



# SPORT DURING A PANDEMIC

RESTART SPORT ENGINE IN EU

PROJECT  
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## DISCLAIMER ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

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**The material is open and available through the project's website (<https://restart.scoutsociety.ro>) for educators, trainers, youth, learners, stakeholders and people who are interested in it.**







## PARTNERS



Alice Milliat Association, Paris, France



Social Youth Development, Kalamata, Greece



Latvijas Sporta izglītības iestāžu "Direktoru padome", Limbaži, Latvia



Scout Society, Targu-Jiu, Romania



Municipality of Beniganim, Beniganim, Spain



4

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

*A short description of the aim and objectives of the project*

6

## SPORT SECTOR DURING COVID PANDEMIC

*An overview of the situation regarding sport sector during the Pandemic and the situation in each of the partner country*

13

## SPORTS DURING PANDEMIC

*Situation regarding sports that were practiced during the pandemic*

19

## MEASURES OF PROTECTION DURING COVID

*What type of measures were put in place during the pandemic in the sport sector*

27

## MENTAL WELL-BEING AND SPORT

*How Covid-19 affected people and the help of sport*







**"Persistence can change failure into extraordinary achievement"**

**ABOUT THE PROJECT**

**AIM**

Develop individuals in Europe in order to be active citizens by promoting education in and through sport.



**SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

Develop skills of 800 people using sporting activities in 5 communities from European Union within 12 months period



**TRAINING**

Increase the skills of 25 people (coaches, trainers, NGOs staff and sport volunteers) to develop innovative ways of using sports in order to develop their local communities in the long run



**RESTART SPORTS**

Restart the sport movement in Europe after Covid19, and come back at least to level before the pandemic

Through our project "Restart Sport Engine in EU", we want to prove that it is still safe to do sports if you change your mindset, if you do certain sports and if you do some small and innovative adaptations. . We want to boost the sporting activities at least in the 5 communities participating in the project, to be an example for other communities, sporting organizations and sports clubs.



The image features two women in silhouette, captured in a stretching pose with their arms raised and hands clasped. They are positioned on a grassy bank next to a body of water. The background is a soft, hazy sunset sky with light clouds. The water in the foreground reflects the women and the sky. Overlaid on the image is the text "Be active!" in a large, white, cursive font. The word "Be" is positioned above "active!", and the exclamation point is at the end of the second line.

Be  
active!

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# SPORT SECTOR DURING COVID PANDEMIC



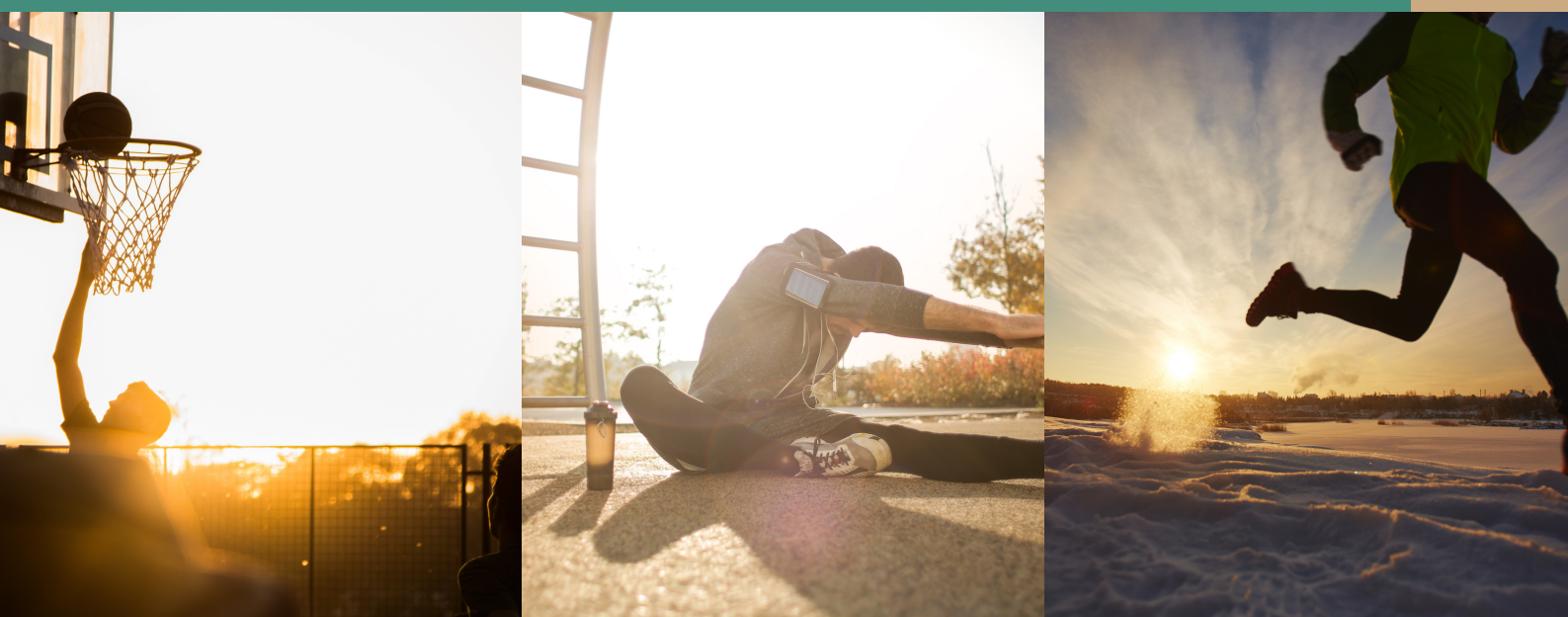
COVID-19 restriction measures recommended by the World Health Organization and imposed at global level were applied in different countries by the governments and local authorities, impacting all categories of populations and socio-economic areas. Regarding professional sport, this activity has been considered a main concern for the officials even though 2020 was supposed to be an Olympic year.

In February 2020, while the pandemic of COVID-19 was still little known, the organizers of the Six Nations Tournament were forced to postpone the games after the spread of the virus in Italy, as a sign of the health situation that began to worsen in Europe and worry its population. In the weeks that followed, many European governments decided to implement lock downs in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus.



Thus, while the year 2020 should have been placed under the sign of sport, with the organization of major sporting events such, as the Olympic Games in Tokyo or the UEFA Euro, it has been marked by postponements or cancellations of competitions and stadiums empty of athletes and spectators. COVID-19 has forced the postponement of the European Olympic Committees (EOC) General Assembly in Athens in June, a meeting where a new permanent President was due to be elected.

This event was supposed to take place on June 10 and 11 in Athens. The postponement of the Olympic Games was probably the most symbolic decision given the fact that since the first edition of the modern Olympic Games in 1896, this event has only been cancelled three times: once during World War I (1916) and twice during World War II (1940, 1944).



Even though the impact of the pandemic was negative for sport professionals, the toll was even greater for grassroots sports who were less likely to be prepared financially to cope with such a stop of activity and loss of income. According to the support document “How coronavirus infected sport” of the European Parliament, estimates show that nearly a million sports-related jobs have been impacted in the EU, not only for sports professionals but also for those in related retail and sporting services such as travel, tourism, infrastructure, transportation, catering and media broadcasting etc. Furthermore, the report highlights the fact that there is a growing concern on the issues related to mental health, eating disorders, as an indirect consequence to the disruption of physical activity.



## Latvia

In Latvia, indoor sports training (classes), including individual visits, had suspended persons who, on the basis of a contract and for an agreed fee, were preparing for and participating in sports competitions. Students of Murjāņi Sports Gymnasium and High-Class Athlete Training Centers, as well as youth and junior national team athletes of Latvia preparing for participation in the European or World Championships of the respective age, were allowed to take place of both practices - indoors and outdoors. The exception applied only to official national team training sessions organized and supervised by a sports federation recognized in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Sports Law and respectively led by the sports coaches of the national teams. Certain individual visits to sports facilities that did not take place as a part of a national team training process and were not led by national team coaches were and are still prohibited now at the end of 2021. Restrictions applied to the rental of sports equipment, which was not allowed indoors (respectively, for example, at ski resorts, ski equipment could only be received and handed over outdoors, but not when going inside the equipment building). Yet, now renting of sports equipment is forbidden completely.





## Romania

According to the Romanian Federation of Basketball, the Covid-19 pandemic affected all areas of life and sport with no exception. Whether we are talking about performance or table sports, the impact was undoubtedly negative and, in addition to the blockages and repercussions already known, there are certainly effects that we have not yet identified. However, some of the certain effects that have been identified so far, are:

- Alteration of the daily training of performance athletes;
- Change of competitive calendars and the postponement of the supreme competition;
- Significant socioeconomic impact on the sports environment as a whole.

The Sport Sector in Romania contributed to the prevention of the spread of the virus. It contributed through diverse measures and recommendations addressed to all relevant parties involved, such as sport clubs, sportsmen, entrepreneurs, sport staff, volunteers, as well as the audience and the citizens.





## Spain

After the declaration of the state of alarm for the Covid-19 pandemic, a series of measures were issued at the national level relating to sport and physical activity, which left the sector in absolute inactivity.

On March 14, 2020, the Spanish Government decreed a State of Alarm in the face of the health crisis caused by COVID-19, announcing successive extensions as of March 22. The Government of Spain has been informing from the beginning of this crisis of the procedure for the prevention of contagion, in addition to indicating which action protocols the occupational risk prevention services must follow in the face of COVID-19 exposure. For its part, the Higher Sports Council has remained in permanent contact with all the interlocutors of Spanish sport, professional and non-professional, federated and non-federated, to monitor the various situations that have emerged (individual and collective, economic, labor, health, or of any kind), keeping open all its consultation and coordination mechanisms.

It should be noted in this preliminary approach that sports in general, and some professional competitions in particular (responsible for most of the income and jobs, direct, indirect and induced), have been affected by the pandemic, in the financial and labor spheres, competitive, and also from the personal and family point of view of athletes and sports professionals, having produced numerous positives for contagion of COVID-19. The behavior of Spanish federated, professional and high-level sports during the pandemic has been, with very few exceptions, exemplary: athletes, sports entities and other sports professionals have shown a great capacity for sacrifice and enormous solidarity, contributing supporting the sector in these critical circumstances, and sending important messages of morality and resilience to all citizens.



## Greece

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a serious impact on Greek sports. The cancellations of large- and small-scale sporting events and the loss of revenue from local sponsors and sportsman's bulletins, among others, will be a severe blow to the financial situation of sports bodies, clubs and amateurs. Many small sports associations and clubs have been forced to lay off staff and their future looks bleak. All this may have a very serious spill-over effect on the future of amateur sport in Greece and reduce the opportunities for all Greeks to participate in sporting activities. Especially, since physical exercise is vital for physical and mental health in times of crisis, such a development would further aggravate the situation.

A professional athlete declares: "This period looked like an injury-period to us, because when we get injured, at first we refuse to accept it. We are sad and angry. And then we have to accept the new situation and do everything we can to adapt to this new reality."

The biggest problem concerns the professional athletes. Those who were used to daily and intense training. The two months of racing inactivity are reminiscent of the period from the end of a season, until the start of the preparation for the next season. This time, it was much more than two months. Something that had never happened to them before.





## France

Between the suspended competitions, the discouraged advertisers but also the closed sports halls, stores and stadiums, the sports sector would have seen a decrease in activity of 21% on average in 2020 in France according to the economic observatory of the BPCE banking group. Faced with this alarming situation, solidarity funds, short-time working and guaranteed loans, as well as aid from the National Sports Agency (ANS) and local authorities, have been set up to help sports associations and federations, and thus attempt to remedy this crisis. But more importantly other competitions, initially postponed, have been completely cancelled, as was announced in November 2020 for the Women's Under-17 World Cup. Estelle Brun, research fellow at IRIS (Institute of International and Strategic Relation) declares that "in international sport, too, it is the so-called "women's" competitions that are the most vulnerable." In France, there were several examples showing that male competitions and teams have been privileged to the detriment of women in the sport sectors. For example, the president of AS Nancy Lorraine declared in June 2020 that he was temporarily suspending spending on its women's section, as it was necessary, at that time, to "save the essentials", i.e. the men's section. In addition, the media coverage of women's sports was very low during the period, particularly during the first period of confinement, even though it was essential for the development of women's sports. We can mention for example that between March 14 and May 18, 2020, during the first containment, "only 2.4% of the printed version of L'Equipe (i.e. one of the most iconic sport media in France) were devoted to women's sports, even though the sector is going through an unprecedented crisis."



Champions keep  
playing until  
they  
get it right







# SPORTS DURING COVID PANDEMIC

Sporting during the pandemic was a real challenge for all those involved in sport – young sportsmen and their families, trainers, sports organisations and others in and through sport – which means, firstly, taking up the situation and, secondly, adapting to it. Getting out of the regular football or volleyball area, basketball grass, hallway runways and outdoor training, in nature in a variety of weather conditions, demands creative athletic solutions from trainers, determination, patience and motivation from young athletes, running the driver's duties several times a week and caring for cold, tired athletes with warm tea and a steaming soup plate on the parental side, ensuring a training environment that meets epidemiological requirements, planning group flows from the management of sport organisations.



# Latvia



Initially during the pandemic, any organized workouts and athletic activities were banned in Latvia, the courtyards of young athletes' houses and nearby grasslands were turned into basketball, football and volleyball squares, stadiums and gyms. Everything that was not considered fit for sport until then was appropriate as sports equipment: worn-out tractor tires, wooden sticks and branches, even stones. There was no sneaking about the sparring partners, either a neighbouring dog capable of bringing the discarded tree or the garage walls from which the ball bounces. On the other hand, moms and dads, sisters and brothers, grandparents polished their video operator skills to capture these strange outdoor workouts in photo or video format and deducted them from the coach in a remote training.

The actual topic is the issue of the quality of sport training and the maintenance and development of athletic physical characteristics training outside of the infrastructure needed for the specific type of sport. Pandemics showed that virtually all sports, outdoor training was possible to maintain physical form and possibly even develop at least some of the physical characteristics, capabilities and skills needed in the particular type of sport. During the winter period of the pandemics, training groups of various sports – basketball, football, light athletics, sprint canoe and sailing, replaced their sports footwear, balls, spears and boats by skis, skates and sticks, becoming great skiers, skaters and hockey players training on snowy forest trails and skating rinks.



# Romania



The Eurobarometer shows that most of the physical activities take place in informal settings, such as parks and outdoors (40%) or at home (32%) or during the journey between home and work, school or shops. It was the case for the sports in Romania as well.

The recommendations that the specialists gave to the people are:

- For Children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 years: all children and adolescents should do at least 60 minutes a day moderate to vigorous physical activity, including activities that strengthen muscles and bones, at least 3 days a week;
- For Adults over 18 years old: should perform at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity during the week or at least 75 minutes of high-intensity physical activity during the week,

including muscle-strengthening activities , two or more days a week;

- Elderly adults with poor mobility: should do physical activity to improve balance and prevent imbalances, three or more days a week.

The Minister of Sport added: "I pointed out that in the case of contact sports, individual trainings can be done without sparring elements. Moreover, outdoor competitions can be organized for those tests that can be practiced individually, kata type. We asked the representatives of the federations to support us with their experience and knowledge to find together those measures that can come in support of the athletes and the clubs to which they are affiliated."



# Spain



Since the pandemic began in Spain and throughout the course of it, in terms of the regulations mentioned above, sports and all sports have been classified as described below. And in addition, in each of these sections, appropriate measures were taken for each specific case.

This classification has been:

- General physical and sports activity: general practice, physical and sports activity, outdoors and in open or closed sports facilities.
- Authorized competitions that require a high degree of training and preparation.
- Physical activity and sports practice that is carried out in teaching, extracurricular and complementary activities during the school day: special protocols were established for these schools.
- Training of federated sports, university sports championships and other official competitions: regulations were carried out for stable groups avoiding contacts, individual sports dynamics were promoted and without physical contact. Measurements were established in each one of the regulatory periods for the use of their changing rooms and showers.
- Competitions and other sporting events: the organizers were obliged to have a special public protocol for the development of the competition or event, with safety and hygiene measures required for the prevention of Covid-19.
- Sports facilities: they were sub-classified according to whether they were open or closed, and in each case the appropriate regulations were applied, in terms of capacity, entry, exit, distance, etc.



# Greece



No sport was allowed due to the pandemic in Greece. All the leagues stopped and the associations, big or small ones, closed too. Once they tried to open professional level leagues, the cases of pandemic were going up so they postponed them again.

So, quarantine at home, in the midst of a pandemic, has created in many people the need to develop new interests and hobbies in order to spend better and more creatively their free time. Of course there were those who previously did not have any time at all to get involved in sports and so this period was a gift for them!

The sports that flourished in the midst of a pandemic are mainly the ones that bring man and nature together. Many preferred a sport for fat burning, such as hiking or jogging, while exploring nature. Others took their bikes again for a walk, something that apart from training offers fun. Water lovers had the opportunity to start swimming, programs with water exercising (e.g. aqua aerobics) or water sports, such as sailing, kayaking, surfing or windsurfing.



# France



Although the French have continued to engage in physical activity and sport during this period, we should not underestimate the slowdown that the pandemic has had on their practice of sport, both professional and amateur.

First of all, the negative impact of the first confinement on the sport plan was great since 38% of the French declared to have decreased their sport practice during this period, according to the National Barometer of sport practices.

Even the booming fields that seemed to be adapted or even privileged with the sanitary measures in force, such as walking and running activities or fitness and gymnastics, have been slowed down by the confinement, as an example, running and walking activities declined by 9 points during the confinement.

The surprise, however, was in sports that gave the opportunity to grow online. One of them is chess that became popular during quarantine, not only as a sport, but also as an entertaining and educational way to pass the time.



*Nature has given us all the pieces  
required to achieve exceptional  
wellness and health, but has left  
it to us to put these pieces  
together*





# MEASURES OF PROTECTION DURING COVID REGARDING SPORT



The COVID-19 pandemic represents one of the most important crises in our recent history, with a great impact from a health, social and economic point of view. In order to halt their expansion and prevent the overflow of health systems, the different countries have adopted a growing set of measures focused on strengthening the response in the field of health and reducing contagion rates by containing mobility. of people and physical separation in the social and economic sphere.



# Latvia

The "Covid-19" measures relating to sport and physical activity during 2021' in Latvia were harsh. And the coaches could be nominated as heroes. Weather conditions in Latvia last winter were harsh: huge amounts of snow averaging 10 degrees below zero between January and March. No activity was allowed inside the buildings, including school studies. However, the Latvian government was so helpful that it allowed groups of up to 20 people to meet abroad and engage in common activities, including physical and sporting activities. The coaches formed up to three of those groups in a row in these harsh weather conditions. And this is how Latvia and its child and youth sports world survived in the last season.



This season, however, has started in worse conditions: Latvia has been blocked since mid-October and no activities are allowed under any exceptions for children and youth sports. We remain positive and look forward to positive solutions and a positive decision from the government in the near future. "



# Romania

The following measures were put in place:

a) Use of a mask: it is one of the measures to prevent and limit the spread of certain respiratory diseases, including that caused by the new coronavirus;

b) Hand hygiene: the use of the mask must be combined with proper hand hygiene. Social distancing: maintaining a distance of at least 1 meter from anyone with respiratory symptoms (eg, coughing, sneezing);

c) House hygiene: hygiene of frequently touched surfaces, natural ventilation, maintenance of mechanical ventilation systems (air conditioning, centralized ventilation in collective buildings).

d) Minimize the number of participants in leisure activities. It is necessary to understand that only by minimizing the number of participants in leisure activities - leisure activities, in closed spaces with many people, or in open spaces with many people, is exposure to this virus avoided.

In the community:

## **A. People without symptoms should:**

- avoid crowds and avoid frequenting very crowded closed spaces (for example, supermarkets, shopping centers);

- wash your hands frequently, using soap and water when your hands are visibly dirty or an alcohol-based antiseptic if your hands are not visibly dirty;

- coughing or sneezing into the flexed elbow or covering the nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a disposable napkin, throwing it away after use and washing hands IMMEDIATELY with soap and water



- refrain from touching your mouth, nose and eyes;
- Respect the rules of use, removal and disposal of masks, associated with proper hand hygiene after removal.

## **B. Symptomatic persons**

-Symptomatic people cannot come into close contact with their family, friends or colleagues until it is confirmed that they are not a source of disease.

- You should go to the GP by phone, online, as soon as you are in one of the following situations: confirmed, suspected, direct contact.

- Self-medication - is a harmful habit, common among Romanians. In the case of COVID-19 infection, with the exception of dietary supplements or vitamins, any medication should only be taken under medical advice and / or supervision, after prior evaluation. The administration of antimicrobials, cortisone anti-inflammatories, antithrombotics should not be done without evaluation and without medical recommendation.

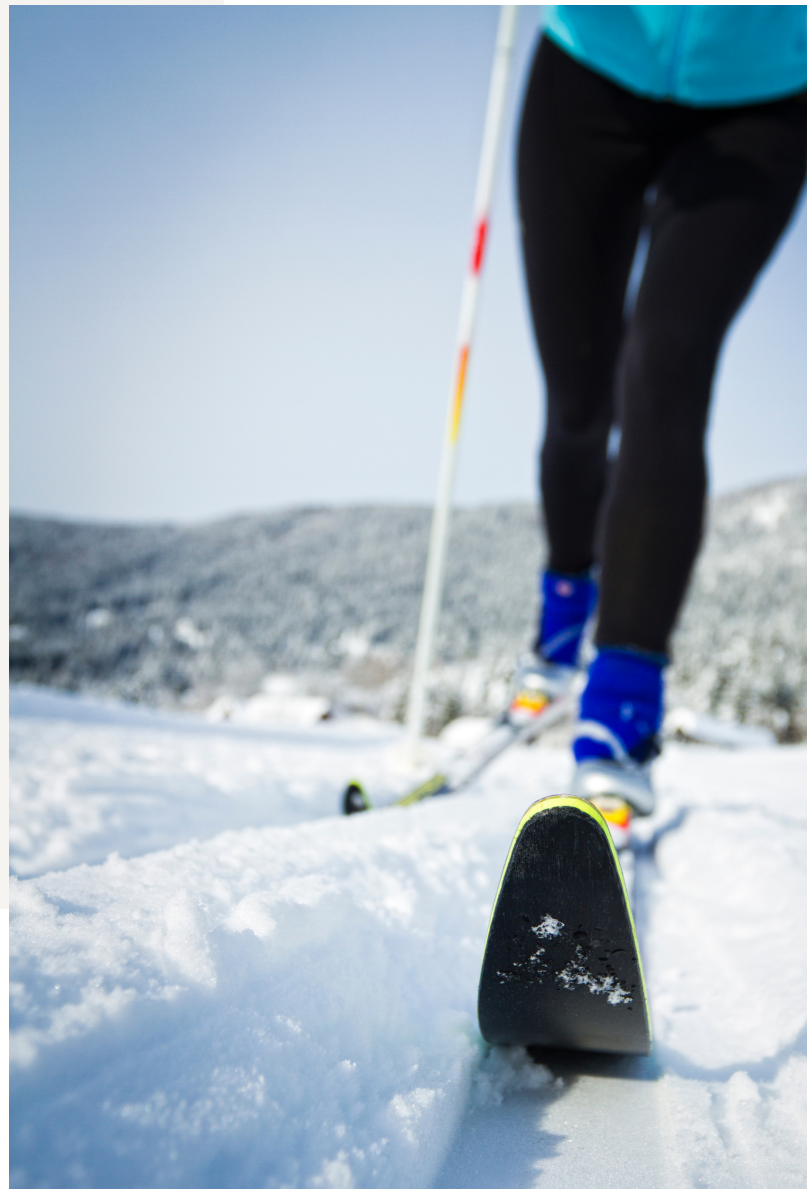


# Spain

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In the case of Spain, the spread of Covid-19 forced the adoption of measures by the health authorities and, later, led to the approval of the Royal Decree, of March 14, which established the state of alarm, with important restrictive measures on mobility and economic activity, and which, for the moment, has been extended three times, until May 9, 2020.

In line with other countries, and in order to mitigate the negative impact of this exceptional situation, successive packages of social and economic support measures have been adopted in Spain, aimed at maintaining the productive fabric, promoting science and research, and protecting the incomes of workers and families during this period of slowdown, thus creating a firm foundation for economic recovery and ensuring that no one is left behind.



At the community level the following requirements to prevent the Covid-19 effects between athletes, trainers and citizens who practice sport activities were mandatory:

Access to the facilities is reserved for people who are going to carry out a sporting activity. Only people duly authorized will have access to the facilities by appointment or reservation.

All entrances must be staggered, in order to control the capacity of the installation, and avoid as much as possible that several people can accumulate in the input control.

PUNCTUALITY will be required to access the site, the lack of which is sufficient reason to deny access to the user. Similarly, rigor is required in compliance with the schedules assigned at the time of EXIT of the installation.



# Greece

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The measures of the pandemic have been many for the sport. So many that they have brought confusion and anger, not only to athletes, but also to anyone who wanted to play sports sporadically and from time to time. The gyms were the ones that remained closed until the last moment because it is considered that there is a direct friction of people through sweat, breathing, etc. In addition, there was a division between the first and second league, because for some time competitions were allowed in the first division and not in minor categories of the same sport.

Some of the measures for the events that were to be held, but also for the sports that opened slowly after the pandemic, were:

- Operation of open sports facilities, without use of changing rooms, exclusively in groups of up to three (3) people, including the coach or families and without the presence of spectators, for sporting purposes.

Operation of sports facilities for training and / or competitions, without the presence of spectators, of teams only if the teams / athletes follow a health protocol that includes the obligation to carry out weekly preventive tests on COVID-19 athletes with proof of antigens

-



For sports performed outdoors or in free spaces, and outside organized sports facilities, such as: mountaineering, climbing, hiking, cycling, ski mountaineering, hiking, distance routes, etc., based on the following conditions:

1. Training groups should not exceed 7 people, maintaining distances of at least 2 meters between athletes.
2. The presence of a coach is not mandatory, but if present, he can train up to 6 athletes / athletes.
3. Athletes' movements to and from the training area must be based on government regulations for transportation.
4. The use of a mask is mandatory. Athletes are excluded from wearing masks during exercise.



# France

Since the beginning of the pandemic, people who play sports have had to face multiple restrictions, which have continued to evolve, forcing themselves to constantly adapt their sports and physical activity practices. Furthermore, the restrictions imposed on certain physical and sporting activities have not benefited others that were still possible and authorized, as might be imagined.

The COVID-19 pandemic reached France on 24 January 2020, when the first case in Europe was confirmed in Bordeaux. However, only at noon on 17 March 2020, in the wake of the crisis in Italy, did France enter a confinement mechanism, which included the implementation of specific measures.



Depending on the practice and the place where the activity is carried out, the activity may be subject to the presentation of a sanitary pass to limit the circulation of the Covid-19 virus and its variants. Since 26 November 2021, a new health protocol has entered into force for sport. The wearing of the mask becomes mandatory for all for the indoor and outdoor sports equipment (ERP X and PA), a sports equipment, except at the time of the sports practice and its effective supervision.





*Everything you  
can imagine is real*

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# MENTAL WELL-BEING AND SPORT



The World Health Organization (2011,1) defines mental health as ‘a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community’. Therefore, in contrast, mental health problems are characterised by alterations in cognition, emotion or social behavior associated with distress or impaired functioning (Sawyer et al. 2000). The WHO stresses that mental health is “more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities.” Peak mental health is about not only avoiding active conditions but also looking after ongoing wellness and happiness. They also emphasize that preserving and restoring mental health is crucial on an individual basis, as well as throughout different communities and societies the world over.

Wellbeing, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is the state of feeling healthy and happy. Wellbeing is not just the absence of disease or illness. It's a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. In short, wellbeing could be described as how you feel about yourself and your life. Every aspect of our lives influences our state of wellbeing.

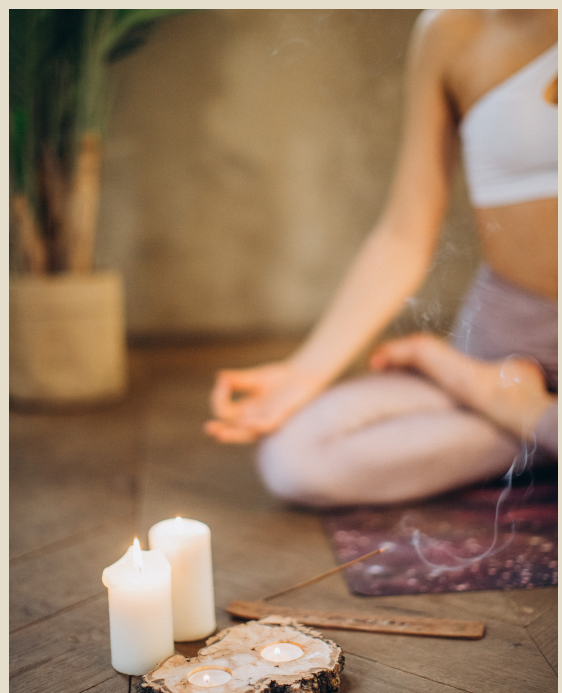


# Mental Well-being and Covid-19



The growing burden on mental health during the pandemic of COVID-19 has been referred to by some as the 'second' or 'silent' pandemic. Despite the fact that pandemic is a physical health crisis, it has also had widespread impact on people's mental health inducing, among other things, considerable levels of fear, worry, anxiety and concern. The negative mental health consequences affect all ages in the European population, but mostly the young have been found to be at high risk of developing poor mental health. Also some other specific groups have been particularly affected, including the health and care workers, the people who already had mental health problems, and of course women. The pandemic has also appeared to increase inequalities in mental health, both within the population and between social groups.

Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones. Many people may be facing increased levels of alcohol and drug use, insomnia, and anxiety. Meanwhile, COVID-19 itself can lead to neurological and mental complications, such as delirium, agitation, and stroke. People with pre-existing mental, neurological or substance use disorders are also more vulnerable to SARS-CoV-2 infection – they may stand a higher risk of severe outcomes and even death







## Mental Wellbeing and Sports

In bibliography there are many publications listing the mental health benefits of physical activity. There are benefits from the social interaction and mutual support resulting from participating in group exercise, the improved mood, self-confidence and self-esteem resulting from engaging in challenging physical activity, and the distraction that physical activity provides from day-to-day stressors.

Participation in sports can help the sense of autonomy that comes from self-selecting the exercise and doing it voluntarily and solely in one's own interests. The importance of the effort expended in exercising through to the improved sense of relatedness created by engaging in physical activities with others.

The impact sport and physical activity can have on mental wellbeing is every bit as important as the physical benefits. Physical activity can contribute to enjoyment and happiness, thanks to the endorphins and other many neurotransmitters released when exercise. More specifically, when someone is exercising, his/her body releases chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins interact with the receptors in his/her brain that reduce your perception of pain. Endorphins also trigger a positive feeling in the body, similar to that of morphine.





Depression is a mental disorder that causes persistent feelings of apathy and sadness. It's a complex condition, with several contributing factors. Changes in your brain biochemistry likely play a part. "Simply put, most people who are depressed have something wrong with their brain chemistry", says William Walsh, Ph.D., president of the Walsh Research Institute, a nonprofit mental health research institution in Illinois. "Life experiences can make things worse," he adds, "but usually the dominant problem is chemistry."

Exercise can help relieve symptoms of depression in several ways. Among other benefits, it helps stimulate the release of feel-good brain chemicals. Exercise can have other mental health benefits too. For example, focusing on your body's movements during exercise may help distract you from upsetting thoughts. Setting and meeting exercise-related goals may also boost your confidence and sense of control.

When you exercise with other people, it can provide mood-boosting social benefits. For example, consider walking in the park, taking a yoga class, or joining a recreational sport team with a friend or family member. Exercise classes can also be a good place to meet new people. You can enjoy the physical stimulation of a workout, while getting social stimulation too.

More broadly exercise leads to life satisfaction through increased social interaction. Volunteers and sports fans also have an increased sense of purpose and pride, while self-esteem and confidence are known to increase through participation or volunteering.

On the other hand, elite athletes are not immune to developing a mental illness and are often at the peak of their competitive careers during these high-risk years. Moreover, they can experience unique stressors that can have deleterious effects on mental health including sport-related stress , injuries , living away from home and burnout.





This is the reason mental toughness in sport has always been a really important strength for athletes. Athletes with greater mental toughness cope more effectively with adversity and pressure, possess increased resilience in the face of challenges, and deliver more consistent, cognitive, and physical performance in sport (Crust 2007). However, it has been proposed that mental health and mental toughness are contradictory concepts in the world of elite sport. Accordingly, mental toughness – "an unshakeable perseverance and conviction towards some goal despite pressure or adversity" (Middleton et al. 2004) – has long been valued in sport and is an important factor in determining sporting outcomes and success. Coaches have to play an important role in the promotion and practice of psychological skills that are beneficial to an athlete's mental wellbeing.

Despite the fact that the mental health challenges are many, there are also many positives that playing competitive sport can bring to athletes. The sports environment fosters positive athlete development by facilitating self-esteem, identity formation, and feelings of competence, and encouraging positive peer relationships, leadership skills, teamwork, commitment, and discipline . The reciprocal social support that occurs in sport is also an important factor in promoting physical and mental well-being.



# Latvia

At the end of 2020, the Center for Adolescent and Youth Psychotherapy carried out an extensive study “The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic Restrictions on Adolescents and Youth in Latvia”, involving more than 1,660 young people aged 12 to 19 in Latvia. The study analyzed the mental health of young people and the impact of the pandemic on it. Research shows that young people value their psychological well-being as critical, and this has been significantly affected by the pandemic.



54.5% of adolescents admit that their mental health has deteriorated, 19.8% - that it has greatly deteriorated during Covid-19. 70.4% admit that they have experienced depression, depression in the last 2 weeks, 79.2% have difficulty learning, more than 60% have obsessive thoughts or are very irritable. These are just some of the problems young people have mentioned. 1 in 5 adolescents admit to experiencing psycho-emotional difficulties at school.



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The indicators of a decline in mental health are also worrying. While in the first wave young people assessed their mental health mostly as good (38.1%) or acceptable (24.3%), in the second wave the assessment of acceptable (31.6%) and bad (29.8%) already dominates. The number of young people who feel very good in a pandemic is falling sharply, while the number who feel critically bad is increasing.

Numerous studies have shown that physical activity has a beneficial effect on the health of children, young people and adults. The recommendations for the promotion of physical activity for the population of Latvia developed by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia in cooperation with the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization indicate that regular physical activity reduces the risk of developing non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and certain oncological diseases.

At the same time, physical activity plays an important role in maintaining mental health by reducing stress, anxiety and depression. In general, physical activity is one of the most effective ways to maintain physical and mental health throughout life. Taking care of physical and mental well-being, sports should clearly be included in the daily routine of people of different ages.



# Romania

COVID-19) has brought dramatic changes to everyday life, including economic and health impacts worldwide. The world faced significant, unique challenges characterized by a high level of insecurity, affecting humankind in all facets of life: intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, professional, financial, and spiritual. Anxiety, worry, and insecurity were provoked by the adverse effects on health and the severe restrictions imposed, which significantly reduced the degree of personal freedom.



The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has caused dramatic changes in the daily lives of Romanians, affecting their mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic has evolved at three significant peaks, which sequentially occurred on: April 29, 2020; September 18, 2020; and the third wave registered the highest severity on November 27, 2020. Little is known about the mental health changes during this phase of this pandemic.



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The authorities in order to protect the mental wellbeing of their citizens, advised the public to:

a) Look for information and practical protective measures COVID19 that come from reliable sources.

b) Check information updates at certain times of the day. The sudden and almost constant flow of reports can make anyone feel worried.

c) Get the facts, not the rumors and misinformation. Access the WHO website and the local health authorities' platform to help you identify rumors. Facts can help minimize fears.

d) Protect yourself and be helpful to others. For example, contact neighbours or people in your community who may need additional help. Working together as a community can help create solidarity in the COVID-19 approach.

e) Appreciate the people who work in the health field and support the people affected by COVID-19.

f) Be prepared and find out in advance where and how you can get practical help, if needed, from seeking medical care to food delivery.

The mental health of Romanian adults was affected both in the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and afterward, particularly in younger adults, those with a lower education level, and those reporting previous traumatic events.



# Spain

The pandemic has hit especially collective sports, in which we have seen an increase in mental health problems and behaviors such as isolation and the loss of social contact. Faced with this situation, we found ourselves in the need to promote activities of socialization through sports practice.



With the aim of improving self-esteem and confidence, initiatives were launched, both public and private, from leisure and free time , different activities such as gymnastics at home, group physical activities to do through videoconferences, workshops all kinds of physical and sports activities, etc. Some activities, in short, with which, in addition to sport, are enhanced by the social skills, the group cohesion and healthy leisure.



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Not in vain, the lockdown and the pandemic in general have greatly affected social relations. Profiles became very isolated, people that didn't know what to do with their life, that didn't feel identified with anything. With this social initiative has tried to remove them of that mental numbness in self-esteem and confidence themselves, helping them to rethink the reconstruction of his vital project and succeeding in awakening that critical spirit.

This initiative has nailed the figure of the volunteering, because in each activity he participates at least one person as a volunteer, physical or legal, that, acting as equals, contributes a great dynamism. It reaches a point, which makes the relations flow much better and that group cohesion is present from the beginning.

In fact, in addition to being models, they break the barrier out of fear, they jump into developing the activity and that makes the rest feel very identified with them and lose fear.

Therefore, the development of the activity is also the perfect excuse for the exchange of experiences, from concerns and of hobbies. Something so necessary in these times of pandemic.

Today, this initiative is here to stay; in fact, 32% more physical activity is practiced in Spain by telematics than in the period prior to the pandemic.



# Greece

In Greece, one of the reasons that the Covid-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult for people living with mental illness or people who got mental issues during pandemic, is that many have found it harder to get the support they need from mental health services.



The truth is that for people who are severely affected by mental illness, even before the pandemic, it was often hard to get the support they needed. Many people are told that they are too unwell to be supported just by their doctor or other primary care services, but not ill enough to get the specialist help that they need. For many people, services that would have been face to face are now taking place over the phone or video conferencing. In other cases some people with mental problems were on waiting lists for hospitals or other mental health services but then these services were closed or the hospitals could not accept more patients because of Covid-19. Sometimes people who were already in these services had to be sent home and put on the waiting list for re-admission.



# France

The confinements and numerous other health restrictions that have been adopted by the French government in recent months in an attempt to contain the Covid-19 pandemic have had negative effects on many sectors, including the sports sector. However, the consequences go beyond this aspect, since they have also severely impacted the health of French people, especially their mental well-being.



Faced with this disturbing fact, several studies have been conducted on the subject. In this context, since March 2020, the CoviPrev survey conducted by Santé publique France aims to monitor changes in the behavior and mental health (well-being, disorders) of the French during the COVID-19 epidemic. Thus, according to the latest results, which concern the period of May 17-19, 2021, "80% of French people currently declare themselves satisfied with their life", an increase of 13 points compared to the level at the beginning of the 1st containment.

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Although the situation seems to have evolved positively after the difficult months of March and April 2020, this percentage is at a low level, 5 points lower than the level outside the epidemic. In addition, the other mental health indicators studied, namely anxiety, depression, sleep problems and suicidal thoughts, remain at high levels since the first restrictions were put in place. For example, 30% of the people surveyed were anxious or depressed.

It should also be noted that certain "profiles of the population" have a more degraded mental health than others. Concerning anxiety, depression and sleep problems, it is the women who have had a more degraded mental health these last months.

In this context of important degradation of the mental well being of the French, sports could be one of the solutions. Indeed, the practice of sports has many benefits, among which, a positive action on mental health as the WHO puts it forward "regular physical activity improves mental health and can reduce the risk of depression and cognitive decline, delay the onset of dementia and improve the general feeling of well-being. Already in 2008, in a report on the effects of physical activity on health, Inserm stated that "physical activity reduces anxiety in the general adult population, decreases the level of depression in a wide range of populations, and should be proposed in any management of depression."





Yet, here too, the pandemic has heavily affected sports activity. Beyond the practice of sports, which has become more difficult with the implementation of health restrictions, psychological factors such as desire and motivation have played a determining role, even more so during this period, according to the National Barometer of Sports Practices. However, in this context of uncertainty, desire and motivation have fallen among both practitioners and non-practitioners, which accentuates the decline in sports participation, and therefore does not allow for its mental health benefits.



The Covid-19 pandemic therefore reminds us of the importance of practicing sports because of its numerous benefits, particularly on mental health. For these reasons, in a particularly difficult context for physical and mental well-being, it is necessary to promote and support the sports sector. And for this action to be effective, the entire sports world must be supported in all its diversity. The objective must be to allow everyone to continue or to start practicing sport, and thus to benefit from its numerous advantages, whether they are professionals or amateurs, women or men, but also people with disabilities.



# Resources

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# Restart Sport Engine in EU

[www.restart.scoutsociety.ro](http://www.restart.scoutsociety.ro)

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