

The magic of old traditions

Background and experience

The Stifting Buitengebied Drogeham organises active and educative farm visits, school visits, excursions, work camps etc. on the organic farm and nature park "Hamster Mieden". An important goal of the farm is to educate children and adults to be more involved in the sustainable management of the natural environment. Due to busy and hectic lives people become alienated from nature, children spend much time behind the computer. On the farm, the kids are busy with all kinds of educational and nature activities. Also, children who need extra care are welcome in the so called 'guest weekends'. The mission is: "Enjoying and learning to appreciate animals and nature by running the farm in partnership with others - both young people and adults - in a socially responsible manner.

During the visits, the groups work on the farm and learn to relate what they are doing in relationship with the daily food on their plate. In consultation a program tailored to the age and level of the group is made.

The staff of Stifting Buitengebied Drogeham and Hamster Mieden have several years of experience with hosting long-term EVS volunteers. For the past years, every year 2 EVS volunteers participated in the project on the farm for 12 months. Because of the continuing participation of EVS volunteers, the project is evolving every year. Due to the good experiences from both the staff as well as the previous EVS volunteers, Stifting Buitengebied Drogeham is looking forward to continue the participation in the Erasmus+ program. Furthermore, the many years of experience with working with Dutch children with fewer opportunities and having a disabled EVS volunteer from the Czech Republic in our 2013-2014 project gives us the experience we need to successfully work with young people with fewer opportunities. In our future participation in the Erasmus+ program we would like to use this experience to host participants with fewer opportunities more often.

Trying to put together the great experience with long term EVS and the Dutch groups, Stifting Buitengebied Drogeham wants to organize a youth exchange to combine all the positive aspects of the activities done in Hamster Mieden: cultural exchange by having an international group and raising social and environmental awareness by working in the farm.

Thom Krol is a full-time organic farmer and has several years of experience as the project leader of the Drogeham EVS project. He has over 20 years of experience with guiding groups of children, youngsters and adults.

The whole team on Hamster Mieden is skilled in the work on the organic farm. Also, the staff have experience organizing educational activities related to the farm. These activities include farm visits, treasure hunts, guest weekends, tours etc. Furthermore, the team has experience with working with children with fewer opportunities in its activities. All of the activities which are organized by the staff of Hamster Mieden are mobility activities; for example, they provide all kinds of people from rural and urban areas the opportunity to discover new places and broaden their horizons. This expertise is also used in the EVS projects and will be used in the Youth Exchange.

Project Description

In this critical moment, when our society is in an economical, social value and environmental crisis, the coordination organization see right moment to invite young people on 9 days and during this time give them the opportunity discover ecological farming, find sustainable ways of energy and to know the process the way short from farmer straight to their plates.

From social point of view the coordinating organization see good reason to give the young participants discover a real reason of celebrating ash, no only as a time for fun, but reasons who are behind.

During the young Exchange participants get the chance learn to proudly say their opinions, but also with the humility listen others. Discover culture, find new friendship, try to find an inspiration how to change their surroundings.

The main objectives of this youth exchange are:

- To facilitate the individual growth of the volunteers through the acquisition of work, life and learning skills.
- To get involved in a sustainable management of the environment.
- To foster mutual understanding between young people from different surroundings.
- To discover different cultures and learn from the local community.

To achieve these objectives, specific goals have been developed:

- To help with cutting trees as one way out to protect nature and landscape
- To investigate using wood as one way of sustainable way of living
- To discover a work on an ecological farm.
- To work in small groups to strengthen the relationships between the participants and promote mutual respect.
- To organize activities to let the participants introduce and share their cultural backgrounds and discuss about their common concern for issues within European society.
- To discover the differences ash as one of old tradition festival in celebration coming spring and Easter across participants nationalities.

Tasks for partners organization

Previous to the exchange: to select volunteers regarding their motivation and transmit through short activities/meetings what does it mean to participate in a youth exchange.

- After the exchange: to organize an event with the participants to share and show their experience and knowledge with other youth, to disseminate the project and the values implicit in it.

Participants profile

Participants are selected regardless of their background, there must be no discrimination among ethnicities and it must ensure gender equality. Disabled people can participate of this project too, promoting their social inclusion. The only thing taking into account is their motivation and their will to take profit of the experience. The participation of the volunteers in other youth exchanges will be checked, trying to select that ones who has not participated in more than 2 to give this opportunity to a wider group of young people.

To guarantee this requirements the partners will be in contact during the selection process and they will offer activities and meetings to the volunteers before their departure to provide them the necessary information and incentivize their interest in the youth exchange.

The exchange is thought for youth aged between 18 and 24.

In the creation of the working groups for the main activities during the project the staff in charge will take care that the gender balance is ensured as well as the mix of nationalities through games.

Learning outcomes

The knowledge and skills acquired by participants through the working with wood, the farming tasks are:

- Botanical knowledge: Participants will learn which kind of trees are growing in the area, when is good time to cut the and why. They also will learn according which time model are selected places. cutting in each year.
- technical skills: Participants will learn how measure the place, where a tree should fall. They will also learn how to use cutting tools
- Environmental conservation techniques: The participants will learn, why is cutting trees is necessary for landscape and sustainable protecting nature.
- Sustainable ways of living: Working on the biological farm, participants will learn how to breed and plant sustainable amount of food for their consumption. This knowledge they can use in their home countries in breaking values chains for the goods.
- Communication skills: The participants receive the area, to speak openly about the problems around. They will learn how to react on the different opinions.
- knowledge about culture heritage and old traditions: By common celebrating ash carnaval, the participants will learn about old traditions and why is necessary to use these tradititon in now days between young people.
- the participants will learn about youthpass, its tools and using in the fight with unemployment between young people.
- Mathematical and technological competencies - Volunteers will need to measure, calculate distances and they will use technological instruments such as GPS. They will need to organize the

budget for the food. They will also use pictures and videos and digital media for the follow-up active during the duration of the project.

- Volunteers will develop their imagination by creating their own masks for a parade in Drogeham.

The attitudes/behaviours improved through the experience and debates/games/activities are:

- Environmental awareness: The participants will learn to understand the fragility of our environment and the importance of its protection. Promoting environmental awareness is an easy way to become an environmental steward and participate in creating a brighter future for the next generation.

- Social awareness: this process will help the participants to seek out information about what is happening in the communities around them. A greater awareness of social norms and problems leads to better understanding and better solutions.

- Self awareness - We will focus with the participants on paying attention to their perception of their personality and behaviour, including strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivation and emotions. Reflecting on their attitudes and feelings the volunteers will improve their self awareness giving them the tool to be able to change their mind towards what they want to achieve.

- Self confidence - Enhancing the strengths of the participants and interacting with the others presenting the results of the tasks they have been done or introducing their culture in the "social activities" in the afternoon, the volunteers will improve their self confidence.

- Sense of initiative and leadership: in the daily tasks of the farm the participants will need to organize themselves enhancing their ability to turn ideas into action. As they will also be responsible for preparing the meals, they will need to plan and manage their time and resources to achieve it.

- Capacity of team working: participants will learn how to be able to commit to a shared goal, to listen and respond to others in an objective and productive way, to take on different roles in the group in order to accomplish shared ends, to be open and honest with one's ideas, concerns, and values, to be a leader as well as a follower, not to carry hidden agendas into team meetings

Practical arrangements

TRANSPORTATION: The volunteers will be picked up in Leeuwarden train station the day of their arrival and they will be left there for their departure by a mini-bus/car. During the project the participants can use the bikes available in the farm.

FOOD: By groups, the volunteers will be in charge to prepare the meals. This will be an opportunity to raise responsibility among the group and also share and discover the typical meals from each participant country. The village offers the possibility to get anything to cover the basic needs.

LODGING: The volunteers will live in the farm where they will have all kind of facilities: bedrooms, kitchen, toilets and living room. The volunteers will be responsible to keep it clean; promoting the recycling of the waste.

COORDINATION: There will be 3 persons in the farm coordinating and supervising the workcamp, to help, mentor and support the volunteers during the experience.

INSURANCE: The participants are supposed to have insurance by their own.

SAFETY AND PROTECTION: In the activities/meetings previous to the exchange, each partner organisation would be in charge to provide basic information according to risk prevention and during the exchange volunteers will receive the proper indications to take appropriate measures to avoid or reduce the risks of labor and increase job security.

PREPARATORY MEETINGS WITH PARTNERS: The contact with the partners will be via internet (mail, skype) to prepare the activities previous to the exchange (to provide the information of the exchange and to motivate them), to coordinate the selection process, to keep them informed about the development of the project, to do the follow-up of the exchange and to disseminate the results.

Main activities

The exchange will last 9 days, from 16th till 24th february 2015.

The first day of the project is planned for the arrival, the realization of some ice breaker activities to get to know each other and for the introduction of the aims of the youth exchange.

The second day will consist in the discover of the farm and the surroundings, to understand better which will be their tasks and get familiar with the place and the people. The methods used to achieve this goal will be a gymkana by groups and a final review of the experience all together.

The next days, the tasks developed are divided in 2 areas:

- In mornings half of the group will help with cutting down trees in the area. The Participants will learn why is the cutting down trees necessary for landscape and nature, what species is possible to cut. Following the volunteers will learn why is now days still usefull the drowning by wood from economical and sustainable point of view.
- The second half of the participants will do farming tasks. The participants will take care of the animals in the farm and will learn about gardening. This will provide them an idea of an alternative and sustainable way of living, focusing on the respect for the nature balance.
- Within cultural will the volunteers explore old traditions in celebrating the ash. As an important factor in holding old traditions between young people.
- afternoons preparation final parade (costumes and etc). in Drogeham
- Cultural exchange and personal growth (evenings): games, activities and debates will be organized to socialize among the group, to share cultural aspects from the different countries of the volunteers and discuss the issues concerning our society (some of them planned by the staff and the others depending on the wishes and petitions of the participants).
- last day will held the session about youthpass and its tools. The participants will have a chnce investigate all advtages which are flowing from ownership off the youthpass.

* Volunteers will be divided in groups to do all tasks along the 9 days of the project. There will be always somebody guiding the activity but the volunteers will do the tasks by their own to learn the

skills experientially, to learn about team working and to improve their own skills and learn from themselves.

Every evening is reserved to do a revision of the day, to analyze the experiences and feelings of each participant to ensure a good development of the project, to fulfill its goals and to guarantee a good atmosphere among the group.

The last day will be the closing day, the volunteers will participate in ash parade in the Drogeham. To prove all knowledge about celebrating this event.

Impact

The participants 9 days will eat biological food, what will have a positive impact their health. They will also learn to breed the animals and plant vegetables in biological way. After the participation in this youth exchanger they will know how to use renewable energies frugal to the environment. They will know the old way in celebrating ash. All these obtained knowledge they can use to improve their surroundings.

Participating organizations - To give the opportunity to young people to achieve new skills and competencies to promote active, respectful and conscious citizens.

Target group (inhabitants in Drogeham) – The celebrating ash festival strength community relationship. Can attract more people to visit Drogeham, what is a good a great opportunity as beginning of organizing cultural events, because Leeuwarden, the capital city of Friesland province, is a candidate for capital city of European culture 2018.