

## WFWP Albania: Eco-Fest Youth Gathering And Concert in the Peace Embassy

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On December 3, WFWP Albania held an "Eco-Fest" - a youth gathering and a concert - under the motto "Choose The Planet Not The Plastic," sponsored by the National Youth Congress and the Municipality of Tirana, in the framework of "Tirana European Youth Capital 2022." The event took place in the Peace Embassy and attracted around 300 participants, including the Deputy Minister of Education, Ms. Nina Guga, and Deputy Minister of Environment, Ms. Almira Xhembulla. "Eco-Fest" was a culmination of the six-month-long project "Youth for the Environment," which started with a training on the harmful effects of plastic organized in June.



After a period of preparation and planning during the summer months, and gaining the necessary permission from the Ministry of Education and Sports, WFWP Albania held presentations on the harmful effects of plastic in 18 schools (mainly high schools, and two elementary) in Tirana, Elbasan, Durrës, and Vlorë. Most of the presentations were done by the project coordinator, Majlinda Ziko. However, in the city of Vlorë, WFWP Albania had help from Endora Çelohoxha, a young WFWP member and environmental activist. Besides the educational presentations, the students were asked to participate in a competition for environmental project ideas and videos. Altogether, 12 schools sent us their submissions, which were evaluated by their peers, according to the criteria of clarity of purpose, feasibility, and potential impact, and the representatives from each school were invited to present their ideas during the "Eco-Fest" concert.

The event on December 3 started with greetings from both Deputy Ministers, who expressed their

appreciation for WFP Albania's initiative. Their positive reception must have been sincere since, after the event, both of them posted about it on their public social media sites. The next person to speak was Ms. Enkelejda Pjetri, the National Youth Congress Representative. She was followed by presentations from the students, who talked with a lot of confidence and poise, filling the hall with enthusiasm and excitement. The spirit was brought even higher by a dance performed by international student volunteers from Universal Peace Academy (UPA), and a performance by famous Albanian singers, Lind and Venera.



At the end of the program, the winners of the competition were announced. The first prize of 500 Euros went to the "Partizani" high school team, who presented an idea of a "BinFinder," a phone app that allows the user to locate the closest recycling bin quickly. The second prize of 400 Euros went to Sami Frasheri high school for their "Trash2Cash" project idea, which also involved creating a phone application, that allows citizens to gather virtual TCoins for recycled plastic deposited in a Reverse Vending Machine. The school has already received a 1000 Euro prize in another competition for this idea and is reaching out to various donors to collect all necessary funds to install the first Reverse Vending Machine in their school. The third prize of 300 Euros went to the Naim Frasheri school from Durres. Their idea involved collecting and selling plastic to a recycling plant and with the money earned, producing fabric bags with the help of the community.



Among other projects which deserve attention was a recycling initiative presented by the students of Arben Broci high school, who produced handbags knitted with recycled plastic and brooms with plastic from big water bottles.

The remaining nine schools, who did not win the main prizes, received 100 Euros each for their participation, and those who won 4th, 5th, and 6th place, and the most likes on Facebook for their videos, received additional prizes of trees to plant, balls, yoga mats and a coupon for books, respectively. The monetary prizes in the competition were sponsored by FFWPU Europe, WFPW Europe, and a few individual donors.

All participating teams also received fabric bags with the slogan "Say no to plastic" and the logo of WFPW and the project donors. All event participants received an innovative gauze bag for daily grocery shopping. In addition, videos made by the students posted on our Facebook page received more than 37,500 views and around 20,460 interactions, including likes or comments.

WFPW Albania hopes that this initiative has raised environmental awareness in the young generation and will lead to new, more responsible, and nature-friendly habits.