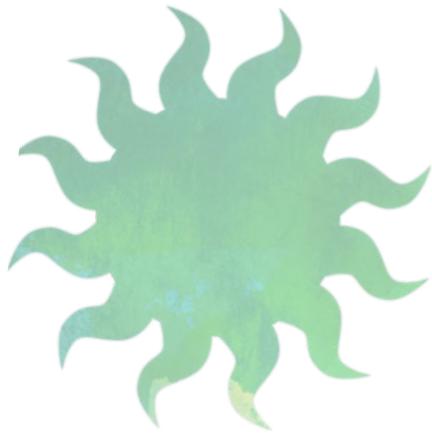


Parents' guide for nature and outdoor education in daycare

Who is using or would like
to start using an outdoor



The output is part of the project Erasmus+ č. 2019-1-SK01-KA201-060775 titled Taking learning outdoors - supporting the skills of pre-school managers in outdoor education and care - TAKE ME OUT II. - Happy childhood happens outside - STEP HIGHER



Title: Parents' guide for nature and outdoor education in daycare

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Language correction: The publication has not been language proofed

The presented opinions are the views of the
TAKE ME OUT II project partnership
and do not have to express the
opinions of the EU.

Issued by INAK, oz, Kremnica,
2022

ISBN: 978-80-974377-1-8



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Introduction

Why do you have this guide in your hands right now?

- Maybe you have the feeling that there must be another way of thinking about children's wellbeing, happiness, learning and development...
- Maybe you have already heard about outdoor education and think it is time for a change of the approach...
- Maybe you have heard about environmental education and think it could be great to walk new ways where our next generation learns to take better care of our beautiful planet and the world...
- Maybe you are curious about what's going on all over the world about outdoor education and want to be part of a new movement with the goal of changing the way we think about education...
- Maybe you just want the children to have a happy childhood...
- Maybe the pedagogues in a daycare/kindergarten where your child goes told they want to spend more time outside with children and you are confused as you don't know what to expect and why they want it, worried your child gets dirty and/or sick...

If you can identify yourself with one or more of the above statements - we recommend you to continue reading this guide and, than, hopefully, you stop worrying and start getting at least as passionate for the outdoors and nature as we are...!



Reasons for use of the nature and outdoor

The world is changing quickly and the competences and skills needed in the future are also changing - and nature and the outdoors are supporting them perfectly. Research documents that children spending time outdoors are more creative, have better critical thinking, problem solving, better social skills and more of the important competences for the future world. In addition, children, who spend time outdoors, have better physical and mental health and overall wellbeing.

"Creativity will become one of the top three skills workers will need. With the avalanche of new products, new technologies and new ways of working, workers are going to have to become more creative in order to benefit from these changes." (Future of Jobs Rapport, World Economic Forum, 2020)

The nature supports creativity

When we stay in nature, our curiosity and wealth of ideas arise, and we become more

flexible in our thought patterns. It is crucial that we can see our tasks, projects, obstacles, etc. in new ways and thus create new ideas and solutions. In the following, we will describe in more detail how nature can help to promote the thoughts that are characteristic of a creative process.

(http://natur-vejleder.dk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/september_2015_kreativitet.pdf)

Children spend much more time indoors, compared to the past and have a lack of outdoor and nature hand-on experiences. Children are active learners and learn by using the body and senses and nature and the outdoors provide fantastic opportunities for learning and development.



Worries



"A pedagogue in a kindergarten, where my child is, told me they want to spend more time outside with children and I am worried because my child might get dirty, get hurt, will not learn anything, will get cold/sick, will be hungry, ...is not used to be outside..."

As a parent it is very normal to worry about our child's thriving, development and education. Somehow we have moved away from nature and the outdoors, as many of us are living in the city and the nature and outdoors can seem far away. But we are part of nature and it is important that children relate to nature

and find the joy and happiness in spending more time outside.

In this guide we will try to inform you about the benefits of outdoor education and hopefully reduce some of your worries.



Aim/purpose of this guide

Our aim with this guide is to:

- Give you information about nature and outdoor education
- Answer some of your questions
- Remove some of your worries
- Give you knowledge, so you can support the day care/kindergarten and change towards the use of the outdoors more



Why nature and outdoor life

Everyone talks about it being so good to be out in nature or just to be outside.

But if you ask a casual passer-by why it's so good to be out in nature, you'll probably get an answer eg. "it's because fresh air is good".

And that's true enough, but there are just so many more reasons.

When you choose a daycare/kindergarten or school for your child with nature or outdoor profile, you choose an institution that prefers to spend much of their time outdoors.

When a daycare/kindergarten or school chooses to spend time outdoors, the children get the opportunity to get fresh air and they get the opportunity to get sensory experience.

Just think of the feeling of raindrops landing on your face, the sun warming your skin, the sound of birds, the scent of flowers or freshly cut grass, the taste of self-picked berries, the sight of the light green sprouting leaves and the feeling of the snow covering peacefully everything.

These sensory experiences that the child gets outside are often a combination of several senses which makes the experience more in-depth and better remembered. Which makes the subsequent learning easier.

Contrary to the learning that often takes place inside. Where often there is only one or two senses in play, sight and hearing. This provides a more one-dimensional learning that is not stored as well in the brain as when the learning is multidimensional.

But it is not only learning as such, also the child's body develops differently in the outdoor space than inside the room.

Imagine you have to balance on a floor. It is difficult and it requires practice but once learned the floor does not change. The experience remains superficial.

If you are balancing on a fallen tree trunk, you have to adjust, work with your body more consciously to overcome the challenge, think deeper about the best ways of doing it, etc. Also, if you are a child, it enhances your self-esteem and ability of overcoming obstacle, and even maybe helping others overcoming it, too, if more



children of different age and development stage are involved. This makes the learning experience, with all these dimensions, much more valuable and lasting. And provides something, you could hardly get inside.

When you choose a daycare/kindergarten or school that focuses on nature, the children get to know nature.

To get to know nature, and get true, deeper connection with it, children must feel it, discover how it scents, tastes, sounds and looks and they must know the natural processes that take place in relation to animals, trees and plants around them, as well as understand our human connection to this all.

They become familiar with the seasons and the change of weather and through personal experiences they learn to love and cherish nature. They also start to understand themselves better and find their place in this all.

There is plenty of opportunity for these kinds of experience outdoors in a daycare/kindergarten or school that focuses on nature and the outdoors, because here the children get the joys of jumping in puddles, playing with mud, snow and wet leaves - on an equal footing with feeling sun and morning dew and warm sand between the

toes.

The children get the opportunity to climb trees, balance on tree trunks, dig, make water canals, build caves, climb trees and hide.

They get the opportunity to collect insects and learn about them, play with the firewood knots from the firewood stack and examine and turn over everything they can.

They may also get the opportunity to cook campfire food and especially in the summer enjoy the experience of eating their lunch outdoors.

The children have fun when they are outside and they can move more freely when they are in nature. Therefore, they can also play, develop and strengthen interpersonal relationships through the various play options.

They also gain increased self-esteem because they learn in nature and they practice to get better. Their communicative skills are improved in nature, there are also difficult words linked to nature to learn. But there is even more what children learn through their senses, so when sensory experiences are linked to the language, the children develop a more nuanced language with a larger vocabulary. Moreover:



- They also develop their social skills
- Get better in communication with the linkage to social skills
- Their motivation gets strengthened
- They can become better in problem - and conflict resolution
- They get increased physical activity and become happier and healthier
- Their creativity and imagination get strengthened
- They get lots of positive experiences and memories that impact their future life positively
- A conscientious approach to nature and the environment is supported





Everyday life with nature and outdoor life

When you as a parent choose a daycare/ kindergarten or school with a focus on nature, you can expect your child to be much more outdoors than if you choose a traditional one.

There should be no doubt that the majority of all children naturally like to stay outdoors - there is plenty of room for unfoldment - to run, jump, explore and use their body and senses. Being outdoors is healthy and good for the child's well-being and development, and at the same time there is the opportunity for a lot of good positive experiences and exploration.

But when compared with traditional kindergartens, there is a big difference in what a day might look like for your child.

In this section we will try to give you an idea of what life in a kindergarten that focuses on nature or outdoors can look like.

In the individual day care/kindergarten or school focused on nature offer, there are different options for using nature and the outdoors - it depends, among other things,

on the outdoor areas and the accessibility to parks and other opportunities in the local area that concrete setting has. There is of course a difference between the daycare located in the middle of a forest or in an urban zone. But no matter what the possibilities of accessing nature are, it is always possible to use nature and the outdoors - the most important thing is just that you make sure to get outside and reach it.

Every day starts with you handing over your child to the pedagogues. Depending on whether it is early in the morning or later, after arrival your child will have the opportunity to slowly get started on the day and possibly play or do some self - chosen activities with their peers.

When most of the children have been handed over, a morning gathering will be held. Here the children are told about what will happen during the day and both children and staff have the opportunity to see who is in daycare this day. Often a song is also sung, preferably with facts that support the apprentice of the



song's lyrics.

And then the kids get a snack.

That way, the teaching staff knows that the children have some food in their stomachs and are thus ready for the day's challenges and experiences. For the morning assembly, the staff prepares the children for the day's program; what should happen in terms of activities, projects or the like.

It is important that the children have energy and are not hungry when going out into school yard or nature. Therefore, snacks and nutritious food are given high priority.

Then the activity starts.

In the individual daycare offer, there are different options for using nature and the outdoors - it depends, among other things, on the outdoor areas and the accessibility to parks and other opportunities in the local area.

As it was already told, there is of course a difference between the daycare/kindergarten or school located in the middle of a forest or in an urban zone. But no matter what the possibilities are, it is possible to use nature and the outdoors, in whatever context - the most important thing is just that children get the opportunity to get outside.

The activities can be a creative process where the children have to go out and find natural materials that they can use for a work of art, in the local area, on the playground or in the woods. Here the focus is on the child's attention and the child's ability to think creatively. At the same time children use their body to run around and find the different materials.

There is also the opportunity to involve children in decisions taken for the day and the children have the opportunity to tell and share their thoughts and ideas. It is thus the part of the formation of democratic approach and behaviour, learning to be a part of a group and to take part in making decisions that concern the child.

It may be that children, as part of their activities, and learning process, have to help preparing the food and participate in cooking, that might also happen outside, on the fire. Involving them in the cooking process gives children a sense of ownership.





They learn about the different kinds of food and it gives them the courage to taste new things at the same time as they learn to safely handle kitchen utensils such as a knife.

They also learn what is needed to make a fire and safety rules.

The activity can also be taking a walk to the local park or forest and “just” play freely. When children are given the opportunity of free play, it sets their imagination in motion. They build dens, caves, try out different roles in play, and form new friendships through the play.

It can be a trip to the street pond or the forest lake and catching tadpoles. When the focus is on biology, children learn to understand and care for nature of which they are a part of. They learn about life and death and the cycle of which all living creatures are a part of.

It can be to take the toboggan with and go over to the nearest hill and slide when there is snow. When we follow nature



together with children, they learn to appreciate the change of seasons and to see opportunities and beauty at present moment, in what is now.

They can also be going on a bird walk to see and hear the different birds, which could be on the playground, in the immediate area or in the woods. Here the focus is on sharpening the child’s attention and on using his or her senses. At the same time, the children practice being quiet so as not to scare the birds away.

It could be lifting stones or knocking down tree trunks to find insects.

Again, the focus is on biology and it is obvious and natural to talk about biodiversity and food chains. For who really eats who?

Part of the activity and learning process is also that the children get the right clothes on in relation to the weather.

Therefore, the children practice looking at the weather and finding the proper clothes that fit and thereafter putting on the clothes by themselves.

Putting the clothes on properly requires strong fine motor skills and a hand / eye coordination that must be trained before the children can handle this by themselves/. Therefore, a lot of time is also spent with this part of the activity.



Because it gives great pride and confidence when the children experience that they themselves can do it.

As parents, you can help the daycare/kindergarten or school and offer suggestions for suitable outdoor areas - or perhaps you have a garden where the children can go for a walk or visit.

It may also be that a day is made where you as parents come to the institution and help establish raised beds, plant flowers, create small play environments, and decorate the playground. You can take as a starting point the materials that are available and or materials that can be obtained cheaply - check for the examples of greenhouses, raised beds, euro pallets etc., in coordination with daycare.

When the activity is over, the children have lunch, so that their energy deficits are balanced and they are filled up.

There is a big difference from country to country and from institution to institution when it comes to the food plan.

But in the daycares/kindergartens or schools where there are food programs included, a hot nutritious meal is often served at lunch so that the children are

full and ready for the next part of the day.

If your child's daycare does not have a meal plan, it is important that you as parents make sure to provide your child with a good and solid food package that provides energy that lasts a long time.

After lunch there is a new activity.

In some countries, children sleep after lunch or have a quiet hour. While in other countries there are less organized activities and more free play after lunch.

This is also a part of life in a kindergarten with a focus on nature because there is a common understanding that the children need time and place where they can relax or time where there are no adult-controlled requirements.

During the afternoon the children are picked up and then a long and eventful day is over.





How do you as a family support nature and the outdoors

As a family you can do many things to support nature and the outdoor approach, too.

The first thing you can do is choose a daycare that values outdoor life and appreciates nature.

When you do that, you can be sure your child gets proper time outside every day and gets to know nature and its wonderful world.

And not only that, you also ensure that your child strengthens his or her language, motor skills, pre-understanding of mathematics, biology and technology. As nature and the outside environment provides all this.

At the same time your child gets fresh air, red cheeks and gets a natural fatigue after using their body actively all day.



But it is not enough just to choose a daycare with a

nature profile because it is also about the way how you as parents talk about nature at home and how you treat it and care for it what matters and what you pass on to your child through your family story.

Because when we as parents say things like “Aah, it’s raining again” or “Aargh, you are completely dirty” or “well glad it’s not me who’s in the woods, which is full of insects”, or if you yourself have “watching TV is much better to relax than going outside” attitudes, then you show your child that being outside is boring, disgusting and scary. And that being inside is better alternative for them. Which is, of course, for many reasons and benefits that only outdoors and nature can offer, not true.

Your words and behavioral patterns have a big impact on how your child meets the world and perceives it. That is why it is important talking about nature and about being outside in a positive way.

You can do this by saying things like; “It’s raining, do you think there will be puddles



you can jump in?" You are really dirty, have you played with mud? " or "Did you find any exciting animals or insects in the forest?

When you use positive words and are open to your child's natural curiosity, for exploring new things and getting new experiences of the natural world, your child will experience that nature and being outside is positive and that he or she can tell you about what they experience outside without being met with negativity.

It thus contributes to your child learning and love for nature and through this love, your child will also gain an understanding of why it is so important to take care of it.

Just so that others can also have the same wonderful experience.

But it is also important that you always speak positively about the teachers and pedagogues, and do it in relation to the outdoor context, too.

Because when your child has to go outside and explore the world, it can be scary. There are so many new sensory impressions and so many new things that he or she has to deal with. And that is why your child needs to be able to find security with someone he or she is with and that is precisely the teachers, who spend a lot of time with your child each day.

As it would be difficult for your child to seek security and comfort with someone about who you or others have spoken badly or with disrespect. Therefore, it is important that you tell your child that the teachers are there to take care of him or her and that your child can always go to them if something happens or if your child experiences something that scares him or her. Because if you respect and trust someone, your child will find that trust and security in that connection, naturally, too.

But it is not enough to just talk positively about nature and the teachers, because even with the best stories, nature can be raw, cold and wet and if your child is not wearing the right clothes and is not properly equipped and open for such an experience, it might become less positive as in the other circumstances.

Therefore, it is also incredibly important that you provide your child with the right, comfortable clothes in relation to the season and weather type.





It is impossible to explore nature, build dens or play with friends if a sock is wet or you freeze your fingers off.

Most daycares have a clothing list of what your child should bring when he or she comes to the daycare and it can only be strongly recommended that you invest in the clothing that they recommend so that your child can be warm and dry even when the weather shows itself from its worst side. The clothes and outdoor equipment does not necessarily need to be expensive. In older clothes both your child and you might get less worried about getting dirty and muddy, which allows more true enjoyment, exploration and comfort outside. In this way, also second hand shops can help you well enough to equip your child properly.

When you are out in nature, the professionals often talk about the 4 elements that must be in place for the experience to be a good experience.

We have already talked about the first three:



1. The security. In meaning that you, as parents, talk positively about nature and the teachers so that your child feels safe and secure with them and outside, or in nature. And know that he or she can always ask for help from the teachers if needed.
2. The warmth' comfort. Here it is important with the right clothes as we have already mentioned. Your child should always feel comfortably warm outside. Not cold, but not too hot, either.
3. The third is dry, again it's about the clothes, that need to protect your child in variety of weather conditions, including the rain and snow.
4. And the last and fourth is being full, and not feeling hungry. Because your child cannot enjoy nature and being outside if walking around hungry or with lack of energy because the blood sugar is too low. In such a case, child would feel uncomfortable and tired. When it comes to tiredness, being relaxed well enough after good night sleep is crucial for your child, to fully enjoy the outdoors, too.

Therefore, as a parent, you need to make sure that your child always comes to daycare/kindergarten or school from home with a full stomach, and, ideally, after enough of sleep during the night. A good breakfast is a good base that allows your child to burn a lot of energy



without feeling cold. Therefore, before spending a lot of time outside during the day, we recommend a breakfast meal with whole grains such as oatmeal, porridge or wholemeal bread, good with protein such as eggs, cold cuts or proteinaceous dairy products such as Skyer, cottage cheese or slices of fatty cheese. As well as some healthy fats in the form of nuts, avocados or cheese, too.

If there is a meal plan or food is provided in your child's daycare/kindergarten or school, do not think further and don't worry about the extra food because it will be taken care of, but if there is no meal, it is important that you also consider what type of food you give your child in the food package.

Again, you have to think that it must be food that satisfies and keeps blood sugar up for a long time, and provides energy. Therefore, we can recommend the same as for breakfast, namely whole grains, protein and healthy fats as well as some good fiber in the form of fruits & vegetables.

It could be a leftover meal from dinner cooked at home, or homemade soup on the thermos or something completely different. As long as there is enough food for your child's appetite and it is of such a nutritious and energy providing composition that your child can continue to be active, feel

comfortable and learn in nature.

We do not recommend white bread, white pasta, sugary dairy products, chips and sweets as it causes your child to have a rapid rise in blood sugar and then experience a big decrease which makes your child tired and hungry for more food.

But you can also support nature approach, nature protection and being outside by supporting the local nature conservation associations that are in your local area. When you do that, you are giving money so that they can influence the politicians to let more nature be preserved & survive as well as maintain peaceful areas that are in danger of being lost.

You can also vote for the policies that want a greener world. In this way, you use your democratic right to influence your country and your local area, so that there is more focus on our nature and money is set aside to work to preserve nature for our children and our children's children now and in the future.



Nature approach

In Denmark, for example, many parents believe that it is important for children to spend time in nature and outdoors - it is important for children's health, well-being and development. Thus, over 90% of Danish parents say the following:

- My children must have experiences in nature
- My children must have knowledge of nature, animals and plants
- My children must learn to take care of and protect nature
- My children must be happy to use nature as adults

(Paltved-kaznelson, 2009)

So there is broad agreement that nature is important and something the daycare service, kindergarten or school should give high priority to. It is important to mention that nature, if treated with care and used consciously, is a great stimulating learning environment for all the themes of the child's upbringing; the versatile development, the social development, communication & language, body, senses & movement, science and culture.

And there is a lot of space to learn from

and get inspired by this approach for other countries, too.

Nature and active outdoor life create a fantastic framework for the pedagogical work - especially in topics of sustainability and the interaction between nature and man - as we as humans are part of nature. Being in nature raises natural curiosity and opens space for many scientific questions - at child concrete development stage; such as, for example, why does it rain, where do the clouds come from, where does the water disappear in the ground, why does it blow, etc. The child wonders and the attention is sharpened when nature changes. And there are many changes every day. By staying in nature, the child experiences the different seasons up close, and feels on his or her own body and with their senses; sun, heat, cold, wind, water,





different sounds etc. Nature gives the child the opportunity to make their own experiences and develop an understanding of all the different contexts in nature.

Nature and active outdoor life give the child the opportunity for direct sensory experience and encourage being active. There is room for active physical movement and the use of the body through running, jumping, climbing, balancing etc. These physical activities greatly support child development at this age as well as brain development. And there is always something to explore - as outdoor and nature teases the child's natural curiosity. Curiosity is a lasting source of research, increased knowledge and something we should try to preserve in the child.

The necessary starting point is that the child gains good positive experiences of staying in nature from the very early childhood, that will naturally last throughout the life and thereby in the long run, will truly appreciate and take better care of nature in the adulthood. By doing small experiments and explorations, for example, the child acquires knowledge and understanding of the cycle of life in nature. In many institutions that

work with nature and active outdoor life, they have compost piles - here the children lay green food waste and follow the process of composting, so that the "food" becomes soil that can be used in the kitchen garden. Germination projects are often made, where you follow the whole process from seed, to germinate, to plant - to something that can be eaten. It gives the child an understanding that we ourselves are part of the ecosystem and are dependent and closely connected to it.

In some daycares/kindergartens or schools waste sorting is done consciously, so that the children at an early age learn how waste is to be sorted and recycled. By focusing on nature and active outdoor life, the child is supported by experiences that nature is rich in opportunities, but also that it is something very important and precious and needs to be taken care of.

As a path learner through his experiences - helped and guided by pedagogical staff - and through senses and bodily experiences, the child must spend time outdoors, to learn and understand nature, of which we are a part of.

How to start

It is always difficult when you have to start something new - how do you do it - how do you start - where do you start and what is the first step?

The starting point is that you want a better everyday life for your child and have the courage to think and try something new. The research describes that children thrive in nature and in the active outdoor life and the result is children who have developed knowledge, experiences and skills that they can use for the rest of their lives. Also, with their immune system boosted and mental state of being happier.

The first step for you might be also reading this guide, and other sources, as to gather knowledge - and deep understanding why is nature and the outdoors so good? - in a light version, you can read this guide and otherwise seek more knowledge in books, online - or seek out professionals or other parents who have experience with nature and active outdoor life already and talking to them.

In Denmark you will find more knowledge and information here:
<https://naturstyrelsen.dk>

[https://www.skoven-i-skolen.dk/
content/ud-med-b%C3%B8rnene-24-
naturb%C3%B8rnehaver-fort%C3%A6ller](https://www.skoven-i-skolen.dk/content/ud-med-b%C3%B8rnene-24-naturb%C3%B8rnehaver-fort%C3%A6ller)

In English, they can help you obtaining more information here:
<https://www.ltl.org.uk/parents>

In Estonia, you can find more information here:
[https://www.tartuloodusmaja.ee/roheline-
kool](https://www.tartuloodusmaja.ee/roheline-kool)

Also you can take inspiration and learn from kindergartens, who have same views and already practice outdoor learning as Kohila lasteaed Sipsik, Rannamõisa lasteaed and Pangapealse lasteaed.

In the Czech republic, you can find more information here:
<https://ucimesevenku.cz>
<http://www.venkovnivyuka.cz>
[https://ucimesevenku.cz/wp-content/
uploads/2019/01/Tajemstvi_skoly_za_
skolou_dvoustrana.pdf](https://ucimesevenku.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Tajemstvi_skoly_za_skolou_dvoustrana.pdf)



In Slovakia, you can check these websites:

<https://stromzivota.sk/stromacik/>

[stromacik-januar-2022](#)

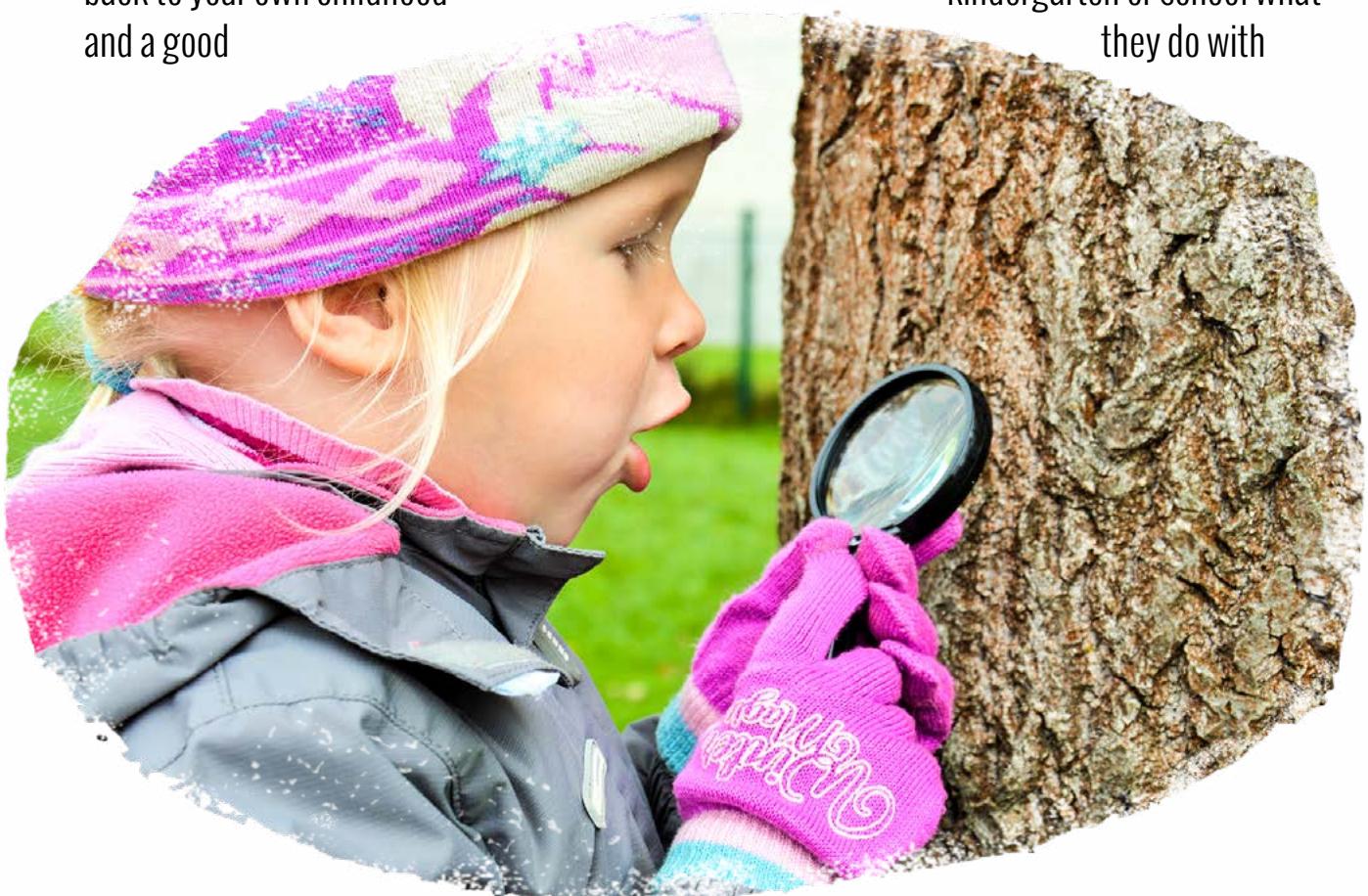
<https://huravon.sk>

<https://www.lesnekluby.sk>

The next step is to find the desire and the will for implementing the change. And also, maybe, if you are not active outdoor and nature lover yourself yet, treat yourself with outdoor and nature rich experience, whenever possible for you, too. As this might help you start understanding deeper all the precious and good that is there to reach, for each of us, and support your motivation for this continuous experience. Most people naturally think that nature and active outdoor life are good. Try to think back to your own childhood and a good

childhood experience - when did you feel good and where were you? Which place or setting is this experience linked too? Many of us, will think of the childhood experience related to outdoors or nature - a walk in the woods, happy play outdoors, making bonfires, picking apples in the garden or perhaps on pear robes in the neighbor's garden, the smell of food. Many of our early childhood memories relate to sensory experience - something you could feel on your body, scent, sounds you heard etc. If you also want your child to have these kinds of experiences, then it is time to ensure and support that this also happens in your child's day care, where children spend lot of their time during the week.

You can ask in your child's daycare/ kindergarten or school what they do with





educational activities related to nature and outdoor life and if they are already underway, you can help and support the process with your own positive approach and contribute your knowledge.

When it comes to taking new paths, it always takes courage and willpower. It is important to start in a place where the success rate and positive experience for both you and your child is high - start with small walks, change small things on the playground - and here you as parents can help and support each other - for example, by offering your help to the teachers in a daycare, too.

In many daycare centers with nature or outdoor focus, the parents are active participants - helping to establish and change the playground - there are often some parents and also you who might have contacts for various resources, car tires for creating sitting spots or flowerbeds, a timber that can provide surplus materials, some of you might have surplus plants in your own garden or in your own family, that you can provide to daycare.

When you as a parent help in the daycare, it also gives your child a greater connection between family and daycare and makes the children take better care of things.

Other daycare centers have a tradition of parents taking trips together and thus supporting the scientific approach and

exploration when researching nature together with children or just socializing that can create stronger bonds among your families.

As parents of a child in daycare where nature and outdoor life must be implemented, you can help come up with ideas for places that can be used - parks, gardens, lakes, forests, farms and more. The more nature and active outdoor life, the better, but the important thing is to start. You will quickly discover that the child thrives and is happier to go to daycare, if they are outdoors more.



Location

OUTDOOR

For a daycare/kindergarten or school that wants to focus on nature and the outdoor, it is of course important to have good facilities - preferably both indoors and outdoors, but it is also about looking at the opportunities that are both in its current facilities and in the immediate area.

Many daycare facilities have a playground, which is often traditionally decorated with a few swings, a sandbox, areas with asphalt, and concrete. In some places, it is about an outdated perception of safety rules and ensuring cheap and easy maintenance as priority.

Many playgrounds are equipped with fixed stations to play at and play equipment that are quickly explored by the child, for example a large nice climbing frame, but the child quickly loses interest as there are limited play opportunities and the stand does not challenge the child enough. Often, playgrounds are designed by architects and must look great - prestige projects for a lot of money, where it is more about appearance, than about the child's opportunities for play and learning.

No decision has been made on the layout and function of the playground, in terms of supporting child's opportunities for play and learning, but there are many opportunities to change that, even if the playground has been designed already.

With small funds and a creative approach, the playground can easily be designed so that there are more opportunities for an outdoor life that responds to and boosts more curiosity, creativity and unfoldment for your children.

It is about looking at the area and the outdoor space with new eyes.

A good way of thinking is to establish a playground that can be constantly changed and altered. And that can provide everything needed for a longer hours spent outside. Materials that can be moved - branches, small raised beds, stumps, boards and





established small play environments that can be changed and moved - small playhouses of euro pallets that are simple - and which the children themselves can build on. If your national safety rules won't allow some type of mentioned items in a daycare playground, please consult your regulations first together with teachers of your children or pedagogues, and then together think of possibilities, that can be easily implemented as a suitable alternative, providing children with wider opportunities to play & learn.

You can make a mud kitchen where the children can play with water and mud - established with pots, pans and other kitchen items that most parents have left at home in surplus - one costs nothing, but gives the child many hours of play and the opportunity to stimulate the senses.

Another option is to grab some car tires and dig them down, have them on the playground so the kids can build something themselves, roll around.

There are many daycare facilities located in the cities and here it is important to take as a starting point the nearby parks and green areas.

If there is an opportunity to go for trips weekly to a park and follow the seasons - get to some of the same places and here give the child the opportunity to observe and explore the changes every week.

Maybe there are other green areas you can go on trips to? It's about being curious and exploratory about the local environment - and taking the child's perspective - where could it be interesting, with the child's eyes, to go? You as parent can recommend such places to the pedagogues.



INDOORS

While there may not be great opportunities to change the playground to be greener and natural, there are plenty of opportunities to also think about nature and greenery indoors.

One thing that is of the great joy and that many children are interested in is having small animals, such as fish, snails, grasshoppers etc.

They are often very easy to take care of and do not require much knowledge or special knowledge.

They can be easily established for little funds. In addition to creating joy for children, it provides good opportunities for learning, too.

The animals must be cared for and taken care of - and this gives the children responsibility - and at the same time animals give rise to a lot of questions. And thus help to support exploration and science, as well as develop connection to nature.





SEEDS PROJECTS

It is a pleasure for the child to sprout - sow the seeds and see what happens - look after them while growing and then of course eat them.

It gives the child a good understanding of where things come from - how they grow. Sometimes they "forget" to water and

then it all goes out, but it is an important learning process.

It is very simple and requires only a window parapet board, light cotton wool or soil, seeds and then children are off to start.





COOKING

Food is something we must have several times during the day and it should be obvious to involve the child in the cooking, as a part of real - life practical experience.

It can be food prepared both indoors or outdoors on the fire.

Children can easily be involved in the preparation and food making process, slicing, peeling, baking etc.

Cooking gives the child a good understanding of where the food comes from and the children are involved and contribute to something in common. It gives the child an experience of being part of a larger group and achieves a sense of being able to contribute to the community.

Having to handle a real knife and real kitchen utensils supports the child fine motor skills.

For some of you, as parents, the idea of your child being allowed to handle kitchen utensils, can be anxiety-provoking, but providing the opportunity to try and practice is the way the child learns - and it is of course important that there are adults who can teach the children to use the utensils and ensure the necessary safety.

But the child also learns from getting a small cut in the finger - it does not make any harm, but the child learns much from that experience. Avoiding such an experience can lead to real injuries and harms on child personality in later years.





Equipment for nature and active outdoor life

As nature is used in all seasons and preferably in all kinds of weather, it is important to have the right clothing.

As we always say; "There is no bad weather, only bad clothes."

This means that it is much more fun and a positive experience to be outside when it is cold, if the child does not freeze and does not get cold.

The clothes must suit the season. It is important that the child has clothes that suit the season, and the long time spent outside, put on already when they arrive in the daycare in the morning, so that they can run out and play right away. And can get dirty, too.

We recommend:

Spring and Autumn: Waterproof shoes, wind and water-repellent jacket and rain pants from the morning

Winter: Flight suit, winter boots and hat and mittens must be in the bag.

The child's wardrobe, for being active outdoors, in a daycare, should contain the following:

- 2-3 pairs of socks / tights
- 2-3 pairs of underpants
- 2-3 pairs of pants
- 2-3 pairs of blouses / t-shirt / long sleeves
- Slippers
- Rubber boots
- A set of rainwear
- Possibly. a set of thermal or fleece clothing, to wear inside the rainwear / flight suit, on cool autumn, winter days and spring days





The backpack

We recommend a backpack that suits the child's age and size and that fits well on the back. Our experience tells us that a size of about 10-12 liters is appropriate. Then there is room for change of clothes, possibly a teddy bear / book and a packed lunch or snack as well as a water bottle when there are full day trips.

The backpack should be equipped with a chest buckle that ensures that the backpack is properly fastened and that the shoulder pads do not fall down.

In addition, it is good to test whether the child can open and close the backpack himself or herself.

Hats and mittens

We recommend an elephant hat that warms both head and neck.

Scarves, hats with cords, and cords in mittens are STRICTLY PROHIBITED and NOT RECOMMENDED for safety reasons.

As for gloves, we recommend the kind that are large and wide enough to get on the outside of the flight suit sleeve and which are waterproof.

Knitted gloves get soaked quickly and result in very wet and cold fingers.





Thermal clothing

Thermal clothing is good for the periods between the seasons and when it is really cold.

In the fall, when it's too cold for just a jacket

or to take inside under the rainwear.

In winter when the snow suit is too cold and again in the spring when the flight suit is too hot.



Footwear

We recommend boots that are waterproof and that the child can take off and put on easily. We have very good experience with thermal rubber boots and boots with eg. Goretex membrane, as they are both warm and waterproof and easy for the child to take off and on.

Boots without laces are preferable as only few kindergarten children can tie their own laces.

Leather boots with a zipper are very difficult for the children to take on and off by themselves, and the zipper often becomes leaky or gets stuck due to mud.

We recommend shoes and sandals that the child can take off and put on easily.





Snowsuit

We recommend a snow suit that has a good fit so that the child can move unhindered and that is easy for the child to take on and off. It must also be waterproof.

The cap should be snug and not too big, so that the child can easily use it.

We often use the hood when we are on a trip

It is important that you as parents think about when you buy shoes, boots, snow suits and other clothes for the outdoor but also indoor use in a daycare/kindergarten or school, that it is something the child can open / close and take off and on easily.

It is good for the child's self - esteem to experience that "I can myself" and at the same time it releases important time resources among the adults when the children can themselves.

Can the child e.g. even be buttoning his/her buttons in his/her pants or

and the wind is bitterly cold or it is snowing. Hood should be fitting well, too, not too loose or big for child head, and not too tight either, to keep protective function.

Rain clothes

zipping up the zipper when he or she has to hurry to the toilet?

Give it a try at home. Turn it to a funny game and learning process that you, as parent, lead your child through.





Learning & curriculum

A question that is often on parents' minds, when it comes to outdoor learning and play is the question whether the child then learns anything from staying in nature and whether the child acquires all the important competencies, needed later at school.

The short answer is YES.

Unfortunately, research in this area is limited for children aged 0-6, but a few studies show positive effects of staying in nature on the learning process and on school readiness (<https://nordefonden.dk/nyheder/ny-forskning-sundere-og-staerkere-boern-i-naturen>)

The children, who spend lot of time outside, are more self-reliant, more creative, have better motor skills, good social skills, better concentration (see chapter 2).



Nature holds unimaginable and endless possibilities for development and learning. Nature is changeable and consists of varying stimulating learning environments. Most children like to be active and move - and nature has countless opportunities for that.

In relation to the strengthened curriculum, all curriculum themes can be easily transferred to nature and the outdoors - the versatile personal competencies, the social competencies, physical and motor competencies, etc. can all be developed outside!

There is no doubt that children who spend a lot of time outdoors and in nature are less ill and have a better physical, as well and mental condition - wellbeing. Our experience is that children are happier outside, too. And the same is true for adults. As parents, it is reassuring to know that child is healthy and is out in the fresh air every day and is physically moving, as it is one of the key aspects necessary for their healthy development at this age. Children who are healthy and well - are in stimulating learning environments, are well placed to develop and learn. In the outdoors and in nature, there is more space for their healthy development, than



inside.

Children aged 0-6 years develop and learn through their experiences and here the special focus is on the child's senses and body. The child must have access to stimulating learning environments that strengthen the whole child's development, well-being and learning.

Nature and the outdoors are a fantastic learning environment that is stimulating and creates countless opportunities for contemplation, pique curiosity, challenge the senses and there is the opportunity for the child to use his or her body and senses in many different ways.

Can nature and the outdoors meet the

requirements and goals set up in the curriculum?

Yes, it can.

The concept of development and learning goes hand in hand. The child learns when it develops, and develops when it learns.

The concept of learning can also be a synonym for socialization or formation and is linked to the child's reflection, actions and identity development.

That is, the child learns to understand the surroundings, to be able to act and act in these surroundings and at the same time be able to become himself or herself.

- Learning is a very broad concept that can be seen as what happens in a process





- Learning takes place in the relationship in the mutual interaction between children and adults
- Learning takes place in a dynamic process that is set in motion in the pedagogical interaction
- Learning is different in different settings and learning environments
- For children in their early years, learning happens almost constantly and, in each situation, and environment and social interaction,
- therefore, **learning environment and interaction, connections of a child to this environment** are key at this age, and the outdoors and nature with their great variety are very important part, with key role in child development process

As a common focal point for the pedagogical practice, nature is included as the most important framework and subject field for the children's play and learning.

In everyday life, it is important that the child learns to move in nature, to wonder and rejoice in the course of the year and to use the imagination during play in nature. This will help to give the child a holistic understanding of the facets of life.

When asked if the child learns what they need to and get ready for school when they just stay outdoors and use nature, the answer is yes.

Both research and experience describe that children who spend a lot of time outdoors acquire the same skills as children who are in more traditional daycare.

At some points, the research describes that children are even more ready for school; the child, who spends enough time outside and in nature, has a better concentration, is more self-reliant, more independent / self-reliant, and is more creative, too.

It can be said that the prerequisites for being able to do well in the school later are very good. The child has been stimulated by the body development, when it moves enough and the senses that are activated outside in a greater, natural way and the basic development is in place.

As you say: "You must be able to crawl - before you can walk" - and that is exactly what the child experiences in a daycare with active nature and outdoor life, where all the abilities are





developed naturally if the environment allows to do so. And the outdoors and nature allow this for sure, in the best possible way.

When the basic elements of body and mind are stimulated equally and are balanced - then the child is better able to do well at school.

So, the role of pedagogues in relation to the use of learning potential of nature and the outdoor environment, for the benefits of your child is to:

- Develop the ability to stay in and take care of nature
- Put into words the actions we take in nature
- Provide the opportunity for an active outdoor life
- Cultivate the feeling of different seasons and their beauty and realize the changes related to them
- Give the children the opportunity to experience the connections in and to nature



- Think green
- Be committed and curious
- Give the opportunity to experiment and use the imagination
- Be available for the children with silencing our knowledge and developing ability to explore new things and enjoy together with them

Because professionals are aware of their role, the child's strengths will be seen on your child by being:

- Responsive to nature through the senses
- Interested in exploring & studying nature and creating coherence - compost, sowing flowers, studying tadpoles, etc.
- Putting the world in order
- Doing experiments
- Good at organizing and identifying, sorting things
- Interested in animals and plants and taking responsibility for them, caring
- Good at predicting the course of nature (eg. rain in wet/cloudy weather)
- See the little things in nature and use them eg. for decorating your home, or using them as small "presents"
- Happy to be outside and finding comfort in it
- Able to listen to nature.

In nature and the outdoors, there are opportunities to follow the changes of the seasons and sharpen the children's



perception, attention and knowledge about it.

It is important that there is room in the daycare/kindergarten or school for the children's daily dealings with nature. This spontaneous opportunity to unfold in and with nature, regardless of weather conditions, makes children accustomed to committing themselves and developing their imagination, creativity and curiosity in nature and strengthening love for it.

This all happens naturally through free play on the playground with the certainty of being supported by the adults when needed, as well as by going on walks outside the house/building and spending time outdoors, and in nature.

It is important to think about the surrounding areas - parks, streams, small green areas as an integral part of everyday opportunities for active nature and outdoor life, as well as learning.

The trips can often be motivated by the rhythm of nature, which constantly gives rise to new interesting events.

It may be observing and feeling the snow, seeding, watching and scenting the first spring flowers, realizing that the horse has got foals, the hatching of the tail toads, etc., etc.

But you can, together with pedagogues, or other parents, plan trips of an excursion-like to nature.

The very conscious prioritization of nature in the pedagogical work, strengthens and develops partly the motor but also the social competencies of the children (cf. benefits) The way to involve nature is therefore not isolated to deal with insight into it and experience with nature as such.

Such knowledge resources are included., eg as part of the child's social experience formation, whereby reaching or getting to nature not only becomes the goal in itself for the children's learning, but is also included as a means of developing their social and many other skills.



The play and the importance of the play



Play is often an important overlooked element in children's development and learning.

To play you must have space, as this is where the child processes impressions, develops and forms important relationships.

The child learns who he or she is through the important play with the friends, testing and exploring their own perception and understanding.

The child learns, tests and practices in the play and sometimes it is challenged by conflicts, disagreements and here practices the difficult social rules and competencies. Of course, the children sometimes need pedagogical staff who can support, help, guide, comfort and talk to the child about the experiences, so that a greater understanding and acceptance of

themselves and others is formed.

Through play, the child learns a lot and the independent play must have the space and time needed in the day. It is in play that the child takes care of his or her own challenges and tests both body and mind - often in relation to other children.

Nature offers unique space and opportunities for play and as nature is constantly changing, it constantly provides new opportunities for development and learning. And this changeability is impossible to reach inside.

Through play, the child can explore the world at the pace and time it makes sense for the child.

At the same time, the course may need pedagogical staff who can support, help and guide the child where it needs to - or where it needs a little push to cope with the next challenge.

It is important that the child has a lot of good positive experiences and an everyday





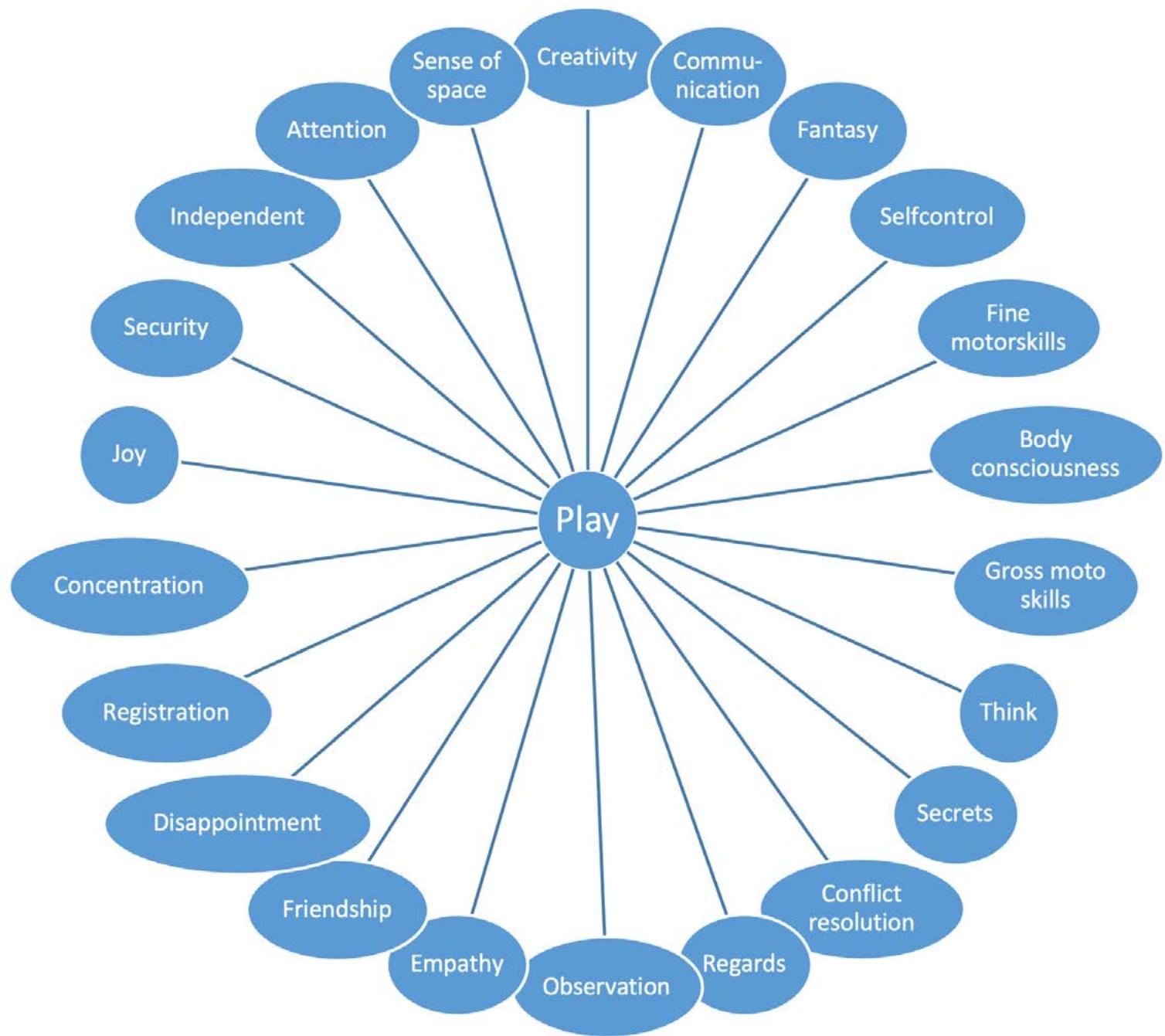
life has been created with versatile and challenging activities, where the child's skills and abilities can be challenged, flourish and develop.

Therefore, in addition to free or independent play, some play should also be initiated by adults, where the adult shows different possibilities in the games or for the play, controls the game and is clearly involved and actively participating together with children. The more controlled games from the breeding ground for new games and

play, new relationships and connections to the world and provide inspiration for the child.

The play must be understood as an independent value and space and time must be created for the child's independent play in the daily planning. And in the nature or outdoor focused daycare/kindergarten or school, this should happen outside, whenever possible.





Legislation, laws and rules

LEGAL BASIS AND QUALITY CRITERIA

The legal basis for day care institutions is the same no matter if it is a more traditional daycare, or a daycare with a nature approach. With a change in 2005, the opportunities for forming private institutions were greatly improved in Denmark when the municipalities' right of veto was lifted here. At the same time, the finances of the private institutions were equated with the public ones. In return, the private sector must meet the same quality criteria as the public sector.

The next thing the initiators must therefore do is read the municipality's quality criteria for daycare.

If you cannot find the criteria on the website, you should contact the administration fairly quickly. It can take up to a few months before the result is available, if the issue has not been taken up for political consideration.





The quality criteria apply to all day care institutions in the municipality. Therefore, one should not fear that they are unreasonably strict. The municipality's own institutions must also be able to live with them.

In Estonia, the requirements are based on the national curriculum and are adjusted as necessary in accordance with the law. And public as well as private institutions have to follow it, too.

In the Czech Republic, the Forrest kindergartens are defined in the School law (561/2004 Sb.) as a kindergartens in which education takes place mainly in outdoor areas.

In the Framework education program for preschool education, teachers are encouraged to provide the child with direct interaction with the natural environment, monitoring the changes and

diversity of nature.

In Slovakia, every kindergarten, whose task is to implement pre-primary education in the school environment, must respect and comply with generally binding legal standards in the implementation of outdoor education. The legislation applies to all kindergarten activities as an educational institution: the content of education (national curriculum, school curriculum), staffing, material-technical, safety, health, hygiene, spatial and financial conditions.*

For other countries, please check and liaise with your national legislation.

* University of Prešov, Faculty of Education, Slovakia: STANDARDS OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN KINDERGARTEN, INAK, OZ, KREMNICA, 2021



Risky play and safety

As a parent, you can worry about your child's well-being and safety when your child is not used to being outdoors and in nature.

Somehow, we have gotten away from nature and nature and the outdoors can seem dangerous to some of us.

But we must remember that it was not many years ago that many children stayed and played independently outdoors, without constant adult supervision.

It is important to emphasize that the outdoor environment must always be safe for the child and it is the responsibility of the teaching staff to ensure this.

That said, nature and the outdoor environment are a fantastic learning environment where there is an opportunity for the child to strengthen and practice all the abilities and develop competencies. To deprive the child of these unique opportunities for well-being, development and learning due to unnecessary worries, we will try to address here in this section.





Risky play

If the pedagogical practice is organized only with a focus on safety and the fear of reprisals, there is a risk that the child will be deprived of the opportunity for development and learning.

Children learn through experimentation, testing, trying - through the use of the body and the senses and thereby form their own experiences.

When the children test and challenge themselves, they gain a sense of getting better and opportunity to sense the improvement, belief in their own abilities and thereby strengthening their self-confidence and self-esteem.

When the child tries and experiments - they learn about their own body, strengths and weaknesses and thereby gain a greater understanding of their own abilities - and

children are “coded” with the will to constantly explore and try new things!

When the child does something “dangerous”, it makes sense for the child - as the child practices mastering something new.

As a starting point, the child will know his or her own limits of ability and will and when the opportunity arises, challenge himself or herself accordingly.

In the beginning, for example, the child will slowly stagger down a hill (perhaps with the help of an adult) and will do so until he or she feels safe. Then the child will go down independently without help and eventually it will run down - faster and faster.

Here it is essential to have and show the belief that the child can do well, rather than forbidding the child from challenging the hill. It takes time and confidence and trust in the child's abilities. And that is more important than forbidding the child to run.

It is part of important learning processes and when the child tries - and most likely also falls - he or she learns about their





own ability and the functions and the possibilities of the body. Children who are given the opportunity to unfold and try out things become more body-conscious, brave, energetic and better at making independent choices, that are safe enough.

Risky play is characterized by 5 factors:

- **Speed**, that can be recognized in eg. cycling, running fast, sledding, sliding
- **Height**, in eg. climbing (on trees, small walls, rocks etc.), in hammock, on balancing places (eg. on tree trunks)
- **Using tools**; knives (cutting with a knife, cooking), saws, use of the right tools (saw, hammer, scissors), ax etc.
- **Environmental elements**,

water - lake, stream and sea etc., campfire site

- **The experiential**, the experience of being “alone” and “getting away” from the others

It is thus important that adults, who are aware of these, support children in having access to as many opportunities for risky play as possible, with proper guidance ensuring safety and these are considered in the various possible learning environments.

“Studies show that children develop their motor skills through risky play (Jensen and Sandsetter, 2015). Risky play can strengthen motor development, gait, social and personal development, as well as well-being in the interaction between children”





https://www.ucviden.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/102536696/Rahbek_2020_P_dagogens_blik_p_barnets_leg_gl_de_ogsus_i_maven.pdf

“ “The dangerous thing” is the spark in all kinds of games. The dangerous thing helps to ensure that the game remains fun and inspiring and to create meaning in the game” (Sederberg & Bahrenscheer, 2018, p. 34).

Many children today are wrapped in bubble wrap as parents are usually afraid that child will be get hurt.

However, all research describes that there are very few accidents in daycares/ kindergartens or schools focused on nature or the outdoors - it is often small cuts, skin abrasions, small wounds that may naturally occur in natural environment.

In particular, there are very few accidents in daycare with nature and outdoor life, as the children here often have the opportunity

to test their abilities in a natural learning environment and learn about their own limits. And this usually can not happen indoors as testing one’s own abilities need a lot of space and a naturally challenging environment, that enables children to try new things, naturally develop and grow. And it is important to keep in mind for you, as parent, that if the child does not have these opportunities, one deprives the child of the opportunity for important development and learning.

Who does not remember even when you have moved on the edge of your own ability - the tickling sensation in the stomach, when you whizzed away, when the body works at high pressure to master the difficulty or challenge, the deep concentration and immersion, when you sat with the cutting knife in the hand cutting your bread by yourself - but not least the great joy and pride of mastering something new?

We want to preserve that joy for our children, too.



Q & A



Many parents who have not yet had the experience with an outdoor or nature daycare have many questions. We tried to ask teachers and pedagogues with practical experience with the outdoors and

nature work with children and let them answer the most common questions that you as parent, might have. Here these questions and answer are:

Questions about hygiene, wellbeing, food and sleep

- **When it's colder outside, will children have tea available?**

If we are outside in nature, often we make tea on the fire. Or on the camp outdoor cooker. We gather around and sing songs until the water is boiled or we collect different herbs or plants to make the tea together with children. Or we simply take out tea with us in thermos. But we also make sure that when it is very cold, we skip activities with children where they would sit, so they don't get cold. In such conditions we use "catching" or other games where children have to run and move around enough to keep warm. If we stay on the daycare or kindergarten school yard, we keep hot tea available for them outside in large heat keeping thermos or bring outside a big pot for a while to serve the tea.

- **What about the toilet outside? Where do children go?**

If we are in the daycare premises, children can go to the toilet inside. If we are in nature or forest, we help children going to the toilet behind the tree and use nature naturally for this purpose too, in a safe and protective way, both for the child and for nature. We always have toilet paper, bags, globes and sanitizer with us. The children often learn fast how to go to the toilet outside.

- **What about hand washing? (they will also play in the mud)**

We always have sanitizer towels with us or water so the children can wash their hands before eating or after being on the



toilet. But if we do not eat outside or they have not been to the toilet, they can just wash their hands when we get back to the daycare.

- **How do you deal with sitting outside in colder weather? Because children often sit on the ground and mothers worry that they catch a cold from sitting (esp. girls)**

We always make sure that the children have the right clothing on when we go out in nature. It could be a snowsuit, thermo clothing or rain clothing. Often, we also have a tarpaulin with us so the children can sit on that if it is wet. By spending much time outside, immune system of children is boosted after some time. From our experience we can say that all the children's health benefits much from staying outside and children are much more resilient and healthier, having less colds and sickness days than their peers who spend most of their days inside.

- **For young children, the question is what do you do if a child gets peeing outside. Where to change?**

All the children have their own backpack with extra clothing, a lunch pack and water. So if a child has an accident it is not a problem. We just take some clean,

dry clothes on to change and put the dirty clothes in a plastic bag and put it in the backpack.

- **What if the child also spares reserved clothes outside and has nothing to wear/no extra dry or clean clothes to change during the day?**

Then we can ask one of the other children if they can borrow some clothes to his or her friend. It has never been a problem. Next time he or she might need that help from friends, too.

- **If children stay outside at any time in any condition, when it is raining, sooner or later they will get completely wet: how long will they actually be in the rain? How will it be resolved when they are completely wet/soaked?**

There is a big difference in the quality off the rain clothes so at some point the children will get wet, but normally when it is raining heavily we seek for shelter outside or in the forest, in the bonfire hut or we put up the tarpaulin so we can sit under it. In that way we are not directly in the rain. And if we get soaked, we will just change clothes. If the weather and rain get extreme in special conditions, we arrange alternative solution for children,



taking care of the shelter and their safety.

- **What if the children are cold? Will they stay very far from daycare? Can they come back if they want to?**

We try to plan the day and the activities according to the weather. That will say that we are very active if it is cold (eg. through running games) or we make a fire where we can sit and get warm. Sometimes we go far away from daycare and other times we stay close to the daycare. We go out as a group and come back as a group, so one child can't go back alone but we listen to the children and go back if we need to. Also, you as parent will be asked to put extra layers in the backpack of your child, in a colder weather. We, as pedagogues, make sure your child puts these extra layers on, if he or she needs to.

- **How will it be with food; will children be eating outdoors or inside?**

It will depend on the daycare and the weather. It can be fun to eat outside but if it is too cold or wet, we will seek shelter inside or under the tarpaulin.

- **How will it be with the afternoon nap/rest/sleeping time?**

Main criterium is that every child who comes to daycare gets at least 45-60 min quiet time. That doesn't specifically mean that they will sleep or nap (what they can also do), but that means children will have time to lay down or do quiet activities such as puzzles, watching books/ reading, drawing etc. This can be done both inside as well as outside, too, if daycare provides conditions for it.





Questions about clothes and gear

- **What clothes will children need? Do they need any special clothes / shoes?**

Don't worry. You will always be provided the list of clothes that you should equip your child with for spending time outside.

- **Is the more suitable for children to wear overalls when it rains or are waterproof trousers and jacket better?**

Well that completely depends on child, what's more comfortable for the him or her. Both are fine!

- **Will the nursery provide special clothing? Waterproofs ... And will these be washed by parents?**

Such requests are only available if parents and daycare would cooperate, agree on it and maybe open a fund for that. It's completely doable and yes parents will take care of washing the clothes.

- **Will teachers help children get dressed? Because my experience is - in November teachers left children in sweatpants outside,**

child ended up sick on ATB for getting cold because the teachers did not want to dress the children (not every child knows how it is outside and what to wear in concrete weather and how to dress properly).

Of course, teachers are required to look how children are dressed and dress them as parents requested, that's why weatherproof clothing, gloves, hats etc. are needed. And the teacher needs to go through every child to make sure that everything is in place and the child is ready to go outside without any problems. In a case of child with special needs (including, eg. getting cold too often), teacher should always know about this. As a parent, please always communicate any additional needs and requirements to teacher.





- **What does need to be prepared / packed for the children and how, what change they will experience in their routines compared to the normal mode in the ordinary kindergarten?**

Preparation depends on daycare/kindergarten or school. Parents will always be instructed, if special preparation is needed (eg. extra snack or drink for a trip, extra clothes in a backpack, etc.). Routine depends also on what teachers prepared for the day and weekly/monthly theme. Let's say it's bicycle day so that means kids won't do their normal daily routine such as go inside/outside to learn

regular things. Instead of that they will go outside on bikes and learn about safety and their surroundings integrated with math/literature etc.

- **Do they need to pack extra food and drink? Or will kindergarten provide it?**

This very much depends on daycare/kindergarten or school. Some of them provide food, with extras for the trips or activities in nature, some of them won't. Nevertheless, you will always be informed about how much food and what will your child need for a day outside.





- **Do children need to be prepared in advance for a longer stay outside in terms of skills? Do they need to be taught anything special in advance (eg how to dress for a specific weather, what to do outside and what not to do, how to deal with hygiene..?), or the teachers will supervise everything - so that the children outside are fine, warm and happy, under any conditions? Will they learn this together?**

Children should be aware of difference and know basic preparation for weather conditions, if there's rain they should know that they have to wear waterproof clothes, if there's snow and it's cold they need to dress appropriately to the weather. They should learn this from you, as parents, who have to teach this your children. Of course, teachers will be guiding and make sure that children are prepared to go outside in any weather. For everything else, teachers will be

supervising children with hygiene, warmth and full stomach/proper eating and they do it as a part of the child learning process. Children technically don't have to worry about anything. But it's good if parents would do some preliminary work at home so for children it's easier to follow the other children and learn together. And fully enjoy the time outside.

- **Are teachers willing to carry water, food and educational materials/equipment for children? How will it be secured?**

As a part of learning process, children will be encouraged and asked to carry their own snack or drink or extra clothes in their own small backpack. The remaining items for learning outdoors, with extra water or snacks, if needed, for example on longer trips, or warmer/colder weather, as well as educational materials/equipment for children, will be carried by teachers, if necessary. Usually it is carried by teachers in backpack or just in a big bag.





Questions about activities, routines / day program

- **Will children go outside in any weather?**

Yes, children go outside in any weather unless it's actually not safe to go out (extreme winds/storms/heavy rain/ too cold/ too hot).

- **Will educators/teachers be encouraged to really go outside in (almost) any weather?**

Yes they will. If teachers are committed, then it's fun to go outside with children in any weather, even if it would only mean

counting the raindrops or measuring the depth of puddles. Children learn and have fun in any environment and are happy outside so if that's the purpose of teachers' job to make children happy, then there's no problem to go outside in any weather.

- **Will the daily program/routines be approximately the same for each type of weather? (If, for example, it rains, will they spend the same time outside as in sunny weather?)**





No, outside time completely depends on the weather. If it rains heavily, then the children will spend less time outside to prevent soaking and the possibility of getting sick. Same goes with every weather.

- **What activities will they do outside if it is wet / drizzle / very hot or cold?**

Everything the weather provides, for hot days and also for rainy days. Children can easily play with water, build constructions for water drains and all that. Almost anything can be done outside in any weather but teachers and you have to be aware of the safety. For hot days make sure children don't spend too much time in open sun, make sure they drink enough if needed and have hats. For cold and rainy days make sure they stay dry or go inside on the right time. It's completely fine if children get wet, but it's important not to stay outside for too long after.

- **Will children play freely or in an organized way outside?**

That completely depends on what is prepared for the day. There can be organized play or completely free play, providing the possibility to play whatever kids would like to play. Usually, most of the days outside provide the combination

of both structured and unstructured play.

- **How will the curriculum change? Will they take over classic themes, following official curriculum or do teachers add something or change anything?**

Curriculum stays the same as the national curriculum requests. Outdoors just provides endless possibilities for creative approach to "classic" themes. It very much depends on how individual teachers use these possibilities and how creative they, together with children, are.

- **Will children be allowed to practice skills such as carving, climbing, working with fire?**

Yes, but always with a supervisor.

- **Will children get possibility to grow something? (plants, herbs, vegetables or fruits?)**

Of course, if teachers create and provide opportunities and right tools for such an experience, they will.

- **Will they come into contact with animals?**

They can. There's a possibility to take a pet for caring and educational purposes.



Small animals such as bunnies, snails, hamsters etc. are common and welcome in some kindergartens. And of course, if parents and teachers agree, “take your pet to daycare days” enabling that children can introduce their pets to the group and then parents take them back home after, can be introduced. When going outside to visit and learn about animals then rule is not to pet any strange animals in a risk of them being dangerous.

- How often and in what ways children will encounter technology/use ICTs?**

That depends on daycare/kindergarten if they have the orientation for ICTs and if they provide and have existing teaching materials that they can use through technologies. In relation to exploration of nature, there are many applications available that can be used outside for learning and identifying the unknown, so there are opportunities for using of technologies outside, too!

- Will children be able to climb the trees/will they get possibility or be allowed to climb?**

Yes, but always supervised. Climbing trees can teach children several key skills and support their motor skills, will power,

problem solving etc.

- What activities will take place outside in the morning/from the routine ones?**

Whatever activity can be done outside. Children will do anything if the teacher is capable of making the activity interesting for children. They can do exercises, read a story/book. If the weather is suitable for it, then teachers can take outside almost any activity and children can do everything outside.

- Will graphomotor skills, fine motor skills be developed outside in the same degree as inside? Because in kindergarten children learn to hold the pencil, stick, cut, etc....**

Of course, teachers can take all the activities that they do inside outside. In addition, outside they can use also natural materials and use them to support graphomotor skills of children, too.





- **I'm not much of a supporter - according to me, children also have to draw, cut, build lego, etc., not just run or play outside. Will outdoor games and activities replace indoor ones properly?**

Teachers can bring everything that's inside and use it outside, if necessary. That includes legos, drawing, cutting, glueing, book reading, and any other activity that you can do inside. Only thing that is needed is a proper play area outside and supplies or necessary material. In addition, outdoor space provides the freedom to move, run, be loud and enjoy the fresh air and different weather conditions, that are much more healthier and natural to us, humans, than the limiting indoor spaces surrounded by walls.

- **And will children not become too "wild" and grow out of as "wild animals" only? Without learning inside?**

No, they will not "get wild". Because teachers can maintain the same rules outside for kids as inside, or modify them, using the opportunities of the outdoors, for children benefits. There is a quiet time and/or quiet corner, there's no running all the time, and you have to be aware of your

surroundings and of other children, too. Also, outside, children are still a part of the social environment and not a "wild" one. In addition, children might often get involved in suggestion of the group rules for outdoor activities, as a part of their learning and democracy competence development.

- **Will the children spending too much time outside be sufficiently prepared for school?**

Yes, they will. And there can be even bigger benefits for them, as children learn more about responsibilities, mindfully observe and notice things around them, practice focus and concentration, while they are happier in more stress free, playful outside environment. And that means they can become more productive and clear minded. And enjoy learning and seek for new knowledge.





The output is part of the project Erasmus+ č. 2019-1-SK01-KA201-060775 titled Taking learning outdoors - supporting the skills of pre-school managers in outdoor education and care - TAKE ME OUT II. - Happy childhood happens outside - STEP HIGHER

The presented opinions are the views of the TAKE ME OUT II project partnership and do not have to express the opinions of the EU.

Issued by INAK, oz, Kremnica, 2022
ISBN: 978-80-974377-1-8

TAKE ME OUT



DANISH NATURE APPROACH
DNA



STROM ŽIVOTA

JAN EVANGELISTA PURKYNĚ UNIVERSITY IN ÚSTÍ NAD LABEM



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

