

**cities
for better
health**

MOVE
FOR FUN



POLAND 

Traditional games given a twist to spark engagement and activity

Move For Fun is a global pilot programme funded by Novo Nordisk and developed in partnership with the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) and Danish sports association DGI, alongside other partner organisations in pilot countries. Move For Fun is designed for children between the ages of six and 12 who would benefit from being more physically active, with a focus on working in vulnerable communities.



Boosting physical activity in school settings

In Wroclaw, western Poland, a Move For Fun pilot programme reached more than 1,100 children and increased physical activity by around 60 minutes per week.

In Poland, national policies and action frameworks are in place to promote physical activity for the health of all citizens over the age of five.¹ Government policy also mandates that 3–4 hours of physical activity is required in the primary school curriculum and three hours per week at secondary school age.¹

In Wroclaw, the fourth largest city in Poland, primary school-aged children encountered considerable obstacles due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.² National lockdowns shut schools and closed off access to many public facilities where physical activity for children could take place outside the school environment.

In May 2021, amidst heightened anxiety and uncertainty for teachers and students, the Move For Fun pilot project was launched. One year after the programme's initiation, teachers and students face new challenges, as they are now tasked with hosting and extending a warm welcome to refugee children from Ukraine.



Implementing partner V4 Sport Foundation

V4 Sport Foundation develops and implements comprehensive programmes based on cooperation between the private, public and non-governmental sectors in Poland and abroad. Headquartered in Wroclaw, the foundation works with domestic programmes that combat sedentary lives, and partners with several refugee integration programmes supported by the European Union.

Pilot approach

The main objective of the Move For Fun pilot in Poland was to promote higher levels of physical activity among children between the ages of five and 10 in the wider Wroclaw region.

The programme aimed to equip and enable teachers to engage their classes in approximately 60 minutes of physical activity each week, ideally divided into three 20-minute sessions. The intention was to empower teaching staff to facilitate enjoyable and active experiences for the participating and primary school children.

The programme is entirely implemented during the school day, offering teachers and schools the flexibility to choose when to incorporate it, either during physical education (PE) lessons, general classroom time or breaks. This approach eliminates any complications and financial implications associated with hosting sessions in after-school clubs or sessions.



Community selection

The V4 Sport Foundation made the initial decision to collaborate with schools and kindergartens in Wroclaw with which it already had a longstanding relationship, working alongside the local education authorities. After successfully implementing the programme with these schools, the foundation then expanded its reach to include institutions beyond its existing network.

The primary focus during the initial outreach was on engaging head teachers and educators in the fields of health and physical education. Since class teachers typically handle instruction for the target age group (age six to 10), their involvement was crucial in effectively implementing the programme.

Programme design

In today's digital era, computer games are seen as providing instant entertainment and gratification, making it challenging to engage children in traditional activities. Competition for children's attention and interest has been identified as a barrier to physical activity in children between the ages of five and 10.

Piotr Sitkowski, the chief operating officer at V4 Sport Foundation, explains that even at this young age, children have become accustomed to responding to unpredictable stimuli. Therefore, the ambitious goal was to reinvigorate and revitalise traditional children's games, turning them into engaging triggers for physical activity.

The objective was to develop and implement simple games that could be organised easily without the need for expensive equipment or facilities. These games could be overseen by a single staff member or even older children acting as monitors.

The plan involved refreshing children's association with timeless, traditional games such as tag, rock-paper-scissors and red light, green light. By giving these games a modern twist, the aim was to increase engagement and effectiveness.

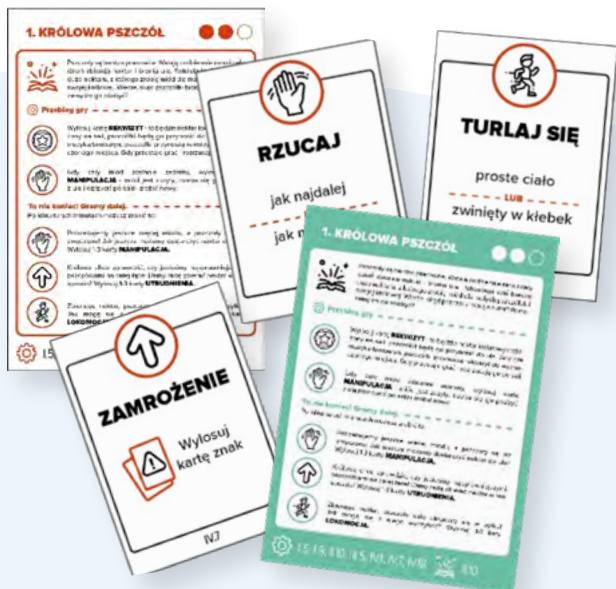
Move For Fun Active Cards

Phase one of the programme introduced a versatile tool that appealed to both children and teachers. The tool was designed to be easily implemented and adaptable, whether used in a structured physical education lesson, during classroom or break time, or as part of a normal lesson.

The tool took the form of a deck of Active Cards accompanied by a manual for teachers. The manual provided the rationale, benefits and practical instructions to enable educators to seamlessly integrate the games into educational activities, making them not only fun but also educational.

What makes this innovation unique is that children get to choose the mode of movement through prompt cards. This instantly captivates their interest and gives them a sense of control.

In addition, the approach fosters quicker consensus within the group, reducing arguments and disagreements between children and teachers. The selected card dictates the activity, removing the burden of game creation or selection from the teacher and allowing them to facilitate, while the children quickly come together and become actively engaged.



Phase 1: Feedback and adaptation

The Active Cards underwent testing with four groups of children between the ages of seven and 10. Teachers provided feedback on the manual and the cards during discussions with the project teams. Based on this feedback, the toolkit offering was modified, with the primary focus on simplifying the content. Piotr Sitkowski elaborates, stating, "Although we initially believed the system to be intuitive and user-friendly, it was still too complex for the users."

Phase 2: Demo lessons

Visits were conducted in person at a total of 19 schools and preschools, accompanied by 33 demo lessons led by five instructors from the Move For Fun team. In instances where the Move For Fun concept was introduced for the first time, dedicated training facilities and teacher's time were provided. In addition, video content produced during the initial stages of the programme served as a valuable tool for demonstration purposes, showcasing the possibilities and inspiring the teaching staff.



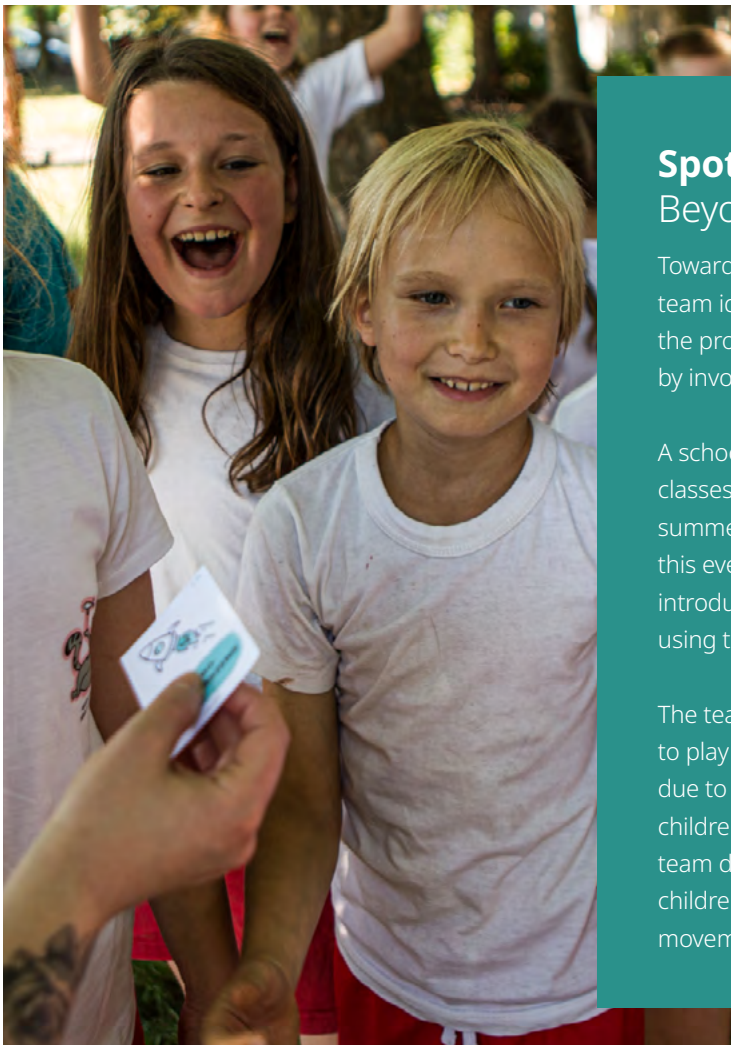
Spotlight on implementation

Move For Fun as an integration tool for refugee children from Ukraine

Move For Fun in Poland had only just started implementing its programme in schools that were reopening after pandemic-related closures, when the arrival of a large number of refugees from Ukraine added another layer of complexity to the classroom environment for teachers.

New students were enrolling, some of whom would remain, while others would pass through and move on. Managing the class became an ongoing challenge for the teaching staff, as persuading overwhelmed teachers to embrace new initiatives proved to be difficult.

The implementing partners saw an opportunity to integrate some language learning into the movement and fun element. The words and phrases on the cards were simplified to encourage the Ukrainian children to engage and learn Polish, helping them play with their new Polish peers. They successfully convinced some teachers of the benefits of these activities in terms of fostering classroom integration and harmony among the children.



Spotlight on implementation

Beyond schools

Towards the conclusion of the pilot, the implementation team identified an opportunity to expand the reach of the programme beyond the confines of the classroom, by involving parents as facilitators.

A school accommodating 1,000 students across 30 classes, from Year 1 to Year 8 organised an annual summer picnic event for parents and families. During this event, a Move For Fun station was set up to introduce parents to enjoyable, physically active games using the programme materials.

The team observed that parents expressed a desire to play with their children, but sometimes held back due to a fear of looking foolish or silly in front of their children or friends. To overcome this hesitation, the team demonstrated ways to engage both parents and children, resulting in laughter, applause and various movements, such as stomping and jumping.

Results

1,192
children

participating in Move For Fun
sessions for a total of around
60 minutes per week

47
classes

participating from across
12 schools

12
schools

participating by August
2023, up from 7 schools the
year before

33%
preschool

one-third of the participating
children were in preschool
(age five and below)

67% primary
school

two-thirds of the participating
children were in primary school
(between the ages of six and 10)

100% sustained
motivation

a survey with the implementing partner
showed that all the children remained either
motivated or very motivated to join in with
sport and physical activity throughout the
programme

*"In some of the schools, children are not allowed to leave the classroom during the breaks, so they remain in the classroom for much of the day. In these cases, **providing the teacher with ready-to-use and easy-to-use tools to enhance physical activity** is very beneficial."*

Polish interviewee

*"What turned out to be very valuable in this project was the flexibility and trust in local partners to develop their own Move For Fun ideas. **There wasn't a one-size-fits-all solution that everyone needs to adapt to.** Taking into account the context in Wroclaw, that has been immeasurably valuable to us."*

Polish interviewee



Challenges

Two major challenges arose from the end of COVID-19 restrictions and the influx of Ukrainian students following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Motivating teachers

A significant hurdle that the implementing teams had to overcome was generating enthusiasm among teachers to facilitate the programme. Many were reluctant to try anything new due to the already stressful return to classes following COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

Adaptation

To overcome this challenge, V4 Sport Foundation developed demo lessons. By “leading by example”, the instructors came into the classroom setting and demonstrated the games and how to engage the children. Showing the teachers first-hand the method and the impact that the games can have on the children was critical.

Key learning

Entering the teacher’s environment and adopting their perspective yielded significant insights and valuable lessons, particularly regarding what strategies to avoid. It would have been impossible to learn the best approaches by simply delivering the activity cards and leaving the rest to chance.

Top tip

The value of footage and photos

From the very first testing session with children, the V4 Sport Foundation diligently took photos and recorded videos of most demonstration lessons. These recordings were later reviewed and analysed to identify effective strategies and areas for improvement.

By closely studying the footage, the foundation was able to determine what factors made the games more active and engaging for the children. Consequently, the Active Cards and manual were updated based on these valuable observations.

The photography from these demo lessons proved to be an invaluable asset when it came to persuading subsequent groups of teachers to participate in the programme. By visually demonstrating its success, rather than simply describing it, the foundation successfully eliminated any doubts or misconceptions that teachers may have had. This approach resulted in increased engagement and greater participation from teachers, paving the way for the successful implementation of the programme.



Influx of vulnerable children

The initial phase was heavily influenced by the refugee crisis triggered by the conflict in Ukraine. By September 2023, Poland had welcomed around 1.5 million refugees, approximately 50% of whom were children.³ A significant proportion of these were children who did not have any knowledge of the Polish language. Moreover, many of them carried the burden of trauma from their past experiences, and uncertainty clouded their future as they did not know how long they would be staying in Wrocław.

Adaptation

The V4 Sport Foundation team had already simplified the written content materials to make them more welcoming and inclusive for the children. The Active Cards became a tool to aid integration and introduce words and phrases that the children could use to play with their new classmates.

Key learning

Physical movement and activity can act as a universal language among children. By joining in and playing together, barriers were broken down, and the activities helped children integrate, have fun and be physically active.



Highlight

*"For me, running the demo lessons is great. When I go through the case photos and I see how much fun it can produce – the joy on the children's faces. **Some of these children have very challenging circumstances to deal with, and yet when their minds are on the game and they get moving, they can still have extreme levels of fun.** What could be better than that?"*

Piotr Sitkowski

Chief operating officer at V4 Sport Foundation



Future direction

In the future, the V4 Sport Foundation would like to adapt the training materials to teach peer-group children to facilitate the games independently.

In its current format, the Active Cards programme requires an adult or teacher to facilitate the class. The V4 Sport Foundation would like to adapt the training manual materials to allow peer-group children to initiate the games independently of adult input.

The programme has seen that older children want to be leaders and looks to empower them to lead and increase physical activity in their schools and take the game into their communities as well.

“The end of the pilot is very much not the end for us. And that’s the best part of it, because it is not the end of this idea. We can build on it. And I hope that we can build on it, develop the programme and reach many more children in the future.”

Piotr Sitkowski

Chief operating officer at V4 Sport Foundation



References

1. World Health Organization. *Poland Physical Activity Factsheet. Factsheet.* 2021. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/librariesprovider2/country-sites/physical-activity-factsheet---poland-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=d5d19803_1&download=true 2. Council of Europe. Wroclaw, Poland – Intercultural City. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/wroclaw> 3. Education on hold: Education policy brief. 30 August 2023, 2023. https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/103089?gl=1*xepwad*_rup_ga*NDM4MTc3NzQ5LjE2OTgwNTkzMDY.*_rup_ga_EVDQTJ4LMY*MTY5ODA1OTMwNi4xLjAuMTY5ODA1OTMwNi4wLjAuMA

About the partners



DGI

DGI is the biggest “sport for all” association in Denmark, focusing exclusively on strengthening and promoting physical activity and sport participation for all citizens through local clubs and communities. DGI collaborates with a wide range of partners to promote health and social well-being. The organisation has 6,600 member associations with 1.7 million volunteers. More than 30,000 volunteers, coaches and leaders attend courses at DGI every year.

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International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)

International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) is a global umbrella association with an active community of 3,669 MOVE Agents and a democratic backbone of 81 member organisations, all of which are national and local promoters of sport, play and physical activity. We develop and deploy concepts to empower organisations worldwide to get citizens from all walks of life more physically active.

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Novo Nordisk

Novo Nordisk is a leading global healthcare company, founded in 1923 and headquartered in Denmark. Our purpose is to drive change to defeat serious chronic diseases, built upon our heritage in diabetes. We do so by pioneering scientific breakthroughs, expanding access to our medicines, and working to prevent and ultimately cure disease. Novo Nordisk employs about 59,000 people in 80 countries and markets its products in around 170 countries.

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Cities for Better Health works alongside cities, researchers and community partners to advance opportunities for healthier eating and active living in underserved communities, especially for children..

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