

IMPLEMENTING ACCESSIBLE GREEN URBAN SPORTS FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES:

OPEN ACCESS TRAINING MATERIALS FOR SPORT COACHES AND YOUTH WORKERS

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List of abbreviations

European Union	EU
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	UNFCC
United Nations	UN
World Health Organisation	WHO
Work Package	WP

1. The FORTHE project

FORTHE aims to address barriers to social inclusion and participation of youth with disabilities in climate action through urban sports. The project will engage young persons with disabilities and their local communities in digitally-enhanced environmental action thanks to the implementation of green 3×3 wheelchair basketball tournaments at national and pan-European level.

FORTHE's activities are designed to enhance the green dimension of urban sports and adopt an eco-friendly way to organise sports events for disabled youth. The project foresees strengthening youth organisations in implementing green urban sports for disabled youth through staff upskilling.

Key project results:
● A curated showcase of resources on the impact of post-Covid-19 on the wellbeing of disabled youth and the role of physical activity/sports.
● An open-access publication "Barriers and opportunities in organising green urban sports for disabled persons in Europe".
● Open access training materials for green urban sports for disabled youth.
● 4 local 3×3 wheelchair basketball tournaments.
● 1 transnational 3×3 wheelchair basketball tournament.
● The FORTHE Manifesto for green urban sports as a trigger for social inclusion and climate action.

Consortium

FORTHE is a 2-year (2023-2025) Erasmus+ KA2 project coordinated by 3on Cyprus LTD. The partnership includes also: Web2Learn (Greece), Sport Evolution Alliance (Portugal), Aps Asd Margherita Sport e Vita (Italy) and Ego Power Foundation (Poland).

The production and release of these training materials belong to WP3 (leader: Web2Learn).

2. Setting the scene

The FORTHE training materials

Building up-to-date and innovative training materials entails a careful identification of practices adopted at national, European, and international levels in the field of green urban sports. Thus, the FORTHE consortium carried out a desk research out of which 10 best practices in green urban sports has been identified. Moreover, to strengthen the "green" dimension of sports, partners defined six eco-friendly indicators based on which the 10 best practices were categorised. This way, FORTHE partners guarantee that the forthcoming

local and transnational tournaments will be organised based on the latest developments in the field of green urban sports.

These open access materials include infographics and training fiches translated into partner languages to further expand the project's impact and outreach to local audiences. The FORTHE training materials are designed in a user-friendly and pedagogically-sound way to ensure accessibility and inclusivity with regards to the needs of sports coaches and youth workers.

Why training materials on green urban sports for disabled youth?

In the framework of the climate emergency, we recognise the value to enhance the knowledge and skills of disabled youth on climate action, while simultaneously raising awareness at societal level on how green urban sports can enable climate advocacy and participation of youth with disabilities.

Hence, since the ideation of the FORTHE project, a lack of training materials that specifically address the need for green urban sports for the benefit of disabled youth was spotted by the FORTHE partnership. Moreover, although urban sports are all the more adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities, there is little or no focus on how they can serve as means for climate awareness, advocacy, and action taken by disabled youth themselves!

As the FORTHE partnership has explored the impact of COVID-19 on youth with disabilities and inquired into barriers and opportunities in organising green urban sports for disabled persons in Europe (WP2), it now (WP3) builds on the acquired knowledge to train and prepare sport coaches and youth workers ahead of the WP4 local and transnational 3on3 wheelchair basketball tournaments!

Moreover, the open-access training materials are developed to serve the hands-on training workshop for youth workers and sports coaches that will take place in Krakow, Poland, in April 2024. During this workshop, participants will acquire knowledge and develop skills on how to organise and implement green urban sports events that uplift disabled youth as agents of climate action and advocacy.

Target audience

The WP3A2 training materials target:

1. Youth workers who are engaged with disabled youth in their regular activities;
2. Sports coaches who work with disabled youth.

Apart from these two profiles, which define participants of the WP3A3 training workshop in Krakow, the training materials will be available open access in FORTHE's official website.

3. Green sports for disabled youth

Green sports present unique opportunities for youth with disabilities to engage in physical activity and recreation, while leading the way for climate action and advocacy. As pointed out by the United Nations (UN, n.d.):
"Persons with disabilities often face societal barriers and disability evokes negative perceptions and discrimination in many societies. As a result of the stigma associated with disability, **persons with disabilities are generally excluded from education, employment, and community life** which deprives them of opportunities essential to their social development, health, and well-being…**Sport can help reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with disability** because it can transform community attitudes about persons with disabilities **by highlighting their skills** and reducing the tendency to see the disability instead of the person."

Through participation in sports, young people with disabilities can develop their social skills, gain self-esteem and community bonding among youth (Sportanddev, n.d.). Additionally, sports can facilitate greater independence, both physically and mentally, among individuals with disabilities. These skills are transferable to various areas such as employment and advocacy, contributing to the development of self-sufficiency (UN, n.d.)

Thus, the value of sports for disabled youth has long been acknowledged by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in its technical report (2004) that brought to the fore how participation in green sports promotes physical and mental well-being among youth with disabilities (WHO, 2004). Although the report is not referring particularly to green sports -reflecting the lack of serious public discourse on climate change in the beginning of the 21st century- it provides concrete evidence on the benefits of physical activity to youth with disabilities.

In this context, sports organisations are called to become climate leaders of the climate neutrality journey. By acting to reduce and raise awareness on their climate footprint, sports organisations will facilitate uptake of climate action beyond the sports sector which is of great importance in the face of the climate emergency (UNFCCC, n.d.).

While disabilities are seen as a mismatch between a person's characteristics and his environment, it becomes paramount to transcend possible barriers. In fact, beyond personal and environmental difficulties (financial, human, physical access), inclusive sporting events entail many positive social and personal outcomes. Youth with disabilities get to experience increased self-development and self-esteem through sports. They also feel valued by the new perspective that practitioners and relatives have upon them.

(Roult et al., 2015)

3.1. EU policies and initiatives on green sports for education, disability and social wellbeing

Determined to tackle the climate emergency by spreading the call for action in all sectors of human activity, the European Union (EU) has delivered a set of policies and initiatives that emphasise the importance of integrating sustainability principles into sports. According to the "Green Transition and Sport At All Levels" research paper, EU policies aim to align the sports sector with broader environmental objectives outlined in the European Green Deal (2019), such as achieving carbon neutrality and promoting a circular economy (European Union, 2022). Moreover, the paper indicates a growing awareness within the sports industry of the need to minimise environmental impact and promote eco-friendly practices (European Union, 2022).

Following the EU's commitment in promoting green sports, the "Sport's contribution to the European Green Deal" playbook provides valuable insights on how the sports sector can contribute to the EU's green growth agenda. Specifically, by adopting sustainable practices, such as reducing energy consumption, minimising waste generation, and promoting eco-friendly transportation options, sports organisations and event organisers can help advance the EU's environmental goals while enhancing the sustainability of the sports sector (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2023).

Moreover, a well-established EU initiative, the "European Week of Sports", embraces green sport events that prioritise sustainability and environmental stewardship. These events, running during September 23-30 each year, serve as models for sports organisations on how they can integrate green practices into their operations, from venue management to event logistics (European Commission, n.d.). Thus, the EU is at the forefront of promoting green sports initiatives, emphasising inclusivity and sustainability through initiatives like the "Healthy Lifestyles For All" (2021-2023) initiative that aimed to connect the values of sports with its benefits to social and health well-being.

Acknowledging the need to provide equal opportunities to all EU citizens in climate action and advocacy, the EU's research paper on "Green Transition and Sport At All levels" emphasises the importance of **accessible participation**, providing opportunities for youth with disabilities to engage in environmentally sustainable sports activities (European Union, 2022). Furthermore, the "European Week of Sports" is designed to prioritise accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that young people with disabilities can actively participate in physical activities and sports. This inclusive approach not only promotes physical health but also fosters social inclusion and a sense of belonging among youth with disabilities (European Commission, n.d.).

The EU's commitment to enhancing youth with disabilities' participation in sports is in line with the Commission's long-term "Strategy, for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (2021-2030), adopted in March 2021. The strategy aims to ensure that all persons with

disabilities in Europe, regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, or sexual orientation will

- enjoy their human rights;
- have equal opportunities, equal access to participate in society and economy;
- can decide where, how and with whom they live;
- move freely in the EU regardless of their support needs;
- and no longer experience discrimination

Source: European Commission, n.d.

Finally, the current landscape of EU-driven green sport events reflects a growing commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility within and beyond the sports industry. By adopting green practices and promoting accessibility, sports organisations are not only enabled to reduce their environmental footprint and fostering civic engagement in sports but also setting an example for other sectors to follow.

4. Planning eco-sustainable sport events: the FORTHE indicators

Measuring the sustainability of green sport events involves assessing various indicators and adopting specific approaches to evaluate environmental performance. Hence, according to the "Green Transition and Sport At All Levels", there is a growing emphasis on measuring the environmental impact of sport events and implementing strategies to minimise their carbon footprint (European Union, 2022).

Based on a desk research, FORTHE partners have identified six green indicators that will serve the organisation of the project's local and transnational wheelchair basketball tournaments. The FORTHE green indicators are:

- **Environmental Awareness Raising -** This indicator acknowledged that sports have a special role to play in promoting and supporting sustainability. The Sports for Climate Action Framework, launched in 2018, "drive emission reductions of sports operations and tap the popularity and passion of sport to engage millions of fans in the effort". To raise awareness on the environmental degradation and climate change, event organisers are called to adopt activities that promote environmental responsibility and eco-friendly behaviours by both the organisation, athletes and people who engage in the events.

- **Transport -** The **"**Transport" indicator points out to transportation as a large contributor to green sports events' costs, greenhouse gas emissions, and poor air quality. Encouraging people to use more sustainable means of transport to get to and from events can reduce CO_2 emissions, traffic congestion, travel time, and parking

issues. This indicator encourgaes event organisers to use and promote sustainable transportation alternatives (e.g. bicycling) in collaboration with local authorities.

- **Waste -** Sports events result in significant waste before, during and at their the completion. Therefore, organisers need to proactively put in place measures to mitigate the quantity of generated waste, while ensuring its recycling. This indicator highlights the need for the utilisation of materials that are reusable, recycled, or biodegradable in green sports events.

- **Energy -** Energy use during the preparation and delivery of sport events takes different forms, whether from the construction of venues, energy consumed by spectators, and energy consumption during the event. Event organisers can minimise negative environmental impacts by reducing the proportion of this energy developed where possible. Examples of commendable practices include integrating energy-efficient technologies for lighting, heating, and cooling, as well as adopting renewable energy sources like solar or wind power to fulfill the event's energy requirements.

- **Supply Chain -** Adopting a sustainable supply chain approach for all products and services required for the planning and delivery of a green sports event is important to showcase commitment to resource efficiency, environmental stewardship, and corporate responsibility.

- **Landscape & Biodiversity -** Many sports events are held outdoors. From the planning phase, these green events should be designed to protect ecosystems and minimise negative environmental impacts on landscape and biodiversity. Healthy ecosystems provide numerous benefits, from mitigation against urban heat island effects to flood alleviation and soil stability, thus it becomes crucial to preserve the natural habitat of outdoor spaces when practicing green urban sports.

5. Disabled youth for climate advocacy through green urban sports

As voices for increased inclusivity and accessibility of disabled youth in climate action and advocacy are on the rise (SustainedAbility, n.d.), it becomes indispensable to expand existing knowledge and create the materials needed to empower both sports coaches and youth workers as well as youth with disabilities. In what follows, we present the core FORTHE training results, namely our infographics and fiches.

5.1. Introduction

To summarise measures to be adopted in the organisation of green urban sports for disabled youth, we provide below an overview of key aspects to consider:

Inclusive Design and Accessibility: Ensuring that 3x3 green urban sports events are accessible to youth with disabilities is paramount. This includes selecting venues that are wheelchair accessible and offering adaptive equipment for those with mobility limitations (UN, n.d.).

Environmental Education: Event organisers can integrate environmental education components into the event. This could involve workshops or presentations on sustainability topics, such as climate change, renewable energy, and waste reduction, tailored to the understanding and engagement of youth participants.

Community Engagement: The European Week of Sports initiative emphasises community involvement in sports activities. Hence, organisers can engage local communities in the planning and implementation of the FORTHE green 3x3 urban sports events. This won't only foster a sense of belonging and ownership but also allow for diverse perspectives to be integrated into sustainability efforts (European Commission, n.d.).

Policy Alignment: Green sports events can align with broader policy frameworks, such as the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021-2030) and the Healthy Lifestyles For All (2021-2023) initiative, to ensure that the rights and well-being of youth with disabilities are prioritised (European Commission, n.d.).

Measurement and Evaluation: Utilising evaluation approaches outlined in the Green Transition and Sport At All Levels (2022) research paper, sports organisations can implement assessment mechanisms on the environmental impact and inclusivity of 3x3 green urban sport events. This could involve tracking the adoption of the FORTHE green indicators and the distribution of participant satisfaction surveys.

5.2. Successful examples of green sports with and for disabled youth

(what follows seems to me to be the FORTHE infographics, perhaps no need to have them here in text as is but we can showcase them directly as pdf/png)

Waste Management Plan: Implement a comprehensive waste management plan to efficiently handle and reduce waste.

Water stations: Install water stations to encourage the use of reusable water bottles, reducing the need for single-use plastics.

Reduce the amount of materials to what is fundamental: In the quest for sustainability, we prioritize minimizing material consumption to essentials. Strategies include transitioning

to online systems to reduce reliance on printed materials. Options for participants to decline physical items, adopt environmentally friendly disposables, and digital information dissemination are key practices. These contribute to a broader commitment to environmental responsibility, emphasizing the importance of reducing ecological footprints and embracing sustainable alternatives.
-Implement strategies to minimize material consumption, such as transitioning to online systems to reduce the need for printed materials.

Use recyclable and biodegradable materials: Create a strategy and a system to deliver environmentally friendly events, by minimizing the environmental impact and delivering community benefits. The goal of these initiatives is to inspire change and educate the sports community to increase understanding of the importance of sustainability.
Some materials that could be recyclable and biodegradable are:

- Uniforms: Use Uniforms made from recycled materials.
- Podios: Construct podiums using recycled and recyclable materials, such as aluminum or cardboard.
- Medals: Design medals with recyclable materials, such as aluminum or stainless steel.
- Trofies: Manufacture trophies from sustainable materials like bamboo, recycled glass, or reclaimed wood.

Adequate waste stations with bins clearly marked& Water stations: When organizing a sports event, it is essential to conscientiously address its environmental footprint. Gain insights from successful environmental initiatives, by incorporating drinking water stations to diminish the reliance on single-use plastics, and implementing well-marked waste stations. Install water stations strategically to actively encourage participants to opt for reusable water bottles, consequently minimizing the demand for single-use plastics. Motivate participants by providing advance information about this sustainable option.
Additionally, establish waste stations featuring clearly labeled bins for various waste types, fostering proper recycling and disposal practices throughout the event.

Reach carbon-neutrality & Measure of Carbon Footprint: Calculate and analyze the carbon footprint of the event, considering factors such as energy consumption, transportation, promoting renewable sources and managing waste effectively.
Strive for sustainability by adopting these guidelines to reach carbon neutrality.

-Implement measures to reduce carbon emissions and offset remaining emissions through initiatives like tree planting or investing in carbon offset programs.
-Calculate and analyze the carbon footprint of the event, considering factors such as energy consumption, transportation, and waste generation.

Educational Programmes: Step into an event experience that goes beyond entertainment—committing to sustainability through educational programs designed to

inspire and inform. From workshops on waste reduction and eco-friendly practices to the appointment of environmental ambassadors, the guidelines aim to foster a culture of sustainability. Engaging exhibitions showcase innovative initiatives, while specific events, integrate educational programs and on-court sorting competitions, actively raising awareness about environmental protection.

- Workshops: Conduct workshops on topics such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and eco-friendly practices to engage participants and foster a culture of sustainability.
- Ambassadors: Appoint environmental ambassadors or advocates who can promote and communicate sustainable practices before, during, and after the event.
- Exhibitions: Host exhibitions showcasing eco-friendly products, technologies, and initiatives to inspire and educate participants and attendees.

Apply for an eco-responsible event stamp: Seek certification or recognition from relevant environmental organisations by applying for an eco-responsible event stamp, highlighting the commitment to sustainability.

Local environmental initiatives: From fostering eco-conscious practices in local tournaments and advocating sustainability in international sports to leading collegiate initiatives, each set of guidelines serves as a compass for communities, athletes, and fans to navigate towards a greener, more sustainable future.
-Implement a comprehensive garbage collection program to manage waste effectively, promote cleanliness, and contribute to environmental sustainability within the local community.

All kinds of materials that can be used by local organisations are donated: Promote community well-being and environmental responsibility by adopting a thoughtful approach to material donations. Encourage physical activity and community engagement by collecting and donating sports equipment to local clubs and schools.
Repurpose surplus uniforms by donating them to community groups in need. Minimize textile waste by donating clothes left behind after events to local charities. Collaborate with food banks to redistribute surplus event or restaurant food, addressing community food insecurity responsibly. Embrace these practices to foster a culture of resourcefulness, community support, and sustainable initiatives.

- Sport Materials: Collect and donate sports equipment such as balls, bats, and other gear to local sports clubs, schools, or community centers. This promotes physical activity and community engagement.
- Uniforms: Donate unused or surplus uniforms, potentially from events, sports teams, or organisations, to local schools, clubs, or community groups in need.
- Clothes Left Behind: Gather and donate clothes left behind after events or activities to local charities, shelters, or thrift stores, supporting those in need and minimizing textile waste.

- Surplus Food: Collaborate with local food banks or shelters to redistribute surplus food from events or restaurants. Ensure safe and hygienic handling while addressing food insecurity in the community.

Encourage the workforce, spectators, and participants to use public or sustainable transport: To contribute to a greener future, encourage everyone involved – from our workforce to event attendees – to prioritize eco-friendly transportation options. Collaborating with local authorities, providing free public transport options, and integrating electric cars for organisational purposes. Opting for hotels near event sites reduces travel distances. Consider initiatives like reimbursing tram tickets, car-pooling perks, and railway discounts to make your travel more sustainable.

- Public Transports: Collaborate with local transportation authorities to provide free public transportation vouchers or passes to event attendees, making it more convenient and cost-effective to use sustainable modes of transport.
- Parking to participants who come in car-pool: Offer free or discounted parking to participants who carpool to the event, incentivising shared transportation and reducing the number of individual vehicles.
- Use of Electric Cars for the organisation: Incorporate electric cars for organisational purposes such as event management, transportation of staff, and logistical operations, promoting a commitment to sustainable practices.

Use of organic, local and seasonal products: Consider incorporating organic, local, and seasonal products into the supply chain, adopting sustainable practices for event planning. Partner with caterers committed to sourcing organic ingredients, collaborate with local farmers and businesses to minimize transportation emissions and design event menus based on seasonal produce for freshness and reduced environmental impact.
Embracing this approach supports local economies, aligns with sustainability principles, and contributes to a greener event experience.

- Organic Catering: Collaborate with caterers who source organic ingredients to create event menus. Prioritize organic options for snacks, meals, and beverages served during the event.
- Local Sourcing: Work with local farmers, producers, and businesses to source food and beverage items, reducing the carbon footprint associated with transportation and supporting the local economy.
- Seasonal Menu: Develop event menus that align with seasonal produce, ensuring freshness, flavor, and reduced environmental impact.

Selection of providers according to sustainable development criteria: When selecting vendors and suppliers, prioritize those that align with the event's commitment to sustainable development, focusing on organic, local, and seasonal products. Implement a procurement code to ensure contractors adhere to sustainability practices. Utilize partnerships and sponsorships to enhance the impact of zero-waste and sustainability efforts, engaging marketing partners for effective fan engagement.

Emphasize the consumption of organic products and select providers based on sustainable development criteria. Engage all stakeholders in driving sustainability throughout the event.

Conclusion: From green urban sports for disabled youth to climate action and advocacy

FORTHE strives to dismantle barriers to social inclusion by promoting accessibility and participation in green sports among youth with disabilities. In particular, youth with disabilities face the consequences of climate change in a much more intense way in their everyday lives. However, they are not the first to be considered as climate advocates and actors within their local communities. Thus, FORTHE is designed to place disabled youth in the centre of climate action, contributing thus to their inclusion as active members of society.

Climate action is not just a matter of words and reports produced to assess its importance. The project goes beyond traditional approaches to sports for climate awareness by encouraging youth with disabilities and their local communities to engage in concrete and digitally-enhanced climate action (measurement of carbon footprint of WP4 sports events athletes and participants through CarbonAcademy tools). This way, by combining urban sports with climate action and advocacy, the FORTHE project empowers youth with disabilities to become advocates for climate action and social inclusion.

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