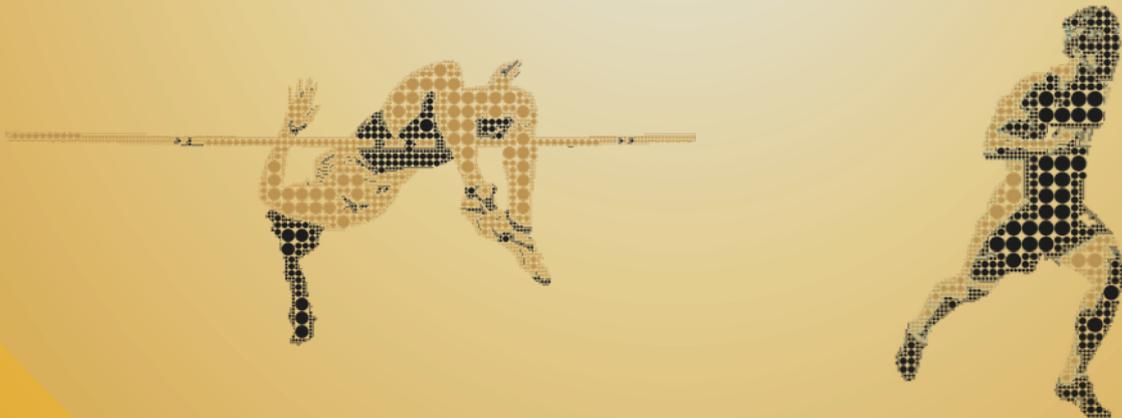




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## TRAINING GUIDELINES



## Partners



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**For updates of the SPHERE project please visit:** [www.ecos-europe.com/sphere](http://www.ecos-europe.com/sphere)



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## Introduction

This document is the second of a number of planned products from an ERASMUS+ funded EU project titled “[SPHERE – Sport Healing Rehabilitation](#)”.

### What is SPHERE?

SPHERE is a two-year project that aims to promote the use of physical activity as part of psychiatric rehabilitation programmes. Informed by contemporary research and examples of best practice, SPHERE will:

- Produce a set of physical activity guidelines to aid mental health practitioners.
- Following the creation of the guidelines, the SPHERE team will train teams of mental health practitioners and sport trainers in the use of these guidelines, relevant to their specific environments.
- Practice based partners will design, deliver and evaluate an intervention based on those guidelines.
- SPHERE will produce the following documents/guidance:
  1. Physical activity guidelines to aid those institutions that implement sport or exercise programmes in mental health rehabilitation.
  2. An online map providing examples of best practices through case studies across the EU in the use of physical activity for psychiatric disorders.
  3. An evaluation report of the interventions delivered as part of the SPHERE project.

The SPHERE project has seven partners from six EU countries, led by the networking organisation ECOS (European Culture and Sport Organisation), and includes third sector sport institutions and Universities. The project team includes the following organisations:

- European Culture and Sport Organization (Italy; Lead organisation)
- European Platform for Sport Innovation (Belgium)
- Everton in the Community (UK)
- Finnish Sport Federation Tampere Region (Finland)
- Rijeka Sports Association for Persons with Disabilities (Croatia)
- Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK)
- Technical University of Munich (Germany)

## What is the aim of this document?

The aim of this document is to:

- Provide practitioners and mental health professionals with practical guidance to design, deliver and evaluate sport and physical activity opportunities for people with mental health problems.

## What is included in the document?

The document includes four main sections referring to the document aims.

- Sport and physical activity-based interventions in psychiatric rehabilitation
- SPHERE pilot intervention
- Person-centred approach in physical activity interventions
- Guidelines

## Guidelines to support mental health patients in practicing exercise

Within the realm of **psychiatric rehabilitation**, the SPHERE project team has put together a set of guidelines seeking to best harness the psychological, physiological and social benefits of sport and physical activity to facilitate patient recovery in sport-based interventions. The guidelines have been developed from a combination of an evidence synthesis from scientific literature, and a survey on the current practices of sport and physical activity for mental health in seven EU countries. A detailed explanation of the theoretical framework behind the guidelines can be found at:

[www.ecos-europe.com/sphere/intellectual-outputs/training-guidelines](http://www.ecos-europe.com/sphere/intellectual-outputs/training-guidelines).

Based on these sources, the SPHERE team drafted a set of punctual recommendations together with additional considerations that surround their application.

### **Sport and physical activity-based interventions in psychiatric rehabilitation**

The guidelines may be adopted by different actors seeking to implement sports or exercise-based interventions for mental health. As different professionals and organizations will face differing and diverse circumstances such as the preferred type of sport, fitness aims, weather conditions, staff competencies, financial resources, or the surrounding environment, the guidelines have been developed as modules adaptable to particular sets of conditions. Depending on the circumstances, a particular program may adopt as many of these recommendations as possible, and adjust them to their own training and delivery protocols.

### **SPHERE pilot intervention**

Considering the differing contexts where the guidelines may be implemented, the SPHERE project team will test them in a pilot intervention conducted in different settings by organizations in four partner countries, each with its own particular context and conditions. The evaluation of the pilot

intervention will be published in a future document.

Based on a person-centred approach that relies on the benefits of sport and exercise practice, the SPHERE intervention is guided by the following aims:

- Main aim: To support people with mental health problems to proactively enhance their life quality and develop an integrated sense of self through sports and physical activity.
- Secondary aims: To, where appropriate, support participants in symptom reduction, coping, mood regulation, comorbidity prevention, socialization, enjoyment, a sense of purpose, physical and social confidence, and provide a positive activity to take part in.

### **Person-centred approach in physical activity interventions**

The guidelines emphasize a person-centred approach where the patient plays a proactive role in their own recovery, becoming an active participant in the process, aided by the trainer and community. Apart from helping to stabilize mood and regulate the body's biochemical processes, sport and physical activity can serve as a conduit for people with mental health conditions to enrich personal experience, develop new perceptions of the self, provide purposeful and enjoyable experiences, improve social cognition and functioning, and elaborate new meanings in personal life. This is facilitated as the participants work to achieve goals individually set with their trainers/coaches/sports leaders in the sport and physical activity sessions. Such deeper psychological developments are also important in preventing exercise addiction.

For these reasons, great importance is placed in keeping regular feedback and dialogue with participants, where people can share their own personal training experience while trainers/coaches/sports leaders provide an environment that allows integration with others and the achievement of goals. It is therefore recommended that goal setting, reviewing of the goals and regular feedback are used in the sport and physical activity programs to ensure that they are not only used as a tool for mood regulation but also to promote personal enrichment, a sense of purpose and enjoyment.

### **Guidelines**

When implementing sport and physical activity to support people with mental health problems, please consider each of the following recommended guidelines. Depending on the circumstances, a particular program may adopt as many of these recommendations as possible and adjust them to their own training and delivery protocols.

1. The sport and physical activity program encourages parallel medical, psychological and social enhancement.
2. Attendance to the program is voluntary.
3. Where possible, sessions or training take place at least three times per week.
4. Sessions are designed for a duration of at least 30 min, and at most, 2 hours. This duration should be dependent on ability fitness level, and availability.

5. Training sessions end at least 2 hours before sleep time.
6. The intervention or program is designed for a minimal duration of 3 weeks, but longer duration is preferable. Shorter interventions require more sessions per week.
7. The activity is in groups, in an aim to develop social integration and social confidence, with an optimal group size between 5 and 15 people per 1 trainer.
8. When possible, training to take place before mid-day to enhance positive effects.
9. Where possible, sessions should incorporate activity in open air or natural environments.
10. Training activities are supervised by an instructor, who should provide motivation and support for the participant and adjust the program accordingly to their needs on a weekly basis.
11. The training or program involves the setting of individualized goals to gradually increase the participant's fitness, confidence and skills.
12. The intensity of physical exercise should aim towards a moderate level according to the participant's capability and fitness level.
13. Sessions should be designed in order to develop mastery of skills, facilitating cognitive stimulation in the form of skill learning (e.g. – concentration, coordination, memorization, competence, use of equipment, game strategy etc...).
14. The participant's goal progression and personal experience are supervised through regular feedback.
15. The program is flexible regarding participant involvement and attendance in each session, depending on the condition of the participant at the time of the session.
16. The sport or physical activity takes place in welcoming environment where people feel comfortable and a part of.
17. The program encourages the participant to continue taking part in the sport and physical activity once the program has finished.

*The Training Guidelines have been developed and endorsed by the SPHERE Scientific Committee which includes representatives from psychiatry, neuroscience, exercise science, sports psychology, clinical psychology and physical activity promotion, from the UK, Italy and Germany. The Scientific Committee includes the following individuals from the SPHERE project:*

- *Dr Santo Rullo - Psychiatrist and Head of the Committee (Italy)*
- *Dr Stefania Cerino - Psychiatrist experienced in Psychiatric Rehabilitation through Sport (Italy)*
- *Dr Francesca Cirulli - Senior Researcher at the Italian National Institute of Health (Italy)*
- *Prof Diane Crone - Professor of Exercise and Health at Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK)*
- *Prof Jürgen Beckmann - Professor and Chair of Sport Psychology at Technical University of Munich (Germany)*
- *Dr Fernando Cross-Villasana - Neuroscience Researcher at Chair of Sport Psychology of Technical University of Munich (Germany)*
- *Dr Paul Sellars - Academic Researcher in Sport Psychology at Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK)*



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