

“OAKS FOR THE FUTURE”

PROMOTING PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE OAK TREES OF CYPRUS

Project Owner:	Society for International Development Lefkoşa Chapter
Project Partner:	Terra Cypria – The Cyprus Conservation Foundation
Contact info:	Telefax: +903928161086 Email: tugberkemirzade@hotmail.com marancos@metu.edu.tr
Funded by:	European Commission, Cypriot Civil Society in Action II Grant Program (Europeaid/127215/L/ACT/CY).

Introduction:

Until about 500 years ago the western and northwestern areas of the island of Cyprus were covered with oak forests. The decline of the forests was primarily due to rural housing development, accidental fires, agricultural intensification and illegal felling for fuel wood. The Kermes Oak has a wide distribution in Cyprus and Turkey. However the Aleppo Oak (*Quercus infectoria*) is rare in the Mediterranean and only found in Cyprus among the European Union member states. It was added in 2003 as an Annex I Habitat of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive. Natural factors contributing to the problems of oaks include poor seed dispersal, probably due to the absence in the lowlands of the Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) that normally feeds on acorns and thus spreads them accidentally. Survival of young oaks is also jeopardised by drought periods that have become more frequent in recent years.



Oaks are protected species in Cyprus, but that protection is weak due to lack of awareness. Under the provisions of the Forest Law of 1967 (Section 12) an application must be made to the authorities before an oak is felled, even on private land. In practice, this law is widely flouted and its enforcement is rare.



Project Objectives:

The overall objective is to improve the conservation status of oak trees and oak woodland in Cyprus. We will both help to reduce damage caused by human impact and at the same time show how the natural regeneration of oaks can be assisted by positive human intervention. Initially, a field survey will be conducted to determine the population and distribution of the existing oak trees and oak woodlands of Kermes Oak and Aleppo Oak. The



project will be in contact and cooperation with the authorities which are the main stakeholders. The survey results and reports will support the relevant authorities in meeting their responsibilities to halt the decline in oak woodland and oak trees by strengthening the protection process. In addition, there will be awareness raising activities such as training for main stakeholders and planting of young oak trees. Our project partner Terra Cypria makes it possible to conduct the project covering the

whole island.

The main activities in the project:

- Island-wide field surveying of the population, distribution and conservation status of oaks and oak woodlands.
- Mapping and documenting the field surveys and presentation of the results to the authorities.
- Cooperating with the European University of Lefke, Department of Agricultural Sciences and Technologies and the Forestry Department in production of young oak trees.
- Determination of suitable areas for the planting for regeneration of oak woodlands by evaluating the survey results.
- Planting of young oak trees with schools, volunteers and organizations and checking the tree growth after 6 months.
- Preparation of teaching materials about oak trees to be used in elementary schools and training of teachers in using these materials.
- Developing environmental education programmes with teachers in the teachers trainings.
- Conducting training programmes about oak trees for the interested organizations, local authorities, construction development sector stakeholders and architects.
- Awareness raising for the broader public.

