



Cyprus Forum. • Brussels

Event Report



18 November 2025



European Parliament

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This report presents a comprehensive summary of the Cyprus Forum Brussels 2025, organised by Oxygen for Democracy in collaboration in with Member of the European Parliament Lucas Fourlas.

Within these pages, you will find a brief overview of the discussions and commitments forged during the forum. We express our gratitude to all participants, including political leaders, professionals, media representatives, academics, and contributors from civic society, for their invaluable input.

The views presented in this report, commissioned by Oxygen for Democracy in collaboration with Member of the European Parliament Lucas Fourlas, are solely those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the official stance of either organising entity, their associated member states, or affiliated organisations.

Readers are encouraged to examine the presentations and recorded opinions and to contribute to the ongoing dialogue.

Co-organisers



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18 November 2025
European Parliament,
Brussels, Room 6Q1



Welcoming remarks

**Nicolas Kyriakides,
Executive President of the Cyprus Forum**

In his opening address, Nicolas Kyriakides, Executive President and Founding Member of the Cyprus Forum, emphasised Cyprus' growing role as a meaningful contributor within the European Union. He highlighted that competitiveness and migration, two central themes of this year's event, come at a crucial moment as Cyprus prepares to assume the EU Council Presidency.

He noted that this year's focus on competitiveness and migration comes at a pivotal moment, as Cyprus prepares to assume the EU Council Presidency in 2026. This, he said, offers not only the chance to participate in European debates but to actively and constructively shape them.

Furthermore, Kyriakides underlined that although Cyprus is a small member state, small states can lead by example through evidence-based policymaking, openness, and commitment to European values, values that can resonate even from "the Mediterranean's smallest corner."

He highlighted Cyprus' deep commitment to peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and its determination to maintain constructive relations with all neighbouring countries, noting that regional trust is essential for Europe's energy security and neighbourhood policy. Kyriakides stressed that Cyprus is not a passive participant in EU policymaking but an active contributor whose work is increasingly recognised.

He also announced plans for the Cyprus Forum to return to Brussels in February, bringing together business leaders, policymakers and political figures as part of the Presidency's preparatory process. Kyriakides concluded by calling on Europe to recognise Cyprus as a country "ready to contribute with purpose" in 2026.



Welcoming remarks

**Loucas Fourlas,
Member of the European Parliament**

In his welcoming remarks, MEP Loucas Fourlas expressed his appreciation for the Cyprus Forum's presence in Brussels, describing it as a vital space for European democracy and decision-making.

He stressed the significance of the coming period, with Cyprus' Presidency coinciding with crucial EU priorities such as the full implementation of the Migration Pact across all member states by 2026.

Fourlas said that, as a member of the European Parliament, Cyprus' national interest is his foremost responsibility. Through his participation in multiple parliamentary committees, he aims to ensure that Cyprus has a strong voice and that its concerns, along with those of European citizens, are effectively represented. He pledged that all efforts will be made to support Cyprus during the Presidency and to advance its priorities in a way that positively contributes to Europe.

Fourlas thanked Nicolas Kyriakides, the organising team, the speakers, colleagues and assistants for their collaboration, and extended his gratitude to all attendees.



Opening Address

**Costas Kadis,
Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans**

European Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, Costas Kadis, in his opening remarks highlighted the value of the Cyprus Forum as a platform for dialogue at a time when Europe faces major geopolitical and economic challenges. With the Cypriot Presidency beginning in just a few weeks, he said the timing of the Forum offers an ideal moment to take stock of progress, assess current challenges and reflect on what can realistically be achieved during the first half of 2026.

Kadis emphasised that smaller EU member states can bring clarity, regional insight and added value to the Union's collective efforts. He outlined how the Fisheries and Oceans contributes to key Commission priorities, including the development of a sustainable blue economy, ensuring competitive and environmentally responsible fisheries and aquaculture, and strengthening international ocean governance as part of Europe's global leadership.

Kadis shared major initiatives that will unfold during the Cypriot Presidency, including the implementation of the European Ocean Pact, the EU's first comprehensive ocean strategy, supported by a new high-level Ocean Board to be launched in spring 2026. He also described the advancement of the impact assessment for the European Ocean Act, set to be presented by the end of 2026. The Commissioner announced the rollout of the NAUTILOS ocean observation system, designed to consolidate Europe's marine knowledge and reinforce strategic autonomy in ocean data. He noted that the full evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy will be completed in spring 2026 and presented at an informal ministerial meeting in Cyprus in May, feeding into the development of a long-term Vision for 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture.

With the Mediterranean at the centre of attention, Cyprus will also host a high-level conference on the MedFish4Ever roadmap, marking the end of its initial ten-year phase. Additionally, Kadis announced that the Commission, together with Executive Vice President Šefčovič, will present a new strategy for EU islands and coastal communities during the Cypriot Presidency to strengthen resilience, diversify local economies and support the green and blue transition. He invited stakeholders to engage with these processes and expressed confidence that close cooperation throughout the Presidency will deliver meaningful progress for oceans, fisheries and coastal regions.



Keynote Speech

***Christina Rafti,
Permanent Representative of Cyprus in the EU***

Christina Rafti, Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the EU, closed the opening session by expressing her pleasure in participating in the second edition of Cyprus Forum Brussels, this time with a focus on Cyprus' upcoming Council Presidency.

She noted that the Cyprus Forum has become a reference point at home for bringing together experts, academics and policymakers and expressed hope that it would become an established part of Cyprus' presence in Brussels. Rafti emphasised that Cyprus assumes the Presidency at a challenging institutional moment, inheriting a heavy agenda amid a volatile global context. She reaffirmed Cyprus' intention to contribute to a Europe that is more competitive, more defence-ready, and more capable as a global actor in an era of shifting geopolitics.

She stressed Cyprus' unwavering commitment to supporting Ukraine, describing it as self-evident for a member state that lives with the reality of occupation, and tied this directly to the strategic importance of EU enlargement. She underlined that enlargement is a strategic necessity but must remain a rule-based, credibility-driven process that rewards progress and ensures readiness for future members.

Turning to specific priorities, Rafti highlighted the importance of guiding negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (post-2028), aiming for a comprehensive negotiating box by June 2026. She also pointed to defence readiness, particularly military mobility and defence industry transformation as a core focus. Competitiveness will remain central to the Presidency, with emphasis on simplifying regulation, diversifying trade partnerships, strengthening the single market and advancing digitalisation and innovation.

Rafti also underscored the need to secure Europe's energy, transport and communication infrastructure, and said migration remains a critical concern for both Cyprus and the EU, particularly as Member States work toward full implementation of the Pact by June 2026. She added that the Presidency will give significant attention to social issues, including affordable housing, cohesion and the EU's forthcoming ocean and island initiatives.

Rafti concluded by acknowledging that preparations are intense and demanding, but expressed pride and readiness as Cyprus prepares to assume the Presidency in January 2026, working closely with EU institutions and Member States to deliver meaningful progress.



Migration: Implementation of the Asylum and Migration Pact

Moderator: Amanda Paul, European Policy Centre

- Nicholas A. Ioannides, Deputy Minister for Migration and International Protection (keynote speech)
- Olivier Onidi, Deputy Director-General, DG HOME
- Uku Särekanno, Deputy Executive Director, Frontex
- Davide Colombi, Researcher - Justice and Home Affairs, CEPS
- Alberto Tagliapietra, The German Marshall Fund of the United States

Panel 1 on the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum highlighted both the significance of the new framework and the challenges ahead.

Cyprus' Deputy Minister Nicolas Ioannides described the Pact as a historic shift toward a cohesive EU approach and essential for frontline states like Cyprus, which continues to face some of the highest migratory pressures per capita. He stressed the importance of predictable solidarity, accelerated border procedures and stronger cooperation with EU agencies, noting Cyprus' readiness to act as an honest broker during its upcoming Presidency.

DG HOME's Olivier Onidi praised Cyprus' responsible handling of irregular arrivals and emphasised the Pact's role in safeguarding Schengen through integrated border management, rights monitoring and coordinated asylum and return systems.

Frontex's Uku Särekanno outlined ongoing operational support, from screening teams to return operations and intelligence, while cautioning that frontline pressures remain despite declining irregular arrivals.

CEPS' Davide Colombi raised concerns about gaps in evidence, rule-of-law risks and uneven compliance among member states, warning that exemptions and ongoing legal revisions could undermine consistency.

The German Marshall Fund's Alberto Tagliapietra noted that internal resistance to solidarity will likely push the EU further toward externalising migration control, creating security vulnerabilities and straining partnerships with third countries.

Closing the discussion, Ioannides underlined that dismantling smuggling networks and securing practical solidarity remain Cyprus' biggest challenges, stressing the need for constant readiness as regional crises can erupt without warning.



Digitalisation and Competitiveness: Vision of the CY Presidency

Moderator: Eddy Wax, Euractiv

- Giorgos Ioannides, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union
- Despina Spanou, Deputy Director-General, DG CNECT
- Tzvetoslav Mitev, Director for Data Economy & Public Administration Policy
- Rebecca Christie, Senior Fellow, Bruegel

Panel 2 examined how Cyprus intends to steer the EU's digital agenda during its upcoming Presidency, focusing on competitiveness, simplification and technological resilience.

Deputy Permanent Representative Giorgos Ioannides stressed that digital transformation is now essential for Europe's competitiveness and sovereignty, outlining the Presidency's emphasis on proportionality, avoiding regulatory overlaps and ensuring predictable rules that attract investment, with strategic public procurement helping drive innovation.

Despina Spanou underlined that the forthcoming Digital Omnibus aims to simplify not weaken the EU's digital framework, reaffirming GDPR as a global benchmark while advancing cybersecurity reforms, including a single cyber-incident reporting system and a revised Cybersecurity Act to strengthen ENISA and address supply-chain risks.

Tzvetoslav Mitev highlighted the Business Wallet as a flagship tool enabling secure digital authentication for companies, stressing that its success depends on public administrations being required to use it.

Antoine Mathieu Collin cautioned that simplification may disproportionately benefit major digital platforms unless safeguards are in place to protect smaller firms.

Closing the panel, Ioannides noted that decisions taken now will shape Europe's digital competitiveness for the next decade, emphasising that the Cyprus Presidency will prioritise making existing rules work through reduced overlaps, simpler compliance and strong but workable cybersecurity frameworks.



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