

## PROJECT

### "Equitherapy in support of the disabled child"



My name is Egidija Urbanavičienė. I have worked for 9 years in the European School Brussels 2 (2006-2015).

Now I continue as the director of the Special School "Šilas" in Vilnius for mentally disabled children (7-21 years). I chose this school for mentally disabled children because I evolved as a teacher and gained a lot of experience during my 9 years at EEB2. I would like to enlarge my circle of knowledge about mentally disabled children and I try to organize activities which would excite them, e.g., the horse therapy (also called equitherapy or hippotherapy), art therapy, music therapy, etc. But it must be said that financial resources are lacking. We have already found the money and human resources for art therapy, music therapy (see information on <http://www.silospecialioji.vilnius.lm.lt>) and, in spite of difficulties, we are starting to practice equitherapy on 19 October 2015. I found the horse therapy specialists (from the horse farm "Lietuvos žirgynas" in Riešė, <http://www.lietuvoszirgynas.lt>) and money for two months.

The horse therapy, often called hippotherapy in Lithuania, is a therapeutic treatment, a form of non-conventional, complementary health care, which takes into account the child's physical and psychological entity and uses the horse as a therapeutic partner to achieve the targets set according to the specialty of the therapist.



We have developed benchmarks to use equitherapy for various purposes:

- Therapy (to relax muscles, for body movement, good emotional state, ....);

- didactic education and concentration;
- learning horse care as a profession for the future..

We have chosen this innovative method because, with the precious help of the horse, the equitherapy guides the child and gives him communication tools. The horse shows the path to the child, allowing him to express himself, helping him overcome his fears and anxieties. The animal does not judge, gives no criticism, does not put the child down or force. It allows the little patient to trigger emotions. Moreover, it can contribute to the rehabilitation of posture, balance, motor coordination – problems often present in children with mental disabilities.



The sessions, in which the patient lies down on the back of the animal, are sources of wellness, relaxation, calm and comfort. That is a special moment. The body warmth and the slow breathing of the horse have a soothing and reassuring effect.

Finally, children with mental disabilities regain their motivation and gain confidence in their own abilities.

So we would like to ask you to help obtain financial resources for our project "Horse therapy in supporting the disabled child." We need 1500 - 2000 EUR for organizing a cycle of equitherapy during the school year 2015/2016.

We thank you for your attention and wish you a very good Christmas Fair.

With best regards,

Egidija Urbanavičienė  
Headmaster



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