



Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on an integrated approach to sport and physical activity in the education context

(C/2025/2987)

INTRODUCTION

By significantly contributing to physical, mental and social development, sport and physical activity play a key role in building a healthy and inclusive society and intergenerational cohesion, and the school environment should be an obvious place for practising them, particularly for children and adolescents. Although the conclusions focus on school-age children and adolescents and the school setting, it should be emphasised that sport and physical activity are integral elements of education, from the earliest age to tertiary education as well as in lifelong learning, and can be practised wherever convenient. An integrated approach in this context strengthens cross-sectoral cooperation among all relevant sectors.

THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

RECALLING:

1. Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which confers on the European Union the competence to carry out actions in the area of sport to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States, and Article 165, according to which the Union is to contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking account of the specific nature of sport, its structures based on voluntary activity and its social and educational function.
2. The European Union Work Plan for Sport 2024-2027 and the priority area 'Integrity and values in sport' indicated therein, as well as the key topic of 'sport and education' (¹).
3. The political background to this issue as set out in the Annex to the Annex.

TAKING NOTE THAT:

4. The level of physical activity in society and other correlated indicators, such as mental well-being and overweight or obesity levels, show a negative trend and it is in the interests of both the EU Member States and the European Union as a whole to reverse this trend. There is evidence to show that such concerns are especially relevant to children and adolescents (²).
5. The main reasons reported for not practising sport and physical activity more regularly are lack of time, lack of motivation and lack of interest (³). Making sporting activities more attractive, showcasing them in all their varied forms, promoting sport and physical activity as a pastime rather than an obligation, educating children and adolescents about the health-related, mental and emotional benefits of being physically active and creating a supportive atmosphere in the school environment can contribute positively to reversing the negative trends in this area.
6. During the COVID - 19 pandemic, the physical and mental health of children and adolescents declined and their physical activity decreased (⁴). Moreover, associated negative consequences, such as poorer socialisation, increased levels of stress and anxiety and increased physical inactivity, further highlight the need for an appropriate support for the development of motor skills, social skills, sports activity and mental health.

(¹) Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 July 2024 - 31 December 2027), OJ C, C/2024/3527, 3.6.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/3527/oj>.

(²) Cosma A., Abdulkhmanova S., Taut D., Schrijvers K., Catunda C., Schnohr C.: *A focus on adolescent mental health and wellbeing in Europe, central Asia and Canada. Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children. International report from the 2021/2022 survey. Volume 1*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe (2023).

(³) Survey conducted by Kantar at the request of the European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 525, Sport and Physical Activity. Full report Fieldwork: April-May 2022.

(⁴) OECD/European Union (2022), *Health at a Glance: Europe 2022: State of Health in the EU Cycle*, OECD Publishing, Paris. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the share of young people aged 15-24 who reported symptoms of depression was at least 50 % higher than the population average in almost all European countries.

7. The development of children and adolescents is a complex process and various factors, such as eating habits, screen time and perception of one's body can influence the level of physical activity and sedentary behaviour. The indicators for children and adolescents in these aspects highlight the need to implement comprehensive measures ⁽⁵⁾.
8. The concept of physical literacy, which involves children and adolescents acquiring knowledge, developing motor skills and building motivation and self-confidence, is an important aspect of sport and physical activity at school. It highlights the need to simultaneously address the affective, cognitive, physical and behavioural determinants of physical activity so as to support health and enable lifelong engagement in exercising through personal motivation and joy of sport and physical activity ⁽⁶⁾.

HIGHLIGHTING THAT:

9. Sport and physical activity have great educational potential and play a significant role in fostering the common values of the EU ⁽⁷⁾, generating a positive impact on civil society, social cohesion and public health. They can also contribute to reinforcing resilience of the EU Member States and their future generations.
10. The effective promotion of sport and physical activity among children and adolescents requires an integrated approach that involves strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation, especially between the areas of sport, education, youth and health, as well as engaging authorities and stakeholders at all levels.
11. Sport and physical activity are of major significance for the holistic development of individuals, upgrading key competences and transversal skills, such as employability skills ⁽⁸⁾, that are transferable beyond a school setting. They can also stimulate cognitive processes, facilitate learning and improve overall educational outcomes ⁽⁹⁾. Learning to be physically active from an early age is an investment in well-educated, healthy, productive and happy generations.
12. Schools can be spaces for practising sport and physical activity and have the potential to become local physical activity hubs. Children and adolescents can be encouraged to be more active through a variety of activities to increase the level of physical activity and to reduce sedentary behaviour at school, including optimal use of school infrastructure and its surroundings, especially outdoors and where possible in natural green environments, high-quality physical education classes, extra-curricular sports activities, physical activity during breaks, before, during and after classes and when possible also at weekends and during school holidays, while also facilitating active commuting to and from school.
13. Cooperation between schools and the sports movement, in particular sport clubs can enhance physical activity and sport engagement, creating more opportunities to stay active. It can also serve as an entry point for children and adolescents to organised sport and fosters the grassroots approach as one of the key features of a European Sport Model ⁽¹⁰⁾.
14. Strategies and programmes planned at the EU, national, regional or local level should take the needs of children and adolescents into account and be based on the results of research that provides empirical evidence. Their implementation should be regularly monitored with standardised methodologies in order to assess their effectiveness and relevance.

⁽⁵⁾ WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour: overview. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe (2021); Report on the fifth round of data collection, 2018–2020: WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI). Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe (2022).

⁽⁶⁾ Cornish, K., Fox, G., Fyfe, T. et al. *Understanding physical literacy in the context of health: a rapid scoping review*. BMC Public Health 20, 1569 (2020).

⁽⁷⁾ Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport, OJ C 196, 8.6.2018, p. 23–26.

⁽⁸⁾ Di Cola, G. *Developing skills and competences in sporting value chains*. Geneva: ILO MINEPS VII Baku Outcome Document. Baku: UNESCO, 2023.

⁽⁹⁾ Barbosa A, Whiting S, Simmonds P, Scotini Moreno R, Mendes R, Breda J. *Physical Activity and Academic Achievement: An Umbrella Review*. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 2020; 17(16):5972.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the key features of a European Sport Model, OJ C 501, 13.12.2021, p. 1–7.

15. Sport and physical activity organised within or outside physical education classes should be varied, tailored to the abilities of individuals and conducted in a safe and ethical manner. Finding enjoyment and a positive attitude towards sport and physical activity at school may contribute to life-long habits and healthy lifestyles ⁽¹¹⁾.
16. Sport and physical activity have a positive influence on mental health. They can help reduce stress, anxiety and depression, while improving quality of life. Additionally, they can serve as a natural and effective tool for prevention and treatment in this area by building self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-confidence and self-worth. Regular participation in physical activity enhances mood, helping to alleviate symptoms of mental health disorders.
17. Sport and physical activity can be effective tools for promoting integration and preventing social exclusion for children and adolescents regardless of their origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, socio-economic background, disability and physical capacities, by fostering social interaction, teamwork, cooperation, trust, resilience, and a sense of belonging. An integrated approach can contribute to ensure their inclusion in sporting activities, promoting accessibility as well as cultivating sport values.
18. Programmes, events and projects organised in schools can also promote intercultural dialogue and add value, enabling participants to find out about cultural diversity through joint sporting activities and traditional sports and games. Empowering children and adolescents to co-design and lead activities and games creates opportunities to bridge cultural gaps, foster inclusivity and greater sense of responsibility.
19. Sport and physical activity in the context of promoting active commuting to schools and outdoor physical activity such as walking, running or cycling not only improves health but also contributes to reducing the carbon footprint and building environmental awareness. Access to appropriate infrastructure for active forms of travel to classes and environmental education through sport supports both physical and mental health and promotes social responsibility and sustainability.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES, AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL, TO:

20. Promote the benefits of regular physical activity and increase awareness of an integrated approach over the course of children's and adolescents' education, including the physical, social, ethical and mental aspects, and its positive impact on practising sport and physical activity, thereby developing transversal skills and facilitating learning.
21. Create conditions for children and adolescents to engage in sport and physical activity, with appropriate flexibility in their implementation. Ideally, this should amount to at least one hour per day and be promoted as an integral part of the education context, possibly by incorporating more movement and aiming to reduce sedentary behaviour ⁽¹²⁾. This could be achieved by making school infrastructure and its surroundings more accessible, especially outdoors and where possible in natural green environments, for example through the use of active co-design, high-quality physical education classes, extra-curricular sports activities, physical activities during breaks, before, during and after classes, including when possible at weekends and during school holidays, and promoting and facilitating active commuting to and from school.
22. Provide evidence-based policies and programmes in the field of sport and physical activity for children and adolescents in accordance with scientific knowledge and statistical data acquired in cooperation with universities and research institutions. Such accomplishments should be widely shared and promoted.
23. Consider monitoring children's and adolescents' levels of physical activity, fitness and physical literacy, including barriers to being physically active. In doing so, consider developing standardised diagnostic tools in this area, allowing comparability of data and ensure the collecting of information in line with the General Data Protection Regulation. The results of this monitoring could serve, where possible, to offer children and adolescents dedicated support and access to adapted sport and physical activities.

⁽¹¹⁾ European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice: *Physical education and sport at school in Europe*, Publications Office (2013). Typically, the number of hours of physical education accounts for less than 10 % of the total number of hours of classes; WHO Europe report: *Health-enhancing physical activity in the European Union*, 2024.

⁽¹²⁾ WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour: at a glance. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2020; Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Wellbeing and mental health at school – Guidelines for education policymakers, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

24. Create conditions that enable all children and adolescents, including those with disabilities and other specific needs, as well as those who are the least physically active, for example by exploring potential synergies and complementarities with sports stakeholders. This could be done by adapting infrastructure, sports equipment, activities and the competences of supervisors (13).
25. Strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and develop partnerships between the sports sector, local authorities, schools and other parts of civil society to create successful policies and programmes integrating sport and physical activity in the education context. This may be supported by the exchange of good practices (14).
26. Where appropriate, provide support for initiatives aimed at constructing and modernising sports infrastructure, in particular in schools and in their surroundings, and purchasing sports equipment to increase access to safe and modern exercise venues for all children and adolescents. Facilitate this access by planning the development of secure lanes to enable easy and safe soft mobility. In this regard, consideration should be given to children and adolescents from disadvantaged and socially excluded areas or who are otherwise at risk of poverty and facing social exclusion, and to boosting measures taken in these areas.
27. Acknowledge the significance of the competences of teachers, coaches and other people who incorporate the elements of sport and physical activity while working with children and adolescents and reinforce their actions by:
 - endorsing the need to support them by providing them with ongoing training and the tools they need to conduct activities based on the latest scientific knowledge and with the use of digital technologies;
 - fostering specific training for them to reinforce the sport values and raising awareness about their key role in reinforcing social integration, active citizenship and the common values of the EU;
 - promoting the use of sport and physical activity elements in teaching subjects other than physical education classes in order to support the physical and transversal skills of children and adolescents;
 - supporting adequate training on the emotional and ethical aspects to safeguard and maintain the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents, including the prevention of violence on sport fields and other disruptive behaviours in sport;
 - promoting the design of safe, secure, accessible and inclusive spaces and the development of protocols to ensure the physical, mental, emotional and social integrity of minors and to keep people in vulnerable situations safe during sports practice;
 - recognising their skills and knowledge acquired in and outside of formal education, where applicable in accordance with the guidelines of the European Qualifications Framework.
28. Recognise the specific involvement of schools in the promotion of sport and physical activity in appropriate ways, by for example considering creation of a label or other forms of appreciation. This could facilitate and strengthen the links between schools and the sports movement as well as national, regional and local authorities, however it should not lead to competition between schools.
29. Recognise and promote the skills acquired by children and adolescents through their involvement in the organisational aspects of sport and physical activity and invite them to engage in decision-making processes when planning their sporting activities.
30. Integrate aspects of safety, for oneself and for others, into skills and competences related to sport and physical activity in order to raise awareness of social responsibility and life-saving actions.

(13) European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Mapping on access to sport for people with disabilities – A report to the European Commission*, Publications Office, 2018, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/061635>

(14) Such as *The European dimension of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games - European initiatives for the development of sport in schools*, report prepared by the French Ministry of Education and Youth.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY AND WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, TO:

31. Cooperate, while avoiding administrative burden, on developing systems for monitoring sport and physical activity, including data about physical education classes and extracurricular sport activities and disseminate information on methods of integrating sport and physical activity into the education context.
32. Consider, while avoiding administrative burden and leveraging synergies from existing efforts, gathering materials, methodologies and relevant case studies in the area of increasing sport and physical activity levels of children and adolescents in the school environment, among representatives of EU, national and regional and local authorities, as well as teachers, coaches and others involved in this process, through cooperation, partnerships and peer learning, for example, and consider their public, online dissemination. This should be implemented in line with the General Data Protection Regulation.
33. Explore how to effectively promote cross-sectoral approaches and synergies between the areas of sport, education, youth, health⁽¹⁵⁾ and urban planning, in particular those aimed at increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour among children and adolescents and developing flexible strategies to counter current challenges in this field, for example under a possible review of the Recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity⁽¹⁶⁾.

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

34. Take into consideration the issues of sport and physical activity in the education context in relevant EU policy frameworks and within the scope of preparatory discussion on EU strategic document on sport, scheduled to be drawn up by 2026.
35. Highlight the importance of the Erasmus+ programme in the area of sport in promoting sporting activity among children and adolescents, development of sports staff competences, exchange of knowledge and best practices, and streamline its results.
36. Promote the possibilities of funding sport and physical activity projects in EU programmes and EU financial instruments for cohesion policy and regional development as well as other relevant initiatives in the areas of sport and physical activity of children and adolescents with a view to its cross-sectoral dimension.
37. Consider developing guidelines for monitoring varied aspects of physical activity among children and adolescents, including the feasibility of an accurate, reliable, objective standardised methodology that makes it possible to compare data between EU Member States and using reliable tools to analyse the dimensions of physical activity, and promote research on the physical competences of children and adolescents, regardless of their fitness level, the results of which can provide a basis for developing a monitoring strategy and harmonised system for the EU in this area, which should be implemented in line with the General Data Protection Regulation.
38. Take into consideration the issue of sport and physical activity in the education context with a view to potentially reviewing the Recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity across sectors.
39. Within the work on the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy, ensure that particular attention is also devoted to sport and physical activity in the education context by strengthening links between generations with a view to also facilitating lifelong physical activity.
40. Continue to promote sport and physical activity in the education context through the #BeActive campaign and the European Week of Sport activities across Europe to promote the use of sport and physical activity as an educational tool at local level.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Such as the European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Wellbeing and mental health at school – Guidelines for education policymakers*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Council Recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors, OJ C 354, 4.12.2013, p. 1–5.

INVITE THE SPORTS MOVEMENT AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS, WITH RESPECT TO THEIR AUTONOMY, TO:

41. Cooperate with schools by developing special sports initiatives and offering substantive support to enable children and adolescents to participate in activities, including leisure-oriented ones, where appropriate, conducted by duly qualified sports coaches. These activities should help children and adolescents discover varied forms of physical activity adapted to their motor skills, supporting their health and personal development in a safe, secure, accessible and inclusive environment.
42. Organise sports events and other kinds of physical activities, including outdoors and where possible in natural green environments, which engage children, adolescents, caretakers, school communities and professional athletes with the aim of promoting physical activity among children and adolescents, stimulating the development of civil society, sports volunteering and encouraging young people to join local sport clubs.
43. Consider engaging top athletes to use their positive image to promote sport and physical activity and the sport values among children and adolescents, through their participation in sports events, workshops, lectures, camps and information campaigns in the education context. Public presentations by such individuals, based on their personal stories and sharing their experience in combining sports activity with education, can inspire children to view them as role models.
44. Consider developing partnerships with schools, regional and local authorities and the private sector to strengthen sport and physical activity in the education context through information campaigns, sports events and support for inclusive, accessible, safe and secure sports infrastructure.
45. Facilitate adequate forms of training of sports volunteers by creating opportunities for children, adolescents and entire families to get involved in the development of sport and physical activity in a safe, secure, accessible and inclusive school environment, also by engaging in local sport clubs activities.
46. Intensify the exchange of good practices and sport and physical activity levels of children and adolescents by organising events and different activities and support the organisation of study visits to places where measures to increase the sporting activity of children and adolescents have been successfully carried out.

ANNEX

Political background

- EU Physical Activity Guidelines: Recommended Policy Actions in Support of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity, endorsed by EU Sport Ministers in November 2008.
- Council conclusions on the role of voluntary activities in sport in promoting active citizenship, OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, pp. 24–26.
- Council recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors, OJ C 354, 4.12.2013, pp. 1–5.
- Council conclusions on maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills, especially among young people, OJ C 172, 27.5.2015, pp. 8–12.
- Council conclusions on the promotion of motor skills, physical and sport activities for children, OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, pp. 46–51.
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport, OJ C 196, 8.6.2018, pp. 23–26.
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on safeguarding children in sport, OJ C 419, 12.12.2019, pp. 1–5.
- Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting cross-sectoral cooperation for the benefit of sport and physical activity in society, OJ C 419, 4.12.2020, pp. 18–22.
- Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States on 'Sport and physical activity, a promising lever to transform behaviour for sustainable development', OJ C 170, 25.4.2022, pp. 1–6.
- Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the key features of a European Sport Model, OJ C 501, 13.12.2021, pp. 1–7.
- Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on lifelong physical activity, OJ C 501 I, 13.12.2021, pp. 1–6.
- European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2021 on EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward (2021/2058(INI)), OJ C 224, 8.6.2022, pp. 2–10.
- Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 469, 9.12.2022, pp. 1–15.
- Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on fostering the lasting legacy of major sporting events, OJ C, C/2024/7401, 9.12.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/7401/oj>.