



FOREST - OUR LIFELONG TEACHER

ERASMUS + PROJECT

LET`S GO TO THE FOREST



PETRA KOŠIR

- a first-grade teacher at Vencija Perka Primary School in Domžale
- co-coordinator of the Eco-Schools
- coordinator of the project Climate Goals and Content in Education

It is becoming increasingly clear that education for sustainable development is one of the cornerstones of tackling the impacts of climate change. It is based on the idea that we all have a role in addressing global challenges. It promotes the knowledge, skills and values we need to take action for a healthier, fairer and more environmentally sustainable society.



We wonder whether schools today provide students with the knowledge they will need for a quality life in the future. We are increasingly interested in whether students are sufficiently equipped with the abilities and skills with which they will be able to preserve the survival of our planet in the future, take responsible care of it, and preserve nature and natural resources.

At Vencija Perka Elementary School, we have been introducing the goals of sustainable development into lessons and other school activities for many years. Since these goals are not sufficiently defined in the existing curricula, most of the activities take place under the auspices of Eco School projects.



This school year, our school also applied to the tender of the National Education Institute of Slovenia with the aim of inclusion in the project Climate Goals and Content in Education. We were selected as one of 8 demonstration educational organizations (two kindergartens, four elementary, and two secondary schools) among the 38 selected educational institutions in Slovenia, which received the highest number of points in the selection.

Teachers use the classroom outdoors more and more often. We conduct lessons outside the school. For example, during classes, we go to a nearby meadow, park, or forest.



In the forest, students learn natural sciences, mathematics, language, music, and art. In it, they exercise and breathe fresh air. Thus, they learn that the forest is a place where they can learn a lot and, at the same time, take care of their health and well-being.



The forest transforms the child's role, which is often passive and sedentary in the classroom, into an active one, one that is tailored to the child.



It is crucial to allow children to climb over logs, dive through mud puddles, dangle from tree branches, talk to beetles, laugh out loud, eat blueberries and wild berries, run, shout, listen to birdsong, observe colours, catch balance ...



The goals of the project that we set for ourselves at our school are:

- education and awareness about forests and their role,
 - drawing attention to the importance of protecting forests and their sustainable management,
- encouraging students to experience and observe nature with all their senses,
 - getting to know different living environments,
- getting to know plants and animals in the natural environment,
- making decisions on environmental matters,

- enjoying the natural environment and exploiting the benefits of forests,
- encouraging a responsible attitude towards the future,
 - care for health and well-being,
 - an exercise in the fresh air,
 - care for quality education (experiential learning, experimental work, learning through research, learning in the context, etc.),
- developing personal and social development skills, and
- interpersonal connection and cooperation.

During the performance of the project, we carried out many activities in the forest and around the school with which we achieved the planned goals.

- We observed and named the trees and bushes around the school and in the forest.



Students get to know the bark of a tree by touch; they looked at the tree tops, the shape of the leaf surfaces, looked for fruits near the trees, etc.



In the forest, we practiced natural forms of movement (walking, running, jumping, etc.).



We got to know the forest as a habitat, in which we looked for many plants and animals and named them.



We monitored the colouration of the leaves of the trees near the school and entered the measurements into the data network of the Globe program, which takes place within the framework of the Eco school.



We planted various trees around the school (3 lime trees, 2 maritime pines, 3 plums, 2 robinias, a larch tree, an apple tree, a pear tree, a cherry tree) and some shrubs.



- We created pictures on the floor and on the grounding in the classroom from natural materials we found in the forest. We were making birdhouses from bark, wooden sticks, and other materials. Students photographed scenes in the forest with imaginary and real cameras. They imprinted barks and leaf surfaces.



- We practiced mindfulness and meditation and got to know nature through different senses. We played the games of getting to know each other and connecting with each other. We looked for “treasures” in the forest and went “shopping”. We made cards to find different things that differ from each other according to touch, smell, and sight.



MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.



The picture shows an outdoor lesson. The students solved tasks in the workbook in the forest. We also acted out dramatizations, sang, listened to stories and fairy tales, learned to calculate, etc.



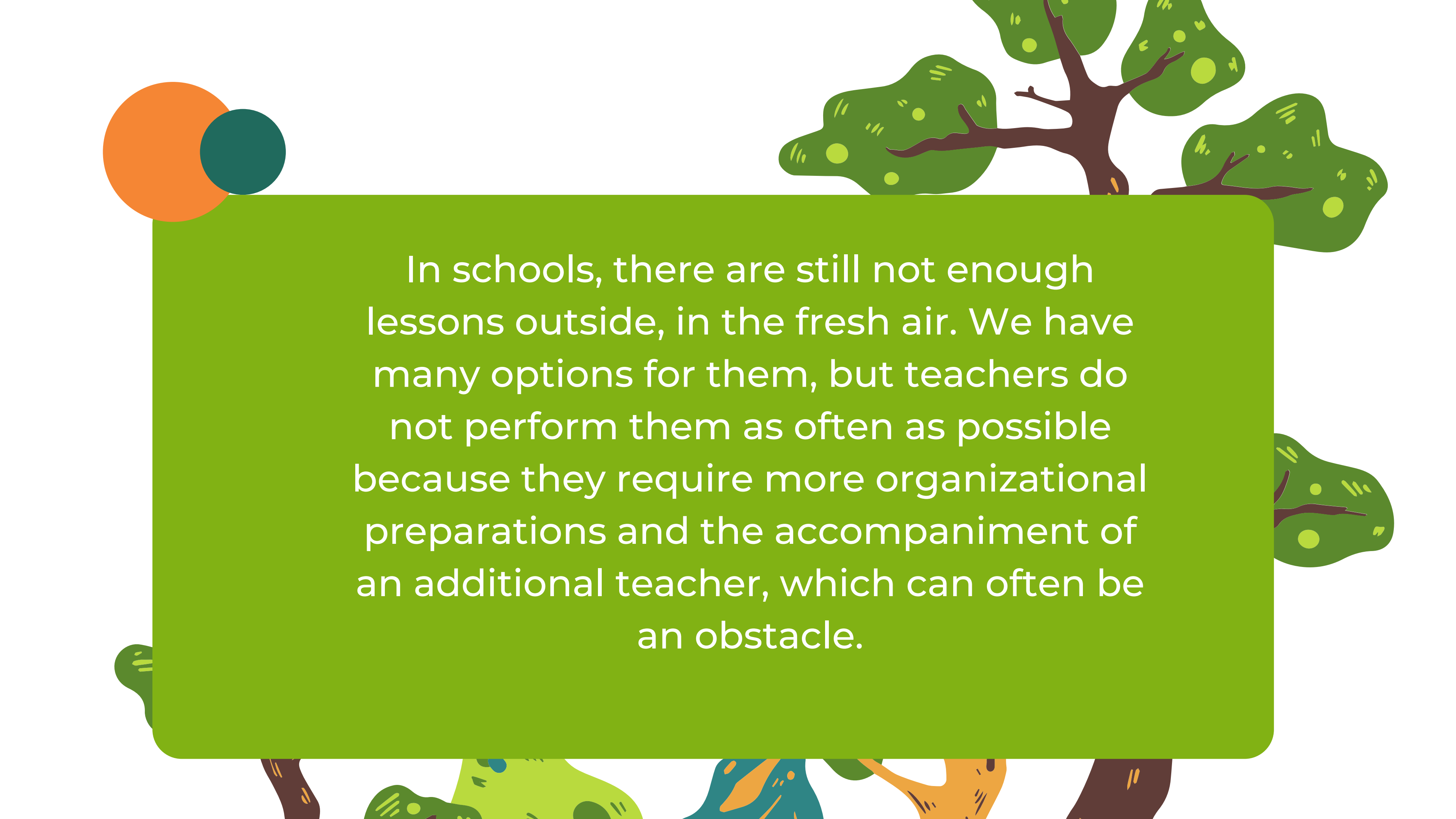
At Christmas time, we made many useful products from wood which we sold at the school fair.

WOOD PRODUCTS





- We learned about the interconnectedness of living things. We learned about what plants and other living things need to live, what photosynthesis is, why it is important to preserve forests, and what impact they have on our lives.

The background features stylized green trees with brown trunks and branches, some with yellow and white spots on their leaves. In the top left corner, there are two overlapping circles, one orange and one teal. The text is centered within a large green rounded rectangle.

In schools, there are still not enough lessons outside, in the fresh air. We have many options for them, but teachers do not perform them as often as possible because they require more organizational preparations and the accompaniment of an additional teacher, which can often be an obstacle.



We carried out many activities in the forest, with which we realized the goals we set for ourselves at the beginning of the school year. Although, as a school, we actively participate in trainings and are involved in projects that address this area, I believe that it will be necessary to continue with an active role in the inclusion of sustainable goals in schools in the future and to encourage all teachers to do so, including those who have been less active in this field so far.