



ACTIVEFORHEALTH.EU



E-Book Capacity Building Programme

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# 1. Introduction and Purpose

## 1.1 About the EHLA Project

The European Healthy Lifestyle Actions (EHLA) project is a two-year Erasmus+ initiative (2024–2026) that addresses one persistent challenge: although the benefits of physical activity are widely known, many communities still struggle to integrate movement into daily life. EHLA responds by identifying successful grassroots examples of physical activity promotion and adapting them for wider use in schools, families, and communities. These innovations will be piloted and shared through a European awareness campaign, allowing proven approaches to spread across countries.

EHLA focuses mainly on children aged **6–12**, a crucial stage for establishing lifelong habits. While schools are the central setting, the project adopts a community-wide approach involving parents, teachers, healthcare professionals, local governments, and sports organisations. Physical activity promotion is paired with education on healthy nutrition to support a more comprehensive vision of children's well-being.

The project is organised into several work packages. WP2 explored effective practices and lessons through research and knowledge-exchange visits. WP3 develops concrete tools—the **EHLA Guideline (D3.1)**, the **Active for Health mobile application (D3.2)**, and the **Capacity Building Programme**—which help partners translate insights into practice. WP4 pilots and disseminates the selected innovations, while WP5 handles communication and outreach. Together, these elements help EHLA move from local examples to broader European adoption.

## 1.2 Purpose of This E-Book

This e-book (Deliverable **D3.3**) compiles the key content of the EHLA Capacity Building Programme. It transforms the content of the training delivered through webinars and workshops into a single accessible resource that partners can consult at any time. Its primary purpose is to ensure that knowledge from the programme remains usable beyond the live sessions and is available to all staff—regardless of whether they attended every training event.

A second purpose is **sustainability**. By presenting the Capacity Building content in written form, EHLA enables partners to keep using and sharing the material long after the project ends. The e-book supports knowledge transfer within and across organisations, and can be reused in future training cycles or onboarding processes.

In short, this document preserves the programme's essential messages and methods and supports partners in applying them consistently across different contexts.



### 1.3 Who Should Use This E-Book?

The e-book is designed for all EHLA partner staff, including coordinators, educators, youth workers, field practitioners, programme managers, and local stakeholders. As outlined in the project plan, it pays particular attention to young staff and women, recognising their important and often under-supported role in health promotion and community well-being. The language is deliberately practical and accessible, avoiding unnecessary jargon so that new team members, external collaborators, or staff unfamiliar with EHLA can benefit just as much as experienced practitioners.

Whether you work directly with children, manage programmes, or support community partners, this e-book offers clear, actionable guidance for promoting physical activity in schools and local environments.

### 1.4 Relationship to Other EHLA Deliverables

This e-book sits alongside two key WP3 outputs:

- **The EHLA Guideline (D3.1)** – an evidence-based reference offering recommendations for stakeholders on promoting physical activity.
- **The Active for Health mobile application (D3.2)** – a digital tool for engaging children, teachers, and families in activity challenges and communication.

Where relevant, chapters in this e-book refer to these deliverables directly. The Guideline provides the *strategic rationale and evidence*, while this e-book focuses on *practical implementation*. The mobile app serves as a ready-to-use technological tool that can support several of the strategies described here. Many examples and insights throughout the document also draw on experience gathered during the **Knowledge Exchange Visits (D2.2)**.

Together, these resources form a coherent toolkit for building local capacity to promote healthy lifestyles.

### 1.5 How to Use This E-Book

This e-book is structured to mirror the main themes of the Capacity Building Programme. You may read it sequentially or consult individual chapters as needed.

#### **What you will find inside:**

- Clear summaries of key concepts and webinar content
- Practical guidance and examples from partner experiences



- References to the EHLA Guideline (D3.1) for deeper background
- Tips on integrating the EHLA mobile app (D3.2) into your work

Each chapter is designed to stand on its own. If you are looking for communication advice, programme organisation tips, engagement strategies, or technology guidance, you can go directly to the relevant section. Throughout the e-book, text boxes, or short call-outs (e.g., “See Guideline D3.1 for further detail”) help you navigate quickly.

You are encouraged to use the worksheets actively—write down ideas, plan activities, map stakeholders, or draft communications. The e-book is meant to support real work, not just reading.



## 2. Background: EHLA Capacity-Building Program Overview

The European Healthy Lifestyle Alliance (EHLA) project launched a comprehensive capacity-building program to empower staff and stakeholders in promoting physical activity. This program was built on earlier project phases that identified needs and innovative practices across Europe. In Work Package 2 (WP2), partners conducted a **state-of-the-art analysis** and **knowledge exchange visits** to gather effective approaches to physical activity promotion. These exchanges provided real-world insights – for example, a visit to Verona, Italy, showcased a successful community “Parks in Movement” initiative and highlighted lessons about accessibility and strong communication. The findings from WP2 laid the groundwork for training content, informing guidelines and tools to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Building on that foundation, Work Package 3 (WP3) delivered a multi-faceted **capacity-building program** for partner organizations. This included interactive webinars/workshops on key themes (communication, quality program delivery, inclusive engagement, and technology) and the development of supportive resources like a Guideline (Deliverable D3.1) and a Mobile App (D3.2). The **EHLA Guideline** compiles evidence-based recommendations and stakeholder-specific advice, while the **“Active for Health” mobile app** provides a practical tool to engage communities (discussed in Chapter 6). The final element of WP3’s capacity-building is this e-book (Deliverable D3.3), which serves as a **practical workbook** capturing all those lessons and providing ready-to-use exercises. The program’s transnational approach – bringing together schools, sports organizations, health agencies, and municipalities – reflects the project’s holistic philosophy: improving children’s health through active lifestyles requires collaboration across sectors and countries.

This background chapter offers an overview of the capacity-building journey. It outlines how EHLA’s partnership moved from research to action: first **identifying successful initiatives**, then **training staff** on how to implement these initiatives, and now **packaging the knowledge** for broader use. The capacity-building content is organized into thematic chapters (Chapters 3–6), each corresponding to core competencies for promoting healthy activity. Later chapters (7–9) integrate these themes with the project’s specific outputs – showing how to apply the EHLA Guideline, adopt innovative measures, and manage change within organizations. The overarching aim is to ensure that every staff member or stakeholder reading this e-book feels equipped and inspired to champion physical activity. In essence, the EHLA capacity-building program is about turning insight into action: taking *“successful initiatives”* and providing a methodology to **incorporate these measures into daily practice**<sup>[9]</sup>. By understanding the



background and structure of this program, readers can better appreciate how each part of the e-book fits into the larger strategy of empowering communities to lead healthier, more active lives.

*Note: This e-book is designed for flexible use – whether as a self-study guide or as training material in workshops. It includes summaries of research findings, case studies from the knowledge exchanges, and practical exercises. Readers are encouraged to use the Guideline D3.1 for detailed background and the EHLA app for implementing tech-based activities, as referenced throughout the chapters.*



## 3. Effective Communication Strategies for Promoting Healthy Activity

### 3.1 Key Principles and Techniques for Effective Communication

Effective communication is the backbone of any successful health-promotion effort. This chapter focuses on how organizations and staff can **craft and deliver messages** that motivate people to be more physically active. Whether promoting a new school exercise program or a community sports event, communication strategies must raise awareness, generate enthusiasm, and sustain engagement. Below are key principles and techniques for promoting healthy activity through communication:

#### 3.1.1 Know Your Audience

Tailor messages to the needs, values, and media habits of the target group. For example, when encouraging children and families, use simple, positive language and emphasize fun (“Let’s play outside and make new friends!”). For older adults, address health benefits (improved mobility, social connection) in an encouraging tone. In all cases, avoid jargon and make the call-to-action clear (what activity to try, when and where).

#### 3.1.2 Use Multiple Channels

Meet people where they are. Combine **social media, local press, school newsletters, flyers, and word-of-mouth** to maximize reach. Social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) can showcase short videos of fun activities or testimonials. Community bulletin boards and local radio can reach those less active online. One partner’s experience in Verona showed the value of tying promotion to community events – their free park exercise classes were launched during the city’s annual MOVE Week, generating buzz and media coverage. Diversifying communication channels ensures that the message of “active living” permeates the community.

#### 3.1.3 Craft Engaging Messages

Frame physical activity as **enjoyable, inclusive, and achievable**. Research suggests that people respond better to positive, empowering messages rather than fear-based ones. For instance, instead of “sedentary life causes disease,” use **positive framing** like “moving more helps you feel energetic, meet friends, and stay healthy.” Highlight quick wins and personal stories: e.g., a quote from a child who loved the new playground games, or an older person who joined a walking group and “now feels part of a community.” Storytelling and testimonials can make abstract benefits feel real and relatable.



### 3.1.4 Leverage Community Leaders and Peers

Identify influential voices – teachers, doctors, coaches, parent champions, even local celebrities – who can amplify the message. A school principal endorsing an active recess initiative in a parent meeting, or a doctor “prescribing” walking to patients, can lend authority to the cause. Peers are powerful messengers too: in Drenthe’s senior buddy program, much of the recruitment happened through **word-of-mouth among seniors**, which proved more convincing than any flyer. Consider forming a team of “Physical Activity Ambassadors” (enthusiastic students, staff or community members) who lead by example and encourage others to join activities.

### 3.1.5 Ensure High Visibility and Clarity

Make information on activities **easy to find and understand**. Post clear schedules for classes or events (who, what, where, when) on websites and social media. In physical locations, use posters with bold graphics (e.g., a person walking or cycling) and concise text. The knowledge exchange visits noted that **visibility** was crucial: Verona’s park classes were advertised with banners on site and frequent social media posts, so citizens constantly encountered the invitation to join. Additionally, all communications should reinforce a consistent slogan or branding (for example, “Active for Health – Join the Move!”) to make the campaign memorable.

### 3.1.6 Interactive and Two-Way Communication

Engage the audience in dialogue, not just one-way messaging. Use interactive tools like polls or challenges on social media (“How did you stay active today? Comment below!”). During community events or workshops, ask for feedback and listen to concerns. Showing that you value the community’s voice builds trust. For instance, partners learned to adjust their messaging based on feedback – if parents felt too busy for after-school sports, campaign messages shifted to highlight flexible, short activity bursts rather than formal programs. Encourage people to share their own progress (photos from a family bike ride, or a testimonial of how they feel after joining a class). This user-generated content not only spreads enthusiasm but also creates a sense of ownership in the movement.

## 3.2 Case Study: Communicating “Parchi in Movimento”

In Verona, the **Parchi in Movimento** program (featured in EHLA’s exchange) succeeded in part due to its strong communication strategy. Organizers branded it as a fun, free opportunity for **“all ages to get moving in the park.”** They partnered with the city and health authority to spread the word. Visibility was high: parks had signs and flags during class times, local newspapers ran stories about the “active parks,” and social media posted schedules and pictures of smiling participants. This multifaceted outreach paid off – each season thousands of people showed



up, many of whom had never joined a gym or sports club before. The key takeaway was that even those who *know* exercise is good for them may need an extra nudge. By **bringing the invitation to them** (both literally into public spaces and via widespread communication), the program bridged the gap between awareness and action.

In summary, to promote physical activity effectively, **communication needs to be proactive, positive, and persistent**. It should raise awareness about opportunities (the *when/where*), convey the benefits in a relatable way (the *why*), and make it feel welcoming (the *who* – “people like me do this, and I’m invited”). As partners discovered, **communication is key to raising awareness and sustaining engagement**. The following chapters will often refer back to communication – whether it’s getting children excited about a new game or informing older adults about classes – underlining that good communication strategies are an integral part of every successful intervention in promoting healthy lifestyles.

*Tip: Consistency builds credibility. Ensure your messaging aligns with what you deliver. If you promote a “fun family activity,” make sure the tone of the event is friendly and inclusive. And celebrate successes publicly – share photos or stats (“100 families joined our walking day!”) to show momentum, which in turn attracts more participants.*



## 4. Delivering Effective Physical Activity Programs and Services

Designing and delivering quality programs is essential to turn enthusiasm into lasting impact. This chapter outlines how organizations can offer **effective, safe, and engaging physical activity programs and services** – whether in schools, clubs, or the broader community. The goal is to ensure that once people show up to be active, they have a positive experience that keeps them coming back. Key strategies include maintaining high program **quality standards**, ensuring **inclusivity**, and practicing continuous **improvement**.

### 4.1 Key Strategies for Delivering Effective Programs and Services

#### 4.1.1 Plan with Purpose and Evidence

A good programme starts with clear objectives and a link to best practice. Decide on your outcomes (e.g. increasing children’s daily activity by 30 minutes, improving seniors’ balance) and design activities accordingly. Draw on evidence from research and successful models—for example, the EHLA Guideline recommends integrating activity across the school day to improve overall activity and even classroom behaviour. If the goal is community-wide activity, consider proven formats like walking groups or car-free street events. Tools such as simple logic models (inputs → activities → outputs → outcomes) help ensure your programme is coherent and aligned with how change actually happens.

#### 4.1.2 Focus on Inclusivity and Enjoyment

Programmes should be welcoming for all ages, fitness levels and abilities. Offer modifications so participants can choose easier or harder options and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Knowledge exchange findings highlighted that success often depends on activities being both enjoyable and adaptable. Include games, music and social elements to make sessions feel like something people *want* to do rather than have to do. Recognition—badges for attending sessions, shout-outs for personal progress—adds a sense of achievement and encourages continued participation.

#### 4.1.3 Qualified and Supportive Staff

The people delivering the programme—coaches, instructors, volunteers—are critical. Invest in training not only on technical skills but also on motivation, communication and inclusion. Staff should create a supportive climate, using positive feedback (“You’re doing great; keep going”) and listening to participants’ concerns. EHLA pilot experiences emphasised training on communication with specific groups, safety and motivational techniques. Even volunteers (such as

student helpers or parents) benefit from a short orientation on how to welcome and engage participants. Where possible, staff should reflect the community's diversity so that participants see role models they recognise.

#### **4.1.4 Logistics and Accessibility**

Reduce practical barriers to attendance. Schedule activities at convenient times (after school, early evenings, weekends) and use venues that are safe, familiar and easy to reach by foot, bike or public transport. Keep costs low or free and provide equipment where possible. Consider additional supports such as parallel children's activities when running an adult programme so parents can join. Ensure facilities are safe and comfortable: adequate lighting, drinking water, toilets and places to rest. Small touches—music, a microphone for large groups, clear signage for routes—can make participation smoother and more attractive.

#### **4.1.5 Monitor, Evaluate, and Adapt**

Effective programmes evolve. From the outset, plan simple monitoring: track attendance, gather short feedback (surveys or informal conversations) and observe engagement (Are people returning? Are they active and interacting?). Use this information to see whether objectives are being met and where adjustments are needed. If attendance drops, explore reasons and adapt (change times, adjust intensity, add social elements). If an activity is thriving, identify what works and strengthen it. The EHLA Guideline emphasises that monitoring and evaluation support continuous improvement and help build a case for sustaining programmes with funders and decision-makers.

#### **4.1.6 Ensure Safety and Well-being**

Safety underpins trust. Include proper warm-ups and cool-downs and adapt exercises for children and older adults (more supervision, gradual progressions, support for balance). Have basic first-aid available and clear procedures for emergencies. Instructors should ask new participants about health issues and adjust accordingly. Emotional safety also matters: create a non-judgmental environment where effort is valued and people are not singled out or embarrassed. A strong safety culture reassures participants and increases the likelihood that they will keep attending.

## **4.2 Checklist for Delivering Quality Programs**

Ensure your program checks these boxes:

- **Clear Goals:** We know what we want to achieve (e.g. "20% more kids active by end of term").



- **Inclusive Design:** Activities can be adjusted for different abilities; everyone feels welcome.
- **Trained Facilitators:** Staff/volunteers are prepared to motivate and support participants, not just instruct.
- **Minimal Barriers:** Timing, location, and cost have been arranged to be as convenient as possible.
- **Engaging Experience:** The program is fun and social. Participants enjoy coming and feel a sense of community.
- **Safety Measures:** We have risk-assessed the activities, and have plans for warm-ups, injury prevention, and emergencies.
- **Feedback Loop:** We collect attendance and feedback and are ready to tweak the program accordingly.

By systematically addressing these elements, organizations can deliver physical activity programs that are **effective (drive desired outcomes), efficient (well-run and sustainable), and beloved by participants**. In essence, delivering a great program means thinking from the participant's perspective: *Would I enjoy this? Would I tell a friend to come? Will I want to keep doing this next month?* If the answer is yes – you are on the right track to instilling lasting healthy habits. As we continue to the next chapters on engaging specific populations and leveraging technology, keep in mind how these general delivery principles can be adapted to different contexts and groups.

*Insight: The EHLA partners' scoring of innovative measures (see WP2 research) underscored that practicality and low barriers are just as important as innovation. A wildly creative idea will fall flat if it's too hard to implement or participate in. Effective delivery finds the sweet spot between novelty and user-friendliness, ensuring programs can realistically be carried out by staff and embraced by the community.*

## 5. Engaging Children and Older Adults in Active Lifestyles

Different age groups require tailored approaches to get and keep them moving. This chapter addresses two ends of the spectrum – **children** and **older adults** – highlighting strategies to engage these groups in active lifestyles. Both children and seniors benefit enormously from physical activity, but their motivations, preferences, and challenges differ. By understanding these differences, staff can create age-appropriate programs that foster lifelong healthy habits.

### 5.1 Engaging Children

Children are naturally inclined to play, but academic pressure, screen time and parental concerns often limit opportunities. To engage them, activity must be **fun, social and routine**.

- **Playfulness and Variety:** Play should be at the heart of children’s activity. Games and imaginative activities work better than rigid exercise routines. Use a mix of tag games, sports, dance, obstacle courses and active storytelling to cater to different interests and develop a broad range of motor skills. A school “activity break” programme might alternate dance parties, relay races and simple yoga. The Finnish *Schools on the Move* initiative shows how adding movement throughout the day – from active lessons to extra recess – increases overall activity and improves focus without harming academic performance.
- **Build it Into the Day:** Make movement part of the daily schedule rather than an optional extra. Schools and after-school programmes can introduce short movement breaks, active recess, or a “daily mile” walk/jog. At home, families can set regular play times or walks after dinner. The idea is to normalise movement so it feels as non-negotiable as brushing teeth—but still enjoyable. The EHLA Guideline, in line with WHO recommendations, advises aiming for **60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity daily** and breaking up long sitting periods; embedding short activity bouts throughout the day is an effective way to achieve this.
- **Social and Cooperative Elements:** Children are strongly motivated by peers. Design activities that emphasise teamwork, belonging and shared goals (“Can our class reach 100 jumping jacks together?”). Small group challenges, team games and “buddy” systems can be very effective. The BASE buddy approach, originally for seniors, can be adapted for youth by pairing less active children with slightly older active buddies. Partners in EHLA exchanges observed that children respond particularly well when



older pupils or teachers join in, turning sessions into shared experiences rather than instruction only.

- **Rewards and Recognition:** Intrinsic enjoyment is central, but small rewards can reinforce participation. Simple tools such as sticker charts, certificates (“Active Star of the Week”) or chances to lead a game validate effort and consistency. Many programmes use badges or bracelets to mark milestones (e.g. after 10 sessions), emphasising participation and improvement rather than ability. Models like *Junior Parkrun* illustrate how recognition (high-fives, milestone wristbands) can keep children engaged without focusing on competition.
- **Engage Families and Educators:** Children’s environments shape their activity patterns. Involving parents, caregivers and teachers multiplies impact. Schools can host family activity days, share active play ideas via newsletters or the EHLA app, and integrate movement into lessons (for example, using jumping or walking to practise maths). Adults set the tone: a teacher who joins in an activity break or a parent who walks instead of drives short distances sends a powerful signal. Involving parents in programme design (e.g. discussing safety concerns and addressing them through supervised play in safe spaces) increases trust and uptake. The capacity-building programme emphasises this transgenerational network – schools, families and communities working together – as key to sustaining children’s active lifestyles.

## 5.2 Engaging Older Adults

Older adults are a diverse group, from active 60-year-olds to frailer 80+ individuals, but they share common needs around health, social connection and maintaining independence. The aim is to improve strength, balance and endurance while reducing isolation.

- **Offer Appropriate Activities:** Tailor programmes to seniors’ abilities and health conditions. Walking groups, low-impact aerobics, water exercise, yoga, stretching, balance training and dance are often suitable. Start gently, allow participants to progress at their own pace, and offer adaptations such as chair-based exercise. The UISP *Progetto Integrato* in Rovigo, Italy, combines group gymnastics, adapted physical activity and walking sessions, including classes for post-stroke rehabilitation, and has shown improvements in motor skills and depressive symptoms. The key is safe, accessible formats that match seniors’ needs.



- Emphasize Social and Fun Aspects:** For many older adults, social contact is as important as exercise. Programmes that foster conversation and friendships retain participants better. Add a coffee/tea social after classes, use partner or group activities, or organise walking clubs that end at a café or community centre. The BASE buddy model in Drenthe demonstrates how pairing seniors with volunteers supports both activity and companionship. Intergenerational activities—such as “active games days” where children and seniors play together—can energise both groups and change perceptions of ageing and movement.
- Address Barriers and Fears:** Barriers like fear of injury, health limitations, transport problems and lack of information are common. Address these proactively: ensure instructors are trained in senior fitness and able to modify exercises; advertise sessions as beginner-friendly and adaptable; and use clear, reassuring messaging (“Easy Exercise for All Abilities”, chairs and supports available). Provide practical solutions such as carpooling or collaboration with volunteer transport services, and keep participation free or low-cost. A welcoming atmosphere—greetings at the door, name tags, applause for effort—helps reduce anxiety and encourages return visits.
- Highlight the Benefits that Matter to Seniors:** Seniors are often motivated by functional outcomes: staying independent, reducing pain and keeping up with grandchildren. Frame activities around these goals (“Steady on Your Feet” balance classes, “Strength for Everyday Tasks”). During sessions, link exercises to daily tasks and periodically measure simple indicators (reach, balance time, walking distance) to show progress. Visible improvements—easier stair-climbing, better sleep, improved mood—reinforce commitment when explicitly acknowledged.
- Community and Healthcare Integration:** Engagement is strongest when programmes are embedded in existing community and healthcare structures. Collaborate with doctors to encourage “exercise prescriptions” and referrals to community programmes. Work with senior centres, churches and retirement communities to host or promote activities, and involve municipal health departments and sports clubs as partners. This multi-stakeholder approach increases trust, visibility and sustainability: seniors encounter consistent encouragement to be active across different parts of their lives.

### Engagement Spotlights:



- *Walking Group:* One partner city started a daily morning walking group for older residents, led by a rotating team of volunteers. It began with 5 retirees; within months, 25–30 people regularly joined. The secret? They made it a social ritual – everyone greets each other, the pace is comfortable, and they end at a café for coffee. Participants report that they come as much for the friendships as for the exercise. One 70-year-old participant said, “I used to walk only to the mailbox; now I walk 3 kilometers and have new friends to keep me going.” This illustrates how **social design** of programs hooks seniors in.
- *Intergenerational Activity Day:* In another initiative, a community organized a “Play Day” where schoolchildren invited their grandparents or senior neighbors to an afternoon of games. Stations included balloon volleyball, hopscotch, and simple dance. The event saw laughter across generations and many seniors surprised themselves by breaking a sweat! Such events not only get older adults active in a fun, low-pressure way, but also change perceptions – kids see that older folks can play, and seniors feel the infectious energy of youth. Several attendees subsequently joined regular senior classes, having lost some fear of exercise.

In conclusion, engaging children and older adults comes down to **meeting them where they are** developmentally and emotionally. **For kids**, make it play and they won’t even realize it’s exercise; make it routine and they’ll carry the habit forward. **For seniors**, make it accessible and meaningful for daily life; make it social and they’ll keep coming for the camaraderie. Both groups thrive on encouragement and a sense of belonging. By applying these age-tailored strategies, staff can inspire the very young and the young-at-heart alike to embrace active living.

*Note: Don’t forget to cross-reference the EHLA Guideline’s stakeholder-specific guidance – it contains additional tips for working with children, families, and older adults, including safety considerations and motivational techniques. Practitioners can use it alongside this chapter for a fuller toolkit.*

## 6. Leveraging New Technologies to Promote Physical Activity

Technology, when used wisely, can be a powerful ally in promoting physical activity. Fitness apps, wearables, online challenges and social media offer new ways to engage people, monitor progress and gamify healthy behaviours. This chapter outlines how organisations can use these tools—with a special focus on the **EHLA “Active for Health” app**—to enhance programmes and reach wider audiences.

### 6.1 Tools to Promote Physical Activity

#### 6.1.1 Digital Platforms and Apps

Mobile apps and online platforms provide convenience and interactivity that traditional programs can struggle to achieve. The EHLA project’s app, **Active for Health**, is a prime example of integrating technology into community health promotion. This app (available for Android and iPhone) allows teachers, parents, and community members to **coordinate and track physical activity initiatives**. For instance, teachers can schedule school-based activities and send reminders, while parents receive notifications and can view their child’s activity schedule or send feedback to instructors. The app also supports **peer connections**: families can link via QR codes to form “buddy” pairs, enabling them to plan activities together and encourage each other.

By consolidating scheduling, communication, and tracking in one place, such an app simplifies participation and fosters a sense of community. When introducing an app to your program, emphasize its benefits: ease of sign-ups, fun tracking of progress, and instant communication (push notifications for event reminders or motivational messages). It’s important to support users in adoption – offer a quick demo session or guide, and ensure the app is user-friendly. (See *D3.2 Mobile Application – “Active for Health” for more information and screenshots of the app.*)

#### 6.1.2 Gamification and Challenges

Technology can support **gamification**—using points, badges or challenges to make activity feel playful. Apps like Fitbit or Strava use these tools, and organisations can run simple digital challenges such as class or community step goals. The EHLA app can host light, optional challenges and display digital badges to celebrate participation. However, gamification can also produce unintended negative effects. Public leaderboards, streaks or competitive scoring can discourage children, and the emotional impact of “losing” often outweighs the motivation gained from “winning.” Those who respond best to gamified systems are usually



already active or involved in organised sport, meaning gamification alone will not reach the full target group. For younger children, **inclusive and social approaches work better than competition**. Schools and teachers are best placed to create supportive environments where participation, cooperation and enjoyment drive activity. For this reason, the EHLA pilot does not include formal gamification. Instead, every child receives a certificate of completion, and each school receives recognition for facilitating the programme—reinforcing participation rather than performance. Given the age profile of the primary target group, **personal devices or wearables for activity tracking are not recommended**. Such technologies may be reconsidered for programmes involving older adolescents or adults.

### 6.1.3 Wearables and Tracking Devices

Pedometers, smartwatches and heart-rate monitors provide immediate feedback and can motivate people by making activity visible. Programmes can lend simple step counters, encourage use of smartphone step apps or incorporate tracking into school projects (“How many steps are in a kilometre?”). A “pedometer week” where everyone aims to increase daily steps is one simple format. Be mindful of equity—basic devices or phone apps are more inclusive than expensive wearables. Some healthcare providers are starting to “prescribe” step goals supported by wearables; similar approaches can be developed in partnership with local health services.

### 6.1.4 Online Communities and Social Media

Social media and online groups extend the community beyond physical meetings. A moderated Facebook or WhatsApp group can function as a support hub where participants share progress, event photos and challenges. Short success stories and clips (with consent) can inspire others and showcase your programme publicly. Live-streamed or recorded sessions (via platforms like YouTube or Zoom) allow people to join from home when they cannot be on site. Many participants are now comfortable with hybrid formats, so combining in-person and online sessions can increase reach and flexibility.

### 6.1.5 Data and Personalization

Technology generates data that can help tailor and improve programmes. Apps can collect simple preference or goal information and adapt content accordingly (for example, suggesting more family activities, or sending specific tips). Online surveys or in-app polls help you learn what participants enjoy and when they are most likely to join sessions. On an aggregate level, data can reveal patterns (such as seasonal dips in engagement) that inform planning. Robust data protection and

transparency about what is collected and how it is used are essential to maintain trust.

### 6.1.6 Innovative Tech Approaches

Emerging tools can make activity more engaging. **Exergames** (e.g. Wii Fit, Just Dance, VR fitness games) can motivate children and some older adults, especially in group or supervised contexts. **QR-code trails** along walking routes can turn walks into interactive experiences with short exercises or health facts at each point. Partnerships with bike-sharing or e-scooter schemes can promote active transport. When considering new technologies, avoid novelty for its own sake and ask: *Does this make it easier or more attractive for our community to be active?* If yes, it may be worth piloting.

## 6.2 Case Example: EHLA “Active for Health” App

The *Active for Health* app supports the EHLA pilot programme by extending communications from the classroom into the home. Teachers add their class and students, setting up the planned PE / activity schedule. In addition to establishing a messaging connection, parents have access to the additional support resources around nutrition and hydration, promoted by the school as part of the pilot programme. An automated notification after every session asks “how did <child’s name> enjoy today’s PE class?”, with multiple impacts. First, it allows the teacher to learn the effectiveness of their lesson, and potentially adapt their methodology in response. The greater impact, perhaps, is that the parent asks this question of their child, seeding a positive conversation about being active and helping the parent to demonstrate an interest in their child’s development. The *Active for Health* app also supports peer connections, allowing parents to plan shared activities such as a hike in the forest or a trip to the beach, and so leveraging small-group dynamics in support of a more sustainable activity model.

In summary, technology can **amplify** your reach and impact but should **support, not replace, human relationships and programme quality**. Apps and devices are most effective when embedded in thoughtful interventions, backed by clear communication and support. Start small—pilot tools with a willing group, gather feedback, and adapt. EHLA partners find that combining traditional methods with tech-based ones capture the strengths of both. With digital tools now widely available, carefully leveraging technology is a practical way to enhance modern health promotion and make active living more engaging and visible.

*Integration note: Throughout this e-book and in the EHLA Guideline (D3.1), you will find prompts to use the Active for Health app or similar tools to implement specific*



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*strategies. Always ensure that staff and participants receive basic technical support and that data protection standards are respected.*



## 7. Putting It All Together: Integrating EHLA Guidelines and Innovations into Practice

This chapter brings the pieces together – demonstrating how to integrate the knowledge and tools from the EHLA project into your organization’s regular practices. By now, we’ve covered effective communication, quality program delivery, engaging diverse age groups, and using technology. Now it’s time to synthesize these elements and connect them explicitly to the **EHLA Guideline (D3.1 Guideline to promote physical activity)** and the project’s **innovative measures**. The aim is to ensure that this e-book doesn’t stand alone but serves as a gateway to the broader EHLA toolkit – and to help you *mainstream* these innovations in your own context.

### 7.1 Making Use of the EHLA Guideline (D3.1) in Day-to-Day Work

The EHLA Guideline provides evidence-based recommendations and case studies for promoting physical activity, particularly among children aged 6–12. To integrate it into your work:

- **Use it as a Reference Manual:** When planning new initiatives or policies, consult relevant sections of the guideline. For example, if designing a school action plan, review stakeholder-specific recommendations for schools, parents and public authorities. The cross-cutting recommendations (e.g. daily activity goals, breaking up sedentary time, inclusive provision) offer a practical checklist. Keep a copy easily accessible—print or digital—and gradually familiarise staff with it, for instance by discussing one recommendation in each team meeting and reflecting on local application.
- **Incorporate Guideline Tips into Training and SOPs:** If you conduct internal trainings for teachers or coaches, draw from the guideline’s evidence summaries and tips. For instance, the guideline might cite that breaking up classroom sitting every 30 minutes improves concentration – share this fact with teachers as rationale for active breaks. If you have standard operating procedures (SOPs) or curricula, you can integrate guideline points (e.g., an SOP for community events might include “ensure activities are free or low-cost, per EHLA recommendation to remove barriers”). This mainstreams the knowledge so it’s not just in a document but in your organization’s way of doing things.
- **Align Evaluation Metrics with the Guideline:** Where possible, adopt indicators suggested in the guideline (e.g. % of children achieving 60



minutes of daily activity, active travel rates). If your intervention promotes active commuting, measure walking/cycling to school before and after. Using common metrics helps you assess progress and situates your local work within a broader European framework, making comparisons and shared learning easier.

- **Promote the Guideline to Stakeholders:** Share the guideline widely with colleagues, partners and policy-makers. Host a short workshop to present its most relevant recommendations, discuss how they match current practice and identify gaps. Encourage staff to cite it when advocating for changes (“According to the EHLA Guideline, regular activity breaks can boost academic performance...”). Consider preparing a brief summary or translations if needed. The more stakeholders know and trust the guideline, the smoother implementation will be.

*Practical note: Ensure staff know where to find the digital (and translated) versions of the guideline. Include links or QR codes in internal documents and, where possible, embed clickable references in the digital version of this e-book to take readers directly to key sections.*

## 7.2 Applying the “Most Innovative Measures” in Your Context

Earlier in the project, three innovative measures were identified and analysed, *Finnish Schools on the Move*, *BASE*, and *Parchi in Movimento* (see “Appendix – Three Most Innovative Measures and How to Implement Them” for a concise overview of these innovative measures and how to adopt/implement them). Integrating these into practice means looking at **how you can adopt or adapt these models** locally.

***Finnish Schools on the Move:*** This measure showed how making the *whole school day* active yields big benefits (improved focus, more kids meeting activity targets). To integrate its concepts:

- **Start small** with pilot schools introducing movement breaks and active recess. Use the logic model from the guideline to plan: inputs (teacher training, equipment), activities (active lessons, walking school buses), outputs (changes in schedule, participation), outcomes (reduced sitting, better concentration).
- **Secure buy-in** from education authorities and school leadership by sharing evidence that activity supports, rather than undermines, academic performance.



- **Adapt to local conditions** by forming an “Active Schools Network”, using the EHLA app or simple online tools for sharing ideas. Begin with manageable changes (e.g. one extra active break per day) and monitor teacher and student feedback. Expand once you can show positive results.

**BASE:** The buddy program from Drenthe focuses on **peer support to engage inactive people**. For integration:

- Identify a target group in your community that could benefit from buddies. BASE was initially for older adults, but can be for teens or families too. Suppose you want to help sedentary teenagers – you could train university student volunteers as mentors, and pair them with teens to go to the gym or play sports regularly.
- Use the resources and process outlined by BASE: a **training curriculum for mentors and buddies**, structured matching, and follow-up events, and the EHLA guideline. Or create your own based on their description. The guideline’s logic model shows needing input like training, partnerships for referrals, and minor resources (pedometers, routes).
- **Tailor to local realities:** recruit buddies through clubs, schools, churches or neighbourhood groups; pair people with some existing connection if trust is an issue. You can also run lighter “Buddy Month” campaigns encouraging people to invite a less-active friend. Track who you reach—especially whether you are engaging the “next 10%” who were previously inactive—and adjust recruitment accordingly.

**Parchi in Movimento:** This Verona-born initiative turned parks into free fitness hubs. To integrate such an idea:

- **Map potential spaces** (parks, squares, other public venues) and create a schedule of free sessions during suitable seasons. Collaborate with local instructors or sports clubs, offering visibility in exchange for their involvement.
- **Work with municipal authorities** for permits, promotion and possible integration into city health campaigns. Their endorsement can significantly increase reach and legitimacy.
- **Adaptation:** start modestly (one park, one session per week) or link sessions to existing events (e.g. market days). If climate is an issue (long winters or hot summers), consider indoor public spaces (malls, community halls) during off-season but keep the “free, come-all” spirit. Choose activities that match local interests and demographics. You might find your community leans more towards certain activities (for instance, dance and yoga might

be more popular than martial arts. The key is to **reduce barriers** (no cost, nearby location) and make it fun and social (maybe add music and post-class mingling). Collect simple data (attendance, age groups, feedback) to demonstrate growth and value.

By piloting these measures—or elements of them—you test proven concepts in your own setting. Document your experience and share it within your organisation and, where possible, the wider EHLA network to contribute to collective learning.

### 7.3 Action Planning: From Knowledge to Implementation

Knowledge only makes a difference if we act on it. Thus, a crucial part of this chapter is moving from ideas to a **concrete action plan** for your organization. This e-book encourages each reader (or team) to create an **Action Plan Worksheet** to integrate EHLA learnings. Below is a guide to formulate your plan:

#### Action Plan Worksheet: Integrating EHLA Innovations

- **1. New Communication Strategy:** Identify one improvement in how you promote physical activity. *Example:* “Implement a monthly ‘Active Newsletter’ for parents with tips and upcoming events.” (*Responsible:* Communications Officer; *Timeline:* Start by next month’s edition.)\*
- **2. New Program/Service Enhancement:** Choose one way to enhance an existing program or service. *Example:* “Add a 10-minute social tea after the senior exercise class to boost retention.” (*Responsible:* Program Coach; *Timeline:* Pilot in Q1.)\*
- **3. Child Engagement Approach:** Pick one idea to engage children more. *Example:* “Introduce a daily classroom movement break (following Guideline’s active schools concept).” (*Responsible:* Principal & Teaching staff; *Timeline:* Include in next term’s schedule.)\*
- **4. Older Adult Engagement Approach:** Pick one idea to engage older adults more. *Example:* “Partner with local clinic to have doctors ‘prescribe’ our walking club to lonely seniors.” (*Responsible:* Community Liaison; *Timeline:* Meet clinic director in 2 weeks, start referrals next month.)\*
- **5. Technology Tool:** Select one tech tool to leverage. *Example:* “Use the EHLA Active for Health app to create a challenge among local schools.” (*Responsible:* IT Officer + PE teachers; *Timeline:* Set up in app within 3 months.)\*
- **6. Staff Capacity Building:** Note one step to strengthen your team’s capacity. *Example:* “Train 5 instructors in buddy program methods (maybe

via an EHLA webinar replay or internal workshop)." (*Responsible: Training Dept; Timeline: Training by May.*)\*

*You can expand this worksheet with more rows if needed. The idea is to force prioritization: start with a few key actions rather than trying everything at once. Make sure each action has an owner and a timeframe.*

After filling out your Action Plan, discuss it with your team and leadership. The worksheet can serve as a **checklist in meetings** – are we on track with these actions? Do we need support or resources to accomplish them? Consider appointing “champions” for each area to keep momentum.

## 7.4 Integrating with Organizational Policy and Culture

To truly integrate these practices, they should reflect in your organization’s **policies, routines, and culture**:

- **Embed into Policy Documents:** Update strategic plans, wellness policies or annual objectives to explicitly include physical activity promotion, referencing the EHLA Guideline where helpful. For example, a school might add daily activity breaks and active transport promotion to its wellness policy; an NGO might commit to using evidence-based, innovative approaches drawn from EHLA.
- **Resource Allocation:** Secure time, budget and staff by making a clear case. Use EHLA evidence to show how investments (e.g. playground equipment, app subscriptions, instructor hours) contribute to health, inclusion and potential long-term cost savings. Linking innovations to organisational goals (better learning, social cohesion, reduced isolation) helps convince decision-makers.
- **Monitor and Celebrate Integration:** Create a simple “integration scoreboard” listing EHLA recommendations or innovations and rating your progress (e.g. green/yellow/red). Review it every six months, celebrate successes (e.g. successful app rollout, new active school policies) and identify support needed for weaker areas. Share success stories widely—such as increased participation among girls in sports—so staff see that new practices are producing tangible benefits.
- **Encourage Knowledge Exchange and Networking:** Continue the project’s emphasis on shared learning by joining networks or communities of practice on healthy lifestyles. Connect with EHLA partners or similar initiatives to exchange experience—e.g. contacting Finnish schools about active school

strategies or the Sport Drenthe team about BASE. Also foster exchange within your own country or region so organisations can learn from one another's adaptation of EHLA ideas.

Finally, remember that integrating EHLA's outputs is not a one-time task but an ongoing process. The **culture change** – toward a more active, health-promoting organization – happens gradually as these practices become “how we do things here.” Support your colleagues through this change: provide training (Chapter 10 will cover change management more deeply), acknowledge efforts, and keep the mission front and center: improving people's lives through physical activity. The EHLA e-book, app, and guideline together form a toolkit, but it's the people on the ground – *you and your team* – who make the toolkit come alive. By putting it all together, you ensure the EHLA project's legacy endures in daily practice and continues to grow.

*Integration Highlight: This e-book explicitly links to all EHLA deliverables. For instance, throughout these pages you've seen prompts like “refer to Guideline D3.1 for more detail” or “see the Mobile App guide (D3.2) for how to create a challenge.” The goal is to direct you to the broader EHLA toolkit whenever you need more depth. Use those deliverables – they are there to help you. Moreover, we encourage you to explore the Knowledge Exchange report (D2.2) for rich case studies and lessons learned across different countries, which can further reinforce the strategies you implement. By integrating these resources, your organization becomes part of a larger movement adopting and spreading innovative measures for a healthier Europe.*



## 8. How to Use the Guideline

This chapter summarises the most relevant recommendations from the EHLA Guideline (D3.1) and explains how staff and practitioners can use it in practice. Think of it as a “cheat sheet”: it highlights key points and directs you to where in the guideline you can find more detail. By internalising these recommendations, you gain a solid foundation of best practices to support planning, implementation and decision-making..

### 8.1 Key Recommendations from the EHLA Guideline (D3.1)

**1. Cross-Cutting Principles:** The guideline establishes several fundamental principles that apply to all settings and stakeholders:

- Aim for at least **60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity** per day for every child. Activity can be accumulated in short bouts; every movement counts and any increase is beneficial.
- **Reduce sedentary time, especially recreational screen time.** Limit long sitting periods and recreational screen time; school-age children should ideally have <2 hours per day of leisure screen use. Break up sitting at least every 30 minutes. Reducing prolonged sitting is as important as promoting active time.
- **Integrate physical activity into daily life and environments.** Promote **active transport** (walking/cycling to school and other destinations) and **active play** (daily, unstructured play with time and space protected). Schools and communities should design environments that make these choices easy and safe.
- **Inclusive opportunities for all.** Design programmes so that all children can participate, regardless of ability, disability, gender or background. Provide diverse activities (not only competitive sport), remove barriers (cost, access, cultural norms) and actively reach less-active groups (girls, children from lower-income families, etc.). Equity is a central theme: those who need activity most should receive extra support.
- **Multi-sector collaboration.** Physical activity promotion is a shared responsibility. Education, health, sport, transport, urban planning, environment and families all play roles. Echoing EU HEPA policy, the guideline calls for coordinated action across sectors. For practitioners, this means building partnerships—for example, schools working with municipalities on safe routes to school or with local businesses on bike racks.

**2. Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations:** The guideline offers tailored advice for key stakeholder groups:

### Schools

- Ensure daily PE or other physical activity opportunities during the school day (at least ~30 minutes in school, complementing 30 minutes at home).
- Use active learning and regular classroom activity breaks.
- Provide training and resources so teachers can integrate movement; teacher buy-in is crucial and can be fostered through professional development and sharing success stories.
- Open facilities for after-school use and collaborate with local sports clubs.

### Parents/Families

- Model active behaviour and set family routines (walks, active chores and games, limited screen time).
- Provide support: safe places to play, suitable clothing/shoes, and encouragement rather than fear.
- Use family-based challenges (e.g. step-tracking together) and highlight broad benefits—better mood, sleep and family connection, not just weight.

### Community and Sports Organizations

- Offer inclusive, low-barrier programmes (free or low cost, beginner-friendly) and proactively reach children who are not already active.
- Use community spaces (e.g. parks, as in Parchi in Movimento) and organise events such as fun runs or sports festivals that attract diverse participants.
- Sports clubs should adopt a “sport for all” mindset: flexible membership options, introductory sessions, and collaboration with schools (e.g. after-school sessions on school grounds).

### Medical and Health Sector

- Incorporate physical activity into routine care—treat it as a “vital sign”.
- Encourage and, where appropriate, prescribe activity; refer families to local programmes or exercise referral schemes and reassure them about safety.

- Help monitor progress (e.g. following up on activity plans for children with overweight).
- Use digital tools where appropriate to connect families to advice and local resources.

### Policy Makers/Public Authorities

- Develop and implement policies that prioritise active living: funding for playgrounds and bike lanes, requirements for daily PE, support for campaigns and digital tools.
- Ensure urban planning considers walkability and play spaces.
- Monitor implementation (e.g. whether schools meet PE time recommendations) and assess population-level impact through surveys and fitness tests.
- Provide leadership and convene cross-sector groups to coordinate a unified strategy.

**3. Innovative Measures and Examples (WP2 Insights):** The guideline (D3.1 – Chapter 6) describes the three highlighted innovations – Finnish Schools on the Move, BASE, and Parchi in Movimento – distilling why they work and what lessons they offer. A quick recap from the guideline’s perspective:

- ***Finnish Schools on the Move:*** Whole-school approach, flexible implementation by each school with national support. Key outcomes: reduced sedentary time, improved focus, more active kids especially girls, no academic harm. Lesson: with policy backing and school-level creativity, you can change culture.
- ***BASE:*** Peer-driven change, leverages social support, started with seniors but scalable to others. Emphasizes training and structure (mentors + buddies). Lesson: tackling inactivity via relationships can reach people traditional campaigns miss, and can be scaled if you train enough volunteers.
- ***Parchi in Movimento:*** Free outdoor classes via multi-partner collaboration (sport association + health authority + city). Attracts diverse ages by offering variety; shows the power of removing cost and access barriers. Lesson: meet people where they are (in community spaces) and they will participate; requires coordination and promotion but payoff is big in participation.

The guideline uses these examples to illustrate principles such as active school culture, social inclusion, multi-sector collaboration and accessibility.

**4. Monitoring and Evaluation:** It is important for practitioners to build in monitoring and use of tools to track progress. Recommendations here include:

- Use **objective measures** when possible (accelerometers, fitness tests, step counts) for accurate data.
- Use **surveys or questionnaires** for attitudes and self-reported behaviour (with validated tools like PAQ-C for kids).
- Track key indicators at school/community level: e.g., % of children walking to school, minutes of PE per week, participation in sports clubs, etc..
- **Act on data:** if monitoring shows low participation among a group (say girls), implement targeted interventions (like a “girls’ sports day” or female coach mentorship). Monitoring isn’t just for reporting upwards; it’s a tool for continuous improvement.
- **Share** data with stakeholders to celebrate success or advocate for change (public dashboards or reports can motivate schools or communities by showing comparisons or progress over time).

## 8.2 How Staff Can Use the EHLA Guideline as an Ongoing Resource

Now that we’ve summarized key content, here’s *how to actually use* the guideline in your workflow:

- **Orient New Staff or Partners:** Provide the guideline (or a short summary) to new teachers, coaches or partner organisations so they quickly understand the project’s evidence base and strategy. Consider a brief induction session where you walk through key recommendations to align everyone’s approach.
- **Program Planning and Grant Writing:** When drafting proposals or plans, use the guideline to justify your design and wording. Cite it to explain why, for example, you include two daily activity breaks or prioritise active transport. Referencing a European research-based document strengthens credibility with funders, managers and policy-makers.
- **Troubleshooting and Improving Existing Initiatives:** If a programme is underperforming, consult the relevant section. Low attendance at an after-school club may point to inclusion or outreach issues; limited parental



engagement may require family-focused strategies from the guideline. Treat it as a “consultant on paper” for common challenges.

- **Training and Workshops:** Use tables, graphs and logic models from the guideline (with proper credit) in presentations and training materials. For instance, the Finnish Schools on the Move logic model can help explain to school staff how a whole-school approach works. The statistics mentioned (such as 81% of adolescents not meeting 60 min/day globally, or the gender gap in activity) can underscore the urgency of your work to stakeholders.
- **Quick Reference for Q&A:** When colleagues, parents or decision-makers ask “Why this approach?”, the guideline gives you evidence-based answers. For example, you can draw on its explanations when arguing for movement integrated into lessons rather than relying solely on PE classes.
- **Connecting to Broader Initiatives:** The guideline references WHO and EU frameworks. If your organisation engages in national or European initiatives (e.g. Healthy Cities, HEPA policies), the guideline helps bridge high-level goals with concrete local actions, ensuring alignment and coherence.

In summary, the EHLA Guideline should be seen as a **living reference** – not a report that sits on a shelf. Make it a habit to consult it when planning, evaluating, or explaining your physical activity promotion efforts. Remember that guidelines evolve; your successes and challenges can inform future updates or new guidelines in this field.

### 8.3 Quick Recap of Top Tips (from Guideline) for Daily Use

From the guideline’s perspective, five practical reminders stand out:

- Every child: **60 minutes of activity per day**, break up sitting, and swap some screen time for active play.
- Make the **active choice the easy choice**: support active travel and daily play as normal, convenient options.
- **Include everyone**: adapt activities and focus especially on those who are often left out (girls, children with disabilities, lower-income groups).
- **Team up across sectors**: schools, families, health providers, municipalities and community groups should act together, not in isolation.
- **Track progress, share results and celebrate wins**: use data to improve, motivate and sustain support.



By using the guideline as your compass, you ensure your efforts are anchored in proven strategies and you speak a common language with others in the EHLA network and the wider health promotion community. This will make your local initiatives more effective and recognized, ultimately helping more people lead active, healthy lives. Keep the guide at hand – it's like having the collective wisdom of the project at your side as you plan your next move!

*You can find the full Guideline to Promote Physical Activity (EHLA D3.1) on the project website. It's free to download and available in multiple languages. When in doubt, refer to it – and don't hesitate to share it with colleagues or partners who could benefit from its insights.*



## 9. Strategies for Change Management and Capacity Building within an Organization

Implementing the innovations and strategies discussed in this e-book often requires changes in an organization's routines, culture, and skills. Whether you're a school trying to become more activity-friendly, a sports club expanding services, or a health agency working with new partners, you'll need to manage change deliberately. This chapter discusses **change management and capacity building** strategies to help ensure that new initiatives take root and that your organization (and staff) can sustain them.

### 9.1 Embracing Change: Creating a Supportive Climate

**1. Establish a Clear Vision and Urgency:** Change efforts succeed when everyone understands *why* it's needed and *where* you're heading. Start by articulating a compelling vision for promoting physical activity in your context. For example, "Our vision is a school where every child enjoys at least 60 minutes of movement a day, leading to healthier, happier students." Align this with broader values (health, education, community welfare). Communicate the **urgency**: use data or anecdotes from the EHLA findings – e.g., "Right now, 80% of our students are not active enough, which could affect their health and learning; we need to act." When people see change as addressing an important problem, they're more likely to commit. Use initial small successes or evidence as fuel: "Look, when we piloted activity breaks, discipline issues in that class dropped – imagine if we scale that up!" Essentially, create a narrative that staying the same is riskier than changing ("the gap between theory and practice has limited impact, so we *must* incorporate successful initiatives to truly help our community").

**2. Leadership and Champions:** Visible leadership and grassroots champions are both vital. Leaders (principals, directors, managers) should endorse the changes, allocate resources and remove barriers—for example, by attending morning exercise or publicly praising active workplace policies. At the same time, identify **champions at different levels**: a teacher who is passionate about sports, an HR officer who's a fitness enthusiast, or a respected community volunteer. These champions can influence peers through enthusiasm and example. Engage them early in planning so they feel ownership. Create a "change team" or task force that includes these champions to drive implementation. Kotter's change model emphasizes forming a guiding coalition – in this case, a cross-functional team (maybe a couple of teachers, a PE teacher, a parent, an admin staff) working together to roll out the EHLA-inspired changes. This broad buy-in prevents the change from being seen as one person's pet project.



**3. Communicate and Involve:** Change can create uncertainty; steady, transparent communication helps. Keep staff informed about plans, progress and small wins through meetings, newsletters, informal conversations and internal channels. Actively **listen:** ask for feedback (“How do you feel about active breaks? What support do you need?”). Involving people in designing solutions—such as workshops where teachers co-create active lessons or staff brainstorm ways to build movement into the workday—builds ownership. Publicly acknowledge contributions (“Shout out to Ms. Lopez’s class for leading daily dance breaks!”). Regular positive reinforcement strengthens momentum.

## 9.2 Building Capacity: Training and Resources for Sustained Change

**4. Training and Skill Development:** New initiatives often require new skills or knowledge. Capacity building is about equipping your team to handle these. Identify skill gaps – perhaps teachers need training in physical literacy, coaches need knowledge on engaging kids with disabilities, or staff need to learn to use the EHLA app platform. Develop a training plan. This can include formal workshops (maybe invite an expert or use EHLA’s training materials), peer learning (one school that’s done active breaks coaches another), and self-learning (sharing relevant articles or online courses). The EHLA Knowledge Exchange visits were themselves capacity building—staff learned from peers abroad. Consider mini “exchange visits” locally (visiting a school with strong PE practice). Use the EHLA Guideline as a study resource—organise discussion sessions around key chapters. Make training practical and ongoing, with follow-up opportunities to share what has been tried and learned.

**5. Resource Allocation and Support Systems:** Capacity isn’t just skills; it’s also having the time, tools, and resources to apply them. Advocate for the necessary resources: budget for equipment (perhaps modest – like playground gear, pedometers), time in the schedule for new activities (maybe a slight adjustment in timetable or staff duties), and human resources (maybe assign a coordinator for the new program, or integrate tasks into existing roles formally). If the change is substantial, phase it (start with one grade or pilot site). Provide user-friendly materials—starter kits for teachers with simple active break ideas, playlists, and a few props. Instituting support systems is key: for example, create a buddy system among staff (a teacher struggling to implement can partner with one who’s doing well for moral support and tips). Or set up a help channel (like an email or chat group where questions can be asked – “Any ideas to get my shy group to participate in morning exercise?” and others chime in). Leadership should check in regularly, visiting sessions and asking what’s needed. The goal is that no one feels they must “figure it out alone”.



**6. Institutionalize and Integrate:** For the change to last, it should be embedded in normal operations and policies. Update **organizational documents** to reflect the new normal – e.g., include physical activity promotion in the school’s annual plan, staff job descriptions (maybe “PE teacher will oversee active break implementation” or “HR will include wellness in staff appraisal criteria”), or budget lines (allocate recurring funds for maintenance of sports equipment or training). Create **routines** and traditions around the change: maybe Monday mornings are now “Move it Monday” assembly, or every staff meeting starts with a 2-minute stretch (to role model). By weaving changes into daily/weekly cycles, they become habit. Develop **guidelines or SOPs**: e.g., a brief protocol for how to conduct an active classroom break safely, or how to onboard new staff into the active culture (so new hires learn about the expectation of integrating movement). Also integrate into orientation for new participants: new students or members should immediately sense that “here we move”. That way, it’s not personality-dependent; it’s systemic.

**7. Monitor, Improve, and Anchor:** Use data to reinforce and refine change. Track relevant indicators (participation rates, basic fitness or health metrics, classroom behaviour, sick leave) and share positive results: “Since daily activity started, nurse visits for headaches dropped 20%,” or “Employee sick days decreased by X%.” This helps win over skeptics and sustain leadership support. If indicators do not improve, adapt your approach and be transparent about learning and adjustment. As success accumulates, link change to organisational identity (e.g. branding as an “Active School” in communication, highlighting achievements in reports and newsletters). Recognise individuals and teams that exemplify the new culture in awards or performance reviews, signalling that these behaviours are valued.

**8. Addressing Resistance:** It’s natural to have some pushback – “We’ve always done it this way” or fear of extra work. Approach resistance with empathy and facts. Listen to concerns (they may have valid points, like time constraints). Find compromise or solutions: e.g., integrate physical activity without losing academic time by making lessons active – thus quelling the “we don’t have time” argument. Provide evidence from EHLA or pilots to address efficacy concerns. Sometimes pairing a resister with a supporter in a team to implement together can help (peer influence). Training can also alleviate self-doubt resistance (“I don’t know how to do this”) by boosting confidence. And frankly, some resistance might fade once successes appear – early wins are the best antidote to doubt.

**9. Change Management “Soft” Tactics:** Use informal influence – often staff culture changes through coffee-room conversations and social norms. So those champions, ensure they talk up the positives informally, too. Maybe start a fun internal challenge for staff (practice what we preach – like a staff step challenge)



to engage them personally. This can shift attitudes through experience. Highlight external recognition if it comes (if a local newspaper covers your new program, share that – people feel pride and thus invest more). Remember that cultural change can take time; be patient but persistent. “From theory to practice” is a journey – celebrate each step forward.

**10. Sustainability through Capacity Building:** Finally, capacity building is not one-and-done. Foster a culture of *learning*. Encourage staff to attend workshops, exchange visits like EHLA did (maybe now among local networks or future Erasmus projects), and bring back ideas. Perhaps set up an internal professional learning community on healthy lifestyles that meets quarterly. Keep connections with EHLA partners or similar projects (maybe your staff could do a short visit or virtual meeting with someone from Verona or Drenthe to get fresh ideas in a year or two). All this continuous capacity building ensures your team remains energized and informed, rather than slipping back to old ways. It also prepares you to handle staff turnover – if capacity and knowledge are widespread, the departure of one champion won’t derail the whole effort.

To conclude, effective change management in promoting physical activity is about **people** as much as about programs. You are changing mindsets and routines, which requires trust, support, and clear benefits. By systematically building capacity (skills, knowledge, resources) and managing the human side of change (vision, communication, involvement), your organization can transform and embed the healthy lifestyle ethos. The knowledge exchange findings from EHLA reinforced that leadership and multi-level engagement were key to success across diverse contexts. So apply those lessons internally: engage leadership, staff, and stakeholders all together in the cause.

Remember that as you champion these changes, you’re not alone – you are part of a wider alliance aiming for healthier lifestyles. As the EHLA experience shows, sharing and supporting each other through change is powerful. With persistence and a supportive approach, your organization can become a model of how to turn good ideas into standard practice – truly moving “from theory to practice” and making a lasting impact on those you serve.

*Checklist for Managing Change: Ensure you have: a compelling Vision and rationale; strong Leadership backing; a coalition of Champions; a detailed Action Plan (who does what, by when); ongoing Communication plan (updates, feedback channels); Training and resource support; quick Wins identified to showcase; Metrics to track progress; and Reinforcement strategies (policy embedding, rewards). Use this as a guiding framework as you navigate the change process.*





## 10. Reinforcing Lessons Learned: References to Knowledge Exchange Findings

The EHLA project placed a strong emphasis on **knowledge exchange** – partners visiting each other, observing best practices, and discussing successes and challenges (as documented in Deliverable D2.2). These transnational exchanges yielded rich insights that underpin many recommendations we've covered. In this concluding chapter, we will **reinforce key lessons learned** by referencing the knowledge exchange findings, showing how those real-world observations validate and illuminate the strategies we've discussed. Essentially, we're drawing a full circle: connecting the lessons from the field back into our capacity-building narrative, to ensure they are well remembered and applied.

### 10.1 Common Success Factors Across Initiatives

One striking outcome of the exchange visits was that, despite different contexts (Italy, Netherlands, Turkey, etc.), the most successful physical activity initiatives shared several **common success factors**. Recognizing these can guide any organization in focusing on what truly matters:

- **Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation:** Every successful initiative involved collaboration across sectors or departments. In Verona's "Parchi in Movimento", the city government, health agency, and sports association worked hand in hand; in Drenthe's "BASE" program, partnerships between sport organizations, elderly care, and local media helped embed the program. The knowledge exchange report explicitly notes that *multi-stakeholder cooperation* was a key feature in successes. The lesson: Don't silo your efforts – engage schools, municipalities, healthcare providers, NGOs, and even businesses in your healthy lifestyle initiatives. Each brings resources or reach that amplify impact.
- **Low Barrier to Entry (Free or Affordable):** Initiatives that removed financial and access barriers saw larger and more diverse participation. From free park classes to programs that provided equipment or transport for participants, reducing barriers was critical. The exchanges highlighted that most successes were *free or very low-cost to users and easy to join*. For example, Verona's park program being free was crucial for attracting those who might not afford gym classes. So, when designing programs, strive for accessibility – seek funding or partnerships to offset costs, use public spaces, and simplify registration.
- **Strong Community Engagement and Ownership:** The visits revealed that programs rooted in the community – involving local champions, responding to local needs – thrived. Participants often felt a sense of ownership, whether through



volunteering or simply being consulted. In Drenthe, the buddy program grew via word-of-mouth among seniors, showing community buy-in. In Verona, the use of public parks and presence of whole families created a community atmosphere. The takeaway: Engage your target community in planning and running activities. That could mean forming parent committees for school activities, volunteer training (like buddies), or routine feedback sessions where participants shape the program. People support what they help create.

– **Alignment with Policy and Institutions:** Successful initiatives didn't operate in a vacuum; they linked with broader public health or education policies. For instance, Verona's initiative was integrated into the regional health plan, giving it stability and recognition. Drenthe's BASE built on a prior Erasmus project and aligned with preventive health strategies. The Istanbul exchange (though planned) was to focus on scaling and institutionalizing an initiative, recognizing that alignment with institutions helps longevity. The lesson: Connect your efforts to local/national strategies (like WHO activity guidelines, national health campaigns, or school curriculum requirements). If authorities see you helping meet their goals, they're more likely to support and sustain the program (funding, endorsements, etc.).

## 10.2 Common Challenges and How to Address Them

The knowledge exchange also shed light on **challenges** that many initiatives face, often in common patterns:

– **Dependency on Political or Funding Support:** A number of successful programs had initial strong political backing or grants, which were great to start but raised questions of sustainability. A change in local government or the end of a grant can threaten continuity. Lesson: Plan early for sustainability – diversify funding (mix of public, private sponsors, perhaps small user contributions if appropriate), and try to embed programs into regular budgets (e.g., get a city to adopt the program as its own). Also, document outcomes rigorously; evidence of success can persuade future funders or political leaders to keep support.

– **Need for Cultural Adaptation:** An initiative from one place may not directly transplant to another due to cultural differences. The exchanges noted that when transferring models internationally, one must adapt to local culture and context. For example, something that worked in secular Western Europe might need tweaking in a more conservative setting, or vice versa. Lesson: Use pilot phases when adopting external best practices – gather local feedback, and modify activities or messaging to fit local values, language, and customs. Engage local community leaders or cultural mediators to tailor the approach. Essentially, keep the core, but dress it in local colors.



- **Reaching the Hard-to-Reach:** Many initiatives still found it challenging to involve the most inactive or disadvantaged groups (those with very low motivation, isolated individuals, etc.). Drenthe's buddy program directly addressed this by aiming for "the next 10%", but even so, identifying and enrolling those people can be hard. Similarly, engaging girls or certain ethnic communities in some areas required extra effort. Lesson: don't be discouraged if uptake is slow in these segments; instead, devise targeted outreach. This might mean partnering with social services, using trusted figures from those communities, or customizing program elements (like women-only sessions, or combining exercise with social activities that particular groups enjoy). The knowledge exchange stressed sharing experiences on what worked to engage reluctant participants. So, learn from peers (e.g., maybe another region had success reaching girls through dance programs instead of traditional sports).

- **Maintaining Momentum and Avoiding Drop-off:** Some best practices noted that initial enthusiasm can wane. For instance, keeping volunteers or participants engaged over time is an art. The exchange discussions often revolved around *how to keep people coming back* – through fun, variety, social bonds, and regular communication. Lesson: Continue innovating and fostering community. Introduce new mini-challenges, celebrate milestones, and encourage participants to bring friends (refreshing the pool). Also, institutionalize where possible (so it becomes part of routine as mentioned earlier in change management).

By referencing these challenges and solutions explicitly, we ensure that capacity-building doesn't paint an overly rosy picture. Realism helps prepare and empower staff to navigate obstacles. It's reassuring to know that if you hit a snag (like funding cuts or low turnout in a subgroup), others in Europe faced it too and there are strategies to cope.

### 10.3 Relevance of Knowledge Exchange Findings to Your Practice

To ground this, consider a scenario: say you're trying to launch a "park fitness" event in your town. Knowledge exchange lessons would advise: - Get the city and perhaps a local health NGO on board (multi-stakeholder coop). - Make it free and put it in a popular park at a convenient time (low barriers). - Use local community influencers – maybe that energetic pensioner who knows everyone, or a local sports hero – to promote and invite others (community engagement). - Tie it into a bigger campaign like the city's "Healthy City" initiative (alignment with policy). - Plan beyond the pilot event: if the mayor who supported it leaves office, ensure another stakeholder (like the health department) is committed, and gather participant testimonials to lobby for it to continue (addressing political dependency). - Adapt activities if, for instance, your community has lots of older



adults – maybe more gentle classes because a pure bootcamp might scare folks off (cultural/context adaptation). – Keep it fun and social so that those who come want to come again, and maybe bring neighbors (maintaining momentum).

We see in this example how exchange-derived wisdom directly informs practical choices.

Finally, the knowledge exchange visits themselves modelled the value of **peer learning**. They showed that often the best teacher is example. As a lasting lesson, it suggests you continue to seek opportunities to learn from others' experiences (regionally, nationally, internationally). And reciprocally, share your own lessons. This e-book, in a way, is a form of exchanging knowledge with you. Perhaps in the future, your experiences implementing EHLA approaches will become case studies for someone else.

To summarize the **three most important lessons** reinforced by WP2 findings:

- *Collaboration is key*: Build bridges between sectors and stakeholders – together we achieve more.
- *Make it easy and fun*: Remove barriers and emphasize enjoyment and inclusivity – that's how you get broad participation.
- *Be adaptable and persistent*: Contextualize methods to your community and keep pushing through challenges – small setbacks are normal, but with adaptation and support, you'll reach your goals.

These lessons, borne out on the ground across different countries, should give you confidence. The strategies in this e-book aren't just theory – they're backed by practice and observation. As you implement them, you're part of the same continuum of learning. And perhaps the next knowledge exchange will feature the innovations you introduced and the lessons you learned. By reinforcing these shared lessons now, we hope they stay at the forefront of your approach, guiding you to effective and sustainable outcomes.

*For reference, see EHLA D2.2 "Report on Knowledge Exchange Visits" for detailed narratives of each visit and the comparative analysis. Those stories might provide additional ideas or a sense of camaraderie – knowing peers in another country faced similar issues and overcame them. Let their experiences reinforce your resolve to apply these lessons in your own work.*

## 11. Conclusion

In wrapping up, we have journeyed through the why and how of promoting physical activity effectively, pulling together research, real-world examples, and practical tools. The knowledge exchange findings serve as a reminder that while contexts vary, *the core principles of success are universal*. As you move forward, keep these principles and lessons in mind. The EHLA toolkit – guideline, app, and this capacity-building compendium – is in your hands, but it's what you do on the ground, with people, that truly counts. Learn from others, adapt boldly, and contribute your own innovations to the growing body of knowledge. In doing so, you ensure that the healthy lifestyle actions we envision become a lived reality for communities across Europe and beyond.

### End of E-Book

*Further resources and references can be found in on the EHLA project website, <https://activeforhealth.eu/>. Thank you for being part of this effort to create a more active and healthy society!*



## Appendix – Three Innovative Measures and How to Implement Them

One of the key outcomes of EHLA’s research (WP2) was the identification of three “most innovative measures” to boost physical activity among children. These were selected after surveying and scoring dozens of good practices and provide models that other organisations can learn from or adapt. In this chapter, we provide an overview of these three standout initiatives and guidance on **adopting or adapting** them in your own context. The three measures are:

1. **Finnish Schools on the Move** (Finland) – a nationwide active schools program.
2. **BASE** (The Netherlands) – a buddy-based community program.
3. **Parchi in Movimento** (Italy) – a free outdoor activity initiative.

Each has demonstrated effectiveness in its own context. Adoption does not mean copying them exactly but borrowing their core ideas and adapting them to local needs.

### Innovative Measure 1: Finnish Schools on the Move

**What it is:** Finnish Schools on the Move is a program that integrates physical activity throughout the school day. Launched in 2010, it grew to involve over 90% of schools in Finland. Instead of a top-down fixed program, it allowed each school to create an action plan for how they’d get students moving more, supported by national guidelines and funding. Common actions included more frequent recess, short movement breaks during lessons, physically active teaching methods, promoting walking/cycling to school, and involving students in planning fun activities. It embodies a *whole-school approach* and a *culture shift*: making “every school day active.”

**Why it’s innovative and effective:** It addresses the problem broadly (not just PE class, but the *entire* school environment) and inclusively (all students, not just sporty kids). It’s innovative in giving autonomy to schools to implement what works for them, which led to creative solutions and strong ownership. Evaluations showed significant benefits: less sedentary time, more kids especially girls reaching activity targets, improved concentration in class, and importantly, **no negative impact on academics** – in fact, teachers reported better on-task behavior when kids had chances to move. This counters the common fear that more play means less learning. It demonstrated that active kids can be a win-win for health and education.



**How to adopt/adapt it:** If you are in a position to influence schools (as an educator, administrator, or partner agency), you can implement the essence of this program:

- **Pilot in one school or year group:** Introduce multiple daily opportunities for movement (extra active recess, short breaks in lessons, some active teaching). Collect simple data (teacher and student feedback, basic attention or behaviour indicators).
- **Use a participatory approach:** Involve teachers and students in deciding how to make days more active. Encourage different schools or classes to develop their own ideas (student committees, hallway games, themed recesses).
- **Seek authority support:** Engage school district or local education authorities for endorsement and small resources. Present evidence (Finnish results, WHO recommendations) and link the initiative to priorities like wellbeing and learning.
- **Provide teacher training and resources:** Offer workshops or toolkits so teachers feel confident integrating movement into regular subjects. Experienced teachers can mentor others.
- **Scale gradually:** After successful pilots, share results through “Active Schools” information sessions where early adopters present to peers. Create simple networks for schools to exchange ideas.

If curriculum time or space is tight, emphasise activity that is integrated into lessons (e.g. maths relay games) and low-space options (classroom or hallway energisers). Focus on the principle—lots of movement opportunities—rather than specific formats.

**Potential challenges:** Some teachers or parents might resist, fearing it distracts from academics. Combat this with evidence – share that *teachers in Finland saw improved focus* and that physical activity is linked to better cognitive function. Another challenge is sustaining momentum; to address that, integrate it into school policy (e.g. incorporate “active school day” in the school’s mission or development plan) so it’s not just one enthusiastic teacher’s effort. Recognize and reward schools or classes that excel (a friendly competition or an award like “Active School of the Year”) to keep motivation high.

## Innovative Measure 2: BASE

**What it is:** BASE (originating in Drenthe, NL) is a *community-based “buddy” program* where trained volunteers (buddies) are paired with inactive individuals to



support and inspire them to be active. Initially, BASE focused on older adults – addressing isolation and inactivity by matching seniors with a buddy who would perhaps visit and go for walks or to exercise classes together. The model has two levels: **professional mentors** (like community sport coaches) who train and oversee the program, and **volunteer buddies** who work directly with participants as companions in activity. They often kick off with a community event, then continue with regular buddy-participant meetups, with check-ins and group gatherings along the way. The program grew from a local pilot to a national initiative in the Netherlands, aiming to reach “the next 10%” of inactive people who just need a supportive nudge.

**Why it’s innovative and effective:** BASE focuses on **social connection**, recognising that main barriers are often lack of company, confidence or motivation rather than lack of information. It formalises the buddy idea through training and structure, which improves quality and safety. It leverages volunteerism as a relatively sustainable resource. Outcomes include increased activity, greater confidence and enjoyment of movement for participants, plus skills and satisfaction for buddies. Over time it can foster a culture of “active togetherness” where inviting someone for a walk or class becomes normal.

#### How to adopt/adapt it:

- **Identify target group and setting:** Choose a manageable context (e.g. seniors at a community centre, inactive teens in a school, families in a neighbourhood).
- **Recruit buddies:** Look for reliable, empathetic, reasonably active volunteers—sports club members, students, parents or active seniors. Emphasise that buddies are companions and motivators, not trainers. Decide whether peer-to-peer or intergenerational matches suit your context.
- **Provide basic training:** Offer at least one structured training session. Cover encouragement skills, basics of safe activity for the target group, dealing with reluctance, boundaries, privacy and when to involve professionals. Provide simple written guidance and use training to check suitability of volunteers.
- **Match buddies and participants:** Use interests, location and preferences (e.g. same gender) to guide matching. Arrange an initial meet-up and be prepared to rematch if needed.



- **Structure activities and follow-up:** Set expectations (e.g. meeting once or twice per week), provide suggestions for activities (walks, beginner classes, home exercises), and encourage enjoyable routines (like coffee after a walk). Programme coordinators should check in regularly and organise occasional group events to strengthen motivation and sense of community.
- **Adaptation options:** Start small (e.g. five pairs) if volunteers are limited. Where in-person meetings are difficult, consider a phone or online buddy model. Use incentives if necessary (recognition, certificates, links to coursework) to support volunteer recruitment. Clarify responsibilities and emergency procedures.

**Potential challenges:** Recruiting and retaining volunteers is a common challenge. To mitigate, make it rewarding – ensure they also get something out of it (like learning experience, social connections, or just the fulfillment – highlight the impact they're making). Burnout can happen if a buddy feels responsible for someone who's very reluctant. So emphasize boundaries: buddies are friends, not caretakers or enforcers. If a participant isn't engaging despite buddy efforts, the mentor or a professional might step in or reassign that buddy to someone ready to benefit. Regular check-ins can catch issues early. Another challenge: ensuring safety, especially with vulnerable populations. Always get necessary consent/waivers. Maybe avoid high-risk activities (stick to moderate exercise unless under professional guidance). But generally, if done with care, the buddy approach can be very safe and supportive – just plan it out and keep communication open.

### Innovative Measure 3: Parchi in Movimento

**What it is:** Parchi in Movimento is an initiative by UISP (Italian Sport for All Association) in Verona, Italy that turns public parks into open-air gyms each summer. It offers a scheduled program of **free physical activity classes in various parks**, open to all ages. Activities range widely: stretching sessions, yoga, aerobics, dance, gentle exercise for seniors, martial arts, Zumba, walking groups, etc. – typically led by qualified instructors from local sports clubs or trainers, but funded or volunteered so participants pay nothing. It usually runs in warmer months (May–September) with classes at different times of day to suit different people (morning, evening, weekends). Families often come together – a child might try a kids' class while grandma joins the seniors' tai chi, etc. It's heavily promoted city-wide, integrated into the municipality's health promotion plan, and has become hugely popular (thousands of participants annually).



**Why it's innovative and effective:** It removes practically all barriers apart from registration – no cost, no special venue, no commitment, – just show up at the park and join. By bringing activities to where people naturally go (parks) and making it fun and social, it draws in people who might never go to a gym or structured program. The variety of offerings ensures there's something for everyone (from a sedentary senior to a fitness enthusiast wanting a group vibe). It also capitalizes on the nice weather and the appeal of being outdoors. Parchi in Movimento exemplifies **cross-sector collaboration**: a sports association working with local health authorities and municipalities. This partnership meant resources (use of parks, small funding for instructors, city promotion) and legitimacy. It helped embed the program in public health strategy (fighting sedentariness and strengthening community ties through exercise). The turnout and expansion each year are testament to latent demand – people want to be active when it's accessible and enjoyable. Importantly, it's a model that can be adapted to different scales (a small town could do a mini version in one park).

#### How to adopt/adapt it:

- **Partner with local authorities:** Engage municipalities or local government early. Explain benefits (health, community cohesion, positive use of public space) and request support: free use of parks, help with promotion and possibly small funding for instructors or equipment. Aligning with events like city health weeks or the European Week of Sport can add visibility.
- **Enlist instructors and organisations:** Approach local clubs, gyms and freelance instructors. Many may volunteer or accept modest fees in exchange for visibility. Emphasise that park classes can showcase their offer and attract new members. Ensure a mix of activity types and intensity levels, including beginner-friendly sessions. Brief instructors to adapt to diverse groups.
- **Create a clear schedule:** Decide how often and where sessions happen (for example, several evenings plus a weekend morning). You can rotate across parks to reach different neighbourhoods or focus on a central park to build a strong focal point. Consistent times and formats help participants form habits.
- **Promote widely:** Use posters, social media, community newsletters, school communications, healthcare providers and municipal channels. Highlight that sessions are free, open to all and suitable for different levels. Launch events with multiple taster classes and local officials can attract media and participants.



- **Organise logistics:** Clarify permits and liability with authorities. Arrange basic sound equipment where needed, access to drinking water or clear guidance to bring water, and a simple system for approximate headcounts. Have someone on site to welcome participants, answer questions and handle basic safety (including a first-aid kit and clear contact point).
- **Adaptation options:** In small communities, start with one park session per week or a single “activity day” and expand if demand is strong. In harsher climates, focus on warm months and consider indoor public spaces (community halls, school gyms) at other times. If full free provision is impossible, explore sponsorship or “pay what you can” models while keeping barriers low. Adapt formats to cultural context (e.g. women-only classes where appropriate; family-focused sessions where that fits best).

**Potential challenges:** Weather and seasonality are obvious ones – but you work around those by timing and providing shade or alternative for extreme conditions. Another challenge is sustaining instructor involvement; to mitigate burnout, rotate multiple instructors per activity if possible (so each only commits to maybe 4 sessions across summer, not every week). Also quality control: ensure instructors know this is for broad public, not to push too hard – a bad experience (too intense or too technical) could turn beginners off. Brief them to prioritize fun and inclusivity over performance. Also ensure safety: instructors should do a quick health check (ask if anyone has issues, and advise modifications). With large open groups, some risk exists (e.g., someone overexerts). Emphasize a go-at-your-own-pace approach. Another issue could be local complaints (noise or crowd in park); get ahead by informing residents and scheduling at respectful hours, and be ready to diplomatically handle any such feedback by pointing out it’s for community health and joy (often, seeing people happy in the park softens opposition).

## Take out

By exploring and implementing these three measures, you tap into a wealth of proven ideas. You don’t have to start from scratch – you can stand on the shoulders of these successful programs. Even if you adopt just elements (like a buddy component within another program, or an active recess at one school, or one free community class event), you are innovating and likely will see positive results. The reason these were highlighted is because they showed **high impact and transferability**.

As you adapt them, maintain the **core innovation** of each: for Finnish – whole-school & empowering teachers/students; for BASE – social support & peer motivation; for Parchi – accessibility & community partnership. Adjust the rest to



fit your people and resources. And don't forget to utilize the network of knowledge: the EHLA partners or documentation can offer more detail. For instance, more on Finnish Schools on the Move can be found via references in the guideline and their official websites; Sport Drenthe or UISP have materials on BASE and Parchi respectively.

In essence, these measures are *catalysts* – by introducing them, you can spark a larger change. One active school becomes a district movement. One buddy program inspires a culture of volunteering. One active park program changes how citizens view physical activity (from a chore to a fun community activity). Adopt an innovative measure, adapt it creatively, and you could ignite lasting healthy lifestyle changes in your community.

*Resource: For further reading, see EHLA D2.1 Appendix 1 which lists these innovative measures among others and describes their key features. The EHLA guideline section 6.1 also provides overviews as in this chapter. Use these as blueprints and feel free to reach out to the originators for advice – the project ethos encourages sharing and exchange, so you're not alone in implementing these great ideas.*

