

Malta's streets are not a dump yard!

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Did you know that 17% of our waste that is thrown in the streets stays there forever? This might be very surprising to read especially when there are quite a number of bins and skips around us. The term litter refers to any kind of trash thrown in small amounts, especially in places where it doesn't belong and by time this piles up. The most common littered items includes fast food packaging, cigarette butts, used drink bottles, chewing gum wrappers, broken electrical equipment parts, toys, broken glass, food scraps or green wastes.

Apart from unappealing, littering causes many hazards and should be taken seriously. The chemicals released from the litter can cause a number of problems. For example, cigarette butts contain a dangerous chemical called arsenic and when this poison ends up in the soil and water it will affect both animals and humans. Litter can cause both air and water



pollution. 60% of water pollution is caused by litter. In return this is not good for us because it can cause lung and skin infections. As a result, it kills over one million animals each year! This happens because they ingest, get tangled, trapped, poisoned or hurt when they step on sharp objects such as broken glass and rusty metal.

Did you know that the U.S generate 250 million tons of trash each year, whilst Malta generates 694kg of litter per person each year? More than half your plastic ends up in a landfill!

To slow down litter we can all do our part. One solution is recycling. A big amount of litter can be recycled. This includes plastic bottles and metal cans which are all easily recycled and worth money and jobs to the local economy. In fact if you recycle one aluminium can, you would save enough energy to run a TV for three hours! Another way to reduce street litter is to attend clean-ups which might be organised by NGO's in different places. Furthermore, friends and neighbours can get together for a neighbourhood clean up campaign to raise more awareness. There should also be stricter laws and regulations about littering. When there are serious financial consequences, such as fines that can go up to € 15,000, people are more likely to follow the laws. A handy tip is to carry a litterbag with you whenever you are out so you use it to throw away your waste, until you find a dustbin. This little act will keep the streets clean.



Studies have shown that people who live in clean areas with lots of green spaces have much better mental and physical health than people who live in areas with a litter problem. People who live in a poor quality environment are more likely to suffer from mental health problems, including anxiety and depression.¹ So it is up to us to keep our streets clean. Are you doing your part?

Littering is a crime, but they are not enforcing the law. We need to educate the youths on why littering is bad and the effect litter has on neighbourhoods.

~ Johnnise Downs

¹ <https://www.kingdom.co.uk/articles/impact-of-litter-on-local-communities/>

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