

# Factors and actions to prevent dropout in youth sport: results of a rapid review and expert opinions.

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## INTRODUCTION

- Physical activity of young people in Europe is decreasing and dropout from sports participation is identified as a key problem between the ages of 12 and 19 years. The statistics on dropout estimate that 35% of youth participants dropout of sport each year (1).
- Sport dropout is defined as the “prolonged absence of systematic practice and competition, either in one sport (sport-specific dropout) or all sports (sport general dropout)” (2).
- A vast majority of research examines the factors related to sport participation in youngsters (3,4), but there is a need to recognise factors and identify actions for preventing youth sport dropout (1).

## OBJECTIVE(S)

The objectives of this study were to:

- Conduct a review of the published and grey literature to identify factors associated with prevention of youth sport dropout, and;
- Identify actions for preventing youth sport dropout from good practice examples in a range of countries.

## METHOD(S)

Factor Identification:

- A search syntax was developed and entered into relevant databases, including EBSCOhost, Scopus, and PUBMED.
- Two researchers assessed the title and abstract of the studies to determine if they satisfied the following criteria: i) review study; ii) focusing on youngsters aged 12 -19 years; and iii) examining factors associated with sports dropout.
- Additionally, members of the project team were asked to identify known grey literature, using a standardised collection template, that would support or add to the published literature findings.

Action Identification:

- Members of the project team were asked to identify actions that aid with the prevention of youth sport dropout from good practice examples in each of the partner countries.
- Information regarding the actions were collected using a standardised collection template.

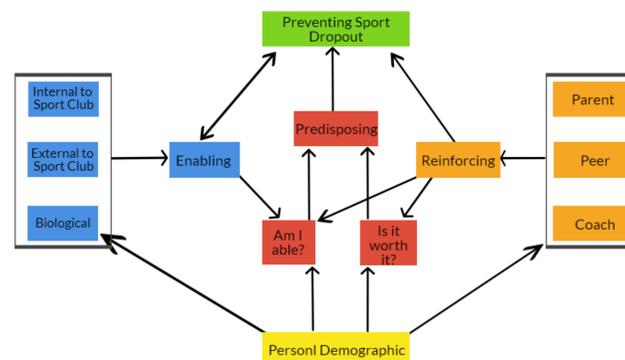
Expert Opinions:

- The factors and actions were presented at project meetings (n = 4) to members of the advisory board, researchers, practitioners and coaches.
- A ‘Keep Youngsters Involved’ seminar was held as part of HEPA 2017 to gain expert opinions and advise on the future directions of the project.
- National meetings (n = 7) were held in order to gain feedback from policy makers, local sport officers, researchers, teachers and coaches involved in youth sports.

## RESULT(S)

Factors associated with preventing youth sport dropout:

- Three studies (5-7), from the 440 identified, met the desired criteria, with 144 factors observed.
- The ten pieces of grey literature (e.g. national reports, PhD theses) identified supported the published literature findings, and added nine additional factors.
- Project meetings, national meetings and the HEPA 2017 seminar were used to refine the literature findings into the 14 factors for preventing youth sport dropout. These factors can be organised based on a framework for preventing youth sport dropout created using two existing frameworks (8,9):



**Predisposing Factors** Am I able: Autonomy, Perceived Competence

Is it worth it: Relatedness, Youngsters Expectancies, Values toward Sport

**Reinforcing Factors** Coach-Athlete Relationship, Parental Support, Peer-Involvement

**Enabling Factors** Cost, Accessibility, Type of Sport, Learning Climate, Retention Policy, Time Conflicts

Actions for preventing youth sport dropout:

- One-hundred and fifty-nine actions that aid with the prevention of youth sport dropout were identified from the partner countries.
- These actions prevent dropout through one or more of the factors identified and were categorised as actions for sport clubs or sport coaches and trainers.
- Knowledge gained from the meetings and HEPA seminar led to the development of flashcards to present the actions identified. Examples of these flashcards can be found below.

<p><b>1: AUTONOMY</b></p> <p>Create a <b>youth committee</b>, to participate in club decisions. <b>Sharing leadership and decision-making with youngsters</b> is sharing on the rewards of sport.</p> <p>Actions for clubs</p>	<p><b>2: PERCEIVED COMPETENCE</b></p> <p>Use the <b>IDEAL principle</b> to coach the players:</p> <p>Introduce skills Demonstrate skills Explain skills Attend to practice of skill Look and observe giving positive feedback.</p> <p>Actions for coaches/trainers</p>	<p><b>10: Peer-Involvement in Sport</b></p> <p>Introduce a <b>'buddy system'</b> to ensure new players felt welcome and part of the club.</p> <p>Actions for clubs</p>	<p><b>4: CLIMATE</b></p> <p>Treat <b>everybody equal</b> and promote equity.</p> <p>Actions for coaches/trainers</p>	<p><b>12: RETENTION POLICY</b></p> <p>Clubs need to tailor their coaching policy to ensure the <b>player is at the centre of their focus 100%</b> of the time and to create the right environment to ensure retention.</p> <p>Actions for clubs</p>
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## CONCLUSION(S)

- The popularity and associated benefits of sport participation do not seem to be sufficient for retaining youngsters, with evidence suggesting that participation peaks at 11 to 13 years before declining through adolescence (10, 11).
- The identification of these 14 factors has the potential to increase our understanding into the ways of preventing youth sport dropout and reversing the trend currently reported.
- The actions collected in this project can aid sport clubs and coaches with preventing youth sport dropout at the grass-root level.
- Future steps of the ‘Keep Youngsters Involved’ project aim to convert the information gathered into a manual and toolkit to help sport clubs and coaches understand and prevent youth sport dropout.

More information regarding the factors, actions and project updates are available online at [www.keepyoungstersinvolved.eu](http://www.keepyoungstersinvolved.eu).

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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