

PETNICA SCIENCE CENTER
INNOVATIVE SUPPORT TO GIFTED
STUDENTS AND ENTHUSIASTIC TEACHERS

IDEASS SERBIA

Innovation for Development and South-South Cooperation



Introduction

By Vigor Majić

Petnica is the name of a small village on the beautiful hills of Western Serbia. There in 1982 a group of young people not satisfied with existing educational practice founded the Petnica Science Center (PSC) as new experimental institution. The main goal of the Center is to search for curious boys and girls, mostly high-school students in age group 14-18, who are highly motivated and interested in science, humanities, and new technologies much above the level of curricula in regular public schools. Using no marks, without rigid discipline, but with flexible programs, interactive teaching, with no regional, ethnical or social limits for students, with a young staff supported by a thousand enthusiastic scientists and teachers, the PSC is not just the focal point of Serbia complementary education, but is one of a very few attractive places in an impoverished and divided Balkans. Here, the young people can feel freedom, happiness, understanding, and the tidal waves of the new century. Parallel to the various types of students training programs, Petnica Center is very engaged in teacher training activities, servicing more than 500 primary and secondary schools in the region.



Learning Through Research is, probably, the most important idea behind the most of programs in Petnica. Here, a methodology of research work is used as a tool in development of students' thinking skills in observing and "attacking" a broad spectrum of problems. This way participants of PSC programs study by "discovering" various relationships, structures or models under the supervision of more experienced researchers.

PSC is a non-governmental organization receiving economic support from several state funds, but mostly through sponsorships and donations from private sector. A small young team of 20 professionals is running the complete program. The team keep contact with over 1,000 guest teachers and lecturers who are famous scientists, university professors and prominent researchers, plus more than 200 "student associates", university students and Petnica alumni, who play an important role in the PSC's educational environment.

Every year the Petnica Science Center offers over a hundred training programs, camps, seminars, and workshops to a vast network of about a thousand primary and secondary schools in Serbia and neighbor countries. From January through December more than 2,000 students (age 13-19) and almost 1,000 school teachers take part in some of these programs that encompass many fields of science and technology: from astronomy and physics, to mathematics and computer science, from biology and chemistry to geology, geography, and electronics, from archaeology and anthropology to psychology and linguistics.

During these last 24 years more than 25,000 students and 6,000 teachers, visiting instructors, and scientists experienced its camps and courses. Focusing promotion of modern science and technologies, as well as humanities, with support of more than 800 professional scientists and university teachers who spend many days as volunteers by giving lectures or conducting discussions and experiments with hundreds of the best students from Serbia and other countries every year, the PSC represents one of a few spontaneously generated institutions in the world that promotes new methods and future technology in education.

The majority of PSC programs and services are free of charge for the participants, student or teacher. The majority of programs cover entire country plus the most of neighbouring countries: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Slovenia and others.

Since the very beginning Petnica attracts attention of many international foundations. So far Petnica has been supported by HESP Budapest, Swiss Development Agency (SDC), UNESCO, UNICEF, European Commission, Canadian Development Agency (CIDA), Kultur Kontakt Austria, Fund for Open Society, The British Council, and others.



What problem does it solve?

In Serbia interest in studying sciences decreased approximately five times in the past fifteen years while more than half of the best researchers and lecturers have left the country for various reasons. In the last ten years the great part of the schools did not purchase even a single instrument for scientific education. Inadequate science education and not-too-enthusiastic public attitude toward science and technology are characteristics of the entire world not only of "the undeveloped south". In undeveloped or developing countries, however, this problem appears to be more prominent because of effects like brain-drain, distance from main scientific centres, old-fashioned teaching methods and tools. The problem becomes even more upsetting when we realize that most of decision making and legislative bodies are occupied by scientifically illiterate people discussing issues like sustainable development,

genetically modified food, green house effect, nuclear power-plants or strategies of scientific and technological development. All countries need solid science policy, now more than ever. Unfortunately, number of citizens competent for creating such a policy is gradually decreasing.

The general solutions of these problems are greater investment in school system, universities, educational infrastructure, media coverage of science and education topics, new technologies in education, establishing and improvement of science museums. Although these solutions cost a lot of money, they are indispensable because they target entire population. However, significant improvement can also be made by targeting relatively small but extremely important group – gifted, highly motivated, and learning oriented young people of pre-university age.





The solution offered by the PSC are to organize top extracurricular training for motivated and capable young people from schools all over the country, especially from country side areas, and to teach them thinking skills, scientific and research methods and train them to recognize real problems and to try to solve them. Investing in talented young people interested in science and new technologies and able for critical thinking could make great impact on the future of entire population.

It is possible to resume in three points the essence of PSC experience. First, this innovative institution helps hundreds of schools (mostly secondary schools, i.e. grades 8+) to solve the problems of students who need more than the school can offer them, especially in the field of science and technologies where the optimal combination of modern technical facilities (laboratories, equipment, libraries) and well educated enthusiastic teachers is difficult to be achieved. With Petnica Center there is no need for such students to change school, but they can once, twice, or several times a year spend a couple of days taking part in intensive training activities out of school at the place where such facilities exist.

Second, such profiles of students (gifted and demanding students) generate future national elite of innovators (as creative and productive scientists, engineers, doctors, public workers, etc.). If we can expand their knowledge and experience with applicable skills and tools before academic (university) training, we can prepare them to use university facilities and environment in much more efficient way and to become more successful and efficient in their future professional work.

Third, Petnica Center as independent institution, could be more flexible and efficient in teacher training activities especially in science and technologies - areas where up-to-date knowledge and information much be shared to educators, where is no time to wait until top level authorities "give permission" or advice to schools and teachers to pay attention on something. This is not case just in some areas of fast changing scientific knowledge or new technical products, but it is much more important in the field of new teaching methods.

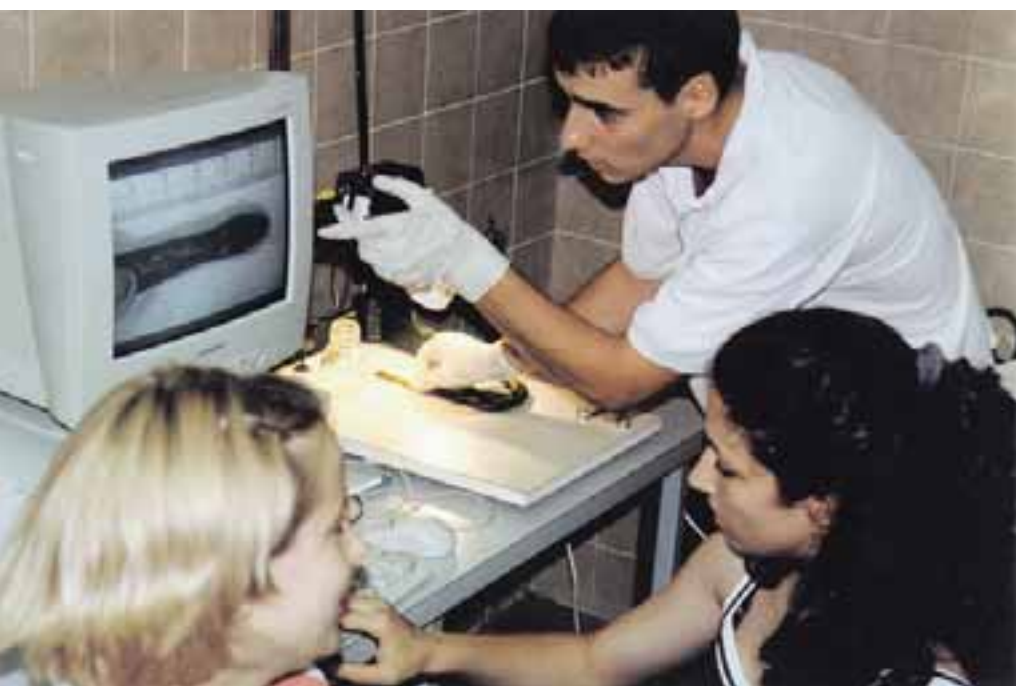
Moreover, the case that there is an organization where both students courses and teacher training exist is very rare in the world. The Petnica Center has many advantages of such opportunity. Here, we can just mention that teachers can be involved in students training to "feel" effects and response of some specific new teaching methods. Well developed communication with students and alumni can be easily and successfully used in evaluation and fine "tuning" of some new innovative teaching methods and techniques in order to be adapted to real needs, style, and "language" of specific students' generation.



Petnica is a center where hundreds of extraordinary motivated students every year get a chance to do something for their own education and to learn through research. Staff and associates of the Center created a method for development of critical thinking and interdisciplinary cooperation that can help in changing of the socio-economic and cultural profile the society by stimulating the most promising young people to search for information, to evaluate it critically, to exchange ideas and to be tolerant, communicative and

flexible, able to see, describe and solve wide range of problems and challenges. With no preconceptions and no model, the PSC became a flexible, future-oriented project with tremendous influence not only on teaching practice in schools, but on the entire evolution of science, technology, and social development of the country.

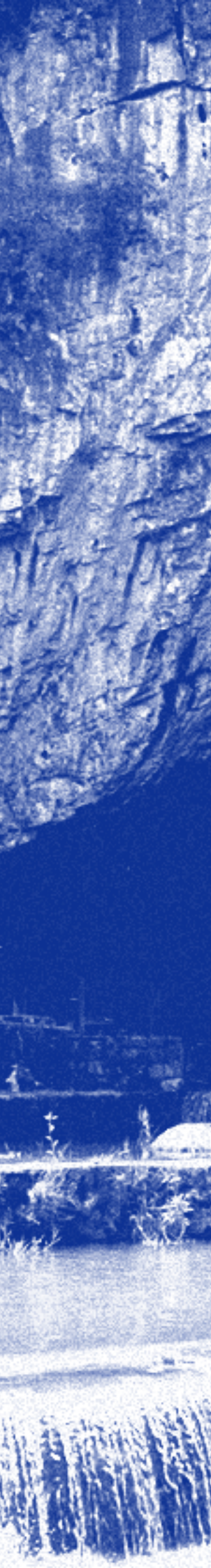
Although it was designed mostly for students, Petnica is well known among Serbian educational institutions, for its specialized courses and



workshops designed for school teachers. The Center carries out teachers' training for hundreds of science, technology and humanities teachers every year in the same stimulating environment as for the students and that way indirectly influence tens of thousands of students. Teachers' training programs in Petnica, have a few important advantages in comparison to the "classical" seminars for teachers. The most important features of such programs are active participation of all teachers, individually oriented practical work and interaction between teachers in the group.

Compared to others centers for out-of-school science education, PSC is orientated more towards the harmonious expansion of the educational system and the entire society and not to the methodology that identifies "super students" or "small geniuses". PSC methodology is striving to stimulate student's personal interest and curiosity for the simple learning's pleasure. Petnica Center does not prepare students for competitions nor delivers diplomas or other formal assets. All Petnica students are attending seminars and workshops because of their motivation to learn more. Such a target group is significantly broader and results are certainly more vital for the society. The real outcomes of Petnica programs are that students are becoming significantly more self-confident, critical and systematic in work and inferring of conclusions, more capable to "dig" necessary information, to precisely express their thoughts and attitudes and finally more aware of responsibility for their own education.





Petnica has more than twenty years of experience and nearly 2,000 programs for 40,000 students and teachers, during this time there were many outcomes than allowed to give an excellent qualitative evaluation of the practices realized: between our alumni increase the interest in science careers; a great number of Petnica student reach high levels in post University degree, becomes researcher, won international awards and when they became University students or professionals continued to collaborate as voluntary teachers with the institution.

We can say that the mission of the Petnica is to support the education system thought promoting rational thinking through extracurricular advanced education in science and technology among motivated students and teachers. One side function is to identify gifted and talented young people, especially students from small and provincial schools and from underprivileged areas, and to give them additional support and quality knowledge and life skills.

The main goals of Petnica Science Center programs are:

- to identify gifted secondary-school and university students interested in science and to give them intensive extracurricular education,
- to enable students to learn while working on real scientific projects under the supervision of professional scientists and science teachers,
- to raise students' motivation, learning abilities and the level of communication,
- to instruct young science teachers on how to apply up-to-date scientific concepts, knowledge, educational methods and technology,
- to help educators to keep pace with demanding but unavoidable new technologies,
- to initiate co-operation and exchange of experiences and ideas among students of different programs and from different schools and
- to establish rich international and intercultural contacts and co-operation among young people, students and teachers.

Such a work, lasting for 24 years now, would not be possible without strong support of numerous associate institutions, network of junior and senior associates, valuable advisory teams and many domestic and international donators attracted by advantageous work of Petnica Science Center. PSC has made large network of associates and associate organizations and today successfully co-operates with:

- Seventy research institutions in Serbia and over a hundred worldwide including the Academy of Science as well as all Serbian universities.
- Hundreds of primary and secondary schools in seven countries in the region. PSC co-operates with almost 90% of general and vocational secondary schools in Serbia.
- There are over 1,500 associates worldwide including both old prominent academics and intellectuals and fresh young researchers.





Petnica Science Center in practice

Petnica Center is located 7 km from the city of Valjevo in W. Serbia, about 70 km SW from Belgrade. Valjevo is well connected by buses and trains with Belgrade as well as with many destinations in Serbia. Valjevo is connected with good roads with Croatia (100 km), Bosnia and Herzegovina (80 km), Macedonia (400 km), Hungary (250 km), Bulgaria (300 km), and Romania (250 km).

Petnica Science Center has relatively good facilities, both boarding and educational, to accommodate students enrolled in the programs all year round. The Center has seven buildings for an extension of 4,000 square meters, which serve various purposes.



The dormitory has 100 beds for students in 4 and 6-bed rooms and several apartments for teachers and guest lecturers. The restaurant serves all living in students.

There are classrooms, laboratories for biology, geology, physics, chemistry, electronics, astronomy, optics, and archaeology, a modern computer classroom, and a central library with scientific literature (40,000 books and journals). There are hundreds of movies and rich image archive with about half a million slides, most of which are on digital media, which allow quick and reliable viewing. The library is the center of many educational and other activities, considering the fact that PSC pays attention to directing young people to use various information sources. Students and the staff have free access to a number of computers linked with the Internet and powerful Intranet services.

The fact that most of the equipment is used both for professional scientific work on some of the projects which PSC is pursuing simultaneously with its educational programs, enables the students to study real scientific processes and even to be involved in them, facing all practical problems and difficulties. Through carefully designed projects students are in the rare position to “experience science”. Therefore, PSC can be described as a “scientific environment” i.e. a special ambient where young people are surrounded by scientific literature and instruments, live research activities, and advised by professional scientists. Moreover, this environment promotes a valuable interaction among young people of similar talents, interests and problems. This illustrates one unique and valuable aspect of education in Petnica - learning through research.



Targeting groups are teenagers (mostly secondary-school students, age 14-18) up to 70%, university students up to 10% and schoolteachers up to 20%.

The majority of programs cover entire country plus the most of neighbouring countries: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Slovenia and others.

The basic idea of Petnica programs is to enable motivated students to learn through research.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Selection of participants is once a year, PSC publish information about the following year's programs including application guide and forms and distribute it to about 600 schools. After a deadline, special selection team spend 2-4 days in order to choose inviting participants for students' programs. Teachers interesting in in-service training courses are informed through specialized media, teachers' associations, and through regional department of the Ministry of Education.



TYPES OF PROGRAMS AND TRAINING METHODS

The annual educational cycle in Petnica consists of four seminars lasting 3-13 days where students assist to selected lectures. Concerning the specific programs, there is a distinction of the number of participants: there are 120-150 Multi-day training programs from mid January through mid December (3-7 day training courses and workshops; 4-10 day student's courses with theoretical and practical activities; 10-20 day summer science camps; 4-10 day field camps; out of Petnica, in specific fields such as Geology, Archaeology, Observation astronomy, Biology, Environment studies). There are about 2,000 students, plus 600 participants for teacher training courses and a number of 2-3 day conferences and presentation meetings, each year.

Students are able to come several times in total up to 32 days a year and than can apply in following year to participate at more programs. Students have opportunity to make individual research projects in various fields and topics in order to learn and practice research methodology on real problems. Petnica Center actively participates in international students' exchange, enabling brilliant students from provincial schools to take part in prominent international science camps, gatherings, or conferences and has unique Teachers' Resource Center opened for individual teachers or teachers groups with selected material covering many aspects of school practice. Petnica's alumni (ex-participants) have furthermore increased the role in development of PSC's programs.

PARTICIPATING COSTS

Half of students training courses (Winter courses and Summer courses/camps) have certain students participation on voluntarily basis up to 25% of real cost of the program. Other students' programs are absolutely free of charge (participants have to pay transportation to and from city of Valjevo). Some of teacher training programs include participation (about 50-80 US\$ per three-day course that include complete boarding costs and work). Some teacher training programs are sponsored or supported by other programs or organizations and, consequently, free of charge for participants.

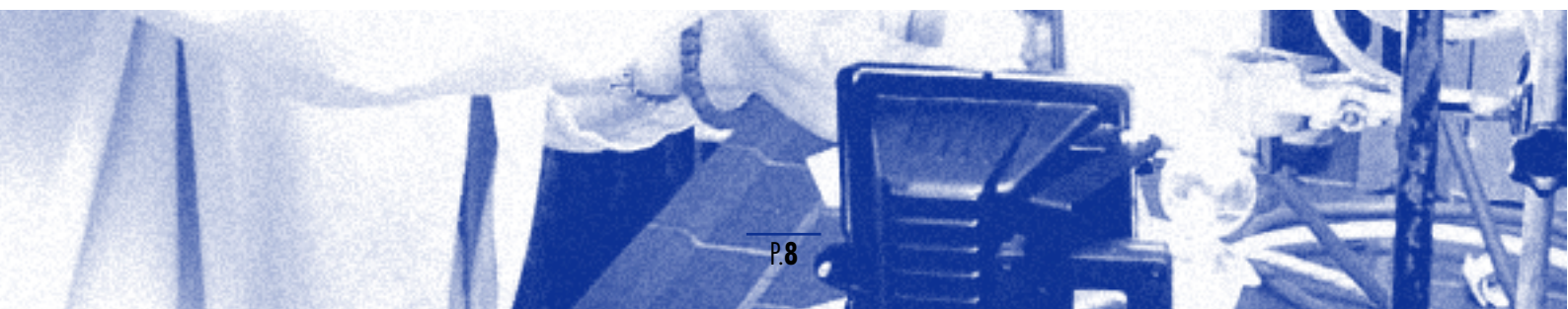
Something different from existing school practice

- FLEXIBLE EDUCATION designed to fulfil individual needs, talents and capabilities;
- INNOVATIVE EDUCATION that transfers actual scientific discoveries, theories & problems into a comprehensive curriculum and better teaching processes;
- EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EDUCATION that makes no distinction among genders, different social, ethnic or religion groups;
- EDUCATION FOR THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY that increases students' mutual understanding, tolerance, friendship, and respect for diversity; education that avoids conflicts among groups or individuals; education against political extremism, intolerance, xenophobia, racism, and violence;
- STUDENTS PARTICIPATION in the creation and realization of the curriculum as a whole;
- EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE that prepares students to recognize the power, opportunity, and risks of modern science and technologies, and to think more about future;
- BIDIRECTIONAL EDUCATION where teachers increase their knowledge and experience in continual interaction with curious and motivated students, and where each student has a chance to teach other students in the field he/she has more knowledge

When students come in Petnica for the second, third or fourth year in the row, they are getting ever more demanding and complex research problems. Parallel to research practice they become involved into instruction and teaching process of less experienced and younger colleagues.

Petnica Science Center has 15 programs divided into 3 departments. All programs have independent seminars and courses, but departments often organize mutual workshops for all their programs. Some methodological topics occasionally require multidisciplinary approach and mutual seminars for participants of all 15 programs.

Department of Anthropology	Dept. of Earth and Life Sciences	Dept. of Physical Sciences and Mathematics
Archaeology Anthropology History Linguistics Psychology	Biology Chemistry Geology Human Biochemistry Environmental Science	Astronomy Computer Science Electronics Mathematics Physics





Except for secondary-school students, Petnica developed courses for schoolteachers also. Petnica Science Center is the leading organization for secondary-school teachers' training in Serbia today. There are two main advantages of Petnica as a place for teachers' programs: unique teachers' resource center and an opportunity that teachers experience training at the same place and the same time as their students do. During the courses teachers get intensive training in both theoretical and practical know-how. Work in small groups enables participants to adjust dynamics and activities to their own pace and preferences. In the contrast to classical teachers' training programs, always organized as one-way transfer of information and suggestions, Petnica builds its training programs on the exchange of teacher's ideas and extensive use of their quiet enthusiasm.

Petnica does not issue diplomas or certificates for students, participants of its programs. We estimate that motivation of young people is quite different when we exclude all unnecessary rankings of students and formal recognitions. Without school marks they learn because of the learning itself and enjoy it. The very process of discovery is the most attractive and the most exciting part of learning through research. However, we require students to detail planning, writing reports or endless correcting of the final text also. The only way to raise the level of self-confidence is to finish the job completely.

Financing of an independent center for out-of-school science education is an issue completely relying on the country and the abilities of the local community. Therefore it shouldn't be generalized. In the more developed countries similar programs are either commercial (paid by participants or their schools) or supported by private foundations and big companies and corporations. Unfortunately, in poor or developing countries neither students could pay the full price of the program, nor there are big companies or private foundations interested in activities of this kind.

Since the beginning Petnica Science Center has relayed a great deal on public (state) funds and international grants, although in the last few years there is significant increase of income from local foundations, from schools, and from small commercial activities. Our institutional annual budget is about 0.6 million US\$. It is expected that in a two or three of years Petnica's budget will stabilize its internal structure reaching the optimal balance where one third will come from public funds, one third from independently funded projects and grants, and one third from commercial activities and Petnica Alumni Foundation. A typical annual budget structure of the Petnica Center is given on the chart below.





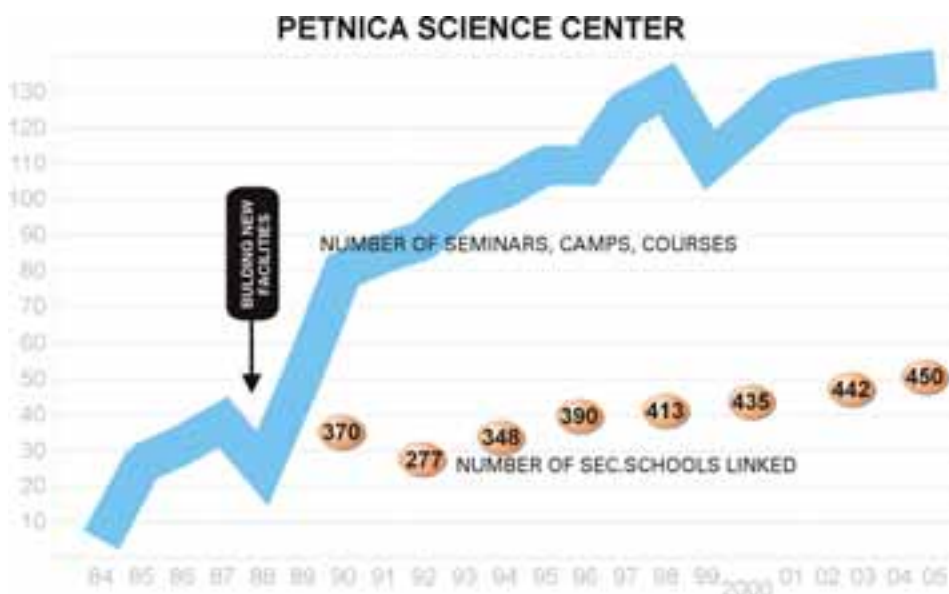
Results

The most important results of Petnica activities are related with quality in teaching and pleasure of learning, like the increased self-confidence or more critical thinking.

In favour to such impacts, we can consider some positive results:

- More than 38,000 students attended Petnica SC's programs since 1983.
- More than 4,000 teachers from about 350 schools, over a total of 450 in all the country, took part in in-service training programs in Petnica.
- Since 1982 Petnica SC had organized more than 2,000 courses, workshops, and science camps.
- Petnica SC students realized and published nearly a thousand research papers.

- Nearly five hundred of Petnica alumni have received masters and doctoral degrees in science, technology, and humanities.
- A number of teenagers, Petnica SC's participants won international awards for secondary-school research achievements. More than 80% of internationally awarded students from Serbia have been Petnica SC's participants or alumni.
- Although the interest in science careers has gradually decreased in the past fifteen years, number of applicants for Petnica SC programs constantly increases,
- Interest for Petnica programs of students and teachers from other countries in the region and abroad is increasing year by year,



- Petnica Center became an important partner for the most state and regional organizations and bodies when discussing topics such as science education, development of human resources, new teaching methods, innovations, or reform of education.

International interest

Activities of Petnica Science Center attracted international attention of several different subjects.

STUDENTS

Organizations for out-of-school science education are very rare in the world in spite of increasing role of science and technology in economic development. Science contests, fairs, or Olympiads are mostly focused on repetition of memorized school knowledge or small science projects designed and made in many cases by teachers. Students programs organized by Petnica Center are very popular by teenagers in SE Europe because of serious hard work in free and relaxing atmosphere.

TEACHERS

The majority of in-service teacher training programs are controlled by government or school authorities and anchored with existing curricula. The most of such programs are with too many participants (hundreds, even up to 3,000 in single room!) to enable free discussion or practical elements. Small, flexible, and liberal training programs in Petnica with small groups of up to 25 teachers are welcome by schools and teachers. Teachers are also very curious to see innovative atmosphere where their students are coming.

FOUNDATIONS

Since the very beginning Petnica attracts attention of many international foundations. So far Petnica has been supported by HESP Budapest, Swiss Development Agency (SDC), UNESCO, UNICEF, European Commission, Canadian Development Agency (CIDA), Kultur Kontakt Austria, Fund for Open Society, The British Council, and others.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

PSC is recognized as a symbol of quality and experience in many universities and organizations specialized in gifted education or in innovative science teaching such as University of Goettingen, The Johns Hopkins University, MIT, The Weizmann Institute, etc. Lecturers from Petnica are welcomed to all educational events in the region. Exchange of information and ideas on the regular basis between Petnica and its fellow institutions is a corner stone of future co-operation in the region.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Petnica Science Center is linked with a number of international societies concerning science education like IOSTE, ICASE, ECSITE, NYEX, and others.

Working language in Petnica programmes is Serbian and because of its similarity with other Slavic languages, participants are mostly from the countries of the region, which permits them to attend activities without serious difficulties. Some camps and workshops have been realized in English, intentionally for joint work of international and domestic participants.





■ To implement Science Centers in other countries

Petnica-like organizations are always valuable supplement to existing educational system. However, although such centers are fairly easy to establish, they appear to be very hard to sustain because of the lack of the public sensitivity to issues of extracurricular science education. Rich international contacts and active co-operation with similar organizations worldwide are, therefore, very important for the existence and development of all such centers.

The crucial needs for begin a PSC like experience are:

- The essential point in developing similar experience designed on the PSC path is to reach the declared interest of the national educational authorities, universities, teachers associations, and leading schools of the country.
 - A pool of associates among scientists and school's teachers is essential for realize the activities. Majority of Petnica Science Center associates are volunteers or people engaged on small honoraria basis.
- To build a strong relation with a great number of school in the country. Real interest in science and motivation for individual work are not always spread among students. If you want to achieve high quality and coherence within a group of students, you should target by the program at least hundred schools.
 - Find the cooperation and the engagement of the university students coursing faculties of science. The most valuable group of associates (technical assistants, advisors, critics and instructor) are university students. They easily realize how much they personally can learn by helping others to do so.
 - Try to find an interesting location keeping in mind that it may expand later. Boarding facilities are essential for many-day courses and programs. Petnica's experience shows that one should plan minimum 40 students/teachers at the same time (because of expected interactions, team work, and social activities) but not more than one hundred (because of individually-oriented activities). Outdoor activities need some free land and local environment attractive for small students' or teachers' projects.



- Good technical facilities like modern laboratories, big library, computer network, field-work equipment are important but not crucial for beginning in the implementation of the experience.

In the beginning be carefully with too many “good will advisers and councillors” who can make mess of inconsistent ideas and initiatives. It could be very good to make an “initial task force” consisted of a couple of enthusiastic teachers, a couple of gifted university students and youth

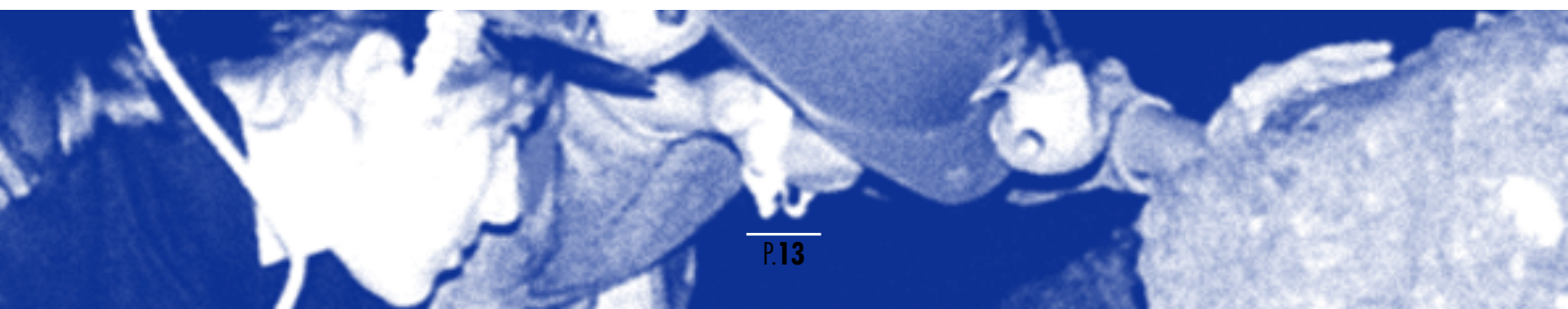
activists, a couple of experienced and skilled people who can cover areas of financing, legal issues, capital investments, purchasing, public relation, staff engagement, etc. Starting concepts and expectations must be very clear.

A few practical tips concerning opportunities and some typical problems expected in establishing Petnica-like type of programs:

- A center could start with small number of programs in order to take experience and establish internal coherence and co-ordination. There is no need for expensive facilities and sophisticated laboratory equipment. The critical parameter is number of involved enthusiasts.
- The spirit and the methodology adopted are essential: intensive problem oriented work and a lot of motivated and enthusiastic people always create stimulating surrounding and conditions for the research.



- Is suggested to avoid giving awards, diplomas or any other type of formal recognition to the participants. They are supposed to work for their own intellectual benefit. If you introduce inadequate external motivation, you would unavoidably change population applying for the program.
- Be informed what other similar programs and organizations are doing. Do not hesitate to include somebody from abroad in the initiative team. Invest some money and time in training staff, visits, and study travel. Advanced teaching in these areas always requires international co-operation from institutions, organizations or foundations concerned with science or education at least through exchange of ideas and information.





To learn more

Petnica has rich publishing activity so there are many available publications describing concept of the Science Center and mechanism of its functioning. Web site of Petnica Science Center also contains a lot of information about Petnica activities and results of students work. Organizations or foundations that Petnica has co-operated with have publications and reports where one can find more information about the Center and realization of particular projects. Finally, any Internet search engine can give hundreds of links to articles and reports about the Center.

www.psc.ac.yu, the Petnica official Web site

- Petnica Papers, the edition published by Petnica Science Center
- Petnica, the almanac of Petnica Science Center (in English)
- The Petnica Science Center, V. Majić, Science Education Newsletter, 152, The British Council, 2000, pp. 1-3
- Petnica Science Center – A model for an Institution of Extracurricular Science Education, S. Verbić, V. Majić, Science Education International, Vol. 13, n° 3, September 2002,

Contacts

Petnica SC makes the accumulated experience and its knowledge available for all countries interested in implementation of similar centers, and is ready to provide them with necessary methodological indications and technical assistance.

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The IDEASS Programme – Innovation for Development and South-South Cooperation – is part of the international cooperation Initiative ART. IDEASS grew out of the major world summits in the 1990s and the Millennium General Assembly and it gives priority to cooperation between protagonists in the South, with the support of the industrialised countries.

The aim of IDEASS is to strengthen the effectiveness of local development processes through the increased use of innovations for human development. By means of south-south cooperation projects, it acts as a catalyst for the spread of social, economic and technological innovations that favour economic and social development at the local level. The innovations promoted may be products, technologies, or social, economic or cultural practices. For more information about the IDEASS Programme, please consult the website: www.ideassonline.org.

IDEASS

Innovation for Development and South-South Cooperation



ART - Support for territorial and thematic networks of co-operation for human development - is an international co-operation initiative that brings together programmes and activities of several United Nations Agencies. ART promotes a new type of multilateralism in which the United Nations system works with governments to promote the active participation of local communities and social actors from the South and the North. ART shares the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the interested countries, ART promotes and supports national co-operation framework programmes for Governance and Local Development - ART GOLD. These Programs create an organized institutional context that allows the various national and international actors to contribute to a country's human development in co-ordinated and complementary ways. Participants include donor countries, United Nations agencies, regional governments, city and local governments, associations, universities, private sector organizations and non-governmental organizations.

It is in the framework of ART GOLD Programmes where IDEASS innovations are promoted and where cooperation projects are implemented for their transfer, whenever required by local actors.