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According to a recent study completed at the University of Eastern Finland, Greek and Turkish Cypriot students agree that a peaceful co-existence is possible in Cyprus. The doctoral thesis of Andri Neophytou, M.Sc., shows that Turkish Cypriots were more positive about meeting Greek Cypriots, and were more eager to have Greek Cypriot partners and Greek Cypriot friends. Furthermore, they were more interested in participating in bi-communal events compared to Greek Cypriots.

The study focused on Greek and Turkish Cypriot university students' attitudes towards each other, and 400 students from both sides answered the study questionnaire. The main purpose of the study was to provide an insight into how two groups of people who are regarded as 'traditional enemies' construct perceptions of 'us and them'. The study also gives an insight into students' attitudes towards the 'Other' and how they consider their in-group in comparison to their out-group. The results are very important at a time when a solution to the forty-year unresolved Cyprus problem and Turkey's induction to the European Union seem to be very close.

The Cypriot question has remained unresolved since 1974. From 1974 till present day, the so called Green Line has divided Cyprus into two parts: Turkish Cypriots in the north and Greek Cypriots in the south. Both parts have autonomous administrations. The Greek Cypriot government is internationally recognised, though not by Turkey, whereas the Turkish Cypriot administration is recognised only by Turkey.

New generation has got over negative memories?

The study emphasises that many generations have been affected by the conflict between the two communities living in Cyprus, and people were also wounded in the conflict. The study showed that students characterized their own cultural group more positively and expressed feelings of unfair treatment by the 'Other' side. However, the results also showed that students representing the new generation do not seem to be strongly affected by these negative memories and, in general, students' attitudes towards the 'Other' were not extremely negative.

Greek and Turkish Cypriot students dare to dream of a common future

Written by Australian Business

The study indicates that Greek Cypriots have a more negative attitude towards the 'Other' than Turkish Cypriots. The study also discovered that while Turkish Cypriots tried to differentiate themselves from the settlers from Turkey, Greek Cypriots did not recognise the difference between the two groups. The study also developed a model which shows that proximity with the 'Other', contact with other cultures, and sense of nationalism correlate with attitudes towards the 'Other'.

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