



COST Action ES1104 'Arid Lands Restoration and Combat of Desertification: Setting up a Drylands and Desert Restoration Hub' focuses on practical measures that can be used by practitioners, stakeholders and authorities to restore degraded drylands and manage their recovery.

Report of Training School 5

Plants, ecology and management for enhanced vegetation establishment for arid land restoration

26 – 30 April 2015 – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

The training school took place in Thessaloniki, Greece between 26-30 April 2015. It was delivered by Eleni Abraham (*Assistant Professor of the Department of Forestry and Natural Environment, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*) and Apostolos Kyriazopoulos (*Assistant Professor of the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, Democritus University of Thrace*) in collaboration and with trainers both from local and foreign research institutes. A total of 24 trainees (14 male and 10 female) were selected out of 51 applicants. These trainees were from 14 countries (Armenia, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, UK).

On the first day, 26 April, 2015, the trainees presented themselves, their background and their research objectives. Two classroom lectures followed. The first was about "The relevance of provenance for selecting vascular plant species for restoration" by Professor Ruediger Prasse from *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universitaet Hannover, Germany* and the other was about the "Vegetation ecology in arid environments: The case study of serpentine vegetation" by Assistant Professor's Ioannis Tsiripidis from the *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece*.

The second day, Associate Researcher Cristina Branquinho, *Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal* had a lecture on the "Ecological indicators of desertification: where are we in drylands?". Emeritus Professor Vasilios Papanastasis, *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece*

talked about “Restoration of degraded Mediterranean rangelands”. The lecture of Dr. Alejandro Valdecantos from the *Centro de Estudios Ambientales del Mediterráneo, Spain* was about “Ecotechnologies for improving plant establishment in degraded drylands”. The last lecture of the day about “Mycorrhiza at the extreme” was presented by the Assistant Professor Michail Orfanoudakis from the *Democritus University of Thrace, Greece*.

On 28 April and 29 day (half day) the trainees attended the international conference on “Arid Lands Restoration and Combat of Desertification” organised and delivered by members of COST Action ES1104. The last classroom lecture of the training school about “Effect of woody-plant encroachment on ecosystem services: Reconciling supply and demand” was given by Professor Osvaldo Sala, *Arizona State University, USA*. Then the organizers (Apostolos Kyriazopoulos and Eleni Abraham) chaired the review of the training school and had a discussion with the trainees in order to have their feedback.

The last day of the training school (30 April 2015) was the field trip at various successful restoration projects in the outskirts of Thessaloniki and in Kassandra Peninsula (Chalkidiki region). Restored quarry sites and post wildfire forest restoration were visited.

It has to be noted that the trainees were divided into small groups of 4 people each in order to work together and complete a questionnaire that was structured with the input of all the trainers. The responses on this questionnaire were sent to the organizers and then distributed to the trainers.