

DOCUMENT*

Theses of the Central Committee: 22nd Congress of AKEL

II. AKEL IN THE FRONT LINE OF SOCIAL STRUGGLES INTRODUCTION

The leading role of our Party is not guaranteed because we define ourselves as the vanguard of society, but this role is earned and reaffirmed continuously through the organization, guidance and waging of political and social struggles of the people.

Our Party is inextricably connected not only with the foundation and growth of the workers trade union movement, but also with all the mass social movements that developed in Cyprus during the 20th century, namely the Peasants, Co-operative, Youth, Women's, Culture and Sports Movement.

Through this process the organizations of the People's Movement of the Left were created and developed as mass broad united bastions of struggle which, with the Party's political and organizational support, waged countless struggles to assert a better life for the people of Cyprus.

However, we must admit that in recent years, the role of the Party in the various organized movements and interest groups has weakened. Developments - technological, social, educational etc. - are causing an explosion in the emergence of movements or interest groups. We have not fully followed this explosion, nor can we categorically claim that the Party's mark is as strong as it was in the past across the spectrum of social action.

The functioning of the Party Base Organisations is of particular importance to the strengthening of the Party's role and participation in social struggles. The PBO, in an organized and collective way, can and must organize and monitor the Party's presence and support of daily struggles. Towards this end, the distinct action of each party member is of crucial importance. Party members must act and participate so that they convey the Party's philosophy within the mass movement and develop their activity so that through their example the Party's vanguard role is acknowledged and recognised.

It is incomprehensible that a member of AKEL is indifferent and neutral in the on-going struggles developing in his/her social environment.

TRADE UNION STRUGGLES

Workers Movement

Cypriot communists were the heart and soul of the Workers Movement during the first difficult steps of its birth and consolidation. In the course of time, this relationship was enhanced further as a result of the struggles waged for workers' rights and the improvement of the lives of the people of Cyprus, with AKEL a steadfast, consistent supporter and ally in their struggles and assertions.

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Cyprus' accession to the EU in 2004 has created new given conditions for the working people and their Movement. The dominant ruling policies decided at an EU level in the field of labour and social policy are aiming at the deregulation of labour relations, the continuous decline of employment protection levels and the dismantling of the welfare state. Step by step neoliberalism in the exercise of economic and social policy is being institutionalised through a series of decisions, such as the Single Economic Governance, the creation of the Banking Union and the regulation for surplus budgets which are having a particularly negative impact on working people's gains and rights all over Europe.

Today in the conditions of a deep economic crisis and the neoliberal conservative administration of the DISY party, where there is an attempt to impose redistribution of wealth at the expense of working people and the popular strata which fully coincides with the policies of the Memorandum, the Workers Movement is confronted with even more difficult situations. The balance of forces between capital and labour is changing dramatically at the expense of labour. The government's policies and objectives and big capital are identical.

High unemployment and the fear, as well as the insecurity, it provokes among working people are exploited by employers, aiming at the further deregulation of labour and abolition of fundamental worker's rights.

At the same time the stance of the majority of the mass media and ruling ideology are cultivating trends denigrating worker's trade union struggles and organized trade union presence.

In this environment, AKEL's relations with working people and the labour movement need to be continuously upgraded. The Party will continue to defend the joint action of working people and will resist any attempts to foster artificial rifts between them.

AKEL through its actions and initiatives must continue to resolutely support the struggles and demands of the trade union movement on the following axis:

- The resistance to austerity policies and cuts in working people's wages and rights.
- The struggle against the selling off of public assets and wealth.
- The fight against the dismantling of the welfare state and the degradation and privatization of social insurance.
- Ensuring the universal application of collective agreements through the necessary legislative regulations and legislative safeguarding of basic terms of employment for all working people not covered by collective bargaining agreements.
- The protection and extension of trade union rights.
- The combating of unemployment by adopting measures to create quality jobs with rights and dignity.

Particularly important in today's conditions of the prevalence of neoliberalism and the attack on working people's rights and gains both internationally and across Europe, is the assumption of initiatives by AKEL aiming at enhancing the role of class-orientated progressive forces which are united within the ranks of the international trade union movement of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), as well as the strengthening of the coordination with other left progressive forces, particularly in Europe.

The support of the struggles of the workers movement does not begin and end through the positions and demands the Party is elaborating and projecting in relation to working people.

The members of AKEL must be organized and participate actively in the trade union movement of the Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO) or depending on their occupation in other professional trade union organizations.

The members and cadres of AKEL, through their activity and participation in day-to-day trade union work, are working for the class awareness and education of the working people, for the cultivation of ties between working people and the Party, acting as the channel of working people's views and concerns to the Party.

Farmers Movement

In the conditions of a deep economic crisis, the agricultural economy is called upon to play an upgraded role. An already greater activity is being observed in the agricultural sector, in the geo-food production chain and generally in the utilisation of the multifaceted economic possibilities of the countryside, such as rural tourism, cultural creation and the environment. An increase in the share of the primary sector in the GDP and a growth in the export of agricultural products is also being recorded.

At the same time, the market operation system continues to lead to the exploitation of farmers. Developments in the field of the Cooperative sector have further worsened the farmer's situation and conditions.

AKEL will continue and further strengthen its support towards the struggle of the Farmer's Movement, taking even more initiatives to curb the exploitative establishments.

The organised Farmer's Movement is a key driving force of society and in today's conditions the upgrading of its role and the tasks it has to fulfil is very important for the economy and society in general. That's why we have to work systematically to further the involvement of the Farmer's Movement in decision-making on agricultural policy.

AKEL all these years was always in the frontline of farmer's struggles, together with the Union of Cypriot Farmers (EKA). Today the priority is to strengthen the worker's and farmer's alliance in the relentless class struggle against the monopoly capital of the multinational companies.

It is imperative to defend society from the austerity policies and poverty, modern credit extortion and wipe out of farmers. We need to highlight the need for cooperative associations in the service of farmers so that they will be a tool and lever to support their income.

The experience of the Farmer's Movement needs to be harnessed to a greater degree towards innovation, ingenious alternative forms of development and the protection of the interests of various sectors of crop and livestock production, coastal fisheries and fish cultivation.

AKEL will support EKA and the Farmer's Movement in general in their effort to forge a broad militant Social Movement to combat the neoliberal policies, in cooperation with the rest of the Trade Union Movement. This is achieved through the daily and methodical work among the broad masses of farmers and the rural population in general. It is extremely important to win the battle of organized personal face-to-face contact to resolve with flexible handling the specialized problems affecting the various sectors and residents of rural areas.

Movement of Small and Middle Shopkeepers – SMEs

The global economic crisis and the criminal policy of the banking and financial system in Cyprus have dealt fatal blows to the backbone of the Cyprus economy, which is composed of the small and medium-sized, family mostly, businesses.

Thousands of businesses in recent years have closed down. All the SME's are facing very serious problems as a result of the reduction of the cycle of their work, the lack of liquidity and funding, as well as the successive blows dealt as a result of the neoliberal policy pursued by the Anastasiades government and the Memoranda measures.

One of the objectives of the economic policy implemented by the government today is the contraction of the middle strata. It is not at by chance that statistical figures on the one hand register the closing of thousands of small businesses and on the other the increase in the number and profits of the very big companies and commercial supermarket chains.

The abolition in reality of regulated shopping hours and the implementation of the policy of issuing decrees are just some of the examples of the government's neo-liberal policies to the detriment of working people and small businesses.

To address and reverse the current destructive path, AKEL supports dynamically the demands and assertions of the Movement of SME's as this is expressed mainly through their organized voice and

expression, that is to say the Cyprus Federation of Professional Craftsmen and Shopkeepers (POVEK). AKEL is working so that measures to support and strengthen the middle strata are implemented, such as:

- Creation and operation of a national funding agency aiming at channelling the necessary liquidity to SME's.
- Funding of SME's from the banking system with conditions and criteria that will correspond to their abilities.
- Protection of small business premises from dispossessions-foreclosures.
- Reduction of rents.
- End to the liberalization of working hours.
- Effective implementation of laws and regulations to address unfair competition between businesses and the prevention of monopolistic and oligopolistic phenomena.
- Promotion of support programs and grants to SME's from European Funds and national resources.
- Promotion of the legislative safeguarding of professions and specialties.
- Modernization and upgrading of the Organization of SME's and strengthening its participation in decision-making centres.

For the promotion and implementation of the above positions the joint action of small and middle strata with the working people as a whole is imperative. The cooperation and common struggle against anti-social measures through the forging of a united front of trade unions, associations, agencies and movements can and must create conditions for resistance and the protection of the gains and rights of working people and society in general.

The role of the Party, its members and cadres, in this effort must be pioneering, resolute and decisive.

The assertions, projection and solution of the just demands of the middle strata confirm the affinity of interests between workers-farmers-middle strata. The further strengthening of this correct policy serves the general interests of the people and the country.

THE STRUGGLES OF THE YOUNG GENERATION

AKEL is in practice the Party of the Youth and this is demonstrated by life itself and illustrated by the long and continuous struggles we waged and the gains we have achieved for young people. We have waged many struggles with the young generation. Together, we are continuing to assert for our young people.

We are struggling for the further upgrading of young people's social, institutional and political role. The system idolizes profit, imposes unbridled competition, individualism and selfishness, as well as intensifying the phenomenon of depreciation and depoliticisation. It is why the participation of young people in mass youth organisations, and through them, in socio-political affairs and struggles is important. It is in these arenas and through these struggles that they become aware that nothing is ever granted, but that rights are won through collective assertion and struggle.

The neoliberal policies being implemented by the Anastasiades and DISY party government damage society and the Cyprus economy. One of the first victims of this policy is the young generation. The austerity policies undermine Education and working conditions. The government's anti-growth policies lead to mass unemployment, which among young people has reached very high levels. Many of our young people are forced to migrate abroad in search of a better life. Many young people after their graduation and completion of their studies abroad choose not to return to Cyprus because they don't see any perspectives whatsoever. There is nothing worse for a country than to disappoint its youth. Regretfully, this is happening today and the responsibilities of the government and ruling forces for this very negative fact are indeed enormous.

The vision of AKEL for a qualitatively better society of true freedom, democracy and social justice, the positions of AKEL to exit the memorandum and austerity, render the Party an objective ally of the youth movement. Through our actions we must channel this objective alliance into joint action with the young people. AKEL always struggled for the young generation and most of its gains and rights are

because of our Party's struggles. With their joint struggles and demands, AKEL and the Youth Movement are called upon to rekindle the hope for our young people.

AKEL supports the demands of our country's new generation. AKEL is on the young people's side and is struggling with them.

The Student Movement

Support of the mass organisations of the Student's Movement (POFEN Pancyprian Federation of Student Unions and PSEM Pancyprian Coordinating Committee of School Students) was and still remains one of the primary goals of our forces within the Student Movement. With the good of the organised student movement always at the centre of our attention, as well as our sole objective the existence of a healthy, autonomous, united and combative Student Movement, AKEL supports with all its strength the Pancyprian Federation of Student Unions. POFEN with its democratic structures and functioning, its militant character is the guarantee for a student movement that will be struggling with consistency for the rights of students and our people.

School Students' Movement

The School Students Movement in 1994 after many years of struggle earned its lawful expression at all levels and the legal safeguarding of the election and functioning of the Pancyprian and District Coordinating Committees of School Students (PSEM and ESEM).

We shall continue to fully support PSEM as the mass voice and expression of the School Students Movement, with the sole criterion the existence of an autonomous, united, mass and militant School Students Movement fighting with consistency for pupil's interests.

Twenty years since the institutional safeguarding of the Coordinating Committees, the state must also accept the free activity within schools of the School Students Organisations, given that through them school student's democratic rights and free expression are guaranteed, politically-aware and conscious people develop with a critical outlook about the world around them.

The Children's Movement of EDON

AKEL and the People's Movement of the Left in general have always had children and their needs among its priorities. The activity of the Pancyprian Movement of Pioneers of EDON since its establishment in 1960 has as its goal helping children develop a critical outlook and struggle against injustice and fascism, as well as providing opportunities for quality use of recreation time, acquaintance with our culture and the development of social action.

Despite the fact that the Pioneer's Movement of EDON has the character of a movement and addresses Cypriot society in a broad sense, nonetheless the support and strengthening of the mass character of the Movement by the Party Base Organisations and the organisations of the People's Movement has never ceased being seen as crucially important.

AKEL is elaborating and developing its policy to the benefit of young people, mainly through EDON. Our Party attaches particular attention to EDON. Through EDON, our Party can reach out in an organised way to the young generation and convey its political proposals and own vision for society.

EDON is organising the youth and mobilising it to demand their rights. Militant assertive action is a component part of EDON's philosophy with regards the Youth Movement. Through this philosophy the promotion and solution of day-to-day and big problems is achieved; problems that concern our country's young generation.

EDON represents the most progressive and militant section of our country's youth. It is the Party's reserve force and the main agency for developing a broad, political, social and cultural movement among

the young generation. AKEL supports EDON and provides all necessary assistance so that it can continue unhindered its activity. This support must not be restricted just to a central and district level. It must also be expressed on a local level as well.

The Party Base Organisations must have at the centre of their attention the provision of practical support to EDON's local organisations at all levels. The PBO must show more trust in the youth of EDON in the development of their local activity and encourage the undertaking of initiatives. In addition, bearing in mind that despite the efforts underway to organise young workers within the ranks of EDON, and that serious difficulties still exist, PBO's must attach to their activity the relevant quality and content that will correspond to the modern given conditions by involving and organising young people in the Party's activities.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The women of Cyprus, despite the advances that have been made as a result of the struggle of the women's movement, are still behind in numerous of areas. The Anastasiades government from the first day of its election has confirmed that the conservatism and liberalism of the Right-wing is the opponent of women and their demands. The Women's Movement, both International and in Cyprus, in the present conditions is called upon to address the contemporary challenges with greater determination.

The reduction in working people's free time is further limiting the possibility of women today becoming active in political struggle and organised in a trade union, of participating in organized struggle and approaching the activity of the People's and Women's Movement. At the same time, the progressive steps which have been taken in women's social position in recent decades have created in many women's consciousness', particularly among young women, the distorted impression that gender equality between women and men has already been achieved; that the whole issue is confined to the election of women to public and state positions; that the various forms of discrimination against women are not associated with the socio-economic system itself or that women's emancipation can be achieved on a personal or family level and not through the struggles of the organized Women's Movement. These are perceptions and ideas which thrive particularly within the European Union, and which are consciously driving women towards depoliticisation and inaction.

The undisputed truth is that women's emancipation and gender equality remains a vision and not a living reality. The numerous forms of discriminations, oppression and inequality of women remain deeply rooted even in the most developed contemporary societies. Furthermore, the truth is that despite the fact that forms of inequality exist that have a trans-class character (violence against women, participation in decision-making centres, reproduction and sexual rights), it is women of the popular strata that shoulder the main burden of inequality.

Without doubt, the full emancipation of women can be achieved in all spheres of life, only through the socialist future of humanity. It is however undeniable that even in the current conditions it is feasible, but also a pressing need, to wage struggles for the protection of women's gains and rights, to resolve specific problems and take new steps forward. This is precisely why political action and struggles with positions and demands on every aspect of women's inequality is demanded, as well as the existence of an autonomous Women's Movement with a class-based, progressive and democratic orientation.

We will continue to work for:

- The Elimination of all the adverse discriminations which still exist in institutions and legislations.
- The defence of equality in work and combating of wage inequality.
- Social, political and institutional measures and infrastructures that will support maternity as a social responsibility and the equitable sharing of family responsibilities.
- Combating of the sexist stereotypes in education, the mass media and in institutions.
- Full safeguarding of women's sexual and reproductive rights.

- Integration of the equality monitoring mechanisms into a single institution with sufficient powers, resources and competences and the enhancement of the role of the National Mechanism for Women's Rights.

The political approach to equality issues is inextricably linked with the positions, demands and struggles of AKEL for the elimination of all forms of human exploitation and the reversal of society's patriarchal structures.

The fulfilment of the role of the progressive movement of POGO under the present conditions demands the even greater support of the Party towards the Women's Movement of POGO; support which must be directly expressed through the systematic involvement of the Party Base Organisations with issues that concern POGO, interconnecting the activity of the Women's Movement with local communities and the Party's activity.

In the field of gender issues various dedicated organizations and agencies are active, working on issues such as violence against women, trafficking of women etc. We need to make our contacts with these bodies more systematic, seeking arenas of joint action, aiming at the promotion of women's equality.

A significant chapter for the Party is the role played by women within the Party itself. Despite the steps that have been made there are gaps and weaknesses in attracting women to the Party at the level of their active participation in party life and in terms of promoting women cadres of the Party. Stereotypes and anachronistic patriarchal attitudes are negatively affecting the perception of the role and position of women within the Party as well.

A greater intensification and systematic work on gender issues within the Party itself is required. Combating discrimination and equality are elements of our vision for a fairer society and this must be reflected in the day-to-day activity of the Party.

The women of Cyprus and the world in general can release enormous potential for socio-economic development, progress and the prosperity of our country, but also of the humanity itself. AKEL will continue its participation in this struggle.

WIDER SOCIAL STRUGGLES

Cooperative Movement

Early in the 20th century, the Cooperative emerged in Cyprus out of society's need to protect the poor and vulnerable strata. The support from the Peoples Movement of the Left helped and contributed both to its development both in the credit sector, as well as in other areas (such as commercial, industrial and rural).

Cyprus' accession to the European Union created a new given situation for the Cooperative Movement. Harmonization with the European Directives and Regulations, which was imposed, contributed to the deterioration of its original character. However, it remained as a popular base movement and continued to play an important role.

Taking into account the philosophy of the current government, we are quite rightly concerned about the danger that the Cooperative movement will not only completely change its character, but also that it will be sold off to private capital.

The agreement between the Government and Troika, but also the law that was approved in September of 2013, without the implementation of the pledges given by the government, has changed the situation for the Cooperative movement. In the credit sector there aren't any cooperative establishments that function according to the principles of the cooperative movement. In reality, there is a state bank with the Government as the owner. The only cooperative element that is left is the holding company which owns just 1% of the shares.

These reversals were made under conditions of a blatant and public blackmail from the Government and the Troika. However, we must admit that we were relatively unprepared in how we should react to the changes that were imposed on the Cooperatives and to some extent we were caught off guard. Although,

we managed to secure some commitments, the government however didn't respect them. Nonetheless, it should be noted, judging by the reactions after the vote, that the position of our Parliament Group during the vote led to confusion and frustration among public opinion.

Regarding the non-credit work of Cooperatives, the intentions of the Government are clear. As the agreement reached between the Cooperative Central Bank, the Central Bank of Cyprus and the Troika stipulates, the commitments that were made will in fact alienate the Cooperative Movement from any other activity that is not financial. That is to say, they will sell out to private capital all the profitable companies that are directly related with sensitive areas such as agriculture livestock.

All these changes and the member's alienation are causing conditions whereby the Movement of Cooperative People is shrinking and cooperative ideas are being undermined. The resurgence of all those characteristics that linked the Cooperatives with the people and the restoration of its character as a movement through the people's participation at all levels of its activities is a priority for AKEL.

Taking seriously into account the new given situation:

- AKEL will continue to struggle for the preservation and development of the cooperative movement as an important pillar of economic and social development.
- We do not accept any *fait accompli*. We will insist on the democratic management of the Cooperative Movement and that its officials should be elected directly by the people.
- We insist on the fulfilment in a specific and practical way of the government's commitment and that they will not sell out either the whole or any part of the share capital it currently owns. We will resist with all of our strength such a possibility.
- We express our strong opposition to the on-going alienation of the secondary companies, particularly the profitable ones, from the Cooperative Movement. Their selling off will create private monopolies in sensitive areas, such as agricultural livestock.
- We demand the return of the ownership to the rightful owners of the cooperative societies and their self-administration.
- We will take initiatives to develop new cooperative companies in innovative sectors of the economy and areas which will benefit social needs.

AKEL considers the Cooperative Movement as a serious social gain of our people and as such we will defend it.

Refugees Movement

Since 1974, AKEL has contributed decisively towards the establishment and development of the Refugee Movement after 1974 and is working to alleviate the refugee's conditions and improve policies on refugees.

On the basis of AKEL's policy on refugees, its MP's are developing their activities through the Parliamentary Commission for Refugees, from where they control executive power and support the just demands of our refugees.

AKEL cadres and members work for the solution of the problems facing our refugees through the Pancyprian Union of Refugees, the Central Agency for Equal Distribution of Burdens and the Turkish Cypriot Properties Management Committees, as well as through the Municipalities and School Committees of the occupied areas, refugee associations and other Committees.

The active participation of refugees themselves in the procedure to promote the promotion of the problems they face, especially in asserting solutions to these problems, is an important priority for our Party and a basic prerequisite for maintaining and strengthening the role of the Refugee Movement.

The dismantling of the refugee policy by the Anastasiades government demands the intensification of the struggle in order to combat the attacks against refugees' benefits and to defend their rights.

We believe that the decisions that have turned the Pancyprian Union of Refugees (PUR) into an appointed body, despite the strong disagreements expressed by AKEL, have weakened both PUR's role and relationship with refugees and their problems.

AKEL will continue to support the long-standing and justified demand of our refugees for the proclamation of elections so that they can elect their own leadership.

Peace Movement

The defence of peace is one the most basic and burning tasks of our time. However, it's not enough to say yes to peace if we do not fight against its greatest enemy, namely imperialism. The struggle for peace to prevail and be lasting is not only a struggle against wars, but also a struggle against the systemic causes that provoke them. Peace is suffering and being undermined by poverty, inequality, exploitation and huge democratic deficits.

Imperialism has redoubled its efforts, especially in our region, the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. Today the need for friendship, internationalist solidarity and the struggle of the peoples, is being highlighted as never before as our own powerful weapon and counterweight.

The World Peace Council has a role in the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples with a rich legacy for a militant continuity. The Pancyprian Peace Council, which three years ago was elected to the Secretariat of the World Peace Council and a fact that strengthens the struggle of the Peace Movement in Cyprus, is an integral part of the WPC.

AKEL is at the forefront of the struggle for peace and solidarity and for the abolition of aggressive military organizations. The anti-imperialist element in its activity stems from its ideology. That is why the Party participates and supports the action of the WPC, which whom it has ties that were forged in long and common struggles and mobilizations for the prevalence of peace in Cyprus and all over the world.

Another timeless very important task is the building of strong bridges of friendship and common anti-imperialist struggle with the peace-loving forces in the Turkish Cypriot community.

It is our duty to increase mass participation and broaden the Peace Movement, developing rich and militant activities in all areas of society and life. We should inject a rich content to the activity of the members and friends of the CPC, so that they really become active fighters for peace.

The Environmental Movement

The organized Environmental Movement has developed big struggles in Cypriot society. In a period characterized by growing environmental problems, both on a local and global level, the Environmental Movement's responsibilities have increased. In order to defend the environment, the active involvement and struggle of citizens and the Environmental Movement is vitally important.

AKEL will continue to highlight the direct link between the pursuit of profit and the destruction of the environment.

AKEL supports and salutes the activity of the Environmental Movement and its official voice and expression, namely the Cyprus Federation of Environmental Organizations.

AKEL members need to be more active on environmental issues and give more support to environmental organizations at all levels.

AKEL considers as positive the contribution and activity of the environmental movement and will continue to strengthen and cooperate with it on the basis of common objectives.

CULTURE MOVEMENT

The Party and the Peoples Movement of the Left from the very outset of its political and social activity had cultural work and development high among its priorities.

The Party identified four basic policy directions aimed at the further development of Culture for the benefit of the people.

- A. Assertive policy towards the state.
- B. Defence of the people of Letters and Arts and the projection of their work.
- C. The development of amateur, artistic and intellectual creativity.
- D. The enlightening and self-education of party members and cadres.

Through this activity, AKEL and the People's Movement of the Left forged strong ties with the workers of culture and the arts, injecting a new impetus to Culture, highlighting the progressive nature of Culture and its people who serve it and led Culture to achieve new gains for the benefit of the people and cultural artists.

We should point out that today due to the economic crisis and the moral and social disorganization, the day-to-day life and priorities of cultural artists is also being affected. Unfortunately, many of them instead of considering collective struggle as necessary for the defence of their rights choose an individual and solitary path, in trying to better their living conditions.

The participation of cultural artists in decisions on Culture is more than necessary. They have however to play a special role in the broader social struggles as well. Today in particular, when attempts are underway to impose a political and social regression, their position on the side of the people and workers strengthens the struggle for progress and justice.

A new effort must begin which will renew the ties between cultural artists with the Party and the People's Movement of the Left and which will forge ties and relations with them on the basis of a joint collective struggle, both for their own problems as working people - artists, and on general issues of our country's cultural and intellectual development.

The cultural artists and intellectual members of AKEL in consultation and coordination with the Cultural Office of the Party have a special role to play in the galvanization into action and correct orientation of the trade union and professional agencies that express and represent the world of Culture.

Large Family Movement

The organizations of large families and families with three children have been elevated in recent years through their militant actions and organizational development, as agencies for the participation and activity of thousands of families who fall into these categories.

The vicious fiscal austerity policies and cuts in social benefits provided for in the Memorandum and being imposed by the government have hit many large families and families with three children.

AKEL supports the struggles of large families and families with three children for an end to the cuts in benefits and allowances relating to these groups of the population, the bringing back of the projects that have been terminated, the completion of the recognition of families with three children as large families.

Now more than ever a comprehensive family and demographic policy is required, which supports the multifaceted and increased needs, particularly of large families.

The complex socio-economic conditions which have a particular impact on these population groups demand a more thorough and structured involvement and better coordination of party mechanisms at a central and district level on the issues affecting large families and families with three children. The members and cadres of AKEL belonging to these groups need to further increase their activities in the organizations of large families and families with three children.

Parents' and Guardians' Movement

Parents and guardians of preschool and school children age are organizing and developing their action through the local Parent Associations.

The Parent Associations have a comprehensive organizational structure at a local, district and national level and the Movement of organized parents has won a very important institutionalised intervention, both in the Council of Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as in various agencies of the state and society whose work is related to children and school pupils.

The Parent Associations must have an autonomous and independent from the state status, have an assertive militant and progressive character, as well as working not only for the daily demands of children and their parents, but also struggle for the broader social priority issues relating to the quality and content of education, aiming at a human-centred and democratic school with respect to children's rights, respect for diversity, democracy and universal values.

Around these objectives it is necessary to rally all the agencies involved in the process within a broad front, that is to say, educational organizations, school pupil's organizations and organized parents.

The Parent Associations represent the arena where the members of AKEL over time develop their activity and in many cases are in the frontline of the struggle and are elected to leading bodies. Despite all this, the greater participation and better coordination of Party members is necessary so that AKEL's organized intervention within these Associations is promoted at the levels that conditions demand.

The Party must upgrade the mechanism for monitoring and coordinating this activity.

Pensioner's Movement

The steady and continuous support which AKEL has always given to the struggle for the improvement of pensions, social benefits and pensioner's quality of life are elements that have contributed towards AKEL's acknowledgement and respect among pensioners being high.

In recent years, pensioners have been organised very efficiently within the ranks of EKYSY-PEO, thus building a mass, militant and assertive movement that functions on a local, district and central basis and in which thousands of people are active.

Bearing in mind the attacks on pensioner's gains as a result of the austerity policies and the dismantling of the welfare state, AKEL will continue to resolutely support their struggles aiming at measures being taken to ensure a dignified living standard for the elderly and improve their quality of life.

Professional Associations and Agencies

Professional associations and agencies are established as a rule in scientific sectors involved with the provision of services. These associations consist mainly of self-employed persons and are committed to ensuring and safeguarding the rights of their members, but also to regulating the standards of exercising their specific professions.

Among such associations and agencies one can register the following: the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ΑΟΑΕ), the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Cyprus (ICPAC), the Cyprus Medical Association, the Cyprus Bar Association and others.

The rapid growth of the services sector in our country in recent years and developments in the Cyprus economy, as a consequence in Cypriot society, have significantly upgraded the role and impact of these associations.

The proper functioning of the associations can greatly assist towards solving important problems of Cypriot society, given that their role should not be limited to narrow trade union sectional issues, but also extend to wider issues of the sector in which they are active.

Based on this logic, AKEL considers that such associations must operate based on principles, have a progressive character and serve society as a whole rather than narrow, selfish, or petty political interests.

The relationship which the Party must establish with such bodies must be close and two-way.

The party safeguards through this relationship, the opportunity to inject a class-based and progressive content to the activities of these associations and agencies.

The Corresponding Auxiliaries Departments/Offices of the Party, which deal with the same issues, must undertake the role of regular contact with the members and associations and agencies described above.

Party members and cadres must participate actively in professional associations and bodies, not aiming to subordinate such agencies, but to contribute so that they have a progressive character and defend the true interests of their members, but also of society in general and not of any narrow personal or petty-party interests.

Assertive Action of Movements and Interest Groups

In recent years numerous organizations have been formed in Cyprus focusing their activity either on problems faced by specific groups of the population, or making a general social contribution and providing support to vulnerable groups.

Such organizations are consumer associations, organizations for disabled people, organizations and associations dealing with the problems of children with special needs, organizations of people facing various ailments, dealing with issues affecting immigrants, the problem of domestic violence and others.

The Volunteers Movement has had a significant intervention over the last few decades, which is governed by specific legislation and operates on a pan-cyprian, district and local basis. It is important to stress that many social welfare and support programmes for vulnerable groups of the population have been established and operate thanks to the efforts of volunteers through the Volunteer Community Councils or voluntary social organizations.

The crisis also creates new needs in the arena of social struggle, such as the issue of repossessions/foreclosures and the protection of family primary residences and small professional premises which has led to the formation of a focused movement on the issue.

AKEL needs to have a constant, creative and interactive relationship with social movements and their specialized agencies.

The building of AKEL's relationship with social movements is achieved through the role and active participation of AKEL members in them. We observe weaknesses in this relationship. There are AKEL members and cadres participating on their initiative and who are active in various agencies, but without having the required coordination and support from AKEL so that a more collective and efficient way of intervention is achieved. However, there is also the phenomenon of Party organizations and bodies at various levels underestimating or ignoring the activity of these agencies.

It is moreover clear due to the social conditions as they are evolving, the diversity of these organizations and complexity of social problems demand the timely formulation of wide-ranging positions and more effective intervention on specific social issues.

This can be achieved with the Party's Auxiliary Offices developing their involvement and the establishment on a more comprehensive and steady basis of an auxiliary mechanism to guide and offer support to party members who are active within these various social organizations, which in a specialised and systematic way should be engaged in the elaboration of policy and development of contacts with the various agencies and social movements.