



# *Handbook for the parents*

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# Introduction word

This handbook is a methodological and standardized European tool for parents to prevent the dropouts sport phenomenon of the athletes in all kinds of sport. The prevention model is the result of the exchange of partners' best practices, experiences learned and a specific scientific research in the field of prevention of sport dropout. The innovative research has focused the attention on a whole process of relationships among the main actors involved in the sport education and the skill of resilience of the athletes, pointing out the important role that it plays in the lives' development of young people.

The parents who want to test the whole PYSD European prevention model can follow the indications of the handbook for parents besides PYSD test model manual and the guide of PYSD experts, in order to apply all methodological steps in the proper way and to measure and to identify the specific items which need to be empowered.

The handbook provides parents with a tool to raise the awareness of their skills and it gives the possibility to identify, through investigation measures, the effects of some specific behaviors, thus to apply possible customized solutions to correct them.

The handbook could also be a different point of view so as to approach a better understanding of the parents' (un)awareness about the relationships between athletes-and-parents and coaches-and-parents. This process can be developed, thanks to the handbook, in view of an enhanced consistency with the European sport values.

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# Why doing sports is good



The field of motor activities is extremely important for the development of young people from early childhood. Proper eating patterns and regular physical activity are just two key factors that should be primary in the field of public health and prevention of poor health and hygiene habits of youngsters. Having an adequate level of motor capacity is associated with many health benefits such as higher levels of physical activity, better cardiorespiratory capacity, better and healthier self-perception and lower risk of obesity (Laukkanen et al., 2014), so by participating in physical activities, young people can prevent many health problems (Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010; Williams et al., 2008). Youngsters with active lifestyles who practice extracurricular physical activities throughout the year maintain and raise their own level of fitness compared to those who nurture sedentary patterns of behavior (Ara et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, the age we live in is characterized by an alarmingly low level of caloric consumption of all age groups, rapid scientific and technological development, lack of sense of play, rapid urbanization, desocialization caused by overcrowding and fast life, depression in the growth phase and lack of space for play. This is especially present in cities that force youngsters to isolate and reduce the possibility of gaining adequate motor experience and socialization through playing in a group (Carlson et al., 2012). Even very young children find fun in static activities such as mass and excessive use of mobile

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phones, watching television programs and playing computer games. Confirmation of these claims are the results of foreign studies that indicate a declining trend in children's physical activity (Colley et al., 2011; Troiano et al., 2008).

While sedentary patterns of youth behavior have been associated with various health implications (Fairclough et al., 2009; Vandewater, Shim & Caplovitz, 2004; de Winter et al., 2018), youngsters with a better aerobic form have a lower risk of obesity and metabolic syndrome (Paley & Johnson, 2018). Children and adolescents who have a higher level of physical activity are less likely to have symptoms of depression, anxiety, or fewer symptoms (Hrafnkelsdottir et al., 2018). Which also shows how important physical exercise is in growing up young, later human (Korczak, Madigan, & Colasanto, 2017).

Extremely sensitive period important for the formation and development of personality is the period of childhood, therefore children's play should be a central and leading activity in order to influence the integral development of

personality with its positive action. In addition, the period of adolescence is critical for acquiring patterns of behavior that are directly correlated with the reduction of risk factors for the occurrence of chronic non-infectious diseases (Rodrigues et al, 2013), therefore movement(s) and motion are considered to be the basis of all important areas of child development, social, developmental, emotional, cognitive and physical. Through physical activities, young people meet the basic bio-psycho-social needs for physical activities and play, develop and form a proper attitude and attitude towards exercise and create healthy habits. Therefore, the process of socialization in the family has a huge impact on the physical exercise of young people.



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# The role of the parents



Human's earliest participation in sports and physical activity is a key factor for the motor development of abilities and the probability of engaging in them throughout life. People and situations constantly influence a personal choice of activities, and thus decisions. The child's parents, as well as the environment in which the child grows up, certainly have a strong influence on the child's choice whether to practice an active lifestyle (engaging in organized physical activities), or sedentary (in television screen and computer games) or focusing on academic development consciousness that exists in society both locally and globally. This is confirmed by the results of a study that used accelerometers to examine the daily activity of parents and nine-year-olds (Fuemmeler, Anderson, & Mâsse, 2011). The results showed that the distribution of children's physical activity levels during the day and week is significantly related to the distribution of parents. If a child's family nurtures an active lifestyle, the likelihood of a child's sense of competence increases for the mentioned areas. So it is more likely that a physically active child will come from a physically active family, from the earliest age. Conversely, if a sedentary pattern of behavior is nurtured in the family environment, it is unlikely that the child itself will be motivated for physical activity.

Research shows that the period from 5 to 12 years is when children are not autonomous in their behavior, thus parents are one of the main factors that can influence the physical

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activity of children (Beets, Cardinal & Alderman, 2010). Parents are very important factors of socialization in this period whose beliefs, and even more importantly the example of physical activity and active lifestyle, or a sedentary pattern of behavior can act as privileges or restrictions for children's participation in physical activities (Haywood & Getchell, 2017). The choice of a child to engage in physical activity is strongly influenced by parental interests and incentives (Kimić & Horn, 2012), especially the role of the father (e.g. if the father engages in physical activity, it is likely that the child will accept the same pattern of behavior and habits from his parent). Young people tend to imitate the behavior of adults. They are curious, and physical activity also provides them with even more space to play and a sense of belonging (DiLorenzo et al., 1998).

The influence of parents on the physical activity of the child also was confirmed by examining the influence of joint family meals in early childhood and their influence on the general physical form of children. Namely, children who regularly had meals with their parents at a younger age, at a later school age had a higher level of general physical shape, consumed less unhealthy diet, showed a lower level of physical and reactive aggression, oppositional behavior and non-aggressive delinquency, even when neutralized influence of parental residence status, gender, cognitive abilities and anthropometric characteristics (Pagani, Harbec & Barnett, 2018).

Parents also act as a factor influencing the physical activity of the child through the ability to finance training, equipment, travel and everything that accompanies the active lifestyle of the child (Ayers & Sariscsany, 2011).





# Why young people and children dropout from sports

Sport dropout is defined as prolonged absence of systematic practice and competition, either in one sport (sport-specific dropout) or all sports (sport-general dropout) (Keep Youngsters Involved, 2020). Recent studies in the United States of America shows that children mostly dropout from sport at the age of 12 or 13 and often earlier (O'Sullivan, 2015; Wallace, 2016). Studies of youth sports participation and dropout rates in other countries show similar trends (Carlman, Wagnsson, & Patriksson, 2013). When comparing domain-general and sport-specific dropouts in relation to the dropout age categories, results showed that domain-general dropouts increased with the dropout age (37% at <11 years; 50% at 11-13 years and 65% for >13 years), while sport-specific dropouts decreased accordingly with age (63% at <11 years; 50% at 11-13 years and 35% for >13 years) (Carlman, Wagnsson, & Patriksson, 2013). In North America 35% of children and adolescents drop out of sport annually (Patriksson, 1988).

There are a number of factors that have an effect on someone's decision whether or not he will stay in sport. Some of them are lack of enjoyment (not having fun, being bored), low perceptions of physical competence; intrinsic pressures (e.g. stress), negative feelings towards team or coach, lack of motivation, parental or coach pressure, other social priorities, sports related injuries, overuse/burnout, financial constraints etc. (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Ommundsen & Vaglum, 1997; Crane & Temple, 2015; Temple & Crane, 2016).

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On European level recent projects giving various solutions to prevent sport dropout especially in youth. Most of them identify dropout factors and show best practice models but there are very few studies that connect resilience, as psychological ability of the person to overcome difficulties, stress, burnout etc. and staying longer in sport. Moreover, to our knowledge there are no projects that have linked resilience to the coach-athlete-parent triangle and youth sport dropout.

In sports, athletes are exposed to many psychological stressful experiences in their competitive sports activities (Petrie, 1992) thus capacity for successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (what we call "resilience"; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990) is of particular importance. Findings of Hill et al. (2018) revealed that resilient individuals were able to return to their previous level of performance after encountering the perturbation, whereas non-resilient athletes' negative performance was followed by another negative performance. Ueno & Suzuki (2016) showed that resilience is negatively associated with burnout among athletes, thus they concluded that applying the concept of resilience to sports may prevent burnout and

dropout rate of athletes. Therefore, authors underlining the need to develop intervention programs for improving athletes' resilience and to investigate their efficacy and provide feedback to the athletes and coaches regarding results of these types of studies.

As Jowett & Ntoumanis (2003) state a series of qualitative case studies were conducted in order to ascertain the nature of the coach-athlete relationship, which could define as the situation in which coaches' and athletes' emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are mutually and causally interconnected. Gould et al. (1996; 1997) reported that situational and personal factors may interactively contribute to youth tennis players' burnout. They found psychological stress, such as high expectations from coaches and parents (pressure to please others and emphasis on winning/ranking...) are major factors leading to burnout. Psycho/social stressors such as negative performance demands, social relations, and lack of social support are some of the major factors associated with burnout (Gustafsson et al., 2008) and can lead to rigid and inappropriate behaviour, decreased performance and withdrawal from activity (Lu et al., 2016). Investigating the effects of athletes' resilience



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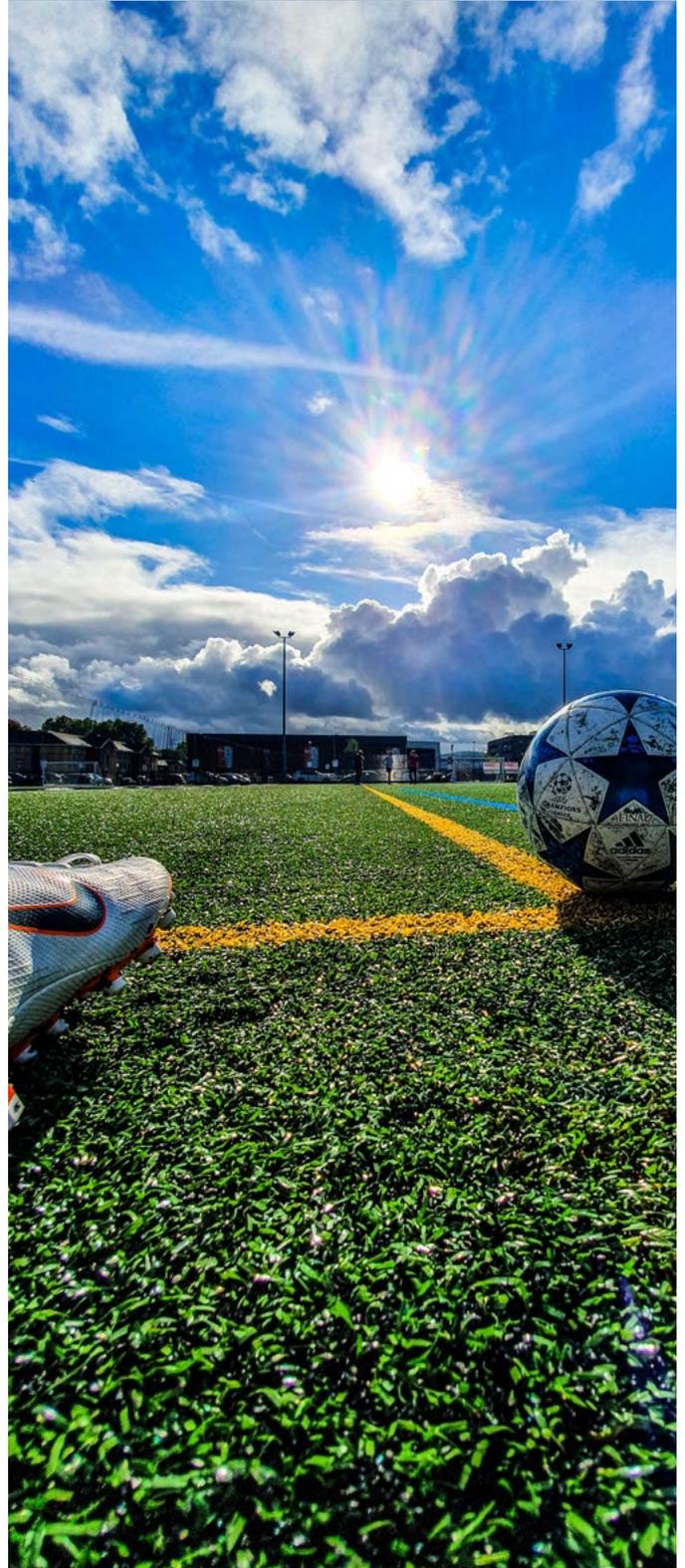
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# Why young people and children dropout from sports

and coaches' social support on the stress-burnout relationship Lu et al. (2016) found that under high life stress, athletes who are both high in resilience and tangible support are less susceptible to burnout than those with high resilience but low tangible support. In the low life stress condition, findings revealed that athletes with high resilience but low tangible support are less prone to burnout than those both low in resilience and tangible support. This way authors confirm that high stress is associated with athlete burnout, that high resilience is negatively associated with stress-induced outcomes, and that social support is negatively associated with burnout, thus emphasize the (good) athlete-coach relationship as a factor of (preventing) burnout, and consequently dropout.

In addition to the coach-athlete relationship a significant factor in the prevention of youth sport dropout is parental involvement in sport activities of young athletes. Researches showed that caring parents who are involved in their children's schooling / participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., after-school sports), and have supportive relationships with teachers/coaches positively contribute to children's academic/sports performance (Nettles, Mucherah & Jones, 2000). However, when a child enters a sport program some parents do not realize their role in that process and own responsibilities, so may miss opportunities to help their children grow through sports, or they may do things that interfere with their children's development. If parents assume an extremely active role in the sports life of their children, their influence may become an important source of children's stress (Smoll, Cummbing & Smith, 2011) that may become chronic (burnout) and cause of children's sport dropout. Therefore, for children



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that participate in sport their parents must be educated on their role in the youth sport triangle (Holden et al., 2015). The sport triangle (Fig. 1), well known as an “athletic triangle”, describes the interpersonal relationship of

coach, parents and athlete - “all parties that need to positively collaborate within the youth sport environment to enhance the sporting experience for all” (Hellstedt, 1987).

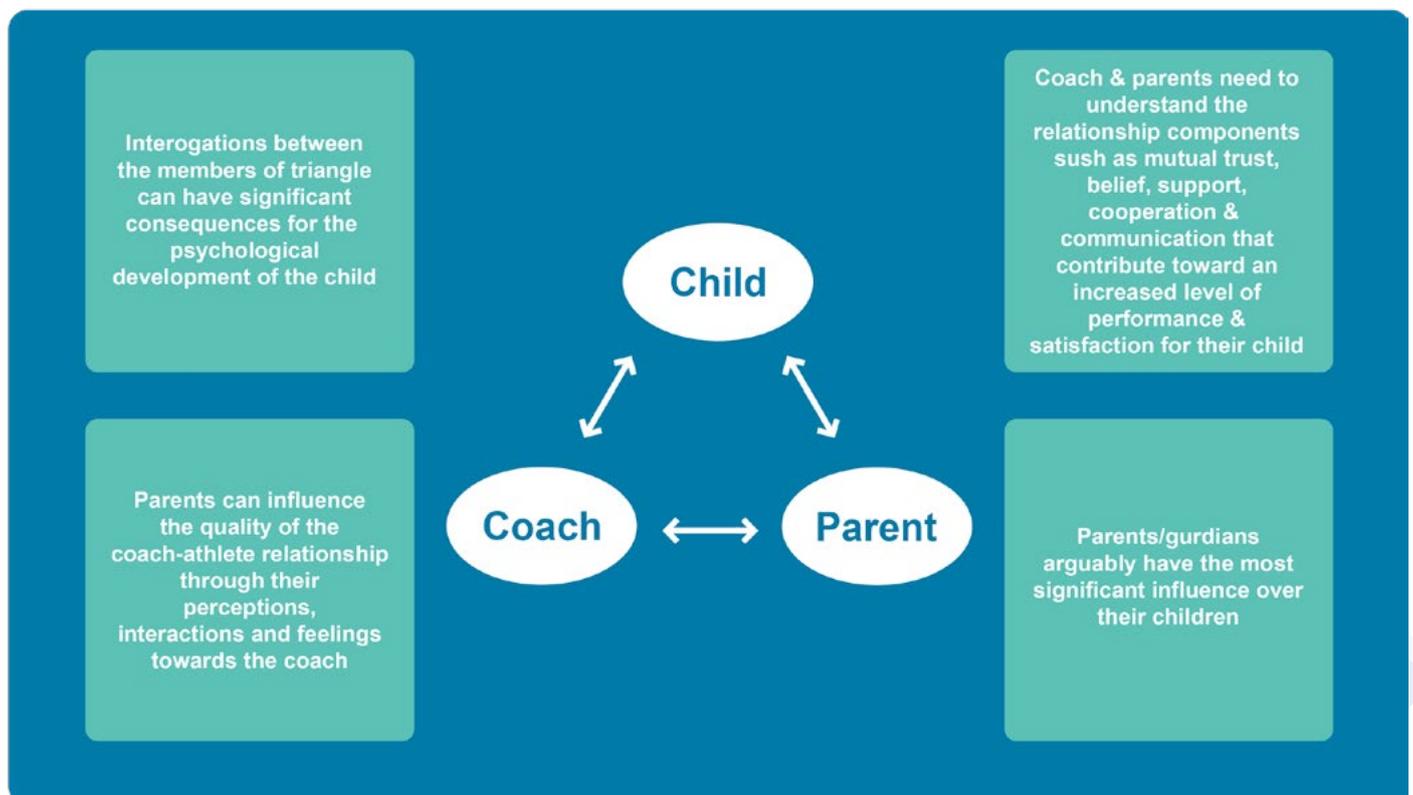


Fig. 1. Athletic triangle by Hellstedt, 1987 (reprinted and modified from <https://thesportinginfluencerblog.wordpress.com/athletic-triangle/>).

The project Preventing Youth Sport Dropouts - PYSD aims to create a best practice model, issued from activities carried on real sport activities to provide clear technical guidelines for trainers, coaches and sport association. Youth sports participation holds positive potential for enabling the development of children and youth. However, there has been a growing emphasis among parents, coaches,

and youth participants on commodifying sport as an arena for winning, status, and living out parental and coaches, rather than players' dreams. In many situations, parents and coaches need to rethink their motivations and their goals and become more youth development focused as they pursue sport involvements for children and youth.

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# PYSD model for prevention of sports dropout

The youth sport is an integral part of the culture in most of the European countries (Holt, Tomlinson & Young, 2011) and worldwide. In addition to having fun it presents an opportunity for young people to experience the joy of success and cope with setbacks to develop resilient behaviours (White & Bennie, 2015), important for overcoming tough and stressful situations. In this regard, the role of coaches and parents is to provide support to young people by creating a strong coach-parent-athlete relationship (Holden et al., 2015; White & Bennie, 2015). Finding a way to improve this relationship it is reasonable to assume that athletes will enjoy sports more, play them on a higher level and consequently play it longer (Blom, Watson II & Spadaro, 2011).

There are a number of studies that have investigated athletic triangle (Blom, Watson II & Spadaro, 2011; Hellstedt, 1987; Holden, 2015; Wylleman et al., 1995; Wylleman, 2000) and also development of resilience through a youth sport or/and coach-athlete relationship (White & Bennie, 2015), but to our knowledge this is the first study to link resilience and the coach-parent-athlete relationship as factors in youth sport dropout. While previous researches were focused on interpersonal relations between coach, parents and athlete, PYSD prevention model consist of identification of the resilience level of youth athletes and their relations with parents and coaches, and providing proposals for actions to parents and coaches in order to build up youth athletes resilience as a predictive factor of youth sport dropout. Taking into

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account all mentioned findings of previous researches, we assume that building resilience at youth and developing relations with parents and coaches will lead to staying longer in sport or return practicing sport.

### *Instruments*

Based on previous findings and experience from practice we chose instruments that could be applied in the assessment of psychological characteristics of young athletes, in different cultural contexts. In order to check the metric characteristics of proposed instruments on a sample of young athletes from Italy, Spain, Serbia and Bulgaria we designed a study in which participated 2407 athletes. After reviewing the collected data, 2133 questionnaires that were in accordance with the criteria were taken for further analysis (Italy,  $n = 785$ ; Spain,  $n = 673$ ; Serbia,  $n = 450$  and Bulgaria,  $n = 505$ ). The sample was conducted of young athletes aged 11-15-y ( $13,2 \pm 1.2$ ; mean  $\pm$  standard deviation) both, male ( $n = 1550$ ) and female ( $n = 551$ ) from 2 team sports (basketball,  $n = 978$  and football,  $n = 707$ ) and from swimming ( $n = 428$ ), as an individual sport. Six months trained by the same coach was the inclusion criteria for

participating subjects in the study (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004).

For the assessment of the resilience level we used 40-items five-point Likert-type (ranged from 1 – never to 5 – always) The Student's Resilience Scale (Lereya et al, 2016) that covers range of 10 subscales (Family connection, School connection, Community connection, Participation in home and school life, Participation in community life, Self-esteem, Empathy, Problem solving, Goals and aspirations and Peer support) measuring childrens' perceptions of their individual characteristics, as well as protective factors embedded in the environment. As a measure of reliability of the instrument we calculated Cronbach's alpha score ( $\alpha$ ), which was high (note that maximum value is "1") on the sample from Bulgaria ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ), Serbia ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ) and Italy ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) and satisfactory for the sample of children from Spain sample ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ).

The 3Cs conceptual model of the Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire, 11-item athlete version CART-Q (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004) was used to assess the coach-athlete relationship as defined by



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# PYSD model for prevention of sports dropout

Closeness (interpersonal liking, respecting, trusting, and appreciating one another), Commitment (relationship between members' thoughts about developing a close and lasting partnership), and Complementarity (members' behavioral transactions of cooperation that are willing, responsive, relaxed, and friendly) (Yang and Jowett, 2012) where items were assigned a score ranging from 1 (not-at-all) to 7 (extremely). Our results showed high internal consistency ( $\alpha$ ) on the Italian ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ), Serbian ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ) and Bulgarian ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) sample, while on the sample of children from Spain it was satisfactory ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ).

Parent-athlete relationship was assessed by The Parent Involvement in Sport Questionnaire, (PISQ; Lee & MacLean, 1997) for both, mother and father / guardians separately. PISQ consists of 19 items rated on five-point Likert-type scales ranging from never (1) to always (5) that assess the extent to which parents control their children's behaviour in sport (Direct Behaviour), the praise and empathy parents display towards their children (Praise and Understanding) and parents' activity in the club or during practice sessions (Active Involvement). Results showed high values of  $\alpha$  for Serbian, Bulgarian ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ) and Italian ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ) samples, while for the Spanish sample it was satisfactory ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ).

Moreover, results of the research revealed differences in level of resilience, athlete-coach and athlete-parent relationship respectively between subsamples in general and by subscales, as well as between subgroups (e.g. sex, gender, dominant sport...), which indicates that all three instruments are sensitive enough to record differences between sample's groups and can be used as a valid tool in the further research of the assessment of psychological characteristics of athletes (a questionnaire





with sociodemographic variables is given at Annex 1).

Based on previous findings as well as findings of current study we suggest that proposed instruments can be used for screening (current status of resilience and relations to the coach and to the parents), subpopulation characterization (differences for groups by gender, age, country and etc.), diagnostic of special needs (which component is weak and need to be developed) and intervention evaluation (does resilience and coach-athlete relationship, as well as parent-athlete relationship is developed after intervention).

### *Intervention*

While a number of studies show some promise for resilience-based interventions that can be a useful way of increasing positive development for children in a wide variety of settings, Brownlee et al. (2013) underline the need to design research studies that include control groups, measure before and after program implementation, use comprehensive instruments to assess resiliency and assess how these factors are related to specific positive outcomes. The authors consider that implemented programs do not always necessarily intend to increase the number of strengths/resilience shown by youths, it may

also attempt to support youths in utilizing existing to address their current issues (Brownlee et al., 2013).

In line with this suggestion of Brownlee et al. (2013) and based on the results of our preliminary research we designed another study that includes athletes, their coaches and parents. We assume that the application of certain measures/actions by coaches and parents over a time could increase (or utilize existing), the resilience of young athletes and strengthen the relationship between athletes, coaches and parents which would indirectly lead to staying longer in sports. In this regard we prepared a list of actions for the development of resilience and the relation between the athlete with his parents and the coaches. The choice of actions is the result of a pedagogical discussion where the leading question was: what actions should a child of a certain age be given to do in order to improve resilience and develop better relationships with the coach and parents? The final compilation of actions is the result of an extensive selection of possible measures, which have been developed and discussed in several expert discussions.



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# Instructions for parents

*Dear youth athlete's parents note that the most critical age for the youth athletes sport drop out are from 11 till 15 years. Before and during this period you can work on development of resilience and building up and strengthening relationships with your children. For this purpose we built a set of measures that you can use.*

*There are two ways of their use, one is recommended general suggestions with practical examples and other is specific proposed measures by indicator assessed by a professional in charge for the PYSD project and methodology.*

## **Recommended general suggestion**

- Ask the child his/her perception about his/her progress.
- Ask the child if he/she is satisfied with its/her performance
- Ask him/her what he/she would like to be different and then ask him/her if there are any difficulties during the training session.
- Ask the child what is the field of his/her satisfaction and security.
- Provide support and encouragement from the parental point of view, give positive information and practical advice for training and playing sports in general. Support your child to increase motivation and self-confidence for training.
- Avoid giving advice to the child regarding

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the manner and improvement of the training process and play techniques, alternatively suggest the child to enhance the thoughts' sharing with the coach.

- If it is allowed and if it suits the child, occasionally visit one of the training sessions.
- Show respect and appreciation for what the coach does for your child because in that way you will influence the creation of a child's sense of trust towards the coach, as well as a sense of security in the training process itself.
- Be interested and talk with the child about what he/she is learning in training.
- Ask the child about what amuse him/her most during the training session. Ask the child what he would like to be different, more interesting.
- Influence the improvement of responsibility: encourage the child to take care of his/her sport things.
- Influence the improvement of self confidence.
- Planning with the child the weekly schedule and encouraging him/her to organize the daily activities considering also the sport

commitment as a priority.

- Ask the child, after the sport training, which is his/her positive or negative feeling .
- Help him/her to name and classify existing feelings.
- Listen carefully to what your child is saying to you without judgments.
- Ask him/her if he or she likes himself/herself during the training session.
- Encourage the work and the commitment, and not only the final results. Praise the efforts, work or sporting behavior of your child.
- Remind your child of the successes and difficulties that have been overcome in the past. Remind him/her that he is an important part of the team and that his/her contribution is very important for the success of the team.
- Emphasize the behaviours on fair play, on the relationship with teammates, the audience and the coach and share together the good experience during the sport training session; if these are not evident, try to encourage the understanding about the facts more close to



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## Instructions for parents

these aspects and promote one of those in the next training session.

- Appreciate his/her efforts to practice sport and share together its daily benefits (wellness, anti stress, physical activity, fun, life skills, relationship, fairplay). Whenever the opportunities arise, support them and appreciate the involvement of children in such activities and never comment negatively on them.
- In accordance with the possibilities and business policy of the club, get actively involved in the process of managing and organizing the planned activities of the club
- Follow the activity and stay informed through social media or other tools with the clubs or sport associations of your child.
- Speak with other parents and share regular impressions about the wellness of the children and their improvements.
- Ask the coach for regular information about the training process and your child's progress and about events during free activities.
- Promote a relationship between the child and both you and the coach, based on mutual trustiness: ask the coach how to support the motivation of sport activities or how to resolve specific problems linked to sport experience .
- According to your and other family members' abilities and in relation to your child's training, adjust family obligations and routines, such as meals, time for relaxation, rest and sleep.
- Inform school teachers about sport experiences of the children and inform the coaches about the schools results and activities practiced by the children, also concerning the sport activities practiced at school.





# Specific proposed measures by indicator for parents

*Note: Dear parents, following measures you can use only with the recommendation of a professional that assessed your children. Please be patient to get your personalized instructions.*

*Indicator: The Directive Behavior scale (DB) - assess the extent to which parents control their children's behavior in sport.*

- Regardless of the achieved result, after the end of the sports event, be sure to first praise your child for what he/she did well, for the effort, work and commitment shown. Praise is what the child needs most at that moment and something the best you can do for the child. If you want to give your child suggestions, which you think would be useful for him/her to improve his/her performance, do not do it immediately after the sporting event. Wait for the child to take a break from the game/competition and when both your and the child's impressions subside, talk about the previously played game or competition.

- After less successful games or performances, avoid focusing on the mistakes made and the worse aspects of your child's performance. Instead, highlight everything the child has done well. Give him credit for his fighting spirit, athletic behavior, and hard work.

- Do not criticize and accuse the child of not doing enough and not giving his/her maximum

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## Specific proposed measures by indicator for the coaches

after less successful competitions or poor results. Children are very sensitive to negative criticism and accusation. Such a relationship can lead to the creation of feelings of guilt and a drop in the child's self-confidence, which can later result in leaving the sport.

- Support your child to help him overcome defeat or a bad result. Help him to shift the focus from defeat and to evaluate in an objective way his performance, as well as the quality of all previously undertaken segments of preparation.

- Try not to ask your child questions after the competition that will overemphasize the importance of winning and the competitive result ("How many goals did you score? Who played the best?"). Ask your child questions about his or her experience of the game and the competition, to emphasize the importance of the fun and the effort and effort shown ("How did you feel while playing? Did you enjoy the game? What was your shot like in relation to the competition compared to the game from last week?").

- Talk to your child about the progress of the training process and the results of competitions. Ask the child what perception he/she has about his/her progress, what he/she is satisfied with and what he/she is not, what is his/her problem, and what is the field of satisfaction and security. Provide your child with support and encouragement from the role of a parent, positive feedback and concrete advice. Avoid giving advice to the child regarding the manner and improvement of the training process and play techniques. Your child's coach is in charge of that part of the job, and additional guidance from you could have a confusing effect on the child.

- It is very likely that your child understands and experiences their participation in sports in a different way than you. Do not show anger in situations when you think that the child's play could be better. Show that you are with the child even when he/she is not doing well. Be a source of support, faith and motivation for him/her.

- Remember that your attitude towards your child's athletic achievement affects the child's self-confidence and self-esteem. The child's wish is to be loved and accepted and for the parents to be satisfied with what the child is doing. Do not be angry with the child, do not scold him, do not humiliate and do not minimize his achievement because it can happen that the child will form a feeling of inferiority, a feeling that "it is not worth your love" or will experience himself as a failed person.





- Be careful when giving advice to a child before a game or competition. Try to be inspiring, motivating and encouraging. Avoid advice that the child might experience as an obligation, criticism or reminder of a previous failure, which could put additional pressure on him and the appearance of negative feelings such as fear and anxiety.

- Avoid giving your child specific advice about a competition or match before a game. Leave it to your child's coach, who should be a safety zone for your child. Your advice could confuse and further burden the child. Instead, try to relax and encourage your child to give their best, to believe in themselves and the coach, and to listen to the coach's suggestions.

- The period immediately before the start of the game/competition is very important for the final preparations of the child. Leave enough space for the child to concentrate and prepare for the game/competition. This is the period when most children need to dedicate themselves to some of their usual rituals that they perform before going out on the field (meditation, breathing exercises, listening to music, playing games, warming up...) or to be in contact with teammates and the coach (final arrangements), mutual motivation and support, joint warming...). If the child does not like to be in his/her immediate vicinity, to give him/her loud support, respect the child's need, and use the support for the period of the game or competition.

- Do not react inappropriately, aggressively and unsportsmanlike while encouraging your child. Support the good points and moves of your child's whole team, as well as the good game of the opponent. Remember that you are a model for identification and that it is very likely that the child will adopt the patterns of behavior that you promote. Also, it can happen that your too "loud" behavior causes uncomfortable feelings in the child (shame, fear, anger, rage...), which can affect the drop in concentration, and thus

the quality of the game / performance.

- Keep in mind that each child has their own need and motivation to play sports, which may differ in relation to your perception of the reason why a child should get involved in sports. For most children, sport is fun, and for only a small number of children, sport will be a future profession. Respect the child's wishes and attitude towards sports and the training process, and try not to impose your own ambitions on them.

- Be realistic in assessing your child's abilities, based on which you will form realistic expectations of the child. Encourage your child to play sports in their area of opportunity and interest. Do not press him for intensive training, which exceeds his capabilities, so as not to lose pleasure and enjoy sports activities, and thus to leave the sport.

- Show the child that you are interested in his progress in the training process. If it is allowed and if it suits the child, occasionally visit one of the training. Be an observer and do not interfere in the child's training process. Show respect and appreciation for what the coach



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## Specific proposed measures by indicator for the coaches

does for your child, because in that way you will influence the creation of a child's sense of trust towards the coach, as well as a sense of security in the training process itself.

- In order to show interest and involvement in the sports activity that the child is involved in, talk to the child about what he is learning in training. If you understand the training process, you can additionally help the child to understand the purpose of certain exercises or to improve certain movements or techniques that he has already worked on with the coach. However, do not suggest to your child to practice movements or techniques that are different from what he/she has learned so far or that goes beyond working with his or her coach.
- Allow your child to make independent decisions when playing sports, but letting them know that you are available in case they need help. In this way, in addition to the development of independence, you will also influence the development of responsibility, sense of competence and self-confidence in the child, which is the basis for successful sports, but also for success in other fields of interest of the child.

### *Indicator: The Praise and Understanding*

- After a match/competition regardless of the end result, praise every effort, work or sporting behavior of your child. Don't forget that praise is a very important and powerful reward that has a great influence on the child's motivation to make more and more effort every time.
- In situations of less successful results in play/performance, shift the focus from defeat or

failure and try to single out and praise the good and successful aspects of your child's play. You will surely find at least one point, move or activity of the child in which he/she shines. Also, the emphasis can be on fair play, on the relationship with teammates, the audience and the coach.

- If you are disappointed or sad because of your child's poor play / competition results, try not to show these feelings in front of the child, but to take a cheerful and optimistic attitude. In that way, you will show the child that it is okay to have bad days, as well as that victory is not the most important part of sports.
- Praise the child after each match/competition in which he/she achieved a good result or victory. Try to praise in such situations as well, based on the effort, work and commitment





shown, and not on the end result.

- Try not to overemphasize joy, happiness and other positive feelings, so as not to influence the child to experience victory as the most important aspect of sports activity and the situation that alone deserves celebration and joy.
- Talk to your child about his/her feelings about the sport they are playing. Help him/her name existing feelings. Encourage him/her to talk to you about unpleasant feelings. Ask him what influences his feelings, what aspects of the sports activity, as well as how you, friends from the club and the coach influence how he/she feels. Listen carefully to what your child is saying to you and try to normalize his/her feelings by telling him/her that it is perfectly fine to feel that way in some situations, that everyone has days when he/she does not feel nice, but that he/she will the days will come when they will feel better. Do not diminish or exaggerate the child's feelings, just let him know that you understand and support him/her.

### ***Indicator: The Active Involvement scale***

- In order to contribute to the better functioning of the club in which your child trains, and in accordance with the possibilities and business policy of the club, get actively involved in the process of managing and organizing the planned activities of the club.
- Be a part of sports events in which your child participates by contributing to the promotion, organization, preparation, realization, donation or some other form of support for the event itself, in accordance with your abilities and interests.
- Work with your child's coach. Get regular information about the training process and your child's progress, as well as about events during

free activities. Introduce the trainer to your observations about your child's manifested behaviors and feelings that may be relevant to the training process. Also, it is important that the child is acquainted with your cooperation and the content of the conversation, which will be presented in a child-friendly way and in accordance with his age. Nurture a relationship of trust of the child, both in relation to you and in relation to the coach.

- Show interest in your child's sports activities. Set aside time to spend talking about current training events. Unobtrusively ask your child to tell you about events in training or competition. Encourage him to share with you less pleasant content, such as personal failures, worries, problems, inappropriate behaviors or unpleasant feelings, as well as possible problems in relationships with friends or coaches. Listen to what your child is telling you and try not to value the content presented, but to accept it as a current burden on your child who needs your support. If it is necessary for the child to correct his own behavior in a calm and precise way, point out to him the aspects of behavior on which he should work. Explain to the child in a clear and precise way how and why he should correct the selected behaviors. On that occasion, emphasize the behaviors that require correction, and not the characteristics and other qualities of the child. For example, tell your child, "The way you treat a friend is not good behavior," instead of saying, "You're not good."
- According to your and other family members' abilities, in relation to your child's training, adjust family obligations and routines, such as meals, time for relaxation, rest and sleep. In this way, you will provide support to the child and his sports activities, eliminate the potential concern of the child regarding the organization of obligations and at the same time contribute to a better organization of your time and the time of other family members.





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# About the project

PYS D “Preventing Youth Sport Dropouts” ([www.pysd.eu](http://www.pysd.eu)) is a project financed by European Commission through Erasmus+ Program (Project 603143-EPP-1-2018-1-IT-SPO SSCP). Four European countries: Italy, Spain, Bulgaria and Serbia have cooperated to reach the final project outcome: the sport dropout prevention standardized model.

PYS D is today a Sport European standardized model to aim and encourage the social inclusion and equal opportunities in sport, fighting the early abandonments of sport activities by the teenagers.

This new sports model of prevention answers the possible different sports needs of young people and represents a solution to recover young sport dropout from the competition and also for young dropout due to exclusion of tough top-level scouting.

In PYS D project the limits and national-local habits, training approaches spoiled by lack of exchange of experiences which negatively affect the sports activities can be overcome thanks to the sharing of project partners’ best practices and other European approaches and through the implementation of an alternative way of sport playing. The project PYS D measures the effectiveness of the standardized prevention methodology through a specific monitoring of project development in order to fine-tune the procedure and to ensure the related sustainability and applicability in all European sport contexts.

PYS D prevention model links existing sport partners’ best practices with a scientific approach in order to monitor and prevent the sport dropout phenomenon through the empowerment of resilient skill of young people.

The project PYS D is aimed at the whole youth sport sector. The intervention methodology addresses the world of sports associations and physical education and it has also been designed for the schools and their sport activities. The guidelines that are developed within PYS D are directly addressed to sports educators, coaches, technical directors and parents.

The beneficiaries of the project are young people, especially 11-15 years old and their family contexts, but also the coaches themselves and the world of sports associations and European professional sports clubs, at local and international level.



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# Partners on project



## **CGFS - Coordinator of PYSD project**

CGFS (Centro Giovanile di Formazione Sportiva - Youth Centre for Physical Training) is an association with a long experience in sport, camps and education, and has been active in Prato's area (Tuscany, Italy) since 1962.

Every year about 7000 children and teenagers participate in the activities organized by CGFS ([www.cgfs.it](http://www.cgfs.it)). Founded in 1962, CGFS's objectives are the promotion of sport activities among children, adolescents up to 18 years old in Prato and surrounding areas. The CGFS executive board is composed of stakeholders in the local sports, including public authorities and private company representatives. CGFS employs 55 permanent staff and more than 150 professionals to lead and run courses and sport activities. The sports offer range of CGFS consists of a wide choice of the water-related activities, which is addressed to different targets: from 3-months newborns to aged people. We propose beside the swimming courses, also water-polo, synchronized swimming, triathlon, finswimming and aquafitness. The qualifications and the skills of the water activities technicians are the driving force of the formative offer and they are monitored and updated on a regular basis thanks to the involvement of academic professionals.

Furthermore the Gym activities represent a flagship of CGFS's offer that embraces different kind of sport and expressive activities for the kids and guys, like dancing, rhythmic gymnastics and all the disciplines related to artistic and mental field. Also the team sports play an important role for the activities proposed, in fact the main sports are volleyball and basketball, both supported by qualified federal coaches and teachers. Other opportunities are offered by courses of martial arts, like Fencing and Judo and by the teaching of combat Philosophies and fair fight. Beside the prevalent activity related to sports promotion, CGFS has tightened agreements with 20 local sports associations in order to boost the sports dissemination and to enhance the sports professionals training. CGFS has a wide offer of activities in the frame of soft sport tourism and adventure travels, as well as, summer and winter camps for children and several sport events for citizenship.

Concerning the CGFS best practice to prevent young sport dropout phenomenon, CGFS is developing a teaching sportive model preventing the sports dropout of young people about the swimming activities, since 2009. Every year, there are 2800 children which participate to CGFS's swimming courses and only a small part of them undertake the federal competitive practice, due to the current tough scouting. Towards the problem solving, CGFS has established specific swimming groups, in order to prevent the water sports dropout, adopting a different method to involve the athletes, which PYSD project is derived from. The issue of dropout phenomenon is studied by in-house staff CGFS in all sport fields and above all also in the activities carried out in the schools. A new important scientific sector is developed internally since 2018, namely the "CGFS Research Study Center", which has been supported by researchers and University professors of Sport education, in order to implement the research in the overall sport field.

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# Partners on project



## **CBG - Club Bàsquet Granollers, partner of PYSD Project**

CBG is the official name of the basketball club of the city of Granollers. It was founded in 1932 and is one of the oldest basketball clubs in Spain. In 1977 it won promotion to the top flight of Spanish basketball, where it remained until 1993. With 25 teams between men and women teams is one of the most important basketball teams in Spain.

CBG has long and wide experiences in collaborating with schools and municipalities in education and social programmes. Since 2001, CBG has hosted one of the most important minibasket championships in Spain. For the last 6 years CBG hosted the conferences "Sport and values" with a very good success in terms of level of speakers and attendees. Every year CBG hosted three sport-education campus (christmas, Easter and summer). In 2015, Granollers was "the city of basketball" in the region and championships and conferences were hosted.

Nowaday, 28 trainers and a Board are involved in CBG with more than 300 young people playing (50% Girls). All the coaches of the CBG have a coach license. One of the primary goals of the CBG is that the social-emotional development of the youth athletes' life skills are taught and not caught.

CBG has a strong collaboration with the Sports Area of Municipality of Granollers as well as Catalan Basketball Federation in all related with improving the skills of trainers.

CBG has also common programmes with primary and secondary schools in the city for promoting sport and healthy activities as well as with an Advanced expert in animation of physical and sport activities (TAFAD) Bachelor Center. About internally best practice to prevent sport dropout phenomenon in basketball, CBG has always focused the attention on training their coaches and having analysis to better prepare them on how to motivate the players and make them feel a part of a team. After this first experience, CBG experimented with a new model of training based on Emotional Coach: where the Coach works with individual players to work on insecurities, fears, concentration, limiting belief and at the same time to boost their confidence as well as listening how the player is feeling emotionally and keeping their motivation up. Emotional Coach works with Basketball Coaches individually to provide communication tools, inclusion strategies as well as talk about fears, insecurities, boost confidence and motivation that later on will result in a more rich and healthy environment and learning for the athletes. Coach also works with the team as a whole through team building activities, and works on team cohesion so that every player has a feeling of belonging and acceptance, which could be a risk factor on athletes' drop out.

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### ***BFU - Bulgarian Football Union, partner of PYSD project***

Bulgarian Football Union is a national football association responsible for the governance, development and promotion of football in Bulgaria. The BFU is a member of FIFA and UEFA and is licensed under the Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sport. The federation currently has approximately 160 paid employees.

The football clubs-members of the Bulgarian Football Union are 546, 30 of which are professional clubs and the rest with amateur status.

The Bulgarian Football Union is the organization on national level, which is in charge of the promotion of football in the country. As such, BFU is running on a yearly basis a few projects, aimed on the development of equal opportunities for all to practice the sport in a safe and attractive environment. Amateur sport is one of the pillars of the new BFU Vision 2018/22, including several different projects, such as "Football Fitness" (targeting adults to practice football for healthy lifestyle) and "Fun Football" (targeting kindergarten boys and girls).

The Bulgarian Football Union has contributed to the PYSD project with its expertise and experience about developing athletes from a very early age to the professional level of football. The federation has a sophisticated system of competitions and tournaments under its umbrella, where young athletes are involved.

BFU provides the project with an interesting point of view, since it is involved in sport at professional level and it enhances the applicability of the PYSD model to a wider range of sports.

### ***SDCS Sports Diagnostic Center Šabac", partner of Pysd Project***



Association "Sports Diagnostic Center Šabac" is a voluntary, non-governmental and non-profit Association, established for an indefinite period in order to achieve goals in sport, physical education and recreation. Established 15.February 2011, is legalized by SBRA as association of professionals and has 23 members.

The goals of the Association are the professional support to development of sport, physical education, recreation, as well as the development and promotion of sport and sports training and recreation, the development and improvement of physical education.

Among its main results, it's worth to mention the established sustainable system for periodic monitoring of physical abilities, children, adolescents, adults and athletes and established system for better control of the sport form of children, youth and athletes, and creation of an education system that will provide advisory role. Moreover, other important results achieved by SDCS are: published scientific researches, created sport documentation database, building of facility for regional sport institute with local office, planned departments and sport training center, good impact on postural status of children and youth. Furthermore, SDCS has created sport measuring devices and software, partnerships and cooperation with domestic and foreign organizations from the field of sport, recreation and physical education, partnerships with producers of sport measuring devices. Then, the association has given support to young and unemployed faculty degree professionals (sport and physical education) to get working skills, competencies, experience and references, helping them in getting scholarships and support in mobility.

SDCS is the scientific partner of PYSD project, which has guided the research in all steps and the has guaranteed the validation of PYSD model.

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## Partners on project

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### **Municipality of Prato**

Prato is the third city of Central Italy, in terms of population. Historically its attitude to evolution and experimentation represents the added value of this city located so close to Florence. Sport is considered by the Municipality as a value and an asset that leads to increase the involvement of all people in multiple sports, sacrificing even some awards opportunities in order to spread the participation of as many citizens as possible. Nevertheless the relationship between Prato and sports is demonstrated by the high number of athletes and champions who have distinguished themselves in different disciplines and by many sports clubs, agencies and volunteers involved in different initiatives. Prato hosts about 50 federations, and over 100 sports facilities all over the city: swimming pools, tennis courts, football and five-a-side football fields, archery and shooting ranges, bocce courts, rugby fields, beach volley courts, street basket.



**PROMO P.A.**  
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RICERCA ALTA FORMAZIONE PROGETTI

In PYSD project the Municipality of Prato has implemented the communication activities thanks to the creative and graphic support of **Promo Pa Fondazione**. Promo PA is a research Foundation working in the field of communication and technical assistance for public and private bodies. In terms of communication, Promo PA

can implement a wide range of activities and tools: communication strategies, dissemination tools, social media management, audio visual material, etc.

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During her professional career, she worked as an assistant in the field of Physical Education at the pre-school teaching training college, physical education teacher, gymnastics coach, aerobics and pilates instructor, personal trainer, animator and nurse.

She is an active member of the Association Sports Diagnostic Center Sabac - Sabac, Serbia, where she is engaged in the role of a scientific researcher. As a researcher, she has participated in several national and international projects and is the author of a number of scientific papers presented at international conferences and/or published in international and domestic journals. As an invited lecturer she participates in seminars for coaches in sport. She is a reviewer of the Serbian national scientific journal *Sport, Science, Practice*.

**Andrijana Vlačić, M.A.** is a psychologist at the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia. She completed her undergraduate and master studies (study program - Research and Experimental Psychology) at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.

In addition to military psychology, she also works as a family psychotherapist, deals with the psychological preparation of children, youth and adult athletes and the education of employees in the education system.

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**Milan Djupovac** is a teacher of physical education, born in Sabac, Serbia. Currently technical secretary at Sport Association Sabac. Beside diploma in sport studies he is physiotherapist. When he was young had an active sports career as a kayak racer (sprint, flat water kayak racing) and triathlete.

He is president of Sport Diagnostic Center Sabac and is in charge for communication, promotion and research coordination activities.

Last years involved in research and scientific work in several projects: Grow healthy - Sport in schools, Kinesiology Lab, Falcon Eye, etc..

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# About the authors

**Aleksandar Ivanovski, Ph.D** is a professor of vocational studies at the College of Sports and Health - Belgrade, Serbia and involved in coordination and organization of children's festivals, recreation and communication camps for children and adults, various competitions, management of sports clubs, management of associations for recreation animation and team building, organization of classes at the College of sport and health, on subjects sport and tourism and tourism and pedagogical practice, corporative games, traditional games etc.

Over 80 scientific works, 2 books written. Participation on several domestic and international projects.

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Active participant in international professional conferences in the field of sports, so far published more than twenty papers as an author and co-author in the field of recreation and sports.

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