



Nature – our teacher, friend and home!

Report for the activities of Vlahi Nature School for 2011 and plan for 2012

1. Implemented Activities

In 2011 the Board of Trustees with the support of many volunteers worked in the following activities:

1.1. Volunteer weekends and work-camps:

1.1.1 There were a series of eco-working weekends organised, which were mainly for work on the garden - digging, weeding, planting vegetables and saplings, work on the oven in the garden. In the working weekends participated volunteers from Bulgaria and abroad - other EVS volunteers and other passages learned about the project from the Internet.

1.1.2 There was a summer volunteer work-camp in July with the participation of 8 volunteers from Germany, Belgium, Russia and Bulgaria, we had again volunteers from SOS Kinderdorf. The volunteer marked tourist roads in the area, cleaned the school, worked in the garden, and renewed part of the fence of the garden.

1.2. Longterm volunteering:

Till the end of May 2011 the activities of the Nature School were supported by the EVS volunteer Matthieu Pedernana. In the second half of the project he was working on finishing the oven, design and project of the veranda and the tools storage, as well as other activities, related to the school maintenance.

1.3. Work on projects:

1.3.1 In 2011 the Schools for Intelligent Energy Use (SIEU) project finished. The statistics of the project shows: 9 schools from west Bulgaria participated – Blagoevgrad, Kresna, Petrich, village of Kolarovo, Pirdop, Kyustendil and Sofia; 132 students for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school year participated, they worked on 10 educational projects, focusing on energy and energy efficiency.

IVAM – partner Dutch organization from the University of Amsterdam, made an evaluation of the project, which for Bulgaria are as follows: In general as result of the SIEU project the students increased their knowledge about Energy, 24% improved their knowledge. 45 % increase their energy awareness, and 43% have better attitude to the energy efficiency.

Additionally 62% of the students improve their energy behavior at home after the project. About 75% of the students were satisfied with their participation in the SIEU project.

1.3.2. At the end of the summer 2011 a project for improving the energy efficiency of the school building was approved and financed by the French Veolia Foundation.



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In the frame of the project activities for the outer plastering of the building started in the autumn. The work is continuing in 2012.

1.4. Others

1.4.1 For second year Lyutenitza fest for home making lyutenitza was organized. The vegetables - tomatoes, paprika, eggplants are bought by local producers. In the school yard the tasty process of baking paprika, boiling tomato sauce and at last tasting the magic lyutenitza is happening. The idea is to use the lyutenitza for fundraising – to sell it to people that appreciate the home made, as well as on local festivals, where the nature school participate.

1.4.2. By the initiative of the Nature School a contact with RIEW –Blagoevgrad was created for declaring the two trees of Greek juniper (*Juniperus excelsa*) as century- old trees. The procedure for assessment the tree status was done and now there is an order issued for their protection.

1.4.3. In the last year the Nature School become a member of the regional tourist organization Pirin Tourist Forum. Since long time we work with them and the membership will give us better possibilities for applying to European Trans-border programs.

1.4.4. In 2011 the circle Friends of Vlahi, established in Switzerland was closed, due to the lack of possibilities of its members to invest more in the initiative.

1.4.5. Here it should be mentioned the great volunteer support given by Dimitur Vasilev for the continuation of the work of the Nature school. With the fact that he is living at the spot and can keep contacts with the locals and to do garden activities.

In 2011 4 member left the Board of trustees, mainly due to family reasons and official engagements – Rada Nedyalkova, Fidanka Mcgrath, Eoin Mcgrath and Evgenia Tasheva. Vote for new members is foreseen, their motivations are present with the document for the General Assembly.



Volunteer weekends 2011



Building of traditional oven



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Part of the integrated pest management used in the permaculture garden.



Harvest from the permaculture garden at Vlahi Nature School, 2011

Volunteer workcamp, July 2011



Improving energy efficiency of the School building.

2. Plan for 2012

2.1. Finish energy efficiency measures in the school, install biomass-fed heater in the school, maintain and improve the permaculture garden, attract more volunteers and visitors to Vlahi village and introduce them to the idea behind the Vlahi Nature School and other local sustainable initiatives.

Practical energy efficiency measures

- plastering outer walls - materials, doors insulation
- ceiling installation
- insulation materials for the roof

Heating installation:

Preparation of engineer design plan of the heating system in the building

Purchasing the heating system and installation



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In addition, we plan to produce some new educational materials, related to energy efficiency and green energy – one for younger children and one for older pupils.

2.2. Participation the spring holidays of Kresna, dedicated to livestock breeding and agriculture.

2.3. Submitting expression of interest for hosting EVS volunteers.

2.4. Volunteer weekends, Lyutenitza fest and others