



## **Northern Cyprus Country Report – FEMS May 2025- Porto**

### ***(CTMA and TCPU Report)***

In Northern Cyprus, recent developments have raised serious concerns regarding democratic processes, public health policies, and professional autonomy in the healthcare sector.

Following a directive from Turkey, the government amended national regulations to allow female students in secondary and high schools to wear religious symbols and attire. This decision, perceived as a top-down imposition, triggered a widespread response across the country. More than 100 trade unions, professional associations, civil society organizations, institutions, and political parties united in a collective campaign to defend secularism, democratic rights, and cultural identity.

Tens of thousands of Cypriots took to the streets in mass rallies, protesting the disregard for the will of the people and interference in their lifestyle and values. Both the Cyprus Turkish Medical Association (CTMA) and the Turkish Cypriot Physicians Union (TCPU) actively participated in these demonstrations.

At the same time, significant challenges persist in the healthcare system. Physicians working in public health centers continue to be employed under temporary contracts, and the shortage of doctors has reached a critical point. In response to deteriorating conditions in hospitals and primary care centers, the Union declared a strike, which was banned for 60 days by a decision of the Council of Ministers through the Ministry of Health.

In protest of the strike ban, the Association and the Union jointly held a press conference in front of the Ministry of Health. The event drew widespread support from various organizations and members of the public.

Despite these challenges, ongoing advocacy by the Union resulted in progress: administrative positions for physicians were officially announced, and relevant examinations have been conducted. A collaborative panel involving various partners also addressed key issues such as the long-overdue implementation of a structured primary care system, preventive health strategies, and the development of nationwide cancer and cardiovascular screening programs. A detailed report from the panel was submitted to the Ministry of Health, prompting initial discussions by the Minister on initiating such reforms. The Union remains committed to maintaining pressure to ensure concrete outcomes.

Efforts to improve the quality of the healthcare system have also focused on implementing healthcare quality standards and hospital accreditation in both public and private facilities. Additionally, lobbying by the medical community has led to the drafting of new legislation to regulate medical education and specialist training through the Higher Education Supervisory Board and the Ministry of Health. This legislation is currently awaiting parliamentary approval.



To support ongoing professional development, numerous training sessions and simulation-based education activities have been conducted for physicians and healthcare professionals.

Workplace safety remains a major concern due to the high incidence of occupational accidents in Northern Cyprus. In response, a series of panels and campaigns on occupational health and safety have been initiated. A comprehensive roadmap has been outlined to apply pressure on administrative bodies and defend workers' rights.

Across the country, the Cyprus Turkish Medical Association and the Turkish Cypriot Physicians' Union have remained active on both health and broader social issues — organizing initiatives, issuing public statements, and engaging in collective actions — all aimed at contributing to the well-being, rights, and health of the people of Northern Cyprus.

Cyprus Turkish Medical Association

Turkish Cypriot Physicians Union

President Prof. Dr. Ceyhun Dalkan

President Dr. Özlem Gürkut