

UEF Federal Committee Report
November 2025

Cyprus
and the
EU Presidency

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Union of European Federalists
Union Europäischer Föderalisten
Union des Fédéralistes Européens

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The Context

As Cyprus prepares to assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in January 2026, the Union of European Federalists (UEF) and the Spinelli Group have launched a dedicated reflection on the country's priorities, perspectives, and strategic role in shaping the future of European integration. This report gathers insights from Cypriot leaders and policymakers in order to assess how Cyprus views the challenges and opportunities ahead for the Union, and how its presidency can contribute to a stronger, more democratic, and more effective Europe.

Cyprus occupies a unique geopolitical position at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East, and the Eastern Mediterranean — a region marked by instability, energy competition, and evolving security dynamics. At a time of profound global uncertainty, the upcoming Cypriot Presidency provides a crucial link between the EU and its neighbourhood.

To ensure that the perspectives of Cyprus are accurately reflected in the deliberations of the European Federal Committee, the UEF invited prominent Cypriot figures to contribute to a structured questionnaire addressing five core dimensions: the impact of EU membership more than 20 years after accession; the strategic priorities of the forthcoming Presidency; the role of Cyprus in regional cooperation; the country's position on EU Treaty reform and deeper integration; and the importance of strengthening dialogue with civil society.

The Union of European Federalists — founded in 1946 as a pan-European civil society organisation advocating for a democratic and federal Europe — and the Spinelli Group — the network of pro-European Members of the European Parliament committed to advancing European integration — jointly support this effort to bring national perspectives into the broader European debate on institutional reform and the future of the Union.

The contributions collected through this questionnaire are presented and discussed at the next meeting of the European Federal Committee in Athens on 21–23 November 2025. They aim to highlight how Cyprus can act as a constructive driver of European integration, particularly at a time when renewed geopolitical pressures underscore the necessity of a more united, autonomous, and resilient European Union.

Introductory remarks

Why a Report on the Cyprus Presidency

In 2024, UEF organized events assessing the results of 20 years of accession to the EU by countries of central and eastern Europe. In view of the next Cypriot presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first semester of 2026, UEF decided to extend the evaluation of the accession of Cyprus considering the geographic situation of the island, the lack of progress on the Cypriot national problem and the sensitive political situation in the Middle East. For this purpose, a short questionnaire was sent in October to 10 main political leaders who hold or have held institutional positions from different political families requesting them to evaluate the political, financial and societal impact of 20 years of EU membership in Cyprus. The aim was to assess the involvement of civil society in the public debate, to identify what the main political challenges for the future are, to take position on Treaty reforms and on the need for deepening the Union towards a European federation.

Based on the replies received, we can notice the progress made on the functioning of democracy and the institutions, on human rights aspect, the rule of law as well as on a more active participation of civil society in the public dialogue. Concerning the Russian aggression and the war in Ukraine, Cyprus, despite historical relations with Russia since its independence, unanimously condemned the violation of territorial integrity of a sovereign country and reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion of peace and respect of international law, underlining the importance of European unity towards support of Ukrainian accession to the Union.

Cyprus supports actions for a common and effective EU defense and security policy, stressing the need for a holistic approach towards external threats. Reflecting the geographical situation of the country in a very sensitive area, Cypriot leaders reaffirm their will to work towards a strong Europe Mediterranean cooperation, promote peace and improve cooperation in particular on education, environment and cultural exchange. Despite the importance attached to deepening the European integration, the reluctance persists on sensitive security issues where the veto and the recourse to unanimity are seen as still necessary.

It is important to also underline the will expressed by Cypriot leaders to improve dialogue and wider consultation with citizens on European topics, fight disinformation and toxic anti-european narratives.

Based on the current pilot experience, UEF should develop further this kind of questionnaire with forthcoming presidencies of the Council and extend the number of consulted people to local civil society and other professional associations and bodies.

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all Cypriot leaders and in particular to the President of Cyprus who took the time to reply to the questionnaire, reaffirming the will of Cypriot citizens to actively support initiatives and actions aimed at deepening the European integration.

Daphne Gogou

Executive Bureau Member - Union of European Federalists (UEF)

Neophytos Aristodemou

Secretary General – UEF Greece

The questionnaire

Considering the unique geopolitical position of your country, particularly during this extremely turbulent period for the Eastern Mediterranean region, the questions for which we would like to have your views aim to capture the priorities of Cyprus's upcoming EU Presidency, the impact of more than 20 years EU membership, the role that Cyprus could play in the context of the regional dynamics, the importance of constitutional changes and Treaty reform for your country, as well as the importance of the participation of civil society to the EU policy developments:

- 1. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. More than 20 years have passed since the EU accession, how would you assess the impact of EU membership on Cyprus and its citizens (e.g. on institutions, society, economy etc)?***
- 2. A few months prior to Cyprus assuming the EU Presidency, and having in mind the current difficult global geopolitical situation, which initiatives should be for you the focal points of the Cypriot presidency?***
- 3. How could Cyprus contribute to reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region?***
- 4. In November 2023, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution - backed by the five major political families - calling for deeper European integration and a revision of the Treaties. Do you believe Cyprus should be among the Member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic European Union in the years ahead?***
- 5. Civil society organisations are vital for shaping the future of European integration. What measures do you consider essential to foster and enhance meaningful dialogue with civil society actors in Cyprus?***



NIKOS CHRISTODOULIDES

*President of the
Republic of Cyprus*

Nikos Christodoulides was born on 6 December 1973 in Paphos.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Economics, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies from the City University of New York, Queens College, and a Master's degree in Political Science from New York University. He holds a doctorate from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the University of Athens.

He was a career diplomat between 1999 and 2018. During this time, he served, inter alia, as Consul General at the High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus in the United Kingdom, as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Cyprus in Greece and as Spokesperson of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU at the Permanent Mission of Cyprus in Brussels.

He also served as Director of the Diplomatic Office of the President of the Republic of Cyprus (2013-2018) and as Government Spokesman (2014-2018). On 1st March 2018 he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, a position which he held until his resignation on 11 January 2022.

Between 2007 and 2010 he was a Lecturer and Research Associate at the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Cyprus in the subject of History of the Postwar World. He is the author of the books Plans for Solution of the Cyprus Problem 1948-1978 (2009), Relations between Athens and Nicosia and the Cyprus Problem, 1977-1988 (2013), and Geopolitical Realities in the Plans for Solution of the Cyprus Problem 1948-1978 (2021).

On February 12, 2023, he won the Presidential Elections with a percentage of 51.97% and assumed his duties as the 8th President of the Republic of Cyprus.

He is married to Philippa Karsera and has four daughters, Ioanna, Ekaterini, Despina-Maria, and Phoebe.

I. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. More than 20 years have passed since the EU accession, how would you assess the impact of EU membership on Cyprus and its citizens (e.g. on institutions, society, economy etc)?

There is overwhelming political consensus, shared also by our citizens, that EU accession in 2004 was our most important national achievement since we gained independence in 1960. I fully share this view. Our accession to the EU was a groundbreaking development for the political, social and economic reality of Cyprus.

Joining the EU was the result of a determined national effort to place Cyprus where it naturally belongs; in the European family. A strategic milestone reflecting our commitment to peace, stability, prosperity and EU values.

Our EU membership anchored Cyprus in stability, despite the continuing division and military occupation caused by the Turkish invasion of 1974. As President, I can say it strengthened us politically and diplomatically, giving the Republic of Cyprus a voice in shaping Europe's future.

Throughout these 20-plus years, we have deepened our European identity, strengthened our institutions and rule of law, and created new opportunities for growth. We enhanced economic competitiveness, attracted investment, and opened opportunities for Cypriots across Europe. In parallel, we have reinforced our participation in EU decision-making, fully acknowledging that this is the way to better serve our citizens but also the overall good of our Union.

Today, the positive impact of our accession to the EU is clearly visible in daily life; better infrastructure, environmental standards, higher education, research and innovation. And personally, I am proud of this journey and its results, as we continue on this path of furthering our European integration and reinforcing our Union as a whole.

2. A few months prior to Cyprus assuming the EU Presidency, and having in mind the current difficult global geopolitical situation, which initiatives should be for you the focal points of the Cypriot presidency?

We assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in a little over one month, at a critical moment when Europe is faced with simultaneous challenges; a war on the continent, regional instability and global uncertainty. At a moment when EU unity needs to be safeguarded the most, we will work towards achieving more integration, greater strategic autonomy, and a stronger global presence for the EU. In this context, we will prioritize enhancing our collective defense and security, boosting competitiveness and defending our core values: democracy, rule of law and human rights.

In addition to this, unwavering support for Ukraine remains central and we will work with Member States and institutions to contribute to a comprehensive and lasting peace.

We will also work together with the institutions and all Member States to bring the EU closer to the Southern Neighbourhood. The EU needs to strengthen its engagement with the wider region, including Gulf States and regional organizations, and the recently adopted Pact for the Mediterranean is a key tool towards this direction.

My government will support progress on Enlargement, as it is a geopolitical project with transformative power, also directly related to the EU's competitiveness. At the same time, Enlargement must remain a merit-based process.

We will advance the work on a coordinated and effective approach to migration and border management, and the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum by June 2026 remains central.

Last but definitely not least, our next EU budget 2028-34 (MFF) will need to reflect all of the above priorities. Our aim is to move the MFF negotiations forward, with a view to an agreement by the end of 2026.

3. How could Cyprus contribute to reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region?

The EU and its Southern Neighbourhood share geography and historical ties, and face common challenges. As President, I believe that this shared space demands strategic vision and collective action. The Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU will support efforts to advance and deepen the EU's agenda with regard to Middle East and Gulf partners, building on the Republic of Cyprus' strategic role as the EU's gateway and foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean, and its strong bilateral relations with Southern Neighbourhood members. In this context, my Government welcomes the adoption of the New Pact for the Mediterranean as a key policy instrument in strengthening the EU's engagement with the region, including with GCC partners.

Cyprus will aim for tangible and meaningful deliverables to showcase the importance and the strength of the EU's Southern Neighbourhood Policy, including through the rollout of the Pact, also in view of the discussions for the adoption of the new MFF. Our approach will be pragmatic, ambitious, and aligned with Europe's strategic interests.

Furthermore, building on the historic first European Union–Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in 2024, a linchpin in our shared vision for peace, security and stability in the EU and the Middle East, the Presidency aims to support continued engagement and practical cooperation ahead of the 2026 Second EU–GCC Summit. As the Republic of Cyprus, a trusted partner in the region, we are committed to reinforcing this momentum.

4. In November 2023, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution - backed by the five major political families - calling for deeper European integration and a revision of the Treaties. Do you believe Cyprus should be among the Member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic European Union in the years ahead?

Cyprus was and will continue to be, especially during our upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU, committed to championing a more united, secure, autonomous and competitive EU. Our Union needs deeper integration and must prepare for enlargement, while preserving its unity but also trust, dialogue and mutual respect between its current and future Member States. It is important to safeguard and support greater efficiency and the EU's capacity to act fast, while preserving the core of our strength, especially under current geopolitical circumstances: unity, and the consensus build on trust, dialogue and mutual respect.

5. Civil society organisations are vital for shaping the future of European integration. What measures do you consider essential to foster and enhance meaningful dialogue with civil society actors in Cyprus?

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus actively supports a strong and vibrant civil society, as an indispensable pillar of a democratic society. As President, I maintain an open and productive dialogue with civil society, including on issues related to the EU. We have engaged closely with civil society also in view of the upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU, within the framework of an open and inclusive process that shaped and enriched our Presidency Program. Their input is not only valued but essential. A number of events engaging civil society will be organized in Cyprus during our Presidency, further strengthening democratic participation and consolidating a powerful legacy for the future.



DR. CONSTANTINOS KOMBOS

*Minister of Foreign Affairs
of Republic of Cyprus*

Dr. Constantinos Kombos was born in 1976 in Lemesos, Cyprus.

He has studied Law and holds a postgraduate degree in EU Law (LLM University of Cambridge) as well as a PhD in European Constitutional Law (PhD University of Hull).

He was elected at the Department of Law of the University of Cyprus in 2006, of which he is a founding member.

He has served as chairman of the Law Department and as member of the Senate. He has published 6 books and numerous articles and chapters in scientific magazines and collective volumes. Part of his work has been translated and published in 6 languages. He has also participated and delivered speeches in numerous international conferences.

He was appointed member of the Board of Judges by the Supreme Court. On behalf of the Republic of Cyprus he appeared before the Court of Justice of the European Union and has made recommendations to the House of Representatives on issues of EU Law and the Cyprus Constitution.

He was appointed member of the Cyprus Problem negotiating team in 2014 and has participated in all stages and levels of the negotiation process, Geneva I, Crans-Montana, Geneva II.

I. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. More than 20 years have passed since the EU accession, how would you assess the impact of EU membership on Cyprus and its citizens (e.g. on institutions, society, economy etc)?

Undoubtedly, the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union constitutes one of the greatest achievements in its history.

Our accession to the European Union has granted Cyprus the place it rightfully deserves—among the other Member States that share Europe’s history, its founding principles, and its fundamental values.

From the very outset of its accession, the Republic of Cyprus has fully risen to the responsibilities inherent in the status of a Member State of the European Union, while at the same time reaping the benefits that such membership confers.

We have strengthened the resilience and competitiveness of our economy, bolstered our business sector, and attracted new investments, while simultaneously seizing emerging opportunities throughout Europe and beyond. We have effectively implemented the fundamental freedoms of the Union, incorporated the European acquis into our national legal order, and further consolidated the rule of law domestically. We have advanced our infrastructure, progressed in environmental protection, higher education, research and innovation.

Since its accession, Cyprus has undertaken numerous development projects, funded by the European Union, covering a wide range of sectors, always with the ultimate beneficiary being the Cypriot citizen, a citizen of EU.

2. A few months prior to Cyprus assuming the EU Presidency, and having in mind the current difficult global geopolitical situation, which initiatives should be for you the focal points of the Cypriot presidency?

Indeed, geopolitical developments are numerous, rapid, and demand constant vigilance and preparedness. The European Union must be equipped to respond to any eventuality, and as the Presidency, we are firmly committed to advancing the EU's strategic autonomy. Autonomy in defense, energy, and other critical areas is essential to prevent the Union from becoming vulnerable to external pressures or unforeseen events.

Defense readiness, along with initiatives such as the EDIP and SAFE programs, represents key legislation that we, as Presidency, will work to further develop and implement. Equally, maritime security remains a top priority for us.

Support for Ukraine continues to be of paramount importance, reflecting both our own experience as a country that has suffered foreign invasion and occupation.

The Republic of Cyprus will be working closely with the High Representative of the European Union and the EU institutions to establish and deepen partnerships with countries of the Gulf region and relevant regional international organizations. Simultaneously, we aim to strengthen the EU's Southern Neighborhood, with the new Pact for the Mediterranean serving as a key instrument in this regard.

Furthermore, as Presidency, we fully support the EU enlargement process, based on the satisfaction of the relevant accession criteria and in a merit-based process.

Finally, we intend to work on a coordinated and effective approach to migration and border management, including the full implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum by June 2026, given that it constitutes one of the most pressing challenges facing the European Union as a whole.

3. How could Cyprus contribute to reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region?

Cyprus is uniquely positioned to play a leading role in reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the European Union and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. This is first and foremost due to our geographic location: as the easternmost corner of the EU, we stand at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Moreover, Cyprus maintains excellent diplomatic relations with the Gulf states as well as with countries of the Southern Neighborhood. As both an EU Member State and a country of the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus possesses a deep understanding of the dynamics, priorities, and interests of both the Union and the region. In this capacity, our Presidency can act as a bridge, fostering dialogue, partnership, and enhanced cooperation between the EU and the Gulf states, as well as the broader Eastern Mediterranean region.

Building on this, the Cyprus Presidency, in close cooperation with the High Representative, will advance the EU's agenda with Middle East and Gulf partners. The New Pact for the Mediterranean is, for us, a very welcome initiative.

Moreover, the Cyprus Presidency remains committed to fostering intercultural and interfaith dialogue as an essential instrument for promoting mutual understanding, social cohesion, and regional stability within the EU's Southern Neighbourhood.

Through these coordinated efforts, Cyprus aims to consolidate its role as a strategic partner and facilitator, enhancing collaboration between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region for the benefit of both the Union and its neighbors.

4. In November 2023, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution - backed by the five major political families - calling for deeper European integration and a revision of the Treaties. Do you believe Cyprus should be among the Member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic European Union in the years ahead?

Cyprus firmly supports a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic Europe. Cooperation among Member States must be deepened and advanced to a higher level to ensure that the European Union attains the strategic autonomy required to respond effectively to all challenges, whether internal or external.

However, any further integration or expansion of cooperation should proceed through careful, measured, and deliberate steps, thereby safeguarding both the security of existing Member States and the prospects of future enlargements for countries aspiring to join the Union.

Similarly, any legislative reforms must be meticulously designed to provide flexibility and adaptability, without being adopted under pressure or creating divisions, thereby preserving and strengthening the sense of shared responsibility that is fundamental to the Union's cohesion and resilience.

5. Civil society organisations are vital for shaping the future of European integration. What measures do you consider essential to foster and enhance meaningful dialogue with civil society actors in Cyprus?

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus is firmly committed to fostering a strong, dynamic, and inclusive civil society, recognizing it as an indispensable pillar of a healthy democracy. We maintain an open, constructive, and continuous dialogue with civil society actors, particularly on matters related to the European Union, ensuring that their perspectives are consistently heard and taken into account in policymaking.

In preparation for our upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union, we have actively engaged with civil society within the framework of a transparent and participatory process, which has been instrumental in shaping the priorities and objectives of our Presidency Programme. The insights and expertise of civil society actors are decisive to ensuring that our agenda is responsive, inclusive, and reflective of the broader interests of society.

During our Presidency, a series of events and initiatives will be organized to further strengthen engagement with civil society, fostering meaningful dialogue and collaboration. These efforts aim to leave a lasting legacy of strengthened

partnerships between the government, civil society, and EU institutions, consolidating Cyprus's commitment to participatory governance and to the principles of transparency, inclusiveness, and civic empowerment.



DR. ERATO KOZAKOU MARCOULLIS

*Former Minister of Foreign Affairs
of Republic of Cyprus*

Dr. Marcoullis served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Transport, Communications and Works of the Republic of Cyprus, (between 2007 and 2013).

During her diplomatic career (between 1980 and 2007), she served as Ambassador to Sweden, with concurrent accreditation to Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Ambassador to the United States of America, with concurrent accreditation to Canada, Guyana, Jamaica and Brazil and Ambassador to Lebanon and Jordan.

Dr. Marcoullis served as member of the Greek Cypriot (GC) Negotiating Team and Head of the GC Working Group on Property in the negotiations for the solution of the Cyprus Problem. Dr. Marcoullis is very active in several Bicomunal Peace and Women's initiatives. Dr. Kozakou Marcoullis holds Degrees in Law, Public Law and Political Science from the University of Athens and a PhD in Sociology and Political Science from the University of Helsinki. She is an Honorary Fellow of the Law School of UCLan Cyprus.

She has lectured extensively in Universities and Think Tanks around the world, granted interviews to numerous international and Cypriot Media and published papers and articles on the Cyprus Problem, Foreign Policy, Cultural Diplomacy, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Hydrocarbon discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean etc. Dr. Marcoullis has also received many Honours and Awards in Cyprus and abroad. She is a Member of the Board /Directors of various academic, research and Cultural Institutions in Cyprus and abroad, including the Cyprus Institute, the SDSN-Cyprus Leadership Council, the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy etc.

I. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. More than 20 years have passed since the EU accession, how would you assess the impact of EU membership on Cyprus and its citizens (e.g. on institutions, society, economy etc)?

On May 1, 2004, Cyprus embarked on a new historical path with its accession to the EU, to which it belongs historically, culturally, and in terms of principles and values. However, a country's accession does not automatically mean that it will adapt to the behavior of EU states and peoples. Legislation is harmonized, but a huge collective effort is required to bring about a change in attitudes through the *acquis communautaire*. In the more than 21 years since our accession, I believe that much has been achieved and that our participation in the various institutions has been constructive. Let us not forget that in the second half of 2012 we had a very successful Presidency of the Council of the EU, for which we received much praise. Today we are preparing to start the second Presidency of the Council of the EU and contribute towards furthering the common European objectives. However, there is still much to be done, both in terms of informing citizens about EU policies, so that they do not feel alienated from European affairs, and

in terms of our participation in EU actions, through the development of initiatives and alliances. The government and the House of Representatives have the primary responsibility to inform citizens at all levels of society, about all EU policies and legislation that affect their lives. Teaching about the EU, its institutions, its values and its policies, should start at an early stage and should be included in at least the secondary education curriculum. Frequent information campaigns and public discussions should be organized on issues like the economy, gender equality, workers' rights, climate change, corruption, the rule of law etc, where citizens, local authorities, women's and youth organizations and others could participate. Cooperation with the media could broaden the scope of such campaigns to reach out to both rural and urban areas.

2. A few months prior to Cyprus assuming the EU Presidency, and having in mind the current difficult global geopolitical situation, which initiatives should be for you the focal points of the Cypriot presidency?

The Cyprus Presidency has already decided on its priorities, within which it will undertake several initiatives. On the basis and within the scope of those Priorities, the Cyprus Presidency Cyprus could promote the need for a more active role of the EU in the international scene, in the areas of peace and security and defending the rule of law in international relations. Taking into account the very volatile situation we live in, the dismantling of international law and the attacks on international organizations, the EU

should take the lead in the effort to restore the international legal order and strengthen the role and credibility of the United Nations. The EU should also be in the vanguard of peace and in collaboration with countries in the region of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, should undertake initiatives to promote respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

3. How could Cyprus contribute to reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region?

There are a number of long standing collaborations of Cyprus with many countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, but most of these collaborations are based on a bilateral or trilateral relationship. There are also intergovernmental organizations like the Anna Lind Foundation, the Union for the Mediterranean and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process), that Cyprus already participates, but to my mind not at a satisfactory level and engagement. I believe that Cyprus could and should take a more active role in its membership in these organizations and undertake several initiatives to promote a stronger collaboration of the countries in the region in areas such as energy, water, climate change and cultural heritage. Cyprus should have as its highest priority the solution of the Cyprus problem, which would remove a big obstacle (the ongoing Turkish occupation of Cyprus territory) and open the way for the participation of all countries of the region (including Turkey), in such collaborations, to the benefit of peace and prosperity of all countries and peoples of the region.

4. In November 2023, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution - backed by the five major political families - calling for deeper European integration and a revision of the Treaties. Do you believe Cyprus should be among the Member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic European Union in the years ahead?

I am a strong believer in the deeper European integration and the revision of the Treaties. Especially today, with all the international turmoil surrounding us, the growing mistrust and polarization, the dismantling of the international legal system and the real threats targeting democracy, the sovereignty of states and their

economic stability, the future lies in uniting forces and strengthening bonds to make a more integrated Europe. As a small country, Cyprus stands to benefit from a more united, autonomous, secure and democratic European Union moving towards a federal structure. Cyprus should work closer with countries that are at the core of the “Group of the Future” and become an active supporter of the federal idea.

5. Civil society organisations are vital for shaping the future of European integration. What measures do you consider essential to foster and enhance meaningful dialogue with civil society actors in Cyprus?

In Cyprus there is a lack of awareness of even the basic elements of the functioning of the European Union and there is limited debate on issues of the EU agenda, let alone such more complex issues as shaping the future of European integration. It would be very important for political parties, trade unions, teachers unions, mass media and professional and civil society organizations to take the lead in an information campaign throughout the country, to inform citizens about the EU in general and the benefits that a federal Europe could bring to EU citizens for their security, more and better democratic functioning, a more stable economy and a stronger coordination for a more uniform implementation of important EU policies. A representative group of dedicated personalities from all these sectors should be formed and act as the leading advocate of the federal idea and seek to get the support of as many members of these organizations as possible. Since this could be a long process that might necessitate funding, a fund should be established accepting donations to support the cause. Advice and assistance should be sought from similar organizations functioning in other EU countries, to act as best practices and an example of how such an objective could be achieved.



MARKOS KYPRIANOU

*Former Minister of Finance and
EU Commissioner*

Markos Kyprianou studied Law at the Law School of the University of Athens. He attended graduate studies at Trinity College, Cambridge University, and was awarded an LLM. He continued his studies at Harvard Law School and was also awarded an LLM. Thereafter, he worked as a trainee at the Human Rights Commission of the Council of Europe and carried out research in International Law at the University of Cambridge.

He entered politics at very young age. He has served as Municipal Councillor for the City of Nicosia. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1991 under the banner of the Democratic Party and was re-elected in 1996 and in 2001. He has chaired the House Committee on Financial and Budgetary Affairs as well as acting as Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

He took over as Minister of Finance in 2003. When the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU on 1st May 2004, he was appointed as the first Cypriot EU Commissioner shadowing budgetary affairs. On November 2004 he was reappointed to the EU Commission in charge of health and consumer protection. He served as Foreign Minister from March 2008 to August 2011. In February 2014 he was elected as Deputy President of the Democratic Party of Cyprus. His term ended in 2018.

Since then he has returned to the private sector and is practicing Law. He is also guest lecturer at the University of Nicosia in International Relations and European Studies

I. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. More than 20 years have passed since the EU accession, how would you assess the impact of EU membership on Cyprus and its citizens (e.g. on institutions, society, economy etc)?

While it is true that Cypriots had different expectations from the EU membership, depending on their priorities and previous level of engagement with European affairs, the vast majority feel that they have benefited overall. Membership has provided stability and a sense of security for a small state situated away from continental Europe.

The adoption of the euro has definitely improved economic stability and development and various EU regulations have contributed to an improvement of the quality of life. For example those on food safety and consumer protection guarantee the wellbeing of Europeans in their everyday lives.

At the same time, Cypriots has occasionally felt neglected by the European Union. The 2013 financial crisis, including the bank deposit “haircut” imposed by the EU— the only one of its kind to take place in the EU — left a bitter taste regarding expectations of EU support in financial matters. Nevertheless, Cyprus benefited from the financial programs that followed, helping to stabilise and grow its economy.

On security, given that the biggest threat for Cyprus remains Turkey, Cypriots perceive a double standard in the EU's approach. While the EU and partner countries are assertive towards Russia, they often seem, influenced by other interests and priorities, to overlook the ongoing occupation of part of a member state and the continuous threats by Turkey. Furthermore, the Cypriots expected the EU to be more active and engaged in a tangible way in the efforts for the solution of the Cyprus Problem.

2. A few months prior to Cyprus assuming the EU Presidency, and having in mind the current difficult global geopolitical situation, which initiatives should be for you the focal points of the Cypriot presidency?

First of all the Cypriot presidency will have to continue the work of its predecessor on ongoing files, while also initiating discussions on new proposals presented by the European Commission. Key areas of focus will likely include defence and the multiannual financial framework. Enlargement should also remain on the agenda, depending on the European Council's positions in December. And the control of illegal migration will also remain a priority.

Mitigation of the climate change should always be pursued, despite a growing reluctance among certain member states and political groups. Extreme temperatures, droughts and desertification are serious threats for the southern EU countries.

And of course the Mediterranean in general should be one of the main priorities, and I would hope with greater political involvement not just immigration, trade and economy.

3. How could Cyprus contribute to reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region?

As I have hinted above, Cyprus can play a key role in encouraging the EU to be more active and involved in peace processes in the Middle East, particularly regarding the Gaza crisis. Given its geographical position and understanding of regional dynamics, Cyprus can collaborate with partner countries in the region, helping the EU reassert its role as a global player with political initiatives in the Middle East demonstrating its commitment to stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Commission has now presented the "Pact for the Mediterranean". Prioritising the relations with the EU's southern neighbours is crucial in view of growing common threats and challenges. The next step is for the projects proposed in the Pact to begin materialising so as to transform words into deeds, especially in the important areas of decarbonisation, climate change, renewable energy, water scarcity and disaster preparedness. And closer cooperation on migration will be extremely important.

4. In November 2023, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution - backed by the five major political families - calling for deeper European integration and a revision of the Treaties. Do you believe Cyprus should be among the Member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic European Union in the years ahead?

I fully support greater European integration, which should be the goal for all member states. However, any revision of the European Treaties carries significant risks, especially given the current political climate across the EU. We should remember the rejection of the proposed European Constitution by France and the Netherlands in separate referenda, not so long ago. At this stage, reopening the treaties could backfire.

In my view, the existing treaties provide sufficient base for advancing EU integration. The key issue is not legal but political: it requires the political will to act. Therefore, the focus during the Cypriot Presidency should be on fostering greater ambition for integration and to cultivate the necessary public support, for example by addressing threats to democracy, the rule of law, and other challenges within member states.

In this respect it is essential to take cue from the recent European Council and prioritise policies that impact the everyday lives of Europeans (such as housing and cost of living), demonstrating in a tangible manner the advantages of the EU and the benefits of EU membership, while addressing and allaying citizens' concerns that European priorities are increasingly detached from the realities they face.

Furthermore, the EU's "sovereign autonomy" must remain a target. Overdependence on third countries in security, trade and technology weakens the EU. While enhancing and strengthening our close ties with our allies, we must be able to also stand alone. Obviously, the first step in this process is to achieve a common view and the necessary unity among the member states.

5. Civil society organisations are vital for shaping the future of European integration. What measures do you consider essential to foster and enhance meaningful dialogue with civil society actors in Cyprus?

I completely agree that civil society is crucial for the future of Europe. Its feedback helps decision-makers align policies with the needs and priorities of European citizens. However, it is important not to limit dialogue to the usual civil society groups, already engaged with European issues, which are by definition pro-EU. Or discuss a specific policy with a "single issue" organisation that will naturally be supportive. The conversation should be expanded to include other parts of society that are less involved with the EU and even sceptical. This will not only provide valuable feedback but also build broader support for the EU policies and even for deeper integration.

We should remember that we live in an era of revived nationalism and citizen scepticism, where Europeans often feel that the EU is disconnected from their everyday problems, focusing instead on high-level politics. Engaging European (and obviously Cypriot) society more widely will provide a reality check for both member state governments and European institutions, helping them address the challenges citizens face in their daily lives and reinforcing public trust.



LILLIKAS YIORGOS

Political Scientist

Former Elected Member of the House of Representatives

Yiorgos Lillikas, originally from Panagia in the Pafos district, is a prominent Cypriot political figure with extensive experience in international affairs and European governance. He pursued his academic studies in France, earning diplomas in Political Science from the Institut d'Études Politiques of Lyon and Grenoble, along with a specialisation in the Arab world at the Middle East Research Centre. This academic foundation shaped the trajectory of his public and political career.

His early professional path included serving as Special Adviser to President George Vassiliou, before being elected to the House of Representatives in 1996. During his first mandate, he chaired the Parliamentary Committee on the Environment and participated in key committees on finance, energy, industry, tourism and education. He also led Cyprus' delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and was elected Vice-Chairman of its Political Affairs and Security Committee.

From 2003 onwards, Lillikas held several high-level governmental roles in the Republic of Cyprus. He served as Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism, later as Minister of Communications and Works, and eventually as Minister of Foreign Affairs under President Tassos Papadopoulos. In 2013, he ran as an independent candidate in the presidential elections and subsequently served as President of the Citizens' Alliance while also becoming a member of the National Council, the Republic's highest advisory body on the Cyprus issue.

Re-elected to the House of Representatives in 2016, he became Chairman of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs and represented Cyprus in various interparliamentary bodies, including COSAC, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the CFSP/CSDP Conference, and the Conference on Economic Governance (IPC SECG).

Alongside his political career, Lillikas founded and directed Marketway/Publicis Group, and served on the Board of Directors of ARCH Capital Group, listed on NASDAQ. He is the author of "The Solution of the Cyprus Problem: Realities, Dilemmas and Options" (2008) and is fluent in French and English.

1. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. More than 20 years have passed since the EU accession, how would you assess the impact of EU membership on Cyprus and its citizens (e.g. on institutions, society, economy etc)?

The accession of Cyprus to the European Union has, in my view, exerted a multifaceted influence across all sectors of societal activity and institutional organization. The adoption of the European *acquis* has consolidated the rule of law while simultaneously enhancing transparency and accountability in state operations and decision-making procedures. Furthermore, it has expanded the obligations of the state toward its citizens, through the introduction of stricter public health and food safety standards, as well as the upgrading of quality benchmarks. These developments have contributed decisively to the improvement of citizens' quality of life. The accession also broadened the labor market, offering new professional and mobility opportunities for young Cypriots, while strengthening the export capacity of Cypriot products. At a geopolitical level, EU membership has elevated the strategic importance of Cyprus, reinforcing its role as a regional actor. Nevertheless, there remains a degree of disappointment within society and among political forces regarding the limited effectiveness of the EU's contribution to the resolution of the Cyprus problem and the termination of the Turkish occupation. Expectations had been high that the Union would provide stronger support to Cyprus's efforts for liberation and reunification of the island on the basis of European principles and values.

2. A few months prior to Cyprus assuming the EU Presidency, and having in mind the current difficult global geopolitical situation, which initiatives should be for you the focal points of the Cypriot presidency?

The contemporary international and regional geopolitical environment has brought to the forefront several critical issues that European policy had long deferred. Foremost among these is the establishment of a genuinely unified European defense and security architecture that is both autonomous and independent. The war in Ukraine, combined with the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, served as a catalyst prompting the EU to take initial steps in this direction. Nevertheless, the path toward this goal remains complex and unfinished. I trust that the forthcoming Cypriot Presidency will contribute meaningfully to the design of a new European defense framework and a more dynamic and autonomous external policy, firmly grounded in the Union's founding principles and values. It is regrettable that the European Union has remained largely absent from developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East—regions of vital strategic importance. Equally concerning is the relative weakness and disengagement of the United Nations in recent years. The Cypriot Presidency could thus play a constructive role in promoting a comprehensive cooperation framework between the EU and the UN, aimed at reinforcing the latter's capacity to uphold international law and to mediate effectively in regional and bilateral conflicts.

3. How could Cyprus contribute to reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region?

Owing to its geographical position as the European Union's closest member state to the Middle East, Cyprus is ideally situated to assume an active role in promoting regional stability and dialogue. I believe that Cyprus could take the initiative to establish a permanent regional organization for cooperation and peace, encompassing all states of the region together with the European Union. Such an organization could serve as a platform for addressing transnational challenges—such as pandemics, climate change, and energy security—through jointly financed European programs. The development of shared infrastructure and common interests would, in turn, enhance stability, prosperity, and peace across the broader Eastern Mediterranean region.

4. In November 2023, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution - backed by the five major political families - calling for deeper European integration and a revision of the Treaties. Do you believe Cyprus should be among the Member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic European Union in the years ahead?

Indeed, I am convinced that the European Union must move toward greater autonomy and independence in the fields of common defense and foreign policy. From this perspective, I consider that the moment has arrived for Europe to take deliberate, strategic steps toward deeper integration, in line with the gradual federalization of the Union. The creation of the euro represented a significant milestone in this process. I fully acknowledge the reservations and difficulties that persist, particularly given the long-standing histories and strong national identities of the member states. Nevertheless, meaningful progress can and should be made to enhance the EU's role as a global actor and to consolidate its position as a model of democratic governance. Smaller member states, in particular, stand to benefit substantially from a stronger, more cohesive, and more integrated European Union. In this context, Cyprus could play an active part by promoting the revision and modernization of the Union's Treaties to meet contemporary challenges.

5. Civil society organisations are vital for shaping the future of European integration. What measures do you consider essential to foster and enhance meaningful dialogue with civil society actors in Cyprus?

Although there is frequent reference to the importance of societal engagement, in practice, limited progress has been achieved toward a more participatory form of democracy. Citizens increasingly seek not only to be informed but also to play an active role in the decision-making processes that directly affect them. The effective use of technology to facilitate genuine dialogue with citizens—prior to the adoption of decisions or legislation—would greatly enhance public trust in both European and national institutions. At present, many citizens feel that, even when invited to contribute, their views are not adequately taken into account. A shift toward greater inclusivity and participatory governance would therefore strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the European project.



CHRISTOS STYLIANIDES

Member of the Greek Parliament

*Minister of Maritime Affairs &
Insular Policy of Greece*

Former EU Commissioner

Christos Stylianides is a Member of the Greek Parliament since June 25, 2023 when he was elected with the New Democracy Party.

He served as Minister of Maritime Affairs & Insular Policy of Greece between September, 2023 to March, 2024. He also served as the first Minister of Climate Crisis & Civil Protection of Greece from September 2021 to May 2023.

Between 2014 and 2019 he was European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Management. During the same period he was EU Ebola Coordinator after his appointment by the European Council. He was characterized as the «humanitarian face of Europe» and he is considered the «architect» of rescEU, the bold initiative that upgraded significantly the European civil protection system.

In May 2021, he was appointed EU Special Envoy for Freedom or Religion or Belief (FoRB) until his appointment as Minister of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection of Greece.

He has been Visiting Professor in Practice at the Medical School of the University of Nicosia-Cyprus and served as Visiting Professor at the Department of Health Policy at the London School of Economics (LSE) in Great Britain and at the Ruhr Universität Research School of Germany.

I. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. More than 20 years have passed since accession. How would you assess the impact of EU membership on Cyprus and its citizens (e.g., institutions, society, economy, etc.)?

There is no doubt that the accession of Cyprus to the EU in 2004 was the most important achievement in the country's modern history. This achievement could not have been realised without the vital support of Greece. It has rightly been described as "the biggest diplomatic achievement of recent times." Its importance becomes even clearer when considering that the accession process was not smooth; on the contrary, it was achieved without first resolving the Cyprus problem—something initially demanded by most of our European partners. Overcoming these obstacles required substantial diplomatic effort, key and prudent strategic choices, skillful negotiation, and, above all, credible and convincing leadership in Nicosia and Athens—especially by President Glafkos Clerides and Prime Minister Costas Simitis.

Since joining the EU in 2004, Cyprus has benefited from integration into the European political system, stronger economic stability, participation in the EU Single Market, access to structural funding, political and diplomatic support, freedom of movement, and enhanced security, environmental, and consumer protections. EU membership has been a major pillar of Cyprus's development as a modern, service-based European economy.

Some of the most important benefits include:

1. **Economic growth and structural funding:** Cyprus has full access to EU structural and investment funds, supporting infrastructure upgrades, digital transformation, and environmental projects. Participation has also bolstered investor confidence and improved market access.
2. **Eurozone membership:** In 2008, Cyprus adopted the euro, leading to stronger monetary stability and deeper financial integration.
3. **Access to the Single Market:** This grants Cypriot companies access to more than 450 million consumers.
4. **Structural reforms:** EU membership has supported institutional reforms in the economic, administrative, and justice sectors.

The most significant impact of EU membership, however, is political. The EU has become a political “protective shield.” Whatever form the resolution of the Cyprus problem takes, it will require European approval, and implementation will occur under the European umbrella. This will safeguard the viability and sustainability of any solution and ensure the establishment of a united European Cyprus.

It is important to underline that only a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem will allow the country to reach its full potential and enable its citizens to enjoy the full benefits of EU membership.

2. A few months before Cyprus assumes the EU Presidency, and given the difficult global geopolitical situation, which initiatives should be the focal points of the Cypriot Presidency?

Cyprus is assuming the EU Presidency at a critical moment for Europe. The current volatile geopolitical landscape in Europe and beyond requires realistic, effective, and forward-looking objectives and policies. The initiatives of the upcoming Cypriot Presidency should be guided by this principle.

Two of the most important priorities should be:

1. **Enhancing European competitiveness and sustainability:** Strengthening the Single Market and supporting SMEs are essential. In addition, initiatives should accelerate investment in digitalisation, innovation, and AI.
2. **European defence and security:** Advancing the goal of a “Defence Union” is necessary to boost the defence industry and improve crisis preparedness in the face of current security threats from Russia and elsewhere. Enhancing defence and security should also include strengthening cybersecurity.

Furthermore, the Cypriot Presidency should continue working with European partners to promote social cohesion, build environmental resilience, combat disinformation, and reinforce democratic accountability and resilience.

Europe has long held a comparative advantage as a “global soft power,” particularly through its humanitarian and development policies. Initiatives should aim to strengthen the EU’s global role by deepening partnerships with regions such as Africa and by continuing to promote a rules-based multilateral order.

3. How could Cyprus contribute to reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region?

Geopolitical shifts are reshaping the global order, with major consequences for security, economic development, and political stability across Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. This volatile yet dynamic environment offers new opportunities. It underscores the need for stronger regional cooperation and the development of long-term resilience in Europe and the wider Eastern Mediterranean. This is a moment that calls for strategic collaboration and actions that deliver real, lasting results.

Cyprus is uniquely positioned to act as a bridge between the EU and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean—including Turkey—and to help implement the new Pact for the Mediterranean for the benefit of the entire region.

This role can only be fully realised through a resolution of the Cyprus problem. A solution would open wide-ranging opportunities for Cyprus to become a genuine regional energy hub, a platform for EU maritime security, a facilitator of climate and environmental initiatives, and a driver of strong economic cooperation.

Moreover, in a region afflicted by bloody wars and conflicts, resolving the Cyprus problem would allow Cyprus to serve as an example of peaceful ethnic and religious coexistence. It could become a platform for reconciliation and dialogue.

4. In November 2023, the European Parliament adopted a resolution—backed by the five major political families—calling for deeper European integration and a revision of the Treaties. Should Cyprus be among the Member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic European Union in the years ahead?

I have always been a strong advocate and supporter of deeper European integration. In principle, Cyprus should support and champion a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic Union—while always taking into account the political realities within the EU and adopting a pragmatic approach.

At this critical juncture for Europe, any steps toward deeper integration should be taken prudently, advancing measured and realistic policies, and always in coordination with European partners. Deeper integration must offer sufficient flexibility, efficiency, and adaptability in order to secure the broad European consensus required.

5. Civil society organisations are vital for shaping the future of European integration. What measures do you consider essential to foster and enhance meaningful dialogue with civil society actors in Cyprus?

A vibrant civil society is essential for a healthy democracy in Cyprus. Political actors have a responsibility to maintain open dialogue with civil society organisations and stakeholders.

Capacity-building is crucial for a strong and dynamic civil society. Governments should therefore promote measures such as regular and structured consultations, improved liaison mechanisms, simpler NGO regulations, and modern digital tools. In addition, they should encourage and facilitate dialogue between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot civil society actors, enriching the overall civic landscape.

Engagement with civil society is particularly important now—both before and during the Cypriot EU Presidency—to ensure that Cypriot citizens become co-owners of the process and of the Presidency's activities and initiatives.



ANDROULA VASSILIOU

Former European Commissioner

Androula Vassiliou was called to the English Bar and has also a post graduate degree in International Relations from the Institute of World Affairs, London.

She practiced Law for 25 years and in 1996 she went into politics. She ran for Parliament and was elected for two consecutive times, namely until 2006 with a small Liberal party, the United Democrats.

In 2008 she was nominated as European Commissioner and after her confirmation she was entrusted with the portfolio of Health for two years. In 2010 until the end of 2014, she was entrusted with the portfolio of Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.

Apart from her professional career, she has been a very active citizen all her life in various fields, both in Europe and in Cyprus, such as in the field of Human Rights, Gender Equality, Culture and Cultural Heritage.

She served for more than 20 years as President of the UN Association of Cyprus and President of the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA).

She was elected twice President of the Business and Professional Women of Cyprus (BPW, Cyprus).

She served for 8 years as President of the Bank of Cyprus Oncology Center. She was a member of the High Council of the European University Institute in Florence (2015- 2023). She served for 7 years as Co-Chair of the Technical Bicomunal Committee on Culture together with Mr Kani Kanol, a TC.

Since 2015 she became an active member of Europa Nostra and was elected member of its Council and one of its Vice Presidents, a position she still holds. She is Vice President of the Council of the University of Cyprus as well as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Cyprus Institute of Research and Education.

The Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Nicosia was established in 2024, upon her own initiative and is representing Europa Nostra as Chair of its Board.

For all her active participation and contribution to the Cyprus society and to Europe, Androula received the following awards:

- *The Grand Cross of the Order of Benefaction by the Hellenic Republic;*
- *The French Republic in 2015 awarded her the title of 'Commander of the Arts and the Letters';*

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- In 2016 she received the highest honor of the Kingdom of Spain in the field of education and culture, 'The Civil Order Alfonso X Sabio';
 - In 2022 she was declared 'Chevalier de la Legion D'Honneur' by President Macron and
 - At home she received the award 'Eryfilli', as a 'Woman Leader' by the Cyprus Employers Association jointly with BPW, Cyprus.

She is married to Dr George Vassiliou and they have three children.

1. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. More than 20 years have passed since the EU accession, how would you assess the impact of EU membership on Cyprus and its citizens (e.g. on institutions, society, economy etc)?

I answer this question with mixed feelings, because in some aspects Cyprus's accession to the EU in 2004, had a very positive effect on our people such as the free movement of our citizens, the enrolment of our young people in European Universities and vice versa and the two way participation in the Erasmus + Programme, their right to find employment in other European countries, the adoption of the Euro and our accession to the Eurozone with very positive effects to our economy, despite the 2013 financial crisis, and in general, the participation of our country in all the affairs of the EU. For a lot of Cypriots somehow Europe feels closer now.

The participation of our six MEPs in the EP was and still is dependant, as in all Member States, to the calibre of the persons we elect. And, regrettably, very often, we do not elect the best persons to represent us.

Our Institutions are also dependant on the persons our governments appoint to lead them. Some are working well and some fall short of our expectations.

The Legal system is not functioning properly and the huge delays in passing judgement force people to avoid resorting to court to find justice.

Our society has a lot to be desired. The feeling of security has fallen and people feel very disheartened from lack of meritocracy in appointments and promotions.

2. A few months prior to Cyprus assuming the EU Presidency, and having in mind the current difficult global geopolitical situation, which initiatives should be for you the focal points of the Cypriot presidency?

Societal issues, such as increase in prices, especially energy prices and rents, immigration, WATER, Climate change and its effects on Cyprus and the whole of our Middle East Region and security issues are, I believe, the issues that preoccupy the people of Cyprus the most in addition to the Cyprus Problem the solution of which preoccupy all of us. I recognize however, that the EU cannot help in a substantial way in the efforts to solve the Cy problem . These are what the Cyprus public wish to be our priorities. However, I personally know that the Cyprus Presidency should deal with other pressing issues, such as progress and even achieve an agreement on the next MFF, issues of peace and security in the

Middle East and the reconstruction of GAZA for which Cyprus can play an important part. Moreover, the geographical position of Cyprus and its good relations with all neighbouring countries renders it an important player and a perfect link between Europe and the Middle East.

Cyprus, as a country of first entry for immigrants from the Middle East and other Asian and African countries must certainly make this as one of its priorities for discussions and hopefully decisions on the Immigration issue.

Lastly, the mediterranean sea, our Mare Nostrum for many EU member countries should be given prominence during the Cyprus Presidency.

3. How could Cyprus contribute to reinforcing collaboration and relationships between the EU and the Eastern Mediterranean region?

Cyprus, has rightly built good neighbouring relations with all Middle Eastern countries and despite its size, they consider Cyprus as an important and trust worthy player in the area. Therefore, Cyprus can play an important role, both in the Peace Process, the humanitarian field, the reconstruction of Gaza and other important issues.

4. In November 2023, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution - backed by the five major political families - calling for deeper European integration and a revision of the Treaties. Do you believe Cyprus should be among the Member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure, and democratic European Union in the years ahead?

I very much agree and wish that Cyprus should be among the member States actively championing a more united, autonomous, secure and more democratic Union in the years ahead. I cannot envisage a future for all of us, small or big without a strong Union. The challenges are too big to be addressed by any country big or small on its own. However, I am also being realistic in recognizing that this is easier said than done. I did participate at the Convention for the Future of Europe and I remember the strong NO of the French and the Dutch people in the referendum. I also remember as a commissioner the agony for the vote of the Irish for the Lisbon Treaty. I also remember many years ago, when we had the first signs of the negative attitude of the Hungarian Government and its autocratic way of behaviour. Action should have been taken then to prevent this country from continuing its negative attitude towards the EU. However, the decision in the EP was blocked by the EPP because the Hungarian Government belonged to this party. Such an attitude is harmful for all.....We see now this negative attitude spreading to other EU countries. These are difficulties to be born in mind when we decide as to how we should proceed. Let us start with small but steady steps to bring about changes instead of trying to amend the Treaty, in my mind an

impossible task at present. Despite the difficulties, however, we should proceed and Cyprus should be involved in this effort. We need a strong, united and independent Union to take up its role as an important world player.

5. Civil society organisations are vital for shaping the future of European integration. What measures do you consider essential to foster and enhance meaningful dialogue with civil society actors in Cyprus?

I am a great proponent and supporter of civil society organizations and I consider them very vital partners for shaping the future of European integration. For many years, both before becoming an EU commissioner and after, I belonged in a number of such organisations and I can see how effective they can be if they are empowered, mainly financially and politically, in fields like peace building, climate change, environment and culture.

Since 2015 I belong to Europa Nosta, the biggest European organization for the protection, preservation and restoration of Cultural Heritage in Europe. Since 2023, Europa Nostra has been entrusted by the EC to co-ordinate a European Project, the European Heritage Hub Project. Under this project heritage hubs have been established in a number of countries. I took the initiative of establishing a Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Nicosia with the objective of acting bi-communally and also create a link between heritage NGOs from the Eastern Mediterranean countries and countries of the Middle East. Already, we cooperate with an NGO from Malta, the National Petra Trust of Jordan, NGOs from Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon. I believe that the EU in its Integration process cannot rely only on Governments. They must make the best possible use of civil society organizations both in EU countries and in neighbouring countries in order to promote a sense of unity and mutual understanding among them



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