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Environmental Education Centers in Cyprus and Greece-Assessment of their role and sustainability through a SWOT analysis

F.Eliadis, M.K.Doula, A.A.Zorpas, S.
Theodoridou

Aim of the study

Environmental education is playing a crucial role in today's societies, given the environmental problems they face, as for example climate change, waste management, ecosystems degradation, etc. The adoption of environmental education as an inert part of the educational system is a necessity in order the Environmental Education Centers (EEC) to be able to provide knowledge, values, and skills so that both students and the society through awareness raising, and activation to become active and environment sensitized citizens. Research has shown that the EEC can influence the local communities and create an environmental friendly situation, especially when the centres operate in peripheral and disadvantaged areas.

Methodology

Steps:

Stage 1 -Scientific Bibliography

Stage 2 - Define and implement a strategic approach to research questions

Defined:

- Target group of study
- The questions that will be addressed in the form of questionnaires in each target group. The corresponding questionnaires were created taking all the necessary measures to protect the personal data of the participants.
- Ways to communicate with target groups and process any procedural and legal issues (eg obtaining the necessary licenses from the respective Ministries of the two countries, contacting CEOs and supervisors, etc.). The questionnaires were shared in the target groups and the participation of the social categories for both countries is shown in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Participation of social groups in study

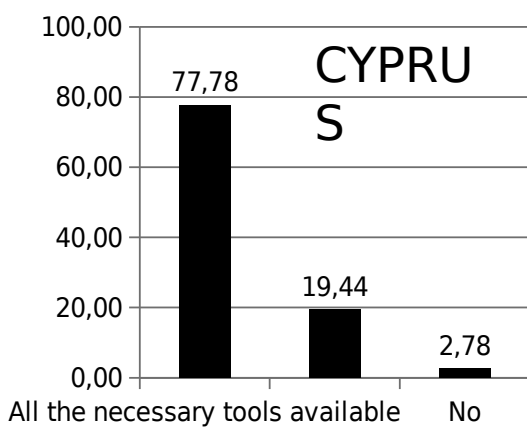
CYPRUS	Number	of
	participants	
Students	72	
Parents	72	
Educators	9	
GREECE		
Students	77	
Educators	12	

Stage 3 - Collection, analysis and evaluation of responses

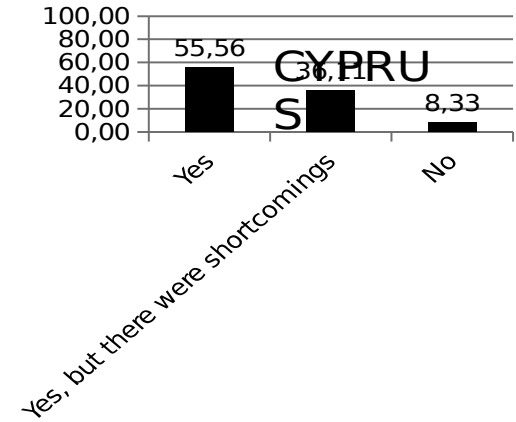
Stage 4 - SWOT Analysis

Lack of available tools to carry out actions according to the three categories of respondents in both countries.

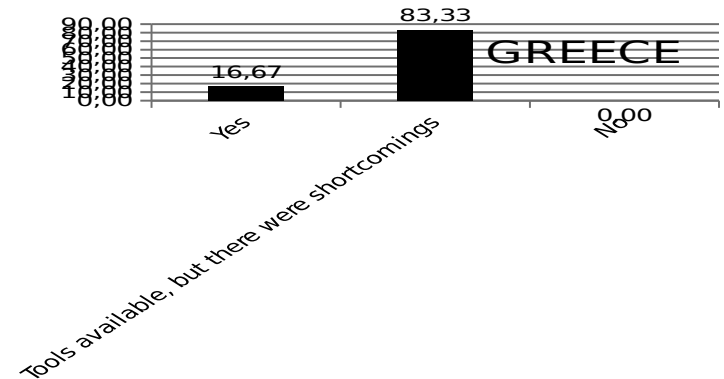
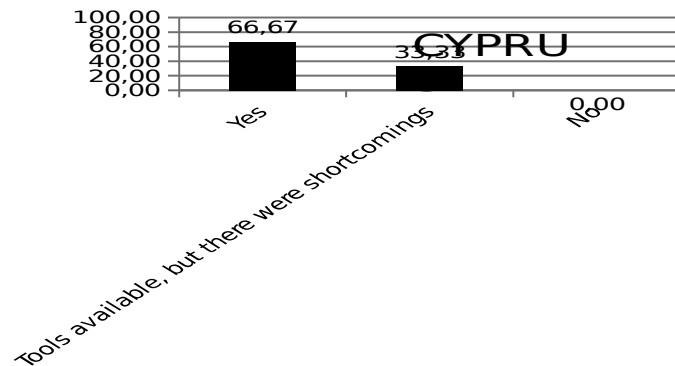
Students from Cyprus and Greece



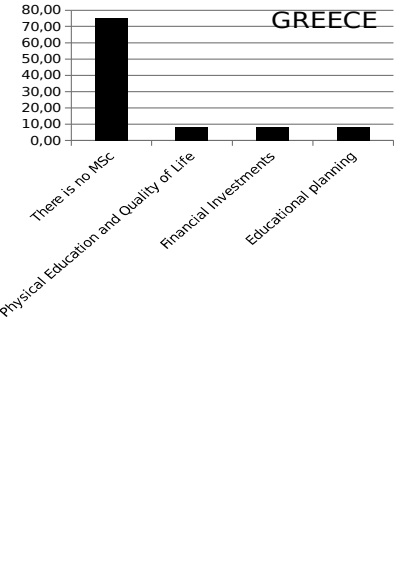
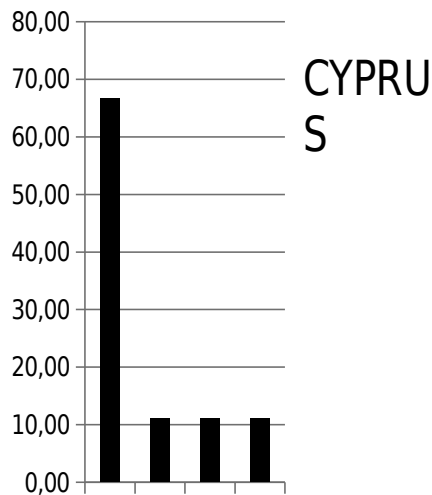
Parents



Educators of Cyprus and Greece

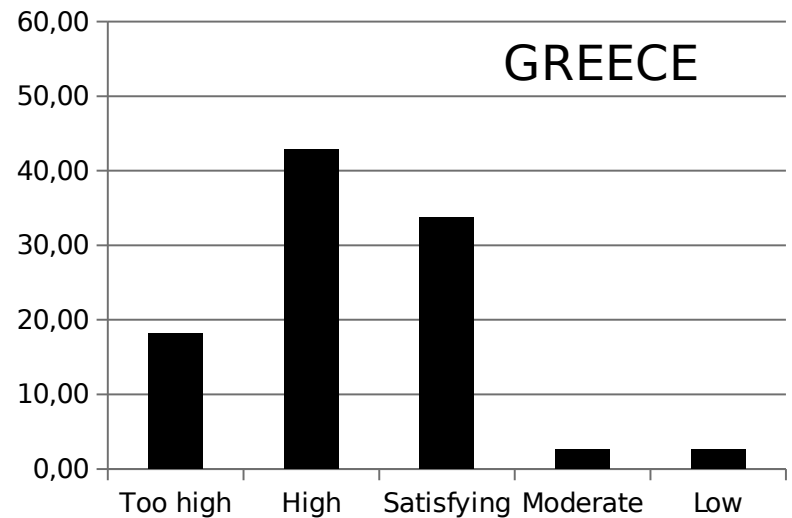
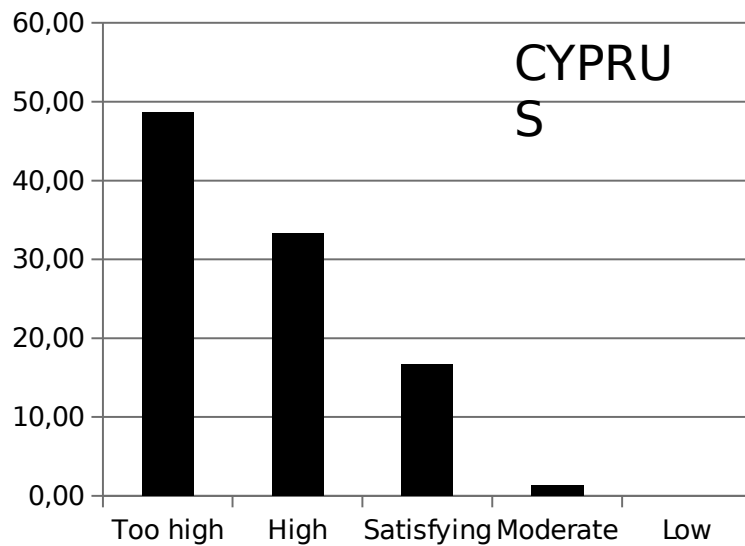


Level of training of EECs educators.

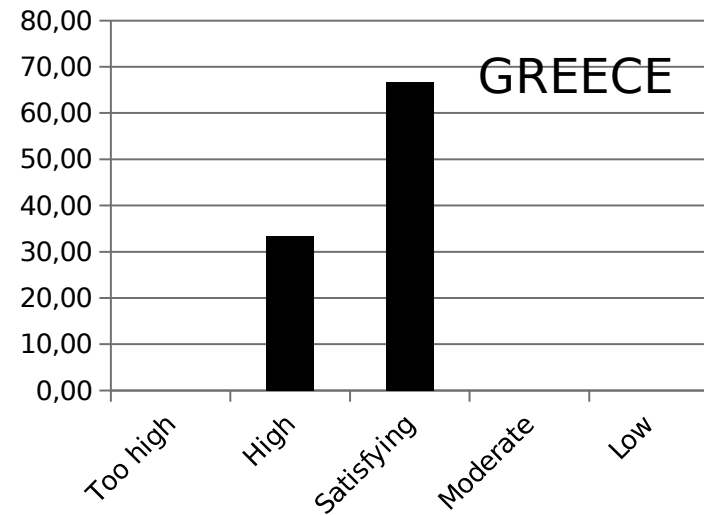
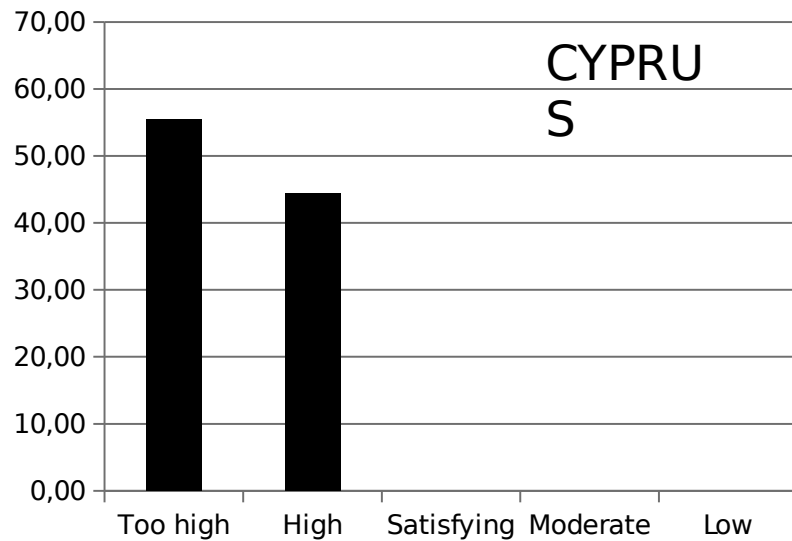


Master in Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development

As a result (students)



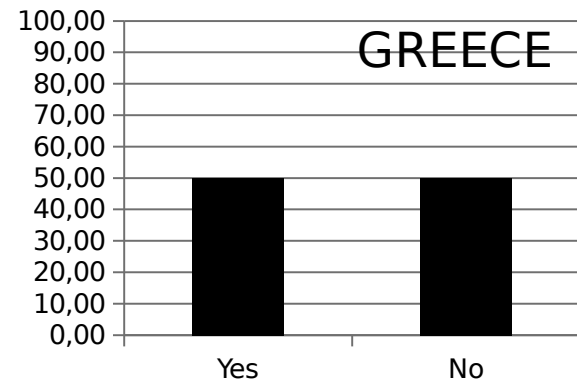
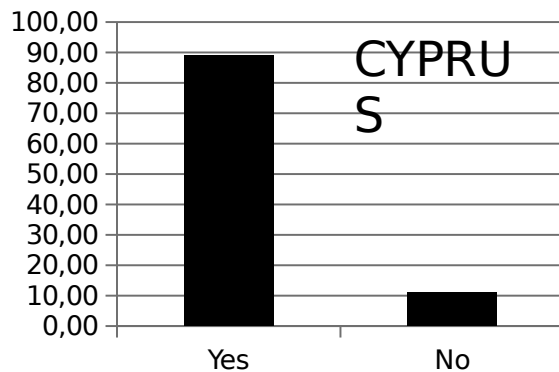
While at the same time the educators declare how they evaluate the other educators who is work in EECs



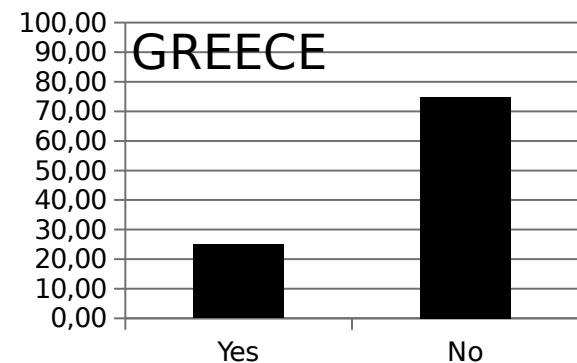
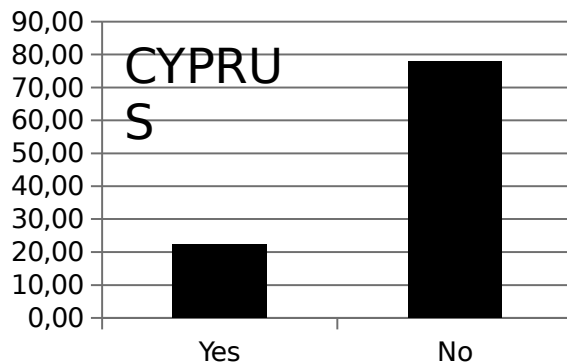
Observing the agreement that exists between them students and educators

Knowledge of the differences between environmental education and education for sustainable development and between education for sustainable development and Worth Living Development:

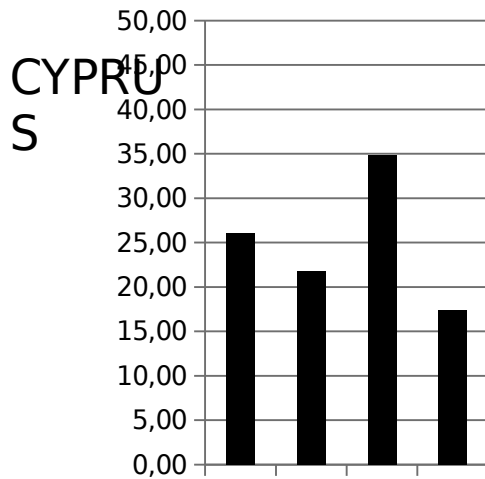
Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development



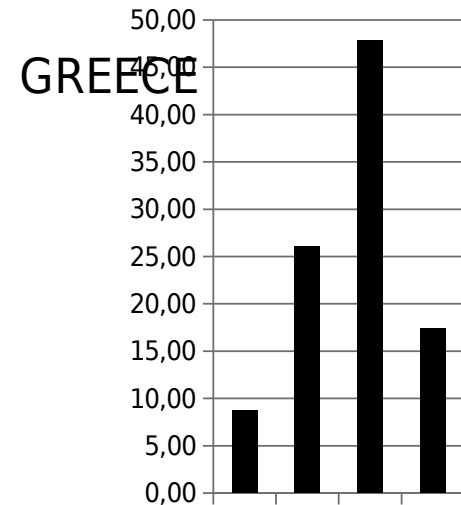
Education for Sustainable Development - Worth Living Development



Ways of educators trains.

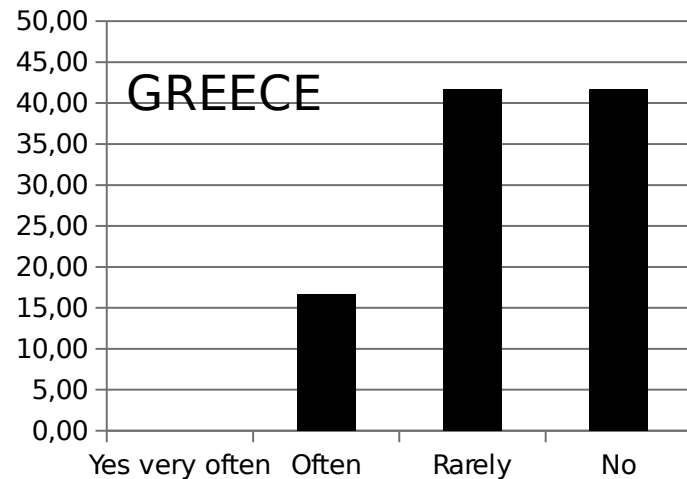
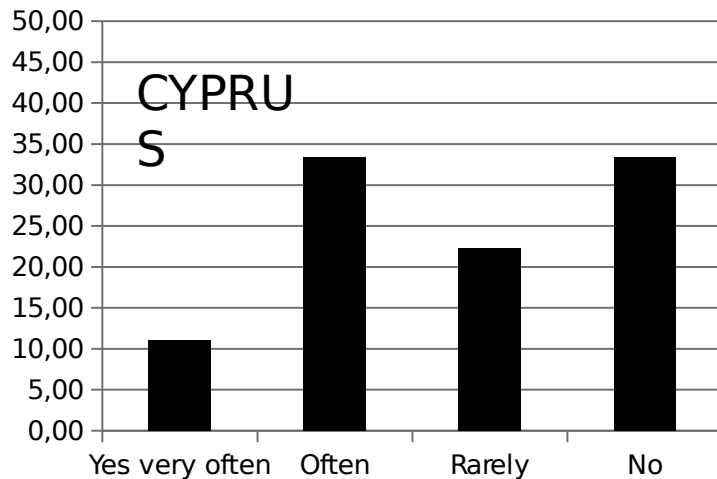


Participation in training events organized by the Ministry of Education

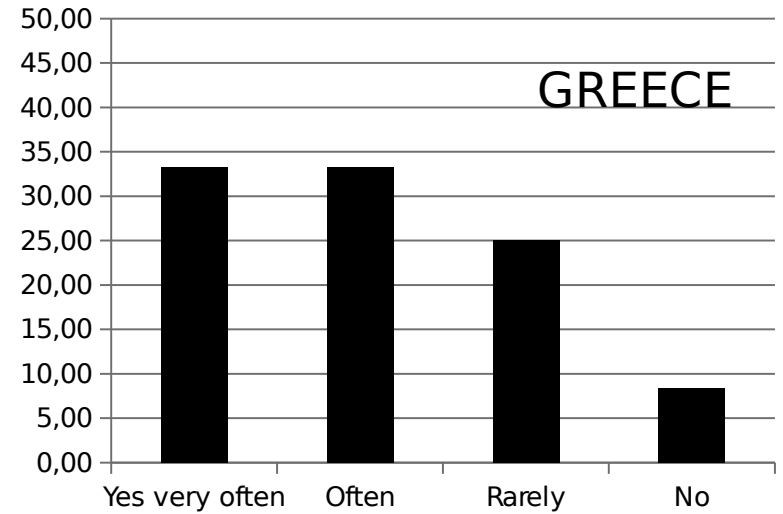
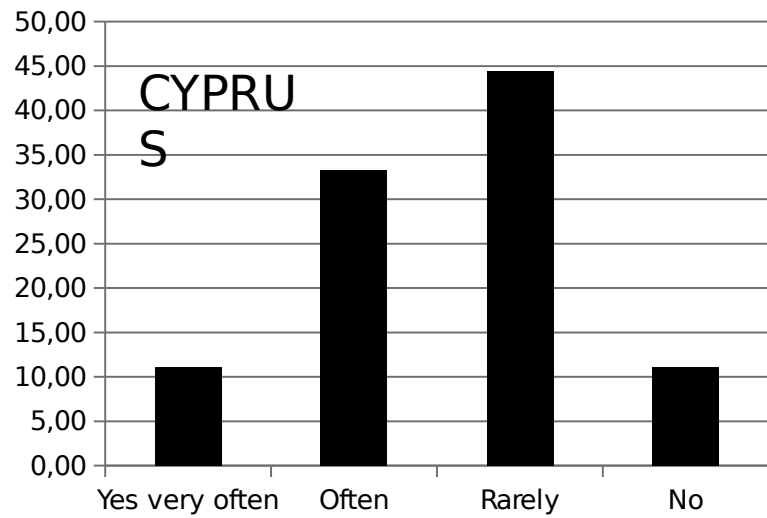


Participation in training events organized by the Ministry of Education

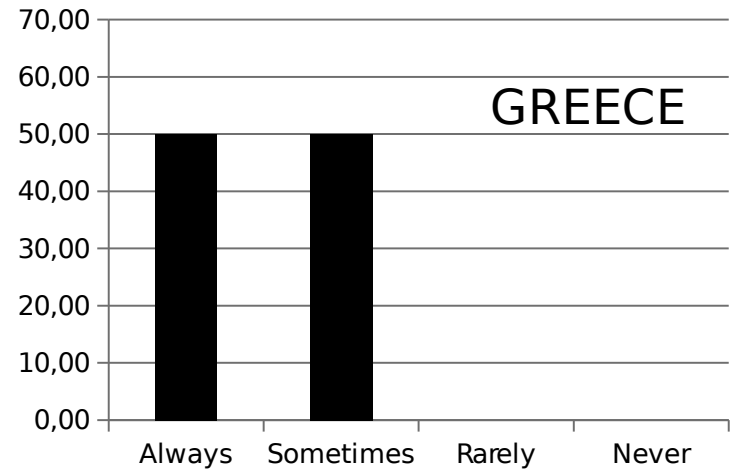
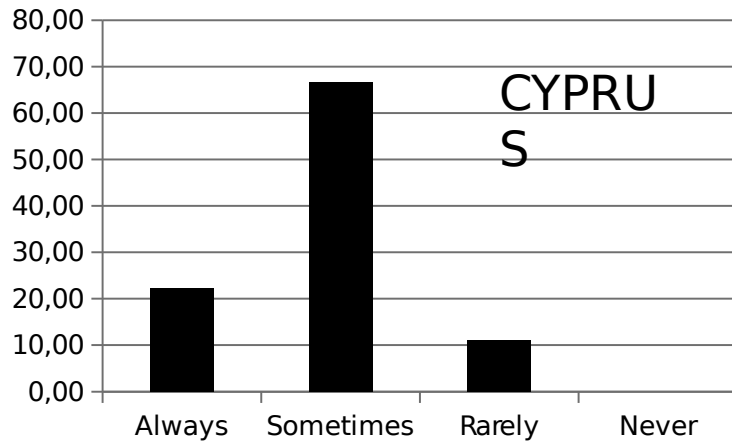
However, funding for participation in scientific conferences



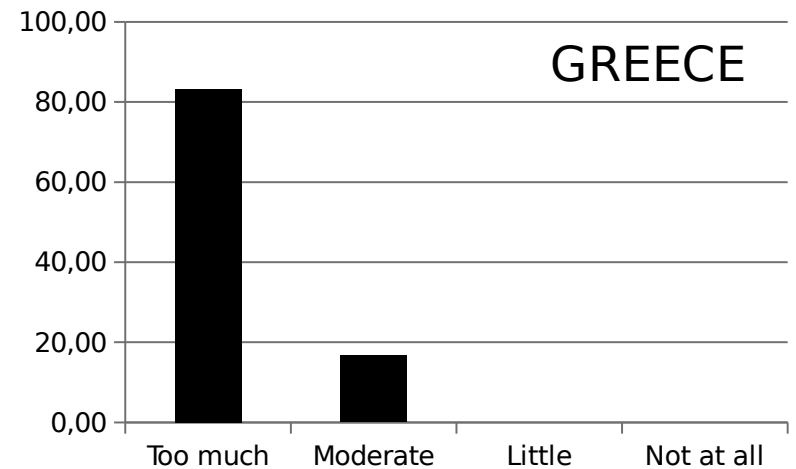
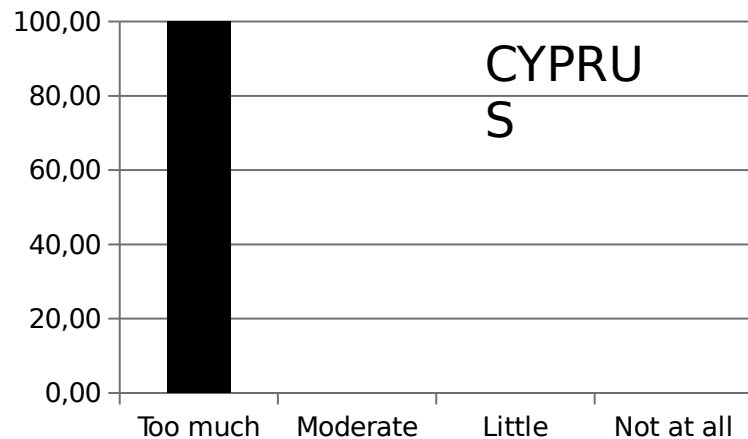
Funding for participation in training seminars



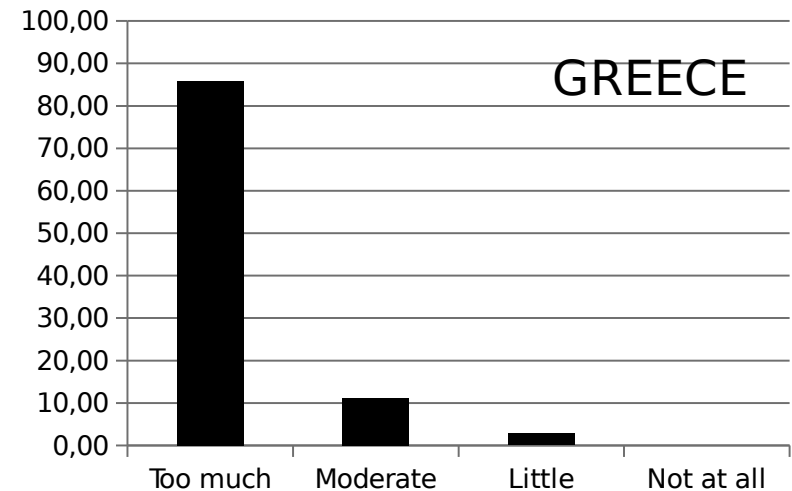
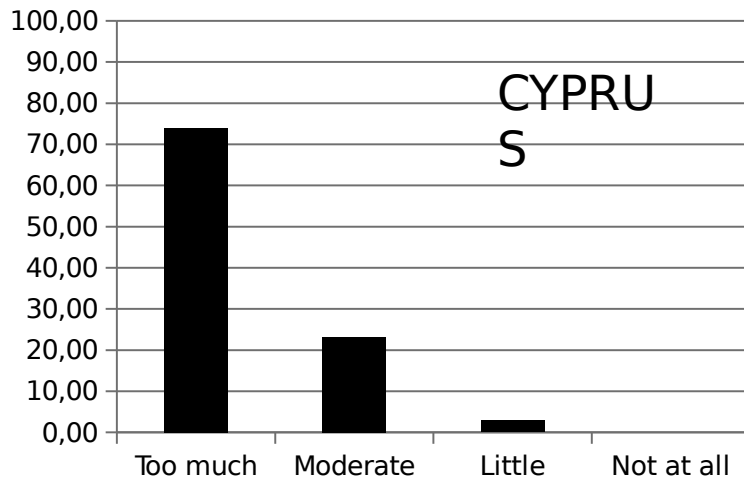
An important parameter for the proper functioning of the EECs is the feedback that is lagging



Satisfaction of a practical part based on educators' opinion:



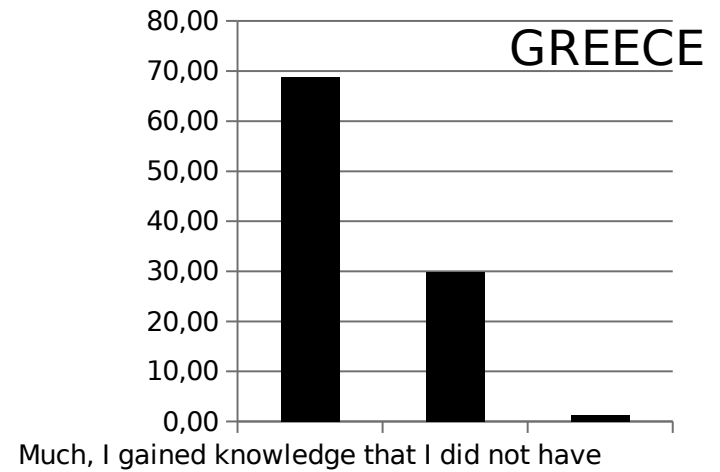
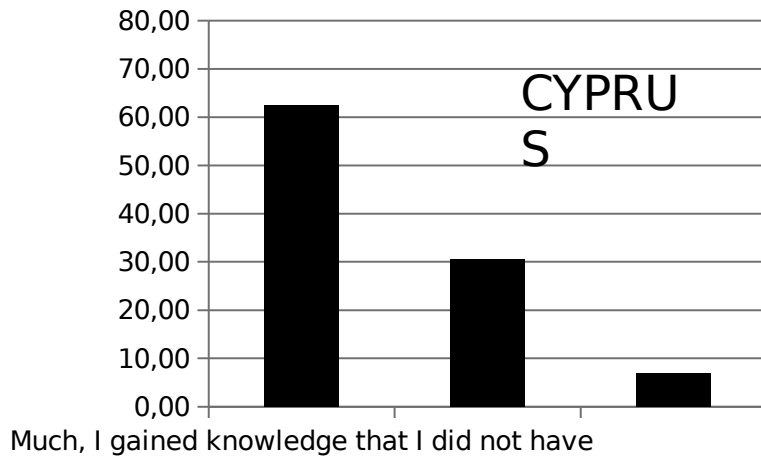
While students express the view



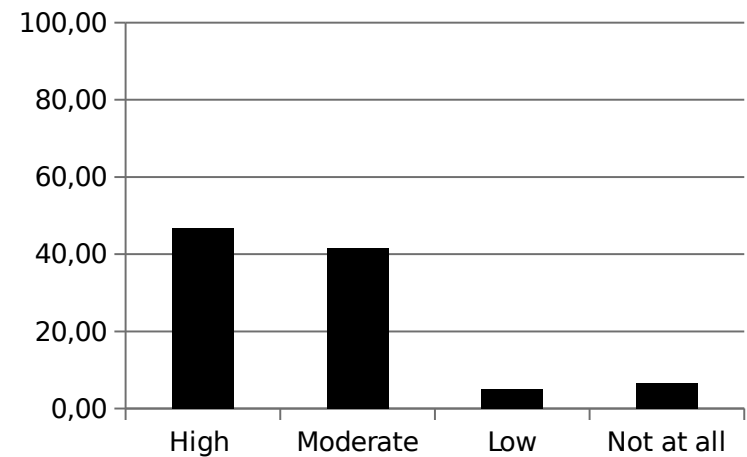
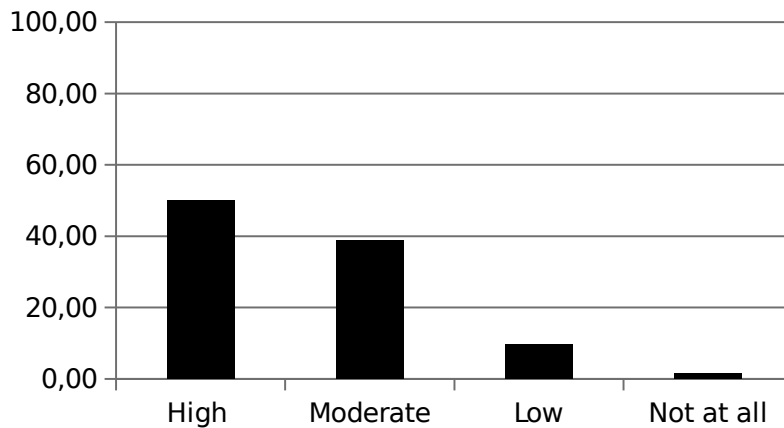
Consequently:

Cypriot educators appear not to have a complete situation of the degree of influence of EECs on students, which is a major threat in this case. On the contrary, in the case of Greece, teachers seem to have become more aware and understanding of their influence on students, and therefore this is also an opportunity that they will be able to redefine if they use it, new strategies for approaching the issues they are developing and targeting target groups.

The degree of acquiring knowledge from the EECs was:



While knowledge of the term of climate change



Coupling of findings and preparation of a SWOT matrix

Cyprus

THREATS	8	v				v	v												
	7	v	v		v		v	v	v										v
	6								v		v								
	5									v									
	4		v				v	v	v										
	3	v											v						
	2				v		v			v				v		v	v		
	1			v	v	v	v	v		v		v	v	v					
OPPORTUNITIES	8			v	v	v			v		v	v	v	v					
	7				v	v				v									
	6				v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v						
	5	v	v				v	v				v	v						
	4				v				v	v									
	3				v		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v					
	2	v	v		v		v	v	v			v	v						
	1	v	v	v		v			v					v	v				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
STRENGTHS										WEAKNESSES									

Greece

THREATS	8					v							v	v	v				
	7					v		v	v										v
	6												v	v					v
	5		v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v			
	4	v	v						v	v									
	3					v							v	v	v				
	2												v	v	v				
	1			v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v			v
OPPORTUNITIES	8													v	v				v
	7							v	v						v				
	6																		
	5	v	v									v							
	4																		v
	3													v	v				
	2			v	v	v	v	v	v							v			v
	1	v																	
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
STRENGTHS					WEAKNESSES														

Conclusions

In the case of Cyprus the strategy that recommended is a Development Strategy because of:

- The combination of high education of educators and the interest shown by students and parents.
- The willingness of Cypriot educators to cooperate with both research and university institutions and similar infrastructures can offer a variety of modern environmental issues, providing new knowledge to the public, exerting a positive influence on them.
- An equally important parameter for educating learners is the appropriate staff and infrastructure in Cypriot ECCs, enhancing their role and strength.

In the case of Greece, the adoption of Strategic Defense seems to be the safest solution because of:

- As owing to the economic crisis, ECCs could not remain unaffected, resulting in the lack of infrastructure and key tools for completing their educational environmental actions.
- Despite public awareness and cooperation with university institutions, non-adoption of the Strategic Plan proposed by the European Union has had a negative impact on the proper functioning of the ECCs.
- Following with the previous parameter, the impact of EECs is decreasing and the pupils' interest also.

It is easy to see that the adoption of a Strategic Defense will "freeze" the situation in which the ECCs are located and will have the required time to adopt radical changes that could overturn the negative situation.



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Thank you

Filippos Eliadis

filippos.eliades@st.ouc.ac.cy

Open University of Cyprus, Faculty and Pure of
Applied Science, Environmental Conservation and
Management