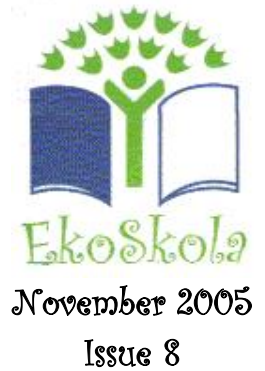


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Editorial Note

Another scholastic year has begun and with it our renewed commitment to improve the quality of life in our schools. This year is promising to be quite a fruitful year! For this scholastic year the EkoSkola programme will start off with 29 participating schools ... involving more than 12,500 school children!

Nature Trust (Malta) has also launched its new logo. Check it out!

As you may recall, last scholastic year closed off with the first EkoSkola parliament session (see Newsletter 7). During this extraordinary session the members of parliament unanimously approved a motion whereby they promised to support the programme's initiative. It seems that the promise has been kept. During his budget speech, the Prime Minister, the Hon. Dr Lawrence Gonzi, said that:

"... given that Government fundamentally believes that the changes we see in the environment sector demand a change in culture, we will in 2006 invest further in the education campaigns already underway in this regard."

Then he went on to say that:

"The Ekoskola programme, in which 26 schools in Malta and Gozo are participating, is helping to foster amongst our younger generations, as well as integrating within the educational curriculum, a culture that is respectful and friendly to the environment. This initiative, coordinated together with Nature Trust, is one other example of how this Government works in partnership with NGOs to further environment-related education."

Now that the support requested is on its way, once again I urge schools to continue with their good work and to send me write-ups about their activities. With two Green Flag applications already being processed, our hope is that more schools will apply for the award by the end of this scholastic year.



Nature Trust (Malta)
PO Box 9
Valletta CMR 01
<http://www.naturetrustmalta.org>



Create a Christmas eCard Competition

Christmas should be a time for us to celebrate simplicity and the values of solidarity, care and respect. But unfortunately unsustainable practices have gradually but surely crept into our celebrations. We would like to openly condemn these practices and invite all schools participating in EkoSkola to do the same and to spread the message to the pupils' families.

Stop the inclusion of twigs of Wild Thyme (Saghtar) in cribs. This practice, besides being illegal, is causing great damage to this beautiful plant. Another destructive practice that needs to be stopped is the indiscriminate cutting of tree branches (and in certain instances, even small trees) for decoration. Trees, especially the Aleppo Pine (Žnuber), take a long time to establish themselves and need all our love and respect. Avoid excessive decorations that eventually end up as waste ... remember that REDUCE WASTE should be the first step in our waste management plans.



EkoSkola is renowned for being proactive. So we have decided to take a step towards making this Christmas more sustainable. Every year people send thousands of Christmas Cards ... which end up as waste once the festivities are done. So why not promote the use of eCards? The EkoSkola steering committee is organising a "Create a Christmas eCard" competition. These are the conditions:

- (a) Children are invited to design and draw their own Christmas Cards. There is no restriction for the use of colour.
- (b) The Christmas eCard can also feature text ... but participants are advised to keep text to a minimum.
- (c) All entries should be in an electronic format.
- (d) Schools can send in as many entries as they like. Each entry should be accompanied with the student's name and surname, age and school.
- (e) All entries should be sent electronically to paul.j.pace@um.edu.mt by not later than the **9th December**.
- (f) There will be two categories: one for primary schools and another for secondary schools. The best 6 Christmas eCards will be selected and made available for all the EkoSkola community. The selection will be made by a group of judges whose decision will be final. The winners will each receive an Environmental Goodie Bag.

Kids' "Create Your Future" Website

Produced by Japan for Sustainability, this website aims to encourage children from all over the world to take interest in and gain an understanding of environmental issues, as well as to think and act independently in response.



The website is quite a unique one in its approach. It emphasises the concept of taking a creative approach towards the realization of a more ecological future on our planet. The site promotes innovative ways of thinking to support concrete methods for sustainable living. While there are several other websites for children that provide current information about the environment, the **Kids' "Create Your Future" Website** not only

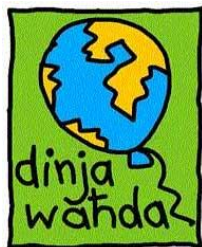
explains the current state and causes of environmental problems in simple terms, but also doable actions aimed at helping us live sustainable lifestyles.

Teachers are urged to have a look at this website because, besides providing background information, it is also a useful bank of resources about sustainable development for children. I promise you that once you visit this site ... you'll surely return again ... and again. The site can be viewed at: <http://www.kidsforfuture.net/>

Using Thinking Skills for a better Action Plan

Sharon Giordmaina is a B.Ed (Hons) 4th year student specializing in environmental education. For her thesis she is investigating the use of Thinking Skills with children involved in the EkoSkola process. Her main research question is whether the implementation of Thinking Skills would help children to design a better Action Plan. She is currently looking for a school that is (or will be) compiling their Action Plan so that she could do some Thinking Skills sessions with the school's EkoSkola committee. Heads of schools who would like to help out in this research are kindly requested to contact Sharon on sharondec@euroweb.net.mt so that they can arrange for an appointment.

Dinja Waħda 5



BirdLife Malta has done it again! After the great success of the previous editions, the new Dinja Waħda 5 project has been launched. The first edition of this environmental education project was launched in 1994 and its aim has always been to generate an informed and active environmental ethic in schoolchildren and their teachers through 'fun activities for nature'. Dinja Waħda strives to fight environmental destruction through environmental education. This year's Action Guide is packed with ideas and 18 activities that participants can adopt.

We have been asked by some schools whether their commitment with EkoSkola conflicts with their participation in this project. The answer is a very clear 'NO'. Rather than conflicting with one another, these two projects complement each other because they share the same goal. For example, activities suggested in Dinja Waħda can easily provide tangible ways of implementing Action Plan targets.

Young Reporters for the Environment

From the 22nd to the 30th of October, 20 young reporters representing 4 countries were sent on a mission to understand the role of new technologies in preserving natural resources. This mission took place in Cyprus. The special envoys from Portugal, Greece, France and Cyprus investigated how wind, solar, geothermal, biomass energy, or biodynamic technologies can help saving resources. Their complete mission report illustrated with photos is available at <http://www.youngreporters.org>

This is a typical activity organised within the Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) programme. Like EkoSkola, YRE is a programme of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). This international network of teachers and secondary school pupils, from 17 countries, produce articles and photos about environmental issues for the local population. Each group must define its own investigation project about a local environmental issue (which topic, which activities, which production). There are 6 main investigation topics: agriculture, cities, coastline,



energy, waste, water. YRE's website is their press agency where they can share news and information and get tools to help them in their projects.

The Volvo Adventure



The Volvo Adventure International competition is an environmental award that rewards environmental action taken by young people. It gives young people the chance to gain international recognition for their local environmental projects and helps support environmental education in schools and the local community. If you enter Volvo Adventure it offers your group the opportunity to:

- Win an all expenses paid trip to attend the Volvo Adventure Conference in Sweden in May 2006,
- Present your project and practical action to a jury of international experts,
- Win a \$10,000, \$6,000 or \$3,000 prize to fund your environmental project,
- Show your project to the world by publishing it on this website,
- Contribute to a handbook of practical action for use by your peers and UNEP.

The 2006 Award is now open. To find out more about the adventure go onto the International website on <http://www.volvoadventure.org/site/39.asp>

Comenius 1 seminar

A Comenius 1 School Project Contact Seminar entitled "Healthy Environment – Healthy School" was held at Stratford-upon-Avon between 9-12 October 2005. Mr James Evans, whose participation was made possible through funding under the Socrates/Comenius programme allocated by the Maltese National Agency within the EUPU, represented Maria Regina Girls' JL, Blata l-Bajda.



The main event was an 'Ecoschool Conference' attended by teachers and students from a large number of Eco-Schools in the Warwickshire area. The conference hall was transformed into an 'Eco-School fair' consisting of schools' displays about their Eco-School activities, grouped under the themes – water, waste, energy, transport, litter, healthy living, school grounds and biodiversity. The highlight of the conference consisted of presentations by students who were also interviewed about their activities. Support from the Local Education Authority, the Warwickshire County Council, District Councils and local enterprises was clearly evident.

As a result of the seminar, Maria Regina Girls' Junior Lyceum has partnered with four other European schools (from England, France, Greece and Poland) in a Comenius 1 project which will develop themes based on environment related issues.

Call for a Maltese Secondary school to partner with three other European schools to develop a Comenius 1 project which promotes the role of the environment and healthy lifestyles in schools. The schools are Harris School from Rugby UK; College les Indes from France and Robazhnieki Elementary School from Latvia. The age range of the students is 11-16. Interested schools may contact Mr James Evans, e-mail jevans@onvol.net, who is acting as the link person.

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter please contact Dr Paul Pace, National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, on paul.j.pace@um.edu.mt

Visit our website on www.ekoskolamalta.com