

Partnership Action

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER. VOL.1, NO.1. DECEMBER 2004

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER!

The Environmental Partnership is an association of six civic foundations in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. They are focused on mobilizing and empowering the people of the region to improve their environment, their local communities and societies. Since their establishment in 1991, the Environmental Partnership has invested over USD 16 million in support of more than 5,000 individual projects in the region.

As a partnership, we aim for cooperation between people, civil organizations, governments and businesses.

Since 2002, the Environmental Partnership has been awarding **the Central European Heritage Award** for outstanding grassroots-based model initiatives. Only successful grantees of any of the six Environmental Partnership foundations are eligible to apply. The regional award committee of independent experts select one out of five national projects that best fits the criteria of being: community-based; combining protection of natural and cultural heritage; being innovative, promoting community development, and building partnerships.

A gift of USD 5000 is a contribution to the development of the winning organization, while each national winner receives USD 1000.

The 2004 regional winner of the Heritage Award is Poland's "Odra River Greenway" project.

The project was carried out by The Ecological Foundation 'Green Action', which is the leading NGO in the Lower Silesia region, focusing on sustainable development. This greenway, a network of kayaking, walking and cycling trails stretching over 300km, is the first to run completely along the Odra River corridor.

There are sixteen educational walking and cycling trails presenting the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

The organisation's goal of developing sustainable forms of tourism, using natural and cultural values, has been achieved. Initiatives included:

- > Art workshops exploring the traditions connected to the Odra Valley region.
- > Young volunteers from schools of the Winsko district marking the trail during their vacations.
- > A Greenway campsite and eco-tourist services.
- > Ecological education trails.
- > Local events such as an international bike rally, a kayak tour and a fair of flowers and local products.



- > These varied activities prompted the formation of a local coalition with over thirty partners.
- > This coalition, the Partnership for Middle Odra, provides a strong base for future initiatives.
- > Plans include developing the eco-museums along the greenway, wine production, and creating a brand of products from the Odra River valley.



THE TRAIL OF JOHANN GRASEL (THE CZECH REPUBLIC)

The Slavonice Renaissance Society organises cultural and education programs focused on Slavonice, a town near the border with Austria.

A range of activities were developed, based on the legacy of a renowned local robber, Johann Grasel. The most successful is a hiking trail, stretching 12km from Cesky Rudolec to Slavonice.

- > Local people were brought together to promote local heritage.
- > Good heritage interpretation was shown in the designing of a trail concept and six information panels along it.
- > Discussions have started for building a community and development centre.
- > The Grasel trail is due to expand, in co-operation with Austrian partners.

more at: www.nadacepartnerstvi.cz



A COMBINED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (HUNGARY)

The Panorama Association was established to increase the rural development power of Banya and other small villages in the Zselic region of South-West Hungary. It works through a number of framework programs:

- > Promotion of student tourism in the Zselic woods.
- > 'Zselic - an opportunity for living', which aims to help the many unemployed people of the region.
- > Open farms. Successful farms include a cheese-farm, a parrot zoo, an arboretum, and a craft-court.

These programs have helped to strengthen the regional economy. Each can be adapted for other regions.

Participants now see their environment as a resource.

more at: www.okotars.hu

MIRACULUM 2004 (ROMANIA)

The Artera Foundation aims to preserve Transylvanian folk traditions. Miraculum 2004 was a year-long project aiming to create sustainable value in the cultural resources of Satu Mare village. Activities included:

- > A Wonderland handicraft camp,
- > An outdoor theatric play,
- > A masquerade ball and Christmas carols.

The project was successful in building communal experience, intercultural learning, and mobilizing different generations. Work on the revitalization of the village set to continue.

more at: www.epce.ro

REVITALISATION OF THE PROTECTIVE ZONE OF THE NATIONAL PARK SLOVENSKÝ RAJ AND DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION.(SLOVAKIA)

Tatry CA cooperates with other organizations to protect the heritage of the High Tatra region, while Let's save Letanovký myln works to change the status of the local Roma community. Together they work on revitalising the protective zone of the National Park Slovenský Raj, an area of 60km². The organizations aimed to modify the character of agricultural land, from monoculture large-plane fields into smaller farming space.

- > Three revitalisation camps were organized where nearly 12 500 trees were planted.
- > A second phase, carried out by Tatry CA, focused on educational and civic activities. These targeted local citizens, from pupils to mayors of municipalities.

more at: www.ekopolis.sk

Bulgaria, as the newly established member to the Partnership, will nominate a project from next year onwards. www.bepf-bg.org

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS!



The next edition of this quarterly will report on the Environmental Partnership's response to the disaster in the Tatras! If you have any suggestions or feedback, please email the editor at kim.lyon@ecn.cz