

Game-changing fitness plan for football fans

An EU-funded project has developed a game-changing physical activity programme held at professional football clubs that motivates overweight fans to get moving and lead healthier lives. Its goal is to help prevent chronic diseases among middle-aged men and cut public healthcare costs.



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Men who are not physically active and overweight can face a host of health problems, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Often, regular exercise can make a big difference. But for many, getting going and staying motivated is a struggle.

The EU-funded EUROFIT project tackled that challenge by creating a lifestyle-change programme geared specifically towards male football fans that taps into their love of the game and loyalty towards their team.

The three-month EuroFIT programme – which grew out of collaboration with some 20 top football clubs in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal – consists of weekly 90-minute sessions. Comprising both physical activity and learning skills for behaviour change, it encourages men to lead more active, healthier lives. The sessions are held at football-club facilities and run by trained coaches.

As of January 2019, the programme will be made available under licence to football clubs, associations and league operators around Europe. It has already been adopted by the Portuguese Football Federation and has become part of Portugal's national physical activity strategy.

'With the overwhelming popularity of football amongst men, EuroFIT offers football organisations and commissioning agencies a cost-effective and targeted solution to intervene in the rising health problems and costs associated with inactivity and obesity within this population group,' says project coordinator Sally Wyke of the University of

Glasgow in the UK.

The programme was tested in a gold-standard, randomised control trial involving more than 1 100 men across Europe. It resulted in greater physical activity, increased weight loss, as well as improved diets and a boost in overall wellbeing, according to Wyke.

Full results will be published by the end of the year.

Getting an insider's view of their club is a major draw for many men, Wyke says. 'And they really enjoy the fact that the club they have supported all of their lives is now caring about them,' she adds.

Project details

- **Project acronym:**EUROFIT
- **Participants:**UK (Coordinator), Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Ireland, Belgium
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- **Total cost:** €7 775 325
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See also

Project web site: <http://eurofitp7.eu/>
Project details:
http://cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/109459_en.html

View the article online:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?artid=37277

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