

CREATING NATURE WITHOUT BARRIERS

Examples, possibilities and obstacles
for unguided nature experiences

Transcription of the prezi-presentation



Cover image: The picture from the Eifel National Park serves as background for the prezi presentation. This National Park has been a reference for inclusive nature experiences in Germany for years. Here: An excursion in the barrier-free nature experience area „Wilder Kermeter“.

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Barrier-free Nature Experience

About the project..

The European project Nature without Barriers aims to make nature an experience available for everyone. For almost 80 million people in Europe, everyday life is associated with a wide variety of barriers. Access to nature is often difficult for people with disabilities.

Nature conservation centres and environmental educators, who want to get acquainted with the topic of barrier free nature experience, have little practical material at their disposal. Therefore, disabled people are largely excluded from environmental education. In this project, we address this obvious lack. We need more barrier-free access so that everyone can experience nature. With this project, we want to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the EU and inspire all Europeans for nature. It might seem strange to overlap wild nature and standardised accessibility. However, inclusive projects and barrier-free design will bring a benefit for every single visitor.

About the Prezi presentation

This presentation is intended to give a brief insight into the various topics related to a barrier-free self-determined nature experience. Details and further information can be found under the corresponding links and on the project website: www.nature-without-barriers.eu.

Educational materials

In general, our educational materials focus on fostering skills of environmental educators with respect to disabled people and provide guidance for two main questions:

- How can experts working in the field of environmental education improve guided nature experience for impaired people?
- How can nature trails be adapted for the independent use by impaired people? The developed materials aim to help users in their everyday work and serve as a guide for improvement by using feedback questionnaires. All materials are free to use under the Creative Commons License and are available for download on the project website.

Topics

- a. Guided nature experience for people with disabilities
- b. Independent nature experience
- c. Eliminating physical barriers
- d. Eliminating communication barriers

This prezi presentation centres on the part of independent nature experience.

Self-determined nature experience

Every person wants and should be able to experience nature independently. For many environmental education centres and nature parks, it is a challenge however to adapt the infrastructure and define concrete measures. These and other topics are addressed in our guideline on self-determined nature experience:

www.nature-without-barriers.eu/en/self-determined-nature-experience.html.

The guideline includes a decision matrix as a comprehensive self-check tool for existing trails and helps to adopt criteria for unguided nature experience according to different needs. Based on various national and European recommendations, we developed criteria for the use by nature conservation institutions to assess the feasibility of existing locations. The basic idea of this comprehensive guideline is both to enable a self-check for the suitability of the location for adaptations for impaired people, and to guide through these adaptations.

Do not overcomplicate it! Check what you can change with little means. Do it step by step. Even if it is for just one group of users.

Current problems of nature educators

Throughout Europe, barrier-free access to nature is not yet self-evident. The good news is that there are more and more best practice examples and people who want to actively work on the topic. You will face the following main obstacles when implementing accessibility in nature experience:

- Limited personnel resources
- The challenging conditions in the field
- Lack of money / funds
- Missing knowledge & open questions: „Where to start?“ „Does everything have to be barrier-free?“

We think that a pragmatic guideline is needed with specific advice on which of the existing offers can be used and how to communicate the necessary information well!

Ready?

Let's check this out together!!

Paths

What do you have to pay attention to with barrier-free paths?

- Width
- Incline / decline
- Ground surface
- Boundaries obstacles (see chapter hazards)
- Enough possibilities to rest
- Barrier-free toilets

Not every trail can be fitted to all disabilities. Some might be too rough, too steep or just dangerous. However, check your options!

Barrier-free paths are a great challenge, especially for nature trails.

Information

How do you present information on the nature trails? Ideally, all clues are available in at least two senses. Include information on condition, orientation and length of the trail.

Online

Always include information on content and condition of your offers to facilitate preparation of the visit. What is important here?

- Barrier-free website and information in Easy-to-read language
- Detailed information about the barrier-free offers
- Information on how to get there and away

On location

Always include information on content and condition of your offers!

- Make information boards available for different senses
- Include audio guides for self-guided experience
- If available: apps for self-guided experience
- Provide information materials also in easy-to-read language
- Introduce educational offers like method kits

Guidance Systems

- Include tactile elements: handrails, curbs, different surfaces, etc.
- Provide acoustic features: different materials, audio guides, etc.
- Improve visual information: signs, colour plates, if possible, in easy-to-read language, etc.

Weather and Surroundings

Especially for wheelchair users and visually impaired persons, changed weather conditions result in higher risks – for example, due to icy or slippery spots it might be harder to navigate or use a white cane for orientation.

Nature trails are exposed to the weather and often change their condition.

Loud ambient noises make acoustic orientation difficult and influence the use of audio guides.

Traffic, road crossings and crossing rails and roads are potential sources of danger.

Hazards

Mind eliminating hazards and securing nature trails like:

- Obstacles (branches, objects)
- Traffic (road crossings)
- Weather impact on path's conditions
- Soundscape and noises
- Ambiguous signage and directions

The Service Chain

The service chain serves as a mental aid for the publicly accessible offers of the respective nature park. It describes the range of services offered from the first information about the journey to the offers within the premises of the nature park; it also serves as a guideline for the development of accessible services. For further information, see the self-evaluation matrix on the project-website:

www.nature-without-barriers.eu/en/self-determined-nature-experience.html.

The service chain for nature parks contains typically the following elements:

- Information
- Getting there and away
- Infrastructure
- Conditions of the nature paths
- Educational offers
- Environment
- Securing sustainability
- Additional services

Matrix

Use our matrix to easily check the accessibility of your various offers for unguided nature experience. This self-check is based on the service chain and is intended to support you in the implementation of barrier-free offers.

The criteria of the matrix are based on various national and European recommendations and can be used by nature conservation institutions to assess the adaptation of existing offers.

To download the matrix use this link:

www.nature-without-barriers.eu/en/self-determined-nature-experience.html.

What next?

Start with the implementation of simple tasks. In any case, they are worthwhile investments in the future. We wish you a good time planning and trying new offers out!

Note: The full prezi presentation (not barrier free) can be found [here](#).

Imprint

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Further Information:

www.nature-without-barriers.eu

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