



PAŇSTWOMIASTO



TOOLKIT

FOR FOREST KINDERGARTEN PRACTITIONERS



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PREFACE

- **A forest kindergarten (FK)** is an educational institution where children are encouraged to learn outdoors all year long, in a safe and experience-rich environment, under the guidance of education professionals. Everyday contact with nature has been proven beneficial in children's physical and emotional health, and promotes their development and learning.
- A forest kindergarten is a family-friendly place, adapted to local specifics, which also fulfils all goals of the national curriculum.

In mid 2018 the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) approved the application of V4 partners aiming at cooperation in promoting the spreading of Forest Kindergartens in the Visegrad region. The implementation period of the project „Advocacy strategies for Forest Kindergartens in V4 countries” lasted between October 2, 2018 and March 31, 2020.

Project partners are four not for profit associations out of all V4 countries: Association of Forest Kindergartens (Asociace lesných mateřských škol, ALMŠ) from the Czech Republic as Grantee/project leader, Association for Farm-based Education (Farm-alapú Nevelésért Egyesület, FANE) from Hungary, Association Państwomiasto (Stowarzyszenie Państwomiasto) from Poland and Association of Forest Kindergartens (Asociácia detských lesných klubov na Slovensku) in Slovakia as project partners.

During the implementation period between November 2018 and February 2020, project partners met regularly in all the capitals of V4 countries: Bratislava, Prague, Budapest and Warsaw in order to hold meetings to discuss current issues, learn from each other's practices, including trainings on advocacy strategy, as well as the four key areas of operation: a) shelter and hygiene b) food hygiene c) risk-benefit approach d) educational principles and methodology.

This document aims at providing an applicable toolkit for FK practitioners throughout the Visegrad region and beyond, based on the results of the project.



SHELTER AND HYGIENE

- Health and safety is high priority of all Forest kindergartens. The educational process takes place mainly outside, therefore the shelter is only for occasional stay mostly during lunch and nap. It allows to store equipment and spare clothes for each child.



What is the shelter for

- provides warmth (children can warm up, dry clothes)
- a place to rest / sleep
- a place to eat at a table
- hiding place in the event of extremely adverse weather conditions (storm)
- storage of all necessary items (backpack for teacher, first aid kit, pocket knife, sleeping pad, ropes, matches, hygienic supplies, canvas)



What the shelter has to provide

- located in or near the natural environment (easy to reach by children)
- it must be possible to heat the shelter
- must be kept clean
- must be supplied with water from a non-toxic source
- it includes a toilet and the necessary hygienic equipment (soap, hand dryers)
- is also prepared for emergencies and critical situations (first aid kit, charged mobile phone with all contacts, etc.)
- regular revision of important facilities in the shelter (heating equipment, wiring, fire extinguisher, etc.)



Examples of good practice

- it is advisable to consult the administrator of the nearest forest (and other land) used by the forest kindergarten (local forester, city office, etc.)
- good relations with neighbours should be established
- water supply in barrels: the barrels must be well-maintained and the particular source the water comes from (the specific water supply point) must always be clear
- good foreign examples for dry composting toilets



OUTDOOR FOOD HYGIENE

• **Rules for providing food (snacks and lunch) outdoors** are based directly on European Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs, with a focus on risk management practices. Forest kindergartens are not in contradiction with the EU regulation, but may experience difficulties with national implementation.

• **HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points)** rules must be set and respected in each outdoor facility (e.g. a Forest Kindergarten).

Examples of good practice

(Based on training by Julia Mackay, Catherine Busson and Lorna Ross in Prague, May 2019)



Food Storage

- immediate consumption of heat-treated food / temperature at consumption above 63°C
- storage: thermobox / fridge (not breaking the thermal chain)
- snacks: consumption within 4 hours of preparation

Water

- drinking water from regularly checked source
- running water possible also from barrels with outflow valve
- warm running water from a barrel (mix of heated and cold water to prevent burning)
- disinfection of water barrels once a week (with ecological means for disinfection)
- washing dishes in separate facilities (dishwasher), incl. household under special conditions mentioned in HACCP



Lunch & campfire cooking

- measures against cross-contamination (hand washing, heat treatment, spatial and temporal separation of food preparation)
- allergen monitoring (see Annex 1).



RISKS AND BENEFITS

Being in the nature implies both risks and benefits. They are both sides of the same coin.

Why outdoor education is so important

(Based on training by Lynn McNair O.B.E. and Luke Addison in Gödöllő/Budapest, September 2019)

Direct, everyday experience of the natural world outdoors is essential for the children so that they can learn to appreciate its wonders and begin to understand the ecological interrelationship between all living things

- learning 'in' and not just 'about' nature
- connectedness – unity in all things
- today as children spend more time indoors and are increasingly disconnected from the natural world, being outdoor has renewed importance and urgency.

The journey to the nature is very important for the children, in this way they build up an understanding of the space and from here their knowledge grows through exploration.

The environment, indoors and outdoors, should be emotionally safe and intellectually challenging, promoting friendships, curiosity, enquiry, creativity and a spirit of adventure.

There is a growing body of research that shows that young children's access to nature and outdoor play is positively associated with improved self-esteem, physical health, development of language skills and dispositions to learning (Davy, 2009:57).

What about risks of being and playing in wild places

„No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool“ (Health and Safety Executive UK 2012)

„The children want to seek out and find the undiscovered, see and know the unseen...“

„Risks are valuable for children, for their confidence, resilience and learning through experience.“

„A child who lacks experience will not know his/her capabilities and is more likely to encounter danger“ (Froebel in Lilley, 1967)



“The Care Inspectorate supports care service providers taking a positive approach to risk in order to achieve the best outcomes for children. This means moving away from a traditional deficit model that takes a risk-averse approach, which can unnecessarily restrict children's experiences attending registered services, to a more holistic risk-benefit model”

Scottish Care Inspectorate Position Statement 2016

Children at Riverside Cottage Nursery spend most of their time outdoors - average around 80%. Despite this, 76% of accidents happen either inside or with their parents coming/going from Kindergarten (2017).

Examples of good practice

(Based on training by PhD. Tereza Valkounová, Ph.D., head of the Czech Forest Kindergarten Association, ALMŠ - Gödöllő/Budapest, September 2019)

How to manage risks

„To be able to tackle risks first you should be aware of them.“

Kindergarten pedagogues should assess the risks stemming from being outside during the day (e.g. risks related to their own place and surroundings, the hygiene of shelter, food treatment or risks on the way to the forest, etc.).

One should be aware of the origin, the effect and probability of risks to be able to assess risk level.

Risk-benefit analysis can be made by using a table containing risks assessment as well as precaution measures to manage them. To explain risk-benefit approach, pedagogues are invited to think about educational benefits of each risky situation. Only when we know why we undertake risk for the good of child's development, we are able to advocate our approach from a professional point of view. Every practitioner must be aware of what to do in case of emergency situations and have practical training in first aid (see Annex 2).

EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND METHODOLOGY

Principles in the International law

Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child underlines that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- the development of respect for the natural environment.

Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union guarantees the right of parents to ensure the education of their children in conformity with their philosophical and pedagogical convictions.

The Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 (2019/C 189/02) establishes the EU quality framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

Example from Denmark

Denmark is a small Scandinavian country with 5.4 million inhabitants. It is a welfare state with a high standard of living and good social conditions. One third of the gross national product is spent on social services. One feature of modern Danish society is that parents have a high participant rate in the labour market. Both parents are employed full time in half of the families with children younger than 6 years old.

Denmark has a tradition for day-care extending more than a century. Day-care has expanded considerably in the last 40 years in connection with women's rapidly increasing participation in education and the labour market. Denmark's 98 municipalities are responsible for ensuring an adequate number of places in family day-care, nurseries and kindergartens and for managing the system's high quality.

The Danish Day Care Act dictates that pedagogues must make an educational plan for the kindergarten. This plan must provide well being, development, play, learning and formation of children. When making the educational plan pedagogues must take into account the composition and special needs of children in the group.

A research from 2018 shows that up to 30% of all kindergartens in Denmark is nature-based. The children in these kindergartens spend between 3 and 5 hours outside, every day, all year round.

David Sobel's design principles (www.davidsobelauthor.com)

When children have access to free play in natural areas, they do the same things, around the country and around the world. They make special places, go on adventures, develop fantasy games, go hunting and gathering, craft small worlds. These recurrent play patterns can be used as design principles to help structure compelling outdoor activities with children. And these engagements can lead to environmental values and social behaviors in adulthood.

7 PRINCIPLES:

- 1: **Adventure**
- 2: **Fantasy and Imagination**
- 3: **Animal Allies**
- 4: **Maps and Paths**
- 5: **Special Places**
- 6: **Small Worlds**
- 7: **Hunting and Gathering**



Examples of good practice

(Based on workshop by Anita Sørholm, November 2019)

All of the games utilize natural materials and accessories easily accessible to the educators (like a blanket). They stimulate different senses – vision, smell, hearing and touch. Games develop:

- children's cognitive skills (e.g. memory),
- social skills (e.g. communication, cooperation),
- physical skills (e.g. gross and fine motor skills),
- ecological consciousness.



Game #1 Memory game with a blanket

- Children are divided into two groups.
- While one group waits, the other is preparing a set up for the game. On one half of the blanket children put ten things that could be found in the surrounding environment and they cover them by another half of the blanket.
- The group that has waited comes to the blanket and has 10 seconds to remember as many things as possible, then they have to find them nearby.
- After five minutes children uncover the blanket again and check the results.



Game #2 Why is it here? Find the rule and match!

- Children are divided into two groups.
- Each group finds a secluded space and draws on the ground twenty squares in two rows of ten. Children put ten things found around them in one of the rows, leaving the second one empty.
- Each square should have a leading theme - it can be a colour of objects, a function of objects or another attribute.
- After the children are finished, they swap and try to figure out other group ideas.
- For each square they find objects matching the rule set up by predecessors.
- After they finish, discuss the results.



Game #3 Fairy tales – a narrative through nature

- Children are divided into small groups.
- Each group comes up with a fairy tale, a book or a movie, and tries to show its plot with use of natural materials put in a sequence.
- After they finish, other groups have to guess what story it is and give its title.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Dishes and their allergen content

DISHES

	Celery	Cereals containing gluten	Crusta-ceans	Eggs	Fish	Lupin	Milk	Mollusc	Mustard	Nuts	Peanuts	Sesame seeds	Soya	Sulphur Dioxide
Tuna Salad [ex-ample]	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓					

Review date:

Reviewed by:

You can find this template, including more information at www.food.gov.uk/allergy

Annex 2: Risk – benefit analysis

DATE: _____ PLACE: _____

NAME AND SIGNATURE: _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

Effect (what can happen to a child)	P	E	Risk level	Benefit	Precaution	Revision

Probability (P) 1 = low, 2 = average, 3 = high
 Effect (E) 1 = home care, 2 = hospitalization, 3 = life threat
 Risk level (P x E): 1 = minimal, 2 = acceptable, 3-4 = middle, 5-6 = severe, 8-9 = unacceptable



FOREST KINDERGARTENS AS A GROWING TREND

Outdoor education is a growing, worldwide trend, originating from parent demand for a tailored and child-centered approach to preschool care. In Europe, the first forest kindergarten was initiated in Denmark in the 1950s, following a tradition of outdoor nurseries common in other Scandinavian countries during the past several decades.

Altogether, outdoor preschool education is based on more than a 100 years of tradition and experience. Nowadays, it is estimated that forest kindergartens or similar initiatives exist in around 2/3 of EU member states.

Children from nature based kindergartens “were more adept at gross motor skills, were able to concentrate better and were less absent due to illness, compared to children who played in a planned, artificial environment.” (Grahn et al., 1997)

What is a Forest Kindergarten?



A forest kindergarten is an educational institution where children are encouraged to learn outdoors all year long, in a safe and experience-rich environment, under the guidance of education professionals. Everyday contact with nature has been proven beneficial in children’s physical and emotional health, and promotes their future development and learning. A forest kindergarten is a family-friendly place, adapted to local specifics, which also fulfils all goals of the national curriculum.

The Visegrad Region



In the Visegrad region, the first forest kindergarten was established in the Czech Republic in 2007. Almost 5000 children are estimated currently to be educated in about 235 forest kindergartens or outdoor settings. Unfortunately, in most Visegrad countries, proper legal standards for outdoor preschool education (i.e., outside of a building) are still lacking.

“A forest kindergarten is defined as a preschool institution in which education is carried out mainly outdoors, outside of the facilities of the forest kindergarten; the facilities of the forest kindergarten cannot include a building.”

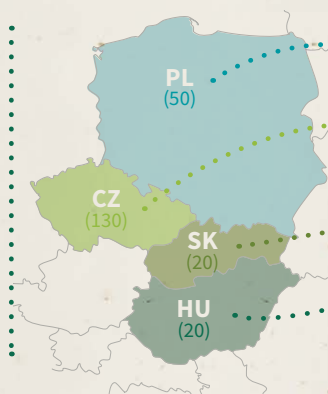
Definition of forest kindergartens in the Czech School Act, 561/2004

Legal and Administrative Solutions Needed



Forest kindergartens have been legally recognized by the Czech School Act since 2016. However, clear legal and administrative standards for this type of education are now needed in all Visegrad countries as parent demand is growing. Solutions to be sought include the regulation of shelters, outdoor catering, hygiene, ensuring teacher’s qualifications and education, and most importantly incorporating outdoor education into the overall education system at each national level.

RECOMMENDED STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY VISEGRAD COUNTRIES



Poland: Provide forest kindergartens and schools in the School Act (Dz. U. for 2017, item 59) with legal status

Czech Republic: Incorporate forest kindergartens and outdoor education into relevant long-term national strategies (Strategy 2030+, State Program of Environmental Education and Consultancy, Framework Education Programme)

Slovak Republic: Define hygiene standards for forest kindergartens in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

Hungary: Design a pilot programme for outdoor education in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Who Are We?

We are representatives of forest kindergartens in Visegrad countries (i.e., Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia). Our aim is to make outdoor education in these countries available for children and affordable for their parents.

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