

**PROJECT “DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE CAPACITIES TO IDENTIFY AND REDUCE HEALTH INEQUALITIES“
No. NOR-LT11-SAM-01-TF-02-001**

Sub-activity 1.1.1.6 “Preparation, issuance and distribution of recommendation for evaluation and reduction of health inequalities“

Recommendations for the reduction of the inequalities of physical activity

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Physical activity (PA) is one of the components of a healthy lifestyle. The scientific literature contains a lot of indisputable evidence that the PA is essential to ensure good physical and mental health. The regular moderate PA lasting for at least 30–45 minutes per day and at least 5 days per week has a positive effect on health and reduces the risk of development of the ischemic heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer and diabetes. The results of the investigations carried out in Lithuania showed the inequalities in the PA, determined by the demographic (gender, age), social and economic (education, the nature of work, income) factors. It is recommended to implement evidence-based interventions for the reduction of the inequalities of PA at the national and local (municipal) level.

I. The recommendations of the national level:

- 1. To carry out the national campaigns promoting the PA.** It is proposed to organize the national, long-term and consistent campaign intended for promoting the PA of the population or the target groups. The campaign should convince, that the PA helps to feel better, helps to maintain the social contacts; helps to implement the understanding that the PA is an integral part of everyday life and that it is worth to change the lifestyle habits. Campaign should include formal and non-formal activities of the PA disseminate the examples of good practice. By carrying out the campaigns promoting the PA, the vulnerable groups may be encouraged to move: girls, women, high school students and the elderly.
- 2. To increase the availability of various activities of the PA.** It is recommended to integrate the PA into the daily life by promoting people to use the infrastructure of the PA: bicycle paths, recreational grounds, parks, physical activity facilities. To apply the compensation mechanisms of the PA services for vulnerable groups. By increasing the availability of various activities of the FA, low income individuals could be encouraged to move.
- 3. The development of the friendly environment for the PA.** It is recommended to orient the urban development planning and the land use policy to create a proper, comfortable and safe living

environment. It can help to create a favourable environment for the PA: the safe layout of streets, the density of residential area, the layout of shops, offices and schools in the distances that could be overcome by foot or by bicycle. By creating a favourable environment for the PA, it is possible to encourage moving more vulnerable groups: children, women with children, and the elderly.

4. **To introduce the “PA prescription”.** It is recommended to identify at the primary health care level those individuals, whose PA is insufficient and / or those who have the risk factors of chronic non-communicable diseases. For such patients the primary health care specialist should provide a brief consultation and encourage (with “PA prescription”) them to participate in the PA programs. When implementing this recommendation, it is essential to ensure the proper preparation (qualification) of the specialists to provide the lifestyle consultations.
5. **To improve the monitoring of the PA of the population.** By improving the monitoring of the PA of the population, it is possible to detect in time the PA trends and inequalities between municipalities or between different groups of the population. Monitoring results would help to plan targeted measures to reduce inequalities.

II. The recommendations of the municipal level:

1. **To provide individual consultations on the PA.** The individual consultations are aimed to change the PA skills, helps to include the PA activity into the daily life. The individual consultations are provided in accordance with the motivational interviewing elements. Pedometers can be used as an additional tool to monitor how the person is doing in achieving the set goals.
2. **To carry out the PA programs in communities.** Multi-component PA programs can increase PA. Different elements of the PA promotion applied in such programs create the conditions to participate in these programs the population from different social and economic, ethical groups, allow to involve the less motivated population. It is important that the community leaders would be included in the community programs. Activities of the PA program should be selected according to the needs of the community members and their PA level. Also, the publicity of the programs and cooperation with other organizations should be ensured.
3. **To improve the formal education of the PA.** In schools it is recommended to introduce the PA lessons, at which children would carry out the moderate or intensive PA for a longer period of time. This can be achieved by varying the structural elements of lessons, as well as by providing more physical education classes per week in the schedule. The education of the formal PA should be carried out in accordance with the plan prepared in advance. In order to maximize the involvement of girls, they may be provided with separate activities of the PA.
4. **To develop the appropriate infrastructure for the PA.** At the local level, the public infrastructure of the PA should be developed. The development of the infrastructure must be accompanied by guaranteed safe, comfortable, aesthetically acceptable environment. While creating the environment

which promotes the PA, it is required to take into account such elements as a good lighting of the pedestrian and bicycle paths, marking of the bicycle paths, bicycle parking and storage places.

- 5. To ensure the qualification of specialists.** The persons implementing the activity of promoting the PA must have the appropriate qualification. The continuous training must be carried out for these persons. The training is required in order to make the specialists able to involve into the PA the low-motivated population and maintain their desire to participate in the activities of the PA, to understand their needs, to determine the PA level of the participants, to have the adequate skills that are necessary to plan and to carry out various activities of the PA.