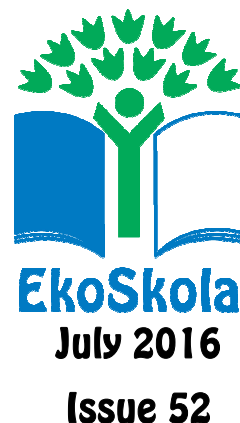


Special Edition:

The 12th EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



The 12th session of the EkoSkola Parliament was held on 2nd June and was attended by 84 students from 41 different schools and 11 Members of Parliament. This year's theme choice was spurred by the agreement approved by the 196 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention of the Climate Change (UNFCCC) in COP21 in Paris. Concern about climate change has for the past years featured very prominently in the programme's agenda. In fact three parliament sessions were specifically dedicated to Climate Change where students had the opportunity to showcase concrete actions they are taking in their school communities.



The preparation ...

A total of 150 students from 31 schools attended the summit held on 26th April 2016 at the Mediterranean Conference Centre and Fort St Elmo, Valletta. Students prepared for the summit during in-school discussions about the theme. The aim of the summit was not to propose actions that as citizens we should be doing to reduce climate change (e.g. using public transport, switching off lights at home, etc.). The aim of the summit's discussions was to suggest specific actions that politicians and other decision makers need to adopt in order to put Climate Change as a

priority on our national agenda. As is customary in such events, the students' deliberations were collated into a declaration that was approved by the attendees and presented at the parliamentary session. The event was organised by Nature Trust (Malta), the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) and the Climate Action Board.



The Declaration:

Caring for Our Future

Climate Change

We, the students of EkoSkola, as citizens of Malta and the world ...

- worry when we see the effects that climate change is having around us;
- feel that we all have a duty to do our part to control these effects;
- are already implementing measures to reduce these effects in our homes and our schools;
- feel that whoever takes decisions affecting our future must take into account the ideas and suggestions discussed at the Summit.

We, the students of EkoSkola, feel that our country can reduce climate change by:

Controlling traffic by:

- In every locality:
 - organize car-free days;
 - allowing even and odd numbered cars on the road on alternate days;
- having a national car-sharing and car-pooling scheme;
- offering free public transport during rush hours (after a study to determine the best time);
- subsidizing school transport;
- having electric buses;
- controlling the amount of cars per family;
- granting credit to frequent public transport users;
- developing more direct public transport routes;
- incentivizing the use of bicycles (ebikes) and motorbikes and create more bicycle and bus lanes;
- raising the age of car-driving licenses and dropping the age for motorbike driving licenses;
- providing more community-based government services to reduce the amount of people going to Valletta to seek these services;
- carrying out road works during the night;
- educating people to consume local products to reduce the need for transport;
- encouraging the sale of local products to reduce transport;

- assess the possibility of an underground train system;
- increasing transport by ferry between Cottonera and Valletta, and between Valletta and Sliema.

Control energy consumption by:

- doing house audits to help people become more efficient in energy and water consumption;
- increasing fuel prices to encourage electric car buyers;
- having places where to charge laptop and mobiles with solar energy;
- fitting more solar panels on public buildings. They can provide power to the homes without roofs;
- fitting solar panels on open car parks that can serve as shelters and where one can charge electric cars (instead of using normal electricity);
- filling disused quarries and fixing photovoltaic panels on them;
- continuing with government's incentives to further encourage the purchase of solar water heaters and photovoltaic panels - especially for families with financial problems;
- regulating the height of buildings to reduce the negative impact on installed solar panels;
- continuing with the government's incentives to further encourage the purchase of hybrid or electric cars;
- fixing traffic signs to inform drivers to turn off their cars in case of traffic congestion;
- fitting more solar powered traffic signals and street lights;
- penalizing companies using polluting fuel and incentivizing those who invested in alternative energy systems;
- installing a solar farm in the space once occupied by the Marsa power station, whose benefits can be enjoyed by the residents of Marsa;
- using research to find new ways to generate electricity. E.g. offshore wind turbines, biomass, hydroelectric, geothermal, from the movement of cars on roads;
- providing government assistance to collect and use rain water and thus reduce the energy used for reverse osmosis;
- installing atmospheric water generators that generate water from air humidity and reduce the use of reverse osmosis;
- making the use of press-sensor taps in public places, schools and hotels compulsory;
- helping households to make use of gray water;
- making more use of water fountains to reduce the use of plastic bottles;
- establishing a deposit refund system – on plastic bottles and aluminium cans (perhaps in supermarkets).

Reduce the impact of deforestation by:

- taxing junk mail (even political mail) to reduce its amount. Social media should be used instead of paper;
- reducing irresponsible building to provide more open spaces that can be used:
 - to plant (and avoid the removal of) more trees; and
 - fitting more solar panels and wind turbines;
- taking more care of the gardens and open spaces that we have.

Moreover ...

- the price of fish can be reduced so that more people eat less beef that has an impact on greenhouse gas emissions. However, we must be careful not to catch more fish than necessary;
- introducing more topics on sustainable development in the subject of Environmental Studies in secondary schools.



The schools represented during the summit were:

- Dun Manwel Attard, Young Adult Educ. Res. Centre, Wardija
- Gozo College, Middle School, Victoria
- Helen Keller Resource Centre, Qrendi
- Maria Regina College, Mellieha Primary
- Maria Regina College, St Paul's Bay Primary
- Our Lady Immaculate School, Hamrun
- Mater Boni Consilii, St Joseph School, Paola
- Sacred Heart - Senior School, St Julians
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Floriana Primary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Hamrun Primary GP
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Hamrun Boys' Secondary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Marsa Primary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Paola Primary A
- St Benedict College, Għaxaq Primary
- St Benedict College, Żurrieq Primary
- St Clare College, San Ġwann Primary
- St Edwards College - Junior School
- St Elias College, St Venera
- St Francis School, Cospicua
- St Francis School, Sliema
- St Ignatius College, Secondary School, Hndaq
- St Ignatius College, Żebbuġ Primary
- St Joseph School Primary, Blata l-Bajda
- St Michael School, St Venera
- St Monica School, Birkirkara
- St Monica School, Gżira
- St Patrick's Salesian School, Sliema
- St Theresa College, Birkirkara Primary
- St Theresa College, St Venera Primary
- St Thomas More College, Marsaskala Primary
- St Thomas More College, Żejtun Primary A

The parliamentary session ...

The Opening Prayer was recited by Luke Bugeja and Mattija Nikol Xerxen from St Paul's Missionary College. After welcoming the attendees, the Hon Mr Speaker, Dr Anġlu Farrugia, pointed out that the environmentally friendly qualities of the Parliament's building are a fitting contribution to our country's commitment towards reducing climate change. Achieving the COP21 commitments requires sincerity and commitment. *"You reap what you sow. What you are doing is in line with these principles."* Prof Paul Pace, the National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, also thanked the attendees for their commitment and explained how students prepared for the parliamentary session during the Summit.

Amber Buttigieg and Angelica Galea, from the Bishop Conservatory Secondary School, Gozo read the EkoSkola Parliament Motion and, with Mr Speaker's permission, tabled a copy of all the student interventions.



The students' declaration of the EkoSkola Young People's Summit was then read by the following students: Kaylin Degiorgio and Isabelle Mercieca (St Thomas More College, Marsascala Primary); Elias Cascino Bezzina and Nirvana Farrugia (San Ġorġ Preca College, Floriana Primary); Sarah Ann Abela and Martha Schembri (Our Lady Immaculate School, Ħamrun); Jonathan Camenzuli and Kurt Vella (San Ġorġ Preca College, Ħamrun Secondary); Neil Apap and Essien Borg (San Ġorġ Preca College, Ħamrun Primary GP); and Alexis Callus and Katrina Gatt (St Benedict College, Żurrieq Primary).

Two members of parliament then replied to the issues raised in the declaration. In his reply, the Hon Dr Simon Busuttil, Leader of the Opposition, thanked the students for their clear and concrete proposals they submitted. He explained that the conception of the environment has evolved from when he was young. When we commit ourselves to improve our environment we are contributing to improving our health. *"The best words I've heard about the environment have been said by you in this House because you have focused on action."*



The Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister remarked that although this was supposed to be a students' hearing, but the proposals tabled are quite serious and courageous and hence warrant the House's attention.

We need further discussion to find ways of implementing these suggestions. "No matter how much we engage in discussions, real change occurs in households. I urge you to be catalysts of change in your families."

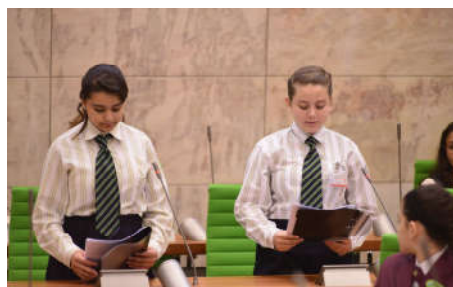
In their presentation, Ġwann Battista Camilleri and Margherita Sultana (Gozo College, Sannat Primary & Special Unit) reported on a three-year project focused on the school's garden. They explained how, besides planting various native trees, they developed a rainwater retention system as well as an irrigation system to water the plants. In his intervention, the Hon George Pullicino, Opposition spokesperson for Early and Compulsory Education started with a quote from the Journalist Sydney J. Harris: "The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows." *"It is important that we realise that there are other people around us and that we are part of a community."* EkoSkola has been organising this parliamentary session to celebrate democracy. Other countries may not have this luxury. Students need to be windows, conscious that their actions will impact on the lives of others.

The Hon Dr Godfrey Farrugia, Government Whip, referred to the water project of the school and highlighted the importance of water for our collective wellbeing. This is particularly important for our country that has been identified as a dry country. *"Inspired by the commitment shown by you students, we MPs need to pledge our efforts to ensure that this important resource is safeguarded."*



The next student presentation was from Samira Axiak and Laura Marie Mercieca (Maria Regina College, Mosta Secondary). They described how, through the wise use of waste and a lot of planning, they managed to rehabilitate their grounds into *Ġnien l-Ilwien* – a garden where students can relax and appreciate nature. The Hon Robert Cutajar, Opposition spokesperson for Family and the rights of Children, the Elderly and Persons with a Disability, thanked the students for investing in the wellbeing of our country. *"We, MPs need to take responsible decisions. We need to approve a law that ensures open spaces, healthy food and lifestyles to ensure a good quality of life."*

The Hon Stefan Buontempo, Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government, also congratulated the students for their valid proposals. *"You can be ambassadors in your communities. You need to motivate MPs into action."* He remarked that every citizen input is important and needed to improve the quality of life of the community.



The final student presentation was from Josepha Micallef and Giada Scicluna (National Sport School) who described how the EkoSkola programme is contributing towards promoting students' voices. The Hon Marthese Portelli, Shadow Minister for the Environment, Energy & Transport stressed that MPs have the duty to consult with the public, particularly with students. *"Thank you because, instead of coming here with*

endless complaints, you offered us solutions."

The final intervention was from the Hon Dr Jose Herrera, Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change referred to COP21 as an essential tool to take concrete actions. Malta is working to achieve these targets. *"We really appreciate your support. You are focusing your energy on action ... not just words."*



The Hon Mr Speaker, Dr Anġlu Farrugia concluded the event by thanking the students and proposing the Motion for the approval of the House of Representatives. The Motion was unanimously adopted by all those present.

The event was once again a huge success as widely reported in the local media and was streamed live on Parliament TV. The EkoSkola Steering Committee would like to thank the Hon Mr Speaker, Dr Anġlu Farrugia and his Office for granting us permission to use the premises and the participating schools for their collaboration.

Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives

Mr President,

On behalf of my friends, I would like to thank you for welcoming us for another session of the EkoSkola Parliament. We look forward for this yearly event because it provides us with an opportunity to talk about what we are doing to improve our environment. We thank you for treating us as citizens who have something valid to offer today and not only when we grow up. Unfortunately not everyone treats us like you, Mr President. Although our schools pay a lot of attention to what we say through the EkoSkola programme, we are not always successful with others - especially in this House.

Whoever planned and built this parliamentary house, took care to construct this building in a way that does not harm the environment. Consequently, this building values the quality of life of those who work in it, as well as those around them. What happens in this building is also aimed at making the quality of lives of us citizens better. That is why we intend to discuss climate change with you once again, as we have done in three other sessions (2008, 2010 and 2011).

As you aware, there was the COP21 meeting on Climate Change in November of last year. During this meeting the countries promised to do something meaningful to alleviate this problem. And in April of this year, the Prime Minister signed this pledge. Therefore, for this year, we chose to focus the summit we do in preparation for the parliament, on identifying suggestions that we can present to you, members of this House, so that our country can contribute towards reducing the climate change problem. These suggestions are not ideas about what every citizen can do to alleviate the problem, but they are suggestions that you can include in laws that you propose.

Whenever we have been in parliament we have always heard words of encouragement for what we are doing in EkoSkola. But few were the instances when you sought our opinion when taking decisions about our future. You are the representatives of the Maltese people and altogether we amount to about a quarter of this people. We kindly ask you to seriously listen to what we say. Through EkoSkola we are doing all we can in our schools and communities. Help us do more. Finally, I ask your permission, Mr President, on behalf of my friends, to place on the table of the House a collection of all our presentations, so that you can refer to what we proposed at your leisure.

The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:

- Bishop Conservatory Secondary School, Gozo
- Dun Manwel Attard Young Adult Educ. Res. Centre, Wardija
- Gozo College, Sannat Primary & Special Unit
- Gozo College, Qala Primary
- Gozo College, Secondary School
- Gozo College, Żebbuġ Primary
- Maria Regina College, Mellieħa Primary
- Maria Regina College, Mosta Secondary
- Mater Boni Consilii, St Joseph School, Paola
- National Sport School
- Our Lady Immaculate School, Ħamrun
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Floriana Primary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Guardian Angel Resource Centre
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Ħamrun Primary GP
- San Ġorġ Preca, Ħamrun Secondary
- San Ġorġ Preca, Marsa Primary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Paola Primary A
- St Aloysius College Secondary
- St Benedict College, Ghaxaq Primary
- St Benedict College, Żurrieq Primary
- St Claire College, San Ġwann Primary B
- St Edward's College, Junior School
- St Elias College
- St Francis Primary, Cospicua
- St Francis Secondary, Sliema
- St Ignatius College, Luqa Primary
- St Ignatius College, Ғaż Żebbuġ Primary
- St Ignatius College, Siġġiewi Primary
- St Ignatius College, Secondary Handaq
- St Joan Antide, Primary School, Gudja
- St Joseph Junior School, Sliema
- St Joseph School, Blata l-Bajda
- St Margaret College, Żabbar Primary A
- St Michael's School, St Venera
- St Monica School, Birkirkara
- St Nicholas College, Rabat Middle School
- St Patrick's Salesian School, Sliema
- St Paul's Missionary College, Junior School
- St Theresa College, Birkirkara Primary
- St Thomas More College, Marsascala Primary
- St Thomas More College, Żejtun Primary A



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.