



REPORT

of the

WORKSHOP ON HEALTH

Project EU:SPORT:FUTURE

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Haus des Sports
Prinz Eugen Strasse 12
1040 Vienna / Austria

Participants:

Last Name	First Name	Nationality
Aichinger	Ernst	Austria
Gasser	Janine	Austria
Gradl	Martin	Austria
Greis	Andrea	Germany
Halbwachs	Christian	Austria
Koller	Daniela	Austria
Lackinger	Christian	Austria
Oja	Leila	Estonia
Pauncheva	Boryana	Bulgaria
Puks	Mariken	Estonia
Spindler	Barbara	Austria
Trinker	Michael	Austria
Veene	Priit	Estonia
Woldrich	Thomas	Austria



Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme



Introduction

The workshop on sport and health was held on 29th May 2009 and lead by Christian Halbwachs, General Manager of the national, health promoting project "Fit for Austria". The discussions were based on the workshop leaflet, including the results of the online survey which has been distributed and presented prior to the workshop.

Participants of the health workshop came from very different backgrounds but all have been related to sport in a certain way. Sport students, sport scientists, sport journalists, sport volunteers and citizens interested in sport discussed together the topic "sport and health".

Prior to the workshops general presentations on the topic "Sport and the EU" and best practice examples in the field of health were aimed at introducing the issues of the workshops and giving food for thought for the discussions in the workshops.

The workshop leader structured the discussions in the workshop the following way:

1. Analysis of present situation (status quo, problems, challenges)
2. Definition of ideal situation/ objectives
3. Recommendations: Tools, measures to achieve ideal situation / objectives
4. Priorities, Follow up

The answers to the open questions of the online questionnaire have been integrated in this report.

Ad 1) Analysis of present situation

It is assumed, that most people are aware that sport is beneficial for health. The statement "Prevention instead of Rehabilitation" is well-known. However, people lack (sometimes) motivation to practice sport, as also incentives and facilities to do sport are missing. Unfortunately, people often only become physically active, if they already suffer from obesity or other diseases.

Nevertheless, it is regarded that the relationship between sport and health and the benefits of physical activity (PA) on health are not considered and supported appropriately at European level. This is also true for sport clubs, as they mostly focus on competition sport and not on health oriented sport programmes.¹

Some sport organisations implement health enhancing physical activity projects but experiences and good practices are not shared at European level.

¹ This statement is related to the online survey statement that "sport organisations should improve their supply of PA programmes to promote health".



Also the media is considered to focus too much on competitive and professional sport. The “sport for all movement” and its events only get insignificant media attention.

Yet another field where the connection between sport and health is not given appropriate attention is sport at work. Not only public authorities but also the corporate world does not recognise sufficiently enough the health enhancing role of sport for its employees and therefore is not supporting it accordingly.

Regarding the recognition of PA on health, the participants strongly support the statements of the questionnaire that “public authorities should better recognise the role of PA as a preventive measure in public health policies” and the statement that “cooperation among sport organisations and health care providers should be improved”.

Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire show that European citizens think that the major competence on “sport and health” rests not with the Member States or sport organisations but with the EU. The EU is considered to be an ideal platform to promote a healthy lifestyle and raise awareness on sport and health in view of the different situations in the field of PA, sport and health in the Member States.²

Some regions in the EU are disadvantaged with regards to sport infrastructures. There is gap between urban and rural regions as well as West and East, whereas the former is better equipped and the latter to a lesser extent with sport infrastructures. Sometimes sport infrastructures do exist but they are old-fashioned or in bad shape preventing people from engaging in PA. Sometimes sport infrastructures are not used to their full extent due to missing utilization concepts.

In most countries there is a lack of cooperation and coordination of work between health care providers and sport organisations.

Ad 2) Definition of ideal situation/objectives

In an ideal world all citizens, decision makers and other stakeholders know about the mental, physical and social benefits of physical activity and sport and take these aspects into consideration in their respective life and work (environment). The preventive role of PA and the beneficial impact of sport on health is generally accepted, promoted and implemented in sport organisations, public authorities, media, health care providers, large companies, small and medium sized enterprises etc.

Relevant campaigning and information work is done so that everyone knows and is updated on the positive effects of sport.

² This statement is related to the online survey statement that “Europe-wide media campaigns should be organised to show the beneficial effects of sport on health”.



People are educated from kindergarten to the home of elderly how they can enjoy and increase physical activity in a simple but effective way like to climb steps instead of using the elevator etc. Health experts offer guidance and advice to (inactive) people to reduce barriers to get physically active.

The development and promotion of grassroots sport is the starting point of every relevant policy initiative as professional sport represents only the tip of the iceberg of the whole sports movement.

Motivation programmes as well as health enhancing physical activity programmes are supplied to get people moving and active.

Sport opportunities – advice as well as sport infrastructure – to be able to practice sport are offered in every social setting from kindergarten over work to the home of the elderly.

Adequate hours of PA – preferably at least three hours per week – are offered in educational institutions such as kindergartens and schools.

Ad 3) Recommendations: Tools, measures to achieve ideal situation / objectives

Considering the analysis of the present situation and the outlook of an ideal situation the following recommendations have been addressed to:

➤ The European Union

- The EU shall support health promoting programmes through its different funding streams such as the Public Health Programme.
- European-wide media campaigns shall inform the European public and stakeholders about the beneficial effects of sport on health. It shall be promoted that people should be physically active throughout their whole life. The importance of a sporty lifestyle for physical, mental and social well-being shall be highlighted during the campaign. Therefore, the EU shall declare 2014 the European Year of Sport and Physical Activity, ten years after the European Year of Education through Sport.
- Regarding PR activities, a European Day of Sport could be organised in cooperation with relevant stakeholders (EU, Member States and sport organisations) on which mass sport events take place in all the EU Member States to activate citizens.



- The EU shall provide a platform to share know-how and good practices on health promoting physical activity projects.
- The EU shall mainstream health better into its policies.

➤ **The European Union and Member States**

- Public authorities shall better recognise the beneficial role physical activity plays on health.
- Every policy initiative shall be based on qualitative as well as quantitative criteria (evidence based policies). Relevant data shall be collected on a regular basis on the PA level in Europe.
- Sport shall be integrated better in the health care systems and in medicine. The EU shall play a facilitating role in offering and fostering platforms to share knowledge and good practice examples among different stakeholders (e.g. medical system and sport).
- The importance of grassroots sport shall be better recognised, acknowledged and promoted in various policies. A European calendar on big grassroots sport events shall help promoting the sport for all movement.
- The EU shall promote the EU PA Guidelines and help the Member States to implement them by identifying strategies to do so.
- In order to make physical education more interesting, Member States shall supply well trained PA teachers by developing relevant educational programmes in cooperation with sport organisations. At European level an exchange of good practices and sharing knowledge complement the activities implemented at national level.
- The EU and Member States shall facilitate access to sport infrastructure by providing financial support to build, renovate and maintain such infrastructures. Authorities – especially at local level – shall provide sport facilities free of charge as part of an effective public health policy. Special attention must be paid to socially disadvantaged groups and the disabled to have easily access to them.
- Create a legal reference to sport in the Constitutions of the Member States

➤ **The Member States**

- In order to reach difficult target groups like the socially disadvantaged or disabled, focus has to be laid the accessibility and low-cost activities.



- The Member States and sport organisations shall develop and promote low level physical fitness tests to be easily implemented even by non-professionals.
- Trainers must be qualified to be able to teach PE. Furthermore, aspects of how to lead a healthy lifestyle should be integrated into the curriculum e.g. nutritional guidelines presented in biology classes.

➤ **Companies**

- Companies shall also recognise the importance of sport and the positive effects it has on employees being more productive and less sick by doing sport. Therefore, companies shall promote sport at work by being obliged to have sport programmes for their employees and by cooperating with sport organisations offering PA programmes.

Ad 4) Priorities, Follow up

A succeeding discussion project seeking support from the Europe for Citizens' programme shall follow up on the recommendations formulated within the project EU:SPORT:FUTURE and broaden the discussion on sport at European level.

A European-wide campaign and the 2014 as the European Year of Sport and Physical Activity is deemed to be first priority to tackle the other identified issues.

Conclusion

The workshop participants realized that there is a vast array of different thoughts, problems and solutions on sport and health. This vast range of views might be attributed to the fact that participants came from all over Europe and from all walks of life which made the discussions in the workshops very interactive and interesting. The participants not only discussed the topic sport and the EU but also learned from each other by listening to the statements coming from all the corners of the EU. This made this workshop an interculturally appealing and rewarding experience for the participants.