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# GOOD PRACTICES RESEARCH REPORT

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PUSH PROJECT  
PROMOTING UNITY THROUGH SPORT FOR HOMELESS



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## GOOD PRACTICES RESEARCH

There are several examples of projects around the world that use sport as a tool to promote the personal and social development of their participants. Football, being the most popular sport in the world, plays a role of enormous cultural importance in several countries around the world. It is an activity that transcends geographical, ethnic and socio-economic barriers, uniting people from different backgrounds around a shared passion. Football creates a sense of community, promotes national pride and strengthens social bonds, becoming a cultural symbol and an essential element of national identity in many countries and communities, shaping traditions, values and lifestyles. In addition, sport has the capability to carry messages of inclusion, respect and solidarity, connecting cultures and uniting people around a common goal. The importance and influence of this modality is notorious in the literature review carried out by this working group, in which most of the projects or organisations that use sport or sporting activity to intervene and assist homeless individuals are mostly designed taking into account only one type of sporting activity, **Football**, therefore, are framed with the model presented by the Homeless World Cup Foundation.

In order to address this limitation, it was necessary to broaden the research, taking into account the objectives of developing activities, relationships and social integration through sport in its broad spectrum and not only through football. It was found that there are a large number of activities or projects that share these same objectives, however, they are directed to different target populations (e.g.: adolescents, the elderly, children, people with addictive behaviours).

The Homeless World Cup Foundation is an international non-profit organisation, founded in 2001, based in Scotland and is responsible for organising the annual Homeless World Cup (HWC) tournament that brings together teams made up of people experiencing homelessness from around the world. The practice of sport, in this case football, allows to **tackle social exclusion** by providing a **context** where participants establish **positive and healthy relationships** with other people; empower participants to develop **social, emotional and**





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**professional skills** for a **positive and adaptive social and professional (re)integration**; **increase the self-esteem** and **confidence** of participants, helping them to overcome challenges and believe in their potential; **eliminate the stigma and prejudices** associated with people experiencing homelessness, **promoting a change in public perception**. Due to its innovative work and the positive impact that derives from them, the Homeless World Cup Foundation is widely recognised internationally, award-winning and has garnered the attention of the media and the support of numerous organisations and public personalities.

The literature review allowed us to identify a number of positive outcomes as a result of participating in the HWC, namely, improvement in physical condition; increased self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation towards changes; decrease in symptoms related to mental health, either by the participation and the practice of sports activities, by the routine around sports, but also through the support of the coaches and their peers; sentiments of satisfaction and pride in representing their country; sentiments of vivacity and serenity; improved relationships with close family members; awareness that the practice of sport, support from their employer, assistance from their families and a psychotherapist are factors that enable them to get out of the situation of homelessness; change in health-related behaviours; reduced alcohol and other substance use during the period of preparation for tournaments; strengthened character; feelings of honour and dignity (Sherry & O'May, 2013; Magee & Jeanes, 2013; Jarvie & Ahrens, 2019; Strzyzowski, Budhas & Buchas, 2021). Sports organisations and activities for people experiencing homelessness have proven to have significant positive impacts, providing life-changing opportunities, emotional well-being and social inclusion for participants. These programmes play an essential role in supporting, empowering and giving hope to people experiencing homelessness, as well as contributing to a society that is fairer and more supportive. Some projects that develop their activities taking into account the objectives and methodologies supported by HWCF that required our attention are: the Portuguese project "Futebol de Rua", developed by the association CAIS; the Scottish project "Street Soccer Scotland"; the Netherlands Life Goals Foundation; the project "Conversation with help of Football" developed by the Hungarian "Megálló" Group.



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### "FUTEBOL DE RUA"

The "Futebol de Rua" project is an initiative developed by CAIS Association, a Portuguese organisation dedicated to promoting social inclusion and improving the living conditions of its participants through non-formal education and the use of sport, specifically football, as a tool for personal, social and sporting development. It stands out for adopting an inclusive approach, welcoming people from different backgrounds and socio-economic conditions, including those experiencing homelessness. Participants are encouraged to develop sporting skills, promote values such as teamwork, respect and fair play and experience feelings of greater self-esteem and confidence. The project also offers social support and referrals to other areas of support, such as housing, employment and education, aiming to promote a full reintegration into society (Malho, 2018).

Studies and reports have shown the positive impact of the project in reducing social isolation, increasing self-confidence, improving physical and mental health and promoting social and community integration. According to the CAIS Annual Accounts Report, in the year of 2022 it was responsible for organising the National Street Football Tournament with its "Futebol de Rua" project. 18 local tournaments were held counting 1320 participants (male and female), 330 technicians and 167 volunteers from 179 teams of 146 organisations/institutions; It was present at the Final of the National Street Football Tournament, where 17 teams competed in the main tournament and 6 teams in the women's street football tournament, for a total of 275 participants; Participated with the National Team in the Mundialito de Futebol de Rua where it became champion; Implemented 96 "Move" sessions with 58 participants ("Move" Sessions are initiatives carried out 1 to 2 times a week, aimed at individuals in the Lisbon District); Organised 34+1 sessions of the "Move-te, Faz Acontecer" initiative with 1137 participants (the "Move-te, Faz Acontecer" initiative is aimed at participants and professionals from all over the country who are part of the project network to develop and consolidate personal and social skills); carried out 1 Residential Street Football Refereeing Training, having been awarded certificates by the Portuguese Football Referees Association (APAF) to 14 former players; trained 27 individuals through the Technical and Tactical Residential Training of Street Football Coaches.



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Throughout 2022 the project had the participation of 1485 athletes, 358 social workers and coaches, 167 volunteers from 179 teams of 146 institutions across 18 districts and autonomous regions, growing the number of international participants and female participants. These results are enabled by the various partnerships and grants that the organisation maintains, in particular, the partnerships with Common Goal and ADIDAS Breaking Barriers. The results showed that participation in the project promotes personal growth of the target population: **84% of participants** reported an **increase in positivity**; **83%** improved their **self-awareness** abilities; **83% improved** their **conflict resolution skills**; **82%** demonstrated increased **mental flexibility**; **91%** of participants felt their **motivation increased** and **90%** reported an **increase in self-esteem**. The outcomes have a significant and positive impact on the lives of participants and therefore, positive and adaptive changes can be expected to take place as a result of the transfer into everyday life of a set of competencies and skills developed and acquired 'in the field' (Malho, 2018; CAIS Annual Accounts Report, 2022). One of the examples of success of the programmes that work in partnership with HWC is the case of Bebe, a Portuguese player and participant in the Futebol de Rua project, who signed for Manchester United Football Club and was called up to the Portuguese Under-21 national team a year after participating in HWC (Harvey, 2016, p. 1). He still maintains a professional career as a footballer, playing to date for Real Zaragoza in LaLiga2. The work developed by CAIS was recognised by the Portuguese Football Federation, which awarded the National Street Football Team the "Inclusive Football" award at the Quinas de Ouro 2017 gala

### "STREET SOCCER SCOTLAND"

Street Soccer Scotland (SSS) is a UK-based social project, founded in 2009 and uses street football as a tool to promote social inclusion, improve quality of life, inspire and transform the lives of socio-economically vulnerable individuals, people experiencing homelessness, refugees and individuals facing imprisonment. Street Soccer Scotland takes a holistic approach, not only promoting physical activity and sporting participation, but also offering emotional support, skills development and opportunities for social integration, combining football with programmes to support housing, work, education and health.





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The project offers a variety of activities and programmes adapted to the needs of its participants. Such activities include: Street Football Training Sessions, providing a structure and routine to participants' lives so that they can develop and improve their skills and participate in friendly competitions; Education and Employment Programmes with the aim of empowering and developing practical skills in participants and helping them to find employment or enter a formal education path; Street Soccer Scotland promotes social and community integration by encouraging participants to get involved in local activities, sporting events and volunteering activities; The project also offers Health and Wellbeing Support by providing access to health and wellbeing services, counselling, advice and guidance on health and wellbeing related issues; In addition, the project offers Health and Wellbeing Support through access to health and wellbeing services such as counselling, emotional support and guidance for mental and physical health issues.

It is recognised that Street Soccer Scotland is having a positive impact and outcome in promoting social inclusion and in the transformation of the lives of its participants. According to their website, **94% of the players think their life has improved as a result of joining Street Soccer; 81% of players have improved their ability to trust others; 90% of players have improved their communication skills; a decrease of 79% of participants' perception that problems in their personal life are beyond their control; Players' family relationships improved by 45%; 87% of players previously involved in prison or probation, are no longer involved in the criminal justice system. Participants reported significant improvements in physical and mental wellbeing, including increased self-esteem, reduced stress and increased sense of belonging.** Demonstrating, that participation in the HWC and playing sport are crucial experiences to broaden participants' horizons, provides a different perspective and a set of alternative choices, enabling the development of social and emotional skills such as teamwork, positive communication, resilience and self-confidence (Jarvie & Ahrens, 2019).



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### LIFE GOALS FOUNDATION

The Life Goals Foundation is a Netherlands project and a leading non-profit organization committed to empowering and transforming underrepresented and vulnerable groups. The organization was established with the firm goal of promoting social inclusion and its programs focus on embracing the unifying potential of sports and physical activity as change agents. The Life Goals Foundation has developed a distinctive strategy that combines physical activity, skill development and social integration because of its unshakeable belief in sport's ability to alter lives.

The LFG develop sporting activities in many cities across the country. A monthly soccer tournament is held in Amsterdam with the main objective of fostering social integration among the homeless community. Participants from the Salvation Army are invited to the event, which is being held at the Sporthal Zeeburg and is a collaboration between the Salvation Army and Life Goals Amsterdam. From June to September, the soccer competition is held each month. Both social service providers and homeless people are included in the target audience. The organization of the competition, in which participants are divided into teams before the game begins, is made possible by the partnership between the Salvation Army and Life Goals Amsterdam.

Over the year of 2021, the tournament has demonstrated encouraging outcomes, a total of 32 participants from the Salvation Army engaged in the event. Each week, four teams were formed, actively participating in the tournament. The interaction between participants and social workers has been notably positive, underscoring the success of this inclusive initiative. The success of this initiative hinges on the pivotal role of enthusiastic social workers. Their active involvement serves as a driving force in encouraging participation among the target demographic. Effective guidance and motivation from these social workers have proven essential in ensuring sustained engagement and commitment from the participants.

Another example of a multifaceted approach to promoting social well-being among the homeless population is the program led by the Stichting Life Goals in Enschede. These activities, orchestrated in collaboration with stakeholders such as the Salvation Army,







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Humanitas onder Dak, Sportaal and the Life Goals Foundation, cater to the preferences of the target group and entail active participation in both organizing and partaking.

This initiative comprising around 15 weekly sports activities conducted in Enschede, designed to foster inclusivity and social engagement within the homeless community. The initiative harnesses the collective efforts of various stakeholders to provide a range of sports options. The sports activities occur daily, offering the homeless participants a versatile array of options to choose from. This initiative's cornerstone is its adaptability to the ever-changing preferences of the homeless participants. The activities are meticulously tailored to cater to the interests of the target group. A unique facet of this endeavour is the active involvement of the homeless individuals in both the planning and execution of the activities.

A distinctive feature of this programme is the synergy between the Salvation Army, Humanitas onder Dak, Sportaal and the Life Goals Foundation. The collaborative nature of this project ensures a holistic approach, where stakeholders and participants coalesce to create an environment that nurtures social bonds and personal growth. The diverse sports activities in Enschede, orchestrated through the concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders, exemplify an innovative strategy for enhancing the well-being of the homeless community. By facilitating active participation and involvement in the decision-making process, the initiative nurtures a sense of belonging and empowerment among the participants.

These programs exemplify a successful strategy for enhancing social integration within the homeless community. The proactive engagement of motivated social workers is identified as a critical factor in achieving positive outcomes and maintaining participant interest. The Wageningen University & Research, Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, and Stichting Life Goals are investigating the social impact and improvement opportunities of sports programs for vulnerable adults (such as the homeless, addicts and ex-prisoners) in the four-year Life Experience Through Sport (LETS) project (Alarslan, Harmsel, Verkooijen & Hilvoorde, 2021).

A significant and frequently mentioned factor for joying this program has to do with the social aspects, such as getting to know other people and working collectively. The physical health







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previous sports experience and daily stress were also mentioned. The context provided, the low admission threshold and the safe athletic environment, is crucial for keeping participation in the activities, the participants saw it as a network of caretaker security and a place where they may get assistance. The social sports trainer is more than just a coach, he is viewed as a “role model, a mentor, a source of stability and a father figure”. The role of the coach is to influence the participants' personal growth and promotes a positive sportive culture (Alarslan et al., 2021). The environment is frequently thought to be positive by the participants. Participants positively influence each other when they are together, creating space for games. The participants support one another and help one another, work together to build a team and provide space for social interaction and personal growth. The fact that the participants are able to identify a part of themselves in the other makes it possible, through empathetic processes, to foster an environment of acceptance, co-operation and mutual help (Alarslan et al., 2021). The activities and the structure provided has an impact on participants' social well-being, daily lives, physical, emotional, cognitive and condition. Participants also adjust their way of life by moving more and eating more healthfully. Were reported that the program can generate **positive emotions**, such as happiness, joy and hope; **numerous positive effects on a social level**, including partnerships, connections with others, skills like cooperation, leadership and the ability to inspire others were also cultivated. The participants reported **feeling more autonomous and self-confident**, having **more self-confidence** and becoming **more aware of their individual perspectives on life** at a cognitive level. In addition, **stress reduction**, **resilience** and the **ability to deal with emotions and problems** are also addressed. Additionally, it was stated that involvement can result in an environment of anti-stigmatization where individuals feel embraced. (Alarslan et al., 2021)

#### “CONVERSATION WITH HELP OF FOOTBALL

In 1997, the "Megálló" Group began operating as an initiative of the Belvárosi Tanoda Foundation. They established as an independent organization in 2005 and has been providing full-day child development for the past 18 years. The goal of this project was to create a special education program that incorporates the therapeutic community's values with an individual-centered helper-developer pedagogy. The programme is directed towards teenagers that dropped out of secondary school, substance users and have been rejected by other



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educational institutions. The practice revolves around the organization of a local football cup that brings together disadvantaged young people, social helpers, representatives of the local government and policemen. This initiative is implemented by the "Megálló" Group in the Middle Danubian Region of Hungary, specifically in Budapest and aims to promote understanding, sensitize participants to diverse perspectives and enhance collaboration among various organizations. The practice engaged 30-40 participants, offering a valuable platform for effective communication and highlighting the significance of shared goals/ activities within a common context. It proved easy to implement and received legal and financial support from the local government and/or through project proposals.

This practice encompasses several key facets such as: **Promote Understanding:** Encourage participants to engage in joint activities to better comprehend each other's backgrounds and challenges to foster greater empathy; **Common Values:** Demonstrate the shared values and collaborative efforts of different organizations in assisting the reintegration of disadvantaged young people; **Social Reintegration:** Create a supportive environment for disadvantaged youth to reintegrate into society through positive engagement.

Representatives from the local police station, the local government and the Stopgroup Foundation collaborated in Budapest to explore opportunities for cooperation in addressing the challenges faced by disadvantaged drug-addicted young people. One significant outcome of this collaboration was the conception of a local football cup involving these stakeholders. The head of the local government endorsed this initiative.

The football cup spanned half a day and featured four teams: the Social Helpers Team from the Stopgroup Foundation, a Team comprising disabled young people from Megálló, the Local Police Station Team and the Local Government Team. Each team played against the other three, culminating in the determination of the final rankings: 1st place went to the Policemen, 2nd place to the Disadvantaged People, 3rd place to the Helpers and 4th place to the Local Government.

The common sporting event emerged as a powerful medium for mutual understanding. Shared experiences on the football pitch fostered openness among participants. The practice





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demonstrated that sometimes, two halves of twelve minutes on a football field can yield more profound results than a professional conference.

Football, in this context, is more than just a competition; it symbolizes teamwork, cooperation and co-production. Winning is not the primary aim; instead, the focus lies on effort, intensity, concentration, perseverance and adherence to fair play. The framework and methodologies applied within these communities provide a safe, free and opportunity-rich environment for drug-addicted young people. Thus, it is possible to offer a chance for communities employing various therapeutic approaches to understand each other's values, respect, share experiences and strengthen bonds, all in line with the European ideal of "unity in differences."

Outside the football sphere, there are other examples of organisations that deserved our attention, both for the role that they have in the communities where they are located and for the use of different types of physical/sporting activities to promote new opportunities for young people and adults who are in economically and socially vulnerable situations. The principles of these sports programmes are similar to the projects mentioned above, they work in a network with different organisations and partners, in order to maximise their results and promote a holistic inclusion and development of their members.

### “MOUNTAIN THERAPY PROJECT”

The Mountain Therapy Project / MontagnaTerapia (MT), situated in the Piedmont Region's ASL Cuneo, Italy, earned accreditation as a Good Transferable Practice on October 18, 2022 (Grasso & Longo, 2023). This initiative, founded in 2019 within the Intercompany Department of Mental Health - North Area, strives to enhance the overall well-being of patients by developing an evaluation and measurement tool to assess the effectiveness of MT activities through process and impact assessments. A specific operational methodology is used to assess the achievement of the patients' general and individual objectives, focused on improving their quality of life, their psychophysical health, their interpersonal relationships and their organisational skills.





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This project takes a unique approach by harnessing the power of group therapy and physical activity that takes place in the natural mountain environment (Scoppola et al., 2007), this project is a therapeutic, rehabilitative and/or social strategy, targeted at patients with difficulties that are significantly defined by social isolation. This intervention fosters connections with oneself and others, actively combatting social isolation, eradicating stigma, and promoting the rediscovery of individual talents and independence across various domains.

It all starts back to 1996 when small mountain walking groups emerged within the mental health facilities, encompassing Savigliano, Fossano and Saluzzo. Over time, these groups not only grew but also forged local partnerships, notably with CAI (the Italian Alpine Club) and began contributing from an evaluation perspective. The local health authority ASLCN1, which has 175 municipalities and 6 mountain communities, includes 75% of its area in mountainous and hilly terrain. A customised multi-professional treatment program with 184 participants was implemented in this area in 2019 and provided 2,749 patients with a range of services. The MT project unfolds over three years, following the Precede-Proceed model and played a pivotal role, benefiting 16.84% of patients within the multidisciplinary therapeutic framework (Grasso & Longo, 2023). Throughout the year, various types of outings are organized, accompanied by the use of specific tools, including video analysis, where audiovisual materials captured during outings aid in assessing progress and observation and evaluation forms. Establishing a habit of walking, particularly on flat terrain during cooler seasons, equips participants to tackle mountain excursions in the summer confidently. They can either venture independently or join mountain therapy groups affiliated with the department.

The project targets approximately 30 patients spanning ages 18 to 60, grappling with serious psychiatric pathologies such as psychosis, severe mood disorders and personality disorders. These individuals are under the care of Mental Health Centers as part of an Individualized Therapeutic Project, which encompasses various rehabilitation areas. The Mountain Therapy Project plays a vital role in their holistic well-being and recovery journey.

### ***“Pisa Marathon and Homeless Project”***

The Pisa Marathon and Homeless Project was started in Pisa, Italy, in 2014 with the main objective of promoting social inclusion in the community as a whole. This unusual initiative





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entailed the planning of a sporting event, specifically the town of Pisa's official marathon, with a course that passed by a Centre for Homeless People. The Centre for Homeless People typically operated daily, offering shelter from 19:30 to 7:45, complete with amenities like showers, laundry facilities, dinner, and breakfast services. Moreover, the centre extended its services on Mondays and Thursdays from 2:00 to 6:30 pm, serving as a PAAS point, where individuals could access computers and the internet, primarily for job searching.

Two groups of people were the intended beneficiaries of this initiative: homeless people seeking inclusion and all Pisa residents. The Pisa Marathon and Homeless Project served as a platform for the neighbourhood to work together, end social stigma, and create a more accepting and kind society. The Center's participation in this civic athletic event represented a cutting-edge strategy for combating homelessness. It reframed the discussion by portraying homelessness as both a dangerous issue and a significant asset for the city (Maxcer, 2015).

The fact that some homeless people, albeit a small number, took part in this campaign as runners is noteworthy. They were given an environment where they could express themselves as regular citizens, free from the weight of social stigma. The active participation of homeless people and committed community volunteers, who served as both runners and organizers, was what made this endeavor unique. They actively planned different facets of the marathon, including as putting up the course, creating refreshment stations for the runners, and organizing activities for kids during the marathon's wait times, in addition to their racing contributions.

### **“EVERYBODY HAS HIS OWN EVEREST”**

Megallo constructed a program applying a different form of exercise besides football. By organizing Risk Therapy Camps like the “Everybody has his own Everest” practice, the MegalloGroup Foundation aims to bring together disadvantaged youth, social helpers, and NGOs from foreign countries. These camps aim to immerse young people from challenging backgrounds in outdoor, adventurous activities to promote a healthy lifestyle, teach them the importance of planning and trust, and demonstrate the significance of teamwork in achieving goals. One of their specialties is working with recovering drug users, who also participate in the foundation's operations.





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The "Everybody Has His Own Everest" practice are multifaceted: **Promote a Healthier Lifestyle:** Remove disadvantaged youth from urban environments to engage them in healthy activities and encourage a sporty lifestyle; **Promote goal-setting and planning:** Use climbing as a metaphor for life, emphasizing the importance of planning and setting achievable goals; **Cultivate Trust:** Demonstrate the significance of trust in others by showcasing climbing as a paired activity where one person relies on another's support. Over a decade, they have taken 15-20 disadvantaged young people, annually, to Poland for risk therapy programs. A week-long camp, held near the Polish Tatra mountains in Mniszkow, involves disadvantaged participants, social helpers, and local government representatives. The camp consists of several key elements, including climbing easy routes, safety training for wall climbing, bungee jumping, and tirolka. The practice offers an excellent opportunity for communication, emphasizing the importance of an environmentally friendly and healthy lifestyle. It is relatively straightforward to implement, although some basic experience in adventure therapy or the involvement of an experienced climber is advisable. Legal and financial support is typically secured through local government funding or project proposals.

The Risk Therapy methodology employed by the "Everybody Has His Own Everest" practice has proven highly effective. It allows young substances users to distance themselves from urban distractions, enabling them to focus on self-improvement and mutual support during the camps. In this therapeutic setting, the intensive program, physical and mental challenges, achievable exercises, and small successes motivate participants to take better care of themselves and discover their own capabilities. Rock climbing, in particular, instils a sense of responsibility and mutual dependence. The participants, initially arriving as a disparate group, often leave the camp as a tightly-knit empowered team.

## CONCLUSION



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The review of the literature demonstrated that there are many examples of good practice in the use of sport as a tool for the bio-psycho-social development of those involved. However, it was possible to see that there is less information on the use of sports activities aimed at the "homeless" population. For the most part, the studies developed, or the theoretical postulations found were designed for more broadly defined target populations, namely the "elderly" and "young people".

After reflection by this working group, it was possible to identify that there are points in common between the homeless population, the elderly, and young people. We therefore thought it would be pertinent to use all the information available to develop this project. For example, the focus on experience, sharing, conviviality, the development of social skills, self-discovery and empathy, found in programmes aimed at young people; the adaptation of physical activities, space, response and services provided, due to social, cultural and health factors, found in programmes and projects developed with the elderly population. Both homeless people and the elderly can be the target of stigma and discrimination in society, which creates barriers to accessing services and participating in the community.

The phenomenon of people in vulnerable and/or homeless situations is a complicated and multidimensional challenge. Understanding and defining this reality has multiple meanings in different places around the world. It develops from a variety of conditions and experiences that differ according to each individual's social, economic, and cultural contexts. In this regard, it is crucial to define the target population of this project, taking into account the guidelines and directives of the European Social Policy Network (ESPN) and the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), in order to create and develop strategies to address this reality in a consistent and integrated manner.

We have therefore decided that the concept of "homelessness" used in this project is in line with the "Roofless" and "Houseless" categories defined by the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS). Roofless and Houseless are commonly acknowledged as forms of "homelessness" in nearly every nation. The Roofless conceptual category includes persons who live on the streets and those who use a night shelter. Individuals who spend the night on the streets or in open-air public spaces without proper







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shelter. The term "Roofless" refers to the most extreme form of homelessness. On the other hand, the concept of "Houseless" is wider than the Roofless category, comprising 5 categories from people in accommodation for the homeless, people in women's shelters, people in accommodation for migrants, people released from institutions, people receiving supported forms of housing for the homeless. Although they may not be literally homeless, they may live in unsuitable situations, such as temporary shelters, overcrowded facilities, friends' or family homes, or anywhere that is not a permanent dwelling. The concept of "Houseless" is broader than the Roofless category, which includes five categories, people in accommodation for the homeless, people in women's shelters, people in accommodation for migrants, people released from institutions and people receiving supported forms of housing for the homeless.

## SURVEY REPORT



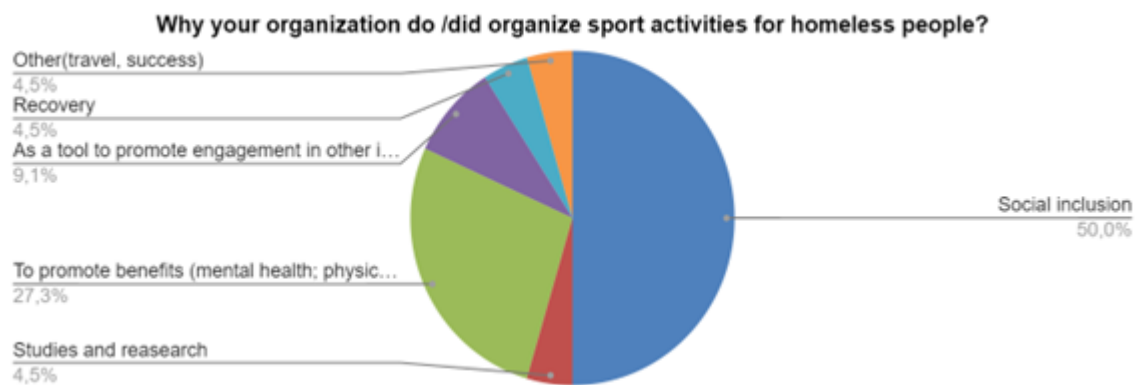


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### SURVEY FOR SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH HOMELESS PEOPLE

A total of 45 responses were collected from organisations and technicians working directly with the target population. Those who organised sports activities brought several reasons:



It was possible to verify that, in general, all the participants revealed a global and holistic view of the benefits that sport can bring, not only in physical terms but also in psychological and social terms. Examples of some significant responses are presented below:

- *“Sport provides not only physical and mental benefits but also relational and cooperative benefits.”*
- *“One of the foundations of sport is to live in a group, and then feel part of a certain social context. Sport, regardless of age, religion or social origin, has a great aggregate value and promotes physical and social well-being.”;*
- *“Useful to feel better, if done in a group helps in socialisation, allows a moment of leisure; difficult perhaps to have a uniformity of physical abilities.”;*
- *“Fantastic! A good way to improve health, daily activities, self-confidence, and social connections.”;*
- *“Sport is a great means to work on goals beyond health and mindset, such as making social contacts, developing social skills, collaboration, etc.”.*



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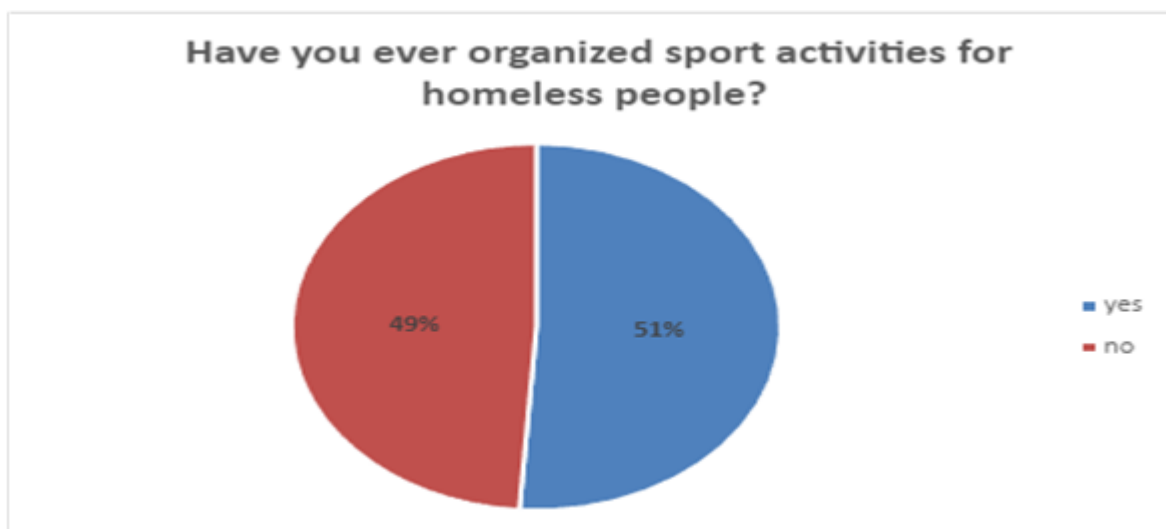
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- *“In addition to taking care of your health (prevention to fight diseases) and having a better quality of life, it can be an alternative to occupying time and training personal and social skills. It provides self-care and a more active mind. (...)”.*

It's important to highlight that the Social Inclusion that these organisations aim for can be achieved by everyone involved, whether they participate directly or indirectly in sporting activities.

When asked if these organisations have ever carried out sports activities with homeless people, we have the following results:

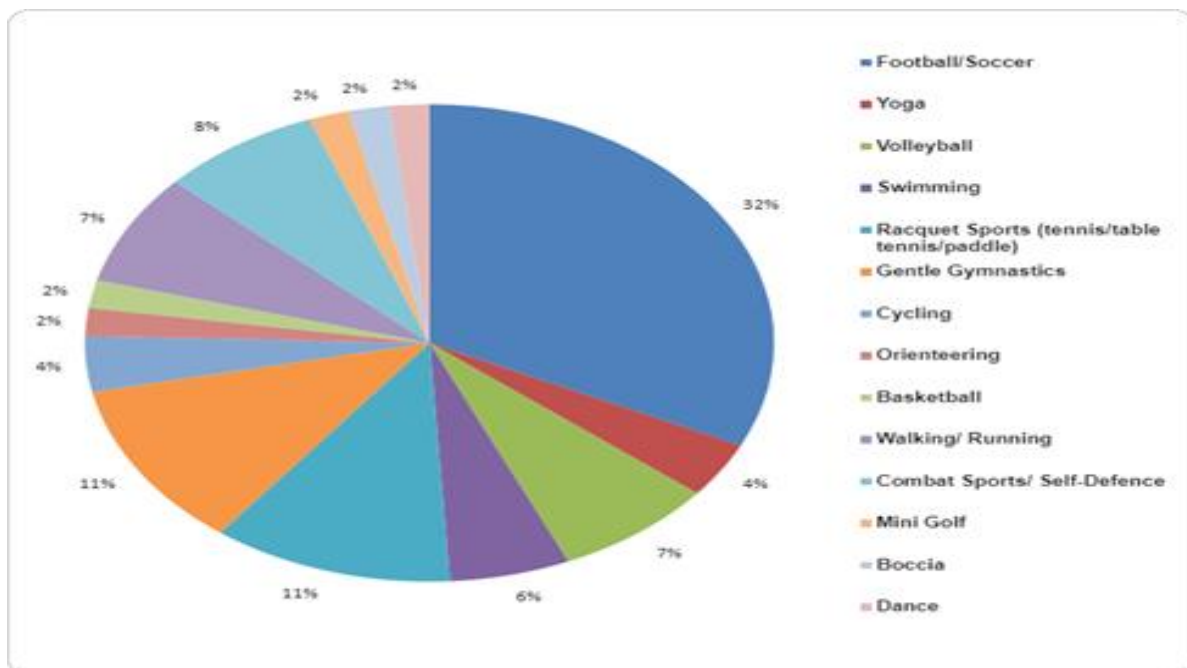


Regarding the sports and activities developed by the organisations surveyed, it was possible to verify a high incidence in the practice of football (32%) followed by gentle gymnastics (11%) and Racquet Sports (11%):

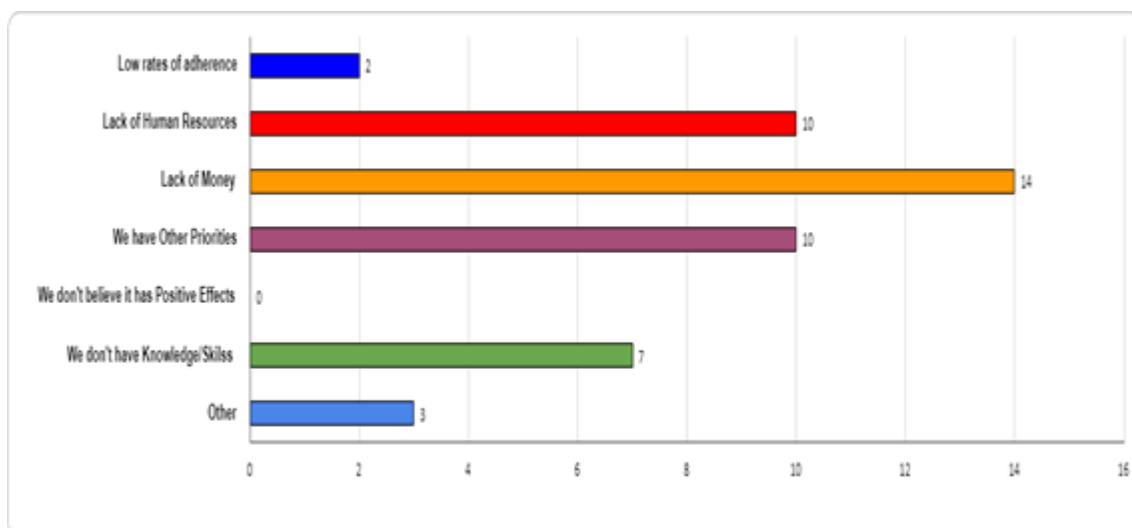




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Those who say they have never organised sports activities for homeless people associate the following reasons (it was possible to select one or more answers):



The financial issue can be overcome by building sports activities taking into account the resources available. It is possible to implement sports activities at low cost and without major changes to the existing conditions in each organisation, not all activities require a high cost in the purchase and acquisition of materials, the need to rent space or investment on the part of





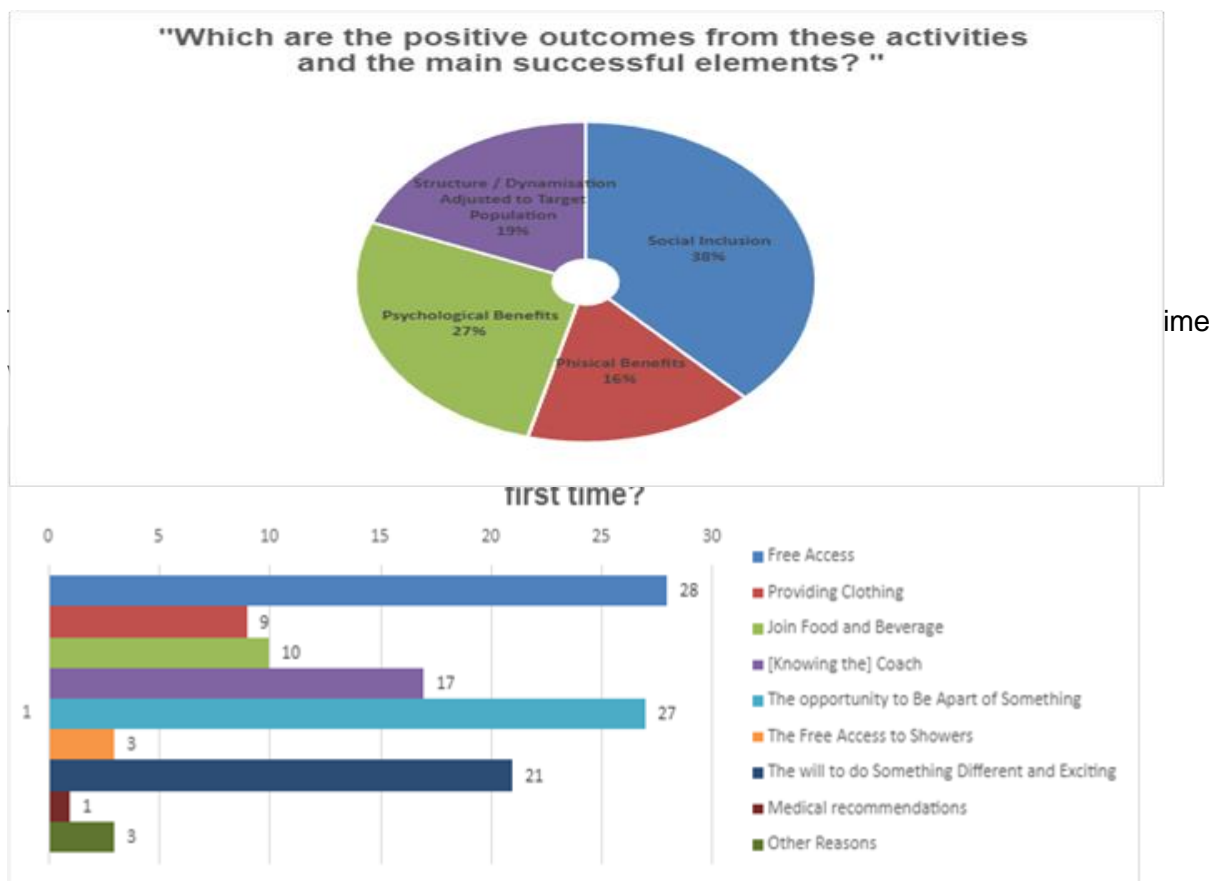
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the organisations. According to the WHO, the practice of sport can include taking part in aerobic activities such as dancing or outdoor walks.

Among the sports activities provided, we found that in the vast majority of cases they are implemented regularly - at least once a week (90%), while 10% are/were carried out "occasionally".

After analysing the answers given by participants to an open-ended question about the benefits and the main successful elements of sport activities, it was possible to identify four clusters: **27%** of the replies corresponded to **emotional and psychological benefits**; **16%** **physical and lifestyle**; **19%** **Structure / Dynamisation Adjusted to Target Population** and **38%** found **social inclusion benefits**.

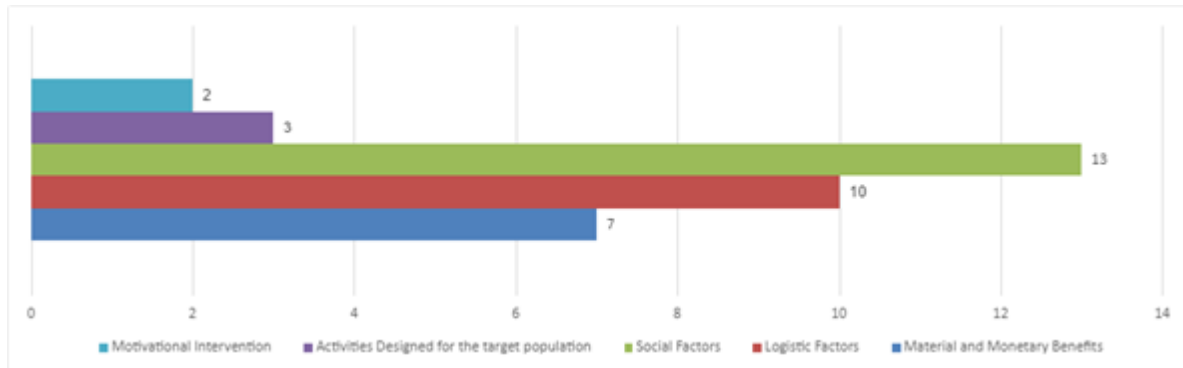




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On the other hand, regard to the question about factors favouring continuity over time of participation in sports. Each respondent could choose several answers:



Finally, all respondents report that they have received positive feedback from all participants in sporting activities, with responses including some very interesting ones, among them:

- *"We're having a great time..."*;
- *"Positive, they didn't think it was that good"*;
- *"The people who took part in the laboratory have returned to ask for the continuity of activities for the beneficial effects had both on the relational and physical"*;
- *"They feel fitter and better (...)"*;
- *"They are glad that it exists."; "It aligns well with their desires. Nice interpersonal connections. You can participate at your own pace and level. There is mutual understanding."*



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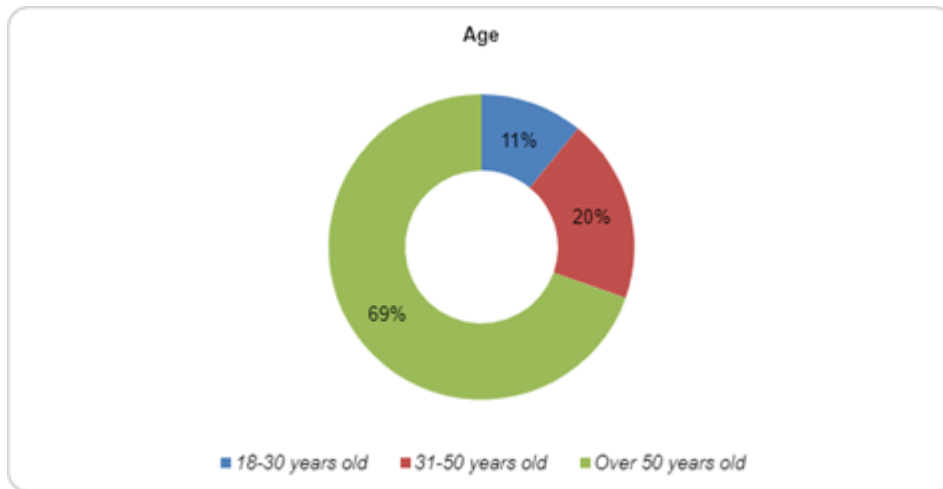


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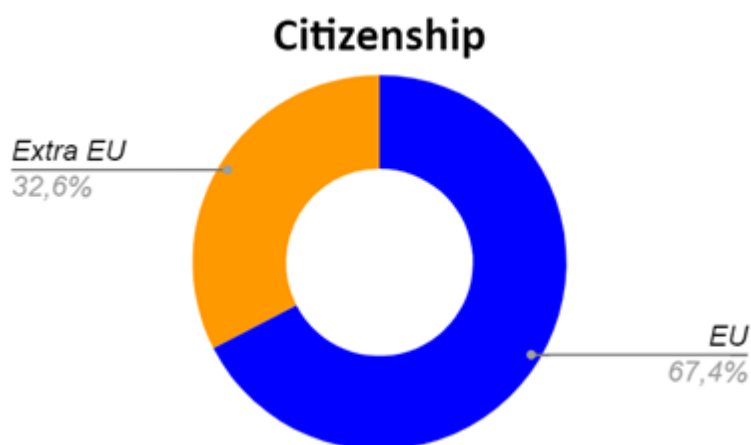


### SURVEY FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

The questionnaires were administered to **46** individuals who are currently or have been homeless in the past. Of the total number of participants, 89% were male and 11% female, aged between 18 and 50 or more with the following distribution:



Considering the Nationalities/ Citizenship of the respondents, represented in the graph below, a higher number of European individuals (28) compared to nationalities located outside of the European Union (15), such as individuals from African states.



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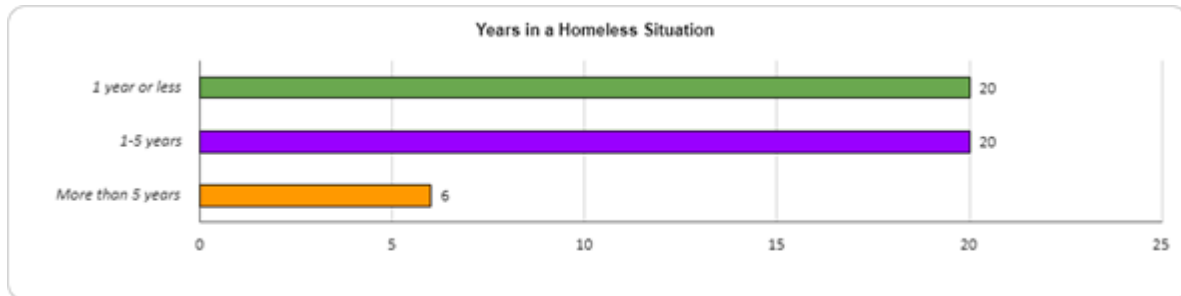




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Regarding the duration of homelessness at present or in the past, it became clear that due to the causes of job loss, pandemic or caused by substance addictions and reports that this situation has been seriously marginalised for a long time:



The question of what you think about sport, considering that the interviewed could give more answers for them suitable, for a lot of people the answer is attributable to the area health and well-being, recognizing how sport in general helps mind and body to be able to: *“feel well and satisfied”*; *“to combat addictions”*. For some people it is a tool for socialising and sharing time in a constructive and positive way (e.g.: *“it allows you to meet new people”*; *“you feel less alone”*).

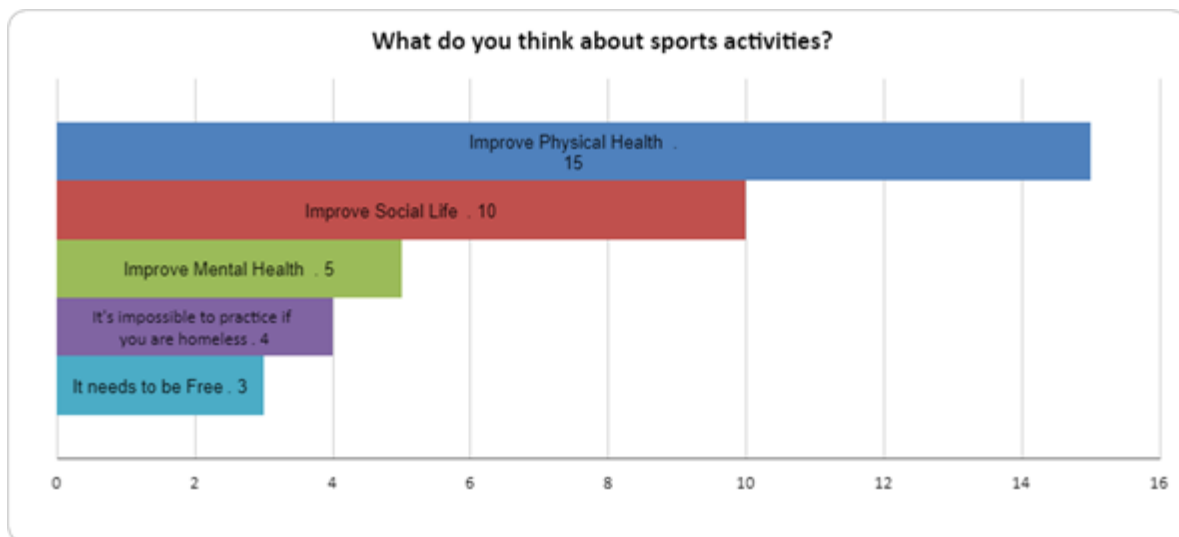
Some people recognise that the financial factor of playing sport is one of the most significant factors in whether or not they are able to actively participate in sport (e.g.: *“if some sports were free, I go back to playing sports.”*; *“The advantage for me is that there are no obligations like in a club, and it is free.”*).



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When asked if they perform or have performed sports activities, only 13 out of 46 individuals interviewed reported practising some kind of physical or sporting activity. The remaining 33 reported that they do not engage in any form of sporting activity, in many cases due to their social or health conditions that prevent them from carrying out their regular physical activities. However, among those who practise sport, 40% do so between two and three times a week, 33% three or more times a week and 27% once a week.

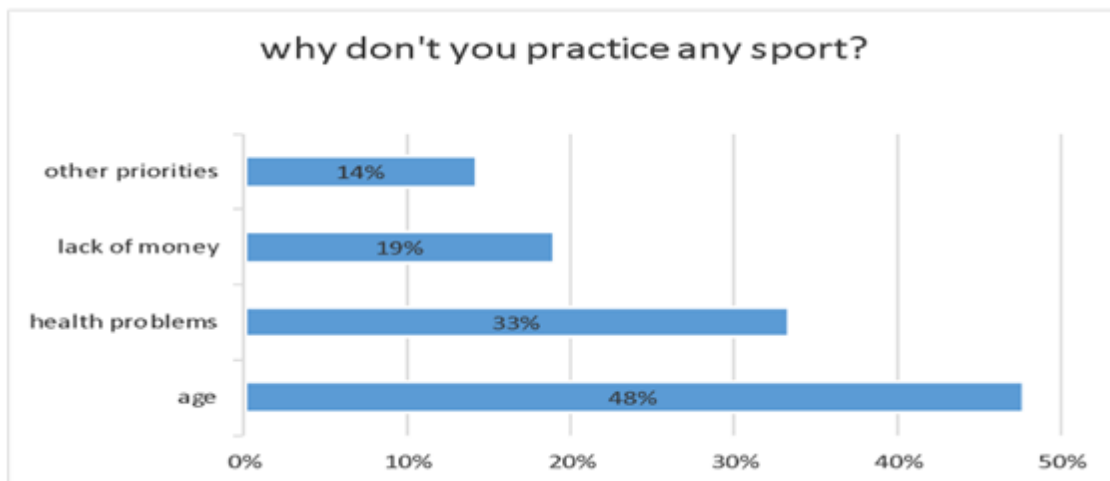
When asked why they do not participate in sporting activities, considering the sample interviewed, 48% report that they are unable to carry out sporting activities due to age: *“at 70 who gets me to play sport?”*; 33% people reported disabling health problems to carry out any sporting activity: *“I have too many health problems that do not allow me to devote myself to sport”*; 19% due to lack of economic resources preferring to use money for other priorities; 14% due to lack of free time and other priorities such as work: *“when I'm free I prefer to go looking for work, send CVs.”*

Once again, it's important to emphasise that the concept of sports activities might be associated with high-intensity, large-scale activities. Issues such as age or health conditions may not prevent participation in activities, but sports practices must be adjusted to the target population and their needs.





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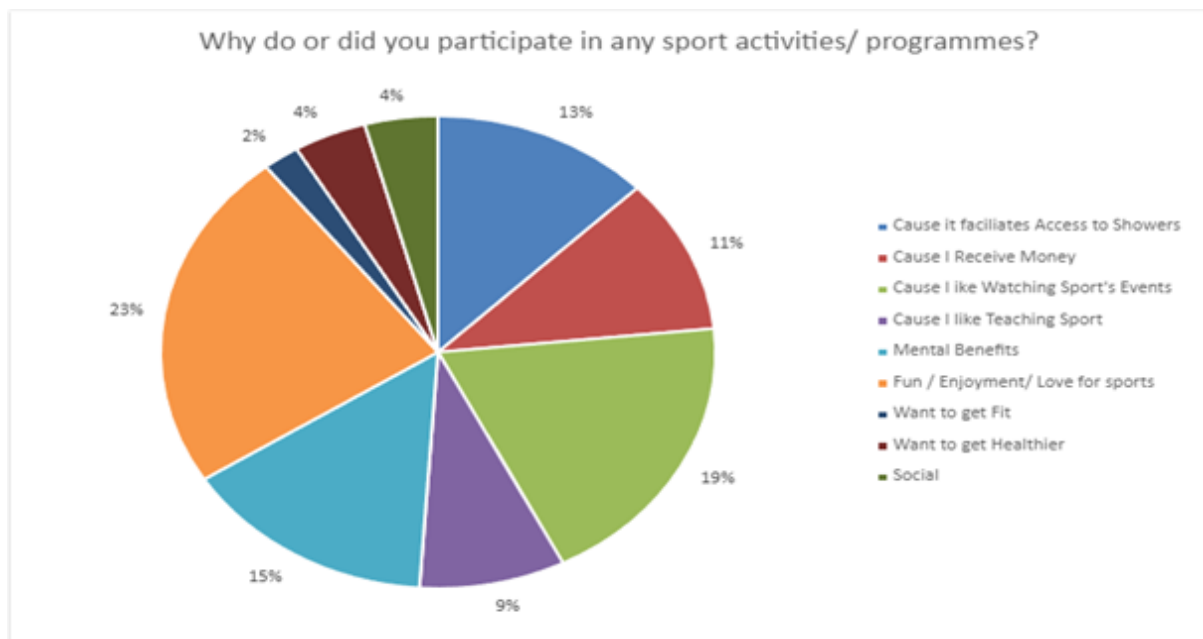


On the other end, to the question “why did you participate or participate in sports activities?”: 23% of the answers were related to the joy and pleasure of practising sport (e.x.: *“It’s fun, healthy, social, and I love sports.”*); 15% recognised the mental benefits associated with practising sport; 13% of the answers were related to the access to showers (e.g.: *“at the camp there is less queue for washing unlike dedicated services”*); 11% for economic gains (e.g.: *“I was paid to play football and this allowed me an extra income”*); 19% to indirect participation (e.g.: *“I like to watch the games on TV”; “As a young man I went every Sunday to the camp to cheer my team.”*) and 19% of the replies considered the possibility to become a coach (e.g.: *“I was good at taekwondo, I would have liked to teach it to children.”*).

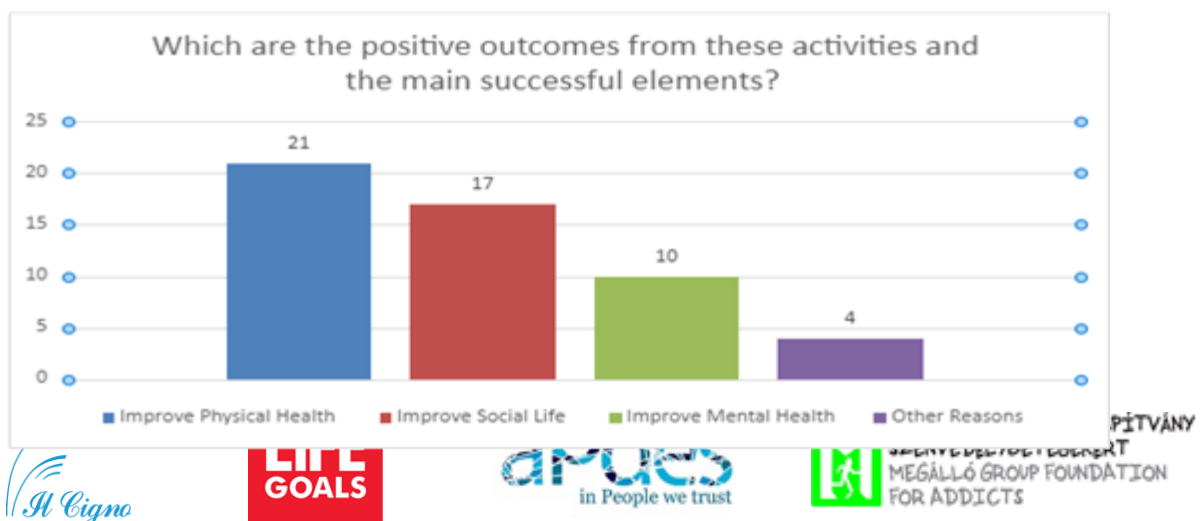




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About the positive outcomes of these sports activities, most of the respondents responded by emphasising the fun that results and the positive aspect of socialisation and the birth of new friendships: *When I did sports, it didn't matter if I lost or won, the important thing was to be together.* Others respondents responded by emphasising mental serenity as a positive consequence of sports activities: sport helps me relieve stress, Practising sports made me relax; some people report that through sport they learned self-defence techniques and how to react in case of danger; some people report that the sport improves and maintains physical agility; 1 person reports countless benefits for the body as the main outcome of sports; 1 person reports the consequence of sleeping and rest much better; another of the positive aspect of being in the fresh air and experience nature; 1 person reports that he has a very good relationship with the coach.

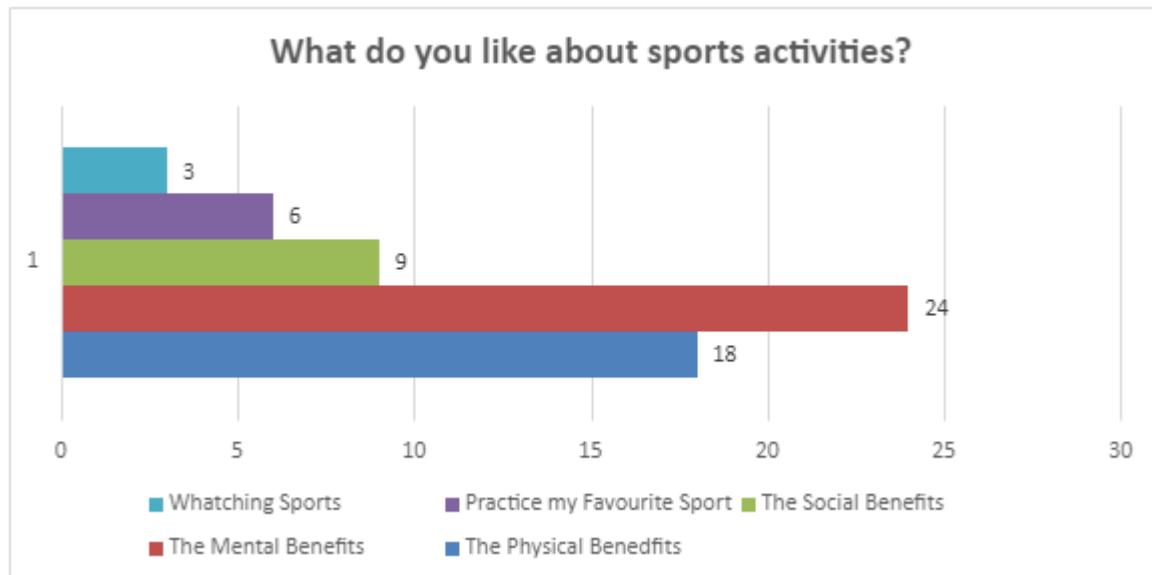




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When asked "what do you like about sport?", most people replied that they appreciate the psychophysical benefits that follow; another group of people report that they appreciate the connection with others.



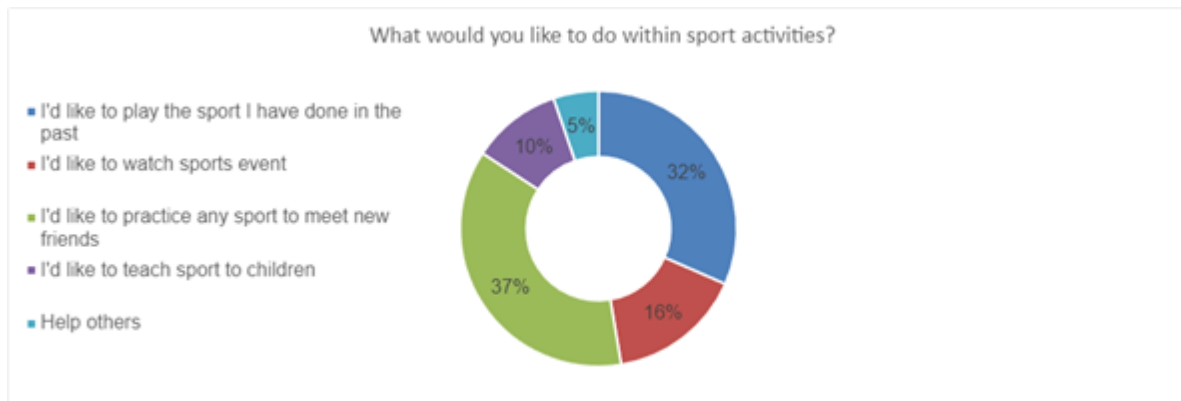
Regarding the question "What would you like to do within sport activities?", it was found that a large number of the answers obtained (32%) are related to the desire to return to a sport practised in the past (e.g.: *"I would like to continue to dance and practice dance."*) and 37% to the motivation to establish and maintain positive and meaningful relationships with other people (e.g.: *"I want to play and train with others."*).

The social aspect of sport is a factor that most participants recognise as important for them to take part in a sport activity. The Psychological Benefits mentioned in the previous question are also related: feelings of well-being and self-knowledge are directly linked to feelings of belonging and integration into a group. We can therefore say that psychological benefits can be considered a cause and/or consequence of social inclusion, and vice versa.

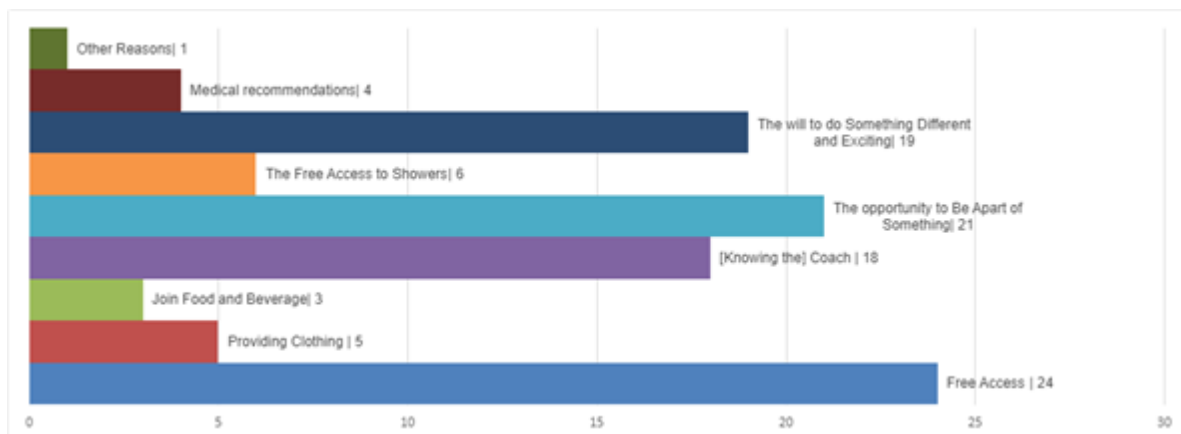




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About the factors that motivate people to participate for the first time in sports activities, the participants defined that free access and the need to establish relationships with others and diminish feelings of loneliness were the main factors to engage in sports:

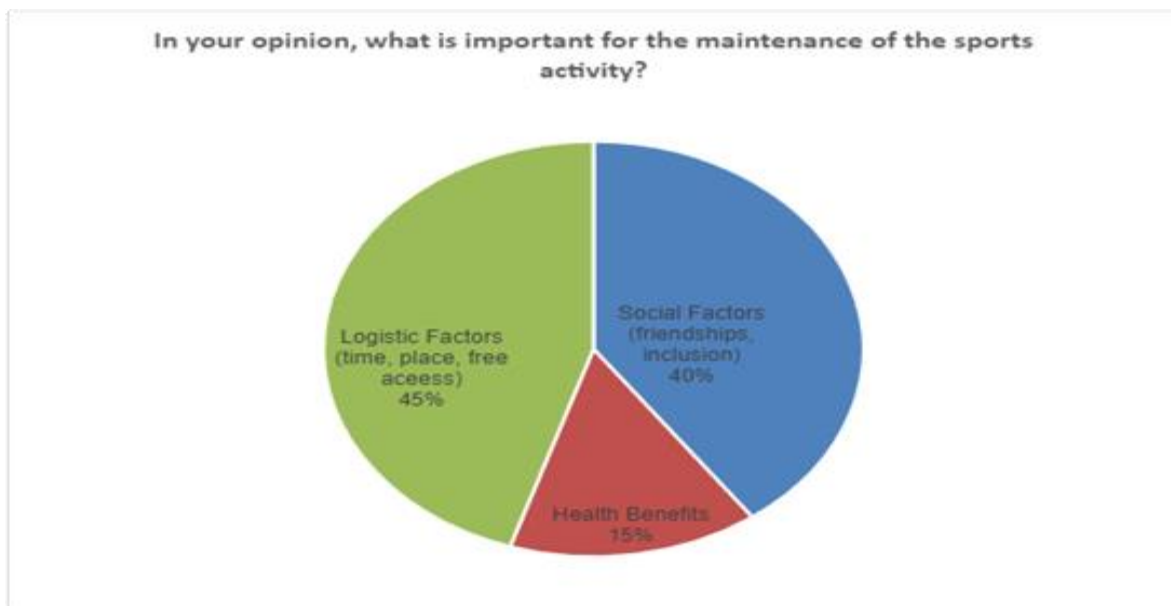


This tendency remained for the factors that encourage the continuity in sports programmes and activities, 45% of the results are aligned with the need to provide free access to sports, while 40% of the obtained answers emphasise social and relational factors to keep sports as a recurrent activity in the individual's life.





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#### SURVEY FOR SPORTS ORGANISATIONS

It was possible to collect 48 interviews with sports organisations and/or their coaches. They were asked about their perception of the strengths and benefits associated with engaging in a sporting activity. In general, all the answers obtained made reference to the benefits for physical health, such as disease prevention and improved quality of life. But also, for mental health, both in the prevention of diseases and in the reduction of existing psychopathological symptoms, without ever excluding the relational component and subsequent social inclusion of its participants (e.g.: *“Physical and Mental Health, Well-being and prevention of numerous diseases.”*; *“It improves physical and mental health, as well as being good for the social aspect.”*; *“Promotes physical, emotional and mental well-being. Nurtures a spirit of mutual help and cooperation.”*).

Most of the sports organisations or sports coaches who responded to the questionnaire reported working with children and young people (13), but also with people in vulnerable situations (17), whether physical, mental, socio-economic, addictions, ex-offenders or refugees.



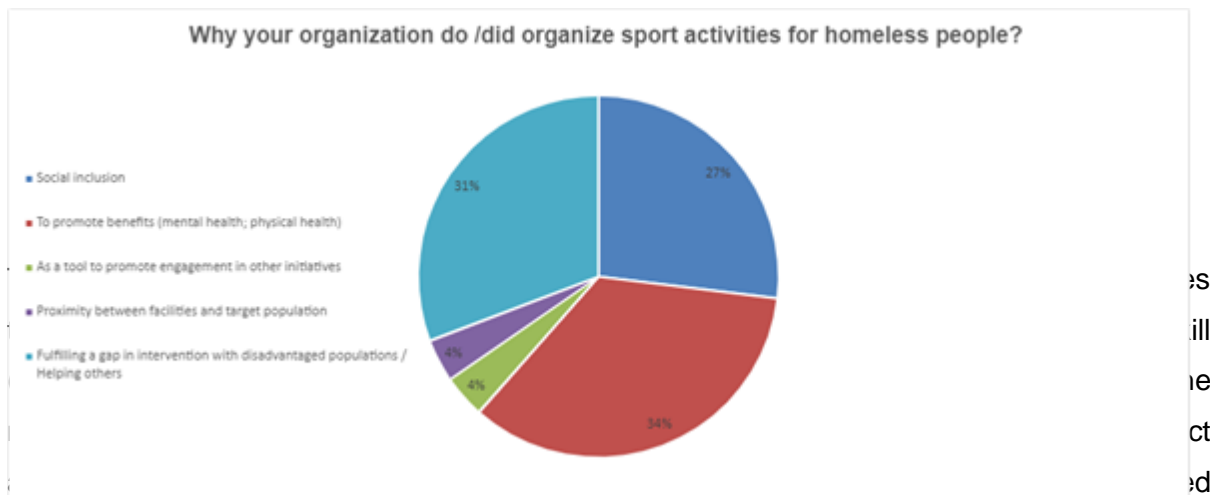




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23 of the participants stated that they either carry out or have carried out some kind of sports activity or sports programme with people experiencing homelessness. The reasons that led to the development of these sports programmes were: fostering social inclusion, promoting benefits (mental health; physical health), as a tool to promote involvement in other initiatives, proximity between facilities and target population and fulfilling a gap in intervention with disadvantaged populations / helping others.

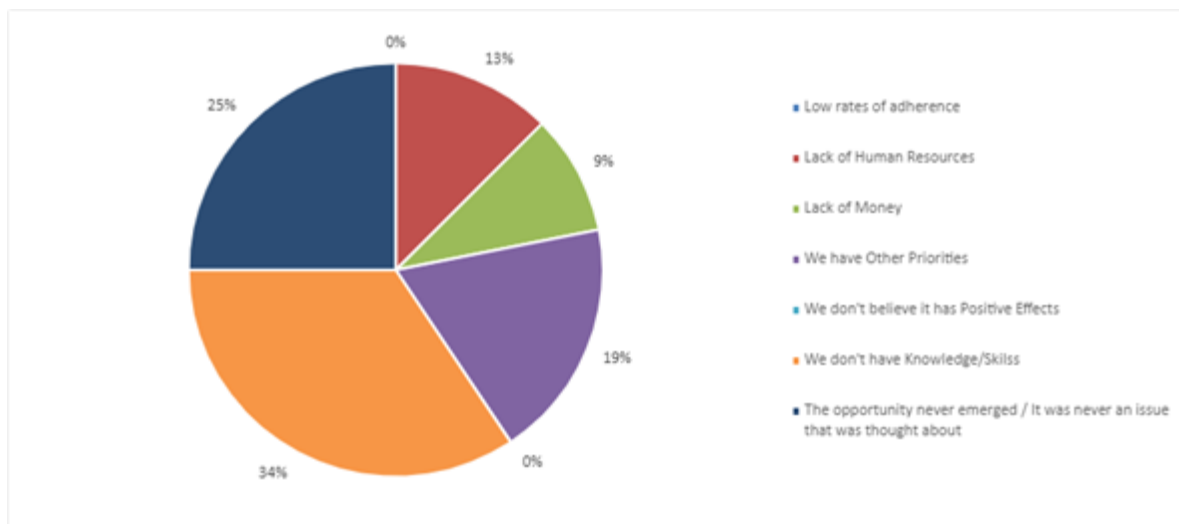


or questioned (25%).

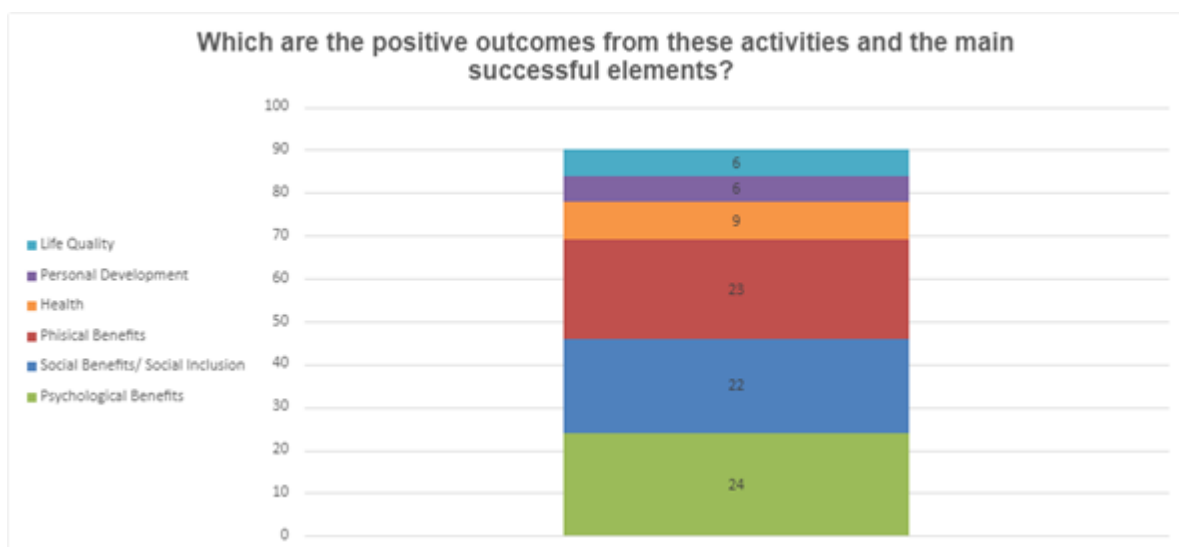




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The majority of the outcomes identified are related to psychological factors such as the reduction of anxious symptoms, the change of perception about others and themselves, but also to the improvement of the social condition/participation of the individuals (e.g.: *"Helps lower stress and anxiety levels and combat some mental illnesses such as depression"; "It does help them release the stress they accumulate every day, connect with others, feel alive and seen, heard by others."*).



When asked about the differences between organising a sports activity/programme with people experiencing homelessness compared to regular sports activities, participants

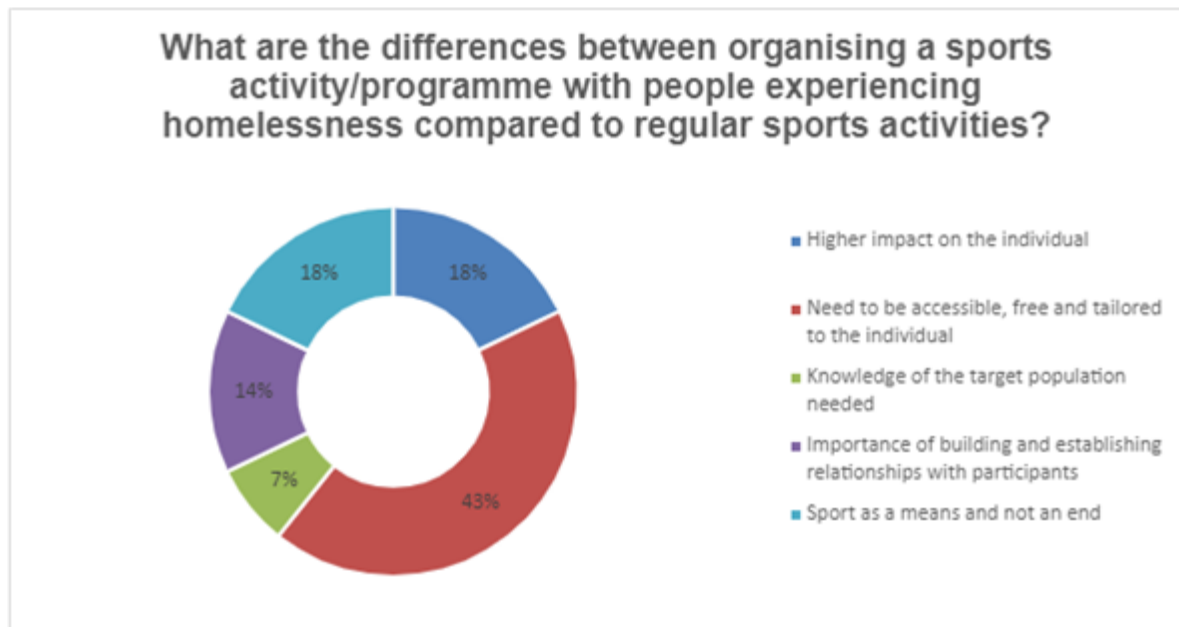




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identified the necessity of adapting programmes to the target audience, namely accessibility and being free (43%). It was also recognised that sport with people experiencing homelessness is a tool that can be used to change the lives of its participants (18%), therefore becoming a vehicle for change (18%).



## CONCLUSION

By reading the data obtained, it was possible to see that Sports Organisations identify a lack of knowledge about the target population as the main reason for not implementing activities with homeless people. On the other hand, the organisations that provide support to this population say that the main reasons why they don't develop sports programmes are related to financial issues and a lack of human resources. These obstacles can be overcome through partnerships and the integration of different stakeholders, resulting in added value due to the underlying complementarity of each partner. Know-how can be provided by organisations that work with homeless people, and materials, coaches and the necessary conditions for sports can be provided by sports organisations.



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Once again, it is important to emphasise the great need to adapt activities to the conditions of their participants. It is these conditions and needs that should be the main focus when defining and designing activities. Even when there are conditions that make it impossible for an individual to actively participate in sport (health conditions, age, never having played a sport), they can and should be assigned roles that allow them to participate indirectly. For example, in the organisation of activities or in other support roles (e.g.: referee, providing food support, coach, etc.).

Practising sport with this target population should focus on inclusion, social integration, sharing moments and knowledge, personal development and the pleasure that comes from practising sport, and not on the sporting or financial results that may result.



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