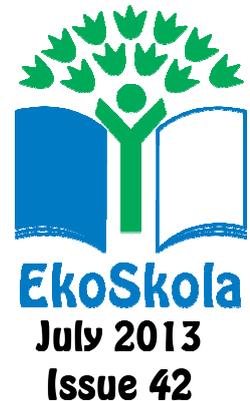


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Special Edition:

The 9th EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



This year's EkoSkola Parliament session was held on 19th June and was attended by 62 students from 31 different schools accompanied by 23 Members of Parliament.



This yearly event is organised to provide students, participating in the EkoSkola programme, with an opportunity to discuss issues related to sustainable development with policy makers. As in the previous year, this session was organised as a follow up to the Young People's Environmental Summit during which students had the opportunity to share their environmental concerns with representatives of the political parties contesting the General Elections.

Aaliyah Spiteri and Amber Vassallo from San Ġorġ Preca College, Paola Primary A, recited the Opening Prayer. The Hon. Mr Speaker, Dr Anġlu Farrugia, welcomed all those present and stressed the importance of sustainable development and how it impacts all aspects of our lives. He praised the students for their commitment to action. *"You are actively*

helping in developing a better future, rather than paying lip service". In his welcoming comments, Prof Paul Pace, the National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, introduced this year's theme and, on behalf of Mr Speaker, welcomed representatives from two EcoCentres – another pilot ESD programme in the FEE Malta family. Bradley Debono and Casey Jade Parnis from San Gorg' Preca College, Floriana Primary read the EkoSkola Parliament Motion and, with Mr Speaker's permission, tabled a copy of all the student interventions.



Hon. Mr Speaker, Dr Anglu Farrugia and National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, Prof Paul Pace

The student's declaration, prepared during the Young People's Environmental Summit, was presented by the following students, who represented those who attended the event: Martina Farrugia and Cristina Grech (St Joseph School, Blata I-Bajda Primary); Randall Abdilla and Jean Claude Muscat (St Patrick's Salesian School, Sliema); Nicole Azzopardi and Gabriel Nappa (St Clare College, San Gwann Primary

B); Neil Abner Camilleri and Thomas Darmanin (St Michael School, Sta Venera); Marabel Falzon and Sarah Micallef (St Thomas More College, Girls' Secondary Sta Lucia); Nathan Axiak and Lucas Galea (St Nicholas College, Boys' Secondary Naxxar); and Elisa Battistino (St Ignatius College, Girls' Secondary, Handaq). Four members of parliament then replied to the issues raised in the declaration.

Hon. George Pullicino, Opposition spokesperson for Energy and the Conservation of Water, expressed his delight that the EkoSkola experiment that was started 10 years ago was giving tangible results. He pointed out that Malta is the only country that treats all its sewage before discharging it into the sea. Our next target should be recharging our water reserves and using treated water for agriculture. "I'm really pleased that you [the students] are aware of these issues".



Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister

In his reply the Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister, commented that this was the best parliamentary session he ever attended since the start of this legislature. He likened the work done for the environment to a relay race in which we pass on the baton of environmental responsibility from one generation to the next. "What you are proposing unites us as a House. The beauty of EkoSkola is that you use common sense to resolve issues thus reminding us what needs to be done".

The Hon. Charlo Bonnici, Opposition spokesperson for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change, started his reply by offering his apologies for using junk mail during the electoral campaign and vowed to amend this by planting a tree in all the schools of his district and use more eco-friendly measures in the future. "Education is a great tool to save the planet and gradually but surely the change for the better is being felt".

The final reply came from Hon. Michael Falzon, from the government parliamentary group, who highlighted our responsibility towards future generations. He said that members



Hon. George Pullicino, Opposition spokesperson for Energy and the Conservation of Water



Hon. Charlo Bonnici, Opposition spokesperson for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change



*Hon. Michael Falzon
Government spokesperson*

of parliament need to feel privileged that they have been entrusted with the responsibility of caring for Malta's future. "You [the students] are not just the future, but also the present. I hope to see you taking a seat here at parliament as curators of our future".

Mariah Balzan and Angela Gatt from Gozo College, Victoria Primary shared their ideas about the importance of the Reduce, Reuse and Repair options in waste management strategies. Their presentation was followed by the address of Hon. Giovanna Debono, Opposition spokesperson for Gozo, who, as a former teacher, expressed her personal interest in EkoSkola. "Such an event shows that students are actively participating in



*Hon. Giovanna Debono,
Opposition spokesperson
for Gozo*

environmental decision making because they have these issues at heart". She pointed out that this was shown when students had a direct input in the eco-Gozo vision by presenting concrete ideas for the improvement of Gozo's quality of life.



*Hon. Franco Mercieca,
Parliamentary Secretary for Active
Ageing and Disability Rights*

The Hon. Franco Mercieca, Parliamentary Secretary for Active Ageing and Disability Rights, said that this was the first time that he experienced this initiative. He reiterated the government's commitment towards the continuity of the EkoSkola parliament. "We believe that this is an investment for future generations. The suggestions made are being noted and we will do our best to implement most of them. Continue guiding us towards choosing the best policies for a better Malta".

The next student presentation was from Christian Attard and Roxanne Sciberras of Gozo College, Xewkija Primary who highlighted their suggestions re different aspects of recycling. In his intervention, the Hon. Clyde Puli, Opposition spokesperson for Education, said that he was pleased



*Hon. Clyde Puli,
Opposition spokesperson
for Education*

to hear students discussing issues that were of benefit for the whole community. "Your enthusiasm is driving you to take action. You are leaders in your community because of your vision for a better society. Keep up your efforts because your country needs your presence here ... in this House".



*Hon. Stefan Buontempo,
Parliamentary Secretary for
Research, Innovation, Youth
and Sport*

The Hon. Stefan Buontempo, Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport, also commented positively on the students' commitment and stressed that politicians and educators need to continue to support the students' creativity and get involved in the forging of our future. Being innovative is an asset for our country's development. "I couldn't keep up with your suggestions and ideas. I am confident that one day our presence in this parliament will be replaced by able persons".

The final student presentation was from Owen Sciriha of St Clare College, Boys Secondary, Gżira who recounted the EkoSkola Committee's effort and commitment towards creating a better

quality of life at school irrespective of the fact that their school was scheduled to be closed down.

In his address, the Hon. Dr Simon Busuttil, Leader of the Opposition, pointed out that sustainability is a common theme during parliamentary debates. However, it is not enough to talk about it, action is needed and that is when problems arise due to implications for economy. He also remarked that his experience of students at parliament was always a positive one. *"My wish is to see you [students] taking up a seat at parliament so that you can influence your country's future"*.



*Hon. Dr Konrad Mizzi,
Minister for Energy and
Water Conservation*

The final intervention was from the Hon. Dr Konrad Mizzi, Minister for Energy and Water Conservation, who reiterated the government's commitment towards clean air, the use of alternative energy sources, waste management, water quality and the renovation of schools so that their environment is conducive to learning. *"The serene and constructive atmosphere that you've created during this session encourages us MPs of both sides of the House to work for a better future"*.

In his concluding speech, the Hon. Mr Speaker, Dr Anġlu Farrugia, remarked that *"Sustainable development should be at the top of our country's political agenda. You are leaders in this process and I was impressed by your presentations and your commitment"*. He then proposed the Motion for the approval of the House of Representatives. The Motion was unanimously adopted by all those present.

As in previous years, the event proved to be a huge success and was widely reported in the local media. The EkoSkola Steering Committee would like to thank all those who made this experience possible particularly the Hon. Mr Speaker, Dr Anġlu Farrugia and his Office for granting us permission to use the premises.



*Hon. Dr Simon Busuttil,
Leader of the Opposition*

We are reproducing a letter that we received from one of the students that participated in the 9th EkoSkola Parliament Session.

Żjara fil-Parlament

Din l-esperjenza ma jien ser ninsiha qatt. Jien niffirma parti mill-EkoSkola u din is-sena x-xorti messet lili li nirrapreżenta lill-iskola tagħna fl-EkoSkola Parlament. Morna Bradley Debono u jien u ressaqna l-mozzjoni. Konna fost diversi membri parlamentari kif ukoll il-Prim Ministru ta' Malta, l-Kap tal-Oppożizzjoni kif ukoll l-I-speaker tal-Parlament. Kien hemm ukoll tfal oħra minn skejjel oħra li jiehdu sehem fil-Programm tal-EkoSkola.

Kienet esperjenza li qatt mhu ser ninsa u nibqa' ngħożżha għal għomri kollu. Stajna nressqu l-fsibijiet tagħna lill-kapijiet kbar ta' Malta u huma minn naha tagħhom qalulna li ser jikkunsidraw u jwettqu dak li għidnilhom aħna. Spiċċajna fuq xi artikli fuq il-gazzetti l-għada tas-seduta ... x'sodisfazzjon!!



*Casey Jade Parnis, Year 6
San Ġorġ Preca College,
Floriana Primary*

Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives

Mr President,

On behalf of my friends, I would like to start by congratulating you for your appointment as Speaker of the House of Representatives. I would also like to thank you for giving us once again the opportunity to come here and talk about issues that we feel are beneficial for our country. You cannot even imagine how important this annual meeting is for us! Such meetings help us develop various skills. However, we really appreciate when the members of this House seriously listen to what we have to say.

Preparation for this meeting was started some time ago. Last year we organised a summit during which several students from different schools met and discussed the state of the environment of our country. This year we met in February so that we could share our ideas with the political parties that were preparing for the General Election. We prepared a declaration, which will shortly be read by my friends, that summarises our thoughts. We did this because, although we still do not have a vote, we are still aware of how we would like to see the environment of Malta and Gozo in the future.

There might be some new MPs who are still not aware of what EkoSkola stands for. We are known for engaging into action rather than just grumbling about issues. EkoSkola is an international programme spread worldwide and encompassing over eighteen million students. In our islands, seventy percent of students from a hundred schools participate in the programme. Thirty-seven of these schools have received the Green Flag for their commitment.

Although we do our utmost to care for our surroundings, at times we are faced with situations about which we cannot do anything. For example, while in our schools we do our best not to waste paper, during the election campaign you flooded us with unnecessary mail. In our schools we do our best to care for the environment. We wish that you could do the same wherever you are. Finally, Mr President, I wish to request your permission, on behalf of my friends, to table a copy of all the interventions which will be made today during this session.



The Declaration:

Caring for our Future

How I would like to see my country in the future

25th February, 2013

We EkoSkola students ...

- as citizens, renew our commitment to continue to do our part to ensure a healthy environment and sustainable lifestyles in our schools and communities where we live;
- worry when, despite our efforts, others take decisions which could ruin our future;
- would like to deliver this declaration to the politicians of Malta so that they take account of our views when making decisions about our future.

We EkoSkola students agree ...

- with good decisions taken to ensure the quality of the environment;
- that to solve certain environmental problems we must be willing to stop doing the same mistakes;
- that sometimes we need to change certain habits to start living sustainably.

We EkoSkola students are concerned because ...

- the emphasis is on recycling waste rather than on its reduction and therefore the amount of waste is increasing;
- too much junk mail is being sent thus increasing a lot of waste;
- although our country's water supply is limited
 - the quantity and the quality of water are deteriorating;
 - there are people who are wasting water;
 - there are people who are using water reserves illegally, and
 - most of the rainwater is wasted instead of stored.
- in the future we might rely entirely on Reverse Osmosis Plants or imported water;
- high buildings are casting shadows on the solar panels of neighbours;
- open spaces are decreasing as time passes. They are being taken up by buildings that often remain vacant;
- certain illegal buildings are not pulled down. This is enticing others to do the same and thus space is further reduced;
- Maltese stone is wasted without any constraint and its availability has fallen sharply;
- although our country gets a lot of sun, wind and is surrounded by sea we are still relying on the use of fossil fuels;
- there are several forms of pollution (air, water, marine, excess light, noise) that are not good for our health and are reducing our quality of life and the surrounding wildlife;
- trees are being felled, even though our country is lacking them;
- there are many activities that are polluting our seas and are killing many marine organisms;
- public transport is not organized enough to be used by many people. So there are too many cars on our roads that occupy space, create road congestion, increase in the amount of accidents and continue to pollute the air.

We EkoSkola students suggest ...

- developing environmental education campaigns in schools and for adults;
- screening educational spots on the media to educate the public about what they can do about the environment;
- the enforcement of environmental laws – present and future - (e.g. the use of water, that houses have wells, illegal disposal of waste). The work of the wardens might also include environmental protection;
- providing incentives (e.g. reduction in electricity and water bills) for people who strive to use resources wisely;
- drawing up guidelines so that recycled paper and fair trade products are less expensive so that more people are encouraged to buy them;
- revising the law on the use of plastic bags to address the abuse being done by some retail stores that are using plastic bags as bags;
- introducing bins for household waste thus avoiding the use of plastic bags;
- using larger waste bins on the streets so that they get filled quickly. It would be better to have covered bins to prevent waste from being dispersed by wind everywhere, including at sea;
- placing enough waste bins during mass activities (political, religious and entertainment) and making appeals for their use;
- that waste is treated before it is exported to reduce accidents that would pollute the sea;
- that waste collection is done at times agreed with the community to reduce garbage bags being left outside and ending up being torn with waste being dispersed;
- that politicians set an example by not generating waste through junk mail and billboards and by using environmentally friendly methods to convey their ideas;
- developing a national plan to regulate water use. This plan could:
 - lead to the registration of rigs used to drill boreholes to curb illegal boreholes;
 - set a quota for how much water is drawn from boreholes;
 - provide assistance to repair wells and reservoirs;
 - incentivise homes and hotels to invest in gray water systems; and
 - ensure better use of recycled water from sewage instead of discharging it into the sea.
- an educational campaign for farmers on the use of alternative sources of water and how to use nitrates and pesticides sustainably to protect water quality;
- incentives to use empty homes and schools and penalties on homes that are kept vacant for a long period of time;
- developing derelict sites instead of using new land for building. For example, topping underground parking with gardens and open spaces;
- controlling the height of buildings to prevent shadowing solar panels of neighbouring lower buildings. Those affected by this problem should be given a chance to use roofs of other buildings;
- reusing stone from demolished houses instead of being landfilled;
- continuing and strengthening initiatives to encourage the use of alternative energy;
- improving public transport service and providing incentives to encourage public use.





The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:

- Archbishop's Seminary, Rabat
- Gozo College, Qala Primary
- Gozo College, Victoria Primary
- Gozo College, Boys' Secondary School, Victoria
- Gozo College, Xewkija Primary
- Immaculate Conception School, Tarxien
- Our Lady Immaculate School, Ħamrun
- St Benedict College, Birżebbuġa Primary
- St Benedict College, Għaxaq Primary
- St Benedict College, Mqabba Primary
- St Benedict College, Safi Primary
- St Benedict College, Girls' Secondary School, Tarxien
- St Benedict College, Żurrieq Primary
- St Clare College, Gżira Primary
- St Clare College, Boys' Secondary School, Gżira
- St Clare College, San Ġwann Primary B
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Paola Primary A
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Floriana Primary
- St Francis School, Birkirkara
- St Ignatius College, Girls' Secondary School, Ħandaq
- St Ignatius College, Siġġiewi Primary
- St Joseph School, Blata I-Bajda Primary
- St Margaret College, Kalkara Primary
- St Michael School, Sta Venera
- St Monica School, Birkirkara
- St Nicholas College, Mtarfa Primary
- St Nicholas College, Boys' Secondary School, Naxxar
- St Patrick's Salesian School, Sliema
- St Thomas More College, Fgura Primary B
- St Thomas More College, Girls' Secondary School, Sta Lucia
- St Therese College, Birkirkara Primary

EcoCentres attending the parliamentary session

- EkoĊentru – Qrendi
- EkoĊentru – Zejtun

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

Visit our website on <http://ekoskola.org.mt/> or facebook on www.facebook.com/ekoskola.