



# **European Commission Expert Group on "Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic"**

Final report

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Directorate D — Culture, Creativity and Sport  
Unit D.3 — Sport

*E-mail: [eac-sport@ec.europa.eu](mailto:eac-sport@ec.europa.eu)*

*European Commission  
B-1049 Brussels*

# **European Commission Expert Group on "Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic"**

Final report

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## Foreword

The profound significance of sport, deeply interwoven with our culture and our communities is crucial for our society. Sport has been a beacon of hope and resilience in tumultuous times, a platform for expression, and an arena where the indomitable human spirit, tenacity and collaboration shine brightly.

The past couple of years have been, by all measures, extraordinary. The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the foundations of our lives, societies and economies. Geopolitical events such as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have added to the challenges we face, including in the sports sector.

I express my gratitude to the Expert Group for their thorough analysis of these events' impact on both professional and grassroots sports. Their extensive study delved into critical issues such as environmental sustainability, climate change and governance within the sports sector.

This report uncovers the wide-ranging impact of the pandemic on sports, affecting everyone from policymakers to the general public. It outlines key recommendations from the Expert Group, including enhancing coordination among Member States, disseminating information on funding opportunities, promoting standardised data collection and bolstering grassroots sports. It suggests national authorities prioritise sports during potential lockdowns and foster a health and safety-conscious economy oriented on well-being. The report also urges the broader sports community to invest in grassroots projects, work closely with athlete associations and embrace the digital transition.

The multifaceted effects of the pandemic, as the report indicates, span the entire sports sector. This report touches on the challenges policymakers face, the economic pressures on sports organisations, the mental and physical hardships endured by athletes, and the significant shifts in the general population's lifestyle and habits. This comprehensive analysis underscores the depth and breadth of the challenges encountered.

Despite this adversity, our spirit of unity, collaboration, and resilience shines brighter than ever. The swift adaptation of clubs and organisations to new realities, the embrace of digital transformation and the sharing of insights and best practices across the EU highlight the strength of our solidarity and innovation.

This report stands as a testament to our shared values and the enduring spirit of our sport community. I commend the Expert Group for their invaluable contribution and extend heartfelt thanks to every individual, organisation and institution that has played a role in strengthening the resilience of our sports sector in these trying times.

**Iliana Ivanova**

European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

## Executive Summary

This report stems from an Expert Group established by the European Commission in 2021 to address the challenges faced by the sport sector during and post the COVID-19 pandemic. Their task was to comprehend the pandemic's enduring impacts on both elite and community sports, disseminate effective strategies, and propose recovery recommendations. Notably, as the group's work deepened, other crises, including the Ukraine conflict and rising energy costs, further intensified the challenges in sports. The report's focus is not only on the pandemic's direct impacts but also on broader matters like environmental sustainability, climate change, and governance.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the sports sector across European Member States, with both short-term and long-term consequences. These effects were felt across different stakeholder groups, namely sport policymakers, sport organisations and the related industry, athletes and professionals, as well as the general population. The impacts and responses across each group are summarised as follows:

### Sport Policymakers:

- Sport policy makers grappled with balancing health risks against social and economic impacts. Lockdowns led to event cancellations, facility closures, and a stark decline in physical activity.
- The European Council highlighted the crisis's toll and called for measures to lessen its effects. Regular exchanges amongst EU Member States focused on COVID-19 measures in sports.
- Exceptions were made for elite athletes in some areas, and sports places were repurposed for health needs in others. The urgency to support grassroots sports and infrastructures became prominent.
- The EU rolled out the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), with 21 Member States pledging €2.2 billion for sports. At the national level, financial supports varied; for example, Estonia used its Sports Register data for fund allocation.

### Sports Organisations, Clubs, and Industry:

- Revenue sources for sports organisations, including ticket sales and memberships, faced substantial decline, causing many to downsize or limit their activities.
- The estimated economic impact on the sector reached a staggering EUR 50 billion, with service industries like tourism and transport heavily affected.
- Many establishments adapted rebounding from losses due to the coronavirus pandemic. Many turned to online solutions or virtual events for alternative revenue.
- The fitness segment confronted challenges, though there were signs of recovery towards the end of 2021.

### Athletes, Coaches, and Employment in Sports:

- Athletes and sports practitioners in general grappled with physical and mental challenges. Training restrictions led to physical deconditioning, while lack of competitions caused significant mental distress.
- Individual athletes faced higher distress levels than team sports members. Gender disparities were evident, with sportswomen more adversely affected in terms of mental health and financial stability. EU Athletes surveys emphasised the critical role of athletes' unions, with a surge in demand for legal, financial, and mental health support.
- While employment in sports dipped in 2020, there was a mild recovery the following year. Notably, there was a decrease in volunteer participation across sports organisations.
- The role of coaches evolved, with many transitioning to online training.

### General Population:

- There was a significant reduction in physical activity due to pandemic restrictions.
- Home and outdoor workouts saw an uptick, supported by digital platforms.
- The importance of regular physical activity, both for physical and mental health, was accentuated during the pandemic, offering potential cost savings for EU nations.
- Mental health, especially amongst the younger generation, became a focal concern. In 2023, a comprehensive approach to mental health was introduced by the European Commission.

### **Conclusions**

Expert feedback reveals the value of networking and sharing best practices. The early phases of the pandemic saw the Working Party on Sport partially serving as a forum for exchange. Having digital tools to facilitate these exchanges is advantageous, especially during emergencies, as demonstrated by Estonia's effective use of databases.

The pandemic, coupled with events like Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the rise in energy prices, highlighted the importance of risk preparedness. Organisations must adopt strategic approaches to crisis management, foreseeing risks and ensuring the welfare of athletes and stakeholders. The need for consistent medical protocols and insurance policies for unforeseen cancellations became clear.

With physical activity levels dropping due to the pandemic, the health benefits of regular exercise emerged as an essential preventive measure against severe COVID-19 effects and other non-communicable diseases. Emphasising these benefits could serve as a health investment, potentially bolstering immunity and curbing prevalent comorbidities. Moreover, digital tools have enhanced sport and fitness experiences, though their unchecked use on platforms can pose risks.



The EU's commitment to promoting public health has surged, as seen in the increased funding, like the Erasmus+ programme's allocation for sport-related activities and the HealthyLifestyle4All initiative.

Athletes, the very heart of the sport, were significantly impacted. Their welfare and rights, along with robust governance, must be central to decision-making. The precarious nature of athletes' employment during the pandemic has raised concerns about their rights, social protections, and health. It's paramount to ensure gender equality and acknowledge the role of athletes and their associations, ensuring their representation in decisions impacting the sport.

Regarding sustainability, the environmental footprint of significant sports events and the energy inefficiency of sports facilities have been under scrutiny. Climate change directly affects outdoor sports, especially winter sports. As we seek to recover from the pandemic, it's vital to prioritise environmental sustainability. This crisis has showcased the intricate link between global health and environmental vulnerabilities, underscoring the importance of fostering a sustainable coexistence between sport and the environment.

### **Recommendations**

The European Commission has an important role for enhancing coordination among Member States for streamlined decision-making and for diminishing disparities. The Commission is also encouraged to spread information about available funding options and support standardised data collection at both EU and Member States levels. Additionally, collaboration with Member States on enhancing grassroots sports support systems is advised. Finally, it would be useful to explore options for establishing a European Crisis Management Network or Group that can swiftly convene on an as-needed basis during emergencies.

National authorities are recommended to prioritise sporting activities during possible future lockdowns while ensuring safety and respecting necessary health precautions. It would be beneficial to actively collect and disseminate essential data for effective policymaking, recognising the immense value of sports to multiple sectors including health, economy, and environment. Addressing precarious employment situations in sports and promoting a wellbeing-focused economy is also vital. National authorities are also advised to maintain access to sports facilities, provide reopening guidelines, and offer organisational resilience and risk management guidance, recognising the valuable contribution of volunteers.

It is crucial for the sport movement at both international and national levels to share important data during crises. They are urged to earmark specific funds for grassroots sports and collaborate with athlete associations for their welfare. Recognising and supporting volunteers, offering resilience and risk management guidance, and seeking diverse funding avenues, including private sector partnerships, are also essential. They should further facilitate access to resources for grassroots sports and embrace innovative practices to adapt during volatile situations.

Sport clubs, especially smaller ones, should strategise stakeholder management and consider forming beneficial partnerships for peer support. They must ensure robust financial planning, explore diverse funding sources, and fully utilise digital transformation while enhancing its accessibility and adaptability for their members.

## 1. Introduction

This report is the result of the work of a European Commission Expert Group on Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, established in 2021 by the Resolution of the Council on the EU Work Plan for Sport (1 January 2021 - 30 June 2024).

The mandate of the Expert Group included an analysis of the medium and long-term impact of the pandemic on professional and grassroots sport and physical activity, the exchange of good practices and the formulation of recommendations for recovery and crisis resilience.

The Group started its work in spring 2021, approximately one year after the beginning of the pandemic. A total of eight meetings were held, providing the Group with a platform to discuss and exchange about the challenges public authorities and the sport movement were facing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each meeting focused on a specific topic:

- EU and national measures to support the sport sector to overcome the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Key challenges of the sport movement
- The COVID-19 pandemic and the European Fitness and Physical Activity sector: impact and recovery
- Education and skills in and through sport: the impact of COVID-19 on sport coaching
- The impact of COVID-19 on elite sport
- Health and wellbeing of citizens as well as the role of sport and physical activity in society
- Volunteering and grassroots sport
- The COVID-19 pandemic in a broader context

As the work of the group was ongoing, other crises arose and their effects started to cumulate on an already affected sport sector. In addition to the severe economic consequences of pandemic, the rise of energy prices due to the war in Ukraine, for example, took an additional toll on sport facilities and clubs. Starting from early 2022, the public attention to the pandemic started to decrease, partially due to the progressive loosening of all restrictions in place, but also due to the beginning of the war in Ukraine and the rise of energy prices a few months later.

The aim of this report is to offer an overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector and some general orientations and recommendations for the recovery of the sport sector from the pandemic, while considering the broader context and other concerns such as sustainability, climate change and good governance.

## 2. Background and context

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in Europe started in early spring 2020, when all EU Member States introduced, one after the other, several measures and restrictions to try and contain the spreading of the virus. The two following years were marked by various lockdowns, curfews, alternated with looser restrictions when the number of positive cases was low. The situation was closely monitored by the European Union through the adoption of legislation and coordination with Member States to share information and ensure a coherent response. <sup>(1)</sup> The sport sector was no different from other activities and had to close and follow the countries' public health regulations on COVID-19.

EU Sport Ministers met throughout the acute phases of the pandemic and discussed the measures introduced in the different Member States, underlining how the situation has impacted the functioning of sports federations and the major economic losses of the sector, as well as the continuity of athletes' training and preparation, and the physical activity levels of the population. <sup>(2)</sup> In their first video-conference meeting during the pandemic, on 21 April 2020, Ministers also stressed the importance of exploring options within the new funding initiatives, such as the "Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative" and the "Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), in cooperation with the relevant institutions, and ensuring the recognition of sport as an important part of regional development and policies. <sup>(3)</sup>

The following meeting on 2 June 2020, showed that some Member States, with more favourable epidemiological circumstances, had started to relax the restriction and to make safety and hygiene recommendations to ensure the protection of all participants in training and sport activities. <sup>(4)</sup> However, most sport events and competitions remained cancelled or postponed.

As the situation linked to COVID-19 gradually improved, the sport sector was faced with other crises, which ultimately overlapped with the end of the pandemic and exacerbated an already complicated situation: Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, its repercussions on energy prices in Europe, and, in parallel, a steadily increasing inflation. The challenges to the sector have become increasingly diverse and complex, demanding adaptability and the pursuit of innovative solutions from all stakeholders involved.

As of late spring 2022, the sport movement has been confronted with higher energy cost, which affected mostly sport facilities, especially for energy intensive facilities, such as

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<sup>(1)</sup> [What is the EU doing in response to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(2)</sup> Croatian Presidency summary of the discussion from the Informal Videoconference of the EU Ministers of Sport, 21 April 2020, <https://eu2020.hr/Home/DocumentDownload/214>

<sup>(3)</sup> Ibid

<sup>(4)</sup> Croatian Presidency summary "Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector", 2 June 2020, <https://eu2020.hr/Home/DocumentDownload/231>

swimming pools <sup>(5)</sup>, but also the sporting goods industry, in both the production and sales of equipment. Gas and electricity prices reached record levels in 2022, peaking in the month of August. The resulting increase of inflation in the European Union, more than tripled in 2022 compared to the previous year <sup>(6)</sup>, did not spare sports goods and services either. According to Eurostat, the prices for recreational and sporting services increased by 4,7% between 2021 and 2022, marking the highest increase in the last 10 years. <sup>(7)</sup>

EU Sport Ministers, during the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 28-29 November 2022, discussed how to turn these multiple crises into opportunities for the sport sector. As the pandemic led to the deployment of new technologies, the energy crisis highlighted the need for a larger discussion on the energy transition and efficiency of sport infrastructure and, more generally, around sustainability and the contribution of the sport sector to the EU's climate and environmental objectives, as well as to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. <sup>(8)</sup> <sup>(9)</sup> The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, while disruptive, can be seen as an opportunity to learn from the experience and develop strategies to tackle global challenges effectively, involving the entire sport community.

Throughout the work of the Expert Group, valuable expertise has been gathered, showcasing the sector's resilience and the European sport community's capacity to confront future crises. This collective effort demonstrates the determination of those involved to overcome obstacles and foster a stronger, more prepared sport sector in the face of adversity.

### 3. Lessons learnt

When the COVID-19 pandemic first started, in March 2020, the reaction of Member States was immediate. Initially most adopted stringent measures, based on infection-prevalence criteria, with a diversity of approaches taking place around April or May.

Focusing specifically on the sport sector, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been substantial, both at the professional and grassroots level. Depending on the severity of the restrictions put in place in each Member State, competitions and events were cancelled or postponed, facilities were closed and the possibilities for outdoor physical activity were strongly limited.

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<sup>(5)</sup> [Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(6)</sup> [Annual inflation more than tripled in the EU in 2022 - Products Eurostat News - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(7)</sup> [Price of sports goods & services: sharp increase in 2022 - Products Eurostat News - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(8)</sup> [Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(9)</sup> Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on sustainable and accessible sports infrastructure, [EUR-Lex - 52022XG1228\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

The main challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic affected four main categories of stakeholders:

- Sport policy makers
- Sport organisations, sport clubs, sporting goods industry and the fitness sector
- Athletes, coaches, and sport employment
- General population

### **Sport policy makers**

The COVID-19 pandemic confronted public authorities with considerable challenges when making crucial decisions. In the face of uncertainty, with public health at risk, governments were tasked with safeguarding their citizens while lacking comprehensive knowledge about the virus, its transmission mechanisms, and the effectiveness of potential measures on both direct and indirect health outcomes. <sup>(10)</sup> Especially in the early stages, they had to rely on constantly changing scientific evidence and to find a balance between protecting public health and preventing severe economic and social disruptions. <sup>(11)</sup>

At the European level, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council acknowledged the multifaceted impact of the crisis (economic, social, and sanitary) and urged Member States, the European Commission, and the sports movement to take measures to mitigate the pandemic's consequences. Recognising the diverse circumstances faced by Member States, the Council also encouraged efforts to support the sports sector and promote physical activity among citizens. <sup>(12)</sup> The Council's Working Party on Sport served as a platform for exchanging information about the situation in each Member State and to adopt a coordinated approach on how to address the challenges faced by the sport sector.

Particularly, during the Croatian, German, Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies of the Council of the EU (in the period March 2020 until December 2021), a regular exchange of information took place among EU Member States regarding Covid-19 measures in the sport sector. Example topics include resuming sport and physical activity, public use of sport infrastructure and facilities, preventive measures in force, attendance of spectators at sport events and obligations regarding RVT (recovered, vaccinated, tested) conditions.

As of April 2020, most Member States had imposed lockdowns or major movement restrictions to the population, with important repercussions on the sport sector as well.

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<sup>(10)</sup> [Rational policymaking during a pandemic | PNAS](#)

<sup>(11)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(12)</sup> [Council Conclusions on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of the sport sector](#)

Sport events and competitions were cancelled, and all sport facilities were closed, including gyms and fitness centres. Most countries allowed open-air individual exercise, however in some cases within a certain distance from the place of residence. Elite athletes were included in the restrictions and were not allowed to use training facilities, except for Finland, where some facilities remained accessible exclusively to elite athletes, and Portugal, where elite athletes, coaches and their support staff, including in parasports, were included in an exception regime that allowed them to continue training. In some cases, as reported by Cyprus and Spain, sport facilities were put at the disposal of health authorities to set up testing centres or store medical resources. <sup>(13)</sup>

Throughout these months, Member States had to face some challenges to which they had to pay particular attention. Firstly, it was important to find a balance between the strict measures taken to limit the circulation of the virus and mitigating the consequences of such measures on people's physical activity habits. <sup>(14)</sup> The decline in the population's physical activity levels quickly became one of the main challenges to face. Several Member States put in place campaigns to encourage physical activity at home. From the #BeActiveAtHome Challenge in Cyprus to the #YoMeMuevoEnCasa in Spain, Member States involved high-level athletes as role models to inspire people to still be active during lockdowns. <sup>(15)</sup> A Europe-wide #BeActiveAtHome campaign was also launched by the European Commission in April 2020, at the occasion of the European Week of Sport 2020. Outdoor individual sport activity and online fitness training platforms gained in popularity and the practice of sport and physical activity in informal settings increased.

Another issue that emerged as a priority for the sport sector was putting in place financial support for grassroots sport, sport organisations and federations, as well as for the maintenance of sport infrastructure and facilities, which in some cases proved to be inadequate and needed adaptation to health measures, but also renovation and energy efficiency works. However, the uniqueness and uncertainty of the situation required policy makers within the sport sector to adapt and the consequences of the outbreak delayed the adaptation of common regulatory frameworks and funding schemes, which were designed for more stable times. At the European level, EU programmes and funds played a crucial role in mitigating the impact. <sup>(16)</sup> In February 2021, the Council adopted the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), to support Member States in addressing the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. <sup>(17)</sup> Within the work of the SHARE initiative, sport stakeholders were encouraged to establish contacts with national and local public authorities to ensure sport was included in the National Recovery and

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<sup>(13)</sup> Replies to the survey conducted by the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in April 2020

<sup>(14)</sup> First meeting of the European Commission Expert Group on Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, 21 May 2021

<sup>(15)</sup> Replies to the survey conducted by the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in April 2020

<sup>(16)</sup> [Council Conclusions on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of the sport sector](#)

<sup>(17)</sup> [Timeline COVID-19 coronavirus - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

Resilience Plans (NRRPs).<sup>(18)</sup> 21 Member States addressed sport and physical activity in their plans, including investments in sustainable mobility, in renovating public sport infrastructure and in the promotion of healthy lifestyle and social cohesion, for a total of EUR 2.2 billion across the EU.<sup>(19)</sup>

At the national level, Member States put in place measures aiming at supporting the sport sector financially, including new structural grants to support organisations to continue their activities or compensate for revenue losses, postponement, or exemptions of obligations such as tax and debt payments, or adjustment of pre-existing support measures and redirecting existing funds. Moreover, support also included providing information resources, guidance, and allowances for freelancers and athletes.<sup>(20)</sup>

In Estonia, for example, the government put in place both general and sport-specific financial support measures. General measures included support for employees, private providers of informal education and recreational activities, commercial and service businesses, including in tourism. Sport specific financial support targeted coaches, federations, professional leagues and clubs, indoor sport facilities (both private and public) and event/international competition organisers. Both general and sport-specific measure were disbursed in three waves. In the case of Estonia, the availability of reliable and comprehensive data made it easier to take fast decisions and to put in place clear principles. Preconditions and eligibility criteria for financial support were established based on the information from the Estonian Sports Register, a regularly updated database of sports organisations, schools, facilities, coaches, athletes' allowances and scholarships and sports results. Any organisation or individual, to receive financial support, had to be registered and updated their information in the Estonian Sports Register, in addition to other criteria.<sup>(21)</sup> For coaches, the need to have valid EQF qualifications and to be in the Register served as an incentive for many unlicensed coaches to obtain their certification.<sup>(22)</sup> Between 2019 and 2020, the number of licensed coaches increased by almost 15%. With these measures, in 2020 and 2021 the Estonian government provided financial support to 900 sport organisations and facilities, for a total of EUR 31 million.<sup>(23)</sup>

Involving sport stakeholders in the decision-making and establishing good communication also proved to be a valuable tool in understanding the needs of the sector

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<sup>(18)</sup> [SHARE LAB - Next Generation EU guidance - FINAL.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(19)</sup> [Sport in the recovery and resilience plans - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(20)</sup> European Commission, Mapping study on measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector in the EU, <https://op.europa.eu/s/yW4z>

<sup>(21)</sup> Second meeting of the European Commission Expert Group on Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, 14 June 2021

<sup>(22)</sup> Third meeting of the European Commission Expert Group on Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, 3 December 2021

<sup>(23)</sup> Ibid.

in times of crisis. In Denmark, sector partnership meetings with government bodies, sport federations and the Danish Olympic Committee were held regularly to discuss legislation proposals, guidelines and financial support. <sup>(24)</sup>

In April 2021, in a survey circulated by the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, most Member States (15 out of 22 total replies) reported that some sport activities had resumed, but mostly for elite athletes and/or only for outdoor sports. Only in four Member States (Bulgaria, Romania, Spain and Sweden) all sport activities were allowed at that time. In all cases, health and safety measures were put in place, such as mask wearing, social distancing and limited maximum capacity for facilities. Only in three out of the 22 participating Member States (Czech Republic, Ireland and Malta), no sport activity was allowed then. Events had resumed as well, although behind closed doors in most cases. <sup>(25)</sup>

The measures adopted by the Member States yielded varying results in controlling the pandemic and in mitigating the impact on individuals. The well-being of Europeans declined, and national economies were significantly affected. In Spain, for example, the estimated loss resulting from the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Spanish sport ecosystem was 38.5 % for the financial year 2020, amounting to approximately EUR 4.6 million. <sup>(26)</sup> In France, according to a study published in February 2021 by the BPCE Observatory, the sport sector would experience a drop of about 21 % in 2020 compared to 2019, a much deeper recession than that estimated in the French economy as a whole (8 % according to INSEE). Considering the expected growth in 2020, the loss of activity due to the pandemic can be estimated at 25 %, with one in four sport companies reporting a decline of over 50%. <sup>(27)</sup>

In September 2021, sport and physical activity had resumed in all Member States and sport facilities were open for public use. Some restrictions were still in place, such as limitations on the maximum capacity of facilities, physical distancing, mask wearing and limitations to the use of changing rooms. Spectators were slowly readmitted at sport events as well, although with restrictions. <sup>(28)</sup> With the gradual reopening of the sector, Member States also started to take stock of the impact of the first year of the pandemic. The most common challenges at this stage were the decline in sport participation (-3% in

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<sup>(24)</sup> Second meeting of the European Commission Expert Group on Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, 14 June 2021

<sup>(25)</sup> Replies to the survey conducted by the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union in April 2021

<sup>(26)</sup> Fundación España Activa, Estudio del impacto del COVID-19 sobre el ecosistema del deporte español, [http://espanaactiva.es/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Informe\\_estudio\\_FEA\\_ADESP\\_CSD\\_impacto\\_covid19\\_compressed.pdf](http://espanaactiva.es/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Informe_estudio_FEA_ADESP_CSD_impacto_covid19_compressed.pdf)

<sup>(27)</sup> Groupe BPCE, La filière sport retient son souffle, <https://groupebpce.com/etudes-economiques/carnets-eco-sport-2021>

<sup>(28)</sup> Replies to the survey conducted by the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in September 2021



Germany, -12% in Portugal), the financial situation of clubs, sport organisations and the fitness sector.

During the pandemic, the Expert Group allowed Member States to exchange with peers and discuss the most challenging issues. However, stakeholders deemed the coordination insufficient as the measures and criteria used for the restrictions were not harmonised among Member States.

### **Sport organisations, sport clubs, sporting goods industry and the fitness sector**

Sports organisations, clubs, gyms, and fitness centres constitute the beating heart of the sport and physical activity sectors, making them particularly vulnerable to the harsh repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and restrictions had a considerable impact on the sport movement, which largely relies on small not-for-profit clubs and organisations with limited financial reserves. The impact has been acutely felt by these organisations, which have grappled with the loss of income stemming from sports events, competitions, and membership fees. As a result, many found themselves strained to cover fixed expenditures, often resorting to painful measures such as workforce reductions and curtailed activities in order to preserve their financial viability. <sup>(29)</sup>

Over 40 sport organisations in Europe, in a joint position paper underline the gravity of the COVID-19 crisis on the sector. Beyond its immediate health implications, this crisis casts a long shadow over the daily lives of individuals, their well-being, and the economy at large. The economic toll, estimated at approximately EUR 50 billion, has been especially pronounced in service industries such as tourism, food and accommodation, as well as transportation and sports. The pandemic's ripple effect has also reduced potential spill-over into domains like research, innovation, and healthcare. <sup>(30)</sup>

The sport sector, in particular grassroots organisations, bore the brunt of movement restrictions and lockdown measures. This comprehensive ecosystem encompasses a diverse array of stakeholders, from athletes, coaches, and instructors to other employees, volunteers, and officials. The commercial side of the sport sector, from fitness clubs and gyms to event organisers and retailers, also had to adapt to these unprecedented circumstances. <sup>(31)</sup>

The pandemic has struck these organisations at their core, exacerbating in some cases an already precarious position. At the local level, within grassroots organisations, the

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<sup>(29)</sup> European Commission, Mapping study on measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector in the EU, <https://op.europa.eu/s/yW4z>

<sup>(30)</sup> Position paper on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the sport sector, [https://www.eurolympic.org/files/position\\_paper\\_COVID-19-final\\_revision.pdf](https://www.eurolympic.org/files/position_paper_COVID-19-final_revision.pdf) Ibid.

<sup>(31)</sup> Ibid

economic crisis has provoked major losses, including bankruptcy, for numerous clubs. In Spain, for example, the losses for sport clubs have been estimated at -53%.<sup>(32)</sup> Traditionally, sport clubs derive income from membership fees, ticket sales, sponsorships, and community events. Membership losses and event cancellations led to substantial financial setbacks, echoing through the entire sport pyramid—federations, clubs, leagues, athletes, and various stakeholders including coaches, instructors, administrators, competition officials, and business owners.<sup>(33)</sup>

The situation is similar when considering major sport federations. The World Players Association, in their biennial report “The Economics of International Sport Governing Bodies: A Comparative Review”, shows that most of the analysed federations did suffer revenue losses due to the pandemic and ended the financial year 2019/2020 in deficit, but the availability of financial reserves on one side, and the resumption of events on the other, allowed them to maintain a solid financial situation.<sup>(34)</sup> In Europe, for example, UEFA’s financial year 2019/2020 ended with a net loss of EUR 73.4 million<sup>(35)</sup>, while the following year ended with a net profit of EUR 22.1 million<sup>(36)</sup>, mainly thanks to the revenues from the Euro2020, which was postponed to 2021.

Similarly to Member States, federations also offered financial support to their members, such as one-off payments, low-interest rate loans, solidarity and relief funds, waiving membership fees as well as adapting competition rules and formats to increase health safety. Some governments also facilitated the access to unemployment benefits and provided access to online training and education programmes.<sup>(37)</sup>

Some clubs made use of technology to generate new income sources, such as social media platforms, online home training programmes, virtual tickets and e-sports with virtual races. FIFA, for example, exceeded its budgeted income for 2020 by 7%, mainly thanks to licensing opportunities and to the growth of e-sports, where the revenue exceeded expectations by 24%.<sup>(38)</sup> Digitalisation also favoured athletes, who could connect virtually with their team or coaches and access training sessions or professional advice

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<sup>(32)</sup> Fundación España Activa, Estudio del impacto del COVID-19 sobre el ecosistema del deporte español, [http://espanaactiva.es/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Informe\\_estudio\\_FEA\\_ADESP\\_CSD\\_impacto\\_covid19\\_compressed.pdf](http://espanaactiva.es/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Informe_estudio_FEA_ADESP_CSD_impacto_covid19_compressed.pdf)

<sup>(33)</sup> Position paper on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the sport sector, [https://www.eurolympic.org/files/position\\_paper\\_COVID-19-final\\_revision.pdf](https://www.eurolympic.org/files/position_paper_COVID-19-final_revision.pdf)

<sup>(34)</sup> World Players Association, The Economics of International Sport Governing Bodies: A Comparative Review, [WPA Economics-of-ISFs-2020 FINAL.pdf \(uniglobalunion.org\)](https://www.uniglobalunion.org/WPA_Economics-of-ISFs-2020_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>(35)</sup> Ibid

<sup>(36)</sup> UEFA Financial Report 2020/2021, [en In uefa financial report 2020-2021.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/uefa-financial-report-2020-2021/)

<sup>(37)</sup> ILO, “Sectoral Brief COVID-19 and the Sport Sector”, February 2023.

<sup>(38)</sup> World Players Association, The Economics of International Sport Governing Bodies: A Comparative Review, [WPA Economics-of-ISFs-2020 FINAL.pdf \(uniglobalunion.org\)](https://www.uniglobalunion.org/WPA_Economics-of-ISFs-2020_FINAL.pdf)

from physiotherapists, doctors or nutritionists. <sup>(39)</sup> The retail sector also moved towards digital solutions and online sales increased between 20 and 60%. <sup>(40)</sup> In some cases, online sales compensated the loss of revenues by more than 60%, but smaller companies without an online store were excluded from this the e-commerce boom. <sup>(41)</sup>

The fitness market experienced a similar contraction in size, revenue, and membership levels due to the pandemic's impact. Extended lockdowns resulted in fitness operators losing over 40% of operational days in 2021. Enhanced safety measures and admission protocols, including capacity constraints and sanitation, challenged the post-lockdown resumption of activities. <sup>(42)</sup> The recovery was not homogeneous in EU Member States, but a EuropeActive survey revealed that membership levels started to grow again in 2021, after months of decline. Development of clear guidelines to support fitness facility reopening, such as the [COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool and Mitigation Checklist](#). <sup>(43)</sup>

The sporting goods industry also saw an important decline in sales in 2020, with a loss of turnover between 10 and 30%, according to a survey conducted by the Federation European of Sporting Goods Industry (FESI). <sup>(44)</sup> The pandemic severely hit the ski sector in particular, with a loss of 50% of turnover for the period 2020-2021. <sup>(45)</sup> In 2021, most equipment manufacturers started to witness positive revenue trends, driven by increased demand for outdoor and at-home training equipment and kits. <sup>(46)</sup>

## Athletes, coaches, and sport employment

Due to the restrictions and their consequences on the sport movement and sport organisations, many athletes and employees of the sport sector were left in a vulnerable situation.

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<sup>(39)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(40)</sup> Federation of European Sporting Goods Industry, FESI survey on COVID-19, <https://fesi-sport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Results-2nd-FESI-survey-on-COVID-19-November-2020-1.pdf>

<sup>(41)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(42)</sup> EuropeActive European Health and Fitness Market Report 2022, Bestsellers - EuropeActive - EuropeActive (blackboxpublishers.com) [Bestsellers - EuropeActive - EuropeActive \(blackboxpublishers.com\)](#)

<sup>(43)</sup> <https://www.ihrsa.org/publications/safety-considerations-for-sport-fitness-clubs-in-the-context-of-covid-19/>

<sup>(44)</sup> Federation of European Sporting Goods Industry, FESI survey on COVID-19, <https://fesi-sport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Results-2nd-FESI-survey-on-COVID-19-November-2020-1.pdf>

<sup>(45)</sup> [WINTER SPORTS BUSINESS 2021/2022 – ANOTHER CATASTROPHIC SEASON MUST BE AVOIDED | FESI \(fesi-sport.org\)](#)

<sup>(46)</sup> Presentation from Deloitte's Sports Business Group on "The COVID-19 pandemic and the European Fitness and Physical Activity sector: impact and recovery", 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Expert Group on strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Surveys and research highlighted that the athletes' financial security, mental health, as well as physical health and safety were profoundly affected during the pandemic. While athletes with labour contracts were normally able to benefit from the income support schemes, many athletes could not receive financial support due to their employment status or contract type. Additionally, many athletes had their contracts unilaterally and unlawfully modified or terminated by their employers. Many athletes found themselves at risk of losing their contracts, sponsorships and primary source of income due to lack of events, especially for those without an annual contract who rely primarily on prize money and event participation bonuses as their main source of income. <sup>(47)</sup> In addition, due to the absence of recognised employment contracts, many athletes, especially sportswomen, were ineligible to receive any financial support from the government. <sup>(48)</sup> The lack of basic worker rights and protection as well as health insurance and medical coverage left athletes in a vulnerable situation. <sup>(49)</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an opportunity to stress the importance of having proper employment contracts and respecting athletes' rights. Moreover, the pandemic was a driving force for athletes' unions to emphasise the pivotal role of players associations, especially in this time of crisis. In a survey conducted by EU Athletes, 74% of the member associations reported a substantial increase in the demand for services from athletes, particularly in the areas of legal and financial support and advice, followed by dual career and transition support and mental health and well-being. <sup>(50)</sup>

The prolonged restrictions and absence from competitions also had a significant impact on athletes' mental and physical health. First, athletes could not maintain their training practices nor have access to their coaches and specialist facilities, resulting in deconditioning. Secondly, many athletes experienced the loss of a core component of their self-identity because of the absence of competition. Altogether, this led to increased psychological distress among athletes, with individual athletes reporting higher degree of psychological distress than team sport athletes. <sup>(51)</sup> <sup>(52)</sup> At the resumption of competition

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<sup>(47)</sup> ILO Sectoral Brief - COVID-19 and the sports sector [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_870973.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_870973.pdf)

<sup>(48)</sup> EU Athletes, "Preliminary Research on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Players and their Player Associations", June 2020.

<sup>(49)</sup> ILO, "[Sectoral Brief COVID-19 and the Sport Sector](#)", February 2023.

<sup>(50)</sup> EU Athletes, Research on the long-term impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Players and their Player Associations, [EUA REPORT FINAL 2 \(euathletes.org\)](#)

<sup>(51)</sup> Neil Dagnall et al., "The Potential Benefits of Non-Skills Training (Mental Toughness) for Elite Athletes: Coping with the Negative Psychological Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 3, article 581431 (September 2021).

<sup>(52)</sup> Clifford C. Uroh and Celina M. Adewunmi, "Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Athletes", *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 3, article 603415 (April 2021).

following lockdown more intensive training and playing schedules led to a significant increase in injuries in comparison to previous seasons in several sports. <sup>(53)</sup>

In addition, it is important to underline the gender differences that emerge from studies. For example, some studies have shown that female athletes were more likely to report mental health issues during lockdown than their male counterparts, as well as more concerns about the impact of the restrictions on their athletic performance. This is also linked to the financial strain women's sport is under, as women were more likely to be among the athletes who lost their employment contract, or who did not have one at all, which was an additional source of stress and anxiety. <sup>(54)</sup> <sup>(55)</sup>

Athletes'/ players' associations have been particularly vocal about athletes' safety in return to play protocols, but they were not often involved or consulted by decision makers. A survey conducted by EU Athletes showed that just over half of their member associations reported they had been involved with their league, federation or government on decisions that directly affected athletes, such as health and safety protocols or the scheduling of competition season. <sup>(56)</sup>

Athletes with a disability paid an even higher price for the disruption of competitions and sport activities, as the access to specific training facilities is even more vital for para-athletes. In turn, the resumption of sport activities also posed a higher risk for para-athletes, as some have underlying medical conditions that make them more vulnerable to infection. <sup>(57)</sup>

The situation appears to be similar when looking at sport employment in the EU<sup>58</sup>. According to Eurostat, in 2019 employment in sport represented 0.69% of total employment in the EU. After steady growth over the previous 20 years, in 2020 the

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<sup>(53)</sup> Igor Tak et al., "Sports Participation and Injury Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Will Data Support Observations from Clinicians and Athletes?", *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine* 8, No. 1 (2022): e001317; Dhruv R. Seshadri et al., "Case Report: Return to Sport Following the COVID-19 Lockdown and its Impact on Injury Rates in the German Soccer League", *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 3, article 604226 (February 2021); FIFPRO, 2021 FIFPRO Player Workload Monitoring: Annual Workload Report – Women's Football and 2022 Player & High Performance Coach Surveys.

<sup>(54)</sup> Bruinvels G, Lewis NA, Blagrove RC, Scott D, Simpson RJ, Baggish AL, Rogers JP, Ackerman KE and Pedlar CR (2021) COVID-19–Considerations for the Female Athlete. *Front. Sports Act. Living* 3:606799. doi: 10.3389/fspor.2021.606799

<sup>(55)</sup> FIFPRO survey on impact of Covid-19 on women footballers - FIFPRO World Players' Union - <https://fifpro.org/en/supporting-players/health-and-performance/covid-19/global-survey-shows-ongoing-impact-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-women-footballers/>

<sup>(56)</sup> EU Athletes, Research on the long-term impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Players and their Player Associations, [EUA REPORT FINAL 2 \(euathletes.org\)](https://euathletes.org/EUA_REPORT_FINAL_2)

<sup>(57)</sup> [The impact of COVID-19 on sport for athletes with disabilities - Play by the Rules - Making Sport inclusive, safe and fair](#)

<sup>(58)</sup> The terms sport employment includes people having a sport specific occupation (ISCO 342) in any type of organisation and people having a non-sport specific occupation within an organisation whose main business is the provision of sport (NACE 93.1) (e.g., in administrative positions).

number of people employed in sport fell by 4.3%, bringing the share of total employment down to 0.68%.<sup>59</sup> This decrease was not even, neither in terms of geographical distribution (Finland +5.6%, Croatia -46%), nor in terms of categories, as the most impacted were youth sport workers (-2.6%), female sport workers (-8.4%), and sport workers with no or low qualifications (-18.3%). The greatest impact was on young female workers. Self-employed workers in the sport sector, more vulnerable to income losses and with lower social protection, saw an increase of 6.7%, an acceleration of a trend seen in the period 2011-2019.<sup>60</sup>

The reasons for this increase in self-employment and the negative impacts on youth and female workers and the less qualified are not yet clear and may be as a result of a number of complex factors which may differ on a country-by-country basis. They may prove to be significant longer-term impacts of the pandemic and require further exploration once the full statistics for more recent years are available.

According to Eurostat, in 2021, the sector showed a good capacity for recovery and the sport workforce went almost back to pre-pandemic numbers.<sup>61</sup> However, further analysis of the Eurostat figures by the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE) may suggest a less optimistic picture. The apparent recovery was mainly due to large increases in nine Member States (Slovenia, France, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Greece, Belgium, Finland and Spain). The very large increase in France (+ 93 700 or 54% from 2019 to 2020) should be further analysed and taken into consideration with scrutiny as it is mainly explained by Eurostat as a definitional change, rather than a real increase. The majority of EU Member States (18 of 27) were still below 2019 levels in terms of sport total employment, including countries with large populations, like Italy or Germany, and those with traditionally high percentages of sport employees, like Sweden or Denmark.<sup>62</sup>

Coaches, in particular, had to show great resilience and proactivity to adapt to the new circumstances. Many turned to online coaching and online learning, which allows for more flexibility but also removes the more practical aspects of coach education.<sup>63</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic also accentuated the differences in the recognition of coaching as a profession and, consequently, of their skills and competences among Member States. As highlighted in the "Guidelines regarding the minimum requirements in skills and

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<sup>(59)</sup> [Employment in sport - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(60)</sup> EOSE presentation at 4th XG meeting

<sup>(61)</sup> [Employment in sport - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(62)</sup> Presentation from EOSE 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the XG

<sup>(63)</sup> 4th XG meeting presentations

competences for coaches”, as of February 2020 the coaching profession was regulated in just over 50% of EU Member States.<sup>64</sup>

Sport organisations in Europe heavily rely on the contributions of volunteers, not only for punctual support in events and competitions, but also as coaches and for the day-to-day running of sport organisations and sport activities.<sup>65</sup> The restrictions linked to the pandemic also resulted in a loss of volunteers, who were unable to continue engagement with their organisations. As part of their V4V project funded by the European Commission under Erasmus+ Sport<sup>66</sup>, the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE) launched an EU-wide survey on volunteering in the sport sector in the period May-July 2022 which gathered a total of 2,226 responses from sport organisations. This survey covered many aspects of sport volunteering such as recruitment, management, retention and training but also included some questions relevant to the impact of the pandemic. Most respondents were from sport clubs and sport federations from 115 different Member States. 54.1% of those responding to these questions reported that levels of volunteering remained the same, but 36.4% reported a decrease in the number of volunteers compared to before the start of the pandemic. When they were asked to predict levels of volunteering in their organisation when the direct impact of the pandemic was over, only 35.8% thought that levels would return to pre-COVID levels. Nearly one quarter (24.3%) felt levels would not return to those in the pre-COVID period and 12.8% thought levels may actually increase. The remainder replied that they did not know. When asked about barriers which deter people from sport volunteering, 30% selected ‘COVID pandemic’ and 36.9% selected ‘COVID pandemic’ as a difficulty which sport organisations face when trying to attract/recruit sport volunteers. The longer-term impact of the pandemic on sport volunteering should be further explored because volunteers are so crucial to the sector.

## General population

The various restrictions taken during the first year of the pandemic disrupted many aspects of daily life, including the physical activity levels of the population. The length of lockdowns and the severity of restrictions varied greatly among countries resulting in uneven opportunities for the population to be physically active.

The closure of sporting facilities generated a decrease in physical activity levels, loss of physical fitness and increased sedentarism, making the WHO recommendations of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week hard to reach. Despite the well-known role of sport in supporting health, preventing

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<sup>64</sup>) European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Čujko, A., Jeričević, M., Lara-Bercial, S. et al., Guidelines regarding the minimum requirements in skills and competences for coaches – , Publications Office, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/69405>

<sup>65</sup>) Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>) <https://www.v4v-sport.eu>

diseases, and fostering mental health, the Special Eurobarometer 525 shows that physical activity level slightly declined during the pandemic, with 52% of respondents either reducing the frequency of sport or physical activity (34%) or stopping it completely (18%).<sup>(67)</sup>

A survey from 2022 conducted by EuropeActive showed similar results in the fitness behaviour of the consumers. In 14 out of 19 participating countries, the share of respondents who reduced their exercise routines was higher compared to those who increased their fitness frequency. About two thirds of the fitness club users included in the study were not able to continue their training routines due to the restrictions placed on fitness centres, impacting negatively their physical and mental health and well-being.<sup>(68)</sup>

Conscious of the decline in physical activity levels, several Member States developed campaigns, including on public media and broadcasting channels, to encourage citizens to maintain an active lifestyle despite the restrictions and the closure of sport facilities and gyms. The European Commission, following the successful example of Member States, launched the #BeActiveAtHome concept, giving people ideas and resources to exercise and remain physically active from home. Home workouts played an important role in both mental and physical health, which have been put to a test, especially during lockdowns. National Coordinating Bodies and partners of the European Week of Sport, as well as ambassadors and influencers, also played a key role in the campaign, as the inspiring voices spreading the message around mental and physical well-being.

Data from the Special Eurobarometer 525 also show a shift in the setting in which people are physically active. Respondent indicated exercising mostly outdoors (47%, +7 compared to 2017) or at home (37%, +5), with few regional differences among Member States. The share of respondents engaging in sport and physical activity outdoors or at home has gained ground in 20 Member States. While this cannot be fully and solely attributed to the pandemic, the restrictions in place on indoor sport facilities and sport clubs are likely to have resulted in an increased popularity of more informal sport and physical activity settings. Outdoor individual physical activity was allowed in most countries even during lockdowns, and online training sessions and fitness training platforms started to become increasingly popular, from elite athletes to fitness centres. However, when it comes to online tools, the access to such resources is far from universal and the risk of amplifying the digital divide needs to be taken into consideration.<sup>(69)</sup>

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<sup>(67)</sup> Special Eurobarometer 525 - Sport and Physical Activity, September 2022, [Sport and physical activity - September 2022 - Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(68)</sup> EuropeActive European Health and Fitness Market Report 2022, Bestsellers - EuropeActive - EuropeActive (blackboxpublishers.com)

<sup>(69)</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Policy Brief 73: The Impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity and well-being and its effects on social development, [The impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity \(un.org\)](#)



In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of sport in preventing disease and supporting health has become increasingly important. <sup>(70)</sup> Policies to increase the physical activity level can translate into healthier populations, less vulnerable and more resilient in the face of potential future pandemics. Numerous scientific reviews have highlighted the positive impact of physical activity on immune functions, as well as immune response to vaccination and to “several disease states including cancer, HIV, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cognitive impairment and obesity” <sup>(71)</sup>. The presence of comorbidities, known to be preventable thanks to an active and healthy lifestyle, has often been a determining factor in one’s immune response to an infection by COVID-19. Moreover, it can extend life expectancy, strengthen mental health and well-being, curbing the rising prevalence of anxiety and depression, and contribute to reducing healthcare expenditure, saving EU Member States up to EUR 8 billion per year. <sup>(72)</sup>

However, as already mentioned in this report, physical health was not the only concerning aspect of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions severely affected the mental health and wellbeing of the population, and particularly of young people, aggravating an already alarming situation. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 6 Europeans suffered from mental health issues (84 million people), with significant regional, gender, social and age differences. <sup>(73)</sup> The HealthyLifestyle4All Youth Ideas Labs, in the proposals presented in September 2022, highlighted mental health as one of the priorities to be addressed in the future and how sport and physical activity can be instrumental in preserving mental wellbeing. <sup>(74)</sup> In June 2023, the European Commission announced a new pillar to the European Health Union, promoting a new comprehensive approach to mental health. This new pillar includes 20 flagship initiatives and funding from different financial instruments and focuses on three principles: prevention, healthcare and treatment, and reintegration after recovery. <sup>(75)</sup>

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<sup>(70)</sup> The Impact of the Covid Crisis on the Sport Industry - Marbella International University Centre (miuc.org)

<sup>(71)</sup> EuropeActive, The positive impact of physical activity and exercise on immune function; [The positive impact of physical activity and exercise Aug2020 web.pdf \(europeactive.eu\)](#)

<sup>(72)</sup> OECD/WHO (2023), Step Up! Tackling the Burden of Insufficient Physical Activity in Europe, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/500a9601-en>.

<sup>(73)</sup> [A comprehensive approach to mental health \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(74)</sup> [HealthyLifeStyle4All: Youth Ideas Labs unveil their proposals | Sport \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>(75)</sup> [A comprehensive approach to mental health \(europa.eu\)](#)

## 4. Looking ahead

### General future orientations

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented phenomenon that posed major challenges to Member States and to the sport movement. It took some time to adapt and to find the right measures to simultaneously limit the spread of the virus and minimise the impact on the sport sector. Going forward, combining the lessons learnt from the pandemic with the long-term, underlying challenges, such as good governance or sustainability, will be essential to ensure a full recovery of the sport sector.

### Networks and information sharing

Among the lessons learnt, experts particularly valued the importance of sharing experience and good practices, the existence of and access to a network of peers to exchange on concrete approaches and discuss on different open questions. As highlighted in the previous section, the Working Party on Sport did partially serve this purpose, especially in the early stages of the pandemic. Having an informal network in place to be convened in case of need would allow easier exchanges of information and good practices. Digital tools represent the ideal solution for this kind of network, allowing immediate access to contacts and information,

The importance and availability of reliable data has also proven to be an important resource to use when taking decisions during an emergency. Whether about the epidemiological situation of each country, or about the sport organisations, staff and athletes as in the Estonian example in the previous section, having a database of up-to-date information constitutes solid ground for evidence-based decision making.

### Risk preparedness

Throughout this time, it became apparent that crises are unpredictable by default and often highlight the structural weaknesses of organisations, building on the effects of previous crises. In 2022, the war in Ukraine and the rise in energy prices and inflation exacerbated the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector and added new issues. Addressing several crises at once, in addition to long-term and structural challenges requires a holistic and strategic approach to crisis management.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed the importance of building resilience and having risk management and prevention plans in place, identifying the key resources and contacts in case of crisis situations. Reflecting on and anticipating potential risks can minimise the disruptions to business continuity and ensure the rights and welfare of athletes and all people involved are kept into consideration while navigating crisis situations. This includes medical protocols consistent for all leagues and between men's and women's sports, particularly for return to play protocols, as well as insurance policies to mitigate the losses in case of cancelled events.

## Health and physical activity

The decline in physical activity levels was accentuated by the pandemic and the closure of sport facilities. An active and healthy lifestyle, however, has been proven to be useful in preventing the most severe consequences of COVID-19, as well as of several non-communicable diseases. Promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity and highlighting the positive effects of physical activity on immune response could be an investment in public health. It can also help boost the population preparedness for future pandemic events, both through enhanced immune response and reduction in the prevalence of comorbidities (e.g. heart disease, diabetes). <sup>(76)</sup>

In this optic, it could have been beneficial if sport and fitness facilities had remained open during the pandemic whilst adapting fitness facility operation to create safe spaces for exercise including mask wearing, increased sanitisation and altered equipment layout. <sup>(77)</sup> A THiNKactive study using data from fitness facilities across Europe demonstrated 0.88 positive COVID-19 cases per 100,000 visits to fitness clubs and leisure centres. Whilst self-reported, this suggests the fitness industry was successful in creating safe, hygienic spaces which minimise disease transition risk. <sup>(78)</sup>

The increased digitalisation and use of technology in the sport sector are also important tools for both monitoring health and fitness levels (through wearables, for example) as well as offering more flexible options for physical activity. Expanding the digital offerings of sport and fitness centres has become a promising strategy to motivate more people to start exercising and adopt a healthier lifestyle. On the downside, when online training content is not offered by a club or by a fitness centre, but is simply on social media platforms, it becomes difficult to verify the qualifications of the instructors or to ensure that the right technique is used when exercising. This could lead to increasing the risk of improper exercise and, in the long run, of injuries.

The pandemic led to boosting EU commitment to foster public health, increasing funding opportunities. For example the Erasmus+ programme has a total budget of EUR 26 billion for the period 2021-2027 (higher compared to previous funding periods) with 1.9%

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<sup>(76)</sup> [Economic-Social-Impact\\_050620.pdf \(europeactive.eu\)](#)

<sup>(77)</sup> Evidence on mask wearing: Gontjes KJ, Gibson KE, Lansing B, Cassone M, Mody L. Contamination of common area and rehabilitation gym environment with multidrug-resistant organisms. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2020;68:478-485. Blocken, B., Malizia, F., Druenen, T.V., & Marchal, T. (2020). Towards aerodynamically equivalent COVID-19 1.5 m social distancing for walking and running. Pre-print at Semantic Scholar. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Towardsaerodynamically-equivalent-COVID-19-1.5-m-Blocken-Malizia/bea48447764cd4ce84ac9d0e9fa2201a40160fc5>; Epstein D, Korytny A, Isenberg Y, et al. Return to training in the COVID-19 era: The physiological effects of face masks during exercise. *Scand. J. Med. Sci. Sports.* 2020;00:1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.13832>

<sup>(78)</sup> [THiNKactive study](#)

allocated for sport-related activities. <sup>(79)</sup> This includes the HealthyLifestyle4All initiative aiming to link sport and active lifestyles with health, food and other policies. <sup>(80)</sup>

### **Good governance and athletes' rights**

Athletes are at the core of sport, and they were severely affected by the pandemic. Athletes' welfare and rights, in a larger good governance perspective, should be at the centre of decision-making and of the running of sport organisations. One of the main causes of concern during the COVID-19 pandemic has been the precarity of the employment situation of athletes, their access to social protection and recognition of their working status, their right to health and safety. Member States and sport organisations should work on protecting, respecting, and promoting human rights in sport, and particularly athletes' social rights as workers. In this aspect particularly, ensuring equal opportunities regardless of gender is paramount to achieve equality in the field of sport.

Athletes'/ players' associations and umbrella organisations have played an instrumental role during the pandemic, providing information and support to athletes in a wide range of issues, including mental health and well-being. Athletes themselves have become more and more vocal in recent years about how these immaterial needs, although more difficult to identify and address, require support and attention as well. Acknowledging sport and its added value to society, including the role of athletes'/ players' associations, and inviting sport stakeholders to the discussion table would ensure decisions affecting sport respect all involved stakeholders.

### **Sustainability and environment**

One of the long-term challenges the sport sector has been facing in the past years are environmental sustainability and the link between sport and the climate crisis.

The sport sector has become the centre of attention in the last two decades especially for the environmental impact of major events, such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup, for their use of resources, waste management and carbon emissions. The rise in energy prices in 2022 has also highlighted the energy inefficiency of sport facilities in EU Member States, which are often quite old and in need of renovation. The ownership of the facilities also came into play, as often the sport clubs do not own the facilities they operate in themselves but rather the municipalities do. When having to avoid high costs, closing the venues is often the fastest and easiest solution.

However, the relationship between sport, the environment, and climate change is multifaceted. While sport contributes to emissions, it is also profoundly impacted by the repercussions of climate change. Outdoor sports, especially winter sports, find themselves grappling with the challenges posed by rising temperatures, including those of water bodies, and diminishing or unpredictable snow conditions year after year.

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<sup>(79)</sup> [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-04/ErasmusplusProgramme-Guide2023-v3\\_en.pdf](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-04/ErasmusplusProgramme-Guide2023-v3_en.pdf)

<sup>(80)</sup> <https://sport.ec.europa.eu/initiatives/healthylifestyle4all>

In contemplating strategies to ‘build back better’ from the social, political, and economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is pivotal to integrate environmental sustainability as a core component of the recovery process. The bounce back from such a crisis presents a unique opportunity to forge new paths and establish greener habits. The pandemic has underscored the interconnectedness of global systems, exemplifying how a health crisis can exacerbate environmental vulnerabilities. Conversely, it has illuminated how addressing environmental sustainability can bolster resilience against future pandemics and other crises, thereby fostering a more harmonious coexistence between sport and the environment.

In line with the above, a recent Commission Expert Group report on “Green Sport: A common EU framework”<sup>(81)</sup> provides focused guidance and recommendations to create a pathway for European sport to meet the goals of the Green Deal. It describes current good practices relating to environmental sustainability in the European sport sector and provides guidance to policy makers and to the sport movement on four focus areas: “innovative cross-sectoral solutions”, “sustainable sport events”, “sustainable sport infrastructures” and “capacity building, education, and promotion of sustainable sport practices”. The report also provides more detailed analysis on the challenges and opportunities for sport to move towards a greener path and discusses the role of various stakeholders to address environmental issues in and through sport. It also puts forward practical guidance, resources and case studies for sport practitioners addressing important topics such as sustainable sport infrastructure or sustainable sport events.

## Recommendations

### European Commission

- **Enhance Coordination Among Member States** - amplify the coordination among Member States to encourage swifter decision-making and harmonization, thereby reducing significant disparities between countries. This includes aligning sanitary and travel measures, establishing common criteria for risk categorisation, setting clear objectives and targets, and harmonising contact tracing systems and apps.
- **Disseminate Information on Funding Options** - communicate information regarding existing funding options, both sport-specific and general, accompanied by regularly updated guidance and support.
- **Encourage Standardised Data and Evidence Collection** - advocate for the collection of data and evidence at both Member States and EU levels to inform policy decisions and measures. Propose a standardised format for data collection across Member States to ensure comparability and ease of analysis.
- **Collaborate on Enhancing Grassroots Sports Support Systems** - Consider working together to devise strategies for Member States to facilitate accessible and safe environments for grassroots sports. This collaboration could also address guidance on decision-making processes that blend efficiency with rights to

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<sup>(81)</sup> <https://sport.ec.europa.eu/policies/documents>

representation and dialogue. Information sharing and awareness-raising of necessary measures are other valuable avenues for collaboration.

- **Explore options for establishing a European Crisis Management Network/Group that can be convened on an as-needed basis** - the group can be prepared in a way to be rapidly convened in case of emergencies, to facilitate learning among sports stakeholders and support the development and dissemination of information across all involved parties.

### National public authorities

- **Prioritise Sporting Activities While Ensuring Safety** (during possible future lockdowns) - Explore the feasibility of allowing sports and physical activities to continue during possible future lockdowns, focusing on specific interventions and precautions that enable public physical and mental well-being whilst respecting the necessary health precautions.
- **Collect and Disseminate Data and Information** - actively gather and share pertinent data and information to underpin policy decisions and measures, ensuring they are well-grounded and effective.
- **Raise Awareness of the Importance of Sport** - enhance awareness at the political level regarding the significant contributions of sports to the economy, public health, green agenda, and other sectors, including tourism, retail, infrastructure, and education.
- **Address Precarious Employment in the Sports Sector** - tackle the issues related to precarious work among athletes and other sports sector workers to reduce their vulnerability, especially during crises.
- **Promote a Wellbeing Economy** - foster a focus on promoting a wellbeing and healthy lifestyle economy to enhance population preparedness for future pandemic events.
- **Maintain Access to Sport Facilities and Fitness Spaces** - advocate for the importance of maintaining access to sport facilities and fitness spaces during crisis periods, where feasible.
- **Develop Clear Guidelines for Reopening** - formulate clear and comprehensive guidelines to facilitate the safe reopening of sports and physical activity sectors, including events, clubs, and fitness facilities.
- **Recognise and Support the Role of Volunteers** - acknowledge the essential contribution of volunteers in sports clubs and provide them with the necessary logistical, financial, and training support.
- **Provide Guidance on Organisational Resilience and Risk Management** - offer guidance and share best practices on enhancing organisational resilience, risk management, business continuity plans, and optimising responses to change.
- **Allocate Specific Funding to Grassroots Sport** – promote the safeguarding of a percentage share of funding specifically for grassroots sport to ensure sustained

development and preparedness for crisis response including pandemics. In addition, facilitate access to resources and expertise for grassroots sport.

### International and national sport movement

- **Gather and Share Data During Crises** - in times of crisis, gathering and sharing pertinent data and evidence are essential to ground policy decisions and implement well-informed measures.
- **Cooperate with Players' and Athletes' Associations** - collaborate closely with players' and athletes' associations, acknowledging their vital role in representing and supporting athletes. Optimise the use of resources when developing and implementing athlete-related measures including preparation for crisis response such as pandemics.
- **Acknowledge and Support Volunteers** - recognise the indispensable role of volunteers in clubs by providing them with comprehensive logistical, financial, and training support in order to be better prepared for crisis response.
- **Offer Guidance on Organisational Resilience and Risk Management** - provide guidance and best practices on enhancing organisational resilience, managing risk, and ensuring business continuity, focusing on optimising responses to change through knowledge, capacity-building, and network development.
- **Diversify and Explore Funding Sources** - maintain sufficient financial reserves and, when possible, diversify and explore new funding sources, including forming partnerships with the private sector.
- **Facilitate Access to Resources and Expertise for Grassroots Sport** - ensure easy access to resources and support in terms of expertise for grassroots sport, incorporating capacity-building actions.
- **Support Innovation and Adaptation to Change** - in managing change during volatile situations, explore and prepare innovative practices to assist organisations in case of future crises. Accompany athletes, sport staff, and clubs in adapting to change, encompassing both organisational modifications and the reassessment of educational practices and protocols for athletes.

### Sport clubs and fitness sector

- **Stakeholder Management and Networking for Small Clubs** - anticipate and create strategies on how to manage stakeholder relations in small clubs and continue to cater to their needs. Additionally, seeking partnerships and networks for peer support can be beneficial.
- **Financial Planning and Diversification of Funding** - ensure a sufficient financial reserve and, when feasible, diversify funding sources and explore new avenues, such as partnerships with the private sector.
- **Optimisation of Digital Transition** - maximise the digital transition and develop digital options as an integral parts of the sport system whilst enhancing accessibility and adaptability.

## 5. Annex: Good practice examples

### Athlete and Player Associations

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>Player and athlete associations are independent, democratic organisations representing and defending the rights and interests of athletes. Player associations often cooperate and create federations of such organisations, either at the national level (for example <a href="#">FNASS</a>), at the European level (for example <a href="#">EU Athletes</a>), global level (for example <a href="#">World Players Associations</a>) or sport-specific ones (for example <a href="#">International Rugby Players</a>).</p> <p>During the Covid-19 pandemic, player association movement cooperated closely together in order to share knowledge, expert advice, look for solutions in order to offer best possible support for their member athletes. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of knowledge, ideas and practical solutions to the crisis between athlete associations from different sports and countries</li> <li>• Addressing new challenges and demands related to the work of athlete associations during Covid-19 pandemic</li> <li>• Improving and adjusting the support that the athlete associations offer to the members</li> </ul>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Player and athlete associations from different sports and countries</li> <li>• Experts from different fields as relevant</li> </ul>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better support for athletes</li> <li>• Strengthening of the network of player associations</li> <li>• Better recognition of the role of athlete associations as source of support for athletes</li> <li>• Informing the relevant measures and policies with research and publications</li> </ul>
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited resources and lack of financial support for the athlete associations' work</li> <li>• Need for greater recognition and support from sport and government stakeholders</li> <li>• Not properly involving athletes and their associations in decision making processes related to the pandemic</li> </ul>



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Questions	Replies
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of working together</li> <li>• Value of sharing ideas and solutions used in different countries or sectors</li> <li>• Need for better understanding of the added value of player associations within the sport sector</li> </ul>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p>Some of the resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://euathletes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EUA-Covid19-21.10.2020.pdf">https://euathletes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EUA-Covid19-21.10.2020.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://euathletes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Preliminary-Research-on-the-impact-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-on-Players-and-their-Player-Associations.pdf">https://euathletes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Preliminary-Research-on-the-impact-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-on-Players-and-their-Player-Associations.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://euathletes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/EUA-REPORT_FINAL_0622.pdf">https://euathletes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/EUA-REPORT_FINAL_0622.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://uniglobalunion.org/news_media/uploads/2020/04/covid-19_guiding_principles_policy.pdf">https://uniglobalunion.org/news_media/uploads/2020/04/covid-19_guiding_principles_policy.pdf</a></li> </ul>

## Austria

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>Since the Austrian COVID-19 Act and the ordinances of the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection on COVID-19 also had a significant impact on the areas falling within the responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport, at a very early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic in Austria, a hotline was established for the area of arts and culture as well as for the area of sport, in order to answer questions in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic in those respective areas. The so-called 'COVID-19 Information Service for the Sport Sector' ('Sport Hotline') officially started operating on 2 April 2020. It was available between 09.00 and 15.00 from Monday to Friday almost continuously and lasted until the end of May 2023.</p>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<p>On 25 March 2020, the Director General of the Federal Ministry responsible for Sport commissioned Department II/A/3 to plan and set up the 'COVID-19 Information Service for the Sport Sector'. This respective department in the Federal Ministry for Sport continuously operated the Information Service for the Sport Sector.</p>

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Questions	Replies
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>During the operating period from 2 April 2020 to 28 May 2023, the service staff handled a total of 13,985 enquiries. 9,389 enquiries (67%) were received by telephone and 4,596 enquiries (33%) by e-mail. 40% of the enquiries were received from associations or federations, 39% from individuals, 18% from the commercial sector and 2% from public authorities or other public bodies.</p> <p>A comparison shows that the distribution of the enquiries that could be assigned to a certain federal state based on the available data from the entire period of operation correlates closely with the population living in that state.</p> <p>Among the most requested topics, the category 'fitness centres/indoor' with 2,642 requests and the category 'outdoor' with 1,724 requests stand out. On the other hand 1,641 enquiries could only be assigned to the category 'General'. 1,312 enquiries (9%) were related to events and, in particular, whether they could be held at all or under which circumstances. 524 enquiries were related to the thematic field 'financial' (4%) - mainly concerning what financial support programmes were available for sports clubs but also for commercial enterprises (sport hotels, fitness centres, etc.) at the respective time.</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>Phases with drastically rapidly increasing numbers of cases alternated with periods in which the numbers of positive cases also noticeably decreased again. In addition, different mutations of the virus emerged, which affected the situation partly with varying intensity. This constant change regarding COVID-19 can be exemplified by the large number of amendments to the 'Ordinance of the Federal Minister of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection on Measures to combat the spread of COVID-19, to which the hotline team had to practically adapt to 'overnight' also with regard to the information requested as soon as a new amendment came into force.</p>
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>During the operation period, the Sport Hotline was also contacted by clubs and individuals that basically had no closer or no connection to the sports sector (e.g. music clubs, etc.). As a reason for their request to the sport hotline, they stated (if they had not mistakenly 'called' the sport hotline) that the hotline had been recommended to them by third parties as a 'competent point of contact', where the callers and their concerns were 'visibly taken care of'. Those 'recommendations' were a clear sign that the efforts of the hotline staff were very positively recognised by the enquirers and that these positive experiences were also passed on to third parties. In summary, it can be said that the 'COVID-19 Information Service for the Sport Sector' was a valuable, specialised contact point for enquirers and their individual needs in this extremely challenging situation.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p>Long version (in German):  <a href="https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/sport/publikationen.html">https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/sport/publikationen.html</a></p>

Croatian Olympic Committee

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>With health measures in place, many athletes and sports associations, both professional and amateur, were unable to continue their activities. Only by creating a coherent support mechanism for the sports sector it was possible to reduce the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this way the sport community was able to resume activities as soon as the virus was under control.</p>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletes</li> <li>• Coaches and sport staff</li> <li>• Clubs</li> <li>• Non-profit local sport organisations</li> <li>• National sport federations</li> </ul> <p>All of the mentioned stakeholders encountered difficulties: either a complete stop in activities or unexpected rising of costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and safety measures in place. Therefore, depending on the situation, NOC Croatia was providing financial support either by ensuring uninterrupted monthly income namely for athletes/coaches/sport staff that could not perform any activity and could not ensure financial stability in that period or to the clubs, non-profit local sport organisations and national sport federations by allowing them flexibility according to the initially presented budget (e.g. for COVID-19 tests, masks, disinfectants)</p>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>Although there were restrictions due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as many as 65 National Federations (NFs) realised <b>more than 90%</b> of their regular program. Of the permitted repurposing of funds planned for preparations and competitions, 49 NFs used the possibility of purchasing personal sports equipment, while 23 NFs repurposed funds for vitaminisation, and 19 for physical therapy / sports diagnostics, or 17 for professional work.</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The funding was addressing the concern about the possible lasting consequences on the economic potential and employment in sports, as well as on public health. At the same time, financial support was not supposed to be limited to popular sports, because recovery measures are of utmost importance for smaller, non-profit sports associations.</p>
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>Close cooperation with the Croatian government and relevant Ministries (Tourism &amp; Sport, Health) was crucial in order to ensure synergies of the relevant institutions and efficient measure implementation.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p>Activity and financial report of NOC Croatia 2021 (public document in Croatian, available on the website of NOC Croatia)</p> <p><a href="https://dev.hoo.hr/images/dokumenti/izvjesca-i-nalazi/Programsko_i_financijsko_izvješće_HOO-a_za_2021_godinu.pdf">https://dev.hoo.hr/images/dokumenti/izvjesca-i-nalazi/Programsko_i_financijsko_izvješće_HOO-a_za_2021_godinu.pdf</a></p>

Czech Republic

Questions	Replies - COVID I	Replies - COVID II
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p><b>Aid area A</b> - operation of sports facilities</p> <p>The aid is intended for a sports organisation operating a sports facility which is affected by the negative effects of the declaration of a state of emergency and emergency measures consisting in the necessity to close or restrict a sports facility, while the operation of the operation of the sports facility, fixed costs are associated with the operation of the sports facility, which the operator must bear regardless of the fact that the sports facility is closed in whole or in part.</p> <p><b>Aid area B</b> - Organisation of sporting events</p> <p>The aid is intended for a sports organisation organising or co-organising a sports event, which is affected by the negative effects of the state of emergency and emergency measures consisting in the need to cancel, postpone or restrict a sporting event, where the event has been necessary costs have been incurred in vain by the sports organisation which cannot be used for the postponed, restricted or other event in the future.</p> <p><b>Aid area C</b> - Hire of sports facilities</p> <p>The aid is intended for a sports organisation that has had to pay rent for the use of a sports facility for a period of time when it was not possible due to the covid restrictions or of a state of emergency and emergency measures, the sports facility in question may be used in whole or in part for sporting activities.</p>	<p>The purpose of the Call was to support sports businesses that have been restricted in business activities due to the negative effects of measures taken under the Crisis Act, emergency and protective measures of the Ministry of Health and regulations of health stations, where sports, dance and other gatherings and events have been banned with more than 100 people in attendance at the same time. The support was prepared in cooperation between the NSA and the Ministry of Industry and Trade.</p> <p><b>Support area A</b> was aimed at supporting business entities participating in professional sports competitions.</p> <p><b>Support area B</b> was aimed at supporting business entities organising or co-organising sporting events meeting the following conditions:</p> <p>(a) it is a one-off sporting event aimed at achieving sporting performance in competitions or recreational, taking place on the territory of the Czech Republic, officially announced in the date list on 2020 and intended for athletes from more than two sports clubs or for the general public, which may or may not have international representation;</p> <p>b) it is at least the second (2nd) edition of the sporting event;</p> <p>(c) it is a cancelled sporting event whose scheduled date fell within the period from 12 March 2020 to 31 July 2020;</p> <p>(d) the minimum total eligible costs of the sporting event(s) claimed in the application shall be at least CZK 1 000 000 (approximately EUR 41 700).</p>

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Questions	Replies - COVID I	Replies - COVID II
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<p>Sorts organisations which are legal persons established for purposes other than profit</p>	<p>Sports businesses</p>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>The grant funds helped to bridge the period when no sports activities were allowed to take place during hard lockdowns.</p>	<p>The grant funds helped to bridge the period when no sports matches or events could be organized due to the decision of the state apparatus.</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The challenge was time, as the response needed to be fast, targeted and flexible. Using IT tools, proceeding efficiently and as simply as possible. Also challenging was the fact that NSA couldn't provide financial help directly to the business entities and had to cooperate with other relevant ministries.</p>	<p>The challenge was time, as the response needed to be fast, targeted and flexible. Using IT tools, proceeding efficiently and as simply as possible.</p>
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>Consequently, it was necessary for us to streamline the subsidy procedure and use electronic tools. It was also necessary to ensure greater awareness and responsibility of sports entities when planning major sporting events or league competitions.</p>	<p>Consequently, it was necessary for us to streamline the subsidy procedure and use electronic tools.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

## Danish Handball Players' Association

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>The main goal for HSF (Håndbold Spiller Foreningen - Danish Handball Players' Association) and 4player (Danish organisation providing second career guidance and support to both current and former elite athletes) during this period was to maintain close member contact via calls to individual members in Denmark and abroad, calls to club representatives to inquire about needs in their teams, and in addition, hold online club visits.</p> <p><b>Topics club visit HSF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Players' overall feeling at the time (e.g., How are you doing? Is there anything that you are unsure about?)</li> <li>- New employment in the association</li> <li>- Updated match-fixing rules</li> <li>- Counselling services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insurance</li> <li>- Occupational injury cases</li> <li>- Holiday pay.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Topics club visit 4player</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education</li> <li>- Job preparation and CV</li> <li>- Possibilities for help with mental health.</li> </ul> <p><b>Online education</b></p> <p>Under the auspices of 4player, together with online education partners (<a href="https://4-player.dk/uddannelse-og-udvændelsen/online-uddannelse/">https://4-player.dk/uddannelse-og-udvændelsen/online-uddannelse/</a>) smaller and easily accessible online education courses were established. The members were also invited to online lectures on, for instance, sleep and stress management.</p> <p>Moreover, follow up emails were sent to club representatives, who, in turn, were supposed to share it on Facebook and WhatsApp groups or similar. These emails included links to HSF and 4player resources as well as contact details of relevant persons if players had questions regarding any topics mentioned above or others.</p>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<p>HSF arranged it using their own resources with partners as needed.</p> <p>In addition, HSF was in contact with various clubs and the league association to provide input for necessary measures in corona protocols.</p>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>HSF was in very close contact with the players, increased the number of members during the period and, for example, got many to start training.</p> <p>In addition, many members made use of the mental health department, which had started 2 months before COVID-19 broke out.</p>

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Questions	Replies
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>Due to the limited resources, it was difficult to reach all the members, physical club visits were impossible to implement, and it was challenging to recruit new members. Despite the challenges, almost all members were reached, physical visits were replaced by virtual ones, and even new members were recruited.</p>
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>Close contact with the players is essential in order to provide them with the best support possible.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p><a href="https://www.haandboldspiller.dk/english111">https://www.haandboldspiller.dk/english111</a>  <a href="https://4-player.dk/english/">https://4-player.dk/english/</a></p>

Estonia (1 of 2)

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i>  <i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>To support sports organisations to pay the salaries of the coaches working with children and youth.</p> <p>The reasoning behind it was that the income of the sports organisation declined because they could not offer their services and therefore ask for the monthly fees. As the state had a general financial support too, this support measure was to be used hand in hand with the general support scheme.</p>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<p>The Estonian Olympic Committee, the Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information, the Estonian Sports Register were involved in developing the support measure. The Estonian Olympic Committee as the Estonian Sports Confederation gathered the opinion of the sports field. The Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information and the Estonian Sports Register developed the IT-tool to hand the support out as they had the necessary data on the coaches, their employers and an already existing IT-tool for a similar support which has been handed out since 2015.</p>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>There were almost no losses among the coaches working with the children and youth and almost none of their employers went bankruptcy.</p> <p>After the crisis, the interest to obtain a professional qualification for the coaches rose. The sports sector recovered quickly from the crisis.</p>

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Questions	Replies
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The main challenge was to integrate the coaches COVID support system with the general supports schemes as they changed during different waves of COVID.</p>
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The main lesson was that the need for good data is an absolute necessity to make fast and correct decision.</p> <p>Good communication and involvement of the sport sector.</p> <p>Flexibility to modify the support measures.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>

Estonia (2 of 2)

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>To support the private owned indoor sport facilities.</p> <p>The reasoning behind it was that the income of the sports facilities dropped to zero as they were closed down during waves or there were big restrictions on the amount of people allowed to be indoors. The aim was to support these privately owned indoor sport facilities not to go bankrupt.</p>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<p>The Estonian Olympic Committee, the Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information, the Estonian Sports Register were involved in developing the support measure. The Estonian Olympic Committee as the Estonian Sports Confederation gathered the opinion of the sports field. The Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information and the Estonian Sports Register developed the IT-tool to hand the support out as they had the necessary data on the sport facilities due to the fact that they maintain the Estonian Sports Registry.</p>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>Over 100 privately owned indoor sports facilities received the support during three COVID waves. Almost none of them went bankrupt.</p> <p>After already the first wave of this measure, the number of privately owned indoor sports facilities registered to the Estonian Sports Register raised.</p> <p>The sports sector recovered quickly from the crisis.</p>



European Commission Expert Group on "Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic"

Questions	Replies
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The main challenges were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- how to support semi-privately owned indoor sports facilities.</li> <li>- How to design the measure so that pools, ice-rinks and other more expensive indoor sports facilities to maintain would survive the periods of COVID waves.</li> </ul>
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The main lesson was that the need for good data is an absolute necessity to make fast and correct decision.</p> <p>Good communication and involvement of the sport sector.</p> <p>Flexibility to modify the support measures.</p>

EuropeActive (1 of 2)

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>THiNKactive, EuropeActive's research centre, conducted an independent assessment of COVID19 transmission in fitness spaces: 'An independent assessment of COVID-19 cases reported in fitness clubs and leisure facilities across Europe: a THiNKActive report'.</p> <p>This was published in December 2020 and included data collected between 4<sup>th</sup> May and 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020. This report aimed to understand the extent to which fitness facilities provided users with space in which to safely be physically active during the COVID19 pandemic. It focused on COVID19 case reporting and compiled data from the two important sources of the SafeACTIVE study (Europe) and ukactive data (UK). This enabled recommendations to be made on the safety of fitness spaces and risk of COVID19 transmission.</p>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<p>The report was produced by <a href="#">THiNKactive</a>, in collaboration with <a href="#">ukactive Research Institute</a>, the <a href="#">Centre for Sport Studies at King Juan Carlos University</a> and the <a href="#">Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam University</a>.</p>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>The report included a combined dataset of 115 million visits to fitness facilities during COVID (4 May- 25 October 2020). It was the first report to explore the reported cases per number of visits during the COVID pandemic and therefore was an influential and important study. It showed that self-reported incidence of positive COVID cases was only 1.12 per 100,000 visits which therefore suggested that fitness facilities were providing safe spaces for physically activity during this time.</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The study relied on self-reported data, due to a lack of established formal reporting systems at this stage of the pandemic. Despite this, robust data collection methods and the large sample size still enabled meaningful conclusions to be drawn.</p>

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Questions	Replies
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>This report suggests fitness spaces can be successfully adapted to reduce transmission risk and therefore be safe for use during pandemic events. It also demonstrates the value of collaboration between private sector and academic actors, to increase data sample size and produce important recommendations on maintaining opportunities for physical activity during times of uncertainty.</p> <p>This original report was followed up with a second report '<a href="#">SafeACTIVE #2: an independent assessment of COVID-19 cases reported in fitness clubs and leisure facilities across Europe: a THiNKActive report</a>', published 16 December 2021.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p><a href="https://www.europeactive.eu/sites/europeactive.eu/files/covid19/ThinkActive/SAFE-Active-Study-FINAL_print.pdf">https://www.europeactive.eu/sites/europeactive.eu/files/covid19/ThinkActive/SAFE-Active-Study-FINAL_print.pdf</a></p>

EuropeActive (2 of 2)

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>The 'Risk Assessment Tool and Mitigation Checklist' was created through dialogue between fitness sector leaders that took the form of a specially convened working group. It was published in May 2020 as interim guidance for the safe re-opening and operation of fitness facilities.</p> <p>It was produced as part of a guide on key considerations for sport and fitness clubs during COVID-19. The aim was to produce guidance on risk assessment for facility operators, in order to support evidence-based decision making on safely re-opening facilities.</p> <p>Physical activity is central for immune functioning and health promotion, in addition to supporting mental wellbeing which was negatively impacted during COVID confinement measures. It was therefore essential to facilitate access to fitness facilities where possible, in a safe way.</p>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<p>The tool was produced by a working group involving representatives from: <a href="#">EuropeActive</a>, <a href="#">IHRSA</a>, <a href="#">WFSGI</a>, IOC, Qualicert and European Tour Golf. It was also supported by consultation with ICREPS and EREPS.</p>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>An open access, free-of-charge industry risk assessment tool was published. This provides an accessible Excel template for facility operators to self-assess disease spread risk in dialogue with local public health authorities, and therefore inform decisions over reopening. The resource enables operators to input responses, supported by clear explanations and guidance, with a total mitigation score automatically calculated. This can then easily be compared to a risk matrix provided.</p>

European Commission Expert Group on "Strengthening the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic"

Questions	Replies
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The resource was produced in May 2020. As significant uncertainty existed during the pandemic, this resource was created reactively, using the best evidence available at the time. This produced challenging conditions and it was important to acknowledge that the resource would likely need to be modified as the pandemic progressed, and regulations changed.</p>
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>This project demonstrated the importance of strong fitness sector leadership in unknown and challenging contexts. It also demonstrated the value of intra-sector collaboration. Additionally, functionality and clarity were key features for making a successful tool with high utility for fitness operators.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p><a href="https://hub.ihrsa.org/safety-considerations-for-sport-fitness-clubs-guide">https://hub.ihrsa.org/safety-considerations-for-sport-fitness-clubs-guide</a></p>

FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile – International Automobile Federation)

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The global COVID-19 pandemic refocused FIA objectives, proving how crucial it was to be connected and to work together to respond to the challenges presented to our sport and its participants.</li> <li>- The FIA articulated this common cause in a movement: Purpose Driven (PD): generate positive actions for the betterment of society across four key pillars – Health &amp; Safety, Environment, Diversity &amp; Inclusion, and Community Development.</li> <li>- PD propelled the FIA into a new dimension, acting as a catalyst which made the FIA a standard bearer for our motor sports and mobility communities, and it inspired actions that accelerated positive contributions to society.</li> <li>- To federate and amplify all the initiatives that help the FIA to achieve its objectives in terms of health and safety, environment, gender equality, diversity, inclusion and community development.</li> <li>- Acting as an umbrella designed to aggregate and amplify the reach of existing and future FIA programmes.</li> <li>- Calling on and supporting motorsport and mobility communities to also demonstrate and accelerate their positive contribution to society under the four key pillars.</li> <li>- Building on existing work, provide support and advice where appropriate, celebrate achievements and encourage wider action within the pillars.</li> <li>- Protect all participants and spectators in our motor sport competitions from the COVID-19 pandemic and preserve lives on the roads, promote safe, clean and affordable mobility for all, defend gender equality and diversity, and facilitate access to motor racing and driving, particularly for young people.</li> </ul>

Questions	Replies
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Member Organisations: work in a collaborative, united effort to generate positive actions for the betterment of society across four the key pillars developed. The FIA encouraging its wider community by providing the tools and support necessary for Clubs to create positive outcomes at national and regional level through the development of education, advocacy, community engagement, and innovation and technology.</li> <li>- On a Mobility project, the Division joins forces with EY-Parthenon to reframe the programme.</li> <li>- The FIA Sport Clubs Solidarity Programme is launched to support ASNs and ACNs during the pandemic and as they start to resume events and activities in order to ensure that the restart of motor sport is organised in a safe and sustainable way, compliant with the guidance of Governments and WHO public health advice.</li> <li>- JCDecaux and #3500LIVES Campaign Ambassadors Join Forces to Help Fight COVID-19</li> <li>- Together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, RM Sotheby's, and the FIA Drivers' Commission, the FIA launches the #RaceAgainstCovid online charitable auction</li> </ul>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The FIA took a step forward and is more than ever determined to increase the positive impact of its two pillars.</li> <li>- The FIA had a responsibility towards society and was more ready to respond to new realities (innovation/advocacy) in an ever-changing world.</li> <li>- Following the crisis and with its experience, the FIA was ready to go even further, to join forces and be a catalyst for change.</li> <li>- FIA ambitions levelled-up about what can be achieved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Safer roads and racetracks – apply what the FIA learnt.</li> <li>o Promote road safety as a fundamental right for all.</li> <li>o Transfer more technologies to road users.</li> <li>o Sport and Mobility act as laboratories and inspiration for eco-friendly innovation and behaviours.</li> <li>o Encourage more diverse talent into our sport and industry.</li> <li>o Quantify our contribution to global and local economies and continue to invest in jobs and livelihoods.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The first phase of COVID (2020/2021) was a "survival mode" context, while ensuring that sport events could still be organised, which was obviously very challenging on a global scale (adapting to different national legislations/regulations, adapting to sudden changes, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pandemic has refocused organisations' objectives on Economic, Social and Governance goals for all their activities.</li> <li>- Sectors that have responded successfully to these challenges have seen significant increases in levels of public support.</li> <li>- A call to action that affects all of society and all organisations.</li> <li>- Restrictions resulting of the pandemic have impacted road transportations emphasising its contribution on global CO2 emissions.</li> <li>- Public transportation faced the most significant impact as preferences for private cars, walking and biking increased.</li> <li>- Motor sport was not immune to the pandemic: events cancellation, establishment of a strict sanitary protocol and negative economic impact.</li> <li>- Motor sport is facing increasing core challenges (safety, sustainability, relevance).</li> <li>- The pandemic revealed the ability of sport to mobilize quickly and efficiently toward a good cause.</li> </ul>

Questions	Replies
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p><a href="https://purposedriven.fia.com/page/frontpage">https://purposedriven.fia.com/page/frontpage</a></p>

## German Olympic Sports Confederation

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To protect the health of athletes, fans &amp; all other sporting events stakeholders</li> <li>- To enable organising committees of (multi-)sporting events as well as (non-) professional leagues to implement safe events during the pandemic in line with certified standards applicable nation-wide &amp; to uphold revenue streams</li> <li>- To give both elite as well as recreational athletes the opportunity to compete in a safe environment to maintain physical and mental fitness through sport during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic</li> </ul>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- German Olympics Sports Confederation (DOSB)</li> <li>- National sport federations (both summer &amp; winter)</li> <li>- TÜV Rhineland Product Safety Ltd.</li> <li>- Event management agency</li> </ul>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Among others, the project was developed and implemented with the German Ski Association to ensure the execution of the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships 2021 in Germany throughout the pandemic and was well received among the International as well as National Federation, both in terms of organisational as well as financial constraints in the face of adversity at that critical time of the pandemic</li> <li>- The project was also supported by the German Basketball Federation in view of their preparation for the EuroBasket 2022. The international tournament was originally scheduled to take place in September 2021, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent postponement of the 2020 Summer Olympics to 2021, it was postponed to September 2022.</li> <li>- The concept proved to be of added value to both indoor and outdoor sports, be it at the elite or grassroots level thanks to its modular design allowing clubs and organising committees to adapt the principles to their specific needs.</li> </ul>
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acceptance for the new concept among political decision-makers at the various layers of governance &amp; policy-making (from federal down to municipal level)</li> <li>- Nation-wide communication &amp; distribution of the concept to relevant stakeholders</li> <li>- Monitoring of implementation &amp; guidance by the NOC to ensure coherent application of the concept.</li> </ul>

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Questions	Replies
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agile management of &amp; practical value creation for complex governance system can be fostered during crisis mode if all relevant stakeholders align</li> <li>- Dedicated task force for special project with external expertise necessary to steer such a high-pressure project</li> <li>- NOC's reach to grassroots level and 87,000 sports clubs in the country needs to be maximised and can be facilitated by regional branches such as regional sports confederations.</li> </ul>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Press release (in German) <a href="https://www.dosb.de/sonderseiten/news/news-detail/news/dosb-hygienekonzept-fuer-den-nationalen-wettkampf-und-spielbetrieb">https://www.dosb.de/sonderseiten/news/news-detail/news/dosb-hygienekonzept-fuer-den-nationalen-wettkampf-und-spielbetrieb</a></li> <li>- Hygiene concept (in German) <a href="https://www.dosb.de/Broschuere_DINA4_Hygiestandards_20201022_Ansicht.pdf">Broschuere_DINA4_Hygiestandards_20201022_Ansicht.pdf (dosb.de)</a></li> </ul>

## Slovakia

Questions	Replies
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What were the aims of this measure/project?</i></p> <p><i>Which specific issue(s) did it seek to address?</i></p>	<p>The aim of the COVID guide for sport was to specify the possibilities how to play sports in the field of recreational sport taking in mind the risk of spreading the infection in different sports.</p> <p>The intention was to place the information about COVID restrictions for the sports community in one place.</p> <p>The intention was as well to take into account the specificity of sport and according to it to have different restrictions for sport during COVID pandemic compared to other areas (e.g. gastronomy industry)</p>
<p>Stakeholders involved</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain which stakeholders were involved in developing this good practice example.</i></p>	<p>The Covid automat was approved by the Pandemic Commission established by the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Public Health Authority.</p>
<p>Results</p> <p><i>Please briefly explain how the measure/project was received by the stakeholders and any results/benefits it had.</i></p>	<p>In individual phases, the COVID guide included details on e.g. state of emergency, curfew, reducing mobility, reducing the concentration of people, limiting social contact, closing outdoor and indoor sports facilities, the necessity to wear a face mask, to proceed with regular Atg/PCR testing, or to observe basic hygiene measures.</p> <p>Due to the amount of data that the system contained, the application <a href="http://www.covidsport.sk">www.covidsport.sk</a> was created. Its main function was to answer the questions how a different sport can be practiced in the different regions in view of the measures currently in force at that time.</p>
<p>Challenges</p> <p><i>Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>As sport was evaluated by the Pandemic Commission as risky in general, it was not possible to take into account the specificity of sport. The same restrictions were valid for sport as for the others areas.</p>

Questions	Replies
<p>Lessons learnt</p> <p><i>Which were the main lessons learnt in the planning and implementation of this measure/project?</i></p>	<p>The COVID guide for sport offered examples for discussing the riskiness of sports and the possibilities of eliminating these risks, especially for experts from the Pandemic Commission, for epidemiologists, virologists, etc., as it provided a more detailed view on sports and its diversity, flexibility and variability.</p> <p>It was also a guide for sports federations and clubs to focus on the development of internal manuals with detailed instructions on how to play sports safely.</p> <p>For the athletes and coaches, the COVID guide in the form of the covidsport.sk application was a practical information tool. And for mayors of municipalities, mayors and sports field operators, it was an aid in planning and decision-making.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p><i>Please add any relevant webpages, videos, social media, photos or documents.</i></p>	<p><a href="http://www.covidsport.sk">www.covidsport.sk</a> (website no longer functional)</p> <p><a href="https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/19336.pdf">https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/19336.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://covidsport.iedu.sk/">https://covidsport.iedu.sk/</a></p>

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