



Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013
Leonardo da Vinci, Multilateral Projects Transfer of Innovation
PROMOTING NATURE BY TRAINING NATURE INTERPRETERS

NATURE AND LANDSCAPE INTERPRETATION

Project Newsletter No. 1, August 2008

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What is hidden in the branches?

FOREWORD

Dear reader,

this is the first newsletter of the project Promoting nature by training nature interpreters, which is supported by the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, Leonardo da Vinci. The programme aims to create and transfer innovative training practice in learning about life on Earth, following the creativity of the great master Leonardo da Vinci.

The project partners set objectives related to learning about, experiencing, and feeling the nature around us. Day to day practice of raising awareness about the importance of nature preservation shows that in spite of great knowledge of the modern society, the attitude towards the nature and environment is more and more neglected and most of all not understood. The invisible mechanisms and relationships between the living beings in the nature, which happen every day in our vicinity, do not provoke any attention for the most of people. The influence of human actions on the nature processes is recognised only after dramatic events occur, which eventually are defined as ecological catastrophes. The heavy storms which are a consequence of over exploitation of natural resources are natural phenomenon, although it seems that their number and intensity is increasing.

To protect some pieces of land on Earth against exploitation of natural resources and urbanisation, the guardians of nature proclaimed especially selected and exceptional natural areas as nature parks already in the 19th century. The local and state authorities become guardians of these areas with a mission and task to monitor natural ecosystems and to limit inappropriate impacts of human actions such as building of infrastructure, land use in agriculture and forestry and industrial production. That's how extensive national parks in the United States and a bit smaller also in Europe have been established. Due to increase of the world's population the land affected by natural processes is becoming more and more scarce, the leftovers of the "natural" land surface become dispersed and of less quality. Nevertheless their cultural landscape, which developed mainly due to food production, still functions mostly for intensive agricultural land use. That is also the image and story of the majority of Slovenian landscape parks. Their primary function is to preserve biodiversity and variety of landscape. Of course this task can not be achieved by few individuals only; it is the responsibility of all who live in the park areas or who visit them. >



Kick-off meeting at Goričko, Slovenia...



...in Austria...

The people acting in the field of nature protection strive to raise the level of understanding of nature processes and identification of interdependency between the human and nature. Our focus is to identify the latter in the nature and landscape itself, which can be done in various ways. Experiential guiding, which activates the senses that are not normally used in a classroom, is taking a lead in practice. Use of experiential learning methods and nature interpretation is the main feature of our project, which aims to develop a training curriculum for nature and landscape interpreters in cooperation with teachers of interpretation. According to the chain reaction principle we wish to create a wide network between the people in Slovenia and abroad who decided work with people in the Slovene nature and landscape in this kind of fashion.

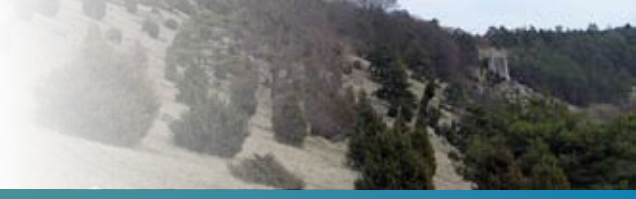
Stanka Dešnik

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Around 35 % of the Slovene territory is included in Nature 2000 sites and more than 12 % of the territory belongs to nature protected areas. Guiding visitors in the nature protected areas differs from classic tourist guiding. Raising awareness about nature, promotion of healthy life style is gaining more importance. In most European countries the visitors of nature park areas and visitors centers are guided by trained nature interpreters.

Nature interpretation is based on learning about nature through direct experience and is much more attractive for the visitors than classical interpretation. Nature interpretation is well developed in Austria and Germany; it contributes significantly to large numbers of visitors in nature protected areas, many alternative offers for small groups, the nature interpretation centers are well visited and there is an effective promotion of a healthy lifestyle. In both countries there are nature interpretation training programmes available to guides. In Slovenia, such training offer is not yet available. Nature interpretation as a means of communicating ideas and feelings which help people understand about nature and themselves through direct practical experience, is becoming more and more important way of motivation and promotion of learning about nature. Closely related to the theme is also promotion of healthy life style.

Nature interpretation is well developed in partner countries Austria and Germany; it contributes significantly to large numbers of visitors in nature protected areas, many alternative offers for small >



...and in Germany.

groups, the nature interpretation centers are well visited and there is an effective promotion of a healthy lifestyle. In both countries, training programmes are available for nature and landscape guides. In Slovenia, such training offer is not yet available.

The purpose of the project is to transfer good practice in training nature and landscape guides from partner countries to Slovenia and to contribute to improvement of the quality of guiding in nature, development of new tourist products and promotion of healthy lifestyle. We would also like to contribute to increase of the number of visitors in the nature protected areas and nature interpretation centers. By training the nature interpreters, who primarily should be locals, the care of the local population about nature protection, sustainable development and healthy lifestyle will raise as well. At the same time, nature guiding with nature interpretation is also an opportunity to generate additional income in regions.

The main project result will be curricula for training of nature interpreters and promoters of healthy life style complemented by a handbook for nature interpreters and trainer's manual. A pool of trainers will be formed as well. To contribute to sustainability of project results, the possibilities for certification of the training programme or development of the national vocational qualification shall be examined.

Summarised by Julija Marošek

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Many activities have been conducted since the official project start in November 2008 and the kick-off meeting held in December. The project, its visual identity, and the project partners were presented on the website of the Goričko Landscape Park, the project promoter.

In April, two partnership meetings were held in Austria and Germany to share experience about training of nature and landscape guides. In the nature park Südsteirisches Weinland in Austria, valuable information has been gathered about development and organization of nature parks and marketing of their offer. In the Nature Park Mürzer Oberland, the participants had an opportunity to meet with Barbara Holzer, the author of the path »Forest of Senses«, which was primarily created for persons with special needs and families. >



Savica waterfall

The partner meeting in the nature park Altmühltal in Germany was focused on development of information centres and presentation of good practice in Eichstätt and Treuchtlingen. Environmental pedagogue Johann Bauch guided participants through multimedia exhibition, which was designed in a way that attracts visitors to actively explore the habitats. The path »Auen-Wiesen« along the river Altmühl, which has been developed jointly by environmental experts and children, has been presented in the field.

The project coordinator participated at a 2-day workshop on nature and landscape interpretation in Bohinjska Bistrica, Slovenia. The Slovene and Scottish interpreters of nature and cultural heritage raised various interpretation topics. The workshop took place both in the classroom and outdoors. The waterfall Savica was used as a case for discussion on various aspects of interpretation.

In June, the first project results have been completed; namely a benchmark analysis on nature interpretation training and programmes and a training needs analysis of the existing and potential nature interpreters in Slovenia. Both documents will serve as inputs for development of the training curricula. Learn more at www.park-goricko.org.

48 persons, who took part in the training needs analysis, expressed their interest to join development of the training programme and its implementation.

In July, the Slovene partners met at Landscape Park Sečoveljske soline to coordinate the coming project activities. The main topic was the preparation of the training curricula for nature and landscape interpreters. The coming months shall therefore be devoted to development of the curricula and training modules as well as to forming the group of potential trainers.

Gregor Domanjko

TRAINING OF THE NATURE AND LANDSCAPE GUIDES IN AUSTRIA AND GERMANY

Austria

Nature and landscape guide courses in Austria have been taking place already for ten years. They are organised by the Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut in cooperation with the Austrian Nature Parks. >



Usposabljanje vodnikov v Avstriji



What is hidden under the leaves?

The objective of the course is that participants gain basic knowledge about methods of experiential guiding and learn how to successfully plan and conduct guiding connected to learning about nature and landscape.

The course is organised in five modules (136 hours) and is meant for all who are interested in nature, especially the local people and personnel of nature park organisations. The entry condition for participation at the course is to have successfully completed the first aid course within the last two years.

An important part of the training are practical cases of experiential guiding adapted to specific target groups such as school groups, difficult youngsters, families, adults. The participants also get more familiar with the nature protected area in which the course is taking place. Among the habitats, they get to know forests, waters, meadows, cultural landscape, and the wetlands.

The examination at the end of the training consists of a written and practical part. The participant is allowed to enter examination provided that he/she has achieved at least 80 % training attendance. For the practical part, the participant conducts a 20 - minute guiding. Those who have successfully passed the exam are awarded the nature and landscape guide certificate. The price of the training, including food and accommodation, is 865 Euro per participant and is co-financed by the EU funds.

Source: <http://www.naturparke.at/index2.html?seite1.html>,

Summarised by Gregor Domanjko

Completion of the nature and landscape guide course in the Nature Park Zirbitzkogel-Grebenzen, Austria

This year's course for the nature and landscape guide was successfully completed between 25 - 27 June in the Nature Park Zirbitzkogel-Grebenzen by 19 participants from the three Austrian Länder; Styria, Lower Austria and Burgenland. Since March 2008, the participants have been learning about new methods of nature interpretation in five modules, altogether taking 120 hours.

The learning contents were the following:

- Basics and methods of experiential pedagogic and environmental didactics,
- Methods of passing knowledge to different target groups,
- Basics of natural science for nature and landscape guiding,
- Planning and organisation of guiding, >



Use all your senses to learn about the forest

- Marketing and development of the offer,
- Communication and presentation,
- Dealing with groups,
- Legal aspects and legal basis,
- Nature protected areas,
- Objectives and functions of nature parks,
- Orientation and meteorology, and
- Specific habitats and landscape types, as well as practical experiential guiding.

The participants expressed great creativity and enthusiasm in presentation of their final works. They chose many different topics ranging from various habitats such as forest, meadow, water, and wetland to some specific contents such as nature photography, dangers in the nature, and bionics. 11 women and 8 men participated in the course. 9 participants live in one of the nature parks, 7 participants will get employed by, while 3 of them are already employed by the nature park.

Marelli Asamer-Handler

Germany

The certified nature and landscape guide course in Germany is organised by the Bundesweite Arbeitskreis der staatlich getragenen Bildungsstätten im Natur- und Umweltschutz (BANU) academy and the Association of German Nature Parks in cooperation with some other nature and organisations for environmental protection.

The objective of the training is to develop trainees' capability to pass the knowledge about the nature and its processes, landscape development in a specific region, the past and today's influence of a man on landscape, etc. to participants/visitors in an interactive way. The course participants are trained in communication with visitors of nature protected areas, they get familiar with legal aspects and marketing basics related to guiding. The certified course is aimed at local people. Nature and landscape guiding offers them an opportunity to generate additional income, though it is not meant to be practiced as a primary business activity. The training contents are adapted to specifics of each region, in which the future guides are trained. The participants are mostly the local people. The nature and landscape guide course provides for the basics which can be upgraded with more specialized training contents. Due to specific teaching methods and space, the number of course participants is limited to 24. In case more candidates apply, the advantage is given to participants >



Experiential path »Auwiesen«



Guiding in the Sečovlje Salina

who possess more knowledge in the spheres of nature protection, agriculture, forestry, biology and are active in the field of nature protection and landscape management.

The basic 70-hour training is divided in three parts; the first two take place at weekends and the third one is running during the whole week. The future nature and landscape guides get familiar with the training contents through team and individual project work, excursions, field work, research and design of presentations. Between the modules, the participants have at least one month to elaborate their group work and to individually prepare written descriptions for a concrete guiding. The participants have to submit a document proving a completion of the first aid course. The compulsory contents of the training are the following:

- Nature science basics of the region, nature habitats, basics of ecology,
- Man – culture – landscape; agriculture and forestry, nature protection and landscape management,
- Communication and guiding didactics,
- Law and marketing, legal basis of nature protection, business economics.

The training is concluded with an exam consisting of a written part, elaboration of a concrete guiding content and its practical implementation. Successfully completed exam is a condition for awarding of the certificate, which is valid for five years. Each year, the certified nature and landscape guides have to take part in additional trainings.

The price for the course is approximately 350 Euros and is dependant on the number of participants, subsidies, etc. **More information:** www.banu-akademien.de
www.naturparke.de/naturparke_naturundlandschaftsfuehrer.php

Summarised by Gregor Domanjko

TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR GUIDING IN NATURE AND NATURE INTERPRETATION IN SLOVENIA COMPLETED

A training needs analysis was conducted in Slovenia to gather data about existing practice and training needs related to nature guiding and nature interpretation. The analysis was prepared on the basis questionnaires, which were submitted by 74 respondents (i.e. 59, 2% of all invited to participate in the analysis).

The respondents have quite different formal education (e.g. chemists, foresters, biologists, economists, >



TNA participants about nature interpretation:

It is about interactive communication, which encourages understanding and experiencing of the nature, its parts, processes, and wholeness.

It means experiential demonstration and teaching, visitor's personal experience, perception with the use of all senses.

The visitor can feel and experience the nature; it is not only aesthetic but also emotional experience, to which an interpreter guides the visitor.

Being guided by a good interpreter is never boring; besides experience the visitor also participates in environmental education performed in a non-intrusive way.

Interpretation generates new perspectives related to the nature and environment and provokes a desire to contribute to a better future.

It is not about transfer of contents and passive inclusion of recipients. The visitors have an opportunity to learn about, respect, and protect (the nature).

The interpretation is a method of transferring professional contents in an understandable way to participants of guiding. The interpreter follows the objectives: what the group should learn, feel and do.

To guide people from point A to point B can vary a lot. One thing is to walk the path safely, but to animate participants to join you in discovering also the point C, or to make the same way once again, is something else. There is a big difference.

geographers, etc.), but share some specific skills and knowledge related to nature guiding and nature interpretation, such as communication skills, nature protection/ecosystems/landscape, planning and organising events, pedagogic and adult education skills. More than half of the respondents have more than five years experience in nature guiding. They deal with various target groups; the majority has experience with pre-schools children, school children, general visitors and pensioners.

The TNA participants are very much familiar with essential differences between the classical tourist-guiding and experiential guiding including nature interpretation. Presentation and interpretation, which enables participants to try, taste, and feel were recognised as the most popular approaches, including story telling, use of interpretation tools in the field and creative workshops.

A part of the questionnaire was devoted to gathering information about experience, which participants have with guiding of the persons with special needs. About half of the respondents occasionally perform guiding for this target group. The participants highlighted the most important differences in guiding people with special needs compared to some other target groups: the contents and approaches have to be adapted to abilities of these persons, the terrain and tools have to be accordingly adapted, too. The interpreter needs more time to get prepared and has to possess some specific skills and knowledge. The guiding itself lasts longer, although the groups are smaller. The participants are emotionally more perceptive. It is important to set achievable objectives for them. Most of the respondents share an opinion that persons with special needs do not have adequate access to quality guiding in nature and nature interpretation in Slovenia. As the main reasons, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of suitable programmes, shortage of skilled guides, and lack of training opportunities for guides were stated. However, it was noted that the situation was improving.

The most frequently stated purposes of interpretation were to raise awareness of participants about nature protection and preservation of biodiversity, to teach about proper behaviour in the nature, and to provoke thoughts about sustainability and quality of life.

The following was also stated:

- to work for the wellbeing of all;
- to recognise that people are part of the nature and that nature preservation is important for the quality of our life;
- to make participants acquainted with the place.

The TNA participants confirmed the need for improvement of knowledge and skills in all >



Snails

areas suggested in the questionnaire: nature and space, cultural heritage, local environment, communication and interpretation skills, marketing, healthy life style, and legal aspects.

The most frequently stated training needs are the following:

- Animation, motivation, inclusion of local people (68, 9 %),
- Ethnology /costumes, religion, local cuisine (62, 2 %),
- Awareness raising and promotion (54, 1 %),
- Nature interpretation (52, 7 %),
- Use of experiential learning methods (52, 7 %),
- Legal aspect of guiding (52, 7 %),
- Finding out about participants' expectations (51, 4 %),
- Legislation in the field of nature protection, natural values and Natura 2000 sites (51, 4 %),
- Characteristics of target groups and their influence on the choice of work methods (48, 6 %),
- Development of products, programmes and events for specific target groups (47, 3 %),
- Setting up a cooperation network (47, 3 %).

Julija Marošek

THE NATURE AND LANDSCAPE PARKS OFFER...

New – The guides in German nature parks present their programmes on the web

Of each person interested in becoming a nature and landscape guide it is expected to be able to develop and offer the visitors environmental education or cultural programmes and guidance. For that purpose, many nature parks in Germany organise courses for nature and landscape guides. The training is developed for open minded people who are attracted by the nature and culture, and are ready to pass the ecological and cultural diversity of nature parks to other people through guiding.

Nature and landscape guides in nature parks play an important role in conducting environmental and pedagogic programmes for children and different age groups of the young as well as for the visitors from abroad or for the people with special needs. Training of nature and landscape guides contributes to higher quality of the environmental and pedagogical offer of the nature parks. The training should also contribute to increase in demand for environmental education programmes and in the number of environmental pedagogues. >



The Association of German Nature Parks is going to promote the nature and landscape guides and their programmes on the www.naturparke.de website. Visitors of nature parks will be able to gather useful information about excursions and programmes offered. In the future, the visitors of some nature parks will also be able to make bookings for guided tours on the internet. The nature parks and the Association of nature parks believe that this approach will help making the nature parks' offer even more attractive and oriented to specific target groups.

Jörg Liesen, Association of German Nature Parks

Nature parks for all

For many people, relaxing in nature, where the only sounds may be the one of the wind in the trees or those of rare and endangered bird species, is a proper answer to a daily stress. To experience and feel the nature is one of the basic needs of each human being. Still, some people do not have such possibilities. That things can change, was proved by the German nature parks that developed guiding offer for people with special needs.

The Association for German Nature Parks in cooperation with the National Contact Point Tourism for All published a brochure "Nature Parks for All – a Barrier-free Nature Experience in Germany". It presents 39 nature parks and their offer for people with special needs. Some examples:

The NGO Naturwacht in the Nature Park Mecklenburgisches Elbetal offers guided tours on a ship, which was adapted to the needs of people who use a wheelchair. In the Nature Park Dümmer, a bird watching tower was adapted for this target group. In Belzig, a town in the nature park Hoher Fläming, a 2- kilometre nature experience path was arranged.

The visitors centre in the Nature Park Nossentiner/Schwinzer Heide is equipped with a relief map, which gives the people with visual impairment a possibility to learn about the area by touching the map. The nature park Wideshauser Geest organizes guiding for the people with visual impairment and people with learning difficulties. The guiding for persons with speech and hearing impairment is also foreseen.

The Nature Park Hochtanus is proud of its archaeological park. Guiding for the people with visual impairment and people with learning difficulties is available upon prior notice. The German Belgian Nature Park Hohes Venn-Eifel provides interpreters for persons with speech and hearing impairment >



Today we are the princesses and princes

for guiding through exhibition about life places along the rivers. The nature path for the visually impaired in the Nature Park Hohe mark is equipped with wooden signs with descriptions of the region's trees and wild animals for the Braille note takers. The Brandenburg forest management in Nature Park Dahme-Heideseen offers guiding for the visually impaired. In Prieros, a biological garden equipped with acoustic and touch information tools is offering guided tours for visually impaired.

All nature parks presented in the brochure have visitor centres, park places and toilets equipped for persons in wheel chairs. Most of the walking paths are suitable for people with special needs.

Gregor Domanjko

Experience the nature and cultural heritage of the Landscape Park Goričko

Training of guides and development of experiential guiding programmes in the Landscape Park Goričko has been developing on a project basis for some years. In 2003 those interested in nature and landscape guiding had a possibility to learn about the contents of experiential guiding within the project Development of the Landscape Park Goričko. The training participants gained a title of experiential guide and started using new methods of experiential learning in their practice of nature and landscape guiding.

One of the objectives of the "Living with Natura 2000 in Goričko" project was pilot introduction of nature science workshops for the children in primary schools in the landscape park area and experiential guiding for park visitors. Evaluation of the pilot implementation which was conducted on the basis of short questionnaires showed that the new approach was very well accepted by the pupils. For the school year 2006/2007 a programme for school children was developed which contained nature science, social science, technical and sport activities connected to experience and interpretation of contents. The interest of the schools increased and in the 2007/2008 the offer was further adapted to visitor's interests and improved.

The programme for the coming school year is already being developed. We are convinced that the offer of nature science days covering various topics and habitats and involving elements of nature interpretation, technical activities such as weaving and pottery, interpreting cultural heritage in the "The princess, farm boy and the dragon" taking place at the biggest castle in Slovenia shall be well accepted by visitors.

Štefanija Fujs



Welcome to the Landscape Park Sečovlje Salina, Slovenia

Sečovlje Salina with its rich tradition and exceptional flora and fauna is interesting for visiting throughout the year. Guided tours are suitable for all friends of nature and cultural heritage. A traditional way of salt harvesting, which the workers in Salina learned from their colleagues at the island of Pag in Croatia, is very special also in the Mediterranean context. Traditionally manual salt harvesting at salt-fields is a unique feature of the cultural heritage of the Mediterranean part of Slovenia. According to written sources the Sečovlje Salina has existed for more than 700 years, some other sources claim that they are even older. Why don't you try salt harvesting?

286 bird species have been identified at Sečovlje Salina. Why are there so many different bird species at Salina? The Salina is a huge water body used by the birds for staying there over the whole year or during winter time. For at least four bird species the Salina is the only nesting place in Slovenia. Besides nesting, the Sečovlje Salina is also important for their migration. As the Salina is located at the Mediterranean coast, with characteristic sub-Mediterranean climate with mild winters, it attracts many birds from the northern parts. In the national context, the Salina is recognised as a unique life environment. The most of the winter resident and migrating bird species on the Slovenian coast and in Slovenia in general can be found here. Welcome to a guided ornithological tour for small groups.

Luka Kastelic

Good practice – The secrets of forest

The Slovenian Museum of Natural History in Ljubljana welcomes you to an interactive exhibition "The secrets of forest". On around 100 m² of space, the visitor can get familiar with various creatures and themes related to the life in the forest. The exhibition is provocative, funny and educational. The accompanying texts are short and focused, various interactive tools offer an opportunity to discover or try, provoke critical thinking and enable learning experience. Visitor is attracted by different > themes and interpretation methods, which stimulate a desire to learn more about the forest. For example:

What would it be like without forest? A simple presentation of the forest and its functions for a human being – it eases the heavy storms, it cools the air; it is the habitat of many plant and animal species and fungus. >



The predators! The authors set provocative and rhetorical questions about the future of the predators in overpopulated areas of Europe and about the proper solutions regarding management and protection of the big predators. The skulls of a wolf and a deer present a difference between the teeth of the predator and its prey.

Forest at night; the sounds of animals which are active at night can be heard by pressing the buttons, to see them, a torch is needed.

A tree; How many figures of a human need to be put one on the top of the other to correspond to the height of the Sgerm's spruce, the highest tree in Slovenia? And how many to measure the highest beech in the world, which grow by the Krka River?

More information is available at <http://www2.pms-lj.si/razstave/gozd/gozd.html>. The exhibitions will be in place until 9 February 2009.

Gregor Domanjko

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.