Andreas, 72, Furniture Repairer, Limassol

**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?**

*My name is Andreas, I’m 72 years old and live in Limassol. My home is not here, it’s in Polemidia but my workshop is here. I’ve got two children but no grandchildren yet unfortunately. My son is married and my daughter is still single.*

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

*My workshop has been running since 1974. This house belonged to Turkish-Cypriots and, after the war in 1974, they left the house and I rented it from the government. I’ve been here for 44 years. Before then, I worked from my house in Polemidia but it wasn’t a convenient set-up. I need space to work; my wife would complain about the mess that I would make at home and so I took the opportunity and asked if I could rent this house [his wife, who was present, agreed that it was a good opportunity to turn the house into a workshop]. I come here every morning from 7am and I work quite a few hours, depending on how much work I have. OK, the house isn’t new but I can do my job well enough [the house has suffered a lot of wear and tear over the many years].*

* **Have you or the government ever carried out any maintenance on the house?**

*Why should I maintain it? Is it mine? I just rent it. If it was mine I would repair it. I pay €50 rent a month; I can’t pay out a load of money for renovations on something which isn’t mine. I’ve got my own house which I maintain and I think that’s enough. The government doesn’t care if it’s derelict or not.*

**4. What advantages did you see in continuing your business? Why don’t you retire?**

*I don’t think you can call this a business, but it’s a workshop. Sure I get a pension, but don’t think that it’s enough. I get €365 a month. Can you live off that much money? My daughter is still living with us, she’s single and unemployed. She lost her job in 2015 and she’s still trying to find another job. So, it’s for financial reasons but then again why should I stop? Should I stay at home and grow old and die before my time? Just think that there are hardly any furniture repair workshops with people who know what they are doing. Most people buy ready-made furniture now which can’t be fixed easily. This piece here belongs to a lady who bought it about 15 maybe 20 years ago and the fabric just needs changing [the workshop is full of old chairs which were once considered luxury furnishings].*

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

*There is still work around, like I said before, people used to buy better quality furniture which can be repaired. Now they buy ready-made which unfortunately can’t be fixed because of the way the furniture is produced. I think that once people stop getting their old furniture repaired and they buy ready-made, this profession will die away. The other problem is the access. This is a one-way street. They fixed the roads a few years ago and here, just behind the seafront road, they made all the roads one-way. If someone stops outside to drop off 2-3 chairs, by the time he gets the chairs out of the car, you can hear the other drivers lined up behind him hooting their horns and shouting. I don’t know who makes these decisions about the roads but it’s idiotic and it has a bad impact on all the businesses in the area.*

**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’ve been here for 44 years and my running expenses are very low. I pay €50 rent a month which is my income from fixing one or two chairs. I don’t have electricity or water. My power comes from a tractor battery which I re-charge at night [he points to the tractor battery]. So, since I make a clear profit, why should I stop working and stay at home all day? Even if they won’t rent this place out to me, I can still work from home. They did try to up the rent several times but I objected to it and it stayed the same.*