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Engaging Children and Older Adults in Active Lifestyles

Evidence-based Strategies for Life-long Health and Movement



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Agenda

Introduction

The Challenge

Multi-setting Approach

Our Strategies

Checklists

Sustainability

Thank you

Project Team

 Sport Drenthe

 Unione Italiana Sport per Tutti

 Spor Istanbul

 Kinetic Analysis BV

 Surpass Sport Systems Ltd.

Universal Issue

Across Europe, both children and adults are failing to move enough; for example, 81% of adolescents do not meet daily activity recommendations

The Goal

Move beyond abstract "be active" messages to provide practical tools that turn intentions into daily habits for all ages.

Every move counts, and every stakeholder—from schools to community planners—plays a role in rebuilding active routines.

Principles for Inclusive Engagement

✓ Health Equity

Ensure fair opportunities for everyone to reach their health potential, regardless of socioeconomic or environmental conditions.

✓ Inclusive Focus

Specifically target groups with lower participation rates, such as girls, low-income families, and individuals with disabilities.

✓ Accessible Services

Programs must be relevant, affordable (low- or no-cost), and physically accessible to be truly inclusive.

✓ Multi-Sectoral Approach

Success requires collaboration between sports clubs, schools, local governments, and health services.



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The COM-B Model

All age-based interventions should address the three pillars of behaviour change



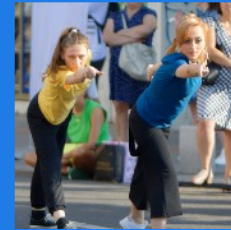
Capability

Providing the physical skills and psychological confidence (e.g., training modules for coaches or simple tips for families)



Opportunity

Creating a supportive physical and social environment (e.g., using existing parks and schools for activities)



Motivation

Increasing the desire to act through social engagement, fun, and peer-to-peer inspiration



Whole-of-School Approach

✓ Quality Physical Education (PE)

Ensure regular lessons focused on skill-building and fun, rather than just athletic performance.

✓ Active School Days

Integrate movement into the routine via "Finnish Schools on the Move"—including active recess and movement breaks during lessons.

✓ Student Involvement

Include children in the design of activity programs to improve engagement and ensure the activities are relatable to their peers.

✓ Positive Atmosphere

Emphasise teamwork and self-improvement over high-stakes competition to build lifelong confidence.



Play and Environment

✓ Unstructured Active Play

Protect recess time and provide simple equipment (balls, jump ropes) to encourage natural movement.

✓ Variety of Activities

Offer a "broad menu" beyond traditional sports, including dance, swimming, and non-competitive games.

✓ Active Transport

Implement "walking school buses" and bike-to-school days to make movement a default part of the day.

✓ Financial Accessibility

Use subsidies, equipment loan schemes, or free community sessions to ensure income is not a barrier.



Parks in Movement Model

✓ ***Parchi in Movimento* (Italy)**

A model offering free, enjoyable physical activity in public parks specifically designed for "all ages".

✓ **Tailored Activities**

Include gentle gymnastics, yoga, dance, and walking groups that are inclusive and family-friendly.

✓ **Low-Barrier Entry**

By hosting events in local, accessible green spaces, the program removes barriers for inactive or socially disadvantaged seniors.

✓ **Community Integration**

These programs rely on partnerships between sports clubs, municipalities, and health agencies to reach the broader public.



Social Support and Buddies

✓ The BASE Innovation

Focuses on the "next 10%" of inactive individuals by using a community-based buddy system.

✓ Social Engagement

Uses peer-led inspiration to overcome the psychological barriers of starting a new routine.

✓ Inspiration through Stories

Highlight success stories of individuals who transitioned from sedentary to active lives to build motivation.

✓ Inclusive Communication

Use language that promotes services as relevant and welcoming to all abilities and ages.



Intergenerational Opportunities

✓ Family-Centred Activity

Encourage parents and grandparents to be active together with children through role modelling and shared play.

✓ Active Home Environments

Limit family screen time and prioritise outdoor excursions to parks or "play streets".

✓ Community Events

Use mass participation events (family sports days or community walks) to bring different generations together in movement.

✓ Shared Spaces

Designing infrastructure (like parks with playgrounds and exercise equipment) serves both children and older adults.

Infrastructure and Policy for All Ages



Active-Friendly Spaces

Invest in safe sidewalks, bike lanes, and green spaces that are accessible to both young children and those with limited mobility.



Safe Environments

Infrastructure like traffic calming near schools and well-lit parks is a "precondition for success" for outdoor play and active travel.



Stable Funding

Public authorities should provide grants for community programs that target inactive groups across the lifespan.

Call to Action

Habits for Life

Engaging children early builds the foundation for an active adulthood and healthy aging.

Key Takeaway

Success is found through multi-component strategies—combining school, family, and community efforts.

Next Steps

Capacity planners and sports partners should audit local spaces for inclusivity and leverage "all-age" models like *Parchi in Movimento*.



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Recordings and presentations are available on the project website:

<https://activeforhealth.eu>



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Project Conference

27 October 2026, Verona (IT)

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