Enhancing and Conservation of Ecosystem through Philatelic Education in Europe: Think Green Concept (III) - FDCs Research Study

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Authors’ contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author BC designed the study, performed the research analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors ALP and MC managed the analyses of the study. Author ALP managed the literature searches. 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 underlines cooperation in the posts domain, taking into account promotion of thematic philately. They also build awareness of the common roots, culture and history of Europe and its common goals. As such, EUROPA stamps are among the most collected and most popular stamps in the world.
Each year, PostEurop’s Stamps & Philately Working Group selects the EUROPA stamp theme. Think green! was the 2016 theme and, also, the one on which we decided to focus our attention. In this paper we propose an insight into the actual history of Europe preoccupations for environmental protection and thematic philately, and bring into limelight the significant concerns in promoting ecological educational via thematic issues (Think green! stamps). The main objective, for the present work and for the next that will follow, is to identify, index and describe the first day covers (FDCs) issued in European countries, starting with Åland Islands postal administration issues and ending with ones from Isle of Man. Although the working method was the usual one, consisting of consulting databases and specialized catalogs and other documentation resources, addressed in numerous other studies that characterize our philatelic side, the results of the study did not cease to surprise us. The pieces that we managed to identify come to show us that, apart from the state discrepancies and the communication dysfunctions that exist between the different postal administrations of the world, a common issue (such as the Think green! theme in this case) can be more than a good cultural ambassador. Of course, when we refer to the FDCs as a good ambassador, with an undeniable background in promoting the culture and values of a nation, we do not exaggerate in any form. The correspondence from that time, as well as the pieces themselves, as part of a philatelic collection, have by themselves a special significance, capturing the will for better, for the truth and for the beautiful.

Keywords: Philatelic education; European postal administrations; Think green!; FDCs.

ABBREVIATION

**FDC (First Day Cover):** Document with a first day cancellation, not necessarily the one with the special illustration.

1. INTRODUCTION

As it was probably expected, as a result of our current 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, first of all, we decided 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, 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 designers creativity, but especially the postal administrations desire to underline the theme.

Although at first sight it may seem that bringing nothing sensational, the present work was intended to be an exemplary study of good practices in environmental protection, both in theory and in practice, by promoting the concept of sustainably developed community. As such, beyond the diversity of forms of the studied pieces, the values of the harmoniously developed community are more than convincing, to be transposed into the reality of our days: the use of renewable energy resources, travel with less polluting means of transport, preservation and conservation of urban green spaces, and the list goes on.

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, respectively by consulting and comparing with other documentation sources and specialized catalogs.
Beyond the passion for thematic philately, as satisfaction for aesthetic need and as a cultural-educational development, the working methodology consisted in identifying, indexing and describing the main philatelic FDCs issued in European countries (about the first half of those involved in the Think green! initiative).

Philatelic collections and open-source databases have been thoroughly consulted, including Delcampe, eBay, StampShop, PicClick, as well as different dedicated international philatelic catalogs, such as Yvert (Yv), Michael (Mi), Gibson (G) and Scott (S). The above mentioned bibliographic resources offer valuable information and authenticity to clarify the following parameters: date of issue, layout and indexing, respectively their designer and description. At the same time, the open-source philatelic content platforms, especially the forums, have been of great use, as a result of the online meetings, valuable information has been found.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of our visits to online sites, more or less dedicated to philately, we managed to identify, index and describe the FDCs for countries participating in the Think green! initiative. We have chosen to study this philatelic issue, for reasons related to national concerns for environmental protection, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development goals. We managed to underline the technical characteristics of the issued FDCs in the tables from 1 to 15, where we also tried to focus on a brief description of FDCs.

Two FDCs, which we decided to remove outside the tables, are shown in Fig. 1, belonging to Abcházia [5], respectively in Fig. 2, belonging to Belgium postal administration [6]. As can be seen, FDCs have a stamp on the stamps, mainly with the same date as the one of the issue.

![Fig. 1. Official fdc with series - Think green!, abcházia, 2017](image1)

![Fig. 2. Official FDC with single stamp - Think green!, Belgium, 2016](image2)
Although this is not the case, FDCs mainly comes with the textual mention First Day Cover. They can also present a semi-illustration, which can have a special significance, bringing additional information to the piece. Besides the two FDCs, we present a whole series of FDCs, thus reaching a total of 60 pieces. Also, for each piece, we decided to send it directly to its source, in order to allow an easy subsequent documentation.

Table 1. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (I)

| 1 | Åland Islands | Official FDC with series 09-05-2016 |
|---|----------------|-------------------------------------|
|   | The semi-illustration shows a green lung similar to an upside down leafy tree |

Reference sites: Delcampe [7], eBay [8,9], PicClick [10,11], Stampshop [12]

| 2 | Albania | Official FDC with single stamp 09-07-2016 |
|---|---------|------------------------------------------|
|   | The semi-illustration shows a faithful reproduction of the EUROPA stamp |

Reference sites: Delcampe [13], eBay [14, 15], PicClick [16, 17], stampshop [18]

| 3 | Andorra (French PO) | Official FDC with single stamp (Andorra → France circulated) 20-05-2016 |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   | presenting in the background image a sunflower and some solar panels |

Reference sites: Blogspot [19]

| 4 | Andorra (Spanish PO) | Official FDC with single stamp 09-07-2016 |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------------------|
|   | eBay [20], stampshop [21], and [22] |
Table 2. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (II)

| 5  | Armenia                      | ![Image] | Reference sites: Delcampe [23-30], eBay [31], stampshop [32], wopa-plus [33] |
|----|------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | Official FDC with series     |         | 01-12-2016                                                               |
|    | The semi-illustration shows  |         | a steamer of leaves running over the waves                               |

6  Austria

| 6  | Official FDC with single stamp | ![Image] | eBay [31] | eBay [35], PicClick [36], stampshop [37] |
|----|--------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------------------------|
|    | 14-05-2016                     |         |         | Reference sites: Delcampe [24], eBay [34] |
|    | The semi-illustration shows    |         |         | PicClick [37], stampshop [39]           |
|    | a colored map of Austria       |         |         |                                         |

7  Azerbaijan - 1

| 7  | FDC with series                | ![Image] | eBay [38], stampshop [39] |
|----|-------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
|    | 25-01-2016                     |         | Reference sites:         |
|    | The semi-illustration shows    |         | eBay [40], stampshop [41]|
|    | Azerbaijan version for “Think |         | Reference sites:         |
|    | green!” text                   |         | Delcampe [42]            |

8  Azerbaijan - 2

| 8  | FDC with block of four         | ![Image] | eBay [40], stampshop [41] |
|----|-------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
|    | 25-01-2016                     |         | Reference sites:         |
|    | The semi-illustration shows    |         | eBay [40], stampshop [41]|
|    | Azerbaijan version for “Think |         | Reference sites:         |
|    | green!” text                   |         | Delcampe [42]            |

Table 3. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (III)

| 9  | Azerbaijan - 3                 | ![Image] | eBay [40], stampshop [41] |
|----|-------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
|    | FDC with souvenir sheet       |         | Reference sites:         |
|    | 25-01-2016                     |         | eBay [40], stampshop [41]|
|    | The semi-illustration shows    |         | Reference sites:         |
|    | Azerbaijan version for “Think |         | Delcampe [42]            |
|    | green!” text                   |         | Reference sites:         |
|    |                               |         | Delcampe [42]            |
10 Azores - 1
FDC with single stamp
09-05-2016

The semi-illustration shows Azores version for “Think green!” stamp as a rectangular triangle in lower left corner

Reference sites: stampshop [43]

11 Azores - 2
FDC with souvenir sheet
09-05-2016

The semi-illustration shows Azores version for “Think green!” stamp as a rectangular triangle in lower left corner

Reference sites: stampshop [44], wopa-plus [45]

12 Azores - 3
FDC with 3 different stamps
09-05-2016

The semi-illustration shows Azores version for “Think green!” stamp as a rectangular triangle in lower left corner

Reference sites: stampshop [46]

Table 4. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (IV)

13 Belarus - 1
FDC with series
05-04-2016

The semi-illustration shows an aprox. reproduction for Belarus second stamp

Reference sites: Delcampe [47-50], eBay [51], peterstamps [52], stampshop [53]

14 Belarus - 2
FDC with block of four stamps
05-04-2016

The semi-illustration shows an aprox. reproduction for Belarus second stamp

Reference sites: stampshop [54]
15 **Belarus - 3**

FDC with block of four stamps
05-04-2016

The semi-illustration shows a precis reproduction for Belarus postmark

Reference sites: stampboards [55]

16 **Belgium**

Official FDC with single stamp
(Belgium→ France circulated)
20-05-2016

The semi-illustration shows a light bulb with small ecological symbols (electric car, wind turbine, bike)

Reference sites: Blogspot [56]

### Table 5. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (V)

17 **Bosnia & Herzegovina**

FDC with series
09-05-2016

presenting in the background the planet to which a flowing tap is attached

Reference sites: Delcampe [57], stampshop [58]

18 **Bosnia & Herzegovina (Croat post)**

FDC with souvenir sheet
05-04-2016

presenting in the background some wind turbines in full operation stage

Reference sites: stampshop [59]

19 **Bosnia & Herzegovina -1 (Serb post)**

FDC with series
25-04-2016

The illustration of the envelope shows a stylized tree whose trunk with branches is represented by a hand with open palms

Reference sites: Delcampe [60, 61], eBay [62], PicClick [63], stampshop [64]
The illustration of the envelope shows a stylized tree whose trunk with branches is represented by a hand with open palms.

Reference sites: PicClick [65]

Table 6. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (VI)

21 Bosnia & Herzegovina -3 (Serb post)
FDC with block of four
25-04-2016

The illustration of the envelope shows a stylized tree whose trunk with branches is represented by a hand with open palms.

Reference sites: Delcampe [66], eBay [67], PicClick [68], stampshop [69]

22 Bulgaria - 1
FDC with series
26-04-2016

The semi-illustration shows the antithesis between nature and industry.

Reference sites: stampshop [70]

23 Bulgaria - 2
FDC with block of four
26-04-2016

The semi-illustration shows the antithesis between nature and industry.

Reference sites: stampshop [71]

24 Bulgaria - 3
FDC with souvenir sheet
26-04-2016

The semi-illustration shows the antithesis between nature and industry.

Reference sites: stampshop [72]
Table 7. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (VII)

| No. | Country          | Description                                                                                   |
|-----|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 25  | Croatia          | FDC with series 09-05-2016 The image on the envelope is identical to the one on the first day's stamp and represents half a leaf |
|     | Reference sites: | Delcampe [73-76], stampshop [77], wopa-plus [78]                                               |
| 26  | Cyprus - 1       | FDC with series 09-05-2016 The semi-illustration presents a wind turbine on the outskirts of a city |
|     | Reference sites: | Cyprusstamps [79], eBay [80], stampshop [81]                                                   |
| 27  | Cyprus - 2       | FDC with block of four 09-05-2016 The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a hilltop with wind turbines |
|     | Reference sites: | stampshop [82]                                                                               |
| 28  | Cyprus (Turkish post) | FDC with series 12-05-2016 The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a natural composition in which you can see a tulip, a few daisies (?) and a group of multicolored butterflies |
|     | Reference sites: | Cyprusstamps [83], Delcampe [84-87], stampshop [88]                                           |

Table 8. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (VIII)

| No. | Country          | Description                                                                                   |
|-----|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 29  | Czech Republic   | FDC with single stamp 04-05-2016 The semi-illustration of the envelope shows some stylized trees, the one in the foreground having the branches on the left side in the form of a human face |
|     | Reference sites: | Delcampe [89,90], eBay [91]                                                                 |


Denmark - 1
FDC with series
31-03-2016

The semi-illustration of the envelope represents a stylized composition of the idea that Earth offers green resources

Reference sites: stampshop [92]

Denmark - 2
FDC with souvenir sheet
31-03-2016

The semi-illustration of the envelope represents a stylized composition of the idea that Earth offers green resources

Reference sites: stampshop [93]

Estonia
FDC with series
09-05-2016

The illustration of the envelope shows a harmony of nature with the technology (wind turbine, electric car, solar panel)

Reference sites: Delcampe [94-99], stampshop [100], wopa-plus [101]

Table 9. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (IX)

Faroe Islands - 1
FDC with single stamp
09-05-2016

The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a reproduction for Faroe Islands second stamp

Reference sites: stampshop [102], wopa-plus [103]

Faroe Islands - 2
FDC with single stamp
09-05-2016

The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a reproduction for Faroe Islands second stamp

Reference sites: stampshop [102], wopa-plus [103]
| 35 | Faroe Islands - 3 |
|----|------------------|
|     | FDC with series   |
|     | 09-05-2016       |
|     | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a reproduction for Faroe Islands second stamp |
| Reference sites: | stampshop [104], wopa-plus [105] |

| 36 | Faroe Islands - 4 |
|----|------------------|
|     | FDC with block of four |
|     | 09-05-2016       |
|     | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a reproduction for Faroe Islands second stamp |
| Reference sites: | stampshop [106], wopa-plus [107] |

Table 10. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (X)

| 37 | Faroe Islands - 5 |
|----|------------------|
|     | FDC with block of four |
|     | 09-05-2016       |
|     | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a reproduction for Faroe Islands second stamp |
| Reference sites: | stampshop [106], wopa-plus [107] |

| 38 | Faroe Islands - 6 |
|----|------------------|
|     | FDC with block of six |
|     | 09-05-2016       |
|     | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a reproduction for Faroe Islands second stamp |
| Reference sites: | wopa-plus [108] |

| 39 | Finland |
|----|--------|
|     | FDC with single stamp |
|     | 06-05-2016 |
|     | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows the image of a white tree on the green background of a stylized flag |
| Reference sites: | stampshop [109] |
| No. | Country     | Description                                                                 |
|-----|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 40  | France      | FDC with single stamp 06-05-2016. The semi-illustration of the envelope shows the image of a leaf as a support for a sustainable developed community. Reference sites: stampshop [110] |
| 41  | France      | FDC with single stamp 06-05-2016. The semi-illustration of the envelope shows the image of a green planet as a support for a sustainable community. Reference sites: stampshop [111] |
| 42  | Georgia     | FDC with single stamp 24-10-2016. Reference sites: stampshop [112] |
| 43  | Germany     | FDC with single stamp 02-05-2016. The semi-illustration of the envelope shows the EUROPA logo and the issue associated text. Reference sites: [113] |
| 44  | Germany     | FDC with single stamp 02-05-2016. Reference sites: [114] |
Table 12. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (XII)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| **45** | **Gibraltar** |
|   | FDC with series 30-03-2016 |
|   | The semi-illustration shows the a solitary tree, which has the crown like the circumvolutions of the human brain |
|   |   |
| **46** | **Greece - 1** |
|   | FDC with series 11-05-2016 |
|   | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows the enlarged image of the official stamp, focusing on green movement |
|   |   |
| **47** | **Greece - 2** |
|   | FDC with series 11-05-2016 |
|   | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows the enlarged image of the official stamp, focusing on green movement, and a stylized city made of cardboard |
|   |   |
| **48** | **Guernsey** |
|   | FDC with single stamp 06-05-2016 |
|   | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a stylized tree with roots in the Think green! soil |

Reference sites: [stampshop 115]

Reference sites: [116]

Reference sites: Delcampe [117]

Reference sites: [stampshop 118]

Table 13. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (XIII)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| **49** | **Hungary** |
|   | FDC with block of four 06-05-2016 |
|   | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a scroll that applies a vertical line of green color that starts under the emblem of the Hungarian post |

Reference sites: [stampshop 119]
| No. | Iceland - 1 | FDC with single stamp | 25-05-2016 |
|-----|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
|     |             | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a cloud callout with Iceland version for Think green! text |

**Reference sites:** stampshop [120]

| No. | Iceland - 2 | FDC with single stamp | 25-05-2016 |
|-----|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
|     |             | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a cloud callout with Iceland version for Think green! text |

**Reference sites:** stampshop [120]

| No. | Iceland - 3 | FDC with series | 25-05-2016 |
|-----|-------------|----------------|-------------|
|     |             | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a cloud callout with Iceland version for Think green! text |

**Reference sites:** stampshop [121]

| No. | Iceland - 4 | FDC with block of four | 25-05-2016 |
|-----|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|
|     |             | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a cloud callout with Iceland version for Think green! text |

**Reference sites:** stampshop [122]

| No. | Iceland - 5 | FDC with block of four | 25-05-2016 |
|-----|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|
|     |             | The semi-illustration of the envelope shows a cloud callout with Iceland version for Think green! text |

**Reference sites:** stampshop [122]

Table 14. Technical characteristics for the Think green! FDCs (XIV)
In addition to the present pieces, we decided to complete the series with a few circulated FDCs that we have included in the Appendix section, respectively, as follows, in Fig. 3 [127], Fig. 4 [128,129] and Fig. 5 [130].

4. CONCLUSION

The first day covers (FDCs) which we have managed to identify, index and describe, during the present work, are complementary to those issued by the postal administrations (in stamps format), and come to certify, in an integrating form, the concerns for the ecological education and environmental protection, starting only from a green thinking perspective. More than that, this study brings to the fore, in addition to the creativity of the designers and the beauty of the FDCs exhibited, a pragmatic, not just symbolic side, that outlines exactly what it takes for the communities concerned to develop sustainably. The idea that comes out, of the FDCs presentation, is that we must take attitude, and we must, above all, adopt a healthy living regime,
in communion with nature. Although such a regime will start with the use of renewable resources, it will not stop at that. It is up to each of us to succeed, to find new ways of approach, and to come up with new solutions for the community.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX

Fig. 3. Circulated official FDC with single stamp - Think green!, Albania, 2016

Fig. 4. Circulated official FDCs with single stamp - Think green!, Andorra (French & Spanish post), 2016

Fig. 5. Circulated official FDC with series - Think green!, Belarus, 2016

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