

What makes an outdoor city?

Research on outdoor sports in urban areas conducted
within the STANDOUT Project

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supported by all partners



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1. The STANDOUT Project – what is it all about?

1.1 Description and Aim of the Project

STANDOUT aims to improve the opportunities for being active in nature in an urban setting. By encouraging cities and municipalities to adopt minimum standards and reshaping urban environments and strategies, the project addresses physical inactivity and inequalities and fosters a development in regards to healthy lifestyles, community wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability.

Why focusing on physical activity in natural settings?

Physical activities that are carried out in nature can lead to synergistic positive effects. In particular, outdoor sports are connected to various benefits such as:

- **Green and blue spaces are the places where people are most likely to be physically active.** The Eurobarometer on sport and physical activity shows that most physical activity takes place in settings such as parks and outdoors (47%). This is an increase of +7 percentage points since 2017 (European Commission, 2022).
- Outdoor sports provide low cost or no cost opportunities for being active and are also **in line with actual trends of being active in a non-organised and informal way.**
- They can **(re)connect people to nature**
- They **foster healthy lifestyles** and exposure to high-quality green and blue space is associated with various indicators of good physical and mental health (WHO, 2021, p.24). The WHO recommends access to public green space of at least 0.5–1 hectare within 300 metres or 5 minutes' walk from residents' homes (WHO, 2017, p.11).

A systematic analysis of the benefits that outdoor sports bring to society has been shown through the BOSS project (see Figure 1). This includes benefits for physical and mental health, education and lifelong learning, community benefits, pro-social behaviour and additional benefits such as lifelong participation in physical activity (Eigenschenk et al., 2019). Of course, being physically active indoors is also beneficial, however the benefits of being active in nature often go beyond. Thompson et al. (2011) conducted a systematic review of the comparative effects of participating in indoor and outdoor activities. This concluded that participants had greater feelings of revitalization and positive engagement as well as decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression when being active in the natural environment.

In the context of increasing urbanisation, a need for climate adaptation measures, insufficient activity levels and an increasing disengagement of people from the natural environment, it is important to bring nature and opportunities of being active in a natural setting to the places where most people live – into urban areas. **Overall, it is a cost-effective strategy and a win-win deal to focus on outdoor sports and the synergistic benefits that activities in nature bring.** Policymakers who work to increase the health, welfare and community wellbeing of their inhabitants can serve on different agendas in one strategy.



Figure 1 Overview of the benefits of outdoor sports for society (Eigenschenk, Thomann & McClure, 2019)

Addressing inactivity

In respect to high inactivity levels that have grown to 46 %, Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport stated: "The new figures show how vitally important it is to continue our efforts to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles. I strongly encourage all actors, from public authorities to sports organisations, to intensify their efforts and work together" (European Commission, 2024). With the STANDOUT initiative, the project partners want to offer guidance on how to address inactivity with the development of outdoor sports opportunities in urban areas.

Addressing health promotion and active ageing

Exposure to green and blue spaces can promote and support a physically active lifestyle and is associated with various indicators of good physical and mental health as well as higher levels of life satisfaction (WHO, 2021, p.24). The outdoors is furthermore a key resource to promote active and healthy ageing. The Special Eurobarometer 525 on Sport and Physical Activity shows that people aged 55 and older suffer from high inactivity levels. 12% never do any moderate physical activity (compared with 6% among respondents aged 15-24 years) and 13% of respondents aged 55 or older even say that they never walk for ten minutes at a time. If elderly are active, they most likely do sport or another physical activity in a park, outdoors, etc. (50% of respondents) (European Commission, 2022).

Addressing urbanisation

Urbanisation in Europe is increasing and expected to reach about 83,7% in 2050 (Competence Centre on Foresight of the European Commission, 2020). With built-up areas expanding, there is pressure on municipalities and city planners to focus on the “grey infrastructure”. The STANDOUT project seeks to get those in authority to rethink urban planning to encompass more nature-based solutions and also to ensure the availability of high-quality green and blue spaces. “Adequate and equitable access to high-quality green and blue environments is a major issue, particularly in urban areas where disadvantaged neighbourhoods often have fewer natural areas (WHO Regional Office for Europe (2021, p.25). The provision of sufficient urban parks and other nature areas can also prevent overuse of existing nature areas, thereby helping to prevent environmental damage.

Addressing climate adaptation and the agenda 2030

According to Scientists at the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre cities can be 10-15 °C hotter than their rural surroundings (Mentaschi et al., 2022). Cities are covered with human-made infrastructure such as roads and buildings with dark construction material which absorb and retain heat more than natural surfaces like grass or woodland. This localized warming within cities is known as surface urban heat island and is associated with an increased risk of heat-related human illnesses and mortality (Mentaschi et al., 2022).

Urban parks and green zones together with bodies of water like lakes or rivers provide cooler temperatures. Vegetation cools the air around it through the evaporation of water so vegetation cover is an important factor that can determine the strength of the urban heat island effect. The STANDOUT project promotes the importance of green and blue spaces in cities which can improve urban resilience to climate change.



Overall, improving the opportunities of being active in green and blue environments in an urban context, bringing more nature to the city and “greening” our European municipalities will support many strategies at the same time. The provision of near to home and easily accessible and available to all citizens green and blue spaces along with the policies, educational programmes and facilities is a clear need.

STANDOUT will provide municipalities and policy-makers with high-quality guidance to make urban areas more outdoor sport friendly but also take into account that this happens in ways that are sustainable and inclusive.

1.2 STANDOUT Partner Consortium

The team to realize the project consists of a variety of partner organizations coming from different geographical backgrounds and bringing together expertise in different outdoor sports as well as city development, community engagement and development of programs and strategies to activate people.

- European Network of Outdoor Sports (ENOS) Lead Partner – France
- County Administrative Board of Västernorrland/ Lansstyrelsen Västernorrland – Sweden
- Mountainbike Forum Germany
- Mountaineering Association Tara – Serbia
- Municipality of Viana do Castelo – Portugal
- Outdooractive AG – Germany
- Silkeborg Kommune – Denmark
- Technische Universität München – Germany
- Trekkify (Associazione Sportiva Dilettantistica) – Italy
- Univerzita Karlova – Czech Republic

1.3 Project Activities

The project is structured into 4 work packages plus management and coordination and delivers on:

- Research as a knowledge base for development of standards and for knowledge sharing on existing good practice
- An exchange program and digital tools for knowledge sharing between cities and municipalities
- A toolbox of /set of (minimal) standards as orientation for developing individual strategies
- A dissemination strategy to foster alliances, cross-sectional working and knowledge sharing across borders.

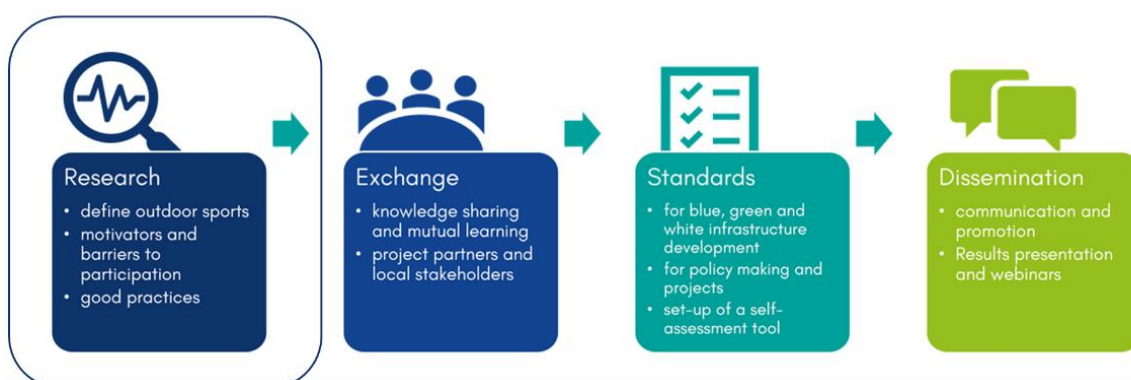


Figure 2 Overview of Project Activities

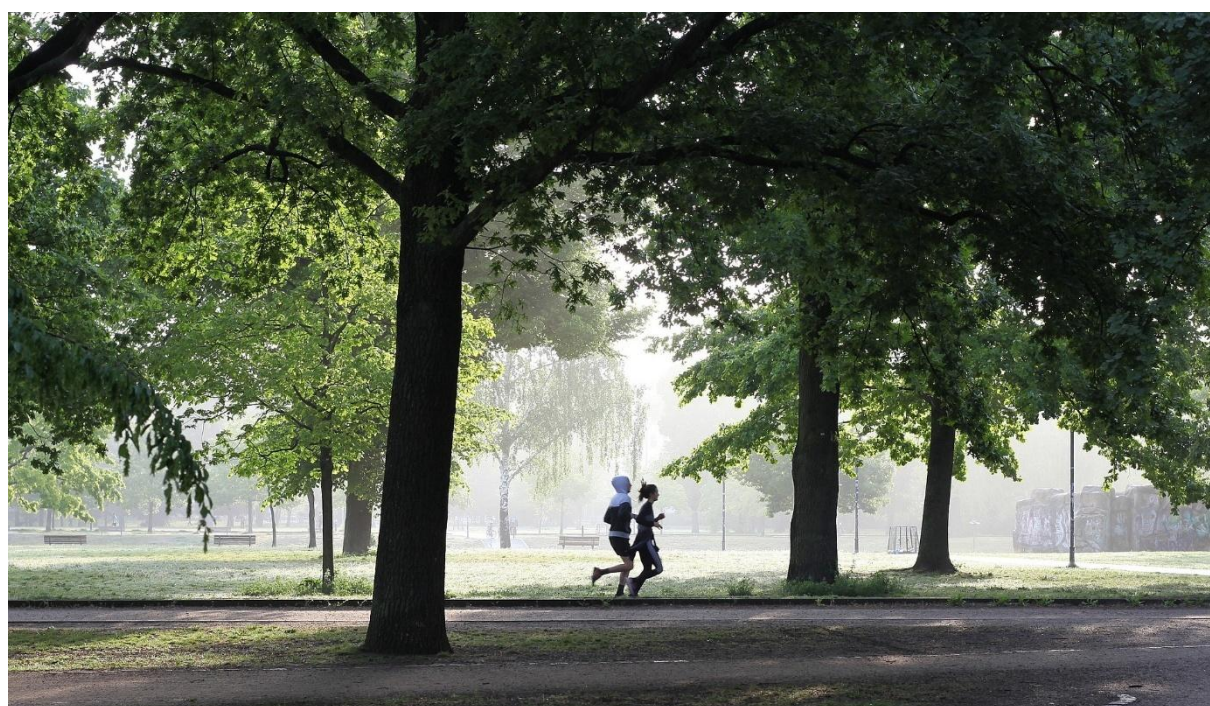


Figure 3 Overview of Research Tasks

Regarding research, different activities have been carried out to create a sound evidence base for the project. This included defining the framework and the activities urban outdoor sports are incorporating, as well as:

- Research on **drivers and barriers of being active in natural environments** in an urban context both from an individual as well from a city developers' point of view: Data collection was carried out. Several master theses give additional deeper insights.
- Research on **good practice**: Additional to the insights from the exchange program within the project, all partners collated examples on good practice from cities outside the partner consortium by desk research to add good insights from a variety of cities of different sizes, geographical and environmental aspects.
- Research on digital good practice examples and **digital solutions** to promote outdoor sports has been carried out by the specialist Outdoor Active.

Additionally, the work package also included research on existing standards. Over 20 labels have been analysed to gain knowledge on existing indicators, processes of assessment and tools for ongoing improvement.



2. Definition of outdoor sports for the use of the project

For the use of the STANDOUT Project, outdoor sports in urban areas are defined as physical activities that take place in urban green and blue spaces to benefit of health, well-being and nature experience.



This definition encompasses all activities involving a minimum amount of physical exertion. Therefore, the project includes all forms of casual or organized participation and does not focus on competitive, high-performance sports. The second main criterion is nature orientation. In this context, the activities take place not just outdoors (open air activities) or use nature as a backdrop, but the experience of nature is central to the activity. Finally, the activities should be accessible to everyone, allowing people of all ages and from all backgrounds to be active in a sustainable and inclusive way.

Examples of Activities that are clearly within the definition (non-exhaustive list):

- Walking (also Nordic walking, hiking, trekking)
- Running, orienteering in urban green environments like parks, forests etc.
- Cycling on green routes, mountain biking on natural trails
- Canoeing, Windsurfing, SUP, etc. on rivers or lakes in and in direct surroundings of the city (including artificial water sports areas)
- Surfing on river waves in the city or at the sea of coastal cities
- Horse riding in parks
- Dinghy sailing on rivers or lakes in and in direct surroundings of the city or on the sea at coastal cities
- Rowing on rivers or lakes in and in direct surroundings of the city or on the sea at coastal cities
- Swimming in lakes or rivers
- Climbing on rocks or outdoor artificial climbing walls in urban green spaces
- ...

Examples of Activities that are outside the definition (non-exhaustive list)

- Sunbathing (not physically demanding)
- Barbecue, camping, bird watching etc. (not physically demanding)
- Chess (no nature experience, not physically demanding)
- Indoor Climbing facilities (no nature experience)
- Ball-oriented sports like football or volleyball (focus on ball, no nature experience)
- ...

Please note: If an activity is not included within outdoor sports, it doesn't mean it's not valuable and doesn't provide any benefits to participants. Of course, activities that don't involve physical exertion or aren't connected to nature can also have positive effects. But within this project, the focus is on nature-oriented sports without wanting to exclude other activities. Of course, depending on the context, cultural background, or local specialty, a different perspective may prevail.

The EU's definition of sport encompasses 'all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels' (Council of Europe, 2001).

3. Understanding Facilitators and Barriers for outdoor sports in urban areas

3.1 Research Design

This research part of the STANDOUT project focused on facilitators or drivers and barriers that people face to get active in outdoor sports and nature-based physical activities in an urban context.

Using a developed methodology and standard process, all project partners liaised with a city in their country and collected data and insights on the drivers and barriers from a participation and policy perspective. Overall, data collection took place in 12 different European cities between July 24 and February 25. A total of 13 workshops were organised, engaging 148 participants.



Figure 4 Geographical spread of the standardized data collection

The idea of the focus group workshops was to bring together stakeholders with different perspectives, coming from different sports (e.g. hiking, running, biking, canoeing, swimming), with special needs and representing individuals, sports organizations as well as policy-makers. The standardized methodology included interactive formats such as a world café on the drivers and barriers, an outdoor city game to prioritize important topics and the task to formulate recommendations to the city council for improvement. The workshop duration was between 2,5 to 3 hours.

The data were analysed using a qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2010) with an inductive category development.

More details and materials to run a similar workshop are included in Appendix A.

Prior to the focus groups in all partner countries, a pilot study in Genova used the methodology of Community Mapping in combination with a literature analysis to create a first list of influencing factors for outdoor sports in urban areas. The results have been used to develop the Outdoor City Game for the focus group workshops.

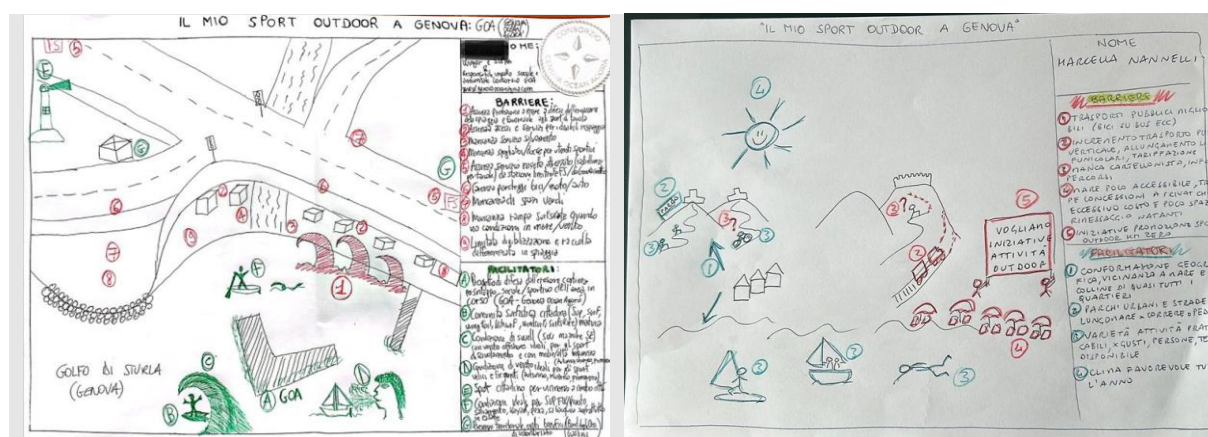


Figure 5 Examples from Community Mapping in Genova (Trucchi, 2024)

3.2 Results

Drivers and Facilitators for outdoor sports in urban areas

16 different groups presented a shortlist of facilitators from the perspective of their city. Of this sample, 15 groups described nature and the **availability of high quality green and blue spaces** as one of the top facilitators. Examples of natural areas ranged from well-maintained parks with open gathering places to exceptional natural attractions such as a national park in close distance. Characteristics of being safe and clean with unpolluted water in rivers and lakes, fresh air and green spaces free of litter, concrete, noise and dust provide an excellent foundation for being active in nature.

A **variety of natural spaces with good conditions for a diverse range of outdoor sports** ($n = 7$) were also considered very important for promoting participation. Some cities can build upon a natural diversity of ocean, river and mountain but participants also valued small-scale variability like different natural terrains. Overall, varied options not only make physical activity more attractive, but they also appeal to a broader audience.

Beyond a comprehensive offer of green and blue spaces, focus group participants emphasized that natural areas and outdoor sport offers must be **easily accessible**. Good access was listed 11 times, including aspects such as short distances and the **availability of near to home green and blue spaces all over the city** as well as access to outdoor sport sites and facilities by public transport. Ideally, green and blue spaces should be within 5-10 minutes walking distance, offer free access, have no opening hours and provide free or inexpensive equipment rentals.

Equipment services (n = 7) including affordable or free of charge equipment rentals, for example by establishing a sharing bank, are particularly important for beginners, people who want to try new activities, individuals with financial difficulties or people with special needs for adaptive equipment.

Many outdoor sports and especially outdoor recreation have a low entry barrier. Creating accessible environments further ensures inclusivity for everyone, including people with mobility impairments. A low barrier to entry is also supported by a welcoming and safe atmosphere, which is particularly important for families and beginners. In connection with the topic of safety, the advantage of having a relatively safe nature was also mentioned, without dangerous animals and with quick emergency care if needed.

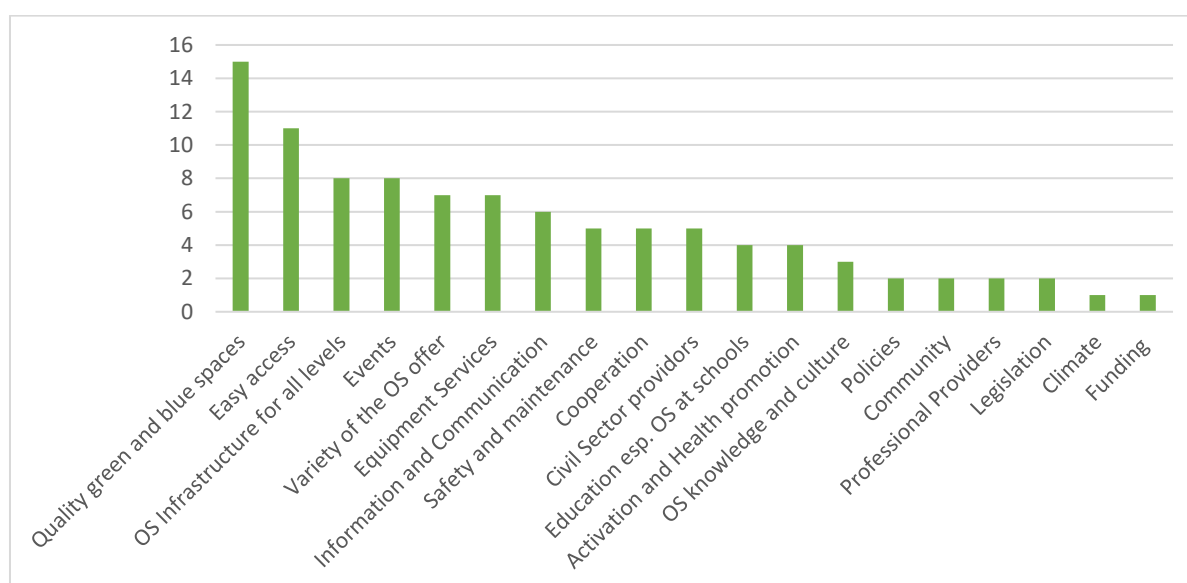


Figure 6 Situation of facilitators and drivers for participation in outdoor sports from the perspective of the focus group cities

Good outdoor sport infrastructure for all levels of expertise (n = 8) is another major facilitator. In addition to the already mentioned well-maintained green and blue spaces, this included facilities for outdoor sports and well-marked trails, paths and routes without cars and clear signage for a variety of outdoor activities like walking, running, mountain biking, cycling, inline-skating or wheelchair use.

The next group of facilitators to participation relates to promotion (n = 6) in general and increasing awareness of outdoor sport offerings with events (n = 8) in particular as well as the provision of clear communication and high-quality **information** (n = 6). High accessibility to information could be achieved through a dedicated outdoor sports website that brings together all activities and opportunities; however, it was mentioned that such platforms rarely exist. Participants furthermore emphasized the importance of clear communication and effective signage, which make outdoor areas more accessible and easier to navigate. Both digital services, such as mobile applications, as well as physical information and information centres were identified as facilitators.

Promotion of outdoor sports takes place through multiple channels, including campaigns, traditional and social media, online platforms, and printed materials such as flyers. Similarly, a wide range of stakeholders can be involved in promoting outdoor sports, ranging from civil society actors such as clubs and associations to private service providers and, importantly, municipalities themselves. In one example, a city promotes itself as an “Outdoor Capital,” positioning the municipality as a leading outdoor organisation. This approach has proven to be interesting for collaboration with external

stakeholders such as other municipalities as well as national sports organizations. In terms of promoting participation in outdoor sports, however, this marketing had a particularly important impact internally.

Events appear to play a central role in promotional effects. While large-scale or popular events can attract competitors and spectators and enhance the area's visibility beyond the municipality, community-oriented events aimed at residents and families were highlighted as especially valuable. Such events help showcase local outdoor sport opportunities, encourage participation at the local level, and increase the overall visibility and recognition of outdoor sports within the area.

Another facilitator, while less central but nonetheless important, is **health promotion** (n = 4). Outdoor sports and nature-based activities offer a wide range of health benefits, and various stakeholders are involved in encouraging activation and increased participation in outdoor sports. This included incentive and reward systems, such as those provided by health insurance companies or employer-based benefits that support participation in outdoor sports such as allowing time for physical activity during the workday, bike-to-work schemes, and other workplace programs.

Factors such as Policies, Community, the active promotion by professional Providers, Legislation, Climate or Funding have not been mentioned very often within the list of drivers and facilitators. However, it has to be noted that this judgement is based upon the experiences and perspectives from the actual situation in the focus group cities. This means, if for example a municipality is not investing in outdoor sport, it is also very unlikely that participants would report funding as a facilitator that they are experiencing. **The results of the world café give insights into the actual situation rather than a ranking of importance in general.**



Figure 7 Impressions from the World Cafés

Barriers to participation in outdoor sports in urban areas

A **major barrier** for participation in outdoor sports in urban areas that has been described in 10 out of 16 groups **was a lack of attractive green and blue spaces**. A lack of near to home natural spaces all over the city makes it difficult for citizens to engage in outdoor sports ($n = 5$) and it can also lead to capacity issues ($n = 4$) with too many participants, a loss of attractiveness and high pressure on existing natural places. In some cases, the quality of the natural environment was criticized, and the green and blue spaces themselves were not seen as attractive enough. Especially in southeastern and eastern European countries, environmental issues were described ($n = 4$) like poor water quality, waste or even illegal landfills. Bad maintenance ($n = 3$) and poorly kept public green spaces like parks make them unattractive and unsafe for use. Further, more general **safety concerns** ($n = 4$) were expressed in relation to poor lighting, lack of safe cycling trails and heavy traffic.

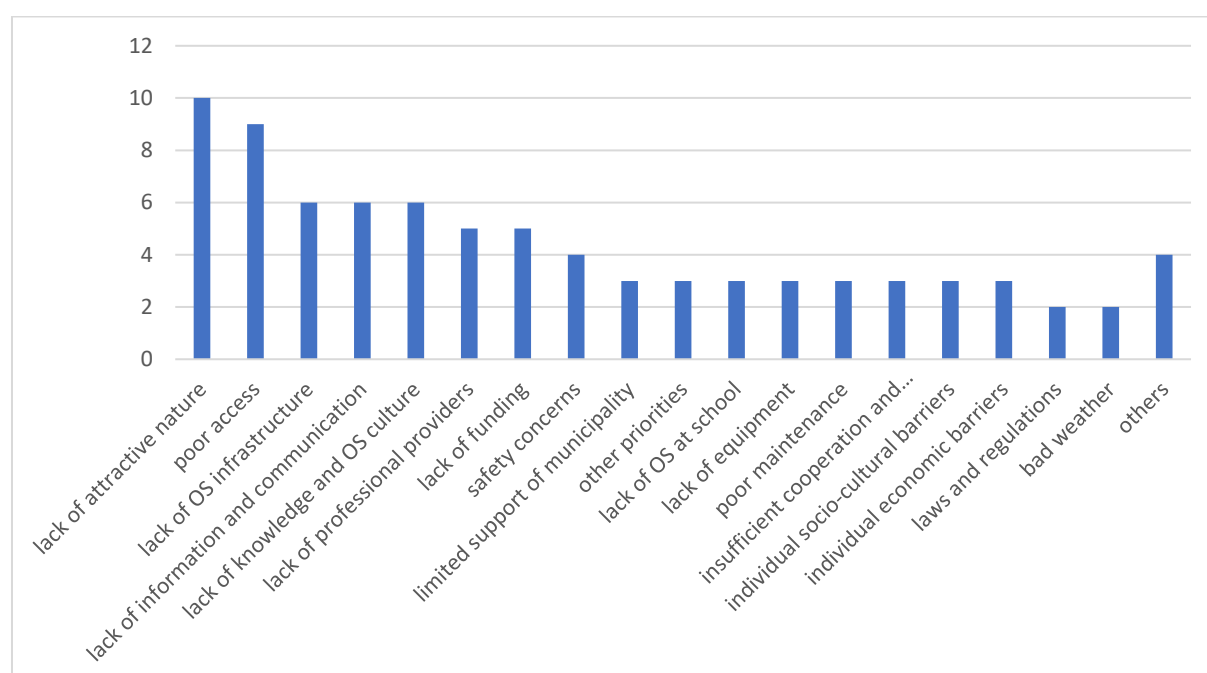


Figure 8 Situation of barriers for participation in outdoor sports from the perspective of the focus group cities

Although outdoor sports and outdoor recreation are not dependent on big infrastructure, stadiums or gyms, an important barrier described is the **lack of outdoor sport infrastructure** ($n = 6$). This includes insufficient or not enough infrastructure e.g. lack of facilities or trails but also cycling paths connecting homes and schools or a lack of infrastructure and facilities for people with special needs. When it came to the discussion of developing new outdoor sport facilities and infrastructure like trails, private property interests and nature protection were named as constraints. For Serbia, participants expressed the infrastructural lack not only for outdoor sports but also as a general problem with bad conditions of local roads, public transport or equipped recreation areas. Although there are a lot of natural potentials, poor infrastructure like undeveloped approaches to rivers makes it impossible to use those potentials in a sustainable way.

This topic is closely related to **the issue of poor accessibility** ($n = 9$), which is considered as a **major barrier in most countries**. The reasons for this include, among other things, insufficient public transport to outdoor sport sites and natural areas as well as no equipment transport or a lack of pathways or other physical aids for people with special needs. Groups that suffer the most from insufficient public transport and a lack of near to home offers are people who cannot compensate with

motorized private transport, such as children and adolescents. In addition to physical barriers, participants expressed time constraints due to opening hours and limited courses as well as **socio-cultural barriers** (n = 3).

Another barrier connected with access is the **lack of information and targeted communication** (n = 6). The absence of clear, comprehensive information on outdoor sport opportunities and effective information channels on spaces and activities leads to a lack of awareness and doesn't promote participation.

6 groups saw an **insufficient knowledge of outdoor sports and a general lack of outdoor sport culture** as a main barrier to participation. Especially highlighted was the poor outdoor sport knowledge of local authorities and decision makers and insufficient knowledge about the needs and wishes of citizens in relation to outdoor sports and recreation. The awareness and recognition of the benefits connected to being physically active in natural environments also seem to be low. Even in cities that acknowledge the importance of outdoor sports and invest in their development, there is a lack of data and evidence about the effects of local projects, initiatives and facilities that can support further development of outdoor sports locally.

Low funding in outdoor sports (n = 5) and **limited general support by municipalities or local authorities** (n = 3) lead to a lack of resources and are also intertwined with other topics such as lack of infrastructure, lack of promotion of outdoor sports or a lack of effective information. In addition to the fact that municipality invest little funds in outdoor activities, individuals who would like to engage in outdoor sports can face **economic barriers** (n = 3) and might not have enough financial resources to purchase equipment or pay for transportation or memberships. Within this list of financial barriers, the lack of equipment gets especially critical with adaptive equipment and special tools needed.

The fact that low funding is invested in outdoor sports is also related to the barrier that municipalities and local authorities often follow **other priorities** (n = 3). Outdoor activities are often not recognized by local decision makers as an important resource and the focus is quite often on traditional sports such as football. In addition, elite and high-performance sports overshadow recreational outdoor activities, leaving less attention and resources for the general population.

Although outdoor sports have great potential in promoting lifelong participation in health enhancing physical activities, and green and blue spaces are most likely to encourage physical activity, **programs in schools are still underdeveloped** (n = 3). However, school programs dedicated to outdoor sports and activities in nature are considered crucial for raising awareness from an early age and building a foundation for participation.

Programs are not only necessary for children; adults are also not always motivated or able to engage in activities independently or in a self-organised manner. A **lack of (professional) providers and trained guides or instructors** (n = 5) to design and lead attractive outdoor sport courses and programs for different audiences therefore represents another significant barrier. Providers include clubs but can also encompass commercial businesses. This is also relevant in terms of offering a variety of activities as well as courses or programs for people with special needs.

For those cities that already have a variety of stakeholders developing outdoor sports, **insufficient cooperation among different stakeholders** (n = 3) and unclear organization and coordination of stakeholders involved can be a barrier. Focus groups reported insufficient cooperation between the private and public sectors, insufficient networks and stakeholder engagement as well as uncoordinated initiatives of the municipality, private business and civil society. If no staff or official contact person from the municipality or city is taking care of outdoor sports, this can also lead to **unclear**

responsibilities which lead to unprofessional management and maintenance of outdoor sport infrastructure and services.

Laws and regulations (n = 2) are also recognised as a limitation and when it comes to restrictions or balancing different interests like forestry and recreation, outdoor sports are often not high on the priority list.

Although outdoor sports and activities in nature were considered as something only seasonal by many local authorities that have been interviewed in the Czech Republic, in addition to the workshop methodology (see Appendix A for a deeper insight on results), bad weather conditions were only mentioned in one focus group.

Overall, the described barriers are interconnected and sometimes hard to analyse separately.

Priority of general influencing factors for the development of an outdoor sport city

While participants focused on drivers and barriers in their respective city during the world café, the task of the Outdoor City Game was to think about general factors that influence the development of outdoor sports in urban areas. Groups received a set of pictures with “ingredients” to build an outdoor city. They then had to sort out elements in several rounds. The selection was decided through discussion by the entire group until only the three most important remained.

An overview of the factors that reached the top priority can be found in Figure 9. Additionally, an analysis of importance was also done by considering rankings beyond the top three. However, the point system resulted in the same order.

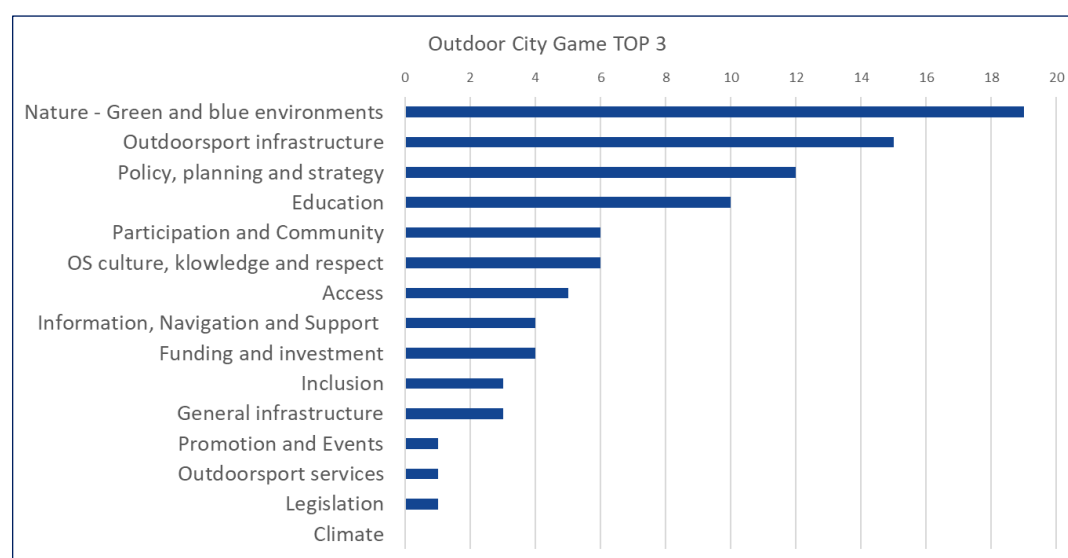


Figure 9 Top priority factors for developing an outdoor sport city

Similar to the discussed results for facilitators and barriers, green and blue environments followed by outdoor sports infrastructure take the lead on the priority list. Although this was not considered as a major barrier or facilitator in relation to the focus group cities, participants rated “Policy, planning and strategy” as the third most common factor among the top three to develop an outdoor sport city. This factor included to have a master plan for outdoor sports, a strategy and (long-term) political initiatives, permanent staff responsible for outdoor sport as well as an advisory board or similar to include



Recommendations for improving the outdoor sport opportunities in urban areas

In the last part of the focus group workshops, participants had the task of developing recommendations for improving outdoor sports opportunities for their respective city. Overall, it can be noted that the participants of the workshops presented very thoughtful and constructive ideas. All local authorities and policymakers would be wise to seek dialogue with such a diverse group of outdoor sports stakeholders and to build upon the insights of a creative working group in their city.

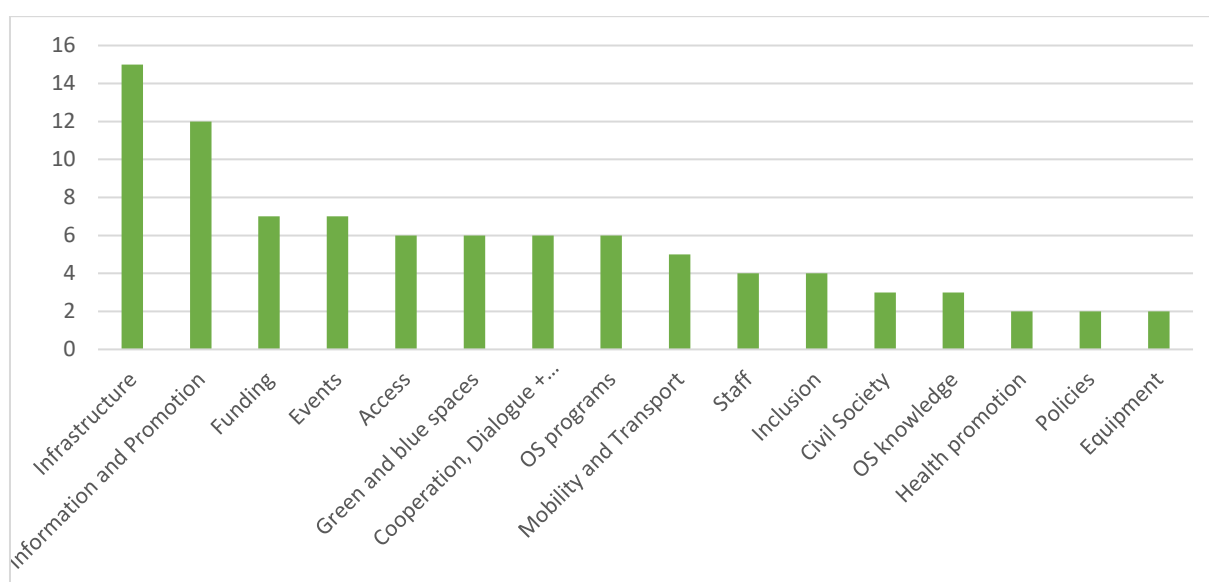


Figure 12 Categories of recommendations to improve outdoor sports in urban areas

The recommendations included:

- **More and better outdoor sports infrastructure** (like trails, pedestrian and cycling routes and accessible meeting places) but also to allow flexible and creative user concepts for outdoor sports e.g. bouldering on bridges, green roofs, the usage of parking space on Sundays etc.
- **Better information and promotion of outdoor sports** that could also include an innovative promotion of the territory by focusing on the unique natural and cultural heritage. In general, participants would like to see one central information platform like an app or a specialised website including all outdoor sports facilities, infrastructure and programs. Additionally, an all-inclusive ticket for outdoor sports in one city would be appreciated.
- **More funding in outdoor sports.**
- **Events** especially for a broader audience to increase the visibility and awareness of outdoor sports.
- **Improved access** by inclusive facilities, no-cost programs or open-door activities and opportunities to try/test new activities.
- **Good public transport and sustainable mobility** through better connectivity of green spaces, e.g., with pedestrian and cyclist bridges, fewer cars, a public transport network that also connects the city centre with the surrounding areas, and safe, active commuting options, including for wheelchairs or cargo bikes.
- **Better protection** of natural places and **transformation of unused grey infrastructure into green spaces.**

- **Cooperation, coordination and regular dialogue** between the municipality and different outdoor sport stakeholders.
- **Staff** dedicated for the development, organisation and coordination of outdoor sports
- Special outdoor sports **programs** with a majority of proposals focusing on children and youth and school programs
- **Support for voluntary work and civil society stakeholders** e.g. with the invention of a volunteering day for better recognition of voluntary work and a free day given by the employer.
- Increased **knowledge on outdoor sports practice** through monitoring of outdoor sports infrastructure, status quo and needs analyses.

In this context, not only the need to inform the public on outdoor sports and activate them for health enhancing physical activities was mentioned. It was also emphasized that it is crucial to inform political decision-makers about the positive effects of outdoor sports and activities, to present data and evaluations, to involve politicians and get citizens and clubs to talk about what they are doing and the good effects for the citizens.

Many great ideas have been collected to improve outdoor sports in urban areas, and the good news is that many of the solutions already exist in some cities and are being tested in practice. See the chapter on good practice examples.

4. Good Practice examples of outdoor sports in urban areas

Partners conducted a structured collection of good practice examples through coordinated desk research. The examples reflect a diversity of approaches to promote active, healthy lifestyles through outdoor sports, covering topics such as policies, urban planning, sustainable infrastructure, programmes to activate underrepresented population groups or measures to increase access. During this first data collection, 70 examples were collected across 14 European countries (see Figure 13) and across, with entries ranging from local initiatives and city programmes to national policy frameworks.

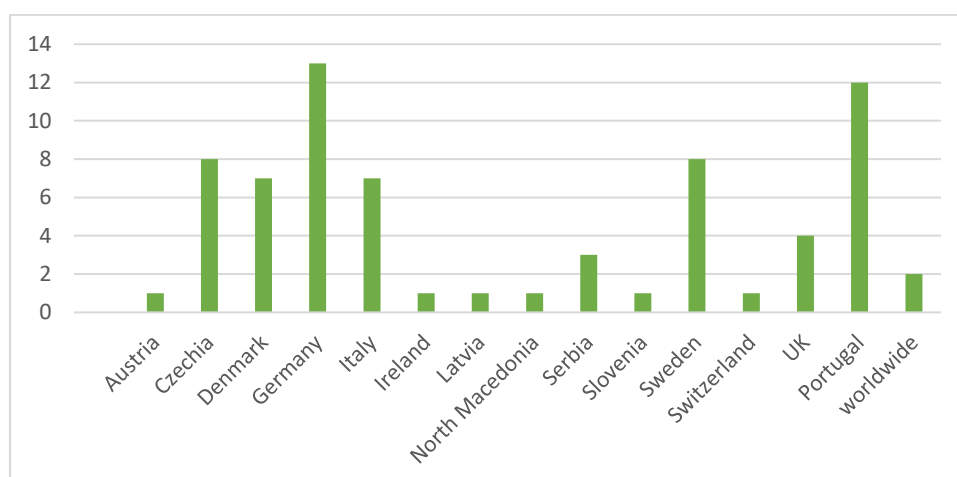


Figure 13 Geographical spread of good practice examples

The collection of good practice examples also represents a variety of different outdoor activities taking place in different environments ranging from classical sports for all like swimming, running / walking to more specialised water or mountain sports. Overall, Mountain biking and cycling were the most prominent activities (see Figure 14).

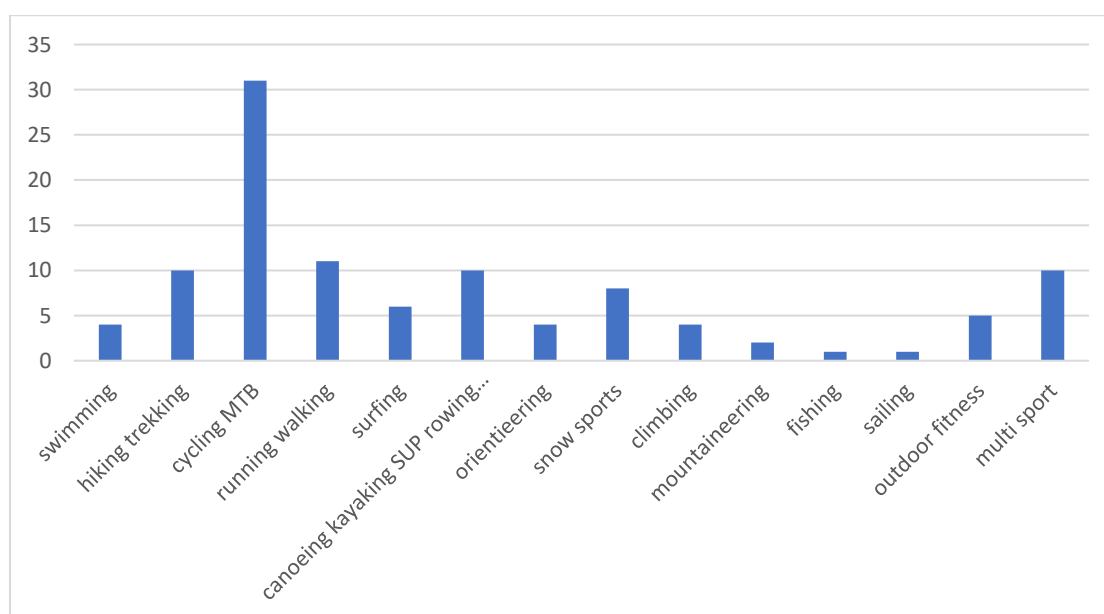


Figure 14 Variety of outdoor activities represented in the good practice collection

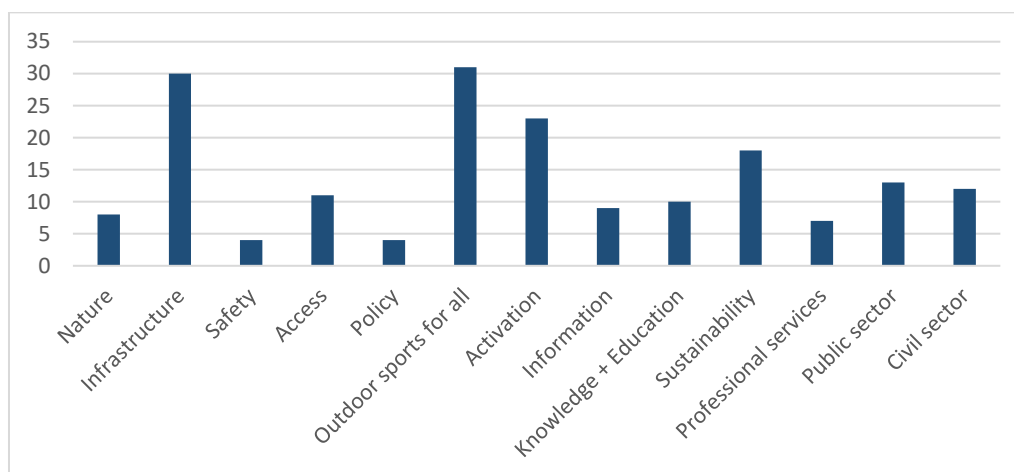


Figure 15 Variety of topics covered by the good practice collection

All good practice examples give valuable insights into how healthy lifestyles for all can be fostered through outdoor sports and nature activities in an urban context. They also showcase how barriers to participation can be overcome with the suitable strategy, innovative programs, cooperations or investments. The full collection will be presented on the project website as inspiration for developing individual strategies. Some exemplary cases are shown below to provide an insight into this resource and the variety of possible initiatives. The examples were also selected to reflect different thematic priorities, geographic contexts, and target groups.

Renaturation of the river Isar



Munich, Germany

A win-win situation by combining nature restoration, flood prevention and an increased quality of life for inhabitants.



**Nature restoration
Climate adaptation**

Between 2000 and 2007, an eight-kilometre stretch of river landscape within Munich's urban area was renaturalized. The goal was to create a near-natural river landscape in which the Isar branches out into a wide gravel bed and can flexibly adapt to the water level. Beyond improving habitat diversity, a concept was developed that allows for better protection against flooding, more space and proximity to nature for the river landscape, and higher quality leisure and recreational use. An interdisciplinary working group that oversaw the planning and implementation, as well as the integration of the needs of the citizens, contributed significantly to the success of the concept.



Photos: Outdoor recreation at the Isar

Further information: <https://www.bfn.de/praxisbeispiele/der-isar-plan-flussrenaturierung-muenchen>

Time laps video: <https://youtu.be/pKzROnHQZ6s>

Sønæs climate and activity park



Viborg, Denmark

Transformation of football pitches to a multi-functional park with recreational facilities and climate control.



**Nature
Climate Adaptation
Education and Knowledge**

Sønæs is a 10-hectare recreational park located by a larger lake in the city of Viborg. Before the transformation, the area was laid out as football pitches which were often unusable due to the wet bog bottom. An increasing need for climate protection and a desire from the people of Viborg for an accessible recreational area gave rise to the establishment of the Sønæs climate and activity park. The need to protect against extreme rain has thus resulted in an experience-rich, hilly, blue-green landscape that invites play and movement. Special attention has been given to create attractions for people to cross the water (e.g. via a concrete path across the purification pond or by barge) which connect to Danish culture and tradition.



The park appears as a recreational "water park" but it is also a technical rainwater basin, an area for promoting biodiversity and good habitats, and an active learning space for imparting knowledge about the environment and the water cycle.

Further information: <https://www.lytt.dk/projekter/soenaes>

Trail Network Vodno Mountain



Skopje, North Macedonia

Free public transport on weekends for sustainable access



**Infrastructure, Access
Sustainability**

The development of the mountain area of Vodno mountain, which is in the immediate vicinity of Skopje, began after World War II. Today it is a very popular recreational area and offers numerous and different opportunities for recreational outdoor sports - there are 53 km of hiking trails, 30 km of MTB trails, 19 km of cycling routes, and 65 routes for rock climbing and a competitive kayaking trail in Matka Canyon. The nearest trails are about 3 km from the city centre. To make this area accessible to as many people as possible and to avoid traffic jams, free public transportation is provided on weekends.



Further information: <https://parkovi.com.mk/en/vodno-2/#1554816831840-83102404-915badba-609b>

Trailcenter Silkeborg



Silkeborg, Denmark

A gateway to nature and an accessible outdoor facility that is being used as a shared clubhouse for different sport clubs, self-organised practitioners and tourists.



**Infrastructure
Access
Outdoor sports for all**

A core idea from the beginning was to build a sustainable facility. Building a shared facility made it possible to build only one facility instead of multiple facilities for different sports clubs, self-organized practitioners, tourists etc. The facility is open from 6 to 22 every day and can't be booked. Two outdoor sports clubs use the trailcenter as their clubhouse. The area around the trailcenter can be used for small events. Using the facility is free of charge. The trailcenter also supports beginners as it provides basic facilities that especially beginners in outdoor sports and citizens with little experience with being in nature need. There is easy access to beginner hiking and MTB trails. The surrounding nature is close to the city and very safe.



Further information: [Trailcenter i Silkeborg](#) | DIF

Schmausenbuck Trails



Nürnberg, Germany

Legalisation of MTB trails in a protected forest based on stakeholder cooperation.



**Nature Protection
Infrastructure
Cooperation**

By 2020, use of the Nuremberg Reichswald forest near Schmausenbuck – a protected forest area with the highest protection status – had steadily increased, accompanied by the 'wild' and unauthorised creation of mountain bike trails. Due to the pandemic, visitor numbers rose even further, leading to environmental destruction and increasing conflicts. In response, the DIMB IG Nuremberg-Fürth interest group became active, quickly gaining more than 400 members. A round table was set up with all interest groups to develop a sustainable usage concept. This process led to an official approval agreement with the Bavarian State Forestry Administration and a

collaboration with the city of Nuremberg, supported by the German Alpine Club (DAV) and the General German Bicycle Club (ADFC).

Since then, trail construction has been carried out in a structured and regulated manner by the DIMB-IG. In total, more than 20 kilometres of designated routes with 14 trails have been created in six sectors. The division into sectors enables active visitor management by directing traffic to or away from specific areas, thereby protecting sensitive zones.

These efforts are complemented by clear communication of the trail rules to promote sustainable and responsible riding behaviour. Ongoing environmental monitoring is already showing improvements within the surrounding FFH protected area: by concentrating activities on official trails, previous sprawl has been reduced and the impact on protected habitats minimised.



Photos: Schmausenbuck Trails (© DIMB-IG Nürnberg-Fürth)

Further information: <https://schmausenbuck.de/>

#BIKEYGEES e.V.



Berlin, Germany

Bicycle training for women with refugee experience or migration backgrounds.



Outdoor sports for all

The #Bikeygees e.V. programme supports women in gaining independence and mobility by teaching them basic cycling skills and bicycle maintenance, with the option to complete an official cycling exam. Its goals include building a sense of community, providing opportunities to practice German language skills, fostering joy in physical activity, and introducing participants to more sustainable lifestyles. Over the years, the initiative has received several awards, such as “Aktiv für Toleranz” in 2017, and it is certified as queer-friendly through the Rainbow Award. In 2023 alone, the programme offered ten training sessions per week—amounting to 319 sessions in total—through which 358 women and girls learned how to ride a bicycle. Additional activities, including multi-day camps, complement the regular trainings and strengthen the programme’s overall impact.

Further information: <https://bikeygees.org/>

Green Kayak



Copenhagen, Leipzig, Hamburg, Berlin, Helsinki, Tokyo and others)

Free boat rentals in return for collecting garbage during the activity.



**Sustainability
Outdoor sports for all**

Green Kayak, founded as an NGO in Copenhagen in 2017 and active in Germany since 2019, invites people to paddle kayaks for free under two simple conditions – collecting trash while spending time in a GreenKayak and sharing the experience on social media. This approach enables participation from low-income households while simultaneously engaging people in the fight for cleaner oceans and rivers.

Green Kayak has achieved remarkable results: in 2021 alone, 18 tons of garbage were collected by 12,000 participants. Over the years, the initiative has spread to cities across six countries, illustrating the scalability and effectiveness of its community-driven approach to environmental stewardship.

Further information: <https://www.greenkayak.org/>

<https://www.l-iz.de/politik/engagement/2024/05/freizeit-umwelt-greenkayak-589551>

<https://www.tag24.de/leipzig/kultur-leute/green-kayak-in-leipzig-beim-paddeln-tonnenweise-muell-sammeln-3303766>

Natur och friluftsråd (Nature & Outdoor Council)



Sundsvall, Sweden

The Nature and Outdoor Council is a forum for dialogue and collaborative development, where all citizens have the opportunity to discuss, take initiatives and make proposals for municipal activities in everything related to nature.



**Policy and Planning
Collaboration
Citizen Dialogue**

Sundsvall's Nature and Outdoor Council is an information and discussion forum focused on collaboration and development related to nature, outdoor recreation, and the cultural environment. It supports democratic development in outdoor activities, sports, and nature protection by bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders with useful perspectives and expertise. The council works together to exchange ideas and knowledge, organizing activities such as lectures and excursions on different themes.

It is not a decision-making body but serves to provide input and perspective on overarching plans and programs related to nature conservation and outdoor life in the municipality. Issues requiring decisions are forwarded to the appropriate municipal committees. To broaden participation, associations, organizations, and the public are invited to additional council meetings, giving citizens early opportunities to influence plans and programs. The council is a vital platform for cooperation to preserve and develop Sundsvall's natural and outdoor recreation opportunities, based on the municipality's Nature and Outdoor Recreation Plan.

The Sundsvall Nature and Outdoor Recreation Council typically meets about four times a year, almost always outdoors, to share experiences between different stakeholders and to discuss about projects like hiking trails and nature areas. They also organize joint activities that are published by the municipality in a spring and autumn program of events.



Photo: An ordinary outdoor meeting for Sundsvall's Nature & Outdoor Council. Taking photos, notes and preparing dinner over open fire.

© Jean Esselström (Länsstyrelsen Västernorrland)

Further information: [Natur- och friluftsrådet - Välkommen till Örnsköldsviks kommun \(ornskoldsvik.se\)](https://natur-och-friluftsradet.se/valkommen-till-ornskoldsviks-kommun)

"Fritidsbanken"



Sundsvall and in 114 other municipalities in Sweden

A free of charge library for sports and leisure equipment.



Access Sustainability

Fritidsbanken is a free lending service like a library, but with sports and outdoor equipment. In this non-profit organisation people can borrow equipment for an active leisure time, such as skis, skates, life jackets, tents, helmets, camping stoves and much more. The loan period is 14 days.

The principles are 1. Everyone can borrow 2. Everything is free 3. The service is based on reused (donated) equipment. The leisure bank is perfect for people who want to try new activities, for kids who quickly outgrow gear or when equipment is only used occasionally. Fritidsbanken also offers equipment for people with disabilities.

Photo: Cross-country skis at Fritidsbanken
 © Erik Engelro (Länsstyrelsen Västernorrland)



Further information: <https://www.fritidsbanken.se/>

Follow the tracks of Santa Claus



Örnsköldsvik, Sweden

A trail marked with reflective markers and YouTube clips from Santa Claus encourages outdoor activity during the dark winter season.



Outdoor sports for all
Activation

Örnsköldsvik municipality has developed this idea of getting a nice experience of the dark forest and attracting especially young people and families with children out into nature despite the dark winter and autumn. People just need to follow small reflective markers that can be spotted with flashlights/headlamps and then find a QR Code. With this code you can watch film clips of Santa giving advice for Christmas Eve. The loop has become incredibly popular and is being used by more and more associations around the municipality.

The QR codes are accessible on the municipality's website so that others can print out the codes and create their own routes. The idea is cheap, scalable and promotes public health.



Photo: Santa Claus Video © Mikael Westman

Further information:

<https://naturguiden.ornskoldsvik.se/aktivitetssidor/itomtensspar.4.9c47fbc19ab647c60023636.html>

SUP4LIFE



London, UK and others

Stand Up Paddle for Children's
Mental Health-



Knowledge and health promotion
Outdoor sports for all - Activation
Events

SUP4LIFE is a charity-driven stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) event that started in London, aimed at raising awareness and funds for children's mental health through outdoor water sports activities. The event promotes physical well-being and social inclusion in urban settings like the London Docklands and Regent's Canal.

Further information: <https://www.waveproject.co.uk/>

Comuni Ciclabili (Cycling Municipalities)



FIAB-ComuniCiclabili is the recognition of the Italian Federation for the Environment and Cycling which assesses and certifies the commitment of Italian territories in promoting cycling as a model of sustainable mobility.



Access and Mobility Sustainability Infrastructure

The objectives of the Cycling Municipalities Recognition are to:

1. Promote sustainable mobility by encouraging the adoption of cycling as an eco-friendly and sustainable mode of transportation.
2. Improve and expand cycling infrastructure to make cycling safer and more accessible.
3. Raise awareness about the benefits of cycling and sustainable mobility.
4. Promote cycling as a means to improve public health.
5. Engage local communities in promoting and using cycling infrastructure.
6. Assist municipalities in developing effective policies and strategies for cycling promotion.



Photo: Cycling Municipalities © Bicityv



Photo: Map of participating cities 2024

Further information: <https://www.comuniciclabili.it/>

Nature Hikes on Fruska Gora



Novi Sad, Serbia

No cost guided hiking to attract newcomers.



**Civil Sector
Outdoor sports for all - Activation
Education and Knowledge**

Every Sunday, there is at least one regular organized hiking tour on mountain Fruška Gora near Novi Sad. The program was introduced by Mountaineering and Skiing Association "Železničar". It is free of charge for all participants and the aim is to get the citizens to the outdoors whether or not they are association members. The activity has a long tradition since it started in 1982. The participants are fostered to use public transport and the volunteering guides provide basic outdoor education to the newcomers.

Further information: <https://psdzeleznicarns.org.rs/category/planinarenje-po-fruskoj-gori/pesacimo-u-prirodi-fruskom-gorom/>

Urban Trekking



Siena, Italy

Trekking Urbano initiative aims at guiding people through alternative cities walking routes. It represents a new way to discover cities combining sport, curiosity and tourism.



**Cooperation
Culture
Professional Services and
Tourism**

Urban trekking is a form of "vagabonding" tourism that promotes outdoor activities while also improving the management of tourist flows within cities. Main goals and approach:

1. Promoting a new form of tourism that combines sports and culture
 - The trails are designed to help participants explore the region through art and nature.
 - The trails can be adapted to all ages and weather conditions
2. Decongesting areas crossed by traditional tourist flows by creating alternative routes
 - the initiative encourages the development of peripheral areas, redistributing tourist flows, and offering a wide range of itineraries
3. Involving local communities in the design of alternative routes
 - Local guides are engaged in designing and managing these alternative routes, expanding the tourism economy's area of interest and benefiting local residents.



Photo: Urban trekking in Siena © Visit Siena

Further information: <https://www.trekkingurbano.info/trekking-urbano-itinerari-2023/>

Blue Gym Viana



Viana do Castelo, Portugal

Regular outdoor physical exercise for people over 65 years old, in response to the physical inactivity of the age group, promoting well-being and quality of life, based on surfing.



**Outdoor sports for all
Active and Healthy
Ageing**

The "Blue Gym" program was developed by the Peninsula Medical School (Universities of Exeter and Plymouth) in the UK, with the goal of encouraging physical activity and outdoor time to help improve health and well-being and raise awareness about the value of the marine environment (Depledge & Bird, 2009). During the pandemic, due to its disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the Viana Surf Club adapted the "Blue Gym" program to surfing and its sports activities. This sports project is aimed at people aged 65 and over in the Viana do Castelo district, but it is open to participants from other districts as well. In response to the lack of opportunities for this population and the need to combat social isolation, the main objective of the program is to increase physical activity levels, interpersonal relationships, and social

integration, enhancing the autonomy, well-being, and quality of life of the participants through the development of a more active and healthier lifestyle.



Further information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Uf0-qcBna70>

"Oceano Seguro" - Safe Ocean



Ericeira, Portugal

A project that involves two aspects: Initiation to surfing, and education for the environment related to the oceans within the scope of school sport.



Public Sector
Safety
Education and Knowledge

The Nautical Sports Training Centre of Mafra developed the SURF IN THE 1st CYCLE project within the scope of school sport, so that 4th year students from the School Groups of Mafra, Malveira and Venda do Pinheiro, have their first surfing experience, as part of the Activities classes of Curriculum Complement. Activities to be carried out with students include adaptation to the aquatic environment in context of SURF (board, slide and aquatic environment), and Education for the environment related to beaches and the Ocean."



Photos: Surfing lessons and environmental education related to beaches and the ocean

Further information: https://www.instagram.com/cfdn_mafra/

Digital Good Practice Examples

Digital content on an outdoor platform can significantly enhance outdoor sports experiences for urban residents. By providing detailed information about hiking trails, cycling routes, climbing areas, or cross-country skiing tracks, platforms like outdooractive help city residents discover nearby outdoor opportunities. Additional information related to safety, mobility (e.g. public transport), weather and snow conditions, and other topics related to a successful outdoor experience enable users to plan confidently and adapt to changing conditions. Furthermore, platform features like community reviews, real-time updates, accessibility information, equipment rental options, and guided tours can enhance convenience and inclusiveness, making outdoor sports more approachable and enjoyable for everyone. In this way, digital content serves as a valuable tool for promoting outdoor activities and connecting city residents with the natural world.

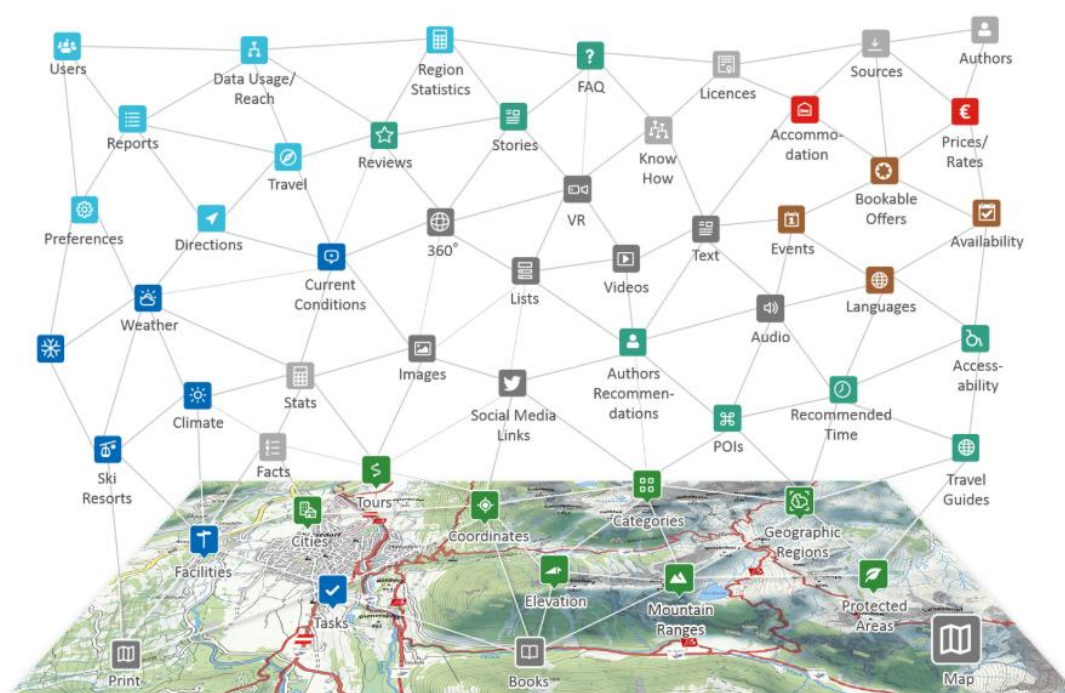


Figure 16 Digital content for providing online information on outdoor sports opportunities via the outdooractive platform (<https://www.outdooractive.com>)

Digitally supported Challenges

Digital Challenges to activate and motivate people for outdoor sports activities

The "challenge" feature on the Outdooractive platform allows users to participate in various challenges by achieving specific goals related to distance, elevation gain, time, number of activities, or special objectives, such as climbing a particular mountain. Users can join a challenge through the app and track their progress by recording their activities. The distance and elevation gained during the challenge period contribute to their overall progress, which can be followed on a digital scoreboard.

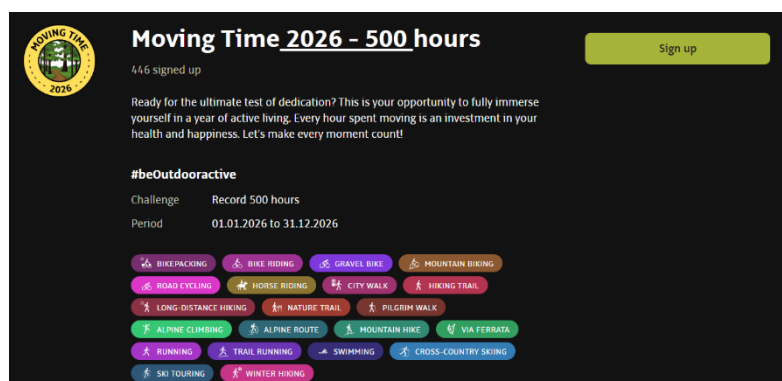


Figure 17 Digital Challenges on Outdooractive.com (<https://www.outdooractive.com/en/challenges/>)

Digital information on inclusive outdoor sports offers

Accessibility Maps and Reports increase access to inclusive infrastructure

The Outdooractive Accessibility Map is designed to make outdoor sports activities inclusive for everyone, including children and seniors, but also people with temporary or permanent disabilities. It does so by highlighting routes (marked as blue dotted lines) and points of interest (in a larger display) that are especially relevant for individuals with limited mobility.

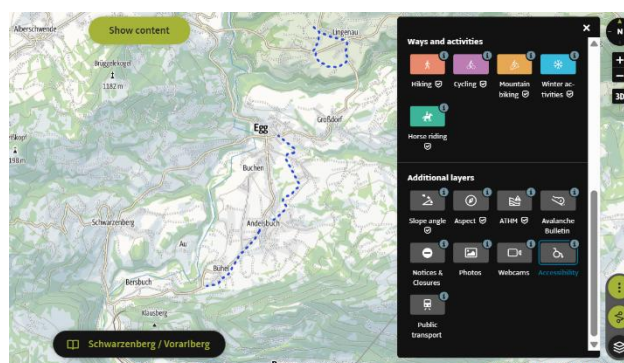


Figure 18 Accessibility Reports on Outdooractive.com

Accessibility Reports provide structured and standardized assessments of how accessible a route or location is for people with disabilities. These reports go beyond simple descriptions by offering objective, detailed information on important features—such as the presence of step-free paths, surface quality, available parking, restrooms, signage, and assistance for those with visual or mobility impairments. The aim is to empower users to independently determine whether a route or site matches their individual accessibility needs. By using verified criteria and clear, consistent formats, Accessibility Reports help establish trust and transparency, making outdoor experiences more inclusive and enabling better-informed decisions for all visitors.



Figure 19 Accessibility Reports on Outdooractive.com

(<https://www.outdooractive.com/en/knowledgepage/the-accessibility-map/808046402/>)

Digital Audio Guides

Fostering sustainability and inclusion through audio records

The Audio Guide is an immersive feature that allows users to learn about their environment through audio. It enables users to listen to audio points of interest (POIs) either individually on a map or from a list view. The guide supports multiple languages and is easy to implement, making it accessible for a wide audience.

To promote sustainable and inclusive outdoor sports activities, the Audio Guide can be used to provide information about local ecosystems, conservation efforts, and the importance of preserving natural spaces. It can also highlight accessible routes and facilities through audios for individuals with disabilities, ensuring that everyone can participate in outdoor sports. By educating users about their surroundings and promoting inclusivity, the Audio Guide can enhance the outdoor experience while fostering a sense of community and responsibility towards the environment.

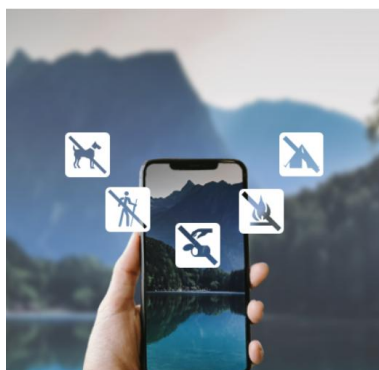


Figure 20 Audio Guides provided by Outdooractive.com

(<https://www.outdooractive.com/en/knowledgepage/what-is-the-audio-guide-/57046460/>)

Digitize the Planet

Digital information on nature conservation data and regulations increase sustainable practices



"Digitize the Planet" is a non-profit organization focused on promoting nature conservation by digitizing information about nature usage rules, local regulations, safety information and trail closures. Their goal is to make this information freely available as open data, which can be integrated into platforms, websites, apps, navigation systems, and digital assistants. The availability of digitized conservation information in urban areas can help outdoor sports participants understand and follow local regulations, ensuring that their activities are environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Figure 21 Digital information on nature conservation data and regulations provided by Digitize the Planet

5. Outlook and next steps

The results and insights from the analysis of facilitating factors and barriers, as well as from the collection of best-practice examples, will be incorporated into a framework of outdoor sport standards and play a central role in its co-creation process. This STANDOUT framework is intended to guide and inspire cities in their own development and help overcome the main barriers to participation. The STANDOUT framework is also meant to encourage cities and communities to take action to improve their opportunities for outdoor sports and nature activities in urban areas, thereby promoting a sustainable, inclusive, and healthy development.

An initial draft and the opportunity to participate in the initiative will be available in May 2026. The municipalities of Silkeborg, Sundsvall and Viana do Castelo will start with the piloting, using the first version of the STANDOUT framework. These cities will apply the standard within their local contexts and assess the performance of the indicators in practice. The goal is to evaluate usability, relevance, and adaptability across different urban environments while gathering structured feedback to improve the clarity and feasibility of the framework. This process will lead to the refinement and finalisation of the standard, directly informing its future implementation in European cities.

The final framework and all good practice examples to foster healthy lifestyles for all through outdoor sports in an urban context will be presented on the project website as inspiration for individual development strategies.

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Appendix

A, Deep Dive - Insights into outdoor sports in green and blue spaces in the Czech Republic

13 students from Charles University, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport have written their final theses related to the topic of the STANDOUT project. This research complements the main findings and illustrates them in a specific national context, rather than representing general results.

7 theses have questioned **24 municipal employees** in different Czech cities with the use of **semi-structured interviews**. 6 theses have used **a survey** among **581 citizens** of different Czech cities. The selected cities were of varying size, population (from 5000 to 200 000 citizens), and green/blue space availability. The goal of the semi-structured interviews was to understand how cities plan, invest in, and manage outdoor sports in urban green and blue areas, and what challenges or priorities they face. They have asked workers from urban development, environment, or sport departments, and in smaller towns, mayors or their deputies (for the interview see *Appendix A1*). The anonymous survey examined citizens' engagement in outdoor sports within urban green and blue spaces across Czech cities. It focused on which spaces and sports are most used and practiced, motivations and barriers for participation, and suggestions for improving urban outdoor sport conditions (for the questionnaire see *Appendix A2*).

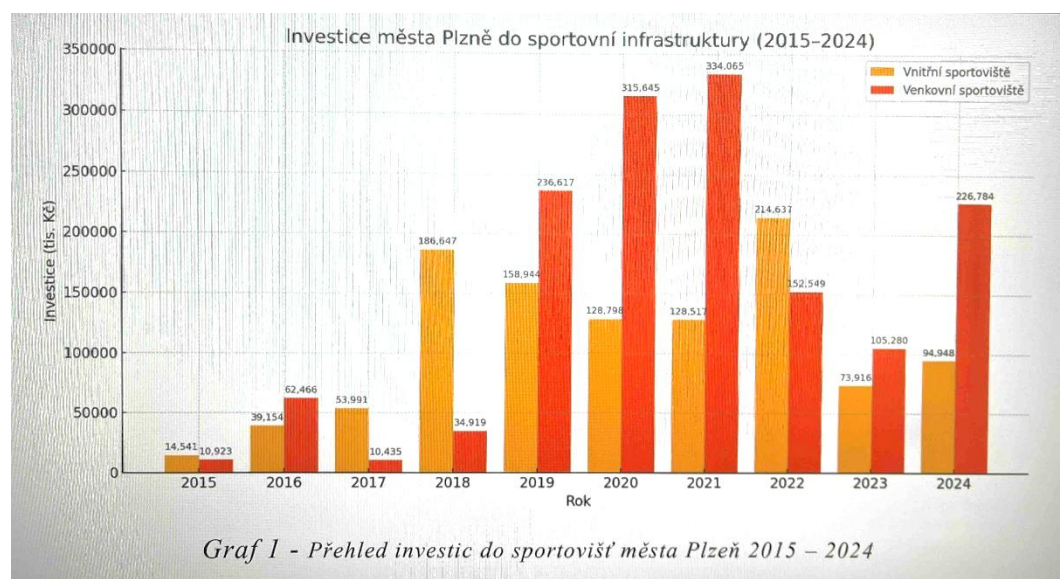
Municipality Perspective

Czech municipal workers do not often understand what outdoor sports (OS) are and include among urban outdoor sports all sports happening outdoors, including football, beach volleyball, concrete skateparks etc. They often connect urban green and blues space more with outdoor recreation. They have agreed that the development of OS in urban green and blue areas is beneficial for the citizens' health (physical, mental and social). However, most cities often deal with other "more important" problems, e.g. city sewerage system, housing shortage for citizens, etc., which have a higher priority.

All cities have a master plan for urban development that includes sustainable and blue-green infrastructure. Only 4 of 7 cities have a specific sport development plan that explicitly includes outdoor sports (those are mainly bigger cities with 25 000 and more citizens). These sport plans mainly focus on promoting everyday outdoor physical activity and developing OS facilities.

A positive aspect is that the general trend in Czech cities nowadays is to invest more in outdoor sports facilities than in indoor sports facilities. This trend started in 2021, after the pandemic COVID-19. One city's investments into OS facilities are 3 times higher than into indoor sport facilities (see *Graph A1*). Smaller towns often rely on grants, charities, and irregular funding.

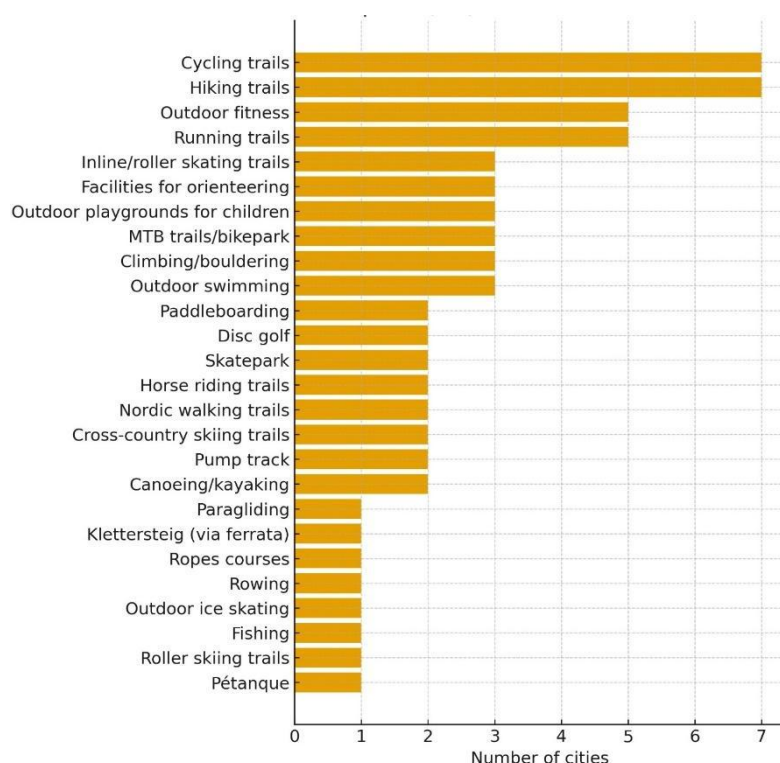
Graph A1 - An example of investment into sport infrastructure in years 2015 – 2024 (Plzeň, Czechia) in Czech crowns (yellow colour – indoor facilities, red colour – outdoor facilities)



Source: City of Pilsen, Department of Sport, 2024.

The most common **OS facilities** built in Czech urban green and blue areas are trails – hiking, cycling, skiing (related to the tradition of Czech “*turistika*” dated back to 1888, when the Club of Czech tourist was founded and developed its unique national system of way marking and sign posting), running trails, inline skating trails, MTB trails, outdoor fitness zones, outdoor (adventure) playgrounds for children, disc golf grounds, facilities for orienteering, water sport facilities, outdoor climbing walls (see *Graph 2*). The priority is to build multifunctional outdoor facilities and sights.

Graph A2: Availability of outdoor sports facilities in the Czech City Sample



Most facilities are easily accessible by walking, cycling, or public transport; smaller towns have universal accessibility due to compactness. What could be improved according to municipality workers is better interconnection of green and blue areas by cycling and walking trails through the city as well as building facilities for parking bikes by the OS facilities.

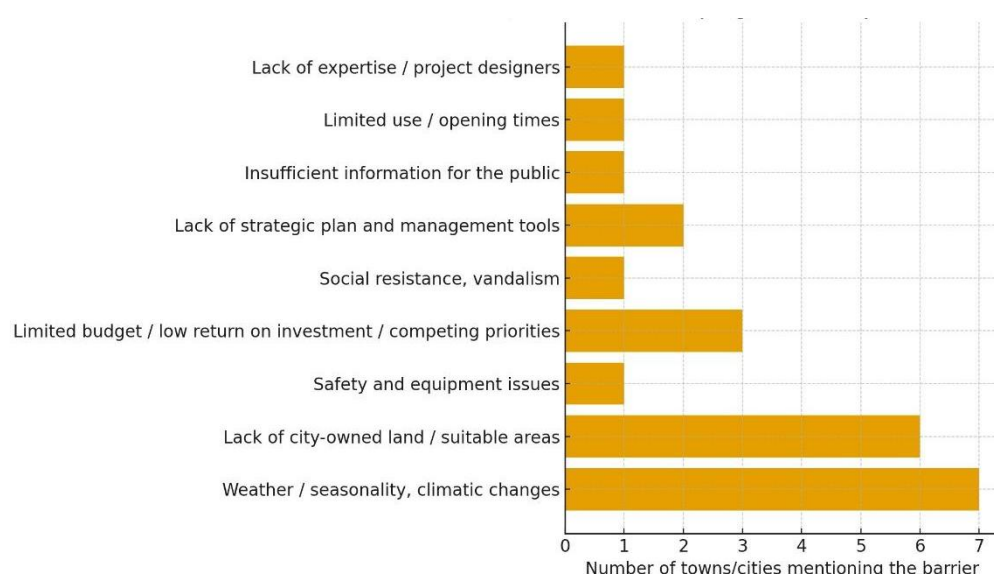
Only one city collects usage data on outdoor sports facilities (showing that 67% of sport clubs in the city train outdoors). Other cities have no data systems or digital databases for monitoring usage or quality. According to municipality workers the attendance of OS facilities is influenced by weather, safety of places, available equipment for OS, information, time of the year (warmer months), and time of the day (later afternoons, weekends, public holidays, school holidays).

Safety is usually limited to basic maintenance as required by equipment producers. Some larger cities enhance safety with lighting, cameras, police patrols, and digital reporting apps. Only one city treats safety of outdoor sports as a priority.

Public participation is increasingly valued: 5 cities include public consultations or surveys in their planning. Common future goals are the construction of multifunctional outdoor sport facilities, better cooperation with local sport clubs and communities, revitalization of existing green spaces and improved maintenance and safety.

Main obstacles identified by municipality workers were **lack of city-owned land** (private owners resist having trails or facilities on their land), **weather** and **seasonality** – outdoor sports are practiced mainly in warm months and weekends, **financial limitations** and **competing city priorities**, **absence of strategic planning** or monitoring tools, vandalism and safety concerns, public opposition (noise, privacy concerns, preference for parking areas), difficulty finding good designers/architects for outdoor sport projects (see *Graph A3*).

Graph A3: Main Barriers for developing outdoor sports from a municipality perspective

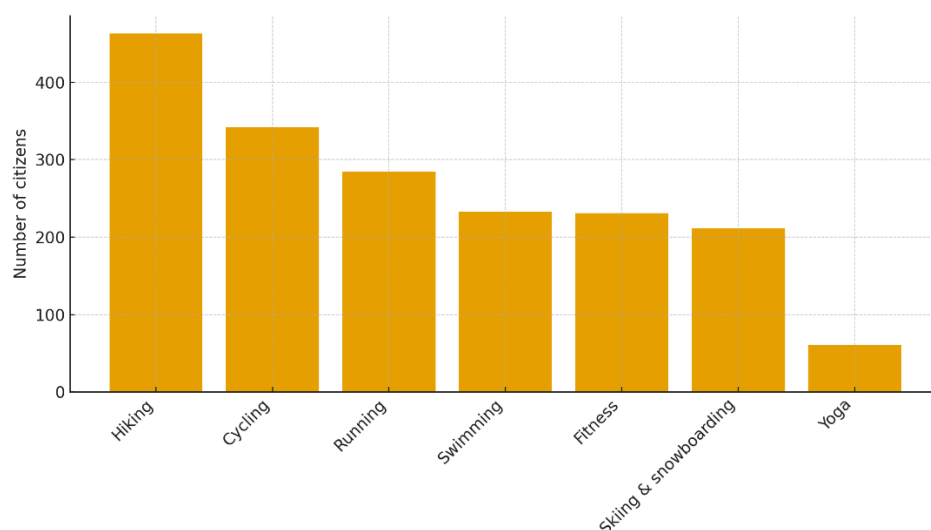


Very few cities use innovative approaches in planning OS in urban green areas, like drone-based temperature mapping (1 city), public participation budgeting and decision-making (5 cities) or mobile apps for reporting damage/safety issues (1 city).

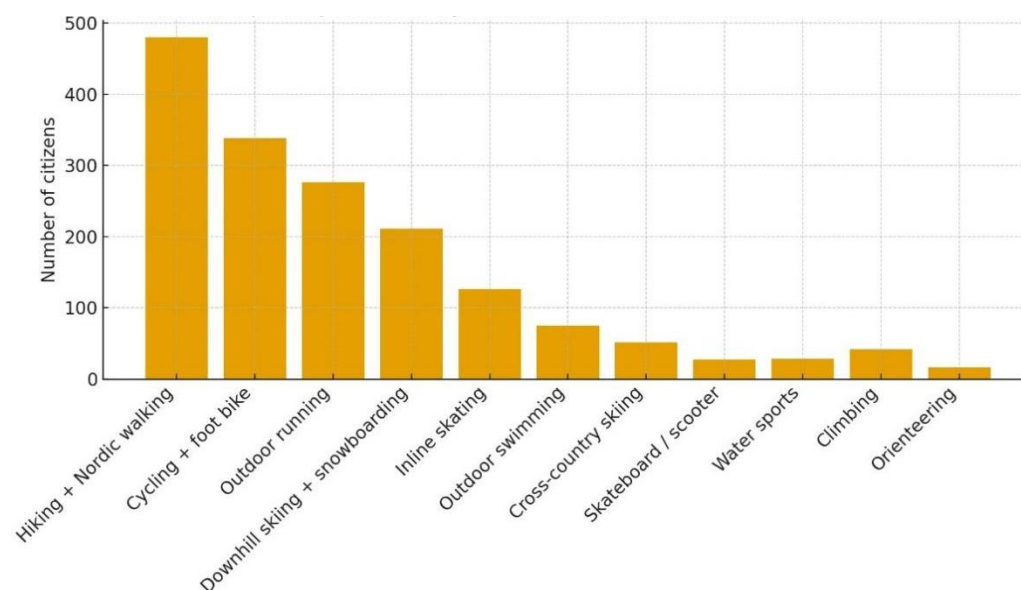
Citizens Perspective

Among the most practiced sports by Czech citizens in their free time are hiking (463 responses out of 581 citizens of different Czech cities), cycling (342 responses), running (285 responses), swimming (233 responses), fitness (231 responses), skiing or snowboarding (211 responses) – see *Graph A4*. **Among the seven most popular recreational sports, four are outdoor sports. 88 % of respondents engage in outdoor sports in their free time.** Top outdoor sports among citizens in selected Czech cities are hiking including Nordic walking (480 responses), cycling or foot bike (338 responses), outdoor running (276 responses), downhill skiing or snowboarding (211 responses), and inline skating (126 responses) – see *Graph A5*.

Graph A4: Sports practiced by Czech Citizens in their free time



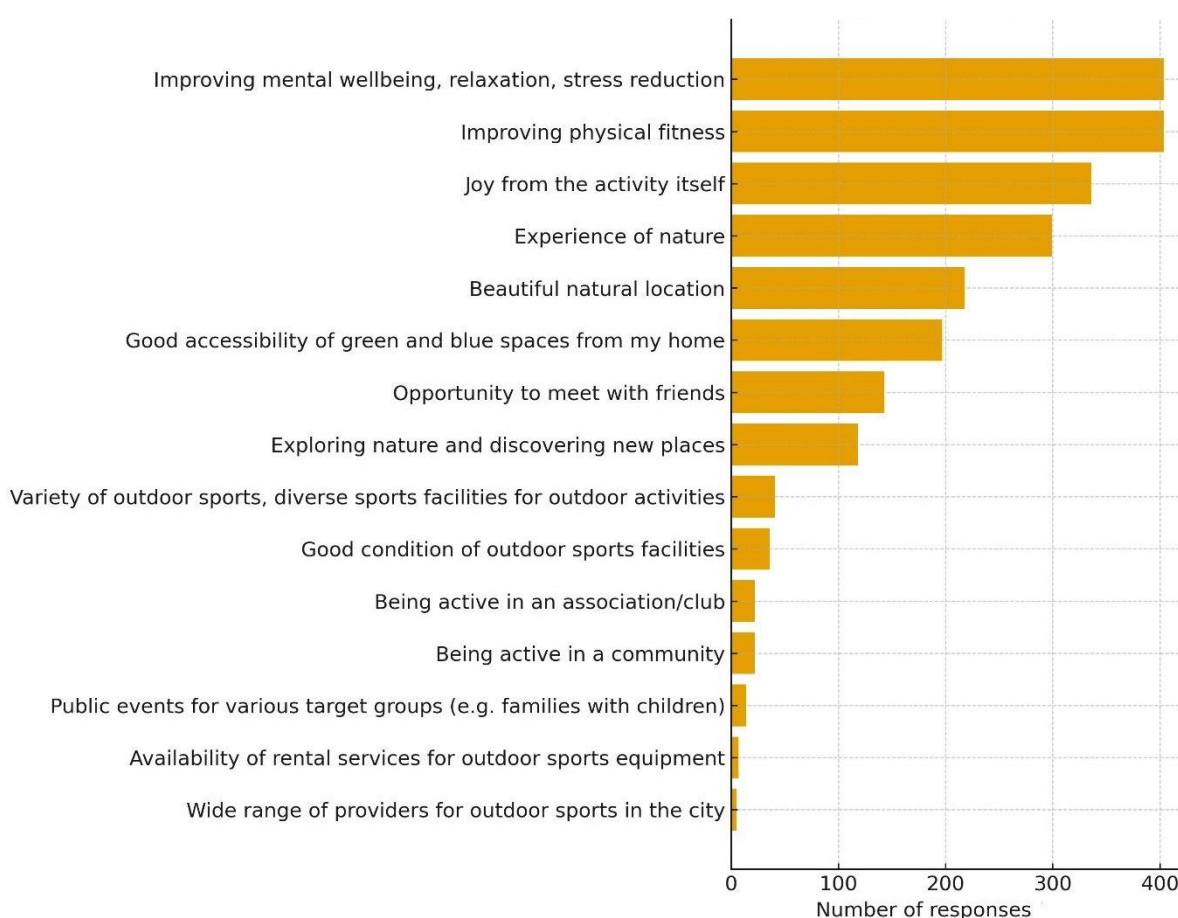
Graph A5: Outdoor sports practiced by Citizens in their free time



For practicing OS, citizens most often use cycling trails, parks, forests, and blue areas (rivers, ponds, dams) in the city or close to the city. Rock areas are used only locally. The majority practice outdoor sports once or twice a week (often 2–3 times weekly). Sports are practiced mainly alone, with family, or with friends.

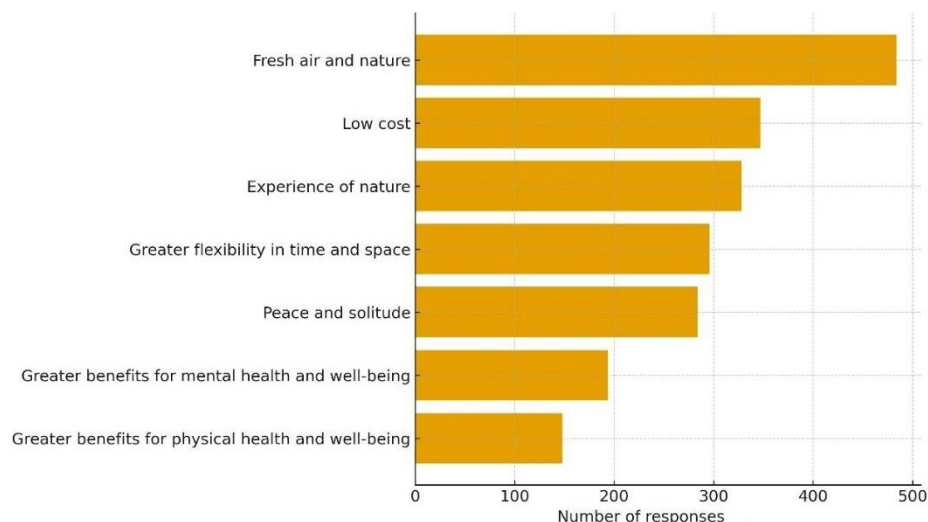
Main reasons for engaging in outdoor sports are **mental well-being** and **improving physical fitness** (each cited by 404 respondents), **joy from activity** (336 respondents), **experience of nature** (299 respondents), **beautiful locations** (218 respondents), **good accessibility from home** (197 respondents), and **social and exploratory aspects** (143 respondents), such as meeting friends or discovering new places - see *Graph A6*.

Graph A6: Motivators for practicing outdoor sports



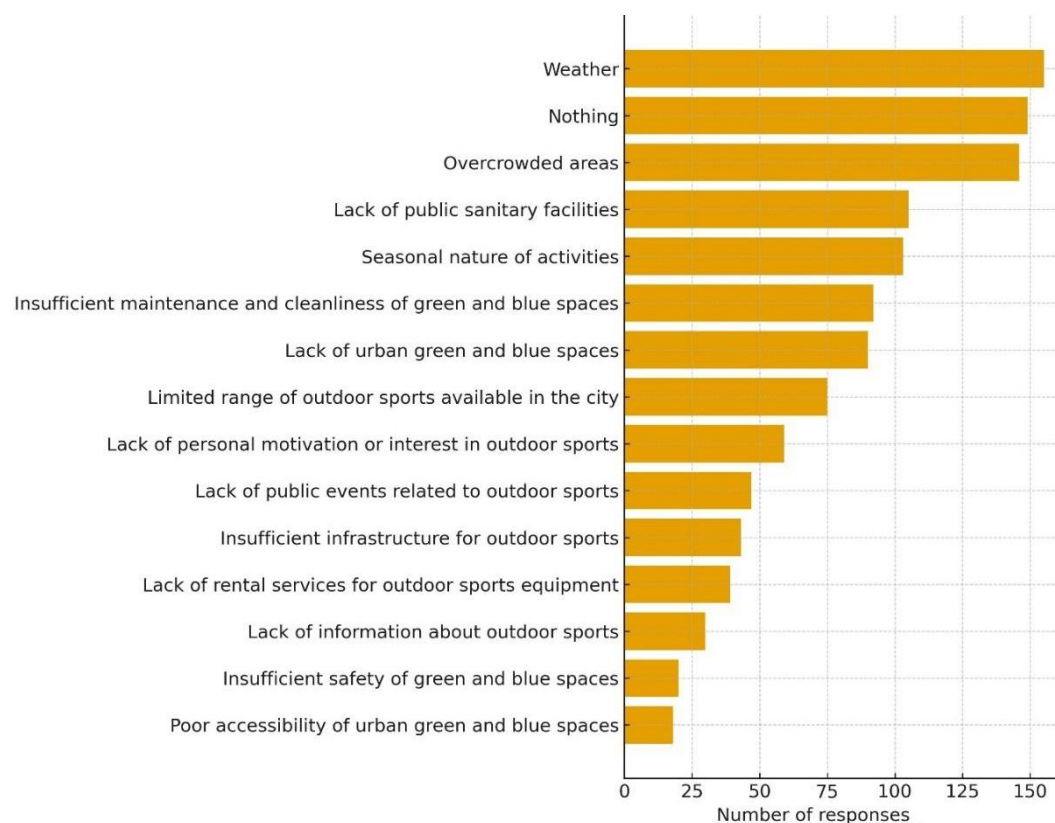
Compared to indoor sports, citizens most appreciate **fresh air and nature** (484 responses), **low cost of outdoor activities** (347 responses), **experience of nature** (328 responses), greater flexibility in time and space, peace and mental health benefits – see *Graph A7*.

Graph A7: Advantages of outdoor sports



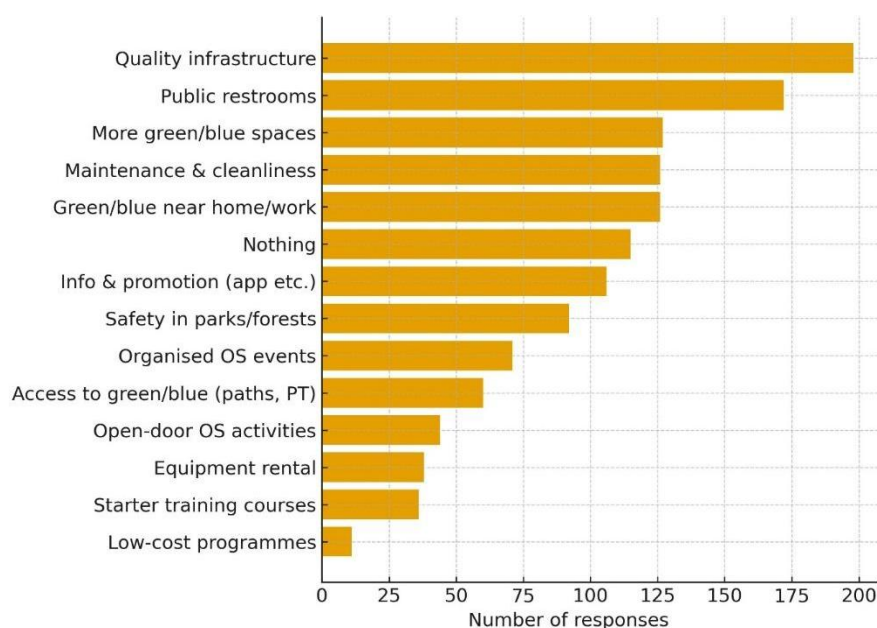
Main barriers to participation are **weather** and **seasonal limitations** (155 responses), **overcrowded areas** (146 responses), **lack of public sanitary facilities** (105), **poor maintenance and cleanliness**. Around 30% of respondents said nothing discourages them (see *Graph A8*).

Graph A8: Barriers for practicing outdoor sports



Citizens suggested the following to start or increase their engagement in outdoor sports: **better infrastructure** - running and bike trails (198 responses), **public restrooms and facilities** – sanitary facilities and drinking water (172 responses), **more accessible green and blue spaces** (127 responses), proximity to home or work, cleanliness, and safety improvements, better information and promotion, e.g., mobile apps for sports opportunities, events, equipment rental, and skill courses. 20% said nothing would help - they are already satisfied or uninterested (see *Graph A9*).

Graph A9: Suggestions to start or increase participation in outdoor sports



Conclusion

Outdoor sports are very popular among citizens in Czech cities, with experiencing nature, health benefits, and accessibility as the main drivers. Municipalities acknowledge the benefits of outdoor sports for citizens' well-being but often lack dedicated strategies, budgets, or data. The integration of outdoor sports into urban green and blue areas is uneven across Czech cities. Cities with a sport master plan and community involvement show more systematic and inclusive development.

The three main barriers for the cities are a lack of city-owned land (suitable areas for the development), the seasonal character of outdoor sports and a limited budget. 30% of citizens answered that nothing discourages them from practicing OS, which is a very positive finding. Among the three main barriers are overcrowded areas and a lack of public sanitary facilities (especially toilets and drinking water) and weather (seasonal nature of OS), however answers related to weather were mainly among those who do not practice OS at all. In fact, it was rated as a smaller problem from the citizen perspective than for municipal workers. What significantly influences their participation is the quality and accessibility of urban green and blue spaces.

The main needs for municipality workers include clearer strategic frameworks for OS, improved interconnection of green/blue spaces via cycling and walking trails, better safety measures and data monitoring, stable funding and land availability for new projects. Citizens want cities to invest mainly in OS infrastructure, sanitary facilities, cleanliness and safety.

Visual examples of good practices in Czechia



Bike trail (Karlovy Vary, Czechia)



Cross-country skiing (Mariánské Lázně, Czechia)



Bouldering (Plzeň, Czechia)



Permanent Orienteering (Jáchymov, Czechia)

Appendix A1

The **semi-structured interviews** were structured along these **themes**:

1. The importance of integrating green spaces and outdoor sports facilities into the urban environment.
2. Master plan/strategic plans for the development of OS in green and blue areas.
 - a. Outdoor sports included in the city's development plans;
 - b. Current strategy for developing outdoor sports facilities and green spaces in their city;
 - c. Plans for building new outdoor sports facilities - type of OS facilities, approximate size, and intended location.
3. Investment into the development of green areas and outdoor sports facilities.
 - a. Budget for the development of OS in green and blue areas.
 - b. Investments in the construction of outdoor sports facilities compared to indoor sports venues.
4. People responsible for planning and developing green spaces and OS in the city.
 - a. Future development of outdoor sports in urban environments in their city;
 - b. Types of sports facilities that are a priority for future development;
 - c. Main challenges and opportunities in integrating new green spaces and outdoor sports facilities into the urban environment?
5. Outdoor sports facilities located in their city.
 - a. Total area and their approximate distribution;
 - b. Types of outdoor sports facilities, their average size, capacity;
 - c. Outdoor sports practiced in cities' green and blue areas;
 - d. Accessibility of OS facilities;
 - e. Current state of outdoor sports facilities in their city in terms of equipment quality;
 - f. City's costs for maintaining outdoor sports facilities;
 - g. Data on the use or attendance of outdoor sports facilities - the most frequently used OS facilities, the most visited OS facilities, times when the use of outdoor sports facilities is particularly high.
6. Main factors influencing the use of outdoor sports facilities in your city.
7. Safety of outdoor sports facilities.
8. Challenges or barriers for developing outdoor sports in the urban context.
9. Sports clubs or organizations offering outdoor activities in urban green areas, using outdoor sports facilities.
10. Process of involving the public and stakeholders in the planning and development of new green spaces and outdoor sports facilities.
11. Examples of best practices or innovative approaches to planning and developing green spaces and outdoor sports facilities in their city.

Appendix A2

OUTDOOR SPORTS IN URBAN GREEN AND BLUE SPACES

Dear Respondent,

I am a student at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Charles University, and I would like to kindly ask you to complete a short survey that is part of my thesis and part of broader research realized with the STANDOUT project. The survey aims to find out:

- whether people engage in **outdoor sports**¹ in **urban green and blue spaces**² in ... (selected city)
- which urban green and blue spaces are used for sports and recreational activities
- which outdoor sports people prefer
- what motivates people to practise outdoor sports in the city and what discourages them
- what the city could do to improve the conditions for outdoor sports in urban environments etc.

The survey is anonymous and completing it will take approximately 10-15 minutes. The collected data will be used exclusively:

- for the purpose of my final thesis

- as part of broader research realized with the STANDOUT project, which aims to establish standards for outdoor sports in cities and urban areas. Data will be processed in accordance with the GDPR legislation. The thesis project has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport.

Your responses are very important and will contribute to a better understanding of how urban green and blue spaces can be developed and adapted more effectively to meet the needs of citizens.

Thank you in advance for your time and willingness to participate.

Sincerely,

.....

¹**Outdoor Sports** – physical activities conducted in natural environments to benefit of health, well-being and the experience of nature. Examples include hiking, trail running, orienteering, rock climbing and bouldering, biking, canoeing, swimming in lakes and rivers, horseback riding etc.

²**Urban Green and Blue Spaces** – these areas include parks, forest parks, rivers, ponds, lakes, and similar areas within the city or its close surroundings (outdoor spaces which is accessible on foot, by bike, or by public transport).

- select one option
- tick more options
- ___ specify in your own words

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. What is your age?

- 15-24
- 25-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61 and over

3. What is your reached education?

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Higher education

4. Are you a resident of ... (selected city)?

- Yes
- No
- I frequently stay here (e.g. for work/study reasons)

5. Which sports do you practice in your free time?

- Hiking
- Cycling, biking
- Swimming
- Strength training, fitness
- Aerobics
- Football (Soccer)
- Yoga
- Pilates
- Running
- Tennis
- Bowling
- Dancing
- Skating
- Skiing, snowboarding
- Other (please describe): ___
- None

6. **Do you practice outdoor sports** (e.g. hiking, cycling, biking, running, skiing, snowboarding, etc.) **in urban green and blue spaces in ...** (selected city)?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

7. **Which outdoor sports do you engage in urban green and blue spaces in ...** (selected city)?
 - Hiking
 - Nordic walking
 - Cycling, biking
 - Riding a footbike
 - Trail running
 - Orienteering
 - Swimming (in a pond/river)
 - Water sports (canoeing, kayaking, rafting, rowing, ...)
 - Inline skating in green environments
 - Rock climbing
 - Klettersteig
 - Other (please describe): ____

8. **Where do you practice outdoor sports?**
 - ☐ Park
 - ☐ Wood, forest
 - ☐ River
 - ☐ Lake
 - ☐ Water dam
 - ☐ Other (please describe): ____

9. **Who do you most often practice outdoor sports with?**
 - ☐ Alone
 - ☐ With family
 - ☐ With friends
 - ☐ With someone else (please describe): ____

10. **How often do you participate in outdoor sports in urban green and blue spaces in ...** (selected city)?
 - ☐ Once a month
 - ☐ Once every two weeks
 - ☐ Once a week
 - ☐ 2-3 times a week
 - ☐ More often

11. **Which other outdoor sports would you like to practice in urban green and blue spaces in ...** (selected city)?

12. **What motivates you to engage in outdoor sports in urban green and blue spaces in ...** (selected city)?
 - Joy from the activity itself
 - Improving physical fitness
 - Improving mental well-being, relaxation, stress reduction
 - Experience of nature
 - Beautiful natural location
 - Good accessibility of green and blue spaces from my home
 - Exploring nature and discovering new places
 - Variety of outdoor sports, diverse sports facilities for outdoor activities
 - Good condition of outdoor sports facilities
 - Wide range of providers for outdoor sports in the city
 - Availability of rental services for outdoor sports equipment
 - Public events for various target groups (e.g. families with children)
 - Opportunity to meet with friends
 - Being active in a community
 - Being active in an association/club
 - Other (please describe): ____

13. What advantages do you see in using green and blue spaces for sports compared to indoor activities?

- Fresh air and nature
- Low cost
- Greater flexibility in time and space
- Experience of nature
- Greater benefits for physical health and well-being
- Greater benefits for mental health and well-being
- Peace and solitude
- Other (please describe): ____
- None

14. What discourages you from engaging in outdoor sports in urban green and blue spaces in ... (selected city)?

- Lack of information about outdoor sports
- Lack of urban green and blue spaces
- Poor accessibility of urban green and blue spaces
- Limited range of outdoor sports available in the city
- Insufficient maintenance and cleanliness of green and blue spaces
- Lack of personal motivation or interest in outdoor sports
- Insufficient safety of green and blue spaces
- Lack of rental services for outdoor sports equipment
- Lack of public events related to outdoor sports
- Insufficient infrastructure for outdoor sports
- Overcrowded areas
- Lack of public sanitary facilities
- Seasonal nature of activities
- Weather
- Other (please describe): ____
- Nothing

15. What would help you start engaging in outdoor sports in urban green and blue spaces in ... (selected city) or do them more often?

- Green and blue spaces near my home or work
- A greater number of accessible green and blue spaces in the city
- Development of quality infrastructure (marked running trails, bike paths, etc.)
- Better maintenance and cleanliness of green and blue spaces
- A higher safety in urban parks and forests
- Improved access to green and blue spaces (e.g. connecting cycling paths, public transportation)
- Public restrooms (WC, changing rooms, drinking water)
- Better information and promotion of urban green spaces and their use for sports (e.g. a mobile app providing information about outdoor sports options in the city and public events)
- Organizing outdoor sports activities or events
- Low-cost programmes
- Open-door activities and opportunities to try/test outdoor sports
- Starter or facilitated training courses to learn the necessary skills
- Equipment rental options
- Other (please describe): ____
- Nothing

16. Do you think the city should invest more in the development of urban green and blue spaces?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

17. What would you like to see improved in the city regarding the offer of outdoor sports and activities in the urban context?

B, Workshop methodology and materials to foster stakeholder communication

STANDOUT Focus Group on barriers and facilitators of outdoor sports in urban areas

Framework and requirements:

- Time frame ca. 2,5 - 3 hours
- Room or space with tables and flipcharts, enough pens, some drinks or coffee
- Optional: laptop and presenter to introduce overall topic and definition of OS in urban areas

Set up of the Focus Group:

The Focus Group should include stakeholders from all relevant perspectives on outdoor sports in the area. A group size of 10 - 20 participants representing different OS perspectives has proven to be suitable. Take into account:

- Stakeholders from different outdoor sports (according to local practice and geographical conditions)
- Active OS participants
- OS club member (organized and non-organized sport perspective)
- OS developer or municipality official / city representative
- Male and female stakeholder represented
- Expert for inclusion (e.g. a person representing an organization for inclusion, a person with special needs ...)
- Youth and different target groups
- ...

Overview of Activities and Outcomes:

Activity	Topic	Outcome
World café	Drivers and Facilitators of outdoor sports in the respective city / municipality	Bullet points from each group on 5 most important Facilitators and 5 most important Barriers
Outdoor City Game	Prioritizing Factors for building an outdoor sport city / municipality in general	Pyramid(s) (and Hierarchy) of factors to build an outdoor city and a common understanding of "ingredients"
Building the Future Activity	5 most important Actions / Recommendations participants would like to see in their city	Action plans (according to group number) with (at least) 5 recommendations to improve the opportunities of being active in nature in the respective city / municipality

Make sure to document all relevant discussions and outputs (e.g. notes, photos of flipcharts, etc.) and to collect and store data systematically and securely. Also ensure that the participants are informed about the purpose of the focus group and that consent is obtained for the use of the collected data.

Instructions of the different parts of the Focus Group

1. Introduction

As a start, plan in some time to introduce the aim of the focus group and to get to know each other. You can include some warm-up activity like everybody drawing their favourite outdoor sport place in the city or just let the participants introduce themselves. Make sure that everybody has a common understanding of outdoor sports and activities in nature that are incorporated under the definition.

2. World Café (approx. 30 min. plus presentation of results 15 min.)

The overall topic of the World Café is: **“How can we make sure all inhabitants (regardless of age, social background, etc.) can take part in outdoor sports in a sustainable way?”**

Groups of 3 – 6 persons work on questions provided on Flipcharts and note their thoughts.

- Question provided on table A. Barriers: What are the barriers or challenges that people are facing in practicing OS in the city of (add name)?
- Question provided on table B. Facilitators: What are the facilitators and drivers that help people being active in nature in (add name of your city)?

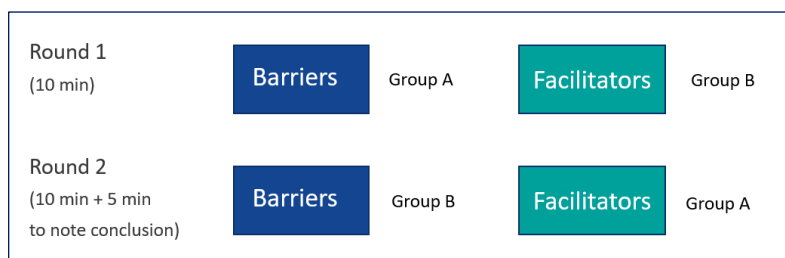


Fig.X: World Café Set-up

If you have more than 2 groups, add an even number of tables with the same two questions. Build 2 (or 4,6...) groups that change tables after 10 min. (each person gets Barriers + Facilitators).

1st Round: Participants write down ideas (10 min). The instructor is walking around for answering any doubts, clarify or mediate.

2nd Round: Participants change table and question. To start, they read notes from the first group and then add their own ideas on the Flipcharts (10 minutes). For 5 more minutes participants are asked to make conclusions to 5 most important barriers or facilitators to be presented to the whole group. The instructor can hand out a new paper to write down conclusions.

To conclude this activity, every group briefly presents the results from their second poster (shortlist of 5 most important facilitators or barriers, ca. 15 min.).

After the World Café, it is recommended to facilitate a real coffee break 😊.

Outdoor City Game (approx. 30 plus 15 min. discussion)

The goal of this activity is to build an outdoor sport city. The ingredients to do so, are provided on printed out cards (*see Appendix B1*). Build groups of 3 - 6 persons. Each group gets a set of cards.

1. First, participants are asked to look at the pictures (every participant does this for him or herself, 5 min). Explanations are on the back of the cards. After this, they discuss if every relevant factor is included. If something very relevant is missing, they can add a card. (make sure the new item is not included yet!!).
2. Now the Game starts: Each group has to roll the dice in turns. According to the number rolled, the group has to sort out cards. They have to discuss and find a consensus, what items they can give away (what factors are least important) to still build an outdoor city). Cards that get sorted out are laid out in a row aside. The **order in which cards have been sorted out must stay visible (build a pyramid with one row for each round)**. Then the next person rolls the dice and cards get sorted out again until there are only 3 cards left. In the end, the 3 most important build the top of the pyramid regardless of the number rolled. Let all groups take a picture of their pyramid.

To conclude, the instructor gets the groups together and lets every group present their top three. The instructor can facilitate discussion:

- What items have been discussed most?
- What factors can be influenced and actively supported by the city?
- Why do you think the top three are the most important ones?

Building the Future Activity (approx. 30 min.)

The task of the last activity is to brainstorm, pitch, and prioritize ideas and initiatives to improve outdoor sports in the city or municipality. Participants are being asked to think of actionable and impactful solutions including all diverse perspectives of the stakeholders and sustainability issues. Discussions take place in groups of 3 - 6 persons and should end up with an action plan of at least 5 recommendations that they would like to communicate to their city council.

To conclude the activity, all groups present their action plan to the whole group.

Appendix B1: Outdoor City Game – Printable Cards

Natural conditions – Green and blue spaces

- Availability of green and blue spaces for outdoor activities
- Carrying capacity
- Versatile territory, landscape
- Good wind, swell, snow etc.
- Air and water quality
- (No) Pollution

Climate

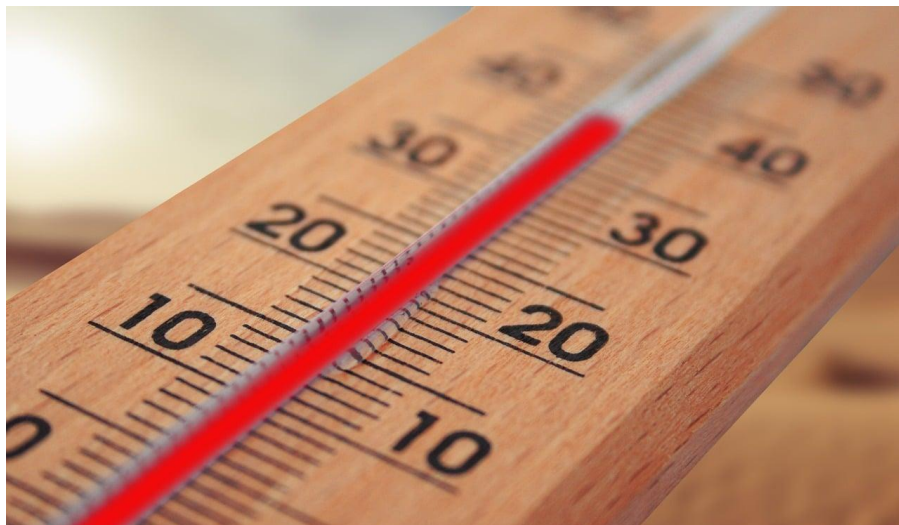
- Favorable climate
- Seasonality

Accessibility

- Transportation (e.g. Access to green and blue spaces via public transport)
- Active commuting
- Equipment transportation
- Proximity of green and blue spaces – opportunities “at the doorstep” of inhabitants and in good reach with public transport

OS Infrastructure

- Variety of trails
- (New) routes for OS (trails, bike paths, parks for orienteering and Nordic Walking, etc.)
- Equipped areas (e.g. for climbing)
- Regular maintenance
- Outdoor sport facilities
- Equipment and sport infrastructure like boat houses etc.



Climate



Natural conditions - Green and blue spaces



OS Infrastructure



Accessibility

General infrastructure

- Tables and recreational infrastructure
- Sanitary facilities, changing rooms/showers
- Infrastructure for nature protection

Information, Navigation and Support

- Way marking, support points along the route
- (standardized) signage at the start and along the route
- Digital services like online maps

Services (Personal services, OS services)

- Rental services and other businesses
- Guiding, Instructors
- Rescue services

Policy, Planning and strategy

- Master Plan, strategy and (long-term) political initiatives
- Permanent staff responsible for outdoor sport
- Outdoor sport advisory board including various stakeholders
- Outdoor sports integrated in urban planning



Information, Navigation and Support



General infrastructure



Policy, Planning and strategy



Services (Personal services, OS services)

Inclusion – OS for all Citizens

- Specialized instructors and training
- Aids for people with disabilities
- Companies willing to promote sports to people with special needs
- Special information and services for people with special needs
- Programs with no cost or low-cost

Legislation

- General regulations on access to green and blue spaces (e.g. everyman’s right)
- Nature protection laws
- Regulations on trails etc.

Funding and Investments

- Funding (not) only for high performance and dominant sports
- Regular funding for outdoor sports programs and initiatives
- Investment for outdoor sport infrastructure
- OS as economic strategies

Participation, Community and Volunteering

- Volunteering in clubs etc.
- Volunteers to help with creation and maintenance of sport infrastructure
- Associations promoting volunteering
- Strong local communities



Legislation



Inclusion



Participation, Community and volunteering



Funding and Investments

OS Culture, Knowledge and Respect

- OS culture and respect for OS (e.g. for the proper use of bike trails)
- Understanding of OS practice
- Knowledge of the benefits of OS
- Cultural values of a city and aligning of different cultures

Promotion and Events

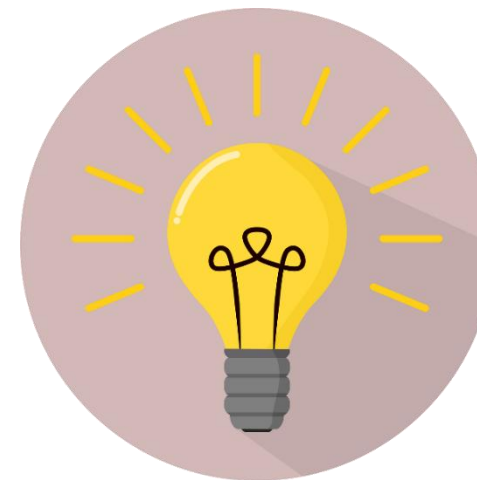
- Social media and web communication) to promote the territory and outdoor activities
- Events to promote OS and support investments
- Events for all
- Family events

Education

- Presence of trained instructors and facilities to train and introduce newcomers to OS
- OS education at schools
- OS education for foreigners
- ...



Promotion and Events



OS Culture, Knowledge and Respect



Education