



LIFE16 NAT/GR/000575

April 2019

2nd newsletter
of the
Life IGIC
project



The project

The Life IGIC project aims at developing Green Infrastructure (GI) and supporting Sustainable Farming Methods in pilot olive orchards, in Western Messara plain, south Crete, Greece.

Overall biodiversity has suffered and the ecological conditions of the area are estimated to be deteriorated.

The main objective of the project is the development of a GI network which will play a demonstrative role in regional, national and EU level, while conserving biodiversity, enhancing agroecosystem services and providing the basis for reconnecting existing nature areas.



“Improvement of green infrastructure in agroecosystems: reconnecting natural areas by countering habitat fragmentation”

The “Life IGIC” project is moving on to its 2nd year with some significant work on the establishment and promotion of Green Infrastructure of in Agricultural ecosystems.

Welcome to the 2nd newsletter of Life IGIC! The current issue, analyses the framework and the objectives of the project, and reviews the activities which took place by the project beneficiaries, within the current and forthcoming period. Life IGIC takes place within the framework of the European Union’s Life+ programme, “Nature & Biodiversity”, with contract number LIFE16 NAT/GR/000575 and duration of 5 years, until 2022.



The project’s area is located in western Messara (south of Heraklion, Crete, Greece), surrounded by protected Natura 2000 sites and characterized by significant socio-economic, cultural, environmental and agricultural value. The land use change of the last decades towards intensive farming has led to a decline in plant and animal species and to habitats loss, with significant implications for the overall biodiversity and ecological conditions of the area.

Development of Green Infrastructure in pilot olive orchards of the project area



Main task of the Action C.1 of Life IGIC is the development of Green Infrastructure elements in pilot olive orchards of the project area. This has initiated with planting of several plant species which are expected to enhance the restoration & enhancement of existing and new microhabitats, the provision of shelter & nesting sites for targeted species and their preys and the increase of carrying capacity of the sites.

Already hundreds of target species plants, including trees, bushes, perennial herbs and endemic species have been established in selected points of the pilot olive orchards. The direct communication with the olive farmers is expected to successfully help the long term establishment of this GI element in the area.

Implementation of supporting sustainable farming methods by olive farmers



Following the tasks foreseen in the sub-action C.1.2, sustainable farming practices are implemented during the running farming period by the farmers managing the pilot olive orchards of the project.

The practices included i) sustainable soil management (no-tillage, strip-cultivation), ii) Cover crop use, with mixtures including leguminous crops, f.i. common vetch (*Vicia Sativa*), iii) Field margin management, maintaining uncultivated (conservation) strips, iv) Plant protection, including the exclusion or rational use of synthetic plant protection substances v) Pruning residuals management, by reducing or eliminating the residue burning, used for increasing soil fertility (residue incorporation to soil).

The sustainable management practices are held under constant consultation with the farmers.





Radio interview on Life IGIC project

On February 26, 2019, the coordinator of the project, prof. E. Kabourakis was interviewed by the radio station SKAI Network 100,3 and the radio show “Πεξ το κι έτσι”. He presented the Life IGIC project and the interest it will have for the public, especially as it matters the rural developments of regions like Crete.



Presentation of Life IGIC project to students of MAICH

In February 4 2019, the project was presented to the students of the international MSc programme of “Susatainable Agriculture”, in the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (CIHEAM-MAICH). The presentation was held during the lectures of Agrobiodiversity course and focused, besides the framework of the project, to the benefits for biodiversity conservation purposes and for enhancing the functional/beneficial part of agrobiodiversity



EIP-AGRI’s Focus Group on olive pest & diseases in Lisbon, Portugal.

In January 15-16 2019, the Life IGIC coordinator, prof. E. kabourakis and Dr. V. Gkisakis participated in the [Focus Group “Olive pests & diseases”](#), organised by [EIP-AGRI](#). The framework of Life IGIC project was presented and several of its activities, such as the implementation of sustainable farming methods (action C.1.2) to and it’s positive effect on the pest control in the olive agroecosystem



Presentation of Life IGIC project to students of University of Crete

In November 26, 2018, the project was presented to the students of the University of Crete/Sociology dpt (Rethymno), during their visit in Archanes, Heraklion. The project was presented by Dr. V. Gkisakis with regards its relation and significance for rural development and the importance of scaling up Green Infrastructure in rural areas, at regional and national level. Printed material was also delivered to them. Students and proffesors showed genuine interest on the project on the project aims and results.





Meeting of the Life IGIC Stakeholder Group in the project area

A meeting of the Stakeholder Group took place in November 4 2018, gathering i) pilot farmers participating the project and ii) representatives of the local stakeholders. The meeting took place in the project area (near Sivas, Municipality of Faestos, south Heraklion). Several presentations took place in order to promote to the local community aspects of the Project that are of interest to them, like findings and news, further actions, steps in fulfilling the objectives of the Project, and b) discuss ways they can be involved or support the Project objectives.



Forthcoming event: 2nd Agroecology Europe Forum, 26-28 September 2019, Heraklion, Crete.

A very interesting event will take place in the premises of TEI of Crete, regarding Agroecology. The 2nd Agroecology Europe Forum, organised by [Agroecology Europe Association](http://agroecologyeurope.org) is expected to attract hundreds of participants interested on the raising concept of Agroecology. Of course, Life IGIC project partners are actively supporting the Forum's organisation! For further info visit the Forum's site: agroecologyeuropeforum.eu



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