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Promoting Transformative Competencies and Employability in Young People through Outdoor Learning

Insights gained from the European project
'From Outdoors to Labour Market'



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

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Challenges of the 21st century

- ▶ Climate crisis
- ▶ Imbalances of power, wealth, access to resources,...
- ▶ Conflicts, wicked problems
- ▶ Living with uncertainty
- ▶ ...



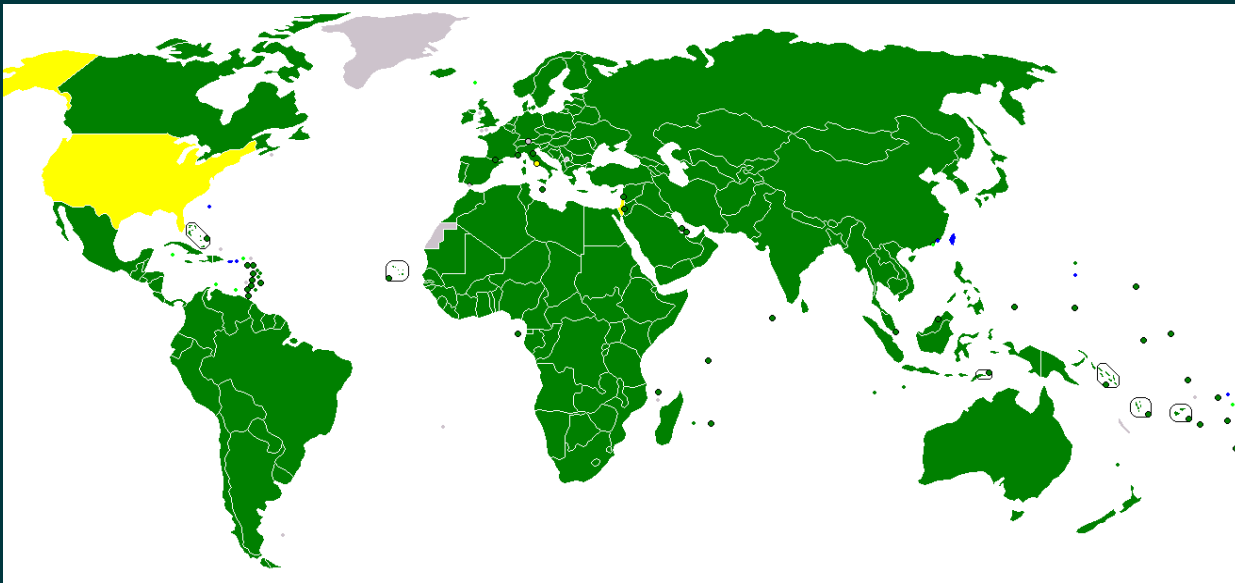
What competencies do we need?

- ▶ Transferable skills and competencies
 - Wide range of contexts (e.g. work, private life, citizenship)
 - All demographics
 - Across full adult life span



Transferable skills & competencies (TCs)

- ▶ OECD (2019): *Transformative* competencies
- ▶ UNESCO (2015): *Transversal* competencies



Green = UNESCO Member states



Green = OECD Member states

Transferable Competencies

- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Reflective and critical thinking
- ▶ Taking on responsibility
- ▶ Flexibility and creativity, problem-solving
- ▶ Etc.

“For a successful life and a well-functioning society”

(Rychen & Salganik, 2003)



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Learning objectives

“For a successful life and a well-functioning society”

(Rychen & Salganik, 2003)

Outcomes of Outdoor Education programmes

- ▶ Socio-emotional skills, pro-social behaviour
- ▶ Team work
- ▶ Problem solving
- ▶ Frustration tolerance
- ▶ Positive self-concept
- ▶ Self-efficacy, locus of control, agency
- ▶ Various leadership skills
- ▶ and others

(cf. Ewert & Siphthorp, Fiennes et al., 2015; 2014; Neill & Richards, 1998, Rickinson et al., 2004)

How does Outdoor Learning achieve this?

Let's look at the example

'From Outdoors to Labour Market' (FOLM)



www.folmweb.com/en/
www.facebook.com/FOLM2018/

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FOLM From Outdoors To Labour Market

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Cantabria (Spain)

Your future is out there!

Participate in this great adventure if:

- You are 18 to 29 years old.
- You have not been working or training for at least the last 6 months.

More information >>

Mid West Region (Ireland)

Your future is out there!

Participate in this great adventure if:

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More information >>

Varmia and Mazuria (Poland)

Your future is out there!

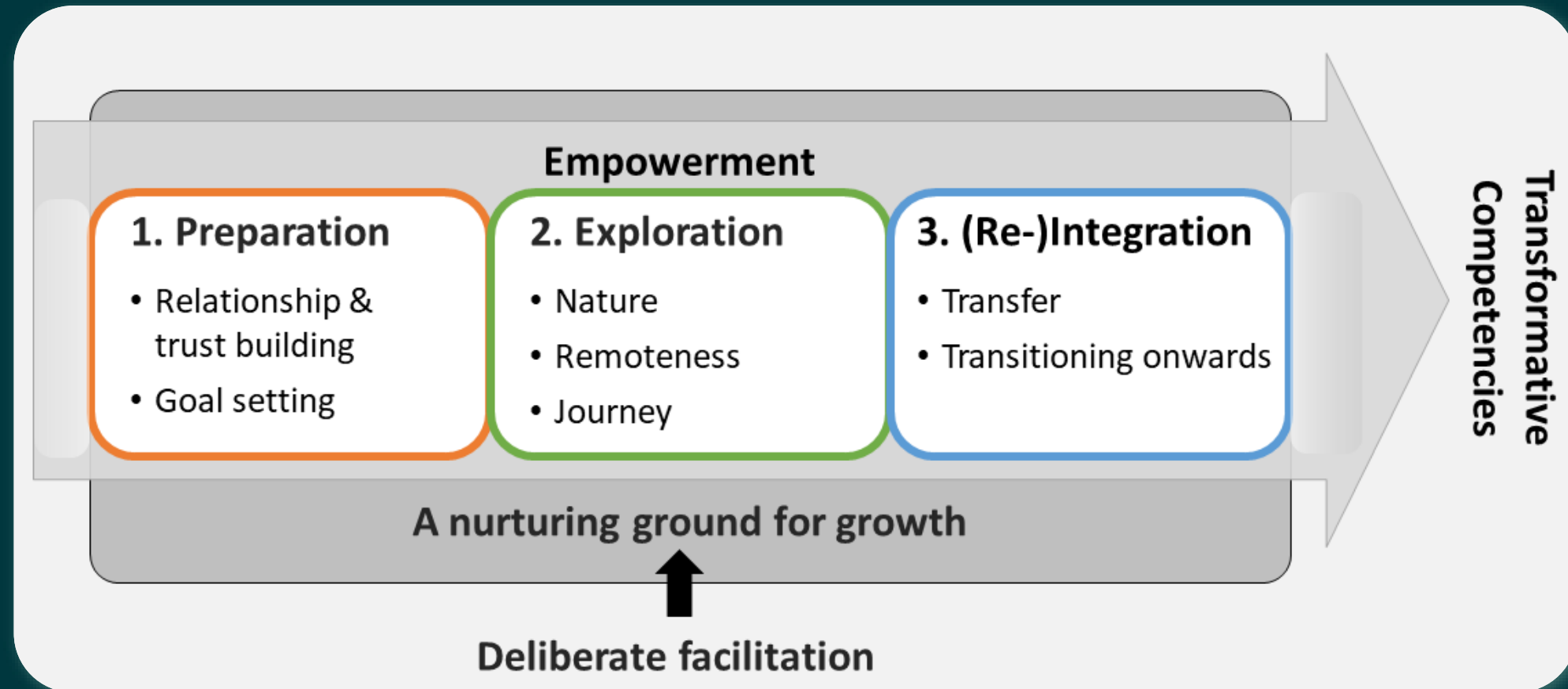
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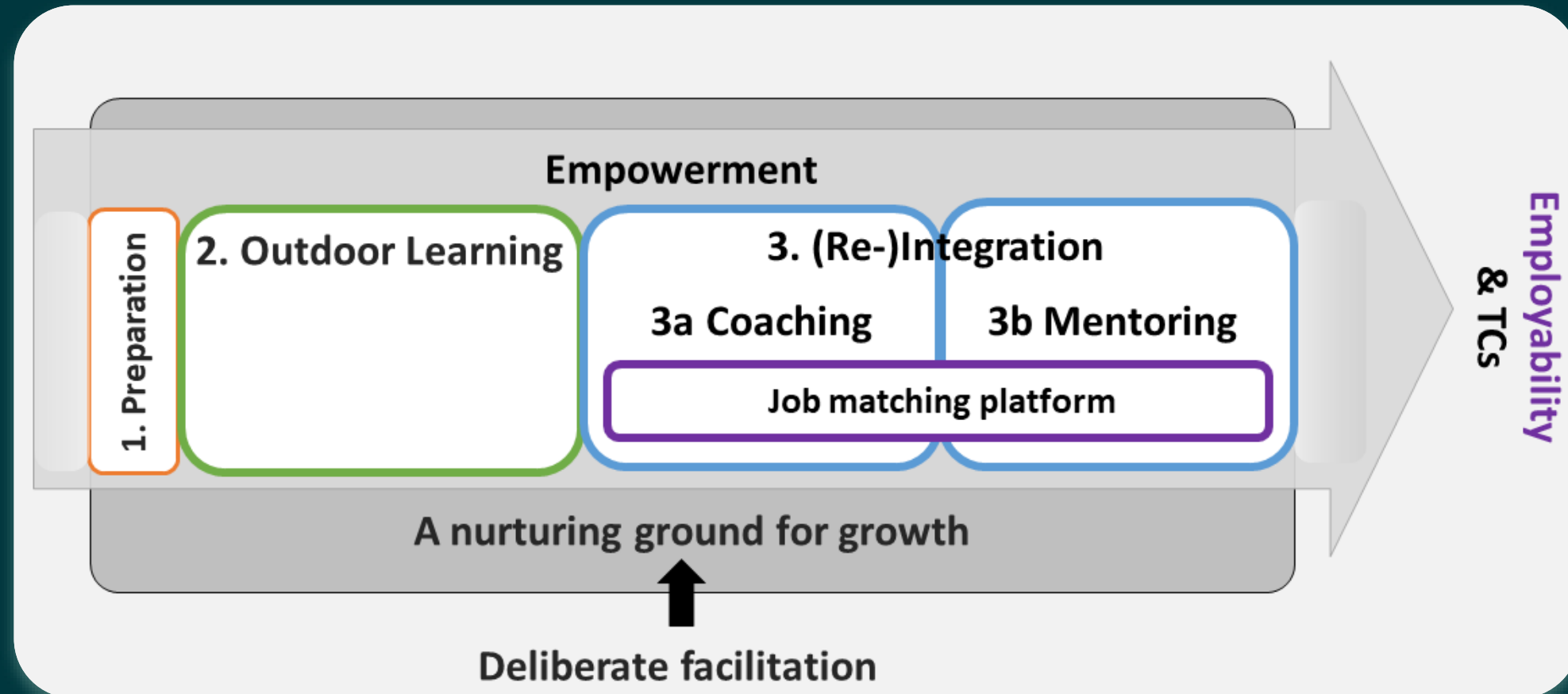
From Outdoors to Labour Market (FOLM)

- ▶ 3,5 year project (Sept 2018 to Feb 2022)
- ▶ Funded by the EEA & Norway Grants for Youth Employment
- ▶ OL Model from Scotland → Poland, Spain, Ireland
- ▶ 990 participants, age 18-29 yrs

The Edinburgh OL Model



The FOLM programme



Research methods (Selection)

- ▶ Questionnaire Self & Agency (at 5 points of time)
- ▶ Interviews (participants, staff, leadership & admin)
- ▶ Online surveys
- ▶ Personal File
- ▶ Evaluation forms
- ▶ Gamification tool



Data sources

- ▶ Participants
 - ▶ Programme delivery staff (working with participants)
 - ▶ Leadership and admin staff
 - ▶ (Other stakeholders)
- ➔ 360 degree, triangulation



Findings

NB: Data analysis is in progress. The following are preliminary findings

To what degree is the programme and OL model effective in bringing young people who are not in Employment, Education or Training into EET?



Where participants moved on to

990 FOLM participants from **3** countries



34%

Participants who went into
employment



17%

Participants in active job
search, training or travel



49%

Participants who went back
to education

83% effectiveness

Questionnaire Self & Agency

- ▶ Based on standardised tools
- ▶ Completed at 5 points of time across the programme
- ▶ Statistically significant increase in
 - Positive self-concept
 - Sense of Agency

Main areas of learning and growth

- ▶ Positive self-concept, self worth, confidence
- ▶ Sense of Agency, goals, motivation
- ▶ Transferable skills & transformative competencies
- ▶ specific employability-related skills (e.g., CV writing)
- ▶ Nature connectedness and stewardship
- ➔ Employability, personal wellbeing, citizenship

They get the answer to the question

'Who am I?'

(FOLM Partner leadership staff)

Factors of impact for growth & empowerment

- ▶ **Being outdoors**
(nature, physical and socio-emotional experience, remoteness, overcoming challenges)
- ▶ **Staff-participant relationship**
(trust-based, respect, person-centred, companions in the experience)
- ▶ **Facilitation elements of the Edinburgh Model**
(group work + one-to-ones, safe space, micro-learning)
- ▶ **Combination & Integration of the Phases**
(Coaching & Mentoring for consolidation, transfer & individualisation of learning, specific knowledge & skills training)

Outdoor setting
Nature engagement

Feedback

Technical skills

Self-reflection

Self-discovery

Self-worth

Confidence & Sense of agency

Goals

Motivation

Actions to change

Authentic situations
Safe space
Time

(Individual) guidance
Action plan

Support for transfer



Long-term effects?

- ▶ Limited data
 - Not enough Q-S&A completed at t5 for statistical analysis
 - Anecdotal evidence, e.g., from interviews
- ▶ Participant growth evident during the programme continued
- ▶ Self-discovery from the OL experience was deep enough to be transformative and long lasting
- ▶ Coaching & Mentoring are crucial for consolidation

It's like a process from being passive to being active, from being hopeless to 'Okay, I have an option in my life. (...) I have enough power to change my life'.

Outdoor Learning Trainer, CIE Poland

Who benefited most from the programme?

- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Additional support needs
- People who
 - are ready & motivated to change
 - whose needs are met



Key insights gained

- ▶ The programme and model are very successful in promoting employability and transferable skills & competencies
- ▶ Nature & outdoor settings are particularly conducive to the empowerment and transformative learning process
- ▶ The facilitation augments and expedites the process
- ▶ Relationship and time are key elements of success



Thank you!



The FOLM Consortium

- ▶ Centre for Innovative Education, PL (Project Lead)
- ▶ Food Bank Olsztyn, PL
- ▶ Cantabria Regional Government, ES
- ▶ Femxa Group, ES
- ▶ Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, IE
- ▶ The Venture Trust, UK
- ▶ The University of Edinburgh, UK



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- ▶ UNESCO Member states map: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/57/UNESCO_member_states.png; Attribution: Alinor (talk), CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons
- ▶ Images of the Edinburgh Model: Hildmann, Higgins, White, Strang, Hardie
- ▶ Photo of jule hildmann: jule hildmann
- ▶ All other photos: FOLM

Thank you!

Questions?

Comments?

...?

