

POSSIBLE FUTURES OF CYPRUS

2022

2035



SCENARIOS REPORT

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The Cyprus Scenarios are imagined stories of the future of Cyprus.

They speak about what *could* happen in the future.



They were created in 2022 by a diverse group of 36 individual Cypriots, who represent a cross-section of Cypriot society.

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Foreword

By Juan Manuel Santos

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Former President of Colombia

I first met Adam Kahane, author of *Transformative Scenario Planning*, in 1996 when, on behalf of the Good Government Foundation, I invited him to come to our country. Colombia was at that time going through a very difficult situation, plunged into political instability and violence. I had been referred to Kahane by President Nelson Mandela, following the successful “Mont Fleur” scenarios process which Kahane had led in South Africa during the transition from apartheid.

Kahane helped us with a very interesting exercise. We gathered representatives from all sectors of Colombian society: from the government and the opposition; peasants and large landowners; trade unionists and industrialists; academics, politicians and retired military; and also members of the paramilitary groups and guerrilla leaders, who participated by telephone because they were sub-judice. That meeting, which seemed highly unlikely, gave way to a process of discussion, reflection, and analysis never before seen in Colombia. Following the methodology proposed by Kahane, this diverse and complex group discussed in depth the reality of the country and the paths it could take in the future.

The group together created the document *Destino Colombia* (Destination Colombia), in which four possible scenarios were contemplated. They were entitled: “Tomorrow will come and we will see,” “Better a bird in the hand,” “Everyone march,” and “Union makes strength.” These scenarios were widely shared in the media and through small and large meetings all around the country. They became a well-known touchstone for Colombians about the choices they faced. Fifteen years later when I was elected President of my

country, I found it breathtaking to read the scenarios again, as they had an almost prophetic clarity in the way they had drawn the path towards peace in different stages. Today, I consider the Destino Colombia process to be one of the most significant events in my country’s search for peace.

In 2012, I again recommended Kahane and his colleagues at Reos Partners to facilitate a transformative scenarios process about the future of the drug problem in the Americas, under the auspices of the Organization of American States. The four scenarios that resulted from this work helped us to promote a deep, serious, and responsible debate with regional and global leaders without prejudices or dogmas, and to start generating new responses. The scenarios for the future of the drug problem in the Americas were credited by many former Latin American Presidents for breaking a taboo in the global drug debate.

These successful experiences confirm the usefulness and effectiveness of the transformative scenarios approach to handling conflicts and to designing political, economic, and social solutions to the major problems that currently concern the world.

Of course, solving these problems requires something fundamental: collaboration, constructive dialogue. Without this, it is impossible to find the paths that take us forward and allow us to solve the riddles and the difficulties that reality presents to us. The nature of this collaboration is, however, more complex than we think. It does not always occur in controlled environments where a group of experts agrees and finds a solution that satisfies all parties. And,

above all, it cannot always occur between people who think the same way and have the same objectives.

Often—and increasingly—it is necessary to collaborate, sit down and talk with our adversaries. In Colombia we know this well. To reach peace, it was necessary to embark on a process of negotiation with the FARC, the oldest and largest guerrilla group in Latin America, an armed group that caused Colombians great pain for decades. Although we did not agree with the ideas of the FARC, much less with their methods, we sat down with them to find a way to silence the guns and to save the lives of thousands of Colombians. We could not resign ourselves to continue an absurd war, a war of more than half a century, that brought so much suffering to our country, more than 450 thousand killed and more than 9 million victims.

Although it was very difficult and we had to overcome many obstacles—the hatreds, the lies of the past, the distrust—fortunately we arrived at port and reached an agreement. We were able to collaborate, dialogue, and converge with our adversaries and, as a result, today we are building a country at peace, a new Colombia that welcomes hope and leaves in the past the atrocities of war.

Healing the wounds of a war of more than 50 years is not easy. To convince the people to accept your former adversaries, the people who have committed atrocities in your life, is not easy. And it takes a lot of time, it takes a lot of perseverance. Many times the reconciliation process reminds people of what happened. It can be painful, but this is a necessary catharsis in order to heal the wounds. What is needed is not a punitive justice, but a restorative justice, a type of justice that allows peace. It is called transitional justice. My instructions to the negotiators in Colombia were to seek as much justice as possible that would allow us to have peace.

Given my own experience with transformative scenarios and this new approach to collaboration I was pleased to hear about the new Cyprus Futures initiative which applies a similar approach. This approach invites us not to fear complexity, not to fear the truth, but rather to take into account the different perspectives and possibilities such complexity presents and, in addition, to be willing to change our strategy if circumstances warrant it. Only then can we collaborate effectively and lay the foundation for a better tomorrow. With enough political will all conflicts can find a negotiated solution.

Abbreviations

BBF	Bizonal, bicomunal federation
CFP	Community Federal Police
CSCFFC	Consultative Civil Society Forum on the Future of Cyprus
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EMGF	Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum
Erasmus	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
EU	European Union
IPC	Immovable Property Commission
TSP	Transformative Scenarios Process
SG	Secretary-General
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
US	United States

Introduction

“Scenarios deal with two worlds: the world of facts and the world of perceptions. Their purpose is to gather and transform information of potential strategic significance into fresh perceptions, which then lead to strategic insights that were previously beyond the mind’s reach. ”

— Pierre Wack

These scenarios are stories about what *could* happen in the future – not what will happen (forecasts) or what *should* happen (proposals or recommendations). They consider the period from 2022 to 2035 in and around Cyprus, including relevant political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and international dynamics.

The co-authors of the scenarios are a “Scenario Team” of 36 outstanding individual Cypriots. They are not a group of “usual suspects”. They include a wide diversity of perspectives across sectors (government, academia, business, civil society, organized religion, social sector, and cultural sector), professions (lawyer, professor, researcher, doctor, engineer, real estate consultant, banker, economist, activist, entrepreneur, social worker, priest, educator, school board member, winemaker, choreographer, playwright), generations (age range 20s–60s) and political views on the Cyprus problem. Furthermore, the group is gender-balanced, balanced between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and inclusive of religious minorities.

While the participants in this process are broadly representative of Cypriot society, they joined the process as individuals rather than as representatives of a specific institution or constituency. To develop the scenarios, they volunteered several weeks of their time to work constructively together. They gathered for intense conversation over the course of three workshops, followed by collective writing and re-writing and informal ad hoc gatherings.

The assignment of the Scenario Team was to create stories of the future of Cyprus that would be convincing, taking into consideration the realities of the world today. They were not asked to dream and engage in wishful thinking, but rather to create a set of stories that are *plausible*. They were also asked to make sure these stories would be *relevant* to the things that Cypriots are concerned about today, and at the same time *challenging*, presenting new perspectives and angles and bringing underlying issues to the surface.

The result is a collective set of scenarios that none of the Scenario Team members could have crafted on their own and to which they have all contributed. Many ideas were tested and some scenarios that reflected individual hopes or preferences failed the test of plausibility. Those scenarios were not included because this particular group could not be convinced amongst themselves that these stories could actually happen. This does not mean that this set of scenarios is exhaustive or definitive – a different group might have arrived at different scenarios. Readers of this report are welcome to consider the possibility of other futures as they reflect on the scenarios presented here.

These scenarios thus represent a collectively constructed set of four different imagined futures. Each of them describes a trajectory, explores its consequences, and demonstrates that the future is the result of today's actions and decisions, something that is constructed day by day. The Scenario Team members agree that these four possible future stories could happen and need to be considered in a wide and inclusive conversation in and around Cyprus to address the challenges facing the island. At the same time, almost every Scenario Team member disagrees with elements in at least one of the scenarios.

As a consequence, the output of the Scenario Team's collective reflection does not represent a consensus on any recommendation or a shared preference towards one scenario or the other. The scenarios simply represent the work of the people themselves – a group of diverse, committed, and caring Cypriot actors who worked together in the hope that these scenarios might encourage more strategic and expansive dialogues that can help Cyprus to move forward. These stories offer a map of the possible future landscape of Cyprus and a common language to support fresh and informed dialogue. Their publication is not the end of the Cyprus Futures conversation, it is intended to be the beginning.

Why scenarios?

“Engaging with the future does not take place in the future; it takes place in the present. Having a future focus changes the way we see the present, so much so that we ‘re-perceive’ that present and its strategic requirements. Learning from the future is exciting and challenging because it changes forever the way we engage with the present.”

— Oliver Freeman

Scenarios are stories. Human beings have always used stories to talk about things that are difficult, complex, or even taboo, to encourage a change in thinking, illuminate pathways, and inspire right action. Creating and telling stories about possible futures allows us to lift our gaze above our current stuck situations and polarized conversations into a longer time horizon and ask ourselves, “What if?”

In the decades of efforts to address and solve the Cyprus problem and navigate the future of the island, many worthy endeavours have been made to initiate, support, or implement initiatives and solutions. This undertaking acknowledges and builds on these efforts while it is also distinctive and unprecedented in many respects. In particular, it does not pursue, espouse, advocate, or promote a specific model of solution for the Cyprus problem or even address this problem exclusively. It is rather an effort by Cypriots to explore, discuss and reflect on their multiple possible futures together. It aspires to bring a future orientation to the public discourse in Cyprus without ignoring how the future evolves from the realities of the past and present.

The project applies the “Transformative Scenarios” approach. This approach was born out of South Africa during the transition from apartheid, when in 1991-92, a diverse group of South Africans from across the political spectrum came together to develop the “Mont Fleur Scenarios”, with the impartial facilitation of Adam Kahane, currently Director of Reos Partners and author of the book “Transformative Scenario Planning” (TSP).

Over the past three decades, this method has been applied at national, regional, and global levels on topics including democracy, climate change, drug policy, justice, education, land reform, food security and more. It has also been applied to national and regional futures including in South Africa, Colombia, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Israel-Palestine, Thailand, the Netherlands, and elsewhere. Across contexts, this method has consistently generated new insight, enhanced trust, increased mutual understanding, established new partnerships, and enlarged capacities for strategic foresight and leadership.

The method is different from other scenario planning approaches in that the scenarios are developed not only with the intention to adapt to the future, but rather with the intention to shape the future. Furthermore, the scenarios are not developed by think tanks or academic experts, but rather collectively drafted by a highly diverse group of individuals who have a stake in the issue at hand and represent a cross-section of a particular society, sector, or system. This makes for an output that is alive, grounded, and potent.

How to read the scenarios

As you read, please remember that these scenarios are not proposals. Do not expect to be presented with a plan and to debate its merits. Rather, imagine these futures coming to be. Immerse yourself in each of the possible futures offered by these four scenarios. Think of them as a situation in which you might find yourself and which you might need to navigate.

As you read each scenario, consider:

→ Could this happen?

→ If it happened, what impact would it have on me, on the people I care about, on the groups that I am part of, and on Cypriots in general?

→ If it happened, what opportunities could I/we make the most of, and what threats or challenges would I/we face? What options would I/we have?

→ What can I/we do today to prepare for this possible future, to avert it or to help it to come about?

Having read all the scenarios, consider:

→ What other scenarios do I see?

→ What do I see now that I didn't see before?

→ What is my role? How may I influence the direction of the future through my actions today?

Scenario overview

There are many possible directions in which the future may go for Cyprus. The Scenario Team chose to elaborate four stories that they believe need to be told and understood about what could happen between now and 2035. Each of these scenarios is a separate “world”, a distinct future reality.

In the world of **‘No Way,’** hope for a better and more uplifting future comes and goes as new negotiations on the Cyprus problem begin and collapse once more. The resulting disappointment and recriminations further deepen divisions between Cyprus’ two main communities. The pattern of multiple rounds of failed talks, combined with ongoing competing solution models, maximalist demands and a lack of transformative leadership, impede progress, feed inertia, and divert resources from tackling other challenges affecting daily life. The Turkish Cypriot administration continues to be increasingly dependent on and influenced by Türkiye*, and the northern part of Cyprus functions as a low-regulated zone for Türkiye’s economy. For Greek Cypriots, the prospect fades of returning to land or property from which they were displaced in 1974, and attention is mainly focused on security in the context of enhanced presence of Türkiye and increased militarization of the island. Few believe in a renewed peace process, but no one is willing or able to completely give up on it either. As a result, everyone involved in and affected by the Cyprus problem is kept stuck in suspension as de facto separation solidifies.

In the world of **‘My Way,’** tensions on the island between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots intensify rapidly as any prospect of a peace process evaporates. The UN SG suspends his mission of good offices from Cyprus indefinitely due to a lack of common ground and willingness to move on the part of both parties. In a context of growing multi-polarity and increasing challenge to Western dominance in global governance, the Turkish Cypriot leadership pursues an active policy of international engagement and recognition of the north as an independent state. This alarms Greek Cypriots greatly and also generates considerable tension within the Turkish Cypriot community. Recognition of the north by a few countries elicits strong reactions, as Greek Cypriots and Greece put up fierce resistance both on the island and outside of it through various measures and their membership of the EU and the UN. This affects the economy in the north and Turkish Cypriots’ mobility, and highlights their continued isolation from international fora. The impact of these measures is only partially mitigated by foreign investment in the low-regulated north, the benefits of which are unevenly distributed. Regional tensions escalate as Greek Cypriots and Türkiye pursue hydrocarbon extraction without any agreement about overlapping claims in the sea.

**The scenarios use ‘Türkiye’ in line with the official name change registered with the United Nations since June 2022.*

In the world of ***'Their Way,'*** the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders experience considerable pressure from the external environment and from business lobbies to settle the Cyprus problem. They engage in high-level negotiations supported by the United Nations, which resemble previous rounds in the peace process in being leader-focused with little transparency or participation from civil society and in applying the principle 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.' Centering 'hard' political issues related to power-sharing, security, territory, and property, and increasingly relying on international experts for substantive advice, the talks charge ahead despite civil society actors raising concerns about the lack of public participation and the risks of not preparing communities for change. The public itself is little engaged but subjected to a smart communication campaign employing marketing techniques to influence public opinion. After ratification of the resulting peace plan, the federation is established with a high degree of decentralisation and little attention for creating effective federal institutions. Cracks soon start to emerge as economic integration proves challenging and the leaders have competing loyalties: to the federation they created and to their community whose support remains essential for remaining in office. Gradually, a dichotomy emerges between effective protective action at the constituent state level (directed against the other community) and inconclusive debates at federal level. This reduces the legitimacy of and public faith in the federation and means people's loyalties are primarily directed to constituent states. It results in a dispensation that reinforces mistrust and ethnic divisions and has little capability to handle stress.

In the world of ***'Our Way,'*** an increasing number of people across Cyprus recognise that the persistence of the Cyprus problem detracts from effectively dealing with pressing current and future challenges as collaborative efforts remain limited in scope, size, and impact in the face of ongoing division and political impasse. Preliminary consultations by the UN with a broad range of stakeholders, result in the leaders agreeing on a new approach to the peace process. Focusing on achieving 'resilient peace,' this approach entails a multi-track, participatory process which combines high-level talks between leaders with working groups, technical committees, and broad civil society engagement, driven from within and with support from UN and other international stakeholders. This unleashes much activity undertaken by different actors at various levels in society, but many Cypriots still harbour misgivings about the negotiations and possible changes, and some try to undermine the peace process. After ratification through separate referendums and careful technical preparation, the new federation comes into being. Much attention is devoted to developing effective and legitimate public institutions at federal and constituent state level, incorporating mechanisms for constructive dispute resolution and coordination, and including participatory governance, human rights, and social cohesion. This results in a federation that is resilient and inclusive, and a Cypriot citizenry that is proud of its plurality of cultures and peoples and its European identity.

“The difference between hope and despair is a different way of telling a story from the same facts.”

— Alain de Botton

Comparison of the scenarios

The future may well include a combination of all four of these scenarios and of others. Nevertheless, to see and discuss these complex dynamics more clearly, we differentiate them into distinctly different scenarios. The following table compares key elements of the scenarios and demonstrates how they differ from one another.

SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	A scenario of stagnation and inaction	A scenario of divergence and opposition	A scenario of peace under pressure	A scenario of resilient peace
ESSENCE OF THE STORY	In the face of continuous failures of the peace process, divisions between the two main communities in Cyprus steadily deepen and solidify resulting in the north's gradually increasing dependence on and integration with Türkiye along with increased security concerns in the south and overall militarisation of the island.	Intent on breaking out of long-standing isolation, Turkish Cypriots no longer hold out for an agreed settlement of the Cyprus problem and actively pursue international engagement and recognition as an independent state, prompting strong resistance from Greek Cypriots and condemnation by international organisations.	Pressured by external forces and relying on international experts, a federation is established in Cyprus through a top-down process that fails to prepare communities for changes ahead, resulting in a dispensation that reinforces mistrust and ethnic divisions and has little capability to handle stress.	Taking charge of their own future through a participatory process, the two main communities on the island acknowledge their interdependence in an evolving context as well as the economic and social benefits of peace and become partners in a federation that is resilient and inclusive.
THE CYPRUS PROBLEM	Gradually deteriorates	Escalates rapidly	Gets settled on the surface	Gets transformed

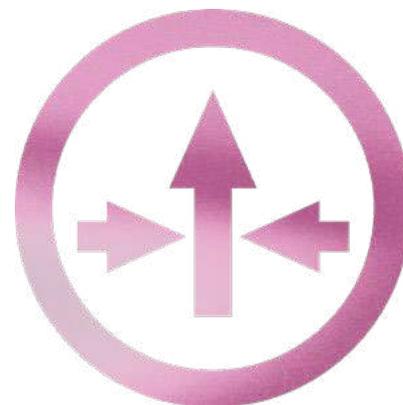
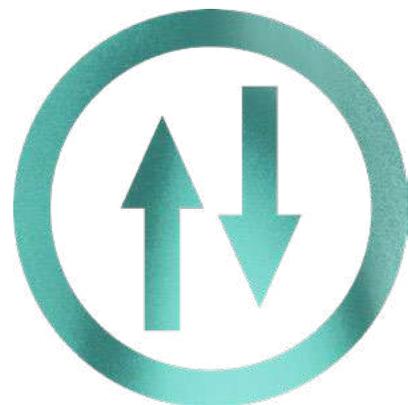
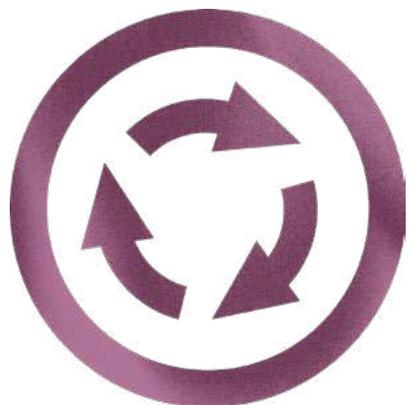
SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	A scenario of stagnation and inaction	A scenario of divergence and opposition	A scenario of peace under pressure	A scenario of resilient peace
MAIN LOCUS OF AGENCY	External	Internal with external support (notably from Türkiye for the north and EU for the south)	External and elite-driven	Internal and shared across many stakeholders, with external support for Cyprus as a whole
PEACE PROCESS	Elite-level negotiations resume with support from the UN but collapse within a few years, feeding further disappointment and recriminations between the two sides as well as deepening divides. The prospect of new talks lingers despite serious misgivings on both sides and little willingness to make it happen.	Negotiations do not get off the ground due to entrenched, divergent positions of and preconditions set by leadership of both sides, leading the UN to suspend its mission of good offices indefinitely with regret.	Elite-level negotiations focus on achieving a federal settlement, with little transparency and public participation, with strong pressure and guidance from international stakeholders and relying on a marketing-style communication campaign to ensure a 'yes' vote from Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots.	A multi-track, participatory peace process focuses on pursuing a 'resilient peace', which combines high-level talks between leaders with working groups, technical committees, and broad civil society engagement, driven from within and with support from UN and other international stakeholders.

SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	<p>A scenario of stagnation and inaction</p>	<p>A scenario of divergence and opposition</p>	<p>A scenario of peace under pressure</p>	<p>A scenario of resilient peace</p>
GOVERNANCE	<p>Separate governance systems with administration in the south formally representing Cyprus as a whole, but without control over the north where EU body of laws and regulations is suspended. Political affairs, governance and decision-making in the north is increasingly influenced by Türkiye, with Turkish Cypriots more and more reliant on Turkish funds for administration and public service delivery. The north ends up with a presidential system where the president governs by extensive executive power. Increasing discrepancy between north and south in terms of human rights, health, and environmental standards.</p>	<p>Separate governance systems, with Turkish Cypriot leadership actively seeking international engagement and recognition as an independent state, which results in its eventual recognition by a few other countries. In the south, democracy persists but concerns about corruption and accountability are easily dismissed with reference to the ongoing political crisis and upheaval related to the north.</p>	<p>A federation within the EU, with little effort devoted to building effective federal institutions as political elites focus on ensuring strong constituent states to protect their community's interests, leading to reduced legitimacy of and limited public faith in federal institutions and to people's loyalties being primarily directed to constituent states.</p>	<p>A federation within the EU, with effective and legitimate public institutions at federal and constituent state level, incorporating mechanisms for constructive dispute resolution and coordination, and including participatory governance, human rights, and social cohesion, facilitated by and resulting in increased trust and collaboration at different levels. Women and youth play an active role in governance and decision-making.</p>
APPROACH TO SECURITY CHALLENGES	<p>Security challenges are not resolved, leading to increased militarisation of the island. Greek Cypriots expand their professional army and replace Russia-branded weapons with US-made versions.</p>	<p>Both sides address security challenges by themselves. Greek Cypriots do so through integration in EU systems and Turkish Cypriots through connecting with Turkish-Eurasian actors. Increased tension in region and along buffer zone.</p>	<p>High-level compromise between the leadership, relating to number of troops, rate of troop withdrawal, and status and responsibilities of the three guarantor powers.</p>	<p>Sides prioritise community security and violence prevention through community police service and early warning/early response system, create a United Cyprus Army and work towards gradual demilitarisation of the island in terms of foreign troops.</p>

SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	A scenario of stagnation and inaction	A scenario of divergence and opposition	A scenario of peace under pressure	A scenario of resilient peace
ECONOMY AND BUSINESS, INCLUDING HYDRO-CARBONS	<p>Separate economies: economy in south embedded into EU single market (though its growth is limited by its small size), while economy in north is increasingly integrated in Türkiye's economy. Decreasing trade across Green Line. Military budget in the south increases. Cooperation on hydrocarbons does not materialise.</p>	<p>Separate economies: economy in south embedded into EU single market, while economy in north is affected by Greek Cypriot measures and by end to EU aid package. The northern economy becomes a low-regulated space that is oriented towards Türkiye and Eurasia. Benefits from foreign investment in the north are unevenly distributed. Competition over hydrocarbons as Greek Cypriots start extracting and exporting fossil fuels without involving the Turkish Cypriots.</p>	<p>Considerable economic gains are had, but there is an uneasy coexistence of uneven economies, partially mitigated through transitional measures which however drag on beyond set time frames. Constituent states adopt reforms and regulations to gain comparative advantage over one another, driven by competitive rather than cooperative motives. Cooperation on hydrocarbons is difficult.</p>	<p>Peace dividend resulting from new markets opening up, with attention for harmonisation and levelling up of the north. Steadily increasing bicomunal trade, helped by improved public transport system. Cyprus becomes a hub in Eastern Mediterranean for international companies. Cooperation on hydrocarbons, together with Türkiye, Greece and other regional partners, and emphasis on green transition.</p>
ENVIRONMENT INCL. CLIMATE CHANGE	<p>Some bicomunal action in case of crisis (e.g., wildfires) but little preparation for problems in the long term. EU environmental standards are only upheld in the south, resulting in limited protection of the environment in the north.</p>	<p>No bicomunal action on joint challenges (e.g., forest fires, water shortages); in the north, tourism, property development and other commercial activity can be pursued with few environmental regulations. EU environmental standards are only upheld in the south.</p>	<p>Bicomunal action in case of crisis (e.g., wildfires); preparation for other environmental challenges takes place but is affected by mistrust and uneasy relationships. EU environmental standards apply throughout Cyprus.</p>	<p>Bicomunal action through federal government, constituent states, and civil society with emphasis on island- wide solutions to environmental challenges and development of joint fire management strategy. EU environmental standards apply throughout Cyprus.</p>

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DESCRIPTION	<p>A scenario of stagnation and inaction</p>	<p>A scenario of divergence and opposition</p>	<p>A scenario of peace under pressure</p>	<p>A scenario of resilient peace</p>
YOUTH PROSPECTS	<p>Many young Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots continue to leave the island and do not return due to limited prospects. Turkish Cypriots who leave are driven by need for survival, while Greek Cypriots tend to leave driven by aspiration. Young men on both sides are conscripted into the army. Greek Cypriot youth face more labour market competition as Turkish Cypriots move south. There is a growing intergenerational divide as young people grow up without much attachment to their grandparents' home land.</p>	<p>Many young Turkish Cypriots who hold an EU passport move to other EU countries if they can afford it, and some move to the south, where they face discrimination. Young men on both sides are conscripted into the army. Some young people are politically active, but primarily in the form of protest.</p>	<p>Improved economic prospects for young people from all communities given economic growth and boost to various sectors. Young people are excluded from the peace process, and most are not politically active. They continue to face discrimination in relation to the 'other' community, and are at risk of violence.</p>	<p>Improved prospects for young people from all communities given economic growth and boost to various sectors. Students studying at universities in the north can take part in European exchange programs. Young people have opportunities to engage in the peace process, in politics, and in governance thereafter.</p>

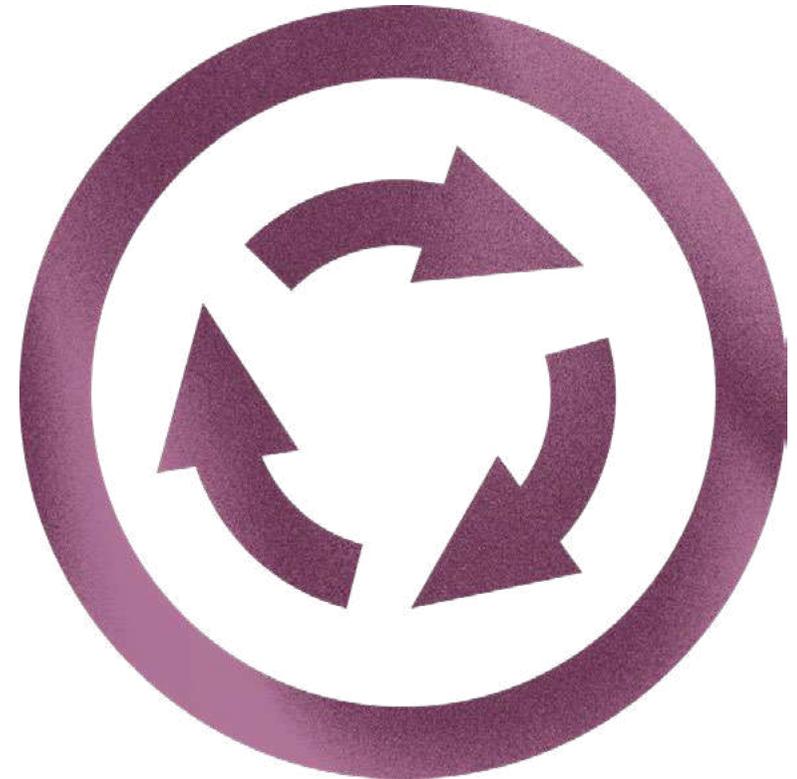
Scenarios



THE WORLD OF 'NO WAY'

A scenario of stagnation and inaction

In 2022, many Cypriots are sceptical that there will ever be a solution to the Cyprus problem. The failure of the 2004 referendum on the Annan plan and the 2017 collapse of negotiations at Crans Montana have generated a degree of fatigue and cynicism in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. Some accept the *de facto* division of the island with grudging resignation, while others struggle to sustain their families, and still others live with the continued trauma of dislocation. The status quo leaves Cypriots with two economic systems, two legal systems, two tax systems, and a continued distrust of their neighbours across the Green Line. Separate education systems have not prepared them for easy coexistence or collaboration, divided as they are by language, religion, and even clashing histories of their island. Yet the persistence of the Cyprus problem continues to divert attention and resources from other challenges, especially those that impinge on daily life, such as the energy crisis, limited access to free or affordable healthcare and education, climate change and pollution. While their leaders blame one another and external forces for the lack of progress in finding a solution, young people see a future characterised by dwindling opportunities.



Focusing on survival

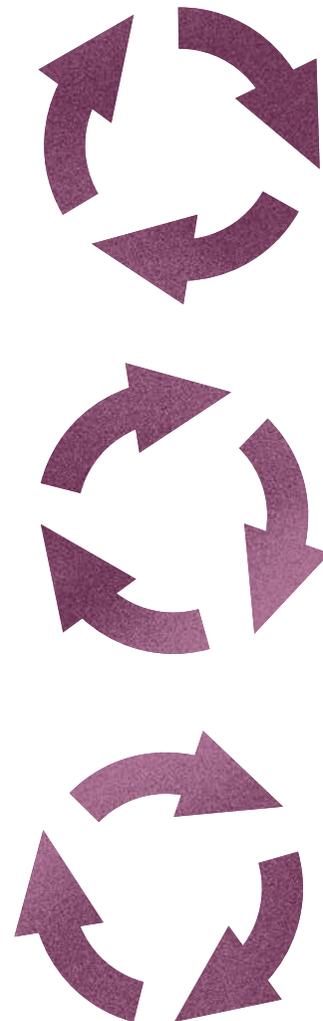
The elections that take place in 2023 in Cyprus and in Türkiye are seen by many on the island as business as usual. Feeling generally unable to influence what happens in Cyprus at the political level and increasingly worried about the economy, most people on both sides of the island choose to focus their attention on securing their own economic survival.

In the north, the global economic downturn is felt particularly keenly, as it is exacerbated by the fluctuations in the value of the Turkish lira. Rising unemployment combined with the influx of cheap imported labour leads to a decline in wages and purchasing power. Many professionals and young people from the north search for a way out via opportunities in the south, often accepting positions below their qualifications. Some Turkish Cypriots who can afford to do so migrate to other countries in the European Union (EU) for jobs, using their Republic of Cyprus (RoC) passports to establish residence in Germany, France, Spain and elsewhere. This route is however only available to those who have such passports, thanks to having parents who are both RoC citizens. The net result of these emigrations is a severe brain drain from the Turkish Cypriot community, which is of great concern to older Turkish Cypriots, many of whom have to sell inherited lands and properties in order to make ends meet or cover their children's education.

In the south, the economic slowdown and growing indifference about the Cyprus problem prompts many Greek Cypriots to look for cheaper goods and services in the north as they try to cope with rising inflation and cost of living while salaries remain the same. Many cross the Green Line to fill up their cars with cheaper petrol, buy medicine at lower prices, or to visit the dentist. Many also choose to have vacations in the north, as hotel prices are significantly lower, and they can no longer afford the prices in the south. Tensions arise in the Greek Cypriot community as some start to refer to those taking advantage of the cheaper conditions

in the north as 'traitors' for supporting the economy there while the economy in the south suffers as a result. Businesses in the south face bad publicity on social media if it becomes known that they conduct business in the north, since their activities are said to help the north financially develop. They lose customers as a result.

Meanwhile, migration into the south fuels social tensions and results in increased competition for jobs and affordable housing. Greek Cypriots compete with a growing number of Turkish Cypriots for a shrinking number of high-skilled jobs in a relatively small economy. In addition, more and more Europeans come to the south of Cyprus and compete in the open work market. Property prices and rents go up further, leading to complaints among Greek Cypriots that they are 'priced out of their own land.' Increasing numbers of people from outside of Europe try to enter via the north to seek asylum in the EU, saying they are fleeing war or persecution, including persecution due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The local authorities and population in the south seldom believe them and treat them as economic migrants exploiting EU asylum regulations. This generates tension between the local population and migrants.



Competing solution models

Against the backdrop of a stagnating peace process and previous failures to reach a settlement, inconclusive discussion takes place in the news and in political, civil society, and academic circles across Cyprus about different solution models. Some call for a federation, others for two states, and still others advocate for a unitary state solution. But there are not enough people on either side focusing on any single option to make it happen. The political fault lines between the adherents of the different solution models are deep, even within single communities. For example, Turkish Cypriots advocating for a federal solution face growing criticism for going against the two-state policy set by their leadership and Türkiye.

Where discussions do take place, active listening to other viewpoints is more the exception than the rule. Suspicions about hidden agendas are rife. The communities lack a common civic, media, or linguistic space where they can discuss issues. As a result, the lack of agreement about which solution to pursue, which has kept the Cyprus problem stuck for decades, continues. Civil society efforts in the south and north are ineffective, because they lack a clear strategy, funding, and a sustained program of action. Change is further impeded by those politicians, business leaders, private individuals, and other powerful interests who seek to maintain the status quo because they are benefiting from it in the form of wealth, status, or influence.

Glimmer of hope

By early 2024 the UN explores the prospect of restarting negotiations with the leadership of the two sides. Changing conditions in

the external environment seem conducive. The EU's need for energy security leads it to encourage the two communities and Türkiye to work towards a solution to secure the Eastern Mediterranean's hydrocarbon resources. Transporting gas from the region through Türkiye is financially most beneficial, and creating a 'web' that embeds Cyprus and Türkiye would reduce the risk of future unrest in the region and limit the influence of Russia and China there. The interests of the US are aligned with those of the EU in this regard.

Following its rejection of Russia's annexation of areas in Ukraine in 2022, Türkiye itself seeks to increase its cooperation with the West. Türkiye's government has observed other countries in the region strengthening their relationships and has taken note of the decision by the US to lift its arms embargo on the south. This has prompted Türkiye to warn of an arms race on the island, especially given the US call upon the Greek Cypriot leadership to replace the army's Russia-made weapons with the US versions. The country's government encourages the Turkish Cypriot leadership to be open to new talks in order to monitor the interactions between the US and the Greek Cypriot side. Meanwhile the Greek Cypriot leadership repeats its proposal to deposit the net revenue from commercial exploitation of hydrocarbons into an escrow account which will benefit both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Its European partners and the EU Commission support this course of action in the background.

Based on its consultations, the UN determines there are sufficient grounds for the peace process to restart, although significant substantive differences persist between the parties especially on the notion of 'equal partnership'. Both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots recognise that a settlement will facilitate natural gas exploitation and will help joint handling of challenges faced across the island, such as migration and climate change. The leaders manage to overcome prime obstacles regarding a declaration of equality and the type of state structure pursued in the talks. A constructively ambiguous formulation is found that allows both leaders to



claim to their respective constituencies that they won the argument on these issues. This allows talks to get underway.

Wait and see

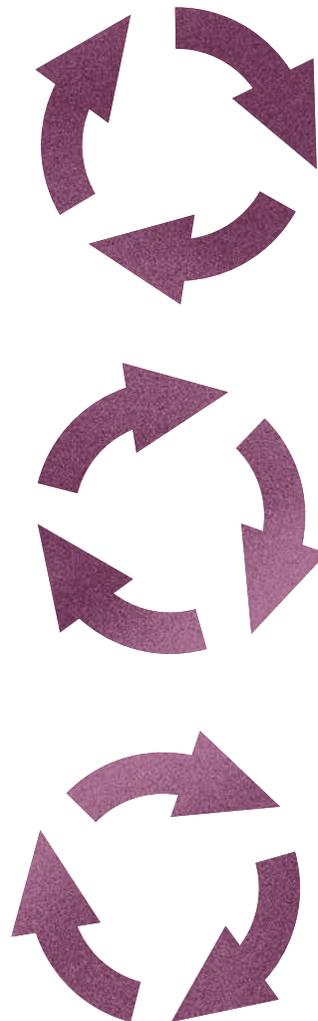
The wider Cypriot society is not involved in this new instalment of the peace process. Lingering disappointment in north and south from the Crans Montana failure leads people across the island to have little faith in the proceedings and in their leaders. A public survey finds that a majority of people across the island feel unable to influence decisions and processes that affect their lives. Social media trends suggest a growing detachment amongst the public with posts saying 'why do I care,' 'they do not listen to us anyway,' and 'the leaders do what they want, regardless of our concerns or preferences.' Generally, politicians make little effort to draw in the public. Some use nationalist or populist rhetoric to please their supporters, which increases suspicions on both sides about the proceedings and the potential solution.

A few groups across the island protest the politicians' lack of sincerity and the people's lack of agency, but their voices are not loud enough to mobilise the population at large or to put effective pressure on politicians on both sides. Most people adopt a 'wait and see' attitude. Opposition parties in each community do not actively campaign for or against the peace progress as scepticism prevails among them too. Leaks in mainstream media paint a picture of a troubled process bound to lead to a dysfunctional settlement. There is much cynicism about the process in public opinion on both sides.

In the absence of information about the contents or progress of the talks, public opinion does not evolve along with them. Anxieties surface as people try to fill the void, questioning whether anything is happening in the talks that they should be afraid of. Speculation

on social media about unpalatable compromises fuels suspicion. Conservative actors and federation-sceptical politicians on the Greek Cypriot side start to issue warnings and highlight risks, especially about sovereignty and the future security of Greek Cypriots, but offer little in the way of constructive suggestions. In the north, pundits warn against future domination by Greek Cypriots and raise worries that Turkish Cypriots will never be recognised as equal partners on the island, given Greek Cypriots' continued emphasis on being the majority community. They also warn against the dangers of going back to the times in the 1960's and early 1970's when Turkish Cypriots were struggling to sustain their lives on the island while living in enclaves.

Civil society organisations, seeking to counteract fears and the negative climate that is developing, struggle to mobilise public opinion in favour of the talks. Having no insider information themselves they cannot alleviate fears and stem rumours. 'Pro-peace' actors dismiss questions or concerns raised by members of the public or interest groups, labelling them as 'anti-solution.' Meanwhile, stories in the Greek Cypriot media cast doubt on the motives of non-governmental organisations supporting the peace process, raising questions about their source of funding and the purpose they serve. When news comes out that many receive funds from abroad, claims proliferate about them being tools to further foreign agendas. External actors such as the UK, the US, and small European countries indicate they support the peace process but do not want to interfere in internal affairs on the island. In diplomatic circles, some mention facing a dilemma: inaction fuels complaints that the international community is standing by and fails to appreciate the severity of the deteriorating mood, yet speaking up about it and funding initiatives to engage the public prompts charges of interference and hidden agendas.



Déjà vu

In 2026, after Cyprus' Presidency of the EU has come to an end, the talks culminate in two high-level conferences attended by foreign dignitaries. Cypriot civil society representatives are absent from the deliberations. Tensions and disagreements between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot teams are palpable at the events. There are rumours of one or the other side going back on issues on which the parties seemed to have converged earlier. Confidential polls conducted separately by the two sides show a high risk of a potential referendum failing.

The talks collapse.

Notwithstanding their earlier misgivings, many in the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities are deeply disappointed. Cynics in both communities point out that the result was predictable - a déjà vu, claiming the other leadership negotiated in bad faith. At both elite and grassroots level, people widely attribute blame for the failure of the talks to 'the other side'.

The activities of the bicomunal technical committees are placed on hold in the absence of communication between the two leaders. External observers suggest that the activities of most technical committees have been too limited and too little known for the public to appreciate how these bodies could serve to improve collaboration between the two communities. They also argue that the secrecy of the talks made it impossible for the public to gain insight into their leaders' behaviour and attitudes during the talks and hold them to account for choices made in the process.

A hardening climate

Each side tries to pick up the pieces and move on with their own separate agendas while positions harden and relationships sour. In the north, calls for a two-state solution intensify now that the latest attempt at overcoming differences has failed. Meanwhile, Greek Cypriots focus on their global integration through membership of the EU. Their leadership observes that a return to negotiations is unlikely without an a priori commitment to a federal solution. Members of the public express doubt if there ever will be fair ground for entering into genuine negotiations.

People withdraw into their respective communities. A rise in nationalist rhetoric on both sides leads to fewer people crossing the Green Line and a decrease in bicomunal trade. Greek Cypriot businesses must take great care that their products - or part thereof - do not indicate origins in the north. A large liquor company in the south is denounced on social media for its commercial activities in the north.

The Green Line regulations facilitating trade remain in place, but tradesmen speak of increasing obstruction by officials, which impedes business. The government in the south regularly adopts measures limiting movement and trade across the Green Line, which are only rescinded after protest from the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce and pressure by the UN and the EU. For example, it decides not to issue road tax certificates for company registered cars from the north to cross through the Green Line, but it must reverse the decision after two weeks. North-based businesses complain that Greek Cypriots want to block trade wherever Turkish Cypriots have a comparative advantage, but an international newspaper describes how obstruction negatively affects entrepreneurs on both sides. The resulting frustration and mutual reproaches discourage future collaboration.



A few violent incidents take place. Some Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot young men get into a fight at a nightclub in Nicosia. The police investigate and those involved get off lightly, but the public narratives that ensue in the north and the south about the event fuel division. A Greek Cypriot motorist taking advantage of lower prices in the north is harassed upon his return home. More efforts are made to stop people from crossing to fill their tanks. Foreign journalists point to a hardening climate resulting from the rise in nationalist discourse which impacts on interaction within and across communities. In their view, religion is also increasingly used on both sides as a tool for polarisation.

Education becomes more nationalistic. In the north, a process gets underway to change the history books. In the south, groups call for bringing Cyprus and Greek Cypriots closer to their Orthodox Christian roots, by returning to traditional values, adopting a less materialistic orientation, and incorporating more cultural and religious elements into the educational system. Efforts to restore cultural heritage across the island peter out. Churches, cemeteries and mosques previously restored through bicomunal efforts are locked up, and their condition soon starts to deteriorate.

Increasing adversity

By 2027, people across the island face increasing adversity. In the south, living conditions for the working class are difficult, due to rising rental prices, construction costs, fuel costs and food prices. In the north, the economy is shrinking and becoming more fragile, and more and more people struggle to cover the cost of water, electricity, and other fixed costs of living.

Water shortages in the south and power cuts in the north become more frequent. For Greek Cypriots, water supply depends increasingly on desalination and on imported water from Greece. Due to

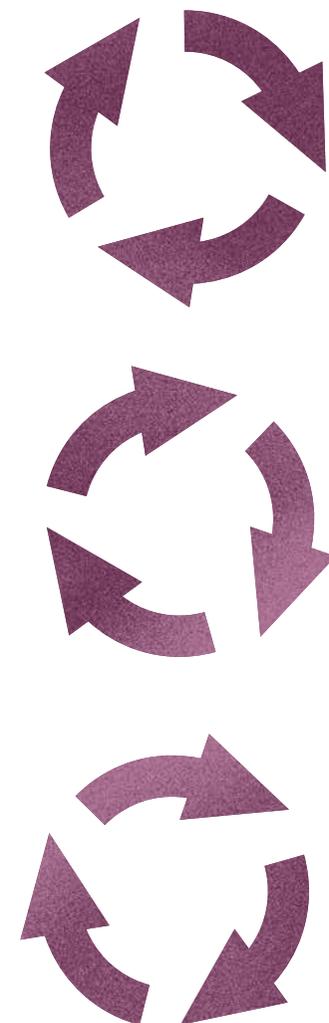
the deteriorating relationships across the island, electricity transfers from south to north - which happened in the past - no longer take place. Turkish Cypriots install solar systems if they can afford to do so, to cope with the rising price and unreliable service delivery.

An increasing number of small Turkish Cypriot businesses have to close down due to bankruptcy. The EU only provides assistance to initiatives that contribute to bicomunal cooperation, which are minimal. It reportedly considers closing its offices in the north, resorting to providing scholarships only. Turkish Cypriots overall increasingly rely on funds from Türkiye.

Slipping standards

The decline in scientific and environmental collaboration across the Green Line proves problematic in the face of threats affecting the entire island. Every year more forest fires take place. Large-scale ones make people across the Green Line rally together to handle the emergency. Such ad hoc efforts however do not translate into a sustained bicomunal program of action with measures for preventing or mitigating climate change and environmental protection. Moreover, when anopheles (malaria) mosquitoes multiply in Cyprus due to climate change, the bicomunal technical committee on health is activated but struggles to get a common eradication campaign (as occurred in 1949) quickly off the ground. Lives are lost, especially amongst children who are more prone to the adverse effects of the disease. This leads to further recriminations between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leadership proclaiming the other side's failure to take responsibility for alleviating the plight of ordinary Cypriots. In the south, some antimalarial drugs are available to provide to the community. Turkish Cypriots receive help from Türkiye.

Large building projects in the north, many of them undertaken by foreign businesses, urbanise previously agricultural and green ar-



eas and contribute to environmental degradation. The Pentadaktylos/Beşparmaklar mountain range is used as a series of stone quarries that operate continuously. The EU brings the importance of adherence to minimum standards regarding environment, health and safety to the attention of the Turkish Cypriot administration in informal bilateral meetings, but no action is taken in response. The high budget deficit in the north constrains the administration's ability to invest further in the implementation of policies relating to food safety, consumer protection, environmental protection, and private sector development. Meanwhile, disputed properties and land continue to be developed, and split ownership – often related to locations from which people were displaced in 1974 - complicates this already contested issue.

Critical voices in the north point to incompetent and dysfunctional public institutions, a lack of accountability, and increasing nepotism as contributing to their problems. Excessive construction activities are said to serve money-laundering purposes and destroy the north's natural resources. Turkish Cypriot newspapers regularly report on excessive staffing and poor financial standing of many municipalities, predicting that they will soon run out of funds to pay salaries or continue with normal government functions. Citing concerns about administration inefficiency, Türkiye indicates it will not bail out these local authorities without significant reforms being undertaken.

In 2028, the issue of hydrocarbon exploitation generates further disappointment. Some gas has been exported, but the further souring of relationships between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaderships after the failed talks, leads to the share of proceeds in the escrow account becoming a source of contention. Greek Cypriots unilaterally stop using the account and start using money from the hydrocarbon exploitation in another account directly controlled by the government. A new south-based organisation is tasked to use the funds for works that increasingly do not involve bicomunal progress. The Turkish Cypriot leadership and

Türkiye's government protest loudly. The EU expresses concern and stresses the importance of regional energy collaboration.

Seeking support

Turkish Cypriots increasingly look to Türkiye for support as they do not see any other option. The growing influence of the perceived 'mother country' is felt through the north's growing economic dependence and through Türkiye's day-to-day impact on decisions in the north. Türkiye's government has long appointed the Heads of the Central Bank, the Turkish Cypriot Military, and Civil Defence, but its influence is increasingly felt throughout all levels and institutions of the administration, reportedly to enhance efficiency and improve service-delivery. It also grants more funds to immigrant-led new civil society organisations to enable them to press for reforms in the direction of greater immigrant integration and naturalisation.

To overcome international flight restrictions, in early 2029 the Ercan airport in the north is designated as an internal Turkish airport allowing international flights to land. Türkiye (rather than the Turkish Cypriot administration) acts as co-signatory of agreements with air carriers in the north, lifting many technical obstacles that have long constrained international carriers from flying into that part of the island.

Responses to this change are mixed within the Turkish Cypriot community. Some groups and business interests are pleased with this pragmatic approach as they believe it will support the economy. Others object that it reflects an increased influence of Türkiye in the north, which undermines the autonomy of Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriot leadership criticises the move through diplomatic channels and protests in the International Civil Aviation Organisation, a UN body, and in the European Union Aviation Safety



Agency. Little action is however taken by the EU. Insiders say the body seeks to preserve relationships with Türkiye as it needs the country's assistance with stemming migration to the EU and enhancing its energy security.

Some Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots feel that the north is continuing to be more and more dependent on Türkiye, and gradually losing the more secular and pro-European Turkish Cypriot aspect of its identity. Politicians supporting close ties to Türkiye are routinely elected, raising concerns among Greek Cypriots and part of the Turkish Cypriot population. Few Greek Cypriots take notice that there are Turkish Cypriots protesting the status quo and experiencing a shrinking of civic space.

Meanwhile, demographic changes underway in the north due to migration are thought to cause shifts in the choices of the electorate there. The administration in the south increases crossing restrictions to stop migrants from entering via the north, which requires it to deploy more immigration and security personnel along the Green Line. An inadvertent side-effect is that smuggling immigrants to EU territory through the buffer zone from the north becomes more lucrative.

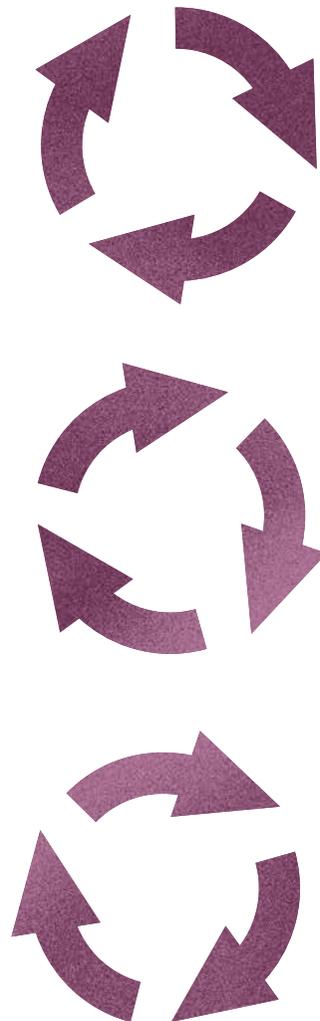
Growing integration

By 2030, Turkish Cypriots rely almost exclusively on funds coming in from Türkiye. The Turkish Cypriot leadership explores with Türkiye's government further economic integration, while critical voices in the north express concern about Turkish Cypriots losing control over the economy. Turkish companies start to build casinos and hotels in the ghost town of Varosha despite condemnations by the UN, the EU, the US, the UK, and Greece.

The more substantial presence of Türkiye on the island leads to rising security concerns amongst Greek Cypriots. These are ex-

acerbated when a military exercise by Cyprus, Israel, Greece, and the US in the Eastern Mediterranean leads to a tense stand-off with Turkish ships. The military budget in the south rises due to the growing threat perception, with US arms arriving to the south for the first time following an agreement to remove older Russian tanks. Further upgrading of military equipment by the Greek Cypriot side prompts Türkiye to protest on an UN and EU level, resulting in the relationship between Türkiye and the US becoming strained. At the same time, Greece complains to the same bodies that, "illegal overflights in the Greek airspace over habited islands" are becoming a daily occurrence, accusing Türkiye of "using these provocations to derail talks." When a journalist from a major newspaper in the north presses the Turkish Cypriot leader on whether he is concerned about developments in the south, he refers to the number of Türkiye's troops on the island and indicates that "the mainland is ready to do whatever is necessary" should the situation deteriorate.

The developments in the north lead some Turkish Cypriots holding RoC passports to move to other EU countries and to the south, claiming the rights of EU citizens there and claiming properties that once belonged to them. Their increased visibility in the south triggers a reaction from Greek Cypriots, who object to Turkish Cypriots who have lived in a "separatist entity" for so long, now seeking to benefit from services, institutions and other gains made in the south. At the same time, tensions in the north increase as people living there who do not have an EU passport resent those who do. Posts on social media complain of deteriorating conditions in terms of governance, growing constraints on democratic freedoms, and outside influence in local decision-making in the north. Greek Cypriot rights activists express concern about the growing discrepancy between north and south in terms of civil and human rights, gender equality, and environmental protection. While the south is subject to international monitoring of standards and has become more liberal in its stance and legislation on gender and rights of sexual minorities, the north has become increasingly conservative.



As tensions mount on the island, Turkish Cypriots complain that Greek Cypriot leaders continually feed a sense of grievance by maintaining a victim narrative and that they do not acknowledge their own shortcomings in preparing their people for peaceful co-existence. Greek Cypriots complain that Turkish Cypriots perceive themselves as passive victims without recognizing that their ongoing reliance on Türkiye and maximalist demands make coexistence near impossible. Despite these serious misgivings, neither side rules out a return to the negotiation table at some point in the future.

Solidifying division

By 2035, the island has become more militarised, as a matter of politics and increasingly also due to a fear of actual attack. The size of the Greek Cypriot professional army has increased. Call-ups for military reservists to participate in military exercises go up from once or twice a year to six to eight times per year. The increased presence of troops and weapons is potentially explosive in the absence of a settlement or any progress towards one.

The expressed fears of some Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots that Türkiye would fully ‘annex’ the north have not materialised. Analysts argue that going this route was never in the country’s interests. It would open Türkiye up to major international criticism and cause it to lose leverage in negotiations. Also, the country’s economy would not be able to cope with embargoes that would likely be put in place following such an annexation. A move to incorporate EU territory would certainly result in Türkiye’s expulsion from the Customs Union with the EU, causing its export sector to collapse. Some observers further note that most casinos in the north are owned by businessmen close to Türkiye’s political elite. They would probably object to a version of Türkiye’s laws being applied in the north as it would result in the casinos’ closure. Finally, many

point out that if Türkiye had intended to annex the north, it would have done so long ago.

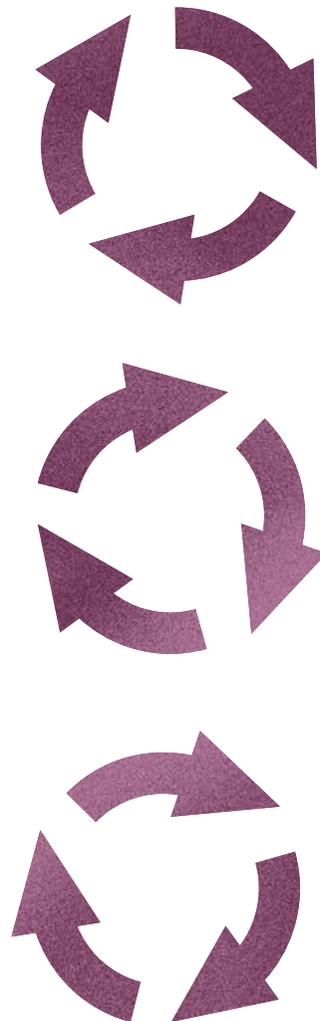
Meanwhile, interaction between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots is minimal, with almost no trade across the Green Line. Crossings do take place but are mostly devoid of meaningful social contact between members of the two communities. Greek Cypriots cross to the north to purchase goods, Turkish Cypriots cross to the south for work, and members of all communities cross to the other side to visit nature spots - but very few people cross to meet one another. Many tourists choose to bypass the south in favour of cheaper options in the north. Members of religious minorities with origins in the north cannot exercise their right of use and ownership of their property. Descendants of people displaced in 1974 mourn that their deceased parents were never able to return to their homelands. These descendants doubt that they will return to these sites themselves - but one never knows, given the fact that the prospect of new talks is mentioned from time to time. An international newspaper quotes a poet as saying “neither Turkish Cypriots nor Greek Cypriots wanted this - but together they created this.”

In the north, important changes take place as northern Cyprus becomes closer and closer to Türkiye. The governance system in northern Cyprus is changed to provide for a presidential system where the president governs by extensive executive power. The independence of the courts is in doubt, and restrictions on protests are justified with reference to a need to ‘maintain law and order in the face of interference by actors from the south.’ Political parties established by immigrants from Türkiye gain more influence in parliament in the north. Tensions increase between those who appreciate the opportunities presented by the closer ties with Türkiye and those who support a more autonomous Turkish Cypriot agency.



Economically, northern Cyprus has been integrated into Türkiye's economy, and functions as a low-regulated space for it. The solidifying separation between the north and the south means that over time, ever increasing numbers of young Cypriots from both north and south leave the island to seek their future elsewhere. While most Turkish Cypriots leave Cyprus driven by the need for survival, Greek Cypriots tend to leave because of aspiration, arguing that the economy and society in the south are not large enough to achieve great things. Academics point to a growing intergenerational divide as younger generations grow up without much attachment to their grandparents' homeland. This fuels indifference towards the divide on the island.

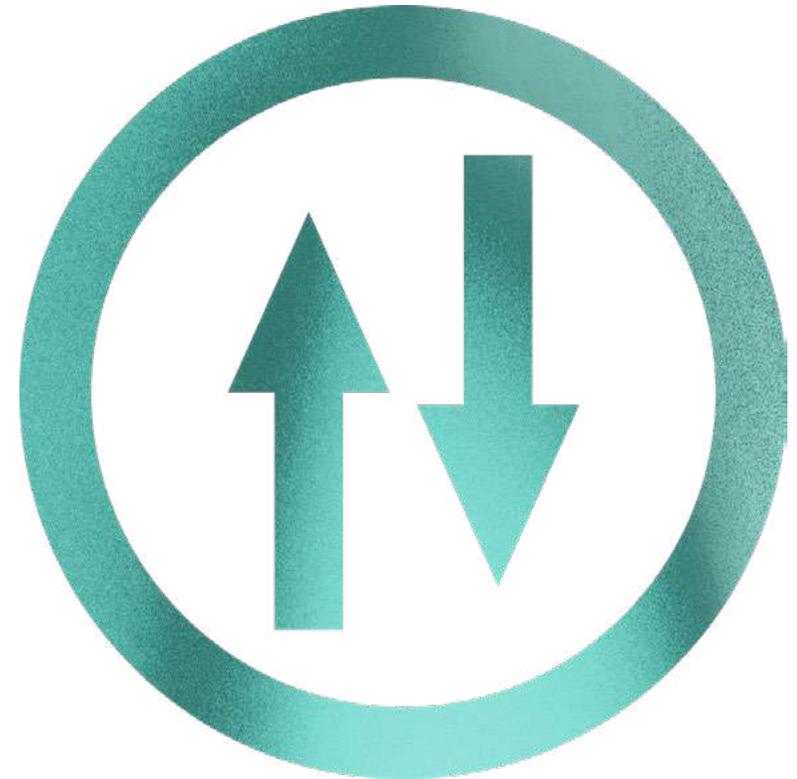
On social media, a post goes viral. It shows a graffiti'd wall in Nicosia with the words, "Cyprus: the island of dying dreams." ■



THE WORLD OF 'MY WAY'

A scenario of divergence and opposition

In 2022, Cyprus is divided, with a growing economic crisis in both north and south due to all-time high inflation and soaring energy prices. The impact is most seriously felt in the north, where the economic crisis is exacerbated by international isolation and limited production leading to increasing dependence on funds and other goods from Türkiye. While the economy in the south is affected by a decline in Russian investments, the economic impact is partially mitigated by investments from EU countries, Israel, and the USA. Education in the north and south hinders interaction between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots as separate curricula and story-telling highlight past crimes suffered at the hands of 'the other' while remaining silent on misdeeds committed by one's own side. Many Turkish flags fly in the north while Greek flags are numerous in the south, reflecting the ethnic affiliations of the two main communities. The external environment of Cyprus is changing as the role of international organisations is called into question and Russia and China form an alliance to counter the dominance of the West in global affairs, calling for multi-polarity. Meanwhile, the antagonism between Türkiye and Greece is at its most volatile since the mid-1990's.



No common ground

Following the 2023 elections in Cyprus and in Türkiye, representatives from the United Nations' 'good offices' of the Secretary General resume consultations with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leadership, shuttling back and forth between the parties to assess whether there is sufficient ground to resume negotiations on a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. These attempts soon demonstrate to the UN that there is no common ground.

The gap between the stated positions of the parties on substance is wide. Trust is low between the two leaders, both of whom are entrenched in their positions. The Turkish Cypriot leadership insists on a two-state solution while the Greek Cypriot leadership insists on a federal solution in line with previous UN Security Council resolutions. After repeated consultations, both sides continue to refuse to negotiate before the type of solution is agreed. Briefing the UN Security Council in mid-2024, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reports that "the combination of these factors, including the preconditions set, make efforts to establish common ground extremely difficult."

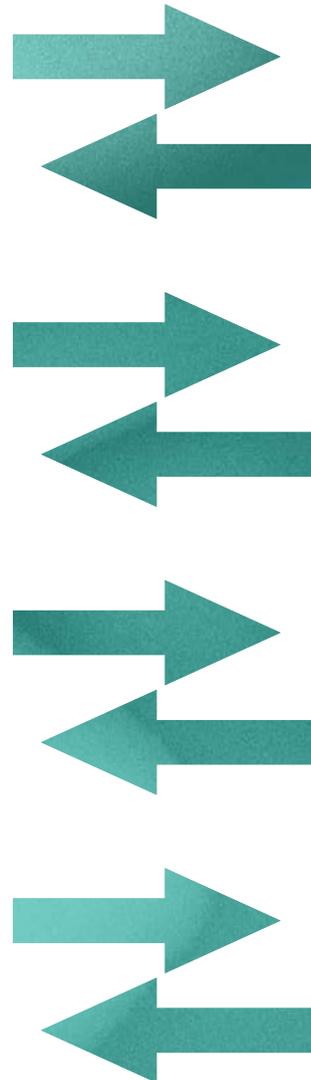
Faced with a seeming impossibility of advancing further negotiations after nearly sixty years of UN presence in Cyprus, the Secretary-General, upon consultation with the Security Council, decides to suspend his mission of good offices from Cyprus indefinitely. In his report to the Council, the Secretary-General indicates with great regret that he sees no alternative given the absence of any prospect of resuming formal negotiations and the parties' resistance to reconsider their stance. Taking note of the Secretary-General's decision, the Security Council expresses disappointment at the parties' unwillingness to engage with each other and settle their differences. The Office of the UN Special Adviser, mandated to support negotiations between the two sides, is disbanded as of January 1, 2025, leaving the peacekeeping mission UNFICYP

in place. The European Union expresses concern that a solution to the Cyprus problem seems further away than ever before.

Pursuing sovereignty

The Turkish Cypriot leadership sees the developments as an opportunity to exercise more strongly what it considers to be its sovereign agency and pursue true independence and international recognition of the north, beyond recognition by Türkiye. It expresses a desire to leave behind decades of failed negotiations and the prolonged state of limbo experienced by the Turkish Cypriot community. At international gatherings, the President of Türkiye also steps up his calls on other countries to recognise the north as an independent state to end the Turkish Cypriots' long-standing suffering.

Considering the prospect of a more permanent division of Cyprus, the EU issues a statement deploring the worsening relationships on the island and admonishing against recognition of the north. It calls upon the two parties to continue implementing the Green Line trade and to increase intercommunal contacts. The Greek Cypriot leadership and the government of Greece issue warnings that the Turkish Cypriot leadership's active pursuit of recognition of independent statehood will be subject to countermeasures and that any recognition by third parties of a secessionist Turkish Cypriot state will result in the severing of diplomatic and trade relations. They also implore the EU to stop providing financial support to the Turkish Cypriot community on the basis that the aim of the EU funds is to facilitate the reunification of Cyprus through the economic integration of the island, improving contacts between the two communities and the EU, and preparing harmonisation with the EU's bodies of law following a settlement.



In spite of these warnings, the Turkish Cypriot leadership, with support from Türkiye, continues to seek recognition as an independent state and to increase its informal engagement with the outside world. It emphasises to the international community that its stance is a consequence of repeated failed federation attempts from 1977 up until the near past, including the 2004 Annan plan and collapsed talks in Crans Montana in 2017. It also questions the legality of the government of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) being internationally perceived as representing the whole of Cyprus, on the grounds that a settlement is now no longer on the table and that the provisions of the RoC Constitution are not fulfilled. Behind the scenes, the EU tries to halt the Turkish Cypriot drive for recognition by offering more benefits to the de facto state if it refrains from seeking recognition. It frames this as part of its practice of 'engagement without recognition' and pushes for resumption of talks.

Unrest in north and south

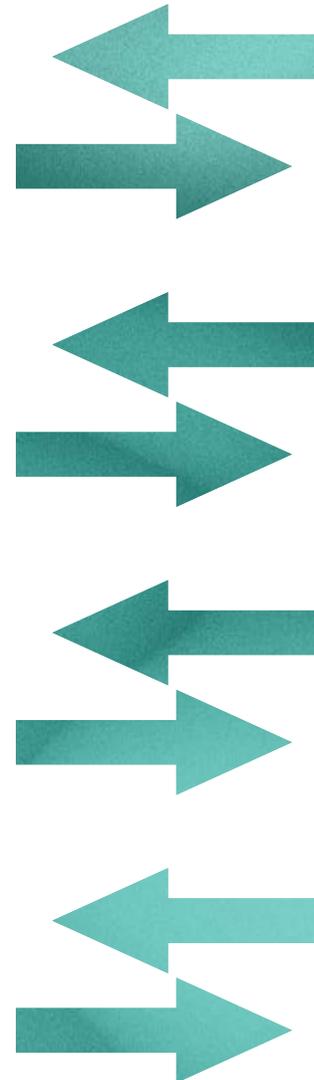
Tensions increase between Turkish Cypriots who support the active pursuit of international recognition and those who favour a compromise solution within the UN framework. Those in favour argue that anything is better than continuing to live in isolation and that Turkish Cypriots should no longer hold out for Greek Cypriots, the EU, the UN, or anyone else in 'the international community' to come to their aid. Members of the political and economic elite point out that, with the rise of China and the emergence of new geopolitical and interest-based alliances, the world has become multipolar, and the power of Western nations and traditional multilateralism is waning. They argue that more engagement with non-Western countries will benefit the Turkish Cypriot community as a whole, even if they have to face the world without being part of the EU. In their view, this will enable Turkish Cypriots to live better with non-recognition and to pursue new forms of partnerships, especially in the East.

On the other hand, those who prefer a compromise solution based on UN parameters are concerned about deteriorating relationships and the risks of a policy that places Turkish Cypriots outside the EU, the international community and international law. In their view, such a policy would deepen their isolation from the world and reduce the possibility of concluding a settlement to achieve a peaceful environment on the island. They emphasise the importance of holding on to the prospect of a federation and a pro-EU stance given the associated benefits.

Demonstrations and condemnations by people and organisations in favour of a federal settlement, including left-wing political parties, trade unions and civil society, manifest the divisions among the population in the north. Even so, many Turkish Cypriots at the grassroots level are reluctant to criticise the active pursuit of international recognition or to be perceived to go against Türkiye (their community's sole foreign support), not wanting to jeopardise their economic and social well-being. In the legislature of the north, left-wing and right-wing parties clash repeatedly while debating how best to secure the Turkish Cypriot community's survival, sovereignty, identity, and prosperity in conditions that are not of its own making. Even those critical of the leadership's policy recognise that Turkish Cypriots are fed up with living in an isolated enclave and that something needs to change.

Those Turkish Cypriots who are concerned about the deteriorating economic conditions in the north and who struggle to make a living look for ways to move to other EU countries or to the south. This path is available only to EU passport holders, excluding Cyprus-born children from mixed Turkish Cypriot/Turkish parents, or from two Turkish parents. Such migration reduces the number of Turkish Cypriots in the north.

In the south, many Greek Cypriots express disappointment and anxiety about the new reality with no prospect of talks or unification. They demand that their government push for a reversal of the



stance of the Turkish Cypriot leadership and Türkiye. Students and some nationalist pressure groups demonstrate in the streets. The issue dominates political discussions in all mainstream and social media for months, with recurring debates around what would constitute an adequate response in case of recognition of the north by a third party.

The Greek Cypriot leadership urges its foreign supporters and the international community at large to influence, condemn, and warn the Turkish Cypriot administration and Türkiye. These diplomatic moves do not succeed in reversing the official policy of Turkish Cypriots and Türkiye of pursuing international recognition. On the contrary, the administration in the north announces an increase in foreign investments. Meanwhile, a few critical voices in the south note that the political upheaval helps the government to distract citizens from other issues, such as corruption, nepotism, and the economic crisis. According to a survey in the south, many Greek Cypriots are disillusioned with politics and an increasing number endorse a two-state solution. Yet few are willing to go on record in this regard, citing fear of repercussions should their views become known. Some observers criticise the Greek Cypriot leaders, saying that this situation would not have arisen had they been less intransigent at Crans Montana.

Raising the stakes

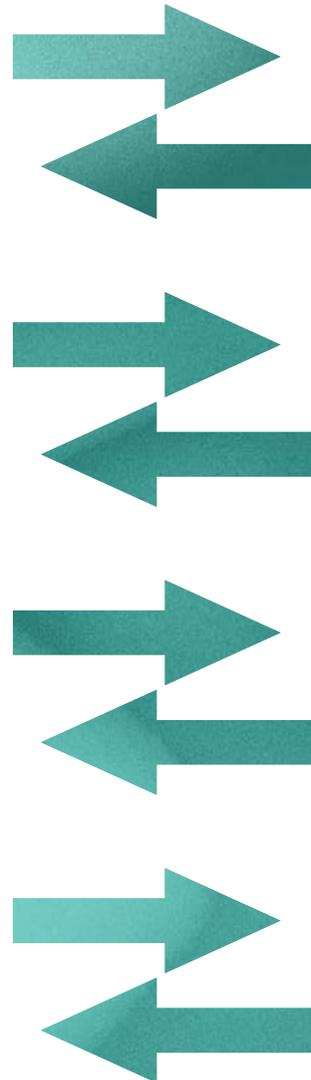
In mid-2025, the Turkish Cypriot leadership ignores Security Council Resolutions and statements emphasising that unilateral action towards settlement of Varosha is inadmissible, and opens Varosha further under its control. The UN and the EU both issue stern rebukes and urge de-escalation, but the Turkish Cypriots don't back down, and the Greek Cypriots demand that the UN Security Council condemn the Varosha opening as 'illegal' and a 'flagrant viola-

tion of UN Resolutions.' Division amongst the Council's permanent members prevents any response.

While a group of former Greek Cypriot residents demonstrate at a checkpoint, the administration in the north launches a 'master plan for rebuilding Varosha.' It reiterates its invitation to Greek Cypriots to apply to the Immoveable Property Commission (IPC) for return to the city under the Turkish Cypriot administration or to apply for compensation or exchange of their properties. It emphasises that it has made the IPC more effective in handling claims and also announces the return of previously militarised Maronite villages in the north. Pointing to these actions, Turkish Cypriot leaders claim that it is doing things 'by the book' when it comes to return of properties since rightful owners can return to their homes if they want to. Critical observers note that few rightful owners will want to return under circumstances that imply paying taxes and engaging with the authorities in the north and anticipate that most will end up selling to international buyers. They also point out that giving back Maronite properties is cheaper than paying heavy monetary compensation to those who lived there before 1974.

The opening of Varosha creates tension within the Greek Cypriot community. Many long to go back to Varosha and to other places in the north from which they were displaced in 1974, but doing so is perceived as bestowing recognition on an illegal entity. Some also doubt that the IPC has the necessary funds for restitution or compensation. The administration in the south reverses its previously neutral stance on Greek Cypriots turning to the IPC in the north and takes measures to avoid mass applications. For example persons living in refugee housing blocks in the south are denied entry at checkpoints.

Even so, a gradually growing number of Greek Cypriots move to Varosha, seeking to escape economic hardship and seeing this as the only way remaining for them to return to their homes. The Turkish Cypriot leadership seizes the opportunity to declare that Varo-



sha is 'partially returned to pre-1974 owners.' Other Greek Cypriots intensify their efforts to reclaim their properties using legal actions and other strategies. People claiming compensation express resentment at the limited amounts of money awarded by the IPC and blame Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot leadership for 'trying to get their property for almost nothing.' The IPC in turn argues that the compensation offered is consistent with current market values in the north, which are depressed due to the economic climate and the isolation that has been imposed on the north for several decades. A few Greek Cypriot owners explore going to the European Court of Human Rights when dissatisfied with the value set by the IPC. They are soon disappointed to find out that this will take a long time since the ECHR recognises the IPC as offering an effective domestic remedy that must first run its course.

Countermoves

The EU presidency in the first half of 2026 provides a platform for the Greek Cypriot leadership to highlight the need to safeguard the stability and security of the EU, drawing attention to increasing tensions in Cyprus. Some Greek Cypriots urge the leadership to take advantage of the presidency to be more outspoken on the Cyprus problem and press for additional measures against the north. But insiders argue that the government cannot do so: countries holding the EU presidency are expected to refrain from using it to promote their national self-interest. After the presidency, the EU stresses that safeguarding the territorial integrity of Cyprus as a member state is of vital importance to stability in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean region. It also reiterates its warning against recognition of the north. Many Greek Cypriots express disappointment that the EU does not react more forcefully.

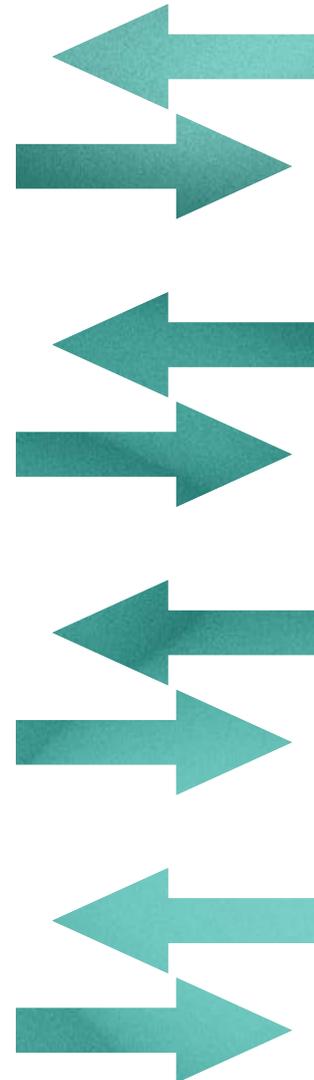
In late 2026, the Greek Cypriots with Greek support begin to extract and export the hydrocarbons discovered in its exclusive

economic zone. In response, Türkiye warns the oil platform that is extracting gas for the Greek Cypriot side by sending ships, arguing that it must defend Turkish Cypriots' claims to offshore energy reserves. Türkiye and Greece step up their mutual accusations about maritime boundaries, delineation of continental shelves, and the situation in Cyprus. Claiming that the US seeks to convert the southern part of Cyprus into a military base through supply of arms and training of Greek Cypriot soldiers, the Turkish Cypriot leadership announces its intention to form a closer alliance with countries in the east. NATO sends representatives to Ankara and Athens in an effort to de-escalate tensions and stave off a military confrontation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The bicomunal technical committees such as those dealing with missing persons and cultural heritage stop functioning. In protest, the EU cuts financial aid for these bodies. The Turkish Cypriot leadership questions the ongoing presence of the UN peacekeeping troops on the island, claiming that they have only served to maintain the status quo to the detriment of Turkish Cypriots. Backed by Türkiye, it argues that 'so-called global governance' through the UN has long been problematic as the Security Council has failed to represent the interests of large parts of the world and is part of a system designed for those who have power, to retain power.

Recognition

In early 2027, a few countries aligned with Türkiye officially recognise the north on the grounds that 'continued isolation is unsustainable and illegitimate' and that 'the north should no longer be held captive by international institutions' inability and Greek Cypriots' unwillingness to resolve the situation.' The EU Commission and the UN Secretary-General denounce such recognition as incompatible with Security Council Resolutions. Analysts say that the UN can do little more as the Security Council serves as a geopolitical bat-



tleground between Western powers on one side and Russia and China on the other.

Fierce resistance

The recognition produces a strong reaction, with the government in the south and Greece opposing not only the Turkish Cypriot pursuit of recognised statehood but also the states that approve it. While downplaying the significance of such recognition, Greek Cypriots work behind the scenes in the EU to ensure that the countries that have recognised the north incur repercussions. This results in the EU imposing sanctions on these countries, so they are limited in their ability to trade with the EU or to receive EU funds. Greek Cypriots also lead efforts within the EU to strengthen bilateral relations with Islamic countries, specifically with the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, raising the opportunity cost for any of these countries to follow Türkiye's requests to recognize the north. Together with Greece, Cyprus votes against the EU's annual financial aid package to the Turkish Cypriot community, leading to a suspension of the aid programme.

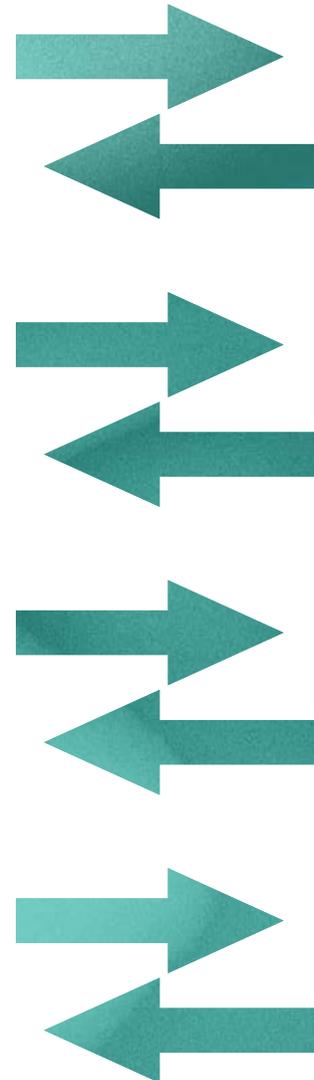
Many Greek Cypriots take to the streets to protest against recognition of the north, leading to large-scale demonstrations. The press reports on scuffles at the Green Line. The Greek Cypriots declare that the authorities will apply all possible measures to reverse the recognition, and invite the Turkish Cypriots to return to negotiations. Citing the ongoing process to become part of the Schengen Zone, the authorities apply strict measures to the crossing of people at the checkpoints on grounds of security and the need to counter money-laundering and limit migration. Passports or ID cards are meticulously checked for people crossing into or returning from the north. Turkish Cypriots without RoC passports and non-EU spouses of Cypriot passport holders are prohibited from entering the south.

Non-EU tourists are also not permitted to travel via the south into the north; if indicating an intention to travel north upon their arrival, they are stopped at the airport. Regulations in this regard are strictly applied.

Affecting the economy

The Greek Cypriots also take measures that affect the economy in the north. It questions the status of hellim/halloumi and sponsors the participation of established Greek Cypriot halloumi producers at trade exhibitions usually attended by Turkish Cypriot producers. It intensifies its checks of goods bought from the north and increasingly confiscates such goods on grounds of violating the Green Line regulation. The Green Line regulation is applied very strictly, which negatively affects small enterprises in the north since their daily trade with the Greek Cypriot side dwindles to a halt. The Greek Cypriot leadership seeks amendments for further restrictions of the regulation. Meanwhile, many in the south demand that the government limit trade across the Green Line and stop Greek Cypriots from going to the north to fill their gas tanks with cheaper petrol.

Two small political parties in the south call upon the government to revoke passports of Turkish Cypriots, but lawyers argue that it cannot do so since Turkish Cypriots with origins in the 1960 Republic of Cyprus are by default citizens of the Republic; international human rights standards and EU norms apply. Newspapers in the north report on Turkish Cypriots finding it nearly impossible to renew their passports and ID cards. The coverage speaks of people having trouble crossing the border to apply for renewal, incurring seemingly endless delays and being told that their papers are incomplete or missing. The EU expresses concern and calls upon the authorities to respect citizens' rights, irrespective of their communal origins or political ideology.



No solution in sight

As a result of the various measures taken by the Greek Cypriot side, traffic, trade, and tourism across the Green Line shrink to a minimum. Meanwhile, foreigners continue to buy properties in the north as large Turkish firms benefit from the lucrative construction business. With no solution to the Cyprus problem in sight, more affected properties in the north are used for construction, making any future restitution harder and any future settlement less and less likely. In response to the building boom, the Greek Cypriot leadership announces it will institute legal action against foreigners occupying Greek Cypriot properties and bring cases against them in their countries of origin. The Turkish Cypriot leadership declares that it will pursue dispute resolution for the monetary losses incurred by Turkish Cypriots since 1963.

By late 2028, online and offline discussions in the north show that many Turkish Cypriots acknowledge that the pursuit of recognised independent statehood has not really mitigated or lifted their exclusion from established international forums for trade, financial investment, and cultural, sports, and political exchange. Part of the population thus continues to oppose this pursuit, noting that the strong resistance by Greek Cypriots and the EU against the recognition project make it untenable. However, the dominant political elite and its business associates point to an increase in foreign investment from actors wishing to benefit from the low cost of investment and limited regulation in the north. They note that such foreign investment creates new job opportunities and that high numbers of properties are sold every week. They also observe that even a modest increase in exports to the countries that have recognised the north makes a big difference to the Turkish Cypriot economy given its small size.

Opposition politicians in the north object that such economic activity in a low-regulated environment subject to embargoes only

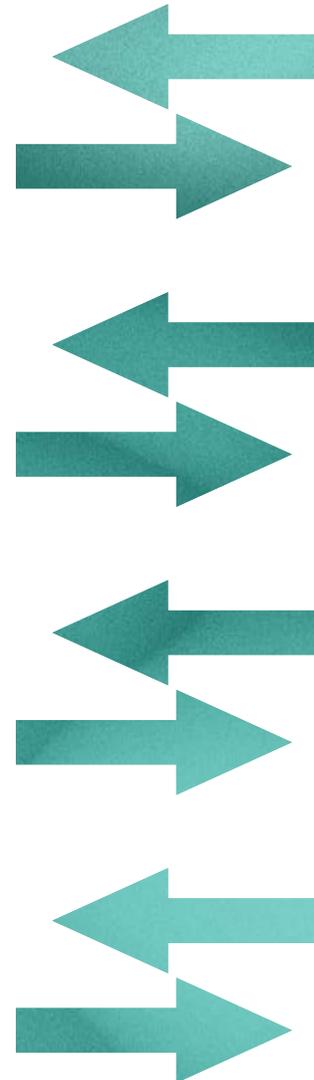
benefits a small group of well-connected individuals rather than Turkish Cypriot society as a whole. They also argue that governance has deteriorated, with insufficient attention for service delivery and infrastructure. Local activists express concern about the environmental impact of the booming construction sector.

Regional tensions

Military tensions on and around the island increase, prompting concern among people in both parts of Cyprus and leading to increased military spending in the south and north. Together with Greece, the Greek Cypriots lobby actively against issues of interest to Türkiye in international fora. They also pressure the EU to impose sanctions against Türkiye, and call on the US, the UK and NATO to intervene. They warn that 'actions undertaken or encouraged by Türkiye' risk destabilising a strategically important region.

The already tense relationship between Greece and Türkiye further deteriorates, resulting in growing divisions within NATO. Türkiye's relations with the EU are increasingly strained too, as the EU considers sanctions against the country. Tensions in the Aegean Sea increase related to overflights and harassments of jets; the countries' disputed claims at sea and rows over airspace limits intensify as does militarisation of the Greek islands. Military exercises by NATO in the region - which previously took place despite the two countries' long-standing disputes - are postponed several times.

Meanwhile, both the Greek Cypriots and Türkiye extract hydrocarbons from the Eastern Mediterranean without any agreement about overlapping claims on the sea, creating tension in the whole region, including with Greece, Israel, Libya, and Egypt. Observers express concern about the potentially explosive situation given the mosaic of competing claims in the Eastern Mediterranean.



Pulling away

Relationships between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots rapidly deteriorate on and off the island. The Guardian and The New York Times report on skirmishes between members of the two communities in the diaspora. Occasionally Greek Cypriots living or studying abroad stage demonstrations against Türkiye in the UK, the US, Australia and European countries. The Home for Cooperation in the Buffer Zone, where many bicomunal activities used to take place, is made dormant, as it has become too difficult to access. Civil society and business cooperation shuts down. Interaction between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots is increasingly viewed with suspicion in both communities. Some religious sites, previously restored as part of bicomunal cultural heritage efforts, are now used for other purposes. People across the island attach less importance to cultural heritage that cuts across the different communities in Cyprus. New mosques and churches are constructed that imitate architectural designs in Türkiye and Greece respectively. Educational materials become more nationalistic, fuelling prejudice about 'the other side.'

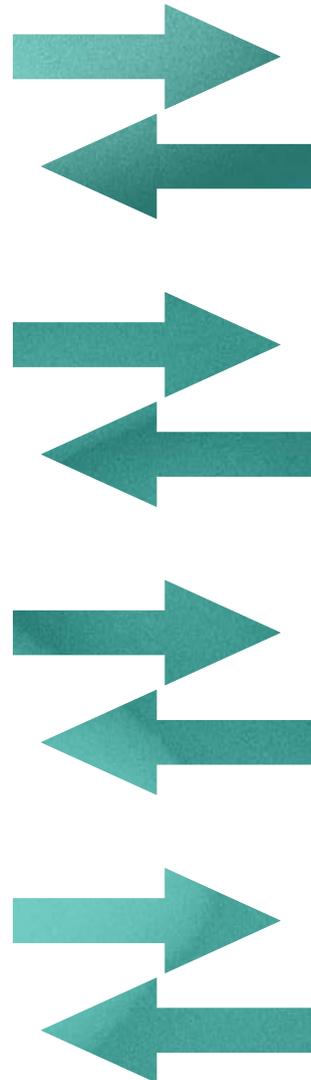
UNFICYP continues to supervise the ceasefire lines and maintain the buffer zone between the military forces in the north and the military forces in the south. While many in Cyprus argue that UNFICYP's role is more vital than ever, the United States advocates in the UN Security Council for ceasing its operations given the absence of any prospect for a settlement and the mission's long-standing strain on the UN budget. Tension along the buffer zone increases further, aggravating security concerns. In 2030, the bicomunal sewerage system, which was already in place before the checkpoints opened in 2003, still operates but maintenance is under increasing pressure. Its functioning is framed as a humanitarian concern.

The population of north Cyprus grows steadily through immigration and reaches one million by 2035. This, combined with ongoing emigration of Turkish Cypriots, has changed the composition of the electorate: the number of Turkish Cypriot voters has drastically reduced. Immigration from other third countries has also grown, evidenced by the rising number of African students. Refugee and illegal migrant crossings into the south have decreased due to the tight border measures.

Advertisements on social media promote northern Cyprus as an idyllic destination for tourists. Despite its contested status, its natural beauty and low prices attract many tourists from Europe and other countries. Many Greek Cypriots express hurt at seeing ads featuring 'their motherland as a Turkish state, without prospects of finding a solution,' as one major Greek Cypriot newspaper puts it. They also express concern that the low prices in the north are adversely affecting income from tourism in the south.

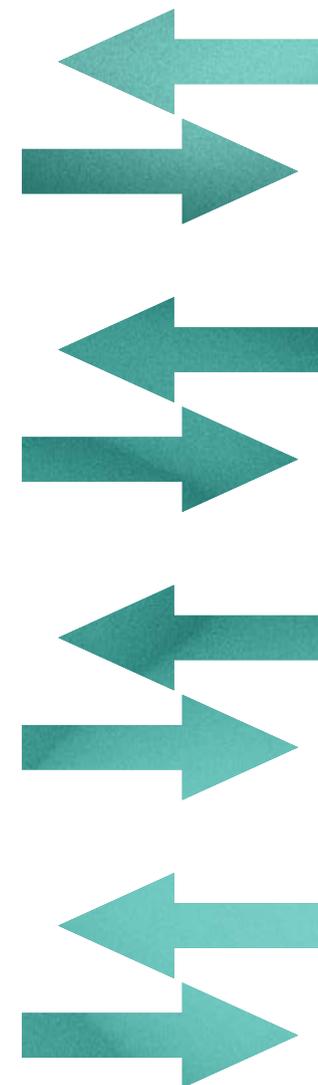
Over time, political changes in the north are accompanied by changes to the Turkish Cypriot economy. Cut off from the south, it focuses on alternative means of increasing economic activity. Savvy entrepreneurs - of Turkish Cypriot and foreign origin - have found that operating outside the realm of recognised sovereign states yet still close to Europe, brings opportunities for avoiding international legislation, for example around gambling, financial transparency, and environmental restrictions. The north has thus become a low-regulated space where tourism, property development and other commercial activity can be pursued with few environmental, health, and safety considerations. Meanwhile, the EU is rumoured to be reconsidering the status of the north as part of EU territory.

Some Turkish Cypriots feel that the increase in foreign investments helps the economy and employment grow. They observe that the



tourism, higher education, and construction sectors have remained strong. Others object that many Turkish Cypriots do not benefit from the economic growth. They argue that the emphasis on international engagement and making money has worsened social and economic inequalities, allowed various forms of corruption to go unabated, and negatively affected the environment.

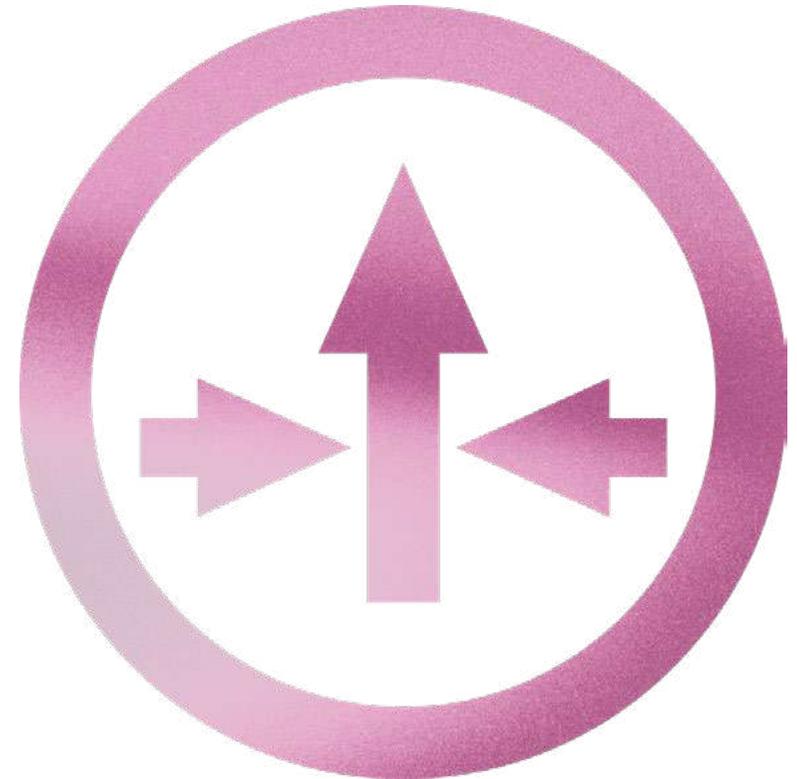
On social media, a post goes viral. It features a graffiti'd wall in Nicosia with the words, "Cyprus: the island where dreams battle to survive." ■



THE WORLD OF 'THEIR WAY'

A scenario of peace under pressure

In 2022, the Cyprus problem continues to loom large while peace process fatigue is prevalent among the population on the island. Many displaced people die every year without having received reinstatement or compensation for the properties they lost. Socially, divisions between the two main communities run deep, bolstered by years of little interaction, ongoing nationalist rhetoric, and entrenched fears and prejudices. Economically, the potential of Cyprus is constrained by factors such as a lack of competitiveness, unpredictable and high energy costs, and poor public transport - all constraints that are amplified by the division of the island. Since 2018, however, bicomunal trade across the Green Line has steadily increased, and business interests in both parts of the island continue to look for opportunities to expand. A growing number of Turkish Cypriots work in the south, while more Greek Cypriots are crossing the buffer zone to take advantage of the lower prices in the north, visit the area or homes from which their families were displaced in 1974, or to go to bars or casinos. The President of the European Commission has hailed the potential of the energy sector to bring Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots closer together.



Pressure for change

In early 2023, there is growing pressure for change from the external environment. Unrest is brewing in many EU countries as record energy bills and high inflation force a growing number of people to make a painful choice between heating and eating. Faced with a consistent push from member states for a solution to mitigate the crisis, the European Commission intensifies its efforts to develop an energy arrangement involving regional actors in the Eastern Mediterranean. The sizable natural gas reserves off the coasts of Cyprus, Egypt and Israel make such an arrangement a vital part of the EU's strategy to diversify its supply of natural gas and meet its commitment to become fully independent of Russian fossil fuels. Unlocking the full potential of the offshore gas wealth, however, depends on mitigating the geopolitical tensions that have thus far held back developments towards energy cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Against this background, the EU and the US make clear to the relevant stakeholders in the region that they consider Türkiye a necessary partner in any energy arrangement. They encourage the country to join the regional energy development efforts and urge the Greek Cypriot leadership to support this move. Egypt and Israel, partners of Cyprus in the recently formed Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), are increasingly willing to mend fences with Türkiye since a pipeline via that country is the most logical and financially viable route to export gas to Europe. This pipeline would, however, have to run through Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ) - which is contested by Türkiye. The shift in Israel and Egypt's stance on Türkiye, combined with consistent urging by the EU and the US, increases pressure on the Greek Cypriots to shift their stance as well.

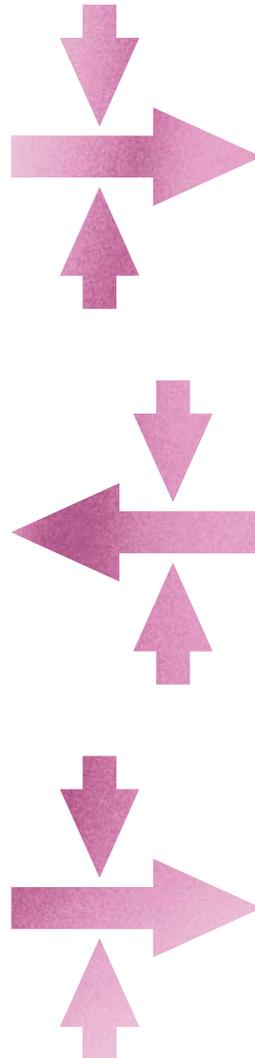
Türkiye seizes the opportunity to enhance its relationships with the EU and the US and bolster its economy at the same time. It signals its willingness to find a way to engage with the Greek Cy-

priot leadership informally in order to meet gas demands and also makes clear that it won't stand in the way of enhanced EU/NATO cooperation given the serious security concerns prompted by the war in Ukraine. The EU and the UN simultaneously encourage the Turkish Cypriot leadership and the Greek Cypriot leadership to resume negotiations. Türkiye's government also agrees with the Turkish Cypriot leadership that the latter will soften its stance on a two-state solution and find a formula allowing it to return to time-bound negotiations along the federal lines discussed earlier.

The external pressures for change are complemented by ardent lobbying by business interests on both sides of the island. Business groups argue that a settlement would open up large new markets for businesses from both communities, and would facilitate much faster and more lucrative exploitation of natural gas. The Turkish Cypriot leadership and that of the Greek Cypriots thus experience a steady and insistent pressure towards making a new substantive effort to resolve the Cyprus problem. In consultations with the UN, both sides indicate a willingness to engage to this end.

Leadership negotiations

In early 2024, following elections in Cyprus and Türkiye the previous year, the UN convenes high-level negotiations involving the leadership of both communities in an effort to build on what was agreed in the last round of talks at Crans Montana. Expressing its support, the EU declares it is hopeful that the parties will manage to overcome their differences by constructive dialogue, which will improve the life of Cypriots and set an example for others. In private meetings, it reasserts the importance of the parties' arriving at an agreement so as to facilitate energy and security cooperation in the region, highlighting the contribution this will make to stability and prosperity in the whole of Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.



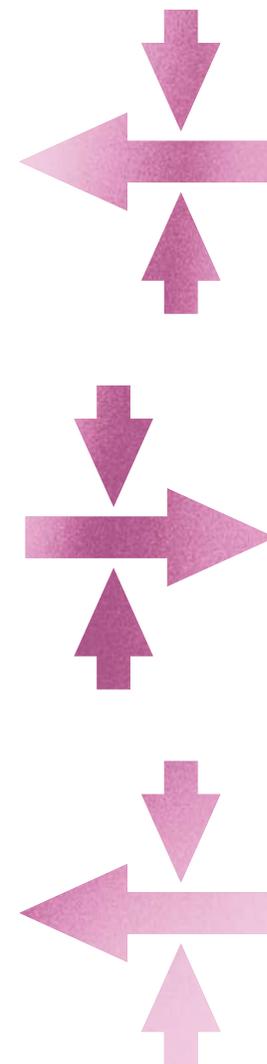
As with previous peace negotiations in Cyprus, the talks take place between the leaders and senior officials from both sides with little transparency or participation of civil society and bound by the principle ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’. The UN, with the leaders’ consent, draws up a shortlist of issues that still require negotiations, drawing on an initial screening of prior convergences and divergences up to the Crans Montana talks. The UN, the US, and the EU formally encourage the leaders to keep the public informed, but privately note that they cannot force them to do so and practically provide little assistance to facilitate civil society engagement. The talks concentrate on political issues such as power sharing, territorial adjustment, security, and property. The agenda does not cover what some refer to as ‘soft issues’ like relationship-building, social cohesion, and dealing with the legacy of past violence. These are considered less pressing and important for making peace as they do not relate to high-level constitutional matters. In addition, education and other issues agreed to fall within the competency of the constituent states are considered beyond the scope of the peace talks.

The leaders of political parties are kept somewhat informed of developments through the respective coordination mechanisms that exist on both sides. However, non-governmental organisations and other groups that have worked for years on specific aspects of a federal solution are not invited into the process. Civil society activists and academics lament in the press that the international actors supporting the negotiations place more emphasis on the parties getting to an agreement than on how they get there. They express concern about the top-down ‘business-as-usual’ approach and what that will mean for what happens thereafter: Will people be prepared for a settlement and the compromises it may contain? Will they ratify the outcomes of closed-door negotiations? Will they be able and willing to put their faith in new institutions resulting from a settlement?

Journalists query the rationale for secret talks, wondering whether the leadership is hiding anything from the public. The public itself is little engaged. In a survey, statements rated particularly highly include “I don’t think I have the power to help with a solution,” “I think it’s up to countries around us and other international interests to solve the Cyprus problem,” and “I don’t deal with politics because the system is corrupt.” Meanwhile, the leaders dismiss all concerns about transparency and inclusion on the grounds that “this is how things work in Cyprus,” and that they know what is best for their people. They assert that the sensitivity of the issues requires confidential talks, and that it is impossible to manage a public process while engaging in negotiations, saying, “One does not want to spoil the broth by revealing the recipe too quickly.”

Moving ahead

Despite the concerns about participation, the high-level negotiations charge ahead citing the “window of opportunity” that must not be missed. The two sides decide to not spend time and energy on working out confidence-building measures relating to issues like Varosha, Ercan airport, and the Famagusta port, on the grounds that a comprehensive settlement will address all such matters. In their view, their energy and attention is best spent on the ‘hard’ substantive issues which, once settled, should be sufficient to achieve peace. They delegate low-level everyday confidence-building measures to the bicomunal technical committees that have been working on them for many years. With support from the UN and the EU, a few additional checkpoints are opened and some restrictions over Green Line trade are lifted, in recognition of the economic and social benefits that crossings and bicomunal trade bring to both communities. An English-language daily quotes an unnamed UN staff member referring to these steps as “low-hanging fruit” in the peace process.



The leaders and the UN increasingly come to rely on international consultants for advice on substantive issues and communication, shutting out Cypriot experts and stakeholders. They justify this approach with reference to a desire to not complicate the deliberations, keep the process more neutral, and prevent leaks to the press. International experts are commissioned to draw up options for all pending issues on the shortlist, for the two leaders to choose from. This leads to a final stage of cross-negotiation between topics where disagreements persist, such as cross-negotiation on property and territory. These are eventually resolved through a process of give-and-take between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders.

Meanwhile an international marketing and communications firm is contracted in order to employ effective messaging through various channels to influence public opinion. This firm engages with the UN and the two sides to run confidential polls and focus groups to fine-tune messaging so as to maximise a 'yes' vote at the end of the process, using marketing techniques like mapping target audiences, and analysing word use and image use. Refraining from looking into substantive issues, the polls focus on capturing the public mood around a settlement and do not examine underlying needs and concerns of the two communities or consider how insight into public opinion can inform convergence in the negotiations. Social media space, newspaper and television is flooded with messaging meant to create a favourable atmosphere around the talks. This makes it difficult for critical voices or outright opponents of the peace process to express their views.

Reaching a conclusion

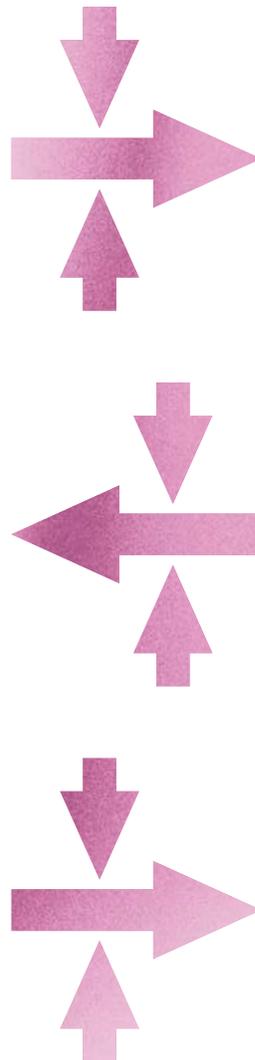
In early 2026, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders agree on a peace plan that will be put to a referendum in the north and south. The plan covers the establishment of a bizonal, bicomunal

federation with political equality of the two communities, which includes a power-sharing modality, dossiers related to the constituent states, and agreement on troops and territorial arrangements to address land and property issues. Informal engagement in the context of the peace talks has resulted in an agreement on the delineation of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Federal Cyprus in relation to Türkiye, which will come into effect together with the comprehensive settlement. Agreement has also been reached on who will be eligible to vote in the referendum on the settlement.

Shortly thereafter, referendums take place on both sides of the island.

Many displaced persons in the Greek Cypriot community vote 'yes,' expecting to receive restitution or compensation for their properties in line with the agreement. The 'yes' vote is further strengthened among Greek Cypriots because the security provisions are perceived as slightly better than in previous plans. Building on deliberations at Crans Montana, the leaders have arrived at a high-level compromise relating to the number of troops, rate of troop withdrawal, and status and responsibilities of the guarantor powers. Exit polls in the south suggest that many vote in favour to avert a worse outcome in case the settlement were to be rejected. People speak of fears that Türkiye might 'annex the north,' or that Greek Cypriots would be left to deal with Türkiye directly if there would be fewer Turkish Cypriots on the island over time. These factors, together with the support of two major political parties in the south, lead to the Greek Cypriot community overall narrowly voting 'yes' in the referendum. The margin is small, as suspicion and unease persist among Greek Cypriots. Some who voted 'no' anticipate a deterioration of living standards due to the initial social and economic costs of reunification. Others are concerned about the potential continued role of Türkiye in Cyprus, the prospect of Turkish migrants settling in the south, and possible demographic changes.

Turkish Cypriots also vote 'yes' but with a smaller majority than



was the case in the 2004 referendum on the Annan plan. Analysts attribute the reduced ‘yes’ vote to growing polarisation in the Turkish Cypriot community between those favouring a European orientation and those advocating an Eurasian one, as well as to the growth in support for a two-state solution since the failure of Crans Montana. They also note that Turkish Cypriots are less open to returning properties one generation later, and that the idea of co-existence with Greek Cypriots seems to hold less appeal than when the checkpoints first opened. Social media posts suggest that those voting ‘yes’ in the north may have mainly done so based on an assessment that the risks of continued division and isolation outweigh the risks of assimilation in a new federation. Even so, a few Turkish Cypriots express fear about Greek Cypriots returning in large numbers and possibly threatening Turkish Cypriots’ political and cultural control of the northern constituent state.

Notwithstanding the ongoing doubts and anxieties amongst people on both parts of the island, the favourable outcome constitutes more progress in peacemaking than Cyprus has experienced for a long time. This leads some to express optimism that the Cyprus problem is finally coming to an end. The international community offers congratulations to the leaders and the people of Cyprus, pledging funds and technical assistance to support the implementation of the comprehensive settlement. On social media, people wonder whether the two leaders are being considered for the Nobel Peace Prize. Other voices however are more sceptical. They observe that the communication campaign has managed to deliver the ‘yes’ vote but has not addressed underlying tensions and concerns about the peace process. They warn that the less than overwhelming support for the settlement does not bode well for the future federation, and that communities are not prepared for the upcoming changes.

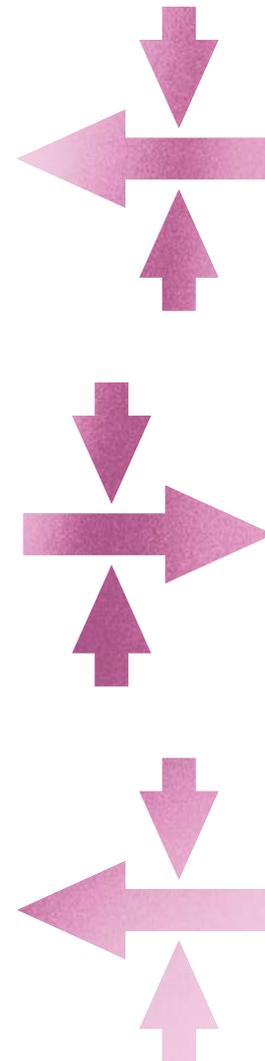
A nascent federation

In early 2027, after Cyprus’ Presidency of the EU, the new Federal Republic of Cyprus comes into being with a high degree of decentralisation. The administrations in the north and the south morph into the administrations of the constituent states with considerable autonomy. There is relatively little effort devoted to building effective federal institutions as the political elites focus on ensuring strong constituent states that can safeguard the interests of their community.

Within society, some groups - mostly liberal and cosmopolitan in character - declare themselves to be ‘peace champions’ and collaborate actively with the new federal authorities. Others, who usually come from religious conservative backgrounds or are people with a strong attachment to national heritage, warn that the new federation will ‘need to earn their trust.’ Greek Cypriots express dread at the thought of a deadlock at the federal level, while Turkish Cypriots raise concerns about possible loss of identity, marginalisation, and encroachment.

Various academics, civil society actors and a few international advisors raise reservations about issues that have been either ignored or been dealt with in a way that may not be conducive to long-term stability and peace. For example, since the comprehensive settlement only considered ‘security’ in high-level terms as relating to presence of troops and status of guarantor states, the new federation does not adopt any measures to address the everyday security needs of individual citizens and communities. Also, no resources are allocated to mitigating ethnic nationalism or ameliorating distrust between the two communities. Education, deemed a ‘constituent state competency’ and as such beyond the scope of the peace talks, will be handled separately at the constituent state level.

Most people show little interest in the new federal arrangements. Posts on social media suggest they feel alienated in relation to fed-



eral institutions and by being served and led by people from the 'other' community. They do not follow political developments and show little civic responsibility. For them, life continues as before, except that they are going more frequently to restaurants, bars and holiday resorts in the 'other' part of Cyprus, with no checkpoints hindering their access.

Emerging cracks

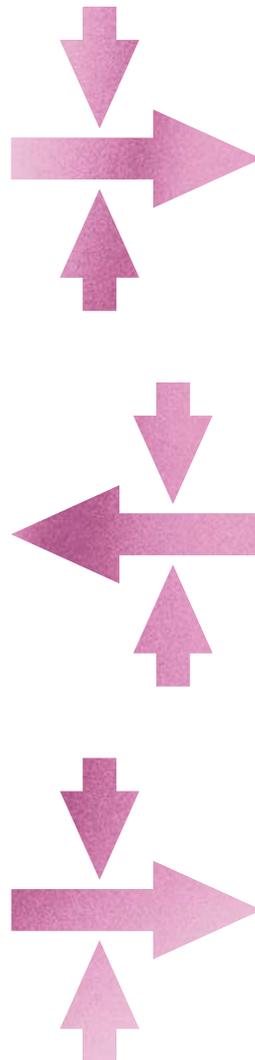
Before long, cracks begin to show, and the authorities at federal and constituent state level take little immediate action to address them or engage communities in trying to make the new dispensation work. Economic integration proves challenging, in part because the economy in the south is so much stronger than the economy in the north. Derogations put in place to support the Turkish Cypriot economy mitigate the imbalance only partially. Meanwhile, Greek Cypriots face more labour market competition since many Turkish Cypriot workers opt for working in the Greek Cypriot constituent state where the wages tend to be higher. This fuels inter-ethnic resentment and questioning about the benefits of reunification among Greek Cypriot workers. Various businesses from Türkiye try to establish a foothold in Federal Cyprus to access the EU market. Several Greek Cypriot interest groups complain that efforts to integrate the economy result in their wealth being redistributed to the Turkish Cypriot constituent state, labelling this as unfair.

Moreover, integrating different laws and regulations is easier said than done. Banks, accountants, lawyers, dairy and meat producers in the Turkish Cypriot constituent state face a sharp increase in regulatory requirements as they adopt EU standards. They receive support to meet these new standards, but their infrastructure is not sufficient to use this effectively and build the necessary capability. Also, in the absence of sector-specific information campaigns about what to expect, many companies have questions about the

new operating environment. Franchisees, importers, and wholesalers post angry messages on social media about being left in the dark, especially about the status of their licences.

Financial aid pledged by international actors to support the post-settlement period does not fully materialise, as more urgent crises at home and abroad have forced donors to re-assess their priorities. This increases the burden on the budget of the federal state. The government has to decide whether to borrow money, raise taxes, or cut salaries to enable the smooth implementation of the settlement. Alternatively, it can slow down implementation of compensation-related provisions. It decides to do the latter to prevent public unrest. Tensions rise in relation to property and displaced persons who have a right to return or claim compensation under the agreement. The legal processes and bureaucratic procedures for the handling of compensation claims prove to be so slow that many come to question the legitimacy and capacity of institutions at the federal level.

Displaced persons face other more invisible barriers that hamper return and residency planning. For example, when engaging with the authorities in the other constituent state, they are expected to speak the language that is dominant there. The lack of schools and places of worship in one's mother tongue in the 'other' constituent state proves problematic for people wanting to move across the island. Civil society activists and academics complain that the leadership only considered the right to return and freedom of movement in formal, legalistic ways in the talks, but has overlooked how to make life more agreeable for Cypriots who live in the constituent state where they do not belong to the dominant ethnic group. Meanwhile, religious leaders express concern that issues related to churches, mosques, cemeteries, and the practice of religious freedoms have not been adequately addressed.



Competing loyalties

By late 2027, it is clear that the leaders of the constituent states face competing loyalties: they have created the federation, but also remain focused and dependent on the support of ‘their’ community, defined exclusively in ethnic or communal terms. Analysts point out that this partly stems from a decision not to adopt weighted cross-voting, which was considered and rejected during the talks. They explain that such cross-voting would probably have enabled each community to have some influence on the election of the other community’s leaders. This in turn would have encouraged politicians to embrace an inclusive agenda, and might also have led to joint election rallies or even partnerships between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot parties.

The federation applies a ‘non-encroachment’ principle between the federal and constituent state competencies, meaning that the federal government cannot impose policies on the constituent states and vice versa. As a result, coordination between the constituent states is required to ensure alignment of policy making and implementation, but it is often lacking. The agricultural sector is one of several where problems related to non-coordination arise. While the requirements for accessing funding are uniform across Federal Cyprus, their implementation differs considerably between the constituent states. This generates farmers’ protests citing injustice and unfair competition as well as claims of unethical lobbying and corruption. Tensions also arise when the Turkish Cypriot constituent state delays the adoption of legislation to cut carbon emissions. Greek Cypriot companies complain about additional expenses they must make to comply with the new rules that were adopted on time by the Greek Cypriot constituent state, arguing that they experience revenue loss as compared to their Turkish Cypriot counterparts.

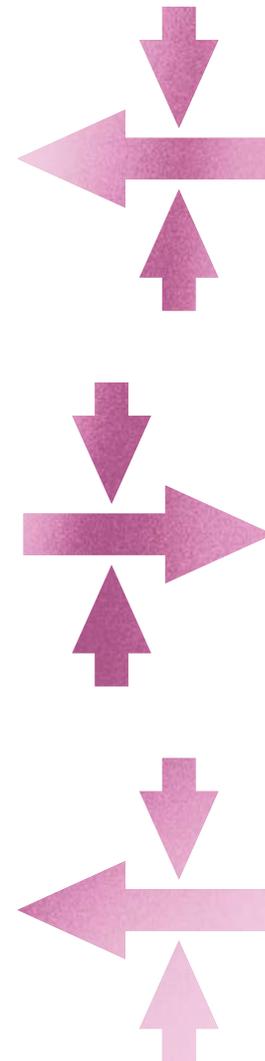
Gradually, each community starts to use its constituent state government to legislate protections against the other community, be-

cause of (real and perceived) problems arising in the reunification process and the new federal system. Differences in procedures and regulations are exploited by the two communities to gain a comparative advantage. The adoption of reforms is driven more by competitive than cooperative motives. Authorities at the constituent state level explain reforms as needed to prevent the risks of falling behind conditions in the other state and of becoming less attractive to workers and investors, as the other community develops and overtakes them.

Indirect obstacles are put in place to hamper labour mobility, such as requirements to be proficient in the ‘other’ language. The European Commission conveys its disapproval of such developments, but cannot do anything as the measures adopted are formally within the parameters of the Acquis Communautaire. Surveys reveal that a majority in both communities increasingly attach more value to their ‘own’ constituent state government than to the federal government.

Arena of contestation

The federal government increasingly becomes an arena of contestation. Few decisions are taken at this level, but many headlines are generated as insiders regularly leak to the press about the heated debates taking place and the controversial positions being adopted by politicians. While the federal institutions have difficulty getting things done, the constituent states are comparative power houses in terms of their policy output. According to academic observers, the dichotomy between effective protective action at the constituent level and long, inconclusive, debates at the federal level is an important factor in people’s loyalties shifting towards the constituent state governments. It weakens the legitimacy of the federal state and reduces the public’s limited faith therein. This is reflected in anti-federation messages posted on social media and calls for separation.



Transitional measures to help minimise the economic differences and the income inequality between the two communities drag on beyond the initially designated time frames. The constituent state governments have fewer checks and balances than the federal government but are managing a greater number of policies and budgets. They become reliant on private investors and outside support to develop their economies. The complexity of their responsibilities, combined with such dependencies creates opportunities for corruption, which makes it difficult for aspiring, honest, politicians to enter into politics. It also fuels the two communities' tendency to not cooperate and level allegations at one another instead.

A bicomunal group of academics publishes an opinion piece in an English language local newspaper, arguing that insufficient effort has been put into economic and political reforms on both sides of the island that were needed to make the agreement work. In their view, this has resulted in the federal government inheriting problems with corruption, ethnocentric bias, and bureaucracy, and has reinforced what they call “a culture of civic apathy” at all levels. A piece by another scholar speaks of “a failure to develop a unifying and resilient social contract that is more than ethnocentrism under a federal blueprint.”

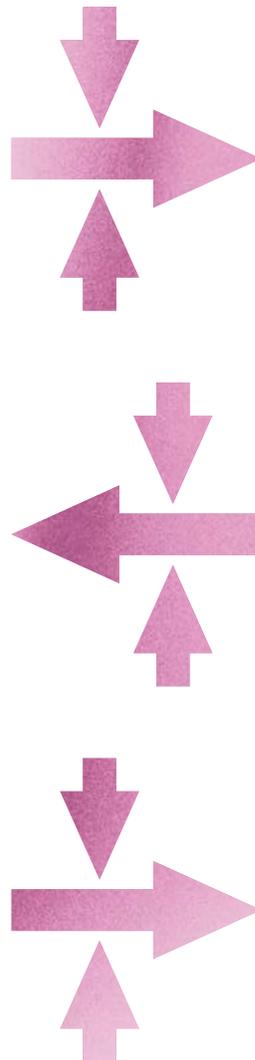
Disappointment and disconnection

Meanwhile, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots remain largely separated and there is little effort to advance relationships and trust between them. The bicomunal technical committees no longer exist since these were disbanded shortly after the federation was established. They were no longer deemed necessary after the settlement as they were established to enable cooperation between the communities when the island was divided. School

books continue to carry nationalistic messages as the constituent states are responsible for education. Political and religious leaders do not make an effort to create a common Cypriot civic identity. Instead, ongoing discourse about unfairness at the hands of the ‘other’ - not just in the past, but also in the new dispensation - further entrenches ethnic identities. Investment in language training is minimal as the federal government and constituent state governments do not consider it a priority.

The continuing, exclusive focus on bi-communality leads progressives in the north and the south to argue that the settlement is disappointing in its failure to recognise Cyprus as a multicultural society with respect for diversity. Members of other ethnic and religious minorities assert that they are still overlooked in policy and decision-making. LGBTIQ+ activists protest against their rights being handled at the level of the constituent states, which means that different rules apply across the island: civil unions between same-sex partners are permitted in the Greek Cypriot constituent state but not in the Turkish Cypriot one. The latter has also adopted fewer measures to ensure equitable representation of minorities and genders. Gender, LGBTIQ+ and human rights activists complain that the new federation is not fully democratic and fails to embrace European standards and ideals. In their view, the ‘solution’ to the Cyprus problem has “unjustly delegitimised” hard won human rights gains.

In 2029, an international NGO publishes a report on human rights conditions in Cyprus. According to the organisation, incidents of ethnicity-based hate speech, discrimination and harassment have steadily increased in Cyprus since the federal state was established. It asserts that several factors have contributed to an environment that facilitates general intolerance and violent incidents. These include ethnocentric and nationalist rhetoric by politicians, a very polarised media climate, and insufficient action to ensure accountability.



The report highlights ‘a significant disconnect’ between the legal frameworks as enshrined in legislation and how these are applied. Hate crimes are formally outlawed, as is ethnic discrimination, but in practice, the report notes, discrimination based on ethnic identity has gradually become normalised and local authorities have considerable leeway in how they handle hate crimes. Soon after, another incident proves the point, when a group of far-right Greek Cypriot football supporters attack a few Turkish Cypriots after a football match in the south, making derogatory statements and shouting ‘enosis.’ The local authorities fail to investigate, leading to an outcry from the administration of the Turkish Cypriot constituent state.

Fragile federation

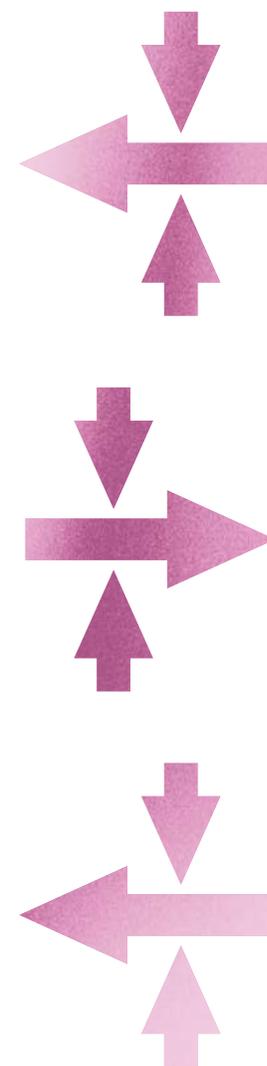
As communal tensions and violent incidents on the island increase, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots increasingly look outward - to the EU, the UN, Greece and Türkiye - for support in managing the tensions in the system. Türkiye announces that it is very concerned about developments in Cyprus. It questions whether the rights of the Turkish Cypriot community are sufficiently protected in the federal system. Greece is more reserved in public but has a similar stance (relating to the Greek Cypriot community) behind the scenes. Energy cooperation slows down, despite fervent efforts from the EU and the US.

By 2035, nearly ten years after the referendums on the settlement, the Turkish Cypriot constituent state still has not caught up economically with its southern neighbour. It requires substantial contributions from the federal government. Heavy opposition by the Greek Cypriot members of the federal government and the Greek Cypriot constituent state leads to a proposal to reduce the federal budgetary allocations to the Turkish Cypriot constituent state, to a level deemed ‘fair’ by Greek Cypriots. The latter argue that the

northern constituent state has failed to adopt the necessary reforms and that Greek Cypriots have subsidised Turkish Cypriots long enough.

This poses a dilemma for the Turkish Cypriots in the federal government. They initially discuss trying to block the proposal but refrain from doing so because it may be a ‘nuclear option’ with no winners, as a deadlocked federal government would not be able to provide services to Turkish Cypriots either. Instead, they decide to cover the shortfall in funding for the northern constituent state through relying more on (private and public) funds from Türkiye. According to some Turkish Cypriot ministers at the federal level, this strategy enables Turkish Cypriots to get the ‘best of both worlds’ by continuing to receive services from the federal government and getting support from Türkiye, while Greek Cypriots will pay less this way. When news about the arrangement becomes public, some consider it a convenient solution. Others are more critical, arguing that the two sides are now further apart and that it may return Turkish Cypriots to a culture of dependence on Türkiye.

A post has gone viral on social media. It features a graffiti’d wall in Nicosia with the words, “Cyprus: the island where dreams stumble.”



THE WORLD OF 'OUR WAY'

A scenario of resilient peace

In 2022, the prospects of resolving the Cyprus problem at the political level appear frozen as Cypriots and the international community await elections upcoming in 2023 in Cyprus and in Türkiye. At the non-political level, bicomunal activities promoting coexistence and mutual understanding persist, as do efforts to promote trade and collaboration around various issues. Some Cypriots question the sustainability of the status quo and the economic and social costs of continued division, and feel a sense of urgency around the risk of solidifying separation. They recognize that forest fires, deterioration of natural resources and high numbers of migrants are among the shared challenges that are increasingly difficult to overcome without closer long-term cooperation. Meanwhile, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led many people in the world to feel a heightened sense of urgency around security and to acknowledge that democracy is fragile and needs to be safeguarded. For Cypriots, these security concerns are further exacerbated by elevated tension between Greece and Türkiye which may affect the island. Economic crisis is also looming and forest fires on the island are becoming more frequent. As the world is rapidly changing, uncertainty about the future prevails.



Result-oriented cooperation

As 2023 begins, many Cypriots are feeling despondent about the peace process, and are keenly aware of the economic, social, and environmental challenges facing their community. Some are therefore increasingly taking matters into their own hands by engaging in tangible, result-oriented cooperation to ease people's daily lives and lessen the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. These efforts are supported by the international community who have been told now is not the time to meddle in the peace process, and are therefore focusing on supporting collaboration on sports, trade, environment, youth entrepreneurship, media professionalism, education, local infrastructure, and other less political issues.

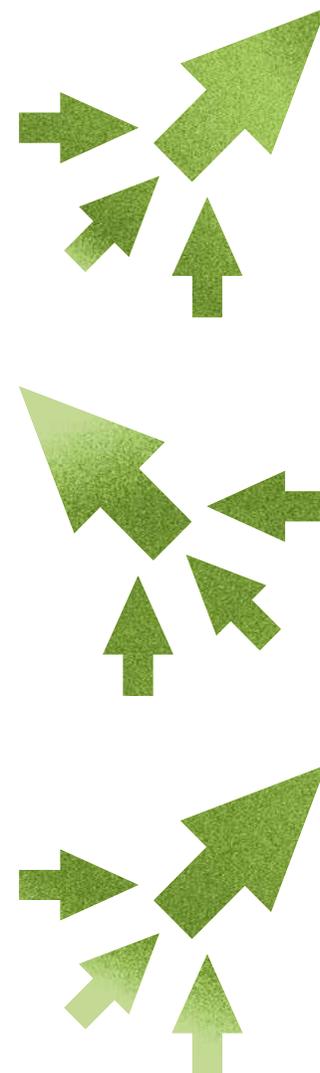
These activities help to build relationships and cooperation across the divide while addressing everyday challenges. But people actively involved in such work observe that so long as the Cyprus problem persists, their efforts remain limited in scope and size and are considered inconsequential or temporary. For example, connections between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot youth facilitated by bicomunal sports events are undermined when the youth return to their own context where spaces for meaningful interaction are limited and narratives about 'the other' are often negative. Collaboration for bicomunal trade is weakened by the unpredictable business environment in the north and suspicion in the south towards Greek Cypriot businesses engaging with partners in the north. The growth of bicomunal trade is further limited by the fact that all trade transactions must take place in cash as Turkish Cypriots cannot open accounts with banks in the south. Uncertainty over the status of Turkish Cypriot businesses in the next ten years also hinders investing in long-term trading relationships.

In March 2023, the main power plant in the north becomes inoper-

ative due to a lack of maintenance and investment to meet the increased demand. The administration cannot resolve the problem quickly, and the authorities in the south provide power to alleviate the plight of people in the north, drawing on earlier collaboration between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Chambers of Commerce. Shortly thereafter, a problem emerges with ramifications beyond the north: fires in the Koutsoventis/Güngör sanitary landfill site become much more frequent, affecting the air quality in all of Cyprus. The reduction in air quality becomes problematic for health reasons across the island and also in light of local and EU obligations. Urgent action is required, which is coordinated by the bicomunal technical committee on environment.

Upon containment of the immediate crisis, the experts from the committee issue a statement reiterating the need for integrated island-wide solutions to pollution and other environmental challenges. They emphasise that "the environment knows no boundaries. We are an island and share an ecosystem that can only be protected through a collaborative approach that recognises our interdependence." They also observe that while ad hoc collaboration in crisis situations may resolve problems in the short term, it does not facilitate the long-term strategising and action-taking needed to address the issues facing Cypriots in a more durable manner. The group's statement is widely reported in the south and the north, in part because a heatwave is forecast for the summer of 2023, which increases the risk of wildfires.

A private-led initiative on the collection, management and trade of paper and plastic-based waste endorses the call for wider and more sustained collaboration. The Greek Cypriot business people leading the initiative highlight that they have intensified collaboration with groups collecting waste in the north for this to be traded across the Green Line and then further to other countries for recycling, since earlier efforts focusing only on waste from the south were not economically viable. The news about this initiative, combined with the recent air pollution alert, ongoing concerns



about the gas and economic crises, and the risks of rising tension between Türkiye and Greece raise awareness that the political preoccupation with the Cyprus problem detracts from effectively dealing with pressing current and future challenges. Politicians are under increasing pressure to break through the political impasse posed by the peace process.

A new approach to peace

In mid-2023, a meeting of the recently established European Political Community is held in Spain, where Türkiye participates along with the 27 European Union (EU) member states and other European nations. At this meeting, the leaders of Türkiye, Greece and Cyprus hold an informal session along with the leaders of the UK, a few other countries, and the President of the European Commission, to address the energy crisis. They acknowledge the importance of resolving the Cyprus problem in order to deal with energy shortages.

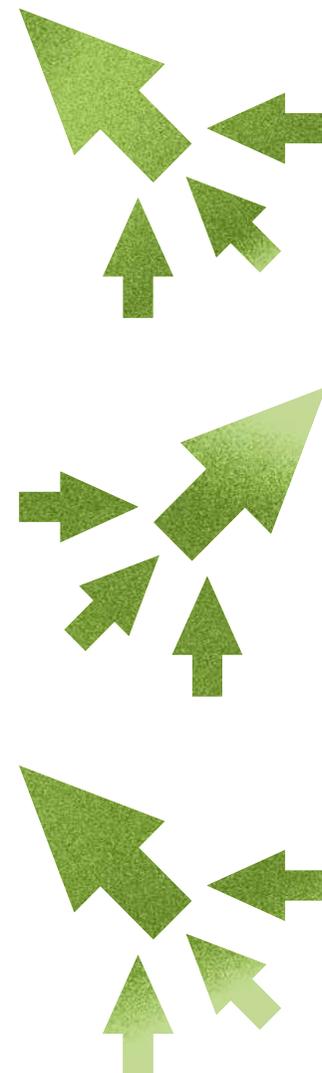
Later in the year, the United Nations (UN) begins a new round of shuttle diplomacy to explore possibilities for a resumption of peace negotiations. The consultations are wide ranging and include the Greek Cypriot leadership, the Turkish Cypriot leadership, the EU, Greece, Türkiye, and the permanent members of the UN Security Council. UN representatives also engage with other actors in the south and the north, such as civil society organisations, business actors, political parties, academics, women's associations, and youth groups.

These preliminary conversations consider whether the rapidly changing geopolitical, economic, and environmental situation that Cyprus finds itself in might open up a renewed pathway for peace. Most leaders recognize that the significant body of work from earlier rounds of negotiations could provide a strong basis for

addressing disputed issues. However, civil society groups and academic institutions argue that the elitist, top-down, processes traditionally used to address the Cyprus problem are outdated, do not take advantage of capacities in society beyond the political elite, and are unlikely to lead to lasting outcomes. The call for a new approach is based on evidence that more participation and inclusion increase legitimacy and public support for both the process and any resulting agreement. There is a general feeling that this is “the last chance” for an effective peace process and that diverse parties and sectors must all get involved this time to ensure success.

Unofficial conversations behind closed doors with the leaders of both sides lead them to reframe their focus and acknowledge common aims despite formally holding divergent positions. The two-state position and demand for sovereignty of the Turkish Cypriot leadership is increasingly understood as a way to address long-standing concerns regarding power-sharing, marginalisation, fairness, and effective participation rather than as actual opposition to a federal solution. With stronger than ever support from the UN, the US, EU and the guarantors (Greece, Türkiye, and the UK), and from civil society, the leaders resolve that new formal talks will be initiated in 2024. While federalism will frame the solution framework underpinning negotiations, federalism is recognised not as an end in itself, but rather as a means towards a workable island-wide social contract providing wellbeing and security to all Cypriots.

On this basis, the UN prepares the ground for a new high-level summit between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders, and the bicomunal technical committees intensify their activities.



Internal and external support

Upon receiving the announcement of new talks, analysts observe that Cyprus is well-placed to play a stabilising role in the region, noting that the war in Ukraine has demonstrated that unresolved conflicts can lead to heavy suffering and unpredictable outcomes. They highlight that Cyprus has a strategic location and a diverse population and cultures, with ties to Europe and the Middle East, and to the Christian and Muslim worlds. In their view, a united Cyprus would benefit greatly from energy cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean and from a so-called 'peace dividend' by boosting tourism, shipping, professional services, and higher education while also enhancing retail and wholesale trade. A widely publicised research institute study shows that the stronger economic performance enabled by a solution will create many jobs and lead to tax and other government revenues. While some Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are sceptical of the findings, saying that it is more of the same, key stakeholders from the business sector praise the study for suggesting specific ways in which a settlement could address current economic difficulties.

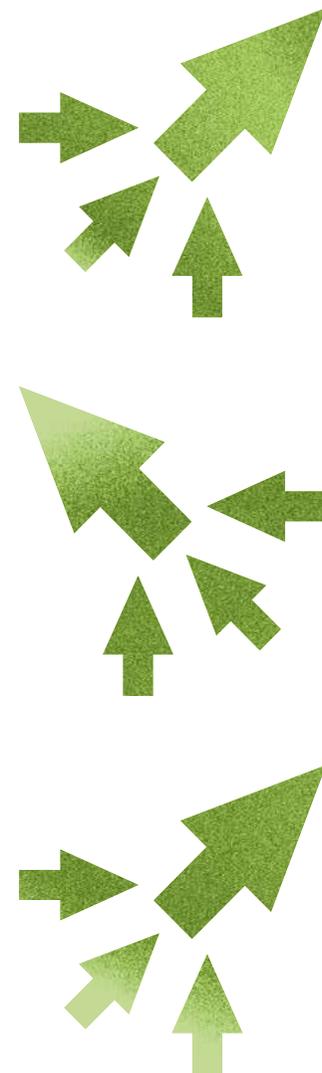
A growing number of citizens across the island increasingly believe that a united Cyprus will be in a stronger position than a divided one to face the present and the future. Some Greek Cypriots are hesitant to tamper with a status quo which they believe allows them to get on with their lives without much upheaval. But many are buying into the notion that the status quo is not sustainable in a world that is rapidly changing and where security and democracy cannot be taken for granted. They still hope for a solution to prevent unilateral actions in Varosha, provide a final chance for refugees to return to their properties, and gain back land from which they have been displaced since 1974, but they are increasingly concerned that the possibility of regaining their land is becoming less likely. They seek

to grow the economy and are concerned about price competition due to the low value of the Turkish lira, resulting in lots of money being spent in the north rather than in the south on petrol, tourist activities and commerce. They are further concerned about immigration, the increasing dependence of the north on Türkiye and the risk of an unregulated state in the north.

Many Turkish Cypriots are also interested in a settlement as they believe it will end their isolation from the international fora and enable their integration with the international community, as well as facilitate economic recovery, ensure good governance, and enhance democratisation in the north. Some Turkish Cypriots also hope to gain more autonomy, and ensure a steady, long-term, connection with the EU.

The prospect of resuming negotiations is strongly supported by the EU and several permanent members of the UN Security Council. At the same time, Türkiye seeks to enhance its relationship with the EU so as to strengthen its economic performance. Improving its relationship would help to modernise the Customs Union with the EU, allow the country to gain more access to the EU single market, and facilitate agreement on visa liberalisation.

Further, given that adversarial solutions in the field of energy in the East Mediterranean have not produced tangible results, Türkiye starts exploring collaborative solutions with Greece and Greek Cypriots. An agreement with them on the delineation of the exclusive economic zones is of considerable interest to Türkiye, especially in light of its rapprochement with Israel and Egypt. It would make energy cooperation on the hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean more likely and viable. In light of these shifting alliances, Türkiye also approves of new negotiations on the Cyprus problem.



High-level agreement

In 2024, following intensive preparations with all sides involved and ongoing consultations with a wide range of actors, the UN Secretary-General convenes a high-level conference in Geneva. The UN and the EU also support the presence of a few highly respected civil society actors from the north and the south to facilitate their interaction with one another and with the leadership in the margins of the formal conference. At the end of this much talked-about process, a high-level framework agreement is announced. In it, the two sides agree to pursue negotiations with a view to achieving a “resilient peace.” The principle of resilience is considered relevant at all levels, from citizens, regions, and communities to institutions and the island as a whole. The settlement framework will be federal, recognizing the political equality of the two main communities and building on the existing body of work from prior peace talks.

The agreement further stipulates that the new negotiations will be participatory and inclusive. Civil society, academia, political parties, the business community, labour unions, youth groups, women’s associations, displaced persons, minorities, and other stakeholders will all be invited to engage with the peace process, so that the talks reflect more diverse perspectives and concerns beyond those of elites, and that their outcome will enjoy wide acceptability. The peace talks will operate across multiple parallel ‘tracks’ to ensure rapid progress leading to a settlement, working with an action plan with clear timelines. A package of confidence-building measures is also announced for implementation in the next few years, relating to, amongst other things, Ercan airport, the Famagusta port, Varosha, and university collaboration.

The public engages

The high-level agreement is widely hailed as a significant breakthrough that helps to unlock the peace process. Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, and others on the island with a stake in its future show new interest in the peace process and express appreciation of the effort to involve the public more than before. Civil society and bicomunal networks across the island start to mobilise now that there is a common direction for action. They highlight the importance of preparing society at large for change and cooperation, observing that the process of working towards resilient peace will be demanding and require determination and commitment.

Youth groups work with new technologies such as virtual reality experiences to engage their peers in imagining how the future could be different from the past and the present. A few newspapers on both sides of the island start publishing sections with news from the other side so that people start to learn about the everyday issues that each community is facing. Some prominent businesspeople and politicians in the south and the north begin to refer to the strong bonds that both communities have to the island. They note that a lasting settlement will bring greater unity, stability, and prosperity to the people of Cyprus and to the wider region and will enhance the capacity to respond quickly to challenges.

Taking advantage of the changing environment, new business collaborations are developed in a few sectors. Pragmatic businesspeople in the north and the south get diverse tourist products going, which combine Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot cultural elements and showcase the natural beauty of the entire island. They explore ‘offshoring’ Turkish businesses to Cyprus by accessing the EU framework, expand initiatives related to halloumi/hellim production, and develop new green energy bicomunal initiatives.

The international community pledges its support to facilitate civic awareness and engagement. Besides financial resources, technical



assistance to enable participation is provided to the extent that people and organisations in Cyprus request it.

Multi-track process

By 2025, a so-called ‘multi-track’ negotiation and peacebuilding process is in full swing, which involves a variety of initiatives at different levels involving diverse actors. The process is designed to balance confidentiality with transparency, ensuring that the public is kept well informed. Parallel working groups of relevant Cypriot experts and community representatives discuss specific topics, at times with international support. The groups interact when dossiers interrelate. They have enough authority and freedom to engage in meaningful negotiations and effectively achieve time-bound progress.

The parallel attention for multiple issues is a significant innovation on past peace efforts where issues were negotiated by the top leaders one at a time. It means the sides engage with each other in such multiple ways that they enter into an irreversible process leading to a final settlement. Another difference is that now all those involved in the working groups are partially remunerated for their time and that the coordinators are employed on a full-time basis. This facilitates more intensive engagement of non-retired specialists, women, and youth, and helps to expand the reach of the process.

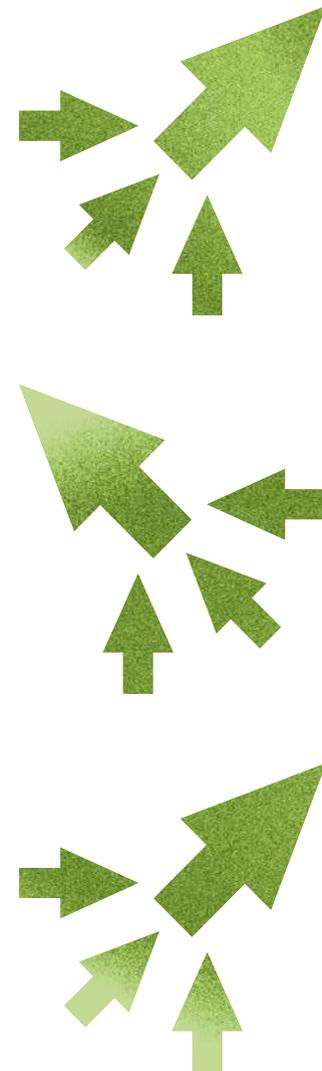
Simultaneously, the technical committees develop ways to work together on health, cultural heritage, integration of the electric grid, management of wildfires, opening up new checkpoints, and everyday economic collaboration. Increased coordination and a results-oriented approach is also pursued in other areas of common interest that are not at the heart of the Cyprus problem, such as crime, agricultural standards, and sports. Where possible, commit-

tee plans are put into action before an overall political settlement is reached to demonstrate progress, grow public confidence, and prepare for post-settlement federal and constituent state institutions. In keeping with the leaders’ commitment to make the peace process participatory and inclusive, the committees also start to engage citizens in their work and to inform the public of their activities. For example, the technical committee on the environment involves environmental youth activists from the north and south to draw on their ideas and networks, and to motivate them to act as champions of the process and of an eventual agreement.

The Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities agree to establish their own secretariats to support the peace process and contribute to reconciliation. Funded by national budgets and the international donor community, these are responsible for reaching out to displaced persons from both communities and to families of war victims and missing persons. The secretariats consult with these groups on possible measures to redress their grief and on current challenges so as to restore their human rights, sharing any information with appropriate authorities and negotiating teams for further action. They are also expected to advance relationship-building across divides and social cohesion through programs to encourage societal healing, dealing with the past, and to promote peace education. The secretariats are in close contact with one another and coordinate some of their activities.

Misgivings

Despite the intensive activity going on in some quarters, many Cypriots express indifference or cynicism. Some declare the process as more of the same and bound to fail. Others resist the idea of any changes in their life, work, or community. Rumours on social media cast doubt on the agendas of those involved in the peace process. Online attacks and misinformation are a frequent occurrence,



partly fuelled by actors who benefit from the shadow economy and tax evasion in the north and those who stand to lose from new competition or from reforms needed to comply with the Acquis. Nationalist interest groups argue that the two communities cannot ever rely on one another for security. They express concern at the idea of a federation that may loosen a community's bonds with its 'mother country' and suggest that a possible future 'Cypriot' identity will come at the expense of one's 'Greek' or 'Turkish' identity.

Many civil society initiatives in support of the peace process struggle to effectively engage with groups or individuals harbouring such misgivings. Some of them collaborate with international NGOs that apply strategies to counter misinformation and online polarisation. Cypriot actors also undertake several creative efforts using street art and culture to engage citizens in challenging old assumptions. A bicomunal theatre group gets much attention across the island with a performance in which the bottom line is that the status quo is not static. The advertisements for the performance state, "We're condemned to each other on this island for better or worse. Let's make it better rather than worse."

A project supporting journalists to cover the peace process in an objective manner generates a stream of media coverage that helps to gradually build trust between the communities. What also makes a difference is the persistent emphasis by leadership that their joint effort towards resilient peace is pragmatic rather than mere idealism and that the aim is the development of the people of Cyprus and the island itself in the long term. Executives of major companies and chairpersons of professional associations and of labour unions echo this message. While this does not deter actors who were benefiting from the previous status quo to continue attempts to undermine the peace process, it does lead citizens to be more resilient and less receptive to such negative messages.

Harmonisation and confidence-building

In 2025, an accelerated programme for the harmonisation of the Turkish Cypriot community with the EU Acquis Communautaire commences. A strengthened EU office in north Nicosia coordinates this, building on the EU's work since 2006 in support of the Turkish Cypriot community and with a greater annual allocation to support the accelerated harmonisation. All stakeholders recognise that adaptation to and implementation of the Acquis Communautaire needs to be achieved in the shortest time possible to minimise any distortions in the economy or significant social problems. To this end, the program contains various elements, including preparations for the adoption of the Euro by Turkish Cypriots; support to strengthen the quality of public administration in the north and private sector competitiveness; and to promote a human rights culture across the Turkish Cypriot community. Together with the EU, the sides negotiate transitional periods and incentives for businesses that need to change the way they are working. They also enable exchanges between civil servants, professionals and rights advocates from the north and the south to build support networks and learn from the Greek Cypriot experience of harmonising with the Acquis.

The two sides implement various confidence-building measures with support from the UN and the EU. Varosha is brought under UN administration, and subsequently opened to its original inhabitants. Ercan airport in the north opens to international flights, managed by the Turkish Cypriot community with UN oversight. The Famagusta port is also opened for direct international trade, under EU supervision. Meanwhile unofficial engagement between Türkiye and the Greek Cypriot leadership in the context of the peace process is enhanced by discussions on regional energy collaboration, which take place with support from the United States. As a result, Türkiye



opens its air- and seaports to the Greek Cypriot side, while Greek Cypriots open Larnaca airport to flights from Türkiye. The shipping and tourism sectors in the south benefit almost immediately. The Greek Cypriot leadership also announces that it will withdraw its veto on further deliberations in Türkiye's bid for EU membership.

Beyond these high-profile measures, other efforts take place which also help to build confidence between the two communities and address issues affecting people's daily lives. For example, the development of a bicomunal fire management strategy leads to the creation of a fire response joint action plan, which spells out how the two fire services will directly collaborate in case of emergency, without requiring high-level authorization through the UN and senior officials of the two sides. A joint committee is set up to coordinate education standards, especially in relation to the history and civic education curricula, to ensure that there are no discriminatory or prejudicial representations contained in schoolbooks. It also starts preparations on developing a common, science-based, narrative of modern history for all learners and students.

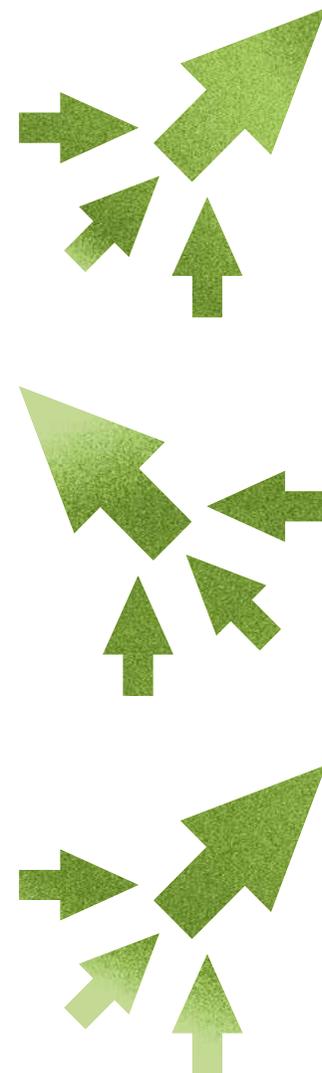
These tangible and unprecedented confidence-building measures demonstrate to the public that the peace process may bring benefits, alleviating some fears about a possible settlement. Posts on social media indicate that many are becoming convinced that "this time is different". Meanwhile, bicomunal trade across the Green Line increases. Business lobbies with an interest in a settlement assert that this means that the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities can successfully cooperate when the appropriate incentives and conditions are in place. They also speak extensively of the large markets they expect to open up after a settlement for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, which will enable Cyprus to realise its "huge economic potential."

Civil society mobilisation

To complement the political and technical efforts, the leadership of the two sides and the UN work with civil society organisations from the north and the south to create a Civil Society Consultative Forum on the Future of Cyprus (CSCFFC). Through this forum, the negotiating teams interact with diverse groups in society about various aspects of the peace process and receive feedback on solutions being considered for specific issues. The direct engagement enables the public to appreciate that many options involve trade-offs. The CSCFFC devotes specific attention to engaging groups whose voices are often overlooked, such as children of mixed parentage, people with disabilities, persons with low literacy, sexual minorities, and the Latin, Maronite, Armenian communities.

In a marked difference with prior rounds in the peace process, participatory peace surveys are implemented through a joint effort of the negotiating teams and the UN, which check options in both communities simultaneously and help to distinguish those that contribute to convergence while identifying concerns to take into account. The results are shared transparently with the wider public and the negotiators. An extensive public education and communication drive goes along with this program, to convey complex matters in an accessible manner and to help the public give informed responses when polled.

In addition to the multi-track peace process, various civil society actors facilitate sessions at football clubs, community centres, youth clubs, trade unions, universities, and workplaces, in urban and rural areas, to explore what people think is needed in their community, in a specific sector, or in public institutions and society at large, and how this relates to the vision of 'resilient peace'. They also host dialogues with mixed groups of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots on topics such as federalism and forms of power-sharing, dealing with the past, and lessons from other countries. The creation of shared civic spaces encourages people exploring



the advantages and disadvantages of possible solutions and other issues of concern. The CSCFFC hosts regular meetings of civil society actors to exchange experiences and identify insights gained that can be fed back to the negotiators.

Social mobilisation and public engagement take various forms in the north and the south, as conditions vary across the island. Language is a barrier but not an insurmountable one. English often serves as a bridge, and some people who speak both Greek and Turkish volunteer to help. Interpreters and language training centres in the north and the south report an increase in customers. Also, several schools start providing the option to learn the other language as part of the school curriculum.

A Plan for Resilient Peace

In early 2026, the two sides share a draft plan with the public for “resilient peace” in Cyprus. Some of the media and commentators in both communities judge it as unrealistically optimistic, but other voices are pleasantly surprised. The plan meets many expectations and even exceeds some of them, especially in relation to security, property, and governance. Some who have been involved in the talks share in interviews that the adoption of certain principles, such as inclusion, respect for individual and communal rights, and the notion that the security of one community should not be to the detriment of the other community, was very helpful in guiding negotiations.

As the publication of the draft plan coincides with the Cyprus’ Presidency of the EU, it gets significant international attention. The leaders of Germany, France, and Greece announce that all of Europe will benefit from a ‘Cyprus solution’ and express appreciation for Türkiye’s support of this process. The coordinators of the two communal peace secretariats are featured together in a story published by The Guardian. Asked about their main learnings, they

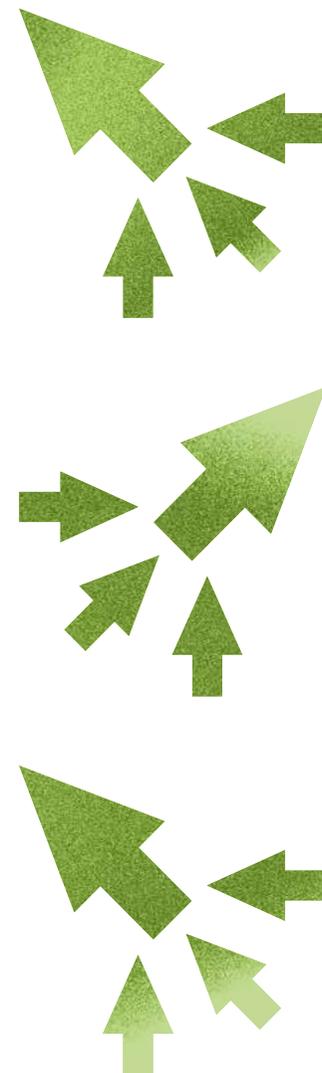
say that “Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots do not need to love each other to coexist on this island, but we need to acknowledge that to win in the long term, we need to work together”. They also admit that the process has not been easy so far and that a long road lies ahead.

Despite all the positive conversations around the peace plan, some concerns from both communities continue to be voiced. For the Greek Cypriot community, these mostly relate to the functionality of the federal set-up and the implementation of the settlement, including property issues and issues about security related to Türkiye’s influence in the north. For the Turkish Cypriot community, these relate to power-sharing, effective participation and security issues.

Steps forward

The two leaders announce that the peace process will now enter an extensive public consultation phase. They facilitate sharing of information about the financing of the settlement, which shows that this will be done with contributions from external stakeholders, low-interest loans to the federal state, and proceeds from hydrocarbons. A joint committee on economy works on envisaging a plausible economic master plan for the whole of Cyprus. Critical questions from members of the public lead to the two sides devoting more attention to working out effective mechanisms for resolving deadlock at the federal level. Taking place through town hall meetings, online platforms, and participatory surveys, the consultation process helps to mitigate anxiety amongst members of the public about the new dispensation.

An aspect of the peace plan that helps to alleviate concerns is that it largely recognises the rights of dispossessed owners based on agreed criteria, including the possibility for restitution of their



affected property (or equivalent property in the same town, if their original home is no longer available), and with attention for accessing education and services in one's mother tongue, freedom of worship, and freedom to practice a profession or start a business. Media reports anticipate that many will opt for compensation and remain at their current towns and villages, and feature individuals expressing appreciation for the fact that they will be given a choice. Dispossessed owners of properties that have been irreversibly developed for public benefit indicate being relieved at the prospect of compensation; this is relevant for those whose land or properties have been used for hospitals, roads, and other public infrastructure.

Transition

In early 2028, after a year of extensive public consultations, technical preparations, and validation by key political stakeholders both in Cyprus and internationally, the revised peace plan is put to concurrent referendums in the north and the south. The referendums succeed with a solid margin on both sides of the island, setting the stage for strong public support during the implementation phase of the agreement. The Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders congratulate the people of Cyprus on this joint decision and indicate efforts will be made to reach out to those who remain disaffected in the two communities. They recognise that the peace plan is not perfect but need not be, provided the new dispensation enables a resilient peace. International leaders emphasise the Cypriot ownership of the process, the outcome, and the future.

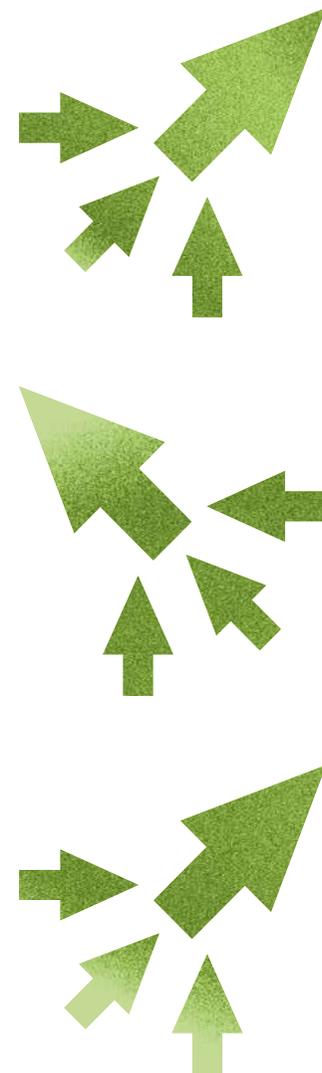
Several months of preparation for the transition ensue. The administrations on both sides of the island emphasise that building strong federal institutions is an important part of 'making peace in Cyprus resilient.' Extensive investment in language education is made, and a process of demobilising the armies gets underway with a view to

creating a professional United Cyprus Army, incorporating members of all communities, led by a mixed command.

Elections take place for the new federal and constituent state bodies. For the federal government, (weighted) cross-voting encourages politicians to appeal to people beyond their own community, in order to secure enough votes. International media coverage of the elections hail the fact that some politicians running for office have been directly involved in the negotiations while others served in an advisory capacity. Provisional administrators of several critical federal and constituent state agencies are appointed; some contributed to the peace process through serving on technical committees or from within civil society. The media coverage points to a high number of women being elected or appointed and draws attention to some relatively young people from an activist background assuming public office, under the headline 'Not the usual suspects.'

In late 2029, the new state of affairs comes into force. The constituent states have considerable autonomy, with a wide range of competencies to enable them to manage all aspects of everyday life for Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots respectively. Exchange between the constituent state authorities occurs regularly, facilitated through a coordination body comprising both entities and the federal government. A Federal Ministry for Social Cohesion and Peace Consolidation with counterparts at the constituent state level draws on capacities and expertise of the communal peace secretariats that operated during the peace process.

The federal government and the constituent states set up an early warning/early response system to detect community-level tensions before they erupt into conflicts, and take preventive measures accordingly. A Community Federal Police (CFP) is established which is to focus on community policing and de-escalation aside from general policing responsibilities.



As stipulated earlier in the peace plan, the federal government designates some areas as the first federal national parks that will highlight the island's rich national heritage. The published plans for these parks specify that they will be repopulated with wildlife and flora from Cyprus' historic past, and that all citizens of Cyprus will have low-cost access to them. Historical sites of major cultural value are also brought under federal protection, reinforcing a sense of unity and assuring that these sites will be protected in perpetuity. The federal government underlines that freedom of worship will be practised in all religious sites.

Stress tests

Events happen that put the new federation, its institutions and the population to the test. In early 2030, after a football match, fans of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot clubs get into an altercation that turns violent. Three young men end up in hospital. Despite some negative reactions online, various media stories stress that the actions of few do not represent an entire community. The Community Federal Police reaches out to those involved, while the anti-hate crime Federal Commissioner investigates. She concludes that this is not a criminal matter and is best addressed by restorative justice measures.

Later that year, friction arises in the Federal Council of Ministers when they consider an energy-related project requiring international and regional cooperation. At the time of decision-making, the ministers split along ethnic lines. A leak results in the dispute being widely covered in the media in the north and south. Some pundits are quick to predict 'the fall of the federation,' which gets picked up on social media. Others observe that any collaboration goes through ups and downs, and that the real question is how these are addressed. The issue becomes contentious between the President and Vice-President, but they agree to initiate the dead-

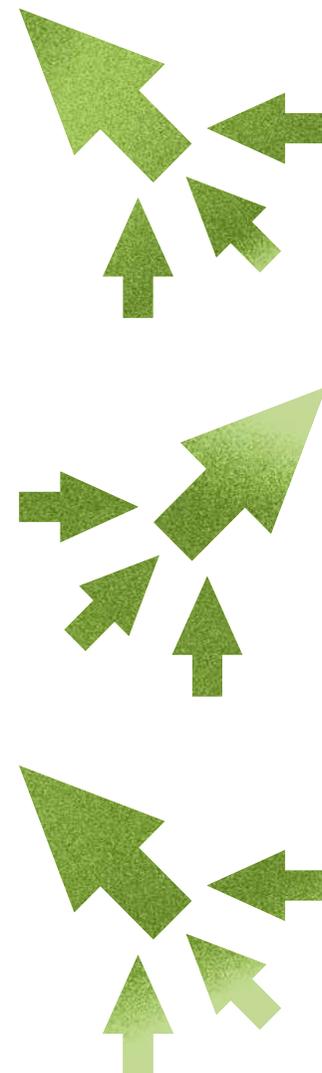
lock-resolving mechanism, being both determined to resolve the matter on the basis of citizens' best interests.

The mechanism proves effective: the matter is resolved within two weeks, facilitated by a shared commitment to the green transition of the federal government. Afterwards, insiders say that the episode was testing - literally and figuratively - but useful. It made those involved more confident in their relationship and joint abilities, and highlighted the value of having effective dispute resolution mechanisms.

A Hub for the Eastern Mediterranean

External stakeholders see the federal government of Cyprus and the constituent state institutions as relatively resilient and capable of preventing or addressing conflicts without third-party intervention. Now that there is sovereign equality between federal Cyprus, Greece, and Türkiye, relationships between them are based mainly on trade, energy, and educational cooperation. By 2031, the three countries have concluded agreements on gas, water and electricity.

Cyprus has also started building three solar thermal power plants with the intention to sell the excess energy capacity from renewables to Türkiye and beyond. Around Nicosia, the first circular tram line is established, linking to radial dedicated cycle and electric scooter routes. This allows many in the country's capital to bypass the congested roads and use a more efficient route to work. With support from the EU, the public transport system across the island is improved, which yields significant social and economic dividends by enabling trade, tourism, and commuting to other cities for work or education.

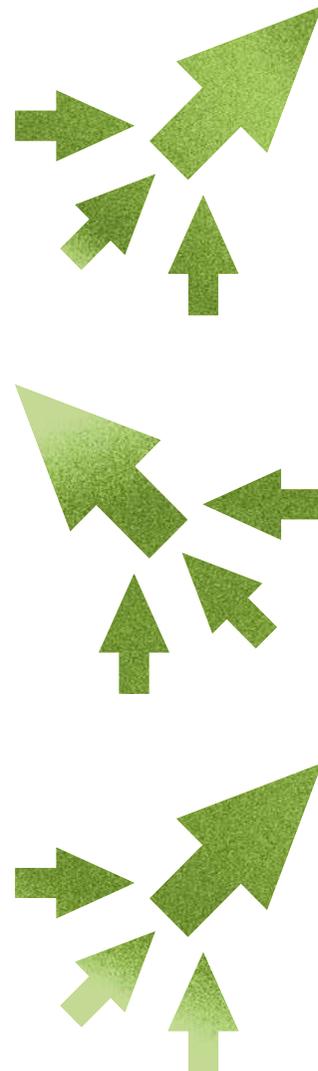


In 2032, elections take place in Cyprus for the federal government and the constituent states. Public events, television debates and media stories about the elections are focused on issues and candidates' plans rather than on communal affiliations. The prevailing coalition, led by a Maronite Cypriot woman, wins on a platform of achieving global competitiveness, inclusive education, climate change adaptation and social cohesion. The federal government opens the first three National Parks.

At the summer Olympics in Brisbane, a diverse team of Greek-speaking and Turkish-speaking Cypriots participates. A large part of the population follows their performance with great interest. Many students studying in the north study abroad for a period of time with an Erasmus scholarship, which is possible now that several universities there are part of the European higher education area. Meanwhile, it has become possible for Cypriots to undergo medical assessment and treatment anywhere in Cyprus, regardless of their communal background or under whose authority the specific hospital is.

By 2035, much has changed in Cyprus. The Federal Republic of Cyprus is a democratic society with effective public institutions where the rule of law and individual and group rights are respected, checks and balances exist in politics and the economy, and recruitment and appointment to public office is based on merit rather than communal background. Women and youth play an active role in governance and decision-making. It is recognised that Cyprus harbours a rich heritage and plurality of cultures and peoples, which is a source of pride. This, and Cypriots' identity as Europeans, forms a common narrative as a culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse and forward-looking nation within Europe. With its improved political stability and increased measures to address corruption, Cyprus serves as a hub in the Mediterranean for international companies, transport, financial services and technology.

A post has gone viral on social media. It features a graffiti'd wall in Nicosia with the words, "Cyprus: the island where new dreams are born." ■



How to use the scenarios

In developing scenarios, we create a common language that allows us to talk about the challenges of the present and the future. Based on this conversation, we can make choices and form strategic alliances that allow us to promote a future reality that we desire. Therefore, for the scenarios to be successful, it is essential for people to reflect on and talk about them. This reflection may be individual or collective, face-to-face or virtual.

The purpose of structured reflection on the scenarios is to engage a diverse group of participants in a discussion about future possibilities, using the scenarios to inform and inspire individual and collective strategies, illuminate possible pathways, and clarify next steps.

Please consider bringing the scenarios to the groups that you participate in, for example:

→ As a **civil society activist** or **community builder**, consider promoting dialogue about the scenarios and their implications among community groups, women's groups, environmental groups, etc.

→ As a **businessperson**, consider using the scenarios for strategic planning, testing the robustness of your strategy in different futures.

→ As a **politician**, consider using the scenarios to test the robustness of your political programme and to consider what more you can do to positively influence the future.

→ As a **teacher** or **university professor**, consider using the scenarios in your teaching.

→ As an **artist**, consider how to translate the scenario stories into exhibitions, illustrations, graffiti, theatre, film, etc.

→ As a **citizen**, consider how these scenarios relate to your political choices and engagement as well as your work at community level.

Details on how to go about using the scenarios in these ways can be found in our "How to use the scenarios" guide on www.cyprusfutures.org.

Glossary

Scenario-related terms

CLEAR. One of four criteria that scenarios must meet, meaning that the scenarios must be accessible, memorable, and recognizably different from one another.

CHALLENGING. One of four criteria that scenarios must meet, meaning that the scenarios should raise questions about how people currently see things and make the invisible visible by shedding light on blind spots and by questioning current assumptions and mental models (our understanding of how things work).

CONVENORS. The eight Cypriots (4 Greek Cypriots, 4 Turkish Cypriots) who assembled the diverse group of people who together constitute the scenario team for the Cyprus Transformative Scenarios Process. They have participated in the process alongside the other scenario team members with an equal voice.

PLAUSIBLE. One of four criteria that scenarios must meet, meaning that the highly diverse group of people constituting the scenario team believe that each scenario could happen, as it is logical and rooted in evidence: each is within the realm of possibility from their perspective – even if it stretches their imagination.

RELEVANT. One of four criteria that scenarios must meet, meaning that the scenarios must clarify and speak to current circumstances and concerns, addressing the uncertainties and anxieties of today's stakeholders.

SCENARIOS. Structured narratives or stories of possible futures, which describe what could happen in the world around us. They are not stories about what will happen (forecasts or predictions), about what should happen (visions/proposals) or about what people could do (options).

SCENARIO TEAM. A group of 36 diverse and committed stakeholders from across sectors, disciplines, communities, and generations in Cyprus, who together have created the set of scenarios through participating in the entire process, collectively drafting and reviewing the final output. While the team is collectively representative of the whole society, each member participates in their individual capacity, not as representative of a group or institution, and does so on a voluntary basis.

TRANSFORMATIVE SCENARIOS PROCESS. An approach that brings diverse stakeholders who hold different, often conflicting, perspectives, together around a situation they are a part of, to develop a set of three or four structured stories that show a range of potential futures in relation to that situation. In so doing, they create a shared framework and language for strategic conversations about the present situation and the actions they can take to shape the future. The set of scenarios provides a map of future possibilities that helps to alert people to risks, illuminate opportunities, and to make subtle connections visible.

Glossary

Cyprus-related terms

ACQUIS COMMUNAUTAIRE. A French term referring to the cumulative body of European Union laws, comprising the EU's objectives, substantive rules, policies, and, in particular, the primary and secondary legislation and case law. While the whole of Cyprus is part of the European Union, EU legislation is suspended in the northern part of the island, where the government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control, pending a political settlement to the Cyprus problem. Also referred to as Acquis.

ACTIVE LISTENING. A communication skill that involves going beyond just hearing the words that another person speaks and seeking to understand the meaning and intent behind those words. Such listening for understanding may involve use of various techniques, including being fully present in the conversation; showing interest and/or empathy; noticing (and using) non-verbal cues; asking open-ended questions; paraphrasing, summarizing, and reflecting back what has been said; acknowledging emotions; holding back one's own responses; and withholding judgement.

ANNAN PLAN. A proposal put forth by the United Nations to resolve the conflict in Cyprus, named after then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Put to a referendum in 2004 after several revisions, it was supported by 65% of Turkish Cypriots and 24% of Greek Cypriots.

BIZONAL BICOMMUNAL FEDERATION. A federation comprising a federal government with a single international personality and single citizenship, along with a Turkish Cypriot constituent state and a Greek Cypriot constituent state, which are of equal status. The constituent states are grounded in different geographical regions (hence 'bizonal') and are led by administrations led by the respective community (hence 'bicom-munal').

BUFFER ZONE. A neutral area controlled by the United Nations running across Cyprus that serves to separate the northern and southern regions of the island, in which respectively the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities live. It extends approximately 180 km across Cyprus and is also referred to as the 'Green Line' or the ceasefire line.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES. Broadly defined as measures that address, prevent, or resolve uncertainties among parties in conflict. Designed to prevent escalations of hostilities, build mutual trust, and reduce the level of fear and suspicion among parties in conflict, such measures can be formal or informal; unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral; military, diplomatic, cultural, political, or social; can be state-to-state, non-governmental or between the leadership of different actors. They may be used to create points of contacts and interaction between parties in con-

flict, and often serve to reduce the level of fear and suspicion among them.

DEALING WITH THE PAST. A holistic approach to addressing a legacy of past violence and human rights abuses by undertaking efforts in four areas – the right to know, the right to justice, the right to reparation and the guarantee of non-recurrence – as part of a long-term process that seeks to establish a culture of accountability, the rule of law and reconciliation.

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN GAS FORUM. An international organization established by Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and Palestine, which formally came into being in September 2020 and is headquartered in Egypt. The European Union and the United Arab Emirates are permanent observers. Also known as EastMed Gas Forum or EastMed.

ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT RECOGNITION. Term referring to the practice whereby states and international bodies like the EU interact with a contested or de facto state – a state that has unilaterally declared independence but is not a member of the UN- without such interaction constituting formal recognition of the entity.

ERASMUS PROGRAMME. European Union programme established in 1987 offering university students a possibility of studying or doing an internship abroad in another country for a period of

at least 2 months and maximum 12 months.

ESCROW ACCOUNT. An account where funds are temporarily held in trust by a third party whilst two or more parties complete a transaction or until a particular condition has been met.

EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE. An area of the sea in which a sovereign state has special rights over the exploration and exploitation of marine resources, including energy production from water, currents and wind, which stretches from the outer limit of the territorial sea to 200 nautical miles from the shore.

FEDERATION. A system of government in which the different states or provinces of the country have their own organs of governance (legislative, executive, judicial), so they have important powers to make their own laws within the scope of competences granted to them by the central federal constitution.

GOOD OFFICES. A broad term for any third-party assistance given to conflicting parties to help them find a solution to their problems, which can take various forms (including, but not limited to, mediation, advising parties to a conflict or governments, carrying messages between opposing sides, facilitating contact or dialogue between groups, or providing specialized expertise to discussions, etc.). In the context of the UN, the use of 'good offices' is a vital role played by the Sec-

Glossary

Cyprus-related terms

Secretary-General. It involves steps taken publicly and in private, drawing upon the Secretary-General's independence, impartiality, and integrity, to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating, or spreading. The SG's good offices and mediation roles can be set in motion at the Secretary-General's own initiative, in response to a request from one or more of the parties to a dispute, or because of a request from the Security Council or the General Assembly.

GREEN LINE. Term referring to the Buffer Zone controlled by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus which divides the island into a northern and southern region. It does not constitute an external border of the European Union and is also referred to as the ceasefire line.

GREEN LINE REGULATION. Regulation from the European Union (Council Regulation 866/2004) that sets out the terms under which persons and goods can cross the Green Line from the areas in the north that are not controlled by the Republic of Cyprus government into the areas that are controlled by this government.

GUARANTORS. States that, by treaty, undertake to guarantee the independence, territorial integrity, and security of Cyprus and not to promote the union of Cyprus with other states or partition of the island. The guarantors of Cyprus are Greece, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom, ac-

ording to the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee (signed simultaneously with the Treaty of Establishment and the Treaty of Alliance at the time of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus).

IMMOVABLE PROPERTY COMMISSION. Body set up in the northern part of Cyprus by the Turkish Cypriot leadership in accordance with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Xenides-Arestis v. Türkiye*, so as to establish an effective domestic remedy for claims relating to affected properties in the north. The body examines claims for restitution, compensation and exchange and was recognized by the ECHR as an effective remedy in 2010.

INCLUSIVITY. Defined by the UN as the extent and manner in which the views and needs of parties to conflict and other stakeholders are represented, heard and integrated into a peace process (UN Security Council, *Peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 8 October 2012, A/67/499-S/2012/746).

MISSION OF GOOD OFFICES. Also referred to as the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Cyprus, which is led by the UN Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on Cyprus and mandated to support the two sides in the search for a comprehensive and mutually acceptable settlement to the Cyprus problem.

MIGRANT. A person who moves away from their

place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.

NON-ENCROACHMENT PRINCIPLE. Principle relating to federal and constituent state competencies, meaning that the federal government cannot impose policies on the constituent states and vice versa.

PEACE DIVIDEND. Term that refers to the economic boost that a country is likely to get when a conflict is resolved, amongst others from lower defence spending. In the context of Cyprus, it can be understood as the difference between economic activity with a solution and without a solution to the Cyprus problem.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE. Considers a criminal act as a violation of people and relationships rather than primarily as a violation of a rule or statute. Focuses on healing victims' wounds, repairing harm done to interpersonal relationships and the community, and preventing similar harms from happening in the future. Supporting meaningful engagement and accountability, it seeks to include those most affected in the justice process (victims and survivors), while offenders are encouraged to understand the harm they have caused and to take responsibility for it. There is no one set way of 'doing' restorative justice, it may take various forms, including victim-offend-

er mediation, talking circles, restorative justice conference, etc. .

TECHNICAL COMMITTEES. Bicomunal technical bodies established by the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities under the auspices of the United Nations, to address issues that affect the day-to-day life of people in Cyprus, through encouraging and facilitating greater interaction and understanding between the two communities. As of October 2022, there are twelve technical committees (on broadcasting and telecommunications, crime and criminal matters, crisis management, crossing points, cultural heritage, culture, economic and commercial matters, education, environment, gender equality, health, and humanitarian affairs). Not all technical committees are active in late 2022.

UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN CYPRUS. Peacekeeping force of the United Nations, which has been in place on the island since 1964 after the outbreak of inter-communal violence. It is tasked with preventing a recurrence of fighting, contributing to a return to normal conditions and the maintenance of law and order (Security Council Resolution 186, 1964)

POSSIBLE FUTURES OF CYPRUS

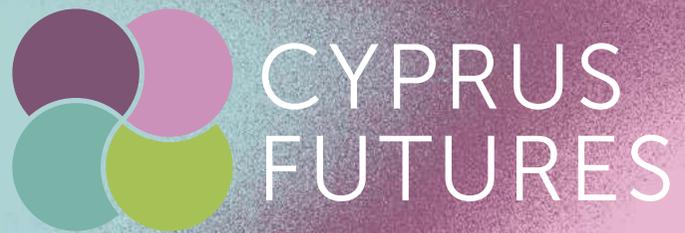
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The Cyprus Futures scenarios were developed by a diverse group of 36 Cypriots, who each invested over 15 days of their time on a volunteer basis. The group was facilitated by Reos Partners, using an internationally validated methodology. The project was supported by PRIO Cyprus Centre and Result Mediation Foundation. Funding was provided by the governments of the Netherlands, Norway (via PRIO), and Finland.

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