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#### D 5.4 Center for health promotion: A new preventive health program

Center for Health Promotion	<i>a new preventive health program</i>	Report  Target group: youth + vulnerable group
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Based on the successful transfer of best practices from Finland and the analysis of the results from the motivational model, we have developed and implemented a new preventive program called "Summer of Opportunities" ("Poletje priložnosti"). The main goal of this program is to promote physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and social inclusion among young people aged 15 to 17. This program represents a sustainable outcome of the project, as it will provide long-term benefits for participants and the wider community.



The sustainability of this result is reflected in several aspects, inspired by the Finnish model:

1. **Long-term health impact:** The Finnish approach to promoting regular physical activity and healthy lifestyle habits has proven effective in reducing the risk of developing chronic diseases and improving overall health. Similarly, our program encourages these habits, contributing to the physical and mental well-being of adolescents and enhancing their overall quality of life.
2. **Social inclusion:** Finland's best practices emphasize the importance of social inclusion and community engagement. The "Summer of Opportunities" program mirrors this by creating

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opportunities for social interaction and connection among young people, strengthening social bonds, reducing feelings of isolation, and encouraging the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities into the community.

3. **Educational values:** Finnish programs successfully integrate educational components that raise awareness about health and well-being. Through educational workshops and activities, our program adopts this approach to strengthen young people's awareness of a healthy lifestyle and encourage their active role in taking care of their own health.
4. **Sustainable orientation:** Finland's commitment to sustainability and environmental protection is reflected in their promotion of outdoor activities. By encouraging outdoor activities and raising awareness about the importance of environmental protection, our program contributes to sustainable development and responsible management of natural resources, following the Finnish example.

### **Attractive program title**

It is important for the program to have an appealing and attractive title, especially when it comes to adolescents. The title "Summer of Opportunities" is designed to catch the attention of young people, inspire them, and spark their interest in participating. This is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, the title is the first thing potential participants notice. An appealing title like "Summer of Opportunities" immediately grabs attention and creates a positive first impression. Adolescents are more likely to decide to participate in a program that seems interesting and fun from the outset. Secondly, a title that is appealing and youthful establishes a connection with the target group. Adolescents can more easily identify with a program that uses language and tone that resonates with them. "Summer of Opportunities" evokes a sense of adventure, freedom, and new experiences, all of which are important elements for this age group.

Additionally, an attractive title can serve as a motivational factor. Adolescents are often motivated by what appears to be fun and beneficial for their personal growth. A title that promises opportunities and new experiences can encourage them to participate more than any technical or dull title. Moreover, an appealing title makes it easier to promote the program. It is easier to create promotional materials and campaigns that are attractive and engaging when the basic program title already captures attention. This contributes to better visibility and success of promotional activities. Lastly, the title "Summer of Opportunities" conveys a positive message. It gives participants the sense that they will gain something valuable from the program, whether it is new skills, friendships, or personal experiences. Such positive expectations can increase their engagement and satisfaction with the program.

### **Experiences for camp participants**

Participants of the "Summer of Opportunities" camp will embark on a journey filled with enriching and engaging activities, much like the immersive programs found in Finnish best practices. They will immerse themselves in a variety of experiences that foster personal growth and development, drawing inspiration from Finland's holistic approach to youth programs. Throughout the camp, they will have the chance to build lasting friendships and enhance their teamwork skills through collaborative activities designed to promote social interaction and group cohesion, reflecting the Finnish emphasis on community and social inclusion.

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The camp will offer dynamic and fun physical activities that improve their fitness levels and instill a love for active living, mirroring Finland's national strategy to promote physical activity among all age groups. Moreover, the participants will attend workshops that provide valuable knowledge on topics such as healthy eating, the importance of rest and sleep, and strategies to avoid harmful addictions, which align with Finland's comprehensive health education initiatives.

They will also enjoy the beautiful natural surroundings, participating in outdoor adventures that highlight the significance of environmental stewardship, a core element of Finnish programs that emphasize the connection between nature and well-being. Under the guidance of trained professionals and mentors, the camp aims to create a supportive and inspiring environment where young people feel empowered to take charge of their health and well-being, much like the Finnish model of fostering self-efficacy and personal responsibility in youth.

We are already actively promoting the "Summer of Opportunities" and have received our first registrations. The promotion is being carried out through all our channels, including Facebook, newspapers, and our website. Most importantly, the flyer is also being distributed by pediatricians and general practitioners at the Brežice Health center. This multifaceted approach ensures broad visibility and access, reaching out to a wide audience and encouraging more young people to join the program.

Promotion and dissemination:



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### Age group 15 - 17 years



The age group of 15-17 years is particularly significant for several reasons, based on both scientific and professional grounds. This developmental stage is crucial for the formation of habits, attitudes, and skills that will carry into adulthood. Adolescents in this age range are in a critical period of psychological and social development, where the establishment of a healthy lifestyle can have lasting effects.

Firstly, the motivational model highlights that regular physical activity during adolescence significantly influences psychological variables essential for academic success, psychological stability, and career development. Adolescents who engage in regular sports activities tend to show favorable development in personality traits such as self-discipline, emotional stability, and resilience. These traits are highly valued by employers and are associated with higher academic performance, better interpersonal relationships, and greater professional success.

Additionally, the motivational model emphasizes the importance of physical activity in reducing symptoms of stress and anxiety among adolescents. Regular engagement in sports activities helps in the development of effective coping strategies for stress, which is crucial during the high-pressure years of high school and early adulthood. Adolescents who participate in sports are more likely to exhibit better stress management, improved concentration, and higher levels of self-esteem.

Furthermore, adolescence is a time when social skills and peer relationships are heavily developed. The social aspect of sports provides a valuable platform for young people to build friendships, learn teamwork, and develop a sense of belonging. These social interactions are critical for the psychological well-being of adolescents and can reduce feelings of isolation and depression.

Engaging in physical activities also promotes a healthier lifestyle, reducing the risk of developing chronic diseases later in life. This is particularly important as habits formed during adolescence are likely to persist into adulthood. Encouraging regular physical activity in this age group can lead to lifelong health benefits, including lower risks of cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and other lifestyle-related conditions.

Finnish studies support these findings. For instance, Finland's "Student On the Move" program, which targets increasing physical activity among students, has shown significant improvements in students' physical and mental health, academic performance, and social skills. Research conducted on this program indicates that students who participate in regular physical activities report lower levels of stress and anxiety and better overall well-being. Moreover, Finnish studies highlight the long-term benefits of such programs, demonstrating that adolescents who develop healthy habits early are more likely to maintain them into adulthood.



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In summary, focusing on the age group of 15-17 years for the "Summer of Opportunities" program is based on the recognition that this is a pivotal period for establishing healthy, lifelong habits. The program aims to harness this critical developmental window to promote physical, psychological, and social well-being, following the evidence-based insights provided by the motivational model and the successful practices observed in Finnish programs.

**What have we learned from the good practice example of Finland?**



Finland has been a leader in promoting physical activity and sustainable development for many years, as evidenced by their numerous successful programs and strategies, such as the national strategy for physical activity and the "Schools on the Move" and "Students on the Move" programs. These programs aim to reduce sedentary lifestyles, promote physical activity, and improve the overall health of the population. Key elements of these programs include encouraging active transportation, adapting the school environment for more movement, educational workshops, and community engagement.

The "Schools on the Move" program is one of the most extensive and successful Finnish initiatives aimed at promoting physical activity in schools. It was introduced to reduce sedentary behavior among school children and adolescents and to encourage their engagement in regular physical activity. The program includes adjusting school schedules to allow longer breaks for physical activity, organizing various sports activities during breaks and after school, and integrating physical activity into the school curriculum.

**Following the Finnish model, we have developed an international prevention program that includes various sports activities, workshops to raise awareness of a healthy lifestyle, and activities to strengthen group dynamics. We named the program "Summer of Opportunities," and it will be organized as a summer camp for young people. Important for the design of the program are the activities that have already been carried out to raise awareness about the importance of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, which we implemented throughout the project.**

Through the project, we have also transferred these practices to countries such as Austria, Croatia, Slovakia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Finland, the Czech Republic, Ireland, and Estonia. We will also invite participating countries to the summer camp. Participants of the "Summer of Opportunities" camp will experience a rich array of activities that promote personal growth and development. Findings from our report on the transfer of best practices indicate that community involvement in the planning and implementation of programs is crucial for their effectiveness and acceptance. The Finnish practice of



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involving communities in physical activity programs has been successfully applied in other countries where we have transferred best practices. Furthermore, the Finnish strategy places great importance on preventing health problems, which would be beneficial to include in preventive programs across all participating countries. With this comprehensive approach and adaptation of Finnish best practices to international needs, we believe that the "Summer of Opportunities" will contribute to the long-term health, well-being, and social inclusion of young people in various countries.

### **How did the results of the motivational model help us in designing the new program?**

The results of the motivational model played a key role in the development of the new preventive program "Summer of Opportunities." This model highlighted several crucial factors that influenced the final design of the program:

- The motivational model showed that for adolescents aged 15-17, it is important to create positive social environments where they feel accepted and motivated to participate. The "Summer of Opportunities" program includes numerous group activities and games that encourage social interaction and cooperation.
- Results indicated that regular physical activity helps reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety. Therefore, the program includes daily sports activities such as hiking, swimming, and team games, which improve physical fitness and help young people manage stress.
- The motivational model emphasized that physical activity positively affects adolescents' self-esteem and confidence. The program includes activities designed to allow participants to set and achieve personal goals, enhancing their confidence and sense of accomplishment.
- The model highlighted the importance of social skills such as teamwork, communication, and empathy. The "Summer of Opportunities" program includes workshops and group activities that allow adolescents to develop these skills in a supportive and encouraging atmosphere.
- The motivational model showed that habits formed in youth often persist throughout life. By incorporating healthy eating, regular physical activity, and education about a healthy lifestyle into the program, "Summer of Opportunities" helps young people develop a healthy lifestyle that will contribute to their long-term health.

With these foundations and the insights from the motivational model, we were able to design a program that promotes physical activity and supports the psychological and social development of adolescents.

### **Hand in Hand workshops on raising awareness about the importance of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle**

The Hand in Hand (HiH) workshops on raising awareness about the importance of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle were implemented through collaboration with various community and educational events. We participated in events where a large number of young people were present. This provided an excellent platform to engage with a broad audience and promote the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle.



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Additionally, we provided professional support and collaborated on workshops conducted in primary and secondary schools. These workshops were designed to educate students about the importance of regular physical activity, healthy eating, and overall well-being. **They were created with the aim of implementing workshops at the Summer of Opportunities camp, and we successfully integrated them into the school curriculum.** By integrating these educational sessions into the curriculum, we ensured that the message reached a wide range of students, fostering a culture of health and activity from a young age.



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