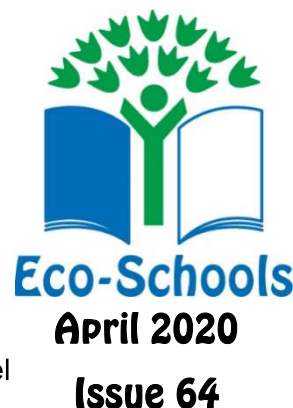


If you need to print this newsletter, please use both sides of recycled paper

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## Editorial Note

Over these last few weeks, life as we know it has been turned upside down with the threat of the COVID-19 virus. This infinitesimally small particle replaced our false feeling of security created by our advanced global society by feelings of uncertainty, loss and fear. Yet during this stressful time, we are witnessing several noble instances of solidarity, caring and compassion that are uplifting and inspire hope. Topping the list is the dedication of doctors, health care workers, the police force and volunteers who are at the frontlines of this battle. Several committed educators have also joined



in by providing their students with the educational support that they need. The fact that schools are closed did not stop educators within our EkoSkola network from offering innovative ESD actions through a combination of personal creativity, collaboration and online technologies (e.g. the Earth Hour

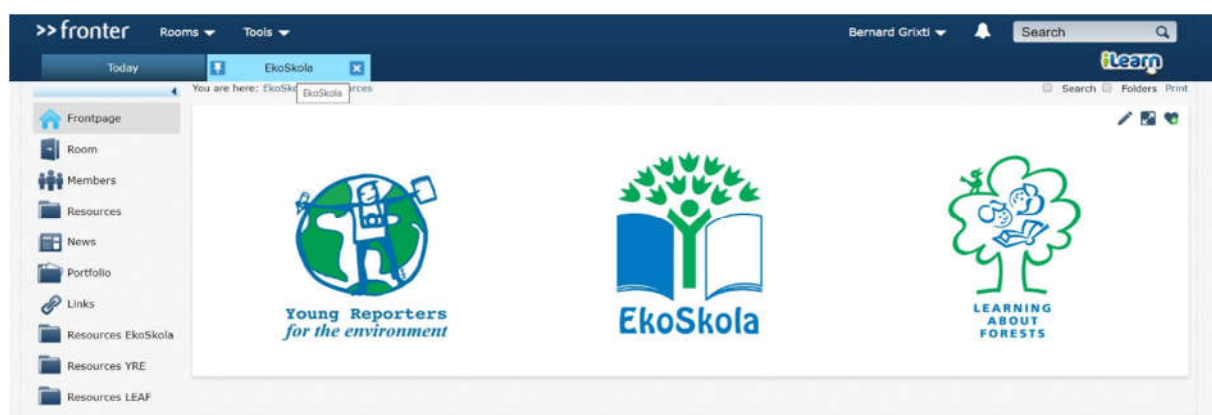
Pledges). This Newsletter also highlights the active steps that our Eco-Schools team is taking to inform and provide ESD resources for our network.

In this edition of the Newsletter we are also reporting on activities organised before the COVID-19 school closure. Amongst these are the FEE Fest – which has achieved new records of attendance – and initiatives involving linking with schools from other countries. All these initiatives seem to highlight that the vast local and international network of Eco-Schools is providing participating schools with opportunities that are enhancing education. Moreover, the Eco-Schools methodology is proving to be quite successful in helping teachers infuse Education for Sustainable Development in various curriculum subjects. We believe that this success is due to the symbiotic relationship that our Eco-Schools team has developed with the host of dedicated educators out there. Thank you! Take care and stay safe.

## ESD support during the COVID-19 School Closure

Our Eco-Schools teachers have been busy selecting ESD activities that are related to the themes addressed in your Action Plans and making them available on the Directorate's iLearn Platform. To ensure as wide an audience as possible, these resources are also included in the Resource section of our website (<https://www.ekoskola.org.mt/resources/>) that, over the years, has become a treasure trove of ESD activities ... as shown by the large number of local and foreign users that regularly access the page.

**The resources on the ilearn platform** can be accessed through the EkoSkola room. These resources are now subdivided according to our ESD programmes, namely EkoSkola, LEAF and YRE. We are populating slowly our room with resources aimed for students, while also taking the opportunity to update you with the latest news through our News Section and providing useful links in the Links Section. We also invite you to ask your school community to participate in the discussion forums that are open also to students in order to keep alive students' voices and active participation during these difficult times. You are kindly requested to contact us should you wish to forward any resources and/or provide feedback on how we can use the EkoSkola room on **fronter** for the benefit of all students.



Schools participating in **LEAF (Learning About Forests)** will also be able to download useful information and other ideas from the ilearn platform LEAF section in the EkoSkola room. Unfortunately given the circumstances *staying in is the new out*, however there are various activities you can still do indoors that will keep you busy and engaged until it will be safe to venture out again. One important reminder now that the scholastic year has come to an abrupt stop: Kindly make the necessary arrangements to make sure that the plants, shrubs and trees in your schools are adequately watered regularly particularly because we had the driest winter in years!

Ms Audrey Gauci, National **YRE (Young Reporters for the Environment)** coordinator, has been in regular contact with schools participating in the programme offering support and information about webinars available for teachers and students. Participating schools are reminded that photos, articles and videos focusing on any sustainable development issue need to be uploaded on the local website [www.yremalta.org](http://www.yremalta.org). The deadline for YRE entries - both for LitterLess and other themes - was extended to **May 31, 2020**, with the awards ceremony in October. For more information contact Ms Gauci on [audrey.gauci@ilearn.edu.mt](mailto:audrey.gauci@ilearn.edu.mt) - or visit the local website.

During this period of school closure, YRE is staying active! All participating countries have got together and created the **#YREstayhome challenge**, where students are invited to stay active from home. All the information can be found here. <https://www.yre.global/stories-news/2020/3/24/yrestayhome-challenge-stay-home-and-stay-active>. There are special prizes allotted to the posts students put up - with no particular criteria (blog posts, podcasts, 5 sec videos, etc). Get creative and get active!

In the meantime, the **webinars** are still on, with or without school closure! First one is on 1st April - Photography webinar for students. Information on webinars can be found here. <https://www.yre.global/webinars>.

Moreover, remember that **your respective Eco-Schools teacher** is only an email away to offer the support and guidance about your plans and initiatives. Our team of Eco-Schools teachers are professionally trained in ESD and are an invaluable help in your school's efforts towards sustainability.

## Reverse Vending Machine Pilot Scheme



Following recommendations from the European Union's Circular Economy Action Plan, the Maltese Islands will in the near future witness the introduction of Bottle Collection Refund Machines. Beverage containers made from plastic, aluminium and glass will in the future be bought at a higher price and a refund returned once such containers are deposited in these machines. The machines will issue a chit for every deposited container that can be redeemed at groceries/supermarkets/etc.

Currently the project has reached its pilot phase, and Nature Trust – FEE Malta, through its EkoSkola programme, has been entrusted to coordinate the education campaign in ten educational institutions which had one of these machines installed on their premises for a period of around two months. This will help the consortium responsible for the project to collect valuable data on the use of these machines before the system is introduced on a national level. Though the aim of Eco-Schools should always remain that of reducing the use of single use items, such machines can help to target waste streams that up to now could not be recycled due to their impurity when mixed in garbage bags.

## Circular Economy and Sustainability

A Circular Economy is an economic system aimed at eliminating waste and focusing on the continual use of resources, minimising pollution and carbon emissions. Eco-Schools can already start applying concepts of Circular Economy with the actions that they take. For this reason, schools were invited to participate in this project, which is a collaboration between Nature Trust – FEE Malta and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Malta.

The launch of this project was held on Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> February at St Dorothy's Senior School, Żebbuġ, whereby the highly motivated EkoSkola members demonstrated how they work their field in order to grow



fresh, local, pesticide-free produce directly for their school community. The students collect the organic waste stream every day and use it to make compost which is then used for their soil. They collect used paper bags and use absolutely no plastic as packaging. No transport costs and no emissions for the produce to be delivered to the consumer. Furthermore, the financial gain from this entrepreneurial activity goes to fund other sustainability projects. How is that for a circular use of resources?



During the event Ms Cynthia Caruana gave details about the project: fourteen proposals were received focusing on food, water, fabrics and waste. Schools will continue working on their respective projects in the coming scholastic year. Four prizes will be awarded during the final closing event. The Head of School, Ms Caroline Anastasi and members from the EkoSkola Committee presented a hamper with fresh produce and olive oil from their school to HE Mr Frank Keurhorst, Ambassador for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, who presided over the project launch.

Since the closure of schools, project participants were invited to attend webinars on Advancing Circular Economy, organized by FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education) and will be encouraged to set up virtual links with eco-schools from the Netherlands. Kindly contact [cynthia.caruana.2@ilearn.edu.mt](mailto:cynthia.caruana.2@ilearn.edu.mt) for more information.

## FEE Fest 2019-2020

Nature Trust – FEE Malta hosted the FEE Fest for the fourth consecutive year. The FEE Fest is a three-day event where students, educators and parents can become more familiar with FEE's flagship international ESD programmes: Eco-Schools, Learning About Forests (LEAF)



and Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) as well as other ESD initiatives organised by other organisations. This year the event was held between the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 at San Ġorġ Preca College Middle School, Blata l-Bajda. Attendance for this year's event was a record breaker! Besides parents, 739 students and 129 teachers from 37 different

schools attended the event over the three days. That's almost four times and thrice as much students and educators (respectively) as last year!

The FEE Fest offers a one-stop-shop event that allows visitors to attend exhibition stalls and scheduled sessions on any day and plan their visit according to their particular interests and needs. The event offered interactive stalls, games and educational presentations that provide ideas for cross-curricular work and information on various sustainable projects and initiatives. The Fest is also an opportunity for networking among visitors and exhibitors.

Hon. Owen Bonnici, visited the FEE Fest on his first official outing as Minister for Education & Employment, where he met students and teachers as well as the various exhibitors. In



his address he thanked educators for their commitment towards providing quality education to all students. Representatives from the HSBC Malta Foundation also attended the event and renewed the Foundation's support for Nature Trust – FEE Malta's ESD programmes.



## Some snippets from the FEE Fest:



The FEE Fest was also featured in the local media:

<https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2020-01-22/local-news/Owen-Bonnici-s-first-official-school-visit-as-Education-Minister-6736218734>

<https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2020-01-24/blogs-opinions/Prioritising-education-6736218789>

<https://www.tvn.com.mt/mt/news/il-ministru-bonnici-jrid-jindirizza-nuqqasijiet-biex-hadd-ma-jaqa-lura/>

<http://www.one.com.mt/news/2020/01/23/ara-kif-it-tfal-tal-iskola-kabbru-diversi-sigar-li-kienu-qed-jintilfu-fmalta/>

<http://www.one.com.mt/news/2020/01/22/il-ministru-bonnici-jzur-il-foundation-for-environmental-education-fest-1/>

List of partners and participants supporting the event:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Agribusiness  | • Learning About Forests (LEAF)                                       |
| • Ambjent Malta   | • Prayer Spaces   |
| • Fashion Revolution  | • ReFab   |
| • Floor Games: Water & Energy Conservation + We Eat Responsibly | • Nature Trust's Ecological Important Sites and Conservation Projects |
| • Fonzu l-Fenek   | • Sharklab – Malta  |
| • Frank Wrap  | • Strengthening Global Education                                      |
| • GLOBE Science Education Programme                             | • Wasteserv   |
| • Ibda l-Bidla - Kopin  | • Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE)                           |

## Our Eco-Schools London Visit

We worked hard throughout the year on our awareness raising mission about how to use water responsibly. You can imagine how happy we were when we were told that our school won the Water Explorer prize – a visit to London sponsored by the Energy and Water Agency and the Ministry for Gozo! Six representatives from the Eco-Schools Committee of St Francis School, Victoria and a student from Gozo College Middle School, who won the Water Explorer Award, travelled to London to share our actions with students there. Sr Francesca, our Head of School and accompanying teachers including Ms Marvic Refalo our Eco-Schools Teacher also came along.



On our first day we visited the London Science Museum where we spent a whole morning. The experiments and information given were very interesting. The virtual reality experience on a Royal Air Force plane was most memorable. After we walked over to St James Park where we relaxed and enjoyed feeding the squirrels. Afterwards we continued our tour of London on foot to Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square.

The following day was the most important day. We travelled by train to visit an Eco-School in Wimbledon: Dundonald Primary School. The students and teachers there were very friendly and welcoming. Students from the Eco-Schools Committee accompanied by their Eco-Schools link teacher, Ms Helena Vokos, took us for a school tour where we visited their classrooms, their playground, their canteen and other surroundings. We also attended one of their lessons! Together we also made some crafts using used corks and natural items.



We shared the actions and projects we had worked on last year and had time to discuss the plastic waste problem and how it is effecting our countries. We also performed a puppet show on water saving which we had created at school last year. It was lovely to make new friends and share experiences with students of our age.



The Dundonald students were very interested in what we had to say and show. Our presentation was the highlight of the visit and we were very pleased of the outcome and the positive comments that we received. It was a very pleasant visit. We also visited the Cutty Sark Museum, kindly sponsored by HSBC. It was very interesting to see such an old ship, what it used to carry and how the sailors lived on it.

We took a lot of photos of this amazing experience that we will treasure forever. We are very glad of all the work we did at school. We thank our teachers and Head of School for encouraging and supporting us when we come up with new ideas for projects and actions for Eco-Schools. We look forward for other chances to represent our school and Malta through Eco-Schools.

*Report by Sienna Cremona, Giacomo Debrincat and Cristiano Hili  
Year 6 students, St Francis School, Victoria Gozo*

## International Collaboration between Malta and Israel



The GLOBE Country Coordinator of Israel, Ms. Refaela Babish, together with the GLOBE Deputy Coordinator of Malta, Ms. Ramona Mercieca, coordinated a collaborative project of schools from their respective countries.

The students' love and enthusiasm for traditions and the significance of trees in their countries' cultures led to a full blown project. This was demonstrated

during a video call between four schools, organized on 11th February. Students from Gozo College Rabat Primary School, Victoria, Gozo, Malta and Begin Elementary School, Dimona, Israel each sang a song about trees and nature in their own language, while students attending Gozo College Middle School, Victoria, Gozo, Malta and Mosenson Youth Village High School, Hod Hasharon, Israel read a tree blessing in Maltese and Hebrew plus a translation in English, the communicating language.

Two trees, a fig tree and an olive tree, symbolizing peace, were planted on the school grounds of each of the schools at the end of the video call, in honour of this international friendship. Plaques in English and Hebrew, to commemorate the event, were placed next to the trees.

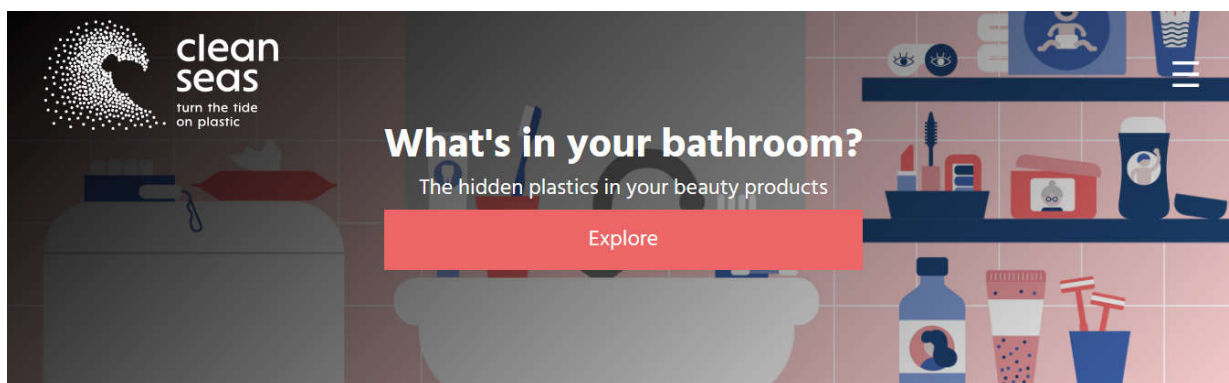
The collaboration between Malta and Israel brought together many students, teachers and representatives from US Embassies and The GLOBE Program. It provided a unique learning experience where students and teachers are not only contributing to scientific discovery, but they are being exposed to different cultures, languages and traditions. Before the call on 11<sup>th</sup> February, students attending Gozo College Middle School researched about Tu Bishvat and shared their knowledge with all students at school through presentations during the school's morning assemblies. This collaboration raised awareness amongst the whole school communities about the importance of trees and set up an example through tree planting. In fact, schools in Malta linked this GLOBE project with the Learning About Forests (LEAF) programme. LEAF, which just like the GLOBE Program, promotes outdoor learning and hands-on experiences which result in the pupils getting a deeper and more involved understanding of the outdoors and nature.



## Teaching Resources

More useful websites ideas for ESD related lesson planning and project work.

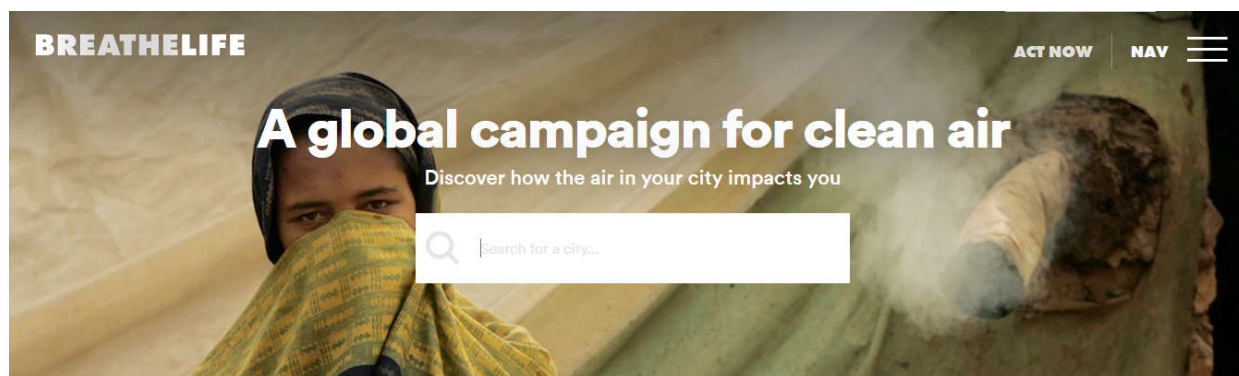
### (a) Clean Seas



This site aims to address the root-cause of marine litter by targeting the production and consumption of non-recoverable and single-use plastic. It has a wealth of information about plastic management and marine litter. Besides providing updates on actions and ideas on how to fight marine plastic litter; its Resource Section is surely worth a visit. The site is accessed on: <http://cleanseas.org/>



**(b) BreatheLife:**



This website is a global campaign for clean air. It provides information (and ideas) of actions taken all over the globe aimed at combating air pollution and its negative impacts on our health and wellbeing. The site has a Resource Section with videos and Infographics. It also provides an online tool to compare air pollution levels in cities around the world (including Malta). Access this site on: <http://breathelife2030.org/>

**The following entities support EkoSkola**



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](mailto:paul.j.pace@um.edu.mt).

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