



EDITOR'S 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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March and April

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HEADLINES

The enlarged meeting on the Cyprus Problem took place in Geneva between March 17 and 18. The UNSG announced a number of confidence building measures, including the opening of four new crossing points; a new meeting in the same format in July; and the appointment of a new envoy prior to the next meeting.

Following the Geneva meeting, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar and Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Christodoulides met in April and announced the creation of a Technical Committee on Youth.

Crossing points and solar energy in the buffer zone are faced with complications.

There is disappointment over Elektra gas drilling in Block 5 of Cyprus' EEZ, as no marketable quantities have been discovered.

EDEK leader Marinos Sizopoulos announced his resignation, leading the party to elections in June.

Cyprus officially ratified the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).

Unemployment in Cyprus has continued to decline, reaching its lowest level since 2008.





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PODCASTS in APRIL:
No podcasts in April



PODCASTS in MAY:
No podcasts in May

PUBLICATIONS in APRIL:
„Country Report: Cyprus“

*Annagrace Messa, Asylum/Migration Civil Society
Consultant*

The publication is available at <https://cyprus.fes.de/publications.html>

„Country Report: Greece“

*Dr. Angeliki Dimitriadi, Head, Migration Programme &
Senior Research Fellow, ELIAMEP*

The publication is available at <https://cyprus.fes.de/publications.html>

„Migration Movements: Shaping the Mediterranean
an Realm – The Egyptian Experience“

Amina Fahmy, Migration Policy Researcher

The publication is available at <https://cyprus.fes.de/publications.html>

„Country Report and Migration Profile: Lebanon“

*Maysa Baroud, Joint Visiting Fellow, Middle East Council
on Global Affairs & Issam Fares Institute for Public
Policy and International Affairs*

The publication is available at <https://cyprus.fes.de/publications.html>

EVENTS in APRIL:

Webinar:

„Europe Calling: Hotspot Mediterranean - Migration
Update: Egypt, Lebanon, Greece & Cyprus“

*With Angeliki Dimitriadi, Amina Fahmy, Niki Georgiou,
Raphael Bossong, Annette Schlicht and Maximilian Fries*

Date: April 28th, 2025

Time: 18:00 – 20:00

Location: Via Zoom



PUBLICATIONS in MAY:

„Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus“
2024 Report

Ömer Gökçekuş and Sertaç Sonan,

The publication will soon be available at <https://cyprus.fes.de/publications.html>

„Migration in the Eastern Mediterranean: Commonalities
and Differences between Egypt, Lebanon,
Greece, and Cyprus“

Maysa Baroud, Angeliki Dimitriadi, Amina Fahmy, Annagrace Messa

The publication is available at <https://cyprus.fes.de/publications.html>

EVENTS in MAY:

Seminar:

„Towards Sustainable Waste
Management in Cyprus“

With Yaron J. Balslev and Anthi Charalambous

Date: May 14th, 2025

Time: 11:30 – 13:30

Location: University of Nicosia

Millennium Building (M104), 1st Floor



Webinar

„Migration in the Eastern Mediterranean - Country
Reports on Egypt, Lebanon, Greece and Cyprus“

*With Hubert Faustmann, Harry Tzimitras, Amina Fahmy,
Maysa Baroud, Annagrace Messa, Angeliki Dimitriadi
and Yara Mourad*

Date: May 14th, 2025

Time: 15:30 – 18:00

Location: Via Zoom

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CYPRUS PROBLEM & INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS

On March 17, the two-day, enlarged informal five-party meeting on the Cyprus problem kicked off in Geneva. The participants included the UN, the two Cypriot sides and high-level representation from the three guarantor powers, Greece, Turkey and the UK. An EU representative was following from the sidelines. The meeting concluded on March 18 with the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG), Antonio Guterres, announcing:

- another informal meeting to be held in the same format at the end of July;
- the appointment of a new envoy to Cyprus in advance of July's meeting;
- the opening of four new crossing points between the two sides;
- a number of other confidence-building measures including: new demining efforts, the creation of a new bicommunal technical committee on youth, initiatives on the environment, the creation of solar farms in the buffer zone, and the restoration of cemeteries on both sides.

The UNSG stated that meaningful progress was achieved in Geneva, and that the talks had been conducted in a new atmosphere with a sense of urgency demonstrated by all sides.

On March 20, as part of working lunch of a European summit in Brussels, the UNSG briefed European leaders on the enlarged meeting in Geneva, reiterating that the Cyprus problem remains one of his priorities.

¹The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is only recognised by the Republic of Turkey. While for Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, Ersin Tatar 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

On April 4, during the first EU–Central Asia Summit held in the Uzbek city of Samarkand, five central-Asian states, notably, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, signed a joint declaration with the EU which ruled out the prospect of any of them recognizing the TRNC.¹ The five countries reaffirmed their strong commitment to UN Security Council Resolutions 541 and 550. Resolution 541 deplores the declaration by the Turkish Cypriot authorities of the purported secession of part of the Republic of Cyprus, while Resolution 550 calls on UN member states not to recognize the TRNC.

On April 2, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar and Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Christodoulides held their first meeting following the enlarged meeting in Geneva. In a joint statement after the meeting, the UN stated that the leaders:

- Agreed to establish a Technical Committee on Youth and provide the UN with a list of members by 15 April;
- Agreed that the issue of demining would be discussed at the level of the Greek Cypriot negotiator and the Turkish Cypriot special representative and that they would exchange information on a proportional number of suspected hazardous areas from each;
- Agreed the Technical Committee on Environment would work on initiatives related to the environment and climate change, including the impacts on mining areas, and that the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage would be tasked to work on the restoration of cemeteries;

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).

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- Held a constructive exchange on crossing points and solar energy in the buffer zone, and they tasked their representatives to continue discussions of the issues, with the view to finding a mutually acceptable resolution.

On April 16, the 32 members of the new bicomunal technical committee on youth were officially named by Christodoulides and Tatar. The committee, which will foster engagement and promote dialogue between the young people across the island, will be co-chaired by Turkish Cypriot Vehbi Zeki Serter and Greek Cypriot Amalia Avraam.

On April 17, UN Special Representative in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, stated that developments on the appointment of a new personal envoy to Cyprus by the UNSG can be expected very soon. Maria Ánge-la Holquín, who served as envoy last year, has been speculated to be reappointed to the position. According to Stewart, progress had been made in some areas outlined by the UNSG following the enlarged meeting in Geneva. This included forming the technical committee on the environment and the technical committee on cultural heritage to draw up a list of cemeteries across the island to be restored. The matters of the crossing points and solar energy generation in the buffer zone seem to be facing complications. Christodoulides and Tatar are expected to meet again on May 5.

On 28 April, the government confirmed that it had proposed to the Turkish government to open Turkish ports to Cypriot-flagged ships in exchange for easier access to European visas for Turkish businesspeople. The Turkish government denied that it was considering such an offer. According to government spokesman Konstantinos Letymbiotis, the move was part of Christodoulides' initiatives for a more active involvement of the EU in the Cyprus problem and the exploitation of relations between Europe and Turkey.

In a draft resolution put forward by DISY to be approved on April 30 by the European Peoples Party (EPP) Congress in Valencia, Spain, the EPP, a major political party in Europe, will request that the EU take on a more active role towards resuming negotiations for a Cyprus settlement and will point out to Turkey that resuming talks would have a decisive impact on the EU-Turkey agenda. The EPP says no European security architecture could be complete as long as an EU member state, Cyprus, remained under military occupation.

Greek and Turkish Cypriot trade unions are to hold a joint event to celebrate Labour Day on May 1. Two marches are set to converge in the buffer zone in front of the Ledra Palace hotel.

HYDROCARBONS

On March 31, the government revealed that it was asking for an extra €70m to complete works at the liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal at Vasiliko, a project that has been plagued by delays. Energy Minister George Papanastasiou told MPs that the €70m will be obtained through increasing the share capital of ETYFA, the state-run natural gas infrastructure company, by the corresponding amount. The additional amount will be used for the remaining works at the land-based LNG terminal. This brings the total cost to €384m, whereas the state-run agency had originally budgeted €295m.

Speaking to journalists on the sidelines of the Capital Link business forum in New York, Christodoulides stated on April 5 that he is ready to discuss the prospect of delineating the Republic of Cyprus' maritime borders with Turkey to the northwest of the island. Turkey however does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus and is not a signatory to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), citing disputes with Greece in the Aegean Sea, as Turkey does not believe that Greek islands have a continental shelf

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and therefore an inherent right to exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of their own.

On April 14, the Energy Ministry announced that drilling at the Elektra-1 well, located in Block 5 of Cyprus' EEZ, had found natural gas but not in marketable quantities. Drilling was carried out on behalf of the consortium of ExxonMobil Exploration and Production Cyprus Offshore Limited (the operator) and QatarEnergy International E&P LLC. The rig will now move to Block 10 to carry out exploration drilling at the Pegasus-1 well site, again for the consortium of ExxonMobil and QatarEnergy. Analysts described the result at Elektra as disappointing.

On April 29, Mustafa Lakadamyali, foreign ministry undersecretary of the TRNC, stated that the north is set to devise a maritime spatial planning map of its own. The development followed Greece's submission of its maritime spatial plan and publication of the official map on April 16 in response to Turkey's maritime spatial planning map that outlined its claims in the Black Sea, the Aegean, and the Mediterranean. Cyprus had already submitted its maritime spatial plan in December 2023.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

Gender Developments

On March 7, Christodoulides stated that a bill for gender policies is under legislative inspection. The President was addressing an event at the Presidential Palace dedicated to Women's Day, celebrated on March 8.

A recent International Workplace Group study revealed a strong link between flexible work and career advancement for women. A striking 84% of women surveyed consider the option for hybrid work essential when job searching, citing daily commuting as a major barrier. Across all age groups,

most women stated that flexible work fosters equal workplace opportunities, with 68% saying it helped them keep their jobs, where otherwise they might have been forced to quit. While the gender employment gap has narrowed (from 27.1% in 1991 to 23.1% in 2024), women's employment rate remains at 46.4%, far below men's 69.5%. Despite higher educational attainment, women hold just 30% of managerial roles globally and remain overrepresented in low-wage sectors. Some progress is evident in pay equity: in 2024, women earned 77.4 cents for every dollar earned by men, an improvement from 70.1 cents in 2004.

Economic Developments in Times of Green Transition

On April 11, the House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill that reforms the regulation of the electricity sector, paving the way for cheaper and cleaner energy. At the heart of the new law is a major change for the Cyprus transmission system operator (TSO). For the first time, the operator will be allowed, under specific conditions, to develop and manage electricity storage units, which is expected to deliver multiple benefits including the increased use of renewable energy.

In statements to the Cyprus News Agency on April 29, Energy Minister Papanastasiou appeared to indicate that the government had taken a wait-and-see stance on the Great Sea Interconnector (GSI) the proposed subsea cable linking the electricity grids of Cyprus and Greece. The €1.9bn interconnector project was reportedly put on ice after the promoter in Greece, ADMIE, temporarily suspended payments to the cable manufacturer, Nexans, due to uncertainty looming over the project, attributed to Turkish ships disrupting the project. According to Papanastasiou, Cyprus expects ADMIE to implement the project. The energy regulators of Cyprus and Greece had reaffirmed their commitment to GSI on March 20. The timetable for the project's completion is at the end of 2029.

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Domestic Developments

On April 23, Christodoulides announced the arrival of 15 mobile desalination units, free of charge, from the United Arab Emirates. Each unit has a capacity to produce 15,000 cubic metres per day, to ensure the island's water supply. The coming desalination plants are powered by fossil fuels.

On April 24, Marinos Sizopoulos, the leader of socialist party Edek, announced his intention to resign explaining that he wanted to hand over the baton to a new leadership as he completed ten years as the party's leader. Sizopoulos was elected party leader in 2015, replacing Yiannakis Omirou. EDEK will elect a new leader on June 1. On April 30, Marios Hannides, a municipal councilor in Strovolos and also party member, submitted his candidacy for the party's presidency.

Former President Nikos Anastasiades concluded on April 30 three consecutive days of testifying behind closed doors before the Anti-Corruption Authority in the ongoing investigation into allegations raised in Mafia State, a book by journalist Makarios Drousiotis. The conclusions of the Anti-Corruption Authority are expected to be delivered by the end of May or early June.

Foreign Relations

No notable developments occurred during the months of March and April.

Future of Work, Labour Relations & Trade Unions

On 4 March 2025, Cyprus officially ratified the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) by depositing the instrument of ratification with ILO Director-General Mr. Gilbert F. Houngbo. The convention is the first international labour standard to comprehensively tackle violence and harassment in the workplace, affirming everyone's fundamental right to a safe and respectful working environment.

The Convention will come into force for Cyprus on 4 March 2026.

On March 6, the Deputy Minister to the President met with the Council of Economy and Competitiveness to discuss key reforms shaping Cyprus's economic future, including tax and pension reform and energy strategy. A central focus was the "brain gain" initiative to bring skilled Cypriots abroad back home, with President Christodoulides planning outreach efforts. Both sides emphasised the importance of bold reforms and collaborative planning to strengthen the economy.

On International Women's Day, the Union of Cyprus Journalists joined a global call for greater gender equality in media, supporting the Beijing Declaration's goals to empower women, increase their media representation, and fight stereotypes. The union stressed the importance of legislation that actively promotes equality and protects the rights of all, especially amid rising threats to gender justice. In the same vein, Cyprus Workers Federation (SEK) highlighted the need to prioritize stronger protections against gender discrimination, faster handling of harassment complaints, enforcement of equal pay and parental leave rights. At the same time, the Pan-cyprian Federation of Labour (PEO) criticised Cyprus's poor gender equality ranking and highlighted persistent income disparities and poverty among women, despite economic growth.

On March 18, the trade unions SEK and PEO addressed a letter to Cyprus Hotels Associations (PASYXE) and Cyprus Tourism Association (STEK), expressing concern over the partial implementation of the renewed sectoral collective agreement in the hotel industry. They noted that during the January 2025 payroll, only a portion of hoteliers complied with the agreed terms. In addition, the unions filed a complaint with the Department of Labour Relations on February 17, 2025. They urged industry

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representatives to take responsibility by informing members of their obligation to fulfil all financial commitments under the agreement, including lump-sum payments, salary increases, COLA, and other benefits.

On March 21, trade unions PEO and SEK announced a 24-hour strike for Thursday, April 3, by employees of Cyprus Intercity Buses, following the failure to renew the Collective Labour Agreement. The Department of Labour Relations declared a deadlock in negotiations, prompting industrial action under the Industrial Relations Code.

On the same day, during the Advisory Economic Committee at the Ministry of Finance, the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB) reiterated its core demand for reduced taxation on labour. OEB highlighted concerns over employer contributions, particularly to the Social Cohesion Fund and the Redundancy Fund, calling for reductions or abolishment due to their non-contributory nature. While praising the government's balanced proposal on corporate taxation, OEB submitted a 25-point memorandum requesting clarifications and further action on outstanding recommendations.

On March 24, truckdrivers at Larnaca Port launched a 24-hour warning strike on Monday to protest unsafe loading practices and operational inefficiencies. They temporarily blocked the port entrance, citing repeated loading issues, loss of income, and safety risks. The workers claim that ever since the port came under Ports Authority management, problems have persisted, including road conditions and repeated loading delays. Despite their sending prior legal notices in February and March, no response was received. If demands are unmet, workers plan escalating industrial action.

On March 31, the House of Representatives passed the Law on Leave (Paternity, Parental, Care, Force

Majeure) and Flexible Working Arrangements for Work-Life Balance (Amendment) Law of 2025. The amendment provides that, in the case of (a) a parent of a child with a disability or a parent of a person with a disability, the duration of parental leave is extended to twenty (20) weeks; and in the case of (b) a widowed parent or single parent either due to removal of parental custody by the other parent or failure of the other parent to recognize the child, the duration of parental leave is extended to twenty-three (23) weeks.

On April 3, the trade union ISOTITA held a two-hour work stoppage across all Social Welfare Services (SWS) offices, demanding a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare and the SWS Director. The union criticised the use of external investigators following a recent child abuse case, arguing that investigations should target systemic issues from top to bottom. Union representative condemned poor working conditions and administrative failures, claiming that unqualified staff are forced to perform duties outside their expertise and warned of further legal and strike actions if their concerns continue to be ignored.

On April 25, the social dialogue on revising the cost-of-living allowance (COLA) commenced, aiming to conclude within two months. The goal is to reach a solution that balances the needs of workers and the economy, although the involved parties have significantly different interpretations and objectives. Employers' organisations (KEVE and OEB) consider COLA outdated and harmful to economic competitiveness and public finances. They advocate for its complete abolition and replacement with a new mechanism based on broader economic indicators like inflation, unemployment, productivity, and growth. In contrast, the trade unions (SEK and PEO) insist that COLA should fully compensate for inflation losses and be applied to all workers. They reject any association of COLA with productivity or

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other economic factors, viewing this as a dilution of its purpose. SEK warned it is ready to take “all necessary action” if negotiations derail, while PEO emphasised the need for full restoration of workers’ purchasing power. The Ministry of Labour has drafted proposed amendments to COLA, but the content remains unclear. The minister plans to listen to initial positions rather than present detailed plans in the first meeting.

Unemployment in Cyprus has continued to decline, reaching its lowest level since 2008 in February 2025. The number of registered unemployed decreased by 1,543 individuals year-on-year (10.8%), mainly due to improvements in the financial, hospitality, and construction sectors, and fewer new job market entrants.

In 2024, PEO reported its best organisational performance since 2010, registering 7,586 new members and expanding union presence in 228 new workplaces. The General Council reviewed the year’s results and approved the 2025 organisational and financial plan. All affiliated unions showed improved outcomes compared to the previous year. PEO attributed this success to its multidimensional advocacy for better wages and benefits through collective agreements, enhancing job security and dignity. Looking ahead, 2025 is considered a critical year, with key issues on the agenda including COLA, minimum wage, third-country nationals strategy, tax reform, and pension system changes.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Gender Developments

On 3 March 2025, Anastasia Melega, a 24-year-old Moldovan, died by suicide in an Alayköy/Yerolakkos nightclub. She was reportedly lured to the northern part of Cyprus with promises of a high-paying job but was forced into prostitution when her passport was

taken. Authorities recorded her death as a suicide, but human rights groups demanded an investigation. Opposition MP Doğuş Derya demanded the closure of nightclubs and punishment for owners involved in forced prostitution and employee rights violations.

On March 8, International Working Women’s Day, women’s organisations took part in events addressing issues of violence, inequality, and rights. The women’s organisations called for the activation of the Gender Equality Department with qualified staff and advocated for the establishment of violence prevention centres and shelters in every region. As of March 8, 2025, Turkish Cypriot daily Yenidüzen reported that five women had been murdered in the last six years, and 6,256 women were victims of violence.

On 15 March, Prime Minister Ünal Üstel announced a plan to cover all social security contributions for Turkish Cypriot women entering the workforce to reduce female unemployment. The state currently covers 80% of the premiums for female employees who are citizens of TRNC. However, the goal is to increase this coverage to 100% by 2025.

On April 15, another female nightclub worker attempted suicide but survived. Nineteen civil society organisations, including trade unions and political parties, urged for a police investigation. They claimed nightclubs in North Cyprus are hotspots for systematic exploitation and human trafficking of women, who often have their passports confiscated, freedom restricted, face severe psychological pressure, and lack social security.

Economic Developments in Times of Green Transition

On January 2, the daily Star Kıbrıs reported that the number of houses available for sale in North Cyprus increased by 53% over the span of one year, amounting to nearly 25,000. The publication further indicat-

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ed that, considering ongoing construction projects and planned developments, this figure could potentially rise to 70,000.

On January 29, at the 4th Five-Year Development Plan (2025–2029) Meeting, Pembe Arifoğlu, head of the Economic Planning Department of the State Planning Organisation, outlined key goals for the north: fostering steady growth, enhancing competitive production, creating sustainable living environments, and building a strong society. The plan focuses on five strategic pillars: steady growth, competitive production, sustainable and livable spaces, a qualified and healthy population, and national and international cooperation.

The Military Service (Amendment) Law, submitted by Resmiye Eroğlu Canaltay, a National Unity Party (UBP) MP from Famagusta, was published in the Official Gazette on January 29. The amendment modifies provisions related to “military service obligations” and “paid military service fees” for individuals born to Turkish Cypriot parents and citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus who also hold Republic of Turkey citizenship. A 2021 amendment had linked paid service fees to the minimum wage to mitigate the impact of foreign exchange fluctuations. However, due to rising inflation and subsequent increases in the minimum wage, these fees have significantly increased. The latest amendment aims to ease the financial burden on young people choosing paid military service.

On February 2, Minister of Public Works and Transportation Erhan Arıklı shared on his personal social media account an interview he had given to a Turkish newspaper. Arıklı stated that he chose to publish the interview himself in response to the newspa-

per’s article titled “Cyprus is becoming Palestine.” He claimed the interview was not published by the outlet because the journalists did not approve of his responses. In the interview, Arıklı emphasised that the TRNC has a total of 2.507 million acres of land, of which only 0.07% is owned by foreigners. Citing official data, he noted that between 2021 and 2024, a total of 9,408 properties were sold to foreigners in the TRNC, including 611 purchased by Israeli citizens. He highlighted that Israel ranked fifth among foreign buyers, following Turkey, EU countries, Russia, and Iran.

On 12 March, the 2024 Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus Report by Ömer Gökçekuş and Sertaş Sonan, supported by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation Office in Cyprus, was released. The report shows that 75% of businesspeople believe bribery and corruption are very common in North Cyprus, while only 4% think there is no corruption. In 2024, North Cyprus was 140th out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index. By comparison, the Republic of Cyprus ranks 46th and Turkey ranks 107th.²

The Statistical Institute reported monthly increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 2.02% in January, 2.16% in February, 4.28% in March, and 4.06% in April, resulting in an annual inflation rate of 40.96%. Among the main expenditure groups, the highest month-on-month increase was recorded in the “Restaurants and Hotels” category, with a rise of 9.51%.

As of April, the Ministry of Finance reported that the domestic debt stock had exceeded USD 170.37 (€150.5 million). In April, the Ministry increased the domestic debt burden through four different auctions: 916 million TL (€21 million), USD.5 mil-

²Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus: 2024 Fact-sheet, summarizing the key findings, is available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/zypern/22007.pdf>

For the full report in Turkish, please visit: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/zypern/21998.pdf>





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lion (€8.4 million), €14 million, and GBP 9.75 million (€11.2 million). Main opposition CTP MP Devrim Barçın noted that the state budget has a monthly deficit exceeding 1 billion TL (€23 million), which he attributed to high levels of employment in the public sector.

On April 14, T&T Construction Industry and Trade Company Limited, the operator of Ercan (Tymbou) Airport, announced that it had paid 227.2 million TL (€5.2 million) to the Ministry of Finance as the VAT-inclusive turnover share for the first quarter of 2025 (January-March).

On April 28, 2025, the Economic and Social Policies Research Centre (ESPA) strongly criticised the draft “Law on the Integration of Fiat Money Abroad into the Economy”, submitted by the government to Parliament. ESPA stated that the regulation in question almost confirms allegations of “money laundering”, emphasising that this bill will not contribute to the country’s economy; on the contrary, it will greatly harm the law and social justice.

Relations with Turkey

On February 28, Turkey’s Ambassador to the TRNC, Yasin Ekrem Serim, was officially dismissed and replaced by his predecessor, Ali Murat Başçeri. Serim, who served for about six months, was reportedly removed from his post due to alleged business ties with the murdered Turkish Cypriot casino boss Halil Falyalı.

On 21 March, Prime Minister Ünal Üstel and Turkey’s Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz signed the “2025 Economic and Financial Cooperation Agreement” between Turkey and TRNC. The agreement includes an allocation of 21 billion TL (€508.6 million) mainly for various infrastructure development projects, such as road works, public hospitals, and schools. Furthermore, in the energy sector, maintenance and repair services for power plants will be provided,

and two units of 35 MW mobile trailer power plants will be donated to Kıb-Tek (Cyprus Turkish Electricity Authority).

On April 17, Oktay Saral, Chief Advisor to the President of the Republic of Turkey, drew public attention with his comments on the dismissal of Imam İbrahim Damar in North Cyprus. Saral sharply criticised Prime Minister Ünal Üstel and voiced support for Damar, who was removed by Turkish Cypriot authorities after stating he would not perform funeral prayers for those opposing the use of headscarves in secondary schools. In a post on his X account, Saral referred to Üstel as a “boşbakan” – a pun on the Turkish word başbakan (meaning “prime minister”), where boş translates to “empty” – before adding, “What a shame, we could not save Cyprus from Greek Cypriot-ness.” As public outrage over his remarks peaked, Saral later attempted to clarify his comments. He explained, “My words were directed at the mentality that, unfortunately, still applies freedom only according to its own beliefs – at those who continue to discriminate against and alienate our veiled girls.” He further stated that his criticism was aimed at “those who embrace a Greek Cypriot mindset, who despise Islam, and who oppose Muslims – something we have, regrettably, been witnessing more and more often.”

Prime Minister Üstel responded firmly, saying: “I return the baseless statements made against the Prime Ministry, the people, and myself in the TRNC to our civil servant friend in the same way,” and he demanded an apology. As of now, Saral has not issued one. Turkish President Erdoğan also reacted to the developments and said, “This is impudence. We will visit the TRNC in the coming days. We will give the necessary messages there. If you do not keep a tight grip on them, they do not know their place.” Erdoğan’s visit to the island is set to take place on May 3 to officially open the Presidential and Parliament complex built by Turkey in Nicosia. The Turkish Cyp-

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riot Parliament and the Presidential Office are set to relocate to the newly constructed complex, reportedly built at a cost of 5.5 billion TL (approximately €126 million).

On April 10, during Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz's visit to the island, construction officially began on the Supreme Court and National Library buildings, part of the Presidential and Parliamentary complex, with prayers attended by both government and opposition members of the Turkish Cypriot community. The event made headlines when CTP (Republican Turkish Party) leader Tufan Erhürman, although present on stage, did not participate in the prayers by raising his hands. On 29 April, CTP Secretary General Erkut Şahali announced that the party will not participate in the upcoming inauguration of the new Presidential and Parliament complex if the ceremonies do not align with secular traditions.

Domestic Developments

Between January 23 and 25, Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister Ünal Üstel met with members of the Turkish Cypriot community in London and highlighted that Turkish Cypriots in the UK are not just individuals abroad but represent the pride, voice, and reflection of their people. He urged the community to stand together: "We need you to defend our rights, protect our identity, and make our voices heard on the international stage."

On February 6, a commemoration ceremony was held in Famagusta for the 35 Turkish Cypriot school children, their teachers and relatives who lost their lives in the 2023 earthquake in Adıyaman, Turkey. President Ersin Tatar and Prime Minister Ünal Üstel attended the ceremony, where a minute of silence was observed in memory of the victims. The school group, known as the "Champion Angels", had been in Adıyaman for a volleyball tournament. During the ceremony, grieving families emphasised that their fight for justice will continue, criticising what they

described as a "lenient" court decision regarding the owners of the hotel where the children and others perished.

On March 4, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar announced his intention to seek re-election in October. Tatar stated, "There is only one rational path. It's not because I take this lightly—after all, my name is Ersin Tatar. My political track record over the years speaks for itself." He added, "My heart is set on being the UBP's candidate, but there may be some constitutional issues, since the presidency is meant to be independent. I'm awaiting the UBP's decision."

On March 24, the Road Safety (Amendment) Law was unanimously approved by Turkish Cypriot Parliament. According to the amended law, those with a blood alcohol level of 150 mg/dL will be brought to court and those who do not comply with police warnings and flee will have their licenses confiscated. Harsher penalties are also introduced for offences such as exceeding speed limits and using mobile phones. According to a report by Bağımsız Gazete on 26 March 2025, 14 people lost their lives in traffic accidents in North Cyprus during the first three months of 2025, up from 13 in the same period last year. Compared to the 50 fatal accidents recorded throughout all of 2024, this figure suggests a concerning rise in traffic-related deaths early in the year. Notably, seven of these fatalities occurred within the first 17 days of 2025, underscoring the urgent need for extra traffic safety measures.

By mid-March, a controversy arose when a female student at İrsen Küçük Secondary School in Nicosia wanted to wear a headscarf in class. Teachers objected, citing the bylaws in effect. The Council of Ministers initially changed the bylaw to allow students to follow their religious beliefs but withdrew it after teachers' opposition. On April 7, a new bylaw permitting headscarves in high schools was issued and took effect. On April 8, KTÖS (Cyprus Turkish

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Teachers' Union) and KTOEÖS (Cyprus Turkish Secondary Education Teachers' Union) and 40 other civil society organisations organised a march protesting the new bylaw. KTOEÖS President Selma Eylem said, "We will all take to the streets and raise our voices against those who disregard the Constitution, the National Education Law, Atatürk's principles and revolutions and the regulations prepared in accordance with these, secular education, and the secular social structure, and who impose political pressure on the will of the Turkish Cypriot community." The march was attended and supported by people from various segments of the Turkish Cypriot community. Among the protesters were former Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı, as well as Serdar Denktaş and Mehmet Küçük—the sons of former leaders Rauf Denktaş and Dr. Fazıl Küçük, respectively. Sibel Tatar, the wife of Turkish Cypriot Leader Ersin Tatar, also supported the march by stating in a post on Facebook that she would have attended the march if she had not had a previously planned engagement. KTÖS and KTOEÖS also filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court demanding the annulment of the bylaw, and the hearing date was set for May 15.

On March 24, Turkish Cypriot Parliament approved the Penal (Amendment) Law, which removes animals from the status of "property" and accepts them as "living beings". Nursel Karabetça, co-chair of the Animal Rights Committee of the Cyprus Turkish Bar Association, said, "The amended law specifically prohibits abandonment, harming and killing animals through negligence. This alone is certainly not enough, but it is a very important step in reducing stray animals and increasing animal welfare."

On April 4, Nicosia MP Hasan Tosunoğlu submitted his resignation to the Office of the Parliamentary Presidency. Tosunoğlu was reportedly facing corruption allegations related to his tenure as chairman of the Executive Board of the Cyprus Turkish Cooperative Central Bank. He became an independent

MP after resigning from the Democratic Party (DP) in November 2024. For his resignation to take effect, it must be approved by a parliamentary vote, which would then pave the way for a by-election to fill the vacant seat.

The 29th Ordinary Congress of the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) took place on April 6. Tufan Erhürman, the sole candidate for party leadership, was re-elected as chairman. It was also decided that Erhürman will be the CTP's candidate in the TRNC presidential elections scheduled for October 2025. With 1,401 members voting, the Party Council was also elected during the congress. The Party Council convened for the first time following the congress on April 15, 2025. Asım Akansoy, Erkut Şahali, and Sıla Usar İncirli contested the General Secretary position, with İncirli and Şahali advancing to the second round. In the final vote, Erkut Şahali was elected as General Secretary.

The Centre for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies (CMIRS) has published the results of its political and social perception survey, which it conducts regularly every three months, for the period of March 2025. In a face-to-face survey conducted with 500 people, 87.77% of participants stated that things were going in the wrong direction in the country. The issues that the participants listed as the country's most important problems revealed the impact of the economic crisis on society. "Economic problems" came first, followed by "low wages", "health system", and "inept political leaders." Electricity infrastructure, inflation, education system, the Cyprus problem, and corruption were also listed as important problems. According to the survey, the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) led by a narrow margin with 31.72% support in a hypothetical general election, while the National Unity Party (UBP) followed closely with 31.11%. In the presidential race, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar held a slight lead over CTP leader Tufan Erhürman.

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On April 17, the trial of Basın-Sen (Press Workers' Union) Chairman Ali Kışmir—who faces a potential 10-year prison sentence over a social media post—was postponed to May 29. Kışmir maintains that the case, which accuses him of insulting the Turkish Cypriot security forces, is politically motivated and stems from his criticism of Turkey's "interference" in the 2020 Turkish Cypriot Presidential Election.

Future of Work, Labour Relations & Trade Unions

On January 9, it was reported that the Turkish Cypriot social security system had 151,351 insured employees. Among them, the number of foreigners from third countries increased significantly. Out of every 100 insured individuals, 50 are TRNC citizens, 28 are Turkish citizens, and 22 are from other countries. In about a year, the social security system registered 13,470 foreign workers, a 67% increase, who now constitute 22.19% of the insured population. These workers primarily come from Turkmenistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

On January 17, the Minimum Wage Determination Commission, which includes representatives of workers, employers, and government officials, established the first minimum wage for 2025 by majority vote. The new minimum wage has been increased by 7.5%, which is below the cost-of-living increase of 11.12%. The new gross minimum wage is 43,469 TL (equivalent to €1,187 on 17 January 2025), while the net minimum wage stands at 37,818 TL (equivalent to €1,033 on 17 January 2025).

On January 23, the "Cooperation Protocol on Vocational Training Activities" between the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of National Education was renewed. The protocol aims to establish qualification, competence, and experience criteria for foreign workers coming to the TRNC. Under the new regulation, foreign workers will also be required to present a Turkish Language Certificate at A2 level.

On March 4, the Municipality Workers' Union (BES) announced a protest to be held in front of the Ministry of Interior on March 5. BES President Mustafa Yalınkaya emphasised that long-standing issues concerning the rights of municipal workers could no longer be postponed. He called for urgent amendments to the 65/2007 Municipality Personnel Law and the enactment of the Examination Regulation, stating that the union would not retreat from its struggle. However, on the same day, BES representatives met with Interior Minister Dursun Oğuz and subsequently announced the postponement of the planned protest until March 24.

From April 9 to 11, the Cyprus Turkish Public Servants Union (KAMUSEN), the Cyprus Turkish Public Employees Union (KTAMS), the Public Workers Union (KAMU-İŞ), and the Equal Rights and Justice Union (HAKSEN) held a strike at the Post Offices. KAMUSEN President Metin Atan cited the "lack of staff and equipment" as the reason for the industrial action.

On 18 April, the Cyprus Turkish Secondary Education Teachers' Union (KTOEÖS) staged a strike at Bekirpaşa High School in İskele/Trikomo. KTOEÖS President Selma Eylem stated that the school principal has been pressuring and threatening teachers, adding, "As long as this pressure and these threats continue, we will maintain our strikes". Eylem explained that after the "headscarf bylaw" was enacted on April 7, two students attended separate classes wearing headscarves, prompting teachers to exercise their right to strike. She claimed that in response to the strike, the school principal summoned the striking teachers and subjected them to threats and pressure.

On April 28, the Cooperative Officials Union (KOOPSEN) held a one-day warning strike across all branches of the Cyprus Turkish Cooperative Central Bank, citing issues related to the collective labour agree-

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ment. On the same day, the Cyprus Turkish Teachers' Union (KTÖS), the Cyprus Turkish Secondary Education Teachers' Union (KTOEÖS) and approximately 100 supporting organisations announced that they had decided to strike on May 2. The planned strike is aimed against the "headscarf bylaw" and what the unions describe as the imposition of reactionary political Islam.

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