



**EX**periential **T**ourism for sustainable **R**ural development

**WP2:** Success stories and needs mapping for VET renewal in rural tourism

**A2.1:** EU collection of success stories and analysis of national trends



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## Analysis of the current national status of rural tourism and related VET offers

### Desk Research National Report - CSI

Country: Cyprus

Partner: Center for Social Innovation - CSI

#### **1. Does your country have a high level of rural tourism? Is there a variety of rural sectors in your country?**

As with most islands, Cyprus has a large population of tourists, which brings in significant revenue for the country. In particular, the tourism sector brings directly and indirectly approximately 20% to GDP<sup>1</sup>. Further, according to the Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT), in 2022 tourists numbered 3.201.080 and tourism revenue was valued at €2.439,2 million<sup>2</sup>. The majority of tourists, however, are mass tourists and are found at the island's beach resorts. According to Boukas (2019) "Cyprus' rural tourism is considered a niche product that only supports in some areas the overall tourism development"<sup>3</sup>.

However, according to Cyprus Mail, Cyprus' Deputy Minister of Tourism Kostas Koumis stated at the 18th Annual General Assembly of the Cyprus Agrotourism Society in April 2024 that agrotourism in Cyprus is growing. This can also be seen in the increase in overnight stays recorded in agrotourism accommodations, from 153,196 in 2022 to 166,293 in 2023. Moreover, he stated that the Deputy Ministry is actively engaged in enhancing agrotourism in Cyprus. For instance, 80 communities have already implemented or are in the process of implementing the projects described in the first notice of the Revitalisation Plan for mountainous areas, rural areas, and border areas. Moreover, recently, incentive plans were announced and agrotourism has been promoted continuously in major international markets<sup>4</sup>.

The most common forms of rural tourism in Cyprus include agricultural tourism, cultural and religious tourism, nature-based tourism, and event tourism<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, during this research, the following

<sup>1</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. National Tourism Strategy 2030.

[https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/BAD4CBEFDCC897B5C225850D0028487B/\\$file/Cyprus%20Tourism%20Strategy%202030%20-%20Foreword\\_En.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/BAD4CBEFDCC897B5C225850D0028487B/$file/Cyprus%20Tourism%20Strategy%202030%20-%20Foreword_En.pdf?OpenElement)

<sup>2</sup> Republic of Cyprus, Statistical Service. Tourism Statistics 2020 – 2022. <https://www.cystat.gov.cy/en/PublicationList?s=51>

<sup>3</sup> Boukas, N. (2019). Rural tourism and residents' well-being in Cyprus: towards a conceptualised framework of the appreciation of rural tourism for islands' sustainable development and competitiveness. *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology*, 7(1), 60-86. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTA.2019.098105>

<sup>4</sup> CyprusMail (April 17, 2024). Rural tourism in Cyprus on the up, minister says. <https://cyprus-mail.com/2024/04/17/rural-tourism-in-cyprus-on-the-up-minister-says/>

<sup>5</sup> Boukas, N. (2019). Rural tourism and residents' well-being in Cyprus: towards a conceptualised framework of the appreciation of rural tourism for islands' sustainable development and competitiveness. *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology*, 7(1), 60-86. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTA.2019.098105>

activities were found to be most popular: staying in rural areas through accommodation options, outdoor activities such as hiking and cycling, visiting wineries, farms, arts and crafts related activities, tours, gastronomy, and ecotourism. Due to the different resources available in each geographical area, agrotourism is found throughout Cyprus. There are, however, certain areas that seem more advantageous than others due to factors like accessibility and proximity<sup>5</sup>.

## 2. *What national and international legislation exists in your country regarding rural tourism?*

**The Regulation of the Establishment and Operation of Hotels and Tourist Accommodation (Amendment) Law of 2024 - 28(I)/2024<sup>6</sup>**: The law also applies to rural hotels, which are defined as hotels located within the community cores of mountainous and less-favoured areas, or at other appropriate locations within the development boundary of those areas.

## 3. *Are there any vocational training programs for rural tourism in your country?*

Cyprus has no specific rural tourism training programs. However, several tourism-related programs and educational programs that can be useful to the rural tourism sector are offered by several institutions. More specifically:

- **Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth:**
  - **Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training<sup>7</sup>**: Secondary VET education for students between 15 and 18. There are specialisation programs available in different sectors. In general, there are many tourism-related programs. Additionally, some programs may be useful to the rural tourism industry, and they include specialisation programs in the following sectors: Sector for Operation and Management, Hotel and Catering Services Sector, Services Sector (tourism speciality program and Tourist Office and Hotel Employees speciality program), Viticulture - Winemaking Sector, Dairy and Cheesemaking Sector, Agriculture Sector (Plant Production (Plant Production and Bio-Crops - Animal Production)).
  - **The Apprenticeship System for Vocational Education and Training – Core Apprenticeship<sup>8</sup>**: The core apprenticeship is designed for students 16 to 18 years old who have completed compulsory education or a preparatory apprenticeship. The program combines three years education in a Technical and Vocational School with paid work experience in selected specialisations. The Hotel/Food Industry Sector offers specialisations such as food and beverages, food preparation and cooking, and hotel maintenance.
  - **Apeiteio Gymnasium of Agros<sup>9</sup>**: A Hotel School is housed in the Apeiteio Gymnasium, under the same management as the middle and high schools.

<sup>6</sup> CyLaw. [http://ns1.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/2024\\_1\\_028.pdf](http://ns1.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/2024_1_028.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training. <https://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/en/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Core Apprenticeship. [https://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/en/smeek\\_core\\_apprenticeship.html](https://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/en/smeek_core_apprenticeship.html)

<sup>9</sup> Apeiteio Gymnasium of Agros. <https://gym-agros-lem.schools.ac.cy/>

- **Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education (ESTEE)<sup>10</sup>**: The evening schools provide specialisations in Agriculture, Hotel and Catering Services, and the Services Sector (Tourist Office and Hotel Employee).
- **Educational Centres of the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth<sup>11</sup>**: They provide lifelong learning opportunities to Cyprus citizens over 15 years old. Their training programs include Business Administration, Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development, Oenology, Beekeeping, and traditional crafts such as Cyprus Traditional Pottery and Embroideries. Rural tourism can benefit from these training programs.
- **Public Schools of Higher Vocational Education and Training (MIEEK)<sup>12</sup>**: The programs that are provided and can be related to rural tourism are: Organic Horticultural for organic product production, and the Dairy and Cheese making program.
- **Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus (HHIC)<sup>13</sup>**: Hospitality and Catering Education Tertiary Institution. There are two educational programmes offered: one in Hospitality and Tourism Management, and one in Culinary Arts. Training programs are also available. (Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus).
- **Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality and Entrepreneurship<sup>14</sup>**: The Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management offers a bachelor's degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management, a master's degree in international Tourism and Hospitality Management, as well as Doctoral degrees (Cyprus University of Technology. Department of Hotel and Tourism Management).
- **Private Universities and Colleges**: Private universities, such as the European University of Cyprus and University of Nicosia, the Neapolis University Pafos, and colleges, such as the College of Tourism and Hotel Management, KesCollege and City Unity College, offer tourism-related programs.
- **The Cyprus Deputy Ministry of Tourism<sup>15</sup>**: They provide a series of free of charge seminars and webinars in collaboration with various educational institutions. The seminars are provided in Greek / English.
- **Training programmes of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)<sup>16</sup>**: Individuals living in Cyprus can attend online courses offered by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), through the Online

<sup>10</sup> Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education (ESTEE)

[https://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/estee\\_genikes\\_plirofories.html](https://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/estee_genikes_plirofories.html)

<sup>11</sup> Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. Adult Education Centres.

<https://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/en/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Public School of Higher Vocational Education and Training (MIEEK).

[https://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/en/mieek\\_genikes\\_plirofories.html](https://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/en/mieek_genikes_plirofories.html)

<sup>13</sup> Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus website

[http://www.hhic.moec.gov.cy/moec/hhic/hhic.nsf/index\\_en/index\\_en?opendocument](http://www.hhic.moec.gov.cy/moec/hhic/hhic.nsf/index_en/index_en?opendocument)

<sup>14</sup> Cyprus University of Technology. Department of Hotel and Tourism Management.

<https://www.cut.ac.cy/faculties/fme/htm/?languageId=1>

<sup>15</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Tourism Education. Educational and Training Programs organized by the Ministry.

<https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/CAA7BB68CE2970FDC22589AB003D58C2?OpenDocument>

<sup>16</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Tourism Education. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

<https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/6FA8DE8764C594E3C22589AB003DF26F?OpenDocument>

Tourism Academy, sponsored by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism. (Grant scheme for participation in training programmes of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), through the de minimis aid scheme). In topics such as digital marketing, finance, strategy, innovation, digital transformation, special products, and sustainability, participants can acquire new skills and knowledge or update their existing ones<sup>17</sup>. Participants in seminars are sponsored by the Deputy Ministry with a sponsorship amounting to 50% of the total cost.

- **The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA)**<sup>18</sup>: Is a semi-government body under the remit of the Cyprus Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. The HRDA offers subsidies for training employed and unemployed people through several relevant programs.
- **Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC)**: The CPC is under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. It organises and implements training programmes in all management fields according to the needs identified in cooperation with the HRDA<sup>19</sup>. Programs that are currently available and could be useful to rural tourism entrepreneurs and professionals include several different programs for enhancing digital skills<sup>20</sup>.
- **The Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI)**<sup>21</sup>: This private corporation is the federation of 5 local Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCIs) that operate in Nicosia, Limassol, Famagusta, Larnaca, and Paphos. They offer training programmes subsidised by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA), including programmes useful in the tourism and rural tourism sector.
- **Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI)**<sup>22</sup>: It is a non-profit organisation that promotes sustainable tourism in Cyprus. They organise conferences on tourism issues (CSTI)

#### ***4. What is the responsible governing body/institution for supporting rural tourism entrepreneurs/professionals in your country?***

The Deputy Ministry of Tourism is the main responsible governing body for supporting rural tourism in Cyprus. The deputy ministry constitutes a transformation of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO). To support rural tourism entrepreneurs and professionals, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism offers educational and promotional activities and funding schemes.

#### ***5. What efforts have been made by different authorities in your country to promote rural tourism?***

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<sup>17</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Subsidy scheme for attending courses provided by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Online tourism academy within the context of the De Minimis Aid Rule. <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/F5A19C5C97014939C22589B1002072B8?OpenDocument>

<sup>18</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Tourism Education. Cyprus Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA). <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/0F08BE273CE9BBB5C22589AB003E1A3E?OpenDocument>

<sup>19</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Tourism Education. Cyprus Productivity Center. <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/D7877BFC9BD55320C22589AB003E32DD?OpenDocument>

<sup>20</sup> Cyprus Productivity Center. E-Gnosis Platform. <https://www.e-gnosis.gov.cy/training/>

<sup>21</sup> The Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) website. <https://ccci.org.cy/training-activity-2/>

<sup>22</sup> Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI) website. <https://csti-cyprus.org/>

Cyprus's authorities that promote rural tourism and their initiatives are:

1. **The Deputy Ministry of Tourism:** On January 8, 2020, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism of Cyprus launched the National Tourism Strategy 2030. A major focus of the strategy is to establish Cyprus as a quality, digitally smart year-round destination, where all residents can benefit from tourism. One of the initiatives undertaken in the context of 'all residents can benefit from tourism' is distributing tourism income across the island, for instance by promoting rural and mountain regions<sup>23</sup>. Several promotional initiatives are undertaken by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, including:
  - **Cyprus Agrotourism Company<sup>24</sup>:** It is a non-profit organisation under the Deputy Ministry of Tourism aiming to develop and promote agrotourism in Cyprus. The company currently has more than 150 members throughout the island. Members include owners and operators of traditional accommodations, winemakers, producers of traditional products, artists, private tour guides, farm and theme park owners, and more. On the website, visitors can find rural accommodation and activities in these areas. Among the activity categories are outdoor activities, wineries, farms, gastronomy, tours, arts and crafts, and ecotourism.
  - **LoveCyprus.com<sup>25</sup>:** The Deputy Ministry of Tourism has created this website to provide tourists with information, tips, and suggestions. A special section is dedicated to rural Cyprus. In particular, there is information about cycling, natural trails, villages, cultural routes, wine routes, religious routes, museums, galleries, and sites and monuments in rural areas. The section devoted to nature also provides information about activities like birdwatching and climbing. Furthermore, information about sailing, diving, and active tourism is provided in the section dedicated to sports & training.
  - **Heartland of Legends.com<sup>26</sup>:** The Heartland of Legends route was designed by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism to showcase hidden gems. This includes among others stays in nature, activities like birdwatching, hiking, cycling, climbing, and free crafts workshops in villages. Among the workshops offered are basket weaving, icon painting, ceramic and pottery making, embroidery, and wine making. Moreover, the website provides a calendar with information about the Harvest Festivals held all over Cyprus. Additionally, the website provides information about the folklore of the island, including traditions, gastronomy, fauna and flora, and religious ceremonies. Also available on the website are stories about cheese makers, wineries, craftspeople, and more along with a map to help visitors plan their route.
  - **Exhibitions and Promotional Activities<sup>27</sup>:** To promote tourism, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism participates in more than 70 international tourism exhibitions around the world. Several promotional events are also organised, including seminars, workshops, and trainings worldwide.

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<sup>23</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. National Tourism Strategy 2030.

[https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/BAD4CBFDDCC897B5C225850D0028487B/\\$file/Cyprus%20Tourism%20Strategy%202030%20-%20Foreword\\_En.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/BAD4CBFDDCC897B5C225850D0028487B/$file/Cyprus%20Tourism%20Strategy%202030%20-%20Foreword_En.pdf?OpenElement)

<sup>24</sup> Cyprus Agrotourism Company website. <https://www.agrotourism.com.cy/about-us>

<sup>25</sup> Love Cyprus website. <https://www.visitcyprus.com/index.php/en/>

<sup>26</sup> Heartland of Legends website. <https://heartlandoflegends.com/crops/#submenu-3544>

<sup>27</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Exhibitions and Promotional Activities.

[https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/exhibitions\\_en/exhibitions\\_en?OpenDocument](https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/exhibitions_en/exhibitions_en?OpenDocument)

2. **Private Initiatives:**

- **Chooseyourcyprus.com<sup>28</sup>:** This initiative was started by a group of young people to showcase beautiful places and activities in Cyprus. The platform and app provide information about rural tourism as well. Detailed information is provided about agrotourism villages in each district, for example. There is also a section dedicated to Troodos mountains with information on villages, hiking trails, cycling routes, picnic and camping areas, museums and churches, and flora and fauna. It also includes information about Cape Greko National Park and Akamas Peninsula National Park, which cover the must-see sea sides, natural trails, and attractions in each park. The website also provides information about wine tours, camping, natural trails, scuba diving, sails, and other activities that people can enjoy in rural areas.

**6. In your country are there any funding opportunities for entrepreneurs who wish to start a rural tourism business?**

The **Deputy Ministry of Tourism** offers funding opportunities for investment incentives and projects. There are currently several programs that benefit rural tourism entrepreneurs and rural communities, including:

- A. **Christmas Villages Grant Scheme 2024-2025<sup>29</sup>:** It aims to attract people to visit the mountains, the countryside, the peripheral and remote areas during the Christmas months (November to January), to revitalise them and reduce their urbanisation. It also aims to promote the area's natural, cultural, and gastronomic heritages and traditions.
- B. **Grant Scheme for the Revitalisation of rural, mountain, peripheral and remote areas through the creation of Authentic Experiences<sup>30</sup>:** The scheme aims to provide targeted support for restoring and upgrading public and private buildings and open spaces for, among others, their reuse as experiential tourism destinations for gastronomy, handicrafts, traditional arts, and so on, as well as to improve the aesthetics and accessibility of open spaces. In addition, the scheme aims to support the development of specific forms of tourism and outdoors activities such as adventure tourism, climbing, cycling, forest recreation, birdwatching, and cultural tourism.
- C. **Grant Scheme for Upgrading Projects of Hotels and Tourist Accommodation in Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas for the Modernisation and Improvement of the Competitiveness of the Tourism Product<sup>31</sup>:** A key objective of the program is to improve the competitiveness of the tourism product

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<sup>28</sup> Choose your Cyprus website. <https://chooseyourcyprus.com/>

<sup>29</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Christmas Villages Grant Scheme 2024-2025. <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/03F10CE76EB5EBB6C2258AF900352A7C?OpenDocument>

<sup>30</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Grant Scheme for the Revitalisation of rural, mountain, peripheral and remote areas through the creation of Authentic Experiences. <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/2B4A92A5BCE983B2C2258AF5003560E6?OpenDocument>

<sup>31</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Grant Scheme for Upgrading Projects of Hotels and Tourist Accommodation in Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas for the Modernization and Improvement of the Competitiveness of the Tourism Product. <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/DD2B36EC6880B02FC22589F3002C661D?OpenDocument>

in rural, mountainous and remote areas by upgrading hotels and tourist accommodations, developing and promoting specialised forms of tourism, upgrading infrastructure, and modernising services through the use of digital technology.

- D. **Grant scheme for experiential workshops of traditional crafts, processing of agricultural and livestock products and wine and gastronomy for 2024 based on the EU Regulation on de minimis aid (de minimis)**<sup>32</sup>: Through this scheme, the Deputy Ministry sponsors experiential workshops aimed at developing tourism in rural, mountainous and border areas. The workshops cover traditional crafts, livestock processing, wine and gastronomy. It aims to increase visibility to the Heartland of Legends route created by the Deputy Ministry. The route passes through rural, mountainous, and border areas of Cyprus, allowing visitors to experience Cyprus' authentic nature, tradition, and way of life.
- E. **Grant scheme for the digital transition of providers of special forms of tourism based on de minimis aid (DE MINIMIS)**<sup>33</sup>: This scheme intends to increase the online presence of special tourism providers and involved parties, enhance the promotion of special types of tourism online, and target the promotion of specific forms of tourism on the Internet. The specific forms of tourism included in the National Tourism Strategy 2030 are, among others, diving tourism, sports tourism (including cycling tourism, shooting tourism, etc.), wine and gastronomy tourism, cruise tourism, outdoor and nature tourism, cultural tourism, and religious tourism.
- F. **Grant scheme for improving accessibility infrastructure, environmental awareness and the creation/upgrading of special interest infrastructure (De Minimis)**<sup>34</sup>: The scheme provides grants to improve access infrastructure, increase environmental awareness, and create/improve special interest infrastructure for rural tourism, religious tourism, sports tourism (sports that do not harm the environment), and cruise tourism, among others.
- G. **Grant scheme for events relating to the promotion of Gastronomy and Local Products organised in Cyprus through a de minimis aid scheme**<sup>35</sup>: The purpose is to promote high quality wine and gastronomy events and festivals in Cyprus with an emphasis on the countryside. Among the objectives are promoting the use of local tourism products and implementing sustainable practices in order to contribute to a sustainable development of tourism, as well as promoting the wine and gastronomy of Cyprus, local products, and the country's cultural heritage and traditions.

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<sup>32</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Grant scheme for experiential workshops of traditional crafts, processing of agricultural and livestock products and wine and gastronomy for 2024 based on the EU Regulation on de minimis aid (de minimis). <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/215053A0467F1D1EC2258AEF00323A4D?OpenDocument>

<sup>33</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Grant scheme for the digital transition of providers of special forms of tourism based on de minimis aid (DE MINIMIS). <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/2E43DA9547663B1CC2258A9A0045D73A?OpenDocument>

<sup>34</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Grant scheme for improving accessibility infrastructure, environmental awareness and the creation/upgrading of special interest infrastructure (De Minimis). <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/14AF483E795F33B3C2258AAC003F15FE?OpenDocument>

<sup>35</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Grant scheme for events relating to the promotion of Gastronomy and Local Products organised in Cyprus through a de minimis aid scheme. <https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/D6DFE8ECF2C9D035C225896000484FA6?OpenDocument>

- H. **Grant Scheme for the Upgrading of Restaurants or Traditional Food Stores, including those that are part of or wish to join Gastronomy Schemes such as "Taste of Cyprus"**<sup>36</sup>: The scheme aims to improve and upgrade the quality of services provided by restaurants and taverns. It also aims to upgrade existing stores that sell traditional food products.
- I. **Grant scheme for participation in training programmes of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), through the de minimis aid scheme**<sup>37</sup>: To improve the destination's competitiveness through tourism education, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism is sponsoring individuals living in Cyprus to attend online programs offered by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The programmes offer participants the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge or upgrade their existing ones in topics such as digital marketing, finance, strategy, innovation, digital transformation, special products, and sustainability.
- J. **Grant Scheme for the Creation and Enrichment of Facilities and Services for Health, Wellness, Rehabilitation, Accessibility and Assisted Living Tourism in Hotels and Tourist Accommodation with the aim of attracting Health and Wellness Tourism**<sup>38</sup>: The objective is to enhance existing hotels and tourist accommodations to develop, promote and attract specialised forms of tourism, including health, wellness, rehabilitation, accessibility, and assisted living.

There are also some other funding programmes that rural tourism entrepreneurs may be able to benefit from through other Cypriot authorities. These include the Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organisation (CAPO)<sup>39</sup>, the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment<sup>40</sup>, and the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, and Industry<sup>41</sup>. For instance, the CAPO currently provides the support intervention **"Investments in tangible and intangible assets – in processing equipment and winemaking infrastructure - in wine marketing structures and tools"** funded by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF). The aim is to support tangible and intangible investments in winemaking and processing infrastructure as well as marketing tools and structures. Entrepreneurs and communities in rural areas can visit CAPO's website to learn more about all subsidy measures provided by each authority. In addition, they can find out if they qualify for each measure<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Grant Scheme for the Upgrading of Restaurants or Traditional Food Stores, including those that are part of or wish to join Gastronomy Schemes such as "Taste of Cyprus".

<https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/D2436C707ED30099C2258A5A00455C15?OpenDocument>

<sup>37</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Subsidy scheme for attending courses provided by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Online tourism academy within the context of the De Minimis Aid Rule.

<https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/F5A19C5C97014939C22589B1002072B8?OpenDocument>

<sup>38</sup> Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Incentives and Grants. Grant Scheme for the Creation and Enrichment of Facilities and Services for Health, Wellness, Rehabilitation, Accessibility and Assisted Living Tourism in Hotels and Tourist Accommodation with the aim of attracting Health and Wellness Tourism.

<https://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/CACC068B89DBBEA2C2258A1C003C1683?OpenDocument>

<sup>39</sup> Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organisation (CAPO). Subsidy Measures.

[https://www.capo.gov.cy/capo/capo.nsf/capo18\\_gr/capo18\\_gr?OpenDocument](https://www.capo.gov.cy/capo/capo.nsf/capo18_gr/capo18_gr?OpenDocument)

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment. <https://moa.gov.cy/?lang=en>

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Energy, Commerce, and Industry. Funding Programmes. <https://meci.gov.cy/en/funding-programmes/list-of-the-ministry-of-energy-commerce-and-industry-s-funding-programmes>

<sup>42</sup> Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organisation (CAPO). Subsidy Measures.

[https://www.capo.gov.cy/capo/capo.nsf/capo18\\_gr/capo18\\_gr?OpenDocument](https://www.capo.gov.cy/capo/capo.nsf/capo18_gr/capo18_gr?OpenDocument)

**7. Do you have any best practices/successful examples regarding rural tourism in your country?**

Several rural communities in Cyprus have experienced success with rural tourism. There are several successful rural tourism paradigms in Cyprus, such as Agros village, Pano Lefkara village and Kalopanayiotis village.

**Agros village** located in the Troodos mountains is famous for its roses. The Agros Community Council organises a two-week long rose festival every year including traditional dances, musical performances, and food and beverage tastings. Also 2 rose factories are in the village, and visitors can visit them during the festival and throughout the year to learn about rose distillation, purchase traditional rose products, and see the rose exhibition. Additionally, Agros is home to some family-owned businesses that produce cured meats, or homemade traditional sweets, and marmalades. These local businesses offer workshops where visitors can participate in rose oil distillation, sweet making, and meat processing. This lively village also offers a variety of accommodation options. Additionally, motorbike excursions to the mountains, other traditional villages, monasteries, and UNESCO sites can be taken from the village. It is also worth mentioning that Agros is home to the Apeiteio Gymnasium, where the hotel school is located.

**Pano Lefkara** is a beautiful village in the Larnaca district, famous for its traditional handicrafts of lace embroidery and filigree silver. In the Lefkara Handicraft Centre and Museum of Traditional Embroidery and Silversmithing, visitors can learn about these arts, observe the making of lace and silver, as well as attend workshops. A Folklore Museum is also located in the village. The Lefkara Festival is also held every year in August, and features music, dance, and handicraft exhibitions among others. There are also many accommodation options available in the village.

**Kalopanayiotis village** is in the Troodos mountains and has something to offer for everyone. This charming village with its traditional architecture and cobbled streets is home to Saint John Lampadistis Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Venetian bridge and the Kykkos watermill. Among other places of interest are the Ayios Ioannis Lampadistis Cultural Centre and the Byzantine Museum. The village also offers sulphur springs, hiking, cycling, and running trails, motorbike safaris and many accommodation options, including spa services.



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