

CLIOHnet2 Cyprus National Meeting, December 2006

The CLIOHnet2 Cyprus national meeting was held in the first week of December 2006 following the Bergen plenary meeting. At that point there were six resident historians in the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Cyprus, the seventh being on leave as the Cyprus ambassador to Greece. There are several institutions of tertiary education in the Turkish-occupied north of the island, but although some of these have historians (and at least one has a Department of History) and have been recognized by unofficial European bodies, the Republic of Cyprus i.e., the internationally recognized legal authority does not accept these institutions and the University of Cyprus strongly discourages official contacts between University of Cyprus faculty members and those teaching in the north. Moreover, although three private institutions in the south will be upgraded to university status in 2007, with the employments of professional historians, this was not the case in December 2006. Thus, considering the small number of professional academic historians, the delegate from the University of Cyprus, Chris Schabel, decided to visit each of the other five resident historians individually in the first week of December, distributing CLIOHnet2 materials from Bergen and discussing developments.

Of particular interest were the recommendations for first and second cycles in history, and there is great anticipation for the third cycle recommendations. The Department of History is at a crossroads, because the planned expansion of the University of Cyprus does not include the addition of more than one or two positions in history, although the department is expected to grow to accommodate 280 students, most of whom will be in history rather than archaeology, while the historians will continue to serve the other departments of the University with elective courses. Meanwhile, competition from the new universities (with instruction in English, rather than the Greek of the University of Cyprus) and the creation of posts for historians in other departments of the University (such as the Department of Turkish Studies) could be considered further threats to the historians of the Department. The issue is, how can we implement the recommendations and at the same time satisfy the demands of the University without increasing the staff?

For example, although the historians of the department recognize the need for students to have contact both with primary source material and with scholarship from the first semester, they did not know how to work this effectively when they were called upon to teach 75 to 90 students in introductory courses combining the department's students and those seeking electives. Not only does the size of the classes preclude effective discussion, but it also makes it difficult to assign papers. Moreover, the mix of history students and non-history students makes implementation difficult. For some fields, such as medieval history, things are easier because the classes require linguistic skills that most students outside the department lack, so they avoid them. Thus with smaller classes, students analyze primary source material and read scholarly articles from the start. With upper-level lectures from the fourth semester onwards, things are somewhat better for other subjects, but it is with the three seminars (beginning the sixth semester) that students are fully exposed to these things. Another problem is that, with six historians and a tight programme, it is impossible to expose students to the history of areas outside Europe and the Mediterranean.

The second cycle in our department is more in line with the recommendations, fortunately, although there are few programme options for students wishing to pursue postgraduate studies. Members look forward to the recommendations for the third cycle, however, since this is an area where things are unclear and yet where we have some potential.

Overall, it was decided that we would regroup in 2008 once the third cycle recommendations become available, and we would discuss how to proceed in the future, given the factors mentioned above.

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