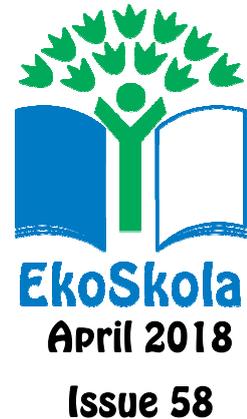


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Special Edition:

The 13th EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



The 13th session of the EkoSkola Parliament was held on 19th April and was attended by 86 students from 43 different schools and 15 Members of Parliament. This session was characterised by various interventions that were motivated by the cross-curricular work that students conducted during the past year in their respective schools and communities.



The parliamentary session ...

Neil Demarco and Glen Demarco, from St Thomas More College, Marsaskala Primary, recited the Opening Prayer. In her Opening Address, the Hon Deputy Speaker, Claudette Pace pointed out the international dimension of Eco-Schools and how its presence in Malta has left a very positive impact. She highlighted issues that plague our islands and the need for commitment towards finding a solution for our common good. *"This is an opportunity for young people to voice their opinion as citizens and be part of a nationwide effort for active participation in decision making"*.

While thanking Madame Deputy Speaker, Prof Paul Pace, the National Eco-Schools Co-ordinator, highlighted the presence of 6th form students for the EkoSkola Parliament session as an indicator that over these last 16 years EkoSkola has permeated throughout the whole educational system.



Maya Caruana and Isaiah Casha from St Theresa College, Lija-Balzan-Iklin Primary read the EkoSkola Parliament Motion and, with Madame Deputy Speaker's permission, tabled a copy of all the student interventions. The negative impact of uncontrolled buildings was highlighted in the address of Elyas Grioli and Mikayah Delceppo from St Margaret College, Vittoriosa Primary. In his reply, the Hon Godfrey Farrugia, of the Democratic Party, supported the students' comments, stressing that irresponsible building has damaged our national character and our health. *"We need to conserve what's left of old buildings and the natural environment through wise and responsible planning. Malta is relying on your commitment."*



Harrison Bugeja and Justin Cassar from Maria Regina College, Dun Manwel Attard Young Adult Education Resource Centre, explained how through organic farming they have managed to instil sustainable values in their schools, their families and their communities. In reply the Hon Clifton Grima, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sport & Voluntary Organisations, stressed that organic farming is the way forward if we value our wellbeing. He praised the students for their initiative. *"You are a source of inspiration. You are a role model on which we as adults need to model our behaviour."*



Ocean Litter was the theme explored in the intervention made by Maria Grech and Claudia Gharzeddin from St Nicholas College, Middle School, Rabat. The Hon Dr Jason Azzopardi, Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, Maritime Affairs & Green Initiatives, responded by wishing that adults would learn from the honest and genuine comments of children so that we can protect those who will come after us. *"We MPs need to be humble enough and admit that we need to learn from you."*



Liya Micallef and Dea Lia from St Jeanne Antide College, Immaculate Conception School, Tarxien, expressed their concerns about reducing litter. In her reply, the Hon Rosianne Cutajar, Member of the Government Parliamentary Group, thanked the EkoSkola team and the school teachers for giving children the opportunity to voice their opinions as concerned citizens. *"Keep on being active in politics and keep on drawing our attention on these important issues."*



Daniel Eric Azzopardi and Angie Marie Said from Gozo College, Secondary School focused their presentation on providing concrete examples of how unused land in Gozo can be transformed into recreational areas. The Hon David Agius, Opposition spokesperson for Local Councils, Communities & EU Funds, pointed out that having been present for every EkoSkola Parliament session, he feels that the commitment of these students makes politics worthwhile. *"In your motion you requested the setting up of a Parliament Committee that would regularly listen to your ideas. I will be proposing the setting up of this Committee."* The Hon Justyne Caruana, Minister for Gozo, said that she had learned a lot from the professional attitude students adopted when they had met her to discuss sustainable issues related to Gozo. *"You left us speechless. Your commitment led us to set up the EkoSkola Regional Committee in Gozo to implement sustainable projects that you propose."*



Katrina Cini and Jan Luca Gatt, from Sir Michelangelo Refalo Sixth Form, Victoria, made EkoSkola history by being the first post-secondary students to voice their concern in this session. The focus of their presentation was the voting rights and responsibilities of 16-year olds. The Hon Robert Cutajar, Opposition spokesperson for Local Councils, Communities & EU Funds, replied by welcoming the 6th formers. He pointed out that it is useless applauding for student interventions without committing ourselves to change. *"We need critical thinkers. Continue with your participation in these events. You made us*

proud! You gave tangible evidence of the resource our country has in its youth." Hon Roderick Galdes, Member of the Government Parliamentary Group, pointed out that these students are a sign of how EkoSkola has matured and has produced students with strong morals and commitment. *"Hold on to your beliefs and values because they will eventually bring about the desired change."*



Ziak D'Amato and Jezya Zahra Spicer from San Ġorġ Preca College, Valletta Primary recounted their experience when they encouraged restaurants to provide healthier Kid's Menus. In his reply the Hon Dr Adrian Delia, Leader of the Opposition, invited other MPs to support the restaurants that complied with this initiative. He encouraged students to continue coming forward with ideas. *"You have the power to bring about change by the choices you make. Believe that you can change Malta and the world."*



The final student presentation was from Nevan Azzopardi and Justin Aquilina from Guardian Angel Resource Centre, Ħamrun, who pointed out the problems their school was facing because of the high noise levels experienced because of major road works in the vicinity. Hon Dr Jose Herrera, Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development & Climate Change, thanked all the students for their constructive criticism. The need to protect our environment needs to be enshrined in the Constitution and the setting up of an Environmental Court. *"I strongly believe that these actions will ensure that citizens become the real guardians of the environment."*



The Hon Deputy Speaker, Claudette Pace 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 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. The event was once again a huge success and was streamed live on Parliament TV. It was widely reported in the local media:

<https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Press%20Releases/Pages/2018/April/20/PR180856.aspx>

<https://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/valetta-schoolchildren-collaborate-with-restaurants-to-present-seasonal-vegetable-menus/>

<http://www.one.com.mt/news/2018/04/19/suggerimenti-ghal-pajjiz-ahjar-fil-qasam-ambjentali-minn-ekoskola/>

<http://gozonews.com/71156/ekoskola-in-parliament-discusses-the-environment-and-plastic-waste/>

Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives

Mr President,

I would like to thank you on behalf of my friends for hosting us once again for another session of the EkoSkola Parliament. Thank you for being one of those who believe in our right to take part in what is taking place in our country. This is the thirteenth time that we have come to Parliament to discuss with you how we can together make life in our country better. As citizens we feel that we have a duty to talk about things that are not going well and offer tips on how they can be improved. We are accustomed to act in this way since in the Eco-Schools programme we learn not to grumble, but to see what we can do to improve the situation.

This year was a record year. Thirty-seven schools wished to speak in this session. But with the time allotted we had to choose only eight. Among the topics mentioned were: the conservation of water and energy; traffic; the destruction of open spaces; the need to reduce plastic; waste management; and the exaggerated amount of construction around us. For the first time, in this session we welcome students from a post-secondary school. This is a sign of how Eco-Schools has spread and its impact on the whole educational system.



Decisions taken at Parliament affect the future of Malta ... our future. Unfortunately these decisions are not always good decisions. There were times when you dragged your feet and consequently the damage took longer to be sorted out. We believe that we are the ones who will suffer most from your shortcomings. So we feel that you need to start listening to our ideas seriously. There were several instances where you disregarded our practical ideas that you could have adopted.

So we would like to see the setting up of a Parliament committee tasked with regularly hearing what we have to say about environmental issues and how we can ensure a healthy future. This would be similar to what will happen in Gozo with the establishment of the Regional EkoSkola Committee. We believe that our country will be making a big mistake if it ignores our views. Finally, I ask your permission, Mr President, on behalf of my friends to put on the table of the House a summary of everything that we will be saying today. We ask you to review them quietly and see what can be done to improve our country.

The schools participating in this year's parliamentary session were:

- Gozo College, Għarb Primary
- Gozo College, Rabat Primary
- Gozo College, Secondary School
- Gozo College, Xewkija Primary
- Gozo College, Żebbuġ Primary
- Guardian Angel Resource Centre, Ħamrun
- Immaculate Conception School, Tarxien
- Maria Regina College Dun Manwel Attard, Young Adult Education Resource Centre
- Maria Regina College, Mosta Secondary (ex-Lily of the Valley)
- Maria Regina College, Naxxar Middle School
- Maria Regina College, St Paul's Bay Primary
- National Sports School
- Our Lady Immaculate School, Ħamrun
- Sacred Heart, Junior School
- Saint Elias College
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Floriana Primary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Ħamrun GP Primary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Ħamrun Secondary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Marsa Primary
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Paola Primary A
- San Ġorġ Preca College, Valletta Primary
- Sir MA Refalo 6th Form, Victoria, Gozo
- St Aloysius College Secondary School, Birkirkara
- St Augustine College
- St Benedict College, Ғal Għaxaq Primary
- St Benedict College, Żurrieq Primary
- St Claire College, San Ġwann Primary
- St Edward's College
- St Francis School, Cospicua
- St Francis Secondary School, Sliema
- St Ignatius College, Luqa Primary
- St Ignatius College, Middle School, Ғandaq
- St Ignatius College, Żebbuġ Primary
- St Joseph, Mater Boni Consilii School, Paola
- St Margaret College, Senglea Primary
- St Margaret College, Vittoriosa Primary
- St Margaret College, Żabbar Primary A
- St Michael School, Santa Venera
- St Nicholas College, Middle School, Rabat
- St Nicholas College, Rabat Primary
- St Paul's Missionary College
- St Theresa College, Birkirkara Primary
- St Theresa College, Lija-Balzan-Iklin Primary
- St Thomas More College, Marsaskala Primary
- St Thomas More College, Santa Luċija Secondary
- The Archbishop's Seminary



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

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