

HIKING TO

A EUROPEAN GUIDE TO YOUTH HIKING CLINICS

CHANGE



deplannenmakers
Pedal your plans



WILD ATLANTIC
LEARNING



●●● k.A.N.E.



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CONTENTS

01 | Purpose

06 | Life Skills
from the Trail

02 | Why Hiking
Now?

07 | Monitoring
& Impact

03 | National Hiking
& Partner Roles
Ireland, Italy, Slovenia,
Greece, Netherlands

08 | Photo Gallery

04 | How to Run a Youth
Hiking Clinic

09 | Hiking to Change
the Future

05 | Sample
Themes



1. PURPOSE

To support young people in improving their physical and mental wellbeing through hiking, while educating on sustainability, entrepreneurship, and European identity. This handbook guides educators and youth leaders in implementing youth-friendly hiking clinics in Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, the Netherlands, and Greece.





2.WHY HIKING NOW?

- Hiking is a simple, low-cost activity accessible to young people of all backgrounds.
- It promotes physical and mental health, helping combat anxiety, stress, and social isolation.
- Nature walks improve memory, sleep, attention, and reduce screen fatigue.
- Aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and national physical activity strategies.



3. NATIONAL HIKING & PARTNER ROLES



IRELAND



ITALY



SLOVENIA



GREECE



NETHERLANDS

IRELAND

Partner: Wild Atlantic Travel Co. (WATC) & Scoil Mhuire Buncrana
National Hiking Body: Mountaineering Ireland

Contribution:

- **Green School** programme with focus on sustainability
- Youth-led **environmental engagement**
- Collaboration with **Donegal Council** on hiking & health strategies

Country Snapshot:

- **Sample local hike:** Inishowen Coastal Walk (Donegal) with biodiversity observation activities
- **Youth engagement:** Students lead guided hikes and awareness campaigns on outdoor health
- **Local SDG/council connection:** Good Health & Well-being (SDG 3), Climate Action (SDG 13)



ITALY

Partner: IIS Adone Zoli

National Hiking Body: CAI – Club Alpino Italiano

Contribution:

- Intergenerational and **youth hiking models**
- Links with **national trails and alpine education centres**

Country Snapshot:

- **Sample local hike:** Apennine Trail (Emilia-Romagna) with geology and cultural heritage workshops
- **Youth engagement:** Students volunteer in alpine refuges and guided activities
- **Local SDG/council connection:** Quality Education (SDG 4), Life on Land (SDG 15)



SLOVENIA

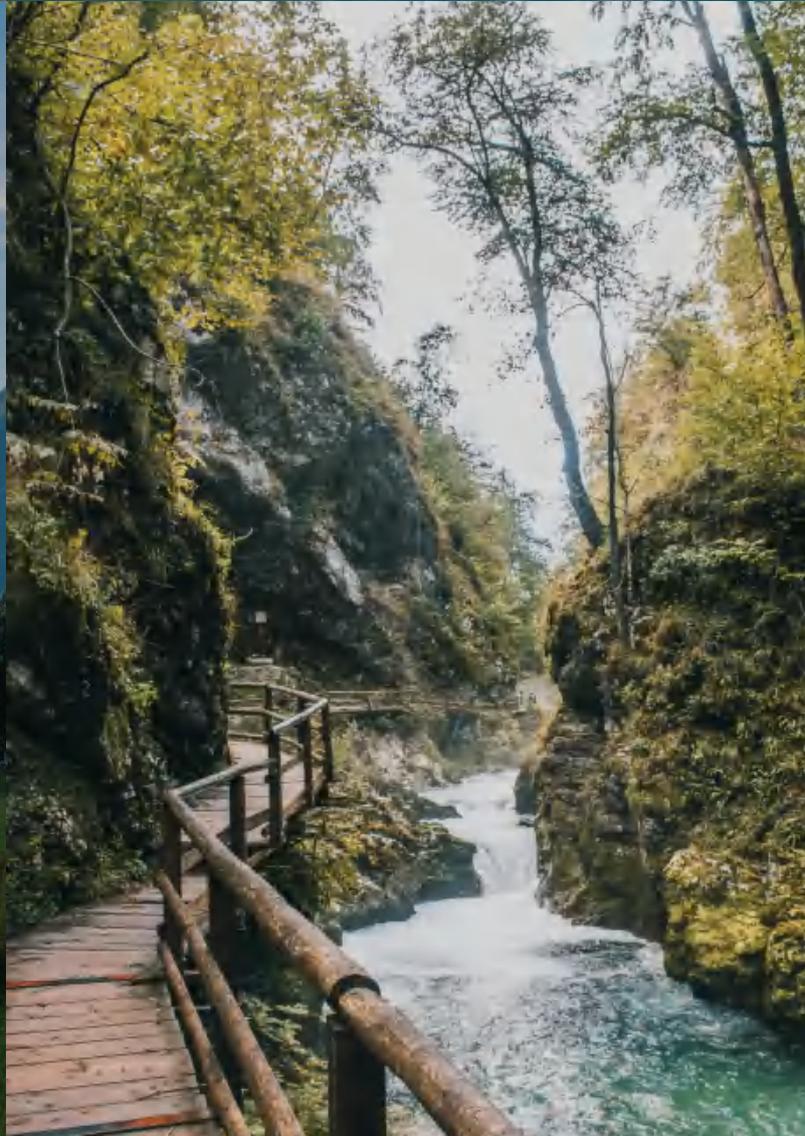
Partner: Društvo za razvijanje prostovoljnega dela Novo mesto
National Hiking Body: PZS – Alpine Association of Slovenia

Contribution:

- School-friendly **hiking curriculum**
- Focus on **mental health outdoors**
- Training of youth **mountain guides**

Country Snapshot:

- **Sample local hike:** Triglav National Park youth trail with mindfulness-in-nature activities
- **Youth engagement:** Youth volunteer programmes for trail conservation
- **Local SDG/council connection:** Good Health & Well-being (SDG 3), Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17)



GREECE

Partner: Hiking Club of Kalamata

National Hiking Body: EOOA – Hellenic Federation

Contribution:

- Emphasis on **youth mountaineering**
- Outdoor **self-reliance and resilience**
- **Sustainable** trail tourism

Country Snapshot:

- **Sample local hike:** Taygetos Mountain trails with orientation and sustainability activities
- **Youth engagement:** Students learn outdoor survival skills and lead trail care campaigns
- **Local SDG/council connection:** Responsible Consumption & Production (SDG 12), Life on Land (SDG 15)



NETHERLANDS

Partner: Stichting International Programs

National Hiking Body: KWbN – Royal Dutch Walking Association

Contribution:

- Mass participation **walking events**
- **Walking and mental health** initiatives for youth

Country Snapshot:

- **Sample local hike:** Nijmegen Four Days Marches (youth sections with thousands of participants)
- **Youth engagement:** Schools organise weekly walking groups to promote health and social connection
- **Local SDG/council connection:** Sustainable Cities & Communities (SDG 11), Good Health & Well-being (SDG 3)



4. HOW TO RUN A YOUTH HIKING CLINIC

Step-by-step Guide:

- **Plan the Route:** Choose a local safe trail. Prioritise accessibility, biodiversity, and heritage.
- **Risk Assessment:** Use national safety templates. Assign supervision and emergency roles.
- **Prepare the Group:** Send out permission forms. Encourage responsible packing (water, coat, boots).
- **Set a Theme:** Health, SDGs, local history, biodiversity, or teamwork.
- **Reflect and Celebrate:** Journaling, group feedback, or small exhibitions.



5. SAMPLE THEMES

Theme	Subjects & Skills	Activity
Sustainability & SDGs	Geography, CSPE	Waste-free hike, local trail clean-up
Entrepreneurship	Business, IT	Plan a “youth-led eco hike” for tourists
Mental Health & Well-being	SPHE, Science	Mindfulness trail moments, cortisol facts
Teamwork & Leadership	PE, Citizenship	Rotate team, problem-solving games



6. LIFE SKILLS FROM THE TRAIL

Hiking clinics help young people build:

- **Resilience** – Adapting to changing environments
- **Leadership** – Leading peers in outdoor settings
- **Critical Thinking** – Reading maps, making route decisions
- **Self-Care** – Monitoring energy, hydration, rest
- **Civic Engagement** – Respect for nature and community involvement



7. MONITORING & IMPACT

- Student **well-being surveys** pre- and post-hike
- Teacher **feedback** forms
- Short **reflective journals** or **photo voice**
- **Youth-designed posters** or **presentations** about their hiking experience











9. HIKING TO CHANGE THE FUTURE

Hiking is not just a physical activity, but also a way to discover nature, connect with oneself, and respect the environment. Each country offers unique landscapes and experiences, but they all share the same challenge: protecting biodiversity and promoting responsible tourism.

With the right equipment, the necessary precautions, and a mindful attitude, young people can enjoy this adventure safely, enjoyably, and sustainably, while contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals.

GET INVOLVED!

SHARE YOUR SCHOOL OR GROUP'S HIKE ON SOCIAL MEDIA USING

#STEPFORWARDEU

CONNECT WITH YOUR NATIONAL PARTNER
OR HIKING ASSOCIATION FOR FURTHER SUPPORT

INVITE PARENTS AND LOCAL COUNCILS
TO JOIN YOUR JOURNEY