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SPORT AND MENTAL WELL-BEING: MAPPING OF GOOD PRACTICES TO PROMOTE MENTAL WELL-BEING IN SPORTS CLUBS

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SP  **RIT**

Sport & Psycho-social Initiative for Inclusive
Training with an aim to develop a framework
for humane, inclusive and empowering coaching
and sport clubs that nurture mental wellbeing.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The European Non-Governmental Sports Organization (ENGSO) leads the SPIRIT project 2020–2022 (Sport & Psycho-social Initiative for Inclusive Training) with partners from Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Greece, and Spain. Aim of the SPIRIT project is to develop a framework for humane, inclusive and empowering coaching and sports clubs that nurture mental well-being.

This report describes the good practices collected by partner countries in the autumn of 2020 with which sports clubs promote mental well-being. The clubs' mental well-being activities were structured as follows: healthy life habits, mental health skills, inclusion, or creating supportive sports club, or all of these. The criteria for good practice stated the following: implemented in a sports club, has taken place in the past 10 years, and addresses mental well-being.

The project uses the term "good practices" instead of "best practices" and emphasises that the collection of good practices sought more good examples and insights from mental well-being promotion in sports clubs than scientifically analysed material. The findings are based on subjective descriptions of club representatives and are selected examples.

The partner countries collected in total 29 good practices using The Good Practice Questionnaire online. Respondents often had simultaneously many roles in the sports club they represented (coach, manager, etc.) Most clubs had more than one main purpose (grassroots sport, rehabilitative sport, competitive or high-performance, or elite sport). Most good practices had more than one target group per age group. In most cases, the good practice was linked to grassroots sports followed by competitive or high-performance sports, rehabilitative sports, and elite sports.

A large proportion of respondents implemented, in some form, all of these mental well-being promotion activities: healthy life habits, mental health skills, inclusion, or creating supportive sports club. The report describes the issues raised by the clubs and the results, strengths and weaknesses of good practices identified by the clubs and, on that basis, recommendations to other clubs.

Good practices provide valuable important information for the next phase of the SPIRIT Project, which will create a coaching framework and an online tool for coaches.

2. ABOUT THE SPIRIT PROJECT

The European Non-Governmental Sports Organization (ENGSO) leads the SPIRIT project 2020–2022 (Sport & Psycho-social Initiative for Inclusive Training) with partners from Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Greece, and Spain.

The SPIRIT project partners are International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), International Table Tennis Federation Foundation (ITTF Foundation), Catalan Union of Sports Federations (UFEC), MIELI Mental Health Finland, Bulgarian Union for Physical Culture and Sports (BUPCS), Hellenic Paralympic Committee, Minor-Ndako, Monaliiku, Flemish Athletics Federation (FAF) and Flanders Sport Agency, and European Lotteries.

The aim of the project is to develop a framework for humane, inclusive and empowering coaching and sports clubs that nurture mental well-being.

This shall be achieved by:

1. Collecting and compiling relevant **research review** and useful **good practice examples** in the field of sport and mental well-being.
2. Developing key **recommendations** for educating coaches that advance the mental well-being of their sports participants. These recommendations for coaches' education will be based on the research review and mapping study of good practices.
3. Creating a **coaching framework** that presents the academic case (based on research review) for sports and mental health in an accessible manner and utilises good practice examples to guide the learner through an educational path.
4. Producing an accessible **online learning course**, facilitating the skills development of coaches in a flexible way. This online educational content will be publicly available and free.

This report focuses on describing the good practices collected by partner organisations in the autumn of 2020 with which sports clubs promote mental well-being.

For more information on the SPIRIT project, please visit the ENGSO site. <https://www.engso.eu/spirit-project>

3. MENTAL WELL-BEING AND ITS PROMOTION

3.1. What is mental well-being?

Mental well-being is a key part of overall well-being and health. Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises one's own potential and is able to make a contribution to one's community. It encompasses emotional resilience, allowing us to enjoy life and overcome disappointments and sadness. Belief in our own, and others' dignity and worth, underlies mental health (WHO 2013, Health Education Authority 1997).

The UK's National Health Service (NHS 2019) lists internationally recognised ways to promote mental well-being. To nurture and strengthen your mental well-being: 1) connect with other people, 2) be physically active, 3) learn new skills, 4) give to others, 5) pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness).

Sports clubs have a lot of potential to promote mental well-being. A person who participates in sports club activities encounters people, is physically active, learns new skills, could help with volunteering, and in addition, performance focuses thoughts to the present. For some people, exercise is also their own way of coping with everyday crises. Interpersonal relationships in the club have a significant impact on whether being involved in the club strengthens or weakens mental well-being.

Mental well-being is one of the most important things in a person's life. It affects overall health and well-being throughout the course of a lifetime. Mental well-being improves opportunities for good relationships and success in studies and working life. (Vorma et al. 2020). Mental health is a resource and its strengthening can be seen as a life skill (MIELI 2019). Mental well-being includes the ability to form interpersonal relationships and find meaningful action in one's life, self-confidence, the ability to solve problems, and the ability to recover from adversity (Vorma et al. 2020). According to Ryff (2014), resilience is the ability to maintain or restore well-being after adversity.

Mental disorders, on the other hand, in western societies occur in about every other person in some point of their lives (Kessler et al. 2005), although they often go undiagnosed. These include, for example, anxiety disorders (such as fear of social situations), mood disorders (such as depressive disorder), and addictive disorders (such as alcoholism). These also include some behavioural disorders in childhood. (THL 2019).

The concept of mental well-being, or positive mental health, helps to see mental health as a more diverse issue than the polarised sick-healthy thinking. With proper treatment, it is possible to have good mental well-being, even if a mental disorder has been diagnosed. In

most cases, mental disorders improve with good treatment and sometimes without treatment. Correspondingly, one can feel that one's mental well-being has deteriorated without illness, for example in a stressful life situation. Mental well-being is a resource that can accumulate or decline. Under favourable conditions, mental well-being resources can increase. Under unfavourable conditions, it can wear out more than what its inherent resilience is (Vorma et al. 2020, MIELI 2019).

Mental well-being is not a static state but is shaped throughout life. It can be strengthened through the individual's own actions as well as those of the community and society (WHO 2004, Vorma et al. 2020). Mental well-being is protected by individual actions and is supported by, for example, a feeling of security, positive early interaction, a positive self-esteem and confidence, learning ability, communication skills, social support of family and friends, and ability to cope with stress. Risk factors for poor mental well-being include parental mental health problems and substance abuse, academic failure, chronic insomnia or pain, illness, substance abuse, loneliness, and poor stress tolerance.

Structural factors that protect mental well-being in society include, for example, the integration of minorities, opportunity to participate and influence, social justice, functioning social services and community support. Risk factors for poor mental well-being include poverty, poor nutrition, easy access to drugs and alcohol, unemployment, violence, war, discrimination and work-related stress.

As an important community, a sports club can look at how it can strengthen the protective factors of mental health of those involved in its activities and thus promote good mental health, as well as reduce the risk factors in its realm.

The Sports Club for Health (SCforH) project (Koski et al. 2017) brought together the key health benefits of exercise. One of the basic pillars of exploiting health potential is that the sports club offers good experiences for participating in its activities by fostering motivation and creating a positive and safe social environment.

Experiencing relevance is an important part of good mental well-being. According to the theory of self-determination, conditions for the emergence and maintenance of intrinsic motivation are created when three basic psychological needs are taken into account: experience of 1) of autonomy, 2) competence, and 3) relatedness (Deci, Ryan 2000). It is worth asking how one can experience appreciation, respect and a sense of belonging in one's own sports club and in the daily life of coaching. How does one's own voice and choices get recognised? How can one experience competence?

3.2. Promoting mental well-being in sports clubs

Like the Health Promotion in a Sports Club research project (Johnson et al. 2010), development work in the SPIRIT project is examined at the levels of the sports club's structure, management and coaching, as well as from the perspective of the working culture.

In sports club mental well-being could be promoted on system level, when the operational policies and regulations and the culture of the sports club support and develop mental well-being. In addition, mental health promotion means that the managers of the sport club promote the “everyone plays” ideology, ensure a safe environment, and support the coaches.

In sports club mental well-being can also be promoted on coaching level, when the coaches have skills to promote the sense of a community and humane, inclusive and empowering culture in their everyday coaching activities. Coaches promote mental health skills as well as healthy daily routines of the participants. Finally, mental well-being promotion means that the coaches strengthen their own mental health skills to face individuals' and groups' or their own emotions.

The working culture crosses both levels and makes things real. Culture means shared values and norms within an organisation, as well as ways to interact with each other and with stakeholders (Schein 2004, Jones 2013). Culture starts with values and beliefs. It crystallises in the phrase “the way we do things around here”. The parable of the iceberg parses different levels of culture. Behaviour, norms, and various physical manifestations are visible on the surface of the water. Deeper, below the surface, personal values and attitudes stand out. At their deepest, are the invisible beliefs and adopted assumptions, often subconscious, that are seldom discussed (Schein 2004, Denison 2012, Jones 2013). Culture is built around values and beliefs, but it is reflected in people's customs, routines, principles, and patterns of action. True values can be mirrored for what time, energy and money are spent in the company. Subcultures can also develop into a culture of action (Cameron, Quin 2006). Its management is the understanding and creation of common rituals, symbols, and meanings. Going to the heart of culture, one might ask, “What do we do when we believe no one is looking?” (Denison 2012).

Figure 1: Mental well-being is promoted at several levels in sports clubs



THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF THE SPORTS CLUB

In the Good Practice Questionnaire of the SPIRIT project, the clubs’ mental well-being activities were structured as follows: healthy life habits, mental health skills, inclusion, or creating supportive sports club, or all of these.

Healthy life habits

The coach supports participants in everyday choices to take care of adequate sleep and rest, food and eating, personal relationships and emotions, exercise and embodied experience, hobbies and creativity (MIELI, "Hand of Mental Well-being" model in Attachment 1). Coaches pay attention to daily choices related to general well-being and ask for example: “Did you have time to take a brake during the day? What gave you pleasure? Was your meal enjoyable? Are your work, studies, hobbies and leisure time balanced?”

Mental health skills

The coach supports the participants' mental health skills, such as emotional, awareness and interaction skills, as well as the ability to focus on the present and cope with stress. The coach also trains himself/herself in these skills.

Inclusion

The operating culture of the club and the team promotes that each participant experiences belonging/involvement in their own community. They can also influence things “with their own voice”, while at the same time experiencing autonomy, and be themselves.

Create supportive sports club

The club's policies and guidelines, management and structures support the above and nurture a safe environment for all, regardless of background.

Mental health skills are defined as emotional skills, awareness skills, interpersonal skills, resilience to cope with life's crisis and capability to regulate mental load and stress and furthermore, to create meaningful relationships with people and one's environment. They also include the ability to manage and regulate impulses that could lead to harmful substance abuse or otherwise harmful life controlling activity. Mental health skills also include everyday life skills and recognising the mental resources in oneself and others and the ability to maintain balance between work, studying, rest and hobbies. Talking about mental health, and its deterioration, are also mental health skills, as is the readiness to judge when one's own resources are not enough and when there is a need for professional help. (Vorma ym. 2020, MIELI 2019).

For more information on slides of mental well-being and related the sports clubs, and the sources, please follow [the link here](#).

4. COLLECTION PROCESS

“Good practice” could be generally described as a working practice or a set of working methods that is accepted of being valuable to use and in this context is being used in coaching and sports clubs. Good practice is ideally described formally and in detail that others could evaluate and utilise it as well.

In the design of the SPIRIT project, it was understood that the level of systematicity and reporting methods of sports clubs would differ. Therefore, the project uses the word "good practices" instead of "best practices" and emphasises that the collection of good practices sought more good examples and insights from mental well-being promotion in sports clubs than scientifically analysed material. The findings are based on subjective descriptions of the club representatives and are examples.

Partner countries collected good practices of mental well-being promotion from their national sports clubs. The collection took place during the autumn of 2020. The criteria for good practice stated the following: implemented in a sports club, in the past 10 years, and addresses mental well-being.

The SPIRIT project contact person in each country was looking for good practice in the way they saw fit, either directly from a sports club they knew was suitable for mental well-being promotion, for example, or through recommendations from a national sports federation or other relevant organisation.

The Good Practice Questionnaire (Attachment 2) was prepared by MIELI Mental Health Finland with an input from the project partners. The introduction to the Questionnaire described the concept of mental well-being, because it was anticipated to be unfamiliar to many club members especially from the perspective of positive mental health and mental health skills. The Questionnaire included links to a broader presentation of the concept of mental well-being from a sports perspective.

The contact persons in the partner countries received uniform model messages to be sent to the clubs, which they could translate into their languages and modify as necessary. The Questionnaire was in English and had to be filled in via an online form. The contact persons agreed with the sports clubs in their countries either that the clubs filled in the Questionnaire directly online in English, or sent the responses to the questions in the national language to the contact person who then translated their responses and filled in the Questionnaire online. In some cases, the contact person filled in the Questionnaire based on an interview with a sports club representative and sent the information to MIELI representatives to be filled in the online form.

5. BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS, CLUBS AND PRACTICES

There were total of 30 submitted response. Partner countries collected 28 good practices: Belgium (7), Bulgaria (4), Finland (6), Germany (3), Greece (2) and Spain (6). Given the differences in sports systems between countries, such differences were allowed. One answer came from France via partners' networks. Respondents could choose more than one answer in most questions and it was possible to skip a question, i.e. not all questions were mandatory. One response was discarded in the absence of almost all of the requested information.

Respondents' backgrounds

Respondents varied and often played many roles in the sports club. Most commonly, the respondent acted as a coach or instructor (15 respondents) or was a member of the club's management (13) in the position of, for example, chairman, board member, manager, or director of a particular area of responsibility. Less than half of the respondents (12) had two or more roles in the club. Respondents also included two national organisations.

In addition, some respondents (4) reported other roles, such as a club employee, secretary, or coordinator. These roles were also mentioned (3): athlete, volunteer, and local social project coordinator. The project did not specifically ask whether the respondent acted in his or her own role on a voluntary basis, which is common in sports.

The main purpose of the club

Most clubs (21 respondents) had more than one main purpose. Most often, the main purpose was related to grassroots sport (22). More than half of the respondents stated that the basic task of the club was rehabilitative sport (17) or competitive or high-performance sport (17). About one in three respondents (10) reported the club's main purpose as elite sport. When the club announced only one main purpose (8), it was related to either rehabilitative sport (4), grassroots sport (3), or competitive or high-performance sport (1). A few respondents indicated in the open answer field that the main purpose was related to educational or social goals.

Target group of the good practice

Most good practices had more than one targeted age group. The age group targets of good practices were adults (22 respondents), children (20), young people (19), seniors (14). The Questionnaire did not specify age groups, so due to national differences, age

classifications may have varied. There were big variations in the concept of seniors. It could mean, for example, over 18 years of age or over 64 years of age.

In addition, there were special projects or activities for people in vulnerable life situations, such as immigrants, those living with or recovering from a disease, or young people in a difficult life situation. Some responses (6) specifically identified in this context that the target group was people in a vulnerable position, such as refugees and migrants, or young people at risk of exclusion. Among the clubs for people living with a disease, those with breast cancer and those with Alzheimer's were mentioned. Common groups for people with a disability were also mentioned.

The main purpose of the good practice

In most cases, good practice was linked to the grassroots sport (23 respondents) and next most commonly to competitive or high-performance sports (15), rehabilitative sports (13) or elite sports (8).

The starting year

Most respondents (26 respondents) reported that good practice in the club continues and no end date was planned. A large part of the practices (20) had been initiated within the last ten years (2010-2019). A small number of clubs (6) announced that the practice had started earlier.

Promotion activities

In most cases, the good practice was promoted as part of training and coaching. Most good practices were promoted through a number of activities: training process (28), exchanges of best practices (18), educational programs (14), code of conduct and the club's values (14), awareness raising events (13), educational toolkits (11), awareness raising campaigns (8).

The source of the idea

In less than half of the good practices, the idea had come from a specific person within the club. Otherwise, the idea had come from outside the club as a result of the cooperation of several stakeholders, from an individual or the target group itself.

Implementers and collaborators

There were several implementers and collaborators both inside and outside the club. Most often, the key player of implementation was a coach or instructor (20 respondents) (coaches, trainers, instructors, educators, volunteers). Implementers also included those in coaching (participants, players), the club's management (president, board, owner) and the club in general, other members of the club (secretary, sports coordinator, technical

person, administrative person, choreographer, assistant) and experts (sports psychologist, mental coach, psychologist).

Respondents named other clubs, sports federations and similar organisations and families (family, parents, caregivers) and regional authorities or agencies (city, municipality, insurance company) as implementers and partners of good practice. Experts and the organisations in the field of education (nursery, school, teacher), social sector (local poverty organisations, refugee shelters, refugee centre, safety house, youth prison, employment centre), health care (nutrition coach, psychiatric centre, youth care department, medical centre) were also named as partners.

Costs and Funding

Almost all respondents (25) reported that the costs of good practice were covered from within the club by various means of raising income. More than half added that external funding was also obtained for the activity, for example from a public authority. The answers were so disparate that it is not possible to go into a more detailed analysis of the external funding.

6. MENTAL WELL-BEING PROMOTION IN GOOD PRACTICES

Respondents were asked to name which of the following mental well-being promotion activities represent the good practice: healthy life habits, mental health skills, inclusion or creating supportive sports club. Respondents could choose several options.

A large proportion of respondents associated the good practice with all of these mental well-being promotion activities: inclusion (29 respondents), healthy life habits (27), mental health skills (26), or creating supportive sports club (25).

The following sets out in more detail what issues the respondents raised when they described their views on the impact of good practice in an open response field of the Questionnaire.

6.1. Healthy Life Habits

Above all, the responses highlighted that good practice supports regular physical activity among participants, which in itself is good for mental well-being. At the same time, it increases the rhythm of everyday life and work-life balance and related skills. The responses named that good practice promotes interpersonal relationships as well as friendly encounters with other people, and also promotes teamwork. Some pointed out that purposeful thinking related to sports activities also supported healthy lifestyles as well as participation in schoolwork. Good practice fostered collaboration with other arenas important to participants, such as parents and schools.

The responses indicated that coaching addressed, among other things, nutrition and recovery as part of coaching or in separate workshops. For young people living in a vulnerable life situation, a healthy lifestyle could be at the heart of coaching, allowing also showering and healthy eating after the exercise. One respondent pointed out that good practice allowed care givers to rest and recover.

“Sport goes hand in hand with healthy living”

“Friendly contact in life and in the competition process”

“Reach a lot of people who haven’t done sport before”

“The information on healthy life habits is an integral part of training”

“The information on healthy life habits was mainly left to a few separate seminars”

6.2. Mental Health Skills

Respondents pointed out that creating a positive and encouraging atmosphere is an important part of good coaching and good practice. Respondents gave some examples how everyone is met personally during training, everyone is mentioned by name and everyone gets feedback.

The responses mentioned that experiences of success and being respected affect self-esteem. Positive self-talk is linked to self-esteem. One club developed a particularly positive self-talk in exercises and competitions, as well as goal setting. A couple of responses brought up that young people have a lot of negative self-talk and that young people's perseverance also seems to have diminished.

The replies indicated that sport is a valuable place to learn to face disappointments and difficult emotions in a safe environment. Interaction skills and kindness should be part of everyday sports. Some responses highlighted the need to develop the interaction skills of coaches and instructors in general so that the supportive culture is not dependent on one coach. There is also a need to increase understanding of different cultures.

Respondents used words such as emotional balance, personal dignity, positive self-speech, self-talk, self-image, personal dignity, confidence, trust, emotional skills, emotional balance, personal security, decision making, problem solving, experience of success, handling failures in a safe environment, dealing with frustrations, disappointments, critic and aggression, group pressure, authority, self-control, tolerance, persistence, focus (concentration), collectivism, friendly relationships, social skills, personal feedback, responsibility.

“The focus is on regulating and managing emotional balance”

“Sport is only a social activity in the free time”

“We take time for conversation during and after sport activities”

“Re-educate to get best out of each one”

“An encouraging atmosphere doesn't just depend on a certain skilled coach”

6.3. Inclusion

Respondents pointed out that the club should be a safe place to practice and compete. An open and inclusive club can be developed together. Coaching policies should be approved by the organisation at every level and prepared together.

Many clubs generally expressed that immigrants and special groups are welcome to join. A few good practices were specifically targeted at refugees or immigrants. In order to lower the threshold for sports, the cooperation and pooling of skills between many professionals is needed. People in a vulnerable life situation need special support, such as free equipment.

The direction of attention to inclusion varied. Respondents named actions in grassroots sports that would give each current participant equal attention and positive feedback in coaching, for example. Other good practices sought to make sports possible at all for immigrants, vulnerable young people or people living with a disease, and organised their own groups. In some good practices, mixed groups were organised, involving both immigrants and locals, people with and without disability, with the view that everyone in the groups learns and grows.

Some respondents said that opportunities for low-income participants to exercise were supported, for example, by providing sports equipment. Respondents highlighted the key role of society, city or municipality in providing facilities cheaply or free of charge.

Respondents used words such as everybody, mixed groups, special attention, interaction, grouping, active role, values, concretisation, low threshold, above all fun, everyone is listened to, safety comes first, current mental stage, working together, good communication, sports culture (martial arts), nobody is excluded, everyone plays equal time, assistant coaches, contact with the natural environment, personal responsibility, being themselves, meet people with the same fears, problems and desires, being part of the team, being appreciated, transparency, community spirit.

“Everyone in the group feels respected and can state her/his need and wishes”

“Everyone is listened to and to make sure that the fun stays above all”

“Everyone is welcome in our club”

“Being part of a team, being appreciated, being missed when you’re not there”

“Special groups and families are involved in the activities”

“Refugees and migrants are welcomed in the mixed groups”

“Coaches are required to pay special attention to and respect to specific national, gender and ethnic customs and traditions”

“The goals of wanted work culture are concretised with the practical examples”

“Meet people with the same fears, problems and desires”

6.4. Creating supportive sports club

Several respondents mentioned that the implementation of the good practice was linked to the management and rules of the sports club. Among other things, they highlighted the coaching guidelines. Some clubs also had separate educational policies and policies on a safe sports environment and health promotion. Part of the response linked the principles to the general principles of sport, sport federation, and society nationally and globally.

Respondents pointed out that clubs need uniform principles and coaching guidelines that have been prepared and concretised together. Some respondents also highlighted the importance of training, orientation and recruitment of coaches. It was also pointed out that the coaching culture of the club should not be too dependent on a particular coach. Some respondents highlighted the importance of continuous monitoring and improving the quality of coaching and gave examples of their own good practice.

One club gave an example of how everyone in the club commits to the rules of the game of coaching. Each child prepares rules of the game, such as how to treat teammates, together and with appropriate vocabulary, and signs the rules of the game. At each session, the coach or instructor gives encouraging feedback on the activities under this.

It was also emphasised that everyone has a responsibility to ensure that recreational sport, above all, supports success and community, and is not too competitive. Practical exercises that support the guidelines must be prepared together with players and enthusiasts, and all activities must be transparent. One club gave examples of how participation in training groups and trainings, communication circles and competition events enable people of different ages to participate in the event, which increases community spirit.

“Our operations are transparent in the team, we talk about budget, calendar and incidents etc.”

“The trainer is not just a coach”

“The principles of positive discipline allow children to feel accepted, respected, and listened to during the training”

“Everyone gets equal attention and equal time to say what they want about matches, training or the team”

7. NAMES OF CLUBS AND GOOD PRACTICES

The ways of describing a good practice varied. Some descriptions lacked a name for the good practice. The designation of some good practices needed to be clarified in order to be as informative as possible in the list of good practices. The words in parentheses are used to clarify them.

Table 1: The sports clubs and good practices

COUNTRY	NAME OF THE CLUB	NAME OF GOOD PRACTICE
Belgium	Sportclub Boezjeern	Sportclub Boezjeern (vulnerable persons)
Belgium	Foyer Cricket Club	Mixed-age training sessions with older players as assistant-coaches
Belgium	Minor-Ndako Sport	Minor-Ndako Sport (young refugees)
Belgium	Les Gazelles de Bruxelles vzw	Les Gazelles de Bruxelles vzw (disadvantaged groups, running)
Belgium	OpBoksen (De Uitdaging)	OpBoksen (youngsters in Olympic boxing)
Belgium	Younited Roeselare	Younited Roeselare (football, social welfare, reconnect marginalised people with society)
Belgium	Beerschot Vrienden Atletiek Club (BVAC)	Sport op Maat (a project for newcomers to start coaching in the club).
Bulgaria	Central Police Taekwon-Do Club	The martial art Taekwon-Do as a means of integration, education, training, physical and mental development of the young generation in Bulgaria.
Bulgaria	Kung Fu ToA Academy	Kung Fu Toa as a means of integration, education, training, physical and mental development of the young generation in Bulgaria
Bulgaria	SC Akademik-Golden tiger	Positive discipline by Jane Nelsen & Linn Lott (coaches using "Positive discipline)

Bulgaria	Condoria Football Club	Social inclusion and equality through Football
Finland	TanssiDans ry (Dance Sports Club)	Mental well-being of children and young people - Dancer's Speech app
Finland	Maunulan Spinni - Spinniskola	Immigrant Youth DropOut prevention
Finland	Helsingin Jalkapalloklubi ry (HJK ry) HJK Helsinki Football Club	HJK player path 6-9 year olds - a child-centred coaching model
Finland	Kuntoliikunta- ja kulttuuriseura Huurteiset Herrat ry	Fitness and Culture Association Huurteiset Herrat - ice hockey as a hobby in senior age
Finland	Lahjan Tytöt ry (Gymnastics club)	Responsibility for children and young people in Lahjan Tytöt - equality and safety first
Finland	Lahden suunnistajat -37 (orienteering)	Lahden Suunnistajat -37 - a mover for the whole family
France	<i>Name not provided</i>	Ping4Alzheimers (table tennis)
Germany	<i>Name not published</i>	Being out on the fresh air and have a casual meeting after practice (breast cancer patients)
Germany	<i>Name not provided</i>	Vaulting and partner exercises (with horse) Belongs to: Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung
Germany	<i>Name not published</i>	Regular volleyball training and competitions (team)
Greece	Spartakos Thessaloniki Swimming Club for persons with a disability	Inclusive open behaviour to encourage all athletes to develop themselves and empower them to participate in small or major events and develop their self-confidence and a lifestyle based on athletic values.
Greece	Panathinaikos Sport Club	Best of both worlds. Inclusive coaching of athletes with and without disabilities

Spain	Club Esportiu d'Arts Marcials Xavi Nadal	<i>No specific name</i> (The School of Martial Arts Team)
Spain	Catalan Hockey Federation	Organisation of competitions, Training of coaches, referees, Inter club relations
Spain	Federació Catalana de Voleibol	Set Obligatori (regulation inside)
Spain	Federació Catalana d'Activitats Subaquàtiques - FECIDAS	Training course of monitor on land and Certification of referee of swimming with fins
Spain	Field Hockey	Social activities and sport activities related with competitions and the attitude of doing them.
Spain	UFEC – Union of Sports Federation in Catalonia	<i>No specific name</i> (integration projects for young people)

8. RESPONDENTS' EVALUATION OF THEIR PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Respondents self-evaluated the results, strengths and weaknesses of their good practice and made recommendations based on their experience.

8.1. Results of mental well-being promotion in the reported good practices

Respondents summarised the results of their good practice. Descriptions varied. Participation in sports was most commonly mentioned. More than half of the respondents cited participation in sport as a result of the good practice. This could mean an increase in the number of participants, commitment to training, or the number of new members or activists, including a decrease in drop-out (stay longer), as well as the number of coaches remaining in the club.

Some responses mentioned good feedback from participants, athletes, coaches, partners or officials as a result. Some mentioned feedback collection practices.

Some responses highlighted the strengthening of participants' mental well-being and life skills. Responses highlighted reduced isolation and increased participation in club and society.

Responses talked about growth as a human being, interpersonal relationships, increased overall well-being, healthy lifestyles, better health, life management, and better attachment to school or work. Responses described emotional balance, mental skills dealing with psycho-social problems, changes in behaviour, problem-solving skills, and empowerment.

Some responses highlighted the development of the quality of coaching and the application of new knowledge and skills or developing the team culture to be more inclusive.

Some respondents cited an increase in the sports club, which meant an increase in training volumes or full-time coaches. A few mentioned the resulting strengthening of the club's reputation, economy, financial self-sufficiency, athletic performance, or year-round conditions.

“Most of them didn't do any sports before”

“Child-centred and rehabilitative sports became an independent entity in the sports club”

“The effect of young people’s self-confidence has never really been measured.”

8.2. Strengths of the reported good practices

The strengths of the good practices were most commonly identified as everyone’s motivation and commitment, cooperation, low threshold in sports, an individual orientation on coaching, and advanced coaching skills.

The strength was that the actors of good practice were motivated and committed to development work.

Some respondents highlighted the strength of co-operation within the club and with stakeholders, as well as the fact that the good practice was built on multi-professional co-operation. The strength mentioned was that the development project was part of the club's wider development work, not just a stand-alone project. The culture of continuous development of the club was mentioned as a strength, supported by, for example, education, mentoring and tutoring.

As a result, some respondents mentioned that in coaching, the orientation was on the individual’s basic psychological needs and developmental stages, which was also accompanied by age-appropriate thinking in coaching children and young people.

Advanced coaching skills were named as a strength of good practices and the team spirit of the club, openness and the fact that the coaches were involved in creating the practice from the beginning. Cooperation with the club's partners and authorities was also mentioned as a strength.

Good practices reached people who would otherwise have been in danger of being left out of everything. Good practices gave birth to a regular way of gathering. The strength of some practices was that people in different life situations work together.

Regularity of exercises and a low threshold for participation were mentioned as strengths. This meant, among other things, finding a training place nearby and affordable access to equipment. For groups in vulnerable situations, the overall solution, “full package”, provided by the good practice, including sports equipment, was mentioned as a strength.

Some respondents pointed out that concreteness was a strength. In good practices, very practical goals were created for coaching and tools were given to achieve them. Some responses highlighted that good practice methods helped to cope with the challenges of the pandemic.

Some responses highlighted the use of role models in coaching. The perspective was also mentioned as a strength that the participant in the exercises was primarily a trainee or player of the club and not a patient or vulnerable, even if he or she was ill or in a vulnerable life situation.

Strengths also included a good reputation, finding coordinating help within the club, finances, city support, trust and a non-competitive atmosphere.

“Education through sports is its own and respected field or area in the club”

“A single project is part of the larger mental well-being project”

“Paths of coaching are divided by education and training by age”

“Full-packing an immediate involvement –coaches and trainers with both a social and sports background”

“A lot of spotters who didn’t sport or move before started to sport”

“The environment is not very competitive, all tournament and matches are friendlies, there are no cups to be won”

8.3. Weaknesses of the reported good practices

The weaknesses of the good practices were most often mentioned as time, economy, resistance to change and competence.

Finding time for weekly sports, as well as finding time for additional tasks in the club, were named as weaknesses. Resistance to change was a weakness and the benefits of the new activity may not have been identified. Sometimes resistance to change can also come from partners, such as health care professionals, as doubts about the potential of sports.

Economic factors were identified as weaknesses in good practices. Finding an additional budget for new activities or development work is challenging when families and authorities have limited resources at their disposal. Long distances between home and hobby, the cost of facilities and the difficulty of finding inexpensive sports equipment were highlighted as weaknesses. Weaknesses highlighted financial difficulties in organising activities on weekends.

As a weakness was mentioned that embracing the identity and role of an educational coach can be challenging at first when the coach him/herself has a competitive athlete’s

background. It was also identified as a weakness that the benefits of a positive coaching style are not apparent before it is put into practice.

Some respondents cited the difficulty of finding advanced coaches and volunteers as a weakness. Knowledge of both the sport and the target group was needed. Some clubs pointed out that the skills and the atmosphere were too dependent on just one excellent coach. Some practical application was only successful in the hands of a very good coach.

A weakness in good practices was defined as a lack of understanding of different cultures, nationalities, religions, or life situations. Some responses also highlighted the stigma towards different target groups.

Weaknesses also mentioned the difficulty of measuring the overall results of the good practice in relation to, for example, participants' lifestyles, social skills or mental well-being.

More support staff would be needed for the activities of the vulnerable, which was perceived as a weakness. One response also highlighted legislative factors and contractual issues as weaknesses in the good practice.

“Promoting healthy life skills is too dependent on a particular coach”

“This just works with the great trainer”

“This is still too coach-specific”

“There is still a lot to develop in the club’s coaching skills”

“The requirements for the quality of clubs are high and growing”

“The consumer also demand professionalism from the NGO sector”

“Some players might find it difficult to adjust their new role as player-coach”

*“One big theme that appears today in the daily life of coaching children:
perseverance and its lack”*

“The limited financial and material possibilities of the families and the state”

8.4. Recommendations from respondents

The respondents most often recommended co-operation, the preparation of coaching guidelines together, and the concreteness of implementing the guidelines.

Some respondents highlighted collaborative and growth partnerships with parents, sports psychologists, teachers and other professionals in the fields of education, health or social care.

Sports was seen a powerful tool for inclusion and the formation of a healthy lifestyle and related mental well-being. Therefore, many respondents thought that sports should be offered at a low threshold. Concreteness is important in the development of coaching. Coaching guidelines should be prepared and discussed among all actors in the club.

It was also mentioned that the exercises and materials should be very practical. It is important for coaches to have highly concretised examples of practical situations.

Coaching was seen as needing continuous development and a wide range of support measures. The coaching culture of the club is influenced already in the coach's recruitment phase, as well as through training, evaluation and, among other things, mentoring. The company must allocate time for development work.

It was commonly felt that excessive competition must be avoided in order to maintain the fun first principle. Young enthusiasts should also be recruited for the coach or instructor path. The company should make use of role models from their own community.

Some respondents also recommended combined groups. It is good to strengthen holistic thinking about sport. Some respondents recommended perseverance, overcoming adversity, and finding partners to support development work.

“Have tolerance for frustration and strength to not give up and keep trying”

“Convince the idea and then apply it in a simply way”

“Guidelines should be prepared and discusses among all actors in the club and openly”

“Build a community of partners around your club who can help or invest and believe in what are you doing”

“Work together with partners from different sectors: work, education, sport, health care”

9. DISCUSSION

The project uses the phrase "good practices" instead of "best practices". The collection of good practices sought more examples and insights on the promotion of mental well-being in sports clubs than scientifically analysed material. The results are based on subjective descriptions of good practice clubs and are examples. The collection process between the six partner countries has also provided valuable insight into the promotion of mental well-being in sports clubs of their respective countries. The authors' own long-term experiences of sports club activities and sports culture also contributed to the insights in this discussion section.

Start from the basics with a new concept

A total of 29 good practices were collected by partner countries. Each of them is unique and a good practice built on its specific context and need to promote mental health. The way in which each good practice approached mental well-being in sports varied considerably, reflecting the different role of both sports and mental well-being in societies across Europe. Overall, it can be argued that the concept of mental well-being promotion is still quite new in the field of sport. There needs to be more work in providing information, materials, tools and support to sports organisations to enable them to develop better mental health skills among their workforce (including volunteers).

In the big picture, at least three dimensions for the good practices could be identified. 1) The purpose of the good practice was to provide high-quality coaching for those involved in the club activities and especially for the target group in question. The aim was, for example, to promote the individuality of the coaching, the child-orientation, the positive atmosphere, the participants' self-esteem and safety. Clubs and coaches collaborated with professionals such as education or psychological coaching. 2) The purpose of the good practice was to provide and enable participation in a sports club for vulnerable young people, immigrants, people living with a disease or disability, thus increasing inclusion, well-being and reducing the risk of exclusion. The coaching required expertise to take into account the vulnerable life situation and cultural background, as well as cooperation with social and health care or regional authorities. Outside of sports, concrete support measures were also needed to lower the threshold, such as the provision of equipment. "Mixed groups" were also organised. 3) The role of the good practice was to play sports for a certain small group of people only for fun and social reasons.

Sports combined all the good practices, but there were identifiable differences in implementation, for example in terms of competence needs and partners. The basic mood of club activities may also be influenced by whether the emphasis is primarily on "growing into physical activity" or "growing through physical activity", quoting the national core curriculum for basic education (2014) from Finland.

Most clubs had more than one main purposes: grassroots sport, rehabilitative sport, competitive or high-performance sport, or elite sport. It would be interesting to increase the discussion on how to lead a club that works from many basic motives and in such a way that the values of the club are as much about the growth of the child as it is about success in top sports. What does this also mean for coach identity?

Beliefs and values as a topic

Aim of the SPIRIT project is to develop a framework for humane, inclusive and empowering coaching and sport clubs that nurture mental well-being. The focus is on the participatory and empowering working culture of the entire club and the activities of the individual coach. Sports clubs have a lot of potential to promote mental well-being. Interpersonal relationships in the club have a significant impact on whether working in the club strengthens or weakens mental well-being.

The beliefs and values behind working culture are usually talked about too infrequently. The beliefs and values that underlie club activities also guide the ways in which each instructor, coach and club leader operates and the working culture of the entire club. Cameron & Quinn (1999, 46) have highlighted competing values in organisations depending on whether the cultural type is hierarchical, tribal, market-driven, or agile. It would be interesting to study the coaches' and club management's beliefs about the club's basic role and to model development work in which the club jointly identifies its value drivers, the club's valued leadership style, view of efficiency and whether, for example, the operating culture is driven by cooperation, control, creativity or competition.

Habits of action seem to be unnoticed factors that protect or threaten mental well-being in the club's working culture. In coaching development, it is helpful to identify current beliefs and values inherited from history that feel as given and will not be questioned. Often, structural changes or coaching policies are prepared together, so they provide a good opportunity to discuss and share views on the club's values, beliefs, and implementation of the core mission during this time.

A high-quality coaching culture can support mental well-being protective factors and reduce the threats to it. Factors that contribute to good mental well-being include, for example, the ability to interpersonal relationships, the ability to act meaningfully, self-confidence, the ability to solve problems, and the ability to recover from adversity. One of the basic pillars is that the sports club offers participants a positive experience by fostering motivation and creating a positive and safe social environment.

Experiencing relevance is an important part of good mental well-being. According to the theory of self-determination, conditions for the emergence and maintenance of intrinsic motivation are created when three basic psychological needs are taken into account: experience of 1) of autonomy, 2) competence, and 3) relatedness (Deci, Ryan 2000). It is worth asking how you can experience appreciation, respect and a sense of belonging in

your own sports club and in the daily life of coaching. How does your own voice and choices get space? How can one experience competence? How would the club even better support the basic psychological needs of participants and club actors?

Simple, concrete actions are needed to promote mental health

A large proportion of respondents associated good use with all of these mental well-being promotion activities: healthy life habits, mental health skills, inclusion, or creating supportive sports club. Healthy life habits were seen as having the intrinsic value of promoting sports in general as well as its impact on other healthy choices and rhythms and interactions in life. Mental health skills highlighted, for example, a positive and encouraging atmosphere, self-esteem and problem-solving skills, encountering disappointments, and interaction skills. In the case of inclusion, the security of club activities, transparency, co-prepared coaching policies, the cooperation of many professionals and support for lowering the threshold for all were highlighted. In creating an encouraging sports club, the leadership of the club and the rules that had to be prepared and concretised together were mentioned. Many open answers highlighted the social significance of the sports club in promoting and enabling participation, which was seen as a good practice in itself.

However, the descriptions obtained in the open responses were quite general and conceptually variable. This is probably due in part to the practical nature of club activities and also to the fact that the concept of mental well-being is still relatively new in the field of sport. In order to promote mental well-being in sports clubs, a common frame of reference for promotion of mental well-being in sports clubs is needed. It would also be useful for international research projects examining health promotion in sports clubs to ensure the mental health perspective is also included. Respondents from sports clubs made recommendations to other sports clubs based on their good practice experiences. In most cases, cooperation within and outside the club was encouraged. Joint preparation of coaching guidelines was considered important. Coaching guidelines and tips should be taken to a very concrete level.

It also turned out that there is a need for further work on the SPIRIT project. In the process of the six partner countries, a common observation was also made that we are still conceptually on the verge of something new in the promotion of mental health. The process began by sharing insights into mental health. MIELI Mental Health Finland created background material for the project on what is the promotion of mental health in a sports club. The International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICCSPE) launched a systematic literature review of the project on sports coaching from a mental health perspective. Together with the literature review, good practices will provide valuable fuel for the next phase of the SPIRIT project, which will create a coaching framework and online tool for coaches.

"A coach is not just a coach"

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