Promoting healthy, active lifestyles among refugee children in Poland

A case study of the Be Active, Be Healthy project
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Abstract

The health status of refugees who arrive and settle in a new country is often poor, both physically and mentally. Despite this, countries rarely offer programmes on healthy behaviour for refugees. Furthermore, even if opportunities are presented, lack of time and money, job insecurity, mental strain, unstable living conditions, linguistic or cultural barriers and general worry often prevent refugees from participating in health promotion initiatives. Besides, many refugees deprivoritize their wish to live healthy, active lives. In 2022, Poland made a commitment to improve the health of refugee Ukrainian children. With support and funding from WHO, Poland extended its Szkolny Klub Sportowy [School Sports Club] and initiated a Be Active, Be Healthy project. By establishing hundreds of new training groups in which Polish and Ukrainian children exercised together, the project encourages participation in physical activity, community integration and support for mental health. This report describes Poland’s example and provides practical considerations for other countries, communities or teams that wish to initiate similar programmes. The report is based on a literature review, stakeholder interviews and an analysis of strengths and barriers. By examining the success of this programme and its impact on refugee children, this document offers insights and recommendations for improving health outcomes among refugee populations across the WHO European Region.

Keywords:
REFUGEES
SOCIAL INCLUSION
SPORTS
CHILD
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## Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>SKS</td>
<td>Szkołny Klub Sportowy [School Sports Club]</td>
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<td>PE</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
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<td>PFA</td>
<td>Psychological First Aid</td>
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<td>MHPSS</td>
<td>Mental Health and Psychosocial Support</td>
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“Every effort aimed at enriching the implementation layer of activation programmes conducted at different levels (local, regional, national) is desirable to minimize the negative effects of this dramatic situation.”

Kamil Bortniczuk, Minister of Sport and Tourism
1 Introduction

In the gym of Primary School No. 5 in Wyszków, a group of children are playing volleyball with enthusiasm and joy. Among them is Sasha, a 10-year-old girl from Mykolaiv, Ukraine, who moved to Poland with her mother, younger sister and a pet hamster a year ago. Unfortunately, her father was not able to join them as he was turned back at the border. Despite the challenges of adjusting to a new country and language, Sasha has found solace in sports, especially volleyball, which has allowed her to make new friends and create a social network in her new home.

Sasha and her peers are taking part in the Szkolny Klub Sportowy [School Sports Club, SKS] programme, which has been running since 2017. In 2022, the programme extended its focus with the support of WHO to help war-affected Ukrainian refugees in creating social connections and support networks in their new communities. For Sasha, who had been practising ballet and classical dance in Ukraine since the age of 4, playing ball games had always been a dream. Although she initially found it challenging to communicate with her new peers in Polish and had to use a translator on her phone and computer, she quickly adapted.

According to Sasha's mother, sports have been a vital source of stress relief and comfort for Sasha during this transitional period. As she continues to adapt to her new surroundings, Sasha finds comfort in training and social connections provided by the Be Active, Be Healthy project.

Since the re-invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in late February 2022, the number of refugees crossing the Polish border has exceeded 11.3 million (2). Due to legal restrictions, Ukrainian men aged 18–60 years have been unable to leave the country, and the majority of refugees are women, children and older people; family separation is a common feature of their displacement. Although some refugees have returned to Ukraine or migrated to other countries, Poland remains the primary destination, hosting approximately 1.5 million recorded refugees as of April 2023. Alarmingly, over 40% of these refugees are children, with immediate needs for relevant services due to the disruption of their education and social activities, family separation, exposure to violence or deep personal loss.

As Poland currently hosts one of the largest populations of school-age refugees from Ukraine, their inclusion in the national education system remains a priority (3). While many children continue their education through online courses offered by Ukrainian schools, a significant proportion – about 155 000 Ukrainian children – were enrolled in Polish schools as of September 2022 (4), creating an important opportunity to reach these children and their families.

“\textit{The war has caused one of the fastest large-scale displacements of children since World War II}” (1).
WHO recommends that children and adolescents accumulate at least an average of 60 min/day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for improved physical, mental and cognitive outcomes (5). Regular physical activity and sports play a crucial role in the healthy physical and mental development of children. In general, engaging in physical activity from an early age improves bone and cardiometabolic health and enhances cardiorespiratory and muscle fitness. Moreover, participation in sports fosters important life skills, such as teamwork, discipline and perseverance, while also promoting social interaction with peers and boosting self-esteem. Additionally, physical activity contributes to the prevention of chronic diseases, including obesity, and establishes lifelong habits of healthy living. Therefore, it is important to provide all children and adolescents with safe, equitable opportunities and encouragement to participate in physical activity that is appropriate for their age and ability, enjoyable and offers variety (5).

Psychiatric and psychological studies have shown that war leaves enduring episodes in children and adolescents which severely affects their mental health (6,7). During war, children have to face, to different extent, two types of stress events: sudden traumatic events in their home country and stress which is caused by their forced displacement and separation from the family members. As a result, the risk of developing anxiety, depression, dissociative disorders or substance abuse is much higher than among their counterparts in the host country. Therefore, in times of crisis or post-crisis, the significance of regular physical activity and sports is even greater. Such activities provide an outlet for children to release stress and anxiety and aid their psychological well-being (8,9). Engaging in physical activity also helps to mitigate the effects of trauma by promoting resilience and improving mood. Furthermore, sports and recreational activities are valuable for community building, facilitating social support and connection and helping children to regain a sense of normality and stability during challenging times (10). Inclusion of physical activity in crisis and post-crisis support is essential in promoting both the physical and mental well-being of children, nurturing their resilience and aiding their overall recovery. Despite these benefits, studies show that most refugee children are insufficiently physically active (11).

In May 2019, the World Health Assembly adopted a 5-year global action plan to promote the health of refugees and migrants (12), which presents a cooperative framework for addressing refugees' health in all its dimensions. It states that refugees are entitled to the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, which must be respected, protected and fulfilled at all times. Social inclusion and participation are among its seven guiding principles. The aim of the Polish Be Active, Be Healthy project is to attain those goals by creating a safety net for displaced children through supportive sports training. The alignment of Government and WHO funding for the project demonstrates the political significance and weight given to this issue on both sides.
2 Background

History of the SKS programme

Polish schools have a history of several decades of providing extracurricular lessons, covering subjects from maths and biology to sports, organized and financed by local municipalities. Due to the decreasing demand, interest and budget, however, many lessons disappeared. In 2017, the Ministry of Sport and Tourism decided to re-establish extracurricular lessons to decrease the prevalence of insufficient physical activity, posture defects and obesity in children. The new system was fundamentally different, including centralized organization and funding. The SKS programme started with the specific objectives of identifying sports talent and enhancing participation in exercise by creating more opportunities for physical activity in the school setting. By offering a wide variety of structured and supervised sports activities led by physical education (PE) teachers, SKS optimizes the use of local sports infrastructure, improves physical fitness and motor skills and promotes healthy lifestyles among primary and secondary school-aged children, with a particular focus on girls and lower-grade students for whom PE lessons are not provided by specialized teachers.

The programme is implemented through collaboration among the Ministry of Sport and Tourism (the main sponsor), the Institute of Sport–National Research Institute (national operator), local education authorities and regional sports organizations. Each region has its own operator (a total of 16) responsible for coordinating local implementation. SKS also collaborates closely with the National Talent Base Programme to identify talented children.

The SKS programme provides students aged 6–18 years with two 60-min training sessions per week, for a total of 70 sessions per year. Each group consists of a minimum of 15 participants (usually of similar age), and the training sessions are conducted by PE teachers in school. The teachers can establish their objectives for the training sessions, tailoring them to the specific needs of the students. The objectives of the groups may differ between small towns and large cities because of differences in the opportunities offered by local sports clubs. In small towns, the programmes tend to attract highly talented, skilled students who may have only a small choice of sports clubs. In large cities, talented students often opt to train in sports clubs, so that SKS groups have a more inclusive approach, accommodating a wider range of participants.

PE teachers receive compensation for their involvement (in 2022: at least 60 PLN (approximately 13 euros)/session) (13). Training is free of charge for students. Schools interested in participating submit an application to the local operator each year, which creates an administrative burden for both the schools and the regional operators. Government funding covers the PE
teachers’ salaries and administrative costs. In smaller schools (< 300 students), two training groups can be organized. In larger schools (≥ 300 students), funding covers the costs of up to three groups. When more than one group is established, more than half of the participants in the second group must be girls to support the objective of promoting physical activity among girls (14).

Initially, the programme was allocated 42.6 million PLN (9.3 million euros), which facilitated establishment of about 14 000 training groups in 8000 schools. Since 2018, an expanded budget has allowed the programme to cover all municipalities in Poland (15).

2.2 2022: a new reason to act

In February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a new invasion of Ukraine, leading to significant numbers of refugees fleeing the country and seeking shelter in neighbouring states. The ongoing conflict and its unpredictable nature have resulted in a continuous flow of refugees into Poland, of whom a significant proportion are school-aged children, many of whom have had traumatic experiences. According to the latest estimates, up to 20% of Ukrainian refugees probably experienced some mental trauma (6). The newly arriving refugees have an even greater need for acute protection because of their prolonged exposure to conflict and violence, as well as the loss of belongings and destruction of their homes. Many have experienced multiple episodes of displacement within Ukraine and now face challenges in accessing secure, stable, long-term accommodation in Poland.

Another critical need of refugee children is continuity of their education and social activities. While most of the children prefer online education provided by Ukrainian schools (16), due mainly to language barriers, differences in curricula and in some cases the lack of social cohesion between the Ukrainian and Polish children, a considerable number of children attend classes in Polish schools. Children who attend classes online have only limited opportunities to socialize, which may further increase their feelings of isolation.

Although promoting healthy lifestyles may not appear to be a priority during a crisis, it is important for the immediate and long-term health and well-being of these children. Ensuring an adequate level of physical activity is vital in this regard. As it is widely considered that sports can help the social integration of refugees and support their mental health (17) and as SKS is a well-functioning school sports programme with wide national coverage, it quickly became the body chosen to implement the country’s policy. Thus, in 2022, the WHO Regional Office for Europe provided technical support and additional funding for the SKS programme, which allowed expansion of the programme’s scope and adaptation of its content to support the needs of refugee children. In September 2022, WHO allocated 1 434 000 PLN (304 450 euros) to the programme, enabling the organization of hundreds of additional training groups involving more than 8000 children. Most of the newly established training groups included 2–4 Ukrainian and 10–15 Polish children.
2.3 Approach and theories

Migration and displacement are key determinants of health and well-being (18). Refugees are among the most vulnerable members of society and are often faced with discrimination, poor living conditions and inadequate access to fundamental services, resulting in poor physical and mental health. In 2022, WHO issued the World report on the health of refugees and migrants (7), a detailed overview of the health of refugees and associated public health challenges. Three of its observations are relevant for this report: (i) noncommunicable diseases are an increasing health burden among refugees; (ii) changes in the lifestyle of refugees as they integrate with host communities may contribute to an increased risk of a more sedentary lifestyle, poorer nutrition and higher levels of obesity; and (iii) refugee children have a higher prevalence of mental health issues than host populations. Early health promotion to address the root causes of noncommunicable diseases (e.g. insufficient physical activity) and community involvement can prevent them; however, health-care services for newly arrived refugees comprise mainly health examinations and crisis psychological services, and there are few formal health promotion strategies for newly arrived refugees (19).

Poland, recognizing the importance of early inclusion and healthy lifestyles among refugees, decided to choose a distinct approach. With additional technical support and funding from WHO, Poland extended the physical activity and sports programme delivered in schools (SKS) to community integration and support for mental health among Ukrainian refugees. The capacity of the programme was increased to accommodate more participants, awareness was raised about available mental health resources, and the programme was adapted to best serve its additional purposes by embedding a “psychological first aid” (PFA) approach (20), which is a simple, yet powerful way of helping people in distress. This renewed method ensured that the Be Active, Be Healthy project was effective in promoting the health and well-being of refugee children, while also addressing some of the challenges associated with migration and forced displacement.

2.3.1 Integration of refugees through sports

It is now well accepted in both research and policies that participation in sports helps refugees to build social networks and to acquire resources in a new country (21). In its White Paper on Sport, the European Commission recognized the role sports plays in European society in terms of health, education, social integration and culture (22). The White Paper noted that:

Sport is an area of human activity that greatly interests citizens of the European Union and has enormous potential for bringing them together, reaching out to all, regardless of age or social origin.... Sport makes an important contribution to economic and social cohesion and to more integrated societies.... Sport can also facilitate the integration into society of migrants and persons of foreign origin as well as support inter-cultural dialogue.... Sport promotes a shared sense of belonging and participation and may therefore also be an important
tool for the integration of immigrants. It is in this context that making available spaces for sports and supporting sports-related activities is important for allowing immigrants and the host society to interact together in a positive way.

Although participation in sports alone will not ensure integration, there is a certain theoretical logic about the contribution of sports to increasing social inclusion. Sports can be a mean for refugees to meet new people, develop their social networks and find other local resources, such as language classes, legal advice or support for children at school. Language difficulties can create misunderstandings and can make refugees more isolated and anti-social (24), whereas leisure and sports activities can help refugees to learn the local language. Besides, sport offers a universal language and fosters and maintains personal contacts between refugees and nationals. Creation of trust by coaches and peers and establishing a supportive environment during sports training lead to acceptance in a new community and foster a sense of belonging.

2.3.3 Integration of refugees into sports

While integration of refugees through sports implies that their participation creates possibilities for access to other social spheres, such as the job market, education and citizenship, integration into sports means becoming a sports participant and a member of a sports community (21). The two aspects are equally important for refugee children. Regular physical activity in childhood is essential for healthy physical and mental development for all children, regardless of language, religion or origin. Therefore, the Physical activity strategy for the WHO European Region 2016–2025 includes a wider concept of inclusion and emphasizes the importance of sports for all throughout the life course (25).

Beyond the well-known benefits of being active during childhood, refugee children can experience further benefits by doing normal activities in an abnormal situation, which relieves the symptoms of stress and trauma (23). Through sports, children learn shared values, build cross-cultural relationships, and develop essential skills like teamwork and conflict resolution. Inclusive sports participation promotes a sense of belonging, celebrating diversity and contributing to the formation of a healthy, connected community. Sport programmes can provide structure and security in an otherwise chaotic situation by re-establishing regular patterns of participation and re-gain of control. Ultimately, sport provides an enjoyable social activity that allows refugees to “switch off” from the trauma and stress in their lives. Sport can also provide a feeling of continuity with refugees’ former lives. The success of sports-based initiatives is due mainly to the hard work and dedication of managers, volunteers and coaches (23). Thus, refugees can be empowered by participating in sports training, as they develop confidence, pride and self-esteem that can be used in other social contexts.
2.3.3 Psychological first aid

Psychological first aid (PFA) provides widely recognized and used, front-line, basic psychological support for people in emergencies. The concept and term were coined in the 1940s to help Merchant Marines suffering from “war stress”. Today, there are several formulations of PFA, but the WHO guide issued in 2011 (20) appeared to fill an unmet need for practical guidance, in non-technical language, for people who met or worked with individuals in distress.

According to the WHO guidance, PFA involves supportive and practical actions for people after a serious crisis, in ways that respect their dignity, culture and abilities and do no harm (20,26). It consists of skills and knowledge that can be obtained by both professionals and non-professionals (e.g. volunteers in refugee centres, teachers, health workers) who are in a position to help people who have experienced very distressing events. Despite its name, PFA covers both social and psychological support (27). A key objective of PFA is to enable helpers to understand their limits and the boundaries of the support they can provide and when to refer people for more specialized assistance.

PFA addresses the following:

- providing unobtrusive practical care and support
- assessing needs and concerns
- helping people to address basic needs (e.g. food and water)
- listening to people, but not pressuring them to talk
- comforting people and helping them to feel calm
- helping people to find information, services and social support
- protecting people from further harm.

It should be understood that PFA is not professional counselling or therapy. It addresses factors that would appear to be the most helpful for people’s long-term recovery, such as feeling safe and connected to others, calm and hopeful as well as being able to help themselves and have access to the necessary support to cope (27). People who can use PFA should not force help on people who do not want it but be available for those who would like some support.
3 The Be Active, Be Healthy project

The Be Active, Be Healthy project was initiated in September 2022 within the existing national programme, SKS. Its mission was to use school sports training as a vehicle for community integration and for the physical and mental well-being of Ukrainian refugees. The original aim of the SKS programme was to increase the physical activity of Polish schoolchildren. Because of the significant influx of refugees from Ukraine, the scope was extended in the Be Active, Be Healthy project. The aim was not to establish an intervention solely for refugees but to offer extracurricular sports opportunities in which Polish and Ukrainian students exercise together. The programme involved children who were enrolled in Polish schools. Parents gave their written informed consent for participation in either Polish or Ukrainian.

A unique element of the Be Active, Be Healthy project was integration of PFA into the sports programme. For this reason, training was organized for PE teachers, psychologists and teachers by the Olympic Refugee Foundation to train trainers to improve listening skills and to develop the capacity to identify mental health problems and facilitate professional support if necessary. The programme, the learning objectives and the outcomes of the 3-day course are presented in Annex 1. The training was active and experiential, giving participants a chance to share their knowledge and to practise skills to maximize the potential for sports to provide a safe, nurturing space that supports young people’s mental health, recovery and psychosocial well-being. The aim of bringing together the expertise of sport coaches and of mental health professionals was to enhance the skills of both types of providers, build a community of mutual support and develop referral networks to best serve the needs of displaced young people. The training included approaches for good communication, self and team care, when and how to refer someone and the PFA method.

The outcome of the 3-day course was a 4-h training script that trainers could use locally to educate PE teachers. Since the original train-the-trainer course, 33 courses have been organized in 13 out of 16 voivodes (the highest administrative level in Poland) for 617 PE teachers who were delivering the programme. In order to ensure quality of the training in the regions, during each training session PE teachers cascaded down in the Vojevodship (region) experienced psychologist participated in person to support or provide supervision.

The findings of desk-based research and stakeholder interviews on the drivers, barriers and facilitators for programme participation are presented below, with mechanisms for sports training with participants from different countries. At
the end, we briefly consider the institutional and legal structures that support sustainable delivery of such interventions.

3.1 Drivers of participation

Many factors affect a young person’s decision to participate in organized sports. In the case of refugee children, the decision is complex, as other competing priorities, fear and uncertainty may influence an otherwise strong intention to be active. Factors that may increase the likelihood of a positive decision are presented below.

**Family support.** As expected, a supportive family encouraged engagement in the programme. Ukrainian parents who participated in sports were likely to look for sports opportunities for their child in their host country.

Our family is a sporty family. My grandmother was a famous gymnast, my father plays soccer and my mum is practising judo. I was a short-distance runner in Ukraine, I am a really good sprinter. Here, thanks to the [S KS] programme, I play basketball in the U12 league.

The opposite is also true. Children who have no encouragement or support from their families are less likely to participate.

I saw other kids playing volleyball and basketball, which really inspired me. I did not do any sport in Ukraine. But I really wanted to join the training group. So, I begged for my mum for months. I think she was afraid that it would be difficult for me and I would be disappointed. But then she let me join the training group and, although it was difficult at the beginning, I made huge progress. And now my mum is very proud of me.

**Personality of the PE teacher.** In all the schools visited, trainers actively created a warm welcome for Ukrainian students by, for example, introducing them to the training groups before their arrival. The personal skills of the trainer are vital in establishing a supportive environment (23). Thus, it was not just the sport that brought students together but also the teacher who organized and ran it.

I prepared the group well in advance for the arrival of refugee kids. We talked a lot in the (training) group about their future teammates and their current situation. So, when they arrived, there was not a single negative comment or any bullying towards the new children.

**Enjoyment and fun.** Most children do sports simply to have a good time. Although one child’s concept of fun may differ slightly from that of another, factors that are likely to work include positive coaching, team friendships, game support, gadgets, mental bonuses, learning and improving and games. In both SKS and the Be Active, Be Healthy project, it is important that the trainers make lessons enjoyable.
SKS is different from the regular PE classes. Here, we are doing what children like and what they prefer. If they would like to play soccer all the time, it is absolutely fine. The main point is that they are having a great time while they are also doing exercise. They gain a lot of positive experience in relation to sport, which is also important. We are here to have fun and to forget problems outside the gym.

We play a lot of simple games that are easy to follow and result in many interactions. I try to teach them the basic skills and elements of basketball by turning them into simple games.

**Sports participation in the home country.** One of the strongest drivers of programme participation was a history of an active life. Those children who were physically active and skilled in sports in their home country were more likely to engage in the programme than those who had not done sports previously. Children who had not done sports in Ukraine but started to exercise in Poland were rare exceptions.

I played football in Ukraine and also did karate. When we arrived in Poland one year ago, first we looked for a school, but soon after I start looking for opportunities to do sports. Here, I play football and basketball at school, and sometimes I do judo in a sports club. For me, the school is more difficult than doing sports. Sport is easy.

Both me and my brother played football in Ukraine. Then we moved to Poland. I was a bit scared about going to school. So, the first few days I stayed home. Then, I started to go to school, and both my classmates and my head teacher were very supportive. My teacher invited me to watch a training group, and I was really curious. Now, I play badminton, football, handball, basketball and volleyball as part of the WHO training groups. I am tall, so I am quite good at volleyball, but I like badminton the most.

**Peer support.** One aspect that can make organized sports motivating and exciting for children is the participants themselves (28). Teammates are probably the most important peers in shaping youth sports choices and experiences, and we also observed a positive link between peer support and programme participation during our interviews. Peer acceptance and friendship were important driving forces for refugee children to join the WHO training groups.

I like Jan a lot. He is really funny. When we moved to Poland, we became classmates, and I have been sitting next to him since my first day. He was playing basketball in school [as part of the SKS programme], and I decided to join him [in the training group]. So, now we are together in school, and we play basketball together, too.

Markus sits next to me in class. At the beginning, he spoke Ukrainian, and I spoke Polish. We did not always understand each other, but we quickly became friends.
3.2 Facilitators and barriers

Understanding perceived facilitators and barriers to accessing the programme can help future programme planners to overcome barriers and increase participation. In this section, we describe influencing factors and the measures used to inspire teams.

**Key barriers.** Several barriers have been identified to attendance of refugees at organized sports training. Lack of knowledge about the possibilities, gender norms, competing family priorities (e.g. parents preferring their children to focus on education), limited time, cost and transport difficulties are those usually described (29).

The Be Active, Be Healthy project was designed in response to such barriers, and training was provided free of charge. The project also removed the barriers of transport and limited time by conducting training in schools. To increase awareness about the training groups, they were advertised at parent meetings, in school log books and by direct contact with refugee children by the participating PE teachers.

The fact that the programme is provided free of charge is very inviting for the families. Another important factor is that it is easily accessible. Having a sports programme directly in the school is very convenient for the parents.

The foundation of the programme, of course, is the opportunity for free participation in sports activities – it is important to remove any entry barriers.

**Key facilitators.** Other than the factors mentioned above, such as convenient timing and location and no charge, several other enablers of participation were identified.

In one school, the PE teacher who organized the Be Active, Be Healthy project locally spoke Russian and became responsible for general communication with the refugee families and for language teaching of Ukrainian children in the school. She explained the benefits of becoming involved in the project to both the parents and the children and acted as a permanent link between the Ukrainian children and their Polish peers. This was extremely effective in engaging and supporting refugee children in participating in the programme.

Another facilitator of participation was the appealing, varied activities in the training programme. At the end of the project, PE teachers reported that 51 different types of sports were played, ranging from rugby and baseball to yoga, swimming and “floorball”. The three most frequent activities were volleyball, basketball and football. Annex 3 describes a few traditional Polish games and the list of sports played in the Be Active, Be Healthy project.

The school sports club programme offers a large variety of sports, such as football, basketball, volleyball, athletics and many others. Classes are tailored to the preferences and abilities of the participants.

One of the factors behind the programme’s success is undoubtedly the fact that participating children can choose the sports they want to play. We have reached
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children who had not been physically active and had no access to organized sports activities. Under SKS, we conduct sports activities in 92 sports, ranging from football and track and field to skeleton sledding and equestrian events. Everyone can find something for themselves.

The programme not only had an impact on public health and social integration but had a strong element of talent identification, which was also inviting and inspiring for many students.

Physical education teachers have obtained a fantastic tool for activating children and teenagers, as well as for identifying the most talented individuals, so that they can be directed to club training. Who knows how many of them will one day represent Poland at the most important sports events, such as the Third European Games held in Poland.

3.3 Appropriate implementation

Working with refugees can sometimes be challenging, due to cultural differences. PE teachers can use an approach in which nationality and gender are secondary identities and ability, skill and personality as a player come first (21). Diversity can be emphasized as a team value. Furthermore, refugee children are not all the same; not all of them are deeply depressed or traumatized (30). While the challenges they face are real and meaningful, some children, particularly the younger ones, were coping surprisingly well with their new situation and smiled and appeared to be emotionally balanced during the interviews. Teachers and trainers must therefore avoid stereotypes when working with refugee children and should focus on the individual.

Overcoming language barriers. Exercise and sports with peers provide excellent opportunities for all children to interact. In the Be Active, Be Healthy project, children were motivated to speak Polish, which also avoided any conflicts that might arise due to misunderstanding. In the training groups in which the teacher spoke Ukrainian or Russian, the teacher and the refugees first spoke Ukrainian, but the children quickly learnt Polish, at least a basic level, and now, after almost 1 year, Polish is used in the training groups.

Sometimes [Ukrainian] kids come to me and ask something in Ukrainian, but I force myself to answer in Polish. Luckily, the Polish and Ukrainian languages are quite similar to each other, so children could quickly learn Polish, at least the basics.

Setting clear rules and boundaries. A multicultural environment requires clarity and consistency. Clear framing of activities and some basic rules (e.g. no disturbing behaviour, everyone should participate in all activities) can be crucial. Some of the children had had difficult recent experiences, which could influence their interactions with other children. Set boundaries and expectations can strengthen their social skills and trust. Patience is also important, and teachers must find the right balance between consistency and patience.

Refugees are a diverse group with unique journeys. Some of them are similar to their Polish peers, smiling and balanced. We must avoid using stereotypes.
Creating a supportive environment. Building relationships and trust between both PE teachers and students and between peers was central to the Be Active, Be Healthy project. Teachers devoted a significant amount of time, attention and energy to relationship building, such as greeting children, learning their names, asking questions about their lives and interests or just having a chat. These actions created a sense of belonging in the training groups.

Cultural understanding and respect are crucial – being open to cultural diversity and respecting differences. Each refugee has a unique story and experience. An atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance and openness where all participants can develop and integrate should be created.

3.4 Legal and institutional frameworks

Legal and institutional frameworks play an important role in the development, operation and sustainability of large-scale health promotion programmes. The legal framework encompasses relevant laws, regulations and enforcement mechanisms, while the institutional system is the structure of associated actors. The Be Active, Be Healthy project was established within a well-functioning national programme governed by an annual implementation regulation issued by the Minister of Sport and Tourism, effective from 1 January to 15 December (12). Since 2022, the implementation regulation has been available in both Polish and Ukrainian. The SKS programme is funded from the Physical Culture Development Fund, which is administered by the Minister of Sport and Tourism, and programme implementation is overseen by the relevant ministry.

National implementation is coordinated by the Institute of Sport – National Research Institute, which also manages all personal data (Fig. 1). Sixteen regional operators are responsible for implementation, administration, promotion, evaluation, monitoring and control at the level of voivodes, including school visits and can secure additional local funding, if feasible. PE teachers conduct classes at designated school facilities in their respective areas. The regional operators maintain annual agreements with participating schools about use of local infrastructure and annual contracts with PE teachers. The teachers are responsible for recruiting participants, obtaining parental consent and conducting fitness tests twice a year (in spring and autumn) as part of the programme evaluation.

Interviews with representatives of the coordinating institute indicated a strong desire to expand the programme, in terms of both the number and range of the sports offered. Consequently, they are actively seeking potential partnerships to support expansion.

In 2023, a total of 274,913 students participated in the SKS programme, of whom 4673 children (1.7%) claimed Ukrainian citizenship. Of the refugee children who were part of the original WHO training groups, 346 (39.5%) are still in the programme.
Promoting healthy, active lifestyles among refugee children in Poland

Fig. 1. Institutional system of the SKS programme

16 regional operators

12,612 P.E. teachers
4 Evaluation

The project was evaluated with both quantitative and qualitative methods.

First, process indicators, such as number of participants, were collected by the national coordinating institute.

Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted, both in person and online. Interviews were conducted in person on 15–16 May 2023 at three primary schools in Łódź and Warsaw, with school heads, PE teachers, Polish and Ukrainian children in the programme and parents of the participating refugees. Participants were identified with the support of the national coordinator. The interview prompts were designed to understand the context, local objectives, the approach used to include refugees, individual drivers and experiences and key features of practice for use in developing future interventions. Online interviews were conducted on 6 June 2023 with a trainer, a PE teacher and a mental health expert who had participated in the original PFA training. The objectives were to assess the usefulness of the training, to understand the lessons for participants and to determine how they had applied the lessons.

Thirdly, questions were sent to both the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and to researchers and leaders affiliated with the coordinating institute, and written responses were returned.

4.1 Outcomes

4.1.1 Quantitative data

In September 2022, 474 additional training groups were established in 375 schools in seven voivodes (Fig. 2).

![Fig. 2. Numbers of WHO training groups and participating schools by voivode (September 2022)](image-url)
Of the participants, 7212 were Polish (89.2%), and 876 were Ukrainian (10.8%), for a total of 8088 children of an average age of 11.5 years (Table 1). Training sessions to promote physical activity and well-being were held twice a week. The project involved 444 PE teachers (176 female and 268 male).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voivode</th>
<th>Girls (n)</th>
<th>Boys (n)</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Poland</td>
<td>1076</td>
<td>1395</td>
<td>2471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuyavia Pomerania</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>1049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesser Poland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Silesia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lublin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lubusz</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Łódź</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masovia</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>1771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opole</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podkarpackie</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podlaskie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomerania</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silesia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Świętokrzyskie</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmia–Masuria</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Pomerania</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3670</strong></td>
<td><strong>4418</strong></td>
<td><strong>8088</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the effort, it proved challenging to engage new schools in the programme. Consequently, most of the newly established training groups were additional groups in schools that were already participating in the SKS programme.

**4.1.2 Perceived benefits of the project**

Interviewees were generally enthusiastic about the programme and felt that sports was an effective way to connect them with their peers. A number of participants emphasized the physical health benefits of being fit and active.
More commonly, however, they described the benefits for their mental health and well-being, such as greater self-esteem, confidence and positive self-image. Many of those interviewed considered that providing an opportunity for young people to experience success and a sense of achievement was an important outcome.

Another important aspect is the boost in self-confidence. Successful sports experiences in the programme can contribute to an increase in self-confidence among participants. Discovering their abilities and achieving sports-related success helped Ukrainian refugees build positive self-esteem and faith in their own capabilities. Sport is a universal language of positive values.

It is worth emphasizing in the context of our programme that, alongside improving physical fitness and health, sports serves the promotion of social skills, personal development and building bridges between different social groups.

Through participation in sports activities, they have developed new skills and achieved small sports successes. I hope their talent and dedication have been recognized and appreciated at the school and the sports community, contributing to a sense of belonging and building positive self-esteem.

One of those interviewed, who is both a school head and a PE teacher, described distinct educational benefits associated with young people’s participation in sports.

Approximately one fifth of all students in our school have Ukrainian citizenship. These kids are in all grades, but there are more children in the 1–3 grades. In my experience, refugee children are very friendly and in many cases they are more helpful, diligent and kind than their Polish peers. But this is a difficult area, with many low-income families. And many parents, both Polish and Ukrainian, selected this school because we offer several school sports opportunities. I think kids in general need these additional hours of sports, not just to release stress, but for a better focus while they are studying. I see that those kids who are part of any (sports) teams in my school perform better in subjects such as math and more likely to achieve better grades.

All those interviewed described the impact of sports participation on social relationships and connections.

What is also significant [achievement] is social integration. Participation in sports and activities organized by the programme has helped Ukrainian refugees establish relationships with Polish peers. Through shared activities in an accessible format, new friendships and intercultural bonds have been formed. This also contributes to the development of social skills. Through collective training and activities, Ukrainian refugees had the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills such as teamwork, communication and relationship-building. These skills are valuable not only in the context of sports.

Ukrainian pupils have formed friendships with their Polish peers and developed positive relationships with teachers and coaches. This has helped them feel
more accepted and embraced in their new environment. In a sense, it has also contributed to the improvement of language skills. Regular interactions with Polish-speaking peers and coaches during sports activities have facilitated language acquisition and communication skills, which are crucial for successful integration. We have also observed an increase in the self-confidence of Ukrainian participants.

What was important for us is to learn if our participants from Ukraine felt welcomed, comfortable and taken care of. Our aim was to make the pupils feel like one team, with no division, regardless of where they come from. And from what I can see, we reached our goal.

4.1.3 Value of training in psychological first aid

Teachers’ subjective well-being is associated with their professional performance, enthusiasm and many desirable outcomes that are highly relevant to the education system (31). Therefore, care for the trainers’ own (mental) health was a key aspect of PFA training and was highly appreciated by the participants.

One of my key learnings was that I have to take care of myself first to be able to take care of others. Of course, this concept is not new. But the training opened my eyes. I always do a lot of things for others. Here, I learned that I need to allocate a little bit more time for myself and for my loved ones. Without having your own resources, you will not be able to care for someone else.

Some interviewees said that the training in PFA was not particularly novel, but they agreed that it refreshed and provided a valuable structure for their existing knowledge. The participants reported that they had particularly appreciated the practical nature of the training, noting its well-structured format and emphasis on real-world application. Additionally, they were reassured that the training had validated the approaches they had used previously, further boosting their confidence in their abilities.

I very much liked the way the training was conducted. First, we got a task, then we listened to each other while we carried out the exercise. Then came the theory. So, in this way, without hearing about the theory first, everybody behaved and acted naturally. Usually, it happens the other way, first someone explains the background then we have to practice. But I prefer the way the PFA training was organized as in this way we are not biased, and we can be more honest and natural.

The training refreshed and organized my knowledge and reinforced that what I am doing, I am doing it right. It is easy to recognize those children who have problems.

These things are not novel, we need empathy, good listening skills, support, we nod, make a slight smile to create a warm atmosphere while we are talking. However, it was good to reinforce what I already knew and to exchange experience with others.
Of particular importance to the goal of sports training was that participants recognized their responsibilities in their work with refugee children.

In many cases, PE teachers are the ones who can first recognize a crisis in a child. Now, we understand the first symptoms, and we can make the necessary first steps.

Training participants were very open and were able to talk about their own cases. We understood that we can respond to the same situation in many different ways, but many of them are adequate. So, there are multiple good solutions for the same problem. We understood that we can do so much.

One participant emphasized the importance of good listening skills, not only in professional life but also in day-to-day communication.

During the training, I realized that I am a really bad listener. I always do something when somebody is talking to me. I am scrolling my phone or doing household things. Anything but not listening. That was an unpleasant but important recognition for myself. Now I understand how to listen well.

The interviewees emphasized the significance of the acknowledgement that they are not alone and that others face similar challenges.

It was interesting to see that I have identical problems with others in the group and we are fighting similar battles. For instance, many students have problems with their parents and grandparents who since they left Ukraine, are living in the same household. Also, in many cases, these children cannot cope with their frustrations, fears, stress and anxiety, but now, after the training, we can give them tools to handle these things.

4.2 Lessons learnt

**Avoid using stereotypes. Not all refugee children are the same.** Some had had a serious traumatic experience, but many of them had not and are very similar to their Polish peers – energetic, smiling, curious and emotionally balanced. Teachers and trainers must leave behind the stereotypes of “refugee children” and focus on individual strengths, capacities and skills.

**Try to overcome language and cultural barriers.** Language barriers can pose significant challenges for both trainers and participants. Trainers can make extra efforts to overcome such difficulties by speaking slowly and simply, avoiding long, complicated explanations and using non-verbal communication. Children adapt surprisingly quickly to new situations and learn a new language easily. Younger children in particular are not bothered much about language.

**Provide easy access.** Refugees often lack the resources, transport and equipment necessary for participating in sports training. Bringing programmes close to children and their families (i.e. directly into the school) increases the likelihood of participation. Programmes should provide all the equipment necessary for a certain sport.
**Employ bicultural or bilingual trainers.** The involvement of bicultural or bilingual trainers is one of the most successful strategies for engaging refugee children in sports programmes. This approach also opens an important means for communicating with parents and other family members. As this appeared to be a critical ingredient of successful involvement in the programme, national coordinating institutes should consider employing bilingual workers as coaches.

**Be flexible.** Creating and running an integration programme is a continuous learning process. It is important to be flexible, respond to changing needs, adjust and strive to support full integration of refugees by providing opportunities for their participation in physical and social activities.

**What didn’t work well and should be improved:**

**Recruitment strategy.** In general, recruitment to the Be Active, Be Healthy project was limited to children who were enrolled in Polish schools, with no intention of involving refugees outside the formal education system. Other programmes have also observed lack of communication between refugee centres and sports programme owners. Consequently, social workers and thus refugees know very little about training opportunities in the host country. To reach out to children who are not enrolled in Polish schools, which in many cases constitutes a significant proportion of refugees, programme organizers should collaborate with refugee centres, social workers and municipalities and inform them about the possibilities.

**Involvement of less active children.** As in any physical fitness initiative, it was difficult to engage children who had not been physically active in their home country and lacked the necessary experience and skill in sports. Schools should use various strategies to involve these children in physical activities. Sometimes, providing a small incentive or offering the opportunity to observe sports training can result in recruitment of less active children.
5 Implications for other countries

Given the academic and policy attention given to sports and physical activity as means for promoting the well-being and social inclusion of refugees and the current situation in Ukraine, it is timely to summarize and critically reflect on the conclusions and lessons of the Be Active, Be Healthy project for strengthening the design and processes of future programmes in the Region. The implications of the Polish case for other teams who are planning to establish similar initiatives are as follows.

1. **Use existing programmes as a basis.** A good strategy for optimizing resources and investment while extending reach is to build on what is already in place. Building on existing programmes increases the likelihood of creating a sustainable initiative and therefore the intended benefits of health promotion programmes.

2. **For a wider reach, establish contacts with refugee centres and municipalities.** As only about one fourth of Ukrainian school-aged children attend Polish schools and the project specifically targeted those in the formal Polish education system, most Ukrainian refugees had no opportunity to participate in this initiative. One of the main slogans of WHO is “Leaving no one behind”. In order to do so, it is important to reach out to those children to involve them in health promotion activities. Ways of contacting refugees include ethnic media, social workers in refugee centres and health information or advice channels.

3. **Empower teachers.** Resilience and mental strength are essential for working with refugee children. Although not all children are distressed or have severe mental health disorders, some do. Tools should be provided for effective communication and help. We provided PFA training for the PE teachers who participated, as it involves not only the core actions of PFA but also covers providers’ self-care and mental well-being.

4. **Include at least a minimum set of indicators.** Sports-related projects and interventions to support social inclusion of refugees rarely include evaluations (16). Although the original SKS programme includes an evaluation strategy, with regular fitness assessments and a sociological study, evaluation of the Be Active, Be Healthy project was limited. Evaluation can indicate whether, why and how programmes achieve their goals. Evaluation is also essential to ensure that limited resources are used most efficiently for the greatest possible impact. Thus, evaluation benefits immediate execution of a project and improves future initiatives.
References


Annex 1. Programme of the psychological first aid training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Safe and supportive sports for young people impacted by displacement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9.00–10.50 | Warm up:  
- Welcome & introductions  
- Overview and objectives of the Olympic Refuge Foundation and this Initiative  
- Our responsibility to self and team care  
Activity:  
- Awareness of our experiences of loss, change and gain  
- Impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including conflict and displacement, on young people  
- Mental health, mental illness and physical activity  |
| Learning objectives |
- Develop awareness of the responsibility for self- and team-care when working with people impacted by critical events  
- Understand short- and long-term impacts of ACEs on all aspects of health and well-being  
- Appreciate the mental health / mental illness continuum and role of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) |
| 10.50–11.00 | Coffee break |
| 11.00–13.30 | Activity:  
- Potential benefits and risks of sports  
- Photo exercise: safety, dignity and inclusion  
- Foundational helping skills to do no harm  
- The gift of Listening  |
| Learning Objectives: |
- Identify the unique benefits and risks associated with sports for young people impacted by displacement  
- Describe and apply the core values of safety, dignity and inclusion in ensuring safe and supportive sports  
- Appreciate helpful and unhelpful responses to helping someone in distress  
- Enhance active listening skills |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Safe and supportive sports for young people impacted by displacement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9.00–11.00 | Warm up:  
- Welcome & recap  
- Recap good communication  
- Practice role plays  
- "Look, Listen, Link" in PFA Sport  
- Review of foundational helping skills  |
| Learning Objectives |
- Describe good communication guidance on what to say and do, and not say and do  
- Understand PFA principles of "Look, Listen, Link" adapted to the sporting environment |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11.00–11.15 | Coffee break                                                             | - Achieve basic literacy in the fields of mental health and sports and physical activity, including evidence for the linkage between the two  
- Understand and apply knowledge of healing-centered sports in selecting and implementing activities with young people who have experienced ACEs |
| 11.15–12.00 | Activity:  
- Understanding terms and sharing expertise from mental health and physical activity  
- Approaches to healing-centered sports |  
- Learning Objectives:  
- Understand when there is a need for referral, what available resources exist, how to refer, and provide follow-up relevant to one’s role  
- Develop self-awareness in relation to the unique role of coaches and mental health providers as mentors for young people impacted by displacement |
| 12.00–13.00 | Lunch                                                                   |  
- Learning Objectives:  
- Appreciate different models of supportive and technical supervision |
| 13.00–14.30 | Reconvene and warm up:  
- Safe, supportive exercise  
Activity:  
- Mutual resource mapping  
- Knowing my limits: when and how to refer  
- Developing self-awareness |  
- Learning Objectives:  
- Appreciate different models of supportive and technical supervision |
| 14.30–14.45 | Coffee break                                                             |  
- Learning Objectives:  
- Appreciate different models of supportive and technical supervision |
| 14.45–16.00 | Reconvene and warm up:  
- Safe supportive exercise  
Activity  
- Putting in place self and team care: exploring ways for support and supervision  
Cool down:  
- Check in and wrap-up |  
- Learning Objectives:  
- Appreciate different models of supportive and technical supervision |

**Day 3**

**Safe and supportive sports for young people impacted by displacement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9.00–12.00 | Warm up:  
- Welcome and recap  
- Review of key principles and approaches  
- Addressing remaining questions  
Activity:  
- Plan to use and share this information and each other’s expertise  
- Facilitation tips for safe and supportive sports orientations (balancing information and practice)  
- Exercise: creating and demonstrating orientation agendas |  
- Learning Objectives  
- Consolidate knowledge and skills of the key principles and approaches in safe and supportive sports for young people impacted by displacement  
- Describe possibilities for utilizing expertise from sports coaches and mental health professionals in Poland  
- Understand and apply facilitation techniques for the development of both knowledge and skills  
- Describe potential orientation agendas and approaches of different lengths of time |
| 12.00–13.00 | Lunch                                                                   | Cool down, Relax, nourish, converse                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 13.00–16.00 | Warm up:  
- Reconvene: safe, supportive exercise  
Activity:  
- Planning next steps: achievable, localized plans  
- Exploring future possibilities: community of practice  
Cool down:  
- Data collection  
- Evaluation and wrap-up |  
- Learning Objectives:  
- Describe a plan for each local area with a potential timeline for initial steps  
- Appreciate and share possibilities for effective communities of practice, including purpose, function, and information and communication sharing  
- Reflect on the experience and provide evaluation feedback for future improvements |
Learning outcomes

- Describe evidence linking mental and physical health
- Introduce concept of “lifestyle psychiatry” and how modifiable lifestyle behaviors (e.g. physical activity, diet and sleep) influence mental health and well-being
- Describe difference between physical activity, sports and exercise, and relationship with mental health
- Summarize the WHO Physical Activity Guidelines
- Provide broad overview of mental health informed physical activity programmes with examples from displacement contexts
- Discuss referral pathways and "physical activity pyramid" for MHPSS professionals
- Summarize the scandal of premature mortality and WHO Guidelines for management of physical health conditions in adults with severe mental disorders
- Discuss potential negative outcomes of sports promotion programmes
- "Look, Listen, Link" for physical health
- Summarize evidence on relationship between physical activity and mental illness (including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia)
- The exercise – weight loss fallacy
- Provide overview of the role of MHPSS practitioners in promoting physical activity, including building referral pathways, introduction to physical activity measurement and assessment
- Identify international examples of best-practice programmes including the role of peer-support
- Small group-based photo reflection exercise – in small groups, participants are given an image related to physical activity and low-resource or humanitarian settings. They are given time to discuss the image before returning as a group. Images cover issues including:
  - Gender and "who isn't in the picture"
  - Co-locating of physical and MHPSS services
  - Real world programmes in Bangladesh, India, Lebanon
- Assessing lifestyle behaviors as part of routine MHPSS care
- Strategies to foster autonomous motivation for physical activity and addressing culture within MHPSS services
- Brainstorm local opportunities in collaboration with local PFA sports trained sports coaches
- Lifestyle and self-care for MHPSS professionals and role of exercise in burnout
Annex 2. Dissemination and communication materials

**Advertising spot**

The advertising spot “Sport is our language” promoted the values of physical activity and the importance of spending time together as a means of reducing cultural differences and language barriers. The spot portrayed sports as a realm of joy, smiles, fun and integration – an avenue towards a healthy and happy life. The spot was released on Szkolny Klub Sportowy [School Sports Club, SKS] social media on 9 December 2022.

**Video competition for SKS participants**

On 7 November 2022, SKS launched a competition in two categories: exclusively for programme participants and an open category for anybody who was interested. The challenge was to demonstrate interpretation of the slogan “Activity and health are our common language” and show how sports can support integration of children from Ukraine. Participants were required to prepare and show a 30 s video on their Facebook or Instagram page. Winners were awarded with sports equipment.

**Infographics**

From 15 December 2022, educational infographics in the form of comics were published on the SKS social media sites. Our celebrated athlete, Anna Lewandowska, known for her expertise in sports and health, was the hero of the infographics. The infographics highlighted the impact of physical activity on health and well-being and the importance of a healthy, balanced diet and good-quality sleep for overall health. The infographics were available in both Polish and English.

---

2 SKS Girls ZSP Konarzyny group
3 Physical Activity and health - our common language
Promoting healthy, active lifestyles among refugee children in Poland
Be active, be healthy!

REMEMBER!

- Your body needs a balance between being active and feeling relaxed!
- Sleep well! While sleeping, your organism releases growth hormone, which helps you regenerate and takes care of your weight!
- An appropriate dose of sleep improves your mood. If you sleep well, you are more creative and full of energy!

My name is Anna Lewandowska. I am a multiple Karate Champion, digital fitness coach. I encourage everyone to develop healthy habits such as exercising regularly, or maintaining a healthy diet. An adequate amount of exercise a day is very important to me - that's the way I take care of my health and good mood as well.
Be active, be healthy!

**REMEMBER!**
- **Healthy nutritious diet** is an ideal supplement for an active lifestyle!
- **After** training, it is essential for you to have a meal containing animal or plant based proteins!
- **Your body needs a balance** between staying active and remaining restful. Drowsy sleep means giving your muscles time to recover after a physical exercise!
- **Avoid unhealthy foods** - not only after training.

My name is Anna Lewandowska, I am a multiple karate champion,iritational fitness coach. I encourage everyone to develop healthy habits such as exercising regularly, or maintaining a healthy diet. An adequate amount of exercise a day is very important to me - that's the way I take care of my health and good mood as well.

Promoting healthy, active lifestyles among refugee children in Poland.
Annex 3. Training activities and games

Table A3.1. Sports and numbers of classes in the WHO training groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>No. of classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>1459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement games</td>
<td>1153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>1029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>1018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handball</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floorball</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General development</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness tests</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping pong</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Two sporting fires”</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports gymnastics</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerobics</td>
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Some traditional Polish games

Dwa ognie

A ball game that requires agility, quick reflexes and strategic teamwork

“Dwa Ognie” is a highly popular game. The objective is to eliminate players from the opposing team by “knocking” them off the field. Players can avoid being hit by dodging, jumping or running in their designated playing area. Once a player is hit, he or she becomes an assistant to the captain and can target and eliminate opponents.

When the ball is thrown out of bounds, the captain of the team closest to the ball or the player whose feet are within the touchline gains possession of the ball. The possession rule ensures that the game remains fair and competitive.

When all the players on a team have been “knocked off”, the team’s captain has three times the normal right to “knock out” opponents, providing an opportunity for a comeback or a last-ditch effort to turn the game around. The game concludes when one team successfully eliminates all players, including the opposing team’s captain.
Palant

A strategic ball game that requires skilful hitting, quick thinking and teamwork

“Palant” is a thrilling, popular Polish team game. Two teams compete on a field measuring 50–75 m by 20–25 m. The objective is to hit a small cast-rubber ball with a stick 60–80 cm long, called a "palant", which is either round or flat.

The participants are divided into two teams: “heaven” and “hell”. The team from heaven takes on the role of attackers, while the team from hell assumes a defensive position. In heaven, there is a designated area called the “nest”, from which a player throws the ball into the air and hits it quickly and forcefully with the palant. A hit is considered valid only when the ball is hit into the territory of hell. The player then runs around the four bases. Each time a player from heaven completes the circuit of bases, their team is awarded a point. If the ball returns to heaven, the player must return to the last base they occupied before continuing their run, provided they successfully tap another player from their team. Meanwhile, the players from hell attempt to catch the ball and either throw it over the sky lines or hit a running heaven player. If running heaven players are hit by the ball, they lose their turn.

The ideal outcome is for the ball to land behind the backline (fence), allowing players from heaven to progress through the bases unhindered. The zones change in various scenarios, such as when three players from heaven reach the first base, when the ball leaves the field after being knocked out, when there are no eligible players, or when the team from heaven commits three faults. Faults include the field-taker missing the ball three times, the base-capturing player being hit by the ball without touching any bases, or a hell player catching the ball with one hand from above.
Ringo

A simple game for either outdoors or indoors

Ringo is a captivating Polish game with very simple rules. Players engage in a fast-paced competition with a single “ringo” ring, trying to throw it into their opponents’ field and to catch it on their side to avoid losing a point. The ring is thrown over a net, tape, rope or string, and, after it has been caught, throwing it swiftly back into the opponent’s square with the same hand in which it was caught. Players move around the pitch only when they do not have the ring in their hands. When they catch it, they must stop and throw it.

Ringo can be played as a team sport with two or three participants on each side (or more). It promotes teamwork, coordination and strategic play. It can also be enjoyed as a one-on-one training experience for individuals who wish to enhance their skills. In the team version, one ring is used by teams of two or three participants on each side. A more professional type of ringo involves playing with two rings simultaneously.

In the recreational and arcade version of ringo, designed specifically for children, the game involves hitting a puck with a stick attached to a base. Children’s ringo equipment is lighter, to allow practising accuracy and coordination. It is a great source of enjoyment for the entire family, fostering friendly competition and active play.

Whether played competitively as a team sport or enjoyed as a recreational activity for children, ringo offers an engaging, entertaining experience. It challenges players to show their agility, reflexes and hand–eye coordination and fosters a sense of being a team and having fun.
The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

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