

# National Index - Germany

Exploring Outdoor Education as  
Inclusion Tools in Work with Young  
Migrants in NEET Situations

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*Partner:*



**CULTURE GOES EUROPE**  
SOZIOKULTURELLE INITIATIVE ERFURT E.V.



**INSIDE OUT**



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National Index - Germany

## **Exploring Outdoor Education as Inclusion Tools in Work with Young Migrants in NEET Situations**

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# Introduction



In response to the pressing need to support the integration and well-being of migrant and NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) youth, our consortium embarked on a project aimed at researching how to use outdoor education as a method for integration, through its benefits on mental health improvement, resilience building, improved adaptation to challenges, decision-making skills, teamwork, leadership skills, and community building.

The goal of this project is to strengthen cooperation with local educational and integration institutions and services, thereby developing collaborative approaches to support migrants using outdoor environments.




# Introduction



This project's target groups are young people in NEET situations, with a focus on migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; educators and integration services providers; and formal and informal civil society working with migrants. The focus of this project is directly embedded in German, Irish and Icelandic realities, where our consortium is located at.

The following report summarizes the research conducted and insights gathered in Germany, through focus group discussions with young migrants; through interviews with four youth workers and trainers specialized in outdoor education; and through dissemination of an online survey for integration services providers and civil society.





# Chapter 1: Focus Group Research

## **METHODOLOGY**

To gather insights and perspectives directly from our target group, a focus group was conducted with young migrants. Firstly, a set of questions was brainstormed by the researchers, and then a representative number of these questions were asked to a group of 6 young migrants between the ages of 18 and 27 years old. The discussion revolved around various topics, including the definition and types of outdoor education activities, the benefits of outdoor education, barriers to participation, support needed for participation, and the role of outdoor education in achieving life goals.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

First, participants defined outdoor education activities as experiences in natural environments that facilitate learning through group reflection. Examples provided included outdoor lectures, guided hikes, camping trips, and nature walks. In terms of support needed to join these activities, access to appropriate equipment and experienced guides emerged as essential factors. Furthermore, participants identified barriers such as transportation limitations, financial constraints, lack of knowledge and skills, and safety concerns as impediments to participation in outdoor activities.



# Chapter 1: Focus Group Research

## **KEY FINDINGS**

When asked about the benefits of outdoor education, the group highlighted improved mental health due to the natural environment providing a break from regular life and helping with recharging and building resilience; enhanced social interaction through diverse opportunities to meet new people and create shared experiences; personal growth through stepping out of comfort zones taking risks, and becoming more aware of oneself and the environment; and overall health and longevity by boosting one's immune system.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the focus group discussion underscored the significance of integrating outdoor education approaches into programs targeting migrant and NEET youth. By addressing barriers to participation and providing necessary support, such initiatives can enhance the well-being, social integration, and personal development of participants. Moving forward, it is necessary to develop tailored educational programs and foster collaborations with local institutions for sustainable impact.



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## INTRODUCTION

In addition to the focus group discussions with young migrants, our research delved into interviews with trainers and youth workers from organizations and services representing case studies related to outdoor education. This chapter synthesizes the key insights gathered from these interviews, offering valuable perspectives on the benefits, challenges, and best practices in implementing outdoor education programs.



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## 1. GERRIT ONSTEIN – OUTRAC - THE NETHERLANDS

Gerrit Onstein is an outdoor trainer, youth worker, and owner of Outrac. Outrac provides outdoor programs that are made according to the participants' learning needs and their direct intensive experiences. More information can be found here: [www.outrac.nl](http://www.outrac.nl).

By sharing his extensive experience working with children with special needs and behavioral issues, he highlighted the transformative impact of outdoor education on their mental and physical well-being. Reflecting on his journey of discovering the benefits of outdoor activities during a period of burnout, Gerrit emphasized the importance of creating safe spaces where young people feel comfortable expressing vulnerability and seeking help. He emphasized the significance of building trust and effective communication in engaging participants, particularly those who may have experienced trauma or lack trust due to past experiences.



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## 1. GERRIT ONSTEIN – OUTRAC - THE NETHERLANDS

Gerrit addressed the challenges in implementing outdoor education programs, including resistance from traditional educational systems and organizations. He emphasized the need for awareness-building workshops and broader stakeholder involvement to overcome these challenges effectively.

Advocating for tailored approaches to outdoor education, Gerrit highlighted the importance of understanding participants' backgrounds and traumas. By gradually reintegrating them into learning environments and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, outdoor education programs can empower young people to overcome challenges and achieve personal growth. Gerrit's insights underscore the transformative potential of outdoor education in supporting the well-being and development of young people, particularly those facing behavioral issues or migration backgrounds. Through trust, tailored approaches, and collaboration, outdoor education programs can create meaningful and lasting impacts on participants' lives.



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

CHECK THE FULL INTERVIEW HERE



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## 2. MARIO BINAR – NEXT LEVEL E.V. – GERMANY

Mario Binar is the CEO of Next Level e.V., an organization based in Erfurt, with a multifaceted work approach to environmental and sustainable education.

Operating at both local and European levels, Next Level focuses on raising awareness, promoting sustainable lifestyle changes, and addressing specific barriers faced by participants. Mario highlighted the organization's extensive work with children, particularly those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds or with migration experiences. Next Level's projects, ranging from school collaborations to community gardens and outdoor activities, aim to foster connections to nature and promote overall well-being.

More information can be found here: [next-level.world](https://next-level.world)



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## 2. MARIO BINAR – NEXT LEVEL E.V. – GERMANY

Mario identified various barriers to outdoor education, including lack of exposure to nature, social problems within families and communities, language and cultural barriers, and financial constraints. However, he emphasized the transformative benefits of outdoor education, citing improvements in participants' connection to nature, social interaction, and overall attitude and behavior.

Mario stressed the importance of engaging with families to understand and address barriers to participation effectively. His advice for organizations initiating outdoor education programs centered on starting with local initiatives, utilizing available green spaces, and emphasizing the value of outdoor experiences in urban settings. By breaking down barriers and fostering environmental awareness, Next Level seeks to empower children and families to lead sustainable lives while nurturing their connection to the natural world.





# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

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# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## 3. IRYNA SYTNYK – BUA – NORWAY

Iryna Sytnyk is a youth worker and trainer from Ukraine and currently based in Volda, Norway. Her organization works directly with BUA, on integrating migrants and refugees into Norwegian society through outdoor activities.

BUA is a national non-profit organization that aims to contribute to inclusion and increased participation in health-promoting activities, sports and outdoor life, for children and young people, regardless of socio-economic status. More information can be found here: [www.bua.no](http://www.bua.no).

Collaborating with local government initiatives, her work focuses on promoting the mental health benefits of outdoor education, and supporting newcomers in adjusting to their new environment.



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## 3. IRYNA SYTNYK – BUA – NORWAY

Iryna emphasized the significant role of outdoor activities in promoting well-being, particularly among individuals facing challenges such as unfamiliarity with nature and lack of proper clothing and equipment. She highlighted the availability and accessibility of free rental services for outdoor equipment, which facilitate wider participation in outdoor activities.

Iryna observed long-term engagement among participants, with many forming friendships and continuing outdoor activities independently. Her advice for other organizations emphasized collaboration with existing initiatives as essential for success. Through partnerships, Iryna's work ensures that outdoor activities are inclusive and accessible to all members of the community, regardless of age or background. By leveraging the inherent inclusivity of nature, she strives to create welcoming spaces where individuals can experience personal growth and community integration through outdoor education.





# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

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# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## 4. EDUARD OGANYAN – TE IS FOUNDATION – HUNGARY

Eduard Oganyan is a youth worker and trainer specializing in outdoor education, working at TE IS Foundation, in Hungary. TE IS Foundation aims to build an efficient voluntary community that is active and ensures the equality of opportunity for everyone. Their focus is on local and international activities, with a strong emphasis on promoting outdoor education. More information can be found here: <https://teisalapitvany.hu/>

Eduard shared his insights into the transformative potential of outdoor education, particularly in facilitating experiential learning and personal growth among participants. He highlighted the dynamic nature of adventure-based learning, emphasizing its role in encouraging exploration, cooperation, and resilience-building. By immersing participants in environmental challenges, outdoor education serves as a catalyst for self-discovery and interaction with the natural world.



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## 4. EDUARD OGANYAN – TEIS FOUNDATION – HUNGARY

However, Eduard also acknowledged the challenges inherent in implementing outdoor education programs. He emphasized the time-consuming nature of planning outdoor activities and the need for educators to familiarize themselves with outdoor settings and integrate them into learning experiences effectively. Moreover, Eduard addressed misconceptions surrounding outdoor education, dispelling the notion that it is exclusively suitable for rural environments. Instead, he advocated for the adaptation of outdoor activities to urban settings, thereby expanding access and participation.

Eduard's advice for organizations embarking on outdoor education initiatives emphasized starting small, utilizing available resources, fostering creativity, and prioritizing inclusion. By balancing safety with challenge, organizations can create enriching outdoor experiences that promote personal growth and resilience among participants.



# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

CHECK THE FULL INTERVIEW HERE

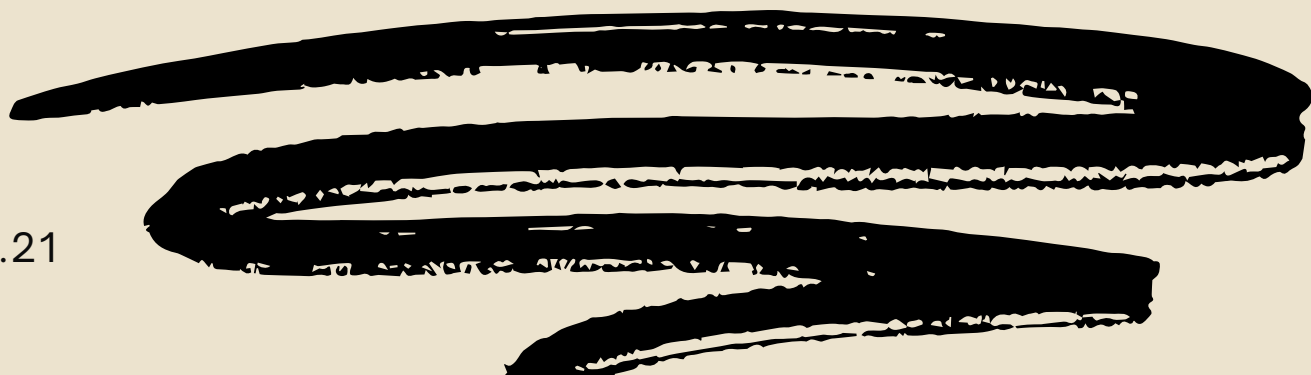




# Chapter 2: Insights from Case Studies

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The interviews with trainers shed light on various aspects of outdoor education, including its benefits, challenges, and best practices. Their experiences showcase the transformative potential of outdoor education in promoting experiential learning, fostering social interaction, and supporting the well-being of participants. Based on the insights gathered, it is recommended to incorporate elements of experiential learning, adventure-based activities, and inclusivity into outdoor education programs. Moving forward, these insights should inform the development and implementation of educational programs, emphasizing inclusivity, creativity, and collaboration. Furthermore, fostering partnerships between organizations and services can enhance the accessibility and impact of new and existing initiatives, ensuring that they reach and benefit a diverse range of participants.





# Chapter 3: Survey for Integration Services Providers & Civil Society

The survey aimed to gather insights from organizations and services working with youth in NEET situations, particularly migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The questions covered various aspects, including the types of services provided, frequency, outreach methods, challenges encountered, collaboration with other organizations, experience with outdoor education, potential outdoor educational activities, perceived benefits, barriers, and interest in learning more about outdoor education methodology.

Unfortunately, the survey faced challenges in obtaining as many responses as desired. One primary difficulty stemmed from communication barriers with the targeted services and organizations. Communication breakdowns may have occurred due to language barriers, and busy schedules, ultimately prioritizing to address immediate needs and challenges faced by their target populations over participating in research initiatives. Moreover, organizations may have been reluctant to engage in research initiatives due to concerns about perceived relevance to their work.

# Chapter 3: Survey for Integration Services Providers & Civil Society

The challenges encountered in obtaining responses to the survey highlight the perceived inflexible nature of integration services, particularly in their communication and collaboration practices. The prevalence of communication barriers emphasizes the need for more inclusive and accessible approaches to engagement. Additionally, the prioritization of immediate needs over participation in research initiatives reflects how these services are understaffed and ultimately can only focus on addressing immediate challenges with minimum capacity to consider the broader long-term benefits of collaboration.

By tackling these challenges, organizations can gather collective expertise and resources to address systemic issues more effectively. Recommendations for further collaboration between organizations align with the need for adaptive and innovative approaches to integration services, ultimately leading to more comprehensive and sustainable solutions for supporting vulnerable populations.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the research conducted in this project has shown the transformative potential of outdoor education in supporting the integration and well-being of migrant and NEET youth. Through focus group discussions with young migrants and interviews with trainers specializing in outdoor education, we have gained valuable insights into the benefits, challenges, and best practices associated with outdoor education initiatives. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating outdoor education approaches into programs targeting migrant and youth in NEET situations, with a focus on addressing barriers to participation and providing necessary support, as well as fostering collaborations between organizations. By creating tailored and informed outdoor educational programs, there is potential to promote personal growth, resilience, and community integration among participants, thus enriching people's experiences and ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and success.



# Acknowledgments

We extend our gratitude to Gerrit Onstein, Mario Binar, Iryna Sytnyk, and Eduard Oganyan, for sharing their expertise and experiences, which have enriched our understanding of outdoor education and informed the development of our project's objectives and strategies. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to the participants of the focus group for their valuable insights and contributions to this research.

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