

European Schools Film Contest about climate change & ocean ecosystem: Commissioner Joe Borg awards young pupils from United-Kingdom

Modelling clay and humour to express real fears about the consequences of climate change & human activities on ocean ecosystems.

Brussels, June 6th 2008 - It was this Thursday 5th June, World Environment Day, that the EUR-OCEANS network of aquaria revealed the country and name of the winning class of its big European Schools Film Contest about *"The impact of climate change and human activities on ocean ecosystems"*. The Award Ceremony happened in the impressive auditorium of the European Commission in Brussels (Belgium).

And the winner is...

Very concerned by the climate change consequences on the ocean ecosystems, the children have worked very hard to produce their films. The EUR-OCEANS jury, presided by French journalist and TV producer, Allain Bougrain-Dubourg, has had great difficulties to choose only one winner. Humour and science-fiction were used by the children to communicate their important messages. Futures citizens of the planet, the European pupils are more than ever aware of the importance of scientific research, of the necessity of exchanges between communities and the current lack of communication to raise awareness towards the general public.

From animations in modelling clay by the English class to the TV News Environment program of the Swedish teenagers, towards the 3 lessons given by the Spanish children or the Tropic Hall travel agency of the French "lycéens" the 8 films were very originals. Real facts (rise of the oceans level, acidification of the seawater...), reminders of past & currents mistakes (cargoships drowns, bad behaviours causing waste of natural resources), science-fiction (what will become our planet in 2050?)... the pupils have given plenty of ideas. The jury members had tough time to deliberate and choose only one winner. *"In our eyes, you are all winners"* has told Allain Bougrain-Dubourg, President of the jury.

Delegations of all classes, accompanied by their teachers, were there this Thursday 5th June in Brussels, during the European Commission's *Green Week*, to present and defend their film - in English! - in front of the jury members European Final and Official Screening of the films.



The jury has chosen the film made by the Ridgeway School from Plymouth (Devon, UK): *"Our Coast, our Sea, OUR PLANET!"*. Katie Holmes and Merryn Hunt, 12 years old, were awarded the 5.000 € (worth in educational tools) by Joe Borg, European Commissioner in charge of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs. As Honorary Chairman of the Award Ceremony_Joe Borg said he was very impressed by the children: *"By preparing these films, you will help spread the word about the need for us all to do our bit to save our fragile and beautiful oceans. I truly hope that, at some*

point in the not-too-distant future, we will be handing out awards that celebrate the oceans as a diverse and strong ecosystem. Your efforts to raise awareness about climate change issues give me real hope."

Mike Golding, the famous around the world sailor, also warmly congratulated them for their great work.

Ernie, Steve and John launched the debate

The film of the English class, presented by the National Marine Aquarium, was entirely made in modelling clay. The animation shows Ernie, the octopus, presenting a TV debate in the oceans, Steve and John, the seahorse with shared opinions about the future of their milieu natural. While Steve is aware of the issues of climate change, John believes that if he is the only person to do something in favour of environment this will be useless! While they receive the answers to their questions, John will realize that we are all need to be part of the action if we want to protect the environment.

Two “coups de cœur”

Focusing on the great quality of the competing films, for the scientific accuracy, the acting of the children and the intensity of the messages the jury members had great difficulties to choose only one winner. This is why the jury decided to elect two “coups de cœurs”, special awards. The first special award goes to the Greek movie called “*The Sea of Electra*”, showing a (bad) dream of how the future could be if nothing was done - very accurate in its scientific details, but most important encouraging in its message. The little Italians from Genoa, aged of only 8 years old, receive another deserved “coup de cœur” of the jury for their film “*Il mistero del barracuda*”.



Strong messages to the European scientific & politic communities

By participating in this contest, the children had the objective to send a strong message to the politicians, scientific and educative worlds, and to the adults in general...

- **Message from United-Kingdom:** *“We come from Plymouth in the south west of England and the sea is a part of our everyday lives. It really worried us to know that climate change was having an effect in our local marine habitats. We have been inspired by this project to make an effort to enjoy, learn about and care for the marine environment”*
- **Message from France:** *“We, today’s teenagers, will have to live the consequences of people’s past and current bad attitudes towards the planet. We are ready to try to do something to reduce human activities’ impact on the ecosystems. To reduce the impact of climate change, people must think about their everyday behaviours and be conscious that we must respect nature”*
- **Message from Italy** *« If a lot of small people, in a lot of small places, does a lot of small things, this is the beginning of a great change »*
- **Message from Greece:** *“Our Seas!... Our Hopes! Change Technology... Respect Science... Support Research... Inform Society...” and lets all seek for a new ethos!*
- **Message from Netherlands:** *“Awareness of climate change affecting marine ecosystems can be achieved by authentic, practical situations, thereby stimulating curiosity-driven learning of students. We need more and intensified educational programs bringing (marine) science into primary and secondary schools”*

- **Message from Poland:** “Through this European Schools film contest opportunity, we wanted to explain in simple words what the global warming is and how it relates to our world in everyday aspects of life. We have put the special impact on situation in our local area and tried to tell everyone how we could fight with that phenomenon and prevent the ecological disaster.”
- **Message from Spain:** “At present we know for certain that our planet is changing. Our responsibility is to learn to live in harmony with our environment and to be conscious of all its problems. This is youth’s message to its elders. We hope it will be impossible for anyone who sees this film to remain indifferent and we hope they learn the lesson: If we know, we learn; If we learn, we love; If we love, we’ll last.”
- **Message from Sweden:** “We think that it is the burning of fossil fuels that causes the problems with global warming and the acidification of the oceans. We mean it’s necessary to stop this usage, and its necessary for everyone of us to think about how we live and react and act, now!!!”

All the children who have participated in this contest sincerely hope that their messages will be heard by European scientific, politics and educative communities.

The eight films can be seen on: <http://www.eur-oceans.info/FR/bruxelles/films/>.

Photos of the filming, of the children, Award Ceremony are available on: <http://www.eur-oceans.info/FR/bruxelles/index.html>.

About EUR-OCEANS and the Public Outreach team

EUR-OCEANS (European Network of Excellence for Ocean Ecosystems Analysis) is a network of excellence co-funded by the Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development of the European Communities (FP6). The network gathers more than 500 researchers from 60 research institutes and universities from 25 countries. Its activities started in January 2005, running for 4 years until December 2008.

The specificity of the Networks of Excellence is that they are not simply an additional research programme. Their purpose is to structure/federate European research in an area of excellence.

Apart from willing to stimulate exchange and cooperation in the scientific field, a last but not least fundamental issue for EUR-OCEANS is communication towards the society. EUR-OCEANS makes strong efforts to strengthen the link with the European public and the socio-economic groups directly concerned by the results of the undertaken research programmes.

As this goal can only be achieved if an effective use and transfer of the information is ensured, a network of European Aquaria (EUR-OCEANS Outreach Team) has been created to be the interface between the scientific research and the general public.

This network comprises 10 aquaria and/or scientific centres as well as the European Union of Aquarium Curators.



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