



CITIES OF SPORT



ACES's official magazine

2024

Connecting the World 5,000+ Municipalities and Beyond!

1st Edition
**American
Week of Sport**

UNESCO-ACES
**A Stronger
Alliance**

Health
**Enhancing
10K Steps
Initiative**

**Gender Equality
Empower,
Transform,
Unite.**

**Sustainability
Thrive for
Tomorrow**

**Monaco
World
Capital of
Sport 2025**





STR ANGER TOGETHER

**Uniting for a Healthier, More Active World.
Discover the Power of Our Alliance!**



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Editorial

Dear readers and sports friends,



Sports

have taught me everything in this life. From training, values to education. Sport has given me everything. From a profession to a passion to a family. Through sport I have learned to live, to make my dreams come true and to grow as a person. I have been dedicated to sports for more than 60 years and it seems like it was yesterday.

I still have the hope of the first day and creating a better world through sport is the motivation that has moved me to have what I've created. ACES is my little boy. He is 24 years old, he is already on his way to his 25th anniversary and I couldn't be more proud of him. Every year it surprises me more. ACES continues to grow, train, and learn every day. ACES is already becoming an adult, consolidating their personality.

We say goodbye to 2023 with new and important milestones. Africa has its first recognised City, Quelimane. It has been a discovery. In America, we increased our alliances such as the new recognition of the Organization of American States (OAS) or the Ibero-American Sports Council (CID). The American Sports Week has been exported to the continent by us with extraordinary success as well as the attraction of new award-winning countries such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Montenegro and Kosovo. And all this without forgetting the new Network of Latin American Cities that we have helped to create together with UNESCO.

But this is not all. Likewise, three new projects, three new awards, three new future initiatives have come to light that will make ACES continue to grow around the world. First, the recognition as the European Capital of Cycling with Manchester becoming the first winner. The bicycle has an important role, it has its place in the way of understanding sports policies in cities and its enormous power of attraction. Secondly, the European Capital of Integration and Volunteering award with Alhaurin de la Torre demonstrating in its candidacy that society and integration rep-

resent a basic pillar of the sport community and its DNA. And last but not least, the Mediterranean Capital of Sport with Alanya in Türkiye as first awarded giving promotion and packaging a recognition that values the sea and our beloved Mediterranean.

The child is now an adult. ACES is a WORLD reference. Our network with more than 5.000 cities around the world grows year after year. We only have the Australian continent left and I am sure that we will be present there shortly. It's a matter of time and a lot of sport.

Now let's set our sights on the new short-term slogans. One, sustainability in sport. Let's score goals for the planet. Green goals. Goals loaded with responsibility and love for our environment. Let's take care of it. Let's be responsible. And two, equality and equity. Let's work for a respectful environment, for similar participation figures, for more security and equal opportunities.

Once again, we all have to row in the same direction. That of a better world through physical activity.

Enjoy the content that we have prepared for you and continue preaching our favourite religion throughout the five continents and out loud: sport in capital letters with its enormous benefits. ★

Gian Francesco Lupattelli

President and founder
ACES EUROPE

Editorial

Fair Play 2.0

FOTO: WIKIMEDIA/CREATIVE COMMONS



Since the very beginning, one of the major values professed by sport practitioners has been fair play. Despite ever-changing trends in the domain of sport, this one constant has remained the priority when it comes to both professional and grassroots sports. Recently, here in the European Parliament, we have undertaken the initiative to not only support this ideal, but more importantly, to take it to a whole

new level. We strived to confirm and strengthen traits such as open competition, solidarity and fairness in sport. This has commented in our effort to develop the European sports model further.

Sport has the power to change the world. This might sound like a cliché, but throughout history, sport has united people, regardless of their race, religion, gender, culture or socio-economic status. It has been a motor in promoting the principles of solidarity, fairness, and inclusiveness.

As a former football player and now a policymaker in the European Parliament, sport has always been close to my heart. In the EU, we have decided to use the potential that sport has, not only for changing the world, but also for changing lives. The report on EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward by the Committee on Culture and Education from 2021, for which I was the rapporteur, provides concrete recommendations to do just that.

The purpose of the report is to strengthen an integrity- and values-based model of sport in the European Union, while accounting for socio-economic and environmental dimensions of sport. We aim to make sport more accessible to all, regardless of their background and to promote participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activity, whose long-term benefits are well known to all.

In the European Union, we see sport as unique; it is based on values, where grassroots and professional sport co-exist harmoniously. Sports are not and never have been just a complementary asset

to the EU policy. We think of it as just as important as other EU policies. We would like to see the European sports model in complete alignment with other EU projects and goals.

Sport is for everyone. Our goal is to make sure that it is equal, accessible, and inclusive.

ACES Europe plays an important role in the process of enforcing the European sports model by allocating the titles of World Capital, European Capital, Region, City, Island, Community, and Town of Sport. I believe that such practice contributes significantly to promoting sports at the local and regional level. The activity of ACES Europe helps with tackling the uprising challenges and with implementing the European values. ★

Tomasz Frankowski

MEP and Honorary President of ACES

SPORTS AS A TOOL FOR INCLUSION, EQUITY, HEALTH, AND DEVELOPMENT

Organisation of American States and ACES Europe/ACES America sign significant agreement for collaboration

On 6 March this year a cooperation agreement was ratified in Washington between the Organization of American States, represented by its Secretary General Luis Almagro, and ACES Europe/ACES America, represented by its Secretary General Hugo Alonso, with the aim of making sports and its practice a catalyst for development, peace, health, and inclusion.

GONZALO CUESTA (ACES AMERICA)

The OAS unites the 35 independent states of the Americas and serves as the primary governmental, political, legal, and social forum in the hemisphere. It has also granted permanent observer status to 69 states, including the European Union (EU). To achieve its most important goals, the OAS is grounded in its core pillars of democracy, human rights, security, and development.

SPORTS AS UNIFIER

The agreement highlights collaboration for the implementation and development of the American Week of Sport, initiated for the first time in the Americas from 23 until 30 September, under the direction of ACES through ACES America. This initiative aims to be a celebration of sports for all in the American continent, where various activities related to sports turn it into a tool for social inclusion, equity, health, and sustainable development. This project seeks to position sports as a cross-cutting and significant element in state policies and public institutions, as well as a unifying factor among all American countries.

*"Today is a great day for
sports"*
Hugo Alonso

GENDER EQUITY

Additionally, both institutions will work on the development and implementation of joint projects or activities, aimed at making sports a source of sustainable economic development, job creation, and social progress in all municipalities of the Americas, among other aspects covered by the agreement. Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the OAS, stated: "We have signed an important cooperation agreement with ACES to promote themes of inclusion, gender equality, and social development based on sports." The Secretary General commended Carmen Plata, Secretary for Access to Rights and Equity of the OAS, and Evelina Cabrera, Ambassador for Gender Equity at the OAS, for their work.

COLLABORATION

Hugo Alonso, Secretary General of ACES, affirmed: "Today is a great day for sports with this very significant cooperation agreement with the OAS, a major achievement to continue working for and with physical activity, emphasising values among the entire population of the continent." He expressed gratitude for the efforts of ACES Vice President Vincenzo Lupattelli, ACES Delegate in America Gonzalo Cuesta, and ACES Secretary General on the American continent Carlos Arango. "This is an agreement to work towards inclusive sports, social transformation through it, and gender equality", Gonzalo Cuesta added on behalf of

ACES America. "With great hope we take on this challenge to promote projects and programmes to achieve a fairer society hand in hand with the OAS."

SPORTS DECALOGUE

The OAS, through Evelina Cabrera, participated in the institutional inauguration of the American Week of Sport alongside Adriana Sánchez Parés, ACES Institutional Director for SAD, in León, GTO-MEX, and at the World Sports Meeting in Konya, Turkey, on 24 September. In November, León hosted the Latin-American Sports Meeting, focused on achieving real gender equality through sports. Both institutions are currently working on a sports decalogue and new projects that will be developed in the near future to implement the strategic policies outlined in the agreement.

"We have signed an important cooperation agreement to promote themes of inclusion, gender equality, and social development based on sports"

Luis Almagro



Signature table of the agreement between OAS and ACES.

'BUILDING BACK BETTER': HOW UNESCO'S FIT FOR LIFE PROGRAMME IS DRIVING POST-COVID RECOVERY

As recently as three years ago, very few people around the world were regularly practising sport. By the middle of 2020, the rapid spread of Covid-19 had prompted many countries to close recreational sports clubs, ban or heavily restrict outdoor socialising, and send all but the top professional leagues on an indefinite hiatus.

PHIL HUMPHREYS

Foreseeing the likely legacy of this shuttering of society, in the autumn of 2021 UNESCO launched a new sport-based action plan, calling it 'Fit for Life'. "There are ongoing crises in the world related to physical inactivity, mental health and inequalities, and the Covid pandemic has been exacerbating all of them," Philipp Müller-Wirth, Chief of UNESCO's Sport Section and the main driver of the new programme, says from his office in Paris. Powered by a global compact of partners, Fit for Life aims to trigger systems-based and behavioural change to 'build back better' in the aftermath of the pandemic. "We know that 80 per cent of young people in the world don't practise sufficient physical activity according to WHO standards, we know mental health issues

"We know that 80 per cent of young people in the world don't practise sufficient physical activity"

Philipp Müller-Wirth



have tripled during Covid and are now probably one of the world's major challenges in the years to come, and we have observed all sorts of increased inequalities concerning girls and women and other vulnerable groups in society. It was a time to say to governments, 'You need to make systematic use of sport and physical education to address these crises and prevent their disastrous consequences'."

DATA-DRIVEN ACTION

Previously, such an instruction was easily ignored without UNESCO having a body of hard evidence to fall back on. But Müller-Wirth – who has worked for the organisation since 1991 – says something else has changed in recent

"At MINEPS VII we had very strong statements from African sport ministers to engage in Fit for Life"

Philipp Müller-Wirth





years. “We have started seeing increasingly robust data demonstrating how much sport, physical activity and education are a means to invert and lower certain alarming trends,” he says. “We have been discussing in the sport for development community for a long time that sport is too marginal. In the policy field, decision makers look at sport mainly as these major events and competitions that generate a lot of economic wealth and benefits, and so they have the false perception that sport is well-funded and that this money will trickle down to the grassroots.”

The numbers at the very top of the professional games can be eye-wateringly high, but decision makers need to look only at the richest professional sports league in Europe to know that the trickle-down perception is a myth. For the 2021-22 English Premier League season, player wages as a share of total revenue averaged a staggering 71 per cent for the 17 clubs who survived relegation¹. In that same season, a Football Association report measured the social and economic value of grassroots football in England at more than 10 billion pounds². The significance of such glaring imbalances is not lost on Müller-Wirth. “The bottom of the pyramid is actually the area where you have the

highest economic and social return on investment,” he says. “This can be seen in terms of physical and mental health benefits, in terms of improved educational performance and attention spans and reduced dropout rates, and in terms of equality such as girls’ and women’s confidence in themselves and the place they have in society.”

The great dichotomy, then? The new wealth of data is also showing that at the bottom of the pyramid, participation in sport is hollowing out. “There is a crisis in the sport movement in terms of participation; young people either don’t practise sport at all, or they practise it outside organised sport,” Müller-Wirth says. “Sports organisations have to make the case to parents about the benefits of sport to

“We know that cities are already very dynamic laboratories for sport and development programmes”

Philipp Müller-Wirth

young people and reassure them that they are well-placed to safeguard the wellbeing of their children.”

NON-SPORT OUTCOMES

If Fit for Life is to realise its potential, Müller-Wirth believes the discussion around participation in sport must be expanded so the various actors focus more on the ability of sport to produce non-sport outcomes. “Nelson Mandela said the nicest things you can possibly say about how sport heals societies and helps people, but it hasn’t moved the needle,” Müller-Wirth says. “When we say that last year we had 5,000 people participating in a sport event and this year there were 10,000, this does not mean much to non-sport stakeholders. What we need to demonstrate to those stakeholders is how we have changed the lives of those who

“What we need to demonstrate to stakeholders is how we have changed the lives of those who participated”

Philipp Müller-Wirth

participated. What has changed in their communities, in their families, and for themselves? Yes, there are stories and there are messages that are still very powerful. But what will move the needle is when we start demonstrating these outcomes to non-sports stakeholders - ministers and public authorities responsible for education, health, employment, economy, gender equality – those people who are not yet aware of the power of sport to deliver certain outcomes that are on their agenda.”

MINEPS SUCCESS

UNESCO’s most recent World Conference of Sport Ministers (MINEPS VII) is an example of the Fit for Life Programme pushing the sport for development goalposts a little wider apart. Nominally an event for and by sports ministers, UNESCO added a number of non-sports stakeholders to the roster for the seventh edition held in Baku in Azerbaijan at the end of June. These included development banks, social investors, and local authorities. “We tried to illustrate the pathways we think sport ministers should build between the sport ecosystem in their countries and other stakeholders,

to convince these other stakeholders that these sports organisations can actually deliver,” he says. “At MINEPS VII we had very strong statements from African sport ministers to engage in Fit for Life as a way of raising the profile of sport for development within their own governments. I think Africa as a whole shows leadership in this area, and we are very optimistic that there are a number of heads of government who have understood the power that sport can bring to their socio-economic development. “In the years to come, I think we will see a number of initiatives moving sport away from the ‘nice to have’ role that it still mainly has in governments.”

IMPACT INVESTMENT MODEL

One such Fit for Life initiative piloted by UNESCO in partnership with the Sport Ministry of Chile and the Latin American Development Bank (CAF) this year, was to include persons with disabilities through sporting activity around the 2023 Pan American Games in Santiago.



The project tested a new model for impact investment: instead of funding infrastructure or services, the investment went directly into showing how many persons with disabilities will have access to education and health services, or will play a role in their communities.

"Because we don't require sophisticated financial accountability structures as we might for a traditional funding programme, these new types of impact investment can be very well implemented in developing countries," Müller-Wirth says. "We want to use that example in discussions with other social investors in Africa and with other developing countries. But we really want to avoid increasing the North-South gap in terms of knowledge and funding. So our Fit for Life core priority is to establish knowledge in the Global South to ensure knowledge transfer from South to North, and from South to South."

The Fit for Life Programme of UNESCO has five interlinked objectives:

- *Increase grassroots participation in sport and quality physical education (PE) to reduce inactivity and chronic disease (physical and mental).*
- *Support the development of quality and inclusive sport policies which drive health, education and equality outcomes.*
- *Use values education through sport to empower young people, promote equality and build socio-emotional resilience.*
- *Support teachers and coaches to deliver quality, student-centred sport education curricula.*
- *Build evidence to scale public and private investments in sport as a driver of sustainable development.*

www.unesco.org/en/fit4life



Also present in Baku to learn more about the Fit for Life Programme were representatives of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games

PARIS 2024

Also present in Baku to learn more about the Fit for Life Programme were representatives of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, who participated in a panel discussion alongside the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other organisations on the sustained impact of major sporting events. Müller-Wirth: "We are very closely involved with Paris 2024: our headquarters are in Paris, our Director General is French. So there are close connections (but) we honestly feel there's been a serious effort for quite a long time to produce something very meaningful. Not just in Paris, but around Paris. The areas with the biggest social challenges are around Paris, and especially in northern Paris, and we are seeing a number of very significant projects trying to address those populations." Not only that, Müller-Wirth says the delivery of Paris 2024 includes initiatives specifically targeting physical education, a key topic area for UNESCO and one of the five core objectives of Fit for Life (see boxed text).

"Schools are where children are either encouraged or unfortunately very often discouraged from practising sport, and so we are seeing significant efforts to look at these early positive experiences by children in schools, which is something quite new," he says. "French President Macron has announced that he wants to invest in further micro and macro infrastructures for school sport. It will take time, but there is a need to showcase solutions and Paris 2024 has a number of examples of how organisers of major sporting events can produce concrete initiatives to ensure social legacy. "We know that cities are already very dynamic laboratories for sport and development programmes, and we want to highlight how they work to identify what can be improved and to scale them to many more cities, especially in developing countries. "Whether we can completely undo the devastating effects of Covid remains to be demonstrated. But what we do know is that sport and activity can significantly improve lives and enhance social cohesion. "And for sure, we haven't seen the last crises we will have to confront, and challenges where sport can play an important role."



1. Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance
2. bbc.co.uk

ACES AND UCLG: A PERFECT PARTNERSHIP FOR THE POST- PANDEMIC RECOVERY

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, municipalities around the world have been vexed by myriad questions about how best to recover and repurpose urban environments to the benefit of individual and collective health. More and more often, the answers to such questions are revolving around sport, and how increased physical activity can be used as a catalyst for urban renewal.

PHIL HUMPHREYS

As the world's largest network of local and regional elected administrations, the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is uniquely placed to face these challenges head on. That is because UCLG is committed to representing, defending and amplifying the voices of local and regional governments to leave no one and no place behind.

"UCLG members recognise sport – and, more specifically, ensure equal access to spaces and equipment – as a key contributor to the protection of human rights and to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all," the UCLG

UCLG is committed to representing, defending and amplifying the voices of local and regional governments

World Secretariat in Barcelona, Spain, says. "Cities and territories that can provide this service to their populations are on their way to not only being healthier, but also more equitable, caring and sustainable, improving the quality of life of their communities as well as their life expectancies."



Konya's representatives in Barcelona, together with the Sec. Gral. of UCLG and ACES.

“This approach provides a powerful and operational lens through which to conduct public policy across different sectors”

UCLG

AGENDA FOR 2030

In 2023 UCLG has taken another step towards enabling healthier cities, signing a landmark agreement with ACES to collaborate around the development of the culture of sports and physical activity and “the entire sports movement”. UCLG: “The promotion of physical activity and the sports movement in local development plans, policies and strategies is a decisive part of local and regional governments’ initiatives worldwide to create equitable and caring cities and territories where all people can live healthy and fulfilling lives.”

UCLG believes sport has a key role to play in achieving the ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, launched by a UN Summit in 2015 and aimed at ending poverty in all its forms by the end of the decade. UCLG hopes to help achieve this by making the ideals of the 17 benchmark Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to health, equality, and sustainable cities and communities a ‘lived reality’. “Our ambition and hope are that the collaboration between UCLG and ACES Europe will ultimately contribute

UCLG believes sport has a key role to play in achieving the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'

to accelerating the localisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," the secretariat says, placing a special emphasis on six of the SDGs (see boxed text).

The partnership with ACES is the product of the leadership of the new UCLG President Uğur İbrahim Altay, who places a strong emphasis on sport and its role in ensuring healthy societies and cities. And Altay should know: as part of a long career in public service he is also the serving mayor of Konya, a historic city in south-central Turkey which hosted the Solidarity Islamic Games in 2022, can boast over 550km of cycle paths, and was awarded World Capital of Sport by ACES for 2023. "Our joint work with ACES Europe will allow UCLG members to actively engage with the recognitions of the Awards assigned by ACES Europe: World Capital, European Capital, Region, City, Island, Community and Town of Sport," UCLG says. "It will allow us to benefit from expertise that will contribute to nurturing the political debates of our consultation mechanisms, as well as our advocacy work towards Universal Health Coverage."

PACT FOR THE FUTURE

UCLG intends the collaboration to contribute to its policy and advocacy agenda on health and care within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and another key programme: the organisation's own 'Pact for the Future' of humanity, which maps out the strategic priorities for the organisation up to 2028. The Pact is based on three overarching principles: people, planet, and government "This forms the basis of a new social contract that local and regional governments are committed to co-create with local communities. UCLG will promote sport as a transversal priority of cities and regions in relation to human rights, and as a lever of social transformation and development. We will also aim to make the link between sport and the environment." Such thinking

has fed into the 'Superblock' initiative piloted in Barcelona – coincidentally the base city for the UCLG Secretariat. The urban development project begun in 2016 aims to combine up to nine city blocks at a time, with priority therein given to pedestrians and cyclists.

HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES

The report – titled 'Towards the Localisation of the SDGs' and presented to the United Nations High Level Political Forum in 2021 – also reviewed the implementation of the third Sustainable Development Goal on health and wellbeing, based around 'Health in All Policies (HiAP)', a concept recognising that population health is not merely a product of health sector programmes but is largely determined by policies that guide actions beyond the health sector.

The Pact for the Future is based on three overarching principles: people, planet, and government

UCLG: "This approach provides a powerful and operational lens through which to conduct public policy across different sectors, and to systematically consider the health implications of different decisions in order to detect synergies and avoid harmful impacts on health. This will be our approach to the promotion of sports and activity in cities and territories worldwide."

The six United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targeted by the UCLG-ACES Agreement:

1. *Good Health and Wellbeing*
2. *Quality Education*
3. *Gender Equality*
4. *Reduced Inequalities*
5. *Sustainable Cities and Communities*
6. *Peace, Justice and Strong*

FOR THE SOCIAL RECOGNITION OF SPORT AS A DEVELOPMENT AGENT

D+D Cities, the first network of Latin American cities

7 June 2023 is a date to remember for Latin American cities and the sports world. León, American Capital of Sport for this year, was Mexico's ideal setting to assist with the creation of the CIUDADES D+D (CITIES D+D) Network. As the name itself suggests, with the first D standing for Deporte (Sport) and the second D indicating Desarrollo (Development), this network stems from the desire and commitment of the participating cities to jointly address local public policies in the matter of sport and physical activity to improve their citizens' health and wellbeing.

GIULIANA GRILLO

The basic idea of D+D Cities is that forming alliances and developing common strategies among cities will strengthen the importance of sport in fostering a better quality of life throughout Latin America, and producing benefits in terms of social inclusion, gender equality, economic growth and cultural change.

“The Cities D+D Network is an area of cooperation established from the voluntary association of local governments in Latin America. They are committed to sport and to the development of their communities and of the region. Every local government has the right and concrete possibility

of joining it,” explains Fernando Caceres, in charge of the Technical Secretariat of the Cities D+D Network and a UNESCO consultant on sports, physical activity, and physical education policies for Latin America and the Caribbean. “Sport has been gaining value in the life of cities, in the citizens' coexistence, in people's habits and codes of behaviour, in public consideration and in political evaluations. While there are thematic networks of cities, until now there has not been a sports space for local governments. We already have an accumulation of experiences and good practices that made it possible to open up to a specific international cooperation in this sector.”



Family picture with founder cities and partners.

“Every local government has the right and concrete possibility of joining the network”

INITIATED BY UNESCO AND ACES

D+D network will mainly target making sport a catalyst of local development, fortifying sports policies and their capacities to achieve sustainability and progress. Committed to similar values and objectives, a group of international institutions like UNESCO, ACES, Mercociudades, UCLG are the network's founding and strategic partners with a view to improving its outreach at the global level. Specifically, by using its vast experience in the creation of different city networks and its close cooperation with the region's local governments, UNESCO took the initiative to gather in León the 16 attending Latin American cities from nine countries (including Santiago de Chile, São Paulo, Bogotá and San José), all together for the first time. At the same time ACES' key contribution to the project lies in its significant role as promoter of quality sports policies along the lines of the existing Eurocities network in Europe, as well as providing invaluable specific knowledge, the ability to build

connections and an extended experience in involving cities for specific purposes.

LEÓN AS INTERLOCUTOR

For Cáceres, their work has been crucial for the CITIES D+D's foundation: “Both feed the growth and strengthen the network that will have the opportunity to develop through the interaction among the member cities and with the associated institutions. UNESCO has been able to recognise the intrinsic and profound value of sport in the configuration of contemporary societies, has invested specific resources and capacities to launch this initiative, and its institutional support is a guarantee of stability and sustainability. ACES, in a convergent manner, has promoted the development of sport by identifying and recognising cities that stand out for their commitment, for the innovative and sustainable quality of their public sports policies and the impact on the development of their communities. All this will be beneficial for the network.”

In the process the city of León, Guanajuato in Mexico, has played its decisive part by assuming the network's presidency until the next assembly scheduled in Cali, Colombia, in 2024. Cáceres: “León has managed to position itself as a regional reference in the formulation and implementation of public policies in the field of sports.”

SIX THEMATIC AREAS

After the statutes' approval during the Cities D+D summit in the Mexican city and the establishment of its main bodies, the network will operate according to the guidelines set by the International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport in application of the Kazan Action Plan, the UNESCO's Fit for Life initiative and the compliance agreements of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At present the network is working on "six thematic areas that are open to the participation of all member cities that want to join them": sport and social inclusion and reduction of inequalities, sport and physical and mental wellbeing, sport and gender equality, measurement and evaluation of the impact of sport, social return and benefits of investing in sport, legal information and advice. "Local governments that enter the network conceive sport as a powerful factor of local development, builder of coexistence, identity and citizenship," Caceres says. "We have identified cities that stand out in these topics due to the quality of their programmes, proven experience over time and good practices and that are willing to assume the responsibility of coordinating and chairing these working teams. Each responsible city has the possibility of drawing

"UNESCO has been able to recognise the value of sport in the configuration of contemporary societies"

up its own roadmap according to the characteristics of the specific issue and its level of development in the region."

AMERICAN WEEK OF SPORT

Among the other significant D+D proposals, there is the introduction of the American Week of Sport for the first time in 2023. Being a twin project of the popular European Week of Sport, this new initiative kicked off from 23 until 30 September in the major cities of the continent to be repeated every year. In Caceres' opinion, the implementation of this initiative "offers an extraordinarily beneficial opportunity to place sport at the centre of attention of the national, regional and international public agenda and to highlight its superlative importance in the construction of cities and citizens."





Gonzalo Cuesta, Hugo Alonso and Carlos Arango in Leon (Mexico).

“Each responsible city has the possibility of drawing up its own roadmap”

TURNING POINT

Active cooperation among municipalities can drive local policies to achieve notable results in the long term and through the work of CITIES D+D, the perception of sport could contribute to positive change in Latin America. But, as Caceres notes, this requires time. “Changes occur as a product of processes. However, the constitution of a network of cities represents an objective turning point, which will generate direct, tangible and measurable effects thanks to the virtues of international cooperation.” Considering the overall advantages for the communities, he says: “Cities will be able to access a greater volume of information in a more agile and direct way, as well as receive specialised technical advice and assistance. They will

be able to expand their networks of links with international entities, develop projects and direct joint efforts with the purpose of obtaining resources and benefits according to their particular or shared needs.”

CROSS-CUTTING SUPPORT

In its long-term vision the network will look to increase cross-cutting support for sport and physical activity on the continent and implement projects and initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable development and social progress in order to offer more opportunities to Latin American citizens to improve their health and lifestyle. In Caceres’ words, “we see a CITIES D+D Network that, with its work, will contribute to the political and social recognition of sport as an agent of development, strengthening the interaction between governments and sports organisations. All this will add value to the conditions of security and citizens’ coexistence and strive to facilitate access to the necessary resources to fulfil its tasks.”

QUELIMANE

AFRICAN CITY OF

SPORT 2024

In 2024, Quelimane, capital of the Zambézia province in Mozambique, will become the first African City of Sport. Rarely will a city be better prepared to hold an ACES title than Quelimane.

FRANS OOSTERWIJK

In order to better exploit the pedagogical, preventive, and connecting aspects of sport and exercise, the Youth and Sports Department of the municipality of Quelimane started a comprehensive action plan in 2021 to enable and facilitate sport and exercise for as many residents as possible. And, an important second objective, to make Quelimane the most important sports city in Mozambique.

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN 2024

The action plan started by identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the municipality in the field of sports, as well as identifying opportunities and possibilities. To this end, all sports locations, accommodations and facilities in Quelimane and the surrounding area were first identified and listed. In addition, meetings were organised at which various groups with an interest in the development of local sport (schools, sports clubs, teachers, sports leaders, coaches, entrepreneurs, civil servants, political leaders, and representatives of the population) could provide input for a targeted sports policy. This year, this led to the presentation of the Sports Development Strategic Plan 2024, which not only earned Quelimane the ACES title African City of Sport 2024, but also became the basis of an ambitious five-year plan to achieve all sports objectives.

GREENEST CITY

Quelimane, with approximately 250 thousand inhabitants, has many nature reserves and is considered the greenest





Official reception with local, regional and national authorities.



Visiting the local football team.

and most emission-free city in Mozambique. Traditionally, a lot of sports are being played and the function of sport to promote health and cohesion among the population has been widely accepted in municipal sports policy. Cycling, canoeing, football, basketball, chess, athletics, volleyball, handball, karate, badminton, gymnastics, swimming, skating, motocross, and karting are the most commonly practised sports. Every year Quelimane organises a number of local, regional and national sporting events.

INCREASING QUALITY OF LIFE

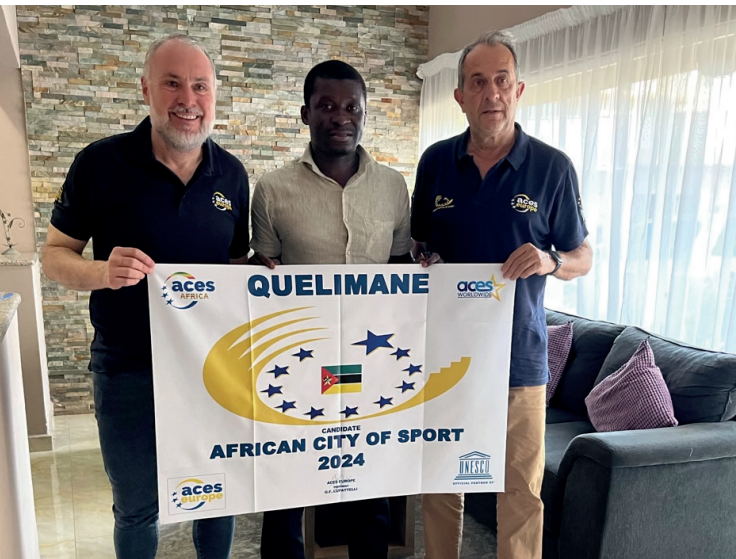
The Youth and Sports Department did not do anything overnight when drawing up the Strategic Plan 2024, intended to encourage more populations and age groups to participate in sports. All policy intentions were critically analysed and discussed by experts in sports management, representatives from civil society, and physical education teachers. The objectives were further specified in numerous working meetings and linked to strategic objectives for the period 2023-2027. The Strategic Plan not only aims to meet the sporting needs of the population, but also provides operational planning to provide the necessary infrastructure. The main goal of the plan is to increase the quality of life of all citizens of Quelimane - in particular youth and people with disabilities - through sustainable sports policy,

The main goal of the plan is to increase the quality of life of all citizens of Quelimane, in particular youth and people with disabilities

aimed at integrating sport and exercise into the daily lives of as many people as possible, also as a means of health promotion.

INVENTORY

When making the inventory of sports facilities, Youth and Sports officials did not only look at the facilities of clubs and associations. The recreational football, handball, volleyball, basketball, and badminton courts in parks, neighbourhoods, nature reserves, and at children's playgrounds, schools, hotels, cultural institutions, and the University and airport of Quelimane were also included. Swimming pools, gymnasiums, fitness rooms, and the sporting facilities of municipal authorities, companies, police and army were also meticulously mapped.



Reception of the mayor of Quelimane, Mr. Manuel Araujo.

ACES expands

The choice of Quelimane as African City of Sports is for ACES itself almost as important as for the city of Quelimane. After Europe, America, Asia, and China, ACES now takes the first step on the African continent. To celebrate the occasion and to support Quelimane's sports ambitions, large stocks of sport equipment, mostly clothes, donated by the Spanish Football Federation, were shipped earlier this year from Spain to Quelimane.

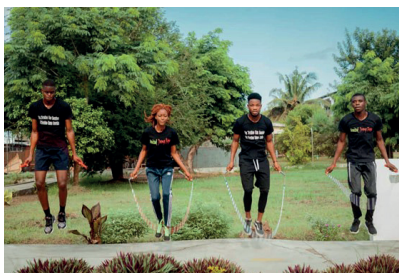
It's the ambition to make Quelimane the leading sports city and first sports destination in Mozambique

MICRO SPORTS PROJECTS

A municipal platform was also established that publicises and disseminates the activities of clubs, associations, schools, and other sports providers, in order to promote sports participation and develop a sports offering that is optimally tailored to the needs of the population. The figure of 'facilitator' between sports clubs, school sports, parents, and students was created to develop common micro-sport projects. A plan was also developed to promote access to sports for people on lower incomes, as well as a strategy to bring more major sporting events to Quelimane. Not only to inspire passive sports enthusiasts to actively participate in sports, but also to realise the ambition to make Quelimane the leading sports city and first sports destination in Mozambique.

HEALTH FAIR

In the past two years, many new sporting events were organised, such as cycling tours, chess tournaments, walking tours, skating and canoeing competitions and wheelchair races for men and women. A Health Fair and women's football and basketball tournaments were set up to promote female participation in sports. The sports agenda for the next five years is also vibrant with innovation and ambition. The main objective is to improve the quality and diversity of the sports offering. The economic dimension is not overlooked. To safeguard the quality of the offering, it is necessary to increase the municipal sports offering and diversify sources of income, in collaboration with associations and other sports organisations.



SPORTS DEVELOPMENT 2023 TO 2027

Key points and outlines for the coming years will be:

- The construction of several football fields, athletics tracks, swimming pools, a track for motor-cross and karting, exercise parks and walking paths in the green areas and sports pavilions in every district;
- Training programmes for trainers, coaches, referees, gym teachers, and other sports supporting and guiding functions;
- The establishment of a consultation council on local sports policy, consisting of municipal representatives, sports professionals and persons of regional and national (sports) interest;
- Increasing knowledge about the importance of physical activity and the dissemination of good practices through municipal publications and a local internet portal;
- More focus on the sports practice of population groups with special needs and/or disabilities;
- A better analysis of the financial and social return on investments in sports;
- The institution of an annual sports gala.

VISIBILITY

The importance of the title African City of Sport 2024 cannot be underestimated, says Sacur Chipre, Chief Information Officer of the city of Quelimane. "It gives all of our plans a big push upwards and will give more visibility to Quelimane around Africa and the world. And it will undoubtedly lead to more investment in sports infrastructure and enables us to host more sporting events, attract more tourists, and consequently realise more financial growth. Most importantly, it will make the promotion of sport for all of our citizens in all age groups easier."

In the past two years, many new sporting events were organised, such as cycling tours, chess tournaments, canoeing competitions and wheelchair races

**ACES' NETWORK
WITH MORE
THAN 500
ADMINISTRATIONS,
REPRESENTING
MORE THAN 5.000
MUNICIPALITIES**

New countries 2024

- **Kosovo, Prishtina,
Herceg Novi,
Montenegro**
European City of Sport
- **Mozambique,
Quelimane**
African City of Sport
- **Belén, Costa Rica**
American City of Sport
- **Argentina, San Juan**
American Capital of Sport



PHOTO'S SHUTTERSTOCK

NEW COUNTRIES 2024

*NORTH
ATLANTIC
OCEAN*

COSTA RICA



KOSOVO



MOZAMBIQUE



ACES AMERICA INTRODUCES FIRST EDITION OF THE AMERICAN WEEK OF SPORT

Inspired by the success of the “European Week of Sport,” an activity launched by the European Commission of which ACES is a partner, ACES America introduced the American Week of Sport (AWoS) - or Semana Americana del Deporte (SAD) – for the first time this year (from 23 until 30 September) promoting well-being, a healthy lifestyle, and physical activity throughout the whole American continent, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego!

ALESSIO DI MAIO (ACES EUROPE)



Official launch of the American Week of Sport in Leon (Mexico).

The 2023 American Week of Sport (AWoS) is a joint initiative of ACES Europe and ACES America in collaboration with the American Sports Council (CADE), the Organization of American States (OAS), the IberoAmerican Sports Council (CID), and several federations of national municipalities such as Fedemunicipios (Colombia) and Liga Municipal Dominicana. The AWoS aims to generate a significant social impact by improving the quality of life, productivity, and reducing medical expenses related to sedentary lifestyles, stress, and obesity. Furthermore, it promotes positive interaction among community members, fostering a sporting spirit and social cohesion. The hashtag #ActivateAmerica is a fundamental part of the continuous promotion of this initiative, a key element to spread and promote the AWoS through social media and all digital platforms.



Glorious 9th edition European Week of Sport

Alongside the American Week of Sport, on the same dates and under the same motto (#BeActive), the 9th edition of the European Week of Sport took place, with ACES Europe as proud partner of it. The growth of EWoS is not only illustrated by the thousands and thousands of sporting events throughout Europe, but also by the introduction of some new features: a Digital Agenda of EWoS Events in the cities awarded by ACES Europe and the presence of these events in the official map of the European Commission.

The European Week of Sport was launched in 2015 to respond to the growing crisis of inactivity and to give people around Europe a springboard into being active. Unfortunately, the level of physical activity is still stagnating and even declining in some countries. The EWoS will continue to improve awareness of the importance of an active lifestyle for everyone. No matter who we are and what we do, even slight increases in regular, physical activity can have a profound impact on our long-term health. Last year the part of ACES Europe in EWoS was rewarded with a special page in the 'Highlights of the EWoS 2022', edited by the European Commission.

HIGHLIGHTS

The results of this first edition were a real success: 13 countries, more than 40 cities, and almost 300 events registered in the Digital Agenda. Multisport events on the whole American continent, from Argentina to Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela. Among the highlights that particularly stood out in this first edition we can certainly mention:

- The city of León, Mexico, American Capital of Sport 2023 and host city of the official Inaugural Act of the American Week of Sport 2023, in the presence of the Mayor of León, Alejandra Gutiérrez Campos, the Ambassador of the Organization of American States (OAS), Evelina Cabrera, and the Institutional Director of the American Sports Week (and former Minister of Sports of Puerto Rico), Adriana Sánchez Paredes, representing ACES America;
- 'Ciclovías Recreativas', the American organisation that involved several cities in different countries and organised more than 120 events dedicated to the beauty of cycling in company, for psycho-physical wellbeing and for increasingly sustainable transport;
- The Alcaldía de 'Miguel Hidalgo', Mexico City, Mexico, with an extraordinary programme of 11 daily events from 23 until 30 September, for a total of 88 events, all free and dedicated to citizens from three to 90 years old!
- 'Fundación Itzae', Tegucigalpa, Honduras, with school projects of great sporting and social value with the first 'International School Sport Day' event;

- The Cities of Santiago de Chile (Chile), Chorrillos (Peru), Puerto Madryn (Argentina), Belén (Costa Rica), Medellín (Colombia), Cuenca (Ecuador), Mosquera (Colombia), and San Juan (Argentina) - the latter already officially declared the 2024 American Capital of Sports 2024 - who organised many events for the benefit of all citizens, for a more active life!

There were more than two million participants in the first edition of the American Week of Sport and it was a great success.

EDITION 2024

The ACES America Team is already working on a 2024 edition even better than this 'Zero Event'; the concept-hash-tag #ActivateAmerica stands for an increasingly healthy, increasingly inclusive, increasingly active American continent!

Alessio di Maio is Coordinator of the American Week of Sport - ACES America.

Find out more at:

www.acesamerica.org/activateamerica

www.instagram.com/acesamerica

www.facebook.com/acesamerica



"Many people don't exercise, they move. They go for walks or they do work around the house"

'EVERY TIME YOU MOVE, IT COUNTS'

Reimagining our cities in under 10,000 steps

Questions around how much even small amounts of physical activity can be beneficial to our health have been exercising the minds of researchers for decades - since well before the promoters of the first pedometers dreamt up an arbitrary target of 10,000 steps per day. Spanish professor Dr Borja del Pozo Cruz puts a bright light on this already classical issue.

PHIL HUMPHREYS

Even with the adoption of physical activity guidelines, many of these talking points have remained unresolved. Is it better to race-walk the family dog around the block each morning, or to venture twice as far on a leisurely late afternoon stroll? In the duel between the hare and the tortoise, is the hare now having the final laugh? And if 10,000 steps really is the magic number, how can we reimagine our towns and cities so that people hit those highs without resorting to the digital prompts of a wristband or mobile phone app?

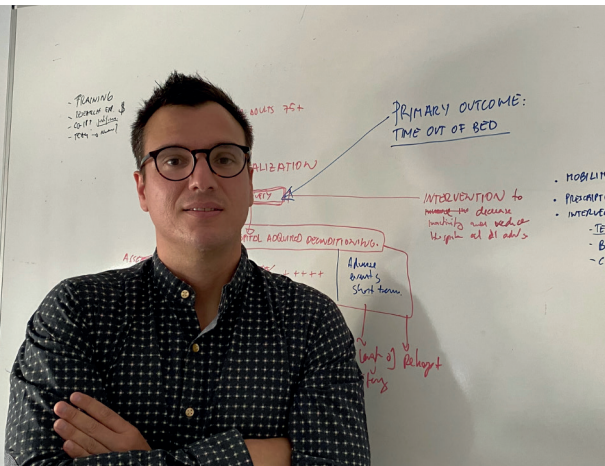
MIXED MESSAGING

Dr Borja del Pozo Cruz knows more than most about the value of encouraging people to move more under their own steam and leave their vehicles parked up at home. A Principal Investigator in Health, he was born and raised in Seville, which has a longstanding ban on cars in the city centre and a network of pedestrianised streets shaded by sun canopies to encourage people to walk even during the stifling summer months. Moreover, in his research work for the University of Cadiz and Southern Denmark University (SDU), del Pozo Cruz now splits his time between the Spanish coastal town famed for its laid-back liveability, and Odense, Denmark's self-styled 'Cycling City' which has a remarkable 540 kilometers of bike paths and 123 cyclist-only bridges for its 185,000 residents.

"We all know that physical activity is good for you; it's good for your health, good for your mental wellbeing, and good socially," del Pozo Cruz says from his home base in Cadiz. "But the messaging around current guidelines on the benefits of physical activity place the emphasis on intensity and time, such as 'You need to engage in 150 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity per week'. You get that message and you think, 'Right, what is that? Is that exercise?' But many people don't exercise, they move. They go for walks or they do work around the house. That's still moving at a certain intensity that meets the physical activity guidelines, but the messaging is different."

RESEARCH

Motivated to close this gaping hole in the health policy landscape, del Pozo Cruz and co-authors at the University of Sydney undertook groundbreaking research into the incremental benefits of individuals increasing their physical activity, measurable in steps, even if they get nowhere near the 10,000 per day 'target'. The research team wanted to know if walking even a few hundred metres further than your daily norm, or walking the same distance at a faster pace, could noticeably lower your risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), cancer and other health complications such as dementia. "If you take the original definition of



Professor Dr Borja del Pozo.

“Aim for 10,000 steps, but if you can only do 30 minutes faster or more intense, then that could also give you that additional benefit”

physical activity, it is any movement that results in energy expenditure such that every time you move, it counts,” del Pozo Cruz continues. “So that’s why we picked steps as the main metric to make people realise that they might be meeting the guidelines without thinking about it as exercise. It makes it something which is accessible for everyone.”

While few people would argue that physical activity is conducive to a healthy lifestyle, the findings of the research surprised even del Pozo Cruz. “What we observed in our data is that beyond the actual number of steps made each day, intensity matters,” he says. “So doing 30 minutes of intense stepping, where for example it becomes harder to hold a conversation with someone, could give you the ‘extra mile’ in terms of benefits. And it doesn’t need to be 30 consecutive minutes; what we observed is something called peak-30 cadence (average steps per minute for the 30 highest, but not necessarily consecutive, minutes across a day). We found this was also predictive of disease and mortality. “So yes, aim for 10,000 steps, but if you can only do 30 minutes faster or more intense, then that could also give you that additional benefit.”

Incredibly, the study also highlighted how increased stepping reduces the risk of acquiring dementia. Del Pozo Cruz: “We thought, ‘Wow, this is really striking’. But when you think about the majority of dementia cases, particularly among the older aged, those are connected to the vascular health system which is essentially related to lifestyle: diet, smoking, alcohol and physical activity.” Del Pozo says another key message of the study is that health benefits can result from *any* increase in the stepping, even if the uptick feels negligible to the individual. “We found you decrease the risk as you increase the number of the steps. So if you normally do 3,000 steps, aim tomorrow for 4,000 and you still get the benefit because you are doing more than before.

“In the case of a hilly city, these interventions can help to overcome the environmental barriers to physical activity”



About the study

The study 'Prospective Associations of Daily Step Counts and Intensity with Cancer and Cardiovascular Disease Incidence and Mortality and All-Cause Mortality' was supported by SDU and the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. Using data from the UK Biobank for 2013 to 2015, eligible adults aged 40 to 79 years old in England, Scotland and Wales were invited by email to be medically assessed. Following this, 78,500 were given an accelerometer to wear - a small device essentially like a Fitbit that collects data on how much the body accelerates along three axis. The measuring period for each participant was ten days. Registry-based morbidity and mortality were ascertained through October 2021, while the data analyses were performed during March 2022.

STAYING ON THE MOVE

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from the study, therefore, is that with the right messaging, the populations of our cities can become healthier even without a largescale investment in the sporting infrastructure. Del Pozo Cruz: "I live in Cadiz, a small coastal city where everything you need is within 20 minutes of walking. So you walk everywhere or you get on the bike and cycle. It means you are always on the move, not because you believe you have to move in order to be healthy, but because the city promotes movement naturally." Cadiz is reasonably flat and compact. What to do in cities where natural geography and topography are less favourable? "The first thing that's needed is an assessment of how the built environment is inviting movement, or otherwise. For example, Santander in northern Spain is a very hilly city, and people with reduced mobility would avoid going to certain parts of the city unless they used a car. So what they've done is build automatic escalators or a lift into the steeper slopes, so it encourages people to think 'I can walk up until this point, then I take the lift and after that I keep on walking'. In the case of a hilly city, such interventions can help to overcome the environmental barriers to physical activity. But that takes a lot of time, initiative, and obviously money." The scheme in Santander is costing upwards of 26 million euros and has so far taken three years to incorporate 15 new escalators and lifts, with a further five due to open before the end of 2023. So such an undertaking requires a strong political will.



Paris has become the first European capital to ban rental e-scooters



THE 15-MINUTE CITY

What works in one city, might fail in another: one size does not fit all. What happens, then, when the barriers to natural movement have mostly been imposed on a city, either through economic necessity or following a succession of poor planning decisions? "It may not be the natural landscape laying down obstacles, it's just that some cities are made for cars with big roads that you wouldn't walk along," del Pozo Cruz says. "So you have to make cities promote cycling and walking more, and overcome those barriers. There are a lot of studies suggesting how you can do that and there is an initiative called the '15-Minute City', which means that within 15 minutes of walking or cycling you have all the amenities that you need such as schools, shops, healthcare. That is not only promoting the health of the population, but also the health of the environment, so it's a win-win."

Within Europe, cities aspiring to 15-minute living include Utrecht in the Netherlands, Milan in northern Italy, and Paris, with the French capital perhaps the most high-profile example as it gears up to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the summer of 2024. As vast swathes of its centre are being newly pedestrianised through the initiative, Paris has simultaneously become the first European capital to ban rental e-scooters, reversing the recent trend in a move cautiously welcomed by del Pozo Cruz. "They are good and bad," he says. "E-scooters still allow you to be more mobile, but they are being used in the cycle lanes or on the roads when they don't have the speed. They can definitely help people use more sustainable means of transportation, and even to move more because even though it is passive, it can be used like a bus to complete only part of a trip. But there needs to be more regulation around e-scooters, because they're everywhere and there are a lot of problems with them." The Paris e-scooter ban points to a broader policy

conundrum faced by city planners and transport chiefs: when to encourage behavioural change, and when to impose it. "There will always be people who prefer to drive but you can go the extra mile with this," del Pozo Cruz says. "In Seville, for example, you can't get to the city centre by car. Either you walk, or you use public transport."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Given the almost universal appeal of the '10,000 Steps' study – from individuals seeking marginal gains from their physical activity to city planners exploring cost-effective ways to help them – del Pozo Cruz and his colleagues are showing no signs of resting on their research. "One thing I'm very interested in is the interaction between walking and pollution, and how this impacts on our health," he offers. "We can say that exercise is good, but air pollution and noise pollution are bad for your health. Noise pollution is linked to dementia, for example. So what happens if you walk in a polluted environment? Is that good, or is that bad? And if you find out that it is actually bad, for how long do you have to walk in a polluted environment for it to negatively affect your health? It might actually be detrimental to exercise at times, depending on the environment."

"Those sorts of questions are the ones we're going to start working on now using the same sort of data set. Hopefully, they'll have the same level of impact."

10,000 steps a day? No need, 7,126 is also enough!

Researchers of the Radboud UMC in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, have recently come up with even more specific results than del Pozo Cruz. They discovered how many steps you really need to take to optimally reduce the chance of dying prematurely or developing cardiovascular disease.

The scientists did this by combining a number of studies worldwide, giving them the health data and number of steps of more than 110,000 people. The conclusion: those 10,000 are not necessary, fewer steps are sufficient.

And to be precise: 7.126 steps. That is enough to maximally reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, says researcher Thijs Eijssvogels. Together with his colleagues, Eijssvogels established that there are measurable health benefits from around 2.500 steps per day. And every additional 500 steps reduces the risk of premature death or cardiovascular disease by about 8 per cent. But there is a limit to this: the risk of cardiovascular disease is already maximally reduced at 7.126 steps.

Anyone who wants to minimise the risk of premature death as much as possible must take a few steps more: 8.763. "Then the risk of diseases other than cardiovascular disease is also optimally reduced," says Eijssvogels. The extra steps on top of the 7.126 still have an effect on, for example, body weight, the prevention of inflammation and sensitivity to sugars.

"We can say that exercise is good,
but air pollution and noise pollution
are bad for your health"

KONYA CELEBRATES THE TOGETHERNESS AND BROTHERHOOD OF SPORTS

World Sport Congress IV in Konya

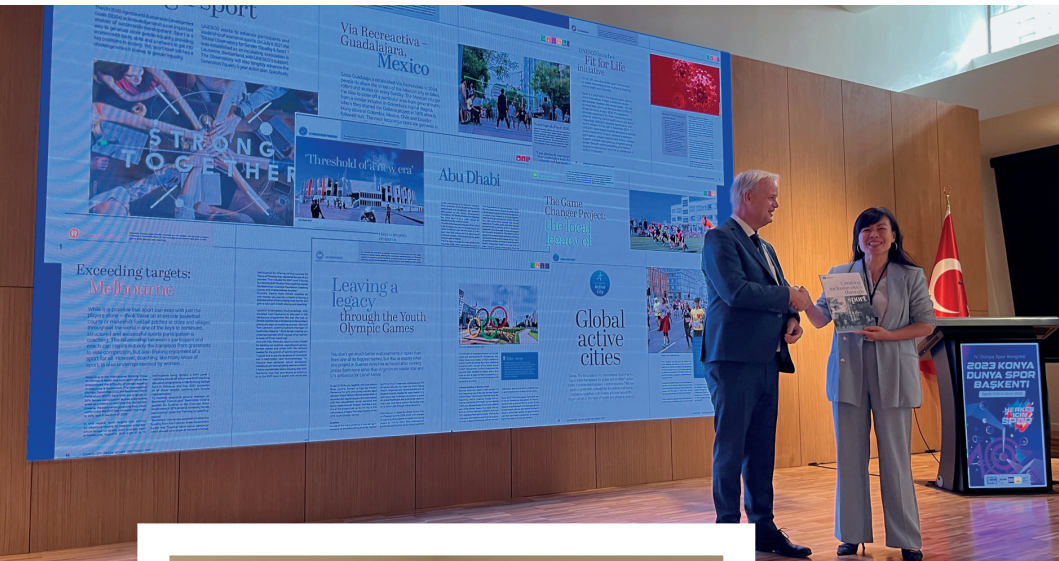
From 9 -11 October the 4th World Sports Congress with the theme of 'Sport for All' was organized by ACES and Konya Metropolitan Municipality in Konya, the 2023 World Sports Capital. During the two-day congress, sessions, presentations and speeches were held on sports-related topics, and information was exchanged by UNESCO representatives and an international public of sports experts and managers on how sports could reach wider audiences.

AYŞENUR KELEŞ

Speaking at the closing session of the two-day congress with the participation of sports representatives from 12 countries, General Manager of Sport of Türkiye and Konya Metropolitan municipality mayor Uğur İbrahim Altay said that he believed that the congress would bring the best results in keeping sports alive and spreading it to everyone. Gian Francesco Lupattelli, President and founder of ACES, stated that Konya is an exemplary city for other sports capitals and thanked Mayor Altay and the sports managers in Konya.

NEW ERA

Evaluating the approval of the decision regarding Turkey and Italy organising UEFA EURO 2032 together, President Altay concluded his speech with the following words: "As Konya, we believe that we will represent our country in the best way in 2032, as a 'World Sports Capital' city with our stadium. The most important aspect of sports is the sense of togetherness and brotherhood. That's why, while carrying this title, we had the opportunity to meet very valuable sports people. I hope this will be the beginning



Official presentation of the policy document.



There was a touristic route for the guests.



Hugo Alonso, André de Jeu, Ozan Cakir and Gian F. Lupattelli.

“As Konya, we believe that we will represent our country in the best way at UEFA EURO 2032 in 2032”

Uğur İbrahim Altay

of a new era for Konya. We will always continue to carry our title of Sports Capital with pride.” During the two-day congress, sessions, presentations, and speeches were held on sports-related topics, and information was exchanged on how sports could reach wider audiences. Experts and managers in sports and UNESCO representatives from countries such as America, China, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Iceland and of course Turkey attended the meeting.

SPREAD SPORTS TO ALL SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY

Addressing sports managers from different countries by attending the gala program with Uğur İbrahim Altay, also President of World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), stated that he was very happy to host the congress in Konya, the 2023 World Sports Capital. Underlining that this congress makes a significant contribution to the mission of spreading sports to everyone, he said: “Our biggest gain while organizing was



All the speakers and organizers together.



Konya's mayor and the UCLG president receive the policy document.

getting to know the delegation of ACES, especially Mr. Gian Francesco Lupattelli. I hope that we will do much better work with our current duties and the duties that lies ahead of us. I think this is only a beginning between 'World Sports Capital Konya' and ACES. Hopefully we will do much more things together. And as the president of UCLG I can assure you that we will work all over the world to spread sports to all segments of society."

"Our biggest gain while organizing was getting to know the delegation of ACES"

Uğur İbrahim Altay

POLICY DOCUMENT OF UNESCO

Within the scope of the program, the guests had the opportunity to visit Çatalhöyük, which is on the UNESCO cultural heritage list, and became the first foreign guests to visit the region after the opening of the welcome center. Turkey's famous national athlete Nur Tatar, who attended the session 'Women in sports' together with Kreena Govender and Evelina Cabrera, gave a speech to encourage women to be more active in the field of sports. In addition, the presentation of the policy document of UNESCO 'Creating inclusive cities through sport' by ACES at the World Sports Congress' contributed to the importance and value of the congress.

UNESCO GLOBAL SPORTS CONFERENCE MINEPS VII PROMOTES INCLUSIVITY, HEALTH, AND SPORT FOR ALL

ACES addresses the congress twice

From 26 until 29 June 2023, the UNESCO Global Sports Conference - MINEPS VII - unfolded in Baku, Azerbaijan, marking the 7th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport. Participants from across the globe gathered to discuss and endorse the 'MINEPS VII Outcome Document: Fit for Life Alliance'. This document emphasises the implementation of the Fit for Life sports initiative at national and international levels, but maybe more importantly... at the local and regional level.

ANDRÉ DE JEU/ACES



The ACES team with the sports minister of Ecuador.

As official partner of UNESCO, president and founder Gian Francesco Lupattelli (Italy), Secretary-General Hugo Alonso (Spain) and board member André de Jeu (the Netherlands), attended the conference in Baku on behalf of ACES. André de Jeu had the opportunity to address the congress twice. In his first speech, he emphasised the crucial role of cities as the closest government to citizens in improving the well-being of residents and enabling a healthy lifestyle for all.

KEY FOCUS AREAS OF MINEPS VII

The conference revolved around several crucial themes:

- **Championing gender equality:** A central aspect was the promotion of gender equality within and through sports.
- **Youth empowerment and mental health:** Addressing the challenges of mental health among young athletes and empowering youth through sports were key concerns.
- **Socio-economic outcomes:** The conference delved into various socio-economic outcomes, including skill development, better understanding, and preventive care.
- **Financing impact investments:** Delegates discussed the importance of financing impact investments in sport for social outcomes.

A central aspect was the promotion of gender equality within and through sports

- **Sports for development in Africa:** Special attention was given to the role of sports in promoting development in Africa.
- **Tackling violence against girls and women:** The conference addressed the critical issue of combating violence against girls and women within the sporting context.

UNESCO'S VISION

UNESCO emphasised that MINEPS VII serves as a global platform, engaging governments, athletes, the private sector, and other stakeholders. Its primary aim is to increase investment in sports, enhance sports practices,



The president of ACES with the sports minister of Türkiye.

Collaboration with municipalities fosters a sense of ownership among citizens

improve the quality of physical education, and maximise the positive influence of sports on health, society, and the economy. The 'MINEPS VII Outcome Document: Fit for Life Alliance' reiterates the commitment to implementing the Fit for Life sports initiative at the national and international levels.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' VITAL ROLE

During the conference, André de Jeu, board member of ACES (Alliance of European Capitals and Cities of Sport),

highlighted the essential role of local governments in promoting well-being and healthy lifestyles for citizens. Local governments, being closest to the people, possess the unique ability to make a significant impact on their lives. Collaboration with municipalities fosters a sense of ownership among citizens, promoting inclusivity, sustainability, health, and physical activity. This partnership strengthens social cohesion, boosts community engagement, and contributes to the overall well-being of nations. National governments, by working closely with municipalities, can effectively allocate resources where they are needed most, ensuring that investments in sports benefit citizens directly.

SUPPORT FOR FIT FOR LIFE

André de Jeu also announced a significant collaboration between UNESCO, ACES Worldwide, and the Association of Sports and Municipalities. In October, they presented a compendium of city-led good practices on sports and physical education initiatives that promote inclusion, integration, and non-discrimination among urban citizens. This publication aims to serve as a policy guide for national and local authorities, aligning with the UN's Sustainable



The ACES team with the sports minister of Azerbaijan.

Development Goals. In conclusion, the conference underscored the importance of collaboration between different levels of government, with local municipalities playing a pivotal role in creating inclusive, sustainable, healthy, and active societies at the grassroots level. Through such partnerships, countries can empower their citizens and ensure a sustainable and healthy future for all through sports.

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UNIVERSAL COMMITMENT

Moreover, all attending countries signed the principles of UNESCO's Fit for Life programme launched officially in Baku. ACES Europe and Worldwide, through its pledge, reaffirmed its unwavering support for the Fit for Life programme, emphasising its alignment with the goal of promoting inclusive and healthy communities worldwide.

ACES pledged to:

- Implement the goals of the UNESCO Fit for Life programme in local and regional policies of capitals, cities, and regions of sport worldwide.
- Promote grassroots participation in sports and quality physical education, inclusive sports policies, youth empowerment, and targeted investments in sports as a driver of COVID-19 recovery.
- Recognise the vital role municipalities play in promoting positive change.
- Promote healthy and active lifestyles and strengthen communities through sustainable initiatives.
- Collaborate closely with UNESCO and other partners to amplify the global impact of the Fit for Life programme.

In essence, the conference showcased a shared commitment to promoting inclusivity, health, and sports for all, underlining the transformative power of sports in addressing pressing global challenges.

Read the MINEPS VII outcome document on: www.unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385925

THE MASSIVE SUCCESS OF CICLOVÍAS RECREATIVAS DE LAS AMÉRICAS

The Ciclovía Recreativa consists of the temporary opening of city streets to residents so they may enjoy a safe and pleasant space for walking, jogging, skating or riding a bike. Vehicular access is prohibited in the area where the programme operates. As makers of public policy, city governments can find a programme in the Ciclovía Recreativa to promote physical activity in their communities.

FRANS OOSTERWIJK

For four hours they
could pedal back
and forth quietly
on a road normally
reserved for
motorised transport

The story of this amazing initiative, nowadays part of the Fit for Life programme of UNESCO, goes back to September 2004 when between 2 and 5 million Guadalajara residents, with the approval of the municipal authorities, took their bicycles to the city's busiest thoroughfare, Avenida Javier Mina-Juarez-Vallarta. For four hours they could pedal back and forth quietly on a road normally reserved for motorised transport. The birth of a real tradition. Since then, this scene has been repeated every Sunday, from eight o'clock in the morning to noon. The initiative emerged from a broad coalition of advocates and action groups and was approved and adopted by the municipal authorities of Guadalajara after intensive deliberation. Ciclovías Recreativas thus acquired an official character and became an activity of cities and municipalities themselves.



The aim is first and foremost to restore the ancient street and city life

MORE THAN 400 CITIES

In recent years, the cycling initiative has spread to large and medium-sized cities in almost all countries of the Americas, from the United States to Canada, from Mexico to Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru and Venezuela. During one or more days of the week (usually on Sundays and during holidays), more than 400 large and small American cities are now radically changing their face and streets and roads are free from motorised (car) traffic for several hours. To provide space for a free, safe ride on the bike or on skates or an undisturbed walk on foot.

RECOVER STREET AND CITY LIFE

The aim of this initiative, which is now 20 years old and still growing in size, is first and foremost to restore the ancient street and city life, by generating spaces for recreation where it is possible and pleasant to play and engage in physical activity, as well as to simply meet each other and carry out cultural and educational activities that encourage coexistence and promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles. City governments find an effective and inexpensive programme in the Ciclovía Recreativa to promote health, local economic development, and social cohesion in their communities.

GAIN OF HEALTH

The advantages for every participating city are numerous: car-free streets, more public space, and, perhaps most of all, better health for the city inhabitants. Because, in a time

when there is a lack of squares, parks and places where people can play and relax in many cities, where neighbourhood life is in decline and is often replaced by mistrust among inhabitants, and where sedentary lifestyle rates are increasing rather than decreasing, at least there will be a break once a week. Then the streets are free for playing children and adults involved in physical activities or doing nothing and enjoying life. And of course, there's an almost unmeasurable big gain of health, caused by the absence of pollution by the emission of cars.

THE CRA NETWORK

The promoters and main continental organisations that have developed and are still developing Ciclovías Recreativas are gathered around the Network of Ciclovías Recreativas of the Americas (Red CRA). In recent years they have not only become qualified in the hard political lobby for more cycle paths and car-free public space in American cities. They have also developed their soft skills by emphasising the informal aspects of car-free Sundays. Like the quality of life that is gained by the possibility of having wonderful, peaceful, family-friendly, and inclusive Sundays.



MANCHESTER EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CYCLING 2024

In addition to being home to two of the most famous football clubs in the world, Manchester will also become the most famous cycling city in Europe in 2024. Manchester is the first European city to receive a new prestigious award from ACES: European Capital of Cycling.

FRANS OOSTERWIJK



The ACES team with gold medallist Emma Finucane.

Hundreds of new cycle paths were constructed in Manchester and surrounding area in recent years



The modern cycling history of Manchester takes off in 1994, when the National Cycling Centre (NCC) is opened, Britain's first indoor Olympic cycling track. The NCC becomes one of the world's finest and fastest board tracks, a frequent venue for national and international track championships and home to the Great Britain Cycling Team. Because of the immense success of British riders in past years the NCC received the nickname The Medal factory. As part of the NCC, the BMX Arena was opened in 2011, featuring amateur and elite tracks. The NCC is also home to the British cycling associations British Cycling and Cycling UK, as well as the professional cycling team Ineos Grenadiers, formerly Team Sky, one of the top teams in the international cycling peloton. Many cycling events are also organised in and around Manchester, both on the road and on track. Almost every year the city is the departure or arrival location of stages of the Tour of Britain. In other words: Manchester has already been



The ACES team during the evaluation visit.

the British national Capital of Cycling for years.

ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

But Manchester does not only have an eye for cycling as a top sport. With numerous actions and campaigns, the municipality has been doing its best for years to get as many people as possible cycling. On

the one hand to reduce air pollution due to CO₂ emissions and exhaust fumes from car traffic. On the other hand to encourage people to lead a more active lifestyle. To this end, the cycling infrastructure has been significantly expanded in recent years. Hundreds of new cycle paths were constructed in the city and sur-

rounding area (Manchester has approximately 550 thousand inhabitants, Greater Manchester 2.8 million). Almost every major route in the city now has safe, separated cycle paths. Also, the Bee Network Cycle Hire scheme was launched, with 1500 bicycles and e-bikes available for hire. On several locations in and around the



Emma Finucane.

Two other new ACES-distinctions

Besides European Capital of Cycling, ACES introduces two other new distinctions in 2024. The Spanish town of Alhaurin de la Torre will be the first European Capital of Integration and Volunteering. The honorific title Mediterranean Capital of Sport goes to Genoa, Italy.

city, tracks and circuits for cyclocross and mountain bikes were introduced. The cycling variants are very popular with youth and therefore highly stimulated by local authorities.

COMMUNITY CYCLE HUBS

In most city areas Community Cycle Hubs were opened, also in order to overcome the

impact of the recent global pandemic. In these hubs people can learn to cycle and maintain their bike under professional guidance. And almost every ward now has cycling clubs, where people can go on cycling trips in the surrounding area with professional coaches. There are guided tours for families, women, children and

In Community Cycle Hubs, people can learn to cycle and maintain their bike under professional guidance

‘wheelers’. In addition bike libraries were introduced, locations where people can borrow a bike for free. Access to a bike is still an issue in Greater Manchester with up to 75% of households not having one available. Last year 18 Recycle Locations were also opened in GM where unused bikes in any state can be donated. Between 2018 and 2022 the Manchester City Council also supported 21 different primary schools in 14 wards across Manchester to hold ‘School Street’ Sessions, to promote safe and active travel - by bike or on foot - from and to school. And, by doing so, help to improve air quality around school sites at the same time. All these initiatives and innovations have led to a spectacular increase of cycling traffic in Manchester by 40% and walking traffic by 15% - clearly demonstrating the transformational effect of high-quality infrastructure.

STRATEGY

Cycling is a priority focus in the Manchester Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, launched in 2019, which promotes cycling as a 100% normal way of traffic in a city and an activity that improves health and fitness. In this strategy the city of Manchester works collectively with the whole sport, physical activity and health sector, to widen access for all Mancunians to lead healthier lifestyles and inspire them to move more each day. Since this strategy was agreed upon significant progress has been made, most notably in relation to investing in improved

facilities, establishing activity interventions, and attracting major events to Manchester. Further development of these approaches, aimed to tackle inactivity with residents and communities, particularly those with poor health will continue to be a priority in next ten years.

THE ACES-BID

In the bid to become ACES European Capital of Cycling 2024 Bev Craig, leader of Manchester City Council, writes: "I see this as a catalyst to escalate the city's ambitions to transform and enhance our cycling offer. Our vision is for Manchester to be in the topflight of world-class cities and to be zero carbon by 2038, as well as to create a healthier city." The city has a significant number of cycling projects in the pipeline, including the development of a new series of Cycle Hubs across the city, targeting communities with low participation rates and high deprivation. The Bee Network will deliver another 1,800 miles of new routes across Greater Manchester in the next ten years. The Bee Network Cycle Hire scheme will also be expanded and more cycling training and bike maintenance classes for targeted groups – notably women and girls, people on lower incomes and minority groups that have already been underrepresented in sport and physical activity for years - will be organised. The number of bike libraries and bike recycle points will be expanded, and the number of training and coaching courses,

Manchester works collectively with the whole sport, physical activity and health sector, to widen access for all Mancunians to lead healthier lifestyles and inspire them to move more

aimed to help and inspire people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to discover the art and joys of bicycling.

ACTIVITIES AND INVESTMENTS

A year-long activity plan was designed to celebrate and emphasise the title of European Capital of Cycling 2024. There will be cycling events in all supporting communities.

There will be tournaments and competitions at the highest level and at grassroots level, on track, road and BMX. And there will be an ongoing communication and promotion spotlight focused on cycling for the whole of 2024. By web, social media, PR/media, print collateral, case studies, filming, animation, outdoor advertising, radio and partner channels. As the bid promises: '2024 will

be a flagship year providing the platform for a catalyst for change – escalating the City's ambitions to transform and enhance our cycling offer.' On top of that the city council has raised the cycling budget for 2024-2025 by 20 million pounds; almost 18 million pounds of it is intended for new infrastructure.



NEW AWARDED CITIES 2024

EUROPEAN TOWN OF SPORT

Grado (Spain)
Les Franqueses del Vallés (Spain)
La Nucia (Spain)
Makarska (Croatia)
Plougastel-Daoulas (France)
Sanary sur Mer (France)
Selestat (France)
Tarazona (Spain)

EUROPEAN CITY OF SPORT

Aix en Provence (France)
Arganda del Rey (Spain)
Arras (France)
Basauri (Spain)
Herceg Novi (Montenegro)
Kayseri (Türkiye)
Manresa (Spain)
Prishtina (Kosovo)
Reims (France)
Stip (North Macedonia)
Subotica (Serbia)
Thessaloniki (Greece)
Viseu (Portugal)
Vlora (Albania)

AFRICAN CITY OF SPORT

Quelimane (Mozambique)

AMERICAN CITY OF SPORT

Belén (Costa Rica)
La Tebaida (Colombia)

SOUTH AMERICAN CITY OF SPORT

Diadema (Brazil)
Manaus (Brazil)
Rio do Sul (Brazil)
San Juan (Argentina)

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OF SPORT

Ambito Maremma Toscana Sud (Italy)
Cuore di Valtellina (Italy)
Flegra (Italy)
Pontina (Italy)
Tatras (Slovakia-Poland)
Terra dei Due Laghi (Italy)

EUROPEAN REGION OF SPORT

Castilla La Mancha (Spain)
Osijek Baranja County (Croatia)
Veneto (Italy)

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF SPORT

Genoa (Italy)

AMERICAN CAPITAL OF SPORT

San Juan (Argentina)

WORLD CAPITAL OF SPORT

Sofia (Bulgaria)

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CYCLING

Manchester (United Kingdom)

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF INTEGRATION AND VOLUNTEERING

Alhaurin de la Torre (Spain)

MEDITERRANEAN CAPITAL OF SPORT

Alanya (Türkiye)

CITIES AWARDED 2024



SOUTH PA
OCEAN

SAN JUAN
(ARGENTINA)

MANCHESTER

(UNITED KINGDOM)

North
Sea



QUELIMANE


(MOZAMBIQUE)

SOUTH
ATLANTIC
OCEAN

GLOBAL OBSERVATORY LOOKING BEYOND SPORTING STARS ON NEW GENDER EQUALITY MISSION

How the seed of an idea first planted almost 20 years ago, to create an equal, just and inclusive future for all in sport, is finally pushing through the topsoil of the gender equality landscape.

PHIL HUMPHREYS



In 2004, when the first moves to establish a global observatory for women in sport were made through UNESCO, only 41 per cent of the athletes, 30 per cent of the flagbearers and eight per cent of the chef de missions at the Olympic Games in Athens were women. The IOC Women and Sport Working Group had only just become a fully-fledged commission, and the US soccer superstar Mia Hamm was one of only two women to be named in a list of the 125 greatest living players commissioned by FIFA. Two decades later, the vision for a worldwide repository of research and expertise to address these imbalances is now a reality with the launch of the Global Observatory for Gender Equality and Sport, a not-for-profit organisation supported by the Swiss Confederation and championed by UNESCO.



“Girls and women in all their diversity should have the opportunity to participate in physical education”



SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES BHARAT 2023



“Our job is to make governments see what policies they should be enacting”

“Over the years, a lot of work has gone into developing movements around women in sport, involving civil society organisations, government actors, academics and different types of development organisations,” Lombe Mwambwa, Research Director of the Global Observatory, says from the platform’s base in Lausanne, Switzerland. “Initially the effort was around convincing policymakers and practitioners that you even need to address gender equality, but it quickly became evident that what was missing was a very specific stream of work on tracking what progress is being made. “Because how do you hold these duty bearers to account if you don’t have the evidence? Data that says: ‘Here is where you have been successful and have actually delivered on your commitment, but here is where the gap is, and therefore where your energy should go.’”

NECESSITY

Before long the forces of progress became unstoppable. At the 2017 International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VI) in Kazan, Russia, delegates committed to establishing a global observatory - a dedicated institution documenting the progress being made around women in sport, and also registering the various challenges that were enduring or evolving. “On the one hand the Global Observatory was really a pragmatic need, and on the other

hand it became a necessity for holding actors to account,” Mwambwa says. How much of the Global Observatory’s purpose, then, is to name and shame governments and sporting institutions into affirmative action? Mwambwa: “Our approach is slightly different since our job is to be at the service of these different actors. We are more like a critical friend, saying to them: ‘We are with you on this, here’s where progress has been made and here’s where you are lacking’. We are the enablers. Our job is to make governments see what policies they should be enacting, to empower civil society to lobby and advocate, and to enable media practitioners to ask the questions they need to ask. We say: ‘We’re letting you know that actually your participation levels are only 15 per cent.’”

QUOTAS

Such discussions around the participation levels of women in sport and in sport governance can often lead decision-makers down the path marked ‘quotas’. A contentious remedy, does the Global Observatory support the notion that sporting institutions should be required to hit certain thresholds of gender representation? “Girls and women in all their diversity should have the opportunity to participate in physical education and physical activity, whether it is as a practitioner, as an (elite) athlete or in the leadership and governance of institutions,” Mwambwa begins. “Gender is one axis through which various inequalities converge, and there are a variety of approaches to addressing these inequalities. Step number one is an understanding of where the gaps are. Quotas fall into the category of affirmative action to address historical wrongs or imbalances, and in many cases are an intervention that works. But you cannot just implement quotas on their own and nothing else, and then anticipate that we will see sustainable change.”

Mwambwa advocates for positive changes being made to the whole culture of an organisation; addressing the internalised views, perspectives and discourse around what leadership looks like, and agreeing on how a participatory and inclusive organisation should operate. “Additionally, is the organisation also implementing other types of policies such as safeguarding and protection? Because even if you have your quotas, if the institution is not safe from harms – whether it’s sexual abuse, racism, marginalisation or disadvantaging of people with disabilities – then that intervention is not going to work. So that is why we use the

term 'inclusive gender equality', because it's not just about saying 'Let's get more women involved in an institution'. We're also asking, 'Which women? What about women with disabilities? Have you considered migrant presence? Have you considered all these other types of factors that contribute to how people are excluded and marginalised?' "The common response is, 'We've always done things this way, we've just never thought about it'. Of course you haven't thought about it, because the population you consider to be the norm are the people whose needs are already being met, and so therefore they end up over-represented in a particular institution or activity. "It's all of these things that we're asking for. And a lot of this requires that decision-makers have the insights, the data and the analysis so that they can assess their own possibility of adopting those changes."

GLOBAL SCALE PICTURE

This is where the first major intervention of the Global Observatory (GO) comes in to play: a repository to aggregate pre-existing data and close any gaps where data is still missing. The GO hopes to build such a tool firstly by collating national censuses, demographic surveys, and other projects that have already been implemented. The second source of data will be initiated in partnership with stakeholders, or through a contributing network of research experts that the GO is currently mobilising via its Research and Action Think Tank (REACT) on Inclusive Gender Equality in Sport. "What has really been lacking is a global scale picture of what is happening," Mwambwa says. "We're working on designing the database; what it will look like and what kind of infrastructure capabilities it will have. One key principle is that it must be open source, because it has to be accessible and useful to as many actors as possible, in order to address that question of access." Mwambwa expects the first step of data mobilisation to begin within months and the initial iteration of the database to be released by the end of 2024.

"What has really been lacking is a global scale picture of what is happening"

TRACKING BY CONSENSUS

So what exactly is the Global Observatory going to track? Mwambwa: "Do we want to track participation levels on leadership in International Federations? If that is what is important to everybody, then that is what we're going to track. Are we agreeing as a collective that we want to track what is happening with media coverage? Because for most of this data, there might be somebody else who's already doing it." Even then, questions will inevitably arise around where the data is coming from, and whether it meets the agreed requirements. "In whose interest is this data collected, and who is represented in this data? We're seeing a lot of data collected in urban areas, but what about people who live in rural areas? We're seeing a lot of data from some parts of the world, but what about countries that we don't get data from? Those world reports or data indices with a grey sign across the map showing 'data unavailable' or 'data not collected'. You know, we're so used to that. So for us, inclusive gender equality is about making sure we have this global reach and perspective to address all the elements upon which exclusion might happen when it comes to collecting data and evidence."



CONFERENCE PRESENCE

In February the GO hosted the inaugural 'International Conference on Inclusive Gender Equality in Sport' in Lausanne. There were panel discussions on the exclusionary history of women's sport, and the lack of understanding regarding intersectionality of gender, race, class, geographical location, disability, religion, and homophobia. "We have been concerned about the disconnection of sport authorities and stakeholders from athlete experiences; the GO aims to foster a culture of gender sensitive policy-making to ensure inclusion," Dr Payoshni Mitra, CEO of the Global Observatory, said in her remarks. Later in June 2023, the GO organised a high-level panel on the final day of UNESCO's most recent world conference of sport ministers (MINEPS VII) in Baku, Azerbaijan. The panellists – including Ecuador Sports Minister Sebastian Palacios Muñoz and Gabriela Ramos, the assistant director-general for social and human sciences at UNESCO - highlighted the need for accelerated, multisectoral and evidence-based action to advance gender equality and empower girls and women in and through physical activity, physical education and sport (PEPAS).

PERSONAL MISSION

"I barely participated in any sport or physical activity when I was in school," Mwambwa says. "It was quite challenging to do that because it was structured to be very competitive and towards finding the best players to make the sports team, and when there are minimum resources it's not very participatory. It was just something I was aware of; this was a field of life that was not very open to me in a way." All that changed when she went to university in 2003 and joined the volleyball team 'just for fun'. "As part of your university fees you are paying a sports fee, so I just thought, 'Oh why not, I should join it if I'm paying for it'. Of course, you then join one of the committees or support in the organising of things, and you discover that there is always a role one can play when it comes to sport. I began to see the inequalities and that is how this has evolved for me." For Dr Lombe Mwambwa and the Global Observatory, the mission is only just beginning.

CONTINUED GROWTH ACES AMERICA IN THE YEAR OF THE AMERICAN WEEK OF SPORT

GONZALO CUESTA (ACES AMERICA)



After years where the world has been severely affected by the pandemic, halting or at least slowing down progress or decision-making, 2023 has been a year of activation of agreements and sustained growth for ACES America in the American continent.

León (Guanajuato, Mexico) has established itself as an excellent American sports capital with a significant brand impact for the city. It has hosted multiple national and international sports events and has significantly facilitated public access to sports. Without a doubt, León 2023 has been a success.

#ACTIVATEAMERICA

In the Mexican city, we launched the first American Week of Sport institutionally, in collaboration with the OAS (Organization of American States) and CADE (Council of Ministers of Sports of the Americas). An initiative led by ACES in which 15 countries, more than 40 cities, and nearly 400 events participated. We hope this celebration of sports becomes a benchmark throughout the American continent in the coming years. The hashtag #ActivateAmerica will be a permanent brand that will define our work and project in America in the years to come. Sports for all - sport as a tool for integration and sustainable development.

AMERICAN NETWORK OF COMMITTED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In León, as the American Capital of Sport 2023, in partnership with UNESCO under its Fit for Life initiative, we jointly promoted the creation of the first Latin American Network of Local Governments committed to Sports and Development, with ACES America as a strategic partner. On 7 March, in Washington, a cooperation agreement was ratified between the OAS, represented by its Secretary General Luis Almagro, and ACES Europe/ACES America, represented by its Secretary General Hugo Alonso. The goal is to make sports and its practice a means of development, peace, health, and inclusion.

The OAS unites the 35 independent states of the Americas and serves as the principal political, legal, and social governmental forum for the hemisphere. It has also granted Permanent Observer status to 69 states, including the European Union (EU). To achieve its most important purposes, the OAS is based on its key pillars of democracy, human rights, security, and development.

AGREEMENTS AND COLLABORATIONS

Additionally, noteworthy agreements were established with the Federation of Municipalities of Colombia (Fedemunicipios), with our Secretary General for the Americas, Carlos Arango, participating in the General Assembly in Cartagena de Indias, as well as with the Police and Firefighters Games to be held in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Adriana Sánchez Parés, Institutional Director of ACES for the Americas, presented the American Week of Sport project at the CADE Ministers at Sports Assembly. In November, we



hosted the Pan-American Sports Meeting in León, focusing on gender equity in sports, with a notable presence of speakers. ACES America is actively collaborating with the network of sports tourism cities, an area with significant development potential in the American region.

SAN JUAN AMERICAN CAPITAL OF SPORT 2024

In September, through its Secretary General Hugo Alonso, ACES participated in the grand presentation of the American Capital of Sport 2024 in San Juan, Argentina, in front of 3,000 spectators as part of the inauguration of the region's velodrome, one of the most important in America, where the Track Cycling World Championships will be held in 2025. Furthermore, Belén (Costa Rica) and La Tebaida (Colombia) will be American Cities of Sport in 2024, and Baja California (Mexico) will be the first American state of sports on the continent. In Brazil, the South American Cities of Sport are Diadema, Manaus and Rio do Sul. Puerto Madryn (Argentina), Chorrillos (Lima, Peru) and Riobamba (Ecuador) are already candidates for American City of Sport 2025.

DRIVING FORCE FOR POLICIES

Gonzalo Cuesta, ACES Delegate for the Americas, stated: "2023 has been the year of ACES America's institutional consolidation, being considered a relevant actor in the world of sports and a strategic partner in various projects and initiatives with broad prospects for growth on the continent. Much remains to be done there in terms of sports by public institutions, and ACES can and should be an activating and driving force for policies that elevate the role of sports as a state policy and a central element in city strategies." The President of ACES, Gian Francesco Lupattelli, expressed his satisfaction with the significant work carried out by ACES America, continuing the prominent role played by ACES Europe since its founding nearly 25 years ago.

IT'S TIME TO BE WORLD CAPITAL OF SPORT 2024!

Sofia - from European to World Capital of Sport

In 2018 Sofia was the European Capital of Sport. This title aimed to promote an active lifestyle and the development of sports policies and infrastructure with an emphasis on grassroots sports. Activities that went on so positively and successfully that the Bulgarian capital will be World Capital of Sport next year.

DAMYAN DIKOV





"This is an important recognition, but also an incentive and a very serious responsibility"

Anatoli Iliev

In 2015 the 'Sofia - European Capital of Sport' foundation was established by Elen Gerdzhikov, chair of the Sofia Municipal Council. Since 2021 both posts have been held by Georgi Georgiev. Vice-chair of the foundation, board member of ACES Europe and current municipal councillor is former track and field athlete Anatoli Iliev, also the engine behind the next and even bigger ambition of Sofia becoming World Capital of Sport in 2024.

"It is quite normal and deserving that Sofia, after having been a very successful European Capital of Sports 2018 and a distinguished example of the initiative, should also be the World Capital of Sports", Iliev says confidently. "The most important thing, and that became the next mission of the team of the foundation, was to further develop good practices and to establish a sustainable sports model for physical activities for people of different age and social groups, which

will remain for the benefit of Sofia residents and guests of the city."

RECOGNITION AND INCENTIVE

The title World Capital of Sports means that people appreciated our efforts, which in the last 7 years have been aimed at providing more opportunities for sports and an active lifestyle for the people of Sofia and the guests of the city, Iliev continues. "This is an important recognition, but also an incentive and a very serious responsibility. The continuation of the initiative and the spill over into being Sports Capital of the World gives us a chance to reward the previous model, which has proved successful and attracted hundreds of thousands. In addition to the hundreds of events and

activities that we organise every year, recently we have been able to allocate more resources to improving the infrastructure and rehabilitating the Vitosha Mountain - one of the most valuable assets of our capital. The Foundation also became the first to set a model for holding sports events in a setting of health measures."

SHARE AND PROMOTE THE TITLE

The other thing the foundation is proud of is that it managed to attract and assist 14 Bulgarian villages to be European cities of sports, which certainly gave Bulgarians more options for a healthy life, says Iliev. "At the end of last year, the heads of ACES Europe visited us and officially presented Sofia the flag of 'World Capital of Sport 2024' during a gala performance in

The foundation is proud of managing to attract and assist 14 Bulgarian villages to be European cities of sports



the National Palace of Culture. Then, with great interest, we also organised an international conference with the participation of foreign specialists and representatives of the Bulgarian sports cities on the topic 'Effect and future of the initiative on a global scale'.

INNOVATIVENESS AND COMMITMENT

Despite the difficulties of a healthy (Covid!) and financial nature in recent years, sports in Sofia remained strongly supported by the two programmes of the Sofia Municipality, Iliev explains. "One is the direct financing of the Youth Sports Clubs with BGN 900,000 per year, the other the development of the grassroots sports in the amount of BGN 540,000 per year. These activities continue under the

recently adopted Ordinance on the rental of sports properties, which facilitated and opened new horizons for those wishing to invest in sports infrastructure. We also prepared and have recently put in effect the Programme for Sports Grounds, which enables each mayor to determine the need to restore and build local sports areas near people's homes and work. The number of street gyms in inter-block spaces is also constantly growing. The Metropolitan Municipality has adopted a General Strategy for the development of sports in the city until 2030, which will also contribute to more investments and finances in this area."

SPORTS ACTIVITIES

The foundation 'Sofia - European capital of sports'

works according to an already established and proven successful model of organising sports events. We emphasise the attractive and popular events among young people, sports holidays and urban festivals with urban disciplines so loved by children. We present sports as a show, as pleasure and people's desire to be active, to have fun. In 2023, we organised 108 events in an urban environment, 23 of them in and around Vitosha Mountain, and 11 with a strong social cause. On the calendar, there are at least as many accompanying activities as presentations, demonstrations and photo exhibitions on sports themes, etc. We keep this model and develop it further in the coming years, and in the culminating year 2024 it will be even richer and more diverse.

Vitosha Mountain

In the last few years, 'Sofia - European capital of sports' managed to allocate more funds and resources for the rehabilitation of the tourist infrastructure of Vitosha, the total invested amount has already exceeded BGN 680,000. We signed an agreement with Vitosha Nature Park and for the third year now a number of activities are strictly carried out in the mountains.



STUDENT HOLIDAYS

In addition to the sports holidays and festivals organised by the foundation in the summer, the 'Sports and Youth Activities' Directorate of the Sofia Municipality is once again implementing a rich palette of activities for students with over 15 activities during the holidays, in which nearly 15,000

young people engage. These events are described in detail on the Directorate's website and Facebook page. In addition, all 24 district administrations have their own rich holiday programmes in places.

Damyan Dikov is Chief executive director of the 'Sofia – European capital of sport' Foundation



Yordanka Fandakova, mayor of Sofia 2009-2023 and Honorary President ACES Europe, is proud that Sofia will be the World Capital of Sport in 2024.

"This is a great recognition for our city, for our efforts to develop opportunities for sports, and for a cause that unites us", she says. "Sofia won the title of "European Capital of Sport" permanently and is honored to be the "World Capital of Sport" in 2024 because of the successful development of mass sports in the city, thanks to the participation of thousands of citizens and the support of Bulgaria's great athletes - European, world, and Olympic champions. The capital of Bulgaria is an example of hard work for the development of various possible sports activities for both professional athletes and all those who want to lead a healthy lifestyle. Over 4.4 million people took part in more than 1.380 events in the last five years. This initiative not only contributes to physical development but also to the creation of a community of active and sports-loving citizens. In recent years, Sofia has actively supported mass sports. We have invested in opportunities for school sports, sports fields, outdoor gyms, and tennis tables with free access. Sofia Municipality has undertaken numerous initiatives aimed at promoting physical activity. Sport is not only an activity but a way of life that inculcates virtues and character in young people. Sofia is prepared to take over the baton as World Capital of Sport for 2024, to continue to develop sports and inspire citizens to be active. I am convinced that Sofia will once again set an example and present itself with dignity with its program of over 300 events for 2024. I thank all partners for their support and sympathy for the cause. Thank you to all citizens who participate and will support their city."

MONACO, WORLD CAPITAL OF SPORT 2025

It's now official, Monaco is World Capital of Sport 2025. H.S.H. Prince Albert II received the officialization of the title on November 4th from Francesco Lupattelli, the President and Founder of ACES Europe/ ACES Worldwide. An ACES Europe delegation represented by ACES Europe President and Founder Gian Francesco Lupattelli, ACES Europe Secretary General Hugo Alonso and ACES France President Robert De Vita and 6 ACES members recently met with the Minister of Sports and the interior of Monaco, Patrice Cellario, Madame Isabelle Bonnal Commissioner Minister of National Education.

ROBERT DE VITA



Monaco remains very attached to
access sports for all

Sport in Monaco has always held an important place. Since the early years of the last century, prestigious sporting events have followed one another, from the Formula 1 Grand Prix to the Monte-Carlo Rally, including the Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters tennis tournament, and the Herculis international athletics meeting.

The oldest of the Monegasque sports sections is called the Société des Régates and was founded in June 1888. If this name is no longer relevant today, it is because it gave rise to the two institutions of the Principality that are the Société Nautique and the Yacht Club, of which the sovereign is, respectively, the Honorary President and the President.

CHARITY

Throughout the year, the principality of Monaco organises various events combining sport and charity. No Finish Line is an event now firmly anchored in the principality. Since 1999, this race, taking place in November and open to all, has allowed funds to be donated to support projects for disadvantaged or sick children, thanks to the system of 1 euro collected for each kilometre travelled. Let us also mention the walk intended to raise awareness of breast cancer prevention and screening methods, as part of Pink Ribbon Monaco.

PRINCE ALBERT II

The princely family is a family of distinguished sportsmen. Starting with the



The princely family is a family of distinguished sportsmen

sovereign prince, who practiced seventeen sports in total and who participated in five editions of the Olympic Games between 1988 and 2002 in bobsleigh. Prince Albert II also took part in two Paris-Dakar starts, in 1985 and 1986. On his mother's side, his grandfather Jack Kelly was Olympic rowing champion in 1920 and 1924 and his uncle participated in four Olympics, winning a bronze medal in rowing in 1956. On his father's side, bobsleigh has been a family affair since Guy de Polignac, cousin of Prince Rainier III, was a member of the French team in the 1920s. Finally, Princess Charlene had the opportunity to show her talents as an outstanding swimmer: South African junior champion, winner of the Monaco swimming meeting, and three-time World



Cup winner in 2002. Princess Charlene also participated in the Olympic Games, where she was ranked fifth in the women's relay during the Sydney edition in 2000.

SPORT FOR ALL

The city and the principality of Monaco also remain very attached to access sports for all and for all audiences. Daily sporting practice enjoys firm support of the government and pursues three objectives:

- Develop the practice of sport at school, such as physical education and swimming lessons. Whenever possible, school buildings are equipped with sports facilities. Students participate in inter-class and inter-establishment tournaments as well as UNSS (National School Sports Union) competitions.

- Promote mass sport by allowing young people to practise as many disciplines as possible within the associative framework. There are nearly a hundred sports associations, a large part of which receive state aid. In addition, the sports facilities of schools are open, after school hours, to associations.
- Encourage competitive sport. Classes with flexible schedules were set up for middle school students with a significant number of training hours; a system conferring the status of high-level Olympic athletes was established in order to encourage the participation of national athletes during major events. Through the Monegasque Olympic Committee, national athletes and their federation can receive assistance as part of Olympic preparation.

This is why Monaco has all the assets for the title of World Capital of Sport 2025.

THE MAGIC OF THE ACES TITLES

Capitals, cities, islands, regions, communities, and towns of sport are always extremely pleased with the ACES title they receive. They mostly see it as an acknowledgement of the efforts they put in investing in sport and movement. By doing so they contribute to public health and the satisfaction of their citizens. But do these efforts also have a more concrete return on investment? The answer: yes, they do!

FRANS OOSTERWIJK

Sport and exercise lead to better health and to more well-being and enjoyment. And the figures conclusively show that it is also profitable to invest in sports and exercise. In the Netherlands, consultancy firm Rebel and the Mulier Institute calculated in 2022 that the Social Return On Investment (SROI) of sport and exercise in the Netherlands is 2.70. This means that the social benefits of sport and exercise are 2.7 times higher than the costs. In 2019, the SROI was still 2.51.

DATA

Perhaps a calculation method will one day be devised to calculate the precise value of an ACES award. Because

The medical costs that Glasgow saved in this way were invested in sports facilities for the elderly

the need to gain more insight into the financial value of sport and exercise and the related aspects (such as the organisation of major sporting events, sporting investments in public spaces, etc.) is extremely topical. The problem is often that it is not clear exactly which data should be looked at. The SROI of sport and exercise is usually calculated by adding up the expenditure of governments, companies, people who exercise and the costs of professionals and volunteers in sport. And to compare this with the returns, in terms of health benefits, quality of life, enjoyment and experience of the athletes and exercisers.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

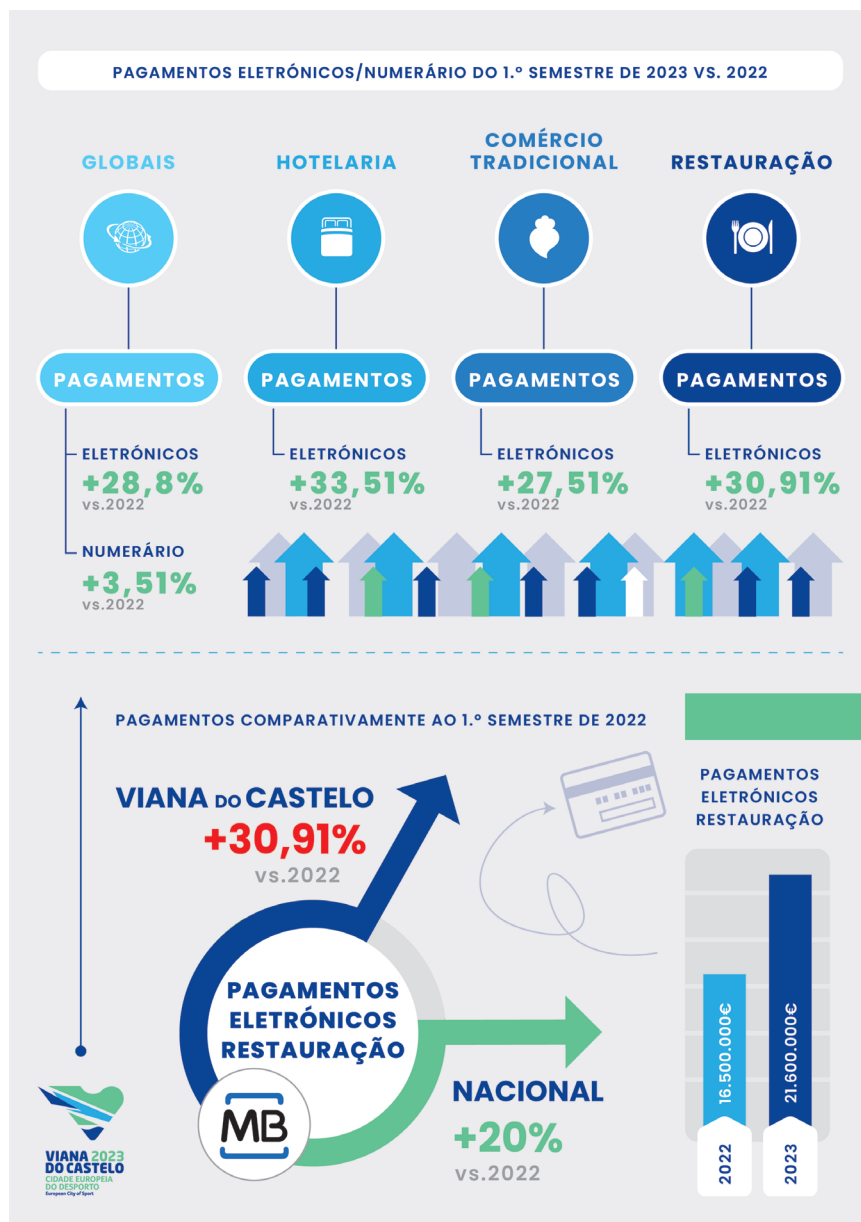
The ACES awards can at least be said to have a strong emotional value. In the sense that almost every capital, city, island, region, community, and town experiences the award as a just reward for their efforts in the field of sports and exercise. What's new is that the award also results in higher or additional income! For example, Andalusia, the 2021 European Region of Sport, estimates the economic impact of the title at 150 million euros, due to the income from (sports) events organised that year. Marseille, European City of Sport 2017, had 20 million euros extra income that year, by successfully using the title to attract additional regional and national subsidies and funds. Piedmont, European Region of Sport 2022, estimates that the social benefits of sport and exercise that year were no less than

7.5 times greater than the costs. Another illustrative example of ROI comes from the Portuguese city of Viana do Castelo, European City of Sport 2023. The municipality subsequently calculated that electronic payments in the city had increased by almost 31 per cent in the first quarter of that year (see image).

SOCIAL RETURN

It's not just about hard financial figures. Antwerp, European Sports Capital 2013, saw sports and exercise participation increase by no less than 10 per cent in 2013 thanks to the title, the subsequent sports and exercise campaign and the 365 sporting events organised that year. Glasgow was European Sports Capital twice, in 2003 and in 2023. The city first introduced 'exercise prescriptions' for older people, an exercise campaign aimed at seniors to encourage them to reduce their medication use and exercise more. The medical costs that the city saved in this way were invested in sports facilities for the elderly. Capitals, cities, islands, regions, communities, and towns also use their candidature to put sports policy higher on their list of priorities. And they enter the biggest network of sport cities with more than 5.000 participants. Thanks to this network up to date information and countless good practices are at their disposal!

This is the magic of the ACES titles and with every new award and title granted this magic grows further and further.



The award also results in higher or additional income

ASCOLI PICENO WINS THIRD EDITION OF THE ACES INTERNATIONAL VIDEO AWARDS



The municipality of Ascoli Piceno is the winner of the 3rd edition of the ACES International Video Awards. The contest created by ACES Italia rewarded the quality of the video produced by the municipality of the Marche Region, which after eleven years has decided to stand as a candidate again for the title of European City of Sport 2025.

LUCA PARMIGIANI

The ACES International Video Awards saw the participation of 24 municipalities, distributed across ten countries belonging to three continents. Popular vote has been an innovation this year, assigned by over 300 high school students from Macerata. The vote once again awarded Ascoli Piceno, winner of the best video for both categories, jury and public.

“It was the year of the record”, said ACES Italia President Vincenzo Lupattelli, referring to the wonderful novelty represented by the vote of the Macerata schools,

which confirmed the jury's vote. Veneto Region won the special ACES Cinema prize and will receive a contribution of 2,000 euros towards the purchase of multimedia material for local schools, while the Municipality of Codogno won the Decathlon prize. The company, sponsor of ACES Italy, will donate a basket to the Lombardy Municipality. The awards had the patronage of Italian sports bodies, such as CONI, Sport e Salute, ANCI, CIP, Istituto per il Credito Sportivo, Office of the European Parliament in Italy, Municipality of Macerata and USSI.



24 municipalities
participated



Awarded municipalities

Best Video:

Ascoli Piceno (Italy)

Project Idea:

Viana do Castelo (Portugal) – Leon (Mexico)

Social inclusion special award Decathlon:

Codogno (Italy)

Project Creativity:

Martorell (Spain) – Sanary sur Mer (France)

Link with the socio-cultural and territorial context:

Sakarya (Turkey) – La Roda (Spain)

Promotion of sport activities and values – Regione Veneto (Italy)

Relevance to the Values of Sport – Seregno (Italy) – Caorle (Italy)

Emotional Impact – San Juan (Argentina)

Sports Tourism – Comunità Alpe Cimbra (Italy) – Taranto (Italy)

Sports & Sustainability – Comunità Pirineu Català – Venaria Reale (Italy)

CORE DRIVER FOR GLOBAL CHANGE

Madrid at the forefront of sustainability in sport

In November last year, Madrid found itself in the global spotlight for successfully hosting the third edition of the World Sport Meeting. The Spanish capital was at the centre of international sports diplomacy under the ACES Europe umbrella, reuniting 120 sports delegates from 50 cities in Europe and Latin America, including the participation of major institutional bodies and agencies.

GIULIANA GRILLO

Having been the World Capital of Sport for 2022, Madrid reached the goal of putting sustainability at the top of the meeting's agenda, enhancing its role in creating opportunities for progress in the field of sport. But what does it really mean to be sustainable in sport? What are cities around the world doing to make sport more sustainable? These two key questions led the meeting's discussion around a topic that is considered a core driver for creating a positive impact in society these days. "Everyone talks about sustainability, everywhere. At the business level, at the government level, at the local level, but nobody knows what the real

implications of it are, and what you have to do to make sports sustainable in the long term," says Sofia Miranda, Sport Councillor of Madrid and organiser of the meeting. "In my opinion there is a lot of philosophy around this subject, but there is no practice. That's why we thought it was going to be very useful to have different cities coming from every corner of the world sitting around a table to speak about their situations and experiences."

THREE KEY PILLARS

Following the International Olympic Committee's announcement three years ago that all future Olympic and Paralympic Games would be 'Climate Positive' from 2030, with Brisbane 2032 being the first Games in history contractually obliged to be delivered as such, the bond between sport and sustainability has become a priority not only in the organisation of sporting events in respect to the environment but also in driving social and cultural change for communities. Despite the different local needs and policies, "everybody agreed that the concept of sustainability goes beyond the mere environmental issues," Miranda continues. "It's not only about plastics, water, materials, etcetera. From a sporting point of view it's important to address the social part of it."

"Nobody knows what you have to do to make sports sustainable in the long term"



The identification and promotion of sustainable development in sport must include three key pillars that are closely tied together: the environment, social needs and economy. In Miranda's view, "a lot of cities spend lots of money to host big sporting events. The money comes from the taxes of the citizens, so you have to make that event sustainable at the economic level. As I said in the discussions, cities compete against each other to bid and organise major events. This competition increases the prices of the event, so we need to be aware of that too because this can be negative for its economic sustainability in the long run. And it's also crucial to check how these events and policies are affecting the environment in order to make them more sustainable for the planet. On the social impact, it's important to see how you use them to positively transform society into a more equitable and inclusive one." During the meeting some of her colleagues from South America revealed how sport is proving to be a useful tool in fighting the increasing violence in their cities. Inviting young people to practise different disciplines and implementing projects to attract their interest with the idea of reducing gender discrimination, is helping them and their governments face the issue and gain more equality between women and men.

"In my opinion there is a lot of philosophy around this subject, but there is no practice"



“Everybody agreed that the concept of sustainability goes beyond the mere environmental issues”

CORRECTIVE MEASURES

In practical terms, if a municipality wants to host a sporting event while investing public money, it needs to involve its citizens to allow them to benefit from and enjoy it, and to create an important social impact and legacy for them. Also it's important to consider the materials used to build the sporting facilities and temporary infrastructures, which food and water will be provided, and also to better investigate the selected location. If an event takes place in the city centre, what is the best area to choose that doesn't burden the city's daily life? If the event is staged outside the town, how will it bring spectators there by transport? If athletes are coming from other countries, how can it reduce the negative impact of carbon emissions of their travel?

“In my experience with the golf national championships in Madrid, we introduced some corrective measures. A private company that pays for part of the tournament, balances the negative effects of using airplanes, cars and trains and compensates them by planting trees after calculating the miles and the impact on the environment. I think the public administration needs to learn a lot from the private sector and the private sector needs to learn from the institutions. We need to work together.” The World Sport Meeting also highlighted how local sports policies can play a role in the decision-making on the national and international stage. Sharing sustainability recommendations and good practices with governments and international bodies can act as a prerequisite for guiding the development of communities through the promotion of sport and wellbeing. “We need to be aware of this kind of relation among the cities because

this is going to affect the national level and then the global one for all countries and citizens.”

ADDRESS CHILDREN

But the real starting point in making sustainability policies and strategies successful, is to focus on children. Miranda: “We always say that children are the future, but children are the present too. If we really want to have a positive impact on society, we need to address them. In Europe we have an increased problem with obesity and overweight, so if we don't reflect this issue in all our sports policies for children, we are going to suffer from the same problems Mexico and the United States are facing. Sport is the best tool we have to change the future. Children have time to do sports; although this is changing due to the use of mobile phones and tablets, the spirit of children is always to be moving. So addressing these policies to them will help make the world more sustainable and healthier with a better future for all of us.”

“If we really want to have a positive impact on society, we need to address children”





BENCHMARK TO FOLLOW

Keeping this in mind and thanks to the notable improvements made in sports policies in recent years, Madrid has been able to set the pace for all municipalities, becoming a model and a benchmark to follow worldwide. Organising the ACES congress and linking sport to sustainability put the city in the very privileged position of being at the centre of policy and international relations for all cities. “We are back in the minds of the international federations as a sport city,” Miranda says. “At the local level we have the most popular competition in all of Europe, with 125,000 people practising sports every weekend in the so-called Juegos Municipales (Municipal Games) that comprise different disciplines. We also realised that the number of people participating in them considerably increased after the Covid pandemic, so that’s a concrete sign of the changes and efforts that our sport department made.” And in the bigger picture, “Madrid needs to keep betting on sport policy not only in promoting events or physical activities but in changing the philosophy of it. In my view the future of public policies comes from relating sport to health. If you have citizens exercising every day for at least 45 minutes, you are saving lots of money for the health and care systems. Budget in sports is an investment in health.” A better society, a healthier lifestyle and a cleaner planet will start from here.

“If you have citizens exercising every day for at least 45 minutes, you are saving lots of money for the health and care systems”

“WE WANT TO BECOME THE STRAVA FOR URBAN CULTURE”

How CityLegends gets young people moving through urban sports

Getting more people to participate in sports or exercise, is one of the major tasks that Europe faces. This requires new solutions that are often aimed at behavioural change. CityLegends does this by getting young people who are not interested in traditional sports, active through urban sports.

FRANS OOSTERWIJK

CityLegends originated from the InnoBeweegLab in Eindhoven, where Jimmy Hermans worked as a project manager to get young people moving. The first version of the CityLegends app included a map on which urban athletes could designate places to complete challenges and share them via videos. A kind of a mix of Instagram, TikTok and Google Maps. The idea came from his personal experiences as a skateboarder. “We always ran into the problem of not knowing where the best skating spots and other skaters were”, remembers Hermans. “In football, hockey and most other sports you have matches and competitions at fixed, pre-arranged locations; skateboarding is

more individual, freer and unbound. The disadvantage is that little information is shared.”

In 2020, Hermans founded CityLegends to provide young people with information about places where they could go skateboarding, free-running, parkouring or BMXing. “They could ‘conquer’ those places by uploading a video with their tricks. By getting as many likes as possible, they can conquer even an entire region. CityLegends now has over 100,000 users around the world: from Latin America to Asia, but most of them in Europe.

“They could ‘conquer’ places by uploading a video with their tricks”

LINES

The app also came on the radar outside the urban sports scene. Hermans: “Governments and municipalities quickly showed interest because they find it difficult to reach this target group. Our information on urban sports locations gives them a better idea of where young people are and what they find fun and interesting.” Based on this need, LINES was founded in 2021, a knowledge institute on urban culture. “Municipalities can become a member of LINES and find out everything about urban culture,” Hermans explains. “They get access to, among other things, a dashboard with information and reports about locations, infrastructure and battles that urban athletes organise. We can also put them in touch with an ‘urban advisor’, in order to build a relationship with the urban scene in their own municipality.”

PLAYURB

This year, the reach of CityLegends was further expanded because the project under the name PlayURB is supported by the EU. PlayURB is a partnership between the European Platform for Sports Innovation (EPSI), ACES Europe, CityLegends/LINES and the European cities of Eindhoven, Munich, Valencia and Turin. The aim of the PlayURB project is to bring local organisations (such as the sports departments of cities and municipalities and local clubs and associations) into contact with the local urban sports culture. The ultimate goal is to entice young people who are not attracted to more traditional sports into physical activity and thus further grow urban sports. Hermans: “We want to set up hybrid activation programmes everywhere in which we connect the digital world of these young people with their actual world, in order to create more hotspots for urban sports. By increasing the supply of urban sports locations and stimulating urban sports activities and events, cities and municipalities not only promote new, alternative forms of sports practice, but also increase the quality of



“We want to create more hotspots for urban sports”

life in their own city,” says Hermans. More specifically, PlayURB pursues the following goals in each city: increasing the participation level of local young people (9-25 years old), promoting urban sports, strengthening the local urban sports community, creating collaborative networks and ensuring transferable and sustainable knowledge development (best practices), from which other European cities, municipalities and regions can benefit in the future.

“Governments and municipalities quickly showed interest”

HOW REGIONS IN EUROPE CAN DEVELOP AND SHARE SPORTS EXCELLENCE

The SESE project might be the answer for regional sports stimulation

Lack of local and regional facilities, insufficient policy and unequal financing of sport from the national government are causes of physical inactivity in many regions in the EU. In the SESE project, four European regions team up to develop a new model of sports excellence in collaboration with other sectors and domains, such as health, work, family and education, and through the development of good practices. For themselves and for the other regions in Europe that lag behind in the field of sports.

FRANS OOSTERWIJK



There is migration to the big cities in all countries in the world. This urbanisation is creating shrinking areas elsewhere where the level of facilities is declining and community life is being undermined. Shops, schools, hospitals, cultural institutions and sports clubs are disappearing. Or people have to cover increasingly greater distances to reach them. The SESE project - Sharing European Sports Excellence - addresses this problem by establishing cooperation between regions in Europe and developing interregional good practices in the field of sport.

EUROBAROMETER

According to the European Commission's recent fifth Eurobarometer survey on sport and physical activity, 45% of Europeans never participate in physical activity. This happens because, according to the research, people do not have enough time for sports, followed by a lack of motivation or no interest in sports. However, an important factor is also the lack of available services, options and facilities in a certain geographical area. If a region does not have the resources to engage people in sports and physical activity, there will be no successful engagement with residents.



FRAMEWORK FOR CHALLENGING SPORTS ENVIRONMENTS

Despite lagging sporting facilities, how can European regions ensure that people become more active? This question is at the core of the EU-funded Erasmus SESE project. SESE wants to promote 'excellence in sports' through transnational, interregional cooperation. In SESE, the European Platform for Sport Innovation (EPSI) and ACES Europe work together with sports and exercise experts from Lapland University (Finland), Sport Azores (Azores), Drenthe Sport (the Netherlands), and Medimurje County (Croatia). The aim is to raise the regional level of sport and sports participation by developing a methodological framework for setting up facilities. To create 'challenging sports environments' and combat the risk of social exclusion, partners explicitly strive for collaboration with private and public parties and interest groups from sectors and domains other than sport, such as health, labour, family and education.

TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT MEETING

The participating parties have now completed two Transnational Project Meetings (TPM). The kick-off meeting took place in Drenthe in February 2023, hosted by Sport Drenthe, the sports organisation of this Dutch province. Each partner gave a presentation of the region and organisation they represented; they then jointly mapped out the route to achieve the project objectives. Six months later the second

meeting took place on the Azores island of San Miguel. Partners once again emphasised the need for a fairer distribution of resources across all cities and regions of a country and discussed possible solutions. Such as tools for valorisation like the ACES labels of European Region/City/Community of Sport, because such labels can raise social awareness about the importance of sports and encourage greater investment in the field. Partners agreed to pursue a twinning programme for knowledge exchange and collaboration, while also committing to the creation of an e-book that will compile project insights.



With these initiatives, the common conclusion was that the groundwork had been laid for a more supportive and integrated sports environment in different European regions. The next meeting of the SESE-partners will take place in Rovaniemi (Finland) in November 2024.

REVITALISE THE SCHOOL YARD PROJECT REPORT

GIULIA MUSSONI AND FRANS OOSTERWIJK

On 13 and 14 July 2023, six organisations from different Member States of the European Union gathered in Barcelona for their second meeting on 'Revitalise the School Yard'. The partner organisations that make this project come alive are Deporte para la Education y la Salud (Spain), University of Thessalis (Greece), ACES Europe (Belgium), CNAPEF (Portugal), NGO Nest Berlin (Germany) and L'Orma (Italy), the latter acting as the coordinator of this project.



The project seeks the organisation of various transnational meetings across the partner countries following the kick-off meeting last year in Milan. The next meeting will also be held in Milan, on December 7th, before the EU Sport Lab organised by project coordinator L'Orma.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The project focuses on studying, creating, testing, and disseminating a strategic administrative mechanism managed by municipalities. It is designed to stimulate local collaborative partnerships between sports organisations and schools. The goal of the project is to support municipalities and sports organisations with the bureaucratic procedures through the offering of a pre-designed administrative mechanism and the creation of online Communities of Practice (CoP).

The specific objectives are to:

- transform the unused or under-used potential of outdoor school spaces into valuable community resources;
- contribute actively to refurbish/reconstruct/replace/ maintain (out)dated external school areas and/or provide new roofed areas for polyvalent sporting destination;
- improve quantity but also quality of both physical education curricula and community grassroots sport supply;
- empower local people to invest in and care for the open-air school spaces within a CoP that shares a common concern toward local quality sport facilities;
- facilitate investment by sport organisations to improve availability and programmability of access to safe, clean, suitable (and affordable) sport facilities within school context.

INADEQUACY OF SPORT FACILITIES AT SCHOOL

Inactivity costs the EU 80.4 billion euros per year, which is equivalent to 6.2% of all health spending (Report *The economic cost of physical inactivity in Europe* by ISCA & Cebr). This is particularly worrying among younger populations. According to the 'Update on the status of physical education



in schools worldwide' by the World Health Organization (WHO), although there are legal requirements for physical education to be taught at school all around Europe, the actual implementation does not usually meet these obligations. As an example, in Italy students only practice 66 hours of physical education per year, leading to 35% of them being overweight and 10/12% obese (1st Report *Sport & Society* by the National Italia Olympic Comity).

The main problem this project wants to address is the inadequacy of sport facilities, both in a quantity and a quality matter.

PARTNERSHIPS TO SHARE FACILITIES

Municipalities face economic difficulties, there are administrative limitations in promoting public and private collaboration. The recommendations of the European Commission's Expert Group on health-enhancing physical activity are very relevant to this project: "Schools and local sport organisations need appropriate sport facilities to develop their activities in safe and healthy environments. Partnerships with shared facilities would be beneficial for regular physical education classes but would also provide for new or expanded opportunities for after-school physical activity programmes." In this sense, 'Local authorities should develop efficient models to plan, manage and fund high quality and safe physical activity and sport infrastructures making them accessible for schools.'

DISSEMINATION CAMPAIGN BY ACES EUROPE

As a partner in the project ACES Europe is working on a 2024 Dissemination Campaign, by involving the 'Revitalise the School Yard' project in several upcoming events of ACES Europe itself: the Annual Awards Gala in Brussels, several sports congresses across Europe where ACES Europe is within the main protagonist, and the yearly ACES Italia Award with all Italian awarded cities and candidates.

Giulia Mussoni is European Project Manager of L'Orma.

The main problem this project wants to address is the inadequacy of sport facilities

The numbers

By the end of the project these are the numbers the project aims to achieve:

- 4 calls for project published by Municipalities;
- 5-20 cities getting actively involved in specific promotional events and/or training initiatives;
- 12 Local Communities of Practice (CoP) under development that have adopted a schoolyard (these refer to the cities getting actively involved in the implementation of the administrative mechanism created, but who have not launched their public call yet);
- 1 interview per partner;
- 200 participants to the International Multiplier Event;
- more than 500 City Councils contacted to be part of the project.

SPORTS INC: TOWARDS REAL INCLUSIVITY

ACES Europe is a partner of the Erasmus+ funded European project that aims to develop a programme of learning, knowledge and skills for an increasingly inclusive sport.

ALESSIO DI MAIO (ACES EUROPE) AND LUCA PARMIGIANI (SPORT INC)



SPORTS INC is a European project funded by Erasmus+ that sees ACES Europe in the consortium formed by Learning Detours V.A. Ltd (Cyprus), Commitment-planet Associação (Portugal), Eolas S.L. (Spain), Associazione Ergon (Italy), and Vienna Association of Education Volunteers (Austria). The idea of the project is linked to the 'EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030'. In this document, people with disabilities constitute 25% of the total European population. Despite the progress made in recent years, these people are still facing significant obstacles in accessing education, employment, leisure activities and are at greater risk of social exclusion. All this was amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has increased obstacles and inequalities.

LEARNING PROGRAMME

The SPORTS INC project aims to develop a learning programme that provides (potential) entrepreneurs and managers in the sport and leisure sector, as well as civil society organisations, with the knowledge, skills and competences to ideate, design, develop, implement, and commercialise a service adapted to the specific needs and circumstances of people with disabilities or special needs. Either by transforming their existing business or by creating a new (social) enterprise. Through sharing and promotion activities, SPORTS INC. it will also help improve communication and cooperation between educational centres, organisations supporting people with special needs and those supporting social entrepreneurship, including the project's partner organisations.

The idea of the project is linked to the 'EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030'

THE ACES NETWORK

ACES Europe plays a leading role in this project, thanks to the involvement of the many countries that are part of our network and that have already provided, in the first research phase, a more careful analysis throughout Europe, for example Croatia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and the Netherlands. The project has passed the survey phase, with over 200 responses collected throughout Europe thanks to the commitment, dedication and passion of each individual partner, aware of being able to offer a clearer picture of this area and above all to be able to give some concrete answers for a world that is increasingly inclusive in the coming years.

ADULT TRAINING

And recently the SPORTS INC consortium has been working on the free online adult training programme for (future) social entrepreneurs and NGOs, and we can already preview some of the content. The programme is for those who are:

- interested to learn more about social entrepreneurship, inclusive sports and active leisure;
- considering starting a social business;
- already in business and would like to make their services or products more inclusive;
- working at an NGO in the field of sports or active leisure and would like to learn more and support members;
- loving the idea of social business but are not sure how to make it successful.

COMPLETE PROCESS

The SPORTS INC Programme covers the whole process from creating product or service idea, to bringing it to the market, and establishing and nurturing relationships with customers and partners. It includes:

- Development of entrepreneurial skills
- Introduction to social enterprise and inclusive sports & leisure
- Ideation and design
- Marketing
- After sales support
- Networking

LEARNING PATH

Short learning units provide the essential knowledge to start and grow a social enterprise, with a special focus on inclusive sports and active leisure. Practical tips, exercises and resources for further learning. A learning path will be suggested based on each own needs.

People with disabilities are still facing significant obstacles in accessing education, employment, leisure activities and are at greater risk of social exclusion



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WITH THE MAGIC OF AI, WE'VE CRAFTED THIS IMAGE.
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