



Cyprus

ESF project “Establishment and operation of the Central Welfare Benefit Management Service (with the YDEP of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance)”

Key facts

NAME OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion

TARGET GROUPS



Recipients of welfare benefits (which are generally the most vulnerable groups of the population)

BENEFICIARY ORGANISATION

Welfare Benefits Management Service (YDEP) at the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance

PROJECT DURATION

01/07/2014 – 31/12/2020

COORDINATOR

Ms Vathoula Antoniadou, Head of Central Welfare Benefits Management Service



eantoniadou@kepa.mlsi.gov.cy

PARTNERS

N/A

BUDGET

EUR 12,139,739.00

Project is financed from ESF funds



PROJECT/ORGANISATION WEBSITE



<http://bit.ly/2tVc26l>

Activities implemented

MAIN PROJECT TASKS



2014 – 2015: organisation and operation of YDEP, including (a) finding premises, furniture and equipment, (b) organizing existing staff, (c) recording of procedures.



2016: purchase of services such as personnel, IT, accounting support, control and technical support aiming at a faster and more efficient operation of the Service.



2017: procuring and awarding a service contract to a private company to establish and operate a call centre for all matters pertaining to YDEP's responsibilities. Also, the additional sub-systems of the computerised system were completed.



2018: signing a 24-month contract for custody and digitalisation of YDEP's requests and related software documents.

Project journey: from conception to delivery

INITIAL STAGE

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

By the second quarter of 2013, the overall **unemployment rate** in Cyprus had reached 15.7%, while for young people (15-24) it had skyrocketed to 40.3%. Additionally, a part of welfare benefits recipients were taking advantage of the system by receiving multiple benefits from different state sources, which the project was aiming to centralise. As a result, the reform of the **social welfare system** became a necessity.

In 2014, Cyprus established the **Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) scheme** by adopting the Guaranteed Minimum Income and Social Benefits Law to replace and centralise all other fragmented benefits. To implement the reform, the Government set up YDEP in July 2014 as part of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI) with responsibility for implementing the GMI and Social Benefits Law of 2014, and the management of the various social benefits paid by MLWSI.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The project aims: (a) to **facilitate** the establishment and smooth operation of YDEP, (b) to **upgrade** the level of services offered to citizens by YDEP, (c) to achieve the necessary **synergy and coordination** in the provision of benefits provided to citizens through the creation of a Single Beneficiary Register, which will lead to rationalization, in terms of social benefits, and (d) to provide reliable **information** to the MLWSI for the purpose of formulating the benefit policy of the state.

MAIN CHALLENGES FACED, AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

The main difficulties involved the organisation and operation of the services offered by YDEP, including (a) finding premises, furniture and equipment, (b) organising staff, (c) recording of procedures within a pressing deadline set by international lenders, (d) establishing of a single register for all welfare recipients.

PROJECT PHASE

KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND EVENTS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The **perseverance** shown by the project team has been an important factor in delivering the best possible outputs. The team's efforts have resulted in a **high-quality input** into future project activities and other reform initiatives. One such initiative was the creation for the first time of the **Social Beneficiary Register**, which will lead to rationalization, in terms of social benefits. Furthermore, with the establishment of YDEP, the responsibility for managing the GMI and other benefits is assumed by the Ministry. In this way, Social Welfare Officers can now carry out their real work of **psychosocial support** for families and citizens in need. With the previous system, the majority of social welfare staff was used to process payments. As a result, state intervention was limited.

KEY RESULTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

The main achievement of the project so far has been the development of the **Social Beneficiary Register**. The criteria for someone becoming a beneficiary are actually controlled now through the Register using direct information from all the relevant state agencies and banks. From the development of the Register until now, all benefit recipients have been checked and in thousands of cases it has been found that these persons should not be recipients of the benefits they have received for years. It should be noted that through this process, the relative allowance budgets not only declined, but gradually increased. From now on, it was possible to provide support for the first time to thousands of citizens and families who really needed this support.

RESULTS, IMPACTS

(EXPECTED) IMPACT ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN GENERAL

The project is expected to result in **enhanced competences** among staff working at YDEP. These results will lead to the provision of **better-quality services** to beneficiaries of welfare benefits. The project is an important step towards improving Cyprus' new **social benefit policy**.

LESSONS LEARNT: THE ROLE OF ESF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The considerable progress made by Cypriot authorities in the area of welfare benefits has been recognized by the European Commission. Support provided by the ESF in the establishment and smooth operation of the YDEP has been decisive in improving country's new social benefit policy. ESF support has also contributed to strengthening the administrative capacity of YDEP, thus increasing the quality of services provided to beneficiaries.

REFLECTIONS



Personal experiences



'Support provided by the ESF in the establishment and smooth operation of the Central Welfare Benefit Management Service (YDEP) has been decisive in improving Cyprus' new social benefit policy.'

Phanos Kouroufexis, Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, Minister's Associate, Minister's Office

'With the establishment of YDEP the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social managed to correct the majority of the distortions of the previous system, to provide enough assistance to those really in need of it.'

– **Maria Pieridou**, Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, YDEP Supervisor

The study "Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration" (PAPA) aims to present specific cases of ESF-funded public administration reform and capacity building initiatives. The contractor prepared 30 case studies and factsheets on ESF supported projects funded in 17 beneficiary countries of Thematic Objective 11 during the programming period 2014-2020.

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PPMi

Find out more about the project by following the link <http://bit.ly/PAPA-PPMI> or scan the QR code using your smartphone camera.

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