

Application form

Applicant

Organisation, country	Ministry of Environment and Water, Hungary
Name, surname	Ms Ditta, Greguss
Headline of best practice initiative	Fairy-tale writing competition and biodiversity weekend

Description of best practice initiative

Describe the basis of your best practice initiative (why, what, when, where; budget in EUR).
<p>On the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity the Ministry of Environment and Water organized a 3-day biodiversity weekend in 2009. As a preparation of this event, a nation-wide thematic fairy-tale writing competition on biodiversity was announced in 2008.</p> <p>The International Biodiversity Day (22nd of May) was celebrated at the most prominent place, the Parliament of the Republic of Hungary through a Parliamentary Open Day focusing on agro-biodiversity, namely the conservation of local varieties and the diversity of national crop and livestock genetic resources. Approximately 500 people participated at the event including all relevant stakeholders, among others high-level representatives from state administration as well as Members of Parliament, scientific and research institutions and NGOs. The participants adopted recommendations on the conservation of Hungary's genetic diversity. More details (in English): http://www.essrg.hu/parlament/programen.html</p> <p>The main event of the biodiversity weekend was the award ceremony of the nation-wide agrobiodiversity-related fairy-tale writing competition titled 'Are there still any sky-high bean stalks at your village?' in the Hungarian Open Air Museum of Szentendre. The title of the competition refers to a wide-known fairy-tale called 'Jack and the bean stalk'. Children and adults were invited to write a tale or a short story related to crop, vegetable or fruit varieties. For our great surprise almost 1000 stories were sent from all over Hungary and by Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries such as Slovakia, Austria, Serbia, Romania and Ukraine. Several stories were written also by families (grandfather with grandchildren, parents with children) or teachers together with pupils. 163 best stories were selected for a two-volume fairy-tale book officially launched that day. The main present for the winners was a copy of the published fairy-tale book and a memory game of Hungarian bean varieties. After the official celebration, various programmes related to agro-biodiversity were offered for the participants, such as an exhibition of traditional plant varieties, joint baking of home-made bread, painting with organic materials, folk games related to field crops, story-telling, folk dances etc. Photos of this day: http://biodiv.kvvm.hu/PhotoArchive/dijkioszto-2009</p> <p>On the last day of the weekend, the writers of the 10 best stories were invited to an excursion to the Bükk National Park.</p> <p>Following the previous years' tradition, a new competition was also announced titled "<i>Send a message to the world to conserve biodiversity</i>" with a deadline of 21 October 2009 (World Day of Caring for the Earth). Primary and secondary school children are invited to design postcards for the celebration of the International Year for Biodiversity (2010) showing the importance of diversity of life on earth. The best postcards will be used as the official postcards of the Ministry of Environment and Water.</p>

What was the main objective of the initiative and what were the results obtained (please quantify)?
<p>The main objective was to raise awareness of the various groups of the general public on the importance of agro-biodiversity, including traditional and local crop, fruit and vegetable varieties.</p> <p>On the occasion of the International Biodiversity Day a beautifully illustrated 2-volume fairy-tale book titled "Are there still any sky-high bean stalks at your village?" was published by the Ministry of Environment and Water, containing the best agrobiodiversity-related tales written and painted for the competition. This book is a perfect tool for environmental education; therefore the main libraries and all eco-schools will receive a copy. It will also be available at bookstores.</p>

What type of media did you use (TV, radio, print, electronic)? Why this choice of media?

The competition was announced in several magazines, daily newspapers, web-based news sites and several radio channels. All primary and secondary schools, libraries and municipalities received it by e-mail. As the huge interest for the competition also showed that this was best way to reach the target group.

Who was the target group?

The target group of the competition was the general public with no restriction.

What were the main messages?

Traditional and local plant varieties with the related traditional knowledge are important part of our national heritage. It is our joint task and responsibility to conserve the diversity of our genetic resources.

Who were the partners? Did you involve other institutions/ministries/agencies/NGOs?

Earth Day Foundation
Research Centre for Agrobotany, Tápiószele
Open Air Museum of Szentendre

Who financed the activities, amount of finances?

The publishing of the book as well as the organization of the biodiversity weekend were financed by the Ministry of Environment and Water (40 000 EUR).

Did you experience any specific difficulties during the action that could be learned from?

The amount of applications for the fairy-tale writing competition exceeded our expectations and resulted in intense (but enjoyable) workload during the evaluation.

Did you receive any feedback after your activities? Did you carry out an evaluation of the results and if yes, what was the outcome?

Hundreds of phone-calls, letters and emails were received. People were grateful for the idea of the competition which helped families and friends to work together on a beautiful task. Several participants highlighted that instead of watching TV, they were researching in the libraries and on the internet about traditional Hungarian plant varieties. By developing their own stories they realised how important these varieties and the connected traditional knowledge are.

Is any follow-up or duplication of this experience foreseen?

Having seen the great interest for the fairy-tale book published in 2000 copies per volume, the Ministry of Environment and Water has started to search for sponsor companies to republish the book in order to make it available for the wider public in all bookstores.

Following the last four years' practice, the ministry announced the new competition on the International Biodiversity Day, this time about designing postcards.

Why do you consider that your proposal should be selected as the best practice initiative of the year?

This competition activated the fantasy and imagination of children and adults, and encouraged them in a joyful manner to work together within the family or school groups. We believe that this is the most efficient way to raise environmental awareness and to motivate them to be actively involved in biodiversity conservation.

Please feel free to attach any printed material, photos etc.
Send your application to the Secretariat by 10 June 2009.