



# **Enhancing and Conservation of Ecosystem through Philatelic Education in Europe: Think Green Concept (V) - Maxicards Research Study**

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## **Authors' contributions**

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

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## **ABSTRACT**

Each year, PostEurop's Stamps & Philately Working Group selects the Europa stamp theme. "Think green!" was the 2016 theme. Europa stamps 2016 are very special stamps, with "Think Green" theme aimed to create awareness and give a wakeup call. Its time to protect our environment for the better future of the coming generations, and to contribute to socio-economical sustainable development. In this context, we propose an insight into the history of Europe philatelic preoccupations for natural heritage conservation, and bring into discussion the significant concerns

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in promoting ecological educational via thematic issues - the Think green! maximum postcards. As such, the main objective is to identify, index and describe the main philatelic pieces (maxicards) issued in European countries, from the beginning of issuing in this field. Identification, indexing, analysis and description of maxims made in terms of information provided by platforms such as Delcampe®, eBay®, PicClick® etc, shows us that the concern for ecological education through philately is well-intentioned and well-received among collectors and the general public.

*Keywords: European postal administrations; maxicards; philatelic education; think green.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A Frenchman, Georges Herpin, coined the word Philately, meaning the study of postage stamps, stamped envelopes, postmarks, postcards and other material relating to postal delivery [1]. It has been derived from Greek “philos” meaning “love” and “ateleia” meaning “that which is tax-free”; the post came free of charge to the recipient rendering it untaxed.

As a basic element of philately, the stamp is an effective communication tool used both nationally and internationally, providing a miniature view of the cultural, artistic, and historical heritage of a country [2]. If philately means collecting stamps, it also acquires new values. We are talking about a means of mass information and knowledge, education (in many cases even ecological education) [3], and especially promotion around the world. The stamp travels everywhere and with it the treasure of our country.

Stamp collecting is all about collecting stamps and arranging them in albums. Philately, is real serious stamp study. A philatelist collects stamps, arranges them and knows a whole lot about its history, manufacture and about the information portrayed on it. As such, philately has been classified into [1,4]:

- traditional – collecting stamps country wide. This includes collecting all kinds of stamps, essays, proofs, watermarks, gum, errors and forgeries;
- postal history – tracing the postal history of a country through philatelic material. This includes collecting postal articles showing markings, postal routes, postal rates, development of postal system, automation of mail. disaster mail, maritime mail etc.
- postal stationery – collecting post cards, envelopes, covers etc.;
- aero-philately – collecting aviation and airmail stamps, postal articles carried or dropped from air, cancellations, rocket mail, balloon mail and pigeon mail;

- thematic philately – collecting stamps pertaining to a theme like birds, flowers etc.;
- literature philately – collecting literature on stamps like catalogues, research articles, handbooks, philatelic periodicals etc;
- fiscal philately – collection of revenue stamps and stamped documents which have been used to pay revenues or taxes;
- maximaphilly – collection of picture postcards showing the stamp design or a picture with some relation to the stamp on it;
- astrophilately – collecting stamps related to space, rocket mail, astronomy, history of space research etc;
- mophila – collection of modern stamps restricted to last 15 years;
- social philately – collection of postal articles describing the social history.

For this paper, we bring back the thematic philately, more precisely the series of Europa CEPT postage stamps, and the associated maximum postcards. 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 (1956-1959), the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) from 1960 to 1992, and the PostEurop Association since 1993 [5]. 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 stamp issues [6,7],and the associated FDCs [8,4] 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.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Objectively speaking, beyond our 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 maximum postcards for the Think green! issue. At the same time, the open-source philatelic content platforms (such as Colnect® and StampWorld® for postage stamps, and Delcampe®, eBay® and PicClick® for maximum postcards) have been of great use. Also, the discussion forums, where as a result of the online meetings, valuable information has been found. Regarding the analysis and description of the exhibited pieces, it was made unitary, for each postcard support separately. We started from the postage stamp that obliterates

the support postcard and a correlation was made, in the vast majority of cases, between the two elements.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This article complements the series of articles dedicated to the philatelic issue Europe 2016, respectively the articles related to postage stamps [6,7], as well as those with reference to FDCs [8,4]. In order to complete the idea of promoting ecological education, we chose to identify, index (see Table 1), analyze and describe the maximum postcards. They in turn have a special role in promoting the notions of ecology applied among the younger generations, which is why they should not be overlooked.

**Table 1. The situation regarding the existence of the Think green! maximum cards**

No.	Country (postal office)	Maximum cards	No.	Country (postal office)	Maximum cards
1*	Abcházia	-	34	Ireland	-
2	Åland Islands	-	35	Isle of Man	-
3	Albania	-	36	Italy	xx
4	Andorra (French post)	-	37	Jersey	-
5	Andorra (Spanish post)	-	38	Kazakhstan	xx
6	Armenia	-	39	Kosovo	-
7	Austria	x	40	Latvia	-
8	Azerbaijan	-	41	Liechtenstein	xx
9	Azores	-	42	Lithuania	-
10	Belarus	-	43	Luxembourg	-
11	Belgium	-	44	Macedonia	-
12	Bosnia & Herzegovina	-	45	Madeira	-
13	Bosnia & Herzegovina (Croat post)	-	46	Malta	x
14	Bosnia & Herzegovina (Serb post)	-	47	Moldova	xxx
15	Bulgaria	-	48	Monaco	-
16	Croatia	x	49	Montenegro	-
17	Cyprus	-	50	Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenian post)	x
18	Cyprus (Turkish post)	-	51	Netherland	-
19	Czech Republic	-	52	Norway	-
20	Denmark	-	53	Poland	-
21	Estonia	xx	54	Portugal	-
22	Faroe Islands	-	55	Romania	-
23	Finland	-	56	Russia	xxxx
24	France	x	57	San Marino	-
25	Georgia	-	58	Serbia	xx
26	Germany	-	59	Slovakia	x
27	Gibraltar	-	60	Slovenia	xx
28	Great Britain	-	61	Spain	x
29	Greece	-	62	Sweden	-
30	Greenland	-	63	Switzerland	-
31	Guernsey	-	64	Turkey	-
32	Hungary	-	65	Ukraine	-
33	Iceland	-	66	Vatican	x

*Legend: Shows that no philatelic items have been identified (maximum postcards). x shows that a maximum postcard has been identified, analyzed, and described; each x represents a stand-alone postcard*

**Table 2. The characteristics for the “Think green!” maximum postcards (I)**

<p><b>1. Austria - maxicard</b></p> <p>The support postcard represents an extension of the postage stamp, which was cancelled with the special stamp illustrating a cyclist, dated 14.05.2016, Vienna [9].</p>	
<p><b>2. Croatia - maxicard</b></p> <p>The support postcard represents an extension of the postage stamp, which was cancelled with the special stamp illustrating a leaf [10].</p>	
<p><b>3. Estonia - maxicard #1</b></p> <p>The support postcard represents an extension of the postage stamp, which was cancelled with the special stamp illustrating a leaf [11].</p>	
<p><b>4. Estonia - maxicard #2</b></p> <p>The support postcard represents an extension of the postage stamp, which was cancelled with the special stamp illustrating a stylized human brain with the message "Think green!" [11].</p>	
<p><b>5. France - maxicard</b></p> <p>The support postcard represents an extension of the postage stamp, which was cancelled with the special stamp illustrating a stylized house with a green roof and a cyclist [12].</p>	

**Table 3. The characteristics for the “Think green!” maximum postcards (II)**

<p><b>6. Italy - maxicard #1</b></p> <p>The first of the two maxims captures the image of a tree that literally embraces the globe with its crown, both in the background image and in the postage stamp applied [13].</p>	
<p><b>7. Italy - maxicard #2</b></p> <p>The second maxim has in the background the already established image of the cyclist pedaling towards a small town that wants to be in harmony with nature [14].</p>	
<p><b>8. Kazakhstan - maxicard #1*</b></p> <p>The image of the support postcard closely reproduces the layout of the imposed postage stamp [15-17].</p>	
	

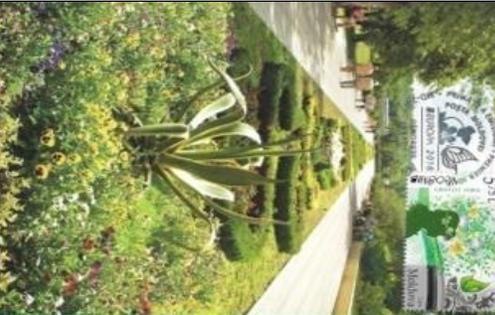
\*several variations are exposed in relation to the position of the pieces that cross the postcard

**Table 4. The characteristics for the “Think green!” maximum postcards (III)**

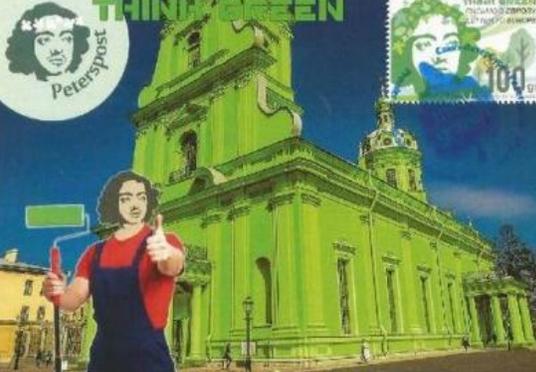
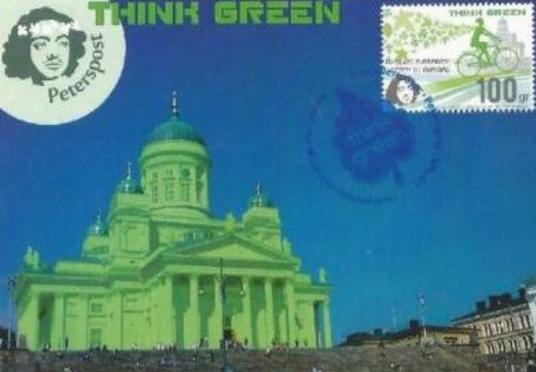
<p><b>9. Kazakhstan - maxicard #2*</b></p> <p>The futuristic image of the city of Astana designated host EXPO 2017 [18].</p>	
	
<p><b>10. Liechtenstein - maxicard #1</b></p> <p>The illustrated postcard image used as a support features a collage of eco-themed logos listed on 100% recycled paper [19,20].</p>	
<p><b>11. Liechtenstein - maxicard #2</b></p> <p>The image of the illustrated postcard used as a support shows a light bulb (symbol of enlightenment) around which life revolves [19,21].</p>	

*\*several variations are exposed in relation to the position of the pieces that cross the postcard; also, the color of the special stamp applied over the postage stamp varies*

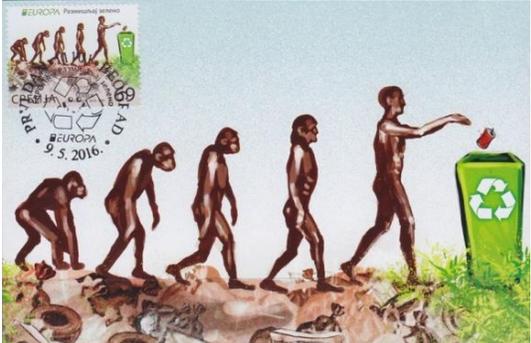
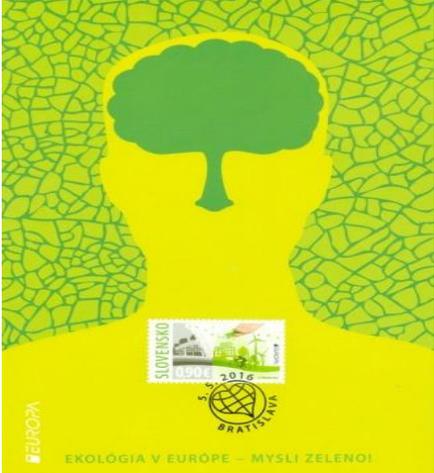
**Table 5. The characteristics for the “Think green!” maximum postcards (IV)**

<p><b>12. Malta - maxicard</b></p> <p>The image of the support postcard reproduces an expanded fragment of the layout of the imposed postage stamp [22].</p>	
<p><b>13. Moldova - maxicard #1</b></p> <p>The support postcard represents a hilly landscape in the immediate vicinity of some human settlements.</p>	
<p><b>14. Moldova - maxicard #2</b></p> <p>Spring flowers: snowdrops and crocuses.</p>	
<p><b>15. Moldova - maxicard #3</b></p> <p>The illustration of the postcard shows a landscape from the Dendrariu Park in Chisinau after a photo by Alexandr Kornienko. The illustration was edited by Poșta Moldovei (code 4/2014) in a circulation of 500 copies [23-25].</p>	
<p><b>16. Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenian post) - maxicard</b></p> <p>The illustrated support is a collage of landscapes within the Khosrov Forest State Reserve [26,27].</p>	

**Table 6. The characteristics for the “Think green!” maximum postcards (V)**

<p><b>17. Russia - maxicard #1</b></p> <p>The support postcard represents a view of the Moscow River [28].</p>	
<p><b>18. Russia - maxicard #2</b></p> <p>The support postcard represents a capitol-type building in Russia [28].</p>	
<p><b>19. Russia - maxicard #3</b></p> <p>The support postcard is a church-type building in Russia [28].</p>	
<p><b>20. Russia - maxicard #4</b></p> <p>The postcard represents a cathedral building in Russia [28].</p>	

**Table 7. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” maximum cards (VI)**

<p><b>21. Serbia - maxicard #1</b></p> <p>The evolution from monkey to man who recycles [29].</p>	 An illustration showing the evolution of man from a monkey on the left to a modern man on the right. The modern man is standing next to a green recycling bin with a white recycling symbol. The background is a light blue sky with some clouds. There is a small circular stamp in the top left corner with the text "#EUROPA Prvenstvo zelenosti" and "PRVI DAN 27. 5. 2016. EUROPA 9. 5. 2016."
<p><b>22. Serbia - maxicard #2</b></p> <p>Little girl blowing in the recycling mill [29].</p>	 An illustration of a young girl with blonde hair blowing into a green recycling symbol that is shaped like a windmill. The background is a light blue sky. There is a small circular stamp in the top right corner with the text "#EUROPA Načiniljig zelenosti" and "PRVI DAN 27. 5. 2016. EUROPA 9. 5. 2016."
<p><b>23. Slovakia - maxicard</b></p> <p>The idea of thinking green is stylized by a tree that takes the place of the brain [30].</p>	 A stylized illustration of a human head in profile, facing right. The head is filled with a green, textured pattern that resembles a tree or a brain. The background is a light green color. There is a small rectangular stamp in the bottom left corner with the text "SLOVENSKO" and "2016". At the bottom of the illustration, there is a small circular logo with the text "BRATISLAVA" and "EKOLÓGIA V EUROPE - MYSLI ZELENO!"
<p><b>24. Slovenia - maxicard #1</b></p> <p>The image of the support postcard closely reproduces the layout of the imposed postage stamp, 27.05.2016, Maribor [31]</p>	 A postcard illustration of a green city with buildings, trees, and a cyclist. The background is a light green color. There is a small rectangular stamp in the top right corner with the text "Slovenija" and "0,64". Below the stamp, there is a small circular logo with the text "EUROPA" and "PRVI DAN 27. 5. 2016 2101 MARIBOR". At the bottom of the illustration, there is the text "THINK GREEN" and "EUROPA".

**Table 8. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” maximum cards (VII)**

<p><b>25. Slovenia - maxicard #2</b></p> <p>The image of the support postcard closely reproduces the layout of the imposed postage stamp, 27.05.2016, Maribor [31]</p>	
<p><b>26. Spain - maxicard</b></p> <p>The image of the support postcard closely reproduces the layout of the imposed postage stamp, 22.05.2016, Madrid [32].</p>	
<p><b>27. Vatican - maxicard</b></p> <p>View from the Vatican Garden [33].</p>	

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The novelty of this study is that we try to bring, to the current and future generations, a hint of the environmental protection history, in general, and Think green! issues, in particular. Through the philatelic pieces, in a very large number of pictorial data (in form of maximum postcards), we expose something that has not been included in Romanian philatelic studies so far. By publishing this study we hope that we will make available to all those interested a useful tools of information, and philatelic orientation in the European environmental protection activity via philatelic issues. 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 thematic philately, especially in the case of this study (through the 27 indexed and analyzed maximum cards), is capable of being a true embassy of culture and environmental protection. The 27 maximum postcards from the 15 countries reflect a preference for the subject of ecology, with affinities towards the use of bicycles instead of vehicles for urban transport, towards ensuring green areas and a climate conducive to urban ecosystems, etc.

#### DISCLAIMER

The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and

producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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