

Αχιλλέας 2023
Η Κύπρος αξίζει καλύτερα

PILLAR II: CYPRUS 2035

**“A SINGLE AND GREEN CYPRUS”: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
AND GREEN GROWTH**

1. INTRODUCTION

The climate crisis is the biggest challenge facing humanity. Cyprus is located in the zone at risk of desertification. Our environmental resources, water, forests, coastline, countryside have never been more valuable. The situation is urgent and Cyprus cannot afford to lag behind.

The destruction of the environment in the occupied areas will inevitably have repercussions on areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus. We must recognise that Cyprus is a single ecosystem. Our policies on the air, water, biodiversity and coasts must overcome the divisions of the ceasefire line and the boundaries of the British Bases. The destruction of the environment of our island concerns us all.

Our participation in the EU has already set out the guidelines. Upgrading the environment and the quality of life is guided by the needs of future generations. According to the European Commission's Sustainability Reports, Cyprus has not made any substantial progress in any of the EU's targets.

Ahead of us, we have the targets of the European Green Deal:

- (i) Ending dependence on coal and achieving climate neutrality by 2050.
- (ii) A 55% reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.
- (iii) Full energy efficiency for new buildings and energy upgrades to existing buildings.

To achieve these targets, we must capitalise on the opportunities offered by the Recovery and Resilience Fund as well as from the EU's new multi-annual programme of 2021-2027. They are our two growth engines.

To change the current, sad state of affairs, the state must offer incentives and subsidy schemes and implement green taxation. We must introduce mechanisms to measure and monitor progress on our targets, so as to prevent the loss of more time. Our island can offer a new narrative to attract investments for a green economy.

We want a Single and Green Cyprus!

WHAT I PROPOSE

2. INCENTIVES FOR USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES (RES)

2.1 Comparative figures from Eurostat regarding the transition to RES and reducing emissions reveal Cyprus' serious delays. Our country's performance diverges significantly from the EU's new objectives for 2030 and 2050.

2.2 We must quickly turn to RES, capitalising on sunshine, where Cyprus has a comparative advantage. Making the best of the opportunities the country offers, we must draw up a comprehensive strategy to end the EAC's dependence on mazut.

2.3 We believe that not only should the use of renewable sources of energy (especially solar) increase but it can also promote just and equitable access to all social groups, addressing energy poverty. By promoting in parallel decentralised production (eg at buildings and households), we can avoid problems that have unfortunately already started to appear as regards location, in a country where land values are significantly impacted by changes in the use of land and the available area.

2.4 Developing and adapting national legislation to promote the creation of energy communities and partnerships so as to allow a more socially just and accessible clean energy.

2.5 RES Suppliers

- Licensing procedures for companies and other participants offering technologies which facilitate the use of RES must be simplified.
- The Commission for the Protection of Competition must intervene to ensure healthy market conditions for RES suppliers.

2.6 Subsidy schemes for RES

- Existing subsidy schemes for the installation of photovoltaics by households and companies should be expanded. The subsidy must be income-linked, with larger grants going to households with lower incomes.

2.7 Targeted state investments:

- Investment in infrastructure to store energy produced with RES.
- Using funds from the Recovery and Resilience Fund, the state must invest in the creation of a comprehensive electric car charging infrastructure, enabling their penetration into the Cyprus market.
- We support the initiative to construct a solar energy park in the buffer zone to the benefit of both communities. Already, the EU Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Elisa Ferreira has announced her readiness to support such an initiative.

2.8 Measures to promote RES by the public sector:

- The state must choose its associates wisely. Environmental criteria should be part of such decisions. Legislation must be approved making it a prerequisite that individuals who participate in public tenders satisfy some minimum environmental

criteria, especially when it concerns a sector with significant environmental impact (eg construction.)

- The government should lead by example as regards the transition to RES. I propose an immediate review of the energy consumption and viability of large public projects and buildings. This study should have an advisory role as to the measures that must be taken to make public buildings more environmentally friendly. These measures should be implemented in order of priority.

3. ENERGY POLICY

3.1 Our target is for 45% of electricity to be produced with RES by 2030.

3.2 Yes, to the use of natural gas during the transition towards ending dependence on polluting fuel that is currently being used to produce electricity.

3.3 In the past decade, the government has failed to implement the plans to import natural gas so as to transition from petroleum to natural gas for electricity generation. Up until the war in Ukraine, extraction was neglected. The extremely dynamic geopolitical environment underlines the need to be prepared for multiple scenarios.

3.4 Modernisation and accelerating procedures are essential so that we can respond to the energy crisis quickly and with flexibility.

3.5 Nuclear energy is not an option in our region. Further than the additional vulnerability because it is an earthquake prone zone, nuclear energy requires political stability and maturity, something absent in our region.

3.6 Implementation of the project to link the electricity grids of Cyprus, Israel and Greece has been approved for partial financing from the Recovery Fund. This project involves a huge investment and as such requires serious public consultation, full transparency, parliamentary monitoring and constant oversight.

4. CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

4.1 We propose an amendment to the Constitution to secure the autonomous right of citizens to a clean and healthy environment. This will allow the public to contest anti-environmental policies in court.

4.2 This right will safeguard the progress registered in the jurisprudence of the ECHR and the legal obligations arising from the Aarhus Convention. More specifically it will safeguard:

- The substance of the right to a clean environment.
- Citizens' right to be informed by the state about environmental issues.
- Effective participation of citizens in political decisions which affect the environment where they live.
- Effective access to justice, legal and administrative procedures, including redress and restitution.

5. GREEN TAXATION AND INVESTMENT IN GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

5.1 **Green Taxation:** Promoting tax reform with emphasis on green taxation to be implemented in a fiscally neutral way. Practically, this means that additional revenue raised from taxation of activities which harm the environment will be balanced out by tax breaks and subsidies for activities by individuals which benefit the environment and contribute to green growth.

5.2 **Promoting green entrepreneurship:** The state can support the work of businesses so that they can move to environmentally friendly practices, introducing the relevant incentives as well as disincentives in the case of non-environmental sensitive monetary profits, thereby contributing to green growth of the Cyprus economy and promoting a circular economy. We propose granting tax incentives to facilitate such business activities within Cyprus and to attract foreign investments in the sector, of course with the necessary oversight to avoid green "laundering."

6. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

6.1 Recycling can contribute significantly to slowing climate change. Upgrading infrastructure and services for recycling and reuse is a prerequisite for effective recycling and making the best of its positive impact.

6.2 We propose reducing VAT on repair services, offering consumers an incentive to repair rather than replace products. This policy has been successfully implemented in Sweden.

6.3 Legislation should be enacted obliging those selling electrical and mechanical products to also supply a quantity of spare parts, depending on their sales. This will facilitate quick repairs and serve as an incentive so that consumers exercise their right for product repairs, rather than replacing them.

- 6.4 Setting a specified date within which the seller must repair products, should the consumer choose to exercise their right to repair, as provided by Article 13 of the Certain Aspects on Contracts for the Supply of Digital Content and Digital Services Law of 2021 (155(I)/2021). Equivalent measures have been implemented in France to propose repairs over replacement of products.
- 6.5 We should make the best of European initiatives such as the EU Ecolabel (the optional certification of products and services which satisfy stringent environmental criteria). The state should give businesses incentives to be certified.

7. BICOMMUNAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS

- 7.1 Our island is a single ecosystem and the environmental destruction of Cyprus concerns us all. The climate crisis creates an opportunity to build cooperation to face this shared challenge.
- 7.2 We propose the establishment of a technical committee to address the climate crisis and environmental destruction, with the participation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, modelled on existing technical committees.
- 7.3 The mandate of the Technical Committee would be:
- Coordinating the fire fighting services of the Republic of Cyprus and the subordinate local administration in the occupied areas to fight fires anywhere on the island and coordinating reforestation.
 - The collection and distribution of information on environmental destruction anywhere in Cyprus, as well as a joint study on ways to address this destruction. The studies will be made public and constitute a useful tool to formulate the government's environmental policy, and will also safeguard the right of the public for access, with transparency, to information on the environment.

8. HORIZONTAL OVERSIGHT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES BY THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 We support bolstering and upgrading the position of the Commissioner for the Environment with additional powers so as to be able to intervene effectively.
- 8.2 Specifically, the commissioner would be responsible:

- For horizontal checks of the environmental impact of the state and of private organisations.
- To monitor that every ministry and public services under the ministry's authority comply with the basic practices of the circular economy (eg recycling).
- To set targets as regards the energy performance of the public sector and check that these targets are met. If they are not, to propose measures to reduce energy consumption.
- To check that the new facilities built to house public services satisfy environmental criteria as regards construction and insulation and that they produce part of the energy they consume using RES.
- To oversee the implementation of licensed projects by the Environment Department.
- The Commissioner should have the possibility to impose sanctions (including closing private facilities) for failure to comply.

9. MASS TRANSPORT – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

9.1 Emissions from transport account for more than 40% of our total emissions as a country. In Cyprus, the public's preferred choice of transport remains the car. We have a duty to facilitate the public to make more environmentally-friendly transportation choices. The urban mobility plans should become a programme with a set timetable for implementation for viable towns.

9.2 Cycle paths: The first step has been taken by demarcating cycle paths in some urban centres. But there is a lot of room to expand and improve.

9.3 Buses:

- Bus routes must be digitised in all the districts so that people know when they should go to the bus stop.
- The Transport Ministry, in cooperation with the relevant municipalities and the public transportation companies, must carry out a study and review the routes. The aim is to have multiple routes so that people choosing to go to their destination using public transport should not have to change bus.

- The Transport Ministry must check that public transportation companies comply with the terms of their contract which stipulates the frequency of the scheduled routes.

10. GREEN TOWN PLANNING POLICIES

10.1 The economic policy of ‘towers and passports’ was opportunistic and had a serious impact on the environment. We have a different vision for our island.

10.2 Buildings with low energy consumption

- We propose energy criteria for large projects and buildings to ensure the lowest possible energy consumption.
- Owners of properties with Ecolabel certification should receive tax relief.
- The carrying out of environmental impact studies (and strategic studies) for high buildings, especially on the coast and immediate implementation of measures to mitigate the impact.

10.3 Urban Green areas

- We must protect the large urban parks as they are the lungs of our towns.
- We support every initiative to increase green areas in urban areas with the creation of parks and green areas.

11. AKAMAS NATIONAL PARK

11.1 Akamas is a heritage that belongs to all of us and we have a duty to protect it for our children. We will oppose anyone who attempts to intervene in the peninsula’s ecosystem. Akamas is not for sale!

11.2 We support the proposal of the Greens to set up a management committee with the participation of the area’s community leaders, the Environment Commissioner, the Agriculture Ministry and experts to implement a local plan for the Akamas.

11.3 For the existing local plan for the Akamas we propose:

- The government should adopt all the legally binding and substantial terms of the special ecological evaluation report and the opinion on the environmental impact study.

- To safeguard the natural and cultural heritage of Cyprus through the protection of Natura 2000 areas. To this end, some of the zones proposed must be abolished or amended.
- Tourist and residential zones should not extend to Natura 2000 areas.
- Use of certified sustainability indicators proposed by the Department of the Environment for the area.
- Removal of the policy relating to isolated homes in the Akamas peninsula to avoid the dangerous repercussions on protected flora and fauna.
- The policy of a ‘visitable farmstead’ should be regulated in a satisfactory way and not extend to areas far from the core of the communities.
- The extension of the Androlykou quarry zone which endangers many of the protected species of the area should be removed from the provisions.

11.4 Residents of Akamas communities

- The state should expropriate land within or close to the National Park, paying fair compensation to owners. This could take the form of an exchange with state land elsewhere.
- We propose special legislative relaxations to simplify the licensing procedure and allow the use of existing facilities as hospitality venues (BnB) within the predetermined development zones. This will avert further human interventions into nature within Akamas.

12. AGRICULTURE, CULTIVATIONS AND THE PRIMARY SECTOR – DEVELOPING THE COUNTRYSIDE

12.1 Agriculture, livestock breeding and the processing of produce must be put on a modern basis: quality cultivations, organic produce, modern units, promotion of local products with innovative and targeted applications.

12.2 The objective is a strategic plan that will pinpoint Cyprus’ advantages because of the climate and develop the primary sector based on the new guidelines of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy and the EU’s “Farm to Fork” strategy.

12.3 The aim is to increase fertility of the land which translates into fewer chemicals, bigger production and higher plant coverage of the land. Converting as much of the prunings and other organic substrates into compost so as to replenish the lost carbon

in the soil, with the aim of it rising from the 1% it is now to more than 5% of healthy soil.

12.4 We need a new modern class of farmers and livestock breeders for business growth in the countryside. They should make the best of the practices of training schools which are familiar with the new trends, draw good practices from other countries and can have the support of the state through national or EU financing.

- We propose a programme to support and attract young farmers with scientific background.
- Targeted encouragement of agricultural units of specialized products with the aim of creating larger, viable units.
- The role of universities in Cyprus is to develop related industries such as food production, agronomy, environmental studies and to link them with new technologies in production. The state must contribute to upgrading the relevant university programmes and specialization in new agrarian technologies.

12.5 Support and development of the countryside

- The state must ensure that the countryside has the infrastructure that allow young couples and their families to remain there. We must invest in regional nursery schools, kindergartens and health centres to support the countryside.
- Offering incentives through tax breaks and subsidy schemes to further develop agrotourism and address rural depopulation.

13. MANAGING WATER RESOURCES IN THE FACE OF THE RISK OF DESERTIFICATION

13.1 Management of water resources is a priority on an island at risk of desertification.

13.2 The measures proposed by the Agriculture Ministry in the 'National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation' must be immediately implemented:

- Repairing all water transportation systems so as to minimise water loss.
- Taxing water-intensive facilities such as golf courses.
- Tax breaks for households which replace antiquated household appliances with new ones with lower water consumption, provided the older appliance is recycled.

- Use of recycled water to irrigate green areas.
- Use renewable energy sources for the production of desalinated water.

14. ANIMAL PROTECTION

14.1 We support bolstering the work of the animal police and public awareness campaigns about their role. We could consider the possibility of an independent service within the police force.

14.2 The state, in cooperation with municipal authorities, must promote neutering programmes for strays and support the work of animal shelters.