

DGI proposal to the Danish Government on reopening of sport and leisure activities

With the arrival of spring and the vaccines being rolled out across the country, there is hope for a restart of voluntary association life. This restart is crucial for Danes' physical, mental and social health.

DGI has a number of recommendations – both for political initiatives and for the sports associations – on how we can ensure a good restart.

Our recommendations are based on the experiences from the closure of the sports associations both in the spring of 2020 and in December-February. In December 2020 DGI also conducted a corona survey with responses from more than 2,600 associations. Knowledge and figures from that study are included in this proposal.

Children and young people first in a gradual reopening

Since the spring of 2020, DGI has given high priority to children and young people's sports associations and activities in the political dialogue on restrictions. And as Danish society now reopens, DGI appeals once more to focus on children and young people.

In the reopening, DGI recommends that three areas receive attention:

Clarity around age limits

If it becomes necessary to open in phases based on age limits, it is important that an age limit is set so that it is recognisable in relation to other age brackets in society, for example in the education sector.

At the same time, we emphasise the importance of adult trainers, leaders and volunteers is crucial in the implementation of children's and young people's association activities.

Indoor and outdoor sports

Sports and association activities are different indoors and outdoors, also under corona restrictions. We wish for a dialogue on the possibilities of delivering outdoor activities before a possible opening of indoor activities.

"Restrictions must be able to work, must be easy to understand and must be possible to explain locally."

Association sports crosses municipal borders

If local/regional re-openings are possible, DGI supports this – in the same way as the sports associations in the autumn gained experience with local/regional restrictions and gradual easing of them. In the coming reopening, DGI continues to draw attention to association activities that are crossing municipal borders.

Children and young people must be given priority

DGI is the children's sports association. 770,000 children and young people under the age of 18 are members of an association in DGI.

Together with the associations, we work for the joy of movement and a “free space” away from an often exaggerated performance culture.

Children and young people have been missing their communities during the corona crisis. It was positive when the Parliament in June 2020 supported children's summer activities. Along with DGI's own means, we could provide a number of free places for summer activities, for the ones in need. A total of 25,000 children participated in one of DGI's summer activities.

Similarly, it was a huge relief that the Parliament in the autumn decided that children and young people up to the age of 21 were exempted from the lowered assembly ban.

“Ensuring the everyday lives of children and young people is the main priority of DGI and should again be a political priority. In the short term in the reopening, but also on longer term through broader measures to open communities for even more children and young people.”

DGI therefore proposes:

- **Nationwide partnership between ministries, the country's schools and youth and sports organisations on strengthened "open school" collaboration**

The vast majority of sports associations state in DGI's corona survey that they have not held any social activities to strengthen their local association life in 2020. There is a need to think across society to get more children and young people back in the sports associations when schools and association life reopens.

Therefore, DGI proposes a nationwide partnership, where ministries, relevant organisations, The Association of Municipalities (KL) and sports organizations work for more “open school” cooperation. To strengthen school class cohesion and well-being. DGI places special emphasis on the initiative "youth at the forefront" as one of the offers in the older school classes, which strengthen students' personal and social skills.

- **Reinforced efforts for more movement in school**

Children learn and thrive with their whole bodies. Therefore, it was it in itself worrying when the University of Southern Denmark last year announced that only every other student (with figures from 2017 and 2018) got the amount of school-based exercise that is prescribed by law.

During the corona crisis, we have gained valuable experiences with “outdoor schools”. But after a year in which a large part of the teaching has taken place online from home, there is a need to strengthen efforts physical movement in school, in order to promote well-being and joy of movement among the students.

DGI certifies schools and day care institutions and points, among other things, on a strengthening of Physical Education, the use of “outdoor schools” and a strengthening of the teacher education.

- **Strengthening the free “leisure passport”**

Not all municipalities have a so-called leisure passport, which ensures that children and young people from homes with less resources can get a grant for participation in an association. DGI wants the scheme strengthened and established in all municipalities, so children and young people, which are often not familiar with association life, become part of active, strong associations.

Lockdown is not closure

More and more teams, shows and tournaments were cancelled in 2020, and during the spring.

Lockdown, 23% of adult athletes stopped playing sports. Figures from IDAN confirm that without associations and communities, the Danes' participation in sports is dropping.

Nevertheless, DGI's corona study shows that "only" one out of three sports associations experience a lack of motivation.

In contrast, the recruitment of volunteers has stagnated. In general, sports associations experience that the recruitment of volunteers is one of the biggest challenges, and the corona crisis has unfortunately amplified this. During the corona crisis, every second (49%) association has indicated that it "did not succeed" at all to recruit volunteers. Only 4% are to a high or some degree succeeding in recruiting volunteers.

This is very worrying for our ambition to get more people active in the local associations.

DGI therefore proposes:

- **Additional funds for the corona grants, which are administered by DUF (youth associations), DGI / DIF and Company Sport.**
In April 2020, the Danish Parliament decided to provide an extraordinary subsidy for association life through the main organisations. The funds have been continuously replenished, so that sports clubs and others could apply for grants to cover losses due to restrictions.
DGI proposes additional funds for this. It should be discussed politically, whether the support can be given in the future and with focus on help for associations that, in addition to their "normal" activities, want to help with local recruitment and start-up activities.
- **A supporting hand to non-formal education and voluntary activity (Folkeoplysningen)**
The state should issue authority to the municipalities on the freezing of the year of calculation of the Liberal education grants (folkeoplysningstilskud), so that it is not based on artificially low numbers during corona.
- **Vaccine passports must not restrict access to local communities and activities**
DGI does not want vaccine passports as part of the sports associations' daily lives, and we do not see control vaccine passports as a task for volunteer association leaders. Children and adolescents will not be vaccinated. We are therefore also worried about what a vaccine passport would mean for children and young people, if, for example, participation in an event presupposes a vaccine passport. Therefore, we call for alternatives to the vaccine passport for those who are not vaccinated.
- **Municipal compensation: Extension of the indoor sport season**
The municipalities should be compensated by the state to enable an extension of the duration of the indoor season. The spring of 2021 will be important to get the Danes back in the active communities. Therefore DGI and the other sports organisations are cooperating with The Association of Municipalities (KL) about extending the season and keeping those municipal sports facilities open longer than normally. DGI therefore supports the municipalities, if they want municipal financial compensation for this in the upcoming negotiations on the finance of the municipalities for 2022.
- **Continued good frameworks for the municipalities' construction and maintenance of sports facilities**
DGI proposes that the municipalities also in 2022 get the best possible framework for building and maintaining sports facilities. Especially in the major cities, there is a big deficit

in sports facilities. Lack of sports facilities is also a barrier for a restart of association life. Because the number of members of sports associations is related to the number of facilities in the Danish municipalities (SDU 2020).

To support Danish employment, the so-called construction ceiling which limits the spending on construction works, was suspended for 2020, according to the agreement between the government and The Association of Municipalities (KL) on March 26, and the municipalities has been given improved loan options. Subsequently, the construction ceiling was raised significantly for 2021. New figures for the municipalities' 2021 budgets show that there is a prospect for an increase in investment in sports facilities. This positive development must be allowed to be continued in 2022 by the municipalities - in line with local needs.

How DGI will strengthen the restart of sports associations

- We will focus on “a good welcome” when we return back to our active clubs and communities
- We will give sports associations targeted guidelines to retain and motivate volunteer coaches and leaders
- We have a toolkit ready for the associations with specific advice to get the members back in the associations
- Sports associations have taken a “digital quantum leap” during corona, and we take the best learnings with us in the digital association development
- The restart must take into account that members come back in somewhat worse shape than before the shutdown. DGI supports with inspiration and good advice for training, where injuries are prevented
- We provide guidance on internships, law, grants and support opportunities
- As soon as the authorities announce reopening, DGI is ready with information emails, webinars and inspiration targeted at sports associations so they can get started quickly in the local, active communities we all miss. Of course with respect for the guidelines

Local communities are essential for well-being and health

The local sports associations are important for the Danes' physical, mental and social health.

And for our individual freedom, well-being and public health. This is most recently confirmed with the Government's "Professional reference group - National warning system for risk assessment and measures for management of Covid-19".

The learning of the corona year 2020 is that restrictions in particular affects the well-being of children and young people. Figures from the University of Copenhagen and the HOPE project at Aarhus University both indicate that young people are the loneliest group during corona.

We know the 10 to 13 year olds who have a daily routine in an association generally have better well-being than their peers. The closure has therefore affected all children and youth.

But vulnerable children and young people have had a particularly difficult time, and we share that concern for the well-being of vulnerable children and young people, as also the country's social organizations have pointed out during the corona restrictions.

Associations persist - even during corona

Since March 2020, DGI has effectively informed and advised its more than 6,400 associations on both the authorities' guidelines, aid packages and grants. Moreover, DGI has shared the good examples of sports associations that keep going and think in terms of creative solutions.

During the shutdowns, DGI has e.g.:

- Boosted online training and virtual communities in the sports associations. Among other things, DGI has delivered over 75 webinars targeting sports associations on online training
- Through the campaign "Thank you for taking one for the team" paid tribute to the volunteers who have kept the activities going and the mood high during a difficult time
- Provided inspiration to focus on association development – e.g. a new website, reorganising board work or explore new digital opportunities
- On DGI.dk, the corona entrance webpage was visited 153,000 times in 2020.
- 8 out of 10 of DGI's sports associations are satisfied with DGI's guidance and support during the corona crisis. Source: Survey among 2,600 associations in December 2020

More about DGI's corona efforts (In Danish)

Tools and knowledge

<https://www.dgi.dk/foreningsledelse/viden-vaerktoejer/saadan-haandterer-du-corona-krisen-i-foreningen>

Digital communities

<https://www.dgi.dk/foreningsledelse/viden-vaerktoejer/saadan-haandterer-du-corona-krisen-i-foreningen/faellenshaft-via-digitale-platforme>

How to handle a positive test

<https://www.dgi.dk/foreningsledelse/artikler/saadan-haandterer-foreningen-en-positiv-coronatest>

Train your team from home

<https://www.dgi.dk/temaer/restriktioner-efteraar-2020/saadan-traener-du-dit-hold-hjemmefra>

We train together

<https://www.dgi.dk/temaer/restriktioner-efteraar-2020/vi-traener-sammen>

About annual general meetings

<https://www.dgi.dk/foreningsledelse/artikler/saadan-haandterer-foreninger-generalforsamlingen-efter-8-juni>