

The Democratic Rally (DISY) may remain in office in Cyprus after the 30 May parliamentary elections

557,589 Cypriots are due to vote on 30 May to elect 56 members of the *Vouli antiprosopon* (House of Representatives), the single chamber of parliament, which was dissolved on 22 April. 1,160 mobile polling stations will criss-cross the country to allow people infected with the coronavirus to perform their civic duty from their homes. In addition, 10 polling stations will be opened abroad: 4 in London and Athens and 2 in Thessaloniki.

A total of 659 candidates from 15 political parties and citizens' groups are running. These legislative elections could well inaugurate a new political era for Cyprus with the entry of several "small" parties in the House of Representatives, which would lead to an unprecedented fragmentation of the Parliament.

According to an opinion poll by the CyBC institute, only 22% of Cypriots are satisfied with the functioning of democracy on their island and 80% say they do not trust the political system, the highest figure ever recorded. "We had to expect this. The 30 May elections come at the end of a decade marked by the financial crisis, the coronavirus pandemic, corruption and the ups and downs of negotiations on the division of the island," said researcher Yannis Mavris.

A few months ago, Cyprus was hit by the "golden passport" scandal. The island issued passports to thousands of foreign investors in exchange for an investment of €2.5 million, which included the purchase of a residence. Launched in 2007, the Cyprus Investment Programme (CIP) grew especially after the 2013 economic crisis when the country was on the verge of bankruptcy. According to the Ministry of Interior, around 4,000 foreigners have benefited from the programme, which has generated

some €8 billion in revenue. People linked to organised crime who can infiltrate the EU in this way, promoting corruption and money laundering, can potentially use the scheme. Nevertheless, some twenty Member States offer this type of service. The Commission regularly denounces the laxity of certain States in controlling applicants and the lack of transparency in the granting procedures, the "risks" that these procedures represent for "security", the possibilities of "money laundering" and "tax evasion" that they constitute. In one report, Al-Jazeera journalists posed as representatives of a fictitious person with a significant criminal record who wanted access to the Cyprus investment programme. Despite this fact, the report shows that several officials and personalities were willing to help him obtain a Cypriot passport. Following its broadcast, the Speaker of Parliament, Demetris Syllouri (Solidarity Movement, KA), who was involved in the transaction, was forced to resign. The so-called golden passport system was abolished on 1 November. The Cypriot authorities are reviewing the files of the 4,000 people who benefited from the scheme. Last week, they announced the revocation of seven passports.

A DIFFICULT ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

It is therefore not surprising that, according to an opinion poll conducted last March by the CyBC Institute, the fight against corruption is the first electoral issue for Cypriots, followed by the management of the health crisis.

The ruling Democratic Rally (DISY) is torn between its right wing, which is appealing to patriotism in order not to lose its most conservative voters and trying to win

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over supporters of more right-wing parties such as the National People's Front (ELAM), and its left wing, which is seeking to attract voters from the centre in order to win on 30 May.

The Progressive Workers' Party (AKEL) accuses the outgoing government of neglecting the problem of the division of the island and of not addressing the Cypriots living in the northern part of the island. The main opposition party laments the near absence of a welfare state and social policy in the country. To remedy this situation, it proposes to modernise the welfare state and decentralise social policy. It is promising to give more money to local communities for better care of the young and the old. It wants to make home ownership easier by regulating rents and mortgages according to socio-economic criteria and by giving tax breaks to young homeowners. Finally, it is promising to abandon the 12% penalty for people who stop working at 63.

The Democratic Party (DIKO) has criticised the outgoing government for its handling of the health crisis on an island that lives largely on tourism.

The Green Movement-Citizens' Cooperation (KOSP) is trying to establish itself as an alternative force to the traditional parties. According to some political analysts, the ecologists could achieve a high result due to the positioning of their new leader, Charalambos Theopemptou, who is more focused on environmental issues and less on dividing the island than his predecessor was.

A new party, Famagusta for Cyprus, could be the biggest surprise on 30 May. It was founded by refugees dissatisfied with the political handling of the division of Cyprus. It criticises the use of the division of the island by political parties to preserve the partisan status quo. The party supports a federal solution. It is running 19 candidates in each of the constituencies, including a large number of women and young people. It is fighting against corruption and wants to develop an education system that will empower children to become true citizens.

According to an opinion poll conducted by the Pulse Institute between 4 and 7 May, the Democratic Rally (DISY) is expected to lead the elections with 25.7%

of the vote ahead of the Progressive Workers' Party (AKEL), 22.9%, the Democratic Party (DIKO), 12.1%, the Movement of Ecologists-Citizens' Cooperation, 7.10% of the vote, and the National People's Front (ELAM), the Movement for Social Democracy-Citizens' Alliance (EDEK-SYPOL), 5.7%, the Democratic Front (DIPA), a centrist party created in 2018 by DIKO members opposed to Nikolas Papadopoulos and led by Marios Garoyian, 3.6%, as well as the Generation Change (Allagi Genias), the former Movement of Independents, led by Anna Theologou, and finally the Solidarity Movement, 2.9%.

AN ISLAND DIVIDED FOR ALMOST 47 YEARS

Many Cypriots have never known their island united. Since July 1974, a green line controlled by UN peacekeepers has crossed the island. This organisation has been present in Cyprus since 1963, the year of the first clashes between the Greek and Turkish communities living on the island. On 15 July 1974, the National Guard, inspired by the military junta in place in Greece since 1967, overthrew the Cypriot president, Archbishop Makarios III, and replaced him with Nikos Sampson. On 20 July, Turkish troops landed in Kyrenia to protect the Turkish minority. With the help of the Greek army, the government of Nikos Sampson managed to keep them behind a line (which became the Green Line) before collapsing four days later. However, Turkey refused to leave the northern part of the island it occupied, even after the fall of Nikos Sampson.

On 30 July 1974, Turkey, Greece and the UK established a security zone guarded by UN peacekeepers and the three countries recognised the existence of two autonomous administrations. On 13 February 1975, the Turkish leader, Rauf Denktash, proclaimed the autonomous, secular and federated State and was elected President in 1976. In January 1977, Rauf Denktash and Makarios III agreed on the principle of a federal bi-communal state, but the death of Makarios III on 3 August 1977 put an end to the negotiations. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus declared its independence in 1983. Turkey is the only state to recognise it internationally. To date, 35,000 Turkish

troops are still stationed in the northern part of the island. The conflict resulted in about 3,000 dead, 1,400 missing and tens of thousands displaced.

On 11 November 2002, the UN proposed a third peace and reunification plan (after those of 1986 and 1992). The Annan Plan (named after the then UN Secretary General) suggested the creation of a united Republic of Cyprus in the form of a confederation of two largely autonomous constituent States inspired by the model of the Swiss Confederation. This plan was put to a referendum of all the island's inhabitants on 24 April 2004. The Cypriots rejected it by 75.83%, while 64.9% of the inhabitants of the northern part of the island approved it. 89.18% of the voters went to the polls in Cyprus and 87% in the northern part.

After intensifying in 2016, negotiations on the reunification of the island between the Republic of Cyprus and the northern part of the island led by President Mustafa Akinci have been at a standstill since 6 July 2017, as the two sides failed to agree on the status of Turkish forces on the island and Ankara refused to give up its rights to intervene in talks held under the aegis of the United Nations in Crans-Montana in Switzerland.

At the end of April, the two sides met again in Geneva, Switzerland, under the aegis of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, but the talks, in which the three guarantor countries of the island took part, again failed to produce a solution. No common ground emerged that would have allowed the resumption of talks to resolve the issue of the island's division.

"Ersin Tatar (National Unity Party, UBP), Prime Minister of the northern part, is a hardliner, 100% aligned with Recep Tayyip Erdogan's positions. This leader is a declared enemy of reunification and a federal solution. He is unlikely to seek a compromise," said Hubert Faustmann, professor of international relations at the University of Nicosia. "The President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, is blocked in the negotiations by his opposition which is not looking for any appeasement, any solution with the north of the island. These are electoral postures which, a few weeks before the legislative elections, risk blocking the

entire peace process," said Tozun Bahcheli, professor of political science at the University of Ontario, and specialist in Cyprus.

According to Gilles Bertrand, lecturer in political science at the Centre Emile Durkheim of Sciences Po Bordeaux, "the solution to the Cyprus problem can only come from civil society itself, much more than from the authorities in place. Thus, he explains, "it was the demonstrations that took place in 2002 in the northern part against the financial crisis and dependence on Turkey that led to the Annan plan".

THE CYPRIOT POLITICAL SYSTEM

The 1960 Constitution has not been applied on the island since the intercommunal unrest of 1963. The President of the Republic of Cyprus, elected by universal suffrage for a 5-year term, also serves as head of government. The current President Nicos Anastasiades (DISY) succeeded Demetris Christofias (AKEL) on 24 February 2013, winning 57.48% of the vote against Stavros Malas (AKEL). He was re-elected five years later on 4 February 2018 with 55.99% of the vote against the same opponent.

The *Vouli antiprosopon* (House of Representatives) is the single chamber of Parliament. In July 1985, the deputies passed a law that increased the number of seats to 80: 56 (70%) are elected by Greek Cypriots and 24 (30%) are reserved for the Turkish community. The latter seats are therefore vacant and will not be renewed on 30 May.

Candidates for the legislative elections must be at least 35 years old.

Voting takes place according to the Hare Niemeyer method in 6 constituencies: Nicosia, 20 deputies; Limassol, 12; Famagusta, 11; Larnaka, 6; Paphos, 4 and Kyrenia, 3. Voters can choose to vote for a single party (by ranking the candidates of that party in order of preference) or for candidates from different parties. Finally, the Cypriot parliament includes 3 deputies who represent the country's religious minorities (Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Catholic and Latin Catholic) and who are elected by the members of their community alone. Each community has about 5,000 members and is grouped in an enclave. The legislative powers of

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these deputies are limited to education and ethnic and religious issues.

8 political parties won seats in the House of Representatives in the previous parliamentary elections on 22 May 2016:

- Democratic Rally (DISY), the party of the President of the Republic Nicos Anastasiades, located on the right of the political spectrum. Founded in 1976 and led by Averof Neophytou, it has 20 seats;
- the Progressive Workers' Party (AKEL), founded in 1926 as the Communist Party (CPC) but which has abandoned some of its Marxist-Leninist ideals. Led by Andros Kyprianou, it has 19 deputies;
- the Democratic Party (DIKO), a centre-left party founded in 1976 and led by Nikolas Papadopoulos, has 9 seats;

- the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK), founded in 1969 and chaired by Marinos Sizopoulos, has 5 seats;
- the Citizens' Alliance (SYPOL), led by Giorgos Lillikas, which is opposed to any austerity plan and is fighting for reunification and rejects any idea of a federation, has 3 seats;
- the Solidarity Movement (KA), a party founded by Eleni Theocharous in 2015, has 3 seats;
- the Green Movement-Citizens' Cooperation (KOSP), a green party led by Charalambos Theopemptou, has 2 seats;
- the National Popular Front (ELAM), a radical right-wing nationalist party led by Christos Christou, has 2 seats.

Reminder of the results of 22 May 2016 parliamentary elections in Cyprus

Turnout: 66,74%

Political Parties	Number of votes won	Percentage of votes cast	Number of seats
Democratic Rally (DISY)	107 825	30.69	18
Progressive Workers' Party (AKEL)	90 204	25.67	16
Democratic Party (DIKO)	50 923	14.49	9
Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK)	21 732	6.18	3
Citizens' Alliance (SYPOL)	21 114	6.01	3
Solidarity Movement (KA)	18 424	5.24	3
Movement of Ecologists-Citizens' Cooperation (KOSP)	16 909	4.81	2
National Popular Front (ELAM)	13 041	3.71	2
Others	10 176	2.89	0
Independents	1 041	0.29	0

Source : http://results.elections.moi.gov.cy/English/PARLIAMENTARY_ELECTIONS_2016/Islandwide

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