



January and February 2026

FES Cyprus Newsletter No. 158

Headlines

- Second trilateral meeting between Erhürman, Christodoulides and UNSG personal envoy fails to produce results on CBMs; no enlarged meeting announced.
- Holguín's op-ed puts the onus on the leaders to continue meeting on their own and to make progress before she re-engages on the ground.
- UNFICYP's mandate is extended, although Pakistan and Somalia abstained, and after Pakistan broke the silent process.
- Corruption allegations against President Christodoulides emerge, as Cyprus assumes EU Presidency.
- Serdar Denktaş was elected president of the Social Justice and Struggle Party (TAM Party) at its first Ordinary Grand Congress.
- Turkish Cypriot Parliament ratified a controversial €110 million fiber-optic protocol with Türk Telekom amid fierce union strikes and „digital sovereignty“ concerns.

Editors Note

An EU member state in the Eastern Mediterranean, at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa; this is Cyprus in a nutshell.

The monthly FES Cyprus Newsletter gives you a current overview of the domestic political situation and the external affairs of an island, which is far more than a divided country.

Have a pleasant read!

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Cyprus Problem and Intercommunal Relations

In January, after shuttling between Geneva, Brussels and Washington DC, the UN Secretary General's (UNSG) personal envoy María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar arrived in Cyprus to assess whether enough progress on confidence building measures (CBMs) had been achieved that could justify another enlarged 5+1 summit. On January 27, Holguín held separate meetings with the respective Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders, Tufan Erhürman and Nikos Christodoulides, to hear their concerns and preview proposals. Following her meeting with Christodoulides, Holguín stated that the island's two sides had not achieved much progress on CBMs since her previous visit to the island.

On January 28, a trilateral meeting was held in the UN special representative's residence, in the buffer zone, between the two leaders and Holguín. Addressing Erhürman's four-point methodology demands, Christodoulides presented a five-point proposal, which included: 1) to formally reaffirm the agreed basis of the solution; 2) the UN to prepare a list of convergences found between the two sides up to the point at which negotiations collapsed in Crans Montana; 3) to convene a new enlarged meeting; 4) to announce at the meeting that talks will resume based on the list of convergences found; and 5) to announce at the meeting the opening of four new crossing points between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (at Kokkina/Erenkoy, Louroujina/Akincilar, Mia Milia/Haspolat, and Athienou/Kiracikoy–Aglantzia/Eglence/Pyroi/Gaziler).¹ The meeting ended without any agreement, and Holguín confirmed afterwards that no enlarged meeting would be arranged and that more results on CBMs were needed.

Speaking after a meeting with UNSG António Guterres on January 29, Greek Foreign Minister Giorgos Gerapetritis stated that the next enlarged meeting on the Cyprus problem would take place when conditions are ripe. It was reported that Guterres had been seriously disturbed by the lack of progress achieved on the Cyprus problem.

On January 31, the UN Security Council decided to renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) until January 31, 2027, reaffirming its support for renewed negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. The mandate was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions by Pakistan and Somalia. Meanwhile, Pakistan broke the silent process of

the mandate's renewal on January 29. The „silent process“ refers to a specific diplomatic procedure used by the UN Security Council to adopt resolutions without a formal debate when consensus is assumed. Pakistan reportedly advocated for stronger language regarding the socio-economic disparities between the two sides and challenged certain phrasings that recognised only the Republic of Cyprus's authority, echoing the Turkish Cypriot view that their consent is also required for the peacekeeping mission.

The Cyprus problem was among the topics discussed during a meeting held on February 11 between Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which primarily focused on Greek-Turkish relations. Mitsotakis told Erdoğan that a window of opportunity for a Cyprus solution exists. Meanwhile, the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta Kos, after meeting Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in Ankara, publicly welcomed Turkey's ongoing informal process on Cyprus under the auspices of the UNSG. She hinted that progress on the Cyprus problem could positively influence Turkey's EU accession prospects. Guterres and Fidan had discussed the Cyprus problem during a phone call on February 10.

On February 11, Guterres and Erhürman held a meeting in New York to discuss the way forward on the Cyprus problem, including the matter of the crossing points. Erhürman reported that Guterres had agreed to maintain closer contact going forward with him and had appeared sympathetic to the principle that this time must be different. to signal a departure from the „open-ended“ and „procedural“ negotiations of the past

In a February 15 op-ed published in the Cyprus Mail, UN Envoy Holguín stated that she would return to the island in a few months when she considers that the UN presence is useful to facilitate decision-making, effectively putting the onus on the leaders to continue meeting on their own and to make progress before she re-engages on the ground. Holguín argued that the two leaders needed time as internal processes were unfolding, in particular the parliamentary elections and EU Presidency for the Greek Cypriots and the consolidation of the new leadership for the Turkish Cypriots. Christodoulides publicly dismissed Holguín's argument that talks could not resume due to upcoming elections or EU presidency duties.

On February 24, Erhürman and Christodoulides met at the official residence of UN Special Representative Khassim Diagne, in the buffer zone, without Holguín's presence. Although no concrete results were achieved, the meeting was described as open and honest. The leaders agreed to have their representatives, Greek Cypriot negotiator Menelaos Menelaou and Turkish Cypriot negotiator Mehmet Dana, intensify their regular weekly meetings to iron out technical obstacles and keep communication open. Both sides agreed to meet again soon, while Christodoulides disclosed he had formally requested a meeting with the UNSG in March to maintain momentum.

¹ The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is only recognised by the Republic of Turkey. While for Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, Tufan Erhürman serves as President of the TRNC, the international community considers him the communal leader of the Turkish Cypriots. As the government of the Republic of Cyprus remains internationally recognised as the government of the whole of the island, the entire island is now considered to be a member of the European Union. However, the acquis communautaire is suspended in northern Cyprus pending a political settlement to the Cyprus problem (see Protocol no. 10 of the Accession Treaty).

Hydrocarbons

Israel and Cyprus are nearing a final bilateral agreement on the joint development of the Aphrodite–Ishai natural gas field, resolving a longstanding cross-border dispute over this shared reservoir in the Eastern Mediterranean.

On 8 January President Christodoulides held a meeting with Guido Brusco, Eni’s Chief Operating Officer Global Natural Resources. Christodoulides stated that the Kronos gas field in Block 6 of Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is in the final stage of development ahead of a potential final investment decision.

On January 23, Christodoulides met with ExxonMobil Vice President John Ardill during which he stated that gas reserves in the Glaucus and Pegasus deposits of Block 10 could amount to between 6 and 9 trillion cubic feet. Plans for further natural gas drilling in Cyprus’ gas-bearing blocks 5 and 10, as well as the prospect of expanding cooperation with the US energy giant, were discussed. Production could reportedly start between 2030 and 2035.

Greek Cypriots

Gender Developments

On January 20, DISY officially announced that MP Nikos Sykas, who had been accused of domestic violence by his wife, would be expelled from the party’s ballot for the upcoming parliamentary elections. Sykas’ parliamentary immunity was lifted by the Supreme Court following a request from the Attorney General.

On January 28, a bill to integrate gender equality into the executive, legislative and judicial elements in the public and broader public sector was discussed at the House Legal Affairs Committee.

On February 4, Paphos Mayor Phedonas Phedonos was suspended following allegations of domestic abuse and rape. In a statement to the police, a Paphos-based land developer accused Phedonos of committing rape around ten years ago. The domestic abuse allegations surfaced after a social media personality claimed to hold admission documents of Phedonos’ wife to the Nicosia General Hospital in 2017. A case file regarding the allegations of rape against Phedonos was handed over to the legal service on February 26. Phedonos denies all charges and claims that they are politically motivated.

Economic Developments in Times of Green Transition

On February 19, EU Energy Commissioner Dan Jorgensen reaffirmed the European Commission’s strong political and technical support to the Great Sea Interconnector, as well as to efforts to accelerate its construction. The project with a budget of EUR 1.9bn, in part provided by the European Union, has reportedly been delayed by geopolitical ten-

sions in the Eastern Mediterranean and as Cyprus has repeatedly sought clarifications on the total cost, viability and any liabilities for unforeseen delays. Greek Energy Minister, Stavros Papastavrou, stated that Greece will hire an external adviser to review costs for the stalled project while Cyprus has reportedly approached the United Arab Emirates for possible cooperation on the project. French cable maker Nexans announced in January 2026 that it was renegotiating the delivery schedule, acknowledging delays.

According to Eurostat, in 2025, Cyprus recorded a 5.2% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the third quarter compared with the second quarter, placing it among the EU countries that achieved notable declines.

Domestic Developments

Just days after Cyprus assumed the rotating EU Presidency, a video uploaded to X by a user named “Emily Thompson” ignited corruption allegations against President Christodoulides. The footage, which government officials described as a hybrid attack, appeared to show close aides and associates discussing:

- Cash-for-access arrangements, where financial contributions allegedly secured access to the President;
- Bypassing campaign finance caps of EUR 1m via donations funneled through a charitable entity linked to the First Lady;
- Conversations involving former Energy Minister Giorgos Lakkotrypis and Chief of Staff Charalambos Charalambous, with unidentified investors promising favours through their contacts with the president in exchange for payments.

The scandal forced Charalambous, who is also the President’s brother-in-law, to resign from his role as Chief of Staff and the First Lady to resign from her charitable leadership role.

On February 17, Former House President Demetris Syllouris and former AKEL MP Christakis Giovanis were found not guilty by the Nicosia Criminal Court regarding their alleged involvement in the golden passports scandal. During the trial, the court rejected as evidence the Al Jazeera video in which high profile officials appeared to be assisting the proxy of a pretend Chinese investor with a supposed criminal record secure a Cypriot passport under the citizenship-by-investment scheme, and did not call certain prosecution witnesses to testify. The verdict was not unanimous.

Future of Work, Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On January 2, the trade unions held a meeting on the the minimum wage issue. A decree dated December 31 stated that the new minimum wage would come into effect on January 1, 2026. The three trade union organisations, Confederation of Cypriot Workers (SEK), Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO) and Democratic Labour Federation of

Cyprus (DEOK), had called on the government to revise its decision before issuing the relevant decree. They argued that the government had retreated from its commitments following pressure from individuals who visited the Presidential Palace a few days before the Council of Ministers made its final decision. Specifically, the National Minimum Wage increases from €900 to €979 (gross salary) upon hiring, and from €1000 to €1088 (gross salary) after six months of employment with the same employer. These amounts correspond to full-time employment. According to the decree, in the case of part-time employees, the minimum monthly wage is adjusted proportionally to the number of hours worked in relation to full-time working hours.

On January 5, ISOTITA trade union's police branch announced initial measures in response to the reduction of rest days for security force members. The union is calling for a symbolic protest outside the House of Representatives of Cyprus when the Legal Affairs Committee discusses the issue. It has also raised the matter with EuroCOP and plans to initiate legal action in Cyprus, describing the decision as unilateral and harmful to police labour rights

On January 9, the first meeting of the Labour Advisory Body of Cyprus took place in a tense atmosphere despite efforts by the new Labour and Social Insurance Minister, Marino Mousioutta. Discussions focused on four issues: the national minimum wage decree, employment of third-country nationals studying in Cyprus, pension reform, and legislation on adequate minimum wages and extending collective agreements. Employer and trade union representatives reiterated their disagreements, while unions maintained that the minimum wage remains too low and requested a meeting with the president.

On January 13, Larnaca taxi drivers proceeded with a four-hour work stoppage, citing threats to their professional survival due to uncontrolled platforms, especially at Larnaca Airport. The Pancyprian Federation of Urban Taxi Drivers (POAT) warned that if authorities failed to act, a 24-hour strike would follow on January 20, and an indefinite strike might begin on January 28. Their key demands include blocking all platforms' activity at the airport and strict compliance with taxi base rules. Drivers emphasised that the responsibility for any escalation rests with authorities who fail to enforce the law.

A new legal framework for teleworking in the public sector will come into effect on April 2, 2026, as established by the 2025 Law on Teleworking in the Public Sector and detailed in the Guidelines Manual of the Department of Public Administration and Personnel. Teleworking will be implemented exclusively in a hybrid model, combining remote work with time at the usual workplace, to avoid isolation and coordination issues. The maximum number of teleworking days is 50 per year, but for the first year of implementation (2026), the limit is 20 days for smooth adaptation. Unused days do not carry over to the next year. Teleworking is not a right but a possibility granted based on

operational needs. Eligible employees must have tasks suitable for remote work, at least one year of service and not work in shifts. Approval rests with the department head and may be reassessed depending on changing conditions.

On January 13, a collective agreement was signed to standardise employment terms for staff of Community Volunteer Councils (SKE) and Committees (EKE) under the Pancyprian Coordinating Council for Volunteering (PSSE). Covering 2026–2028, it regulates salaries, leave, benefits and overtime, ensuring dignified and uniform working conditions. PSSE officials emphasised that supporting these frontline volunteers is essential for maintaining social cohesion and protecting vulnerable groups across Cyprus.

The Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO) has called for an immediate investigation into reports from a foreign TV documentary highlighting abusive employment and housing conditions for female workers in Ayia Napa, including information pointing to possible human trafficking mechanisms. In its statement, PEO noted that the allegations heighten long-standing concerns raised to the government about practices leading to labour and sexual exploitation, procedural violations and infringement of workers' rights, while exposing weaknesses in effective oversight. The Ayia Napa Municipality stated that the incidents highlighted by Channel 4 "do not reflect the overall situation in Ayia Napa". The municipality stressed that Ayia Napa is an international tourist destination, welcoming hundreds of thousands of visitors each year while respecting workers' legality, human rights and dignity. Letters were sent to relevant ministries, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, and other authorities to ensure necessary actions are taken.

From February 1, 2026, Cyprus public sector employees can access extended flexible hours (7:00–9:00 a.m. arrival, 2:30–4:30 p.m. departure) and eligible employees (parents, caregivers, and those with health conditions) can reduce their daily work hours by two hours. Reduced hours affect pay proportionally but do not impact promotion, leave or retirement benefits. Employees must submit a formal request to their department head, indicating the reduced hours for the entire calendar month. The mandatory public service window of 8:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. remains in effect.

A new bill titled "The Adequacy of Minimum Wages Law of 2026" is expected to be submitted to Parliament in 2026. The bill aims to achieve a decent standard of living, reduce worker poverty and promote social cohesion and upward convergence. The law applies to all employees under employment contracts within the Republic of Cyprus. Certain categories of employees or economic sectors may be exempted by decree in accordance with Article 7 of the law.

Average gross monthly earnings in Cyprus increased 4.3% in Q3 2025, reaching €2,452, according to the Cyprus Statistical Service (Cystat). Men earned more on average

(€2,622) than women (€2,238), though women's wages grew faster (+4.9% vs. +3.8%). About 36% of employees earn below €1,500, while 5% earn €6,000 or more, with non-Cypriots more concentrated in lower wage brackets.

In 2024, 56.8% of Cypriot youths, aged 15–34, with medium or high education, reported a strong match between their studies and jobs. This is slightly above the EU average of 56.4%, according to Eurostat. The highest match occurs in health, ICT and education, while arts, humanities and social sciences show the largest mismatches. Across Europe, Latvia, Lithuania and Germany lead, while Italy, Slovakia and Denmark report the lowest alignment.

On February 24, the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance announced that the first pillar of Cyprus' pension reform is scheduled to be submitted to the new parliament in early June 2026, following the May elections, with the aim of implementing the new system from January 1, 2027.

Turkish Cypriots

Gender Developments

The Academy for Women Entrepreneurs was officially launched on January 5 as an initiative to encourage women's involvement in business and enhance their professional abilities. Supported by the Turkish Cypriot Women Entrepreneurs Association, the programme was held both online and in person from January 21 to March 6. The academy delivered comprehensive training in digital marketing, financial management, leadership and e-commerce through a partnership with Garanti BBVA and Boğaziçi University's Lifelong Learning Centre.

Women's Education Collective organised a series of public activities titled "Feminist Events" aimed at raising awareness of gender equality and feminist perspectives in the Turkish Cypriot community. The programme, which started on February 11 and was scheduled to conclude on March 11, included seminars, workshops, film screenings and interactive public discussions in northern Nicosia. Activities addressed themes such as women's historical contributions to science, feminist history, and ongoing struggles for women's labour rights and social equality. The programme also included a seminar and drama workshop titled "How Do You Take Your Feminism?", as well as a presentation on Women and Science accompanied by a screening of the film Marie Curie: The Courage of Knowledge on February 14.

On February 18, a workshop titled "Women-Focused Health System: Experience, Access and Our Rights" was held in northern Nicosia through the cooperation of the Universal Patients' Rights Association and Woman-to-Life Support Association (KAYAD). The event addressed structural barriers women face in accessing healthcare and discussed solutions from a patient-rights perspective.

Economic Developments in Times of Green Transition

The Turkish Cypriot tourism industry posted its strongest performance to date in 2025, with official data confirming a 17.2% increase in arrivals compared to the previous year. Total visitor numbers reached approximately 2.6 million through air and sea gateways, a surge driven largely by the primary market of Turkey, where arrivals rose by over 19%. This growth occurred despite broader economic headwinds, including a significant local inflation rate. While third-country arrivals showed diverse trends, Germany emerged as a key European contributor with robust year-on-year growth, and Israel recorded a substantial increase in visitor numbers, reinforcing its position as a vital source of regional tourism. Government officials, including the tourism minister, attributed this success to expanded flight connections and targeted promotional campaigns, emphasising that record-breaking arrivals remain essential for sustaining the hospitality sector and service-based economy.

In the opening months of 2026, Turkish Cypriot Ministry of Finance intensified its domestic borrowing strategy to meet state financial obligations, conducting a series of high-volume auctions through the Central Bank. On January 8, the government secured a record-breaking single-day internal debt of over 4.135bn TL (approx. €81.3m) in a multi-currency issuance, followed by an additional 1.169bn TL (approx. €23m) later that month. This aggressive borrowing trend continued into February with a major „four-way“ tender on February 25, where the Treasury sought approximately 3.6bn TL (approx. €70.8m) across Turkish Lira, US Dollars, Euros and British Pounds to manage liquidity needs. By the end of February, the Ministry had already launched nine separate Government Internal Debt Security auctions for the year, utilising swap transactions to mitigate exchange rate risks as it navigates a projected budget deficit and high inflationary pressures.

Following a high-level evaluation meeting on February 12, Finance Minister Özdemir Berova confirmed that the north is accelerating its transition to a mandatory electronic invoicing system, officially set to launch in May 2026. This digital reform aims to modernise fiscal oversight, increase tax transparency and combat the informal economy by integrating business transactions directly with the Tax Department. While the government maintains its May deadline as a cornerstone of the 2026 digital transformation strategy, officials and stakeholders continue to evaluate technical readiness and software integration to ensure a seamless transition for the private sector.

In the first two months of 2026, the north experienced a steady upward trend in consumer prices, with the annual inflation rate climbing from 39.40% in January to 40.22% by the end of February. According to the Turkish Cypriot Statistical Institute, the monthly cost of living rose by 1.97% in January, largely driven by a sharp 11.40% spike in communication costs, followed by a more accelerated

monthly increase of 2.76% in February. This late-winter surge was primarily fuelled by a 6.06% rise in food and non-alcoholic beverages—highlighted by a staggering 100.40% increase in the price of cucumbers—and significant hikes in utility and housing costs. Despite a seasonal decline in clothing and footwear prices during February, the cumulative price index has already grown by 4.79% since the start of the year, signalling continued pressure on household purchasing power.

Domestic Developments

On 25 January, the Social Justice and Struggle Party (officially abbreviated as TAM Party) held its first Ordinary Grand Congress at the Near East University Atatürk Cultural and Congress Centre in northern Nicosia, electing founding leader Serdar Denktaş as president. He described the party as a new alternative focused on social justice, economic reform and a fresh approach to the Cyprus issue. By completing the congress, TAM Party met the statutory requirements for elections, and Denktaş pledged to modernise political culture, support young entrepreneurs with tax incentives, and enforce stricter citizenship controls to secure the Turkish Cypriot community's future.

On January 27, Mehmet Harmancı, mayor of the Nicosia Turkish Municipality (LTB), announced that he would not run for the leadership of the Communal Democracy Party (TDP) and would, instead, seek re-election as LTB mayor. Speaking on a TV programme, Harmancı said that with possible early parliamentary elections and the already ongoing process for selecting party executive bodies, it would be unfair to challenge the sitting party leader.

Newsletter No. 157 reported on a political standoff in December between Turkish Cypriot leader Tufan Erhürman and the Turkish Cypriot government over the appointment of the Board of Trustees of Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU). Erhürman initially rejected the government's nominees, citing legal inconsistencies and a failure to address the university's severe financial crisis. A compromise was reached on February 4, when Erhürman signed the decree appointing Şemi Bora, a former mayor of northern Nicosia and UBP veteran, as chairman. He nevertheless remained critical, arguing that the new board lacked the expertise needed to resolve the university's financial problems.

The Turkish Cypriot community marked the third anniversary of the devastating Turkish earthquakes of February 6, 2023 with emotional „Justice and Eternal Love“ commemorations, where families released white balloons into the sky at the graves of the „Champion Angels“, a group of 26 middle school students from the Gazimağusa/Famagusta Türk Maarif College volleyball teams and the nine parents and teachers who all perished when the Grand Isias Hotel collapsed in Adiyaman. These ceremonies took place against a backdrop of deep societal outrage following a controversial January 2026 verdict in the Isias case, in which a Turkish court in Adiyaman sentenced three public officials to 10

years for „conscious negligence“ while acquitting others. The Champion Angels Association fiercely condemned the ruling as a betrayal of justice. Leading figures, including association president Ruşen Karakaya and political leaders, have vowed to appeal the decision to higher courts and, if necessary, the European Court of Human Rights, insisting that the deaths were a foreseeable result of „probable intent“ rather than mere negligence.

The Fatma Ünal “fake diploma” trial reached a critical turning point on February 18, when the Güzelyurt/Morphou District Court ruled that sufficient evidence existed to refer the 16-count indictment, which includes charges of forging and circulating official documents, to the Nicosia Criminal Court. Ünal, a UBP politician and former president of the party's Kyrenia women's branch, is widely known as a close political ally of Prime Minister Ünsal Üstel. The case has placed additional pressure on the ruling National Unity Party (UBP). During hearings in late January, prosecution witness Serdal Gündüz, former secretary-general of the Cyprus Health and Social Sciences University, alleged that Parliament Speaker Ziya Öztürkler had pressured university officials in 2021 to facilitate Ünal's enrolment and accelerate the issuance of her diploma. Öztürkler has publicly denied the accusations. The next stage of proceedings, scheduled for March 27, is expected to draw significant political attention amid growing public scrutiny of alleged patronage networks within the Turkish Cypriot higher education sector.

The Turkish Cypriot political landscape remains strained by a high-stakes dispute over a €110m fibre-optic protocol with Türk Telekom, ratified by the Turkish Cypriot Parliament on February 23 after a marathon 19-hour session and widespread union strikes. The agreement, which was first placed on the political agenda several years ago as part of efforts to modernise the north's outdated telecommunications infrastructure, would establish a fibre-optic network operated by Türk Telekom under a 25-year framework. Opponents argue that the protocol effectively grants a long-term monopoly to a Turkish state-linked operator. Trade unions, including the Telecoms Workers Union (Tel-Sen), and the main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP) have denounced the deal as a “surrender of digital sovereignty”, criticising the lack of a competitive tender, the projected costs and the potential weakening of the state telecom authority. Supporters within the ruling National Unity Party (UBP) argue that the agreement is necessary to secure investment and accelerate long-delayed digital infrastructure upgrades. Despite the parliamentary vote, the agreement has not yet entered into force, as President Tufan Erhürman has not signed the bill, indicating that it is undergoing presidential review.

Future of Work, Labour Relations & Trade Unions

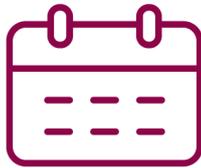
Following intense deliberations by the Minimum Wage Determination Commission, Turkish Cypriot authorities officially implemented a new minimum wage effective from January 1, as reported by local news outlets on Janu-

ary 9, 2026. The commission approved an 18.39% increase, raising the monthly net minimum wage to 52,738 TL (approx. €1,037) and the gross amount to 60,618 TL (approx. €1,192), a move intended to bolster the purchasing power of approximately 50,000 workers against rising inflation. In addition to the base salary adjustment, Labour and Social Security Minister Oğuzhan Hasipoğlu announced a supplemental social support package totalling 12,000 TL (approx. €236) for the year, to be distributed in two 6,000 TL (approx. €118) instalments in February and March to eligible employees. While the government highlighted that the new rate remains competitive compared to neighbouring jurisdictions, trade unions have expressed reservations, signalling that the increase may still fall short of the rapidly climbing cost of living.

Workers at Ektam, the north's main Pepsi bottler, launched an indefinite strike on 6 February over alleged anti-union actions and threats to job security, after management refused to engage with the Emek-İş (literally "labour") union. Acting as mediator to seek a resolution, the Turkish Cypriot Labour Ministry has announced it will investigate the alleged mass dismissals and maintains that there is no legal barrier to unionisation. Some political figures and civil society groups have criticised the company and called for stronger labour protections, while opposition parties contend that the government should do more to enforce labour laws and safeguard constitutional rights. Trade unions have also urged a boycott of Ektam products in support of the strike, which continues as pressure mounts for a negotiated settlement.

In mid-February, a wave of industrial action gripped northern Nicosia as trade unions, led by the Telecoms Workers Union (Tel-Sen) and the Cyprus Turkish Public Servants Union (KTAMS), launched strikes to protest the controversial fibre-optic protocol introduced in the preceding section. The unrest peaked on 23 February, when workers from the Telecommunications Department and other public sectors converged on Parliament, prompting the temporary installation of riot fencing to secure the building. In a dramatic escalation that same day, the Council of Ministers imposed a 60-day strike ban, justifying the move by designating telecommunications as an "essential service". The unions refused to recognise the ban, condemning it as an anti-democratic violation of constitutional rights. Union leaders, including KTAMS President Güven Bengihan, argued that the dispute had grown beyond a departmental issue into a broader struggle against the privatisation of strategic state assets and what they described as political impositions from Ankara.

Events in March and April



Event: Grab a UNIC Coffee Online Briefing
Title: Bumps and Barriers - The Long and Winding Road to Peace in Sudan
Guest: Achim Vogt, Head of FES Office in Uganda, Head of FES Project in Sudan
Location: via Zoom
Date: Tuesday, 17 March 2026
Time: 10 am (Nicosia) / 9 am (Berlin)
Registration: RSVP by March 16th to office.cyprus@fes.de

Recent Publications



No publications in January and February

Recent Podcasts



No Podcasts in January and February

Short Biographies of Authors

Yiannis Charalambous

Yiannis Charalambous has been a Research Assistant for FES Cyprus contributing to the writing of the monthly FES Cyprus Newsletter since July 2012. Yiannis obtained a Bachelor's degree in Turkish Studies from the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and an MA in International Relations and European Studies from the University of Nicosia. The subject of his dissertation focused on evaluating the catalyst effect in resolving the Cyprus problem, by comparing the factors of EU membership and the discovery of hydrocarbons. Yiannis speaks Greek, English and Turkish.

Hubert Faustmann

Hubert Faustmann is a Professor of History and Political Science at the University of Nicosia. Additionally, he is the director of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus. He is an expert on British colonial Cyprus and post-independence Cypriot history and politics. His research also focuses on Hydrocarbon politics in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the relationship between state and society with a focus on Political Culture, Clientelism and Political Patronage.

Stavros Stavrou

Stavros Stavrou holds a Bachelor's degree in History from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, a Master's degree in International Relations from the University of Warwick and a Master's in Industrial and Employment Relations from International Training Centre of the ILO in collaboration with University of Turin. His research focuses on the employment relations of migrants and refugees, trade unions, and social inequalities.

Özker Kocadal

Dr. Özker Kocadal is an Associate Professor of International Relations at Cyprus International University. He earned his Ph.D. in Politics from the University of Exeter, where his research explored the role of kin-states in peacemaking, focusing on Bosnia, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland. His expertise lies in intra- and interstate conflict, international peacemaking and peacebuilding, and the complex geopolitical relationships among Cyprus, Turkey, and the United States. Dr. Kocadal has published widely in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, contributing to academic debates on power-sharing, peace processes, and international relations. In addition to his scholarly work, he is an active commentator on global affairs and a contributor to opinion platforms.

Imprint

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March 2026

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