



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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154
May and June

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HEADLINES

Diplomatic efforts and shuttle diplomacy continue following the appointment of UN and EU envoys, preparing the ground for a new enlarged informal meeting on the Cyprus problem, scheduled for July in New York.

Former Auditor-General Odysseas Michaelides, who was removed from office by a Supreme Constitutional Court ruling, launches new political party, called ALMA ("Leap" in English).

The Cypriot government aspires to join the Schengen zone by 2026.

Cystat data show Cypriot women earn 15.4% less than their male counterparts.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid a visit to northern Nicosia on May 3 to inaugurate a new building complex for the Turkish Cypriot Presidential Office and Parliament.

On June 2, the UBP (National Unity Party), DP (Democrat Party), and YDP (Rebirth Party) jointly endorsed Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar for a second term at their "Common Sense Consensus" event.





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PODCASTS in JUNE:
No podcasts in June



PODCASTS in JULY:
No podcasts in July

PUBLICATIONS in JUNE:
No publications in June



PUBLICATIONS in JULY:
No publications in July

EVENTS in JUNE:
No events planned in June



EVENTS in JULY:
No events planned in July

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CYPRUS PROBLEM & INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS

On May 2, United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres announced the re-appointment of María Angela Holguín Cuéllar as his Personal Envoy following her previous stint in this role from January to July 2024. Holguín was tasked to re-engage with the parties and prepare the ground for a new enlarged meeting on the Cyprus problem. Holguín undertook a shuttle mission on the island where she met separately with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nicos Christodoulides and Ersin Tatar,¹ on May 24 and May 26, respectively. Tatar refused a proposed trilateral meeting with Christodoulides, citing tensions over property issues, notably the arrest, by Cypriot authorities, of individuals involved in sales of Greek Cypriot-owned properties in the north. Despite the setback, Holguín used her week-long mission to hold a second round of separate meetings with the leaders. She also met with the respective Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot negotiators and bicomunal technical committees, including the bicomunal youth group. Holguín then proceeded with visits to the capitals of the guarantor powers (Ankara, Athens, London) and EU headquarters in Brussels, to prepare the ground for the eventual enlarged meeting of July.

On May 18, the EU appointed Austrian Johannes Hahn, former EU Commissioner, as special envoy for Cyprus, a newly created position. Tasked with supporting the UN-led process, Hahn himself described his mission as a facilitator, enabling the sides to find a solution, stressing the need to reach out to different stakeholders and build trust. On June 24, Hahn held

his first meeting in Nicosia with Christodoulides who praised the EU's engagement as a positive signal. For his part, Hahn conveyed Brussels' full commitment to helping end Cyprus's division. Following his discussion with Christodoulides, Hahn stated that he will reach out to all stakeholders, including Turkey, to help build confidence and support Holguín's mission. Meanwhile, Tatar declined any meeting with Hahn during his visit, rejecting the EU envoy's role as illegitimate and without Turkish Cypriot consent. However, Hahn did manage to meet with Tufan Erhürman, the leader of CTP, the Turkish Cypriot opposition political party and candidate for October's Turkish Cypriot leadership election.

Progress with regards to the confidence measures (CBMs), which the two leaders agreed upon in Geneva in March 2025, has been mixed. On the positive side, the Youth Technical Committee convened for the first time in Ledra Palace on May 5 bringing together young people from both sides, with the participation of the two leaders. Regarding the issue of cultural heritage, both sides agreed to restore 30 cemeteries, with an equal number in the north and south (15 each) selected for rehabilitation. Talks, however, to open four new crossing points, which the UNSG considers a high priority to build confidence, remain at an impasse, with both sides being unable to agree on the details.

The informal, enlarged five-party summit on the Cyprus problem, a follow up to the one held in Geneva, is expected to take place in New York during the second half of July.

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

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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HYDROCARBONS

Energy Minister George Papanastasiou stated that seabed surveys to find a sinking point for the pipeline that will take natural gas from Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to Egypt for liquefaction would begin on June 4. The pipeline will connect Block 12 of Cyprus' EEZ, which contains the Aphrodite deposit, to Egypt. Meanwhile, efforts remain underway for Cyprus to construct the domestic LNG terminal. According to George Ashikalis, chairman of Defa, natural gas public company, the floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) Prometheus, which is to be used at the under-construction LNG terminal at Vasiliko, is expected to be certified for use in October 2025.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

Gender Developments

On June 2, Commissioner for Gender Equality Commissioner Josie Christodoulou emphasised the vital role of rural women in society and called on the government to support initiatives aimed at strengthening their contributions. She noted that rural women often struggled under the weight of stereotypes, highlighting the need to cultivate an environment where women enjoy equal access to resources, funding, education, and expertise. According to Christodoulou, 39 women have already benefited from investments of approximately €2.5m under the rural development programme that supports female entrepreneurship, including funding for young female farmers.

An open event, organised by the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Education (GECEVT), took place on June 23, in Nicosia. The aim was to inform the public and encourage dialogue around the Committee's work and the promotion of gender equality in the workplace and in

education. The event was addressed by Labour Minister Yiannis Panayiotou and Ombudswoman Maria Stylianou-Lottides.

According to newly released data by Cystat, stark gender-related differences continue to be reported in regard to wages, access to the labour market, public life, poverty and health. Reportedly, Cypriot women earn 15.4% less than their male counterparts and remain more vulnerable economically. The risk of social exclusion is higher among women at 18.5%, versus 15.6% for men. Similarly, the poverty rate for women is higher, with 16% living at risk, compared to 13% of their male counterparts.

In 2024, Cyprus recorded a 10% gender employment gap, aligning with the European Union average and showing a slight improvement in 2023. Specifically, in 2024, the employment rate was 80.8% for men and 70.8% for women, both 0.2% lower than 2023. Based on Eurostat, Cyprus reported a 24.5% gap between people with disabilities and those without disabilities, again close to the EU average of 24%. This reflects a minor reduction of 0.2% from the previous year.

Economic Developments in Times of Green Transition

Speaking at the Green Agenda Cyprus Summit in Nicosia on May 19, George Papanastasiou acknowledged that the lack of storage is the main obstacle to expanding renewable energy, and he assured delegates that the government is moving swiftly to fix the problem. The Energy Minister stated that Cyprus will have its first large-scale electricity storage system operational within the next 16 months. According to Papanastasiou, the island currently produces 1 GW from renewables, but has the potential to host up to 2.5 GW. A full switch to natural gas is planned by late 2026 or early 2027, which should help reduce electricity prices. Meanwhile, the Electricity Authority of Cyprus (EAC) is also fast-track-

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ing its own storage plans. Chairman George Petrou said the goal is to roll out systems within the next 12 months. He said the EAC is investing far more than in previous years and that the grid is expected to be much more efficient in the near future. He also confirmed that the government is targeting a 20–25% cut in emissions by 2030. The EU's goal remains full green transition by 2050.

According to data released by Eurostat, Cyprus recorded the fourth lowest share of renewable energy in net electricity production among EU member states during the first quarter of 2025.

On June 20, the energy regulatory authority (Cera) approved in principle an application from the Cyprus Transmission System Operator (TSO) to develop, operate and manage energy storage systems. The implementation and connection of the storage systems will be completed by June 2026.

Nexans, the French cable contractor of the Crete–Cyprus electricity interconnection, has confirmed it will continue construction until August, but what happens after that reportedly remains unclear. According to Greek financial news outlet Newmoney, Greece's Independent Power Transmission Operator (Admie) is under pressure to recover expenses through both Greek and Cypriot regulatory authorities in order to ensure liquidity. Nicosia appears unwilling to approve payments without clearer guarantees that the project will actually be completed. The Greek Cypriots' reluctance reflects broader geopolitical concerns and doubts over Admie's financial strategy.

Domestic Developments

On May 19, former Auditor-General Odysseas Michaelides, who was removed from office by a Supreme Constitutional Court ruling last September, launched his new political party, named ALMA – Greek for 'Leap'. Addressing the gathered media,

Michaelides said Cyprus “needs a restart here and now”, and that the existing political system, as it has been evolutionarily distorted, constitutes a hand-brake on the country's progress. Touching on the Cyprus problem, Michaelides stated that this must be based on a federal solution as described in United Nations resolutions, provided that this solution will be sustainable, functional and fully in line with the *acquis communautaire*.

The Cypriot government has set as one of its central goals to join the Schengen zone in 2026. Joining the Schengen zone will effectively abolish border checks between the Republic of Cyprus and 29 European countries. Thus, air and maritime passenger transport to the continent will no longer require a passport or identity card check. Cyprus is one of just two EU member states left outside the Schengen zone. Reports earlier in the year set out the likely requirements Cyprus must fulfil to be able to join the Schengen zone, with the country said to have been tasked with strengthening its border controls. Particular attention on this front has been paid to the Green Line, which, while not *de jure* an external border, is said to require strict controls and is not exempt from EU frontier standards.

Stefanos Stefanou was re-elected as General Secretary of AKEL on June 22 during the final day of the party's Pancyprrian Congress in Nicosia. Of the 810 delegates casting ballots, 781 supported Stefanou, representing a 96.4% majority, and 29 voted against. In his address, he said the party was entering the battle for a strong and combative AKEL that will pave the way for the progressive change of the country.

Parliament on June 26 green-lit the 2025 budget for the National Solidarity Fund, making €100m available in 2025 to compensate savers and bondholders who lost their savings in the March 2013 haircut. An online platform went live, where affected people can apply for partial compensation. The platform will be accessible until September 30.

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Future of Work, Labour Relations & Trade Unions

On May 1, the four main trade union organisations in Cyprus, Cyprus Workers Confederation (SEK), Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO), Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus (DEOK), and Pancyprian Public Servants' Trade Union (PASYDY), presented their positions and demands on key labour issues on the occasion of International Workers' Day. Their statements focused on major concerns such as the cost of living allowance (COLA), minimum wage, social housing, and tax justice, emphasising the need to improve workers' daily lives and preserve social cohesion.

According to Eurostat, in 2023, 26.8% of employed people in Cyprus usually worked on weekends. This indicates a slight increase from 2021 (26.5%) and places Cyprus third among EU countries, well above the European average of 22.4%. The figures highlight a broader trend toward more flexible working hours across the continent. Greece had the highest proportion of salaried employees working weekends in the EU, at 32.3%, followed by Italy (30.9%) and Cyprus (26.4%). The lowest rates were observed in Lithuania (3.0%), Poland (4.5%), and Hungary (6.6%). These statistics reflect the diversity of labour cultures in Europe and underline the impact of flexible work arrangements on employment patterns.

On May 6, the Cyprus Land and Building Developers Association (LBDA) held a meeting with Minister of Labour and Social Insurance. The meeting focused on the importance of strategic planning aimed at attracting foreign labour and stressed that a key component of this strategy should be encouraging local workforce participation by better aligning education with labour market needs.

The Ministry of Labour and social partners in Cyprus are set to launch consultations to address a legal gap regarding paid training and education for em-

ployees, following disagreements between the two sides on the issue. The gap in the current legislation was identified during a recent session of the Labour Committee, which reviewed a bill proposed by political party AKEL. The bill aims to strengthen the legal framework that obliges employers to inform, train, and educate their employees to ensure workplace safety and health. Specifically, the proposed changes require employers to provide training from the employee's first working day, in a language the employee can understand. It also stipulates that during the training period, employees should receive their full salary and benefits.

On May 20, the Minister of Education, Sports, and Youth, announced the Cabinet's approval of a proposal to modernise the teacher evaluation system. The Minister described the reform as being "of fundamental importance" for the country. However, the Pancyprian Council of General Representatives of POED (the teachers' union) unanimously expressed strong disagreement with the Ministry's proposal. POED stated that the proposed changes not only fail to correct the flaws of the current system but actually worsen them.

On May 27, the Cypriot government decided to institutionalise the payment of a 13th salary for all employees in the hotel industry, starting in August 2025. This was announced by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, who also confirmed that the relevant regulations are being submitted to Parliament. The decision is part of a broader mediation agreement between the Ministry of Labour and social partners concerning the renewal of the collective agreement in the hotel industry. For employees with less than 12 months of service, the 13th salary will be paid proportionally. Those who leave their job after working for at least one month will also receive a proportional amount.

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On June 11, the hoteliers expressed strong disagreement with the legislative regulation of the collective agreement for employees in the hotel industry, which sparked a sharp reaction from the trade unions. The trade unions of SEK and PEO warned that they would take strong measures to ensure the enforcement of the agreed terms and protect workers' rights if the agreements are not implemented. Speaking before the Parliamentary Labour Committee, the general director of PASYXE (Cyprus Hotels Association) stated that the memorandum of agreement reached after the Minister's mediation late last year did not include provisions for all key issues. Responding, the Director of the Labour Relations Department said that the amendments cover the agreed matters concerning the provident fund and holiday pay, which are included in the agreement signed on December 5, 2024, between social partners.

On same day, the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance reaffirmed Cyprus's commitment to the principles of the International Labour Organization (ILO) during the plenary session of ILO's 113th General Conference held in Geneva. Ahead of Cyprus's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, he emphasised Cyprus's intention to work closely with the ILO to promote tripartite social cooperation among workers, employers, and the government, aiming to strengthen social dialogue, economic growth, and social cohesion.

On June 19 a meeting took place at the SEK offices between unions, employers organisations, and representatives from the companies BOLT, FOODY, and WOLT. The meeting was initiated by SEK and PEO trade unions along with Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB) as part of a joint effort to exchange views on worker safety in the delivery sector. During the discussion, all parties agreed on the importance of road safety and the need to protect delivery workers by companies continuing

to provide and strengthen their training, ideally in cooperation with the trade unions where possible. Special attention was given to the serious issue of attacks against delivery workers. It was agreed that relevant state authorities would be invited to the next meeting to discuss proposals and ideas aimed at improving protection measures for workers in this sector.

On June 19, the parliament unanimously approved the regulatory framework for the creation of rooms for breastfeeding, expressing, and storing breast milk in workplaces and public spaces. This is part of implementing the law for the Promotion and Protection of Breastfeeding. The regulations, developed by the Ministry of Health, set minimum technical and operational requirements to ensure appropriate facilities that help mothers exercise their right to breastfeed or to express and store breast milk. The rules also specify the number and suitability of such spaces depending on the size and use of the buildings.

On June 11, a Court of Appeal decision regarding the 2007 strike at the National Bank of Cyprus was issued confirming the fundamental right to strike and the legal protection unions and their members have against civil lawsuits for striking. The Court unanimously upheld a previous lower court decision that dismissed the bank's lawsuit against Cyprus Union of Bank Employees (ETKY) and its members, which challenged the strike as a criminal offense. This decision firmly establishes that workers' right to strike cannot be criminalised or intimidated. ETKY emphasises that strikes are used sparingly and only after all dialogue and negotiation options have been exhausted. The ruling sends a strong message that union rights are protected and respected, validating ETKY's long-standing struggle and commitment to workers' rights.

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The discussion and voting on the bill aimed at enhancing tax incentives to encourage the repatriation of talented Cypriots (the so-called brain gain) have been postponed until autumn. During a recent meeting of the Finance Committee reviewing the revised bill submitted by the government, representatives of stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the changes made by the Ministry of Finance and requested further amendments. As a result, the Finance Ministry will continue consultations with involved parties to present an agreed-upon version to the committee. Social partners emphasised the need to provide incentives not only for returning talent but also to retain talented individuals already in Cyprus, to prevent brain drain.

On June 26, the Cabinet approved a bill to regulate teleworking in the public service, specifically hybrid teleworking, which allows employees to work remotely on certain days combined with working at their usual workplace. The Ministry of Finance also approved new regulations related to working hours in the public sector, introducing options for reduced working hours and an extension of the flexible work schedule. These measures are part of the 2021-2026 Recovery and Resilience Plan aimed at modernizing the public service.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Gender Developments

On May 17, a coalition of Turkish Cypriot NGOs organised the "Pride March 2025" in northern Nicosia to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia. The event, themed "Oppression is One Color, Resistance is a Rainbow", commenced in front of the former Suitex shop, followed Dereboyu Street, and concluded at Lefkeliler Inn in the central old town. The organisers stated that the march promoted equality and justice, emphasising LGBTI+ rights as fundamental human rights.

The death of Ahsen Nur Kilitçioğlu, found on a Famagusta beach on May 30, has prompted public outrage and suspicions of femicide, particularly since a police officer is reportedly the main suspect. Civil society groups and her family have questioned the integrity of the police investigation, citing lost evidence and uncollected statements, and they are calling for an independent inquiry. Lawyers and activists highlight a broader issue of institutional negligence in handling suspicious female deaths. Public protests continue, with Ahsen's death seen as a call for transparent, impartial justice.

Economic Developments in Times of Green Transition

On May 27, Turkish Cypriot Economy Minister Olgun Amcaoğlu argued that the north's economy would be in recession were it not for spending by Greek Cypriots. He emphasised that post-pandemic economic activity driven by visitors from the south—particularly in fuel, retail, and services—has significantly supported growth and job creation. As a result, import volumes rose by millions of dollars between 2022 and 2024, and employment surged to over 159,000, up from pandemic-era lows. However, the number of crossings from the south has declined in the past year, with an 8% drop in 2024 and a 15% fall in the final quarter, largely due to rising prices in the north making it less attractive to Greek Cypriot visitors.

On June 11, Haberkibris.com reported that the north saw a significant drop in tourism for the first four months of 2025, with over 26,000 fewer passenger arrivals and 27,000 fewer hotel stays than the previous year. Turkish citizens made up most of the 720,190 visitors, but only about half stayed overnight. Industry experts attribute the downturn to weak marketing, high costs, and low service quality, emphasising the need for a clear recovery strategy.

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A new World Bank report, released in June 2025 under the EU-funded Supporting Economic Convergence and Integration in Cyprus programme, outlines key steps to boost economic resilience in the Turkish Cypriot economy. The report highlights strong 6.4% growth in 2024, driven by domestic consumption and rising wages, but it warns of persistent inflation, elevated fiscal pressures, and limited intra-island trade. Green Line crossings remained stagnant, with trade across the divide accounting for just 10% of external sales—far below potential. Growth is projected to slow to 4.2% in 2025 due to weaker demand and ongoing macroeconomic pressures. To support inclusive, long-term growth, the report recommends improving spending efficiency, broadening the tax base, and advancing structural reforms to support private sector development. It also emphasises reducing regulatory and trade barriers through measures such as simplifying licensing, modernising controls, enhancing infrastructure, and improving access to finance, aiming to unlock greater economic integration and shared prosperity across the island.

On June 26, the Turkish Cypriot Ministry of Finance raised 2.57 billion TL (€55 m) through four domestic debt tenders in Turkish Lira, US Dollars, Euros, and British Pounds. From February to June 17 such debt auctions took place. CTP MP Devrim Barçın criticized the government for running a record May budget deficit of 3.34 billion TL (€71.2 m) and pushing the year's total debt burden to nearly 9.8 billion TL (€211 m).

The TRNC Statistical Institute reported inflation at 2.71% for May 2025 and 1.42% for June. The Consumer Price Index rose by 17.79% in the first half of the year and 35.78% year-on-year. In June, restaurants and hotels recorded the highest monthly increase among main expenditure groups, rising by 8.14%.

Relations with Turkey

On May 3, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited northern Nicosia for a day trip—his first since his 2023 re-election. During the visit, he inaugurated a new government complex that will house both the Turkish Cypriot President's Office and the Turkish Cypriot Parliament. As we noted in the last newsletter (No. 153), the new complex's estimated cost thus far stands at 5.5 billion TL (approximately €126 million). There is also a new Supreme Court building under construction within the complex. Additionally, a public park, a new building for Turkish Cypriot National Library, and a mosque are being built directly opposite the complex. The site is located just a few kilometers from the Metehan/Agios Dometios crossing on the Green Line, in the western part of Nicosia. President Erdoğan said the new complex reflects the growing stature of the TRNC and symbolises the determination of the Turkish Cypriot people. He called it a testament to their will to exist despite injustice and a sign of the shared destiny between Turkey and the north. "We will build new successes on this strong foundation," he said, vowing to continue the struggle for independence and unity, and stating that attempts to divide them would not succeed.

On May 16, the "Island Cyprus" tourism brand was officially launched in Istanbul to promote the TRNC in Turkey. President Ersin Tatar emphasised the country's growing tourism sector, noting over 600 monthly flights and 500,000 visitors from Turkey. Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz reiterated Turkey's full support, outlining major financial investments and a joint vision to strengthen tourism and infrastructure. The campaign will spotlight the island's natural beauty, history, and culture to reposition TRNC as a premier tourism destination for Turkish tourists.

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On May 27, a conference titled “Developments in Turkey and the World Economy and Future Vision” was held at the Presidency Conference Hall in the north, attended by Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek, along with Ersin Tatar and other senior officials. Organised in cooperation with the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Commerce and the North Cyprus Banks Association, the event focused on economic opportunities in tourism, education, health, and FinTech. Şimşek emphasised Türkiye’s full support for the TRNC’s sustainable development and regional integration. He highlighted the island’s potential to become a hub for health tourism and financial technology through strategic investment and digital infrastructure.

At a May 30 event in Bursa, Turkey, Prime Minister Ünal Üstel credited Turkey with ensuring the survival and growth of Turkish Cypriots, stressing that Ankara’s support is essential. He criticised pressure from Greek Cypriots, highlighted Turkish Cypriot business achievements and Turkey’s ongoing support since 1974, and urged more investment in the TRNC beyond its “casino island” image, emphasising its cultural and historical value.

On June 14, Fahrettin Altun, Director of the Turkish Directorate of Communications and a close advisor to Erdoğan, in a video message sent to the “Key to a Solution in Cyprus: Two Equal Sovereign States” panel, held in northern Nicosia, said, “Turkey clearly states that the sovereign equality and equal international status of the Turkish Cypriot people must be registered and resolutely defends the vision of a two-state solution.” On June 20, 2025, Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz met with President Ersin Tatar and Prime Minister Ünal Üstel in northern Nicosia. It is reported that they discussed ongoing economic and financial cooperation projects and strategic investments.

Domestic Developments

Turkey’s TEKNOFEST, an annual aviation, space, and technology festival (reportedly the largest of its kind in the world) launched on May 1 at the old Ercan (Tymbou) Airport grounds and remained open to visitors until May 4. Held for the first time in the north, albeit on a much smaller scale, was branded as “TEKNOFEST TRNC”. The festival was organised under the auspices of the TRNC Presidency, in collaboration with Turkey’s Ministry of Industry and Technology and the Turkish Technology Team Foundation (T3 Foundation). The official opening ceremony was attended by Ersin Tatar and senior officials from both the north and Turkey. The site was also visited by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during his visit to the north on May 3. Selçuk Bayraktar, Erdoğan’s son-in-law and the CTO (Chief Technology Officer) of Baykar Technology (renowned for its Bayraktar TB2 drones), was also present at TEKNOFEST TRNC, representing his family-owned company and participating in the event’s activities.

On May 2, Tatar met with Binali Yıldırım, former Turkish Prime Minister, Chairman of the Council of Elders of the Organization of Turkic States, and a close political ally of President Erdoğan. Tatar expressed appreciation for Yıldırım’s long-standing contributions and emphasised the significance of TRNC hosting the 17th meeting of the Council, calling it a historic milestone. He highlighted ongoing efforts toward the recognition of the TRNC, including its observer status in the Organization of Turkic States, and praised Turkey’s support, particularly from President Erdoğan.

On May 29, the trial of Ali Kışmır, chairman of the Press Workers’ Union (Basın-Sen), was postponed to October 30. Kışmır faces charges related to a social media post that insulted the Turkish Cypriot security forces and could receive up to 10 years in prison if convicted. He states that the charges are

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linked to his previous comments regarding Turkey's involvement in the 2020 Turkish Cypriot Presidential Election.

On June 2, the UBP (National Unity Party), the DP (Democrat Party) and the YDP (Rebirth Party) announced to the public that they had chosen President Ersin Tatar as their joint candidate for a second term, through the "Common Sense Consensus" event they organised. On June 29, Kıbrıs Postası reported that Mehmet Hasgüler, who currently serves as rector of the European Leadership University (based in Famagusta), will run as an independent in October 2025 Turkish Cypriot presidential election. On June 30, TDP's (Communal Democracy Party) Party Assembly took the decision to collaborate with CTP in support of CTP leader Tufan Erhürman's candidacy for presidency.

On June 3, the Turkish Cypriot Parliament approved sweeping reforms to casino legislation after a day of intense debate. The changes remove cap limits, eliminate distance restrictions—allowing casinos within 100 m of schools and town centres—and ease rules for hotel-based casinos (now needing only 750 beds). The ban on Turkish Cypriots entering casinos has been made a civil offence punishable by a fine of €50. Some believe the reforms could result in an increase in the number of casinos from the current 32 and lead to job creation, while others express concerns about potential rises in addiction, crime, and money laundering.

On June 23, the Turkish Cypriot Parliament agreed to urgently discuss in committee a draft law proposing to lower the paid military service fee from 10 to 5 times the gross minimum wage and to provide full exemption from military service for individuals who make the payment.

Between June 23 and 27, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces completed the 21st annual "Martyr

Lieutenant Caner Gönyeli Joint Military Exercise" in the north. The drill included coordinated ground and sea search-and-rescue operations, showcasing their readiness and cooperation. It involved simulated refugee rescues, maritime security tasks, and special forces actions, demonstrating joint response capabilities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Future of Work, Labour Relations & Trade Unions

On May 1, Prime Minister Ünal Üstel announced new regulations under the amended "Foreigners and Residence Permits Regulation", aiming to ease residency and visa processes. Key changes include 90-day visas for those with approved real estate sale contracts, penalty amnesty for foreign students under 18, and extended residence permits—up to five years—for property owners. The new rules also ease health insurance procedures for foreigners over 60 and streamline bureaucracy to improve public satisfaction. Üstel emphasised the reforms serve all who live, invest, or contribute to the TRNC.

The Cyprus Turkish Teachers' Union (KTÖS) declared that they opposed the government's decision to ban a strike by the Cyprus Turkish Secondary Education Teachers' Union (KTOEÖS) at Bekirpaşa High School, stemming from the recent headscarf controversy covered in detail in our previous issue (No. 153). In protest, KTÖS organised a full-day warning strike on May 28, 2025, at İskele Şehit İlker Karter Primary School. The union condemned the strike ban as an attack on democratic rights and called for solidarity against pressure on trade unions.

On June 4, several unions, including the KTHES (Cyprus Turkish Nurses and Midwives Union), Tıp-İş (Physicians Union), and KTAMS (Cyprus Turkish Public Employees Union), read a press statement outside Dr. Burhan Nalbantoğlu Hospital, condemning the government's stance against union activity. They criticised the reassignment of union leaders

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İbrahim Özgöçmen and Ali Özgöçmen as political retaliation and vowed not to accept the moves. The unions denounced what they described as pressure, arbitrary practices, and threats from the Ministry of Health, pledging to continue their struggle. Tıp-İş chairwoman Özlem Gürkut emphasised that union membership is a right, not a crime.

On June 27, Cem Kapisız, chairman of the HTKS (Air Traffic Controllers' Union), stated that due to staff shortages at Ercan (Tymbou), airspace control was temporarily transferred to Ankara, Turkey. He indicated that this action is temporary and was carried out in response to ongoing issues related to staffing and infrastructure.

On June 30, El-Sen (Cyprus Turkish Electricity Authority Employees Union) and Türk-Sen (Cyprus Turkish Workers' Unions Federation) protested in front of Kib-Tek (Cyprus Turkish Electricity Authority) headquarters in northern Nicosia, warning of an indefinite strike if long-standing issues remain unresolved. El-Sen Chairman Ahmet Tuğcu criticised the government's inaction despite a year of attempted dialogue and highlighted serious technical and safety failures at the Teknecik power plant. Accusations of illegal staffing, salary cuts, and threats against journalists were also raised as main issues. Union leaders vowed to continue their legal struggle against what they called "arbitrary and unlawful practices" by the Kib-Tek administration.

The Supreme Administrative Court concluded that the minimum wage case filed by Hür-İş (Free Labor Unions Federation) on June 30, rejecting an interim order to suspend the wage but requiring future decisions to be based on real economic data. Hür-İş welcomed the ruling, viewing it as a step toward transparency and accountability in wage setting. Hür-İş chairman Ahmet Serdaroğlu argued that the court's decision prevents reverting to lower wages but strengthens the obligations of the Minimum Wage

Determination Commission. The case stemmed from a 7.5% increase in January that workers argued was below the cost of living. The ruling is seen as a precedent for future wage determinations.

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