

NEWSLETTER

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Fit-Balkans

Improving the Subjective Well-being of Young Women in Balkans through interventions in their Physical Activity

Fit-Balkans is designed based on two sections: 1- Research part, 2- Awareness-raising part.

The aim of the research study was to identify the initial state of participants related to their level of physical activity and wellbeing, eating habits, facilities of the neighbourhood for active transport and physical activity, personal status etc. The study was conducted in period May – September 2023 in all five project countries, following same research protocol.

The research study was conducted using specially designed questionnaire for the purposes of the project. It integrated different standardized protocols focused on different aspects of health, physical activity, nutrition, and subjective wellbeing.

Participants in the study were 1220 women at the age between 18 and 30 years old, from five different cities in Greece (Athens), Bulgaria (Plovdiv), Romania (Bucharest), Serbia (Nis) and North Macedonia (Shtip). From the total sample, 135 participants (11%) were from Greece, 92 (7%) were from Bulgaria, 597 (49%) from Romania, 205 (17%) from Serbia and 191 (16%) from North Macedonia.

Five deliverables were obtained based on the first data collection of Fit-Balkans.

1- First standard questionnaire.

This questionnaire is the first of the two surveys, and its objective is to explore the physical activity status of the participant and the factors affecting it. This question has five main parts: neighborhood perception and mobility behavior, physical activity, nutrition, well-being, and socioeconomic part. Fit-Balakans employed standard questionnaires including ALPHA (neighborhood part) questionnaire, short version of IPAQ (physical activity), and WEMWBS (Well-being). The first questionnaire has 56 questions.



2- Second standard questionnaire.

This is the second questionnaire of the two surveys, and it is designed to collect data after completing intervention (Changing travel behaviour, and/or changing diets habits, and/or reducing sitting and screen time). The second questionnaire has 40 questions and 5 sections including mobility attributes, physical activity (IPAQ), nutrition, well-being (WEMWBS), and intervention.

3- Validated dataset.

The validated dataset is one of the important results of data collection. The dataset involves 1220 rows that shows 1220 women were participated in the first data collection and their data was validated after data cleaning and validation process. The variables will be used in the next steps of research part of Fit-Balkans for analyzing data and writing scientific papers.

4- Data collection technical report

The technical report is a 15-pages report that shows participant profile, data collection method, and different types of variables in dataset.

5- Data analysis report.

The data analysis report provides some information and statistical report about all variables in dataset. This report is 75 pages including diagrams, tables and statistics.

The intervention started from October 2023, and it will continue to end of March 2024.

During the intervention participants changed the travel behaviour. It means they promised to change their mobility habits from passive to active (using cycling and walking as the main mode choice) for six months. In addition to travel behaviour, participant can choose to have healthy diet or reducing sitting and screen time or all of them.

Partners have own program to reach participants and keep them motivated during the intervention period. So, partners designed some activities for motivating participants.



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Transnational meeting - Plovdiv, Bulgaria 7-8 December 2023

During the days of 6th and 7th December, the Fit Balkans project teams from the partner countries gathered in a meeting in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. All partners were present in person, except for the colleagues from Greece who joined online. Throughout the meeting, the focus of discussion were the work packages, deliverables, deadlines and papers I,II and III.

On the first day of the meeting, the partners focused their attention on arranging meeting dates for the next year, outcomes of deliverables and WP3, WP4 and WP5, whereas the second day was dedicated to WP6, WP7 and WP8.



Campaign in Bulgaria:



Courage Foundation's campaign in Bulgaria is a comprehensive six-month program conducted through platforms like Facebook, Viber, and email to maintain constant communication with participants. The initiative kicked off with a Zoom meeting on November 2, 2023, introducing the program and gathering participant input. Zoom meetings covering various topics, such as nutrition, movement, and exercise, were held, fostering open discussions among the participants. The MED method was introduced to encourage participants to incorporate healthy practices into their daily lives.

Weekly posts on different topics, accompanied by open-ended discussions, were shared in the group. The content included principles of nutrition, fast and slow energy sources, exercise tips, and movement hacks. Various media, including video talks, infographics, and TEDx talks, enriched the program.

DoychZone coaches played a crucial role by offering advice, sharing personal experiences, and showcasing daily training routines, making exercise more accessible. To boost participant engagement, activities like short walks, project suggestions, and rewards were organized.

Future plans include sessions on folk dancing, additional sports activities, and a final Zoom meeting where participants can express their learnings and share how their lives have changed after the six-month campaign.

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Campaign in Greece:



We developed a facebook page and asked for all participants to join through the communication channel we were given (viber group, group email). However, so far only 5 out of the 58 people who had answered in the questionnaire that they would participate have joined. We shall try to reach them again and ask them to join. The small percentage of participants indicates either lack of commitment, lack of interest or absence of a facebook account.

The plan is to reach each participant individually to identify the reason for not joining the group and ask them to join if possible. The campaigns that we planned to hold involve weekly posts, questions and polls. So far, smooth interventions are planned due to the limited interest.



Campaigns in Serbia:

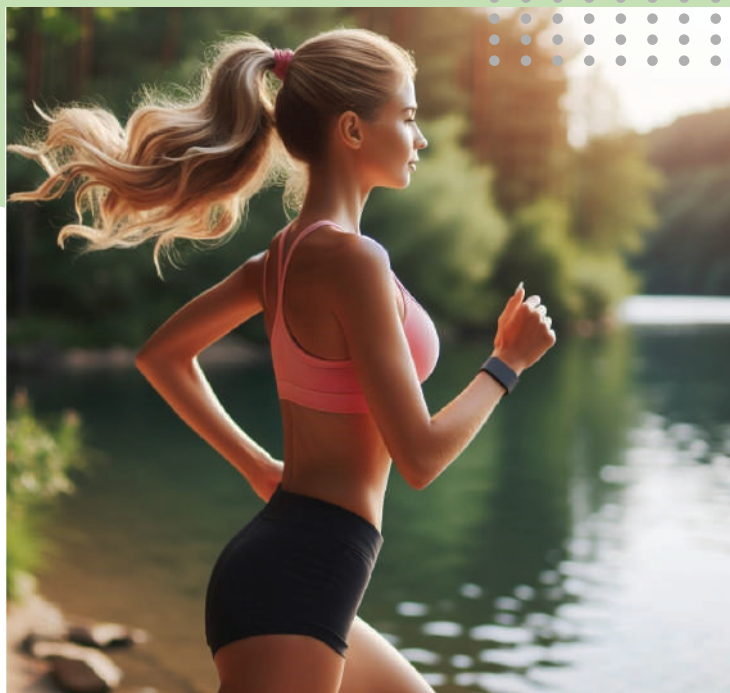


In November-December 2023, two campaigns were organized for participants in the Fit Balkans project. The first campaign, held on November 25, 2023, in Nis, Serbia, focused on team planning and organization with an emphasis on functional strength training. Functional strength training aims to improve overall functionality, stability, and coordination through dynamic and purposeful exercises. The campaign sought to establish a structured framework for the project, introduce participants to functional strength training, and motivate them to enhance performance and collaboration. The warm-up included joint mobilization, cardiovascular exercises, dynamic stretching, activation exercises, and balance drills. Functional training exercises encompassed kettlebell squats, dumbbell renegade rows, bodyweight step-ups, kettlebell swings, dumbbell walking lunges, and bodyweight glute bridges. Weight and intensity were adjusted based on participants' fitness levels. The goal was to build strength, enhance core stability, and promote a resilient body for everyday activities and sports.



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Campaigns in North Macedonia :



In the period November-December 2023 we organized two campaigns for the participants in the Fit Balkans project.

First Campaign: Partner CrossFit

On November 5, 2023, the first Fit Balkans campaign focused on Partner CrossFit for women in Nis, Serbia. Partner CrossFit, a high-intensity strength and conditioning workout, aimed to enhance physical fitness, sports agility, and facilitate weight loss. Participants were instructed to bring sports equipment, sneakers or non-slip socks, and a suitable surface. The session started with a 7-10 minute warm-up, followed by partner-oriented exercises like get-ups, pulls, pushes, crawls, lunges, frog jumps, leg throws, crawls, and plank squats. Sets involved 10-20 seconds of rest, and the session concluded with stretching, an introduction to upcoming campaigns, and an explanation of the communication strategy, including a dedicated Facebook group.



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Second Campaign: Tabata and Active Break

The second campaign, conducted on December 21, 2023, was an online session via Zoom, aiming to reduce sitting time, mental fatigue, and enhance concentration and physical activity levels. Participants were required to bring sports equipment, sneakers or non-slippery socks, a suitable surface, a towel, a chair with a back, and a strong desire for movement. Tabata, consisting of 8 exercises with 20 seconds of activity and 10 seconds of rest, incorporated movements like squats, towel exercises, step-backs, and planks. The session included active breaks with exercises targeting various muscle groups and concluded with stretching. A calendar of upcoming activities was introduced, featuring events such as outdoors physical activities, online Tabata, and Pilates in the sports hall on specific dates.



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