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Arts met Politics in Cyprus Presidency opening ceremony

Both the artistic and the official parts of the Presidency's flagship event showcased European Union as a unifying force towards reunification of Cyprus. Defending EU values and morals, EU officials' statements on Ukraine and Greenland were sent from Lefkosa, the last occupied capital of the continent. Read on.

With the change of the year, [Cyprus assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union](#) for the first six months of 2026 aiming at "An Autonomous Union. Open to the World".

"[MEMORY – PRESENT – META](#)" was the title of the opening event, hosted yesterday at the Cyprus Theatre Organisation's (THOC) Main Stage, where art took the stage to talk about politics, reunification of the island at the forefront.

During the ceremony, art in diverse forms "emerged as a unifying force and a symbol of hope, [mirroring how Cyprus looks to the European Union as a unifying force in its efforts towards reunification](#)".

"The ceremony includes a contemporary and multi-layered artistic act, combining music, dance, theatre, image, poetry and digital technologies, narrating the history of Cyprus through the centuries, highlighting its culture as an integral part of European civilisation", said [Dr Vasiliki Kassianidou, Deputy Minister of Culture](#).

Art Director Kostas Silvestros and 100 artists participating

staged the spirit of Cyprus in three acts, the first paying tribute to the island's heritage and traditions.



The second act presented modern-day Cyprus, as a bridge between Europe and the wider region, consistently contributing to a stronger, more secure and autonomous Union, "[Despite still grappling with the dire consequences of Turkey's invasion and the illegal occupation of part of its territory.](#)"

The final act visioned a future of a united Cyprus.

The event served as one of the flagships of the Cultural Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, which is about to involve more than 500 cultural professionals, with a strong international dimension in 31 countries and a total cost reaching €4.4 million, a landmark in the country's history.

Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, expressed feelings of joy, pride and responsibility and welcomed officials and distinguished guests to [Lefkosa as the last occupied capital of the continent](#), strengthening his political statement by wording Lefkosa, instead of Nicosia.

He highlighted Cyprus' trust on the importance of European unity towards the island's reunification. "Cyprus fully understands the importance of the unifying power of the EU and we are placing our trust in our Union, in the serious attempts we are making to liberate and reunite our homeland." he said.

He emphasised on the European unity against ongoing

geopolitical challenges and expressed strong, unwavering solidarity with Ukraine, making again reference to the island's invasion and occupation.

"[...] we are also providing our unwavering political, financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine, defending its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity [...] stepped up during our Presidency, because Cyprus knows first-hand what invasion and occupation means, and what refugees, missing persons and the violation of basic human rights means." were his words.



"For Ukraine, this moment is really very, very meaningful – just as it is for Cyprus – a member state that, unfortunately, remains divided, but committed to lasting peace – and is fully equal in Europe. And a country that may be smaller in size but has an equal voice in European institutions," replied Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, taking the floor.

Cyprus was introduced as building bridges through times and cultures, with a long history and strategic geopolitical role. First rank EU officials recognised Cyprus' humanitarian role in Gaza and highlighted the crucial momentum for European values and morals, commenting on ongoing international turmoil.

Presenting Europe as a community of values to defend, [António Costa, President of the European Council](#) sent the message that the "European Union cannot accept violations of international law - whether in Cyprus, Latin America, Greenland, Ukraine, or Gaza".



[Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission](#), commented among others that "law is stronger than force [...] not only to our European Union, but equally to Greenland".

"Cyprus brings to its Presidency a unique moral authority. As a country at the crossroads of continents, cultures and crises, Cyprus understands the strategic importance of peace and stability in our neighbourhood; the urgency of security in an uncertain world; and the enduring value of international law." continued President von der Leyen.

Commenting on Cyprus reunification she affirmed that it "remains an absolute priority" and that "we will do all we can to ensure that the UN-led process succeeds, so that 2026 can bring renewed momentum towards a reunified Cyprus".

Attendees included foreign leaders and EU officials such as Tony Murphy, President of the European Court of Auditors; Maia Sandu, President of Moldova; Abdul Latif Rashid, President of Iraq; Joseph Aoun, President of Lebanon; Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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