

20 March 2025

## HSBC Malta Foundation promotes biodiversity and conservation

HSBC Malta Foundation has partnered with the Foundation for the Conservation of the Maltese Honey Bee (KNM) to support pollinatives for School Gardens, an initiative aimed at enhancing biodiversity and educating students on the importance of indigenous flora and pollinators. The event, held at Sacred Heart College (Saint Julians) and St Michael's School (Pembroke), saw the planting of native and melliferous plants that provide essential resources for pollinators, including Malta's National Insect, the Maltese Honey Bee.

Through this initiative, students were actively involved in selecting and planting indigenous shrubs such as Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*), Maltese Stocks (*Matthiola incana melitensis*), and Mediterranean Buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*). This hands-on approach not only enriched the students' knowledge of local plant species but also emphasised the importance of preserving Malta's natural ecosystem. The plants, sponsored by HSBC Malta Foundation, were placed directly into the ground to promote sustainability and reduce maintenance requirements.

The activity was organised with the guidance of Johann Gatt, National Coordinator of the LEAF (Learning about Ecosystems and Forests) international programme, managed locally by Nature Trust FEE Malta. His role in educating students on habitat selection and planting methods helped foster a deeper understanding of Malta's biodiversity and conservation efforts.

A group of Slovenian beekeepers also participated in the event, sharing their expertise on the conservation of native bee species. They highlighted the threats posed by hybridisation with imported bee strains and reinforced the significance of protecting Malta's endemic *Apis mellifera ruttneri*.

Speaking on behalf of HSBC Malta Foundation, Glenn Bugeja stated: "Educating young minds about biodiversity and sustainability is an investment in the future. By engaging students in conservation efforts, we inspire a generation that values environmental responsibility and preservation."

Abner Joe Buttigieg, Administrator of KNM, added: "Beyond protecting the Maltese Honey Bee, we must also safeguard its habitat. By enhancing school gardens with indigenous plants, we create vital spaces for pollinators to thrive, even in urban environments."

To commemorate their participation, all students received limited-edition postcards, designed by HSBC Malta Foundation and KNM Foundation, featuring the Maltese Honey Bee on local flora. This symbolic gesture further reinforces the significance of native species and the role they play in maintaining ecological balance.

Through this initiative, HSBC Malta Foundation continues to demonstrate its commitment to environmental sustainability, biodiversity, and education, fostering a greener and more informed future for Malta.



***Photocaption: Students participating in a planting activity of indigenous plants beneficial to pollinators, standing on the freshly ploughed ground just before the plantation session.***

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