Chrystalla, 65, Confectionery, Nicosia

**1. Can you tell me a few things about yourself? For example, when and where you were born? Did you study for anything? Have you travelled or lived overseas?**

*I’m 65 years old and live in Nicosia. I have two children and five grandchildren. I’ve been working here at the confectionery for years; Mr George had it before me [she shows his photograph on the wall]. Then about 18 years ago I took over because his children had chosen other professions. I come here six days a week apart from Sundays. But things are difficult. Business isn’t as it used to be. We produce mainly biscuits and savouries now which we distribute to supermarkets.*

**2. Have you ever owned another business in the past? How long have you been an owner of a business? How many businesses have you owned in the past?**

*I was working here at the confectionery as an employee for 28 years and then I took over, even though there was a drop in business. I continue working so I can help my daughter. My son is doing well and he has just started his own business. But my daughter didn’t study for anything and it’s difficult for her to get a job. So I am forced to stay on, making biscuits and savouries to distribute to supermarkets.*

**3. Can you tell me about the history behind your business?**

*Mr George first opened the business and because of the shop’s location [in Old Nicosia] it became popular; there were a lot of shops around here, it was a busy area and there was a lot of work. I worked here as an employee for 28 years until Mr George had to stop due to his old age, then because his children weren’t interested I took over. I have owned the business since 2000, but I don’t own the shop, I rent. The owner wanted me to leave a few years ago; he wanted to combine it with the first floor and turn it into a house but the town planning department didn’t give him permission.*

**4. What advantages did you see in opening your business?**

*In the past we had many customers who would buy our products. Later on however, especially over the last ten years, many other shops have opened in the area and sales have dropped. Times have changed. People used to buy our products, now they don’t have money. Just think, I had a regular customer, who would come in every Friday and buy a bag-full of biscuits. After a few years he stopped coming. One day I saw him in the area and I asked him why he had stopped coming in. He said to me, “Mrs Chrystalla, they made me redundant and I don’t even have money to buy milk for my children, how can I come and buy biscuits?”*

*The only reason I keep the shop is for my daughter. She has debts to repay and children; I have to help.*

**5. Are you facing any obstacles or problems in keeping your business going?**

*There isn’t work like there used to be. Now there’s a lot of competition, there are quite a few shops in the area. There are shops that have been opened by foreigners – Pakistanis, Indians; they don’t come to shop here. To tell the truth the Cypriots are scared of coming to the area because it has changed, it’s full of foreigners who drink too much and get drunk. I come here early and leave by 3pm; I don’t stay late when it gets dark. I get a pension but I pay rent for the shop...I don’t get that much but I stay here for my daughter’s sake.*

**6. Considering the experience that you have built up over the years but also the experience that you are going through now, would you say that you are still able to maintain the business and deal with the problems that affect it?**

*I work here mainly for financial reasons. But it’s difficult because I have a family which means that I come here from the morning ‘til the afternoon, then I go home and do my housework. I do what I can to help my daughter...we try to make the best of things.*