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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Cyprus celebrates its 10th anniversary. To mark the occasion the FES newsletter has a new design and we hope you share our excitement over the new look. We hope that the pandemic will allow for an appropriate celebration later this year. In the meantime, we wish you good health and hope you enjoy our “new” newsletter.

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FES CYPRUS NEWSLETTER

CONTENT

EVENTS, PODCASTS, PUBLICATIONS 3

CYPRUS PROBLEM 4

HYDROCARBONS 5

GREEK CYPRIOTS 6

Economic Developments

Domestic Developments

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

TURKISH CYPRIOTS 9

Economic Developments

Relations with Turkey

Domestic Developments

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

Newsletter No.109 JUNE 21

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2



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PODCASTS in JULY:

Sarah Morsheimer and Emmanuel Achiri
Migration 2.0 Podcast - Episode 5: International Students and Migrants in North Cyprus - A Discussion with Emmanuel Achiri from VOIS
(In English)



PODCASTS in AUGUST:

No podcasts in August

PUBLICATIONS in JULY:

No publications in July



PUBLICATIONS in AUGUST:

No publications in August

EVENTS in JULY:

Cypriots' Voice Conference:
The bicomunal situation as a result of the disastrous development of the "negotiations"
on July 10th (Saturday) at 9:00 am
at NOMAD (ex-Chateau status) opposite Ledra Palace Hotel



EVENTS in AUGUST:

No events planned so far

Public Launch for the Turkish version of the:
**Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus:
2020 Report**
on July 30th (Friday) at 9:30 am
at Rustem Bookshop in Nicosia

Newsletter No.109 JUNE 21

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CYPRUS PROBLEM

On June 4, nine-crossing points were reopened after 16 months of restrictions due to Covid-19 measures. Nicosia's central Ledra Street crossing point had been closed while other checkpoints opened sporadically. In practice, different rules on either side of the Green Line made crossings practically impossible for most inhabitants of the island or foreign visitors. The crossings resumed after an agreement between the two leaders, Nicos Anastasiades and Ersin Tatar, to synchronize Covid-related measures. Those who want to cross must present negative rapid or PCR test certificates in print form, not older than seven days. The technical committee on health will be assessing the epidemiological situation every 15 days, making adjustments if necessary. The two sides are also expected to discuss the issue of people who are fully vaccinated. However, concerns were raised as the majority of Turkish Cypriots received the Chinese vaccine Sinovac which has yet to be approved by the European Medicines Agency.

In June, following the failure of the April informal five party summit on the Cyprus problem to yield results, UN special envoy, Jane Holl Lute, arrived on the island to launch another round of discussions with the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders. Lute initiated a new round of contacts as part of efforts to find common ground for the continuation of the procedure that would ultimately allow for another informal summit to take place. Lute is not expected to recommend convening another such meeting, unless she sees common ground to build on.

On June 21, issuing a written statement on the Varosha initiative and the Immovable Property Commission (IPC), the Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar's office said that there was no going back on plans to reopen Varosha which had remained fenced-off for the past 47 years. Reminding that the IPC is recognized by the European Court of Human Rights as an effective domestic remedy, the statement pointed out that the commission has been providing legal

remedies for properties abandoned by Greek Cypriots in 1974 in line with international law. It said that the IPC was expecting a total of 3,000 applications concerning properties located within the fenced-off town which covered an area of 3.5 million square meters. The statement also pointed out that there were currently 344 applications made to the IPC concerning properties in Varosha and that the goal of the initiative was to solve the property disputes through the IPC so as to allow the town to be reopened for settlement in line with international law.

On June 22, the two sides reiterated to Lute their opposing positions on the way forward for the Cyprus problem. Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades reaffirmed his readiness to participate in a new informal summit on the Cyprus problem as well as substantive talks and reiterated his proposals for substantive confidence-building measures (CBMs) he submitted during the informal meeting in Geneva in April. The proposals concerned Varosha and the Tymbou airport being brought under UN administration so that it could open to international destinations; the operation of Famagusta port under EU regulations; and the creation of an escrow account where the share of the proceeds from the exploitation of natural resources for the Turkish Cypriots will be deposited.

Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar, informed the UN official that the Turkish Cypriot side sticks to the position it submitted in Geneva calling for recognition by the UN Security Council of the north as a sovereign state which will then negotiate with the Republic of Cyprus their future relationship. Tatar stated that he was ready to participate in any informal meeting, but to go to substantive talks it was important that the six-point proposal he had submitted was accepted, especially the first point that concerns sovereign equality and equal international status.

On June 25, UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres met separately with Anastasiades and Tatar on the sidelines of a special European Council in

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Brussels. Guterres reportedly proposed the appointment of a new Special Representative to speed up efforts to find common ground.

According to Turkish Cypriot media, with regards to the appointment of a new Special Representative, Tatar said the issue had been discussed with other parties and the Turkish Cypriots would “study it and we will see the result”. Tatar had previously rejected Guterres’ proposal for the appointment of a Special Representative to work on a four-point package based on the settlement framework which had been tabled by Guterres at the Crans-Montana talks in 2017. Tatar argued that he rejected it because it sends the wrong message, as Turkish Cypriots would find themselves involved in a process in which their sovereignty would not be accepted. Tatar reportedly told Guterres that negotiations can start on the acceptance of “our sovereign equality and equal international status, as expressed in the six-point proposal we submitted in Geneva”. As far as confidence building measures (CBMs) are concerned, Tatar stated that in consultation with Turkey, some decisions can be made to make daily life easier for Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

According to Anastasiades, Guterres told him during their meeting that a two-state solution was a “non-starter”, clarifying that the terms of his mandate were clear and provided for a solution based on a bicomunal, bizonal federation (“BBF”), with political equality in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Anastasiades told Guterres that the Greek Cypriot side agreed with his proposal, as submitted at the informal summit in Geneva last April, for the appointment of a Special Representative for the Cyprus Problem.

On June 25, following the completion of the EU

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

Summit in Brussels, the President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen stated that the EU would “never accept” a two-state solution to the Cyprus problem and that this stance is maintained by the UN. Von der Leyen’s statement were condemned by authorities in the north including the TRNC¹ foreign minister Tahsin Ertugruloglu, who described them among other as “unjust” and called for a “neutral position”.

According to an advanced final draft of the EU Summit’s conclusions revealed on June 24, the European Council is set to offer Turkey readiness to engage in “a phased, proportionate and reversible manner” while remaining fully committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, based on a bi-communal, bizonal federation with political equality. The Council also underlines the importance of the status of Varosha and calls for full respect of United Nations Security Council Resolutions, including Resolutions 550 and 789. The draft welcomed the de-escalation of tensions in the eastern Mediterranean.

HYDROCARBONS

On June 29, Energy Minister Natasa Pilides stated that US oil company EXXON MOBIL will resume offshore drilling for natural gas in around November to December. Pilides said EXXON MOBIL will return to block 10 of Cyprus’ exclusive economic zone (“EEZ”), the contract with the rig has already been signed and that the government is in the process of issuing the necessary permits, a routine procedure. The minister said experts from the United States and elsewhere, who will take part in the drilling operations, have started arriving in Cyprus. EXXON MOBIL will

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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be carrying out an appraisal, or follow-up drill at the site of the Glafcos-1 reservoir, discovered more than two years ago, in February 2019. The Glafcos play, bearing an estimated 5 to 8 trillion cubic feet of gas, is the largest gas discovery to date in Cypriot economic waters.

Like other companies licensed in Cyprus, EXXON MOBIL had put drilling operations on hold amid the coronavirus situation.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

According to the Central Bank of Cyprus (CBC), Cyprus' economy is forecast to grow by 3.8% this year, although this will be in relation to a 5.1% shrinkage in GDP in 2020. In its Economic Bulletin for June, the CBC also forecast a 3.1%, and a 2.5%, GDP growth for 2022 and 2023, respectively. For 2021, the CBC said the growth will be driven by all sub-categories of GDP spending.

On June 25, Cyprus and the European Investment Bank (EIB) signed two agreements worth €212m, earmarked for road infrastructure and assistance to small and medium businesses. The first agreement concerns the National Road III project which will be financed with €112m to be used for construction and improvement of the road network, and investment in fixed and mobile speed enforcement cameras. The second agreement for €100m concerned funding of small and medium enterprises ("SMEs") through the existing Cyprus Entrepreneurship Fund ("Cypef").

According to the survey which used data supplied by the Economic Research Centre at the University of Cyprus, the island ranked in 33rd place in the 2021 Institute for Management Development World Competitiveness Ranking. Cyprus dropped three places in the ranking from the previous year. In the survey for the ranking, Cyprus declines sharply in business efficiency, as pressure from the pandemic

crisis placed a burden on the state and its institutions. Businesses also saw a decline in profit, because of the crisis, as well as from the high level of corporate debt. Deficiencies in the country's infrastructure were also noted, particularly in the areas of scientific and technological infrastructure.

On June 28, Finance Minister, Constantinos Petrides, unveiled the second supplementary state budget for 2021, a stimulus package aimed at continuing support to businesses struck by the coronavirus-related measures, despite the fact that the largest spending item was the allocation of €45m to military defense. Laying out the supplementary budget to MPs, who will need to approve it, Petrides said that barring unexpected events during the rest of the year, or a resurgence in the pandemic, the Cypriot economy is on a rebound track. For 2021, the finance ministry projects GDP growth of 4%, compared to the European Commission's more conservative 3.2%. The ministry's forecasts take into consideration the declining revenues from tourism, expected to take a major hit this year as well. The supplementary budget amounts to €148.5m. It is the second supplementary budget this year, the first of €250m, having been approved by the cabinet in March 2021. The ministry predicts a fiscal deficit of 4.7% of GDP, compared to 5.4% in 2020. Unemployment is expected to decline to 7.4%. The government anticipates that the debt to GDP ratio will drop to 112%, from 119% last year. The supplementary budget features:

- €20m on various schemes supporting businesses and workers;
- €10m in support to low-income pensioners;
- €19m in benefits to asylum seekers;
- €10m for the purchase of medicines;
- €11m on equipment purchases for the department of civil aviation;
- €5m in subsidies to farming and animal husbandry;
- €45m in extra defense spending.

Tourist industry stakeholders including Cyprus Ho-

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tels Association (“Pasyxe”) director general, Philokypros Roussounides, painted a grim picture of upcoming July following the UK’s announcement that Cyprus would remain in the amber category, effectively delaying the arrival of British holidaymakers for a further three weeks at a minimum. Roussounides noted that Cyprus was moving further away from “good scenario” and if it has a season like last year, some businesses may not be able to survive.

Domestic Developments

In June, the COVID-19 cases increased from 75,457 to 75,860. The number of deaths attributed to the virus increased from 360 to 378. A spike in cases probably due to the delta variant, was noted in the last ten days of the month with daily cases returning to triple digits. As regards the vaccinations, fully vaccinated people account for 49.5% of the eligible population for vaccinations, while 64.3% of the eligible population has received the first dose of the vaccine. To boost the national vaccination coverage, the health ministry announced at the end of June the expansion of the programme to minors. The government is considering of providing incentives to encourage people get vaccinated as it has no intention of imposing stricter restrictions despite the spike in daily cases. Meanwhile, Cyprus rolled out an EU Digital certificate designed to show, via QR codes, whether passengers are fully vaccinated, or have immunity due to recent recovery from Covid-19 or have had a negative test, PCR or rapid depending on destination. The certificate has been set up to reopen and facilitate smoother travel within the EU and likely further afield in the future.

On June 4, Andros Kyprianou, announced he was stepping down as AKEL party leader. Kyprianou stated he had taken his decision several months before the May parliamentary elections, where AKEL performed poorly.

On June 10, DISY MP Annita Demetriou, was voted House president, the first woman ever to hold the post in Cyprus. Demetriou garnered 25 votes in the

second round. She was voted by her DISY colleagues and the MPs of newly established DIPA and far right ELAM.

A mini government reshuffle took place in June after the resignation of the health and justice ministers: On June 17 Justice Minister, Emily Yiolitis, resigned on the back of continuing reports relating to a reshuffle that presented her as the weakest link in the administration, which rendered her presence at the ministry unproductive and problematic. Yioliti was replaced by lawyer, Stephie Drakou, the former insurance superintendent. Health Minister, Constantinos Ioannou, had expressed his intention to step down after around three years as Health Minister, where he served since May 2018. Michalis Hadjipantelas, a chartered accountant by profession, will take over the Health Ministry on July 1. DISY member Marios Pelekanos also replaced Kyriacos Koushios as government spokesman. Koushios is reportedly nearing retirement.

On June 24, the Cyprus News Agency reported that Citizens’ Alliance president, Yiorgos Lillikas, is leaving politics while his party has set in motion procedures to merge with EDEK. The party said its goal is to unite the political forces that oppose a bizonal solution to the Cyprus problem and to deal with the challenges facing the country. Lillikas, who served as Commerce and Foreign Minister in the Tassos Papadopoulos government from 2003 to 2006, chose not to seek re-election to the House of Representatives in the May 30 elections.

A report into the now-defunct citizenship-by-investment (CBI) programme, released on June 22, conveys a picture of an almost total system failure – authorities and actors across the board not doing proper background checks on the applicants or their wealth provenance, vast discretionary powers assumed by the cabinet, and an overall lax attitude that over the years granted 6,779 citizenships of which the majority are flagged as problematic in one way or another. The voluminous dossier recommends among others the revoking of citizenships granted to sev-

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eral foreign nationals, and also prompts authorities to investigate the possible commission of criminal offences, including making false declarations. The report covers the period 2007 to 17 August 2020. The tax department is urged to take a closer look at some of the cases classed as high-risk to determine whether the applicants paid the correct tax on their transactions. On the government's responsibility, the dossier notes that certain cabinet members (ministers) should have rescued themselves from participating in sessions where relatives of theirs were in some way involved with the applications. The panel also highlights an incestuous relationship between the beneficiaries of the citizenship scheme and people in government.

Labour Relations and Trade Union

On June 28, taxi drivers started a work stoppage and blocked traffic on Athalassas and Strovolou Avenue in Nicosia. A delegation visited the relevant Ministries of Transportation, Labour, Interior and Education to voice their requests through delivering a memorandum. Among their demands is the continuation of the support plans of the Ministry of Labor at least until the end of the year, noting that from November to March, tourism, their main source of income is very low. They asked that the Ministry of Finance provides taxi companies and individual drivers a one-time sponsorship to cover a minimum operating income of offices. In addition, they asked to be included in the plan of the Ministry of Tourism for the financing of organisations involved in the resumption of the start of inbound tourism and call on the public to use taxis for their transportation. At the same time, they referred to "fraudulent public contracts" of the Ministries of Interior and Education for the transportation of passengers - students and immigrants - asking the two Ministries to review them.

On June 15, EKYSY (Union of Cypriot Pensioners) gave to the Ministers of Labor and Health "time cred-

it" for the solution of the problems faced by retirees. In their letter to the Ministers, they requested an immediate meeting, as they seek to resolve the serious problem that arises due to the very long delay in the examination of the applications both to the Social Security Fund and the examination and settlement of the applications submitted by low-income pensioners, from 2018 until today. As the letter points out, thousands of applications have been left in the offices of the Welfare Benefit Management Service for months without being examined yet, noting that "it is almost impossible for the low-income pensioners to contact the Welfare Benefit Management Service by phone, nor can they visit its offices to try to solve the problems that arise or to ask for clarifications on anything." EKYSY considers this behaviour "completely unacceptable".

On June 10, the unions SEK and PEO held a protest outside the Conference Center in the afternoon, shortly before the first session of the Plenary Session of the new Parliament, for the abolition of the employment status of the education services employees. The mobilization is part of the indefinite strike of the employees in the afternoon and evening programs of the Ministry of Education. Also, in the context of the strike, the employees decided not to submit grades for the second four-month term, not to supervise any exams and not to submit assessments or anything else related to their educational work.

On June 7, the nurses of PASYNO (Pancyprian Confederation of Nurses) protest a disciplinary investigation ordered by the Minister of Health for 5 nurses of the Athalassa Psychiatric Hospital who refused to take care of a patient with coronavirus, protesting that patient protocol was not enforced. A representative of PASYNO stated that "in November 2020, PASYNO, after receiving complaints by members who took care of the first incident with COVID in the psychiatric hospital of Athalassa, that in the specific ward where the incident was treated, there was a lack of protocol protection for both

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the patient himself and the nurses". As the spokesperson of PASYNO added, the conditions were unacceptable, and the General Assembly immediately noted that the work environment was dangerous and the nurses could not provide their services under such conditions. "The decision was made by the trade union and the nurses followed the instructions of their union. Nevertheless, the Minister decided to investigate for disciplinary misconduct by said nurses". PEO expressed its deep concern about the fact that the Ministry of Health has initiated disciplinary proceedings against nurses.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

The TRNC and Turkish governments signed a loan agreement. According to the agreement, the TRNC will borrow (up to) \$500m from Turkey. The debt service will start in 36 months and the maturity date will be in 114 months.

Based on the Central Bank's quarterly bulletin, Cyprus Today reported that the TRNC's Treasury ran a deficit of 229 million TL in the first three months of 2021. The report also showed that tax revenues were down by 8.6% to 976 million TL (€94.8 m) compared to the same period for the previous year. Non-tax receivables, the second highest share of budget revenue, were down from 544 million TL in the first quarter of 2020 to 488 million TL in the first quarter of 2021. The first two items with the largest share in budget expenditures (82%) in the first quarter of 2021 were 'current transfers' and 'personnel expenditures', amounting to 805 million TL and 708 million TL respectively.

Based on data provided by the Cyprus Turkish Construction Contractors Association (KTIMB), the economy portal Standard reported that the number of constructions decreased by 44.7% in 2020 compared to the year earlier. The association officials stated that the decline was the result of the pandem-

ic and to a large extent stemmed from a decrease in the construction of new housing units. Construction is considered as one of the leading sectors of the economy in the northern part of the island.

On June 23, 23 local authorities were left without electricity after the Electricity Authority (Kib-Tek) cut off their power supply over large unpaid bills. Municipalities owe a total of 255 million TL (€24.7 million) to Kib-Tek, according to the chairperson of its board of directors, Turan Buyukyilmaz. Only five councils were spared the power cuts. Kib-Tek also cut off the power supply to several government offices and traffic lights due to unpaid bills. Buyukyilmaz said the authority was in serious financial trouble and that they had sent written warnings to public offices and were forced to cut the power once the payment was not made. He said 150m TL (€14.5 million) are needed to purchase fuel oil.

According to the Statistical Institute, the 12-month inflation reached 19.9% in June.

Relations with Turkey

Ersin Tatar and Foreign Minister Tahsin Ertugruloglu attended the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, which was held under the auspices of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and hosted by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

On June 23, Prime Minister Ersan Saner visited Ankara as the guest of the Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay.

On June 3, the TRNC and Turkey signed a protocol to further develop bilateral ties in trade and economic cooperation in Nicosia. The protocol was signed by Turkish Trade Minister Mehmet Mus and the deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Erhan Arikli.

A delegation from the Cyprus Turkish Municipalities Union (KTBB) visited Konya (Turkey) for contacts within the framework of a protocol signed in February (2021) between the union and the Konya municipality to enhance economic, social and cultural cooperation.

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The Speaker of Turkish Cypriot Parliament Onder Sennaroglu visited Ankara and was received by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Vice-President Fuat Oktay and his counterpart Mustafa Sentop.

The Minister for Public Works and Communication Resmiye Canaltay was received by Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay in Ankara.

The Chairperson of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) Kemal Kilicdaroglu visited Nicosia where he met with the Turkish Cypriot president, government officials and political party leaders. Kilicdaroglu expressed support to the Turkish Cypriot leadership's two-state solution policy on Cyprus.

Domestic Developments

The ad-hoc parliamentary committee which is made up of only members of the coalition government (National Unity Party-UBP, Democratic Party-DP, Rebirth Party-YDP), agreed to hold the parliamentary election on April 3 (2022). The head of the committee, Sunat Atun (UBP) noted that the ad-hoc committee will next work on amending the electoral law. Opposition parties Republican Turkish Party (CTP), the People's Party (HP) and the Social Democratic Party (TDP) had contested the constitutionality of the ad-hoc committee (taking the committee to the constitutional court) and refused to nominate anyone to take part in the committee.

On June 22, the main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP) announced that it will organize street protests in each of the 6 districts 'to stand against violations of freedoms and law, and to claim our political will to govern ourselves'. The CTP leader Tufan Erhurman stressed that Turkish Cypriots were being stripped of their political will, accusing the government of disregarding democracy, human rights and freedoms in the country. He also said that Turkish Cypriots will never accept Turkey's tutelage. "Turkish Cypriots are one of the two equal elements on the island," the CTP leader said, adding that the majority of Turkish Cypriots desired integration with

the world instead of being alienated and isolated. He also underlined that the Turkish Cypriot side's current position on the Cyprus problem demanding political recognition was not possible. "This is nothing but putting the Cyprus problem in the freezer," Erhurman said. Touching on the Varosha issue, Erhurman said the CTP supports confidence-building measures in general. He said the fenced-off town must be opened under the control of the UN in line with international law and in a manner that will act as a catalyst for a comprehensive settlement. Also touching on the relations with Turkey, Erhurman said the CTP rejects Ankara's tutelage, dominance and interference in the domestic affairs. He said the Turkish Cypriots are fully capable of self-governance.

In June, the number of Covid-19 cases increased from 7,229 to 8,097 while the number of deaths attributed to the virus increased from 33 to 35. Towards the end of the month the Minister of Health, Unal Ustel, announced that in total 194,782 doses of covid-19 vaccine have been administered; 108,923 people received their first dose vaccinations, while 85,859 have received both doses (the percentage of people who have got vaccinated has not been regularly released). Ustel also pointed out that daily case numbers failed to drop as there was growing complacency amongst the public, and warned that no one could tolerate another lockdown. Ustel also said that the Ministry with the support of Turkey have speeded up the vaccination drive and that it was everyone's responsibility and duty to get jabbed: "The vaccinations have lowered the number of patients in hospitals and deaths caused by COVID-19," he said, adding that the pandemic will subside as immunity increases. Earlier in the month, 21,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccines were handed over to the Turkish Cypriot side by the Greek Cypriot side. The delivery was arranged through the bicomunal technical committee on health. This was the biggest batch of vaccine shipment delivered to the north to date, Turkish Cypriot co-chair of the com-

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mittee, Cenk Soydan said, adding that, as of June 11 the north received 24,700 AstraZeneca and 10,350 Pfizer-BioNTech doses. He added with the latest delivery that the number of doses for the Turkish Cypriot community reached 56,050. Soydan also said the north has received 190,000 doses of the Sinovac vaccine from Turkey.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On June 23, 24 trade unions (including the three trade union federations) held a protest outside the Prime Minister's office and threatened to bring life to a 'standstill' unless the government drops plan to amend labor law. Representatives of the trade unions held a banner that read: 'Appointed Prime Minister take your hands off the workers' bread'. A joint press statement warned that a general strike will be held across the country if debates in Parliament begin on the Draft Labour (Amendment) Bill and Draft Collective Bargaining Strike and Referendum (Amendment) Bills. The unions claim that the proposed legal amendments aim to 'abolish collective bargaining agreements and related rights, therefore disbanding the unity of organized unions'. Municipal Workers' Union (BES) president, Mustafa Yalinkaya, who spoke at the protest, said that 'all the country's trade unions were in front of the Prime Ministry to issue a warning' that if the government takes 'one more step on this matter' then the unions will 'make life difficult for them'.

On June 24, the Constitutional Court revoked the governmental decree to freeze the cost-of-living adjustment (for 4 months). The lawsuit was filed by six trade unions (including left-leaning KTAMS, and right-leaning Kamu-Sen and Kamu-Is). Head of KTAMS (Turkish Cypriot Public Servants' Union) Guven Bengihan said the court had ruled that the government could not introduce such a decree by by-passing the parliament. He also said that such governmental decrees could only be utilized only in exceptional cases and in public interest.

On June 24, This Country is Ours Platform, which

is made up of left-leaning trade unions and political parties held a press conference in front of the Ministry of Interior and protested the government's citizenship policy. The platform spokesperson said that the pace of granting citizenships has intensified, adding that 2,500 people have been given citizenship in the past six months.

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Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Office Cyprus
20, Stasandrou, Apt. 401
CY 1060 Nicosia

Tel. +357 22 377 336
Email: office@fescyprus.org
Web-Site: www.fescyprus.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/FEScyprus
Twitter: [@fescyprus](https://twitter.com/fescyprus)

Text:
Hubert Faustmann, Yiannis Charalambous,
Sertac Sonan, Enis Porat, Gianna
Chatzigeorgiou and Sophia Papastavrou

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Stadtformat Einig & Kazmierczak GbR

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