



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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132
MAY 23





FES CYPRUS NEWSLETTER

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PODCASTS in JUNE:

Hubert Faustmann (FES Cyprus), Prof. Ahmet Sözen (Diplomeds expert) and Laury Haytayan (Middle East and North Africa Director at the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI))

“Leveraging the Energy Factor to Support Peacemaking in Cyprus”
(in English)



PODCASTS in JULY:

No podcasts in July

PUBLICATIONS in JUNE:

No publications in June



PUBLICATIONS in JULY:

No publications in July

EVENTS in JUNE:

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus

“Right Wing Populism in Europe and Cyprus”

Date: Thursday, 1st of June 2023

Time: 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Location: University of Nicosia, Nicosia

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus and Prof. Ahmet Sözen
(Diplomeds expert)

“Grab a Cypriot Coffee”

“Leveraging the Energy Factor to Support Peacemaking in Cyprus”

Date: Thursday, 8th of June 2023

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. (EEST)

Location: Zoom (Online)



EVENTS in JULY:

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus and Harry Tzimitras
(PRIO Cyprus Centre)

“Grab a Cypriot Coffee”

“The Impact of the Elections in Cyprus, Greece and Turkey on the Trilateral Relations”

Date: TBC

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. (EEST)

Location: Zoom (Online)

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CYPRUS PROBLEM

On May 15 and 16 the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, held separate meetings with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nikos Christodoulides and Ersin Tatar, respectively. Following the meetings, Stewart alluded to “the beginning of a very important period” where he expressed his hope to achieve some progress on the Cyprus problem. Stewart argued that after elections in Turkey and Greece there will be a new period of relative calm which he referred to as an opportunity.

On May 23, during a ceremony celebrating the release of his book entitled “Vision for Two States in Cyprus”, Tatar stated that the north is ready for a two-state solution. Tatar stated that two sovereign states on the island could cooperate in key sectors such as the economy, tourism, agriculture, water resources and energy, adding that water and electricity arriving from Turkey could be shared throughout the island.

As part of a two-day visit to Berlin, on May 25 Christodoulides met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz regarding the Cyprus problem and efforts to break the deadlock being among the topics discussed. Scholz stated that Germany fully supports a solution to the Cyprus problem that creates a bizonal federation, where each community will be represented in the country’s leadership. The chancellor expressed Germany’s readiness to assist in breaking the impasse, but he also queried whether there is the desire to push forward. With regards to Christodoulides’ policy seeking for an EU-appointed official to get involved with the Cyprus problem,

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

in an interview with Deutsche Welle (DW), Christodoulides mentioned for the first time in public that Chancellor Angela Merkel was among those considered for the position. Merkel’s name had been mentioned in speculative media reports. Christodoulides has floated the idea for an EU special envoy or mediator for Cyprus, to help break the deadlock, but with the talks remaining under UN auspices. It is unclear whether such a proposal is feasible.

On May 28, Tatar and other Turkish Cypriot politicians congratulated Turkey’s president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan following his victory in the presidential elections against opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. Erdoğan ended up with just over 52% of the vote, securing another five years in power. Kılıçdaroğlu garnered most of the votes in the TRNC,¹ where 58.1 % of registered Turkish voters backed him, against Erdoğan’s 41.8%. Over 140,000 Turkish citizens living in the TRNC had the right to vote. Voter turnout was calculated at 59.2%. At the parliamentary elections, too, the main opposition party CHP fared better than the ruling AKP: The CHP took first place with 35.3% while AKP took second place with 30%. The two nationalist parties, MHP got 7.33% while the İYİ party received 6.94% of the votes. The two left-leaning parties, Green Left Party and TIP (Turkish Workers Party), garnered 6.81% and 4.83% of the votes respectively.

BICOMMUNAL RELATIONS

On May 1, trade unions across the divide held a rally in the UN-controlled buffer zone under the slogan “solidarity, reunification, social justice” to mark the International Workers’ Day. Koral Asam, head of

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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the Turkish Cypriot trade union federation Dev-Is, and Sotiroula Charalambous, general secretary of the Greek Cypriot trade union confederation PEO, read out a joint declaration at the event, which also featured music by a bicomunal band. In the joint declaration, Asam and Charalambous called on both leaders to avoid acts that could increase tension and resume "as soon as possible" negotiations for a solution to the Cyprus problem. "We will never compromise with division" was the main message of the joint declaration. Calling for better pay and working conditions, the joint declaration also commemorated Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot "pioneers of the Cyprus labour movement, who managed to achieve fundamental gains for the Cypriot working class".

On May 5th, a wildfire broke out in Limnitis (Yesilirmak) village in the western part of the island. Upon Turkish Cypriot president Tatar's request, a fire-fighting plane from the Greek Cypriot side also took part in the efforts to extinguish the fire. Tatar said that this showed the importance of cooperation that he always emphasised. An estimated 50 hectares, or around 400 donums, of land was burned in the wildfire.

On May 23, the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KEVE) participated in a trilateral meeting alongside the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (KTTO) and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Cyprus, Colin Stewart. The main topic of discussion was the reinforcement of the Green Line regulation, among other matters. During the meeting, issues related to economic and trade relations between the two communities were addressed as a means to sustain prospects for a future resolution. Earlier in the month, on May 12, KEVE and KTTO released a statement of support for all efforts aimed at the bilateral improvement of Green Line trade.

On May 26, the European Commission announced that, together with KEVE and KTTO, it will create an information and support centre for Cypriot businesses looking to cooperate across the Green Line. The EU-funded initiative will be a One-Stop Shop from which interested parties will be able to receive information and technical support for commercial transactions across the Green Line. According to the EU, the project will begin in October 2023.

On May 27, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots joined forces at the Ledra Palace, demanding new checkpoints to be opened, procedures at crossing points to be streamlined, and Cyprus to be reunified within the framework of a comprehensive solution. The rally was supported by approximately 110 political parties and organisations as well as prominent figures. During the event, the protesters chanted slogans in favour of peace and a resolution to the Cyprus problem and presented a resolution to the UN noting that the current crossing points fail to meet the needs of the people.

In a move aimed at strengthening cooperation between the two communities and rekindling hope for a solution to the Cyprus issue, AKEL submitted a range of measures to president Christodoulides. According to AKEL's general-secretary Stefanos Stefanou, who made the announcement on May 27, the package includes an Office for Turkish Cypriot Affairs, the expansion of the Green Line Regulation, and the creation of a fund to support intercommunal initiatives. AKEL's package of recommendations also includes a series of measures in the fields of education, health, and society in general. He explained that these measures were developed through dialogue and contact with organised Turkish Cypriot groups.

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HYDROCARBONS

On May 14, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formally announced plans to build a pipeline transporting natural gas from Israeli offshore reserves to a liquefaction facility to be built in Cyprus. On May 15, Energy Minister George Papanastasiou confirmed that Cyprus and Israel are working towards such a deal.

On May 26, Papanastasiou and Christodoulides met with a delegation from CHEVRON, one of the operators of the Aphrodite field in offshore Block 12. Following the meeting, Papanastasiou stated that the company was “positively disposed” toward supplying natural gas to Cyprus from Aphrodite, which will be used to fuel Cyprus’ electricity production at a lower cost. The company presented a “preliminary plan” to develop Aphrodite, which the government would look over.

On May 29, a two-day workshop entitled “The Cyprus Gateway: Natural Gas to Power and Liquefaction” was held in Nicosia by the Energy ministry, in collaboration with the Cyprus Hydrocarbons Company (CHC) and in the presence of key energy industry players. During the event, Christodoulides stated that a gas pipeline connecting Cyprus with Israel along with a facility for liquifying the gas was of the utmost priority of his government. Papanastasiou stated that the pipeline will be 190km long and that the project is viable. The minister emphasised that the primary aim is to secure cheaper energy in Cyprus, and gas could begin arriving from Israel within 18 months once the agreements are finalised and investment begins.

According to NEWMED Energy, one of the three companies licensed to operate in the Aphrodite field, there can be no supply from the field before 2027. An updated development plan, submitted to the government on May 26, was filed on May 31 by NEWMED on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, on which

it is listed. According to the plan, the three stakeholders – CHEVRON, NEWMED and SHELL – proposed to interconnect the Aphrodite field with a gas liquefaction station in Egypt, through a subsea pipeline that will be built from Aphrodite to the Egyptian coast. NEWMED ENERGY announced in Tel Aviv that the updated plan would accelerate development and reduce costs, the reason being that liquefaction could be done in existing Egyptian facilities instead of commissioning a floating unit on the Aphrodite site. Papanastasiou stated that the government does not agree with a development timeline of 2028.

According to the Cyprus News Agency three gas turbines worth €48m have arrived in Cyprus and are currently being installed for Power Energy Cyprus (PEC), the first private conventional power plant. The plant will produce 25-30% of Cyprus’ electricity needs and aims to address the country’s major energy crisis. The company aims to use natural gas for electricity generation.

A Cypriot delegation including Papanastasiou is expected to visit Israel in June 14-15 in order to discuss a preliminary agreement between the two states on the natural gas pipeline. The minister will discuss the natural gas flow in quantities suitable to support the gas transportation project from Israel to Cyprus and subsequently determine the interest for export to Europe.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

According to data released by Eurostat, in 2022, the unemployment rate of people aged 15-74 in Cyprus was 6.8%, a little higher than the EU average (6.2%). The Central Bank of Cyprus (CBC) on May 30 reported that total deposits in April 2023 recorded a net decrease of €173.3 m, compared to a net increase of

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€59.8 m in March 2023. The annual rate of change reached 1.9%, compared to 2.6% in March 2023. In addition, the balance of deposits reached €51.6 bn in April 2023. Total loans in April 2023 recorded a net decrease of €130.9 m compared to a net increase of €41.9 m in March 2023. The annual rate of change reached a negative 1.3%, compared to a negative 0.5% in March 2023. Finally, the balance of total loans in April 2023 reached €24.9 bn, the announcement concluded.

According to data released by the Cyprus Statistical Service (Cystat), the island's gross domestic product (GDP) for the first quarter of the year amounted to €6.2 bn, marking a 3.4% increase on an annual basis when measured in volume and adjusted for seasonal fluctuations. When compared to the fourth quarter of 2022 and using seasonally adjusted data, the growth rate amounted to 0.8 %. Annual inflation rate in May decreased to 3.01%, continuing its downward trend for the seventh consecutive month, mainly driven by a deceleration in the prices of petroleum products.

According to Deputy Tourism Minister Costas Koumis, tourism to Cyprus seems to have recovered from Russian sanctions, as arrivals so far this year are 8% higher than the record year of 2019 and 3% higher than last year.

Domestic Developments

Tasos Tzionis has been brought out of retirement to head up the Central Intelligence Service (KYP). Tzionis, had previously served as director of KYP from 2003 to 2008, during the presidency of Tasos Papadopoulos. He is now taking over the post from Kyriacos Kouros. As the new director of the intelligence service, Tzionis' role will be upgraded, as he will also sit in on the just-announced National Security Council and will also undertake its composition. Members of the National Security Council will be tasked with briefing the president and the cabinet on issues con-

cerning national security, defense and foreign policy, as well as negotiations for a solution to the Cyprus problem. The National Security Council will respond directly to Christodoulides and will be headed by the national security advisor, who will be appointed by the president.

A parliamentary committee will convene on June 1 to examine a complaint against independent MP Andreas Themistocleous, alleged to have made "abusive remarks" against Greens MP Alexandra Attalidou. The controversy revolves around a social media post Themistocleous made in reply to Attalidou where she welcomed the passage of legislation criminalising "conversion therapies" on LGBT persons. The independent MP had voted against the legislation.

On May 24, a special report by the audit service found that a large number of Turkish Cypriot properties on the island are currently mismanaged. According to the report, several Turkish Cypriot commercial properties have not been handled efficiently and effectively and are not even used by refugees. Specifically, out of the 2,255 Turkish Cypriot properties, only 1,013 are leased to refugees.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On May 4, at a Pan-Trade Union meeting, the trade union movement unanimously decided to reject the proposal of the Minister of Labour for the Cost of Living Allowance (CoLA). In their statements, the unions said that the new agreement should be in the framework defined by the transitional agreement for the PIA of 2017 and under no circumstances will they accept elements that alter or deconstruct the philosophy of the PIA, especially taking into account the positions expressed by employer organisations. However, on May 12, the most critical labour issue, which caused rifts in the relations of the social partners and risked dynamic mobilisations in all sectors of economic activity, seems to be moving towards a

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solution, through the ministerial proposal and the compromises by both sides: employers and the trade union movement. The social partners, in the presence of the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance as a mediator, signed a new transitional agreement to pay the CoLA at a rate of 66.7% of inflation (from 50% under the previous agreement). The payment of the increased rate of CoLA will begin in June, while the social dialogue to reach a comprehensive and permanent agreement will be completed by June 2025. The proposal commits the two parties to enter negotiations immediately after June 2025, when employers and unions will seek to conclude a comprehensive agreement for the future formation of CoLA. For the trade union movement, the adoption of the verbal agreement reached between all social partners in 2017 was a decisive factor for the ministry's proposal to be accepted. Trade unions expect the benefit to be completely restored. On the contrary, the employers insist that after June 2025 the two social partners will engage in direct negotiations with the aim of finding the golden ratio of CoLA that serves the interests of all and mainly of the local economy.

On May 4, the Pancypriot Association of Qualified Hourly-Paid Teachers (PASYPAE) stated in their announcement that they are waiting for an answer from the director of Social Insurance regarding the employment status of teachers in Ministry of Education-run afternoon classes. On May 10, teachers will be required once more to pay their own social insurance costs as self-employed. From July 28, 2022, with the amendment of the relevant legislation, the teachers, in cooperation with the trade unions, sent a request for an examination of their employment status. According to the announcement, despite the repeated efforts of the trade unions in both writing and meetings with the Social Insurance Services to clarify the whole issue in a reasonable period of time, there was a delay that cannot be considered justified. In the meantime, a day before the deadline

to pay the social security contributions of teachers who are work as self-employed workers in the educational programmes of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security published a relevant announcement. The announcement states that the examination of the requests that were submitted to the Social Insurance Services to determine the insurance category of the persons employed by virtue of purchase of services in programmes operated by the Ministry of Health is ongoing and will soon be completed. The announcement went on to state that, until a decision is made, their contributions to the funds managed by the Social Insurance Services should be paid as usual.

On May 17, the District Committees of AKEL Nicosia-Kyrenia and EDON Nicosia-Kyrenia held a protest regarding housing policies. They set up tents at the entrance of the Presidential Palace, highlighting the intensifying housing problems especially faced by young families and students. They also submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Government Representative with proposals for solving the problem. The protest took place in the context of AKEL's pan-Cypriot campaign on the topic of housing policies with the slogan "Housing for all", which will conclude with a conference on 29 May 2023. Among their proposals were the taxation of large idle property, the creation of rental market schemes, the collaboration of local authorities and state agencies to produce and supply housing units at affordable prices, the availability of State-owned or other public land to be developed in a way that contributes to the collective good, the strengthening of the Housing Financing Organisation, acceleration of student housing implementation procedures, state funding to state agencies for student housing projects, etc.

On May 29, the bill for the establishment of teleworking was the dominant topic that occupied the meeting of the Labour Advisory Body (ESS) un-

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der the Ministry of Labour. The Minister of Labour seems to be seeking some changes to the bill that was prepared during the late Zeta Emilianidou's tenure. This action caused the four trade unions to react. The leaders of the trade unions pointed out that in the event that the ministry proceeds with any changes that might weaken the basic principles set by the trade union movement, they will not be accepted. The basic principles set by the trade unions and are part of the bill are:

- Teleworking must only be carried out on a voluntary basis, or upon agreement between the worker with employer.
- The right to disconnect must be regulated.
- The employer should bear the costs incurred by teleworking.

The leaders of the trade union organisations invoked the relevant bill, which, they pointed out, should have already been referred to parliament for a vote last year. However, it was suspended when the employers' organisations had pointed out that, at the European level, there is an ongoing dialogue between the social partners of the member states in relation to teleworking.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

According to the Statistical Institute, the consumer price index was 62.6% higher in May 2023 compared to May 2022. Consumer prices had risen by 3.6% in May alone. The biggest monthly inflation was in "leisure and cultural activities", where an increase of 10.89% was recorded. Prices in this consumption group had gone up by 8% in April too. The monthly inflation in food prices slowed down to 1.49% (from 5.55% in April).

According to the Tourism Planning Department, the number of passengers entering the TRNC by air and sea (excluding the TRNC and Turkish citizens) increased by 40% compared to the previous year, reaching 97,127, up from 71,984 in the same period of the previous year. Arrivals from Iran and Russia went up remarkably: The number of Iranians increased from 8,408 to 13,520, while the number of Russians more than tripled in one year reaching 13,042. The third biggest group was Germans with 9,370 arrivals. On the other hand, arrivals from African countries, mainly university students, decreased significantly. The number of passengers arriving from Nigeria, which was 6,435 in the first four months of 2022, decreased to 2,477 in the same period this year. The number of arrivals from the Democratic Republic of Congo also fell from 1,997 to 726.

On May 29, the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Industry (KTSO) announced that 11 farms had received the compliance certificate for raw milk production that is suitable for Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) hellim/halloumi production. KTSO representative also added that a second factory was expected to receive PDO-certification for hellim production within a month. Speaking to the public news agency, the Director of the Certification Unit of KTSO, Kemal Öztürk, reminded that the European Commission in April 2021 had announced that dairy producers and dairy product manufacturers in Cyprus would be inspected by an independent inspection body, Bureau Veritas. He said that while Bureau Veritas had started inspections in the south in October 2021 and as of today, 55 manufacturers were certified, inspections in the north had only begun in February 2023. Explaining that the bacterial content of milk, the animal feed, and non-disease-related factors were examined during inspections on farms, Öztürk said that inspections for livestock diseases were regulated by a separate set of regulations. He added that the body responsible for conducting these inspec-

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tions had not yet been determined. He also said that the TRNC was very close to eradicating all livestock diseases such as brucellosis and foot-and-mouth disease, and expressed hope that Turkish Cypriot producers will be able to export hellim to EU markets in 2024.

Relations with Turkey

On May 4, a new Ro-Ro cargo ship, purchased by the Cyprus Turkish Maritime Company (which is owned jointly by the TRNC and the Turkish Privatisation Authority), docked at Famagusta Port. The cargo ship can carry 15 large trucks, 25 small vehicles and 400 passengers. Speaking at the ceremony held in Famagusta port, the Turkish Ambassador Metin Feyzioğlu said that electricity would be brought to the island via cable just as water had been brought via a suspended underwater pipeline. "All these ... are carried out on the notion that we are one nation, two states. The unique and strong bond that exists between our two countries will continue to exist".

Domestic Developments

On May 10, the head of the Higher Electoral Council, Narin Ferdi Şefik, said that there were 209,837 voters who would be eligible to vote in the upcoming by-election, which will take place on June 25 for the one seat in parliament vacated by the leader of the People's Party (HP), Kudret Özersay, who had resigned last year. Şefik also touched upon the issue of amending the electoral law to bring an end to split voting, which is currently on parliament's agenda. She pointed out that 60% of the split votes cast in the last election had been declared null due to mistakes made by voters, adding that a change was inevitable. "Scrapping the practice will negatively impact the votes who prefer splitting their votes among different parties but when you have an election where 60% of the votes are invalid then you have a situation whereby the will of the people is not reflected onto the ballot", Şefik said. She also stated that work was being carried out to reduce the number of ballot

boxes for the upcoming by-election because voting will be taking place for only one seat. On May 31, ten candidates running in the upcoming by-election submitted their applications to the Higher Electoral Council. The provisional list of candidates will be announced on June 1 and the final list will be announced on June 4. The official propaganda period for candidates will begin on June 5 and end on June 24, a day before the election.

The steep rise in tuition fees for private schools raised the prospect of a "mass migration" of pupils from private schools to state schools for the next term, sparking concerns that state schools will not be able to cope with a sudden influx of students. The Minister of Education Nazim Çavuşoğlu said that the government does not have the authority to intervene in private school fees and pointed out that it would be "impossible" to absorb 12,000 students from private schools to state schools "all at once". "The main task is to strengthen the infrastructure of the state's own schools and to eliminate the need for citizens to go to private schools", he said, adding that nearly 20 new schools are needed due to the increasing population of the TRNC.

On May 12, the leaders of the ruling coalition of National Unity Party (UBP), Democratic Party (DP), and Rebirth Party (YDP) held a press conference to mark their first year in office. Speaking at the press conference, Prime Minister Ünal Üstel said that the coalition government enacted 65 laws in Parliament since coming to power. "Beyond our means, we have made historic pay rises for public sector employees", he said, noting that the government has also supported the social security premium payments of tens of thousands of private sector workers. "We, as the coalition government, have stood by employers as well as ensured employment in the private sector", he declared. Üstel said that the government would continue to provide social security premium support to small businesses with up to 10 employees in the

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agriculture, livestock, forestry, beekeeping, fishing and manufacturing sectors, which will help over 7,000 people. He also added that the government already began granting low-interest rate loans to small businesses, farmers and livestock producers.

On May 23, the Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dursun Oğuz announced that for the first time in the TRNC, the government designated “six marine protected areas (MPA)”. The new MPAs would “contribute to the protection of marine life and increase their number, diversity, and habitat areas” the minister said, as well as provide for the expansion of amateur fishing. Robin Snape, a researcher and marine biologist with the Society for the Protection of Turtles (SPOT), hailed the announcement, adding that new MPAs will, among other things, “protect monk seal breeding sites that we have identified”. “Additionally, all shark and ray species (all species listed on Annex II of the Barcelona convention and some additional candidate Annex II species) including many endangered and critically endangered species have been banned from trade under the new [regulation],” he said. “These and other amendments bring TRNC fisheries sustainability management closer toward regional and global norms”. They are also a great step forward toward the TRNC potentially meeting global targets on biodiversity conservation, such as the EU’s 2030 biodiversity strategy, which aims to protect 30% of its oceans by 2030... with 10% of all marine areas “highly protected”, i.e. zero fishing.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

Public Officials Union (KTAMS) announced the hunger threshold for April as 14,148 TL (€660), which was 2,348 TL (€110) above the minimum wage, which was set in January and is not expected to be updated until July.

The trade unions representing primary (KTOS) and secondary school teachers (KTOEOS) held a gener-

al strike and demonstration on May 16 in front of the Parliament to protest proposed amendments to the “Teachers Law”. The two unions, which claim that the draft amendment bill targets the Atatürk Teacher Training Academy (training primary school teachers) and teachers’ rights, went on strike from 8am to 12.30pm in all schools where they are unionised. KTOS secretary general Burak Maviş, speaking at the protest, said it was “unclear yet as to whether schools are structurally safe” and that “no steps have been taken to offer Turkish support lessons in schools where there are students who do not speak Turkish or English”. While teachers are trying to teach under “difficult conditions”, the Education Ministry is “messaging around with teachers’ rights instead of trying to find solutions to these issues”, he claimed. The two unions continued holding a series of strikes and protests across the country in the rest of the month demanding the bill be withdrawn. The strikes in secondary schools led to the cancellation of end-of-year exams, which had been due to start on May 23, throwing the academic calendar into disarray and sparking anger from parents. Though the bill was eventually passed, the trade unions vowed to bring certain articles to the Constitutional Court, saying that although the law was passed, the problems were not over.

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**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.

Gianna Chatzigeorgiou

Gianna Chatzigeorgiou holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Crete and a Master's in Social and Political Theory from the University of Cyprus. Her research interests include issues of collective action and social movements, political violence, social class, and social inequality.

Hubert Faustmann

Hubert Faustmann is a Professor of History and International Relations 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.

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