Enhancing and Conservation of Ecosystem through Philatelic Education in Europe: Think Green Concept (IV) - The Second Research Study on First-Day Covers

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Authors’ contributions
This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author BVC designed the study and performed the literature searches. Author ALP managed the analyses of the study and also managed its own literature searches. Authors BVC and MC wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT
EUROPA stamps are special stamps issued by European postal administrations and bears the official EUROPA logo, a PostEurop registered trademark under the aegis of PostEurop in which Europe is the central theme. EUROPA stamps underline cooperation in the posts domain, taking into account the promotion of thematic philately. They also build awareness of the common roots,

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culture and history of Europe, and its common goals. As such, EUROPA stamp issues are among the most collected and most popular stamps in the world. Europa Stamps 2016 are very special stamps with the “Think Green” theme aimed to create awareness and give a wakeup call - its time to protect our environment for the better future of the new generations, and to contribute to socio-economical development. In this paper, we propose an insight into the history of European preoccupations for natural heritage conservation and for environmental protection and bring into the discussion only the significant concerns in promoting ecological educational via thematic issues (in this case, Think green! issues). In this context, the main objective was to identify, index, and describe the main philatelic pieces - in particular first-day covers - issued in European countries (starting with Italy and ending with the Vatican), from the beginning of issuing.

Keywords: Philatelic education; European postal administrations; think green; FDCs.

ABBREVIATIONS

FDC: First day cover document with a first day cancellation, not necessarily the one with the special illustration.

1. INTRODUCTION

An extremely important notion, for the following approaches, which subscribes to the modern philately area, is the notion of first-day covers. As it was natural, the first-day covers appeared and developed over time as a result of highlighting common features and behaviors for several processes and phenomena in different areas of activity. Applied ecology does not discount the use of postage stamps, first-day envelopes, and other post-philatelic effects; its slogans and promotions being easy to highlight by the appearance of philatelic issues and postal circulations.

As expected, as a result of our concerns, for combining philately with ecology education [1], since the beginning of philosophical concerns for environmental protection [2], we believe that it was appropriate to continue, and to expose the elements that integrate the stamps, not only in the collections of philatelists but also in the circulations or correspondence of the time. This is why, we decided to continue to expose the envelopes with the mention of the first day of the issue, or first-day covers (FDCs), which we consider to be the first official pieces that come to include the stamps. Most of them have been issued by the postal administrations, in the natural completion of the stamps, together with the other forms of stamps grouping, such as blocks, philatelic cards, souvenir or commemorative colitis.

We chose to approach Think green! FDCs, because they bring the additional essential information about the regime of the issued parts. Moreover, FDCs capture the integrity of the issuing act, promoting at a somewhat macro-level (as opposed to stamps, which are generally small in size) the whole story behind the Think green! issue [3,4]. Also, the semi-illustrations with which FDCs come, most often in the same package, involve not only the designer's creativity but especially the postal administration's desire to underline the theme.

The Europa postage stamp (also known as Europa-CEPT until 1992) is an annual joint issue of stamps with a common design or theme by postal administrations of member countries of the European Communities from 1956 to 1959, the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (namely CEPT) from 1960 to 1992, and the PostEurop Association since 1993 [3-5]. Europe is the central theme. EUROPA stamps underline cooperation in the posts domain, taking into account the promotion of philately. They also build awareness of the common roots, culture, and history of Europe and its common goals.

As such, nowadays EUROPA stamp issues are among the most collected and most popular stamps in the world. Since the first issue in 1956, EUROPA stamps have been a tangible symbol of Europe's desire for closer integration and cooperation. To show the EUROPA stamps vital role in European states philately, this paper we proposed an insight into the history of European preoccupations for natural heritage conservation and environmental protection and bring into the discussion only the significant concerns in promoting ecological educational via thematic issues (in this case, Think green! first day covers). In this context, the main objective was to identify, index, and describe the main philatelic pieces - in particular first-day covers - issued in European countries (starting with Italy and
ending with the Vatican), from the beginning of issuing in this field.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The working methodology for this study comes as an accessible concern from all points of view of the current generation. As with the practice of philately, no special, long-term training is required, as, in the present study, no innovative methodology, expensive equipment and/or instruments is required. We analyzed and interpreted this kind of new pictorial data (in the form of FDCs) based on the descriptions made by collectors and philatelists, or by consulting and comparing with other documentation sources and specialized catalogs.

Beyond the passion for thematic philately, as satisfaction for aesthetic need and cultural-educational development, the working methodology consisted of identifying, indexing, and describing the main philatelic FDCs issued in European countries (the last half of those involved in the Think green! initiative).

From the multitude of platforms with philatelic content, we identified over 10 platforms, but for the present study, we limited ourselves to processing the information provided by Colnect, Delcampe, and StampShop (Fig. 1), specialized catalogs, as well as other mainly philatelic trade sites, like eBay and PicClick. To all these platforms are added the groups of philatelist communities from various social networks through which the dissemination of new information is much faster, much more efficient. Also, another source of information is to browse the content of blogs/sites belonging to passionate philatelists.

The selection criterion of the platforms was the free provision of information, and then its easy structuring and indexing. Also, no ethical or other approval was required for the present study, the information processed being public, and platforms with open-source regime. Based on the identified pieces, technical observations were made, mainly related to the characteristics of the postal-philatelic issue. The characteristics in question refer to the date of issue, the size and format of the parts, the way they are arranged for printing, the number of parts (where the information could be found), respectively other data that underlie the description of issue.

Fig. 1. Examples of First-Day Covers philatelic description via StampShop & PicClick
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the searches on different platforms dedicated to philately, it was possible to identify an impressive number of pieces, the first-day covers having applied the EUROPA 2016 postage stamps. For each of the considered pieces, the main technical characteristics were exposed, culminating with the written description of the constituent elements.

Regarding the analysis of the identified pieces, one can easily notice a wide variety of formats, illustrations, and stamps, all of which are meant to highlight the beauty of the Think green concept. In addition to the large number of features that postage stamps possess, a significant addition is also brought by first-day covers. The latter indicates more than the stamps, through the illustrations that complete them, how the postal office administrations decided to make known all over the world the strategy to promote care for the environment, as well as the adaptation to the concept of a sustainable community.

| Table 1. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XVI) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **59**  Italy - 1  |
| FDC in private edition made by Venetia Club  (1/2) with single stamp  |
| 09-05-2016  |
| The pollution also affects hikers, thereby, becoming a greater cause of abandoning mountain climbs being higher because of this than that caused by physical exertion.  |
| Reference sites:  [6]  |
| **60**  Italy - 2  |
| FDC in private edition made by Venetia Club  (2/2) with single stamp  |
| 09-05-2016  |
| Hiker climbing a slope.  |
| Reference sites:  [6]  |
| **61**  Italy - 3  |
| FDC with single stamp  |
| 09-05-2016  |
| Official FDC (variant 1) with the emblem of the Italian Post.  |
| Reference sites:  [7]  |
| **62**  Italy - 4  |
| FDC with single stamp  |
| 09-05-2016  |
| Official FDC (variant 2) with the emblem of the Italian Post.  |
| Reference sites:  [7]  |
|   | Country          | FDC Details                                                                 |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 63 | Italy            | Italy-5: FDC with single stamp, 09-05-2016, FDC in private edition, Capitolium (1852), "embracing a tree". |
| 64 | Italy            | Italy-6: FDC with single stamp, 09-05-2016, FDC in private edition, Capitolium (1853), "the green city". |
| 65 | Jersey           | FDC with series, "Think green!" envelope illustrating a tree spreading roots over Earth, lower right corner collage of leaves with state name. |
| 66 | Kazakhstan       | Kazakhstan-1: FDC with single stamp, 21-10-2016, "first day" stamp, "bouquet" of six leaves also in FDC illustration. |
Table 3. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XVIII)

| No. | Country   | Series | Date       | Description                                                                                     |
|-----|-----------|--------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 67  | Kazakhstan| - 2    | 21-10-2016 | FDC with series, The logo of the "first day" stamp, a "bouquet" of six leaves, is also found in the FDC semi-illustration. |
| 68  | Kazakhstan| - 3    | 21-10-2016 | FDC with series, The logo of the "first day" stamp, a "bouquet" of six leaves, is also found in the FDC semi-illustration. The order of the stamps differs from the previous version. |
| 69  | Kosovo    | - 1    | 09-05-2016 | FDC with series, FDC with the two stamps of the issue.                                           |
| 70  | Kosovo    | - 2    | 09-05-2016 | FDC with souvenir sheet, FDC with souvenir sheet of the issue.                                  |

Reference sites: [16] [17] [18] [19]
Table 4. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XIX)

| No | Country   | FDC with series | Date       | Description                                                                 |
|----|-----------|-----------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 71 | Latvia    | FDC with series | 09-05-2016 | Focusing on recycling, the envelope made of 100% recycled paper, features in the foreground a trunk of a young birch from which a baby squirrel greets with a leaf in his left "hand". |

Reference sites: [20,21]

| No | Country   | FDC           | Date       | Description                                                                 |
|----|-----------|---------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 72 | Lichtenstein | FDC with series | 07-03-2016 | FDC with the two stamps of the issue.                                       |

Reference sites: [22]

| No | Country   | FDC            | Date       | Description                                                                 |
|----|-----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 73 | Lichtenstein | FDC with single stamp | 07-03-2016 | FDC with the first stamp of the issue.                                     |

Reference sites: [23]

| No | Country   | FDC            | Date       | Description                                                                 |
|----|-----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 74 | Lichtenstein | FDC with single stamp | 07-03-2016 | FDC with the second stamp of the issue.                                    |

Reference sites: [23]
| No. | Country     | Description                                                                 |
|-----|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 75  | Lichtenstein | FDC with block of four<br>07-03-2016<br>FDC with a block of four stamps arranged tete-beche. |
| 76  | Lichtenstein | FDC with block of four<br>07-03-2016<br>FDC with block of four imposed stamp. |
| 77  | Lithuania   | FDC with series<br>07-05-2016<br>The electric car is the theme of this envelope dedicated to the issue. |
| 78  | Luxembourg  | FDC with series<br>10-05-2016<br>"Green steps on the path to a green world" could be called the illustration of this envelope. |

Reference sites: [24], [25-27], [28]
| 79 | Macedonia - 1 | FDC with series | 10-05-2016 | The image of an eagle in its habitat. |
|----|----------------|----------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 80 | Macedonia - 2 | FDC with souvenir sheet | 10-05-2016 | The brown bear and the mountain mushrooms are the theme of this semi-illustration. |
| 81 | Madeira - 1 | FDC with single stamp | 09-05-2016 | The theme of the semi-illustration presents in an equilateral triangle the name of the show, and as graphic elements two wind turbines, a cyclist and two stylized trees. |
| 82 | Madeira - 2 | FDC with souvenir sheet | 09-05-2016 | The theme of the semi-illustration presents in an equilateral triangle the name of the show, and as graphic elements two wind turbines, a cyclist and two stylized trees. |

Reference sites:  
[29]  
[30]  
[31]  
[32]
### Table 7. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXII)

| No. | Country      | Description                                                                 |
|-----|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 83  | Malta        | FDC with series 09-05-2016. The semi-illustration of this envelope shows a light bulb with a leaf inside. |
| 84  | Moldova - 1  | FDC with series 05-04-2016. The semi-illustration of this envelope shows a child urged to think freely, ecologically. |
| 85  | Moldova - 2  | FDC with block of six stamps 05-04-2016. Envelope equipped with the package-block of the issue. |
| 86  | Monaco       | FDC with single stamp 09-05-2016. The Royal Palace of the Principality of Monaco is present in the semi-illustration of the envelope. |

Reference sites: [33,34], [35], [36], [37,38]
In addition to the philatelic documents issued by the postal administration of the Republic of Moldova we found, searching on different platforms, the issues that are presented in Fig. 2 [39], Fig. 3 [40] and Fig. 4 [41].

![Fig. 2. Privately First Day Cover with series](image1)

![Fig. 3. Privately First Day Cover with block of six stamps](image2)

![Fig. 4. Privately First Day Cover with series, like a postcard](image3)
| No. | Country                | Issue Details                                                                                                                                       |
|-----|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 87  | Montenegro             | FDC with single stamp 09-05-2016 Green city is the theme of the envelope. Stylized, windows of the blocks, a cup, the blades of wind turbines and a flying bird can be seen. |
|     |                        | Reference sites: [42]                                                                                                                                 |
| 88  | Nagorno-Karabakh - 1   | FDC with series 20-05-2016 "Green wreath" could be the theme of the envelope chosen by the postal administration.                                   |
|     |                        | Reference sites: [43]                                                                                                                                 |
| 89  | Nagorno-Karabakh - 2   | Circulated FDC with series 20-05-2016 "Green wreath" could be the theme of the envelope chosen by the postal administration.                      |
|     |                        | Reference sites: [44]                                                                                                                                 |
| 90  | Nagorno-Karabakh - 3   | Circulated FDC with series 20-05-2016 "Green wreath" could be the theme of the envelope chosen by the postal administration.                      |
|     |                        | Reference sites: [45]                                                                                                                                 |
Table 9. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXIV)

| Reference | Country | FDC Type | Date       | Description                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------|---------|----------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 91        | Nederland | FDC with series | 21-04-2016 | The transition from an industrial city to an ecological one is framed by a heart-shaped bicycle chain.                                         |
| 92        | Norway  | FDC with series | 09-05-2016 | The leaves are the main theme of this envelope.                                                                                           |
| 93        | Poland  | FDC with single stamp | 09-05-2016 | Just green energy sources, such as solar and wind panels.                                                                                 |
| 94        | Portugal | FDC with single stamp | 09-05-2016 | The theme of the semi-illustration presents in an equilateral triangle the name of the show, and as graphic elements two wind turbines, a cyclist and two stylized trees. |
| No. | Country        | Date       | Description                                                                                                                                 |
|-----|----------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 95  | Portugal       | 09-05-2016 | FDC with souvenir sheet<br>The theme of the semi-illustration presents in an equilateral triangle the name of the show, and as graphic elements two wind turbines, a cyclist and two stylized trees. |
| 96  | Romania        | 04-05-2016 | FDC with series<br>Mechanized agriculture bordered by renewable energy sources.                                                            |
| 97  | Russian Federation | 05-08-2016 | FDC with set of 4 perforated stamps<br>Wreath of leaves on the head of a young Slav.                                                      |
| 98  | Russian Federation | 05-08-2016 | FDC with perforated S/S<br>Wreath of leaves on the head of a young Slav.                                                                     |

Reference sites:
- [50]
- [51]
- [52]
- [53]
Table 11. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXVI)

| No. | Country | Issue Details |
|-----|---------|---------------|
| 99  | San Marino | FDC with single stamp  
10-03-2016  
Envelope with the coat of arms of the Republic of San Marino. |
|   | Stillwater, Oklahoma | FDC with single stamp  
10-03-2016  
Palace of the Governors, Oklahoma State Capital. |
|   | San Marino | FDC with single stamp  
10-03-2016  
Tivoli, the Grotesque Fountain, Tivoli, Italy. |

Reference sites: [54] [55] [56] [57]

100 | San Marino | FDC with single stamp  
10-03-2016  
Palazzo Pubblico, seat of government of the Republic of San Marino. |

Reference sites: [54] [55] [56] [57]

101 | Serbia | FDC with series  
09-05-2016  
Child blowing in a mill whose petals are rendered by the sign of recycling. |

Reference sites: [56] [57]

102 | Serbia | FDC with block of six stamps  
09-05-2016  
Envelope stamped with six postal stamps of the issue canceled with the "first day" stamp arranged horizontally. |

Reference sites: [56] [57]
Table 12. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXVII)

| No | Country | FDC Details |
|----|---------|-------------|
| 103 | Serbia - 3 | FDC with block of six stamps  09-05-2016  Envelope stamped with six postal stamps of the issue canceled with the “first day” stamp arranged vertically. |

Reference sites: [58]

| 104 | Slovenia - 1 | FDC with single stamp  05-05-2016  The planet embraced by leaves. |

Reference sites: [59]

| 105 | Slovenia - 2 | FDC with single stamp  27-05-2016  Amazing creativity, seems like thought are disseminating in the air in the form of green leaves. |

Reference sites: [60, 61]

| 106 | Spain - 1 | FDC with single stamp  22-04-2016  A green envelop, the color of leaves, a leaf with petiole and veins can be seen. |

Reference sites: [62]
| Reference sites: | [63] |
|------------------|------|
| 107 Spain - 2    |      |
| FDC with single stamp | 22-04-2016 |
| Planet Earth full of life. | |
| ![Image](image1.png) | |
| Reference sites: | [64] |
| 108 Sweden       |      |
| FDC with single stamp and another issue | 14-01-2016 |
| Envelope in the semi-illustration of which is reproduced the Museum of Natural History made on the occasion of the 100th anniversary. | |
| ![Image](image2.png) | |
| Reference sites: | [65] |
| 109 Switzerland - 1 |      |
| FDC with series | 12-05-2016 |
| The slogan of the issue is framed by three different kinds of leaves. | |
| ![Image](image3.png) | |
| Reference sites: | [66] |
| 110 Switzerland - 2 |      |
| FDC with block of four stamps | 12-05-2016 |
| The slogan of the issue is framed by three different species of leaves. | |
| ![Image](image4.png) | |
Table 14. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXIX)

| No. | Country | FDC Details | Description |
|-----|---------|-------------|-------------|
| 111 | Turkey  | FDC with series 09-05-2016 | Abstract composition consisting of leaves and leafy trees. |
| 112 | Ukraine | FDC with single stamp 15-04-2016 | Just leafy trees |
| 113 | Vatican | FDC with block of six stamps 10-05-2016 | The medallion shows the Vatican Museum. |
| 114 | Vatican | FDC with single stamp 10-05-2016 | A tree in the middle of the field. |

Reference sites: [67], [68], [69], [70]
Table 15. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXX)

| 115  | Vatican - 3 |
|------|-------------|
| FDC  | with single stamp |
|      | 10-05-2016   |
|      | In the medallion, the Vatican Museum. |

Reference sites: [71]

| 116  | Vatican - 4 |
|------|-------------|
| FDC  | with single stamp |
|      | 10-05-2016   |
|      | View of the garden next to the Vatican Museum. |

Reference sites: [72]

| 117  | Vatican - 5 |
|------|-------------|
| FDC  | with single stamp |
|      | 10-05-2016   |
|      | A stamped envelope of Vatican. |

Reference sites: [73]

4. CONCLUSION

Through the philatelic pieces, in a very large number of pictorial data (in form of postal stamps applied on official and privately edition FDCs), we exposed, something that has not been included in philatelic studies so far. By publishing this study we hope that we will make available to all those interested useful tools of information, and philatelic orientation in the European environmental protection activity. This study is mainly addressed to passionate philatelists, but can also be of interest to other professional categories that can develop similar studies starting only from their hobbies. It can be highlighted that philately, especially in this study, is capable of being a true embassy of culture and environmental protection.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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