



CTO's Successful Implementation of the European Program
"European Destinations of Excellence - EDEN " and
the award to Vouni Panagias as "Tourism and Protected Areas" destination in Cyprus

The Cyprus Tourism Organisation has successfully implemented the European Program **European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)**, and has awarded the Vouni Panagias area as **"Best Tourism and Protected Area Destination- Cyprus"**.

The EDEN program, which is co-financed by the Tourism Unit of the European Commission, had 22 countries as participants and each one has selected its own National Winning Destination: Biosphere Park Grosses Walsertal-Austria, Viroinv-Hermeton Nature Park-Belgium, Belista Blagoevgrad region-Bulgaria, Nacionalni Park Sjeverni Velebit-Croatia, Vouni Panagias-Cyprus, Bohemian Switzerland-Czech Republic, Soomaa-Estonia, Northern Vosges Regional Natural Park-France, Lesvos Petrified Park-Greece, Irottko Nature Park-Hungary, Sheep's Head Peninsula-Ireland, Marine Protected Area "Penisola del Sinis-Isola di Mal di Ventre-Italy, Tervete Nature Park-Latvia, Nemunas Delta Regional Park, Unique Terrain o Harmony of Nature, Culture and Tourism-Lithuania, Recreation area and nature reserve :Haff Reimech"-Luxemburg, Melliena and the Hamlet of Manikata-Malta, Park Gravenrode-Netherlands, The Bird Republic in the Warta Mouth-Poland, Apuseni Nature Park-Romania, Solcavsko-Slovenia, The Ebro Delta-Spain and Kars, Kuyucuk Lake Wild Life Reserve-Turkey.

In order to select the **"Best Tourism and Protected Areas Destination- Cyprus"**, CTO launched earlier this year a National Competition. A total of four candidacies were submitted: Kato Drys, Larnaca Alykes, Xeros-Diaryzos Valley, and Vouni Panagias. *Vouni Panagias Protected Area* promotes sustainable tourism while respecting its protected environment and meeting the needs of local residents and visitors. Vouni Panagias is an attractive area of endemic flora and fauna species and part of the Cyprus "Natura 2000" Network. The area's Local Authorities and tourism stakeholders have taken initiatives for the development of sustainable special interest tourism.

Vouni Panagias is included in the select group of the 22 european *"Best Tourism and Protected Areas Destinations"* promoted in a pan European campaign by the European Commission and CTO. The various means of promotion include a 16-page colour brochure, a DVD, as well as the Cyprus EDEN website - www.cyprus-eden.com, and the EU website.

The European Commission has decided to promote and award the 22 European EDEN projects and winning destinations in Brussels, Belgium 7-9 October 2009, in parallel with the European Tourism Forum, and has invited 3 representatives from each participating country to attend the EDEN Awards Ceremony and EDEN Exhibition. The Cyprus invitees - Cyprus EDEN Delegation - were Ms. Maro Kazepi-Cyprus EDEN Manager, Mr. Iezekiel Iezekiel-President of Panagia Community and Mr Savvas Iezekiel-President of Panagia Development Association.

During the EDEN Awards Ceremony, honored by EU Officials, a promotional film for Vouni Panagias was presented, followed the presentation of the Cyprus EDEN Award. The EDEN Award Ceremony was attended by European Commission's Tourism Officials as well as representatives of the EDEN Network.

The 22 winning *"Best Tourism and Protected Areas Destinations"* were also promoted during a special EDEN Exhibition where each country had its own exhibition stand. The EDEN Exhibition was inaugurated by European Commission's Tourism Officials. The Cyprus EDEN Exhibition was visited by European Commission Officials including Vice President Verheugen, who expressed excellent comments for the Cypriot hospitality during his visit to an EDEN winning destination.



At the EDEN Awards Ceremony [left-right] Mr. Iezekiel Iezekiel - President Panagia Community, Ms. Maro Kazepi CTO-EDEN Project Manager, and Mr. Anastasatos - European Commission



At the EDEN Awards Ceremony [left-right] Mr. Franco Ianniello-Tourism Unit, European Commission, Ms. Maro Kazepi CTO-EDEN Project Manager, and Mr. Iezekiel Iezekiel - President Panagia Community

The Cyprus EDEN Delegation - Ms. Maro Kazepi CTO - EDEN Project Manager, Mr. Iezekiel and Savvas Iezekiel, Presidents of Panagia Community & Development Association, welcomed more than 400 delegates at the Cyprus EDEN exhibition and offered them promotional materials, delicacies and wine from the Vouni Panagias "Natura 2000" area.



At the Cyprus EDEN Exhibition Stand, [left-right], Mr. Savvas and Iezekiel Iezekiel-Panagia Community, Ms. Maro Kazepi CTO-EDEN Project Manager, and Mr. Pedro Ortun - Director European Commission



At the Cyprus Exhibition Stand [left - right], Mr. Iezekiel Iezekiel-President Panagia Community, Mr. Gunter Verheugen - Vice President European Commission and Ms. Maro Kazepi CTO-EDEN Project Manager.

This prestigious Award is of high importance for Cyprus and in line with the objectives of the Strategic Tourism Plan of the island which emphasise sustainable tourism development and the promotion of special interest tourism and particularly Nature Tourism, including the areas included in the Cyprus network "Natura 2000".

The pan-european calibre of the EDEN Award is expected to provide winning destinations with a credible, universally acknowledged Award which will facilitate their marketing, promotion and general visibility on the world's tourist map.

It is a great honour for Cyprus and Vouni Panagias to be part of the select group of the 22 "Best Tourism and Protected Areas EDEN Destinations" which opens a new window of opportunity to develop future "Networks of Excellence" and participate in the "EDEN Network of the Winning Destinations" for the further development of cooperation programs, exchange of best practice experiences, as well as joint promotional activities at the European level.

Such profile achievements in European programs are a great honor for CTO and will be exploited effectively for the promotion of Vouni Panagias, the “Best Tourism and Protected Areas Destination-Cyprus”, and the networking with other European destinations for the exchange of experiences as well as for further cooperation.

CTO explored networking opportunities during the EDEN Exhibition and had an active role in the EDEN Network Seminar, organised by the Tourism Unit-European Commission on the 7th October 2009 in Brussels, during which Ms Maro Kazepi, Cyprus EDEN Project Manager, has made a presentation and highlighted the role of CTO in promoting the visibility of the EDEN brand both in Cyprus and in Europe.

For further information on the Cyprus EDEN please contact:

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