

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of the Species

Annual Report

1. Darwin Project Information

Project Title	Schools and communities monitoring and protecting biodiversity in Slovakia
Countires	Slovakia
Contractor	Field Studies Council
Project Ref.No	126/9/007
Grant Value	£129520
Star/Finishing Dates	June 2000 – April 2003
Report period	April 2001 – March 2002

2. Project Background

The Living Nature is an environmental education project aimed at biodiversity protection and mapping of natural and cultural landscape throughout Slovakia. Slovakia has a rich biodiversity which is under threats from economic, agricultural and industrial development. Increasing pressure on biodiversity is mainly visible in some hot spot regions in Slovakia.

The increasing of public awareness by involving young people in the process of biodiversity protection is very important in Slovakia and tends to fullfil educational goals set up in policy documents such as NEAP II and Slovak Conception on EE and Training.

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Purpose and Objectives

The goal of the project is to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding, active learning 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 biodiversitiy databases and undertaking small-scale ecological projects to ensure that the rich biodiversitiy 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 strenghten 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

The national Development Team was created at the beginning of the project. The Development Team attended a training event in the UK at Preston Montford Field Centre in Shropshire. The Team developed and tested the Biodiversity monitoring Kit. The project was launched to all schools in Slovakia and 799 groups were registered. Each group has been sent the Biodiversity Kit consisting of a Teachers Handbook, poster, three ecosystem based keys, together with other materials, T shirts, pens and magnifying glasses provided by the commercial sponsor. The leader of each of the groups attended a half day training session at one of 20 workshop locations in Slovakia. An additional event involved the launch of the Project by the Minister of Environment and British Ambassador at a special event in Bratislava.

4.2. Progress over the last year

The groups of school students surveyed 105 species of animals and 120 species of plants in various localities from May 2001 to October 2001. 552 groups sent the results: list with observed plant and animal species and map with marked locality to SAZP in October 2001. The groups recorded 15 617 animals and 23 098 plants in 787 localities throughout Slovakia.

The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively and set of GIS maps was produced in the period of three month, from November 2001 to January 2002. The map, which has a degree of interaction – clicking on specific icons provide information about the nature of the data collection and the data collectors. **CDRom** is the starting point of long term student data set on the Biodiversity of Slovakia.

The Team spent the time period from November 2001 to January 2002 in the development of the 2nd Newsletter, the Ecosystem poster, the Teachers Handbook – Small-scale ecological projects, the Living Nature exhibition.

The full colour Newsletter was printed. The Newsletter gives information about project background, objectives, progress. The children drawing, photo, opinion, passages from letters and poems are published. Inside the Newsletter are picture of the Ecosystem poster and the evaluation of the questionnaire distributed to the project participants in the previous period of the project.

The Ecosystem poster was created by drawings of the animals and plants in the habitats submitted by group members and scanned onto the computer. The poster contains a brief digest of the project, the three habitats with pictures of animals and plants, with related comments. Each animal and plant is numbered and indexed in a listing below the habitat drawings. A further section advises how the material may be used in teaching. The last section is ‘thank you’ to the supporting organisations and the participating groups. Logo attribution is evident in this section, Darwin Initiative, Field Studies Council, Slovak Environmental Agency, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of the Education of the Slovak Republic, and Slovak Gas Industry.

The Teachers Handbook – Small-scale ecological projects has three main chapters. The first chapter gives basic information about biological diversity, why we need it to protect. The second part is methodology – how to establish small scale ecological projects, collect relevant data etc. In the third chapter are concrete examples of small-scale ecological projects, How clean is the air I breath – using Lichens as pollution indicators, How clean is the water in our streams/lakes – using freshwater invertebrates as pollution indicators, Building bird boxes, Reducing and removing waste, etc. At the end of the Handbook is information from a variety of organisation that students can utilise to develop a project and short dictionary.

The Living Nature exhibition was prepared for the launch of the Project by the Minister of Environment and British Ambassador at a special event in Bratislava, 22 April 2002 and was exhibited in frame of the Envirofilm 2002, the 8th international festival of films, TV programmes and video programmes dealing with the environment protection and improvement which was organised from 7 to 11 May 2002.

During March 2002 the majority of leaders of groups which sent the results to the SAZP (552 groups) attended a half day training session at one of 20 workshop locations in Slovakia. Each of 552 groups received or has been sent a Newsletter, CD Rom, Teacher Handbook – Small-scale ecological projects, Ecosystem poster.

4.3. Projects Training Research and Training work

Training over the project has consisted of

Teacher Training

All the teachers and group leaders taking part in the project and sending the results were invited to one of 20 workshops held at locations throughout Slovakia.

No specific training has been provided for the Darwin Team in Slovakia in Year Two.

4.4. Significant difficulties

There were not significant difficulties.

Evaluations of results by experts showed that some of groups had problems with determination of 6 animal species and 5 plant species.

Some groups had to change monitoring site because of increase abundance of sheep ticks.

4.5. Project design

The project design has not been enhanced over the year although discussions have been held with the Ministry of Education. They appreciated such type of project for school student and promised support, but not financial.

4.6. Work plan for the next period

2002

April

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

April/May

The collection of application forms for the second phase of the project – small scale ecological projects.

May/October

The groups will realise small-scale ecological projects related to protecting and conserving the biodiversity they have measured.

May/September

Monitoring of realisation of small-scale ecological projects. Work on the multi-medial CD Detective in Nature.

October/December

Evaluation of small-scale ecological projects.

2003

January/ March

Evaluation of group works during the whole project. The third Newsletter will be prepared.

April

Project result evaluation and writing the final report. The national launch of the Project by the Minister of Environment, British Ambassador, the Minister of the Education and other important organisation that support the project at a special event in Bratislava. To disseminate the process that the project used to environmental educators in all Slovakia organise national conference.

5. Partnerships

5.1. Collaboration with UK and host country partner

The relationship between SAZP and the FSC has been very good during Year Two. The FSC input has largely been through regular visits during which the FSC Team have attended planning meetings with the SAZP Project management team to jointly plan the key activities and outputs. Development meetings have also been held with the whole Slovak Development Team. In addition the FSC Team has undertake monitoring and review visits.

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.

The members of the development team are experts from different governmental organisations: State Nature Protection, Central Slovak Natural Museum, Matej Bel University.

In frame of collaboration with state governmental organisation Biodiversity maps CD Roms will be send to organisations like State Nature Protection, Slovak Academy of Science, State forests of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Entomological Society, Slovak Zoological Society, Slovak Botanical Society, Society for birds protection in Slovakia.

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

The SAZP and FSC wish to collaborate further with similar biodiversity projects in other European countries. The two organisations have proposed that the final Conference is enlarged to become a more strategic European Conference on Biodiversity Education. However, this can not be done within the current project budget and additional funds are being sought.

6. Impact and Sustainability

6.1. Impact

The project is the largest environmental education project that has ever taken place in Slovakia. In the first phase of the project 799 groups were involved, in the second year of the project it was 552 groups and probably more than 5 500 children.

The results of questionnaire showed that the participants of the project appreciated the possibility to spread their knowledge about biodiversity by form of active learning in nature, the quality of received methodological material and improvement of social contacts between children in working groups.

6.2. Sustainability

SAZP have relationship with Sponsor like Slovak Gas Company. The Ministry of Environment is also likely to support the project. In addition, it is felt that there might be a market of the keys, poster, Teachers handbook, multi-medial CD and the possibility of the sale of materials to generate income to support sustainability.

7. Outputs, Outcomes and Dissemination

7.1. Table

Code No.	Quantity	Descriptions
		Nearly 250 teachers and group leaders have been trained at one of 20 half day workshops held throughout Slovakia 552 groups have registered to take part in project. More than 5500 children taking part in the second year of the project.
	1000 newsletters	552 groups received the 2 nd Newsletter. Almost 100 newsletters were distributed to the media, journalists, governmental and nongovernmental organisations.
	1000 CD Rom - the biodiversity maps	552 the biodiversity maps CD Rom - circulated to working groups.
	1000 Ecosystem posters	552 Ecosystem posters circulated to working groups.
	1000 Teachers Handbook – Small-scale ecological projects	552 Teachers Handbook – Small-scale ecological projects circulated to working groups
		4 articles in the National press about the project
		12 articles in the Regional and communities press
		3 articles in the National journals
		1 article in the Newsletter Central and Eastern Europe
		3 appearances on National TV programmes
		8 appearances on National Radio programmes
		4 appearances on Regional Radio programmes

7.2. Differences

The only difference in the project was the decision to produce the results of the Biodiversity Survey as a CD Rom rather than a printed publication and also to produce a poster to go to all schools.

7.3. Publications

Table 2: Publications

Type	Detail	Publisher	Available form	Cost £
Teachers Handbook	Small-scale ecological projects (Teachers handbook)	SAZP	SAZP	Free to project schools – currently not on sale to others
Poster	Ecosystem poster	SAZP	SAZP	Free to project schools – currently not on sale to others
CD Rom	Biodiversity maps (CD Rom)	SAZP	SAZP	Free to project schools – currently not on sale to others

All the project materials are available from Slovenská agentúra životného prostredia, Tajovského 28, 975 90 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. Currently all the materials are offered free of charge to the project schools.

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

8. Project Expenditure

Income and Expenditure summary for Accounting Year Ended 31 December 2001

	£	£
<u>Income</u>		
Grant Received		
Add Balance Brought Forward		
Total Income for Year		—
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Salaries & Fee		
Office Rent		
Postage, Telephone & Stationery		
Travel & Subsistence		
Printing		
Conferences		
Other Expenses		
		—
Excess of Income over Expenditure		—

The above figures have been sent separately to DETR and have been audited by the FSC Accountants.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons

9.1. During the data collection process large emphasis was given to monitoring the results presented by schools and checking their accuracy. All the members of the Development Team were involved in this process. This was done through visits to some schools during the data collection process and also through telephone and email monitoring.

Monitoring was also undertaken through a questionnaire sent to the schools taking part in the survey. This demonstrated an increase in understanding of biodiversity.

The FSC and SAZP have monitored the project overall. Essentially the project has been highly successful with few problems. The numbers of schools and children involved in the project has far exceeded the realistic expectations of SAZP.

The main challenge that faces SAZP is how to ensure that the network of Biodiversity Schools is maintained and that the survey is repeated in 2003.

9.2. Because of the election in Slovakia in the autumn 2002 it will be necessary to contact new representatives in the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Education with aim to reach support to the project after the end of the Darwin funding.

10. Authors/Date

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