



# **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 Europe 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.

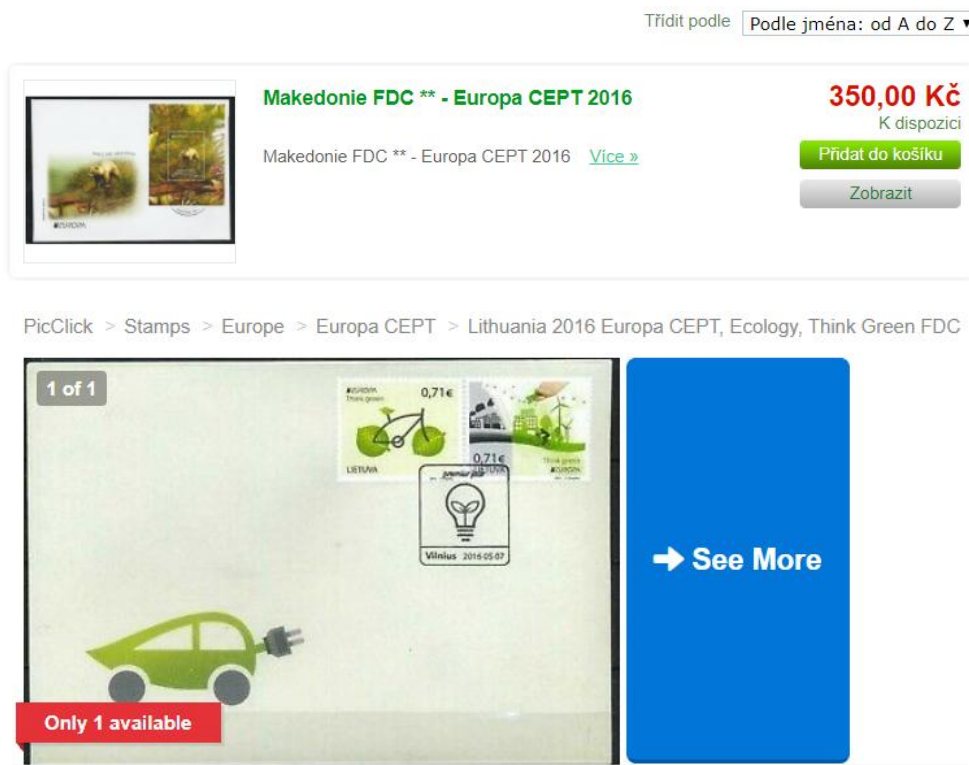


Fig. 1. Examples of First-Day Covers philatelic description via StampShop & PicClick





### 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)**

<p>59 Italy - 1</p> <hr/> <p>FDC in private edition made by Venetia Club (1/2) with single stamp 09-05-2016</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [6]</p>	
<p>60 Italy - 2</p> <hr/> <p>FDC in private edition made by Venetia Club (2/2) with single stamp 09-05-2016</p> <p>Hiker climbing a slope.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [6]</p>	
<p>61 Italy - 3</p> <hr/> <p>FDC with single stamp 09-05-2016</p> <p>Official FDC (variant 1) with the emblem of the Italian Post.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [7]</p>	
<p>62 Italy - 4</p> <hr/> <p>FDC with single stamp 09-05-2016</p> <p>Official FDC (variant 2) with the emblem of the Italian Post.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [7]</p>	


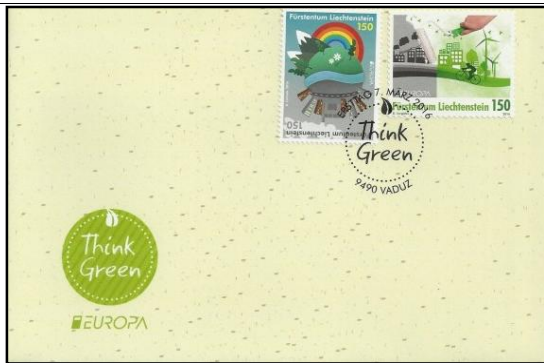

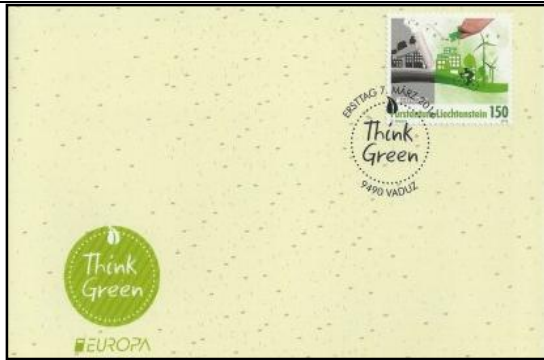
**Table 2. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XVII)**

<p>63 Italy - 5                  FDC with single stamp                  09-05-2016                  FDC in private edition, Capitolium (1852),                  "embracing a tree".</p>	 <p>Europa 2016 - Albero                  F.D.C. Capitolium 1852                  21/2016 IT</p>
<p>Reference sites: [8-10]</p>	
<p>64 Italy - 6                  FDC with single stamp                  09-05-2016                  FDC in private edition, Capitolium (1853), "the green city".</p>	 <p>Europa 2016 - Città                  F.D.C. Capitolium 1853                  22/2016 IT</p>
<p>Reference sites: [8-10]</p>	
<p>65 Jersey                  FDC with series                  The theme chosen to illustrate the envelope is a tree that spreads its roots over the Earth. In the lower right corner, a collage of leaves with the name of the state of Jersey.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [11-14]</p>	
<p>66 Kazachstan - 1                  FDC with single stamp                  21-10-2016                  The logo of the "first day" stamp, a "bouquet" of six leaves, is also found in the FDC semi-illustration.</p>	 <p>EUROPA                  Қазақстан                  Kazachstan                  F.D.C. Capitolium 1853                  21/2016 IT</p>
<p>Reference sites: [15]</p>	



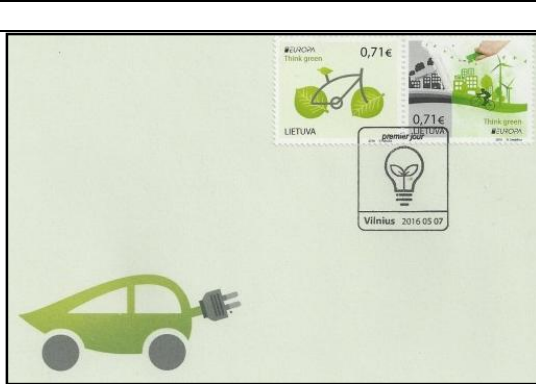

**Table 3. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XVIII)**

<p>67 Kazakhstan - 2                  FDC with series                  21-10-2016                  The logo of the "first day" stamp, a "bouquet" of six leaves, is also found in the FDC semi-illustration.</p>	 <p>The image shows a First Day Cover (FDC) for Kazakhstan. On the left, there is a large green logo consisting of six leaves arranged in a circular pattern, with the word 'EUROPA' written vertically to its left. In the top right corner, there are two postage stamps. The top stamp is a 300 Euro stamp featuring a green landscape with wind turbines and solar panels, with the text 'EXPO 2017 Future Energy' and 'Kazakhstan'. The bottom stamp is a 300 Euro stamp featuring a green landscape with wind turbines and solar panels, with the text 'EXPO 2017 Future Energy' and 'Kazakhstan'. Below the stamps, there is a circular postmark with the text 'ALFAШҚЫ КҮННІҢ ХАТ ҚАЛТАСЫ' and 'FIRST DAY COVER'. At the bottom right, there is a logo for 'КАЗПОЧТА'.</p>
<p>Reference sites: [16]</p>	
<p>68 Kazakhstan - 3                  FDC with series                  21-10-2016                  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.</p>	 <p>The image shows a First Day Cover (FDC) for Kazakhstan, similar to the previous one. It features the same large green logo of six leaves and the word 'EUROPA' on the left. The postage stamps in the top right corner are the same as in the previous FDC, but their order is different. The circular postmark and the 'КАЗПОЧТА' logo are also present.</p>
<p>Reference sites: [17]</p>	
<p>69 Kosovo - 1                  FDC with series                  09-05-2016                  FDC with the two stamps of the issue.</p>	 <p>The image shows a First Day Cover (FDC) for Kosovo. On the left, there is a logo consisting of a stylized tree with green leaves and the text 'Posta e Kosovës' and 'Mendo gjelbër 09.05.2016'. On the right, there are two postage stamps. The top stamp is a 1 Euro stamp featuring a green landscape with wind turbines and solar panels, with the text 'KOSOVA' and '09.05.2016'. The bottom stamp is a 2.10 Euro stamp featuring a green landscape with wind turbines and solar panels, with the text 'KOSOVA' and '09.05.2016'. At the bottom left, there is a logo for 'First Day Cover'.</p>
<p>Reference sites: [18]</p>	
<p>70 Kosovo - 2                  FDC with souvenir sheet                  09-05-2016                  FDC with souvenir sheet of the issue.</p>	 <p>The image shows a First Day Cover (FDC) for Kosovo, similar to the previous one. It features the same logo on the left. On the right, there is a large, stylized green tree graphic that incorporates the two postage stamps from the previous FDC. The circular postmark and the 'First Day Cover' logo are also present.</p>
<p>Reference sites: [19]</p>	

**Table 4. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XIX)**


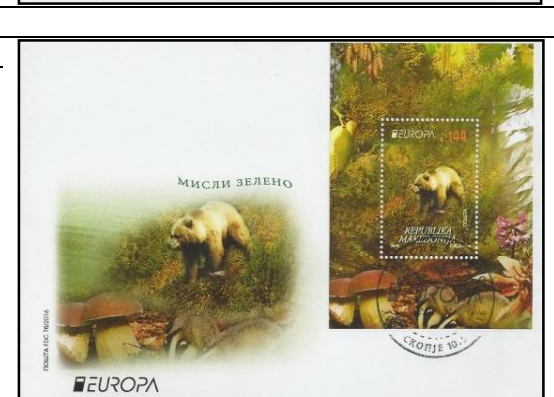


<p>71 Latvia                  FDC with series                  09-05-2016                  Focusing on recycling, the envelope made of 100% recycled paper, features in the foreground a trunk of a young birch from which a baby squirrel greets with a leaf in his left "hand".</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [20,21]</p>	
<p>72 Lichtenstein - 1                  FDC with series                  07-03-2016                  FDC with the two stamps of the issue.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [22]</p>	
<p>73 Lichtenstein - 2                  FDC with single stamp                  07-03-2016                  FDC with the first stamp of the issue.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [23]</p>	
<p>74 Lichtenstein - 3                  FDC with single stamp                  07-03-2016                  FDC with the second stamp of the issue.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [23]</p>	

**Table 5. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XX)**


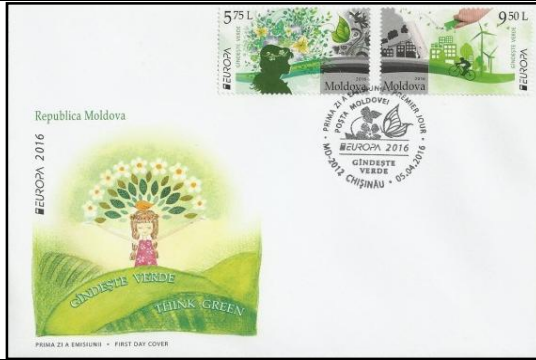


<p>75 Lichtenstein - 4                  FDC with block of four                  07-03-2016                  FDC with a block of four stamps arranged tete-beche.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [24]                  76 Lichtenstein - 5                  FDC with block of four                  07-03-2016                  FDC with block of four imposed stamp.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [24]                  77 Lithuania                  FDC with series                  07-05-2016                  The electric car is the theme of this envelope dedicated to the issue.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [25-27]                  78 Luxembourg                  FDC with series                  10-05-2016                  "Green steps on the path to a green world" could be called the illustration of this envelope.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [28]</p>	



**Table 6. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXI)**

<p>79 Macedonia - 1 FDC with series 10-05-2016</p> <p>The image of an eagle in its habitat.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [29]</p> <p>80 Macedonia - 2 FDC with souvenir sheet 10-05-2016</p> <p>The brown bear and the mountain mushrooms are the theme of this semi-illustration.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [30]</p> <p>81 Madeira - 1 FDC with single stamp 09-05-2016</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [31]</p> <p>82 Madeira - 2 FDC with souvenir sheet 09-05-2016</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [32]</p>	

**Table 7. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXII)**

<p>83 Malta                  FDC with series                  09-05-2016                  The semi-illustration of this envelope shows a light bulb with a leaf inside</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [33,34]</p>	
<p>84 Moldova - 1                  FDC with series                  05-04-2016                  The semi-illustration of this envelope shows a child urged to think freely, ecologically.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [35]</p>	
<p>85 Moldova - 2                  FDC with block of six stamps                  05-04-2016                  Envelope equipped with the package-block of the issue.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [36]</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [37,38]</p>	

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







Fig. 3. Privately First Day Cover with block of six stamps







Fig. 4. Privately First Day Cover with series, like a postcard





**Table 8. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXIII)**

<p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [42]</p>	
<p>88 Nagorno-Karabakh - 1                  FDC with series                  20-05-2016                  "Green wreath" could be the theme of the envelope chosen by the postal administration.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [43]</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [44]</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [45]</p>	




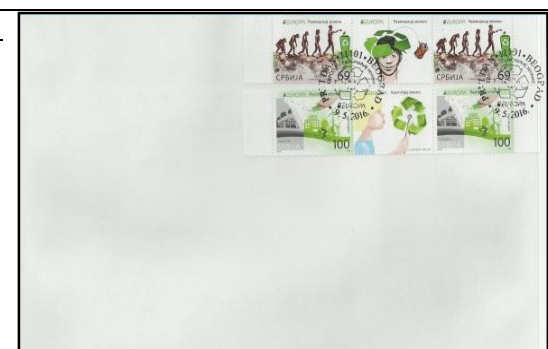
**Table 9. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXIV)**

<p>91 <u>Nederland</u>                  FDC with series                  21-04-2016                  The transition from an industrial city to an ecological one is framed by a heart-shaped bicycle chain.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [46]</p>	
<p>92 <u>Norway</u>                  FDC with series                  09-05-2016                  The leaves are the main theme of this envelope.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [47]</p>	
<p>93 <u>Poland</u>                  FDC with single stamp                  09-05-2016                  Just green energy sources, such as solar and wind panels.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [48]</p>	
<p>94 <u>Portugal - 1</u>                  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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [49]</p>	





**Table 10. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXV)**

<p>95 Portugal - 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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [50]                  96 Romania                  FDC with series                  04-05-2016                  Mechanized agriculture bordered by renewable energy sources.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [51]                  97 Russian Federation - 1                  FDC with set of 4 perforated stamps                  05-08-2016                  Wreath of leaves on the head of a young Slav.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [52]                  98 Russian Federation - 2                  FDC with perforated S/S                  05-08-2016                  Wreath of leaves on the head of a young Slav.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [53]</p>	

**Table 11. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXVI)**

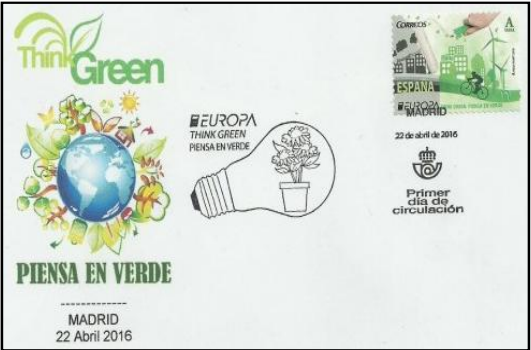



<p>99 San Marino - 1                  FDC with single stamp                  10-03-2016                  Envelope with the coat of arms of the Republic of San Marino.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [54]</p>	
<p>100 San Marino - 2                  FDC with single stamp                  10-03-2016                  Palazzo Pubblico, seat of government of the Republic of San Marino.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [55]</p>	
<p>101 Serbia - 1                  FDC with series                  09-05-2016                  Child blowing in a mill whose petals are rendered by the sign of recycling.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [56]</p>	
<p>102 Serbia - 2                  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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [57]</p>	

**Table 12. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXVII)**

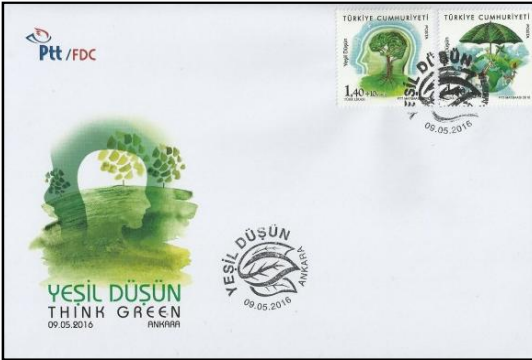
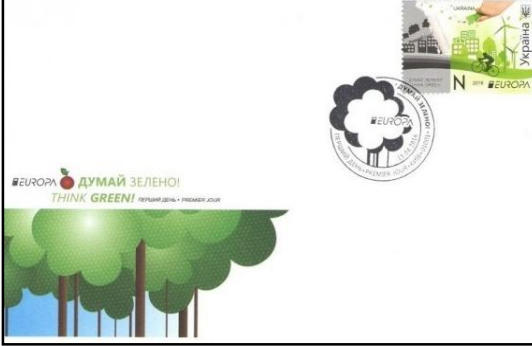


<p>103 Serbia - 3                  FDC with block of six stamps                  09-05-2016                  Envelope stamped with the "first day" stamp arranged vertically.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [58]</p>	
<p>104 Slovenia - 1                  FDC with single stamp                  05-05-2016                  The planet embraced by leaves.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [59]</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [60,61]</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [62]</p>	



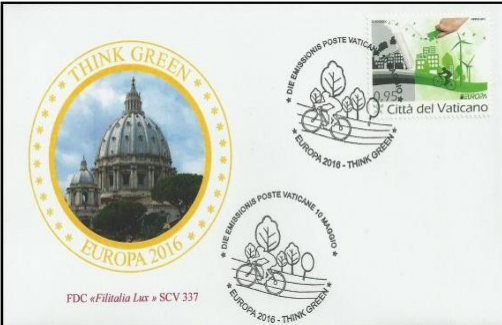


**Table 13. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXVIII)**

<p>107 Spain - 2                  FDC with single stamp                  22-04-2016                  Planet Earth full of life.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [63]</p>	
<p>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 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [64]</p>	
<p>109 Switzerland - 1                  FDC with series                  12-05-2016                  The slogan of the issue is framed by three different kinds of leaves.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [65]</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [66]</p>	

**Table 14. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXIX)**

<p>111 Turkey                  FDC with series                  09-05-2016                  Abstract composition consisting of leaves and leafy trees.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [67]</p>	
<p>112 Ukraine                  FDC with single stamp                  15-04-2016                  Just leafy trees</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [68]</p>	
<p>113 Vatican - 1                  FDC with block of six stamps                  10-05-2016                  The medallion shows the Vatican Museum.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [69]</p>	
<p>114 Vatican - 2                  FDC with single stamp                  10-05-2016                  A tree in the middle of the field.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [70]</p>	

**Table 15. Technical characteristics for the “Think green!” FDCs (XXX)**

<p>115 Vatican - 3                  FDC with single stamp                  10-05-2016                  In the medallion, the Vatican Museum.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [71]</p>	
<p>116 Vatican - 4                  FDC with single stamp                  10-05-2016                  View of the garden next to the Vatican Museum.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [72]</p>	
<p>117 Vatican - 5                  FDC with single stamp                  10-05-2016                  A stamped envelope of Vatican.</p>	
<p>Reference sites: [73]</p>	

#### 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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