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Good Practice – Zsuzsi narrow-gauge railway

Matúra and Natúra Foundation

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GP 4 – Zsuzsi railway & Matúra and Natúra



Definition of the GP

- **Zsuzsi railway** is an excellent example of how infrastructure elements previously used for other purposes could be transferred in order to enhance the importance of natural and cultural heritage.
- **Matura and Natura Foundation** (Matúra és Natúra Alapítvány) is a public benefit foundation, aiming at:
 - environment and nature protection
 - environmental education
 - dissemination of scientific knowledge.
- Zsuzsi and Matúra Natúra are cooperating in the Eastern part of the city, around the terminus station of Zsuzsi.
- A Good Practice that contributes to:
 - put some unknown areas on the human mental map
 - the co-operation of an NGO and a city-owned nonprofit organisation
 - co-operation of different stakeholders

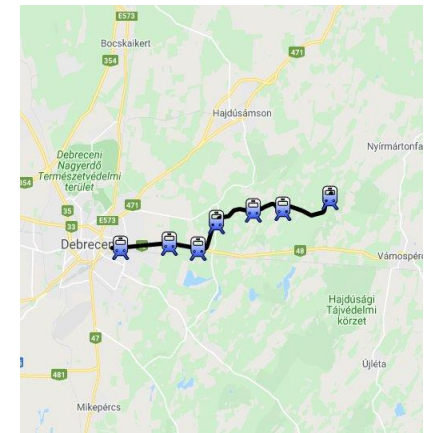
Aligning with PROSPERA

- Objective: Preserving natural and cultural heritage + raising awareness
- It aligns with PROSPERA leverage: **Sustainable public-private partnership**
- How?
 - by public-civil society partnerships
 - by raising public awareness
 - by educating
 - by improving the environment of the terminus station



Some facts about the Zsuzsi railway

- The oldest, still-operating narrow-gauge railway in the Carpathian Basin
- It has undergone a major transformation (timber transportation – commuting – recreational function). Operated by a non-profit organisation owned by the city.
- It's protected as a historical monument (including the buildings, locomotives and the 17 km of historic railway line)
- Part of Debrecen's (and Hungary's) cultural heritage, the terminus station located in a forested area (natural heritage)



Activities of Zsuzsi railway I.

- Connecting urban and peri-urban areas (unique mode of transport):
 - Operation, maintenance
 - Infrastructure renovation – passenger friendly image



Activities of Zsuzsi railway II.

- Organised guided tours in the vicinity of the terminus station: bird ringing, forest walks, thematic walks, star gazing etc. – cooperation with different stakeholders:
 - Matúra Natúra – NGO
 - Farmers, families in the peri-urban area
 - Local Forestry



Activities of Zsuzsi railway III.

- Educational activities (outside from school) which aiming at:
 - Preservation and transmission cultural and natural heritage to future generations
 - Forest pedagogy
 - Environmental protection
 - Health promotion, education for healthy/sports lifestyle
 - Strengthening Hungarian and local identity



Introducing Matúra and Natúra Foundation

- public benefit foundation established in Debrecen 20 years ago
- In 2014 the foundation established the so-called Nature Archive (Természetvár) – huge success
- 3 workers, 20-25 volunteers
- Collaborating with different stakeholders
 - Zsuzsi railway
 - Hortobágy National Park
 - Museums, Library



Activities of Matúra and Natúra I.

- Organizing thematic tours in different parts of the city:
 - Guided walks in different themes: ornithology, botany, ecology etc. – adapted to the season and age groups
 - Connection with Zsuzsi railway – introducing the natural values of „Erdőpuszták”
 - Thematic tours in the Big Forest (Nagyerdő)
- Talent management – outside from school
 - Participation in study competitions
 - Organizing (cooperation with Hortobágy NP – GP3) study competitions



Activities of Matúra and Natúra II.

- Extra-educational activities:
 - provides additional knowledge inside the school, supporting both teaching and learning
 - using live teaching tools (experiments, model), interactive lectures
- Cultural programmes:
 - Temporary and permanent exhibitions
 - programmes
- Programmes for families:
 - Learning by playing, jigsaw puzzles
 - Cooperation with the local ZOO, Library

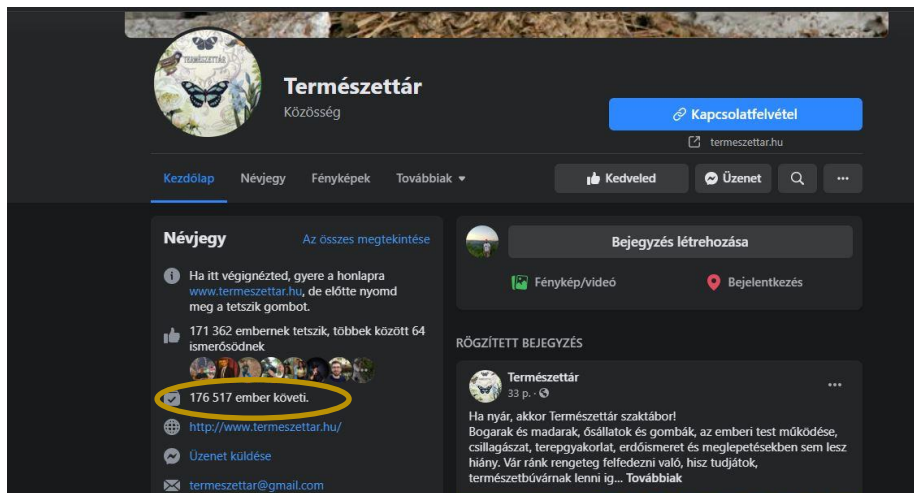


Activities of Matúra and Natúra III.

- Community building:
 - Participating in urban projects (coop. with the Municipality):
 - Green city projects: lectures and practices in balcony gardening
 - Creating guerilla gardens in cooperation with the residents
 - Help to establish the first community garden – became self-organised community
 - Coordinating the „Tree of the year – Europe”
- Organizing summer schools and camps
- Present in the virtual world: the most popular Facebook page in the country in this topic

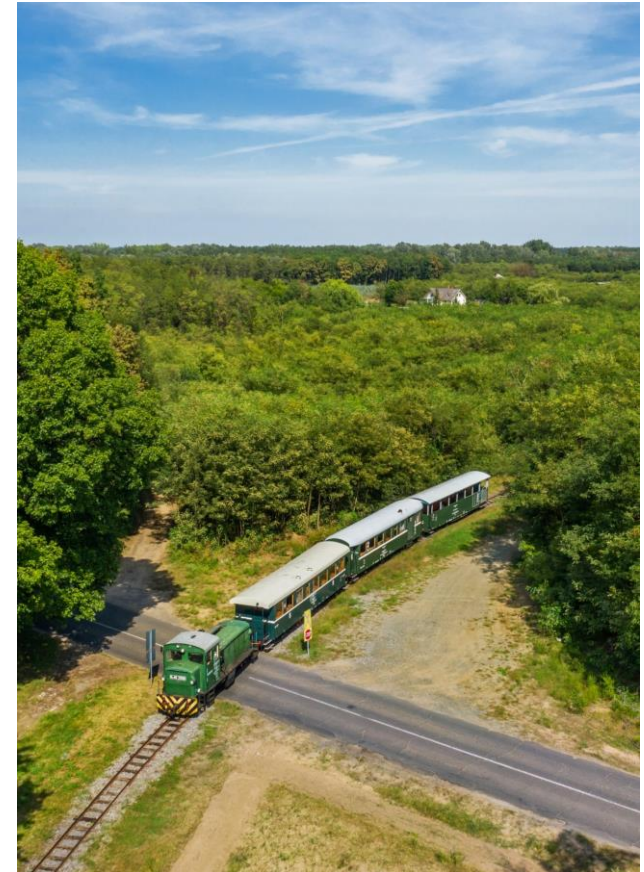


Activities of Matúra and Natúra IV.



Challenges for the Municipality

- Key challenges for Debrecen:
 - Zsuzsi part of the cultural tradition - the city should maintain
 - Lack of quality facilities/sites in the peri-urban areas of the city
 - Residents do not know the values of peri-urban areas
 - Existing recreational areas are overloaded – need for including new destinations
 - Strengthening environmental awareness



Challenges for Zsuzsi

- COVID situation:
 - Zsuzsi is undergoing a transformation (ongoing process) – replacing old attractions with adventure activities
 - Result: more and more children are using it – greater demand for recreational areas in the peri-urban landscape
- increasing revenues and cost-effectiveness of Zsuzsi:
 - To develop accommodation facilities around the terminus station (renovation of summer school)
 - To strengthen cooperation with local farmers, gastro-tourism
 - Programmes for all seasons



Challenges for Matúra and Natúra

- COVID situation:
 - Using online platforms
- Financing:
 - Organizing different events: exhibitions, summer camps
 - Use of EU grants, tendering
 - Donation
- To decongest the city's popular recreational areas by putting new places to the mental maps of the residents





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Thank you!

Questions welcome



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