

Third lesson, Városligeti English-Hungarian Bilingual Primary School, Budapest: // Tamás Kovalcsik uses hands-on examples in a discussion with pupils about how they can become more energy-conscious at school and at home.



What children can teach us: see energy in a new way

Internet quicklink → 602

Energy for Children is E.ON's first groupwide community involvement program. Its objective is to improve children's education and develop their understanding of energy so they can grow up treating resources and environment with respect and responsibility. At the same time, it is also a step towards transforming society's attitudes towards energy in general.

E.ON supports a number of projects, and its involvement varies in each country according to the societal and educational context. In Germany, E.ON has started its lighthouse project, Education for Sustainable Development in kindergartens, with ANU (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Natur und Umweltbildung, Germany's leading sustainable education organization). The initial phase of training is now under way. By 2012, the project aims to support education in sustainability, energy and the environment in around 4,000 kindergartens and day-care centers—that's around ten percent of such establishments in Germany.

E.ON's community involvement also extends to Hungary: Peter Havas, educational psychologist, honorary president of "Körlanc," the Hungarian association for environmental education and an adviser for E.ON Hungária's Energy for Children project, tells us what he and the children involved have learned.

Mr. Havas, you've played an important role in promoting environmental education for children and even added it to the national curriculum in Hungarian schools. Why do you think energy is important enough to become part of the curriculum?

Because lifelong knowledge and personal habits develop from the earliest age. Children have to be more sensitive to, and responsible about, energy usage. They need a more realistic view of nature and the value of energy. I think that children's vision of their man-made environment has to include energy production, finite and renewable energy sources, energy transport, and the advantages and disadvantages of different technologies.

Are those topics really of interest to children?

Definitely. Children are curious about the past, present and future. It is a great adventure for them to explore. Energy is invisible, which makes it magical and mysterious to small children. They see it as an attribute of the heroes in stories, comics, and movies. As they grow older, they assume energy is somehow connected with fashion, tools, behaviors, or food and drinks. The school curriculum, particularly in science classes like physics, presents energy as an abstract physical phenomenon. It's everyday experience that teaches young people that energy has something to do with electricity, gas, and heat.

What was the most pleasant surprise you've experienced so far when discussing energy issues with children?

The most pleasant surprise was that young children regard energy as a part of the human character. Teenagers on the other hand can explore the value of energy—and how to conserve it.

And the most unpleasant surprise?

The assumption of young children that energy is a dark, scary power that elicits anger and fear.

Why focus your work on children? It's the adults who decide which products are bought, which politicians are elected, and which energy sources are used.

That's true, but I see the school and classroom as real and determining places for childhood and early adulthood. They construct much of the personal knowledge, shape the moral foundation and character of pupils, develop their competencies. On top of that, children can also affect their parents' attitudes and habits. I've heard from parents that their children came home from our lessons, switching off computers and lamps when they're not needed anymore and avoiding the standby mode of electronic devices. The same is true for waste management and water consumption. They bring a new, positive attitude to their families' households, whose introduction is not always conflict-free, but fruitful nonetheless.

As an experienced environmentalist, what made you partner with E.ON in this project?

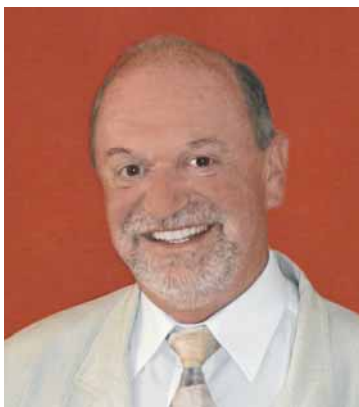
To me, E.ON Hungária is a positive example of a company that really wants to take part in social development and lives up to its responsibility for the future. This is not typical consumer service—it represents a new generation of firms of the 21st century.

How does energy education in the project actually work?

EnergiaKaland is an effective, unique and contemporary learning and teaching tool. It's free, available to all, and incorporates the latest ideas about effective learning and teaching using the latest technology. It offers an effective interaction between children and the local environment, adapting the most appropriate learning method for different schools, teachers and classrooms, building on the solid base of the National Core Curriculum.

Having taught children about energy issues—is there also something that you've learned from them?

The most important thing that I've learned from children is that the meaning of big things lies in their small details. I have to think in terms of small details not just in terms of abstract ideas and broad objectives.



Peter Havas // Educational psychologist and honorary president of "Körlanc"

Supporting older people in need

[Internet quicklink → 419](#)

Energy consultancy for older people is a joint project of Age Concern and E.ON UK

What's the best way to get to the hardest-to-reach whose problems are rarely publicized? Do it together with organizations that have long been in personal contact with these people, know their problems and needs and have their trust. EnergyRight is a joint project run by Age Concern—the U.K.'s largest organization for older people's issues—and E.ON.

EnergyRight offers energy consultancy for those who urgently need it: low-income over-60s. Age Concern volunteers are trained to carry out free home energy audits and give valuable tips on how to use energy more efficiently and reduce electricity bills. Where necessary, they can also help older people to apply for support to finance efficiency improvement measures. In 2008, over 2,000 people were supported through the program. EnergyRight will be continued and extended in 2009. Age Concern and E.ON have been working together in the U.K. for nine years now. It's only one of many projects where E.ON has a long track record of helping vulnerable customers.

Fast assistance

[Internet quicklink → 617](#)

We believe that social responsibility is about deeds, not words. That's why we respond when the regions where we operate are struck by natural disasters. One example was the widespread flooding in east and northeast Romania in July 2008, in which more than 21,000 people lost their homes and a large number of public institutions were destroyed. E.ON reacted swiftly: our two Romanian subsidiaries committed €500,000 in emergency aid, our Romanian employees donated an additional €25,000 and E.ON matched that amount. Altogether, we sent a total of €550,000 to the emergency aid fund for the reconstruction of schools, kindergartens and hospitals. We have since been directly involved in ensuring that this money is used effectively.