

2015

LEAF ANNUAL REPORT



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FEE LEAF INTERNATIONAL

Forward

2015 a year of development and strengthening of the LEAF programme.

In 2015, we celebrated 15 years of the Learning about Forests programme. The programme expanded into two new countries, while a number of other countries expressed an interest in joining. In 2015, over 1,000 tree-planting activities took place and over half a million trees were planted.

2016 will be another exiting year for the LEAF programme. LEAF is currently present in 23 countries around the world and we are looking forward to welcoming new countries on board. Our National Operators Meetings will take place in March, in Malta. We will continue to work with our FEE member organisation in Ireland, An Taisce, and conduct research into the LEAF programme and aim to have a report ready before the end of the year.

The purpose of this LEAF Annual Report is to show case the success of the programme in 2015, this report includes some exciting figures regarding the number of schools and participants involved in the LEAF programme around the world.

I look forward to the year ahead and working with passionate coordinators from around the world to help strengthen the programme and raise awareness about the importance of our forests.

Rachel Boyle
International LEAF Director



Foundation for Environmental Education

The Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) is a non-government and non-profit organisation promoting sustainable development through environmental education worldwide. A global presence, more than 80 countries around the world are engaged in working with our various programmes. Furthermore, the organisation is recognised by UNESCO as a world-leader within the fields of Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development. FEE is active through five environmental flagship programmes, Learning about Forests, Young Reporters for the Environment, Eco-Schools, Blue Flag and Green Key.

FEE's Environmental Education Principles

The member organisations of FEE have agreed upon the Principles below to work towards excellence in Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

- ✓ Ensure that participants are engaged in the learning/teaching process
- ✓ Empower participants to take informed decisions and actions on real life sustainability issues
- ✓ Encourage participants to work together actively and involve their communities in collaborative solutions
- ✓ Support participants to examine their assumptions, knowledge, and experiences, in order to develop critical thinking, and to be open to change
- ✓ Encourage participants to be aware of cultural practices as an integral part of sustainability issues.
- ✓ Encourage participants to share inspirational stories of their achievements, failures, and values, to learn from them, and to support each other
- ✓ Continuously explore, test, and share innovative approaches, methodologies and techniques.
- ✓ Ensure that continuous improvements through monitoring and evaluation are central to our programmes.

More about **FEE** at www.fee.global



Learning about Forests

The Learning about Forests (LEAF) programme is designed for schools. However, depending on interests and the resources within a country, other educational organisations can be included. The LEAF programme encourages environmental education through awareness raising among students, teachers and the wider community. The LEAF programme was initiated in 1999 by the Forest in Schools programmes in Norway, Sweden and Finland, in cooperation with FEE, and was rolled out in the Spring of 2000. The LEAF programme was successfully transferred to the FEE Head Office, Copenhagen, in 2014 and is now coordinated by FEE at an international level. The three founders still play a major role in the LEAF organisation, as they are all part of the International Steering Committee (ISC).

Aims of the LEAF programme:

- To see an increased level of awareness and knowledge about the key role forests play for sustainable life on our planet
- To stimulate activities that will help students achieve an increased level of environmental maturity irrespective of age and previous knowledge.

Goals and Objectives of the LEAF programme:

- ✓ **Ensure students learn to enjoy the outdoors, experience and observe nature.** Encourage positive experiences outdoors and develop a positive attitude toward the environment and our forests. Help students gain a general curiosity about nature and human interaction with forests.
- ✓ **Ensure students understand the ecological web.** It is important to understand the ecology of forests. This knowledge leads to a better understanding of nature's processes.
- ✓ **Ensure students understand the interplay of man and nature.** The programme reflects all the functions forests fulfil for people: cultural, ecological, economic and social. Understanding the balance between these is crucial when understanding the potential conflict of interests that exist between different stakeholders.
- ✓ **Ensure students are capable of making decisions on environmental issues.** By understanding the interplay between forests and humans we can identify where conflicts of interest may arise. Questioning skills are crucial to collect knowledge and reliable information. Based on education and knowledge, students can make well-informed decisions.
- ✓ **Ensure students help take responsibility for their future.** Every individual is responsible for their own actions. The LEAF programme and the structured approach to education and awareness of forests has the potential to create a highly educated, informed and skilled population translating into many associated environmental, economic and societal benefits through better understanding of forests and related disciplines.

The LEAF programme is well-recognised internationally. Globally, there are 23 countries participating in the LEAF programme (see Table 1). The programme expanded into two new countries in 2015, Slovenia and Trinidad and Tobago. The LEAF programme aligns itself with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the Global Action Programme (GAP) and the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is recognised that the educational systems and forests differ widely from country to country. The LEAF programme strives to adapt to the local conditions in each participating country. Each country is encouraged to implement the programme appropriate to local traditions and the national curriculum. Participating countries can adapt the programme to their needs.

Table 1. Participating countries

	Country	Year started
1	Belgium-Flanders	2011
2	Bulgaria	2000
3	Cyprus	2000
4	Czech Republic	2007
5	Denmark	2000
6	Finland	2000
7	Greece	2001
8	Iran	2010
9	Ireland	2000
10	Japan	2010
11	Kenya	2009
12	Latvia	2005
13	Malaysia	2013
14	Malta	2011
15	Netherlands	2011
16	Norway	2000
17	Romania	2002
18	Russia	2002
19	Slovenia	2015
20	Sweden	2000
21	Trinidad and Tobago	2015
22	Turkey	2004
23	Uganda	2011

Over the past 16 years, the programme has gone from strength to strength with 9,836 schools currently participating in the programme. 50% of the participating countries are registering the schools and following the LEAF Award process while the remaining 50% are running the programme through existing national forest school programmes. For countries following the award process, depending on the resources within a country, they are awarded in the form of a LEAF

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certificate or a LEAF plaque. While the LEAF Award is given to schools that complete all the essential elements of the LEAF programme, it should be remembered that the programme is flexible, and that different countries will find different routes to achieving LEAF objectives.

Over 17,000 teachers are working to increase the level of awareness and knowledge about the key role forests play for sustainable life on our planet. Over half a million students of all ages are actively engaged in the programme. See Table 1. and Table 2.

Table 1. The total number of LEAF schools in 2015.

Pre-School	Primary	Secondary	College/University	Other	TOTAL
675	6,583	2,593	39	23	9,836

Table 2. The total number of teachers and students participating in the LEAF programme in 2015.

Number of Teachers	Number of Students
17,060	556,754

Tree Planting and Theme Activities

In 2015, 1,085 tree-planting events took place and approximately 518,483 trees were planted by LEAF schools around the world. Though the value of planting trees is undeniable, the programme is much more than just this one undertaking.

Operated in a thematic manner, LEAF looks at all the functions of forests: cultural, ecological, economic and social. All activities, teacher training and materials for students and teachers are administered in accordance with the vision, mission and philosophy of the LEAF programme. Participating countries are encouraged to work on the current LEAF theme. The LEAF Theme for 2015 was Forests and Water.

In 2015, 54% of the LEAF countries focused on the Forests and Water Theme. The remaining 46% focused on previous LEAF Themes. Approximately, 900 Theme activities took place in 2015. Furthermore, 52 teacher-training workshops and 1,148 student workshops took place during 2015. Samples of Theme topics covered by participating schools can be seen in Table 3 and samples of LEAF activities can be seen in Table 4.

Table 3. Sample list of topics covered, in relation to 'Forests and Water' in 2015

Cyprus	Water Cycle and the Forests
Latvia	How the forest grows, CO ₂ and O ₂
Russia	Influence of reforestation onto the water supply of an area
Trinidad and Tobago	Wetland forests - functions of vital importance
Uganda	Retaining soils

Table 4. Sample list of LEAF activities in 2015

Belgium	Exploring senses in the forest
Bulgaria	Protected species in our region
Cyprus	Biodiversity of forests
Czech Republic	Designing a plan for a school garden
Greece	Visit the forest, observe, record and photograph
Iran	Forest Eco-Tours – forest ecology and how to protect forests
Ireland	Habitat mapping and species identification
Japan	Benefit of using domestic wood
Kenya	Tree-planting, clean-up and sports campaign
Latvia	Forest Days, Forest Olympics, Forest excursions
Malaysia	Talks about Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
Malta	The Maltese Rubble Wall: Stopping soil erosion at the woodland
Norway	Working on conflicts of interests in forests
Russia	Collecting, planting and monitoring seeds
Slovenia	Building bird boxes

Curriculum Links

The National Operators are responsible for setting out the specific guidelines in their own country. Each country is encouraged to implement the programme appropriate to local traditions and the national curriculum. Schools are encouraged to link the LEAF programme to the curriculum work going on in the schools, the links are very varied, some examples are provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Sample curriculum links

Belgium	Science - Recognising different biotypes
Bulgaria	Science - Human and nature, endangered species
Cyprus	Science - Biodiversity of forests
Czech Rep.	Ecology - Forest as an ecosystem
Greece	History - of a nearby forest and the environmental problems through the years
Japan	Mathematics – age of tree and calculate the amount of CO ₂ stored
Kenya	Sustainable production and consumption
Latvia	Math in the forest – how the forest grows
Malta	Science – Carbon and Nitrogen Cycles
Netherlands	Food Science – food production
Norway	Science - Humans and Climate Change
Romania	Biology – benefits of the forest
Slovenia	Biology - Food chains, animals in the forest
Turkey	Language and Art – reading forest related stories ‘Winter in Forests’ and sketching
Uganda	Environment – natural resources

Monitoring and Evaluation

The 8th principal of FEE is to ensure that continuous improvements through monitoring and evaluation are central to FEE programmes. In 2015, 41% of the countries stated that they were actively engaged in assessing the levels of awareness and monitoring progress of the LEAF programme. For example, in Belgium, pre and post awareness surveys are used to determine the levels of knowledge in relation to forests and the various topics. In the Czech Republic, for every handbook they produce, they compare the knowledge and attitudes of students who participate with those that do not, both before and after the programme.

Benefits of the LEAF programme

The LEAF programme and the structured approach to environmental education and awareness of forests has the potential to create a highly educated, informed and skilled population translating into many associated environmental, economic and societal benefits through better understanding of forests and related disciplines. The LEAF programme helps develop students' decision-making skills and builds students' confidence and sense of citizenship through participation.

Below are some comments from the National Operators highlighting some positives aspects and activities of the LEAF programme in 2015.

Bulgaria *'2015 was extremely active and inspiring for all the people involved in the LEAF programme'*

Czech Republic *'Developing a handbook for 1st graders and making a short film showing a typical forest lesson'*

Denmark *'Enormous interest in schools and media for the 'Replant the Planet' activity and a greatly growing understanding in schools and society for the benefits and opportunities in outdoor education'*

Finland *'Organised the first forum for Young Opinion Leaders'*

Greece *'Students and teachers are very enthusiastic about the programme and its proposed activities'*

Kenya *'2015 saw the involvement of more corporate bodies in supporting LEAF activities e.g. banks, hotels, Foundations and other companies. This helped give the LEAF programme a face lift as it improved its scope and coverage'*

Latvia *Mammadaba Masterklass was a huge success – 'it is the best way, to invite kids outside, to teach outside and to spend time in the forest. You can teach about the forest in the forest'*

Malta *'The opportunity to organise hands on workshop in the outdoors for a group of teachers that are following a course at University'*

Netherlands *'The enthusiastic reactions of the students and the teachers on the possibilities of learning outside instead of the classroom'*

Romania *'the number of participating schools is among the highest of LEAF members'*

Russia *'Sharing experiences and data between schools has become more active'*

Trinidad and Tobago *'The ENO tree planting exercise gave the schools the trust needed to carry on with the environmental education activities implemented through their environmental clubs'*

Difficulties of the LEAF programme

Lack of funding has been identified as a major issue among participating LEAF countries. The success of the LEAF programme is ultimately dependent on the dedication and commitment of the schools, and in particular teachers and management within the schools. However, there is an overriding priority to generate increased support and funding for the LEAF programme at national and international levels if the programme is to be sustainable and effective.

2015 Plant a Tree for Peace

Each year, LEAF International and ENO Environment Online invite schools to plant trees for peace and a more sustainable future. The event takes place on September 21, each year, to coincide with the United Nations 'World Peace Day'. This event is a practical way of enhancing environmental and global education. It connects children all over the world to focus on environmental issues. The planting of trees symbolises hope and the continuity of life.

This year, eight LEAF countries participated and encouraged their LEAF schools to plant trees. Over 86,000 trees were planted in these eight LEAF countries. The LEAF countries included: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Malta, Romania, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago and Turkey. See Table 6.

Table 6. List of LEAF and non- LEAF countries and number of trees planted by schools that registered on the LEAF website

Country	No. of Classes/Schools	No. of Participants	No. of Trees
Afghanistan	12	159	17
Belgium	2	40	1
Bulgaria	43	8,119	1,293
Czech Republic	11	752	17
FYR Macedonia	2	40	25
Malta	7	93	81
Poland	2	55	10
Romania	220	10,362	7,622

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Russia	51	2,762	77,144
Tanzania	1	207	10,000
Trinidad and Tobago	2	19	3
Turkey	1	40	100
TOTALS	354	22648	96,313

Economy

Costs and incomes were not in accordance with the budget for 2015. It was predicted that the LEAF programme would acquire sponsorship; however, no funding was acquired in 2015.

2016 LEAF International Aims

- ✓ To strengthen the LEAF programme and ensure more people are aware of the programme by promoting the programme on social media sites and through the monthly newsletters
 - ✓ To secure funding to support the International programme and to support the LEAF National Operators
 - ✓ To initiate LEAF in at least three new countries in 2016
 - ✓ To encourage all new and existing LEAF countries to register schools and follow the LEAF Award process
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Visit the Learning about Forests Flickr page to view images from 2015:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/feeinternational/albums/72157650231132982>