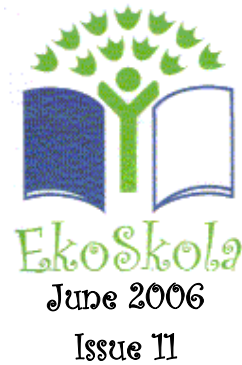


Special Edition:

The 2nd EkoSkola Parliamentary Session



Attended by 190 students and 25 teachers from 11 different schools, this year's session of the EkoSkola Parliament was held on the 1st June, as part of the Environment Week activities. For this session, the children chose to present their concerns about the environmental issues outlined in the State of the Environment Report (SOER) 2005. MEPA (the Malta Environment and Planning Authority) offered schools the required support and contacts with local media houses to help students express their ideas through specific communication media.

After the opening prayer, read by Loren Delia from Dun Alwig Camilleri, Primary School A - Żejtun, the Deputy Speaker Hon. Carmelo Abela delivered his opening address. While acknowledging EkoSkola's success in fostering environmental responsibility in schools, he listed the benefits this programme is having on the overall education of children. He reiterated that it was the parliament's duty to support this initiative and help children gain the skills needed to develop into responsible citizens.



Deputy Speaker, Hon Carmelo Abela and the EkoSkola Co-ordinator, Dr Paul Pace during the welcoming address

Two students, Dinah Lee Ciantar and Ian Muscat, from George Schinas, Primary School C – Luqa, then read the motion that invited MPs to take a pledge to keep the

quality of the environment at the forefront of all their deliberations at parliament. In the debate that followed, students from the various schools focused on a specific environmental theme from SOER and after making a brief presentation about it, they highlighted their concerns and raised pertinent questions about certain related environmental problems.

Students from St Monica School – Gzira addressed the waste generation problem through a video production. This was followed by several students’ contributions from St Joseph School - Blata l-Bajda about climate change ... these contributions and drawings were later collated in an environmental insert of a local newspaper.

In his reply the Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Opposition spokesperson for Tourism, recalled his childhood days and pointed out that although, back then, they lacked all the gadgets that we have today that make our life more comfortable, they enjoyed more open spaces and less pollution. In hindsight, most of the choices we made have reduced our quality of life because they did not respect the environment. We need to ensure that we do not repeat the same mistakes in the decisions that we will have to take in the future.



Children making their presentation

Primary School B - Zejtun students developed a website (that they presented to the MPs) that highlighted local environmental issues related to land. This was followed by a mime/dance on air choreographed by the children from Primary School C – Mqabba.

In her address, the Hon. Helen D’Amato: Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care recalled that in the past environmental awareness was very low. Nowadays, particularly through EkoSkola, students are

becoming more aware and willing to do something positive for the environment. While expressing her wish to see more schools joining the EkoSkola programme, she commended the children for their use of the media to promote their pro-environmental message.

St Joseph School – Paola followed with a video presentation that explained the meaning of biodiversity and the need to protect it. Waste generation was later addressed by the children from Patri Mattew Sultana, Primary School C – Xaghra, Gozo who developed an audio clip that was also broadcasted on one of the local radio channels.

The Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, Hon. Roderick Galdes, gladly pointed out that both sides of the House of Representatives have agreed to invest in environmental education, particularly in EkoSkola, as a way to address the nation’s environmental problems. He encouraged children to continue working within EkoSkola so that tomorrow’s politicians would be more environmentally educated.

In the next wave of student presentations, Antonio Sciortino, Primary School B – Zebbug presented a series of students’ essays and drawings about water. These contributions were also featured in one of the local newspapers. The children from Leli Camilleri, Primary School A – Zurrieq put up a drama session that presented issues related to landscape.

The Hon. George Pullicino, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Environment, heartily thanked the children participating in EkoSkola for their commitment. He recalled the emotional moment when he saw the look of satisfaction on the children’s faces during the official Green Flag hoisting ceremonies. He considers the Green Flag an invitation for environmental



Opposition spokesperson for the Environment, Hon. Roderick Galdes

responsibility. He then quoted data collected by his office that showed that during this scholastic year 2,000kg of paper, 400kg of plastic and 70kg of batteries have been collected from schools for recycling. He finished his address by pointing out that the fact that children are doing their bit, should encourage MPs to do the same.



Hon George Pullicino, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Environment

The last student presentation, from St Bernardette, Primary School B - San Gwann, was a video clip that addressed the 3Rs of waste management. This was followed by the address from the Hon. Dr Charles Mangion: Deputy Leader of the Opposition who remarked that this was one of the most pleasant parliamentary sessions that he recalls and wished all those present that someday THEY would be MPs. EkoSkola is proving to be a strong programme that is translating environmental concern into action. Today's generation is changing its perspective about the environment. The responsibility and commitment shown by students should lead us (adults) to do something

tangible.

The Hon. Dr Francis Zammit Dimech: Minister of Tourism, concluded this part of the session by thanking all those who contributed for the success of the parliamentary session. Economy, Education and Environment are the three major pillars characterising the government's policy. He commended the children for the use of the media to promote environmental commitment. The ever increasing number of participating school is encouraging and we (MPs) need to respond positively to what you are suggesting "One Day at a Time".

After the last intervention, the Hon. Deputy Speaker moved for the approval of the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the parliament and the session was closed with the singing of the song by the choir of the Primary School C - Mqabba.



One of the performances staged by the children for the parliamentary session

The schools participating in the parliamentary session were:

- St Joseph School - Blata l-Bajda
- St Monica School - Gzira
- George Schinas - Primary School C - Luqa
- Primary School C - Mqabba
- St Joseph School - Paola
- St Bernardette, Primary School B - San Gwann
- Patri Mattew Sultana, Primary School C - Xaghra Gozo
- Antonio Sciortino, Primary School B - Zebbug
- Dun Alwig Camilleri, Primary School A - Zejtun
- Primary School B - Zejtun
- Leli Camilleri, Primary School A - Zurrieq

Motion about EkoSkola

presented to the House of Representatives

on the 1st June 2006

on the occasion of Environment Week 2006

The EkoSkola programme is an international environmental education programme. About four and a half million children from about fourteen thousand schools spread in thirty seven different countries are participating in the programme. Through EkoSkola we (the children) have an active role in the decisions, planning and implementation of environmental activities aimed at improving the quality of life of our school and its community. Nature Trust (Malta), in collaboration with the government, introduced this programme in Malta in 2002. Since then the number of schools participating in EkoSkola has increased from 6 to 42. Two of these schools have managed to get the Green Flag – an internationally renowned certificate that is awarded to schools that are seriously committed to the environment.

Last year we came here and requested the House of Representatives to acknowledge the useful work done through the EkoSkola programme and to support this programme with all your resources. This year, we would like to firstly thank both sides of the House for including EkoSkola in your respective environmental education programmes. Then we feel that, like we did last year, we need to discuss with you, honourable Members of Parliament, the environmental situation in our country. To do this we worked with MEPA (the Malta Environment and Planning Authority) and made use of the latest publication of the State of the Environment Report. We worked closely with the media and later on we intend to present you with our own version of this document.

We are not just tomorrow's citizens. Through EkoSkola we are doing our part as today's citizens to improve our country. But our future is also in your hands honourable Members of Parliament. You have the power to decide about the quality of our environment that we will have in the future, irrespective of what we do.

So we would like you to support our efforts for a better Malta by giving us your word that you will keep the present and future welfare of our environment in mind in every decision taken in this House. This will ensure that we will have a good quality environment that we can enjoy and live safely in.



Malta's future ... our future

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