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## 1. New and Upcoming Publications/Podcasts ([www.FESCyprus.org](http://www.FESCyprus.org))

### April

**Fiona Mullen, Hubert Faustmann**  
***The Impact of the Covid-19 Virus on Divided Cyprus***  
 (In English, German)



### May

**Hubert Faustmann, Gregoris Ioannou, Sertac Sonan**  
***Cyprus, Trade Union Monitor [for 2019]***  
 (In English, German)



**Ömer Gökçekuş, Sertac Sonan**  
***Socio-Economic and Political Impact of Austerity Policies in North Cyprus: A Brief Assessment***  
 (In English, German, Greek, Turkish)



**Sertac Sonan, Ebru Küçükşener, Enis Porat**  
***Politics and Society in North Cyprus: A Survey Study, 2019 Report***  
 (In English, German, Greek, Turkish)



**Ömer Gökçekuş, Sertac Sonan**  
***Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus: 2019 Report***  
 (In English, Turkish)



**Podcast: The LGTBI Movement in Cyprus**  
 With Enver Ethemer, Independent Researcher & Co-founder, Envision Diversity; Okan Bullici, Psychologist & Co-founder, Envision Diversity, Nayia Kamenou, VC2020 Senior Lecturer, School of Applied Social Sciences & Deputy Director, Media Discourse Centre, De Montfort University, UK; Costa Gavrielides, Adviser to the President of the Republic of Cyprus for Multiculturalism, Acceptance and Respect to Diversity & Former President, Accept – LGBTI Cyprus (2012 to 2017)  
 (In English)



**Podcast: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Cyprus as a new Migration Hotspot**  
 With Nicos Trimikliniotis, Professor of Sociology at University of Nicosia. Head of the team of Cyprus' team for the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU.  
 (In English)



## 1. FES Cyprus Events

All upcoming public events have been cancelled until further notice in response to the spread of the corona virus.

## 2. Cyprus Problem

In an interview with a television channel in the north<sup>1</sup>, Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci stated that it had been a mistake to close the crossings along the Green Line by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides. These decisions were made unilaterally. Akinci noted that the crossings should not be reopened unilaterally in the same manner and added that the prerequisite for their reopening should be cooperation and understanding. Akinci had strongly criticized the initial decision by the Republic of Cyprus to temporarily suspend the operations of the Ledra Street, Dherynia, Astromeritis and Lefka crossings at the end of February. The decision was justified as a measure to combat the COVID10 pandemic. Both sides said that the opening of

the crossings would come at later stages of easing the restrictive measures.

On April 16, the Greek Cypriot side handed over to the Turkish Cypriot side a total of 2,000 chloroquine tablets and 4,000 pieces of Personal Protective Equipment after a request by Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci to Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades. The process was facilitated via the bi-communal technical committee on health. This has created a crisis between the Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister Ersin Tatar and Akinci. *“The way these drugs were imported is illegal. It needs prior permits from the Drug and Pharmaceutical department, then the customs requirements need to be satisfied in order to enter the TRNC,”* Tatar said. *“I have asked the Inspection Board of the Prime Ministry to investigate and to pass the matter onto the Attorney General, who can decide on whether or not to take legal action.”* He also criticized Akinci for having requested medical supplies from the south. Tatar pointed out that the TRNC had been acquiring all its medication from Turkey and that the request had put the country in an *“unnecessary position”*. *“We don’t need these medicines and even if we did we would request it from Turkey it would be sent immediately,”* he added. *“We learned from this announcement that we have conducted a ‘major smuggling’ crime,”* Akinci replied sarcastically adding that he expected to be charged with smuggling. Upon continuing attacks from the nationalists and UBP circles, few days later, Akinci said *“it is unbelievable that even at such a time, some people can accumulate such grudge and animosity in their hearts”*. The Turkish Cypriot members of

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<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, Mustafa Akinci 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).

the bi-communal Committee on Health said that they had prepared the list with experts from the Turkish Cypriot Ministry of Health.

The Turkish Cypriot government introduced temporary restrictions on entry into the TRNC of the EU personnel, foreign diplomats and United Nations Peacekeeping troops. Those assisting with efforts to contain the spread of Covid-19 are exempted.

### 3. Hydrocarbons

In April, Energy Minister Giorgos Lakkotrypīs confirmed that he was informed in writing by US based EXXON MOBIL that they have pushed back to September 2021 the drilling of an appraisal well at the site dubbed Glafcos in block 10 in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) due to COVID-19. Although Italy's ENI and France's TOTAL have not formally informed the government that their exploratory drill at the Kronos site in block 6 has been put on hold, a postponement is considered likely to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic as well as the sharp drop in energy prices globally. ENI recently announced it was reviewing its activities in 2020 and 2021, as well as all its energy projects in the Middle East, with the aim of reducing capital expenditures.

On April 19, Turkey dispatched the Yavuz drillship to explore for natural gas inside the island's EEZ. Yavuz intends to drill in an area that covers part of exploration blocks 6 and 7, which have been licensed to the ENI and Total

consortium. The drillship will be conducting drilling activities until July 18, when Turkey's latest Navtex expires. Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu stated during an online discussion organised by the Turkish branch of the Atlantic Council that Ankara would continue drilling and even deploy a third drillship. On April 22, UN Security Council permanent members China and France voiced their support for Cyprus. According to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, EU foreign ministers also expressed concern over Turkey's illegal activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and reiterated their full solidarity with Cyprus.

### 4. Greek Cypriots

#### Economic Developments

On April 1, the EU Commission called on EU Member states to phase out citizenship by investment programs. Nevertheless, Interior Minister Nicos Nouris stated that the Cypriot program will not be ended.

According to Eurostat the unemployment rate in Cyprus increased to 6.7% or 30,000 individuals, up from 5.8% in February or 26,000 individuals.

During the month of April more than 40.000 applications for loan instalment suspensions until the end of 2020 had been filed in Bank of Cyprus and Hellenic Bank.

On April 13, Finance Minister, Constantinos Petrides warned that Cyprus was going through a financially-challenging time and that the state's resources were not unlimited. According to the Minister, Cyprus was among EU member states that enforced the strictest measures to limit the loss of life, shutting many economic sectors. The government's package reached €1.3bn, or 5.4% of GDP, against the EU average of 3%.

According to Scope Ratings, Cyprus is among the European countries facing the greatest external risks to its economy from the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic. Moody's ratings agency meanwhile revised its outlook for the Cypriot banking system, from positive to stable to reflect the impact of widespread economic disruption caused by the coronavirus outbreak. The agency said it expected the economy to contract by 6% in 2020 as the coronavirus outbreak and efforts to contain its spread lead to a downturn in business activity, with the important tourism industry particularly affected.

On April 29, the House commerce committee discussed ways of salvaging the tourism sector, including a controversial plan for businesses to issue vouchers instead of cash refunds to customers for cancelled bookings. Tourism Minister, Savvas Perdios expects the sector to resume operations by July, but warned protective measures would have to remain in place as long as the coronavirus was around. Perdios noted that Cyprus would have 60% fewer tourists or around 1.5m in 2020 and a full recovery would only be achieved in the next two or three years. On

similar lines the head of the Paphos hoteliers, Thanos Michaelides, noted that tourism is expected to regain its stride during the 2022-2023 season. Michaelides stated that some of the hoteliers have decided not to reopen until July 2020 and others decided not to operate at all this year.

On April 27, the University of Cyprus Economics Research Center reported that the economic sentiment in Cyprus deteriorated further in April amid the fallout of the coronavirus crisis, suggesting a grim outlook for the economy. According to the centre, the economic sentiment indicator dropped by 21.9 points against the previous month, marking a historic reduction.

According to a survey conducted by financial consulting service PWC from April 20 to 22 on 45 of the island's Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), 73% said there was a recession coming, while 58% believed there would be a decrease in consumption and consumer confidence.

### **Domestic Developments**

In April, the Coronavirus cases rose from 262 to 850. As of April 28, a total of 20 Corona Virus related deaths were reported, with Covid-19 being the main underlying cause of death for 15 of them. The reported fatality rate currently stands at 1.8%. April 1 marked the biggest number of cases recorded since the outbreak, with 58 new infections. An upward trend continued throughout the first days of the month with the government ex-

tending movement restrictions until the end of April and advising people to “Stay Home at Easter”. The situation seemed to stabilize mid-month, allowing the government to start exploring the possibility of easing certain restrictions. The last ten days of the month were marked by a downward trend in confirmed cases.

On April 28, following the reduced numbers of reported daily cases, the President announced a relaxation of restrictive measures starting from May 4. The blueprint for easing the lockdown is comprised by 4 phases:

- Phase 1 (May 4 to May 20): The first phase would see an increase the number of outings allowed from one to three, the opening of the construction sector and all its supporting businesses, opening of retail shops but not malls, and the opening of outdoor markets and of travel agents. Civil servants will return to work, except those in vulnerable groups, and schools will reopen from May 11 only to students who are in their final year. The curfew remains in place but will last from 10pm to 6am and the SMS system is still mandatory.
- Phase 2 (May 21 to June 8): During the second phase all restrictions on movement are expected to be lifted provided that the epidemiological data allow so. Outside hospitality industries will be allowed to resume operations, based on strict abidance with instructions from the health ministry. Athletes will be allowed to use open installations and from May 18 team

training will also be allowed based on protocols.

- Phase 3 (June 1 to July 13), people may go to the beach while important sites such as museums, libraries and archaeological sites can open. Airports, ports, Hotels, restaurants and Malls will also gradually reopen
- Phase 4 (July 14) theatres and cinemas, festivals and concerts, casinos and play areas will resume operations.

On April 21, Former Attorney-General Alecos Markides passed away at the age of 77. Markides served eight years as attorney-general and as Greek Cypriot negotiator with the Turkish Cypriot side. He also ran for President of the Republic in 2003 as an independent. He was one of the most vocal proponents of a ‘Yes’ vote on the Annan plan during the referendum period in 2004.

### **Labour Relations and Trade Unions**

Due to COVID-19, the trade unions this past month sent letters of support to the relevant departments of the government regarding employees’ benefits. Their most important actions were the following:

On April 7, PEO (Pancyprian Workers’ Federation) complained to the Ministries of Justice and Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance that workers in bakeries, supermarkets, grocery-shops as well as security guards were under threat of dismissal, lacked specific working hours and the required protective equipment.

The trade unions called on the relevant departments to carry out stricter controls and impose crucial measures required for the safety and health of those working in such workplaces.

Also, in a letter to OKYPY (State Health Services Organization), the trade unions clarified that the changes in the schedule but also in the number of days that cleaners and chamber assistants work in public hospitals these days are a temporary measure due to the pandemic. They were reminded that any change made during the fight against the pandemic will be valid only until the end of the measures decided by the Government.

In another announcement, PEO states that keeping the supermarkets closed on Sundays, as announced by the government, is an important and correct measure. The trade union noted that it is a measure to ensure public health and calls on the relevant services not to give up, as the closure of supermarkets on Sundays has provoked a strong reaction from certain employers.

In a statement on April 11, the trade unions denounced the Supreme Court's decision on the legality of the 2013 cuts to employees in the wider public sector.

On April 15, PEO sent a warning letter to the Cyprus Public Transport (CPT) company. The occasion was the company's announcement for the hiring of drivers and other employees, to work in the CPT companies that manage the public transport in the provinces of Nicosia and Larnaca. PEO reminded that in a con-

versation between them, CPT had stated that the company's work in the first months after they signed the contract to manage these two provinces would be carried out without any changes. Any changes to the itineraries would, according to the agreement, take place around the end of 2020, after consultation with the Ministry of Transport. At the same time, in their letter, PEO stressed that there are existing drivers who can adequately cover today's routes and in addition there are others who work fewer hours and can be utilized for the company's additional needs. Finally, the letter concludes that the victimization of existing employees will not be tolerated and that otherwise the unions will take strict measures against the company.

A letter was sent to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, on April 9, by professionals and organizations in culture and the creative industry, proposing specific measures to address the problems faced by the entire spectrum of artists and creative sector workers because of the anti-pandemic measures. It is evident that with the various bans imposed as measures to combat the pandemic, artists are one of the most vulnerable groups. They requested immediate financial support, measures to ensure the continuity of artistic creation, ideas to support the remote artistic creation of organized bodies and artists, and other plans to be implemented at the end of the crisis.

## 5. Turkish Cypriots

### Economic Developments

The Prime Minister Ersin Tatar said that the economy had 'hit rock bottom': the monthly revenue collected by the Ministry of Finance, which was around 500 million TL before the lockdown, went down to around 200 million in April.

According to a statement made by the Petrol Station Operators Union in mid-April, job losses are likely in the sector following a 79% drop in demand for fuel.

On April 28, the presidents of the four opposition parties represented in the parliament issued a joint statement criticizing the government of bypassing the parliament and questioned the legality of the governmental decrees issued since the beginning of the pandemic.

### Relations with Turkey

On April 14, the Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister Ersin Tatar spoke with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan over the phone. The Turkish President Erdogan expressed Turkey's continued support to the TRNC in the fight against coronavirus. Speaking to a Turkish news channel after talking with Erdogan, Tatar said that he had conveyed the TRNC's appreciation to the Turkish president for Turkey's continued support. On a different occasion, Tatar pointed out that Turkey has been sending large quantities of medical supplies to

the TRNC and reassured the public that Turkey continues to support the Turkish Cypriot people: *"No one should worry or make misleading comments. We are convinced that Turkey will continue to do whatever it can to address and meet our other demands as well"*.

Repair work for the underwater pipeline carrying fresh water from Turkey to the TRNC will be finished in the summer without causing water cuts on the island, Turkey's Agriculture and Forestry Ministry announced on April 12. According to the statement, production of 500-meter-long high-density polyethylene pipes, which will replace damaged ones, have started in Turkey. The ministry noted that the supply of other special equipment needed for repair work was also underway. In January, the Turkey-TRNC water pipeline suffered disruption due to severe weather conditions. Officials located the damage to be around 250 meters deep undersea and eight km away from the Turkish coast. The 80-kilometre pipeline was completed in 2015.

On April 30, Turkey's radio and television broadcasting authority (RTUK) cut the north Cyprus-based Diyalog TV's satellite broadcasts on the grounds that a guest (who happened to be the owner of the channel along with the chain of Merit hotels), on a program made insulting remarks about Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and harmed Turkey's independence and territorial integrity. The Turkish Cypriot Journalists Association, the Turkish Cypriot Journalists Society, Bayrak Workers' Union (BAY-SEN), the Turkish Cypriot Public Servants Union (KTAMS), the Revolutionary Workers' Union (DEV-İŞ), the



Turkish Cypriot Cameramen's Association and the Turkish Cypriot Sports Writers' Association (KTSYD) issued a joint statement condemning RTUK's move, describing it as the latest attack on the Turkish Cypriot press. Akinci was among those criticizing the move while Tatar reportedly said he did not believe what happened was undermining democratic values.

### **Domestic Developments**

In the last 13 consecutive days of the month, no new cases were reported and by the end of April, there were only three patients left in hospital receiving treatment for Covid-19. Since the beginning of the pandemic, 108 people tested positive, and four people (two of them tourists from Germany) lost their lives due to Covid-19. Meanwhile, the number of TRNC citizens in the UK who have lost their lives to Covid-19 has reached 90.

On the last day of the month, the government extended some of the restrictions while lifting or easing others. The ban on entry of all foreign nationals into the TRNC and the night-time curfew have been extended until May 15. The ban on mass gatherings, prayers, or fast-breaking events during the holy month of Ramadan will remain in place too.

The travel restriction between districts, which was introduced on April 4, was lifted as of May 4. The day-time partial curfew was also lifted for the exception of Sundays. The essential public services will continue to operate as they have been operating since the beginning

of the pandemic while other public offices, which are deemed necessary by the ministries, will resume their work until May 15 with limited staff and based on a rotational basis. Public servants with chronic illnesses or who fall in high-risk groups will be shown flexibility. Pharmacies and banks returned to normal working hours as of May 4.

All schools, educational facilities, picnic sites, tourism facilities, casinos, internet cafes, barber shops, hair dressers and beauty salons, farmers markets, children's playgrounds and areas, entertainment venues, cinemas, theatres, sports facilities, historical sites, museums, and wedding halls will remain closed until May 15. Other shops can open as of May 4. Take-away and delivery services of the restaurants and cafes will start operating as of May 11 on the condition that their staff are all tested for Covid-19 and comply with all the health and hygiene regulations announced by the government. All businesses with permission to open must keep a register of their customers to ease contact tracing.

Reportedly, between March 23 and April 27, 1,313 people were arrested for violating the daytime restrictions, and 606 were arrested for breaking the night-time curfew. In addition, 32 business owners were arrested for opening illegally.

The repair work at Nicosia public hospital which was partially destroyed in a fire two months ago has been completed. The largest and best equipped hospital in the TRNC had been partly out of service due to the damage caused by the fire. The minister of health Ali Pilli said: *"we have raised the number of venti-*

lators from 46 to 54 and we have 105 more on the way”.

### **Labour Relations and Trade Unions**

On April 22, the government reduced the unemployment benefit from 2,617 TL (€348) to 1,500 (€200), in effect levelling the unemployment benefit with salary support for private-sector employees affected by the pandemic. Guven Bengihan, head of KTAMS (Turkish Cypriot Public Servants’ Union), slammed the decision, describing it as unfair. He said the government had first decided to slash the salaries of the public servants and pensioners when the economic crisis hit the north and had now as an extension of the unfair practice, lowered the amount of the unemployment benefit. He reminded that the unemployment benefit scheme was safeguarded by the Social Security Law and is paid against the beneficiary’s premium payments over the years. Defending the government’s decision, Tatar said that this would be limited to four months and intended to prevent situations where the issue could be abused.

Later in the month, Bengihan said that the government’s economic measures were unfair and unlawful. *“While the public servants, wage earners and pensioners suffered pay cuts, the business sector, most of whom are wealthier than the state, have not been touched at all,”* Bengihan said. Speaking on the reopening process, he said it was wrong to be talking about the reopening when the

health infrastructure has not been adequately improved yet.

*“A total of 49,405 applications have been filed for the 1,500 TL (€200) salary support scheme in eight days,”* Labour Minister Faiz Sucuoglu said on April 28. Addressing the plenary session of the parliament, Sucuoglu said that 33% of the applicants were TRNC citizens, 35% of them Turkish nationals and 18% were foreigners from third countries (who had been initially excluded but later included in the scheme). The remaining 14% of applications came from employers. Sucuoglu added that the payments would be starting as of May 4.

Also responding to criticisms on reducing the unemployment benefit Sucuoglu said that the government was expecting a rise in the number of unemployed due to the crisis and therefore they would not be able to pay the regular unemployment benefit and hence the reduction. He added that the Social Security department had lost 18,000 premium contributions in the last two months, which put the department in financial difficulty.

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