**Let’s take action**

One of the main challenges nowadays is to educate students on how to take action when facing a real-life problem, such as waste management.

Official data shows that in 2011 the total percentage of recycling of paper, plastic, metal and glass was 26%. Cyprus has to reach a goal of 50% by 2020.  
Despite recording a steady increase, only 30% of paper waste is recycled.  Plastic recycling levels are even lower at a mere 11%. In 2012 Cyprus ranked 3rd in Europe after Switzerland and Denmark in the production of municipal waste.  It ranked 2nd in the EU28. In 2010 Cyprus ranked first in the production of municipal waste.

This data proves that Cyprus needs to promote education for waste management by addressing to students the 5R’s (Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Respect). It is important though to address these actions under the concept of sustainability, so that students realise that their actions influence not only their lives, but also the lives of future generations.

Having in mind all the above, in our school we decided to take action and find ways to promote waste management at school and at home. Our school consists of 35 students and 5 teachers. After investigating the 17 SDGs, we came into the conclusion that the Sustainable Development Goal 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, is directly connected to our actions. The idea was to teach our students how to acquire a more sustainable way of living (concerning waste management), and at the same time to give the chance to other schools to come and see how we do that. So, we took the following steps:

STEP 1: Our students had the chance to learn what is sustainable development and how we can promote a sustainable way of living at home.

STEP 2: Along with the students, we decided what kind of actions should we take so that to promote waste management in our school and at home.

STEP 3: We all took action – we started collecting paper, plastic, oil, organic waste and batteries for recycling.

STEP 4: Along with the students we decided that we could recycle paper at school. We bought the necessary equipment and created a workshop to recycle paper (our goal was to recycle all waste paper in our school).

STEP 5: For the last 4 years we are producing recycled paper by waste paper produced in our school.

STEP 6: The product is used in art lessons.

STEP 7: We decided that we can share our expertise with teachers and students from other schools (so far 10 schools have visited our school to see how we do it – some of them created their own workshop at school too!).

Along with the workshop for recycling paper, we reused waste to create mosaics and pots for planting, we got tires from cars to create tree basins and we use organic waste to create organic fertilizer (compost) for our garden. All these actions are still happening in our school and every day our students are becoming more environmentally conscious. Our goal is to educate students to LOVE the environment and TAKE ACTIONS to preserve it.

DIFFICULTIES: Since our school is a public school, one of the most important difficulties that we face is funding. Funding comes from the government and it does not include money for initiatives like this. Time is also an issue, since the timetable is very tight and does not include time for creative actions such as these.