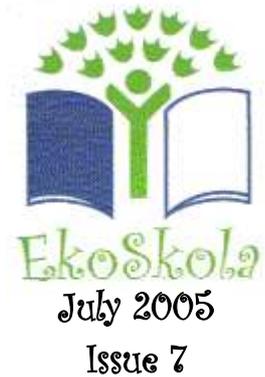


Special Edition:

The 1st EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



“Listening to these children voice their concern for the environment and seeing their enthusiasm in sharing what they’re doing made me look at the future in a more positive way.”

“This is one of the few parliamentary sessions in which I truly felt my responsibility as a people’s representative.”

“Parliament should have more sessions like this one. For once I attentively listened through everything that was being presented during the debate.”



General view of the EkoSkola Parliamentary session

These are but a few of the comments expressed by some of the MPs that attended the first special parliamentary session dedicated to EkoSkola. The session, held on the 2nd June, was part of the activities organised for this year’s Environment Week. All those attending could feel the vibrant atmosphere created by the 138 students hailing from 12 different schools from Malta and Gozo participating in the EkoSkola programme.

The parliamentary session was aimed at bringing these young policy makers face to face with the country’s official policy makers in a positive parliamentary debate about ways of improving the quality of life in our



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schools and in the surrounding communities.

After the opening prayer, read by one of the girls, the Hon. Speaker Anton Tabone delivered his opening address. While acknowledged EkoSkola's efforts to infuse in our schools the values of democracy, citizenship, participation and sustainable development, he pointed out that, as the national guardian of these values, it was the parliament's duty to support this initiative.

He welcomed the students whom he praised for their "strong sense of citizenship" and their "genuine commitment to do something positive for the environment, rather than complaining about what others should do". In his concluding comments he stressed the need to invest in this programme by pointing out that "if these citizens are already fully committed to the improvement of their environment, imagine the greater contribution that they will offer their country in the future".



Reading of the introductory prayer



The Hon. Speaker Anton Tabone reading his opening address. In the background: Dr Paul Pace, National EkoSkola Co-ordinator.

Two students then read the motion that invited MPs to acknowledge the valid work being done by EkoSkola to improve schools and local communities, by pledging their full support. In the debate that followed, students from the various schools amplified on the motion by briefly highlighting the activities that they organised as part of their EkoSkola action plan. The activities mainly targeted waste management and the wise use of resources like water and energy. Class and school environments were also targeted and several schools reported a general heightened sense of belonging and wellbeing. Particularly noteworthy were the various success stories reported about the fruitful interactions that the EkoSkola programme established with local councils. Councillors, who have collaborated with schools participating in EkoSkola, acknowledged the potential of these students in helping the council to take tangible steps towards initiating the local Agenda 21 process in their community.

The response by the MPs was very encouraging. The Hon. Carmelo Abela, Opposition spokesperson for Education, recalled what a student had said on the day of the launch of



The Hon. Carmelo Abela, Opposition spokesperson for Education

the EkoSkola programme: "Show us the way and we will take up the challenge", and remarked that EkoSkola has really proved its worth in providing students with the means for a holistic education that is not focused solely on the acquisition of knowledge but on developing the whole person.

In her address, the Hon. Helen D'Amato: Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care chose to stress and praise



The Hon. Helen D'Amato: Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care

the work done by the students in the community. In line with the National Curriculum's emphasis on establishing school-community links, she encouraged students to further engage in activities promoting the value of community so as to help in the development of a more caring society.



*The Hon. Dr Joe Brincat
Opposition spokesperson
for the Environment*

The Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, the Hon. Dr Joe Brincat, was impressed by the commitment invested by the students in the care of their environment. He felt duty bound, as a member of the House of Representatives, to formally ask children to forgive adults for the lack of good example that they sometimes give in environmental matters and particularly for ruining most of the environment that the children will inherit. He also encouraged children to continue their good work and show adults how to be more responsible towards the environment.

The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Environment, remarked on the change in culture that this programme is generating in schools: a move towards more sustainable lifestyles. He pointed out that although legislation is important in a nation's effort to safeguard the environment, environmental education is a more long-term and radical solution that needs to be placed at the forefront of our nation's educational priorities. He therefore invited his colleagues to approve the motion being tabled and to pledge full support to it.



*The Hon. George Pullicino,
Minister for Rural Affairs and
the Environment*

The Hon. Dr Alfted Sant, leader of the Opposition, proposed an annual repeat of the EkoSkola parliamentary session in



*The Hon. Dr Alfted Sant,
Leader of the Opposition*

which the children, rather than the MPs, are the real protagonists. He pointed out that the honest feedback that children provide could be the basis of concrete proposals to promote environmental education that could be tabled for approval by the parliament.

The Prime Minister, the Hon. Dr Lawrence Gonzi, further amplified on the need to listen attentively to what the children are saying and actively doing. He invited not only the MPs, but also the general public to heed the plight of these children for a better environment. He urged the Maltese to focus on their lifestyles and actions and to ask what they can do to improve the situation ... just like the students are doing in the EkoSkola programme.



*The Prime Minister, the Hon.
Dr Lawrence Gonzi*

After the last intervention, the Hon. Speaker moved for the approval of the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the parliament and the session was closed with the singing of the song "la Preghiera".

As a token of remembrance of this session, all students were invited to take a group photo with the MPs. Furthermore; each participating school will be given a printed version of the motion together with a signed commitment for its implementation by the MPs who participated in the debate.



School choir singing “la Preghiera”



Group photo: all the children attending the event with the MPs

The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:

- Carmela Sammut, Primary School A - Mosta
- Dr Frans Chetcuti, Primary School B – Zabbar
- Dun Guzepp Xerri Primary School - St. Julians
- Dun Salv Portelli, Primary School, San Lawrenz Gozo
- Emmanuel Debono Decesare, Primary School B - Fgura
- Maria Regina, Girls’ Junior Lyceum - Blata I-Bajda
- Patri Guze Delia, Primary School C - Siggiewi
- Patri Matthew Sultana Primary School, Xaghra Gozo
- Primary School C - Mqabba
- Primary School B - Zejtun
- St Joseph School, Blata I-Bajda
- St Joseph School, Paola

Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives on 2nd June 2005 on the occasion of Environment Week 2005

The EkoSkola programme is an international environmental education programme. About 3 million boys and girls from about 13 thousand schools distributed in 33 different countries participate in this programme. EkoSkola encourages the full participation of us children in decision-making, planning and implementation of environmental activities with the aim of improving the quality of life in our school and community. Nature Trust (Malta), in collaboration with the government, introduced the programme in Malta in 2002 as a pilot project. Since then, the number of schools participating in EkoSkola increased from 6 to 26.

From what has been achieved till now, it is quite clear that EkoSkola is helping in the holistic development of our schools. Moreover, EkoSkola is helping us collaborate more with our Local Councils for the benefit of our localities. EkoSkola is becoming more and more popular and it will not be long till certain schools receive the Green Flag, which is a world-renowned certificate testifying that the school that received it is seriously committed for the care of the environment.



Students reading the Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives

As active citizens we have already begun contributing for the improvement of our country. We have been working very hard and now, having arrived this far, we do not want to stop here and wish to go on further. So now, in order to proceed further we need your help, honourable members of parliament. We have already given proof of what we are capable of achieving on our own; imagine what we can accomplish together if you give us your trust.

So, at the start of these ten years dedicated by the UN for Education for Sustainable Development and during the European year dedicated to Citizenship through Education, we wish that you support our efforts by:

- acknowledging that the EkoSkola programme is helping us children as citizens to be committed and responsible for the environment around us;
- acknowledging that the EkoSkola programme is helping in the holistic development of our schools; and
- promising that you will support this programme with all your resources.



And the commitment continues ...

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter please contact Dr Paul Pace, National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, on paul.j.pace@um.edu.mt

Visit our website on www.ekoskolamalta.com