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# Call for decisive action to save economy

## CYPRUS' POTENTIAL AS TECHNOLOGICAL HUB MULLED

By **Paul Malaos**

**C**yprus must re-evaluate its goals and take decisive action immediately to curb unemployment, president of the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ETEK) Stelios Achniotis said in a press conference which discussed steps to improve the economy.

"The manner in which we previously dealt with problems must change. Our priorities from now on must be the implementation of measures that will contain unemployment by taking advantage of our natural resources and manpower."

The chamber made a number of suggestions which it believes, if implemented soon, will help the ailing economy following the harsh eurozone bailout measures.

According to Achniotis, one of the most important steps involves a complete restructuring of the public service with the aim of increasing productivity and efficiency.

"For example instead of carrying out studies on public works such as roads and refugee housing estates, civil servants could be used to monitor the construction

industry and combat illegal development while at the same time work on issuing development licences in a timely way."

ETEK maintains that such a measure would significantly increase productivity in the private sector while at the same time increase funds to the state by restricting illegal development.

ETEK also floated the idea of Cyprus using its resources to become a technological development centre in the region.

"Proportionately Cyprus has more degree holders than any other country in the EU. We consider that this gives us the potential to become a technology development hub such as Finland with its world famous company Nokia or Israel which has invested heavily in technology and is now reaping the results."

In addition, the chamber suggests digitising all ministries along with the creation of a central digital data centre that will help monitor and reduce work costs in all sectors.

"We cannot wait and expect the public sector to generate wealth. Its role should be redefined and geared towards co-ordinating Cyprus to improve productivity."

As a precondition to working in Cyprus, ETEK also recommends that evidence must be provided of proficiency in the Greek language where appropriate, in the private and state sector.

"Depending on the nature of the work this could prove effective along with other adjustment measures providing they are allowed by the EU."

The absence of an energy efficiency policy for government buildings was also brought up by the chamber which has for years insisted is a major factor behind the state's high electricity bills.

"It is estimated that the state and civil service spend somewhere in the region of €50m each year on electricity and fuel for heating and cooling purposes. However, some minimal adjustments could help reduce this figure by approximately 30%."

Achniotis added that the chamber was at the disposal of the state and was more than willing to take part in an in-depth discussion.

"We would welcome further dialogue on how these measures can be practically implemented and will request a meeting with the President of the Republic to further discuss the matter."



**IDEAS: President of the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ΕΤΕΚ) Stelios Achiotis (left) outlines measures to help the economy**