

A very brief history of Danish Gymnastics & Sports Association (DGI)

The Danish Gymnastics & Sports Association (DGI) is a national organisation, working through sports and other cultural activities to strengthen the work of local amateur associations in an endeavour to promote the education of both youths and adults.

DGI is a sports and cultural organisation with about 1.3 million members in Denmark. DGI provides a long list of sports activities in the 5,500 local clubs, which are the foundation for DGI's 1.3 million members. This is a significant number considering that Denmark has only 5.1 million inhabitants. A typical DGI local association has several activities - sports as well as non-sport activities.

The organisation has roots back as far as 1861. On 31 October 1992 - after a century of frequent mergers and divisions of the national sports associations - two old sports associations merged, forming the modern-day DGI.

DGI Response to the Green Paper

DGI appreciates the European Commission's concerns and focus on the general public health situation. The public health prognosis is unfortunately not very positive and even though some of the latest research from Denmark indicates that overweight/obesity for some groups (children and young people) seems to stagnate, it is obvious that we have severe challenges ahead of us.

We are glad to see that the Green Paper mentions physical activities as one of the most important instruments to combat obesity, cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, etc. However, we are concerned and disappointed about the lack of acknowledgement of organised NGOs in popular sport /recreation. There is a distinct lack of emphasis on the possibility that organized sports associations (NGOs) can assist the overall improvement of public health.

Physical activities, ranging from traditional sports to health enhancing activities have always been a central part of our organisational priorities. Over the last few years the focus on health and the priorities of human and financial resources to health enhancing activities has rapidly increased. Our increasing attention and prioritisation of health enhancing activities are implemented by several initiatives targeting different groups such as children and seniors.

Examples of DGI initiatives:

- New regional projects focused on increasing the level of physical activities among children
- National educational programmes and local training groups of Nordic Walking (currently our fastest growing health enhancing physical activity)
- Physical activities on prescription from family doctors (a cooperation between medical sector and civil society sector)
- International cooperation agreement with German sister organisation (Deutscher Turner-Bund) on development of health activity strategy and health enhancing programmes.

We hope that these examples indicate that we, as a voluntary popular sports association, have the capacity to support new trends, create new partnerships as well as develop and initiate projects for special target groups.

We would like to stress the following statement: *Sport associations in Denmark and many other countries are efficient structures, from national to local levels, to reach the citizens with inspiration and concrete health enhancing offers.*

The recommendation from Danish Gymnastics & Sports Association to the European Commission would therefore be to:
Include the popular sport association structures in the relevant European countries in future activities on public health initiatives.

Best regards.

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