

*Your Excellency, Ms. Clélia Chevrier Kolačko, Ambassador of France to Cyprus,*

*President of the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Mr. Stavros Stavrou,*

*Esteemed Guests,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Innovation is not something Cyprus recently adopted — it is something that has defined us for millennia. We are the island where copper was mastered, where merchants engineered complex trade routes across continents, where ideas travelled faster than ships. Cypriots have always adapted, created, engineered, and imagined new possibilities. And today, as technology reshapes our world, that same spirit drives our research and innovation ecosystem: bold, outward-looking, and built on a deep culture of ingenuity.

It is a pleasure to join you today at this Cyprus–France Cooperation and Innovation Forum, a gathering that reflects the growing depth of our partnership and a shared commitment to shaping a more innovative, resilient, and prosperous Europe. Cyprus and France have long been close partners in culture, education, maritime affairs, diplomacy, and security. Today, we are adding a new chapter to that story: a chapter defined by research, technology, and scientific excellence.

The forum brings together companies, research institutions, and government bodies from both countries to explore cooperation in maritime technologies, cybersecurity, spatial innovation, and disaster risk management. These are fields in which France is a global leader and in which Cyprus is rapidly emerging with ambition, talent, and strategic clarity.

Cyprus's research and innovation ecosystem has transformed dramatically over the past few years. We are now home to world-class universities, seven Centres of Excellence, more than 3,500 researchers, and a vibrant community of startups and innovative SMEs. We have climbed to 25th globally in the Global Innovation Index and entered the top 50 startup ecosystems worldwide. Behind these achievements lies a deliberate national effort to build a modern, competitive innovation economy.

At the Research and Innovation Foundation, we have signed more than €100 million in contracts since 2023, supporting over 370 enterprises and bringing 739 new researchers and innovators into the ecosystem. We have evaluated more than 2,600 proposals requesting nearly €600 million in funding and leveraged €33 million in private money alongside public investment. These numbers reflect scale, seriousness, and momentum.

We are expanding our research infrastructure as well. Fourteen new facilities have been funded in the past two years, strengthening Cyprus's capabilities in health, digital technologies, climate and environmental science, marine research, and space applications. And importantly, these infrastructures are already delivering impact on the ground.

At the Cyprus Marine & Maritime Institute, teams are advancing autonomous systems and digital technologies that strengthen maritime safety and environmental monitoring.

At CYENS Centre of Excellence, researchers are developing AI, cybersecurity, and immersive technologies, supported by major international partners such as LTIMindtree.

At the German Oncology Center, the Agora 3.0 infrastructure is driving breakthroughs in precision medicine and diagnostics.

And through C-SpaRC, the Cyprus Space Research Centre, we are building national capacity in Earth observation and satellite data applications, in close cooperation with COSPAR.

These case studies reflect a simple truth: Cyprus is not only investing — *it is delivering*. Our infrastructures are connecting researchers with industry, attracting investment, and producing technologies and knowledge that serve Europe and global markets.

But numbers alone do not tell the full story. Cyprus is implementing a long-term vision for the country's future. Vision 2035 defines an aspiration for Cyprus to be a regional hub for technology, innovation, and research. To achieve this, the Deputy Ministry of Digital Policy, Research and Innovation has launched the Research and Development Strategy 2024–2026, built on four pillars: strengthening research excellence; enabling R&D as a growth engine for every SME; empowering people as drivers of growth; and positioning Cyprus as a leader in research and innovation.

The Office of the Chief Scientist serves as Cyprus's global bridge for science, technology, and innovation. As Chief Scientist, my mission is to foster research excellence, accelerate innovation and commercialisation, and connect Cyprus with the ideas, markets, and partnerships that can shape our future. I strive to bring the best of the world to Cyprus — and the best of Cyprus to the world: our researchers, our innovators, our companies, and our vision. A key strategic focus is building world-class partnerships with nations and organisations that can help drive Cyprus's economic and scientific growth.

In this role, I bring together government, industry, and academia to shape a national direction grounded in foresight and opportunity. As Chair of the Interministerial Committee for R&D and the National AI Taskforce, I help coordinate how Cyprus prepares for emerging technologies, how we set national priorities, and how we ensure that innovation serves citizens and strengthens our economy.

Ultimately, my goal is to make Cyprus a place where knowledge becomes opportunity, where research becomes impact, and where innovation creates real, lasting value for our society.

In essence, we are building a pipeline that moves from basic research to applied research, to innovation, and ultimately to commercialisation. Not all ideas are equal. The ones that create value are the ones that reach the market through patents, licenses, products, and solutions. And breakthroughs often take time. Many of the technologies we rely on today began decades ago, even more than a century ago, in the case of Ada Lovelace's early work that foreshadowed modern computing.

This is why investments in fundamental research matter. Today, multi-disciplinary teams across Cyprus are working with machine learning, neural networks, advanced materials, biotechnology, and quantum computing. They are building solutions that will transform healthcare, energy, maritime safety, and climate resilience. These emerging capabilities are shaping entirely new sectors — and this is where the power of partnerships becomes critical.

Countries that have mastered the transition from research to market have done so through strong ecosystems: France and Switzerland in pharmaceuticals; Germany in green tech and automation through Fraunhofer and Max Planck; Silicon Valley built on DARPA-funded research; Singapore through its maritime and biotechnology excellence. Smaller nations like the UAE have advanced rapidly through strategic research partnerships in AI, space, and life sciences.

In all these cases, innovation is not the end game; *it is the fuel*. The real engine is the *ecosystem* — the accelerators, technology transfer offices, funding tools, and mentorship networks that turn ideas into companies. Cyprus is learning from these models. We are building on an exceptional record of ERC success. We are forming MoUs with leading research nations worldwide. We are supporting young researchers — 80 percent of our Excellence Hubs are led by the next generation. And we are strengthening the triple helix of universities, industry, and government.

However, the journey from discovery to market is not linear. It demands risk-taking, entrepreneurship, and interdisciplinary collaboration. It requires us to speak two languages — science and business — and build bridges between them.

This is why we are investing heavily in innovation infrastructure: incubators, blended finance programmes, technology transfer mechanisms, and support structures that help ideas scale. Our DISRUPT programme has already awarded €10.5 million, attracted €12.5 million in venture capital, created 58 jobs, and helped form valuations of up to €200 million. This is how Cyprus becomes a Mediterranean hub for research commercialisation — through strategy, partnerships, and exceptional talent.

And this is where France becomes an indispensable partner.

France is both a scientific and innovative powerhouse. Its contributions to aerospace, defence, cybersecurity, maritime engineering, energy, and space are globally renowned. The companies and research institutions represented here today — from Airbus Defence and Space to Safran, Thales, Sopra Steria, Arkeocean, Océa, Musthane, and others — bring world-class expertise in the exact areas Cyprus is developing.

In maritime and marine technologies, France's engineering tradition aligns perfectly with Cyprus's maritime centres of excellence. In cybersecurity, French leadership complements Cyprus's rapidly expanding cyber sector. In spatial innovation, France's heritage through CNES, Airbus, and Safran connects naturally with Cyprus's space research ambitions and C-SpaRC.

In disaster and risk management, the solutions offered by French innovators align with our national priorities in climate resilience and emergency response.

When you place our ecosystems side by side, the complementarity is striking. Cyprus brings agility, strategic location, EU access, and a fast-growing innovation engine. France brings scale, experience, scientific depth, and global reach.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Today's forum is not just a meeting point. It is a platform to forge partnerships that can lead to joint research projects, shared infrastructures, co-developed technologies, and new market pathways across Europe and beyond.

And this brings me back to the core message I want to leave with you:

Cyprus is ready.

Ready to collaborate.

Ready to innovate together.

Ready to build a Mediterranean and European future shaped by science, technology, and shared ambition.

Let us use today to build alliances that matter — alliances between Cypriot and French companies, between our researchers, between our universities and industries, between our governments and our innovators.

Together, Cyprus and France can turn ideas into impact, research into prosperity, and collaboration into a legacy that strengthens our region and our continent.

Thank you.