



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus
Geneva*

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The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Special Procedures Branch) and with regards to the latter's joint communication with reference AL CYP 1/2026 dated 4 March 2026, has the honour to provide herewith the response from the competent services of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, dated 21 May 2026.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Special Procedures Branch) the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 26 May 2026

To the
Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights (ohchr-registry@un.org)
Geneva



ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ, ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΟΛΑΙΑΣ

Αρ. Φακ.: 06.15.005

21 Μαΐου 2026

Θέμα: Απαντήσεις από Υπουργείο Παιδείας, Αθλητισμού και Νεολαίας στα ερωτήματα που τίθενται στην Επιστολή Ειδικών διαδικασιών ΟΗΕ προς τον Υπουργό Εξωτερικών σε σχέση με το πρόγραμμα Imagine- Υπόθεση AL CYP 1/2026

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.

The vision of the Ministry of Education and Culture is “The formation of literate citizens with skills, responsibility, democratic ethos, historical identity, but also respect for diversity, citizens with a complete personality, capable of contributing creatively to the development of society and to addressing the challenges of the future, as well as to improving the quality of life of citizens through education, sports and youth empowerment”. The IMAGINE Program is consistent with this vision, as it “aims to strengthen contact between the two communities of Cyprus and to promote peace, understanding and anti-racism on the island within the framework of a holistic vision of the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, inspired by UN documents, resolutions and action plans”.

2. Please provide information about the reasons for the delay of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cyprus in issuing the circular concerning the participation of Greek Cypriot schools in the activities of the programme for the academic year 2025-2026. Please indicate how this decision complies with the aforementioned international standards in the field of guarantees of non-recurrence.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth sends circulars throughout the academic year. The Ministry's circular regarding the Imagine program was sent in time, to allow schools to plan and participate in relevant activities during the second semester of the 2025-2026 school year. There is already interest and schools are participating in the programme.

3. Please provide information about the measures adopted by the relevant authorities to address the public campaigns of misinformation and divisive rhetoric employed by Greek Cypriot media outlets, parliamentarians, political parties, and nationalist groups, against the bicomunal study visits of the Imagine programme, to address the climate of fear that undermined the delivery of the activities of the programme, and to ensure that accurate information about the role and characteristics of the project are disseminated to the general public.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth addressed the public controversy around the *Imagine* programme primarily through clarification and factual information via the Ministry's communication channels. The Ministry publicly rejected misinformation and divisive rhetoric, stressing that the programme was established under the Technical Committee on Education as a confidence-building educational initiative promoting mutual understanding, peace, respect and anti-racism. The Minister clarified publicly that many statements and reports were not based on accurate information. The Ministry also clarified the exact nature of its role. It stated that, for nine years, it had informed schools about the programme, but was not the body organising its activities. It further clarified that participation was voluntary and that, where activities involved pupils, parental consent was required.

Furthermore, the Ministry re-issued official information to schools through its formal circular system. On 18 February 2026, it informed public schools that pupils, teachers and schools could participate voluntarily in pedagogical activities within schools and in the Ledra Palace area during school time. The circular specified that the activities include student training during school hours, as well as workshops and a bicomunal conference for teachers outside school hours. It also provided contact details and directed schools to the programme organisers for further information.

The Ministry's circular also disseminated accurate information about the programme's record and characteristics. It noted that *Imagine* has operated since 2017, bringing together more than 7,200 pupils from all communities of Cyprus and training more than 1,500 educators. It also clarified that the programme is implemented by the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research and the Home for Cooperation, and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

4. Please provide information about the measures adopted by your Excellency's Government to implement the recommendations of the 2017 joint report of the Technical Committee on Education, and the progress made in this area. If no measures have been adopted, please explain why.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth responded to the recommendations of the Technical Committee on Education (TCE) for the 2016–17 school year through a combination of policy integration, teacher training and targeted programmes that promote inclusion, anti-racism and intercommunal contact.

First, in line with the TCE's emphasis on fostering contact between the two communities, the Ministry strengthened opportunities for voluntary interaction through initiatives such as the Imagine Programme. This programme facilitated structured encounters between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot students and educators, thereby operationalising the recommendation to inform schools and encourage contact.

Second, the Ministry advanced curriculum-related recommendations by promoting inclusive and intercultural education. Curriculum reforms emphasised critical thinking, democratic values and respect for diversity, aligning with the TCE's call for a critical approach to prejudice and extremism. The inclusion of themes such as human rights, anti-racism, and peace education became more systematic, supported by official in-service training.

Teacher training constituted a central pillar of the Ministry's response. The Pedagogical Institute expanded professional development opportunities focusing on human rights education, anti-racist practices, and inclusive pedagogy. These actions reflect broader strategic priorities to enhance teachers' professional capacity.

Importantly, concrete measures addressing inclusion and anti-racism were institutionalised. These include the introduction of a Code of Conduct against Racism, systematic recording of incidents, and targeted policies for the integration of students with a migrant background, including language support programmes. These actions demonstrate a shift from ad hoc initiatives to structured, policy-driven interventions.

5. Please provide information about the measures adopted by your Excellency's Government in the field of education, culture, institutional building and legal reform to prevent the recurrence of violence and serious human rights violations, in accordance with international standards. If such measures have not been adopted, please explain why.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, has adopted a comprehensive set of measures aimed at preventing violence and promoting human rights in line with international standards.

In education, human rights are systematically embedded across curricula. The **Health Education Curriculum** integrates human rights, anti-racism and intercultural education, promoting peaceful coexistence, respect for diversity and prevention of violence. A central initiative is the **implementation of a national Action Plan for the prevention and tackling of violence and delinquency in schools**. Preventive policies are further reinforced through the **Code of Conduct against Racism**, the promotion of **gender equality in education**, and the **integration of children with a migrant background**, including enhanced language support programmes. Teacher training on human rights, anti-racism and conflict management is systematically provided.

The curriculum has been enriched with subjects fostering democratic citizenship, critical thinking, and respect for diversity, while commemorative and educational actions (e.g. historical awareness initiatives) strengthen collective memory and reconciliation.

At the institutional level, the Ministry has introduced **school self-evaluation systems**, strengthened **student councils**, and promoted inclusive programmes such as “Actions for School and Social Inclusion+”, targeting vulnerable groups.

Finally, legal reforms include **new legislation on teacher and school evaluation**, reforms in recruitment systems, and the modernization of special education frameworks, ensuring accountability, equality and the protection of children's rights across the educational system.