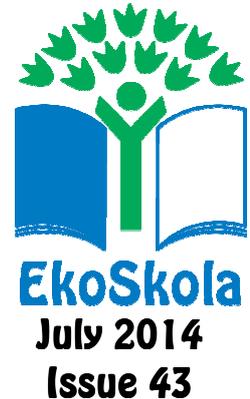


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Special Edition:

The 10th EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



This year's EkoSkola Parliament session was held on 29th May and was attended by 76 students from 38 different schools and by 21 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.



The preparation ...

As in these past few years, this EkoSkola Parliamentary session was organised as a follow up to the EkoSkola Young People's Environmental Summit. Following suggestions made by attendees to last year's summit, this year's event provided a forum for young people to discuss and share their environmental concerns with experts as well as ministers responsible for various facets of sustainable development.

Students from 35 schools attended the summit held on 28th March 2014 at the Le Méridien Hotel, St Julians. The discussions were organised into the following five thematic workshops: Managing our energy resources; Waste: a resourceful nuisance; Water: conserving a precious resource; Sustainability starts with the family; and Student empowerment. The experts assigned to each workshop with whom students could interact included: Mr Joseph Montebello (Chief of Staff, Ministry for Energy & Water Conservation); Hon. Leo Brincat (Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development & Climate Change); Ing Manuel Sapiano (Malta Resources Authority), Hon. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca (then Minister for the Family & Social Solidarity); and Hon. Evarist Bartolo (Minister for Education and Employment) respectively.

Conclusions from each workshop were collated into the declaration that was approved by the attendees and presented at the parliamentary session. This year's event was supported by HSBC Bank, Malta.



The Declaration:

Caring for Our Future

We EkoSkola students ...

- have a duty, as citizens, to be concerned about what is happening around us.
- believe that everyone should contribute so that our country will have a good quality of life.
- feel the need to do our part for the benefit of our country.
- would prefer if decision makers would take account of our ideas and suggestions on the topics discussed at the Summit.

On our active participation in decision taking, we EkoSkola students ...

- sometimes regret when our parents, teachers and politicians disregard our ideas because they think that:
 - we do not have good ideas.
 - our ideas cannot be better than theirs.
 - because we are young we are not able to take care of our surroundings.
- believe that we should be given space to speaking out at home, in our family and our community ... especially when what is being done is not beneficial for us and for our future.
- feel that we should be given the necessary assistance so that what we say is properly informed and be able to suggest better ideas.
- suggest that local councils receive funding specifically to create opportunities so that we can express our ideas as a school and work with them on environmental projects.
- suggest the inclusion of a regular space in the school time table during which we can deliver our views.
- believe that we have much to learn from adults, but feel that they should realize that they can learn from us as well.

On the management of energy resources, we EkoSkola students ...

- think that large roofs should be put to a better use by installing more solar panels.
- feel that people who do not own a roof should be given the opportunity to sponsor wind turbines or solar panels that are installed elsewhere.
- think that if we are going for wind farms, they should be installed off-shore due to our lack of space.
- should be given an opportunity to make videos and commercials about wise energy use. These should be part of an educational campaign on energy use.
- feel that there are people who – although willing – cannot afford to buy solar panels and electric cars. So they should receive more help from the Government and the EU.
- feel that all new buildings must be constructed in a way that is sustainable, both in energy use and in the use of water.
- think that street lights should be more widely spaced and have LEDs. Billboards, traffic lights and signs that need electricity should have small solar panels to provide energy and store it for the night.
- believe that we should start making better use of intelligent lighting in streets and public places to avoid wasting electricity.
- feel that there should be more education about the use of solar panels that follow the sun (360°), the optimal size of windows to allow light in but not heat, and other energy-related technologies.
- suggest that LEDs are distributed to families just like what was done with energy saving lamps.
- suggest that schools should be assisted in controlling their energy (and water) consumption (e.g. meters to facilitate the monitoring of consumption, experts who can answer student queries, and gadgets that show how much electricity is used by appliances).
- think that there should be special days, such as Earth Hour, during which something is done to raise awareness about the wise use of energy.

On waste management, we EkoSkola students ...

- would like that more emphasis is placed on reducing waste, so we suggest:
 - giving each student a reusable lunch box.
 - establishing another center or another bin at Bring-In Sites where people can deposit used clothing – which could then be given to charity or used to make new clothes.

- using electronic media (e.g. television, texting, Facebook, emails) instead of paper to deliver information (e.g. newspapers, magazines, pay slips).
- using recycled paper if there is a genuine need to send information by Government and political parties.
- taxing the distribution of junk mail.
- encourage companies to reduce packaging.
- start checking (and educating) shops on the distribution of plastic bags.
- checking on the fast-food joints to reduce the amount of waste they produce.
- believe that some waste can be reused instead of being discarded. Therefore, we suggest:
 - installing bins for excess food so that it can be composted.
 - opening centers or second hand shops for the sale of used items.
- to avoid a lot of waste from being sent to the landfill, we suggest:
 - increasing the fractions of collected separated waste (e.g. soft drinks caps, organic waste, cardboard).
 - giving more recycling bins to schools.
 - collecting separated waste more regularly.
 - installing more Bring-In Sites and starting an education campaign on their proper use.
 - making Bring-In Sites more accessible for people with disability by providing ramps next to them and / or having reachable bins.
 - the collection of organic waste for composting.
 - the collection of used cooking oil for biofuel.
 - installing bins for waste separation during major public events.
- feel that Government should reward and encourage those (houses, shops and industry) that endeavor to reduce waste.
- feel that Government should create a blog so that we can give our suggestions or report about waste related issues.
- suggest installing surveillance in places that have been cleaned-up. There should be stiffer penalties for people who pollute these places so that they can learn respect the hassle taken to clean the place.

On the management of water resources, we EkoSkola students ...

- believe that with a little attention we can introduce practices that can help us use water wisely. Among these we suggest:
 - increasing the collection of rainwater in homes, schools and public places (e.g. car parks and gardens).
 - initiating an educational campaign showing people how to save water at home (e.g. using water hippos and fitting sensor taps instead of press taps).
 - enforcing the law that requires homes to have wells.
 - refusing building projects, especially large buildings such as schools, if they do not include plans to collect rainwater.
 - having harsh punishments for people caught stealing or polluting groundwater.
 - providing incentives for people who conserve water.
 - that Government sets the example by planting Maltese trees (that do not waste too much water) and avoids water wastage at leisure venues.
 - using material for road surfacing that allows rainwater to seep into the rock.
 - installing water meters in schools that can help children to manage water consumption.
 - increasing control to reduce the pollution of stormwater from sewage, pesticides and fertilizers.
 - the cleaning and repairing of existing water reservoirs.

- funding schools enabling them to work with local councils on water conservation.

On sustainability in family life, we EkoSkola students ...

- feel that family members are not spending enough time together.
- feel that free time and time to go out is decreasing because too much of it is taken up by work (e.g. HW, study, private lessons and other things).
- worry because our parents take up more than one job to meet debts on home loans further decreasing time together.
- should take every opportunity to spend time together – even by doing chores together.
- feel annoyed because on the day that we can go out with our family (i.e. Sunday) we cannot go into the countryside before 14:00 due to hunting.
- believe that while technology is important for communication – especially when we are abroad – they may interfere with communication within the family – even when they go out together.
- feel annoyed when someone smokes at home as this is not healthy for them and for us.
- believe that fighting and unresolved family disputes are not resolved by shouting, but by dialogue.
- are fed up of too much noise in the places where we live – traffic noise, loud television, and swearing people. Sometimes you have to close the windows to avoid the noise.
- feel that the school is a second family for many of us and therefore should provide a safe environment that is free from dangers, from bullying and from racial discrimination.
- suggest having picnic areas in each locality so families can relax together without the need of using their car.
- suggest that there are nursing homes in each locality so that we can visit our seniors more often.
- are not sure whether we should have our own family in the future because we are afraid of such a great responsibility.

The schools represented during the summit were:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • De La Salle College, Junior School | • St Ġorġ Preca College, Paola Primary A |
| • De La Salle College, Senior School | • St Ġorġ Preca College, Valletta Primary |
| • Gozo College, Boys' Secondary, Victoria | • St Ignatius College, Qormi Primary - San Ġorġ |
| • Helen Keller Resource Centre, Qrendi | • St Joseph Junior School, Sliema |
| • Maria Regina College, Mellieħa Primary | • St Joseph, Mater Boni Consilii School, Paola |
| • Maria Regina College, Boys' Secondary, Mosta | • St Joseph School, Blata l-Bajda, Ħamrun |
| • Maria Regina College, Girls' Secondary, Mosta | • St Margaret College, Kalkara Primary |
| • Maria Regina College, Naxxar Primary | • St Margaret College, Żabbar Primary A |
| • St Aloysius College | • St Margaret College, Żejtun Primary A |
| • St Augustine College | • St Michael School, St Venera |
| • St Benedict College, Boys' Secondary, Kirkop | • St Nicholas College, Boys' Secondary, Naxxar |
| • St Benedict College, Mqabba Primary | • St Patrick's Salesian School, Sliema |
| • St Benedict College, Żurrieq Primary | • St Paul's Missionary College, Rabat |
| • St Claire College, Boys' Secondary, Gżira | • St Therese College, Birkirkara Primary |
| • St Clare College, San Ġwann Primary B | • St Therese College, Boys' Secondary, Birkirkara |
| • St Francis School, Cospicua | • St Thomas More, Girls' Secondary, Santa Lucia |
| • St Francis Girls' Secondary, Sliema | • Stella Maris College, Gżira |
| • St Ġorġ Preca College, Floriana Primary | |

The parliamentary session ...

Leonella Galea and Emily Jones from St Margaret College, Żabbar A, recited the Opening Prayer. After welcoming all those present, the Hon. Mr Speaker, Dr Anġlu Farrugia, pointed out that while environmental issues are frequently debated, action to improve the situation is usually lacking. *"You are Malta's future. Our nation needs your commitment"*. Before concluding his introduction, Mr Speaker said that he was looking forward to hosting next year's



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

EkoSkola parliament session in the new eco-friendly parliamentary building.

Prof Paul Pace, the National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, after thanking the participants for their commitment, explained the preparatory process through which the session went through. Two students from the Gozo College, Għarb Primary: Julia Azzopardi and Julia Camilleri read the EkoSkola Parliament Motion and, with Mr Speaker's permission, tabled a copy of all the student interventions.

The following students, representing the students who attended the EkoSkola 3rd Young People's Environmental Summit read the students' declaration: Vanni Caruana and Chloe Grixti (St Thomas More College, Żejtun Primary A); Nicole Cilia and Martina Schembri (Maria Regina College, Mellieħa Primary); Luca Gatt and Julia Pace (St Francis School, Cospicua); Enrique Camilleri and Nicole Sciberras (St Therese College, Birkirkara Primary); Hugh Portanier Mifsud and Nick Zahra (St Aloysius College); Isaac Muscat and Mika Zammit (Maria Regina College, Boys' Secondary School, Mosta); Christian Purkiss and Andre Spiteri (St Augustine College); and Zachary Saliba and Neil Eric Zammit (St Benedict College, Boys' Secondary, Kirkop).

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



Hon. Owen Bonnici, Minister responsible for Justice, Culture and Local Government

Hon. George Pullicino, Opposition spokesperson for Energy and the Conservation of Water, focused on the importance of water. *"We understand how much it's essential when we lack it"*. He reminded those present of the many children that have to forfeit their education and their safety to get the water they need to stay alive. While government needs to promote water conservation, we need to do our bit by changing our habits.

In his reply, the Hon. Dr Owen Bonnici, Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government, invited students to extend their concern beyond the natural environment and focus on cultural heritage. *"Go around your localities and identify sites that need to be promoted ... we will then build up an inventory"*.

The Hon. Charlo Bonnici, Opposition spokesperson for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change, said that he was impressed by the number of tangible and practical ideas that were included in the Declaration. He went on to zero in on a particular comment, i.e. that students are not always given due



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

attention and that adults need to learn from them. He pointed out that they have access to families. *"You are change agents and education is the tool that will change our mentality"*.



Hon. Leo Brincat, Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development & Climate Change

The final reply came from the Hon. Leo Brincat, Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change. While acknowledging that most of the students have placed waste management at the top of their action agenda, he expressed that he was impressed with the students' level of involvement. At this point he promised *"to meet you (students) at least 3 times a year through EkoSkola so that I can learn from you and consult you regularly"*. Moreover, he also promised to set up, with immediate effect, a blog for suggestions or reports about waste related issues (as suggested in the declaration).

The session continued with a presentation from Yasenia Azzopardi and Benjamin Gatt from San Gorg' Preca College, Paola Primary A, about their concern about water conservation and what their school is doing to address the issue. Their presentation was followed by the address of Hon. Giovanna Debono, Opposition spokesperson for Gozo who thanked the students for their commitment towards education, the family and our resources. *"You teach us ... please keep up your commitment and keep on working to help us change our lifestyles"*. She pointed out that through EkoSkola students are promoting sustainable development as she had witnessed when she had invited students to suggest sustainable projects for the Eco-Gozo project.



Hon. Giovanna Debono, Opposition spokesperson for Gozo



Hon. Anton Refalo, Minister for Gozo

The Hon. Anton Refalo, Minister for Gozo, said that he felt honoured that he was sharing this session with such a committed group. He said that this was the best parliament session that he has ever experienced since 1987. Reflecting on the students' summit declaration, he acknowledged that *"sustainable development is a theme that you regularly discuss – well done for finding a balance between economic, social and environmental concerns ... this is particularly important for Gozo"*.

The next student presentation was from James Cachia and Maverick Pace from the Dun Manwel Attard YAE Resource Centre, Wardija. After relating how they are implementing change in their school through EkoSkola, they pointed out that the current parliamentary building was not accessible for people on wheelchair. They expressed their wish to see this issue resolved in the new building. In his intervention, the Hon. Dr Joe Cassar, Opposition spokesperson for Education, recalled that when he was a child, environmental issues were rarely, if ever, mentioned ... let alone discussed at a parliamentary session. *"You are our teachers about environmental issues because you are aware more than us. You decided to do something rather than just complain about problems"*.



Hon. Dr Joe Cassar, Opposition spokesperson for Education

The Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment, said that over the years he has seen EkoSkola maturing as a programme. *"I agree with you that it is frustrating when no one listens to you. That is why you should be given the green light in planning your education"*. He pointed out that excessive school and

homework is depriving students from the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. This needs to change.

The final student presentation was from Christabel Borg and Nicolai Vella of St Ignatius College, Siggiewi Primary School. They highlighted their school's commitment towards promoting a good quality of life in their community. In his address, the Hon. Dr Simon Busuttil, Leader of the Opposition, stressed that living in a



Hon Dr Simon Busuttil, Leader of the Opposition

society implies that we think about each other's welfare. *"Think not about yourself but about the welfare of others. Think not about 'me' but about 'we'"*. He said that this implies that we should not expect others to do something good ... we should take the initiative.

The final intervention was from the Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister, who said that this was one of the few instances where both sides of the House agree with what was being said. *"Our challenge is to put what you are saying in practice. You are change agents. We need to listen to you both as politicians and as parents"*. Finally, given the commitment showed by the students, he wished for a time when he would see them as MPs.

In his concluding address, the Hon. Mr Speaker, Dr Anġlu Farrugia thanked the students for their contribution and for making this event a pleasant one. *"I was really impressed by your great sense of commitment ... keep it up"*. He then proposed the Motion for the approval of the House of Representatives. The Motion was unanimously adopted by all those present.

The event has once again proved to be a huge success, widely reported in the local media and streamed live. 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. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment



Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister

Motion about EkoSkola presented to the House of Representatives

Mr. President,

This is the tenth time that the EkoSkola programme is organizing this Parliament session. During this session, we students have a chance to share our ideas with the members of this House about improving the quality of life in our country. So, Mr. President, on behalf of my friends, I would like to heartily thank you for making it all possible on a yearly basis. It seems that as time passes, our ideas are being taken more and more seriously by the House. For this, we thank you.

We are not coming here to play at parliament. We come here to ask your support for the work we do. Only a handful of people still haven't heard of the EkoSkola programme. But perhaps not everyone knows about the great work we do in our schools. With the care we show when using electricity and water we are preventing tons of carbon dioxide from reaching the air and litres upon litres of water from being wasted. Through the wise use of our belongings we are preventing tons of waste from ending up in our landfills.

It is worth mentioning that this change in the way we live is being taken up in our homes and we are gradually changing the way adults think about the environment. This is evident from

the ever increasing number of local councils who choose to work with us on community projects. We are always ready to commit ourselves because we believe that if we have a better environment, our health will be better. And if our health is better, we can enjoy a happier life and a healthier society. Therefore, as we did in previous years, we feel the need to prepare ourselves as best we can for this session.

Last March, we met for a summit on sustainable development that was sponsored by the HSBC Water Programme - Catch the Drop Campaign. A total of 175 students from 35 different schools all participating in the EkoSkola programme attended the event. Ministers and experts in the different fields we discussed also joined us for the summit. The topics we discussed were: Managing our energy resources; Waste: a resourceful nuisance; Water: conserving a precious resource; Sustainability starts with the family; and Student empowerment. From the ensuing discussion we compiled a declaration that will be read by my fellow students shortly. Finally, I ask your permission, Mr. President, on behalf of my fellow students – to place on the table of the House a copy of all the presentations that will be delivered today, so that you can all get some ideas from what we are proposing.

The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:

- Dun Manwel Attard YAE Resource Centre, Wardija
- Gozo College, Girls' Secondary, Victoria
- Gozo College, Għarb Primary
- Gozo College, Sannat Primary and Special Unit
- Maria Regina College, Mellieħa Primary
- Maria Regina College, Boys' Secondary, Mosta
- St Aloysius College
- St Augustine College
- St Benedict College, Birżebbuġa Primary
- St Benedict College, Għaxaq Primary
- St Benedict College, Boys' Secondary, Kirkop
- St Benedict College, Mqabba Primary
- St Benedict College, Żurrieq Primary
- St Clare College, San Ġwann Primary B
- St Clare College, Gżira Primary
- St Claire College, Boys' Secondary, Gżira
- St Francis School Birkirkara
- St Francis School Cospicua
- St Ġorġ Preca College, Floriana Primary
- St Ġorġ Preca College, Paola Primary A
- St Ġorġ Preca College, Valletta Primary
- St Ignatius College, Girls' Secondary, Handaq
- St Ignatius College, Luqa Primary
- St Ignatius College, Siggiewi Primary
- St Jeanne Antide College Primary School, Gudja
- St Joseph Blata l-Bajda, Primary Section
- St Joseph Mater Boni Consilii, Paola
- St Margaret College, Xgħajra Primary
- St Margaret College, Żabbar Primary A
- St Michael School, St.Venera
- St Monica School, Gżira
- St Nicholas College, Boys' Secondary, Naxxar
- St Patrick's Salesian School, Sliema
- St Therese College, Birkirkara Primary
- St Therese College, St Venera Primary
- St Thomas More College, Girls' Secondary, Sta Lucia
- St Thomas More College, Żejtun Primary A
- Stella Maris College, Gżira





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://www.ekoskola.org.mt/> or facebook on www.facebook.com/ekoskola.