

**Mountains for All:
Embracing Inclusion in
Mountains and Outdoor Activities
Checklist**

**Steps Toward
Inclusion:
How to Build
Inclusive
Practices in
the Outdoors**

In this chapter* we share key tips and practical steps that we have gathered through the Via Alpina Youth Project. It should serve as an invitation for reflection and as a tool that could help in making outdoor activities more welcoming and inclusive. All insights come from real experiences, experts, shared stories and lessons learned along the way.

1. Insights come from ...

1. Assessing Needs and Defining Activities

Consider the objectives and goals of the activity. What are you aiming to achieve—cooperation, confidence-building, connection? Which activity is best suited for reaching these goals?

2. Education and Skills

Consider accessibility and equipment. Reflect on what might prevent someone from participating (e.g. language, physical ability, cultural background, or lack of proper gear). Adapt your plan to remove barriers and ensure your activity is truly inclusive.

3. Planning & Evaluation

Different target groups have different needs. Take time to educate yourself about the people you want to include. This might mean seeking advice or doing additional research to better understand their specific challenges and perspectives.

4. Tailored Support

Inclusion often requires different kinds of support. This might be financial assistance, an extra preparation session, a mentor, appropriate clothing or gear, or language interpretation. Ask the participants or their mentors if they have any special needs or requirements that you are not aware of—and plan ahead to meet those needs.

5. Preparatory Visit or Meeting

If needed and feasible plan a preparatory visit or meeting to introduce the activity in advance. Use this time to give an overview, highlight key details, and explain the meal plan. Most importantly, create a welcoming space where participants feel comfortable asking questions and sharing any concerns. This helps reduce anxiety and builds a sense of trust from the beginning. If it is an international activity, preparatory video calls can be a good alternative.

6. Diet

Aim for seasonal, regional, and organic food whenever possible. It's important to understand that people have different food choices that may be connected to their religion (halal/kosher), values (vegetarian/vegan), or health conditions (lactose intolerance, gluten allergy, etc.). The group should be understanding and respectful of these differences. Never make fun of or shame someone for their diet! If you're organizing an event for a large group, consider offering mainly plant-based meals or reducing the amount of meat. This also benefits the environment.

Another option is collaborative meal planning and cooking, at least for some parts of the project. This helps avoid conflicts by finding compromises. It also teaches young people about food, nutrition, and how to collaborate.

7. Tailored Goals

Avoid setting goals that are too ambitious—or too easy. Set realistic and meaningful objectives that fit your group's abilities and needs. This helps prevent frustration and keeps the experience positive. Consult with experts if needed. Focus on the overall journey, not just the outcome.

8. Safety Considerations

Good risk management is a core part of any outdoor program. This means understanding potential risks, identifying them early, actively reducing them, and having a clear risk assessment strategy in place.

Don't forget: safety always comes first. Check the weather in advance, carry a first aid kit*, and pack all necessary safety gear. If possible, visit the area ahead of time to identify any risks and, if needed, bring a qualified mountain guide with you.

9. Include a Trusted Person

Sometimes, it's helpful to have a familiar adult—such as a teacher, educator, or mentor—join the activity. Their presence can create a sense of safety and comfort for participants. This can be especially important in managing difficult moments, like emotional breakdowns or crises.

10. Take Care of Yourselves!

Ensure your support team is large enough. Some groups need more attention. Be mindful of the group size: smaller groups are often easier to manage and more inclusive.

Be a good host not just to others, but also to yourself. Your well-being matters too.



Tip: It's always a good idea to include some emergency menstrual products in your first aid kit. Menstruation shouldn't be a taboo topic.

*This is just an excerpt from the booklet of the same title. You can access the full booklet here: https://www.cipra.org/media/files/2025_mountains_for_all_embracing_inclusion.pdf

Self-assessment check-list

Take a moment to reflect and prepare for inclusive practice by exploring the self-assessment checklist—a tool to support thoughtful planning and awareness.

	✓	●	✗
Am I personally ready to experience and learn about inclusion?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Am I well informed about the target group, its composition, profile, and their specific needs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have I involved participants and/or experts to develop the activity materials/resources and training/learning methods?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have I clarified my objectives before the activity?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have I chosen the proper content/methodologies for my objectives and my target group's profile?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Am I aware of my own misconceptions, stereotypes, and limits? How can I work on them?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Who am I including and excluding by my decisions or actions? Am I aware of this?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do I have enough time, space, commitment, skills, and personal resources to ensure inclusion?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Am I flexible enough to adapt to unexpected situations? Do I have a plan B or C?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do I have a risk mitigation plan?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do I still need to inform them about something important?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is there anything else I should prepare for or think about?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Am I trusting and enjoying the process?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Don't forget: Have Fun

It's easy to get stress about getting everything just right. But what matters most—especially for young people—is having fun.

Your mood, energy, and attitude can shape the whole group's experience and wellbeing. Approach each moment with openness and a spirit of fun.

2. During the Activity

1. Take Time for Check-In

Start with a check-in activity—like an ice-breaker or name game. This helps build trust and sets a welcoming atmosphere. It gives everyone a chance to mentally arrive, get comfortable and start connecting with others. This is also an important opportunity for you, as a facilitator, to get a sense of the group you're working with.

2. Language Proficiency

Include a simple activity to see how comfortable participants are with the language—especially in international groups. Remind everyone that it's okay to make mistakes or not find the right words, and that the group can offer support in these moments. What matters most is the effort to connect and participate.

3. Create Common Rules

Take time to create a few clear rules with the group. Listen to everyone's ideas, but keep the number of rules small and simple. E.g. "We respect cultural and religious differences" or "We listen without interrupting".

4. Name a "Good Fairy"

If you're organizing a multi-day event, you can create an opportunity for peer support by inviting a different participant each day to take on the role of the "good fairy." This person can be someone others can approach for a friendly, peer-to-peer conversation if questions or concerns come up.

Of course, it's also important to make it clear that participants are always welcome to speak with the activity leader.

5. Follow 5 C's

- Say things in a Clear way
- Be Cohesive, stay on topic
- Be Compelling, engage
- Actively listen and be Curious about others' perspectives
- Be Compassionate, kind & avoid assumptions

6. Be Concrete

Some people struggle with abstract ideas or talking about their feelings. Use simple language, visual aids and small group discussions. Be supportive as they try to express themselves.

7. Gradualness and Encouragement

Start with short, easy outings so everyone can get comfortable in the outdoor environment. Encourage participants who feel unsure. Avoid activities that are too difficult or risky at the beginning, as they can cause discouragement or even lead to unsafe situations.

Also, take care that your explanations don't unintentionally create fear or anxiety in others.

8. Discussions Matter

Don't just focus on the activity. Open the space and take time to talk about what people felt, learned, how they cooperated. Encourage everyone to speak—but don't force it. Offer a space also to quieter or reserved group members and encourage them to share.

3. Some additional facilitation tips

- Be present and listen actively.
- Set group culture early: listening, no interrupting.
- In big groups, make sure everyone has a chance to speak.
- Example prompts for facilitators: "Would someone who hasn't spoken yet like to share?" "Anyone from this side of the room?" "What about you, X?"

- Maintain a balanced and respectful atmosphere.
- Sometimes use tools like a talking stick or ball to let people take turns in speaking.
- Offer various seating options—floor, chairs, cushions—whatever makes people comfortable.
- Make sure the sitting area is organised in a way that everyone can see and hear everyone. The circle form is normally the best way.
- Use hand signs like "T" for a technical question or "L" for language help. Applause can also be shown with open hands waving in the air.
- Provide translation if needed. Ask volunteers to help with this.
- Acknowledge silence. It's okay to pause and give people time to think. A little quiet time is okay.
- Bear noise levels in mind. Some participants are sensitive to loud voices.
- Include small group or pair talks/exchanges—some people don't like speaking in front of everyone.
- Try the Think-Pair-Share method: think alone, talk in pairs, then share with the group.
- Place a box in a private spot where participants can share thoughts or feedback anonymously. This creates a safe space

for honest expression without fear of judgment. In workshop settings with flipcharts, you can also dedicate one flipchart to capture thoughts that arise during the session. Don't forget to check it regularly for new entries.

- Reflection Time is important! Give people time to process—before discussions or at the end of the day. You can also schedule a quiet reflection time, e.g. before dinner (15–30 minutes).
- Use activities that include movement, body awareness, and are inclusive for everyone.

4. After the Activity

1. Group Evaluation

At the end of the the activity, it's important to offer space for participants to reflect and evaluate matters. Choose a method that suits your group and setting. Gather feedback. If you are organising a multi day event, do a short reflection round every day. In this way, you can make sure that everyone has a space to share, and you also have an opportunity to adapt the programme if needed. You can also offer a way to give feedback anonymously.



Tip: don't take feedback too personally: instead see it as a learning opportunity.

2. Link Experiences to Daily Life

Help participants apply what they've learned to their real life. This is ideally guided by the person who has been facilitating activity.

Depending on the activity, its aim, resources, target group and the overall setting, some additional items can be offered:

Online Check-in (1 month later)

with the activity relevant-topic. People can share further reflections about the activity and share what kind of support they still might need.

Reflection Buddies

People can pair up to stay in touch—if they want! Encourage them to exchange at least one letter or email to share their progress or experiences.

3. Team Evaluation

Evaluate the activity with your team and any experts or educators involved.

Ask yourselves: What went well? What could be improved? What surprised you?

Use all feedback—from participants and your team—as a base for reflection and planning future events.

Embrace the fact:

Not everything will always go as planned - perfection is not the goal. Group work is a journey, and, with each experience, we can grow and learn together.

Published in August 2025

This publication was produced as part of the Erasmus+ Project “[Via Alpina Youth](#).” The project disseminates knowledge, ideas, and opportunities for sustainable lifestyles, inclusion, environmental protection, and climate change along the Via Alpina—a long-distance hiking trail that has connected all Alpine countries for over 20 years. It was co-funded by the European Union’s Erasmus+ programme and MOVETIA.

The views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

More about the project:

