

## **For the future of the planet; How do we inspire young people to act sustainably?**

The changes and the state of our times require changes in the way we live, act, value and ethically and morally live together as a society.

In response to the question of how to promote, realise, inspire and act in a sustainable way, the organising committee for this year's festival developed this year's conference theme: For the Future of the Planet with the research question: How do we inspire young people to act in a sustainable way? At the Biotechnical Centre we are aware of the need to contribute to sustainable development and quality education through ethical behaviour. A commitment to nature is our basis for action. Since 2004, we have been actively working on the conversion of our school farm to an organic farm. We have placed an ethical core at the heart of the 2013-2014 Integral Model we have developed, which encompasses the Centre's values and social responsibility. The ethical core is underpinned by: understanding and awareness, inclusion, outreach, integration of ESD content and methodology, integration of research and project work with education and outreach, and reducing the environmental footprint.

To raise awareness, experts from Spain, Japan, Austria, Indonesia, Serbia, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Croatia and Spain are actively participating in this year's international conference. They will talk about the challenges they face when educating and inspiring young people to actively engage and act on environmental challenges. They will also show examples of project and research work undertaken in educational institutions in cooperation with the local and wider environment, Some educational institutions are also very actively involved in environmental activities.

In the plenary session this year we are joined by prominent experts - each in their own field is very actively implementing the basic principles of sustainable activities in the field of development and active systemic input in the development of eco-systemic action, self-reliance. They will highlight an important area where education can and does play the greatest role; in social innovation and the promotion of active citizenship, the protection and inclusion of vulnerable groups of society and the development of new opportunities for active participation in society. Education in nature is the best learning space for understanding the stability of natural resource consumption. It is also an opportunity for intergenerational understanding and for working and living together.

In the second part the examples of sustainable education in biotechnical centres across Slovenia will be presented. In the 2004-2006 curriculum renewal, we have developed core common professional contents of sustainable development for all levels of education. In 2007, we started to implement these core contents of sustainable development. Over the years, in the areas of vocational, secondary vocational and vocational-technical education, we have developed a number of examples of active learning situations where, through the active participation of students, we involve cognition, problem-solving, cooperative learning, teamwork, and an interest in broader societal challenges.

I believe and trust in a young generation that has the desire, the strength and the courage to do things hand in hand with nature, so that we can preserve our planet for

the future generations. That is why systemic, integrative, research project-based, active participatory, transformative education is needed to make the necessary changes. We certainly have the best environment for this. Slovenia is a green and rich country with plenty of water and fields. Undoubtedly, there is a strong awareness and desire to stay that way and become even better. Debt should certainly not be left to our great-grandchildren. That is why I trust and believe in the activity of us, educators, to ensure a healthy and good life for future generations through knowledge, skills and ethical attitude and responsibility.

Andreja Ahčin, The Principal