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The 'FAST' Project as a common action of information, knowledge and contrast to invasive alien species present in Malta and Sicily

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The Mediterranean Basin is one of the areas of the planet with the most intense international transit of goods and people and this rapid and often uncontrollable development affects natural ecosystems with a loss of local biodiversity. In this context, the accidental introduction of alien animal and plant species is one of the most worrying phenomena, with negative effects on the quality of natural environments, on the survival of some species at risk, and also on human behaviour and the management of urban areas. The "FAST" Project (Fight Alien Species Transborder) Interreg Italia-Malta 2014-2020, aims to safeguard the biodiversity of Sicily and Malta located in the centre of the Mediterranean, focusing on the problem of biological animal and plant invasions. The main activity was the creation of a database of alien, terrestrial and freshwater animal species, with particular attention to invasive ones. For each species recorded, the pathways, the diffusion and the degree of invasiveness in the two archipelagos were recorded. The elaboration of the database, in addition to the unpublished personal data, required the consultation of the main international databases (e.g. DAISIE, ISSG, CABI, GRIIS, GBIF) and national (e.g. checklist of the Italian fauna, species.invasive.it), and publications concerning single taxa or groups of taxa. Several problems arose above all in the preliminary work that led to the creation of the lists of non-native invertebrates, due to the considerable number of taxa to be considered, the discrepancy of the sources consulted, taxonomic confusions, and gaps in ecological and ethological knowledge on some species. In this regard, it was also necessary to resort to the contribution of experts in various zoological fields. For the species introduced before 1500 and naturalized, the term parautoctonus was used. Over 900 alien and cryptogenic species have so far been identified in the two archipelagos.

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