



The local government system in

Cyprus



Key facts

POPULATION (Census 2001): 689,565
AREA: 9,251 sq km
CAPITAL: Nicosia
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP: 1.46%
CURRENCY: Euro (EUR)
HEAD OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT: President Dimitris Christofias
FORM OF GOVERNMENT: republic
PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM: unicameral
STATE STRUCTURE: unitary
LANGUAGES: Greek and Turkish (official)
NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
House of Representatives: last: 2006; **turnout:** 89.0%; **next:** 2011
Presidential: last: 2008; **turnout:** 89.6%; **next:** 2013
LOCAL ELECTIONS: last: 2006; **turnout:** 88.3%; **next:** 2011

SUMMARY

Since 1974, following Turkish military intervention, almost 37% of the population in Cyprus is under Turkish occupation. This profile deals with local government in the part of the island under the control of the internationally recognised Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Cyprus is a democratic republic with a comprehensive system of local government comprising urban municipal councils and rural community councils. There is no general constitutional provision for local government, although the establishment of five municipalities is mentioned within the constitution. The main pieces of governing legislation are the Municipalities Law 1985 and the Communities Law 1999. There are 24 municipal councils and 355 community councils, and a further nine municipal councils and 136 community councils within the occupied area. Both municipal and community councils are empowered to raise revenues through local taxes and fees and consideration for marginalised groups is factored

into the structure of charges and taxes. Additionally there are central government transfers to each local council, both annual grants and grants for specific development projects. Statutory council responsibilities include waste disposal, water supply and public health; additionally all municipal councils are responsible for social services, and larger municipal councils are further responsible for the planning permission process.

1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Cyprus is a democratic republic with a unicameral parliament. The head of state is the president who is directly elected for a five-year term of office and must gain an absolute majority to be elected. The parliament is known as the House of Representatives and has 80 members, known as deputies. There are 56 seats reserved for Greek Cypriot deputies and 24 seats reserved for Turkish Cypriot deputies, all elected by universal suffrage of citizens over the age of 18. Also,

there are three observer members, one each drawn from the three next most populous minority communities: Armenian, Roman Catholic and Maronite. Constitutionally elections to the House of Representatives must be held on the same day for both Greek and Turkish communities, no elections however have been held among the Turkish Cypriot community since 1974 in accordance with the constitution. The House has kept vacant the seats allocated to the Turkish Cypriot community. The president appoints an executive council of 11 ministers which may be drawn from either inside or outside the House of Representatives. The ministers are not allowed to hold any other public office or have any private practice during their term of office.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions:

There is no general provision or protection for local government within the constitution; however the establishment of five municipalities



Table 1. Distribution of councils and population (Census 2001)

District	Municipalities	Communities	Population	Rural %
Nicosia	8	95	279,545	26.4
Limassol	5	109	201,057	20.1
Larnaca	4	48	117,124	38.7
Paphos	4	97	67,432	30.0
Famagusta* (unoccupied)	3	6	38,371	n/a
Kyrenia	Occupied area			
TOTAL (under government)	24	355	689,565	n/a
Largest population	94,250	6,443	-	-
Smallest population	921	< 10	-	-
Average population	20,221	1,175	-	-

* Under the control of the government. Source: Cyprus Statistics

in each of the five largest towns is mentioned within the constitution.

2.2 Main legislative texts:

- The Municipalities Law 1985 – with 51 Amendments
- The Communities Law 1999 – with 17 Amendments.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state:

Cyprus is divided into six districts for administrative purposes. There is a comprehensive system of local government which comprises 24 municipal councils in urban areas; including major towns and tourist areas, and 355 community councils in rural areas, that cover 85% of the island's total land area.

3.2 Ministerial oversight:

The Ministry of the Interior is tasked with overseeing local government and formulating and implementing the government's policy in relation to urban development, district administration, town planning and housing, land surveying, migration, asylum, civil defence and communication.

3.3 Council types:

Both rural and urban authorities are single-tier local authorities.

3.3.1 Municipalities: There are currently 33 municipalities, nine of which are located within the Turkish occupied area where their legal status, including their mayors and councils, is fully maintained. New municipalities can be established following a plebiscite in an area or by a group of villages with a population of more than 5,000. Similarly, a municipality may be abolished if the population falls below 4,000 over three consecutive years. Leaders of municipalities are called mayors.

3.3.2 Communities: There are 355 communities in the area controlled by the government and 136 in the occupied area.

3.3.3 District councils: Following a ministry led reform discussion throughout 2010, a consensus was reached across local government to create district councils, which will in turn form a second tier of local administration and become the pillars of regional planning and development. The district councils will be established following the December 2011 local government elections. They will be made up of representatives of the municipalities and complexes (see section 10) as well as of the district unions of communities. From 2016, the 19 members of the board of each council will be directly elected from the district's constituency.

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections:

The last local elections took place in December 2006, and the next elections, for both municipalities and communities, will be in December 2011.

4.2 Voting system:

The proportional voting system is used and, as with national elections, voting is compulsory. Councillors stand for election either as members of a coalition or as independent candidates. In Cyprus, six political parties with representation in the House of Representatives also contest local elections. Residents who have been forced to move district due to the occupation are eligible to vote both for the municipal authorities in which they are temporarily resident and for the municipal authorities of their origin. Mayors are directly elected by the first-past-the-post system with mayoral elections being held at the same time as the council elections. Mayors and councillors serve for a five-year term. A deputy mayor is indirectly elected by secret ballot of all the councillors at the first meeting of the council.

4.3 Elected representatives:

Councillors serve for a five-year term and must be at least 25 years old to be eligible to stand for election. The number of councillors in each council varies according to the number of voters in the electoral area, the smallest being eight and the largest 26. Municipalities must have a management committee, which prepares the budget, annual report and annual accounts, and assists and advises the mayor. The council appoints the members of the management committee, comprising not less than one-third and not more than half of the membership of the council, with the mayor and deputy mayor being ex-officio members.

Other committees can be set up at the discretion of the council. These have a consultative rather than an executive role. The membership of these committees is generally drawn from the councillors though co-option of

Table 2. Aggregate revenue (2005) and expenditure (2003) for municipalities and communities

Revenue (€m)	Municipalities	Communities	Expenditure	Municipalities	Communities
Government grants	59.1%	52.9%	Admin.	7.5%	7.3%
Taxes	20.1%	22.5%	Value-added gross	45.9%	21%
Licences, permits, fines, rents & fees	19.6%	n/a	Services: street lighting, cleaning, cultural services	17.3%	17.1%
Other	1.2%	24.6%	Other	29.3%	54.6%
TOTAL (both)	285*		TOTAL (both)	298*	

Separate total revenue or expenditure for either municipalities or councils not available.

Source: Ministry of the Interior⁴



other people is allowed. Committees are expected to reflect proportionally the different parties, coalitions and independents on the council. Chairpersons must be members of the management committee.

Leaders of communities are called presidents and along with the other council members are elected every five years.

4.4 Women's representation results for 2010:

- Municipal councillors: 20%
- Community councillors: 9%
- Municipal mayors: 6%
- Community presidents: 3%.

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement:

No information provided for this edition.

5.2 Implementation:

A wide range of formal and informal arrangements and measures are in place to encourage and to facilitate citizen participation in decision-making. They include:

- Open meetings of local councils
- Referendums
- Development of websites
- Right of access to information relating to the environment
- Public meetings at neighbourhood level
- Involvement of specialist groups in consultations
- Public consultations
- Meetings with marginalised groups.

5.3 E-government:

Local governments are encouraged to develop their own e-government strategy.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

6.1 National local government associations:

There are two national organisations of local government: the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and the Union of Cyprus Communities.

Following the 2011 local government elections, local authorities will be able to form 'complexes' or associations of local authorities. These groups will be established on a voluntary basis with the participating local authorities maintaining their independence. They will undertake to execute projects and provide services that their local authority members are either unable to deliver or that they deem to be more efficient and effective if carried out jointly. Their boards will come from the councils of the participating authorities.

6.1.1 The Union of Cyprus Municipalities' core functions are to contribute to the development of local government autonomy and to promote local government interests. The Union acts as the highest body representing the municipalities of Cyprus at a national and international level, with a view to promoting and defending their interests. This is achieved through:

- Strengthening the political, administrative and financial autonomy and independence of municipalities
- Identifying problems of a general or common nature and interest, drafting policies and strategies and ensuring their implementation
- Monitoring and promoting legislation relating to municipalities
- Interacting effectively with municipalities in order to facilitate and enhance cooperation with them, thus offering them the possibility to communicate and exchange opinions and know-how among themselves and to improve cooperation with local authorities from other countries
- Providing appropriate support services to municipalities (research, studies, advice, training etc)
- Cooperating with the trade unions representing municipal staff and their various social and economic partners
- Highlighting the political, social and economic/development role of local self-government in order to encourage and facilitate citizen participation in the management of local issues
- Achieving the widest possible participation of municipal authorities in public governance in Cyprus
- Participating in international bodies of local self-government and in local and international conferences.

6.1.2 The Union of Cyprus Communities has the following objectives:

- To protect and promote its members' powers, interests, rights and privileges and, generally, the independence and self-sufficiency of local authorities
- To assist with cooperation and exchange of views between members for the achievement of common goals
- To collect data and information useful to members
- To lobby other government and non-government agencies, including the central government and the House of Representatives, and to assist in securing the powers and resources necessary for the

development and expansion of local self-government

- To participate in international bodies of local self-government and in local and international conferences.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

At the national level, intergovernmental relations are often channelled through the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and the Union of Cyprus Communities. At the district level, the district officer, a civil servant who is head of the district office and accountable to the Minister of the Interior, coordinates government activities in the area.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

8.1 Municipalities:

The annual budgets of municipal councils are approved by the Council of Ministers. Municipalities must keep proper books of accounts, and financial statements must be prepared and submitted for audit by the end of the financial year. The audited accounts are submitted by the Auditor General, together with the audit report thereon, to the municipal council, the House of Representatives and the minister, who sees that they are published in the official gazette. The Auditor General has the right to request any information or explanations from any council member or employee and has the right of access to any document necessary to conduct the audit.

8.2 Communities:

The annual budgets of community councils are approved by the district officer. Communities must keep proper accounts and prepare financial statements by the end of the financial year. The financial statements are submitted to the Auditor General. The audited financial statements and audit report are then submitted to the district officer. Additionally, the Auditor General may conduct special reviews or any other audit deemed necessary.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9.1 Locally raised revenue:

Municipal councils obtain their revenues from municipal taxes, licence fees, permits, fines and rents. Community councils derive their revenues from taxes, fees and other revenues. Marginalised groups are considered in the structure of charges and taxes.

9.2 Transfers:

The government subsidises each local council with a yearly grant proposed by the Council of Ministers and approved by the House of Representatives. In addition to these annual state grants, the



government contributes special grants for development projects. Such grants vary according to the project and the financial situation of the council. Grants from central government are approved on a project-by-project basis with financial assistance ranging between 70–100% of the total cost. The whole of the annual grant to the municipalities and approximately 75% of that to the communities is directly allocated, then distributed further to individual local units based on an agreed formula. Expenditure incurred should be included in the approved annual budgets.

9.3 Local authority staff:

Mayors are given an annual stipend that is determined by the council and approved by the Council of Ministers. The stipends of elected officials (mayors, municipal councillors, community presidents) and the salaries of officers are paid through a local authority's budget.

Municipalities recruit staff directly under conditions specified in their approved regulations. Central government provides administrative and technical assistance to most communities through the local district office.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

Whilst both municipalities and communities have responsibility for:

- Waste management
- Water supply
- Sewers and drainage systems
- Street maintenance
- Public health
- Slaughter-houses
- Theatre regulation and control.

Municipalities have additional responsibilities for social services and building permits, with larger municipalities overseeing planning/development permission, domestic waste collection and treatment. Municipalities also have discretionary powers for municipal markets and cultural and leisure facilities, and the power to issue permits for the construction and alteration of buildings. Coastal authorities can issue licences for beach sports, activities and facilities.

Planning responsibilities are shared with the Department of Town Planning and Housing. Water supply, sewerage and drainage are constructed and managed through specialised boards whose councils are made up of representatives of local authorities.

References and useful websites

1. Statistical Service of Cyprus www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf
2. UN statistics <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008/Table03.pdf>
3. IMF statistics www.imf.org/external/data.htm
4. Ministry of the Interior www.moi.gov.cy
5. Government of Cyprus www.cyprus.gov.cy
6. UNDP Human Development Report 2010 www.hdr.undp.org
7. Union of Municipalities www.ucm.org.cy
8. Union of Communities www.ekk.org.cy
9. National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, Greece www.ekdd.gr
10. Study on the Restructuring of Local Government in the Republic of Cyprus, 2010 National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, Greece



Annex A. Summary of service provision in different spheres of government

Service	Delivering authority			Remarks
	Central	Municipalities	Communities	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION				
Police	■			Local authorities may appoint traffic police (within their boundaries)
Fire protection	■			
Civil protection	■			
Criminal justice	■			
Civil status register	■			
Statistical office	■			
Electoral register	■			
EDUCATION				
Pre-school	■			
Primary	■			
Secondary	■			
Vocational and technical	■			
Higher education	■			
Adult education	■			
Other	■			
SOCIAL WELFARE				
Kindergarten and nursery	■	■	■	Local authorities may establish & run nursing homes
Family welfare services	■			
Welfare homes	■	■	■	
Social security	■			
PUBLIC HEALTH				
Primary care				
Hospitals	■			
Health Protection	■	■	■	
HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING				
Housing	■			
Town planning	■	■	■	
Regional planning	■			
TRANSPORT				
Roads	■	■	■	
Transport	■	■		
Urban roads	■			
Urban rail				
Ports	■			
Airports	■			
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION				
Water and sanitation	■	■	■	
Refuse collection and disposal		■	■	
Cemeteries and crematoria		■	■	
Slaughterhouses		■	■	
Environmental protection		■	■	
Consumer protection	■			
CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS				
Theatre and concerts	■	■	■	
Museums and libraries	■	■	■	
Parks and open spaces	■	■	■	
Sports and leisure	■	■	■	
Religious facilities		■	■	
UTILITIES				
Gas services	■			
District heating	■			
Water supply	■	■	■	
Electricity	■			
ECONOMIC				
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■			
Economic planning	■			
Trade and industry	■			
Tourism	■	■		

■ = discretionary service by the local authority