

FOREST – OUR LIFELONG TEACHER

FOREST AS A THERAPEUTIC ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mojca Borštnar, OŠ 27. julij, Kamnik 31. 5. 2023







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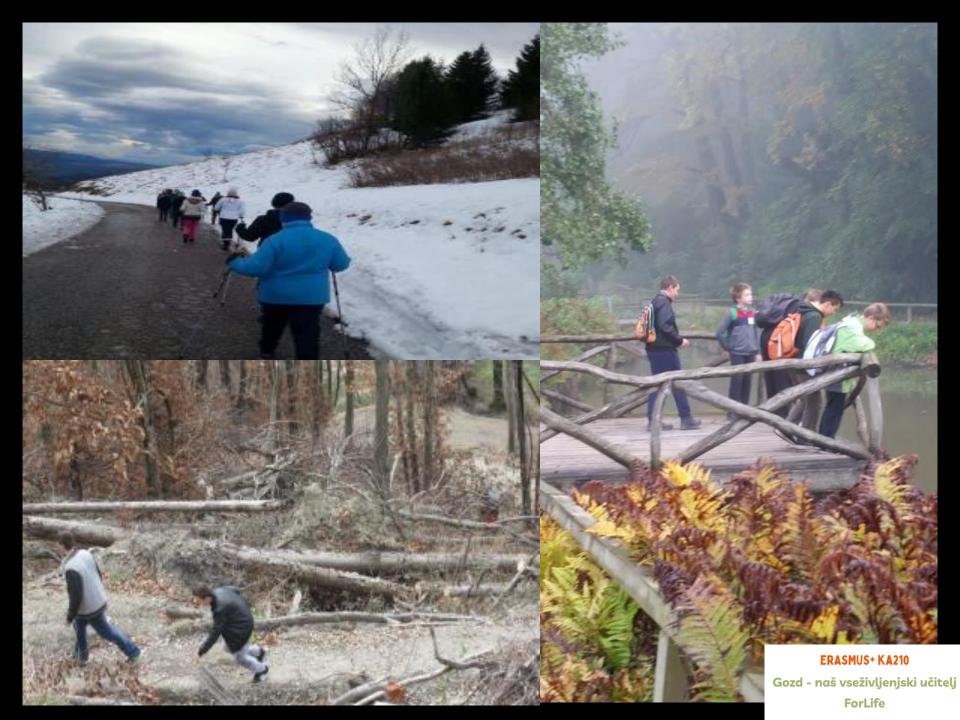
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27th of July Primary School





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ForLife





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Castles in Kamnik; hiking locations during sports



Velika planina

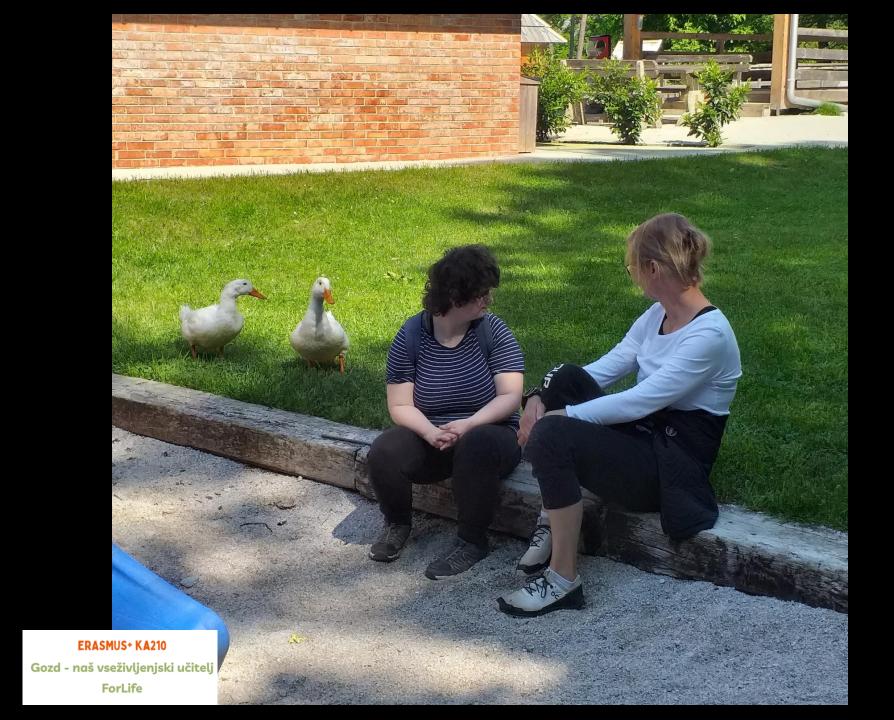
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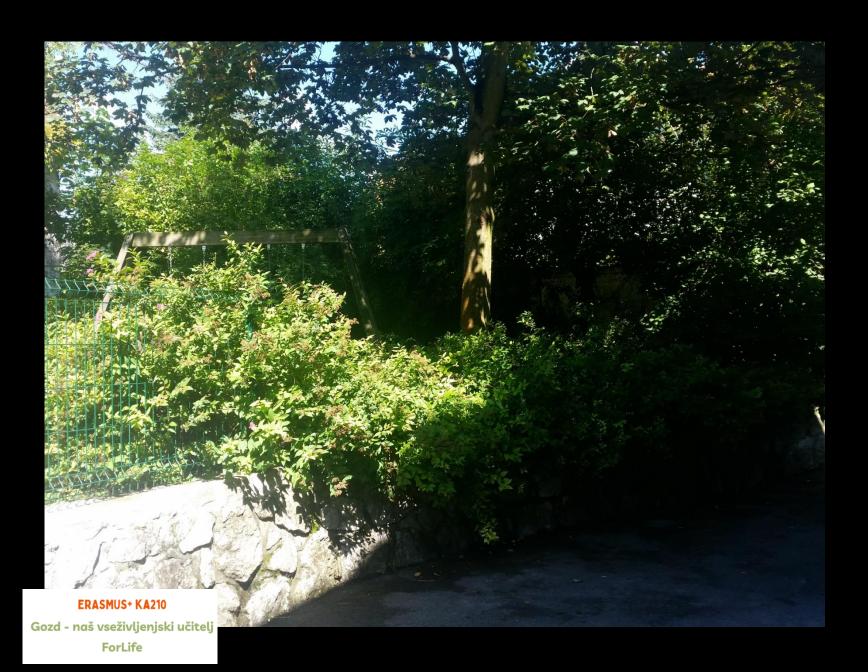


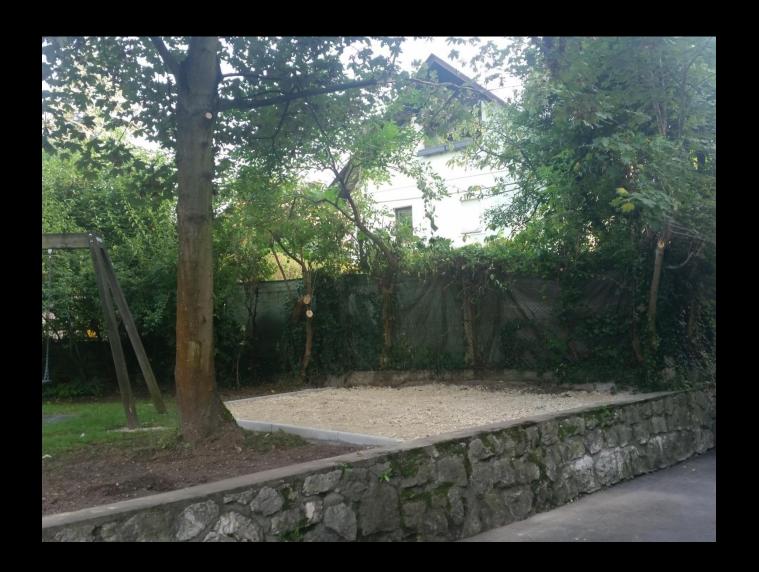
Eco Resort

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Science event





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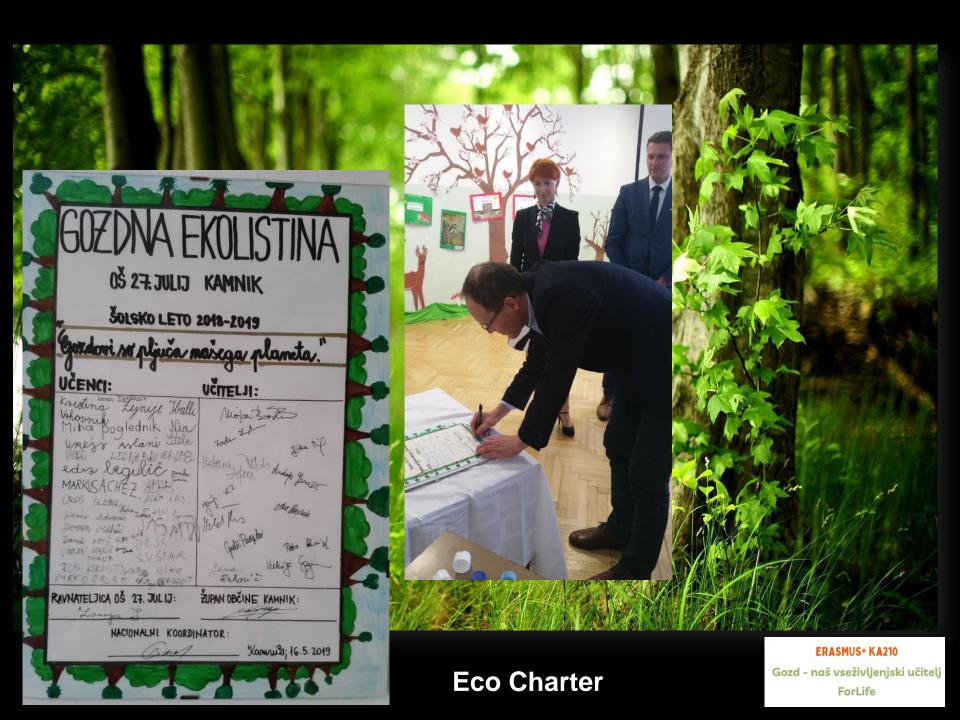


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Fruit tree planting









Erasmus+ International Project "The Forest - Our Lifelong Teacher

In this presentation we have tried to find an answer to a question, can a forest be a therapeutic environment for children with special needs.

The study involved children and adolescents with moderate and severe mental disabilities, who are studying in a primary school for children with special needs.

By presenting school and extracurricular activities connected to the forest, we focused mainly on their well-being and integrated development.



Can a forest be a therapeutic space for children with special needs?





Children spend many sports hours, regardless of the weather and season, outside.

They are improving their motor skills with different forms of movement around the forest terrain.

There are also less illnesses during winter time.



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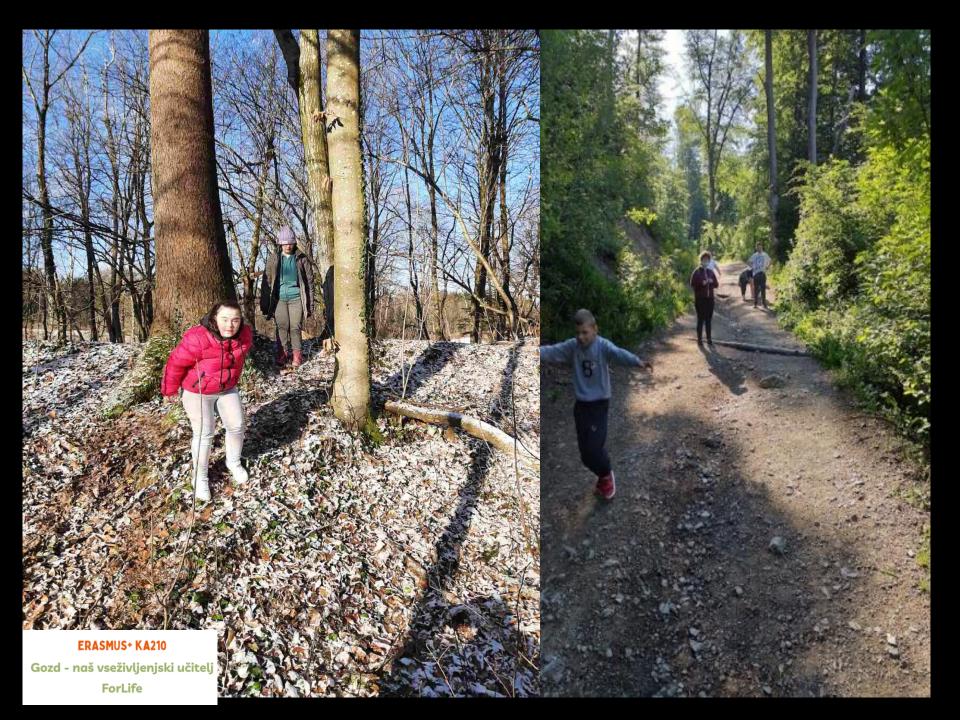
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Outdoor Sport lessons in all seasons













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By hiking as an interest activity, pupils are strengthening their physical abilities and learning about spatial orientation.





By staying in nature, in the context of School in nature, pupils are learning about their needs, adaptability and developing communication and social skills.



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School in nature, Velika planina



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With sensory exercises in the forest, pupil are developing their senses, while games are representing a form of relaxation in nature.



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Developing our senses through games



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By collecting natural materials, pupils are (non)formally learning about the forest and are developing their imagination by using the collected materials in fine art design.

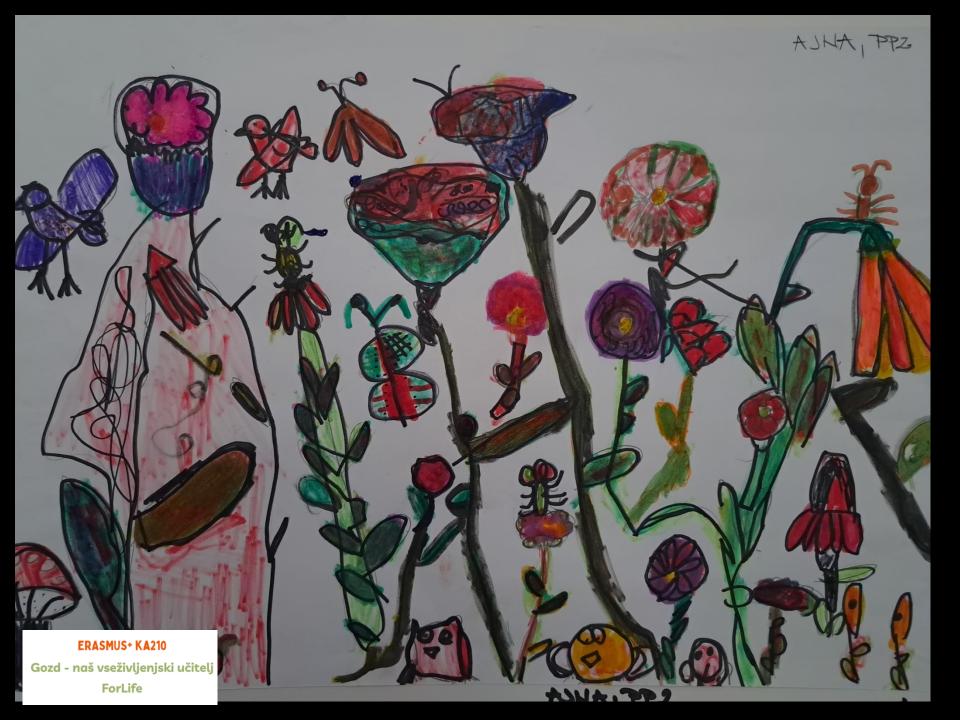


Fine art in the forest





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In the science lessons pupils are learning about the legality of survival in nature through observation and measurements.





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The forest is a place to learn science



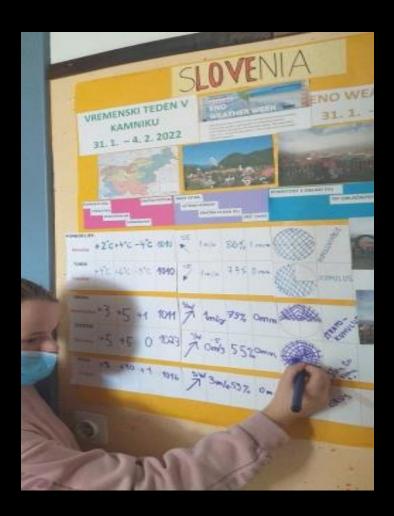


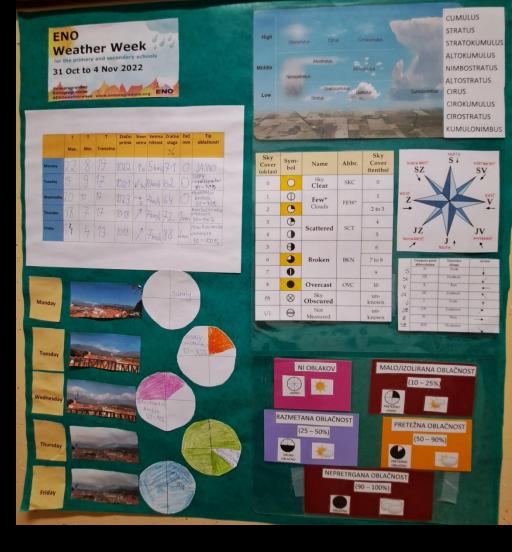
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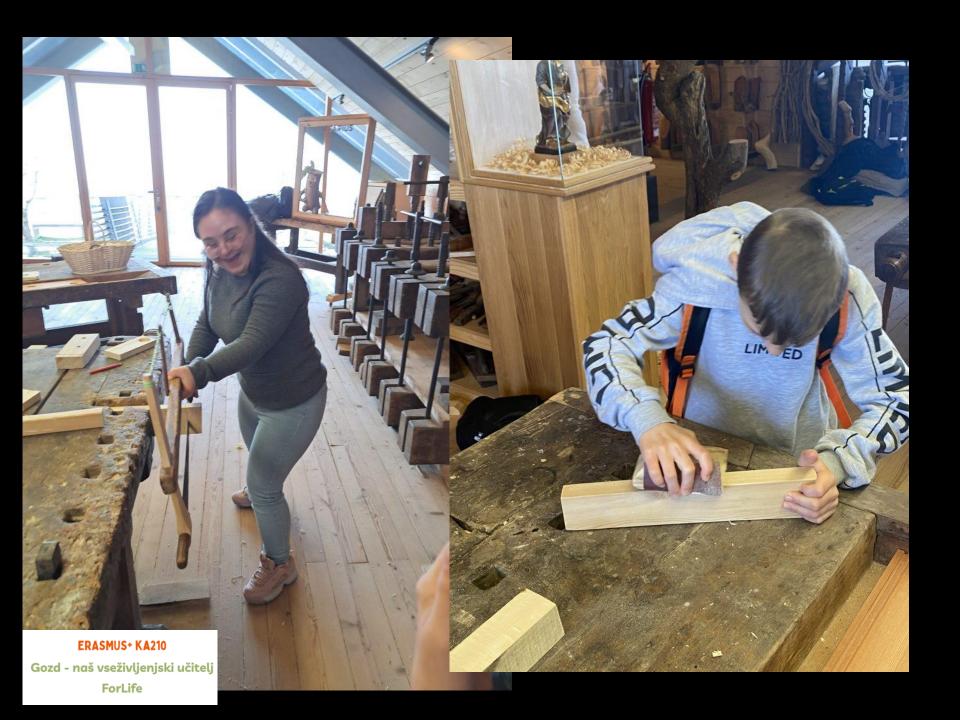


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Conclusion:

Children and adolescents with moderate and severe mental disabilities like to visit the forest with teachers and are manageable, but they do not express desire to spend their free time in the forest.

Forest works on them as a therapeutic environment, because their personal satisfaction after coming to class is much higher, they are more motivated for the school work and even interpersonal relationships are better.

