

Get in Motion to Save the Ocean (GMSO) by St Monica School, Birkirkara

The GMSO project aimed to implement a number of measures to address a number of issues including the circular economy, the overconsumption of single-use plastic (SUP), afforestation, the proliferation of microplastics along Maltese Coastal Areas, and the promulgation of Citizen Science Practices.

These intertwined goals were achieved through the application of a number of measures adopted by the school in the course of a year. Such initiatives included the:

- installation of water dispensers throughout the school to slash the consumption of bottled water;
- collection of holm oak (*Quercus ilex* - il- Balluta) acorns from Buskett woodland for planting purposes;
- planting of holm oak acorns within Water bottle halves and re-used plant pots and their watering for nine months;
- donation of the holm oak tree saplings to St Monica's Ecoschool Committee and Nature Trust - FEE Malta;
- extraction of microplastics from a number of local beaches during two different seasons;
- application of the ANDROMEDA project app developed by the University of Malta so that microplastics extracted by students can be photographed and characterised by the mathematical algorithm embedded within the app;

The students' initiatives were all conducted with the active involvement of Prof. Alan Deidun, Professor at the Department of Geosciences of the University of Malta, Malta's Ocean Ambassador, and a member of the UN's Regular Process and Director of the IOI Malta Training Centre.

It is also worth noting that this project contributed to a European-wide database/repository of microplastics, culminating in the dissemination of findings and the raising of awareness among the school's community.

Following the implementation of such activities, a survey was conducted with students, educators, and parents. The majority of responses indicated that all participants involved in this project acknowledge the relevance of this project in minimising the use of single-use plastics, the importance of recycling single-use plastics; and the significance of opting for refillable drinking water bottles as opposed to single-use plastic bottles.

Based on the results obtained and the instalment of the two water dispensers within the school premises, it is hoped that this project leaves a mark on all school stakeholders involved so that, as a school community, they continue acting as climate advocates with particular emphasis on preserving marine wildlife and Planet Earth in its entirety.



