

Response by Finland

- 1. To what extent, in your view, should United Nations Member States encourage individuals to participate in sport and adopt healthy lifestyles, to fulfil State obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to health? What is the minimum that must be done for this obligation to be met?**

Member States should strongly encourage individuals to participate in physical activity and adopt healthy lifestyles. Guidance on healthy lifestyle throughout the life cycle forms an important part of the social and health services in Finland.

Insufficient amount of physical activity and sedentary lifestyle as well as other unhealthy habits (poor diet, use of tobacco and alcohol) are contributory factors to many common diseases, problems caused by ageing and increased economic costs, they weaken the productivity of labour and competitiveness, and increase inequalities in health and wellbeing between population groups. We need to influence living environments and structures, ensure that all population groups have sufficient information and skills as well as support individuals and communities, especially the most vulnerable.

Finland closely follows the EU's recommendations and guidelines on health-enhancing physical activities, and the WHO's Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health.

- 2. Has your State introduced legislation or policy in relation to sport and/or healthy lifestyles? If so, please provide a brief description of the laws or policies adopted.**

The norms observed in Finland provide a sound basis for promoting health and wellbeing by means of physical activity. The most important acts containing provisions on promoting health and wellbeing are the Constitution of Finland, the Sports Act, the Health Care Act, the Youth Act and the Local Government Act.

Under the Constitution of Finland, physical activity is a basic cultural right. The purpose of the Sports Act is to promote the wellbeing and health of the population and to support the growth and development of young people by means of physical activity. Under the Health Care Act, municipalities must include health counselling in all health care services and arrange health checks and advice for all age groups. Under the act, municipal decision-makers must monitor the health and wellbeing of the residents and the factors affecting them and take measures in order to meet these needs. In addition, legislation covers quality criteria food stuffs and provision of food such as free school meals to all children. Health education as well as sports and cooking lessons are also a compulsory part of Finnish educational system.

The Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity (390/2015). (See Annex) promotes:

- (1) the opportunities of various demographic groups to engage in physical activity;
- (2) the wellbeing and health of the population;
- (3) the maintenance and improvement of the capacity for physical activity;
- (4) the growth and development of children and young people;
- (5) civic action in the field of physical activity including club activities;
- (6) top-level sports;
- (7) integrity and ethical principles in the context of physical activity and top-level sports; and
- (8) greater equality in sports and physical activity.

The efforts to achieve these objectives are based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion, multiculturalism, healthy lifestyles, respect for the environment and sustainable development.

Also, On the move – national strategy for physical activity promoting health and well-being 2020.
http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=6511564&name=DLFE-27873.pdf

Pursuant to Section 11 of the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the basic education syllabus includes physical education and health education as subjects. The National Board of Education updated the normative bases of the curricula for pre-primary, basic and additional education in 2014. The new curricula will be instituted as of 1 August 2016.

As for the bases of the pre-primary curriculum, the activity-promoting goals, content and pedagogical practices were updated. In terms of basic education, the Government issued a decision on more physically active school education in 2012 (Government Decree 422/2012). The Government decided on national goals and hour allocations for basic education, increasing the number of lesson hours allocated to physical education by two weekly lessons per year. In the new scheme, at least 20 weekly lessons per year are reserved for basic education. In total, this means 760 physical education lessons. The new allocation adds 76 physical education lessons to schoolwork.

In basic education, the purpose of health education is to provide pupils with a diverse knowledge of health and related skills. The key principles are valuing all life and securing a dignified life for everyone in accordance with basic human rights. Phenomena related to health and well-being are examined through various areas of health-related knowledge, in a manner that is appropriate for each age group. The goal is to guide the pupils towards enhancing their understanding of physical, psychological and social health.

A more physically active lifestyle is also promoted organically through club and group activities arranged by the schools in the morning and afternoon.

All basic vocational qualifications include a course on physical activity, health education and maintaining your capacity to work (named "Työkyvyn ylläpitäminen, liikunta ja terveystieto"), through which healthy living, work capacity and physically active hobbies are promoted among students. The aim is to ensure that the students are familiar with healthy lifestyles during their studies and when making the transition to employment. With this knowledge they can build their lives accordingly. In addition to this, vocational students must be aware of the safety requirements of their work tasks and be capable of developing work methods and the safety and healthiness of the operating environment during actual employment.

3. What are the major challenges and opportunities that arise in adopting a right-to-health approach to participation in sport and adoption of healthy lifestyles?

One of the major challenges and opportunities is to create equal opportunities for sport and physical activity for all in line with the implementation of the Act on the promotion of sport and physical activity. For this purpose the National Sport Confederation, Valo, together with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Justice and some sport federations has created a model for enhancing equity and equality both in administration and in action. Every federation aiming to have government funding should prepare the equity and gender equality plan by the end of 2016.

Supporting physical activity in early education provides children with important life lessons, based on which they can adopt active lifestyles that improve their own well-being. As a natural continuation of early education and pre-primary education, high-quality physical education promotes an active lifestyle among children and adolescents and supports self-motivated extracurricular sports and exercise. Adopting a physically active lifestyle at a young age increases the likelihood of children and adolescents continuing to engage in sports and exercise in their adulthood. Studies have shown that the impact of early childhood on adopting a physically active or passive lifestyle is undeniable.

4. What are the best ways the Members States can promote individuals' participation in sport and adoption of healthy lifestyles? Please provide and briefly describe any examples of "good practices" adopted by Member States in this respect.

In Finland we have a national physical activity program for every age group. These programs have campaigns, education and counselling and financial support for local actors to organize different kind of sports. Ministries have national physical activity recommendations and dietary guidelines for every age group. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health also have national recommendation to reduce sedentary lifestyle, which is a new perspective in physical activity promotion.

Please also see Annex 2, which is a factsheet on health-enhancing physical activity in Finland, developed as a part of a joint initiative between the European Commission (EC) and WHO Regional Office for Europe in the context of the implementation of the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors and the European Noncommunicable Diseases Action Plan 2012-2016.

5. Are there any targeted interventions that can be implemented to promote participation in sport and adoption of healthy lifestyles amongst population who could face vulnerable situations, including women, children, and people with disabilities?

In Finland the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture have common strategy for physical activity, which emphasize support for vulnerable groups. The National Lottery Association supports for example non-governmental organizations and their interventions concerning vulnerable groups.

Please see the following national recommendations:

Physical Activity in early childhood education:

http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=28707&name=DLFE-3739.pdf&title=Varhaiskasvatuksen_liikunnan_suosituksset_fi.pdf

The physical activity of school-aged children:

http://www.ukkinstituutti.fi/filebank/1477-Fyysisen_aktiivisuuden_suositus_kouluikaisille.pdf

http://www.ukkinstituutti.fi/ammattilaisille/terveysliikuntasuosituksset/lasten_ja_nuorten_liikuntasuosituksset (only in Finnish)

and for senior citizens (over 65 years old)

http://www.ukkinstituutti.fi/ammattilaisille/terveysliikuntasuositukset/liikuntapiirakka_yli_65-vuotiaille
(only in Finnish)

Programme for integrating immigrants through sports (2010).
http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2010/Kehittamisohjelma_maahanmuuttajien_kotouttamiseksi_liikunnan_avulla.html?lang=fi&extra_locale=en

The National Policy Programme for Older People's Physical Activity (2012)
<http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2012/liitteet/OKM17.pdf?lang=fi>

In order to implement the recommendations and programmes, there are several projects, such as School on the Move for children and young people: <http://www.liikkuvakoulu.fi/in-english>

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Culture supports the Finnish Paralympic Committee and the Finnish Sports Association for Persons with Disabilities (VAU) (which is a non-governmental umbrella sports organization for persons with disabilities in Finland) as well as research on adapted physical activity, equal accessibility to sport facilities and other activities to enhance integration and inclusion. For further information e.g.:

<http://www.vammaisurheilu.fi/in-english>

<http://www.sport.fi/paralympiakomitea/briefly-in-english>

6. Other than Member States, which other actors should be taking steps to encourage individuals to participate in sport and adopt healthy lifestyles? What can Member States do to encourage this occurs?

Finland has a long tradition of collaboration with different stakeholders and using Health in All Policies Approach. Ministries, research centers, physical activity programs, non-governmental organizations, municipalities etc. all together make efforts in the promotion of physical activity and healthy lifestyles, both nationally and internationally.

Enclosure: 1) Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity (390/2015)

2) Finland Physical Activity Factsheet

