

Press Release – LIFE Programme

Protecting our health from Desert Dust Storms

The Cypriot LIFE National Contact Point and the team of the LIFE Cyclamen Project organised a press event on Thursday October 22nd 2020 at the UCY Medical School. The purpose of the event was to introduce local journalists to the LIFE Programme - EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action.

The general objective of the LIFE Programme is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation by co-financing projects with European added value. Those who can benefit from this Programme are public bodies, research centres, non-governmental organisations, local authorities, universities and private companies.

During this event, participants had the opportunity to hear more about a Cypriot LIFE Project, namely [LIFE MEDEA](#). This project was funded under the Climate Action thematic. LIFE MEDEA aims to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of an adaptation strategy to Desert Dust Storms (DDS). It also aims to better inform EU policy-making by providing field-based evidence for the adoption of a strategic plan for mitigating the health effects of DDS events in Cyprus and the rest of the Southeastern Europe.

More specifically, the project carries out air quality measurements at households and classrooms during DDS outbreaks, while evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of certain recommendations aiming to reduce people's exposure to dust particles. These recommendations include some simple changes to everyday behavior, such as: a) remain indoors during a DDS and avoid outdoor physical activity, b) keep doors and windows shut while remaining indoors and c) use an indoor air cleaner. With the completion of this project, both susceptible individuals (i.e. children with asthma and adults with atrial fibrillation) and the general population will be informed about how to reduce their exposure to dust and in turn be able to reduce the negative impact of DDS to their health.

In addition, LIFE MEDEA aims to establish the capacity for early forecasting of DDS events and timely notification of the public, especially of susceptible individuals.

It is also important to point out that a National Strategy for the mitigation of health effects of DDS events will be developed through this project. This strategy is particularly important considering the fact that the current National Action Plan for the improvement of air quality in Cyprus focuses mainly on anthropogenic pollution and doesn't sufficiently include DDS. Finally, it is worth noting that, since the project takes place during the COVID-19 outbreak, many of the collected data from susceptible individuals can also provide us with useful information about the impact of the pandemic and the related public health mitigation measures on this population.

The Cypriot National Contact Point (The Department of Environment) through the LIFE Cyclamen Project aims to support and assist Cypriot applicants and help increase the success rate of Cypriot proposals while making use of these EU funds to improve our environment. To find out more about the LIFE Cyclamen Project and the LIFE Programme visit www.lifecyclamen.com.cy

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