

# THE EUROPEAN WEEK OF SPORT

Last update: July 2021

## Alarming and growing levels of physical inactivity across the European continent

The physical inactivity 'pandemic' is a concerning global reality that has worsened over the past 20 years and which contributes to at least 5 million annual deaths. High-income countries record physical inactivity levels that are twice as high as low-income ones. Increased levels of physical inactivity have negative impacts on health systems, the environment, economic development, community well-being and quality of life. The drop in physical activity is partly correlated to sedentary behaviours during leisure time, time at work and at home, and to passive modes of transport.<sup>1</sup>

Europe is not spared from this dangerous trend: in 2018 46% of Europeans stated they never exercise or play a sport<sup>2</sup>. This represents a disturbing 4% increase in inactivity levels from 2014<sup>3</sup>, and is in keeping with the trend since 2009.

A study calculated the minimum annual direct and indirect cost of Europe's physical inactivity at EUR 80 billion, setting it as a public health risk that is foreseen to outgrow smoking.<sup>4</sup> Today, a vast amount of research proves regular physical activity provides broader benefits than improved over-all wellbeing, mental and physical health; physical activity is directly correlated to preventing and managing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers and type II diabetes.

## The European Commission's response: the European Week of Sport

In 2009 the Lisbon Treaty entered into force providing the European Union (EU) with the competence to implement activities that seek to support, coordinate or complement Member States' actions in the sport and physical activity sector. In 2015, the European Commission inaugurated [the European Week of Sport \(EWoS\)](#), an annual continent-wide campaign that unfolds between **23-30 September**, and that is organised with the help of Partners and National Coordinators.

With a focus on grassroots initiatives, EWoS' primary objective is to **raise awareness around the importance, role, and benefits of physical activity and active lifestyles, and strives to encourage people to #BeActive regardless of age, background, or fitness level**. Ultimately, the Week facilitates collaboration among the sport and physical activity movement, public authorities, the private sector, civil society and individuals. Every year, the campaign is launched on June 23<sup>rd</sup> Olympic Day.

A number of EWoS spin-offs and complementary initiatives exist:

- **The European School Sport Day** spin-off focuses on enabling children and young people to be physically active. The campaign was met with instant success following its launch in 2015.
- **The Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle** was presented and signed by the Commissioners for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Agriculture and Rural Development, and for Health and Food Safety, at the opening of the 2017 EWoS, in

<sup>1</sup> Physical activity, WHO newsroom. 26 November 2020. <https://shorturl.at/hwBZ9>

<sup>2</sup> Eurobarometer 472 Sport and physical activity, 2018. <https://shorturl.at/eqzJQ>

<sup>3</sup> Sport and physical activity report, Special Eurobarometer 412, 2014. <https://shorturl.at/djsGV>

<sup>4</sup> The costs of inactivity in Europe, CEBR. 17 June 2015. <https://shorturl.at/wBDJ6>

sight of reflecting the transversal nature of sport and physical activity.

- Since 2017, the [#BeActive Awards](#) celebrate individuals and projects who are dedicated to the promotion of sport and physical activity across Europe, through 3 categories: #BeActive Education, #BeActive Workplace, and #BeActive Local Hero.
- In the spirit of bringing regions and people together, 2018 saw the inauguration of the [European Week of Sport Beyond Borders](#), which includes partners from the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries and regions in EWoS.

#### **EWoS key numbers:**

- 2015: over 7 000 events and 5 million participants
- 2019: over 28 300 events and 15 million participants across 42 countries
- 2020: 32 617 events and over 15 million participants across 42 countries<sup>5</sup>

### **The fitness and physical activity sector's contribution**

Despite the continuous decrease in physical activity levels, the relevance of the fitness sector has never been clearer. Reaching an ever-growing range of people, the sector's growth is estimated at 4% annually<sup>6</sup>, while the number of fitness users has increased by 72% in the last decade. In 2020, the European fitness sector served over 64.8 million consumers, generated EUR 28.2 billion in revenues, employed over 750 000 people, and consisted of approximately 64 000 facilities. Finally, 9.7% of all European citizens aged over 15 are users of fitness facilities.

EuropeActive has been an official partner of EWoS since its launch in 2015, bridging the continental campaign with fitness stakeholders. Since 2017, EuropeActive and

the fitness and physical activity sector's contributions to EWoS was consolidated under the **National Fitness Day campaign**, which successfully developed across 15 different countries. For the [2020 edition of EWoS](#), the sector's contribution recorded the following numbers:

- 1 548 involved facilities,
- 3 203 events across Europe,
- 1,365,000 involved participants,
- and over 30 million people reached through media activities!<sup>7</sup>

As of 2021, EuropeActive rebranded all of the sector's EWoS activities under the [#BEACTIVE DAY campaign](#). **#BEACTIVE DAY** strives to celebrate and promote the fun and importance of physical activity for people's physical, mental and social wellbeing. Implemented by EuropeActive's National Association Partners in their respective countries through thousands of free events and activities taking place in various setting, across Europe and beyond, the **#BEACTIVE DAY** campaign intends to be the main annual celebration and contribution from the fitness and physical activity sector, coordinating national campaigns to strengthen ties at European and national levels- and ultimately, to get more people, more active, more often!

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/sport/week\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/sport/week_en)

<sup>6</sup> European Health & Fitness Market, Report 2020. Deloitte. <https://shorturl.at/oxPQ9>

<sup>7</sup> The European Fitness Sector contribution to the 2020 #BEACTIVE Campaign, <https://shorturl.at/rxIK6>