

Partnership Action

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

NEWSLETTER. VOL.1, NO.2. MARCH 2005

Welcome to the second edition of the Environmental Partnership Newsletter!

The need for effective aid has featured in global news during recent months, after the Asian Tsunami. In this issue we report a natural disaster closer to our Central European work: **the Tatras disaster** where, although on a much smaller scale, effective aid was similarly crucial. We also report the first year success of project where the Partnership was working on a regional level - **Schools for Sustainable Development.**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Winning EU Grant- DG Environment accepted our application for institutional growth and program development in 2005.

Toyota Europe Social Contribution Fund supports the development of Slovak-Hungarian Greenways.

First major gift to endowment -The first major contribution of US\$ 50,000 donated to Environmental Partnership to achieve the matching grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation! It shows that a onetime anonymous US/Swiss donor understood the importance of a reserve fund to strengthen our role as independent grant-makers in Central and Eastern Europe.

DIVIDED INTERESTS

Slovak society was divided on restoration methods, raising the question: what type of Tatra mountains does our generation want for the future? The government, influential tourism investors, wood and land businessmen viewed the event as a business opportunity - a chance to extract wood material, and build new tourism facilities. With their money and power, these groups were quick to take advantage of the situation.

Meanwhile, environmentalists and thousands of 'ordinary' people who consider the Tatras their national pride and wealth are against 'modern' mega- complexes. They can express their views, but have little power to enforce them. For fifteen years, environmentalists have been pointing at un-ecological forest management, and calling for radical change. The disaster provides opportunity to reassess (and reaffirm) the ecological importance of the Tatras, and the conceptual planning of the Tatra National Park.

PARTNERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

The Slovak Environmental Partnership, a key grant maker in the Slovak Republic, initiated the establishment of the Tatra fund immediately after the event. The Czech Environmental Partnership has organized national collections. Within several weeks, more than 300,000 Euros was raised from individuals and businesses.

The fund is financing a sensible renewal of Tatra landscape and forests, including practical improvements, education and enforcement of appropriate renewal methods. Funds raised will be distributed as grants for civic groups, local governments and NGOs. Grants will not be used for immediate remedies, but for long-term support, emphasising public participation so that local citizens share a vision for the Tatras.

The Tatra Fund is aimed at the sustainable renewal of the Tatra mountains for future generations. More details or to donate go to: www.tatrafund.info

In our 14-year history, we have been fast and efficient in mobilizing resources and providing well-organized aid several times. One example was the Tisza-disaster in 2000, when a three-country program was set up to support initiatives (with 24 organizations and 120,000 USD) aiming to rehabilitate and develop the river-basin.



Foto: Juraj Rizman

NOVEMBER 19TH, 2004: THE WINDSTORM.

"THE GREATEST ECOLOGICAL CATASTROPHE IN THE LAST 100 YEARS." (Slovak Ministry of Environment)

A windstorm with speeds reaching 103mph swept through the Tatras on November 19th 2004, destroying 13 500 hectares of forest. The storm, lasting five hours, was followed by heavy snowfall. Damage continued after the storm, destroying 3 million cubic metres of wood mass in an area of 600 square kilometers.

SCHOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (SSD) COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM - SUPPORTED BY TOYOTA EUROPE SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION FUND

On 11th January, professionals from England, Poland and the Czech Republic met to discuss the outcomes and future stages of the SSD program. A year after its launch, teachers presented a variety of completed projects, which had been supported by the Czech and Polish Environmental Partnership Foundations, Groundwork UK and Toyota Europe Social Contribution Fund.

The meeting was encouraging, both in what had been achieved and for the future of SSD. With many international participants and experts seeing the benefits of SSD, the numbers of applicants and successful projects in 2005 can only grow.

Practical projects focus on one of four themes selected by the grant committees, calling for innovative solutions:

- > Precious Energy - energy saving
- > Our Water - water management
- > Useful Waste - waste management
- > School Yard Nature Gardens - stewardship of small schoolyard nature, gardens or important local habitats

HISTORICAL EDUCATIONAL TRAIL IN ÚPICE

In a secondary school of Úpice, students created an educational history trail across the city, connected to historical sites of its famous natives. The trail reviving the fame of the city not only serves local people but tourists also with the marking of houses and cultural monuments on a map made by pupils during their art class. (Awarded grant: EUR 667)

OPEN SCHOOL – OPEN GARDEN, KOČBERE

This project is an excellent example of mobilising local inhabitants. Pupils, parents, local entrepreneurs and members of the municipality created a freetime zone with climbing frames, a sandpit, benches, an activity trail at their school. Together, they replanted the hedge and recultivated the vegetable patch, creating an area for all community inhabitants to enjoy. The small garden demonstrates the huge effort of all!

(Awarded grant: EUR 2190)

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

"Youth comprise nearly 30% of the world population. The involvement of today's youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programs is critical to the long-term success of Agenda 21".

As these two case studies show, SSD does much more than improve local environments. The program promotes improvement in community relations, encouraging local inhabitants to think about and voice their thoughts on public issues. Perhaps most importantly, in keeping with Agenda 21, the students gained confidence in turning their vision into a reality. They are more aware of their environment and the help available to improve it, boding well for future community projects.

Thanks to the continued support of **Toyota Europe Social Contribution Fund** and the enthusiastic partners the program will be continued in 2005!

Our small grants help to build a sense of trust and responsibility and help initiate efforts to mobilize additional funds and partners. The more funds we raise, the more schools can be involved and we can support more projects!

Further results, information, and a toolkit about SSD can be found at: www.schoolsforustainabledevelopment.org

If you have any suggestions or feedback, on this newsletter, please send an email to: kim.lyon@ecn.cz

