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**A SUPERPOWER
TO DEFEND
NATURE** 

MANUAL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS



**LET'S MAKE NATURE
EDUCATION MORE INCLUSIVE!**

A SUPERPOWER TO DEFEND NATURE

The project

This Manual for Outdoor Environmental Educators is part of the Erasmus+ project “A Superpower to Defend Nature”, aiming to promote a world where children with developmental disorders are given a chance to become nature leaders and influencers of climate justice. A world where children, families, professionals, and eco-warriors in all their diversity are brought together through nature-bonding experiences.

The partners

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MANUAL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS

Introduction

Outdoor environmental educators are often faced with the challenge of carrying out programs for children with disabilities without having any specific training or skills in this area. Sometimes there are only a few children with disabilities in a group and other times there may be a whole group of children with disabilities. The children may or may not be accompanied by teaching staff who can support the full participation of the children with special education needs.

The purpose of the manual is to provide outdoor environmental educators with guidance on how to adapt their outdoor environmental programs and activities to include schoolchildren with cognitive disabilities and neurodiversity. The methodology includes tips from special education professionals, as well as best practices to be implemented in outdoor education settings. The aim is to multiply the outdoor environmental services provided to children with special education needs by ensuring inclusive programs, access to environmental information, and an enjoyable experience for all.



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MEET SOME STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS!

Hi, I'm Asla, I love animals and drawing. Because I have an intellectual disability, I sometimes get confused if people speak too fast or say a lot.



Hi, I'm Sam, I love playing group games. I don't like sitting for too long and my friends say I talk a lot. This is because I have ADHD, and not because I'm not paying attention.



Hi, I'm Daniel, I am autistic. I know all the names of the wild birds in Europe and their characteristics. Loud noises irritate me, so I like quiet areas and working alone.



Hi, I'm Nadia, I have Down's Syndrome so I may get tired easily. I don't like sports, but I love group activities. I'm a great dancer and actor and can mimic birds and other animals.



Please note in a piece of paper
your thoughts on the following questions:

Have you worked with
children with disabilities?
How was your
experience?



What did you do to
include us and
support us to
participate?



What could you do to support us?
What would you need?



You can do it!
Don't be afraid!

SUGGESTIONS FROM SPECIAL EDUCATORS TO OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT EDUCATORS



Some things to do before the visit

- **Send information to the contact person beforehand** so they know about the program and what to expect e.g., your website, a video about what the group will do, a social story, a map of the area.
- **Find out about the needs of the group** before their visit. Ask the teacher:
 - about the group (e.g., things you should be aware of, what are the best activities to do, what to avoid, what may trigger some individuals)
 - about their attention span, for how long they can concentrate.
 - about the cognitive level of the students. For some teenagers, it may be easier to use materials aimed at younger students (as long as it is not too childish)
 - about their sensory needs (what sounds/textures/smells/tastes may trigger reactions)
 - to make sure that children who use objects to self-regulate, bring the object with them (e.g., headphones, squeezable stress balls, cards with breathing exercise prompts, their favourite games/snacks/chewable toys/songs or other sensory objects)
- **In case of a mixed group visit, ask the teacher** or any personal assistants will be accompanying the students on the day of the visit.
- **Prepare your indoor spaces** by removing unnecessary and dangerous objects. Some students may become easily distracted by posters/photos on walls. Adjust the room's lighting according to needs (e.g., more lighting may be needed in the case of visual impairment or less lighting in the case of autism).
- **Ensure areas are accessible** for people using wheelchairs or other assistive means.
- **Check paths** and potential dangers/risks.
- **On the day, present some information** (video, social story, a map of the area) to the group before beginning the visit or activities. Present the program schedule. Be careful not to give too much information, as some children may get stuck on doing a particular activity.

PRESENTING VERBAL INFORMATION

It will be easier for children to understand if you:

- Speak at a slow pace without sounding unnatural or monotonous.
- Present information in smaller chunks.
- Pause to allow time for processing the information.
- Allow more time for responding to questions or when brainstorming.
- Repeat and review important information more often than you would with typical students.
- Avoid using jargon, difficult terminology, or technical terms/language but if you need to, show me or use an example from everyday life.
- Use natural elements that attract the children's attention, e.g. dried leaves, nuts, seeds or 3d puppet-mascot. (Image 1)
- When explaining difficult or complex things or things that children may have never experienced before, consider having an accompanying infographic sheet or a miniature model to show. (Image 2)
- Sing or use catchphrases that are easy to remember (these must be age appropriate). (Examples below).
- Use natural elements that attract the children's attention, e.g. dried leaves, nuts, seeds or 3d puppet-mascot.

Example 1.

**Hands across the
world unite,
to keep our planet
shining bright.
From forest green
to ocean blue,
together, there 's so much
we can do.**

Example 2.

**Pick up trash,
plant a tree,
keep the earth
as clean as can be.
The rivers, oceans,
mountains tall,
we must protect them,
one and all.**

Example 3.

**The earth is green,
the sky is blue,
let's keep them clean,
it's up to you.
The trees, the flowers,
the air we breathe,
protect them all,
let's not leave.**



Image 1



Image 2

PRESENTING INSTRUCTIONS

It will be easier for children to understand if you:

- Present the steps in chronological order.
- Explain instructions more than once, if needed.
- Use visual supports, like pictures, photos, or print the instructions.
- Present instructions referring to time, visually. It may be difficult for someone to understand "...for 10 minutes" so you could use an hourglass or timer. A visual timeline could be used to present the sequence of activities.



PRESENTING VISUAL INFORMATION [WORKSHEETS, ACTIVITIES ETC.]

**YOU CAN CREATE NEW WORKSHEETS AND WRITTEN ACTIVITIES OR EASILY
ADJUST THE ONES YOU ALREADY HAVE BY [CHECK ANNEX 1, 2, & 3]:**

Presenting information in an easy-to-read format:

- Less information on each page (use A3 size paper).
- Break text down into simpler, shorter sentences.
- Avoid complex words or provide explanations if they are necessary.
- Support each idea or sentence with a clear image (drawing, symbol or photograph).
- Start each new sentence on a new line.
- Use clear fonts (e.g. Arial, Calibri) and a font size of at least 14.
- Align the text to the left of the page.
- Make the titles and headings bold.
- Avoid pronouns (e.g. it, she, he, they etc.). It is clearer if you repeat the word.

Another methodology to consider using is Universal Design for Learning and Makaton. The students' learning support educator or assistant can help you with suggestions related to the specific needs of the students.



ORGANISING AND SUPPORTING GROUP ACTIVITIES

It will be easier for children to follow and understand, if you:

- Ask for more teachers to be present or some more of your colleagues to help.
- Give the option to choose from 2-3 activities (use words, pictures or objects).
- Plan for fewer activities than what you would usually do with neurotypical children (1/3 to 1/2 less).
- Consider forming smaller groups. For example, if all the children have a disability, a group of 12 is a good size.
- Offer the option of working alone.
- Use different learning channels and provide a multisensory experience (e.g., when talking about a specific kind of bird – look at the colours, touch the feathers, hear its voice on the Internet, make the bird sound, mimic its movement).
- Prepare a mix of activities
 - both energizing/physical activities and calmer activities.
 - cognitive/thinking activities and practical activities.
- Make activities fun so that students will maintain their enthusiasm and want to return to your outdoor program.
- Focus on the process rather than on the outcome of the activity.



ENSURING INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION OF ALL

- **Be flexible.** Be willing to throw away your original plan and expectations, or go at a slower pace. The goal is to encourage curiosity and connection with nature, and allow time for children to spend time outside doing what interests them most.
- Encourage the children to be **self-directed explorers** from the start. Let the child lead the way.
- Try using **role-playing** (e.g., let's pretend we are explorers, let's pretend we are lost in a jungle).
- For activities in smaller groups, share the roles so that a child who has more severe difficulties can be supported. Try **modifying with simpler tasks and easier roles**.
- Use **coloured badges/neck lanyards** to promote group unity and to differentiate the groups.
- Encourage participation by **motivating with a reward** at the end of an activity (e.g., whoever collects the most feathers/rubbish will win something or have the opportunity to do something, may commence the next activity, may announce the results of the team etc.).
- Motivation and encouragement of participation may be easier if done by their **familiar teachers**. Ask for it.
- When you ask an open-ended question, allow **more time for children to answer**. Make sure that different children have the opportunity to answer.
- Learn and **use their names** for a more personal and friendly approach (stickers or name tags could be helpful).
- **When communicating with a hearing-impaired child**, make sure he/she is sitting or standing in the front row, opposite you. Speak slowly and clearly, with your face turned towards him/her, without covering your mouth to allow lip-reading. Talk to them close to the ear with the highest hearing rate. This will ensure equal access to information and opportunity to participate.
- And then again, when you have a **visually impaired child** among your team, make reasonable adjustments. Keep in mind that good lighting, the use of magnifying glasses, the provision of documents in enlarged print or Braille, the provision of lots of objects (such as leaves, rocks, a relief model of the park, three-dimensional animal illustrations, etc.) for palpation and tactile exploration can greatly facilitate his learning. To ensure his participation, ask him questions where knowledge comes from his other sensory channels, i.e. touch, hearing, taste, smell. Channels that these individuals rely on and are highly developed.



CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS & POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Some students with **tactile sensory sensitivities** may not like to be touched, to hold hands, to sit on the ground, or to touch things like soil, leaves, and water. So, allow them not to do it and think of alternatives to have ready to use, like:
 - instead of holding hands, the children can hold a rope.
 - instead of sitting on the ground, the children can sit on a pillow or a stool.
 - have garden tools available when doing activities with soil etc.
- Some students with **auditory sensitivities** may become agitated:
 - by natural sounds (e.g., natural sounds from birds, ducks, or rustling trees). In this case, propose them to use their noise-cancelling earplugs or headphones.
 - by man-made sounds (e.g., whistles, drums, bells that may be used by facilitators to draw attention or create a quiet environment). Hence, avoid using them or keep the volume low. Keep on observing their reactions and customize your schedule.
- Some other students may have **obsessions with certain textures** (e.g., touching soil). Some others may obsess with a particular activity or area and not want to stop doing an activity or move on. Allow time for the transition to the next area or activity with the help of the teacher. If possible or appropriate, allow the child to take the object with them. Don't forget to use your visual prompts to encourage the child to move on. Another behavior may be towards people. For example, a child might try to pull hair when close to people with long hair. You could have your hair tied back to avoid any triggers.
- Some students may have **obsessions with routines**. One example is that they may want to follow the same path when returning from a particular place. If there is a



support teacher available, allow them to accompany the child, so as not to disrupt the rest of the group. Otherwise, use some visual supports, such as a map or a photo of where you are going, to reassure the child of the destination.

- **Fear of germs and routines with cleanliness** is something that may be present in any child, however some children with disabilities, especially ones on the autism spectrum, may have more intense reactions. Be prepared by having hand sanitizers, wet wipes, or something else to clean surfaces.
- A student **may stop participating for various reasons** like fatigue, attention-seeking, or not understanding the task. Stop and assess the situation. If the reason is tiredness, rest for a few minutes. Consider your overall plan - what are we doing, what will we do next. Involve the rest of the group (if necessary, the group approaches and encourages the person to continue).
- Some students **may become overwhelmed**. Calm them down, do not argue with them, be patient. To reduce the tension and make them relax, you can try:
 - short calming breathing exercises (deep inhalation for 5 seconds, slow exhalation for 5 seconds, wait for 5 seconds, repeat 3 times).
 - **yoga exercises** (see **video**).
 - the **Bee Breathing Technique** (see **video**).
 - the **5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique** (see **video**).
 - going to a calmer place. Let them stay there, till they feel better.
 - encouraging them to listen to their calming music playlist.
 - Keep in mind that especially for children on the autism spectrum, **no two children are alike**. What works for one child may not work for another.
- **Don't be afraid to make a mistake**. The children's teacher knows how to deal with challenging behaviours and is always there to help.
- If a child displays **self-injurious behaviour or violence** towards other students or personnel, you must ask for the educator or assistant to intervene and help. Until they come, gently but firmly stop the child, always in a way to protect your own and the children's safety, **just as you would do** for any other child.
- **Safety** is an important component and children must feel safe to participate and for learning to take place.

YOUR ACTION TO MY REACTION

In case of a tantrum, a behaviour crisis, an epileptic seizure, choking, or self-injurious behaviour:

- the most appropriate and safe action is to stay calm.
- protect yourself and the other students.
- remove any immediate danger and call the teacher accompanying the child. These may never happen during a school visit, but if they do, don't worry, the teacher will know what to do.

OTHER DIFFICULTIES TO KEEP IN MIND

Some children with disability may have:

- Poor judgement in relation to hazards, e.g. reduced ability to recognize an animal that might bite, falling off a path or into a pond, injury from branches, possibility of tripping over tree roots, disorientation, etc.
 - Therefore, to ensure the safe conduct of the program, make sure that there are signs indicating dangerous situations, boundary markings with ropes, guardrails or fences, and increased supervision and vigilance by the animators.
- Increased mobility difficulty, due to poor coordination of their movements, brain damage, obesity, tremor, reduced vision, etc.
 - So, when you observe similar phenomena, make sure that the distances you need to cover are short, the terrain is smooth, without obstacles and the slopes are gentle. If they need it, provide them with assistive walking sticks if there are some available.
- Also, when you have a child with visual impairment in your group, make sure there is a personal escort available for him to ensure safe movement. If needed to guide him, you can hold him or let him hold you in the hand just above the elbow. Walk at his pace, describing the features of the area and what he needs to do next (e.g. walk through trees). You can also prompt him to give himself tactile feedback to determine the boundaries of the space. Last, where safe, encourage him to use his own white cane to foster a sense of autonomy.
- If you offer food, you might notice that some children become overly fixated on it. This fixation could make it difficult for them to focus on the activity you've planned. They might persistently ask for the food, try to trick you into giving it to them, or even search for it in the trash.

Other children may have unusual eating behaviors, such as consuming non-edible substances (e.g., dry leaves, soil) or displaying patterns like overeating, extreme pickiness, refusal to eat entirely, or being particular about food presentation – such as not wanting foods on their plate to touch – or being sensitive to certain smells. It's crucial to consult their educators beforehand to determine which foods are safe for the children to eat. Be mindful of allergies and specific dietary needs, such as avoiding unsuitable foods for those with diabetes. For children with organic difficulties, offer soft foods and straws if necessary, allow extra time for eating, and ensure they take small bites and chew thoroughly to prevent choking. Lastly, learn basic first aid to be prepared for emergencies.

DEALING WITH MIXED GROUPS

What do you do if there is only one or a few children in the team with extra requirements?

- It's okay to slow down for everyone.
- Prepare your information/activities for the majority of the group. Allow time for the child/children to process information. You could give the rest of the group something else to do.
- Develop buddy systems that allow people without disability to assist people with disability.
- If they feel tired/anxious, they can stay back with an escort, and the rest of the group continues and they can meet up later.
- Allow them to keep a distance from the group if they feel like it.
- The child's teacher can assist participation by following the pace that suits the child.



REFLECTING ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Please note in a piece of paper your thoughts on the following questions:

Do you now feel more **comfortable** to work with groups like us?

What can you do in practice to include us and support our participation?

What other resources do you need to make the learning experience positive and fun for all?



DEFINITION OF TERMS

Access Arrangements	Provisions or reasonable adjustments to allow eligible students to gain access to assessments and demonstrate their achievements without having an unfair advantage over their peers without special education needs.
Assistive means	This includes any means required by a person with disabilities specifically because of their impairment such as palliative/therapeutic devices, prosthetic (or any other) apparatus including trained animals. Examples include wheelchairs and other mobility aids, prosthetic limbs, the use of ICT and augmentative and alternative communication and guide, and service dogs.
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	ADHD is a condition that affects people's behaviour. People with ADHD can seem restless, may have trouble concentrating, and may act on impulse.
Autism Spectrum Disorder	Autism is a complex condition that affects the way that a person processes information, their emotions, sensory input, and how they relate to others. It is referred to as a spectrum because of the many varied ways it manifests itself. Persons on the autism spectrum may or may not have intellectual impairments. They usually have communication difficulties, which may be subtle or more obvious. They may have very specific abilities.
Cognitive Disability	Cognitive Disabilities is a term that refers to a broad range of conditions that include intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, severe, persistent mental illness, brain injury, stroke and Alzheimer's disease, and other dementias.
Developmental disability	Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behaviour areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime.
Disability	Disability refers to the barriers in society which prohibit one's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others where a person has a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment.
Diversity	Refers to differences or dimensions that can be used to differential groups and individual persons from one another, including body appearance, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, social class, level of education, religion, work experiences, lifestyles, and cultures, and being sensitive to emerging diversities and needs.

Easy to Read	A method for presenting written text in an accessible, easy-to-understand format. It is often useful for people with learning disabilities and may also be beneficial for people with other conditions affecting how they process information.
Epilepsy	A chronic noncommunicable brain disorder that causes recurring, unprovoked seizures.
Impairment	Impairment refers to a long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory condition that restricts functionality.
Intellectual disability	Intellectual disability is a type of disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, which covers everyday social and practical skills. This type of disability originates before the age of 22. Individuals with intellectual impairments have difficulties with learning, understanding and overall cognitive functioning. The level of difficulty experienced is usually correlated with the severity of the intellectual impairment and the presence of additional impairments. The level of a person's functioning is also highly dependent on the amount of support received that enables them to develop skills in a structured environment that attends to their personal support needs.
Inclusive education	Refers to the valuing and acceptance of diversity, to its value and the rights of learners to not only attend mainstream schools but also to belong as valued members through active participation and the elimination of the barriers limiting the participation and achievement of all learners, respect diverse needs, abilities and characteristics.
Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environment	Refers to a learning environment that provides the optimal conditions for effective learning and teaching to take place. Such an environment welcomes, nurtures and educates all learners regardless of their gender, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other characteristics.
Individualised Education Plans	Refers to the planning for individual learning needs and the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating a curriculum program as well as the holistic development of the learner.
Learning Support Educator or Assistant	The role of the Learning Support Educator is to assist students with individual educational needs in the classroom and provide additional support to enhance their learning experience.
Learning Disability	A learning disability refers to weaknesses in certain academic skills, these are normally related to reading, writing, and mathematics.

Neurodiversity	Neurodiversity is a word used to explain the unique ways people’s brains work. While everyone’s brain develops similarly, no two brains function alike. Being neuro-divergent means having a brain that works differently from the average or neuro-typical person.
Obsession	A person may get fixated on certain objects/plants/colors of surfaces and may refuse to move on or change activity.
Reasonable accommodation	The legal definition is “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustment not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case to ensure to persons with disabilities can enjoy or exercise, on an equal basis with others, in all human rights and fundamental freedoms. In the context of education, this may be changing the location of a class, adaptations to the curriculum, providing documents with an enlarged print, providing handouts in Braille, providing assistive devices and accommodations for assessments.
Self-regulation	How someone with sensory sensitivities or in an overwhelmed state calms him or herself down using either breathing exercises, a copying mechanism they have learnt or assistive gadgets (noise cancelling headphones, stress balls, etc.).
Sensory sensitivities	Extreme sensitivity to specific sounds, to textures, to lights, to human touch, and to a varied array of external factors. A person may withdraw from an activity or become agitated.
Social story	A short story with pictures/drawings and small sentences describing what will take place. This helps reduce anxiety in students who have difficulty with going to new places and doing new activities.
Tantrum	An episode of acute yelling/crying/hitting due to anger/fear/inability to express themselves.
Trigger	An event that could cause a person to have a tantrum.
Universal design for learning	Refers to a concept that rather than adapting or changing learners to best fit curriculum (curriculum as defined by goals, materials, methods, and assessments), UDL focuses on how to build flexible learning environments that prioritise access for all, from the point of design, rather than as an afterthought, through multiple means of engagement, representation of content knowledge and action and expression. It is a framework that guides the design of instructional goals, methods, and materials that can be customized and adjusted to meet individual needs. It ensures that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.

DISABILITY CORRECT LANGUAGE

Acceptable Language	Unacceptable Language
Disabled person / person with disability	The handicapped, The disabled, Person with special needs, Crippled.
Wheelchair user	Wheelchair-bound, Confined to a wheelchair, Wheelchair case.
Non-disabled	Able-bodied.
Person with a learning disability	Mentally handicapped, Mentally defective.
Seizures	Fits, Attacks, Spells.
Diagnosis	Illness, Suffers from Handicapped, Invalid.
Persons with autism / Person on the autism spectrum	People living with autism, An autistic ¹
Learning disability / Person with a learning or cognitive disability	Retarded, Slow, Brain-damaged, Special ed, Dim-witted.
Person with a speech/Communication disability	Dumb, One who talks bad
Cognitively/Developmentally disabled, Person with a cognitive/Developmental disability	Retards, Mentally retarded, Special ed ²

¹ <https://calvertexmoor.org.uk/news/disability-terminology/>

² https://www.aucd.org/docs/add/sa_summits/Language%20Doc.pdf

REFERENCES

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL THE INFORMATION BELOW IS CLICKABLE



- [Defining Criteria for Intellectual Disability](#)
- [Neurodivergent](#)
- [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder](#)
- [What's the difference between learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities?](#)
- [What is reasonable accommodation in education](#)
- [Access arrangements](#)
- [A policy on inclusive education in schools](#)
- [Eurydice-Malta-Special education needs provision within mainstream education](#)
- [Dissability & Employment in Malta. Employers Guidelines](#)
- [Easy-to-Read](#)
- [Makaton](#)
- [Tips on exploring the outdoors](#)
- [Getting outdoors Tips and Resources for Individuals with disabilities and parents](#)
- [VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES](#)
- [Yoga for Kids!](#)
- [How to do Bhramari Pranayama \(Bee Breathing Technique\) | Ventuno Yoga and You](#)
- [Grounding exercise to manage anxiety](#)
- [Summer Sensory Survival Kit \(ck.page\)](#)
- [About Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(IDDs\) | NICHD - Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development \(nih.gov\) from the US Department of Health and Human Services](#)





ANNEXES



ANNEX 1

QUICK TIPS

Quick Tips – Adapting a typical activity to meet the needs of all students

The following suggestions are for children with learning disabilities who may face challenges understanding, completing and participating in activities you usually use with typical children.

<p>Target age: 6 – 18-year-olds</p>	<p>Consider the group’s cognitive capabilities. If you know a group of teenagers has learning disabilities, then an activity you typically use with younger neurotypical children may be used.</p>
<p>Group size: Usually classes have 25 – 30 children</p>	<p>An ideal group size is 10 – 12 students.</p>
<p>Duration: e.g. 1 hour</p>	<p>You may need twice the amount of time for an activity. e.g. a 1-hour activity may take 2 hours with a break in the middle. OR 30 minutes of theory and the rest of the time activities or practical work.</p>
<p>Topic:</p>	<p>All topics are suitable with some modifications for more complex topics.</p>
<p>Activity name: e.g. Illegal hunting? Let’s re-think it</p>	<p>Short title and to the point e.g. Legal and illegal hunting.</p>
<p>Introduction of the topic: Usually verbal</p>	<p>A verbal explanation is appropriate, but consider enhancing understanding with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A video. • Visual aids like pictures, maps, objects. • Being at the actual environment where the activity will take place.
<p>Discussion and Brainstorming: e.g. discuss with the children the differences of legal and illegal hunting and ask if they know what the difference between illegal and legal hunting is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a whiteboard or flipchart. Divide it into 2 sections with the headings e.g. legal / illegal hunting, written with clear, big letters. As the children express their ideas, write each idea under each respective heading. • Create a mind map on a whiteboard or flipchart. Write the student’s ideas as they say them. Then use a different coloured marker for each (legal / illegal) to circle the words and join the related ideas with a line. • For non-verbal children consider creating a collage with pictures/photo you have pre-cut.

Smaller group activities	3 students with disability + 1 educator per one or two groups to explain /encourage/ coordinate them. Make sure there is at least one student per group who can read.
Activity sheets: Usually written	Create new activity sheets, using the easy to read method. Use posters or pictures that have a larger size e.g. A4 size or larger for each.
Drawing activities:	Adapt activity to one that involves gluing pictures or making a collage of pictures.
Written activities:	Adapt activity to one that has choosing the correct picture or photo and sticking it on paper.



ANNEX 2

CREATE EASY-TO-READ RESOURCES

A. HOW TO ADAPT AN EXPLANATORY TEXT

YOU USUALLY PROVIDE STUDENT WITH THE FOLLOWING TEXT ABOUT LIMESTICKS AS PART OF A PROGRAM ABOUT ILLEGAL HUNTING.

Limesticks

Description: A piece of wood with glue that the birds confuse with a twig, so when they sit, they stick on it. When they try to fly away, their wings stick to the wood. So, they have to remain there until someone releases them. Often they die of fatigue, hunger, or thirst in their efforts to escape, as days may pass until someone collects them. They usually end up in a cage to sell in stores and “decorate” people’s homes.

Threatened species: Green finches, goldfinches, serins, blackbirds, and all the common bird species we see every day on our balconies and parks. In addition to the passerines, there are often collateral losses as larger species of birds such as sparrow hawks, buzzards, kestrels approaching to grab the smaller trapped ones and are also trapped. They often manage to escape but with wing injuries (they fly off with pieces of wood glued to their wings).

FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO ADAPT THE ABOVE WRITTEN TEXT TO EASY TO READ & UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE

ILLEGAL HUNTING LIMESTICKS



A limestick is a piece of wood with glue.

The birds confuse the limestick with a twig.

The bird sits on the limestick and gets stuck.



The bird tries to fly away, but its wings stick on the wood.

The bird stays there until someone unsticks it.

Days may pass until someone collects the bird.

The bird keeps on trying to escape.

The birds often die because they feel very tired, hungry and thirsty.

If the birds do not die, they end up in a cage.

These illegal hunters sell the birds in stores.

Customers buy them for decorating their homes and listening to them singing.



Threatened species



Greenfinches



Goldfinch



Serins



Blackbirds

and all the common bird species we see every day on our balconies and parks.

In addition to these little birds, there are often more losses.

Larger species of birds, such as



Sparrowhawks



Honey Buzzards



Kestrels

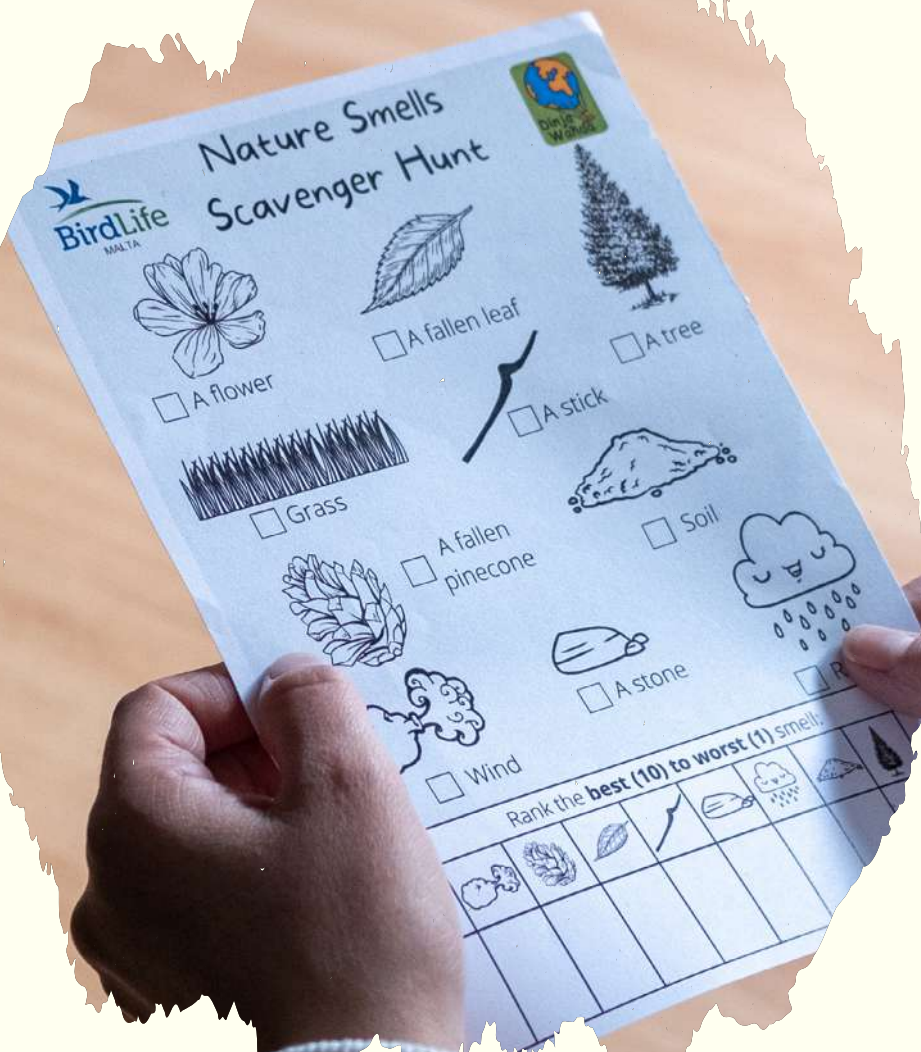
approach the smaller birds which are trapped.

They want to grab them.

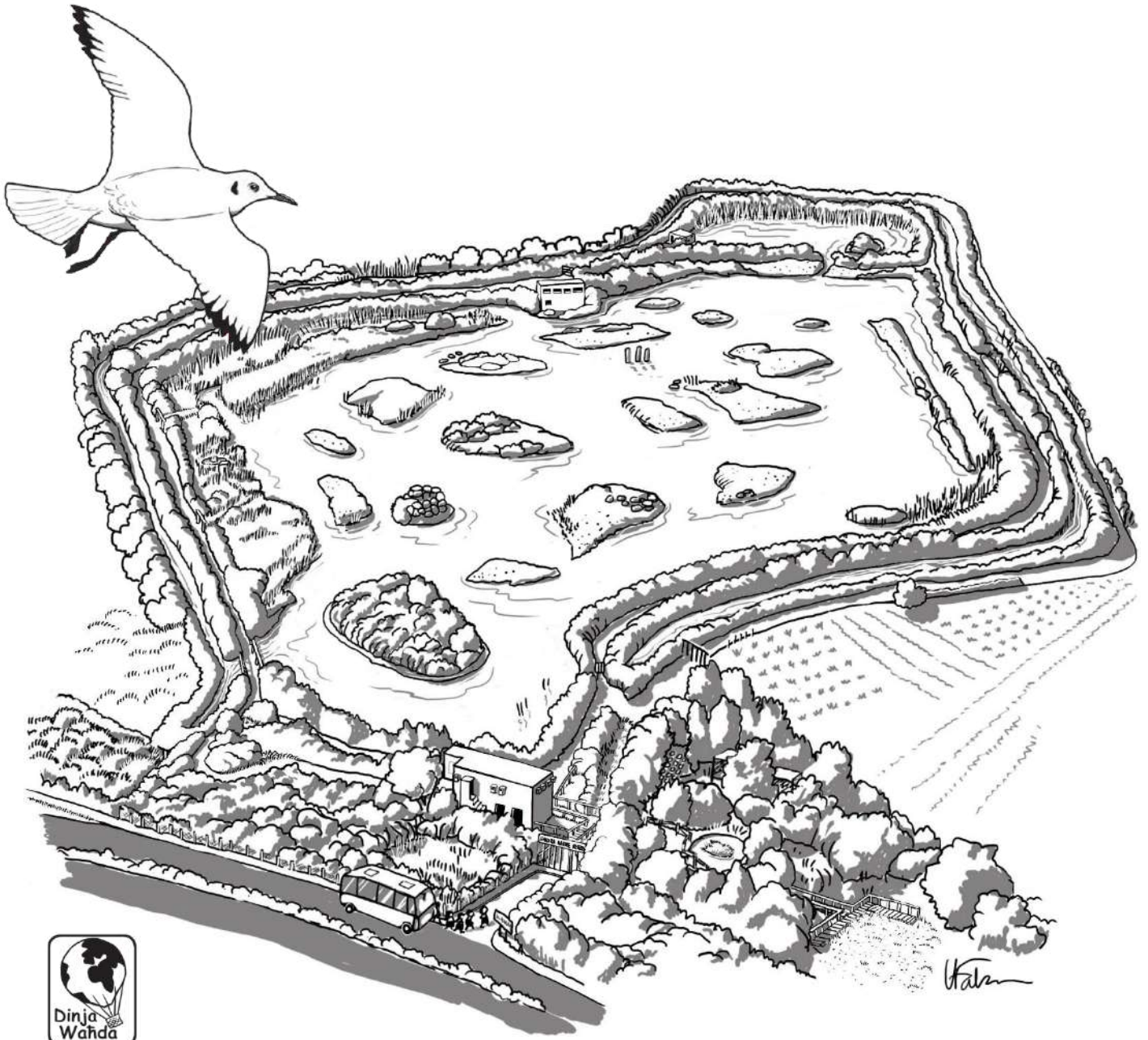
But, then they are also trapped.

Sometimes they manage to escape but they fly off with pieces of wood glued to their wings.

B. HOW TO ADAPT A WORKSHEET



A visit to Ghadira Nature Reserve



My name is _____

ORIGINAL

1) Read the sign over the gate and fill in the missing word:

_____ Nature Reserve

2) Look out of the window. Draw a circle around the things you see:

Water

Ice

Road

Flowers

Lake

Grass

Cars

Sea

Trees

Sand

Rocks

Ships

3) Look around you in the room
and find this picture →



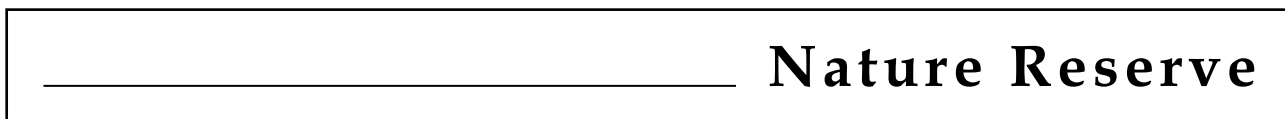
Write the
missing word



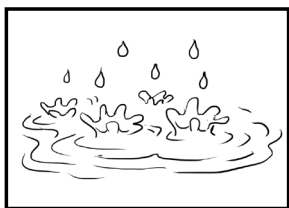
Malta

This is the name of the organisation that looks after Ghadira

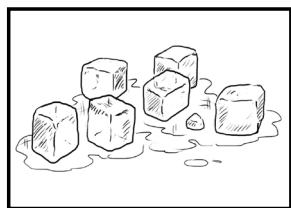
1) Read the sign over the gate and fill in the missing word:



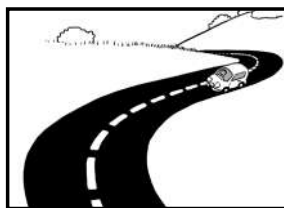
2) Circle photos of the things you can see out of the window.



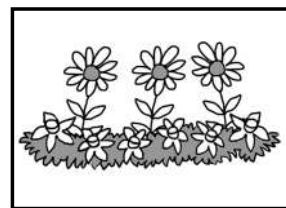
Water



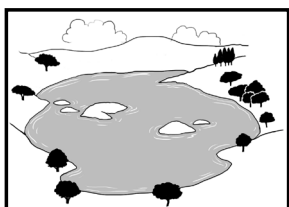
Ice



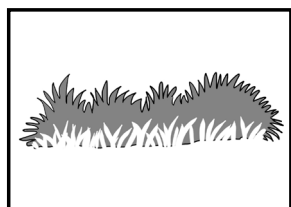
Road



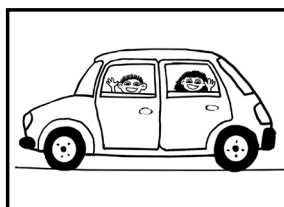
Flowers



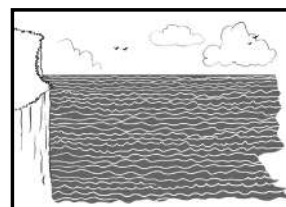
Lake



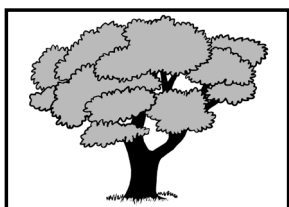
Grass



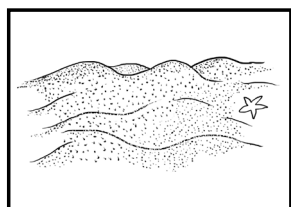
Car



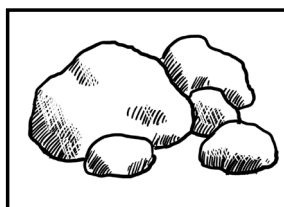
Sea



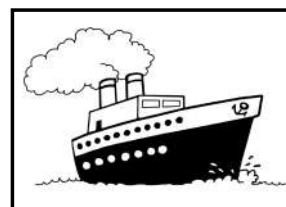
Tree



Sand



Rocks



Ship

3) Look around you in the room and find this picture →



Write the missing word



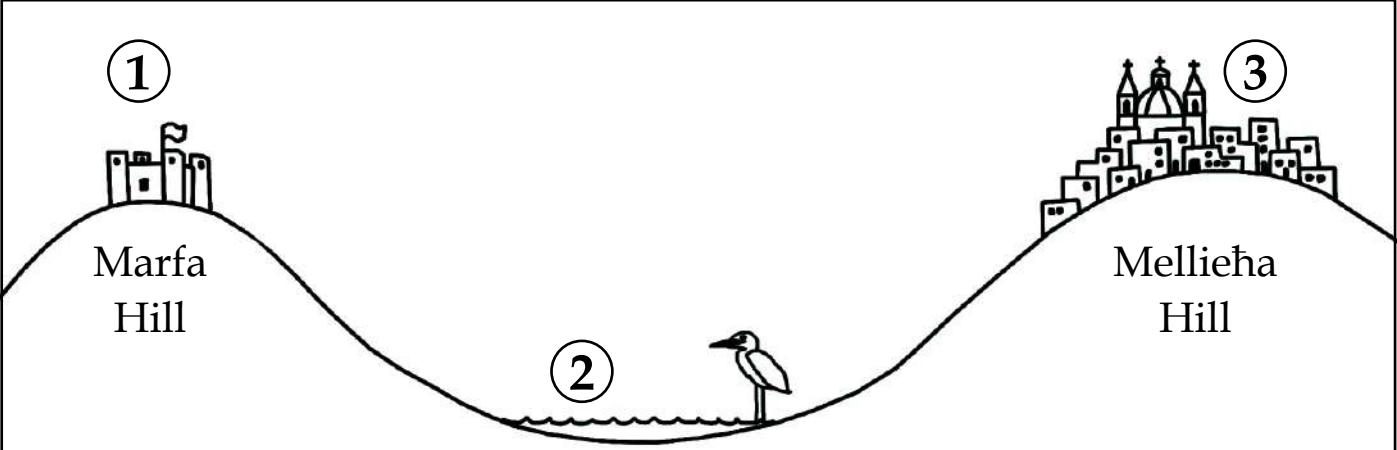
Malta

r d i b i l e f

This is the name of the organisation that looks after Ghadira

ORIGINAL

4) This picture shows us where Ghadira is. Put the right number in the circles:



Marfa Hill

Mellieħa Hill

Mellieħa is at number

The **Red Tower** is at number

Ghadira is at number

5) Mark good behaviour with this symbol ✓ and bad behaviour with this symbol ✗

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I walk on the path | <input type="checkbox"/> I touch the trees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I make a lot of noise | <input type="checkbox"/> I catch the animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I speak softly | <input type="checkbox"/> I take pictures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I walk without running | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I litter the floor | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I pick flowers and leaves | |



4) This picture shows us where Ghadira is. Put the right number in the circles:

①
The Red Tower

②

③
Mellieħa

Mellieħa is at number

The Red Tower is at number

Ghadira is at number

5) Mark how to behave in nature with this symbol ✓ and what behaviour to avoid in nature with this symbol ✗



I walk on the path



I make a lot of noise



I speak softly



I walk without running



I throw down the garbage



I pick flowers and leaves

ORIGINAL

6) Here are some plants that grow at Ghadira.

Look at the small signs and match the names:

		Does this plant have leaves?	
		Yes	No
Aleppo	samphire	Yes	No
tama	pine	Yes	No
Golden	risk	Yes	No
ol	aar	Yes	No
ar	ive	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No



6) Here are some plants that grow at Ghadira. Look at the small signs and match the names. Does the plant have leaves? **YES** or **NO** (underline the right answer under each picture).

**Aleppo
Pine**



YES or NO

**Golden
Samphire**



YES or NO

Tamarisk



YES or NO

**Olive
Tree**







YES or NO

**Araar
tree**












YES or NO

7) What **season** are we in?





			
Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter

8) Did you see any **flowers** during your visit? What **colours** were they?










 White	 Pink	 Red	 Blue
 Brown	 Yellow	 Orange	
 Violet	 Green		



7) What **season** are we in?

			
Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter

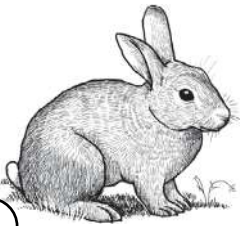
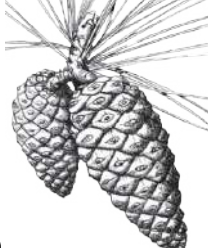
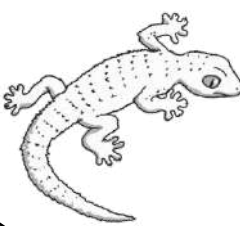
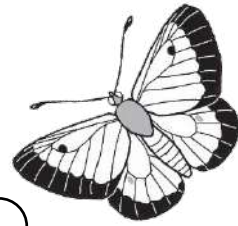





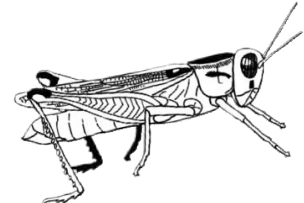
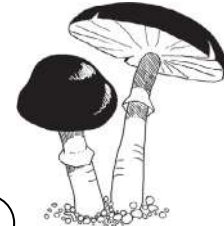


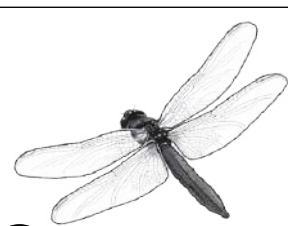

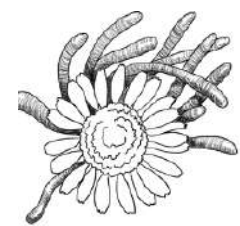
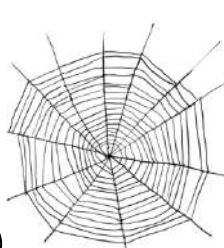
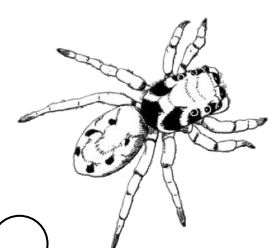
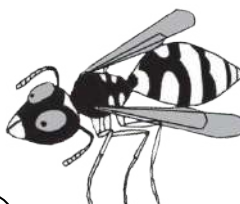
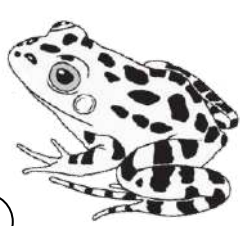
8) Did you see any **flowers** during your visit? What **colours** were they?

 White	 Pink	 Red	 Blue
 Brown	 Yellow	 Orange	
	 Violet	 Green	



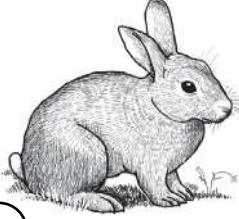
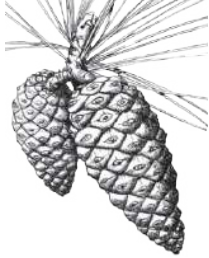
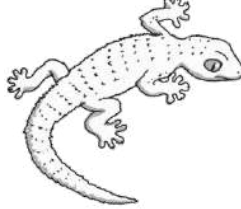




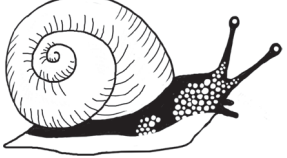

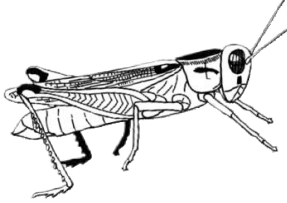


ORIGINAL

9) First, specify if the elements below are part of the flora (plants) or fauna (animals) and then, tick ✓ the ones you saw

<input type="radio"/>  a wild rabbit	<input type="radio"/>  an Aleppo pine	<input type="radio"/>  a gecko	<input type="radio"/>  a butterfly
<input type="radio"/>  an ant	<input type="radio"/>  a bird swimming	<input type="radio"/>  a bee	<input type="radio"/>  a snail
<input type="radio"/>  a sparrow	<input type="radio"/>  a grasshopper	<input type="radio"/>  a mushroom	<input type="radio"/>  a chameleon
<input type="radio"/>  a beetle	<input type="radio"/>  a dragonfly	<input type="radio"/>  a bird flying	<input type="radio"/>  a Golden Samphire
<input type="radio"/>  a web	<input type="radio"/>  a spider	<input type="radio"/>  a wasp	<input type="radio"/>  a frog

9) Here are some of the flora (plants) and fauna (animals) of Ghadira.

Tick ✓ the ones you saw

 <input type="radio"/> a wild rabbit	 <input type="radio"/> an Aleppo pine	 <input type="radio"/> a gecko	 <input type="radio"/> a butterfly
 <input type="radio"/> an ant	 <input type="radio"/> a bird swimming	 <input type="radio"/> a bee	 <input type="radio"/> a snail
 <input type="radio"/> a sparrow	 <input type="radio"/> a grasshopper	 <input type="radio"/> a mushroom	 <input type="radio"/> a chameleon

NOTES FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

- The number and size of the pictures/letters depends on the child's visual acuity, ability to focus and concentrate, age, etc.
- It is also advisable not to include a picture of an animal/bird that frightens the child involved, as this could trigger reactions.

C. SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS IN MAKATON

Makaton is a unique language program that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organization of language and expression.

For more information please click here: 

Here is an example of how some instructions to protect nature are given in MAKATON



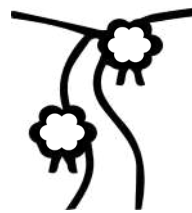
I take care of



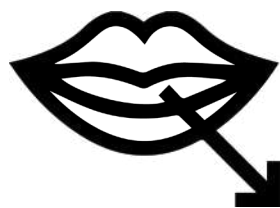
nature



I walk on



the path



I talk



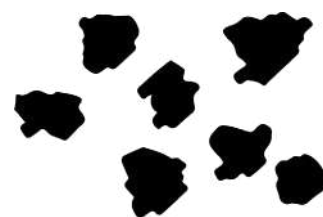
quietly



I don't



throw



garbage

ANNEX 3
HOW TO ADAPT AN ACTIVITY

Our Neighbours

Group size: 1-15 ppl *Duration :* 1 hour *Difficulty level:* 2

Background & Objectives

In this activity, children will focus their attention on a specific species of bird or animal they like.

Resources

Tools for drawing.

Instructions

- 1) Divide the class into two groups. Each group selects a bird (if you have been lucky enough to see birds in the yard, focus on those species. Otherwise, you can distribute pictures/cards of two birds from your area).
- 2) Each group describes, imitates, and has the other group guess the species selected.
- 3) After the groups have described and imitated the birds/animals, have a discussion with them about the differences between humans and the birds/animals they selected. What characteristics do they share? What makes them special? What makes us special? You can have this reflection collectively, but also individually.
- 4) If there is enough time, you can ask the children to make a drawing that emphasizes what each child feels that makes them special and different from the discussed bird/animal.
- 5) Make a nature corner in the classroom, where you can incorporate all the activities and images that you generate.

Our Neighbours

Group size: 1-10 ppl *Duration :* spread across several days

Difficulty level: 1

Background & Objectives

In this activity, children will focus their attention on a specific species of bird or animal they like.

Resources

Tools for drawing;
 Identification cards;
 A video of the birds;
 Cards with possible answers;
 Mobile phone/ipad for showing video.

Instructions

1) Divide the class into two groups. Each group selects a bird (if you have been lucky enough to see birds in the yard, focus on those species. Otherwise, you can distribute pictures/cards of two birds from your area). Make sure that if you distribute pictures/cards of two birds that they have really distinct characteristics so they can be easily distinguished/categorized. If some children have difficulties describing the birds, provide them with a short video (e.g. 30-40 seconds) showing the sounds/colours/movement of the species which they have to describe. To remember the bird vividly. Have this small clip on an ipad/tablet/mobile phone and, of course, show it somewhere where the children from the second group will not be able to listen or see.

2) Each group describes, imitates, and has the other group guess the species selected.

3) After the groups have described and imitated the birds/animals, have a discussion with them about the differences between humans and the birds/animals they selected. What characteristics do they share? What makes them special? What makes us special? You can have this reflection collectively, but also individually.

Facilitate the discussion and the answers using at least one concrete example of how humans and birds are different and what makes them different.

- Eg. Birds do not speak. Not like we do. But they make sounds. They sing (adult does the birds sound) and then, “Let me hear you sing like birds”. Show video of birds talking/singing.
- Birds have feathers. What do they do with them? (They can fly). Show a video of birds flying How do we go from place to place? (We walk). What do we use to walk? (We use our feet).
- Birds leave outside... etc.

If you do not show videos, have all the possible answers in picture cards and have them at hand/next to the students with difficulties when telling the differences. In the “What makes us special” section, the social educator could do the first example. Perhaps, provide two examples, one with appearance characteristics and another with personality characteristics. E.g. “I believe I am special because I have brown hair”, “I believe I am special because I am kind”.

4) If there is enough time, you can ask the children to make a drawing that emphasizes what each child feels that makes them special and different from the discussed bird/animal. In the drawing part of “What makes me special”, if the child with difficulties cannot draw, outline of a child and have the child fill it with colour (even if painting outside the lines). It would also be nice to have another drawing “What makes birds special” and have the child contribute to the drawing in anyway they can. For both drawing ideas, children read their drawings / or the social educator reads them aloud and then hangs all the drawings in the classroom.

5) Make a nature corner in the classroom, where you can incorporate all the activities and images that you generate. Have pictures and drawings. You can make bird face masks: find face pictures of the bird species discussed (or if not find on the internet an outline drawing of a bird face) and print them on A4 paper/as to fit a child’s face, punch holes in the picture at the place of the eyes and tie a ribbon at the back so it can be worn as a mask. Hang the masks at the bird corner and prompt children to use them for pretend play. E.g. Child imitating the sound of the bird, I am ...bird, I like to eat ..., I fly to..... Children with difficulties could just make the sound of the bird (while wearing the mask, or when someone else is wearing it).



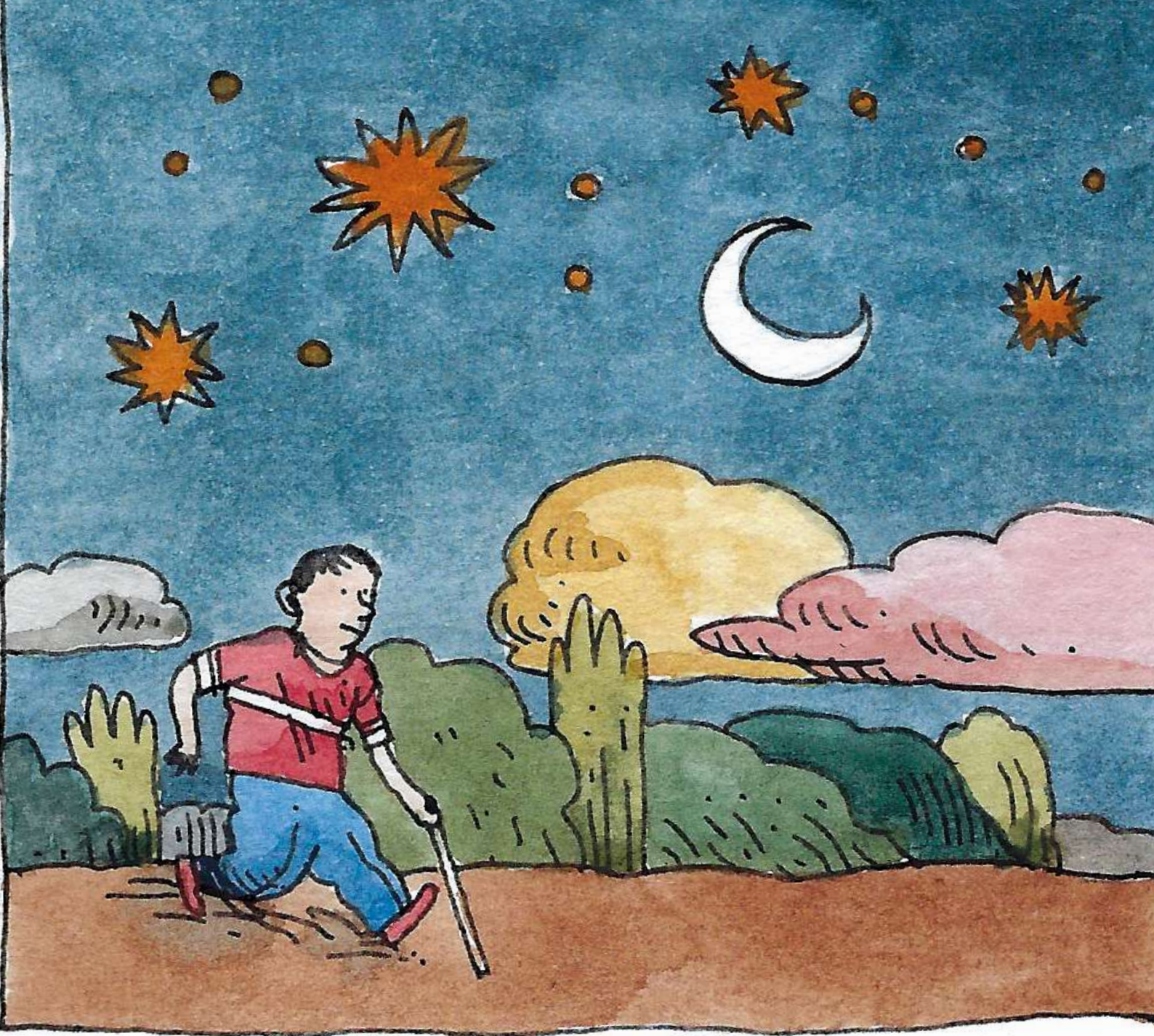
THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the time to explore this manual and for your dedication to fostering inclusive outdoor experiences. Your efforts to adapt programs for children with disabilities ensure that every child can connect with nature and benefit from the joy it brings. Nature belongs to all of us! By creating accessible and engaging environments, you are helping to cultivate a sense of belonging and appreciation for the natural world in every child, regardless of their abilities.

Thank you for your passion and commitment to making outdoor education a welcoming space for everyone!

For more information contact us by sending an email to: education@birdlifemalta.org
info@ornithologiki.gr
theotokos@theotokos.gr





Co-funded by
the European Union

**A SUPERPOWER
TO DEFEND
NATURE**



AIPD
PISA

