



nadácia
ekopolis

VÝROČNÁ SPRÁVA

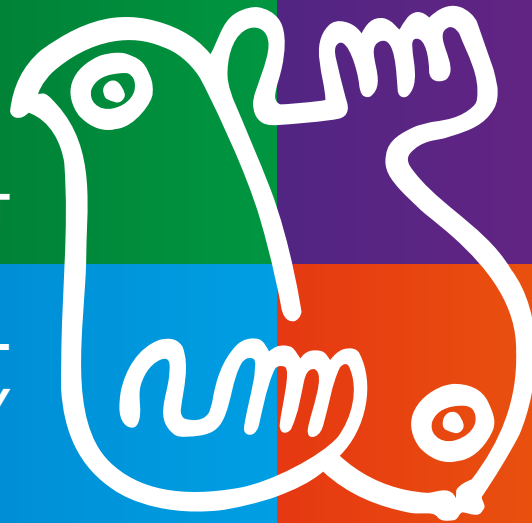
2021

ANNUAL REPORT



ENVIRONMENT

**CIVIL
SOCIETY**



**SMART
CITIES**

**BY
BICYCLE!**

DEAR FRIENDS

From February 24, 2022, the world has changed again

At the time of writing these introductory words in the Annual report of Ekopolis for the past year, at the beginning of March 2022, our lives are turned upside down. Much of what should be written here and what we would like to share feels somehow inappropriate from February 24, shadowed by the reality, into which we are waking up and falling asleep since that day.

What we could not and did not want to imagine has happened - in the close vicinity of the European Union, Russia has launched an open war against Ukraine. Against a state which, by the decision of its own people, has freely chosen to follow the way that the countries ruled by the former Soviet Union chose in the 90's. A peaceful Europe underestimated the threat of an aggressive Russia, which, under Putin's leadership, opened a new chapter in our history. The Ekopolis Foundation has been operating in Slovakia since 1991. Throughout our years of work, we have focused on strengthening well working partnerships in communities. We have supported small and large projects that have addressed real challenges that we as a society and civilization cannot avoid.

The year 2021 was not different, we write about our main activities on the following pages. At the moment, however, what lies ahead of us is more important. At the Ekopolis Foundation, we support and we are part of the efforts to ensure that the history of the first half of the 20th century never repeats again. We stand on the side of democracy and elementary human ethics. Today, these values are embodied in suffering Ukraine.

*Peter Medved'
March 2022*

TOGETHER FOR PEOPLE, NATURE AND FUTURE.

Since 1993, the Ekopolis Foundation has been creating space for efforts to protect the environment and people's growing interest in how we can realistically help our country. It has been supporting community projects for a long time - since its inception it has supported more than 3 611 projects of non-governmental organizations, local governments and civic initiatives in the amount of more than 22,5 mil. eur.

"Our vision is a country in which people are aware of their responsibility for the state and development of the environment. It is the citizens who are involved in improving civil society, have the guts to take a critical stance and act in such a way that future generations also have a quality life. "

Through grant programs, it seeks to bring new ideas, innovative programs and, above all, local solutions to today's environmental problems. It supports projects and activities of non-governmental non-profit organizations in cities and local communities throughout Slovakia.

The real value and benefits of these projects for people and the environment are incalculable.

**IN 2021, WE SUPPORTED
137 PROJECTS,
TOTAL IN € 1 498 026.**

Together with the foundations in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania, we are members of an international consortium Environmental Partnership Association, also we are a member of the European Cyclists Federation, the most influential cycling associations in Europe, as well as European Greenways Association, an association that is dedicated to the creation, promotion and propagation paths for non-motorized transport in Europe. We belong to Civilscape, an international network to support the implementation of the European Land Convention, and we are partners in the Fair Trade initiative, which promotes fair trade ideas.

OUR PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS ENVIRONMENT

PLANTING FOR THE FUTURE

In the new initiative Planting for the Future the Ekopolis Foundation has combined efforts to protect the environment, long-term support for community projects and growing people's interest in how we can realistically help our country. Our goal is to return the trees to the settlements of the open country, wherever necessary. In particular, in localities where a functioning green infrastructure is missing or disrupted. An important part of the Planting for the Future initiative is the support of local communities - active municipalities, schools, civic associations. The initiative includes educational, informational and demonstration activities to raise awareness of the importance of trees in the country.

In 2021, we supported a total of 28 plantings, involving 750+ volunteers and planting a total of 1250 trees in places where it makes sense.

On October 20, 2021, we launched a new initiative Planting for the Future in the village of Trstené pri Hornáde. The Minister of the Environment Ján Budaj also took auspices over the initiative, and especially the Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia and the President Zuzana Čaputová.

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GREEN BELT

The Green Belt grant program supports active citizens and the sustainable care of environmentally valuable local sites that serve the general public, promote nature conservation and sustainability.

In the 15th year of the Green Oasis programme, twenty excellent ideas and green solutions from all over Slovakia received a grant. A total of 166 applications, 12 winners determined by the jury and 8 projects selected by public vote, which was attended by more than 37,000 people. Through this programme, the Ekopolis Foundation and Slovnaft have been systematically supporting the creation of green cities and community cooperation for fifteen years. Also in 2021, it supported projects in the amount of 60 thousand euros.

TOP Project 2021: The planting of a fruit alley in Zálesie came closest to the theme of the 15th year "We are planting the future". The fruit alley is planted by the cycle route that connects Malinovo - Zálesie - Most pri Bratislave and leads all the way to Bratislava. Volunteers returned 130 trees of native species to the open country. They planted them where they were missing the most. Along with maintaining biodiversity, trees are also an important landscape element. That is why we awarded the title of Top Project 2021 to volunteers from Zálesie.

GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Practical help for good ideas and useful changes, connecting people and building friendly neighborly relations, this is the goal of the Good Neighbor program, which is focused on the surroundings of the Slovnaft refinery in Vrakuňa, Podunajské Biskupice, Rovinka and Ružinov. The main partner of the Dobrý sused program is SLOVNAFT, a.s.

During 2021, 4 grant rounds were opened, which were continuously evaluated until the grant funds in the amount of 30,000 euros were used up. A total of 34 applications were received, of which 14 grants received support. A total of 179 volunteers participated in the projects.

TREE OF THE YEAR 2021

The aim of the competition is to draw attention to the beauty and value of trees and to arouse people's interest in the environment.

In the 19th year of the survey, up to 22,613 voters decided on the final ranking of winners. The crown and the title Tree of the Year 2021 won the Weeping European Beech from Starý Smokovec, which gained 4833 votes in a public vote.

As part of the survey, we again managed to make the trees visible to the public at events during the summer. This year we also supported the successful planting of an orchard at the historic stud farm in Kopčany, where the locals planted the original species of varieties from the

region, such as pears, apples, mulberries and hazelnuts. During February 2022, Weeping European Beech Slovakia represented Slovakia in the international competition European Tree of the Year. Umbrella from High Tatras finished in an admirable fifth place with more than 37,000 votes.

COMPETITION “FOR WATER” TRANSFORMED INTO “FOR SOIL” PROGRAMME

The aim of the For Water competition was to contribute to responsible and efficient water management over 5 years through nature-friendly measures and to connect young talented people with those who are looking for solutions. The Minister of the Environment, Ján Budaj, also sponsored the competition

The last finals of the PRE VODU competition in front of the members of the expert jury took place online on December 10, 2020. On January 27, 2021, we solemnly announced the winners of the 5th year online.

Following the end of the For Water competition, Nestlé, as the main partner, decided to transform the competition. The Ekopolis Foundation in partnership with Nestlé Slovakia and in cooperation with the Partnership Foundation (Czech Republic) in 2021 began to map the environment in order to make visible the concept of regenerative agriculture in Slovakia. The long-term goal is to support the debate on sustainable land use and measures to increase its resilience to the

negative effects of climate change. The context of the whole program is the goal of decarbonization of Europe and Slovakia by 2050.

“For the soil, the program focuses on a new concept called regenerative agriculture, which offers ways to improve the structure and fertility of the soil, and thus the country's resilience to climate instability.”

The aim of the first stage of the program was to start mapping the environment with the intention of raising the profile of the concept of regenerative agriculture in Slovakia.

LIVING TRAILS

The aim of the program is to support the sensitive renewal of the Slovak landscape and increase its recreational and cognitive functions. Since 2008, financial support has focused on the restoration and improvement of tourist marked trails and public spaces used by tourists.

The Living Trails grant program, implemented by the Ekopolis Foundation thanks to the support of the Horalky from Sedita, helped six localities in 2021. Local volunteers renewed the markings on more than 90 km of hiking and biking trails, repaired two wells and added five renovated shelters and rest areas for tourists.

PROTECTION OF BIODIVERSITY IN VEOLIA SLOVAKIA AREAS

In the second year of bird monitoring in the Rakytovce WWTP area, up to 40 species of birds were recorded. At

the same time, 30 of them also nest here according to the methodology of the Slovak Ornithological Society / BirdLife Slovakia. A novelty is the nesting of storks.

The Rakytovce WWTP site is an example of good practice in the EU LIFE BooGI-BOP international project, which develops the concept of Biodiversity-Friendly Company Premises (BOP). The Slovak partner of the project is the Ekopolis Foundation.

Ekopolis Foundation, Stredoslovenská vodárenská prevádzková spoločnosť a.s. and the city of Banská Bystrica also joined forces and invited the public to a planning meeting entitled “We plan meadow modifications for people and nature” in the Družby - Fončorda locality in Banská Bystrica.

LIFE BOOGI BOP

Design of corporate premises supporting biodiversity. Biodiversity Oriented Premises (BOPs) support local plant and animal species, become part of the green infrastructure in the area and are more attractive to employees and visitors to the company.

In 2021, the project included a series of 3 online interviews with representatives of inspirational projects linking residential construction with biodiversity, as well as an online seminar for plant managers, which sought to present the potential and basic principles of biodiversity-friendly business premises.

DARE 2 CONNECT

The project was implemented by 11 partners from 8 countries. In the project we used modern technologies of remote (satellite) exploration of the Earth to map the ecological interconnectedness of habitats in the Green Belt and to evaluate its potential for ecosystem services. These are important parameters, expressing both the territory's ability to contribute to the increase of biodiversity, which is important for the protection of life on Earth, and the territory's ability to provide the values necessary for human existence (such as clean air, health, water, food, leisure and pod.) ", says Ján Roháč, project communication manager.

The project mapped these aspects and made recommendations on how to strengthen the ecological connectivity and ecosystem services of the area and what needs to be done at the level of public administration and management.

EKOALARM

Introduction of separate collection in schools and raising awareness of proper sorting and waste prevention.

In 2018, more than 5,000 baskets were donated to the first 190 schools. Due to the pandemic, the project was interrupted, but in 2021 it started again. We were looking for 380 primary and secondary schools from all over Slovakia, which obtained containers for sorting waste into each class. We brought interactive online training implemented by experienced lecturers.

The project is financially supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds. The amount of the non-repayable financial contribution is € 197,144.21

TESCO AREAS FAVORABLE TO BIODIVERSITY

The project aims to improve the conditions for biodiversity at four selected Tesco department stores.

The Tesco chain cares about beautifying and enhancing the immediate surroundings of the stores it operates in Slovakia. In such selected areas, it combines the support of biodiversity with the aesthetics of natural design. The changes will benefit nature, please visitors and provide them with interesting information.

Emphasis will be placed on the protection and promotion of native plant and animal species. The changes will help to functionally improve the environment of 4 stores: in Humenné, Partizánske, Prešov and Trnava.

OUR OTHERS PROGRAMMES:

LEARNING LANDSCAPES (LELA)

The Learning Landscapes (LeLa) project develops the concept of the unique event "LE: NOTRE Landscape Forum", which provides an opportunity for informal discussion, creative interaction and dialogue between landscape architects, landscape architects, and other professionals during workshops and excursions.

From 9 to 18 October 2021, students and teachers from

the Institute of Landscape Architecture FZKI SPU in Nitra took part in an intensive creative workshop in Gdańsk, Poland, which takes place as part of the international project Erasmus + Learning Landscapes (LeLa). The workshop is also attended by students from STU in Bratislava and the universities in Zagreb and Gdańsk. The educational program was led by teachers from Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Germany and the Netherlands with interesting input from local experts in the field of art, architecture, urbanism, tourism and other areas.

BIODIVERSITY IN THE CITY

In cooperation with Deutsche Telekom Services Europe Slovakia s.r.o. A useful object - the Living Wall - was added to the Nova Cvernovka area during the volunteer day. It serves as a separating element between the gardens and the renovated park, where public events also take place. Plants, shrubs, trees and flowers covering the mound will not only have an aesthetic but also a cooling function thanks to the retention and evaporation of water in the soil. These effects are desirable especially in city parks to make your stay more pleasant in the hot summer months and help the natural water cycle. The wall will be completed by stumps and dead parts of trunks and trees, which will serve as a refuge for insects.

GREENING OF MOUNTAIN HUTS IN NATIONAL PARKS OF SLOVAKIA

Project is focused on the greening of mountain huts in national parks in cooperation with the KOOR company.

CLEAN ADVANTAGE PROGRAM

Clean Advantage is Green Print's international program that supports tree planting, landscape cleaning, school projects and other environmental initiatives around the world. The Ekopolis Foundation participates in this program in cooperation with its sister foundations from the Environmental Partnership Association, and in Slovakia we have been using the resources obtained from this program since 2021 for tree planting in the initiative Planting for the future.

INSPIRING WORLD CAMPAIGN 2021

This initiative is the result of cooperation with the C&A Foundation and has three main activities. These are measures for more biodiversity in different environments. In the initial phase of the project, we managed to support the greening of the J. Král Grammar School in Zlaté Moravce and produce an interesting "Eco-lab" tool for environmental education, which can be used at larger and smaller events for schools or the public. In 2021, with the support of this

project, we further developed measures for biodiversity in the Rakytovce WWTP area, such as newly established flowering meadows by a pond of rainwater.

INSPIRING FOR BIODIVERSITY

The project is supported by the Erasmus + Program and aims to create innovative adult learning tools on the importance of biodiversity. The project involves six partners from EU countries under the leadership of the German Global Nature Fund. In 2021, partners worked on the preparation of these tools, which will be completed and publicly presented in 2022.

CIVIL SOCIETY

ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND – SLOVAKIA

Active Citizens Fund – Slovakia (ACF) is a grant programme aimed at strengthening civil society, promoting active citizenship and improving the position of vulnerable groups in Slovakia.

ACF supports Slovak civic organizations in involving citizens in decision-making and public policy-making, in seeking to create better conditions for good governance, in protecting human rights and providing civic education, and in improving the position of vulnerable groups in society. Special attention is paid to young people and their participation in public events.

The Active Citizens Fund is part of the financial assistance of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to the 15 Member States of the European Union. ACF in Slovakia is managed by the Ekopolis Foundation in partnership with the Open Society Foundation of the Carpathian Foundation.

In the period 2018-2023, the ACF will distribute a total of 7.7 mil. In 17 grant calls. EUR for projects of Slovak civic organizations and will provide other support activities, e.g. training in project management, organizational development and self-financing.

In 2021, we opened 3. call for project applications and the determination to defend human rights or actively develop civil society. In the last round of calls of the ACF - Slovakia programme, a total of 235 grant applications were assessed in five priority topics. After administrative control and evaluation of applications, a total of 44 projects were selected for support.

Presentation of examples of good practice through blogs entitled "Those who left their mark."

All informations on www.acfslovakia.sk

EUROPE FOR CITIZENS - RECLAIM OUR CIVIL SPACE!

The Europe for Citizens project and the Reclaim Our Civic Space! initiative address the trend of reducing the space for NGOs in Central European countries. Through this initiative, together with partners from seven countries (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria

and Norway), we want to help connect organizations interested in this phenomenon, provide them with more information from home and abroad, as well as teach them skills on how to cooperate and how to deal with the problematic situation in respective countries.

May 20, 2021: the Reclaim! National Training as part of our new project Reclaim our civil space !. After a very long time, we finally met local activists from central Slovakia live as part of all the measures. In addition to commitment, these people also share an interest in creating a space for decent people in which to find cultural and social life. At the same time, however, these spaces are always a place of discussion and solutions to the problems that plague us as citizens. Especially in the corona period.

At the end of November, on 24-25. November 2021, the 8th annual International Forum on Human Rights Democracy - Human Forum 2021 - took place in Banská Bystrica, under the auspices of the President of the Slovak Republic Zuzana Čaputová and the Public Defender of Rights Mária Patakyová. This year, the event dealt with extremism and democracy at the local level.

The “Reclaim Our Civil Space!” project benefits from a 1,8 million € grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Regional Cooperation..

PROGRAMME OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY

-The program for the development of Roma communities is implemented by the Ekopolis Foundation in partnership with the Carpathian Foundation. The aim of the program is to draw attention to the challenges facing our society: the deterioration of the situation of the Roma minority in terms of access to employment, housing, education or health care, as well as growing anti-Roma sentiment within the majority society.

SMART CITIES

BY BICYCLE!

SABRINA

The Sabrina project focuses on safe cycling routes in the Danube region and is supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

Since 2020, together with other partners from another 8 countries, we have been implementing the SABRINA project, aimed at increasing the safety of cycle routes in Central and Eastern Europe. It includes a field safety audit of existing EuroVelo cycle paths.

WELCOME CYCLISTS IN THE V4 COUNTRIES

(International Visegrad Fund)

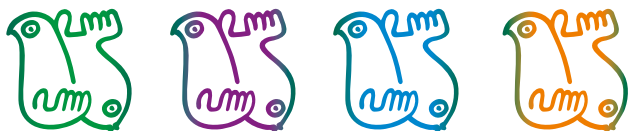
Certification scheme Welcome cyclists! was launched in Slovakia in May 2008. It is inspired by certification schemes in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and is directly based on the Cyclists Welcome certification, which has already certified more than 750 facilities and targets in the Czech Republic. The aim of the certification is to increase the number of tourist facilities and services that are adapted to the needs of cyclists and thus support bicycle transport and cycling tourism in Slovakia as well.

International Summer Photo Competition Welcome, cyclists! in V4: The competition organized by the

Partnership Foundation was dedicated to those who spent their holidays in active mode in the Visegrad Four countries - Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland. The main motive of the international competition was photos of services for cyclists (certified accommodation Welcome cyclists, restaurants, tourist information centers, bicycle services or just the EuroVelo and Greenways routes in the V4).

OUR OTHER PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

- Photo competition To work on a bicycle as part of a nationwide campaign
- Webinars with Netherland cycling experts
- Greenway project, project Sustainable mobility, campaign On bicycles!
- Online conference: Sustainable mobility in Slovakia



Výročná správa Nadácie Ekopolis

Referenčné obdobie: 1.január 2021 - 31.december 2021

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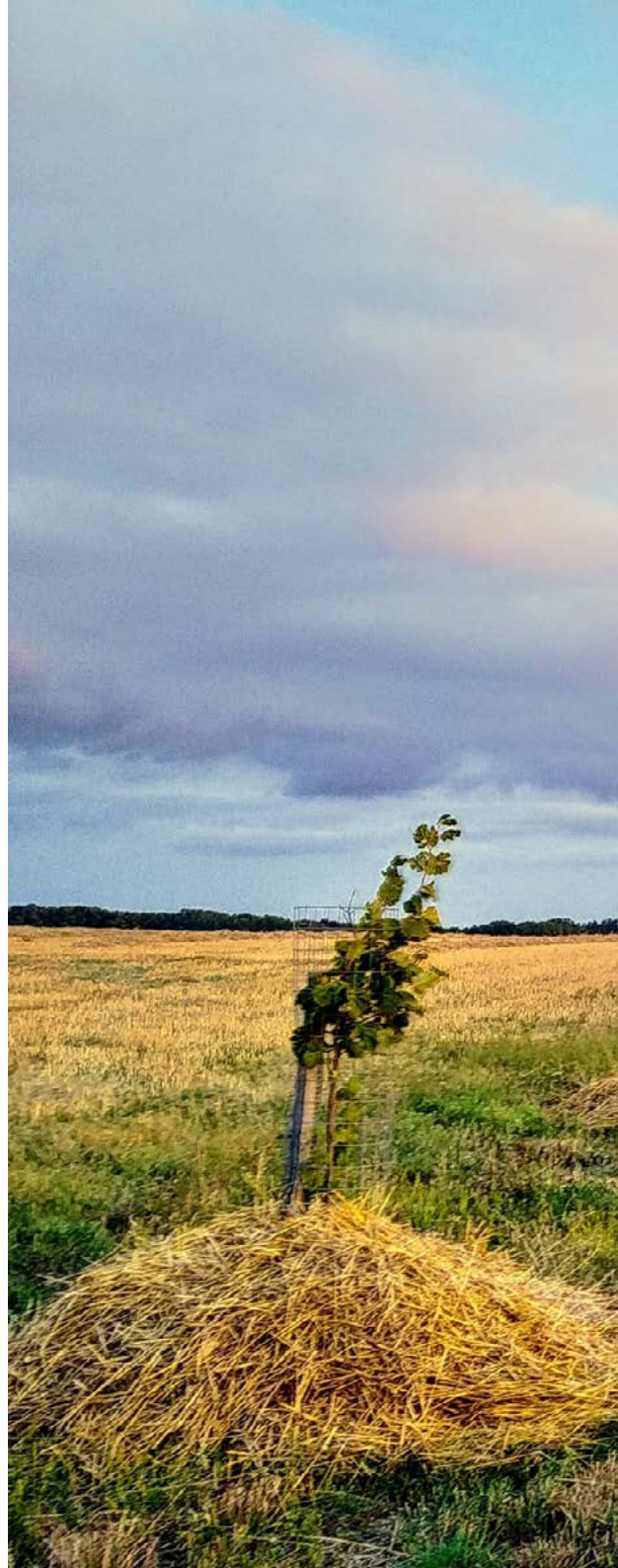
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