



Geology for youth in Lithuania: International Year of Planet Earth-related and other activities

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A great number of Lithuanian secondary and high schools devoted a range of activities to Earth sciences on September 22 (autumn equinox), 2008 proclaimed by the Lithuanian National Committee for IYPE and Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania as “Earth’s day”. Beforehand, the 11 IYPE brochures were translated, supplemented with relevant Lithuanian data and placed on the website www.zemesmetai.lt. The activities comprised lessons, competitions, performances, field trips, seminars, excursions to museums and nature sites, meetings with geologists and naturalists etc. In many schools the 10 scientific themes were expanded, transformed and included into different school programmes such as geography, chemistry, physics, biology, Lithuanian language etc. The other schools preferred to organise discussions, performances and concerts where children expressed their concern about future of the Earth and suggested ways to save it. Several schools invited geologists, ecologists or other representatives of Earth sciences or local authorities to provide with information on environmental and geological issues in Lithuania and their own surroundings. Several museums and nature sites were visited. The “Earth’s day” was advertised and broadcasted on TV and radio, reflected in the press. The reports from schools were placed on the Lithuanian IYPE website. The Board acknowledged the best participants with special letter of thanks. It turned out that despite the provided information on different subjects of geology only few of them were chosen. School teachers encountered some problems relating the Earth’s interior with its surface, recognising modern geological processes etc. They found some brochures to be too complicated for non-specialists. Biodiversity was much easier to explain and present as geodiversity. Nevertheless, everybody admitted the great importance of geosciences in society and insufficient knowledge, and greatly acknowledged the initiative of the IYPE.

The “Earth’s day” initiative triggered a lot of activities and joint projects at Lithuanian schools and public institutions devoted to Earth sciences. Many geologists and other scientists were invited to schools, public and governmental institutions to provide with all sorts of geological information. A lot of different competitions, camps and seminars followed the “Earth’s day”. As a special success the Young Geologist movement hosted by the NGO Lithuanian Youth Tourism Center has to be admitted. Summer camps, seminars, competitions on geology have been organized at the Center for more than 25 years.

The successful co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania and also with several private and governmental institutions and commercial enterprises resulted in a publishing of a special calendar for 2009. Each month in the calendar is devoted to the institution or enterprise either related to geosciences, using nature resources in a sustainable way or producing environmentally friendly goods or energy. The calendar was distributed to Lithuanian schools, public and governmental institutions.

Inspired by the success of the “Earth’s day”, the LitNC and Ministry of Education and Science organised a competition “Earth in our hands” for all types of schools in 2009. Over 50 PowerPoint presentations, movies, drawings, photos and posters were received at the Center of Young Naturalists in Vilnius. The winners were awarded with a special “geotour” on September 25.