

CultureSports

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THE HEALTH ISSUE



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We all know that physical activity provides many benefits - one of the most obvious being good health. An active lifestyle will keep your body healthy, and you will be less prone to numerous diseases. However, despite the large amount of information on the benefits of physical activity that is available, we are seeing some disturbing trends emerging. Instances of people becoming overweight and obese are growing alarmingly in Europe and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, today’s hectic and stressful work culture makes it difficult for many people to eat well and get regular exercise. For many, travel involves driving in a car, work involves sitting at a desk and leisure consists of watching a new flat screen TV or surfing the Internet. The cheapest, most convenient food is often the least healthy, and hectic work schedules mean less people are cooking for themselves. This issue of CultureSports will illustrate that poor diet and lack of exercise can be a deadly combination.

As efforts to reverse such trends are increasingly prioritised, there is growing interest in the work of civil society organizations such as ISCA, which focus on activity-based solutions to health issues. As a vital tool in the fight against obesity, sport and movement should not be the domain of the rich elite. Easy access to sports facilities and open spaces is undoubtedly part of the solution, and ISCA is working hard to ensure that as many people as possible gain the opportunity and motivation to stay active.

Much of this issue will be devoted to the battle to win the hearts and minds of those threatened by poor health and obesity, and the initiatives taken by civil society and public institutions to improve public well-being. We wish you healthy reading!

Anders Bülow (ISCA President)



Contents

Editorial	2
Good nurturing leads to strong growth	3
Slovenia hosts new “Sport for All” Congress	6
UK schools - sport and healthy eating back on the menu	8
Obesity - bridging the gap between knowledge and action	9
Health Care and Health Promotion in the German Gymnastic Federation - a “Sport for All” success story	12
Action first - a fresh initiative for health	14
WHO - leading the way in anti-obesity policy	16
SESC São Paulo: education, health and social welfare	18
HEALTH News	20
Notes & News	21
Upcoming ISCA Congresses and Forums	23

The International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) brings together sport, culture and youth organisations from across the globe. ISCA believes that everyone has the right to participate in international activities such as festivals, exchanges, training courses and sports tournaments. We call this “Sport and Culture for All”.



Good nurturing leads to strong growth

Tobias Martens, a youth volunteer at the ISCA Secretariat, examines best practice in youth development and takes inspiration from Germany's 'junior team' model

BY TOBIAS MARTENS

The process of instilling social skills, health awareness, and a sense of shared responsibility is most effective if begun at an early age. Approaches can take many forms, but young people's involvement in youth and sports clubs can be one of the most effective. This article will examine best practice methods of youth development - both in ISCA member organisations and elsewhere.

In order to be seen as appealing, youth clubs must offer activities that are constantly challenging and motivating, and the task of assimilating often-reluctant newcomers should always be high on the agenda. Three key words in this area are "Attract, Qualify and Integrate"

Firstly, clubs should offer the right incentives to attract young people. Activities on offer should be fun and imaginative, and each organisation should retain its independence and avoid being seen as part of the establishment. Secondly, newcomers need to undergo a process of social qualification in which they improve their social skills and become accepted and respected by their peers. This usually takes place through shared activities.

Finally, integration is of major importance. Young people need to assimilate into a group and accept its values without feeling isolated, embarrassed or resentful. To achieve this, ongoing dialogue should take place between all age ranges. The idea of the mentor, or "helping hand", common in the German junior team



model serves to minimise newcomers' risk of failure or loss of face. The mentor's tasks include introducing the newcomer to the way things work, and imparting

The idea of a "mentor" or "helping hand" is common in the German junior team model



Working together: team spirit can be strengthened by shared activities



knowledge and support when he or she is faced with new responsibilities.

According to ISCA Youth Co-ordinator Jean Luc Frast, such a helping hand can often be vitally important for new members. “Young people can be enthusiastic, but they also need guidance,” he says. “When put in charge of funds, for example, they need to think responsibly. This also applies when carrying out activities related to the public image of the organisation. Older members who can speak on the newcomers’ level can help steer young people away from conflict with older people who are more set in their ways.

The importance of mentoring cannot be stressed hard enough,” he adds. “It can act as a bridge between generations”

**‘Old hands’ helping new members.
Junior teams lead the way**

The idea behind the German “junior team” concept is quite simple - to provide young people, generally aged from their early teens to their early 20’s, the chance to

engage with an organisation they are interested in, while at the same time allowing them to decide to which extent they want to get involved. Junior teams are groups consisting of interested young people who want to engage, but are still not quite sure to what extent.

This flexible, youth-oriented model means that no elections are held, and no fixed period-posts are awarded. Interested parties are free to participate in meetings and activities, but if circumstances force them to spend more time at school or university or even with their girlfriend or boyfriend, they are free to reduce their engagement. This model also means that young people are protected from stumbling into a large commitment that is not right for them, which could lead to them being put off the idea for life!

But what exactly goes on when Germany’s junior teams embark on a project? Although most projects are selected and developed by the team, their content is usually related to one of the main focuses of the organisation. An inner-city youth or sport club, for example, may choose a project which spreads information about the dangers of drugs. A swimming club

may choose a project focusing on pollution in the marine environment.

The team also decides which work methods are used, often resulting in much creativity and flexibility. Young people often see unorthodox work practices as more attractive and motivating than more traditional methods. The projects' transparency also enables new recruits to join up easily. The whole team is always collectively responsible for the project, and if any individual member can't manage the tasks they are responsible for, the team works out another solution.

Many junior teams also have their own budget. This financial independence can promote new ways of spending and saving money - many of them unconventional and innovative. As the project progresses, a constant transfer of knowledge between the members takes place, and the whole team is empowered by such an "open-source" exchange of views.

Junior teams with their own budget

This experience can be a fantastic foundation for young people to develop their own social, organisational, cooperation and management skills. Skills they are more likely to put to use working in NGOs or other careers than in day-to-day life at school. The support offered by peers and professionals or senior volunteers through the mentoring process creates a safe

environment as well as a sense of identification with the organisation and its projects. As the personal connection between team members grows, not only is the organisation strengthened, but participants become more integrated too. Other less obvious benefits include improving the ability to think and work in a structured manner.

The mentoring and coaching structures of German junior teams are so successful that similar structures are being applied in the corporate business world. Thinking about it, it is quite logical for businesses to support young trainees in this manner as it encourages innovation and the transfer of knowledge from past to present. It also provides companies with strong human resources.

Of course, not every young person who participates in a junior team project will continue to be involved with voluntary organisation for the rest of their lives. Work, travel and education often make long-standing commitments difficult. However, some will continue to volunteer, and even those who leave will have participated in a learning process for life, and will often apply their newly gained knowledge in other areas.

Put simply, good nurturing leads to strong growth. As far as youth development is concerned, best practices such as the junior team methods mentioned above can serve as inspiration to ISCA's many affiliated youth associations across the globe.

Independent decision-making often leads to creative ideas





Conference facilities in Portoroz

Miro Ukmar, President of SUS

Slovenia hosts new “Sport for All” Congress

The 2006 ISCA General Assembly in Slovenia is to be held in conjunction with a new event - the European Sport for All Congress

BY HENRY NOBLE

Around 200 delegates from across the world were due to descend on the town of Portoroz in Slovenia in mid October for the 2006 ISCA General Assembly, which was planned to take place in conjunction with the European Sport for All Congress

- a new event designed to bring together policymakers, leaders and politicians working in the field of grassroots sport. The decision on where to hold ISCA's annual assembly is never an easy one, but after careful considerations Slovenia was selected - not least due to its many active “Sport for All” organisations, and ISCA's strong cooperation with the Sports Union of Slovenia



(SUS) in a number of projects across the Balkans.

“We are a global association and it is our long term goal to award the general assembly to geographically diverse hosts,” ISCA’s Resource Development Officer Marvin Radford told CultureSports. “The original idea was to hold the 2006 conference in South East Asia, but circumstances prevented us from doing so. With time running out, practical considerations made Slovenia the best candidate.”

Although the ISCA General Assembly will take place on day one of the congress, Marvin Radford hopes that many delegates will remain to attend the entire event. “It is a high level occasion, bringing together ministers, presidents and secretary generals of sports organisations and representatives of European governing bodies” he says “This means that the standard of presentations and networking opportunities will be excellent. In other words, it will be worth sticking around”.

As its name suggests, the European Sport for All Congress is aimed specifically at the “Sport for All” community in Europe, and is being jointly hosted by ISCA, the Sports Union of Slovenia (SUS), the Confederation Européenne Sport Santé (CESS) and the International Academy of Sport for All (IASFA). Initiated by SUS, the event’s theme is “Autonomy in European Sport for All - Today and Tomorrow”. In

addition to the exchange of expert views, ideas and best practice, the congress will offer inspiration to forming organisational guidelines for development and look at ways of introducing the concept of “Sport for All” to the new, enlarged European community.

“The congress will be different in a number of ways,” continues Marvin Radford. “For example, in an effort to avoid stereotypical “top-down” presentations, workshop speakers will only be allocated between five and seven minutes to speak before the discussion is opened up to the panellists and the audience.”

Although he appreciates the hospitality of ISCA’s European members in providing a venue for the general assembly, Marvin Radford confirms that plans are underway to take the event out of Europe next year. “We are currently forging ahead with plans to go to Malaysia in 2007” he confirms. “Asia has waited for the opportunity to host this important event and showcase the growing strength of “Sport for All” in Asian cultures. Like our Slovenian hosts, I am sure our Asian partners will give us an exciting programme with outstanding content!”

More information on the European Sport for All Congress can be found at www.sportforall-congress.org

UK schools - sport and healthy eating back on the menu

Something of a revolution has been taking place in Britain's schools. Not only is sport making a comeback, but school meals are improving too!



BY MARCUS HOY

At the end of 2004, British Prime Minister Tony Blair surprised many by announcing that he was to set aside a total of GBP 500 million to improve school sports and tackle childhood obesity. Specialist teachers were to be employed to teach such diverse subjects as martial arts and yoga, and “competition managers” would be engaged to arrange school-based festivals and national tournaments. By the year 2010, he pledged, every child aged between five and 16 would be guaranteed at least four hours of school sport a week.

At the same time, Channel 4 TV chef Jamie Oliver was preparing to shoot a programme that would catch the imagination of the entire nation. Called “Jamie’s School Dinners”, it attempted to persuade a different British school each week to ditch its standard, processed school dinners and replace them with fresh, nutritious fare. During the course of the series, Oliver demonstrated that, for the cost of a standard school meal - just 37p - pupils could enjoy a tasty and healthy alternative. What Blair was doing for pupils’ physical activity, it seemed, the popular chef was attempting to do for their diet.

Oliver’s campaign led to major changes in the way school meals are perceived

School dinners - the next generation

In line with the recommendations by the England’s School Meals Review Panel, English schools must ensure that meals offered to pupils adhere to the following guidelines from September 2006

- they should be free from low quality meat products, fizzy drinks, crisps and chocolate or other confectionery;
- high quality meat, poultry or oily fish should be available on a regular basis;
- pupils must be served a minimum of two portions of fruit and vegetables with every meal
- any deep-fried items should be restricted to no more than two portions per week.

The TV programme became so popular that it soon spawned a national campaign entitled ‘Feed me Better’. Schoolchildren, parents and teachers joined forces to urge the government to make a similar commitment to school dinners as it had done with school sports.

The original plan was to gather 10,000 signatures to present to the Prime Minister. However, as the campaign gathered pace, it became clear that this target would be exceeded. Eventually, just four days after the last episode was broadcast, Oliver delivered a petition containing 271,677 signatures to 10 Downing Street -

one of the largest online petitions ever seen. Tony Blair thanked Oliver for his “remarkable work” and announced that the government would spend an additional GBP 280 million on school meals. The average cost per child per meal was to rise to 50p (0.74) in primary schools and 60p (0.89) for secondary schools.

The most recent development came in May 2006, when Education Secretary Alan Johnson published new minimum nutrition standards for school food. Designed to ensure “healthier eating throughout the school day”, the guidelines banned meals high in salt, fat and sugar from the school diet, as well as low quality meat. According to a government statement, the new standards were intended to “improve the quality of food in schools and undo decades of neglect in school meals provision.” The rules also put an end to the sale of junk food in vending machines and promoted sales of healthy snacks and drinks such as water, milk, and fruit juices.

“My job was to persuade them [the schools] to make better decisions about what the pupils were eating,” says Oliver on his website. “There was no food culture at schools. And in lots of families, people hadn’t got time for food and cooking. Some of the younger ones didn’t always get dinner at home. That’s why it makes more and more sense for schools to step in. Whether they’re lucky kids with good food at home or not, they all should get decent food at school.

“The information’s all there,” he adds. “The statistics show that we’re growing more obese, getting more diseases linked with poor diet. If we don’t act now, in 100 years what will people think? They’ll look back and say, all the signs were there - why didn’t they do something?”

In the face of government predictions that 20% of children aged between two and 15 will be chronically obese by 2010, it is yet to be seen how effective the initiatives on school diet and health will be. However, with regular sport and healthy eating now back on the menu in schools, everyone agrees that the well being of Britain’s school pupils can only improve!

Further information on Jamie Oliver’s campaign can be found at www.feedmebetter.com



The rise in obesity is a growing cause of concern.

What can we do to combat this trend - and how can we avoid becoming overweight ourselves?

Obesity

- bridging the gap between knowledge and action

BY CLAIRE FORDER

Good health is acknowledged as one of our basic life needs. We like to think that everybody wants to stay healthy. But do they? Despite being presented with an abundance of information on the links between obesity and ailments like diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases, strokes and cancers, more and more people are leading inactive lifestyles and opting for an unhealthy diet.



Be physically active and eat according to your energy needs

According to the World Health Organisation, chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as those mentioned above account for around 46% of the global disease burden worldwide, but 77% of the burden in Europe. Diabetes alone has become one of the leading causes of death in western countries, and complications

from the disease are resulting in increasing disability, reduced lifespan and enormous health costs. Indeed, diabetes is certain to be one of the most challenging health problems we will face in the 21st century.

According to the International Obesity Task Force, (IOTF) a global network and think tank set up to combat these trends, an estimated 300 million people around the world are obese. And, as a recent IOTF media statement warns, obesity is now with us almost from birth. "Children as young as three are already showing the first signs of deterioration in their arteries due to poor quality diets high in fats, sugar and salt," it reads. "But as they grow older the damage becomes less reversible." It adds that obesity levels will continue to rise - with severe health consequences - unless urgent action is taken now. Institutions such as the World Health Organisation and the European Union also view the increase in obesity with increasing alarm, and both have developed strategies aimed not only at changing behaviour and attitudes, but also convincing national governments of the urgency of the problem.

Although much emphasis is placed on eating habits, many experts believe that the potential of 'Sport for All' organisations in contributing to the solution has not yet been fully realised. Such organisations can play a variety of important roles, as their existing infrastructures and networks can help in the implementation and development of health strategies. Campaigns run at a theoretical, organisational level have very little effect on the grass roots. Regulations on food, food labelling and food content may be one way of tackling the problem, but if the information given to consumers does not encourage a change in lifestyle, many health problems will remain.

If you have the motivation, a healthy lifestyle is within reach. Don't drink in excess, don't smoke, and do only 30 minutes of "energy expending" physical activity per day ("energy-expending" means that the body's heart rate goes up). Physical activity doesn't only mean organised sports - it can also mean playing traditional games such as rope skipping, dancing, walking briskly or riding a bike.

Moreover, eating healthily doesn't necessarily mean eating less. Here are some simple guides to having a healthy diet.

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits
- Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain



ISCA members promote active health

A number of ISCA member organisations are already actively engaged in encouraging individuals to live healthy and active lives. USEP (France) is involved in a campaign to highlight the enjoyment of physical exercise in children and establish a relationship between exercise and health. UISP (Italy) is involved in a campaign designed to encourage families to construct “spaces” of activity outside the limits of structured sport. The DOSB - former DSB (Germany) is an active partner in the platform for the German Strategy for the Prevention of Obesity in Children and Young People (PEB). This programme is aimed at informing parents and children about nutritional foods and habits and encouraging physical activity.

In addition, ISCA’s Health Care and Health Promotion Programme is designed to help members interested in developing healthy living campaigns or health-enhancing physical activity programmes with a series of consultancy services and activities. The programme allows ISCA members to receive help, advice and support from other members who have already developed their own activities.

Physical activity is a vital tool in the fight against obesity

- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives. Reduced fat varieties should be chosen, where possible
- Drink plenty of water

And take care to:

- Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake
- Choose foods low in salt
- Limit your alcohol intake
- Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars
- Prevent weight gain: be physically active and eat according to your energy needs
- Care for your food: prepare and store it safely
- Follow the food pyramid

Claire Forder is a project manager specialising in health issues who has been working closely with ISCA.



Health Care and Health Promotion in the German Gymnastic Federation - a “Sport for All” success story

BY HERBERT HARTMANN

The health benefits of physical exercise are well known, but for many sports organisations, the introduction of specific strategies to promote health is a relatively new idea. Until now, only a few have fully prioritised health promotion, and as a result, the great potential of organised sport to contribute to public health has not yet been fully realised.

In Germany, however, advances are being made. The German word “turnen” (gymnastic) is a synonym for diverse, popular physical training, and the idea of gymnastics having positive health benefits dates back to the founding fathers of German gymnastics. The concept even predates the emphasis on performance and competition, which did not become popular until the second half of the 19th century.

Although much emphasis is still placed on sport's competitive nature, the idea of sport as a means of improving health has been making something of a comeback. Experiences in Germany show that physiotherapists, health centres, clinics, and commercial institutes needn't dominate the field of health. Indeed, we have found that organised, Deutsche Turner Bund (DTB)-affiliated sports clubs are well placed to fulfil the role of recognised community “health providers” - not least due to the social and friendly approach of their programmes.

Well placed to fulfil the role

DTB initiatives targeted specifically at health promotion date back to 1982, when a program entitled “Sport and Health in the Gymnastic Club” was launched. Another campaign, “Active Living” was initiated in 1987, which was followed by a 1990 initiative entitled “Health Sport,” which concentrated on

more specific and differentiated programs. Since then, the DTB has followed a two-tiered strategy relating to health promotion - a general “Sport for All Intervention” approach, and a strategy of “Health Sport Treatment Intervention”.

“Sport for All Intervention” aims to promote physical activity through sport, and a number of DTB campaigns have more or less achieved their aims in this area. However, recent studies have found that such general programs are more effective if they convey not only a definite message to the population such as “be active” or “stop smoking”. Such campaigns are also more effective if they provide individual support and use specific settings like schools or private companies as the base for their activity programs.

Important tools also include teaching aids for sports instructors and managers, such as education programs, exercise manuals and other information that can be distributed via travelling roadshows. Media attention is also desirable. As part of the health campaign





Herbert Hartman pictured at the Danish Festival of Sports and Culture 2006

“Germany moves”, the DTB has been cooperating with public TV and the nation’s biggest Sunday newspaper, as well as a large health insurance company.

Two-tiered approach

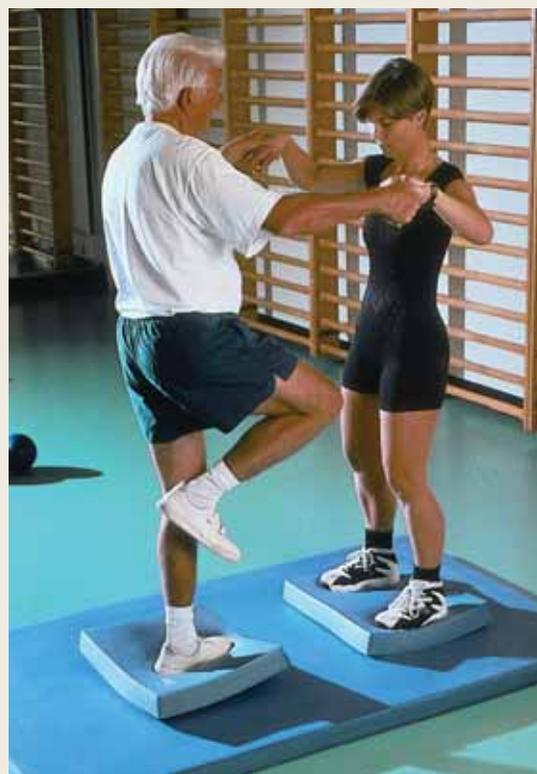
“Health Sport Treatment Intervention” is based on scientific evidence revealing that better, more specific and more stabilised health benefits can be achieved if exercise programs are targeted at a particular goal. This is especially so when various criteria relating to the duration, scope and the intensity of the activities are taken into account. Examples of this type of program include “cardiovascular prevention training,” “prevention of back pain” and “pilates”. Many such programs need to follow strict criteria, including using instructors with special qualifications, limitation of participants and minimum program length.

As part of its health promotion efforts, the DTB has introduced a broad education system that can be described as a “quality management concept”. This system comprises of visiting specialist instructors, regional conventions, local “quality circles” for instructors to exchanges experiences, teaching material and a regular magazine for sports instructors involved with health. A special accreditation certificate, the “Pluspunkt Gesundheit DTB”, is awarded to health instructors if they reach desired quality criteria, and more than 7000 have already achieved the required level. A spe-

cial accreditation is also awarded to fitness and health centres in sport clubs.

Many of the DTB’s health programs have achieved such high standards that they are gaining full credibility within the national health system and are being viewed as valid by health insurance companies. However, achieving such high standards is not easy. Because strict standards are required, serious involvement in the fields of health care and promotion can be demanding for any “Sport for All” organisation. Yet, such involvement can also be a highly rewarding investment, both for civil society and the development of the organisation itself.

**Herbert Hartmann is a former Vice Chairman of the German Gymnastic Federation, which comprises of more than five million members in 20,000 clubs across Germany*



Action first - a fresh initiative for health

In a bid to tackle pressing health problems such as obesity head-on, a new Europe-wide platform is forging partnerships between NGO's, sports organisations and food manufacturers.

BY MARCUS HOY

Good advice, it seems, is not always enough. Despite numerous of recommendations from bodies like the World Health Organisation and initiatives like 2004's European Year of Education through Sport, statistics show that Europeans are piling on the calories like never before. Too much fat, sugar and salt in the Euro-diet means that high obesity levels have now become a significant health problem.

Faced with such an alarming situation, the European Commission is lending its support to an alliance of sports and health organisations, experts and food and industry groups known as the European Platform on Diet, Health and Physical Activity (EPDHPA). Unlike other initiatives, the platform's work is not primarily concerned with organising events and distributing information. Its main aim is to provide a 'rapid response' to health problems such as obesity, involving not just NGO's and health organisations, but also food manufacturers and marketers. According to official statement, the purpose of the platform is "not primarily to deepen understanding, but to create a platform for concrete actions designed to contain or reverse current trends".

Officially launched in March 2005, the EPDHPA seeks to recognize and implement effective ways of

addressing what many health experts are now describing as an obesity "epidemic". In addition to identifying successful strategies and spreading "best practice" knowledge across the continent, the platform will also attempt to ensure that the EU uses its own powers to guarantee that best practices are followed in the fields of food safety, public health, education, internal markets and agriculture.

However, the task of reversing obesity trends is not an easy one. Faced with an increasing barrage of advertising, less healthy choices in shops, and the fact that unhealthy options are often cheaper, it is easy for consumers to acquire habits that can prove deadly later in life. As a central pillar and founder member of the platform, the International Obesity Task Force (IOTF), is one of the organisations currently concerned with identifying practical solutions.

Speaking to CultureSports, Neville Rigby, Director of Policy and Public Affairs at the IOTF, points out that the causes of obesity can be complex. "There has been a trend towards greater consumption of processed foods, many of which are high in fat, sugars and salt, and a reduction in the levels of physical activity needed for most aspects of life," he says "However there are also many complex collective factors involved in the



The new platform is forging ties between NGO's, health organizations and the food industry

development of obesity which tend to affect those in deprived communities disproportionately. It is a constant problem that having the right information does not lead to appropriate behaviour. People are aware of the lethal nature of tobacco, for example, yet still smoke.”

“The difficulty is persuading those who help to shape the environment which promotes obesity that they need to make fundamental changes,” he continues. “One aspect is the intense promotion of energy-dense food, calorific drinks, junk food and sodas - particularly when children are targeted as consumers. There is a need for much stronger measures to protect children from the marketing of food and beverages which encourage the formation of inappropriate dietary habits, which can affect them throughout their lifetime”.

He points out that sport and physical activity - especially if it is not seen as overly competitive - has an important role to play to the fight against obesity. “Sport can be a powerful inspiration to individuals to be active” he states. “But competitive sports can also be a deterrent to the enjoyment of activity, particularly if they reinforce negative stereotypes for children who cannot compete with more sporting peers. “

“The appreciation of sport and activity tends to be instilled early in life,” he continues. “Therefore encouraging wider participation among children in a range of activities, not only competitions, could be valuable. Support to prevent the continued reduction of safe activity areas and sports facilities for children would also be beneficial.”

Although they are concerned with health problems in all age ranges, both the EPDHPA and the IOTP have set a strong focus on children, as under 18’s who become overweight often remain so throughout their adult lives. ISCA shares these concerns, and as a result has been active in organising of a number of youth events that put strong focus on both diet and health, including the European Youth and Sport Forum 2006, which took place at the end of September in Finland. As CultureSports went to press, ISCA had been officially invited to join the EPDHPA - a move that would open the door for future ISCA projects and initiatives to be carried out in conjunction with the platform.

More information on the European Platform on Diet, Health and Physical Activity and other EU health activities can be found at www.ec.europa.eu/health



An appreciation of sport and activity should be instilled early in life

WHO - leading the way in anti-obesity policy



The World Health Organisation is urging national governments to place more focus on sport and active living as part of the fight against obesity.

By MARCUS HOY

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is well known for its work on the frontline of disease prevention and the promotion of health and medical treatment. Its staff not only work as health experts - they also distribute medicines, collect data, impart information and run programmes designed to ensure that knowledge and best practice in the field of health is spread as widely as possible.

However, as some health problems diminish, others increase - and obesity definitely falls into the latter category. According to the WHO, instances of obesity have tripled in Europe in the past twenty years - and the problem is not confined to western nations. In China, for example, nearly 15% of the population is now officially classed as overweight. Perhaps even more alarmingly, in many parts of the world obesity rates are rising just as fast among children and teenagers as they are among adults.

So how did these alarming trends emerge, and what is the WHO doing to combat them? In an interview with CultureSports, Roar Blom, a Technical Officer specialising in physical activity and health at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, points out that current high levels of obesity are the result of our changing

It is important that people use their leisure time in the right way, says Roar Bloom



Roar Bloom is a WHO Technical Officer specializing in physical activity and health

lifestyles. “Our way of living has altered dramatically, and this has affected our energy balance” he says. “We are eating more energy-dense, nutrition-deficient food, and at the same time using much less energy in our daily lives, for example, we are doing much less manual work, less housework and less gardening.”

“This rapid growth in obesity is not only confined to Europe” he continues. “It is also a growing problem in developing countries, and in some parts of Africa, for example, it is still associated with prestige and power. Attitudes need to be changed all across the world.”

He points out that the WHO is working at a number of levels to transform attitudes and lifestyles. “We are examining the causes of obesity and related diseases and spreading knowledge about causes and prevention,” he says. “But most importantly, we are working hard to motivate WHO member states to take concrete action”.

He adds that national action is expected to increase substantially after a ministerial-level conference takes place in Istanbul, Turkey on November 15-17. The conference - the highest-profile anti-obesity event ever held in Europe - will bring together health ministers and other government representatives from across the region, as well as civil society sports organisations such as ISCA and other NGO’s.

A global epidemic

According to the WHO, obesity is one of the greatest public health challenges of the 21st century. Its prevalence has risen threefold in many European countries since the 1980s, and the numbers of those affected, particularly children, are continuing to increase at an alarming rate. Obesity is already responsible for 2-8% of health care costs and 10-13% of deaths in different parts of the WHO European Region - more than any other WHO region.

The problem is mainly associated with unhealthy eating and low physical activity. In addition to individual behaviour, however, it is also increasingly linked to social and economic policies and development, such as those related to agriculture, transport, urban planning, the environment, food distribution, processing and marketing, and education.

The WHO states that both society and governments have a responsibility to curb the epidemic. Policies should involve different government sectors, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

“It could be argued that too much emphasis has been placed on our individual responsibility in the past” Roar Blom says. “We do not want to remove this focus, but we believe that more emphasis needs to be placed on changing society’s attitudes. Getting national governments motivated is highly important, and the Istanbul conference will recognise this. It will seek to adopt a charter committing nations to take concrete action”.

“It is important that people use their leisure time in the right way” he continues. “Participation in sport is an excellent way of keeping active, and sport provides a means of “activating” people that is not often found in other forms of leisure. However, many people are put off by what they see as the specialist, competitive nature of sport and the need for high-quality equipment. Sometimes, physical activities requiring little equipment - walking, or beach volleyball, for example - can provide the best introduction to sport. This is why organisations such as ISCA, which support this approach to sport, can play a vital role. The importance of sports associations will be high on the agenda in Istanbul”.

More information is available at www.euro.who.int/obesity

SESC São Paulo: education, health and social welfare

The Social Service of Commerce (SESC) is committed to encouraging participation in sport and cultural activities in Brazil. Supported by businesses, SESC aims to promote social welfare and quality of life through physical and cultural activities. Danilo Santos de Miranda, Regional Director of SESC São Paulo, outlines the work and principles of his organisation.

BY DANILO SANTOS DE MIRANDA

Although the Social Service of Commerce is one of Brazil's best-established organization, it remains in a process of continuous development. Offering a variety of activities and services in many areas of sport and culture, SESC programs have 1.1 million registered users, and in the past year alone the organisation welcomed over 90 million attendees to its various programs.

At a general level, SESC seeks to promote the interaction of many people from diverse cultures - regardless of age, formal education or social standing. Many activities are offered with a special focus on education, and artistic growth is seen as just as important as physical and sportive development.

In addition to sport, SESC's activities encompass such areas as the arts, the environment, diet, health, third age and tourism. In the São Paulo State region, SESC has 30 activity centres, one virtual unit and even a television channel. SESC users have a varied profile, although around 80% of our enrolled clientele earn less than USD 600 per month. To offer this variety of opportunities, SESC has a modern structure of facilities and equipment including 21 aquatic complexes, 28 sportive gymnasiums, 45 open courts, 54 rooms for gymnastics and corporal expression and 48 rooms for multiple uses. These facilities are coordinated and promoted by over 350 professionals, instructors and

SESC São Paulo organises a wide range of physical and cultural activities



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Challenge Day 2004: Havana, Cuba

sports monitors qualified in the area of physical education, all with a solid cultural background and good interdisciplinary dialogue skills.

SESC is not a formal education organisation. Instead, it promotes what we call “permanent education”, with much emphasis placed on the training of technical and managerial staff. Organizations such as ISCA are seen as important partners to SESC, not only because of our shared ethical values, but also due to similar commitments to education. SESC sports instructors who recently took part in the International Youth Leader Education, for example, confirmed that ISCA’s educational values are based on the idea of diversity - something which is in perfect harmony with the principles of SESC. Partners like ISCA are not only important for sharing the same ethical commitments and defending the democratisation of cultural experiences, but also for their engagement to education. The International Youth Leader Education is a good example of this.

Our partnership with ISCA has generated several congresses, exchanges and the important International Forum of General Gymnastics, promoted annually in Campinas, gathering students, athletes, artists, professors of several institutions from Brazil and abroad to promote the practice of general gymnastics based on a participative model encouraging social well being

Physical development and the promotion of quality of life

SESC’s activities are often diverse, but are guided by the general culture of movement, consciousness, health, and education. SESC also launches special campaigns to promote physical activity and encourages the formation of specific activity clubs focused on such activities as walking, running and cycling. The

SESC Events

SESC Summer

Promoted since 1995, the program takes place every year in January and February in all SESC branches of São Paulo State and many public spaces, attracting around 1 million participants. The event comprises of activities aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of physical activity in the daily life. Each annual event is given a different theme

“Relaxation is good for health”

Image and slogan - SESC Summer 2006 Campaign

Challenge Day

Taking its inspiration from the ParticipAction and the Trim & Fitness International Sport for All Association (TAFISA), this event encourages communities to break their daily routine with 15 minutes of physical activity. Held annually in the last Wednesday in May, Challenge Day encourages cities of about the same size to engage in a friendly competition to see who can involve the highest percentage of participants.

The event grows each year. In 2006, over 49 million people representing 2,867 towns and cities across the American Continent got involved - up 20% on 2005

promotion of various types of gymnastics, martial arts and dance programs as well as the organization of tournaments, workshops, festivals, performances and seminars is also an important part of our work. Popular annual events include the SESC Summer and the Challenge Day (see box text). Promoted by SESC since 1995, both projects are operated throughout a wide network, but take their starting point in the 30 SESC branches of São Paulo State.

Like the World Health Organization we believe that health is a resource and responsibility that we all share. SESC, with its 362 centres of activities all over Brazil, seeks to continually develop and update its programs, and encourage the growth of ideas and the spread of best practice within health and leisure. Here in São Paulo, SESC is working to encourage autonomy, community spirit, and the critical and creative thinking needed to promote human development.

More information on SESC São Paulo can be found at at www.sescsp.org.br



EU Launches New Public Health Portal

The Public Health Portal is an initiative of the Community Public Health Programme 2003-2008. The objective is to facilitate a greater involvement of individuals, institutions, associations, organisations and bodies in issues of public health through consultation and participation. The idea is to give European citizens simple, clear and scientifically sound information about measures to protect health and prevent diseases. One of the main aims is to convince citizens that they share responsibility for improving their health. Information on EU initiatives within public health, lifestyles, major topical events etc can be found on the portal.

www.health.europa.eu

EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health holds US Transatlantic conference on Good Practices: Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

The purpose of this transatlantic conference co-chaired by the European Commission and the US Department of Health and Human Services was to identify good practice through an exchange of ongoing and new strategies and initiatives regarding health and nutrition between main EU and US players (i.e. consumer groups, health NGOs, food and advertising industries and regulators, researchers). There was however, a distinct lack of representation from sports organisations, meaning that the Diet, Physical Activity and Health Platform is yet to fully harness the proven health benefits of physical activity. The conference took place on May 11 and 12, 2006.



WHO ministerial conference in November 2006

The World Health Organisation (WHO) European Regional Office is organizing a Ministerial Conference on Counteracting Obesity on 15-17 November 2006, hosted by the Turkish Government in Istanbul. The conference aims to raise awareness about the need to fight obesity. Physical activity along with a healthy diet is considered by the WHO to be a central element in the fight against obesity. The participants at the ministerial conference will, amongst others, consist of representatives of national health ministries, including ministers. As part of the preparatory process for the conference, the WHO is hosting various consultations. ISCA has been invited to represent NGO's involved in sports and physical activity. For more information contact the ISCA office info@isca-web.org

www.euro.who.int/obesity

2006: Sports, cultural diversity and fellowship in the 'International Tent'

More than 780 international guests and participants from more than 25 countries visited and performed at the Danish Festival of Sports and Culture 2006, which was held in the town of Haderslev at the end of June. As an important cornerstone of the festival, the "international tent" presented a three days programme filled with debates, workshops and performances (most of which the participants could join themselves), presentations, interviews and an international conference.

On Thursday the tent hosted the conference: 'Sport will broaden your mind', organised by the international arm of the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations (DGI) and the DGI Educational Forum. During the conference, spectators could participate in seven different practical and theoretical workshops with titles such as "Rhythmtions", "Educating Young Gymnasts" and "Integration of Ethnic Minorities through Sport". On the Friday and Saturday two debates were held on the topics; "Minorities in Focus" and "The future of the EU", attended by young representatives of national minorities from Europe and the Koeng Sports Academy. Among the participatory workshops we can mention were Tai Chi, Salsa, Samba, Irish Riverdance, Indian Dance Performance, Capoeira, Glima Wrestling from Iceland and gymnastics performed by an acrobatic group of young men from Tanzania. Other topics under discussion included Football Schools in the Balkans, Supporting Sportswomen in Kabul, Gymnastics and Culture in Brazil, Corruption in an International Sport Association and The Border Region - From Conflict to Cooperation. For more information please contact: Dorthe Bach Rasmussen at dbr@dgi.dk.



UNESCO platform to promote and develop traditional sports and games (Paris, 13 March, 2006, UNESCO Headquarters)

In March 2006, ISCA participated in a collective consultation designed to create an international platform for the promotion and development of traditional sports and games. The crucial role of traditional sports and games in preserving the good practice of physical and sports activities in a cultural environment is one of the priorities of UNESCO. The consultation was enriched by the diversity of international experts' viewpoints, and was a gratifying experience in which a common project to create an international platform for the promotion of traditional sports and games was approved. The next meeting of the consultation group will be in November 2006, in Kazakhstan.

International Youth and Health Festival 8-23 September 2007, Noumea New Caledonia

The Committee of the FIYHNC in New Caledonia is organising its Festival of Youth and Health of New Caledonia on 8-23 September 2007, in partnership with ISCA. One of the objectives of this festival will be to explain to young people how Oceania was populated, the role of traditional transport, and other legacies of bygone days in forming today's local sport and culture. All languages of the region will be represented, and local versions of sports such as Mélanésien cricket, rugby and football will be showcased. A health forum will discuss transmissible and non-transmissible diseases and their role in sport. A website is in construction. For more information please contact Mr Puluiuvea Marco, President of FIYHNC, PO box 13769 Noumea Cedex 98803 New-Caledonia Tel / Fax (687) 24 17 92, E-mail: marco.puluiuvea@gouv.nc

ISCA included in final report to United Nations

ISCA has been included in the final report on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (IYSPE 2005). The report was presented to the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan by Mr Adolf Ogi on April 3 2006 at an event at the United Nations Headquarters in New York attended by over 500 guests. The ceremony featured statements by Kofi Annan, General Assembly President Jan Eliasson, the Foreign Minister of Sweden, and top-ranked tennis player Roger Federer, who was appointed UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador prior to the event. Many other dignitaries and world renowned athletes were in attendance. You can see the report at www.un.org/sport2005



International SUN SVOLI festival

Arranged by the Finnish Gymnastics Federation (SVOLI), the international SUN SVOLI gymnastics festival was held in the city of Tampere from June 8 - 11. Around 11,000 gymnasts participated in the festival and the daily visitor tally reached 15,000. Almost 600 international participants from 20 countries around the world turned the festival into an important international gathering. The programme included large group performances, gymnastics performances, workshops for instructors and gymnasts and an international seminar on gymnastics as a health-promoting activity. The sunny festival days and comprehensive programme led to many new friendships being forged.

IYLE training course “Risk and Lifestyle Education Through Sport”

The training course “Risk and Lifestyle Education Through Sport” took place 13-19 April 2006 in Portugal. The course was hosted by ISCA member and project partner INATEL. Over 130 young people from all over Europe applied to participate in the training course, of which 22 were selected to take part in this innovative project dealing with subjects like healthy lifestyle, risk taking and risk sharing in local communities.

IYLE youth camp “Active Citizenship and Participation through Sport”

ISCA’s international youth camp ‘Active Citizenship and Participation through Sport’ took place in Denmark from 2-9 July, 2006. The camp was hosted at the Helsingør youth hostel, close to Shakespeare’s famous Castle. A total of 55 young people from all over Europe shared their experiences and opinions relating to the challenges of active citizenship and other relevant issues.

The XIVth all-Sokol SLET was held in Prague from July 1 to 6, 2006.

The SLET festival is the largest traditional event held by the Czech ‘Sport for All’ association, and ISCA partner, Sokol. The first festival was held in 1882, and since then it has been held every six year. Besides mass performances (callisthenics) the programme included the best of Sokol theatre, music, folklore and marionette ensembles, various sports and tourist activities.

The XIVth SLET festival opened on July 1 with a sports show at the Sazka Arena. Followed by, on July 2 a major parade through Prague city centre, in which almost 20,000 participants from the Czech Republic and from abroad took part. From that point the rehearsals for the 16 mass events at the Strahov E. Rosicky Stadium started.

At the same time, smaller staged events were being held in Tyrsuv Dum, the seat of the Czech Sokol organisation.

Many cultural Sokol events were on the programme including theatre, choirs and folklore performances. In addition, many top sport competitions were organised, including basketball, handball and volleyball events. However the highlight of the festival came on July 5 and 6 when the 1st and the 2nd Strahov Programmes were performed. These perfectly-composed mass motion events took place in the presence of the President of the Czech Republic Vaclav Klaus. In all, around 17,000 participants from the Czech Rep. and about 1,200 from other countries took part.

The XIVth All-Sokol SLET was a real success – so much so that a book and a DVD will be available shortly.



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Council of Europe: General Support.

Council of Europe, Youth Foundation: ISCA International Youth Camp - Education through Sport.

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Democratic Development through Grassroots Sport in Southeast Europe.

Swiss Working Group on Sport and Development: Democratic Development through Grassroots Sport in Southeast Europe.

Danish Ministry of Culture: General Support.

Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI): General Support.

ISCA Congresses and Forums

1st European Sport for All Congress

12 - 15 October 2006, Portoroz, Slovenia

The first European Congress of Sport for All will provide a professional and organisational environment for the exchange of expert views, sport and political ideas and good practice. The two main topics are:

- The Politics and Sport for All - private and public involvement
- Healthcare and Health Promotion

Moreover, the congress will offer inspiration to forming key organisational guidelines for further development. Finally, the congress will introduce Sport for All to the enlarged European community.

For more information: www.sportforall-congress.org

ISCA World Congress 2007

Public Health: The Challenge met by Sport for All

May 2007, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The questions and concerns of public health and fitness are high on the agendas in many different countries and parts of the world. Public health trends and perspectives over a 10-year period have led to increased attention by governments, private sector and media. This international congress on Health, Fitness and Sport strives to guide-lines and inspiration for national initiatives.

The congress will be hosted and organised in a partnership between: Malaysian Ministry of Youth and Sport, National Fitness Council of Malaysia, International Sport and Culture Association.

For more information: www.isca-web.org or contact info@isca-web.org



The IVth International Forum of General Gymnastics

August 2007, Campinas, Brazil

This will be the fourth in the series of successful international forums and will be organised by SESC - Social Service of Commerce and the Physical Education Faculty of UNICAMP. The forum will be supported by ISCA.

For more information: info@isca-web.org

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