



SOMEROL:

SOCIAL MEDIATION AND THE STRENGTHENING OF RULE OF LAW IN CYPRUS

Project Proceedings Report

Nicosia
June 2023

Executive Summary

This document is a summary of the Project Proceedings under the Social Mediation and the Strengthening of Rule of Law in Cyprus (SOMEROL) project, implemented by the University of Central Lancashire in Cyprus (UCLan Cyprus), the Interdisciplinary Centre for Law Alternative and Innovative Methods (ICLAIM), and the Cyprus Peace and Dialogue Centre (CPDC) from October 2022 to April 2023.

The full report is available at:

<https://social-mediation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/SOMEROL-Project-booklet.pdf>

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This Report provides an overview of key activities and outputs delivered under the project **Social Mediation and the Strengthening of Rule of Law in Cyprus (SOMEROL)**, undertaken by the University of Central Lancashire in Cyprus (UCLan Cyprus), the Interdisciplinary Centre for Law Alternative and Innovative Methods (ICLAIM), and the Cyprus Peace and Dialogue Centre (CPDC). The project built on previous Social Mediation projects that have taken place in Cyprus and online from 2018 to 2022.¹ The aim of the project was to enhance the delivery of capacity building activities on Social Mediation, with a particular focus on strengthening the Rule of Law in Cyprus, on either side of the UN-administered Buffer Zone.

The project employed previous findings, especially regarding divided societies, which raise challenging theoretical and practical questions in terms of conflict prevention, management, and resolution. In addition, by turning the focus on the Rule of Law principle, the SOMEROL project dealt with issues of transparency, corruption, media-freedom, and counter-information, as relevant, from policy, industry, civil society, and educational perspectives, in an inter-communal context.

The SOMEROL project benefited from the expertise of the EU-funded Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for the Rule of Law and European Values CRoLEV (2022-25) running at the School of Law of UCLan Cyprus.² A Rule of Law expert of CRoLEV was present at all events, in the person of its Director, Prof. Stéphanie Lahlé Shaelou, Professor of European Law and Reform and Head of the School of Law at UCLan Cyprus. Prof. Lahlé Shaelou is also a Founding Director of ICLAIM.

The **key deliverables** of the project were: Two Training Workshops on Social Mediation and the Rule of Law; a Roundtable discussion; a Training Workshop on Deep Democracy, and a two-day Closing Conference, as presented here.

¹ Social Mediation Project: <https://social-mediation.org/>; For previous Reports and Manuals see: <https://social-mediation.org/resources>

² CRoLEV Webiste: <https://crolev.eu/>

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Training Sessions & Roundtable Discussion

21 & 28 January 2023, 18 February 2023

The project was initiated with two separate training sessions on Social Mediation and Rule of Law, with the first training inviting known policy makers from across the divide who play or have played an active role in local policy institutions. The second training invited other professionals with experience in inter-communal affairs in Cyprus, with a background in education, civil society or other.

Both trainings were designed in an interactive manner, to allow both the theory and the practical scope of Social Mediation and the Rule of Law to be presented. Upon this foundation, participants were invited to provide contemporary insights into how the Social Mediation dispute resolution methodology and the Rule of Law principle relate to the level of the rule of law in Cyprus, in daily life and in the context of the Cyprus Question, with reference to policy, social dialogue and the history of the Cyprus conflict.

The two training sessions enabled participants to exchange viewpoints in an environment that embraces social mediation and Rule of Law principles, with the aim of returning to key themes in the subsequent Roundtable and Closing Conference events.

Workshop Recurring Issues	Key Issues for Roundtable
To fully understand the relevance of the Rule of Law principle, one needs to take it into account at three levels: National/ Supranational (EU)/ International.	Revisit the identification of relevant stakeholder in the Cyprus context
How do states of emergency and exception impact the Rule of Law on general.	How can we reach out to said stakeholders?
The role of the media is crucial in sustaining the Rule of Law.	What would be the vision for Social Mediation in the Cyprus context?
Social mediation can be used as a method to critically expose one side to the other.	What would constitute Rule of Law indicators in your field of expertise?
Challenges relevant to checkpoint crossing need to be addressed.	Can Social Mediation complement political mediation? If yes, how?
How do you agree politically who is impartial enough to be accepted as mediator? That touches on the parties' confidence.	What about the intra-communal dynamics of each community?
Considering the historical complexity of intra-communal dynamics, how did it become possible for the Turkish Cypriot community to present a more unified front in 2004?	

Beyond the context of the political negotiations, participants recommended to use Social Mediation to facilitate dialogue with those members of the public that resist reconciliation and the potential solution. The same approach can be taken to facilitate public dialogue for highly controversial and divisive issues, and in efforts to combat corruption, improve education and skills development, and strengthen efforts towards a stronger culture of active citizenship.

Concluding points agreed

- There is a need for more future-oriented initiatives involving individuals from across the divide.
- Youth is a key actor in all efforts for peace and reconciliation.
- Highlighting and communicating the positive aspects of collaboration is key.
- There is a need for joint media outlets to equally represent and engage with both communities.

Deep Democracy Training

17 March 2023

Following the training and discussion series on Social Mediation and the Rule of Law, the project participants were invited to join a training workshop on Deep Democracy by experts joining us from the Netherlands, which refers to a methodology for interactive communication that complements the principles and practice of Social Mediation. The Deep Democracy training included discussions on the structure and philosophy behind deep democracy and simulations of deep democracy dialogue.

A key principle in Deep Democracy is that it reaches beyond the surface to identify values and unconscious wisdom/potential. One main technique used, the soft shoe shuffle, is utilized to unveil this unconscious wisdom on a collective level, through an open exchange of concise statements, and highlight that no one has monopoly over the truth.

Closing Conference

27-28 April 2023

The Closing Conference was launched on 27th April by keynote speakers Ms Androulla Vassiliou and Ms Meral Akıncı, followed by questions and comments by the convenors Prof. Stéphanie Laulhé Shaelou and Dr. Meltem Onurkan Samani followed by the audience. On 28th April, the Conference involved various initiatives and contributors, whose presentations and networking were used as the basis to continue the ongoing discussion, and further distillate and streamline the suggestions collected in the previous events. Unlike the workshops and the roundtable, the Conference was open to the public.

Concluding remarks

The SOMEROL project made clear that the logistical difficulties behind inter-communal collaboration are many. At the same time, the apparent lack of political will in the present standstill, contrasts sharply with the strong will expressed by those involved in initiatives at the grass roots level. Despite the progress achieved in inter-communal relations in Cyprus since the opening of the checkpoints in 2003, there is still a need to break through the usual demographic of persons involved in new initiatives - primarily youth activists and a variety of groups located in Nicosia.

The Conference concluded with a common understanding that at this stage there is an urgent need for new directions on how to initiate and achieve progress, overcoming the lack of follow up with activities that would regenerate and boost the many existing successful efforts towards a unified Cyprus. This can be supported by the Social Mediators' Network which newly trained social mediators via the SOMEROL project will be joining following the successful completion of the project, benefiting from the Network's enhance tools and network in Cyprus and across three continents.



