

Nature-based integration of immigrants at Društvo Raznolikost

We are searching for project partners

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Društvo za alternativo, vrednote, okolje in dejavnosti ter botanični vrt Raznolikost (Association for alternative, values, environment and activities and botanical garden Diversity) is a non-profit NGO from Gabrovka, Slovenia.

Tax number: 56899599

Registration number: 4093330000

Volunteer-based organisation number: 9794-4093330000

PIC number: 897143689

Farm registration number MID: SI100 934688

Account number: SI56 6100 0001 5616 571

We were established in 2016 with the aim to contribute to educating the public in the fields of natural sciences, protecting the environment, cultural heritage and sustainability.

Recognizing the problems immigrants face trying to build a new life in Slovenia, we wish to offer our facilities and knowledge. Our objective is to develop the farm and land we own into a Nature-based Integration venue on a working farm, offering immigrants a chance to come into contact with the countryside, experience activities connected with farm life, learn and share skills.

1. Who we are and what we have:

Brief introduction of the staff:

The core staff of Društvo botanični vrt Raznolikost are volunteers Petra Sladek, Ahmed Ashour and Uroš Krsmanović. Our team brings together many varied skills and a lot of good energy. We are always looking forward to working with people who bring new skills and fresh ideas.

Ahmed Ashour is a native Arabic speaker. He has experience in interpretation, protection and social work and has excellent contact and communication skills and a lot of experience working with refugees and migrants.

Petra Sladek is a biologist. She conducts nature walks, workshops and lectures on gardening, arts and crafts, animal husbandry and teaches horse riding.

Uroš Krsmanović has teaching experience, mainly with preschoolers, and in providing aid to the disabled. He has experience in logistics, management and administration.

Our farm:

Društvo botanični vrt Raznolikost is registered at a farm owned by Petra Sladek. The farm is located near Gabrovka, Slovenia, in a sparsely populated area in a forest clearing. The two nearest neighbors are approximately 300 m distant. The last part of the access road is private. This guarantees privacy, peace and quiet. The farm is comprised of a farmhouse, several farm buildings and greenhouses, 5.5 ha of grassland and arable land and 11 ha of forest. It is situated at an altitude of 520 m above sea level, on a hillside facing South, giving the location a very mild microclimatic conditions.

Društvo botanični vrt Raznolikost collects and sustains a collection of wild plants from around the world, heritage crop and fruit varieties. The plant collection has been registered as a botanical garden and available for public viewing since 2006.

We also keep various species of livestock and have gained an ARK center license in 2019 for our work in breeding rare Slovenian livestock breeds.

Local name of the farm is 'Lambergar', a disambiguation of German 'sheep hill'. In past centuries people who farmed here bred sheep and grew various local fruits.

Our wish:

Our wish is to help people help themselves, to engage and empower them by offering new knowledge and skills and a taste of life in the countryside. We wish to promote sharing knowledge between members our target group and make an outreach to the wider local community. With this we aim to help people integrate by giving them a chance to slow down, adjust, learn, work together and make connections.

2. Nature-based Integration method (As explained by Anu Roverato, 2019):

Immigrant back grounded children, adolescents and their parents might lack information on different ways to move and spend time in nature, and about rights and regulations of conduct in nature (Faehnle et al. 2011). They might also be unused or afraid to spend time in nature or the countryside.

An approach to integration that has proven very successful is Nature Based Integration. This approach has been analysed by Gentin et al. and their findings are reported in 2019 in a paper titled Nature-based Integration of Immigrants in Europe: A review. The group reviewed papers on Nature-based Integration published in several European countries: Netherlands (Peters, 2010; Peters et al., 2010), Germany (Jay and Schraml, 2009), Switzerland (Germann-Chiari and Seeland,

2004; Seeland et al., 2009), United Kingdom (Curry et al., 2001), Spain (Moren-Alegret, 2008), Poland (Stodolska et al., 2017) and Finland (Leikkilä et al., 2013). The basis of the analysis has been Esser's model (1999) of social integration which can be differentiated into four forms: Structural, cultural, interactive and identificational.

Main findings according to Gentin et al.:

1. Nature and activities in the natural environment are the medium for forming bonds between the socio-cultural and physical structures of the new place of residence (interactive integration)
2. Nature and the natural environment can be seen as a medium for integration (identificational integration)
3. Nature can be an effective way of transferring cultural knowledge through providing an accessible and open Platform to observe and take part in local customs and traditions (cultural integration).
4. Equal opportunities and inclusion of immigrants in nature and outdoor recreation as well as the Planning processes of green spaces are mandatory in contributing the integration into society (structural Integration)

Also the European Commission (2016, in Gentin et al. 2019) has promoted revisiting and developing approaches for the successful integration of migrants all over Europe. One possible response to address this challenge is using nature as an arena for social integration of newcomers.

Equal access to the natural environment as well as knowledge about opportunities for outdoor recreation are the prerequisites for gaining positive effects on wellbeing and health. The natural environment should be seen as a key institution that immigrants should have equal access to, comparable to the whole healthcare system in order to get to gain the health benefits of nature.

The three pillars of Nature-based Integration:

1. Builds identity through enhancing social interaction and creation of positive place attachment.
2. Provides positive experiences through activities in nature that stimulate mentally and physically.
3. Improves capabilities through education, teaching job skills and promoting health and wellbeing.

(Pitkänen et al. 2018., Gentin et al. 2018.)

3. What we wish to do:

Main target groups:

1. All immigrants who wish to participate in Nature-based Integration activities
2. Especially children, adolescents and women

Our aim is to:

1. Provide Nature-based Integration activities to immigrants, including: nature walks, gardening, farm tourism, horse riding, workshops in arts and crafts, cooking, gardening, animal husbandry, activities for children
2. Offer our facilities to other institutions for Nature-based Integration related activities
3. Run the farm as a social business by providing jobs and housing to immigrants
4. Help bridge the gap and overcome prejudice by inviting local population and organisations to participate in our activities, co-host events and also by our participating in local events

Main aims of our activities for the immigrants are:

1. Prevent marginalization
2. Support active citizenship and equality
3. Provide opportunities to develop hobbies
4. Provide knowledge of legislation regulating the use of nature
5. Provide mental and physical benefits of spending time in nature
6. Provide learning and recreational opportunities that can bring a higher quality of life and better employability

Main aim of our activities for other organisations are:

1. To provide a venue for Nature-based Integration activities

4. Appeal for cooperation:

Cooperation is essential in Nature-based Integration, as projects are realised multi-professionally with partners from various different sectors. We are looking to cooperate with other organisations at local, national and international level. We are looking to implement projects with other organisations. We are also interested in hosting experts in various fields to hold workshops that improve capabilities of participants.

We are looking for funding to:

1. Provide 2 long term jobs for caretakers of the farm. We will employ immigrants
2. Provide services free of charge to immigrants at the farm
3. Provide services free of charge to partner organisations at the farm and at other locations
4. Perform maintenance work at the farm
5. Perform upgrades at the farm

Services we will provide at the farm:

1. Day trip destination

2. Multi-day trip destination
3. Activities on the farm
4. Holding events
5. Performing workshops

Services we will provide at locations suggested by partner organisations:

1. Workshops
2. Lectures
3. Nature walks

Maintenance needed at the farm:

1. Checking and repairing rooves of the farmhouse and two farm buildings
2. Maintaining the park area around the house

Upgrades needed at the farm:

1. Installation of heat pump to heat the farmhouse and one greenhouse
2. Installation of solar panels to heat the farmhouse and one greenhouse
3. Building another drinking water reservoir
4. Buying a yurt and setting it up as an activity space for children
5. Building an extension to the farmhouse to provide a community space for adults and two more rooms
6. Building a wooden horse stable to provide a box for each horse separately
7. Covering the 200 m of private drive-in road in asphalt for easier access and maintenance in winter.
7. Paving the area in front of the house and the path around the house