



## 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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## HEADLINES

The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nikos Christodoulides and Ersin Tatar, met with the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres for an informal dinner in New York, where they agreed on a multilateral meeting with the guarantor powers and further informal meetings exploring the opening of crossings.

A poll conducted in September shows that approximately 55% of Turkish Cypriots would vote “yes” in a potential reunification referendum.

An agreement regarding the delivery of the FSRU unit, currently held in Shang-hai, has been reached by the Cypriot government and the Chinese CPP-Metron Consortium.

Christodoulides became the first Cypriot President invited to the White House since 1996 to meet with US President Joe Biden. The Cyprus problem, bilateral relations and the situation in the Middle East were discussed.

The hotel industry negotiations collapsed following trade unions’ rejection of the mediation proposal.

EU Council adopted new regulations to improve working conditions for digital platform workers.

A new speaker of parliament has assumed office in the north, despite objections from opposition parties and legal experts who contested the validity of the voting result.





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PODCASTS in NOVEMBER:  
*No podcasts in November*



PODCASTS in DECEMBER:  
*No podcasts in December*

PUBLICATIONS in NOVEMBER:  
*No publications in November*



PUBLICATIONS in DECEMBER:  
*No publications in December*

EVENTS in NOVEMBER:  
*No events planned so far*



EVENTS in DECEMBER:  
*No events planned so far*

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## CYPRUS PROBLEM & INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS

On October 15, the respective Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders Nikos Christodoulides and Ersin Tatar attended an informal dinner with UN Secretary General (UNSG) António Guterres in New York to exchange views on the course of the Cyprus problem. Recalling the report submitted by his personal envoy on Cyprus, María Angela Holguín Cuéllar in July 2024, Guterres expressed his regret that no common ground between the parties had been found. Guterres reportedly encouraged both leaders to consider how to bridge the gap in their positions and rebuild trust that would allow the movement necessary to lead to a settlement. Despite opposite positions on the way forward, with the Turkish Cypriot leader talking about sovereign equality and the Greek Cypriot leader about UN resolutions, both agreed to:

- have an informal meeting in a broader format in the near future under the auspices of the UNSG, to discuss the way forward: The Greek Cypriot side interpreted this as a five-party meeting with the three guarantor powers: Greece, Turkey and Britain. However, the Turkish Cypriot side seemed to be opposed to Britain participating in such a meeting;
- hold future meetings to discuss the opening of more crossing points: The Turkish Cypriot side wants to open a crossing point at Mia Milia/Haspolat, while the Greek Cypriot side has suggested that either Pyroi/Gaziler or Kokkina/Erenkoy, which is operating as a Turkish military base, should open simultaneously with Mia Milia/Haspolat. Tatar seemed willing to open a new crossing point in Mia Milia/Haspolat in order to increase trade.

Furthermore, UN Under-Secretary General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, is expected to assume the role of coordinating the

leaders' informal meetings in Cyprus, after Tatar reportedly opposed Cuéllar's return to the role.

During the dinner, Guterres reportedly said that there was a need for an open discussion with "out of the box" ideas. Regarding the future of the process, the UNSG raised the issues of governance and guarantees, expressing his belief that a discussion could be held on the basis of what the Greek Cypriot side said in Crans-Montana in 2017 that the external guarantees could not be maintained. Meanwhile, a source close to the negotiations who spoke to the Cyprus Mail on condition of anonymity emphatically stressed that the two leaders discussed the idea of a Truth Commission in a bid to uncover the truth over the missing persons from the intercommunal troubles of the 1960s and the 1974 Greek coup and Turkish invasion. Reportedly, Christodoulides put forth the idea of a Truth Commission to Tatar, but the Turkish Cypriot leader did not seem to be open to the idea before a solution. Christodoulides also reportedly put forward the idea for three "tables" of negotiations:

- The first would discuss the governance of a future Cyprus after a solution and would be composed of representatives of the Greek Cypriot community, the Turkish Cypriot community and the UN;
- The second would concern guarantees, and would comprise representatives of Cyprus' two communities, the UN and the country's three guarantor powers;
- The third would concern security and would comprise all those that sat at the second table with the exception of the UK.

The UNSG has reportedly reacted positively to the proposal, although Tatar has rejected it. Nevertheless, the outcome of the dinner was presented as a positive step by all sides, mainly in the sense that it demonstrated continued UN interest and facilitated





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some movement, despite Tatar being adamant on his demand for sovereignty and equal legal status for the TRNC.<sup>1</sup>

On October 17, Tufan Erhürman, the leader of the main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP), held a meeting with civil society representatives to discuss his recent visit to New York and the Cyprus problem. Erhürman reiterated his party's commitment to resolving the Cyprus problem through a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation based on political equality, as outlined in UN Security Council resolutions. Erhürman emphasised the need to analyse past negotiation efforts to develop a more effective methodology for future talks. "We are not seeking negotiations just for the sake of it; we want negotiations that will produce results", Erhürman stated.

Earlier in the month, on October 14, the "Protection of Rights Initiative" staged a protest at the Ayios Dometios (Kermia/Metehan) crossing point, demanding the release of individuals who are in prison in RoC pending trial for real estate transactions in the TRNC. The initiative, which comprises several organisations, including the Contractors Union and the Chamber of Commerce, received support from various groups including the Bar Association. During the demonstration, a letter was submitted to an official from the UN Peacekeeping Force to be delivered to UN and EU officials. In the press statement, read in both Turkish and English, the initiative emphasised that the property issue could be resolved through the Immovable Property Commission (IPC). Hasan Esendağlı, President of the Bar Association, stated, "We have come together to draw attention

to the property issue and injustices in north Cyprus." He added, "The Greek Cypriot leadership's attempts to weaponise the law for political purposes are escalating tensions and undermining reconciliation efforts." Esendağlı also reminded that the IPC has been recognised by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) as a fair and effective mechanism for addressing property claims. Meanwhile, a board member of the Estate Agents Association in the north stated during an interview on Kibris TV that, fearing arrest, many estate agents, contractors, architects, engineers, and hotel owners have been avoiding crossing to the southern part of the island. On October 23, the newly elected President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, visited the island where he met with Christodoulides and discussed the Cyprus problem, the crises in the Middle East and Ukraine, and the plans for the EU's future including defense, energy and competitiveness. Costa expressed his support for a solution to the Cyprus problem, and his hope that both communities in Cyprus could achieve a positive result.

On October 24, the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot negotiators, Gunes Oner and Menelaos Menelaou, met at the Ledra Palace Hotel in the UN-controlled buffer zone in Nicosia, in the presence of Colin Stewart, the Special Representative of the UNSG in Cyprus. The two negotiators recognised the need to focus on the outcomes of the dinner and how to implement what was decided between the two leaders and the UNSG.

On October 28, a Turkish army officer threatened a farmer in Deneia while he was tending to his field in

<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

recognised as the government of the whole of the island, the entire island is now considered to be a member of the European Union. However, the *acquis communautaire* is suspended in northern Cyprus pending a political settlement to the Cyprus problem (see Protocol no. 10 of the Accession Treaty).

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the buffer zone. Local authorities called the UN to intervene. Tensions continued on October 30, when farmers were again obstructed by Turkish soldiers while attempting to cultivate their fields. UNFICYP managed to defuse the situation and is investigating the incident. UNFICYP spokesman Aleem Siddique stated that UNFICYP is liaising with both the community leaders and the Turkish forces to resolve the issue.

On October 29, while presenting the EU's annual package of reports on its enlargement process, EU High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, expressed disappointment regarding Turkey's current stance on Cyprus. Borrell criticised Turkey's current support for a two-state solution to the Cyprus problem. He also referred to the continued militarisation of the north, pointing to upgrades at the Geçitkale (Lefkoniko) air base, Turkey's military exercises in Cyprus' maritime zones and Turkey's refusal to recognise and cooperate with the Republic of Cyprus.

On October 30, just six days before the US Presidential elections, Christodoulides met with US President Joe Biden in the White House following a surprise invitation by the latter on October 26. Christodoulides and Biden discussed the latest developments on the Cyprus problem, bilateral relations, regional security and the situation in the Middle East, including Cyprus' role in providing humanitarian assistance, support to Ukraine and energy diversification. Following the meeting Biden expressed his optimism about the prospect of a solution to the Cyprus problem under a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality. Christodoulides attributed the invitation to Cyprus' strengthening "regional and international footprint". The meeting was described as historic and characterised as the culmination of the strengthened relations between the two states. It also marked the first time a Cypriot president was invited to the White House since 1996, when Pres-

ident Glafcos Clerides met with then US President Bill Clinton.

A survey by the Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies (CMIRS) in September 2024 revealed that 59.06% of 500 respondents in the north want a solution to the Cyprus problem, while 40.94% do not. The Cyprus problem is the second most important issue for Turkish Cypriots, though optimism about a solution has waned due to stalled talks, Turkish interventions and leadership changes. Only 36.94% are optimistic about reaching a solution, with 49.8% being pessimistic. In a potential referendum, 31.17% said they "would vote 'no'", 8.3% said "probably 'no'", 24.29% said "probably 'yes'", 30.16% said "definitely 'yes'", and 6.07% were unsure (more on this survey in the Turkish Cypriot section).

### HYDROCARBONS

In an interview with Kathimerini, published on October 13, Energy Minister George Papanastasiou stated that Cyprus' first natural gas extraction will most likely be from the Kronos reservoir in Block 6, which may be in 2027. He also shared that in early 2025, US-based ExxonMobil will begin drilling an exploratory well in the Electra site in Block 5 and a well in the Glaucus site in Block 10. The last time ExxonMobil drilled in Cyprus' EEZ was in early 2022 when it made an appraisal well in its Glaucus gas field. Even though the results have not been published, they were reported to have been disappointing, with gas reserves estimated to be below 5tcf (trillion cubic feet).

On October 22, Papanastasiou stated that an agreement regarding the delivery of the floating storage and re-gasification unit (FSRU), which is part of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) project at Vasiliko, has been reached by the Cyprus government and the Chinese CPP-Metron Consortium (CMC). Under a realistic scenario, construction works for the LNG

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project would now be completed by end of 2025. According to Papanastasiou, the FSRU, named Prometheus, would be delivered to Cypriot authorities within the next 60 days. He said the agreement regarding its delivery was financial and that, as a result of the vessel being delivered, the amount payable by CMC by way of the bonds had been reduced. He added that certain actions would have to be taken on both sides for the FSRU to be delivered, with these largely entailing the production of certifications to allow it to sail from Shanghai, where it is currently located. Concerning the loans for the LNG project received so far from the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Papanastasiou noted that the lenders had been persuaded not to demand their money back, because the Cypriot government had promised to hand over an implementation plan shortly.

The development breathes life into the project, which had been stalled since July 2024, after CMC terminated its contract with Etyfa, the state-run natural gas infrastructure company that was building the terminal. The FSRU had been one of the key points of contention between Etyfa and CMC, with CMC insisting that the vessel was ready in Shanghai and that Etyfa had refused to take delivery of it while also frequently not meeting payment deadlines. The situation worsened after the contract was terminated and the European Commission demanded that Cyprus repay almost €69m, which had been paid in grants for the terminal. Furthermore, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) announced the opening of an investigation into possible procurement fraud, misappropriation of EU funds and corruption related to the terminal. Cyprus signed the contract for the LNG project in December 2019. The entire project should have taken 22 months to complete.

## GREEK CYPRIOTS

### Gender Developments

On October 22, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in Nicosia by Justice Minister, Marios Hartsiotis, and Minister of Social Cohesion and Family of Greece, Sofia Zacharaki, for cooperation between Cyprus and Greece in preventing and combatting domestic and gender violence. The MoU would allow both countries to cooperate on developing programmes, exchanging practices and training, and setting protocols to help victims of domestic violence.

### Economic Developments in Times of Green Transition

The Cabinet, on October 2, approved a €1m grant scheme for installing solar hot water systems. Funding for the scheme hails from the Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Conservation Fund.

On October 11, EAC Board Director, Giorgos Petrou, stated that further deliberation is needed over the Energy Minister's proposal to create a state-owned electricity grid company. The state grid company, which would entail unbundling the EAC's energy transmission from generation and supply, would then participate as the investor in the Great Sea Interconnector project. The move aligns with the EU's third energy package, adopted in 2009, which introduced rules on the separation of energy provision functions.

The energy ministry has reissued its "Photovoltaics for All" grants scheme for encouraging the use of renewable energy sources in residences to accommodate an additional 3,000 applications from households across Cyprus. The scheme, first launched in March 2024, aims to assist non-vulnerable households lacking initial capital to install photovoltaic systems, helping them reduce electricity bills and their environmental impact.







### Domestic Developments

The British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) announced on October 18 the appointment of Michael Tatham CMG as the new British High Commissioner to Cyprus. Tatham will take up his appointment in November this year, succeeding Irfan Siddiq OBE, who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment.

According to a poll conducted by RetailZoom on behalf of daily Politis, political party DISY continues to maintain its position as the leading party in Cyprus despite facing significant pressure. The poll shows that the parties in the current government coalition are seeing low levels of support, while former Auditor-General Odysseas Michaelides emerged as a popular figure for both the 2026 parliamentary elections and the 2028 presidential race. Michaelides, who has been suggested as a potential candidate even if he forms his own party, is favoured by 40% of respondents for the 2028 presidential elections. He is followed by Paphos mayor Phedonos Phedonos at 38%, former DISY leader Averof Neophytou at 31%, and former presidential candidate Andreas Mavroyiannis, who also secured 31%. For the 2026 parliamentary elections, DISY led at 19% support. Michaelides' potential party would garner 17%, placing him second overall. Volt came in third at 12%, followed by AKEL at 9% and ELAM at 8%. The coalition government parties fared poorly, with DIKO receiving just 3%, while DIPA and EDEK each garnered only 1%. The Green Party polled at 2%, and the newly announced Never Surrender party received 1%.

### Foreign Relations

As part of the strategic dialogue between Cyprus and the US, which was announced in June 2024, US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs James O'Brien visited the island on October 23. Discussions between delegations from the US and Cyprus centred on security, education,

investments, crisis management, the rule of law, energy, culture, commerce and technology. Following the meeting, the US and Cypriot governments issued a joint declaration, describing the launch of the strategic dialogue as a milestone in the relationship between the two countries and a confirmation of the strengthened strategic partnership between them. Both countries agreed to continue to cooperate in a number of fields, including security, education, energy, and trade.

### Future of Work, Labour Relations & Trade Unions

On October 8, the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance submitted a new mediation proposal for renewing the sectoral collective agreement in the hotel industry. He presented the proposal to both employers' associations and trade unions, expecting their final responses by October 21. The Minister emphasised the necessity of renewing the hotel industry's collective agreement to maintain labour peace and support the sector's positive economic prospects, which are vital for Cyprus' economic growth. He described the proposal as "fair and balanced", aiming to meet the interests of both sides under the Industrial Relations Code.

On October 9, thirteen labour and civil society organisations submitted a memorandum to President Nikos Christodoulides, outlining a comprehensive support package for workers and vulnerable groups affected by the high cost of living. The memorandum proposes a range of measures to address inflation, high living costs, and economic pressures on households. Key proposals included restoring subsidies for electricity costs, reducing fuel prices, reinstating zero VAT on essential goods, increasing rent subsidies and social allowances, and expanding automatic cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to cover more workers.





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On October 14, the Council of the European Union adopted new regulations aimed at improving the working conditions for over 28 million people employed through digital labour platforms across the EU. The new platform work directive will enhance transparency in the use of algorithms for human resources management. It ensures that automated systems are supervised by qualified personnel and grants workers the right to challenge automated decisions. Additionally, the directive will help clarify the employment status of individuals working for platforms, ensuring they can access the labour rights they are entitled to. The directive will now be signed by both the Council and the European Parliament, and will come into effect once published in the EU's Official Journal. Member states will then have two years to incorporate the directive's provisions into their national laws.

On October 16, the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance announced that before the end of the year, plans to submit a bill to Parliament to regulate paid internships and apprenticeships for young people. The Minister emphasized the need to address this legislative gap, which affects youth transitioning from education to the workforce. Internationally, the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) has shown that only a few countries regulate paid internships, despite a European Parliament resolution in January 2022 urging member states to establish a unified legal framework guaranteeing fair remuneration for interns and apprentices.

On October 17, the Parliament approved the agreement between the government and trade unions to implement a 1.5% general salary increase for public sector employees and retirees. The vote, passed with 25 votes in favour and 17 against, followed an extensive debate that revealed differing views within the Parliament.

On October 22, the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KEBE) met with Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, to discuss key employment issues and challenges in the Cypriot labour market. The discussion focused on the hiring of third country nationals due to labour shortages. KEBE requested a higher salary deduction (from 10% to 25%) for employer-provided housing and called for unrestricted access to the labour market for third country national students. KEBE opposed expanding collective agreements to cover 80% of businesses, arguing that EU guidelines only encourage and do not mandate collective bargaining. Lastly, during the meeting, KEBE expressed its opposition to setting an hourly minimum wage and suggested revising the COLA system.

On October 24, the plenary session of the Parliament approved measures to strengthen the existing legal framework for effectively addressing undeclared and illegal employment. More specifically, the parliament approved an amendment to the Law on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions. This amendment grants the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance the authority to issue a decree requiring employers to declare the essential employment terms of their employees in an information system. Additionally, the Parliament approved a change to the Social Insurance Law, increasing the administrative fine for inspectors when undeclared employment is discovered. The fine will rise from €500 to €1,000 per employee for the month in which the violation occurred. Furthermore, if an inspector detects repeated violations of undeclared employment within two years of the initial fine, the employer will be subject to increased fines: €2,000 for a second violation and €3,000 for any subsequent violations.

On October 25, the hotel industry went on strike, following the collapse of ongoing negotiations, which led to a deadlock, according to the hotel trade unions SEK and PEO. In a joint statement, SEK and

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PEO announced that after rejecting the mediation proposal from the Minister of Labour regarding the renewal of the collective agreement in the hotel industry, they decided to take action across the entire sector nationwide. The unions highlighted that the ten-day warning period had passed, as it was agreed upon from the day the mediation proposal was submitted. Consequently, the union leadership is calling on all hotel industry workers to participate in the planned protests once they are scheduled. One of the main reasons the unions rejected the mediation proposal is that it did not clearly specify that the agreements made within the collective contract would be legally secured. The unions are demanding legal protection of collective agreements to ensure they cover all hotel employees, whether they are under a collective agreement or not. It is noted that both the Cyprus Hotel Association (PASYXE) and the Cyprus Hotel Workers Union (STEK) accepted the mediation proposal from the Ministry of Labour, despite PEO and SEK rejecting it.

On October 30, a meeting was held with the Minister of Justice and Public Order, the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance and the chief of police to address the rising number of attacks on delivery workers. Since the beginning of the year, 18 incidents of attacks on food delivery workers have been reported. These attacks are frequent occurrences and have evolved into a pattern of imitation. Following the meeting, the Minister of Justice mentioned that all involved parties expressed their determination to reduce and eventually eliminate these unpleasant incidents.

According to the Household Income and Living Conditions Survey by the Cyprus Statistical Service, 2.4% of the population in Cyprus, or about 22,000 people, experienced severe material and social deprivation in 2023, which is a slight reduction from 2.7% in 2022. This metric reflects the percentage of individuals unable to afford at least seven essen-

tial items or activities out of a list of thirteen, due to financial hardship. Since 2015, Cyprus' deprivation index has consistently remained below the EU27 average and has shown a downward trend.

Technocratic teams in the public sector have proposed an overhaul of the current hiring procedures for filling vacancies in government roles. The goal is to address issues hampering efficient public service operations and contributing to administrative disruptions. The proposal includes suggestions to streamline approval processes by simplifying or setting strict deadlines for unfreezing vacancies to reduce delays; to modernise hiring procedures by introducing continuous review mechanisms; to address interview inefficiencies; and to enhance the use of technology.

### TURKISH CYPRIOTS

#### Gender Developments

No notable developments occurred during the month of October.

#### Economic Developments in Times of Green Transition

According to the Statistical Institute, the consumer price index was 65.7% higher in October 2024 compared to October 2023. Consumer prices have risen by 3.2% in October alone; the inflation rate in the first ten months of 2024 has reached 50.5%. The monthly food inflation was 1.03%. The highest monthly inflation was in the "clothing and shoes" segment where an increase of 22.7% was recorded; the second highest was in the "medical care" segment with 14.7%.

The head of the Real Estate Agents Association, Hasan Sungur, called on the government to amend recent legislation regulating property sales to foreign nationals. In a written statement, Sungur

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highlighted that the Greek Cypriot administration, alarmed by the recent growth of the real estate sector and economy in the TRNC, had begun arresting individuals involved in the buying, selling, and development of former Greek Cypriot properties in the TRNC. “The intention is to create a climate of fear,” Sungur claimed in his statement. “While this fear was being cultivated, [the Turkish Cypriot parliament] inexplicably enacted a law that effectively supported the Greek Cypriots’ campaign [which] ... has harmed our economy as much as the arrests.” Sungur was referring to the law that came into effect on May 21, 2024, which introduced several restrictions on real estate sales to foreigners. The changes are also retroactive, with numerous deadlines looming for compliance with the new regulations. This has caused significant concern among many expatriate buyers, some of whom have been living in the TRNC for more than a decade but have yet to receive their title deeds. Addressing the government, Sungur stated: “We urge the government to amend the flawed provisions in the legislation. To counter the blackmail tactics initiated by the Greek Cypriot side, we must regain the support of foreign investors and restore confidence in the real estate market.” “We trust the government but urge them to act swiftly. Rather than driving away foreign investors and causing dissatisfaction, it is crucial to consider their sensitivities and restore the TRNC’s reputation as an investment-friendly destination in the Mediterranean”, Sungur added.

According to Orhan Tolun, head of the Travel Agents Association (KITSAB), the tourism sector has yet to return to its pre-pandemic level when the overall economic performance is taken into consideration. Tolun noted that while tourism revenues accounted for 60% of the country’s foreign trade deficit in 2019, this figure dropped to 35% in 2023 due to a reduction in the number of foreign tourists. He explained that, although the number of Turkish tourists has increased, they stay for an average of only

2.2 nights compared to foreign tourists, who stay for an average of six nights. Emphasising that high prices have made the country less competitive, Tolun remarked that the tourism sector is “bleeding dry”. In a report in Cyprus Weekly, Tolun pointed out that while the number of tourists appears to be rising, it would be misleading to assess the sector’s health based solely on this statistic. Tolun highlighted a significant shift in visitor demographics, with a post-pandemic decrease in the number of tourists from outside Turkey, while the number of Turkish tourists has grown. Foreign tourists, he explained, are often deterred from visiting north Cyprus due to high prices: “A hotel room that cost €100 in 2019 now costs €250-300, while prices in Turkey or the south have not increased by more than 15%.” He noted that hotels in north Cyprus have raised their prices due to the high cost of living, which has undermined their competitiveness.

On October 30, Hoteliers Association (KITOB) convened its 35th General Assembly in Kyrenia, where Dimağ Çağınır was re-elected as president. In his address, Çağınır criticised the government for undermining the sector with populist policies ignoring the economic organisations’ proposals for solutions. He also called for urgent reforms in public administration, energy, and tax, and stressed that political efforts should focus on practical actions, not debates. Speaking at the General Assembly, Çağınır voiced concern over the sector’s lack of competitiveness due to rising costs.

### Relations with Turkey

There was nothing to report on this topic.

### Domestic Developments

Electing the speaker of the parliament has turned into a farce. The ruling three-party coalition (UBP-DP-YDP), which holds 29 seats in the 50-seat parliament, failed to secure the required 26 votes in favour, even after 15 rounds of voting with three

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different candidates. Worse still, they declared Ziya Öztürkler (UBP Morphou MP and former Minister of Interior) elected, despite objections from all three parliamentary lawyers, and opposition MPs. The government claims he received 26 votes in his favour in the last round, but the opposition (as well as lawyers and former high court judges) claims three of the votes counted by the government as having been in his favour were actually invalid as the ballot papers had been stamped multiple times. The leader of the main opposition party, CTP, Tufan Erhürman, accused the government of carrying out a coup against the parliament as it proceeded to appoint Öztürkler as speaker. Erhürman warned that if Öztürkler attempted to act as speaker and preside over sessions, his party would not attend the session. On October 28, when Öztürkler tried to open parliament, the CTP group and two independent MPs refused to enter the chamber.

According to a survey conducted by the Center for Migration, Identity, and Rights Studies (CMIRS) in September 2024, 59% of participants expressed a desire for a settlement of the Cyprus problem. The poll, which involved 500 people, indicates that most Turkish Cypriots still support a solution. CMIRS Director Mine Yücel highlighted that the Cyprus problem remains a significant issue for the Turkish Cypriot community, ranking as the second most important concern. Yücel noted that the desire for a settlement remains like levels observed during the Annan Plan period (i.e., 59%) however, only 37% felt optimistic about the prospect of achieving one. The survey also showed the main opposition CTP at the top spot. CTP started leading the (CMIRS) polls in March 2024, and this was confirmed in the June 2024 survey. The September 2024 poll shows that this trend continues, with the CTP remaining in the leading position. Though no candidates have been officially declared for the upcoming presidential election, the survey revealed a trend that mirrors the political party distribution: The CTP leader Tufan Erhürman is slightly ahead of other potential candidates.

### Future of Work, Labour Relations & Trade Unions

On October 11, eight trade unions organised in the public sector, including the right-leaning Kamu-Sen and Kamu-İş, held a press statement in front of the parliament, demanding the government's resignation. A banner reading "UBP-DP-YDP Government, we are ashamed of you, resign!" was displayed. Public Servants Union (KTAMS) Chairman Güven Bengihan criticised the government for delaying the opening of schools by a week in September for what he described as "political reasons", calling it a "black mark in history". He also condemned the government for its inaction on critical issues such as corruption allegations, and ongoing problems in education, healthcare, and public services.

Earlier in the month, Bengihan criticised the lack of personnel, vehicles, and technical infrastructure necessary for the Court of Accounts (Audits) to effectively fulfil its constitutional duties. He questioned the government's intentions, asking, "Does the government not want the Court of Accounts to carry out audits?" Bengihan highlighted Articles 93 and 132 of the Constitution, which establish the Court of Accounts as the financial audit body responsible for auditing all accounts of the TRNC, and he emphasised the urgent need for adequate staffing and technical resources to carry out this critical mandate. He pointed out that despite a request made 10 months ago to open 29 vacancies for auditors, no progress has been made. Meanwhile, the government continues to hire temporary workers on a partisan basis, neglecting the necessity of employing auditors. Bengihan argued that this inaction demonstrates the government's unwillingness to facilitate financial audits. He further stressed the urgency of providing transportation vehicles and establishing the technical infrastructure needed for the Court of Accounts to connect online with institutions covered under the Public Financial Management and Control Law. This, he said, is essential

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for the Court's staff to effectively perform their wide-ranging duties.

KTAMS and the Cooperative Workers Union (Koop-Sen) have joined forces to establish a new federation, the Cyprus Federation of Workers' and Employees' Trade Unions (KIEF). The presidents of the two unions announced that they would collaborate under the federation's umbrella to advocate for the rights of employees, workers, and pensioners. They also extended an invitation to other unions to join the federation and strengthen the collective struggle. The new federation held its first meeting on October 7.







## SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS

### Yiannis Charalambous

Yiannis Charalambous has been a Research Assistant for FES Cyprus contributing to the writing of the monthly FES Cyprus Newsletter since July 2012. Yiannis obtained a Bachelor's degree in Turkish Studies from the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and an MA in International Relations and European Studies from the University of Nicosia. The subject of his dissertation focused on evaluating the catalyst effect in resolving the Cyprus problem, by comparing the factors of EU membership and the discovery of hydrocarbons. Yiannis speaks Greek, English and Turkish.

### Hubert Faustmann

Hubert Faustmann is a Professor of History and International Relations at the University of Nicosia. Additionally, he is the director of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus. He is an expert on British colonial Cyprus and post-independence Cypriot history and politics. His research also focuses on Hydrocarbon politics in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the relationship between state and society with a focus on Political Culture, Clientelism and Political Patronage.

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