



European Rural Parliament 2015

National report for Cyprus

Prepared by

Troodos Network of Thematic Centers

July 2015

The European Rural Parliament (ERP) national campaign in Cyprus consisted of 5 local ERP events and a national one which was held and hosted at the House of Representatives. The campaign was co-organized by the Troodos Network of Thematic Centers as ERP National Champion, working with the Ministry of Agriculture and the House of Representatives. At the closing ceremony of the campaign, in the last week of June 25015, the President of the House of Representatives officially announced and committed to a long term cooperation through the provision of assistance and the plan to host every year the Cyprus Rural Parliament at the House of Representatives,

Following the closing ceremony, the results and proposals of the national campaign will be assessed by the House of Representatives and some of them will be subjects of discussion during the coming year, starting in September 2015.

The Troodos Network of Thematic Centers is involved in many projects for Rural Development which are funded by the EU, the Cyprus Tourism Organisation and the Troodos Regional Board of Tourism as well as the Council of Europe and local community councils.

Through the years it has developed a unique model of Rural development, with 100% community engagement for the sustainable development. The Troodos Network's Model of Development is a holistic approach, and aims at the social and financial inclusion of all the inhabitants of the rural areas and the preservation of the culture and history of each place.

Our philosophy is that each village is a unique treasure, a unique jewel which we try to preserve, and build a brand around it, and educate the habitats of the area about their unique natural and cultural treasures, for which they should feel proud and work in Teams not only to preserve what they have but also to develop the local products into more competitive ones, and create new products and points of tourism attraction, which will attract tourists to the village and increase the income of the inhabitants.

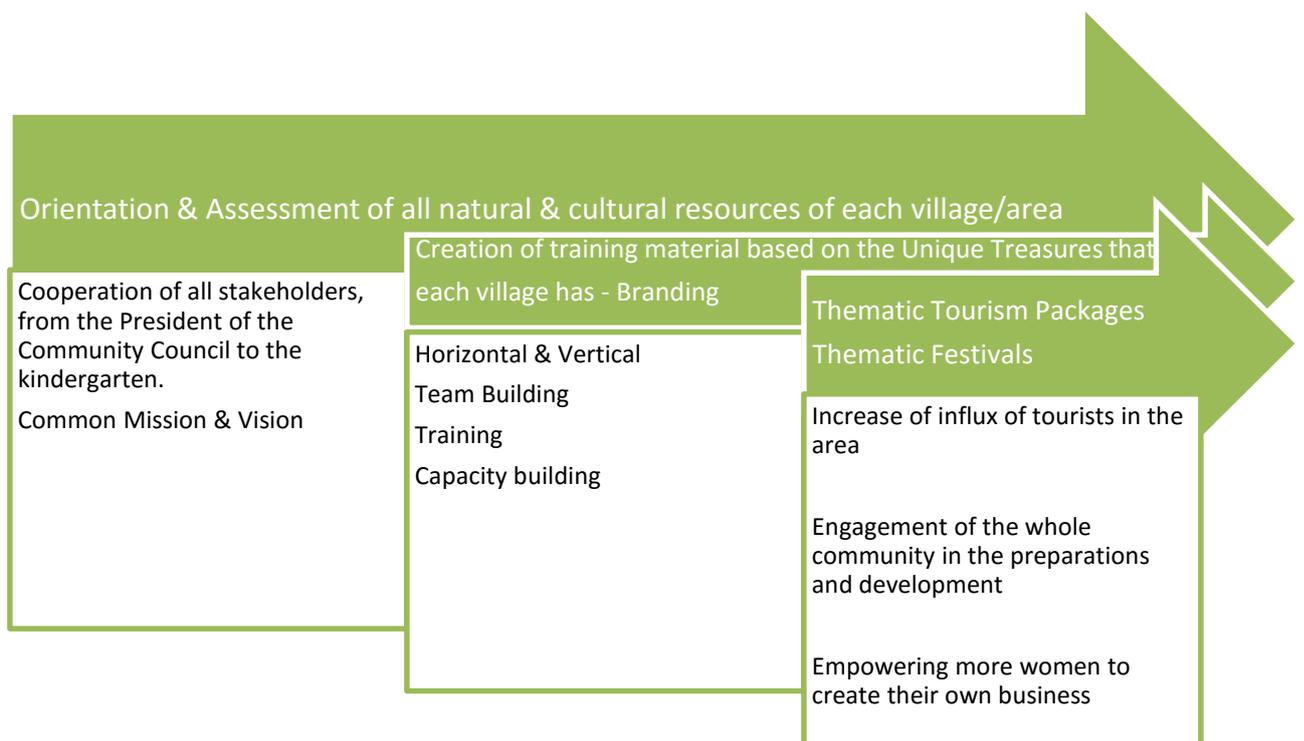
Our Methodology is based on empirical studies and field work in the rural areas, and the knowledge of the huge potential of development which remains untouched due to urbanisation, the lack of cooperation between rural stakeholders, the lack of cooperatives and clusters, and the lack of knowledge about the natural and cultural treasures that each village has.

Instead of focusing on the rural problems which are known, recorded and are common in all rural areas in Cyprus (lack of good medical & educational services, lack of incentives for young people,

lack of social and recreation incentives to stay and work in Rural Areas), we focused on solutions, on developing , empowering, training and help the people who live in rural and deprived areas to have a voice by learning to work first in Teams so that they are not alienated and they can have the voice of a team with much higher impact than the voice of the individual.

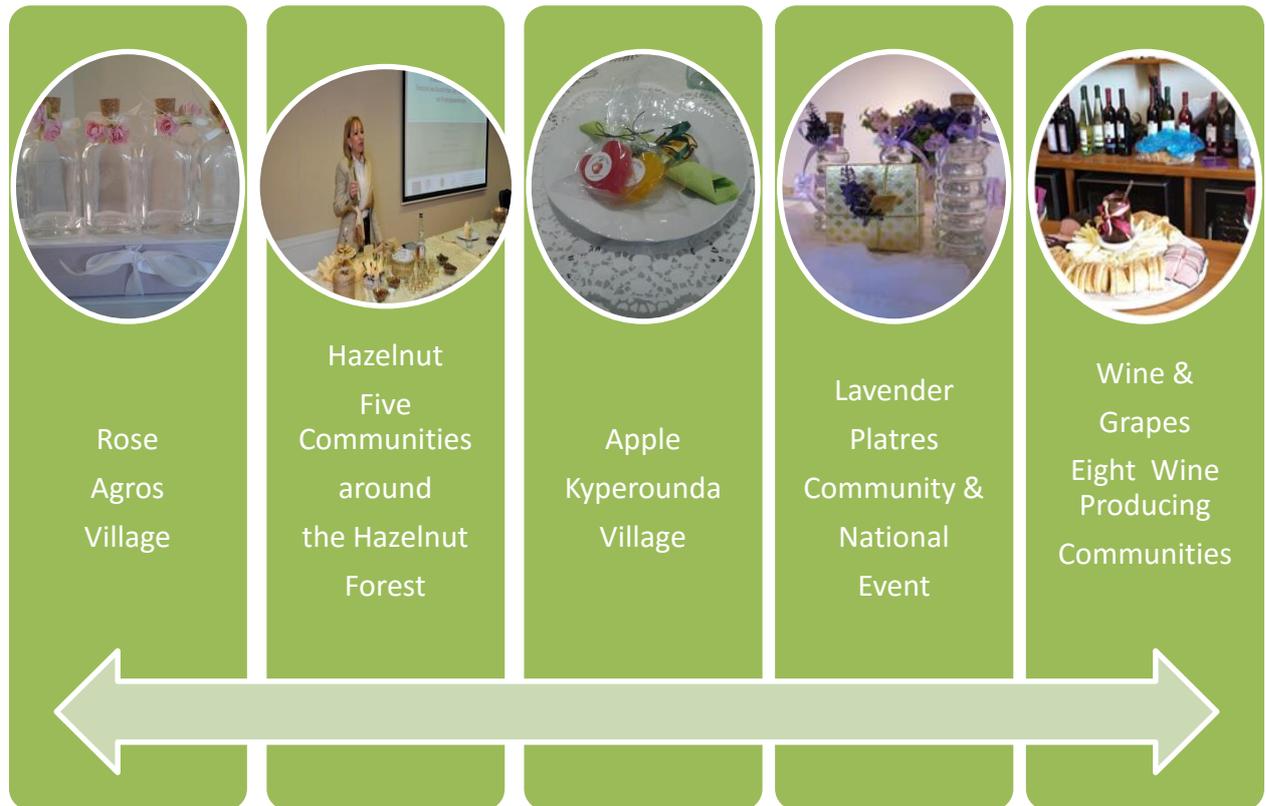
We are focusing on capacity building by teaching rural people how to create new products and upgrade the traditional ones that they are producing, by higher quality and more attractive packaging, better presentation, efficient supply chains, so that they will have higher income and higher self-esteem, plus a more active social life.

We are using a structured methodology which has a great and immediate impact on the communities. It is shown below:

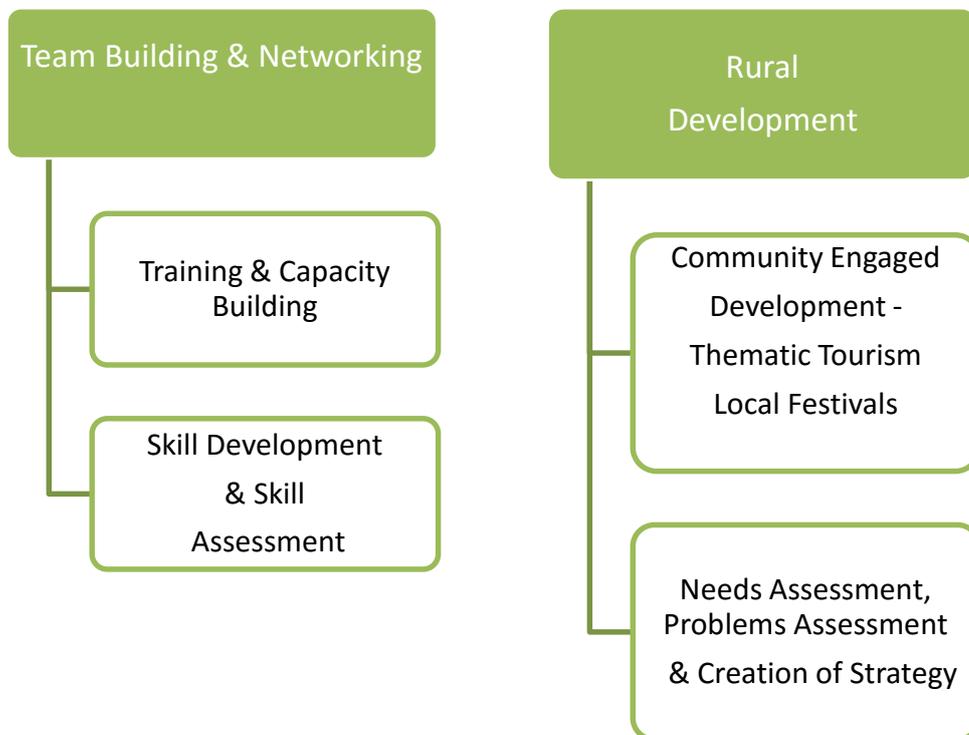


Our local ERP Events had five Themes - Rose, Hazelnut, Apple, Lavender & Grapes - and were held in five different areas within the Troodos area, the Green Heart of Cyprus. We used this as our first area, due to our familiarity with the place and the communities (it is the birth-place of our National Coordinator), and because it is recognised by the government as a priority area for development, having been neglected for many years despite the huge potential which can create a real difference to the life not only for the people who live there but to the whole of Cyprus.

The five ERP local Campaigns were pursued through the following events:



Each event had the following purposes



The reason that we have focused so much on the Team Building is that at the moment people who live in the Rural Areas, apart of facing the problems of living in deprived areas, do not work in teams because they see each person as a competitor instead of a possible collaborator or partner. Our bottom up approach started with training and capacity building, in order to create awareness about the dynamics and the power of teams, the potential, synergies and benefits of possible cooperation and clusters.

All the participants were trained about the unique treasures of their area, the healing properties of their natural resources and the unlimited possibilities for new products and ideas which emerge from a single fruit/vegetable/herb, plus the potential for promoting their culture and history.

As a final stage at each event, they learned how to make their own organic soap, so that they worked in small team sharing utensils and having fun, seeing in practise the benefits and power of working in teams.



At the end of the local ERP event, we assessed and recorded all the skills of the people (IT, cooking, handicrafts, story telling, etc), but also all the problems. We explained to them what is the ERP and how the ERP can change their lives by giving them voice and the right to express this voice at a national and European Level.

While implementing all the above ERP local Campaign Events, we were in contact and had several meetings at the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Rural Network, and the House of Representatives in order to explore the possibilities of cooperation through the ERP and to organise a huge National ERP Campaign which will cover the whole of Rural Cyprus.

Understanding and appreciating our efforts and the importance of the ERP, the House of Representatives and the Ministry of Agriculture (through the National Rural Network) have decided to be long term partners with us in this initiative, by offering their full support and assistance and organising a yearly National ERP event at the House of Representatives, with the involvement of all stakeholders. This was our biggest success.

102 stakeholders representing Rural Cyprus attended the official launching of ERP at the House of Representatives, which was covered by media prior to the event and with live broadcasting during the event

The first part of the official ERP launching was the ceremonial part, where Mr Yiannakis Omirou the President of the Parliament and His Excellency Mr Nicos Kouyialis the Minister of Agriculture welcomed the delegates and announced officially their full engagement to the ERP.

Professor Michael Dower, Joint Coordinator of the European Rural Parliament, made a short presentation of the ERP and the national and European benefits of this initiative. Mr Panayiotis Papadopoulos, the National Champion/Coordinator, spoke about his Mission & Vision as National Coordinator, as well as the evolution and Strategy of the Troodos Network of Thematic Centers. Mr Marios Adamides, Coordinator of the National Rural Network, welcomed the delegates and explained the importance of the discussion groups which followed.

At the second part, the delegates were divided into four discussion groups, having pre-registered and sent their comments, ideas and problems in advance.

The four discussion groups had the following themes :

1. Agriculture
2. Renewable Energy
3. Rural Tourism & Culture
4. Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas

Each group had two moderators which were experts in their field.

The results of each group with the Problems, Potential and possible solutions were presented at the third part of the meeting, and soon will be uploaded for public view : the results will be assessed by the House of Representatives and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The ERP local events and National campaign had three main outputs :

- a. A set of clear ideas about the concerns and aspirations of rural people, were identified and recorded, with what these imply for action by the rural communities themselves, for the policies of local, regional and national public authorities in Cyprus , and for exchange or policy influence at European level
- b. A strong and attractive expression of these ideas and implications, for use within Cyprus, has been recorded and a presentation has been created to be sent to the Parliament, to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well to the Cyprus Tourism Organisation. A strong conclusion which emerged through the discussions at the Parliament is the lack of cooperation between Ministries, Chambers and local and national Tourism Boards regarding a common policy, and the lack of a “one-stop shop” where all the information/benefits/EU Funds for the rural areas can be visible and easily accessible for every citizen
- c. A concise expression of those ideas for use at European level, in the form of this national report in English and supporting material.