



Internationalisation
in Higher Education
for Society

>>> Sports URV-Leisure and Healthy Physical Activity

#IHES project

This project includes two separate activities: Canoeing and University Autumn Excursion (hiking), both aimed at both the university community and the wider public. A local specialised company is hired to lead each of the activities.

Canoeing takes place in the Ebro River, each year from and to different locations along the river and at the time of the year when the river flow is optimal, that is usually first weeks of October.

As for the University Autumn Excursion, it is planned to have a low level of difficulty to encourage people to participate and it takes place in some of the beautiful surroundings of the university Campus in November.

1 WHAT IS THE GOAL OR REASON FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT?

For all participants, the activities want to reinforce a sense of belonging and identification with the environment, to enjoy and at the same time foster respect for nature; both activities seek to increase the environmental awareness of the participants. Furthermore, the activities aim to improve participants well-being, namely their physical and emotional health, and transmitting positive values of such healthy physical activity shared with family and friends. On a more societal level, it aims at inclusion of functional diversity, social awareness about the benefits of healthy physical activity, and promotion of gender equality.

It addresses a wide range of SDGs: SDG3 Good health and well-being, SDG4 Quality education, SDG5 Gender equality, SDG10 Reduced inequalities, SDG13 Climate action, SDG15 Life on land.

2 WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARIES?

Target groups in society for both activities, canoeing and hiking, are instructors working for the specialized companies hired to carry out each activity. International attendants are organised in one group and instructors are asked to address the group in English.

Also, for the university community, it aims at bringing them closer together and improving collaboration with local organisations, while for the companies, it provides contact with the university world and the international students.

3 WHO ARE YOUR PARTNERS IN YOUR UNIVERSITY?

Key actors are members of the URV university community as well as foreign mobility students who share the experience with friends and family. Staff at I-Center is a valuable partner because by being in contact with international students, they make the information available to them and at the same time, encourage their participation in such kind of events. For credit recognition to the URV students, the university unit dealing with formal academic matters was also involved.



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HOW DID YOU REALISE THIS PROJECT?

Both projects are organized by the Office of Social Engagement-Esports URV in a yearly basis and run in a similar way. They last about 6 hours including travel time and URV students receive 1 credit.

Specialized companies are hired to lead each activity and once the details of date and place are fixed, a call is launched to the university community and the call encourages the university community members to bring in friends and family. They are organised as weekend activities to make it easier for people to attend.

Canoeing takes place on days with optimal river flow, that is usually first weeks of October. In 2021 it didn't take place because of COVID-19 and in 2022 it was on the first weekend of October, Saturday the 8th. Routes are designed to get to know the Ebre River in different stages, therefore, each year a different route is chosen. Participants are provided with all the material needed, as well as expert advice from instructors.

The University Autumn Excursion is organized in November, when in Catalunya it is no longer hot and the cold of winter has not yet arrived. In 2021 it was on Saturday, the 20th of November and in 2022 on the 19th.

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WHAT ARE THE MOST RELEVANT ENABLERS OF THIS PROJECT AND HOW DID YOU CONVINC THEM TO PARTICIPATE?

Staff at I-Centre is a valuable partner because by being in contact with international students, they make the information available to them and at the same time, encourage their participation and ask them to invite friends from outside the URV to participate.

Because of the IHES project and more specifically, because of being part of the IHES Lab Catalunya, the focus was set on adding internationalization to the activities. This was the reason why both events were attended by so many international students and so that those who wanted to could listen to one of the guides explaining the points of interest in English.

Local specialised companies hired to lead each of the activities were key enablers as they both provided very well-prepared instructors, willing to make the participants enjoy the experience.



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WHAT WERE THE MAIN OBSTACLES YOU ENCOUNTERED AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

Canoeing is a long-time well-established activity at the URV and as a such, all the initial obstacles were already overcome during the first editions. From the very beginning, not an obstacle but an essential requirement is to know how to swim.

One of the obstacles was for the people to travel to the point of the river where the activity started, as the URV has campuses at different placements within the Tarragona County and travelling by car was not environmentally friendly. As a solution, Sports URV organized coaches from university campuses to the activity start-point location and back.

Lessons learned for canoeing, from the organisation point of view, were applied to the University Autumn Excursion, a much more recent activity. One obstacle in this case was the difficulty level of the walk and it was overcome by setting a low difficulty level, to facilitate participation.

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WHAT WERE THE KEY "DO'S AND DON'T'S" THAT YOU LEARNED WHILE SETTING UP AND RUNNING THIS PROJECT?

Do's:

- Establish the everyone role
- Try to following the plan
- Be realistic with timelines and agenda
- Trust in your colleagues
- Do not ignore different situations
- Track progress I share information

Don't's:

- Ignore cultural and social differences
- Take your eye off the scope
- Forget recognise the efforts
- Make assumptions and not to ask
- Forget to listen
- Ignore bad news
- Do not burn bridges
- Underestimate anything during the activity development