

YOUTH PARTICIPATION CATEGORY

Involving young people in environment and health issues.



Austrian adolescents clean up the country.



Children in Aalesund ...



... promote a Green City.

YOUTH ENVIRONMENT DAYS

Diana Leizinger from the Austrian „Jugend-Umwelt-Netzwerk“ (JUNE) reports.

The Youth-Environment-Days (JUTA) are a project in which young people are informed about environment and health issues within their own lived-in world. Young people who stand for our future development get involved in environment and health issues and new networks can be built up.

It is important to involve young people in their everyday world in environmental and health issues. Therefore a large youth event is a good possibility to include various approaches to environmental, health and sustainability issues.

The Youth-Environment-Days (JUTA) are an extracurricular event for young people.

This event takes place for several days every year in autumn. It is a meeting place for 200 up to 500 young people from all over Austria who are interested in environmental issues. In a relaxed atmosphere the young people concentrate on issues of sustainable development for several days. The JUTA help young people to get more involved in the environmental sector for a long-term commitment.

The JUTA in 2006 pointed out "environment and health" as main subject, which was orientated on the four Regional Priority Goals of the CEHAPE.

Goals

- to build a network: young people meet other young people who are interested in environmental and health issues and also representatives from environmental organizations or health sector
- to inform young people about environmental and health issues and additionally to stimulate a discussion about these
- not only to discuss environmental and health problems but also to find ways how environmental and health issues can be put into practice
- to help young people to be critical, to get communication skills and to learn team work; a big aim was to try to make young people more and more to critical, mature and democratically trained personalities.

Activities

The JUTA 2006 were held from the 11th to the 14th October in Vienna.

- There were various workshops (50 workshop-partners and 10 workshops focusing on health issues), excursions, sports, creative activities, and discussions
- Workshop examples were "Helping Hand" (Youth Red Cross), "Vegetarian & Vegan" (Vegan Association), "Loud noise is the sound of other people" (Vienna EPA), "A healthier dorsum" (Sports Club Vienna), "Climate Scenarios" (Climate Alliance)
- About 20 to 30 environmental organizations or organizations and institutions from the sustainability sector and from the health sector attended
- More than 500 young people participated in the JUTA 2006
- Young people are already strongly involved in the planning and organization of the event. This is a main reason why the JUTA are so successful

Results

A broad network between like-minded young people themselves and a network between young people and environmental, health and sustainability institutions or organizations could be built up. The JUTA are a well known youth event which take place annually.

Youth-Environment-Days could take place in other European countries as well as there could be an international event, the "European-Youth-Environment-Days" with a main focus on environmental and health issues.

This would improve the network of the European environmental education sector and the network of young people in Europe who are interested in environmental and health issues. ♦

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GREEN CITY AALESUND

Christine Rørvik from the municipality of Aalesund describes the project.

Green cities contribute to set extra focus on the environment and by our different projects we also include children's health and to care for the environment. We try to make the children participate in our projects and take their wishes and attitudes about the environment seriously.

Aalesund is working towards becoming the 7th Green City of Norway. Involving children of all ages is an important aspect of the project. Schools and kindergartens have projects about the environment, and the municipality is bound to put focus on environment, and try to encourage the children of the city to participate in the project.

In the year 2000 the "Ecoagents" started the project with the Green Cities. Since then many large cities in Norway have worked with this project, cities such as Oslo, Trondheim to mention a few.

The Ecoagents' eight demands of a Green City are:

- Children have a right to clean air
- Children have a right to clean water
- Children have a right to a clean environment
- Children have a right to green areas in their communities
- Children have a right to climb trees
- Children have a right to safe bicycle paths
- Children have a right to experience the joys of nature like their parents did before them
- Children have a right to green kindergartens and green schools.

In 2007 Aalesund has started the project of working towards becoming a Green City with projects that involves the children, and the finale is on the 8th of June when the Minister of the Environmental Department comes to Aalesund to certificate us as a Green City.

Until then numerous projects are going on in the schools and kindergartens in Aalesund.

Goals

Aalesund wants to be able to say with pride on the 8th of June that we take children's environmental wishes seriously. We want to encourage schools and kindergartens to set focus on the environment, and the municipality will take its responsibility to work towards realization of the 8 demands of the Ecoagents.

Activities

"The Children's Eight Wishes": We sent out over 350 posters to all the 49 kindergartens and to all the schools and classes in Aalesund. All the wishes will be concluded into eight shared wishes for their city.

The children's city council, 14th of May: Three of the children's shared wishes will be cases to debate in a children's city council, where three children from each school participate as politicians, to find solutions for their wishes. The mayor of the city will be the chairman and the politicians are invited to come.

Adoption of a wood/area: We want to share some of the responsibility with the children of the city. The kindergartens and the schools can adopt an area or wood and will receive an "adopting" paper which will include some criteria for what they will take care of and focus on.

Recycled city: We wanted to make houses from Aalesund of recycled materials. Each class will make three houses from the city of Aalesund. This will be a part of an exhibition that will be shown on the 8th of June.

Walk to school project: We want to encourage more children to walk or cycle to school. This have a health factor for the kids but it also means more secure school areas when less parents drive their children in front of the school building.

Environmental prize: The green city project in Aalesund sent an application to the politicians for 20.000 Norwegian kroner. This will be used to inspire and reward the kindergartens and schools. Five thousand will go to one kindergarten, one primary school, one junior high and one high school.

The Green City Day, 8th of June: This day we invite over 500 children to a place called "Borgundgavlen", which is a museum area with a great outdoor environment. The minister of our Environmental department, Helen Bjørnøy, will participate and certificate Aalesund as a green city. From that day on our work will continue, that is our promise to the Ecoagents.

We wish for this project to set extra focus on the environment and be able to take the children's wishes for a green city seriously. ♦

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WASTE IN WATER HURTS OUR HEALTH

Adnana Mihaela Pătrășcoiu from the Secondary School from Sf. Gheorghe describes the project.

Children found out by themselves how important the quality of drinking water is for their own healthiness. They shared the results of their research with people of their community and people throughout the Danube Delta region.

This project built on the experience gained in two previous projects: "Together for a clean Delta" (2005) and "Let's present our local community!" (2006) convinced us that the quality of drinking water is a problem in the Danube Delta and definitely in some other regions.

Thus we considered the project a good opportunity for the children in our school not only to continue their research on the local environment but to try to make the entire local community aware of the importance of clean water for our health.

Goals

- Make young people aware of how environmental problems affect their own well-being
- Encourage them to become active for improving the living conditions in their communities
- Give them a voice within their communities and in the European public

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- Make them aware that they form part of the European Community, of parallels and differences in living conditions of young people throughout Europe and of the possibilities of networking at an European level.

Activities

- Research activities on how waste in the water influences the quality of drinking water and thus the healthiness: measurements of the quality of the water and soil
- Joint activities with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (DDBRA) representatives
- Interviews with the employees of the meteorological station
- Interview with the doctor in the village
- Making a short video (5-10 minutes) about what children found out.

Results

- Children will become aware of the importance of clean water
- The results of children's work regarding the quality of our water will motivate the other countries along the Danube River to maintain clean water
- The local community will improve the living conditions.

The Danube is a European river and we all must work together to preserve a clean and healthy water. ♦