

„Flora@velden.eu – Bildung inklusive!“



Exploring diversity in the meadows of St. Egyden
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Location

Municipality of Velden am Wörther See, Carinthia (Kärnten)

Country

Austria

Short summarizing description

In 2016, the municipality of Velden became the location for a new educational campus combining the town's kindergarten, primary, new secondary, music and International school. The children attending these schools come from different areas, as do the plants surrounding the campus. In the LEADER-project "Flora@velden.eu – Bildung inklusive!", the children learn about these plants – their demands, usage and characteristics as well as how they found their way into our climes. The pupils start to realize that a lot of plants, which we usually perceive as native, have a history that begins in different parts of the world, and that our meadows and fields, as well as our daily diet, would look very different without these migrating plants. In this framework, the diversity of plants and humans alike is connected to a positive feeling. The teaching material that has been developed during the project, is now available for all schools participating in the ÖKOLOG-network.

Key Terms

Plant migration, diversity, education

Context and background, Which problems/challenges does your measure try to solve/cope with?

In 2016, Velden was chosen to be one of two inclusion model regions in Carinthia, Austria, and is therefore called upon to focus on the need-based support of every pupil in town, regardless of their geographic or social background or their (dis-)abilities. This measure is one of many steps towards a more inclusive school system. Meanwhile, the flow of migrants that had its peak in Austria in 2015, lead to the establishment of an asylum seekers' hostel in the district of St. Egyden in Velden. Among the 70 residents are many children who attend the kindergartens and schools in Velden. The

municipality is now challenged to establish and preserve a peaceful coexistence. The project visits these diverse classes and targets the topics of migration and diversity with the pupils in a subtle way.

Which are the key objectives of your measure?

- Raising awareness and discussions with pupils and educators and natural scientists about the meaning of diversity in its actual and in its metaphoric context
- Experiencing diversity in your own environment in a positive way
- Sensitization of pupils and teachers for the topics of “inclusion” and “migration”
- Sparking the participants interest in becoming involved with other cultures
- Communication of scientifically oriented material and knowledge about local flora

Who are the main target groups and beneficiaries of your measure?

- Children aged between 5 and 14 (participating educational institutions, ÖKOLOG network)
- Teachers and educators (participating educational institutions, ÖKOLOG network)
- Parents and families (parents were informed about the project; the pupils were asked to do research on the plants at home)
- Senior citizens living in a residential community (share plant knowledge with children, common activities)

Which actions have already been implemented and which results have been achieved so far?

The implementation phase started in March 2017. So far, we have conducted our programme in several classes of all five educational establishments (kindergarten, two primary schools, new secondary school, International School Carinthia). The programme involved theoretical input, discussion rounds, field trips and a guided visit to the local botanical garden. In these days, the children learned about migration of plants, the abundance and diversity of plants in our daily environment, how to identify different species and the best way to preserve specimens. In autumn 2017, we implemented cooperation days, where participant classes from different schools came together to renew their knowledge and to learn that they are part of groups that are not based on their origin.

Which were the main problems and challenges you were/are facing when implementing the project and how did/do you (try to) overcome them?

- Coordination among schools which required close cooperation with teachers and headmasters, while always taking the growth periods of different species into account
- Feasibility of the programme for different age groups which lead to the adjustment of individual parts and the finding that pupils with a big age gap work extremely well with each other
- Partly adverse reactions both from decision makers beforehand and from pupils that were directly confronted with the topic of migration, however such situations offered the perfect opportunity for topic-related discussions

Link to website

<http://www.velden.gv.at/leben/gesunde-und-soziale-gemeinde/leader-projekt-gemeinde-velden/> if two links possible:
<http://www.e-c-o.at/project-details-en.html?id=225>

Starting date

2017-03-01

Duration

18

Regional scale

1 - local (one municipality)

Other involved partners

E.C.O. Institut für Ökologie, Alpen-Adria-Universität (AAU), Kärntner Botanikzentrum, KG Velden, VS St Egyden/Drau, VS Velden, NMS Velden, ISC, Initiative für Kärnten

Contact person

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Category 1, Managing social change

The project makes the inclusion model region Velden visible to the local population and beyond, and hereby pursues the goal of establishing an inclusive society. By involving the relatives of the participant children and adolescents, many citizens get the chance to contribute actively to the inclusion model region (cross-cutting issue diversity). During the project school and kindergarten children, educators and citizens realize that migration is a social and cultural phenomenon that has accompanied humankind throughout history. The imparted subject matters provide opportunities to discuss and reflect on such topics as the concept of being native, migration flows and social changes, and will ideally spark an interest to become involved in each other's cultures. Thanks to the cooperation days, the schools have an exchange among themselves, such that all-Austrian-classes can benefit better from the project.

Category 5, PR impact and awareness raising

The framework of the project facilitates the discussion of the topics of inclusion and migration with many different people – from pupils to teachers to relatives. During field trips, residents and passersby were frequently taking interest in our activities, which provided the opportunity to inform locals on the project. Based on collected experiences, E.C.O. and the AAU, developed teaching material for ÖKOLOG – a network of 519 Austrian schools that integrate Environmental Education into their school programmes. At the official opening of the educational campus, parents, citizens and politicians had the possibility to examine the pupil's work at a supervised info booth. The local newspaper published two stories about the ongoing activities. The project will be represented at the Long Night of Research 2018, in Klagenfurt, and at the Citizen Science Conference 2018 in Salzburg. A summary of the project can be found on the websites of partners and participants (attachement).

Category 6, Innovative dimension

According to the current knowledge of the project partners, in Austria no other project before has approached the elusive topics of diversity and migration through analogies from the world of plants. The project draws on innovative rudiments to make those social phenomena tangible for kids and adolescents. The pupils start to learn about migration and diversity of plants and to question the seemingly native vegetation around us. While doing research on specific plants, the children realize that there are some matches between their origin and the plant's. Later the meaning of the term diversity will be extended, and the pupils learn that with their colleagues – Austrian or not – they have many differences but also many similarities. In this way the classes can be both biologically and socially educational.

Category 7, Transferability

The elaborated and implemented programme of the project was the base of the development of teaching material that is now available for all of the Austrian schools that are part of the ÖKOLOG-network. Besides the plant lists, the programme is not tied to a specific area, therefore viable in any other school. Most parts of the world consist of native, migrated and introduced plants and therefore offer a perfect situation to talk about diversity. The framework of the project also allows only part of the programme to be extracted and transferred to other sectors or regions: From our experience, many schools in one area do not have a lot of touching points during the year, the cooperation days are a welcomed change for both the pupils and the teachers. Pupils from schools with different levels, different age groups and grades, as well as different locations come together and talk about a topic they have already learned about within the same programme.

Category 8, Embedment in a comprehensive welcoming strategy

As part of the inclusion model region Velden there are additional measures to provide possibilities, especially for the residents of the asylum seekers' hostel in St. Egyden to participate in everyday life. After the first provision with the most necessary things, learning German is one of the most crucial skills for the migrants to find their way. With the help of volunteers, there are weekly German classes for all different language levels. Talented asylum seekers have the chance to take part in German classes at the Alpen-Adria-University, Klagenfurt. Another measure is the implementation of a painting workshop for locals and asylum seekers, where it is all about creative work. There is also a workshop only for migrants, where they discuss the terminology of home with an artist. Together they create items that remind them of home or of their relatives that they had to leave behind and present them at a public exhibition, where locals can listen to their stories.

Further Information



Discovering an abundance of plant species in the neighbor's garden
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Collection of websites presenting the project and funder logos