

INVOLVING AND EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PREVENTION OF THE ASIAN TIGER MOSQUITO: WE PRESENT THE EDMUND MACH FOUNDATION'S "SIGNORA ZANZ" PROJECT

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The "Signora Zanz in Trentino" lab, which puts in place actions to prevent and fight the spread of the Asian tiger mosquito for kindergarten and elementary school children of the Autonomous Province of Trento, is starting in late March. The initiative stems from the "E-STaR" project of the Edmund Mach Foundation's Research and Innovation Center, with the support of the Provincial Government call for proposals called "Science STAR communicators"

"Daddy, do you know what I learned at school today? To fight mosquitoes! " This is the key phrase of the video called "Signora Zanz in Trentino" which will be screened in kindergartens and elementary schools across the Autonomous Province of Trento during the spring of 2019 and 2020. The project's hero is an elementary school child who saves Trentino from the Asian tiger mosquito, symbolized by "Signora Zanz", a cheerful but clever Asian tiger mosquito that loves Trentino for the "fresh blood" it finds in playgrounds and the stagnant water it finds in gardens and manholes. When it hears the child tell how to fight mosquitoes through easy preventive actions, Mrs. Zanz decides to go back to Asia.

The Asia tiger mosquito is indeed an invasive species that comes from Asia and arrived in Italy in the 1990s. In recent years, researchers at the Edmund Mach Foundation have studied biology, ecology and various solutions to the issue posed by this mosquito. It has been shown that, where the dissemination of the problem has reached politicians and stimulated the direct involvement of citizens, the presence of this insect has been effectively reduced. So far, however, the communication of preventive measures had mainly targeted adult citizens rather than younger

people (and their parents). In order to draw children's attention and encourage their active role in prevention, the "Signora Zanz" initiative was created, with a lab divided into a funny and educational video, some time dedicated to more in-depth observation of microscopic mosquitoes and a final step in which kids actively learn eight tiger mosquito prevention actions with a booklet. The goal is to make children aware of the actions each of them can take to prevent the spread of the Asian tiger mosquito, thus becoming an active player in the control of the spread of this species. In turn, the child will be able to pass on his new knowledge to the parents, increasing the effectiveness of the actions developed with the project.

The initiative emphasizes the importance of Asian tiger mosquitoes prevention and the crucial and active role of children in protecting our environment. The production of "Mrs. Zanz" stemmed from the E-STaR project, a science communication project of the Edmund Mach Foundation funded by the provincial call for proposals called "The STAR communicators of science". E-STaR aims to bring research to society through new technologies, involving citizens in monitoring and controlling invasive alien insects and educating young people in actions that make them responsible citizens and consumers. The E-STaR project also works to strengthen the collaborations between the STAR system member entities (FBK, FEM, MuSe and UniTrento) through the organization of events aimed at the interaction between researchers and Trentino residents.

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