

Plan your hike together

Handbook for youth workers
and mountain guides





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Innovative Education Center (Austria)

Contributing partners:

Bulgarian Sports Development Association (Bulgaria)

Rijeka Sport’s Association (Croatia)

Iniziativa democratica (Italy)



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Aims and objectives of the guide

Who is it for?

This guide is designed to support youth workers, mountain guides, sport experts and other interested parties in planning and implementation of projects and activities related to hiking or walking in nature.



The specific objectives of the guide:

- Acquire new knowledge and experience of using hiking as a tool for social inclusion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and promotion of equal opportunities;
- Raise awareness of the added value of hiking and physical activities in relation to the personal, professional and social development of individuals;
- Promote volunteering in sport and strengthen volunteer's skills and support activities related to natural environment of hiking clubs;
- Provide tools and guidance for improvement of activities and services of NGOs and mountain organizations who are supporting hiking as a tool for social inclusion;
- Introduce the Hike Together Project

Key definitions

Hiking

is an outdoor activity of long energetic walking in beautiful natural environments on pre-charted paths called hiking trails for a day or overnight. That means your equipment should reflect that day trip and the needs of the specific hiking location.

Trekking

Is a long journey undertaken on foot in areas where there are usually no means of transport available. Trekking involves long distance walking, so your equipment must match those needs and should reflect how remote your route will be.

Equality

Means that everybody is of equal value and deserves equal respect, dignity and opportunity. It is based on four key objectives:

- Access to services;
- Inclusion in decision making and shaping one's own community;
- Relationships based on love, care, respect and solidarity;
- Acknowledgement of diversity and the right to social status.

Integration

Reconciles difference(s) in the sense of a synthesis that creates a coherent entirety – “wholeness”. Well-achieved, integration is pleasing in that it constructs a genuine harmony – an equilibrium – between disparate elements. In everyday use, the term nowadays frequently connotes the social integration of foreigners or of persons living with disabilities on equal terms with the mainstream or majority.

Inclusion

A term used widely in social and educational policy making to express the idea that all people living in a given society (should) have access and participation rights on equal terms. This means, on one hand, that institutions, structures and measures should be designed positively to accommodate diversity of circumstances, identities and ways of life. On the other hand, it means that opportunities and resources should be distributed so as to minimise disadvantage and marginalisation. In the sphere of European youth work and non-formal education, inclusion is considered an all-embracing strategy and practice of ensuring that people with fewer opportunities have access to the structures and programmes offered.

Diversity

Diversity is about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin. Diversity allows for the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It means understanding one another by surpassing simple tolerance to ensure people truly value their differences.

CULTURE

"A set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs."(UNESCO, 2011)

Hike Together Project



www.hiketogtherproject.com

Hiking is a perfect tool to promote social inclusion and participation in physical activity. By participating to hiking activities organized by clubs or by joining to mountain clubs, young people have a chance to socialize and increase feeling of belonging to their community, and learn new skills.

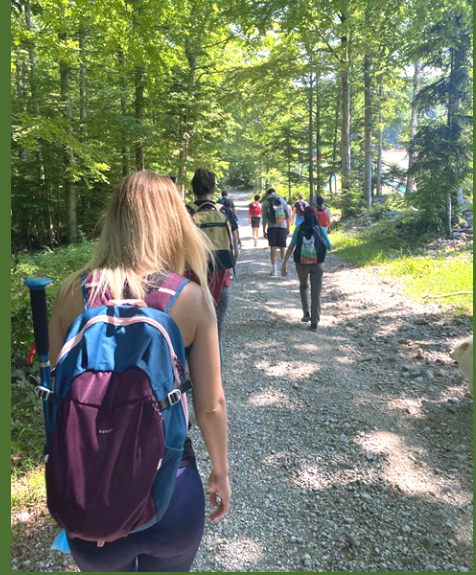
Hiking is a physical activity without boundaries for several reasons: it can be done whole year around; it does not require special skills, facilities or expensive equipments; it has health benefits and low risk of injury; and walking itself is physical activity to begin and maintain as a part of a physically active lifestyle. Hiking offers many health benefits, such as controlling obesity, giving a cardio workout (stronger workout by using poles) or cardiovascular activity that increases heart rate and fastening breathing by inhaling fresh air, and etc.

Hiking on uneven terrain works muscles while improving balance and stability and increases the amount of energy your body uses by 28% compared to walking on flat ground, 90-minute hike in nature has dramatic effect on the brain and the way we feel. Just one hour of hiking can burn well over 500 calories.

Hiking is also a social activity because hikers always recommend using the buddy system. Interaction with hiking community encourages young people to workout as a lifestyle, rather than a chore, which will make young people more likely to stick with it for the long haul. It's an inherently social activity and enhance relationships with friends and family, by inviting along those dear to you, it can give you a fantastic chance to spend some real, quality time together. A regular weekend meet-up or a planned long-distance trek can help you forge bonds while shaping up.

Moreover hiking is a low cost activity as most of the natural parks and mountain trails are free of charge.

#hiketogether



Project Hike together contributes to raising awareness of health benefits of walking in nature – as a natural exercise by promotion participation in hiking and trekking. Project “Hike Together” is focused especially on young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Specific goals:

- To develop skills to use hiking as a tool for social inclusion of young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and to promotion equal opportunities for people, regardless of their age, sex, origin, financial status, etc;
- To create a network of professionals, devoted to healthy and active living, from different parts of Europe, who commit to the project not only during the project life, but also after the project;
- To raise awareness on the added value of hiking and physical activities on the personal, professional and social development of individuals through all planned project activities, in particular with the dissemination events that will be implemented in each partner country;
- To promote access to volunteering in sport and strengthen volunteer's skills and management skills and increase the capacity of the local hiking clubs as professional providers of services in local communities.

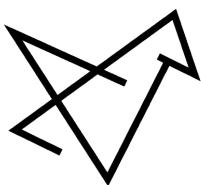




Our PARTNERSHIP

Coordinator from Austria

Innovative Education Center



The Innovative Education Center (IEC Austria) was established in Vienna in 2018 by a group of experienced youth workers and international consultants. Innovative Education Center aspires to create a community built on collaboration, innovation, creativity, and belonging. The aim of IEC Austria team is to develop projects, training courses and non-formal learning activities to support and improve the use of NFE, sport, music and art, as a tool for social inclusion, mutual understanding, entrepreneurial development, empowerment and leadership.

Partner from Bulgaria

Bulgarian Sports Development Association



Bulgarian Sports Development Association was founded in 2010 and is a nonprofit public benefit organization devoted to the development of Bulgarian sport and improving sporting culture in Bulgaria! Bulgarian Sports Development Association has extensive experience in the field of youth activities, sports events and trainings. Young athletes and volunteers are an essential part of the team of the Association and for our team capacity building of Bulgarian youth and sport experts is a top priority. Over the years we have organized a variety of events focused on the development of sport and physical activity and implementing of good practices on local level in our country. Each team member is committed to the development of sport and has a solid background in various aspects of management, administration and organization of NGO and entrepreneurial sector. Team members have participated in multiple trainings and initiatives under the program Youth in Action and Erasmus+.



Partner from Italy

Iniziativa Democratica

Iniziativa Democratica is a non-governmental organization, founded in March 2011 and registered in October 2012 in Italy. Members of the organization are actively involved in organizing and creating youth projects based on non-formal and formal education, such as seminars, personal development and coaching trainings, youth exchanges, participation in a variety of projects in Italy and abroad. Iniziativa Democratica's mission is the spreading of active citizenship (especially European one), Human Rights and legality. Iniziativa Democratica works at local, national, European and international level and works mainly with youngsters because Iniziativa Democratica believes young people can change the world.



Partner from Croatia

Rijeka Sport's Association

Rijeka Sport's Association, allying all sporting clubs within the City of Rijeka, in accordance with art.48 of Sports Act, is the promoter of the Programme of public sports programme co-funding in the City of Rijeka, which is presented through the City administration department for sports and technical culture to the government of the City of Rijeka and to the City Council of Rijeka for adoption. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the local Government is obliged to foster the development of sports; to this end, funds are allocated out of the City of Rijeka annual budget for sporting activities co-funding and the City government's commitment in this respect is clearly expressed in the Programme of public sports programme co-funding.

Mountaineering and hiking in partner countries



Austria

In Austria, the umbrella hiking organization is called Association of Alpine Associations of Austria (Der Verband alpiner Vereine Österreichs - VAVÖ). Main goal of the association is to coordinate alpine associations in the representation of interests and to train alpine instructors and hiking guides. VAVÖ has 12 member associations in total, 668 sections consisting of local groups and clubs and more than 750 000 members. The biggest and most significant associations are Austrian Alpine Association (The Österreichischer Alpenverein), Nature friends Austria (Naturefreunde Österreich) and Austrian Tourist Club (ÖTK Österreichischer Touristenklub). In the area of the capital, Vienna, there are 12 alpine clubs registered.



Bulgaria

The Bulgarian umbrella hiking is The Bulgarian Tourist Union (BTU), which unites tourist companies, federations and associations. The main goal of the Bulgarian Tourist Union is to support the development of civil society and democracy in the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of social tourism, creating conditions, offering opportunities and services in order to exercise tourism; develop and promote various types of mountaineering and tourist activities; stimulate orienteering, mountaineering and speleology; manage and maintain the tourist material base. The total number of sites is 410. Most mountain clubs in Bulgaria are registered as NGOs. In the area of the city Sofia and its district, there are 36 officially registered hiking clubs in BTU.

Another important institution in Bulgaria is The Bulgarian Mountaineering Union. It was created by people who want to improve the conditions in the mountains and want a change in the current management.



ITALY

In Italy, the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) is the umbrella hiking organization on the national level. CAI operates 433 mountain huts, 224 bivouacs and 106 smaller huts and shelters throughout the Italian Alps. At the end of 2019, the organization had more than 320 000 members. The Italian Alpine club was also a founding member of the International Union of Mountaineering Associations (UIAA). In the region of Ancona, there is the Sezione CAI di Ancona which has 51 initial members. Overall in Marche region there are 15 mountaineering clubs located in Ancona, Amandola, Ascoli, Fabriano, Fermo, Jesi, Macerata, Montefeltro, Pesaro, Potenza Picena, San Benedetto del Tronto, San Severino, Sarnano, Senigallia. Youth Mountaineering section OTTO Marche-Umbria is a joined club of two regions - Marche and Umbria.



CROATIA

The only umbrella hiking organization in Croatia is the Croatian Mountaineering Association (HPS). The goal is to bring together all mountaineering associations with the status of legal entities in Croatia; take care of mountaineering houses and paths in Croatian mountains; organize professional schools and courses; coordinate and improve the work of mountaineers, climbers, speleologists, guides; publish the magazine "Croatian mountaineer" and professional mountaineering literature. The Croatian Mountaineering Association is united in the UIAA (International Association of Mountaineering Associations) and the Croatian Olympic Committee (COC). In the area of Rijeka there is the Rijeka Mountaineering Association which is part of the mentioned national association. In the city of Rijeka, there are 9 mountaineering/hiking clubs.



Volunteering in hiking clubs

In most countries, volunteers have the opportunity to form different groups, maintain, create and mark footpaths, take photographs, build and work on mountain houses, clean nature and the environment. Different associations can also create more specific projects for volunteers, for example in Bulgaria, the Sofia Mountain Club organized a project called First aid kit on the aisle. The main objective was to place 4 kits in strategic places in the area of Vitosha Mountain. The exact points of placement were voted on. Participants consisted of volunteers and also children from the Home for Children Deprived of Parental Care Petko Slaveykov. Another educational project created by Sofia Mountain Club was for example Come to the Mountain Forum which aimed at establishing the mountain culture in Bulgaria, discussing important things that every visitor to the mountain should know, sharing practices with experienced mountaineers, organizing hikes in the mountains and, most importantly, making them safe. Apart from the above mentioned projects, Sofia Mountain Club annually organizes a project named Plums for garbage – cleaning of Vitosha Mountain.

A total of 43 % of the Austrian among 15 – 29 years old – carries out some form of unpaid voluntary activity and thus makes an indispensable contribution to social cohesion and to our high quality of life. Freiwilligenweb (www.freiwilligenweb.at) Official Austrian government portal for volunteer work. In Austria, maintaining hiking trails is popular. Regular basic maintenance is essential to ensure that habitats are protected and paths can be enjoyed for years to come. Trails marking, which began in some regions close to 140 years ago, is mostly carried out by alpine clubs, who use volunteer workers for this purpose. Alpine clubs are very proud of this tradition.



How to join hiking club

Most clubs provide information regarding applications on their websites or, in some cases, applicants can find contact information published on social media pages. The usual requirement to enter a hiking club is to pay an entry fee and fill out an application form. The amount to pay usually depends on the age, status or possible disadvantage of the applicant. Some clubs can require members to renew their membership by paying an additional fee every year. Applicants have the opportunity to apply for membership online, only rarely there is the necessity to apply in person. Active participation in club activities is required as well.

Membership in hiking clubs is usually accompanied by various advantages, which can include for example insurance coverage. In Austria, hiking clubs provide a wide range of benefits, for instance rescue cost, insurance for rescues out of wayless areas during leisure time, in Austria and also abroad, worldwide repatriation service from abroad, medically necessary treatment (including medically necessary transport to a hospital) abroad. Other advantages include for example discounts for the purchase of gadgets, facilitated conditions in the use of the accommodation facilities (reduction in price), the right to receive corporate publications and discounts on courses in the training programme.



ADDED VALUE

of hiking for individuals

Personal development

By participating in hiking activities and events, participants have the opportunity to work on their self-discipline and mental strength and they can improve their physical and mental abilities and skills. In this way, participants can stay connected with nature. This connection and spending time in a natural environment facilitates recovery from stress, equilibrates personal balance and has a calming effect on the body and mind. Moreover, hiking improves personal endurance, helps to develop cognitive abilities and improve people's self-esteem and can change the mind-set of people. Hikes of higher difficulty can also motivate people to challenge themselves and overcome their personal boundaries or issues. Overall, nature experiences have a pronounced, positive effect for promoting psychological and physical wellbeing.

Professional development

Spending time in nature can help participants find inspiration for their work and motivate them in their professional life. Participating in such events also usually consists of some team building activities and the event as a whole sometimes requires teamwork and team spirit which can lead to development of leader skills as well. Since hiking events are usually a group activity, it is a great opportunity for people to improve their communication skills and learn how to listen to others.

Social development

By organizing hiking events, where participation is open to everybody and all members of the community are invited, associations are offering an opportunity for accessible outdoor activities while motivating participants to be physically active and spend more meaningful time in nature. The accessibility of hiking events ensures that participants can meet other people and learn more about their background and different cultures, improve their teamwork skills, adapt to new groups of people and develop their soft skills through non-formal learning. It is a great way to make new friends and share the community experience. There is no competition, so participants can enjoy a conversing and relaxed atmosphere. Many hiking events are open to people of all nationalities, so participants usually have the opportunity to practice learning new languages as well.





EU funding's supporting international sport and youth initiatives

Erasmus+ Chapter Sport

There is a variety of opportunities under Erasmus+ for organisations to apply for funding to deliver sports-related activities. Centralized activities run by the European Commission's Executive Agency The opportunities managed by the Executive Agency are funded under the sports strand of Erasmus+ and are aimed at supporting European partnerships focused on grassroots sport. Cooperation partnerships in the field of sport support the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices in sport and physical activity. Europe-wide voluntary sport events can be funded, including organisation, implementation and legacy activities.

Erasmus+

The programme provides funding in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. It supports people's mobility for better employability and transnational cooperation with a view to sharing innovative practices. Actions fostering social inclusion, preventing radicalisation, supporting the recognition of qualifications and promoting multilingualism, tolerance and common values are being encouraged. The programme is implemented either by national agencies in the Member States or directly by the European Commission through its Education, Culture and Audiovisual Executive Agency. Organisations actively involved in sport can take part in decentralized activities if their projects are intended to use sport in the context of education and training or youth activities. This could include, for example, work placements abroad for sport apprentices, staff training for coaches, volunteers or youth workers involved in delivering sports activities in a formal or informal context or partnership projects aimed at improving provision in the teaching of sporting skills.



Activities for young people in nature

Before you plan your hike together!

Number of the staff

Hiking in nature for many kilometers is a long and exciting activity, make sure you have enough staff (youth workers and mountain guides) to keep your group together. Always keep one responsible at the front of the group and one at the back and one or two in the middle. The maximum size of a hiking group is 15 participants including staff

Clothing

There is no such thing as bad weather, only badly prepared hikers. Always check the weather forecast and have a back-up plan in case the weather changes and you need to make a quick exit down the hiking path. Cold and wet weather - raincoat, warm clothing. Hot and sunny weather - sun hats, scarfs, sun cream, plenty of liquids to drink. If you can carry some extra clothing, water and food, it can be very helpful in case of an emergency.

Safety instructions

Walking in nature is an exciting physical activity, especially when you are exploring a new environment. However, there are a few different hazards being outdoors which you should take note of and actions to reduce risk as much as possible. Make sure you plan your hike before going with a group and carry out an appropriate risk assessment. Check restrictions and closing on the hiking trails and store in your mobile the number of a local mountain rescue service.

Health instructions

Check with the participants their physical and health conditions before joining the hike. Make sure you carry a first aid kit and have someone with you that is first aid trained in case of any accidents. If you are going to be in a remote area, make sure you have mobile phones in case you need to make an emergency call and a charged battery bank. Make sure that everybody in the group has appropriate insurance covering accidents in mountain areas.

Timing of the hike

Allow time for short rest every hour for 10-15 mins. Plan a bigger break after a few hours of hiking for lunch and refreshment 60 - 90 mins. After the first 15 mins of walking make a short 5 mins break and allow participants to adjust their hiking gear to feel comfortable.



Organise your hikes as environmentally friendly as possible

Before you buy, think!

Reduce the amount of waste created by borrowing equipment from someone else or try to reuse something you already have. This way you will also save money.

Leave no trace

Make sure you take everything you brought with you, home with you. Leave no trace that you've been in the area.

No plastic

Try to avoid using plastic where possible, especially single use plastic items like straws, plastic bags, plastic packaging. Bring your own water bottle and refill.

Minimize footprint

Plan your travel to the meeting point for hiking carefully. Walk, cycle or use public transport when possible. If you are travelling by car, try to share rides with other hikers, to reduce the number of vehicles on the road.



Activities during the hikes

Have a few activities prepared which can focus your group's attention, with so much to see and explore it is easy to lose concentration! There are lots of easy and simple activities such as nature sit spots, or some ice breakers, which will refocus the group



Herbal Hike

2: 30 hours

Before the hike starts, participants are asked to share their knowledge about herbs growing in the given area and different ways in which the herbs can be useful. When the hike starts, everyone is welcome to stop the group and point out different herbs which can possibly be collected. At the end of the hike, participants can reflect on their findings.

Outcomes

- Communications skills
- Presentation skills
- Nature education
- Raising awareness of the importance of natural flora

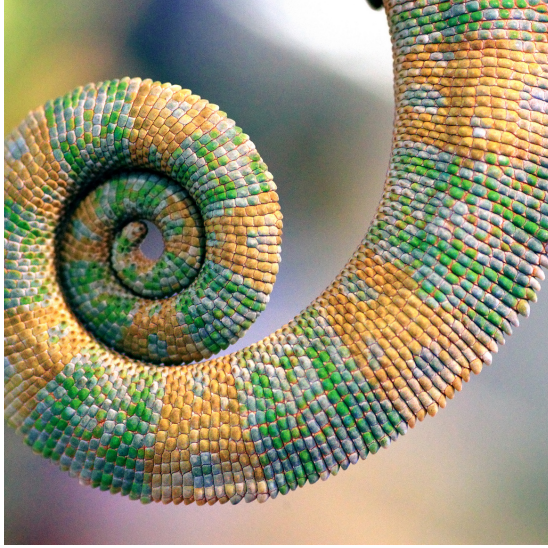
Group mascot

1: 30 hours

Choose an open space for this activity and divide participants into smaller groups. In groups they should then think of their group mascot and make up a name for it. Using only natural materials, each group should try to create their mascot and later present it in front of other groups.

Outcomes

- Ability to work in a team
- Expanding creativity
- Ability to orientate in nature
- Raising awareness of importance of preserving natural materials and resources



Camouflage

2: 30 hours

Start the activity with a talk about camouflage and its importance in nature. Participants may also brainstorm ideas about how animals use different ways of camouflaging into the environment and why it is helpful. Then, choose a place, for example a shorter part of the trail, where participants will have 5 minutes to try and camouflage themselves into the environment. One of the participants will then walk along the trail once and try to call out as many people as possible. This activity can be repeated more times always with one of the participants taking the role of a searcher.

Outcomes

- Ability to orientate in nature
- Improving communication skills
- Nature education

Nature art

1: 00 hour

Each participant should find a place in nature and everyone will be provided with a set of pencils, a frame and some paper. Then, they will be asked to place the frame in some chosen place and try to draw on the paper what they see from their perspective. Later, participants will present their drawing to others and explain their choice.

Outcomes

- Expanding creativity
- Connecting with nature using creative imagination
- Experiencing own point of view



Name game

10 mins

This activity is a good warm-up exercise to do before a hike. Each participant should think of an animal, plant or a natural object that represents them in some way or that they feel a connection to. Everyone will then take turns and say their name with the chosen animal/plant/object, with the following participant always repeating what was said before. This will help participants to remember the names of others.

Outcomes

- Getting to know other participants
- Remembering names of other participants
- Communication skills

Sit spots

As long as needed

During this activity, participants should be working alone. The first step is to find a suitable trail. Then, after starting the hike, participants will be given a break for approximately 10-15 minutes to think about their surroundings, what they see and feel and the feelings nature evokes in them. They can write down notes as well. These breaks should be repeated multiple times until the final destination is reached. In the end, every participant should share what they have noticed and felt.

Outcomes

- Nature observation and appreciation
- Developing relationship between nature and humans
- Ability to focus and concentrate on surroundings
- Training senses

After completing an activity, participants can reflect on their work and think about the tasks they have done or the feelings those activities have evoked in them. They can also reflect on their possible findings, perceptions and notes they have collected while exercising different activities. Here are some questions which can help participants with reflection:

- What feelings did you have while fulfilling your task?
- How did you feel in nature?
- How was the communication with other participants?
- How was this activity helpful or enriching?



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