ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This document is part of the PASS project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The review has been conducted by the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE) www.icsspe.org. Five European partners brought their support to this document: TAFISA, ISCA, FESI, EUPEA, Spolint Institute.
The relationship between physical activity and physical health is now established beyond doubt, and the awareness of the health costs of sedentary behaviours is so advanced that inactivity is now recognized as a major public health concern. For example, physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for diseases. Until recent years, concerns were directed primarily to the developing world. However, it is becoming clear that there is a trend for sedentary lifestyles across most of developed countries, too. It is also becoming apparent that a number of social and economic factors mediate physical activity, resulting in marginalized groups being particularly disadvantaged in terms of access to opportunities to be physically active.

The challenges Europe is facing, like all continents, are both general and distinctive. The health risks associated with inactivity and sedentary lifestyles apply to all people, irrespective of their location and culture, but the social and environmental characteristics of living and working in Europe need to be understood as peculiar to that region.

A number of reports show the financial and personal costs associated with low levels of PA to be considerable. However, because these reports often focus almost exclusively on a narrow range of physical health markers, it is reasonable to suppose that the real costs of inactivity are considerably greater than currently reported.

Physical activity is important for people of all ages. So, it is concerning that available evidence suggests that activity levels, in Europe and elsewhere, are often low and even declining.

Increasing physical activity and physical fitness has been shown to be associated with reductions in relative risk of death, and while decreasing them increases the risk.

Physical activity is an important feature of healthy human development, and inactivity is a risk factor for a range of serious conditions, many of which develop during childhood or adolescence.

While discussions of the benefits of PA tend to focus on physical health, there is also compelling evidence suggesting improvements to a wide range of aspects of human functioning, including emotional well-being, social inclusion, life and social skills, cognitive functioning and educational attainment.
The numbers decrease as age increases.

The case for a childhood focus for health-orientated physical activity policies and programmes has been enhanced by the growing body of evidence associated with the "early obesity intervention hypothesis", which theorizes that intervening before adulthood is necessary to mitigate the development of poor body composition status later in life.

There have been very few quality empirical studies of explicitly physical literacy programmes and the lack of conceptual clarity makes it difficult to envisage a situation in which rigorous research would be possible. However, there have been numerous high quality studies focusing on both general physical activity promotion and general skills development, and these suggest a number of characteristics of effective strategies, emphasizing skill development and personal competence, enjoyment, and diversifying the activities played.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013), obesity and overweight are estimated to be the principal causes of 44% of all cases of diabetes around the world, 23% of ischaemic heart diseases, and between 7-41% of all cancer cases. Consequently, obesity is a source of considerable health care expenditures, and it is predicted that these costs will increase over the coming decades.

According to the analysis of policymakers, estimated obesity-related costs range from 0.09 to 0.51% of total annual gross domestic income in Western European countries. Obesity-related healthcare burdens of up to 10.4 billion euros were found.

When it comes to the age difference, younger people are more likely to be physically active. The numbers decrease as age increases.

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The Human Capital Model (HCM) offers the view that physical activity is an investment capable of delivering valuable returns. Underlying the HCM is an assertion that the stock of competencies, knowledge and personal attributes are embodied in the ability to take part in sporting and other physical activities, and that these activities produce values that are realized through increased well-being, educational achievement and, ultimately, economic value.

It is also important to acknowledge the other side of the coin – the economic benefits associated with active lifestyles. A number of studies have identified sport, in its different forms, and physical activity as drivers for economic growth. ISCA / CEBR (2015) in their study calculated that inactivity imposes economic costs of more than 80 billion euros per year to the EU-28 through four major non-communicable diseases (coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, colorectal and breast cancer) and through the indirect costs of inactivity-related mood and anxiety disorders. (see ISCA, 2015, p. 6)

The HCM is part of the Designed to Move agenda for change, financially supported by Nike Inc. It conceptualizes development in terms of different forms of ‘capital’, as follows:

Financial Capital:
- Gains in terms of earning power, job performance, productivity and job attainment, alongside reduced costs of health care and absenteeism/presenteeism (i.e., lower productivity among those who are ‘present’) linked to physical activity.

Physical Capital:
- The direct benefits to physical health and positive influences on healthy behaviours.

Emotional Capital:
- The psychological and mental health benefits associated with physical activity.

Intellectual Capital:
- The cognitive and educational gains that are increasingly linked to participation in physical activity.

Economic benefits are apparent at both the national and individual level. In their review-of-reviews for UNESCO, Bailey and Reeves (2013) found evidence of multiple contributions from participation in sport and physical activity in terms of educational attainment, employability and career progression.

One study calculated the cost in Europe of depression alone to be 118 billion euros, including direct medical costs totalling 41 billion euros.
An approach like this is useful, since it stresses that PA is affected by both personal interests, motivations, and preferences and factors outside of the individual, such as opportunity, social norms and expectations, and location.

Numerous models have sought to explain the determinants of engagement in physical activity. One popular model involves dividing the facilitators or barriers to physical activity into two types: personal and environmental factors.

Numerous studies have also reported the importance on places and spaces for the promotion or obstruction of physical activity, but research highlights the psychological dimension, too.

For example, one review summarized the primary environmental and societal influences on physical activity, such as: public recreation facilities; commercial use of school facilities; physical activity promotion policy; after-school physical activity programmes; physical education class availability; youth sports; “walkable” communities; physical education class content and training; crime and perceived safety; and sedentary stimuli for leisure.
There are currently limited accurate measures of the amount of daily physical activity by European for children and adolescents, since the available information is rarely based on objective methods. Many of the recent concerns from politicians, policymakers, advocacy groups and other stakeholders have targeted this phase of development as particularly deserving attention.

EASO, 2014

There has been a tendency for researchers to focus on the risks and costs of inactivity, rather than the benefits of activity. Despite the mounting evidence of the benefits of physical activities, there continues to be a general under-appreciation of the importance and the wider benefits of exercise and sport, such as psychological and social well-being, the development of life skills, and career advancement. There is currently no evidence to indicate the economic value of these settings? How can individuals or groups succeed in focusing on the national level. A currently under-utilised resource, has been the more local governmental agencies. In light of the evidence growth of urbanisation across Europe, it is worth considering the impact of policies at the cities / municipality level.

EOR, 2018

By way of a conclusion, it is worthwhile to consider some of the ways in which this knowledge might be used. Designed to Move, which was referred to earlier in this paper, emphasises a number of contexts in which physical activity could and should play a role. Why is physical activity important in these settings? How can individuals or groups succeed in capitalising upon the potential offered by physical activity?

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However, because these report often focus almost exclusively on a narrow range of physical health markers, it is reasonable to suppose that the real costs of inactivity are considerable greater than are currently reported.

As our knowledge of the importance of physical activity grows, so does our awareness of the concerning rates of inactivity across Europe, for all ages and all social groups. In most countries in Europe, significant proportions of the population are so inactive that their health is at risk. In the case of children, millions live sedentary lifestyles that place them at increased risk of a range on non-communicable diseases in both the short-term and the long-term.

The main findings, to be brief, are that there are genuine causes for concern, and large proportions of the European population are too inactive too often. It should be remembered, however, that engagement with physical activity is mediated by a wide range of factors. While the data of physical activity patterns might lead to anxiety, any fear can, at least, been mitigated by a recognition of the growing awareness of and to promote physical activity.

Physical activity is an important contributor to human health, and the full extent of its benefit has only recently started to be realised. Activity improves health, well-being and functioning in a wide range of settings. Ironically, the physical health outcomes of regular exercise are so compelling and urgent that they are in danger of excluding other outcomes by their dominance. This would be unfortunate, as the cases for the wider benefits of physical activity suggest that it can make distinctive contributions to a wide range of domains, including educational achievement, the development of life skills and social skills, and psychological well-being.

A number of reports show the financial and personal costs associated with low levels of PA to be considerable. The cost of Physical Inactivity is a burden on European Economies. An opportunity to reverse this trend GETTING ACTIVE CITIES MOVING
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This document outlines a number of areas of knowledge in order to offer an overview of the physical activity situation in Europe. It offers an analysis of the benefits of physical activity, and discusses the financial costs – to individuals and to the wider society – of inactivity and sedentary lifestyles. It then reports on a number of studies of physical activity levels around the world, and especially in Europe.

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