



BUSTA (BUILDING SKILLS THROUGH TRAINING THERAPY ANIMALS) PROJECT IMPACT REPORT



2023

Summary

The BUSTA (Building Skills through Training therapy Animals) project is a partnership project, financed by the European Union, between six organisations in three different countries - Belgium, Lithuania and Bulgaria. Three schools and three associations worked upon creating alternative school programs and educational approaches including activity sessions with therapy animals in the period of March 2022 to March 2024. The project was flexible for the setting and conditions every school has. This allowed teachers and therapists in every country to develop programs and to conduct activities that are appropriate for the children they worked with. The project highlighted the acquisition of 21st century lifelong learning skills when the kids participate in the training process of the therapy animals. Moreover, it was also an opportunity for the students to take part in co-creating new training exercises through the process of designing new training games to train the animals to respond to specific needs from a disabled beneficiaries.

The main requirement of the project is that the students participated voluntarily in the offered activities, their opinion and rights were respected.

Three project results were fulfilled:

Project Result 1 is a documentary, presenting the conducted activities with the therapy animals. Students, teachers and therapists were involved in its creation as actors, video capturing and editing.

The teachers and therapists were responsible to explore the new skills of the involved students' development and to collect all the information about in the **Project Result 2** - The Impact report.

Based on observations and acquired experience, the partners created a Guide book - **Project Result 3**, to assist organisations working with people with special needs and schools that would like to include similar activities in their educational programs.

In each of the countries, the students had the opportunity to get to know different therapy animals - in Lithuania there were dolphins, in Belgium there was a dog trained to be an assistant dog, in Bulgaria - horses. As a subsequent step, students, teachers and therapists could exchange their experiences during the three Learning, Training, Teaching meetings that were held in each of the partners' countries.

In addition to being really useful and enriching the work of each organisation, the project opened up new opportunities for future partnerships and development of new activities.

