



SAILAWAY

National report summary



Partners

KMOP – Greece

Mira'm Foundation

Rijeka sports association for persons with disabilities

Aproximar - Cooperativa de Solidariedade Social

Nautical Club of Paleon Faliron

Montetauro Social Cooperative

Institute of Development Ltd

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Isprski savez osoba s invaliditetom grada rijeka
rijeka sports association for persons with disabilities



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1. Results of national desk research.

This desk research was conducted in the context of the **Erasmus + SailAway project - Supporting the participation of children and young people with developmental disabilities in sailing**. The transnational project with partners from the countries of Croatia, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain aims to promote social inclusion and develop the personal skills of children and young people with ASD, encouraging their participation in team sports activities such as sailing. Desk research will facilitate partners to have a clear picture of the situation of sport and disability in their countries by collecting useful data with particular interest on the sport of sailing. This research provides interesting insights into the situation in the participating countries by examining and analyzing all relevant data and resources, such as state policies on sport and disability; previous studies and research; action plans and specific projects on our topic of interest; evaluation of future projects and plans. Desk research will guide partners towards further development of intellectual outcomes and teaching material.

1.1 National policies on sport and disability, with particular attention to ASD.

The first disability laws came in the 1980s (Spain and Italy), but it was only in the 2000s that the various states signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The signing of this protocol has brought greater awareness on the part of individual states on the need to create laws to defend the rights of people with disabilities. As regards the national strategies for people with ASD, where present they are young laws relating to the last two years or laws that have yet to be approved, therefore little can be noted in this regard, if not reiterating the importance of the practice of sport and inclusive sport for the weakest groups including those suffering from the spectrum of attention disorder.

1.2 Sailing and disability experiences.



Ispravljanje razlika i mobiliziranje građana
za sportske aktivnosti osobe sa invaliditetom



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All project partners can take advantage of a national territory strongly characterized by the sea, this could suggest that the various countries are able to offer countless sailing activities for people with ASD, thanks to the tradition of sailing, but this in reality it does not happen. Other sports enjoy greater prominence and commitment to ASD, mainly basketball, swimming and horse riding. In the countries of Spain and Italy there are many realities, probably thanks to the extension of the territory but there is still no coordination of national level activities, this aspect is evident in all the project partners. In Croatia and Greece, sporadic initiatives aimed at ASD and sailing are still mapped.

1.3 **Obstacles to the inclusion in sport and especially in the practice of sailing for people with ASD.**

People with disabilities encounter obstacles and barriers in their life on a daily basis. Let's talk about psychological, social and physical barriers. Discrimination, low expectations and prejudice towards people with disabilities, lack of service provision, the inadequacy of public places such as urban public transport, government institutions, hospitals, workplaces, schools, sports centers. All these barriers make life difficult for people with disabilities and prevent them from playing sports. Barriers for people with disabilities are decreasing every day, but they are still present in society. Research shows that people with disabilities can have financial problems, which makes it difficult for them to buy sports equipment they need to play sports and which in the case of sailing is huge and often has to be fully supported by families. It also highlights the lack of specific training of sailing instructors in relation to the ASD and few training opportunities in the national territories that limit the generation of new opportunities for inclusive sport - sailing – ASD.

1.4 **Evaluation and results of inclusion policies for people with ASD.**

All research confirms the importance of having a national legislative framework capable of reducing inequalities and discrimination against people with ASD. This leads to a profound negative impact. In the territories in question, the need for a paradigm change is still noted, today at the level of



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promoting policies aimed at individuals with ASD, great work is done by the families and associations that represent them, to the detriment of the support that should instead come from the institutions. The data show that families are left alone especially at the end of the school period and in this way the opportunities to play sport for ASD drastically decrease. Chronic lack of trained instructors, as already highlighted in the previous chapter.

1.5 Goals, plans and future policies at the national level.

All the partners agree that there is still a long way to go, and the policies related to the ASD are practically very rarefied, in Italy there is confidence in the new reform of the Third sector which will help the voluntary associations in carrying out their tasks, but this reform is slow to be operational. In Spain the focus shifts on intellectual disabilities and not just on visual and motor disabilities, in Greece the activities for the construction of the first Paralympic center are started, in Croatia, unfortunately, everything is still on the shoulders of the families of children with ASD.

1.6 Conclusions.

The social reality for people with ASD is still very difficult, after the age of school where opportunities for sports arise, families are left alone in the task of offering the possibility of inclusive sport to their children. Doing sport is expensive and this is added to the unpreparedness of the instructors and to a small territorial proposal and often focused on performance sport (Paralympic) compared to a healthy approach and social integration. There are still strong prejudices on disability that affect the current life of people with ASD, a cultural change is needed that requires a strong commitment from the institutions. Without this commitment, the next few years risk not bringing effective improvements to the possibilities of people with ASD to experience sports and inclusive sports that can enrich their "life project".

2. Field research



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спортских организација за особе са инвалидитетом



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2.1 Methodology.

The project partners, following the original project proposal and guidelines, conducted research interviews in the field by contacting 10 professionals engaged with ASD users and 10 families of children and young people with ASD, in order to investigate the various national territories and existing social inclusion policies, in particular those aimed at children and young people with ASD. Emphasis was given to the topic "inclusion of children with ASD in sports, sailing and other athletic activities". In addition, further notions were explored and discussed regarding possible challenges, recommendations on how to better approach and communicate with children on the autism spectrum, how sports experts and professionals can prepare and important aspects that can help all connected parties to build a relationship based on trust and mutual respect. During the interviews it was discussed in depth, with both groups of interviewees (professionals and relatives), how participation in sport can benefit children / adults with ASD. Both groups stressed that participation and inclusion in sport and sailing in particular can be a wonderful opportunity for children and young adults with ASD to develop their social skills through close interaction with coaches - instructors and peers. Additionally, sailing has a long list of commendable benefits for children and young adults with ASD, such as helping them gain more autonomy, connect with nature, learn how to better cope with external stimuli, and of course, elevate their mood and health and general well-being.

2.2 The sample interviewed.

Parents of ASD children participated in the national research, mostly mothers (80%) of the interviewed sample, a percentage which is also confirmed among professionals. Most professionals have received specific education about ASD through courses and school training. While rarely participating in the life of associations that promote the inclusion and awareness of people with ASD, they are all committed to raising the awareness of people they meet towards ASD. The average age of the parents who participated in the interview is 49, the average age of the professionals is 40 and 80% of them have been working with ASD people for over 10 years. Families generally claim to have received diagnoses of their children when they were between the ages of 2 and 5, Poor participation, less than 50%, of families in associations that promote initiatives for ASD, there are still reluctances to show their children affected by ASD.



Společnosti se zaměřuje na rozvíjení sportovního zájmu lidí se zdravotním znevýhodněním



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2.3 Personal knowledge and attitudes towards the challenges of ASD.

All respondents agree that by the very nature of autism each person is a "unique piece", therefore it is very difficult to create actions aimed at the individual that have undoubted benefits as they have different needs and preferences. Many families in the investigated areas wrongly and for lack of information believe that autism is a disease that can be cured and this approach only leads to frustration of efforts. On the other hand, when families inquire and support the development of the child with ASD, the results are encouraging. Both parents and professionals are unanimous in affirming that the support of the state and institutions is not adequate to the needs of families and children with ASD, highlighting the lack of a general support framework or if present very distant from users, forcing families to provide on their own or through the support of private associations for supplementary activities such as sports and special didactics. Despite a state support deemed inadequate, in all countries there has been an improvement in awareness of ASD issues in recent years, also due to the exponential increase in ASD diagnoses in the population. There are still many differences in awareness among the people who live in large centers and more rural areas in terms of knowledge of the problem and behavioral patterns towards people with ASD, there are strong categorizations also given by the media.

2.4 Actions and initiatives in the field of ASD and sports activities.

Unanimous opinion among the interviewees that sport is a benefit for all individuals and also for people with ASD. Unfortunately, if sport does not take place within the school context, there is little help from the institutions, causing the participation of ASD children in sports to decrease with age. Sport and sailing in particular lead to an increase in social inclusion, an increase in teamwork skills, learning the rules, self-control, goal setting, respect for others, greater confidence, fun and decompression from the usual stresses. In general, subjects with ASD have practiced sports. The most practiced sport remains swimming, but the practice of sport is in all states after the conclusion of the studies at the full expense of families. Sailing turns out to be an expensive sport and often families cannot access this practice, despite their desire and being aware of the benefits it brings to their children.



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2.5 Incidents of bullying, discrimination and violence.

All respondents state that they have not witnessed or are aware of serious bullying incidents in confronting people with ASD. The contexts of educational work with children and young people with ASD are always limited and controlled environments, this certainly helps to avoid triggering episodes of this type. Many, on the other hand, pay attention to the lack of awareness of the companies to which they belong to ASD issues, which can generate misunderstandings towards people with ASD.

2.6 Challenging communication and behavior with people with ASD.

Communication with people with ASD is not only through words, many autistics are not-verbal, all the interviewees affirm that to have an effective communication it takes time and patience, to have a communication made of simple and repetitive concepts. As regards the practice of sailing, it is considered fundamental to work on a simulation of the boat and the activity that will be carried out using videos, social stories and dedicated training. For the activity to be successful, there must be team work between the instructor, educators and family of origin, in order to provide all the information on the subject with ASD that may be relevant to the success. Knowing the subject with ASD in depth will allow the instructor to implement only those behaviors that will not conflict with the person in order to avoid unpleasant episodes of crisis (which in autism are sometimes unpredictable if not properly trained and informed) , risking to frustrate the efforts and to remove the subject from a sporting practice that would bring him undoubted advantages in terms of emotionality, health and sociality.

2.7 Type of training and preferences.

The majority of respondents (when possible) favor a face-to-face workshop training, this training should also include the support of a guide for instructors and videos dedicated to real cases. The duration of the course should be a few months

3. Conclusion



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The field research and the desk research were clearly expressed on some themes, through common situations in all the investigated territories. There is a common awareness that sport is useful in the harmonious development of people with ASD and therefore it must be considered a right to be able to take advantage of it. If participating in sports activities during the school period is easier, major problems are encountered with the end of the cycle and the increasing age of the subject with ASD, also because it coincides with a decrease in support from the state which is in any case considered insufficient. throughout the life of the subject. In some states for people with ASD, reaching the age of majority coincides in practice with the transition from ASD to "normotypic." This situation aggravates the state of families who have to take on more responsibility for all the activities necessary for family members with ASD.

There are no organic state intervention plans on the ASD or, where present, they are actually disconnected from what happens in society. For this reason, all the interviewees hope for greater commitment by the institutions in implementing social policies to support disability and ASD, relying on that increase in awareness that both families and professionals find to be present in recent years compared to previous decades, also due to the increase in autism diagnoses in the population. High hopes are directed towards coaches and sports clubs so that eager to work with intellectual disabilities they can train to provide those inclusive sport activities as very important means of socialization for ASD subjects.

These are the recommendations that emerge from the interviews and that must be kept in mind in the development of the project:

- ✓ ***There is a need for improvement in health and social policies regarding disability and specifically autism.***
- ✓ ***Greater commitment on the part of institutions to create greater knowledge on ASD issues in order to remove prejudices and categorizations.***
- ✓ ***More support from institutions in supporting families of people with developmental disabilities and in particular for the coming of age of family members affected by the disorder,***



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SILAWAY



✓ *Increase the training of sports instructors and sports clubs, with training actions agreed with the national sports federations, on the possibilities of addressing their action also to people suffering from developmental delay.*

