

Project of young “Engineers without Borders” – Student Chapter

STUDENTS OF FLORIDA RAISE THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS OF KRATOVO CITIZENS

Citizens of Kratovo expect that until May next year the first containers for PET bottles will be installed in their city. At the same time a system for collection, selection, transport and recycling of PET bottles should be developed. This will be done thanks to the young members of “Engineers without Borders” from University of Florida, USA, who work for a longer period on project for modernization of management of solid waste in this Macedonian city.

Six students, future engineers from different fields of engineering, one professor and one consultant, supported by 20 colleagues that work with them in Florida, have arrived for second time in Kratovo to arrange next steps of the project, after six months spent in USA, summarizing the data collected during the first visit. They hope that until May, when they will come again to Kratovo, first effects of their volunteering work will become visible and that in the next five to ten years they will implement the whole project that includes much more than the current focused activities – recycling of PET bottles and composting.

In order to reach some concrete knowledge regarding their achievements, they collected first data of solid waste in the city regarding arrangement of the containers, waste collection dynamic etc. During their last visit to Macedonia, they had meetings with the managers of the recycling factories in Tetovo and Veles and they had already developed a concept about the process for collecting bottles and their recycling. The purchase will be organized through the NGO “Sonce vreg” (“Sun hill”) from Kratovo that already manages this type of work. After that, the PET packing will be transported to the collecting center in Slegovo for primary treatment and afterwards it will be transported to the recycling factory in Veles. For the beginning 10 containers are considered to be distributed and will be produced by a company from Kratovo for 200 Euro each. Student Branko Kerkez, who is the president of students’ organization “Engineers without Border” at the University of Florida, said that they will face more problems regarding collection and transportation of PET packing, because it should be selected before selling. The NGO pays five Macedonian denars (5 MKD) for one kilogram of PET bottles, while the factory from Veles pays eight denars. It is assumed that the difference of three denars will cover the transportation costs. The company that will run this business might not have profit at the beginning, but cost for transportation and the employees’ salaries will be covered. Kerkez said that in order to provide funds for production of the containers, they would wash cars and organize concerts and would use the funds from the donors at their University. They did the same when they were collecting money for their trip and stay in Macedonia. “We are students and we make small steps” said his colleague Lindsey Nolan. She expects that this activity, at the beginning focused only on Kratovo, will be expanded in the neighboring municipalities. She hopes that the project will include other activities that were foreseen and in the next five to ten years Kratovo will welcome groups of students from Florida every six months. Groups will be consisted of different members because in the meantime some of them will graduate.

Their mentor, Professor Timothy Townsend, emphasized the humanitarian and educational character of this project and said that their goal is raising the level of awareness of the citizens of Kratovo to keep clean environment. In that context, young Engineers without Borders organized small workshop on composting in Kratovo schools, hoping that pupils from schools will share the knowledge with their parents.

American students were very excited about the stay, welcoming and communication with Macedonian people, and they said that this project is great experience that can not be gained at the University. Therefore, they are convinced that they will successfully end this project and start new ones so that many students and future generations can gain such knowledge.

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