



Bsport+

WHITE PAPER ON POLICY MAKERS ALBANIA

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



B-Sport +: WHITE PAPER ON POLICY MAKERS**INTRODUCTION: SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

The physical activity levels of children and youth are commonly questioned, but the evidence cited is both equivocal and methodologically diverse. The amount and type of physical activity undertaken during childhood that is appropriate for optimal health is unknown, although it has been suggested that, in the absence of such criteria, activity levels known to confer health benefits in adults are also appropriate for children. The measurement of activity in children is problematical, and there is currently no valid method of assessing activity levels that is feasible for use in large studies. Therefore, studies may lack either internal validity or wider applicability. Exercise makes it easier to control blood glucose (blood sugar) level. Exercise benefits people with type 1 because it increases insulin sensitivity. In other words, after exercise, your body doesn't need as much insulin to process carbohydrates.

Children with type 1 diabetes, should get enough exercise that is not only a great way to help manage diabetes but also instill healthy habits from an early age.

Therefore, children and young people with diabetes should be supported with specific programs to assist them in better management of diabetes and promotion of physical and psychological well-being. Very important is the involvement of family members, caregivers, educators, teachers, sports coaches, medical team, peers and civil society.

In Albania there are no HEPA programs for young people and children with diabetes, so this category would benefit greatly if:

1. Education at an early age to manage the problem and aim for general well-being.
2. Involvement in well-studied physical activities, to benefit physically and psychologically
3. Long-term reduction of health and social costs
4. Community involvement and networking

In spite of obvious progress, the condition of the country, in all sectors (medical, educational, social, etc.) remains seriously degraded. Infrastructures should be rehabilitated, the facilities are rare or little adapted, and the staff is untrained. 6.2 percent of the adult population in Albania (or 2,084,137 persons), suffer from some sort of disability. Refers to people who identify themselves as having severe or extreme difficulty in at least one of the following: seeing, hearing, mobility, cognition, self-care, communication, or disability. The most commonly encountered type of disability is movement restrictions (3.7 percent), and the least common ones are hearing and communication (1.7 and 1.5 percent respectively), while vision, learning and self-care fall somewhere in between. They need to be motivated (activated) to adopt healthy habits and one of the best approaches is coaching and emulation (Ferre, 2015). In addition,

policy adjustments are needed to facilitate the complete and active participation of PwDs in HEPA, and to contribute to social inclusion through these activities. So being part of B-SPORT+ to generate a HEPA Policy Lab to address, examine and recommend policy life cycles.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

There is not a latest national statistic on number/percentage of how many PwD's live in Albania. According to FIMITIC (2011) there are about 32.000 Labor Invalids, 33,000 children (one on five) suffer a deficiency (of which 14 000 of a mental or sensory deficiency), 35,000 disabled persons benefit from state allowance (mostly labor invalids). People with disabilities in Albania are a sizeable vulnerable population group. The 2011 Census provides that 137,435 people of the age 15 years old and over, of which 75,239 women, live with disabilities. Presently, there are contradictory data on disability prevalence in children and youth in Albania. Regardless of the urgent need, no specific study has been conducted to assess the scale of disability prevalence in Albanian children and the services available to support their needs. Furthermore, previous data collection on child disability in Albania has relied on models not in compliance with the requirements of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Nevertheless, such data on prevalence are considered imperative also because trustworthy data account for planning and expansion of more effective interventions and support with regard to both intervention cost and time. Countries that have ratified the UNCRPD, such as Albania, pursuant to Article 31 of the Convention are required to "undertake to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention." Furthermore, the same article of the UNCRPD states that the state shall "identify and address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights" (UN,2006). The present study marks the first national study on disability prevalence in children and youth in Albania. In terms of approach and conception, methodology and selected research instruments, this study represents a new era in this field. Moreover, it has been designed in compliance with the UNCRPD requirements regarding statistical data collection for persons with disabilities (TELESEICT, 2019).

The hospital admission, officially free of charge or reimbursable, indeed paid under the - table, is a maximum 21 days. After this hospital period, the patients are sent home, and medical treatment is almost interrupted, because of lack of rehabilitation services, or failure to use the services. No state institution distributes for free orthopedic devices. Rehabilitation services such as physiotherapist and



psych motorist are in considerable numbers, mostly in the capital, but are private services that cost and cannot be accessed by all persons with disabilities. There is a great lack of inclusion for people with disabilities regarding those services. In such a context, disabled persons, not receiving health care, are exposed to serious risk factors that directly threaten their life quality and considerably reduce their life expectancy.

As for the disability prevention, it is little taken into consideration, as the prenatal and postnatal health care services do not dispose precise diagnosis devices for early identification of disability. Most of the time it is the family or the teacher the first to detect a child deficiency and unfortunately it is often too late. The legal frame exists. But the legislation doesn't cover all categories of disabled persons and big gaps have been created between these various categories. Otherwise, laws don't cover all disabled persons rights. Finally, by-laws for application of these laws are not always followed by the sufficient funds for their practical application. It is therefore necessary, to clearly redefine a national policy on disability and an operational strategy reflecting a more modern undiscriminating legislation adapted to the PwDs' needs and followed by positive actions. It is also very important the legislator to dispose the means for making these laws known and implemented. This objective could not be reached without a close cooperation between disability associations and the public authorities, or without making pressure on the government (FIMITIC, 2011).

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SPORT PARTICIPATION FOR PwDs

Special education programs are not considered a priority by the public authorities. The teaching staff is composed of teachers without special education background on disability and not knowing the methods and tools indispensable to work with disabled children. The university curricula for disability are not yet included in the education program. In fact, disabled children are almost excluded from the compulsory education, and also deprived from integration services. Youngsters and teenagers are not attending either vocational or occupational, neither professional education program (FIMITIC, 2011).

The right to education for all children in Albania, including children with disabilities, is guaranteed by a variety of laws and regulations as well as objectives socially defined in the constitution. The law on pre-university education sets out principles that guide the education of children with disabilities, specifically for the development of their physical and intellectual potential, improving the quality of life and ensuring their full integration into society and the labour market. The law promotes the concept of inclusive education, emphasizing that involvement in specialized educational institutions is temporary and that involvement in kindergartens and general schools is important primary (Ferre, 2015).

There is no official data on PwDs sport inclusion in Albania but there are some activities that are organized for PwDs. ADP Albania partnered with Genuine Effect to organize "BITT 2016 – Tribute to Mati" where disabled people participated not only as professional players but also as professional referees. Burreli International Table Tennis (BITT) is an international competition that is organized every spring in a small city in the north of Albania. This year's event, on 27-29 May, was part of the European Move Week.

Our partner in this sport event is Active Disabled People (ADP) Albania, a sport organization for people with disabilities. It is the third year that people with a disability in Albania have competed as professional players in this international competition. However, this year they were not only represented as players but also as professional referees. Through this event, Move Week in Albania promoted more social inclusion and an increase in self-esteem for people with disabilities (ADP, 2016).

The ratification from the Albania Government of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2012), provides new obligations for the Albania Government in terms of legal changes, administrative practices, approaches towards disability, standards of a higher level for the protection and a better life for people with disabilities.

o Participate in Abu Dhabi Special Olympics World Games

On March 8-22, 2019 in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates hosted the “Special World Olympic Games 2019” United Arab Emirates from March 8-22 in Abu Dhabi. These games were also attended by a representative team of Albania, whose training took place 3 months before the development of the games. As a result, the duration of the project was divided into two parts. The first part was the development of training sessions from December 1, 2018 to February 28, 2019. The second part is the participation of the team in the world games from March 8 to March 22, 2019. The participation of the Albanian delegation in these games was made possible by the cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana which supported the delegation with the payment of travel tickets and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (through RED), which enabled the relevant permits for physical education teachers were an essential part of the delegation.

o European Football Week and European Basketball Week

“European Football Week 2019” and “European Basketball Week” are an annual event supported by “Special Olympics International” and “Special Olympics Europe and Eurasia”. It is attended by representative teams of several special schools in the country which are led by a group of volunteer trainers trained by the Association “Special Olympics Albania”

o “Getting Healthy Together” project

This project instructs the creation of a healthy lifestyle through physical activity, nutrition and hydration.

o Ongoing planned activities

This project offers training for coaches by experts for Unified Sports Special Olympics Europe and Euro Asia (SOEE) for teachers (coaches) from special and ordinary schools, as well as for sports coaches from the University of Sports of Tirana.

- a).** Developing activities at least at 6 high schools and community centers, which include a presentation of concept of Unified Sports and its impact on inclusion, as well as very useful experiences for young people and coaches.
- b).** Establishment of four Unified Basketball Teams (two women and two men’s teams) and setting a schedule for their regular training.
- c).** Organizing competitive activities (tournaments) in unified basketball and football teams within the European Basketball and Football Week of the Special Olympics.

o European Football Week and European Basketball Week

“European Football Week 2019” and “European Basketball Week” are annual events supported by “Special Olympics International” and “Special Olympics Europe and Eurasia”.

The main stakeholders facilitating the access of PwDs to health, education and other relevant services in Albania are as following (this list is not exhaustive):

- National Council on Disability Rights (National Disability Council), <https://shtetiweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/L2-National-Strategy-on-People-with-Disabilities-2005-2007.pdf>
- UNDP in Albania, <https://www.al.undp.org/>
- MEDPAK, <http://medpak.org/web/>
- Save the children, <https://www.savethechildren.net/>
- Caritas Albania, <http://caritalbania.org/>
- UNICEF ALBANIA, <https://www.unicef.org/albania/>
- WORLD VISION, <https://vision4children.jimdofree.com/>
- FSHDPAK, <https://sherbimet-per-pak-al.jimdofree.com/fshdpak/>
- CRCA, <https://www.crca.al/sq/news-women-and-youth-politics/nga-sot-nje-rjjet-kombetar-te-rinjte-ne-shqiperi;>

OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

The study shows that most of the respondents are motivated to do sport activities and they mostly do multiple sport activities, such as leisurely walking, bicycling, skating swimming, light gardening and housework, dancing or other moderate exercises, running, weight training and only a few of them do not do any sport activities. They stressed that they are mostly motivated by intrinsic motivation and personal beliefs, family and friends influence, doctoral and health professional, adequate infrastructure and accessibility.

Also, they stated that some of the reasons for lower participation were lack of time, family and friends’ influence, appropriate facilities, transportation problems, financial constraints, lack of interest, lack of confidence, illness and other reasons. The main factors that can make easier their participation to sport activities are family and friends’ support, personal assistive devices, facilities and infrastructure,

mobile health and sports, the role of the organizations and policies, and other reason. Of the 47 respondents with disabilities who took part in the online survey in Albania, 65 % of the respondents' daily routines activities are not limited from their health conditions. 36% is satisfied with the lifestyle. However, participants reported they experience several negative emotions due to their health condition, 49 % of the respondents have no specific feeling, 22 % feel nervous and anxious, 16 % of the respondents feel different from others.

Regarding their everyday activities, : most of the participants are student (78%) and employed full-time (11%), Moreover, 59% of respondents feels able to carry out every day physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, carrying groceries etc. 46% spends between 1 and 2 hours a day in sport or recreational activities. This includes light gardening and light housework, leisurely walking, dancing, running, swimming etc. 54% use IT equipment in a daily basis and 59% do not use health or fitness apps to track their health. The main reasons for a higher participation to sport and recreational activities are intrinsic motivation and personal beliefs, or doctors and health professionals' influence. The main reasons for a lower participation are a lack of time, illness or injury and lack of self-confidence. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents lack social contacts and want to have more tailor-made activities to maintain a better level of physical and mental well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the literature review and the survey, focused on children who suffer from and their participation in sport activities empathizes that they are willing to adopt a healthy lifestyle but they face many internal and external barriers in doing so. Based on the literature review conclusions, the most frequent internal barriers are lack of understanding and support which makes them feel uncomfortable. Consequently, PwDs demonstrate a low self-esteem, motivation and participation in different spheres of life, including sport activities. Other factors inhibiting PwDs' active participation in sport activities are financial constraints, community support, and accessibility to sport facilities, better information and education background, legislative support, etc. The extensive literature review stressed the lack of information and data on PwDs. Most of the partner countries have difficulties to present an exact number of PwDs that participate in sports activities in their countries, even their participation in sport was difficult to measure.

Related to their participation in sport activities, most of the PwDs, who participated

in the survey, indicated that their health conditions do not prevent them to participate in sport activities. Moreover, half of the respondents are motivated to do sport activities and they mostly do multiple sport activities, such as leisurely walking, bicycling, skating swimming, light gardening and housework, dancing or other moderate exercises, running or weight training and only a few of them do not do any sport activities. They also mentioned that most of them are mostly motivated by intrinsic motivation factors and personal beliefs, family and friends influence, doctor and health professional advise, adequate infrastructure and accessibility. While other respondents, that had a lower participation in sport activities stated that some of the reasons for lower participation were lack of time, family and friends' influence, appropriate facilities, transportation problems, financial constraints, lack of interest, lack of confidence, illness and other reasons.

Related to the IT skills, more than half of the respondents from the sample stated that they spend a lot of time on Smartphone, PC or tablet, but they expressed moderate ICT skills. The pandemic also affected their lifestyle by affecting their psychological and physical state. Literature review and online questionnaires stressed the importance of raising awareness on sports benefits and existing possibilities to participate in sports activities. Most of PwDs do not have the right information on sports benefits and they also are not provided with information about sport activities organised to support them. Secondly, it is important to organise more sport activities and trying to be more inclusive. During the online survey PwDs stressed the importance to be accepted and supported by the community. Also, it is recommended to create better conditions in order to increase sport participations: PwDs stated the importance of better infrastructure and conditions in order to increase their participation in sport activities. Technological-based solutions that are financially accessible seem to represent a promising perspective in order to improve the quality of life of PwDs.

Key Recommendations

Based on the literature review and online questionnaire, the importance of raising awareness on sports benefits and existing possibilities to participate in sports activities were stressed. Most of PwDs do not have the right information on sports benefits and they also are not provided with information about sport activities organised to support them. Secondly, it is important to organise more sports activities and trying to be more inclusive. During the online survey PwDs

stressed the importance of being accepted and supported by the community. Also, it is recommended to create better conditions in order to increase sport participations. PwDs stated the importance of better infrastructure and conditions in order to increase their participation in sport activities. Another important issue that was discussed during the online survey was the IT skills. Most of the respondents felt not too much confident on IT skills. So, it is recommended to organise different training sessions in order to develop their technology skills. Finally, the government and different organisations should offer financial funding to support them and their participation in sport activities.

REFERENCES

Ferre, C. g. (2015). *Profile of the Disabled Population in Albania*. Tirana: Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation SDC.

FIMITIC. (2011). Retrieved February 22. 02. 2021, 2021, from Description of disability situation in Albania: <https://www.fimitic.org/content/description-disability-situation-albania>

Fullan, M. (2004). *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nicholson, M. H. (2008). *Sport and Social Capital*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd.

TELESEICT. (2019, february 14). Retrieved February 22. 02. 2021, 2021, from Child disability in Albania – Disability prevalence, access to services and quality of services: <http://teleseict.com/category/physical-disability/>

Bsport+

WHITE PAPER ON POLICY MAKERS ALBANIA

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Who we are

FUNDACIÓN
Intras

