

School to Farm Newsletter 2

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the EU, the School to Farm project aims to create a set of place-based and gamified-STEAM activities that can be used in farms in environmental education as “out-of-school education,” which also complements formal education.

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Non-classroom spaces turn into classrooms and our classrooms are transforming into dynamic hubs of learning, where traditional subjects merge with practical insights.

Our students need to gain a holistic understanding of the world around them. Our project, which aims to achieve this, brought together our experts with the LTT activity in Greece.

02 Insights from Latvia: An Interview with Farmer Evija Skudra

Community involvements are strengthening our project. Local farmers are not just mentors; they are a part of our educational ecosystem.

For exploring the relationship between farmers, educators, families and students and understanding how these insights can shape the future of our School to Farm Project, we continued the works in Latvia with an interview.



Greetings from the heart of the School to Farm project!

As we embark on this exciting journey that connects the vibrant worlds of education and ecology, we are thrilled to bring you the latest updates from our Learning Teaching Training (LTT) activity in Thessaloniki and an insightful interview with a farmer from Latvia in our second newsletter.

Our experts recently had the privilege of participating in our Learning Teaching Training activity in the picturesque city of Thessaloniki. The event served as a melting pot of ideas, practices, and experiences from educators across borders. The Thessaloniki LTT not only broadened our horizons but also reinforced the collaborative spirit that underpins the School to Farm project. We delved into innovative teaching methods, shared successful strategies, and explored ways to enhance the integration of STEAM and place-based education into our curricula.

In this edition, we're delighted to present also an exclusive interview with a farmer from Latvia. Community involvement is an important part of our project. Local farmers are not just mentors; they are an integral part of our educational ecosystem. Evija Skudra, with hands-on experience in sustainable farming, shares their journey, challenges faced, and the invaluable lessons learned along the way.

As we progress in our School to Farm journey, we invite you to be an active participant in this transformative initiative. Whether you're a parent, educator, or community member, there are numerous ways to get involved. Your support is crucial in cultivating a generation that understands the significance of sustainability and values the connection between education and the environment.

Thank you for joining us on this exciting venture! We look forward to sharing more stories, insights, and successes in the upcoming newsletters.

Happy reading!

01 Seeds of Innovation: Thessaloniki Workshop Unleashed STEAM Power for Education

During the first week of October (02-06/10/2023), Smart Umbrella Management Solutions E.E. organized the Learning Teaching Training Activity “School to Farm” – Workshop on STEAM Farm-based Learning Approach” in Thessaloniki Greece. During the 5-day event we were excited to welcome seventeen experts from all partner countries and train them on the newly developed Modules and Lesson Plans combining STEAM Education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) and farm-based learning with diverse hands-on activities.



Each day, the participants were introduced to different Modules varying from Ecological Concepts and Problems, Gamification in the Farm, Farm Life, STEAM Applications and Prototypes, as well as Art. Among the 24 lesson plans presented, covering 48 teaching hours, experts got familiar with multiple activities they can develop with the students either in the classroom, garden or when visiting a farm.



We even had the chance of trying some of them out during the event. As part of Gamification on the Farm Module, experts engaged in the “Fruit basket game” to better understand the roles of students and the learning outcomes.





Introducing the use of Legos, participants engaged in setting up a farm and a cold storage for the STEAM Application Examples Module Made on the Farm. To further engage into STEAM approach, a machine was built and programmed to transfer fruits and vegetables from the field to the storage.

Moving on to Automation and Robotics, participants had the chance to get familiar to a BBC micro:bit and use coding to take measurements on soil moisture. To better comprehend the importance of technology in farming, experts used Legos and programming to build a products' sorting machine that can automatically separate the edible items from the damaged ones, depending on the features given (Module for Creating STEAM Prototypes for Ecological Problems on the Farm).

These are just some examples of activities from the modules we are working on to make available to you.



In the framework of the training, we hosted Dr. Anastasios Kollias, a university professor specialized on STEAM Education, who presented the importance of teaching with a STEAM approach and the ways to successfully implement it.



Each Module and Lesson Plan was separately evaluated by all experts and results are currently processed so that the final products will achieve the highest possible quality. As we continue to exchange ideas and methodologies, we are excited about the positive impact this cross-cultural fertilization will have on our classrooms and farms.

The final Curriculum will be available on our platform soon so stay tuned!!!



BY ELEME EVGENIA

My name is Evgenia Eleme, and I am a Project Manager working for Smart Umbrella Management Solutions E.E.

I am a graduate of the Business Administration Department of the American College of Thessaloniki (Anatolia) and I hold an MSc in Banking and Finance of Stirling University, Scotland. Through my professional years I have worked extensively in drafting and managing investment projects funded under the Community Support Framework & the National Strategic Reference Framework. In my current position,

I have worked in more than 10 European projects on diverse subject areas such as school education, social inclusion, gender equality, green transition, social entrepreneurship, and innovation. I love taking dance lessons and reading literature but most of all I enjoy getting to know other cultures through their gastronomy.



02 02 Insights from Latvia: An Interview with Farmer Evija Skudra in June 2023

When we presented the international projects implemented at Grundzale Elementary School to the parents, especially the "School to Farm" project, farmer Evija Skudra and her family (her children attend our school) were very interested and strongly supported the implementation of such a project and the development of materials.

Here is an interview with Evija Skudra.

1. Please introduce yourself and your farm!

My name is Evija Skudra, I am an organic cattle farmer, and I currently have 70 producing cows on my farm, I have been working for 8 years, together with my husband and children. It is a family farm or business.

And do you like what you do?

Yes, because if you didn't like it, you wouldn't do it. It has to be inside you because you can't work with an animal if you don't like it. The animal feels it, and then nothing works.

And how big is your farm?

We have about 300 hectares of land: part of it is pasture, and then in the trial we also started to grow cereals so that the animals have their own cereals, and the rest we make hay or produce silage.

Would you be interested in on-farm training if school children ever came to see?

Yes, that's the time to do it, because children are more sedentary, on computers and TVs, and they don't know what happens in real life, where the milk, the meat, everything that we consume actually comes from. It would also be interesting for them.

Also in the countryside, not just in the city?

Yes, because it seems that if you live in the country and you don't have animals and you haven't seen how it happens, then there is no difference between being a country kid and a city kid.



2. What is your experience of using your farm to educate students?

I don't have any experience in educating students myself, but we educate and work with our own children, and children of relatives; there are opportunities to come and work.

What difficulties might arise in the learning process?

Children might also have difficulties - there are different children: there are those who don't listen, those who don't hear, those who are bothered by smells and stenches, but children have to understand that these are animals, this is countryside, this is how it should be, there is mud, there is everything.

The other difficulty might be that the animal might be afraid of children making noise, because animals are not used to strange people, to strange, sudden movements, they usually live in peace, in their own enclosure. If they were to meet strangers on a regular basis, they would be used to it.

There could also be a problem with the parents because they feel that if they have not been there themselves, they would think it is dangerous and they might not let their own in. Safety considerations have to be thought about.



3. Do you think that Latvia is a suitable country for cross-sectoral (agriculture and education) relations/cooperation?

It is certainly suitable, as there were agricultural traineeships at the technical school in the past (30 years ago). When I was a kid, we even had internees coming to our farm, working, without having to pay for it.

But now would you be willing to take on an intern?

I was thinking about this just yesterday. There's a big amount of work with them, you have to work there, he comes and he doesn't know anything, because city kids also come to the technical colleges and they think they're going to be vets, live in a clinic, work with little dogs and cats, but he comes and he's shocked that he has to work with a big animal, he's scared of cows. But to become a vet, he has to go through everything. The trainees have to be trained; owners of the farm have to be behind them all the time.

Probably I would take an intern, at least something different; we have to teach the new ones somehow.

How will they otherwise find out, if not by working, if we don't let them on our farm?

It is hard to let go and trust. It always seems that you as a farmer or professional will do it better than trainee, you will do it faster. And you will be responsible. When you take on trainees or new workers, you're expecting to have to put in the work, and then maybe it will be worth later.



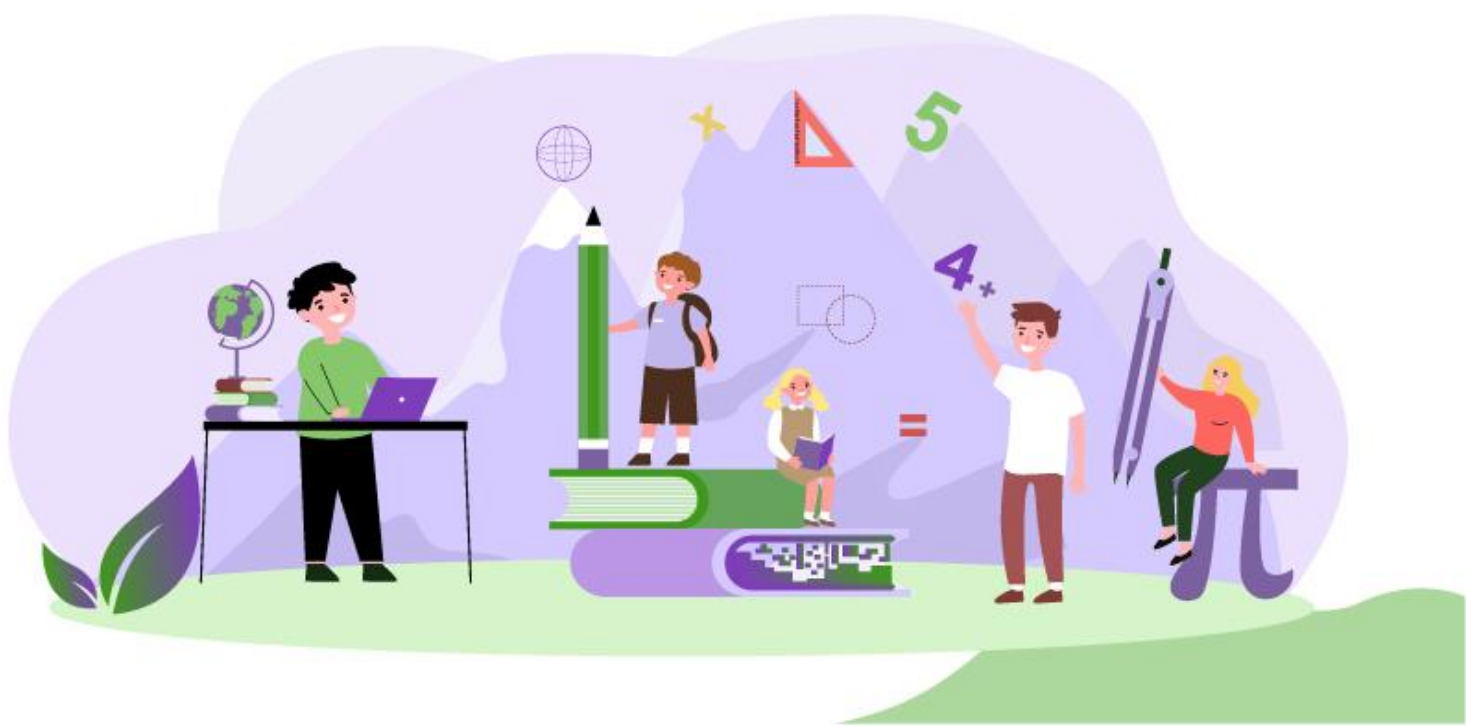
4. The Erasmus+ project "School to Farm" aims to use farms as an ecological and pedagogical environment for the comprehensive study of STEAM subjects. Do you think this will help to bridge the gap in agricultural knowledge/permaculture etc.? What advantages could it bring?

Children would probably actually see how it works if they were present or spent an hour on the farm in the morning when all the work (cleaning, feeding, inspecting) is done, so they would get a better idea of how farming works, how an animal should be treated and cared for, how it happens in real life. You just don't see a beautiful animal in the field, and a milk parcel in the shop. Pupils can see how the milk gets there, how the meat gets on the shelves, how we farmers tame them so that we can work with them normally ourselves.

Thank you for the interview!

BY DACE KALNIŅA

My name is Dace Kalniņa and I am a teacher at a small countryside school - Grundzāle Elementary school - for more than 20 years. I am a teacher of Latvian language and literature and art of theater; I am a librarian and an international project manager. We have implemented already almost 10 international projects, starting with school exchange projects continuing with learning mobilities projects for teachers and now implementing KA220. I am also participant in NGO "Grundzāles skolai" - I am a coordinator of projects connected with youth work. At my free time I play volleyball for already 35 years and I like to travel and be outdoors - work in garden, go skiing, skating, camping, swimming.





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