

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Cyprus (CY), the third largest island in the Mediterranean (after Sicily and Sardinia) with its 9,251 sq. km, has Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Greece (Rhodes) as neighbours in order of decreasing proximity. In 1974 Cyprus was invaded by Turkish forces who occupied the northern part (approx. 36%) of the island. The latest attempts to reunite the Greek part in the south and the Turkish part in the north — and give the island a federal structure — have failed, and the island is still divided into two ethnically distinct areas by a “Green Line” (see map below). The [Republic of Cyprus](#) [*Kypriaki Dimokratia/Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti*] controls the southern part.



- 1.2 The Republic of Cyprus was set up in 1960 with a presidential form of government and a bi-communal system to represent the interests of the Greek and the Turkish communities. On the basis of the [Constitution](#) of 1960 — which is still in force — the House of Representatives exercises the Legislative power, but since the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriots from the Republic’s institutions (1963) it has functioned only with Greek Cypriot members. Cyprus’ main economic activities are banking, tourism, craft exports and merchant shipping. Major towns in the island are Nicosia (the Capital), Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos; and on the Turkish side, Kyrenia and Famagusta. In 2001 the degree of urbanization in the area controlled by the Republic of Cyprus was 68.9% (485,082 out of the total 703,529 inhabitants). In 2002 the Republic of Cyprus had a GDP per capita of € 18,500 (equivalent to 80% of the EU average), and a low unemployment rate (3.4%). The EU is Cyprus's largest trading partner (54% and 52% respectively of Cyprus’s exports and imports in the year 2002). The services sector is the most important one, employing 65% of the population.

In the northern part of Cyprus (occupied area) the economic situation is considerably weaker (in 2002 the GDP was estimated around € 4,500 per capita): there is no independent monetary policy, and trade is heavily dependent on the Turkish market. Cyprus is a member of the Commonwealth and Great Britain has retained two military bases.

2. General aspects

2.1 In the 11th century B.C. Cyprus was settled by the Greeks. It became a Roman province in 58 B.C. and part of the Eastern Empire in the 4th century. The Byzantine period marked the introduction of the Christian Orthodox Church, which became the established church in an autocephalous form. Groups of Armenians and Maronites first settled in Cyprus in the 6th and 7th centuries, respectively. From the end of the 12th century onwards Cyprus was ruled by the Franks and later by the Venetians, with ensuing antagonism between the Orthodox and the Latin (Roman Catholic) churches. In 1570-71 the island was conquered by the Ottoman Turks, who ruled Cyprus for three centuries. Turkish settlements in Cyprus were distributed across the island, to ensure control over the whole territory. A consequence of this policy was that the Turkish lived side by side with the Greeks, although as separate religious communities – according to the confessional group [*Millet*] division that was typical under the Ottoman Empire. Such a pattern allowed contact between the communities. Because of the religious difference there was no integration, though no conflict either [Kizilyürek, N. and Gautier- Kizilyürek, 2004]. A census conducted in 1832 recorded 198 Christian villages, 92 Muslim ones and 172 mixed. A result of this interaction was that a proportion of Turkish Cypriots (5.4% of them according to 1881 statistics) became bilingual in Cypriot Turkish and Cypriot Greek. The independence of Greece (1830) and its unification with Crete (1913) were events that fuelled Greek nationalism in the island. In 1878 Cyprus was ceded to Britain and formally annexed to the British Empire in 1914. With the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) Turkey relinquished its rights on Cyprus and recognised its annexation to Britain; the island became a British Crown colony in 1925. The movement of Greek Cypriots that advocated union [*enosis*] with Greece gained momentum in 1950, when an unofficial referendum for self-determination showed that 96% of the Greek population favoured *enosis*. Among Turkish Cypriots a counter movement advocating division [*taksim*] of the island emerged, and Turkish nationalism gave rise to a separatist ideology. The Greek opposition to the British grew into an anticolonial struggle, impelling Britain to grant independence (1959).

2.2 The 1960 Constitution, which is still in force, provided for a presidential system of government with a Greek President and a Turkish Vice-President, 10 Ministers (7 Greek and 3 Turkish) and a unicameral House of Representatives (with 35 members elected by the Greek Community and 15 elected by the Turkish Community). It is a particularly complex Constitution, not nationally endorsed but the product of the Zurich/London international agreements (1959) between Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom. In 1963 constitutional amendments were proposed, but aroused the opposition of the Turkish community who withdrew from all legislative, executive and administrative posts. Subsequent constitutional developments aggravated the situation, prompting the UN to send a peace-keeping force. Before 1974, the distribution of the two communities had precise historical origins, for the Ottoman Turks had originally settled on the properties of the expelled Christians and across the whole island. But after 1963 the Turkish Cypriots formed social, political and territorial enclaves that disrupted the population pattern of the island. According to UN estimates approx. 20,000

Turkish Cypriots moved to special quarters within towns and to ethnically pure villages. In 1974 a pro-Greek *coup d'état* occurred. Turkish troops occupied the northern part of the island and of Cyprus (as well as the capital Nicosia) was divided into two areas, virtually homogeneous from the linguistic point of view. Most constitutional provisions regarding the Turkish Community in the Republic of Cyprus have been suspended since then, and the ban on crossing the Green Line either side was lifted only in 2003. In May 2004 the Republic of Cyprus joined the European Union, but the application of the *acquis communautaire* is suspended in the areas where the Government of the Republic does not exercise control (⇒ 6).

- 2.3 The Constitution makes no reference to “minorities” or “national minorities” but to “Communities” [*koinotites/cemaat*] (Greek and Turkish) and to “religious groups” [*thriskeftikes omades/dinî grup*] (Armenians, Maronites and Latins). By virtue of Art.2 all citizens must choose adherence to either the Greek or the Turkish Community. The Latins are normally Greek-speaking Roman Catholics of (mainly) European descent; together with Armenians and Maronites, they have chosen to belong to the Greek Community. While communities are defined on the basis of such criteria as ethnic origin, language, cultural tradition and religion, the denomination of “religious group” appears limited insofar as it points to religious adherence alone. Many Maronites, for example, consider themselves as a distinct ethnic group with a distinct language; and a number of Latins do not feel that the name sufficiently reflects their Catholic religious affiliation. The power-sharing between the two Communities has virtually been suspended, including the allocation of public offices. The government of the Republic of Cyprus considers the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM) to apply to the Armenian, Latin and Maronite religious groups, as well as to the Turkish community – without prejudice to its constitutional position. However, the obligation to choose adherence to one of the two Communities was deemed to be in conflict with Art. 3 of the FCPNM, and in 2002 the Cypriot government was invited to address the issue. The religious groups have the right to elect their own representatives to the House of Representatives. However, they do not have any legislative powers and only an advisory role.

3. Demographic data

- 3.1 The only census covering the whole population in the Republic of Cyprus dates back to 1960. It counted 573,566 inhabitants, of which 442,138 were Greek Cypriots (77.1%), 104,320 Turkish Cypriots (18.2%) and 27,108 others (4.7%), mainly Armenians, Maronites, Latins and British. Such ratios are not far from those of the census undertaken by the British administration in 1881, which showed a proportion of 75% Christians (including Armenians, Maronites and Roman Catholics) as against 25% Turks. After the partition in 1974 it has been practically impossible to obtain reliable data on the island's total population. In 2001 the government of the Republic of Cyprus's estimate of the population of the island (without counting Turkish settlers and troops) was: 631,100 Greek Cypriots (78%), 87,600 Turkish Cypriots (11%), 2,600 Armenians (0.3%), 4,800 Maronites (0.6%), 900 Latins (0.1%). The population in the occupied area is roughly estimated at 200,000, of which 80-89,000 are Turkish Cypriots and 109,000-117,000 Turkish settlers. There are also 30-35,000 Turkish troops according to UN estimates. Freedom of movement between the Turkish and Maronite communities in the two parts of the island has been facilitated in recent years.
- 3.2 Following the events of 1974 almost all Turkish Cypriots have concentrated in the occupied area. On the basis of a population exchange agreement, 196,000 Greek

Cypriots living in the north were exchanged for 42,000 Turkish Cypriots living in the south. At least 36,000 Turkish Cypriots emigrated in the period 1975-1995, with the consequence that within the occupied area the native Turkish Cypriots have been outnumbered by settlers. According to the 2001 Census, there were 361 Turkish Cypriots left in the area controlled by the Republic of Cyprus, mainly concentrated in Limassol, Paphos and in two villages: Potamia in the district of Nicosia (within the buffer zone) and Pyla in the district of Larnaca. However, they have no representatives nor cultural organisations. The Turkish-speaking community in the Republic of Cyprus is therefore in a situation of a small, not organised minority, while in the occupied area they form the absolute majority of the population. A small number of Greek Cypriots (little more than 400 according to recent estimates) have remained in the occupied area, mainly concentrated in the peninsula of Karpassia. They live concentrated in Rizokarpaso and Ayia Triada as well as in the villages of Galinoporni, Koroveia, Agios Andronikos, Platanissos, Galateia, Gialousa, Lythragkomi, Agios Symeon.

4. Language policy

- 4.1 Under Art. 3 of the Constitution (\Rightarrow Appendix), Greek and Turkish are both official languages, but *de facto* they are used as such in the Republic of Cyprus and the occupied area respectively. With the division of the island, the principle of personality has thus given way to a territorial separation between linguistically homogeneous areas [Karyolemou, 2004]. As a principle, the Republic of Cyprus government recognises to members of all religious groups and communities the right to use their own language in private and in public, and to receive instruction in it.
- 4.2 Greek [*Ellinika*] constitutes a language and a separate branch of the Indo-European family. The Greek Community in Cyprus use both Standard Modern Greek (SMG) – the official language of Greece – and the Greek Cypriot dialect, which belongs to the South-Eastern Greek subgroup and is considered to have remained closer to ancient Greek because of its isolation. SMG was previously known as *dimotiki* [common language], the form that had coexisted for a long time in a diglossic situation with *katharevousa* [purified language]. *Dimotiki* was used in everyday interaction, while *katharevousa* (closely related to ancient Greek) was reserved for literary and official purposes. In the late 1970s both Greece and Cyprus adopted SMG as an official language used in administration, education and the media. Greek Cypriot has remained a strong element of ethnic identity, but formal interaction usually takes place in SMG. Greek has no legal status in the occupied area.
- 4.3 Turkish [*Türkçe*] belongs to a sub-group of the Turkic languages within the Uralo-Altaic family of languages. Standard Turkish is based on the Istanbul variety. The language was essentially written in the Arabic script (although there is a body of documents in the Armenian, Greek, Hebrew, Cyrillic and other alphabets) until 1928, when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk decreed the introduction of the Roman alphabet. The script reform – also motivated by the need to bridge the gap between the literary language and the vernacular, as well as by the inability of the Arabic script to reflect the vowel system of Turkish – was followed by a language reform that sought to purify the language from all Arabic and Persian elements, in keeping with a general break with the Islamic past [Bellér-Hann, 1998]. In Cyprus, the impact of the reforms was felt as early as the 1920s, when the language reform was eventually adopted. The Turkish currently spoken in Cyprus is both the

Turkish Cypriot [*Kıbrıs Türkçesi*] dialect (also called [Osmanlı](#)) and mainland (Anatolian) Turkish, mainly imported by settlers and troops.

- 4.4 In the past, English was used as a lingua franca in Cyprus. In addition Greek Cypriot was shared by both communities, although it is difficult to assess the degree of bilingualism [Karyolemou, 2004]. English was the official language during the British administration, and continued to be used *de facto* in court proceedings until 1989 and in the legislation until 1996.
- 4.5 In the late 50s nationalism produced a “Citizen Speak Turkish” campaign to encourage Turkish Cypriots to use Turkish instead of (Cypriot) Greek. Under the 1960 Constitution Turkish was used in the sessions of the House of Representatives and the Official Journal was published in both languages; since the division of the island, however, Turkish is now considered as a minority language in the Republic of Cyprus – a status that the Turkish community does not generally accept. Since the increase in the demand for official documents by Turkish Cypriots living in the occupied area, who are now able to visit the Republic of Cyprus, application forms and other documents are also drafted in Turkish. However, the small community of Turkish Cypriots living within the Republic of Cyprus usually do not make use of their right to use Turkish in their contacts with the authorities. In the occupied area, Turkish was declared the official language by the 1983 [Constitution](#).

5. Presence and use of the languages in various fields

5.1 Education

- 5.1.1 Under the 1960 Constitution every community was to be responsible for its own educational affairs (pre-primary, primary, secondary and vocational education), managed by the Greek Cypriot communal chamber for the educational matters of the Greek Cypriot community and by the Turkish Cypriot chamber for the educational matters of the Turkish Cypriot community. In 1963 the management of Turkish Cypriot education came under the authority of the Turkish Cypriot administration, which functioned independently. In 1965 a Cyprus Ministry of Education was created to run the education of the Greek Cypriot community. Because of the original constitutional arrangement, the Republic of Cyprus is not considered to have authority over the education of the Turkish-speaking minority. In the occupied area all Turkish Cypriots are educated in their mother tongue.
- 5.1.2 Following a decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus, since 2001 Turkish should be taught as a subject (6 h/week) to Turkish Cypriots at the primary and secondary school level in the private system. There is a Turkish elementary school in Pyla. As of 2003-4 Turkish can be taught as a foreign language in the second cycle of the secondary school (lyceum). According to the [Press and Information Office](#) of the Republic of Cyprus, in the school year 2003-04 there were eight classes of Turkish as a foreign language, and 75 Greek Cypriot students opting for Turkish as a foreign language. Turkish is also taught as a foreign language in the state language institutions [*epimorfotika*] and in the department of Turkish Studies at the [University of Cyprus](#). In the occupied area Turkish is the language of instruction at primary and secondary school level, while in higher education most of the institutions use English as a medium of instruction. For the Greek community there is one primary school in Rizokarpaso where Greek is taught as the language of instruction, while efforts are being made

to reopen the Gymnasium (lower secondary school students are obliged to go to the Republic of Cyprus if they want to continue). Teaching material is imported from the south. Greek courses are available at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta.

5.2 Judicial authorities

Under the 1960 Constitution, judicial proceedings are supposed to be conducted in Greek or Turkish depending on the language of the parties, and in both languages if the parties are one from each Community. Prior to 1989 English was used both as a court and legislative language, and parties still make wide use of English. The constitution also provides for the right of persons under arrest to be informed (in a language they can understand) of the reasons of their arrest at the moment of the arrest, and for the right to be assisted by an interpreter free of charge. In the occupied area there is no provision for the use of Greek in courts.

5.3 Public authorities and services

5.3.1 In public administration and services of the Republic of Cyprus, Turkish — despite being an official language according to the Constitution — is not actually used. However, efforts are being made to reintroduce it wherever necessary. Before the division between the two communities, extensive translation services from and into Turkish were provided and funded by the government. An example were the debates in the House of Representatives, where deputies had the right to speak in their mother tongue. The Press and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus has a translation service in various languages, including Turkish; it has also the obligation to provide free linguistic assistance to Turkish speakers in the courts. Greek has no legal status and is not used by the Turkish administration in the occupied area.

5.3.2 Before 1974 Turkish was used in all services (together with Greek and English). Since 1974 — and more specifically since the 1980's — the use of Turkish (as well as English) has been discontinued. In the Republic of Cyprus it is still used in passports, identity cards, certificates of birth and other official documents. Signs in Turkish are also to be found in police stations, hospitals and other government buildings. Turkish Cypriots are free to choose and use their Turkish family and first names. The government also accepts the Turkish names of the places where Turkish Cypriots used to live. Prior to 1974, Turkish was used both in road signs and in public signage (together with Greek and English). After 1974 Turkish was no longer used, but has remained in many public places (town halls, hospitals etc.). Since April 2003 signs in Turkish have made their appearance in several shops near the partition line in Nicosia and in new road signs. Within the occupied area Turkish (and sometimes English) is the only language used in public and road signage as well as in commercial centres and shops; the policy has been to change Greek place-names to Turkish ones, but since the ban was lifted in 2003 there has been a partial use of Greek names and signs, too.

5.4 Mass media and information technology

According to the 1960 constitution the allocation of hours to each language (Greek and Turkish) on state radio and television was calculated on the basis of a seven (Greek)-to-three (Turkish) ratio: to every seven hours of emission in Greek there

were three hours in Turkish. The same ratio applied to TV stations. The division of the island has brought about the suspension of these constitutional provisions, too. In the Republic of Cyprus there is also a bi-communal private radio channel where both Greek and Turkish are used equally (Radio Potamia). The CBC (Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation) also broadcasts TV Turkish programmes 2,5 hours a week, with subtitles in Turkish for some local productions. In the occupied area there are no media for the Greek minority; it is only possible to pick up Greek radio stations from the south, such as CBC channels 1, 2 and 3. Foreign films/series are normally dubbed in Turkish, and private TV stations broadcast entirely in Turkish. Apart from being the language of the Internet sites in the occupied area, Turkish also appears on the official website of the [Republic of Cyprus](#), of several ministries and of the House of Representatives.

5.5 Arts and culture

Due to the limited membership and organisation of the Turkish community in the south and of the Greek community in the north (\Rightarrow 2.2) there are no sufficient data available.

5.6 The business world

Within the Republic of Cyprus, Turkish can be an asset in language teaching and for certain government posts. Before 1974 knowledge of Turkish was a job requirement for Greek Cypriot civil servants. Within the Republic of Cyprus there is a slight increase in the presence of Turkish in advertising, since the partial lifting of restrictions on movement has allowed Turkish Cypriots to visit the Republic of Cyprus. Within the occupied area the language of advertising is mostly Turkish (sometimes English); Greek is not used.

5.7 Family and the social use of the languages

The small Turkish community living in the Republic of Cyprus still uses Turkish Cypriot for communication within family and with friends, but Greek, Greek Cypriot or English in their contacts with the rest of the (Greek-speaking) society. The Greek-speaking community in the occupied area uses Greek within the family, where intergenerational transmission of the language continues. The younger generations of Turkish Cypriots living in the occupied area know little Greek (unlike the small community of Turkish Cypriots living in the Republic of Cyprus), but in the few Greek-speaking locations and in the buffer zone there is still a degree of bilingualism. Cypriot Turkish – because of its physical separation from Turkey – has tended to remain more conservative than Standard Turkish and is still spoken by Turkish Cypriots, but the nationalist-oriented developments have imposed Standard Turkish as the high variety. However, there is a tendency among Turkish Cypriots in the occupied area to use their dialect as a means of differentiation from the settlers. In this light it should be noted that most Turkish Cypriots who spoke the dialect before 1963 still use it, despite having been exposed to mainland Turkish.

6. The European dimension

The Republic of Cyprus has endorsed a number of international legal instruments for the protection of human rights, including the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1992 (it entered into force in 2002), and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1995 (entered into force in 1998). The Convention is considered to apply to the Armenian, Latin and Maronite religious groups, as well as to the Turkish community – without prejudice to its constitutional position. The Republic of Cyprus has recently signed a bilateral agreement with Armenia on cooperation in the field of culture. The specific protocol on Cyprus, attached to the Accession Treaty, foresaw that – in the absence of a settlement – the application of the *acquis communautaire* should be suspended in the northern part of the island until the Council decides unanimously otherwise, on the basis of a proposal by the Commission.

APPENDIX: Art. 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus

1. The official languages of the Republic are Greek and Turkish.
2. Legislative, executive and administrative acts and documents shall be drawn up in both official languages and shall, where under the express provisions of this Constitution promulgation is required, be promulgated by publication in the official Gazette of the Republic in both official languages.
3. Administrative or other official documents addressed to a Greek or a Turk shall be drawn up in the Greek or the Turkish language respectively.
4. Judicial proceedings shall be conducted or made and judgements shall be drawn up in the Greek language if the parties are Greek, in the Turkish language if the parties are Turkish, and in both the Greek and the Turkish languages if the parties are Greek and Turkish. The official language or languages to be used for such purposes in all other cases shall be specified by the Rules of Court made by the High Court under Article 163.
5. Any text in the official Gazette of the Republic shall be published in both official languages in the same issue.
6. (1) Any difference between the Greek and the Turkish texts of any legislative, executive or administrative act or document published in the official Gazette of the Republic, shall be resolved by a competent court.

 (2) The prevailing text of any law or decision of a Communal Chamber published in the official Gazette of the Republic shall be that of the language of the Communal Chamber concerned.

 (3) Where any difference arises between the Greek and the Turkish texts of an executive or administrative act or document which, though not published in the official Gazette of the Republic, has otherwise been published, a statement by the Minister or any other authority concerned as to which text should prevail or which should be the correct text shall be final and conclusive.

 (4) A competent court may grant such remedies as it may deem just in any case of a difference in the texts as aforesaid.
7. The two official languages shall be used on coins, currency notes and stamps.
8. Every person shall have the right to address himself to the authorities of the Republic in either of the official languages.