

REAL ESTATE

A SPECTACULAR TURNAROUND

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS, THE REAL ESTATE SECTOR HAS MADE A REMARKABLE COMEBACK, SAYS PANTELIS LEPTOS, PRESIDENT OF THE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION.

How do you view the real estate industry in Cyprus five years after the 2013 financial crisis?

The industry has displayed clear signs of a spectacular turnaround. Real estate volumes are up, the number of transactions is up, unemployment is down, building permits are up. Also, demand seems to be coming from a large number of different nationalities and markets, which is a very healthy sign. The potential is great. It's based on Cyprus' geographical location, climate, culture and quality of life.

How successful has the government's Citizenship by Investment Scheme (now renamed the Cyprus Investment Programme) been? Do you think that it should be extended indefinitely?

The Citizenship by Investment scheme and the permanent residency scheme, coupled with the Government's tax incentives, have boosted the attractiveness of real estate in Cyprus and, indeed,

have given a much-needed injection of fresh money into the economy. I do believe, therefore, that these useful schemes and incentives should stay.

In an interview last year, you commented on how "the real estate industry has proved to be one of the most important contributors to the Cyprus economy by attracting foreign investments, mobilising funds, making new projects and creating jobs." What are your views on this a year later? Has the sector evolved even further?

Yes, indeed. Real estate investment by foreign buyers brings much needed foreign funds into the country, funds which stay here and create employment. The real estate industry is evolving further through the introduction of new types of world-class projects and products. This variety of investment products, combined with the wide spectrum of buyers, will create even more real estate activity on the island.

There appears to be a local trend towards high-rise luxury properties at present. Do you see this continuing in the foreseeable future?

With the limited amount of building land available in Cyprus, it is inevitable that we will move towards higher developments, allowing for more open space for the benefit of the community.

In your opinion, what would be the best strategy to be followed by the Government and the banking sector in order to tackle the problem of Non-Performing Loans (NPLs)?

The NPLs of borrowers who wish to pay but cannot, especially those who are backed by good real estate assets, should be given more time in order to find a way of repaying their loans.

With over 55 years of history, Leptos Estates has achieved a leading position in the Cyprus real estate industry. What would you say is the key

to this success?

Our industry is very complex and there is not a single factor that can make a firm excel. It is rather a combination of factors; having a good product, offering value for money, providing good service to clients, reliability and the ability to offer innovative products at the right time. Finally, you need vision, which enables you to create new trends or identify them early on.

Of your many developments, what do you consider to be your flagship project right now?

It is difficult to single out particular projects but I would say our flagships for Paphos are Kamares Village, with 1,000 villas built to date, and Coral Bay Estate with the Coral Beach Hotel, Thalassa and many nearby residential developments around. For Limassol it's Limassol Del Mar and for Greece, it is our Aphrodite Beach Villas in Chania, Crete. ☺

Pantelis Leptos



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