# Step out, Tune in!

**Name of the organisation**
KAPTÁRKŐ TERMÉSZETVÉDELMI ÉS KULTURÁLIS EGYESÜLET

**Website of the organisation**
https://www.kaptarko.hu/

**Location of the organisation**
Kallómalom utca 32. III/9., 3300 Eger, Hungary

**E-mail address of the organisation**
info@kaptarko.hu

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**Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work**
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Non-formal education/-learning
- Environment/climate
- Sustainable development

**Good practice category**
A practice of processes and methods

**Good practice aim & purpose**
This practice aims to empower students (14–19) from rural Hungarian towns to become active contributors and leaders in sustainability-related decision-making processes. It addresses the gap between high student interest in environmental protection and the strikingly low awareness of global sustainability initiatives among local youth.
The practice follows a structured, non-formal path, beginning with experiential learning field trips to protected and non-protected areas, where students observe local environmental threats as well as good practices firsthand. These findings are processed in workshops using non-formal tools to develop concrete solution proposals. To strengthen advocacy, students receive training in argumentation, structured dialogue, and critical thinking.
The process culminates in roundtable discussions, where students present their “youth perspective” proposals directly to decision-makers active in their chosen topic. This transforms participants into active stakeholders capable of influencing local environmental strategies. In parallel, students co-create a practical guide documenting the methodology and outcomes of the program, making the practice easily adaptable.
The project specifically addresses the problem of classroom confinement by proving that nature is best understood through direct experience. Ultimately, we aim to develop GreenComp competencies, fostering a lasting sense of responsibility to contribute to global climate action.

**Good practice description**
This project is a structured, non-formal educational programme that empowers high school students from rural Hungarian towns (Eger and Veszprém) to become active contributors to sustainability-related decision-making processes. It addresses the gap between strong environmental interest and

limited awareness of global (EU and UN) sustainability initiatives among youth.

The participants were involved through a combination of open calls and direct outreach in cooperation with local secondary schools. Although the programme was entirely organised and implemented outside the formal school system, formal cooperation agreements were established with partner schools. Schools were also attendts of the final event.

The methodology follows a clearly defined, step-by-step learning pathway based on experiential learning and problem-based learning. Following the information events, preparatory workshops follow, which provide foundational knowledge on environmental values and sustainability concepts, while also equipping students with practical skills for fieldwork.

The core phase consists of field visits to protected natural areas (to Bükk and Bakony regions) in cooperation with National Parks, where 20 students participate in expert-led, hands-on learning experiences. During these visits, students observe real environmental challenges while also identifying good practices. This place-based approach strengthens ecological awareness and connects theoretical knowledge with real-life contexts.

Following the field experiences, participants engage in a series of monthly follow-up workshops. Based on the field visits, the students are divided into five smaller working groups according to their individual interests. Each group focuses on a specific sustainability challenge identified during the fieldwork, including:
• illegal waste dumping in protected natural areas,
• recycling and reuse practices,
• responsible behaviour in nature,
• the relationship and tensions between forestry and nature conservation,
• and the role of environmental education within the Hungarian public education system.

These sessions focus on processing observations, developing critical thinking, and transforming insights into concrete solution proposals. Using non-formal methods, groups collaboratively formulate their questions and create a “proposal package” addressing local environmental challenges. Within their thematic groups, they deepen their understanding, critically analyse the issues, and develop targeted solutions.

A key component of the practice is the co-creation of a practical guide by the students. This guide documents the full methodology, learning process, and outcomes, making the programme easily adaptable and transferable. The document is also shared with local municipalities of the visited areas, as it reflects on local challenges. In addition, it is disseminated among relevant national park directorates and forestry stakeholders, supporting the integration of youth-generated insights into local environmental management and decision-making processes.

The process concludes with a roundtable discussion involving 70 participants, including students, environmental experts from universities, educators, and local decision-makers. Student groups present their topics, outline the problems, and propose solutions, while also raising their key questions. Presentations are followed by moderated discussions, where decision-makers (from Hungarian Association of Environmental Enterprises, Napraforgó Waldor School, National Society of Conservationists and Hungarian Hiking Federation) provide feedback and assess feasibility.

The practice combines experiential and problem-based learning with youth participation. It builds skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, and active citizenship, while promoting long-term commitment to sustainability.

**Good practice result & concrete effects**
The use of this best practice has resulted in a profound transformation of the participating high school students, shifting them from passive observers of environmental issues into active stakeholders and policy influencers.

**Concrete Effects on Participants**

1. **Shift in Identity and Agency:** Students no longer see themselves as mere recipients of information but as confident participants capable of initiating local environmental strategies and engaging in structured dialogue with decision-makers.

2. **Development of Critical Competencies:** Participants strengthened GreenComp competencies, including systemic thinking, problem-solving, argumentation, critical thinking, and public speaking, enabling them to represent youth perspectives effectively.

3. **Practical Knowledge and Awareness:** The project connected global sustainability goals with local realities, giving students concrete understanding of how issues like biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental degradation manifest in their communities.

4. **Long-term Commitment and Volunteerism:** Students maintained commitment beyond the project, volunteering in trail maintenance, community actions, and organizing environmental education events, fostering civic engagement and responsibility.

5. **Broader Impact and Inspiration:** By sharing experiences and knowledge, participants inspired peers, family, and local communities, promoting environmental awareness and active participation.

**Conclusion:** This practice fosters personal growth, practical skills, and sustained commitment, transforming students into proactive, informed, and responsible young citizens capable of contributing to sustainable communities.

**Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work**
Organisation and practice