

PROMOTING HEALTH ENHANCING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



1. State of play: alarming and unacceptable levels of physical inactivity and obesity

The detriments caused by **the lack of physical activity** in Europe are well recorded, as are the significant economic costs associated with the effects of **sedentary lifestyles** and their related health problems, especially in view of the fact that most European societies show increasing numbers of people being overweight and obese:

- **51.6%** of the EU's population (18 and over) is **overweight** (Eurostat, 2014);
- **1 in 3 children** is currently overweight or obese.

Despite many millions of Euros spent to encourage higher levels of participation in sport and physical activity, there has been little impact on turning the tide of inactivity. **Physical inactivity remains the 4th leading risk factor** of global mortality increasing the risks of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure.

According to the 2014 Special Eurobarometer on Sport and Physical Activity⁽¹⁾:

- 54 % of all respondents did not do any vigorous

activity within a week and 44% did not do any moderate physical activity, while the **WHO recommends**, for an adult, at least 150 minutes per week of moderate –intensity aerobic physical activity or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity.

- 13% of EU citizens do not walk for at least 10 minutes at a time on a given day within a week.
- **60% of Europeans do not reach the minimum levels of physical activity recommended by WHO**, and many of these are people come from low socio-economic backgrounds, minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

The treatment of diseases has both direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are related to the expenditure for health care whereas indirect costs cover the loss of economic output due to illness, disease-related work disabilities or premature death. A recent study by the Centre for Economics & Business Research estimated **the cost of physical inactivity to be EUR 80 billion per year in the EU-28**.



2. Benefits of regular physical activity

The evidence for the benefits of physical activity for health has been available since the 1950s. There is now wide agreement on principles established by the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations for physical activity (2): **"Adults aged 18–64 years should do at least 150 minutes** of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week."

The **EU Physical Activity Guidelines** (3) make much the same recommendation. Exercise, sport and day-to-day physical activity can be instrumental in the prevention and

management of a wide range of increasingly prevalent conditions including diabetes, cancer, coronary heart disease, obesity, stroke, musculoskeletal conditions and to help improve mental health.

A strong focus **on prevention, early intervention and behavioural change** is therefore necessary to stem the growing financial and societal costs associated with the increase in lifestyle-related chronic conditions. It is critical that we now adopt a preventative strategy for the benefit of future generations.

(1) http://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_412_en.pdf

(2) http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet_recommendations/en/

(3) http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/policy_documents/eu-physical-activity-guidelines-2008_en.pdf



3. The role of the Fitness sector in the promoting of HEPA

The European Health and Fitness sector is serving 52.4 million consumers, it employs 650,000 people and generates 26,7 billion Euros. With an annual growth of 3-4%, the fitness sector is the largest growing participant sport and the only area showing any growth in the past 4 years ([European Health and Fitness Market Report, Deloitte](#)). All other grassroots sports have "flat-lined" in their participation levels. As the fitness sector continues to grow and diversifies its products and services it

offers a high potential for significantly increasing the number of participants in physical activity across Europe. The European fitness sector is building a framework of action to encourage mass participation in exercise and activity. This is based on the highest levels of professional collaboration and inter-agency coordination to develop integrated policies, campaigns and recommendations of best practice to get: more people, more active, more often.



4. EuropeActive recommendations on the promotion of HEPA

EuropeActive believes that the fitness sector has both the responsibility and the potential to **make more people more active more often** and to help turn back the "tide of inactivity". EuropeActive calls for:

1. **A cross sectoral approach** that should bring together the food and drink sectors and the sport and active leisure sectors to work closer together to promote the positive message of the importance of active and healthy lifestyles.

2. More **partnerships with private enterprises** that can have a demonstrable impact on more inactive groups, such as the elderly, women and adolescents.

3. A **stronger focus on grassroots sport** and health-enhancing physical activity:

- The focus should be on mass population participation, with a high interest on non-competitive sport and more on physical

activity and non-sporting events; a high attention should be given to particular population, and more inactive groups.

- The #BEACTIVE message should be as known as other already existing and powerful message such the "5 a day" message (campaign to eat at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day)

- For clarity and efficiency reason, EuropeActive calls for a #BEACTIVE WEEK instead of European Week of Sport

4. A **higher attention on skills development of coaches and trainers**, to make sure people an exercise in safe and effective ways, and to the benefit of their health

5. A **reliable and harmonized collection of data** on the level of physical activity of Europeans and increase investment into researching physical activity programmes that can be applied in different settings, including education, transport and leisure.

