



Winners of project competitions receive awards

World experience shows that it is important to involve the public in the process of environmental decision making. This involvement adds quality to decisions, making them easy to implement, as it harmonises the interests of various institutions, sectors, economic entities and individuals and takes account of other groups' approaches, which allows members of society to see themselves as responsible stakeholders of this process.

However, the Lithuanian public has not yet reached sufficient maturity, nor is it prepared to take part in the decision making process, as Lithuania lacks the experience and tradition of this kind of activities. It is necessary to build such traditions, starting at the earliest possible age, by shaping a young person's world outlook and developing his or her environmental awareness. Improved information and education of the public is the key prerequisite for preserving a clean environment. It is this particular objective that the project "Saving Water Resources for Future Generations", financed by the EU Structural Funds, pursues. The project is aimed at building and promoting the need of pupils and teachers for taking an interest in the condition and management of water resources, actively participating in the decision making process and informing the project participants of basin water resources management.

Eight remote Lithuanian schools were selected for the project. The schools hosted seminars, saw a film specially shot for the project and held drawing, essay and photo competitions for the purpose of encouraging the pupils to take an interest in environmental protection and understand the need for saving water resources.

In late April, 56 pupils and teachers from the districts of Skuodas, Akmenė, Vilkaviškis, Ignalina and Šalčininkai, Vilnius Žirmūnai Gymnasium and S. Stanevičius Secondary School gathered together for a seminar at the New Vilnius Hotel in Vilnius. This event again highlighted the need for and importance of saving water. The winners of the competitions received their awards, and a cultural programme was organised for the pupils.

The seminar started with a survey arranged by pupils of S. Stanevičius Secondary School, followed by reports to the pupils and the teachers on Lithuania's surface and ground water and the basin (integrated) water resources management being implemented in Lithuania. representatives of the schools talked about their environmental activities, sharing their experience and impressions of the project financed from the Structural Funds. The seminar continued with a colourful presentation of the project "Building Environmental Awareness by Artistic Means" by pupils of Vilnius Žirmūnai Gymnasium. The seminar ended with the award ceremony of the winner of the competitions. Representatives of all the eight schools participating in the project received various prizes, while teachers were granted letters of gratitude. After the seminar, the pupils and the teachers were invited to the cinema to see the animated cartoon "Ice-Age 2".

Artistic competitions are one of the activities of the environmental project launched last year. The themes of the competitions were linked with water resources and their protection. The schoolchildren were encouraged to give a thought to the importance of water in everyday life, its cycle in nature and the possibilities of every individual to contribute to the purity of a water drop. All through the winter the children were engaged in essay writing, drawing and taking pictures, presenting the most beautiful works to an evaluation commission in Vilnius. The pupils had the greatest pleasure in expressing their ideas about water and its importance by drawing. The participants of the drawing competition amazed everyone with their creativity and ingenuity, as they not only drew but also did some needlework, made applications and created works from sand and other unexpected materials. The evaluation commission received a total of 33 drawings, 20 photographs and 14 essays. Pupils from Ylakai Secondary School were the most active participants, appearing in all the competitions.

The works presented by the schools were assessed by an evaluation commission comprising two environmental specialists, two teachers and two pupils. The commission rated each work's compliance with the theme, uniqueness and artistic character. The best drawings, essays and photos were selected from among the works presented by each school. The schools also competed among themselves in the drawing, essay and photo competitions.

We believe that the project will encourage the pupils to further take an interest in the protection and the environment and water.

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