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Operational Programme Italy-Malta 2007-2013



IN THIS FOURTH NEWSLETTER

The four projects presented in this newsletter have a common aim: environmental protection through actions intended towards; safeguarding the natural habitat, developing marine and land ecosystems, and the diffusion of innovative systems for energy efficiency. **Panacea** aims to protect the Sicilian and Maltese maritime protected areas and also popularizes their scientific value. The nature reserves in the cross-border area, their management, monitoring, restoration and actions to make a visit more enjoyable are the common basis of the **Simbiotic** and **Remasi** projects. Respect the environment through spreading of the culture of energy saving and the use of renewable energy sources on the other hand is the objective pursued by the **R.E.S.I.** project.

Four projects for this fourth issue, but with a single theme: the environment.

>> MARITIME PROTECTED AREAS? RESOURCES TO DISCOVER...

promoting biodiversity through four environmental education centres: the **PANACEA** project

>> RESTORING THE ENVIRONMENT "NATURALLY"

the restoration of abandoned natural areas and cross-border connectivity: the **SIMBIOTIC** project

>> LET'S REVALUE OUR RESERVES!

making a visit to the Maltese and Sicilian nature reserves a more enjoyable experience thanks to improvements: the **REMASI** project

>> THE ENVIRONMENT MUST BE SAFEGUARDED WITH... ENERGY!

the diffusion of renewable energy for an eco-sustainable development in Sicily and Malta: the **R.E.S.I.** project





THE MPAs – THE PARTNERS

The Maritime Protected Areas: Plemmirio (SR); Pelagie Islands: Lampedusa and Linosa (AG); Capo Gallo and Isola delle Femmine (PA); Ustica (PA); Dwejra (Gozo) and Rdum Majjiesa (Malta).

The partners: Provincia Regionale di Siracusa (lead partner); Provincia Regionale di Palermo; Comune di Lampedusa and Linosa (AG); San Lawrenz Local Council (Gozo); University of Malta - IOI-Malta Operational Centre.

panacea

MANAGING THE ASSETS OF BIODIVERSITY WITHIN THE SICILIAN AND MALTESE MARITIME PROTECTED AREAS by developing codes of best practices and the institution of Environmental Education Centres (EECs).

The **PANACEA** project has furthered not only the knowledge of naturalistic heritage but also the environmental safeguard and management of the Sicilian and Maltese Maritime Protected Areas (MPAs) through the opening of Environmental Education Centres in four of the six MPAs involved in the project: Plemmirio (Siracusa); Pelagie Islands Lampedusa and Linosa (Agrigento); Capo Gallo and Isola delle Femmine (Palermo); Ustica (Palermo);

Dwejra (Gozo) and Rdum Majjiesa (Malta).

The EECs opened at Dwejra, Pelagie Islands, Plemmirio and Capo Gallo/Isola delle Femmine are at the cutting edge of “edutainment” (educational entertainment) that make visitors aware of the need to safeguard the natural heritage and preserve it from the activity of man.

The centres have been designed to stimulate the active participation of the visitors who can “immerse” themselves among the riches of the seabed and the often unknown marine ecosystems. The EECs have more than 150 interactive display boards, audio visual support to show underwater documentaries

shot for the project, and dioramas containing three-dimensional models of the marine species to be found in the area.

The **PANACEA** project was well received in Europe during the European Day of the Sea, organized in 2013 at La Valletta. Maritime experts from all fields underlined the crucial role that seas and oceans play in the daily lives, not only of the coastal communities but of all EU citizens and more than 400 children were enthralled by watching the documentaries made for the project during the event.

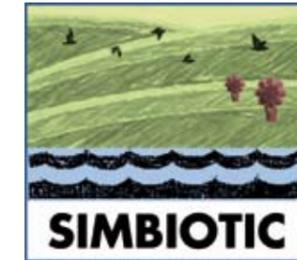
The **PANACEA** project also had a strong media impact in Italy. During a RAI TV’s Linea Blu interview (29 June 2013) Alan Deidun – Senior Lecturer at the Physical Oceanography Unit, University of Malta – illustrated the important work of heightening awareness, especially among children, at the Dwejra Environmental Education Centre.

RENOVATION, PROMOTION, AND FRUITIFICATION OF SOME OF THE AREAS INCLUDED IN THE NATURE 2000 SITES (see box) so as to improve the ecological connectivity between south eastern Sicily and Gozo.

SIMBIOTIC is an environmental refurbishment project that has improved the ecological connectivity of the cross-border zones situated between south-eastern Sicily (Siracusa area) and the island of Gozo along the migratory bird route between the European and African continents.

The project dealt with the **planning and management of coastal wetlands** in south-eastern Sicily with the restoration of Pantano Ponterio marsh land in the territory of Pachino which is of great importance at both the National and European level. On the Maltese side the **restora-**

tion of the **Mediterranean scrub** on abandoned farmland on Gozo was made possible. The restoration project was based on a preliminary joint study in the mapping and identification of local plants, animals and elements of the local habitat, in the analysis of changes to the landscape and the identification of priority areas, or stepping stones, used in connectivity. On the whole, the project’s actions have revived ecological systems



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NATURE 2000 NETWORK

Nature 2000 is the main European Union policy instrument for the conservation of biodiversity.

The Nature 2000 network – a European ecological network made up of sites of community importance (SCI) and special protection zones (SPZ) – was set up in accordance with the 92/43/CEE “Habitat” directive to guarantee the long term maintenance of natural habitats and the flora and fauna under threat or rare at Community level and the subsequent 2009/147/CE “Birds” directive concerning the safeguard and conservation of wild birds.

THE SITES INVOLVED: Government Experimental Farm in Xewkija (Gozo); Ta’ Lambert in Xewkija (Gozo); Ta’ Toč and it-Taksis, Nadur (Gozo); Pantano Ponterio, Pachino (Siracusa).

THE PARTNERS: University of Malta - Institute of Earth Systems (lead partner); Ministry for Gozo; University of Catania - Dipartimento di Scienze biologiche, geologiche e ambientali; Comune di Pachino.



PANACEA - Promozione delle aree naturali attraverso centri di educazione ambientale



Website:
www.panaceaproject.net
Lead partner: Salvatore Mancarella
Provincia Regionale di Siracusa
panacea@provincia.siracusa.it

The bio-diversity of our Maritime Protected Areas: an asset that must be promoted.



The Mediterranean is characterised by many local species that are today under threat from the intense human activities in its waters.

The need to safeguard such riches and to stem the real possibility of a general impoverishment of the Mediterranean marine eco-system has, over the years, encouraged many European countries to set up the so-called Maritime Protected Areas. Each of the six Mediterranean MPSs falling within the Sicilian and Maltese territories (Plemmirio, Pelagie Islands, Capo Gallo and Isola delle Femmine, Ustica, Dwejra and Rdum Majjiesa) present distinctive elements upon which the PANACEA project developed the themes illustrated in the four environmental educational centres. **Dwejra and Rdum Majjiesa** well represent the

dualism between the rocky Maltese coastlines, modelled by erosion and characterised by flights of huge step-like terraces and the underwater terraces populated by Posidonia and Cystoseira sea grasses. The Plemmirio is characterised as a harbour for the new Lessepsian migrant species arriving through the Suez Canal. Lampedusa and Isola delle Femmine present respectively marine mammals and turtles as well as shallow water corals easily reached by divers. Ustica has a sequence of many-coloured, infralittoral zones, while Linosa and Capo Gallo show off the incredible morphology of their sea beds, an out and out naturalist architecture. The wealth of the seascapes and the flora and fauna of the MPAs studied by the PANACEA project has been well documented by the four videos, already posted on YouTube and seen by more than 15,000 viewers.



SIMBIOTIC - Enhancing Sicily-Malta BIOgeographical Transboundary Insular Connectivity

Website:
www.simbiotic.eu
Lead partner: Alexander Borg
University of Malta - Institute of Earth Systems
alexander.borg@um.edu.mt

An ecological connectivity project for the conservation of cross-border biodiversity.



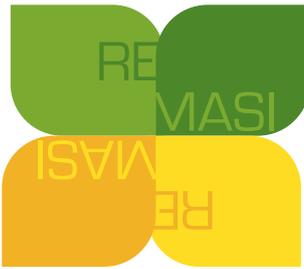
Sicily and Malta represent two of the largest reserves of biodiversity in Europe and host a considerable number of endemic animal and vegetable species.

Pantano Ponterio, near Pachino, was the Sicilian area involved in the project. The site has a good flow of fresh and brackish water, deriving both from land subsidence and sea water infiltration and is populated by many species of aquatic migratory birds (geese, shags, herons, flamingos etc.) that find here a protected staging post on the long flight between Europe and Africa. Through actions such as drainage, fencing, rebuilding of banks, restoring paths and planting native tree species that had almost completely disappeared, the Pantano

Ponterio site has, today, returned to being a particularly interesting nature attraction, especially for birdwatchers.

On the Maltese side intervention in the **Gozo and Nadur** territories allowed the drafting of six local action plans to restore the habitat and connectivity as well as two plans for the collection of germinal plasma for the diffusion of marsh and Mediterranean scrub species such as **Cerantonia siliqua** and **Quercus ilex**.

The redevelopment of the areas and their “restitution to the public” were the major successes of the SIMBIOTIC project and was made possible by the continuous exchange of expertise and experience between the Sicilian and Maltese partners.



INTERVENTION REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT AND FRUITION OF NATURE RESERVES and geo-sites in Sicily and Malta through actions heightening the awareness of local communities on bio-diversity protection.

The **REMASI** project is an intervention regarding the development of nature reserves and geo-sites in Sicily and Malta through actions heightening the awareness of local communities on the protection of bio-diversity. The said project has fulfilled integrated actions and interventions to increase and disseminate knowledge about natural reserves and geo-sites, and sites of Community interest in Malta and Sicily through a multidisciplinary approach based on the idea of ecological networks.

Furthermore, **REMASI** has carried out a study on some extremely interesting cross-border migrant species and some pelagic species (*Cory's shearwater*, the *Yelkouan shearwater*, and the *European storm petrel*) protected by the EU and included in international protection programmes.

The partnership carried out the activities in the nature reserves managed by Legambiente on the island of Lampedusa, at the Macalube di Aragona (AG) and the Grotta di Sant'Angelo Muxaro (AG).

The local communities were involved in specific actions to increase awareness and environmental education, especially in schools and amongst young people thus helping to consolidate the results of the project's activities.



THE PARTNERS AND THEIR EXPERTISE

In line with REMASI's characteristically high integration and interdisciplinary approach, the partners are very different indeed: a town council (Comune di Bivona) in whose territory, one can find protected areas of great naturalistic interest; a research centre with a long history in nature conservation and environmental planning (University of Palermo); an environmental association (Legambiente) that manages the three regional nature reserves; a public body (Heritage Malta) that deals with the conservation and protection

of its cultural and environmental heritage and manages the National Museum of Natural History of Malta.

Such synergy has produced more than satisfactory results, both in the observation of almost 300 nests and in the monitoring and ringing of 2000 specimens in Sicily and 13,747 migratory birds in Malta.

Website:

www.remasi.eu

**Lead partner: Giovanni Panepinto
Comune di Bivona**

agricolturabivona@libero.it



REMASI - Reti Ecologiche transfrontaliere MALta-Sicilia



Renewable Energy Scenarios in Islands

THE RESI PROJECT IS AN INTERVENTION AIMED AT INCREASING THE DIFFUSION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY (in particular solar energy) and encouraging the transfer of technology and good practices among partners.

The project has defined common strategies to overcome the energy gap of the cross-border area compared to the European average. In this perspective, the **RESI** project has created an environmental and socio-economic data base of Sustainable Energy Resources (SER) and optimised a Renewable Energy Atlas and the good practices realised on Malta and in the Ragusa and Agrigento provinces. The project has also set up a strategy for implementing the SER through an Energy Forum, a workshop and an exchange network among the three, cross-border Renewable Energy Points established in the territories of the partners involved (Provincia Regionale di Ragusa, lead partner; Provincia Regionale di Agrigento; Malta Resources Authority; University of Malta – Institute for Sustainable Energy).

THE RENEWABLE ENERGY ATLAS

The Renewable Energy Atlas illustrates the topographical characteristics of the interested areas, and the functioning and yield of the plants at present installed in the Sicilian and Maltese territories.

Its realisation, by Malta University's Institute for Sustainable Energy, was possible thanks to the continual exchange of knowledge among all the partners involved and favoured by the two **Renewable Energy Tours**, held in the sites where the energy plants operate.



Website:

www.resiproject.eu

**Lead partner: Joseph Ferraro
Provincia Regionale di Ragusa**

joseph.ferraro@provincia.ragusa.it



R.E.S.I. - Renewable Energy Scenarios in Islands