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Report on the
European Citizens' Initiative
"Invest in Education" in Cyprus
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European Citizens' Initiative



EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT!
DO NOT COUNT EDUCATION SPENDING AS PART OF THE DEFICIT!

[Cyprus Volunteers' Team of Supporters of the European Citizens' Initiative \(ECI\)](#)¹ *Invest in Education*, under the auspices of the think tank [DIKTIO](#) - the NETWORK for Reform in Greece and Europe.

Our ongoing campaign, on our website <http://invedcy.eu>

Find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/invedcy) <https://www.facebook.com/invedcy>

The successful securing of 9500 support statements in Cyprus for the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education", despite the fact that the overall required European goal for 1.000.000 signatures has not been reached, is the main reason for the continuation of our voluntary engagement with this issue. This engagement will take place within the context of a reviewed partnership aim uniting the Volunteering Group which supported and continues to support this Initiative in Cyprus.

Besides, the themes on which this campaign focused in Cyprus, **better education, increase on spending for research/development and more jobs for our youth**, the means which were used for promoting this campaign and the expertise that we have acquired, as well as our conclusion that beyond the collection of signatures our

¹ The Commission adopted the "European Citizens' Initiative", introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, as a new legal tool that enables one million citizens to propose legislation in areas where it has competence, including Education. Substantive prerequisites for any ECI project are: a) the statements of support (i.e., the electronic signatures which are stored in secure software program) come from citizens with electoral rights in the European elections, b) obtain a minimum number of signatures from at least seven EU countries (Cyprus requires 4500 signatures, while Greece 16500) and c) to collect signatures within one year.

biggest achievement was the activation of citizens towards a set goal, motivate us towards further action.

Since 2009, strict austerity measures have been implemented in the whole of Europe, with the set aim of balancing public budgets.

More recently, the causes of the economic crisis, as well as the financial effectiveness of the austerity measures have been cast into doubt by international organisations and experts. The short and long-term negative effects of the measures on democratic procedures and the standards of social rights have also attracted criticism. Prominent politicians, economists, academics, authors and artists are warning that, if no solution to the problem is found, this will result in us being a lost generation (if we are already not one).

As the former Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth EU Commissioner, **Mrs. Androulla Vassiliou points out**, “Investing in education, training and research is the best investment that we can make for Europe's future”.² She adds that “there is a need to move towards reforms, which will improve our education system, so that it becomes one of the best, and this will mean investing in Education.”³

Sir Christopher Antoniou Pissarides, Nobel Prize Winner for Economics in 2013 and ambassador to the Initiative, shares the same view by stressing that:

(...) economic crises come and go but young people get just one chance to learn the skills that will get them a job and help them embark on a successful career. Cutting down on education investments because of a temporary economic crisis is short-sighted. It could destroy the lives of a whole generation of young people. Education spending is an investment in our future and should not be part of the government's fiscal balance⁴.

On the occasion, we would like to express our gratitude to the thousands of supporters and tens of volunteers of the Initiative,

² EU Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/index_en.htm

³ See the Initiative's website (in greek): http://invest-in-education.eu/?page_id=3118

⁴ Bloomberg Business Week, 16th December 2013 and on the Initiative's website, http://invest-in-education.eu/?page_id=2

who, through their support and their active stance in collecting signatures from their friends and acquaintances, pushed the Cyprus campaign into an EU first, considering the small population of the country.

We can influence European leaders to reflect on our future!

We can influence the media to deliberate on our prospects!

We can make use of our legal rights as stipulated in the Treaty of Lisbon!

Our country, in order to find its way, needs

A change of approach as regards education,

A change in the structure of education, both quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as a change in the role citizens are expected to play in a democratic and sound state entity!

With Regards,

Iacovos Psaltis | *Doctor of Professional Studies in Educational Management. Cypriot representative to the 7- European Member Country Organisational Committee for the European Citizens' Initiative, "Invest in Education".*

Vasilis Kiliaris | *Economist, International Relations Scientist
Coordinator of the Cyprus Volunteers' Team of Supporters of the ECI Invest in Education.*

Alexander Tambakis | *Physicist, Trainer for Adults
Website manager.*

Yiannis Trimithiotis | *Sociologist, Political Scientist
Social Media Manager.*

If you wish to become volunteers and to contribute to current and future actions in the context of the Initiative "Invest In Education", please contact the [Volunteer Support Group for the Initiative "Invest in Education"](#) in Cyprus, at the following E-mail address: invedcy@gmail.com

European Citizens' Initiative



QUALITY EDUCATION, THE ANSWER TO ECONOMIC CRISIS

EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE “INVEST IN EDUCATION” IN CYPRUS

The idea for the Initiative was introduced by the Team of the Think Tank DIKTIO – Network for Reform in Greece & Europe, the president of which is the ex Education Minister of Greece & ex European Commissioner Ms Anna Diamantopoulou. The seven participating countries in the Organising Committee were Greece, Cyprus, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria with Supporting Ambassadors: Helene Glykatzi Ahrweiler, eminent Greek university professor and Byzantinologist and Sir Christopher A. Pissarides Economist (Nobel Prize Economic Sciences 2010). (For basic facts and details on the European Citizens' Initiative Invest in Education see appendices I & II on pp.57 & 60).

In Cyprus, the Initiative was originally supported by the Organisation for Social Reform (OPEK), the Board of Governors of which proposed Iacovos Psaltis as the Cypriot Representative of the 7-European Country Member Organising Committee who supported and promoted the petition all over Europe. Iacovos Psaltis, a holder of a Doctorate of Professional Studies in Educational Management, having behind him forty years in education at several positions, and being an active member of the civic society during the recent years, analysed the importance of investing in education in a short video for the Initiative's website (www.invest-in-education.eu) as follows.

Investment in education is important, because it is through it that people are trained professionally and vocationally and at the same time it shapes their mindsets and attitudes in terms of social bearing.

Investing in lifelong learning in the form of formal, non-formal and informal education has assumed an increased weight, since the initial training alone for entering the labour market has long ago become outdated, while retraining for a new job with a view to combating the rising youth unemployment, has proved inadequate. Nowadays, enhanced employability implies increased investment in research, entrepreneurship, reforms and experience.

In its wider sense, education is a sine qua non foundation for cultivating in people social values and the basic human rights of solidarity, tolerance, mutual respect and freedom of speech, nurturing in them the ability to become active citizens with critical thinking.

After the summer holidays of 2013, and for a short period, the mass sending of the petition through electronic mail was launched, but soon had to be discontinued, since

the Cypriot representative was preoccupied with chairing an organizing & scientific committee for the international conference “The Role of Education in a Multicultural Cyprus”, which kept him busy until the first months of 2014. When the conditions were ripe for re-launching the campaign it was already February 2014, while, quite accidentally, when Ms. Anna Diamantopoulou came to Cyprus in order to promote the petition, the Cypriot Representative happened to be on an information visit to Brussels and therefore did not manage to coordinate with her, with a view to pushing the campaign forward. However, some ground work had been done, since in cooperation with the President of OPEK Mr. Kyriakos Pierides she managed to secure the support of the University of Cyprus and the University of Nicosia.

In the meantime Mr. Psaltis, quite accidentally, met with the economist Vasilis Kiliaris, a young activist with an international relations background who, after being briefed about the aims and objectives of the Initiative, offered to get involved in the promotion of re-launching the petition INVEST IN EDUCATION. The ideas of the two did not always coincide, but with serious and patient argumentation and lots of good will a middle ground would always be found, which allowed the process to move forward. In this association one could perhaps manifest what the Germans term as Gestalt (The belief that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts). And indeed what was generated out of this partnership was work that by far exceeded the capabilities and possibilities of each one of the two.

The Cypriot Representative had long ago a rough draft for a Roundtable Discussion on the current situation of the educational system in Cyprus, for which he had been on the lookout for materializing for some years, and after Vasilis’ input it was decided that this event could be a good opportunity for re-launching the petition. Thus, the event, took place on the 16th May 2014 with the title “On what Kind of Education should Cyprus Invest Today and was coorganised with the Representation of the European Parliament in Cyprus, the Think Tank DIKTIO - Network, OPEK, the Cyprus Academic Dialogue (CAD), the European Youth Movement (EYM) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) at the European House,

The themes that comprised the programme of the Roundtable Discussion focused on the two subjects that at that time - and for a long time to come will - monopolised the public interest and debate: The economic crisis and the political situation in Cyprus. Unavoidably, the themes of research/development, entrepreneurship, reform, competitiveness and employability on the one hand and intercultural education, multi-perspectivity, citizenship & identity on the other hand featured prominently in the Roundtable discussion. The target audience was the Diplomatic body of the EU Member Countries, education policy makers, academics/teachers/students, activists & people involved in the civic society, and the press. In order to encourage participants from all communities, English was employed as a working language.

Following are the flyer, the invitation and the full programme of the event:

European citizens' initiative



DO NOT COUNT EDUCATION SPENDING AS PART OF THE DEFICIT - EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT

Sign in the initiative's webpage NOW:

www.invest-in-education.eu (Deadline: 6 August 2014)

The Greek think tank "[DIKTIO - the Network](#)", in cooperation with a [7-person European Committee](#), launched the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)*. For more information on the initiative, you can follow us on:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/investineducationeu

Twitter: [@Invest_in_Edu](https://twitter.com/Invest_in_Edu)

We believe in the power of European citizens to impact policies!

It is our responsibility to steer our future!

Since 2009, strict austerity programmes have been applied across Europe with the intention of consolidating public budgets. More recently, both the economic effectiveness of austerity measures and the causes of the crisis are being questioned by international experts and organisations. The short and long-term negative effects of the measures on democratic processes and social rights standards have also come up for criticism. In 2011 and 2012, cuts in education budget were made in twenty countries for which data are available. Cuts of more than 5% were observed in Greece, Italy, [Cyprus](#), Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, the United Kingdom (Wales) and Croatia, whereas decreases between 1% and 5% were seen in the French Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom – Scotland.

Youth unemployment (under 25) now exceeds 20% in most of the EU member states, with [Cyprus recording over 40%](#), while in Spain and Greece the record hits as high as of 55% to 60%, respectively ([Eurostat newsrelease](#)).

[28 February 2014](#)). Distinguished politicians, economists, academics, authors and artists warn that unless a way is found to resolve the problem, we are a lost generation (if we haven't become as such already).

- We need to influence European leaders to reflect on our future!
- We need to influence the media to deliberate on our prospects!
- We need to be able to make use of our legal rights as stipulated in the Treaty of Lisbon!!

Cypriot economist, Sir Christopher Antoniou Pissarides,⁵ an Ambassador of the Initiative, comments:

Economic crises come and go but young people get just one chance to learn the skills that will get them a job and help them embark on a successful career. Cutting down on education investments because of a temporary economic crisis is short-sighted. It could destroy the lives of a whole generation of young people. Education spending is an investment in our future and should not be part of the government's fiscal balance.

For all of these reasons we are asking you to sign this Initiative.

***On behalf of the Cyprus branch of volunteers supporting the Initiative
"Invest in Education"***

Iacovos PSALTIS ([watch the video](#))

Doctor of Professional Studies in Educational Management, Member of the 7-person European Committee launching the ECI.

*A ECI is an invitation to the European Commission to propose legislation on matters where the EU has competence to legislate, on a topic we believe is important and vital for improving our lives. A citizens' initiative has to be backed by at least one million EU citizens, coming from at least 7 out of the 28 member states. A [minimum number of signatories](#) is required in each of those 7 member states ([for Cyprus 4500 signatures are required](#)). The rules and procedures governing the ECI are set out in an EU [Regulation](#) adopted by the European Parliament (EP) and the Council of the European Union in February 2011. (In order to be eligible to support the initiative, signatories shall be citizens [natural persons] of the European Union and shall be of the age to be entitled to vote in Elections to the EP.

Professor Pissarides is the School Professor of Economics & Political Science and Regius Professor Designate at the London School of Economics. In 2010, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics, jointly with Peter A. Diamond and Dale Mortensen, for his contributions to the theory of search frictions and macroeconomics.

INVITATION

The Cyprus Volunteer Team of Supporters
of the European Citizens' Initiative [Invest in Education](#),
under the patronage of the
DIKTIO - Network for Reform in Greece and Europe,
cordially invite you to the open discussion:

On what kind of Education should Cyprus Invest Today!

Friday 16th May 2014 (16:00 – 20:00)

At the Conference Room of The European Union House

(30 Vyronos Avenue, 1096, Nicosia)

Keynote Speaker

Sir Christopher Pissarides, Regius Professor of Economics, London
School of Economics, Professor of European Studies, University of Cyprus

Roundtable Participants

Niyazi Kizilyurek
Chara Makriyiannis
Pavlos Pavlou
Panayiotis Persianis
Mimis Sophocleous
Constantinos Hadjistassou
Loizos Michael
Theodoros Panayiotou

Co-organisers

Association for Social Reform (OPEK)
Cyprus Academic Dialogue (CAD)
European Parliament Office in Cyprus
European Youth Movement (EYM)
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)

(Working Language: **English**)

1.

**RSVP by 15th May 2014 to Vasilis Kiliaris: E-mail: vkiliaris@gmail.com,
Twitter: [#InvEd_event_16thMay2014](#) or Tel.: [99 097 777](tel:99097777)**



Full Programme

16:00-16:30 Registration and welcome coffee.

16:30-16:40 **Welcoming** addresses:

1. **Vasilis Kiliaris**, on behalf of the Volunteers supporting the Initiative “Invest in Education”, under the auspices of the DIKTIO-NETWORK for Reform in Greece and Europe.
 2. **Dejan Janjic**, on behalf of the Association for Social Reform (OPEK).
 3. **Nicos Anastasiou**, President of the Cyprus Academic Dialogue (CAD).
-

16:40-17:45 **PART A’ – The Context of the Initiative.**

16:40-17:00

1. **Alexandra Attalides**, Acting Head of the European Parliament Office in Cyprus: ***The European Strategy 2020.***
2. **Iacovos Psaltis**, Doctor of Professional Studies in Educational Management. Cypriot Organiser of the Seven EU Member Country Committee who are organising the petition: ***The European Citizens’ Initiative “Invest in Education”.***

17:00-17:30 **Keynote Speaker.**

Sir Christopher Pissarides, Regius Professor of Economics, London School of Economics, Professor of European Studies, University of Cyprus:

Regular Education as a Tool of Counter-Cyclical Employment Policy.

17:30-17:45 Questions and Answers.

Moderator: **Stefanos Evripidou.**

17:45-18:00 Coffee Break.

18:00-20:00 PART B – Round Table Discussion: The Past, the Present and the Future.

18:00 -18:50 – Section I:

1. **Niyazi Kizilyurek**, Dean of the School of Humanities of the University of Cyprus: ***Envisioning Education in a United Cyprus***.
2. **Chara Makriyiannis**, Doctor of History Education (History and Museum Education): ***Multi-perspectivity in History and Museum Education***.
3. **Pavlos Pavlou**, Doctor of History (and History of Education): ***Segregated Education as a Factor of Constructing Identity: Communal Instead of Republican***.
4. **Panayiotis Persianis**, Doctor of Comparative Education: ***Citizenship, Critical Thinking, and Educational Knowledge***.
5. **Mimis Sophocleous**, Director of Aphi (Touch) Publishers/ Director of Patticheion Municipal Museum-Historical Archives and Research Centre of Limassol: ***Culture, Tradition and Civilisation***.

18:50-19:05 Questions and Answers.

Moderator: **Iacovos Psaltis**.

19:05-19:15 Short break.

19:15-19:45 – Section II:

1. **Constantinos Hadjistassou**, KIOS Research Centre, University of Cyprus: ***Educating the Next Generation of Energy Professionals***.
2. **Loizos Michael**, Assistant Professor in Computer Science: ***Science-Technology-Education Partnership: Taking a STEP Forward***.
3. **Theodoros Panayiotou**, CIIM Director: ***Reform, Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Employability***.

19:45-20:00 Questions and Answers.

Moderator: **Vasilis Kiliaris**.

THE OUTCOMES OF THE ROUNDTABLE “ON WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION SHOULD CYPRUS INVEST TODAY”



Welcoming Addresses:

- In his welcoming address Vasilis Kiliaris drew attention to the major points of the event. As main objective of the event he mentioned a solid support to the ECI “Invest in Education”. Throughout his address he stressed the risk of generating a lost generation as a result of reduced education budgets. He also pointed out the objective of preparing a legal framework to the EU power sharing system on the matter.

- Dejan Janjic, speaking on behalf of the Association for Social Reform (OPEK) he emphasised the fact that the question “On what kind of education Cyprus should invest today” should be the main challenge for all of us in these days. He pointed out the fact that the current level of education spending is very difficult to sustain at the moment and suggested that at least we should search for efficient directions to follow at this stage.
- The president of the Cyprus Academic Dialogue (CAD), Nicos Anastasiou, began his welcoming address by signifying the importance of inclusive democracy and stressed the vital role of education in multicultural societies. In relation to the main question of the event, he clearly pointed out some of the values that we need to invest in today, such as citizenship, tolerance of the “other”, coexistence, critical thinking, and empathy.

The Context of the Initiative

- Alexandra Attalides began her speech by mentioning the close cooperation between education and training. She emphasised the European 2020 Strategic Framework and suggested that economic growth must be based on education. She pointed out that, despite the economic crisis, young people have a role to play in the society and stated that the future depends on citizens. Concluding, she stressed that, at a time of crisis, when we are more focused on growth and jobs, education is the best investment for our society.
- Iacovos Psaltis, in his capacity as the Cypriot Representative of the Seven EU Member Country Organising Committee, described the ultimate goal of this Initiative as the adoption by the European Parliament of a legislation whereby education spending should be exempted from cuts under certain conditions. At the same time, he stressed the need for raising awareness about the call for extensive reforms in our educational system.
- The keynote speaker of the event, Sir Christopher Pissarides, delivered a speech on the theme “Regular Education as a Tool of Counter-Cyclical Employment Policy” and analysed the role of education in helping young people face the economic crisis. He stressed the importance of good education policy in offsetting any long term impact of recession. With regard to the cost of educational recession, he pointed out that cutting down on education spending is

the worst of all public cuts, as this may result in a lost generation. Characteristically, he pointed out that education cuts can result in a scarring outcome on our youth, which may last for decades if not for ever. Other issues raised in his speech were the level of educational costs, education spending in % of GDP, teachers' pay, the short and long-term role of education, timing of educational expansion and policies addressing youth unemployment. For him, more general type of education, followed by specialization at a later stage is a better option during times of crisis. He strongly argued that investment in education in longer and medium run is by far the most productive of all public spending.

Questions and Answers:

- In the Q&A part of the first panel, the discussion focused on the outcomes of the Finnish educational system, which is renowned for its attainments in the PISA examination, and for its highly esteemed teaching profession.
- Another theme that attracted attention was the difficulty in forecasting the needs of the labour market, after the recession.

Round Table Discussion: The Past, the Present and the Future:

- The second part of the event commenced with Chara Makriyiannis' speech on "Multi-perceptivity in History and Museum Education". She mainly drew attention to the AHDR Education Policy Paper, which addresses the necessity of investing in critical education, democracy, human rights, and social justice. She also highlighted the importance of gender issues and the elimination of discrimination against sexual orientation in our educational system. During her speech she stated that political and other agendas should not intervene into our historical understanding. Creating the culture of dialogue is of utmost importance to her.
- Pavlos Pavlou expressed concerns about his belief that the ground is not fertile for developing a climate of citizenship and highlighted the importance of citizenship as a sine qua non condition for the creation of citizens with critical thinking. He added that owing to the lack of civic elements, we have failed to promote citizenship on both sides of the divide. In the overall picture, he pointed out that Turkish Cypriots were not even the "other" throughout the history of Cyprus and described this as the main challenge in our educational system. He contended that in order to be able to act as citizens and members of the society, we need the solution to the Cyprus problem, simply because we need to be a

member of a united country. Therefore, what we need to accomplish is the creation of a civic identity instead of the existing national (ethnic) identity.

- Panayiotis Persianis delivered a speech on “Citizenship, Critical Thinking, and Educational Knowledge”. For him, citizenship means having moral and legal responsibility and drew attention to the lack of tradition in citizenship training. He contended that the lack of provisions for training in state building identity after independence in 1960 resulted in low self-esteem. For him, clientelism has been the barrier to such an initiative. He emphasised that we need new ethical understanding and new ethical norms in that respect. More emphasis needs to be placed on solidarity as a social capital. Assigning specific roles to political parties or involving local authorities in citizenship building should be listed as some of the proposals for addressing the problem. New curricula, new perception of pedagogy, interdisciplinary knowledge and more than one text book are required in the light of all these.
- Mimis Sophocleous, who delivered a speech on “Culture, Tradition and Civilization”, referred to culture and civilization as the bank of the future. He pointed out that the books we are using are out of date. He particularly challenged that a city perspective is better than global or national perspective. He added that the future relies on culture in all terms; material, social and metaphysical. Therefore, the future of Cyprus is based on culture, on the environment and our sole. For him crisis are not bad moments, rather they are critical turning points, both in terms of spiritual and physical power. From his point of view, today we should invest in cultural activities and cultural knowledge.
- Niyazi Kizilyurek was also one of the speakers of the roundtable and delivered a speech on “Envisioning Education in a United Cyprus”. He opened up his speech by asking “Is conflict enslaved in education or is education enslaved in conflict?” He called attention to the fact that ideological education, in order to justify national policies, has been the main focus so far on both sides of the divide. From his point of view, there are two ethnic communities on the island who do not have “demos”. Everything focuses around national citizens, good Turks and good Greeks, but not good citizens of Cyprus. For him, we need to adopt multi-perceptivity and stop believing that one book will deliver us a single absolute truth. Concluding he pointed out that this requires substantive active critical thinking and a radical review. He also drew attention to the fact that in Cyprus we are already beyond Turkish or Greek and we require interaction for multiculturalism.

Section II:

- In his speech “Educating the Next Generation of Energy Professionals”, Constantinos Hadjistassou referred to the curse of national resources, the structure of oil and gas industry, Cyprus’ prospects as a petro-cluster and energy hub for building new energy competencies. He warned that the increase in GDP that generates from high exports resources leads to slower growth. He explained that this is so because of the erosion on the country competitiveness, which can be referred to as the “Dutch Disease” in the literature. Mr. Hadjistassou considered both Saudi Arabia and Norway and asked this simple question: “How are we going to learn the required know-how in Cyprus?” He argued that we have to work with Total and Eni & Kogas, for instance, for expertise. He also drew the attention to the Cyprus’s competitive advantages, such as the low corporate tax. Concluding he stressed that energy related professions should be promoted for the creation of new jobs in the future local labour market.
- Loizos Michael, in his speech about “Science-Technology-Education Partnership” pointed out to several challenges such as the perception of teachers as authority figures and one size fits all type of understanding. He also highlighted the educational means and ends citing the array of alternatives to the physical constraints of the classroom. On the whole, he drew attention to a series of innovative educational approaches, reminding us that apart from the formal type of education a significant role is played by informal and non-formal education.
- Theodore Panayiotou delivered the final speech of the event on “Reform, Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Employability”. He highlighted the loss of competitiveness and the gross mismanagement of resources during economic crises as well as the failure to invest in the right kind of education. He pointed out that we lack ethics, social responsibility, creativity and innovation, risk taking and entrepreneurial spirit, while at the same time, and equally, fail to invest in them. Mr. Panayiotou also highlighted the necessity for investing in the right type of schools and teachers. Furthermore, he asserted that “We have high education expenditure but low educational and economic performance” by emphasising that the type and quality of education are much more important than how much we spent on it. Concluding his presentation and in a way summing up the outcomes of the open discussion he very firmly affirmed his conviction that “employment, competitiveness, economic recovery, and sustainable growth require investment in the kind of education that combines

values with value, theory with practice, knowledge with skills, high touch with high tech and market relevance with humanity.

Apart from the academic outcomes of the Roundtable, what was generated from it, which proved of equal importance was the creation of the volunteers group, who thereafter played a very significant role in supporting and promoting the petition. In connection, a European Citizens' Initiative, the new legal tool introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, generally, equips citizens with the right to recommend specific policy proposals, if at least one million (1.000.000) citizens support legislation in areas where the European Commission has competences, including Education. Thus, the EU enhances European Citizens' active political role and Reason (with the philosophical sense of "correct discourse" (Orthos Logos) to participate explicitly in shaping the wider European mainstream and in forming the specific political, economic and social framework in issues which concern the individual as part of a community. The ultimate goal is to regenerate the power of citizenship, i.e. to achieve transforming the term into active citizenship.

In this context, we are delighted to have managed implementing the aforementioned aspiration through founding the volunteers group and envisioning its advancement into a Forum of Active Citizens, whose main interest, on the whole, will centre around better education and will pursue actions in the direction of moving educational issues further in the European milieu and in the Cyprus Educational System more specifically.



THE CYPRUS VOLUNTEERS' TEAM AND ITS SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE “INVEST IN EDUCATION”

As pointed out above, apart from the academic outcomes of the Roundtable Discussion, something else that was generated from it was the creation of the Cyprus Volunteers' Team, which did an unprecedented job in supporting and promoting the petition. Equally astonishing, was the trajectory of this team, since the whole procedure of putting it together reminded moving sand and served as a sieve through which citizens that really believed in our cause emerged as leaders through their hard individual and collective work.

Thus, out of the twenty six (26) people that put their names down as prospective volunteers on the 16th May event, only six (6) turned up at the first meeting, which was called for the 24th May 2014, with a view to working out a strategy for putting the Initiative on a more organised footing. Five more people from the February Brussels Information Visit took the total number of participants in this meeting up to eleven (11). Out of this total number, eight of them set up the informal “headquarters” and stuck it to the bitter end to see the campaign through its successful conclusion on 6 August 2014. However, for three of the participants that was the first and last contribution to the initiative.

As a venue for our first meeting, and for most of those that followed, we used the Home for Cooperation (H4C), which symbolizes the current multicultural composition of the Cypriot society and embraces the core European values of tolerance, coexistence, solidarity and human rights. Values, which we would like to see promoted in our educational system on both sides of the divide. The themes on which ideas were exchanged at this inaugural meeting of the Cyprus Volunteers' Team were set out in an agenda prepared by Vasilis as follows:

1. *Appreciations!*
2. *Briefing Report for Friday's InvEd Event.*
4. *Why did we regenerate the Initiative, since March 2014?*
5. *How Cyprus is related to Invest in Education and what is the affiliation of the Cyprus Volunteer Team of Supporters (We, the Volunteers) with the Organizers and*

Supporters (DIKTIO, CAD, OPEK, EYM, FES) of the European Citizens' Initiative Invest in Education?

6. *What is our current situation (No of signatures, in Cyprus and on a Pan-European level).*
7. *Briefing on Media coverage so far.*
8. *Exchange views, suggestions and ideas on how to further organize the Initiative, aiming to continue gathering electronic signatures supporting investments in Education, till the deadline of August 6, 2014 (minimum 4.500 statements of support) allowing the procedure to move ahead as a legal proposal through the EU power sharing Institutional system!*
9. *Niche message approach: to members of the academia and educational community, students / scientists / scholars / researchers / teachers and, if possible, to policy makers Vs Massive message approach: to the public, with a marketing mix approach, using slogans and smart ideas advertise in the electronic editions of prestige local media.*
10. *SWOT Analysis [accordingly, utilize mini interview with Prof. Pissarides and InvEd Event Academic Report (coming soon), CCCM, tv/radio spot with Cypriots volunteers (see DIKTIO template video clips on line) etc].*



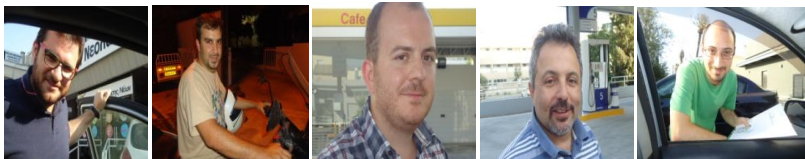
The item that monopolised the discussion at this meeting was the shocking message we had received from Brussels in the morning of 16th May 2014, the very day we were having the event for re-launching the petition that, after about nine (9) months from the date the petition had been launched, the signatures collected in Cyprus up to that point were only 278. The news created a very heavy atmosphere, since most of

us assessed the result as most disappointing, especially after the fact that the deadline of 6 August was closing on us, and because of the quite good media promotion we had run during the period up to the re-launch event.

Some attributed the poor results to the lack of either targeted mailing and/or personal approach or to insufficient personal commitment. Others brought our attention to the fact that our electronic mailboxes are inundated with messages and that people cannot be bothered with filling in time consuming statements if they are not especially motivated. Yet, one attendant pointed out to the problem of disclosing personal data during completing the support statement and made it clear that s/he would be the last one to give such data. This statement was enough to discourage one or two of the participants to continue with the Volunteers Team.

Notwithstanding, the overwhelming majority of the group stood their ground and pressed on with suggesting measures for further promoting the petition, among which were the following: Individual commitment; personalised approach; targeted emailing; branding; media promotion; marketing; social media construction; securing support from organised institutions; identifying liaison key personalities in institutions; introducing support statements on paper, engaging individual volunteers in securing signatures on paper, and working out ways of addressing the concern about the disclosure of sensitive personal data.

A rough distribution of duties was agreed among us as to how best the above would be promoted but no tight boundaries were imposed during the process of implementing the goals decided. In effect, each one of us was doing what we could do best, depending on each one's expertise, background, interest, network and availability. After all, this is the meaning of volunteerism. In practice, among others, Iacovos Psaltis undertook the role of press officer and media coordinator, Vasilis Kiliaris became the coordinator of the Cyprus Volunteers Team, Yiannis Trimithiotis undertook the construction of the Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/invedcy>, while Alexandros Tambakis designed our Website <http://invedcy.eu/>.



Two more volunteers who have been with us on the team from the very first day of its creation to the completion of the campaign have been two Georges. George Demetriou and George Isaias: the first one, among others, served as our liaison with

the Nobel Winner of Economics Sir Christoforos Pissarides, one of the main ambassadors to the ECI, and the second one who headed the team of volunteers who undertook the task of entering the data from support statements on paper into the electronic data base of the ECI. In a humorous publication on our Facebook Page on 9 July 2014, the group of the above colleagues was named “Men ready for everything” and this is exactly what in effect they did, as mentioned before and as you will verify below:

Other volunteers that helped with entering data from support statements into the electronic data base were the following:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Ute Ackerman Boeros | 13. Lefki Lambrou |
| 2. Chryssa Androulaki | 14. Maria Leonidou |
| 3. Katerina Antoniou | 15. Panayiota Louca |
| 4. Giorgos Demetriou | 16. Annagrace Mesa |
| 5. Antigone Heraclidou | 17. Giorgos Pirishis |
| 6. Mertkan Hamit | 18. Iacovos Psaltis |
| 7. George Isaias | 19. Panayiota Lambraki |
| 8. George Foris | 20. Haris Shekeris |
| 9. Melina Foris | 21. Maria Solomou |
| 10. Sotiroula Fori | 22. Alexandros Tambakis |
| 11. Golfo Kateva | 23. Georgia Tourmousoglou |
| 12. Vasilis Kiliaris | 24. Yiannis Trimithiotis |

However, undeniably, the most important area in which the ECI Volunteers offered their services was that of canvassing signatories for the petition and the list comprising this group is quite representative of the wide range of their background.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Litsa Constantinides | 12. Michalakis Kiliaris |
| 2. Costas Constantinou | 13. Vasilis Kiliaris |
| 3. Louis Christofi | 14. Panayiota Lambraki |
| 4. Nicolette Demosthenous | 15. Irene Leontiou |
| 5. Mertkan Hamit | 16. Anthi Makriyiannis |
| 6. Tassos Hadjilefteris | 17. Sotira Savvidou |
| 7. Charalambos Hadjisavvas | 18. Giorgos Pirishis |
| 8. Maria Ioannou | 19. Kyprianos Philippou |
| 9. Antonis Katsantonis | 20. Anna Protopapa |
| 10. Tugberk Kaya | 21. Androulla Psaltis |
| 11. Androulla Kiliaris | 22. Iacovos Psaltis |
| | 23. Panikos Theodoulou |
| | 24. Yiannis Trimithiotis |

The background of the above volunteers varied and consisted of public servants, retired head teachers, repatriated relatives & friends, activists, municipality officers, bank employees, young scientists, doctorate students, housewives, insurance officers, school governors, and artisans. The other feature of the group was that it was intergenerational. The work done by them was exemplified in the activity of Sotera Savvidou, a volunteer who identified herself with the Initiative and gave the best of herself.

Freely translated, the name Sotera in English would mean “Saviour”. And she literally saved the Initiative because she joined us at a time when the first news about the poor results on the 6th of May 2014, had disheartened us to the point of seeking an excuse to quit the venture. This, however, was practically unrealistic, since we were in the middle of the preparatory work for the Roundtable Discussion, “On What Kind of Education Should Cyprus Invest Today”.

At that juncture, we happened to meet Sotera accidentally and when she was informed about our frustration she retorted: “This campaign will succeed only if you believe in it”. She shocked me! Not so much because she embarrassed me and pointed out my responsibility as the Cypriot Representative of the 7-Member European Country Organising Committee, but mainly because it made me wonder whether I really believed in what I had undertaken and whether I really cared whether this petition would succeed or not.

I mumbled something; I cannot quite remember what, in an attempt to avert the challenge. She stood there in a forbidding countenance awaiting a response. In the meantime, she had already completed the first support statement with signatures and she asked for a second one. I refused, because I was totally convinced that her devotion to the role she had undertaken would keep her away from more important family responsibilities. She would not listen and went on assembling her own support statement. From then on, Sotera became the role model for the Initiative, especially for me and my family, and we pulled ourselves together realising how hard we had to work if we wanted to succeed in our venture.

When recently I asked her why she had given so much of her time to the Initiative she told me in the simplest manner that she had done it for three reasons. “First and foremost because I have trust in the person who has undertaken the initiative in Cyprus, second I believe in the cause of the Initiative and third, I like offering”. And indeed, offering to the community is what characterizes her most.

You will very rarely find her at home, since she looks after known and unknown people with several needs, accompanying sick to the hospital, cooking for lonely people and transporting neighbours to several services to carry out daily odd jobs. When I asked her how she would characterise herself, she thought for a while and with misted eyes she responded: "Since 1974 I am a very hard tried woman". And she was not wrong, as with her husband they had lost their family industry and she started working as a labourer in order to top up her partner's meager income that he was sending her from abroad where he had gone to find employment.



In later years, her children scattered all over the world and recently she has lost at an early age her only daughter, a brilliant scientist. However, in a little while she wiped a tear and very proudly she stated that what fits her better is the title of the active citizen. And that is what the main feature of the ECI volunteers was.

The Support Statement on Paper

One of the most serious documents we had to prepare for the Initiative was a Support Statement on Paper, as this had to address several needs including the necessity for protecting private data. Other points that had to be taken care of were:

- *The need for including the data required for verifying the validity of the details stated, which for our country were - First name & Surname, Citizenship, number of Identity Card or number of Passport, Date and Signature .In other words, each participating country was asking for some personal data, which they felt were appropriate to them in order to verify that the signatories were real people.*
- *The preparation of a simple and friendly text appealing to the local communities, which would, at the same time, contextualize the basics of the European petition and the local branding and, at the same time, take into consideration the local sensitivities.*

It took several drafts to be prepared, as several people worked on it and tried it out before it was officially approved at the 2nd meeting of the volunteers on 14 June 2014. (See sample on following pages, including the Privacy Statement).

EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE



DO NOT COUNT EDUCATION SPENDING AS PART OF THE DEFICIT! EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT!

Dear Friends

In my capacity as the Cypriot Organiser of the 7-European Country Member Committee from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria, who have organised the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education" and on behalf of the Cypriot Volunteer Team who promote the initiative, we need your support in order to bring to a successful outcome the campaign for securing 1.000.000 supporters, something which will allow the European Civic Society to propose to the European Parliament a legislation whereby education spending will be exempted from cuts.

At a recent intercultural and intergenerational Volunteers meeting that was attended by influential people like you from both communities, who represent civic society organisations, several measures have been discussed for promoting the campaign and now we are applying to you, who are directly involved in education, in order to request for your valuable assistance in supporting the campaign.

Therefore, we appeal to you to communicate the present petition to your colleagues, friends and acquaintances, requesting them to support our effort for securing the minimum number of 4.500 supporters required for Cyprus.

The procedure for supporting the initiative is very simple and it can be carried out within a few minutes electronically HERE: www.invest-in-education.eu (please see privacy statement on 2nd page).

The support can also be carried out in writing (see form on page 3 below) by putting down the data required for verifying the validity of the details stated - First name & Surname, Citizenship and number of Identity Card or number of Passport. This form will have to be returned to me by the end of July 2014 at the latest.

We are asking your support for better education and for more jobs for our youth. Any other ideas that might promote the campaign are welcome!

Supporters must be European Citizens eligible to vote in the European Elections, regardless of nationality (deadline for electronic support 6 August 2014).

For Cyprus we are campaigning for:

- MORE SPENDING ON RESEARCH /DEVELOPMENT - MORE JOBS .

With my most sincere greetings

Iacovos Psaltis (+357 99 638396)(Fax: 22 330781)

Doctor of Professional Studies in Educational Management.

Member of the 7-European Country Member Committee for

The European Citizens' Initiative "INVEST IN EDUCATION"

Website: <http://invedcy.eu/> Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/invedcy>



**DO NOT COUNT EDUCATION SPENDING AS PART OF THE DEFICIT!
EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT!**

Online Collection System

[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)

Please select language

-
- [Home](#)
 - [View conformity certificate](#)
 - [View privacy statement](#)
-

Privacy statement: in accordance with Article 10 of Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, the personal data provided on this form will only be made available to the competent authorities for the purpose of verification and certification of the number of valid statements of support received for this proposed citizens' initiative (see Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 on the citizens' initiative) and, if necessary, further processed for the purpose of administrative or legal proceedings relating to this proposed citizen's initiative (see Article 12 of Regulation (EU) No 211/2011). The data may not be used for any other purpose. Data subjects are entitled to obtain access to their personal data. All statements of support will be destroyed at the latest 18 months after the date of registration of the proposed citizens' initiative, or, in the case of administrative or legal proceedings, at the latest one week after the date of conclusion of the said proceedings.

Online Collection System

You may support the initiative electronically [HERE NOW www.invest-in-education.eu](http://www.invest-in-education.eu) or do it in writing below (page 3) by putting down the required data in order to allow for the verification and certification of the number of valid statements of support received for this proposed citizens' initiative so that the random sampling checks which are going to be carried out by the government of each participant state are made possible.

Thus the European Union will safeguard that the people supporting the petition are real.

[European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education" Registration Number – ECI \(2013\)000006](#)

Statement of Support Form

European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education" registration number

– ECI (2013)000006

S/N	FULL NAME	CITIZENSHIP	<u>TYPE AND NUMBER OF IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENT FOR VERIFICATION OF DATA</u> Choose identity card or passport depending of the situation: (One out of the following two) Identity Card Number: Or Passport Number.....	DATE AND SIGNATURE
00	(Example A') David Andrew Marsh	Cypriot	Identity Card No: 353637	
00	(Example B') Carol Demetriou Williams	Cypriot	Passport No: E 954789	
01				
02				
03				
04				
05				
06				
07				
08				

CANVASSING SUPPORT FROM ORGANISED INSTITUTIONS

The trajectory of canvassing support to the Initiative from organised institutions makes a most extraordinary story, since the initial, usually enthusiastic, theoretical support for the petition, did not always translate into real numbers of electronic signatures.

This evidently referred to the case of Higher institutions, since picking up from where Ms. Diamantopoulou left in early February, we contacted almost all state and private universities at the very top level, and we were left with the impression that the results would be very satisfactory, as each one of these institutions employed each and every one of their communications means and social media in order to promote the petition both at the administrative and academic level and at the level of students.

The some 300 electronic signatures that were collected for Cyprus by early May 2014 was not of course representative of the initial enthusiastic welcome, so after a lot of reflection on the situation we decided to revamp our effort with the above institutions and open up the circle of institutions from which we would seek support. Thus, we made a big list of potential supporters comprising political parties, youth organisations, teacher unions, community councils, municipalities and NGOs.

At the meetings that followed with them we always made it a point to identify somebody from inside to be our point of reference and liaison for collecting signatures on the support statement forms that we left with them and requested them to sign during the meeting. This was a new hands-on approach we adopted, and from then on, each of the volunteers would carry with him/her a form handy for any eventuality.

Below is the list of institutions that supported the Initiative:

1. Association for Social Reform - OPEK
2. Cyprus Academic Dialogue – CAD
3. Office of European Parliament in Cyprus
4. European Youth Movement – EYM
5. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - FES
6. University of Cyprus - UCY
7. Cyprus University of Technology – CUT
8. Open University of Cyprus – OUC
9. University of Nicosia – UNIC
10. European University of Cyprus – EUC
11. Pancyprian Union of Greek Teachers – POED
12. Organisation of Secondary Education Greek Teachers – OELMEK
13. Organisation of Technical Education Teachers – OLTEK
14. DISY House Speaker and Commissioner of Education Nicos Tornaritis
15. AKEL Head of Education Matters, Mr. Christos Christofides
16. AKEL Member of House Education Committee MP Andros Kafkalias
17. Commissioner of Volunteerism and NGOs Mr. Yiannakis Yiannaki
18. Youth Organisation of AKEL – EDON
19. Youth Organisation of DISY – NEDISY
20. Youth Organisation of EDEK - EDEN
21. Youth Organisation of Green Party
22. Youth Organisation of United Democrats.
23. Cyprus Youth Council – CYC
24. Cyprus Youth Board
25. Kakopetria Community Council
26. Dherynia Municipality
27. Latsia Municipality
28. Aglantzia Municipality
29. Nicosia Municipality

The Meetings with the Institutions

The experience gained from meeting the representatives of the above institutions was quite interesting in that we were given the opportunity to hear from each one their views about the Initiative, which did not always coincide with the aims and objectives set by the ECI manifesto or with the views of the initiators and ambassadors to the petition. However, this did not stop them from supporting the petition, most of the

times unreservedly, since there seem to be a general consensus about the aims and objectives of the Initiative as they were contextualized for Cyprus.

For instance, the parliamentary spokesman of the Democratic Rally & Education Commissioner of the same party MP, Mr. Nicos Tornaritis, was quite firm in supporting the cuts that have been imposed on education spending in Cyprus as a necessary evil because of the economic crisis, but stated that he would support the petition on principle and because he was in agreement with the goals of better education and increased spending on research/development.

On the other hand, the head of the Education Bureau of AKEL Mr. Christofides, heading the delegation that accepted us for the meeting, was quite sincere with us in disagreeing with what he called neoliberal views of the ambassador of the Initiative Professor Pissarides and with some of the positions of Ms. Diamantopoulou in her capacity as ex Education Minister of Greece. He also stressed that as AKEL they differ from the EU on several issues, and warned us not to raise high expectations about how much the EU could do or how far would go in terms of this Initiative. However, they would back the petition all the way because they thought that it was in the right direction.

The president of the Youth Organisation NEDISY Mr. Socrates Frangou was concerned about the slim chances young teacher appointees have to get permanently employed as state teachers, while the Youth Board President Mr. Panayiotis Sentonas surprised us with the news that despite the fact that the Organisation's Board consisted of representatives from youth organisations affiliated to all political parties they had no difficulty in policy making, as usually decisions were taken unanimously. So they had no problem in supporting us.

The Commissioner for Volunteerism Mr. Yiannis Yiannaki had no reservation to support a petition that was coming from the civic society for which he is an advocate and accepted our offer to help in promoting the wider aspect of human rights in volunteerism in state education, something which is in their immediate plans.

Finally, Mr. Constantinos Yiorkadjis, the mayor of the capital stated that he was in full agreement with our aims and objectives and wished us good luck!

Below is an indicative list of press releases that were published in the local media after the meetings. The contents of these press releases were usually agreed between the two parties before publication, but there have been occasions when the organisations themselves issued their own communiqués in support of the Initiative and used their electronic email lists and social media to promote the petition to their special audiences.

PRESS RELEASE
(23rd June 2014)

In a meeting of the House Spokesperson and Education Commissioner of the Democratic Rally Mr. Nicos Tornaritis with the Cypriot Organiser of the 7-Country Member of the European Committee from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria, who have organised the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education" Dr. Iacovos Psaltis and the member of the Cyprus Volunteer Team who support the Initiative and Projects Officer of the Cyprus Youth Council Mr. Yiannis Trimithiotis, the MP was briefed about the said initiative which aims at collecting 1.000.000 supporters from European citizens with a view to promoting to the European Parliament a legislation which will exempt education spending from cuts.

On principle, Mr. Tornaritis expressed his personal support to the petition and it was agreed that the subject will be considered further by the several organisations of Democratic Rally and other institutional bodies in order to coordinate the effort for promoting the campaign for securing the 4.500 supporters required for Cyprus.



PRESS RELEASE
(26th June 20014)

In a meeting between the AKEL Education Bureau Officer Mr. Christos Christophides and a delegation of the European Citizens' Initiative **"Invest in Education"**, the Member of Parliament was briefed about the said initiative which aims at collecting 1.000.000 supporters from European Citizens with a view to proposing to the European Parliament a legislation which will exempt education spending from cuts below the mean % of GDP expenditure in the EU.

The delegation of the European Citizens Initiative comprised the Cypriot Organiser of the 7-Country Member of the European Committee from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria who have organised the European Citizens' Initiative **"Invest in Education"** Iacovos Psaltis, Doctor of Professional Studies in Educational Management, and the Coordinator of the Cyprus Volunteers Team who support the Initiative Mr. Vassilis Kiliaris. From AKEL also took part the MP Mr. Andros Kakkalias, member of the House Education Committee and the Central Organising Secretary of EDON Mr. Konstantinos Stylianou.

Mr. Christophides expressed his unreserved support for the Initiative, which, as he put it, constitutes a step in the right direction and a measure of social justice, and through the AKEL Organisations he will undertake several initiatives in order to contribute towards securing the 4.500 supporters that are required for Cyprus. On the other hand, greeting the Initiative, Mr. Kakkalias noted with meaning that whatever cuts on education spending do not necessary lead to improvements on students' attainments or the performance of our educational system. At the same time, EDON, the AKEL Youth Organisation, among other activities, will promote the campaign further through its 27th Youth and Students Festival, which is going to take place between 3 and 5 July 2014, in Nicosia at the Famagusta Gate quarters.



PRESS RELEASE
(1st July 2014)

After the meeting between the House Spokesperson and Education Commissioner of the Democratic Rally Mr. Nicos Tornaritis with a delegation of the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education" it was the turn of NEDISY, the Youth Organisation of the Democratic Rally, to welcome and discuss the aim and objectives of this Initiative with its delegation.

NEDISY were represented by its President Sofronis Frangou and the General Secretary Ioannis Papouis and the European Citizens' Initiative by the Cypriot Organiser of the 7- European Country Member Committee from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria who have organised the Initiative Dr. Iacovos Psaltis, the Coordinator of the Cypriot Volunteers Team Vasilis Kiliaris and Mr. Yiannis Trimithiotis, Projects Officer of the Cyprus Youth Council & member of the Cyprus Volunteer Team who support the Initiative

The leaders of NEDISY were briefed about the said initiative, which aims at collecting 1.000.000 supporters from European citizens with a view to promoting to the European Parliament a legislation which will exempt education spending from cuts.

Mr. Frangou and Mr. Papouis expressed their full support for the petition and undertook to contribute to the effort for reaching the goal of the 4.500 signatures, which is the minimum number of supporters recommended for Cyprus. They will be sharing the petition with their contacts of youths and students in their social media and also secure support at events they will be organising between now and the deadline of 6 August 2014.





Συμβούλιο Νεολαίας Κύπρου

CYPRUS YOUTH COUNCIL

Kıbrıs Gençlik Konseyi

Nicosia, July 1st 2014

Subject: CYC support for the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education"

Dear friends,

We would like to express the strong support and active participation of the Cyprus Youth Council (CYC) in the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "Invest in Education» following a request from the seven-member European Committee (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria), which launched and coordinates this initiative.

The "Invest in Education" Initiative, through a network of volunteers and partners, aims at collecting at least 1,000,000 signatures from all over Europe by 06 August 2014. 4,500 are expected to come from Cyprus. These signatures, through the new European legal instrument "[European Citizens' Initiative](#)" will allow the promotion at EU level, of a legislative proposal whereby spending on education will be exempted from cuts.

More information on the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education" can be found at <http://invedcy.eu/> and <http://invest-in-education.eu/>.

The CYC, as the only platform representing youth NGOs in Cyprus (political party affiliated or not) and as a continuous supporter of the call for quality education, shares clearly the objectives of this campaign and will provide real support for its successful outcome.

Therefore we would like to invite you to support this initiative by submitting the necessary support information [HERE](#)!

Additionally, we strongly appeal to you to contribute towards achieving the goal of the campaign by forwarding this message to your contacts as well as collecting signatures from your peers, colleagues and members by using the relevant Support Statement, which you can find [HERE](#) (the Support Statements must be returned to the CYC offices not later than the end of July 2014 at the latest).

Yours
Despina Chapoupi
President
Cyprus Youth Council

PRESS RELEASE
(14th July 2014)

PRIMARY EDUCATION TEACHER UNION POED'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE "INVEST IN EDUCATION"

In a meeting between a representative of the European Citizens' Initiative "INVEST IN EDUCATION" and the Executive Committee of POED, the support statements towards the petition to the European Parliament for exempting education spending from cuts were delivered. More particularly, the proposal provides for the exclusion from the calculation of each country's public spending deficit, that part of Government spending for education that is lower than the last 5-year European average.

The Initiative has been launched by Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria and is supported by all European Member States. In order for the relevant legislative proposal to be considered by the European Parliament, a minimum number of 1.000.000 signatures must be secured all over Europe. For Cyprus, the minimum number of signatures required is 4500.

On behalf of the Cyprus Volunteers Team that support the Initiative in Cyprus and in his capacity of the Cypriot Organiser of the 7-European Country Member Organising Committee who prepared and promote the petition, the representative of the European Citizens' Initiative Iacovos Psaltis, Dr. of Professional Studies in Educational Management, expressed his gratitude for the valuable contribution of the preschool and primary education teachers in collecting the required signatures for Cyprus and wished every success to the meaningful task they are carrying out in the schooling of the children of this age. Summing up Mr. Psaltis stressed that POED's support constitutes a gesture of decisive significance in achieving the goal of the campaign.

On behalf of the POED Executive Committee the President Mr. Filios Phylaktou, the General Secretary Mr. Apostolos Apostolidis, the Vice President Christophoros Theophanous, the General Treasurer Ms Dora Katselli and the Assistant General Secretary Mr. Lukas Tsoukas took part in the meeting. Views were exchanged about the current situation of educational issues in our country and referring to the Initiative Mr. Phylaktou said that "it is evident that such an effort cannot but be wholeheartedly supported by POED, since its education funding policy is in full accord with our philosophy".



PRESS RELEASE
(16th July 2014)

UNRESERVED SUPPORT TO THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE "INVEST IN EDUCATION"
BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR VOLUNTEERISM & NGOS

In a meeting between a representative of the European Citizens' Initiative "INVEST IN EDUCATION" and the Commissioner of Volunteerism and NGOs, Mr. Yiannakis Yiannaki expressed his wholehearted support for the petition to the European Parliament for exempting education spending from cuts and he will use all the appropriate available means in his office in order to publicise and promote the Initiative. At the same time he expounded his plans for restructuring the movement of volunteerism in a wider and more inclusive approach with a view to increasing the involvement of youths and the Civic Society in general.

The Initiative "Invest in Education" has been launched by Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria and is supported by all European Member States. In order for the relevant legislative proposal to be considered by the European Parliament, a minimum number of 1.000.000 signatures must be secured all over Europe. For Cyprus, the minimum number of signatures required is 4500. More particularly, the proposal provides for the exclusion from the calculation of each country's public spending deficit that part of Government spending for education that is lower than the last 5-year European average.

On behalf of the Cyprus Volunteers Team that support the Initiative in Cyprus and in his capacity of the Cypriot Organiser of the 7-European Country Member Organising Committee who launched and promote the petition, the representative of the European Citizens' Initiative Iacovos Psaltis, Dr. of Professional Studies in Educational Management, expressed his gratitude for the valuable contribution of the Commissioner in supporting the campaign for collecting the required minimum number of signatures for Cyprus and wished every success to the meaningful task he is carrying out in restructuring the Volunteers and NGO movement.

Concluding, the two parties agreed on cooperating in the preparatory work that is being done on drafting a policy for schools, which will promote volunteerism in education in its wider sense, with a special emphasis on human rights.



PRESS RELEASE
(18th July 2014)

THE CYPRUS YOUTH BOARD ON THE SIDE OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE "INVEST IN EDUCATION"

A meeting took place yesterday between the Cyprus Youth Board and the European Citizens' Initiative "INVEST IN EDUCATION". During the meeting, the president of the Board Mr. Panayiotis Sentonas, after congratulating the delegation of the Initiative for its involvement in the petition for exempting education spending from cuts, expressed the common front of the Board in the campaign in question and analysed the plans of the Board for promoting the issues that refer to the youth, especially under the conditions of economic crisis that our country goes through.

The Initiative "Invest in Education" has been prepared by the Think Tank Diktio for Reform in Greece and Europe, and is represented in seven countries, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria, while it is promoted in all European Member States. In order for the relevant legislative proposal to be considered by the European Parliament, a minimum number of 1.000.000 signatures must be secured all over Europe. For Cyprus, the minimum number of signatures required is 4500. More particularly, the proposal provides for the exclusion from the calculation of each country's public spending deficit that part of Government spending for education that is lower than the last 5-year European average.

Mr. Sentonas expressed the will of the Board to contribute all possible assistance in the campaign for ensuring the minimum number of signatures for Cyprus, by promoting the petition to the youth of the country via all the available electronic and hard copy support statements.

The European Citizens' Initiative delegation comprised Dr. Iacovos Psaltis in his capacity of the Cypriot Organiser of the 7-European Country Member Organising Committee who launched and promote the petition, Mr. Vasilis Kiliaris, the Coordinator of the Cyprus Volunteers Team that support the Initiative in Cyprus and the volunteers Yiannis Trimithiotis, manager of the Initiative's social media and Alexandros Tambakis, manager of the Initiative's website. On behalf of the Youth Board, apart from the President, the Acting Executive Secretary Ms Maria Kazamia -Costara was present.



PRESS RELEASE
(29th July 2014)

AFTER PRIMARY EDUCATION POED, NOW OELMEK FROM SECONDARY EDUCATION OFFERS ITS SUPPORT TO THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE "INVEST IN EDUCATION"

At a recent meeting between the Executive Committee of the OELMEK Board and the European Citizens' Initiative "INVEST IN EDUCATION" the President of the Secondary Teachers Union Mr. Taliadoros delivered the support statements of his Organisation to the petition for exempting education spending from cuts. More particularly, the proposal provides for the exclusion from the calculation of each country's public spending deficit that part of Government spending for education that is lower than the last 5-year European average.

The Initiative "Invest in Education" has been prepared by the Think Tank Diktio - Network for Reform in Greece and Europe, and is represented in seven countries, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria, while it is promoted in all European Member States. In order for the relevant legislative proposal to be considered by the European Parliament, a minimum number of 1.000.000 signatures must be secured all over Europe. For Cyprus, the minimum number of signatures required is 4500 and the maximum 9000.

The European Citizens' Initiative delegation comprised Dr. Iacovos Psaltis in his capacity of the Cypriot Organiser of the 7-European Country Member Organising Committee who launched and promote the petition, and the volunteers Yiannis Trimithiotis, manager of the Initiative's social media and Alexandros Tambakis, manager of the Initiative's website in Cyprus. On behalf of OELMEK, apart from the President, present were the Vice President Ms Alkisti Varnava, the General Secretary Mr. Michalis Ierides, the General Treasurer Mr. Andreas Sophocles, the Organisational Secretary Mr. Sotiris Papamoyseos, the Assistant General Secretary Mr. Yiannos Socratous and the Assistant General Treasurer Mr. Lakis Gabriel

Mr. Psaltis stated that OELMEK'S support for completing the minimum required supporters for Cyprus was crucial and after expressing his gratitude for the support wished the new Executive Committee all success in their new role as leaders of the Secondary Teachers Union.



PRESS RELEASE
(6th August 2014)

**NICOSIA MUNICIPALITY SUPPORTS THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE
"INVEST IN EDUCATION"**

A meeting took place today between the mayor of capital Nicosia and the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "INVEST IN EDUCATION" at which Mr. Yiorkadjis was updated about the progress of the petition for exempting education spending from cuts. More particularly, the proposal provides for the exclusion from the calculation of each country's public spending deficit that part of Government spending for education that is lower than the last 5-year European average.

The Initiative "Invest in Education" has been prepared by the Think Tank Diktio - Network for Reform in Greece and Europe, and is represented in seven countries, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria, while it is promoted in all European Member States. In order for the relevant legislative proposal to be considered by the European Parliament, a minimum number of 1.000.000 signatures must be secured all over Europe. For Cyprus, the minimum number of signatures required is 4500 and the maximum 9000.

The European Citizens' Initiative delegation comprised Doctor of Professional Studies in Educational Management Iacovos Psaltis in his capacity of the Cypriot Organiser of the 7-European Country Member Organising Committee who launched and promote the petition, and the volunteers Yiannis Trimithiotis, manager of the Initiative's social media and the Secretarial Officer of the Cyprus Youth Council Mr. Nicolas Christofis. The members of the ECI delegation analysed the two pillars around which the petition has been promoted: improvement in the quality of education and increase of spending on research/development with a view to enhancing entrepreneurship and reform and creating new jobs for our youth.

The mayor fully agreed with the aims and objectives of the campaign and wished the delegation good luck, while the European Affairs Officer Charoula Theocharous has invited the staff and municipal councillors of Nicosia Municipality to support the petition. Furthermore a relevant request has been posted on the website www.nicosia.org.cy as well as in the Facebook page of the municipality <https://www.facebook.com/NicosiaMunicipality>

Mr. Psaltis characterised as symbolic the support offered by Nicosia Municipality to the Initiative, since this coincided with the deadline of the campaign and has sealed in the best possible way its successful conclusion, since both the goal of the minimum number of 4500 signatures as well as the maximum of 9000 have been covered, according to the latest estimate.



THE PROMOTION OF THE PETITION BY THE MEDIA & THEIR ROLE IN MAKING IT A SUCCESS STORY

Issuing press releases was only one of the means that have been employed for promoting the petition. The May 16th event gave us the opportunity to promote it quite satisfactorily in the media, especially in the electronic ones. We would like to express our gratitude to each and every one of the news agencies and media, which assisted us in our effort to secure not only the minimum required number of 4.500 signatures but reaching the European record of 9.500 support statements.

In a chronological order, these are: the Cyprus News Agency (CNA), CyBC, Super Fm Radio, Maxi Newspaper, Astra Radio, Phileleftheros, Simerini, Politis, Cyprus Mail and Financial Times Newspapers and the electronic newspapers Phil news, Sigma live, Studycyprus.eu and Paideia News.

We are indebted to the following journalists (again in a chronological order): Saskia Constantinou, Katerina Eliadi, Frosso Georgiou, Vicky Nioulidou, Athina Violaris, George Pavlides, Olga Pierides, Soula Hadjikyriacou, Eleni Vrettou, Antigone Dhrousiotou, Zoe Telegraphou, Dimitris Sidiropoulos, Tassos Mourtouvanis, Christina Tserkezi, Christina Kyriakidou, Evangelia Sizopoulou, Paris Potamitis and Kyriakos Pierides.

Special thanks are owed to a charming lady journalist of Astra Radio, Zoe Telegraphou, who with the excellent preparation of the European Affairs programme she presented on the 27th of June 2014, gave us the opportunity to analyse in detail what the Initiative was all about and on top of this, got all the staff of the three-storey establishment of Dialogue Publishers to sign the petition.

On the other hand, the wide coverage of the initiative by CyBC throughout the campaign and especially the CyBC 3rd Radio Talk Show “Face to Face” with Demetris Sidiropoulos on 5 July and the TV midday News Programme with Paris Potamitis on 24 July 2014, gave us the opportunity to make the petition known all over the island, something that facilitated securing support much easier in the very critical period that followed.

Extraordinary was also the work done by Christina Kyriakidou, the journalist responsible for educational issues in Phileleftheros, who, apart from covering the

progress of the petition on a systematic basis, made a special report on the trajectory of the Initiative, after resorting to serious research into available sources, such as the Initiative’s webpage www.invest-in-education.eu , our Facebook Page “Invest in Education” <https://www.facebook.com/invedcy> and our Website <http://invedcy.eu>.

A quite comprehensive record of the above coverage can be seen in the below table, in which the reader can follow the progress of the media coverage of the Initiative up to the deadline of 6 August 2014 and the “next day” period up to the point of preparing this report. There may have been other media and journalists that we do not know of, who have contributed to our effort; please accept our apologies for not acknowledging your input, which we value anyway. On the whole the media coverage has been incredibly instrumental in making the petition known and gathering momentum for the campaign, which resulted in the amazing results for Cyprus.

s/s	Date	Name of medium / journalist	Programme/ Column	Participants	Tine	Duration/ Word Count
01	07.05.14	CyBC Radio 2 English Programme / Saskia Constantinou	Round and About	I. Psaltis	09:30	15 minutes
02	08.05.14	Super Fm Radio / Katerina Eliades	Morning Talk Show	I. Psaltis	08:50	10 minutes
03	11.05.14	Maxi Newspaper / Frosso Georghiou	Education Column / Interview	I. Psaltis	-----	800 Words
04	12.05.14	CyBC Radio First Programme / Vicky Nioulidou	Youth Programme	I. Psaltis	17:00	40 minutes
05	13.05.14	CyBC Radio First Programme / Athina Violaris	Syn Athina	I. Psaltis	16:00	50 minutes
06	14.05.14	Astra Radio / George Pavlides	European Issues	I. Psaltis	08:20	10 minutes
07	14.05.14	CyBC Radio First Programme / Olga Pierides	Cultural Pages	I. Psaltis	10:00	20 minutes

08	16.05.14	CyBC TV 1 (RIK 1)/ Soula Hadjikyriacou	News Broadcast	Event Presenters	20:46	1.5 minutes
09	16.05.14	Cyprus Mail / Stephanos Evripidou	Local News	-----		351 words
10	17.05.14	CyBC Radio 3rd / Eleni Vrettou	Morning Talk Show	I. Psaltis & V. Kiliaris	09:15	45 minutes
11	02.06.14	Phileleftheros Newspaper /Antigone Dhroushiotou	5 Minutes / Interview	I. Psaltis	-----	450 words
12	18.06.14	MyCyRadio / Yiannis Trimithiotis & Ellada Ioannou	Youth on Air	V. Kiliaris	17:00	1 hour
13	19.06.14	Phileleftheros Newspaper /Christina Kyriakidou	First Page Reportage /Battle against cuts	-----	-----	350 words
14	20.06.14	CyBC Radio First Programme / Olga Pierides	Cultural Pages (Reflection on 16 th May event at EUH	I. Psaltis	12:00	25 minutes
15	23.06.14	CyBC Radio First Programme / Vicky Nioulidou	Youth Programme	V. Kiliaris & Y. Trimithiotis	17:00	60 minutes
16	26.06.14	CyBC Radio First Programme / Olga Pierides	Without Luggage	I. Psaltis (14.07.14)	16:30	30 minutes
17	26.06.14	CyBC Radio First Programme / Olga Pierides	Without Luggage	I. Psaltis ()	16:30	30 minutes
18	27.06.14	Astra Radio / Zoe Telegraphou	European Themes	I. Psaltis & Y. Trimithiotis	09:30	30 minutes
19	28.06.14	CyBC Radio 3 rd / Eleni Vrettou	Morning Talk Show	I. Psaltis & V. Kiliaris	09:30	45 minutes
20	05.07.14	CyBC Radio 3 rd / Demetris Sidiroopoulos	Face to Face	I. Psaltis & V. Kiliaris	12:00	60 minutes

21	11.07.14	Electronic Journal Studycyprus / Christina Tserkezi	Education Column / Interview	I. Psaltis	-----	1.300 words
22	16.07.14	CyBC TV / Tassos Mourtouvanis	BIZ / ΕΜΕΙΣ (Production)	I. Psaltis & V. Kiliaris	11:00	120 minutes
23	16:07:14	Super Fm Radio / Katerina Eliades	Morning Talk Show	I. Psaltis	08:40	10 minutes
24	18.07.14	CyBC Radio 3rd / Eleni Vrettou	Morning Talk Show	Reference to progress of ECI	09:00	02 minutes
25	24.07.14	CyBC TV 1 (RIK 1) / Paris Potamitis	From Day to Day	I. Psaltis	15:00	15 minutes
26	31.07.14	Sigma Live	Article / The Role of an active citizen in Europe	V. Kiliaris	-----	800 words
27	02.08.14	CyBC Radio 3rd / Kyriakos Pierides	Morning Talk Show	V. Kiliaris, Y. Panayiotou & M. Kola	09:30	45 minutes
28	04.08.14	Phileleftheros Newspaper	Article / The Role of an active citizen in Europe	V. Kiliaris	800 words
29	08.10.14	MyCyRadio / Yiannis Trimithiotis & Ellada Ioannou	Youth on Air	I. Psaltis V. Kiliaris A. Tambakis	17:00	1 hour



Our Social Media

A very powerful promotional tool we used for our campaign was the social media, and more particularly our Website <http://invedcy.eu> and our Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/invedcy>. Unfortunately this did not happen until late, since they were only constructed and put into operation towards the end of June 2014.

Thus, our Facebook Page became our daily mouthpiece and means of interacting with our friends, who within a month climbed up to 300 (now we have 365 friends). Up to now we have had about one hundred (100) publications, which have attracted about 14.500 viewers from all over the world.

More particularly, we have had viewers from twenty-two (22) countries, originating from forty-five (45) towns in twelve (12) languages. Fifty-six percent (56%) of our viewers are women and forty-four percent (44%) men, while the most popular age is that of 25-34 years old (40%).

Our website serves a double purpose. On one hand it offers a bigger space for people who would like to write about educational issues falling within the scope of the Initiative as has been contextualized in Cyprus and at the same time it functions as a historic repository where the reader can follow the trajectory of the Initiative in terms of its activities in various areas such as press releases, events, calendar, aims and objectives, who we are, supporters and communication.

The Website and Facebook Page have been constructed, designed and managed by two of our most active members of the Cypriot Volunteer Team: Alexandros Tambakis and Yiannis Trimithiotis respectively, whom we owe a thousand of thanks.



GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS FOR SECURING THE REQUIRED MINIMUM NUMBER OF SUPPORT STATEMENTS

The massive mobilization on several fronts after the shock of the first results in early May, seemed to start bearing fruit, when on the 25th of June we were informed that the electronic signatures had almost tripled, reaching the number of 778. This of course was not a reason for celebration or for being optimistic, since we were still a long way away from the required minimum of 4.500 signatures.

However, with this development we could hope that, subject to the extent of our effort, the final goal could be reached. In no way did we want to create a climate of self-complaisance. So we pulled our act together, made it a habit to always carry with us a support statement form for approaching potential signees and launched a renewed operation for getting support.

So, you could catch us collecting signatures at youth and municipality festivals, at supermarkets, at restaurants, at excursions, at cafeterias, at churchyards, at radio stations, at family gatherings, at municipal markets, at barber shops, at wedding receptions, in village neighborhoods and squares and ... on the beach! This activity may be manifested in the example of the 3-5 July, EDON Festival, where about four hundred (400) signatures were collected or in the 11-13 July Kokkinochoria area weekend, which resulted in more than five hundred (500) signatures.



The other benefit that sprang out of this function was something which we had unwisely, at best, undervalued or disregarded and, at worst never thought of. And this was the fact that, to start with, we did not realise that the best place to start collecting

signatures was our immediate environment, and secondly we did not anticipate that in these people we would find the most effective partners and multipliers of our effort.

This was made apparent to us when, appreciating our effort, quite a few of these people that heard about the petition accidentally, offered to get involved in the campaign by collecting signatures themselves. Such people were our partners, relatives, colleagues, friends, associates and neighbours. And what was more; seeing this positive reception, we were encouraged to ask for assistance from people who were not so close to us, and we never thought that they would be willing to get involved in the Initiative



Of course not everybody who got involved in the venture honoured their initial decision, but this was totally respected as, after all, this is the meaning of volunteerism. On the other hand, we came across volunteers who had excelled in canvassing support for the petition by collecting hundreds of signatures on their own. We thank all of them and each one of them for any little or a lot of work they have put in. After all, we must not forget that the difference between the minimum 4.500 required signatures and 4.499 is only ... one signature!!!

The Contribution of the Turkish Cypriots to the Initiative

I am sure that our Turkish Cypriot friends would have liked to have a more active involvement in the initiative but the division ...is always a barrier for such activities. However, for friends like Sener Elcin, Mertkan Hamit, Tugberk Kaya and the Cultural Centre Baraka the barriers proved weak to stop them from promoting the campaign and signing for the initiative. Sener undertook to forward the petition to the Turkish Cypriot Teacher Unions in the north; Mertkan got tenths of signatures from Famagustians while Tugberk got all the CTP representatives at the EDON Festival to sign the petition.

It was at the EDON Festival where we met the BARAKA people as well, who gladly offered to support the petition along with hundreds of Greek Cypriot Edonites. We are grateful to them both for the practical contribution and also for the symbolism their support carries, in that civic society initiatives are common, like the problem of occupation of Cyprus is common. With the reunification of Cyprus GCs and TCs will be able to work together much more effectively for promoting mutual interests and goals, such as mutual respect, better education, increased spending on research/development and more jobs for our youth.



The first signs of optimism

The first signs of optimism started showing on the horizon halfway through July, when the results that we kept receiving from Brussels each fortnight showed a steady increase, which sometimes was double on the previous one and by the 21st this increase went up by more than 200%.

This impressive development made us confident that the minimum goal of 4.500 signatures was definitely feasible and started working for doubling up on this, which was the maximum of 9.000. So we did our best and by the 25th of July the number of electronic signatures had gone up by more than 160%, bringing the total number to 3.780, which was very close to the required minimum.

Judging by this steady increase on the number of electronic signatures, which sometimes went over 200% on the previous, as said before, we were now sure that the maximum number of 9.000 would be reached. This confidence was enforced by Ms. Diamantopoulou, who in a contribution to a radio debate on education announced that Cyprus had had the best results up to that point of time, though the overall goal of 1.000.000 signatures for Europe was still quite away, and she did not feel that it could be covered until the deadline of 6 August.

With the announcement of the final results for Cyprus at the end of August 2014, the formal concluding date for the Initiative, our forecast for reaching the maximum

number of 9.000 support statements was confirmed, as the official number of electronic signatures announced to us went up to 9.408 (see table below)

DATE	NUMBER OF ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES	NUMBER OF SIGNED ON PAPER	TOTAL NUMBER OF SIGNED	+ -	+ - %	PERCENTAGE OF MINIMUM NUMBER GOAL COVERAGE OF SIGNATURES
06/5/14	0300*	X	0300*	-	-	006.66%
16/5/14	0278*	X	0278*	-0022	-007.33	006.17%
27/5/14	0300*	X	0300*	+0022	+007.33	006,66%
04/6/14	0281*	X	0281*	-0019	-006.33	006.24%
25/6/14	0778	X	0778	+0500	+159.33	017.28%
07/7/14	1125	X	1125	+0347	+044.60	025.00%
21/7/14	2327	X	2327	+1202	+206.84	051.71%
25/7/14	3780	X	3780	+1543	+162,44	084.00%
06/8/14	8453	X	8453	+4673	+223.62	187.84%
06/8/14	X	0955	9408	+0955	+011.29	209.06%

The limitations

Despite the eventual roaring success in reaching the maximum goal of numbers in signatures, the Initiative has been riddled with a multitude of difficulties, conundrums, oxymoron, contradictions, and contingencies throughout the campaign. Some of these may be attributed to the first-time inexperience or coincidence, some to the local culture of procrastinating, some to deficient communication, others to lack of human and/or material resources, some to misconceptions and, probably the last but not least, the nature of the venture; the fact that the whole initiative was a volunteer business. To start with, like everybody else who has been involved in the venture, the Cypriot Representative to the 7-Member European Country Organising Committee was a very busy person to spare enough time for setting off the campaign early enough. For about six months, save for the initial video and some mass emailing to contacts, nothing significant had been done in the way of seeking partners for the mission. A chance for setting off a more effective strategy when Ms. Diamantopoulou was in Cyprus in early February was lost, since the Cypriot Representative was outside the country on an information visit to Brussels.

Though the 16th May event on the theme “On what kind of education should Cyprus invest today” gave us the chance to initiate the petition into the media and attract in the audience incredibly representative active members of the civic society who comprised, what eventually proved, the most effective tool in our hands for pushing the petition forward, the core of the Team of Volunteers, it took about four (4) months to organise, something that diverted our attention from the main task of securing support statements.

Up to the point of receiving the first poor results, we were complacent that the satisfactory media coverage and the impersonal mass emailing of the introductory flyer along with the invitation for the above event to thousands of recipients would have the corresponding results. On the other hand, we did not assess suitably the rather complicated online electronic support system, which for Cyprus however, was the least time consuming and complicated. The other issue was the concern of exposing personal data within the support statement and although for Cyprus this proved negligible in the long run, it did have a serious effect on persuading more people to become involved in the volunteer team.

Branding the petition demonstrated an equal difficulty in identifying the most appropriate themes around which a successful campaign would be carried out, since the general government expenditure on education in Cyprus in % of GDP at the time was the 2nd best in Europe at 7.18, with the EU mean at about 5%. At the same time, according to the wider local public opinion, most of this expenditure went to high wages for educators without the corresponding results in student attainments, and, therefore, some cuts were justified or at least there should not be any further increase in education funding.

Suspicion as to who was “behind” this petition, was another hitch we had to overcome, given the local deep-rooted conviction that behind everything there must be some partisan or other benefit, especially after the widespread distrust and discrediting of the political parties and most of the other institutions at large. On the other hand, the institution of civic society in Cyprus is a relatively novel concept on which we had to elucidate a lot.

Last but not least, the very laborious regulations we had to comprehend before following and the slow communication between us and the initiators of the petition in Greece was a barrier in our effort to clarify procedural queries and in adopting alternative routes. For instance, there was no provision for an automatic system of showing the support results online and this, on one hand, was demotivating for the signatories, and, on the other hand, would not allow us to see the progress of our effort at any time. We could only get the local results after three (3) weeks from sending in a request and we have never been given the overall results in Europe.

THE NEXT DAY

Working for the next day now, we have already had the first post-petition meeting of volunteers with a view to exchanging ideas as to how best to utilise the experience we have gained on being involved in this successful for Cyprus Initiative having in mind the themes we have used for promoting it. Below is the invitation we sent out to the team of volunteers for this meeting:

The meeting was attended by old and new members of the Cyprus Volunteers Team and after a very productive assessment of the campaign that resulted in the successful results it was decided, among others, to proceed with the preparation of a full report on the outcomes of the Initiative in Cyprus and co-organise a celebrative event with the Representation of the European Commission in Cyprus.

Dear Colleagues and friends members of the Cyprus Volunteers Team

With the formal closing of the campaign for the above initiative on the 31st of August 2014, and awaiting the report from Diktio, we can announce that, despite the fact that the overall goal for collecting 1.000.000 signatures in Europe has not been met, Cyprus has marked an unprecedented success in securing both the minimum number of 4.500 signatures and that of the maximum of 9.000. All in all we have collected 8500 electronic signatures and about 1000 on paper). This has been the result of your very hard personal and collective work.

On behalf of the 7-European Country Member Committee from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria, who have organised the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education" and in the capacity of the Cypriot Organiser, allow me to express my deep appreciation to all of you for the great job you have done. Our country and the whole European Union must feel very proud of you.

Now our campaign is entering a new phase, that of obtaining the support from the political groups that comprise the European Parliament and already the support of the President of the European Parliament Martin Shultz, the support of the President of France Francois Hollande and the support of the Prime Minister of Italy Matteo Renzi, who is now heading the European Presidency, have been secured.

For Cyprus we are re-launching the Initiative with a meeting at the Home for Cooperation (H4C) next Friday 24 October 2014 at 16:00, and we invite all of you to join us with a view to plan the next steps for further promoting the three pillars below, which we have used for our successful campaign:

Better Education

More Spending on Research/Development

More Jobs for our Youth



LESSONS LEARNT FROM OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE “INVEST IN EDUCATION”

- Do not leave taking action until too late.
- The best time to start doing something is now and the best person to do it is you.
- Funds are not always necessary for moving initiatives forward. More important is self-commitment.
- Hard work always pays.
- Believe in what you do and in your capabilities/possibilities for carrying out your mission to a successful outcome.
- Be consistent with your responsibilities once you undertake a task. People will follow you if they believe in you.
- In order to gain credibility you have to lead by example.
- There is not a single best way of doing things.
- Do not underestimate the possibilities/capabilities of anybody, especially of people from your immediate environment.
- Do not be afraid to take risks that in the first place feel unattainable.
- Do not be suspicious of people; most of them will listen to a decent argument.
- Do not be intransigent with your views; a combination of ideas usually has a multiple outcome in results.
- Acknowledge the work offered by your associates; people like to be appreciated for the work they have done, regardless of quantity.

More particularly:

A European Citizens' Initiative, as a rule, lasts for one year. However, though we were actually involved in organizing and administering the campaign in Cyprus for less than six months, we successfully duplicated the minimum goal of support statements. Perhaps the concentrated population in a small area, such as Cyprus, where everybody knows each other, is an advantage compared to other EU partner-states with bigger populations and higher targets in number of signatures.

Reactivating citizenship takes time and devotion to a goal, which could be achieved either by single-minded effort, (as our group of volunteers did in Cyprus), or through dialogue, discussions and meetings (as we did on several occasions, e.g. interviews / presentations in the media and meetings with stakeholders and continuous meetings and communication with our volunteers), or, still, through the professional and scientific study of an area of research that is affiliated with the potential legislature/proposal, i.e. the ECI.

The last could be pursued on personal level (i.e. an individual/citizen can allocate some time surfing through relevant materials, readings and websites cited in the Initiative). Hence, these parallel modes of action may lead someone, in the first place, to complete the online support statement on an issue that a fortiori s/he approves and later on joining the volunteer team for further action.

The aforementioned summary of lessons learnt from our involvement in the ECI Initiative, could perhaps constitute a good model of practice for future successful ECI campaigns, given that the geographical area covered is effectively and efficiently addressed by an adequate number of volunteers. However, the management of an ECI through an entire year should be a sine qua non condition for getting the required minimum and maximum number of signatures/support statements.

In conclusion, engaging people in active citizenship may be an equally important achievement as that of securing the required number of signatures as such, for promoting the legislation in question to the pertinent European Body. This has been manifested in the best possible manner in Cyprus, since a small group of active citizens, without any funding, have achieved results, which in the first place sounded beyond anybody's reach.

Basic facts

What is a European citizens' initiative?

A European citizens' initiative is an **invitation to the European Commission to propose legislation** on matters where the EU has competence to legislate.

A citizens' initiative has to be backed by at least one million EU citizens, coming from **at least 7 out of the 28 member states**.

A minimum number of signatories are required in each of those 7 member states and the rest of the European Member States (see table on next page).

The rules and procedures governing the citizens' initiative are set out in an EU Regulation adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union in February 2011.

What can be proposed as a citizens' initiative?

A citizens' initiative is possible in **any field where the Commission has the power to propose legislation**, for example environment, agriculture, transport or public health.

Who can organise a citizens' initiative and how?

In order to launch a citizens' initiative, citizens must form a **"citizens' committee"** composed of at least 7 EU citizens being resident in at least 7 different member states.

The members of the citizens' committee must be **EU citizens old enough to vote*** in the European Parliament elections (18 except in Austria, where the voting age is 16).

Citizens' initiatives cannot be run by organisations. However, organisations can promote or support initiatives provided that they do so with full transparency.

Member state	Minimum number of signatories
Austria	14250
Belgium	16500
Bulgaria	13500
Croatia	9000
Cyprus	4500
Czech Republic	16500
Denmark	9750
Estonia	4500
Finland	9750
France	55500
Germany	74250
Greece	16500
Hungary	16500
Ireland	9000
Italy	54750
Latvia	6750
Lithuania	9000
Luxembourg	4500
Malta	4500
Netherlands	19500
Poland	38250
Portugal	16500
Romania	24750
Slovakia	9750
Slovenia	6000
Spain	40500
Sweden	15000
United Kingdom	54750

The citizens' committee must register its initiative on the allocated website before starting to collect statements of support from citizens. Once the registration is confirmed, organisers have **one year to collect** signatures.

* Citizens do not need to be registered to vote, just old enough.

Who can sign up to a citizens' initiative and how?

All **EU citizens** (nationals of a member state) **old enough to vote*** in the European Parliament elections (18 except in Austria, where the voting age is 16) can sign a citizens' initiative.

To give their support to an initiative, citizens have to fill in a specific **statement of support** provided by the organisers, on paper or online. It is not possible to sign up to an initiative on the website.

* Citizens do not need to be registered to vote, just old enough.

What happens when a citizens' initiative gets one million signatures?

The Commission will carefully examine the initiative. Within 3 months after receiving the initiative:

Commission representatives will **meet the organisers** so they can explain in detail the issues raised in their initiative

The organisers will have the opportunity to present their initiative at a **public hearing** in the European Parliament

The Commission will adopt a formal response spelling out what **action it will propose in response** to the citizens' initiative, if any, and the **reasons** for doing or not doing so.

The response, which will take the form of a communication, will be formally adopted by the College of Commissioners and published in all official EU languages.

The Commission is not obliged to propose legislation as a result of an initiative. If the Commission decides to put forward a legislative proposal, the normal legislative procedure kicks off: the Commission proposal is submitted to the legislator (generally the European Parliament and the Council or in some cases only the Council) and, if adopted, it becomes law.

Appendix 2

DO NOT COUNT EDUCATION SPENDING AS PART OF THE DEFICIT! EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT!

Since 2009, strict austerity programmes have been applied across Europe with the intention of consolidating public budgets. More recently, both the economic effectiveness of austerity measures and the root causes of the crisis are being questioned by international experts and organisations. The short- and long-term negative effects of the measures on democratic processes and social rights standards have also come in for criticism.

In 2011 and 2012, cuts in education budget were made in twenty countries for which data are available. Cuts of more than 5 % were observed in Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, the United Kingdom (Wales) and Croatia, whereas decreases between 1 and 5 % were seen in French Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom – Scotland.

Mind the Gap

Recession is tough especially for youths, but it is tougher on less educated youths than on those with good education. Data have highlighted strong inequalities in labour market outcomes within generations depending on different educational levels, as well as between generations: youth have been significantly more affected by the crisis, and this impact is even stronger for lower-skilled youth. It is thus confirmed that education indeed represents an important long-term personal and social investment. This carries on in later life: unemployment is always higher amongst less well educated workers. Education cannot reverse the impact of recession on unemployment, but it can help as the second contribution of education to economic and social development.

Young people have been hit particularly hard by the crisis. Youth unemployment rates in Europe stood at 23.5% in the first quarter of 2013, more than twice the – already

very high – rate for the population at large. In some countries, more than half of the young people who want to work are unemployed. Young people hold the key to Europe's future dynamism and prosperity. Youth unemployment has a profound impact on individuals as well as on society and the economy.

In avoiding a 'lost generation', DIKTIO – “NETWORK for reform in Greece and Europe” has taken the initiative for the creation of a European movement, entitled “Education is an investment! Do not count education spending as part of the deficit!” in order to set education as a priority both in the EU and in each country-member, in view of the inequalities emerging within the societies facing the current financial crisis.

More specifically, DIKTIO – ‘The Network’ proposes excluding the part of each country's budget for education that is lower from the 5-year Euro zone average, from the country's public spending deficit. Funds for this policy should derive from re-allocating budgets from European support frameworks, the European Central Bank, or even from specially designed loans and they will be linked with the completion of specific educational policy goals.

Budget and Reforms

The primary role of education is its contribution to longer-run economic growth. It has a big role to play in the success of Europe 2020, in terms of the quality of jobs and productivity growth. Our first and most important concern should be not to allow the austerity to put at risk this function of education. To ensure that recession does not have a negative impact on education, a minimum of expenditure on education should be off the fiscal balance sheet (e.g., through special EU loans/grants). It is reasonable to allow annual spending up to 5% of GDP in the last pre-recession year, or the country's actual spending in the same year, whichever is higher. This maintains the standards in advanced countries and encourages growth in the ones below the mean.

The budget increase should be linked to structural reforms and R&D investments. Each country has set qualitative and quantitative goals within EU policy 2020 that should be respected in order for Europe to become more competitive. A consequence of the second role of education is that the best time to increase educational attainment, from the social point of view, is recession. Education is an investment: the main social cost of this investment is the foregone output of the student. The return is the higher productivity and lower unemployment of the beneficiary as much as 12% currently in Europe.

The objectives of our initiative are to combat inequality by providing equal opportunities for education and training to all young people in Europe, to ensure adequate and appropriate infrastructures and tools for high quality education in Europe in times of crisis and to enhance and safeguard growth, development and democratic institutions. Europe has to invest in education so as to enhance its competitiveness towards USA and China. This is a win-win situation for all member states of the EU, below and above the euro zone average on public expenditure for education.

Smart Growth

As the Education at a Glance 2013 report of the OECD points out, investing in education always pays off in the long run and Member States cannot afford to forget this when it comes to allocating public budgets. More than half of the GDP growth in OECD countries over the past decade is related to labour-income growth among workers with higher education.

Indeed, even as GDP across all OECD countries shrank by 3.8% during the global recession year of 2009, growth in labour income among people with higher education contributed nearly 0.4% to the GDP of these countries overall. In contrast, the contraction of labour income that year among people with a medium level of education reduced the GDP by 0.8%, while shrinking incomes among people with lower levels of education trimmed another 0.5% of GDP. In connection, the Nobel Laureate Economist Christopher Pissarides, Regius Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics

Economic crises come and go but young people get just one chance to learn the skills that will get them a job and help them embark on a successful career. Cutting down on education investments because of a temporary economic crisis is short-sighted. It could destroy the lives of a whole generation of young people. Education spending is an investment in our future and should not be part of the government's fiscal balance.

Edited by:

On behalf of the Cypriot Volunteers' Team that supported and promoted the European Citizens' Initiative "Invest in Education" in Cyprus.

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