



# ECO-World Café round table discussion SLOVAKIA

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**Inovatívne budovanie ekologického povedomia a kultúry rozvíjaním environmentálnych zručností a formovaním postojov občanov s mentálnym postihnutím**

**Innovative building of ecological awareness and culture by developing environmental skills and shaping the attitudes of citizens with mental disabilities**



### *ECO-World Café round table discussion*

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The main objective of the project is to support social inclusion and lifelong learning of people with mental disabilities by developing their environmental skills and competencies, shaping their environmental attitudes and responsibilities through education based on international experiences. The project specifically focuses on supporting and developing international cooperation of participating organizations, building, and strengthening partnership networks and professionalization of organizations.

*ECO-World Café round table discussions ensures exchange of experiences, identification of best practice examples in the field of environmental education in partner countries, identification of the most successful methods and forms of education that are suitable for the people with mental disabilities and the most important ecological skills for sustainable life.*



Coordinated and edited by  
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## 1. Participants

- Representatives of the Project coordinator organisation – Spoluprácou pre lepšiu budúcnosť
- Representatives of Environmental Education Center Dropie
- Employers - operators of sheltered workshops
- Representatives of non-governmental organizations to support people with disabilities
- People with mental disabilities

The list of participants is attached in the attendance register.

Number of participants: 14

## 2. Agenda

9:30 – 9:40	<b>Registration</b>
9:40 – 9:50	<b>Opening speech</b>
9:50 – 10:10	<b>Presentation of the activities of the civic association Spoluprácou pre lepšiu budúcnosť – Veľký Meder/Teamwork for a Better Future - Veľký Meder</b>
10:10 – 10:30	<b>Presentation of the activities of the Association for Help to People with Intellectual Disabilities in Dunajská Streda</b>
10:10 – 10:30	<b>Presentation of the international project „<i>Innovative building of ecological awareness and culture by developing environmental skills and shaping the attitudes of citizens with mental disabilities</i>“</b>
10:30 – 10:40	<b>Coffee break</b>
10:40 – 12:15	<b>World Café Discussion</b>  1. exchange of experiences, identification of educational programmes, examples of good practices, best practices aimed improving the environmental skills and competences of people with disabilities with emphasis on the people with mental disabilities

	<p><b>What educational programmes, examples of good practices, best practices aimed improving the environmental skills and competences of people with disabilities with emphasis on the people with mental disabilities did you met so far? Why did you find these good or best?</b></p> <p>2. identification of the most successful methods and forms of education that are suitable for the people with mental disabilities in the field of environmental education</p> <p><b>What kind of successful methods and forms of education are suitable for the people with mental disabilities in the field of environmental education?</b></p> <p>3. identification of the most important skills that we need to develop in the field of environmental education in the case of the direct target group</p> <p><b>What are the most important skills that we need to develop in the field of environmental education in the case of the direct target group? Proposals for topics/contents of modules.</b></p>
12:15 – 12:25	<b>Conclusions, recommendations</b>
12:25 – 13:00	<b>Lunch</b>

### 3. Description of the ECO-World Café discussion

#### The aims of the ECO-World Café round table discussion

ECO-World Café round table discussions are the most important activities of the project, from the point of view of obtaining starting materials for the creation of the main results of the project.

The aim of this activity in all partner countries was to involve actors and stakeholders from various sectors and areas - in the field of education, the environmental field, and the provision of services for people with mental disabilities and the protection of their interests in order to:

1. exchanges of experiences, identification of educational programmes, examples of good practices, best practices aimed improving the environmental skills and competences of people with disabilities with emphasis on the people with mental disabilities, and

2. at the same time, the identification of the most successful methods and forms of education that are suitable for the people with mental disabilities in the field of environmental education, and
3. identification of the most important skills that we need to develop in the field of environmental education in the case of the direct target group and last but not least
4. providing information about the project and project activities through a presentation.

The discussion was conducted using the World Café method, based on pre-prepared questions on the three main topics (points 1, 2, 3), which have been agreed by the partnership. This method is very effective in terms of obtaining as much information as possible on the proposed topics or answers to questions in a relatively short period of time, with the active participation of all participants.

At the end of the event, the information obtained will be summarized and conclusions and recommendations will be formulated at national level. Subsequently, a summary will be carried out at transnational level and international conclusions and recommendations will be prepared.

The information obtained will be the starting point for the creation of innovative education "ECO-COMPASS".

### The process

The host of World Café introduced the programme.

Groups of 4-5 participants set around the three tables. At each table a „Table Host“ facilitated the conversation in a given topic. At the tables 3 different topics were discussed parallel within 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, the participants – except the Table Hosts – changed the table and they continued the conversation in another topic for another 20 minutes. Participants were also encouraged to write or draw their ideas, suggestions on a flipchart paper so that when people change tables, they can see what previous members have expressed in their own words and images.

Each participant participated in the discussion of all the three suggested topics.

### The suggested topics

1. What educational programmes, examples of good practices, best practices aimed improving the environmental skills and competences of people with disabilities with emphasis on the people with mental disabilities did you met so far? Why did you find these good or best?
2. What kind of successful methods and forms of education are suitable for the people with mental disabilities in the field of environmental education?
3. What are the most important skills that we need to develop in the field of environmental education in the case of the direct target group? Proposals for topics/contents of modules.

## 4. Results and conclusions of the workshop

1. **What educational programmes, examples of good practices, best practices aimed improving the environmental skills and competences of people with disabilities with emphasis on the people with mental disabilities did you met so far? Why did you find these good or best?**

This question was divided into four parts:

### **Exchange of experiences**

Educating people with mental disabilities requires more thorough training of lecturers. It is necessary for the lecturer to have patience, empathy and to be able to apply other approaches that are suitable for this target group. It is important that people with mental disabilities acquire new skills and discover the environment. For various activities, e.g. at sports events, people with mental disabilities enjoy competition, are more motivated with the objective to achieve better results, and have in them strong competition. Lecturers apply various forms of work in which they encourage them. (e. g. fine - art works, outdoor activities, various creative activities and game work).

### **Educational programmes**

Within educational programmes, the most suitable are educations in the external environment, e.g., people with mental disabilities while walking on the educational walkway discover the beauty of nature; the lecturers motivate them with the smell of herbs, the touch of herbs, and the taste of herbal preparations. They have intense experiences when they are in contact with animals, engaging in joint activities, games, participating in trips. Lecturers always apply individual approaches.

The great importance has also transmission of cultural traditions - painting eggs for Easter, painting pictures, appreciating the beauty of nature. Within the learned - educational programmes, commented tours are suitable, where they get knowledge about historical events specifically in the given environment. It is also inspiring to visit national parks, where during the performances they will understand for what purpose national parks were created, which are protected species of animals and plants.

Negative aspects were also noted, e.g., some people with mental disabilities have problems when they are not in their own regime, e. g. if they have a different regime of the day during the trip, it is necessary to take this into account.

The World Café method was also evaluated very positively by colleagues. There is a more appreciated and more important interactive form of education, a form of experiential education, when they can creatively enter into the creation of an educational programme.

### **Examples of good practice/ Best environmental practices**

There are highly appreciated outdoor activities, in the garden, in nature, involving them into gardening. These activities contribute to the development of belonging. Belonging also develops within the framework of club activities. When they serve each other, they cook; team spirit and teamwork are strengthened. Cooperation in the preparation of food is appreciated; they have a positive experience if the group prepares delicious food.

People with mental disabilities have positive experiences outdoors, they be addressing by outdoor environment, contact with nature, animals and plants. When presenting products made from natural substances, they enjoy the knowledge of natural products and the natural environment, which they have not yet known, or did not know at the level in which they were introduced to them. Of course, there are also those who prefer to stay indoors.

In addition to nature experiences such as smell, taste, touch, smell, hearing, is very popular waste separation procedures, energy conservation considerations, gardening activities, composting, and thus the protection of values, environmental protection.

**Identified examples of good practice:**

Environmental Education Center Dropie of the Slovak Environmental Agency (SEA)

Environmental Education Center Dropie (EEC) was established by the Slovak Environmental Agency and is the only SEA residence centre. EEC Dropie of SEA provides non-formal education in the form of practical environmental education for a wide target group, including citizens with disabilities. The programmes are focused on learning about the natural and cultural values of the Lower Rye Island region, presenting the values of the Protected Bird Area Ostrovné Lúky and raising awareness in the field of adaptation and mitigation measures to the effects of climate change.

Environmental education for youth with disabilities - Education without barriers I. and II. - Manual for Youth with disabilities and Manual for Youth with disabilities Work intended for the teaching public

The manuals were developed as a part of an international project aimed at improving the access of young people with disabilities to sustainable development within environmental education. Manual I. contains a detailed description of various activities focused on the following topics: meadows, environment, waste, trees, biodiversity, and sustainable development. At the end of each activity, there are tips and suggestions on how to adapt the activity to a specific disability. The manual also contains a table of thematic links of individual activities.

Programme ECOFOOTPRINT

The educational programme includes an online calculator of the ecological footprint of the individual and the school. It is a modern teaching method that provides teachers with ideas for project teaching. At the same time, it supports the use of ICT in the teaching process. Students through the playful activities used during the teaching process, can gain new knowledge. The ECOFOOTPRINT programme also includes work presses in the areas of ecological footprint, electricity, heating, water, catering, waste, transport, buildings and grounds, purchasing and equipment, as well as theoretical inspiration for teachers.

The programme is implemented within the project "Improving environmental awareness in the field of nature and landscape protection (including NATURA 2000)" and is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Danube Values - Methodical Handbook for the First Stage of Primary Schools

The objective of the handbook is to pass on the values of the Danube River, which flows across Europe from its west to east, to future generations. The methodological handbook contains 5 key topics: history, culture, environment, nature protection and water management. The methodological collection includes 21 worksheets that teachers can use within the teaching hours of natural science and homeland studies classes respectively in environmental education classes. They also contain ideas that can be used for school trips, club activities and schools in nature. The main character of the



methodological handbook is "Dunajko", which accompanies the methodological handbook and the students have to help him in solving problems and questions.

## **2. What kind of successful methods and forms of education are suitable for the people with mental disabilities in the field of environmental education?**

### **Forms of education**

For people with mental disabilities, the organizational form of teaching according to the environment can take place outdoors and indoors. It depends on the conditions and circumstances. For example, training can also take place indoors, but when the weather is nice, outdoor activities are preferred. Educational activities in nature are preferred, e.g. in the courtyard of the clubhouse, in the form of a walk in the forest, in the garden, or elsewhere in nature in the form of agrotourism.

In the interior, teaching takes place most often in suitably furnished club rooms.

According to the number of participants, the form can also be divided into individual and group forms of education, with the group form being more preferred. There may be situations where participants with different abilities are present in the group. It is appropriate to involve all participants in group activities, including those who have weaker abilities, as the group has a motivating power. E.g. if some participants do not know how to write or draw, in this case the lecturer can give them a creative skills developed toys and come up with a "tailor-made" task for everyone. At the same time, it is appropriate to prepare individual exercises for them. In such cases, an individual approach is applied to each according to one's own possibilities and abilities. The approach is very important, especially the creativity of the lecturer. People with mental disabilities who have better abilities may be given more challenging and more difficult tasks.

### **Educational methods**

Experiential education is preferred, resp. a combination of different methods depending on the conditions, e. g.:

- Movement (activating)
- Creative (fine arts)
- Research (manipulation of objects)
- Sensory perception (involvement of all five senses - sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch)
- Experimental methods
- Competitions
- Quizzes
- Screening of short documentaries
- Lectures

The optimal number of participants in a group is 10-12 people, but it is possible to work with more. When there are also clients with weaker abilities in the group (they are not able to learn more demanding subjects) it is appropriate to apply an individual approach (e. g. participants with weaker abilities can draw). It is important that they learn together, realise creative activities and motivate each other. When training takes place in a familiar environment they have a feeling of security.

The World Café method is also a very suitable and effective method for exchanging experiences in the given field.

### **Educational process**

Within education, it is also important to regularly repeat the procedures for expressing belonging. E.g., at the beginning of education - to form a circle, to hold hands, to say a common password that expresses belonging that we are here, we are together, we are in a safe environment (e.g., Association for Help to People with Intellectual Disabilities in Dunajská Streda: Pure spring, nice word, that's our password and be our friend!)

At the beginning of the training, for the informal "breaking of the ice", for the release of the atmosphere, the participants can express their own thoughts in order to feel comfortable and relaxed. At the beginning of the training, the lecturer announces the topic and a guided interview follows. The questions naturally draw the participants' attention in the desired direction. It is important that he motivates them to think, so that they can discuss the given topic together and revive previous knowledge.

The lecturer lectures, presents the theory in an easy-to-understand way, so that all participants understand the essence. He can also use video during the lecture. If those present have heard and understood the lecture, and attention is beginning to decline, it is appropriate to apply a break, energizer, movement exercises or motivational and relaxation games to revive education. During the training, it is appropriate to use worksheets, solving tasks in a small group and subsequent presentation in a large group.

Once they have mastered the theory, it is appropriate to apply work in small groups and e.g. take quizzes (this is also useful in order to get feedback on whether they understood the subject, but also for the purpose of repetition). Finally, a competition can be organized (when they hear the theory several times, they remember better). Consolidation of knowledge can take place by repetition or joint play.

During education, it is desirable that different forms, methods and techniques of education alternate. In education, it is important that participants engage as many senses as possible to see, listen, use smell, taste, but most importantly to survive and be able to test the learned knowledge in practice. Therefore, the theory, quizzes, competitions, experiences, repetitions are followed by a practical part. The acquired knowledge can be tested in practice, in the field. E.g. when preparing a visit to the castle, it is appropriate to explain to them the importance of castles, the historical events that are associated with the place, then to implement the activity in practice.

Creativity is very important in the work of a lecturer. After entering the task, it is not recommended to help in such a way that we tell the participant the answer, but to use creative methods that lead to the achievement of the objective.

It is important to use activating educational methods in educational practice. It is very important to work together in a group that will involve each participant the most. By working together, we can do more collectively than individually. Everyone must perceive the task comprehensively, and everyone can have a good idea or solution.

**3. What are the most important skills that we need to develop in the field of environmental education in the case of the direct target group? Proposals for topics/contents of modules.**

The World Café discussion identified the following skills that are recommended to be developed in environmental education:

It is very important to build a positive attitude towards nature, knowledge and skills for the careful handling of nature and natural resources, cultural heritage and public spaces, to develop one's own abilities and skills for environmental research, to develop sensitivity and respect for nature, to build one's own values and attitudes to nature, ability to understand the aesthetic value of nature, including wilderness, ability to prioritize nature protection interests over economic and personal interests, knowledge of place and landscape, ability to critically assess their impact on place and landscape, developing belonging, ability to work with the community, understanding the role of human being in ecological processes, developing the ability to cooperate and communicate, knowledge and skills for responsible consumer behaviour and actively influencing their environment, the ability to motivate and lead by example.

The training will consist of four modules:

1. Development of ecological skills and competences in individual life
2. The importance of ecological values and attitudes in the family
3. Sustainable development in the workplace
4. Active participation in the creation of a green society

Within the educational material, it is recommended to create a short theoretical material for lecturers of education in the field of environmental issues according to the structure of the proposed educational material. At the same time, prepare instructions on how to approach the target groups. Among the lecturers there may be those who are not experienced in working with people with mental disabilities, so it is important that they know how to approach them.

Proposed structure of educational material:

**1. Development of ecological skills and competences in individual life**

In the first module, it is very important to strengthen critical thinking, it is important that we create ten behaviours' towards nature that must be reflected in the daily life of human being. It is necessary to develop a positive relationship with nature first in personal life. It is very important that was created in the first module a positive relationship with the environment that surrounds us (especially water, soil, air), animals, plants. It is important to emphasize the impact of human activities on the environment, the ecological footprint and the importance of environmental protection, ecological behaviour, building one's own values and attitudes towards nature.

**2. The importance of ecological values and attitudes in the family**

Within the family, it is important that education is directed towards independent living. Strive for self-sufficiency or reduce dependence on purchased vegetables and fruits. E.g. if we have a small garden

or ground do not sow grass, but grow vegetables, plants resp. trees that do not require much space. We can use the game PEXESO (with protected animals, plants) to transfer knowledge into practical life. Furthermore, ecological values and approaches can be reflected in family life, e.g. separation and further use of waste (e.g.: production of decorative items), energy saving, responsible purchasing. Secondary use of waste will be appropriate to build into the structure of the last module.

### **3. Sustainable development in the workplace and work-life balance**

We divided this module into a home environment and a work environment. Within the home environment, we can focus on aesthetic education - beautifying the home environment, creating small gardens.

Communication skills and social interaction are very important at work. Since not everyone is a communicative type, manual skills can also be used. We have also included the development of manual skills in this module. In the context of social interaction, the transfer of experience is very important. We recommend including the topic of work-life balance in this topic. Effective use of free time - support of ecological thinking also towards oneself, support of a healthy lifestyle.

### **4. Active participation in the creation of a green society**

Within the module, we propose involvement in various social activities (tree planting, waste collection) resp. prepare a calendar of activities for the whole year. It is desirable that environmental education take place throughout the whole year and in connection with various important environmental days (e. g.: World Earth Day, World Biodiversity Day, World Environment Day, International Non-Purchasing Day, International Animal Rights Day). At the same time, it is recommended to return to these important days every year and carry out the relevant activity. It is very important to motivate people and raise awareness of existing projects in the field of environmental education. By involving more people, we can ensure the sustainability of environmental projects (e.g.: pasture management, mowing grass). We can also include waste recycling activities in the module so that they are associated with natural elements - e.g. production of animals from waste material. It is also important to pay attention to the waste management and to the pollution of nature by traffic.

## 5. Recommendations for the content of the Innovative Environmental Education ECO-COMPASS

Recommended curriculum:

- 1. Development of ecological skills and competences in individual life**
  - 1.1. We are part of the nature that surrounds us (water, soil, air)
  - 1.2. Secrets of the plant and animal kingdom
  - 1.3. The impact of human activities on the environment - climate change, ecological footprint, the importance of ecological behaviour
  - 1.4. Ten for the careful handling of nature - environmental protection
  
- 2. The importance of ecological values and attitudes in the family**
  - 2.1. Transfer of ecological values and approaches to family life - ecological household
  - 2.2. Electricity and heating
  - 2.3. Waste separation, composting in household
  - 2.4. Responsible shopping
  
- 3. Sustainable development in the workplace and work-life balance**
  - 3.1. Aesthetic home environment
  - 3.2. Sustainable development in the workplace - communication, social interaction
  - 3.3. Work-life balance, efficient use of free time
  - 3.4. Healthy lifestyle
  
- 4. Active participation in the creation of a green society**
  - 4.1. Significant environmental days (motivation for sustainable living through involvement in social activities)
  - 4.2. Environmental protection (city / town / village, parks, nature), waste management
  - 4.3. Independent living, responsible consumer behaviour
  - 4.4. Traffic pollution

**Content of individual topics:**

- short educational videos
- theoretical introduction for lecturers
- a short theoretical introduction in easy-to-understand speech
- quizzes
- practical part - follow-up practical exercises - worksheets
- outdoor adventure activities - inspirational and adventure programmes directly in the natural environment in order to support practical skills and the ability to use the acquired knowledge in real life

## 6. Evaluation of the ECO-WORLD Café roundtable discussion

Achieving the objectives of the ECO-World Café discussion was evaluated by obtaining feedback from the event participants. We used evaluation questionnaires related to the round table discussion programme, topics and professional level of lectures, content and professional focus of the discussion, possibilities of obtaining new information, social aspects - possibilities of networking, evaluation of information quality, project outputs, level of fulfilment of expectations, time space, the possibility of exchanging best practices, ideas, innovative proposals, organizational assurance, technical support and the overall level of activity.

The participants commented very positively on the World Café method, which is a popular and effective method of obtaining the opinions of participants in a relatively short period of time on several topics. The participants appreciated the most, information about the project, exchange of experiences, examples of good practice, joint group work and involvement of all participants in the discussion. According to the participants, ECO-COMPASS training will provide an excellent opportunity to map and develop the environmental skills of the target group and their involvement in socially beneficial activities, with outdoor interactive activities being recommended in particular. According to the questionnaire survey, 100% of the participants expressed satisfaction with the activity of the ECO-World Café round table discussion and the intangible results of the event were also achieved:

- raising awareness of information level and the importance of environmental education for PWD
- exchange of experience and examples of good practice at national level in the field of environmental education for PWD
- networking and strengthening of cross-sectoral and inter-sectoral cooperation as well as within the ministry in the field of providing environmental education, non-formal education and training for adult marginalized groups, including PWD, as we will also work intensively with EEC Dropie during the project.

## Coordinator



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## Partners



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