

# **CECZA A Successful Exercise In Inter-zoo Cooperation**

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## **Some background.**

Conservation Education Curriculum for Zoos and Aquaria or CECZA for short, started as an IZE initiative to assist in the development of zoo education in Eastern European countries. At the beginning of 1998 Mr. Chris Peters, IZE regional rep for Europe and the Middle East and Mrs Liset van Geldermalsen, course co-ordinator from IPC Dier Barneveld College in the Netherlands, applied for EU ,funding for the course via the Leonardo da Vinci program. The application was successful and the project was granted 80 000 Euros (\$80000 US). With support from EAZA, partners from a number of different zoos and related organizations got together to create a one month pilot course. These included Amsterdam Zoo, Apenheul Primate Park, Burgers Zoo, Rotterdam Zoo, Hardervijk , Dolphinarium, IPC Dier Barneveld and Van Hall Institute in the Netherlands, Budapest Zoo in Hungary, Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark and Antwerp Zoo and Plankendael Wild Animal Park in Belgium.

Thanks to all of the above the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1999 marked the beginning of the first course and an experience which we'll never forget.

## **13 teachers, 10,educators, 8 countries, one language.**

The start of the course found us all a little nervous but curious at the same time. Slowly, however, the English language removed all the barriers and we started to get to know one another. Our 10-strong educator team came from six Eastern European countries, each of us bringing personal experience as well as part of our national culture. The course brought together people from Gdansk-Oliwa Zoo and Plock Zoo in Poland; Jihlava Zoo and Brno Zoo in the Czech Republic; Bratislava Zoo in Slovakia; Riga Zoo in Latvia; Szeged Zoo and Budapest Zoo in Hungary; Targu Mures Zoo and Bucharest Zoo in Romania. Everybody was as ready to share knowledge as to pick up something new. The teachers from the Netherlands and Belgium were always on hand to answer our questions, explaining everything we wanted to know.

## **The course schedule.**

Subjects covered during the four week course included marketing, philosophy, management, formal education, informal. education and personal skills. The daily program contained presentations, workshops, creative activities, discussions and analysis of situations and even interactive games designed for use in educational programs. A very important role was played by the lessons on marketing, management and future policies in education. During all this time we learned how to make informative educational

materials such as panels, labels, worksheets, articles and press releases and even a website which proved very useful back home. Zoo visits formed an important part of the course as it gave us a chance to see how our theoretical new knowledge worked in practice. The teachers, most of them zoo educators themselves, explained new philosophies and shared all their resources and information with us.

The visited zoos, ten in total, (8+2 optionally) gave us specific examples of modern concepts relating not only to the educative mission of the zoo but the zoo mission itself. Visits to . Rotterdam Zoo, Plankendael W AP, Apenheul, Harderwijk, Burgers' Zoo, Beekse Bergen Safari Park, Wissel and Amersfoort showed us different ways of getting the same education message across.

### **After the course -making changes in our own zoos.**

Time passed quickly and, all too soon, it was time to go home. A lot of plans, ideas, and projects waited to be put into practice.

We knew that when we got back home, our first priority would be to communicate our ideas to colleagues and superiors so that we could start putting into practice what we'd learned. Our first action will be to get the communication ways to our colleagues and superiors to allow us to put into practice, everything we learned. For most of us it will not be easy but we are determined and so will find a way of doing it.

No one is going to try to do everything at once but the first step has been taken and together we hope to support what we've Created and with the support of IZE and .EAZA offices, things should go well. Another important step will be the implementation of our new knowledge. In some cases this might involve a fundamental change in the zoo's image; in other cases there will be an improvement in existing plans and last but not least we'll enjoy sharing all of this information with other zoo colleagues.

Finally I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone that prepared this course and to the teachers and the zoo staff for their understanding, patience and hospitality.

