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Editorial Note

Looking back, this has been yet another busy scholastic year. Primarily thanks to the dedication of our school link persons and the support of heads of school our EkoSkola team managed to provide several ESD opportunities for our students. We dedicate this end-of-year newsletter to recap the major highlights of this year. Thanks again ...

FEE Fest 2017-18



For the second consecutive year Nature Trust – FEE Malta hosted the FEE Fest - a three day event where learners can become more familiar with FEE's flagship international ESD programmes: Eco-Schools, Learning About Forests (LEAF) and Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) and various other ESD initiatives. This year the event was held between 10th and 12th January 2018 at the Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary in Naxxar. Besides parents, 270 students and 61 teachers from 30 different schools attended the event.

By partnering with various entities and participating in various local and international ESD projects the FEE Fest offers a one-stop-shop event that allows visitors to develop ideas for cross-curricular work, get information about various sustainable projects and initiatives and establish collaboration networks in a fun and friendly atmosphere.



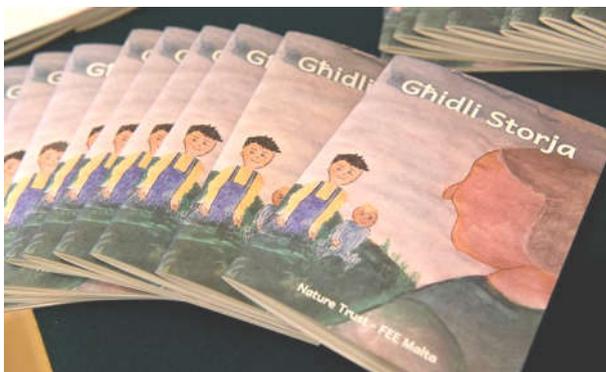
Participants were free to attend exhibition stalls and scheduled sessions on any day and plan their visit according to their particular interests and needs.

The Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education & Employment and the Hon. Joe Mizzi, Minister for Energy and Water Management also attended the event and had face-to-face meetings with students who asked questions about various issues concerning the local environment. The FEE Fest was also featured in the local media: https://www.timesofmalta.com/mobile/articles/view/20180111/local/zebbug-school-students-growing-talents.667669?utm_source=tom&utm_campaign=top5&utm_medium=widget

List of partners and participants supporting the event:

- Centre for Environmental Education & Research
- Environment & Resources Authority (ERA)
- Fonzu I-Fenek
- HSBC Malta Foundation/HSBC Water programme
- Institute for Physical Education & Sport, University of Malta
- Koperattiva Kummerċ Ġust
- Majjistral Eco-Farm
- Ministry for Education and Employment
- Ministry for Gozo/Eco-Gozo
- Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- National Literacy Agency
- PARKs-LIFE Project; Saving Buskett
- Prayer Spaces
- WasteServ
- Water Explorer
- We Eat Responsibly
- Xrobb I-Għajin Nature Park and Centre for Sustainable Development

Ghidli storja



Eco-Schools in collaboration with the Directorate for Eco-Gozo and Regional Development at the Ministry for Gozo invited students attending schools in Gozo to interview old people in their localities and ask them about their childhood days. The students then produced short stories in Maltese set in Gozo nearly a century ago. The aim was to capture the experiences of a world and lifestyle that are quickly fading away and forgotten.

The result of this project was a book, entitled Ghidli Storja (Tell me a story). The book includes twelve short stories, a poem and various illustration drawn by students themselves. The stories speak about traditions, religion, culture, society and family lifestyles when the students’ grandparents were of the students’ age. Students participating in the project developed various skills such as designing and conducting interviews, researching topics online and in libraries and story writing. The Hon. Justyne Caruana, Minister for Gozo, awarded certificates and prizes to participating students during the book’s launch ceremony on the 17th January 2018 held at the Ministry for Gozo.



The production of this book, which is dyslexia friendly and printed on recycled paper, was only possible because of the interest and support of heads of schools, educators, students and their respective families. Schools participating in the project were Gozo College, Middle School; Gozo College, Qala Primary; Gozo College, San Lawrenz Primary; Gozo College, Żebbuġ Primary; Laura Vicuña Primary School; Sacred Heart Minor Seminary; the School of Visual and Performing Arts, Xewkija; Sir M.A. Refalo Post-Secondary School; and St Francis School, Victoria. (Photo credits: MGOZ/George Scerri)



A Maltese Eco-Schools delegation in Prague

Between the 26th and 28th January 2018, thirteen adults and five students represented Eco-Schools Malta in the 'We Eat Responsibly' International Forum held in Prague, Czech Republic. The students attending the event were from Gozo College Middle School; St Albert the Great College; St Augustine's College; St Dorothy's Senior School and San Ġorġ Preca College, Hamrun Secondary. The accompanying educators hailed from a number of other schools from various localities and sectors.



The forum titled *Menu for Change* brought together delegations from the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Malta who had distinguished themselves in the We Eat Responsibly (WER) project. Participants actively participated in various workshops, presentations and debates during which each country showcased the projects and ideas the Eco-Schools committees had come up with and successfully carried out throughout the project. More information about the workshops can be accessed from <https://www.ekoskola.org.mt/uploads/2018/02/WER-International-Forum-in-Prague-Jan-2018-Report.pdf>.

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The overall aim of WER was to encourage sustainable food consumption especially of fresh, local, seasonal and organic produce whilst looking at the global perspective and creating an awareness about food wastage, growing your own food, use of palm oil, fair trade products, and the processing, packaging and transport of food. Although the project has come to an end, WER has left an indelible mark in schools and many schools have adopted the project's theme in their Action Plans.

A Regional EkoSkola Committee for Gozo

On the 15th March 2018, students from thirteen EkoSkola Committees from schools in Gozo met the Hon Justyne Caruana, Minister for Gozo, to share their views and concerns about ways how to enhance the sustainability of Gozo. The meeting was one of a series of events, forming part of the Eco-Schools Programme, aimed at promoting active citizenship by giving voice to students enabling them to participate directly in decision-making fora.



During the meeting, students made suggestions and offered solutions about more outdoor experiences and opportunities for families with children; open spaces for exercise and leisure; initiatives to reduce the use of single use items; banning of balloon releases; incentives to promote car-pooling, the installation of innovative systems which produce clean energy; educational campaigns and littering enforcement rules. Minister Caruana noted down all that was said by the students, welcomed

various innovative suggestions and replied to each and every point raised, giving explanations about the various projects already being planned and developed.

One of the suggestions made by the students specifically asked for the setting up of a Regional EkoSkola Committee for Gozo. The minister immediately gave her go ahead for the setting up of this committee – the first of its kind not just in the Maltese Islands, but also internationally. The Regional EkoSkola Committee is made up of a student representative from each school and a representative from the Gozo Ministry. The Committee will meet on a regular basis to discuss and plan sustainable projects and initiatives, giving a stronger voice to students.



Two months later, the Committee met for the first time at the Ministry for Gozo.

During the meeting the students mentioned a number of initiatives and projects. Dr Caruana invested an initial sum of €5,000 to assist in the implementation of the first project that the Committee would decide upon. She expressed her satisfaction that the first meeting had proved to have such a positive impact. Vincent Attard, CEO of Nature



Trust – FEE Malta, thanked the Minister Caruana for the initiative and reiterated EkoSkola’s aim to empower children. Mr Attard concluded that “Nature Trust now hopes that more Regional Committees such as this one in Gozo, will be formed in Malta”. (Photo credits: MGOZ/Terry Camilleri).

Children’s Voice at the CHOGM 2018

Together with the President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, EkoSkola initiated a process that led to the organisation of a Roundtable Discussion “*Children, Community and the Commonwealth*” in London. Held on the 18th April 2018, this was a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2018 Side-Event and part of an initiative aimed at formally setting up a Children’s Forum as part of the CHOGM official programme ... an initiative that saw its beginning during the 2015 CHOGM meeting held in Malta when both organisations had jointly organised a Young People’s Summit (reported in Newsletter 51).



In her opening address, HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, said, *"We are here to celebrate, to validate, and to share the voices of over 600 million children who call the Commonwealth their home"*. This event brought together the voices of children from Ghana, Malta, Pakistan and the UK to share their concerns and hopefully lay the foundations for a Children's Forum as part of future CHOGM editions. The children representing Malta were members from the President's Children's

and Young Persons' Council and EkoSkola (Neil Bezzina and Luke Polidano from St Augustine College and Sarah Habesh and Martina Pace from San Ġorġ Preca College, Hamrun Secondary). They participated during the Roundtable Discussion through live streaming from San Anton Palace.



HE the President augured that, *"this event can be an opportunity for us to highlight the concerns and recommendations of our children. We must make it clear that the voices of our younger generations matter, that they are being taken seriously by the Commonwealth, and that their aspirations for the future are being acted upon"*.

The Water Explorer Project

Through its EkoSkola programme Nature Trust – FEE Malta started coordinating the international Water Explorer Project locally supported by the HSBC Water Programme, the HSBC Malta Foundation, the Catch the Drop Campaign and Ġhajn – Water Conservation Awareness Centre managed by the Energy and Water Agency. Besides having access to resources, the 26 schools that registered for the project could apply for extra support funding from HSBC Malta Foundation for the best proposed plans for the water related open challenges which can be linked with each of the Water Explorer missions. The project's website can be accessed at <http://www.waterexplorer.org/malta>.



Gozo College Middle School, Victoria



St Clare College, San Ġwann Primary

The site also allowed schools to set up their own animated school platform where they could upload photos and newsreels, sharing their efforts to save water and promoting awareness raising activities with local and foreign schools.

During the National Malta Water Explorer Event held on Tuesday 3rd July, eight finalist schools presented their respective projects related to water saving initiatives and awareness raising. Six independent judges evaluated each action and initiative of each school. The Misty Team from Gozo College Middle School were nominated National Water



Laura Vicuña School, Ghāsri, Gozo



St Margaret College, Kalkara Primary

Explorer team and will be representing Malta in London in October 2018 for the International Water Explorer Event. St Clare College, San Ġwann Primary School came in second while Laura Vicuña School came in third. St Margaret College, Kalkara Primary School team was announced as the National Water Explorer School for June and the Global School of the Week. Mr Andrew Beane, CEO, HSBC Bank Malta plc, visited the exhibits set up by the schools and distributed the awards.

The eight finalist schools were:

- Gozo College Middle School, Victoria
- Laura Vicuna School, Ghāsri, Gozo
- Mater Boni Consilii, St Joseph School, Paola
- Maria Regina College, Dun Manwel Attard Young Adult Education Resource Centre, Wardija
- St Clare College, San Ġwann Primary
- St Ignatius College, Middle School, Handaq, Qormi
- St Margaret College, Kalkara Primary
- St Nicholas College, Rabat Primary, Malta

Students as Community Change Agents

EkoSkola has become synonymous to the active promotion of opportunities that give voice to the students' opinions and ideas about sustainability issues. EkoSkola believes that children can provide a fresh perspective to age-old problems that have plagued our community and the environment. Great things can be achieved if we just listen attentively to what these citizens have to say and care enough to change our unsustainable habits. During this scholastic year EkoSkola students managed to bring about change on the following fronts – change that was acknowledged on the local media:

- (a) EkoSkola students collaborated with the Puttinu Cares Animation Team to provide a sustainable alternative to balloon releases sparking a national awareness about the issue.

<https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20180603/environment/puttinu-cares-celebrates-with-pigeons-and-bubbles-instead-of-balloons.680764>

<https://www.tvn.com.mt/en/news/campaign-against-use-of-balloons/>

- (b) EkoSkola students sparked off a national outcry against the distribution of free milk in schools in single-use carton of milk and plastic straw. The children's objections were supported by their teachers and the Maltese Association of Parents of Students in State Schools (MAPSSS).

<https://www.tvn.com.mt/mt/news/mizuri-biex-jonqos-il-plastik-fit-tqassim-tal-frott-u-l-halib-fl-iskejjel/>

<https://lovinmalta.com/lifestyle/environment/benna-responds-to-backlash-over-plastic-straws-in-national-free-milk-for-schools-scheme>

<http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2018-05-28/local-news/Herrera-looking-into-amending-Free-Milk-Scheme-following-uproar-over-single-use-plastics-6736190638>

https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/87082/benna_says_government_specifically_requested_individual_straws_with_free_milk_scheme#.W6ayYflx3Dc

<http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2018-05-29/blogs-opinions/You-only-live-once-so-think-twice-6736190667>

- (c) Students from San Ġorġ Preca College, Valletta Primary convinced three restaurants (two in Malta and one in Gozo) to provide healthier options in their children's menus. They also raised the issue with the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA).

<https://www.tvn.com.mt/en/news/three-restaurants-change-childrens-menus-to-offer-healthier-fare/> □

Green Flag Award Celebration at St Thomas More College, Secondary School, Żejtun

On Tuesday 22nd November our school celebrated the acquisition of the Green Flag Award for the first time, involving all Year 7 and Year 8 students. The students were first addressed by the EkoSkola Secretary, Anne Marie Azzopardi, who gave an explanation of the journey which eventually led to the attainment of this achievement. This was accompanied by a slide presentation portraying photographs of activities that EkoSkola embarked on during the last year.



Following the Green Flag Award celebration, Mr Peter Paul Galea, a member for the local music group Tribali conducted a musical performance with all students present, using recycled, handmade, musical instruments which were made and decorated by the students themselves as part of a project, during music appreciation lessons.

A WasteServ representative was also present and highlighted the importance of making wise choices in the use of plastic material, vis-a-vis the negative impacts on the environment, particularly on sea creatures. EkoSkola national coordinator Prof Paul Pace, EkoSkola Officer and LEAF programme coordinator Mr Johann Gatt and College Principal Mr George Psaila, honoured us with their presence for this special occasion.



*Article by Anne Marie Azzopardi,
Natalia Busuttil and Chanelle Zammit,
EkoSkola Committee Members*

Luqa Primary grows vegetables and herbs without soil

As part of the We Eat Responsibly (WER) project, the St Ignatius College Luqa Primary EkoSkola team revamped an abandoned space in the school's grounds. Students, together with Ms Cynthia Caruana, WER Coordinator, Mr Stefano Farrugia, Assistant Head of School and Ms Miriam Ellul, EkoSkola link teacher, decided to set up a Vertical Wall Garden based on the principles of hydroponics – the science of growing plants without soil. With funds provided by WER, HSBC Water Programme, the Luqa Local Council, the school's own funds with help provided by Wasteserv, the project was started in the beginning of the year 2018.



Mr Mario Salerno, ex lecturer at MCAST and Mr Charles Zahra – Agronomist, guided the school throughout the various stages of the project. Ten pallets that would have been otherwise thrown away, were used, and thanks to the school's gardener, Mr Charles Scicluna, who oversaw the project from start to finish, they were treated with linseed oil to prolong their lifetime. They were reinforced with wood from older pallets, fitted with weed mat and attached to the wall with custom made brackets. Two 1000 litre tanks, provided by Wasteserv from their Civic Amenity Sites and a

smaller tank was provided by the Luqa Local Council were used for irrigation. The pallets were filled with different substrates such as seaweed, sawdust, perlite, coco peat and peat. To save water, a system to collect the extra water used for irrigation was installed beneath the pallets.



Inaugurated on the 19th of June, the project allowed Luqa Primary children to grow their own vegetables organically and sustainably, whilst raising awareness that local produce should be given priority and that lack of space to grow crops is no longer an issue. The EkoSkola team plans to invite other EkoSkola teams to encourage them to take up such an initiative. The EkoSkola team would like to thank the Head of School, Mr Alexander Cassar, for believing and supporting this project.

EkoSkola Project at Gozo College Middle School



The EkoSkola Committee together with all year 8 students at the Gozo College, Middle School showcased their three month long work as part of their EkoSkola project during an Open Day on 24th November 2017. During the 2017-18 scholastic year, the EkoSkola Committee participated again in the LEAF (Learning about Forests), YRE (Young Reporters for the Environment) programmes, We Eat Responsibly project and the Litter Less Campaign.



This year's committee promoted the use of the carob fruit, a resource growing naturally locally outdoors – the carob being an indigenous and protected tree. The main aim of the project was to instil in the students, school staff and the whole community a greater appreciation towards the local natural environment, responsible food production and consumption and a more sustainable lifestyle. Taking a whole school approach, students learned about the carob tree. They researched on this protected tree and prepared traditional and innovative recipes using the carob pod. The

students found out that the carob pod is in fact a healthier substitute for chocolate and how to use it in cakes and drinks.

An informative leaflet about the carob tree was launched during the Open Day. The leaflet includes information about the tree, the various projects and programmes the school is participating in and six simple, but healthy recipes using the carob products. Attendees had the opportunity to taste carob cake and carob banana smoothie prepared by the students and to buy the traditional carob syrup and cake mix stored in reused jars.



Farewell celebrations with a difference



EkoSkola students from the St Ignatius College, Middle School organised the Year 8 farewell celebrations in an environmentally friendly way. The EkoSkola Committee reviewed the plans for a balloon release and, with the help of the Assistant Head, Ms Rosanna Mifsud and Mr Brian Pace, decided to release domestic pigeons. While domestic pigeons return to their coop, balloons although adorned with beautiful colours do not. Instead they burst and fall back to the ground or at sea where they wreak havoc in the environment, such as killing fish

and turtles that swallow the balloon residues mistaking them for jellyfish.

Mr Josef Azzopardi, Assistant Head and responsible for EkoSkola in the same school, supported the initiative considering that over the years, Nature Trust – FEE Malta worked to nurture environmental values in students through EkoSkola, with the aim of developing environmentally conscious citizens and leaders.

Part of the farewell celebration involved a boat trip around the Maltese ports. At the beginning of the tour the reason why pigeons instead of balloons were to be released was explained. Students carried posters with the following slogans: What goes up, must come down!, We're releasing pigeons instead of balloons because we care. Others held the EkoSkola Green Flag while others released the pigeons. This initiative has greatly appreciated by Mrs

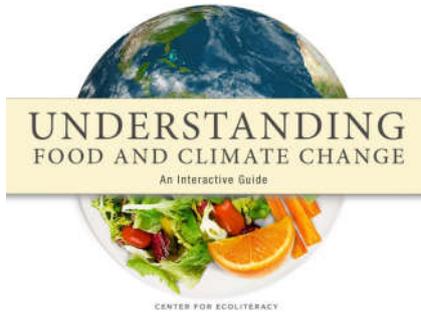


Camilla Appelgren of Clean Up Malta that is now trying to make the banning of balloon releases a national campaign. See also: <https://newsbreak.edu.mt/2018/05/30/itajru-l-hamiem-minflok-il-bziezag/>

Teaching Resources

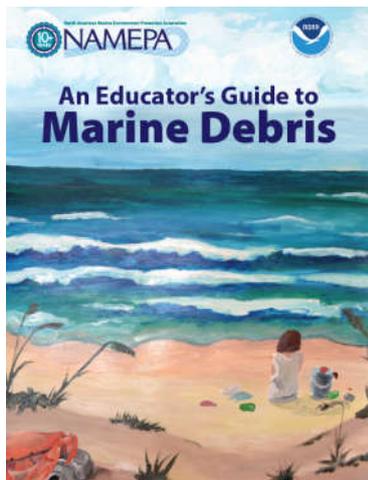
More useful website ideas for ESD related lesson planning and project work:

(a) Understanding Food and Climate: An Interactive Guide



This free downloadable eBook uses video, photography, text, and interactive experiences to help educators, students, and advocates learn how food and climate systems interact and how personal choices can have an impact. It is available at: <https://www.ecoliteracy.org/download/understanding-food-and-climate-change-interactive-guide>.

(b) Educator's Guide to Marine Debris



This easy-to-use guide is designed to provide maximum flexibility for educators in both formal and informal settings. It may be used as a standalone teaching tool, or to supplement lessons in other areas. The guide includes information about marine debris and useful lessons with a focus on STEM objectives. The guide is based on NOAA's "Turning the Tide on Trash: A Learning Guide on Marine Debris" and was published in 2014. To access presentations referenced in this guide and for additional information, visit www.namepa.net/education or the junior website: www.namepajr.net. The guide is updated regularly with new lessons and resources. If you use this guide or any of the education resources in this site, please provide feedback by emailing Nina Quaratella at n.quaratella@namepa.net. The guide can be accessed here:

https://cdn.naaee.org/sites/default/files/eepro/resource/files/namepa_marine_debris-2018-web.pdf.



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.