



Republic of Cyprus

In 1974 Turkish troops invaded and occupied the northern 36 per cent of the Republic of Cyprus. This area was later declared independent. The secession has not been recognised internationally, except by Turkey. The UN and Commonwealth have for many years protested about the occupation and tried to resolve the problem by negotiation.

Due to this division of the Republic of Cyprus, aggregated information is not always available. Economic and social data given here generally cover the government-controlled areas only, although legally and constitutionally the Republic of Cyprus includes the occupied north.



KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth: 1961

Population: 1,141,000 (2013)

GDP p.c. growth: 0.9% p.a. 1990–2013

UN HDI 2014: World ranking 32

Official languages: Greek, Turkish

Time: GMT plus 2–3 hrs

Currency: Euro (€)

Geography

Area: 9,251 sq km

Coastline: 648 km

Capital: Nicosia

Cyprus is an oval-shaped island with 'pan-handle' north-east peninsula in the eastern Mediterranean. Its closest mainland neighbours are Turkey (to the north) and Syria and Lebanon (to the east).

Topography: The Troodos Mountains, in the central and western part of the island, rise to 1,951 metres at Mount Olympus. The Troodos, of infertile igneous rock, are characterised by steep slopes, narrow valleys and precipices. The Kyrenia Mountains (also known as the Pentadaktylos range), along the north coast, rise to 1,024 metres and are mainly limestone. Passes and valleys allow access to the north coast. The fertile Messaoria Plain lies between them. About half of its 186,000 hectares is irrigated. Most water sources are in the south – all major rivers originate in the Troodos and flow east, south or west. Many rivers dry up in the summer. There are sandy beaches on the south of the island and some rugged rocky coastline in the north.

Climate: Mediterranean climate. Hot dry summers (June–September) and mild wet winters (November–March).

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are limited water resources – due to lack of rain in the summer and pollution of the island's largest aquifer by sea water; water pollution by sewage and industrial wastes; coastal degradation; and loss of wildlife habitats due to urbanisation.

Vegetation: Mediterranean scrub, succulents and pine woods, adapted to the dry summers, with 1,800 species and subspecies of flowering plants. Forest covers 19 per cent of the land area. The mountains are forested and less than 15 per cent of the land is arable and permanently cropped, about 20 per cent of which is irrigated. The occupied north is generally more thickly vegetated and fertile.

Wildlife: The only large wild animal is the agrino, a species of wild sheep, which is now protected. Snakes, once so abundant as to give the island its old name *Ophiussa* ('abode of snakes'), are now comparatively rare.

Main towns: Nicosia (Lefkosia, capital, pop. 334,120 in 2011, with a further 61,378 in the occupied north), Limassol (239,739), Paphos (91,200), Larnaca (53,500). In the occupied north, other main towns are Famagusta (40,920), Kyrenia (33,207), Morphou and Lefka.

Transport: There is a good road network in the Republic, extending to 20,000 km (40 per cent paved), with motorways between Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos and the Famagusta

area; comprising 2.2 per cent of the total network. Cyprus has no railway.

Major ports are at Larnaca and Limassol.

Nicosia airport was closed in 1974. There are international airports 5 km south of Larnaca, and 15 km east of Paphos.

Society

KEY FACTS 2013

Population per sq km: 123

Life expectancy: 80 years

Net primary enrolment: 98%

Population: 1,141,000 (2013); 67 per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 1.7 per cent p.a. 1990–2013; birth rate 11 per 1,000 people (19 in 1970); life expectancy 80 years (71 in 1970).

The population comprises Greek Cypriots (approximately 80 per cent) and Turkish Cypriots, and small populations of Armenians, Maronites and 'Latins' (the term used in Cyprus for Roman Catholics of European origin). The population of the occupied north was estimated at 257,000 in 2005, and included around 160,000 Turkish illegal settlers.

Language: Official languages are Greek and Turkish. English is widely spoken; German and French are spoken in tourist centres.

Religion: Most Greek Cypriots belong to the autocephalous Cypriot Orthodox Church; most Turkish Cypriots are Sunni Muslims. There are small religious groups of Maronites, Armenians, Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

Health: Public spending on health was three per cent of GDP in 2012. In the Republic, medical care is free for government employees, displaced persons and low-income families, including in all about 65 per cent of the population. The government has proposed a national health insurance scheme. A new general hospital was built in Nicosia in the latter 1990s. Infant mortality was three per 1,000 live births in 2013 (30 in 1960).

The Government of Cyprus offers free treatment in government hospitals to all Turkish Cypriots residing in the occupied north.

Education: Public spending on education was seven per cent of GDP in 2010. There are nine years of compulsory education

starting at the age of six. Primary school comprises six years and secondary six, with two cycles each of three years. There are many private schools. Some 95 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2007). The school year starts in September.

The University of Cyprus is a bilingual (Greek and Turkish) university which opened in 1992. The other public universities are Cyprus University of Technology (2007) and Open University of Cyprus (2002). Private universities include the European University Cyprus (2007), which developed out of Cyprus College (1961); Frederick University (2007), which developed out of the Frederick Institute of Technology (1965); Neapolis University (Paphos, 2010); and University of Nicosia (2007), which developed out of Intercollege (1980). Other tertiary institutions include Cyprus Forestry College (1951); Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus (1966); Higher Technical Institute (1968); Mediterranean Institute of Management (1976, postgraduate); Nursing School; and Cyprus International Institute of Management (1990). The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 0.90:1 (2010). There is virtually no illiteracy among people aged 15–24.

In 1984 Cyprus hosted the Ninth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Nicosia. Commonwealth Education Ministers meet every three years to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

Media: There are several daily papers, most in Greek (including *Philelefttheros*, *Politis*, *Simerini*) but the *Cyprus Mail* is in English. Of the several bi-weekly, weekly and fortnightly papers, two (*Cyprus Weekly* and *Financial Mirror*) are in English.

The public radio and TV provider is the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, broadcasting in Greek, English, Turkish and Armenian. Private radio and TV stations compete with the public networks. The switch from analogue to digital TV was completed in July 2011.

There are 627 personal computers per 1,000 people (2012).

Communications: Country code 357; internet domain '.cy'. Mobile phone coverage is good.

For every 1,000 people there are 306 landlines, 952 mobile phone subscriptions and 655 internet users (2013).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Epiphany (6 January), Greek Independence Day (25 March), EOKA Day (1 April), Labour Day (1 May), Assumption (15 August), Independence Day (1 October), Ochi Day (28 October), Christmas Day and St Stephen's Day (26

December). Fixed-date holidays falling on a Saturday or Sunday are not moved.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Green Monday (start of Lent, 50 days before Greek Orthodox Easter), Good Friday (Greek Orthodox), Easter Monday (Greek Orthodox) and Kataklysmos (Pentecost, 50 days after Greek Orthodox Easter).

Economy

(In this section, figures do not include the occupied north.)

KEY FACTS 2013

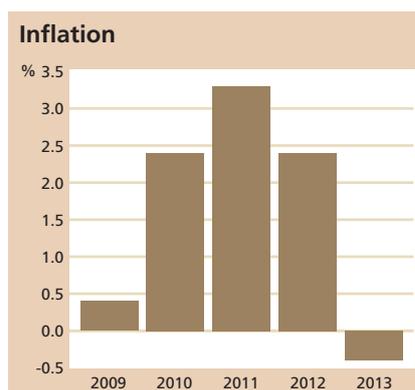
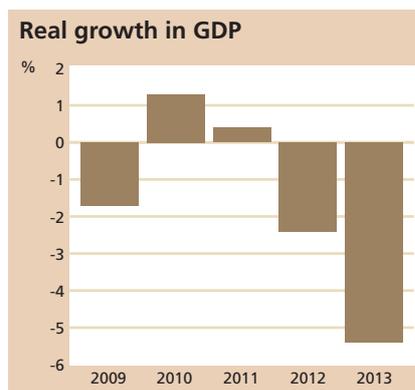
GNI: US\$21.5bn

GNI p.c.: US\$25,210

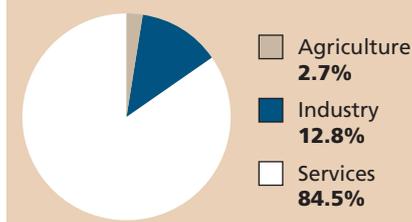
GDP growth: -1.6% p.a. 2009–13

Inflation: 1.6% p.a. 2009–13

Despite occupation of the north and the consequent forced movement of population and loss of resources, the economy of the Republic has grown steadily with relatively low inflation, particularly in the tourism and offshore financial services sectors, while the agriculture sector and exports of citrus fruits and potatoes became relatively less important. Oil and gas exploration was under way in 2011 and large offshore finds of natural gas were announced in December 2011, amounting to an estimated 140–230 billion cubic metres, and further significant finds were announced in 2012.



GDP by sector (2013)



From the latter 1990s, the government introduced economic reforms with a view to joining the European Union (EU). The economy continued to grow strongly, until it slowed in the tougher international climate after 2000, picking up again from 2004, the year in which the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU, and continuing at about four per cent until 2008, when the impact of the world economic downturn on tourism and trade caused growth to stall in the latter part of that year and go into reverse in 2009 (–1.7 per cent). There was then a return to growth in 2010–11 before the economy moved into recession again in 2012 (–2.4 per cent), contracting sharply in 2013 (by 5.4 per cent) and 2014 (by about three per cent).

Cyprus adopted the euro at the beginning of 2008, replacing the Cyprus pound. In March 2013 the EU and International Monetary Fund (IMF) offered Cyprus a €10 billion loan to rescue the Cypriot banks, which had incurred heavy losses arising from a very large exposure to Greek debt. This deal required the government to raise a further €5.8 billion. Parliament then voted against the government's initial proposals for a levy on all the banks' customers. The banks remained closed while discussions continued between the government, EU and IMF. A deal was agreed on 24 March 2013, under which the banks were to be restructured; the levy paid only by customers with deposits of at least €100,000; and Cyprus was to remain in the eurozone.

History

The civilisation of Cyprus, recorded through archaeological finds, myths and later written history, can be traced through 9,000 years. The island, perfectly placed as a strategic base for the great civilisations of the Near-Eastern ancient world, has been much fought over. It was subject to the empires of Assyria, Egypt, Persia, Macedonia and Rome in the BCE period. Its population has been predominantly ethnically Greek since then. After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, it was ruled by Byzantium, the Franks, the Venetians and the Ottoman Turks. It was during the Ottoman period that the ancestors of the Turkish Cypriots settled

on the island. Through these rich and varied influences, Cyprus acquired a great archaeological legacy.

In 1878 Britain concluded an alliance with the Sultan on Cyprus, and gained effective control. When Turkey sided with Germany in World War I, Britain annexed the island. In 1925, Cyprus became a Crown colony.

From the 1930s, Greek Cypriots campaigned for *enosis* (union with Greece), a movement that came to be led in the 1950s by Archbishop Makarios. The UK proposed instead (in 1948, 1954 and 1955) various forms of internal self-government, all of which were deemed unacceptable by the Greek Cypriot Ethnarchy Council. In 1955, the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) began armed resistance against the UK. Turkey helped the Turkish Cypriot leaders establish the Cyprus Turkish Party and the Turkish Resistance Organisation, and the fighting became intercommunal.

In 1960 the UK negotiated an independence agreement with Greece and Turkey, under which the three powers guaranteed to protect the integrity of Cyprus, which was to be allowed neither to unite with any other country nor to be partitioned. Cyprus, which had not taken part in these negotiations, became independent as the Republic of Cyprus.

Intercommunal fighting broke out again a few years after independence, leading to some 500 deaths and more than 1,000 casualties. British troops imposed order and a plan centred on a ceasefire line known as the Green Line. In 1964, the UN Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP) succeeded the British troops. A UN force remains in the same position today. However, hostilities continued, with the Greek and Turkish military becoming involved, and very nearly led to war between the two countries. Archbishop Makarios began negotiations towards a settlement.

But in 1974 a military coup in Cyprus overthrew Makarios and installed a fervently nationalist government, led by Nikos Sampson, favouring *enosis*. Turkey invaded twice, taking control of the northern 36 per cent of the country. Greece, in confusion after its own military coup against President Makarios, was unable to intervene. About

180,000 Greek Cypriots fled from their homes in the north, and came south as refugees; 45,000 Turkish Cypriots were similarly uprooted.

Intercommunal talks under UN auspices began in 1975. In November 1983, the Turkish Cypriot assembly in the north, under the leadership of Rauf Denktaş, voted for independence and in 1985 approved a new constitution. Independence has subsequently been recognised solely by Turkey, but condemned by the UN Security Council and other international organisations.

The 1988 presidential election in the Republic brought to power George Vassiliou, on a platform of conciliation. He was not the first leader openly to seek compromise: Makarios had accepted the concept of federation in 1977, and concluded the first high-level agreement with Denktaş; and President Spyros Kyprianou had signed the second high-level agreement with Denktaş in 1979 and accepted the notion of bizonality proposing the demilitarisation of the island. But Vassiliou was prepared to go further. In 1993, he went to the elections stating his willingness to accept, as a basis for further negotiations, a UN proposal for a federal republic. However, he lost the election by a narrow margin to Glafkos Clerides, who took a more cautious view of the UN plan.

Parliamentary elections in the Republic held in May 1996 – the first to be held since the adoption of proportional representation – returned the Democratic Rally–Liberal Party coalition (supporting President Glafkos Clerides) with a majority of one seat.

There was optimism that real negotiations might be about to begin when in July 1997, Clerides and Denktaş met for the first time in three years at a UN-sponsored meeting in New York. Subsequent meetings were held in Nicosia and Glion (Switzerland) over the next six weeks. However, tension was mounting with successive military exercises on the island by Greece and Turkey, and when it became clear that the EU negotiations would proceed without reference to the occupied north if a settlement had not been reached in the meantime, and also that Turkey was not at this period invited to join the EU, Denktaş left the talks and the process was stalled.

The first round of the presidential elections in February 1998 was inconclusive. President Clerides narrowly won the second-round contest with George Iacovou with 51 per cent of the votes. Clerides then formed a broadly based coalition administration, to prepare for further negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots and the accession talks with the EU.

Talks with the Turkish Cypriots continued during 1999 and 2000, but progress remained stalled because the parties were unable to agree on future constitutional arrangements. While the Greek Cypriots, with the support of the international community, were seeking a return to a bi-communal independent federation with a central government, the Turkish Cypriots were insisting on a confederation of two equal states.

Accession negotiations with the EU began in November 1998 and the accession treaty on formal entry of Cyprus and nine other candidate countries in May 2004 was signed in April 2003.

Talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots continued during 2001–02 and, from January 2002, these were UN-mediated talks between Clerides and Denktaş, ending in March 2003 when the two leaders were unable to agree on putting the UN's settlement proposals to referendums in their communities, though both sides agreed to continue negotiations.

Referendums on the UN reunification plan were held simultaneously in the two communities in April 2004. Greek Cypriots were overwhelmingly against the plan and Turkish Cypriots strongly for it. Among the reasons for the plan's rejection by Greek Cypriots were that it would give them only limited rights to return to and recover their original homes, and that it would allow tens of thousands of Turkish settlers to stay and Turkey to maintain a garrison. Turkey would also maintain its status of guarantor power, with the right of unilateral military intervention.

The Republic of Cyprus became a member of the European Union in May 2004. The application of the *acquis* is suspended in those areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control.

Republic of Cyprus on the international stage

Singer and television personality Peter Andre is of Cypriot parentage, but was born in London.

On the sporting front, George Achilleos, born in 1980, is a champion skeet (clay pigeon) shooter. He has won four Commonwealth gold medals, seven World Cups and four World Championships.

Cyprus has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the Commonwealth: 997 infants survive every 1,000 births.

Constitution

Status: Republic with executive President

Legislature: House of Representatives

Independence: 16 August 1960

The Republic of Cyprus is a democracy with a

directly elected executive President, serving a five-year term. The 1960 constitution has provisions to ensure a balance of power between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. The legislature, the House of Representatives, was to be elected by universal suffrage with 35 Greek and 15 Turkish seats and a term of no longer than five years. Under the amendment of 1985, the legislature was to comprise 80 seats (56 Greek, 24 Turkish). In 1996 a system of proportional representation was introduced. The seats reserved for Turkish Cypriots have been unoccupied since 1963.

The executive was to comprise a Greek President, a Turkish Vice-President and a council of ministers, with seven Greek and three Turkish members. Ministers may not be members of parliament. The President is to be elected by absolute majority. If this is not achieved, a second election between the two top candidates is to be held. All Cypriots must declare themselves either to be Cypriot Greeks or Cypriot Turks (the Armenian, Maronite and Latin communities declared themselves Greek for this purpose).

The ratio of Greek to Turk in the army must be 6:4, and 7:3 in the police, judiciary and civil service. Nicosia, Paphos, Larnaca, Limassol and Famagusta each have separate Greek and Turkish municipal authorities. Equal status was granted to the Greek and Turkish languages.

Politics

Last elections: 22 May 2011 (parliamentary), 17 and 24 February 2013 (presidential)

Next elections: 2016 (parliamentary), 2018 (presidential)

Head of state: President Nicos Anastasiades

Head of government: The President

Ruling party: Democratic Rally

Women MPs: 13%

In the parliamentary elections in May 2001, the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) took an increased share of 34.7 per cent of votes and 20 seats, but the ruling coalition of Democratic Rally (34.0 per cent and 19 seats) and United Democrats (2.6 per cent and one seat) narrowly won the contest. Centre-right Democratic Party (DIKO) secured 14.8 per cent of votes and nine seats and social democratic KISOS 6.5 per cent and four seats. KISOS was called the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK) until 1999 and again from 2006. For the first time 18–21 year-olds were entitled to vote and, since voting is compulsory, there was a high turnout (some 92 per cent) of the 468,000 registered voters.

DIKO leader, Tassos Papadopoulos, won the presidential election in February 2003, with the support of AKEL and KISOS, receiving 52 per cent of the votes, defeating incumbent President Glafkos Clerides (39 per cent).

The parliamentary elections in May 2006 were won by the governing coalition of AKEL, with 18 seats and 31.1 per cent of the votes, DIKO (11 seats and 17.9 per cent of the votes) and EDEK (KISOS) with five seats and 8.9 per cent of the votes. Democratic Rally gained 18 seats and 30.3 per cent of the votes.

In the lead-up to the presidential election of 2008, the ruling coalition of DIKO, AKEL and EDEK was unable to reach a consensus on a common candidate and so Papadopoulos was to run for re-election with the support only of DIKO and EDEK. Communist party AKEL left the coalition and chose its general secretary and House of Representatives President, Demetris Christofias, as its candidate. Ioannis Kasoulidis of Democratic Rally was the other major candidate.

In the presidential election in February 2008 – with turnout of around 90 per cent – the three candidates each received about one-third of the votes (Kasoulidis 33.5 per cent; Christofias 33.3 per cent; Papadopoulos 31.8 per cent). No candidate having more than 50 per cent of the votes, Christofias and Kasoulidis went into a second round and the incumbent Papadopoulos was eliminated from the contest. Christofias defeated Kasoulidis by 53.4 per cent to 46.6 per cent. Christofias immediately invited DIKO and EDEK members to join his cabinet. DIKO leader Tassos Papadopoulos died in December 2008.

Formal UN-supported negotiations between the government, led by President Christofias,

and the Turkish Cypriots, led by Mehmet Ali Talat, began in September 2008. In June 2009, at the 32nd meeting, the economic agenda was concluded and discussions on territorial issues began. The first round of negotiations was concluded with the 40th meeting in August 2009. A second round of talks, covering economic matters, power-sharing, property rights and the EU was conducted from September 2009 to January 2010. A new round of talks got under way in May 2010, continuing through 2011, the Turkish Cypriots now led by Dervis Eroglu. The talks were abandoned in 2012.

In the May 2011 parliamentary elections, Democratic Rally secured 20 of the 56 seats contested (34.3 per cent of the vote); AKEL took 19 (32.7 per cent), DIKO nine (15.8 per cent), EDEK five (8.9 per cent), the European Party two (3.9 per cent) and the Green Party one (2.2 per cent), with turnout of 79 per cent. AKEL and DIKO formed a coalition government. The coalition collapsed in August 2011 following policy disagreements, leaving AKEL in a minority government.

The presidential elections of February 2013 were won by Nicos Anastasiades of Democratic Rally. He secured 45.5 per cent of the vote in the first round on 17 February, ahead of Stavros Mala of AKEL (26.9 per cent) and Giorgos Lillikas of EDEK (24.9 per cent), and went on to take 57.5 per cent in the second-round contest with Mala on 24 February.

International relations

Cyprus is a member of the Council of Europe, European Union, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Further information

Cyprus Government Web Portal:
House of Representatives:
Statistical Service:

www.cyprus.gov.cy
www.parliament.cy
www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/index_gr/index_gr?OpenDocument
www.centralbank.gov.cy
www.visitcyprus.com/
www.thecommonwealth.org
www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Cyprus

Central Bank of Cyprus:
Cyprus Tourism Organisation:
Commonwealth Secretariat:
Commonwealth of Nations:

Media

Cyprus Mail:
Phileleftheros:
Politis:
Simerini:
Financial Mirror:
The Cyprus Weekly:
Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation:
Cyprus News Agency:

cyprus-mail.com
www.philenews.com
www.politis-news.com
www.sigmalive.com/simerini
www.financialmirror.com
incyprus.com.cy
www.cybc.com.cy/en
www.cna.org.cy

Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid for at least three months from the date of departure. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. Prohibited imports include some food and some plant material.

Travel within the country: Driving is on the left. Heavy fines are imposed on those driving without a seat belt or riding a motorbike without a helmet. There are also fines for those caught driving while using a mobile phone or under the influence of alcohol.

Bus services connect towns and villages. Taxis

run 24 hours a day between the main towns. Fares are regulated by the government and all taxis have meters.

Travel health: There are no prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended.

There were 2,405,000 tourist arrivals in 2013.



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