



CONFERENCE

Island of resilience – Cyprus' perspective on climate, sustainability and food security

22/04/2026 | 10:00 – 15:15 | Larnaca, Cyprus



Biographies of the speakers:



Cillian Lohan graduated from University College Cork and the University of Ulster, earning Bachelor's and Master of Science degrees. He has extensive experience in both the corporate sector, particularly in strategic planning and business development, and the environmental sector, with a focus on conservation and habitat management. A recognized leader in the circular economy, he was the inaugural Chair of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, which he helped establish. He is an experienced delegate to United Nations initiatives, including the Climate COP negotiations and the High-Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals. As CEO of the Green Economy Foundation, he has overseen major initiatives such as the planting of over four million trees in Ireland and the establishment of a wildlife reserve in Tobago. Appointed through the Irish Environmental Pillar, he has been a member of the European Economic and Social Committee since 2015, serving as rapporteur for 17 opinions, Vice-President for Communication from 2020 to 2023, and, since October 2025, President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group.



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Andreas Vyras was born in Larnaka in 1978. He studied Public Administration and Business Administration at the University of Cyprus and earned an MBA from the University of Southampton. In 2002, he returned to Cyprus and worked in the public sector and later at the Cooperative Central Bank. In December 2016, he was elected Mayor of Larnaka at the age of 38, becoming the youngest mayor in the city's history. He was re-elected in June 2024 with 65.7% of the vote. Vyras has been actively involved in social and political organizations, having served as President of the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Youth Organization and participating in the youth meetings of the European Union.



Annita Demetriou is the first woman and the youngest person to serve as President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus. First elected to parliament in 2016 and re-elected in 2021, she was subsequently elected President of the Democratic Rally (DISY) party in March 2023. She holds a degree in Social and Political Sciences and a postgraduate qualification in International Relations and European Studies. Demetriou is an ambassador of Women Political Leaders (WPL) and represents Cyprus in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). She participates in parliamentary fora, including the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments, the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament of the Council of Europe, and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. Her priorities include strengthening parliamentary effectiveness, advancing digital transformation, enhancing communication with citizens, promoting human rights and gender equality, protecting the environment, and reinforcing parliamentary diplomacy.



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Andreas Gregoriou graduated from 10th Lyceum in Lemesos in 1983. After completing his military service, he earned an economics degree at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and later a Master's degree in Public Sector Management from the Cyprus International Institute of Management (CIIM). In 1992 he joined the Cypriot Public Service, serving in the Inland Revenue Department, Customs and Excise, the VAT Service, and the Ministry of Finance. From 2002 to 2008, he held senior responsibilities at the Office of the Commissioner of Electronic Communications and Postal Regulation, including postal sector regulation and EU directive transposition. He served as Director of the Department of Postal Services from 2008. In December 2019, he was appointed Acting Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. Since September 2020, he has served as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, while since July 2023 also heading the Presidency Administration.



Anastasis Yiapanis is the General Secretary of the Pan-Agricultural Association of Cyprus and Cyprus's representative to Copa-Cogeca (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations) since 2014 and member of the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group (Group III) since 2015. He was previously Deputy Secretary of DEPA (Public Natural Gas Corporation) and was a member of the Republic of Cyprus's three-member negotiating team for the supply of natural gas as an interim solution. He has worked in hotel management, sales, the financial sector and as a Business Consultant/Entrepreneur. He holds Master's degrees in Business Administration and International Economic and European Law from Kingston University of London and the University of Neapolis, respectively, and he is currently researching his PhD at the University of the Aegean in Common Agricultural Policy. He has authored articles on "Globalization," "Privatization – Liberalization," "Tourism and Prospects," "The Role of Youth in Today's Society," etc.



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Eliana Tofa Christidou is a civil engineer with a Diploma from the National Technical University of Athens (1999), an MSc in Hydrology and Water Resources Management from Imperial College London (2000), and an MBA (2021). She joined the Water Development Department (WDD) in 2002 and has served in the district offices of Limassol, Larnaca, and Famagusta. Her roles include Head of the Water Systems Operation and Maintenance Service in Nicosia (2013–2015), District Engineer in Larnaca, Acting District Engineer in Famagusta, and District Engineer in Limassol from 2017 to 2023, before her appointment as WDD Director. Ms Tofa is a member of ETEK and the Association of Civil Engineers of Cyprus and has served on the Cyprus Water Association Board, the Central Committee for Changes, and the Limassol Water Supply Board. She later served as Deputy Director General at the General Directorate of Environment.



Dr. Makis Antoniadis was born in Limassol and is a graduate of Laniteo Lyceum. He studied Agricultural Economics at the Agricultural University of Athens and completed an MSc in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development at University College Dublin. He later earned a PhD from the Agricultural University of Athens, specializing in pluriactivity, part-time farming, and farm diversification. He also a Master's degree in Public Administration and an LLM in European Business Law from the University of Nicosia. He worked at the Agricultural Research Institute of Cyprus in the Agricultural Economics Section, focusing on research to support the agricultural sector and improve farmers' quality of life. In 2001, he was appointed Alternate Permanent Representative to the the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). He subsequently held senior roles within the Ministry of Agriculture, culminating in his appointment as Director of the Department of Agriculture. He has held senior positions on the Cyprus Potato Marketing Board, Council of Olive Products and Milk Industry Organization and the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN).



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Ioannis Vardakastanis, born in 1957 on the Greek island of Zakynthos, is a lifelong human rights advocate. At age 29, he was elected President of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind, and later led its International Relations Department. Since 1993, he has served as President of the National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece (NCDP). He has been President of the European Disability Forum (EDF) since 1999 and served on the Board of the European Blind Union from 1996 to 2011. Since 2007, he has represented EDF at the International Disability Alliance, holding the positions of Vice-Chair, Chair and Treasurer. Since 2010, he has been a member of the EESC, representing NCDP. A member of the European Economic and Social Committee since 2010, he represents NCDP in the Civil Society Organisations' Group (Group III) and serves as Vice-President of the ECO Section and Co-Chair of the EU–Turkey Committee. In Greece, he is a member of the Economic and Social Council, advocating for the rights and interests of citizens with disabilities.



Penelope Papavassiliou is from Lefkosia and holds a BSc in Industrial Economics from the University of Warwick and an MSc in Business Administration from City University Business School (UK). She has extensive experience in Cypriot public administration and the European Commission. From 1997 to 2004, she served at the Planning Bureau, coordinating Cyprus's negotiations for EU accession. She later worked at the Permanent Representation of Cyprus in Brussels (2005–2006) on Research Innovation and the Digital Agenda. Between 2006 and 2010, she served as Head of the Office of the Minister of Finance. She subsequently contributed to the Secretariat of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU (2010–2013), the Cyprus Economic Adjustment Programme, and DG REFORM, and chaired the Working Group on the Insolvency Framework. In March 2023, she was appointed Secretary to the Council of Ministers and now serves as Permanent Secretary of the Directorate General for Growth.



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Professor Konstadinos Mattas is a professor at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Greece in the School of Agriculture and visiting Professor at CIHEAM/MAICH. His research focuses on Food and European Policy and analysis, Rural Development, Agricultural Marketing and Investment Analysis, and International Trade with a specialization in Input-Output models. He has published around 400 referred articles, cited more than 6,000 times. He has contributed extensively to international and Greek conferences and served as a referee and managing editor for several scientific journals. He was a manager in an enterprise processing agricultural products and worked at the Ministry of Agriculture. He has supervised more than 20 PhD students and over 100 international students. An expert in impact and policy analysis, he has served in EU and National Food Policy Committees, the Board of the European Association of Agricultural Economists (EAAE) and as Scientific and Project Coordinator in more than 30 European Research Projects.



Elena Stylianopoulou is a biologist who studied at Brown University, USA and completed graduate studies in Energy and Environmental Management. She worked as an environmental consultant for several years before joining the Department of the Environment in 2001. She has worked in environmental management, environmental impact assessment, ecolabel, waste management and nature and biodiversity. From July 2023 to August 2024, she served as Acting Director of the Department of the Environment. She has extensive experience coordinating EU Cofinanced Projects, particularly LIFE Integrated Projects in nature and waste management. In March 2025 she was seconded to the Presidency of Cyprus as a coordinator of the Secretariat for the Coordination and Support of the Government Programme, under the Deputy Minister to the President. Since early December 2025, she has been serving as Acting Director of the Department of Environment.



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Biographies of the moderators:



Panagiotis Champas graduated from the Technical School of Nicosia, Cyprus and earning a Bachelor of Social Administration and Social Sciences, Sofia (Bulgaria). He devoted his career to agriculture, rural development, and environmental policy. He has been working for the Union of Cypriot Farmers since 1987 and has served as its General Secretary since 2009. From 1991 to 2009, he was a member of the Engomi Municipal Council, with a strong focus on environmental issues. At national level, he has chaired the Chamber of Agriculture of Cyprus and the Wine Products Council and served on the boards of key agricultural, water, and land reclamation bodies. His European engagement has been extensive: he participated in the Young European Farmers Council (CEJA), served as a deputy member of the European Economic and Social Committee, and represents the Union of Cypriot Farmers (EKA) in the EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group (Group III), since 2020.



Elena Calistru is serving as member of the European Economic and Social Committee, since 2020, on behalf of civil society, where she is currently the President of the ECO Section. She has focused in her work on issues related to public finance, including the Multiannual Financial Framework, the Recovery and Resilience Facility or cohesion policy. With over 20 years of experience in civil society projects, Elena's expertise spans good governance, public finance, and advocacy, making her a leading voice in efforts to create a safer, well-informed society. Elena Calistru is the founder and chair of Funky Citizens, a Romanian NGO that promotes government accountability and transparency through research-based advocacy tools.



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