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*Parlamentary Election**Cyprus*

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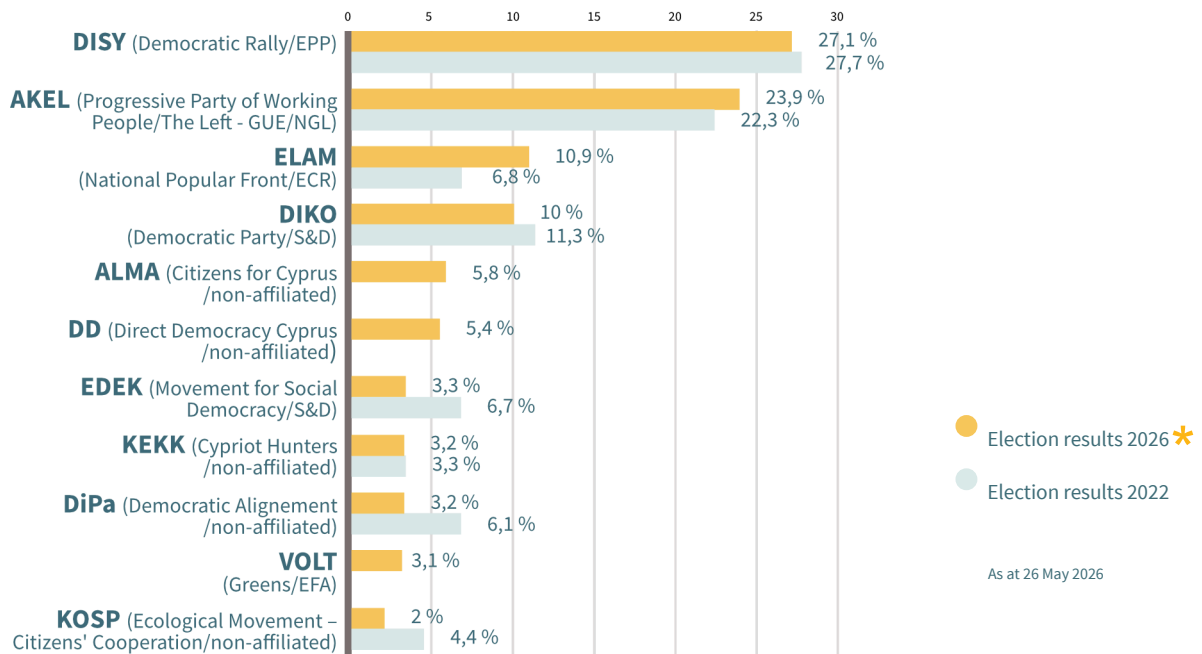


1. Key findings, decisive issues and trends

The 2026 parliamentary election in Cyprus painted a more nuanced picture than many observers had anticipated. Whilst the centre-right Democratic Rally (DISY) remained the strongest political force, the Workers' Party (AKEL) maintained its position as the main opposition party. Both parties proved to be significantly more resilient than many pre-election forecasts had suggested. The most significant shifts resulted from the continued rise of the xenophobic and right-wing populist National Popular Front (ELAM) party, as well as the entry of several new political formations into parliament. Voter turnout was once again comparatively low, confirming the continuing alienation of large sections of the population from the established political elites.

ELAM emerged as the clear winner of the election, having firmly established itself as the third major force in the party system. ELAM benefited in particular from the intense politicisation of the migration issue, which was closely linked during the election campaign to questions of the state's capacity to act, internal security and national identity.

At the same time, two new political groups managed to secure seats in parliament. The anti-corruption party ALMA Citizens for Cyprus and the populist group Direct Democracy Cyprus, led by MEP and YouTuber Fidas Panayiotou. The election campaign was heavily marked by warnings from the established centrist parties DISY and the Democratic Party (DIKO) against 'populist' and anti-establishment forces. In particular, the new parties ALMA Citizens for Cyprus and Direct Democracy Cyprus were portrayed by both parties as a threat to political and economic stability – not least because DISY and DIKO themselves feared significant losses of voters to these new formations. In hindsight, this strategy appears to have paid off, as the two major parties, DISY and AKEL, did not suffer significant losses of votes, contrary to expectations. This is likely attributable to the success of this mobilisation strategy, particularly given the high number of undecided voters. By contrast, the traditional rivalry between DISY and AKEL took a clear back seat during the election campaign. Instead, DISY and DIKO increasingly presented themselves as responsible forces of the political centre capable of guaranteeing stability, governability and economic continuity. According to both parties, this stability



was particularly threatened by the rise of ELAM, ALMA and Direct Democracy Cyprus.

Three established parties – the social-democratic EDEK, the centrist DIPA and the Greens – failed to clear the 3.6% threshold and were excluded from parliament. Contrary to expectations, the newly established progressive Volt Cyprus narrowly failed to clear the threshold.

Domestic and socio-economic issues were key factors in the election. The dominant issues were:

- rising living costs,
- high rents and property prices,
- stagnating real wages,
- migration,
- and general dissatisfaction with the political elite and allegations of corruption.

Compared to previous elections, the Cyprus conflict played only a minor role. Whilst the question of reunification remained symbolically present, it no longer served as a central mobilising factor. Instead, issues of social insecurity, impoverishment and political representation dominated.

Another important factor was the regional security situation. The drone attack on British military installations in the south of the island, in the context of the escalation between Israel and Iran, heightened the sense of geopolitical vulnerability and contributed to general unease in the country.

Compared to previous elections, this thus revealed a clear shift:

- away from the traditional dominance of the Cyprus issue,
- towards a more fragmented, emotionally charged contest driven by frustration with the established elites and parties.

2. Government Formation: Trends and Next Steps

The immediate impact of the election on the government remains limited due to Cyprus's presidential system. Unlike in parliamentary democracies, the election does not result in a government in the traditional sense, and there is no formal requirement to form stable coalitions.

Nevertheless, the new composition of parliament is of considerable political significance. President Nikos Christodoulides still lacks a parliamentary majority and, with EDEK and DIPA, has also lost two of the three parties that support him in parliament. The third, DIKO, has also lost a seat. He will therefore be even more reliant in future on flexible and shifting majorities, which, alongside DISY, could now increasingly include ELAM votes. As DISY, contrary to expectations, did not suffer any significant loss of votes and was able to maintain its position as the largest party, the question now arises as to its future relationship with President Nikos Christodoulides. Whilst the party has so far frequently supported the president on key policy issues, the election result could give it the confidence to distance itself more from Christodoulides and field its own candidate in the 2028 presidential election. Whether DISY continues to focus on cooperation or claims the political leadership of the centre-right bloc for itself is likely to become one of the key political issues in the coming years.

Against this backdrop, the election of the new Speaker of Parliament is likely to serve as the first key indicator of potential future alliances for the next presidential elections. Particular attention should be paid to whether ad hoc agreements develop between DISY and parts of the governing coalition, or whether political polarisation continues to intensify.

In the medium term, attention is already turning to the 2028 presidential elections. Many political actors do not view the parliamentary election as a decision on the formation of a specific government, but rather as a preliminary battle to reshape the political system and forge potential presidential alliances.

A key scenario remains the emergence of an informal centre-right bloc comprising DISY, parts of the political centre and economically liberal forces. At the same time, attempts may be made to build an alternative alliance centred on the Progressive Party of Working People, even though the ideological differences within such a camp remain significant.

Particular attention is being paid to the future positioning of both the President and the conservative DISY vis-à-vis ELAM. Whilst formal cooperation with ELAM remains politically taboo, the party is likely to exert a significantly greater influence on the political discourse in future – particularly on migration and security issues – due to its strengthened parliamentary position. Following this election result, Christodoulides is dependent on the formal or informal support of ELAM for his re-election. Politicians close to ELAM already hold ministerial posts in his cabinet.

Overall, the election therefore points less to stable political majorities than to a phase of increased volatility, flexible parliamentary cooperation and long-term strategic reorientation.

3. Implications for European policy

The election will not result in a fundamental shift in Cyprus's European policy. All the major parties across the democratic spectrum remain fundamentally pro-European and continue to regard membership of the European Union as the central framework for their foreign and security policy. Given the pro-European consensus in the new Greek Cypriot parliament, the more Eurosceptic ELAM party will have little or no influence here – with the exception of migration policy. With an

eye on the 2028 presidential election, President Nikos Christodoulides is likely to have a strong interest in demonstrating successes in foreign and European policy. This includes the Cyprus issue, which, despite its reduced prominence in the current election campaign, remains a central element of presidential governance. Against this backdrop, it is to be expected that Christodoulides – as previously announced – will present a roadmap for the resumption of formal negotiations in the coming months. However, it remains questionable whether this can lead to substantial progress

Since taking office, critics have accused the President of failing to back up his ambitious rhetoric on reviving the peace process with corresponding political initiatives. Furthermore, a resolution to the Cyprus issue and political support from ELAM (as well as DIKO) are mutually exclusive. Against this backdrop, concrete progress towards resolving the Cyprus conflict seems rather unlikely in the short term. Nevertheless, several shifts are discernible. Firstly, the increased fragmentation of the political system is likely to polarise the domestic debate on European issues further, particularly in the areas of migration, the rule of law and energy policy. The electoral success of the National Popular Front will increase pressure on the government and established parties to adopt a tougher line on European migration policy, a course they have already embarked upon at the national level.

Secondly, the election confirms Cyprus's growing strategic importance within the EU. Its geographical proximity to the conflicts in the Middle East, the island's role in evacuation and logistics operations, and the energy policy significance of the eastern Mediterranean are giving Cyprus increasing weight in European security

debates.

The Christodoulides government is therefore likely to continue along its current course:

- close cooperation with the EU on security matters,
- closer collaboration with Israel and regional partners,
- and support for a stronger European presence in the eastern Mediterranean.

It is generally considered certain that Cyprus will maintain its European orientation and, in view of regional uncertainties, will in future position itself even more strongly as the EU's frontline state in terms of security and geopolitics.

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The IEP's Election Monitor tracks and analyses elections across Europe through factsheets, background information, short interviews and election analyses. In this way, the IEP promotes transnational debate on European policy issues.

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