

Introduction: Sports Club for Health movement

Prof Željko Pedišić, PhD, Institute for Health and Sport, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

Sports clubs have been deeply embedded in culture and social life of the European Union. According to the latest Eurobarometer survey, more than 53 million European Union citizens are members of sports clubs (1). Despite a large number of sports clubs and the important role of sport in the society, the population prevalence of insufficient physical activity is still high, ranging from 11.2% to 80.4% across the European Union member states (2). These high prevalence rates suggest the need for further public health efforts to promote physical activity in the European Union.

Since the establishment of the Sports Club for Health (SCforH) movement in 2008, three international projects funded by the European Commission were carried out with the aim to tackle the high prevalence of insufficient physical activity, primarily by supporting European sports clubs and organisations to focus more on the promotion of health-enhancing sports activities. Sports clubs have been chosen as the target setting for physical activity promotion, because: [i] they are among the organisational settings with the highest population reach; [ii] many of them seem to be exclusively focused on elite and sub-elite competitive sports; and [iii] they already have access to personnel, facilities, and equipment needed to implement additional health-enhancing programs in their given sport. Better availability and quality of health-enhancing sports activities in sports clubs would facilitate increased sport participation, especially among people who are not interested to engage in high performance-focused, elite-level sport. To assist sports clubs and associations in this endeavour, in 2009, the SCforH consortium published the SCforH guidelines (3).

Collaborative work of more than ten organizations involved in the first SCforH project titled “Sports Club for Health” resulted in an updated version of SCforH guidelines (4). The project also established cross-institutional network and framework for the dissemination of the SCforH guidelines across the European Union member states. The activities of the project also included organisation of workshops, presentations at conferences, advocacy among European and national-level sports organisations and sport-related governmental bodies, and promotion of SCforH guidelines among sports clubs through European and national sports associations.

The second SCforH project titled “Promoting National Implementation for Sports Club for Health Programmes in EU Member States” aimed to: [i] evaluate the outcomes of previous dissemination of SCforH concepts and guidelines in the European Union member states; [ii] identify best practices in disseminating and using SCforH guidelines; [iii] expand the body of evidence related to the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity in sports clubs; and [iv] update the SCforH guidelines to include considerations for all age groups—children, adolescents, young adults, middle-aged adults, and seniors. The key published output of the project was the current version of SCforH guidelines (5).

The third SCforH project titled “Creating mechanisms for continuous implementation of the Sports Club for Health guidelines in the European Union” built upon the previous two projects by creating the SCforH online course (6) and distributing it across Europe to nearly 4,000 stakeholders in the sports sector from 36 countries. Activities to disseminate SCforH guidelines also included organisation of a conference and several workshops, seminars, and symposia attended by more than 1,300 participants. As part of the project we also published the SCforH textbook (7), SCforH country cards (8), four scientific articles (9-12), and six conference abstracts (13-18).

One of the main outputs of the latest SCforH project is also this edited book. The book starts with a chapter including definitions of specialised terms used in the context of the SCforH work (19), to facilitate their understanding in the remaining chapters. The following two chapters provide answers to the question “Why is the SCforH movement needed in Europe?”.

One describes the evolution and current state of physical activity guidelines (20) and the other summarises findings of studies on the prevalence of physical activity in the European Union (21). Next two chapters describe the context in which the SCforH movement has developed, including the structure of the European sports system (22) and the history of HEPA Europe—European network for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity (23). We then describe key activities of the SCforH movement. This part of the book includes chapters on the history of SCforH movement (24), actions to promote health-enhancing physical activity and SCforH approach undertaken by four European and international umbrella sports organisations (25), awareness and use of SCforH guidelines in 36 European countries (26), and 76 examples of SCforH initiatives from 33 European countries (27). The book concludes with a summary of findings from all the chapters (28). I hope the book will be an interesting reading for the stakeholders in the sports sectors, and that it will contribute to the further advancement of the SCforH movement.

As the editor of the book, I wish to thank all the authors for their excellent contributions. Your efforts made this book possible. I also express my gratitude to participants in the empirical studies published in this book and hundreds of individuals and organisations who have contributed to the development of the SCforH movement. Last but not least, on behalf of all authors of the book chapters and other members of the SCforH consortium, I thank the European Commission for their continuous support of our work.

References

1. TNS Opinion & Social. Special Eurobarometer 525: Sport and physical activity. Brussels, Belgium: European Commission; 2022.
2. Whiting S, Mendes R, Morais ST, Gelius P, Abu-Omar K, Nash L, et al. Promoting health-enhancing physical activity in Europe: surveillance, policy development and implementation 2015–2018. *Health Policy*. 2021;125(8):1023-30.
3. Kokko S, Koski P, Savola J, Alen M, Oja P. The guidelines for sports club for health (SCforH) programs. Helsinki, Finland: The Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA); European network for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA Europe); and Finnish Sport for All Association; 2009.
4. Kokko S, Oja P, Foster C, Koski P, Laalo-Häikiö E, Savola J. Sports Club for Health – Guidelines for health-oriented sports activities in a club setting. Helsinki, Finland: Finnish Sport for All Association; 2011.
5. Koski P, Matarma T, Pedišić Ž, Kokko S, Lane A, Hartmann H, et al. Sports Club for Health (SCforH) – updated guidelines for health-enhancing sports activities in a club setting. Helsinki, Finland: Finnish Olympic Committee; 2017.
6. Jurakić D, Matolić T, Bělka J, Benedičić Tomat S, Broms L, De Grauwe G, et al. Sports Club for Health (SCforH) online course: Sports Club for Health (SCforH) consortium; 2021. Available from: <https://course.scforh.info/>.
7. Pedišić Ž, Koski P, Kokko S, Oja P, Savola J, Lane A, et al. Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Textbook. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
8. Pedišić Ž, Matolić T, Benedičić Tomat S, Hartmann H, Strika M, Titze S, et al. Sports Club for Health (SCforH) country cards. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
9. Oja P, Titze S, Memon AR, Jurakić D, Chen S-T, Shrestha N, et al. Health benefits of different sports for adults: systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal and intervention studies. In press.
10. Matolić T, Jurakić D, Podnar H, Radman I, Pedišić Ž. Promotion of health-enhancing physical activity in the sport sector: a study among representatives of 536 sports organisations from 36 European countries. *BMC Public Health*. In press.
11. Matolić T, Pedišić Ž, Jurakić D. Raising awareness about the Sports Club for Health (SCforH) guidelines in the sports, higher education, and health promotion sectors using an online learning tool: outcomes of a large initiative in 36 European countries. In press.
12. Jukić AM, Žganec Brajša F, Jurakić D. Is sport and exercise participation related to the environmental and political factors for physical activity in Croatia? A cross-sectional population-based study. In press.
13. Oja P, Pedišić Ž, Titze S. Health benefits of different sport disciplines: an updated systematic review. 1st Nordic governmental digital conference on physical activity; 27th October 2022; Helsinki, Finland; 2022.
14. Oja P, Titze S, Pedišić Ž, Jurakić D. Health benefits of different sport disciplines: an updated systematic review. *Eur J Public Health*. 2022;32(Supplement 2):ckac093. 17.
15. Pedišić Ž, Matolić T, Podnar H, Radman I, Rakovac M, Háp P, et al. Sports Club for Health (SCforH): 12 years of a successful European initiative. In: Šalaj S, Škegro D, editors. 9th International Scientific Conference on Kinesiology; September 15-19th, 2021; Opatija, Croatia. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2021. p. 698.

16. Matolić T. Creation of the Sports Club for Health online learning tool. Book of abstracts of the first international CALT: Creative Approaches to Learning and Teaching CALT conference; March 24-25, 2023; Osijek, Croatia; 2023.
17. Matolić T, Jurakić D, Podnar H, Radman I, Pedišić Ž. Promotion of health-enhancing physical activity in Europe: a cross-sectional study among 536 sports associations. *Eur J Public Health*. 2022;32(Supplement 2):ckac095. 17.
18. Jurakić D, Matolić T, Pedišić Ž. Development of the Sports Club for Health (SCforH) online learning tool. *Eur J Public Health*. 2022;32(Supplement 2):ckac093. 21.
19. Pedišić Ž, Matolić T, Bělka J, Benedičić Tomat S, Broms L, Chaplais E, et al. Sports Club for Health movement: terminology and definitions. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
20. Titze S, Em S, Oja P. Physical activity guidelines for health: evolution, current status, policy context, and future outlook. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
21. Rakovac M, Pedišić Ž. Physical activity and sport participation in the European Union. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
22. Hartmann H, Benedičić Tomat S. The structure of the European sports system as a framework for the implementation of health-enhancing physical sports activities. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
23. Oja P, Wendel-Vos W. The history of HEPA Europe: Growing from an EU-funded project towards a WHO-Europe network In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
24. Pedišić Ž, Oja P, Koski P, Kokko S, Savola J. The history of the Sports Club for Health movement in Europe. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
25. Pedišić Ž, Rakovac M, Strika M, Podnar H, Radman I. Promotion of health-enhancing sports activities through European and international umbrella sports organisations: four examples of good practice. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
26. Pedišić Ž, Matolić T, Bělka J, Benedičić Tomat S, Broms L, Chaplais E, et al. Dissemination of Sports Clubs for Health guidelines in Europe: a survey-based evaluation. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
27. Benedičić Tomat S, Hartmann H, Pedišić Ž, Strika M, Matolic T, Broms L, et al. Sports Club for Health and similar initiatives in Europe: examples of good practice. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.
28. Pedišić Ž, Jurakić D. Conclusions and future directions. In: Pedišić Ž, editor. *Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Movement in the European Union*. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb; 2022.