

## BE OPEN Foundation launches initiative in Cyprus to reinvigorate traditional crafts



### Companies

**BE OPEN Foundation in cooperation with the Centre of Visual Arts and Research (CVAR) have come up with a new educational initiative in Nicosia, dedicated to popularising and preserving traditional Cyprus fabric production techniques.**

On 22 and 23 April, BE OPEN and CVAR will run six educational sessions for Nicosia schoolchildren, each consisting of a lecture on craft-related entrepreneurship and a master-class of traditional Cypriot weaving. The lecture will be based on the experience of Andreani Panayides, a young woman of Cypriot origin, who will share her journey from trying to explore her cultural heritage to establishing her *Folkmona* fashion brand that trades in accessories and clothes internationally; the master classes will be held by Elli Filokyprou, a weaver with over 20 years of experience, who runs her weaving workshop in the village of Gourri.

The classes titled Cyprus Handcrafted Heritage - Classes with BE OPEN and CVAR will be inaugurated by representatives of Cyprus' cultural and educational authorities and institutions, and have gained encouragement from Dr Philippa Karsera, First Lady of Cyprus: "We welcome all initiatives that aim at teaching Cyprus children about their culture and history, expanding their horizons and offering a nurturing space for self-development. The format of the educational initiative developed by the BE OPEN Foundation is particularly exciting, since it unites the theory and practice, the past and the present, the historical context and its contemporary implementation. We hope that this project will not only help transfer the knowledge to the children, but inspire a genuine interest in the artisanal heritage of our country."

Dr Athena Michaelidou, Minister of Education Sport and Youth, Republic of Cyprus, kindly expressed her support too: "Cyprus's rich artistic and artisanal history inspires international institutions, like the BE OPEN Foundation, to launch educational projects that are dedicated to traditional crafts. This project highlights not only the intrinsic value of this particular handicraft but the connection between our past and future - in other words, between the handcrafted tradition of weaving fabric and how to translate it into contemporary fashion. We support BE OPEN's initiative, as educating children and youth in Cyprus, both in theoretical and practical terms, provides a pathway to engaging them with their own culture and history and to expose them to the value of the tangible and intangible heritage of Cyprus. The project will contribute to the commitment by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth to provide all children with diverse and high-quality opportunities to expand their knowledge and to explore their creative abilities."

Elena Baturina, Founder of BE OPEN explained the philanthropic goals of the project: "We are very thankful for the support and appreciation our educational initiative received from the authorities and educational institutions of Cyprus. At BE OPEN we have always been committed to training the "creative muscle" in younger generations because we believe that it is one of the most important and transformative cognitive skills. Helping them expand their knowledge and develop their creativity on the basis of Cyprus's amazing handcrafted heritage is a great opportunity to inspire love, respect, and appreciation of their history, culture and the scope of their own self-expression."

BE OPEN continues to involve Cyprus' creative youth into educational and artistic projects. Last June, the foundation held an exhibition of artwork by young Eastern Mediterranean artists in Cyprus as part of BE OPEN Regional Art programme, and offered a few more programmes that young people of Cyprus could greatly benefit, including the UNSDG-themed student competition programme that aims to encourage creation of innovative for a more prosperous and sustainable future.

BE OPEN is a global initiative to foster creativity and innovation, a think-tank whose mission is to promote people and ideas today to build solutions for tomorrow. It is a cultural and social initiative supported by international philanthropist and businessperson Elena Baturina.