

About Association Bioteka

Bioteka is a civil society organization for promotion of biology and related sciences. We are based in Zagreb, Croatia and are one of the pioneers of science popularization in this part of Europe.

Since our inception in 2010, our primary mission has been to democratize access to science, focusing on the most pressing issues of our time. As a forward-thinking civil society organization, we relentlessly promote scientific thought and methods for all layers of modern society. Our efforts span various levels, from conducting workshops and educational camps for school children to educating educators, creating captivating popular science content both online and in print, and mobilizing volunteers and active citizens throughout the country.

Bioteka transcends the conventional definition of a non-governmental organization; we stand as a driving force for transformative change, collaborating actively with all three societal sectors (private businesses, public institutions, and the civil society). We thrive in the art of making science accessible to a broad audience, as well as relatable and intriguing, igniting a deep passion for scientific exploration.



Most recently, with a commitment to innovative and high-quality STEM education, we place our focus on addressing critical challenges like biodiversity loss, nature and environmental preservation, climate change, more women and equity in the STEM fields, the rise of artificial intelligence, efficient use of green technology and architecture, nature-based solutions, sustainable development, public health, food and water, overpopulation, urbanization, and more. Our approach centers around fostering creative and critical thinking, promoting innovation, advocating for contemporary teaching and learning methods and tools, and nurturing volunteering and active citizenship.

With collaborative efforts involving scientists, educational institutions, the private sector, and the public, Bioteka has so far successfully executed over 80 projects of local, national, and international importance. We invite you to join us on this transformative journey of connecting the dots between science and society for a common goal of shaping a sustainable and enlightened world!

Current projects

1. **"GIRLS own STEM"** is a nationwide initiative empowering 50 girls and young women aged 14-18 from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who excel in STEM. With the help of mentors from major Croatian businesses, IT companies, communication and media professionals who volunteer for the project, the girls devise, test, and execute small-scale local projects addressing environmental, economic, and societal challenges (SDGs). The project aims to boost interest in STEM, promote equity in STEM careers, and bridge educational disparities.

Main purpose of the project is to increase inclusion of underrepresented girls in STEM through developing their practical and social skills by helping them work on [their own local STEM projects](#) (the girls receive professional mentoring, but also emotional support and finances to work on their own ideas on helping their local communities grow stronger). We also aim to promote equity in STEM careers and raise STEM's importance and visibility in the public and media.



2. **“The STEM Ambassador's Network”** is a project that provides practical training for individuals of various ages and backgrounds, including high school and STEM university students, private sector STEM professionals, as well as established scientists and educators from Croatian STEM educational institutions for the purpose of helping them get better in communicating science and STEM subjects/fields to the public.



Through extensive 23-month long educational programs, practical work, and trainings we have empowered them to transfer STEM knowledge successfully and effectively to children, youth, and the public. This strengthened their own, but also the capacities of their organizations, companies and institutions for better STEM communication and science popularization, which is the project's primary goal.

From 2021 to 2023, we brought together and guided 25 individuals

aspiring to become STEM ambassadors. We orchestrated comprehensive STEM training for them, which included a STEM education trip to Portugal and an enlightening year-and-a-half-long mentorship program.

We organized two national STEM competitions targeting students aged 9-18, with a focus on devising their own solutions for pressing environmental challenges. As a reward for the top 80 participants, we hosted two 5-day residential STEM camps at a campus in the picturesque Croatian coastline.

Our outreach spanned all 21 Croatian counties, where we actively engaged with more than 4,100 elementary school students and 6,100 adults through immersive STEM workshops, captivating demonstrations, and exciting STEM showcases.



In Zagreb, we conducted 108 STEM workshops specially tailored for underprivileged children aged 6-12, fostering their interest and skills in STEM fields.

Additionally, we published a valuable and pragmatic [STEM manual](#) designed to empower educators with tools and insights for 21st-century education and produced 14 short STEM educative and entertaining [videos](#) for the wider public.

3. "PANDA – project-based learning for gifted students"

Our "Panda Project" is an innovative educational initiative, spanning 7 years now that, in synergy with civil, public, and private sectors, builds activities and teaching methods for gifted children ages 6-12 attending primary school but collaborating with adult experts in different STEM fields. The project methodologically relies on research and project-based learning, encompassing current topics and challenges of the world we live in, such as space research, robotics, molecular genetics, agriculture, smart drugs and medicine, carbon-neutral society, farm animals and pets' welfare, and similar topics.

During project-based research work, that often includes visits to scientific laboratories and technological factories, children learn problem-solving, data collection and interpretation, as well as practical applications of knowledge. Additionally, they are encouraged to engage in creative, collaborative, immersive critical, and analytical thinking to address presented challenges, which, in turn, enhances their self-confidence, patience, empathy, social skills and teamwork.

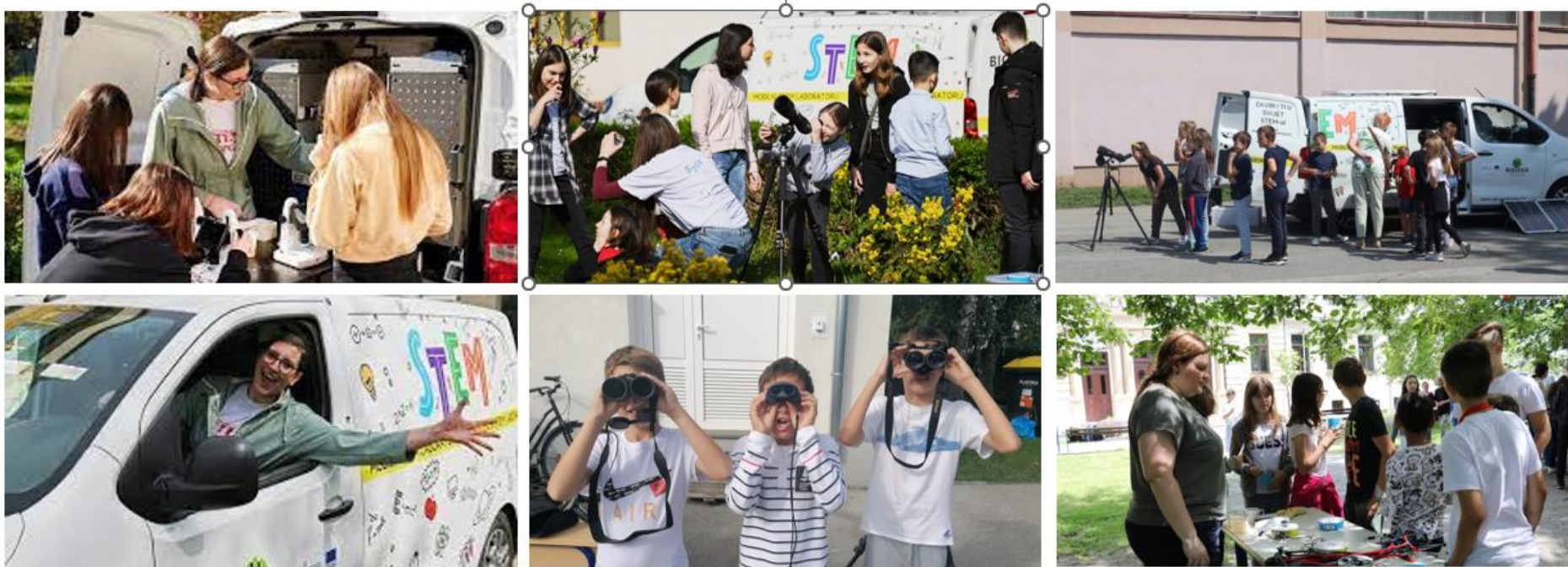


The PANDA program started in 2016, and has so far included more than 150 children proven to be gifted or potentially gifted by psychological tests in cooperation with certified psychologists. The main purpose of the project is to create a space for gifted children to practice their own pace and depth of work, introducing experimental scientific work through STEM and related topics in extracurricular education. It also aims to foster the creativity (often exceedingly lost as the children age), improve social skills, and raise interest of gifted children in pursuing future STEM studies and careers.

4. "Bioteka on the move" – a story of the traveling STEM laboratory

"Bioteka on the move" is a program that started in 2014 with a clear idea to deliver environmental education (learning about nature in the nature itself) to the less equipped and less fortunate schools, areas, and children in Croatia, ensuring equal educational opportunities for every child. We would gather educators from various fields (biologists, chemists, geologists, mathematicians...) and travel to different parts of the country, bringing valuable knowledge, laboratory materials and research equipment to children from small villages and towns for whom we performed outdoor education activities. Over the years more than 2000 children participated in the program and "Bioteka on the move" visited over 50 local communities.

In 2021 we have updated our mobility and equipment by purchasing, repurposing, and equipping a vehicle that, after a 6-month collaboration with manual workers from different sectors, turned into a beautiful and practical traveling mobile STEM laboratory, which so far toured 20 Croatian cities and regions, covering 6400 kilometers, and raising awareness about STEM with even bigger impact.



Today STEM mobile laboratory promotes critical thought, inspires STEM career choices, and instills a positive attitude towards science among students of different ages and interests. It provides hands-on experience with diverse STEM content, making it crucial for empowering future generations for problem-solving skills and critical thinking, which matters regardless of their future career choices.

During our STEM visits, students can learn through interactive workshops, while their teachers explore modern educational tools as well. They also just have a fun and inquisitive afternoon, getting to know some of the newest equipment available in education (microscopes, interactive measuring devices, telescopes, drones, environmental field work tools, lab chemicals and more).

With this learning platform the program enables us to enroll up to 200 students per day to participate in these interactive STEM activities.

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