Visit to Lakumja festival – Cyprus – September 2025

The EkoSkola project, managed by Nature Trust – FEE Malta on environmental sustainability and awareness, is part of the ResIsles project. Two educators from Wardija School and one of the Ekoskola coordinators represented the Resisles Project in Malta and took part in an enriching exchange in Paphos, Cyprus. This visit brought together educators from three islands, Malta, Cyprus and Crete to share experiences, explore cultural traditions, and strengthen collaboration on climate action.

A highlight of this experience was attending the rural Loukoumi Festival, where participants learned how the traditional Cypriot sweet is made, met students from local schools, and connected with other educators. The group also joined a community event celebrating International Tourism Day, featuring traditional food, weaving, dancing, and zivania tasting, gaining first hand insight into local heritage.

The visit offered opportunities to observe sustainability in action. At a local shop committed to eco-friendly practices, the educators experienced how food can be sourced from home grown produce, how spaces can be furnished with upcycled items, and how caring for animals can be part of a wider community effort. This restaurant is all decorated with upcycled items and it also offers a cat shelter as well. Some of the food and beverage products sold at the restaurant such as the fig and prickly pear lemonade, olive bread, figs and pomegranate halloumi cheese were all prepared using local seasonal products grown at their own garden. The profit the restaurant makes all goes for the upkeeping of the garden as well as to take care of the cats in the sanctuary.

Environmental learning was another key focus. In fact, together with other participants, the group visited a beach to collect and analyse samples for microplastics, discuss the impact of pollution on marine ecosystems and reflect on the shared environmental challenges faced by island nations like Malta, Cyprus and Crete. The presence of coral fragments along the shore offered an added reminder of the importance of preserving biodiversity and how precious this is for such beaches in this area.

The Loukoumi Festival was organised for the first time by Akti, a Project and Research Centre located in Cyprus. They celebrated that Loukumi is now being recognised by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage. This also helped to showcase local products, traditional Cypriot dancing and local food products. Representing ResIsles and Nature Trust Malta at their own stand, the educators shared good practices, raised awareness, and exchanged ideas with peers from across Europe about Recycling, Composting, Sustainable Education and Awareness. These conversations highlighted common challenges and the importance of joint efforts to

overcome them. The waste management companies are carrying out pilot projects about composting and recycling to raise more awareness among the Cypriot people. Our educators from Malta shared different practices already put in place in Malta and explained how the mentality of the people changed throughout the years. As a result, this helped people that we met understand the need to follow these initiatives. The videos done by the Maltese students from various schools were also shown during this Festival and we couldn't be prouder representing our country.

Nonetheless, we had the opportunity to explore around Paphos, visiting various historical places as well as trying different traditional Cypriot dishes and sweets. To conclude, the Cyprus experience blended cultural discovery, environmental action, and international collaboration. By sharing practices and working together, educators can inspire their students, strengthen community engagement, and contribute to a more sustainable future.