

Investigating the roots of political disengagement of young Greek Cypriots

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Abstract

This study attempted to disentangle the issues that underlie the dramatic drop recorded in political interest of young Greek Cypriots. To reveal the dynamic processes through which people debate, disagree or convince each other towards the formation of political attitudes, a qualitative method was selected. Forty individuals, equally distributed according to age (18-24 and 25-35) and gender, participated in a total of eight focus-groups. Analysis of the data showed that young Greek Cypriots, as most young people in Europe, appear extremely uncertain for their future, quite pessimistic and cynical, and highly disillusioned with traditional politics. Contrary to what is observed with young people in other European countries, Greek Cypriots do not experiment with alternative forms of political action but tend to remain inactive, and although the country's politicised culture of the past is still reflected in the way they theoretically discuss about social issues, they tend to become embarrassed and confused when asked to elaborate on how these ideas could be transformed into action. They associate politics with corruption and economic interests, they are scornfully disillusioned with the European Union, and they emotionally distance themselves from important changes to come with the possible reunification of Cyprus. Young Greek Cypriots appear insecure, pessimistic, disoriented and uninspired. Their responses indicated that they are in an urgent need to rediscover passion for ideas, which they cannot any more find in traditional politics and forms of political action.

Key Words: youth, Greek Cypriots, political disengagement, political action