

LAYMAN'S REPORT

Troodos National Forest Park: **Promoting natural values and Ecosystem Services**



LIFE16 GIE/CY/000709

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Layman's Report. iLIFE-TROODOS project:
Troodos National Forest Park: Promoting natural values and ecosystem services.

THE PROJECT

The project “Troodos National Forest Park: Promoting natural values and ecosystem services” (iLIFE-TROODOS; LIFE16 GIE/CY/000709) was implemented within the framework of LIFE program of the European Union. The project aimed to increase public awareness on the natural values and the ecosystem services of Troodos National Forest Park (TNFP) for which it was included in the Natura 2000 network.

The project started on the 2nd October 2017 and completed on the 30th September 2020. The total project budget was 1,313,826 euros, of which 766,125 euros (60% of its total eligible budget) were co-funded by European Union.

PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES

- Promote public awareness of the general public, towards the need for the protection of the Natura 2000 Network.
- Increase awareness on natural values for which the TNFP was included in the Natura 2000 network.
- Change negative attitudes of Cyprus inhabitants, regarding Natura 2000 network, using various means.
- Spread knowledge about the natural values and ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000 Network to professional target groups (policy implementers).
- Create and provide toolsets (Mobile Apps, best practices guide, documentary, etc.) regarding the Natura 2000 network, the conservation of natural values and the provision of ecosystem services in order to be forwarded to the public and be used more widely in a national and international context.

For more information regarding the iLIFE-TROODOS project you can visit the project's website www.ilifetroodos.eu

TROODOS NATIONAL FOREST PARK

TNFP is located in the heart of Troodos mountain range and was designated as a National Forest Park in 1992, aiming to safeguard its sustainable use and to perpetuate the values and functions of the area: ecological, scientific, recreational, hydrological and economic. The greater part of the Park has been included in the European network of protected areas “Natura 2000”, named “Ethniko Dasiko Parko Troodous” (CY5000004), since 2004.

The ecological quality and importance of the area lies in the following natural values:

Flora

Troodos area is the most important area for wild flora conservation in Cyprus. Here, they are hosted more than 750 plants (species and sub-species), i.e. 40% of the total flora of Cyprus, 70 of which are endemics to Cyprus (51% of the endemics of Cyprus). Ten *taxa* are found only at Troodos and nowhere else in the world. TNFP also hosts 21 threatened *taxa* (IUCN list). Five plant species accepted as new additions to Annex II of the Habitat's Directive, out of which three are priority ones (**Arabis kennedyae*, **Chionodoxa lochiaie*, **Pinguicula crystallina*).

Fauna

TNFP supports the only population of *Loxia curvirostra quillemardi* in Cyprus and the major population of the endemic species *Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae*. It provides important habitats for the endemic birds *Oenanthe cypriaca* and *Periparus ater cypriotes*, too. Moreover, the TNFP is an important site for the Cyprus wild sheep (*Ovis gmelini ophion*), the endemic snake *Hierophis cypriensis* and other fauna species, especially bat species.

Habitat types

Eleven Annex I habitat types of the Habitats Directive, of which four are priority habitats (Serpentinophilous grassland of Cyprus, Scrub and low forest vegetation with the endemic golden oak, Black pine forests, Juniper forests) are found at TNFP. The unique habitat “Peat grasslands of Troodos” occurs only at Troodos and nowhere else in the world.

Geology

The Troodos Ophiolite Complex which occupies the central-southcentral part of Cyprus, is one of the best developed ophiolites in the world and attracts visitors from all over the world. The ophiolitic rocks are a residue of the oceanic crust, which has reached the surface of the earth since the collision of the tectonic plates.



ECOSYSTEM SERVICES OF TROODOS NATIONAL FOREST PARK

Services, which are supported by earth's ecosystems and benefit people, are called ecosystem services. The three categories of ecosystem services, all of which are equally important for the health and well-being of people are categorized as provision services, regulating and maintenance services and cultural services.

TNFP is an important forest ecosystem, that offers ecosystem services from all three categories. The following ecosystem services have been identified at TNFP:

- 13 provision services: water, food (fruits, aromatic plants, mushrooms, honey, fishes, game, etc.), raw materials and fuel (wood, firewood) and genetic material/biodiversity.
- 12 regulating and maintenance services: regulating climate, water and floods, contribution to the air and water quality, prevention from extreme weather events and soil erosion, pollination, seed dispersal, etc.
- 11 cultural services: provision of recreational opportunities, tourism, inspiration as well as research and education.



AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

A well-structured and detailed communication plan was elaborated that included the main techniques employed for the implementation of the information and awareness campaign on the natural values and ecosystem services of TNFP. Starting from spring 2018, two media campaigns per year were implemented. In total, six campaigns were implanted, which included advertisements at all Media, such as: broadcasts of TV and radio spots, broadcasts of animation cartoons in cinema halls, publication of press releases, articles and advertisements in newspapers and magazines. Additionally, the information campaign included: TV and radio presentations, production and distribution of leaflets, outdoor advertising in highways connecting main cities and on public transport means, advertising in Google display network and Facebook, web banners in two Cypriot websites, continuous presence in Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, production of newsletters, promotional material (stickers, notebooks, USBs, pencils, luggage tags), information boards and creation of a website (www.ilifetroodos.eu).



DOCUMENTARY

A documentary about TNFP was produced within the framework of the Project and is being displayed at Troodos Environmental Information Centre since June 2020. The documentary presents the beauty of TNFP through the four seasons of the year. The geology, biodiversity and ecosystem services of the area are presented to the audience in a simple and attractive way and thus provokes the intense desire to visit, explore and enjoy TNFP. A special reference is made to the villages of the area, the stone-built settlements promoting local festivals as well as aspects of the culture and religious of the area.

The documentary is also available at the project's website and also at the YouTube channel of iLIFE-TROODOS.

You can watch it at <https://bit.ly/Troodos-Film>

INFORMATION POINTS AT TROODOS

Within the framework of iLIFE-TROODOS project, two information points were established, one at “Platania” picnic site and one at Troodos square. Each information point includes eight information panels with pictures and texts and one outdoor touch screen. The touch screen provides: information about the TNFP (biodiversity, ecosystem services, etc.), information about the available recreational activities (e.g. Picnic and Camping sites, Nature trails, Waterfalls, Cycling routes, Museums and Monuments, Churches and Monasteries, Environmental centres, Geological routes, etc.), as well as games, like puzzles and multiple-choice questions.

It is also possible to search through a general map on information for all above-mentioned points. Moreover, this map shows several points of interest such as banks, gas stations, hotels, restaurants, etc. All points of interest are geotagged and provide the option to navigate via Google maps to the selected point.

The touch screens also include instructions and safety tips for visitors at TNFP, emergency phone numbers, as well as announcements regarding local events, extreme weather conditions, road closures, picnic sites occupancy, etc.

The design and construction of the information kiosk allows every day 24-hour access, throughout the year and it is suitable for wheelchair users and for people with visual impairments. Similar services are provided at the “Livadi tou Pasia” picnic site.





PHOTO CONTEST

A Photo Contest with the subject “**Troodos, it is in our nature**” was organized in collaboration with the Cyprus Photographic Society – Nicosia Branch. The Contest had a duration of one year and aimed to highlight the natural – inherent value of the forest ecosystem of TNFP regarding its biodiversity. Using their photo cameras, the participants were encouraged to “capture” the Park’s natural beauty and show the variety of habitats, flora and fauna species, geology and natural landscapes throughout the four seasons of the year.

Sixty-five amateur and professional photographers participated in the Contest (494 photographs were submitted in total). The photographs were evaluated by an independent committee, which was comprised of representatives from the partners of the project and the Cyprus Photographic Society. The nomination of the winners took place during the inauguration of the information point at “Platania”.

THE WINNERS OF THE CONTEST:

- **1st Award** and cash prize €1000 to Aristides Kalogirou for the photo “Magical Forest”
- **2nd Award** and cash prize €500 to Marinos Angelides for the photo “Morning in the snow”
- **3rd Award** and cash prize €300 to Constantinos Panayides for the photo “A cold morning”
- **1st Praise** and cash prize €50 to Aristides Kalogirou for the photo “Mushrooms and Elves”
- **2nd Praise** and cash prize €50 to Theodoros Theodorou for the photo “Waterfall”
- **3rd Praise** and cash prize €50 to Nektarios Kammass for the photo “Forest Sunshine”
- **4th Praise** and cash prize €50 to Pantelis Nikolaides for the photo “Hantara fall”.

PHOTO EXHIBITION

Selected photos from photographers that took part at the Photo Contest were exhibited during the Photo Exhibition that “travelled” throughout Cyprus during November 2019 – August 2020.

The exhibition consisted of 19 photos that were selected with the aim to highlight the biodiversity elements of TNFP and the ecosystem services it provides. Specifically, the Exhibition was hosted at:

- Troodos Botanic Garden “A.G. Leventis” (25/11/2019 – 20/12/2019)
- Troodos square (20/12/2019 – 27/03/2020)
- Aradippou: Apostolos Louka square (30/03/2020 – 20/04/2020)
- Larnaca: Finikoudes (04/05/2020 – 25/05/2020)
- Agia Napa: Thalassa Municipal Museum (25/05/2020 – 15/06/2020)
- Latsia: Latsia Municipality (15/06/2020 – 06/07/2020)
- Aglantzia: Kyrenia Avenue (06/07/2020 – 27/07/2020)
- Limassol: Municipal Garden (27/07/2020 – 17/08/2020)
- Athalassa Information and Education Center (17/08/2020 – 18/09/2020)



TROODOS NATIONAL FOREST PARK (iLIFE-TROODOS)

Maybe the best app for visiting and enjoying Troodos National Forest Park.



Scan for Android version



Scan for iOS version

The application “Troodos National Forest Park (iLIFE-TROODOS)” seeks to become the ultimate tool for visitors, providing information regarding the biodiversity of the area and the available opportunities for recreation, like: camping and picnic sites, nature trails, cycling routes, accommodation, restaurants, museums, churches, waterfalls, environmental centers, etc. Moreover, the app includes information about the weather, calorie calculator and many other possibilities. All points of interest are geotagged and provide the option to navigate via Google maps to the selected point. The app is available for iOS and Android devices.

TREASURE HUNT WITHIN TROODOS NATIONAL FOREST PARK

Seek and find: The ultimate treasure hunt app in Troodos!



Scan for Android version



Scan for iOS version

The “Treasure hunt within Troodos National Forest Park (iLIFE-TROODOS)” app includes three treasure hunt games, each of which corresponds to a different thematic section: Environmental Route, Cultural Heritage Route and Platania Picnic Site. The first two thematic sections are for adults and the third section for children aged 10 – 15. During the game, the players will have the opportunity to familiarize with the natural areas and infrastructures in the area of TNFP and to acquire knowledge on environmental issues and the cultural heritage of the area. The app is available for iOS and Android devices.

An aerial photograph of a dense forest. A winding path or stream cuts through the green canopy, with some areas showing exposed earth or sand. The trees are mostly green, with some patches of brown and orange, suggesting autumn or a specific forest type. The overall scene is lush and natural.

STAKEHOLDERS' MEETINGS

Within the framework of the Project, two Stakeholders' meetings took place with representatives from: Troodos Development Company, Deputy Ministry of Tourism, Troodos Tourism Development and Promotion Company, Cyprus Association of Professional Foresters, Cyprus Forest Association, Limassol District Administration, Game and Fauna Service and Geological Survey Department.

The main purpose of the meetings was to inform the participants about the objectives of the Project, as well as to give feedback about the actions implemented. The stakeholders expressed positive comments regarding the awareness campaign of the Project and contributed to the promotion of certain actions related to themselves.



TOURISM SECTOR'S WORKSHOP

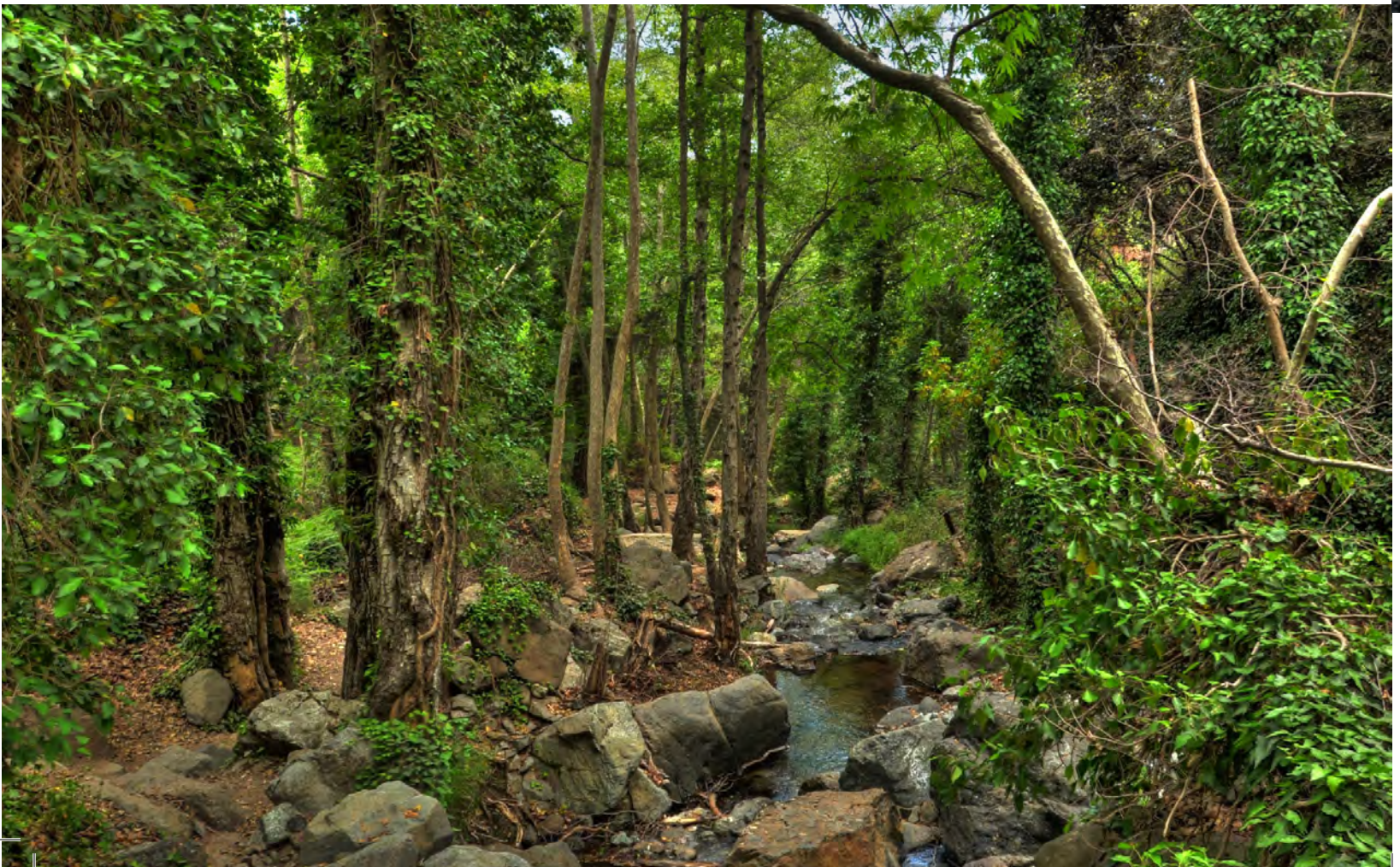
On 27 June 2019 a Tourism Sector's Workshop was organized at the Philoxenia Conference Center. The workshop was co-organized by the iLIFE-TROODOS project and the Deputy Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the British High Commission in Nicosia.

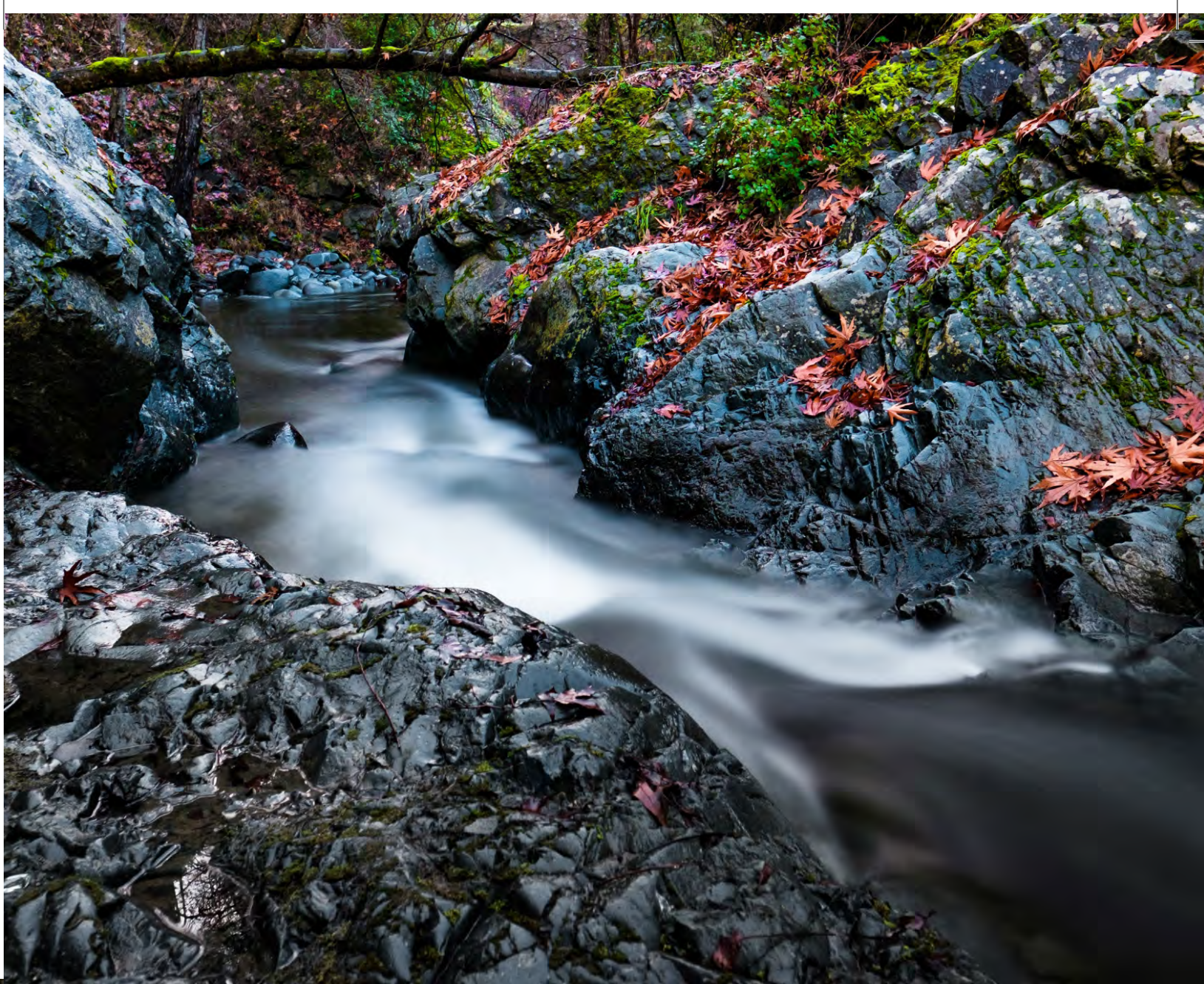
Fifty-six people from departments and services, ambassadors and embassy representatives, tour guides and tourist agents participated in the conference. The workshop invited talks from Cyprus Tourism Safety Platform's partners about the progress made regarding the safety of tourists in Cyprus. During the workshop, members of iLIFE-TROODOS project presented the natural values and ecosystem services provided by the TNFP and also the project's aim and goals. The two Apps developed within the framework of the project were presented in extend.

CONFERENCE ON THE MAPPING AND EVALUATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN CYPRUS

A two-day conference on “Mapping and Evaluation of Ecosystem Services in Cyprus” was held in Nicosia on 4 and 5 December 2018. The conference was organized under the aegis of the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, Dr Costas Kadis.

More than 50 people from public and wider public sector departments and services, environmental organizations, universities and development companies were invited and participated in the conference. The conference presented the necessity of mapping and assessing ecosystem services in Cyprus and how these are part of the European Union’s policy on biodiversity conservation. The conference included invited talks by experts on ecosystem services from abroad, as well as thematic sessions for the mapping and evaluation of the ecosystem services of two important areas of the island: Larnaca Salt Lakes and Troodos National Forest Park.





RYRAL WORKSHOPS

Within the framework of informing people who live inside or near TNFP, five workshops were carried out in 2018. Specifically, the iLIFE-TROODOS project was presented at the villages Amiantos, Phini, Kakopetria, Tris Elies and Platanistasa. In addition, the Project participated in events and conferences held in the Troodos mountain communities. The main objective was to increase the awareness about the natural values and ecosystem services provided by TNFP.

During the workshops, a number of interesting questions and comments were expressed, as well as some concerns. Moreover, the participants had the opportunity to watch the audio-visual material prepared within the framework of the project and they were provided with leaflets, newsletters and promotional material.

SOCIAL DIMENSION

An additional dimension of the project was the assessment of the knowledge and awareness of the public, regarding the natural values and the ecosystem services of the TNFP.

The information campaign of the Project was carried out very satisfactorily, achieving an increase in the level of information of most of the target groups of the campaign. At the same time, throughout the project there was direct contact and communication with both the community leaders and the residents of the area, as well as with organized groups related to the area, such as small and medium business owners, members of non-governmental (voluntary) organizations and travel agents.

As a result, the overall project impact on the target groups is considered positively, as there has been a gradual shift in perceptions of the importance of protecting the TNFP, both in terms of natural beauty and in terms of providing entertainment and recreation opportunities (e.g. nature trails, cycling routes, waterfalls, etc.). In addition, project actions such as the App for smart devices, which offers the ability to navigate through digital maps to a large number of attractions and infrastructures in the area, helped people to realize that the TNFP is an area suitable for activities throughout the year (e.g. photography, cycling).

It is expected that the number of visitors to TNFP will increase and, both the permanent residents of the area and the visitors will respect, conserve and protect it.



Dentris is a little elf, the “spirit of the forest”, who with a narration like a fairy tale explains to young children the benefits of the Troodos forest.

WHAT iLIFE-TROODOS HAS ACHIEVED

- A comprehensive information campaign was launched for the first time in order to raise awareness on the importance of the natural values and ecosystem services of a site of the Natura 2000 Network.
- A significant contribution was achieved to alter the attitude of the public towards the Natura 2000 Network. Specifically:
 - The number of people who know about the Network has increased
 - The number of people who believe that the Network contributes to the preservation of the natural environment has increased
 - The number of people who believe that the Network positively affects the financial interests of landowners has increased
 - The number of people who believe that the local community of Cyprus can benefit from the Network has increased
 - The number of people who know what “ecosystem services” are has increased.
- Visitor information points were constructed for the first time in a site of the Natura 2000 Network in Cyprus.
- For the first time, facilities for people with visual impairments are provided in natural areas.
- For the first time, applications for smart devices were created exclusively for a Natura 2000 Network site.
- In addition to informing the general public, the iLIFE-TROODOS project carried out information activities/ workshops for local communities, policy makers and stakeholders regarding the natural values and ecosystem services of the TNFP.
- A lot of information material was prepared and disseminated in order to attract visitors at TNFP. At the same time, the appropriate tools were created to mitigate the effects of an excessive increase in visitors.
- A photo contest with the subject “Troodos, It’s in Our Nature!” was successfully implemented. Selected photographs were presented in the context of a photo exhibition that traveled for about a year to popular places in Cyprus.
- A documentary about TNFP was produced presenting the natural values and ecosystem services it provides with special reference to the villages of the area and the stone-built settlements.



“Troodos, It’s in Our Nature!”

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www.ilifetroodos.eu

