

1st European forestpedagogics congress

Summary of results

The development of forestpedagogics in Europe was, main topic of the first international forestpedagogics convention which took place in the forest environmental centre of the Hungarian town Sopron (Ödenburg) from September 20th to 22nd 2006.

Representatives from eight European countries introduced their concepts and discussed the chances of forestpedagogics in a Europe growing together.

A "career in the administration" certified **Dr. Albert Knieling**, head of department in the Austrian life ministry, to forestpedagogics in his lecture "forestpedagogics as a part of the European forest policy". So far forestpedagogics is represented on pan-European only indirectly as a component of few resolutions and at UN level not at all. On an EU-level it is mentioned in the forest action plan for the years 2007-2011 and in the advice ordinance "development of rural area". At a national level forestpedagogics appeared in all sorts of programmes since the first mention in 1990. The forest action plan (where forestpedagogics is one of 18 prior actions) now enables the networking of forestpedagogics within the European area as well as its elaboration. The member countries have now the opportunity to realize forestpedagogical measures. This might happen within the context of national plans for the development of the rural area, for example. "We get hold of it" he appealed to the conference participants. Knieling held the opinion that the career of the forestpedagogics will go on. He critically examined the present publicity of forestpedagogics in economy and politics. Particularly concerning the information stand of political decision makers he sees the necessity to improvement. Knieling sees deficits also in the previous political lobby work, which does not exceed a regional level due to a very individual appearance of the protagonists and insufficient networking resp. organisation.

"One of the best products which the forest has"

Knieling considers forestpedagogics as "one of the best products which the forest has to provide". He recommends to increasing its power by a forced forestpedagogical education at universities, an amplified inclusion of scientific knowledge and an improved marketing. The evaluation should be an integral part of actions, politician better included and the sustainability thought emphasised more intensively.

Europe network forestpedagogics

Thomas Baschny, head of the forestpedagogics unit at the Austrian life ministry, introduced a concrete attempt of networking European forestpedagogics. The Europe network forestpedagogics founded in 2005 aims at extending the Europe-wide forestal knowledge transfer on the new one as well as the growing field of forestpedagogics. For the quality assurance uniform definitions and forestpedagogical standards as well as the further establishment of the forestpedagogics as a forestal office task are striven for. All European states shall be included into this network. It is aim to reach all interested forestpedagogues of the European states through the representatives of the respective forest authorities. The home page www.waldpaedagogiknetwork.eu and a newsletter "forestpedagogics live" appearing bimonthly since September 2006 shall be used for the networking.

Host Hungary: Long tradition

Dr. Petö, president of the Hungarian forest organization, referred to the long tradition of the work in the field of educational work in Hungary's woods. at the opening of the conference. Already 1902 a "day of the bird" was introduced which then has been developed to a "day of the woods". Now it has arisen to a "week of the forest" which has been opened on the occasion of the forestpedagogics meeting in 2006 in Sopron. Today, Hungary has 23 forest schools in which trainees and teachers shall be sensitized to the interests of the forest.

Forestpedagogics as an integral part of the Hungarian teacher-training

Since 1997 the forestpedagogics is an obligatory component of the teacher-training at Győr university. Prof. Dr. Maria Kovats-Nemeth introduced the education conception there *In the context of this Project*(which are carried out predominantly at a forest school -time frame 60 hours) the studying have to learn and prove theoretical and practical knowledge. Aim of the environmental education in the forest is to recognized that man as part of the nature should live in harmony with himself and its environment. Environmental education shall not only provide environmental knowledge ut also a culture of behaviour and a health consciousness which shall make it possible to take over responsibility.

Austria: Every schoolchild once with the forest warden in the woods

Thomas Baschny explained the aim of the life ministry in Vienna that every Austrian schoolchild once takes part at a guided tour in the forest with the forest warden. Since the amendment of the forestry act in the year 2002 forestpedagogics is established legally as an education order for the authority organs. Forestpedagogical activities are already promoted through the ordinance development of rural area since 2000. Pre-condition is the proof of a corresponding qualification through the forestpedagogics certificate which can be obtained in a modular education since 2003. At present, there are 800 certified forest peoples in Austria, which are organized for the large part in the organization "forestpedagogics in Austria" (www.waldpaedagogik.at). They offer a lot of guided tours in the woods. Moreover, there are 15 forest schools with structural facilities. Fritz Ganster, president of the Austrian forest wardens, judged the forestpedagogics briefly and obviously as "incredibly". To use the forest for the education is a task for which the forestry and the forest wardens shall take on the responsibility. He sees the most important challenge of the future for the forest wardens in public relations generally.

Germany: various federal offers

Due to the federal structure in Germany there is a very versatile offer. At first **Klaus Radestock** (house of the forest of the Mark Brandenburg) gave a short summary of the history of forestpedagogics across federal borders before he discussed (out of the view of the forest peoples working group (BDF)) the concept, the leading targets, principles, target groups, suppliers and supply categories of this new branch "forestal environmental education" He closed its explanations with a view of coming tasks and also introduced the corresponding demands of the BDF on politics, administration and science. The BDF position on German forestpedagogics is published on the internet page www.waldpaedagogik.org and in the newsletter "forestpedagogics live".

The three core messages of the forestpedagogics in Germany introduced the author of this article **Prof. Robert Vogl** (U.o.a.S. Weihenstephan):

1st Forest makes school: With curriculum oriented offers forest wardens contribute to convey the curriculum contents on the forest clearly and effectively. In several federal states it is the aim to invite every pupil as a guest to the forest warden i. In some federal states new offers in the afternoon in the context of the whole-day schools make repeated woods visits of the pupil possible within a school year. As some studies show (BOLEY 1998. HÄFNER 2002. KIENER 2004. LETTIERI 2004) the stay in the forest promotes or the everyday school life

important competences like creativity, concentration, curiosity, curiosity as well as the social behaviour. Woods could help to counteract the deficits established at school examinations like the Pisa studies.

2nd sustainability: At the latest since the 2005 started UN decade "education for sustainable development" the sustainability topic is more current than ever. The woods and its lasting forestal management are a graphic example that thinking in long-terms can work. Moreover, one can at the example the woods very clearly show the networking of economy, ecology and society

3rd "Doctor Forest": the health-related performances of our woods are of growing significance in our aging societies. The performances of "Doctor Forest" reach from the curative effect of the plants from cleaning of air and water up to increased movement in easing surroundings.

Representatives of different German federal states presented the respective country offer after the conference: **Prof Robert Vogl (Bavaria)**, **Hermann Dilling (Hesse)**, **Peter Rabe (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)**, **Roland Migende (North Rhine-Westphalia)** and **Dr. Ralf Plugge (Rhineland-Palatinate)** explained the current state of the forestal educational offer.

Switzerland: cradle of the forestpedagogics

The emergence of the forestpedagogics in Switzerland described **Franz Lohri (SILVIVA)**. At the beginning of the 1980s years reports provided a terrible vision about a feared "forest dieback". After the WWF has initiated an environmental and forest education at that time, the forestpedagogical education as a cooperation project of different associations was brought into being under the name "CH forest weeks". Today this organisation is still active as "SILVIVA"; it offers (two to three-day) didactic further educations for forest wardens as well as a 25-day certificate course "nature related environmental education". In addition there are different one-day seminars and the offer "education workshop mountain forest".

Lohris fundamental statements concerning the forestpedagogics got a lot of attention on the part of the conference participants. So he sees the meaning of the forestal forestpedagogics primarily in the possibility of showing sustainability and to implement the "principle hope" into young people at the example of the woods. This "most important message" of the forest peoples can be comprehended only as of the age of puberty. The target group of the pupils of the 2nd to 4th classes in this respect represents a well attainable but not so receptive to this forestal core messages target group. Furthermore Lohri noticed that forestpedagogics would selflessly be operated for others unlike public relations (which is always obtained by itself); despite selflessness forestpedagogics is the best public relations for the woods.

Dorothea Häberling, leader of the Zurich forest schools, introduced the forestpedagogical offers founded 20 years ago to the city of Zurich. Every class is invited into the woods every year once. A twelve-headed team consisting half of natural scientists and half of educationalists looks after the pupil for free at five studying places. The three forest schools and two mobile studying places are being visited by 12,000 children every year. The Zurich forest schools are, facilities of the "green city of Zurich" in which all former "green" offices are combined. This favours the stronger cooperation of "green" training providers and the grouping of its educational offers.

Bulgaria: forestpedagogics at the "end of Europe"

Simon Ten Kate, forestal management consultant from Sofia, presented Bulgaria as a far away country but also as one that is very rich of woods, lumber and nature. The people would therefore still have a good relation to nature. Nevertheless one already established in

the beginning 1989's occasionally forestpedagogical offers like woods camps. Today there is a forest information centre nearby Sofia in the Witoscha mountains. Ten Kate lamented that from a state side hardly impulses arose for the development of the forestpedagogics and furthermore the forestal education is carried out without an educational additional qualification. The nature administration which promotes nature educational offers is more active, however.

Latvia: forestpedagogics of StoraEnso

Leide Villkriste, Latvian PR manager of StoraEnso, presented the forestpedagogics project "school in the woods - woods in school" carried out by their company. The offer aims at teacher or pupils as multipliers. It aims to illustrate all academic topics also in the woods and to make woods topics more attractive through actions with "additional sympathy-getter" and with the help of instructional game CDs.

Poland: national forest, associations and national parks offer forestpedagogics

Wictor naturski of the forestry office Kattowice showed that the state-owned forest in Poland (80% of the woods) offers a breadth forestpedagogical offer in Poland. In 202 woods teaching rooms and 25 environmental centres as well as at 688 nature trails in the forest 500,000 pupils are led in the wood every year. It is a prior-ranking aim to communicate the multifunctional forestry. Besides state forest wardens who offer the large part of the forestpedagogical events NGO's and national parks are involved at such offers.

Slovenien:

Hedvica Jenicic (state forestry administration Maribor) puts experiencing into the centre of the Slovenian educational offers in the woods. Playing drawing useage of all senses,, but also meals are used to encourage the Slovenien to educational offers in the woods. Every year, about 30,000 pupils are led in the woods by forest peoples (recently also trained educationally), 80 educational trails complete the offer.

Andreja Senegacnik (state nature preservation administration Maribor) presented the offers on the part of the state nature preservation which are aimed at children from 3 to 14 years (nursery schools and schools).

Prospects at the end

The conference ended with a sample from the education programme of the Sopron woods environmental centre. The leader **Miklos Szabo** led the participants through the multifarious woods in immediate surroundings of the centre and presented some possible forestpedagogical activities there. The closure was A panorama view from the outlook tower in the "Burgstall" which made it possible to have a look beyond country borders over the area of the Neusiedler lake. By that the organizers of the event pointed out their Intention quite successfully.

Klaus Radestock