

A person is running away from the camera on a paved path. They are wearing a teal tank top, black shorts, and colorful sneakers. Their hair is tied back and blowing in the wind. The background shows a sunset over a body of water with hills in the distance.

# Sports4Life

## NON-FORMAL TOOLKIT FOR GRASSROOTS

WWW.AJITER.PT

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Associação Juvenil  
da Ilha Terceira

Co-funded by the  
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# **“Sports4Life: Non-Formal Toolkit for Grassroots”**

**A TOOLKIT FOR GRASSROOTS  
March 2020**

With the support of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Unit A6: Erasmus+ Sport, Youth and EU Aid Volunteers

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### About the Project

"Sports4Life: Non-Formal Toolkit for Grassroots" is the result of an application submitted and approved in 2018 to the Erasmus+ Sport program, a European youth mobility support program, managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

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The project had the main objective of promoting healthier lifestyles in Europe, starting with the fight against childhood inactivity and obesity. To this end, the project aims to improve the tools and work skills of youth workers and school-age coaches by creating a toolkit consisting of non-formal techniques designed specifically for young school-age athletes. On the other hand, to achieve the project's objectives, a group of 27 young people participated, in March 2020, in a training week that took place in Terceira Island (Azores-Portugal). During the training week, the participants developed their skills and competences in teaching sports to young people, while developing the contents of this handbook.

This toolkit will consist of a guide available online or for printing, with a set of non-formal techniques that grassroots coaches can use to motivate children to play sports. These non-formal techniques are games and dynamic exercises that enable fun, comprehensive and long-lasting learning, promoting inter and intrapersonal contact.

The handbook aims to serve as a working tool for teachers and trainers working with children who are starting physical activity for the first time. The tool contains activities and games for certain age-groups and the result of a questionnaire created by the partners of the project.

All the contents that appear in this handbook were created and developed by the participants during the project and later compiled by the Coordinator.



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## The Partnership

### AJITER – Associação Juvenil da Ilha Terceira (Coordinator) - Portugal

The Youth Association of Terceira Island is a non-profitable organization, created in 2003 in Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal. Its main objective is to promote the youngsters' integration and participation in their communities. Sports have been one of the major areas of interest for AJITER. To promote healthy lifestyles and physical activity, one of its main activities is a futsal tournament, the "Torneio Futsal AJITER", currently in its 14<sup>th</sup> edition,

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### AJFB – Associação de Jovens da Fonte Bastardo (sports expert) - Portugal

The Youth Association of Fonte Bastardo is one of the most prominent sports clubs in the Azores. It is located on Terceira Island and hosts hundreds of athletes starting at the age of 6 years old. It was founded in 1975 and houses dozens of teams from grassroots sports, namely, volleyball and futsal. AJFB's male senior team plays on the A1 National Division Championship. In 2011 and 2016 they became National Champions and in 2013 and 2016 they won the Portuguese National Cup.

### Active Youth- Asociacija Aktyvus Jaunimas – Lithuania

Active Youth is an association committed to youth projects through non-formal education. The NGO organizes seminars, conferences and discussions about relevant social topics, such as sport and healthy lifestyle promotion. This association offers, also, a considerable input in regards to the outputs of the project, as its digital presence is outstanding.

### Champions Factory – Bulgaria

Champions Factory is an international sports organization with 8 years of experience in the fields of development and implementation of national and international sports projects, sports management, research and innovation. The organization is established and with headquarters in Sofia (Bulgaria). Other offices are set up in Dublin (Ireland) and London (United Kingdom).

### Solidarity Tracks – Greece.

Solidarity Tracks is a non-profit company that promotes the values of sustainable development, human rights, through youth mobility exchanges and intercultural learning. The main goal of the organization is to understand the links which unite people, supports the spirit for equal and mutual development. Their target groups are young people, including people with social problems and disabilities.



## What are Grassroots Sports?

Grassroots sports are physical leisure activities, organized and non-organized, practised regularly at non-professional level for health, educational or social purposes. They are the fundamental elements of physical activity, being important for the education of young children. Grassroots sports clubs play a vital role in their local community. Not only do they help people stay fit and healthy and help develop an individual's sporting talents, but they also bring children and people in general from the local community together. Some examples of grassroots sports are football, volleyball or basketball.

Playing sports, young people tend to improve their self-confidence, allowing them to feel better about themselves and facing health more seriously. This can even be a start in a sport-related career, using passion as a drive for future situations.

Inclusion is also an important element of grassroots, as some participants can feel less integrated/capable than others. Developing a sense of teamwork will also allow dealing with this issue, as teammates can help integrate other members.

Furthermore, grassroots allow children to have an introduction to sports and physical activity that allows children to learn the following:

- Interaction with each other;
- Healthy rivalry;
- Space awareness;
- Basic rules;
- Respect;
- Coordination;
- Agility;
- Muscle mass-gain;
- Endurance;
- Team-work.
- Reflexes;
- Developing a sense of purpose.

To this effect, the following principles are primordial to assure the involvement of young people: a) Make sure the activities are fun and flexible, avoiding stress to the participants; b) present the activity as a game, as children lose interest easily; c) make sure there is always a trainer/coach/adult following the activity and there is constant attention to each participant regarding safety and involvement.

## Benefits of Grassroots Sports for Young People

Promoting the active practice of grassroots sports can help develop young people in several areas and across many transversal skills and competences, such as:

- Promoting healthier lifestyles and general well-being;
- Promoting mental health;
- Aiding self-expression skills;
- Promoting active self-improvement;
- Improving social awareness, by cementing important friendships;
- Aiding at self-emotional-control and understanding;
- Developing values and good principles;
- Broadening mentalities.

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Young people in fragile situations can also benefit from practising sports. For instance, sports that use animals can help develop children with diagnosed mental and physical conditions improve their skills, overall health and sense of attachment and belonging. Furthermore, in countries with greater criminal activity levels, sports can help young people escape and find positive interests.

Grassroots can also be an individual or group activity. Other than help develop communicational skills, group sports grant an easier entrance, as a support team can help in the initial steps. Individual sports, on the other hand, allow the individual to focus on his results, being the sole responsible for them.

## Sports4Life: Young Trainers in Grassroots Online Questionnaire

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### Introduction:

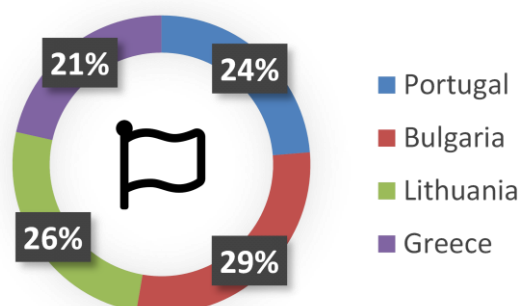
To learn more about the subject at hand, the partners created an Online Questionnaire under the title "Sports4Life: Young Trainers in Grassroots Online Questionnaire". The objective was to collect information about the target group of the project and learn more about their expectations and first-hand experience on needed tools.

The target of the online Questionnaire was youth workers and professionals or not-professionals working or practising some activity related to sports and, more specifically, grassroots. The partners set out to collect data from at least 20 different respondents per country (total of at least 80 responses: 20 responses from Portugal, 20 from Greece, 20 from Bulgaria and 20 from Lithuania), during one month (February 2020). The Questionnaire was shared and promoted by all partners, achieving a total of 93.

### The collected data:

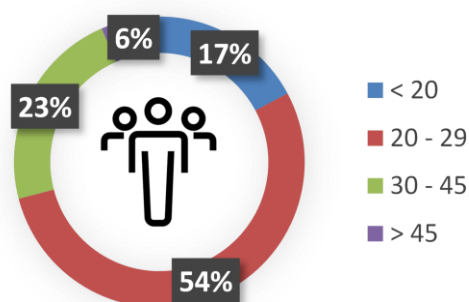
#### Place of Residence:

From the 93 respondents, 27 were from Bulgaria, 24 were from Lithuania, 22 from Portugal and 20 from Greece, achieving the minimum goals in every country and validating the sample, as projected.



#### Age:

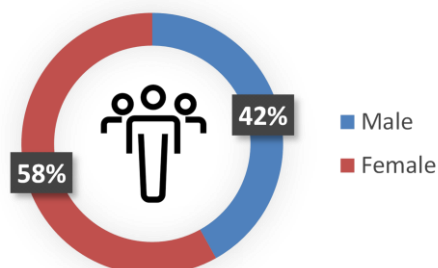
In regards to age, the group is mostly placed between 20 and 29 years old.





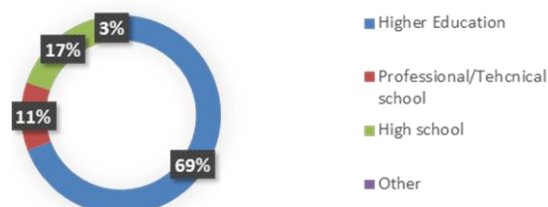
## Gender:

The majority of the responders to the questionnaire were female (54 responses), rather than male (39 responses).



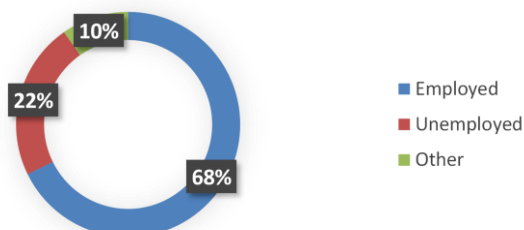
## Education:

Most responders indicated "Higher Education" as their level of education (63 responses).



## Occupation:

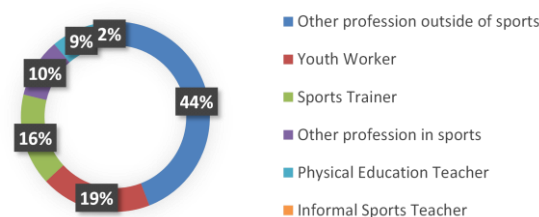
Most responders indicated that they are currently employed (also 63 responses).



## Current job condition:

The biggest percentage (67,7%) of participants were employed; 22,6% were unemployed. The rest were freelancers, students or other. Among employed people, most (46,2%) professions were not related with sports, and 18,3% were youth workers. The professions related with sports were:

- Sports trainer (15,1%);
- Physical education teacher (8,6%);
- Informal sports teacher (2,1%);
- Other profession in sports (9,7%).

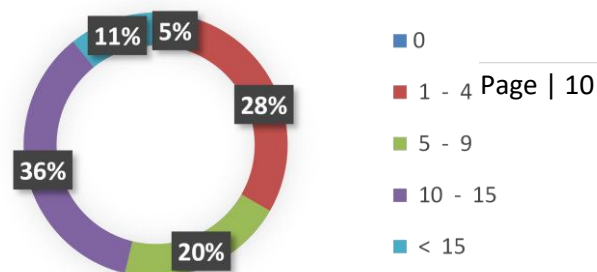


## Years of experience in sports:

The results varied from 0 to 41 years. There were 5 groups based of year of experience:

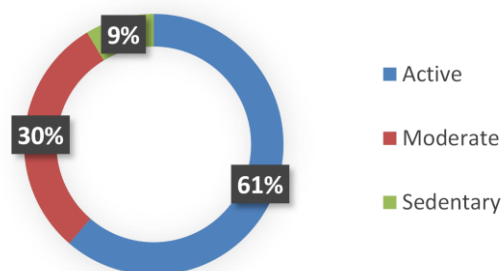
- 0 (5%)
- 1-4 (28%)
- 5-9 (20%)
- 10-15 (36%)
- >15 (11%)

Examples of experience in sports were "professional athlete", "kickboxing", "football player", "fitness club manager", "volleyball player", "volleyball coach", "climbing", "yoga", "basketball player" and "basketball coach".



## Type of lifestyle:

The group was divided in three categories. The biggest group of respondents consider they have an active lifestyle (61,3%). 30,1% of the participants choose moderate lifestyle and the rest (8,6%) - sedentary.

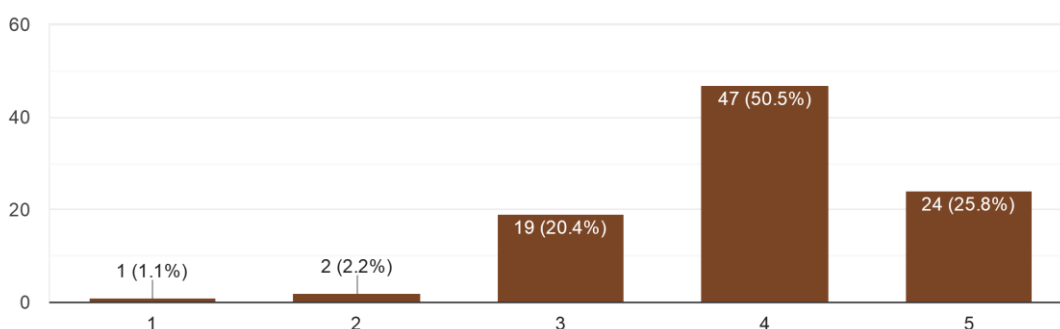


## Importance of sports:

After characterizing the group of respondents, their expectations and opinions were addressed. When asked about the importance of sports in the participant's country, most responses were "important" and "very important". The respondents consider the role of sports in their day-to-day life either "important" (34 responses) or "very important" (34 responses).

How important are sports for the culture of your country?

93 responses

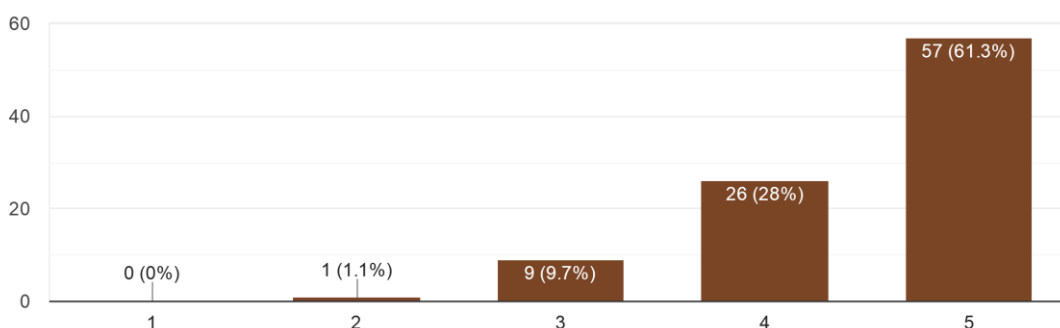


## Sports in young people's everyday life:

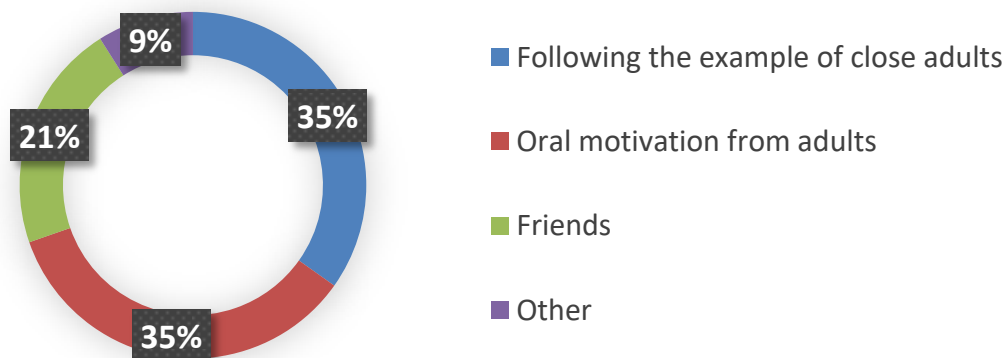
Most respondents recognized that practising sports is "very important" to create connections between young people. They also majorly agree (57 responses) that it is "very important" to train coaches and trainers working with young people in grassroots. They were also asked what is most effective to motivate young people to practice sports.

Is training teachers/coaches working with children in Grassroot Sports important?

93 responses



They were also asked what they would consider is the most effective strategy to motivate young people to practice sports. The responses were divided but focused mainly on the influence of adults and friends.

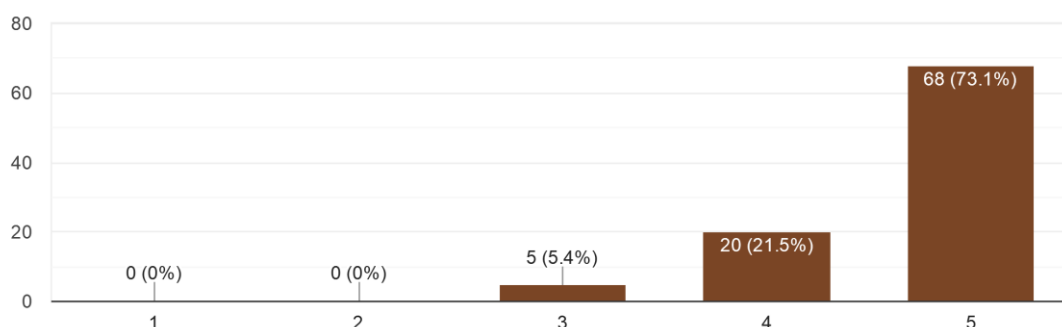


## Sports and nutrition for children:

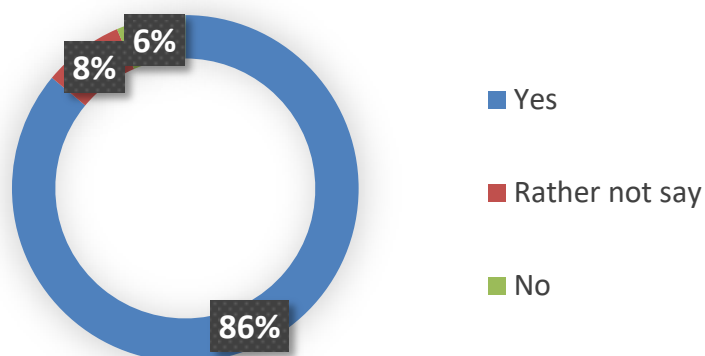
The respondents from all countries majorly agree that it is "very important" (68 responses) to motivate children to practice sports. They also consider that nutrition should have a relevant role in young people's lives (72 respondents consider it to be "very important").

How important is it to motivate young people to practice sports?

93 responses



Following the expectations of the responders towards working with children, the partners asked if the participants are willing to try new sports and teaching methods. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

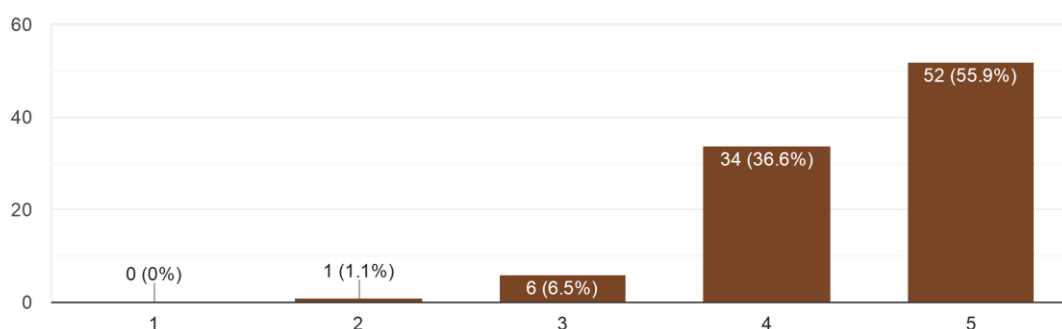


## Young people and Erasmus+:

The respondents from all countries majorly agree that it is either "very important" (52 responses) or "important" (34 responses) to continue using the Erasmus+ Sports programme to promote healthier lifestyles.

How important are Erasmus+ Sports projects to the promotion of more active lifestyles?

93 responses



## Online Questionnaire - Conclusions:

For this project, the partners conducted an online questionnaire which contains questions about personal information and background, sports and grassroots. In total there were 93 valid responses registered from the four different countries participating in the project: Portugal, Greece, Bulgaria and Lithuania.

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Most responders fall under the age category of 20-29 years old (53.8%). Most participants have higher education degrees and have occupations in different fields of sports. Furthermore, most participants have over 10 years of experience in sports. A considerable amount of responders have a part-time occupation in sports, practising a lifestyle that they consider to be "active".

For most responders, practising sports is very important overall and specifically to create connections between young people in their everyday activities. They also majorly agree that it should be a priority to motivate young people to practice sports, with nutrition being a very important factor as well. In the opinion of the participants, several factors influence young people to be more active, focusing on the influence of adults and friends

Almost 90% of the participants consider that working with children in grassroots sports is important, with Erasmus+ Sports projects being also an important factor in the promotion of more active lifestyles. Lastly, most respondents (86%) claim they are willing to try new teaching methods.

Overall, through this questionnaire, the partners were able to understand the level of importance of sports in everyday life of people of various backgrounds, ages and occupations. They also assessed that there is an interest of young people in further developing their skills and competences at grassroots level.



## Activities for Grassroots

As a result of the work done by the participants of the project "Sports4Life", here are few tips when implementing new activities in grassroots:

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1. Experiment with different sports.
2. Combine active and mental elements from different sports (technique, power, patience and strategy).
3. Team formations: try to find and achieve a team goal, with compromise and fair play.

*4. "Teach respect: teach how to play and enjoy, not just win".*

5. Share know-how, knowledge and experiences.
6. Create levels (easy, medium and hard) and track progress made.

*7. "Create a personal leaderboard to identify individual progress".*

8. Combine theory and practice in different steps to assess goals and gains.
9. Write down the goals of each exercise to help your athlete focus.
10. Create little competitions between teams.

*11. "Integrate people of different backgrounds".*

12. Try to make activities as involving as possible, by using sport-related energizes, for instance.
13. Switch locations from activity to activity.
14. Combine sports with other activities outside of the sport to make them more fun.

*15. "Evaluate results and your training methods".*

16. Sport combined with other activities is a **way of life**.

## Tips to motivate young people

Keeping our tips in mind, some activities can help motivate young athletes to continue attending your practices:

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1. At the end of the session, point out personal best achievements for everyone.
2. Each athlete can prepare one warm-up exercise for the group.
3. Invite parents and friends to participate in the activities.
4. *Implement a daily challenge.*
5. Prepare a monthly group dinner.
6. Implement thematic competitions (Christmas, Easter...).
5. *Invite an expert to a particular activity.*
7. Provide a purpose for training (training and doing activities for charity or a group trip, for instance).
8. Be aware of the importance of motivational speeches from the coach.
9. Implement a "Good Teammate" game to promote friendship: in a draft, every athlete picks another athlete that they have to positively surprise in some way.

## Planning the activity

To assure the participants can fully connect with a new activity, the trainer should plan and prepare for the implementation. A careful plan should include most of the following:

1. Number and age of the participants;
2. Type of activity;
- 6. Objectives;*
3. Materials and objects necessary;
4. Description of the exercise;  
*7. Time: total, parcels and rest periods;*
5. The intensity level and difficulty options;
6. Muscle groups (if relevant);  
*8. Possible risks involved;*
7. Simple and clear wording;
8. Feedback and evaluation with the group and by the trainer.

## Activities for Grassroots

Here are a few examples of exercises and activities that can be implemented in groups of several sizes and with different objectives.

### TIR-PIR

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- **Number of participants:** At least 3, no limit
- **Time:** 4-10 minutes, depending on the number of players
- **Equipment:** 1 ball
- **Ages:** 6-30 years old
- **Description:** Young people stand behind each other in two opposite facing single lines. The first person starts by throwing the ball to the person in front of him and runs toward the end of the opposite line. If you miss the pass or do not catch the ball, you are out. The two last-standing get an award (applause)

### MIND CONTROL

- **Number of participants:** At least one pair, with no limit
- **Time:** 4 minutes
- **Equipment:** None
- **Ages:** 5-30 years old
- **Description:** This is a concentration game, where one person is leading by holding the palm of his hand very close to the face of the other player to control him. The follower has to focus on the movements of the palm and move exactly as the palm does.

### PIZZA DELIVERY

- **Number of participants:** At least 2, with no limit
- **Time:** 4-10 minutes
- **Equipment:** Number of balls equal to the number of players
- **Ages:** 4-30 years old
- **Description:** Every player holds a ball like a hot pizza box while trying to make other players drop their "pizza box". The last standing player gets an award (applause)

### THE TREASURE IN THE VULCANO

- **Number of participants:** Unlimited pairs

- **Time:** No time limit
- **Equipment:** 2 balls, 2 benches, two treasure items (like a tissue or a cone)
- **Ages:** 4 years old to no limit
- **Description:** Two teams stand in lines facing two benches. The first person from each team has to run to the bench, climb it and transverse it and while balancing. Then run to a "treasure" item balanced on top of a ball. Each player needs to grab it, without making the ball move, and return it to the next person in the line. Then that second person does the same but balances the item on top of the ball for the next person to grab. When returning, the player has to clap the hand of the next player for him to start. The first team to go through all players wins.

## IN TIME OF NEED

- **Number of participants:** Unlimited
- **Time:** No time limit
- **Equipment:** Blindfolds and several objects for obstacles
- **Ages:** 3 years old to no limit
- **Description:** A group of players stand in a line with their hands on the following person's shoulders. All players are blindfolded, except for the last one in the line. The last player needs to guide the others with non-verbal communication and gestures to reach the finish line while avoiding obstacles. To do this, the team needs to first discuss a set of non-verbal commands that the non-blindfolded teammate would give while keeping his hands on the next person's shoulders.

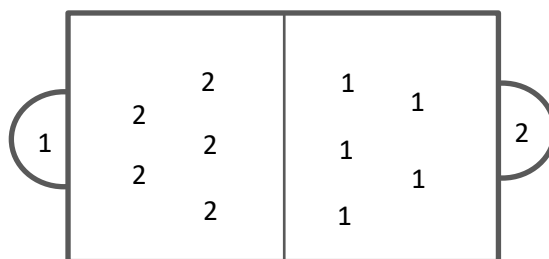
## LAND AND SEA

- **Number of participants:** At least 2, with no limit
- **Time:** Play until only the winner remains
- **Equipment:** 1 line on the floor
- **Ages:** 7 to 11 years old
- **Description:** All players stand next to a line on the floor (you can use the field lines), facing a leader/adult. One side of the line is the "sea", the other is "land". The leader needs to shout quickly the command words "sea" and "land" and the players need to quickly respond by jumping to the correct side. The players that make a mistake are out until only the winner is standing.

## FIREBALL

- **Number of participants:** 12 players
- **Time:** Two parcels of 15 minutes each
- **Equipment:** 1 ball (preferably, soft) and 1 court
- **Ages:** 7 years old to no limit
- **Description:** 12 players are divided into 2 teams. You can use any field: there needs to be two equal spaces, one for each team, and two spaces for a leader on each team. The player needs to hit an opponent with a "fireball" to dispel them from the field. If the ball gets out of the field, the "fire guardian" gets the ball and tries to hit an opponent. If a player from the other team catches the ball as an opponent tries to hit him, he can summon one of his dispelled teammates.

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## CATCH THE KNEES

- **Number of participants:** 3 to no limit
- **Time:** 5 minutes
- **Equipment:** None
- **Ages:** All ages
- **Description:** Similar to a regular game of catch, but instead of simply touching another player to catch him, the catcher needs to touch the other person's knees to catch him.

## CATCH IT STILL

- **Number of participants:** From 4 to 10 players
- **Time:** 5/10 points
- **Equipment:** 2 chairs, 1 ball
- **Ages:** 9-18 years old
- **Description:** 2 teams stand in front of each other, with a chair in front of the first person of each line. The first player from each line sits on the chair and sends the ball to his opponent sitting in the chair opposite to him. Once he throws the



ball, he runs to the back of the line, and the next person needs to quickly sit down, receive and send the ball. Each time a player fails to catch the ball, the other team gets a point.

## CAPTURE THE FLAG

- **Number of participants:** 10-30 players
- **Time:** 3/5 points to win (3/5 flags captured)
- **Equipment:** 2 objects for flags, 1 tissue or piece of cloth for each player
- **Ages:** 7-18 years old
- **Description:** Divide the players into 2 teams. Each team has a flag at the end of their field and each team member has a tissue on him that represents a "life". The team wins the game by invading the opponent's field, capturing the flag and bringing it back to their field. However, if a player removes the "life" of an opponent, the opponent is out. If a person carrying the flag loses a "life", he has to drop the flag where he was caught.

## HUNTING IN PAIRS

- **Number of participants:** 5 to no limit
- **Time:** 5 minutes
- **Equipment:** None
- **Ages:** 9-14 years old
- **Description:** Similar to a regular game of catch, but instead of only one person catching, a pair of players holding hands catches, promoting teamwork between the two.

## Final Conclusions

The project "Sports4Life" allowed for a number of participants to work in multinational groups and all together come up with useful tools that are summed up in this toolkit. In the frame of the project we created and shared a questionnaire, being the first part of our primary research, we brainstormed new ideas for kids' training and we tested our results in practice.

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From our questionnaire, we should point out that it was filled by people of all ages and genders with their majority being 20-29 years old from all the participant countries. The most relevant outcome was that sports are important for most people in their countries which is a positive sign for the future of our youth. The importance of sports in creating connections was also pointed out, is also something that we tried to focus on during the creation of the activities.

Afterwards, we focused on the very important topic of motivation for and through sports. Our results indicated that friends and family are very important in motivating youngsters strengthening the argument that the environment is critical for the formation of children's characters. To actively evaluate the results of the questionnaire, in the second part of the training course, we created activities for children and organized a training session for a local sports team.

We made a lot of energizers through a training week that focused on getting to know each other more and observe in practice the creation of connections between people. We concluded that energizers can be used to motivate kids to participate and thus they can be part of a wider training approach. World Cafe was a technique we used and by dividing into groups we brainstormed to come up with ideas and points of view on grassroots. In the end, every theme was presented and integrated. We created new innovative methods about how to motivate young people to participate more in sports activities, such as unconventional games/exercises. Each exercise had a specific purpose and a goal as we wanted kids to develop speed, reflexes, memory and most importantly, to incentivize them to practice sports and physical activity.

In conclusion, the partners point out that sports are and should be an important part of kid's everyday lives as they can create and increase capabilities that will be very useful for their lives from now and beyond. The major recommendation delivered is that trainers need to be inventive in creating training programs that raise children's love for sports.