

NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK FOR MALTA NEWSLETTER

11TH EDITION, DECEMBER 2014

NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK
Ministry for European Affairs and the
Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto

Managing Authority
Funds and Programmes Division
Triq il-Kukkanja, St Venera, Malta
Tel: 00356 2200 1059
Email: rdd.meaim@gov.mt
Web site: www.eufunds.gov.mt

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 11th issue of the National Rural Network Newsletter. This is the last issue of our newsletter for 2014. It has been a very busy and eventful year for everyone. We await 2015 with fervour as we will see the implementation of the final projects for the 2007-2013 programme and later on, the launch of the new Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Once again we cannot stress enough the importance of networking among stakeholders in the rural communities: please do not hesitate to forward us your queries or share with us your experiences and knowledge so that we in turn can assist you to help spread useful and innovative information and strengthen our rural communities. Your input and feedback will help is in successfully implementing the new programme.

Finally we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Network Support Unit
rdd.meaim@gov.mt

IN THIS ISSUE

Malta's Partnership Agreement.....	2
Measure 125.....	3
The Natura 2000 management planning project	4
GAGF in 2014.....	6
GAL Xlokk Foundation 2014.....	7
The work of Majjistral Action Group Foundation (MAGF) in 2014.....	8
LEADER Seminar November 2014.....	9



Malta's Partnership Agreement

EU Funds Programming Unit



Photo: DOI - Jeremy Wonnacott

Malta's Partnership Agreement is the strategic document which contributes towards the EU 2020 targets and which enables the implementation of the Operational Programmes related to the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds namely the: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund (CF), European Social Fund (ESF), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto (MEAIM) has been responsible for coordinating the preparation of Malta's Partnership Agreement which was adopted by the European Commission on 29 October 2014 and which will enable the investment of over €1 billion during through its Operational Programmes.

The Partnership Agreement analyses the state of play of Malta's socio-economic environment and highlights a number of key areas which aim to bring Malta closer to its national EU 2020 targets. Interventions in these areas aim to provide opportunities for business and commerce to flourish and enhance better and more job opportunities, whilst at the same time respect social and corporate responsibilities. Within this context, three funding priorities have been identified, namely:

Fostering competitiveness through innovation and the creation of a business-friendly environment

Ensuring the sustainability of the Maltese economy within the global economic scenario remains a priority for the utilisation of ESI funds under the 2014-2020 period. This funding priority captures Malta's aim to shift towards a more economically competitive environment through investments in R&D facilities, innovation activity, digital technologies as well as specific measures (including adequate space and access to finance) to enable the growth and prosperity of local enterprises. Such measures will foster the right environment for economic growth and job creation.

Sustaining an environmentally-friendly and resource-efficient economy

This funding priority focuses the shift towards a more sustainable environment including: the shift towards a low-carbon economy, the sustainability and quality of water supply, better waste management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and more efficient transport methods. Interventions within the rural environment will be undertaken through a holistic approach that

embraces biodiversity, water management, air quality, soil protection, quality of agricultural production, and cultural and natural heritage. Similarly, the promotion of sustainable fisheries will be pursued. In addition investments supporting sustainable urban development with the aim of fostering social inclusion and the rehabilitation of dilapidated areas will also be supported.

Creating opportunities through investment in human capital and improving health and well-being

Investment in human capital including the shift towards more and better employment opportunities quality education provision and community-based health and social services will be the main focus under this funding priority. Investments will include training and incentives to attract and retain more people within the workforce, the provision of facilities and scholarships for a higher education attainment, adequate measures to address poverty and social exclusion and shift towards more community-based social and health services and promote healthy lifestyles. Moreover, investments to improve the efficiency of the public administration will also be supported.

Measure 125

Transport Malta shall soon commence projects related to Measure 125, Action Type 4, **Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture** which falls under of Axis 1 of the Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013 for Malta, entitled Improving the Competitiveness of the Agricultural Sector. This measure aims to facilitate the development and adaptation of agriculture by supporting the improvement of the necessary infrastructure.

The Maltese agricultural sector is unfortunately jeopardised by the lack of preservation of existing land holdings which risk abandonment as a result of difficult accessibility and fragmentation. Therefore the improvement in accessibility

through the upgrading of farm access roads will constitute an increase in farm utilisation, reduce the risk of land abandonment, improve farm management, and increase farm efficiency.

The aid intensity for this measure is 90% of the eligible expenditure with a project value of approximately €6.6 million and an EAFRD contribution of €5.9million

About fifty-five (55) rural roads in twenty-three (23) localities shall benefit from Measure 125 with works including general site cleaning, demolition, earth works, road formation and resurfacing. These projects are expected to start in the first quarter of 2015.



The Natura 2000 management planning project

Thanks to the setting up of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas, a communal European effort is being made to safeguard protected habitats and species in Member States. Each country in the European Union is in fact duty bound to contribute to this long term biodiversity conservation initiative by designating a list of sites focusing on the protection of ecologically important habitats and species. Following designation, Member States are required to manage the Natura 2000 sites and promote the appreciation of such a network with the general public through an educational campaign



Buskett - Girgenti Natura 2000 site

Malta has to date designated a total of 34 terrestrial Natura 2000 sites as. In order to manage these sites, MEPA pioneered a project co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) under Measure 323 of the Rural Development Programme named "Management Planning and Implementation of Communication measures for Terrestrial Natura 2000 Sites in the Maltese Islands". The aim of the project was to establish management plans or legal provisions for the management of all terrestrial Natura 2000 sites in the Maltese Islands while increasing awareness amongst the general public and stakeholders.

For the purpose of this project, in cases where these terrestrial Natura 2000 sites overlap considerably, these were managed as one site. Furthermore, for management purposes, some sites have been grouped together and then divided into regions in such a way that a management plan will be compiled for each region. In synopsis, the 34 terrestrial Natura 2000 sites have been grouped into 30 sites which have been divided into two groups: high priority group and medium priority group.

Implementation of this project was carried out between October 2012 and March 2014 by Epsilon International SA - Adi Associates

Environmental Consultants Ltd Consortium and involved a variety of tasks and activities. One of the first objectives of the project was to gather available site specific information and identify gaps in knowledge which were then addressed by the carrying out of surveys. Based on the data collected, the present conservation status of the relevant habitats and species within each protected area was determined. Experts from different fields organised workshops for each site where stakeholders were invited to participate and highlight management concerns that needed to be taken into consideration during the preparatory phase of the management plans. Following these consultations, the consortium drafted a number of management objectives which was later again discussed with all the stakeholders involved including amongst others NGOs, farmers, land owners and local authorities.

The end result of this project was the compilation of 22 management plans and 8 conservation orders, each having a set of actions tied to specific timeframes for their implementation. The following step is the official approval of these documents and the implementation of actions within the plans and conservation orders. Monitoring of the effectiveness of such measures and actions is an integral and crucial element which feeds directly into subsequent revisions of the plans intended at 5 year intervals.

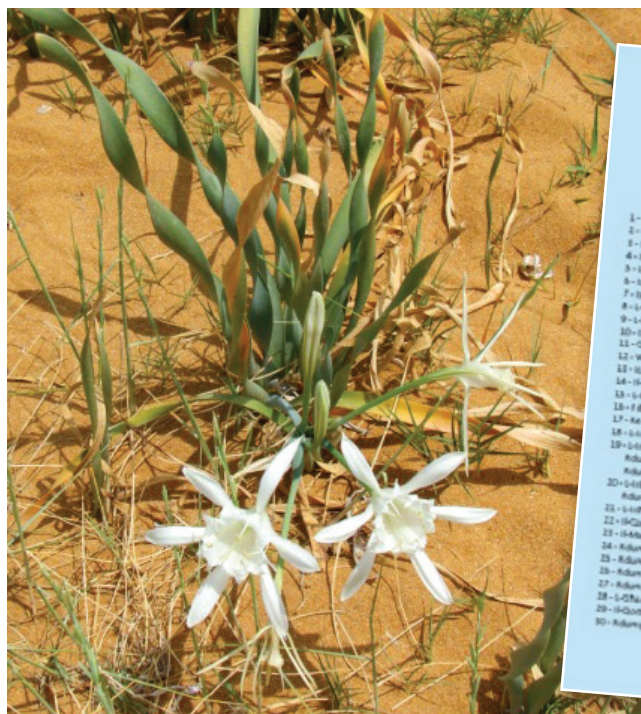
The project also delivered awareness campaigns on Natura 2000 sites for the public and specific target groups such as farmers and land managers, thereby setting the ground

and equipping key stakeholders with knowledge and skills necessary to effectively participate in the management planning process. In doing so, the project has helped Malta fulfill its EU and international commitments by informing, educating, encouraging ownership, and building momentum for the implementation of the EU Natura 2000 network of protected areas whilst improving the quality of life in rural communities.

Further information on this project can be found on the Natura 2000 project website at: natura2000malta.com/



Ghajn Tuffieħa Natura 2000 site



Pancratium maritimum Sea Daffodil



- 1 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC)
- 2 - L-Infierri ta' Fenech (SAC)
- 3 - Il-Bajru ta' Wiedja (SAC)
- 4 - Il-Bajru ta' San Pawl il-Barrani (SAC)
- 5 - L-Infierri ta' Ramla (SAC)
- 6 - Il-Sinjura ta' San Pawl il-Barrani (SAC and SPA)
- 7 - Il-Sinjura (SAC)
- 8 - L-Infierri ta' San Pawl (SAC)
- 9 - L-Infierri ta' Ramla ta' l-Ilva u l-Infierri ta' Madonna (SAC and SPA)
- 10 - Il-Bajru ta' San Pawl (SAC)
- 11 - Wiedja ta' San Pawl (SAC)
- 12 - Wiedja ta' San Pawl (SAC)
- 13 - Il-Bajru ta' San Pawl (SAC)
- 14 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 15 - Il-Bajru ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 16 - Il-Bajru ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 17 - Il-Bajru ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 18 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 19 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 20 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 21 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 22 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 23 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 24 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 25 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 26 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 27 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 28 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 29 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)
- 30 - L-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta u l-Infierri ta' Ghajn Beretta (SAC and SPA)

GAGF in 2014

During 2014, the Gozo Action Group Foundation (GAGF) was busy in implementing the LEADER Programme and issued five (5) calls with a total budget of €845,440

The first call was Measure 413.1 – Promotion of Gozo as a distinct destination, which aims to provide assistance to the development and implementation of marketing initiatives focused on Gozo’s distinctiveness in six (6) main areas: Agriculture, Environment, Landscape, Culture, Heritage and Gastronomy in order to generate further the demand for tourism in Gozo, especially in shoulder months.

Another call issued this year was the M413.2 – Folk and Traditional Activities Support (3rd Call) which seeks to provide assistance to initiatives that aim at enhancing and revalorising the intangible heritage (local traditions, customs and practices) of Gozo by creating more cultural events that have a strong link with the local intangible heritage.

M413.5 is another important measure launched, which aims to provide assistance to public entities to improve the signage of sites of interest in the island of Gozo. It will also fund the creation and generation of maps and information tools which will be developed for these sites of interest leading to integrated investment in further accessibility to the natural and, historical sites of interest within the rural area. This action aims to increase the tourism demand, develop Gozo’s distinctiveness and improve internal mobility in an affordable and efficient manner.

M413.4 Landscaping 2nd Call was launched in 2014, so as to provide assistance to local councils to improve the landscaping of the GAGF’s region and contribute to increase the quality of life in rural areas, generate more awareness of local rural resources and the need for their conservation for future generations.

M413.6 Festivals and Events (2nd Call) was also launched in 2014 aims to provide assistance towards the development of events and festivals focused on Gozo’s intangible heritage.

All of the measures are tailor made for the island’s needs and aim to enhance Gozo’s numerous existing particular assets and qualities, preserve its unique heritage and traditions while simultaneously increasing tourism and consequently generating economic growth.



GAL Xlokk Foundation 2014

This has been a very busy year for GAL Xlokk Foundation, which produced positive results giving us great satisfaction. The Local Action Group issued all the measures related to the LEADER programme (2007-2013) and has also contracted a large number of projects

Throughout this year GAL Xlokk issued its last two measures: M413.A7 - Community Support for Children and M413.A1B - The Setting up of a Tourist Hub in the Xlokk region. The projects falling under the first measure have already been launched and children from several localities in the South East of Malta are benefitting from various, agricultural experiences with a hands on element, different from those which they are accustomed to during school outings. M413.A1B is currently being worked on and shall be completed in the coming months. This centre will benefit tourists and Maltese visitors alike who will visit and learn more about the attractions the region has to offer.

During the first half of the year, a large number of projects related to the LEADER programme

were contracted. A number of local councils have also signed their contracts under Axis 1 - measure M125. Work on these projects is underway with some of them having been completed and others being in their final phase.

Measure M413.A6 - Cultural and Educational Activities in the Xlokk Region promotes the Xlokk region among tourists and locals through education and culture. Ten (10) activities are being organized by the LAG with the collaboration of ten (10) different local councils from the south east of Malta. A number of events have already taken place, and these have attracted hundreds of people of all ages and coming from different sectors of our localities.

As part of Measure M421 - Trans-national and Inter-territorial Cooperation, GAL Xlokk and GAL Majjistral participated in two festivals in Italy, in the regions of Sardinia and Veneto. During both visits, GAL Xlokk was represented by a good number of local producers from several sectors, including handicrafts, agri-tourism, crafts and catering. During both festivals the Maltese product was promoted as part of the Mediterranean diet.

The Foundation is looking forward to next year, when it will be working on the Local Development Strategy related to the new LEADER programme (2014-2020). This strategy will include a larger number of stakeholders from the Xlokk Region and utilise all the experience gained through the previous programme, so as to ensure the implementation of a better-developed strategy.



The work of Majjistral Action Group Foundation (MAGF) in 2014



Throughout 2014, Majjistral Action Group Foundation has continued its work towards the implementation of the Local Development Strategy for the Majjistral territory in line with the LEADER programme 2007-2013. This year has been crucial in that many contracts with respect to Axis 4, Axis 3 and Axis 1 projects were signed with a total of 23 projects contracted under various actions and measures.

One of the actions launched in 2014 is 413.2 which supports direct marketing for the local crafts and artisan (“crafts”) producer. This measure seeks to improve the competitiveness of the crafts sector by offering financial support for the promotion and marketing of the high quality products made by local craft artisans in our territory.

Action 413.4 was also launched this year; it supports the development and marketing of 3 distinctive products for the Majjistral territory to reinforce the concept of regional identity and regional cohesion. It aims to create working relationship and synergies between producers operating at the different stages of the production chain.

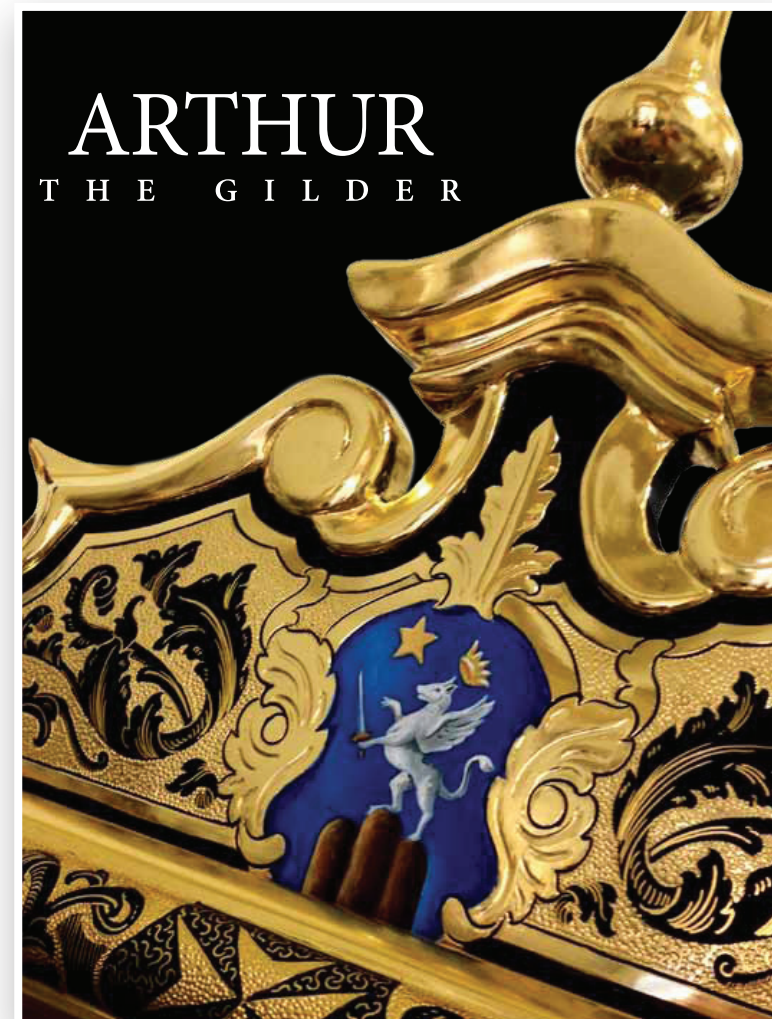
Another important measure launched in 2014 is Measure 125 (1st call & 2nd call). Contracts were

signed with 7 local councils who are currently implementing such projects through the works and resurfacing of various agricultural access roads. .

Measure 313 (2nd Call) was also launched this year, it supports the encouragement of tourism activities within the territory thus enabling economic growth in the Majjistral rural areas.



Diar il-Bniet



ARTHUR
THE GILDER

LEADER Seminar November 2014

A seminar on LEADER titled “Identifying Ways to Improve Governance and the Decision Making Process” was organised by the Managing Authority, and held on the 14th November 2014 at The Palace Hotel in Sliema

The participants were Local Action Group Committee members, staff from the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency within the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change and the MA EAFRD. The aim of the seminar was to present the newly revised operating rules for the Local Action Groups and to identify best and bad practises from the experience of the LAGs as well as the MA and ARPA.

Mr Raphael Scerri, Director General of the Funds and Programmes Division made the opening address, welcoming participants and giving a brief overview of the aim of the seminar and the scope of the revised Operating Rules.

Mr Donald Aquilina made a presentation which described the needs which led to the revision of the rules, including an in depth explanation of the LAG structure, its implementation process

and the way the LAG should operate under these newly revised rules. He concluded stating that the Operating Rules shall be revised from time to time as the need arises.

A workshop was later held for all participants where they discussed what worked well during the 2007-2013 LEADER programme, how they

would improve and address future challenges and what changes they would make in the approach to design and develop the 2014-2020 strategy.

The seminar was received very well by participants overall and further seminars are envisaged in the future to ensure the best possible start for LEADER under the new programme.





MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM ALL OF US AT THE NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK



**LINK WITH OUR
EUROPEAN COUNTERPARTS**
European Network
for Rural Development (ENRD):
enrd.ec.europa.eu



**MAKE A LINK TO THE
MA WEBSITE ON YOUR OWN
WEBSITE.**
www.eufunds.gov.mt



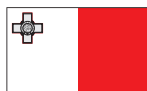
SPREAD THE WORD
Inform and encourage other
stakeholders to be added to our
mailing list by sending
us an email on:
rdd.meaim@gov.mt



**LET US KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE UP TO**
Send us information about
relevant news, campaigns
and initiatives within your
organisation, area or region to
be promoted on our website.



**DO YOU HAVE
ANY FEEDBACK
OR SUGGESTIONS?**
The NRN newsletter team looks
forward to receiving feedback
and suggestions as to continue
improving this publication.
Send us an email on:
rdd.meaim@gov.mt



Rural Development Programme for Malta 2007 – 2013
Newsletter co-financed through Technical Assistance
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
Co-financing Rate: 75% European Union, 25% Government of Malta
Europe Investing in Rural Areas

