

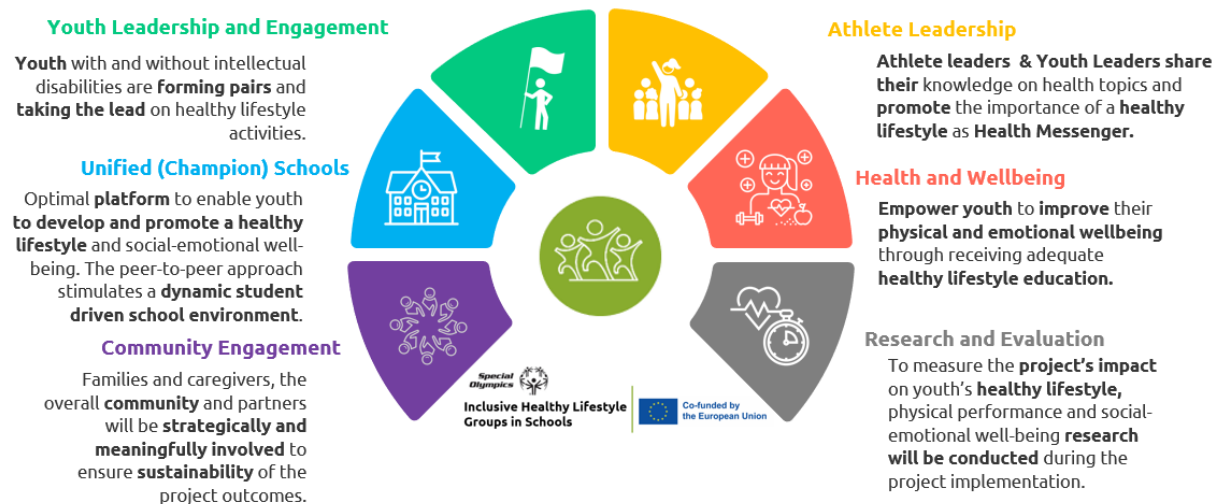
-Overview: establishing Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools- Information for Special Olympics Consortium Members

1 Background

The Special Olympics Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools (IHLGiS) project aligns with the focus areas of the EU “HealthyLifestyle4All” initiative aiming to promote healthy lifestyle in the Union, in particular among children and students with an emphasis on vulnerable groups such as persons with intellectual disabilities (ID).

With this project and through the support of the EU, 4 consortium members combine Special Olympics programming areas, activities, and educational opportunities in a cross-departmental approach.

As displayed in the graphic below, the following ones will intertwine: Health and Fitness, Unified Schools and Youth Engagement, Athlete Leadership, Research, Family and Community engagement, Strategic Development and Communication



From a *Health and Fitness perspective*, this project is focusing on youth and schools to provide opportunities for starting a healthy lifestyle from a young age on, infusing a holistic approach to health and fitness, physical and mental well-being into everyday life. This will on the one hand happen through inclusive healthy lifestyle activities and on the other hand through education and screenings in three specific Healthy Athletes disciplines.

From *Unified Schools and Youth Engagement perspective*, it is the environment in which young people a) spend a significant amount of time and b) provides a setting to form behaviours and learn. Within Special Olympics this project is a chance for Unified Schools to “upgrade” to Unified Champion Schools; which in turn links with a higher demand of opportunities for Youth Leaders to take the lead on inclusive activities and engage other students with and without ID in the whole school.

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Looking at *Athlete Leadership* through the lens of health, the training and activation of Health Messengers plays an important role in this project, as it allows for important peer-to-peer learning experiences.

Through *Community engagement* families, caregivers and the immediate community are educated on the objectives of the project as well as the ins and outs of a healthy lifestyle. Their engagement is a critical part through everyday life modelling and supporting of healthy behavior to and of the young people they care for.

The Research aspect of this project will investigate the effectiveness, impacts and outcomes on the participants health and potential social and emotional behavior changes.

Through the consortium partners' attention to *strategic development* suitable partners are identified, resources secured, and actions taken to ensure the project's success and sustainability.

The consortium members will work closely on and with communication to ensure a successful transmission of internal and external information and spreading of best practices. Including Ambassadors to promote the project and regular sharing of content and pictures on Social Media is required.

2 Unified Schools as inclusive platform to promote a healthy lifestyle

It is important that youth and athletes take the lead on healthy lifestyle group activities, learn and teach how to achieve optimal health and performance through adequate physical activity, nutrition, hydration, emotional wellbeing and healthy habits.

The best platform of peer-to-peer learning for students with and without ID are schools and universities. Therefore, the Special Olympics consortium members establish local, inclusive healthy lifestyle groups led by trained Youth Leaders and Health Messengers in schools/universities. This will increase awareness about SO, will enable local Programs to introduce SO programming to a new audience and create opportunities to increase the number of athletes, Unified partners, teachers and schools for Special Olympics and promote a healthy lifestyle in the Union.

3 Establishing Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools – Details

Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle groups fall under the Unified Sports Recreation model which is an inclusive recreation sports activity for SO athletes and Unified partners. The goal of IHLGiS is to provide a fun, social environment that encourages inclusive, year-round, holistic physical and health activities led by youth with and without ID.

The focus of this project is on establishing IHLGiS. A necessary step therefore, is for the SO consortium members, to train adult mentors as well as youth with and without ID on topics around Healthy lifestyle, Youth and Athlete Leadership.

IHLGiS are also a great opportunity for trained and qualified Health Messengers to lead, guide and advise the inclusive groups on how to perform physical exercises and live a healthy lifestyle.

Regularly throughout the project the consortium members will collaborate closely with Health care professionals trained by Special Olympics as Clinical Directors in three Healthy Athletes disciplines: Strong

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Minds (Emotional Well-being and mental health), FUNfitness (physical therapy) and Health Promotion (Healthy Lifestyle). The Clinical Directors provide free health screenings and education to the participants in the above-mentioned disciplines; health data will be collected and analyzed.

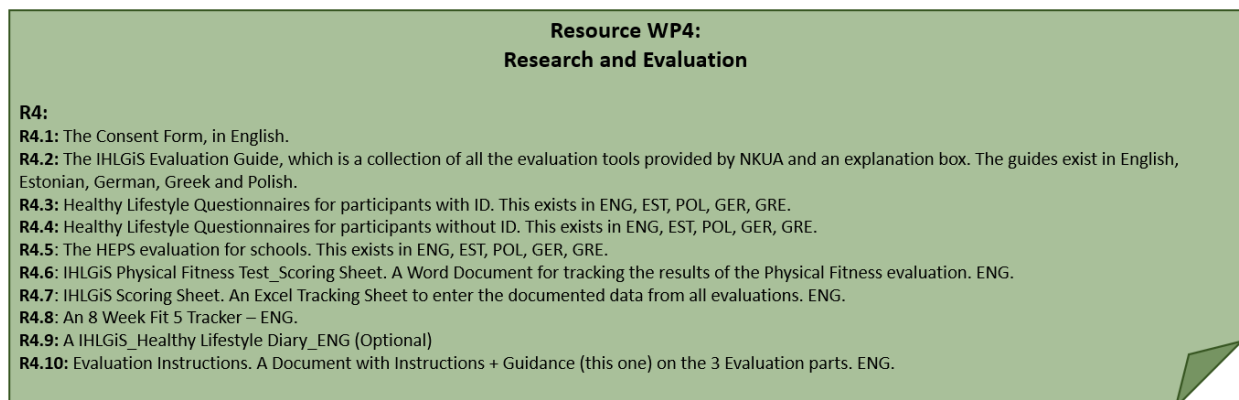
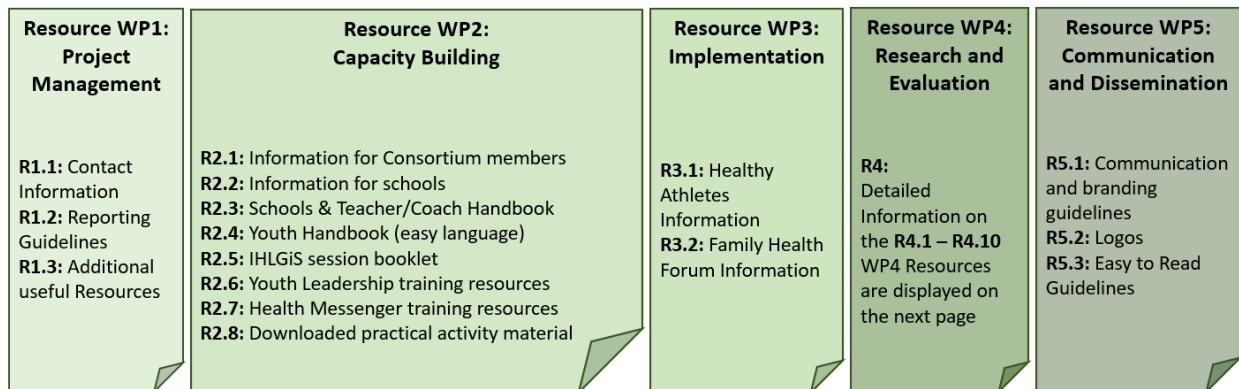
Families and Caregivers are engaged through Family Health Forums. Special Olympics Family Health Forums provide a space for the families and caregivers of the young people with and without intellectual disabilities to engage with health professionals, community leaders and social service providers; get educated on the topics of the project and help to support the Youth on their journey towards a healthy lifestyle.

The consortium member that focuses on the research aspect of the Project will be leading the evaluation.

To assist these activities and trainings, respective resources are available in the IHLGiS toolkit.

4 Toolkit & GDPR

To ensure that all consortium members follow a targeted, holistic, and similar approach when it comes to the execution, implementation and evaluation of the project, the “IHLGiS – toolkit” was created. As the graphic displays below, the toolkit consists of 5 resource packages which contain hands-on guidance for all aspects of the project.



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Please work together with the project group leaders and mentors to ensure that your countries GDPR regulations are complied with.

5 Awarding achievements: Recognizing efforts of Youth and Athlete Leaders and schools

It is recommended that Youth Leaders, Health Messengers and schools be awarded for successfully implementing the IHLGiS. Certificates can be handed out after the groups run at least 8 weeks (but preferably regularly throughout the school year) and can be found in the toolkit.

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