

# **WISE – Women’s Involvement in Steady Education**

## **General guidelines on Best Practices**

*Results of research conducted in 2021 in the countries of the project partners*



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## Introduction

This document is one of several planned outputs from the ERASMUS+ funded EU project titled “WISE – Women’s Involvement in Steady Exercise” [Project no: 622485 – EPP-1-2020-BE-SPO-SCP]

### What is WISE?

WISE is a 30 monthly-project, co-founded by the Erasmus+ Sports Program of the European Union, which has the aim to contrast sedentariness and create and spread a specific exercise programme for girls aged 15-24. This target group, in fact, according to statistics and scientific studies, is the least physically active and is the most likely to drop out of sports activities.

With the help of contemporary research, examples of best practices, a pilot project carried out in Italy, Spain, and Serbia, WISE will:

- Produce research of some best practice situations/projects/activities developed in the partner’s countries.
- Organize 3 pilot actions which will monitor 300 girls of 15/24 years in their everyday movements, exercises, vital parameters, sleep quality.
- A set of data, collected by wearing a smartwatch provided to all the 300 girls and transmitted to an APP (WISE project App), which will be elaborated and will give us a snapshot of the current situation of girls & steady exercise
- Practice-based partners will design, deliver and evaluate an intervention based on those results and guidelines.

### Partners of the consortium which is developing the WISE project

The WISE project has six partners from five EU countries, led by the not-for-profit association **EPSI (European Platform for Sport Innovation)**, and includes third sector sport, companies, and Universities. The project team includes the following organizations:

- **European Culture and Sport Organization ECOS** (Italy )
- **University “Union – Nikola Tesla” Faculty of Sport** (Serbia)
- The sports company **SPORTLAB SSD arl**, (Italy)
- **University of Valencia** (Spain)
- the tech company **Kinetic Analysis** (the Netherlands)

### General Objectives

- To provide quality information and knowledge about the benefits of sport and physical activity for young women aged 15-24.
- To make specific interventions to encourage the participation of young women in physical activity and to reduce the drop-out phenomenon.



- To have a cross-sectoral approach by involving entities (team managers, sports teachers, public institutions, doctors, nutrition experts, communities, ....) related to Sport, Health, and Education.
- To train sports and health professionals in encouraging young women to make regular exercise and in helping them to avoid a possible withdrawal.
- To promote a specific exercise programme focused also on nutrition and body composition.
- To build a transnational network to pursue the project's main purposes.

## **Specific Objectives**

- General investigation of best practices in the European Union regarding innovative solutions to involve young women aged 15-24 in physical activity and tackle a possible withdrawal.
- Definition of general guidelines to allow sports and health professionals in encouraging young women to make regular exercise and tackle the gender gap.
- Implementation of actions to involve young women in regular exercise in the partner countries and monitor their progress – meanwhile tackling a possible withdrawal.
- Definition and validation of the WISE exercise programme.
- Communication and dissemination of the programme and all project results.
- Monitoring of all project activities to pursue the project's purposes most effectively.

## **Target groups**

- Girls/young women aged 15-24
- Sports professionals (coaches, trainers, instructors)
- Health professionals (nutritionists, physiologists, physiotherapists, sports psychiatrists, and psychologists)
- Sports facilities
- Health facilities
- Decision-makers in the fields of sport, health, and education
- The whole civil society

## **Documents/guidance produced by WISE**

1. An evaluation report of the interventions delivered as part of the WISE project.
2. The results of the survey carried out during the first phase of the project which is contained, as an abstract, also in this paper
3. Physical activity guidelines to aid those institutions that implement sport or exercise programs for girls and young women, also as results of the pilot projects carried out on the representative sample of 300 girls 15/24
4. An online map providing examples of best practices through case studies across the EU



## What are specific WISE activities and output?

The programme, as mentioned before, will allow EU sports professionals and facilities, as well as health professionals and institutions, to apply a structured model aimed at involving young women in practicing regular exercise and avoiding possible dropouts.

The main project activities can be synthesized as follows:

- a) Research of best practices related to exercise for young women (but also for mixed groups) at a European level but specifically in the partner's countries, with a special focus on innovative solutions to encourage girls in practicing regular exercise.
- b) Definition of the guidelines to train the sports professionals and help them in tackling the dropout of sports among young girls
- c) Implementation of pilot actions with girls in the countries involved in the project. 300 Girls – 100 from Italy, 100 from Spain, and 100 from Serbia, will be monitored during a time frame of 6 months.
- d) Definition of the “WISE programme”, with related validation and recognition at a European level. The exercise programme will be a toolkit including a mobile App, diet and nutrition guidelines and tips to incentivize the girls to eat better, examples of community creation, contests, etc.
- e) Project communication and dissemination including a constant social media presence, uploading of open educational resources on the project website, organization of conferences and meetings with decision-makers, sports professionals, health professionals, and other sport opinion leaders.

## What is the aim of this document?

This document aims to:

1. Provide a background on the actual situation of sports & young women in the European countries of the WISE partners
2. Describe the survey characteristics and the questionnaire which was used to collect data
3. Highlight the results of the survey, statistics, and quality parameters together with some glimpses of some of the best practices, results of case studies, in each country.
4. Anticipate what can be searched through the pilot actions to be held during the WISE project.

## What is included in the document?

The document includes four main sections referring to the document's aims.

1. an overview of what is the situation in each partner's country How is the situation in Countries overview
2. Best practices: what do we mean by personal best practices and best practices.
3. The questionnaire, parameters, and scores.
4. Results of the survey (abstract)
5. Some best practice examples

## The scenario

### Some European figures

The increase in the sedentary nature of children and adolescents raises alarm. Only 34% of European adolescents aged 13 to 15 years are physically active at the recommended levels. This contributes to the rise of overweight and obese children in Europe, especially among the weakest socio-economic groups. Based on the data collected by the “Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative” [1], conducted in Europe by the World Health Organization, almost 50% of children eight years of age are overweight and over 25% are obese. In almost all European countries, levels of physical activity begin to drop significantly between eleven and fifteen years of age and this is especially true among girls: more than 86% of girls aged fifteen have been physically inactive.

### WISE and the European policies concerning Sport

The project is aimed at encouraging participation in sport and physical activity, especially by supporting the implementation of the Council Recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity and being in line with the EU Physical Activity Guidelines [2], since its main objective is to determine the influence of exercise and healthy lifestyle on body composition of young women aged 15-24 and to define a specific WISE Exercise Programme – a multidimensional model of dependence between body composition, lifestyle, and nutrition which would enable the programming of optimal patterns of behavior in life habits as a planned corrective measure and stimulate the young women in EU countries to avoid the drop out of sports.

The project is in line with the Council Recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) [3] due to:

- its cross-sectoral approach involving policy areas including sport, health, education by national specificities;
- the process of making data on the physical activity available for the monitoring framework;
- the foreseen regular exchange of information and best practices on HEPA promotion in the relevant Union level structures for sport and health as a basis for strengthened policy coordination.

The project follows the EU Physical Activity Guidelines, [2], especially regarding the guidelines n. 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 23, 24, 38, and 39.

A special focus concerns:

- School playgrounds and physical education lessons, which should be adapted to all pupils, considering in particular appropriate equipment for girls to stimulate their participation in sport and recreation activities.
- "Sport for all" programs, that should aim at encouraging participation in physical activity and sport of all citizens, promoting the perception that the entire population is the target and that sport is a human right, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, social class or gender.
- Sports organizations, which should provide activities and events attractive to everyone, and encourage contact between people from different social groups and with different

capabilities, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, nationality, and physical and mental health.

- Ensure open access to sports facilities for all citizens, taking into account gender equality and equal opportunities for everyone.

Moreover, the project is in line with the Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle [4], especially in educating children and young adults about the importance of adopting a healthy and balanced diet, as well as getting adequate physical activity. These are important habits that can encourage children and young adults to lead healthy lifestyles and thereby safeguard their health.

Scientific evidence shows that regular physical activity boosts health and wellbeing, while its lack leads to ill health, particularly later in life. Scientists have also identified the strong effects of sport on educational achievement and success in the job market later in life.

The project corresponds to the EU aims in the field of sport expressed in the Erasmus+ programme, which follows sports policies formulated in the Lisbon Treaty (2007) [5]. This issue is underlined by the EU leading policy paper White Paper on Sport (2007) [6] in 2.1. - "Lack of physical activity reinforces the occurrence of overweight, obesity, and a number of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, which reduce the quality of life, put individuals' lives at risk and are a burden on health budgets and the economy". It continues "as a tool for health-enhancing physical activity, the sport movement has a greater influence than any other social movement". In 2.7. it is said that "The Commission will promote the use of sport as a tool in its development policy. In particular, it will target action at improving access for girls and women to physical education and sport, to help them build confidence, improve social integration, overcome prejudice and promote healthy lifestyles..."

The project is even related to "ALL IN: Towards gender balance in sport", a European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (COE) joint project (1 March 2018-31 October 2019) [7] aimed to provide support to the public authorities and sports organizations when designing and implementing policies and programmes addressing gender inequalities in sport, and when adopting a gender mainstreaming strategy.

The project also corresponds to the EU Parliament 2012 resolution on the European Dimension for Sport [8] since "sport is a key factor for health in modern society", "key motivating factor behind citizen involvement in sport and physical activity is to improve personal health and well-being", and "promoting physical activity and sport makes for significant savings in terms of public expenditure on health".

All the aforementioned documents emphasize the importance of cooperation and cross-sectoral approach between the entities responsible for sport and addressing transnational challenges using coordinated EU policies.

## The dropout phenomenon

The sport early **dropout** most of the time is final. Factors like the attention to the physical aspect and the possibility of knowing better themselves and learning to relate with others are not enough to convince children to continue with sports practice.

The reasons for dropout are a lot and often add up to one another. Some examples: diminishing confidence in their abilities, too many commitments, the fact that not all teachers in school understand that the sports activity is not "enemy" of the study.... Above all, putting too much emphasis on the value of competition. Sometimes the responsibility is also of parents. They often



emphasize the abilities of their children, increase the illusion of easy successes thus encouraging dropout first sign of trouble. Sometimes if children prefer to stop sports activities is only because in the youth sport often prevails the interests of adults, and competition and it lacks joy and fun. Anyway, the family plays also an important role in promoting sport and healthy lifestyles. 83% of young people between the ages of 3 and 24 practice sports if both parents are sports. This percentage is reduced by almost half if neither of the parents is involved in sports activities.

Studies of the Women Sports Foundation (<https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/do-you-know-the-factors-influencing-girls-participation-in-sports>) [9] have shown that the core reasons for girls to drop out of sports are especially related to:

- Lack of access and transportation – this is both in terms of sports facilities offering sports opportunities for young women, as well as in terms of logistics/organization for women's sports.
- Social Stigma – this is particularly related to the wrong notion of “female fragility’ and the idea that sport can contribute to the de-feminization of the person.
- Economic costs – the systematic lack of sponsors for female participation in sport, particularly at the grassroots level, is a key cause of the disparity in terms of participation between genders.
- Lack of positive role models and appropriate coaching methods. This refers to the disproportionately low number of female coaches (particularly in those sports which are not considered female-friendly) and the lack of knowledge from coaches in terms of differentiation practices and coaching styles implemented.

With regards to the economic costs, it is important to consider that those with financial difficulties are less likely to engage in other physical activities and that women systematically report lower socio-economic wealth (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/11/news-un-women-and-the-world-bank-unveil-new-data-analysis-on-women-and-poverty>) [10] in comparison to the men in their countries.

Even the lack of positive role models is crucial, since gender-friendly guidance and coaching, as specified in “[Gender Equality in Sport: Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014-2020](#)” [11], may decrease the high drop-out rate of girls and women, avoid sexist gender stereotypes in sport and create a positive and social educational climate for all.

**Gender equality** contributes positively to the quality of the services delivered, as women will provide different role models for girls and boys, and new, relevant educational approaches which encourage girls and women to enjoy sport and prepare for a lifelong sporting career.

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## A focus on Italy, Serbia, and Spain

Since the pilot projects of WISE (girl's monitoring for 6 months) will be developed in 3 countries that have cultural and geographical different characteristics, we have focused on these countries to collect some data about the current sports situation.

### Italy

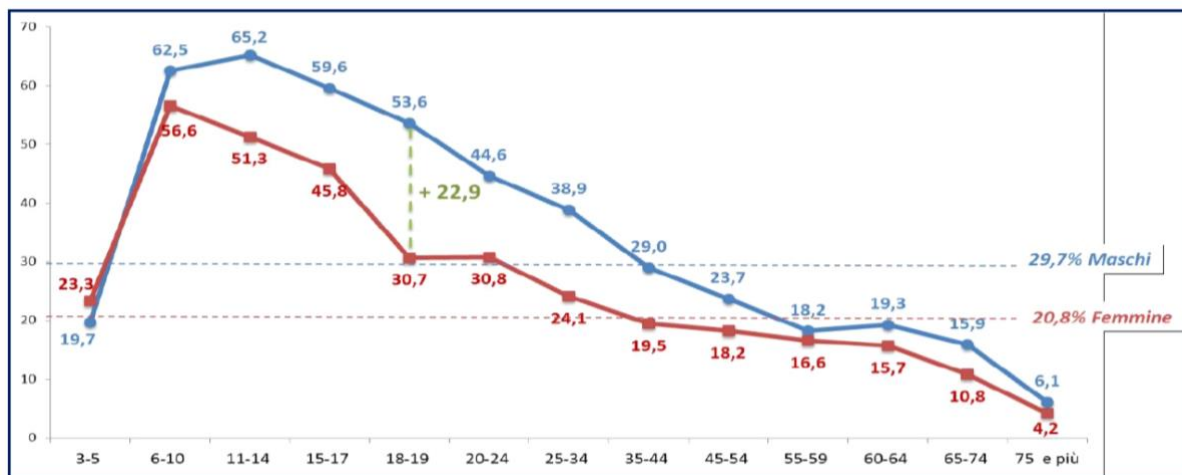
An ISTAT research of 2017 [12] shows that in Italy the age group between 6 and 10 years has the highest percentage of sport practicing and 59.7% of children are sporty. In 2016 (years of the extended research) 58.3% of children from 11 to 14 years started to drop out of sport. It decreases to 52.8% in the 15-17 age group and 42.9% in the 18-19 and 38% in 20-24 years. Figures are in continuous and constant descent but generally from 2013 to 2016 sport increased in all age groups. Athletes who practice constantly are increasing, both women and men, reaching an average of 20.8% and 29.7% respectively. In particular, 29.7% of males practice sport with continuity and 11,1% occasionally. For females the percentages are lower: 20.8% and 8.3% respectively.

Overall, women who practice sports activities continuously or occasionally are 11.7% less than men; in absolute terms, this percentage corresponds to just under 3 million units.

Females are much more sedentary than males: 43.4% against 34.8%. Over the years, the difference between men and women in active participation has always been between 11 and 13 percentage points. In recent years, despite the increased propensity for sports for both genders, the gap between men and women has not decreased.

**The gender gap** shows significant differences from the age group of 6 and reaches the highest levels between the 11 and 44 age group whereas instead decreases in older age groups. The propensity to exercise sports is typical of the youngest and reaches maximum values among boys between 11 and 14 years, while among girls the maximum values are between 6 and 10 years. From the age of 15 for males and 11 years for females, interest in practicing decreases progressively even if the percentage remains fairly high up to 24 years (54%).

The gender gap is still relevant and between 18 and 19 years of age reaches its greatest gap ( 22.9 percentage points).



[MALES AND FEMALES OF MORE THAN 3 WHO DECLARE TO PRACTICE CONSTANTLY SPORTS. 2016]

According to the survey carried out by Stage Up and Ipsos, “Sports Disciplines analysis of interest and practice in Italy” [13], concerning the national population of women and men between 14 and 64 years (39.6 million people), swimming is the sport that most appeals to young people. In 2016, there were 4 million and 169 thousand people registered for swimming pools. Of all swimmers, the authors of the study have estimated that 24% are very young and 52% are women.

Sport is fundamental for healthy growth and helps to maintain a correct weight. It is much more important for Italy where one child out of three is overweight or obese.

Young people who do not play sports might have harmful effects on health with risks of death much higher than normal. According to World Health Organization, the situation is critical for 81% of the 11-17 age group.

## Serbia

According to available data, more than two-thirds of the adult population of Serbia are physically inactive. In Serbia, nearly one in five adults is obese (21.2%); every third inhabitant smokes (33.6%); around 40% of the population consumes alcohol daily or occasionally, and almost half of the population suffers from hypertension (46.1%).

A total of 40% of the EU population say that they engage in sports activities at least once a week, while in Serbia, only around 10% of the people practice sports once a week. Around 34% of EU citizens state that they have never engaged in physical exercise, while in Serbia as much as 56% percent of the population have never engaged in physical exercise.

When the EUROBAR and CESID research data are compared, it can be seen that the main reason for low participation in sports activities is the lack of time. This is precisely the main reason cited by the EU, while the findings in Serbia show that this reason applies to a smaller part of the population - about 40%.

There is no information about the participation of women and girls in professional, recreational, and school sports, but the data on investment in women's and men's sports at the local level show a disproportionately small budget funds allocated for female athletes, while in some local communities there are no sporting activities suitable for girls and young women. The survey Gender Barometer 2012 [14] has shown that only 11% of women are engaged in recreation and they do it significantly less frequently than men.

Part of the given technology of progress can be recognized in the need for continuous collection of information on the characteristic and important parts of society, in which the quality of life, with all its positive and negative sides, makes an important segment (World Health Organization, 2000). The body structure in humans implies a field of research in science that studies the shape and composition of the body and studies the basic dimensions that describe given form and composition (Heyword and Stolarczyk, 1996) [15].

The physical status is directly subject to changes that depend on the diet, lifestyle, and habits of physical exercise, both positive and negative (WHO, 2000; Kyle et al., 2006; Hull et al., 2007) [16]. Two basic factors of modern lifestyle are reduced physical activity and increased energy intake.

The monitoring of habits in physical activity, eating habits, as well as conditions and changes in body status since school days, and even during the student period, is a very important procedure because it provides initial information about the research area, that is, determines the facts about the current morphological status from the beginning of the education period, (Hoffman et al., 2006; Dopsay et al., 2010; Meckel et al., 2011; Hajnalka & Chaba, 2017) [17]. In addition to personal socio-social and professional changes that a student population will meet shortly, there are inevitable biological influences that are taking place during growing up and aging, and which modern life and urbanization bring about as a change in the lifestyle of a modern man.

At the macro level, the human organism consists of four basic elements (segments), as the main biologically measurable substances: water, oily, protein, and mineral component. Mathematically,

the relations of these basic elements define morphological indices, based on which the representation of individual elements in the body is calculated, which determines the proportions of body structure (Heyward and Stolarczyk, 1996; Dopsaj et al., 2013; Dopsaj et al., 2015) [16]. The given data is of crucial importance for clinical practice and defining the state of nutrition of individual, but also they are changeable that is variables of interest for scientific research in applied anthropology (pedagogical, medical, cultural, evolutionary, etc.) (Mott et al., 1999; WHO, 2000; Kyle et al., 2006; Stommel and Schoenborn, 2010) [16] [18].

So far, the measurement procedures and procedures in the field of body composition, as well as the degree of nutrition and morphological characteristics in humans, were predominantly based on the Body Mass Index (BMI), that is the measurement of skin folds and/or the volume of different body extremities, and the use given data in terms of their conversion for the needs of estimating certain structural elements using mathematical formulas (Heyward and Stolarczyk, 1996) [16].

However, it has been established that this kind of evaluation has major predicament errors, while for BMI it is increasingly confirmed that it is not sufficiently specific and sensitive in the dressed value zones in the function of prediction of the real values of the body composition, and especially about the level of fat in the body (Kyle et al., 2003; Rothma, 2008). The instruments of the latest generation measuring that use the new body metering technology uses the principle of multichannel electrical bioimpedance and with high reliability and measurement fluency provide valid scientific data on the content and structure of the body (InBody 720, 2005; Dopsaj et al., 2017). [16] [20]

At the beginning of the third millennium a new phenomenon was observed, and especially in the young female population - a tendency towards a "skinny" look (Cheney, 2011) [21], where the phenomenon of new body status emerged due to various habitual, nutritional and social factors. Namely, the methodological approach of crossing two criteria of obesity (BMI and% BF) revealed the profile of the new subclass of morphological status (Romero-Corall et al., 2008) [22], which is: skinny or and lean fat, are skinny or have normal (lean) BMI values, but at the same time a high level of fat percentage in the body.

## Spain

According to the data provided by the Survey of Sports Habits in Spain (official statistics carried out every 5 years by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Higher Sports Council) [23], the highest rates of sports practice occur in the youngest population (15-19 years), reaching 87% of the total population in that age range. This is a sample investigation with a sample of 12,000 Spaniards aged 15 years.

The results indicate that in 2015, 53.5% of the population from 15 years old practiced sports in the last year. Most of them, 86.3%, with great intensity, at least once a week.

Age, sex, and educational level are determining variables. By sex, sports practice is higher in men than in women, whether it is considered in annual terms (59.8% in men, compared to 47.5% in women), or weekly (50.4 % in men, compared to 42.1% in women). The sports modalities most practiced by women are skating (12.3%), cycling (28.5%) swimming (41.2%), hiking (31.6%), jogging (26.7 %), soft gymnastics (46.0%), and intense gymnastics (36.3%) (data expressed as a percentage of the vertical total).

Among women, the practice of a single sport modality is more frequent than that of men. More specifically, 26.4% of women who practice sport only practice one, compared to 16.6% estimated for men. Regarding the sports modalities practiced, there are also notable differences between the sexes. It can be highlighted that while soccer, basketball, tennis, cycling, or paddle tennis is more

frequent in men, higher rates of practicing any type of gymnastics or swimming are observed in women.

It is interesting to note that, when comparing the 2015 surveys with the results of the survey conducted in 2010, the gender gap observed in sports practice has decreased significantly (reduction of 7 percentage points). However, the distance of weekly practice rates by sex continues to be 8 percentage points between men and women, (women being below men).

Lastly, the differences between men and women are not only manifested directly about sports practice, but also in sports-related activities, such as sports-related employment (58.0% men vs. 42.0 % women), attendance at sports shows, both live (5.0 men vs. 3.6 women) and audiovisual media (6.5 men vs. 4.3 women), or the fact of looking for news on sport (6.1 men vs. 3.8 women). The last 3 parameters are expressed in the degree of interest on a scale from 0 to 10).

The situation is very different in the **federated sport**. There are differences by sex in terms of the number of federated licenses. Of the total sports licenses registered in 2018, 77.0% of the federal licenses correspond to men and 23.0% to women. As regards high-level athletes, 4,962 were counted in 2018. In year-on-year terms, this figure represents an increase of 6.5% compared to the previous year. By sex, 62.8% of high-level athletes correspond to men and 37.2% to women.

Also, there are significant differences between **University championships** and **school-age championships**. The results for 2018 indicate that the total number of athletes participating in the final stages of the Spanish university championships was 3,853. This figure reaches 6,975 at the Spanish school-age championships. By sex, more significant differences were observed in the data related to university championships, with 2,172 male (56.4%), and 1,681 women athletes (43.6%). In contrast, among the participants in the final stages of school-age championships, the differences are minimal by sex (50.8% men vs. 49.2% women). 35.7% of the participants in university championships practice team sports, and 64.3% practice individual sports. At school age, 55.8% of athletes play individual sports and 44.2% team sports.

## Survey on Best Practices in some European countries

### Premises: what is a Best Practice

In management and policy analysis, “best practice” refers to “the set of mechanisms implemented by an actor for creating value in an optimal manner” [24]. How these mechanisms are implemented is nonetheless largely influenced by the context and circumstances of different actors [24], 25]].

For example, different institutions offering sports programmes may be affected by the programme implementation; for example financing schemes, legal frames, surrounding environment, social and geographic context. For this reason, the mechanisms applied by a particular actor to optimize their results can be more modestly recognized as “good practice” [[24] 25]]. Considering the diverse circumstances of the different actors, it is most suitable to find multiple practice exemplars before defining what constitutes universal best practice. Even then, such “best practice” should only describe the overall mechanisms recommended for optimizing results, while leaving flexibility about the specific means for implementing them, so that each actor can adapt the best practice to their particular conditions [24].

### An epistemological treatise on "Girls & Sport & Nutrition & Health &...": what the "Italian School" means when talking about Good Practices

It was asked to Prof. Gianfranco Beltrami, cardiologist, and sports doctor of the Parma University and San Raffaele, Milan University to write a short epistemological paper on our focus argument to better define Good Practices for our target group and allow the research team of WISE to better address their survey.

It has been scientifically proven that physical activity is a fundamental factor for the physical and psychological development and well-being of women: through sporting activity in youth conditions for healthy growth are created, you maintain a healthy weight, you learn basic values of life such as respect for others and the rules, solidarity, loyalty, self-discipline, teamwork, the ability to deal with problems and you enhance cognitive and intellectual skills.

From a health point of view, countless benefits can be obtained from a regular and well-structured physical activity that will lead to lifelong benefits to all body organs systems by improving bone development and the ability of the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Exercise reduces the risk of illness, improves psychological well-being, and positively affects social relationships.

For **women**, an **active life is the best way to prevent many diseases** and the health benefits of physical activity include a lower risk of contracting chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, some forms of cancer, such as breast and colon cancer, and the improvement of bone mineralization, which contributes to the prevention of osteoporosis.



## *The countless benefits of Physical Activity*

**Physical activity** also improves digestive function and the regulation of intestinal rhythm, it is a determining factor for energy expenditure and is, therefore, essential for the control of body weight. By increasing energy expenditure, physical activity contributes to reducing fat mass and increasing lean mass, facilitating a more harmonious growth of the body, and preventing overweight and obesity.

Physical activity also has positive effects on **mental health**, helping to maintain cognitive function and reducing the risk of depression and dementia.

It **reduces stress and anxiety, improves sleep** quality and self-esteem. In the workplace, it helps to **reduce sick leaves**, with positive effects also in terms of productivity and economic impact.

## *Exercise is good for all ages*

**Exercise is good for all ages**, starting from **early childhood** where the influence of parents' lifestyle (from the pre-conception phase and then during gestation) has a key role in determining the state of health in the years to come. During **childhood** and **adolescence**, physical activity is necessary for osteo-muscular development contributes to increasing learning abilities and the level of self-esteem, and represents a valuable tool for social aggregation. An active lifestyle from childhood, associated with proper nutrition, also decreases the risk of childhood obesity and chronic diseases.

Physical activity also **facilitates the adoption of healthy eating habits**. Regular physical activity patterns acquired during childhood and adolescence are more likely to remain so in **adulthood** and thus provide the basis for active and healthy living. Participation in games and other physical activities, both at school and during leisure time, helps control body weight, has beneficial effects on the cardiovascular system and respiratory function, and contributes to healthy muscular development.

**Children and adolescents** up to age 17 should engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity vigorous physical activity per day and musculoskeletal strengthening exercises at least 3 times per week. The same recommendations as for adults should apply to **girls from 18 on**, namely, a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week or a minimum of 75 minutes of vigorous activity plus strengthening exercises of major muscles (groups 2) or more times per week. **Adult women**, to maintain good health, should engage in moderate physical activity daily, either sporting or related to daily activities (such as walking at a brisk pace, walking stairs, biking to work). This, becoming a part of lifestyle habits, can be prolonged over time more easily.

The recommended amount of physical activity can be fractionated throughout the day to better incorporate exercise into the routine of various daily activities.

Practicing physical activity more than the minimum recommended, brings additional health benefits and a more effective reduction of risk for several chronic diseases (cardiovascular and metabolic) and is also recommended for individuals who have difficulty maintaining constant body weight. To reach this aim it is suggested to practice at least 60-90 minutes

of daily exercise. It is advisable to interrupt frequently a sitting or reclining position, ideally at least every 30 minutes, with even short periods (2-3 minutes) of activity (active breaks). The deleterious effects of hours spent in sedentary conditions are, in fact, independent from the physical activity practiced in leisure time.

Even during **pregnancy**, if there are no specific contraindications, moving and practicing physical activity brings important benefits, both for the future mother and for the fetus and it is also important to avoid an excessive increase in body weight, which can lead to obstetrical complications. Greater attention is required to the woman in the **last phase of pregnancy** when moving with agility can become tiring. In this period it is advisable to perform walks and strolls. Physical activity during pregnancy promotes good circulation with beneficial aspects on the fetus, it allows to keep the bodyweight under control, it reduces the risk of conditions such as gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia, pre-term birth, venous varices, and deep vein thrombosis. In addition to these physical benefits their **psychological benefits**, which include reduction of fatigue, stress, and depression. In the **postpartum period**, it helps to reduce depression and anxiety, improves mood, cardiorespiratory functions, and keeps weight under control.

### *And what about diet?*

**Pre-adolescence and adolescence** is a period of profound physical, mental and behavioral changes for women. The need for energy and certain nutrients (e.g., iron, calcium, and vitamins) increases, and the **diet** must be able to provide all that is needed for growth.

**Adolescent girls** have an increased need for iron, so it is necessary to increase the consumption of iron-rich foods. It is important to follow a varied and balanced diet, containing all the nutrients, avoiding drastic diets (or "self-made diets") that can be particularly harmful to balanced bone development and balanced reproductive system development. It has been shown that non-optimal bone growth in the early stages of life predisposes to osteoporosis. It is also good to remember that both **body over-weight** and **excessive thinness** deeply affect the emotional well-being and physical health of the adolescent girl.

For **complete and balanced nutrition it is important to vary the diet as much as possible**, increasing the consumption of fruits, vegetables, legumes, reducing the consumption of sugary foods and drinks, and the use of salt.

An **unbalanced diet**, in terms of balance between fats, proteins, and carbohydrates and with an inadequate distribution of meals during the day, favors overweight and obesity, which increases the risk of chronic diseases. [written by Dott. Gianfranco Beltrami, Cardiologist and Sports Doctor, University of Parma and University San Raffaele, Milan – Italy, 2021]. [26]

## **The WISE survey on best practices**

The survey to find best practices in some European countries was carried out by the use of a questionnaire which was defined by the Scientific Committee of WISE.



There was also bibliographic research of best practices but results were not so specialized for lack of information and documents.

Nonetheless, there were some results of a study on Women and Sports from Serbia [Annexe 1], some articles published by the Ministry of Health of the Italian Government [27]) and a list of best practice initiatives collected by the University of Valencia from European and rest of the world countries [Annexe 2] and a list of a few Italian ones [Annexe 3]

## The Questionnaire

The questionnaire (Annexe 4) was delivered in a Google Form, in English, throughout the partner's contacts: it was delivered in what it was thought to be the best environment for best practice: the world of teams, innovating projects, and federal activities.

We have to underline that the language gap is still critical and in Italy, Serbia, and Spain the questionnaire had to be translated into the native languages, and sometimes also sent by emails and, after translation in English, uploaded in Google Form.

The Period of the survey was from 24 May '21 to 24 September '21 Countries and it was delivered in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Serbia, and Belgium.

The results were 40 questionnaires filled in by our target group.

Note: it is important to underline that during the survey period the Tokio Olympic Games took place and therefore all the federations were not available to fill our questionnaires in (preparation, performances, debriefing). So, despite many active contacts, there were no opportunities to have the Federations participate in our survey. Sports federations are excellent in the sports world, even with their peculiar structure, so some important testimonials were missed.

### *Aim of the questionnaire and categories*

It aimed to find out examples of best practices and evaluate them from a qualitative and a quantitative point of view.

To reach this objective and evaluate a "best practice" scores were assigned to each section of the questionnaire to define 3 categories:

- 70 points: GOLD
- From 60 to 69 points: SILVER
- From 50 to 59 points: BRONZE
- Less than 50 points: no best practice in a standard point of you <sup>1</sup>

### *Topics investigated with the questionnaire:*

There were questions concerning many different aspects of the sport:

- age,
- frequency,

---

<sup>1</sup> Actually, as in the definition of "Best Practice", some initiative may not reach the score of our 3 categories but can be defined Best Practice for their territory and the actors involved.

- gender,
- level of attendance,
- involvement of stakeholders,
- use of IT tools,
- attention to other factors such as nutrition, general health, etc.

## Criteria

Many were the criteria that concur to give a score to the best practices:

1. Evaluation of the Stakeholders/actors involved
2. Relevance and Innovation, that is if innovative solutions were used to address them to other EU countries
3. Effectiveness; where he practices effective and achieve results that can be measurable
4. Community involvement and in particular local communities in the case of local/regional project
5. Health & Nutrition, that is if these projects approached the participants with a multidimensional paradigm of the body composition & lifestyle & nutrition, all together in a systemic way

To each question of each section of the questionnaire, a score was assigned to totalize a maximum of 100 points.

Before the 5 sections, as anticipated, there was a General Information section, scoreless and investigating the kind of activity, the scope, the dimension, the length and frequency of the program, the gender (only girls, mixed gender), the size of the group, the type of institution/legal entity involved, the average time for the girls to remain engaged in the program, the participation in the programme voluntarily or mandatory (i.e. scholar programme or leisure time programme), the presence of exergaming.

## The structure

Our questionnaire was composed of:

- A General Info section with 13 questions to describe the project (no score)
- 5 sections with 5 or more multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions
  - section 1 to investigate Stakeholders/actors involved (7 multiple choices): up to 15 points
  - section 2 to investigate Relevance and Innovation (5 questions): up to 20 points
  - section 3 to investigate Effectiveness (5 questions): up to 25 points
  - section 4 to investigate Community Involvement (5 questions): up to 20 points
  - section 5 to investigate Health and Nutrition 5 questions): up to 20 points

## The Results

We collected:

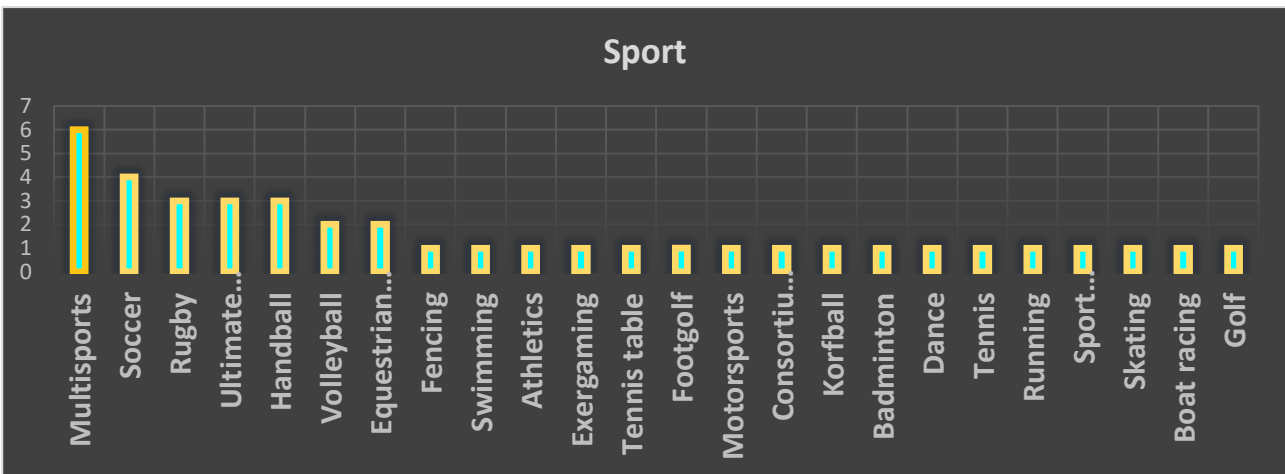
- 16 questionnaire from Italy
- 11 from the Netherlands
- 9 from Spain
- 2 from Serbia

- 1 from Belgium
- We also collected 1 from Macedonia (a country that was not part of the WISE project but we received a questionnaire from a contact interested in our activity and we included it in the panel).

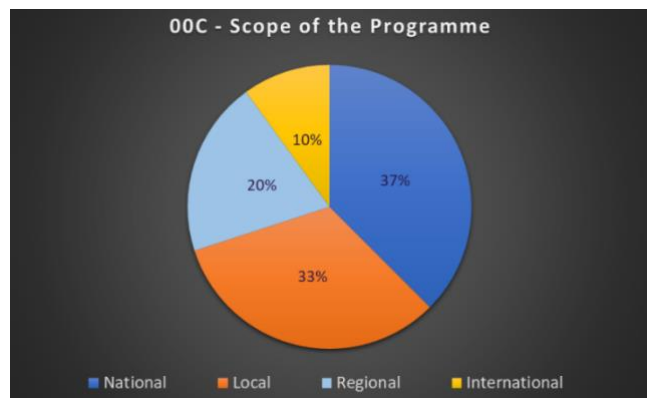
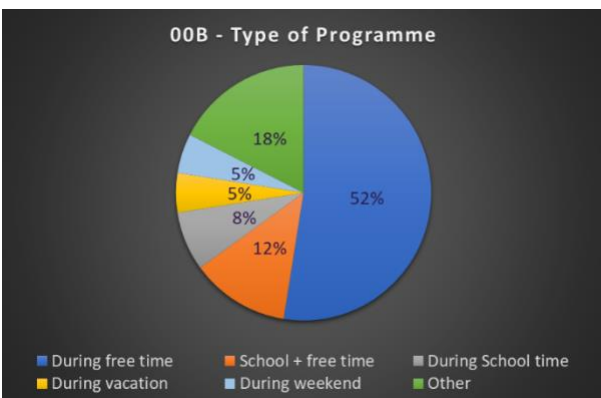
Eventually, there has been a data elaboration which statistic results are shown in the attached table [annex 5]

### Programmes General Information

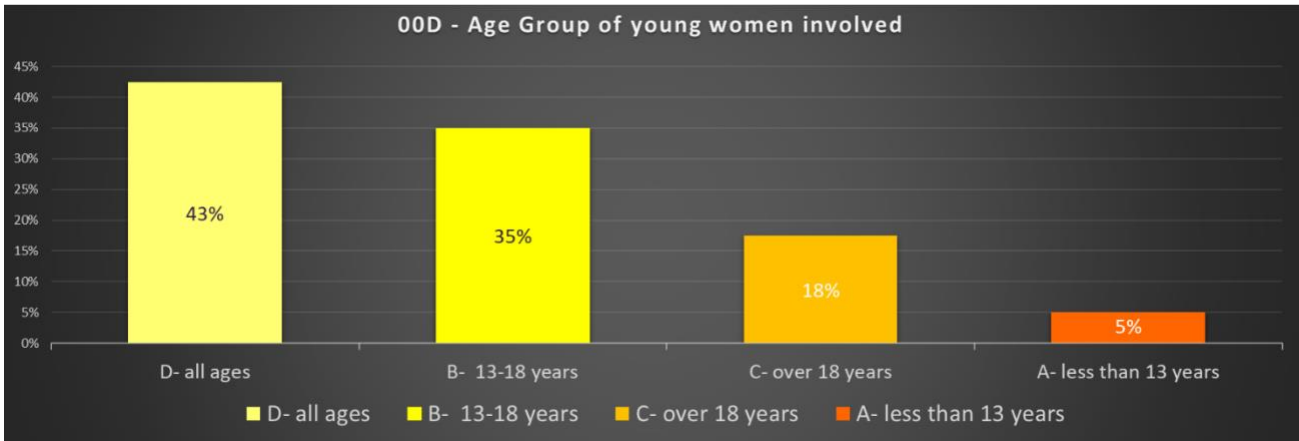
A great variety of sports were represented, as shown in the diagram



The survey was about WHEN people practice sport and the SCOPE of the activity. These topics are synthesized in the diagrams below



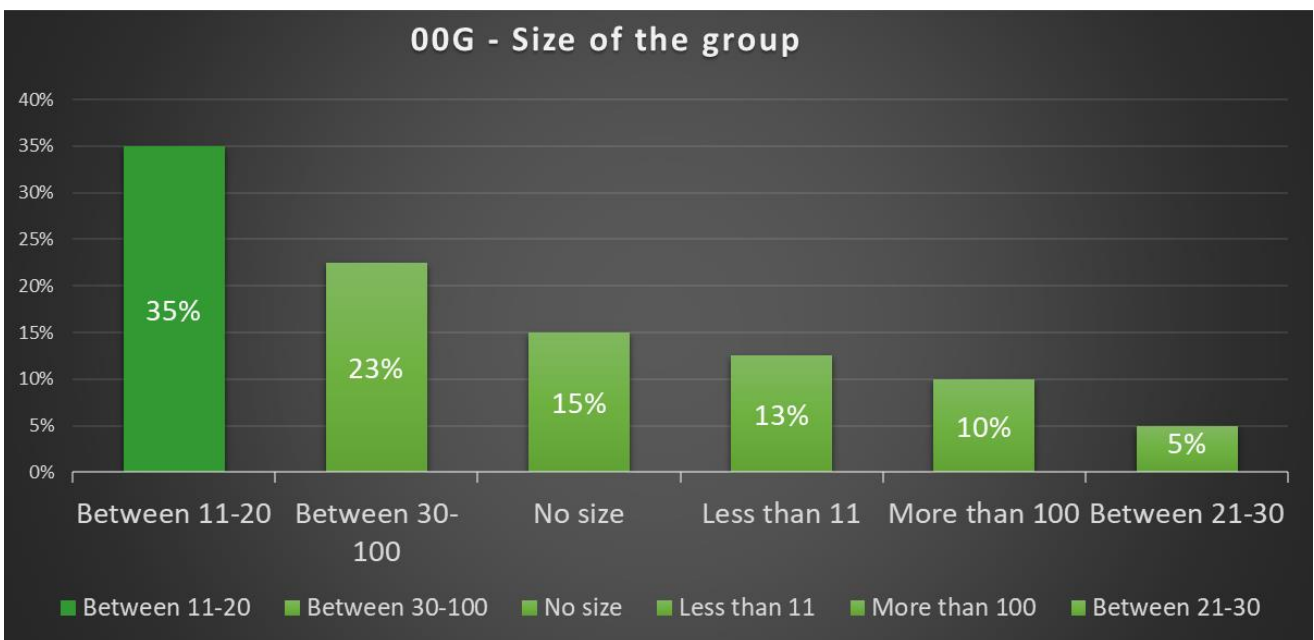
About the age groups of the people involved (mix gender, women, and men) it is interesting to note that almost half of the projects involve people of all ages, followed by the age group 13 /18 years (secondary and high school) whereas the specific age groups of over 18 and under 13 is not so represented (less than 20% with a further and dramatic decrease for the under 13 age group).



About type and gender, fortunately, we had evidence from either sedentary or sporty people (50%) and could count on the data from either girl, male, or mixed gender groups.

**Size of the groups and frequency and length of the programme:**

the survey has shown that the majority of the sports groups have 11-20 participants (35%) closely followed by wider groups (30 to 100 participants) with a percentage of 23%. Other data are shown in the diagram below.



About **frequency**, 75% train regularly twice a week whereas only 25% train once in a while.

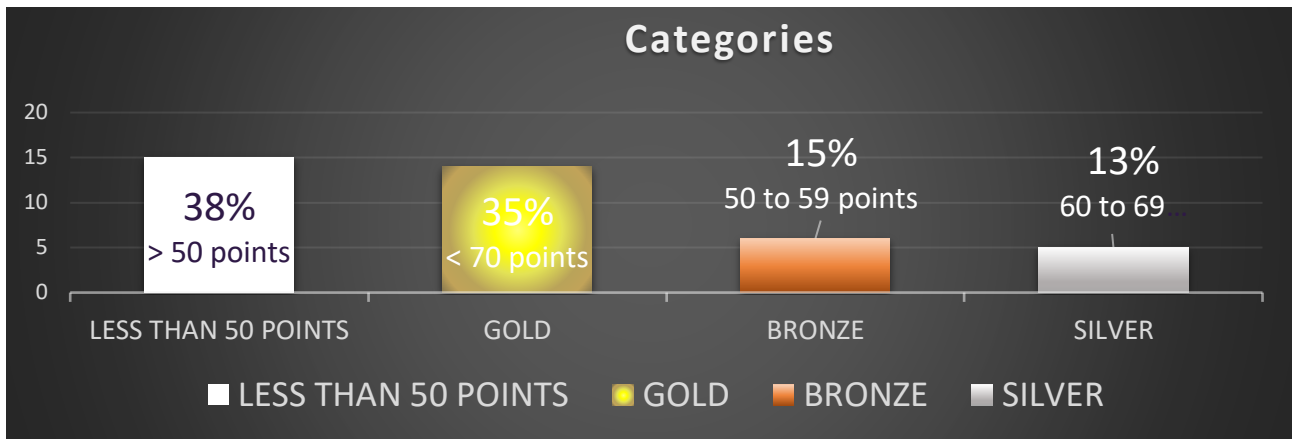
What about the scores each group reached?

### Scores and categories of the "Best Practices"

Sadly 38% of the Programmes did not reach the threshold, only 13% reached the Silver category, and 15% the Bronze category

On the other side, 35% reached the Gold category.

From these results, it can be deduced that when an activity is well structured and rich in offer for the participants it is virtuous and can be defined, by all means, as a “best practice” activity.



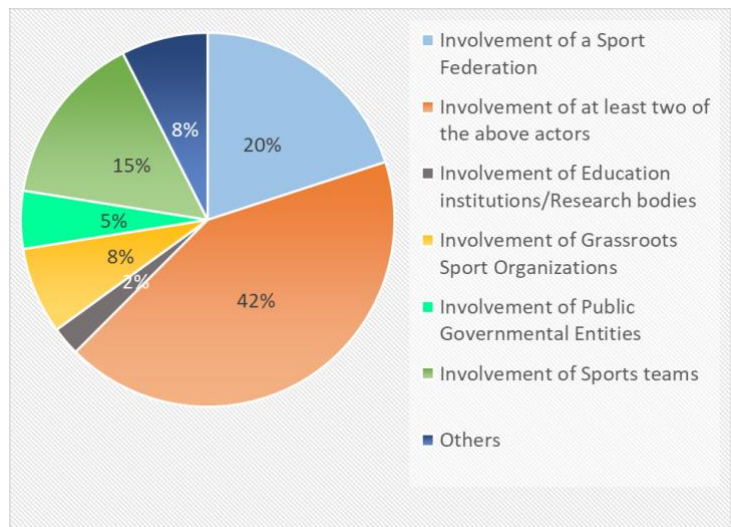
### Details of the Programmes characteristics

#### STAKEHOLDERS/ACTORS INVOLVED (Section 1 of the questionnaire)

The survey shows that

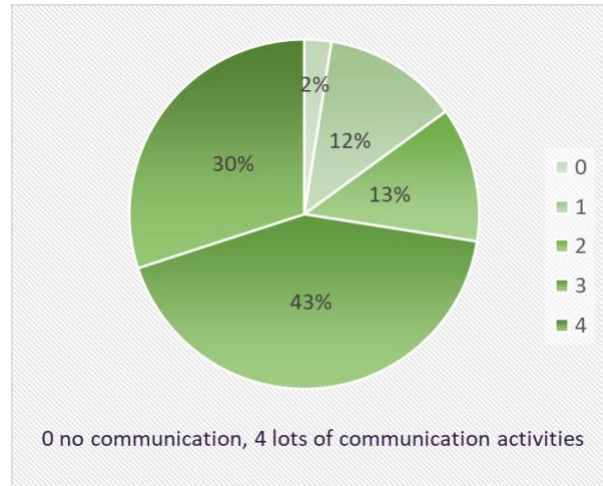
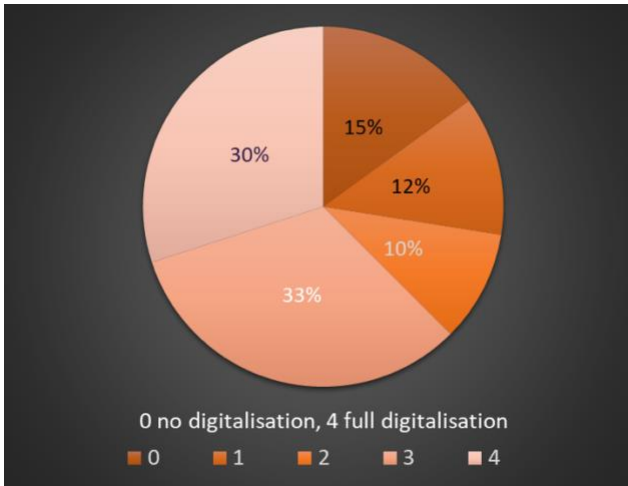
More than 40% of the Programmes involve at least 2 categories of stakeholders; In 20% of them Sport Federations are involved; In 15% we have Sport Teams as promoters of the activities.

Worth noting: only 2% involve Education Institute or Research Bodies and only 5% involve Public Governmental Entities.



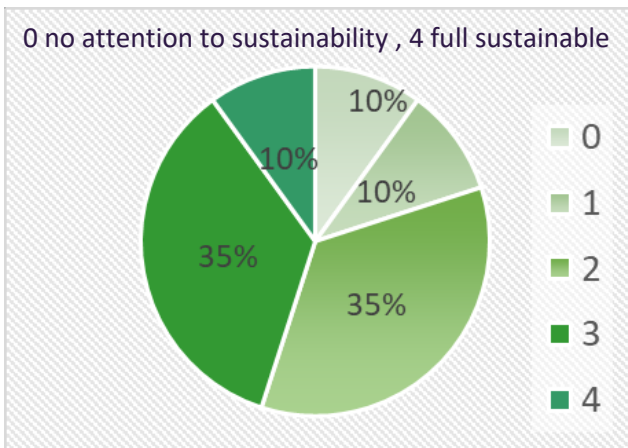
#### RELEVANCE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS IN A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE (Section 2 of the questionnaire)

Problems start here: there is a very low score in almost all the questionnaires concerning **Digitalisation and the Use of digital tools for training**. On the other side, as shown in the diagrams below, the **communication and dissemination factors** are not so negative thanks to social media which increase the average score of this section.



30% of the activities do not use devices or digital tools at all but the average is nevertheless increased by the use of WhatsApp and social media to communicate, publish results, and other forms of internal communication. Almost 80% of the interviewed declare to develop a form of communication through social media.

Included in this section is the **presence of an R&D team** (either volunteers or professionals) were investigated: only 10% of these Programmes have it and almost 45% of them do not have any kind of research and development activities going on.



The fourth issue investigated in this section was **Sustainability**: results were encouraging meaning that 80% of the programmes have a high level of sustainability

Only 10% declare not to be sustainable, in particular for what regards social actions – being programmes not inclusive for all. So the inclusion factor has to be improved by all means

And last investigated topic was **Replicability**. Again some good news: most of the Programmes, after proper adjustments, can be replicated in other European countries and do not have a limit of territoriality.

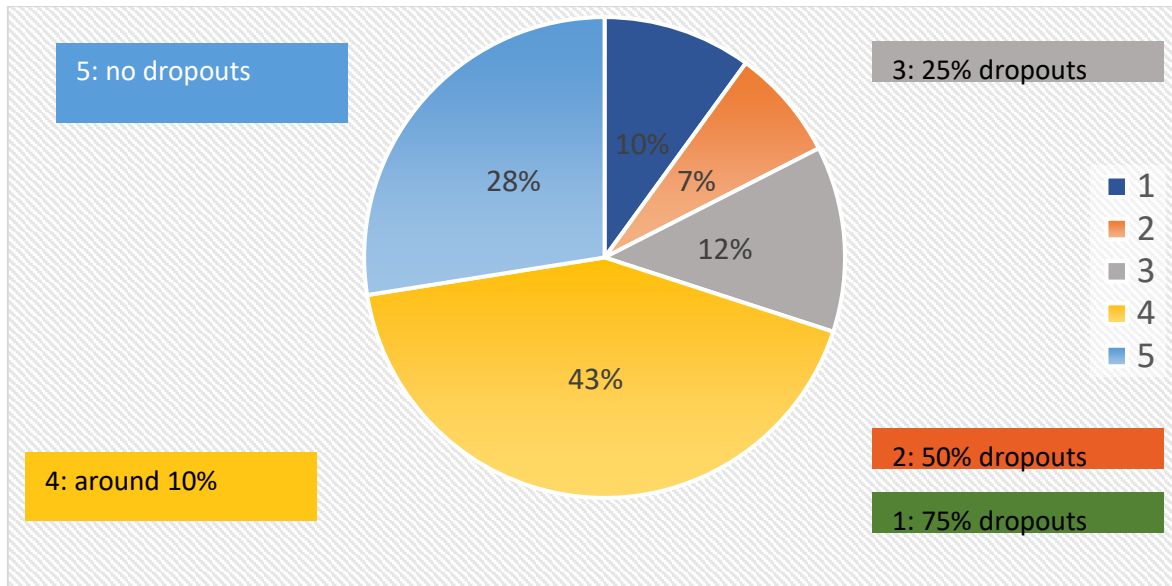
### EFFECTIVENESS AND ACHIEVING MEASURABLE RESULTS (Section 3 of the questionnaire)

The topics investigated in this section were four: Results and Update publication, Dropout, Monitoring, and Motivation Resources.

The **Results Publication** shows a very weak condition: 37% of the Programmes barely do not publish their results nor update them, and only 38% carry on some form of publishing.

**Dropout**, on the other side, or should we say constant participation, shows a very positive trend.





More than 70% do not have or do not reach 10% of dropouts (with rate of dropout we mean the difference between the initial number of participants and dropout during the program)

And not even 20% of the programmes have a rate of dropouts between 50% and 75%.

To exemplify: in an average team of 20 participants, 15/17 will continue to train and only 2 or 3 will quit. So these best practices show that if youngsters start to participate, they'll keep on exercising.

Results about **Monitoring**, on the other hand, show a critical situation:

- 30% of the programmes do not have any kind of monitoring and about only 25% have basic procedures of monitoring
- Only 23% have a kind of structured monitoring (with APPs, smartwatches, weight control, etc.)

Altogether there is an insufficient condition of monitoring and a lack of scientific procedures to check the results.

And what about **Motivational resources**? Here are most of the elements of a best practice: almost 70% of the programs use motivational resources, such as activities and scores recording, recording of results, use of recording for communication and dissemination, etc. to keep participants engaged.

Also, social events, prizes, and social media communication contribute to this good result.

And the sense of belonging and the close ties with the team are probably the main reason for the low dropout rate.

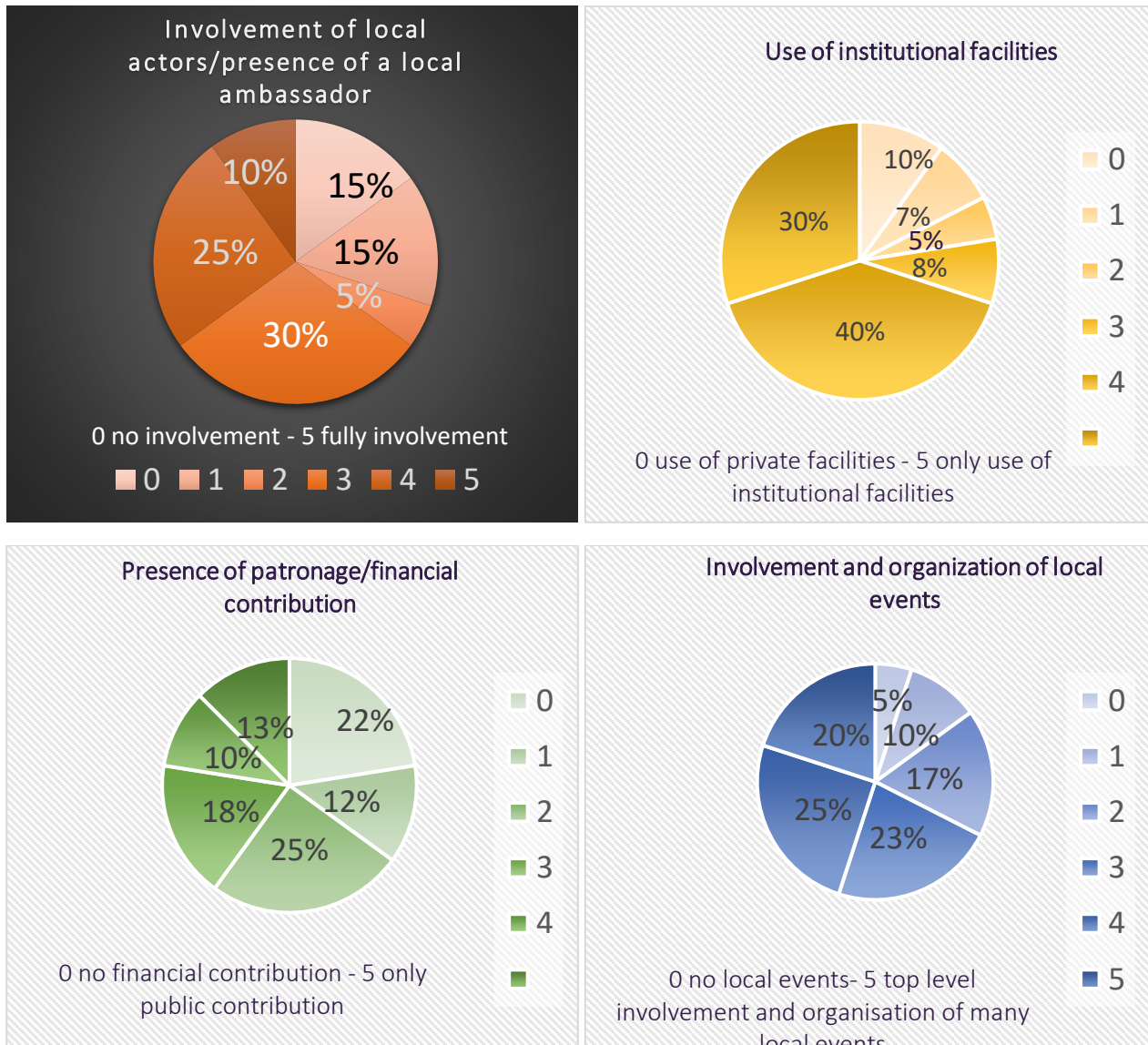
## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (section 4 of the questionnaire)

This topic is strategic for the success of the initiatives. Many factors impact:

Financial contributions, use of institutional facilities, presence of local ambassadors, public events organized to enhance the value of the initiatives. As in the other sections, there are some opposing situations even though it is clear how much weight does this factor has on the initiative.

There are not many local **Ambassadors** involved in the initiative whereas there is a great use of **institutional facilities**.

Not as much as **Financial contribution** as we should expect for sports programs but at there is a lot of **Involvement and organization of local events** which keeps up spirit and enthusiasm about the Programmes. The following diagrams show these situations:



## HEALTH AND NUTRITION (Section 5 of the questionnaire)

Eventually, in the 5<sup>th</sup> section, it was investigated the **presence of** skilled health **Professionals and Nutritionists** inside the Programmes and related specific actions, assuming the girls' health and sports life has to be studied with a multidimensional paradigm made up of lifestyle, body composition & nutrition.

Results were not comforting: more than 50% of the programmes do not have health and nutrition Pros involved, nor related specific actions.

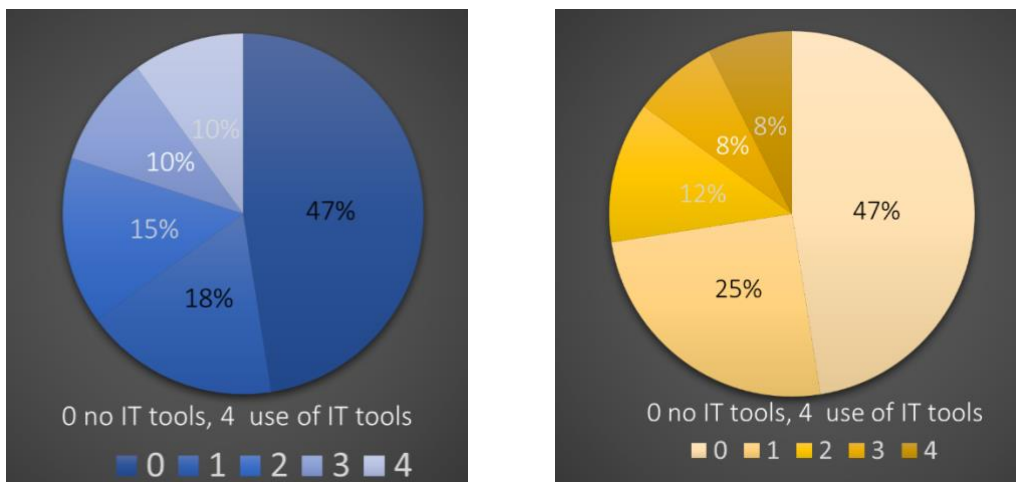


Only 25% have this kind of role and these are the top league's teams.

The same percentages are found when investigating the use of **IT tools to promote health and nutrition values**: almost 50% of the initiatives do not use IT Tools at all. Only 10% use them as part of the training process and 40% use them occasionally and not as an integral part of the process.

And again, the same percentage, if not lower, applies to the use of **IT tools to monitor health and nutrition parameters**: 50% of the trainers do not use them and only 8% use them as monitoring tools.

Even when talking about Best Practices, we, therefore, discover that helpful technology is not used at its best and important tools are missing. Indeed, one could cautiously state that we should work on a technology soft revolution to improve the way of training, taking advantage of all the means at disposal.



Unfortunately, the same results are found when investigating the field of **Promotion of specific health and nutritional values** such as healthy food habits, special menus, menus suitable for physical activity, nutritional tips...

Topics about Menus, food habits, nutritional tips are absent in 60% of the Programmes. Only 23% of them provide guidelines, if even not diets, about correct nutritional habits. And those are competitive initiatives...

In conclusion, even in the panorama of Best Practices, there is a lot of work to carry on to consider a "sport" body in a multidimensional paradigm and take advantage of the existing IT Tools.

## General conclusion about the results of our survey on some European Best Practices

As we can see in the results of the questionnaire [annex 5] there are no significant differences between one country and another.

Differences are evident when dealing with an amatorial initiative or federation/competitive one.

Both have some success factors: the first one relies a lot on community involvement, organization of events, sense of belonging, making up a “Group”, leveraging cultural, logistic, and geographical distances by meeting the needs of the single participants. There is almost no dropout among these participants since the sports project is so important and strategic for their life. This seems against the trend highlighted by the Women’s Foundation Study (<https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/do-you-know-the-factors-influencing-girls-participation-in-sports>) [9] probably because we are here dealing with local realities and small dimension groups whereas the study takes into consideration the target group of young girls regardless of the type of Programme. Also to be a “member of the Group” tends to erase possible fatigues, efforts, and inner problems (see chapter on Best Practices Examples). Social media is a lot helpful for internal communication and helps to overcome geographical distances.

The competitive teams have a lot more financial contributions, more use of IT tools, and access to technologies and cultural means such as nutritional guidelines, the presence of health specialists, devices to monitor the state of health, and training trends.

On the other side, competitive teams have a greater rate of dropouts because of the agonistic expectations and the heavy demands in terms of training and matches. The accessibility of facilities is a problem too, especially for high school girls who are not yet independent. And it is important to underline that, if compared to Northern American culture, the European school in most of the cases is not structured to host competitive players as students and few are the programs that help to reduce the gap between sports expectation and being a good student.

Leisure and amatorial groups, on the contrary, still miss opportunities in terms of tech development, they are a step behind for what concerns digitalization, health, and nutrition, monitoring, and dissemination of their good characteristics to other stakeholders.

Eventually and regardless of the type of sport and gender of participants, there is still a lot to do to improve the global level of sports programs.

## EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

We picked out some of the “best practice” programmes examined by the questionnaires. As it was mentioned in the chapter “Best Practice”, besides the questionnaire scores, there is some project which can give us hints for the WISE programmes even though they have a local dimension.

But because of their attention to Gender Equity, to disadvantaged areas, and disadvantaged social conditions and context they stand out as Best Practices

### Italy - *Giocampus*

A project aimed at children and teens developed to promote the wellness of future generations, including a training course that combines physical, nutritional, and environmental *education*.

Born in the city of Parma as a multisport recreational summer camp for children of 6-14 years, it has become a model for Italy, a model to be introduced in the primary school (in Italy there are no sports programmes at primary school) and has been transformed also in a series of activities throughout the year (winter ski camp, daily sports events, etc.).

**Dimension and scope:** each year thousands of children benefit from the activity, both during the summertime and during school. Developed in Parma (Italy) it is a model which can be applied everywhere.

**Drivers of success:** involvement of children of all ages, involvement of Pros as trainers but also of teens as co-trainers and companions. Involvement of nutritional experts to draw out balanced menus and entertainers to complete the daily program and provide fun together with sports practicing.

[www.giocampus.it](http://www.giocampus.it)

### Italy - *Corri con noi*

Project for women of all ages to promote the benefits of walking and running.

Promoted and sponsored by a famous women’s magazine, “Donna Moderna”, it has been developed around the character of an ambassador, a sporty woman who in each town aggregates around herself young women and even old women to do exercise together, after school or after work (usually once a week at 7 PM in a park or in a green area).

Women are divided into 3 categories: participants who want to walk (stroll), participants who would like to run but have not the capacity and are trained to achieve this result, and runners. Each group has a group leader and exercises for about 1 hour.

**Dimension and scope:** hundreds of women in many Italian cities.

**Drivers of success:** the national magazine launches the initiative, gives a pink t-shirt with the writing “Corri con Noi” (*Run with us!*), creates a community with social media, WhatsApp and chats and everybody feels part of a Group!

It has been a really successful initiative with thousands of participants and was still growing until Covid pandemic in March 2020 when it was forced to stop. Now in Italy, there are still restrictions for groups so we will have to wait to see the developments.

## Spain - Dragon Boat Marina Valencia

Sports project for training and competition, rowing challenge, with boats "Dragon Boat", a boat/team dedicated to women who have breast cancer, have already had surgery, or are survivors.

A great and virtuous example of aggregation of fragile women who found in this activity a mean of self-rescue, who find the stimulus to fight and move forward through sport and the closeness with other women in the same physical and psychological situation.

**Dimension and scope:** there are from 30 to 100 women over 18, they keep on training and competing every year depending on their health situation and age. It has a regional dimension and they are expanding because of the goodness of the initiative.

**Drivers of success:** participants tell that when practicing and training, they do not feel their disease and feel "stronger than ever". Sport, sociality, and solidarity are the success keys of this initiative.

[www.dragonboatmarinavalencia.es](http://www.dragonboatmarinavalencia.es)

## Spain – Juntas es mejor

A project to accompany women in their process of discovering or consolidating sport in their lives.

Promoted by two bloggers, twice a week they lead groups of 10-20 women to practice exercise, using especially videos and social media to communicate and disseminate their project. They do live training and remote ones, so women feel at ease to practice inside their houses, too, if they cannot participate in life.

**Dimension and scope:** it has a regional scope (regional for Spain) but it is spreading day by day and now it has thousands of followers.

**Drivers of success:** Among the factors of success we can point out the sympathy of the promoters and their warm capacity to involve any kind of woman. Not the overstressed woman beautiful and perfect trainer: just simple but professional girls who stimulate women to do steady exercise.

Note: This initiative was considered so outstanding and the two trainers so good that the WISE consortium decided to use involve them to produce a video tutorial of the HIIT protocol exercises for the 300 girls participating in the WISE pilot project phase (subtitles will be translated in native languages – Italian and Serbian).

[www.juntasesmejor.org](http://www.juntasesmejor.org)

## The Netherlands – Korfball

Korfball, a game similar to netball and basketball, was invented in 1901 by an Amsterdam schoolmaster, Nico Broekhuysen. It was first demonstrated in the Netherlands in 1902 and was played on an international level, primarily in Europe, by the 1970s. It was devised as a game for both sexes.



It is now an international mixed-team sport, played at all ages, by all genders and in a mixed group, in school and during free time. It is played every week 2/3 times. There is now an Erasmus+ programme to teach Korfbal in the schools once a month for 2 years. It is played by clubs and national organizations within the international Federation of Korfbal.

The Erasmus+ project has the aim to overcome the gender gap and reach gender equality and create an education module for coaches.

**Scope** of the programme: international

**Drivers of success:** a sport that can be played by anyone, at school and during their free time. A “new” sport for the rest of Europe that has the appeal of a novelty and carries with its fundamental values.

<https://korfbal.sport/ikf-erasmus-sport-grant-2021/>

## **The Netherlands - Jong PSV Vrouwen**

A Soccer programme for girls, younger than 19. The programme includes soccer training, conditioning training, and strength training.

It is played during school twice a week with modules which include: 4 times soccer training (combined with conditioning), 2 times strength training, and once a match.

It is registered under the Soccer national federation and girls participate for 3 years (high school period).

**Dimension and scope** of the program: groups of 10 to 20 girls each time in a local scope.

**The driver of success:** all the means provided by the Federation are used, different kinds of heart rate monitoring methods, jump/sprint testing protocols, strength & conditioning testing, wellness. Great presence of Motivation resources: mainly seminars and motivational meetings (meet & greet with athletes for example). Girls can decide to join a different programme based on their level of playing. It can be a “stepping stone” for those who want to become professional soccer players and if a contract is signed great prominence and echo is given to the event.

[www.brabantsport.nl](http://www.brabantsport.nl)

## **Serbia – My super vacation**

A project aimed at teens, (13-18) was developed to promote a sports camp for summertime and winter break.

It is a multisport camp, participated by mixed-gender groups, and has the involvement of educational Institutions and Research Bodies.

IT tools are used in training and there are a lot of activities during the camp. News on the website and lots of fun while exercising for the participants which are around 100.



**Dimension and scope:** the scope is national and each year there are hundreds of participants.

**Drivers of success:** a different and complete *edutainment* proposal for summer and a winter initiative/vacation with a lot of communication/interaction especially with the sport girls (WISE target).

[www.mojsuperraspust.rs](http://www.mojsuperraspust.rs)

## CONCLUSION

After the presentation of our WISE project and its aims, we have examined the scenario of some European countries, very different from a cultural, geographical, and logistic point of view.

There is a wide range of sporting activities for girls of our target group (15/24) either professional, agonistic, or just leisure. All institutions involved in this world are convinced that steady exercise is the best way to keep in good health and pursue a good quality of life, both from a psychological and a physical point of view. There are, though, many problems in having the girls attending the practice: most of the time logistic problems related to far sports facilities, a heavy assignment from high school and university or a very little free time due to long working hours.

The best practices show that the main factors of success to limit the drop out is to practice exercise in a group, that is to have a social incentive and to have the community support if one is practicing a team sport.

Since there is not a rich literature in Europe related to this target group (whereas we found interesting studies in Australia and the United States) [28], we hope to deepen the knowledge of this field during our project (at the date of this documents we still have to develop the pilot projects) also to enrich a cultural aspect with case studies.

We have then described the survey we have carried out by the use of a questionnaire which had the aim to analyze those which were considered “best practices” in the sports programs panorama.

The results have been presented with statistics and with comments.

What we have discovered inside our sample is that almost half of the best practices did not reach what was defined as a high-standard project.

We tried to deepen the examination of the 35% “gold” example and discover that there is still a lack of offer in terms of use of technology, involvement of nutritional and health professionals, motivational tools, devices to monitor activities, ...

This does not apply to professional and competitive teams but there is a long way to go to bringing amateur projects closer to these standards.

Nevertheless, there are interesting hints also in the “lower category” initiatives: a strong sense of belonging, a low rate of dropouts because of the social importance of being part of a group, the use of social media which overcome the communication gap, and the limited financial availability.

We will work for the WISE Programme to fill in the gaps, highlighting the positive values of the amatorial initiative while introducing means which are not present so far, trying to reduce the high dropout rate for the professional project – maybe stimulating school institutions to open channel of communication with trainers and all together developing useful tools for educators, trainers, and institutions involved in the sports world and in particular in the women’s sports world.

For WISE project updates please visit: [www.wise-project.eu](http://www.wise-project.eu)

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all WISE partners and all the institutions that contributed to our survey for their support and participation and will contribute to the WISE pilot projects yet to be started (Italy with the city of Parma, Serbia with the city of Belgrado, and Spain with the city of Valencia)

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## Annexes

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