



## The Special Olympics Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools (IHLGiS) project, co-funded by the European Union. -Executive Summary-

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 2–3% of the population have an intellectual disability (ID), ranging from moderate ID to severe and profound ID, often corresponding with multiple functional disorders and disabilities. In the EU, this equates to approximately 15 million people with intellectual disabilities at all levels. Despite the expansion of improved healthcare policies and the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in many EU countries, people with ID remain the most neglected, institutionalised, excluded, and underserved disability population worldwide.

The overarching goal of the Special Olympics Europe Eurasia Foundation is to improve the health, fitness, and well-being of children and adults with intellectual disabilities across Europe by providing health screenings and intervention programmes, education and training for healthcare professionals, students, and families of people with ID, as well as community-based health and inclusive fitness initiatives.

The Special Olympics project “*Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools (IHLGiS)*” aligns with the purpose and focus areas of the EU “*HealthyLifestyle4All*” initiative, which aims to promote healthy lifestyles across the Union, particularly among children and students, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups such as persons with ID.

Across four project partner locations (Estonia, Germany, Greece, and Poland), Special Olympics programmes plan to collaborate with a total of 100 schools and institutions, train 200 youth pairs, and reach 4,000 young people with and without intellectual disabilities through physical activity, health literacy, and health promotion activities in four EU Member States.

### **General Objectives of the IHLGiS Project**

- Develop and implement accessible, inclusive health promotion, fitness, and well-being programmes in special schools and institutions, adapted to the needs of students with ID. These programmes will be led by peer-to-peer groups with and without ID, supported by mentors and health experts, and will focus on healthy nutrition and hydration, regular health-enhancing physical activity, mental health, and health literacy.
- Involve community health services, families, local education establishments, and other organisations to support inclusive and healthy school environments and improve awareness of the healthy lifestyle needs of persons with ID.
- Promote and raise awareness of project activities in conjunction with the European Week of Sport, the Special Olympics World Summer Games Berlin 2023, and other EU health initiatives.
- Evaluate project activities with a focus on participants’ health outcomes.
- Disseminate project outcomes and results through social media, conferences, and publications to key stakeholders and decision-makers.
- Conclude the project by identifying and sharing best practices for inclusive, adapted health promotion programmes in schools and institutions for people with ID.



## Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools

The intention of the Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools is to provide a fun and social environment that encourages a holistic, year-round approach to healthy nutrition, health-enhancing physical activity, and overall well-being, led by young people with and without ID. The establishment of Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools or similar settings is based on the following key project objectives:

- Train and activate IHLGiS participants (youth leaders, mentors, and health messengers) in participating schools.
- Implement ongoing, evidence-based IHLGiS activities focusing on healthy nutrition, health literacy, healthy lifestyle choices, and health-enhancing physical activity.
- Engage community stakeholders, local authorities, and other organisations in the project to train participants and raise awareness of health promotion needs among people with ID.
- Evaluate the impact of the project in relation to participant health outcomes and share best practices with stakeholders and EU Member States.

**Special Olympics Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools**

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). The activities, funded by the European Union, will encourage and support inclusive schools and other educational settings to adopt the concept of health - promoting schools led by youth pairs with and without ID.

**Key objectives of the IHLGiS project:**

- Develop and implement accessible, inclusive health promotion, fitness and well-being programs in special schools and institutions adapted to the needs of students with ID led by peer-to-peer groups with and without ID supported by mentors and health experts with focus on healthy nutrition and hydration, regular health enhancing physical activity, mental health and health literacy.
- Include community health services, families, local education establishments and other organizations to support inclusive and healthy school environment and improve awareness of healthy lifestyle needs of persons with ID.
- Promote and raise awareness about the project activities in conjunction with the European Week of Sport, Special Olympics Events and other EU health initiatives.
- Evaluation of project activities with focus on health outcomes of the participants. Disseminate project outcomes, best practices and results through social media, conferences and publications to key stakeholders and decision makers.

**5 PROJECT PARTNERS**  
**4 EU COUNTRIES**  
**100 SCHOOLS**  
**200 YOUTH LEADERS**  
**4.000 STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT ID.**

Special Olympics

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