



Success story

Guidelines on Recommended Levels of Physical Activity and Reduction of Sedentary Behaviour



Sector: Health | Education | Sport | Transport | Urban planning | Environment | Workplace |

Social affairs | Children & Youth | Ageing | Community

Target group: All age groups, including people with chronic conditions, disabilities and other groups with specific health needs

Implementation stage: Early implementation

Transferability: Yes

About the initiative

Developed as part of Croatia's Action Plan for Obesity Prevention 2024–2027, the *Guidelines on Recommended Levels of Physical Activity and Reduction of Sedentary Behaviour* provide evidence-based recommendations for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour across the life course.

The guidelines cover children, adolescents, adults and older adults, while also addressing population groups with specific health needs.

They are intended to support policymakers, health professionals, educators and other stakeholders in developing and implementing effective HEPA policies and interventions.

The overall aim is to improve population health, prevent noncommunicable diseases, enhance quality of life and reduce inequalities in physical activity through a coordinated, cross-sectoral approach.

What is making it successful?

A key strength of the initiative was the creation of a multidisciplinary working group bringing together experts and representatives from relevant sectors.

Close collaboration between health, education, sport and other stakeholders ensured that different perspectives and areas of expertise were incorporated into the guidelines.

This intersectoral approach helped to build:

- Shared ownership of the recommendations
- Consensus among stakeholders
- Commitment to implementation
- Stronger alignment between sectors
- A broader evidence and expertise base for the guidelines

The process demonstrates that intersectoral collaboration can be as important as the final policy document itself.

What could other countries learn?

Two conditions were identified as particularly important: Strong political commitment and effective intersectoral collaboration.

Countries adapting the approach would need to bring together relevant sectors and stakeholders early in the development process and establish sufficient political support to move from recommendations to implementation.





Key challenges to promote HEPA

► Croatia's wider challenge for physical activity promotion

Croatia's main challenge is turning strategic commitments into consistent implementation across sectors and levels of government.

Although strategic frameworks are in place, they are not always translated into sustained and widely accessible programmes. Implementation capacity and resources can also vary between local communities.

The country faces additional challenges in addressing inequalities in access to physical activity, particularly between urban and rural areas and across socioeconomic groups.

At the same time, sedentary behaviour is increasing in the context of digitalisation, car dependency and work environments that may not encourage movement.

Addressing these challenges requires stronger political commitment, better cross-sector collaboration and stable financing for HEPA programmes.

► Country-level barriers to advancing HEPA

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



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

► What is needed?

Croatia identified several priorities:

- Stronger political commitment to physical activity promotion
- Better coordination between health, education, transport and urban planning
- Stable funding for HEPA programmes
- Capacity building for local authorities, particularly in underserved areas
- Targeted measures to reduce inequalities in access to physical activity
- Improved monitoring and evaluation to support evidence-based decision-making



► How can the HEPA Europe Network help?

The HEPA Europe Network can support Croatia by connecting policymakers, researchers and practitioners and facilitating the exchange of evidence and good practices.

The Network could also contribute through:

- Training and capacity-building activities
- Workshops and knowledge exchange
- Tools for policy development, implementation and evaluation
- Sharing approaches to reduce inequalities in physical activity
- Supporting countries to adapt successful interventions to their own contexts



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