



Educational program for  
elementary school teachers  
**VolonTERRA – active schools  
drive change!**

**sunce**

November,  
2025.



## **VolonTERRA – active schools drive change!**

The educational program for primary school teachers was created as part of the project of the same name, funded by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, and implemented by the Regional Center for Education and Training Hollen (Germany) and the Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development Sunce (Croatia). The project duration is from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025.

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Figure 1. Program participants

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# INTRODUCTION

Based on many years of experience and cooperation with educational institutions and other civil society organizations on projects with similar themes, at the Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development Sunce, we have noticed a low representation of volunteering in school curricula and a neglect of cross-curricular topics of civic education for sustainable development (ESD) due to a lack of skills, knowledge, competences, time and motivation of educational workers for their implementation.

In the national context, volunteer programs have been appearing in schools for about thirty years. However, it is only in the last ten years that they have begun to be implemented more frequently as extracurricular activities in school curricula across the country. Although studies on youth volunteering are rare in the domestic research space, they all emphasize the need to introduce volunteer activities into school curricula as one of the mechanisms for encouraging young people to volunteer (e.g. Ćavar et al., 2018; Forčić, 2007; Lavrič et al., 2019; Ledić, 2001). A positive school climate, cooperation and trust among participants, active involvement of students in planning and implementing activities significantly contribute to the success of school volunteer clubs. Although cases of lack of support within the school have been recorded, the results indicate that motivated and competent coordinators, along with a clear organizational structure and institutional support, play a key role in the sustainability and long-term success of these programs (Čekolj, Ćulum Ilić, 2023.)

We are actively involved in monitoring the adoption and implementation of national and international policies related to education, civil society and sustainable development.

The National Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for the Development of Civil Society from 2012 to 2016 states that volunteering, as one of the most common and widespread forms of civic activism, is not sufficiently represented in school curricula and is not given systematic attention at all levels of the education system. It further points out that educational institutions often do not have adequate resources or opportunities to provide (material) support for teacher training in the areas of program development and volunteering.

According to the National Curriculum Framework (2011), the focus on the development of children's skills and competences, including social and civic competence, is the foundation of the development of society. However, according to a 2015 study conducted by the GONG association, the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb and the GOOD initiative, young people in Croatia do not have sufficiently developed civic competences and social skills. More recent research confirms that the situation has only partially improved.

The study Leko-Šimić and Perić (2025), published in the journal *Ekonomski vjesnik*, shows that volunteering plays an important role in strengthening community well-being, social cohesion, democracy and personal development, which confirms the need for institutional support and systematic evaluation of volunteering in Croatia.

Integrating volunteer education into the curriculum and everyday practice of primary schools would have immeasurable benefits for students and would be a major step towards the quality formal education system we strive for. Numerous studies conducted around the world have shown the positive impact of volunteering on volunteers and the positive consequences for the community (Moore and Allen, 1996; Wilson and Musick, 1999; Lightfoot and Lum, 2005).

Recent studies confirm these findings and show that the attitude and motivation of teachers play a crucial role in the development of a volunteer culture among students. In schools where volunteer activities are integrated into the curriculum, an increase in students' interest in civic engagement and socially responsible behavior has been observed (Svalina and Jukić, 2024).

In the European context, research on school volunteering programs indicates that experiential, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning and connecting the school with the local community are key factors for the development of sustainability. Such programs have a long-term impact on the development of empathy, solidarity, a sense of community and active citizenship, which is fully aligned with the goals of education for sustainable development (Čekolj, 2024).

There is almost no educational area that volunteering does not have a stimulating effect on. Volunteering is an activity that develops positive personality qualities, which are formulated in the educational goals of modern schools (in Croatia and around the world).

Volunteering is an opportunity to develop all those qualities that we strive to develop in different educational areas, and a way to fulfill material, functional and educational tasks in the school system. By educating for volunteering, we direct young people to activities through which they acquire knowledge, develop skills and abilities, learn independence, responsibility and teamwork. Education for volunteering is aimed at adopting a positive attitude towards a certain type of activity through which the goals and tasks of all educational areas are achieved. It leads to situations that enable the development of intellectual strength and abilities (intellectual education), and through experience it enables the acquisition of various knowledge, skills and habits (work education).

It is an opportunity to develop humanism, solidarity and tolerance, a positive attitude towards material and spiritual values (moral education), and finally an opportunity for creative expression and the adoption of aesthetic values, i.e. an immeasurable contribution to the cultural life of the entire social community (aesthetic education). Numerous studies also confirm that volunteering develops everything that is required today by the modern labor market and a quality education system (Russo, 2007; Ćulum, 2008).

Additionally, international research confirms that volunteering has a positive impact on the personal well-being and mental health of volunteers. Longer duration of volunteering correlates with higher levels of life satisfaction and a greater sense of social connectedness (Alganami et al., 2025). People who volunteer have a significantly lower risk of developing depression and feelings of social isolation (Jenkinson et al., 2013).

By designing and implementing a quality educational program, the goal is to provide educational staff with the knowledge and tools necessary to independently establish and manage school volunteer clubs, design quality volunteer programs, motivate students to participate and continuously implement volunteer activities. In order to successfully implement the above activities, employees will improve their knowledge and skills in working with students, especially in the development of social competences and the promotion of environmentally responsible behavior. Strengthening the capacities of educational staff in these areas and providing support throughout the process will enable the sustainable implementation of volunteer clubs and activities in school curricula. In this way, the continuity of volunteer programs and the inclusion of new students and educational staff in their work are ensured.

## 2. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The educational program VolonTERRA – active schools drive change! was developed and implemented as part of the project of the same name by the Regional Center for Environmental Education Hollen (RUZ Hollen) and the Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development Sunce, and is intended to empower educational staff to work with students in the field of active citizenship for environmental protection and education for sustainable development. The modules are methodologically designed and adapted for the simplest possible application in working with students in schools. The program encourages participatory learning and the use of innovative learning methods through 6 modules (Table 1) with a total duration of 36 hours (6 modules x 6 hours).

The workshops were organized on weekends during the participants' free time. This activity for educational staff was voluntary. Upon completion of the activity, all participants received certificates of participation that they could later use for further advancement.

The first two modules aim to establish volunteer clubs in primary schools and actively involve participants in their work. Volunteer management was covered in two modules to provide a thorough introduction to the legal framework, regulations and rules, mandatory documentation and specifics of underage volunteering. The knowledge and information obtained prepared educational staff to establish school volunteer clubs and lead a volunteer group.

The third module aims to empower educators and provide them with the necessary tools to develop students' social skills needed for volunteering. Additionally, they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully lead a school volunteer club.

The last three modules provided participants with examples of activities that contribute to achieving the goal of actively involving students in transforming their school into an environmentally responsible institution.

Additionally, Sunce representatives and activity implementers (expert associates) revised existing materials, selected those relevant to the implemented program, and the materials are available to all participants as an additional tool in future work.

The first three modules were implemented in the first semester, and the next three in the second semester of the 2024/2025 school year.

A time gap was left between individual workshops so that participants could carry out the assigned activities in their schools.

At each subsequent workshop, participants had the opportunity to present their work, the challenges they faced, seek support, etc. Sunce and project partners used their knowledge and skills to monitor, assist and encourage the implementation of volunteer activities carried out by educational staff participating in the educational program. The selection of activities that were carried out in the form of volunteer actions in the newly established volunteer clubs was up to the students and the club leader.

Typical activities of school volunteer clubs include raising awareness of climate change issues through communication campaigns, school events for students, improving the school environment with nature-based solutions, planting a permaculture garden with indigenous plants, creating a compost pile, creating a vertical garden or raised beds, installing bins for separate waste collection, etc.

In order to achieve greater visibility of project activities in the media and the public, volunteer actions in schools can be linked to marking dates related to:

- promoting volunteering such as International Volunteer Day (December 5),
- spending time in nature such as: Outdoor classroom day (May 23rd or November 6th),
- marking important environmental dates such as Forest Day (March 21), Water Day (March 22), Earth Day (April 22), International Biodiversity Day (May 22), etc.

To assess the success of the program, an evaluation questionnaire was conducted with the participants upon its completion. All program participants had the opportunity to implement the acquired knowledge in their schools, while the implementation of the educational program was monitored in the partner school, Brda Elementary School. In addition, the school was required to carry out a volunteer activity that included the construction and equipping of an outdoor classroom.

The goal of the VolonTERRA - Active Schools Drive Change! educational program is to empower teachers with the necessary tools and skills to integrate sustainable development into school curricula and to encourage the development of responsible citizens committed to the future of the planet. The program develops competencies for leading all modules of the VolonTERRA program, establishing and leading school volunteer clubs, and providing support to schools in implementing sustainable development projects. In this way, a network of competent educators is created that contributes to the expansion and sustainability of the program at the regional and national levels, strengthening the capacities of the educational and civil sectors to build an active and sustainable society.

SN	Educational program module	Module duration
1.	Establishing a volunteer club and managing volunteers	6 hours
2.	Volunteer management	6 hours
3.	Development of social skills of school volunteers	6 hours
4.	Environmental awareness – Permaculture in elementary schools	6 hours
5.	Environmental awareness – Measuring and monitoring environmental impact	6 hours
6.	Environmental awareness – Outdoor classroom activities	6 hours
TOTAL: 36 hours		

## 2.1. Module: Establishing a volunteer club and managing volunteers

**Workshop leader:** Duška Milinković, mag. soc. paed.

**Materials for work:** PPT presentation, post-it notes, paper at least A3 size, markers, pencils.

**Workshop goal:** To empower educators to initiate and manage school volunteer clubs through understanding the legislative framework, the role of volunteering in education, and the importance of a formal approach to volunteering in schools. To encourage the creation of a volunteer culture and sustainable volunteering models through the exchange of experiences and the development of proposals for school volunteer activities.

### WORKSHOP OUTCOMES:

**The participants have:**

- understood the legal and institutional framework of school volunteering,
- defined the roles of volunteers and organizers of volunteering at school,
- recognized the values and benefits of volunteering for students, the school and the community,
- designed a basic plan for a volunteer program at school,
- identified key steps in the volunteer management process.

## Workshop content:

### Introductory part (35'):

- **Presentation of the VolonTERRA educational program (5')**

Since representative briefly presented the VolonTERRA program using a PowerPoint presentation, talking about the roles of everyone involved, the duration of the program, and the planned methods of work (workshops and independent activities in the period between two workshops).

- **Introducing the workshop leader and participants, and defining expectations (30')**

The facilitator started the workshop with a short introduction – she stated her name, organization, workplace, experience in volunteering and working with youth, and personal motivation for participating in the project. After that, each participant briefly introduced themselves in the same way as the facilitator. The participants wrote down their expectations from the workshop on post-it notes. The facilitator noted key messages and grouped them by topic in order to create a common picture of the participants' expectations and goals.

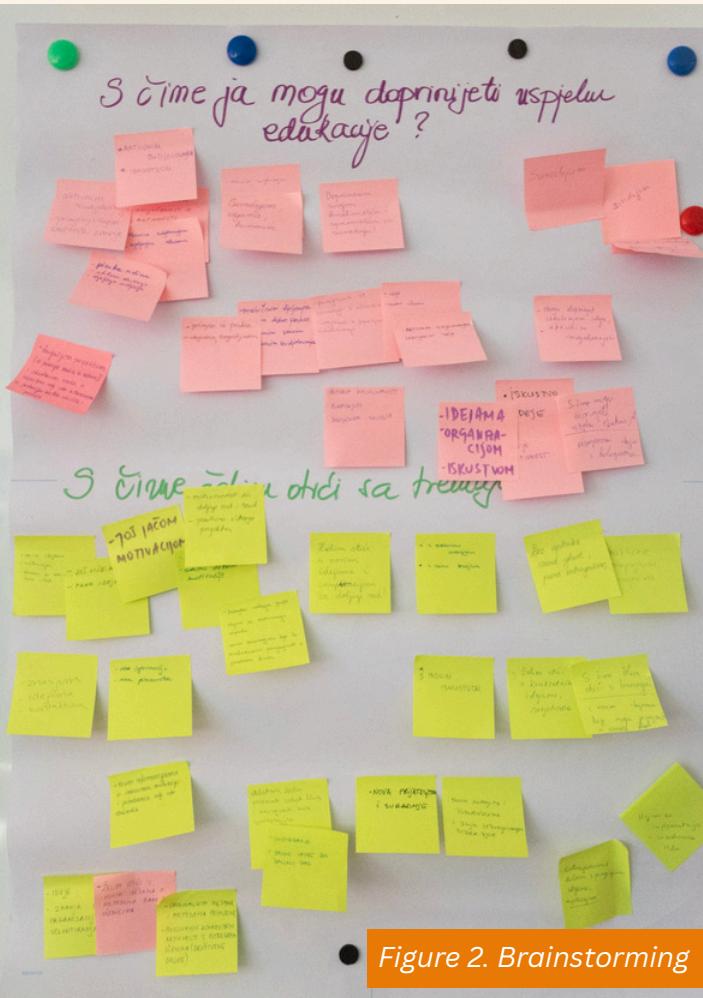


Figure 2. Brainstorming

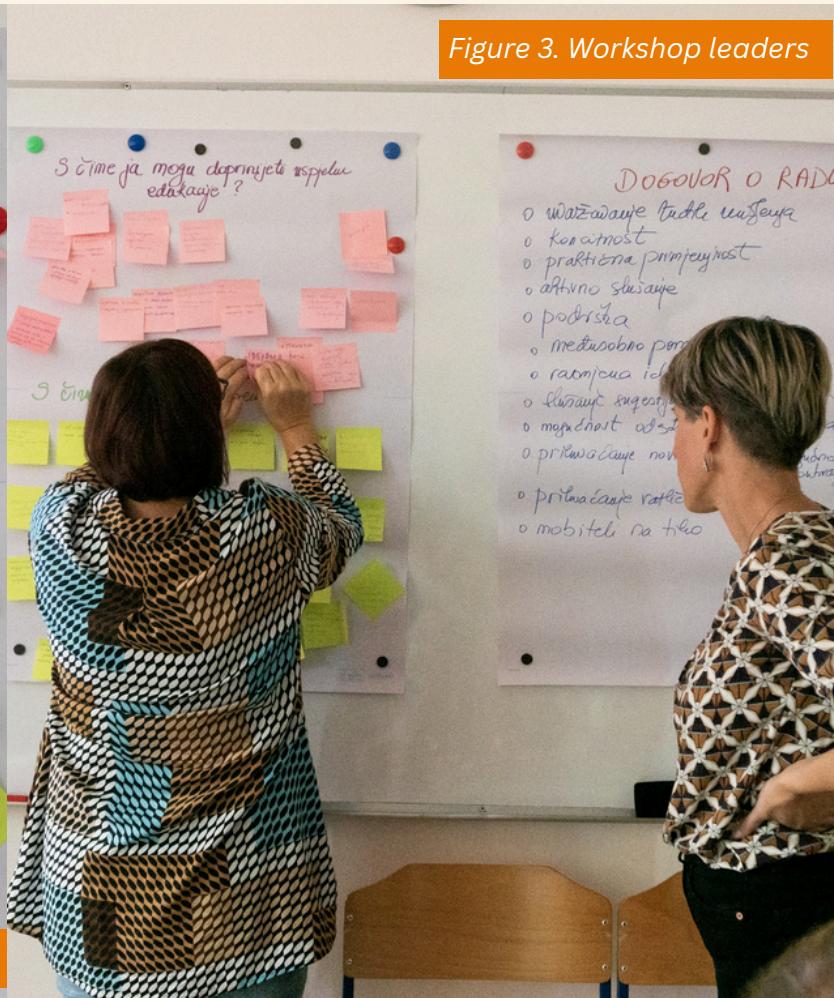


Figure 3. Workshop leaders

## Central part (160')

### • On school volunteering and education for volunteering (legislative framework, curriculum and volunteering) (30')

The workshop leader introduced the participants to the institutional and legal framework for volunteering through a PowerPoint presentation. The participants were introduced to the concept of school volunteering and the introduction of volunteering into the school curriculum. Through the presentation, they received information on the most important issues related to school volunteering and education for volunteering:

- Who is a volunteer?
- What is volunteering/volunteering education?
- Who organizes volunteering?
- Who can be a volunteer?

## Volunteering and its importance in the process of raising and educating children and youth (40')

- The benefits of volunteering and its importance in the community were discussed through group work. The participants were divided into three groups. Each group wrote on a blank piece of paper what they gain from volunteering: children and young people, school and society. After that, each group presented their results, and new values were added through discussion with the participants.

### ŠTO DOBIVA DRUŠTVO?

- aktivno sudjelovanje pojedinca i odgovorno
- rješavaće lokalni problema
- rješavaće ovisnika
- prevećaće mjesti o mogućnosti rješavanja kroz konstanu rad i odgovorne luke
- društvo dobira empatije i socijalne luke
- povezanost
- bolje zdravje - zdr. okruž. / manji trošak

Figure 4. Benefits for society

### Što dobivaju dječa i mladi volontaranti?

- o iskustvo i osjećaj vrijednosti
- o nova prijateljstva, ljubavi, simpatije
- o raznat, samopouzdaje, nekom se pomogli
- o da "se polaže" profesionalna korist
- o ranoj doc. vještina / nove z/ / praktične z/
- o mentalno zdravlje
- o priući ta pretesti u njemu bez errana
- o org. i upravljanje vremenom
- o nove vrijednosti
- o osjećaj pripadnosti Štoj društ. z/ i odgovornosti

Figure 5. Benefits for volunteers

Figure 6. Action planning



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ZELENA ČISTKA

CILJEVI:

- I. Čistoca okoliša
- II. Podizanje svijesti o važnosti ekologije
- III. Jačanje koherzije unutar škole

OPIS AKTIVNOSTI VOLONTERA:

- I. Prikupljanje otpada i smeća
- II. Sortiranje (razvrstavanje) otpada
- III. Odlaganje otpada na za to predviđena mesta
- IV. Kompostiranje biootpada
- V. Sadnja odabranih sadnica u šk. vrt
- VI. Evidentiranje tijeka akcije (fotografiranje, zapisivanje, članci za stranice škole)

RAZDOBLJE VOLONTIRANJA:

Trajanje: 3-5 sati tjedno/mjesečno tijekom cijele školske godine

Raspored radnih sati: 2h u

Figure 7. Action description

- Cycle of the volunteer program at school:

## 1. Planning a volunteer program at school (60')

Group work – participants were divided into four groups. Each group was tasked with designing a school volunteer program according to the following template:

- Why do we want to launch the program (determine the purpose and goal of the program)?
- Who is it intended for (identifying needs in the school and local community)?
- What activities will it include?
- What resources do we need (human, spatial, financial)?
- How will we monitor and evaluate volunteering?

At the end, each group presented its proposal. The facilitator encouraged discussion about legal constraints and ethical standards and summarized the common elements that form the basis for developing a school volunteer club.

# AKCIJA ČIŠĆENJA PLAŽE STINICE

**CILJEVI:**

- uklanjanje otpada s plaže kako bi zaštitili obalni ekosustav
- podizanje svijesti o važnosti očuvanja okoliša
- motiviranje zajednice da se uključi u održavanje čistog okoliša
- jačanje zajednice

**OPS AKTIVNOSTI** - informiranje javnosti o akciji

- izrada plana akcijnosti s lokalnom zajednicom (kotar Brda, udruženje Stinice)
- osiguranje sredstava potrebnih za rad
- prikupljanje i razvrstavanje otpada
- odvoz otpadu
- osiguranje pića i grickalica za djecu

**RAZDOBLJE VOLONTIRANJA** - subota uoči Sv. Duje (poklon gradu Splitu)

Figure 8. Action objectives

## Figure 9. Additional information

**BROJ SATI:** koordinatori - ~~nač~~ 5 sati

akcija - 5 sati

radni sati - 4

**KVALIFIKACIJE:** socijalne vještine, timski rad, dobra volja, razvijena eko-svijest

### OČEKIVANI

### REZULTATI:

- čista plaža
- doprinos gradu i zajednici
- osobno zadovoljstvo
- jačanje osjećaja pripadnosti grupi i zajednici

**SUPERVIZOR** - D.R. (koordinatorica)

**MOTIVACIJA/** - za školu certifikat FEE 2024

**NAGRADE** Global Action Days

- za vœenike 5 iz prirode i biologije

## **2. Promotion of volunteering and informing students and teachers about volunteering opportunities (30')**

The participants were introduced to the role of the school as a promoter of volunteering. The facilitator explained the important function of the school in promoting, encouraging and organizing volunteering, thereby transmitting the values of volunteering to students, parents and school staff. Through a joint discussion, ways in which volunteering can be promoted in schools were highlighted:

- regularly informing students about volunteering opportunities at school and in the community, by including positive examples of student volunteers,
- presenting successful school volunteer actions (e.g. humanitarian, environmental and educational actions),
- using school communication channels (notice boards, school newspaper, website).

Participants, in smaller groups, came up with suggestions for ways in which their schools could promote volunteerism and inform students and teachers about volunteering opportunities.

## Final part (105')

### 3. Finding volunteers - motivating students to volunteer (80')

The workshop leader introduced the topic of motivation through a presentation. She emphasized that values are the foundation of all motivation and that volunteering encourages the development of self-confidence, responsibility, initiative and empathy. Participants were introduced to three main groups of motivations:

- personal development (learning, friendships, sense of usefulness),
- solving specific problems in the community (helping the elderly, protecting the environment) and
- contribution to social development (self-initiative, democracy, solidarity).

Through group work, the experiences of volunteers from practice were analyzed, on the example from the Lučac Elementary School in Split (the Lučac volunteer club was founded in 2018, but it started volunteering much earlier). Based on the discussion, the groups came up with suggestions on how to encourage students to volunteer - through recognition, praise, volunteer days or establishing a volunteer club. It was concluded that the key factors of motivation are school support, freedom of choice, a sense of belonging and recognition of the effort invested.

## Questions and answers/Workshop evaluation (25')

At the end of the workshop, time was left for questions from participants and the following questionnaire was administered:

1. Please rate your satisfaction with the workshop leader?
2. Please rate your satisfaction with the content of the workshop?
3. Please rate your satisfaction with the organization of the workshop?
4. What would you highlight as particularly satisfying during the workshops from Module 1?
5. What, in your opinion, could have been better?
6. Do you have any ideas for future workshops?

## 2.2. Module: Volunteer Management

**Workshop leader:** Duška Milinković, mag. soc. paed.

**Materials for work:** PPT presentation, paper size at least A3, post-it notes, markers, felt-tip pens, planning worksheets, evaluation sheet.

**Workshop goal:** To introduce participants to the phases of the school volunteer program and the role of the school coordinator in managing volunteers, and to empower educational staff for planned, systematic and motivating leadership of student volunteers.

### WORKSHOP OUTCOMES:

**The participants have:**

- understood the school volunteer program cycle and its key phases,
- recognised the role of the school coordinator and mentor in providing support to student volunteers,
- learned about ways of assessment, rewarding and evaluating the volunteer program,
- applied the learned methods in planning and implementing volunteer activities at school.

## **Workshop content:**

### **Introductory part (5')**

#### **• Workshop presentation (5')**

The workshop objectives were presented and a brief overview of the importance of a well-structured school volunteer program was given. Special emphasis was placed on the importance of a planned approach in working with volunteers, the role of the school coordinator, and the importance of motivating and recognizing volunteers.

### **Central part (190') - Cycle of the school volunteer program:**

#### **• Selection and preparation of students for volunteering (60')**

Participants received answers to the questions: How to inform students about the basics of volunteering, the Volunteering Act and the Code of Ethics. How to conduct an initial interview and determine their motives, interests, skills and availability for volunteering. How to collect basic data through volunteering application forms and how to involve minor students (obtaining written consent from parents or guardians). How to assess motivation and abilities, select appropriate activities appropriate to the age of the students and in accordance with the principles of protection of minor volunteers. Who (volunteer coordinator) and how informs students about the rights and obligations of volunteers, planned activities, volunteer training and expected results of volunteering.

## • Involving students in volunteer activities (40')

Participants received instructions on how to involve students in volunteer activities through the school volunteer club, volunteer actions within the school, and cooperation with community volunteer organizers. Through examples of implemented activities such as peer support in learning, environmental actions, humanitarian events, and marking important dates, it was shown how students volunteer according to agreed tasks with the support of coordinators and mentors, where activities are clearly defined, structured, and aligned with the age and interests of students. The role of the coordinator is to ensure a safe and stimulating environment and connect students with partners in the community.

### OBVEZE VOLONTERA

- poštirati dogovor
- poznavati i prihvaćati prava i obveze volontera
- poznavati i prihvaćati SVRHU i CILJ volonterskog rada
- uvažavati koordinatora i druge volontere, korisnike volonterskih usluga
- realizirati planirane aktivnosti
- podržavati pozitivno volontersko ozračje
- biti primjer drugima

### PRAVA VOLONTERA

- PRAVO NA POMOĆ / PODRŠKU
- PRAVO NA PAUŽU
- PRAVO NA NADZOR
- PRAVO NA IZMJEĆAVANJE MÍJENJA I STANOVU
- PRAVO NA ODRŽAVANJE VOLONTERSKIH USLUGA
- PRAVO NA POTVADU O SNOJELOVANJU / VOLONTERSKU KNJÍŽICU
- PRAVO O ISPUNJAVANJU ZAKONSKIH OKVIRA ZAKONA O DGOJA
- PRAVO NA NAGRADU
- PRAVO NA INFORMACIJU O VOLONTERSKIM AKTIVNOSTIMA

Figure 10. Volunteer responsibilities

Figure 11. Volunteer rights

- **Monitoring/supporting student volunteer activities – the role of school coordinators/mentors (50')**

The key role of the volunteer coordinator in supporting and monitoring the work of student volunteers was explained through: regular communication, resolving difficulties, strengthening their motivation, keeping records of volunteer hours, and fostering a sense of belonging and importance for each student. Through continuous support, students developed self-confidence, cooperation, and a sense of responsibility, while the school provided space for their personal and social development.

- **Evaluation and rewarding of student volunteers (40')**

The importance of evaluating volunteer engagement during and after the implementation of activities was emphasized, as well as the need for recognition through formal and informal forms: certificates of volunteering, commendations, letters of appreciation, public presentation of results, and inclusion in school events. The Government of the Republic of Croatia awards a state award for volunteering at the proposal of the National Committee for the Development of Volunteering. Rewarding volunteers has encouraged a sense of pride, motivation, and personal value, and has contributed to the development of a culture of volunteering in schools.

## Final part (105')

- **Evaluation/assessment of the success of the entire volunteer program and the work of the volunteers (80')**

The evaluation was conducted through interviews, questionnaires and joint reflection of students, coordinators and school staff. The success of the implementation of the activities, the satisfaction of the volunteers, the achieved goals and the acquired competences were assessed. The coordinator kept records of the volunteer engagement and prepared a report on the activities carried out. The evaluation results were used to improve the quality of the program (what is good and what needs to be changed and improved), plan future volunteer activities and strengthen the school volunteer club.

- **Workshop evaluation (25')**

A short survey was conducted to assess satisfaction with the workshop and its organization, and to collect suggestions for improvement.

## 2.3. Module: Development of social skills of school volunteers

**Workshop leader:** Duška Milinković, mag. soc. paed.

**Materials for work:** PPT presentation, post-it notes, paper at least A3 size, felt-tip pens and markers, hammer paper, activity worksheets, evaluation sheet, chairs for working in a circle.

**Workshop goal:** To empower educators to develop social skills in student volunteers as a prerequisite for successful volunteering, cooperation and personal development of students through experiential workshops and interactive work methods.

### WORKSHOP OUTCOMES:

#### The participants have:

- understood the importance of social skills in the process of upbringing, education and volunteering
- recognized and named the basic social skills necessary for successful volunteering
- learned examples of working methods for developing social skills in students
- experienced and analyzed pilot workshops (empathy, nonviolent communication, self-confidence building)
- designed their own activities to encourage the development of social skills within school volunteer clubs
- applied the learned methods in planning school volunteer programs

## Workshop content:

### Introductory part (55')

#### • Concept and basic information about social skills (10')

The workshop leader introduced the participants to the topic through a short lecture and interactive discussion - what social skills are, their importance in the educational process and volunteering, and how to recognize and develop them in students.

Participants have participated in the following activities:

• **Tree of Expectations (25')** - On a large poster in the shape of a tree, participants used pieces of paper of different colors to write down their thoughts - leaves for their expectations from the workshop, apples for what they wanted to get, worms for their fears, and flowers for what they could contribute to the group. The activity encouraged reflection, openness, and mutual understanding, while the facilitator ensured discretion and a safe environment that allowed for honest expression. After all participants had glued their pieces of paper to the tree, the expressed opinions were collectively summarized and commented on, which created an initial picture of the group's expectations and needs and laid the foundation for further work.



Figure 12. Expectation tree



Figure 13. Workshop participants

• **Agreement on the rules of group work (20')** – Through experiential work, it was shown how to create a safe and stimulating environment by respecting the circle rule, the rule of listening, confidentiality, respect and active participation.



## **Central part (160')**

### **· Social skills essential for volunteering (20')**

Through discussion and group work (3 workshops: Empathy, Nonviolent Communication and Strengthening Self-Confidence), the participants identified the basic and more complex social skills needed for volunteering (empathy, communication, cooperation, respect, self-confidence, self-control, decision-making) and connected the content with the cross-curricular topics of the National Curriculum (personal and social development, civic education). It was concluded that the development of these skills is important for student volunteers, the school and the community.

### **· Empathy Workshop (30')**

Participants went through a pilot workshop intended for student volunteers in which they practiced recognizing and understanding the feelings of others. Through joint reflection, they recognized the difference between empathy and pity and discussed ways to encourage empathy in children and young people. The Happy Ball activity was conducted.

**· Happy Ball (20')** - The facilitator explained the game: "Catch the ball that I will throw and complete the sentence: 'I am sad when...', then pass the ball to another participant. Everyone completes the sentence in their own way." After the first round, there is a round with the sentence: "I am happy when...". Through the game, we see that feelings differ and that our words and actions affect the feelings of others."

Additional activities that can be implemented are: Feeling Chairs, Draw Your Feeling and Empathetic Situations, and their description can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

## • **Workshop Nonviolent Communication (90')**

Through experiential work, participants learned techniques and methods for teaching nonviolent communication, including active listening, assertiveness, and collaborative conflict resolution. Activities included the Persuasion Game, the Rainbow Story, and the story of Panto Pletikosa. Participants analyzed ways to apply the learned methods in a school context and shared experiences.

**The workshop is divided into three parts:**

### **1. How to say no and stand up for yourself Activity: Persuasion game and standing up for yourself (30')**

Participants were divided into pairs. In the first part of the activity, one person held a clenched fist, while the other tried to persuade them to open it. After two minutes, the roles were reversed. In the second part, participants were given different situations, which they completed by assuming their own reactions in the same situation.

Questions for discussion in the circle: Were you able to open another person's fist? In what way?, What was it like to be a "Persuader"?, What was it like to keep your fist clenched?, Was your behavior in the situation aggressive, passive or assertive?, What behavior do you consider most effective for solving the problem?

### **2. Give me your hand (40')**

The activities "The Story of the Rainbow" and "Panto Pletikosa" were carried out.

Additional activities: Decision Making, Complete the Story, and The King's Garden are described in Appendix 2.

Activity: The Story of the Rainbow (15') – Participants read parts of the story by color and discussed the conflicts in the story and their own experiences.

## RAINBOW - Indian legend

Once upon a time, all the colors of the world started a fight: each one claimed that it was the best, the most important, the most useful, the most beloved. Green said: "It is clear that I am the most important. I am the sign of life and hope. I was chosen for the grass, the trees, the leaves; without me, all the animals would die. Take a look around the landscape and you will see that there is the most of me." Blue interrupted her: "You only think of the earth; but consider the sky and the sea. Water is the very source of life, and this is done by the clouds from the blue sea. The sky gives space, peace and serenity (tranquility). Without my peace, you would all be crazy bodies." Yellow giggled: "You are so serious. I bring laughter, joy and warmth to the world. The sun is yellow, the moon is yellow, the stars are yellow. Every time you look at a sunflower, the whole world starts smiling. Without me, there would be no fun." Orange was the next to play her song: "I am the color of strength and health. I may be rare, but I am precious, because I serve the inner needs of human life. I carry all the most important vitamins. Just think of carrots, oranges, melons, mangoes... I don't show up around all the time, but when I fill the sky at sunrise or sunset, my beauty is so dazzling that no one even thinks of any of you." Red couldn't take it anymore. She shouted: "I am the ruler of you all, blood, the blood of life. I am the color of danger and courage. I am willing to fight for a cause. I can set blood on fire. Without me, the earth would be as barren as the moon. I am the color of passion and love, the red rose and the poppy."

Purple rose to her full height. She was very tall and spoke with great pomp. "I am the color of rule and power. Kings, leaders, bishops - they have always chosen me, because I am the color of authority and wisdom. People do not ask me, but listen and obey." Indigo spoke much more quietly than the others, but just as decisively: "Imagine me. I am the color of silence. You hardly notice me, but without me you are all redundant. I mean reflection and thought, twilight and depth. You need me for balance and contrast, for prayer and inner peace." And so the colors continued to boast, each convinced that she was the best. Their quarrel grew louder and louder. Suddenly there was a flash of brilliant white light, thunder and a bang. A heavy rain began to fall. All the colors huddled together in fear and pressed together. The rain spoke: "You stupid colors, fighting among yourselves, each trying to rule over the others. Don't you know that each one is special and different. Hold hands and come with me. The colors spread across the sky in a great arc as a reminder that we can live together in peace. And so every time we see a rainbow after a heavy rain, let us remind ourselves that we should respect each other.

## Activity: Panto Pletikosa (20')

- Participants were divided into groups, with one set of participants leaving the classroom while the facilitator read the story. Afterwards, the participants who were outside returned to the classroom, and the first set retold the story to them, which was most often inaccurate and with parts left out. The activity emphasizes communication, showing how information can easily be distorted, parts of a story forgotten or mistranslated, and how important it is to listen clearly, formulate messages, and check for understanding.

### **PANTO PLETIKOSA**

*There are eighteen people sitting in the waiting room of the Copacabana Health Center. On the door of the room in front of which the most people are sitting, it says: "Dr. Panto Pletikosa, psychiatrist." In the waiting room are a general in civilian clothes, a man in black shoes, a white woman with a three-year-old boy of color, a woman with curlers on her head, several girls and boys, and a man with a large nose. Suddenly, the sharp sound of quickened footsteps is heard in the hallway and a pretty forty-year-old woman enters the waiting room, followed by a plump but frowning man. The woman sniffles. They enter the office without knocking. The sound of a car and the sound of the wind can be heard from outside. It is autumn. The general in civilian clothes has just started coughing loudly when one of the young men in the waiting room thinks he hears a gunshot. The red-haired forty-year-old woman angrily leaves the office. Dr. Pletikosa runs after her, clutching his head. The boy of color is crying.*

**Final activity (5')** – Participants shared ideas for conflicts and imagined how to resolve them by advocating for their needs.

## 1. Understanding conflict and personal behavior in conflict (20')

The goal is to understand that conflicts are not always undesirable, learn to react to conflicts, actively listen and learn about conflict resolution models through:

### **Activity: How do I behave in a conflict? – Animal fantasy (20')**

Visualization of one's own animal in a conflict, reflection on one's own reaction and categorization as aggressive, passive or assertive.

Participants closed their eyes and visualized themselves in the form of an animal and imagined meeting another animal in a conflict situation. After that, they described their reactions and classified them as aggressive, passive, assertive or indecisive. Through this exercise, students learned about different ways of reacting to conflicts and saw the benefits of assertive behavior, clearly expressing one's needs and feelings without hurting others.

Additional activities: Getting to know each other - How did I get my name?, How do I behave in a conflict? and How did I talk in a conflict? are in Appendix 3.

## Final part (105')

### **• Workshop Strengthening self-confidence (80')**

The workshop consisted of two parts: 1. "Best Me" and 2. "My Self-Confidence". Participants went through the activities "Grandma, Dragon and Samurai" and "Post-it Compliments", in which they recognized their own strengths, positive traits and ways to encourage self-confidence in student volunteers. Through reflection, they discussed the importance of a positive self-image and the impact of self-confidence on the motivation and success of volunteers.

## Part 1 of the workshop: The Best Me (60')

Materials needed: post-it notes

**Activity: Grandma, Dragon and Samurai (30')** involved dividing participants into two groups and choosing one of three characters. The goal of the game was to show the character without words and "cross the bridge" to the opposing group. This activity encouraged cooperation within the group, strategic thinking and creative expression through body movements and facial expressions, while also strengthening the participants' self-confidence.

Rules of the game: *If you are the grandmother, you will bend down slightly as if you are holding a walking stick, if you are the dragon, you will step forward strongly and 'let fire out', and if you are the samurai, you will wave your hand in the air as if you are holding a sword in your hand.* Keep in mind that when the grandmother and the samurai are on opposite sides, the grandmother defeats the samurai and crosses the bridge because the samurai has a code of honor that obliges him to let his elders go. The dragon defeats the grandmother because he is stronger than the grandmother. The samurai defeats the dragon because he kills the dragon with his sword. Silently agree on which character you will be in the story.

**Activity: Post-it Notes (30')** used post-it notes to have participants write down positive qualities they noticed about each other. After all participants had written at least one nice trait for each group member, they sat in a circle to discuss their impressions. Questions such as: "How did you like what you read?" and "How did you feel when you wrote something nice to someone else?" allowed for reflection on mutual recognition, strengthening self-esteem, and positive group dynamics.

You can find the additional activity "I'm great" in Attachment 4.

## Part 2 of the workshop: My self-confidence (20')

### **Activity: Complete the sentences.**

Participants were given sheets with unfinished sentences that they had to complete independently (e.g. Something I do well is..., I am proud of..., One of my best characteristics is...). After completing them, students read their answers to themselves, encouraging them to believe in positive statements about themselves. If they wanted, they could share their statements with the group, and the discussion focused on the feelings that accompanied the expression of personal qualities.

Additional activities: What is self-confidence?, What can I do better?, Mirror with a handle? and Letter to myself are in Appendix 4.

### **• Workshop evaluation (25')**

Participants filled out an evaluation form and participated in an oral discussion about their impressions, usefulness, and possibilities of applying the workshop content in their own work. The facilitator summarized the main messages of the workshop and encouraged participants to identify methods that they could incorporate into the activities of the school volunteer club.

## 2.4. Module: Ecological Awareness- Permaculture in Elementary Schools

### **Workshop leaders (3 lectures and 3 workshops):**

Marin Kanajet, B.A. Philosopher and Sociologist, Permaculture Dalmatia

Ivan Mateljan, B.A. Civil Engineer, Permaculture Dalmatia

**Materials for work:** PPT presentations, pens and writing papers, colored cardboard or collage paper, paints and markers, ruler with different measurements, scissors, tape, magnetic board and magnets, plastic pipes, plumber's lubricant, workbenches and clamps, hand-held battery and power tools, potting soil, flower and succulent seedlings, water for watering

**Workshop goal:** Introducing participants to the concept of permaculture and examples of its application in primary school education; introducing participants to available materials; introducing participants to examples of making vertical garden elements that are suitable in spaces where classic gardens cannot be established; training participants to independently make a vertical garden by reusing plastic pipes; basic introduction to permaculture design and the tools that can be used; conducting interviews for establishing a school garden.

## WORKSHOP OUTCOMES:

### The participants have:

- acquired knowledge about the application of permaculture in primary schools;
- acquired knowledge about design principles and tools and applied them in the creation of four examples of the layout of elements in the Brda Elementary School garden;
- created design elements at a scale that is applicable in the future development of the garden and outdoor classroom design in collaboration with teachers and students;
- made four elements of a vertical garden from plastic pipes and were trained to make them independently;
- conducted an interview about establishing a school garden and collected data for four schools in the Split-Dalmatia County;
- became familiar with existing educational materials and exchanged contacts for future joint activities.

## Workshop content:

### Introductory part (35')

- **Presentation of the lecturers and facilitators and the topics that will be covered in the Environmental Awareness module (5')**

Sunce employee, Miranda Šimac, announced and introduced the workshop leaders, daily schedule, and working methods.

- **Presentation - Permaculture in elementary schools (30')**

Marin Kanajet from Permaculture Dalmatia, using a PowerPoint presentation, introduced the participants to the concept of permaculture and its application in the educational system (primary and secondary schools). He presented numerous examples of garden design and educational programs, as well as practical activities. He introduced the participants to existing materials that they can use in their teaching.

### Central part (160')

- **Practical work – Making scale elements (70')**

After a short tour of the school garden to familiarize themselves with the elements on the ground, the participants were divided into four groups. Each group had the task of reproducing the elements from the ground to scale on previously obtained geodetic bases of the school's floor plan and to propose the positioning of the outdoor classroom. For the creation, they used a ruler with different scales, collage paper for creating the elements, and felt-tip pens for creating the legend, under the mentorship of Marin Kanajet and Ivan Mateljan.



Figure 15. Making elements to scale



Figure 16. Making elements to scale

### • Presentation – Vertical Gardens (20')

Ivan Mateljan from Permaculture Dalmatia, using a PowerPoint presentation, introduced the participants to different variants of vertical gardens, the possibilities of their creation and the challenges of maintenance.

### • Practical work – Making vertical garden elements (70')

The participants were divided into four groups and, with the mentorship of the workshop leader, using various tools, they created four elements of a vertical garden by carefully drilling holes in plastic pipes and planting flower and succulent seedlings in them. After the creation, several variants of assembling the created elements were demonstrated.



Figure 17. Constructed vertical element



Figure 18. Making of a vertical element

### • Presentation – Permaculture Design Tools (40')

Marin Kanajet, using a PowerPoint presentation, introduced participants to the tools for permaculture design: permaculture ethics, design principles, five-element analysis, zoning, sectoral and functional analysis, and the use of samples from nature. He also demonstrated the possibilities of applying the before mentioned tools in teaching, either as part of a systematic approach to design, or as individual practical tasks that encourage analytical thinking and learning.

### • Group work – Garden design interview (45')

The participants were divided into four groups, each representing one primary school. With the mentorship of the workshop leader, the participants conducted a group interview based on pre-defined topics and questions. The research covered various aspects related to the establishment of the garden, including potential users, their wishes, needs and expectations, legal and ownership relationships, possible administrative obstacles, daily school routine and habits of the users, level of knowledge of permaculture, identification of potential challenges and economic aspects and opportunities. The aim of the interviews was to collect as much relevant information as possible that would help in defining the users, needs and potential resources and obstacles for the establishment of a school garden. The participants were introduced to this method as a first design step, and the interviews were completed in their home schools with other relevant users of the gardens.



Figure 19. Overview of the Brda Elementary School grounds

## • Workshop evaluation (25')

Time was left for questions and answers from participants, after which the workshop was evaluated using the following questions:

1. Please rate your satisfaction with the workshop leader?
2. Please rate your satisfaction with the content of the workshop?
3. Please rate your satisfaction with the organization of the workshop?
4. What would you highlight as particularly satisfying during the workshops from Module 4?
5. What, in your opinion, could have been better?
6. Do you have any ideas for future workshops?



Figure 20. Workshop participants

## 2.5. Module: Environmental awareness - Measuring and monitoring environmental impact

### **Workshop leaders:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sc. Martina Baučić (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodesy)

Margita Radman, MSc. in Biology and Ecology (Sunce)

Miranda Šimac, MSc. in Biology and Geography (Sunce)

**Materials for work:** PPT presentations, laptops (at least one per school) with internet access, pens and notepads, potting soil, clay/loam, compost, wildflower seeds, mixing buckets, water, planting pots, wooden slats, drilling and joining tools, natural materials (twigs, bangs, reeds, straw), cardboard and markers.

**Workshop goal:** To empower educators to use geospatial data and digital tools to monitor the state of the environment and to encourage the use of practical outdoor activities that develop students' environmental awareness and responsible behavior towards nature.

## WORKSHOP OUTCOMES:

### **The participants have:**

- understood the concept and importance of geospatial data in the context of environmental impact monitoring
- became familiar with basic digital tools and free sources of geospatial data (Google Earth, OpenStreetMap, Copernicus, QGIS)
- applied what they learned by creating a simple map of their own school and its surroundings.
- developed ideas and carried out outdoor activities (making insect hotels, bird houses and feeders, seed bombs)
- recognized opportunities for connecting digital tools and practical activities in educational work

## Workshop content:

### Introductory part (15')

#### • Workshop presentation (15')

Since representative welcomed the participants and introduced the workshop leaders and the daily schedule of activities.

The participants were introduced to the objectives of the module "Environmental Awareness - Measuring and Monitoring Environmental Impact" and the importance of connecting digital technologies with practical experiences in nature.

### Central part

#### • Free global geospatial data - Google Earth, land cover, forest status, urban greenery, OpenStreetMap (90')

To perform this activity, a person who understands how to work with geospatial programs and tools is required.

In the introductory lecture, the participants were introduced to the basic concepts related to geospatial data: coordinate systems, map projections, the concept of layers, geodatabases and GIS systems. Sources of free geospatial data (Google Earth, USGS, Copernicus, OpenStreetMap) and web services for monitoring the state of the environment (Google Earth Engine, Global Forest Watch) were presented. In independent work, with the help of computers, the participants researched and compared data on the state of the environment in their own community. The work concluded with a discussion on the possibilities of using these tools in teaching geography, biology and civic education.



Figure 20. Getting to know free geodata sources

Figure 21. Overview of the environmental situation in the community



## • **Free geospatial data for elementary school locations (90')**

In a short introductory lecture, the participants were introduced to free geodata sources in Croatia (Geoportal DGU, ISPU, Bioportal) and the free GIS software QGIS - its capabilities, installation and ways of loading geodata (XYZ, WMS and WFS services). In the practical part, the participants created a simple map of their school using available geospatial layers (orthophoto images, cadastral plots, natural elements). The work was concluded with a discussion and exchange of ideas on how GIS tools can contribute to monitoring the state of the environment in school projects.

## • **Practical examples of outdoor activities (90')**

Through experiential workshops, participants learned about methods for developing environmental awareness in students:

• **Insects Game (30')** – an introductory game to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the role of insects in the ecosystem. Pictures of animals were hidden in their natural habitats, inside different plants, the participants had to find them and then correctly classify the animals and insects according to the number of legs, which allowed them to notice the basic differences between insects and other animals. Based on this knowledge, a discussion began about the body structure of insects, with an emphasis on the division into head, thorax and abdomen.



Figure 22. Participants playing the Insects game

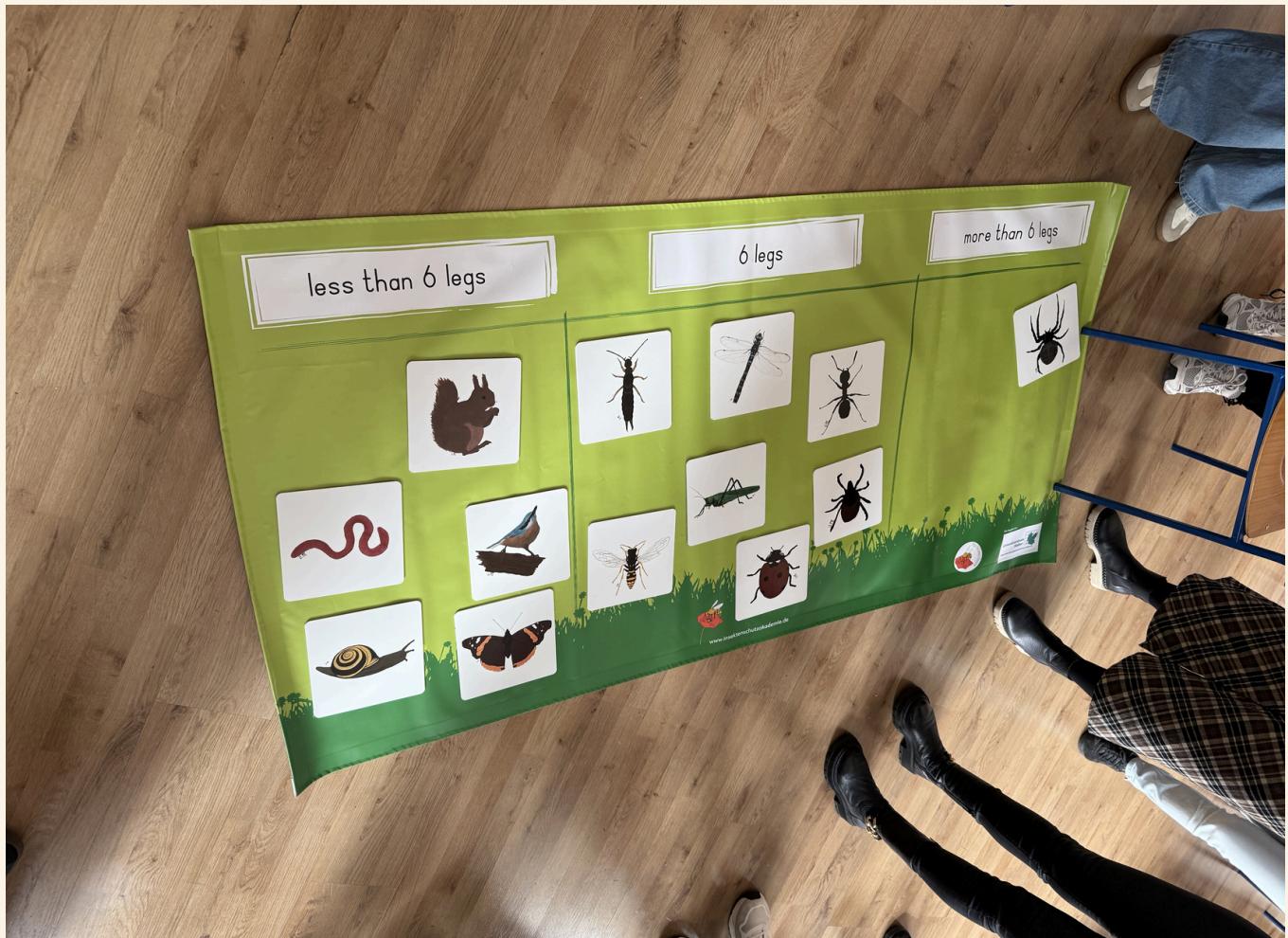


Figure 23. Educational game Insects



Figure 24. Cards for educational game



Figure 25. Cards for educational game



Figure 26. Cards for educational game

• **Making insect hotels (30')** – in groups, participants made mini-hotels from natural materials that could be placed in the school garden. As part of the activity, they began to make wooden structures that served as the basic frame of the hotel. The wooden slats were precisely measured, cut and joined using nails or screws, ensuring the stability and durability of the structure. The interior of the structures was filled with natural materials – reeds, pine needles, twigs and straw – arranged in such a way as to create microspaces suitable for different types of insects. After completing the assembly, the hotels were strengthened, protected with a natural coating if necessary, and prepared for placement in the school garden. In this way, a favorable habitat for beneficial insects was created, which contributed to the preservation of the ecosystem and the promotion of sustainable development of the school environment.



Figure 27. Making of an insect hotel



Figure 28. Preparing materials for an insect hotel

Figure 29. Insect hotel



Figure 30. Workshop participants with their insect hotels

• **Making bird feeders and seed bombs (30')** – a practical activity in which simple elements were made to encourage biodiversity and improve the school environment. During the practical activity, participants made bird feeders and seed bombs to encourage biodiversity and improve the school environment. They made the feeders from empty orange peels by cleaning the halves of the peel, punching holes in the side for a rope, and filling the inside with a mixture of fat and bird seeds, thus creating a simple food source. They shaped the “bombs” from clay soil into balls and rolled them in seeds of indigenous plants; after drying, they planned to throw these balls into nature in the spring, where they would grow flowers and further contribute to the preservation of biodiversity. Through discussion and reflection, the educational value of practical activities and the way to involve students in observing and measuring environmental impacts were discussed.

## Final part

### • **Workshop evaluation (90')**

Participants completed an evaluation form and verbally commented on the usefulness of the content and its potential for application in their schools. The facilitators summarized the main messages of the workshop, emphasizing the importance of connecting digital tools and practical activities in strengthening environmental literacy and promoting sustainable behavior in students.

# 2.6. Module: Environmental Awareness – Outdoor Classroom Activities

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## **Workshop leaders:**

Margita Radman, MA in Biology and Ecology (Sunce)  
Miranda Šimac, MA in Biology and Geography (Sunce)  
Karla Penić, MA in Public Relations (Sunce)

**Materials for work:** PPT presentations, pens and paper, gloves, waste collection bags, scales, monitoring sheets, composting containers and soil, seeds and natural materials, laptops with internet access, cell phones or cameras for recording, note paper, markers, promotional materials and posters, materials for the exchange fair (books, seedlings, tools, seeds).

**Workshop goal:** To empower school volunteer coordinators and educators to implement and promote green activities in schools through sustainability education, practical workshops, and communication skills development. To encourage collaboration, creativity, and environmental responsibility among students.

## **WORKSHOP OUTCOMES:**

### **The participants have:**

- understood the concept of sustainability and the importance of green volunteer programs in schools
- learned about and applied elements of the Sunce association's educational programs (Green Reporters, Composting, Cleaning Actions, Exchange Fair)
- developed skills in planning and implementing practical activities in the community
- acquired knowledge about the basics of communication campaigns and writing announcements, articles and video materials
- linked sustainable activities with the development of the volunteer club and its visibility in the local community

## Workshop content:

### Introductory part (30')

#### • Presentation – outdoor classrooms and outdoor activities (30')

A Tips & Tricks presentation on implementing outdoor activities was held. Participants were introduced to the concept of an outdoor classroom, methods of working in a natural environment, and practical examples. During the presentation, practical advice was highlighted, such as: start with simple activities such as a walk in the garden or reading outdoors, time outs immediately after recess or at the end of class, involve students in planning and leading activities, use local resources and partnerships with parks and associations, and arrange outdoor space with basic learning supplies. The importance of safety guidelines and agreements on rules of conduct outdoors was also emphasized to make the experience in nature educational and safe.

#### • Examples of good practice in Sunce – Green Reporters and Cleanup Actions programs (105')

The Green Reporters program was presented, in which students take on the roles of photographers, journalists, and reporters to document and report on environmental problems in their community, encouraging active participation of young people in environmental protection, and the Clean-up Actions program. In the practical part, participants divided into groups (organizers, reporters, photographers, volunteers) and conducted a short clean-up action near the school using monitoring sheets, scales, and photography. After the end, a discussion was held on the importance of documenting and reporting on the results of the action.

Figure 31. Participation in Waste Monitoring activities



Figure 32. Waste Monitoring Activity



## Central part

### • **Possible sources of funding for a volunteer club (30')**

A presentation was held on financial opportunities and sources of support for school volunteer activities, including the use of websites and available competitions.

### • **The importance of visibility of a volunteer club (70')**

A presentation was held on the importance of communication and promotion of volunteer activities – how to convey a message to the target audience, create a communication plan and write articles and posts for the media and social networks, with an example of a successful campaign "Together without Plastic". In the practical part, the participants were divided into groups: Group 1 prepared articles about the volunteer action, Group 2 made posts for Facebook and Instagram, and Group 3 created reels. This was followed by the presentation of: articles, posts and reels, and giving feedback.

### • **Composting (20')**

A presentation of the educational program Composting in Schools was held - covering the steps of establishing a compost pit, its maintenance, student involvement and integration into the classroom. In the practical part, the participants made mini models of compost pits from prepared materials (soil, plant waste, water, containers). First, they placed a layer of soil in the containers, then added plant waste, moistened it evenly with water, and then gently mixed and covered everything, thus ensuring the conditions for proper decomposition and monitoring the development of the compost. Finally, they went through the steps of setting up and monitoring the composting process. Then, a short discussion was held on the challenges and possibilities of composting in a school environment.

### • **Exchange Fair – Circular Economy in Practice (45')**

The participants were introduced to the model of the Exchange Fair as an activity that promotes the reuse of materials and togetherness in the school, with a presentation of examples of good practice from kindergartens and schools (DV Kaduljica, DV Radost, DV Trogir). In the practical part, a mini-exchange fair was organized among the workshop participants - books, seedlings, manuals and other useful materials were exchanged. After the activity, a reflection and analysis of the benefits of such actions in the educational context was carried out.

Figure 33. Preparation for the Exchange Fair



Figure 33. Exchange Fair

## Final part

### • Reflection and evaluation of the workshop (15')

Participants summarized what they had learned, made suggestions for implementing activities in their schools, and filled out an evaluation form. The facilitators concluded the workshop by emphasizing the connection between practical green activities, student education, and the sustainability of school volunteer clubs.

### 3.CONCLUSION

The educational program VolonTERRA - active schools drive change! rounds off many years of work, experience and dedication in promoting the values of volunteerism, civic education and education for sustainable development. It was created in response to the need for systematic empowerment of educational workers who play a key role in shaping future generations of responsible, supportive and active citizens in their communities.

Through six carefully designed modules, the program combines theoretical knowledge, methodological approaches and practical tools that enable teachers and professional associates to independently launch, lead and maintain school volunteer clubs. Program participants acquire the competencies necessary for planning and implementing volunteer activities, developing students' social and civic skills, and promoting environmentally responsible behavior within school communities.

*VolonTERRA focuses on the idea of schools as spaces for shared growth, collaboration and the creation of positive change. In this context, volunteering is recognized as a valuable educational process that encourages the development of empathy, self-confidence, responsibility and team spirit in children and young people. Such an approach allows students to directly experience the value of togetherness, personal engagement and contribution to the community through concrete activities - from environmental actions and school gardens to awareness campaigns.*

The program establishes a network of empowered and motivated educators who, in collaboration with civil society organizations, local communities, and other stakeholders, build the foundations of a sustainable society. This way, VolonTERRA goes beyond individual projects and becomes a permanent model of cross-sectoral cooperation in the field of education for sustainable development.

More broadly, this program affirms that change begins with education – with classrooms where children are encouraged to think, act, and take responsibility. By integrating volunteering into school curricula, we contribute to creating schools that don't just teach facts, but also shape character, strengthen social sensitivity, and foster a love of nature and community.

In conclusion, VolonTERRA is a testament to the fact that every school, regardless of size and resources, can become a place of inspiration, collaboration, and action. It shows that lasting changes in society begin with small but decisive steps – steps taken by teachers, students, and communities who believe in the power of education and volunteerism as a path to a sustainable and more just future.

## 4. ATTACHMENTS

### **Attachment 1. Empathy workshop - description of additional activities**

**1. Emotional Chairs (5')** - Everyone sits in a circle, and the leader mentions different emotions. Those who recognize that emotion in themselves should sit one seat to the right if the chair is empty, and if not, they sit on the person's lap. The game creates funny situations.

**2. Draw your feeling (20')** - The facilitator explains the activity: Each participant is given a worksheet with ten situations that evoke different feelings. The task for the participant is to draw a smiley face in the empty space next to each situation and write in words how they would feel in the given situation. When they are finished, they read and show their smiley faces to the group. Together they notice that in different situations we can feel different emotions. Then a discussion is encouraged about other words that can describe the same feelings (e.g. for sad – depressed, disappointed, angry...).

**3. Empathic situations (10')** - The facilitator explains the activity: Each student receives a sheet of paper with a description of three situations. They read the situations and choose how they would react in each one. After everyone has finished, the answers are shared and appropriate actions are discussed. It is important to note that there are no "wrong" answers – the goal is to learn to better understand other people's feelings and think about different reactions.

## Attachment 2. Nonviolent Communication Workshop - Part 2. Give me your hand

**1. How do we make decisions? (15')** – participants fill out a worksheet with a table (Table 2), then exchange answers and discuss what they can and cannot influence.

**Table 2. How we make decisions**

Things I decide daily:	I can influence:	I cannot influence:

**2. Complete the story (20')** – Groups complete the story about conflicts using their needs or demands, then role-play the situations and discuss the effectiveness of the strategies.

1. *Luka and Roko are in 6th grade together. One day they agreed that they could play PlayStation together at Roko's. Luka brought with him his older friend Matej from the street who is in 8th grade and who was thrilled with the idea of joining them. After they took turns playing on the PlayStation for a while, because they only have two joysticks, Matej took one of Roko's hands and pushed him away. A fight and argument broke out over who would play next...*

*Continue the story.*

2. *Lorena and Ines often spend time together after school, thinking of and doing all sorts of fun things: riding bikes, rollerblading, playing with the dog, etc. Although they had agreed to hang out after school two days before, that day Lorena just said: "I'm going home!", to which Ines got angry and said: "Okay, if you're like that, don't even call me anymore." Lorena was hungry and tired and wanted to get home for her mom's lunch as soon as possible. She didn't understand why Ines was angry, but she didn't want to talk to her anymore...*

*Continue the story.*

**3. The King's Garden (15')** - Participants are divided into groups, with one set of participants leaving the classroom while the facilitator reads the story. Afterwards, the participants who were outside return to the classroom, and the first set retells the story to them, which is often inaccurate and with parts left out. The activity emphasizes communication, showing how information is easily distorted, parts of the story forgotten or mistranslated, and how important it is to listen clearly, formulate messages, and check for understanding.

### **King's Garden**

*A king, walking through his garden, discovered that the trees and flowers in it were withering and disappearing. The oak was withering because it was not tall and slender like a pine. The pine was drying up from grief because it could not bear fruit like a vine. And the vine was withering because it could not bloom like a rose. And then the king came across a plant - the passionflower, which was in full bloom and radiated freshness and beauty. And she whispered to him: "For me, planting me meant that you wanted me as I am. If you wanted an oak, a pine, or a rose, you wouldn't have planted me. Since I can't be anything other than what I am, I tried to be the best possible passionflower. We are all here because life needs us as we are. Otherwise, someone else would be here, not us. Each of us has our own meaning in the world, just as we are. Take another look at yourself. You can only be yourself. You don't need to be someone else. Enjoy being who you are, unique and unrepeatable, or you will wither if you are not aware of this truth." (Anonymous author)*

### **Annex 3. Workshop Nonviolent Communication - Understanding Conflict and Behavior in Conflict**

**1. Getting to know each other – How did I get my name? (20')** – Pairs discuss the meaning of their name and introduce their interlocutor to the group, with reflection on paraphrasing and active listening.

Students worked in pairs to discuss how they got their names, the meaning of their names, their nicknames, and their own feelings about them. They then presented their partner to the whole group, trying to convey what they had remembered and understood. This exercise practiced active listening and paraphrasing, as good listening involves understanding and expressing the feelings and words of another person.

**2. How do I behave in a conflict? (20')** – "Brainstorming" on the concept of conflict, grouping positive, negative and neutral concepts; discussion on aggressive, passive and assertive behavior.

The students were introduced to the concept of conflict. They brainstormed what first came to mind when they heard the word "conflict". They then grouped the concepts into negative, positive and neutral. The facilitator explained that conflicts can be opportunities, not just threats, and that the way we react determines whether a conflict will escalate or be resolved collaboratively.

**3. How I talked in conflict (30')** – Participants describe conflicts with teachers, parents and friends; slips of paper are drawn and reaction styles are discussed.

Students were divided into three groups: conflicts with teachers, parents, and friends. Each student wrote down on a post-it note how they reacted in such situations, and the notes were randomly drawn and analyzed in a circle. This exercise allowed students to examine their communication styles and consider alternatives for future conflicts.

## Annex 4. Self-confidence building workshop

### 1. I'm great.

Participants fill out worksheets on which they list their five positive traits, something they are proud of, skills/knowledge they have learned, ways they can be rewarded, non-materially, when they achieve something, what can make them laugh, what they can do to help someone. After filling out the worksheets, the facilitator initiates a discussion, asking questions such as: How was it for you to list your traits? What was the hardest and easiest thing for you? This exercise encourages self-confidence and awareness of your own strengths, and strengthens a sense of pride and personal satisfaction.

### 2. What is self-confidence?

Through a shared conversation, students present their understanding of self-confidence and cite people they consider role models in self-confidence, reflecting on their behavior, emotions, and success. The facilitator further explains the concept, if necessary, using theoretical guidelines and quotes. The activity encourages self-reflection and understanding of the role of self-confidence in personal development.

### 3. What can I do better?

Students reflect on areas they want to improve, habits, goals, academic performance, and appearance, and devise concrete ways to improve. They then assess their own level of self-confidence and share impressions of how others perceive them. The activity encourages realistic insight into personal capabilities and development needs.

## 4. Mirror with handle

Each participant draws a mirror with a handle and writes their name above it. The drawing circulates around the group, and each member writes two positive qualities of the mirror owner. When the mirror is returned, the participant writes one of their own strengths on the handle that helps them “carry the mirror”. In the final discussion, the participants reflect on how difficult it is for them to talk about their own strengths, how much praise and recognition mean to them, and from whom recognition is most important to them. The activity strengthens self-esteem, self-awareness, and group appreciation.

## 5. A letter to myself

To conclude the workshop, students write a letter to themselves expressing their desires, goals, and plans. The letters are placed in envelopes and opened after a year, or the online platform FutureMe.org can be used. This activity encourages long-term reflection on personal growth and changes in self-confidence and attitudes.

## 6. LITERATURE

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