Dear Loucas,

Thank you for the update. Please see some queries and suggestions in the text, let me know if you agree. Please revise, also for language and readability and try to reduce the length to 600 words.

Thanks and regards,

Camilla

*The presidential intervention to prevent the risk of new strikes in the state hospitals, the dispute over the renewal of the collective agreements of airports ground handling workers and the social outcry over the exclusion of women from national guards are the main topics of interests in this article. This country update reports on the latest developments in working life in Cyprus in the second quarter of 2016.*

# Presidential intervention to soothe conflict in the health sector

The determined, publicly announced decision of the state doctors' union (PASYKI) to strike against the medical understaffing has influenced the personal intervention of the President of the Republic, Nicos Anastasiades, into the conflict. The President mediated in order to soothe the dispute and push for the implementation of the National Health System (NHS), a dated and hotly-debated issue. It is noted that the many problems in public hospitals have been intensified during the years of the economic crisis. The austerity measures blocked the recruitment of staff while the state hospitals experienced since then an unprecedented overcrowding because people hit by the crisis turned from the private to public health. The President urgently requested the director of medical services fordetails of the shortage of medical staff in all state hospitals with a strict deadline. Following meetings with the health and finance ministers and the sectoral health stakeholders to discuss the most urgent hospital needs of the hospitals, the President urgently convened the Cabinet to approve the decisions. These included:

1. the hiring of 28 physicians;
2. the submission of the bill on the financial and administrative autonomy of state hospitals by 15 July 2016;
3. the hiring of external expert for assessing the needs for medical and paramedical staff and
4. the formation of a financial impact study in preparation of the NHS.

# Warning strikes of ground handling workers

The deadlock on the renewal of the collective agreements of ground handling workers influenced work stoppages in Larnaca and Paphos airports on 4 and 6 July 2016. The interim agreement reached after the labour minister's intervention in the dispute lasted too short. The ground handling companies violated the agreement paying partially the agreed paid rises. Workers demand the restoration of the collective agreements to the pre-crisis status but the ground handling companies, which perceive the collective agreements as antiquated agreements that prevent their competitiveness, pursue ground changes. The public statements of the General Director of the Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB) over the warning strikes of the workers stirred up things. He said that when the 'well-paid ground handling workers' strike for pay demands, tens of companies are negatively affected. Trade unionists and workers perceived the statement provocative and soon after the Secretary General of the Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO) responded. He argued that workers have been put against the wall by OEB but the employers who violate the agreements remained in the immune. All sectoral stakeholders asked from unions and employers to exhaust all conciliation efforts in an intensifying dialogue to go forth labour peace.

# Social outcry over exclusion of women from National Guard

Within the frame of the modernization of the National Guard, the Cabinet approved the recruitment of 3,000 professional soldiers and the simultaneous reduction of the mandatory military service. The decision caught the opposition parties unaware and drew harsh critics for the lack of information. The political parties requested from the government to submit a bill to the House of Representatives for approval, a request that is still pending. The announced scheme, however, and its connected remuneration and social provisions attracted the interest of the unemployed youth; the submitted applications exceeded all the expectations of the defence ministry. The advertising of the vacancies, from the other side, which excluded women for applying drew the reaction of the civil society. Trade unions, NGOs and women's organizations perceived the scheme as a clear act of an institutional, direct discrimination against women. The defence minister in responding to the outcry argued that eligible people for applying for the positions are those who completed their mandatory service in the national guard and this excludes not only women but men as well who were relieved of their duty to serve in the army. The process of the recruitment is presently running as planned.