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

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Abstract
This article investigates the impact of the European Union (EU) on the Turkish-Cypriot civil society, pegged to the Europeanization debate. The article contributes to the discussion on Europeanization and the role of the EU in contested states, which remains a neglected topic in the literature. The argument advanced is that a series of factors that relate to the contested statehood of the Turkish-Cypriot case mediate the occurrence of Europeanization and they often contribute to an exceptional EU impact on domestic civil society. In this regard, the Turkish-Cypriot example has strong comparative value for the study of the international role of the EU, the Europeanization of contested states and the importance that the EU places on contacts with civil society, as an alternative avenue to relations with states.

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

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Disclaimer: This work does not wish to engage in the debate over the legality of the self-declared ‘TRNC’ – any references in the text should not be interpreted as statements on the legality of the Turkish-Cypriot administration.

© 2013 The Author(s) JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies © 2013 John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA
on civil society (albeit mediated). What is more, the post-accession EU effort to promote the development of northern Cyprus has become a new channel of influence upon civil society. This article discusses this multifaceted impact of the EU on the Turkish-Cypriot civil society since 2002, which marks the birth of a strong civil pro-EU movement.

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

Subsequently, this research aspires to a twofold comparative relevance: first, the Turkish-Cypriot case becomes a blueprint for the examination of the Europeanization of other contested states and the importance of their civil society; and second, this study has comparative value for the broader relevance of the EU to civil society, especially in environments where the engagement with state authorities is challenging (regardless of statehood status per se). Indeed, the external relations of the EU often face politically challenging regimes and pay increased attention to civil society. As a result, this article contributes to the wider debate on Europeanization and the stimuli or limitations for the EU’s international role, especially with reference to dealings with civil society as an alternative to traditional EU–state relations.

The research methodology is based on a single case study, linked to the debate on Europeanization. A critical review of the literature provides the conceptual framework for the ensuing investigation of the case study, which is based on qualitative analysis of primary material, such as policy documents from the local and EU levels (particularly EU regulations, their proposals, and reports on their implementation) and international and local media reports. Research also draws on semi-structured interviews with a representative sample of EU officials (seven) and Members of the European Parliament (one), who focus on Turkish-Cypriots and civil society. In addition, interviews with local political elites (three) provide background information but, more importantly, analysis draws on interviews with civil society, including: trade unions (two), leaders of pro-EU civil platforms (one), representatives of the Turkish-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (KTTO) both at the local (two) and European levels (one). The interview questions focused on providing more detailed information on the EU programmes and their impact, but also on unravelling how the EU has impacted the interests and understanding of civil society, including some of the interviewees.

2 For example, Kosovo, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.
I. Europeanization: Explaining Change beyond the ‘State’

In exploring the relevance of the EU to the Turkish-Cypriot community and civil society, this research engages with the conceptual discussion of Europeanization that mostly seeks to explain the process via which the EU impacts the national scene, particularly of Member States (Ladrech, 1994; Börzel and Risse, 2000; Hix and Goetz, 2001; Töller, 2004) or candidates for EU membership (Lippert et al., 2001; Grabbe, 2001; Sedelmeier, 2011). Indeed, contested states, like the Turkish-Cypriot one, have not been at the heart of this debate, which has concentrated on conventional states and especially more on policy and institutional matters and less on politics and civil society (Sedelmeier, 2011). However, contested statehood represents an increasingly important matter in European affairs – not least due to the EU’s involvement in many regions with similar entities (for example, the Balkans, the Caucasus). In particular, the troubled diplomatic status of those entities calls for an investigation of their non-state players like civil society, and their place within European integration. Therefore, the examination of the Turkish-Cypriot example is a contribution to the existing literature and provides a blueprint for the study of the neglected topic of civil society, especially in contested states. Indeed, the few works on regions with contested states have focused on the related conflict (Coppieters, 2004; Williams, 2004; Nodia, 2004; Tocci, 2008; Secrieru, 2011) or EU-supported state-building (for example, Kosovo – see Bieber, 2011; Börzel, 2011). Cyprus, too, has attracted the attention of scholars, but again most studies address the impact of the EU on the conflict (Tocci and Kovziridze, 2004; Zervakis, 2002) or the RoC, which represents the government that has monopolized EU accession (Featherstone, 2000; Sepos, 2008).

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

3 Here, civil society is approached as ‘a realm of social life – market exchanges, charitable groups, clubs and voluntary associations, independent churches and publishing houses – institutionally separated from territorial state institutions [. . .] a term that both describes and anticipates a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected nongovernmental institutions’ (Keane, 2009).
Since Europeanization is approached as a process of change, a lot of the discussion has focused on the mechanisms through which the EU’s impact is channelled. Besides institutional compliance that relates more to polity and policy matters, Knill and Lehmkuhl (2002) introduce two more mechanisms of Europeanization relevant to socio-political dynamics and the question of civil society: Europeanization via change of domestic opportunity structures and framing of domestic beliefs and expectations. In cases of change of opportunity structures, the EU is thought to provide players with the opportunity to ‘exit’ domestic constraints to pursue their interests through European structures. Redistribution of power can also take the form of various ‘informational advantages’, which relate to the influence that actors enjoy due to their relevance to a particular matter, or more opportunities for access to information via participation in EU affairs (Hix and Goetz, 2001, p. 12). Indeed, case studies have looked at the change of opportunity structures in relation to civil society, especially in the context of enlargement and through assistance or chances for international involvement (Cîsař and Vráblíková, 2010; Göksel and Güneş, 2005; Pilat, 2007). The EU is often thought to have empowered civil society by assisting the legitimacy of its agenda and by becoming an ‘ally’ to its objectives (Göksel and Güneş, 2005; Tocci, 2005).

On the other hand, framing of domestic beliefs and expectations – what we refer to as ‘cognitive Europeanization’ – relates to changes in the interests of actors but also ‘formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, and ways of doing things and shared beliefs and norms’ (Radaelli, 2000, p. 4), also via processes of socialization (Schmidt, 2001, p. 12; Börzel and Risse, 2000; Pasquier, 2005). Indeed, the literature has reflected upon the change in the interests of civil society and documented the participation of organizations in the debate over European integration (Beer and Flecker, 1998; Della Porta and Caiani, 2009), especially in candidate countries, where civil society has played a crucial role by advocating EU membership in the public sphere (Cîsař and Vráblíková, 2010; Göksel and Güneş, 2005; Tocci, 2005) and, in a ‘bottom-up’ fashion, Europeanization. The investigation of Turkish-Cypriot civil society also takes into account how the ‘carrot’ of EU membership can facilitate strong Europeanization pressures, especially as far as cognitive matters and the public support of EU integration is concerned (Agh, 1999). At the same time, the various EU enlargement programmes, which target the assistance of civil society, entail the potential for the communication of new styles and practises for the organizations. Here, analysis also draws on the so-called ‘goodness of fit’ thesis (Börzel and Risse, 2000; Radaelli, 2000; Cowles et al., 2001), which discusses how the incompatibility between the EU and national levels creates opportunities for the EU to impact the domestic landscape. As the communist legacy of countries who acceded in the period 2004–07 present an interesting example of how the ‘misfit’ between the EU and national levels facilitates domestic change, the comparative underdevelopment of the isolated Turkish-Cypriot community is also expected to shape the process of Europeanization.

In this regard, the lens of Europeanization helps unveil the EU’s impact on Turkish-Cypriot civil society via the mechanisms of change of opportunity structures and cognitive change. Here, the EU and its role represent the independent variable, and the degree of effect on civil society the dependent variable, of the case study. Research begins with the hypothesis that the EU has impacted Turkish-Cypriot community by: a (re)distribution of power in favour of civil society; and change in the perceptions of interests and the
communication of new styles and practices of organization and action of civil society. As far as mediating factors are concerned, the focus is on three issues that shape the process of Europeanization as an example of contested state: the existing conflict (the Cyprus problem); the non-recognition of the contested state (TRNC); and the consequent international isolation of the entity.

II. The EU and Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society: Two Stories

The development of Turkish-Cypriot civil society has always been linked to the trajectory of the ‘Cyprus problem’ – the intercommunal dispute over the fate of the divided island. Despite the establishment of the bicomunal RoC in 1960, ongoing conflict led to the retirement of the Turkish-Cypriots from the state and the division of the island into a Greek-Cypriot (south areas) and a Turkish-Cypriot zone (north). This division was reinforced by the 1974 war and the self-declaration of TRNC in 1983, which remains diplomatically and practically isolated, since the RoC (now controlled by the Greek-Cypriots) continues to be the only de jure administration in the island. This pending resolution of the island’s division introduces a crucial dichotomy in the Turkish-Cypriot community (including civil society): on the one side stand local elites and public opinion that are ‘moderate’ with regard to the prospects of a solution, support a federal Cyprus and are generally defined by conciliatory tactics towards the Greek-Cypriots. On the other side, the ‘hard-line’ camp of those that are less flexible about the formula of solution (for example, co-federation instead of federation) are often characterized by a certain degree of Turkish nationalism and loyalty to the self-declared TRNC. While political competition has seen a wide range of both moderate and hard-line views (Kyris, 2012), civil society traditionally has been dominated by moderate actors.

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

As a result, underdevelopment and over-politicization are central characteristics of Turkish-Cypriot civil society. Civil organizations have been almost exclusively preoccupied with the Cyprus issue, with moderate positions being particularly dominant. This is explained by both the left-leaning ideology of a good part of the organizations and the monopolization of government by hard-line elites, which prompted a civil opposition. The domination of the socio-political scene by governing elites suppressed the development of

4 The left has traditionally supported a compromised solution of the Cyprus issue. See also Kyris (2012).
civil society. In addition, underdevelopment and lack of professionalization was caused by the prematurity of the Turkish-Cypriot socio-political system, the absence of a legal framework to protect and promote civil society, and international isolation that did not allow external narratives of organized civil society to penetrate northern Cyprus.

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

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

Indeed, the support of the EU brought many civil society organizations into collective action. The ‘This Country is Ours’ scheme (The Economist, 2000) concentrated a range of organizations, especially trade unions, and was the first to campaign strongly in favour of reunification and EU integration and against the regime of the hard-line leader Rauf Denktaş, who opposed the Annan Plan. The ‘Common Vision of the Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society’ (Kibris, 2002) was another platform with similar aims that was initiated by the KTTO and brought together 86 organizations. The declaration that founded the organization sheds light on the benefits with which EU integration was correlated:

[R]eaching a [. . .] solution in Cyprus followed by EU membership [. . .] means investment, production, employment, science and technology, and social security [and] the end of our isolation from the rest of the world.6

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

Turkish-Cypriots have been facing [. . .] difficulties owing to international segregation [. . .] it is the common desire of our organizations that a [. . .] federation [is] established and [. . .] is a member of the EU.7

As is obvious from the above, the Cyprus problem became a strong facilitating factor in the process of Europeanization: in this era, moderate civil society reconfigured their interests towards more pro-EU attitudes because European integration was seen as the means to achieve resolution of the Cyprus issue by reunification. Indeed, the then KTTO president and leader of ‘Common Vision’ explained that NGOs saw the EU as a guarantor

5 Interview with EU official A, Brussels, 2009.
6 Cyprus Protests Calendar 2010 («http://protests.hamamboculeri.org»).
7 Cyprus Protests Calendar 2010.
of a viable solution to the Cyprus issue, which will bring Turkish-Cypriot prosperity. Also, the KTOEOS secretary general felt that the association of EU prospects to the Annan Plan reinforced the European ‘feelings’ of his organization and other members of civil society. What is more, this ‘cognitive’ change often took place in contrast to existing ideological profiles. Many organizations altered their previously Eurosceptic agenda in order to accommodate the purpose of the EU. For example, according to the KTOS secretary general, the organization was principally against the EU but they nevertheless embraced the goal of European integration only because it served their other target of Cyprus reunification. This profound change offers clear evidence of the extended ‘Europeanization’ of interests of civil society and resembles previous examples (especially in the context of enlargement), whereby domestic civil society took a clear (often favourable) public stance towards the issue of European integration.

At the same time, civil society gained ample domestic influence by organizing the public pro-EU/solution movement. First, civil society prepared an extensive campaign and went ‘door to door’ to inform people about the EU and the Annan Plan, which was about to be subjected to referendums in both Cypriot communities. Not only the technical details of the UN Plan needed to be explained to the public; the Turkish-Cypriot absence from the accession process (topped with the international isolation) led to an additional lack of EU understanding. This Turkish-Cypriot knowledge gap was used by many organizations that became the main information source regarding solution and European integration and tried to communicate the ‘good face of the EU’ to the locals. A noteworthy example is the ‘European Information Centre’, which was established under the aegis of the KTTO and inaugurated by the then European Commissioner for enlargement Günther Verheugen (European Commission, 2002). In addition, civil society also organized rallies (BBC News, 2003) that protested against the hard-line regime.

Through this organization of the pro-EU movement, the EU also caused a change in the domestic power equilibrium towards a more influential role for civil society. Indeed, the popularity that the rallies enjoyed – some estimates refer to more than a quarter of the community’s population (BBC News, 2003) – is indicative of the extensive public influence that civil society obtained via the advocacy of EU integration. Moreover, the overturn of the Turkish-Cypriot hard-line parties in favour of pro-solution/EU forces for the first time in history during the 2003–05 elections (Kyris, 2012) testifies to the influence that civil society achieved in domestic affairs. This Europeanization-triggered change in opportunity structures is even more remarkable in light of the previously weak role of civil society within a system dominated by governing elites. It is also significant due to the absence of bilateral relations between Brussels and the Turkish-Cypriots, which also suggest a more ‘bottom-up’ process of Europeanization, widely initiated by social actors instead of domestic governing or EU elites. Indeed, this is not too dissimilar to other Europeanization studies (not least some focusing on Turkey – Göksel and Günes, 2005; Tocci, 2005) that have reflected upon the way the EU empowers civil society by becoming a ‘partner’ in their goals.

8 Interview with Erel, Nicosia, 2009.
9 Interview with Ersalan, Nicosia, 2009.
10 Interview with Elcil, Nicosia, 2009.
11 Interview with KTTO official, Brussels, 2009.
12 Interview with Erel, Nicosia, 2009.
A New Scene? Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society and the EU after Accession

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

The above linkage between assistance to civil society and reconciliation is reflective of the EU’s rhetoric about its commitment to a compromise between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. So far, the most important scheme through which the EU has channelled its help has been ‘Cypriot Civil Society in Action’, which aims to ‘strengthen the role of civil society [. . .] as well as to promote the [. . .] development of trust, dialogue, cooperation and closer relationship between the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities as an important step towards a solution to the Cyprus problem’ (European Commission, 2008, p. 2). More specifically, the scheme has aimed at supporting: reconciliation by financing civil society projects for the co-operation between the two Cypriot communities; NGOs that promote reconciliation through research; and Turkish-Cypriot civil society in particular by funding existing or newly established organizations.

It is, therefore, obvious that Turkish-Cypriot civil society attracts increased attention and more than a third of the funds (39 per cent) are designed to support exclusively the Turkish-Cypriots (category c), in addition to their eligibility for bicommunal (category a) or research projects (category b). Moreover, the widening of Turkish-Cypriot civil society becomes a prime EU objective through the support of new organizations (category c). Here, the Commission seems to favour Turkish-Cypriots over Greek-Cypriots due to the limited opportunities provided to the former as a result of international isolation.13 In this context, the support of Turkish-Cypriot civil society is prioritized over the assistance in both communities and bicommunal reconciliation. For example, actors with entirely reconciliation-related activities represent only a minority within the group of beneficiaries – a group that is, anyway, dominated by Turkish-Cypriots. Indeed, this aid ‘echoes’ other Europeanization studies that reflect upon EU-provided opportunities, especially by means of assistance in the context of enlargement.

Particularly important for technical assistance has been the ‘Civil Society Support Team’. The Support Team was established in 2008 to help the so-called ‘capacity-building’ of civil society, which represents a central EU priority (European Commission,

It organized training sessions and several campaigns to raise awareness of the role of civil society and also established an ‘advisory council’ as a discussion forum for NGOs (Civil Society Support Team, 2009). In this regard, the EU’s role has entailed strong elements of technical help, which is crucial for the Turkish-Cypriots. For example, because previous funding schemes (for example, the United Nations Development Programme) had been traditionally supervised by externals, the Support Team made an extra effort to increase capacity of the organizations that will allow them ‘ownership’ of the project.

In Europeanization terms, this assistance is very important not only for the empowerment of civil society, but also the cognitive pressures that it holds. Here, international isolation becomes a mediating factor that intensifies the degree of ‘misfit’ between domestic civil society, which is underdeveloped and unfamiliar with ideas and practices beyond the Turkish-Cypriot space, and what the EU would like to promote. This misfit has facilitated a process of ‘cognitive’ Europeanization through the EU’s capacity-building agenda and the communication of new ‘ways of doing things’ and practices of how to organize and act as civil society. As a result, the post-accession cognitive Europeanization represents a slightly different picture: the opportunities provided by the EU programmes perpetuate pro-EU interests evident in the pre-accession period. However, now, the cognitive effect has an added ‘technical’ flavour since the recipients of EU aid have been communicated a series of new ideas and practices about civil society and how organizations could set up and act.

Assistance of civil society lies at the heart of a series of other provisions in the FAR. The objective of the regulation – ‘[to bring] the community closer to the EU’ (European Commission, 2006, Article 2) – has been addressed through the ‘Community Scholarships Programmes’ and the ‘Promotion of Youth Exchanges and other People-to-People Contacts’ (European Commission, 2009a, p. 42.4). While the first initiative has benefited scholars that want to study across the EU, the latter has principally targeted civil society: ‘[P]riority [is] given to participants between twelve and thirty years old as well as to areas where the isolation and lack of awareness of the EU context is the greatest’ (European Commission, 2009b, p. 1.2.B). Indeed, Brussels is very vocal about the effort to cultivate an EU understanding among the Turkish-Cypriots that is, admittedly, weak due to international isolation:

[T]he political situation and the relatively low level of prosperity [. . .] preventing indeed opportunities for contacts abroad, this community has [. . .] limited relations with counterparts in the EU. [. . .] From this isolation resulted a remarkable deficit of knowledge about the EU. [. . .] It is therefore appropriate to enable the Turkish-Cypriots [. . .] to develop fruitful relations with other EU Member States. (European Commission, 2009b, p. 1.1)

The first call for proposals for the ‘Promotion of Youth Exchanges and other People-to-People Contacts’ in 2007 was rather unsuccessful due to lack of capacity and weak applications (European Commission, 2009a, p. 42.4). At the same time, many Turkish-Cypriots have been frustrated with the (unknown) processes of EU programmes. As a

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14 Interview with EU official C, Nicosia, 2009.
15 Interview with EU official D, Nicosia, 2009.
16 Interviews with EU official E and KTTO official, Nicosia, 2009.
result, in the second call for the scheme in 2009, the EU assisted locals in preparing their bids (European Commission, 2009c) and, indeed, this round was much more successful, with over 85 per cent of the grants being claimed (European Commission, 2010). The low quality of applications continues to be a challenge and requires important consultation from the side of the Commission, whose capacity is strained (European Commission, 2012, p. 10). However, this is not to undermine the fact that a potentially important Europeanization does take place via the empowerment of civil society and its gradual familiarization with a series of norms and practices of organization and ideas about the EU; indeed, awarded projects, such as the ‘Study Visit to the European Institutions’ or ‘Networking with the EU’ are indicative of the EU’s effort to increase knowledge and socialization of locals in the European sphere. Here again, international isolation comes with a lack of EU understanding, which creates the conditions for a potentially important cognitive Europeanization.

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

Finally, the Green Line Regulation (GLR) (European Council, 2005) is another instrument which, although not fundamentally concerned with civil society, offers important insights into the EU’s role on the ground. The regulation aims at controlling movement of persons and goods between the two Cypriot communities and calls for a series of trade-related tasks to be undertaken by local agents. Because the EU does not recognize the self-declared state, the Commission preferred to avoid interaction with the Turkish-Cypriot administration in fear of ‘recognition by implication’ and a series of trade responsibilities were instead delegated to the KTTO (European Commission, 2004). For that reason, the KTTO established a representation office in Brussels, which gradually evolved into an important lobbying centre for the Turkish-Cypriots. In addition, the

17 Interview with an MEP, Brussels, 2009.
18 The term, often cited by EU and local elites, refers to the diplomatic recognition of the authorities of the self-declared state via interaction with them.
20 Interview with KTTO official, Brussels, 2009.
KTTO personnel in Cyprus were trained by EU experts on their role in the GLR (TAIEX, 2006, p. 9) and also on the implementation of the FAR and the assistance of beneficiaries in, for example, their application for and management of grants.\textsuperscript{21}

This interaction with the EU has affected the KTTO in terms of power but also cognitive matters. At the domestic level, the EU has provided KTTO with ‘informational advantages’ since the organization was given an important role in the GLR due to its expertise in trade. At the same time, KTTO has contributed to other EU activities, like the FAR, and leading members of it claim that their role as ‘facilitators’ of EU–local relations is a source of important empowerment.\textsuperscript{22} The involvement of the KTTO in EU matters has provided opportunities to ‘exit domestic constraints’ and increase the organization’s participation in the international environment, as exemplified by their activity in Brussels and greater access to information, resources and networking.\textsuperscript{23} Here, the absence of recognition of the contested state adds to the empowerment of the organization, which is preferred by the EU as an alternative partner.\textsuperscript{24} Finally, the EU-provided training of KTTO members and their growing socialization at the EU level is indicative of the ‘cognitive’ Europeanization pressures towards better EU understanding and new ideas and practices that exist beyond the Turkish-Cypriot space. Although the KTTO represents a unique case, the position of a non-state actor within a traditionally state-dominated environment is very important and offers a blueprint for other cases of Europeanization of contested states and the role of civil society in this regard.

Apart from the KTTO, the rest of the moderate civil society that participated in the pro-solution/EU movement (before accession) has displayed minimal interaction with the EU in this period. For example, only 5 per cent of the beneficiaries of FAR were part of pro-solution/EU platforms such as ‘This is Our Country’. The EP’s activities also see a limited partaking of this group of actors. This is due to a number of reasons. First, the pro-solution/EU trend among locals has declined and some argue that ‘moderate’ civil society pays the price of mounting Euroscepticism.\textsuperscript{25} Second, Brussels has criticized the over-politicization of civil society\textsuperscript{26} and tried to support not just ‘moderate’ organizations, but a variety of other causes.\textsuperscript{27} Third, most of the trade unions, which were at the epicentre of the pro-solution/EU trend, have showed limited engagement with Brussels, possibly due to their early Euroscepticism that has staged a comeback after the EU accession in spite of the failed reunification.\textsuperscript{28}

Not only has long-established Turkish-Cypriot civil society displayed limited interaction with the EU, but newly emerged organizations seem to have been the protagonists of EU programmes. This is largely a result of the EU’s assistance to newly founded NGOs, such as the Energy Professional Association or the Cyprus–EU Association. The power that civil society acquired in the pre-accession era encouraged the appearance of new organizations, who sought the support of the EU towards their development. The ‘birth’ of new organizations, largely assisted by the EU, can be seen as significant not only for

\textsuperscript{21} Interview with KTTO official, Nicosia, 2009.
\textsuperscript{22} Interview with KTTO official, Nicosia, 2009.
\textsuperscript{23} Interview with KTTO official, Brussels, 2009.
\textsuperscript{24} Interview with ex-KTTO official, Nicosia, 2009.
\textsuperscript{25} Interviews with Denktas and Cakici, Nicosia, 2009.
\textsuperscript{26} Interviews with EU official D and EU official G, Nicosia, 2009.
\textsuperscript{27} Interview with EU official D, Nicosia, 2009.
\textsuperscript{28} Interview with Ersalan, Nicosia, 2009.
their empowerment, but also the EU’s cognitive effect on actors that represent a ‘blank canvas’ for EU-related influences on how they set up and organize their action.

Consequently, the EU continues to have an important relevance to civil society but, throughout the years, power seems to have changed hands from old to new actors and the post-accession era seems a slightly different ‘story’ of the Europeanization of civil society. Before, empowerment was evident in civil society’s increased influence for domestic politics (as exemplified by their important role in the public debate). In contrast, more recent empowerment mostly relates to the enhancement of civil society’s capacity through proactive financial and technical assistance from the EU – something which distinguishes the pre- and post-accession eras and gives the latter a clearer ‘top-down’ flavour of Europeanization. Indeed, EU representatives refer to different groups of civil society that have engaged with the programmes and they also highlight their internal strengthening (capacity-building) and consequent external empowerment. However, it is still too early to test whether this empowerment will lead to an increase in relevance to the overall socio-political landscape. This becomes especially doubtful given continuous reports on the problematic implementation of the EU assistance due to the unique politico-economic conditions in northern Cyprus (European Commission, 2012, p. 10). Finally, post-accession ‘cognitive’ Europeanization presents a somehow different picture: although moderate civil society continues to support the scope of the EU (which is however a topic less dominant in the agenda), cognitive change relates more to awareness about the EU but also a series of new ideas and practices on how to organize and act as organizations, which are communicated to the EU beneficiaries. Indeed, civil society elites discuss how EU assistance has made domestic organizations more professional.

Conclusions: The Europeanization of Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society and Beyond

This study has reflected upon the EU’s impact on Turkish-Cypriot civil society and provided a test case for the Europeanization of contested states. Here, the pre- and post-accession periods represent two different phases of Turkish-Cypriot ‘Europeanization’: until circa EU accession, mostly old ‘moderate’ civil society actors were domestically empowered and had their interests reconfigured towards pro-EU attitudes. To the contrary, the post-accession period did not see their power enhanced or their interests further impacted by the EU. This was mainly due to their minimal interaction with Brussels and the decline of the pro-solution/EU trend. Instead, EU activities have empowered a slightly different group of civil society, which also become subject to cognitive pressures via the communication of new ideas of organization and action and ideas about the EU. Those players are often more neutral about the Cyprus problem, largely ‘young’ and assisted in their establishment by the EU. Along these lines, the research hypothesis is verified and indeed the EU has impacted both the power and ideational dynamics of domestic civil society, albeit in different ways when the pre- and post-accession eras are compared. Furthermore, the ways through which change is induced are different when the two periods are compared: pre-accession Europeanization took place due to the reunification/EU integration association and in what can be seen as a largely ‘bottom-up’ fashion. In the

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29 Interview with EU official C, Nicosia, 2009.
30 Interview with Erel, Nicosia, 2009.
post-accession era, the EU’s effect is also channelled via the bilateral EU–Turkish-Cypriot relations that, although reflecting EU enlargement record and a clearer top-down process of Europeanization, retain their uniqueness due to contested statehood conditions. These conditions are categorized into three broad themes, which contribute to the Europeanization debate: the conflict; international non-recognition; and international isolation.

The Conflict

The conflict often related to the contested state, which can divide societies based on people’s stance towards solution, is expected to create additional implications for the EU’s effect. Here, the extended Europeanization of interests of Turkish-Cypriot civil society relates to the linkage between a compromised solution to the Cyprus problem and EU integration prospects, which made ‘moderate’ actors embrace the scope of the EU, often despite their initial Euroscepticism. With regard to power distribution, the linkage between EU integration and reunification initially added to the influence of moderate civil society. However, in the post-accession era and with pro-European attitudes diminishing, the civil society that led the pro-solution/EU trend has lost relevance. This varied effect of the EU reconfirms previous observations on the power of European integration to define the influence and interests of domestic actors, especially if ‘tied’ to existing socio-political cleavages (here: the form of solution to the Cyprus issue). At the same time, the Turkish-Cypriot example has showed how the support of the EU by domestic elites makes their influence dependent upon the dominant attitudes towards Brussels.

The International Non-recognition

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

The International Isolation

International isolation is the last factor that mediates the domestic manifestation of Europeanization of contested states. Here, years of isolation have contributed to an

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31 Interview with KTTO official, Brussels, 2009.
underdeveloped Turkish-Cypriot civil society, which is also deeply unfamiliar with the EU realities. This has affected the interaction between the EU and civil society in two opposing ways. First, the low familiarity with EU affairs has evoked a certain degree of Euroscepticism among locals, who stood suspicious[^32] and frustrated[^33] towards the time-consuming process of grant application and longed for immediate benefits[^34]. Second, due to this difference in practices, Brussels has launched an imperative capacity-building mission, which offers new channels for the EU’s effect. This reconfirms the ‘goodness of fit’ thesis and suggests that the EU’s impact gains where the difference between domestic and EU levels is significant – something which should be expected in contested states.

In this context, the Turkish-Cypriot example has a strong comparative potential for the study of European integration, especially in reference to contested states and civil society. The article has argued that, where the EU future is linked to important domestic matters (especially the conflict related to the contested state), a redistribution of power will take place in favour of pro-EU elites (including civil society) where pro-European attitudes prevail, and against them where Euroscepticism exists. The mobilization of the Turkish-Cypriot society in favour of European integration and the ability to influence domestic socio-political dynamics (for instance, election results) is an interesting example of a bottom-up process of Europeanization in contested states and indeed environments where European integration is seen in a very positive light. This important role of the EU in the public debate (and, therefore, the conflict per se) contradicts many works on the EU’s limited aptitude for conflict resolution and is important for the Europeanization discussion in reference to both contested and conventional states. Furthermore, the non-recognition of the contested state seems to create additional opportunities for civil society, often at the expense of ‘state’ authorities. Again, this is a particularly important finding that contributes to the debate on Europeanization – not necessarily restricted to contested statehood: non-state actors are expected to be prioritized by the EU over authorities of either contested states (for example, TRNC and Kosovo) or governments with which interaction is challenging due to other reasons, including many politically ‘awkward’ partners of the EU (for example, a variety of states of the ENP). Moreover, the isolation and the related international unfamiliarity of the Turkish-Cypriot civil society unveil the increased opportunities for the EU to influence practices, ideas and domestic balance of power. Indeed, this is not too dissimilar to previous enlargement examples in, say, 2004–07. It is also relevant to a series of other cases where the contested legitimacy of the state – and not just contested statehood – prohibits the development of international links. In this regard, more research on the topic is welcome, especially in reference to different contexts of the EU’s relations to contested states, such as enlargement (for example, Kosovo) or various partners of the European Neighbourhood Policy (for example, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh or the disputed territories in Georgia) or the Eastern Partnership, and how these different links shape EU instruments, mechanisms and the outcome of Europeanization. In this context, although particularly relevant to contested states, the study of the Turkish-Cypriot case contributes to the wider discussion on

[^32]: Interview with EU official D, Nicosia, 2009.
[^33]: Interview with Nami, Nicosia, 2009.
[^34]: Interview with Erel, Nicosia, 2009.
Europeanization and the debate on the EU’s external role, especially with reference to alternative ways of engagement beyond traditional state-centric interaction.

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