

## Partnership with the Health Sector

### *The Public Health sector*

...has within its overall goal of primary prevention of diseases the task to facilitate multilevel, coordinated action to counteract the epidemic of physical inactivity. With its widespread network on national, regional and local level the Public Health sector is a suitable strategic partner for the sport sector, on one hand to support with knowledge and expertise in the field of health-promotion and on the other hand for advocacy and promotion of the SCforH approach of a sport association to public authorities and to other parts of the health sector.

### *The Health care sector*

...is the crucial partner for SCforH promotion. Health care professionals (medics, nurses, physiotherapists, nutritionists) working with individuals and settings (e.g. schools, work-places, hospitals, senior-homes) can provide counselling in relation to HEPA and refer them to sport-clubs with a SCforH program. On the national level the umbrella-organization of medics, the National Medical Council, can play an important role as this organization is credible and powerful to advise and train their members in regard to HEPA promotion. In some countries the Medical Council has launched already an "Exercise prescription", which can be handed out by a physician to advise for health-enhancing physical activities.

All in all the consciousness and knowledge about the positive effects of physical activity and sport for prevention of illnesses has grown within the health-care sector. But a convincing and consistent SCforH approach is a precondition for partnership with the health-care sector. A perceptible partnership with this sector is an important step for the public and political recognition of sport-associations and their clubs as competent stakeholder in the field of health promotion.

### *Health insurance providers*

...are usually commissioned to reimburse medical costs. But in many countries they are also entitled and sometimes obliged to use parts of the budget for health prevention, including HESA promotion. Assuming that a certain level of physical activity is the most efficient and cost-effective way of preventing disease and promoting well-being. Supporting HESA initiatives has in their opinion the potential to yield a high return on investment.

Health insurance providers pursue different directions to support health enhancing physical activities. Some offer own courses for their clients. But to avoid financial investments in personnel and infrastructures of physical activity programs, the most usual way is cooperation with existing providers of physical activity programs, such as sport organizations or fitness centers. Based on certain contracts the insurance companies reimburse participation costs of their clients in activities of such providers. Another option is to offer financial incentives (bonus payments) to clients, who are (or are becoming) physically active. Such financial incentives can also be directed to providers of health care services. For example, physician can be financially rewarded for encouraging patients for more physical activity ("Exercise on Prescription").

Health insurance companies have also in their marketing-budget resources to be used for sponsorship of projects and initiatives for HESA promotion.

Such possibilities to support physical activity promotion should be used as a driving force by sport-associations and their clubs for creating and implementing a SCforH approach and to cooperate with health insurance companies.

## Examples

### Case Study: The German Gymnastic Federation (DTB) and Health-Sector partnership

#### Outline of the partners involved

The German Gymnastic Federation is the leading sport association in Germany in the field of HESA promotion. This position is historically based on the tradition of gymnastics as non-competitive activity for everybody in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, focussing on fitness and health benefits. More than 80% of the 5 million members are active in 'Gymnastic for All' as a recreational sport activity. But the federation has developed since 25 years a more decisive approach to HESA initiatives and put exercise programs (HEXE) into the focus. Cooperation and partnership with different stakeholders of the health sector plays a crucial role within the DTB HESA-Strategy.

- The health insurance companies are entitled by law to reimburse costs for participation of clients in HEXE programs, certified with the quality mark "Pluspunkt Gesundheit.DTB". With the umbrella organisation of health insurance providers (VDEK) the federation pursues close partnership based on special contracts.
- Due to cooperation with the German Medical Council, the German Sport Confederation received the official accreditation of the quality certificates "Sport pro Gesundheit" and "Pluspunkt Gesundheit.DTB" and launched the "Exercise Prescription".
- Individual cooperation contracts with health insurance companies support special campaigns and the creation of new HEXE programs of DTB.
- DTB fosters cooperation with federal ministries (ministry of health; ministry for families, seniors, women and youth) based on special projects for health promotion.
- DTB fosters partnership with the "German Centre of Health Education" (BZGA) in the frame of different projects.



#### Why and how did partnership happen?

The health benefits of physical exercises and sport to counteract health risks and diseases had been evaluated in many studies. But the organised sport sectors had been for a long time very reserved, to become a competent partner to promote explicitly health enhancing physical activities. Recognizing the growing consciousness for fitness and health related activities in big parts of the population in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and according consequently to the needs of Gym-cubs and their members the federation started to create and implement HESA initiatives and a pin-point program "Health Sport". Rather soon it became obvious, that these initiatives –mostly self-made without evidence control- was not sufficient to find recognition, never mind real support from stakeholders of the health sector. Moreover, counteracting to the upcoming professional fitness- and health market needed a new approach. Based on the "Concept for Health-Sport" of the German Association for Sport Science with 6 quality criteria (derived from the WHO-Charter on Health Promotion and New Public Health) and supported through a research project "Quality Management of Health

Sport in Clubs” the DTB created its “Quality Management Concept” with the main pillars of evidence based health enhancing exercise programs (HEXE) and a special health related instructors education.

The quality improvement of HESA initiatives was a real breakthrough for a trustful and productive partnership with partners of the health sector.

#### What are the aims of the partnership?

- The DTB see his main task to act as service provider for his member-clubs. With a high quality of HEXE programs and specifically educated instructors the clubs would be able to meet the needs of their members and customers for quality assured health effects of the provided activities. Moreover the clubs should be able to compete on the professional fitness- and health-market.
- The improved recognition of the federation by the health-sector as a competent partner for health promotion due to an evidence based quality management system is the door-opener for project funding and sponsorship for HESA programs on the national, regional and local level.
- Within the obligation to enhance well-being and health the health-sector stakeholders can utilize the sport-sector to promote HEPA for a wider range of the population. Sport organisations like the DTB with a focus on recreational sport activities have a direct access to a huge amount of members and clients throughout its versatility and cost effectiveness.

This win-win situation is the basis of a productive cooperation and partnership since many years.

#### How is the partnership managed and implemented?

Prevention through physical activities and sport is a task of law for health insurance companies in Germany (§ 20, SGB IV). In regard to this law the partnership with health insurance companies is settled through an overall contract between DTB and the umbrella organisation of the health insurance companies VDEK. This contract is based on common guidelines, fixing special quality standards for HESA, demanding effectiveness and evidence. The health insurance companies can reimburse costs for participation of clients in HESA programs, certified with the quality mark “Sport pro Gesundheit.DTB” and additionally since 2014 accredited through the Central Certification Agency (ZPP). The whole procedure is managed through the federation in cooperation with the German Olympic Sport Confederation DOSB.

In regular contact to individual health insurance companies, to the German Centre of Health Education and to health related corporations from the private sector the federation tries to identify relevant topical cooperation measures and develops project ideas, to be funded by the partners. They are on one hand directed to internal target groups of the DTB and on the other hand to target groups within the special interest of the cooperation partners. The federation is normally the initiator and manager of such projects.

The cooperation with political institutions on the national and regional level is based on one hand on support for bigger health promoting conventions/congresses and on the other hand on call for tenders within HESA topics. Due to the high recognition of DTB as a competent stakeholder in the area of HESA promotion the federation had been granted frequently with public funds. Moreover the DTB was leader of EU granted projects in the area of HEPA promotion.

#### What are the benefits of the partnership?

The benefits of the partnerships with health sector stakeholders are significant and can be marked as a real success story. The fitness- and health section of DTB is since many years the most dynamic growing part of the federation, both regarding increasing membership and expanding activities. Actually 72% of the 20.000 DTB-clubs offer HESA/HEXE activities. 35.000 instructors specially licenced for HESA/HEXE initiatives, take care for a successful provision of the programs in the clubs. 50% of gym-clubs cooperate with health-insurance companies on the local level. More than 50% of the gym-clubs want to increase the number of HESA initiatives.

The constant development of quality assured HESA/HEXE programs, the high quality of the education measures, carrying out of new projects and campaigns for HEPA promotion keeps the wheel running. DTB would not have been able to master all these tasks on his own. Only the partnership, including substantial financial support and advice from different stakeholders of the health sector, made the success possible.