



# Active Development

An Integrated Contribution from Sport and Physical Activity to Economic and Social Development

# SHARE initiative



Sport

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and Physical Activity to Economic and  
Social Development

## ***SHARE initiative research paper*** ***July 2020***

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# **Active Development**

## **An Integrated Contribution from Sport and Physical Activity to Economic and Social Development**

'Active Development' is the process of integrating the promotion of sport and physical activity into economic and social development strategies and practice. It is a powerful tool for achieving both better health and wellbeing and many of the other objectives of development policies.

# Background and Context

## *Introduction*

Across Europe currently, public authorities at many levels are developing the **economic and social development strategies that will determine much of what Europe will look like in a decade from now**, notably in their formulation of national and regional strategies for the implementation of the Cohesion Policy funds<sup>1</sup> from 2021. By the time these strategies are realised, we can expect the world to have changed dramatically, not only as a result of new technologies, but also in order to address the climate crisis, to adjust to the legacy of the COVID-19 crisis and to respond to major changes in the way that Europe's citizens will be living their lives.

For many years, **sport and physical activity projects have played an important but under-recognised role** in the economic and social development of many of Europe's regions and communities<sup>2</sup>. More recently, the ideas driving these developments have cross-fertilised and coalesced into **a smarter vision of the future – the vision of Active Development**. This is a vision that fits the needs of citizens and communities over the next decade in ways that not only deliver health and wellbeing, but also contribute to creating a Green Economy, promote social integration, deliver innovation and growth and generate the jobs needed to replace those of the old economy.

The purpose of this paper is to explain the vision of Active Development and how it can be integrated into the development strategies of Europe's nations and their regions and communities, as an essential element positively **promoting a healthier and happier Europe, while, in addition, allowing the other main objectives of EU Cohesion Policy to be addressed more effectively**. The paper therefore begins by arguing that promoting the health and wellbeing of European citizens is a major societal challenge that the authorities need to address. Then it explains how responding to this challenge can be achieved by building on changes that are taking place anyway to deliver a more coordinated and coherent realisation of all five of the Cohesion Policy main policy objectives, in ways that comply with the requirements of the different fund-specific Regulations. In brief, it is a document that proposes the mainstreaming of Active Development into the intervention logic of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the plans, strategies (including Smart Specialisation Strategies) and programmes being developed by national and regional authorities.

The SHARE initiative<sup>3</sup> has been a steadfast advocate of the relevance of sport for regional development through its impact on a number of key policy areas such as innovation and research, environmental protection, territorial attractiveness and regeneration or social cohesion and inclusion, and as an effective means of attaining the objectives of EU Cohesion Policy and the European Structural and Investment Funds.

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<sup>1</sup> Previously known as the 'Structural Funds'

<sup>2</sup> CSES & Blomeyer & Sanz (2016) 'Study on the Contribution of Sport to Regional Development through the Structural Funds'

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/sport/share-initiative\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/sport/share-initiative_en)

# *A Healthy and Active Europe as a Key Objective*

For over a decade now, health and demographic change has been perceived not only as a **major societal challenge** but also as an opportunity to develop new services and promote innovation. In 2010, the EU's strategic document, Europe 2020<sup>4</sup>, spoke of health and demographic change as one of 'the challenges facing our society' and the importance of addressing it to allow for social cohesion and higher productivity, while also indicating that health was one of the areas that provided scope for major research efforts and for innovation, growth and jobs.

In highlighting health and demographic change, Europe 2020 was reflecting the arguments rehearsed by the World Health Organisation's 'Health and Development through Physical Activity and Sport' in 2003. This document details the impacts of the increasing global epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, that result from changes in lifestyle mainly in the form of physical inactivity, an unhealthy diet and in tobacco use. It also points out that these lead to great costs, in addition to human suffering, and problems in terms of social development. Encouraging **physical activity**, it is argued, **is essential for health and wellbeing, but also has important economic benefits** in terms of reduced health care costs, increased productivity and healthier physical and social environments, especially as a result of the use of alternative transport systems.

An effective response to this challenge requires multi-sectoral policies as part of **an integrated approach** to the prevention of non-communicable disease, health promotion and socio-economic development, involving policy and decision-makers, health professionals, the media, education and sport community, local leaders and the public at large.

At a European level, the Council Recommendation in 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors<sup>5</sup> equally recognises that rates of physical inactivity in the EU remain unacceptably high and that physical activity, being a prerequisite for a healthy lifestyle and a healthy workforce, contributes to the achievement of key objectives defined in the Europe 2020 Strategy notably with regard to growth, productivity and health. It goes on to recommend that Member States work towards effective health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) policies by developing a cross-sectoral approach involving policy areas including sport, health, education, environment and transport.

Both the WHO and the EU, therefore have exhorted their Member States in the past to take action to promote more sport and physical activity and promote more healthy lifestyles. The extent of the challenge is also made clear, in that **wholesale societal changes** in thinking and behaviour are required to bring about a major change in lifestyle across all parts of Europe and beyond. This is already under way. Social media illustrate how healthy eating and an active lifestyle is already part of how many people see themselves these days and this can only become more significant, especially as developing information technology, notably 5G and the Internet of Things, will make information about health and performance, and acting upon it, an even more routine part of daily lives.

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2010a) 'Communication from the Commission: EUROPE 2020 A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' COM(2010) 2020 of 3.3.2010

<sup>5</sup> Council Recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors OJ C 354, 4.12.2013

The COVID-19 crisis has only reinforced these arguments by adding a new and shocking dimension to the case for greater attention to health as a social and economic force. It has underlined the importance of sport and physical activity for developing both physical and social resilience. Regular exercise strengthens the body's immune system and improves resistance to infection, especially for older people, and participation in training and sport activities can also influence other factors that affect physical health and resilience, such as diet and general lifestyle. Exercise has also become an important element in the life of individuals and families forced to self-isolate, helping them to maintain a rhythm to their lives and safeguard their mental health. In addition, sport clubs and organisations have proved to be one of the elements in community life that have been able to contribute to social resilience, especially by using their networks and local knowledge to offer social support to the elderly and particularly vulnerable groups. For the same reasons and as already-established and supported networks, they are in a good position to assist in the re-launch of social and commercial activity after the crisis subsides.

Furthermore, these changes in the role of sport and physical activity in our lives over the next five to ten years will be a major factor in **a revolution in healthcare systems**, as they transition from primarily responding to health problems to anticipating and preventing them.

It is now time, therefore, for comprehensive active and healthy lifestyle policies to be integrated into broader development strategies, encouraging the process of Active Development.

## *The Shape of a Strategy of Active Development*

A parallel SHARE initiative publication to this one - a document entitled 'Contribution of sport to regional development through Cohesion Policy 2021-2027'<sup>6</sup> - provides **concrete examples** of the different sorts of project, based on sport and physical activity, that can contribute in each of the areas covered by the five main objectives of the Cohesion Policy beyond 2020. Rather than provide further examples of past and potential future actions that could take place under the different funding schemes, this document focuses on another aspect of **the design of Cohesion Policy interventions**, namely the formulation of the hierarchy of objectives within the overall intervention logic and the nature of the implementation processes that are envisaged, before these give rise to particular actions or projects. These elements in the overall intervention logic are important since designing them with care ensures that the strategies and programmes that are elaborated are robust and coherent and achieve the maximum impact possible, once they are actually implemented. In this way, it is hoped that this document can complement others that have highlighted specific interventions, by suggesting **a more systematic use of sport and physical activity** as an instrument for economic and social development.

At the same time, the following sections will take proper account of the necessary constraints that are relevant for designing interventions. These **constraints** are imposed by the Common Provisions Regulation and the Regulations governing the separate funds and are necessary to ensure that the Funds have as great an impact as possible. The arguments in this document fully support this aim.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://keanet.eu/wp-content/uploads/SHARE-The-contribution-of-sport-to-regional-development-through-CP-2021-2027-FINAL.pdf>

At the time of writing, the Regulations have not been finally adopted by the Council and Parliament, but the Commission's proposals<sup>7</sup> give a fair indication of the relevant issues. In particular, they involve **thematic concentration** - requirements to concentrate a substantial proportion of the ERDF on creating a Smarter Europe (innovation and supporting SMEs) and a green and low-carbon economy, with a further portion for urban transformation, plus a requirement for concentration of spending under the ESF+ on promoting social inclusion and tackling poverty. There are also the '**Enabling Conditions**', of which the formulation of a smart specialisation strategy is an important instance, that have to be fulfilled before the implementation of programmes can commence. In addition, there is encouragement of integration with other EU and national programmes and an emphasis on mobilising contributions to delivering the strategy from as many of the relevant agents as possible, including through community-led local development. Finally, there are requirements to establish a **performance framework** to allow monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programme performance during implementation. This includes the specification of output and result indicators and corresponding milestones and targets.

These provisions of the Regulations act as a discipline on the development of Partnership Agreements and Programmes by the national authorities, ensuring that they remain focused on achieving the main Cohesion Policy objectives. They also apply, of course, to the formulation of Active Development strategies, as will be seen in the following sections.

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<sup>7</sup> See European Commission (2018 a – c) in the Bibliography and related proposals



# Addressing Cohesion Policy Objectives

## *A Key Element in an Active Development Strategy*

The **basic proposition of a strategy of Active Development** is that by incorporating into development policy a process of transition to a society that maximises the health and welfare benefits of sport and physical activity, policy makers can achieve their other objectives more effectively.

As features of **the Experience Economy**<sup>8</sup> increasingly influence consumer behaviour, making lifestyle choices a major demand factor in economic development, there are already plenty of signs that, along with healthier eating, many citizens are opting to undertake more physical activity. Furthermore, sport and physical activity is no longer a marginal or additional aspect of people's lives, it has become central to how they see and conduct themselves. This is evident from the number of gyms and fitness centres established, the participation in sporting events, including mass events such as those organised as part of BeActive campaigns, the growth in cycling and walking as modes of transport and the substantial growth of activity tourism. These trends have only amplified the already substantial role that sport and physical activity has as content for conventional and digital media and as occasions for promotion and advertising. These attitudes and behaviours are especially prevalent among younger sections of the population, but are by no means restricted to them.

Associated with these activities, many people are not only deriving the more immediate health benefits, they are also generating and experiencing **the other benefits of physical activity and fitness**. It is common for participants to report **a sense of wellbeing** and contentment and greater mental alertness. This contributes to better overall health, including mental health, but it also generates other benefits, which feed through into greater social engagement and activity and at work, greater productivity. This is why a number of companies are installing equipment for physical activity and encouraging their staff to make use of them<sup>9</sup>. But there are also longer-term benefits. Sport and physical activity can encourage the development of **a range of transferable skills**, from self-motivation, discipline, persistence and ambition to social interaction, open attitudes, creativity and enterprise. Indeed, one of the great strengths of sport-based initiatives is that they can work with individuals who are impervious to more conventional training methods. It is also important that people enjoy participating in sport and physical activity and that **it can be fun**.

There are still many sections of the population who need to be encouraged to take more exercise and pay greater attention to health issues. Active Development assists this process by promoting a transition to a care for health society and integrating this into other development strands. By doing so, it introduces several important elements into the development process that can both involve ever-widening sections of the population and drive forward development as a whole. Above all, linking Active Development with other development processes allows those who are implementing strategies to tap into **a major motivational force**.

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<sup>8</sup> Pine, J. and Gilmore, J. (1999) 'The Experience Economy', Harvard Business School Press, Boston

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, winners of the #BeActive workplace award winners, such as in 2018:

[https://ec.europa.eu/sport/week/beactiveawards-2018-winners\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/sport/week/beactiveawards-2018-winners_en)

Helping people to feel better and enjoy what they are doing helps them to take actions that they need to undertake for other reasons. And sport can bring along social processes and skills that enable participants to implement these actions more efficiently and effectively. Sport and physical activity as a motivational force is therefore a major element of its overall contribution to economic and social development, including in ways that will be explained further below.

Other elements concern the way that Active Development can generate new businesses and employment and particularly how it can do this by aligning with closely related sectors in the Experience Economy, how it accelerates the transition to a green economy and how it can transform the promotion of social cohesion.

## *Active Development's Contribution to Growth, Employment and Innovation*

Responding to the needs of a more active society leads to the creation of multiple **growth and employment opportunities**. Sport and physical activity processes tend to need labour-intensive support, either in the creation and maintenance of facilities and equipment or in the form of players, coaches, trainers, managers etc. and related activities such as media coverage, promotion and advertising are also labour intensive. This is especially significant as job-destroying technologies are becoming more prevalent.

However, much of this is happening anyway through market forces. From a development perspective, the question is how can Active Development contribute more systematically to the creation of growth and jobs in general and high value-added jobs, in particular?

Those developing plans need to focus on identifying opportunities in the processes of transition towards a healthy economy (in all senses) and on supporting those who are contributing to this transition, particularly with the classic instruments of regional development and in line with the provisions of the ERDF Regulation - notably the thematic concentration requirement to devote between 35 and 60% of allocations to the Smarter Europe objective and at least 6% to sustainable urban development.

### *Promoting Sport Innovation*

To some extent, **promoting sport innovation** is a matter of applying approaches developed for other sectors. These can be appropriate for supporting the exploitation of the commercial applications of sport science and related medical science, developing performance monitoring apps or software to assist the management of professional sports and enhancing its importance as content for conventional and social media, sport-based development of technologies and materials or developments in areas where sport can provide key test-beds, such as in clothing and textiles. These well-established approaches to fostering innovation can involve dedicated support services or access to specialised finance, for instance, or the further evolution of Living Labs, an innovation promotion technique that is particularly suited to sport. An especially productive approach would be to support further the growing number of **sport-based clusters**. This would mean additional support using the instruments of cluster development to further develop cluster management and growth and help build appropriate innovation ecosystems and/or support for those brought together by ClusSport<sup>10</sup>,

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<sup>10</sup> <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sport>

for instance, to help build transnational co-operation partnerships between clusters. There is plenty of scope for initiatives of this type.

A SHARE research paper, entitled ‘Mapping smart specialisation strategies for sport’<sup>11</sup>, has analysed information in the *Eye@RIS<sup>3</sup>* database<sup>12</sup> and found that **102 regions included sport in their smart specialisation strategies**. It should also be noted that this is an area where developments supported by other EU and national programmes, such as Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+, can be built on.

In all these cases, sport-based initiatives are either directly supporting the growth of Active Development or are increasing the benefits of Active Development initiatives that have spin-offs for other sectors.

#### *Active Coordination in Tourism*

It is also a matter of developing **synergies with other initiatives**, in order to make the development processes more co-ordinated and powerful. This is especially relevant in areas close to sport and physical activity, such as tourism and the creative industries. Here it is possible to make more systematic use of the tools of transition analysis with its appreciation of multi-layered and multi-phase processes of governance and decision-making required to bring about transition – generally a transition to a Green Economy, but with lessons for broader transitional processes. The recent shift in transition analysis from analysing and understanding problems towards identifying practical pathways and solutions for desirable environmental and societal change is also a valuable part of a systematic approach.

In the tourism sector, development processes are these days often influenced by the model of **destination management**, promoted by the World Tourism Organisation<sup>13,14</sup>. A feature of this approach is the perception that tourism represents a particularly clear instance of the Experience Economy, since visitors perceive an interdependent set of experiences as being on offer at any particular destination. The downside of this is that one bad experience can ruin a holiday. To ensure the best experience for visitors, the complete package needs to be managed actively by a Destination Management Organisation (DMO). Activity tourism, in which a physical activity, such as walking, cycling, skiing or canoeing, is the main or an influential reason for choosing a specific holiday package, is the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry. It is characterised by an increasingly diverse set of activities, often provided by new enterprises. Consequently, sport and physical activity are now a significant element in the overall tourism experience.

At the same time activity tourism can contribute to ameliorating many of the **problems habitually faced by the tourism industry**. It can help by diversifying a destination’s offer, sometimes attracting high-spending visitors and the expertise needed to provide the service, extending the season and reducing the load on particular areas and frequently bringing development to remote areas. It also helps in promotion and marketing, often projecting attractive images suggesting a vibrant destination. Activity tourism can also help in managing relations with the local population, by providing facilities that locals can also use, reducing the environmental impact of visitors and contributing to the buzz in local communities. At the same time increased activity tourism builds the idea of an active society in

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<sup>11</sup> <https://keanet.eu/wp-content/uploads/SHARE-Mapping-smart-specialisation-strategies-for-sport-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/map>

<sup>13</sup> World Tourism Organization (2007) ‘A Practical Guide to Tourism Destination Management’

<sup>14</sup> World Tourism Organization (2019), UNWTO ‘Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) – Preparing DMOs for new challenges’

the minds of visitors and locals alike, taking physical activity beyond something for leisure time to a part of every-day experience.

There is a major case therefore, within destination management structures where these are well-developed, to promote the better **integration of activity tourism into the general tourism offer**. This can involve support measures such as business support services for new activity enterprises and the development of activity hubs, with common facilities for activity and other tourism businesses, but the greatest impacts will result from a more systematic analysis of how the two sectors can reinforce each other at each of the different levels where they intersect.

#### *Active Urban and Rural Development*

Coordination with related sectors, especially the creative industries, is also necessary to obtain the most positive **impact from sport on urban development**.

The Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) have many common features with sport, including a high dependence on performance and events and similar motivation and drivers in terms of the development of talent and personal ambition. Together with sport and physical activity, they are a major component of the attractiveness of locations and hence of the tourism offer and contribute to the growing Experience Economy.

The similarities also extend to the particular role that the CCI are seen to have in the context of urban development. As a result, to a large extent, of the work of Richard Florida<sup>15</sup> in the early 2000's, the CCIs are now seen to have a critical role in the re-development and continuing prosperity of regional centres. Part of the effect arises from the impact that iconic buildings, such as museums or theatres, can have by conveying a new mood of optimism and attracting other property developers to locate near to them. The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is an early famous example. But Florida argues that this effect also extends to the attraction of the atmosphere that such institutions create to highly mobile talent and especially those with a strong creative temperament. The CCI are therefore said to have an important role in attracting both inward investment and human talent by making cities places where the talented want to live and work. Sport and physical activity can have a very similar role. Both spectator and active sport facilities are part of the attraction of a city and the engagement of citizens in sport in Active Cities<sup>16</sup> and as highlighted in two URBACT Networks<sup>17</sup> can help create a vibrant atmosphere that adds to a city's attractiveness.

Furthermore, as there is a growing awareness of the divergence in development performance between large urban centres, on the one hand, and smaller towns and rural areas on the other, it can be argued that sport is better placed than the CCI to contribute to the attractiveness of **less developed and rural areas**, simply because these places often find it more difficult to establish and maintain viable cultural facilities than is the case with sport facilities. In many smaller and rural towns, facilities for sport and physical activity represent a major social investment and some of them are the largest local employers. Indeed facilities such as national parks and green spaces<sup>18</sup> represent a major asset and can act as a focus for an interaction with development interests, tourism and the cultural sector in which sport and physical activity can play a leading part.

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<sup>15</sup> Notably after the publication of 'The Rise of the Creative Class' in 2002.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.tafisa.org/active-cities>

<http://www.pacteproject.com/pacte-more-than-an-erasmus-project-part-of-a-global-shift/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://urbact.eu/vital-cities>

<https://urbact.eu/healthy-cities>

<sup>18</sup> See [EUROPARC Federation \(2019\)](#)

Sport and physical activities and their supporting facilities, therefore, need to be part of effective development, both in urban centres and in smaller and rural centres. Again a systematic attempt needs to be made to integrate them into overall plans.

## *Delivering a Greener, Low-carbon Europe*

A major advantage of promoting Active Development and a transition to a healthy society is that it can play a very important role in **delivering a Greener, low-carbon Europe**.

Transition to a Green Economy and developing more sustainable production and consumption is one of the most serious challenges facing governments and society generally today. Support for this transition is a major feature of the future Cohesion Policy funds, which requires that at least 25% of spending should be devoted to it.

This challenge has been apparent for some time and considerable thought has been given to managing the major changes that are required in existing but unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Initially, there was a lot of emphasis on the need for new technology to replace carbon and resource-intensive production, but increasingly it was appreciated that the transition to a Green Economy requires more than the adoption and diffusion of new more environmentally-friendly technology. **The scale of the changes involved require social and political changes too.** Transition analysis and related transformation theory<sup>19</sup> have therefore increasingly tried to look at the **interactions between different elements in the complex systems of governance and decision-making** required to bring about transition to a Green Economy and indeed their disruptive, ‘non-linear’ nature. They have also increasingly tried to promote such processes through bottom-up change, not least through **community actions**. This puts an emphasis on the need for changes in behaviour and habits as communities and societies transition from traditional forms of production and consumption to new forms that more sustainable. Sustainable use of materials, for instance, requires consumers to change their habits, both in terms of their consumer choices and in their commitment to mitigating action, such as effective recycling. Frequently, these are conceived as taking place as a result of social enterprise and innovation. As a result of this, there have been a number of projects and initiatives dedicated to promoting transition at the local level, including the development of national and regional **Transition Hubs**<sup>20</sup> and Transition networks, which consist of individuals and groups working together to promote transition in their local communities.

However, until recently and in spite of the commitment to a systems approach in transition analysis of this kind, there has in fact been a determined focus exclusively on environmental issues in a relatively narrow sense and the opportunity has not been taken to take the broader view evident, for instance in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals<sup>21</sup>. This is unfortunate, since it fails to mobilise all the potential forces that can contribute to the transition to a Green Economy.

The argument is that by **bringing together Active Development and the transition from healthcare to a care for health society, with the transition to a sustainable economy** – creating a healthy economy in all senses – Cohesion Policy resources will be used much more effectively. In particular, Active Development needs to be integrated into transition analysis and practice.

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<sup>19</sup> See Hölscher K., Wittmayer J. M., Loorbach D. (2018) for an explanation of the differences and convergence of transition and transformation analysis

<sup>20</sup> <https://transitionnetwork.org/transition-near-me/hubs/>

<sup>21</sup> United Nations (2015) ‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ A/RES/70/1 See also 2018 General Assembly Resolution on [Sport as an enabler of sustainable development](#) A/73/L.36

Reference will be made in the next section to the major contribution that active forms of mobility – cycling, running and walking – can make to the development of modern and sustainable transport infrastructure. In addition, there are numerous ways that sport activities and sport facilities themselves can be made to move to carbon neutrality and there may also be opportunities for physical activity to be associated with a reduction in heating or with the generation of power.

Over and above the detailed contributions, however, that Active Development can make, there are important ways in which **the motivational power of sport and physical activity** can be deployed to accelerate and intensify the changes that are underway. There is already substantial evidence<sup>22</sup> that outdoor activity especially leads to a greater environmental awareness, because of the direct contact with nature, but perhaps the greatest contribution that sport and physical activity can make to a transition to a green economy is in terms of motivating a broader change, since **there is a link between pursuing human health and fitness and delivering a healthy environment**. The two are closely intertwined, especially when it is appreciated that delivering transition will require a large change in people's habits. This will involve significant changes in consumption patterns, including in the types of food that are consumed, changes in work and travelling practices and in day-to-day living arrangements, even changes in holiday destinations and activities. At the moment, the motivation for such changes is largely the fear of the consequences, such as the evident effects of global warming on weather patterns and sea levels and indeed outdoor sporting conditions and facilities. A more powerful motivation would be the much more positive wish to live a healthy lifestyle, especially when this translates into new consumption patterns and the corresponding demand-side market forces. Associating the changes necessary for a Green Economy with the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle transforms a negative motivation into a positive one. **It is possible to enjoy making the necessary changes in our behaviour.**

At its heart, therefore, Active Development implies **a new and broader conception of transition**, which not only involves a transition to a more ecologically sustainable economy, but also encompasses a change to a lifestyle which is healthier in many senses, while at the same time maintaining the analytical tools and approaches that make transition analysis so empowering.

## *Connectivity and Active Development*

Much of the transformation in people's daily lives can be prompted and supported by greater connectivity, while in turn, people making use of more information about their health and daily activities can drive ICT developments and greater connectivity. There have already been many ICT developments providing various forms of Personal Training Software and related applications including nutrition guidance. However, 5G, the growing Internet of Things, Big Data and Artificial Intelligence will accelerate **the integration of personal information into the lifestyles of large sections of the population**, not least through the proliferation of apps for mobile devices. If advantage is taken in software development of the insight into the connection between the pursuit of a healthy and active lifestyle and greater awareness and more action at a personal level on environmental matters, the

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<sup>22</sup> Eigenschenk, B. et al (2019)

beneficial effects on both human health and sustainability referred to in the previous section will be multiplied many times.

As people receive more information on their everyday health performance and on their susceptibilities to critical diseases, this will help the transition from healthcare systems to systems promoting care for health, which in itself will encourage more people to participate in sport and physical activity. In this way, the changes advocated by the WHO and the EU will move from the periphery of people's perceptions to the centre of their concerns and become very much more part of everyday life. In short, these will be contributing to a healthy lifestyle revolution.

Part of this revolution is already underway and is contributing to 'sustainable multimodal urban mobility' and other **developments in transport systems**. The encouragement of walking and cycling can contribute to a large reduction in carbon emissions from transport, but this is most effective when there is a co-ordinated approach<sup>23</sup>, integrating the encouragement of an active lifestyle, and especially the greater use of cycling and walking, into urban planning. This can include the development of a systematic cycling strategy, integrating cycling with other transport modes, such as that adopted in the city of Copenhagen in 2011<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore the development of electric bikes means that cycling can be extended to new population groups and areas not previously suitable because of their topography.

Schemes to create infrastructure for cycling and walking also contribute to urban development in general, by adding to the attractiveness of cities and their dynamism. Similar developments can contribute to the process of greening tourism.

Again, integrating Active Development into broader strategies (in this case the promotion of ICT and connectivity) can be seen to amplify the benefits for all concerned.

## *Active Development and a More Social Europe*

Most **sports are social in nature**, requiring interaction between people and fostering further social contacts and sport is especially good at bringing people of different social backgrounds together, especially young people. It is therefore able to make many effective and flexible contributions to achieving the aims of the ESF+ Regulation.

The new ESF+ has already integrated a health dimension into European Social Policy with a **specific Health strand**, which in the words of Preamble (38) 'should contribute to disease prevention throughout the lifetime of the Union's citizens and to health promotion by addressing health risk factors, .... and foster supportive environments for healthy lifestyles'<sup>25</sup>. In itself, this adds considerably to the case for an integrated Active Development approach to ESIF planning, but the detailed examination of the characteristics of sport-based interventions substantially reinforces the need for such an approach.

As well as the contributions to **jobs and growth** made by Active Development referred to above, numerous examples can be cited of sport and physical activity being used in schemes which often engage more effectively than conventional training with **young people and the long term**

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<sup>23</sup> As suggested, for instance in a WHO report - Edwards, P. & Tsouros, A. (2006)

<sup>24</sup> Copenhagen City, Centre for Traffic (2011) 'Good, Better, Best: The City of Copenhagen's Bicycle Strategy 2011-2025'

<sup>25</sup> European Commission (2018c) 'Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) + Annex COM(2018) 382 final of 30.5.2018

**unemployed**, helping them with the acquisition of basic skills and competences and the transition into employment or further training.

Similar processes promote **gender equality**, building up the key competencies of girls and women, giving them experience of involvement in governance bodies and increasing their visibility and presence in public spaces. Sport and physical activity are also very effective means of bridging social divides, engaging with groups of all kinds, including those suffering from **social exclusion** – a major target group of ESF+, where inclusion is actively fostered.

More generally, however, for the population at large, ESF+ is also envisaged as contributing to **a better work/life balance and ‘a healthy and well-adapted working environment** addressing health risks, adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change, and active and healthy ageing’. Sport and physical activity has an obvious role in these processes, particularly in the post COVID-19 period.

In addition, the community base of many sport organisations, clubs and associations makes them particularly suitable for projects which involve **social innovation and social experimentation**, especially in the form of the **Innovative Actions** envisaged by the Regulation. Often these organisations already form a bridge between the public authorities, and the private sector and civil society and with their established memberships in local communities they are an obvious candidate for inclusion in **Local Action Groups**. Many of these organisations already have statutes that direct them towards social objectives and most already behave in this way.

Again it is a matter of bringing all these elements together in a coherent strategy with a distinctive theme emphasising the transition to a healthy society that bring benefits for all. An added advantage of such an approach is that it is easily integrated with other parts of a coherent development strategy that have been referred to in previous sections.

## *Bringing Europe Closer to its Citizens*

**Active Development can help Europe engage with perhaps a broader range of Europe’s citizens than any other approach.** Whereas many measures mainly involve public officials, professionals or business managers in both their design and implementation, those related to sport and physical activity necessarily require inputs from community organisations and individuals who would not regard themselves as professionals and, in their implementation, will involve participants from many social backgrounds, including more women and young people and even those from marginalised groups.

Furthermore, **the embedded nature of many sport clubs and associations within their local communities**, together with the support they receive from national sport organisations, provides a structure for this engagement that is already well-organised and extensive. Integrating Active Development into Partnership Agreements and Programmes, therefore, presents an opportunity to broaden the base of participation and support for Cohesion Policy on the ground, mobilising a range of citizens that goes well beyond the usual suspects to involve many organisations and individuals who might otherwise have little or no connection with the EU, and providing them with direct experience of how they can benefit from EU policies.

These points have only been underlined by the COVID-19 crisis. With their position in community life and strong networking capabilities, sport organisations have a significant role both in mobilising society to face the pandemic threat, especially by encouraging people to keep healthy and fit in their homes, and also, at the appropriate point, contributing to the re-launching of social and economic activity. At this stage, the strength of sport networks and their connections on the ground will be a particularly useful asset, providing a natural base for providing safe forms of social engagement and a



contribution to physical and mental resilience, but also for stimulating local spending and economic resurgence.

## *Assessing Effectiveness*

The Regulations governing the Cohesion Policy funds require Member States to establish a **performance framework** governing monitoring, reporting and evaluation of Programme performance. The performance framework will also specify the output and result indicators linked to specific objectives, together with a definition of targets to be achieved by the end of the year 2029 and intermediary milestones.

**Indicators** are already stipulated in Regulation annexes. Of these, many are **generic**, such as – ERDF output indicators under the Smart Europe objective on enterprises or start-ups supported or enterprises cooperating with research institutions and corresponding result indicators, such as jobs created in supported entities, private investments matching public support, SMEs introducing product or process innovation. Similarly, there are generic ERDF indicators for the other objectives, such as result indicators on greenhouse gas emissions for the greener, low-carbon Europe objective, and also for ESF+ and other funds, such as, output indicators on unemployed or inactive participants in ESF+ programmes or participants below 30 years of age, with result indicators relating to participants engaged in job searching, or in education or training, upon leaving.

Some indicators are **more specifically relevant**, notably ERDF output indicator RCO 58 - Dedicated cycling infrastructure supported – under the Connected Europe objective and the corresponding result indicator RCR 64 - Annual users of dedicated cycling infrastructure. Under the Europe closer to citizens objective, as well as the result indicator ‘Stakeholders involved in the preparation and implementation of strategies of urban development’ there is an output indicator ‘capacity of cultural and tourism infrastructure supported’ with corresponding result indicators, ‘tourists/ visits to supported sites and ‘users benefiting from cultural infrastructure supported’. These could clearly be extended to make reference to sport infrastructure.

In Annex III to the ESF+ Regulation, there are four indicators specified relating to the Health strand. These are generally underdeveloped at this stage and there are no indicators explicitly proposed to capture the effects of moving from the treatment of illness towards the prevention of health problems, but this is clearly an area where more telling indicators could be developed.

More generally, as Active Development becomes a more common feature of overall development strategies, monitoring and assessment of its effects and impacts will have to go beyond the use of the generic indicators applying to the broad range of ESIF interventions, in order to **capture the specific benefits** generated by the approach, including, where possible, the extent to which including Active Development amplifies other measures. This will be a task both for Managing Authorities making use of Active Development approaches and for the SHARE initiative and others involved in sport-based development.

# Conclusions and Next Steps

## *Conclusions*

**Active Development integrates the promotion of health and wellbeing into economic and social development strategies.**

By encouraging more sport and physical activity, it promotes better physical and mental health, builds resilience and - in line with WHO and EU recommendations - is **a major response to the societal challenge** arising from poor diet, an inactive lifestyle and the ageing of the population. Crucially, it facilitates the **transition** from healthcare systems that primarily respond to health problems to those that anticipate and prevent them.

These considerations are particularly relevant at the time of the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath.

However, as well as promoting wellbeing and contentment, it can also make other development processes more effective. This requires appropriate planning and the integration of Active Development into broader development processes.

First of all, it brings important **motivational factors**, encouraging and helping people to enjoy the change that has to take place in any case and to build positive behaviour into their daily lives, especially as the impact of the Experience Economy becomes more evident and lifestyle considerations drive changes in demand and consumer behaviour.

At the same time, it is necessary to assist the process of transition and **detailed transition analysis is required** to map the steps to be taken and design Active Development interventions. Where possible, existing analytical and development frameworks, such as destination management in the tourism sector should be utilised as part of this process.

There is **plenty of scope**. From sports-based innovation in technology, apps for mobile devices and new services and the potential to create new businesses, through to more effective ways of promoting social inclusion and skills acquisition, sport and physical activity offer plenty of opportunities. Above all, integrating Active Development into the transition to a Green Economy gives rise to a prime example of how it can amplify other processes.

Finally, it should be recalled that Active Development is a powerful way of **engaging development processes with a wider community**. Sport is particularly good at engaging with people and providing a natural ground for social enterprise. With the extensive links into the community of sport organisations and clubs, Active Development mobilises **community support for development processes** and embeds them in the actual lives of Europe's citizens.

Member States and European cities and regions currently have a unique opportunity to act, in their review of their Partnership Agreements, their Programmes and their smart specialisation strategies. Designing an Active Development strategy is particularly timely and represents an opportunity for smarter, more coherent strategies in which initiatives reinforce each other and reap more substantial benefits.

Consequently, **'BeActive'**<sup>26</sup> is not only an exhortation to individuals to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, by engaging in sport and physical activity. It is also a call to communities and their authorities to engage with the rising demand for sport and physical activity in all its forms, as a means of mobilising society to address pressing health, social, environmental and economic issues.

## *Next Steps*

The following are recommendations, addressed to the public authorities, especially those developing their Cohesion Policy strategies and programmes, for following up the analysis presented above:

- 1) Conduct a mapping exercise of the main public authorities, sport organisations, universities, enterprises (especially SMEs) and business support organisations (e.g. clusters, incubators) that can contribute to the development of an Active Development strategy in the area for which you are responsible.
- 2) Conduct a SWAT analysis of these organisations to establish their potential contributions.
- 3) Identify potential initiatives, based on sport and physical activity to which these organisations could contribute, while also identifying areas within existing development strategies that could be strengthened by integrating Active Development elements.
- 4) Establish an appropriate set of objectives for a comprehensive Active Development strategy in your area of responsibility.
- 5) Undertake a transition analysis to determine in detail the levels at which intervention should take place, the appropriate actors and the objectives and implementation mechanisms at each level.
- 6) Identify priorities for action.
- 7) Encourage bottom-up initiatives, for instance in Local Action Groups, and encourage Innovative Actions.
- 8) Integrate Active Development into local development strategies in related sectors, such as tourism, the cultural and creative industries and the health sector, making links, for instance, with destination management organisations and their strategies.
- 9) Develop appropriate intervention tools, such as support services, access to finance, networking and mentoring services.
- 10) Establish arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.

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<sup>26</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/sport/week\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/sport/week_en)

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