



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



EXCHANGE REPORT



CHILD-FRIENDLY APPROACH -
Insights from the exchanges among
the SWUP project community

WHAT IS THE REPORT ABOUT?

This report is a synthesis of the issues regarding child-friendly approach that have been exchanged in the framework of SWUP project. SWUP (Sport for Women in Urban Places)¹ is a project funded by the Erasmus+ fund of the European Union to enhance women participation in outdoor physical activities. The project's activities are meant to shade light on why and how to design women friendly urban environments for outdoor physical activity.

Other five topics, besides the one addressed in this report, have been identified and discussed by the project's partners: the role of municipality, the role of women in executive sport positions, the desirability of only-for-women activities and infrastructures, local impact generated by outdoor sport activities, activities and infrastructures for disable women.

Information was collected through ad hoc oral exchanges that the partners had during the SWUP project and through the contributions that the project partners and other interested actors exchanged in the online forum² hosted in the project website.

This report is organized in three sections. The first section will present the topic. The second section will gather and analyze the contributions that the partners and other interested stakeholders exchanged on the topic during the project. Finally, the last section is an expanded biography that reports suggested readings and links on the topic.

THE TOPIC: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

This report focuses on the child-friendly approach as a tool to engage women in regular sport activity.

The child-friendly approach refers to all those actions, which aim at making it easier for parents with young children to carry out their activities and reconcile the family time with work and free time. In this case, a child friendly approach is proposed as a tool to remove the time barriers that women often encounter when trying to do sport. The following paragraph will report partner's exchange on different issues related to child-friendly approach.

PROJECT EXCHANGES: MAIN HIGHLIGHTS ON THE TOPIC

1. Is it useful to put in place structures that can look after the children while the mother carries out the sport practice?

Women tend to have less leisure time than men as they take on the greater burden of responsibility for housework, childcare and care of elderly or infirm relatives. This is one of the key reasons for not taking part in sport. Women also cite lack of childcare facilities as a major factor discouraging them from taking part in sport and physical activity. This means that, from a policy point of view, it is crucial to investigate options for the provision of childcare, or help with childcare costs, and adopt a child-friendly approach so that women can bring their children with them to the venue.

Having little time is one of the major causes of lower women practice of sport. For this reason, all those measures that decrease the time restrictions given by work and family and make it easy and uncomplicated for them to join the

¹ <http://www.swup-project.eu/>

² <http://www.swup-project.eu/forum-swup/>

sport activity are likely to increase women's sport practice. This is the case for example of kindergarten service in correspondence with the venue and the time of the sport activity.

Polisportiva Corbetta has highlighted the importance of offering activities that allow women to optimize the time devoted to family organization in all the fields: work, social life, culture, free time, sport.

Undoubtedly we think it is very useful to create structures where mothers (and fathers) can practice physical activities while their children are attended and/or practicing simultaneously some sportive activities, workshop or simply doing their homework. Logistically, it is a good way to optimize family time, but it is not simple, it will depend since the age of children and if the parents look for a specific activity of sportive practice for themselves as the activity to be developed by their children.

2. Do you consider a good strategy to optimize the family time by scheduling the project simultaneously with the children's activity?

As in the case of childcare, organizing children's activities at the same time of women activities can help those women with young children to take part in the activity. This measure can meet more easily the quest of trust by part of the parents. On the other side, mothers and children could experience difficulties in finding their preferred activities in the same time slot in case the offer is not very varied. It is important that also fathers are offered the possibilities to do sport at the same time of their children. This would indirectly benefit women that wouldn't need to take care of the children in that range of time and so will have more free time, that they could decide to spend in doing sport.

Nonetheless, as shared by the Sofia European Capital of Sport, sometimes offering childcare is not sufficient because mothers do not trust the person in charge of the childcare, as it can be the case with students. For this reason, it is important to choose a person that can be "objectively" trusted. Besides this, placing the childcare near enough that mothers are able to see it and giving many details about the service can help mothers trusting the service and plan the activity inside their restricted time schedule.

3. Do you think the figure of the partner is focal to allow the woman to have a correct access to the sport practice in the evening time?

The support of the woman's partner is essential to allow women to attend evening sport, both for the concrete help in taking care of the children and for the psychological wellbeing of the couple. On the other side, for all those cases in which partner's support does not come spontaneously from the beginning, campaign raising awareness on the positive effects on health of an active life style and the accessibility of the sport venue (in terms of distance and of fee) are crucial to engage women in getting started.

4. Do you think is an incentive to practice a sport activity together with children?

Practicing a sport with children can be an incentive for mothers to practice a sport. At the same time, there factors as children age, mothers' flexibility and reaction to stress, welcoming or restricting environment and children's temperament that highly influence the choice of the mothers to take part to such an activity. Some of these factors can be tackled by organising these activities in spaces that are sufficiently large for the 2 groups not to bother each other but at the same time keep on being on eye sight, having a good soundproofing. Encouraging the adoption of some informal rules to be followed during the session is also key to make the experience pleasant for every participant while at the same time ensuring enough flexibility for mothers to take care of their children in case it is needed.

It may be an incentive for families that they usually do not practice sports and the initiative to practice together with their children can be an incentive. However, for parents who practice sports regularly and currently they can not continue to do sport for logistical problems, it will be a solution not an incentive.

We agree about sports practice together is positive, it is known that it improves the emotional bond as well as being beneficial to have time with the children when usually the lack of time removes us of these whiles. But we also believe that ideal for the father / mother would be to have time at least twice each week for doing an activity for their own interest.

So, we understand the family practice together as an activity to enjoy the weekend, share a family hobby or enjoying occasional events (family races, family bike ride, tournaments of parent and child...)

As Sofia European Capital of Sport witnessed, child friendly approach, besides satisfying mothers' needs of physical activity and destress, make children love the moment in which mother practice sport because they have fun in the meanwhile. For this reason, kids will want to come again thus carrying out a positive incentive for mothers to be constant in their sport practice.

5. Please provide good examples and initiatives. What are the facilities and services offered at the local level?

Other facilities and services could also be that of providing crèche facilities and/or providing classes for toddlers and children, either with or separate from their parents, so that the adults can bring their children along when they go to exercise. For example, parents and baby aerobic classes could incorporate exercises like lunges with pushchairs, encouraging participants to see how they can incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. Finally, making physical activity a part of the working day can help address the lack of time so many women experience. For example, lunchtime walking, running or exercise groups, supported by the employer, can help staff to fit physical activity into a busy working day .

A good example of practice could be "Mums on the run" initiative. It is a program designed with a special focus on the needs of mums, which offers guidance, advice and solutions to help mums across the country in enjoying the physiological, social and psychological benefits of getting out and being active. The possibility of taking the baby to the class in the buggy and the flexible organization of the trainings make easier for participants combining childcare with physical exercises.

There are several activities that are offered at local level for practice parents and children simultaneously: In the range of 0 to 3 years old, there are a couple of equipments that offer aquatic activities for babies and psychomotor classes. Being part of these groups help parents to have self-confidence, meet other families that are in the same stage so it generates security and motivates to them to continue doing the activity later. Until three years old, it is easy to find clubs or civic centers that offer sportive activities with family, but what happens after that? It is very common for the boy or girl continue practicing "their sport" and test news in extra-curricular classes.

After 3 years old, many sports centers are already incorporating activities for parents who want to continue doing sport with the whole family, such as swimming classes, zumba, aquagym, yoga, tennis ... Participating in these activities benefits both adults as little ones. The joint participation is very enriching because favors that the whole family spend moments of fun, collaboration, relaxation, game and bonding that will help their later on how to do and be at home, as well as being a source of physical and psychological health (increases self-esteem, improves psychomotricity, strengths in social relationships...).

Other option that some private sport center offers is the play center service: while parents are at the sports center, their children are attended by a monitoring service. Usually during this time, children make free games, craft workshops or take the opportunity to do the homework of the school.

Everything is different options to help parents stop practicing. The good habits that we want to teach to our children begin in oneself, parents are the mirror where our children are reflected, and it is very important to educate with the Exempel.

Among the many initiatives organized worldwide to engage women and their children in sport, in Australia a 3-month programme delivered enjoyable fitness activities in local parks for women and their families.

Always in Australia, Active Mums Noosa” offered 19 group activities over the 20 weeks including activities such as mums and bubs yoga, Pilates and box fit. The popularity of this program can in part be attributed to the involvement of the target group in the program planning. A large number of mums completed an online survey indicating their preferences for days, times and location of program activities. The council also involved new mums’ groups in focus group style sessions to provide input into the program planning.

Yoga with babies has gained more and more popularity. Besides allowing the mother to take care of their children while doing sport, the camaraderie of postnatal classes often helps offset the sometimes isolating and disorienting stage of early parenthood.

In France, a remarkably high number of gyms advertise courses for mother and children with experienced personnel taking care of the physical activities of the two.

Last but not least, Sofia European Capital of Sport encouraged women participation in sport by providing suitable conditions (mobile changing rooms and toilets) at 90 events and offering free-of-charge childcare service at 10 events. In all those activities, they targeted women of all ages, with special attention to those with children.

The growing interest in child friendly approach can be observed by the number of blogs and articles that can be found online about how to combine childcare and sport. Femme Actuelle Magazine, for example, offers an article with a list of sports that mothers can comfortably practice with children

(<https://www.femmeactuelle.fr/enfant/enfants/quel-sport-pratiquer-avec-mon-enfant-2024875>)

6. What are the local and national policies and incentives in this aspect?

As it can be read on the Women and Sport report by the UN, many international conferences have been organized on the topic of women and sport and every of them developed tools and recommendation in order to strengthen women participation in sport.

Back in 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, provided important policy recommendations on women, gender equality and sport already. Among the other aspects, the Platform calls for the creation and support of programmes in the education system, workplace and community to make opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity available to girls and women of all ages, on the same basis as they are made available to men and boys.

In 2002, in view of the Third World Conference on Women and Sport the Montreal Tool Kit was developed as a reference manual containing 20 tools to help women activists working to increase women’s participation in sports. More recently, a woman inclusion in sport activities has been recognised as being a driver for the achievement of many of the SDG goals.

Nonetheless, the need to ensure the same access to sport for mothers has still not been fully addressed by international conferences. National policies and especially ground initiatives seem to be more advanced in the topic.

An example of national initiatives is The Get Out, Get Active program from the Queensland Government, in Australia. It provides funding for projects that will deliver community-based sport and recreation activities that increase opportunities for participation by women and girls who are either currently inactive, or would otherwise benefit from further participation. (<https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/sports/funding/organisations/getoutgetactive>)

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Changing the Game: Increasing Female Participation in Sport Initiative

Author: **Brendon Gale**, CEO Richmond FC; **Matthew Kennedy**, CEO Tennis Victoria; **Kate Redding**, General Manager Game Development, Netball Victoria; **Steven Reaper**, CEO AFL Victoria; **Adam Robertson**, Surfing Victoria; and **Craig Tiley**, CEO Tennis Australia

Link: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/increasing-female-participation-in-sport-initiative>

Abstract: Gender equality in sports-Handbook on good practices EPAS

The first part of this handbook presents the existing situation on girls' and women's participation in sporting activities in Europe: their access, their obstacles and their activities. Good practices and successful experiences throughout Europe are gathered in a second part. As for the last part, it puts forward a set of recommendations, originating from the analysis of the good practices, whose purpose is to help practitioners and policy makers in pushing forward the fight for gender equality in sport.

Title: Access for Girls and Women to Sport Practices

Author: Clotilde Talleu

Everyone Wins

Author: CoE

Link: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport/gender-equality-and-gender-mainstreaming>

Abstract: The publication aims to increase participation in sport of priority populations (people with a disability, women and girls). It does this by building healthier sporting environments that are safe, accessible, inclusive and equitable. It offers a framework of actions and practical tools and resources on how to welcome, involve and value everyone in our community.

Two versions have been developed:

- *State Sporting Associations (SSAs)*: This version aims to assist SSAs to build healthier sporting environments that are more inclusive and welcoming of everyone in our community, particularly people with a disability, Indigenous Australians, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and women and girls.
- *Community sports clubs*: This version aims to assist Victorian community sports clubs to build healthier sporting environments that are more inclusive and welcoming of everyone in their community, particularly women, girls, Aboriginal people and people from culturally diverse communities.

Women and sport

Author: UNITED NATIONS

Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Link: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/Women%20and%20Sport.pdf>

Abstract: The report explores the relationship between sport and gender equality. It reviews the United Nations human rights and sport for development and peace framework as well as global and regional policy/normative frameworks on women, gender equality and sports. It examines the ways in which sport serves as a vehicle for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and then focuses on addressing gender inequalities in sport. The last part of this publication draws conclusions and offers recommendations.

The Montreal toolkit

Author: Legacy of 2002 World Conference on Women and Sport

Link:

<https://www.icsspe.org/system/files/2002%20World%20Conference%20on%20Women%20and%20Sport%20-%20Montreal%20Toolkit.pdf>

Abstract: It is a reference manual that contains 20 tools to help delegates in their challenges to bring about change in their own community, organisation, region, or nation.