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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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PODCASTS in AUGUST:
No podcasts in August



PODCASTS in SEPTEMBER:
No podcasts in September

PUBLICATIONS in AUGUST:
No publications in July



PUBLICATIONS in SEPTEMBER:
No publications in September

EVENTS in AUGUST:
No events in August



EVENTS in SEPTEMBER:
No events planned so far

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CYPRUS PROBLEM

In July, Turkey's Foreign Minister, Mehmet Cavusoglu visited the north where he met with Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar. During a joint news conference, Tatar and Cavusoglu flatly rejected a new round of informal talks on Cyprus, saying there was no point after the deadlocked talks in Geneva, and rejected the idea of the appointment of a new Special Representative for Cyprus as suggested by the UN Secretary General ("UNSG") Antonio Guterres. Tatar stated that formal negotiations can begin once the Greek Cypriot side accepts the six points that he personally put to UNSG during their recent meeting in June 2021 in Brussels. In particular, Tatar stressed that the Greek Cypriots needed to accept the point that the island's north is a sovereign entity and thus has the same status as the south of the island. Cavusoglu for his part, reiterated a proposal by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for a regional conference to discuss revenue-sharing from eastern Mediterranean gas.

Speaking before the European Parliament, plenary European Council President, Charles Michel stated on July 7, that a two-state solution in Cyprus is a non-starter. In a debate with MEPs about the outcome of a recent European Council meeting, Michel said that the EU will continue to actively support the process to settle the Cyprus problem, including the issue of Varosha. Varosha, a suburb of Famagusta, was abandoned by its mostly Greek Cypriot inhabitants fleeing the advancing Turkish army in 1974 and had been fenced off by the Turkish military. Parts of the ghost town were recently opened by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership. Michel also noted that de-escalation in the eastern Mediterranean is a good sign, but constructive engagement needs to be deepened. He noted that engaging with Turkey remains the EU's policy aiming at modernizing the EU-Turkey Customs Union, but at the same time they need to address existing irritants.

On July 15, US Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Chairman, Bob Menendez and Senators Chris Van Hollen and Marco Rubio, joined by 11 of their Senate colleagues, sent a bipartisan letter to President Joe Biden, urging the US administration to utilise both bilateral and multilateral channels to pressure Turkey to halt its provocations in Varosha and to clearly articulate the consequences of Turkey's illegal actions. The Senators also raised concerns that Turkey's transgressions in Varosha come as it blocks progress in reunification talks.

July 20, marked the 46th anniversary of the 1974 Turkish invasion which resulted in the occupation of the island's northern third following a military coup engineered by the Greek military junta that toppled the government of the Republic on July 15. Events and memorials were held in the south while in the north a military parade took place in the presence of Turkish President Erdogan and a high-level delegation, in celebration of what is officially considered by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side as a peace operation. During his visit Erdogan addressed the Turkish Cypriot Parliament where he reiterated Ankara's position for a two-states solution and announced the construction of a new presidential office and parliament building for the north. He made no mention on the issue of Varosha. Main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP) and the Social Democratic Party (TDP), did not participate in the parliament session in protest over Ankara's interference in the north's internal politics.

Speaking at the military parade in the north on July 20 to mark the 47th anniversary of the Turkish invasion and with Erdogan in attendance, Tatar, announced the demilitarisation and opening of 3.5% of the fenced area of Varosha for its Greek Cypriot owners to return under Turkish Cypriot administration. Tatar called on Greek Cypriot refugees to submit claims for their properties through the immovable properties commission (IPC), which was set up by Turkey in the north as a domestic remedy and stated that the move was in accordance with international law and human rights.

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According to TRNC¹ Prime Minister, Ersan Saner, there are 496 properties which will open within the quarter for settlement, as part of the second phase of the initiative on Varosha. According to Saner, 337 applications are currently pending before the IPC for Varosha, 36 of which concern the 3.5% that is demilitarised. Former Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, leader of main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP) Tufan Erhurman, head of the Social Democratic Party, Cemal Ozyigit, and head of the People's Party, Kudret Ozersay, criticised the opening of part of Varosha while the move provoked reactions by the Greek Cypriots, the EU and the UN. On October 8, 2020, the Turkish side had opened part of the fenced area of Varosha, following an announcement made in Ankara on October 6, 2020. Both the UNSG and the EU expressed concern, while the UN Security Council called for the reversal of this course of action. UN Security Council resolution 550 (1984) considers any attempts to settle any part of Varosha by people other than its inhabitants as inadmissible and calls for the transfer of this area to the administration of the UN. UN Security Council resolution 789 (1992) also urges that with a view to the implementation of resolution 550 (1984), the area at present under the control of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus be extended to include Varosha.

On July 21, the National Council chaired by President Anastasiades warned that possible claims by Varosha refugees to the IPC over their properties carried risks because it promotes Turkey's goal of partition. The government advised against such a move and called on Famagusta refugees "to be patient" as territory is one of the most fundamental issues of the Cyprus problem. Refugees from Varos-

ha are torn about whether to claim their properties through the IPC, fearing they might lose their properties if they don't.

On July 27, the EU warned that the bloc's foreign ministers will consider actions against Turkey at their next meeting, if Ankara does not reverse actions in Varosha, which are contrary to UN Security Council Resolutions. In a written statement on behalf of the EU, High Representative Josep Borrell, stated that the EU "strongly condemns Turkey's unilateral steps and the unacceptable announcements made by the Turkish President and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community on 20 July 2021, on the further reopening of the fenced-off town of Varosha." Borrell further stated that "The EU equally calls for the immediate reversal of these actions and the reversal of all steps taken on Varosha since October 2020,". He added that the EU "continues to hold the government of Turkey responsible for the situation in Varosha." The EU foreign ministers are set to hold an informal meeting on September 2 and 3 in Kranj, Slovenia. The next Foreign Affairs Council is scheduled for October 18, 2021.

On July 29, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution that will renew the mandate of UNFCYP for another six months, until January 31, 2022. The final text, which was tacitly accepted and will be adopted by the plenary, satisfied all the points raised by Nicosia, with the support of 14 of the 15 members of the Security Council (excluding Britain), especially concerning an equal distance policy for the failure of the informal 5+1 meeting in Geneva in April 2021, and the basis of a solution as provided by the resolutions of the Security Council. Security Council Resolution 2587 also recalled the body's earlier Presidential Statement which condemned the July 20 announce-

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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ment by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders on the issue of Varosha, and called for the immediate reversal of this course of action and the reversal of all steps taken on the ghost town since October 2020, reaffirming the status of Varosha as set out in its previous resolutions of 550 (1984) and 789 (1992).

HYDROCARBONS

President Erdogan stated on July 2 that Turkey would carry on exploring for oil and gas in the eastern Mediterranean in comments that are expected to revive tensions with the EU and Greece amid attempts to repair their already tensed relations. Turkey is at odds with EU members Greece and Cyprus over energy resources and jurisdiction in the region. On July 9, Turkey's state-owned energy company TPAO applied for a licence to explore for crude oil in the eastern Mediterranean. The three areas where TPAO plans to carry out the exploration are in Turkish territorial waters off the coast of Silifke in Mersin province.

On July 23, Cyprus and Lebanon signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreement for cooperation in the oil and gas sector during a visit by the neighbouring country's Defence Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Zeina Akar. The MoU on Cooperation in the Energy Sector was signed by Akar and Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides. The MoU establishes the general framework for the enhancement of cooperation between the competent ministries of the two countries.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

On July 7, the European Commission raised its forecast for Cyprus' economic growth in 2021 to 4.3% from 3.8% in its previous forecast. This brings Cyprus closer into line with the latest forecast for both the EU and the euro area of 4.8% for this year.

On July 13, the UK lifted travel advice to British nationals to avoid all but essential travel to Cyprus, based on the current assessment of Covid-19 risks, but tourism stakeholders warned that this might not change much until the epidemiological situation improves. The UK is the largest market for Cypriot tourism.

According to real estate data experts WiRE FS, property prices dropped in the second quarter of 2021. Prices for apartments fell on a quarterly basis by 0.14%, for houses by 0.36%, for commercial properties by 0.85%, for warehouses by 0.33% for office spaces by 0.62%, for holiday apartments by 0.38% and for holiday houses by 0.95%. In Limassol however, apartment prices continued to rise for the fourth quarter in a row and for about 2.5% in the second quarter of 2021. On an annual basis, there was a significant drop in the prices of commercial properties and warehouses, 5.1% and 4%, respectively. On an annual basis, Paphos had the most significant drop in rental prices across all property types. The biggest drop was recorded for holiday homes and commercial properties, with 5.5% and 8% respectively.

Hellenic Bank shares rose by 5.33%, reaching a price of €0.87 per share. The rise in share value is perceived to be a result of the recent activity surrounding the bank, including Logicom's recent purchase of 4,505,554 shares and the acquisition by Eurobank of a 9.9% holding. Moreover, the bank has also recently had its new CEO, Oliver Gatzke, approved by the European Central Bank. Hellenic Bank is the second largest financial institution in Cyprus.

On July 24, Moody's ratings agency upgraded Cyprus' sovereign rating to Ba1 from Ba2 and changed its outlook to stable. The stable outlook reflects Moody's view that credit strengths and challenges are balanced at the Ba1 rating level. The agency said Cyprus also showed robust medium-term GDP growth prospects being supported by sizeable European funds.

According to Central Bank data released on July 24, non-performing exposures (NPEs) rose slightly

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in April, pushed upwards by increased restructuring. NPEs in April reached €5.14bn compared with €5.13bn the previous month.

The Cyprus Stock Exchange announced that it has accepted the listing of 100,000 Treasury Bills. The bills have a maturity of thirteen weeks and have a nominal value of €1,000 each, with a total value of €1m, resulting from an auction held on July 26, 2021. The newly approved bills do not bear any interest.

On July 26, The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin) approved Cyprus' national recovery and resilience plan, unlocking €1.2bn in EU funds to the island over the next years. The Recovery and Resilience Facility is the EU's programme of large-scale financial support in response to the challenges the pandemic has posed to the European economy. Future disbursements from the facility will take place once the member states reach milestones and targets set for each investment and reform. According to Ecofin, Cyprus intends, among other things, to reform its electricity market and facilitate the deployment of renewable energy, as well as to enhance connectivity and e-government solutions.

On July 27, Energy Minister Natasa Pilides, Agriculture Minister Costas Kadis and Deputy Minister for Innovation Kyriakos Kokkinos, presented a new €90m national action plan. The target is to ease Cyprus' transition to a green, circular model that relies on renewable resources and recovers and reuses raw materials, thereby reducing wastage and keeping waste production at a minimum. The plan was recently approved by the Council of Ministers and is based on four pillars:

- information campaigns for businesses and consumers on the opportunities as well as on pay as you throw;
- incentives – including advice;
- Go Circular subsidy schemes and personnel training;
- infrastructure and managing municipal waste;

The latter includes €25m for pay as you throw, €3.5m for collection programmes and recycling green spots in remote communities, €7m for household composting of organic waste, €4m for repair and reuse centres, €5m for the reduction and separate collection of solid waste in Limassol and Paphos and €15m to use the separately collected waste. Pilides added that her ministry will be unveiling a €13m incentives scheme for industries to invest in projects and practices to smooth the transition.

Domestic Developments

In July, the COVID-19 cases dramatically increased from 75,860 to 101,946 with the Delta variant remaining the most dominant variant. The number of deaths attributed to the virus increased from 378 to 421. Daily cases remained in three- and four-digit figures throughout the month. Between July 13 to July 26, Cyprus' cases remained at exceedingly high levels with a rate of 1.403 per 100.000. As regards the vaccinations, fully vaccinated people account for 64% of the population for vaccinations, while 73% of the population has received the first dose of the vaccine. Voluntary vaccinations will begin in August for children over 12 years old. A SafePass is now required from everyone aged 12 and over at all premises where more than 10 people including staff can congregate. A SafePass is either proof of vaccination, proof of recovery from Covid-19 in the past 180 days or a 72-hour negative PCR or rapid antigen test. The health ministry will scrap free antigen rapid tests for the general population from August 1.

On 3 July, a deadly fire broke out in Arakapas village, which destroyed over 55 square kilometres and killed four individuals. The fire was the most devastating ever in the history of the Republic. Homes, properties and large areas of pine forest and other vegetation were destroyed in just a few hours. Authorities evacuated several villages in the area, with the flames affecting some 10 communities including Melini, Ora, Odou, Sykopetra, and Eptagonia, Ayioi Vavatsinias, Vavatsinia and Arakapas. The fire is sus-

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pected to be started by a 67-year old.

On July 4, Stephanos Stephanou was elected as the new secretary general of AKEL. Stephanou was elected by the party's central committee, which comprises 105 members, who voted between Stephanou and Giorgos Loukaides. With one absentee and one blank vote, Loukaides received 29 votes or 28.16% support while Stephanou obtained 74 votes or 71.84%. He replaces Andros Kyprianou who held the post since 2009.

On July 9, Anastasia Anthousi was sworn as the first junior minister of social welfare as part of the government's efforts to reform and upgrade the operation of the state's social services. The new minister was a senior health service officer who served as the coordinator of the minister's office under two former ministers and had key roles in the implementation of the national health scheme and fighting the pandemic.

Former EDEK MP Yiorgos Varnavas announced on July 29 that he would run for party president in the October 24-25 party conference. Varnavas said the party can only play a decisive role in the pursuit of its goals on national and other issues if it gains strength among civil society, something requiring comradeship, respect for collective organs and for opposing views and transparency within the party.

Labour Relations and Trade Union

On July 1, a circular by ETYK (Union of Bank Workers Cyprus) recognized the impasse that has arisen regarding negotiations for the renewal of the collective agreement with Hellenic Bank. In the circular, ETYK claims that the two sides had reached an agreement on all points, however, as it notes, "the bank's board of directors did not ratify the agreement despite the commitment it had made." ETYK, in its circular, notes that it is willing to negotiate for the renewal of the collective agreement, if the bank convinces them of the credibility of its negotiator and implements, as it is obliged, the existing agreements that provide, inter alia:

- Restoration of salaries due to the reductions, from 01/01/2019.
- Payment of 12% to the provident fund to employees coming from the former Co-operative Bank, recently acquired by Hellenic Bank.
- Granting the so-called 14th salary to the beneficiaries coming from the former Co-operative Bank.
- Filling the vacancies in 33% of the existing staff.

On July 7, PEO disagreed with the positions of the Minister of Labor, Welfare and Social Insurance Zeta Aimilianidou in the Labor Committee of the Parliament on the pension.

PEO clarified in its announcement that:

- They do not agree with the change of retirement age.
- With regard to the 12% reduction in pensions for those who retire at the age of 63 instead of 65, it seems on the basis of statements made by the Minister, that she categorically rejected the universal request of the employees for its abolition.
- The viability of the Social Insurance Fund is important. However, according to PEO's announcement "sustainability cannot be placed entirely above the need for a social security system that meets the modern needs of workers and is characterized by adequate and equitable reciprocity."
- PEO calls on the Minister of Labor to immediately convene with the Labor Advisory Body to start a dialogue on the issue of the Social Insurance Fund, with the aim of finding fair and socially balanced solutions.
- On July 9, all lifeguards in Cyprus went on a three-hour work strike, to demonstrate against the non-resolution of their long-standing demands. Specifically, the requests concern:
- The immediate upgrade of the salary scale for the profession of lifeguard.

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- The immediate revocation of the decision of 6 May 2019, by the Joint Labor Committee, which excluded lifeguards from being included in the regular hourly paid government staff.
- Securing the profession with the enactment of a Bill, with the aim of classifying it as a regulated profession.
- Improvement of working conditions.
- Upgrade of logistics equipment, in accordance with the "SALAMIS" operational plan.
- Establishment of an independent service that will concern the Lifeguard profession exclusively.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

The 12-month inflation has reached 20.2% in June. Department of Commerce statistics show that the TRNC's foreign trade deficit in the first quarter of 2021 was US\$219 million, down from \$317.4 million in the first quarter of 2020; a decline by 31.1%. The exports in the January-March period of 2021 exceeded \$45 million for the first time in many years (46.1 million); an increase of 23.9% compared to 2020. The sharp decline in the imports of the TRNC continued this year as well. The imports fell by 16.5% percent compared to 2020 from \$317.3 to \$264.9. The trade figures point to the contraction in the economy.

The research conducted by the Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies (CMIRS) conducted in June has revealed that there has been a serious decrease in the rate of those who frequently stated that 'they looked to the future with confidence in the last week'. While this rate was 60.6% in March, it decreased to 41.7% in the June survey. For the first time since the beginning of the survey, the rate of those "who do not look to the future with confidence" (58.1%) has exceeded the rate of those who do.

Relations with Turkey

Both the main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP) and Social Democratic Party (TDP) boycotted the special session of parliament which the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addressed, in protest of Ankara's disregard of opposition parties in the north. The parties also objected to not being allowed to speak at the special session. The third opposition party, People's Party (HP) decided to attend the session 'as a requirement of statehood and political courtesy'.

Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar slammed those criticizing and protesting Erdogan's visit. Tatar accused the Greek Cypriot side which attempted to present Erdogan's visit to the entire world as unlawful as insolent and disrespectful. He also accused the parties boycotting the session of acting together with the Greek Cypriot side to provoke tension. 'We are fully aware that these people are being managed by the same circles whose main goal is to cut off the Turkish Cypriots' ties with Turkey and to force the Turkish Cypriots to accept their preferred solution model,' Tatar said. He said these attempts were futile since the TRNC will continue to embrace Turkey.

Along with Erdogan, the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Mustafa Sentop and the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Devlet Bahçeli attended the ceremonies to mark the 47th anniversary of July 20.

Former Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı's press advisor Ali Bizden and researcher, Dr Ahmet Cavit An were barred from entering Turkey on the premises that they were regarded as a threat to Turkey's national security. It turned out that the decision was made in September 2020 and is valid for 5 years. Bizden on July 7 and Cavit An on July 11 were denied entry into Turkey and were deported back to the island. The decision to bar them from entering Turkey had sent shockwaves through the Turkish Cypriot community and the opposition, reigniting a never-ending debate on relations with Ankara while

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the government and Tatar maintained their silence. Reportedly, 'the list' made in September 2020 includes many more people.

On July 5, Prime Minister Ersan Saner announced that Turkey was releasing 100m TL (€9.85 m) as part of its second grant scheme. Saner said that the money will be used for various infrastructure projects such as road works, education projects, strengthening the police force, grant schemes for agriculture and tourism projects.

Domestic Developments

On July 16, Koral Cagman (Democratic Party (DP), Kyrenia MP), has been reappointed as the Minister of Labour after quitting the job on June 25, citing health reasons and 'extreme stress and unhappiness' at being unable to serve with 'honesty and transparency'. However, he decided to return to the role after Prime Minister, Ersan Saner, refused to appoint Afet Ozcafer (Secretary General of the DP) who was nominated by DP to replace Cagman. Afet Ozcafer, resigned from her party and told reporters at a press conference that she had lost her faith in her party and did not believe they could move forward with such 'unprincipled behaviour'.

On July 7, Bertan Zaroglu (Nicosia MP) announced his resignation from the Rebirth Party (YDP) and the formation of his new party, the Nation Party. Speaking to reporters after submitting his resignation, Zaroglu said that around 2,000 members of the YDP had also resigned and joined the ranks of his new party. He said that he had opposed the idea of joining the minority coalition and cited his disagreements with the YDP leader Erhan Arikli as the main reason for leaving the party. Zaroglu who had run for the leadership of the party had lost against Arikli in the party congress held last April.

According to the US State Department's latest 'Trafficking in Persons Report', which rates countries from best to worst in four levels, the TRNC was ranked among the worst i.e. 'countries whose

governments do not fully meet ... minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so'. 'Despite the lack of significant efforts, "TRNC" took some steps to address trafficking. In March 2020, "Parliament" amended the "TRNC criminal code" to include trafficking for the first time and "Parliament" also passed the 2000 UN TIP Protocol in April 2018. However, Turkish Cypriot authorities did not investigate, prosecute, or convict any traffickers. Turkish Cypriot authorities did not identify any trafficking victims and provided no victim protection, including shelter and social, economic, and psychological services. Turkish Cypriot authorities did not allocate funding to anti-trafficking efforts or provide training on anti-trafficking issues,' according to the report.

According to the report of the daily Yeniduzen, the Minister of Health announced that 280,502 doses have been administered as of July 27. The number of people who have received the first dose is 157,761 while the number of people who have received both doses is 125,741. Based on the State Planning Organisation's 2019 population projection, 32.8% of the north's population of 382,230 people have received both doses. In July, the number of Covid-19 cases increased from 8,097 to 11,562 while the number of deaths attributed to the virus increased from 35 to 40.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On July 28, the Minimum Wage Determination Commission convened to determine the second minimum wage of the year but could not reach a consensus. Following the meeting, the government representative, the Minister of Labour, Koral Cagman said that they took the views of the representatives of employers and employees at the meeting, and that they would evaluate these views with the relevant ministries as the government side, and that he wishes to conclude the process so that the new minimum wage would be applicable as of August. The representative of the workers' side, Ahmet Serdaroglu (Hur-Is Federation) reminded that the

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Minister of Economy promised to reduce the prices 'if we cannot increase the minimum wage' but to the contrary exorbitant price hikes have been seen since this statement. Serdaroglu also said that the entry level gross salary in the public service was 6,076 TL (€598), and demanded that this should be determined as the minimum wage and that the cost of living should be indexed automatically to increase the minimum wage. The current (as of February 2021) gross minimum wage in the TRNC is 4,400 TL (€434) and net 3,828 TL (€377).

The Trade Union Platform, which is made up of 15 left-leaning trade unions, saluted the decision taken by the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) and the Social Democratic Party (TDP) not to attend the special parliamentary session which Turkish President Erdogan addressed. 'The appropriate response to the ruling elite in Turkey and to their collaborators, which dealt a blow to Turkish Cypriots' demands for federation, in the north came from the CTP and the TDP; the platform statement said.

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