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

### 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)

<https://www.facebook.com/600328553408402/posts/2980377862070114/?d=n>

or:

<https://www.fes.de/mediathek/hoerbar/permalink/default-ce4a91a247-1-2-1-1-1?fbclid=IwAR0zIMMX0sBGe1OI2yFZ85sc9COBoB5rzzeSA4UenNYCy0VTOA5WT1gyF9o>



**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)

<https://www.fes.de/mediathek/hoerbar/permalink/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-cyprus-as-a-new-migration-hotspot>



## 2. FES Cyprus Events

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

## 3. Cyprus Problem

In June crossings between the two sides began following May's agreement between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders, Mustafa Akinci and Nicos Anastasiades to gradually open the checkpoints for certain groups of people. On June 1, via a two-hour teleconference of the members of the bi-communal Technical Committee on Health, the two sides briefed each other on the epidemiological situation before any decisions were taken for easing restrictions on crossing points. The crossings however did not open as agreed on June 8. They remained closed until June 21 as continued restrictions by the north did not permit any effective movement. The non-alignment of the policies on both sides of the divide caused a lot of confusion and issues to the island's citizens throughout the month.

On June 10, TRNC<sup>1</sup> Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kudret Ozersay,

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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

stated that although they would allow people to cross to the south of the island for work, those people would either have to stay in the south until July 1, or face a 14-day quarantine when they returned to the north. Following the announcement, UNFICYP expressed its concern over the situation and the disruption it has caused to people from both communities and asked for clarifications. On June 11, the TRNC announced that as of June 22 people working in the south but living in the north will be able to cross daily between the two sides if there was no deterioration of the epidemiological conditions. It was also announced that as of July 1 visitors from other countries would be allowed to the north including citizens and tourists crossing from the south.

On June 11, peace activists from both sides of the divide submitted letters to the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders calling for the reopening of the crossing points. Representatives from the bi-communal initiative United Cyprus which represents more than 75 groups from both sides, arranged a distance meeting at the closed Ledra Palace crossing point before paying separate visits to their leaders. Among their demands, was the re-opening of crossings points and resumption of negotiations for a permanent and comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

On June 12, the Greek Cypriot side protested to the UN Secretary-General's Special Repre-

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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).

sentative in Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar over the allegedly biased way UNFICYP addressed the two sides on the issue of reopening the crossings. The government was reportedly irked by UNFICYP's lukewarm response to the refusal by the Turkish Cypriot side to implement the decision taken in May by the two leaders on reopening the crossings on June 8, given that a more critical stance was taken by the UN towards the Greek Cypriots in February, when the suspension of the crossings was announced.

The Greek Cypriot side started allowing crossings between the two sides from June 21, apart from Ledras Street, while the Turkish Cypriots allowed crossings a day later. While the Greek Cypriot side opened the checkpoints to all Cypriots and permanent residents if they had negative COVID tests. Those who are enclaved or Maronites were allowed entry into the north. Though the Ledra Palace crossing has been open on the government-controlled areas since then, it is understood that pedestrian crossings are not allowed.

The Turkish Cypriot side initially opened five crossings: Ayios Dhometios, Zodia, Strovilia, Pergamos and Ledra Street, which remains closed on the Greek Cypriot side. The Turkish Cypriot side eventually opened the Limnitis crossing on June 26. On June 30 they announced that it would open Ledra Palace crossing from July 1 for pedestrian crossings.

On June 23, Akinci accused the TRNC government of creating total chaos over the crossings by refusing to coordinate with the Greek

Cypriot side as per his agreement with Anastasiades.

UN Special Representative Elizabeth Spehar is expected to begin talks with both leaders in July, ahead of the UN Secretary General's report on renewing UNFICYP's mandate. The talks are reportedly set to take place online on July 5 and 10 where Spehar is set to have separate talks with Anastasiades and Akinci. According to CNA, the report is expected to be published on July 10.

On the 1st of June, petrol bombs were thrown into the Koprulu Haci Ibrahim Aga Mosque in Limassol and "Immigrants, Islam not welcome" written on its wall. The Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, the government and opposition parties all condemned the attack on the mosque. Akinci condemned the incident which he described as an act of Islamophobia and racism, and called on the Greek Cypriot leadership to act swiftly to investigate, identify, apprehend and punish those who were responsible. Akinci said that such acts should not be tolerated and that all places of worship, irrelevant of which religion, were sacred sanctuaries which needed to be respected. Later in the month, a Byzantine flag was hung up at a mosque in Larnaca, which was also protested by the Turkish Cypriot side.

Speaking in the Turkish Cypriot parliament, National Unity Party (UBP) MP Oguzhan Hasipoglu said that the fenced-off suburb of Famagusta, Varosha/Maraş, could be reopened by the end of the year if the necessary political will was exercised. Until 1974 the

suburb had been inhabited by Greek Cypriots who fled from the advancing Turkish army. Referring to the recent meeting held in Varosha with the participation of the Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay, Hasipoglu said, *“The necessary political will was put forward at that meeting. The fenced-off city is TRNC soil and will be opened under the TRNC’s administration in line with international law. The roadmap has been determined and technical as well as legal work is currently continuing. There is no reason why we cannot complete work and reopen it before the year’s end.”* He also added that the reason why the city had remained fenced-off all this time was the repeated and unsuccessful attempts to reach a federal settlement. *“There is no logic to keeping the city closed,”* he added.

In response to the announcement by the Greek Cypriot side of the implementation of a bilateral arrangement reached in 2014 with the UK on the regulation of non-military development in the Sovereign Base Areas (SBA), the Turkish Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement saying that this was in violation of international law and Turkish Cypriots also had rights within the SBA.

According to civil society sources, incidents of domestic violence in the Greek Cypriot community increased by 58% since the lockdown, that is, from the middle of March till the 22nd of April 2020. In the Turkish Cypriot community, the situation is even worse, as calls on helplines increased up to 10 times since the lockdown. In general, shelters in both communities are not enough to provide support, and alternative accommodation for victims

had to be found, while there is no adequate infrastructure to help women after life in the shelter.

#### 4. Hydrocarbons

As part of a two-day official visit, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, arrived in Cyprus on June 25 to discuss the ongoing Turkish activities in areas claimed by the Republic of Cyprus as its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as well as other issues. The EU official called for cooperation between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey and welcomed Nicosia’s offer to Ankara to negotiate in good faith the maritime delimitation between their relevant coasts. He stressed the importance of the two countries improving their relations and avoiding escalating tensions in the region that could be very damaging for everyone. In response the spokesman of Turkey’s foreign ministry, Hami Aksoy, described the proposal from Borrell as *“far from being serious,”*. Meanwhile, Akinci criticised Borrell for not meeting with him during his official visit to Cyprus.

*“Turkey will carry out its seventh drill to the west of the island of Cyprus ... We are planning to intensify our research in the north of the Eastern Mediterranean region”* the Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Fatih Donmez said during a TV programme on June 28.

On June 19 speaking to CNN Turk, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu called on

Israel to annul its agreement with Cyprus on the delimitation of their EEZs, claiming that Israel had ceded some maritime areas to Cyprus. The Republic of Cyprus signed EEZ delimitation agreements with Egypt in 2003, Lebanon in 2007 and Israel in 2010, based on the median line method. The Turkish minister said that Cyprus carved out its offshore blocks based on the agreement it made with Israel and that part of Turkey's continental shelf falls within that area.

US based NOBLE ENERGY, the primary concession holder on the Aphrodite gas field, has signalled that they are putting on hold plans to develop and monetise the reservoir, while reiterating their commitment to the project. In a statement provided to daily Politis, the company stated that tumbling commodity prices due to the economic fallout linked to the global coronavirus situation, have led them to reconfigure their work schedule in Cyprus as well. Discovered in late 2011, the Aphrodite play holds an estimated 4.5 tcf of gas.

Cyprus' permanent representative to the UN, Andreas Mavroyiannis sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres denouncing Turkey's actions in the island's EEZ. In the letter, Mavroyiannis denounced Turkish violations of the aviation and maritime space during February and March.

## 5. Greek Cypriots

### Economic Developments

Speaking through teleconferencing at the 10th Nicosia Economic Congress on June 30, Central Bank Governor Constantinos Herodotou, presented the Central Bank's (CBC) scenarios on the course of the economy. According to the Governor, the economy could dip by 9.9% this year under extreme conditions that include a second wave of the virus. The CBC's basic scenario sees a 7.3% drop in GDP this year and 5.5% growth in 2021. For 2022, the CBC sees growth at 4.1%, under the same scenario. A more optimistic scenario sees a 5.6% contraction. Unemployment could rise to 8.2% in 2020 under the basic scenario. Unemployment may take a downward trend in 2021, when it is expected to drop to 7.2% and continue to decrease to 6.5% in 2022. According to Herodotou a rise in non-performing loans in 2021 is expected, due to the effects of the coronavirus crisis. Finance Minister Constantinos Petrides described the crisis as the biggest since the 1929 depression.

Lawmakers agreed to an extra €150m in direct assistance relating to the economic fallout from the coronavirus. The €150m forms the lion's share of a €231m supplementary government budget and is geared at assisting businesses and the self-employed until October 2020. The supplementary budget will be put to the vote at the House plenary on July 3. The package is the final three-part economic relief programme, which altogether the government estimates to cost around €3bn,

where €1.2bn have been slated for fiscal interventions, and €1.7bn towards improving businesses' liquidity. Some 50,000 beneficiaries are expected to apply for five schemes, to run from June 13 until October 12.

On June 26, three schemes involving interest rate subsidies and direct cash assistance to businesses designed to counter the impact of the coronavirus were officially launched by the government. The plans concern interest rate subsidies for households and businesses and direct financial assistance to small businesses and those who are self-employed.

On 20 June, Cyprus eased travel restrictions, as it hopes to attract tourists to lessen the effects of the coronavirus crisis on the economy. Travellers from 22 countries can enter the country without displaying proof they had tested negative for the virus. People coming from: Australia, Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Switzerland, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea have been placed in the so-called category A, which includes countries with a good epidemiological profile regarding Covid-19. People coming from Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Romania, UAE would still need a document proofing that they have tested negative within the last 72 hours as they were put in category B. Included in the 7 countries of category C are Cyprus' main tourist markets, the UK and Russia, which are considered high-risk countries as regards the coronavirus. They require a certificate showing a negative result

for Covid-19 administered within 72 hours prior to departure and are required to stay in a self-administered 14-day quarantine upon arrival. The latter requirement renders Cyprus unattractive as a holiday destination for those in category C.

According to Fitos Thrasivoulou, president of the federation of restaurant/leisure owners, from the 750 or so restaurants, cafes, coffee shops and bars in the district of Paphos, less than a third have reopened.

On June 11, the European Commission approved a €33m Cypriot aid scheme deferring VAT payments to ease the liquidity constraints of companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. Meanwhile the government on June 24 temporarily reduced VAT charges to 5% from 9% for hotels, restaurants and taxi transport. The move is intended to support the tourism industry with a boost in revenues.

The cabinet on June 10 approved regulations to the citizenship by investment programme linking the scheme to anti-money laundering legislation. According to Interior Minister, Nicos Nouris, the linking of the scheme to anti-money laundering laws was an important provision which would help in the execution and examination of applications for the so-called golden passports. Financial criteria to secure citizenship will remain the same notably a €2m investment plus the purchase of a house worth €500k plus VAT.

The cabinet on June 10 approved a €6.3 m incentive scheme to boost Cyprus' air connectivity in the wake of the lifting of restrictions

to contain the spread of coronavirus. The scheme, which will be temporary, will apply for up to six months and will subsidise airlines that have at least 40% capacity.

### **Domestic Developments**

In June, the confirmed COVID19 cases rose from 944 to 998. In total 26 people with Covid-19 have died, with the virus being the underlying cause of death for 19.

On June 9, phase 3 of the government strategy to lift restrictive measures imposed due to the virus came into force with the reopening of malls, airport and ports. On June 13 gyms, casinos and other recreational activities resumed operations three months after the lockdown was imposed. The limit of 10 persons for gatherings remained in place until June 24. Gatherings are now allowed for up to 50 people indoors or up to 100 people outdoors. Indoor theatres and cinemas were also allowed to reopen by month's end.

A mini cabinet reshuffle occurred in June. New ministers for Justice and Defence, Emily Yiolitis and Charalambos Petrides respectively, were sworn in on June 29 replacing Giorgos Savvides former Justice Minister and Savvas Angelides former Defence Minister. Savvides became Attorney General with Angelides as his deputy, after former Attorney General Costas Clerides abruptly resigned following a debacle over his retirement date. While the law states that the Attorney General is entitled to retire at the age of 68, Clerides faced criticism over his insistence to retire at the end of July, instead of July 8 when he turned 68, reportedly for financial gain. Shipping

Minister, Natasa Pilides will also assume the portfolio of Energy Minister Giorgos Lakkotrypis who will be moving to the private sector. A new police chief, Stelios Papatheodorou, was also sworn in on June 30 replacing outgoing Chief of Police, Kypros Michaelides.

An Oxford University study ranks Cyprus in the top 10 of a global league table of countries on preparedness for easing coronavirus lockdowns, according to Scotland's The National.

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

The struggles of the workers in the construction industry and the negotiations between the Trade Unions and the Employers' Associations took a long time before an agreement was reached. The agreement foresees that the four basic terms of the Collective Agreement should be legally regulated. The Legislation has immediate effect and any violation by the employers is a criminal offense. Specifically, the new Law obliges all employers in the Construction Industry to not exceed working hours and to pay overtime labour on the basis of the Collective Agreement, as well as to provide Provident Fund, holidays, bank holidays, and gratuities to all employees. The new Collective Agreement in the Construction Industry was signed last September, after long negotiations. The agreement concerns about 30,000 employees and is valid from 2019-2021.

Thousands of hotel workers protested outside the Ministry of Labor on July 3 over the fact



that 10,000 hotel workers were left out of special compensation plans announced by the government due to the coronavirus. Thousands of seasonal workers in hotels and leisure centers were required to make a living with a mere €360 a month because their employers violated the winter work suspension agreement and failed to pay 2.8% of their workers' salaries. As a result, employees are considered unemployed by the Ministry of Labor and therefore do not have the right to join the special subsidy schemes of 60% of their salary. The protest will also be attended by employees for whom the payment of the special unemployment benefit is delayed from May 20, without the ministry clarifying when they will be paid.

On June 25, the employees of the Larnaca Bus Company ZENONAS organized a strike demanding from the company to pay the contributions to the various employees' funds (Provident Funds, Provident Fund loans, Medical Care Fund, Prosperity Fund, License Fund). The Trade Unions announced that the company did not pay the contributions to the funds to date. *"These deductions are made from the salary of the employees and should be paid directly to their Funds. Despite the employees' actions, both towards the company Larnaca Zenonas Buses, and towards the Minister of Transport and Labor, there has been no response to this issue"*. It is worth mentioning that from July 5 the management of public transport in the province of Larnaca will be taken over by a new company called "Larnaca Public Transport" and for this reason the employees considered that they should

claim the contributions to their funds owed to them by the company.

## 6. Turkish Cypriots

### Economic Developments

According to the Statistics Department, the cost of living went up by 0,75% in May compared to the previous month, and 8,64% compared to the same month last year.

On June 22, the government introduced the second economic support package covering the period between June and October. Announcing the measures at the end of cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Ersin Tatar pointed out that the economy was experiencing a decline due to the drop in tourism and higher education sectors which were worst hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. *"The contribution to the economy will be 1.114bn TL (€143,2 million). 449m will be spent on employment support, 359m for other support schemes, and 356m for real sector incentives,"* he said. Tatar also announced that newly employed TRNC citizens would be offered social security premium incentives for a period of 12 months. He added that an Economic Council made up of representatives and bureaucrats would be established to analyze the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy.

*"Even though the KTTO's recommendations were not fully reflected, we are pleased with the second economic relief package,"* the chairman of the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (KTTO) said. The KTTO criticised the cabinet's insistence on separating sectors

into those which remain closed and those which remained open during the lockdown when offering the ₺1,500 (€195) salary support payments, and argued that the government should continue with the salary support scheme for all businesses until the end of the year.

According to the competitiveness report commissioned by the KTTO, the north fell 18 places in one year and ranked 107th place among 141 countries. The overall points received for the north's competitiveness was 55,2 out of 100 in 2018 but dropped to 51,8 in the 2019-2020 report. Bureaucratic obstacles in establishing businesses, poor professional education quality and the points given by the business community to the overall economy have resulted in a decrease in the north's competitiveness score.

Reportedly, thousands of Turkish nationals with work permits who have been without work for three months have lost all hope of returning to their jobs and continue to leave the northern part of the island en masse.

### **Relations with Turkey**

According to a statement released by the Turkish Presidential Office's Communications Department, Tatar and Erdogan talked on the phone about bilateral relations and regional issues, as well as the flights between Turkey and the TRNC, which was scheduled to start on July 1.

### **Domestic Developments**

The arrival of a group of people from Turkey with a private jet without complying with quarantine (and customs and immigration) rules caused a public uproar and a political scandal. The scandal, which was revealed by daily Yeniduzen cost the Minister of Tourism, Unal Ustel, his job. Ustel was held responsible for the scandal by the junior coalition partner, People's Party (HP), as he was the one bringing the 'business' visit to the island to the agenda of the Council of Ministers. Ustel denied any responsibility: *'Once I was informed about the request put forward by the company, which placed a bid for the marina project in Lapta [Lapithos], I relayed the message to the Council of Ministers. Implementing the necessary health measures and ensuring the implementation of immigration procedures are the responsibilities of the relevant ministries,'* Ustel said, pointing the finger at others in the cabinet. The mayor of Lapithos, who oversees the marina project, said he was not aware of the visit and that the group did not go to the site. A police investigation revealed that some members of the group had left the hotel to go to Kyrenia (for shopping and lunch) and Famagusta (for another business deal). It also emerged that all CCTV footage at the hotel where the group had stayed was erased.

Eventually, Tatar replaced Unal Ustel with Kutlu Evren but found himself in hot water when it emerged that he had also tried to replace the Minister of Labour (and rival in intra-party power struggle) Faiz Sucuoglu with Aytac Caluda. President Mustafa Akinci, in

view of recommendations from the Attorney General's office, did not approve Caluda's appointment as Caluda's political immunity had been lifted by the parliament due to numerous corruption charges against him (from the time he had served as a director at Ministry of Labour).

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's scientific team (headed by former Speaker of Parliament and Prime Minister Dr Sibel Siber) resigned claiming the government did not consult them and has been keeping data which does not allow them to complete their study on the situation of the pandemic.

President Mustafa Akinci proposed bringing forward the date of the presidential election to August 16th from October 11<sup>th</sup> because of the possibility of a new wave of infections in the Fall. The presidential election was set to take place in April but was postponed due to COVID-19 at a joint meeting of the political parties in parliament. Akinci's proposal did not gain support from political parties.

According to a poll conducted by the Center for Migration Identity and Rights Studies (CMIRS) in June, Akinci is leading with 33,6% followed by Prime Minister Tatar (14%), the CTP leader Tufan Erhurman (11,6%), and Deputy Prime Minister Kudret Ozersay (3,2%). With 36,6% the proportion of those saying they were undecided or not going to vote, was remarkably high.

The TRNC edged closer to removing or easing the few remaining restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As of June 1, evening curfew was lifted, and hotels, casinos,

betting offices, tattoo parlors, culture and art activities, cinemas, exhibition halls, libraries and day-care centres opened. The government also decided to open the ports of entry to international arrivals on July 1st. All foreign nationals will be allowed to enter the country under certain conditions, depending on which country they are travelling from. The list of countries has been divided into three categories, which will be updated at least once a week according to epidemiological results and data obtained by the health ministry and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Prime Minister Tatar announced that the number of flights per day would be limited to two because of the limited testing capacity.

Later in the month, the government decided to move Turkey from (the safest) category A to category B. Those arriving from countries in category A will be required to present a negative PCR test carried out in the last 72 hours upon arrival while passengers arriving from countries which fall in category B will be subject to a second test at the port of entry. The move was prompted by a recent spike in the number of coronavirus cases in Turkey. Accordingly, all passengers arriving from Turkey will have to present a negative PCR test (conducted within the last 72 hours), and a second test will be carried out upon arrival. There will be no quarantine requirement.

The parties in parliament reached a consensus on June 29 not to give a summer recess to the General Assembly. The assembly will be convening once a week for an extraordinary session until the election bans for the presidential election come into force.

**Labour Relations and Trade Unions**

Professional organisations in the health sector and the Trade Unions Platform held a march in Nicosia to protest the government's failure to carry out the necessary preparations to protect public health. They demanded the government revoke its decision to allowing people arriving from Turkey to enter the country without having to remain in quarantine.

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