



**LINKING PHYSICAL EDUCATION WITH LOCAL SPORT  
ORGANIZATIONS: IMPLEMENTATION OF AN  
“ACTIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY”**

**Roland Naul<sup>1</sup>,**

**Till Utesch<sup>1,2i</sup>,**

**David Niehues<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Department of EU Studies in  
Physical Education and Youth Sport

<sup>2</sup> Department of Sport Psychology  
Institute of Sport and Exercise Sciences  
University of Münster  
Münster, Germany

**Abstract:**

The main purpose of the active school communities project was to act as a starting point for more active school communities throughout seven countries across Europe by strengthening the links between community sport organizations and local schools and provide a low-cost solution to improve physical education and physical activity in schools. Further, opportunities for cooperation were fostered by creating new partnerships between stakeholders that already separately work at the community level to encourage children to move more. Therefore, toolkits were created by the active school communities ERASMUS+ project to promote collaborations between the field of education together with grassroots sport sectors and sport clubs. The aim of this study was a pilot evaluation of these toolkits. A total of 38 members of local sport organizations, 34 members of local schools and 5 national coordinators participated in three parts of the evaluation study. In sum, there are ambivalent results regarding the three toolkits, but the majority of participants supported the aim of the project to create and improve more active school communities. Finally, future recommendations are discussed.

**Keywords:** physical activity; community-based; network; active school communities; sport club

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [till.utesch@uni-muenster.de](mailto:till.utesch@uni-muenster.de)

## **1. Introduction**

The project "Active School Community" (ASC) was initially an Erasmus+ network project with 11 partners in seven EU-countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, and United Kingdom) plus Switzerland. It was carried out in the years 2016 and 2017. Most of the 11 partner organizations represented national physical activity and sport organizations in their country: "BE Active" in Bulgaria, the Danish Gymnastic Association (DGI), the Hungarian School Sport Federation (HSSF), the Italian Sport for All Association (UISP), the Sport Union of Slovenia (SUS), the South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Association (SLLC) in Scotland and the Youth Sport Trust in the England (both UK). In addition, three additional partners at the international level were involved - two international umbrella organizations: the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) based in Denmark and the European Union of Physical Education Teacher Associations (EUPEA), based in Switzerland - and the Willibald Gebhardt Research Institute, based in Germany (WGRI).

### **1.1 Partnerships between sport clubs and local schools to support physical education and to enhance physical activities at school**

There are several countries across Europe where the development of partnerships between sport clubs and schools has a strong historical record either since the 1920s after World War I or since the 1950s after World War II (de Knop et al., 1996; Heinemann, 1999; Breuer et al., 2015). In former times, particularly between the 1960s and the 1980s, many physical education (PE) teachers also offered their expertise at sport clubs in training and coaching young people when there was a children and youth sport department established at the sport club. This has been one of the early bridges of school partnerships with sport clubs when also active and engaged pupils followed their PE teachers and became regular sport club members. After the velvet revolutions in Eastern European countries, new sport clubs were founded in the 1990s and became attractive with new kinds of physical activity and sports when at the same time former school-based PE became much dismantled in real school life in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (Földesi & Egressy, 2005; Novotny, 2015; Zysko, 2013). Often, PE courses at schools were transformed into extra-curricular activities. Pupils who wanted to attend these courses had to pay for them, but many parents did not have the money for it. However, this was only one special item of the so called "crisis of PE" at the end of the 1990s in Eastern Europe when this term was launched globally by Kenneth Hardman and Joe Marshall (2000) in their 1<sup>st</sup>. "World-Wide Survey of the State and Status of PE". Particularly, in central, western and northern European countries, a decline of PE was visible in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and later. It was linked with some items of new developments (Naul & te Uhle, 2001): educational decentralization policy with increase of local school autonomy; flexibility in time tables for school subjects with reduced lessons plans for PE, state supported reduce and hidden

curriculum time allocation for teaching PE, employment of more "generalist" teacher instead of "specialist" teachers in PE, new enrolment of sport club and community coaches and trained volunteers for extra-curricular offers at school, ignored reconstruction of old PE facilities or budget cuts to facilitate, and, finally, the increased focus by parents and school principals on so called "core subjects" in schooling for academic marks. However, after the year 2000 the raising problem of physical inactivity and overweight of children and adolescents became evident combined with a more sedentary lifestyle that was supported by new electronic media in many EU-countries (e.g., United Kingdom (UK), France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Germany). In this context of decline in quantitative and qualitative PE at school and emerging high prevalence of obesity in children and adolescents, some campaigns started in EU-countries like the UK, France, Denmark and the Netherlands (Bergsgard et al., 2007; Ibsen et al., 2016) to foster school links to out-of-school partners in physical activity. Across Europe, one of the most prominent and ambivalently discussed national campaign was in the UK: the so-called "physical education school sport club link policy" (PESSCL) which started in 2002/2003 to enhance the participation of 5-16-year-old pupils into PE lessons from 25% up to 75% and 85% in 2008 as one of eight goals. In 2008, this strategy of linking schools and sport clubs was converted into the "physical education and school sport strategy for young people" (PESSYP) by the UK government. Beside many similarities between both strategies, handicapped pupils and young athletes were included in the PESSYP and PE, school sport and physical activities in extra-curricular time at sport clubs for 5-16-year-old children and adolescents now should have increased up to five hours weekly. The pro and cons of school-sport club linked cooperations with schools to extend physical activity beyond PE was discussed ambivalently from the very beginning up today (Houlihan & Green, 2006; Bloyce & Smith, 2010; Phillpots, 2013; Phillpots & Grix, 2014). After the London Olympic Games, which served as a supportive background for this new strategy since 2008, further financial support declined and a roll-back started.

More orientation to school sports either as a curricular part of PE lessons or as an extra-curricular supplement of PE started in the early 2000s also in other EU-countries with school reforms of elementary schools (e.g., Germany with the introduction of the all-day-school; bredeschool in the Netherlands). A turning point on European level to re-shape the role of physical education was set up in 2004, the Year of Education through Sport (EYES). Beside many school-based and sport club projects in 24 EU member states (Janssens et al., 2004) the General Directorate of Education and Culture (EAC) of the EC launched a research review entitled "Study on young people's lifestyle and sedentariness and the role of sport in the context of education and as a means of restoring the balance" (Brettschneider & Naul, 2004). The analysis whether PE will be able to support an active, healthy lifestyle to counteract physical inactivity and obesity in the school context although losses of its status and lower acknowledgment as a school subject across Europe were present were discussed in detail (Brettschneider & Naul, 2004, pp. 141-160). Finally, the recommendation published that PE can only

counteract sedentariness and restore the balance by the idea of “initiating and progressively expecting new `networks` going beyond the institution `school` and incorporating the home, sport clubs, public health authorities and the social community at large” (Brettschneider & Naul, 2004, p. 156). This recommendation to establish a comprehensive network for PE with some other cross-sectoral stakeholders for physical activities in local (sport) communities was taken by the EAC for further EU-based policy activities in 2005 and onwards (Kornbeck, 2013, 2018). The cross-sectoral network idea to support PE at school was finally incorporated into the chapter of education of the “European Physical Activity Guidelines” (EC, 2008; Naul, 2018). Later, many other authors and institutions are recommending the school partnership model to improve items of PE through bi-lateral agreements (e.g., Hardman, 2007; van Acker et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2015; EU-Expert Group, 2015) with local sport organizations or even better and more effective on multi-lateral level with other partners representing more sectors (public health, welfare, social work) of a community (Ehlen, Dreiskämper, Utesch & Rehaag, 2018; Naul, 2012; Wang et al., 2013).

Currently, the idea to establish partner links between schools and sport organizations on local level becomes more and more relevant and is applied across EU-countries for various reasons: in Germany because of the introduction of the all-day-school with physical activity in afterschool programmes; in Hungary because of the target of five hours PE a week at school by the national education law, a capacity that is only realistic to achieve by offers of sport clubs and sport organizations; or the example of the Danish education law of 2014, which demands to offer a minimum of 45 minutes of physical activity per day at school, a goal that cannot be covered by regular PE teachers and regular PE lessons and needs support from sport club partners outside the school system. Therefore, the question how local sport clubs with their coaches and volunteers approach schools could help and be connected with local schools developing sound ties for partnerships and, more general, how physical activities at school in curricular or extra-curricular time could be supported and extended? Consequently, the Erasmus+ “Active School Community” Project (2016-2017) sought to develop tools for guiding personnel of local sport organizations to build partnerships with schools.

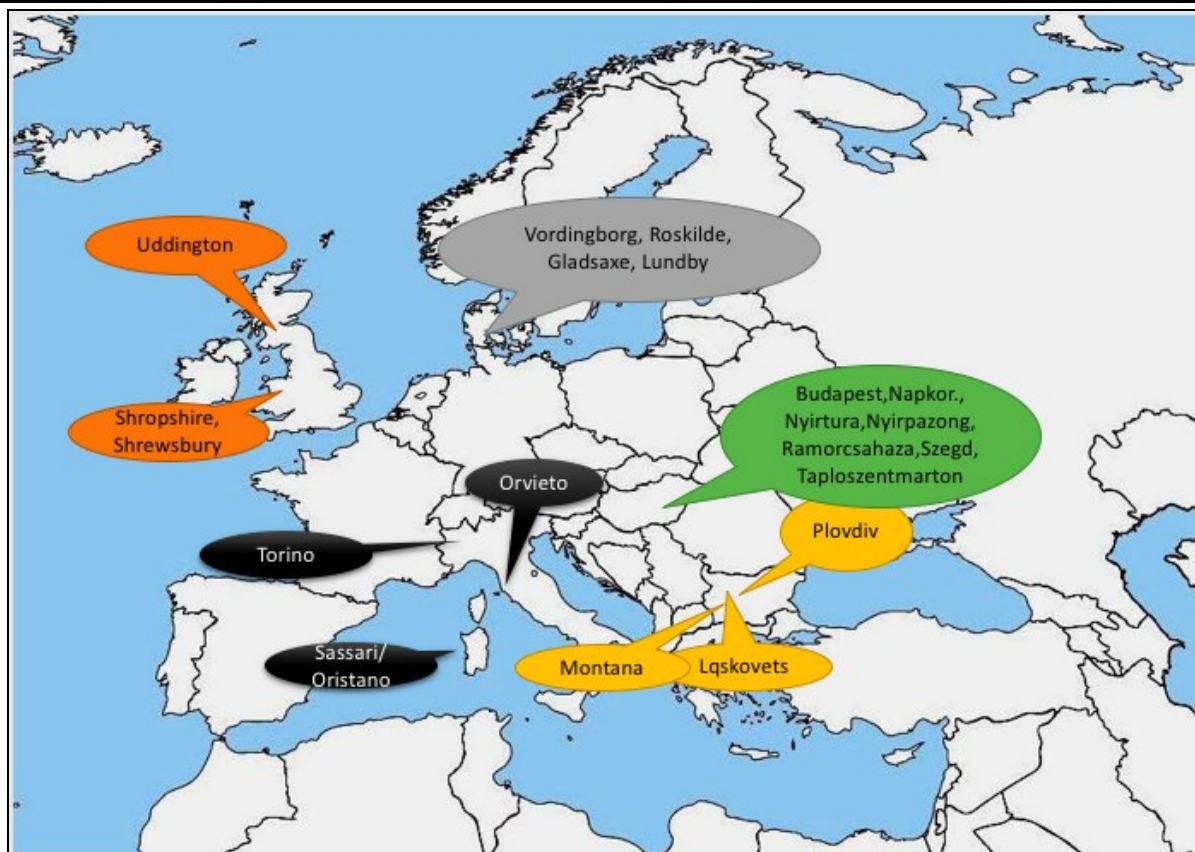
## **1.2 Background of the active school communities project**

The main purpose of the ASC project was to act as a starting point for more active school communities throughout Europe by strengthening the links between community sport organizations and local schools and to provide a low-cost solution to improve physical education and physical activity times in schools. New partnerships between stakeholders that already work separately at the community level are needed (and existing ones should be continued) to encourage children to move more (ASC, 2018) in order to develop motor competence (e.g., Bardid, Rudd, Lenoir, Polman, & Barnett, 2015) and, accordingly, positive, accurate physical self-concepts in order to be physically active and counteract overweight and obesity (e.g., Utesch, Dreiskämper, Naul, & Geukes, 2018). These positive aspects of active school communities can be

summarized by the EU's ambitions to counteract growing physical inactivity tendencies already in childhood, because already about 81% of the 11-17-year-olds fail to meet their physical activity recommendations (WHO, 2017). Therefore, it is important to promote collaborations between the field of education together with grassroots sport sectors and sport clubs. Thus, the aim of the project was to develop, to implement and to evaluate three parts of the so-called "ASC Toolkit" for local sport organizations. The aim was to prepare local sport organizations to approach partner schools with their youth coaches and volunteers in order to implement different sport offerings at school after mutual negotiations and agreements with school representatives. ASC Toolkit No. 1 is a "Self-Assessment Toolkit" for sport organizations to evaluate their possibilities and supply capacities for school offerings; Toolkit No. 2 is an "Action Planning Toolkit" to prepare sport offerings of local sport organizations in accordance with given school priorities in education and active school life in the school frame; Toolkit No. 3 is a "Sport Organization Toolkit", a guideline (i.e., a step by step strategy) of single actions to initiate a sport project with special tasks and to plan adequate school offerings.

The three toolkits were developed by the Youth Sport Trust after a scientific literature review of comparable local community-based PE and sport projects, released by WGRI, and included a collection of best practice examples contributed by ISCA, WGRI and some other national partners of the project (ASC, 2018). The final versions of the Toolkits were implemented and distributed to local sport organizations in mainly urban areas of small and big cities in Bulgaria, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, England and Scotland (UK) by national coordinators of the different national partner organizations involved in the ASC project. Between March 2017 and July 2017, sport courses were organized by youth sport coaches and volunteers of local sport organizations at their local partner schools according the toolkit guidelines and after negotiations with head teachers or school liaisons.

As a part of the Erasmus+ project, upon the completion of the school-based projects by sport organizations, the aim of the present study was to evaluate the processes and outcomes of the delivery and implementation of the ASC Toolkits in spring to summer 2017.



**Figure 1:** The different locations (i.e., names and no. of places) in each country, in which local sport organizations implemented their sport programmes according to the guidelines of the ASC toolkits are shown in this picture. The biggest city was the city of Torino with almost 1 million inhabitants; the smallest town was Nyirtura, Hungary with less than 2,000 inhabitants. Most of the participating towns had fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. In total, the ASC toolkit was implemented in 31 communities: four in the UK, Denmark and Italy, five in Slovenia and Bulgaria and nine in Hungary. In most cases, four to five local communities were contacted by the national coordinators. In some countries like Italy and Hungary, one national sport umbrella organization - in Italy it was Sport for All; in Hungary it was mediball - contacted their member clubs for implementation in different regions of the country. Several other partners approached different kinds of sport clubs with games, body shape programmes, martial arts and combat sports. Slovenia did not contribute its documentation

## 2. Design of the pilot evaluation study

The main purpose of the evaluation study was to collect feedback data related to the value, structure and content of the three toolkits, which were applied by coaches, volunteers and teachers for planning and implementation of sport courses at local schools. The aim was to use feedback data from the evaluation of the practical application of specific sport offerings at schools to improve the toolkits for a final draft. A second aim was to prepare a report highlighting the benefits or deficits of the toolkits for the local partners from the sport clubs and partner schools.

For these purposes of evaluation, we created three instruments:

1. a National Coordinator's Questionnaire (NCQ). The NCQ assessed socio-demographic and organizational data about the local sport organizations (e.g., time of foundation; amount of club memberships in general and for children and adolescents; number and kinds of sports offered; number and qualification/unlicensed coaches and volunteers in general and how many participated into the ASC project; number of offered courses by the local partners and range of time for courses etc.).
2. one questionnaire with two version - Version 2A for coaches and volunteers and Version 2B for teachers (IMPEAQ) - to assess the value, structure and content of the toolkits. Version 2A for coaches and volunteers from the sport organizations ("IMPEAQ, for sport organizations"), included items based on the guidelines from all three toolkits; Version 2B for school teachers ("IMPEAQ for schools") addressed items from only one of the toolkits - the *ASC Action Planning Toolkit*. Neither the *Self-assessment Toolkit* nor the *Sport Organization Toolkit* was considered for schools. The IMPEAQ questionnaires were structured according to the various sections of the different toolkits. Data gathered included a complete set of socio-demographic data of each participant: gender, age, qualification status, involvement in the ASC sport club offerings at schools and of the extra-curricular sport offerings of teachers in partner sport clubs, as well as the total number of children who participated. Part of the questionnaire included requiring individual assessments on what worked really well, what was missed in the toolkits, and what were the most important learnings that evolved from the use of the toolkit.
3. the LAM-EQ, the "Learning, Ability and Motivation Questionnaire" was developed by one of the partner organizations – EUPEA - in cooperation with WGRI. This questionnaire included items to evaluate the degree to which the toolkits helped sport coaches and teachers in the process of improving their personal abilities, experiences and motivations to plan, organize and implement sport courses. The LAM-EQ was structured into three parts:
  - the items in Part A asked about the degree to which certain abilities, working experiences and personal motivation and trust were developed as a result of using the toolkits
  - the items in Part B explored a range of related learnings e.g. in teaching, organization, advocacy
  - part C evaluated the application of the toolkits in communication processes with others.

The NCQ was sent on paper to the seven national coordinators; both IMPEAQ versions and the LAM-EQ were prepared as online-tools for all participating individuals in the ASC project. Figure 2 gives an overview of the design of the evaluation study. Sample sizes of the pilot evaluation study were: national coordinators (n=5), personnel from the local sport organizations (n=38), teachers of partner schools



and individuals who filled in data for the LAM-EQ (n=34). The national coordinator and local sport organizations from Slovenia did not join the evaluation project.

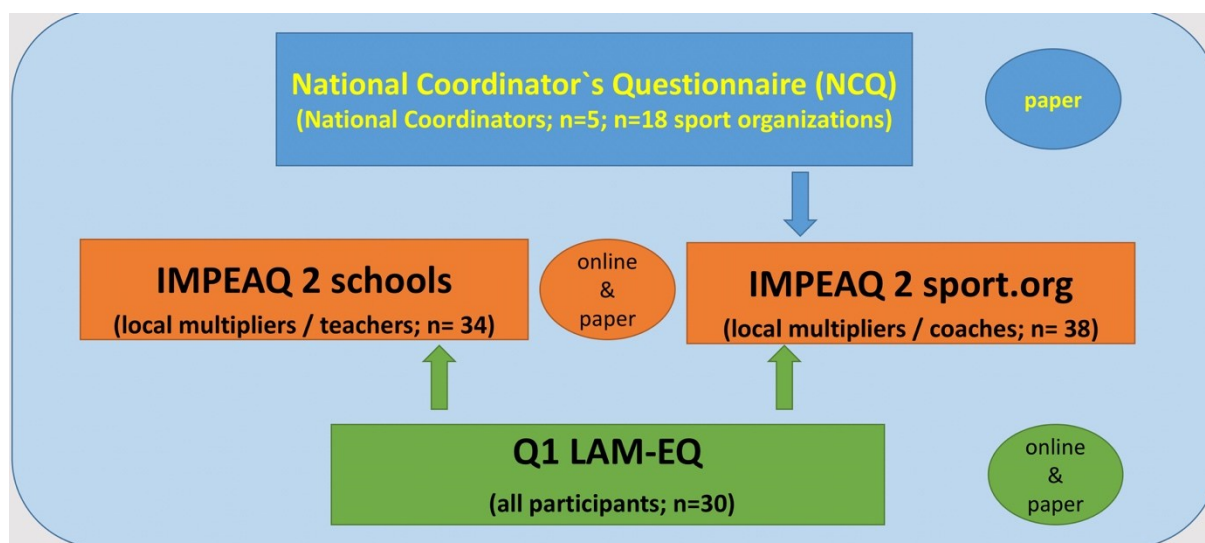


Figure 2: Overview of the ASC toolkit evaluation study design

### 3. Results

In total, *ASC Toolkits* were implemented in 29 local communities of the six participating EU countries including Slovenia. Results of the pilot study are presented here. Firstly, the general socio-geographic frame of the study (NCQ as reported by the national coordinators) is presented with data from participating individuals from the sport organizations and their partner schools, followed by the evaluation of the three toolkit instruments viewed and assessed by personnel who represent (a) local sport organizations (IMPEAQ 2A, sport organization) and (b) personnel who represented their partner school (IMPEAQ 2B for schools). The results of the self-assessments and the respective assessments by sport organizations of partner schools and of sport organizations by partner schools will be comprehensively provided for comparison. The results of the LAM-EQ will not be presented due to the specific focus of this paper.

#### 3.1 Sample size, sport club posts and sport club offerings in different local school physical education and physical activity settings

The total of 38 members of local sport organizations who replied to our IMPEAQ sport questionnaire after the implementation study of the ASC toolkits serve in the sport clubs in different positions (see Table 1).



**Table 1:** Overview of participating persons and work positions across participating countries

		I am engaged in a local umbrella sport organization/local sport club as:					Total
		chair person	licensed trainer/coach	trained volunteer	manager	unlicensed trainer/coach	
Country	Bulgaria	1	5	1	2	1	10
	Hungary	3	5	6	0	0	14
	Italia	0	1	1	1	0	3
	Scotland	0	2	0	0	0	2
	United Kingdom	0	4	0	0	0	4
	Denmark	3	2	0	0	0	5
Total		7	19	8	3	1	38

Just 50% of all participants work as licensed coaches (19), assisted by 21% of trained volunteers (8) and another seven individuals (18%) who serve in the capacity of a chair person in the local sport club. The mean age of the coaches/volunteers is 38 years (ranging from 23 to 52 years); 50% are males, another 50% are females.

About 30 people (79%) out of this sport organization sample group have been involved in ASC sport offerings of their sport clubs at local partner schools (see Table 2).

**Table 2:** Evaluation in the involvement of offerings at school per country

		Please mark and indicate if you are also involved in offering PA/sport offerings at school						Total
		no	yes PE lesson	yes SS lesson	yes PA in break times/before	not involved	yes after school programmes	
Country	Bulgaria	6	0	1	0	0	3	10
	Hungary	0	7	2	2	1	2	14
	Italia	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
	Scotland	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
	United Kingdom	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
	Denmark	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
Total		7	13	6	2	1	9	38

Again, 50% of the sport coaches (19) offered sport courses as a part of the regular PE lessons or school sport lessons at school, mainly in Denmark and Hungary; another 9 persons from Bulgaria, Denmark and the UK (24%) offered sport courses as a part of the afterschool programmes.

### 3.2 Sport club size, range of sports, memberships, youth coaches and young people involved

In Italy, a total of 4 of the participating sport organizations held memberships of more than 1,000 people, whereas in Denmark all types of small (< 100 people), middle (< 500

people) and high membership (> 501 people) clubs were included. In most places of Eastern Europe sport organizations hold club memberships between 100 and 500 people. Bigger clubs offered more than five different kinds of sports, whereas small clubs only 1 to 2 kinds of sports. Sport organizations in the West and in Hungary offered far more games (football, handball, hockey, tennis, mediball) than many partner organizations in the East which offered more individual physical activities to enhance body shape, physical fitness and some martial arts and combat sports. Membership data of young people in the participating sport organizations are related to the size of the sport club: the bigger clubs in Italy, Denmark and one in Bulgaria have more than 300 children and adolescents as members; whereas the memberships of young people in the East and the West in small and middle ranged sport clubs are on average fewer than 100. In the bigger sport clubs more than 11 youth sport coaches usually work. However, most of the participating sport organizations, particular in the Eastern European countries, serve with fewer youth sport coaches, only one to three. Nevertheless, the number of youth sport coaches and volunteers who participated with their sport club offerings at schools in the ASC pilot project do not really differ between the East and the West: regularly 3 to 4 coaches out of the different local sport organizations offered a sport course at their partner school which means most of the coaches of Western sport organizations did not participate in the ASC toolkit pilot study, but almost all youth sport coaches of the small sport clubs in Eastern Europe did.

### 3.3 Sample size, school posts and teaching offerings of local school personnel in different physical education or physical activity settings

The total of 34 members of local schools who replied to our IMPEAQ school questionnaire after the implementation study of the ASC toolkits serve in their schools in different positions (see Table 3):

**Table 3:** Evaluation of the working positions of persons with program offerings per country

		Primary/secondary school, working in the position of:						
		school principal	other subject teacher	unqualified PE teacher or coach	qualified PE teacher	head teacher	community worker	Total
Country	Hungary	3	4	0	6	0	0	13
	Bulgaria	4	0	1	4	0	1	10
	Italy	0	4	1	1	0	0	6
	United Kingdom	0	3	0	0	1	0	4
	Denmark	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total		7	12	2	11	1	1	34

About one third of the sample group works as qualified PE teachers (11) mainly in Hungary and Bulgaria assisted by one head teacher and two untrained PE teachers. Another 12 teachers (35%) are other subject area teachers who are involved in teaching PE predominately (71%) in primary schools mainly in Italy and the UK. The mean age

of the teachers is 48 years (ranging from 24 to 64 years); 76% are females; 24% are males. Up to 80% of teachers are not engaged in any sport organization in their community. But 85% of all teachers (29) are involved in teaching in different settings of PE/PA at their schools (see Table 4).

**Table 4:** Evaluation of the number of offerings per country

		I am offering PE/school sports/PA/sport programmes in:						
		PA in extra- school		curricular		not		
		PE lessons	sport sessions	school sport offerings	PA across curriculum	after school programmes	involved	Total
Country	Hungary	8	1	3	0	1	0	13
	Bulgaria	3	1	2	0	0	3	9
	Italy	1	0	0	5	0	0	6
	United Kingdom	3	0	0	0	0	1	4
	Denmark	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		16	2	5	5	1	4	33

The school principals in this study are not involved in teaching PE. A total number of 18 teachers (53%) are teaching PE and school sports. Another five teachers from Hungary and Bulgaria are engaged in extracurricular school sports and interestingly, five teachers from Italy also in physical activities across the curriculum.

### 3.4 Number of ASC sport sessions and coaches, boys and girls who participated at their schools in ASC sport offerings of local sport organizations

In both IMPEAQ questionnaires, local sport clubs' officials and school teachers who completed the questionnaires were asked about the participation frequency of boys and girls in ASC Toolkit sport offerings at school. Table 5 gives an overview on frequencies of weeks sessions, total sessions and number of boys and girls who participated into the sessions

**Table 5:** Project sample information based on school and organization data (rounded averages)

Country	No of boys in the beginning	No of boys in the end	No of girls in the beginning	No of girls in the end	No of coaches in total	Sessions organized per week	Sessions organized in total
Hungary	104	110	129	129	12	2	6
Bulgaria	37	38	41	43	2	2	6
Italy	24	24	24	24	2	2	25
United Kingdom	227	227	198	198	6	11	60
Denmark	30	30	28	28	4	2	6
Mean	65	66	69	69	6	2	10

There are descriptive differences between the countries regarding the numbers of participating pupils and numbers of active coaches in ASC Toolkit sport offerings as well as between the number of sessions per week and in total. The highest participation ratio of pupils was in the UK where at four communities 15 sessions were delivered at each place; the highest participation ratio of coaches with in total 12 was in Hungary. As the data further documents, there was no real drop out of pupils in classes/courses between the beginning of the first and the final sessions in the pilot. The range of given sessions varies between the countries. For example, just five or six sessions were offered on average in Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria and up to 15 sessions in the UK. On average up to 70% of the number of all ASC offerings in the West and 43% of ASC offerings in the East are restricted to 5 sessions, whereas 30% of all ASC session in the West and 57% of all ASC sessions in the East expired the amount of 5 sessions in the pilot study. Also, the time unit varies between 45 minutes per session up to 180 minutes per session. As far as the ASC sport offerings are included into the regular PE curriculum, mainly in Denmark and Eastern European countries, the time slot is 45 to 60 minutes; in extra-curricular offerings, e.g., afternoon programmes in the UK and Eastern European countries the time slots range between 120 and 180 minutes.

### **3.5 Evaluation outcome of the ASC Sport Organization Toolkit**

Only the 38 individuals who replied to IMPEAQ for sport organizations are included in this part of the pilot evaluation study. Again, the sample was split into Eastern and Western European participants of the study. No contribution from partners from Slovenia was received. Regarding the statistical analysis, we renounce inference statistics due to the small sample available.

#### **3.5.1 Better conversations with schools after the ASC pilot study**

All in all, representatives of the sport organizations agreed that they achieved better conversations with schools after the ASC pilot. Members of sport clubs in Eastern Europe assessed this between "much" and "very much" with a mean of 4.35 whereas their counterparts in Western European countries assessed this on a far lower level (mean = 3.36). The biggest difference occurred in the assessment of whether this achievement also includes the volunteers of a sport club. Little improvement was assessed for volunteers in the West (mean = 2.08) whereas in the East this outcome was ranked much higher (mean = 3.33).

#### **3.5.2 Benefits for sport clubs working together with schools**

Sport clubs in the East seemed to agree that there were benefits for their club from working together with schools, including higher rates of participation of children at sport clubs (mean = 3.88), a more diverse participation by children at the club (mean = 3.67) and in particular a benefit for a good contribution to the community and social outcome (mean = 3.88) and for stronger local networks (mean = 3.83). All these benefits are also positively assessed by members of sport organizations in Western Europe but

on much lower level: means vary between 3.64 as the highest (contribution to the community) and 3.14 as the lowest (higher rates of children in the sport club after the pilot).

**Table 6:** Evaluation of the process of engagement with schools by coaches of Eastern and Western Europe. Answers were provided on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = poor to 5 = excellent)

	Eastern Europe		Western Europe	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Raised level of physical activity in all young people	4.08	1.06	3.79	0.70
Raised level of physical activity of the least active children	4.13	0.68	4.07	0.62
Increase of school's existing offering by ASC sport club program	4.08	0.50	4.08	0.76
Shared understanding of school's key priorities	4.29	0.46	3.85	0.69
Sport club intervention target school priorities	4.08	0.72	3.50	0.86

**Note:** Mean represents the mean of the scale. SD represents the standard deviation of the scale.

### 3.5.3 Self-assessment of sport club engagement at school

There are five important outcomes from the ASC engagement by local sport organizations with their partner schools. Table 6 shows the means with respect to the increase in sport activities and in how far these offerings of the sport clubs at school increased school offerings and understanding by sport clubs of school priorities.

As the means show, three items were assessed almost identically between sport club officials of the East and the West: their offerings increased physical activity for the least active children and because of this these offerings increased definitely the existing school offerings with an increase in the shared understanding of the school's key priorities. However, the impact of sport offerings is assessed divergently between the two country groups: coaches and volunteers from the East are convinced that the numbers of young people increased at their clubs (mean = 3.63); this was not an outcome assessed by their colleagues from Denmark, Italy and the UK (mean = 2.71). Also, the means for the special impacts of their offerings differ: the rankings between the physical and social impacts are equally ranked by their means but vary between the countries: the physical and social impact of sport offerings are self-assessed with means of 4.33 and 4.08 by Eastern coaches whereas coaches in the West self-assessed their physical and social impacts of offerings with means of 3.71 and 3.50.

A similar difference appears for the assessment whether or not their sport offerings need to improve for the future: the Eastern participants in this study seems to be less critically than their colleagues in the West (mean = 4.00 vs. mean = 3.21).

### 3.6 Evaluation outcome of the ASC Self-Assessment Toolkit

Only the 38 individuals who replied to "IMPEAQ 2A for sport organizations" are included in this part of the pilot evaluation study. The sample was split into two groups of individuals, being a member in a sport organization based in a Western EU country (DEN, UK, ITA) or in an Eastern EU country (BGR, HUN). Data of coaches and volunteers from Slovenia were not contributed to this study. In principle, the ASC Self-Assessment Toolkit was assessed as useful (mean = 4.0) in all countries (mean<sub>West</sub> = 3.85

vs.  $\text{mean}_{\text{East}} = 3.88$ ). Differences occurred in the assessment of how far this toolkit improved understanding for school needs: coaches/volunteers from the West are closer to a “moderate” level (3.23) than their counterparts from the East which assessed it much higher and very close to the “useful” level (3.96). More culturally diverse was the further assessment in how far the toolkit was applied for internal activities of the sport organizations and for preparation of their sport programmes for schools: a member of the local sport organization took much (4.0) to very much (5.0) responsibility to consult a school (West 4.29 vs. East 4.71) and negotiated at school about their club offerings ( $\text{mean}_{\text{West}} = 3.57$  vs.  $\text{mean}_{\text{East}} = 4.25$ ), however, here again on a lower level in Western countries. The largest cultural difference occurred for the assessment in how far the attached best practice examples of the toolkit helped to develop the own programme of the sport club: a low mean for the Western countries (2.46) means “little”, whereas the mean for the Eastern sport clubs (3.58) means “moderate to much”. In summary, the ASC Self-Assessment Toolkit was much more used and applied in Eastern European sport organizations for their preparatory work of sport offerings than in the Western part of Europe. Probably, more coaches and volunteers from Denmark, Italy and the UK were much more acquainted with school offerings and had more previous experiences in collaborations with schools than their colleagues in Hungary and Bulgaria where the progression of partnership links to school PA offerings is still at an earlier stage of development.

### 3.7 Evaluation outcomes of the ASC Sports Planning Toolkit

Section C of both versions of the IMPEAQ for sport organizations and partner schools asked participating teachers at schools (n=34) and youth coaches/volunteers in sport organizations (n=38) who offered courses at their partner schools to self-assess the ranking of specific education tasks at their school and for their sport organizations respectively and to assess vice versa the importance of education tasks for their partner institution (teacher for sport organizations; youth coaches/volunteers for schools). The ranking list ranged from 1 to 10 points (Table 7).

**Table 7:** Importance of education tasks

Tasks	School Teacher about:				Organizational Youth Coaches/Volunteers about:			
	Themselves		Sport Organizations		Schools		Themselves	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Attainment	8.26	2.44	7.47	2.69	7.89	2.75	6.79	2.51
Achievement	8.97	1.36	8.74	1.66	8.26	2.00	8.58	1.70
Life Skills	8.85	1.86	8.44	1.93	8.21	2.12	8.11	2.03
Motivation and Engagement	9.29	1.55	9.21	1.47	8.95	1.65	9.26	1.34
Vulnerable Groups	7.09	3.26	6.41	2.91	6.63	3.03	6.16	2.83
Behavior	8.53	1.62	8.21	1.98	8.33	2.07	7.79	2.04
Parental Engagement	6.56	2.29	6.67	2.51	6.56	2.92	7.26	2.56

Physical Wellbeing	9.32	1.27	9.61	0.79	9.24	1.48	9.47	0.94
Mental Wellbeing	9.56	0.96	9.30	1.21	9.52	1.03	9.36	1.01
Emotional Wellbeing	9.50	1.14	9.33	1.190	9.52	1.12	9.59	0.72

There are no differences between the two groups of teachers and coaches when it comes to self-assessment and external assessment of school priorities (Table 8). On a scale of 1 to 10 points both groups ranked the well-being dimension (physical, mental, emotional) as having the highest priorities (between 9.61 and 9.30 points). Also, the two lowest school priorities were ranked with minor differences between teachers and coaches: vulnerable groups with means between 6.16 and 7.09 and parental engagement with means between 6.56 and 7.26. However, a difference occurred between teachers and coaches when they self-assessed each other's attainment and achievement as a school priority (8.26 vs. 6.79). Teachers assessed the ranking of attainment and achievement in the work of sport organizations much higher than sport organizations did for themselves (7.47 vs. 6.79).

**Table 8:** Importance of objectives that can be achieved with ASC offers at school. Answers were provided on a 10-point Likert Scale (1 = totally unimportant to 10 = totally important)

	Coaches				Teacher			
	Eastern Europe		Western Europe		Eastern Europe		Western Europe	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Increased PA level, physical competence & physical fitness	9.00	1.47	8.82	1.33	8.52	1.73	9.09	0.94
Improved levels of emotional, social & mental wellbeing	9.00	1.18	8.30	1.16	9.30	1.19	9.00	1.00
Improved level of attendance, behavior engagement & attainment	8.29	1.30	7.40	1.08	8.35	1.70	8.45	1.75

**Note:** Mean represents the mean of the scale. SD represents the standard deviation of the scale

Coaches and teachers in both the Eastern and Western communities highly agreed that the objectives of the ASC offerings can increase the level of PA in a school and improve emotional, social and mental wellbeing (Table 9). There was also agreement that there was a lesser degree of improvement for attendance and attainment. The data seem to indicate that coaches of the East tend to be a little more positive than their counterparts in Western European countries. There are only small differences between teachers and coaches of the East whereas teachers in the West assessed the possible achievements more positively than coaches in the West.



**Table 9:** The most difficult actions to take for an ASC sport offer. Answers were provided on an 8-point Likert Scale (1 = easiest one to 8 = most difficult)

	Coaches		Teacher	
	Eastern Europe	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Western Europe
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Common school & sport organization priorities	2.32	3.60	1.89	3.75
How more or different PA can help	2.68	4.33	2.24	3.80
Monitoring & evaluation	2.90	3.30	1.87	3.89
Improvements of the ASC program	2.43	3.27	1.92	3.83

**Note:** Mean represents the mean of the scale.

Scale numbers between 1 and 4 indicate slight differences in a ranking from “very easy to easy” and scale numbers of 5 to 8 indicate slight differences in a ranking of “difficult to very difficult” (Table 10). Surprisingly, the highest assessments of difficulty are given by coaches and teachers from Western European countries (4.33 from coaches) with respect to how more or different PA can help. Teachers from the West assessed the difficulty of monitoring and evaluation at 3.89 and of how to improve the ASC programme at 3.83. The difficulty rankings of teachers from the West for these two items may be related to the situation that primary school teachers are not trained in PE/PA and have many other subjects to teach.

**Table 10:** Which PE/PA setting at school can the sport organization support most effectively? Answers were provided on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very much)

	Coaches				Teacher			
	Eastern Europe		Western Europe		Eastern Europe		Western Europe	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Teaching PE	3.57	1.56	3.85	1.56	3.95	1.24	3.73	1.34
Teaching School Sports	3.61	1.34	4.14	0.86	4.05	1.07	4.20	1.07
After school programs	4.23	0.92	4.64	0.63	4.26	1.01	4.40	0.84
PA in break times & before school starts	3.26	1.39	3.14	1.56	2.91	1.02	2.60	1.43
Active learning across curriculum	3.77	1.02	3.14	1.35	3.14	1.20	3.55	1.57

**Note:** Mean represents the mean of the scale. SD represents the standard deviation of the scale.

There is a high consensus in the rankings of coaches and teachers in the East and the West with respect to the item that “after school programmes” can be effectively supported by ASC offerings (Table 11). Coaches in the West also think that they can do much more in teaching school sport and teaching PE than their counterparts think in the East. Coaches across the countries are more positive about their potential to support PA in break times and before school starts than teachers are about the coaches’ ability to do so. Teachers also had a less positive assessment of coaches’ ability to support active learning across the curriculum than coaches indicated on their own self-assessments.

**Table 11:** Evaluation of future of ASC sport offers at school.

Answers were provided on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree)

	Coaches				Teacher			
	Eastern Europe		Western Europe		Eastern Europe		Western Europe	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
The project has worked well	4.57	0.75	3.85	0.80	4.50	0.80	4.18	0.75
We will continue with momentum	4.42	0.72	4.31	0.63	4.50	0.61	4.27	0.65
We learned things for next activities	4.58	0.50	3.85	1.07	4.38	0.59	4.18	0.60
The project can be moved to another cohort	4.42	0.58	3.54	0.97	4.37	0.68	3.56	1.13

**Note:** Mean represents the mean of the scale. SD represents the standard deviation of the scale.

High rankings are indicated by coaches and teachers from East and West on all items related to the future of ASC programmes, with small differences noted between coaches and teachers of the West (Table 12). Coaches in Western European countries are less convinced than their counterparts of the East and teachers in the West that the programme has worked well. Compared to the three other sample groups they are also more reluctant to agree that they have learned things for future activities and that they can move the project to another cohort group. On this item both teachers and coaches in the West agreed on the same, smaller level than their respective partners in the East.

**Table 12:** Evaluation of future of ASC sport offers at school. Answers were provided on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree)

	Coaches				Teacher			
	Eastern Europe		Western Europe		Eastern Europe		Western Europe	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
The project does not need updates	3.08	1.02	2.92	1.19	2.85	0.81	3.00	0.82
There is still room for improvements	3.96	0.81	3.77	1.01	3.90	0.70	3.90	0.57
The program has little impact	2.08	1.14	2.85	1.07	2.00	0.86	2.30	1.16
The outcome can be applied to a new outcome	4.29	0.55	3.67	0.65	4.21	0.63	3.44	1.13

**Note:** Mean represents the mean of the scale. SD represents the standard deviation of the scale

Finally, when assessing the future of the ASC sport programme there are some mutual agreements between the two professional groups without any cultural related differences. There is a strong disagreement (2.0) that the programme has little impact, although coaches of the West tend a little to less disagree. On the other hand all four sample groups almost fully agreed that there is still room for improvements and that the outcomes can be applied to a new project.

### 3.8 Final recommendations of participants

Within the ASC questionnaire, we asked the participants of both the schools and the school sport organization to give an elaborated opinion on the (1) strengths, (2)

weaknesses and (3) possible improvements of the ASC toolkit. We collected all the statements from the participants and identified some clusters for each category. In the following, the qualitative assessment of the sport organizations and the school participants' questionnaire will be presented. Detailed information on each single answer and how clusters were identified will be given in the supplement.

The participants of the sport organizations mostly agreed on the fact, that the toolkit was beneficial for an improved communication with the respective school. Eleven out of the total of 28 answers were regarding an enhanced communication with the schools (e.g., "It helped to see what schools might be looking for and to think about how we could support them"). Another important point that was mentioned three times by the participants was that the toolkit was helpful in terms of identifying school priorities and addressing the needs of the pupils (e.g., "Identify social needs and offer maximum participation. Pathways also offered to pupils"). Furthermore, seven people described the toolkit as a useful tool for self-reflection of the organizations' strategies and how they can contribute to an effective cooperation with schools (e.g., "The self-assessment tool to address the weaknesses of our club").

The second question was aimed at things that were missing in the toolkit. The majority of participants (13 of 30 answers in total) had nearly nothing to complain about the toolkit (e.g., "I do not think that something is missing"). The most criticism was aimed at the length of the documents. In total nine people criticized the length of the document in the context of preparing a sport session (e.g., "It is too big, too many questions for both club and the school it does not work in reality. There is no time to go through all this. Both club and school cannot spend this much time to do a program together"). Further criticism could not be related to a certain category, but it ranged from the wish for more detailed information to the note that the toolkit should involve the role of the parents in the promotion of these projects.

The third question should emphasize suggestions about possible improvements in the toolkit. Despite the fact that improved communication was also named as a positive outcome of the work with the toolkit, there seems to be still room for improvement in this area. Seven out of a total of 14 answers referred to the communication aspect. As the amount of answers to this question was rather limited, this was the only real cluster that could be identified. The other answers stressed the importance of the student's personality in a programme like this. It was also mentioned that the time frame of the implementation of the project was too small for a proper implementation.

The participants of the schools were asked the same questions as the participants of the sport organizations.

From a total of 22 answers, the cluster we identified most clearly was aimed at communication and partnership with the respective sport organizations (seven answers). Answers here were mostly congruent to the answers from the organization questionnaire (e.g., "The toolkit had a very good impact on the good communication between the sports club and the school"). A second category we identified (four

answers) was the impact the coaching of the related sport association had on the children (e.g., "The relationship between the coach and the children was great and it showed successful results"). The other answers were either off topic or contained several different, rather general positive aspects about the toolkit (e.g., "The idea that we need a planning and the involvement of all the teachers").

Parallel to the answers of the sport organizational participants, the school participants (11 answering total) criticized the amount of information given (four answers) in the toolkit (e.g., "Some of the questions were quite repetitive – the meeting could have been quicker without so many questions"). Another group of school participants (five answers) expressed a wish for more practical advice when it comes to the concrete organization of a project (e.g., "More concrete help for the realization of the programme"). Due to the fact that only eleven people answered this question, we can assume that the majority of people were quite satisfied with the programme.

Room for improvement (14 answers in total) was mostly seen in an even better communication (four answers) with the school (e.g., "Planning, organizing and identifying both school and club needs"). Some participants also expressed their happiness with the current toolkit. These answers were all collected without a specific category as they are off topic of the question. Other unrelated suggestions for improvement dealt with "better organization" or "more transparency" with the help of the toolkit.

#### 4. Conclusion

In principle, there are ambivalent results for two of the three categories, either by differences of internal clusters or by different replies of teachers and youth sport coaches or by different geographical regions of the participants (teachers & coaches). The most comprehensive category regardless of professional background of teachers or coaches and their geographical area is the category of "strength" for *beneficial assessment of communication improvements to understand school priorities and their needs*. The category of "missing in the toolkits" was assessed ambivalently. Beside the notion of "no missings" the length of the toolkit, practical relevance and missing better examples were criticized. Another ambivalence occurred in assessment of how to improve the toolkits. Beside the standpoint that no improvements were necessary, other individuals mainly representing schools proposed to include the item of "parents" and to have pupils' tailored criteria as a part of the next version of the toolkit. In total, sport coaches assessed the set of the three categories much more positively than teachers did; teachers and coaches of Western European countries were more concerned about critical improvements than their counterparts of the East. It was apparent, that some of the national coordinators replied much more positively than their local implementors of the toolkits in the countries. Experienced PE teachers vote more critically on the range and list of items of the toolkits than younger youth sport coaches and trained volunteers. A reduced and integrated version of the three parts of the pilot toolkits was recommended

by local teachers and to extend the bilateral cooperation (sport organization and schools) by a network of local stakeholders' partnerships.

In sum, the ASC toolkits provide a great basis for starting and establishing new partnerships between schools, sport clubs and further partners. These partnerships have been recognized as the basis of a structured dialogue and a beneficial network that can enhance the probability of more and successful active school communities across Europe from which schools, sport clubs, parents, and, most importantly, children can benefit in their daily life. Thus, the ASC toolkits can be considered a great opportunity for schools, physical education and more active and more healthy communities and children.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A. Identified Categories Organization Part 1

Identified Category	Examples (ORGANISATION PART 1)
Cooperation with the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fully applicable to sports organizations and their work with schools</li> <li>- Attracting children and young people to sport; Improving communication with schools</li> <li>- school and sport club relationship</li> <li>- It allowed to follow a common thread of the project and to have a comparison tool between school and organization.</li> <li>- It worked as an example of good practices to propose in the school.</li> <li>- It was useful to have a conversation with the teacher about their priorities and to identify some individual pupils to improve their activity levels and engagement in school</li> <li>- It helped us think about more than just coaching tennis - we worked with the school to choose some specific pupils who could benefit more widely</li> <li>- It helped us to get ready for the initial meeting with the school</li> <li>- It helped to see what schools might be looking for and to think about how we could support them</li> <li>- Identifying common goals and priorities helped to plan the steps from school to club.</li> <li>- School and sport club relationship</li> </ul>
Self-assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-assessment</li> <li>- An opportunity to make an analyzes</li> <li>- It gives us a clearer picture of our club as well as the opportunities for partnership with schools and other organizations</li> <li>- Fully applicable to sports organizations</li> <li>- The handbook is broad and comprehensive, covers both the gaps in our organization and the ways to overcome them</li> <li>- The self-assessment tool to address the weaknesses of the club</li> <li>- The self-assessment tool are very good for sport clubs new to this field of work. We have worked with schools for a few years and still found some good points in the self-assessment tool.</li> </ul>
Identifying school priorities / addressing pupils needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The concern to the importance of the PA on the school performance</li> <li>- That part which is used to meet special needs</li> <li>- Identify social needs and offer maximum participation. Pathway offered to pupils</li> </ul>
Without a specific category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helped experience and thoughts</li> <li>- Each</li> <li>- Simple answers to good questions</li> <li>- The information were useful.</li> </ul>

- each
- Online-version needs some alterations, some questions were repetitive
- It was too long. The action planning tool was not useful in this form. We don't have time to go through such a big tool- We need a short list of good points to go through and help to how we can organize this kind of work with schools, when there are no money.
- It is a good tool if the club has not worked with schools before

### Appendix B. Identified Categories Organization Part 2

Identified Category	Examples (ORGANISATION PART 2)
Nothing to complain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I do not think something is missing</li> <li>- Nothing</li> <li>- completely accurate and without gaps</li> <li>- Nothing - it is totally accurate and descriptive</li> <li>- Nothing.</li> <li>- nothing</li> <li>- nothing</li> <li>- nothing</li> <li>- Everything was available</li> <li>- Nothing</li> <li>- It contains all necessary information.</li> <li>- Nothing</li> <li>- I do not think that something is missing</li> </ul>
Length of the documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is very time consuming. Not useful</li> <li>- It is too big, too many questions for both club and the school it does not work in reality. There is no time to go through all this. Both club and school cannot spend this much time to do a program together.</li> <li>- But we think the tools are only for the board of the club. It is too much work for the trainers / volunteers to be involved in. They need only a list of questions / points to go through with the teacher from the school when preparing the program.</li> <li>- We found it hard to persuade the school to commit time to the meeting and the project overall</li> <li>- It's already quite long - I don't think you'd want to add any more to it</li> <li>- We didn't have enough time to look at the case studies. The toolkit took a long time to work through. I think it could be shorter.</li> <li>- A short checklist - one for the board in the sport club, one for the trainers who are doing the program with the school and one for the school and club to go through together.</li> <li>- There's a bit too much to work through, especially in the first two sections. The case studies weren't always easy to transfer to your</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>club setting</li> <li>- It wasn't easy to read it in order to prepare the sporty schedule.</li> </ul>
Without a specific category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More visuals, infographics. Adaptability to results after self-assessment - proposals to be categorized according to the capacities of the club</li> <li>- The possible methods of effective involvement of parents, and common practical interfaces of the institution-child-parent association.</li> <li>- support and tools</li> <li>- More details of the questions.</li> <li>- An adequate preparation of his use and a separated paperwork for schools, families and sport clubs in order to give more responsibility to the partners.</li> <li>- The scientific references of the parts where it speaks about the PA benefits.</li> <li>- Online version was not IT friendly</li> <li>- Collection of data is useful for evaluation</li> </ul>

### Appendix C. Identified Categories Organization Part 3

Identified Category	Examples (ORGANIZATION PART 3)
Better communication with the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good cooperation with the schools.</li> <li>- It helps to think the relationship of the school and the sport club.</li> <li>- The toolkit helps us in the analyze of every separate phase of working process with the school.</li> <li>- Communication is not at a good level</li> <li>- Planning, organizing and identifying both school and club needs.</li> <li>- For coaches and teachers to agree on a shared set of outcomes from the project</li> <li>- Helping colleagues and leaders in school to see the wider benefits of sport</li> </ul>
Without a specific category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A more transparent, value-oriented, well-organized program can be created.</li> <li>- Grade point average for active students has increased</li> <li>- When the major goal is to improve the physical activity of the children, the results are excellent</li> <li>- There is always something else to learn</li> <li>- Regardless of conversations and good communication it is necessary to pay attention to the personality</li> <li>- Internationally, it's given more value to the PE than in Italy.</li> <li>- That you need to build in enough time to plan and implement things properly</li> </ul>

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**Appendix D. Identified Categories Schools Part 1**

<b>Identified Category</b>	<b>Examples (School PART 1)</b>
Communication with the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication between the club and school</li> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Helping identify common goals, priorities, and designing steps to move from school to club.</li> <li>- Contact</li> <li>- The supporting information what made possible the school and the sports club flexible cooperation.</li> <li>- The toolkit had a very good impact on the good communication between the sports club and the school</li> <li>- It allowed us to build a strong relationship with the club</li> </ul>
Coaches' impact on the children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The coach had clearly used it to think about how he could support the school's priorities</li> <li>- The attendance and the motivation of all the students towards the offered activities</li> <li>- The relationship between the coach and the children was great and It showed successful results.</li> <li>- It means that we were able to have a good conversation with the coaches around the ethos and aims of the projects.</li> </ul>
Without a specific category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mediball rackets, balls and nets.</li> <li>- Where we could assess the personal needs.</li> <li>- Good questions, easy answers.</li> <li>- Easy questionnaire.</li> <li>- I do not have opportunity to get to know toolkit well</li> <li>- The toolkit gave us some interesting ideas.</li> <li>- A real assessment of the situation; strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>- It is not yet possible to say specifically what works, which does not</li> <li>- The idea that we need a planning and the involvement of all the teachers.</li> <li>- It allowed us to build a strong relationship with the club</li> <li>- Engaging with club and allow pupil to participate in new sport</li> <li>- Some good points, but I did not use it as intended. It was too huge and time consuming. If you can summarize it to a checklist, it would be better.</li> </ul>

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