



Handbook for the sport coach

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Introduction word

This handbook is a methodological and standardized European tool for coaches 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 coaches who want to test the whole PYSD European prevention model can follow the indications of the handbook for coaches 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 coaches 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 be also a different point of view so as to approach a better understanding of the coaches' (un)awareness about the relationships between athletes-and-coaches 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 coach

In addition to parents-athlete relationships, the nature of interactions of athlete's with their coach also have a significant impact on psychological development of the child (Davis & Jowett, 2010; Jowett & Cockerill 2002) argue that the relationship established between the coach and his/her athletes, plays a central role not just in athletes' physical but also in psychosocial development. An effective relationship with the coach is important to athletes because it can provide them becoming not just a skillful and successful performer (Jowett, 2005) but also can provide them with a sense of security during difficult times (e.g., injury), emotional crises (e.g., failing at major competitions), etc. (Yang & Jowett, 2012). Furthermore, coaches themselves have noted that to be effective they need to get close to their athletes as to provide them with the kind of behavior (e.g., commitment, motivation, character) (Kassim et al. 2020). It is found that athletes who feel committed to the coach are more likely to be willing to do more than is required and perform well (Razania & Gurney, 2014).

However, this relationship does not have just one-sided impact. Emotions of both contributors of this complex dynamics relationship, their thoughts and behaviors are mutually and causally interconnected. The feelings of being cared for, liked, and valued, as well as the ability to trust one another have an affirmative effect on coaches' and athletes' intrapersonal and interpersonal factors (Jowett & Meek, 2000; Jowett & Cockerill,

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2002). Furthermore, complementary roles, tasks, and support play a significant role in this relationship - enables both coaches and athletes to channel all their efforts towards accomplishing the goals set.

Although coach-athlete relationships are generally characterized as close, committed and co-operative they are not always immune from interpersonal conflict (Yang & Jowett, 2012), as well as parental involvement in child's sports activities does not always have a positive impact (Smoll, Cumming & Hassle, 2011). One of the main problems occurs when adults mismatch goals of youth and professional models of sport, especially in the young child's ages Unlike professional sport where main goal is financial success, thus winning, youth sport provides a development settings of physical and psychological characteristics of a child. Therefore, when excessive emphasis in youth sport is placed on winning, it is easy to lose sight of the needs and interests of the young athlete (Smoll, Cumming & Hassle, 2011) which can lead to loss of motivation, feelings of emotional pressure, dissatisfaction... and consequently to drop out of sports.

During the training process the good coach will always take care not just of physical but also of the psychological component of youth sport and will not take young athletes as if they were professionalists. In this regard coaches should cooperate with parents (Davis & Jowett, 2010) and encourage them to view their involvement in youth sports as an integral part of their child-rearing responsibilities.



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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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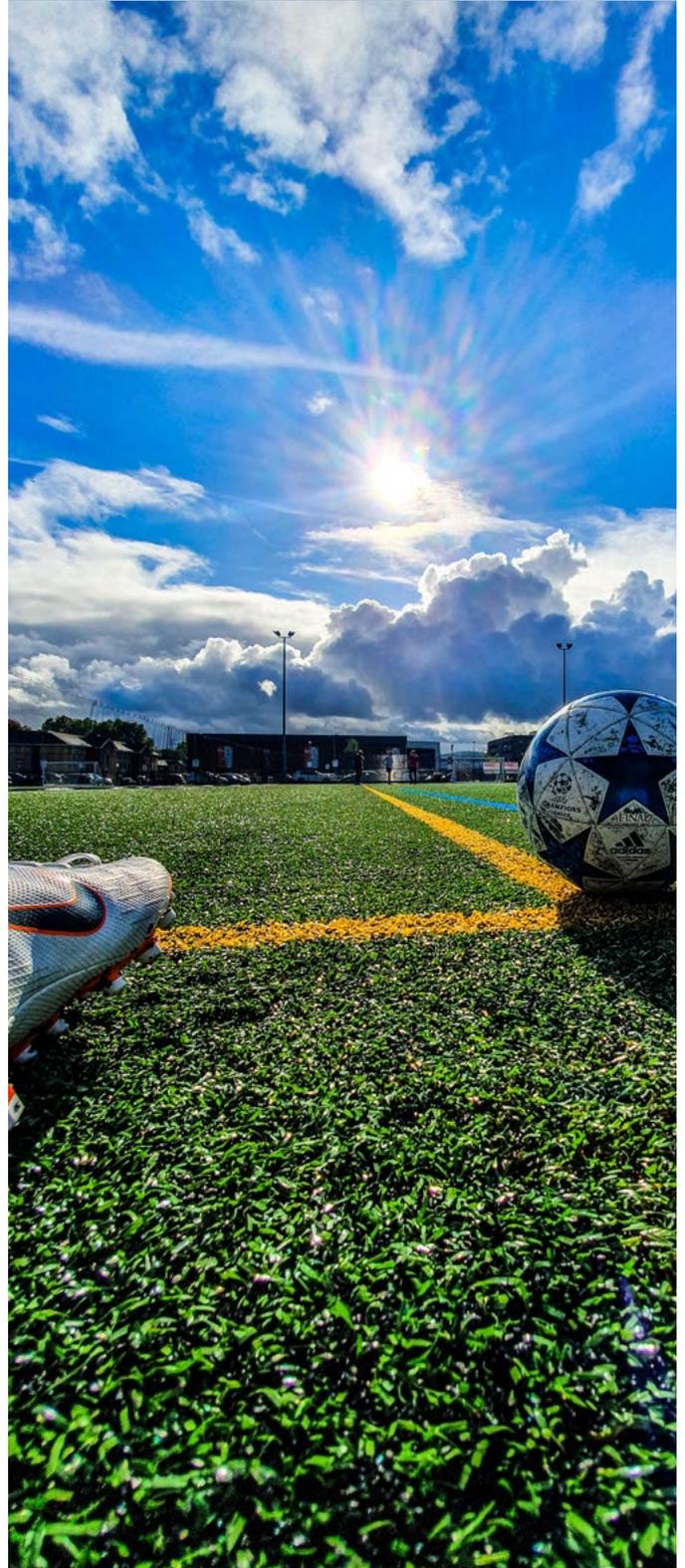
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Why young people and children dropout from sports

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, Cumming & 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).

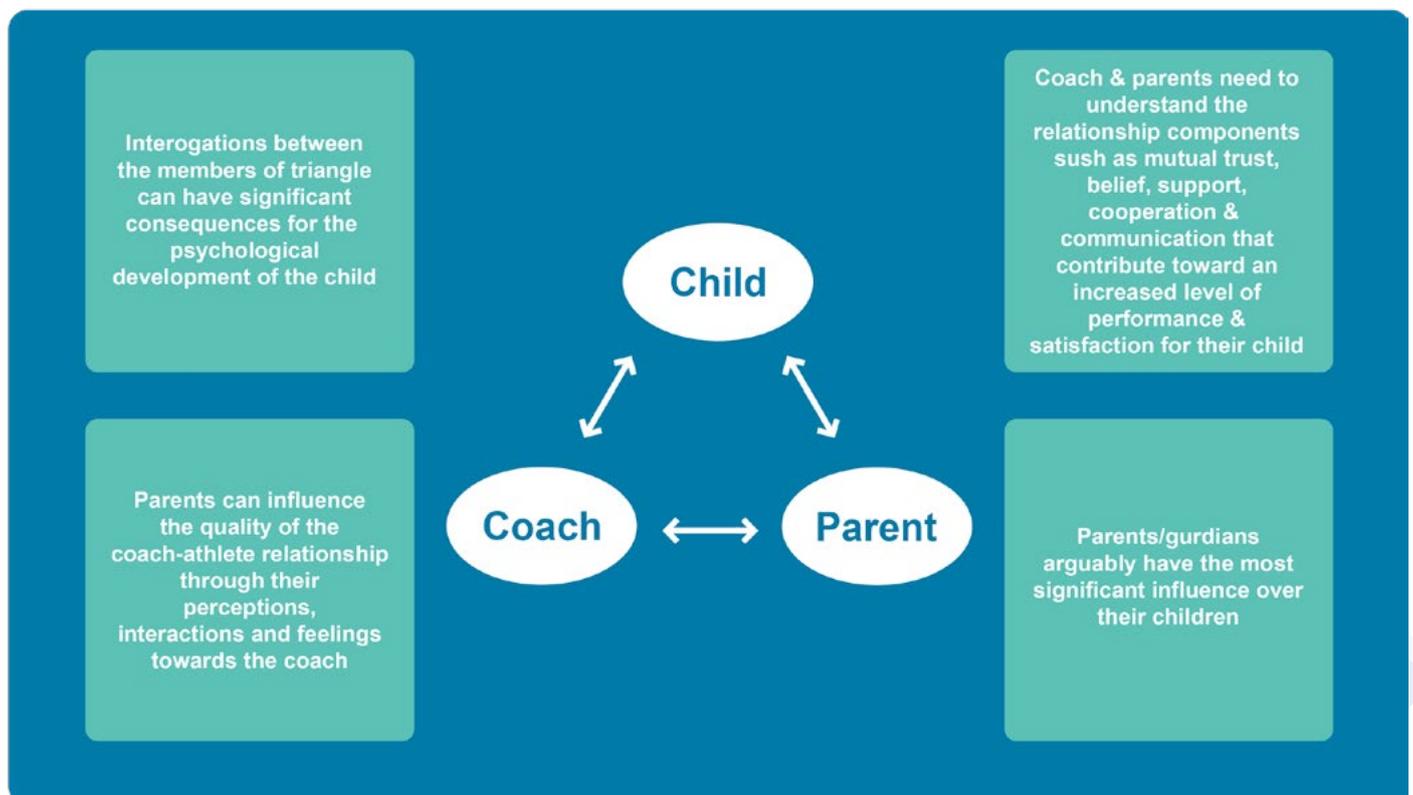


Fig. 1. Athletic triangle by Hellstedt, 1987 (reprinted and modified from <https://thesportinginfluencerblog.wordpress.com/athletic-triangle/>).

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 (α), 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 (α) 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 α 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 the sport coaches

Dear youth athlete's sport coaches 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 athletes. 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 derived from partners' best practice and other is specific proposed measures by indicator assessed by a professional in charge for the PYSD project and methodology.

Recommended general suggestion

Creating a warm atmosphere full of tolerance and respect.

- a) Start the training session adopting a short activity for cooperation among athletes.
- b) Highlight the importance to be part of a team - emphasize the role of each one with a dedicated meet up at the beginning or end of the training session.
- c) Start the training session adopting a game to create good vibes

Participating with the children in designing their personal goals and training plans.

- a) In collaboration with athletes create short-term goals of the training session, for the team

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and for each athlete, concerning the sport skills and the motivational side. Athletes are more successful in following the rules they create.

b) Keep records of the achieved goals and update the short-term plan accordingly. Keep a record of the achieved goals and together with the athletes analyze the achieved results.

c) Record the training sessions (at least once a week) and have a brief brainstorming with the athletes to review the good aspects that contribute to sporting success as well as those that need to be improved (sports skills, expression of feelings, motivation during training). Ask athletes what they are satisfied with and what they would like to improve, what feelings were most often present, if there is something that burdens them....

Agreeing on how to reward for following the rules, as well as the consequences if the rules are not followed.

a) At the beginning of each week, together with the athletes, remind them of the main rules of the training session. Ask athletes for their opinion if any rules need to be changed, dropped

or whether a new rule should be made.

b) Reward the entire team for following the rules or deny them some privilege if the rules are not followed. For example, awarding the group/team with 5-15 minutes training session the way they choose.

c) Have a brief closing session for the discussion of rules with athletes at the end of the week, by promoting their suggestions and their point of views.

Paying attention to non-verbal communication and messages that you send to athletes in this way (body language, facial expression, tone of speech...)

a) Do not use loud speeches in a negative way. Adopt the way of communication to the age and temperament of the athlete, as well as the situation in which you are.

b) Adopt specific body language to emphasize the verbal positive messages to the athletes.

c) Listen carefully to what the child is saying. Dedicate time and attention to the child. Look



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Instructions for the sport coaches

him in the eyes, nod your head to show that you are listening to him. Try not to look around in those moments and not to think about some other things, but to concentrate only on what the athlete has to tell you.

Try to get as close as possible to the way athletes think, use language (jargon) in communication that is specific to their age, interests and the environment in which they live. Use humor, examples from your own life, examples from the lives of famous athletes who are popular for the generation you work with.

a) Establish a way to say hello specific for each athlete or with the team

b) Use some (and only some) slang words popular for the children ages

c) Make reference to the brands/trends specific to the athletes' ages

d) Ask each athlete if he/she has problems at school/family and try to be open for a free discussion with them.

e) Interact with athletes by calling them by name (Nick Name) and not by surname or other way of naming (numbers, letters, etc).

Design training that will be fun and attractive for athletes and look like a game. You can use various props that can be borrowed from other sports.

a) Propose, short session based on another sport or activity. Also, try to ensure that each training contains something new, even if it is minimal. For example, the presence of guest coaches or lecturers, changes in dressing, humor, music...

b) Adopt as much as possible circuit training

which compose a sort of game, instead of mono-skill exercises; organize small competitions within the team / group and training session in unusual and interesting circumstances.

Develop an atmosphere of sportsmanship, fair play, mutual respect, support, appreciation and tolerance. Teach children empathy, that is, understanding the feelings and behavior of others.

a) Change roles of the athlete and between athletes and coach, for a brief session in order to improve the awareness of the peers' feeling and empathy with the coach. Ask the children how they feel and try to remember how they felt when they were in the situation in which their teammates or coach are now.

b) Promote some exercises to be carried out in pairs, so as each athlete can evaluate the other in a pair and suggest how to improve (on both skills and behaviour).

Allow children to express their opinions about the quality of training, the relationship with the coach and other children and the experiences from the competition goal of the competition, but the investment of maximum effort and effort of each athlete.

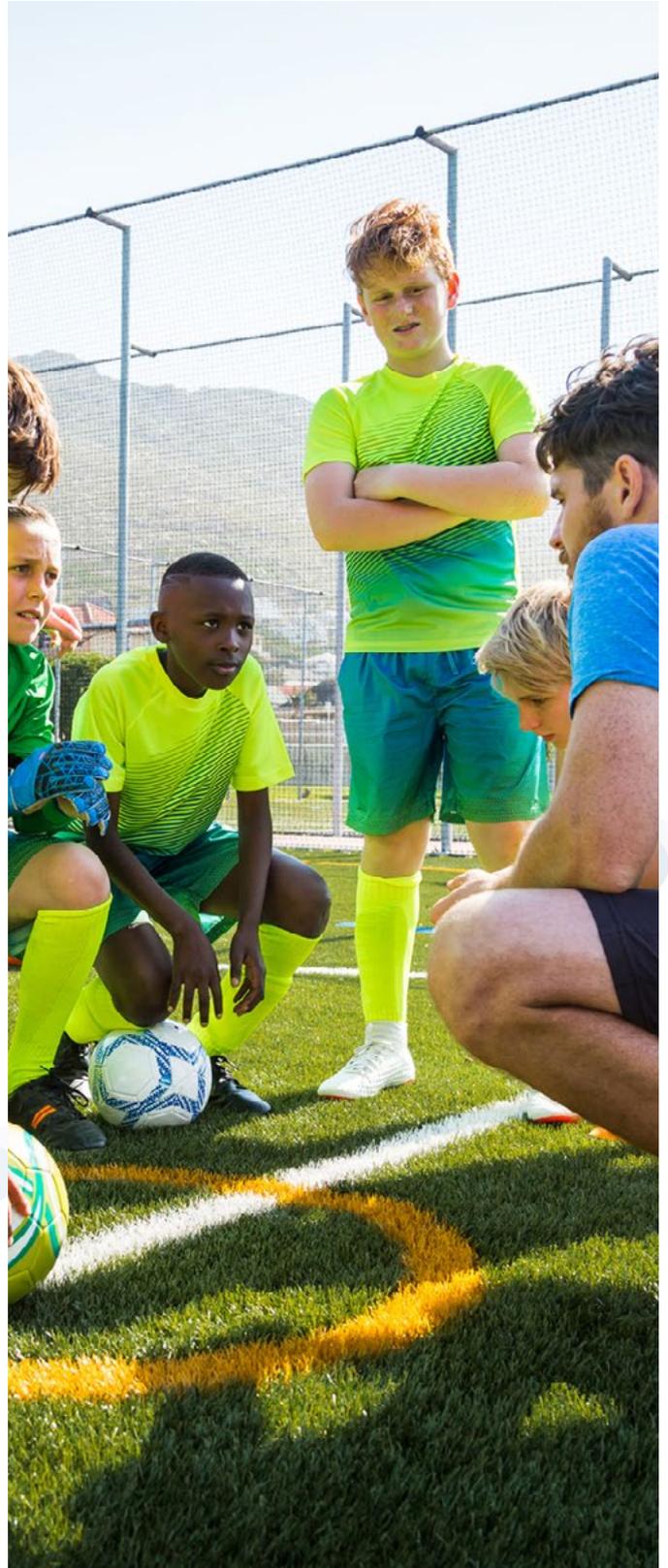
a) Ask the athletes to rank each training session and be open for an evaluation of your performance as coach. You can achieve this by talking in a group, in person with each child, or in writing by filling out anonymous surveys. Encourage the children to express their opinions and suggestions, because in that way they will feel like an important and respected part of the team/group.



b) Ask the athletes what they like and what they would like to be different. You can achieve this by talking in a group, in person with each child, or in writing by filling out anonymous surveys.

Enhance a flexible approach concerning the timing of learning.

a) The athletes have individual time to learn and it's not perceived as a limit, so organize a quick session of training where the athletes choose individually the technical aspect to be improved and let them try.



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Specific proposed measures by indicator for the coaches

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

Measures based on The Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire – CART-Q, athlete's version.

Indicator: Commitment - is defined as coaches' and athletes' intention to maintain their athletic relationship and implies the athletic dyad's cognitive orientations for the future (cognitive aspect)

- Create a warm atmosphere, full of tolerance and respect, both in personal relationships with each child and in relationships within a group of children, so that the children can feel club as a safe place where they enjoy spending time and training as an activity that makes pleasure.
- Make every effort to have personal contacts with your athletes to gain a better understanding of each athlete's character, temperament and personality traits and tailor approach and training style to each athlete. In this way, you will get to know each athlete better and increase your sense of closeness and confidence.
- Encourage athletes to feel free to ask you questions whenever they have any doubts or something is not clear enough to them. In this

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way, you will show them that you are interested in how they think and that you care about working on improving physical skills.

- Listen to what the athlete wants to tell you. Dedicate yourself to the athlete, look him/her in the eyes, nod your head to show that you are listening to him. Ask additional questions to make sure you understand what your athlete wants to tell you.

- Pay attention to changes in athlete's behavior, feelings and motivation. Find a good opportunity to ask the athlete how he/she is feeling, about the events in his/her life. Show to the athlete that you are there for him/her to listen to and help if he/she wants to.

- Accept and respect each athlete's problems, worries and emotions. Do not diminish their importance by telling him/her that it is nothing and how it will pass, but show to the athlete that you understand how he/she feels and that it is okay to have such feelings. Remember that even the smallest problem at a given moment can be a significant problem for a child.

- Show to the athletes that you really care about them and their success, by being present at training and competitions not only physically but also mentally, that is, that you will show your involvement, interest and commitment to their sports development at every opportunity.

- Have a pre-designed training and competition plan. Also, participate together with the children in designing their personal goals and training plans. In that way, children will have a more adequate insight into their progress process, and they will also have confidence in your work.

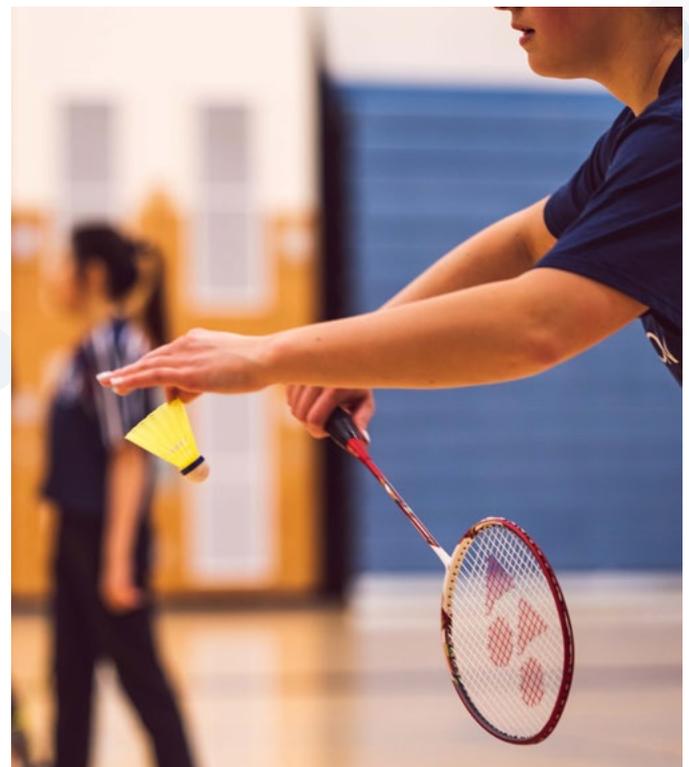
- Make sure you always find a reason to praise each athlete for something they are really good at, for their hard work or effort. Do this even

in situations where the child does not succeed. Do not judge on the basis of final achievement and do not resort to false praise. Remember that praise and reward are among the most powerful motivational tools.

- Be realistic with children. Show that you believe in their specific capacities, emphasize the qualities of each child individually as well as the aspects that should be worked on in order to be even better.

- Support athletes in practicing aspects where they are not the most successful. Support and encourage them further. If they have low self-esteem, occasionally put them to train or compete with their equals or with those weaker than themselves, and not with the better ones.

- Talk to the athletes after each competition. Ask them what they are happy with and what they are not, how they feel, what they think they could improve in their performance and the game of the whole team (for team sports). Normalize unpleasant feelings if they are expressed by reminding them that it is okay



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Specific proposed measures by indicator for the coaches

to feel sadness, anger, rage, doubt their own self-confidence and that this is normal after a defeat, failure or poorly played game or bad performance. Encourage them by reminding them of the pleasant feelings they had after training / matches that they were happy with.

Indicator: Closeness – refers to feeling emotionally close with one another in the coach-athlete relationship (affective aspect)

- Promote tolerant and athletic behavior. In all situations, support a fair-play sport mode. Remember that you are a model of behavior that children will adopt.
- Be an authority to athletes. In addition to a friendly attitude towards children, it is necessary to be strict, fair and consistent, respectively to take the position that the same rules always apply to everyone regardless of

the circumstances, your mood or the result of the match/performance.

- Find out about current topics of interest to the athletes you are training that you can discuss with them in between training sessions or exercises.
- Try to get as close as possible to the way athletes think, use language (jargon) in communication that is specific to their age, interests and the environment in which they live. Use humor, examples from your own life, examples from the lives of famous athletes who are popular for the generation you work with.
- In addition to training time, try to provide athletes with time that will be dedicated to their socializing with each other.
- Control unpleasant own emotions and behaviors (anger, impulsive reaction, intense fears...). You try not to experience inappropriate reactions of children on a personal level and to react to them calmly and be collected. Be



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aware of your own weaknesses and try to work on their elimination, discussing the problem situation with colleagues or experts from the club (psychologist).

- Build and nurture a relationship of trust. Always talk openly and honestly with your athletes, and ask them to do the same. You try to listen to them actively, dedicatedly and to really understand what they want to tell you.

- Do not look down from the height of the athletes, do not judge them, do not belittle them, do not use rude jokes, do not insult them. Keep in mind that in addition to parents and teachers, you may be one of the persons crucial for their psychophysical and / or future professional development.

- Do not talk about athletes when they are not present, nor comment negatively on other children in their presence. Do not share the content of conversations with children in personal contact with the rest of the group. Do not retell the contents of conversations with children unknown to them.

- In order to maintain a relationship of trust, to the parents, as well as to the other adults, do not pass on the contents of conversations with athletes, unless you have received the approval of children or if the content of the conversation does not threaten the safety and dignity of children. Strive to establish a cooperative relationship with parents, regularly report to them on the behavior and progress of children in the training process, and at the same time respect the information about children that you receive from them.

- Be sensitive to differences between athletes that may be due to gender differences, age (developmental) stages, cognitive and emotional capacities, temperament, moral development, development of social skills, physical predispositions, health status,

individual specifics, differences in cultural, socio-economic, religious and family context.

- Set clear rules of behavior with athletes during and outside of training. Agree on how to reward for following the rules, as well as the consequences if the rules are not followed. Be consistent and persistent in adhering to defined rules. In this way, you will help children develop responsibility for their own behavior. Act in accordance with the advice you give to children, be consistent in your behavior, in relation to the set rules and given promises. Only in this way will children adopt desirable forms of behavior.

- From time to time, give each athlete individually, as well as the group/team as a whole, feedback on training behavior and the level of progress achieved in the training process, and based on that, redefine training goals and plans together.



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Specific proposed measures by indicator for the coaches

- Pay attention to non-verbal communication and messages that you send to athletes in this way (body language, facial expression, tone of speech...). It is necessary for it to be harmonized with what you are verbalizing. Also, it is necessary that your verbal and non-verbal communication follows the content and tone of what the athlete is telling you (for example, if the athlete is sad, you should not have a smile on your face).
- Avoid commanding communication. Communicate in a way that is more motivating, proactive, collaborative. It's okay to be serious, but whenever the situation allows, be cheerful and don't forget to smile.
- If you make a mistake in your relationship with the children during the training, please accept it, and show how you feel and apologize if necessary. By behaving like this, you will be a model of desirable behavior in the same and similar situations, you will show that it is okay to make mistakes, and athletes will respect your honesty.
- Show by your own example the importance of hard work and perseverance. Share a story with children about your successes, achievements, sports results that you are proud of.
- Motivate children to stay in sports by pointing out by their own example the benefits that sport has brought you after finishing it (high self-confidence, organization, acquaintances, travel, good work ...).

Indicator: Complementarity - reflects coaches' and athletes' complementarity or cooperative interactions, especially during training (behavioral aspect).

- Nurture a positive and supportive climate in the training process, which will be largely based on sincere praise, rewards, encouragement and highlighting the good sides of each athlete's performance.
- Design training that will be fun and attractive for athletes and look like a game. You try to introduce something new at every training. You can use various props that can be borrowed from other sports, change the way you train, record training, bring guest coaches or lecturers, introduce changes in clothing, use humor, music and similar.
- Develop an atmosphere of sportsmanship, fair play, mutual respect, support, appreciation and tolerance. Teach children empathy, that is, understanding the feelings and behavior of others.
- You try to empathize with the children, to put yourself in their position, and in that way try to understand how they feel in the various situations they go through.
- Adapt the training style and context to each athlete, taking into account differences in relation to gender, age (developmental stage), individual specifics, physical skills, social, emotional and moral maturity, motivation and level of involvement of children.
- Create training so that each athlete will be able to show their qualities. Avoid situations



where athletes may feel unsuccessful.

- Try to have the same attitude towards each athlete, without favoring or neglecting individual athletes. Regardless of the existing differences in abilities and skills, try to devote equal time to each athlete and to be approximately equally involved in the game / performance.
- Have realistic expectations of athletes to avoid the negative consequences and frustrations of the athletes.
- Emphasize that the best result, i.e. victory, should not be the ultimate goal of the competition, but the investment of maximum effort and effort of each athlete.
- Motivate athletes by telling them to believe in them. Remind them of good moves and results from the past, encourage them when they are not doing well. Explain to them that the days when they achieve poorer results and experience defeats are an integral part of every athlete's career from which they can learn a lot.
- Avoid open criticism. After praising what they are doing well, calmly and in a moderate tone of voice, point out to the athlete the aspects of training that he needs to work on more, give him precise, short and clear guidelines on how to improve the aspect that is not satisfactory.
- When pointing out what the athlete is not doing best, specify the specific behaviors, technical segments, and performance aspects that need to be worked on. Never evaluate the characteristics and abilities of the athlete, so that the athlete would not interpret a bad result as his/her own.
- Allow children to express their opinions about the quality of training, the relationship with the coach and other children and the experiences from the competition. You can achieve this by talking in a group, in person with each child, or

in writing by filling out anonymous surveys.

- Pay attention to each child personally, show that you are interested in how they feel and what is happening in sports as well as in their life that goes beyond the sports context (school, family, environment...). If the child does not want to talk, respect that, do not insist on the conversation, but show that you are there for him.
- Organize activities (team building) that will be outside the context of training in order to work on strengthening the relationship between coaches and children as well as to increase cohesiveness within the team or group of children (organizing a party, going on a trip, cinema, attending a sporting event).





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About the project

PYS D “Preventing Youth Sport Dropouts” (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). 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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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.



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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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About the authors

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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*.

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

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