



## Beekeeper Interview

# Efstathia Georgopoulou

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*Messini / Greece*

**Programme:** Erasmus+ Bees and More

**Roles:**

- Nikos (Student – Researcher)
- Aris (Student – Researcher)
- Efstathia Georgopoulou (Beekeeper)

### Interview Transcript

Nikos (Student): Good morning. We are from EPAL Messinis and we would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in our Erasmus programme. My name is Nikos and my classmate is Aris. We would like you to tell us your name and a few things about yourself.

Beekeeper: It is a great honour that you invited me. I came with great pleasure. My name is Efstathia Georgopoulou and you can ask me whatever you like.

Nikos: How many years have you been involved in beekeeping?

Beekeeper: About five and a half years.

Nikos: Is it your main profession?

Beekeeper: No. My main profession is philology. I am a teacher and I practice beekeeping as a hobby.

Nikos: In which area do you operate? Do you move your beehives?

Beekeeper: I move my beehives once a year. My apiary is located in the area of Koutalas in Messinia.

Nikos: Are there beekeeping associations or organizations in your area?

Beekeeper: There is a beekeeping association, and I am a member. There beekeepers submit their documents, obtain a registration number and officially register their beehives.

Nikos: Are you a member of the association?

Beekeeper: Yes, of course. I also have a registration number.



Nikos: What types of honey and other bee products do you produce?

Beekeeper: I have produced fir honey, thyme honey and strawberry tree honey. In addition, as an amateur beekeeper, I have also prepared propolis tincture. Bees produce many products and all of them can be used by humans and are beneficial for health.

Nikos: What impact do climate and the environment have on your bees?

Beekeeper: A very significant impact. Conditions vary greatly depending on the region. Different management practices are applied here in Messinia compared to northern Greece. When the weather is warm and there is flowering, we can perform more beekeeping operations. When it is cold, we avoid opening the hives so as not to disturb the bee cluster. Climate directly affects the management of the colonies.

Nikos: Over the years you have been involved in beekeeping, what changes have you observed in the health of your bees?

Beekeeper: I have not observed serious problems because I focus on prevention. We use treatments such as formic acid to prevent or treat varroa. I regularly inspect my hives and try to prevent potential problems.

Nikos: What is the most important thing farmers and landowners can do to help pollinators?

Beekeeper: They should avoid chemicals. That is the most important thing. They should look for alternative cultivation methods. The cleaner the environment is, the cleaner the products that reach us will be. Chemicals affect insects and living organisms in general.

Nikos: From your perspective, what are currently the greatest threats to bees?

Beekeeper: The greatest threat is humans. Human intervention in the environment, pollution and uncontrolled construction affect the ecosystem and consequently the bees.

Nikos: How do you ensure the safety and well-being of your bees?

Beekeeper: Through prevention and frequent inspections. I visit the apiary regularly and check the hives. If you intervene in time, you significantly reduce problems.

Aris: Could you give us an example?

Beekeeper: In spring we must visit the hives frequently. If the hive becomes full, we need to add frames or create new colonies to give them space. If this is not done, there is a risk of swarming and losing the colony. We also check whether there is a queen and brood. If there is no queen, immediate actions must be taken. Regular inspection prevents losses.

Aris: What should consumers pay attention to when buying honey?

Beekeeper: Honey can be easily adulterated and it is difficult for consumers to detect it. The most reliable method is chemical analysis. Consumers should know the producer from



whom they buy honey. Even though I practice beekeeping, I might not be able to detect adulteration without laboratory analysis.

Aris: What is the most satisfying part of beekeeping for you?

Beekeeper: Being in contact with nature. For me every hive is a puzzle. You must observe, listen and decide which management action to take. For me, this process is magical.

Aris: What advice would you give to someone who wants to start beekeeping?

Beekeeper: I would advise them to first apprentice with an experienced beekeeper. They should see the work in practice and understand the difficulties. Beekeeping requires knowledge, time and capital. It is not something that should be decided lightly.

Aris: Thank you very much.

Beekeeper: You are welcome. I wish you all the best.