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OŠ Ivana Filipovića from Osijek wins ‘Groundwater, guardians of life’ project challenge and earns school trip to Aquatika

This year’s project activities focused on schoolchildren – alongside the quiz, over 600 students participated in interactive workshops organised with partner associations

Omiš, 12 June 2025 – Students from Osnovna škola Ivana Filipovića in Osijek achieved the highest overall score in the “Groundwater, guardians of life” project challenge, a corporate social responsibility initiative by Studenac aimed at raising awareness of the importance of groundwater. The main prize is an educational trip: 50 students will visit Aquatika in Karlovac, Croatia’s only freshwater aquarium, during the next school year. Studenac will cover all travel costs, including organised transport, snacks, water for the journey, meals, a guided aquarium tour, and an interactive workshop.

The quiz was held in May on the project website, with participation from 386 schools across Croatia and over 2,100 quizzes completed. The highest participation was recorded in Zagreb (55 schools), followed by Split (13 schools), Rijeka (10 schools), and Osijek (7 schools). The combination of the largest number of participating students and the highest average score – 22.5 out of 25 correct answers per student – secured a clear victory for Osijek’s OŠ Ivana Filipovića.

“Third-grade students at OŠ Ivana Filipovića actively participated in the ‘Groundwater, guardians of life’ project, launched by Studenac with the support of the Osijek-based association Zeleni Osijek. Through this project, our students had the opportunity to explore the importance of this invisible but vital resource. Groundwater preservation is crucial for everyone’s future as it provides drinking water, supports ecosystems, helps resist climate change, and underpins agriculture and industry, while preventing land subsidence. I am proud of the dedication and engagement of our students, and I believe this project represents an important step toward a more responsible and sustainable future,” said **Zlatko Kraljević**, Principal of OŠ Ivana Filipovića.

In addition to theoretical knowledge gained through the online quiz, students also participated in an educational workshop organised by Studenac in collaboration with Zeleni Osijek, where they developed practical skills and contributed ideas on how to protect groundwater.

“Congratulations from the heart to the students of OŠ Ivana Filipovića for their outstanding results, as well as to the teachers and parents who encouraged teamwork. It is important to educate children on crucial topics early on, while they are forming their own views and interests. Approaching environmental topics in a fun and age-appropriate way is key, which is why we combine learning with motivation, including a joint school trip – because nothing beats the joy of an excursion with classmates,” said **Tatjana Spajić**, Director of Corporate Communications at Studenac.



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The winning school also took part in this year's educational cycle of the "*Groundwater, guardians of life*" project, implemented by Studenac in partnership with local associations. Interactive workshops were conducted for a total of 20 elementary schools, attended by more than 600 students, mainly in lower grades. In Osijek, the workshop was led by Zeleni Osijek, which also highlighted groundwater protection through its independent LIFE RESTORE for MDD project at Bjelobrska Bara.

"Our association values long-term, genuine partnerships with a shared goal – improving the quality of life in our community through systematic activities to protect natural resources. We have maintained such cooperation with Studenac through joint projects, and thanks to the company's financial donations, we can more easily implement our own initiatives, which directly supports our work," said **Mislav Barić**, Project Manager at Zeleni Osijek.

Workshops were also held in Ploče schools and as part of the '*School in Nature*' educational programme for students in Karlovac County. The Karlovac-based association OSMICA, another project partner, led these workshops.

"We have been cooperating with Studenac since last year, and I am thrilled that together we can engage younger generations and show them in a fun way why groundwater is important. It is especially rewarding to see students' interest and enthusiasm – this gives hope that they will care more about this resource and act responsibly," said **Damir Basara**, Secretary of OSMICA, which has been running socially responsible activities in Karlovac for many years.

In Ploče, the Udruga mladih Kolektiv association, which collaborated with Studenac last year during the Neretva river cleanup, organised the workshops. This year, they introduced a new plastic recycling machine for the first time. Students first learned about the importance of recycling for groundwater protection and then participated in melting plastic caps using a specially designed bike, turning them into various items.

"We are grateful to Studenac and OŠ Vladimir Nazor in Ploče for enabling us to showcase our new Neretva Without Plastic initiative. The recycling machines we received from the Institute of Entrepreneurial Education and Innovation and FabLab Croatia allow us to recycle plastics from our cleanup activities, develop new products, and provide fun educational opportunities to encourage students to think about reuse. Ploče was our first stop, and we plan to recycle plastic in other parts of Croatia by the end of the year with this new machine," said **Ivan Gluščević**, Donations and Sponsorship Coordinator at Udruga mladih Kolektiv.

The associations Zeleni Osijek, Udruga mladih Kolektiv, and OSMICA have been project partners since the beginning of "*Groundwater, guardians of life*". Over the past year, together with Studenac, they have implemented various initiatives to raise awareness of groundwater preservation, a resource that supplies 90% of Croatia's drinking water. To support their work further, at the end of 2024, Studenac provided each association with a financial donation of €5,000.



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About the 'Groundwater, guardians of life' project and Studenac's CSR initiatives

Studenac, with more than 1,400 stores, is the largest retail chain in Croatia. Alongside ongoing business growth, the company actively develops a corporate social responsibility strategy to drive positive change in local communities.

In 2020, Studenac launched the "A Step Closer to Nature" program, focused on environmental protection and raising awareness of ecological issues. Within this program, the "Groundwater, guardians of life" project was introduced in 2024 to educate the public and highlight the importance of groundwater as a vital resource for life and ecosystems.

As part of the project, Studenac issued a special series of bottled water, donating part of the proceeds to environmental associations. Additionally, 500 bottles were donated to the GLOBE school competition. Two expert panels on the importance of groundwater were held, and, with the support of employees, partners, and associations, a section of the Neretva riverbank was cleared of ten cubic meters of waste as part of internal initiatives.

The project's activities in 2024 were recognised with prestigious awards, including the Green Butterfly by Večernji list and the Grand PRix by the Croatian Public Relations Association.

This year, the focus is on educating children and youth. In cooperation with the associations Zeleni Osijek, OSMICA from Karlovac, and Udruga mladih Kolektiv from Metković, interactive workshops were organised in 20 elementary schools across Karlovac County, Osijek, and Ploče, involving more than 600 students. Through practical activities such as recycling plastic and drawing superhero guardians of water, students learned about the importance of protecting groundwater. Additionally, a quiz competition involved more than 2,100 students from 386 schools, hosted on the project's website www.podzemnevode.studenac.hr.

Alongside "A Step Closer to Nature", since 2021 Studenac has been running the "A Step Closer to the Community" program to support local communities. Since 2024, this program includes the "Orange Fish" project, focused on providing support to single-parent families.

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