

PRESS RELEASE

The SEA Dropie Center for Practical Environmental Education will undergo a revolutionary transformation

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Environmental education has a firm place in the structure of the Slovak Environment Agency (SEA) practically since its inception. It has experienced the phases of expansion and building a network of state centers of environmental education, but also the phases of stagnation and the search for its role and mission in today's world. Thanks to the passionate employees of SEA and the support of Norwegian partners, with the transformation of the Dropie Center, the agency can become a leader in informal environmental education in Slovakia.

Practical and experiential environmental education and training of a wide target group is the main mission of SEV SEA Dropie (SEV – center for environmental education). It was created by the transformation of the rescue station of the bearded bustard in 1992 and until 2010 the visitors even had the opportunity to see the bustard in the resort. It was part of the SEA network of environmental education centers and today it is the only residence center of the SEA. *"Time and long-term non-investment in the center have also affected its current state. We need to reduce this debt and gradually move forward. In cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment, it was possible to set an ambitious and lively concept for the further development of this center by transforming it into a model center for climate change. It will be important not only for the region, but for the whole of Slovakia,"* said Michal Maco, General Director of SEA.

Since the original focus of the program offer on the protection of the bearded bustard and its habitats, thanks to various projects, the program offer has expanded to include the issue of agricultural landscape protection in the context of climate change. Finances from foreign partners should aid in the reconstruction of the center to the so-called Living Lab Dropie. *"In the context of the SK-Climate Program, the Living Lab project in Dropie has a specific position, not only because it is the only predefined project within the program. The project aims to support a systematic approach to environmental education and training, the integration of practical examples of measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change."*

It is gratifying that foreign partners from the Kingdom of Norway from contributing countries will be involved in the implementation of individual activities, namely the Norwegian Bjerknnes Center for Climate Research and the city of Trondheim," explained Denis Knotka from the Environmental Programs and Projects Section of the Ministry of the Environment.

The importance of a healthy agricultural landscape is crucial in the ongoing climate change situation. Local mayors, farmers, and various non-governmental organizations are also aware of this, thanks to which the scope and reach of SEV Dropie extend beyond the fence of the area to the entire region of Dolný Žitný ostrov. On the occasion of the start of cooperation in the joint initiative for the project, all actors and stakeholders met at the opening event on 15 June in SEV Dropie. *"Thanks to Norwegian partners, SEV Dropie is starting a new phase today. In the project, we count on cooperation with schools, kindergartens, universities, local governments, and other stakeholders. It is high time to change our attitudes towards the environment. Because when you are not part of the solution, you become part of the problem. I believe that together we will be part of the right solutions and decisions in the ongoing climate change,"* concludes Katarína Vajliková, head of SEV SEA Dropie.

Project "Climate change and environment education center in Dropie supported for additional demonstration measures and educational programs"

The Climate change and environment education centre (Living Lab) in Dropie benefits from a € 1 200 000 grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants and Norway Grants.

The project has been co-financed from the State Budget of the Slovak Republic in the amount of 180 000 €.

The aim of the project is to create a complex educational centre that shall ensure the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills needed to promote and implement climate mitigation and adaptation measures and community outreach in action. One of the most important missions of Living Lab shall be filling the gap of providing the relevant, digestible information, knowledge and skills to negotiate, plan and implement necessary mitigation and adaptation measures for relevant stakeholders on municipal level.

If you want to know more about programmes and projects financed by the EEA and Norway Grants in Slovakia, visit www.eegrants.sk or www.norwaygrants.sk .