

# MOVE THE MIND KNOWLEDGE BASE

AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION THAT  
SPORT CAN HAVE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – ENGLISH



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Move The Mind Knowledge Base examines the intersection of sport and mental well-being within the context of the Move the Mind project. The project is co-funded by the European Union and seeks to capitalize on the synergy between sport and mental well-being. While acknowledging the complexities involved, it aims to support sport coaches and working-age adults to better harness the benefits of sport for well-being.

The World Health Organization's definition of mental health, emphasizing well-being and the ability to cope with life's challenges, serves as a foundational principle and starting point for the Knowledge Base. Then, it highlights various aspects disrupting the mental well-being across populations. It showcases evidence that some sort of mental disorders are affecting a quarter of the global population at some point in life. And that mental health challenges rank third after cardiovascular disease and cancer in terms of overall disease burden in Europe.

The Knowledge Base outlines that the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the challenges related to mental well-being in Europe and world-wide: It has accentuated the vulnerability of individuals' both physical and mental health. The pandemic-induced fears of illness, loss, and economic instability have compounded the importance of addressing mental well-being. And even after the pandemic has ended, these mental well-being repercussions are expected to maintain or even extend.

Amid these circumstances, the Knowledge Base shows that potential mental well-being benefits of engaging in sports and physical activities have gained recognition and that they have been widely endorsed to bolster mental well-being. Yet, it clarifies that navigating this complex thematic terrain requires a structured approach.

For it, the Knowledge Base provides the readers with a working and research model which recognises that the thematic fields of sport and mental well-being are broad, and that they differ by levels, perspectives, and target groups. It clarifies that the interrelationships between the different aspects are complex and influenced by various external factors. These include generic challenges inherent to modern society, encompassing social time structure or the impact of social media. But that it also stretches to specific causes or triggers of mental disorders, such as trauma (abuse, accidents, combat) or medical causes, such as brain injuries, that lead to more severe mental disorders. Whereby social crises can amplify all these factors.

Sport and exercise are then identified as independent variables with the potential to positively impact on mental well-being as both preventive and therapeutic measures. Yet, the Knowledge Base's and project's scope focusses on prevention-oriented aspects only. Guiding questions frame the exploration of the specific sport-mental-wellbeing dynamic, addressing challenges, needs, and competencies.

Then, four key perspectives—sociological, psychological, physiological, and pedagogical—are identified to inform the framing of the Move The Mind learning courses. For it, physical activity's positive impact on stress, anxiety, and depression is explained, emphasizing the importance of appropriateness and quality of any sport coaching interventions.

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