



EU Work Plan  
for Sport

2014-  
2017

**Expert Group "Health-enhancing physical activity"**

**Report from the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting (9-10 February 2015)**



## 1. PARTICIPANTS

- Experts from 21 Member States: Austria, Belgium (Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic
- European Commission: DG EAC
- Observers: ENAS, ENGSO, EPFL, EOC – EU Office, EUPEA, EuropeActive, EOSE, FESI, ICSSPE, UPKL, WHO HEPA Europe Network

## 2. INTRODUCTION

As part of its introductory remarks, the Commission welcomed the members of the XG and briefly summarised the political context of the new Juncker Commission, which puts policies that create growth and jobs at the centre of the policy agenda. It summarized the priorities from the EU Work Plan for Sport 2014-2017 and the promotion of HEPA in particular. It recalled that the European Parliament established for the first time an Intergroup on Sport and that regarding the work in the Council, upcoming Presidencies also put the promotion of physical activity high on the agenda. The Commission then gave an update on the Erasmus+ Sport Programme<sup>1</sup>, namely that the 2014 call for projects had a big success, in particular in the field of HEPA (results published in Dec. 2014), and that the 2015 call for projects not related to the European Week of Sport will be open until 14 May 2015.

The Commission gave an overview of the ongoing activities for the preparation of the first European Week of Sport, which will take place on the second week of September to promote sport and physical activity. The Week will be organised around 4 Focus Days with the following themes: education environment, outdoor environment, work environment and sport & fitness clubs. Many events should take place in Member States, on the ground (NB: meanwhile 31 countries have appointed national coordinators to ensure the coordination at national level – the list will be shared with the XG HEPA). They will be complemented by several activities in Brussels, including a launch and a flagship event and a large scale communication campaign. Several partnership agreements have been signed between the Commission and sport stakeholders who have committed to support the Week with concrete actions. An ambassador's programme will also be established.

The XG adopted the draft agenda without comments.

## 3. PRESENTATION BY THE OBSERVERS

The chairman recalled that the applications of 13 observers were approved during the first meeting of XG HEPA and that 2 additional applications had been received after the first meeting and approved in written procedure.

The list of admitted observers was then agreed as follows:

N°	Name of the organisation	Website
1	Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL)	<a href="http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com/">http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com/</a>

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index\\_fr.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_fr.htm)



2	EuropeActive / European Health & Fitness Association (EHFA - former name)	<a href="http://www.ehfa.eu.com/">http://www.ehfa.eu.com/</a>
3	European Federation for Company Sport (EFCS)	<a href="http://www.efcs.org/">http://www.efcs.org/</a>
4	ENAS (European Network of Academic Sports Services)	<a href="http://enas-sport.net/">http://enas-sport.net/</a>
5	European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO)	<a href="http://www.engso.com/">http://www.engso.com/</a>
6	European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE)	<a href="http://www.eose.org">www.eose.org</a>
7	European Olympic Committees (EOC) EU Office	<a href="http://www.euoffice.eurolympic.org">http://www.euoffice.eurolympic.org</a>
8	European Physical Education Association (EUPEA)	<a href="http://www.eupea.com/">http://www.eupea.com/</a>
9	Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (FESI)	<a href="http://www.fesi-sport.org/">http://www.fesi-sport.org/</a>
10	International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE / CIEPSS)	<a href="http://www.icsspe.org/">http://www.icsspe.org/</a>
11	International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)	<a href="http://www.isca-web.org/">http://www.isca-web.org/</a>
12	Sport Accord (International Federations' Union)	<a href="http://www.sportaccord.com/en/">http://www.sportaccord.com/en/</a>
13	Sport and Citizenship think tank	<a href="http://sportetcitoyennete.com/">http://sportetcitoyennete.com/</a>
14	Union of Professional Ki Life aisbl (UPKL)	<a href="http://www.europe-upkl.eu/">http://www.europe-upkl.eu/</a>
15	WHO HEPA Europe network	<a href="http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/physical-activity/activities/hepa-europe">http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/physical-activity/activities/hepa-europe</a>

The chairman noted that, as agreed in the first meeting, the agenda of the XG included a session on the second deliverable held *in camera*, i.e. without the observers.

The observers present were invited to make a short introduction of their organisation and of their respective contribution to the work of the XG. The observers in general saw their role as a pool of expertise and best practices. They could also create bridges between governments and the sport movement, by offering access to different networks for dissemination of the outcome of the XG and ensuring higher take up. In the subsequent discussion the experts positively valued the contribution from the observers.

#### **4. PREPARATION OF EXPERT GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS, INCLUDING MOTOR SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD, AND TO CREATE VALUABLE INTERACTIONS WITH THE SPORT SECTOR, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR (DELIVERABLE 1)**

##### **4.1. INTRODUCTION AND RELATED COUNCIL POLICY DEBATES**

The Commission introduced the session on the first deliverable to be produced by the XG HEPA. It stressed that the promotion of physical activity, in particular in the education sector, was high on the agenda of the IT Presidency which had organised a policy debate on



"Sport and physical activity at school age" at the Sport Council on 25 November 2014. The Commission informed that the topic was also at the centre of the policy agenda of the upcoming LV and LU presidencies, organising respectively a policy debate on "Physical activity as an essential element of quality education at all levels – cooperation models with the sport sector" and on "motor skills in early childhood". LV informed that under its PRES term it would organise a high level conference on Healthy Lifestyles on 23-24 February 2015. Physical activity promotion was covered. The LU Presidency was also planning a conference on quality Early Childhood Education and Care. The Commission underlined the importance to achieve concrete, pragmatic, realistic and attractive recommendations that could be usefully taken up by policy makers at national level.

The Commission recalled that, according to the EU Work Plan for Sport, the final deliverable 1 should be finalised by the end of the first semester 2015. However in view of the policy debate under the LV Presidency mentioned above (in May 2015), a first draft of recommendations related to interactions between the education sector and the sport sector was expected by the Presidency by mid-April 2015.

The Commission highlighted that deliverable 1 not only fitted into the HEPA policy at EU level, but that it was also relevant in the context of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) policy of the EU. ECEC was defined as "any arrangements providing education and care for children aged 0 to compulsory school age — regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content — and includes pre-school and pre-primary provision"<sup>2</sup>. The whole age group was covered as systems were very different across Europe and this was the way to embrace all. The Commission briefly explained what the EU intended to achieve under that policy.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission underscored that coordination with other ongoing processes had also to be ensured as appropriate. For example, cooperation between the work of XG HEPA and the work of DG SANTE was ongoing and relevant communication channels were in place. The global initiative from UNESCO on guidelines for policy makers for quality physical education was also relevant.

#### **4.2. APPROACH AND MS CONTRIBUTIONS**

PT, as Lead Expert in charge of deliverable 1, summarised what had been done since the first meeting. A questionnaire was sent to MS to frame the scope of the recommendations to be produced. It was based on the Eurydice report on 'Physical Education and Sport at School in

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<sup>2</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52011DC0066>

<sup>3</sup> Under that policy, the EU wants all young children to be able to benefit from high quality education and care. The Barcelona target set by Ministers in 2002 set as a target that 33% of children under the age of three and 90% between three and compulsory school age should be in ECEC by 2010. In addition the EU benchmark calls to guarantee for 95 % of children between age 4 and the start of compulsory education a place in ECEC by 2020. Research has proven that early childhood is of prime importance: it is the stage where education can most effectively influence the development of children, and create foundations for successful lifelong learning, for social integration, personal development and later employability. In order to meet this objective, the Commission presented an agenda for work among Member States and actions that it was putting in place to support them. This agenda was part of a Commission Communication issued on 17 February 2011, entitled "Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow"<sup>3</sup>. The Communication proposed a holistic approach to children in ECEC, covering 4 areas of personal development: cognitive, emotional, social and physical. It had been followed by Council conclusions on early childhood education and care ("providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow"<sup>3</sup>). On that basis a Working Group was established between 2012 and 2014, to make a proposal for a quality framework for ECEC. The Commission encouraged MS representatives in the XG on HEPA to liaise with their counterparts in the Education departments to ensure synergies between the streams of work, and to consider the quality framework<sup>3</sup> which had been produced, in particular for the recommendations of XG HEPA related to motor skill in early childhood.



Europe<sup>4</sup>.

PT presented the contributions received from MS on the questionnaire and noted that the main answers were going in the same direction. The majority of MS agreed that new physical education reforms must take into account the national education system specificity. One size-fits-all approaches could not be recommended. MS had to keep flexibility in the implementation of the recommendations.

All MS agreed that during primary education, physical education curricula had to develop fundamental motor skills, and that sport had to be introduced in higher grades. In lower grades, physical activity had to be fun most of all. The majority of MS agreed that the recommendations had to address the inclusion of mandatory activities in physical education for each age group and all educational levels (or targets); curricula goals and learning outcomes had to be defined. It was important to teach a broad range of physical activity, sports and concepts to develop all personal competences, skills and life-long healthy habits. The majority of MS also agreed that health education had to be mandatory in physical education class, as well as the promotion of knowledge about positive effects of physical activity and sport in health and about the negative effects of sedentary behaviours. The majority of MS agreed that the recommendations had to address formative or summative assessment and could stress the inclusion of novel evolution scales.

Regarding gender, some MS were of the opinion that physical education had to promote gender equity and activities had to match needs irrespective of gender, while some other MS were of the opinion that gender/biological differences had to be considered until a certain age (not in teaching methods though). The majority of MS agreed that physical education curricula had to pay attention to children with disabilities or special needs and talented athletes. Some MS expressed the view that, on the contrary, equity and equality had to be core pillars. However, all MS were of the view that methods and activities themselves had to be adjusted according to abilities (requiring advanced training for physical education teachers). The majority of MS agreed that the recommendations had to address the physical education teacher's status (must be specialised and have professional capacity to identify kids' needs).

On the exemptions from physical education classes, most MS found that the recommendations had to address the issue (e.g. general practitioners had a role to play), while four MS were of the opinion that this was a national issue and had rather to be tackled according to schools policy.

The majority of MS agreed that the recommendations had to address the need to increase the physical education taught time in compulsory education, and in particular address the very low effective taught time (only 16-18 min/average). Two MS expressed the view that there was not enough evidence supporting physical education taught time and cognitive/academic achievements. Conditions had to be created to be active and reduce waiting time, parks and sport club facilities could be used to reduce shortages in school. The majority of MS shared the view that the recommendations could suggest the creation of a new label such as "European Sport Minded School", but that it had to not focus only on sport.

All MS agreed that the recommendations had to include the need to improve, increase & vary extracurricular offer. Extracurricular activities could make the bridge between mandatory activities and sports. It was important to create partnerships with sport organisations. School sport federations had a role to play. Extracurricular activities could

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[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/150EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/150EN.pdf)



also include healthy breaks. On the role of local authorities, the majority of MS agreed that the recommendations had to promote active transport (e.g. safe walking and cycling lanes to go to school, bicycle racks, safe and adequate sport facilities) and address physical activity from a cross-sector perspective in general (education, sport, health, transport, urban planning). On the role of the private sector, the majority of MS found that it had to interact with schools to promote extracurricular activities (under pedagogical supervision). It was important that equity was respected. Cooperation with the sport sector was seen as easier.

On the basis of the exchanges of views, PT committed to share in the third week of February a revised questionnaire focusing on the interactions with the sport sector, for which a first draft of recommendations was expected earlier (see above). It was agreed that observers would be offered the possibility to contribute to the questionnaire (adding questions + replying).

Based on the comments made during the second XG meeting, on the answers on the questionnaire and on some possible written comments, PT would make the first draft of recommendations related to interactions with the sport sector by the end of February. The planning agreed then continued as follows:

- Comments from XG HEPA on that first draft (interactions with sport sector): mid-March
- Draft final recommendations on the interactions with the sport sector: 27 March
- Review by XG HEPA: 10 April
- Final recommendations on the interactions with the sport sector: 17 April
- Delivery to the LV Presidency in view of the policy debate planned in May

The complete deliverable 1 (including recommendations related to physical education curriculum and motor skills in early childhood in particular, interactions with private sector and interactions with local authorities) would be elaborated following an agreed planning as follows:

- Full questionnaire: end of March
- Feedback from XG HEPA: mid-April
- Draft Deliverable1: early May
- Review by XG HEPA: mid-May
- Draft final Deliverable 1: early June
- Review meeting at XG HEPA – finalisation of recommendations: June 2015 (**new date**: 25-26 June).
- Final Deliverable 1: 30 June

The final deliverable 1 would then be presented at the Council Working Party on Sport on 6 July 2015

### **4.3. PRESENTATIONS OF RELEVANT INITIATIVES**

Dr Lazlo Molnar informed about initiatives at the Hungarian School Sport Federation (HSSF) aiming at developing physical education. So far, European structural funds had been used successfully in order to develop physical education in Hungary. The Erasmus+: Sport Programme was offering new opportunities. A project called "SHA P.E." was submitted by HSSF under the 2014 call for collaborative partnerships and was among the successful projects (awarded in December 2014). The objectives were to shape the principles and development areas for health-oriented physical education. Throughout the two-year period of the project a European Framework of Quality Physical Education would be elaborated based on the existing experiences of the coordinator and of the 4 partner institutions' researches, on workshops and on the progressive input from individual experts. The analyses would focus on the following key areas in the respective countries: National Qualification Frameworks (NQF), Public Education Systems, Life Long Learning Key Competences and Core Curricula particularly in the field of Physical Education.



Dr Annamaria Somhegyi, Director for prevention at the National Center for Spinal Disorders in Hungary, made a presentation on health promoting criteria for the effective implementation of daily physical education. She emphasised some successful achievements in Hungary in terms of inclusion of health promoting criteria in key physical education documents at national level.

Detlef Dumon, from the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), presented on behalf of UNESCO (and as key partner of the UNESCO initiative) the recent UNESCO guidelines for policy makers on quality physical education (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002311/231101e.pdf>). The guidelines were released on the occasion of a meeting of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS) in Lausanne, Switzerland, on 28-30 January 2015. Among other things, the document was calling on governments to reverse the decline in physical education investment that had been observed in recent years in many parts of the world. The guidelines were highlighting the benefits of investing in physical education versus the cost of not investing. They were produced in partnership with several international and intergovernmental organisations.

A presentation on the ACTIVE Network project was foreseen in the agenda. The project had been co-financed by the European Union under the Preparatory Actions in the field of sport, as part of the 2012 call for projects. The project was led by the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) and ended in June 2014. The aim of the project was to create partnerships between European municipalities and sport organisations. ISCA could not attend the meeting and deliver the presentation and therefore the XG HEPA was invited to watch an online short presentation of the project (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpKnGTqHLHk&feature=youtu.be&hd=1>).

The project concluded with recommendations that could be of interest for the XG HEPA: <http://www.active-network.eu/news/activenetworkprojectreleasesfinalrecommendations>

## **5. COORDINATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON HEPA (DELIVERABLE 2)**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

As part of the introductory remarks, the Commission recalled that on the basis of a Commission proposal, a Council Recommendation on promoting health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) across sectors<sup>5</sup> was adopted in November 2013. It invited MS to adopt national strategies, develop cross-sector HEPA policy approaches and implement corresponding action plans to promote physical activity. It also invited the Commission to promote the establishment and functioning of a monitoring framework, in close synergy and cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), as the Council recognised that the availability of more information and better data on physical activity levels and HEPA promotion policies was an essential element to underpin better evidence-based policy. MS had appointed national Physical Activity Focal Points to support that monitoring framework, as contact points in each MS to provide information and data corresponding to the 23 indicators defined in the Annex of the Recommendation. The Focal Points network already met twice (October 2014 and January 2015) and collected data corresponding to a first set of 8 indicators.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1204%2801%29&qid=1411979009602&from=EN>



The Council Recommendation also called on MS to cooperate closely among themselves and with the Commission by engaging in a process of regular exchange of information and best practices on HEPA promotion, as a basis for strengthened policy coordination. The XG HEPA was providing the EU level structure for that. The Recommendation finally invited the Commission to assist MS in the process of adopting strategies and action plans, in the form of capacity building and training, and to submit progress reports every 3 years to the Council. The Commission stressed that the input from XG HEPA was pivotal in this reporting obligation. The Commission informed that it had launched a 1-year study at the end of 2014 to assist the Focal Points in their tasks (awarded to a consortium led by the University of Erlangen and with renowned scientific experts).

## **5.2. APPROACH AND MS CONTRIBUTIONS**

HU, as Lead Expert in charge of deliverable 2, summarised what had been done since the first meeting. A questionnaire and a background document had been sent to MS to guide the discussions and summarise the task of the group. XG HEPA was seen as a platform to share good practices, with a focus on barriers and lessons learned. The final deliverable 2 could take the form of a summary of good practices, lessons learned, challenges and recommendations. The lead experts (HU and FI) proposed to make a proposal for the structure of deliverable 2. HU presented the output from the contributions to the questionnaire.

Several MS replied that they were already involved in national HEPA promotion. In half of the MS the sport sector was taking the leading/coordinating role, while it was the health sector in  $\frac{1}{4}$  of MS. In  $\frac{1}{5}$  of MS the HEPA promotion was jointly led. The main difficulties in achieving the cross-sector approach in HEPA promotion were considered to be finding the right person, the availability and the different agendas of the different sectors and funding issues. Several MS suggested extending the list of sectors involved (besides sport, health, education, environment and transport) to the voluntary sector, tourism, the corporate and business sector or socially disadvantaged groups.

In many MS the expert in XG HEPA was the same person as the designated Focal Point. When it was not the case, in general, good communication channels were already established.

Many good practices were reported for cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organisations for the sake of HEPA promotion. Usually governments were defining strategies and providing funding, while non-governmental organisations were rather involved in the implementation.

The majority of MS reported positive changes in national HEPA promotion since the adoption of the Council Recommendation on HEPA (November 2013). Working groups involving all respective sectors had been established in several countries, or were being established. In some countries no coordination group existed yet. National HEPA strategies had been developed or updated. Corresponding action plans had been adopted and implemented in several countries. In terms of concrete initiatives foreseen this year, several MS mentioned awareness-raising campaign (e.g. focusing on parents), the definition of national action plans or an active participation in the European Week of Sport.

All MS agreed that sedentary behaviour had to be addressed in the course of the implementation of HEPA promotion. Several MS reported that studies existed that show the detrimental effect of sedentary behaviour and sitting time on health, even when meeting the WHO physical activity requirements (sedentary behaviour is defined as 1.5 times the level of energy expenditure above rest).

## **5.3. PRESENTATION OF GOOD PRACTICES AT NATIONAL LEVEL**



The XG HEPA agreed of the usefulness to include in the agenda of XG meetings presentations of good practices at national level, with a focus on barriers, lessons learned and challenges. This second meeting of XG HEPA gave the opportunity to four experts to inform about initiatives in their country.

FI presented a good practice example of physical activity promotion. Finland had been investing on Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) for the last 25 years. A survey on physical activity was conducted every 5 years in the population (with accelerometers and a questionnaire free to use and published online). It showed that levels of physical activity and physical fitness were decreasing even with all the efforts invested at national level for many years. Sedentary behaviours were too high and increasing. This was a concern as studies showed that these were strongly related to chronic diseases. Both sedentary behaviours and the low level of inactivity were considered threats for the future. Therefore FI had established a new strategy for HEPA promotion 1.5 years ago, and a new action plan 2 months ago to address those threats. A decision had been taken to put in place a new HEPA steering group.

HU presented the TÁMOP project, aiming at implementing the EU sport policy and its key documents in Hungary with the support of the European Social Fund. The main goals of the project were to strengthen leisure sport communities in Hungary, to give professional support for sport providers, to enhance strategic planning and decision making in sport and to offer input to the discourse on the positioning of sport in the 2014-20 period. The focus was to provide objective, measurable and timely evidence for policy and strategy in the field of sport and physical activity. In particular, professional networks needed to be strengthened and bridging the gap between science and practice remained a challenge. As first assessment of the outcome of the project, the Eurobarometer 2014 on sport and physical activity showed that HU was among the most inactive countries, but had the highest progress.

IE informed about its draft cross-sectoral national physical activity plan 2015-2020. The development of the national physical activity plan was one of the commitments of Healthy Ireland, a framework for improved health and wellbeing 2013-2025. A cross-sectoral working group was established in September 2013 to develop the plan, co-chaired by the Ministries of Sport and Health, and with representatives from Education, Children, Environment and Transport sectors. The plan was intended to be finalised and published in Q2 2015. It was aiming at addressing both physical activity promotion and sedentary behaviours. The plan included 70 actions across 8 thematic action areas. A key issue identified was that strong leadership and cross-sectoral partnership were pivotal to drive the implementation of the plan.

LU presented the "Lätz move!" campaign against physical inactivity in Luxemburg. The concept was based on a website where members could register the physical activity they did. The website was comparing the total level of physical activity achieved with experts' recommendations for physical activity. Despite an awareness media campaign and the availability on mobile devices, the participation of members was limited and LU was envisaging targeting the tool to specific groups like workplaces or schools. Some MS challenged the efficiency of internet-based approaches as they might induce sedentary behaviours. Some other MS on the contrary voiced the opinion that internet-based approaches are a good means to catch the attention of young people.

## **6. TOUR DE TABLE**

In the final tour de table, all MS thanked the lead experts for their excellent preparatory work.



There was consensus that sharing information, good practices and experiences between Member States was pivotal to improve the promotion of HEPA at national level, in particular for less advanced countries. There was a strong will to cooperate on the matter and the experts found the meeting useful.

Several MS summarised that coordination at national level remained one of the biggest challenge for the promotion of HEPA. Some MS expressed an interest in establishing a list of all activities related to HEPA at European level to ensure synergies.

Several MS were of the opinion that the XG HEPA should work more closely with the Physical Activity Focal Points. The Commission confirmed the intention to hold the next meeting of XG HEPA and of the Physical Activity Focal Points back-to-back to contribute to this.

At the request of some MS, the Commission offered to set up a collaborative platform for easy dissemination of meeting documents and presentations. The documents would be made available under <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/5f7b94ab-3391-4309-a1cf-5734cca4efdf> (detailed information to follow).

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the XG HEPA will take place in Lisbon on 25-26 June 2015. It will be organised back-to-back with the next meeting of the Physical Activity Focal Points on 24 June 2015.

The 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of XG HEPA will take place in October 2015.