



Success story

Sport Hour: Bringing Free Physical Activity into Education



Initiative type: School–sport partnership | National programme

Sectors: Education | Sport | Children & Youth | Community

Target population: Children, pupils and university students

Implementation stage: Fully implemented

Transferability: Yes

► About the initiative

The “Sport Hour” Programme of the Ministry of Youth and Sports provides free opportunities for children and young people to participate in physical activity, recreational games and sport within educational institutions.

The programme is delivered through partnerships between sports clubs and kindergartens, schools and higher education institutions, with activities led by qualified sports professionals, physical education teachers and university sports lecturers.

The programme aims to increase regular participation in physical activity, promote healthy lifestyles, improve physical abilities and develop social and personal skills. It also supports school and university sports teams and provides opportunities for young people to discover and engage with different sports.

► Who is it for?

The programme covers children and it is available across public, municipal and private educational institutions.

► What makes it successful?

A key strength is the combination of public funding, educational settings and organised sport.

The programme:

- Provides free access to organised physical activity
- Connects schools with local sports clubs
- Uses qualified sports professionals and teachers
- Makes use of existing facilities in educational institutions
- Provides clear implementation, monitoring and reporting requirements
- Links physical activity with wider goals such as social inclusion, healthy lifestyles and reduced sedentary behaviour

The approach also uses sport as a way to develop teamwork, discipline, tolerance and fair play.

► What can other countries learn?

The model could be adapted by countries that want to strengthen cooperation between education systems and local sports organisations while using existing facilities and professional capacity.

Its most transferable elements are the combination of public funding, school settings, sports clubs, qualified professionals and free participation.





Key challenges to promote HEPA

► Bulgaria's wider challenge for physical activity promotion

A central challenge is helping children and young people move from occasional participation to regular physical activity as part of everyday life.

Sedentary behaviour and insufficient physical activity remain a public health problem while access to organised activities can differ between communities and educational settings.

Bulgaria also identifies the need for sustained cooperation between the sport and education sectors, together with sufficient funding and professional capacity to provide regular, attractive and high-quality opportunities.

► Country-level barriers to advancing HEPA

The following barriers are most persistent to advancing HEPA policy in the country.



BARRIER

IMPACT

Limited funding/resources	MODERATE
Weak intersectoral coordination	MINOR
Political prioritisation	MODERATE
Lack of workforce capacity	MODERATE
Insufficient monitoring/data	MODERATE
Limited research translation into policy	MINOR
Regional/local implementation gaps	MODERATE
Inequities in participation/access	MINOR
Public engagement challenges	MINOR
Other	MODERATE

► What is needed?

Bulgaria identified several priorities:

- Sustained investment in accessible, high-quality physical activity
- Stronger and longer-term sport–education cooperation
- Adequate funding for local activities
- Sufficient numbers of qualified professionals
- Better use of existing sports facilities
- Improved monitoring of participation and outcomes
- Greater equality of access between regions and communities



► How can the HEPA Europe Network help?

HEPA Europe can support Bulgaria by facilitating the exchange of evidence-based policies, successful practices and practical tools.

Peer learning and networking between public authorities, education institutions, sports organisations and other stakeholders could help identify approaches that can be adapted to the Bulgarian context.

The Network could also support Bulgaria in strengthening monitoring and evaluation and improving the use of evidence in policy development.



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