

PROJECT IMPACT IN CROATIA

1. What impact do you think the project had on you and your organization?

The project has improved knowledge, skills and competences of immediate participants, but also of whole School. In everyday work, we started to apply techniques and methods of work that, until then, we did not even know that they exist. All this has led to a better quality of educational work, as confirmed by the results of the research on students (reading skills among 7th and 8th graders). Furthermore, school pet Gricko has become constituent part of school curriculum (through teaching, extracurricular activities and rehabilitation procedures), so as of school life in general.

Implementation of the READ program (program has been implemented with the school pet - guinea pig) improved reading skills among students in such a way that statistically significant difference has been made between first and second assessment (before and after the READ program) on the following factors: average reading time (for a short text) has decreased from 114 sec to 95 sec, total averaged score on reading test increased from 20 to 24 points, average number of words read in 2 minutes increased from 62 to 73, and average number of mistakes made while reading decreased from 63 to 60. Total number of words read in 2 minutes, and number of mistakes made while reading them together made an extra score, which increased from averaged 49,60 to 61,80. Furthermore, increased score on happiness and relaxation scale was found among students during the reading session with animal, as well as decreased score on fear and anxiety scale. The emotional state was assessed by Situational Emotional State Scale. Above results show that students started to perceive reading as relaxation and pleasant activity, which doesn't cause tension and stress.

We also established cooperation with organizations that we knew they exist, but didn't know that it's possible to actively include them in immediate educational work (animal shelters, veterinary stations, equestrian club etc.). Until now, we only visited these organizations by occasion, and now they were used for learning and skill developing purpose, ie improving certain areas of functioning among students, such as emotions, motivation, general wellbeing etc.

2. Did you involve any other target groups that are not a part of your organization and what was the impact on these participants (here you can describe the shelters, animal organizations which you worked with during the project,...)?

Besides our teachers, students and parents, we included participants from other organizations in project activities, mostly on local level (Center for rehabilitation „Mala Terezija“ Vinkovci, Animal shelter „Pobjede“ Osijek, Equestrian club „Dunavski raj“ Vukovar, Vukovar vet station, Anubis club Vukovar – animal shelter and vet station, ZOO Osijek). Even though we collaborated with some of those organizations earlier, at this point, we actively included them in school work (student visits to those

organizations on regular basis, regular visits of therapeutic dog in our school, the attendance of representatives and volunteers from those organizations in our school, encouragement of active involvement of students in animal care – students raised money to feed animals in ZOO and independently care for class pet.

Center for rehabilitation „Mala Terezija“ Vinkovci (<http://czt-malaterezija.hr/>) is an institution for rehabilitation of children and adults with multiple development difficulties. The Center is an only institution of that type that uses therapeutic dog for physical rehabilitation of their users and, collaborating with them, we have learned together how to expand the scope of work. Teachers, students and parents had an opportunity to see how the therapeutic dog is used for physical rehabilitation, and the Center employees had a chance to learn how to use a dog for other areas of development. Furthermore, thanks to cooperation, the therapeutic dog took part in immediate implementation of teaching (class of physical education, mathematics, Croatian language etc.).

Animal shelter of association „Pobjede“ Osijek (<http://www.pobjede.hr/#>) is a shelter for abandoned animals which primarily takes care of abandoned dogs, but also of other animals. Students have visited shelter for more than once, brought food for dogs and took part in shelter activities (walked the dogs, cleaned their habitats), and the shelter activists went to school to lecture and to conduct a workshop for students on how to take care of animals. After that, one of the students adopted the dog from the shelter.

The equestrian club „Dunavski raj“ Vukovar (<http://www.dunavski-raj.com/web/index.php>) is an association that provides therapeutic riding service. While cooperating, our students have been visiting Club on a regular basis, once a week, or even more often (if weather conditions were good) during the autumn and spring. They helped employees with horse care and rode horses with assistance of therapist specialized in therapeutic horse riding.

Veterinary station Vukovar (<http://www.vsvu.hr/>) is an institution that provides veterinary protection for animals. Our students visited station and watched how animals are being vaccinated, how the chips are being inserted under their skin, they've learned why and when animals need a passport, what is the weight and height of different sorts of dogs and they compared their weight and height with animal's. Students also had a chance to see the operating room and tools for microscoping and detecting trichinosis in pigs. Vet station offers service of hairdressing dogs and cats, so we had a chance to see that too.

Veterinary ambulance and animal shelter „Anubis“ Vukovar (<https://www.facebook.com/Anubis.Klub/>) offers vet services for all animal species and has an organized temporary accommodation for abandoned animals (dogs, cats, horses, sheeps, goats etc.). They also organize transfer of fostered animals to their new home in abroad. Cooperating with Anubis, our students had a chance to see how the animals are being treated and to volunteer (to feed and walk the animals that are

accommodated there). Ambulance was also in charge of health care of our class pet Gricko.

ZOO Osijek (<http://www.zoo-osijek.hr/hr/zivotinjski-svijet/>) is the only ZOO in eastern part of Croatia. Since they don't have enough financial resources for animal support, they frequently carry out the action of »fostering« the animal - individuals or institutions raise money to take care of specific animal on annual basis. Our students raised money (by gathering and selling an old paper and plastic bottles) and »fostered« the animal – dwarf valabi. For that money, ZOO management bought food and provided care for our animal, and our students visited their »pet« several times.

3. Did you in any way manage to transfer the impact of the project on the local, regional or international level (here you can write about other organizations that you involved in the project on local or regional level and if you talked about the project at any other international projects or trainings you were involved in)?

Yes, representatives of 46 kindergartens, primary and secondary schools from Slavonia and Baranja county took part in the multiplier event (they engage app 10 000 children and students), together with Institute „Mjedenica“, ŠOSO „Milan Petrović“ and PS Dušan Dugalić, attended by 1500 children and students with developmental disabilities.

Also, the project is presented at a Conference of psychologists, organized by Croatian education and teacher training agency, which gathered 200 kindergarten, primary school and high school psychologists from whole Croatia. Cooperation with 4 more schools, which weren't included in this project, was established (Turkey, Macedonia, Italy and Hungary) and new proposal was brought about resumed work in the area of animal assisted therapy and exchange of knowledge and skills with partners from this schools. In this case, our school will still disseminate knowledge gained through this project. The presentation of project results was arranged for expert meetings of education rehabilitation teachers and professional associates, on a level of Slavonia and Baranja county.

Describe how you will disseminate the project results in and outside the partnership. Describe target groups on local/regional/international level and explain your choice.

All project activities were regularly published on school web-site and local media (Vukovar newspapers, press032, City of Vukovar), and through multiplier event and presentation of project in different expert meetings of school workers, we've tried to inform as many educational workers as possible, about all the odds of animal assisted therapy. We also wrote and published article about the project, project activities and results in "Vukovarsko-srijemski učitelj" magazine. The magazine will be released in October, on the occasion of the Teacher's Day. The main goal is to reach the teachers

from regular schools that integrate children with developmental disabilities and parents of those children, so this way of educational work could begin to live in as many educational institutions in Croatia as possible. Professional service – psychologists and educational rehabilitators are those educational workers that cover all educational institutions (kindergartens, schools), and can reach to all the other colleagues, students and parents. Also, in description of professional service's regular work is an immediate work with students, regarding the development of their emotional, social and communication skills, as well as preventive programs, reading techniques and skills. Animal assisted therapy can significantly improve work in areas listed above.

There is a plan to establish cooperation on web space with schools from other countries which weren't included in this project, so the knowledge and skills could disseminate even more (in the frame of Erasmus+ program, the cooperation with 4 schools which weren't part of a project is already established).