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D3.1 E-BOOK
Capacity building training programme

HOW TO BECOME A REGION OF SPORT EXCELLENCE?

SHARING EUROPEAN SPORT EXCELLENCE

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SESE

SHARING EUROPEAN
SPORTS EXCELLENCE



SportDrenthe
zet mensen in beweging



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ABSTRACT



Abstract

The SESE E-book capacity building programme: How to become a region of sport excellence? is a document addressed to policy makers, sport operators from sports organisations and public administration operators working in the sports sector from all over the world. The purpose of the E-book is to provide relevant information and to motivate regions to become excellent in sport in order to contribute to the regional development, to promote a healthy and active lifestyle and to improve the general health of the population.

The main goal of the SESE project and this E-book is to adapt regional policies in order to support sport development and to motivate population to be physically active. Through regional development and adaptation of policies in the field of sports, efforts and changes are necessary to encourage **healthy lifestyles** and change the mindset of population about **sports and physical activity**. With this purpose in mind, the SESE model was developed.

Health of the population should be a top priority for all policy makers, and the Erasmus+ Sport project **Sharing European Sports Excellence – SESE** will raise awareness of the **importance and potential of sport for improving the population's health**. Policy makers, therefore, have a role to engage different stakeholders who have influence on different parts of the population, who motivate people to get physically active and/or push talents in the direction of competitive sports. Understanding the population's profile and motivation is crucial for an adequate impact and development of relevant measures.

With the help of the **pre-assessment tool**, regions can assess their current state of art regarding the SESE Model principles and requirements, and then through the implementation of the E-book strengthen their regional development with the help of different sport initiatives.

Keywords: sports, physical activity, sports excellence, regional development, model

1

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS E-BOOK?



1 Introduction – What is E-book?

E-book named “How to become a region of sport excellence?” is capacity building training programme addressed to policy makers, sport operators from sports organisations and public administration operators working in sports sector from all over the world. The purpose of the E-book is to provide relevant information and to motivate regions to become excellent in sport in order to contribute to the regional development, to promote healthy and active lifestyle and to improve the general health of the population. E-book is developed within the Erasmus+ Sport project Sharing European Sports Excellence – SESE.

The SESE project promotes the creation of the Sportregions with the aim to create a permanent space for promoting cooperation, sharing of best practices, lessons learned and knowledge from a cross-sectorial and transnational dimension. Sportregion aims to strengthen and interlink initiatives and projects by promoting synergies and complementarities. The project interconnects strategy, policies and practice that lead the transformation of the role of sport in the post-pandemic era and in an evolving ecosystem. SESE project will promote sport as a necessary tool for personal development in terms of well-being and developing active and healthy lifestyle as well as boosting sport regions for improving public policies and private and public cooperation.

What is sport?

The EU’s definition of sport was originally developed by the Council of Europe. It encompasses “all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels” (European Commission, 2016). Also, sport encompasses all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels (European Commission, 2020).

In addition to this rather broad definition of sport, this project is also concerned with the role of physical activity in promoting regional economic, health and social development, and this broadens the scope of eligible activities even further. In the EU Physical Activity Guidelines (2008) physical activity is usually defined as “any bodily movement associated with muscular contraction that increases energy expenditure above resting levels” (European Commission, 2008). This description includes all types of physical activity, such as “leisure-time physical activity (including most sport activities and dancing), occupational physical activity (recreation and sport), physical activity at or near the home and physical activity connected with transport” (Institute for Public Health of Međimurje County, 2023).

Why is E-book for policymakers?

Sport is identified as an indispensable mechanism for social inclusion where policymakers with emphasis on local and regional authorities in the collaboration with researchers, academics, and many others can strengthen and enhance the benefits of sport for the whole region. Prioritizing sport and physical education within communities can encourage a sense of belonging, safety, and integration within society. Sport is, therefore, the fundamental field of intervention for governments to achieve the full potential of physical activity for personal, social and overall regional development.

Governmental bodies and policymakers have the unique ability to actively engage with the local community and identify the best action plan and policy to promote engagement with sport and physical activity within the population (UNESCO, 2024). Sport is also recognized in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an enabler of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2024). To follow and reach up to the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations, as well as to provide support to an overarching sport policy follow-up framework and five priority areas for international and national multi-stakeholder cooperation, the Kazan Action Plan is defined to mark the commitment to link sport policy development (United Nations, 2017).

Based on a MODEL

The E-book is based on a [Model – The Sportregion methodological framework](#), developed by the SESE project consortium, based on the experience and knowledge transfer within the partners. Capacity building training programme (E-book) is developed on best practice examples from excellent sport regions – Azores, Drenthe, Lapland and Međimurje, as holders of the European region of sport title, and in collaboration with the experts gathered in the “Pool of experts”. The sports excellence from partnering regions, together with their knowledge and expertise from identified best practice examples, will benefit other regions from all around the world to become excellent in sport itself and to compete for the European region of sport title in the future.

How can sport contribute to regional development?

The European Commission has noted that sport has a strong potential to contribute to regional development, with emphasis on contribution to economic, smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth and new jobs creation through its positive effects on social inclusion, education, training, and public health (European Commission, 2016). Sports’ contribution to regional development is also recognized in the White Paper, which indicates that sport has a growing yet underestimated potential to contribute to a macroeconomic impact from regional policy, including job creation. In particular, sport has synergies with the tourism sector. Sports investments can support the modernisation of overall infrastructure (European Commission, 2007).

By increasing sports excellence, the number of sports participants is continuously increasing, and “community in motion” is developing, which is the main objective of the SESE project. Encouraging as many people as possible to be physically active has a positive impact on numerous spheres of social and economic development of the region according to European Commission document “Study on the Contribution of Sport to Regional Development through the Structural Funds” (2016):

- Sport has a high employment multiplier - sport requires human input and, therefore is relatively good at generating employment locally, not only in the activity itself, but also in the construction and maintenance of facilities;
- Sport generates business activity directly - Better health could add \$12 trillion in global GDP in 2040
- Sports is good at attracting talent and encouraging new and innovative forms of experience, from new kinds of sports to new ways of measuring performance and monitoring activity;

- Sport is an important contributor of content for ICT developments and is increasingly using ICT to enhance performance and its measurement;
- Sports events and activities can have strong direct impacts on local economies, but also provide powerful occasions for marketing and promotion;
- Sports and physical activity can improve mental agility as well as promote physical fitness and active and healthy ageing. All of these can have direct effects on productivity and also reduce health-care costs;
- Sports is good at motivating people and at promoting well-being and social cohesion;
- Sport is especially good at helping to engage with excluded social groups and developing basic but transferable skills and enhancing employability;
- Increased physical activity can lead to a reduction in the use of carbon-based transport and other beneficial environmental effects, so sport has a positive effect on the reduction of carbon emissions and raising awareness on environmental protection (European Commission, 2016).

In this way, the SESE project is showing how regions can benefit from investing in their sport excellence using the E-book as the main guideline document.

Therefore, the final goal of the SESE project is to create the first international network of regions (Excellence Sportregions' network) based on an interregional value chain in the field of sport with the objective of increasing and stabilizing the standards of Sport Policies with the focus on three main topics - modules: **social inclusion, digitalisation and business creation**.

Thus, Excellence Sportregions' network is based on the idea that the success and experience of identified excellent sport regions can help other regions to improve their sport policies, to give more opportunities and ideas and to strengthen the philosophy that sport really has the power to build healthy societies and improve economic development of the region.

How to use the E-book

The E-book is based on the bottom-up approach, trying to encourage policy makers to initiate the change from local to regional level with the aim for the region to become excellent in sport. Local and regional stakeholders are advised to take actions through „soft“ policy tools and measures, following the defined legislative framework on international and national levels. Soft policy tools, therefore include dialogue, policy cooperation, the development of guidelines and recommendations, and funding inspirations. Local and regional policy makers can, in dialogue and cooperation with relevant sports stakeholders introduce new measures and tools to increase activation of the local population in everyday physical activity and to promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

The proposed **Training programme** and knowledge transfer are based on identified best practice examples from partnering regions. [Identified best practices](#) are divided into three categories/modules:

1) DIGITALISATION

- a. The digitalisation module addresses the needs and challenges with identified best practice examples from partnering regions focused mainly or partially on digitalisation activities and measures that contributed to the popularization of sport and physical activity among the population which resulted in increase in the number of people

involved in any kind of physical activity. The digitalisation module is crucial for the regional development through the popularization of physical activity. The main advantage of digitalisation activities is their replicability in other regions, as well as to other aspects and areas of development.

2) SOCIAL INCLUSION

- a. Social inclusion module addresses the needs and challenges with identified best practice examples from partnering regions focused on the activities and measures that contributed to social inclusion and had positive impact on populations' wellbeing and quality of life. Social inclusion is important component for the overall regional development that can be positively contributed to through sport and other physical activities. The importance of this module is the inclusion of all age groups, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups (children, young adults, women, elderly population, etc.).

3) BUSINESS CREATION

- a. The business creation module addresses the needs and challenges with identified best practice examples from partnering regions focused mainly on business model creation based on the sports development and introduction of new sport policies. The creation of new business opportunities and growth in business investments in the sport sector is complementary with the increase in people engaged in sport or any other physical activity. Business creation in sport plays an important role in the regional development and new investment opportunities.

Each module is in the correlation with **requirements from the SESE Model**, so policy makers are advised to follow the Model when trying to achieve sports excellence, with emphasis on achieving defined requirements. Achievement of each requirement from the Model can be monitored through the [Self-assessment questionnaire](#) (checklist).

Policy makers can find different best practice examples under each module, which can direct them to further understanding of the possible actions and measures that can be developed.

The partner who holds the experience of the best practice will be in charge of giving technical assistance for the potential implementation of the selected best practice, together with other members of the [Pool of experts](#). In this way, they will provide support and advice/consult regions who are interested in the implementation of selected best practice within their territory and government.

Best practice examples defined within each module address three training areas:

- **Management**
 - a. Management training area aims to capacitate partners' managers and staff to improve their management tasks, to strengthen their capacity to operate at transnational level and implement the Excellence Sportregions model.
- **Technical training**
 - a. The technical training area aims to address the main identified challenges and needs that the sports sector is facing in the partnering regions and Europe overall, with an emphasis on presenting concrete and practical activities that can be easily replicated in other territories.
- **Entrepreneurship and business management**
 - a. Entrepreneurship and business management training area aims to promote innovation, competitiveness and develop new business models within sport sector.

The focus of each training area is described within each best practice example description together with possible actions and measures that can apply to other regions within [Section 7](#).

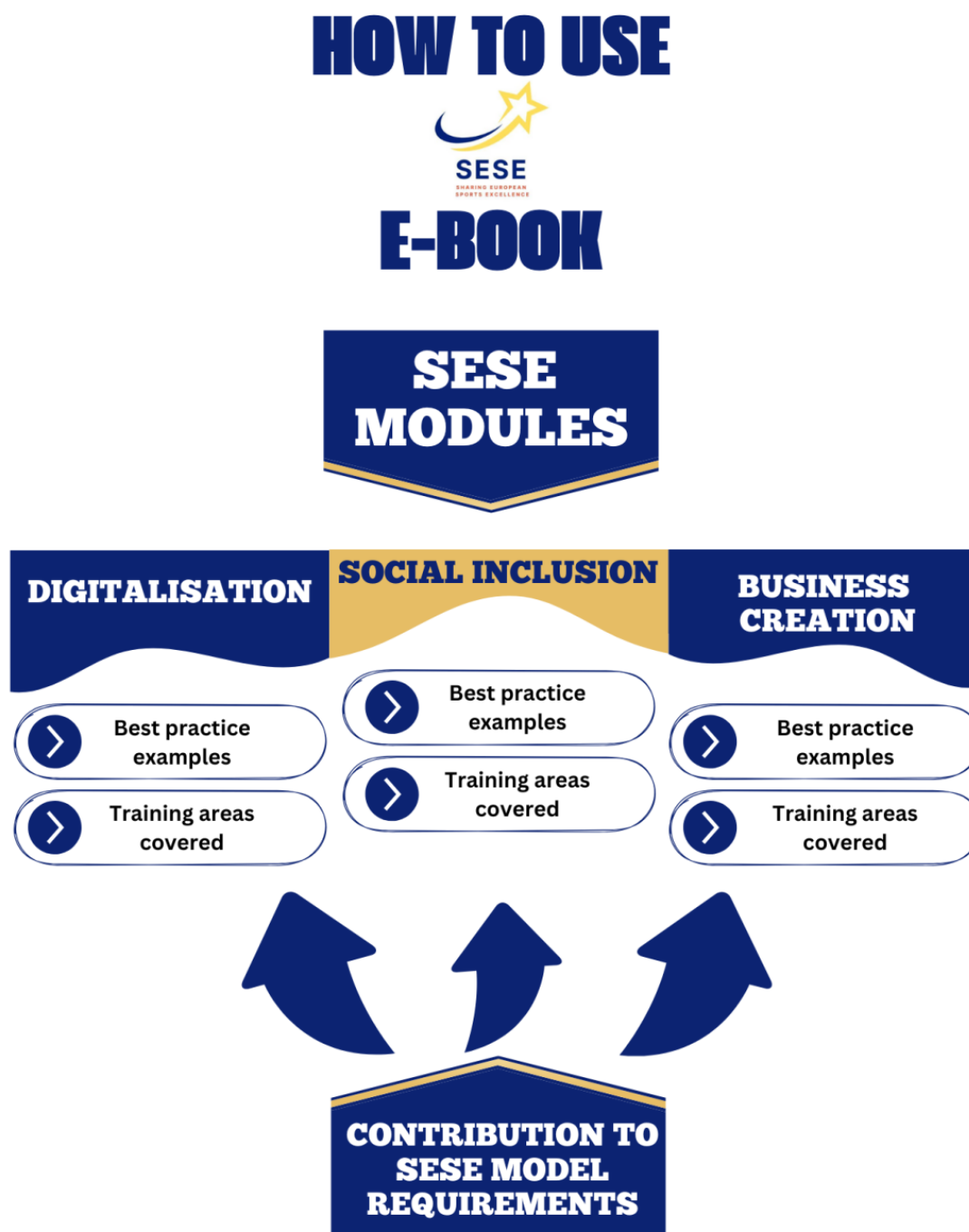


Figure 1. Concept on how to use the E-book

2

SHORT PRESENTATION OF SESE PARTNERING REGIONS



2 Short presentations of SESE project partners

SESE project partnership consists of partner organisations from four European regions – Azores (Portugal), Drenthe (The Netherlands), Lapland (Finland), and Međimurje (Croatia) together with two sectoral European organisations, EPSI and ACES from Belgium. These organisations support regions in their sports development, provide networking between sport organisations, support the development of project proposals and follow them in the competition process for the title European regions of sport. Since in partnering regions the significant influence of sport policy development on overall regional development has been recognized, **regions in general are identified as the main target areas** for SESE E-book (Training programme) together with their management authorities, policy makers, and other sport organisations's staff. Two partnering regions are holders of the title "European region of sport" – Drenthe for 2019 and Međimurje for 2022, together with one city (Rovaniemi from Lapland region) which is holder of the title "European city of sport" for 2020. Therefore, partnering regions serve as best practice examples and guiding regions for others who want to compete for this title in the future.

Generally, a big number of regions in Europe joined the AER – Assembly of the European Regions. It is the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe. According to the AER, the term region refers to *"territorial authorities between the central government and local authorities, with a political representation power as entrusted by an elected assembly (AER, 2025).*

2.1 Azores

The Azores are one of two autonomous regions of Portugal. It is an archipelago composed of nine volcanic islands in the North Atlantic Ocean. Azores has a population of about 236,000 inhabitants (2021). The largest city of the Azores is Ponta Delgada. The partner organisation from the Azores region is [The Regional Directorate for Sport](#). The Regional Directorate for Sport (Direção Regional do Desporto - DRD) is a key entity within the Regional Government of the Azores. Its mission is to implement sports policies, create, coordinate, and support sports activities, and promote physical and sports activities among the Azorean population.

2.2 Drenthe

Drenthe is one of 12 provinces of the Netherlands located in the northeastern part of the country. Drenthe has a population of about 502,000 inhabitants (2023). The capital of the province is Assen. It is a predominantly rural area, except for the small cities of Assen and Emmen. The partner organisation from the Drenthe region is [SportDrenthe](#). SportDrenthe is a social organisation that has been representing the interests of sports since 1968. The organisation focuses on offering support in developing necessary sports and exercise infrastructure, as well as to develop different sport programmes for the entire Drenthe population.

2.3 Lapland

Lapland is the largest and northernmost region of Finland. Lapland has a population of about 177,161 inhabitants (2019). The main regional centre of Lapland is Rovaniemi. The region is the least densely populated area in the country due to its territory characteristics and climate conditions. The partner organisation from the Lapland region is the [Lapland University of Applied Sciences](#). Lapland UAS is one of the leading Finnish universities in R&D in applied sciences, a pioneer in arctic studies, and an active developer and innovator, especially in winter sports.

2.4 Međimurje

Međimurje County is the smallest and northernmost region of the Republic of Croatia. Međimurje has a population of about 105,000 inhabitants (2021) and is the second most densely populated region in the country. The capital of the region is Čakovec. It is a predominantly rural area between two rivers –

Mura and Drava. The partner organisation from the Međimurje county is a regional public authority – [Međimurje County](#). Međimurje County as an organisation has one sectoral division focused on sports development within the Board of Directors for Education, Culture, and Sports. This division's work is dedicated to the sports promotion, financing mechanism, and organisation coordination to promote sport and engage citizens in physical activity.

2.5 ACES

ACES is a non-profit association based in Brussels which assigns every year the recognitions of World Capital, European Capital, Region, City, Island, Community and Town of Sport. ACES is an official partner of the European Commission in the European Week of Sport and is in the official partnership of UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

2.6 EPSI

EPSI is a non-profit European association (ASBL) based in Brussels, Belgium. EPSI is a European membership-based networking organization that focuses on promoting innovation in sports, physical activity, healthy lifestyles, vitality, the environment, and related sectors. Its mission is to create an innovation-friendly environment within the EU sports ecosystem by stimulating technological advancements and fostering business development across the entire innovation spectrum. It is a network-based European organisation that fosters collaboration and innovation in sports.

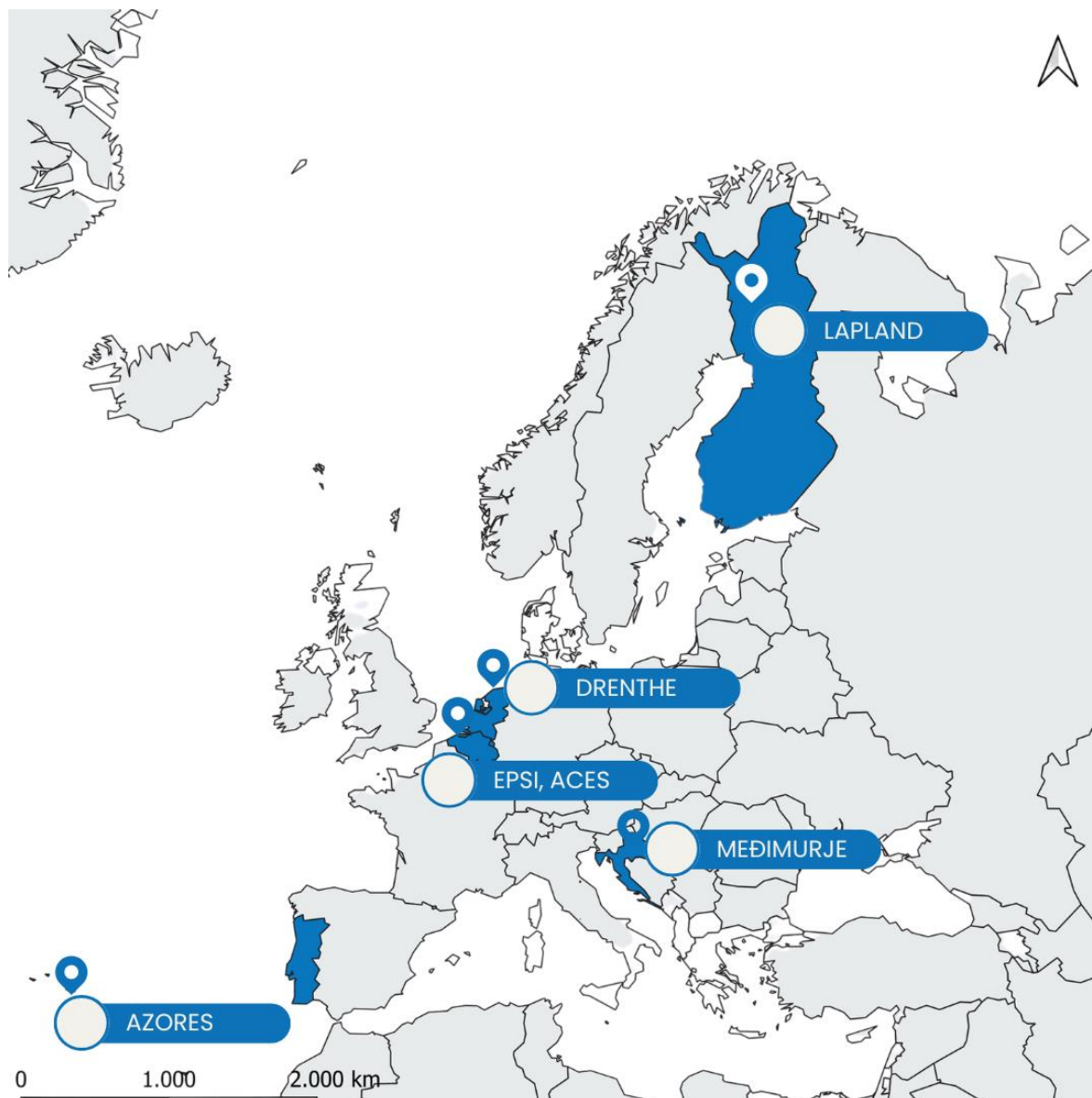


Figure 2. SESE Project partners' location in the scope of Europe

Project partners' regions

Table 1. SESE Project partnering regions' information

Region	Inhabitants	Area (km ²)	Year of the European Region/City of Sport title	No. of registered athletes	No. of sport clubs
Azores	236,000 (2021)	2,346	N/A	24,642 (2023)	260 (2023)
Drenthe	502,000 (2023)	2,680	2019	150,000 (2024)	1,240 (2024)
Lapland	177,000 (2019)	100,367	2020 (Rovaniemi)	13,000 (2019)	350 (2019)
Međimurje	105,000 (2021)	729	2022	15,000 (2025)	400 (2025)

Although partnering regions are different and their territories (by their size and number of inhabitants) are not comparable, these regions have similar characteristics regarding the culture of sport and the importance of sport policies in the context of regional development. All regions have invested in sports policy development and improvement of sports regulations as well as sports infrastructure and social inclusion to engage population in physical activity and sports. Thanks to the promotion of sport and the implementation of various activities within the European Region of Sport title, numerous investments have been made in sports infrastructure, as well as in sports management. However, the regions have identified the challenges they face and shortcomings that they are still trying to address while exploiting identified numerous potentials, especially in the context of sports management and sport experts' education.

Identified needs and challenges

All SESE partners have conducted SWOT analyses and identified the needs and challenges their regions are facing within the workshops with relevant stakeholders. Based on the stakeholders' workshops results, all four regions have identified the lack of financial support and financial mechanisms to sports organisations and sport clubs as well as high financial dependence on regional government. Lack of expertise/human resources, educated/licenced trainers as well as their mostly volunteering work is also the problem for almost all partnering regions, where various projects have been initiated to increase the value of the work of experts and professional, educated sports staff. Sports organisations often face financial and logistical challenges due to a lack of staff expertise and heavy bureaucracy. Experts should be involved as part of the working groups in the process of tenders development (on national and regional level), so that tenders can be adapted to the specific real needs, with emphasis on promoting physical activity and not the competitive form of sport.

One of the main challenges and opportunities for development is the lack of public awareness and interest regarding the needs and benefits of sport and physical activities for the population. Identified best practice examples can serve as a basis for partnering and other regions to implement various activities which will lead to raising awareness among the population. Also, specific titles such as "European region of sport", "European city of sport" and similar help regions to promote themselves as sport regions and can have a positive impact on the growth of people engaged in physical activity. These titles can be promotion boosters for regions who want to raise interest in sport and physical activity within their population. Therefore, strategic planning in the field of sports is necessary to define objectives and directions. The primary focus for promoting sports and physical activity should be on emphasising the importance of sports for quality of life and healthy leisure time, encouraging socialisation and education through sports. The need for coordination and cooperation of sport institutions, organisations, personnel, and activists from the whole region is necessary to develop a unified approach in the popularisation of sports and physical activity and to develop new opportunities for the local population.

3

WHY REGIONS STRIVE TO BECOME EXCELLENT IN SPORT?



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3 Why regions strive to become excellent in sport?

Different factors that can positively affect regional development and have benefits on the society in general are the reason why Sportregion Excellence Model (SESE Model) is developed, consisting of principles, requirements and domains. The Model serves as an inspiration for regions who want to become excellent in sport and influence the regional development with changes in sports policies.

The positive effects of the sport on regional development in general is mentioned before in the E-book, but sport also benefits to the physical and mental health of the population and on society. This is the motivation for regions to continuously strive to become excellent in sport and improve the regional development. Based on a research by Institute of Public Health of Međimurje County (2023), some identified benefits for the society are the following:

- Prevention of obesity
- Improved concentration... and better academic functioning (40 % increase in test scores)
- Improving confidence and self-esteem
- Reduced risk of sickness
- Enables proper growth and development of children and young people
- Better physical and mental health
- Improved quality of life
- Improved functional ability
- Contributes to better posture
- Prevents stress, anxiousness
- Reduces symptoms of depression
- Enables people with disabilities to be more physically independent and improves physical and psychosocial health
- Supports functional and independent life of older people
- Reducing the risk of frailty syndrome in older people
- It is important in preventing falls and injuries, especially in older people (Institute for Public Health of Međimurje County, 2023).

Therefore, “sport is a fundamental field of intervention for governments to achieve the full potential of physical activity for personal and social development” (UNESCO, 2024).

By developing and promoting sport as a tool for social inclusion, an opportunity for the development of inclusive sport can be created. “Inclusive sport involves making sport accessible and welcoming to everyone regardless of age, ability, socio-economic status, cultural background, ethnicity, gender, etc.” Inclusive sport involves policy development on different levels (local and regional) where policy should meet the local/regional needs and work with local processes. This process involves the participation of all relevant stakeholders, inclusiveness, and adaptation to persons with special needs.

Sport is also “an effective catalyst of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals on the United Nations 2030 agenda. UN General Assembly recognized the power of sport to expand sustainable development and inspire young people around the planet to participate in sports actively. The elements for effective interventions can be categorized in an analytical framework that comprises five pillars:

- 1) participatory processes
- 2) physical environment
- 3) social environment
- 4) customization

5) empowerment.

These five pillars do not stand alone; they are interrelated and influence each other. Sport and physical activity interventions that apply active elements from all five pillars are most likely successful in achieving their goals (UNESCO, 2024). Improvements within these five pillars can lead to becoming an excellent sports region.

Definition of Sport Excellence

“Sport Excellence is a shared responsibility to ensure that the region receives attention in areas that can help support development and healthy active lifestyles. Continuous regional development in the aspect of expertise development in areas such as funding, social inclusion, and economic growth through sport can be considered as a true asset that can be harnessed and shared. Its applicability and transferability ensures the interest of other regions and the joint knowledge transfer through the acquisition of new experiences and knowledge.”

“Sports Excellence is perceived as a high-quality standard that leads to optimized results in the promotion of sport and healthy lifestyles. To be excellent, a region must deeply know its reality (monitoring systems in place), plan and manage its resources in a very effective manner and put in place a wide system of sport development, that enhances every dimension of sport with high-quality standards.”

„In a Sports Excellence Region sports and physical activity tends to be free and accessible to all; an articulated and integrated vision of the different stages of sport development, in the promotion of sport and lifelong physical activity.”

“A European Sport Region Model of Excellence will inspire other regions to strive for excellent sports policy. In this model, sport as a means to make other social profit and sport because it is just fun, are included together. The model also consists of steps that a region can take to work on its excellence. The model and training programme help sports regions to strengthen their sports policy.”

“The Sports Excellence of the Regions is mostly related to the general state of health of the population, as well their habits to engage in physical activity and sports. Every region that strives for excellence in sports should first of all have a broad base of sports and recreation programmes, to implement free of charge or with minimal allocations for the citizens and in this way the general health condition of the region's inhabitants would be improved. Implementing a campaign to popularize sports and physical activity for the inhabitants, within a year could give great results. The percentage of physically active people and the general state of health would surely increase.”

4

SESE MODEL

THE SPORTREGION METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK



4 Introducing the SESE Model - The Sportregion Methodological Framework

SESE project promotes transnational cooperation, improving the capacity of public and private stakeholders to operate in a challenging environment through the promotion of the concept of Excellence in sports from a cross-sectorial perspective, developing joint strategies with other areas and interest groups and promoting sports in new areas, among others Health, Labour, Family and Risk of Social Exclusion.

Thanks to its idiosyncrasy, Sports regions probably represent the best mechanisms to deal with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Sports and the current economic crisis, through the promotion of digitalisation, social inclusion and business creation.

To face this health and socioeconomic crisis that is hitting Europe, six partners from five different countries (Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Portugal and The Netherlands) have decided to gather efforts through the creation of a Sport regions network to boost excellence in the definition and implementation of sport policies based on the SportRegion Excellence Method.

The Sharing European Sports Excellence Model (SESE Model), presented in the graphic below, is composed of three components/pillars: principles, requirements and domains. Eight principles that all regions excellent in sport share are the basis of the Model. Requirements represent functions and characteristics that need to be fulfilled to reach excellence whereas domains are areas in which interventions are needed and/or possible.

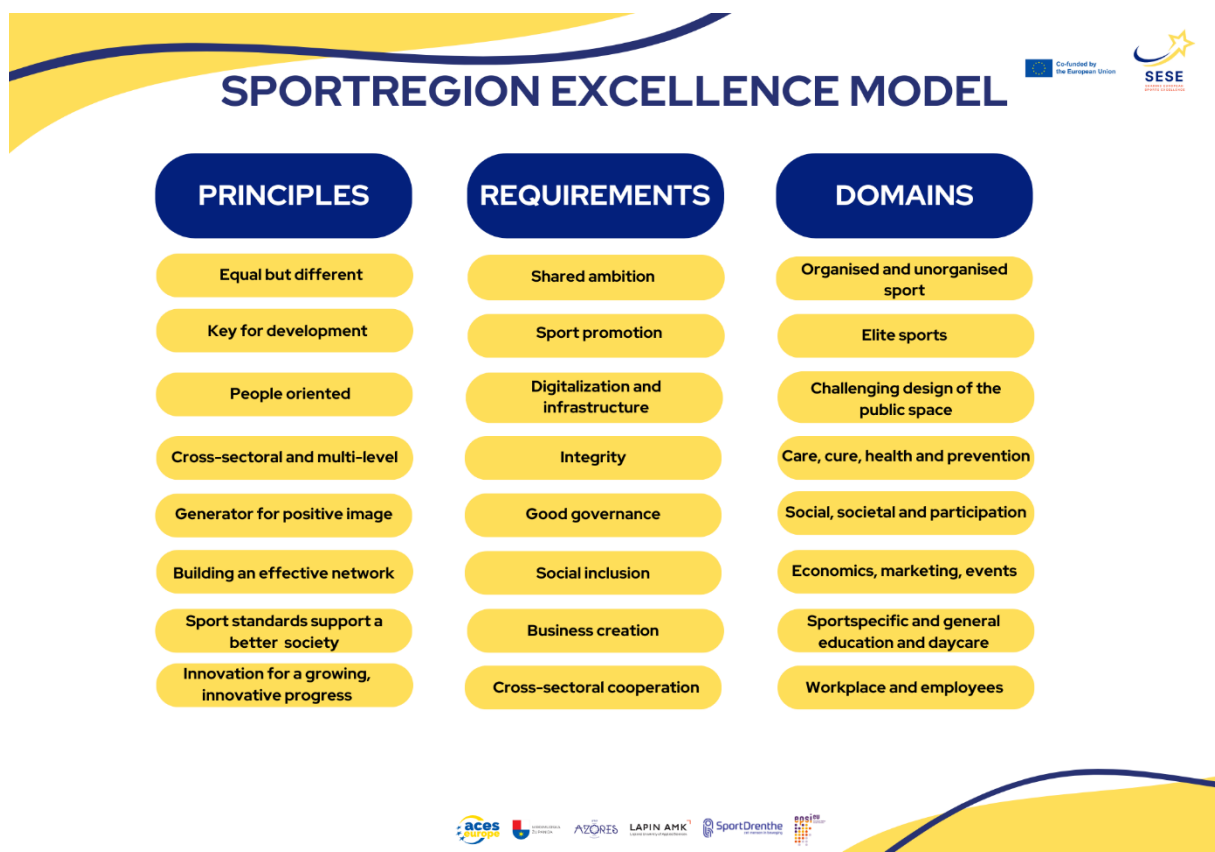


Figure 3. The Sharing European Sports Excellence Model (SESE Model)

4.1 The principles

The Principles of the Sharing European Sports Excellence Model (SESE Model) are the pillars of this project. The principles provide the basis for a shared vision on Regional Sports Excellence being both the foundation and the starting point for the implementation of the model. They represent the foundation, i.e. the stepping stone on which the SESE Model is built.

All regions that are considered to be excellent in sport share the principles presented hereafter.

4.1.1 PRINCIPLE 1: EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT

All regions with sport excellence have different characteristics, organization and resources, but they all intervene in common areas and with common goals in the field of sport, what makes them equal. As already mentioned, their common goal is effective promotion of physical activity and healthy lifestyles in order to raise the quality of life and wellbeing of the population. Common areas are investment in infrastructure, public funding of sport NGOs, development of human resources to perform targeted activities responding to the needs and motivation of the population.

4.1.2 PRINCIPLE 2: KEY FOR DEVELOPMENT

All regions consider sport to significantly contribute to regional development, enhancing both social and economic growth, thereby directly and indirectly having an impact on regional development.

Direct benefits of sport on a population's health and overall wellbeing seem to be widely known but physical activity tends not to be put to practice by individuals. Especially taking into account current negative trends of the sedentary lifestyles, increased screen-time and social media "addiction", and poor knowledge of nutrition, which are all having a negative effect on one's health, sport has a much deeper and broader role than mere leisure. It also influences cognitive development and contributes to learning outcomes and education in general. Moreover, sport opens opportunities for social inclusion of marginalized groups and increases social cohesion.

On the other hand, as the importance of sport increases, more business opportunities in the field arise. At the same time, in the area of competitive sport in order to assure funding, sport clubs need to be business oriented and adopt the entrepreneurial mindset.

4.1.3 PRINCIPLE 3: PEOPLE ORIENTED

Regional sport policies need to ensure that each individual (independent of their economic and social status, origin, or gender) has the opportunity to be active, improving their quality of life, health, social inclusion, education and personal development.

While designing effective regional sport policies regions need to have people's needs, expectations, habits and attitudes in mind, both in the case of grass-root and competitive sport. Only then policies and interventions will be successful and have the desired impact on regional development.

The first step is to perform a stakeholder analysis making sure that there is a proper understanding of different stakeholder groups and their adequate role in implementing policies through different interventions. Furtheron, in designing interventions and their assessment it is important to ensure public participation and engagement.

4.1.4 PRINCIPLE 4: CROSS-SECTORAL AND MULTI-LEVEL

Resources and organization of each region are fundamental to achieving sport excellence.

The stakeholder analysis already mentioned in the previous principle is a helpful tool to get the picture about the interest, influence and importance of stakeholders from different sectors and levels as well

as their relations. That includes organizations on the local, regional, national and even EU level from the public, private and civil society sector in the field of sport, healthcare, social services, education (academia), as well as the media.

To better understand this principle and assure that no one is left out from policies and interventions required to achieve sport excellence the questions one should bear in mind are: *Who has/owns the resources (human resources, equipment, physical infrastructure)? Who has an interest in sport excellence? Who decides? Who can influence behaviours and attitudes of target groups?*

4.1.5 PRINCIPLE 5: GENERATOR FOR POSITIVE IMAGE

Sport is a valuable instrument to influence intercultural, social, economic and political relationships. It enhances communication with people and organizations with purposes such as increasing the attractiveness and image of a region, in a visible and understandable way for the general public. A region's notoriety is often related to a specific sport event, sport club or athlete. At the same time, some nations and regions are perceived as more active than others thus contributing to the overall image of the area.

4.1.6 PRINCIPLE 6: BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE NETWORK

The success and experiences of other regions can help a region improve their own policy, exchange more opportunities and ideas and strengthen the philosophy that sport really has the power to build societies. Regions with proven ambitions and results, that work together on raising their level of sport excellence even higher, can be an example for other regions. In this respect, this Model is designed by regions and organizations all committed to sport excellence but with different approaches adapted to their unique circumstances and challenges. Working together on the same issues enriches the regions and gives new perspective and drive to enthusiasts responsible for everyday efforts to achieve even higher levels of excellence.

4.1.7 PRINCIPLE 7: SPORT STANDARDS SUPPORT A BETTER SOCIETY

The SESE Model has an impact on the increase and stabilization of quality standards in regional sport policies, through sharing experiences, good practices and training of stakeholders. This will contribute to raising the standard of intervention of regional sports authorities. With the crucial purpose being an improved level of raising awareness about the benefits of sport and physical activity, in the long run this will contribute to a healthier and happier society.

4.1.8 PRINCIPLE 8: INNOVATION FOR A GROWING, INNOVATIVE PROGRESS

Innovation has a significant importance in the context of sport, especially through the particularities of sport and innovation in a region, as well as adding value, contributing to its development and promoting the cross-sectoral dimension of sport. Social innovation, i.e. innovative approaches are necessary to tackle regional needs, including social, educational, digital, environmental, health and organizational challenges. In many cases, simple yet innovative solutions are most effective and at our grasp.

4.2 The Requirements

Requirements presented in this part of the document are the second component of the SESE Model. In order to achieve and maintain sport excellence regions need to approach the matter in a strategic way, coordinate all resources, support the system for sport promotion and ensure adequate

infrastructure. Good governance principles and integrity need to be insisted upon. Sport excellence can only be achieved by assuring social inclusion and supported by businesses and cross-sectoral cooperation.

4.2.1 REQUIREMENT 1: SHARED AMBITION

Firstly, it is important to emphasise that all regions are unique with their own characteristics, institutional capacity and approach to organization. It is undeniable that this institutional capacity and organization greatly influence its intervention in society.

However, all of them share the same ambition of constantly working to improve the quality of life of all groups in the population.

A region's level of governance and autonomy influences the navigation of the different levels of governance, especially in the relationship with organizations in the public sphere at national and local level, but also with the different stakeholders at each level.

The degree of administrative organization, through its definition of competencies and mode of action, through the regulation of its activity, guarantees an effective and transparent activity.

Last but not least, the installed capacity of each region, in terms of human, financial and material resources, is decisive for the proper functioning and application of public policies in the area of sport. The resources and organization of each region are fundamental to achieving these objectives. This all comes down to a network of organizations and enthusiastic individuals. In order to avoid ad hoc activities and assure a strategic and targeted approach, each region should organize the system appropriate to their own specifics and resources, always knowing who is responsible for which aspect.

4.2.2 REQUIREMENT 2: SPORT PROMOTION

Another requirement to achieve and maintain sport excellence is for regions to continuously promote sport and healthy lifestyles. To assure maximum results this needs to involve efforts from all sectors (public, civil, private). It is important to mention that the promotion of sports and physical activity is based on civil society organizations, namely sports federations, sports associations, sports clubs and other entities, coordinated by the public sector, i.e., regional or local authorities and public health institutions.

Public authorities need to support the civil society through the provision of financial and material resources (adequate and well-managed sports infrastructure being one).

This support focuses on:

- A) **Organized and Competitive Sport:** sport developed under the auspices of a national sports federation. The regions' focus in this matter is mainly on supporting grassroots sport and the regional and local phases of School Sport.

However, regions should not forget that, although on a smaller scale, it may also be essential to support some athletes who are at the elite level or who are on the way to getting there.

- B) **Sport for All**

These days, there is a clear rise in the sport for all movements across Europe, mostly meaning non-formal and informal sport, outside the sphere of organized sport. However, in some cases, there are NGOs focused on sports for all which are well organized and coordinated by regional and national federations.

There is a change in the way sport is viewed, in which physical activity is highlighted in promoting a healthy lifestyle, particularly with regard to the control of non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and various types of cancer, as well as such as preventing hypertension, maintaining a healthy body weight or improving mental health and quality of life and well-being.

The focus is to create the conditions and opportunities to increase and maintain the practice of physical activity and sport throughout life for the entire population, awakening society to recognize its benefits, promoting well-being and the adoption of healthy lifestyles.

For effective action in this area, regions must have adequate physical activity monitoring systems in place, invest in regular awareness campaigns, and promote sport while taking advantage of their natural resources and conditions (terrain, water surface).

Human Resources allocated to sport, which include coaches, volunteers and other sports staff are a precondition for sport promotion relying on the support of public sector.

Regions face difficulties in attracting, training, and retaining specialized resources. Likewise, volunteering today is a different challenge than in the past because of a significant generation shift. This requires a careful look on the part of political decision-makers to better understand the attitudes, values, behaviours, and preferences of younger generations to be able to find an effective mix of motivation strategies.

4.2.3 REQUIREMENT 3: DIGITALISATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

As already mentioned under the previous requirement, a network of public sports infrastructure in each region is a fundamental aspect for the existence of conditions for practicing sports with dignity.

Regions must take into account aspects such as planning, construction, renovation and maintenance of sports facilities, in order to be prepared and allocate the necessary resources to meet the needs of their population in a timely manner and avoid unnecessary pressure on existing facilities. In short, they need to organize an efficient and effective sport facility management.

However, when the public sector is not able to invest in the infrastructure due to financial restrictions, this can be overcome through public-private partnerships or sole private investments.

In line with modern equal opportunity policies, access to public facilities must be guaranteed to everyone, removing physical barriers and obstacles as well as financial ones. In terms of physical barriers, we need to look beyond the minimum prescribed by legal authorities and to find innovative solutions to obstacles perceived by different groups and individuals. This also means that we need to strive to make the use of sports infrastructure affordable to all groups of the population or even free of charge when possible.

Nowadays, physical infrastructure needs to be accompanied by modern digital infrastructure. According to the survey conducted by the Global Sport Innovation Centre (2019) technology brings new opportunities for teams to enhance athletes and teams' performance. Coaches will be able to gather data and analyze it in order to increase player welfare by preventing athlete injuries and facilitating recoveries, personalize trainings to optimize players potential and analyze game strategy on real time.

Digital media, for instance, can help engage sponsors, but, more importantly, it can be used as a platform to promote sports, physical activity and even volunteering. Furthermore, digitalization offers innovative ways to develop appealing content to reach a broad audience (some ideas can be found in

the section dealing with [best practices](#)) as well as to monitor the effectiveness of different interventions (eg. digital devices measuring the time spent physically active and its intensity).

4.2.4 REQUIREMENT 4: INTEGRITY

Threats to the integrity of sport can take several forms, including the following:

- Illegal betting
- Match-Fixing
- Doping
- Disruption of public contracts
- Corruption in the awarding of major public events
- Threats to children and young people in sport
- Violence
- Discrimination.

Derived from several situations, today, the protection of integrity in sport is a topic on the agenda. And so it must continue.

In addition to doping, we must not forget to mention the fight against corruption and match-fixing, the safeguarding of children and young people in sport, violence and discrimination.

A region of excellence must continue to implement actions aimed at preserving clean and fair sport. This is an inalienable commitment to sports development, which must be emphasized in a peremptory manner.

4.2.5 REQUIREMENT 5: GOOD GOVERNANCE

Successful organizations are those devoted to fulfilling their mission and achieving their objectives. In this respect, good governance principles including democracy, transparency, accountability in decision-making, and representative inclusiveness are essential. In achieving and maintaining sport excellence this in the first place refers to public financial support and management of sport infrastructure.

Regions must ensure, internally and externally, that there are compulsive quality standards, meaning, appropriate structures, efficient organization and management, the existence of accountability of stakeholders, transparency and clarity mechanisms, and assertiveness in the decision-making processes. These principles need to be blended into the organizational strategy of the public institutions but also demanded by those receiving public funding. Public calls for financial incentives in the field of sport and sports promotion can be a useful tool for that.

4.2.6 REQUIREMENT 6: SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Commission's White Paper on Sport (2007) recognizes the social function of sport, its economic dimension, and the specificity of its organization. Requirements 6 and 7 are closely related, but it is useful to distinguish the two.

The same document highlights the important contribution of sport to economic and social cohesion and to more integrated societies, using the potential of sport to promote social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities. In this respect sport can influence attitudes and positive mindsets, openness to new ideas and embracing diversity as a benefit for the whole society. It can also bring people closer together, mitigating the risk of isolating potentially marginalized groups (the elderly, people at the poverty line, neurodivergent individuals, persons with disabilities, etc.).

In 2009, with the Lisbon Treaty, the EU acquired specific competence in the field of sport. Article 6(e) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) gives the EU competence to support or complement the action of Member States in the field of sport, while Article 165(n) 1, specifies the details of a sports policy, stating that the Union must contribute “to the promotion of European aspects of sport, whilst taking into account its specificities, its structures based on volunteering and its social and educational function” (European Union, 2012).

These dimensions of sport, especially its social value, must be present in political choices and in the role of regions.

Considering the importance of this recognition for the sports sector, for its organizations and agents, these dimensions must be reflected in the model of excellence.

In terms of the social dimension, aspects such as: inclusion, the promotion of equality, cohesion, sustainable development and active citizenship must be considered. This is tightly linked to the Requirement 4 in the part related to accessibility of infrastructure as a precondition for social inclusion.

4.2.7 REQUIREMENT 7: BUSINESS CREATION

As for the economic dimension, already tackled in the previous requirement, aspects such as: measuring the effective economic impact of sport, innovation and development, employment, and the creation of new businesses must be considered. Namely, more and more individual sports and health experts, as well as sports clubs, recognize the opportunity for business creation in the field. In turn, this makes the whole sector more competitive, driving sport to progress and increase positive impact on the society.

Here are some business opportunities, identified in the regions with sport excellence, to illustrate these statements:

- Specific and innovative sports infrastructure not yet recognized by the public sector or when the public sector lacks financial resources for that particular investment;
- Specific and innovative sport, recreation and health related services not offered by public institutions – kinesitherapy, counselling (nutrition, sport psychology, sport medicine), individual or group coaching, courses to teach skills for particular sports...;
- Sport clubs turning their focus from sole public funding to sponsorships, adopting a business orientation...

4.2.8 REQUIREMENT 8: CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION

The European Union Work Plan for Sport for 2021-2024 as well as the Work Plan (2024-2027) recognize that sport could contribute to achieving the overall political priorities of the EU, and in particular the goals of various other policy areas such as innovation, digitalization, economy, education, health, youth, social affairs, inclusion, equality, gender equality, urban and rural development, transportation, environment, tourism, employment, and sustainability; and that those policy areas could support the promotion of sport, based on cross-sectoral cooperation (European Commission, 2024).

Cross-sectoral cooperation can play an important role in creating or optimizing conditions conducive to an active and healthy lifestyle and therefore in activating the positive social potential of sport and physical activity, as well as in stimulating innovation and economic dimension of sport. Coordinated actions at various levels can be more effective than isolated interventions.

Therefore, regions, at different levels of governance but above all in partnership with other sectors at regional level, must promote transversal policies.

4.3 Domains

In addition to the principles and requirements, which already indicate that Sports Policy can be applied broadly, it can also be helpful to list the domains in which interventions can be made to reach sports excellence. As already concluded, regions aiming at being excellent in sport need to have in mind different target groups in the whole population with their specific needs, motivation, and attitudes in terms of sport and recreation (more about this in the section dealing with [stakeholders](#)). Various options are highlighted in the scope of domains, ranging from organized and competitive sports to designing a health-friendly workplace, all of which can be used as inspiration in reaching sports excellence.

4.3.1 DOMAIN 1: ORGANIZED AND UNORGANIZED SPORTS

Sports as understood in this model concerns all forms of sports or better all forms of being active regularly. From recovery after an injury or a surgery, from reintegration of individuals or joint walks or bike rides to organized competitive sports. Of course there is a focus, but the description covers the entire range of being active, with the national Exercise Standard (different everywhere) as the starting point.

4.3.2 DOMAIN 2: ELITE SPORTS

Top sport or elite sports often plays an important role in sports policy. This is because a lot of policy is being developed (in the chain from selection, talent development to international prestige) and because it receives a lot of media attention. Regions need to consider their role is in the field of top sport, but in many cases, top sport policy lies with the national government, often delegated to national organizations such as the Olympic committees.

4.3.3 DOMAIN 3: CHALLENGING DESIGN OF THE PUBLIC SPACE

Many of the activities take place on an individual's initiative or in various public spaces. Running, walking, and cycling are the obvious options taking place in public spaces not designed particularly for sport purposes, but there are many more. By using the natural environment, you can quickly increase sports participation (people who meet the exercise standard). While designing public spaces like parks, squares, traffic paths, etc., the future use for recreation needs to be taken into consideration and an appropriate level of public discussion assured. Adopting [New European Bauhaus \(NEB\)](#) values and principles can provide a useful guide. The NEB initiative promotes solutions that are not only sustainable but also inclusive and beautiful, while respecting the diversity of places, traditions, and cultures.

4.3.4 DOMAIN 4: CARE, CURE, HEALTH AND PREVENTION

“Prevention is better than cure” is an age-old statement that always holding. Inactivity is perhaps the greatest threat to health. Developments in society, especially technological developments, mean that

people tend to exercise less and less. Sports policy should always greatly encourage exercise in all areas. Finding ways to motivate individuals of all ages to invest their time in physical activity is crucial and requires a broad discussion and the involvement of different stakeholders. This is why this domain considers the role of the health sector – public health institutions and family physicians in the first place. While public health institutions can organize different campaigns and activities for the general public, family doctors and internists can proscribe regular physical activity to the patients they identify as inactive. [Exercise in Medicine: A Global Health Initiative](#) offers useful guidelines and tools to encourage health care providers to promote physical activity. “Doctor’s orders” can, in some cases, make just the push required for an individual to change their habits.

[WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour \(2020\)](#)

include recommendations for children, adolescents, adults and older adults (including specific subpopulations) on the amount of physical activity (frequency, intensity and duration). These are, among others, intended for policy makers at different levels developing plans to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour.

4.3.5 DOMAIN 5: SOCIAL, SOCIETAL AND PARTICIPATION

Sports has the power to bring people together. Participation in group sport and recreational activities can have a positive impact on the level of motivation, improved skills for a particular sport and increased team cohesion. On the other hand, there are individuals that prefer to be active in their own time and on their terms which is fine as well. In each case, the point is to be active. Namely, WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour (2020) emphasise that physical activity generates positive outcomes on society in terms of mental health (e.g. reduction in depressive symptoms, rise in self-esteem, reduced anxiety symptoms) and improved cognitive outcomes (academic performance, executive functions). Sport policy, therefore, needs to have in mind that all forms of activity will generate positive impacts in terms of contributing to a happy thriving community.

Under this domain, the role of the civil sector (NGOs) and various public institutions like kindergartens, schools, universities etc. is considered. As an example of an event including a broad audience and different public institutions as well as the civil society in the section on best practices, you can find [BIMEP - “Cycling the trails of Međimurje”](#).

4.3.6 DOMAIN 6: ECONOMICS, MARKETING, EVENTS

Sport can give the region an important economic boost as part of positioning the region as an active tourism destination. Particularly large events, like national, European or world competitions on one hand, or attractive recreational events as marathons or cycling races can promote regions and create different spill-over effects on the tourism sector (longer stays for incoming athletes, their teams and spectators, spending in restaurants, cafes, visits to different tourist.

Tjelesna aktivnost je lijek

Recept za tjelesnu aktivnost/vježbanje

Pripremio
zavod za javno zdravstvo
međimurske županije
prema globalnoj inicijativi *Exercise is Medicine*
(Izvor: <http://www.exerciseismedicine.org/>)

Rp/ Ime i prezime: _____ Datum: _____

Preporuke za provođenje tjelesne aktivnosti:

Aerobna aktivnost

Tip: Hodanje Nordijsko hodaње Vožnja biciklom Trčanje Plivanje _____

Frekvencija (dana u tjednu): 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Intenzitet: Lagan (kao kod laganog hodaња) Umjereni (kao kod brzog hodaња) Visoki (kao kod trčanja)

Vrijeme (minuta na dan): 10 20 30 60 Više od 60

Koraka na dan: 2500 5000 7500 10000 Više od 10000

Vježbe snage

- Vježbe za jačanje mišića se trebaju provoditi **najmanje 2 x tjedno**.
- Vježbe moraju uključivati sve glavne skupine mišića: bokovi, leđa, prsa, trbuh, ramena, ruke, stražnjica.
- Za svaku vježbu, potrebno je napraviti 8-12 ponavljanja.
- Primjeri vježbi snage uključuju vježbe koje se izvode težinom vlastitog tijela, npr. trbušnjaci, iskorak, nošenje težih tereta, teže vrtlarjenje.

Potpis doktora: _____

U slučaju otežanog disanja, nepravilnog rada srca, bolova u prsima ili omaglice, obavezno prekinite aktivnost i savjetujte se s vašim liječnikom!

Beside that, not to be neglected, professional competitive sport, especially in case of remarkable results, can help create better recognition and overall image of a nation, which again influences on regions as well.

Sport has another economic aspect. Healthcare costs are a threat to the economy. The idea exists that investing in an active lifestyle is an important economic investment (approximately investing one euro gives a return of at least €2.5).

4.3.7 DOMAIN 7: SPORTSPECIFIC AND GENERAL EDUCATION AND DAYCARE

Another domain in which efforts to increase physical activity and promote sport can have long-standing results is the educational system at all levels (starting at an early age from kindergartens and up to the university level). The habits of being physically active need to be adopted early on and indirectly by motivating children to be active and teaching them about the benefits, the effect can be created on the whole family. Regions are mostly not in charge of school curricula but can try to increase the level of physical activity in schools through different projects and initiatives in cooperation with schools, sport clubs, and regional federations.

In the formal and informal education system there are various programmes and courses at different levels educating professionals in sport.

4.3.8 DOMAIN 8: WORKPLACE AND EMPLOYEES

Adults spend 1/3 of their time at work, which puts a responsibility on employers to consider the health aspect of the workplace. Unfortunately, not all employers are aware of that responsibility, and this is where public policies can make a difference and motivate them to adapt their human resource policies and strategies by having the employees' well-being in mind. This, in turn, will result in reduced absenteeism, increased organizational commitment, motivation and productivity of employees, and even reduced turnover.

There are various possibilities for employers to make simple interventions in the workplace. From providing pilates balls to sit on instead of chairs to investing in exercise equipment to be available at work. Outside of work, employers can offer subsidized sports facility memberships or motivate individuals to engage in team sports competitions.

Commuter traffic plays a role in this as well. Encouraging walking or cycling can be important. But it is also useful to see how sitting during the working day can be interrupted as effectively as possible or how active exercise can be stimulated, for example, during the lunch break. This can help employees reduce work-related stress which reduces health problems in the long run.

There is an interesting initiative of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Institute of Public Health in the scope of the project [Living healthy](#). A component of the project dedicated to health at the workplace includes the module Health-friendly Company, which labels a company recognizing healthy values and caring about improving health of their employees.



5

PRE-ASSESSMENT OF REGIONS



5 Pre-assessment of regions

The Pre-assessment tool allows interested regions to analyze their existing efforts and identify potential areas for improvement and interventions before implementing the SESE model following the capacity building training programme (E-book). The precondition for conducting the pre-assessment is that the region has adopted some form of sport policy or relevant strategic document in the field of sport.

Regions can, therefore use this tool to give a score from 1 to 5 (1 being the least applicable, 5 being the most applicable) to evaluate the suggested statements. Through the final sum of principles and requirements, regions will identify the direction in which they can progress thanks to the SESE E-book training programme. Scoring of domains will give regions an inspiration in which area they can intervene and invest to stimulate sport development.

The final scoring consists of a sum of grades for **principles and requirements** (80 points in total).

PRE-ASSESSMENT TOOL

PRINCIPLES

Promotion of sport and physical activity is of excellent quality.

1 2 3 4 5

Sport is used as a mechanism for regional development.

1 2 3 4 5

Sport policies are designed to ensure that each individual has the same opportunity to be active and engage in physical activity.

1 2 3 4 5

Stakeholders from different levels (local, regional and national) and sectors are included in the sports policy development.

1 2 3 4 5

The region is adequately promoted and recognized through sport.

1 2 3 4 5

Cooperation and networking with other regions is crucial to improve sport policies based on good practice examples and adoption of measures.

1 2 3 4 5

Interventions like sharing experiences, good practices and training of stakeholders are included in the sport policy development.

1 2 3 4 5

Promotion of innovation (business, social, digital, environmental, etc.) is crucial in the development of sport policies.

1 2 3 4 5

PRE-ASSESSMENT TOOL

REQUIREMENTS

Functioning of resources (human, financial and material) and organisation system in sport is excellent.

1 2 3 4 5

Regional policies are designed to promote sport and physical activity through civil society organisations and coordinated by the public sector.

1 2 3 4 5

Access to sports infrastructure is accompanied by modern digital infrastructure.

1 2 3 4 5

Implementation of actions is aimed at preserving fair sport with integrity.

1 2 3 4 5

Good governance principles (including democracy, transparency, accountability) and inclusion of stakeholders is implemented in the decision-making process, with emphasis on public financial support and management of sport infrastructure.

1 2 3 4 5

Sport is used to promote social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities through policy development.

1 2 3 4 5

The economic impact of sport, innovation and development is measured and evaluated with the aim to support the business aspect in sport.

1 2 3 4 5

Cross-sectoral cooperation and promotion of transversal policies is implemented into the policy development process.

1 2 3 4 5

PRE-ASSESSMENT TOOL

FINAL SCORING

90 %

72-80 points

EXCELLENT

80 %

64 - 72 points

GOOD

70 %

56 - 64 points

MODERATE

60 %

48 - 56 points

MODEST

The final scoring consists of a sum of grades for principles and requirements (80 points in total).

PRE-ASSESSMENT TOOL

FINAL SCORING

EXCELLENT



Congratulations! Your region is an excellent example of how sports policies and strategies should be implemented. Sport and physical activity are highly promoted, and sport plays a key role in regional development. Policies ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, with strong involvement of stakeholders at all levels. Resources are well-managed, infrastructure is modern and digitally supported, and there is a strong collaboration with other regions. Innovation is a driving force in your sports development, and the economic impact of sport is systematically evaluated. Your region serves as a role model and an inspiration to others!

PRE-ASSESSMENT TOOL

FINAL SCORING

GOOD



Well done! Your region has a good level of sports policy development and implementation. There is a clear strategy for promoting sports and physical activity, and stakeholders are actively involved. Sports infrastructure is accessible, and resources are efficiently managed. Cross-regional cooperation is in place, and innovation is encouraged, though there is still room for further improvement. By strengthening some key areas, particularly in evaluation and networking, your region can reach even higher levels of excellence. Keep up the great work!

PRE-ASSESSMENT TOOL

FINAL SCORING

MODERATE



Good effort! Your region has a moderate level of sports policy development. There is recognition of the sport's role in regional growth, but some challenges remain in fully implementing policies and ensuring stakeholder inclusion. Infrastructure is available but could be improved with better digital integration. Innovation and economic evaluation are not yet fully established. Your region has great potential—by enhancing cooperation, improving governance, and making better use of resources, you can take sports development to the next level. Keep progressing!

PRE-ASSESSMENT TOOL

FINAL SCORING

MODEST



Keep going! Your region is at a modest level in terms of sports policy development, with room for significant growth. While some efforts have been made, sport is not yet fully recognized as a driving force for regional development, and stakeholder participation is limited. Infrastructure and digital access need improvement, and better management of resources is required. Innovation is not yet systematically integrated, and the economic impact of sports remains unmeasured. With more strategic investment and planning, your region can make great progress and become a strong player in sports development. Keep pushing forward!

6

POOL OF EXPERTS



6 Pool of experts

The pool of experts is the body formed within the SESE project which consists of experts from partnering institutions as well as experts/holders of the identified best practice examples. The pool of experts is a group of sports professionals from various sectors, covering different areas, and contributing to supporting organizations in implementing the SESE methodological framework and the Excellence standards to achieve the status of a European Excellence Sportregion. A partnering institution in charge of each best practice example will, as an expert, be in charge of giving technical assistance for the potential implementation of the selected best practice in other regions, together with other members of the Pool of experts. In this way, they will provide support and advice/consult regions who are interested in the implementation of selected best practice within their territory and government. Regions that selected the best practice example for the implementation are advised to consult the Pool of experts.

Partnering institutions within the Pool of experts are the following:

Table 2. Pool of experts

Partner Institution	Region	Webpage	Contact information
The Regional Directorate for Sport	Azores, Portugal	https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/dr	Regional Directorate for Sport, drd@azores.gov.pt
SportDrenthe	Drenthe, Netherlands	https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	Rick Horst, rhorst@sportdrenthe.nl
Lapland University of Applied Sciences	Lapland, Finland	https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1	Benjamin Taylor, Benjamin.Taylor@lapinamk.fi
Međimurje County	Međimurje County, Croatia	https://www.redea.hr/kontakt/	Public Institution for the Development of the Međimurje County REDEA, reda@reda.hr
ACES Europe	Bruxelles, Belgium	https://aceseurope.eu/	Alessio Di Maio, alessio.dimaio@acesitalia.eu Gian Francesco Lupattelli, aces@aces-europa.eu Hugo Alonso, hugo.alonso@aces-europa.eu Andre de Jeu, a.dejeu@sportengemeenten.nl Luca Parmigiani, italia@aces-europa.eu
EPSI	Bruxelles, Belgium	https://www.epsi.eu/	Fundraising Department of EPSI: info@epsi.eu

Role of organisations in the Pool of experts

1. **The Regional Directorate for Sport (Direção Regional do Desporto - DRD)** is a key entity within the Regional Government of the Azores. Our mission is to implement sports policies, create, coordinate, and support sports activities, and promote physical and sports activities among the Azorean population. As member of the Pool of experts, DRD will provide valuable insights and support to regions aiming to adopt and implement our best practices. DRD can assist in:
 - Policy Implementation: to ensure the effective implementation of sports policies that promote physical activity and sports participation across all age groups.
 - Community Engagement: by fostering a culture of sports and physical activity, engaging local communities and encourage widespread participation in sports.
 - Youth Development: focus on developing youth sports programs that nurture young talent and promote healthy lifestyles from an early age.
 - Event Organization: DRD's experience in organizing sports events, such as the Gala do Desporto Açoriano, showcases their ability to celebrate and recognize sports achievements, which can serve as a model for other regions.
 - Infrastructure Development: to support the development and maintenance of sports facilities, ensuring they meet the needs of the community and promote active lifestyles.
 - Training and Education: to provide training and educational resources for coaches, athletes, and sports administrators to enhance their skills and knowledge.
 - By sharing experiences and best practices, DRD's aim is to inspire and assist other regions in their journey towards promoting sports and physical activity.

2. **SportDrenthe** - since 1968 SportDrenthe has been an organisation that independently represents the interests of sport in the broadest sense of the word in the province of Drenthe (The Netherlands). On 16 November 2018, they celebrated their 50th anniversary. 'Making Drenthe even better with sports', is our guiding principle here. The office consists of 40 permanent employees. They work for and with the province of Drenthe, all municipalities and all social institutions in Drenthe. They support around 1,300 sports clubs in Drenthe. One of the main programs of SportDrenthe is Drenthe Beweegt. Drenthe Beweegt is a program, realised by SportDrenthe, but financed by all 12 municipalities and the province of Drenthe. This program started 2009 and started a new period in January 2021 (till 2024). Drenthe Beweegt will be responsible for the Drenthe-part of the European project. Being initiator and true ambassador for SeSe, SportDrenthe with their participants will stay involved and enthusiastic in the period after the project period. They want to the help other regions to become excellent in sports and healthy lifestyle and are ready to support.

3. **Lapland University of Applied Sciences – Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Lapland UAS)** is optimally positioned to provide best practices in the field of sports within Lapland, particularly in Arctic and winter sports. As the northernmost University of Applied Sciences in the European Union, Lapland UAS has established itself as a leading institution in sports innovation and research. The university has extensive experience in research and development, actively participating in numerous national and EU-funded projects.

Lapland UAS plays a pivotal role in the Lapland Sports Academy, which supports the dual career pathway for athletes by facilitating the combination of academic studies with high-performance sports training. The Academy has been awarded top-sports academy status by the Finnish Olympic Committee, underscoring its excellence in athlete development.

Furthermore, Lapland UAS collaborates with national sports federations, regional sports organizations, and international networks such as the European Athlete as Student (EAS) network and Inno4Sport, fostering cross-border cooperation in sports innovation.

With its strong institutional partnerships, commitment to regional development, and expertise in Arctic sports, Lapland UAS serves as a key driver not only for the SESE project but also advancing sports education, research, and best practices in the European Arctic region.

3. **Public Institution REDEA** is regional development agency and regional coordinator for Međimurje county. They provide support and expertise, initiates and implements strategic projects of regional relevance in the field of strategic planning and regional development, social and economic development. REDEA has experience in implementation of various transnational projects, regional initiatives, training programmes and conferences. As member of the Pool of experts, REDEA will provide support and assistance to other regions when implementing best practices from Međimurje County and connect regions with relevant stakeholders for a particular best practice example.
4. **ACES** - ACES is a non-profit association based in Brussels which assigns every year the recognitions of World Capital, European Capital, Region, City, Island, Community and Town of Sport. The allocation of these recognitions is done by ACES, according to the principles of responsibility and ethics, being aware that sport is a factor of aggregation of the society, improvement in the quality of life, psycho-physical well-being and complete integration within social classes in the community. ACES provides support to candidates and potential winners and guide them through the whole process of their candidature. ACES will provide support to regions implementing the SESE Model and the E-book as potential candidates for the European capital of sport title.

ACES is also official partnership of UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

5. **EPSI** - EPSI is a European membership-based networking organization that focuses on promoting innovation in sports, physical activity, healthy lifestyles, vitality, the environment, and related sectors. Its mission is to create an innovation-friendly environment within the EU sports ecosystem by stimulating technological advancements and fostering business development across the entire innovation spectrum.

In the context of the SESE project, EPSI plays a crucial role within the Pool of Experts by leveraging its extensive network to connect regions, stakeholders, and various realities, helping them develop their ideas and secure funding for innovative sports initiatives.

EPSI members have exclusive access to the Members Only Zone (MoZ), a dedicated platform where they can find tailored resources, networking opportunities, and funding insights. Within the MoZ, members can:

- Access up-to-date lists of funding opportunities and relevant calls for proposals.
- Connect with other EPSI members, potential project partners, and experts.
- Share and develop project ideas through collaborative discussions.
- Stay informed about upcoming events, workshops, and training sessions designed to enhance project development and funding success.

7

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER



7 Best practice examples and knowledge transfer

Within the SESE project and correspondent WP2 and WP3, project partners from **Finland** (Lapland region), **Croatia** (Međimurje county), the **Netherlands** (Drenthe region) and **Portugal** (Azores) identified its best practices that are related with sport policies on the fields of digitalization, social inclusion and business creation. This chapter provides an overview of selected best practices from the previously mentioned regions. Some of these best practices are ongoing from year to year, while others have already been completed. The showcased examples highlight innovative approaches, effective solutions, and measurable positive outcomes that have been achieved through the implementation of specific sports-related initiatives in these regions. Each practice has been carefully selected to illustrate the tangible **impacts and results** these efforts have had on the communities, ranging from promoting healthy lifestyles and social inclusion to driving regional development and fostering cross-sector collaboration. By presenting these examples of best practices, the document aims to facilitate knowledge exchange, inspire new ideas, and encourage the adoption of proven strategies in other regions or projects. The comparative analysis not only demonstrates the transformative potential of sports but also underscores the importance of collaboration in addressing shared challenges and achieving sustainable development goals through sports and physical activity.

OVERVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES:

- Best practices are categorized based on the module they contribute to the most: digitalization, business creation, or social inclusion.
- Each best practice within a module is further categorized according to the **TARGET GROUP** as follows:
- Some best practices can have an even greater impact—for example, those that include marginalized groups, people with disabilities, etc. These best practices are marked with a star symbol - ★



Next to the name of each best practice, you will find the contact information of the responsible expert who can provide more details about the specific best practice or connect you directly with the BP holder. The named experts are part of the „pool of experts“—a group of sports professionals from various sectors, covering different areas, and contributing to supporting organizations in implementing the SESE methodological framework and the Excellence standards to achieve the status of a European Excellence Sportregion.

7.1


MODULE 1: DIGITALIZATION



7.1 MODULE 1: DIGITALIZATION

MODULE	BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE	TRAINING AREAS COVERED	BEST PRACTICE HOLDER	SESE REQUIREMENTS
DIGITALIZATION	Neighbourhood Sports Coaches	Management	Drenthe	1. Sport ambition 2. Sport promotion 8. Cross sectoral cooperation
	Regional Cooperation	Management	Drenthe	2. Sport promotion 8. Cross-sectoral cooperation 5. Good governance
	School Playground coaches	Technical training	Drenthe	2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion
	Westerveld Toppers	Management	Drenthe	1. Shared ambition 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
	Moving in public spaces	Management Technical training	Drenthe	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 5. Good governance
	Youth & Adult fund sport and culture	Management	Drenthe	4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
	Lifelong exercise	Management	Drenthe	2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
	Old Stars	Management Technical training	Drenthe	2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion

Safe Dressingroom	Management Technical training	Drenthe	3. Digitalization and infrastructure 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation
Social Safe Sports	Management Technical training	Drenthe	3. Digitalization and infrastructure 6. Social inclusion
Lapland UAS Sports Lab	Technical training	Lapland	3. Digitalization and infrastructure 7. Business creation
Međimurje bike mobile app – Cyclist Welcome Quality standard	Entrepreneurship	Međimurje	1. Shared ambition 3. Digitalization and infrastructure 6. Social inclusion
On the move	Management	Međimurje	2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
Trainings and preparations for professional athletes	Management	Međimurje	2. Sport promotion 3. Digitalization and infrastructure. 7. Business creation

NAME OF THE BEST PRACTICE	GENERAL DESCRIPTION - TARGET AUDIENCE	RESULTS	IMPACTS
DRENTHÉ REGION, NETHERLANDS			
NEIGHBOURHOOD SPORTS COACHES Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>A Neighbourhood Sports Coach is dedicated to promoting sports and physical activity within the local community. Their primary objective is to engage as many residents as possible, particularly those who might not naturally seek out exercise. These coaches are typically employed by municipal sports organizations or social welfare institutions. They play a pivotal role in establishing sports activities, offering advice on healthy living, collaborating with schools and community partners, and organizing sports events.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience, from children to the elderly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Participation: More people, especially inactive groups, adopt active lifestyles. Drenthe has approximately 80 coaches. • Community Connection: Activities bridge age and cultural gaps, fostering social interaction. • Health Promotion: Focus on exercise reduces risks of obesity, diabetes, and other health issues. • Collaboration: Engagement with 252 primary schools, 18 secondary schools, and 2200 sports clubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved health and reduced healthcare costs. • Strengthened social cohesion and sense of belonging. • Economic benefits through lower absenteeism and support for local sports initiatives.
 REGIONAL COOPERATION Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>The Drenthe community spirit, deeply rooted in its culture and history, is central to the region's sports and societal development. Historically a less affluent region, Drenthe relied on mutual support and cooperation, which evolved into a collective ambition for improvement. At the start of the 21st century, the region launched the Drenthe beweegt program to use sports and exercise as tools to enhance social cohesion, health, and regional</p>	<p>Strong networks: 13 authorities collaborate in structured Sports and Exercise Consultations.</p> <p>81 Neighborhood Sports Coaches across 12 municipalities.</p> <p>Management by Drenthe beweegt, involving municipalities and social organizations.</p> <p>Support from SportDrenthe, a sports service organization with 40 employees.</p>	<p>Social cohesion: sports foster bonds, a sense of belonging, and neighborhood solidarity.</p> <p>Health improvements: increased physical and mental well-being through active lifestyles.</p> <p>Social inclusion: vulnerable groups are included in sports, reducing isolation and promoting equality.</p>

	<p>attractiveness.</p> <p>Volunteer-driven sports clubs and initiatives are vital in fostering solidarity, inclusivity, and well-being, with special focus on vulnerable groups like the elderly and disabled.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly</p>		<p>Economic benefits: volunteerism and community involvement boost local economies through events and club activities.</p>
<p><u>SCHOOL PLAYGROUND COACHES</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>Students in the final year of elementary school (Group 8) are trained by Neighborhood Sports Coaches to become playground coaches. Over three lessons, students learn to design, practice, and implement activities for their peers. After completing internships where they lead playground activities for other classes, they graduate with a sports package and an activity guide, including their own games.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: students (Group 8) and Neighborhood Sports Coaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills improvement: Students develop collaboration, communication, and empathy. • Bullying reduction: Playground coaches help recognize, address, and prevent bullying. • Positive playground atmosphere: A safer, more inclusive environment fosters respect and cooperation. • Enhanced teacher-student communication: Coaches bridge gaps and improve mutual understanding. • Strengthened school community: Collaboration among students, teachers, and parents promotes a supportive play environment. 	<p>Research from the Netherlands and Belgium shows playground coaches reduce bullying, enhance social skills, and create inclusive playgrounds. The program's success depends on proper implementation and evaluation but consistently demonstrates benefits for students and schools</p>
<p><u>WESTERVELD TOPPERS</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>Westerveld Toppers is a sports program for children aged 6–12 who, for various reasons, lack access to regular sports clubs. Held every Thursday at the De Hulsebosch sports complex in Dwingeloo, the program offers monthly rotations of different sports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Sessions: 32 sessions per year across eight months, plus summer and winter specials. • Broad Reach: 80 participants per month (120 unique 	<p>Increased Inclusivity: Provides children with the opportunity to engage in sports at their own level.</p> <p>Parental Feedback: Parents report happier, more confident</p>

	<p>Training is provided by local sports clubs, exercise coaches, and a physiotherapist, ensuring a diverse and inclusive experience. Approximately 80 children from four main villages in the municipality participate each month.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: children aged 6–12</p>	<p>annually), with half not engaged in other sports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to Clubs: 10–20% of participants eventually join organized sports clubs. 	<p>children who feel a sense of belonging.</p> <p>Community Influence: Encourages municipalities to adopt similar inclusive sports initiatives.</p>
<p><u>MOVING IN PUBLIC SPACES</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>"Moving in public space" refers to promoting outdoor physical activities like walking, cycling, and exercising. Urban planning and policies focus on creating safe, accessible, and well-designed spaces that encourage movement, improve public health, and enhance the quality of life. Key initiatives include building bike lanes, public parks, exercise gardens, and organizing community fitness events, fostering active and vibrant communities.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-friendly routes to schools and sports clubs. • New exercise gardens in Drenthe villages. • Additional walking, cycling, and mountain bike routes. • Increased community fitness events. 	<p>Improved Public Health: Encourages physical activity, reducing risks of chronic diseases.</p> <p>Social Cohesion: Public spaces become hubs for social interaction and community bonding.</p> <p>Enhanced Spatial Quality: Green spaces and trails create attractive, livable environments.</p> <p>Sustainable Mobility: Promotes walking and cycling, reducing car dependency, pollution, and congestion.</p> <p>Economic Benefits: Activity-friendly zones boost local businesses and tourism.</p>
<p><u>YOUTH & ADULT FUND SPORT AND CULTURE</u> ★</p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>The Adult Fund Sport & Culture provides financial support to low-income adults (18+) to enable their participation in sports and cultural activities. This includes membership in sports clubs or lessons in dance, music, theatre, or visual arts. The initiative addresses financial barriers that limit access</p>	<p>Research studies reveal significant positive outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of participants report increased self-confidence. • 84% met new people through funded activities. 	<p>The fund positively influences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health: Promotes physical and mental well-being. • Social Inclusion: Builds connections and combats isolation.

	to these activities for low-income individuals, promoting inclusivity and participation. TARGET GROUP: low-income youth and adults (18+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% feel healthier due to participation. Further research highlights that financial support effectively increases participation in sports and culture for low-income groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence and Skills: Enhances self-esteem and personal growth. • Equity: Reduces financial barriers, enabling broader access to sports and cultural experiences.
LIFELONG EXERCISE Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>In Drenthe, 50% of residents regularly engage in exercise, but 35% (175,000 people) aspire to be active yet face barriers. The initiative "#MovingForALifetime" by SportDrenthe addresses these challenges by supporting active individuals to maintain their habits and encouraging non-active residents to begin exercising. The approach acknowledges mental barriers such as shame, fear of judgment, and unrealistic expectations, offering a supportive, non-judgmental environment to promote lifelong movement.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly</p>	KEY ACTIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the E-magazine "#ALifetimeOfMoving" (December 2021) to inspire and guide residents. • Launch of the 2022 campaign "#LivingActiveForALifetime" targeting the 175,000 residents who aspire to be active. • Focus on the "Moving Scale" concept to assess and address barriers to physical activity. 	<p>Inclusivity: Promotes exercise for all by addressing physical and mental barriers.</p> <p>Community Health: Encourages a healthier lifestyle across all demographics.</p> <p>Empowerment: Helps individuals build confidence and realistic expectations around physical activity.</p>
OLD STARS Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>The "Old Stars" program, initiated by the National Elderly Fund and Eredivisie CV, promotes physical activity and social engagement among the elderly. It offers adapted sports such as walking football, volleyball, and korfbal, tailored to older participants' abilities. The program is implemented in Drenthe by FC Emmen and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking Football: Participants became 3.3 hours more active weekly, with improved balance (28% to 60%) and flexibility (25% to 54%) according to the University of Groningen. • Volleyball: A 12-week study by Amsterdam University showed significant enhancements in 	<p>Physical Health: Improves balance, flexibility, and muscle strength, reducing health risks in later life.</p> <p>Social Connections: Encourages bonding, reduces loneliness, and strengthens community ties.</p>

	<p>SportDrenthe, emphasizing sports, social interaction, and fun.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: elderly population</p>	<p>participants balance, responsiveness, and endurance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Korfball: Participants experienced increased physical activity, reduced loneliness, and a higher quality of life. 	<p>Challenging Stereotypes: Demonstrates the active potential and societal value of older individuals.</p> <p>Economic Benefits: Supports public health and reduces healthcare costs associated with inactivity and isolation.</p>
<p>SAFE DRESSINGROOM ★</p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>The <i>Safe Dressingroom</i> project focuses on creating a safe sports environment, with an emphasis on the physical and social safety of the LGBTIQ+ community. Through a step-by-step plan, sports clubs work towards establishing safe dressing rooms, aiming to obtain the "Safe Dressingroom" visual label. This initiative was launched in collaboration with organizations fighting for LGBTIQ+ safety.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: sport clubs and sport facilities</p>	<p>Three sports associations (a football club, a hockey club, and an athletics club) tested the protocol and implemented it within their organizations.</p> <p>Significant progress has been made, and the project has advanced. The project will continue, with plans to expand its development to other European countries in order to achieve a proven intervention and EU label.</p>	<p>The project contributes to creating a safe sports and recreational environment for everyone, with special attention to LGBTIQ+ individuals, fostering a more inclusive society within sports communities.</p>
<p>SOCIAL SAFE SPORTS ★</p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>A socially safe, positive and inclusive sports culture ensures more sports enjoyment, fewer athletes dropping out, better personal development of athletes and a positive impact on society. The approach follows a pyramid structure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safe: Every club should meet basic social safety standards (4 V's) and actively work towards creating a welcoming environment both in the dressing room and on the field, with a focus on inclusivity for all, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2024, at least one special Exercise Club (Beweegclub) will exist in every municipality. • Nearly 20 special exercise coaches (Beweegcoaches) trained to guide those who may not exercise on their own. • A daily TV program, Drenthe Moves Together, has been created for this target group. 	<p>The program has raised the profile of exercise, making it more prominent than sports in many areas. Exercise is increasingly recognized by governments for its health benefits, leading to improved health and greater societal participation. By promoting structured exercise and societal involvement, health improves, and individuals contribute more to the community.</p>

	<p>including LGBTIQ+ individuals (Safe Dressing Room).</p> <p>2. Positive: The next step involves implementing positive coaching, creating a pedagogical climate, and offering club management coaching.</p> <p>3. Inclusive: To make sports truly inclusive, some clubs will need specific offerings, though this may not be feasible for all clubs.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly</p>		<p>Increasing participation in sports and cultural activities for low-income adults.</p> <p>Strengthening social cohesion through shared activities, fostering new social connections.</p> <p>Promoting health and well-being, benefiting both individuals and society.</p> <p>Stimulating the local economy by supporting sports and cultural institutions.</p> <p>Increasing equal opportunities by enabling low-income individuals to participate in activities, reducing social disparities.</p>
LAPLAND REGION, FINLAND			
<p>LAPLAND UAS SPORTS LAB</p> <p>Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p>The <i>Lapland University of Applied Sciences Sports Lab</i>, located in Ounasvaara, serves as a learning, testing, and RDI (Research, Development, and Innovation) environment for physical education, sports, well-being, rehabilitation, and coaching. It is part of the Olympic Training Center and aims to support the region's economy by acting as a platform for SMEs and generating knowledge for the area. It also supports skills development and skills training in national networks. In addition, the lab's</p>	<p>The facility has been open for about 1.5 years, and while the benefits for students and athletes are still being optimized, the potential is high. Courses Offered at the Sports Lab: Physiology;Exercise Physiology;Sports Coaching; Learning and Teaching Games; Physical Exercise Testing and Analysis;Biomechanics;Bachelor Thesis and Practical Training. The lab and its equipment are also utilized by Lapland Sports University</p>	<p>With additional staff and further training, the facility is expected to fully meet its goals and provide more impactful results.</p>

	environment and equipment provide opportunities for a wide range of thesis and research activities. TARGET AUDIENCE: professional athletes, students	(Santasport) and other operators within the Olympic Training Center.	
MEĐIMURJE REGION, CROATIA			
<u>MEĐIMURJE BIKE MOBILE APP – CYCLIST WELCOME QUALITY STANDARD</u> Responsible expert: Magdalena Trstenjak www.redea.hr	Međimurje County, known as the "Cyclist County," has made significant strides in promoting cycling tourism. It prioritizes investment in cycling infrastructure, digitalization, amenities, accommodation, and information systems to improve the cycling experience. The county boasts well-maintained, diverse, and well-marked cycling trails. A free mobile app, <i>Međimurje Bike</i> , provides cyclists with detailed information on all available bike routes, including elevation, distance, and difficulty levels. Cyclist Welcome Quality Standard (CWQS) ensures that establishments, businesses, and destinations meet the needs of cyclists. TARGET GROUP: facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 20 accommodation facilities in Međimurje have earned the Cyclist Welcome Quality certificate • Better cycling infrastructure, including upgraded bike lanes and routes • There are currently 21 cyclist routes around Međimurje, with varying levels of difficulty. These routes extend beyond the county, reaching into Slovenia and Hungary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of Cycling: Through easily accessible information, improved infrastructure, and cycling events, more people are encouraged to cycle, fostering a healthier, more active community • Promotion of Cyclotourism: as a CWQS destination, Međimurje has attracted more cyclists, boosting tourism revenue and benefiting local businesses.
<u>ON THE MOVE</u> Responsible expert: Ivana Hajdinjak www.redea.hr	On the move project (co-financed by the Erasmus+ SPORT Programme) was focused on promoting healthy lifestyles based on physical activities and a balanced diet among obese, overweight and preschool children with a low level of physical activity and their families. Experts in kinesiology, health and nutrition designed working programmes for children according to their	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 202 children and their families from Međimurje County took part in the activities. • Activities were organized at three locations in Međimurje County to make them more accessible. 	Contribution to changing habits – participants in the project activities had the opportunity to change their physical activity and dietary habits. Promotion of healthy lifestyles – various educational materials were

	<p>age and fitness level. It consisted out of regular sports trainings three times a week for preschool (4 – 7 years) children and weekend indoor and outdoor activities with workshops on healthy food. Whole family including children's parents must be included. Different stakeholders were involved in the project - the Institute for Public Health, kinesiologists, psychologists, nutritionists, professional athletes, the local government.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: youth and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An exercise video for children was produced and published on social media. • A children's book "Sonny's search for great powers" was published. • A sustainability model for the local community was prepared together with guidelines for future activities in enhancing physical activity and healthy nutrition as a healthy lifestyle. 	<p>published to promote healthy lifestyle and physical activity.</p>
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<p><u>TRAININGS AND PREPARATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: Ana Kralj www.redea.hr</p>	<p>Međimurje County has heavily invested in sports tourism, with Sveti Martin Spa being the region's top tourism generator. Along with DG Sport, which offers sports fields and hotel accommodations, it attracts athletes and teams for training, including the Croatian national football, basketball, and karate teams, as well as international teams from Europe and the Middle East. The region, surrounded by two rivers, is also well-suited for water sports. The Rowing Federation of Zagreb has expressed interest in training at the Dubrava reservoir, which has been prepared for rowing teams. The Croatian National Rowing Team and international champions have tested the site and praised the conditions. Furthermore, the Croatian Mountain Rescue Service plans to establish a water rescue training center in the area.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: sport clubs</p>	<p>Promotion of Međimurje as an Active Tourism Destination and a region of sports - Serving as a location for preparation trainings of renowned athletes and teams. Local community also gets access to the quality sports infrastructure. This is also a business opportunity which is already identified by local entrepreneurs.</p>
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7.2

MODULE 2: SOCIAL INCLUSION



7.2 MODULE 2: SOCIAL INCLUSION

MODULE	BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE	TRAINING AREAS COVERED	BEST PRACTICE HOLDER	SESE REQUIREMENTS
SOCIAL INCLUSION	Project Grassroots Sport Coordinators	Technical training Management	Azores	2. Sport promotion 5. Good governance 6. Social inclusion
	Equipment, Vehicles and Vessels	Management	Azores	2. Sport promotion 5. Good governance 8. Cross-sectoral cooperation
	Accessibility to Sports Infrastructures	Management	Azores	2. Sport promotion 5. Good governance
	From 0 to the Olympics (“Dos Zero aos Jogos Olímpicos”): Umbrella program	Technical training Management	Azores	2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion
	Transparency of Sport Funding and Support	Management	Azores	5. Good governance
	Sustainability	Technical training Management	Azores	5. Good governance 8. Cross-sectoral cooperation
	Competitive Activity of Local, Regional and National Scope	Management	Azores	2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion
	Inclusion, gender equality, intergenerational focus, health care	Technical training Management	Azores	4. Integrity 5. Good governance 6. Social inclusion



Free participation fees in sports	Management	Azores	3. Digitalization and Infrastructure 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation
Neighbourhood Sports Coaches	Management	Drenthe	1. Sport ambition 2. Sport promotion 8. Cross sectoral cooperation
Regional Cooperation	Management	Drenthe	2. Sport promotion 5. Good governance 8. Cross-sectoral cooperation
School Playground coaches	Technical training	Drenthe	2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion
Westerveld Toppers	Management	Drenthe	1. Shared ambition 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
Moving in public spaces	Management Technical training	Drenthe	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 5. Good governance
Youth & Adult fund sport and culture	Management	Drenthe	4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
Lifelong exercise	Management	Drenthe	2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
Old Stars	Management Technical training	Drenthe	2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion



Safe Dressingroom	Management Technical training	Drenthe	3. Digitalization and infrastructure 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation
Social Safe Sports	Management Technical training	Drenthe	3. Digitalization and infrastructure 6. Social inclusion
Sport facilities are free of charge for under 18s	Management Technical training	Lapland	2. Sport promotion 3. Digitalization and infrastructure 4. Integrity 5. Good governance 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation
Free of charge physical activity and local sport facilities	Management	Lapland	2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 5. Good governance 6. Social inclusion
Open for all orienteering trainings	Management Technical training Entrepreneurship	Lapland	2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
Various events to increase physical activity	Management Technical training	Lapland	2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
Cycling benefit	Management	Lapland	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation



BIMEP – “Cycling the trails of Međimurje “	N/A	Međimurje	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation
Local voluntary fire brigades competitions	Management	Međimurje	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
Sports on the water for people with disabilities (“No boundaries” project)	Management Technical training	Međimurje	2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
A sport per week	Management	Međimurje	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation 8. Cross-sectoral cooperation
Čakovec Winter Basketball Championship	Management	Međimurje	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion
The Olympic Kindergarten Festival Međimurje	Management Technical training	Međimurje	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion
Running races, trails and St.Vincent Hike	Management	Međimurje	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion
On the move	Technical training	Međimurje	2. Sport promotion 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion

NAME OF THE BEST PRACTICE	GENERAL DESCRIPTION- TARGET AUDIENCE	RESULTS	IMPACTS
AZORES, PORTUGAL			
PROJECT GRASSROOTS SPORT COORDINATORS Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd	<p>Project aims to improve the quality of clubs' intervention in young people's sports training, as well as the organization and management of clubs. The Azores Government provides support for sports clubs that wish to hire coaches with required technical skills and training for the development of the proposed activities. The main goal is increasing the quality of sports practice for young Azorean athletes as one of the pillars of regional sports development. The existence of a coordinator responsible for training and guiding a club's group of coaches significantly contributes to improving the quality of grassroots sports interventions.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: sport clubs</p>	<p>The project enables clubs to build better structures and face challenges effectively. Without government support, many clubs would lack the capacity to hire Grassroots Sport Coordinators. Over the past two seasons, the project has allowed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. 2022/2023: 35 Grassroots Sport Coordinators hired. 5. 2023/2024: 37 Grassroots Sport Coordinators hired. 	<p>Funding grassroots sport coordinators for small clubs has a transformative impact. Coordinators act as pivotal figures, enhancing the organization and programming of clubs, nurturing talent, and fostering community engagement. Ultimately, this investment benefits not only the clubs but also the broader community by promoting the social and health advantages of sports.</p>
EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES AND VESSELS Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd	<p>The Azores Government runs a project to support the equipping of sports or social facilities and the acquisition of vehicles for athlete transport or boats for nautical activities. This initiative enhances the conditions for sports development by improving facilities and equipment, fostering better practice environments, and supporting sports associations in meeting modern demands.</p>	<p>The annual outcomes depend on the number of applications received and the available budget. In 2023, a total of 98,395.00 euros was allocated, distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22,485.00 euros for equipment. • 75,310.00 euros for vehicle purchases. 	<p>Supporting the modernization and equipping of sports facilities and the acquisition of transport vehicles has a profound impact on communities. Improved infrastructure fosters inclusive participation in sports and social activities, strengthening health, well-being, and community cohesion.</p>

	TARGET AUDIENCE: sport facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 600.00 euros for the purchase of vessels. <p>This support benefited 22 entities from the sports association movement across five islands in the Azores, enabling the acquisition of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight vehicles for athlete transport. Two boats for training and competition. Various equipment for sports clubs and associations. 	Vehicles break down logistical barriers, ensuring fair access to competitions and events. These investments boost regional sports development, promote social inclusion , and help cultivate local talent across various disciplines
<u>ACCESSIBILITY TO SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURES</u> Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd	<p>The Azores Government implements a project to enhance sports infrastructure by supporting the equipping of sports or social headquarters and funding the acquisition of vehicles for athlete transportation or boats for nautical activities. This initiative aims to improve the overall conditions for sports clubs and associations, fostering regional sports growth and meeting modern demands for facilities and equipment.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: sport facilities/sport clubs</p>	<p>The project outcomes vary annually based on the number of applications and available funding. In 2023:</p> <p>A total of 98,395.00 euros was allocated, distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22,485.00 euros for equipment. 75,310.00 euros for vehicle purchases 600.00 euros for boats. <p>Support was provided to 22 sports entities across five islands, resulting in:</p> <p>The acquisition of eight vehicles for athlete transportation.</p> <p>Two boats for training and competition.</p> <p>A range of equipment for sports headquarters and practice facilities.</p>	<p>This project has significant social and community benefits, including:</p> <p>Improved infrastructure: Modernized facilities create inclusive spaces for sports and social activities, enhancing health and fostering community cohesion.</p> <p>Increased accessibility: Vehicles facilitate participation in events, reducing logistical barriers and ensuring equitable access to competitions.</p> <p>Social inclusion: Investments strengthen local communities by encouraging participation and cultivating talent.</p>
<u>FROM 0 TO THE OLYMPICS ("DOS ZERO AOS JOGOS OLÍMPICOS"):</u> UMBRELLA PROGRAM Responsible expert:	<p>Project is designed to foster early stimulation and motor development in children, equipping them with the tools to become more capable, autonomous, and emotionally developed. The initiative progresses through four stages, from infancy to high-performance sports, aiming to nurture a generation of athletes who excel</p>	<p>Since its launch in 2022, the project has achieved significant participation:</p> <p>Pre-sport:</p> <p>2022/23: 6,256 children (1,051 preschool; 5,205 primary education).</p> <p>2023/24: 6,054 children (1,556 preschool; 4,498 primary education).</p>	<p>This comprehensive project promotes lifelong physical activity and sports development, emphasizing:</p> <p>Early intervention: Ensures motor skills and physical activity are introduced at a young age.</p>

https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd	<p>nationally and internationally while serving as regional role models.</p> <p>Project Phases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motor Literacy Development: For children aged 0–3 years. 2. Pre-sport – Sports Schools: For preschool (3–5 years) and primary education (6–10 years). 3. Specialization: For training categories (10–18 years). 4. High Performance: Advanced training and competition. <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: students/youth</p>	<p>Specialization – Training Categories: 2022/23: 11,807 participants. 2023/24: 11,296 participants.</p> <p>High Performance Athletes: 2022: 62 athletes in 11 sports. 2023: 84 athletes in 8 sports. 2024: 80 athletes in 9 sports.</p> <p>Sport Coaches: Nearly 900 involved across various programs.</p>	<p>Community awareness: Highlights the benefits of sports for health, well-being, and social cohesion.</p> <p>Skill acquisition and growth: Creates opportunities for personal and athletic development at every stage.</p>
<p>TRANSPARENCY OF SPORT FUNDING AND SUPPORT</p> <p>Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd</p>	<p>Azores Government funding and support to Sport is fully regulated and published in regional law, enhancing transparency and good governance at public level.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: other</p>	<p>As a result, there's a main law establishing the principles for funding and support for the regional government but also for municipalities.</p> <p>There's at least 13 different published regulations, both for organised sport and sport for all</p>	<p>Establishing transparent mechanisms for sports funding ensures clarity and accountability in public investments. Trust among stakeholders and aligns funding decisions with community needs.</p> <p>Enhanced accountability drives efficient and fair resource allocation while encouraging higher standards for public and private organizations.</p> <p>Transparent processes also expand support to more sports organizations, fostering diversity and inclusivity in the sports ecosystem.</p>
<p>SUSTAINABILITY</p> <p>Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd</p>	<p>The Azores Government collaborates with the Regional Secretariat for Tourism, Mobility, and Infrastructure, alongside the Azores DMO, to integrate sustainability into sports. By leveraging the inclusive and motivational power of sports, the initiative seeks to drive positive behavioral changes and contribute to the region's sustainable development.</p>	<p>Encouragement of sustainable practices among sports promoters (e.g., reusable cups, healthy snacks, recycling, energy efficiency, and promoting walking or cycling).</p> <p>Promotion of the Azores Sustainability Charter among sports clubs and stakeholders.</p> <p>Awareness campaigns on sustainability for school communities and through social media.</p>	<p>By embedding sustainability in all aspects of sports, this initiative positions sports as a critical driver of sustainable integration and societal progress.</p>


	TARGET AUDIENCE: other	Organization of sustainability-themed events to foster awareness. Use of sports as a tool for social inclusion, particularly for disabled or disadvantaged individuals.	
<p>FREE PARTICIPATION FEES IN SPORTS</p> <p>Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd</p>	<p>In the Azores, sports and physical activities are generally free and accessible to all, with only a few exceptions like tennis, swimming, and golf. Most sports clubs do not charge participation fees, ensuring that sport is available to everyone. This approach promotes inclusivity and widespread engagement in physical activity.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: sport clubs / sport facilities</p>	<p>Due to the accessibility of sports and physical activities, the Azores has one of the highest participation rates in Portugal, with 11% of the population engaged in organized sports—nearly double the mainland participation rate. This results in 24,500 athletes practicing 45 different sports in 468 sports clubs across the region.</p>	<p>Making sports and physical activities free has a profound impact, democratizing wellness and allowing individuals from all backgrounds to participate without financial barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This fosters inclusivity, social cohesion, and promotes healthier lifestyles. • It also ensures equity by providing access to the benefits of active living for people of all economic statuses, leading to stronger, more resilient communities.
<p>COMPETITIVE ACTIVITY OF LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SCOPE</p> <p>Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd</p>	<p>The project aims to enhance the organization of Sport Regional Associations in the Azores, ensuring balanced and harmonious participation across islands and sports. The project focuses on raising the quality of regional sports and bringing the Azorean community together through better competitive opportunities at local, regional, and national levels.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience</p>	<p>The project ensures territorial continuity and equal opportunities for athletes across the Azores. It involves approximately 100 entities annually: 47 local, 41 regional, and 13 national. The key achievement is the successful organization of competitions, with near 100% of planned activities being fulfilled each year.</p> <p>The project also supports over 4,700 regional and national travel opportunities for athletes, referees, judges, coaches, and staff. Specifically, it funds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referees and Judges: 28 regional and 13 national organizations. • Coaches and Staff: 22 organizations. • Sport Organizations in Early Stages: 6 organizations. 	<p>The project fosters a unified Azorean community by enhancing the quality of regional sports, ensuring equal access to competitions and support. By funding travel, accommodation, referees, judges, coaches, and early-stage organizations, the Azores government ensures that these sports entities become financially sustainable, contributing to long-term sports development in the region.</p>

<p><u>INCLUSION, GENDER EQUALITY, AND HEALTH IN AZORES SPORT</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd</p>	<p>Sport Azores promotes inclusivity and equality in sports through various initiatives:</p> <p>Desporto Adaptado: A dedicated sports project for people with disabilities, aimed at ensuring equal access to sport for all citizens, regardless of ability.</p> <p>Positive Discrimination: Project funding is allocated to encourage female participation in sports.</p> <p>Sport for All: A program that integrates inclusion, gender equality, and intergenerational focus in sports projects.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience</p>	<p>Sport Azores is part of the III Regional Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Domestic and Gender Violence, as well as a strategic plan aimed at using sport as a "social tool" to prevent risk behavior. Sport also plays a role in the Regional Plan for Health, which is currently under development.</p>	<p>Recognition of Sport's Social Role: Sport is acknowledged for its contribution to social development.</p> <p>Cross-Sectoral Cooperation: Collaborative efforts between sectors lead to a more holistic approach to societal challenges.</p> <p>Prevention of Risk Behavior: Sports initiatives help prevent behaviors that could negatively impact health and well-being.</p> <p>Transition from Healthcare to Health Care: The initiatives encourage a shift from treating illness to promoting health, improving overall societal well-being.</p>
DRENTHÉ, NETHERLANDS			
<p><u>NEIGHBOURHOOD SPORTS COACHES</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Sports Coach is dedicated to promoting sports and physical activity within the local community. Their primary objective is to engage as many residents as possible, particularly those who might not naturally seek out exercise. These coaches are typically employed by municipal sports organizations or social welfare institutions. They play a pivotal role in establishing sports activities, offering advice on healthy living, collaborating with schools and community partners, and organizing sports events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Participation: More people, especially inactive groups, adopt active lifestyles. Drenthe has approximately 80 coaches. • Community Connection: Activities bridge age and cultural gaps, fostering social interaction. • Health Promotion: Focus on exercise reduces risks of obesity, diabetes, and other health issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved health and reduced healthcare costs. • Strengthened social cohesion and sense of belonging. • Economic benefits through lower absenteeism and support for local sports initiatives.

	TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience, from children to the elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration: Engagement with 252 primary schools, 18 secondary schools, and 2200 sports clubs. 	
<p>REGIONAL COOPERATION</p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>The Drenthe community spirit, deeply rooted in its culture and history, is central to the region's sports and societal development. Historically a less affluent region, Drenthe relied on mutual support and cooperation, which evolved into a collective ambition for improvement. At the start of the 21st century, the region launched the Drenthe beweegt program to use sports and exercise as tools to enhance social cohesion, health, and regional attractiveness.</p> <p>Volunteer-driven sports clubs and initiatives are vital in fostering solidarity, inclusivity, and well-being, with special focus on vulnerable groups like the elderly and disabled.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly</p>	<p>Strong networks: 13 authorities collaborate in structured Sports and Exercise Consultations.</p> <p>81 Neighborhood Sports Coaches across 12 municipalities.</p> <p>Management by Drenthe beweegt, involving municipalities and social organizations.</p> <p>Support from SportDrenthe, a sports service organization with 40 employees.</p>	<p>Social cohesion: sports foster bonds, a sense of belonging, and neighborhood solidarity.</p> <p>Health improvements: increased physical and mental well-being through active lifestyles.</p> <p>Social inclusion: vulnerable groups are included in sports, reducing isolation and promoting equality.</p> <p>Economic benefits: volunteerism and community involvement boost local economies through events and club activities.</p>
<p>SCHOOL PLAYGROUND COACHES</p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>Students in the final year of elementary school (Group 8) are trained by Neighborhood Sports Coaches to become playground coaches. Over three lessons, students learn to design, practice, and implement activities for their peers. After completing internships where they lead playground activities for other classes, they graduate with a sports package and an activity guide, including their own games.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills improvement: Students develop collaboration, communication, and empathy. • Bullying reduction: Playground coaches help recognize, address, and prevent bullying. • Positive playground atmosphere: A safer, more inclusive environment fosters respect and cooperation. 	<p>Research from the Netherlands and Belgium shows playground coaches reduce bullying, enhance social skills, and create inclusive playgrounds. The program's success depends on proper implementation and evaluation but consistently demonstrates benefits for students and schools</p>

	TARGET AUDIENCE: students (Group 8) and Neighborhood Sports Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced teacher-student communication: Coaches bridge gaps and improve mutual understanding. <p>Strengthened school community: Collaboration among students, teachers, and parents promotes a supportive play environment.</p>	
WESTERVELD TOPPERS Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>Westerveld Toppers is a sports program for children aged 6–12 who, for various reasons, lack access to regular sports clubs. Held every Thursday at the De Hulsebosch sports complex in Dwingeloo, the program offers monthly rotations of different sports. Training is provided by local sports clubs, exercise coaches, and a physiotherapist, ensuring a diverse and inclusive experience. Approximately 80 children from four main villages in the municipality participate each month.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: children aged 6–12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured Sessions: 32 sessions per year across eight months, plus summer and winter specials. Broad Reach: 80 participants per month (120 unique annually), with half not engaged in other sports. <p>Transition to Clubs: 10–20% of participants eventually join organized sports clubs.</p>	<p>Increased Inclusivity: Provides children with the opportunity to engage in sports at their own level.</p> <p>Parental Feedback: Parents report happier, more confident children who feel a sense of belonging.</p> <p>Community Influence: Encourages municipalities to adopt similar inclusive sports initiatives.</p>
MOVING IN PUBLIC SPACES Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>"Moving in public space" refers to promoting outdoor physical activities like walking, cycling, and exercising. Urban planning and policies focus on creating safe, accessible, and well-designed spaces that encourage movement, improve public health, and enhance the quality of life. Key initiatives include building bike lanes, public parks, exercise gardens, and organizing community fitness events, fostering active and vibrant communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child-friendly routes to schools and sports clubs. New exercise gardens in Drenthe villages. Additional walking, cycling, and mountain bike routes. <p>Increased community fitness events.</p>	<p>Improved Public Health: Encourages physical activity, reducing risks of chronic diseases.</p> <p>Social Cohesion: Public spaces become hubs for social interaction and community bonding.</p> <p>Enhanced Spatial Quality: Green spaces and trails create attractive, livable environments.</p> <p>Sustainable Mobility: Promotes walking and cycling, reducing car</p>

	TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly		dependency, pollution, and congestion. Economic Benefits: Activity-friendly zones boost local businesses and tourism.
<u>YOUTH & ADULT FUND SPORT AND CULTURE</u> Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>The Adult Fund Sport & Culture provides financial support to low-income adults (18+) to enable their participation in sports and cultural activities. This includes membership in sports clubs or lessons in dance, music, theatre, or visual arts. The initiative addresses financial barriers that limit access to these activities for low-income individuals, promoting inclusivity and participation.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: low-income youth and adults (18+)</p>	<p>Research studies reveal significant positive outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of participants report increased self-confidence. • 84% met new people through funded activities. • 80% feel healthier due to participation. Further research highlights that financial support effectively increases participation in sports and culture for low-income groups. 	<p>The fund positively influences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health: Promotes physical and mental well-being. • Social Inclusion: Builds connections and combats isolation. • Confidence and Skills: Enhances self-esteem and personal growth. • Equity: Reduces financial barriers, enabling broader access to sports and cultural experiences.
<u>LIFELONG EXERCISE</u> Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>In Drenthe, 50% of residents regularly engage in exercise, but 35% (175,000 people) aspire to be active yet face barriers. The initiative "#MovingForALifetime" by SportDrenthe addresses these challenges by supporting active individuals to maintain their habits and encouraging non-active residents to begin exercising. The approach acknowledges mental barriers such as shame, fear of judgment, and unrealistic expectations, offering a supportive, non-judgmental environment to promote lifelong movement.</p>	<p>KEY ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the E-magazine "#ALifetimeOfMoving" (December 2021) to inspire and guide residents. • Launch of the 2022 campaign "#LivingActiveForALifetime" targeting the 175,000 residents who aspire to be active. <p>Focus on the "Moving Scale" concept to assess and address barriers to physical activity.</p>	<p>Inclusivity: Promotes exercise for all by addressing physical and mental barriers.</p> <p>Community Health: Encourages a healthier lifestyle across all demographics.</p> <p>Empowerment: Helps individuals build confidence and realistic expectations around physical activity.</p>

	TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly		
OLD STARS Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>The "Old Stars" program, initiated by the National Elderly Fund and Eredivisie CV, promotes physical activity and social engagement among the elderly. It offers adapted sports such as walking football, volleyball, and korfbal, tailored to older participants' abilities. The program is implemented in Drenthe by FC Emmen and SportDrenthe, emphasizing sports, social interaction, and fun.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: elderly population</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking Football: Participants became 3.3 hours more active weekly, with improved balance (28% to 60%) and flexibility (25% to 54%) according to the University of Groningen. • Volleyball: A 12-week study by Amsterdam University showed significant enhancements in participants balance, responsiveness, and endurance. <p>Korfbal: Participants experienced increased physical activity, reduced loneliness, and a higher quality of life.</p>	<p>Physical Health: Improves balance, flexibility, and muscle strength, reducing health risks in later life.</p> <p>Social Connections: Encourages bonding, reduces loneliness, and strengthens community ties.</p> <p>Challenging Stereotypes: Demonstrates the active potential and societal value of older individuals.</p> <p>Economic Benefits: Supports public health and reduces healthcare costs associated with inactivity and isolation.</p>
SAFE DRESSINGROOM  Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/	<p>The <i>Safe Dressingroom</i> project focuses on creating a safe sports environment, with an emphasis on the physical and social safety of the LGBTIQ+ community. Through a step-by-step plan, sports clubs work towards establishing safe dressing rooms, aiming to obtain the "Safe Dressingroom" visual label. This initiative was launched in collaboration with organizations fighting for LGBTIQ+ safety.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: sport clubs and sport facilities</p>	<p>Three sports associations (a football club, a hockey club, and an athletics club) tested the protocol and implemented it within their organizations.</p> <p>Significant progress has been made, and the project has advanced. The project will continue, with plans to expand its development to other European countries in order to achieve a proven intervention and EU label.</p>	<p>The project contributes to creating a safe sports and recreational environment for everyone, with special attention to LGBTIQ+ individuals, fostering a more inclusive society within sports communities.</p>

<p><u>SOCIAL SAFE SPORTS</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>A socially safe, positive and inclusive sports culture ensures more sports enjoyment, fewer athletes dropping out, better personal development of athletes and a positive impact on society. The approach follows a pyramid structure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Safe: Every club should meet basic social safety standards (4 V's) and actively work towards creating a welcoming environment both in the dressing room and on the field, with a focus on inclusivity for all, including LGBTIQ+ individuals (Safe Dressing Room). 7. Positive: The next step involves implementing positive coaching, creating a pedagogical climate, and offering club management coaching. 8. Inclusive: To make sports truly inclusive, some clubs will need specific offerings, though this may not be feasible for all clubs. <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2024, at least one special Exercise Club (Beweegclub) will exist in every municipality. • Nearly 20 special exercise coaches (Beweegcoaches) trained to guide those who may not exercise on their own. • A daily TV program, Drenthe Moves Together, has been created for this target group. 	<p>The program has raised the profile of exercise, making it more prominent than sports in many areas. Exercise is increasingly recognized by governments for its health benefits, leading to improved health and greater societal participation. By promoting structured exercise and societal involvement, health improves, and individuals contribute more to the community.</p> <p>Increasing participation in sports and cultural activities for low-income adults.</p> <p>Strengthening social cohesion through shared activities, fostering new social connections.</p> <p>Promoting health and well-being, benefiting both individuals and society.</p> <p>Stimulating the local economy by supporting sports and cultural institutions.</p> <p>Increasing equal opportunities by enabling low-income individuals to participate in activities, reducing social disparities.</p>
LAPLAND REGION, FINLAND			
<p><u>SPORT FACILITIES ARE FREE OF CHARGE FOR UNDER 18S</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: Ben Taylor</p>	<p>The city of Rovaniemi offers free access to over 300 indoor and outdoor sports facilities it manages for individuals under 18. Facilities such as school halls, athletics fields, and sports halls are available</p>	<p>Approximately 6,500 sports club members under 18 benefit from free access.</p>	<p>Health Benefits: Free access encourages physical activity, contributing to improved public health and lower healthcare costs.</p>

https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1	for both private use and sports club activities at no cost. Additionally, local sports clubs and associations can apply for free training slots for under-18 members, provided at least two-thirds of participants are under 18 years old . The city also supports private companies in reducing ticket prices for minors. TARGET GROUP: students/youth	Facilities are heavily used for private and club sports activities, though specific data on facility use is not collected.	Social Inclusion: Provides opportunities for young people to participate in sports, fostering both individual and group engagement. Economic Relief for Clubs and Families: Clubs save money by receiving free training slots. Families benefit economically through free or discounted access to facilities. Support for Junior Sports Development: Encourages greater participation in organized sports by reducing financial barriers for clubs and individuals.
FREE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND LOCAL SPORTS FACILITIES IN LAPLAND Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1	In Rovaniemi and across Lapland, numerous opportunities for free physical activities are available. Residents can enjoy activities such as cross-country skiing, hiking, biking, skating, and using outdoor gyms or suburban playgrounds, all maintained by the city, municipalities, or organizations like the Forest Administration. Many facilities are multi-purpose and adapt seasonally, e.g., hiking trails becoming skiing trails in winter, and sand pitches transforming into skating areas. In Rovaniemi, cross-country skiing trails and skating rinks are even constructed in the city center, ensuring easy access for everyone. TARGET GROUP: broad audience	Encourages low-threshold participation in physical activity. Increases the number of people engaging in sports and recreational activities, both individually and socially. Promotes preventive health measures , reducing healthcare costs. Makes physical activity affordable and inclusive for all economic backgrounds.	Facilitates an active lifestyle by eliminating financial barriers . Builds healthier communities through inclusive and accessible activities. Strengthens social connections and overall well-being by encouraging group participation in sports and recreational activities. Reduces future public health expenditures by prioritizing preventative health initiatives.
OPEN FOR ALL ORIENTEERING TRAININGS Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1	The Ounasvaaran Hiihtoseura Orienteering Club in Rovaniemi organizes weekly open-for-all orienteering trainings from mid-May to the end of September. These sessions are accessible to all ages, genders, and skill levels —from beginners to top athletes. Participants can choose courses that match their abilities, making the activity inclusive and adaptable. The training fees are affordable,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100-150 summer orienteers regularly participate in the club's training sessions. • The club's summer training program attracts both recreational participants and those interested in competitive orienteering. 	Encourages locals to explore new areas of their city. Enhances navigation skills while fostering a sense of adventure. Improves physical and mental health through outdoor exercise and problem-solving challenges.

	<p>with a season ticket costing 90€ for adults and single-entry fees at 7€ for adults and 5€ for under-18s, pensioners, and students.</p> <p>This initiative provides low-threshold exercise that encourages participation in physical activity in a social and engaging environment.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: broad audience</p>		
<p>VARIOUS EVENTS TO INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</p> <p>Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p>Lapin Liikunta (Laplands Sport Federation) is an association with the aim of increase physical activity in the Lapland region. For example, “Lähe sieki liikkeelle” and “Kunnon Mummola” events are operated by Lapin Liikunta and events are held around Lapland. The first event is for everybody and the second one is for seniors. Both events are low-threshold events, designed to measure people's fitness easily. Events are free of charge.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: elderly, but also broad audience</p>	<p>In 2023, Kunnon Mummola was organized in eleven municipalities, and a total of 602 elderly individuals participated in the events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19.1% responded YES to the question "Have you fallen in the last 6 months?" 32.6% responded YES to the question "Are you afraid of falling?" <p>The average rating given by customers for the event was 9.6 out of 10.</p>	<p>Healthcare, trying to reduce health costs and low-threshold measuring, to provide the elderly health experts with methods to prevent over 65s from falling</p>
<p>CYCLING BENEFIT</p> <p>Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p>The cycling benefit is a tax-free benefit provided by employers, offering employees access to a bicycle for work or leisure purposes. This initiative promotes sustainable commuting while reducing environmental impact and saving money for employees. The benefit typically includes the provision of a bicycle, maintenance and servicing costs, and necessary equipment like helmets and lights.</p> <p>Employees can receive a tax-free cycling benefit of up to €100 per month (or €1200 per year), allowing them to acquire their desired bike as part of their salary. Employees can save 20–40% on the cost of the bike through this benefit.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: other</p>	<p>Since the start of the service in Oct 2023, there has been a 10% uptake in the service from the 250 staff members who have access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage people to buy new and better bikes -> Bike business has grown Encourage people to come to work by bike and to cycle more in their leisure time. Encourage staff to use sustainable methods of transport. Encourage staff consider their health and healthy active lifestyles.
MEĐIMURJE REGION, CROATIA			

<p>BIMEP – “CYCLING THE TRAILS OF MEĐIMURJE “ Responsible expert: Magdalena Trstenjak www.redea.hr</p>	<p>BIMEP is envisioned as a one-day sports and recreational event. It is designed to be flexible, with no single starting point, allowing participants to join from different locations. As participants bike through Međimurje County, they collect stamps along their chosen route, setting their own pace and challenge. Participants collect stamps at various checkpoints, with the goal of collecting all 19 stamps, completing the approximate 150 km challenge. The event appeals to a diverse range of participants, including recreational cyclists, cycling clubs, families with children, elementary and high school students, and others. TARGET GROUP: broad audience</p>	<p>In 2024., the event attracted over 1800 participants, including many from neighboring countries such as Hungary and Slovenia. In 2024. 16 municipalities set up checkpoints with refreshments. The event also sees participation from organized groups such as schools, cycling clubs, and families. A group of 14 children and young people with disabilities and developmental difficulties joined BIMEP with their own route, which was 12.6 km long and consisted of 4 points</p>	<p>Community Engagement: BIMEP fosters community involvement, with local communities setting up checkpoints and providing refreshments for cyclists. Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle and sports: BIMEP encourages physical activity and promotes healthy lifestyles. Also, one of the sponsors of this event is Međimurje County Public Health Institute.</p>
<p>LOCAL VOLUNTARY FIRE BRIGADES COMPETITIONS Responsible expert: Magdalena Trstenjak www.redea.hr</p>	<p>In Međimurje County, voluntary fire brigades play a significant role in fostering community spirit, particularly among the youth. Nearly every local unit has its own brigade, and their focus is on engaging young people through training, exercises, games, and competitions tailored to their age. These activities not only teach practical firefighting skills but also prepare participants for competitions, ranging from local and regional levels to national events and the prestigious Firefighters' Olympics, organized by the International Association of Fire and Rescue Services. Notably, two brigades from Međimurje achieved top-five placements at the 2022 Firefighters' Olympics in Celje. TARGET GROUP: students/youth</p>	<p>For instance, the latest county competition in Domašinec attracted over 850 children and young people, with 82 teams from Međimurje and additional teams from Slovenia and Hungary.</p>	<p>Promotion of Physical Fitness and Well-being: Firefighting competitions demand strength, agility, and endurance, fostering a healthy lifestyle among participants. Promotion of Volunteerism: These competitions emphasize the value of community service and encourage young people to take on civic responsibilities by contributing to the safety and well-being of their communities.</p>
<p>“NO BOUNDARIES” PROJECT ★ Responsible expert: Ivana Hajdinjak www.redea.hr</p>	<p>Project focuses on encouraging the participation of people with disabilities (PWD) and volunteers in sports and physical activity for a health-enhancing lifestyle. Within the project, there were implemented several activities:</p>	<p>A total of 17 sports events were held, six of which were in Međimurje Outdoor exercise equipment fully adapted for people with disabilities has been installed at two locations – in Čakovec and in Podturen.</p>	<p>Providing a better conditions for organizing sports events for PWD. Promotion of healthy lifestyle and sport activities;</p>

	<p>-2-days sport event for children and youth; -2-days sport event for adults with disabilities; -organization and demonstration of new water sport programme -development of a three different sports programs for people with disabilities (traditional sports for children and youth, traditional sports for adults, and new sport on water)</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: other (people with disabilities-both youth and adults)</p>	<p>Motivated volunteers and PWD to participate in sport events (30 volunteers have been trained to conduct sports activities for 120 people with disabilities)</p>	<p>Social interaction, meaning that water sports activities often involve teamwork, cooperation, and social interaction.</p>
<p><u>A SPORT PER WEEK</u> <u>Responsible expert:</u> <u>Ivana Hajdinjak</u> <u>www.redea.hr</u></p>	<p>The community of sports associations' Čakovec organizes sports camps for children called "A sport per week" for 19 years in a row. Sports camps are organized during the summer holidays for elementary school students with the aim to show the variety of sports that are available to them in the local area. Through sports activities, the project tries to motivate children to engage in sports and recreation in their free time. Sports camps are held for 18 different sports from Monday to Friday in the morning hours. Every week, other sport is being held. Elementary school students register to participate in the camp with a symbolic registration fee, which includes a T-shirt, bottle and fresh drinks every day experts and mentors working with groups of children of different age.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: elementary school children</p>	<p>More than 500 participants in 2023 (20 % more than previous year) – number of participants continuously grows every year. More than 18 different sports, and it grows every year. More than one coach per sport Multiplying effect: The initiative of sports camps in this form is also being launched in other local self-government units within Međimurje County, which is proof that this activity has multiplying effect.</p>	<p>Adapted approach and methodology-experts and mentors working with groups of children of different age. Awareness raising: sports camps increased the level of awareness of the importance of physical activity within children with the aim of preserving health and preventing diseases from an early age. Through sports camps, children's motivation to engage in sports and recreation and involvement in local sports clubs has increased. Improvement of social inclusion: Sports camps for elementary school children encourage social inclusion, with emphasis on the inclusion of children with developmental difficulties or children with disabilities.</p>
<p><u>ČAKOVEC WINTER BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP</u> <u>Responsible expert:</u></p>	<p>The Čakovec Winter Basketball Championship is an inspiring project that revives the basketball spirit of the community through an amateur</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams consist of local community members rather than registered clubs. 	<p>Social Inclusion and Health Improvement: sports as a tool for integrating disadvantaged groups,</p>

<p><u>Ivana Hajdinjak</u> www.redea.hr</p>	<p>competition held on Sunday mornings during the winter months. Beyond its sporting aspect, the championship carries a humanitarian mission – for example, every technical error during games results in a €20 donation to charity. One such initiative collected €1,200 for the Center for Education, enabling students to enjoy a one-day trip to the sea. The project also plays a vital role in social integration. In the past two years, two Filipino teams participated in the championship, showcasing the potential for sports to integrate foreign citizens and workers into the local community.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: broad audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing number of international representatives, particularly foreign workers (2023: 2 international teams, 2022: 1 international team, 2021: 1 international team). • Increasing humanitarian contributions, with more institutions participating annually. • Inclusion of children with disabilities who contribute creatively by making medals for awarded players and teams. 	<p>such as foreign workers, into the local community and clubs; Humanitarian Role of Sports: raising awareness about the role of sports in supporting local communities through charitable activities; Community Building and Multiplying Effect: evolving from a grassroots initiative into a regional model of best practices with wide-scale impact and replication potential in other communities</p>
<p><u>OLYMPIC KINDERGARTEN FESTIVAL MEĐIMURJE</u> Responsible expert: <u>Ivana Hajdinjak</u> www.redea.hr</p>	<p>This festival gathers preschool children from all kindergartens across Međimurje County, who compete in various sports disciplines such as the 50-meter run, relay races, long jump, ball throwing, and indoor soccer. Annually, over 700 preschoolers participate in the festival. The event emphasizes the importance of physical activity from an early age, nurturing the values of Olympism in young children by promoting friendship, respect for differences, non-violence, and fair play.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: kindergarten children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 years of continuous implementation. • Over 650 participants in 2024, a 30% increase compared to 2023. • Participation of children from 17 kindergartens across Međimurje County in 2024, up from 12 kindergartens in 2023. • Preschool children prepare for the festival throughout the year. 	<p>Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles and Sports: raises awareness of the physical, mental, and social benefits of sports for children, including fostering social inclusion, independence, and organizational skills. Increased Motivation for Sports Activities: familiarizes children with the Olympic spirit and the concept of competition in a way that motivates them to engage in sports. Growth of Sports Events for Children: boosts the number of free sports events for children throughout Međimurje County, further promoting inclusivity and accessibility.</p>
<p><u>RUNNING RACES, TRAILS, AND ST. VINCENT HIKE</u> Responsible expert: <u>Ana Kralj</u> www.redea.hr</p>	<p>Međimurje County, Croatia's smallest by area, offers a vibrant array of sports events and activities catering to locals and tourists alike. Annual running races are held in nearly every local unit, targeting both children and adults. These amateur events aim to include as many</p>	<p>Participation of over 50 hiking associations from Croatia, Austria, Slovenia, and Hungary. More than 6,000 participants of all ages in St. Vincent Hike events, including individuals with disabilities.</p>	<p>Community Engagement: The St. Vincent Hike strengthens community involvement by involving local communities in organizing checkpoints, providing refreshments,</p>

	<p>participants as possible, fostering community engagement. In addition to urban races, trail races and hikes are organized in rural and forested areas with challenging terrains. Among these events, the "St. Vincent Hike" stands out, celebrating the patron saint of winegrowers. These organized hikes traverse the picturesque hills and vineyards of upper Međimurje, highlighting the natural beauty, local culture, gastronomy, and the region's wine road. The overarching goal of these events is to promote walking, hiking, and spending time in nature as pillars of an active lifestyle.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: broad audience</p>	<p>Over 15 running races held yearly across Međimurje County, organized by local governments and sports organizations. Seasonal running leagues, such as the Globetka Cross League in Čakovec, Rudar Racing League in Mursko Središće, and Prelog Summer Cross League in Prelog.</p> <p>Some races attract over 500 participants.</p>	<p>and showcasing local products and souvenirs, adding value to the events.</p> <p>Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles and Sports: these events promote regular physical activity and highlight its health benefits.</p> <p>Tourism Development: these events attract numerous participants, including tourists from neighboring countries, boosting Međimurje County's visibility</p>
<p>ON THE MOVE Responsible expert: Ivana Hajdinjak www.redea.hr</p>	<p>On the move project (co-financed by the Erasmus+ SPORT Programme) was focused on promoting healthy lifestyles based on physical activities and a balanced diet among obese, overweight and preschool children with a low level of physical activity and their families. Experts in kinesiology, health and nutrition designed working programmes for children according to their age and fitness level. It consisted out of regular sports trainings three times a week for preschool (4 – 7 years) children and weekend indoor and outdoor activities with workshops on healthy food. Whole family including children's parents must be included. Different stakeholders were involved in the project - the Institute for Public Health, kinesiologists, psychologists, nutritionists, professional athletes, the local government.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: youth and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 202 children and their families from Međimurje County took part in the activities. • Activities were organized at three locations in Međimurje County to make them more accessible. • An exercise video for children was produced and published on social media. • A children's book "Sonny's search for great powers" was published. <p>A sustainability model for the local community was prepared together with guidelines for future activities in enhancing physical activity and healthy nutrition as a healthy lifestyle.</p>	<p>Contribution to changing habits – participants in the project activities had the opportunity to change their physical activity and dietary habits.</p> <p>Promotion of healthy lifestyles – various educational materials were published to promote healthy lifestyle and physical activity.</p>

7.3

MODULE 3: BUSINESS CREATION



7.3 MODULE 3: BUSINESS CREATION

MODULE	BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE	TRAINING AREAS COVERED	BEST PRACTICE HOLDER	SESE REQUIREMENTS
BUSINESS CREATION	Sports tourism and Outdoor sports	Management	Azores	7. Business creation 8. Cross-sectoral cooperation
	Free participation fees in sports	N/A	Azores	3. Digitalization and Infrastructure 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation
	Moving in public spaces	Management Technical training	Drenthe	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 5. Good governance
	Youth & Adult fund sport and culture	Management	Drenthe	4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion
	Safe Dressingroom	Management Technical training	Drenthe	3. Digitalization and infrastructure 4. Integrity 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation
	Artificial snow and first snow ski track	Entrepreneurship Management	Lapland	2. Sport promotion 3. Digitalization and infrastructure 5. Good governance 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation

Construction of mountain bike trails	Entrepreneurship Management	Lapland	3. Digitalization and infrastructure 7. Business creation
Lapland UAS Sports Lab	Entrepreneurship Management	Lapland	3. Digitalization and infrastructure 7. Business creation
Sports students contributing to regional development through practical training	Entrepreneurship Management	Lapland	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 7. Business creation 8. Cross-sectoral cooperation
Cycling benefit	Entrepreneurship Management	Lapland	1. Shared ambition 2. Sport promotion 6. Social inclusion 7. Business creation
Sport Business Lapland	Entrepreneurship Management	Lapland	7. Business creation 8. Cross-sectoral cooperation
Trainings and preparations for professional athletes	Entrepreneurship Management	Međimurje	2. Sport promotion 3. Digitalization and infrastructure. 7. Business creation

NAME OF THE BEST PRACTICE	GENERAL DESCRIPTION- TARGET AUDIENCE	RESULTS	IMPACTS
AZORES, PORTUGAL			
SPORTS TOURISM AND OUTDOOR SPORTS Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd	The Azores' exceptional environmental, natural, and cultural heritage offers unique experiences for locals and visitors alike. This richness supports the promotion of green and blue sports, including outdoor and nautical activities,	A wider variety of activities is now available to tourists, while local communities have become more active outdoors.	Tourism Growth: Outdoor recreation has significantly boosted the tourism sector, creating more jobs in fields such as

	<p>through cross-sectoral collaboration among the Tourism, Environment, and Sports sectors. Adventure sports, such as mountain biking, surfing, canyoning, diving, and hiking, are especially popular. Tourism in the Azores has been steadily growing, and between 2013 and 2018, the number of outdoor tourist activities almost doubled. With increased investments in nature preservation and the promotion of sea-related activities, more sports and tourism organizations are focusing on sustainable outdoor adventures.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: sport clubs</p>	<p>Since 2021, Sports, Environmental, and Tourism governmental departments have been collaborating to achieve shared goals. In 2022, a collaborative event brought six experts from the European Network of Outdoor Sports to the Azores, enabling knowledge-sharing among stakeholders. Collaboration continues on revising the Azores Nature Charts.</p>	<p>accommodation, food services, and transportation.</p> <p>Economic Benefits: Businesses surrounding these activities have flourished, leading to an increase in local tour guides, hiking guides, and sea adventure specialists.</p> <p>Sustainability Leadership: The Azores' initiatives showcase how nature-based tourism and outdoor sports can align with sustainability goals while enhancing economic and social opportunities.</p>
<p>FREE PARTICIPATION FEES IN SPORTS Responsible expert: https://portal.azores.gov.pt/web/drd</p>	<p>In the Azores, sports and physical activities are generally free and accessible to all, with only a few exceptions like tennis, swimming, and golf. Most sports clubs do not charge participation fees, ensuring that sport is available to everyone. This approach promotes inclusivity and widespread engagement in physical activity.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: sport clubs / sport facilities</p>	<p>Due to the accessibility of sports and physical activities, the Azores has one of the highest participation rates in Portugal, with 11% of the population engaged in organized sports—nearly double the mainland participation rate. This results in 24,500 athletes practicing 45 different sports in 468 sports clubs across the region.</p>	<p>Making sports and physical activities free has a profound impact, democratizing wellness and allowing individuals from all backgrounds to participate without financial barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This fosters inclusivity, social cohesion, and promotes healthier lifestyles. <p>It also ensures equity by providing access to the benefits of active living for people of all economic statuses, leading to stronger, more resilient communities.</p>
<p>MOVING IN PUBLIC SPACES Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>"Moving in public space" refers to promoting outdoor physical activities like walking, cycling, and exercising. Urban planning and policies focus on creating safe, accessible, and well-designed spaces that encourage movement, improve public health, and enhance the quality of life. Key initiatives include building bike lanes, public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child-friendly routes to schools and sports clubs. New exercise gardens in Drenthe villages. Additional walking, cycling, and mountain bike routes. <p>Increased community fitness events.</p>	<p>Improved Public Health: Encourages physical activity, reducing risks of chronic diseases.</p> <p>Social Cohesion: Public spaces become hubs for social interaction and community bonding.</p>

	<p>parks, exercise gardens, and organizing community fitness events, fostering active and vibrant communities.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: broad audience from children to the elderly</p>		<p>Enhanced Spatial Quality: Green spaces and trails create attractive, livable environments.</p> <p>Sustainable Mobility: Promotes walking and cycling, reducing car dependency, pollution, and congestion.</p> <p>Economic Benefits: Activity-friendly zones boost local businesses and tourism.</p>
<p><u>YOUTH & ADULT FUND SPORT AND CULTURE</u></p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>The Adult Fund Sport & Culture provides financial support to low-income adults (18+) to enable their participation in sports and cultural activities. This includes membership in sports clubs or lessons in dance, music, theatre, or visual arts. The initiative addresses financial barriers that limit access to these activities for low-income individuals, promoting inclusivity and participation.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: low-income youth and adults (18+)</p>	<p>Research studies reveal significant positive outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of participants report increased self-confidence. • 84% met new people through funded activities. • 80% feel healthier due to participation. <p>Further research highlights that financial support effectively increases participation in sports and culture for low-income groups.</p>	<p>The fund positively influences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health: Promotes physical and mental well-being. • Social Inclusion: Builds connections and combats isolation. • Confidence and Skills: Enhances self-esteem and personal growth. • Equity: Reduces financial barriers, enabling broader access to sports and cultural experiences.
<p><u>SAFE DRESSINGROOM</u> ★</p> <p>Responsible expert: Rick Horst https://sportdrenthe.nl/contact/</p>	<p>The <i>Safe Dressingroom</i> project focuses on creating a safe sports environment, with an emphasis on the physical and social safety of the LGBTIQ+ community. Through a step-by-step plan, sports clubs work towards establishing safe dressing rooms, aiming to</p>	<p>Three sports associations (a football club, a hockey club, and an athletics club) tested the protocol and implemented it within their organizations.</p>	<p>The project contributes to creating a safe sports and recreational environment for everyone, with special attention to LGBTIQ+ individuals, fostering a more</p>

	<p>obtain the "Safe Dressingroom" visual label. This initiative was launched in collaboration with organizations fighting for LGBTIQ+ safety.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: sport clubs and sport facilities</p>	<p>Significant progress has been made, and the project has advanced. The project will continue, with plans to expand its development to other European countries in order to achieve a proven intervention and EU label.</p>	<p>inclusive society within sports communities.</p>
LAPLAND REGION, FINLAND			
<p>SPORT BUSINESS LAPLAND Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p><i>Sport Business Lapland</i> is a project initiated by the Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Lapland UAS) aimed at strengthening the skills of individuals working in the sports or sports-related industries. The project's goal is to promote regional employment and business development. As a result, Lapland UAS decided to integrate a Bachelor's degree in International Sport Business Management into its educational offerings, prioritizing sports business as a field of study</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: students</p>	<p>As of April 2024.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 147 users have enrolled in the Sport Business Lapland modules 117 graduates from courses offered in Finnish. <p>These courses have been integrated into the Sports Coach Degree program and translated into English for the International Sports Business Management Degree program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lapland region became a destination for sports education Well-educated staff providing their knowledge and trainings <p>Impact on the growth and sustainability of the sports industry in the region.</p>
<p>ARTIFICIAL SNOW AND FIRST SNOW SKI TRACK Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p>The City of Rovaniemi makes artificial snow and collects snow in the winter and stores it over the summer under a blanket cover. Artificial snow is spread during October or as soon as the weather allows to make it. First snow ski track is made for everybody (for the residents of Rovaniemi, for other Finns, people from around the world) who wants to start their cross-country skiing season early. The track is available for a small fee. Rovaniemi citizens can buy season ticket for lower price. The length of the first snow ski track is 6 km.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: broad audience</p>	<p>This activity allows the city to also better understand the storage and production methods of snow. This data can greatly support local tourism providers by having the ability to store snow that can extend the period of time they can provide activities.</p>	<p>Positive impacts to tourism and economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local athletes, fitness enthusiasts and cross-country skiing enthusiasts have one more place to exercise which is nearby. This lowers the threshold for physical activity, reduces health care costs, health prevention.

<p>CONSTRUCTION OF MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS</p> <p>Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p>Cycling tourism is rapidly growing, and Finnish cities and municipalities are capitalizing on this trend by developing mountain biking trails in dunes and fells. Notable examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rovaniemi: Mountain bike trails in Ounasvaara. • Kolari (Ylläs): Over 190 km of summer cycling trails and 100 km of winter trails, making cycling a year-round activity. These trails are free to use, offering accessible outdoor recreation. <p>TARGET GROUP: broad audience</p>	<p>In 2019, a €700,000 mountain biking project in Ylläs renovated old trails and built new ones.</p> <p>Business Growth: The region saw an increase in bike rental services, with new businesses emerging and existing ones expanding to include cycling-related offerings.</p> <p>Tourism Boost: A 2020 survey showed that one-third of visitors to Ylläs in summer came specifically for cycling.</p> <p>Sport Events: Events like NUTS MTB Ylläs-Levi attract fitness enthusiasts with challenging routes (75 km, 55 km, 30 km) amidst Lapland's scenic landscapes.</p>	<p>Introduction of winter cycling as a "new sport" or physical activity. Growth of the bike rental industry, with increased business opportunities for locals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant growth in tourism and the local economy, driven by the cycling tourism boom.
<p>LAPLAND UAS SPORTS LAB</p> <p>Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p>The <i>Lapland University of Applied Sciences Sports Lab</i>, located in Ounasvaara, serves as a learning, testing, and RDI (Research, Development, and Innovation) environment for physical education, sports, well-being, rehabilitation, and coaching. It is part of the Olympic Training Center and aims to support the region's economy by acting as a platform for SMEs and generating knowledge for the area. It also supports skills development and skills training in national networks. In addition, the lab's environment and equipment provide opportunities for a wide range of thesis and research activities.</p> <p>TARGET AUDIENCE: professional athletes, students</p>	<p>The facility has been open for about 1.5 years, and while the benefits for students and athletes are still being optimized, the potential is high.</p> <p>Courses Offered at the Sports Lab: Physiology; Exercise Physiology; Sports Coaching; Learning and Teaching Games; Physical Exercise Testing and Analysis; Biomechanics; Bachelor Thesis and Practical Training.</p> <p>The lab and its equipment are also utilized by Lapland Sports University (Santasport) and other operators within the Olympic Training Center.</p>	<p>With additional staff and further training, the facility is expected to fully meet its goals and provide more impactful results.</p>

<p>SPORTS STUDENTS CONTRIBUTING TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PRACTICAL TRAINING</p> <p>Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p>Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Lapland UAS) strengthens the connection between higher education and the regional economy by aligning its curriculum with labor market needs and offering 450 hours (55 ECTS) of practical training to students in the field of sport and recreation.</p> <p>Students complete their training in businesses, sports clubs, public services (schools, daycare centers), or welfare organizations, where they gain real-world experience, undertake projects, and contribute to ongoing research. This collaboration benefits both students and businesses by ensuring that graduates have up-to-date, industry-relevant knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Lapland UAS also maintains regular communication with businesses to adjust curriculums based on market demands, ensuring a strong alignment between education and employment opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% of graduates in sport and recreation are employed within a year after graduation. • Practical training has proven to provide high-quality learning experiences and a smooth transition to working life. • Students find practical training meaningful and engaging, increasing motivation and career readiness. 	<p>Boosts regional economic competitiveness by integrating education into the regional innovation ecosystem.</p> <p>Helps retain and attract new residents, workforce, and entrepreneurs in sparsely populated areas like Lapland.</p> <p>Encourages business creation by equipping students with real-world experience and entrepreneurial skills.</p> <p>Can be replicated in other fields of study and at different levels of education, including vocational schools.</p>
<p>CYCLING BENEFIT</p> <p>Responsible expert: Ben Taylor https://lapinamk.fi/en/contact-search/#/units/s=/p=1</p>	<p>The cycling benefit is a tax-free benefit provided by employers, offering employees access to a bicycle for work or leisure purposes. This initiative promotes sustainable commuting while reducing environmental impact and saving money for employees. The benefit typically includes the provision of a bicycle, maintenance and servicing costs, and necessary equipment like helmets and lights.</p> <p>Employees can receive a tax-free cycling benefit of up to €100 per month (or €1200 per year),</p>	<p>Since the start of the service in Oct 2023, there has been a 10% uptake in the service from the 250 staff members who have access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage people to buy new and better bikes -> Bike business has grown • Encourage people to come to work by bike and to cycle more in their leisure time. • Encourage staff to use sustainable methods of transport. • Encourage staff consider their health and healthy active lifestyles.

	allowing them to acquire their desired bike as part of their salary. Employees can save 20–40% on the cost of the bike through this benefit. TARGET GROUP: other		
MEĐIMURJE REGION, CROATIA			
<u>TRAININGS AND PREPARATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES</u> Responsible expert: Ana Kralj www.redea.hr	<p>Međimurje County has heavily invested in sports tourism, with Sveti Martin Spa being the region's top tourism generator. Along with DG Sport, which offers sports fields and hotel accommodations, it attracts athletes and teams for training, including the Croatian national football, basketball, and karate teams, as well as international teams from Europe and the Middle East. The region, surrounded by two rivers, is also well-suited for water sports. The Rowing Federation of Zagreb has expressed interest in training at the Dubrava reservoir, which has been prepared for rowing teams. The Croatian National Rowing Team and international champions have tested the site and praised the conditions. Furthermore, the Croatian Mountain Rescue Service plans to establish a water rescue training center in the area.</p> <p>TARGET GROUP: sport clubs</p>	<p>Promotion of Međimurje as an Active Tourism Destination and a region of sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serving as a location for preparation trainings of renowned athletes and teams. Local community also gets access to the quality sports infrastructure. This is also a business opportunity which is already identified by local entrepreneurs. 	

Live healthy exercises



8

SESE MODEL CHECKLIST

HOW TO BECOME AN
EXCELLENT SPORT REGION
AND HELP YOUR
POPULATION TO STRIVE





SESE

SHARING EUROPEAN
SPORTS EXCELLENCE

8 SESE Model Checklist – how to become an excellent sport region and help your population to thrive

At the very end of the SESE Capacity building training programme: How to become a region of sports excellence?, you have a chance to evaluate your work in the context of regional development supported by sport development. Within SESE Model Checklist, you can evaluate which principles, requirements and domains from the Model you already achieved and gain an inspiration for further development.

SESE MODEL CHECKLIST

<div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 10px; border-radius: 15px; display: inline-block;">PRINCIPLES</div> <div style="font-size: 2em; margin-left: 10px;">✓</div>	<div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 10px; border-radius: 15px; display: inline-block;">REQUIREMENTS</div> <div style="font-size: 2em; margin-left: 10px;">✓</div>	<div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 10px; border-radius: 15px; display: inline-block;">DOMAINS</div> <div style="font-size: 2em; margin-left: 10px;">✓</div>
Equal but different <input type="radio"/>	Shared ambition <input type="radio"/>	Organised and unorganised sport <input type="radio"/>
Key for development <input type="radio"/>	Sport promotion <input type="radio"/>	Elite sports <input type="radio"/>
People oriented <input type="radio"/>	Digitalization and infrastructure <input type="radio"/>	Challenging design of the public space <input type="radio"/>
Cross-sectoral and multi-level <input type="radio"/>	Integrity <input type="radio"/>	Care, cure, health and prevention <input type="radio"/>
Generator for positive image <input type="radio"/>	Good governance <input type="radio"/>	Social, societal and participation <input type="radio"/>
Building an effective network <input type="radio"/>	Social inclusion <input type="radio"/>	Economics, marketing, events <input type="radio"/>
Sport standards support a better society <input type="radio"/>	Business creation <input type="radio"/>	Sportspecific and general education and daycare <input type="radio"/>
Innovation for a growing, innovative progress <input type="radio"/>	Cross-sectoral cooperation <input type="radio"/>	Workplace and employees <input type="radio"/>

9

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

WHO TO ENGAGE



9 Stakeholder analysis – Who to engage

This stakeholder analysis is performed from the perspective of regional policy makers in order to answer the question about who to engage in the story of reaching sports excellence. It is surely clear by now that it cannot be a solo endeavour. The model proposed in section 3 shows the broadness of required interventions. Going domain by domain the stakeholder groups in the table below can be identified, with their specific interest in the matter of sports excellence and potential influence on target groups (rating from 1-low to 5-high).

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Interest</i>	<i>Influence on target groups</i>
National government	Increased population's health and quality of life (reduced healthcare costs); Positive image and recognition	3
Local authorities	Increased population's health and quality of life (reduced healthcare costs); Acting in the interest of the whole population – positive image and recognition	4
Sport clubs and associations	Attraction and selection of new talents; Promotion of their particular sport and image building of their organization (more members, more sponsors); Promotion of sport as part of a healthy lifestyle	4
PE teachers	Promotion of sport as part of a healthy lifestyle; Increased physical activity of their pupils and students, healthy habits adopted	5
Sport professionals - coaches	More users of coaching services; Efficient and effective coaching services; Promotion of sport as part of a healthy lifestyle	5
Public health institutions	Promotion of sport as part of a healthy lifestyle; Increased population's health – decrease occurrence of chronic diseases, prolonged life expectancy	4
Physicians	Promotion of sport as part of a healthy lifestyle; Increased population's health – decrease occurrence of chronic diseases, prolonged life expectancy	5
NGOs in general	Active participation in the local community; Positive image and recognition	3
Educational institutions	Active participation in the local community; Positive image and recognition; Increased physical activity of their pupils and students; Improved cognitive and mental skills of pupils and students;	5

	Well-being of pupils and students and their families	
Employers	Overall employee well-being; Reduced absenteeism; Increased productivity and commitment of employees	4

The groups that need to be engaged in order to reach sports excellence are not to be confused with target groups of interventions and activities. Stakeholders considered here are the ones that can have the influence on different parts of the population to motivate them to get physically active and/or to push talents in the direction of competitive sports. Understanding the population's profile and motivation is crucial for an adequate impact. This, however, is a separate task for stakeholders while designing specific activities.

10

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