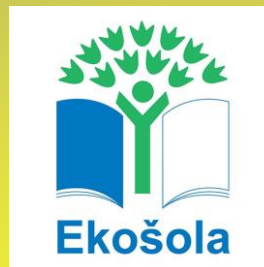




VRTEC POBREŽJE
MARIBOR
ENOTA ČEBELICA



ERASMUS + KA210

Forest – our lifelong teacher
ForLife

Forest heroes

1. 2. 2022- 1. 9. 2023

Petra Horvat

The Pobrežje Maribor Kindergarten is a public educational institution, under the leadership of the principal, Ms Branka Šamec. The kindergarten has nine units and is currently visited by 661 children. The are located in the suburbs of Maribor, where we are surrounded by nature in its diversity.



Our unit Čebelica is located in Malečnik and surrounded by various natural and urban environments, in which we actively participate. The unit has two sections; the Yellow and the Green playroom. The children in the yellow playroom are aged between 2 and 4 years.



As part of the Erasmus+ KA210 project Forest - Our Lifelong Learner ForLife, we started by planning goals, activities, strategies, ways and forms of work to make children's active involvement and participation in nature - the forest - a possibility.





The goals we set ourselves are:

- to get to know and experience the forest with all the senses,
- to raise awareness of the importance and role of the forest,
- to gain knowledge and experience of what the forest gives us,
- to encourage children to engage in their own activities in which they gain authentic experiences,
- to learn about and name the trees, undergrowth, plants and animals in the forest,
- to provide time in which the individual has the opportunity to be actively involved,...





- encouraging children to get to know the forest as a place to play,
 - teaching a responsible and respectful attitude towards nature - the forest,
- increasing children's and parents' environmental awareness,
 - implementing curriculum areas in the forest,
 - allowing individual progress and development,
- promoting interaction, empathy, helping and supporting each other with the children.



We use different strategies, methods and forms of work to achieve our goals.

Living in natural environments, exploring the forest, carrying out activities in the forest, handling natural materials...



We take into consideration children's individual abilities, developmental characteristics and respond to their interests and wishes.





We strive to create a stimulating environment that allows children to experience, explore and discover...
The role of the educator is to be an inspiration, a supporter, a motivator, an encourager of the children's active involvement, as well as a demonstrator, an explainer, a guide, an instructor, a teacher.

Throughout the project, we complement, integrate and extend our objectives, activities, strategies, ways and forms of working.





The neighbourhood of our unit Čebelica is surrounded by diverse natural environments; the Drava River, meadows, fields, gardens, fruit gardens, streams, ...

In their connections, dependence and preservation, we have discovered their characteristics. We learnt about their significance and discovered natural patterns.

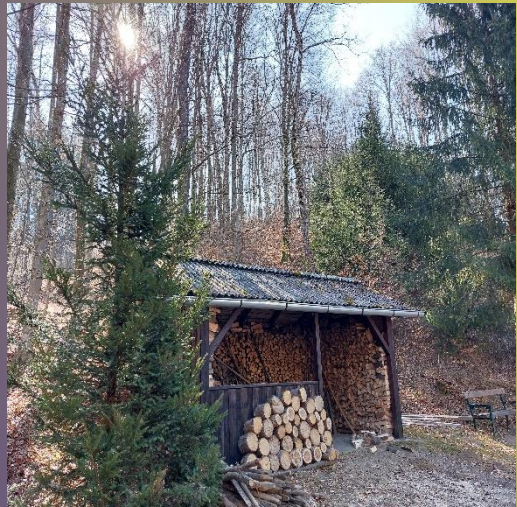
Every active involvement is an opportunity to shape and teach children a responsible, respectful attitude towards nature and the natural environment, and to care for it in a mutual way.





The forest can be accessed along different paths. It is shaped by hills and flats, which was both a challenge and an opportunity for us. There is a pond, a stream, a woodshed from which we borrow material to play, create, explore....

All of the above enriches our experiences, allows us to integrate content, understand the dependency of nature.



In the forest with children, we learn about it as an ecosystem, experiencing it with all our senses, in our own observation, involvement and exploration. We learn about the role and importance of forests. Discover what grows in the forest and who lives there. Learn about the impact of forests on the environment. Find out what and who harms the forest.

We link everything we learn to environmental issues such as sustainable development, weather, climate change, environmental protection, saving, pollution....





In the forest: -we observe, -we listen, -we explore, -we investigate, -we compare, -we sort, -we ask questions, -we look for answers, -we look for solutions, -we name, -we get to know each other...





Being in the forest stimulates children's interest in the forest, their own active involvement and the learning of natural knowledge. In repeated engagements in the forest, we learn about and observe cyclical phenomena in nature.



We learn about responsible and caring practices in the forest.





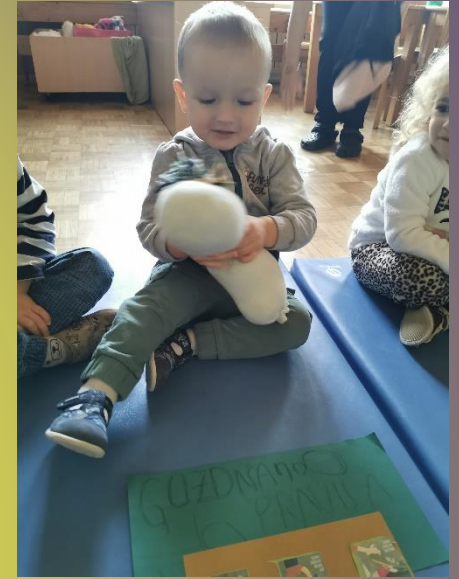
In their interactions with each other, children acquire social competences, self-confidence, patience, collaboration, mutual help.

In the course of the activity, they practise different skills and abilities, find their own solutions, and learn about responsible and caring behaviour.





In the forest, we collected different materials, which we grouped into collections. We are actively exploring, learning about, complementing and creating with it. This allows children, both younger and older, to be active. The younger ones in learning, handling and knowing, the older ones in recreating the experience and in their own creativity.





We use collections of natural materials in the forest, in the classroom and on the playground. Each re-handling allows children to bring in their own perceptions, a different process in which they acquire new skills and knowledge and expand their experience. Many ideas are born.



We make games out of natural materials, create decorations, play games with natural materials.... We have made an insect hotel, which we observe throughout the year and keep track of what's going on inside.



With natural materials: - we handle, -we name, -we explore, -we create, -we compare, -we sort,...



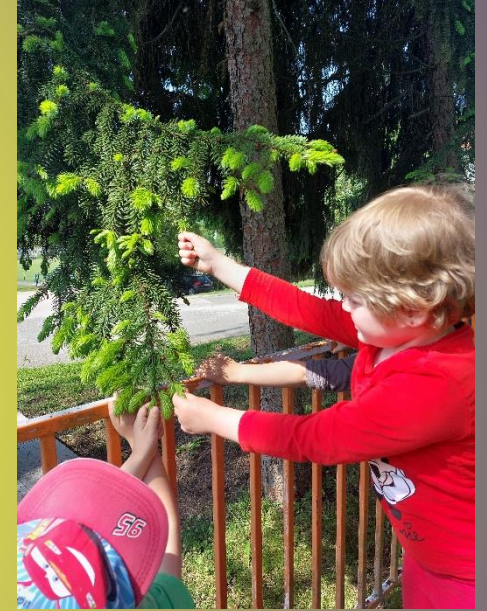


Our playground is varied and planted with trees. So, throughout the year we observe the changes and characteristics of the trees; the birch, the pines, the hazelnut, the insect hotel and the newly planted tree, which the children have named "My Green Tree".





On the playground: - we observe, -we take care of trees,
-we handle natural materials, -we take care of the
environment,...

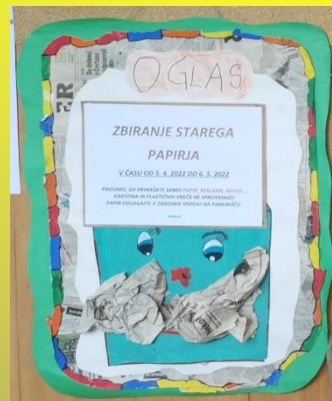


We are committed and proud that families respond to our various invitations. They are involved in bringing materials and resources, fund-raising campaigns, bringing literature, the tradition of the dwarf festival, as well as joint marches and meetings. They are also actively involved in the ongoing activities in their own awareness-raising and informing the children about the topics presented to them by the children, presented by the teachers, displayed on notice boards and in the eco-corner.





Families and kindergartens work together to raise awareness, educate and shape responsible and respectful behaviour in caring for nature. Children pass on the habits, experiences and behaviours of their families that have been shaped by their primary environment. In kindergarten, we have the opportunity to provide the right support. We have the opportunity to transform the inappropriate practices we observe by raising awareness, encouraging both children and their families.



Every place has its own characteristics and features, as well as events and changes that are part of our lives. This is how we got to know beavers and their activity near the kindergarten by the river Drava. Foxes have also been spotted. In the woods, deer's, pheasant, marmot, hedgehog, ...



In May, we had a period of increased rainfall, which we linked to the water cycle in nature.

As a result, we have experienced landslides, which we have seen for the first time. We explored the causes and consequences, highlighting the importance of trees in landslide prevention.



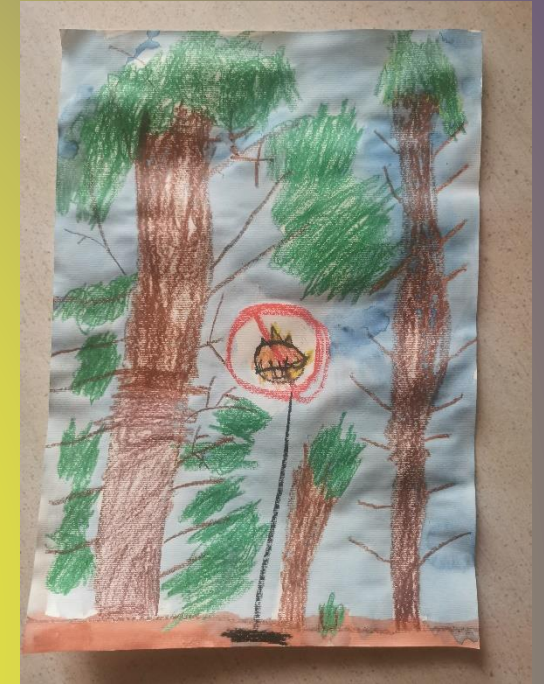
Through all the experiences, activities and discoveries we have achieved the active involvement of children in the natural environment. Children know the agreements of behaviour and integration in the forest - forest behaviour.

They identify, locate and name the parts of a tree. Everyone is actively involved in handling natural materials, suggesting their own ideas. Through our own involvement, we foster a relationship with nature, shaping the lifestyles of children, families and the local community.





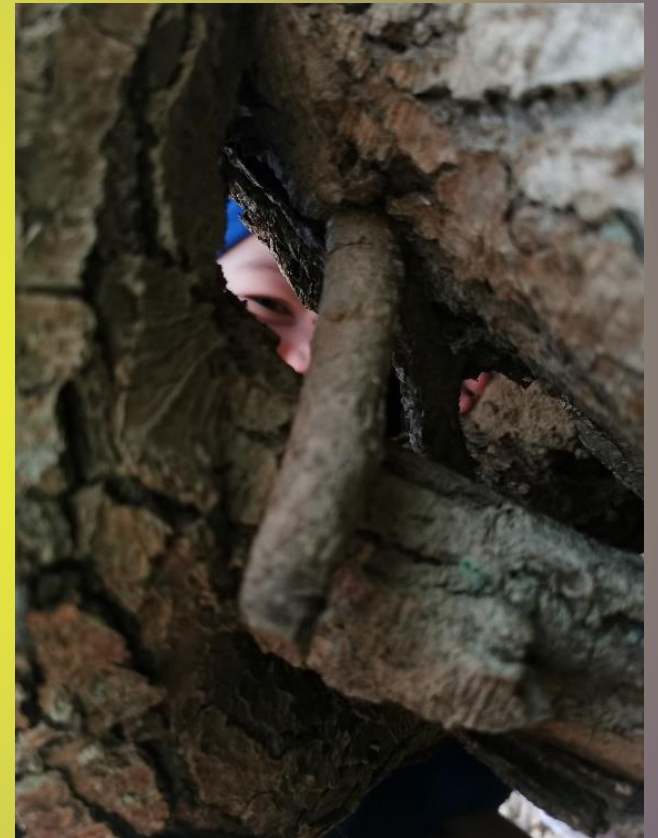
The project actively involved different environmental topics; learning about, the difference between habitats, typical plants and living things in them, integration and co-dependence, safe integration in the traffic, weather, water, waste, sustainable development...



We are happy to have made the forest a place where children can:

- we are constantly in an active role in a different way, - we have direct contact with nature, forming a relationship with living and non-living nature, -we form an awareness of our role in preserving the forest, -we learn and form ways of caring for the forest, -we strengthen our own awareness and perception of the environment, -we train our skills and abilities, develop ourselves holistically, -we build social relationships, have positive experiences, as well as challenges and successes.

Just like children, teachers have the opportunity to progress in their own professional growth. Both in renewing what is known and in gaining new experiences and knowledge. We pass it on to the children, and it gives us the greatest pleasure when they are curious, active and involved with us. We work together to connect, share practice, complement and continuously learn from each other.



I would like to thank my colleagues for their support, cooperation and joint realisation of the project's goals.

Also, to the management of the institution; Ms Branka Šamec, Ms Bojana Simonič for all the support, help, advice and encouragement.



Thank you for your attention.

Petra Horvat