

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of the Species

Annual Report

1. Darwin Project Information

Project Title	Schools & Communities Monitoring and Protecting Biodiversity in Slovakia
Countries	Slovakia
Contractor	Field Studies Council
Project Ref. No	126/9/007
Grant Value	£129520
Start/Finishing Dates	June 2000-April2003
Report Period	June 2000-May2001

2. Project Background

Slovakia has a rich biodiversity which is under threat from a number of directions most of which are associated with economic development. The key threats come from changing agricultural management practice, an increase in tourism and urbanisation. It is likely that these pressures will increase in the future. Unless further economic development can be put into the context of sustainable development then the environment of Slovakia is likely to become further degraded.

The need for this project was identified through work with FSC partners in Slovakia and on going discussion with Ecologists and environmental educators in the Slovak Environmental Agency. These discussions were supported by the outcomes of a needs analysis undertaken as part of the Regional Environmental Management Plan for the Hron River Basin that highlighted the needs to support the development of active approaches to environmental education particularly in relation to nature protection and biodiversity.

The project helps Slovakia meet obligations under the Biodiversity Convention and also the related educational goals in it's own policy documents including the NEAP (1995), the Slovak Conception on EE and Training (1998) and the various educational policies related to the development of environmental education and active learning.

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Purpose and Objectives

The goal of the project is to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and the protection of biodiversity in Slovakia. This is to be achieved through involving school students, families and communities in monitoring biodiversity and creating a series of national biodiversity databases and undertaking small scale biodiversity projects to ensure that the rich biodiversity of Slovakia will be more greatly valued and protected.

The specific project objectives are:

- To train a development team of 10 environmental educators and scientists in Slovakia

- To enable schools and local communities to understand the importance of biodiversity in Slovakia
- To give schools and local communities the skills confidence and support necessary for achieving biodiversity conservation
- To strengthen and support effective biodiversity education in the formal and informal education systems in Slovakia
- To enable schools and communities to be able to contribute towards a community based national biodiversity database.
- To create a successful working partnership between SAZP, Schools and Communities.

3.2 Changes

There have been no changes to the purpose , objectives or outputs

4. **Progress**

4.1 Brief History

Not applicable

4.2 Progress over the last year

The project has followed the timescale of activities set out in the Project Proposal (section 2.6). Phase One was successfully completed and Phase Two is progressing well. There have been no slippages, and indeed the project is slightly ahead of the proposed timescale to ensure that schools could start their monitoring at the right time of year.

The first month was spent by the SAZP selecting an appropriate national Development Team. Once selected the Team were briefed at a workshop by SAZP and FSC [1(a)] and then attended a training event in the UK at Preston Montford Field Centre in Shropshire [1(b)].

The Team then spent six months in the development and testing of the Biodiversity Monitoring Kit and developing the process of the project for school and community involvement [1(c)]. During this process a writing workshop was held.

The project was launched to all schools in Slovakia in December 2000 and to date around 850 groups have registered. Each group has been sent the Biodiversity Monitoring Kit consisting of a Teachers Handbook, poster, three ecosystem based keys, together with other materials for the children taking part including T shirts, pens and magnifying glasses provided by the commercial sponsor [2(a)]. The schools have now begun the survey period [2(c)].

Before starting the project the leader of each of the groups attended a half day training session at one of 25 workshop locations in Slovakia [2(d)].

An additional event involved the launch of the Project by the Minister of Environment and British Ambassador at a special event in Bratislava.

4.3 Projects Training Research and Training work

Training over the project has consisted of

- (a) **Project Manager Training**
This has been a mixture of formal Basics of Management training by the FSC and through informal training by Managers in SAZP.
- (b) **Training of the Development Team**
This consisted of eight days intensive training on the following themes - environmental education - approaches to learning and effective education and biodiversity education. A significant amount of time was also spent planning the structure of the biodiversity survey and agreeing the work plan for the development of the materials and in particular the production of the keys. Later the Development Team also attended a week long writing workshop which again had an appropriate mix of training and development work on the materials.
- (c) **Teacher Training**
All the teachers and group leaders taking part in the project were invited to one of 25 workshops held at locations throughout Slovakia.

The criteria for the assessment of the Development Team included a background in biodiversity - with a specific interest and knowledge of a particular ecosystem/species. The Development Team also had to have some experience of nature education and be available to give some 30 days of their time in the year to the project.

The success of the training and development is demonstrated through the current success of the project in attracting so many schools and groups to take part.

4.4 **Significant difficulties**

There were no significant difficulties encountered.

4.5 **Project design**

The project design has not been enhanced over the year although discussions have been held with the commercial sponsor and Ministry of Education about support for the continuation of the project after the end of Darwin Funding.

4.6 **Work plan for the next period**

The work plan is as proposed

2001

June - October

Survey Period - the results will be submitted by the groups by October 2001

During this period there will be one visit by the FSC to monitor the school and plan the analysis and presentation of the Results. The schools will also be circulated with a newsletter reporting on results.

November/December

The results will be analysed and a set of GIS maps produced. This will be produced in a number of formats. Schools will be presented with a special Biodiversity map of Slovakia as a poster, and the Biodiversity Report will be launched by the Minister of Environment.

2002

January - October

After the survey period, the groups taking part in the project will be invited to develop small scale projects related to protecting and conserving the biodiversity they have measured. This will be supported by a second publication related to developing successful community projects.

5. Partnerships

5.1 Collaboration with UK and host country partner

The relationship between the FSC and the SAZP is progressing very smoothly. SAZP as a government agency is a highly effective and professional organisation, and is managing the project extremely successfully with the minimum of input from the FSC after the major training events.

5.2 Collaboration with similar projects

The project has not collaborated with any other environmental education projects in the country. However, many of the groups that are taking part in the project represent NGOs and other informal groups.

At a formal level the Ministry of Environment are formally involved in the project.

As a result of the success of the project we believe that we have a model that could be replicated by other countries, and even on a European scale. We might therefore wish to hold a dissemination event before the proposed Month 34.

6. Impact and Sustainability

6.1 Impact

Although we have not formally reviewed the project to date, we believe that the impact is very high. The interest from groups to take part in the project has far exceeded SAZPs expectations, and the project is easily the largest environmental education project that has ever taken place in Slovakia. 850 groups are involved and probably up to 10000 children and families.

6.2 Sustainability

SAZP have excellent relationships with a major Sponsor, the Slovak Oil and Gas Company. Negotiations are already being held to assess the possibility of the company being a major sponsor after the end of the Darwin funding. The Ministry of Environment is also likely to support the project financially. In addition, it is felt that there might be a market for the keys and other education materials and the possibility of the sale of materials to generate income to support sustainability is being researched.

In terms of an exit strategy, the SAZP are easily able to manage this project after the end of Darwin involvement, and have demonstrated this through their successful management to date. FSC input is largely the input of new ideas and processes related to communicating biodiversity effectively, and once adopted SAZP have the capacity through their Education Department to continue these.

7. Outputs, Outcomes and Dissemination

7.1 Table

Code No.	Quantity	Descriptions
6 A/B	Training of Project Manager in Slovakia for week	This took place in June through formal FSC "Fundamentals of Management" training and through on going informal mentoring by SAZP senior managers
6 A/B	Workshop for one week by 10 members of the Development Team Study Visit of one week for the Development Team Writing Workshop of one week for the Development Team	The Development Team attended a short two day training and briefing event led by the FSC in June, and then held regular meetings during the August in relation to the Project This took place in July and was held at Preston Montford Field Centre and was led by Steve Tilling, Wayne Talbot and James Hindson This took place in Slovakia at the Temply Vierce Centre and was led by Steve Tilling.
6 A/B	At least 500 teachers trained on a half day workshop	Nearly 750 teachers and group leaders have been trained at one of 25 half-day workshops held through out the country. 850 groups have registered to take part in project. Around 15% of Slovak Schools are taking part and around 10000 children.
7	1000 Biodiversity Monitoring Kits	1000 Kits consisting of a Handbook, and three eco system keys have been produced and currently 850 groups have registered for the Survey.
15A	At least 5 article in the National press about the project	2 articles in National Press

16 A/B/C	1 newsletter circulated to 1000 schools etc in the host country and 25 in the UK.	
18 A/C	At least 5 appearances on TV programmes	2 appearances on TV
19 A/C	At least 5 appearances on Radio programmes	3 appearances on Radio programmes

7.2 Differences

There are no significant differences. There are slightly fewer groups taking part in the project than predicted. However, this prediction was revised downwards by the SAZP and Development Team at the start of the projects as they felt it was far too optimistic. 1000 schools would be at least 6 times more schools than any other project to date. Therefore, the FSC and SAZP are thrilled with the 850 currently registered groups.

7.3 Publications

Table 2: Publications

Type	Detail	Publisher	Available from	Cost £
Teachers HandBook	Ziva Prioroda-Teachers Handbook	SAZP	SAZP - see below for contact details	Free to project schools - currently not on sale to others
Fold out identification chart	Woodland Key	SAZP		Free to project schools - currently not on sale to others
Fold out identification chart	Water Key	SAZP		Free to project schools - currently not on sale to others
Fold out identification chart	Meadows Key	SAZP		Free to project schools - currently not on sale to others
Poster	General	SAZP		Free to project schools - currently not on sale to

				others
CD	Animal Sounds	SAZP		Free to project schools - currently not on sale to others
CD	Biodiversity Information	SAZP		Free to project schools - currently not on sale to others

All the project materials are available from Slovenska Agentura Zivotneho Prostredia, Tajovskeho 28, 975 90, Banska Bystrica, Slovakia. Currently all the materials are offered free of charge to the project schools, but discussions are being held about offering the materials to other schools for a charge.

7.4 No dissemination activities have been held in the first year of the project.

8. Project Expenditure

Income and Expenditure Summary for Accounting Year Ended 29 December 2000

9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons.

9.1 Monitoring during the year has been on an informal basis through telephone and email discussions to check that progress is being made against the project timescale and objectives.

A visit at the beginning of Year Two will establish a more formal monitoring system that will allow the progress of the participating schools to be effectively followed and supported.

9.2 This first year of the project has progressed very smoothly, and there have only been two issues to deal with.

The original project officer appointed by the SAZP moved to another job in January 2001. She was replaced with no impact on the project as a whole as the major development work had been undertaken and other members of the EE team at SAZP covered her work.

The communication systems between FSC and SAZP have been amended to encourage more frequent reporting and communication between the two organisations.

10 Authors / Date

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