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- „Rural Education Centres Towards Sustainable Future” in Poland (case study)
- The folk school courses in Lipsk

The folk school courses in Lipsk was realized by Stowarzyszenie Nowa Europa of Lodz, and it was part of EU Programme SOCRATES GRUNDTVIG 1 - „Rural Education Centres Towards Sustainable Future” in Poland This programme is implemented in cooperation between 7 organisations of Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Ireland, Denmark and the United Kingdom. These countries have already held 13 folk school courses attended by approx. 260 participants, basically female residents in rural areas and small towns. The project's objective is to provide access to education and promote sustainable development in rural areas.

The folk school was attended by 15 female Lipsk residents aged 19 – 45, predominantly with secondary or foundation vocational education background. In view of the absence of employment opportunities, most of them are housewives.

Programme of Folk School in Lipsk, Poland (podlaskie region)

I. Social and Personal Development. Personal development planning. Life objectives. System of values, strengths, aptitudes, communication styles, occupational activity. Interpersonal communication in occupational or public situations. Public speaking. Appearance. Make-up art.

II. Health and Sustainability. The healthy food and herbs. Herbal gardens. Study visit to an organic and agri-tourist farm. Organic food. Workshop. Addictions prevention. Patient rights.

III. Arts and Handicraft (Crocheting. Easter eggs painting. Traditional Christmas decorations. Cross-stitch embroidering. Table decoration).

IV. Modern information technologies

The Association New Europa introduced two new ideas to the Grundtvig programme:

First – to organise a study visit to a sustainable and agro-tourist farm at Giże, where Anna and Lech Marczak held a workshop on healthy food and lectured on tourism-oriented farms. The trip was an introduction to further activities with a view to encouraging local residents to engage in rural tourism and earn additional income by utilising **unique skills in traditional crafts, handicrafts, and to establish cooperation links – networking - for promotion and sales.**

The second idea was to prepare the participants to give public speeches, including personal presentations and handicraft products demonstrations. Promotion materials were developed for each participant so as to help them make presentations at handicraft fairs, festivals, and other trade events. The final meeting was attended by guest-instructors, who offered specialist help in this respect . The promotion materials so prepared helped establish first prospective contacts.

What education actions were important for the community and how people could contribute to its development and improve the quality of life (participants opinions):

- Seen as relevant were such skills as experiences as: assertiveness, self-confidence building, self-recognition, and positive image building.
- All classes were enjoyable; all were great and interesting, relevant, attention-grabbing and practical, informative, necessary, and capacity building. *The most preferred classes were those in the personal development block, i.e. make-up art and self-presentation, self-creation, setting life objectives, own products promotion, photo sessions. Another highly evaluated block of class was arts and handicraft (including crocheting and Easter eggs painting), table decoration.* Also, the classes in computer literacy and in health and sustainability were found enjoyable. The trip to the sustainable and agri-tourist farm, combined with the onion-bread baking workshop, was welcomed with great interest, too.

The skills the participants are going to utilise for their own aims – personal development, earning additional income, etc. - are: handicrafts, self-presentation skills, image building, best impression making skills (make-up, speechmaking, body motion), computer literacy, including Power Point presentations, writing articles for newspapers, and managing agri-tourist farms. The course helped participants with understanding some aspects:

- How to earn money; extra **income** (agri-tourist farm, **handicrafts** enhance their earning potential and enrich handicraft product ranges, how to make new acquaintances and keep up the friendly relationships.
- How to help the country youth realizing additional classes, especially during the field works (their parents frequently see this as an attempt to shirk wor). So it is necessary to work more on the parents

- How to build consciousness, proudness of places, traditions; how to prepare people who can write eligible projects, and we are looking for more; how education can help elevate community; how to promote agri-tourism, natural assets, hospitality, and tradition; **how to create activity of people, including young people in different area; culture, sport**, regional education club;
- **Opinion of association which implements environmental protection and culture programmes**(Our major project is to preserve the marshland ecosystems in the River Biebrza Valley. Our activities include education, environment and culture protection).
- How to win the local community's support; without the stakeholders, i.e. the local residents, nothing can be done.
- How people can help each other to brake a numbers of barriers (mother with disabled child). mentality damage.
- Creating public involvement/ initiatives. The role of education in this area is essential. Integration-wise, the garden party had a substantial impact
- **library as a place of informal education (+internet)**