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COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Recommendation Rec(2003)6

of the Committee of Ministers to member states on improving physical education and sport for children and young people in all European countries

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 April 2003
at the 838th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members, notably by means of common action in social and cultural matters;

Bearing in mind the conclusions of the European Ministers responsible for Sport at their 16th Informal Meeting in Warsaw on 12 and 13 September 2002 on improving physical education and sport for children and young people in all European countries;

Having taken note of the report on European sports co-operation and of Recommendation 1565 (2002) adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly, and welcoming the Assembly's support for the work of the Council of Europe in the field of sport;

Having taken due note of the conclusions of other international conferences and meetings on physical education and sport for children and young people in recent years, such as the adoption of the Declaration of Punta del Este at the 3rd Unesco Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport in 1999 and the World Summit on Physical Education in Berlin in 1999;

Aware of the findings of recent surveys that point to a serious decline in several countries in the quality of, and the time allocated to, the teaching of physical education and sport to children and young people in schools, together with reduced opportunities to participate in recreational sport out of school;

Conscious of the importance of, and the known benefits that result from, the provision of regular and adequate physical education and sport in the school curriculum for all age groups;

Noting that lessons in physical education and sport also provide a context for teaching important values upheld by the Council of Europe, such as tolerance and fair play, experience in winning and losing, social cohesion, respect for the environment and education for democratic citizenship;

Acknowledging the importance of the role of the non-governmental sports movement in providing recreational sports activities for children and young people often organised by volunteers in their leisure time, which not only improve health and physical prowess, but also introduce children and young people to the wider community and prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life;

Approving the suggested measures for national, regional and local action plans and for the Pan-European programmes to improve the quality and quantity of sports and physical education activities offered to children and young people in all European countries as set out in the Appendix;

Bearing in mind that the European Union has designated 2004 as the European Year of Education through Sport,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

1. study ways in which the provision of physical education and sport can be improved in their countries for all children and young people, including those with disabilities;

2. investigate and consider whether, in the light of the findings of recent international surveys, there is a need at national level:

– to redefine the role and purpose that physical education and sport should fulfil within the school curriculum;

– to consider the need to improve the quality of physical education and sport available for children and young people in schools and ensure the necessary time, for example, three hours of physical education classes for each child each week, to achieve the goals set;

– to promote the ideal of one hour of physical activity each day for children and young people, including both physical education and sport in the school environment and recreational sport outside of school;

– to examine the following areas: the curriculum, the status of the subject, the financial resources available, the availability and condition of facilities, gender and disability issues;

– to take action, in the light of their findings, to improve the motivation and status of physical education teachers in order to attract and keep young people in the profession;

– to improve the quality of training and retraining for those teaching physical education and sport, in order to increase the number of well-trained physical education teachers in European countries and to revise and improve their training programmes where possible;

– to introduce campaigns which strive for a more active lifestyle for children and young people, while also taking steps to improve recreational facilities and sports programmes in the community;

3. co-operate with and contribute to pan-European programmes which:

– encourage an active lifestyle;

– exchange information and experience in this area;

– work towards a co-ordinated health strategy for children and young people;

– aim to develop standard tools for measuring and monitoring health and fitness levels;

4. consider ways of implementing the measures proposed in the Appendix, possibly in the context of the European Year of Education through Sport in 2004, and examine the progress in this field at the 10th Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport in Budapest in 2004.

Instructs the Committee for the Development of Sport (CDDS) that within the context of the "Compliance with Commitments" project pertaining to the European Sports Charter, emphasis should be placed on evaluating the provision of physical education and sport for children and young people and the implementation of the conclusions of the 16th Informal Meeting of European Ministers responsible for Sport.

Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2003)6

Agreed measures for improving physical education and sport for children and young people in all European countries

I. Preface

1. The conclusions adopted by the 16th Informal Meeting of European Ministers responsible for Sport point clearly to the need for national, regional and local Action Plans and pan-European programmes to improve the quality and quantity of physical education programmes for children and young people throughout Europe.
2. Physical education and sport hold a unique position in the educational world, firstly because they contribute to the harmonious development of body and mind and secondly because the practice of sport, as understood by Sport for All, has wide-ranging effects for the quality of adult life when school days are over. It also provides an obvious framework for educating children and young people in the importance of tolerance and fair play and in practising social cohesion.
3. The drop in physical activity and sport in a number of children and young people has been a contributory element to the rise in obesity, diabetes mellitus, and high levels of blood pressure among this group of the population. These factors have never been observed before at such an early age. Unhealthy children are already making considerable demands on national health budgets. They are, it is to be feared, destined to grow into unhealthy adults, placing an even greater strain on these budgets. Programmes and policies which include physical education and sports provision are indispensable in halting this trend.
4. Improved access to sport and physical education for children and young people to participate in sport during their school life makes it more likely that they will continue sports activities into adult life. Governments are urged to involve all the responsible sectors in formulating a list of objectives and/or a list of activities to be included in national action plans or European programmes working to improve the quality and quantity of physical education and sport, available in and out of schools.
5. The following measures are grouped around the spheres that influence the lives of children and young people and thus include home and family, school, the local community and the national policies of the member states of the CDDS.

II. Targeting the group – Children and young people

1. Policies and programmes must centre on the needs of the children and young people themselves. It has to be remembered that they are not "mini adults".
2. Consultation with young people is essential to involve them in the decision-making processes and the development of programmes. Some European countries have developed models and good practices, with extensive consultation machinery, where children and young persons play an active part in the planning and implementation of the programmes affecting them, which can serve as case studies.

III. Suggested Policies and Action

A. Within the home and family

1. Activities that can be done as a family should be actively supported. Parental support for children's activities is crucial – if only to ensure that children and young persons have access to the facilities and programmes. Parents should be encouraged to

become involved in the schools and sports clubs working with their children. Parents can serve on the different governing bodies to ensure that children and young people obtain the maximum benefit from physical education and sport.

2. Marketing techniques and the different media can be used to inform parents of the importance of physical activity, so that they, in their turn, become active and serve as role models for their children and young people.
3. Parents can take steps to encourage their children to increase the amount of leisure time spent in physical activities and sport, while restricting the period spent watching television or using a personal computer.

B. Within the School

1. It is agreed that the number of hours of physical education in the curriculum should move towards a compulsory legal minimum of 180 minutes weekly, in three periods, with schools endeavouring to go beyond this minimum where this is possible. Children and young people should, however, have one hour of physical activity every day, which would include physical education and sports lessons in or out of school time, and other out-of-school exercise (for example, walking or cycling to school).
2. The concept of the school as a place that promotes health at all levels should be developed. Physical education should be a core curriculum component, with close links to other academic subjects. The role of schools as centres for teaching a healthy lifestyle to both pupils and the wider community should be underlined and reinforced by, for example, increasing the opportunity for the use of school sports facilities outside school hours.
3. It is important to encourage schools to make it tempting for children and young people to spend their recreation time outdoors playing different games. In many schools the free access to the sports facilities during breaks and after school, under the qualified guidance of physical education teachers or trainers, has awakened the interest of children and young people in physical activity and sport.
4. The quality of physical education and sports training should be improved by promoting and providing in-service training through model training packages aimed at both physical education teachers and non-specialists. Appropriate steps to monitor performance could be introduced. Schools with a particularly good record might be encouraged to help other local schools in the area to attain similar high levels in physical education and sport.
5. Schools and local authorities should be given guidelines on how they can improve the environment around schools to encourage walking and cycling. It is important to set up local networks of "safe houses"[1] on popular walk-to-school routes, where children can go if they are in trouble from bullying, etc.
6. Establishing "safe routes and zones" for a certain distance around all schools, where walking and cycling have priority and where car travel is difficult or even impossible, would encourage children to come to school "under their own steam".
7. Schools should introduce all children and young people, especially school-leavers, to local sports clubs and facilities. Teaching personnel should help young people to find a recreational physical activity that they enjoy. Local clubs might offer several free sessions to school-leavers. Young people should know what is available locally, how they can continue to play sport after their school days are over and be aware of which activities they prefer and find stimulating.

C. Within the local community

1. A funding programme for community-wide physical activity projects could be set up, in co-operation with both the local authorities and non-governmental sports associations. Such a fund could aim at increasing participation in sport and physical activity and tackling social exclusion.
2. Networks of local and regional physical activity and leisure co-ordinators should be developed in order to stimulate community-level actions. They can work across institutional boundaries and facilitate links between all local bodies, including schools.
3. The improvement of the local sporting environment should be made a priority in order to facilitate formal and informal physical activity. It should include non-club based informal activity, for example street sport, in deprived areas, staffed by trained volunteers. Children and young persons should be consulted when assessing the local needs. Ideas could include new, multifunctional, flexible community sports facilities, such as:
 - skate parks and adventure playgrounds;
 - facilities aimed at girls;
 - the provision of basketball hoops in cities.
4. The idea of "home zones", promoting safe play in the locality, with measures to slow or ban traffic could be extended.
5. Sports fields should not be taken to provide land for building purposes, especially in areas where there are few sports facilities.

IV. The Development of National Policies

1. Each country will have its own specific problems in this area, and will need to select and implement its own priorities, develop both short- and long-term plans and lay down clearly the lines of responsibility in each area. Short-term plans could prioritise:
 - minimum standards in the quality and quantity of physical education in schools;
 - improving the training of physical education teachers, trainers and volunteer helpers;
 - upgrading facilities.Long-term plans could include:
 - developing inter-regional co-operation;
 - developing co-operation between local and national authorities;
 - further training programmes for the above-mentioned groups, for example, teachers;
 - ensuring equal treatment in the area of gender and for those with disabilities.
2. Increased inter-sectorial activity between government departments would ensure co-operation between all the parties involved in promoting physical activity for children and young people. Committees or working groups including representatives from all the relevant areas – sport, education, transport, environment and health – would help to steer co-ordinated action.
3. It is important to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, especially in connection with walking and cycling to school (where and when the climate permits) which has beneficial effects for the natural environment and sustainable development.

4. The proved connection between the physical activity and health of children and young persons makes effective links between the government departments concerned imperative in this important area of co-operation.
5. The ministries responsible for sport can take initiatives to make recreational sport more attractive to a wider range of people, with less emphasis on competition and more on the importance of lifelong physical activity.
6. Funding for physical activity programmes aimed at under-privileged children and young persons should be increased. This should include programmes for such groups as children and young people with disabilities, migrants and refugees.
7. Marketing techniques should be employed, for example, through work with various forms of media, including television, the printed press, and the organisation of national campaigns.

V. The European Dimension

1. There is a need for an integrated European health strategy that would serve as the basis of a health project for children and young people. It could be built on intergovernmental co-operation within the Council of Europe and between the Council of Europe and other European and international bodies. There should be special emphasis on activities during the European Year of Education through Sport in 2004.
2. Europe-wide programmes and campaigns encouraging an active lifestyle, discouraging excessive sedentary activities and taking account of the international nature of youth culture could be envisaged. Ways to counter the influence of video games and television, both of which add to the problem of a sedentary lifestyle, could be investigated and research done into the reasons why some children and young people find physical education boring or unsatisfying.
3. Regular surveys that monitor and evaluate the level of physical activity among children and young people should be established. Making provision for a pan-European survey on physical education policies and practices every five years would help to maintain interest in this area, give deeper insight into the question and chart progress and compliance with the applicable articles of the European Sports Charter. These measures would help to ensure that this remains a priority area. The simplified series of tests in Eurofit for children could be used more often.
4. Activities at both the European and national levels should interact and take account of the priorities as established by surveys. Co-operation between member states and European networks should be encouraged in order to share information, the results of research and national experiences on promoting physical activity.

1. A "safe house" is a place where a child can go if in need of protection, for example, from bullying.

Documents liés

▸ Réunions

838 meeting of the Ministers' Deputies - Meetings 2003 / 30 avril 2003 / anglais 

▸ Comité des Ministres; Conseil de l'Europe

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Committee for the Development of Sport (CDDS) - b. Draft Recommendation Rec(2003)... of the Committee of Ministers to member states on improving physical education and sport for children and young...