***Lithuania’s Zippy’s and Apple’s Friends***

You’ve already heard the basic information about the Lithuanian implementers of ZF and AF in the first part of the conference. Here I would like to remind you that we really have a lot of experience in running ZF – we’ve been doing this for 18 years already, that is since 2000, and AF has been run for the 6th year, since 2012. We have about 25,000 children taking part in both programmes every year, as well as over a thousand teachers (≈1,300) and about 800 schools and kindergartens. About every third child aged 6–7 years participate in our programmes. So, we definitely have considerable experience of running Zippy’s and Apple’s Friends.

Having all this in mind, these participants and all related work has to be managed by only 3 employees, we had no way out, but to develop our own model for running the programme, which would 1. help coordinate all practical aspects; 2. assure the quality of running the programme and 3. reduce the implementation costs.

**I’ll start with the practical aspects of the implementation.**

The Lithuanian agency, NGO Vaiko labui, is located in the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius. The programme itself is running throughout out the country - in 60 municipalities (which are situated in 10 counties). I order to make easier to coordinate geographically distant schools, we came up with an idea of setting up one or several programme centres in the largest towns in each county. So, we found educational institutions whose teachers had already been involved in the programme and whose principals wanted and agreed to assume requirements and obligations for such a centre.

 What does a programme centre do? First of all, it provides free premises and the necessary IT equipment for teachers’ training seminars and other programme events.

 All programme material sets and other publications for children, parents and teachers are kept at the centre. The centre undertakes to keep the material, distribute it to county teachers at the beginning of the school year and collect them at the end of the school year. As well as to look over the collected sets to make sure that they are complete and, if some parts are missing, to supplement with necessary material. The centres also distribute other publications to programme participants - children, parents and teachers.

Who does all that work? Programme volunteers. We are an NGO, so we can engage volunteers. These volunteers are programme teachers, who are, however, not ordinary teachers. At the very beginning of the programme – around 2003/2004 - we started to look for active and talented teachers loyal to the programme. We invited them to become our volunteers and so „raised” them. Almost every year we organise training seminars for our volunteers. At present there are 88 such teachers (we call them "programme trainer's assistants"), with different levels of involvement in the programme.

Programme trainer's assistants, if requested by the trainer, help conduct new teachers training seminars.

Some trainer's assistants observe the sessions run by first year teachers and give them advice.

Also, programme centres and volunteers working there represent the programme in that county and, with our approval and assistance, organize programme events in the county. They represent the county programme at various national events.

You might ask why schools contribute to the programme implementation voluntarily and, furthermore, free of charge? I am really happy and proud to say that ZF, with AF catching up, are highly rated in Lithuania by the Ministry of Education and Science, municipal education departments, education specialists, scientists and teachers. So, it is prestigious for a school to be the centre of the ZF or AF programme; such activity adds additional points in the official assessment of the school; the school is more attractive to parents when they have to choose among educational institutions ...

All this sounds very good and nice. But I also have to say, without going too much into details, that not everything went smoothly at the beginning, when in 2003 we started setting up these centres, there were some off them which worked rather formally and not very willingly; several programme centres had to be moved from one school to another. Sometimes the workload is too heavy for one centre, so we set up another one in the same county. However, most of the programme centres have been working really well.

Speaking about the centres, I mentioned that they store programme material sets and other publications. You may ask, why we need to store them?

The programme material sets in Lithuania are not sold – teachers use them on the library principle. Teachers running the programme take and return the material sets from the programme centres located in the largest town of the nearest county. Here they also get all other publications for the programme participants – cards, diplomas, concertina cards for children as well as home activity booklets for parents.

All programme material is distributed to the teachers and collected by the trainer's assistants - our volunteers - according to the lists provided to them by us.

The material set may be taken only by the teacher whose school has applied to participate in the programme. We sign an agreement with such school for one academic year. The agreement includes all teachers who are going to run the programme during that year in that school. It also specifies all obligations for both parties while implementing the programme: PFC copyrights, fees, commitment to run all sessions, as well as the requirement to attend the seminars for new teachers. The agreement also includes a commitment to preserve the programme material set – that is not to cut or tear it, to return it in good condition and pay a fine if it is lost.

The library principle works well - some material sets are used for up to 10 years, depending on their condition. Of course, every year there are some Activity Sheets or Module Booklets lost. In such cases, our volunteers or we ourselves (in Vilnius) supplement the set with the missing parts. It is highly unlikely for a teacher to lose the whole material set. So far, we have not requested a single fine.

The agreement with the school is a great tool for ensuring that we always know which teachers and schools are running the programme and how many material sets and other publications will be required. We decided to sign agreements with schools after signing a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Education, in which we took it upon ourselves to ensure that the programme will be implemented only by qualified programmes teachers.

We conduct and coordinate all publishing and logistics entirely on our own. To ensure that the required amount of material sets and other publications is delivered to the specific centre on time, we bring them by ourselves with our own car or sometimes we hire transportation companies. Not everything is always ideal, sometimes we have to drive twice to one centre, sometimes we have problems with publishing houses, but so far, no teacher or child has been left without the necessary material.

I hope you now have a general picture of how the practical side of things is run in Lithuania.

2. So now I move on to the second point – quality assurance of the programme implementation.

In our opinion, the key to quality assurance is well-prepared, motivated and highly qualified trainers who are able to prepare and motivate teachers to run the programme.

We have a relatively steady team of trainers. The first and largest part of them was prepared in 2002 (in a 20-hour seminar). The trainers, who joined the programme after that, were also trained, only in shorter seminars (14 academic hours). Training courses for our trainers are held on a regular basis. So far, we have had 4 such seminars, the most recent one was held last year. The issues discussed during those seminars include the latest developments of the programme, child education methods, how to present all this information to teachers and others topics. For example, the last seminar focused on inclusive education.

Another group involved in the training of teachers is the programme trainer's assistants. As I mentioned earlier, there are currently 88 such assistants, who contribute to the quality assurance of the programme. We hold volunteers' training seminars almost every year (which usually last 8 academic hours; there were 3 seminars which lasted 2 days). These seminars always contain programme-related training and other topics relevant to the teachers themselves - mostly they request to learn more about psychological studies on children, communication with parents and similar things. We value our volunteers a lot and give a lot of attention to them because they contribute much to the implementation of the programme.

As we all know, Zippy’s and Apple’s teachers' training programme is one and the same all over the world, developed by PFC and Lithuania is not an exception. We just added a couple of things to it.

First, trainers (if they wish) engage programme volunteers - trainer's assistants - to help them conduct seminars (for example, trainer’s assistants answer teachers’ questions about practical issues and share their experiences).

Second, in order to help the first-year teacher to implement the programme, we strongly encourage our trainer's assistants to observe the sessions run by their newly trained colleagues and consult them. However, there are not many such visits and follow-up consultations, basically because the new teachers are not very eager to be observed; they usually regard this as inspection or control and not as help. (and the trainer’s assistants need teacher’s permission to take part in the session).

A bit more about programme’s quality assurance in Lithuania. Some 6-7 years after the launch of the ZF programme, we found that , in our opinion, it was not that the formerly trained teachers needed to update their knowledge of the programme, but rather to strengthen their motivation to run the programme, to create the feeling that they are a part of a bigger picture, part of ZF family.

So, we decided to organize on a regular basis teachers’ qualification support and refreshment seminars for „old" teachers. There have already been 3 such seminars under different programmes. Now we are planning the 4th seminar for Zippy teachers and the 1st one for Apple’s teachers.

Those seminars for “old” teachers include training, related to the programme and its latest developments and other issues relevant to the teachers themselves. When selecting the topic of the seminar, we collect information from trainers and teachers on what [wɔt] they think they need most of all and what [wɔt] they are interested in. These seminars usually last 6 academic hours and are held in Program Centres.

Every “old” teacher who takes part in the seminar receives a booklet published for that particular seminar.

Speaking about the programme quality assurance, I would also like to add that we have been publishing a series of booklets, called Learning to Cope, for programme implementers – that is, trainers, trainer’s assistants, and teachers. To date, there are 9 publications in this series.

We do our best not to leave the teachers or trainers alone to run the programmes. We want them to feel part of the community of Zippy and Apple. So, we try to involve all of them in various events that we organise.

For example, we held a big event on the occasion of Zippy’s 10 years in Lithuania. Since counties had joined the programme in different years, individual events were organised in the particular county in the respective year.

We celebrated together the 100-thousandth child involved in the programme; then the arrival of Apple Friend’s in Lithuania. We held a joint event with our general sponsor to celebrate 10 years of the sponsorship. Each year, we invite all of our programme schools, trainers, trainer’s assistants and teachers to join a specific activity suggested by us during the annual national event A WEEK WITHOUT BULLYING.

Another part of our work is the inclusion and involvement of parents in the programmes. This is the part which, in my opinion, has been least successful. We have been trying a lot, but we are not happy with the results. Maybe our efforts haven’t been sufficient or not persistent enough.

Every year we organise both free and paid workshops, seminars or lectures for parents on issues relevant to the emotional education of children.

The family of every child participating in the ZF programme receives a Home Activity booklet, which gives general information about the programme and provides guidance to parents on how to strengthen the child's skills and competences acquired in the programme. We have prepared the PowerPoint presentations for teachers on how to introduce both programmes to parents. We have made a number of recommendations for teachers on how to communicate with parents while implementing the programmes. There is also a section on our website for parents (with the Programme's Guide for Parents, Home Activity's booklet and other information for parents).

That’s about all we have done so far to involve the parents. But I myself do not regard these achievements very highly, nevertheless, the parents’ opinion about both Zippy’s and Apple’s Friends and their impact on their children is very good. A couple of years ago, we conducted a survey on how parents assess the effects of Zippy and Apple on their children: 87% of the parents believed that ZF was beneficial to their child and 82% said the same about AF.

Third part of my presentation - programme implementation costs.

Without going into too much details, the programme implementing costs are very clear: *training, publishing and office expenses.* How do we manage them and what [wɔt] are we doing to keep them low?

I’ve talked about our programme centres and volunteers at the beginning. So, the volunteers working for free; premises and IT equipment free of charge at the programme centres; repeated use of material sets based on the library principle – all of this reduces both the training and direct costs.

However, it is difficult to save on publishing, especially if you want to have a nice, high quality and lasting publication. But we do our best to look for cost-efficient options.

Speaking about our office maintenance costs, we work with a small, motivated and loyal team, we work hard and we use the available resources very efficiently (not to say our salary is lower than the national average).

The important issue of money which is highly relevant to everyone.

How have we, as an NGO, been able to run and develop the programmes for so many years? Well, we’ve had both good and bad days. For the last 8 years our financial situation has been rather stable.

Our revenues for the present include 3 main sources:

1. about 1/3 (one third) of our total income comes from our general sponsor (who has been supporting ZF for as many as 11 years);
2. the remaining part can be divided into two halves and consists of
3. programmes participants’ fees
4. and money received from the Ministry of Education which purchases our services of running ZF and AF (this money covers part of the cost).

We also receive some support from private persons and some financing through municipal projects.

And I hope, that our experience, which I shared with you will be useful to your organization.

Thank you for your attention and I’ll be happy to answer your questions if there are any.

*Aurelija Okunauskienė*

Vaiko Labui

Šv. Ignoto str. 5,

LT-01144 Vilnius

Lithuania

aurelija.ok@vaikolabui.lt

[www.vaikolabui.lt](http://www.vaikolabui.lt)