

Annex II

Cases description



Social/Care Farming in Slovenia
State of the Art for "So Far" project
(Social Services in Multifunctional Farms)
EU FPVI

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Name of Project

Interlacing of Social Care and Agriculture at the Črna Centre for Training, Occupation and Care

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Some key-words

- Social care
- Agriculture
- Education
- Occupational activity
- Mentally disabled
- Evaluation

Brief overview

There is a forty-year old tradition of interlacing of social care and agriculture at the Črna Centre for Training, Occupation and Care. At first, children who had no opportunity to spend their holiday with their families were welcomed by neighbouring family farms. This experiment has encouraged professionals at the Centre to develop and to exercise on-farm experienced-based teaching method as one of the special education methods. Taking care of green plots around the Centre has been incorporated into the regular educational curriculum. Agriculture-based occupational therapy has been a permanent content of the therapeutic mix in the Centre. Yet, although the professionals were familiar with horticultural therapy as well as animal assisted therapy, these activities have been scrutinised and evaluated very carefully and only individualised and adopted after this. By such systematic procedure, the Centre composed a mix of agriculture-based activities that are used nowadays. Four participants of the Green Program were asked to share their personal experiences with different activities of the program with us. Their stories are the best way to evaluate the program.

Background

In ancient times being in one's natural environment, working with plants, animals and other living creatures had been a foundation of human existence. Modified and adapted to modern men, these activities have a significant role in our everyday life at present too. Yet, modern society is attracted by technical developments, computer technology etc., neglecting the natural environment, as well as the many positive impacts of nature on humans. However, we do believe that learning about these effects, testing them and applying them in our practices, may contribute to a better life of all of us.

Activities, related to agriculture have been incorporated into our work program since the beginning of the Centre. Yet, systematic development in this field began in late 1990's and since then we have been building up the Green Program accordingly to our goals and aim, as well as with users' needs and preferences. As users' welfare is of outmost importance for the Centre, the users' evaluation of the green program will be in the centre of this case study.

The development of the Green Program

There is a forty-year old tradition of cooperation between the Centre and neighbouring family farms. Long ago, the majority of users were children, who left the institution for holidays. Yet some of them, who had no opportunity to spend their holiday with their families, expressed a wish to spend holidays on a farm. To meet these needs, the Centre approached several farmers and asked them for temporary fostering. This experiment was very successful and children liked it so much that even now, as adults, they still feel at home on these farms. On the other hand, this experiment has encouraged professionals at the Centre to develop and to exercise on-farm experienced-based teaching method as one of the special education methods.

Many users lived on farms prior to their admission to the Centre. For them an opportunity to sum up their previous lifestyles and roles on hosted farms make a profound difference. As farmers needed some extra labour, users of the Centre have been welcomed helpers, particularly during the peak-season. This way very good relations based upon mutual content, as well as interest have been developed.

Tidy green plots and flowerbeds have always been the token of the Centre. Taking care of them has been incorporated into the regular educational curriculum. Vegetable production (lettuce, parsley, carrots, cabbage etc.) has been another popular activity as staff and users cultivated it collectively. The young and the adult users have been enthusiastic with this mutual endeavour.



Hill farming around and above Crna

"If there will be a snow, can we go to work? What will happen if I do not do my work!"

Toček



Forests and extensive orchards on grassland above Crna

Agriculture-based occupational therapy has been a permanent content of the therapeutic mix in the Centre. Yet, although the professionals were familiar with horticultural therapy as well as animal assisted therapy, these activities have been scrutinised and evaluated very carefully and only individualised and adopted after this.

By such systematic procedure, the Centre composed a mix of agriculture-based activities that are used nowadays:

- Individual inclusion of users into regular farm work on a family farm
- Group-work to assist the farmers at peak-season work (spring raking of grasslands, haying, fruits picking, fruits pressing etc.)
- Individual on-farm practical work in the duration of three weeks
- Gardening at the Centre's green plots
- Individual practical work at the horticultural nursery in the duration of three weeks
- Production and processing of ornamental flowers and herbs at the Centre's garden
- Taking care of pets at the Centre
- Therapeutic horse riding.

Everyone is functions as a holistic bio-psycho-social structure and we have learned from our practice that agriculture-based are the best suited to support this structure. Therefore, the Green Program strives to meet various goals:

- Satisfying the personal motives and values of the users
- Expanding the users' social network
- Preservation and development of motor skill and abilities.
- Acquiring new experiences and skills
- Building up a positive attitude to working and learning
- Increasing users' personal responsibility
- Increasing self-esteem and self-value, as well as quality of life of the users
- Strengthening life-long education
- Giving the users an opportunity to spend quality free time
- Social integration/inclusion of the users into local community.

In terms of intellectual sub-structure, different agricultural tasks (work on grasslands, in a stable, horticultural tasks, taking care of domestic animals etc.) are the best way of experience-based learning. An individual in a concrete situation by practical action acquires new knowledge, skills and work techniques. Agricultural tasks present a person with a sense of usefulness, making them feel like productive members of society. These activities contribute to an extension of users' social network and help them learn social skills that can be applied elsewhere. As very many users are of farm or rural origin, practicing agriculture provide them with pleasant recollections. Better self-value, self-esteem and positive self-identification are valuable effects of agriculture on emotional welfare of the users. Agricultural-based activities help to preserve and to develop motor skills. Furthermore, they keep the users fit and prevent them to become "homo sedens".

Users' evaluation of the Green Program

We asked four participants of the Green Program to share their personal experiences with different activities of the program with us. These are their stories.

Tonček

»You know, I came to the farm in this way: the master needed help and he called in Centre. Before coming to Centre I lived with foster family on a farm, somewhere above Ravne. I did not hesitate at all, when tutor told that on one farm they need a help. – at once I offered myself and I went up there the very same day. I was instantly very pleased with this farm. The farm is rather small, they have some animals, and rabbits, pigs, hens and a dog. And they have a forest and meadows. Oh, this was long ago, I think, in the year 1992 or so; yes, yes, it was short after war.

Now I am going on the farm every afternoon, after I finish my job at the Centre as postman. When I come to the farm I speak with the mistress at first, and we have coffee together and I make inquiries, what has happened on the farm since I was there. Than "Let's get down to work cheerfully"¹⁾. Usually I bring firewood to the kitchen, in the stable I shovel dung away, in the autumn I pick fruits and I help at fruit-pressing. Yesterday, when I was on the farm, I carted dung to a hotbed.

I get on the best with the master and we work together a lot. If he has a lot to do²⁾ I stay on the farm whole day long. Than we work in the forest, we mow and something else. We talk with the master very often about the farm, the neighbours, and we do some men-talk.

During the summer I am very often worried, how will they manage to gather hay when bad weather is forecasted. And during the storms, that lightening would not strike. You know very well, how many stables and drying –frames have burnt out in this way.

This farm means to me a lot. I like to work as a postman at the Centre but I can't imagine not going to the farm nearly every day. Sometime I get angry with something of course, but the farm means to me a lot.«

Sašo

»Before coming to Črna I used to live in the larger town. Even than I it was my heartfelt wish to help on the farm. My sister had school-fellows, who were living in the village, and she was telling them about my wishes and so I got an opportunity. I was coming on that farm during the summer, when I had a lot of free time and in the autumn, when was a lot to do on the farm. Even now, when I go home, I call on them sometimes.

When I came to Črna I immediately expressed the wish to work on a farm. Together with the teacher we were thinking how to realize my wish. So we call on Franjo, who is working with us

1) Tonček used a very popular phrase "Veselo na delo!"

2) Tonček used a dialectal word »notno« that means to be very busy, to have lot to do.



Preparing splinters for making fire



Planting the plants at the nursery

"I carry dung, and we cut litter; it is good to stay with farmer's family"

Tonči

and who had than a small farm. He had animals too: some cows, calves, two pigs, a hors and hens and sucks. I work on his farm from spring to autumn, whenever I had time and whenever he needs me. I helped in the stable, I clean a horse, sometimes I helped hit to shovel snow away during the winter. In the autumn I helped at picking and gathering fruits, in the spring we pruned fruit trees and leaned up the orchard.

I was very happy when I was going to Franjo on the farm. We became real friends with him and his wife. I still remember how uncomfortable I felt, when Franjo suggested addressing them as "thou"³⁾. At first it was very hard for me to say this "ti". Even to day it means a lot to me: I became one of them.

Than I had some health troubles and I cold not work on the farm so. Of course, Franjo understood this, it was not the same to me, therefore I asked Anica to help Franjo at pick-season instead of me, I supervised work a little – so said Franjo.

Than Franjo sold nearly all the animals, they did not cope to farm along with job; still they have a horse and the fowls. I felt very sorry, and Franjo noticed this. He still keeping saying to me to call on, that some work for me will be found for sure. Often I go upward, to chat.

I feel that I need on-farms works. I am already thinking and we are talking with Vojka about some other. I think I will succeed. I will keep going to my very first farm in Črna with delight, to help, if needed.«

Mario

»I am working on the farm and like this work very much. At the moment I am going to the farm in my free time. They call me and if I am in the mood to go – and I always am – master pick me up. On the farm I clear dung away from the stable, I am helping to prepare firewood, I help to place electric Shepard, in the spring we are picking up stones on the meadows.

When I come to the farm we greet at first, of course. Than I look a little bit around, what's new. We drink some coffee. Than they inform we about the task and we start to work –of course we have some breaks during the work. Yesterday master and I went to Najevnik lime tree⁴⁾ - we visited another farmer to pick up tailing for fodder. When we finish work we have lunch or supper, than master drive me back to Črna.

I can sleep over on the farm, but I want to go back to the Centre, as I have girl-friend there.

I like to work on a farm and since I am going up I have learn a lot of new things.«

3) Using the intimate pronoun *ti* instead of the formal *vi*. *Ti* is used only between friends, while *vi* is used otherwise.

4) Najevnik lime tree (*Tilia cordata*) is estimated to be 500 years old. It is the national natural monument. From 1991 on the Slovene statesmen and stateswomen meet under it once a year following an old rural tradition of people meetings under the lime trees.



Maintaining municipal green plots



Making a stack of hay

**"Government should make an effort to make it possible for us to go to a farm"
Tonček, Tončj,
Mario and Sašo**

Mojca

»As it is horticultural circle of course we are picking and nursing flowers. Besides this we picked dandelion flowers in the spring and we used them to make a honey. We are picking herbs for tea and dry them. During the winter we prepare tea, we have tea-parties and so on. We pick flowers too and dry them and than we make floristic arrangements. In the autumn we prepared flower saplings to decorate our Centre with them. So we did last year. Very many of us are active in the horticulture circle. I must say that this work relaxes me.«

Kristjan

»Before I start riding⁵⁾ I have, of course, to prepare everything. Than I bring horse and I chain him and I greet horse and I pat him and I clean his hooves. Than I saddle him. And than starts riding, if horse is ready, of course. When I finish riding I thank horse, I put a saddle away and I take horse to a stable or to the pasture. I say goodbye to horse.

Being with horse means to me a lot. Hors is a living creature and has feeling as a human being. More you love him, more he loves you. I love him and I want to keep this.«

Conclusion

These stories, also being so short, are so authentic and convincing that there is no need for any additional evaluation. Yet, we have to stress that the Green Program contributes to the quality of life of all participants. The professionals get an opportunity for more profound insight into user's personality and to widen and/or overcome the professional limits. Participants are provided with broader spectre of activities so that they choose what suits them the most. Farmers get diligent helpers whenever they need them and treat these helpers with love and respect.

4) Najevnik lime tree (*Tilia cordata*) is estimated to be 500 years old. It is the national natural monument. From 1991 on the Slovene statesmen and stateswomen meet under it once a year following an old rural tradition of people meetings under the lime trees.

5) Therapeutic horse-riding

**Picking apples****Cleaning up a horse stable before riding**

""It is better for them to help us then not to do this. Care has to be taken for these people."

Farmer