

RWL Case Study

Country

Hungary

Name of the programme

Hedgehog Camp (Süni Tábor)



Age of the children involved?

(7) 8-12 years

Short introduction/teaser

A 10-day nomadic camp in wilderness environment for children aged 8 to 12. First hand experiences of nature and personal sustainability/self-reliance practices as well as community building, organisational development and local traditions.

What is the frame?

Learning to give and take allows us to make Earth our home.

We are part of nature. We have become disconnected while living in modern societies, but it is possible to get connected again. A nomadic camp in the wilderness is perhaps the best place for it!

What are the goals of the programme?

The basic goal is to make children enjoy wilderness without fears but also with respect and love towards nature. When they return home, their way of thinking and behaviour would be changed.

In a wider perspective, principles behind Hedgehog Camps correspond fully with the Earth Charter Initiative (www.earthcharterinaction.org) that is a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. These principles are briefly the followings:

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity
2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations

In this spirit, the goal of Hedgehog Camps is

- To prepare 'Little Hedgehogs' as well as 'Big Hedgehogs' to be able to make responsible community centred decisions and have a lifestyle and habits both as children and later as adults that contribute to the conservation of biodiversity,
- To preserve and restore the harmony between people and nature, and people and other people. In order to achieve the above, our aim is to help children get to know and appreciate nature. This should happen in a relaxed way, with good spirits, based on direct experiences, where children themselves are active participants as well as creators of their own learning process.

What values are promoted in the programme?

- According to the hand model: respect for nature and care for the state of our planet, respect for future generations.
- According to PIRC's values: a World of Beauty, curious, inner harmony, protecting the environment, respect for tradition, responsible, unity with nature, a world of beauty, protecting the environment.

Which competencies are promoted that empower learners to shape a sustainable future?

Learning for sustainability means empowering the learner to shape a more sustainable future for themselves and others. To do so, experiencing self-efficacy and participation, cooperation and self-directed learning are especially critical. In this project, there is a possibility to;

- enable learners to cooperate, participate, take responsibility and to learn in a self-directed way,
- enable learners to deal with their own feelings and the feelings of others,
- enable learners to be reflective and critical thinkers – considering different perspectives to reach informed opinions and decisions,
- empower learners to be creative, flexible and able to take positive action to deal with change,
- enable learners to become conscious of interconnectedness - you, me and the world around.

The creators of the Hedgehog Camp project collected some more competencies, partly overlapping with the above competencies, together with situations promoting them in the camp:

- Knowledge on science and ecological thinking* – ,academic' programs, depending on the site of the camp: botany, geology, ornithology, entomology, creek walk, astronomy.
- Traditions, local culture* – programs on ethnography, crafts, common singings, local songs.
- Environmental problems and their possible treatment, prevention locally and globally, ecological footprint* – evening discussions;
- People and nature* – relationship, interrelatedness – all programs are suitable to discover how man changed nature and also to evaluate it.

- During ethnography programs a connection could be made between local nature, available resources, what local people made their living on, and the other way around: between human activities and the change of local environment:
- ,Settler game' and the framework tale help to understand these relationships.
- *Elements of environmentally friendly conduct of life –*
 - The campsite is made carefully in order to make the least necessary changes to the area and to leave as little trace as possible after the camp is over;
 - Toilets are designed in such a way that nature will restore itself after we leave; waste is sorted. Water is used very sparingly;
 - In the stove only waste wood is used. We cook for ourselves;
 - No unnecessary items are brought to the camp;
 - No electricity is used except for the torches;
 - Public transport is used to get to the campsite as much as possible
 - We make sure children understand that all of these actions were undertaken as a result of conscious decisions according to specific values.
- *Ability and need for systems thinking –*
 - By harmonising the 'academic' programs,
 - By discovering the relationships between certain fields and chains of cause and effect. This is done by 'Hedgehog Mothers and Fathers' as well as well through specially designed games such as 'BioWar' and 'Settlers game', which can be very helpful;
- *Handling competitive situations and improving cooperation, and organisational development* - in 'Hedgehog Families' care is taken to create a cooperative atmosphere:
 - Duties are distributed, taking into consideration the individual abilities and knowledge of 'Little Hedgehogs' and discussions are held with everyone in order to assist them in how to make decisions;
 - 'Little Hedgehogs' are given tasks to work in pairs or in small groups;
 - The running of the camp also depends on how successfully the 'families' can cooperate; competitions are used to motivate and help individual abilities to develop ensuring that competitions are a good chance to learn about and accept each other's abilities;
 - Cooperation between 'Big Hedgehogs' is an important element of the running of the camp well and can serve as a good example for the 'Little Hedgehogs';
- *Responsibility, responsible decision-making:*
 - 'Little Hedgehogs' are requested to pack their backpacks in a way that enables them to carry them. If they do not pack this way they might lack certain things during the camp;
 - Services necessary for camp life (working in the kitchen, collecting fire wood, cleaning of bathrooms and toilets, the setting up, and striking of the camp) are good ways to develop responsibility for the whole of the camp, as well as similar duties within each of the 'families';
 - Games serve many opportunities to understand and enhance individual, communal or human responsibility in general, and to make children aware that we must be consciously making decisions.
- *Thinking about, and planning for, the future –* this is one of the most important, and often missing, competencies as far as building a sustainable society is concerned. When developing this competency, characteristics of each age group should be taken into consideration. For this a 3-stage system ('Little Hedgehog', 'Teenage Hedgehog' and 'Big Hedgehog') was introduced: if a 'Little Hedgehog' would like to work with us in a long run, they know what they are expected to do for it. The consequences of human activities are therefore shown.

Which of the specific scientific concepts does the programme relate to?

Below are some examples how different scientific concepts are touched on during the programme:

- Cycles: It is quite easy to demonstrate the cycles of plants and animals in the forest, and

how they live and decay. Or water cycle: when you are a bit more exposed to nature, living outside rather than in an urban environment the water cycle is also a lot more evident: the rain, dew, humidity, clouds, rain, streams, springs and wells...

- Energy flow: the kitchen is fuelled by wood collected nearby, showing how the Sun's energy turns into fuel via plants.
- Change: human activities and related changes in the local, natural environment; and on a smaller scale the changes caused at the campsite as a result of camping there.

Which ecological problems are involved, if any, and how? (Refer to mind maps of 9 planetary boundaries)

Essentially all of the problems are involved since the Big Science Issues (biodiversity loss, climate change, land system change, fresh water use, chemical pollution, biogeochemical loading /nitrogen and phosphate cycles/, ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosol loading, ocean acidification) are all ultimately generated and caused by our modern consumer society.

A nomadic camp draws the attention to the fact that we are part of nature. Any science issue can be discussed. However, in such a camp children most likely to get in touch with, and experience first hand, issues like land system change, climate change, fresh water use and biodiversity loss. Due to land use changes, the extension of modern lifestyle and climate change, there is a loss of biodiversity.

Transferability: Which different areas of life are included and how?

Learners can experience that they are part of nature and how it feels being exposed to nature (**themselves**), as well as the influence humans have on nature (**the natural environment**) and the consequences for other people (e.g. climate change caused by using non-renewable energy and consumer habits - **the global society**). Learners can overcome these hardships by cooperating in 'families' or smaller groups (**community**).

What educational strategies (learning models, methods, etc.) are used in your programme?

Hedgehog Camp is a nomadic summer camp.

Due to the constantly changing conditions of the natural environment, society, the economy and legal issues, the pedagogical aims of the Hedgehog camp, and the methodology and content needed to achieve them, are in continuous development. Furthermore, organizers adapt the camp to the ever-changing needs of the 'Little Hedgehogs' and their parents. This changes from generation to generation, just as the knowledge and experience of the staff of the camp changes.

In the early years the aim of the camp was – starting with studying astronomy - to provide a complex science education, to help children to appreciate nature and experience how a community and an organisation develop. Over the years, due to witnessing how nature and human behaviour changes, gradually other aims and contents appeared such as a commitment to nature conservation, a strengthening of environmental awareness and of responsible behaviour.

It is well known that we care for things only if we are emotionally connected to them in a positive. One can love something once one gets to know it well. Summer camps for children are perfect places to experience and live through this process. Children live outdoors, with nature, as a part of it and are therefore likely to develop a relationship with it.

It is very important that the camp is well organised:

- A nice camp site that touches the children and raises respect for nature by its sheer

- appearance;
- having good hygiene and organisation of camp - drinking and washing water, camp kitchen, suitable tents, toilets etc.; and
- all organised in a way being part of nature.

Programmes utilising time and the local possibilities well and which are designed carefully for the age group of the camp participants are also needed.

Methods used during camping: emphasis on personal first-hand experiences, making direct connection to nature.

Although it seems such a camp is not easy to fit into the formal school education/curriculum, there have been attempts to do so. In a high school in Törökbálint, Hungary, a committed teacher introduced a scheme where (15 years old) spent the last week of the school year in such a camp. These 6 days are prepared and run with the help of 5-6 older students, including erecting up the camp and running the kitchen and the programmes. One experienced teacher is enough; the presence of another is of great help. 10th and 11th graders are able to spend 6 days in the camp after the 9-graders, once the school term is over. They are all experienced campers, and many of them come again. 12th graders can join after that, after their final exams as well as the families from the community. A low budget wilderness camp is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen connections in the school as well as in the community.



In the Hedgehog Camp all the above goals hope to be achieved through the *'academic' programs*, the *'framework tales'*, the *games*, the *common singings*, the *running of the camp* and the completed *duties*.

The competencies mentioned above are not developed separately, but the program of the whole camp is designed and led in a synergetic way. Program leaders know the other programs well, so they could connect them. 'Hedgehog Mothers and Fathers' help to make connections and relationships between the activities that happen each day. At the centre of all activities is respect

and appreciation towards each other and nature. Harmony of nature and to what degree we depend on it can be lived in a campsite far away from settlements and busy roads. It is important not to allow mobile phones in the camp to make 'Little Hedgehogs' live in nature and the community, to recognize, describe and try to solve their problems. Their attention and feelings should not be diverted by watching what is outside their immediate community.

It is important to note that 'Big Hedgehogs' learn from each other both during preparation and camping, learn from the situations, and from the 'Little Hedgehogs'. Always facing new situations requires never-ending preparations and skills; among others openness, cooperation, and common decision-making. These competencies are necessary in our life outside the camp in order to take on and transfer our values, and environmentally friendly lifestyle whole year long.

Usually it is the first time children meet the concept of voluntary work. As they see how 'Big Hedgehogs' work together and run the camp, later many of the 'Little Hedgehogs' return and join the work of the association and the camp.

How is the programme evaluated? How do you know the programme achieved its educational goals?

No scientific research had been carried out to evaluate the camp work. The simple fact that the Hedgehog Camp is now going on for 27 years is a very reassuring feedback. Former 'Little Hedgehogs' have grown into 'Big Hedgehogs' and there is a continuous improvement as organisers discuss what and should be done differently to improve things year by year. Over the years the values and aims of the camp became an organic part of the Pangea Association. Organisers can see and follow the changes of children year by year. This is, however a rather instinctive than a consciously planned pedagogical method of evaluation.

There are several publications available on the camp, and in each of them there is description why it is useful, what is the aim. In 2013 questionnaires were prepared for both parents and children on how satisfied they were, what they liked the best, what program they would like to see etc.

Does the programme drive a behavioural change? How do you know that?

Although no formal research has been done so far, there are several kinds of feedback suggesting that behaviour change did take place.

In 2013, for example, a university thesis was written analysing how the camp influenced the lives of former campers based on interviews with them. The results of this study stated that camps and work in the association as a 'consequence' of camping had really positive impacts on environmentally aware behaviour of *returning participants*. Camps influenced career choices of 'Little Hedgehogs' as well as the life of their families. Some specific points mentioned in the replies, which were significant to the participants included team membership, living examples of values and concepts, attention paid to everyone, and that the camps provided a space where participants felt comfortable to be themselves. (In the future, more research projects are expected in this topic.)

Describe the programme

The Hedgehog Camp was first organised in the mid 80s by the Göncöl Foundation and later by the Pangea Association (www.pangea.hu). Every year the tents of the camp are erected on a clearing of some different hills of Hungary.

The Hedgehog Camp is a 10-day nomadic camp in the wilderness for 80-85 primary school children aged between 8-12 years (There is another camp organised for those aged 13-16.) In the camp children are called 'Little Hedgehogs' and live in 'Hedgehog Families' of 10-12 members under the supervision of a 'Hedgehog Mother' and a 'Hedgehog Father' who are young adults, typically former 'Little Hedgehogs' who look after them. Other adults in the camp are the young scientists and naturalists called 'Big Hedgehogs' who lead the 'Little Hedgehogs' through the 7

'academic' days of the camp with the assistance of their 'Hedgehog Mother' and 'Hedgehog Father'. As days go by 'Little Hedgehogs' get a full picture of the area around the camp site and gain an increased awareness of the relationships between different elements of nature (rock – soil – flora – fauna -land use - protection). Each 'Hedgehog Family' stays in the camp for one day to help in the kitchen with food preparation and washing up.

Each camp is framed by a carefully elaborated story that helps children understand that everything is interrelated: why the surrounding wilderness is so precious, why it is an integral part of our lives and why it must be preserved. Actions children can take to protect the environment after having returned home is also discussed. The main aim is to focus on problems between people and nature (our use of nature). 'Big Hedgehogs' represent the bad guys, and children show them the right behaviour. The frame of the story could be about aliens, ancient Greeks, a castle in the Middle Ages, viking, managers etc. On arrival, the 'Big Hedgehogs' already dressed up according to the tale, welcome the children, so that they are already inside the theme and become part of the story right from the start so will get involved. Every morning 'Big Hedgehogs' add bits to the story (dressed up) when a "Hedgehog Family" gets a task for that day and has to perform (dressed up, in group work) something in the evening around the campfire

The academic programmes that change daily basically determine the daily rhythm of the camp. Each academic day 'Hedgehog Families' go for different morning excursions with 'Big Hedgehogs'. Children discover the trees, bushes, birds and insects living near the campsite, herbs and their uses, the different aspects of flora and fauna changing by the seasons, geology, fossils of the area, insect fauna of the meadows, animals living in the creek, birds flying over as well as the ethnography including folksongs, tales, traditional ways and tools of land use and land management, past and present life of local people. Children also learn about first aid, astronomy, landscape history, and study orientation as well as how to set fire and make simple camp food. The main aim is that children get into direct touch with the elements and the whole of nature by, for example, using magnifying glasses, preparing leaf and bark prints, tracking animal footprints etc. Nature observation field trips help children get away from urban lifestyle and way of thinking.



Physically harder days such as geology, botany, bird watching/zoology and the kitchen day are followed by more relaxing days such as ethnography, hand crafting and creek walk. Prior to each of the hikes the 'Big Hedgehog' discusses the interest and needs of a particular Hedgehog Family with the 'Hedgehog' parents. The programmes usually fit into the framing stories of the camp.

In the afternoons, after the field trips, there are games organised at or near the campsite where all children can participate as families or members of an even larger group. This way, children can experience not only the joy of games but also the importance of cooperating with others instead of competing each other.



On the last day, all 'hedgehogs' go for an day-long hike together. In the evenings there is a campfire closing the whole day with lots of discussions, folk song singing and tale telling.

The camp is organised and run by volunteers, majority of whom used to be 'Little Hedgehogs' themselves many years ago. They are young adults: university students or recently graduated professionals doing voluntary work for Pangea Association. There usually about 30 of them working at the camp every year. The organisation of the camp starts not long after one camp is closed: finding a new place, getting permits, organising logistics of supplies etc.

Short introduction of the author of the programme:

The Hedgehog Camp is organised by the Pangea Cultural and Environmental Association which works 'with the help of volunteers for the "Whole World"'.

For more information both in Hungarian and English, please visit their website: www.pangea.hu.

Included resources / materials / tools

www.sunitabor.hu (in Hungarian only)

- Bundai Zs., Filó A., Malatinszky Á. (szerk): SÜNI Természetismereti nomád táborok szervezésének praktikuma, Pangea Egyesület, Pénezsgyőr, 2008 (in Hungarian)

1. kötet: Mikor? Mit? Hogyan? – a tábor szervezése és élete
2. kötet: Napkeltétől napnyugtáig – A tábor szakmai és szabadidős programjai
3. kötet: A tábori főzés rejtelsei –Tábori szakácskönyv
4. kötet: Ami a torkunkon kifér – A tábor énekeskönyve

- Malatinszky Ákos, Ádám Szilvia, Benicsek Mihály, Bundai Zsófia, Fehérvári Bence és Filó Andrea: Önkéntesek bevonása 8-18 évesek természetvédelmi nevelésébe: a Süni táborok 25 éve, in Természetvédelmi Közlemények 18, pp. 338-346, 2012 (in Hungarian)

Photos or videos, logos

www.sunitabor.hu

A short introduction: <http://vimeo.com/64014976>

A longer video: <http://vimeo.com/63857432>