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THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF CYPRUS IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

EXPERIENCE AND BEST PRACTICES

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VOLUNTU



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FACTS

- On May 1, 2004, the Republic of Cyprus became a full member of the EU, completing a long journey that lasted more than three decades.
- Accession to the EU was a natural choice for Cyprus, dictated by its culture, civilisation and history, its European outlook and the adherence to the ideals of democracy, freedom and justice. EU accession launched a new era of challenges, opportunities and responsibilities for Cyprus.
- Despite being a divided country, the entire island is an EU territory. Turkish Cypriots are eligible for EU citizenship; however, EU law is suspended in the occupied by Turkey area.

Perspective on the political participation of Cyprus in European projects and programmes

- In recent years there is a continuous participation of Municipalities and other political actors of Cyprus in EU projects and programmes. There are many programmes that allow this participation, like CERV, URBACT, HORIZON, INTERREG, LEADER, ERASMUS, LIFE and many others.
- Through the participation already done, the political actors involved have faced great benefits. Funding that created many collaborations with European cities and other European actors, funding for projects that created jobs and opportunities for the youth, the IN NEET people and others, funding for construction of various projects and other obvious benefits.

- Euroscepticism was something that was preventing the political participation of Cyprus in EU. In Cyprus there was a great concern about European Union, since there is the belief that the European Union didn't deal with the invasion of Turkey in Cyprus in 1974 and also recently to its Exclusive Economic Zone, like it dealt with the invasion of Russia in Ukraine and other invasions done.
- Through the participation in various EU projects, youth and other citizens realised that Europe is our great common "country", we should eliminate Euroscepticism, cooperate with it and make it stronger for our common benefit. So, Euroscepticism is eliminated due to the benefits mentioned above.
- Now it can easily be stated that the perspective for political participation of Cyprus in European projects and programmes is great.

Importance of political will in the development and success of transnational initiatives

- In order for the development of transnational initiatives and cooperation, political will must be present, otherwise the initiatives won't succeed.
- Political will, which is very important, is usually mentioned in reference to the centre of power, and to political decision makers as the key actors in good governance. In our case, the initiatives require good political will and stability, both from the central government but also the local governments.
- Central government has to have the will to put the initiatives in the negotiations and the design dealt and agreed with European Union decision bodies. On the other hand, without the political will of local governments that promote and benefit from the transnational initiatives there wouldn't be success to the whole procedure.

- Local governments are the main actors of this success.
 - First of all, they have to believe in the benefits of the initiatives and promote decisions in their local bodies for the participation.
 - Secondly, they have to anticipate and approve the required budget for the participation in the initiatives.
 - And last, but not least, they have to raise the awareness to the citizens and disseminate the information needed to them, so that they (the citizens) will embrace the opportunities and with their participation to add to the local government's will for the participation in these initiatives.

Presentation of best practices and lessons learned in the field of European cooperation

- Cyprus is a small country of the European Union. Municipality of Athienou, our Municipality, is a small municipality in Cyprus of around 7.000 inhabitants. We are the biggest municipality in Cyprus in area (64,8 sq. km.), but with 75% of the land occupied since 1974 by the Turkish army. The last few years though the participation of our city in EU projects and programmes, regardless of its small size and the occupation, is great. Involving our youth and many other interested citizens, Athienou has participated and participates in many EU projects, either as Lead Partner or as a plain partner, always trying to have a significant participation in all.
- Athienou has a best practice for volunteerism for which is very proud. This has been approved by URBACT Programme in 2017 and through it the Municipality led 2 European projects for transferring it to a total of 11 EU cities of 10 EU countries.

- The best practice deals with the Municipal Council of Volunteerism (MCV), that was founded in 1970, in collaboration with the local authorities, by groups of volunteers working in the municipality. It is chaired by the respective Mayor.
- It became an institutional organization of a society, which for decades had demonstrated a high degree of social cohesion. People of all ages are excited to participate, offering their time and resources to those in need. The spirit of volunteerism exists in most families, is passed down from generation to generation and contributes to the healthy development of the society.
- Its objectives are:
 - a. The recognition of the social needs in the Municipality of Athienou and the development of the necessary policies to address them.
 - b. The involvement of citizens in the development of society's quality of life.
 - c. The promotion and education of the public about the social programs of the MCV and the local social needs.

The Programs of the MCV are:

- **Kleanthios Community Home for the Aged** (established 1983).
- A living organization providing care to the elderly and not only.



Picture 2 SUNDAY WALK - VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY OF ALL GENERATIONS



- **Konstantinelenio Center for Adults** (established 2001).
- Social policies for the entire society of the municipality. Day care, home care, etc.



- **Community Nursing Center** (established 1991).
- High quality services for children 0-3 years old.



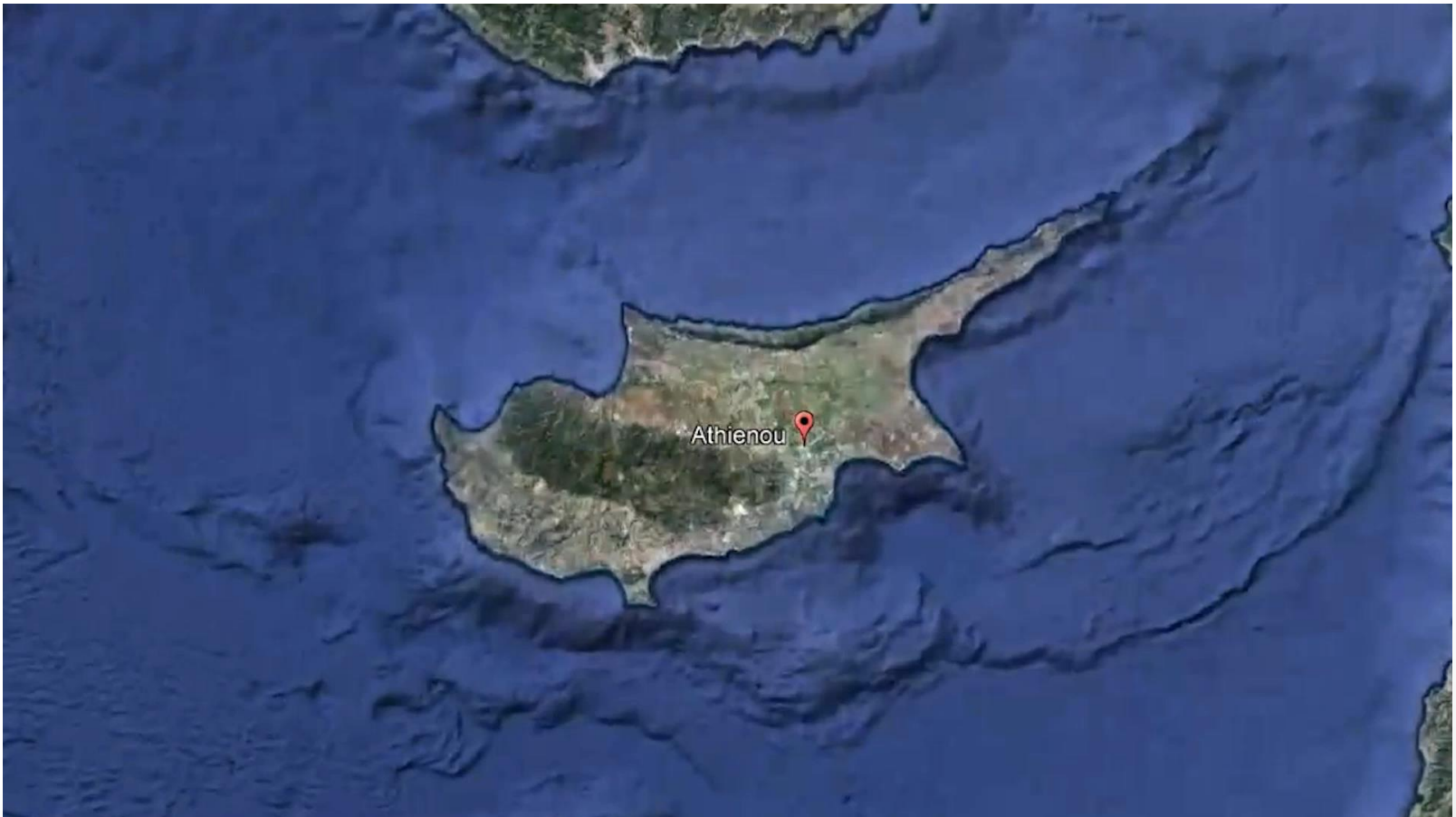
- **Social Welfare Committee** (established 2011).
- Social benefits network. Social care.

Note: The main characteristic of all Programs is that they are run by **Volunteering Management Committees**. The Social Welfare Committee is chaired by the respective Mayor of Athienou. There are lots of volunteers at all times. More than 60 permanent and occasional sponsors, Companies (especially local) with increased social responsibility. Multiple voluntary activities that involve the public and especially promote the cohesion between generations.

MANY THANKS

Before concluding I would like to mention the exceptional collaboration since 2018 with the Municipality of Altea in three European projects. And I would like to say that this cooperation is very successful due to Paloma Verdu, the manager of EuroAltea, and the collaborator of the Municipality Alberto Lorente, who both I would like to thank a lot for the excellent cooperation we have.

VIDEO FOR ATHIENOU





Thank you for your attention

