# Včelí kRaj

## 1. Introduction

Včelí kRaj - the educational center is located near the village of Kokava nad Rimaviciou, in the Liešnica valley in the Stolické Mountains (central Slovakia). Včelí kRaj project started in 2013 as a project of the civic association kRaj. The apiary attracts visitors who are interested in beekeeping in a quiet and clean environment of a traditional farmland. The apiary offers also apitherapy. Traditional folk buildings contribute to the rural character of the apiary and new multifunctional constructions represent innovative conceptions.

## 2. Promoter profile



**First Name**
Dávid

**Last Name**
Turčáni

**Birth Year**
1985

**Gender**
Male

**Education**

Tertiary, doctoral

## 3. Farm Profile















**Address**
Liešnica 1214/7 985 05 Kokava nad Rimavicou-Liešnica

**Country**
Slovakia

**Farm area in hectar**
1.00

**Date of establishment of the farm**
2013

**Date since when the promoter owns/rents the farm**
Tue, 01/01/2013 - 12:00

| NUMBER OF WORKERS | **FAMILY MEMBERS** | **EXTERNAL WORKERS** |
|---|---|---|
| **Full time** | 0 | 1 |
| **Part time** | 0 | 1 |

**Farm description**

The apiary is located in the Liešnica valley that is the local part of the village of Kokava nad Rimavicou. The apiary is not a part of a protected landscape area. Since the 15th century, the landscape had been used for mining and glass production. Later on, the paperwork industry was established. After the Velvet Revolution the industry gradually declined and disappeared. Today's landscape still shows signs of historical industrial land uses. Grasslands and arable land and scattered settlements are used often mainly for recreational purposes. Formations of non-woody vegetation and orchards located in the vicinity of settlements support the diversity of land structures. The apiary owner continues the family beekeeping tradition of more than 60 years. It is nationally and internationally known for its educational activities for people all age groups, experts and non-experts alike.

**Website and social network links**
www.kraj.sk
Facebook

# 4. Multifunctional/sustainable farming and European Agricultural Landscapes (EAL)

**Multifunctional & sustainable farming Key Words**
Social farming
Tourism and recreation related to EAL
Traditional buildings

**Free Text**

Protected landscape areas are more profitable for beekeeping if a beekeeper applies for a trade mark of organic bee products because such bee products are more financially valued. However, this apiary is not located in the protected area. Nevertheless, its business strategy brings positive economic outputs that are being further invested into innovation and new educational activities. The success lies in a high-quality education provided directly at the apiary, primary schools or at seminars and trainings. Experiences are being shared with domestic as well as for foreign visitors on the topics such as beekeeping, eco-beekeeping, and the most recently apitherapy. Creative workshops, bee care experience, bee products tasting and hiking through the traditionally farmed landscape rich in biodiverse grasslands and fruit orchards are increasingly becoming very popular with the public. A fusion of innovative ideas and traditions is visible in the newly build multi-purpose constructions nearby old folk farming buildings that are still well-preserved and will undergo renovation in near future. The modern multi-purpose building will be used for educational purposes as well as for apitherapy. Its spatial disposition, material and features show deep understanding of cultural landscape values. The owner takes great care of the whole apiary, thus greatly improving the visual quality of the landscape type.

**Advice/Recommendation**

"Bees are not only honey producers but they also have another very important function – they serve as natural pollinators. Our food depends to a large extent on their work. The active management of traditionally used landscapes with grasslands rich in biodiversity and fruit orchards is crucial in providing bees enough food and clean environment. "

# 5. Considerations, skills/competences involved and queries/questions

**General considerations**

A high rate of unemployment as well as many opportunities for multifunctional farming are a

characteristic feature of the Stolické Mountains. Recreational potential of the traditional farmland with scattered settlements is undervalued. Winter recreational activities are quite well developed but without adding value to this landscape type itself. Moreover, this kind of tourism boosts uncontrolled construction of modern recreational buildings, thus disturbing the characteristic appearance of the landscape. Such activities adversely affect agritourism. Therefore, the apiary owner highlights the necessity to manage traditional agricultural landscape in a sustainable way, one which is beekeeping. The owner of the apiary emphasizes that agricultural activities in the region shall be based on traditional farming practices, thus producing organic products of high quality as well as organizing agricultural events. To prove his point, the beekeeper introduced his product "Med Medveď z Liešnice" (honey) that was recognized and marked as the regional product of Gemer-Malohont region. There is a huge potential for bee products to reach the local as well as national market. Moreover, the apiary represents a symbiosis between modern and traditional architecture – a move that would be supported in revitalization efforts concerning other similar farms as well. The owner uses the historical oven for bread baking for baking home-made products like pizza. Furthermore, it should be noted that old farming buildings build in the local architectural style were renovated and a new building was constructed featuring carefully selected typical features of the local architectonic style as well as innovative design features, thus creating a unique and nice multifunctional building.

| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
|---|---|
| • Quiet and unpolluted environment.<br>• Tourist attraction all year round. | • Abandoned or only rarely used homesteads and overgrown land.<br>• Weak recreational infrastructure in the vicinity and in the village of Kokava nad Rimavicou (also features decaying sites) alike. |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| • Education activities at primary schools may spark interest in the young generation in beekeeping.<br>• Educational activities attract visitors from other regions and from abroad. | • Residents moving out from the countryside (reason is low living standard due to unemployment).<br>• Bee diseases could heavy impact all related activities on the farm. |

# Keywords

**EAL Keywords**

Farmland

**Farming Key words**
Beekeeping

**Main Training/Skills/Competences**

The apiary owner used his knowledge of ecology and environment gained from his study at the university as well as passed down from previous generations (over 60 years of tradition) to establish educational activities in the apiary. Finances from a grant were used for the further development of apiculture business, and income from educational activities financed the renovation of the apiary. Currently, the owner also focuses on apitherapy. The apiary cooperates with primary schools in order to establish a relationship between children and the art of making living with one's own hands - beekeeping. On top of the high quality education the project has an international impact as well as demonstrated by the presence of foreign visitors at educational events (and some of them regularly return). Since 2017, further educational activities on the traditional land use have started at the apiary and the surroundings. The activities also include an "open classroom project" where children can see domestic animals while listening to the explanation of ecological relations between pollinators and the landscape quality.

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**Queries/Questions**

- Do you think that an apiary established in a protected area can further develop its business activities?

- Which activities would be organized by an apiary to carry out active landscape management activities that are important for the preservation of distinctive features of the landscape as well as functional ecological relations and biodiversity?


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