

400 offences in 90 minutes

Veronica Stivala



Saying it with flowers: A girl guide gently asking a passer-by not to litter.

Four hundred people were caught littering at Valletta within the space of 90 minutes yesterday. But instead of being fined, they each received a flower from a girl guide.

As part of the three-day clean-up activity organised by the environment ministry, 12 girl guides set out on a clean-up mission in Valletta.

Whenever they saw someone littering, the girls, aged 11 to 13, handed them a flower with a note attached which read: "We need your help too, please do not litter."

The unsuspecting participants were also given a phone number which they could call to participate in the clean-up campaign.

Many of those who dropped items such as papers, bus tickets and cigarette stubs, were not even aware what they had done: "What's this for?" and "Oh, never mind, it's just a small piece of paper," were some of the comments.

The activity seems to have had a positive effect, however, as some people acknowledged they had done something wrong.

Most guides stayed close to the bus terminus, while others went to Merchants Street and Republic Street.

Tamara Schembri, 13, explained that the environment was always on the girl guide agenda but this event made the issue fun.

Rural Affairs Minister George Pullicino said: "We wanted to hit people in a positive way."

Other initiatives saw at least 150 McDonalds employees clean up Għajn Tuffieħa and 100 people clear out the cart ruts at San Ġwann. Thirty bags were filled with tyres, glass bottles and iron metal pieces recovered from the sea bed at Wied iż-Żurrieq.

Comments

Maria Carodna (58 minutes ago)

It's true we are in need of more dustbins but that is still no excuse (as many people on here have pointed out) to throw rubbish on our streets. I have 2 daughters, the youngest only 2 and a half, if we are out and she has say a sweet wrapper for example she has learnt to give it to mummy to throw away when we get home. Everyday my handbag / pockets are emptied from various items that could have been carelessly disposed of on the floor. If a two year old can manage this why can't we adults?

Etienne Pavia (3 hours, 36 minutes ago)

In my opinion this was a good initiative. However, one must note the lack of bins we have around the island including public beaches and other public places. If you look at Golden Bay in summer, you will see most of the bins full just before the time for the evening bbq's. Why cannot the responsible entities empty these bins? Valletta, lack of bins.

Also, bins should be designed in a way to be covered and the public should also learn that if a skip or bin is full, it is useless to throw more rubbish as obviously it will fall out! I am sure that in certain cases of unemployment, such jobs could be created in making sure that Malta will look better, not just for the tourist who visit the island for few days but mainly for us who live here!

P Sultana (4 hours, 43 minutes ago)

Excellent initiative! Well done! Let's hope this has some effect on the rubbish tip we call a country.

E. Azzopardi (5 hours, 7 minutes ago)

Well done to all concerned.,

However, if we ever needed proof of how selfish, careless and how many of us lack pride in their country, then this is it. The people had enough time to educate themselves. Now is the time to act and if we really do (not like usual) then the government has the chance to bring the deficit to

nought by end of 2009. At this rate it could be July 2009!!!! There is no need to wait for 2110. But then hope is eternal, isn't it?

René Micallef (7 hours, 10 minutes ago)

This summer as I was waiting for the Park and Ride minibus I saw a person emptying the litter bins in Valletta. The lock on the bins was rusted and he could not open them. So he simply put in his hand, took out some items from the top layer that were overflowing... and then moved on, leaving the bins quite full. This explains why many bins are always full and why stuff ends up rotting inside....

In many places here in Spain one not only finds decent bins with decent locks, but separate bins allowing waste separation. In Alcalá, every morning, the stainless steel bins and adjacent area are disinfected with lysol and washed. Pavements are scrubbed to remove chewing gum. Of course, German tourists here complain about the waste of water used to clean the streets, and they are partially right, but in hot climates street cleansing does have to be more thorough. Furthermore, it is a well known principle in psychology: when a person finds herself in a clean environment, she is less prone to litter: one is unconsciously prohibited from throwing about that 'first' cigarette stub or paper ticket on a truly spotless pavement.

Ann Camilleri (8 hours, 26 minutes ago)

Well done girl guides! Very original idea. It's about time our mentality on littering changed. It's shameful how much litter you can see on our streets.

A lot of people have the "Oh, never mind, it's just a small piece of paper" mentality. Go look at some of our bus stages and count the number of tickets on the pavement! I'm sure tourists are we leave a mark on the tourists like this.

A Calleja (9 hours, 13 minutes ago)

Thanks for appreciating our job. This encourages us to take part in more activities.

Unit Leader

Malta Girl Guides

Sandro Agius (10 hours, 19 minutes ago)

No litter bins....no problem...throw it away at home...this is also the same excuse....everywhere....everyone....this is children's mentality

Elaine Attard (10 hours, 42 minutes ago)

Well done Malta Girl Guides!!! At least someone is trying to do something about irresponsible littering in a positive way.....Adults should take example from our younger generation in this case!!

a. sciberras (10 hours, 52 minutes ago)

Well done on this initiative!

It is an embarrassment to be caught littering in republic street but this should be done on a

constant basis by police / wardens on all Maltese roads if it is the only way that we will think about our actions and grow up as a nation!

C.Sapiano (10 hours, 55 minutes ago)

Very sweet initiative - but now hard action has to be taken. I believe that the fines should be handed without mercy and till they really hurt dirty people's pockets. Only in this way will the small dirty minority in the country learn !

Wilfred L Camilleri (1 day, 2 hours ago)

To all those making negative comments about this activity I say grow up! Slamming such an effort is not the answer. The lack of trash cans is not an excuse to litter either although I agree that more should be provided and they should be emptied regularly so as not to overflow. It's the stupidity of individuals who think that "it's just a small piece of paper" that we have to change. People with this sort of attitude are stupid and deserve our contempt!

Robert Caruana (1 day, 3 hours ago)

So 12 girl guides "caught" 400 people littering in an hour and a half.

Can the government please inform us how many people have been booked for littering by wardens and/or police over the past year?

Chris Sciberras (1 day, 4 hours ago)

Sweet revenge. Us grown ups usually teach, if not dictate on younger generations what to do and not to do. This was an opportunity for these youngsters to remind us of our mistakes. Surely it must have been humiliating walking through Republic Street showing off a flower.

John M. Grima (1 day, 5 hours ago)

What a beautiful reminder.....Cool, non violent.

Flower children. Peace brother.....peace.

However, are there enough litter bins provided in the City?

Oreste Calleja (1 day, 7 hours ago)

@ Liam Kelly.

Most ridiculous initiative...? If you've lived in this environment a good number of years you should know that ANY initiative is praiseworthy - especially an innovative one as this - since apparently nothing else seems to work. Threatening fines is definitely the MOST ridiculous initiative. Perhaps reverse psychology might work. Greed and litter are two of Malta's capital sins.

J.Mifsud (1 day, 9 hours ago)

@ Adrian Galea

"But the police would not notice"

I think that some of the police force have to be taught not to litter. A couple of weeks ago I saw a policeman standing in front of HSBC Mosta throwing his cigarette end onto the ground in front of him. If i am not mistaken a policeman is not allowed to smoke when on duty, let alone litter.

That's two rules he has broken, what an example he gave to all and sundry, he is a disgrace to the uniform he wears.

Liam Kelly (1 day, 10 hours ago)

Is it possible to nominate this initiative for THE most ridiculous initiative of all time?

So you see someone litter; walk up to them and hand them a flower; what do most people do with flyers, literature and other tacky items which are handed out by people in streets? Somehow I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to sort that one out.

A FINE would have put a stop to it completely whereas handing out flowers just gives them something else to throw away.

Vincent Galea (1 day, 10 hours ago)

Few citizens litter with any frequency; most take care to preserve the environment. We must deliver the message that one abandoned newspaper can despoil a park or a public garden, carelessly discarded plastic containers can endanger other creatures, but most important, that even one piece of litter, can begin an accumulation that creates the impression amongst tourists that we Maltese are litter bugs.

As we care about our environment we should focus on marginalizing the few who don't care.

The journey began.....with a flower.

Criss Camilleri (1 day, 10 hours ago)

Besides having inefficient Authorities, when are we going to STOP teaching such people not to litter? Even our three year old grand daughter does not litter, why? Because we took it upon ourselves to TEACH her not to.

If these 400 persons were fined at least €10 each, then they might have learned something, at least, say 300 of them would have. However if caught the second time, then a higher 'fine' will be appropriate.

Adrian Galea (1 day, 11 hours ago)

Well this shows how inefficient the work of police and wardens is. 13 year old girls managed to notice 400 infringements in 90 minutes. But police would not notice anybody or they simply turn a blind eye because they don't want to go to Court to spend whole days of their leave to testify against these uncivic citizens. One thing I would suggest is that there should not be a need to go to Court to settle these matters, but get the fine paid there and then. And policemen should not be uniformed but under cover. I am sure this would help a lot and the culprits would be paying a lot of Euros, which would be used directly in embellishment projects.

s.bugeja (1 day, 11 hours ago)

With the kind of mentality some people have I would not be surprised if the flowers found themselves on the ground as soon as the girl guides were gone! I don't want to sound pessimistic but experience has taught me not to be over optimistic where littering is concerned. I think that enough has been said for those who want to listen.

David Muscat (1 day, 11 hours ago)

400 people in 90 minutes divided by 12. That should now be the benchmark for our wardens and Police. A few weeks of enforcement at that rate and no one will dare throw away anything anymore.
