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Natural resources co-management, green transition and divided societies - Zones of agreement in the Cyprus case using a conjoint survey experiment

Policy Brief

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This policy brief presents key findings from a public opinion survey and conjoint experiment with a representative sample of 800 Greek Cypriots, examining public attitudes toward natural resources co-management in the Eastern Mediterranean and the green transition in the context of the Cyprus Problem. It examines views on climate change, joint energy projects, political arrangements, and possible confidence building measures (CBMs) that could build trust between the two communities. The major finding of this research is that it identified potential peace packages accepted by a majority of the Greek Cypriot voters that include Cyprus-Turkey co-operation as part of a comprehensive settlement and wider regional co-operation on energy in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Main findings:

- A majority supported the proposed bi-communal joint solar/photovoltaics park in the UN Buffer Zone. The project, agreed by the two leaders in 2025, is seen as a positive example of both clean energy and cooperation.
- A slight majority albeit lower than the solar/photovoltaics park supported regional energy projects with Greece and Israel, including the Electricity Interconnector, the EastMed pipeline and the LNG facility in Vasilikos. However, most respondents opposed building a gas pipeline to Turkey <u>before</u> a political settlement.
- Several trust-building measures (CBMs) were well received by a majority, including the creation of a joint gas revenue account, the reopening of Famagusta Port and Tymbou Airport and Varosha under UN control and proposals for history textbooks revision and a truth commission.
- On the design of a peace package as variation to the Guterres framework a conjoint experiment revealed that rrespondents preferred power-sharing arrangements with implementation oversight by international bodies such as the UN or the EU.
- While some preferences differed by political views, there was broad agreement on key points such as support for higher compensation for displaced persons and the return of Morphou, Rizokarpaso and Yalousa under Greek Cypriot administration. Both the territory, security and compensation arrangements proved of utmost importance for a successful referendum. For example compared with leaving Morphou under TC administration, returning Morphou to GC control raises overall support for a settlement by about 12–15 percentage points. In case old Morphou plus Rizokarpaso and Yialousa are returned under GC administration there is a gain of 18-20% in overall support of a package.

- Overall support for BBF (those who are in favor plus those who can tolerate it
 if necessary) is currently at 79% adding one more research in the post-Crans
 Montana period which shows a significant increase of support for BBF in the
 GC community in recent years¹.
- In the context of a comprehensive peace package resistance towards a Cyprus-Turkey energy co-operation is lifted suggesting that the ideal regional cooperation scenario could be one that includes co-operation between Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and Israel.
- Green transition projects in Cyprus although accepted by the public are vulnerable to policy fairness concerns and suspect of becoming the vehicle for enriching corrupted politicians so their implementation should find ways to engage the public in both their design and implementation (e.g citizen assemblies).

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The findings from the conjoint experiment show that Greek Cypriots are generally open to cooperative solutions, especially when these are linked to shared benefits with the other community, Greece and Israel. There is increasing support for a BBF solution in the post-Crans Montana period by about 80% of the population and as far as the content of BBF is concerned there is consistent support for territorial restitution, generous property compensation, parliamentary forms of power-sharing, and international oversight in both the justice and security sectors (by UN and EU or UN and other countries).

At the same time, energy cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean is also viewed positively, provided it does not depend on Turkey before a solution although importantly there are possible peace packages accepted by a majority that include Cyprus-Turkey co-operation as part of a comprehensive settlement. The joint solar park in the Buffer Zone, already agreed in April 2025 by the leaders of the two communities is one of the most widely accepted CBMs and is seen as a beneficial and constructive step forward.

This indicates a foundation for building public support around a future settlement. Proposals severely involving former guarantor powers, rigid ethnic dualism, or limited restitution are unlikely to generate acceptance among Greek Cypriots.

Negotiators and international actors should focus on inclusive territorial arrangements and trusted international guarantees. Green energy projects can offer low-risk

https://infogram.com/greek-cypriots-view-of-bbf-2010-2020-1h7g6k3gmr3o2oy?live

¹ For an infographic that charts the trends of acceptance of BBF in the Greek Cypriot community in the period 2010-2025 see here

opportunities for rebuilding trust and demonstrating progress but citizen's should be engaged in their design in more participatory ways like citizen assemblies. The window for wider energy co-operation involving Cyprus (both communities), Greece, Turkey and Israel accompanying a solution to the Cyprus issue is open from a public opinion perspective.