

# NEWSLETTER

News and Updates on the Erasmus+ Project



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DISCOVERING A SUSTAINABLE MINDSET

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## Editorial

The question is how to facilitate intercultural access to the SDGs and sustainability issues without being selective or discriminatory. Currently, there is little to no specific teaching material in the field of sustainability for vocational teachers and trainers in relation to ethics, values and intercultural/interreligious competences.

There is a high demand for transnational learning activities that combine innovative learning methods (digital learning), professional learning and personal learning. In order to concretise and implement the abstract topic of sustainability in companies and schools, new instruments, methods and teaching concepts are needed, as well as competent trainers for the ideas of motivation and implementation of sustainability.

There is a need for the development of special education and training programmes that focus on sustainability. SysMind connects different realities with intercultural and interreligious backgrounds with ecological sustainability and vocational training. Teachers and trainers improve their subject knowledge and foreign language skills, students are prepared for future challenges in the workplace. Vocational schools as well as companies with trainers, coaches or mentors benefit from this project because teachers can make their lessons more attractive and trainers are enabled to integrate sustainable development issues into their work. The Europe-wide encounter motivates openness to diversity. In this respect, SysMind helps to combine interculturality, interreligiosity and interdisciplinarity and to select partners with different strengths, experiences and ideas regarding sustainability in vocational education.

## Projectpartner

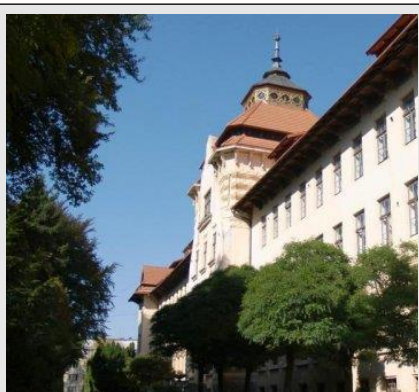
### **University College of Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy**

The University College of Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy is the competence centre for green pedagogy. Theoretical knowledge is complemented by practical experience so that students acquire the competences required in the profession. Teaching, learning and research take place from an ecological, economic and social perspective. Currently, three Bachelor's programmes and two Master's programmes are offered. In addition, there are a variety of further education and training opportunities ranging from half-day seminars to university courses.

### **International Agricultural Training Center**

The International Agricultural Training Center, abbreviated as UTEM, one of three continuous training centers affiliated with Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Turkey. Main mission of the UTEM is capacity development of human resources at the Ministry through implementation of training programs. Therefore, UTEM's target group consists of approximately 150 000 Ministerial Staff. Sustainable use of natural resources is primary focus of UTEM's training courses. The UTEM is located in Ankara, in the Middle Anatolia Region, yet there is no geographical limitation for its operations.





### **Ukrainian National Forestry University**

Ukrainian National Forestry University (UNFU) is a largest forestry educational and research centre of Ukraine (founded in 1874) and STARS member. It is the only University in Ukraine which trains professionals for all specialities of forest sector and specialized in the field of forestry and wood industry research.

Study and programmes leading to Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Forestry, Park-and-garden management, Landscape architecture, Woodworking technologies, Chemical technologies in wood processing, Computer science, Design, Engineering mechanics, Timber harvesting, Automation and computer-integrated technologies, Enterprise economics, Management, Accounting and taxation, Ecology, protection of the environment and sustainable use of nature, Environmental and natural resource economics. Postgraduate studies in 8 programmes and senior doctoral studies in 4 programmes.



### **Ss. Cyril and Methodius University**

The Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM) is a public higher educational institution and the first and biggest state university in North Macedonia. UKIM is comprised of 23 faculties, 5 research institutes and 4 public scientific institutions and offers high-standard teaching and research in all scientific fields – natural sciences and mathematics, technical and technological sciences, medical sciences and health, biotechnology sciences, social sciences, humanities and arts. Nowadays, over 60.000 domestic and foreign students are following the first, second and third cycle studies and every year there are more than 10.000 students who are enrolled in all three cycles. The Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje (engaged in this project) is the oldest higher education institution in North Macedonia with initiated studies in 1920. The Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje consists of 12 departments, from humanities and social science disciplines, including Philosophy, Pedagogy, History, History of Art and Archaeology, Classical studies, Psychology, Sociology, Social Work and Social Policy, Security Defense and Peace, Special Education and Rehabilitation, Gender Studies and Family Studies.



### **Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule Wien/Krems**

The Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule Wien/Krems (KPH) is the largest private university college of education in Austria. It has seven locations in Vienna and Lower Austria. Seven Christian churches cooperate together: Catholic Church, Evangelical Church A. and H.B., Greek-Oriental Church, three Oriental-Orthodox Churches and Old Catholic Church. The respective identities are preserved in the training. Within the framework of religious teacher training and the promotion of interreligious competences, the KPH cooperates with the Free Churches, the Islamic Religious Community, the Alevi



Religious Community, the Israelite Religious Society and the Buddhist Religious Society. The teaching offer of the KPH Vienna/Krems consists of the teacher training programmes for primary and secondary general education, the Bachelor's programme in elementary education and cooperations in the field of religious education. In addition, there is a further and continuing education programme, with university courses (up to the master's degree), further education events and support in school development processes. The KPH Wien/Krems currently has about 2,500 students in initial education and about 1,000 students in continuing education courses and 40,000 students in continuing education.

### **Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies**

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies is a multi-profile educational institution. It has 8 faculties and more than 4000 students. The university provides studies in economics, sociology, IT, as well as unique fields such as food technology, catering and hotel management, veterinary medicine, forestry, agriculture, landscape architecture.

The main building of the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies is located in the greatest masterpiece of architect F.B. Rastrelli - Jelgava Castle.

### **Fundaciton Monte Mediterraneo**

The issue which, in 1992 Rio de Janeiro as “sustainable development” was discussed, was to have practical applications in Andalusia. This new venture of combining sustainable development practices with the ecological development of a landscape, the Dehesa, had started! The original founders and other interested parties contributed funds to the foundation which were used to purchase the ranch, barn, outbuildings, and agricultural lands and to establish the necessary infrastructure. As a result, the operation would be able to support itself. The philosophy behind the methods of operation of the Dehesa ecosystem – the last barrier to the desert - is “sustainability” which means that traditional methods were to be used to generate profits from farming, raising of livestock and forestry. At the same time, those methods are designed and used to maintain and heighten the production quotas to make the best use of the potential of the resources available. Besides the agro-eco activities, the Foundation does intense awareness raising, educational and training work, research, realizes rural development as well as international projects and markets its own products. The foundation was entered into the public domain via the BOJA, no 40 on March 26, 1994. It is registered under the number HU 521 [before A 26/S.E.15] in the state register of Andalusia.



## Planung&Vielfalt | Elke Szalai

Elke Szalai is a landscape planner and knowledge manager. After her studies at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, she founded a company. She has been an entrepreneur since 2004 and a lecturer at various universities, universities of applied sciences and teacher training colleges since 2008. Since 2018, in addition to her self-employment, she has been a research assistant at the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland and a university lecturer.

She holds a Managing Diversity Certificate and a Master in Knowledge Management.

Her research and educational topics are sustainable development, technology and society, gender and e-learning. Regional and landscape planning, especially as a workshop leader and project developer for LEADER regions in Austria.

She has been working internationally since 2015 on behalf of OOAD in Albania, Kosovo and Northern Macedonia on school development, school quality in vocational schools with a focus on girls and gender equality issues.

She has two sons and is passionate about Ashtanga Yoga.



## First Meeting in Vienna

The first international meeting of the Erasmus project SysMind took place in Vienna on 5-6 April 2022. After a joint dinner at Palatchinkenkuchl, the participants from 6 European countries took a walk through the city at night. The next working day started with the greeting of the rector of the KPH Wien/Krems, Dr. Christoph Berger. After the introduction of all participants, there was an emotional message from war-torn Ukraine by Prof. Soloviy, which ended with a spiritual part, with a prayer. The founder of the International Educational Network PILGRIM Dr. Johann Hisch presented the pedagogy and the working methods of PILGRIM. Afterwards, the programme of the environmental experts was presented, which was developed in the Centre Education for Sustainable Development and Spirituality. After lunch in the city centre, there was an interesting guided tour in the Botanical Garden, where the religious symbolism of plants was presented from the perspective of different religions. During the last working session of the afternoon, the group discussed the guiding principle of SysMind and the logo. The dinner in the restaurant "12-Apostel-Keller" was not only a culinary delight, but also a friendly meeting with songs in different languages from different countries.

On the second working day, the group dealt with quality management and the dissemination of the Sys Mind project. During the deliberations, the participants were able to experience the silence of a sacred space in the church Maria am Gestade - very much in the spirit of Sacred Spaces. After the coffee break, there was a visit to the Vienna Business School, which is a PILGRIM school. There, students presented their projects that are being implemented in the field of sustainability and spirituality. A joint lunch at Sparkys restaurant in the centre of Vienna was the conclusion of this international meeting. The meeting in Vienna was the first get-to-know meeting of all participants. It tried to offer solid working impulses in the field of sustainability education and to combine intellectual work with elements of spirituality.

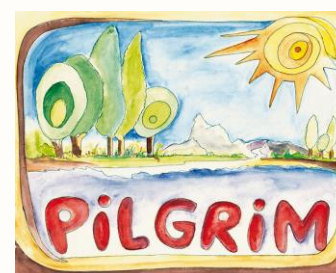
## Contents in the Meeting

### Infos on Result 1

In Result 1 of Erasmus + KA2 SYSMIND, the idea is to develop tools that would help teachers and trainers in Vocational Educational Training to reach their pupils or students teaching ecology and sustainability. Special focus of this result is to create awareness of the different cultural, religious and spiritual backgrounds: teachers and trainers can become aware of their attitude towards or relationship to the different backgrounds and can be trained in recognizing their students' or pupils' background. This awareness is the basis for the development of tools, exercises, methods, strategies, etc. to impart the contents of ecology and sustainability to students and pupils with different cultural, religious and spiritual background.

### PILGRIM

One of the very important parts of this 1st term of SysMind was the presentation of the International Education Network PILGRIM on the topic of pedagogy of sustainability in connection with spirituality. The main focus in this presentation was to give an idea of the starting way of PILGRIM – and it is the result of the research project from 2002/3 commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education and Science. The way how spirituality is shown in the projects is in using all senses for realizing the world as it is. The four topics of SysMind – water, earth, fire and air – are already implemented in the logo of PILGRIM. The focus in school classes is the explanation of intercultural values and ethics, which are also integrated in all religions in Austria. Since 2015 the UN has presented the 17 SDGs in order to create projects in school classes and PILGRIM is working in this field also with the 7 goals of Laudato Si from Pope Franciscus.



### Spirituality in the Sustainability Projects of PILGRIM

The Centre for Education for Sustainable Development at the KPH Vienna/Krems pedagogically supervises PILGRIM projects in the spirit of sustainability and spirituality. Over the years, there have been 1500 projects at different levels of education from kindergarten to university. Pupils from different religions and denominations are involved in these projects. They bring their own religious experience and their own perspective on the environment. This is the first pedagogical approach to spirituality in the sense of PILGRIM: each pupil, each group of pupils has its own spirituality and brings it into the project events.

Religions have a rich treasure of experience in dealing with creation; it is to be discovered and lived. Religions are teachers of praise and gratitude. One can draw from their millennia-old wisdom and meditative power. The involvement of religious teachers and theologians in the sustainability projects is a valuable extension of the commitment to the environment. Spirituality is also expressed in other areas of culture such as music, poetry, architecture. All these areas are open to creative educators and students, can be incorporated and deepen and enrich the engagement with the environment in the school. Philosophy gives students the opportunity to ask the big questions of life: Where from? Where to? What for? In the field of philosophy, the question of the deeper meaning of environmental engagement can be asked, common values can be discovered and named. Spirituality has a high value. It can and should be lived in the pedagogical space at school in an interdisciplinary, interreligious and interdenominational way.

## **PILGRIM Projects of Vienna Business School**

Vienna Business School is a private school of the Fund of the Viennese Merchants in the old town of Vienna. It is the oldest economic higher school in the whole German-speaking area. In addition to the excellent economic education, many projects in the sense of sustainability and spirituality have been implemented here every year since 2002. They are based on Roman Catholic religious education and are designed to be interdisciplinary, interdenominational and interreligious. The connection of sustainability with spirituality opens up the possibility for the groups of pupils to integrate their own religious education or their own confession into the project. An example of this is the project "Poverty does not ask", which dealt with poverty in Kosovo, Egypt and Vienna. Muslim and Christian students got involved together to support the needy people in these countries, regardless of their religion. A sustainable action that allowed to discover common charitable ideas in the two world religions. Another project of this school deals with the program of the PILGRIM environmental experts, which is being introduced for the upper grades all over Austria. This program is developed in cooperation with the KPH Vienna/Krems and the IBN PILGRIM. It has been designed, tested and implemented at Vienna Business School for two years. In the last 20 years, more than 200 projects have been implemented at VBS Akademiestraße that combine sustainability with spirituality. An in-school Amicus Award offers the project groups the platform to present their projects to a broad audience consisting of students, teachers, parents and guests of honor and to win an award for it. The PILGRIM motto: Living Consciously - Giving Future enriches and influences the economic education of this school.

## **Culture in Vienna**

### **Nature in Vienna – Excursion into the World of Botany**

One afternoon was dedicated to a visit to the Botanical Garden. With 12,000 different plant species studied by researchers from all fields of biology, the Botanical Garden provides the perfect environment for engaging with nature and science. The unique plant collection houses endangered species, exotics and representatives of the native flora. Many of them are studied by scientists and used for the education of students. The garden's groves and meadows are a valuable habitat for wildlife. For us as visitors, the garden was a place of relaxation and wonder.

### **Nature carved in Stone – St. Stephan's Cathedral**

An interesting part was the experience with St. Stephan's Cathedral on one evening. To understand a building from the Middle Ages it is necessary to find the criteria of the culture of that time. Therefore the measurement of the Dome is not in the meter-measure but in the measurement of feet ~ 0,32 m. This way of meeting the culture of former times brings a lot of new understanding for today. Also the very impressive orientation towards east, where the sun is rising – as a symbol of Christ, brings an idea to see the world today with ethical senses.



## Vienna by Night

The cultural programme « Vienna by night » ended our working day.

A walk through part of the old town took us past sacred buildings such as St. Stephen's Cathedral, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Synagogue and the Catholic St. Ruprecht's Church, the oldest church in Vienna, as well as the memorial site of the Gestapo headquarters and the Danube Canal. Inspired by many impressions, we were looking forward to another interesting day of our Erasmus event.

## Quality Assurance

Elke Szalai is responsible for quality management at Sysmind, which is divided into two complementary circuits - one internal, which evaluates project planning, implementation and execution, and one external, which is supported by a quality board. The benefits of these two cycles are easily explained:

Planning security for all project participants and continuous improvement of work steps and cooperation in the project team.

External expertise, especially in the development of the content and structure, the methodological-didactic setting of the planned MOOC.

In the sense of intercultural usability of the course content and the course itself, it is planned to have experts from each partner country on the board.

This action plan and the first tools have already been set up and are available on our Moodle platform!

After the first transnational meeting in Vienna, an online survey was carried out for the project partners, which immediately showed that it is absolutely necessary to carry out the evaluation directly on site and not online after a meeting in order to motivate everyone to participate. The first learning!

1. I'm part of the following program area  
6 Antworten

