

LEARNING ABOUT FORESTS - MALTA



Issue No 5

LEAF your gateway to outdoor learning!

Dear forest friends,

Welcome to the fifth issue of our newsletter.

The past two months have been very busy ones. LEAF Malta hosted this year's National Operator's Meeting whereby a number of delegates from sixteen countries convened for a two day meeting.

Apart from assisting schools with their LEAF projects the LEAF coordination receives numerous requests to lead outdoor activities. One major challenge faced is permits to take students to certain areas which are considered vulnerable, especially when these sites belong to third parties. As many of you know MEPA is now defunct and has been replaced by the new entity ERA – Environment and Resources Authority. LEAF Malta is in continuous contact with the new authority to try and make some sites of old forest remnants accessible.

One other challenge faced is lack of space for tree planting. Luckily, thanks to the PARKS Directorate this year, schools had the opportunity to plant a number of indigenous trees at Buskett as part of the EU LIFE Project – Saving Buskett. There might be more opportunities to plant at Buskett this year but one needs to think ahead. To this effect meetings with the PARKS Directorate have already taken place in order to explore other possibilities and potential sites.

Whilst hoping you enjoy reading this issue DO NOT hesitate to contact the coordination team if you have ideas for LEAF projects for next scholastic year.

Kindly be reminded that the deadline for submitting the LEAF projects for this scholastic year is Monday 9th May 2016.

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The Europe Direct - Gozo LEAF Award Scheme projects



At the moment there are various LEAF projects going on in various schools in Gozo thanks to the initiative by Europe Direct Information Office, Victoria, Gozo. These vary from tree nurseries within the schools, the design and landscaping of a public playing field with endemic and indigenous trees and shrubs and the complete transformation of an illegal dump site on public land to a park area.



Through a hands-on approach, the LEAF programme takes every opportunity to raise further awareness about the benefits of trees, shrubs and plants and increase students' knowledge and love for trees. The National coordinator of the LEAF programme, Mr Johann Gatt, visited the schools on a number of occasions to share ideas and liaise with potential stakeholders to further assist in the smooth running of the initiatives.

Ġnien il-Ġenerazzjonijiet at St Vincent de Paul Residence

On Friday 29th April Hon Dr Justyne Caruana, Parliamentary Secretary for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing inaugurated *Ġnien il-Ġenerazzjonijiet* at St Vincent de Paul Residence. The initiative marked the EU Day of Solidarity between Generations.

The garden project was a joint collaboration between a number of LEAF schools and the residents. Various indigenous trees were planted based on a plan devised by *Gonna Dinja Waħda*.



In her speech Hon Caruana praised the initiative and said that such occasions are great opportunities to bring together the ideas of young and old in a tangible way and in so doing improving also the environment of the residential community. She also mentioned the importance of active citizenship and called on both generations to become more actively involved in decisions that affect their quality of life.

Hon Justyne Caruana thanked all the EkoSkola and LEAF students and teachers, the administration and the staff at St Vincent de Paul, Nature Trust Malta, *Dinja Waħda* and the artist involved.

A team of experts that have worked tirelessly to bring this project to fruition will be meeting regularly to devise a plan for the maintenance and upkeep of the area. Provisions to make the best use of the garden by involving more schools and residents will also be taken.

The LEAF National Operators' Meeting in Malta



The Annual National Operators' Meeting for the International Education for Sustainable Development Programme, LEAF (Learning About Forests) was this year hosted locally by Nature Trust Malta with the support of the international NGO Foundation for Environmental Education.

21 delegates from sixteen countries attended this two day long meeting which was held at Xrobb I-Għagin Nature Park and Sustainable Development Centre. The aim of the meeting was to discuss issues related to the management of the International LEAF Programme and its implementation in schools and other

educational facilities. Besides providing opportunities for networking, the meeting also included discussion workshops and presentations from delegates of various participating countries.

The meeting included also a visit to the Malta's semi-natural woodland Buskett and a guided tour about the LIFE project: Saving Buskett. The delegates had the opportunity to tour various areas where interventions are well underway to control soil erosion, eradicate alien species and re-forest various spaces with indigenous trees and shrubs to restore the woodland to it's former glory. This was possible thanks to the Director of the PARKS Directorate Mr Herman Galea and Dr Mark Causon, project manager of the EU LIFE project.



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The Malta LEAF NOM was supported by GreenR Cabs, an innovative company which has successfully introduced zero-emissions cabs in Malta, with a brand new fleet of 100% electric vehicles and a 24/7 service.



Other partners supporting this important event include: Marsaxlokk Local Council, the PARKS Directorate through the LIFE Project: Saving Buskett within the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change, HSBC Catch the Drop Campaign, EDIC Victoria Gozo office, EDIC Malta, KOPIN and WasteServ.

Nature Trust Malta hosted this meeting at Xrobb I-Għagin Hostel, in itself a sustainable building, in the most sustainable way possible keeping its carbon footprint to a minimum including the use of sustainable products with the majority of food items being locally sourced.

Go to this link for a short video of the event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oUHL2V36Zc>