



**REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH**

**Opening remarks by the Minister of Education, Sport and Youth, Dr. Athena Michaelidou, at the International Conference “*Sport Tourism as a Driver for Sustainable Development*”**

**Wednesday, 3 June 2026, 09:30  
Opening Session – The European Agenda on Sport Tourism  
Filoxenia Conference Centre, Lefkosia (Nicosia), Cyprus**

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Nicosia for this International Conference on “Sport Tourism as a Driver for Sustainable Development,” organised in the context of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Today’s conference carries particular significance because it reflects the growing political recognition of sport tourism at European level.

Only a few weeks ago, on 12 May 2026, the EU Sport Ministers adopted the Council Conclusions on Sport Tourism as a Contributor to Sustainable Development. This represented an important milestone for European sport policy, as it marked the first time that sport tourism was addressed in a structured and comprehensive manner within the framework of the Council of the European Union.

This development demonstrates that sport tourism is no longer viewed solely through the lens of events or visitor activity. It is increasingly recognised as a cross-sectoral policy area connected to sustainability, health, education, regional development, innovation and social cohesion.

For Cyprus, advancing this discussion during our Presidency was a deliberate policy choice. We considered it important to place sport tourism on the European agenda because its impact extends well beyond the sport sector itself. It requires cooperation across institutions, governments, local authorities, international organisations, academia and industry.

Promoting sport tourism is fully aligned with the broader priorities of the Government of Cyprus, which views sport not only as a field of athletic achievement, but also as a powerful vehicle for social cohesion, public health, economic development and international cooperation. Through targeted investments in sport infrastructure, active lifestyles, sustainable

tourism and regional development, Cyprus seeks to maximise the positive contribution of sport to society while creating new opportunities for growth and innovation.

This approach is equally reflected in the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Throughout our Presidency, we have emphasised the contribution of sport to broader public policy objectives, including physical and mental well-being, social inclusion, sustainable development and community resilience. The Council Conclusions adopted in May provide an important framework for advancing these objectives and for strengthening cooperation between the sport, tourism, education, environmental and economic sectors.

At the same time, the relevance of this topic clearly goes beyond Europe. The strong international participation in this conference demonstrates that countries and organisations across the world are increasingly examining how sport tourism can contribute to sustainable development, community resilience and responsible event governance in a rapidly changing global environment.

The discussions over the next two days will therefore be particularly valuable. They provide an opportunity not only to exchange good practices, but also to develop a shared understanding of how sport tourism can evolve in a more sustainable, inclusive and strategic direction.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all speakers, experts, moderators and participants for contributing to this important initiative and for supporting the efforts of the Cyprus Presidency to advance this agenda at European level.

I wish you a productive conference and a pleasant stay in Cyprus.

Thank you.