



LIFE16 NAT/GR/000575

3<sup>rd</sup> newsletter  
of the  
Life IGIC  
project



December 2019

## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Life IGIC project has been already accomplished, establishing and promoting Green Infrastructure and sustainable farming methods in agricultural ecosystems of southern Crete, Greece.

Welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> newsletter of Life IGIC! The current issue, 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.



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.

## Establishing GI plants in pilot olive orchards – round 2

A 2<sup>nd</sup> round of planting Green Infrastructure related plant species has started in the Life IGIC project area. Works are under progress and hundreds of tree, shrubs, aromatic and other perennial plants are currently being planted in carefully selected points of the pilot olive orchards, after direct communication with the olive farmers

Development of Green Infrastructure elements, such as targeted species of plants in the in pilot olive orchards of the project area are a main task of the Action C.1 of Life IGIC. These are expected to enhance the restoration & enhancement of existing and new microhabitats, the provision of shelter & nesting sites for targeted species and their preys.



## Supporting sustainable farming methods by olive farmers



Under constant consultation with the farmers and following the tasks foreseen in the sub-action C.1.2, a set of sustainable farming practices are implemented during the current farming period. These included mostly 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).





## Meeting of the project team with External Monitoring

On June 25, 2019 a meeting of the LIFE IGIC project team with the LIFE External Monitoring Team (EMT/NEEMO) took place at the premises of the Hellenic Mediterranean University (Crete, Greece), to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the project's actions as well as to discuss issues related to the project.



## Participation to ICZEGAR

Project partners participated in the International Congress on the Zoogeography and Ecology of Greece and Adjacent Regions, held at Thessaloniki, Greece, in 24-26 June. During an oral presentation, the objectives of the Life IGIC project was presented as well.



## Earth Feast festival, 27 and 28 June 2019

LIFE IGIC participated in the "Earth Feast" festival organized by the cultural association of Arkalohori, Heraklion, Greece. UoC – Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC) participated in the "Earth Feast". Leaflets were provided for the LIFE projects that NHMC implements/participates, among them LIFE IGIC. Moreover, discussion with the olive growers and inhabitants of the area as well as visitors was held.



## EIP-AGRI's Focus Group on Pests and Diseases

Life IGIC people participated in the EIP-AGRI's Focus Group on Pests and Diseases of Olive Tree. During the EIP Agri's Focus Group meeting, held in Heraklion on 18-19 September 2019, FG members visited the Project area and pilot olive orchards of the Life IGIC where they talked with local farmers on plant protection, especially using agroecological approaches. At least 15 stakeholders from Italy, France, Spain & Portugal were guided on the framework and activities of the project





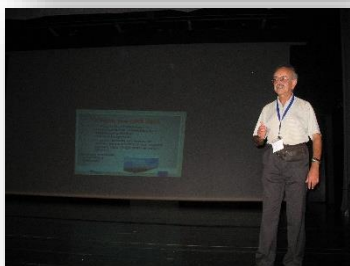
## 2<sup>nd</sup> Agroecology Europe Forum, September 26-29 2-19

During the 2nd Agroecology Europe Forum, the Life IGIC partner Hellenic Mediterranean University participated and organized a workshop on Green Infrastructure and a field trip to the project area presenting the framework and initial results of the project. More than 50 stakeholders from all over Europe and globally attended, including academics, students, NGOs and farmers.



## 16<sup>th</sup> Hellenic Botanical Society Conference

Life IGIC project was presented at the 16<sup>th</sup> Panhellenic Scientific Conference of the Hellenic Botanical Society, Athens, 10-13 October 2019. During the oral presentation of the work “Flora diversity in olive orchards located in different agroecological zones” the objectives of the Life IGIC project was presented as well as initial results regarding the flora diversity in the pilot olive orchards of the project.



## 18<sup>th</sup> Panhellenic Entomological Congress

Life IGIC project presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> Panhellenic Entomological Congress, Komotini, Greece 15-18 October 2019. During an oral presentation, the objectives and preliminary results of the project were presented

## EIP-AGRI’s workshop “Small is smart”

Life IGIC project in the EIP-AGRI’s workshop “Small is smart” – Innovative solutions for small agricultural and forestry holdings, held in Bucharest, Romania, 29-30 October 2019. A Member of the Hellenic Mediterranean University presented on the project and its results among other colleagues and stakeholders at EU level.





### University of Vic, Catalunya, Spain

Dissemination of Life IGIC project framework and initial results took place on 28th of November, to colleagues and students of the Universitat Central de Catalunya, at Vic, Spain (Chair of Agroecology & food systems), by a member of the Hellenic Mediterranean University.



### Origin Forum, Laussane, Switzerland.

Life IGIC project presented in the Forum Origin, Diversity & Territories, in Lausanne, Switzerland (4-6 December) by a member of the Hellenic Mediterranean University, organised, among others, by FAO-Switzerland, Fibl, Biovision foundation, Slow Food etc. Presentation and dissemination of project material took place in the workshop entitled "Agroecology, biological and cultural diversity in agricultural and food systems" to participants from several EU countries and worldwide, such as France, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Kenya, Germany, Lebanon etc

For more information, check: <https://origin-for-sustainability.org/en/>



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