



FORM BEST PRACTICES CONTEST 2026

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Country: North Cyprus

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Name project

From Destruction to Living Heritage: The Minia Cyprus Sustainable Development Model

Category Certification Criteria: mark the category of your project

- ☐ Energy and environmental policies (politiche energetiche e ambientali);
- ☐ Infrastructure policies (politiche infrastrutturali);
- ☐ Quality of urban life policies (politiche per la qualità urbana);
- ☒ Agricultural, touristic and artisan policies (politiche agricole, turistiche, artigianali);
- ☐ Policies for hospitality, awareness and training (politiche per l'ospitalità, la consapevolezza e la formazione);
- ☐ Social cohesion (coesione sociale).

Summary project

The Minia Cyprus Project is a Cittaslow-based integrated sustainable development initiative implemented by Tatlısu Municipality. The project transforms the nearly 1,000-year-old Panayia Pergaminiotissa Church and its surrounding area into a multifunctional cultural, educational, and production hub.

The site combines an open-air miniature museum representing the cultural heritage of Cyprus and Türkiye, a Nature Information Museum highlighting the Natura 2000 ecosystem, and an agricultural production zone focusing on lavender and endemic Cypriot roses. These agricultural products are processed into essential oils and transformed into value-added cosmetic goods by the Tatlısu Women's Cooperative.

The project integrates cultural heritage conservation, environmental education, sustainable agriculture, and women's economic empowerment under a single model, creating a strong link between tourism, local production, and community-based development.

Goal project

- ✓ To protect and restore cultural heritage through adaptive reuse of historical sites
- ✓ To promote sustainable tourism based on Cittaslow principles
- ✓ To strengthen local economic development through value-added agricultural production
- ✓ To empower women through cooperative-based production and sales systems
- ✓ To raise environmental awareness through education on biodiversity and Natura 2000 ecosystems
- ✓ To create an integrated model linking culture, nature, and economy
- ✓ To transform heritage from a static structure into a living socio-economic ecosystem

Result project

- ✓ Restoration and functional reuse of a 1,000-year-old Byzantine heritage site
- ✓ Creation of an open-air miniature museum with 35 cultural heritage models
- ✓ Establishment of a Nature Information Museum



- ✓ Development of lavender and endemic rose cultivation areas
- ✓ Production of essential oils and cosmetic products through the women's cooperative
- ✓ Creation of a fully local value chain (production-processing-sales)
- ✓ Annual visitation of approximately 65,000–70,000 people
- ✓ Increased tourism-based local income and economic diversification
- ✓ Replication effect: 7 local producers (3 women, 4 men) started lavender cultivation following the project

Finance (costs and benefits)

Costs: 233.686 USD

Benefits:

- ✓ Sustainable revenue generation through tourism
- ✓ Sale of cosmetic and aromatic products by the women's cooperative
- ✓ Increased local economic activity in food, retail, and services sectors
- ✓ Reduced dependency on external funding through self-sustaining production model
- ✓ Long-term economic contribution to Tatlısu Municipality

Staff (staff involved and use of time)

The project operates year-round with two permanent employees, combining seasonal agricultural production activities with continuous museum and tourism operations.

Additional information (if necessary)

Minia Cyprus represents a Cittaslow-based best practice model integrating cultural heritage preservation, environmental sustainability, and community-driven economic development. The project demonstrates how abandoned or at-risk heritage sites can be transformed into living ecosystems that generate social, cultural, and economic value simultaneously.

It is also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly:

- ✓ SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities
- ✓ SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
- ✓ SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production
- ✓ SDG 5 – Gender Equality

The project serves as a replicable model for small municipalities aiming to integrate tourism, heritage, and local production under a sustainable development framework.

Link website: <https://www.tatlisubelediyesi.org>
(if available)

Once filled in this form please send it to: info@cittaslow.net
- Participation Deadline, 19 May 2026 -



From Destruction to Living Heritage: The Minia Cyprus Sustainable Development Model

Tatlısu Municipality aims to transform the Cittaslow philosophy, which places sustainable development, preservation of local identity, environmental sensitivity, and community-based production at its core, not only as a local governance approach but also as a sustainable tourism and development model. In this regard, projects developed by the municipality prioritize the protection of cultural heritage, support for local production, empowerment of women's labor, and the provision of authentic visitor experiences. The Minia Cyprus project stands out as one of the most significant examples of this approach.

Within this framework, the Panayia Pergaminiotissa Church in Tatlısu, a nearly 1,000-year-old cultural heritage site from the Byzantine period, had been neglected for many years, facing severe structural risks and reaching the brink of disappearance. Through comprehensive restoration works, the structure was brought back to life; however, it was recognized that physical conservation alone was not sufficient, and therefore a sustainable use model was developed. Accordingly, the Minia Cyprus project was implemented, transforming the site into an integrated museum and experience center that combines cultural, natural, and economic dimensions.

Minia Cyprus is an innovative open-air museum located in the church courtyard, offering visitors a holistic cultural experience. The area features miniature representations of distinguished architectural and cultural heritage sites from Cyprus and Türkiye. The collection consists of 35 works, 8 of which represent significant structures from Türkiye, while the remaining pieces reflect the historical and cultural identity of Cyprus. Each miniature has been meticulously scaled and detailed with high precision, remaining faithful to its original structure. This approach enables visitors to experience and comparatively explore cultural heritage from different geographies within a single space, facilitating a deeper understanding of cultural diversity.

The interior of the church has been repurposed as a Nature Information Museum. In this space, the ecosystem of the region designated under Natura 2000, endemic plant species, and local fauna is presented through scientific and visual content. Thus, the project establishes a multi-layered educational and awareness-raising environment that integrates both cultural and natural heritage. This approach directly aligns with the core principles of the Cittaslow philosophy, including environmental sustainability, preservation of local identity, and community-based development.

The project has also been expanded by the municipality to include agricultural production and local development dimensions. In this context, one of the first lavender gardens (Figure 1) in Cyprus was established in the area, alongside a dedicated cultivation site for native Cypriot roses (Figure 2), which are under threat of extinction. The harvested lavender and rose crops are processed into essential oils (Figure 3). These oils are then transformed into value-added cosmetic products by the Tatlısu Women's Cooperative. The cooperative actively produces items such as creams, colognes, perfumes, and aromatic products (Figure 4). In addition, the on-site retail space is also operated by the women's cooperative, ensuring the direct marketing of all products. This creates an integrated value



chain entirely driven by local women's labor across production, processing, and sales stages (Figure 5). This model strengthens women's participation in economic life while contributing significantly to rural development, sustainable local production, and the Cittaslow-driven local economy approach.

Furthermore, the lavender oil distillation facility established within the project area has not only served municipal production activities but has also become a pioneering model for local producers in the region. Following the establishment of the distillation center, 3 women and 4 men producers started their own lavender fields and began production, actively utilizing the facility for essential oil extraction processes (Figure 6). In this way, the project has become an inspiring initiative for the local community, contributing to the diversification of rural production, the expansion of aromatic plant cultivation, and the inclusion of small-scale producers in value-added production processes.

Minia Cyprus has also become a strong regional tourism attraction. Hosting an average of 65,000–70,000 visitors annually, the site makes a significant direct and indirect contribution to the economy of Tatlısu. Visitor flow creates economic vitality, particularly for local businesses, food and beverage establishments, and the service sector, generating new income opportunities for the local population. Moreover, the museum is frequently visited by primary, secondary, and high school students across Cyprus, enabling them to experience the island's history, culture, and natural heritage firsthand. In this respect, the project functions not only as a tourism investment but also as a powerful learning and socio-economic interaction platform that reflects Tatlısu Municipality's local development vision, integrating education, tourism, environmental awareness, and cultural transmission.

In conclusion, Minia Cyprus represents a holistic development model that brings together cultural heritage conservation, sustainable tourism, local production, women's labor, and environmental awareness under a single framework. Directly managed by Tatlısu Municipality from restoration to operational processes, the project stands out as a concrete implementation of the Cittaslow philosophy. Minia Cyprus offers an exemplary sustainable tourism model that preserves local values while generating economic benefits, transfers cultural and natural heritage to future generations, and fosters social interaction through its educational and tourism dimensions. In this regard, the project is fully aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), representing an exemplary model integrating local development and sustainable tourism.



Figure 1. Lavender garden



Figure 2. Native Cypriot roses Garden



Figure 3. Lavender Oil



Figure 4. Lavender-Based Produced Products



Figure 5. Natural Products Market



Figure 6. Lavender Producers Utilizing the Distillation Center for Essential Oil Production