

THE FUNMILIES PROJECT

Guide for Sports Clubs on the Inclusion of Older People in Sports Activities

**DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL INTERGENERATIONAL
SPORT ACTIVITIES**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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The Funmilies project

Funmilies - “Intergenerational Sport Solutions for Healthy Ageing” is an Erasmus+ Sports (2019) funded project involving five European countries: Hungary (BAIS), Greece (ANCE), Italy (CSC), Bulgaria (ABS) and Slovenia (Slovenian Third Age University), and it is coordinated by ANCE.

The project aimed to address the challenges of loneliness, isolation, as well as the problems related to sedentary life choices and lack of movement of older people (65+) in Europe through the promotion of active and healthy ageing. It intended to encourage participation in sport and physical activity. The project started in January 2021 and ended in December 2022.

The project was specifically set out to:

- Enhance participation and cooperation in intergenerational sports activities of older people of 65+ and youth of 25-.
- Enhance the awareness and capacities of sports professionals in organising/implementing intergenerational sports activities.
- Increase awareness on the importance of physical activity, healthy living and active ageing among older and younger citizens.
- Increase the access of persons 65+ in sports activities, and relevant information.
- Strengthen the physical skills, social skills, self-esteem and psychological skills, cognitive skills and general well-being of older people (65+) and of youth (25-).
- Promote the concept and benefits of intergenerational sports to relevant stakeholders, actors and policy makers in the fields of sports, healthy living and active ageing.

Introduction to the guide

While older people in Europe generally live longer compared to previous generations, they also tend to face multiple disadvantages, including loneliness and isolation. There is also worrying data across Europe which indicate that young people suffer from a sedentary lifestyle as well as a lack of regular movement because of the amount of time spent on computers and mobile phones. Not engaging in regular, moderate levels of physical activity is an observable tendency in both younger and older generations.

Based on the results of the piloting activities, and in order to further support the trained sports professionals in their work and in the training of their colleagues, as well as to enable sports clubs in general to implement intergenerational activities, the present guide for sports clubs was developed by the Funmilies consortium. The guide includes practical strategies on how to plan, organise and implement intergenerational programs and activities that would be appropriate for old and young people alike focusing on connecting these age groups through sports.

The guide is structured around four chapters, each of which focuses on a different aspect of the implementation of intergenerational sport activities.

The *first chapter* provides a broad perspective on the role that intergenerationality applied to sport activities can have in benefiting older people. It also presents some of the most common barriers that are met when implementing such activities, and offers some practical solutions.

The *following chapters address different phases of the organisation of intergenerational sports activities* and events. In detail, the *second chapter* covers the planning phase from all the different perspectives that must be taken into consideration when organising small or large sport activities; the *third chapter* addresses the implementation phase, especially in terms of safety measures and visibility of the event; the *fourth chapter* the follow-up and feedback or evaluation related tasks that should be carried out after the successful conclusion of an event. The last, and *fifth chapter*, is the summary section together with the main takeaways for the reader according to the authors.



1. Benefits and Barriers of Intergenerational Sport Activities

Potential benefits of intergenerational sport activities

1. Positive benefits on participant's physical and mental health

It is well known that participation in sports and physical activity boosts physical and mental well-being. Funfamilies partners experienced some very uplifting moments while implementing the piloting activities. Obviously, the physical benefits of such short term interventions cannot be assessed in the long run, however, partners all agreed that intergenerational sports can boost happiness and satisfaction of participants as long as these are FUN and delivered by skilled and motivated coaches. A well planned session that addresses the needs of young and old people alike is key. For example, a coach preparing exercises that suits people with limited range of motion and has alternatives for someone who needs more challenge while the exercises can still be done simultaneously has not only physical but clear interpersonal benefits to it.

2. Personal knowledge and soft skills development - increased sense of solidarity and equality

By delivering pilot sports Funfamilies partners also experienced behavioural changes of participants: by getting to know younger or older generations while having fun opened opportunities for soft skills development and non-formal learning/informal knowledge-exchange. The partners claimed that intergenerational sports could be an optimal platform to decrease intergenerational prejudice and these could help to break the "fear of the unknown". There was a common understanding that doing exercises together (whatever they may be) is a natural and organic way to foster interpersonal connections in the short and long term.

3. Increased sense of belonging

In case intergenerational programs are maintained in the long run (i.e. kept relevant and regular), participants can develop a sense of community or sense of belonging. Fostering the feeling of belonging could be particularly beneficial for older generations and it could boost their expectations towards life. In case intergenerational sports are practised with the participation of family members we can foresee the opportunity for strengthened family bonds/links. In general, if parents have been active exercisers, then their children can also become active exercisers - indeed, seeing their grandparents exercise, especially together with them, brings a different type of connection and joy to the concept of intergenerational sports.

4. Fostering social inclusion, volunteering and active citizenship

At the level of broader society intergenerational activities such as sport events can foster larger societal processes of social inclusion, increasing solidarity, volunteering and in general active citizenship which are totally in line with the core policy objectives of the European Union and its member states. Of course, here it's important that any coach or facilitator maintains an

open and inclusive atmosphere for the practitioners - which seemed to have been achieved in this project as reported by the partners.

Potential barriers to involve different generations into sport activities

Based on the evaluation of pilot intergenerational sport activities, the Funmilies partners identified potential barriers of implementation which should be taken into account when planning and delivering intergenerational sport events. A research commissioned by the European Commission¹ divides these barriers into two main groups: “*barriers which may pose issues for participants to engage and benefit from intergenerational activities and structural barriers linked to limited funding and organisational issues.*” Below, we aim to classify the challenges experienced by the Funmilies partners during the implementation of pilot actions into similar groups:

Motivational barriers to participation in intergenerational sport activities (mainly negative stereotypes and challenging cultural contexts)

1. Fearing the unknown

Project partners often experienced unnecessary “mental burdens about the other groups” which proved to be a key challenge for participants taking part in intergenerational sports. Participants from both older and younger age groups tend to be reluctant to mingle with other generations, they feel safe in their own communities and circles.

One of the main roles for coaches and trainers is to “break the ice” and create a welcoming environment for any age group.

2. Barriers associated with different communication attitudes/patterns of groups

The partners of the consortium also experienced barriers in bringing together different age groups on certain communication channels. Different generations use different communication channels (e.g. younger people are more active on social media) which often pose challenges to bring them together before and after the sport events. Therefore, well-balanced communication - on different channels - which in its language is respectful but can remain casual is essential to equally include different age groups.

3. Isolation of older people especially in Northern and Central European countries

Due to differing cultural traditions young people may feel uncomfortable to engage in activities with old peers as they were not necessarily socialised with these groups. Funmilies partners also experienced that in Southern European countries. It was easier to bring together generations, as the family ties are much stronger in these countries (e.g. Greece and Italy). In post-socialist countries like Hungary, Slovenia and Bulgaria family ties can be considered weaker in comparison (when looking at the 21st century), therefore, prejudices and

¹ <https://sport.ec.europa.eu/news/mapping-study-on-the-intergenerational-dimension-of-sport>

motivational barriers can also have a stronger impact on the delivery of intergenerational sport activities.

Event organisers are advised to bear in mind the local cultural patterns/attitudes and address them with diligence.

4. Failing to provide an ideal setting and environment for intergenerational activities

Most of the consortium partners emphasised that identifying a “neutral” space is important for the delivery of intergenerational sport events. It is the responsibility of coaches/trainers to identify those spaces that do not scare off younger or older generations. For instance, organising intergenerational sports in primary/secondary schools might be a considerable challenge as younger generations are overrepresented and older generations might not find schools welcoming. A neutral sport venue seemed more appropriate. Have a look around your living area and identify public spaces or indoor venues that satisfy the group's implicit needs.

5. Not finding an engaging sport activity that could be FUN for younger and older generations alike

One of the key motivational barriers is failing to identify a sport activity that is equally appealing for younger and older generations alike. For instance, Nordic walking proved to be far more appealing for older generations, but dance like salsa or zumba seemed to attract the attention of both age groups (-25 and 65+).

Sport event organisers are advised to map the needs of their participants and identify sports which can be attractive, cheerful and FUN for both generations.

Structural barriers to intergenerational sport activities (e.g. lack of funds and lack of awareness)

1. Post-Covid19 framework

Undoubtedly, the global pandemic had a major impact on the sports participation rates of Europeans. Older generations were greatly impacted by the global pandemic and their participation in sports and physical activity significantly dropped at the outbreak of Covid19. The Funmilies project was delivered within a post-Covid19 framework which did not really favour the implementation of intergenerational sport activities especially in closed spaces.

Health and safety are huge concerns for older generations, therefore intergenerational sport activities must be delivered with great caution and proper measures to minimise the health risks.

2. Availability of funds and limited financial support

Shortly following the outbreak of the Covid19 global pandemic Europe was hit hard by the recent energy crisis. Sport facilities are facing increasing overhead and utilities costs, while the lack of support from local authorities jeopardise the sports sector. With such circumstances, the implementation of intergenerational sport activities do not really represent a priority for sports clubs that often cope with financial difficulties. If local authorities fail to

support intergenerational activities in general, then intergenerational sports cannot thrive. As a key barrier, Funmilies partners often experienced limited financial support for insurance on sport events including older generations.

To mitigate financial risks event organisers should seek multiple funding opportunities, including sponsorship, material donations and contributions from local and international partners.

3. Lack of awareness of public authorities when it comes to the importance and impacts of intergenerational sport activities

The Funmilies consortium members generally experienced a low level of commitment from public authorities to support intergenerational activities. The same applied to the sports sector: sport organisations were reluctant to engage in intergenerational activities as they sometimes perceived these activities “useless” and much rather focused on existing, specific target groups (e.g. working age men and women). We can assume that there is a considerable lack of awareness and practical knowledge on the benefits of intergenerational sport activities or even sporty family programs, targeting not only the nuclear family but a family across all its generational members. Thus attempting to highlight advantages and benefits of intergenerational sport activities as well as the visibility local authorities could get through these activities (if they support them) could be a way of gaining more assistance from public authorities.

4. Poor infrastructure and lack of equipment

Some of the Funmilies partners reported difficulties linked to underdeveloped sport infrastructure and lack of appropriate sport equipment which is closely linked to the limited financial support from local authorities. Nevertheless, with some creativity and motivation coaches and trainers can overcome these challenges, for instance, by emphasising the great benefits of sport activities including young and old people alike!

2. Planning your intergenerational sport activity

Now that we have understood the role intergenerational sport activities can play in our society, let us see how we can organise our own event!

Intergenerational sport activities can have different goals which include²:

- Encouraging **increased participation in sport** of young and old people;
- Promoting **healthy lifestyles** through intergenerational sport activities;
- Increasing sport participation through **intergenerational competitions**;
- **Promoting the role of families** in encouraging physical activity;
- Foster **connections** between generations.

Identifying goals and objectives is the heart of sport event planning. In case of intergenerational sport activities, **common goals** for generations are utmost important. As a ground rule, sport activities should **promote collaboration between different age groups**, they should foster intergenerational understanding and develop trust between participants. Event organisers must keep in mind that representatives of different generations should feel equal and able to participate regardless of their age and physical conditions. Skills of a certain age group should not be favoured with respect to the chosen sport discipline.

For the successful delivery of intergenerational sport activities accurate and detailed event planning is crucial. When it comes to effective and impactful sports event management, the following elements should be determined before the realisation of events:

- **Key objectives:** e.g. bringing together different generations to foster bonding and increase mutual respect and understanding.
- **Target audience and number:** within the frameworks of our Funmilies project we involved young people (-25) and old people (+65), however, this is only a suggestion. Decide in advance roughly how many people you want to reach and plan accordingly.
- **Event date and time:** events should not be advertised on an ad-hoc basis, dates should be announced well on time.
- **Event location:** try to identify a “neutral” venue which suits the needs of different generations. This can be outdoor or indoor but should preferably be easily accessible, suit the program and not too large or small of the number of participants present.
- **Physical activity:** appropriate sport discipline identification and selection.
- **Event program and schedule:** having a clear event schedule facilitates promotion of sport activities, your participants will know what to expect!
- **Event coordinator:** Try to identify coaches/trainers who have already completed the [Funmilies e-learning course](#). Experience in the field of sports event coordination is

² <https://sport.ec.europa.eu/news/mapping-study-on-the-intergenerational-dimension-of-sport>

desirable, but not a must. Name and contact information should be visible on promotional materials.

- **Risk assessment:** see potential risks in the dedicated section.
- **Budget:** intergenerational sport activities do not require large budgets, however, effective utilisation of public/private funding is essential to deliver impactful programs.
- **Follow-up and sustainability:** one-off events can have limited impact, it is highly advised at the planning stage to already think about sustainability of intergenerational sport activities. Having appropriate evaluation mechanisms is also key to success.

Let's now explore in detail some of the most relevant elements that can determine the success of your initiative!

Key objective

Outline and determine the reason for doing an intergenerational sport event. Questions to consider when setting an objective: why should people participate? What is your aim with organising an event like this? What do you want for participants to take away from the event? An event objective can be as simple as having the participants enjoying themselves and having fun together. But sports, as a tool, can also be used to highlight the importance of social inclusion and community building. It is also possible to have more than one objective for an event.

Target audience

When talking about intergenerational sport (related) events, in the Funmilies framework, we aimed to bring together younger people (25 years of age or younger) with older people (65 years of age or older). Nevertheless, intergenerational sport activities can and should include any generations found in a family. Each generational group has different needs but we have found that selected sport activities can act as the perfect bridge to connect the groups, because in sports you can connect on many levels: physical, emotional, verbal and non-verbal, etc. Creating new or deepening existing bonds between any generations through the medium of sport can be called a success. Or even just making people aware of each other and connecting generations for a set duration of time is a win for society, since older people feel included and younger people get to interact with other generations in a new environment, which can lead to new and different experiences.

Gender balance

When planning an intergenerational event it is easy to focus only on the age of participants but forget about genders. Of course influencing the gender balance is not always possible but something to at least keep in mind when preparing a class or event for younger and older participants - as this too can influence the atmosphere. If needed, the coach or trainer can tailor exercises for the different genders (e.g. dance moves can be more masculine and more feminine, showing both and letting participants decide which moves to do is a good practice).

Timing of an event

The selected date and time, together with the location, should be announced well in time. Which date and time is picked will be influenced by the objectives set for the event, the size of the event (do you want to bring together 10 people or 1000?), the availability of the organisers and coaches as well as the target audience, and the actual sport discipline selected, which venues are available (is it indoor or outdoor), etc.

However, in general it is good to consider the *time of year* and *availability of your target audience*. The time of year can be thought of the current season (e.g. winter, summer) and what else is happening then in the calendar (e.g. are there public holidays coming up? Is there a big festival happening?). These factors should be taken into account when selecting a date to maximise the reach and impact of your event (if this is the goal!). In terms of the participants availability, generally speaking, younger people may have more free time outside of regular weekday working hours (9-5) and weekends but take into account that university students for example may have differing schedules and commitments on weekends. Older people may prefer an event to take place during the day (not too early in the morning and not too late in the evening). These generalisations will differ per country and culture but should be considered.

Identifying appropriate venues/locations

Finding an ideal location for intergenerational sport activities is one of the pivotal aspects of event planning. Based on the intergenerational sports report of the EC³, implementing intergenerational activities in settings that favour one group over another (e.g. schools where young people overrepresented) often resulted in failure. *“The reasoning behind this is that older people were outnumbered in schools and might have felt like they do not naturally belong to that setting. The sense of not belonging could have created anxiety when approaching young individuals and trying to establish contacts. On the other hand, young people might have felt reluctant to engage with the elderly due to peer pressure or prevailing norms stipulating that it is not socially desirable to spend time with older people. Similarly, research has shown that environments such as retirement homes, nursing homes or hospitals do not contribute to successful implementation.”*

Therefore, when identifying a venue for your intergenerational sport activity strive to pick a “neutral” location. Think about locations in your city/area that are ideal for the implementation of intergenerational activities. There may also be other considerations that you need to take into account (e.g. budget, availability of the location). The location or venue can be indoor or outdoor. It could be a gym or a lively square, some streets and sidewalks, or a park in the city centre. Bear in mind that studies have shown the benefits of “neutral” areas that work the best in terms of connecting the groups when it comes to intergenerational

³ <https://sport.ec.europa.eu/news/mapping-study-on-the-intergenerational-dimension-of-sport>

activities. By neutral it is meant a location that is not tied to one age group or another (e.g. like a home for pensioners or schools).

For example, having the event in the heart of the city, in a vibrant area, is great fun for the participants themselves and it also contributes to visibility. You will also have people that can join and try your sports spontaneously. Moreover, organising an intergenerational sport activity in an **open space** can also help to raise awareness of the importance of intergenerational inclusion and it is also safer when it comes to preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

In case of identifying indoor/closed areas certain considerations shall be taken into account. Given the post-Covid19 framework, it is still essential to think about health safety measures which can also depend on the country's local rules and regulations. However, it is also important to emphasise that safety regulations should not take away the positive aspects of sport activities as intergenerational sport activities should essentially be **fun and joy for all participants**. When identifying a sports facility (no matter if it's an indoor or outdoor one) you should bear in mind that it should be accessible for anyone regardless of physical condition and age. Some of the aspects you shall take into account when identifying the most appropriate sports facility:

- Accessible restrooms, changing rooms
- No unnecessary, broken or unstable furniture
- Rails to hold onto in key areas (e.g. toilets, showers)
- Anti-slip mat in showers

Any venue should suit the expected number of participants in size. Furthermore, it should satisfy the needs of the selected sport or exercise. For example, having a dance or zumba class in a dance studio or a gym with enough space and mirrors makes sense, while having an event centred around ball games in the same space can be considered unwise.



Identifying appropriate sport disciplines

One of the key success factors of event planning is the identification of sport activities that could attract both young and old participants. During the implementation of the Funmilies projects, the consortium members tested a number of sports disciplines and some of them proved to be really engaging from an intergenerational perspective. **We suggest identifying a sport activity which is FUN, ACCESSIBLE (does not require expensive sport equipment) and preferably NON-COMPETITIVE (or at least practised in a non-competitive way).**

Our suggestions for intergenerational sport activities:

- Various types of latin dance: e.g. salsa, mambo, cha cha, zumba
- Yoga or stretching
- Hiking
- Badminton
- Bocce, Petanque
- Table Tennis
- Water Sports (e.g Water weights, “Trust exercise”, Swimming)
- Soft martial arts (e.g. Tai Chi, Qigong)
- Different connection-building games integrated with the specific sports



Risk Assessment

Identifying the potential risks associated with intergenerational sports events is also an important part of planning. Common risks at events can be categorised into 5 types of risks: reputational, physical, emotional, facility and financial.

Reputational Risks

Reputational risk is the damage that can occur to an organisation when it fails to meet the expectations of its stakeholders and is thus negatively perceived. It can affect any business, regardless of size or industry. Within the framework of intergenerational sports, reputational risks are mainly related to failing to satisfy the expectations of target groups (young and old generations alike). If unprepared coaches/trainers deliver activities that do not meet the expectations of participants that will impact the reputation of the sport club/NGO in charge of the program. Preparedness also means that the coaches/trainers make adequate health checks of both the young and old participants to ensure each participant is healthy and takes part at their own risk.

Physical Risks

While working with intergenerational groups organisers must pay attention to minimise risks of physical injuries of participants. When it comes to older generations, reduced blood flow to the heart could cause chest pain (angina), to the lower legs could cause cramping, and to the brain could cause disorientation or light-headedness with exercise. These conditions can limit the duration and intensity with which an older adult can safely exercise. On the other hand, tendons and ligaments lose elasticity as we age. This can limit range of motion in the joints and make them more prone to injury. Older bodies also take longer to recover from injuries.

[Here you can find some useful tips how older participants can avoid physical injuries.](#) It is not only older people who may have health related difficulties but younger people too. A general briefing and health check is a must at the beginning of each session, led by the coach or trainer (there should already exist a protocol for this if we talk about professional coaches and trainers).

Emotional risks

Mental health problems are quite common among older people and may include isolation, affective and anxiety disorders, dementia, and psychosis, among others. Many older people also suffer from sleep and behavioural disorders, cognitive deterioration or confusion states as a result of physical disorders. Inappropriate planning and delivery of intergenerational activities can strengthen risks of emotional stress. Participants could find themselves in uncomfortable situations that can also impact their future participation in organised sport activities. Preparing every participant and briefly explaining what will happen and making sure to create a safe atmosphere, without judgement, is key (it is okay to stop and it's okay to move).

Risks related to the facility

As introduced in section B, identifying ideal venues for intergenerational sport activities are fundamental to achieve successful implementation. When identifying venue and sport activities event organisers must assess the potential hazards that can cause physical injuries to the participants, coaches, volunteers and anybody involved in the activity. Choosing sport facilities that are uncomfortable for any age group involved in the activity can impact the quality implementation of sport programs. Sport facilities not equipped with first aid kits are to be avoided.

Financial risks

As detailed in the barriers section above, lack of funding can considerably impact the implementation and sustainability of intergenerational sport activities. Pilot activities delivered by the Funmilies project partners were supported by the Erasmus+ Sport programme of the European Union, they were free and accessible for the participants involved. However, in the post-Covid19 framework many sport clubs and civil organisations - especially at the grassroots - struggle with loss of membership base and finances which can have a negative impact on the sustainability in sport programs in general. Intergenerational sport activities are not necessarily in the focus of sport organisations, therefore more incentives from local, national and European authorities are needed. Keeping in mind the budgetary constraints, financial risks can be mitigated with the involvement of committed volunteers who can dedicate their time and energy in sport event organisation.

How to assess risks before the implementation of intergenerational sport activities?

Suggested steps:



- Create a risk assessment document that lists potential hazards identified for your intergenerational sport activity and suggest contingencies to lessen these risks (see table below)
- Consult with coaches/trainers who are well aware of potential physical and mental health risks of your target groups and involve them into the planning process.
- Involve representatives of the target groups into the planning and delivery processes.
- Involve experienced event organisers who could support you in mapping and avoiding potential risks.
- In the case of sports events with a large number of participants (+100), think about event insurance first! Sport event insurance can be obligatory to safeguard event organisers and attendees, especially if organised in a public area. It is important to have your own event insurance, even if the venue has its own as it will not cover all of your potential hazards.

Type of Risk	Name of Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation measure
Reputational Risks	List all relevant risks	Add risk likelihood	Describe your mitigation measure
Physical Risks	List all relevant risks	Add risk likelihood	Describe your mitigation measure
Emotional risks	List all relevant risks	Add risk likelihood	Describe your mitigation measure
Risks related to the facility	List all relevant risks	Add risk likelihood	Describe your mitigation measure
Financial risks	List all relevant risks	Add risk likelihood	Describe your mitigation measure

Risk assessment map

Human resources

In order to successfully deliver intergenerational sport activities, it is inevitable to have a skilled and motivated workforce. Human resources management is a pivotal aspect of event organisation, as in the end, success depends on the professionalism and commitment of human beings involved. Tailor the event team to the anticipated number of participants - a session with 10 participants can be run by one trainer, while a whole day long intergenerational sport event for the public will require a larger team. The profiles of staff to be included to the planning and delivery of intergenerational sport activities could be the following:

- **Qualified coaches / trainers:** at the heart of intergenerational sport activities we can find qualified and committed coaches who are able to work with different age groups. Coaches must be well prepared to mitigate physical and emotional risks and at the same time they should be well-aware of the core objectives of intergenerational activities. Within the frameworks of the Funmilies project a really useful [e-learning course](#) was developed by project partners which is highly suggested for sport professionals and anyone involved in the planning/delivery of intergenerational sport activities.
- **Volunteers:** the European sport movement is based on committed and active volunteers without whom grassroots sport activities would not exist! Especially in case of larger events it is highly advised to involve volunteers who can support the delivery of intergenerational sport activities by engaging in a number of different roles. Involving and managing volunteers might be a daunting challenge for those who have hardly organised bigger events. Check the box below to know more about recruiting and managing a successful group of volunteers!
- **Medical professional or at least a recently trained first aider:** Especially in case of larger events it is inevitable to involve a medical professional who can intervene if an accident happens. In case of smaller events you must have a person present who can provide first aid on the spot.
- **Communication professional and/or photo/video responsible:** It is highly advised to record photos and videos during the implementation of intergenerational sport activities. Photos and videos can be used for future promotion of events as well as for dissemination purposes. Older people enjoy a good picture of themselves just as much as younger folks do ☐ If you don't have a communication professional, try to identify a motivated volunteer to take photos and videos - sometimes even a mobile phone will do a great job!

Tricks and Tips: How to recruit and manage volunteers?

- Try to reach out within your own networks and look for volunteers who are already engaged in organising/supporting sport events.
- It's advised to involve young students and pensioners as well to strengthen the intergenerational approach of the activity! These two age groups tend to have more free-time that they can offer for volunteering.
- Aim to have commitment for a longer term and try to involve committed volunteers into the everyday life of your sport organisation/NGO. Offering mentorship to volunteers can benefit not only the volunteer but your organisation as well!
- Offer benefits in exchange of volunteering e.g. sport equipment or a free sport session at your club. Following the event think about the appreciation of volunteers for instance by issuing a certificate or appreciation letter. Appropriate recognition of volunteer work is crucial to keep up the spirit of sports volunteerism.

Partner engagement

Cooperation and networking can be key to successfully realise intergenerational sport activities. Don't reinvent the wheel if someone already has a good practice in place. Reach

out to other local sport clubs, and see if they have programs for older people. They do? Great! What works for them, and what doesn't? They don't have any similar programs? Ask them if they want to deliver an event together. Potential partners and stakeholders for delivering intergenerational sport activities could be:

- Sport organisations active in the field of sport for all;
- Health centres and health sector stakeholders;
- Organisations and institutions working with older people;
- Non-governmental organisations, providing leisure time activities for older or younger people (e.g. youth NGOs or pensioners' activity clubs);
- Municipalities and local decision-makers.

Gaining support from local authorities is particularly important in case of intergenerational sport activities that involve participants from local public institutions. Public departments that are particularly relevant from a cooperation perspective are the departments/units responsible for health, sport and social issues (such as maintaining facilities for old people). For example, as part of the Funfamilies project, a few partners reached out to local district and cultural centres to promote their events and set the grounds for future co-operations.

Tricks and Tips: How to reach out to potential partners?

- Find their main email address, write a friendly introduction of yourself, the project and why you are contacting them - be friendly, specific and to the point!
- Tailor the language of communication to the potential partner:
 - Municipalities may prefer a more official form of communication at first
 - An NGO may be more open and accepting if communicated to on an equal level
 - The style of communication may also vary from country to country, what is appropriate and what is not
- Find their main email address, write a friendly introduction of yourself, the project and why you are contacting them - be friendly, specific and to the point!
- If there is no reply, try to call them (look up their contact details on their channels)
- Trust is important in a partnership: be open, share why a collaboration would benefit the potential partner, the target groups and the community as a whole as well as your organisation.
- Make a short list of potential partners. Contact the first 1-2 that you feel is most suitable. If they decline, move on to the next. One partner also brings their network to a cooperation.
- By contacting potential partners you already gain valuable experience of what does work and what does not. Your level of success (how many working partnerships were reached) will provide you with valuable lessons, which you can benefit from in the future.



3. Implementation of your intergenerational sport activity

In order to ensure that your event will proceed as planned, it's important to provide every team member a detailed description of tasks they need to deliver before the start, during and following the event. In case of larger sport events (100+ participants) it is essential to have a core organisational/steering committee that is responsible for making decisions. These committees can be composed of the event coordinators, sport professionals (e.g. experienced coaches), communication professionals and board members of organisations that are in charge of the organisation.

For successful implementation of larger sport events the following documentation could be helpful:

- Event planner form (e.g. event overview, event coordinator information, event scope)
- Event schedule form (timeline) - this could also be part of the planner form
- Risk assessment plan (as seen in the previous section) - this could also be part of the planner form
- Tasks and emergency plan checklist, including delegations (list of to-dos, in case of an emergency too)
- Event team contact list (contact details of team members)

- Communication plan (externally and internally)
- Event evaluation form and sustainability plan (e.g. have one or separate questionnaires for both the staff and participants to fill in after the event is concluded and provide their feedback)

Health and safety regulations

Working with intergenerational groups requires an increased level of preparedness when it comes to health and safety. Older people could have heightened health issues, especially if they live a sedentary lifestyle. Unfortunately, it does not mean that youth are exempt from physical or mental health issues. Event organisers should identify medical preconditions of participants and tailor each sport activity/exercise accordingly. If possible, they should also screen psycho-social preconditions of participants.

One way of measuring participants' physical and mental health status is self-assessment. Participants can share if they have any health conditions, what is their level of physical preparedness, whether they do regular exercises (e.g. walking 30 min every day).

Apart from asking participants to sign a “release of liability” form, the following can be done to make sure all health risks are assessed and people are feeling safe:

- Ask the participants to provide their medical conditions (e.g. heart, breathing capacity, joint and mobility problems, etc.).
- Blood pressure (high or low), lightheadedness, impaired hearing or sight - all these conditions may affect the level of participation and could need the adjustment of the exercise.
- Adjust the exercise to the identified individuals with restrictions in their activity and/or have any physiological preconditions, and have a volunteer pay extra attention to this group of older people.
- Take into account that medical preconditions may also be mental (e.g. signs of dementia).
- *Always follow the local rules and regulations related to Covid19.*

On a side note: the “release of liability” can also act as a consent form: it can state that the participants consent to video and photo materials being recorded of them and used for the purposes of the project only.

Emotional language, as mentioned in the risk assessment section, is important to take into account too.

- It is not always the case, but depending on the age of your target group (the older the more prevalent) your participants may be in a **vulnerable state**, not necessarily physically but emotionally, due to experiencing loneliness, coping with anxiety, etc.
- It is important to be **mindful** of the emotional status of participants in your communication and when giving instructions.
- Try to create a **safe space**, a warm atmosphere with your tone and body language.

Communication and Visibility

As the first step, we advise setting up an *event communication plan*. An event communication plan could include the following chapters/elements:

- general event information (date, time, venue and sports involved)
- goals and objectives
- funding (here specific reference to the EU-funding)
- stakeholders (internal communication, external communication)
- delivery channels (internal communication, external communication)
- visual identity and logos (specific reference to the Funfamilies visual identity)
- quantity/frequency of communication and timeline

Younger people (in our case 25- of age) are reachable on multiple social media platforms, perhaps the most suited for the purpose is instagram coupled with facebook. When posting the event call, younger people can be encouraged to bring along their older relatives (e.g. grandparents).

Older people (in our case 65+ of age) are a specific target group, therefore the delivery channels mostly include “mouth-to-mouth information” and paper materials (leaflets, posters, etc.). The location to hang the posters and to distribute the leaflets has to be decided after careful consideration: health centres, senior daily centres, markets and shopping centres are the best locations for this target group. More and more older people start to use Facebook, therefore, we also advise approaching this target group via this communication channel.

Tricks and Tips: How to involve older people?

- Use appropriate language and style. Straightforward information (what, when, who, fees, instructors).
- Share information on your website and Facebook (other social media channels are less prevalent in the population of older people).
- Next to digital media promotion, consider printing flyers for billboards at cultural centres or swimming pools, etc.
- You can reach out to the local municipality and public initiatives working with recreational activities for the given age group (65+).
- Start with your relatives who can pass on the message to their friends. Invite your grandmother and grandfather to the event and ask them to reach out to their friends!

Promoting the event on social media networks

- Once the event has been created make sure that it is open, accessible and visible for everyone and participants can invite their friends.

- Don't wait until people find your event! Share it in relevant groups and pages, this is the best way to reach out to your local community. Sometimes sharing is better than advertising your event for a certain amount of money (but buying online ads on platforms such as Facebook does not require a large investment and does reach more people).
- If you want to target a local audience, you can share the events in groups and pages which have local relevance. Ask other individuals and organisations to share the event on their social media channels.

Tricks and Tips: Online visibility during and after your event

- *Visibility, visibility and visibility!* This is what you should keep in mind also during and after the realisation of your intergenerational sport event. If you want to make sure that people know about your event, then utilise opportunities offered by social media and digital communication platforms!
- *Do not forget to digitally document your sport event!* Nowadays, you don't even need a professional camera to document the happenings. Take your phone and take as many photos as possible, then select the best ones. Give them some colours and publish them on the Facebook event and other channels!
- To share your best photos use platforms like Instagram and *make a short recap of the event*. Use Facebook and Instagram stories or reels to inspire your followers! Facebook communication will be more relevant for older people (65+), while younger people (<25) will be rather reached through Instagram stories and TikTok videos.
- *Make sure you save your best photos to an online drive*. You can always use these materials for the promotion of your next event or just for regular social media communication.

Acknowledgement of funding (if required)

In case the sport activity is financed through funds of the European Union emblem must be used and the name of the European Union displayed in full. The name of the Erasmus+ programme can appear with the flag in case the sport activity was financed through this program. The preferred option is to write „Co-funded by“ or „With the support of“, then „the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union“ next to the EU flag. E.g. „Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union“ or „With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union“. The detailed instructions are set out [here](#).

4. Event follow-up and evaluation

According to the research commissioned by the European Commission⁴ *“there is a lack of formal evaluation of intergenerational sport programmes and activities. The evidence base could be strengthened by addressing these knowledge gaps.”*

Following the delivery of intergenerational sport activities we highly advise to follow-up with your participants, coaches, volunteers, etc. and ask their opinion on the activities delivered. Meaningful evaluation is necessary to increase the overall quality of intergenerational sports, feedback from participants can provide the necessary information on how to improve the implementation. Identifying success factors and barriers in the local cultural context is also essential. A follow-up can be as simple as an informal talk about their experiences or sharing an online evaluation form.

1, Measuring participants’ satisfaction and keeping contact with them

Asking people about their opinion is always a good idea which can help you to improve the quality of your event. The easiest way to get acquainted with the opinion of participants is to approach them following the event and inquire about their feedback. Most of the sport activities that are delivered in smaller intergenerational groups allow coaches/trainers and event organisers to ask directly their participants following right after the activity. In case of larger groups online evaluation forms could be useful tools, however these e-forms might not be as effective as in-person feedback sessions and debriefings. When it comes to the improvement of an activity, event organisers/coaches should always be open to new ideas, suggestions and feedback. Learning about the negative aspects of your sport event is as important as hearing the positive aspects of organisation. Here are some possible ways for receiving feedback from event participants:

- Joint debriefing: informal group conversation following the event,
- Online forms: from simple questionnaires to more complex surveys,
- In-depth conversations (or even semi-structured interviews).

Keeping contact with your participants is not only relevant for getting feedback on the organisation aspects of your intergenerational sport event. Sometimes your participants become the most active volunteers or event organisers. Make sure you give them the opportunity to join your organisation and become active members. In our experience, the most active and committed volunteers always come from the pool of event participants.

2, Opinion of coaches and trainers

It is important to be able to give and receive feedback from the coaches/trainers who are in charge of the sporting aspects of the event. Feedback/evaluation sessions can not only strengthen the relationship between the administrators of the sports club and the coaches, but it can help event planners to better take into account the opinion of experienced sport professionals. The format of the feedback can be a simple conversation where it's discussed

⁴ <https://sport.ec.europa.eu/news/mapping-study-on-the-intergenerational-dimension-of-sport>

how each party perceived the happenings, what they thought was successful and enjoyable, and where improvements could be made for a potential “next time”. It could also be more formalised and put in a format of a questionnaire.

Considering the Funmilies project: from all partner countries, coaches reported a positive impact of the piloting activities, bringing together young and old people through sports in a casual way can be fun and motivates the participants to show each other what they are capable of. In this project's case a semi-structured interview sample was developed for coaches to give feedback on the piloting events done by the consortium members. The pre-set questions asked the coaches to report how they felt the event went, what were the challenges and for example if they find intergenerational sports activities to be useful. In the course of the interview the partners could also express their feedback.

Tricks and Tips: getting feedback from participants

- Following the end of the activity, ask participants to stay a little longer to have some words with them. You can also mix the evaluation session with common stretching exercises.
- Be friendly, open-minded and informal. Participants will also be more open to provide you sincere feedback.
- Make sure you leave enough space for different generations to express their opinion. Do not prefer one generation over another when providing them space to express their opinion.
- Always ask easy questions to open the floor for conversations: e.g. how did you feel yourselves? Did you have fun?
- Encourage more reserved participants to provide suggestions/recommendations.
- Sometimes person-to-person conversations are necessary as people might not reveal their honest opinion in front of others. If you can, devote some time to talking with your participants outside the regular sport settings.

5. Conclusion and takeaways

The Erasmus+ funded Funmilies project was one of the first of its kind to experiment with releasing intergenerational sport activities in various settings and cultural contexts. During the implementation of the initiative, partners faced various challenges (including the global pandemic which has particularly impacted project activities in 2021), however **the outcomes represent valuable learning lessons** for everyone involved. With the present guide we aimed to share these lessons and experiences with a larger audience and incentivise sport clubs, civil society organisations and institutions to deliver more and quality intergenerational sport activities. This guide can be used as a reference point for anyone wanting to organise intergenerational sport related activities.

As takeaways, we can recall some memorable moments gained during the implementation of pilot activities. At the heart of intergenerational sport activities can find unbounded happiness which connects people regardless of their age, socio-economic background or gender. This is the atmosphere that should be strived for at any event and physical activity is the perfect tool to connect people. Experts of U3A, the Slovenian partner of the Funmilies project reported the following memory:

“A grandmother who could not participate in the event entrusted us with her granddaughter saying that she would be coming to pick her two hours later since allegedly the girl would not be able to sustain the activities. Two hours later the girl was so involved in different sports activities together with (older) adults that she would forget about her attention deficit disorder and would not go home.”

Besides such heart-warming examples, Greek participants, especially the older ones, reported having learned important information about exercises on flexibility and strength that are relevant for their age, which can be done at home alone, or in a group anywhere. They also familiarised themselves with the concepts of intergenerational sports, and how to take care of their physical and mental health. In Hungary one of the highlights was the Zumba Gold class where younger international participants joined Erzsi, an amazing zumba dance teacher in her 60s and her fantastic team. Zumba proved to be an ideal tool for connecting people with different backgrounds: even if young international participants did not speak a word in Hungarian, they totally understood older Hungarian adults and the flow of activity created a memorable atmosphere for everyone involved.

At the end of the project we can firmly state that all of the project partners gained valuable experiences by working with different generations and utilising sports to bring them together. Physical activity and sports are open platforms that can bring various people together regardless of their age, gender, cultural, economic or social backgrounds, however, sport event organisers must strengthen their knowledge-base in the field of sport-based social inclusion. Delivery of intergenerational sport activities also requires a great amount of commitment, solidarity and motivation, but we can assure you the invested time and energy will pay-off in the form of happiness and joy. We truly hope that others will use the outcomes from the Funmilies project, learn from it and implement something even more beneficial and useful for the young and old in their communities.