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## Non-formal adult education programs for creative citizenship

First Folk School in Russia – Kiev, 1859

Public Universities – Soviet Union

St. Petersburg High Folk School (HFS) – 1998

(Pioneer in post-Soviet space)

Non-formal educational institution

Part of civil society, space for its development

Now – in Vladivostok, Kazan, Astrakhan,  
Orenburg



### Aims of High Folk Schools and Universities in Russia nowadays:

- Developing adults' learning motivation
- Meeting adults' various educational and learning needs and interests
- Linking learning and social activities
- Developing social involvement, civil participation and cohesion
- Creating favorable conditions for learners' communication, sharing and mutual enrichment
- Improving public health, social and psychological protection
- Overcoming inclusion in adult education
- Developing personal and social skills for living in diverse interconnected world
- Advancing personal and community awareness of environmental issues, competencies for sustainable development and contributing to biosphere consciousness and global empathy

### Principles of HFS activities

- Democracy
- voluntariness
- autonomy
- openness,
- accessibility

**HFS — successor of schools for adults created by N. Grundtvig, the outstanding Danish philosopher, teacher and politician.**

*Relationship between individual learning and social movements.*

*Connection of intellectual and cultural growth with group development, prelude of civic relations.*

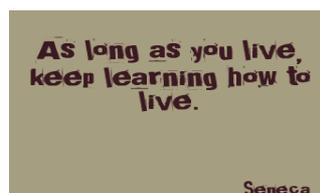
*Link between real human life and people's attitudes as citizens.*



N. Grundtvig

### Lifelong learning — main pillars:

- learning to know,
- learning to do,
- learning to live together,
- learning to be (J. Delors Commission, 1998);
  
- + learning to care for the planet (P. Jarvis, 2008)



*Traditionally is not recognized enough as crucial part of lifelong learning*

### Favorable reasons for adults environmental learning

- environmental problems are close to people, they concern them, relate to the quality of their life, health, well-being;
- these problems are "self-evident" (environmental damage from human unreasonable activities);
- environmental science is a complex discipline, including human activity in its various manifestations;
- there is a lot of contradictory information, which does not reflect the real environmental situation of the city, region, country.



### Designing environmental programs: issues to concern

While the problem of human survival on the planet needs developing participation and social cohesion, we face traditionally low engagement in social activities and small belief in their effectiveness

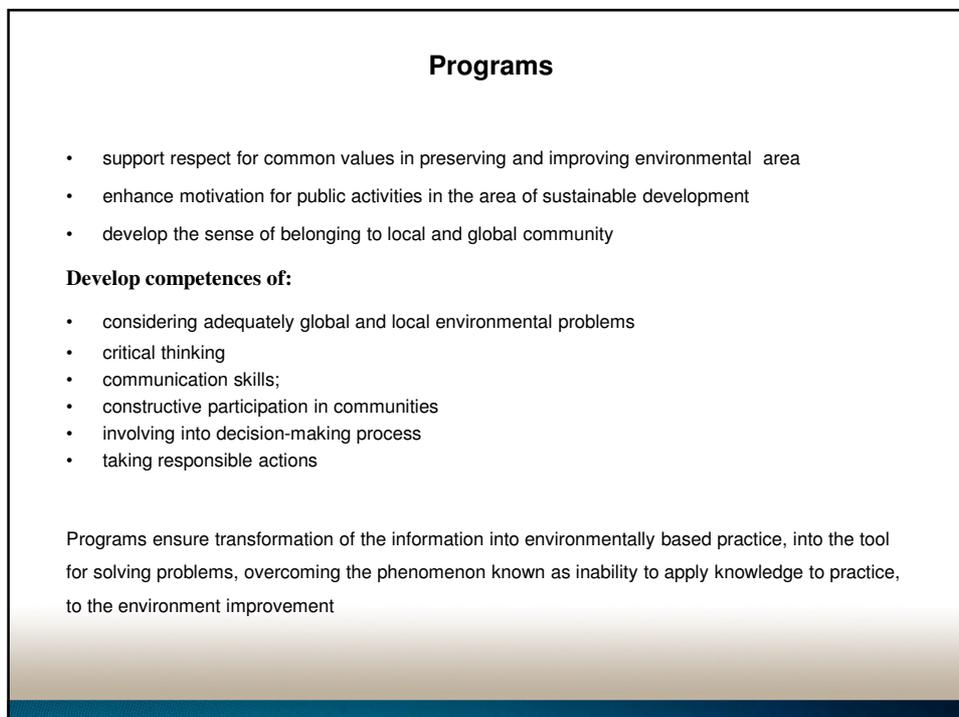
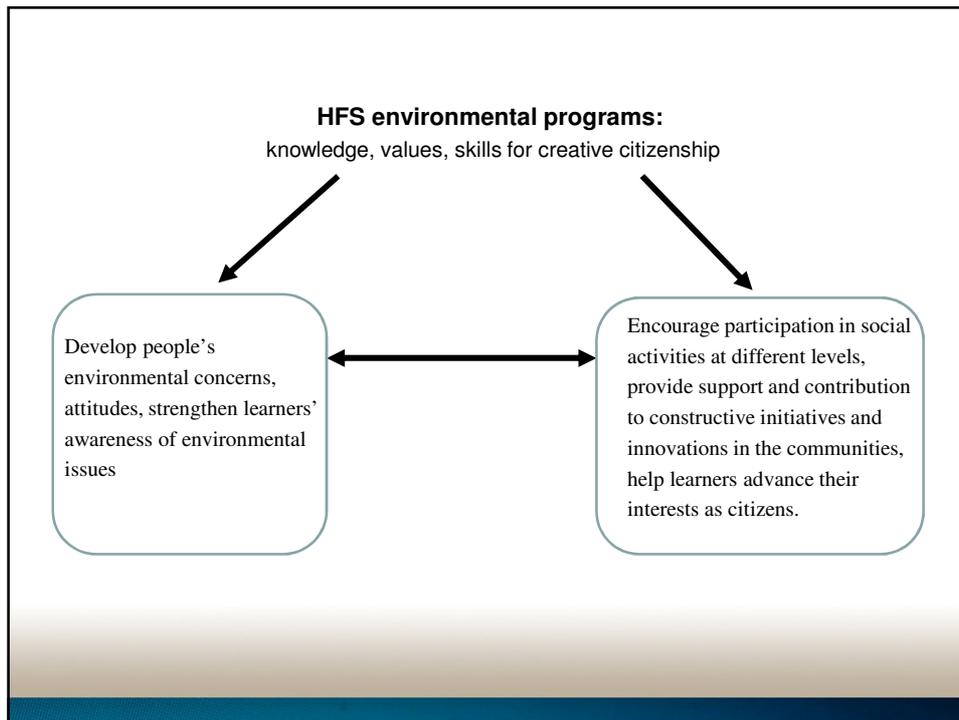
The problem of human well-being in the context of the ecological crisis is not often considered among most essential problems

Traditional conservative approach — nature is an endless source of raw materials and energy, stereotyped cliché, is an obstacle to adults' identification of both existing and new challenges, for making environment-friendly decisions.

Indifference and passivity in the perception of environmental issues and their solution

Feeling helpless; restricted understanding of individual and community opportunities for improving environmental quality

Community participation in supporting and initiating environmentally sound actions aimed at improving the environmental situation is minimal.



The **contents** of programs comprise basic scientific knowledge, raise awareness of global environmental issues — problems of ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, acid rain, biodiversity conservation, highlight regional and local environmental problems. General framework for problems study is — what we have today, where, how and why the situation began to deteriorate, and how we can try to change the situation for better.

Special attention is paid to environmental problems of St.-Petersburg and its region — water resources, air, soil, waste; developing skills required for the improvement of the city environment.

**Project activities** (from megapolis to ecopolis) promote

- motivation,
- joint activities,
- experience of constructive solutions in regard to environmental issues
- power of freedom and creativity;
- stimulation of social activity;
- emotional enriching learners' lives,
- raising confidence in their capacity of improving environment

*Project activities help finding grounds to compromise, communicate ideas and propositions and take practical actions*

### Mass media

Against the background of diverse information obtained from the Internet the share of ecological information is quite low. But when it is received it does not obviously mean that it works as expectable.

In our virtual time when for many people physical and math reality is almost nothing in comparison with informational reality, it is important to have the basic knowledge and skills necessary for:

- critical and reflexive acceptance of ecological information
- realizing our true opportunities for improving the environmental situation.

### Programs develop

- critical thinking through which people can learn to join others to seek and influence changes collectively, thereby contribute to fostering community capacities and civic benefits (Fryer)
- ability to structure and interpret critically the ecological information from the Internet, TV, radio, newspapers and magazines, and to be open to individual and public initiatives and activities, for contribution to the environment preservation.



Programs include exercising learners' participation in cooperation with NGO, public agencies in the area of environment protection. It allows people to clarify their rights and obligations towards nature better, to voice their opinions on matters affecting them louder

**Public environmental associations** provide more rights than individuals

they are enabled:

- To organize meetings, demonstrations, marches and pickets, collecting signatures on petitions;
- To apply to the state authorities of the Russian Federation, local governments, and other organizations
  - ✓ to get information about the state of the environment, measures for its protection, the circumstances and the facts of economic and other activities that threaten the environment, life, health and property of citizens;
  - ✓ to give proposals on matters relating to environmental protection, the negative impact on the environment, and receive informed responses

*(Article 12 of the Law "Rights and obligations of public and other non-profit associations operating in the field of environmental protection").*

In the structure of environmental programs special attention is paid to European traditions and modern trends in the solution of environmental problems. It is especially important in terms of enhancing social action in this field, involving different groups of people in the environmental movement as the genre of expression of social groups interests - public participation, which is not widely spread in our country.

Knowledge and understanding the methods of environmental problems solutions by other people, especially our neighbors in Europe, is an important integral part of the environmental education; it serves as an essential basis of identifying of personal involvement in the improvement of the environment, the expansion of its "repertoire".



### **Non-formal HFS learning for sustainable development as part of citizenship**

#### **HFS programs**

- give context for exercising citizenship in everyday life
- emphasize on civic activities and social cohesion for change
- develop skills necessary to improve the ecological status on the basis of social activities
- promote linking learning to the lives of learners; enjoying forms of citizenship and action through which learners hope to realize their ambitions, giving meanings to their lives, and exercising greater influence over their worlds.

The observation by Oldfield that citizenship is not a spectator sport, places action at the center of citizenship that is lived and shaped rather than just given, and, ideally, links learning and activity in a reciprocal and continuing relationship (R.H. Fryer, 2010).

*Non-formal education is one of the most effective and promising social activity which contributes to development of the society civilization mechanisms, providing support for the appropriate social relays and promoting acquiring environmental competencies as elements of civil society culture.*