



Troodos Mountains, Troodos, Cyprus | Photo by Milan Seidler on Unsplash



CYPRUS

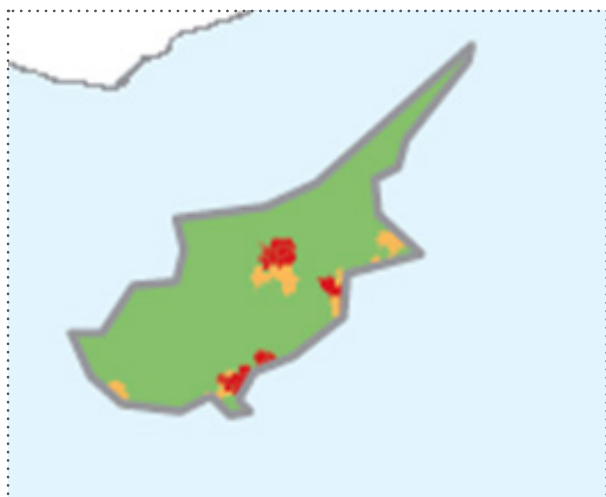
INSIGHT PAPER

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RURALITY (1)

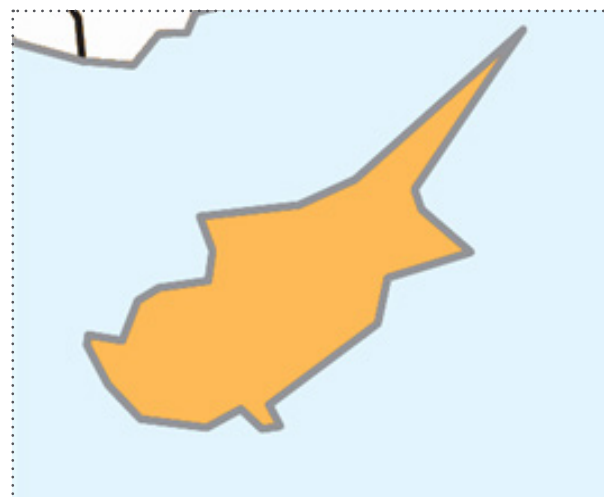
Degree of urbanisation for local administrative units level 2 (LAU2)



- Cities
- Towns and suburbs
- Rural Areas
- Data not available

Source: Eurostat, JRC and European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy, May 2016

Urban-rural typology for NUTS level 3 regions



- **Predominantly urban regions**
(rural population is less than 20% of the total population)
- **Intermediate regions**
(rural population is between 20% and 50% of the total population)
- **Predominantly rural regions**
(rural population is 50% or more of the total population)
- **Data not available**

Source: Eurostat, JRC, EFGS, REGIO-GIS, December 2016

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

49,7%

Share of people living in cities

23%

Share of people living in towns and suburbs

27,3%

Share of people living in rural areas

Source: Eurostat, 2016

GEOGRAPHY

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea and is a member state of the European Union since 1 May 2004. According to the urban-rural typology for NUTS level 3 regions, the Republic of Cyprus constitutes a single region categorised as "Intermediate region". There are two Mountain ranges: the Kyrenia Mountains, which rises in the north of the Karpas peninsula, and that of Troodos, in the south-west of the island, where there is the highest Mount of the island, the Mount Olympus. Despite the fact that the Republic of Cyprus has de jure sovereignty over the whole island of Cyprus and the surrounding waters, except in two small areas, Akrotiri and Dhekelia (which, at the time of independence, were assigned to the United Kingdom), its territory is divided into two areas by the "United Nations Buffer Zone", that separates the territories governed by the Republic of Cyprus (the southern area) from those de facto under the power of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (the northern area). Cyprus is divided into six districts (Greek: π Turkish: kaza): Nicosia, Famagusta, Kyrenia, Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos (plus Akrotiri and Dhekelia), whose capitals share the same name. The districts are further divided in Municipalities and communities. Cyprus is a major tourist destination in the Mediterranean Sea, most notably for the coastal resorts, but also for the countryside and extensive cultural and historical monuments in the interior.

Despite its compact size, Cyprus has many quite extensive rural areas of low population density, especially in the centre and the west/north-west of the island. These are characterised by villages and small settlements, without nearby large towns that provide a wide range of business, shopping, social and other services. Areas along the UN Buffer Zone are at added disadvantage due to movement restrictions to much of their traditional neighbouring areas, although recent road upgrading has improved their connectivity to Nicosia. As with most European countries, smaller towns, villages and rural areas in Cyprus have difficulties in retaining their economically-active population.

Many of the available jobs in these areas are lower-paid, such as in tourist-related, hospitality and service industries, some of which are also seasonal in nature (albeit a long season due to its southern climate). Much of the interior is upland, which limits crop options and farming incomes. Cyprus was one of the countries to suffer severely during the economic crisis, which impacted on the economy and availability of employment, especially in rural areas.

RURality (2)

32,2%

Share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in rural areas, **2016**

0,3%

Share of people aged 16 and over who reported unmet needs for health care in the previous 12 months due to expense, distance to travel or length of waiting list in rural areas, **2016**

12,4%

Unemployment rate, persons aged 15–64, in rural areas, **2017**

22,7%

Share of young people aged 18–24 neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) in rural areas, **2017**

Source: Eurostat

NATIONAL POLICIES RELATING TO RURAL MOBILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

There is no specific policy document on mobility in rural areas, nor indeed is there any recent policy document for transportation. A policy document in 2008 included an objective to enhance public transport, which may have contributed to the subsequent reforms in 2009, but there has not been anything further since.

Nevertheless, there is a de facto policy to ensure minimum level services for towns and villages. This is evidenced in the practice of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works (MoTCW) and the current levels of service provision. It is supported by Cabinet and Ministry decisions and continued financial support, albeit not incorporated in any law.

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) have been developed for each city, beginning with Nicosia in 2010 which was then developed as the Nicosia Integrated Mobility Master Plan. More recently SUMPs have been developed for other cities including Larnaka

and Limassol. MoTCW would now like to consider an approach for all Cyprus, dealing with sustainable mobility extending beyond the main urban areas. The SUMPs and the Nicosia IMMP did not pay much attention to the outer suburbs and hinterlands, although recently Limassol has started to give consideration to better connections with nearby villages.

Access to education is also a de facto policy, supported by a long-established Schools Transport scheme (see below).

There is no explicit policy on access to healthcare and other social support services.

In general, policies tend to have objectives and aspirations rather than quantified targets.

There are not relevant policies on rural development.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Republic of Cyprus has three primary layers of Government:

- **Central** (national) Government which is located in the capital, Nicosia
- **District**, of which there are 5 in Cyprus: Lefkosa (Nicosia), Limassol, Larnaka, Paphos and Famagusta
- **Municipal**, for areas with population in excess of 4,000

Below the Central Government, District Government is the higher layer, but in practice the Districts focus on the non-Municipal towns, villages and areas, allowing the Municipal areas to manage themselves.

Government in Cyprus is strongly centralised in all respects, including for the affairs and mobility in rural areas.

Responsibilities for mobility in rural areas is strongly consolidated at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works (MoTCW).

The Department of Road Transport, within MoTCW, has responsibility for all matters dealing with public transport. This includes policy development, planning, regulation, vehicle registration, procurement of services, contract management and operations oversight. This is all implemented centrally from Nicosia.

Currently, Districts and Municipalities have no statutory role in passenger transport services, facilities or infrastructure, although they may be consulted.

ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

It should first be noted that private car is the dominant means of transport in Cyprus, with public transport having only a small share. Mobility services for the general public, including in rural areas, consists almost entirely of scheduled bus routes, operated with larger vehicles.

Public transport in Cyprus is provided entirely by the private sector (except for a small number of minibuses operated by Nicosia Municipality for the core city routes). Prior to the restructuring in 2010, there were more than 300 operators, comprising individuals with just a few buses. In 2010 the sector was completely reorganised (coinciding with the need for compliance with EU Directive on PSO). The sector was reorganised on the basis of 6 exclusive PSO Contracts (with provision for some overlap), being one Contract each for the 5 District plus an Inter-City Contract. The contracts are for 10 years through to 2020 on Gross-Cost basis. This required the Operators to consolidate and pool into the 6 companies that now operate the contracted bus services. Some exited the industry instead or concentrated on the tourist/private-hire markets.

The Contracts are structured around a defined network, with provision for adaptation of the services over time.

agency in Cyprus, neither at national or District levels. All matters, including contract management, are currently performed by an in-house unit at MoTCW.

There are many tourist mobility services in Cyprus. Two additional service types are available as general public transport:

- **Shared Taxis**, which currently operate only on city-to-city basis. These are operated on special licence with 'maxi taxis', at tariff significantly less than regular taxi. Currently Shared Taxis do not provide connection to towns or operate within rural areas.
- **Special Express Services**, operating on 'point to point' basis, e.g. between downtown Nicosia and Larnaka Airport. Currently there are not DRT services in Cyprus, although the new PT contracts (that would become effective in 2020) make provision for operators to serve areas with DRT if regular bus services would be non-viable.

Schools Transport services are provided for second-level students only, on the basis that almost everywhere the local primary school can be reached on foot.



Signposted dirt road with view over sea on Cyprus Island. by CreativeNature_nl

The Contract covered urban, suburban, district and rural routes. For the rural areas, trunk routes serve the major villages with reasonable frequency. For more remote areas, feeder routes are provided with a typical frequency of 2-4 trips per day. In the current Contracts, which are essentially transition of the traditional operators to the new model, there has been reasonable understanding on the part of the Operators about the need to maintain services to rural areas. It remains to be seen whether the same spirit carries through to the next round of Contracts, due to become effective in 2020.

In terms of organisation, MoTCW provides the high-level direction and coordination, while the Contracted Operators are responsible for the daily organisation at the local level. There is currently no passenger transport

MoTCW organises the services by planning each June for the needs of the following school year. Students are expected to use general public transport where it is available, school transport routes are provided where there is not suitable public transport. The services themselves are delivered by the operators within their contracts; it is up to them whether to provide the service in-house or to use contractors.

At present, there is no overall mobility services coordinator function in Cyprus, neither at National or District level. There is not a structured basis for integrating shared mobility or other non-conventional services with the formal public transport, although the various operators do their best in practice.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The primary legal instrument for regulation of transport operators and services is Law 94(1) of 2001.

All matters relating to route, vehicle and driver regulation are handled by the Department of Road Transport at MoTCW.

All public passenger transport services are under the same regulations, whether urban, suburban, inter-city or rural.

Prior to the restructuring of 2010, there was relative freedom of entry to the market (at least in technical terms) where a new service would not conflict with an existing licenced service. The 2010 restructuring is based on exclusive District-level area Contracts, meaning that the new Operators have monopoly rights on public passenger transport services in their area (allowing for necessary overlap with other Contracts). This has, to all intents and purposes, closed entry to the market. This will continue to apply when the new Contracts are let in 2020.

Express point-to-point services, tourist services, private hire services, etc. are not constrained by the PT

Contracts. Of course, services that are in reality PT in nature could not circumvent the regulations by claiming to be of such categories.

Shared Taxis are operated under the taxi regulations. At present, only a limited number of services and licences have been granted, not least because of resistance from the general taxi sector. These are nominally from one city to another, but allow pick-up within a 4-km radius in the origin city and the destination city. It may be considered to allow more scope for shared taxis, including to connect rural areas.

There appears to be limited scope within the framework to allow initiatives to emerge from the community. That said, an initiative has emerged in Troodos Mountains where community groups have worked with the local operator to provide a bus link from Limassol to the tourist areas in the mountains, thereby increasing visitors while avoiding that they bring their cars. A different type of local-led initiative involving DRT to link a peripheral village to Limassol, also in cooperation with the local operator, is under discussion.

FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

All financial support for public transport and other mobility services is provided through MoTCW. This is national exchequer funding.

Since the 2010 restructuring, the financial support is provided through the PSO Contracts between MoTCW and the contracted Operators. As the Contracts are on Gross-Cost basis, the effective subsidy for non-viable routes, the costs of free and discounted fares and the cost of the school transport services are all covered within the general compensation provided by MoTCW.

There is no ring-fenced funding for rural mobility services. Financial support for rural services can only be done indirectly, by specifying the routes and service levels to be provided by the contracted Operator for the area.

Concessionary fares are available to several categories of people and on different bases:

- **Free:** Designated categories of socially-vulnerable people; soldiers; children under 6 years of age;
- **50% discount:** Persons over 65 years of age; disabled people; schoolchildren; university students;
- **Low-cost weekly/monthly card:** Schoolchildren; university students;

OTHER INFORMATION

- *Scheduled bus routes are the primary form of public passenger transport in Cyprus. These are supplemented by Schools Transport services for second-level students*
- *Since 2010, these are operated by private sector companies under 5 exclusive District-level PSO Contracts with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works. All urban, suburban, district, rural and school services are included in the Contract. Interurban services are bundled in a separate contract*
- *Shared Taxi services are available between the main cities, but not yet to or within rural areas*
- *The recent rollout of ITS to all PSO Contract buses will now allow a comprehensive traveller information and an integrated ticketing system to be provided across all services*

The regulatory framework itself could be reasonably flexible towards community-led initiatives and innovative forms of mobility service. However, the exclusive nature of the District-level area Contracts may seriously constrain any form of alternative public passenger transport services. There are no obvious exemptions provided for.

In practical terms, any form of community-led initiative or open mobility service will have gained the cooperation

of the contracted Operator for the area. This could be in a passive form of 'No Objection', an intermediate form of coordinating with a community service, or an active form where the Operator provides the service in association with the community group (as in the Troodos Mountains service). The motivation for the Operator to work with a community-led initiative could be to meet a perceived social obligation without incurring much cost; or to enable people to access the bus stops of the main services.

The new Contracts are expected to allow Operators to offer DRT services in cases where regular services can be shown to be non-viable. This may open the door to a range of initiatives not previously seen in Cyprus. There may be considerable scope for Shared Taxi services to be extended to rural areas, either as connectors with the urban areas or for local movement within the rural areas.

A comprehensive ITS system has recently been deployed across all contracted public transport services in Cyprus. This is now providing the basis for four major developments: (1) comprehensive journey planning and travel information services; (2) new integrated ticketing system; (3) operations management and planning; and (4) contract management and monitoring.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND MINISTRIES ADDRESSING RURAL AREAS

TITLE	ROLE
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works	Responsible for all policy, planning, budgetary and regulatory matters concerning transportation.
Department of Road Transport	Responsible for all matters concerning public transport in Cyprus, including planning, regulation and the contracts for bus operators; responsible for all matters of operator, vehicles and driver licencing.
OSEL, EMEL, ZINON, OSYPA, OSEA; Intercity-Buses	Bus Operators with responsibility for all scheduled bus operations in the Districts of Nicosia (Lefkosa), Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos and Famagusta respectively; and for the Intercity Bus network of Cyprus
MOTION	Responsible for the comprehensive traveller information and integrated ticketing services.

LINKS TO WEBSITES

- Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works: www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/mcw.nsf/index_en/index_en
- Department of Road Transport: www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/rtd/rtd.nsf/index_en/index_en?OpenDocument
- MOTION traveller information and ticketing system: <http://motionbuscard.org.cy>
- OSEL – public transport operator for Nicosia District: www.osel.com.cy
- EMEL – public transport operator for Limassol District: <http://en.limassolbuses.com>
- ZINON – public transport operator for Larnaka District: www.zinonasbuses.com
- OSYPA – public transport operator for Paphos District: www.pafosbuses.com
- OSEA – public transport operator for Famagusta District: www.osea.com.cy
- Intercity-Buses – public transport operator for Intercity Buses in Cyprus: www.intercity-buses.com
- Travel Express – provider of Intercity Shared Taxi Services: www.travelexpress.com.cy/en-us



REFERENCES

- Nicosia Integrated Mobility Master Plan, 2010, available at:
[www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/mcw.nsf/All/A292C778CAC81BAEC225781C00449D16/\\$file/IMMP%20Final%20Report.pdf](http://www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/mcw.nsf/All/A292C778CAC81BAEC225781C00449D16/$file/IMMP%20Final%20Report.pdf)