

1980-2014



# THE STORY OF THE Civil Society Peace-Building MOVEMENT IN CYPRUS





EUROPE

ATLANTIC  
OCEAN

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

MIDDLE EAST

NORTH AFRICA

# intro

The island of Cyprus rests at the **crossroads of three continents**, in the waters of the Eastern Mediterranean. Its unique geographical position makes it **a place rich with history**, both in ancient and recent times.

ATLANTIC  
OCEAN

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

CYPRUS



MIDDLE EAST

NORTH AFRICA

One important part of this history is the **civil society peace-building movement** that has been developing throughout the last few decades with the purpose **to reconcile the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities** on the island.



Separated by a Buffer Zone called The Green Line, and with limited access to each other until the opening of crossing points in 2003, the two communities are still trying to find **the best way of building a peaceful and prosperous society together.**

THIS IS THE STORY  
OF THAT ENDEAVOUR FOR  
PEACE AND RECONCILIATION





1980-1997

## early years: 1980 to 1997

The peace-building movement draws its roots from **a series of bi-communal meetings, workshops, and trainings** that enabled people to make contact and work together in the name of a common vision.





# 1980-1997

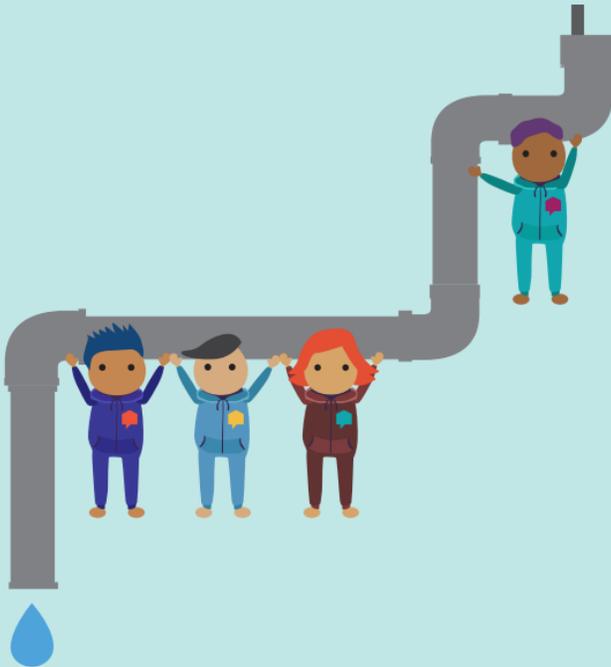
During that time contacts between people from the two communities were almost impossible. Nevertheless, some pioneers found ways to meet, for example by attending meetings and workshops abroad.





1980-1997

## Nicosia Master Plan



One of the first groups of pioneers was a team of experts from both communities who in 1978 joined forces to complete a joint sewage system for Nicosia. They formed the **Nicosia Master Plan**, a team of architects, city planners, sociologists, and economists which became instrumental in **building a common vision for the divided city of Nicosia.**



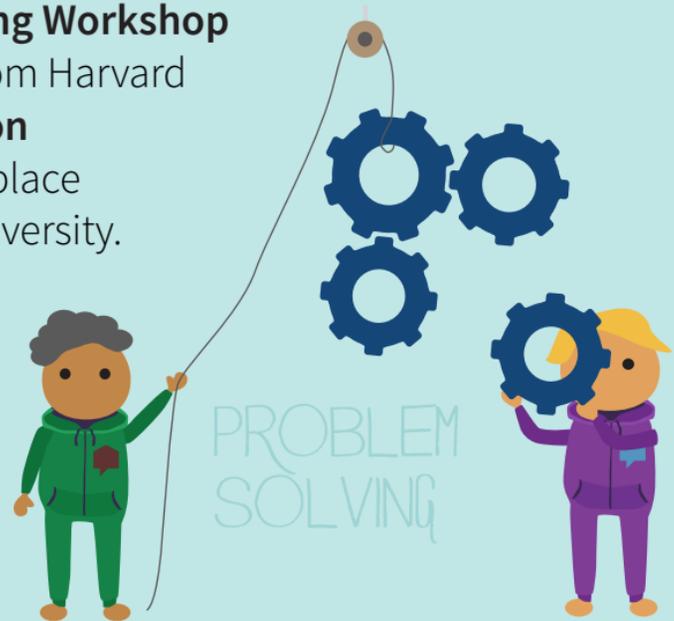
Then, starting in 1980, a series of **bi-communal meetings** was organized by the **British Friends of Cyprus Committee** in London with Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot journalists, educators, politicians, public servants, and architects.





1980-1997

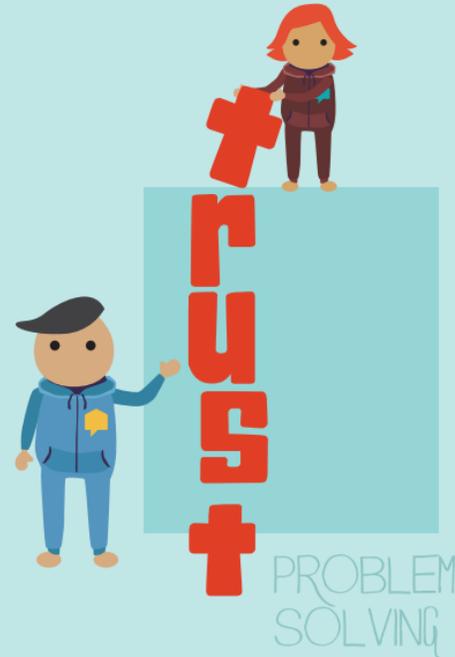
Other initiatives followed such as the **1984 Interactive Problem-solving Workshop** organized by **Herbert Kelman** from Harvard University and the **1985 Operation Locksmith Workshop** that took place with **Leonard Doob** from Yale University.





1980-1997

From **1988 to 1993**, a series of four **Problem-solving Workshops** (in Ottawa, London, and Nicosia) was organized with the help of **Ron Fisher** from the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security. These workshops aimed to **build trust between Cypriots** using ideas from the growing academic field of conflict resolution.





1980-1997

In **1992**, **Louise Diamond** from the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy came to Cyprus to organize two Conflict Resolution Workshops.

She teamed up with **Diana Chigas** from the Conflict Management Group and a fruitful collaboration emerged between the two organizations, leading to the establishment of the **Cyprus Consortium** in **1994** with the support of the **Cyprus Fulbright Commission** and **USAID**.





The **Cyprus Consortium** carried out a series of **Trainings for Trainers** from 1994 to 1997 and helped **build a pool of local trainers** that offered assistance to different bi-communal groups focused on specific issues.





1980-1997

These workshops and groups used a technique called **Interactive Management** which was employed by Fulbright Scholar **Benjamin Broome** to help **Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots develop strategies for their peace-building efforts**. The work culminated in a **Cyprus Peace Bazaar** event where **241 promising bi-communal projects were showcased and 15 were selected** as the most instrumental to the needs of the both communities and the bi-communal movement.





1980-1997

Another key development was a series of **25 mediation trainings** offered to various groups by Fulbright Scholars **Marco Turk** and **John Ungerlider**.

These trainings used exercises, roleplaying, and discussion to help Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots learn **mediation techniques** that could be applied at home, at work, or in community settings.





1980-1997

Therefore, the focus of the movement during these early years was on **civil society development** and **mediation and peacebuilding**. The various trainings and workshops equipped people from the two communities with conflict resolution and mediation tools and also led to the establishment of **bi-communal groups that started to meet regularly** and were the **seeds of the civil society peace-building movement in Cyprus**.





1980-1997

But in **December 1997** political difficulties meant that **Turkish Cypriots could no longer cross the Buffer Zone** to meet with Greek Cypriots. This meant the movement needed to adapt to the new circumstances.





1998-2003

## initial developments: 1998 to 2003

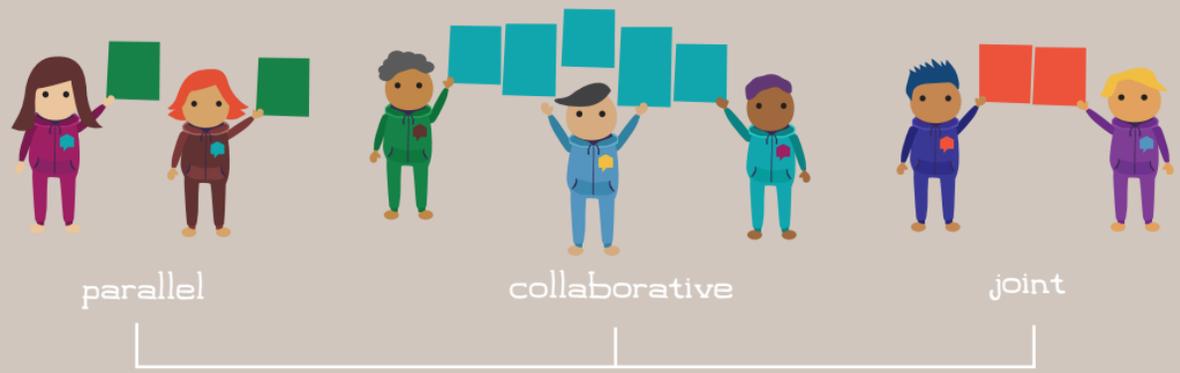
Between **1998** and **2003**, the civil society peace-building movement **began to develop outside the Buffer Zone**, working not only on mediation and reconciliation, but also carrying out activities in areas of common concern for both communities.





1998-2003

These initiatives had a bi-communal component with **parallel**, **collaborative**, and some **joint projects** taking place.





1998-2003

During this period around 200 civil society organizations in Cyprus made use of the support offered by the **USAID/UNOPS Bi-communal Development Program** to do work in different relevant fields. Even though a variety of initiatives were implemented, **cultural heritage**, **environment**, and **public health** were predominant during this period.





1998-2003



cultural heritage

Cultural heritage initiatives were focused on **restoring and preserving the architectural artefacts** of the island such as the traditional quarters of Old Nicosia and the Venetian Walls surrounding the heart of the city, the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas, and the Hala Sultan Tekke Mosque.





environment

Environment initiatives were deemed vital for the **preservation of fragile ecosystems** across the island and carried out important work with local fauna (sea turtles, snakes, griffon vultures, Cyprus donkeys and Cyprus mouflons) as well as reforestation, cleaning-up events on beaches across the island, and biodiversity awareness campaigns.





1998-2003



public health

Public health initiatives were also implemented during this period to eradicate diseases and pests, to inform the public on disease prevention issues, and to **introduce new medical techniques** in Cyprus.





1998-2003

At the same time, work was still being done on bringing people together in order to help them overcome the past. The establishment of a **Friendship House** in Pyla in 1998, accessible to both communities, meant that some level of contact was still possible and people continued to work together. At the same time, bi-communal public events organized in the **Pergamos Park** in Pyla were the beginning of a new era of contact and dialogue.





1998-2003

The approach of the civil society peace-building movement during this nascent period was to identify and address the **most urgent needs** in society in areas such as **capacity development, knowledge & innovation,** and **social good.**





1998-2003

In **2002**, the emerging civil society peace-building movement had its first major public outreach opportunity when a **Common Vision** document was created and signed by **86 Turkish Cypriot NGOs** calling on the leaders of the two communities to come to a settlement and outlining criteria for a solution.





1998-2003

But the most crucial event for the evolution of the movement came in **2003**, when **crossing points between the two communities were opened** and Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were able to make contact, and thus work together, much more easily than before.





2004-2008

## growth & cooperation: 2004 to 2008

The lifting of crossing restrictions in **2003** was a major turning point for the civil society peacebuilding movement in Cyprus. It enabled the multiplication of joint projects and the establishment of **inter-communal networks** and **thematic groups** such as:

- Teachers' Platform United Cyprus (2004)
- Madison Dairy Advisory Group (2004)
- Cyprus Organic Advisory Group (2005)
- Cyprus Environmental Stakeholder Forum (2007)
- Cyprus Community Media Centre (2009)
- Cyprus Islandwide NGO Development Platform (2009)
- and more!



2004-2008

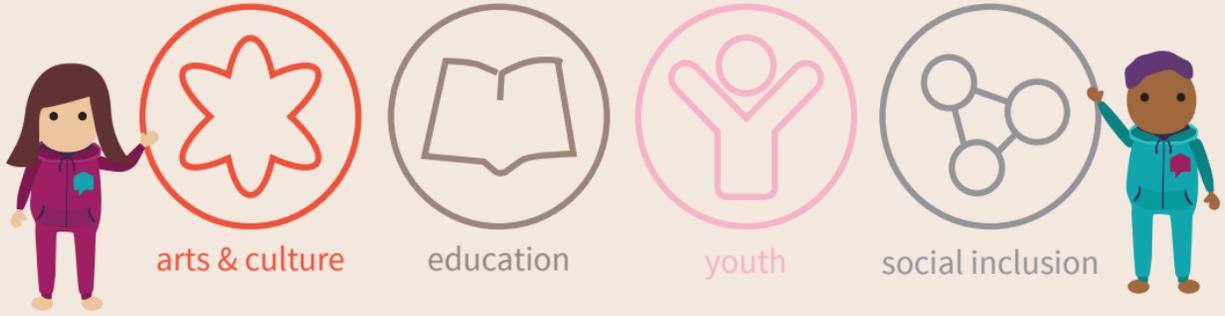
At the same time, **the emerging civil society sector continued growing** and attracted support from the European Union and USAID, through the following programmes:





2004-2008

**Working on common projects** enabled Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to find ways to **build relationships & cooperate** on issues of common concern. The thematic reach of the civil society peace-building movement continued to diversify with considerable growth in areas such as **arts & culture, education, youth, and social inclusion.**





2004-2008

Arts & culture initiatives worked to **bridge the gap between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot artistic communities** through joint exhibitions and performances, art competitions and collaborations, and **efforts to involve more people** such as the Open Studios events during which artists opened their workshops for visits from the public.



arts & culture

**TOGETHER**



social inclusion

Social inclusion initiatives were centered on **offering support to marginalized groups**, combating discrimination, and **promoting human rights** and respect for diversity.





2004-2008

Education initiatives focused on **promoting tolerance through civic and peace education**, training teachers and educators in conflict resolution, initiating a dialogue on historical narratives in both communities, and providing educational materials and trainings on various environmental, health, and social issues.



education



youth

Youth initiatives included numerous bi-communal summer camps on different topics, skill development opportunities, and events focused on peace and reconciliation.





2004-2008

While capacity development, knowledge production, and working for social good remained essential pillars of the civil society peace-building movement during this period, **encouraging dialogue & promoting diversity** also became central to the movement's efforts for reconciliation.



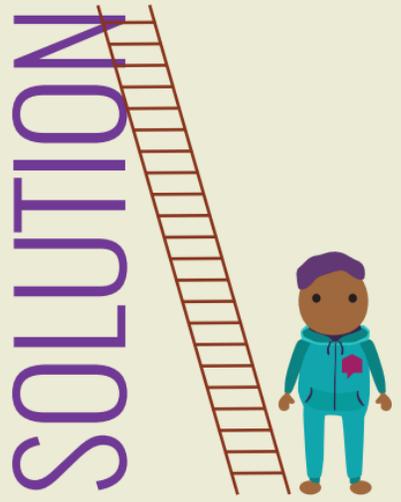


2004-2008

The focus on mutual understanding and multiculturalism was particularly important following the rejection of a comprehensive settlement in April **2004**.

While the Turkish Cypriot community voted in favor of the settlement, an outcome that was influenced by the great mobilization of Turkish Cypriot civil society, the Greek Cypriot community voted against the plan, and a solution wasn't reached.

In May 2004, the Republic of Cyprus joined the European Union with the *acquis communautaire* suspended in the Turkish Cypriot community.

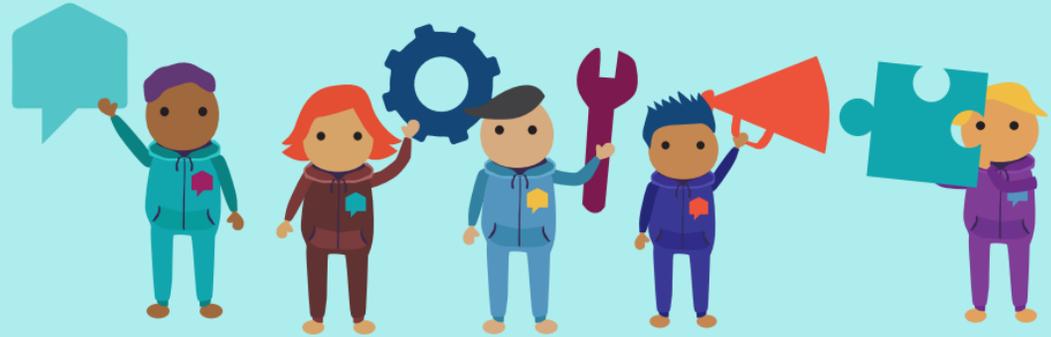




2008-2014

## specialization: 2008 to 2014

When negotiations for a settlement were resumed in **2008**, **13 working groups and technical committees** were set up to pave the way to fully-fledged negotiations. The participants in some of the committees included **civil society leaders and technical experts** who had been involved in the peace-building movement.





2008-2014



At the same time, some civil society organisations were beginning to occupy an increasingly important role in **addressing the democratic deficit of the formal peace process** and providing **specialized services** to their communities.



2008-2014

This specialization is reflected in an increasing tendency towards equal distribution of initiatives belonging to different thematic areas, a definitive sign of the **consolidation and maturity of the civil society peace-building movement**. One important development is that some areas that had been lagging behind such as **gender, media, and business & economy** began to bloom during this period.



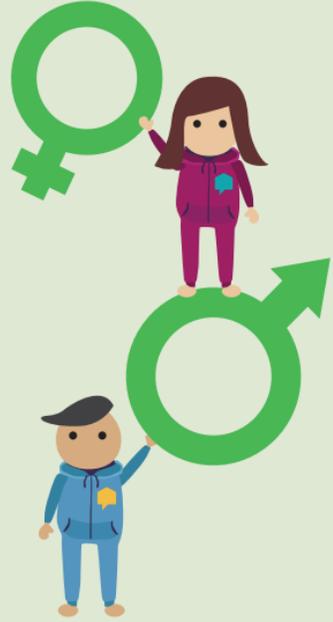


2008-2014



gender

**Gender initiatives** focused on the **empowerment of women and the fight for gender equality** in the private sphere, through trainings and community awareness events, and the public sphere, by setting up a Gender Advisory Team whose purpose was to mainstream gender equality in the peace process and by highlighting the importance of including UN's Security Council Resolution 1325 in the Cyprus negotiation process.





2008-2014



media

**Media initiatives** were mainly directed towards **encouraging the emergence of a non-biased, independent, community media sector in Cyprus** and equipping community leaders with the necessary skills for professional online journalism and media production. Moreover, civil society in Cyprus was the host for an international community media conference where practitioners exchanged best practices and discussed the future of community media in our technology-driven societies.





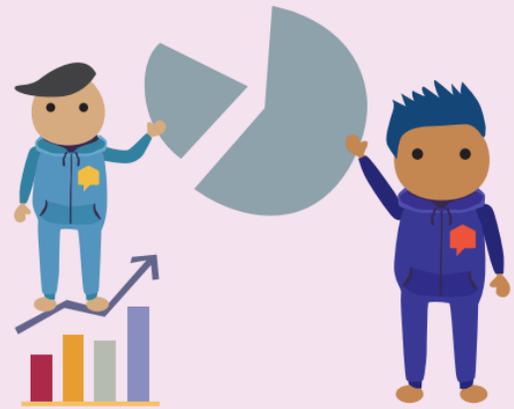
2008-2014



business

**Business & Economy initiatives** were centred on **highlighting the benefits of economic co-operation between the Greek Cypriot community and the Turkish Cypriot community**. The Chambers of Commerce in the two communities carried out a joint project called Interdependence which aimed to encourage joint business initiatives and private sector development through market research and business cooperation grants.

In addition, the Stelios Awards, rewarding business cooperation between the Greek Cypriot community and the Turkish Cypriot community, proved to the Cypriot public that such cooperation can be achieved and is beneficial for all.





2008-2014

During this period, civil society peace-building initiatives have increasingly focused on actively engaging with the general public, through **active citizenship** activities, and decision-makers, through **advocacy & policymaking** initiatives. At the same time, dialogue & diversity initiatives have also continued growing in numbers.





2008-2014

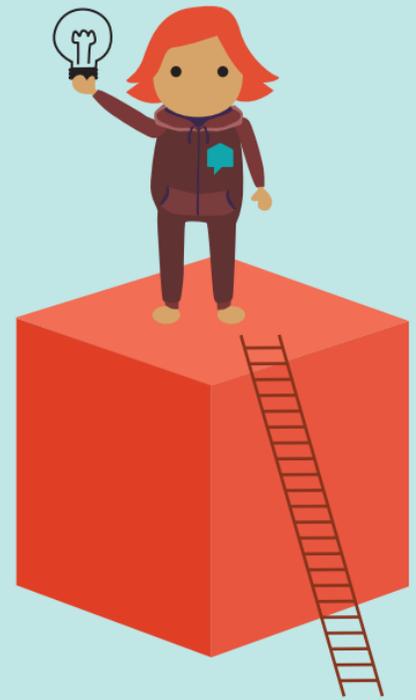
These trends confirm that civil society in Cyprus is contributing to the creation of a multi-cultural society and is helping **mend the divisions between the different communities on the island,** and **strengthen the relationship** between the public and the island's leaders.





2008-2014

With support from UNDP ACT,  
**a pool of civil society specialists**  
has been established in Cyprus  
working to bridge the gap between  
needs on the ground and  
policy-making processes  
in **different thematic areas:**





2008-2014

**Education & History**

Association for Historical Dialogue & Research

**Media & Communications**

Cyprus Community Media Centre

**Economic Cooperation**

The Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry, The Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce

**Environment**

Cyprus Environmental Stakeholder Forum

**Cultural Heritage and Participatory Planning**

Kontea Heritage Foundation, The Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ETEK), Union of the Chambers of Cyprus Turkish Engineers and Architects

**Civil Society Development**

The Management Centre of the Mediterranean, NGO Support Centre

**Youth**

Youth Power, Mediation Association, PeacePlayers Cyprus

**Research & Advocacy**

SeeD (Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development)

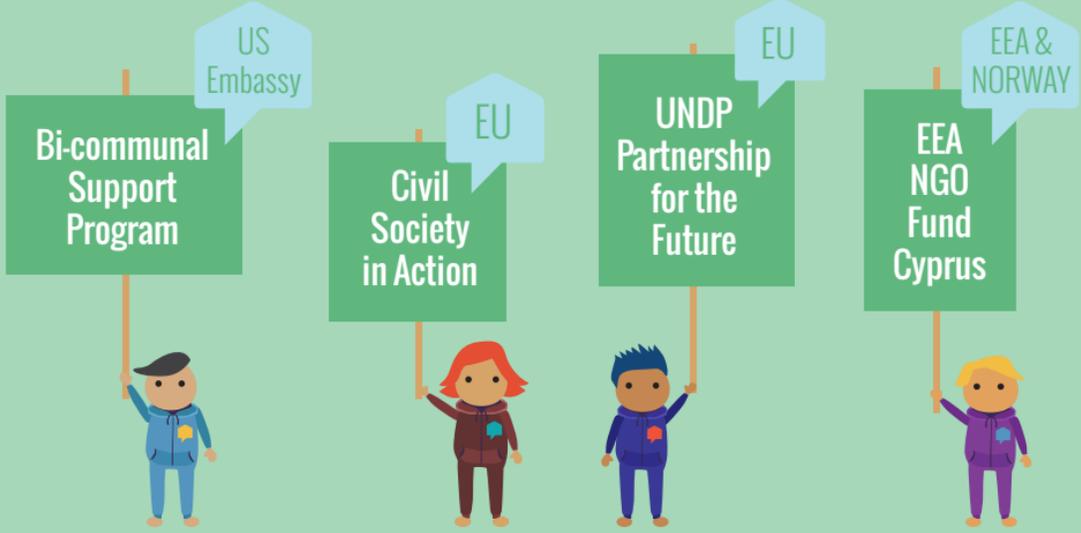


To see the full range of organizations working on peace building in Cyprus **click here.**



2008-2014

In addition to UNDP ACT, other programs helped support the civil society peace-building movement:





2008-2014

A landmark for the civil society peace-building movement was the **opening of the Home for Cooperation** in **2011**, in the **Ledra Palace** Buffer Zone, twenty years after pioneers of the Cypriot civil society peace-building movement first met here.





2008-2014

Another significant moment was the establishment of the **Peace it Together network**, which connected the efforts of **peace-building and reconciliation NGOs on the island.**





2008-2014



**Mahallae** is the fruit of this collaboration, a platform designed to connect the experiences, resources, and expertise of civil society practitioners in Cyprus and the region and to encourage the use of technology and innovation for social change.

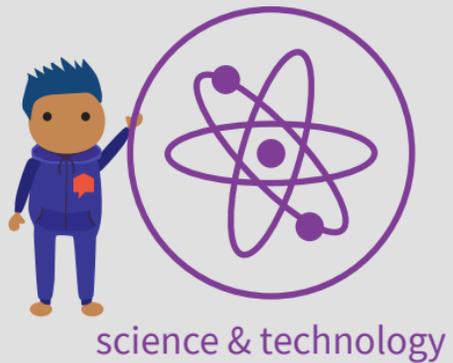




2008-2014

Together with SCORE, a tool that uses a scientific approach to identifying the obstacles to reconciliation, **Mahallae** is dedicated to using the power of technology for social good.

At the same time, as information technology opens up new avenues for communication and collaboration, new initiatives of the civil society peacebuilding movement are seeking ways to benefit from **science and technology** in their work.





2008-2014

Today, civil society organizations in Cyprus are becoming more firmly established and specialized and they tend to be better placed to influence policymaking in the two communities. The story of civil society peace-building in Cyprus continues and **new generations of activists and practitioners are carrying the mission further**, adapting old methods and inventing new tools to build a peaceful, multi-cultural, prosperous society on the island.

