



## 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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## FES CYPRUS NEWSLETTER

PODCASTS in NOVEMBER:  
*No podcasts in November*



PODCASTS in DECEMBER:  
*No podcasts in December*

PUBLICATIONS in NOVEMBER:  
*Omer Gokcekus and Sertac Sonan*  
**Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus**  
2021 Report  
(in English)



PUBLICATIONS in DECEMBER:  
*No publications in December*

EVENTS in NOVEMBER:  
*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus*  
**Journalist Seminar**  
Date: 04. - 06. November  
Location: Chateau Status  
**Not open to the Public**



EVENTS in DECEMBER:  
*No events in December*

*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus*  
**Discussion: Cypriot Youth in Crises**  
Date: 21 November  
Time: 06:30 p.m.  
Location: Goethe-Institut,  
Markou Drakou 21, Nicosia  
**For participation fill the form:**  
<https://forms.gle/aWtjom8j3B1mmnJa9>  
**Open to the Public**

*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus*  
**Launch: Corruption Perception**  
**2021 Report**  
Date: 24 November  
Time: 10:00 a.m.  
Location: Home For Cooperation  
**Please RSVP by November 22 to**  
[office.cyprus@fes.de](mailto:office.cyprus@fes.de)  
**Open to the Public**

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### CYPRUS PROBLEM

On October 6, President Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan connected on the Cyprus problem during the sidelines of a European summit in Prague. Anastasiades relayed to Erdogan that the Cyprus problem needs to be solved and efforts should be made to revive stalled peace talks. The Turkish leader noted that it is not the right time to discuss the issue arguing that Anastasiades will be leaving office in the following months.

On October 7, the UN confirmed that it received a request from the Turkish Cypriot side stating that UNFICYP needs to reach an agreement with the TRNC<sup>1</sup> to remain active in the north. TRNC Foreign Minister, Tahsin Ertugruloglu, stated that UNFICYP was handed an ultimatum, saying the force had one month to make a status of forces agreement (SOFA) with the TRNC, or leave their bases in the north. The peacekeeping force has such an agreement with the Republic of Cyprus. The development follows last month's meeting in New York between Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, where the former presented a preliminary SOFA. The Turkish Cypriot leadership is complaining that they are hosting UN troops pursuant to a formal agreement not with them, but with the Greek Cypriots and are claiming to be treated as equals.

On October 17, the EU's Director General for Structural Reform Support, Mario Nava met with Anastasiades at the presidential palace. The need to build trust between the two communities in Cyprus was underlined by Nava.

<sup>1</sup>The 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 his speech at the Economist Conference in Nicosia on October 18, UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus, Colin Stewart, referred to the importance of trade and business ties between the two communities on the island towards reviving hope for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. Stewart described economic interest as the surest way to restore confidence in a solution. He repeated that more dependence by the occupied north on Turkey, particularly economically, means less interdependence between the two sides of the island, and stressed that if current trends continue, the idea of a mutually acceptable settlement will soon become unviable. According to Stewart, both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot shoppers are finding certain retail goods cheaper or more attractive on the other side. He added that the World Bank has compiled a list of products in which each side has a comparative advantage. Meanwhile, Stewart noted that work is going on behind the scenes to expand trade through the Green Line Regulation, to overcome banking challenges and ease congestion at crossing points. In addition, the technical committees are working on approximately 20 other initiatives, that will lay the groundwork for future solution talks. He said, however, that the technical committees and confidence-building measures "are not a substitute" for negotiations.

On October 20, the Foreign Ministry sent a letter to UNFICYP asking for an immediate postponement of works taking place at the Cetinkaya football pitch in the buffer zone, after an agreement was struck between UNFICYP, the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkey. The matter reportedly caused Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides to ask Special Representative in

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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Cyprus Colin Stewart to explain the rationale that led UNFICYP to grant a work permit without the consent of the Republic of Cyprus. Commenting on the matter, UNFICYP spokesman Aleem Siddique stated that any claims that the status of the football pitch within the UN buffer zone will change are wrong and misleading.

On October 23, leader of socialist EDEK party Marinós Sizopoulos, called on Anastasiades to request from the UN to recall its special representative in Cyprus. Sizopoulos argued that in the short time that Stewart had been on the island, he has directly or indirectly taken actions that upgrade the TRNC and are in complete contradiction of the UN charter. Sizopoulos in particular referred to the way that the upgrade of the Cetinkaya football pitch in the buffer zone had been handled. The EDEK leader also referred to a request from the Turkish Cypriot side for UNFICYP to reach an agreement with the TRNC to remain active in the north. Anastasiades hinted on October 28 that steps are being taken even as high as the UN Secretary General over issues that arose with UNFICYP. The Greek Cypriot side is also protesting about actions by the Turkish military in the buffer zone including the harassment of a farmer and the installation of a new sentry post in Denia.

Responding to queries put to her by the Cyprus News Agency (CNA) on October 27, Russian foreign ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the Russian Federation has not altered its stance on the Cyprus problem and remains committed to UN Security Council resolutions relating to Cyprus. Zakharova was also asked to comment on claims expressed by some analysts of possible “revenge” against Athens and Nicosia over EU sanctions. Zakharova was also asked to clarify Russia’s position on the matter of direct flights between Russia and the north that was reported in media in September 2022, which she characterized as “fantasies in the press”.

In a recent poll presented by state broadcaster CyBC in the run-up to the February presidential elections, conducted by pollsters Cypronetwork from October 4 to 14, using a sample of 1,224 respondents aged 18 and over, only 8% said that the Cyprus problem and Turkey were the biggest problem facing the country. Regarding progress made on the Cyprus problem over the past year and how close a solution is, 92% of respondents said there is no solution on the horizon. Assistant UN Secretary General Rosemary DiCarlo is expected to arrive to the island in November on a fact-finding mission to assess whether the process for resolving the Cyprus problem could be kept alive.

Cyprus Today reported that statements of the Turk-Sen Trade Union Federation that there are approximately 3,000 Turkish Cypriots working in southern part of the island. The head of the federation, Arslan Bicakli, said that while some had found work “through their own means and acquaintances”, others benefited from cooperation schemes between trade union federations across the divide. Turk-Sen and the SEK, and Dev-Is and PEO are collaborating to find jobs for Turkish Cypriot jobseekers in the south. Bicakli said that out of around 600 people who applied to them, around 400 have already started working. Bicakli pointed out that one of the main reasons that Turkish Cypriots want to work in the south is that they can earn more than double the salary they would earn in the TRNC: “A person working in the north earns around 8,600TL (€ 460) while average salary they make in the south doing the same job is around €900. Bicakli added that working conditions in the south were also better where workers strictly “work eight hours” a day “and if they have to work longer, receive double per hour in over-time”.

According to Esra Aygin’s report in Cyprus Mail from 16 October, “for the first time since the crossing points opened in 2003, there now are more Greek Cypriot crossings than Turkish Cypriot crossings. Between January and August this year, 1,883,000

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crossings to the north were recorded by Greek Cypriots. During the same period, Greek Cypriots spent almost €30 million euros with their credit cards,” helping the Turkish Cypriot economy survive one of the worst crises it had encountered recently. Aygin also quoted the head of the Restaurant Owners Association, Salih Kayım as saying “in the past year, it has been the Greek Cypriots, who have made it possible for the food sector to survive ... Turkish Cypriots cannot not afford to go to restaurants anymore.”

The European Commission and the Goethe Institute have officially opened a new office of the “EU Scholarship Program for the Turkish Cypriot community” in the northern part of Nicosia. A European Commission announcement said the office forms an “integral part of the assistance that the EU provides to the Turkish Cypriots to come closer to the European Union”. The office will be open to the public as a “clear demonstration of the EU investment in the future of the Turkish Cypriots” the European Commission said. European Commission director general for structural reform support, Mario Nava, who was at the opening, said: “This inauguration fulfils our objective of bringing the Turkish Cypriot community closer to the EU. “This building is part of a strategy to create access, inclusion and a sense of belonging by placing the educational and training needs of the community at the centre. “We want to ensure that all Turkish Cypriots have access to information and take advantage of the program when deciding about what and where to study in another EU country.” The European Commission statement added that the scholarship program for Turkish Cypriots was established in 2007 and has “offered more than 2,000 Turkish Cypriots the possibility to study and train at highly diverse, inclusive and stimulating environments throughout the European Union”.

The International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH), based in Geneva has teamed up with the Technical Committee on Cultur-

al Heritage (TCCH) and the United Nations Development Program(UNDP) under the auspices of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus for the conservation of two cultural heritage sites: St George of the Latins Church in Famagusta and Tuzla Mosque in Larnaca. An event was held at the Home for Cooperation in the buffer zone to mark the signing of a grant for the amount of \$840,335 from ALIPH to the UNDP for this Project.

The education ministry announced that free afternoon Greek language courses will be made available to Turkish Cypriots that hold a valid ID card of the Republic of Cyprus. The classes will be given at the Ayios Antonios lyceum and the Ayios Spyridonas lyceum in Limassol and will consist of 120 classes of 45 minutes for every school year. Interested individuals can contact the afternoon institutes at 25-306545 for Ayios Antonios and 25-694350 for Ayios Spyridonas.

On October 15, the Turkish Cypriot human rights platform held its first Walk for Freedom march this month to raise awareness on human trafficking, as cases are on the rise in the north. The march ended at Ledra Palace crossing point, where protestors from the north met with the corresponding march organized for the eighth time by Cyprus Stop Trafficking in the south.

### HYDROCARBONS

On October 14, the EuroAsia Interconnector was inaugurated. The project will connect the Cypriot, Greek and Israeli power grids through the world’s longest submarine power cable which will total over 1,200 kilometres with a 2,000-Megawatt capability. The final construction of the electricity interconnection is expected to be completed by the end of 2027. The project will allow Cyprus to have an excess of renewable energy that could be exported or exchanged.

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On October 18, Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides said he will probe Washington's interest in brokering talks between Cyprus and Turkey for a possible maritime border deal following the United States' role in mediating an historic agreement between Israel and Lebanon. Speaking on CyBC radio, Kasoulides said he intends to float the idea to Amos Hochstein, Senior Advisor for Energy Security at the US State Department.

On October 18, the head of the Turkish Cypriot Energy Efficiency Association Gorkem Celik stated that the Turkish Cypriot community must demand from the EU the right to get on board the prospective EuroAsia Interconnector project "without political preconditions".

European Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson, visited Cyprus on October 13 and 14 for the inauguration of the start of construction of the EuroAsia Interconnector project and to attend the East Med Gas Forum (EMGF) meeting held in Cyprus. Simson avoided building up expectations that Europe needs more East Med natural gas/LNG, other than what is committed through the EU-Egypt-Israel MoU signed in June 2022. Instead, she rather recommended promoting renewable energy.

On October 19, Director and Frontier Exploration of ExxonMobil Tristan Aspray, spoke at the Annual Economist Summit in Nicosia. Aspray reiterated that the hydrocarbon resource development requires billions of dollars of investment and that East Med gas fields including Cyprus' are small, in deep water and expensive to develop, requiring long-term exports.

On October 28, a Cypriot delegation met with outgoing Lebanese President Michel Aoun to discuss maritime border delineation between the two countries. Speaking after the meeting special envoy Tasos Tzionis, stated that "there is no problem between Lebanon and Cyprus that cannot be resolved eas-

ily". Lebanon and Cyprus reached a maritime border agreement in 2007 which hasn't been ratified by Lebanon's parliament and therefore never went into force. Cyprus delineated its maritime exclusive economic zone (EEZ) with Israel in 2010. Lebanon and Israel officially delineated their contested sea boundary on October 27, following years of U.S.-mediated indirect talks. Aoun said the next step would be delineating Lebanon's maritime boundaries with northern neighbour Syria and resuming talks with Cyprus to the west.

### GREEK CYPRIOTS

#### Economic Developments

On October 24, the House Finance Committee, kicked off discussion of the budget for fiscal year 2023. As submitted to parliament, the 2023 budget sees a €525m rise, driven primarily by higher operating costs and increased social spending. It features a 4% increase on social spending, and 12% on development spending. According to the government's forecasts, in 2023 GDP growth will slow down to 3%, down from the estimated 5.7% for this year. The Central Bank of Cyprus estimates that the annualized inflation rate this year will come to 8.4%, retreating to 3.9% in 2023. Discussion of the state budget, by government ministry and department, will continue throughout the month of November. The three-day plenary session to approve the balance sheet is set for December 6, 7 and 8.

On October 25, the European Commission endorsed a positive preliminary assessment of Cyprus' payment request for €85m in grants under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), while Cyprus lost €90m in grants due to better-than-expected economic performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Cyprus has already received pre-financing amounting to €157m.

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On October 26, Finance Minister Constantinos Petrides stated that the decision on a possible foreclosure suspension now lies with the House. He went on to warn, however, that amidst rising rates, there is a danger that this measure may evolve from temporary to permanent, and ultimately cancel out the foreclosure bill entirely. Petrides said that both the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Cyprus (CBC) have warned of the consequences including the possibility of not disbursing the instalment of €85m through the European RRF and even a possible “punishment” through a downgrade. The Finance Minister went on to say that amidst rising government bond yield, Cyprus cannot risk a possible downgrade.

According to a report released by the CBC the total amount of deposits in the Cypriot banking system reached €51.8bn in September 2022, the highest level of the last nine years, while loans stood at a five-month low. Total deposits in September 2022 recorded a net increase of €148m, compared to a net increase of €173.7m in August 2022. According to central bank data, total loans in September 2022 recorded a net decrease of €110.9m, compared to a net decrease of €100m in August 2022. The balance of total loans in September 2022 reached €28.3bn, the lowest level since last April.

An increase in demand for properties, particularly from international companies, mainly for large prime plots was noted in Cyprus during Q3 of 2022. According to a land registry report regarding the real estate sector, there were 5,566 property transactions with a total value of €1.65bn. For comparison, the total value of transactions during Q1 and Q2 of 2022 amounted to €1.2bn and €1.3 bn, respectively. Commenting on the figures, Council for Registration of Real Estate Agents president Marinou Kineyirou estimated that at some point inflation, the rise in

construction costs and the increase in lending rates will affect the property market.

### Domestic Developments

In October, the Covid 19-cases increased from 587,994 to 599,118 cases<sup>2</sup>. The number of deaths attributed to the virus since March 2020 rose from 1,182 to 1,194.

On October 15, DIKO splinter party DEPA announced that it would be supporting candidate Nikos Christodoulides in the upcoming 2023 Presidential elections. Christodoulides has claimed that he is an independent candidate but has since received support from parliamentary parties DIKO, EDEK, and now DEPA. The Solidarity Movement, which is not in parliament and is led by Eleni Theocharous, is also supporting Christodoulides. Christodoulides said he would form a government of national unity that would also include people who had not supported him if he is successful in gaining the position.

Speaking at a news conference on October 20 about the Cyprus problem and what he would do if elected, independent presidential candidate Achilleas Demetriades, stated that he stood for a bizonal, bicommunal federation solution and that his negotiating team would be made up of only people that believed in that solution. One third of his team he said would also be women as per UN Resolution 1325 on women’s participation in peace processes. His vision for a future Cyprus is outlined as: The Republic of Cyprus evolving into a federation with political equality as laid out in UN resolutions; without occupying forces, intervention rights and guarantees; with the European acquis, together with fundamental rights, to be applied throughout the Republic of Cyprus. His immediate goal, if elected, is for the return of the Turkish Cypriot side to the negotiating table. He identified energy and the EU-Turkey relationship as

<sup>2</sup>The government no longer publishes daily Coronavirus cases or deaths. Instead, it publishes figures on cases and

deaths on a weekly basis. These figures represent the latest published figures of the month, up until September 30.

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key factors in achieving this goal.

On October 23, the Cyprus Green Party decided during a meeting of the party's Electoral Conference that it will not be backing any of the Presidential candidates.

Local media reported over an internal rift within DISY, after party leader and presidential candidate Averof Neophytou called on President Anastasiades during a debate broadcasted by Sigma on October 24 to clarify his position over who he supports in the upcoming Presidential elections. The incident followed comments made by Neophytou on October 20, when he had stated that his candidacy is faced with an elephant in the room naming Anastasiades. Meanwhile, daily Politis claimed that some ministers have also been irked by the President's stance during this election. It is understood that although Anastasiades has officially endorsed and reiterated his support towards Neophytou, he has been accused of being more active in previous elections and for a rather lukewarm endorsement of Neophytou. Anastasiades's stance has been interpreted as looking towards healing potential rifts within the party following the elections, leaving the doors open for the sizeable chunk of the DISY electorate which is likely to vote for Christodoulides. Meanwhile local media reported that Neophytou may have made his comments as a deflection tactic, as should he lose the election to Christodoulides who is strongly favoured in the polls, the DISY leader could then shift blame to Anastasiades. When asked about the matter on October 27, Anastasiades stated that he would not comment on the presidential elections. According to recent polls by CyBC, Christodoulides continues to be the most popular candidate at 55%, with AKEL's Andreas Mavroyiannis and Neophytou trailing at 37% and 35%, respectively.

During a press conference on October 26, Presidential candidate Andreas Mavroyiannis said he

has the plans and the tools to address society's main concerns, which he identified as the high cost of living, corruption and the migration issue. The AKEL-backed candidate said he would also seek to establish a bicommunal technical committee on migration with the north, in cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Mavroyiannis is preparing a fund-raising gala dinner with an entrance fee of €300, scheduled for November 25.

Talks within the month failed between the four independent presidential contenders to put forward a common candidate. The four independents are Christodoulos Protopapas, Marios Eliades, Achilleas Demetriades and Constantinos Christofides.

The trial of the four key players allegedly involved in the now scrapped 'golden passport' scheme scandal, including two who were shown in Al Jazeera's undercover report, has been postponed for November 30. The Nicosia criminal court decided to postpone the first hearing that was expected to start on October 26, following requests by the defense counsel for additional testimonial material.

### Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On October 7, the trade unions, after a joint meeting, expressed their dissatisfaction with the unjustified delay in the passing of the two bills, regarding pensions of employees in the wider public sector. They reported that the pension agreements, which are the product of social dialogue, have been co-signed between the unions and the Minister of Finance, after long discussions and consultations. In June 2022 however they were submitted by the government to parliament for discussion and voting. On October 18, the trade unions expressed their satisfaction at the completion of the article-by-article discussion of the relevant Bills before the Parliamentary Finance and Budget Committee of the Parliament. In a joint announcement they stated that they look forward to the completion of the relevant dialogue by the ple-

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nary of the parliament as soon as possible and the immediate passing of the Bills, in order to ensure, as they state, “the pension rights of thousands of workers, who have remained uninsured for over a decade and to tackle the gross injustice suffered by employees who have retired in the interim, until the implementation of the New Retirement Plan”.

On October 20, the definition of hourly compensation of the National Minimum Wage (NWW) was put on the table of the meeting of the Labour Consultative Body (LES). Although it was not included in the initial agenda of the Ministry of Labour that it had sent to employers and trade unions. The issue was included at a recent meeting of the unions with the Ministry. The hourly compensation will be implemented in January 2023 and will be re-evaluated a year later. Moreover, the main subject of discussion was Price Index allowance, with the trade unions also setting a timetable for the completion of the discussion before it expires on December 31. The rationale was provided for in the memorandum of agreement reached between employers’ organisations and trade unions last year. The argument between employers and the trade union movement in relation to the Price Index allowance was well expected as neither side was willing to back down from their initial positions. On the other hand, the employers’ organizations reiterated their claim for the complete abolition of the allowance as they claim that the allowance is anachronistic and that it affects the competitiveness of the national economy. The trade unions, on the other hand, insist on the complete reinstatement of the allowance in order to restore the purchasing power of wages from inflation.

In the agenda of the LES, as determined by the Ministry of Labour after the written suggestions received from the employers’ organizations and trade unions, the following issues were also included for discussion:

- the modernization of the strategy for the employment of foreign workforce;
- the enactment into law of the social partners’ agreement regulating strikes in essential services;
- the regulation of basic minimum rights and expansion of the coverage of employment conditions with collective labour agreements;
- the improvements of labour laws in relation to the “termination of employment” law;
- the parental leave laws,
- the concealment of the employer-employee relationship,
- the fight against the purchase of services and false employment,
- the modernization of the pension system and the abolition or regulation of the actuarial cut of 12% for those who have retired at the age of 63;
- the protection of employees in case of insolvency of the employer;
- the ratification of the ILO convention on decent work for domestic workers;
- welfare funds;
- standards of professional qualifications;
- work issues on online platforms;
- the delay in examining benefits paid by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### TURKISH CYPRIOTS

#### Economic Developments

According to the Statistical Institute, the consumer price index was 120.7% higher in October 2022, compared to October 2021. The consumer prices had risen by 3.4% in September alone while the inflation rate in the first ten months of the year was 81.6%.

According to the Statistical Institute, the TRNC’s GDP increased by 3.9% in 2021, and reached 30.1 billion TL (€2.86 billion). GNP per capita was put at \$11,129, up slightly from \$10,055 in 2020 but still

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well below \$14,187, which was recorded in 2017. In 2020, the GDP had fallen by 16.2% as lockdowns and travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic took their toll on the economic output.

Data published by the Trade Department showed that imports in 2021 were worth a total of \$1.57 billion compared to \$1.32 billion in 2020, an increase of 19%. Turkey accounted for 62.9% of imports, while 15% came from EU countries, 8.9% from the Far East, and 6.5% from the Middle East. Exports also increased in 2021 compared to 2020, by 27% from \$101.1 million to \$128.7 million; 49.3% of exports were sold to Turkey, and 26% to the Middle East countries. Only 1.5% of exports went to the EU countries. Dairy products were the most important category of exports, worth \$46 million in 2021. Other top export products were citrus produces, scrap metal and “cartridges and supplies”. The Trade Department also noted that the value of the “Green Line Trade”(from the northern part of the island to the south in line with the EU’s Green Line Regulation) rose from \$5.3 million in 2020 to \$6.1 million in 2021.

According to the fifth edition of the Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus, a study conducted by Omer Gokcekus and Sertac Sonan for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Cyprus Office, the corruption perceptions score of the northern part of Cyprus in 2021 slid by 8 points to 28 compared to 2020; a drastic decline. The study is based on the methodology of Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, which does not cover the northern part of Cyprus. On a scale of 0-100, zero indicates very high corruption and 100 indicates no corruption. The TRNC’s score is below the average score of 180 countries (43) in the 2021 list published by Transparency International at the beginning of 2022, placing the TRNC in the 140th position – the same as Mauritania, Myanmar, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. The TRNC’s score is well behind the Republic

of Cyprus’ score of 53, which was down by 4 points compared to the year earlier. 76% of the business executives surveyed for the study said that corruption is a ‘very serious problem’ and according to 78% of the respondents corruption is ‘very common’ among politicians. The rate of those who say that the TRNC government is “is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves” is 70% while two thirds of the respondents think that “big companies avoid paying their taxes”.

On October 17, the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued “a travel advisory for Nigerians seeking school admission or job opportunities in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC),” warning them of “the clandestine activities of unscrupulous elements parading themselves as agents and deceiving unsuspecting young Nigerians into believing that TRNC, provides easy access to ‘greener pastures’ for studies and jobs opportunities”. “This has led to an alarming influx of Nigerians into the territory in recent times [and] ... an unprecedented increase in consular cases of stranded young Nigerians in TRNC,” the press release added. The higher education sector is one of the two driving forces of the TRNC economy, and as of the 2021-22 academic year, there were over 94,000 foreign students in the TRNC, around 44,000 of whom were Turkish citizens, and remaining 50,000 “third country” nationals. Nigerian students are the second biggest group after Turkish students studying in the Turkish Cypriot universities.

### Relations with Turkey

Metin Feyzioglu has been appointed as the new Turkish ambassador to Nicosia. Feyzioglu - who is not a career diplomat - is a professor of law who also served as the head of the Turkish Bar Association from 2013 to 2021. Feyzioglu who was known to be a critic of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has shifted his position recently and became a supporter. When he was the president of the Turkish

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Bar Association, Feyzioglu organised a roundtable meeting in February 2020 in Varosha where the reopening of the ghost town was discussed. The Turkish Cypriot opposition is concerned that his appointment may be a harbinger of an attempt to an overhaul of the judicial system in the northern part of the island., aimed at undermining its independence.

According to a statement issued by the Development and Economic Cooperation Office (KEI) of the Turkish Embassy, the Turkish government allocated 74 million TL (€4 million) to promote holidays in TRNC in “target countries,” i.e., Germany, the UK and Russia. The project is being carried out as part of the “2022 Economic and Financial Cooperation Agreement” signed between the two countries. The statement said a similar promotional film shot last year attracted “a great deal of attention” in the UK and Germany. The statement said that with the addition of the Russian market this year, the “diversity of foreign tourists visiting the TRNC is expected to increase”.

#### Domestic Developments

The Constitutional Court rejected the main opposition Republican Turkish Party’s (CTP) application for suspension of the implementation of the (Special) Law on the Unification of Municipalities, which reduced the number of municipalities from 28 to 18. Accordingly, the local elections to be held on 25 December will be held for 18 municipalities.

The Statistical Institute identified that between 2011 and 2021, the population of the TRNC has been estimated to grow by 36.5%. According to the last census conducted in 2011, the population was 286,257; the projected population as of the end of 2021 was 390,745.

According to a conducted by the trade union of primary school teachers (KTOS), there are pupils in Turkish Cypriot schools from 45 different countries

who make up around 6% of the student population; overall, 40% of students are not TRNC citizens. The percentage of students who don’t speak Turkish or English are particularly high in Trikomo (Iskele). The KTOS secretary general Burak Mavis attributed this to the rapid expansion of the construction sector in the region, which is oriented to foreign buyers. KTOS and the trade union of secondary education teachers (KTOEOS) accused the government of failing to provide any kind of program to support such pupils. The KTOEOS’ president Ozan Elmali pointed out that “the problems are being experienced not because of these children are foreign but because they don’t speak Turkish or English”. Elmali said that this meant “no education whatsoever” for these children. Elmali also said that the main nationalities who cannot speak Turkish are Kazakh, Iranian, Russian and Afghan.

Human rights lawyer and the president of the Human Rights Platform, Fezile Osum, stated that not a single individual has been prosecuted under much-heralded human trafficking laws introduced in the TRNC more than two years ago. Osum said that the police are reluctant to prosecute suspects under human trafficking legislation passed with the support of MPs from all parties in March 2020 as an amendment to the TRNC’s Penal Code following Parliament’s adoption of the United Nations Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Protocol in April 2018. The Police “lack the necessary capacity” to deal with human trafficking cases, preferring to charge suspects under lesser offences, she said. There is a lack of a formal and dedicated anti-human trafficking unit in the TRNC.

#### Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On October 13, the Public Workers Union (Kamu-Is) members laid a black wreath in front of the Ministry of Education as part of an ongoing strike by cleaners at public schools. Speaking at the protest Kamu-Is chairman, Ahmet Serdaroglu, said that some 230





cleaners, who are employed by a private company that has been outsourced by the Education Ministry to provide cleaning services at public schools, demanded a collective bargaining agreement after they complained of not being paid properly and that their rights as workers were being violated. While the cleaners “knew from the very beginning” that they would not be hired as public sector workers, Serdaroglu said that unionised employees now have the right to collective bargaining. On October 17, Serdaroglu announced that cleaners from another 16 primary and secondary schools had joined an “indefinite strike” that was being already held at nine schools. On October 24, the union held a protest outside the Parliament demanding the parliament focus on ensuring the cleaners’ rights. During the demonstration the protestors tried to force open the Parliament gates but were held back by police officers.

On October 17, the Secondary Education Teachers Union (KTOEOS) went on a strike at all public secondary schools and held a demonstration. The KTOEOS took the action over “Education Minister Nazim Cavusoglu’s attitude towards teachers”, while also demanding that the “Draft Teachers (Amendment) Bill” be dropped. Teachers marched from the KTOEOS offices to the Parliament and then to the Ministry. Black wreaths were left outside the Ministry, while copies of school yearbooks and newspapers containing details of schools’ activities and achievements were left at both Parliament and the Ministry. Protesters called on Cavusoglu to resign. Speaking in Parliament after the protest, Cavusoglu said that he was “well aware of the work done by teachers” and that he would continue to support them, but accused the KTOEOS of making incorrect statements about the draft law and “not responding positively” to requests for a meeting.

On October 31, the Cyprus Turkish Civil Servants Union (KTAMS) published a report stating that a

family of four needs at least 10,600TL (€567) a month to maintain a healthy diet. KTAMS chairperson Guven Bengihan said that this meant that the net minimum monthly wage of 8,600TL (€460) was 2000 TL (€107) below the bread-line. “Despite the persistent demands of our unions and the fact that the [increase in the] cost of living was 56.8% [in the first six months of 2022], the minimum wage was raised by only 41%,” in July. Bengihan called on the government to change the criteria used to set the minimum wage and also the structure of the Minimum Wage Determination Commission. He also demanded a legislation, which will promote unionisation in the private sector “as soon as possible to prevent private sector employees from being exploited by their employers”.

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