

A new WHO tool to empower organized sports clubs to promote health



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There is a strong link between sports and health. While sports clubs can often be seen as places for competition and athletic performance, there are many opportunities for sports clubs to contribute to overall health improvements in the community that have not yet fully been harnessed.

WHO's new Health-Promoting Sports Clubs – National Audit Tool will help countries of the WHO European Region to develop this potential while increasing physical activity levels, improving health literacy and promoting healthier choices.

WHO supports countries to implement a whole-of-community approach to promoting health. This includes sports clubs, which can play an important role.

“Sports clubs have great potential to promote health and well-being not only among athletes and participants, but also among local communities and the wider population,” explained Kremlin Wickramasinghe, Acting Regional Adviser for the Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Programme at WHO/Europe.

“Local sports clubs could become comprehensive health-promoting hubs, involving stakeholders and communities in decision-making and working together to raise awareness of public health issues.”

The new WHO Health-Promoting Sports Clubs – National Audit Tool is the first instrument of its kind that can help countries to review how effectively they support sports clubs to promote health and, if needed, take steps for further improvement. It offers a method to gather data on existing policies and strategies, measure national commitment, identify key stakeholders, raise awareness on existing practices, and share positive and negative experiences.

“Sports clubs are nowadays recognized for their potential to promote and organize physical activity, an important determinant of health. But they can also use the informal education potential of sport to empower sports participants and foster their social, mental and physical health, as well as community health and social capital,” explained Aurelie Van Hoyer, a Marie Curie research fellow at the University of Limerick in Ireland and one of the authors of the National Audit Tool.

The National Audit Tool will enhance the new WHO Sports and Health Programme, launched in April 2022 to help people all over the world lead healthy lives by promoting participation in sports and working with the sports community to advance health for all.

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