**Biodiversity and Travel**

Haapsalu Vocational Education and Training Centre (Estonia)

By L.Rüü

How can we reduce the carbon footprint of student/teacher/school workers? Do we have car share arrangements, bicycle facilities? Can students be encouraged to walk? Is there a helpful public infrastructure - school buses, trains etc. Examples of best practice in this area. Any initiatives already taken or planned in these areas. The barriers to improvements in these areas.

School map and the number of school buildings is 4: main building, woodwork house, construction house, gym, and students' Hostel. Number of steps that students measured between different buildings:

* From the school to the woodwork house (260 steps)
* From school to construction house (370 steps)
* From school to student’s Hotel (216 steps)
* From the Hostel to Construction building (150-200 steps)

Important places nearby: shop, and bus stop (helpful public infrastructure, for free, teachers and students travel to school).

* From school - to the bus stop (106 steps)
* From the bus stop - to the Hostel (110 steps)
* From school to shop (248 steps)

School location and the main ways teachers and students travel to school: on foot; by bike, electric scooter, bus, or car.

Encouraged to walk (Students learned how to measure with steps at the National/Country Defense camp: high school and vocational school students have to pass it as a part of social studies. It lasts one week. There they get their first experience of soldiers' life: the theoretical part and the camp life in nature. It is compulsory for boys and girls as well.)

Transportation share arrangements: shared transportation to the airport (minibus, car) when sent on a foreign assignment.

Time from nearby town Haapsalu to get to school: 35 min 2.8 km on foot, 5 min car, and by bus 12 min.

Bicycle facilities: every building has a place where to store bikes. We use that opportunity mainly in Spring and Autumn. Sometimes in Winter, too, when we don't have much snow.

Electric scooter: the school doesn't own them. To rent one, you need an App on your mobile phone. Price 0.20 EUR per minute. It costs about 1-2 EUR to get from school to the town. Speed limit 25 km/h. In the school area, 5 km/h.

Traditional events: adaptation camp for the new 1st year students at the beginning of the school in September; for 2nd-course traditional nature walk (RMK nature house in Nõval) + National defence camp; a traditional event for the whole school is Hike in Spring.

We encourage our students to be in nature. An example: Encouraging letter from the school's youth worker.

Dear students,

If you've looked out of the classroom windows lately, it seems like it's a sin to be indoors in such beautiful weather!

Therefore, on Tuesday, May 17, we organize an afternoon of common well-being in nature for the entire school family. We have set our sights on the beautiful Nõva side, specifically the Peraküla beach. The Peraküla learning trail awaits us.

Buses take us all from the school building to Perakülla and bring us back to the school building. The bus leaves in front of the school at 12:30. Clothes are comfortable for the back and legs and suitable for the weather.

A lovely gathering ends with a small meal in nature.

Biodiversity: flower bed, birdhouses

Peat bead for flowers: our teachers went to a nearby vocational school to study gardening. After graduation, they taught it as an evening course to our students. As a result, they put together a nice peat bead for flowers (heather, rhododendron, etc.) in front of the school. A local company gave us peat and peat blocks to us.

One carpenter's speciality student made these during his practice time in the woodwork company last school year.

Support: teachers

Aile Nõupuu - a person, a teacher with many hobbies - is so good at what she is doing that people are taking touch with her from different sides of Estonia. Biodiversity: permaculture - is an approach to land management and settlement design that adopts arrangements observed in flourishing natural ecosystems.

Marje Loide - more than just a nature guide, giving lectures to students in our school and other schools in our County. She knows almost everything about living in nature in Estonia. You may find her very often in the Matsalu nature park near our County. She is doing mushroom picking tours, learning about medicinal plants, painting with mushrooms.

Marko Valker - nature education specialist - Silma Nature School. Mainly deals with birdwatching - often in the evening news programme on TV, when birds are arriving in Spring or living in Autumn.

Support: specialities all started from nature tourism teaching in our school.

nature tourism - nature guide (regular education) - bird guide (advanced education)

They are organizing/taking part: guided walks/tours/excursions; picking mushrooms from the forest; birdwatching tours; MAFF (Matsalus’s Nature Film Festival); organizing Nature Festival in our school and county.

Ideas for future

We have nature and a good location supporting us; in the future, we must use these good things even more to make the people around us more environmentally friendly. Some ideas:

* RMK tree planting with students “State forest as a carbon pantry.” RMK manages Estonian state forests.
* Traditional event Community activities day "Let's do it!"- World Clean Up day (EST Teeme ära - Maailmakoristus). It is traditional to do a cleaning in the Spring.
* We must have more lessons where the sustainability topic is integrated. Integration of lessons (Science as a subject: biology + speciality-related lesson: woodwork = making more birdhouses).
* Raising awareness in this area (Nature Festival 2023 in Spring)

Barriers

There is no bad weather; there is only the wrong outfit (climate: cold weather).

You can't have two good things at the same time: this week, the management of our school decided to remove the flower bed because there are so many bicycle users in our school that it was necessary to start building the bike storage area more extensive.

The flowers found homes in our school teachers' gardens, and hopefully, in Spring, we can make a new flower bed with the same plants in front of our school again.

**Hyperlink** ([Click to see the presentation](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1gVqiOkceq73oa1f-qqJSU3JyHL63uK5G1mOF6R9d3Ro/edit?usp=sharing).)