

ISCA opinion

By Mogens Kirkeby, ISCA President

Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle

Three EU Commissioners took the first step to collaborate on the promotion of a healthy lifestyle with the Tartu Call, which they signed at the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU's Seminar on Healthy Lifestyles on 22 September. What will be the next steps and who will follow?

By signing the Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle, the three Commissioners Tibor Navracsics, Vytenis Andriukaitis and Phil Hogan (represented at the event by Commissioner Mario Milouchev) took the first step to support the primary objective of the European Union “to promote peace and well-being of its citizens”. 15 fine actions are outlined by the three Commissioners as their efforts to support the promotion of a healthy lifestyle among the European citizens.

In particular, one of the 15 actions has the potential to support the EU's overall objective if it is unfolded and utilised to the full.

Action 7 declares to take actions “Pursuing co-operations among relevant Commission services to coordinate actions to promote healthy lifestyles and related funding”.

As simple as it may sound, such cross-sector collaboration has often proven to be a major barrier in physical activity promotion. And action should follow on from the commitments!

ISCA would strongly recommend the following actions as a follow-up to the Tartu Call. And as always, we are committed to doing our part as well. This is why after each of the suggestions below we also make our commitment to action to make the Tartu declaration come to life!

- Ensuring future investment in physical activity and the sport sector via European Structural and Investment Funds
- Ensuring research in physical activity and sport participation themes within the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme
- Ensuring double usage of open land for both production and recreation

Ensuring future investment in physical activity and the sport sector via European Structural and Investment Funds

Investment in sport strongly supports the objectives of the European Structural and Investment Funds¹. The sport sector is a significant sector with a turnover the size of agriculture, fisheries and forestry combined, and at the same time it is a labour intensive sector, as the above report

has found. Investment in sport and recreational physical activity will both stimulate economic activity and support the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Therefore, priority to investment in sport and recreational physical activity should be given in future European Structural and Investments funds¹.

ISCA Commitment: To use the recent report on sport in structural fundsⁱⁱ as a backdrop to:

- ***Lobby for European governments to prioritise sport and recreational physical activity in national priorities for the European Structural and Investment Funds.***
- ***Activate our strong network of member organisations and partners to engage in both current and new projects in support of sport and recreational physical activity***

Ensuring research in physical activity and sport participation themes through the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme

Research and innovation in the promotion of healthy lifestyles are crucial to the quality and impact of the policies and actions in this field. A few studies and research projects on physical activity and sport participation have been supported by the comparatively minor Erasmus+: Sport programme. But topics supporting a healthy lifestyle – including sport and recreational physical activity – should be included and supported by the major European Research and Innovation programme Horizon 2020 – and beyond.

ISCA Commitment: To establish more formal links between the research community and practitioners, including ISCA member organisations, to ensure relevance and maximised uptake of research results.

Ensuring double usage of open land for both production and recreation

The nature and the outdoor environment are the European citizens' preferred settings when it comes to a physically active lifestyle. Access to nature and the open land are therefore important for stimulating a more active lifestyle among European citizens.

Almost 50% of the land in the European Union has a primary function for agriculture production and forestry. We acknowledge this primary function of the open land, but note that it is very important to see the open land as a double resource, where food production and recreational activities should co-exist. It is crucial that public access to open land, forests and rivers, lakes and seas, in particular, are ensured in policies and regulations and that measures are taken to

stimulate national and local cooperation between agriculture, forestry production organisations and organisations promoting healthy and active lifestyles.

ISCA Commitment: To describe and promote the principles for double use of land and share 10 good practices from the field.

We find that the Tartu Call is a most welcome initiative from the three Commissioners. If we want to tackle the inactivity crisis in Europe, which an ISCA commissioned report by CEBRⁱⁱⁱ showed costs us more than 80 billion euros and 500,000 premature deaths every year, we need to step up. Step up and understand that while there is no quick fix, we should urgently invest much more in what is now proven as a workable solution with high return on investment – the promotion of physical activity for Europe’s citizens.



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ⁱEuropean Structural and Investment Funds. Available: <http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/studies/study-contribution-sports-economic-growth-final-rpt.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Report on sport in structural funds. Available: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3e9c6d76-9aa1-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1>

ⁱⁱⁱ CEBR. Available: <http://inactivity-time-bomb.nowwemove.com/>