

TRANSPARENCY WORKSHOP: OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS PAPER

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY IN CYPRUS:
WORKSHOP ON DECISION-MAKING AND
NEGOTIATION PROCESSES



This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Global Policies Centre and Oxygen for Democracy and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



1. INTRODUCTION

The TransparenCY project is funded by the European Union under the PLACE in Cyprus Small Grants Programme and implemented by the Global Policies Centre (GLOPOL) and Oxygen for Democracy. The TransparenCY Workshop, convened leading stakeholders from across Cyprus's socio-political spectrum to critically examine the transparency and inclusivity of decision-making and negotiation processes on the island. The event focused on the democratic deficits observed in previous settlement processes and sought to generate actionable recommendations for more participatory and accountable governance mechanisms. Participants included former negotiators, civil society representatives, policy experts, academics, and youth activists, reflecting a diverse and engaged cross-section of the Cypriot communities.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Cyprus remains a de facto divided island, where formal political processes and settlement negotiations have often been characterized by top-down decision-making, limited civic involvement, and minimal public oversight. As the island continues to seek avenues for reunification and reconciliation, the role of transparency and participatory governance has gained renewed urgency. The democratic legitimacy of any political agreement is contingent not only on the formal endorsement of leaders but also on its perceived legitimacy among the citizenry.

The workshop was designed to respond to this need by providing a structured platform for reflection, comparative learning, and the co-creation of recommendations to enhance transparency and citizen participation, particularly in the context of settlement negotiations and broader decision-making frameworks.

3. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Session I: Transparency in the Negotiation Processes in Cyprus

Speakers: Andreas Mavroyiannis, Erhan Erçin

Moderators: Nicolas Kyriakides and Hüseyin Silman

The first session critically examined past Cyprus negotiation processes from the perspective of democratic participation and institutional transparency. Both former negotiators emphasized the complexity of striking a balance between the confidentiality inherent to high-stakes negotiations and the need for public accountability and civic trust.

Key insights included:

- **Legitimacy vs. Secrecy:** While complete transparency during sensitive negotiations may be unfeasible, the absence of regular engagement with the public undermines the legitimacy and sustainability of any agreement.
- **Political Will as a Precondition:** A clear consensus emerged that the fundamental barrier to participatory processes is not procedural or legal, but political. Without the political will of both leaders, civil society inclusion remains cosmetic.
- **Structured Roadmaps:** The speakers advocated for structured negotiation processes that define clear stages for public engagement, expert consultation, and iterative feedback mechanisms.

- **Contextualized Knowledge Sharing:** Merely disseminating information is insufficient. What is needed is a process of contextual translation that enables the public to understand the stakes, trade-offs, and systemic interdependencies.

Session II: Transparency in Broader Decision-Making Processes in Cyprus

Speakers: Hulusi Kilim, George Isaia, Sertaç Sonan

Moderator: İpek Borman

The second session expanded the discussion to include domestic governance and institutional decision-making, highlighting the opacity in legislative, administrative, and policy-making arenas across both communities.

Key insights included:

- **Institutional Design:** Speakers criticized tokenistic forms of consultation and called for the institutionalization of meaningful citizen participation.
- **Comparative Examples:** Parallels with Bosnia-Herzegovina and Northern Ireland emphasized that cooperation does not require full mutual recognition, but a shared commitment to institutional functionality.
- **Youth Engagement and Innovation:** The establishment of the Youth Bicomunal Technical Committee was cited as an example of how citizen advocacy can translate into institutional change.

4. CONCEPTUAL REFLECTIONS

The workshop encouraged a rethinking of transparency not as a technical ideal but as a democratic imperative. Democratic legitimacy extends beyond electoral representation and requires continuous public engagement, institutional accountability, and citizen-centered governance.

In line with participatory democracy theory and deliberative models of governance, participants stressed the need to conceptualize civil society not merely as a stakeholder group but as co-producers of political solutions. Moreover, transparency must be embedded in both formal institutions and informal political culture.

The workshop also revisited the assumption that recognition must precede cooperation. Instead, it was proposed that functional cooperation—rooted in participation—can be a precursor to any form of solution, thereby challenging dominant paradigms of conflict resolution.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. To Political Leaders and Institutions

1. Institutionalize Structured Participation: Develop formalized roadmaps for political negotiations and policy-making that include consultative stages with civil society, academia, and business representatives.
2. Commit to Accountability Mechanisms: Establish independent monitoring bodies or ombudspersons to ensure that promises made during negotiation processes align with eventual agreements and actions.
3. Redefine Political Legitimacy: Ground political authority in the active consent and participation of citizens, not just electoral majorities.

B. To Civil Society Organizations

1. From Advocacy to Co-Governance: Move beyond traditional lobbying to seek co-decision-making roles in public policy, especially in areas that affect intercommunal relations and peacebuilding.
2. Enhance Research and Policy Capacity: Build technical expertise to contribute evidence-based proposals and counter misinformation.
3. Promote Political Education: Organize sustained civic education programs that empower citizens to critically engage with complex political processes.

C. To the European Union and Donor Community

1. Mainstream Participation in Funded Projects: Require EU-supported reconciliation and democratization projects to incorporate participatory methodologies as a condition of funding.
2. Support Dialogue Infrastructure: Facilitate the creation of permanent, bicommunal dialogue platforms that can act as advisory bodies to negotiators and institutional actors.
3. Enable Capacity Building: Invest in long-term institutional and human resource capacity of local actors to participate meaningfully in political and policy processes.

D. To Academia and Media

1. Demystify Negotiation Processes: Develop academic and journalistic outputs that decode complex political issues for wider audiences using accessible language.
2. Facilitate Cross-Community Discourse: Create forums where Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot academics and journalists collaborate to inform and educate both communities.
3. Track Transparency Metrics: Design indices and public dashboards that assess the openness and accountability of political processes on the island.

6. CONCLUSION

The TransparenCY workshop served as both a diagnostic exercise and a visioning platform. It revealed a shared appetite among stakeholders for a more open, participatory, and citizen-centered political future in Cyprus. While the road to such a transformation is neither linear nor uncontroversial, the workshop reaffirmed the conviction that sustainable peace and governance in Cyprus must be built not only by political elites but also through inclusive and transparent democratic practice.

The workshop closed with a commitment from participants to continue working collectively toward advancing these principles in both policy and practice.

