

Get active

Learning in nature

Outdoor fun



Outdoor-based LEARNING METHODOLOGY

Methodological framework for implementation

The Methodology is developed as a part of the project Outdoor activities for social connectedness, cohesion and well-being of youth (OA/SCY).

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Applicant Organization: Youth on Board – North Macedonia

Partner Organizations:

Institute of Entrepreneurship Development – Greece

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About the methodology

This guide has been written to help youngsters evaluate and then set about improving, or further improving, the quality of outdoor experience and education. They will begin their journey to becoming healthy adults and adults with active lifestyles and start to develop emotional connectedness to their environment and community. Educators, families, and other members of the community have a role to play in achieving this vision by demonstrating a positive attitude and participating in proposed activities and challenges. Whether playing in the backyard, hiking a nearby trail, or visiting a national park, this fun-filled guide will inspire you to get outside and explore the great outdoors. The handbook can easily be adopted in the school's nonformal programs or during some projects. The Handbook is developed as a part of the project Outdoor activities for social connectedness, cohesion and well-being of youth (OA/SCY). Project number: 2020-3-MK01- KA205-094423 .

The first part named WHAT WE STEP ON gives a country perspective on outdoor activities. This includes national regulations and initiatives, local facilities for outdoor activities, identification of best places for outdoor activities, etc. This part is the stepping point of what we have as a starting point, resource, or experience in each country and how to use this in the best possible way for project activities, as well as after the project lifetime.

The second part, WHAT WE NEED presents results from a study conducted with young people from each project country. The study results give us information on the interests of young people in outdoor activities, their needs as well as problems they faced regarding outdoor participation. The results from the study are essential in identifying the interests of target groups. In these terms, they are essential when designing outdoor activities.

The third part provides more information about STORYTELLING and the drama method as an approach in work with young people as well as instructions for its successful implementation.

The fourth part, Methodology for developing outdoor activities is a document that contains all important aspects that should be considered when preparing for outdoor activities. It is a step – to step guideline that emphasizes all important elements of outdoor activities. It will be a valuable tool for youth workers when designing outdoor activities. It is also important to provide one unique style of designed outdoor activities that will ensure designed activities are user-friendly and easily applicable.

The next two parts, HOW TO MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR MORE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE and SAFETY ISSUES RELATED TO OUTDOOR, are designed to provide practical information and guidance for youth workers to help them with the practical implementation of the designed activities. Both parts are short, step-by-step instructions that should provide valuable outdoor experiences. We designed them based on our previous experiences as well as the results from the study where safety and motivation (mainly lack of motivation) were identified as important for outdoor participation. These two parts will be very useful for youth workers and trainers when implementing outdoor activities but also will be useful after the project lifetime for anyone interested to have some type of outdoor experience.

The last part, HOW TO INTEGRATE THE METHODOLOGY FOR OUTDOOR IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULA provides an overview of countries' perspectives in terms of implementation of outdoor activities in school and university curricula in terms of identifying good practices for outdoor activities in the educational process. Furthermore, following project results, we present some general ideas on how outdoor activities were developed and designed during the project as well as guidelines provided in the Methodology that can fit in school and university curricula or be used in the organization in different types of curricular and extracurricular activities.

Having all these elements in one document will be also useful for upgrading the theoretical frame for outdoor education, mental health, and social cohesion with country-specific conditions particularly related to COVID 19 effects as well as research data from a study conducted on a population of youth. We consider that Methodology will be also very useful in terms of supporting the work of many organizations in the frames of European countries and can have an important impact on future research and project design.

OUTDOOR BASED LEARNING METHODOLOGY was created with complete support from all partners included in the project and with the great contribution of researchers from each partner's team. The development of the Methodology was coordinated by YOB with support from researchers from the Institute Of Entrepreneurship Development in Greece and The Citizen Centre Bennohaus, Arbeitskreis Ostviertel Association (AKO) from Germany.

About outdoor activities

What are outdoor activities?

Outdoor activities refer to any kind of activities that are placed in an outdoor setting – nature, parks, mountains, sea sides, river coasts, lakeside, forests, and all other open-air, outdoor spaces. As defined by Kouthouris (2009), outdoor activities/ outdoor recreation includes any environmental, sporting, recreational, or social awareness activity in the form of a simple experience or a given program carried out in a free natural environment (Kouthouris, 2009). Outdoor activities are realized for different purposes, based on the individual preferences of participants. This can include physical exercise, general wellbeing, creativity, spiritual renewal, use of the advantages of being in nature, etc. (Jensen & Guthrie, 2006).

The types of activities are also numerous. They can include physical activity, sports, recreation, relaxation, meditation, learning, etc. Outdoor activities can be done individually, in pairs, in groups, etc. They can be done on daily bases or periodically depending on the type of selected activity and its dependence on weather conditions, period of a year, etc. The list of outdoor activities is quite long. Some of the most popular outdoor activities are hiking, running, jogging, trekking, trail running, cycling, and walking in nature. Yoga, meditation, tai -chi, listening to music, reading a book, and sunbathing are some of the forms of body and soul outdoor-based activities. Adventurous and adrenalin sports are also mainly outdoor-based, and they include: mountain biking, skateboarding, triathlon, all types of water sports (sailing, scuba diving, rafting, surfing, canoeing, kayaking), and all types of snow sports (skiing, snowboarding, sledging, cross- country skiing), paragliding, hunting, camping, backpacking, etc. Many creative activities related to music and art can also be outdoor-based or use nature as inspiration and a place for creation.

Key benefits from outdoor activities

Outdoor activities and outdoor sports are becoming more and more popular, due to their benefits on overall health and well-being. Based on different experiences of participation in different types of outdoor activities, several key benefits are identified. They are the following:



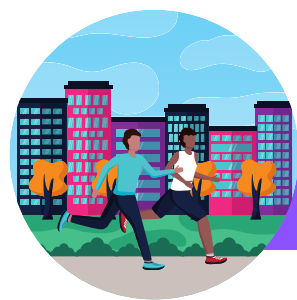
Pleasure and enjoyment

Being outdoor, in nature, and participating in activities that are less formal and not strictly structured make participants feel more comfortable and relaxed. These encourage positive emotions and enthusiasm for activities, which reflects positively on the overall experience providing pleasure and enjoyment. These feelings are fostered when participating in activities that are our interest and personal choice. Furthermore, participation in outdoor activities is closely related to personal satisfaction and enjoyment, meditation as well as the needs for autonomy, competence and connection, comfort and intense emotions, satisfaction from personal achievements, vital strength and experience from nature (Clough et al., 2016; Sheng-Hsiung et al., 2015; Crust et al., 2013).



Development of self-confidence and positive characteristics

Outdoor activities are often challenging but can also motivate participants to join in activities that are different from the ones that they are used to. This can lead to overcoming some personal fears and limits, providing the feeling of encouragement, self-confidence, and motivation to try something new, to be open to new experiences and new learnings. All of these can have a positive impact on personality and lead to another level of personal development developing a positive attitude toward personal abilities and skills (Stott et al. 2015).



Development of social and emotional awareness

Participation in outdoor activities and activities that are less formal, allows outdoor participants to become more aware of themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, their needs, and skills. These contribute to increasing the awareness of others and their needs and lead to the development of social and emotional awareness. Outdoor sports are also positively related to social benefits, active citizenship, and environmental awareness (Focht, 2009). Self-confidence is also improved (Ekkekasis & Backhouse, 2009).



Health and wellbeing

Being outdoor increases the awareness of personal health and its importance for overall wellbeing. Outdoor participation fosters the determination to development of healthy habits and creates a habit for a healthy and active lifestyle as personal determination. Many study reports suggested benefits for both mental and physical well-being when being in nature and exercising outdoor in a natural environment (Akers et al, 2012; Demirhan et al, 2014, Mayer et al, 2009). It affects positively reducing stress and anxiety (Andre et al., 2017; Hanson & Jones, 2015; Puett et al., 2014). Outdoor participation improves sleep and revitalization. The stay of the sun stimulates vitamin D synthesis, which improves immunity. Outdoor activities also positively affect physiological functioning and improved health parameters, regulating heart rhythm, blood pressure, and endocrine markers (noradrenaline, adrenaline, and cortisol levels) (Loureiro & Veloso, 2017).

Related to the effects of outdoor activities on health and wellbeing, studies evidence better revitalization, a decrease in tension, confusion, anger, and depression (Eigenschenk et al, 2019), greater enjoyment, improved cognitive functioning, better sleep (Biddle & Mutrie, 2008); improvement of individual well – being (Mayer et al, 2009). Outdoor physical activity and outdoor exercise are also associated with positive relations in the perception of personal health and stronger nature-relatedness (Focht, 2009; Puhakka et al, 2018).



Environment awareness

Being outdoor provides possibilities to explore and experience nature in different shapes and conditions. It also provides the possibility to be aware of the power and beauty of nature, and its uniqueness as a place and source of inspiration and creativity. This leads to increased awareness for nature protection and eco-awareness. Staying in nature and using its resources also develop the sense and need to protect nature and take care of it.



Development of movement abilities and skills

Participation in different outdoor activities that are movement and sports-based leads to the development of motor skills and improvement of movement abilities. Qualities like spatial orientation, surviving skills, problem-solving, and orienting can be easily improved and developed by participating in different outdoor sports and activities (Neill, 2008). This is also closely related to the development of movement skills and motor abilities such as strength, stamina, speed, etc. Exercising outdoor was identified to require less exertion than exercising indoors (Demirhan et al, 2014) and has a better effect on fatigue recovery.

In terms of the development of skills, many outdoor activities are also quite an adrenaline depending on and adventurous. They involve exceptional excitement and physical challenge but also require a higher level of motor abilities and skills and vice versa, supporting their development and improvement. Many of these adventurous activities include risk and are identified as "adventure recreation", rather than an extreme sport.



Development of personal qualities

Depending on selected activities, outdoor participation can improve proactive behavior, initiative, independence, responsibility, communication skills, skills for teamwork, leadership, etc. Different outdoor activities and outdoor surroundings can stimulate the development of these skills in different manners (Cooley, Burns & Cumming, 2015). Outdoor activities and being in nature, also have positive effects on socialization and communication and improve the quality of the learning process. In this regard, when learning outdoor and learning in nature, students are in direct interaction with the environment. This interaction has positive effects on interpersonal communication (Horwood, 2002), helps improve interpersonal skills using tandem work and teamwork (Russell and Burton, 2000); provides a possibility for kinesthetic, affective, and sensor learning (Lieberman & Hoody, 1998), as well as possibility for moral and spiritual research and improvement of overall development (Russell and Burton, 2000).



Wider horizons and thinking out of the box

New activities, a new environment, challenging, and changeable surrounding provides the opportunity to connect natural and social environment, use the old knowledge differently, and use nature as learning to set, providing possibilities for creating different perspective and awareness for different aspects of the same situation. Participation in different outdoor activities provides new and different experiences that stimulate creative and flexible thinking and thinking out of the box.



Increased creativity and concentration

Different surroundings, colours, and sounds of nature are both inspirations and motivations for different activities. The calmness of nature stimulates the mind and improves creativity and concentration. Openness to new experiences is composed part of being in nature and is in direct relation to creative thinking (Batey et al, 2010). In addition, it is confirmed that a few days of stay in nature in the continuum (camps or summer school), as well as participation in outdoor activities, improves creativity and ability for problem-solving (Atchley, Strayer & Atchley, P, 2021).



Improves mental health and cognitive skills

Being outdoor was also identified to be important for mental health, creativity, and productivity. Study evidence confirms that being in nature improves attention and focus on the task, and decreases mental fatigue (Ohey et al, 2016).

In summary of the effect of being active and participating in outdoor activities, we can conclude that outdoor participation has positive effects on physical and mental health, overall wellbeing, education, lifelong learning, active citizenship, anti-social behaviour, creativity, and productivity (Focht, 2009).

What do we step on?

Countries' perspectives and experiences with outdoor activities

Different countries have different experiences with outdoor activities and their promotion. It is closely related to countries' traditions, the culture of living, priorities, etc. Following are some country-specific approaches and regulations related to outdoor activities in three project countries: Greece, Germany, and North Macedonia.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND REGULATIONS



GREECE

In **GREECE**, legislation on outdoor activities is subject to tourism and not sports. The last revision was made in 2018 as presented on the National Gazette 208 / A / 11-12-2018 (Law NO. 4582 /2018). The main points referring to the outdoor activities are: RURAL TOURISM and SPORTS TOURISM

RURAL TOURISM refers to ecotourism and touring routes. Ecotourism - green tourism is the most specific form of rural tourism, which is associated with various forms of nature tourism and develops in areas of ecological interest, and recognized ecological value, such as National Parks, wetlands, and Natura 2000 network areas and other protected areas. It includes sightseeing, hiking, observation, and photography of ecosystems and other recreational activities that are organized in the natural environment, contain the element of adventure, do not disturb the ecological balance of the area, and have a scientific and educational character.

Touring routes - hiking is the most special form of rural tourism that develops in mountaineering - hiking trails, as specified in the decision 151344/165/2017 of the Deputy Minister of Environment and Energy (BD 206) and include all activities of approaching points in the countryside. The aim is to get acquainted with the natural and cultural heritage of each place, promote its special characteristics, and raise the awareness of the citizens for its protection.

SPORT TOURISM is defined as a form of tourism, which takes place with active or passive participation in leisure sports activities that visitors-tourists choose in the tourist destination of their vacation, with the aim of entertainment and improving health, fitness, and well-being. and includes:

(a) active recreational sporting activity, individually or in groups. b) the personal development or improvement of the skill and the learning of the rules for carrying out leisure activities individually or in a group. c) passive watching, as a spectator or supporter of a team, a sport, or a sporting event. (d) visiting sites and places related to the history, cultural heritage, and culture of a sport or sporting legend. e) leisure activities for people with special needs and disabilities.

Sports tourism is divided into the tourism of sports events and tourism of outdoor activities of sports recreation - adventure. a) Tourism of sports events is the most specific form of sports tourism, which includes aa) visitors - tourists who aim to watch, as spectators, sports games, combining their stay and vacation with sports events, bb) individual athletes, groups of athletes, missions, technicians, and journalists, who travel to participate in sporting events and sporting events if they combine their stay at the venue or elsewhere and extend their stay for leisure and holiday purposes. b) Outdoor sports recreation - adventure tourism, is the special form of sports tourism that is addressed to visitors - tourists, who during their vacation visit a destination to actively participate in one or more sports recreational activities.

Outdoor sports recreation - adventure activities mean any activity, extreme or mild adventure, which takes place once or occasionally without a competitive character and has the main purpose of recreation and entertainment of the participants. Outdoor sports-adventure activities can be developed: at sea, in lakes and rivers, in mountainous, semi-mountainous areas and in urban and semi-urban areas and include: (aa) outdoor activity programs such as hiking, horseback riding, running, archery, swimming with equipment, games of acquaintance and team building, in intense activities, such as inflatable boat rafting, rafting, , climbing, rowing, surfing, windsurfing, paintball, engaging in all kinds of winter sports activities, and in specific climatic conditions, including those in mountain shelters and shelters, , caving, cave caving, triathlon, tennis, golf, sand volleyball and scuba diving, as well as in extreme sports activities, such as free diving (sky diving), rock diving (cliff diving) and controlled fall with bungee jumping, paragliding-paragliding, bb) sports leisure programs by groups of animators and coaches / trainers of hotels with special infrastructure such as gyms, spa centers, swimming pools, golf courses, tennis courts, theme parks and thalassotherapy centers. c) Cycling tourism is the form of tourism where cycling is the main purpose of the trip, and the bicycle is the means for visitors-tourists to experience a complete tourist experience. Cycling tourism concerns visitors - tourists who either stay in a specific tourist destination and choose daily cycling routes or visit more destinations and stay in various locations. Leisure cycling activities are divided into gentle cycling, where the cyclist enjoys nature and the landscape, and intensive cycling, where fitness is the main goal. In the reference list, some links to private and public organizations are provided that carry out outdoor activities following the law outlined above. At the state level, responsible for the promotion of outdoor activities In Greece are Local Government Organizations (OTA) which, subsidized by the General Secretariat of Sports, created, and maintain the local sports organizations. These organizations offer a variety of sports programs, through which they try to meet all the needs and preferences of the citizens, thus contributing to the increase of sports participation, protecting health, and improving the quality of life. In our country G.G.A. (General Secretariat of Sports) co-organizes and co-finances "Sports for All" programs. The General Secretariat of Sports reports to the Ministry of Culture and is responsible for the planning of sports policy and the development of sports. Responsible for the planning and formulation of government policy in Sports is the Deputy Minister of Culture with responsibility for Sports.

The responsibility of the General Secretariat of Sports is national staff planning as well as overall responsibility for all issues related to the progress and the best organization and operation of sports in our country. In particular, the General Secretariat of Sports oversees all kinds of sports activities, the preparation of short-term and long-term sports development programs, as well as the provision of the necessary facilities for the implementation of these programs, which include what is mentioned in the field of sports projects. Still, when we talk about sports, we do not always mean outdoor activities, which, as we previously stated, are a subject of tourism in terms of laws. The Regional Tourism Services of the Ministry of Tourism authorize any sports tourism organization, which is carried out by natural or legal persons, engaged in sports tourism business activities, as well as by associations of non-profit persons if these activities are included in their statutory purpose, and the following conditions are cumulatively met when a) the event concerns entertaining citizens / visitors-tourists, and b) the event is intended for sports recreation and is not part of competitive sports or Sports Programs for All. The above licensing process, the required supporting documents, and any other relevant issue are regulated by a decision of the Minister of Tourism.



GERMANY

In GERMANY you cannot find “outdoor activities” as a subject or area of responsibility of any governmental authority itself, it rather defines and combines different topics of human beings’ life or can be used as an umbrella term for activities people do outdoor in their leisure time and for educational reasons. Daily life and laws in Germany are regulated by the federal constitution, but every one of the 16 states in Germany has its constitution as well. Concerning the topics of outdoor activities, they differ because of the natural surroundings and personal interests of the persons living in one certain area. Because the Citizen Center Bennohaus is located in Münster the information gathered around the topic of outdoor activities and this template concentrates on the regulations of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (abbreviated in the following also NRW) – never forget that all regulations are done in a top-to-bottom-system from federal to state to single areas or cities. To work on outdoor activities in Germany research on the internet has shown that there is a huge variety of topics one can find and work on. To get to the different activities youth can do in Germany one should first define and find those topics. The umbrella terms that have been found in the framework of the research for this template are sports, education, culture, home and history, health, tourism, and leisure time and you can find a huge variety in the terms themselves again. Just to mention a few here are some examples of outdoor activities Germans like to do: sports like soccer, football, tennis, badminton, swimming, diving, running, biking, hiking, canoeing, yoga, meditation, riding, inline-skating, skating on skateboards, ice skating, skiing, fishing; educational seminars and activities in the nature, for example in nature conservation associations like Greenpeace, birdwatching, outdoor education, gardening; visiting botanical gardens, visiting

parks and zoos, having organized bike tours to see historical sights, day trips for sightseeing in surrounding areas or other parts of Germany, camping, playing golf, having a picnic, boat trips, sailing, visiting open-air museums, visiting open-air events like concerts or just meeting friends outside or reading a book alone in the grass. There are also specific outdoor activities that are only known and done in smaller local societies like the Speckbrett game (like tennis but with a thick wooden plate as a racket) is done in Münster, those kinds of activities have a lot to do with traditions. There are different authorities to organize these topics. Getting down from the federal constitution to the federal state constitution for the whole state of North-Rhine Westphalia the main responsible authorities are the different ministries, in the case of outdoor activities the Ministry for Family, Children, Youth, Culture and Sports NRW is the main responsible authority in North-Rhine Westphalia (<https://www.land.nrw/de/media/image/ministerium-fur-familie-kinder-jugend-kultur-und-sport/>). In addition to that and when taking school activities and educational activities into consideration information can also be found on the web pages of the Ministry for School and Education in Northern-Westphalia (<https://www.schulministerium.nrw/>).



NORTH MACEDONIA

In NORTH MACEDONIA outdoor activities are becoming more and more popular in recent years. As the country is mainly mountains, there are many natural resources for different outdoor activities that combine outdoor sports, culture, historical findings, and tradition. In this regard, especially in the last decade, there is a rising trend of development of rural tourism that includes the promotion of rural places that are recognized by food or some traditional cultural event, combined with the offer of sports tourist programs. In this regard, whole regions were promoted as tourist attractions. For example, the Galichnic region is recognized for 100 years old tradition of Galichnik weddings, followed by traditional costumes and customs, food, and music but also supported by sports offers such as hours of riding, mountain biking, hiking, etc. Responsible for this promotion is the Agency for tourist promotion, supported by the Ministry of Economy and the Agency for Youth and Sport. Other popular regions are the Ohrid region, Vevcani region, Krushevo, etc.

Another aspect of the promotion of different outdoor activities in local communities that are responsible for both providing facilities for different outdoor activities as well as promoting them. In these terms, local communities are responsible for building urban zones, green areas, parks, and other open-air spaces suitable for different types of activities. The authorization of these facilities is on the local community that many times cooperates with different government bodies, NGOs, and foreign embassies and together works on the development of open-air spaces and promotion of different types of outdoor activities. In terms of Legislation, outdoor activities are the subject of TOURISM, particularly rural tourism and sports tourism.

Responsible for the promotion of outdoor activities is the Agency for promotion and support of tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia (<https://tourismmacedonia.gov.mk/>) which provides programs and strategies for the promotion and support of tourism that also involves support for organization promotion and support of different outdoor activities. For example, the program for 2021/2022 provides support for the program "10 Mountain picks", organization of auto camps and their promotion, initiatives shared on the national webpage for promotion of tourism <https://www.macedonia-timeless.com/eng>, etc. In terms of adapted strategies, there are national Strategies for promotion of rural tourism and sports tourism, Strategy for sustainable development, National strategy for environment protection 2017 – 2027, etc, that all provide different aspects of regulations, actions, and plans that are related to outdoor activities. Similar strategies are also provided at the level of regions and the local community.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY IN THE COMMUNITY – WHAT WE BRING INTO THE PROJECT



ABOUT LARISSA - GREECE

Larisa is in the heart of Greece, is very youthful and lively, and it may be considered a modern European city. Its green areas are significant for locals' relaxation and well-being. Among them stands out the river Pinios which runs through the north part of the city, and it is a meeting point for people who enjoy nature, walking, hiking, and biking. It is known that recreation is often led by demand from people who wish to participate in certain activities there are also increasingly well-recognized benefits to health and well-being from closer contact with nature. The municipality of Larisa is taking a keen interest in this and in the means of encouraging sedentary populations to engage in physical activity in natural environments. Sports and leisure activities are supported in the city, with a significant infrastructure of sports facilities, as well as athletic events.

The Municipality of Larisa has built many fully equipped indoor and outdoor sports facilities that are ready to welcome all inhabitants and accommodate any type of event. In more than 10 district sports centres the Municipality supports Sports Academies, organizes Students' and Local Associations' Sports Championships, and hosts athletic events throughout the year (RunGreece-Larisa, the event "Run Pinios", the Half Marathon race "Tirnavos - Larisa", the "Hippocratic" swimming races, Panthessalian track events for the Disabled, etc.). Alkazar Sports Complex, Nikea Sports Complex, and Neapoli Sports Complex are three of the most important facilities. Outdoor gyms, tennis courts, swimming pools, and v stadiums are all available in these complexes.



Outdoor initiatives in Larissa

A major initiative/ event that takes place in the city is the Pinios Festival. The Pinios Festival started as a celebration to highlight the landscaping works of the riverbed and to integrate the river into the life of the city. In June 2001, the Municipality of Larissa organized for the first-time cultural event entitled "Feasts of Pinios" in the landscaped with pedestrian, bicycle paths, and pedestrian bridges of the historical riverbed of Pinios River. The festival has now been established and its reputation resonates nationwide. It is a multicultural festival, organized every year in mid-June along 4km and on both sides of the riverbed of Pinios, just 300 meters from the Central Square of Larissa with its visitors far exceeding 200.000. During the Festival events, theatrical performances, storytelling, concerts, and sports activities centred on Pinios are organized every year as well as various art exhibitions and happenings that provide an unforgettable experience to young and old. The sports activities that are included are recreational sports games, table tennis, aerial flow, yoga, cycling events, taekwondo, beach volley, soccer, etc. Larisa, without a doubt, provides an appealing atmosphere for recreational activities.



Popular recreational outdoor facilities in Larissa

Pinios River is the third-longest river in Greece, running some 170km of land from the west to the east until its journey ends at the Aegean Sea. Its springs are located at several spots in the central Pindus mountains. Their waters run towards Thessaly forming the main river which flows across the Thessalian plain. Flowing from the west, the river meets Larisa town, where it turns northwards until it reaches the feet of lower Olympus where it changes course again towards the east. All along, the river holds very rich bird wildlife (white and grey herons, storks, various kinds of ducks, and as the river nears the sea, lots of sea birds). Numerous river-related initiatives have been planned and implemented. Rafting and riverside adventure, canoeing, high ropes, and team building, inflatable kayaking and monorafting in the "Vernezi straits" route, cycling and river canoeing, rafting in the "Tempi Valley", sea kayaking "from the river to the sea," and mountain bike to mention a few.

Mount Olympus is the highest mountain in Greece. It is part of the Olympus massif near the Gulf of Thérmai of the Aegean Sea, located in the Olympus Range on the border between Thessaly and Macedonia, between the regional units of Pieria and Larissa. Nowadays the mountain is a darling for climbing expeditions. Mountain Olympus boasts of its astonishing nature, its popular slopes, and its ancient/medieval sites. It is considered a non-technical hike, except for the summit of the peak of Mytikas (2918m).

In the region of Thessaly, there are many mountaineering and nature-loving clubs. They are organized in two federations: the E.O.O.A (Hellenic Federation of Mountaineering and Climbing) and the OFOESE (Federation of Nature-loving, Mountaineering and Excursion Associations of Greece). That EOOA specializes in mountaineering and climbing, while OFOESE specializes in simple hiking and touring. These Associations with their actions have taken tens of thousands of hikers and climbers on the mountains, trained thousands through schools' climbers, maintain shelters and trails, and organized events and screenings that spread similar activities and all these with the non-profit support of their members.

In the eastern plain of Thessaly, close to Larissa, next to mountain Kissavos in the area "Hassabali," there is the low mountain of Gentiki or Gintiki. It is a mountain of 446 meters, used by many people for training in sporting activities such as mountain biking and mountain running. One of the most popular activities that take place in Gentiki mountain is the Gentiki trail, organized by the association of Marathon Runners of the Prefecture of Larissa in collaboration with the Region of Thessaly. It is a raised route that follows a marked path. The long route is 20 kilometres long, while the short route is only 5.1 kilometres long, and both have a limit of 250 and 200 participants, respectively.



ABOUT MÜNSTERLAND - GERMANY

The Münsterland forms the northern part of North Rhine-Westphalia, which extends from the upper Ruhr area to Lower Saxony and borders the Netherlands in the west. It has developed into a tourist attraction. In 2004, Münster was chosen as the city with the highest quality of life in the global "LivCom Award" competition. An award that certainly has its justification for it can be seen as a very green city with a green political strategy and many young people living there.



Outdoor initiatives in Münsterland

When it comes to outdoor activities, Münster offers a huge range of different activities one can choose from. First one has to know that Münster is one of the leading bicycle cities in Germany. It is said that every "Münsteraner" – this is what a Münster citizen is called - has around four bikes and this is also the number of bikes every Münsteraner has already lost or had stolen.

Münsteraner nearly does everything by bike. This is not difficult, because from one side of Münster to the other side a good biker can make it in less than 30 minutes. A green ring road called "Promenade" leads around the old Centre of the city and it is perfect for bikers to have a short way to any destination in town. But the promenade is not only frequented by all the bikers, it is as well used for walks, running, having a picnic, playing ball, taking your dogs out and for a few years now the 4 kilometres around Münster are also used for a huge cultural event called "grassed area entertainment". Within this event, the grass along the promenade is used as small stages for local artists who play music, theatre, or sing.

This event is very famous among the Münsteraner and therefore takes place several times during the summer months. Another very famous event outdoor at the promenade is the monthly flea market which takes place around half of the promenade and the nearby meadows. By following the green ring of the promenade, you get straight to the next green recreational facility of Münster, the Aasee. This lake is located only 10 minutes from the historical centre. It is only a 15-minute walk from the Prinzipalmarkt and offers a whole range of interesting leisure activities for young and old - from a walk to a sailing trip to a visit to the zoo.

The Aasee attracts walkers, cyclists, and inline skaters as well as runners and people who just want to enjoy the water and the sun. A boat rental, a sailing school, and two sailing clubs invite people to explore the lake from the water. If you are out and about at Lake Aasee, you cannot avoid modern art.

Because around the lake, there are many sculptures that internationally renowned artists created especially for the four major sculpture exhibitions from 1977 to 2007. In the summer months, the solar ship SOLAARIS brings its guests from the city centre to the other special attractions of the Aasee: The all-weather zoo is well known to many German people from television series. In the Westphalian Horse Museum Hippomaxx, which is also located in the all-weather zoo, everything revolves around horses and next to the zoo there is a nature museum with a planetarium that brings visitors closer to foreign galaxies and worlds long past. Unfortunately, swimming in the Aasee is prohibited, but young and old use the nearby Dortmund Ems Canal for this. This is also where our organization is located, right next to the water.

Merchant ships operate here, but the city authorities allow careful swimming and, along with the outdoor pools, it is a popular destination for swimmers from all over the city. During summer months you can hardly find a free grass place to lie there and people meet and have barbecues or just spend their office breaks having a short walk, running, or reading a good book. Further famous outdoor activities combined with cycling (which is, without doubt, the most famous outdoor activity in Münster) are longer cycling trips people do in their free time.



Popular recreational outdoor facilities in Münsterland

Münster and its surroundings offer a huge variety of routes, especially for biking and hiking. For example, you can go to see around 100 moated castles in the region that look back on a long history. The European reserve "Rieselfelder Münster" is located about 6 km north of the city of Münster. As an important resting and moulting area for migratory birds, this man-made wetland in the former irrigation areas of the city has an important connection and steppingstone function for bird species that are threatened throughout Europe. As seen from above, the fields offer the image of a large lake district with over 100 individual ponds. The division of the area into two is clear: In the nature reserve to the north, the original chessboard-like parcelling has largely been preserved. The nature discovery area adjoining the southeast is less clearly structured.

As European bird sanctuaries, both areas are part of the NATURA 2000 network of protected areas for the preservation of the European natural heritage and are subject to international protection regulations. To explore nature and flora one can also stay in the city centre. Next to the baroque castle at the promenade, the university owns the botanical garden. The botanical garden has a total area of around 5 hectares with a greenhouse area of 2000 square meters. 5 out of 10 greenhouses are open to approximately 200 000 visitors per year. A total of 6091 different plant species and cultivars are cultivated in different collections and seasonal ornament plantings. Those collections are presented in the following categories: high mountain region, Mediterranean flora, the flora of Australia and New Zealand, semi-deserts of southern America, Mexico and the Andes (succulents), Canary Islands, and Cape flora of South Africa. The botanical garden is constructed as a teaching garden of the university, but there are also seminars on photography for adults and special exploring programs for children. (<https://www.uni-muenster.de/BotanischerGarten/dergarten/index.html>). Münsteraner like to cycle and to walk and the older part of the town offers many historical buildings and places to explore. For tourists Münsters take a few days to explore, many of them use a weekend to come and see Münster and the cultural office of Münster offers a huge range of outdoor events. One of the most famous open-air events for example is the "Schauraum" (showroom) art and music event where people can listen to classic music and visit art galleries which are open until midnight these days. A special classical music event is also the "Aaseerenaden" which takes place directly at lake Aasee which offers a wonderful view and acoustics. For younger people, the university organizes a lot of music festivals with different famous bands on stage. People who like to ride cars can take part in a special old-timer rally. When it comes to eating and drinking, Münster offers outdoor events like "Münster spoils" or special wine and beer feasts. Many events in Münster are planned by the city council, the cultural office, or smaller initiatives. Good examples of feasts of the citizens and their initiatives are the neighbourhood events where different districts organize huge feasts on the streets for all the Münsteraner.

A yearly huge outdoor festival organized by a citizens' initiative and many huge sponsors is the harbour feast. The harbour festival in Münster was celebrated for the 18th time in 2019. A varied music program was presented to the visitors on all three days on a total of three stages with many live acts. From the fields of pop, rock, ska, soul, and jazz, there was something for every taste in music. The marching bands and walking acts were an integral part of the harbour festival in Münster. Sporty-maritime activities to watch or take part in, presentations, and places to eat and drink round off the program.

Paddles, canoe polo, and pedal boats invited the visitors to join in and try new activities. Last but not least, because Münster is such a green place, of course, Münster offers a huge variety of possibilities to do sports. And the Münsteraner love to do so. Münster offers sports rooms and outdoor facilities for school and club sports, leisure and popular sports. Whether sports field or small playing field, gymnastics rooms or sports hall – there is a large selection. The sports facilities are available from January to December, on weekdays and weekends. The sports facilities and places belong to different organizations. They belong to the city, sports clubs, universities, and others. The possible uses are as diverse as the sponsorship is.

There are more than 200 sports associations in Münster, some examples of the activities are American football, aerobics, acrobatics, aqua jogging, fishing, baby swimming, badminton, ballet, beach volleyball, volleyball, football, basketball, belly dance, hiking, boccia, body forming, boules, bowling, box sports, breakdance, bridge, capoeira, floorball, football, soccer's, billard, golf, hockey, jazz dance, canoeing, judo, karate, croquet, modern dance, parkour, Pilates, Nordic walking, riding, cycling, rugby, skiing, chess, triathlon and many more.

One sport that is famous and unique in Münster is "Speckbrett". Speckbrett is a tennis-like sport based in the Münster land region. This is played on ash and asphalt pitches. The court is slightly smaller than a tennis court (20 m long, 9 m wide, with half a meter on each side reserved for doubles). The racket consists of a wooden board with a handle (originally like a cutting board from the kitchen, today with many drilled holes in a grid-like arrangement, no strings). A tennis ball is used as the ball. The counting method is based on table tennis. There are four Speck Brett sports clubs in Münster. They organize a city championship every year.



ABOUT SHTIP – NORTH MACEDONIA

The city of Shtip is located in the east part of North Macedonia and is the biggest city in this region. Two rivers pass through Shtip, one is the second-largest river in North Macedonia named Bregalnica, and Otinja divides the city centre. Both rivers are closed for swimming and water sports. The hill Isar is an early-medieval fortress that dominates the city. The fortress is a green hill protected by UNESCO thanks to its historical and traditional nature. The area surrounding the city is suffering from deforestation which is contributing to the temperature extremes, with summers being hot and dry with mean temperatures around 32 °C and days above 40 °C being common.

Winters are short (less than 2 months usually) and mild (though considered cold for the area) with normals around $-2\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$, but with occasional drops down to $-10\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. Spring usually comes in February, when most of the foliage is regenerating, although freak snow storms could appear as late as May. The city of Shtip is divided into several urban and suburban settlements and about forty villages (rural areas). In the city, there is one University with fifteen faculties, six high schools, five primary schools, and two kindergartens.



Outdoor initiatives in Shtip

There are very few initiatives for outdoor activities in Shtip. During the year, there is one official initiative organized by the municipal authorities together with the schools for World Ecology Day. The other initiatives are organized on a smaller level with formal or informal groups. Very often during the spring and summer period in the early morning or the afternoon, you can see groups of people training in different sports outdoors. At the local level, there is an association of mountaineers who often have initiatives for outdoor activities. They are usually of the hiking or mountaineering type. These initiatives are often organized in different mountainous areas across the country. When it comes to other initiatives for outdoor activities at the level of the municipality of Shtip, there is not much to talk about. This is one of the weaknesses of this municipality. Young people at the local level know about enjoying outdoor activities and often use their free time in local cafes.

During the year several more mass open-air activities are a result of tradition. Shtip marks the first day of spring by climbing the Isar fortress. On this day at the initiative of the holiday, many people go to the top of the hill and climb down meanwhile performing traditional activities such as collecting 40 rocks. This day can be said to have mass movement and outdoor activities. When it comes to initiatives, it can be said that most outdoor activities are organized by informal groups or organizations dealing with young people.



Popular recreational outdoor facilities in Shtip

When you observe Shtip from the perspective of open green areas that can be used for different activities, there are many. Just one kilometre from the city is Suitlak Park, this place is open-minded. It has several parks, wild trails, and space for walking and running. This space is used by young people for informal socializing and is a place where young people are often seen. This space is often used by schools when there is a celebration of some world days and they organize outdoor activities.

Because the city centre is the Isar Fortress, the other cities in our country often refer to Shtip as the city under the Isar. This is a beautiful hill with lots of greenery, trees, and wild hiking trails. It has an ideal infrastructure to be used for various outdoor activities. Young people often know how to climb the Isar on their initiative because the whole city can be seen from the top. Officially The Isar is visited by the general population in mass one day a year due to a traditional holiday. Very rarely is this treasure used for other events organized by schools, educational centres, sports centres, or organizations.

On the other hand, Shtip has about 7 km of the walking path along the river Bregalnica. This area is a typical place for recreation and citizens often use it for informal walks and recreation. This area of the city can be used for many outdoor activities as it has a large area that is away from traffic and city congestion. Unfortunately, in our city, such areas are rarely used for useful organized outdoor activities. The university has four campuses that have courtyards that can be used for outdoor activities. These yards are not designed specifically for any activity but can still be used. Primary and secondary schools have larger fenced yards in their facilities. There are football, basketball, volleyball and other sports fields in these areas.

Also in the schoolyards, there are a lot of green areas where other activities can be performed such as teaching, training, workshops, and more. Teaching in schools usually has a traditional approach. Very rarely when the weather is right do the professors decide to use the open spaces to perform activities. Most often physical education teachers conduct these classes in the open. In recent years, professors have chosen to teach in the open air. The physical activity of young people is at a very unenviable level and they are going further and further away from nature. Only in the kindergartens do we have more outdoor activities, but that is not enough. All the citizens can use these above-mentioned public areas for different outdoor activities such as playing games, informal sports activities, competitions, or training. These areas are free and accessible to all youngsters. When we talk about spaces where different activities can be performed outdoors, and are free to use, we must mention that in every urban and rural settlement in Shtip there are sports fields for basketball, volleyball, tennis, etc. In several places in the city, there is urban exercise equipment and there is a fitness zone.

When it comes to open-air activities organized by the local self-government or other relevant institutions, it can be said that there are very few. These are activities that can be counted throughout the year and refer most often to events or sports competitions.

There are night races in our community once a year. This activity is a bit bigger, and it gathers youngsters and adults. During the year there is also "Stip Cultural Summer". An event that is organized outdoors and is cultural. This event has a mix of different cultural events such as theatres, concerts, songs, folk dances, exhibitions, short films, and the like.

Once a year, outdoor activities are also organized to clean the environment from small waste. All institutions and all citizens are involved in this activity. This activity is ecological and is very important for the citizens to raise their awareness of the need to preserve the environment. Once a year there is an action "Plant your future". This action is for planting young trees. This action is organized for World Tree Day and all institutions are involved in it. Trees are planted in predetermined areas and the environment of our community is greened.

Generally, in Stip, there is no big informal activity during the year. The only informal outdoor activities are the walks that the citizens take in the open walking areas. Neighbourhood football and basketball matches can also be considered informal open-air activities. Other open-air activities are riding bikes, rollerblading, running, etc.

Conclusions for country perspective for outdoor activities and initiatives.



1

Different experiences in outdoor activities between the three countries involved in the project were identified.

2

Legislation and responsibilities for outdoor activities are mainly under tourism – rural tourism and sports tourism (Greece and North Macedonia) and in Germany, under Ministry for Family, Children, Youth, Culture and Sports NRW.

3

There are different national organizations responsible for the promotion of outdoor activities. In Greece is Local Government Organizations (OTA), in Germany is the Ministry for Family, Children, Youth, Culture and Sports NRW, and in North Macedonia is The Agency for promotion and support of tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia.

4

The level of promotion of outdoor facilities and activities is closely related to country traditions, approaches, and priorities. The support comes mainly from the local community regarding national strategies and agencies.

5

In all three countries, different initiatives at the local level were identified that are aimed to promote different types of outdoor facilities, outdoor activities, and outdoor initiatives.

6

The three hosting cities offer a variety of spaces and open-air areas for outdoor activities that can be used for the promotion of project activities.

7

Identified places for outdoor activities in Larissa – Greece, Münsterland – Germany, and Shtip – North Macedonia, as well as identified and presented activities and outdoor initiatives are valuable information for project purposes in terms of their use for project activities as well as for tourist promotion of the three mentioned cities.

What do we need?

Results from the study of interests of young people in outdoor activities and their experiences

Young people are our target group and the project aims to develop outdoor-based activities that will be beneficial for their mental health, well-being, social cohesion, and connectedness. Therefore, it is essential to design activities that will be in line with young people's interests. In this regard, we designed a study aimed to identify young people's experiences with outdoor activities, their interests, and preferences but also the motives that lead them to be actively outdoor or the difficulties they faced not doing so.

The study was designed based on project needs and goals. For the study, a specially designed questionnaire was developed to determine young people's interests and preferences, it was composed of 26 questions divided into five many subcategories: experience with the outdoor, environment, available time and motives for outdoor participation, outdoor activities during pandemics and what kind of outdoor experience do they expect.

The study was conducted in the period of May and June 2021 in all three partner countries – North Macedonia, Greece, and Germany. The survey was administered online.

Graphic 1 presents the structure of the study.

In the summary of the results, the following conclusions could be made:

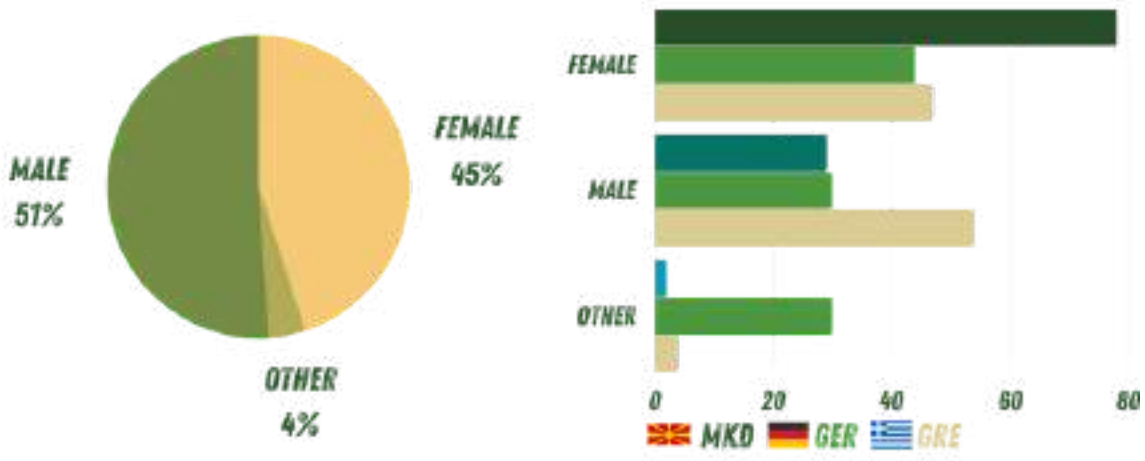




OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS

RESULTS OF SURVEY TO IDENTIFY THE INTEREST OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES; AVAILABLE FACILITIES AND RESOURCES
SURVEY DURATION: MAY - JUNE 2021

PARTICIPANT STRUCTURE BY GENDER



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS



DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES IN NATURE AND IF YOU DO, WITH WHOM?



47 % ANSWERED "MOSTLY YES"
70 % ANSWERED "WITH FRIENDS"
24 % ANSWERED "ALONE"



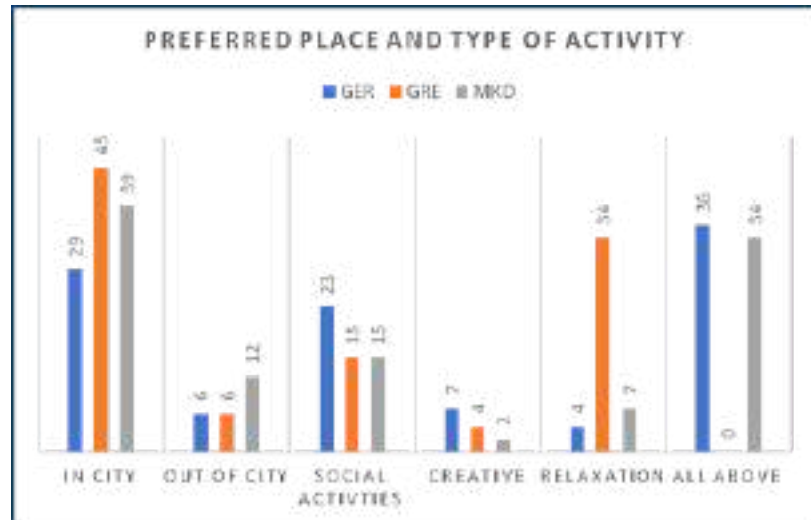
51 % ANSWERED "WHENEVER I HAVE TIME"
65 % ANSWERED "WITH FRIENDS"
18 % ANSWERED "ALONE"



62 % ANSWERED "WHENEVER I CAN"
70 % ANSWERED "WITH FRIENDS"
12 % ANSWERED "WITH FAMILY"

Forms of outdoor activities:

- Places in the city are more preferred for outdoor activities (urban cities' green zones)
- Places for outdoor activities should be within walking distance and easy to get
- Young people prefer different activities. Youngsters from Greece prefer mainly relaxing activities, German young people prefer social outdoor activities, while Macedonian youngsters prefer social, creative, and relaxing outdoor activities
- Most frequently preferred outdoor activities: walking in parks, running, picnics, listening to music outdoor, cycling



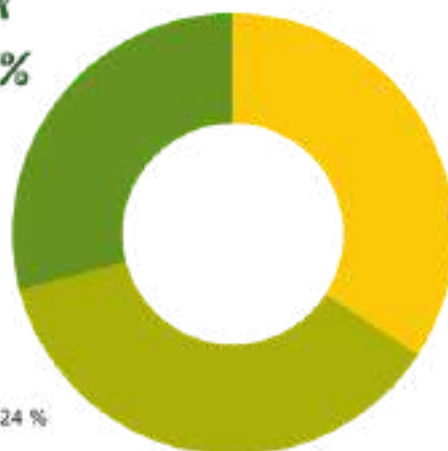
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS



PREFERRED ENVIRONMENT FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

GER
29.1%

MK
34.2%



GR
36.8%



Green places (parks, mountains, lake costs 40%



Green places 34%, city urban places 24 %



Green places 34%, city urban places 24 %



WHAT MOTIVATES YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE ACTIVE OUTDOOR?

HEALTH BENEFITS - EXPOSURE TO SUN AND FRESH AIR, BOOST THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

ENJOY IN NATURE - ANTI-STRESS, GOOD FOR MENTAL HEALTH, POSITIVE VIBES,

SOCIAL BENEFITS - MEET NEW PEOPLE, CONTACT FRIENDS

NOT MANY FINANCES ARE REQUIRED



REASONS FOR BEING LESS ACTIVE OUTDOOR

TOO BUSY WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES

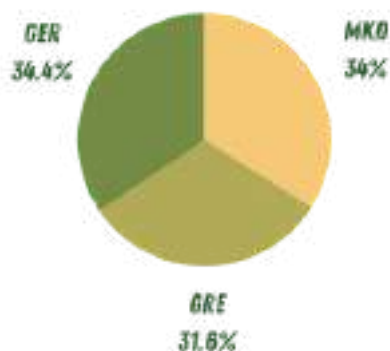
LACK OF ORGANIZED TRANSPORTATION TO THE PREFERRED DESTINATION

LACK OF SKILLS FOR DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES

DEPENDENT ON PARENTS' SUPPORT



EFFECTS OF COVID 19 PANDEMICS ON OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



 **MKD**  **GER**  **GRE**

Decrease of physical activity during the pandemic especially in the frequency of every day and several times a week

Most affected were social activities, mental health, and physical activity level. Less affected were personal relations, communication with friends and working habits

Most young people started to do the following activities during COVID 19 pandemic (were not doing them previously):
Have a pet and started to walk with it, Outdoor fitness, Photography, Painting, Reading books in nature, Camping, Picnics,

What should we do?

What kind of support should we ask for?

What can we do to attract young people to outdoor activities?

- 1 Provide activities according to their interests that are:
 - ✓ Easy to reach (in the city, within walking distance, or are easy to get using means of transportation)
 - ✓ Low costs
 - ✓ Not too much time
 - ✓ Not difficult to realize independently
- 2 Provide support (trainers, instructors) for specific activities that can help young people to start something new and unknown to them
- 3 Organize team activities that support communication, meeting new people, and contact with friends
- 4 Organize and support different types of activities:
 - ✓ Sports activities (in the city: walking, running, cycling; out of the city: hiking, mountain biking),
 - ✓ Relaxational activities (reading, yoga, meditation)
 - ✓ Social activities (concerts, picnics, picnics with some thematic activity)
 - ✓ Artistic outdoor events (concerts, drama plays, open-air cinema, bazars)

- 5 Ask for support from the local community, and schools (to provide facilities, administrative or staff support, and financial support).
- 6 Use city urban zones and green places as working and outdoor activities environment
- 7 Combine good and useful following the interests of young people and available resources
- 8 Look for volunteers that can attract other young people
- 9 Youth organizations should be a leader in this process

Participants suggestions

ACTIVITIES

“hiking, cycling, running, climbing, paintball, skating, picnics in parks, supported with music or reading, camping, yoga, and sports games at city outdoor courts, open-air concerts, photographing, meditation, dog walking, gardening, chess and Viking chess, community sports and community sports games, poetry slam, community hiking, outdoor cinema, the community meets up;”

WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT DO THEY NEED?

“Someone to organize the activity; To have more information for different activities that I can join; Motivation; Transportation for activities in the mountains; Equipment; To have safety environment;”

WHAT COMMUNITY CAN PROVIDE

“ Urban zone green spaces; Adult playground; More places for pedestrians; Guided tours; BBQing areas; Outdoor music & outdoor festivals; Fitness trails in parks; Public exercises equipment; More trash bins; More sitting areas in the park; Bicycle routes; Mapped tracks; More community-driven activities; More public bathrooms; More fishing spots; Dog walking trails Regular maintenance of existing activities; ”

PLACES SUGGESTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people included in the study suggested three of their favourite places for outdoor activities in their countries and the local area. The list is presented in Appendix 1 of the Methodology. We highly recommend to youth workers to use the list and prepare activities that are suitable for suggested places.

About storytelling and drama method

Outdoor games and activities are critical for children's and teenagers' physical and cognitive development. Implementing tasks while active in nature or a semi-natural environment increase active learning through direct personal experience. Young people learn to overcome their obstacles and fears by being given a challenge, which an outdoor adventure can provide, and they are given opportunities to grow their independence, which will help them create confidence. Given that children and adolescents are at an age when they are making the majority of their friends and learning about various cultures on their own, outdoor activities can also be utilized as a strategy for the inclusion and integration of children and adolescents who have fewer possibilities. Unfortunately, the value of outdoor sports and games as a tool for inclusion and integration is underutilized. If outdoor games or activities are built or changed in a way that supports this purpose or has aspects that promote it, children confronting cultural differences, social challenges, or scholastic issues will have more opportunities for inclusion or integration[1].

Stories can create familiarity, comfort, and connections, and as a hook to get people's attention. Stories can enthrall, attract, and entice people to participate. They can be personal or impersonal, imaginative, draw on our memories and reflections, and stay in our minds long after the event has passed. They're a sort of covert education in which we don't realize we're learning till afterwards. We gain a look into someone's world, as they perceive it, and as they choose to share it with us when we listen to or read their tale. We help others to begin to comprehend us when we tell a narrative, especially if it is 'our' tale. We have control over what we say, how we perceive our experiences, and how much (or how little) information we share. Stories are a well-known method of producing meaning based on culturally defined and historically contextual interpretations and personal experiences. We learn to recognize objects, become familiar with them, and utilize them to interpret and comprehend our surroundings. Outdoor stories have a unique feature, especially if they include sensory elements: they can help us make the connection between the outside world and our inner world, and they can be tailored to the individual setting and culture.

Storytelling brings language learning to life by creating a participative and immersive environment in which Young Learners can enjoy hearing the language in a dynamic, sometimes stylistic, and amusing manner. The use of essential terminology and phrases throughout participation might help to develop a sense of rhythm and organization. This playful and imaginative environment whets the appetite for more similar encounters. Students who have enjoyed storytelling in class are typically motivated and encouraged to write and tell, play out, or draw their own stories in various ways. The act of storytelling appeals to a variety of learning preferences and personalities, ensuring that everyone gets an opportunity to engage in a way that they love, from the shyest to the most active of learners. This can range from just listening to taking part as an actor.

Children can sympathize with strangers, places, and situations through stories. Provide information on other cultures and ideas. Insights on universal life experiences are provided. Encourage kids to think about new concepts.

Insights on universal life experiences are provided. Encourage kids to think about new concepts. Discover the contrasts and similarities between cultures throughout the world. Encourage a sense of well-being, enjoyment, and relaxation. Increase the willingness of children to share their views and feelings. Encourage people to get involved. Improve verbal skills. Encourage people to use their imaginations and be creative. Encourage pupils to work together. Improve listening abilities[2].

Drama's meaning has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Some have considered the phrase to mean "representation" or even "metaphor" for what happens in the world, while others have taken it to indicate "imitation" of the real world. Everyone is expected to discover and develop his or her resources, concentration, use of the five major senses, imagination, use, mastery, and control of the physical self, speech or practice of speaking, emotion discovery and control, and mental power at the start of theatre. This occurs regardless of the presence of other people. Individuals discover and explore their world and other people within that context through theatre after mastering their resources. They enrich their resources both within and outside of their environment later. Drama as a teaching tool is not a new concept. It has long been acknowledged as a powerful tool for education and training. Children have become passive recipients of experience because of television and video games. As a result, it is critical to provide youngsters with an opportunity to engage in artistic activities.

Drama is a great medium for this engagement since it includes the players' physical, mental, emotional, and social abilities. Drama can be viewed as a method of learning, a means of self-expression, a therapeutic approach, a social activity, or an art form, whether it is used in the classroom, at a camp, or in a community program. Many of the goals of drama and modern education are similar, including creativity and aesthetic development, critical thinking, social growth, the ability to work cooperatively with others, improved communication skills, the development of moral and spiritual values, self-awareness, and understanding and appreciation of others' cultural backgrounds and values. Drama has unique importance as a teaching tool since it is an experiential method of learning. Furthermore, some of the more innovative applications of creative theatre outside of the classroom may be staged anywhere. Museums, parks, libraries, camps, community centres, historical sites, and city streets are just a few of the alternative settings she introduces.

Outdoor activities can surely help participants enhance their physical fitness and overall health. Furthermore, being in natural settings can provide young people with a sense of calm and inner serenity. Pretend play was determined to be the most dominant kind of play outside, followed by excitement, attention, and persistence, according to Whitehurst (2001). Outside, social skills and self-esteem were most evident. The outdoor activities are chosen to provide direct experiences for the participants and are appropriate for the individual group at the given time. Outdoor education initiatives also inspire participants to develop environmental respect. Furthermore, outdoor education aims to promote personal and social growth. The three main goals in this regard are the development of self-esteem, self-awareness and interpersonal connections [3].

[2] <https://ihworld.com/ih-journal/issues/issue-43/why-storytelling-is-important/>

[3] <http://liu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:22099/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

In addition, the act of telling stories could generate healthy bonds. Nonverbal communication such as eye contact, emotional attunement, and other characteristics of nonverbal communication has many links to the formation of deep attachments and means of dealing with challenging feelings can be found in these safe, secure relationships. Storytelling is a unique form of speaking and listening that is simple to perform, engaging for children, and a natural means of learning about emotions and relationships. Storytelling is a bilateral and interactive activity between the teller and the audience; turn-taking, shared attention, and other fundamental characteristics of attachment occur spontaneously as soon as someone begins to tell a story. When communicating with others, stories can be more effective than questions. When one person shares a story, another person often responds with a narrative of their own. The mutual dynamic of speaking and listening is reflected in storytelling.

People can improve their listening skills while engaging with both the storyteller and the story. The listener must connect with the teller, visualize the characters, surroundings, and action, and build mental images as they follow, feel, and think about the message conveyed because there is no page to focus on and no graphics to accompany them. They become more aware of the spoken word as well as the story.

When we hear a narrative, we frequently begin to see it in our mind's eyes. Storytelling is all about conjuring up mental images. We can then begin to vocally explain those images, allowing language and "imaging" to complement one another and develop cognitive skills. The ability to envision, visualize, and articulate what we see in our heads is a skill that is underrated but crucial. The ability to solve problems and build a better future for ourselves is part of our human capacity. However, this ability is frequently overlooked in schooling or misinterpreted as a sign of being out of touch with reality. However, our imagination assists us in dealing with reality, and the ability to enter and exit the creative world is critical. True, some youngsters might become overly engrossed in their fantasies and retreat into their fantasy world, which may appear to be a safer alternative to their experience. Sharing stories with others, on the other hand, can serve as a bridge between reality and fiction, as well as a secure social experience.

For many people, our imagination may be a cause of great tension and concern. We may fear the worse and fantasize about the tragedies that we believe would strike us. For many people, our imagination may be a cause of great tension and concern. We may fear the worse and fantasize about the tragedies that we believe would strike us. Fears and nightmares thrive in the imagination. It is, nevertheless, also a place of hopes and dreams. We may envision ourselves reaching our objectives. The topic of overcoming hardship and reaching the desired objective appears in many stories. Because we naturally begin to envision and visualize a narrative when we read or hear it, stories stimulate the imagination. We learn to think about new and imaginative solutions to address issues as our imagination grows, frequently through concepts, we hear in stories. We are always creating tales about who we are, what we are good and awful at, and what we should and shouldn't do because the human mind is a natural storyteller. Our minds are particularly adept at this type of storytelling, and while many stories aren't necessarily 'true' or accurate, we have evolved this 'narrative mind,' which we can't easily turn off or stop. That is why it is critical to consume a steady diet of good stories to impact these self-narratives and emphasize competence and consideration.

Oral storytelling has been an important communal experience from the dawn of humanity. Literacy was non-existent for most of human history, and it was a skill that only a small percentage of the population possessed for the previous few thousand years. We don't know when humans first began telling stories, but it was obviously before writing and other forms of iconography in ancient history. Storytelling was most likely one of the first art forms to be practised. Storytelling was most likely the primary method of teaching and pleasure in our early history, as well as a means of passing down traditions and knowledge about the world. It would have become a recreational activity as mankind got more settled[4].

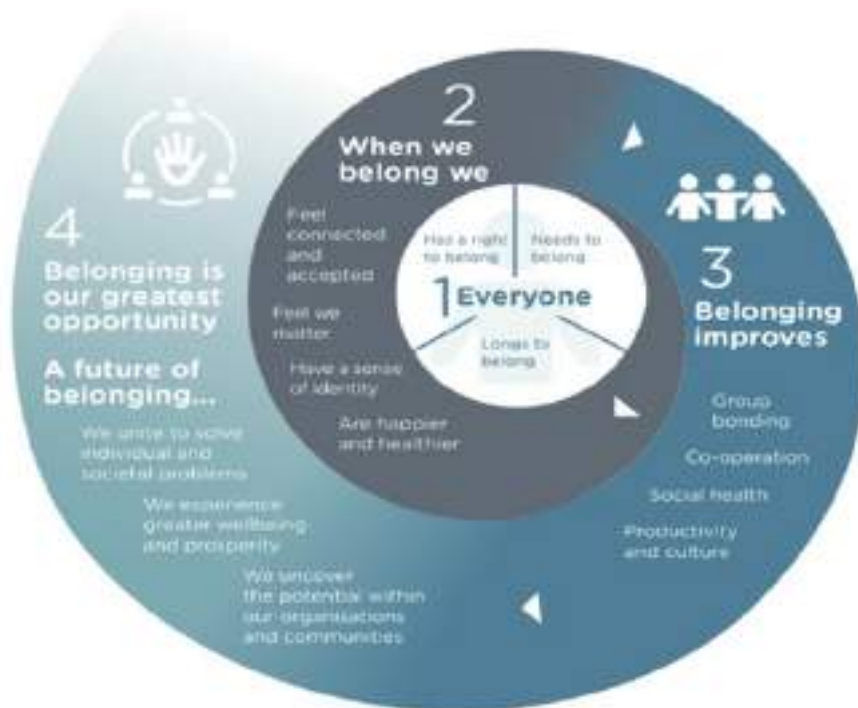
Nowadays fundamentals such as authenticity, participation, and engagement have become increasingly important because of social media technologies. Special effects and massive events are great, but they're just one-offs if they don't get to the heart of the matter. Organizations, causes, businesses, and individuals who identify and develop a core story create and demonstrate genuine meaning and purpose that others can believe in, engage in, and share. This is the foundation for cultural and social transformation. This is an important skill to master.

Even as technology's capabilities get more complex the tools are becoming more accessible and user-friendly. So much so that lines are blurring not only between technologies but also between the people who create and interact with them. Despite all the enthusiasm, the human brain has evolved at a slower rate than technology. Our brains continue to seek out the story to make sense of the event. The meaning begins in the brain, regardless of the technology. The transmedia producer may get the credit, but the storyteller's resonance, authenticity, and richness are what make the transmedia effort successful. True human experiences are communicated through stories. As every skilled storyteller (transmedia or otherwise) understands, stories skip the technology and take us to the heart of the experience. There are various psychological reasons for the power of storytelling. Collaboration and connection are key to stories. They connect us to others, span generations, and engage us through emotions. We share our passions, sadness, challenges, and joys through stories. We have similar meanings and goals. Stories provide a common platform for individuals to communicate, allowing us to overcome our barriers and differences. Stories help us better understand ourselves and discover common ground with others. They are the means through which we make sense of our lives. Schemas, scripts, cognitive maps, mental models, metaphors, and narratives are all terms for the same thing. We use stories to explain how things function, make decisions, justify those actions, persuade others, understand our place in the world, construct identities, and define and teach social ideals. The order comes from stories. The story framework is known, predictable, and reassuring to humans. We can tolerate strong emotions within the confines of the story arc because we know that the conflict will be resolved. With a safety net, we can experiment. We are also wired by stories. In the imagination, stories take place. Imagined experiences are processed in the same way as genuine ones by the human brain. True emotions, presence (a sense of being somewhere), and behavioural responses are all triggered by stories[5].

[4]<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/publications/building-relationships-through-storytelling-31-10-12.pdf>

[5]<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/positively-media/201101/the-psychological-power-storytelling>

We are strongly shaped by our social environment as human beings, and we suffer greatly when our social relationships are weak or damaged. Our well-being is highly influenced by our social connections. Our society's health and progress are also dependent on ties on a local level. We struggle to maintain a profound sense of belonging - to feel at home with the people and places around us - in this era of rapid change and hyper-individualism. This sense of separation, powerlessness and lack of belonging has all the negative mental and physical health consequences that we are all too familiar with. Stories are an ancient form of communication that has been utilized by all known human societies to bring people together. Stories allow us to share our feeling of individual identity, as well as our understanding and sense of location. People and society are shaped by stories. Who we are is made up of the stories we tell ourselves and each other, whether we are young or old, rich, or poor, from any culture. We feel 'heard,' appreciated, that we 'matter,' and that we belong in that community when we share our experience with another human[6]



Graphic: <http://www.humankind.enterprises/blog/communitybuilding#:~:text=When%20we%20listen%20to%20stories,and%20our%20role%20in%20it>.

Moreover, from societal aspect narratives are appealing health messages, that pull listeners' minds into sync, whereas weaker messages may not. Personal stories are processed more consistently in the brain regions that help us understand what other people think and feel than other non-narrative sorts of messages. Providing opportunities for people to share their ideas through storytelling initiatives can help society grow and minimize prejudice and marginalization. When people are immersed in the story, narratives are highly effective at influencing people's ideas and behaviours. People become emotionally engaged, less prone to objectively assess evidence, and more open to changing their opinions when this happens. For these reasons, educators, scientists, parents, and others must learn how to utilize stories to explain what they know. Our brains are hardwired to connect with others, and tales provide a genuinely human method to do so.

[6]<http://www.humankind.enterprises/blog/communitybuilding#:~:text=When%20we%20listen%20to%20stories,and%20our%20role%20in%20it>.

Methodology for developing outdoor activities

Developing methodology for outdoor activities is creative work but also required experience with the organization, management, etc. Furthermore, the activities are conducted in an outdoor setting which is very changeable and dependent on many factors: weather, period of the day, period of the year, frequency of people, resources, distance, etc. Therefore, when designing some outdoor activities, the issue is not just to think about activity, but also to think about all other aspects including place, equipment, safety, etc. Therefore, to facilitate the work of youth workers and young people that will design outdoor activities, we prepared the following Methodology for developing outdoor activities (Table 1) that are used as a baseline and framework to design different outdoor activities, developed within the “Youth wellbeing and getting outdoors after Covid-19” Handbook as a part of the project proposal.

It is designed as step-by-step guidance that should help developers of the activities to include all important aspects of outdoor activity, that should provide a complete learning experience. The Methodology refers to three main aspects:




-  Category - the aspect that should be defined (name of the activity, description, location, etc)
-  Explanation – gives instructions to developers on what is needed to be explained under a category or instructions on how specific activity should be conducted or realized
-  Define – gives instructions on what aspects should be identified and explained (ex: what are the financial requirements, location, needed equipment, etc).

Table 1: Methodology for developing outdoor activities

Category	Explanation	Define
Name of the activity	Give a name to the activity that will be short, interesting, attractive	
Description of the activity	Should be short, understandable, clear instruction, coherent. Modifications should be suggested. Describe the roles if there any, or modification if any. Put a picture if easier.	
Place of realization	Explain where the activity will take place; if any spatial activities are required, area requirement, accessibility, need for transport, fee for entrance or rental expenses;	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Walking distance Transportation required 2.Financial requirements 3.Define the characteristics of the required location 4.Required infrastructure
Required tools and equipment	Describe what tools or equipment you will need for the activity; alternative for some equipment; who will provide the equipment; any costs for the equipment; sports outfit or other specific outfit ;	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Activity with or without equipment 2. Fee or no fee for the equipment
Participants	Define minimum and maximum number of the participants in the activity; individual or team/group; required skills for the activity; specific group and modification required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solo, small or larger group 2. Level of difficulty (low, medium, high level of difficulty) 3. Specific group
Purpose of the activity	On short describe the intention of the activity (relaxation, movement, fun, company, team building etc)	Mark one of the following aspects that refers to designed activity Relaxation; Physical activity; Exploration Creativity; Socialization; Team building activity;
Impact	Provide information how the activity can impact participants	Mark one or more of the following aspects that refers to designed activity Physical health; Mental health; Socio – emotional health; Education!; Social inclusion

Possibility of modification

If possible, please describe the possibility to modify the activity, by providing easier or more difficult options so it can fit to participants to different levels of skills
Also provide suggestions for modifications in case of lack of resources and equipment or suggestions how to modify in case of bad weather conditions or other factors that can disrupt the suggested activity.

Mark one or more of the following aspects that refers to designed activity
Physical health; Mental health; Socio – emotional health; Education; Social inclusion

Feedback

Should be provided after the activity.
It should be designed a manner that is easy and fast

EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITY CREATED BY YOUTH WORKERS

Example 1:

Name of the activity: *Anything you can do*

I CAN DO IT BETTER!

Short description and manner of realization

This is a perfect game that you can play with your bosom buddy (best friend). It will bring out your most competitive side and allow for great fun afternoons or evenings. You'll get the most out of physical activities that both of you enjoy, and you'll keep coming back for more. For this game, we created a set of 5 physical activities, but you can also suggest exercises on your own. The winner is the one who will have a better score in total. Keep in mind that it's recommended that adults should do 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. Starting with just 30 minutes a day will put you and your friend right in the middle of that range.

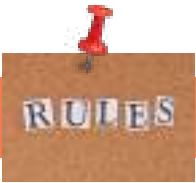
SO LET'S START!

Number of participants: 2



Required tools

- Outdoor shoes/sandals
- Bottle of water
- Outdoor Blankets and Throws
- If you have planned some activities on your own that requires an additional equipment, make sure that you will take it with you;



Rules:



Find your perfect spot in nature to start the challenge;



Stretch your body and warm up for 5 minutes;



Take a 5-minute break after each exercise;



In the end congratulations each other on the good result;

OUR SUGGESTION:

The first person chooses an exercise, like squats, and performs one squat. Then your partner has to do two squats. Your turn, do three squats. Continue alternating until one person can't continue. Then take a water break. Next time, let your partner choose the exercise, like pushups, and start the challenge. You can compete for each exercise or total up the number of times each person won at the end of your workout.

Mix it up! You can do treadmill sprints or planks, adding 30 seconds each time, box jumps, burpees, or any exercise you choose. This is a great game for competitive people to push themselves to go further during their workout!



Desired time for implementation:

Our recommendation: 1 hour

- ✓ 20 minutes walking;
- 5 minutes stretching;
- 30 minutes of physical activities;
- 5 minutes break after each exercise = 25 min;



Location:

Outdoor facilities & open spaces in nature such as parks, gardens, river



The possibility for modification and adaptation:

You can play with more people too, just have each person take turns doing the same number of reps (everyone does one squat, everyone does two squats, etc.) so you don't get to a high number of repetitions too quickly. You can call this version "Match Me".

Self-reflection questions:



- 1 What was the biggest challenge during this game?
- 2 Say a nice supportive quote to your friend!
- 3 Did you enjoy bonding with your friend?

NOTE: All developed outdoor activities can be find in "Youth wellbeing and getting outdoors after Covid-19" Handbook, developed in the frames of the project



Suggestions what to consider when designing the activities

All activities **should be attractive, simple, and convenient** to be implemented by one person or more. A basic rule for considering something simple and accessible is to be completely understandable. The appropriateness and ease of adjusting/converting the exercise can also be seen when there is a precise explanation of the steps of completing the exercise and the tools needed to perform it.

Activities **should be designed for different users or provide adaptation for each activity.** In this regard, it is important to note the level of difficulty, or define if any previous skills or experience are needed. In terms of when previous experience is needed, it is important to provide adaptation for those that are less skilled or less experienced. This way we will provide to have inclusive activities, suitable for everyone. This way, activities can be designed for people who are already engaged in different outdoor activities and are looking for additional ideas and information, but also for those who decide to start incorporating outdoor activities into their lives and do not have much experience in them.

For these reasons, there **should be multiple ways to choose an activity.** For example, one should be able to choose an activity about the equipment one already has. Or with whether to perform it alone or with friends. Or even about the environment where the activity can take place if the user can simply walk to the required environment for exercise or if he needs a means of transport to get there.

Another very important factor is **why one chooses to do an outdoor activity.** What does he/she seek to achieve through this activity for himself/herself and what areas of his life does he/she want to enhance through the effects of this activity? In this regard, it is important to emphasize the benefits of activity.

Finally, another very important factor is **the feedback** that can be given to each activity and act as an incentive for other users. There are different forms of feedback and it's important to select one that will be fast and easy to use.



How to motivate young people for more outdoor experiences

Sometimes it is hard to start doing outdoor activities, isn't it? Following the results from the survey, as well as having in mind all the excuses that young people in our organization use, we defined a list of possible obstacles and excuses and tried to give some tips on how to overcome these difficulties and finally start being active outdoors!



Obstacle #1: "I do not have money for sports equipment, course fees or outdoor sports clothes".

Not having money for sports equipment, course fees or outdoor sports clothes should not be used as an excuse for not being active outdoors. When money is tight one possible solution could be to become creative in putting your own sports equipment together. Looking around at home you will notice that many things can be used as working out equipment. For example, a water bottle or box can be used as a weight for squats. Regarding sports clothes, you don't have to spend lots of money on them. Look on a secondhand online shop or any flea market in your area.

Some ideas to do outdoor sports for free are training with your body weight, running, doing parkour, cycling, basketball, or soccer. Furthermore, there are many Youtube videos/ tutorials with which you can train. One of the most acknowledged YouTubers in this area is Mady Morrison who shares different Yoga practising videos.



Obstacle #2: "I think it's boring to do outdoor activities, I'd rather read a book or watch Netflix"

Doing something else while exercising can be very effective to keep you going on. It could distract you from the exertion and helps you to stay positive while training. Furthermore, you can do two things at once. To name an example you could go on a run while listening to an informative podcast. In this way, you can use the time while doing sports for other things.



Obstacle #3: "I feel lazy."

First of all, it is completely okay and normal to feel lazy. For example, when you had a hard day at work, a stressful period or just feel tired for some reason. Furthermore, rest days are very important for your mind and body. Creativity needs a free and restful mind and activity needs inspiration and energy. But if you want to be active and creative consistently, do not rest every single day. So how do overcome that laziness?

At some point, you must overcome your laziness. Just focus on good things, the positive mood and benefits that your activity brings, and you are ready for the first step against laziness. It can be that feeling that you have after a good run, or self – satisfaction after you completed your masterpiece or the feeling that you have after completing the poem. Imagining the result can be one solution too. Find out your motivation and build your routine.

Things that might help are to find a "buddy": someone who motivates you to do sports together, inspire you for your next piece of art, rewards yourself or just tries something new. Another effective tip is to think in small steps. Do you want to go running? First step. Just put your running shoes on but try not to think about the exhausting way ahead. Then just say to you to take a little walk around the block. If you are in the mood, begin slowly to run.



Obstacle #4: "I feel too depressed to go outside "

This is totally okay. Dare to accept help. In the long term, outdoor sports help to prevent mental health issues like anxiety or depression.



Obstacle #5: "The weather is not good for outdoor activities"

Especially when the weather is grey and bad sport is good and important for your mental health. With good clothes and preparation, outdoor sports are also a lot of fun even in bad weather. Remember to dress "like an onion" - layering is the key. The most common mistake is to be dressed too warm - it's ok to freeze a little bit at the beginning of the training. On the bike, the most important thing is to keep your feet warm and also running makes much more fun when the feet are warm and not wet!



Obstacle #6: "I do not know any good outdoor spaces in my city"

Maybe you could ask your friends or colleagues if they do outdoor sports. Moreover, you could just research (take a look on google maps) good outdoor spaces in your city. Almost every city has at least one sports field with many different opportunities to do outdoor sports.



Obstacle #7: "I feel uncomfortable when other people watch me doing sport outdoors"

Every new situation can be unpleasant and stressful at first. But when time flies, you become used to the situation and will feel less uncomfortable about it. Keep in mind that everyone started from the bottom. Probably they felt uncomfortable too. But over time you will become stronger and more secure due to the experiences you make. Consider that other people most likely do not even notice you, because they are too busy with other things. Is it worth it to cut sports out of your life just because of the possibility that people could think about you in a bad way? Don't make yourself dependent on other people! Be yourself and do what you want to do. And if people laugh at you or offend you just ignore them. They aren't worth your time or energy! Another piece of advice: You can feel a lot more comfortable if you wear nice sports clothes.

Finally, sport is the perfect remedy to gain more self-confidence. Even the smallest steps and achievements can push your confidence enormously. Achieving goals is very motivating for everything that is coming afterwards. But also defeats make you stronger and more confident physically as well as mentally. A lot depends on the own inner attitude.



Obstacle #8: "I think that going to the gym is more effective "

If you are a fan of running, it is much more effective to go outside instead of doing it on a treadmill. Doing sports outside means a lot more challenges, like the air resistance that makes it more difficult to run on a consistent level. Moreover, you will be faced with different kinds of terrains, like gradients or surfaces such as mud, grass or stone ground. Consequently, you will burn around 30% more calories. In addition, your mental health will benefit from outdoor sports. Because the routes you run are mostly a lot more varied. There are for example many different attractions that affect you, like birds twittering or weather conditions. Moreover, you can experience nature while running or cycling and meet new people. Another benefit of outdoor sports is that you can fill up with sunlight. Thereby your body can absorb vitamin D, which is necessary to strengthen your bones. Additionally, it helps to prevent diseases like cancer or depression. Even more important than vitamin D is oxygen. Due to the physical exertion, you will inhale more deeply.

Thereby more oxygen will get into your blood. This oxygen will boost your brain performance as well as helps your body with repair tasks on a cellular level. In the gym, however, you aren't provided with lots of oxygen. That's why outdoor sports are perceived to be revitalizing. Furthermore, outdoor sports are very beneficial in terms of stress reduction. Concerning this, cortisol reduces greatly when you spend some time outside. So, a workout session outside is much more stress-reducing than a workout session in a closed and sticky room. According to this, going to the gym isn't necessarily the better and more effective option if you want to do sports.



Obstacle #9: "I make plans to be active, but I do not stick to the plans or quit after one try"

You should take small steps if you want to start something new like sports. It can be very frustrating and overwhelming when you strive for perfection in many areas of your life. So start small to really achieve your goals. Regarding sports, you could try to start with a 20-minute workout every second day. If this works for you, you could increase the intensity of your workout by doing 30 minutes every second day. These small steps will help you to keep on with your goals and not give up so early. Because if you feel overwhelmed, you're not motivated to do something for your goals. Instead of being active, you choose to do nothing. Moreover, take your time and find out what kind of sport makes you feel good. Then you're much more motivated to practice it. Furthermore, you should consider that every new thing you want to put into your routine can be a challenge at first. But if you once used to it, it becomes a part of your life, such as brushing your teeth or washing your laundry.



Obstacle #10: "I do not have the time"

There is always a time spot within your calendar. So, make sure to use your time spot properly. Do you have a dog, so you must go for a walk anyway? Then turn your comfortable, little walk into a running session. Do you use your car or the bus to get to work or school even though you could walk the way? Then walk the way as quickly as you can. Even parking your car further away from your destination or going off the bus two stops earlier can do the trick. Do you have a short or longer break between work time? Then take your mat, go outside to a park nearby and start your yoga or workout session. As you see, it is very easy to introduce sports into your daily life. If you're a busy person it is, of course, a bit more difficult for you but you can plan your day so that sports isn't a problem for you anymore.

If you want to go into more detail, we created a board on padlet.com with many different sources:

https://padlet.com/maria_steinmetz/outdoor



HELPFUL TIPS

SOME MORE GENERAL TIPS ON HOW TO MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE ACTIVE AND CREATIVE IN OUTDOOR



#1 Use social media to promote the activity and motivate young people to involve

Young people spend a lot of their time on their smartphones and social media, so a creative, interactive, and fun social media strategy could go a long way in motivating young people to join outdoor activities. The social media strategy should include an appealing depiction of activities through short video clips and an interactive approach, where everybody can participate in challenges and share their experiences by filming short clips (TikTok, reels, ...) and then be featured on official channels of the project. This way people can share their experiences and get a sense of community instead of feeling alone with their struggle for motivation and effort. Also, the organization of groups and communities on social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram, ... can help the sense of community and give a lot of support. If you plan on going on a run alone, no one will miss you and you easily can put it off or cancel it altogether. But if you are meeting with another person or group, you are much more likely to commit to your plans.



#2 Creating a list of activities or defining a Program of activities for your organization

Generating and providing ideas for activities can be useful as well. Creating a list of activities, that are free or very affordable, don't require a lot of equipment and are beginner-friendly would provide ideas and help to overcome one's inhibitions to start physical activity.

Providing and sharing resources like websites, YouTube channels, and local possibilities, thus creating a pool of information that can be widened by the participants as the project progresses can be a powerful tool as well. It would be like "yelp" only for sources and public places and other providers of outdoor activities, where people can write about and share their experiences and impressions.



#3 Providing the possibility for the free trial or short-term participation

Long-term commitment to a single sport or activity can be off-putting for some people. You don't know if you will like the activity, the group or the coach, so buying a long-term course is sometimes risky. You pay for weeks of activities and find out on the first try that it's not the right activity for you. And usually, there is no claim for a refund. So it would be great if there was a possibility to try different things, like trial lessons or workshops for things that require guidance (e.g.: parkour, skating, slackline, team sports,...)

This can also be achieved by public "hands-on activities" for example in parks, forests or other places. The event "Sport im Park" is an example of creating incentives and motivation to try something new without any commitment.



#4 Connecting sports and outdoor activities with social activism

Connecting sports and outdoor activities with social activism could also increase motivation. If you're doing something good for yourself and for the world – how great is that? In Germany, there are public challenges like the cycling challenge, where people try to cycle as many kilometres as possible in a given frame of time and for every kilometre, the hosting organization donates to a charity or an environmental cause. Another idea would be to create the possibility to travel and realize international projects (e.g.: Skate-Aid).



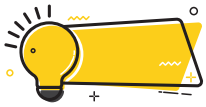
#5 Chose a beautiful environment and place in nature as a setting for the activity

Spending time in beautiful nature is great and we often forget just how gorgeous the world outside is, especially if you live in a big city or a not-so-green district of your city. So, creating incentives for nature like beautiful pictures or videos of places in nature, where physical activities take place is a big part of creating motivation.



#6 Providing detailed information about different facilities for activity

Providing information about the facilities of the city and to draw attention to it, to tell what's special about it and how you can benefit from the offers is important. A lot of students in Münster know about the university sport – “Hochschulsport” and the variety of low-cost activities it offers. Also, there are outdoor gyms and public spots for different kinds of outdoor activities like bare-footpaths and kneipp water-treading-basins, but often they are not well-known and hide in parks or forests. It would be great to create an online map of all those spots in every city. Promote places in your local community that can be used for some outdoor activity.



#7 Promote the benefits of being active outdoor

Promoting the advantages of outdoor activities can increase motivation. Following are some of those benefits:

- ✓ lower risk of infection
- ✓ boost positive mood
- ✓ increase creativity
- ✓ improves concentration, focus on the task
- ✓ reduce stress and depression
- ✓ improves mental health
- ✓ the freedom to decide for yourself how to be active
- ✓ making your own decisions and setting your own goals, are motivating
- ✓ making new friends
- ✓ environment has barely any spatial restrictions

IN CONCLUSION, YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BE MOTIVATED BY:

- offering information in an efficient, fun, and creative way
- creating a sense of community and support for example through social media and group activities
- provide a variety of cheap or cost-free activities that are low threshold
- create spaces and events for outdoor activities.

Outdoor safety

What needs to be considered when organizing outdoor activities and safety issues related to outdoor participation

When it comes to the organization of outdoor activities, regardless of the type of activity, we must be aware of the changeable environment and that it depends on different factors. These factors can affect positively and motivate, but also can have a negative effect and disrupt or cancel the activity. This is due to great dependence on outdoor conditions such as weather, period of the day, period of the year, selected place, frequency of people, etc. Many of these factors cannot be controlled by organizers but can be predicted and some measures can be taken accordingly and on time. Therefore, to provide the best possible preparation for youth workers, we prepared a list of several aspects that should be always considered when planning and organizing outdoor activities. They are the following:

1 THE PURPOSE OF THE ACTIVITY

When starting to plan and organize outdoor activities, several questions need to be answered. The answer to those questions will lead to the next steps and future actions. Those questions are:

What are the type and the main purpose of the activity?

- What are the type and the main purpose of the activity?
- What do we want to achieve with it? Is it to develop creativity, improve some skills, be physically active, relax, socialize, or simply enjoy nature or something else?
- Who is the target group?
- What are the specifics of the target group? Is it an individual or a team; beginner, intermediate, or experienced participant; is he/she the first time joining the activity?

When we have the answers to these questions, we can easily plan the following steps and activities.

2 LOCATION

The next important aspect to consider is choosing the appropriate location. Which location can be determined as appropriate is closely linked and will largely depend on the previously established purposes of the activity. However, the following may be stated as general requirements.

Appropriate place according to the selected activity. If it comes to outdoor physical activity in a rural environment, it should be a safe place, and familiar to participants or for at least one of the participants to have information about the place. It is important to move on mapped tracks, at the proper time of the day (try to avoid outdoor activities at night) and to follow the weather conditions. It is good if the selected place has a resting area nearby, a place where drinkable water and food can be found, etc. When it comes to urban outdoor sports activities, besides having the above-mentioned characteristics, the selected place should be easy to access, not be near big traffic streets, have rest areas, etc. If it comes to other types of outdoor activities (for example creative activities) is important to choose a place that will provide certain privacy and the possibility to be isolated in terms of the place not being too crowded, not too loud environment, etc. Noise crowds and many activities ongoing in the same place could distract the attention of the participants and the activity cannot be done as it should.

Quite a place (or not too noisy place). Being active outdoor many times means enjoying the sounds of nature and using them as inspiration, calmness, and relaxation. Quite places could provide better communication between participants or better communication with ourselves during individual activity. In these terms, it is important to select a place where everyone can be heard, otherwise, it will disturb the whole process and activity. In this regard, we recommend places that are not near roads, traffic areas, restaurants, coffee bars, construction areas, central city region, etc. Pleasant sounds from nature are welcomed as they can stimulate concentration and focus. If the selected location is an urban city green zone or city park, depending on the type of activity, it should be at a proper distance from parking places, children's playgrounds, food areas, etc. For proper quietness of the selected space, it is important to properly choose the day. It is recommended to choose a period when the frequentation of movement is lower but also to be proper in terms of weather conditions (avoid noon hours in summer, or morning period in winter, late at night, etc.). When it comes to silence and noises, it is worth mentioning that certain sounds like the sounds of birds, water, the sound of leaves, and trees moving on the wind have a positive effect. They are relaxing, provide calmness, and improve creativity, attention, and focus. Therefore, we recommend isolated parts of city parks or another urban green zone, near forests or places for picnics near cities, safe places near rivers and lakes, etc.

Spaciousness. The size of the location should be appropriate to the number of participants, but also according to the selected type of activity and its specifics. For example, if it comes to creative activities that should be completed in groups, a larger space will be needed.

Distance to the selected location. The selected location should be easily accessible. Depending on the available time, it should be accessible by walk or by using certain means of transport. The simplest option is to choose a location that is close to all participants or is easy to access to it. It should be also considered that for some activities, equipment will be needed, and transportation needs to be planned.

Transport and access to selected location. The means of transportation and manner of how to access the location should be planned accordingly, based on selected activity, available time, required equipment, length of the activity, period of the day, weather conditions, etc. The easiest and fastest way to access should be identified. If the group needs to go together to a different distance location, a waiting point should be agreed upon. It should be a place that is familiar to all participants, easy to find, easy to access, visible, etc. From here, the manner of the following movement should be agreed upon. It can be by walk, by bike, organized transport, etc. Regardless of the selected way of transport, each participant should be informed about the waiting point, time to arrive, manner of further movement, approximate time to arrive at the final location, responsible person to contact, etc. Transportation tools like bikes, rollers, and electric bikes can be also used as an option for transportation. The other benefit of using these means of transport is the promotion of active transportation and increased level of physical activity. Yet, we should also pay attention to safety movement, available places to store transportation means, etc. In case when selected location is more distanced, organized transportation should be provided. It also means providing clear details about the type of transport, waiting point, time of departure, travelling fees, number of persons travelling (providing a list of travellers), responsible person for contact, etc.

Possibilities of protection from unplanned and unfavourable weather conditions. Weather conditions are a very important factor that can make outdoor activities an incredibly enjoyable experience or an exceptional challenge. Hence, one of the important preconditions for efficient realization is monitoring the weather conditions and choosing a location that offers the opportunity for protection from unplanned changes in weather. In this regard, it is necessary to choose a location that has shade for sun protection or a place for protection from rain and wind. It's useful to search for backup options in case of possible bad weather conditions (for example think about accessible mounting houses and lodges, nearby closed areas, etc)

Administrative permissions. When choosing a location, another aspect that should be considered is whether we need permission to stay at that place or to move to the selected area (for example national parks, protected green areas, etc). In this regard, attention should be paid to certain temporary prohibitions and restrictions that apply to certain locations (eg: movement through the forest in summer, restrictions due to hunting seasons, etc.). The organizer of the activity is responsible for securing administrative permits rests, while for individual activities, everyone has personal responsibility. In this regard, it will be useful to have links within the community, that will follow up on this information or recreational centres to provide regular updates regarding this. Cooperation with rescue teams is also recommended when it comes to movements in mountains.



PRACTICAL ADVICE:

Before organizing the activity, especially if it is a group activity, it is recommended to visit the place where the activity should be realized before the period of realization. This is important in terms of defining the exact location, identifying possible difficulties that can occur, and thinking about proper alternative solutions.

For individual activities, especially when out of urban city zones, please make sure that you have constant contact with friends and family or inform them of your track of movement. Avoid going alone in mountains, forests, etc. Avoid going when bad weather conditions are announced or if you have some medical issues.

3 WEATHER CONDITIONS

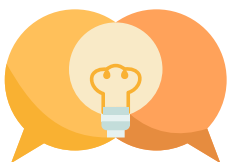
Weather conditions are very important when it comes to outdoor activities and play an important role in their overall success. In this context, the following aspects should be considered:

- Optimal weather conditions vary based on the selected type of activity. For example, for activities on snow, we need cold weather, snow, etc. that is not the case for creative activities, etc. For most outdoor activities, the optimal weather conditions would be spring and early autumn, when the weather is sunny and moderately warm (usually the months of October, April, May, and June are most suitable), but this does not mean that the other seasons are automatically excluded. What should be avoided is too low and too high temperature, extremely cold and extremely hot weather, and periods when there is fog, heavy winds, or thunderstorms. Following the weather forecast and planning the activity and equipment accordingly is the best option and advice. When it comes to outdoor sports activities, it is important to select outfits and equipment to be appropriate for different weather conditions as at places with higher altitudes, the variations in temperatures are higher and faster.

- Does the location protect from bad weather conditions? As already mentioned in the section Location, it is necessary to choose a space that offers shadows at different times of the day, and protection from the sun and the rain. In windy areas, it is important to find places that will offer options to protect from the wind. Suitable locations are grassy areas that have trees and offer shade for most of the day, parks or green areas where there are gazebos or other forms of protection from the sun and rain, and canopies near the selected location.
- The length of the activity. This is important in terms of planning the activity in periods when it is not very cold or very hot (winter and summer) and when the length of day and night is different and affects the activity by itself.

- Practical information for participants for required clothing and equipment. This is a very important aspect as it can affect both positively and negatively of overall outdoor experience. Movement in nature requires clothes that are comfortable and provide freedom to move easily. Different activities provide different types of clothes. Participants should be informed regarding this at the beginning of each activity. The rapid change of weather conditions, which is specific, especially during the change of seasons, usually requires layered clothing but also wearing additional pieces of clothing such as hat, gloves, scarf, jacket as protection from wind and rain, etc. Therefore, following the selected activity, location, period of realization, and length of the activity, participants should provide instructions for the required appropriate clothing and equipment. If the activity is longer, instructions for meals and drinks should be also given. In addition, participants should be also informed about the duration of the activity, the place of realization, the time when it starts, etc.
- Dependence of the planned activities on the weather conditions. The weather conditions largely determine the realization of all types of outdoor activities. This is not just in terms of conditions for realization, but also in terms of the structure, contents, and duration of the activities. There are certain situations when the weather conditions are closely related to the planned activities (for example very high temperatures are not suitable for physical activity outdoors, but this does not apply to lower temperatures when such activities are acceptable, for example, activities at snow). It should be taken into consideration that certain outdoor activities are conditioned by a specific season or period, so the weather conditions are not taken into account, but the focus is on having the appropriate equipment and preparation for the planned activity.

PRACTICAL ADVICE: it is always necessary to have a suitable alternative in case of unfavourable weather conditions. Always take reserved clothes. When doing outdoor sports activities always have water and some sweets with you (energetic bars, dry fruit, etc)



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4 SAFETY CONCERNS

When it comes to outdoor activities, safety always comes first. Physical safety and the safety of the participants are equally important. Ensuring safe conditions is a special challenge and should not be neglected. Proper planning and organization of outdoor activities should anticipate and minimize potential security risks. The risk is minimized when it comes to urban cities' green areas. Greater risks exist in distance outdoor locations that are in nature, out of urban zones. In such a situation, the following should be taken into account:

- Protection from animals
- Protection from insects and reptiles
- Dangerous and hard-to-reach area (lush vegetation, proximity to the road, opportunities for safe transport, etc.)
- Safe environment (to check the safety of the space where you will be sitting - old trees, branches that can fall, broken benches, debris of building materials, stones that are crumbling or can be rolled, etc.)
- Health aspects. Outdoor activities, although has numerous health benefits, still can bring certain inconveniences in certain situations. This is especially the case in the periods of May and June when the vegetation blooms and allergic reactions are possible for participants that are sensitive to allergies. Therefore, it is necessary to warn them about taking preventive measures before and after the completion of outdoor activities to minimize such risks. Risks like allergies to sun, bees, spiders and other insects are also possible so the participants should be aware of this and take proper precautions measures.

PRACTICAL ADVICE: before organizing outdoor activity at a more distant location that is out of urban city green zones, it is necessary to anticipate and calculate the possible risks and to provide a solution for each separately. Participants should also be alerted and given directions for a safe stay at the chosen location.

5 RESOURCES

Resources are a very important aspect of the organization of outdoor activities. The importance is even bigger considering that in certain activities, nature is used as a resource. When planning outdoor activities, is important to define what resources and equipment will be needed; what is available, and what could be used as a replacement, as an alternative and creative solution. Depending on the type of activity, different items in nature can be used as a resource in outdoor activities. Following are some of them.

- Parts from trees or whole tree that are put in vertical position can be used for sitting. Backpacks and small and easy-to-transport mats are also very appropriate for sitting while outdoor
- Other wooden materials can be also used for sitting
- Park benches beside sitting, can be used as a fitness tool for push-ups, stretching, and other forms of movement.
- Stairs in parks can be also used for different types of leg and arms workout
- In urban zones, outdoor fitness platforms are purposely built for exercising outdoor

6

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

When participating in outdoor activities, the outdoor environment is both environment, resource, and tool. Therefore, we need to keep it safe, and clean, and take care of it. This requires responsible behaviour from all participants before, during, and after the activity. Equally, as we pay attention to safety, we must pay attention to environmental protection as well. Therefore, participants must learn the following:

- Take care of the garbage and collect after them
- Take care of the resources – protect trees, grass, and water. Not to destroy benches in the park, outdoor fitness areas, lights, rest areas, water supplies points, informational tables, etc.
- Park in proper places that are marked
- Not to destroy or hide markings while moving on mapped tracks etc.

On the other hand, while we are active outdoor, we become closer to the nature and environment around us. These increase our awareness for environmental protection and build our ecologic conciseness. We are closer to nature and as its users, we are more concerned about taking it safe and clean. This eventually will result in more responsible behaviour and transfer as our everyday habit.

PRACTICAL ADVICE: always take a bag for garbage in case there is no available place to throw it. When possible, as a part of outdoor activity, organize a cleaning action or short activity to clean after each stay outdoor.

7

CREATIVITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Due to the impact of many factors (weather, places, other conditions), the same outdoor activity can be different whenever is practised and always brings a different experience. In this regard, in terms of always being a positive or new learning experience, great flexibility and creativity in its organization are needed. Also thinking out of the box will provide many creative solutions and ideas when we face some obstacle or challenge. Anticipating all challenges and possible problems will facilitate the process of an organization. Yet, many situations occur in place. Therefore, a certain ability to improvise, a great amount of imagination, fast decisions, and finding solutions “here and now” are very important. Therefore, organizing outdoor activities can be a great challenge, but it is also a great learning process that provides life skills that rarely can be acquired when it comes to formal teaching and a regular learning environment.

8 ACTIVE BREAKS

While practising creative outdoor activities, regardless of the benefits of being outdoor in the fresh air, exposed to the sun, and the positive impact of the natural environment, mental fatigue can occur. This can bring a lack of attention, drop in concentration, decrease in creativity, less focus on a task, etc. In addition, the body is in the position of continuous sitting in the same position for a longer period. Sitting on the ground on a hard surface is an additional challenge. These can cause numbness, discomfort, and pain in the neck, back, and legs. All these processes together, lead to great mental fatigue which manifests itself as drowsiness, yawning, loss of attention, a decrease in energy and attention, lethargy, passivity, as well as muscle stiffness, body aches, and headaches. Although staying in nature and the fresh air partially act as a counterbalance primarily to mental fatigue and continuously provide oxygen, some short active breaks, micro-breaks, or so-called Brain Breaks are necessary. Active breaks are short forms of physical activity for 2-4 minutes that are performed at the place where the activity is realized and when some of the previously mentioned signs and symptoms are noticed. They aim to use physical activity in terms to compensate and eliminate mental fatigue and to be applied as a form of active rest/break. Active breaks are realized without special organizational preparation, by simply getting up and performing certain basic movements. The basic means of active breaks are shaping exercises, ie a complex of 3 to 4 simple, clear, and dynamic general preparatory exercises are used, which are repeated 4 to 6 times. Simple movements with bending the head forward, backward, sideways, and circles are mostly used; body movements forward, backward, sideways; hand movements in different directions and different ways, stretching the arms and hands, stretching the legs, running in place, squats are also some of the forms applied for an active break. When realizing them, simple, easy-to-find equipment can be used, such as pillows, a cube, chairs, a small ball, a backpack, a book, a balloon, etc. Simple elementary games, as well as collective games such as statues, pantomime, broken telephone with movement, and associations using movements, are also proven forms of active break. Particularly popular forms of active breaks are the ones that apply music during the movements, as well as already created recorded active breaks that are uploaded on online platforms. Such a platform that has collected more than 150 different forms of active break, which includes numerous videos from various sports and dances around the world is the HopSport Brain Break platform (<http://hopsportbrainbreak.com>).

Study results in evidence for great positive effects in terms of cognitive functions (Mullender et al, 2015; Etseban et al, 2015), better academic achievement (Donnelly et al, 2016; Mullender et al, 2015), improved attention and focus on the tasks that follow (Janssen et al, 2014; Mullender et al, 2015), better concentration as well as improved behaviour during teaching, holistic learning and goal-orientation (Popeska et al, 2018; Glapa et al, 2018), positive attitude towards physical activity (Uzinoz et al, 2017, Mok et al, 2020; Ke Zhou et al, 2021), increased level of physical activity daily (Korz et al, 2018; Bonnema et al, 2020, Mok et al, 2020), improved self-confidence and self-awareness (Popeska et al, 2018), improved short-term memory (Hayar et al, 2021)

Outdoor activities in schools

How to integrate the methodology for outdoor in the school curricula

In previous sections, we elaborated on different types of outdoor activities, their benefits and impact as well as suggestions for their organization. Analyzing their use and the impact that they have on the improvement of physical abilities, physical and mental health, socialization, emotional wellbeing, creativity, environmental awareness, and overall effect on character building and life skills, it is understandable why outdoor activities are included in formal school and university curricula. Based on country traditions, overall educational concepts in different countries, main educational goals as well as country resources, and different experiences in different countries are noted in terms of implementation of different outdoor concepts and outdoor activities in school and university curricula.

In this regard, there are examples of many countries such as Canada, New Zealand, and Nordic countries (Finland, Denmark, Norway) that have well-developed concepts for outdoor education and great examples of implementation of outdoor activities in their educational system. In these terms, in the last decade, concepts like green education, outdoor classroom, green education, place-based outdoor education, etc, are very popular. In addition, formal and informal education has interfered in many countries and this results in well-developed scout movements, organization of winter and summer camps, adventurous outdoor camps, and activities, etc. Such activities combine outdoor movement activities, adventurous sports, adrenalin activities, but also creative outdoor activities, activities for socialization, activities for the development of life skills and survival techniques, etc. The importance of outdoor activities within an educational process as well as the development of the concept of outdoor education becomes even more important and emphasized during the COVID-19 pandemic when indoor activities were cancelled and there were suggestions, whenever possible to transfer the educational process and learning activities outdoor.

The following part presents experiences from countries included in the project regarding different forms of implementation of outdoor activities at school and university curricula. The emphasis is given to the existence of outdoor activities within school subjects, separate subjects or courses related to outdoor activities, or study programs that are aimed at different types of outdoor education.



GREECE

Outdoor activities in school and university curricula in Greece



Outdoor education is a proposal for a new subject for the Greek curriculum in formal education. It is not a compulsory course and can be done with the help and contribution of existing staff. Nowadays, the presence of programs in schools, such as white nights and green classes, expresses the state's intention to introduce outdoor education programs to the Greek educational reality.

The program "Winter Student Weeks 2004" was implemented for the first time in the school year 2003-2004 (preceded by a pilot application only at the ski centre of Parnassos). The program was called "White and Green Weeks" and aimed at the widest possible contact of students with the natural environment and cultural tradition of the countryside, by organizing weekly educational trips on a large scale. The cost of the program was borne by the Ministry of Development, while the Ministry of Education was responsible for educational planning and the accompaniment of students. Key features of the Program were:

- ✓ Participation of 50,000 students in total;
- ✓ The program of all destinations included the morning activities in the countryside (hiking, winter sports, visits to areas of special natural beauty, acquaintance with the local tradition, etc.), the afternoon four-hour lesson, and in the evening cultural events, an acquaintance of students with each other, traditional music, dances, etc;
- ✓ It concerned students of the 3rd grade of the Gymnasium, the 1st grade of the Unified Lyceum, and the 1st grade of the 1st cycle of the vocational schools;
- ✓ The excursions were five days (departure Monday and return Friday), with four nights (from Monday to Thursday);

The program for 2004 concerned a total of 36 regions-destinations from all over mainland Greece and Crete. Of these 29 areas were for the Green Classes (e.g., Lake Plastira, Metsovo, Zagoria, Pelion, Gortynia, Parnonas, Lassithi) and 7 areas of Ski Centers are for the White Classes.

The reinstatement of the institution of "White Week" in all the country's schools is being discussed during this time (2021). The Minister of Tourism has already sent a proposal to the Minister of Education, outlining options for when the "White Week" will take place, as well as changes to the academic year's curriculum. Private education in Greece, on the other hand, goes a step further in this regard. We provide some examples of curriculums found in private Greek educational institutions.

Degree (The American College in Athens) provides students, faculty, and staff with the opportunity to engage in outdoor recreation, as a healthy and environmentally sound leisure activity that generates a sense of well-being. The Recreational Sports Program provides various outdoor adventure-based experiential activities such as hiking, climbing, scuba diving, biking, and skiing through organized trips while also providing the requisite equipment. Such activities initiate recreational, educational, and leadership learning opportunities and are a great way for students to learn new skills, socialize, and explore their natural surroundings.

ACS Athens is a student-centred international school, that embraces American educational philosophy, principles, and values. It provides numerous outdoor activities for early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school students.

Another example of an outdoor activities curriculum designed by private primary and secondary schools is Platon Private School, which, like other private schools in Greece, offers summer or diving camps among other outdoor activities.

Outdoor education as a form of subject in schools in Greece



As previously stated, outdoor activities and outdoor education have not yet been fully integrated into the Greek educational system, but we can observe some early steps and some very solid initiatives in this direction. One of these efforts to integrate outdoor education can be discovered at Karpathos Elementary School. At this particular elementary school of Karpathos, teachers implemented The "hiking trail"(as they name the curriculum) as an ideal field for Outdoor Education. The design and the implementation of the activities included were made by environmentalists and scientific collaborators of the University of the Aegean. The idea was to introduce hiking to the students. Students were taught how to distinguish the organized paths from the simple ones, to read the signs so they know they are on track and what hikers do when they want to put their sign having no tools available. The purpose, according to educators, is to identify the path they hiked "as a model field of educational activities" that may be used by schools and environmental organizations for Outdoor Education activities.

Another example comes from the International School of Piraeus, which has integrated outdoor learning into its curriculum. The outdoor class is held once a week for students aged 3-7. The concept of the outdoor class assumes that children are complex beings. It is based on the belief that to cultivate the child holistically, education must follow the fundamental principle that children learn everywhere and constantly, and children need a wide variety of learning experiences and stimuli in areas such as gross and fine motor skills, social-emotional development, language development, and creative expression. A full range of activities is carried out, including many activities traditionally considered "internal activities". The outdoor area offers a balance of fields for more and less active play. In the outdoor classroom, children can often start their own learning experiences and activities, with teachers always supporting them. Children experience nature in as many ways as possible.

Finally, since 2012, the concept of forest schools has been implemented in Greece. Forest Schools are nature-based communities where professional practitioners encourage learner-led exploration and discovery, fostering meaningful experiences that have long-term positive effects. The educators' approach is based on well-being, and they provide guidance and facilitation for participants' time in nature by recognizing their social, emotional, and physical needs.



Preparation of educators for outdoor learning and activities

In Greece, according to the findings of the desk research, the significance of outdoor activities in terms of physical and mental health, as well as social connectivity, has been recognized in recent years. Many studies evidence that if the leisure sports programs are not properly structured, they create low expectations for their quality, and the intentional behaviour of the trainees will not be desirable, as a result of which the trainees' relationship with the sports organization is weakened. On the contrary, the desired behaviours lead to an increase in participation, a positive promotion of the organization's "word of mouth", an increase in revenue, and an increase in the frequency of stay of trainees in the programs (Theodorakis, 1992). That is the reason that aside from the ones included in undergraduate Physical Education and Sports Science courses, other options for outdoor activity study have been established. A few of them are listed below.

✓ Educational Program "Outdoor Winter Leisure Activities in Education".

Training & Lifelong Learning Center (KEDIVIM) of the University of Thessaly (Duration 60 hours/February-March 2020/ 2 ECTS).

This training program "Outdoor Winter Leisure Activities in Education" offers specific material, accurately describes the procedures, and trains the attendant/teacher/trainer/animator/parent or social worker to be able to lead a safely and successfully group of pupils/students/children but also individuals older in a free winter natural but organized environment with physical exercise - leisure activities.

This training program aims to educate and familiarize participants with the winter environment, the proper preparation for dealing with prevailing conditions, updating and applying safety rules aimed at the ability to plan, organize and implement motor activities and games that take place in nature. The aims of the program refers to learning safe personal movement in a snowy landscape; teaching of the basic principles of behaviour and safety rules in the snow; learning for the use of special equipment and technics in the skiing and winter sports as well as other forms of activities on snow such as winter hiking and snow games.

This training program is addressed to education executives of all levels, school principals, education counsellors, adult staff educators, civil servants, policymakers in regional and local government organizations, company and business owners and consultants, employees of tourist accommodation, executives and owners of children's camps, executives and owners of companies of outdoor activities, executives of ecological - outdoor tourism and graduates, students of all cognitive objects and educational institutions (secondary education, universities, vocational schools). The program is aimed at individuals, mainly teachers who want to innovate methodologically in teaching their courses or work, enrich their daily reality, to strengthen their professional profile with the prospect of offering modern quality training programs. The program is based on the principles of the hybrid training method, which includes live meetings and asynchronous training.



Animator of Outdoor Tourist Activities- Training & Lifelong Learning Center (KEDIVIM) of the University of Thessaly is an innovative educational program, lasting 7 months (420 teaching hours).

The aim of the program is the training and certification of employees with previous work experience in the field of Outdoor Leisure Activities tourism. The program is based on the principles and procedures of the blended learning method as it includes both in-life and distance learning modules. It is addressed to executives, employees, and business owners who offer programs of Outdoor Tourist Leisure Activities in Greece. In this educational program, the participants, regardless of degrees, certificates, certifications of different educational levels and origin, different specializations in an outdoor activity, or different work experience they hold, obtain a joint certification entitled: "Animator of Outdoor Tourist Activities". Upon completion of this training program, the participants can: get to know the content of active leisure & outdoor activities; be informed about the benefits and goals of leisure activities; manage the necessary individual and group equipment; choose the right place, and organize every action safely; to know the basic technical elements of an effective escort; safely guide a group of 'trainees' in a free environment; be aware of international safety regulations. manage an emergency or accident situation adequately; know the rules of nature protection and the practice of 'leave no trace'.

 Outdoor Education_Rural Education & Education Life Skills, Environment, Motor Sports - [Training & Lifelong Learning Center (KEDIVIM) of the University of Thessaly]. The duration of the training program is nine (9) months corresponding to 450 hours - 18 ECTS.

This training aims to allow all participating students to be able to design from a simple to a complex Rural Education program and to try to guide groups of students or other people adequately and safely, in educational activities in nature, in amusement parks, in suitably landscaped urban areas free from construction. Rural Education as a process and as a cognitive object aims to help students of all educational levels, but also any other group of participants, to try to get in touch with nature through a variety of motor and educational activities, to become aware of the environment, to know themselves, create bridges of communication with other people, teachers or companions, try to gain a different perspective on life, to transfer the positive elements of this experiential experience to their real life. This training program is addressed to teachers of all levels. More specifically, to education executives, kindergarten teachers, teachers, leisure professionals, Outdoor Tourist Activities Animators but also to the teaching staff of organizations that provide Outdoor Mobile Recreation Services and alternative forms of Tourism. Also, to school principals, human resources training consultants, staff of Environmental Education Centers (KPE), special schools, adult educators, educators of Centers for Open Protection of the Elderly, and policymakers in regional and local government organizations. The program is based entirely on the principles and procedures of distance learning asynchronous training programs and Lifelong Learning. The asynchronous education platform offers a series of guides for the development of the skills of the trainees as well as assignments, tests, and practices for the evaluation of the student's progress lasting 450 hours.

 Outdoor Recreation Activities – Camps [University of Thessaly]

The course Outdoor Recreation Activities – Camps, University of Thessaly, concerns the introduction to the field of Outdoor Recreation and Outdoor Activities. Theoretical approaches to the subject of Outdoor Recreation are reported, in the relevant areas of Management-Action Management, and Environmental Psychology _knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour of the individual in the Natural Environment. Five basic outdoor activities are taught in detail: a) camping in the countryside - environmental responsibility, b) rock climbing, c) mountain biking, d) mountain hiking and e) orientation. The teaching of the subjects is accompanied by active participation in the activities aimed at the experiential education of the student and the activation of his environmental consciousness.

The course has a mission to introduce the student to specific outdoor activities and specifically most important for possible future professional employment. Downhill Skiing in winter was raised as a perspective, followed by involvement in summer children camps. Activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and orienteering could take place throughout the year. Finally climbing as an activity that dominates the issue of security concerns tracks on artificial walls or rocky paths but always 'top rope'.

Outdoor recreation programs in schools and universities in Greece



As far as secondary education is concerned, there are plenty of camping destinations under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, for the summer months of the year. Water activities, athletic activities, and extreme sports are the most popular activities at these camps. Among them stands out the camp "Once upon a time", which is a member of The International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts and UNESCO. Also, many schools participate in Erasmus + initiatives, with the 21st Elementary School of Athens being a particularly noteworthy example (Erasmus + KA229 "Take care! Sustainable children - sustainable Earth"). During the program, the school's instructional staff had the opportunity to learn new things and exchange good practices related to sustainable development and the "green" culture of schools. When visiting Orivesi, Finland for the 1st Transnational meeting of the project (the meeting's topic: "Outdoor pedagogy, green labels, and eTwinning training") they participated in experiential, environmental, and outdoor activities in the school yard of the local "Nature School" and the forest, which can be easily integrated into the school curriculum. They also participated with the students in environmental games and experiential activities.

In addition, all universities have Physical Education Offices and annual programs for outdoor leisure activities. The PEOs aim at encouraging the students at the Universities to participate in Sports activities, keep fit and strengthen their bodies and soul through physical training and rivalry. As an example, the Outdoors leisure activities schedule for the academic year 2020-2021 from the office of physical activities at the University of Thessaly in Larissa is presented below.

WINTER SEMESTER 2020-2021

1. Hiking at Olympus
and visit the museum and the archeological site of Dion
2. Rafting at Arachthos river in Ioannina and visiting at Dodoni oracle
3. Skiing at the Vasilitsa ski resort in Grevena

SUMMER SEMESTER 2021

1. Hiking at Olympus and the Enipeas canyon and visit at the museum and archeological site of Dion
2. Rafting at Arachthos river in Ioannina and visit at the city of Ioannina
3. Educational and environmental trip to Kerkini lake (canoe-kayak, bicycling, and archery)
4. Hiking at Kissavos at Calypso Canyon



GERMANY



Outdoor activities in school and university curricula in Germany

Statutory guidelines and teaching plan demands are published and regulated by the Ministry for Culture and Education NRW (<https://www.schulministerium.nrw/themen/schulsystem/richtlinien-und-lehrplaene>), where all the curricula for primary, secondary and also for vocational colleges can be found. The states of Germany, differ slightly because they are formed by the federal ministry. Research has shown that like in all other states of Germany also the state of North Rhine-Westphalia supports several extracurricular projects with different topics and different funds, but none of them is specifically defined as outdoor activities.

One example is the state program “culture and school”(<https://www.schulministerium.nrw/nrw-landesprogramm-kultur-und-schule>). On the project page, it is said that politicians are aware of the need for children and young people to experience culture and art at an early stage of their life. Therefore, the state NRW supports culture and art projects of local artists or cultural institutions when they take place at the schools or specifically for school classes, no matter if outdoor or indoor. Many art projects are often for example done outdoor, it is not uncommon that you see a group of pupils painting an old stature and Germany offers a lot of historically important places to do so.

Another state project that indirectly also includes outdoor activities in schools is called “education and health NRW”. It follows a national prevention strategy and targets activities of prevention for higher quality standards in health prevention at schools. Over 300 schools in Germany have already taken part in this project which is also supported by several local health insurance funds (<https://www.bug-nrw.de/landesprogramm>). One of the main goals of this project until 2022 is a network of schools with several extracurricular or curricular activities that support the health of the pupils.



Outdoor activities within school subject programs in German schools

When it comes to outdoor activities besides normal sports lessons in school one can hardly find any strictly compulsory offers or subjects in the teaching plan guidelines. School sport in Germany looks back to 150 years of tradition and is firmly anchored both in the subject canon and in daily school life. It comprises the two pillars of physical education and non-curricular school sports. Physical education forms the core of school sports. It is a compulsory subject for all pupils from the first grade to the final exam and is one of the subjects with the highest total number of hours, along with German and mathematics.

The timetable for the subject of sport provides at least three hours of physical education per week (<https://www.schulministerium.nrw/schulsport-und-gesundheitsfoerderung>). But in addition to compulsory physical education, there is also extra-curricular school sport, which can enrich school life with its diverse range of offers and is of course also done outdoor during the summer months. These include sports offers during breaks, school sports communities, school sports festivals, school sports competitions, or school trips that focus on sports. One of the main goals of the school ministries in Germany is to play sports as a daily business because physical activities help to motivate the mind as well. School sports are an independent and irreplaceable contribution to holistic education and open a special field of learning by experience. These experiences are not only done by oneself, but the pupils also experience their social and natural environment through their movements.

In this respect, it is said that a good German school is also a moving school. Exercises, play, and sports have a positive effect on the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of children and young adolescents. There is a close connection seen between successful learning and healthy exercises, whether done outdoor or indoors. During the summer months, teachers also take pupils out in the garden (if there is one) of the school and do lessons outside. Other possibilities are afternoon groups at schools that can be chosen concerning personal interests. These groups can be sports groups as well as theatre or gardening groups. For the teachers who want to do more outdoor activities, the Federal Ministry for Nature, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Security offers many materials to teach and learn outdoor for several school subjects like even math or computer sciences (<https://www.umwelt-im-unterricht.de/>). All the material can be downloaded and used for free.

When it comes to studies and subjects including specific outdoor activities for future teachers/educators one finds much information concerning the topic “experimental pedagogics” or „adventure-based learning“ and it is sometimes also called “outdoor education”. The umbrella organization for this field of profession, the federal association for individual or experimental education Germany, is a registered association located in Dortmund, NRW (<https://www.bundesverband-erlebnispädagogik.de/>) with over 100 member organizations all over Germany. In terms of different content, the member associations assign themselves to one or more specific areas/subjects which build different working groups. The cooperation of the members is desired, but not compulsory. The specific groups are also open to non-members, as is the public part of the annual general meeting in which, among other topics, advanced training offers are on the agenda. Both individual and experimental education are recognized and established practical approaches in the field of child and youth work and youth welfare. But the work's target groups are not exclusively found for children and adolescents – the methods of experimental education are also used in educational work with adults. Looking back to the 1980s and concentrating on the adventurous forerunners in Germany, one can see that first, it was all about the outdoor element of water and here in particular about the outdoor activity of sailing that had a formative power.

In 1987 the forerunner of today's associations was founded by Prof. Dr Ziegenspeck under the name „Federal Association of sailing pedagogics and therapy“. Over the following years, on the one hand, many youth welfare projects on the water were established, on the other hand, the approach was increasingly implemented with other methods of outdoor education.

Today experimental education programs have become an integral part of the educational landscape but there are only a few universities that offer to study them as a subject. Often, they are embedded in social studies or pedagogics, or they form an extra educational program that has to be paid for. They take place with different target groups and age groups, for example as part of school schedules and class trips, as holiday camps, or as social training courses. Other recreational programs are only done within class trips which can last from one day to one week. In general, these trips are done for the learning experience and not for recreation. Classes go to experience animals at the zoos, travel around to any specific place in Germany that has historical or cultural meaning or take a day trip to a sight nearby and have a guided tour to learn more about Germany's history. Recreation programs to experience nature in Germany are mostly organized by voluntary associations or the church. The same is done at universities. In their study time, students learn, and in their free time they should rest. If pupils want to experience any other outdoor activities or something specific this is done in their leisure time. The leisure time of young people in Germany is often structured by their hobbies and interests and many of them do additional activities in voluntary associations nearby. Free time in the afternoons is one of the advantages of the German school system. The fact that pupils can leave school at noon or afternoon gives them enough space and time to follow their interests as well as meet friends or learn something else in their free time which is not compulsory and strictly connected to schooling rules or guidelines.



NORTH MACEDONIA



Outdoor activities within school subject programs in schools in North Macedonia

When it comes to outdoor activities in schools and universities in North Macedonia, the desk analyses that included analyses of primary and secondary school curricula, showed that there is no separate subject within study programs that are dedicated exclusively to different forms of outdoor activities. Yet, analyses per subject in both primary and post-primary education give a different perspective (<https://www.bro.gov.mk>).

Namely, in primary education, the study programs in several subjects like nature and environment, physical education, art, and knowing nature, which are subjects learned at the primary level, different contents involve different types of outdoor activities, or the nature is suggested as an environment for the realization of different contents and as a tool and resource for learning.

Particularly, the contents from the subject nature and environment, children learn about orientation in nature, sides of the world, different types of vegetation, waters, mountains, etc. In this regard, it is suggested to teach these contents in nature, by organizing hiking tours, nature sightseeing, picnics, intentional hiking tours aimed to explore some activity in nature, etc.

Different types of outdoor sports activities are implemented in the curriculum from the subject of Physical and health education. Within this subject, children go on organized hiking and cycling tours, mountain biking, skiing, winter sports activities, rollerblading, etc. These activities are implemented as a part of selective thematic unions named “outdoor activities”, and “snow and water activities”. These thematic unions are organized by the school and supported by parents and the local community. This refers to both primary and secondary schools. Outdoor sports activities become more popular among teachers and students during the COVID-19 pandemic when following the instructions when was suggested PE lessons be realized outdoor. Such a situation was used positively in terms of greater organization of outdoor activities that on the other side attracted children's attention and interest, become very popular, and were maintained as good practice when we return to normal teaching after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Creative outdoor activities like drawing, painting, photography, etc are part of the art education curriculum, and many times some activities are realized outdoor, using nature as a resource or place for realization. Yet, the realization of this depends on teachers' manner of work and their preparedness to do the lectures outdoor.

Apart from curricular content that refers to outdoor participation, many outdoor activities are happening as extracurricular activities. In this regard, different schools have different initiatives, and they organize one-day outdoor activities such as cross running, outdoor traditional games, biking tours, hiking tours, activities on snow, skating, etc. Many schools also organized picnics for the whole school or activities in nature with some aim, such as environment day marked with planting trees, ecology day aimed to collect garbage and clean the environment, etc. Many schools also organized a week of outdoor classes (outdoor learning week), summer and winter camps, and snowy cities organized on a state level as an event where children build cities and figures from the snow at ski resort Mavrovo, etc. All mentioned extracurricular activities are organized in different formats: as independent organization of a particular school (based on school resources, an initiative of school staff, etc), on the community level when the community supports or organized the activity and all schools from that community join and take a part or at state level events are organized by different state institutions or associations and school from all country take participation.



Preparation of educators for outdoor learning and activities

The organization of outdoor activities, regardless of their type or goal, needs proper skills and knowledge to be organized properly and safely. Therefore, proper education for outdoor activities is needed. Considering that there is no specific subject in schools, there is also no specific course or study program for preparing students for outdoor activities and outdoor education. Yet, there are different content within different study programs that are working on this issue. In this regard, students enrolled in teaching faculties, are prepared for outdoor education and outdoor activities in different subjects. Students at Teaching faculties have courses from different methodic (The methodic of physical education, the Methodic of natural sciences, the Methodic of nature and society, etc). In these study programs, students learn how to organize different types of outdoor activities according to the needs of the subject. Students from the Faculty of physical education, sport, and health also have some courses for outdoor activities on snow, by the water where besides learning the bases of skiing, swimming, and other water sports, they also learn how to organize outdoor activities and provide safety issues. Yet, there is no separate subject that will prepare them, particularly for outdoor education.

Students at the Faculty of physical education and sport, have separate subjects for winter and summer sports as well as hiking courses and courses for water sports in their study programs, as obligatory courses, and activities. As a part of these courses, they are prepared for the organization and realization of different outdoor activities in different surroundings and environments.

Overview of country perspectives

Overview of country perspectives for outdoor activities within school and University Curricula

- ✓ All three countries have different experiences in the implementation of outdoor education in school and university curricula;
- ✓ Outdoor activities are not implemented as a separate subject but mainly as a part of other subjects (physical education, nature education), as an approach to teaching (green classroom, outdoor learning of particular contents), or as extracurricular activities;
- ✓ Greece made a step forward in implementing the experimental program in certain schools named "White and green Week" where different outdoor activities are organized during different periods of the year. Many private schools in Greece also propose different outdoor activities on regular bases;
- ✓ In all three countries, there are examples of organizations of different outdoor activities such as extracurricular activities like summer and winter camps, hiking, cycling activities, days for water sports, white and green weeks and days, etc.
- ✓ In preparation of teachers for outdoor activities, also different approaches are noted;
- ✓ In Greece, there are several study programs at different universities that educate students on outdoor activities, such as the Educational Program "Outdoor Winter Leisure Activities in Education", Animator of Outdoor Tourist Activities- Training & Lifelong Learning Center, Outdoor Education_Rural Education & Education Life Skills, Environment, Motor Sports;
- ✓ In Germany, teachers that want to realize outdoor activities are supported with educational materials and supporting tools for outdoor education by the Ministry for Nature, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Security as well as different associations that are working on the promotion of outdoor activities.;
- ✓ In North Macedonia, teachers are educated for the organization of outdoor activities within different subjects in Teaching faculties and the Faculty for Physical education, sport, and Health;
- ✓ Although not completely implemented as a separate subject, outdoor activities in different forms are implemented in school and university life;

About the Methodology

The use of the methodology for outdoor activities in schools, universities, and nonformal education

Following the country analyses for implementation of outdoor activities in school and university curricula, presented in the previous part, it can be concluded that still there is a need for additional work in the segment of the implementation of outdoor activities in terms of development and implementation of the concept of outdoor education.

In this regard, we consider that a prepared Methodology for outdoor activities can have a great contribution to the promotion of outdoor education, its benefits, and its impact on overall development in terms of its implementation in schools and universities. It can have an important contribution to the implementation of outdoor activities in curricular and extracurricular activities as well as both in formal and nonformal education. The schools and universities can benefit from the presented Methodology for outdoor activities in terms of:

- 1 Guidelines on how to choose different outdoor activities and to design outdoor activities for different purposes (sport, creativity, well-being) and in different surroundings (urban green zones, rural environments, mountains, lakes side's, etc);
- 2 Guidelines on what to consider when organizing outdoor activities as well as information on what to prepare as requirements and directions for participants;
- 3 Instructions on how to motivate students and young people to participate in outdoor activities;
- 4 Ideas and suggestions for different outdoor activities as well as for instructions for their modification that can be easily implemented in different subjects;
- 5 Safety issues that can be considered and followed when preparing outdoor activities;
- 6 Presented aspects for use of storytelling can be also very useful for teachers and trainers in terms of closer work with students and young people;
- 7 Suggested activities are based on study results and represent the interest of young people. This can be very useful for all educators in terms of selecting activities that are initiated by the real interest of young people as users and their need;

- 8 Suggested places for outdoor activities in three countries can be very useful for educators within the country as ideas where outdoor activities can take place;
- 9 Suggested places can be also used for international promotion in terms of their involvement as a part of touristic promotion;
- 10 Presented Methodology can upgrade teachers' knowledge of outdoor education and help them in the organization of different outdoor activities;

Presented Methodology can be also useful for NGOs and local communities in terms of:

- 1 Guidelines for selection, organization, and realization of outdoor activities as a part of their work in terms of organization of outdoor workshops, outdoor seminars, etc;
- 2 Ideas for different outdoor activities that can be very useful in terms of different activities related to skill development, personal development, fostering social interaction and communication, development of leadership skills, etc;
- 3 Suggested places for outdoor activities in three countries as ideas where outdoor activities can take place.
- 4 Suggestions for the local community for real needs of young people that can be used for building strategies for community development in terms of green, eco and movement-friendly community;
- 5 Study results presented in the Methodology can be used by NGOs to design different outdoor programs for the skills development of young people;
- 6 Study results can be also used by the local community to identify the gaps between what they provide and what citizens needs and, in these terms, to improve the infrastructure where needed, or support the organization of different activities based on identified needs and interests.

7

Instead of Conclusion

The presented Methodology for outdoor activities will fulfill its goal if:



INSPIRE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE MORE ACTIVE OUTDOOR



MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE TO TRY AT LEAST ONE OF THE SUGGESTED OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND IMPLEMENT IT IN THEIR EVERYDAY ROUTINE



MOTIVATE TEACHERS TO ORGANIZE MORE ACTIVITIES OUTDOOR



INSPIRE LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO TAKE MORE ACTIONS RELATED TO THE ORGANIZATION OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

#

A bad day at camping is always better than a good day at work

#

If we needed to stay at one place, we `d have roots instead of feet (Rachel Wolchin)

#

In every walk in the nature, we receive far more that we seek (John Muir)

#

Somewhere on your journey, don `t forget to turn around and enjoy the view

Annexe 1

Places for outdoor activities suggested by participants in the study

GREECE



Kaisariani's Park

Ardittos Hill

Chatzichalar Park, Park Mezourlo, Alcazar Park, Park Tritsi (Athens)

Kipothreatro Alcazar(Larissa)

Alsos of Mezourlo

Pelion

Relaxing in the area around the historical museum of Larissa

Hiking tracks at Peinios and Olympos

Agiocampos

Thermi's Dam Platanakia

Historical Museum of Larissa

Lagoon of Kalochori

Elaiorema Toumpa

Mountains Parnitha, Olimp, Yentiki, Kissavos, Pelion

GERMANY



Lake: Aasee

Parks: Zoo, Südpark

Forests: Hoppengarten

Wildlife Sanctuaries: Baumberge

Promenade

River (Weser)

Chateau gardens

Old city center

Skatepark

Football field

Pool

NORTH MACEDONIA



Hill and fortress ISAR

Sport complex SUTLAK

Canion Kamnik and Kozjak

Mountains near Stip: Plackovica, Lisec, Osogovo

Area of Strumina River

Lake Area Gratce

Kokino Observatory

Ski center Ponikva

Arheological finding Bargala

Mountain Vodno (Skopje)

Hicking tracks in Berovo and Probistip

Mountain lounge at Plackovica

Smolari waterfalls



NATIONAL AGENCY
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