



GUIDELINES

FOR PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR WOMEN IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACES

Ideas, recommendations and observations raised from SWUP's community of practice

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Introduction

In this document, we share ideas, recommendations and observations on how to enhance women's sports participation in urban places and how to realise women friendly urban planning regarding outdoor sport facilities and spaces.

The contents of the guidelines have been collected during SWUP, a project financed under the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union aiming at enhancing women's outdoor physical activity. The project is composed of 10 partners located in 7 different countries (see appendix 1). 5 partners, with the methodological and co-ordinational support of the remaining partners, have carried out surveys to understand the barriers and motivations for women of their communities to be active (outdoors). On the base of the surveys' results, the partners designed and implemented pilot activities aiming at removing those barriers and engage women in practicing outdoor sport. A collective assessment of the activities has been carried out and shared in a devoted report. The community of practice that has developed among project's partners has been enlarged and deepened with other activities, such as the ad-hoc offline and online exchanges on some key issues related to women, sport and public spaces, the collection of good practices of sports programs specifically designed for (a specific group of) women of women's engagement in physical activity from all around the world and multiplier events, multiplier sport events, the publication of roadmaps giving suggestions in the partners' local communities, the collection of feedback and suggestions from project partners and other participants to the final project event.

This document builds on the knowledge and exchange deriving from this SWUP community of practice and from the relative publications. More specifically, it draws from and builds on the survey report¹ (drafted by Mulier Institute), the Roadmaps² (drafted by SW-UP local project partners), the Participatory assessment of the SWUP pilot programmes³ (drafted by Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale - IRS), the Exchange reports⁴ (drafted by SW-UP local project partners), the Catalogue of Good Practice, the brainstorm that the partners had during focus group at the last project meeting and the inputs that other interested actors exchanged in the online forum⁵ hosted in the project website and during the multiplier events. In particular, this document recalls the main findings of the assessment of pilot programmes included in the Participatory assessment report and recalls, where deemed useful, some of the projects gathered in the Catalogue of Good Practices.

Before we dive into what is needed to enhance women's outdoor sports participation and women friendly urban sports planning, we would like to introduce the issues at stake in relation to women's sport participation in outdoor spaces.

Both sports and public spaces are traditionally societal domains, constructed for and dominated by men⁶. Despite large developments having taken place, with women being much more present both in public spaces and mainstream sports in most Western societies, including European countries, gender equality has still not

1 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/3-Towards_gender_equity_in_European_outdoor_sports.pdf

2 <https://www.swup-project.eu/roadmaps/>

3 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Participatory_assessment_report_FINAL.pdf

4 <https://www.swup-project.eu/exchange-reports/>

5 <http://www.swup-project.eu/forum-swup/>

6 See for example Aitchison (2003), Hargreaves (1994) and Massey (1994).



been reached⁷. In nearly all of the member states of the European Union, men are still more likely than women to participate in sport and recreational physical activities, including outdoor sports.

Furthermore, women experience more and different (gender specific) barriers compared to men⁸. In general, compared to men, women are less socialized in (outdoor) sports, experience more time constraints due to higher child care responsibilities and higher unsafety in public (green) spaces⁹.

To realize more gender equality by increasing women's opportunities in outdoor sport/physical activity participation can be realized by different strategies. Whereas 'direct sex discrimination', or the unfavorable treatment on grounds of sex is prohibited in all European countries, simultaneously, positive action measures that provide advantages for disadvantaged groups are often allowed and sometime regarded necessary to counteract historically grown gender inequalities. With respect to sport and physical activity this would suggest that apart from promoting sport and physical activity spaces for both genders, simultaneously more attention should be paid to further enhance the participation and experienced safety of all girls and women in outdoor sport/physical activities.

It is on this framework and on this line of thought that the recommendations reported in this document have been gathered. While the first chapter reports the ideas, recommendations and observations on how to enhance women participation in outdoor physical activities, the second chapter focuses on how to enhance women-friendly urban environment that encourages women to practice physical activities outdoors.

1. How to enhance women participation in outdoor physical activities

The survey regarding the barriers and motivations for women to be active (outdoors) that has been conducted by the partners at the beginning of the project and the participatory assessment of the pilot programmes suggest a wide array of conditions that enhance women's outdoor physical activity. Among them, the customization of the activities according to women's capacities and needs and the quality of the proposed activities have a crucial importance in increasing the appreciation of the participants and their participation.

Customization of the activities according to women's capacities and needs

Results from the SW-UP pilot programs show that in order to adapt interventions to women's needs particular attention should be paid to:

- The conciliation of outdoor sports with personal duties, especially the family. There are different ways to answer this need:
 - The activities can be programmed in various moments of the days to allow to different groups of women (e.g. mothers, employees, retired women, etc.) to adjust with their daily tasks;

7 See European Commission (2014a, 2014b), European Institute for Gender Equality (2017), Fenster (2005), Green & Singleton (2006) and the methodological framework of analysis of the SW-UP project (SW-UP, 2018).

8 See for example: Aitchison (2003), Beebeejaun (2017), Hargreaves & Anderson (2018), Fenster (2005), Scraton & Watson, 1998; <https://urbact.eu/gender-sensitive-public-space-placemaking-and-spatial-justice-through-perspective-gender>.

9 See also Davadaki (2016), Dellas & Elling (2018).



- Child care service can be provided at the venue where the sport activity takes place. Most of the respondents of the assessment of the pilot program in Sofia reveal that they would practice more sport if the childcare service were provided continuously during all sport events;
- The activities can deliver medical advice, nutritional advice, etc, thus answering to the women's need of taking care of themselves with limited time and budget;
- Activities can be organized near the target group's house or work place. To this extent, the course of the pilot program in Corbetta takes/took place at lunch time near the public administration building enjoyed a remarkable and constant success from the employed ladies of the municipality;
- Activities can involve also the family. This last option, though, is debated: according to focus groups carried out within the participatory assessment, involving the whole family in outdoor sports may represent an additional incentive to outdoor sport practice. However, for some women opening the activity to the whole family may represent a disincentive, as they might not be able to detach themselves fully from family care duty. In addition, women might also fear being observed by men and renounce taking part in the activity. Therefore, the outdoor sport offer should be varied and should include both types of activities, so that women can select the one most suitable to their needs and expectations;
- The promotion of social interaction among participants and the creation of an inclusive group with whom all participants can identify. In most of the SW-UP pilot programmes, the creation of inclusive groups of women represented an incentive for attending the programme and for creating a long term habit. The role of the trainers revealed crucial to boost interactions and spirit of belonging: most trainers involved in SW-UP programmes paid particular attention to create inclusive groups that could further motivate participants to keep a constant engagement in the programme. Participants in both Granollers and Corbetta pilot programmes identified the existence of a tight group as a reason to attend the programme regularly. In addition to enhancing attendance rate, the provision of social interaction opportunities can also contribute to increasing women's social capital resources supporting their higher participation in community life and labour market;
- The gratuity/low costs of the activities – this is particularly relevant for single mothers, as pointed out by the experience of the pilot programme in Corbetta. The same pilot program also shows that while this measure is relevant for attracting women, it is not sufficient for keeping them engaged over a long period of time;
- The possibility to choose among different levels and types of activities. This allows all women to find a suitable option to their athletic preparation and to their preferences. If it is not possible to deliver different courses, than instructions to do the same kind of exercises but with different degrees of intensity should be given to the participants, complemented by personalised advises and follow-up. Among the many possible activities, offering activities that relax and de-stress is also important, in order to offer a moment of calm as opposed to the stress often embedded in daily routine.

In order to better tailor interventions to women's needs, it is important to select a specific target group (i.e. women, women with children, women with chronic diseases) and involve it in the design of the intervention. Focus groups and informal exchange of opinions with the target groups are a precious source of information regarding the target group's barriers, motivations and preferences. In addition, a survey to the target group can be conducted in order to gather detailed information on the target. Ideally, this survey should be conduct-



ed by some particularly motivated women of the target group, thus turning the design process in a precious tool of awareness raising and empowerment. Last but not least, creating a program WITH the target group and not FOR the target group will ensure the relevance of the project and enhance its participation.

The quality of the proposed activities, in particular of the trainer(s)

The quality of the proposed activities has been highlighted in multiple occasions by the respondents to the assessment of the pilot activities. Respondents, in particular, stress the importance of the professional and human skills of the trainers. The qualities of the trainers that were most appreciated in the pilot programs were their promptness in giving feedback and tailored advises, their empathy, their capacity to accommodate the specific needs of all participants and to create inclusive group. In addition, such attentions not only enhance the quality of the physical activity, but also the self-esteem and the feel of belonging of participants, thus boosting their constant participation. Last but not least, a skilled trainer is also seen as more trust-worthy, thus giving an extra incentive to those women that need a more secure framework and are reticent towards sport activities. In the pilot that took place in Sofia, for example, where child-care service was proposed to mother that were taking part to the outdoor sport events, students of physical education and sports attending their the 3rd and 4th year of a well-known university (the National Academy of Sport) were chosen to deliver the babysitting sport activities. This allowed to answer to the need of security of mothers when it comes to leave their children under someone else's supervision.

Good communication

The quality of the activities also encompasses a good communication with whom to give women more information and of a better quality. The communication should cover all the aspects related to the sport activity: the modalities in which the activity takes place, the instructions about the most beneficial way of practicing it and the benefits emerging from an active and healthy life style. One of the activities in the framework of the pilot programme in Guimarães goes in this direction: in the same session, participants could discover the motivating experiences that women in special conditions (as for example pregnant women, elderly people with reduced mobility or people with a cancer) shared with them and receive information and recommendations from a health practitioner and a sport trainer. The very informal context in which the exchanges took place allowed more proximity among the participants, the mentors and the practitioners, facilitated the sharing and contributing to break some prejudices. Another good example is the one of Fit4Life¹⁰, a Finnish project that combined exercise sessions with workshops on health and nutrition. Mass event proposing a range array of out-of-the ordinary activities can also be a good tool to raise awareness, especially since they have high chances of reaching not only women but also their families and acquaintances. Nonetheless, it is important that raising awareness campaigns are not limited to sporadic mass event but continue all along the regular practice of the activity. For this to happen, prepared trainers and communication material in the places where physical activities are more likely to happen are crucial to keep women informed and motivated.

Constant and continuous activities

Proposing constant and continuous activities rather than sport events is more likely to produce a durable change in the sport habits of women. Besides introducing sport activity in the routine of participants, regular and contin-

10 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2-SWUP_Good_Practices_07-2018.pdf p.23



uous activities create a group mechanism that enhances women engagement and retention. In the case of the Italian initiative “Movimenti bancari o bancari in movimento?”¹¹, across the project’s duration, the walking group met once a week and now, even if the project has finished, a group of 50 people still meets regularly to have walks.

Spot and isolated activities can be beneficial in as much as they not only raise the attention of women and their families on the benefits of having an active life style but also redirect them towards the regular sport activities that are offered at that time in the community.

Novelty of the programmes concept

Proposing new type of activities, new settings in which practicing them or new type of relations (as for example it is the case when people are trained by one of their peer – neighbours or previous mates) trigger women’s curiosity in discovering the programme and participating in it, as pointed out by the experience of Granollers and Ramnicu Sarat municipalities.

Legitimacy of the outdoor sport/physical activity and of its organisers

The legitimacy is a key aspect for people to firstly join an activity that is out of their ordinary life. In the SW-UP pilot programmes, the factors that were contributing more to give legitimacy were the involvement of trustworthy testimonials and the displaying of the EU logo. While trustworthy participants triggered a bandwagon effect (emulation of the testimonials’ behaviours by other people), the display of the EU logo was considered a sign of quality of the intervention.

Providing moral or economic incentives

Providing moral (awards, etc.) or economic (discounts, bonuses, vouchers for sport practice, access to additional free services, as the medical advice, etc) incentives for participating in programme activities increase participation in sport activities. Focus groups with project partners shows, in fact, that the provision of a gadget to those joining the walk represented an incentive for participating in the activity. In Guimarães pilot, there was a boost in participation following the announcement that project’s t-shirt would have been delivered. In Mamme in Bici project¹² the assignment of a bike to women that would have completed the bike learning course motivated women to attentively follow lessons.

Besides the above-mentioned factors emerging from the survey and the collective assessment, the following suggestions have been also identified by SWUP community of practice to enhance women’s practice of outdoor physical activities.

Establishing partnership with local stakeholders

Establishing partnership with local stakeholders has been highlighted by all the partners of SWUP project. The partnerships can involve a vast array of actors: schools, sport entities, hospital and medical centres, companies, associations in the field of social inclusion, churches, media.

11 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2-SWUP_Goof_Practices_07-2018.pdf p.11

12 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Catalogue_of_Practices_FINAL.pdf p36



Local companies, in particular, can play an important role both as source of financing and as a catalyser of activities stimulating physical activities of the employees. Having this point clear in mind, Ramnicu Sarat Municipality has engaged 10 companies that are now investing their time and influence on the employees to support women involvement in mass sport and organize team building sport activities. In the Italian “Mamme in Bici project”¹³, a private actor “Lombardo Bike” donated bikes for the project. The remaining resources were gathered through a crowdfunding that was mainly advertised to the local stakeholders and the informal networks of the organisers. In the Italian “Movimenti bancari o bancari in movimento”, the partnership with banks and institutions of the tertiary sector ensured the biggest share of participants. In the English “The women running network”¹⁴, the coordination of network engaged the running shops in providing discounts for the women subscribed to the network.

Guimaraes highlights the importance of engaging partners not only in disseminating or funding the event, but in designing the activity. This allows to inform the design of the activity with different points of view and sources of information and it enhances the partner’s feel of ownership of the project. In addition, as Ramnicu Sarat Municipality highlights, early and constant engagement of partners deepens their understanding of the needs of the community.

On general term, it is very important to match with existing initiatives that already mobilise for whatever reasons the target group. For example, the sport activity that Guimarães Municipality proposed near a church at the end of the mass was very successful because it was easy for women to participate to the mass to join the activity afterward. In order to find out-of-the-box partners Ramnicu Sarat Municipality highlights the importance that the activities’ promoters participate to other events of different topics and are in contact with the informal leaders of the community. Besides receiving hands-on feedback on the activity, this allows to be always updated with what is happening in the community, the main “mobilisers” and eventual initiatives with whom collaborating.

Enhancing the target’s autonomy

Creating the conditions so that women become independent in practicing sport is key in order to guarantee the uptake of regular physical activity in women’s life. Among the strategies to enhance the autonomy, in the focus group SWUP partners highlighted the participants quality time during the sport activities, creating a tight group of participants with high level of social bonding and engaging women in designing the activity. The positive experience, tight bond and spirit of belonging resulting from these strategies give participants the enthusiasm and motivation to put in place the energies required to self-organize. Having a WhatsApp group is also a cheap way to give participants a beyond-the-project arena where to arrange other initiatives. Building on the more motivated participants is also a possibility. The more motivated participants can be given logistic and organizational support and trained, formally (see “train the trainer” technique experienced by “Women bike for integration”¹⁵) or informally, on the sport competences and the pedagogical and community organizing skills that are needed to take over the course once the project has finished. Ramnicu Sarat Municipality fostered this process during the project duration by giving some participants the responsibility to organize

13 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2-SWUP_Goof_Practices_07-2018.pdf p.29

14 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2-SWUP_Goof_Practices_07-2018.pdf p.33

15 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2-SWUP_Goof_Practices_07-2018.pdf p.21



one of the bi-monthly activities of the Women Sport Club. “This mum runs”,¹⁶ in the UK, offers weekly running activities with the help of a “Run angel”, a local mum who is qualified to support the organization of the activity in her area.

Raise boys’ and men’s awareness of being respectful towards women

This aspect, that is often neglected, raises from the recognition that gender inequality is not only a problem of and for women, but also a problem of and for men. As Garance association highlighted during the final SWUP event, it is important to put the burden of adjusting gender inequality on the shoulder of those who commit it, thus including of course male individuals. If on one side respect towards women should be thought since the early education of a child, it is important that lacks of respect are penalised during the whole life time and in all fields. According to Granollers Municipality partner, allowing men to participate to the activities designed to enhance women active lifestyle is a good strategy to invite men to adapt to women’s needs and overcome stereotypes. This vision is backed on the acknowledgement that only-for-women activities could reinforce the gender stereotypes on women’s role in society, i.e. women need specific interventions to cope with both family burden and care for oneself. However, the SW-UP pilot programmes shed light on the fact that activities specifically tailored to women’s needs represent an effective way for getting women into sports and maintaining them engaged over a long period of time. Furthermore, positive discrimination is widely acknowledged and used to enhance gender equality.

Nevertheless, in order to avoid such a risk, pilot programmes should be complemented with awareness raising campaigns on gender equality in sport and all sphere of life and the choice between women-only activities or mixed activities should be debated time to time according to every situation.

Being aware of cultural differences

As it is often the cases, social interventions are very sensitive to cultural norms and habits. To this extent, partners suggested to take into consideration the appreciation in a particular country of playing outdoor activities with what is considered bad weather conditions. For example, Guimaraes and Corbetta’s pilot programs registered a reduction in participation in outdoor activities during winter periods.

16 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2-SWUP_Goof_Practices_07-2018.pdf p.22



2. How to enhance women-friendly urban environments that encourage women to practice outdoor physical activities

While there are numerous advocacy and communication initiatives to enhance women's participation into sports, less attention has been paid to designing women friendly urban environments for sports/physical activity, and in particular outdoor sports/physical activity. What follows are the recommendations that the SWUP community has identified to meet this challenge, with safety of the sport venue and women engagement in the planning and monitoring of the sport venue being the most mentioned measures.

Enhancing the perception of safety

The initial surveys done in the framework of SWUP project reveal that safety of outdoor areas were deemed particularly relevant for sport practice. Structural conditions of facilities (e.g. lack of light), lack of people with whom to practice sport, fear of men's annoying behaviours are some of the factors contributing to the feeling of unsafety.

In order to tackle it, SWUP partners believe that improvement of the space should be carried out both at the level of the urban furniture and at the level of the use and perceptions related to the outdoor sport venues and of the roads to reach it, with the first element reinforcing the second one:

- Introducing SOS spots, maps showing the different paths and facilities, meeting points, easy-to-read signals, lights can do a lot to enhance the safety of a place and its perception. Illumination, nonetheless, is a debated point in the existent literature: as wittily summed up from the Gehl Institute, "The addition of artificial lighting can help this process [of feeling safe to navigate public space in one's own communities], especially when co-designed with community members. But the locations where lighting is added, as well as what or whom it is meant to make visible, can be complicated political questions. Lighting works best when it is dignified, sensitive to local dynamics, and makes people feel welcome to spend time in public. Conversely, oppressive lighting stifles public life, leading to greater degrees of alienation and higher perceptions of unsafety"¹⁷. In Granollers, for example, putting lightning would damage the eco-system near the lake;
- Selecting pieces of furniture that are pleasant and resistant: this makes them more attractive to be used and diminishes the feeling of neglect that is often at the basis of the perception of fear;
- Gardening and maintenance: as litter, graffiti and broken furniture all suggest a place is uncared for and possibly unsafe, good maintenance is crucial to maintain perceptions that areas are low risk;
- Designing the furnishing pieces and architectural patterns that enhance visibility of and in the sport venue and reduce hidden places. To this extent, reducing obstructive vegetation and favour wide visibility of every point of the venue is a proposed solution. Nonetheless, whatever safety measure needs to be balanced with the need for and right to privacy. It is suggested that every time pros and cons of each measures are carefully analysed according to the context, with a special attention to the different kinds of public;
- Enhancing the opportunities to do physical activities in company. This can be spurred by organizing outdoor courses, supporting the use of apps gathering people that want to do sport together and providing outdoor sport equipment that attracts people to practice sport in the same space;

17 <https://gehl.institute.org/dialogue/lighting-safety-public-life/>



- Keeping the venue animated, especially if isolated or usually not much frequented. Giving the opportunity to play outdoor activities in group, as it is the case of Pilates, yoga, walks, bike cross and promoting the use of the sport venues for different kind of activities and purposes can reveal crucial to make the venue more used and improve its perception by the nearby inhabitants, both in terms of safety and attractiveness. When the venue suffers from a negative perception, organizing itinerant sport courses taking place every time in different venues, combining well known as well as unusual areas, (such as rough parks, health care centres, workplaces, schools and transport systems) can be a way to attract people attention and preferences (with the well-known venues) and then use this legitimacy and enthusiasm to introduce them to less renown venues.

More insights about how to create safe park environments can be found in “Creating Safe Park Environments to Enhance Community Wellness”¹⁸, a publication offering a wide range of recommendations, approaches and case studies on the issue.

Engaging citizens

To make urban spaces women-friendly for women to play sport it is crucial to engage women and all the users of the above-mentioned measures in their design and maintenance.

In the design phase, engaging women and all the stakeholders of the sport venue is the first step to understand the needs and the proposals of the future users, especially of those that tend to be excluded or penalised. The engagement must take different forms and different intensities according to the importance of the stakeholder. For example, in the case of women-friendly sport venues, women can be invited to a series of workshops where, together with experts and facilitators, they can be led to the identification of the needs and consequent solutions, while secondary stakeholders as other individuals and organizations using the park can be involved through consultation meetings. Independently of the methodology used, SWUP partners highlight two crucial aspects for the co-creation process to work. The first is that the city planner in charge of the work is convinced of the utility of the participatory process and she commits to embed its outcomes in the final plan. The second is that women are well accompanied in the process of recognition of their needs. It is to answer to this challenge that the Belgian association Garance has proposed female inhabitants of Brussels a series of “Exploratory Marches”, accompanying participants in the identification of the gender barriers of a park of the city¹⁹.

An example of gender mainstreaming in urban planning is represented²⁰ by Vienna Municipality²⁰. Women’s specific needs were identified through surveys and focus groups and integrated in the design and implementation of a number of pilots tailored upon these needs. The pilots were carried out across the city, integrating gender aspects in parks, housing, pedestrian-friendly design and public transport.

More in general, both during the design and the monitoring phase, women can be invited to express their opinions and their gender perspectives also through less structured but not less relevant tools. Some municipalities give their citizens the possibility to comment a proposal of urban plans on their website. Lately many applications, Facebook groups, online forums have been developed in order to signal issues in urban decorations and public infrastructures.

18 <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/f768428a39aa4035ae55b2aaff372617/park-safety.pdf>

19 <http://www.garance.be/spip.php?article650>

20 https://www.swup-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Catalogue_of_Practices_FINAL.pdf p7



Enhancing the accessibility and proximity of sport venues

How much does it take to arrive to the venue? Is it easy? Is the journey to get there safe and nice? All these elements play a crucial role in the motivation to practice sport outdoor.

The following suggestions have been proposed by SWUP partners in order to enhance the accessibility and proximity of outdoor sport venues:

- Placing sport venues near the residential and working areas;
- Connecting sport venues through public transport, bike lanes and pedestrian paths. The options offered by public transport to get to the venues should imply no changes, have high frequency and a limited journey time, otherwise women's difficulties in conciliating the activity with other family/personal duties could lead them to desist from practicing outdoor sport;
- Making the journey to the venue pleasant and safe. For example, people can access the sport venue through a path that is surrounded by nature and is accessible from multiple points. This improves the quality of the time devoted to the sport activities and removes the psychological and physical barriers to access the venue;
- Making the venue together with its services and benefits visible. Campaigns advertising the venue and the different ways to access it can do a lot to "remind" the inhabitants about its existence and deconstruct the prejudices related to its accessibility. For example, a panel signalling the minute distance to the park, very visible bike lanes or an article on the calm and biodiversity of the green hallway leading to the park could modify the perception of remoteness that people may have in relation with secondary venues.

Enhancing the diversity of uses of the sport venue

Designing sport venues answering to the multiple needs of their users is crucial to enhance the motivation to use them, especially in case of women that often need to take care of children. Here some of the needs and relative suggestions to satisfy them that SWUP community has identified:

- Basic needs such as eating, drinking, going to the toilets, resting. For this it is important that in the park there are at least one drinkable-water fountain, a bar, a toilet, and benches of different sizes and types. As for toilets, they can be provided by a public-private partnership, for example with the companies managing the bar;
- The needs related to practicing a sport activity: a running trail with suitable floor, flat wide spaces where group sport activities can take place, changing rooms with lockers, fields and courts to play team sports, sport equipment that can be used not only by men, but also by women, kids, disabled people. Sport equipment should be located near playground for kids, so that mothers can play some sport while overseeing their kids playing and sport courses for women can be facilitated in providing the service of child care²¹;
- The needs of having mobile signal and being connected to the Internet: mobile phone and WIFI coverage are services that can be appreciated by users and concern the feel of security;

21 <https://www.swup-project.eu/exchange-reports/>



- Extra services such as dogs-reserved areas, grill areas, a music kiosk or theatre are useful to attract people to the park.

Enhancing the physical appearance of the sport venue

It is widely acknowledged nowadays that good-looking sport venues can stimulate their use and enhances the perception of safety. The following are just some of the actions that can be put in place to make a venue appealing:

- Including natural elements and support the presence of wild fauna. Trees, flower beds, ponds, little hills, bushes, canals, if well maintained, boost the beauty of a place;
- Installing good-looking furniture and ensure its maintenance;
- Keeping the venue clean. Appealing original and clear waste collection bins and visual panels reminding people to not leave their waste can do a lot to stimulate people to properly dispose their waste.

Before implementing any of these interventions, doing pilots of the selected measures helps to learn more on the issue and understand if it would work.

Conclusions

In the European societies of nowadays, characterised by an increased physical inactivity, affecting in particular women of all ages²², and a still existing gender gap, the design of activities and urban environments that encourage women to practice regular outdoor physical activity is more and more relevant. In addition, its widespread benefits allow to tackle many aspects at the same time, from health, to gender equality, inclusive cities, good governance.

Tailored-to-women-needs and good quality activities are according to SWUP community the most important factors to enhance women constant participation in physical activities. More in general, proposing funny, social, free activities conciliating sport with women's personal duties, as it is the case of SWUP pilot programs, have shown not only to enhance participants' regular sport practice, but to increase their knowledge and awareness on outdoor sports, improve their physical and psychological health and their self-esteem and self-efficacy, enlarge their social capital. All these factors have effects on aspects of women's life that go beyond health and wellbeing. Increase in self-esteem and self-efficacy coupled with physiological and physical wellbeing can favour an improved job/education attainment in the long period. An increase in social capital reduces the feeling of social isolation and favours participation in community life²³.

Establishing partnerships and building on already existent initiatives, proposing regular and original activities, providing moral and economic incentives, enhancing the target's autonomy and, last but not least, men's respect for women are also deemed important factors in engaging women in practicing sport activity.

Along with the type and quality of activities/services offered to women, the type of urban public spaces also play a crucial role in enhancing their regular physical activities. According to SWUP's community of practice, what makes a venue friendly for women's practice of sport is first of all the safety. Urban equipment, mainte-

22 See European Commission (2014), WHO (2006)

23 See Boom et. all. (2005); Taylor et all. (2015), Holt et. All (2009).



nance and the vivacity of the venues are key factors to make a space safer and modify the safety perception of the inhabitant. Another important aspect is the accessibility of the sport venue. This can be increased by promoting spread parks near residential and working areas, improving the quality and quantity of means to reach the venues and developing a strategic communication making sport venues and their accessibility visible to the large public. Promoting venues that are good-looking and with a wide range of uses is an important factor to motivate women to use the venue. Last but not least, engaging women in the design and monitoring of the sport venues is a key aspect to meet women's needs and raise their awareness on and demand of urban spaces that encourage them to practice outdoor physical activity.





Appendix 1

Consortium of Partners of SWUP project

Name	Country	Role
ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy	France	Coordination of the project and contribution to the project's publications
Ajuntament de Granollers	Spain	Implementation of the exploratory surveys, the pilot activities, the collective assessment and contributions to the development of the project's publications
Tempo livre ciprl	Portugal	Implementation of the exploratory surveys, the pilot activities, the collective assessment, the multiplier event and contributions to the development of the project's publications
Câmara municipal de Guimarães	Portugal	Support Tempo Livre in the project's activities and publications
Polisportiva Corbetta	Italy	Implementation of the exploratory surveys, the pilot activities, the collective assessment and contributions to the development of the project's publications
Comune di Corbetta	Italy	Support Corbetta in the project's activities and organization of the multiplier event
Uat Ramnicu Sarat	Romania	Implementation of the exploratory surveys, the pilot activities, the collective assessment, the multiplier event and contributions to the development of the project's publications
Sofia – European capital for sport	Bulgaria	Implementation of the exploratory surveys, the pilot activities, the collective assessment, the multiplier event and contributions to the development of the project's publications
Stichting w.j.h. mulier instituut, centrum voor sociaal-wetens	Netherlands	Development of the survey report (" <i>Towards gender equity in urban outdoor sport spaces</i> ") and contributions to the development of the other project's publications
Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale scarl	Italy	Development of the Catalogue of Good Practice and of the Participatory Assessment Report and contribution to the development of the other project's publications