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YOUNG AND PHYSICALLY ACTIVE:

a blueprint
for making
physical activity
appealing to
youth



By: Paul Kelly, Anne Matthews and Charlie Foster,
Department of Public Health, University of Oxford,
United Kingdom

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This publication arises from the project "Networking for Physical Activity", which has received funding from the European Union in the framework of the EU Health Programme 2008-2013.

By: Paul Kelly, Anne Matthews and Charlie Foster,
Department of Public Health, University of Oxford,
United Kingdom

Abstract

Scientific evidence shows that physical inactivity is a leading risk factor for ill health, going well beyond issues related to weight control and influencing both physical and mental well-being. Over the past few years, the promotion of physical activity has increasingly been recognized in Europe as a priority for public health, and many countries have responded through the development of policies and interventions. To support Member States in their efforts, the WHO Regional Office for Europe has developed this blueprint for making physical activity appealing to young people. It is intended to be a resource for physical activity promoters, with a focus on supportive urban environments and settings where children and young people live, study and play. This report outlines the blueprint itself, its development and suggested next steps.

This publication arises from the Networking for Physical Activity project and has been co-funded by the Health Programme of the European Union.

Keywords

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Definitions

Blueprint	A plan for making physical activity youth-friendly, appealing and enjoyable
CEHAPE Network	Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe Network
HEPA Europe	European Network for the Promotion of Health-enhancing Physical Activity
Physical activity	Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires the expenditure of energy
Physical environment	The facilities, equipment and fabric of surroundings associated with taking part in physical activities
Social environment	The people, culture and attitudes associated with taking part in physical activities
Young people (youth)	All individuals aged 0–24 years
Youth-friendly	Appealing and enjoyable to an audience of young people

Foreword

With almost one million deaths per year attributable to physical inactivity,¹ this has become the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality in high-income countries and a major public health issue.

In line with the life-course approach advocated by the new European health policy, Health 2020, the promotion of physical activity in early life is of the greatest importance in the healthy development of children and young people.

The adoption of a physically active lifestyle early on, which could be maintained throughout the life-course, also contributes to the building and maintaining of physical and mental health in later life.

The WHO European Member States recognized this in the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health, adopted at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Parma in March 2010, when they committed themselves to providing environments that would enable young people to be more physically active.

The direct involvement of young people in the development of interventions targeting children and adolescents is critical in ensuring effective promotion of physical activity in this target group.

To support Member States in their efforts, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the European Union have developed this blueprint for making physical activity appealing to young people. Building on their long-standing involvement in the international environment and health process in Europe, and on their consultation and active engagement in the drafting of the blueprint, we hope that it will provide useful insights and ideas to implementers, with a focus on supportive urban environments and settings where children and young people live, study and play.

Dr Guénaél Rodier

Director of the Division of Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment,
WHO Regional Office for Europe

¹ *Global health risks: mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2009.

Introduction

This document is intended as a resource for the countless policy-makers and people working throughout Europe to promote physical activity and sport for young people. It has been developed as a form of plan, or road-map, for making physical activity youth-friendly, appealing and enjoyable. The areas discussed are suggested as points for consideration; it is not a comprehensive plan for a physical activity project or intervention and does not cover areas such as funding, implementation or evaluation.

Previous work (1) has shown that making a physical activity initiative or intervention youth-friendly is just one component of a successful project (Fig. 1). Across Europe, however, it has been identified as an area where more information is required. Physical activity promoters have reported that they need a better understanding of their target groups in order to design improved interventions and approaches.

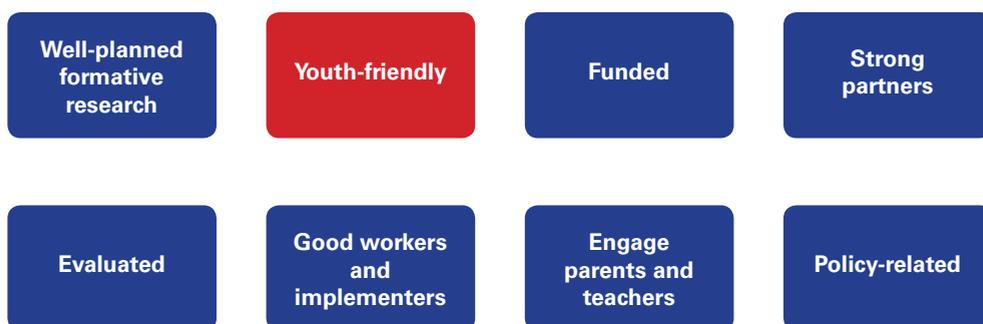


Fig. 1. Key components of the promotion of physical activity (1).

The document was developed on the basis of the perspectives and views of youth delegates from the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) Network. The primary opportunity for the expression of these views occurred on 10 March 2010 at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Parma, Italy, when youth delegates participated in a morning workshop involving both group and individual activities.

The blueprint is divided into three main categories: the physical environment, the social environment and the experience of physical activity. Social cognitive theory shows that there are many subtle interactions between the physical and social environments, and it is likely that these will determine the nature of individual and group experiences.

Each category is composed of specific points, ordered according to the importance placed on them by the youth delegates consulted in the development of this document. It is unlikely that the success of a project in being youth-friendly will hinge on just one of the points listed. The interactions of the different factors form a complicated system, but the more points that are addressed, the higher the appeal and enjoyment of a project or intervention are likely to be. Neither will all the points be relevant to all projects: some will apply to school settings, others to gender-specific approaches. It is up to individuals using the document to decide which approaches apply in specific situations.

Case studies from across the WHO European Region have been used to illustrate the points identified by the youth delegates (Fig. 2 and Annex 1). The map in Fig. 2 shows the geographical spread of these case studies across the Region.

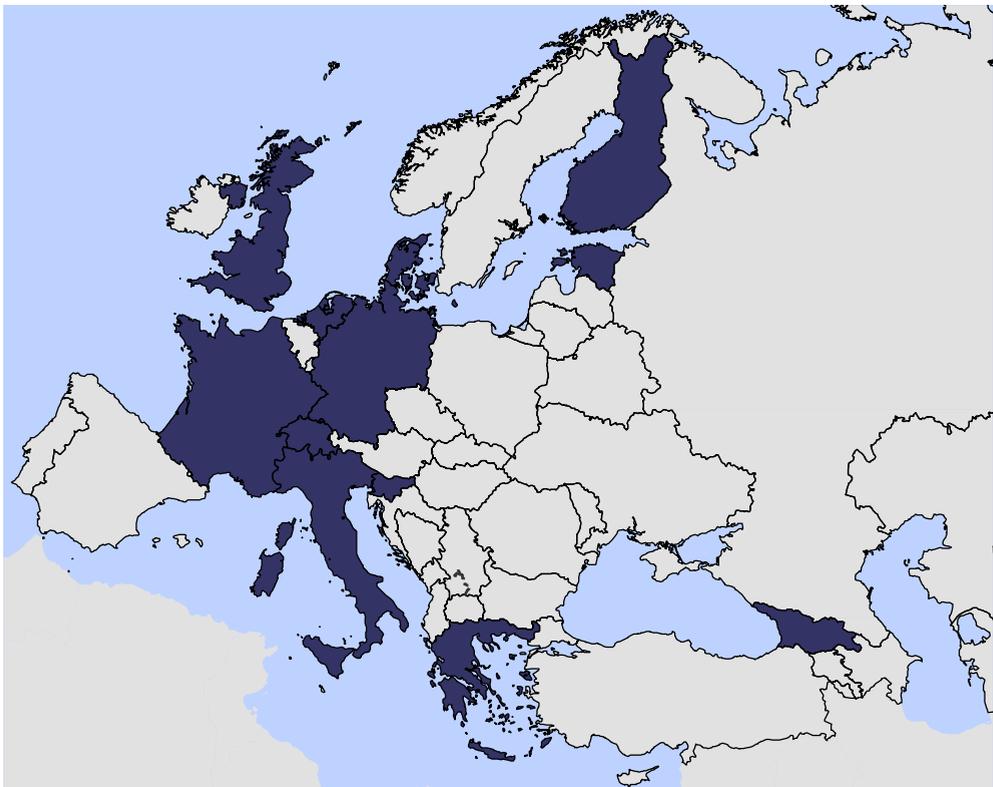


Fig. 2. Geographical location of the blueprint case studies

Background and rationale: why is the blueprint needed?

Physical activity plays a vital role in the health and well-being of children and young people. It contributes to their short- and long-term physical, social, emotional and psychological development; it promotes independence and healthy growth, and it helps to develop fundamental movement skills (2–4). A recent report into young people’s health found increasing evidence of an association between physical activity and enhanced academic and cognitive performance (5).

Despite the well-known benefits of an active lifestyle, epidemiological studies have identified an increasing prevalence of inactivity among children and adolescents. The latest report from WHO on the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study, with 11-, 13- and 15-year-old pupils in 35 countries of the WHO European Region as well as North America, demonstrated that more than two thirds of young people do not meet the current recommendation for physical activity of 60 minutes per day, 5 or more days a week (6). Physical activity levels fall significantly between the ages of 11 and 15 years.

Environmental, economic and social factors, as well as perceptions about safety, accessibility and weather conditions, are thought to affect the opportunities for children and adolescents to be physically active (7). Likewise, the influence of peers can encourage or discourage physical activity. Across Europe there are many interventions and approaches aimed at increasing physical activity by young people through supportive environments.

A common challenge identified by promoters of physical activity across Europe is how to engage young people in the activity or intervention on offer. The problem is described as a lack of understanding of young people and what they want (1) and the need for guidance on how to make physical activity youth-friendly. As a result, this project has been commissioned to create a blueprint for appealing and enjoyable physical activity. To make the guidance relevant it has been decided that the perspectives and input of young people, in the shape of youth delegates from the CEHAPE Network, should drive the project.

Relationship of this document to the behavioural epidemiological framework; promotion of physical activity

Before an intervention can be planned, the key variables correlated with the form of behaviour in focus need to be known. In this case, these factors are associated with appealing and enjoyable physical activity. The mediating variable framework

suggests that physical activity is not directly changed by an intervention but by a change in some personal, social or physical variable as a result of the intervention (8). If the factors that make physical activity appealing and enjoyable are understood, interventions and approaches can attempt to use this information to influence physical activity behaviour positively.

How to use the blueprint and the checklist

Projects and practitioners could consider this as a reference guide for their work. The more points they are able to address, the better the chance they have of making their projects youth-friendly. Apparent skewing in their projects as regards either the social or physical environment may indicate areas to focus on for change or improvement.

Considerations in making physical activity appealing to young people; case studies

This section explains the structure and main content of the blueprint. It is built around three main categories: the physical and social environments and the personal experience of physical activity (Fig. 3). Each category encompasses a number of individual points, or considerations.

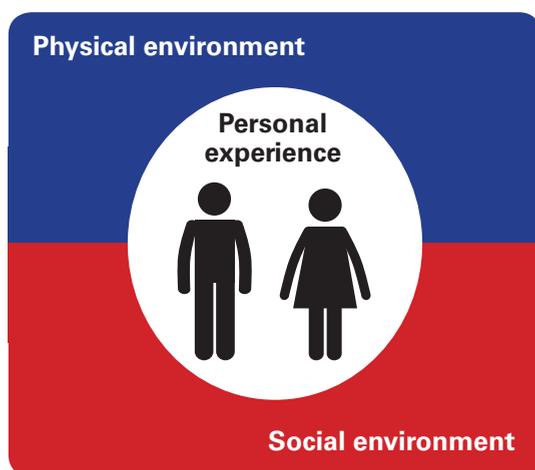


Fig. 3. Schematic representation of the factors that influence whether a physical activity is youth-friendly

The physical environment

Location: ease of access

Accessibility was considered the most important determining factor for making physical activity youth-friendly. It must be quick or easy to get to the activity and take part. A positive association between access to facilities and participation in physical activity by young people has been shown by Biddle et al. (7).

“Physical activities have to be easy to get to” (CEHAPE youth delegate) The effort required to take part in physical activity was also given as a reason why young people do not participate more – it is thought easier to stay indoors and watch television or use computers. Thus, making participation as easy as possible could make the activity more appealing. This might mean locating opportunities for physical activity in schools or close to homes, as many young people have limited transport options or may be subject to parental restrictions on where they can go. Research has associated increased distance from facilities with decreased participation in physical activity by children (9). To work within a school, the engagement of teachers is key (1).

Case study. Easy access to physical activity in schools (Finland)

To work within a school, the teacher is the key person. We would advise other projects to find out the needs of the teachers and try to find solutions that work. Involving teachers at the project design and development stage (including formative evaluation) was found to foster a positive attitude and lead to better end results. The Sports Adventure around the Globe project was initially tried in 3 schools, with 15 teachers, to test ideas. For example, they trialled different variations of their exercise card and feedback showed it was too complicated and needed refinement.

Cost

“Activities need to be affordable” (CEHAPE youth delegate) Cost can also be a determining factor. As soon as there is any fee for participation there is the risk of creating social selection bias. Foster, Cowburn & Allender (10) have indicated that parents of children aged under eight years regarded costs associated with organized sport as a potential barrier to participation.

Case study. Reducing cost (StreetGames, England)

Access to sport is a huge problem in disadvantaged communities. StreetGames projects take sport to the doorstep of young people, uti-

lizing empty urban spaces. Cost is regarded as key to success – sessions are provided at the “right price” – either free or at an affordable level per session (around £1). No participant is excluded for inability to pay. This is made possible by convincing partner organizations to subsidize the provision.





Outdoor activities

The youth delegates surveyed reported enjoying physical activity outdoors and when they were surrounded by nature. Biddle et al. (7) have found a positive association between the physical activity levels of children aged under 12 years and time spent outdoors.

Case study. Playing outside (trainer of physical education teachers, Slovenia)

Playing outside can be key to improving children's physical activity. Outdoor activities should be organized outside the regular school settings. The focus should be on activities that have the potential to become leisure habits. The emphasis should be on unorganized sporting activities and play, which are less easy to control but are accessible to everyone because they are affordable and adaptable.

The delegates did, however, report a dislike for being cold, wet and rained on. Across Europe participation in physical activity is likely to be climate-dependent; the weather in Scandinavia, for example, may more often be a barrier to physical activity than in the Mediterranean countries. The provision and use of appropriate clothing for climate and weather are a possible solution. Another important consideration is to offer indoor alternatives when the weather is bad.

Case study. Indoor activities (Wheels for All, England)

Our Wheels for All cycling project provides quality cycling activities that are both physically and mentally stimulating and, above all, fun for all involved. The commitment is to enhancing the provision for children and young people. When the nights draw in and the weather takes a turn for the worse, many sessions over the winter will take place indoors in sports halls and gyms.

It is likely that there are broadly different cultural attitudes in northern and southern countries towards adverse climatic conditions. In the Nordic countries, for example, outdoor leisure activities such as hiking, skiing and cycling are more prevalent, and in the Netherlands cycling is an everyday activity, in large part regardless of the weather. In southern countries, on the other hand, extremely high temperatures could be a barrier to activity. This is an important consideration for projects.

Avoiding air pollution

Poor air quality, pollution and busy streets all have negative effects on the appeal of physical activity. The risk of asthma attacks was cited as a big worry not only by young people but also by parents (11). This is clearly important in urban environments.

Emission levels have been shown to vary locally (12), so the identification of suitable areas and the use of city parks may be successful strategies.

Case study. Cycling to school to improve air quality (Vélobus, France)

In order to reduce air pollution and traffic jams in school surroundings and to improve children's physical condition, independence and traffic safety along school routes, cycling school "buses" or Vélobus were introduced in Nantes. A Vélobus is a small group of children who cycle along a known school route under the guidance of an adult. Like a real bus, fixed routes and stops are called at.

Recent evidence suggests that areas of high emissions should not be avoided at the expense of physical activity (13), and it is important to acknowledge the potential for social exclusion if areas of high pollution are avoided. Project organizers should consider it desirable but not mandatory to avoid or reduce exposure to high emission or pollution areas.

Walking and cycling

The delegates considered that walking and cycling for transport and leisure were important because of the environmental and social benefits and the reduction in traffic jams and congestion, particularly in busy urban areas. These factors have also been indicated by research (14). Delegates suggested that the appeal in these activities lies in the informal alternatives they offer to individuals who do not enjoy traditional organized sports.

Case study. Encouraging cycling (Cycling in Europe, Italy)

The Cycling in Europe: a Bridge across Europe project enables young Italian students to work with other young people in four European countries to encourage cycling. They work developing a web site providing information about a national cycle route, combining cycling and other web-based activities. Young people from the other countries visit regularly and everyone cycles together to look at the work undertaken by the Italian students.

Equipment and facilities

When equipment and facilities are of poor quality, the activity is less likely to be enjoyable. If, for example, young people are asked to cycle on bad roads or cycle networks, they will find the activity less appealing. Ferreira, van der Horst & Wendel-Vos (15) have identified the provision of facilities as a factor in the participation of young people in physical activity. Safety of equipment and facilities may be the primary concern.

***“I like it that activities such as cycling are good for you and the environment”
(CEHAPE Youth delegate)***



Case study. Safety (trainer of physical education teachers, Slovenia)

Facilities and equipment do not have to be shiny and have the latest gadgets ... the only necessary demand should be that they are safe.

Case study. Facilities for sports (Union of Physical Education Teachers in France, France)

To teach appealing and enjoyable physical and sports education we need good and modern facilities. We are working hard to obtain the construction of sports equipment in or very close to all schools, which allow for our many different activities. They must have modern changing rooms and showers.

“Physical activity is not enjoyable if there is a lack of proper changing or shower facilities” (CEHAPE youth delegate)

Delegates focused on the importance of showers and changing facilities. This was particularly significant for girls, with a suggestion that they might choose to avoid lunchtime activities at school if they could not shower before afternoon classes. While Foster, Cowburn & Allender (10) demonstrated that negative experiences at school of showering or changing created barriers to participation by adolescent girls, the case studies quoted here suggested that wider

fears may also be a factor. The provision and use of such facilities may be country- and context-specific issues.



Case study. Showers are not appropriate in all contexts (trainer of physical education teachers, Slovenia)

Showers in the school are out of the question due to the parents' fear of sexual harassment.

Sports clubs

Sports clubs were identified as potentially appealing locations for physical activity. They provide focal points for such activities and can act as good meeting points. They will often have the required facilities and be able to provide for the needs described above. MacPhail, Kirk & Eley (16) assert that increased sports club provision would facilitate the involvement of young people in physical activity. The social importance of sports clubs varies across Europe (1), so this may be a culturally specific point.

Case study. Youth and Sport (Switzerland)

In the centre of all the efforts of Youth and Sport are children and adolescents. Youth and Sport is based on regularity, quality and sustainability, and therefore supports the main sports clubs with 54 million francs per year. Every year around 10 000 sports clubs lead to 50 000 Youth and Sport courses which support about 550 000 children and adolescents aged between 10 and 20 years. Since 2008, the Youth and Sport programme has benefited younger children (aged 5–10 years) with age-appropriate, attractive exercise and sports lessons. Age-based, attractive sport contributes to the development of children and young people and creates incentives to engage in lifelong physical activity.

The social environment

The activity culture

The activity culture was identified by the delegates as the most important factor in the social environment. Aspects such as cooperation, integration, positive attitudes, team spirit and communication were all specified as aiding in the enjoyment of physical activities and leading to a positive experience. These views are echoed by research from sports psychology; Bredemeier & Shields (17) discuss game reasoning theory, which illustrates how negative sporting and physical activity cultures may lead to cheating and overly aggressive behaviour, while an appropriate teaching and coaching culture and positive values can promote positive character development.

Case study. Combining sport and cultural development (Union of Physical Education Teachers in France, France)

Sport can have many negative sides but we have found that if we try to keep sport out of the school and the classroom, it comes in anyway. Therefore, we choose to teach sport and artistic (e.g. dance) activities didactically, with a view to combining them with the specific cultural aims of the school. Of course, not all children enjoy or like sport, but as good teachers we should be able to make the activity interesting for all pupils, genders and abilities (as we would with all subjects). It's a question of culture, health and balanced education, not training high level sportsmen and -women.

Case study. Using physical activity to develop personal skills (Circus Studio Folie, Estonia)

By promoting circus skills aimed at performance, Circus Studio Folie works in a friendly environment to develop the enthusiasm of young people for physical activity. Personal character development is enhanced through teamwork, responsibility and creativity as volunteers work to improve the physical skills of young people from all social backgrounds.

Healthy competition

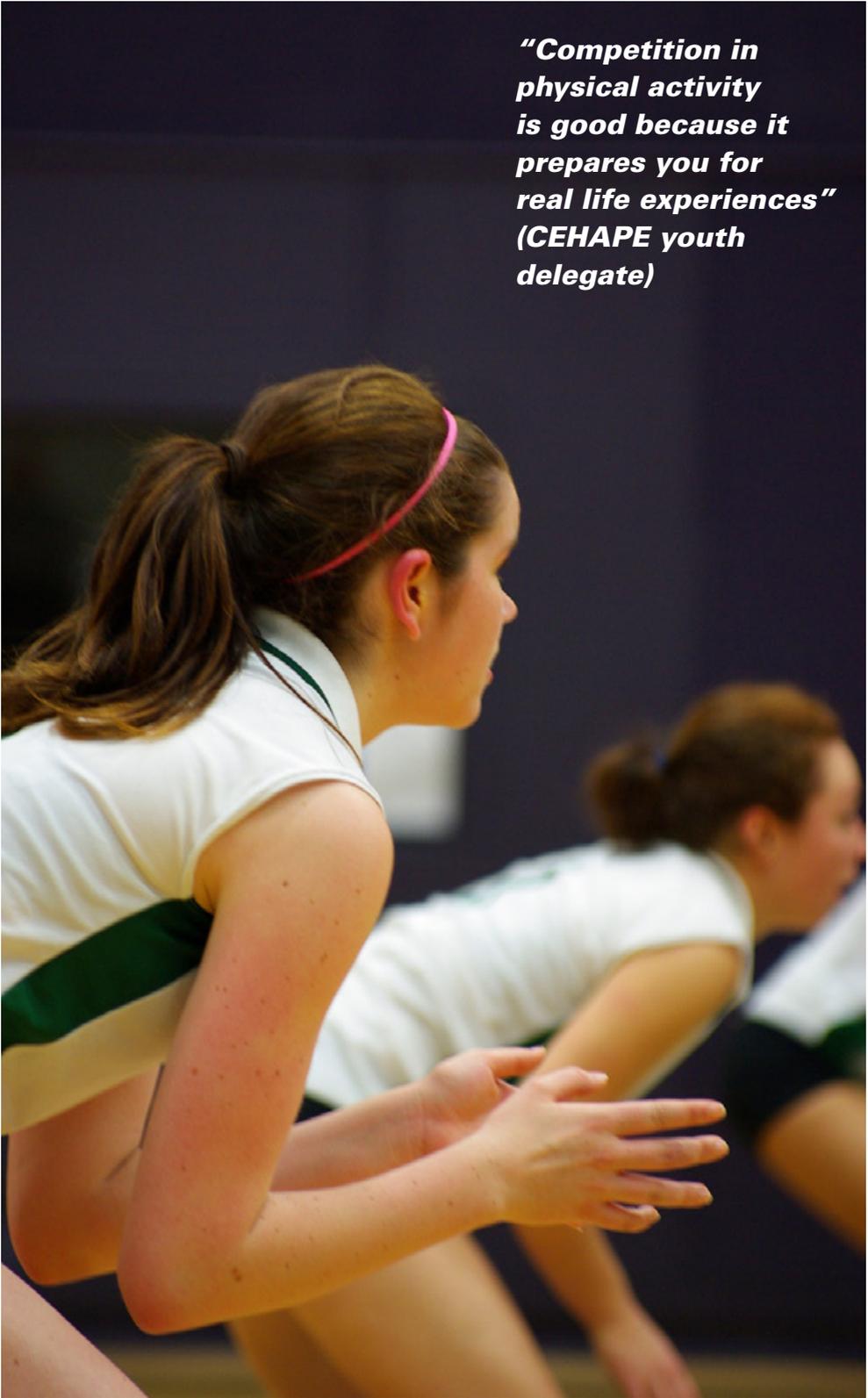
For many young people the competitive side of sport and physical activity is the very thing that makes them fun and enjoyable.

However, the delegates argued that, for many others, particularly those without sporting or athletic backgrounds, this competition discourages participation. Being made to feel like a loser was stated as a real concern for those who could not attain high athletic levels.

Case study. Tailoring to personal ability (Healthy Children in Sound Communities, Germany)

The Healthy Children in Sound Communities project plan included evaluation tests of body mass index and a complex physical fitness test which measures age-related basic motor development such as coordination and strength. Reports are given to parents, schoolteachers and to individual children in order to evaluate their physical development in a "healthy developmental zone." Pupils are supported in specially tailored courses (e.g. more support for coordination or aerobic endurance) according to their physical fitness and health development.

***“Competition in physical activity is good because it prepares you for real life experiences”
(CEHAPE youth delegate)***



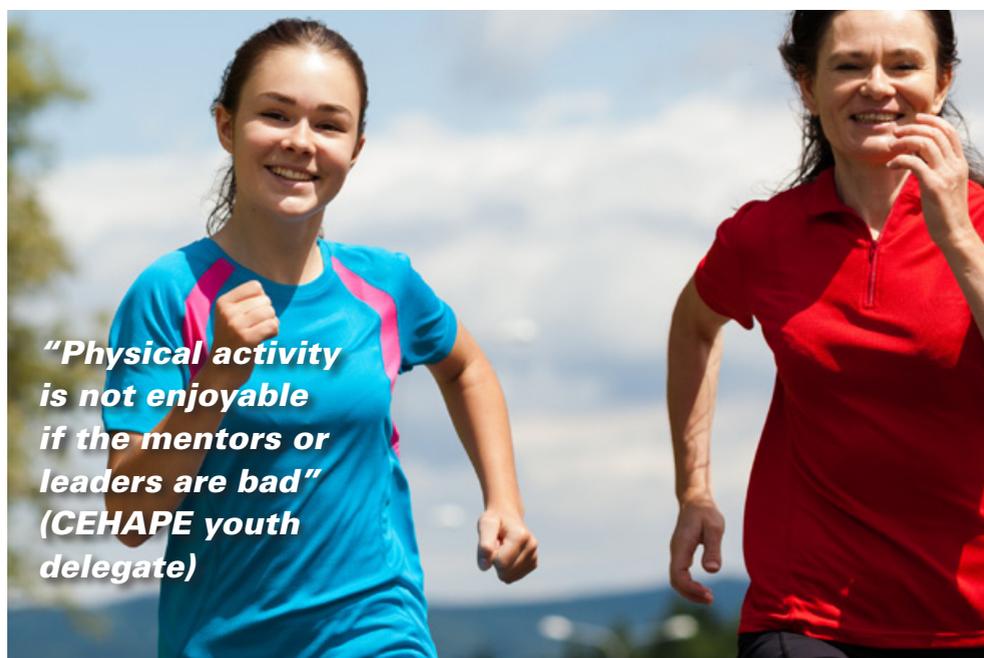
Coakley (18) emphasizes the importance of maintaining goal rather than outcome orientation in continuing to engage young people in physical activity. It should be about fun and participation through skill-based activities, so that success and improvement are rewarded, not just the achievement of first place.

“Cooperation is good because it lifts team spirit and is motivating” (CEHAPE youth delegate)

“Physical activity shouldn’t make you feel like a loser” (CEHAPE youth delegate)

Case study. Individual attainment (Cretan Health and Nutrition Education programme, Greece)

Sport and physical activity programmes can often focus mainly on the attainment of motor skills and reward the more adept and skilled performance. Within the Cretan Health and Nutrition Education programme, we aimed to promote and encourage participation by all pupils in the intervention group and not just the few gifted ones. A distinct feature of the physical education intervention component of the programme was that it did not foster competition among the children. The reinforcement of any progress, however small or seemingly insignificant, by the physical education instructors participating in the programme increased the sense of competence and self-mastery in the children.



“Physical activity is not enjoyable if the mentors or leaders are bad” (CEHAPE youth delegate)

Mentors

Delegates cited the quality of mentors, coaches and instructors as key to the enjoyment of physical activity. This is hardly surprising as they are clearly vital to setting the culture and healthy competition described above. Davies, Foster & Kaur (19) describe how teachers acted as role models for secondary school students in achieving exceptionally high levels of cycling to school. Hellison, Martinek & Cutforth (20) describe the effective use of one-to-one mentors in promoting health and well-being among inner-city boys through basketball. Projects may, therefore, benefit from supporting mentors and implementers in creating a youth-friendly environment.

Case study. Supporting mentors and implementers (Healthy Children in Sound Communities, Germany)

Within the Healthy Children in Sound Communities, external experts from the public health sector are employed on part-time contracts for measurement, evaluation and further education programmes supporting and assisting schoolteachers and sport club coaches. They also work in an advisory and guidance role to improve the quality of programme mentors.

A lack of leadership and organization or mentors who were considered boring were things that the delegates said would put them off physical activity.

Case study. Helping to train teachers (trainer of physical education teachers, Slovenia)

From our experiences we would advise projects to run educational programmes for teachers and other workers who are going to take part in the running of physical activity programmes. The key elements in these educational programmes should be planning of activities, group management and motivation strategies.

Case study. Drawing on available mentoring resources (teacher and gymnastics trainer, Italy)

When teaching physical education (football, walking, swimming, etc.) in schools, other colleagues and teachers were included. When coaching gymnastics in sports clubs, parents were brought in and involved in the activities. This was to enhance the quality of the mentoring and the experience of taking part.

Socializing

The opportunity to meet new people, make friends and develop social skills is an important part of the appeal of physical activities. While it was recognized that this was a non-health benefit from physical activity, it was ranked high in terms of appeal

and enjoyment. “Opportunities for spending time with friends” has previously been cited as a key motivator for encouraging the participation of young people in sport and other informal physical activities (10,21).

More young people could well be attracted by this associated benefit and enabled to form social networks and relationships that will support the activity.

***“I like the teamwork and social side of physical activity”
(CEHAPE youth delegate)***

“It is best when physical activities focus on social inclusion” CEHAPE youth delegate)

Case study. Socializing (trainer of physical education teachers, Slovenia)

Two projects were used to increase social opportunities and develop social skills. Project Human was aimed at former drug users in rehabilitation and used sports such as football, basketball, hiking and running as a way of developing social competencies. Job and Sports was targeted at young people institutionalized in correctional facilities, and used in-line hockey, ski mountaineering and football to develop and progress social skills necessary for functioning in the job market. Both projects were considered to have been successful as participants reported later taking up these activities as leisure pursuits for socializing purposes.

Health awareness

Combining physical activity with lifestyle and diet advice was viewed positively. The delegates thought that young people are increasingly aware of problems such as obesity and cardiovascular diseases and that they would be attracted by the health benefits. These benefits could well give young people a reason, justification or motivation to undertake physical activity in place of some sedentary or other unhealthy form of behaviour.

“Sport is good for your mind and body” (CEHAPE youth delegate)

Health benefits have already been shown to be an attraction to sport for adolescent girls (10).

***“Physical activity is good as part of an overall healthy lifestyle ... I like it when combined with anti-smoking and healthy eating messages”
(CEHAPE youth delegate)***



Case study. Promoting a healthy lifestyle (Coolfit, the Netherlands)

The Coolfit programme is designed to raise awareness of physical activity within the context of a healthy lifestyle. The emphasis is on short, interactive activities, designed to appeal to the student lifestyle and way of learning.

Case study. Benefits of health and nutrition education (Cretan Health and Nutrition Education programme, Greece)

Inclusion of health and nutrition as part of the school curriculum in the Cretan Health and Nutrition Education programme led to an increase in health knowledge among both the children and their parents. This was accompanied by significant changes in biochemical (blood lipids levels) and anthropometric indices (body mass index, sum of skinfold thicknesses, etc.).

Choice

The ability to choose favourite activities can give a sense of freedom and make physical activity more appealing, while a lack of choice or new opportunities can be viewed negatively. Foster, Cowburn & Allender (10) have shown that adolescent girls would do more sport if there was a wider choice of activities on offer.

“It’s good to have freedom and a variety of choices” (CEHAPE youth delegate)

Case study. Increasing participation by offering choice (trainer of physical education teachers, Slovenia)

In the last three years of primary school, children have the possibility to choose elective courses either of sport or dance. The elective course sport consists of three modules: sport for fun, sport for relaxation and selected sport. In the selection of contents of these three modules the schools and teachers are very independent. They can offer children trendy sports, which are otherwise not present in the official curriculum, and children who are interested in more serious training in certain sports are given the opportunity to do that. Every child is allowed to select one module of elective subject sport per year (three modules in three years) and over 75% of children select this elective course.

Case study. Introducing popular choices (sports classes, Georgia)

It was recognized that traditional physical culture lessons in Georgian basic and secondary schools were not engaging the interest of young people. In response they are being replaced by lessons with a sports

focus, namely popular sports such as basketball, football, volleyball and khridol (a Georgian martial art), as a way to connect with young people's culture and promote interest. Schools can select a sport to offer, depending on teacher and student choice.

It could be that increased choice and opportunities must first be requested by children or parents. They can be stimulated to make these requests through education about the health and social benefits. A forum where parents and children can learn about these benefits and express interest in the choices and opportunities available will be critical.

Case study. Developing a market for increased physical activity (Union of Physical Education Teachers in France, France)

Teaching of physical education uses a combination of physical, sports and artistic activities as an aim and method of education. In secondary school, pupils are given the choice of more physical and sports education. To be able to enhance and progress opportunities for physical education in schools it has to be requested and asked for by the parents and pupils themselves. Whenever there are surveys or questionnaires about favourite activities and things they want more of, it is important that the answer is physical education. This is achieved by convincing parents and pupils that physical education at school is good for them.

Young people are unlikely to enjoy a specific activity when they feel that participation is compulsory. This may be particularly important in school settings where physical education lessons are not optional, as shown by Brooks & Magnusson (22), who observed more engagement at school when a greater choice of activities was introduced. For example, offering alternative activities more suited to less active or physically able individuals might be beneficial, and the offer of gender-specific activities (such as dance for girls) might increase engagement. Biddle, Atkin & Foster (23) suggested that interventions targeting girls only, rather than boys and girls together, might be an effective strategy for increasing participation in physical activity.

National activities and famous personalities

The delegates said that activities and sports specific to the culture, and thus popularity, in different countries can make them more appealing, for example, the use of Nordic sports in some northern European countries.

The engagement of famous people and athletes to champion these activities is also likely to have a positive effect on young people's interest in taking part. Although there



is limited evidence that sports programmes using sporting celebrities as champions increase participation by young people, there is evidence that their effectiveness is likely to be increased by encompassing other significant role models, such as parents and teachers (24).

Case study. Incorporating sports celebrities (Scoring for Health, the Netherlands)

Scoring for Health is a project in which Premier League footballers encourage primary school children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They act as mentors by setting an example for exercise and healthy eating. The project starts with the signing of a contract for Healthy Living. The class (the teacher and all students) sign a contract with one of the players and promise to maintain a healthy lifestyle for 20 weeks.

Personal experience of participation

Independence and self-confidence

Feelings of independence and freedom, a sense of achievement and learning to deal with adversity were all aspects of physical activity identified as appealing by the delegates. The association between physical activity and self-confidence, particularly for adolescent girls, has also been identified in research (7). The idea that self-confidence can be improved as a result of physical activity could be used in promoting it.

Case study. Developing confidence through attainment of skills (Dance for Health, England)

The project Dance for Health sought to build self-confidence and self-esteem through the enjoyment of dance and the successful acquisition of specific skills. The development of coordination, agility and balance was strongly promoted and encouraged.

Relaxation

The relaxation that can come from physical activity is a positive experience. The delegates felt that physical activity can be good for the mind, especially in the feelings of satisfaction and relaxation generated by making a physical effort. Indeed, Brooks & Magnusson (22) showed that adolescent girls more readily engage in physical activity if they perceive relaxation as an outcome. Such positive aspects of physical activity could be encouraged by selecting appropriate activities and giving individuals the opportunity to explore them.

***“Physical activity is a good way to escape and think about other things ... it’s good to take time out”
(CEHAPE youth delegate)***

Case study. Activities in a relaxing environment (Sport in the Holidays, Denmark)

Run by Denmark’s national sporting association, Sport in the Holidays promotes activities to young people during their school holidays, a traditional time for relaxation. The programme combines sport and camping, where young people can try new activities such as kayaking, orienteering and BMX riding, as well as handball and football, in a relaxing environment away from home and school.

Avoidance of too much activity and the possibility of injuries

The delegates were concerned that too much physical activity can damage the body and potentially lead to injury. In addition to this, a previous study has suggested that high volumes of activity and training can turn young people away from sport and physical activity, as they wish to have balance in other aspects of their life (1). Young people should not be pressured to do too much, or to greatly exceed their current ability or capacity, or they will risk being discouraged from activity.

Fun – endorphins, adrenaline, enjoyment

Finally, for young people physical activity could and should be fun. Biddle et al. (7) showed that enjoyment of physical activity is vital to maintaining the engagement of adolescent girls. Getting a rush of adrenaline, feeling the release of endorphins, feeling healthy and simple enjoyment are all sensations from physical activity that should be encouraged and used to appeal to young people. In addition, organizers should try not to take it too seriously, as for the vast majority of young people sport and physical activity should be about having fun rather than performance or elite competition.

“It’s good to combine sport and fun” (CEHAPE youth delegate)

Case study. Emphasizing fun (Coolfit, the Netherlands)

The Coolfit programme emphasizes fun rather than health, which children (especially boys) do not see as important. The focus is on getting over the message that physical activity is “cool.” The volunteer teachers are all young people, and activities are fast-paced and related to students’ lives using, for example, hip hop, street dance and Zumba to raise awareness.



Case study. Fun through self-mastery (Cretan Health and Nutrition Education programme, Greece)

The Cretan Health and Nutrition Education programme showed that the degree of children's participation in physical activities is very much related to the fun and enjoyment children get from their participation in the activity. The ultimate goal of the intervention was not to enforce fitness upon children, but to teach them to love exercise and enjoy it enough to want to keep doing it. The enjoyment children get from their participation in physical activity depends to a large extent on their perception of ability or self-mastery. Children who perceive that they have a low ability and feel unable to cope with the demands of the activity are more likely to drop out.

In particular, the delegates described ways that physical activity could be made more fun, for example, organizing specific events or gatherings and parties.

Case study. Fun events (Coolfit, the Netherlands)

At Coolfit, students attend an event day, where a range of fun activities is organized for school groups, such as food demonstrations, dance workshops, fitness assessments, nutrition information. All the activities are delivered by young volunteers not too different in age from the target audience.

Development of the blueprint

The blueprint was constructed using data from three different sources:

- input from CEHAPE youth delegates
- current literature on the promotion of physical activity in Europe
- case studies of existing promotion of physical activity in Europe.

Input from CEHAPE youth delegates

Stage 1. The workshop



The construction of the blueprint began with the collection of perspectives and input from the 50 CEHAPE youth delegates. This was done in a morning workshop session at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Parma on 10 March 2010.

The aim of the workshop was to gather perspectives and input from the CEHAPE youth representatives on:

- what makes physical activity a positive or negative experience
- what makes a physical activity project appealing or not
- which aspects are important for future work.

In preparation for the workshop, a supporting document was circulated to all youth delegates in advance. This set out the aims of the work package, provided five case studies to illustrate youth-friendly physical activity projects and, as a prompt for the workshop, invited the delegates to make notes of their own thoughts and experiences.

The workshop provided a brief introduction and explanation of the methodology for developing the blueprint, and an overview of existing literature on young people's physical activity and the environment. It was run in three sessions, which six youth delegates volunteered to facilitate.

In session 1, delegates were invited to mix together and talk to as many people as they could about their own positive and negative experiences of physical activity, recording information on sheets provided. A short feedback session followed.

In session 2, in groups, delegates were provided with flipchart paper to record what they liked and disliked about physical activity projects or programmes. The feedback session to all delegates provided the opportunity for each group to contribute one like and one dislike.

In session 3, in groups, delegates were invited to rank the likes and dislikes noted from Session 2 on a scale of one to five, in order to demonstrate which were thought to be the most important. Delegates then selected a key like and dislike and gave reasons for their choices on flipchart paper. Then still in groups, delegates were asked to consider specific case study projects, and were invited to highlight essential youth-friendly aspects. Finally the flipchart work was displayed around the room. Delegates were invited to spend time considering the work of other groups. A final discussion reviewed the outputs from the workshop, and encompassed aspects delegates found surprising or thought-provoking.

Stage 2. Thematic analysis

All resources from the three workshop sessions were collected and a standard thematic analysis was conducted independently by two researchers, with the aim of identifying important categories for searching the research literature and for case study follow-up.

The results from the analysis were circulated to the youth delegates, so that the document could be reviewed. Comments and feedback were requested and used to formulate the final categories. Three categories, encompassing eighteen individual points, were identified:

- *the physical environment*

1. location
2. costs
3. outdoor activities
4. air pollution
5. walking and cycling
6. equipment and facilities
7. sports clubs

- *the social environment*

8. activity culture
9. healthy competition
10. mentors
11. socializing
12. health awareness
13. choice
14. national activities and famous personalities

- *the experience of participation*

15. independence and self-confidence
16. relaxation
17. avoidance of too much activity and the possibility of injuries
18. fun.

Stage 3. Verifying the blueprint

After the development of the draft blueprint, the youth delegates were asked to complete an online feedback questionnaire. The purpose of this was to verify whether or not the blueprint accurately reflected the views gathered in Parma, and to make changes to it in the light of any particular comments.

Current literature on the promotion of physical activity in Europe

It was important to establish whether the opinions of the youth delegates about ways to engage young people in physical activity could be verified and supported by existing research. Evidence from published scientific literature and government documentation, using reviews where possible, was sought and included under each guidance point.

Case studies of promotion of physical activity in Europe

The aim of the case study investigation was to identify real life examples of good practice that illustrated the points from the data analysis. Case studies were identified from existing literature, physical activity networks in Europe and professional contacts. Seventeen case studies from twelve countries were selected. The selection criteria were inclusive, so as to get a wide range of experience of the promotion of physical activity and as wide a geographical representation as possible.

The case studies were investigated with respect to the areas identified by the delegates by e-mail questionnaires and correspondence or telephone conversations, depending on the preferences of the interviewees. Brief summaries of the 17 case studies can be found in Annex 1.

After a last round of consultation and feedback from the expert group and youth delegates, the final draft blueprint was created. This was then shared for feedback with selected European experts from the European Network for the Promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA Europe) working group on exchange of experiences in physical activity and sports promotion in children as well as WHO staff, and finalized based on the comments received.



The blueprint – checklist

Use this blueprint checklist to ensure that your physical activity project engages young people. Aspects are listed in order of importance for each section, as prioritized by the CEHAPE youth delegates.

The physical environment

- 1. Location – ensure ease of access
- 2. Costs – keep these low
- 3. Outdoor activities – include if possible
- 4. Air pollution – avoid polluted locations
- 5. Walking and cycling – include if possible
- 6. Equipment and facilities – ensure high quality
- 7. Sports clubs – use if possible

The social environment

- 8. Activity culture – promote positive attitudes
- 9. Healthy competition – focus on personal achievement
- 10. Mentors – include if possible
- 11. Socializing – provide opportunities to develop friendships
- 12. Health awareness – emphasize the benefits

13. Choice – include opportunities

14. National activities and famous personalities – include if possible

The experience of participation

15. Independence and self-confidence – aim to develop

16. Relaxation – include as an outcome of your activity

17. Avoid too much activity and the possibility of injuries

18. Fun – make sure your activity is enjoyable

Strengths and limitations

The method applied and the resulting blueprint have some strengths and limitations. The youth delegates were not a random sample, but a pre-selected group with an interest in the topic. They came, however, from a wide geographical spread of countries, which is likely to make the results more representative. Furthermore, to be delegates, they had to have direct involvement or interest in physical activity in their own country, so their views can be considered as based on experience and learning.

In addition, the scope of the project did not allow for additional extensive consultation with young people beyond the workshop and online survey. In this regard, it is important to note again that the blueprint aimed at identifying the critical factors in making physical activity appealing to young people from their own perspective. It is, therefore, primarily based on the input provided by the youth delegate, as well as additional factors based on evidence from published literature, which are known to influence young people's participation in physical activity but which were not mentioned by the youth delegates (25–27). These include, for example, doping or substance abuse in sports and perception of body image. Doping or substance abuse could be an additional factor from the negative side of competitive sport under point 9: healthy competition in the social environment category. Perception of body image that could be improved through physical activity, or could be a barrier to those who did not want to wear certain sports clothing, may have been a subset of point 12: health awareness, in the same category. The existing literature highlights these as important aspects alongside other factors, such as previous participation in sports and parental influence.

The selection of case studies was limited to the availability of case study documentation being available in English. It is expected that a multi-language approach would reveal more case study examples.

Future research

The blueprint indicates the need for continued research in this area. Now that the action points that are important to the youth delegates have been identified, it could be of value to undertake the following activities:

- testing the action points with a larger, representative selection of young people from across Europe, to confirm the areas already identified, decide on new important areas and allow for the relative importance of each point to be accurately assessed;
- turning each point into specific steps that can be taken by projects by, for example, consultations with people working with existing projects with experience in the relevant areas, or through a workshop with an expert panel of project implementers and workers from across Europe, so as to create a strategic plan with greater practical value for practitioners.



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Annex 1. Case studies

Case Study	Sports Adventure around the Globe
Country	Finland
Target age group	6 –12 years
Type	School-based physical activity intervention
Approach	Annual three-week campaign. Pupils use activity cards to record the amount of exercise undertaken. Performances per class are collected every day and used to travel on the virtual adventure around the world. Between 170 000 and 180 000 pupils and 10 000 teachers take part each year.
Blueprint aspect	1. Physical environment: ease of access
Further information	http://www.nuorisuomi.fi/liikuntaseikkailu

Case Study	StreetGames
Country	England
Target age group	5–18 years
Type	Sports event and tournaments
Approach	Bring sport to where young people live. StreetGames is a network of organizations that delivers sporting opportunities to young people in disadvantaged communities in England and Wales, using doorstep sport. StreetGames projects, which receive accreditation, provide stronger and safer communities, encourage social action and volunteering and improve health and wellbeing.
Blueprint aspect	2. Physical environment: cost
Further information	http://www.streetgames.org

Case study	Trainer of physical education teachers, Faculty of Sport, University of Ljubljana
Country	Slovenia
Target age group	6–18 years
Type	Physical education
Approach	Organization of activities that could potentially become leisure-time habits
Blueprint aspect	3. Physical environment: outdoor activities 6. Physical environment: equipment and facilities 10. Social environment: mentors 11. Social environment: socializing 13. Social environment: choice
Further information	http://www.fsp.uni-lj.si/measurements/sports_diagnostic_centre/laboratory_for_physical_and_motor_development_diagnosis/

Case study	Wheels for All
Country	England
Target age group	5–18 years
Type	Cycling activities for young disabled people
Approach	Aimed at individuals, groups and families who are unable to ride a two-wheeled cycle due to a physical and/or learning difficulty, in a safe, traffic-free environment. Through the use of adapted cycles, cycling projects hope to make cycling accessible to all.
Blueprint aspect	3. Physical environment: outdoor activities
Further information	http://www.cycling.org.uk/liverpool-wheels-all

Case study	Vélobus – cycling to school to improve air quality
Country	France
Target age group	6–11 years
Type	Cycling
Approach	A cycling school “bus” which encourages children to cycle to school rather than travel by car, reducing CO2 emissions in Nantes.
Blueprint aspect	4. Physical environment: avoiding air pollution
Further information	http://www.nantesmetropole.fr/pratique/deplacements/a-pied-31509.kjsp?RH=TRANSPORT&RF=A_PIEDS

Case study	Cycling in Europe: a Bridge across Europe
Country	Italy
Target age group	14–19 years
Type	Cycling intervention
Approach	Project engaging Italian school students in developing a cycle path website. Develops visits by Spanish and German students.
Blueprint aspect	5. Physical environment: walking and cycling
Further information	http://www.marconigorgonzola.it (then follow the link under Projects and Courses/Cycling Routes: bridge across Europe)

Case study	Union of Physical Education Teachers in France
Country	France
Target age group	6–18 years
Type	Physical education
Approach	Enhancing physical education at all levels of the French school system
Blueprint aspect	8. Social environment: activity culture 13. Social environment: choice
Further information	http://www.snepfsu.net/

Case study	Youth and Sport
Country	Switzerland
Target age group	5–20 years
Type	Physical activity in sports clubs
Approach	Instructors in sports clubs lead courses and training sessions for children and adolescents in their chosen disciplines, and teachers lead general weekly sports lessons. There are training sessions for new instructors and continuing training for all instructors, including counselling and support, with financial remuneration for lessons held. Some 550 000 children participate in the programme and 12 000 instructors are trained each year.
Blueprint aspect	7. Physical environment: sports clubs
Further information	http://www.jugendundsport.ch/

Case study	Circus Studio Folie
Country	Estonia
Target age group	6–22 years
Type	Promotion of physical activity – circus skills
Approach	The idea is to give children a chance to do their hobby in a pleasant and friendly atmosphere, developing physical and performance skills at the same time. Objectives include: to encourage responsibility through group work; to develop personality with individual work; to give training in performing skills with public performances; to guarantee a healthy attitude with a sporting lifestyle; and to allow for creativity with artistic freedom.
Blueprint aspect	8. Social environment: activity culture
Further information	http://www.tsirkus.ee/folie/

Case study	Cretan Health and Nutrition Education programme
Country	Greece
Target age group	Primary schoolchildren
Type	A school-based intervention aimed at improving children’s diet, fitness and physical activity
Approach	The Cretan Health and Nutrition Education programme was a six-year intervention programme conducted with primary schoolchildren on the island of Crete, which managed to significantly increase children’s physical activity and fitness levels.
Blueprint aspect	9. Social environment: healthy competition 18. Experience of participation: fun
Further information	http://cbpp-pcpe.phac-aspc.gc.ca/intervention_pdf/en/300.pdf

Case study	Healthy Children in Sound Communities
Country	Germany
Target age group	School-aged children
Type	A programme to promote and implement more opportunities for local children to engage in an active lifestyle
Approach	Public authorities (school boards and health boards of the municipalities involved) and partners from civil society (local sport clubs and organizations, health centres, etc.) build local, community-based, multi-actor networks for a commonly agreed health-enhanced physical education/activity programme for local children. They will promote and implement more opportunities for all to engage in an active lifestyle as a means to counteract physical inactivity and overweight/obesity.
Blueprint aspect	9. Social environment: healthy competition 10. Social environment: mentors
Further information	http://www.hcsc.eu/

Case study	Teacher and gymnastics trainer
Country	Italy
Target age group	6–20 years
Type	Physical activity
Approach	Coaching and education of young people
Blueprint aspect	10. Social environment: mentors
Further information	–

Case study	Coolfit
Country	The Netherlands
Target age group	12–14 years
Type	Awareness project
Approach	Project working to raise awareness of physical activity and healthy eating in a fun way, using young volunteers during school time.
Blueprint aspect	12. Social environment: health awareness 18. Experience of participation: fun
Further information	http://www.coolfitopschool.nl/home

Case study	Sports classes
Country	Georgia
Target age group	5–18 years
Type	Sports lessons at public schools
Approach	Physical culture classes will be replaced by sports lessons at public schools. Forty-eight pilot schools have been selected to launch the piloting process and development among schoolchildren at basic and secondary levels. Competition will start between the pilot schools at several levels in football, basketball and volleyball.
Blueprint aspect	13. Social environment: choice
Further information	http://www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=777&lang=eng

Case study	Scoring for Health
Country	The Netherlands
Target age group	9–12 years
Type	Healthy lifestyle promotion
Approach	Using Premier League footballers as role models for adopting a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity
Blueprint aspect	14. Social environment: national activities and famous personalities
Further information	http://www.nji.nl/smartsite.dws?id=37990&recordnr=629&adlibtitel=Scoren%20voor%20Gezondheid&setembed=

Case study	Dance for Health
Country	England
Target age group	3–11 years
Type	Dance
Approach	Promoting physical activity through dance to disadvantaged communities
Blueprint aspect	15. Experience of participation: independence and self-confidence
Further information	http://www.loopdancecompany.co.uk

Case study	Sport in the Holidays
Country	Denmark
Target age group	5–20 years
Type	Sports and outdoor activities
Approach	A programme which combines camping and trying out new sports
Blueprint aspect	18. Experience of participation: relaxation
Further information	http://www.dgi.dk/Udover/idraet_i_ferien/kalender/nyheder/Hvad_er_idr%C3%A6t_i_ferien_[a21123].aspx

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The WHO Regional Office for Europe

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World Health Organization
Regional Office for Europe
Scherfigsvej 8, DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark
Tel.: +45 39 17 17 17 Fax: +45 39 17 18 18.
E-mail: contact@euro.who.int
Web site: www.euro.who.int