

## **Green Deal, Sustainability and Impact Report**

### **Introduction**

Green deal, sustainability and impact of the activities within the Erasmus + project named INCLUSION FIRST (Project Number: 101087167-FIRST-ERASMUS-SPORT-2022-SSCP) were discussed throughout the entire project lifetime and introduced to the public during the project dissemination meetings. This topic was notably convened during the last three months of the project lifetime and representatives from the University of Malta as the consortium partner institution and ŠK Mladost' from Slovakia as the project coordinating institution were actively in attendance. The meetings aimed to evaluate progress and plan future activities namely regarding environmental sustainability, inclusion and diversity, and the digital dimension.

The core dissemination meeting dealing with green deal, sustainability and impact was held in Slovakia on 8 - 9 June 2024, which was followed by a series of consequent meetings. In addition to the exchange of expertise, the meetings addressed the dissemination phase summary and the partner entities reached agreements on the next steps in the field as well as specific tasks focused on the major project objectives. Prior to the meetings, relevant documentation was circulated along with appropriate articles that promoted fresh thinking on the project concept.

### **Description of public deliverables**

Electronic and printed format, English language, target group - media representatives, sport events participants and audience

### **Type of public deliverables**

Green deal, sustainability and impact report to be downloaded on [www.run-and-smile.com](http://www.run-and-smile.com)

**Lead Beneficiary of public deliverables:** University of Malta



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## **Green Deal, Sustainability, and Impact of the INCLUSION FIRST Project**

Green deal, sustainability and impact of the INCLUSION FIRST project were anchored in several actions, which we would like to introduce within this report. The typical features of all of them were environmental sustainability, inclusion, and diversity.

The consortium members agreed that addressing horizontal aspects such as environmental sustainability, inclusion and diversity, and the digital dimension, the INCLUSION FIRST project was fully implemented with eco-friendliness in mind, integrating green practices throughout its various phases. It actively involved local and regional sports clubs, as required by the specifications

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for small-scale partnerships. All project activities occurred within the countries of the participating organizations, linking closely with the national perspectives of sport policies in Malta and Slovakia while also considering policies developed at the international level. The project's approach encompassed both non-governmental and governmental levels, facilitating communication and mutual discussions. Notably, the project considered the increasing global focus on sustainability and the green dimension across governments worldwide.



### **New Sports Group called RUN AND SMILE**

The first and foremost sustainability initiative of the INCLUSION FIRST project we would like to introduce in this report is the creation of a new sports group called RUN AND SMILE, which welcomed and integrated new individuals. This initiative was designed based on the project activities, before the final transnational project meeting. Its primary aim was to bring together all

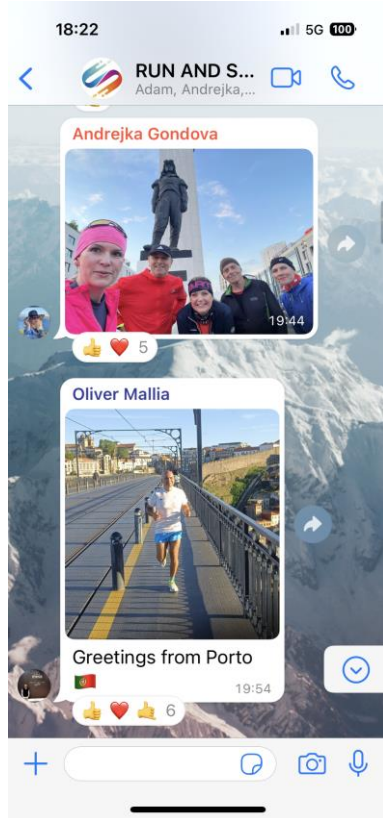
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the runners from the project consortium who were interested in participating in the Bratislava marathon 2024. However, it later expanded to a project flagship activity, including a much larger community, focusing on fostering regular engagement and community building through shared project activities and values.



Since March 2024, the group has held regular running workouts every Friday evening at 19:00, with sessions physically conducted in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. However, these gatherings go now beyond physical exercise; they also take place virtually in various locations, serving as a platform for promoting inclusion, health, and community spirit.

A significant feature of these sessions is the incorporation of green topics, which are vital for each running session. The philosophy of the INCLUSION FIRST project is woven into every aspect of these gatherings, ensuring that everyone feels welcome and valued. Environmental sustainability is a key component of the new sports group. During the gatherings, green practices are promoted, and awareness about



the European Green Deal is regularly discussed. By integrating green aspects into our activities, we aim to educate and inspire our members to adopt more sustainable practices in their daily lives.

A WhatsApp group has been established to organize these workouts. This platform is used to share logistics, coordinate meet-ups, and, most importantly, circulate testimonials and messages centered around inclusion. The group serves as a support system for its

members, providing inspiration and encouragement to maintain motivation for continued training and participation.

Additionally, to attract interest in sport activities and further spread the ideas and values of the INCLUSION FIRST project, we maintain an active presence of the new sports group RUN AND SMILE on social media. Our Facebook page, for instance, is a crucial tool for outreach, where we post updates, share stories, and engage with the wider community. The project consortium has pledged to keep this new sports group running beyond the project’s lifetime, ensuring a lasting legacy of activities and sustainability.

### **Project INCLUSION FIRST Sustainability and Green Initiatives**

Sustainability and the green dimension were integral parts of every aspect of the INCLUSION FIRST project. From planning to execution, the project consortium prioritized eco-friendliness and strived to minimize environmental impact.

During transnational project meetings, the consortium provided local transportation trying to use electric vehicles, reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable mobility. Additionally, the consortium committed to using eco-textiles and adhering to a fair-trade approach for all gadgets and eco-administrative materials used throughout the project. This choice not only reduced our ecological footprint, but also supported ethical and sustainable supply chains.

The consortium deliberately organized transnational project meetings primarily in



outdoor environments. This approach reduced electricity consumption and the carbon footprint associated with indoor venues, while providing participants with opportunities for physical activities in the fresh air, promoting well-being and connection with nature. Moreover, conducting outdoor activities mitigated the risk of virus infections, ensuring the safety and well-being of all participants while maintaining the momentum of our project activities.



### **RUN AND SMILE Collection of Inspirational Stories**

The green deal, sustainability, and the impact of the INCLUSION FIRST project were well highlighted also in the RUN AND SMILE collection of stories of inspirational personalities.

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Developed during the project's lifetime and continuing beyond, these stories showcased personal achievements, challenges overcome, and the inclusive spirit of the project. By sharing these narratives, we aimed to inspire and support others in their fitness journeys and in embracing inclusive values. The collection included discussions on green aspects and messages to raise awareness about the Green Deal, with all posts being publicly accessible on the project platform [www.run-and-smile.com](http://www.run-and-smile.com). Interviews within the collection opened topics of sustainability and green initiatives were fully integrated into the project's operations.

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Numerous personalities discussed the green dimension in their interviews. A great example might be Eman Azzopardi's life that is intricately woven with a deep commitment to social and environmental causes. Inspired by Albert Schweitzer's quote, "Quello che tu puoi fare e solo una goccia nell'oceano, ma e cio che da significato alla tua vita" (What you can do is only a drop in the ocean, but it is what gives meaning to your life), Eman's journey began in the early '90s while doing voluntary work with street children in Palermo.

Over the years, Eman actively engaged in various social and environmental initiatives, volunteering with local and foreign charities, and dedicating 22 years to social work with a local institution. Notably, on a weekly basis, Eman initiated the voluntary cleaning of valleys and surrounding countryside near their hometown and embarked on a personal mission to collect 10,000 plastic bottles from the Maltese countryside within four months in 2022.

While currently taking a break from environmental initiatives, Eman remains closely connected to nature and the Maltese countryside, regularly hiking with like-minded individuals who share a passion for the environment. An annual tradition involves walking 1km for every year lived on Eman's birthday, raising funds for an agency assisting terminally ill patients.

Despite some viewing these initiatives as inconsequential, Eman finds profound meaning and purpose in these seemingly small contributions to the well-being of the community and the environment.

The whole interview about his efforts, starting with experiences doing voluntary work with street children in Palermo and how that shaped his commitment to social and environmental causes can be found on the project platform [www.run-and-smile.com](http://www.run-and-smile.com)





Finally, all the activities in the field of green aspects and messages to raise awareness about the Green Deal were effectively summarized through a mesmerizing introduction by the president of ŠK Mladost' during the dissemination meeting in Tajná, Slovakia as well as by the Maltese leading project figures on the premises of the University of Malta in June 2024.

### **Championing Green: Consortium Partners and Team Members' Pledge on Sustainability and Green Aspects**

The green deal, sustainability, and the impact of the INCLUSION FIRST project were well concluded by the consortium partners and team members' pledge on sustainability and green aspects, presented at the final project stage, comprising the following texting:

*“We, the consortium partners and team members of the Erasmus + project INCLUSION FIRST, wholeheartedly commit ourselves to promoting sports values and sustainability for the betterment of society and the planet. Inspired by the INCLUSION FIRST project, with passion, dedication, and a sense of responsibility, we pledge to:*

- 1. **Educate for Environmental Stewardship:** Through our RUN AND SMILE platform, we vow to lead by example, maintaining the highest standards of sustainability in all our operations and initiatives. We will continuously educate and inspire others to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours, ensuring our actions contribute to a greener future.*
- 2. **Empower Local Communities:** We commit to engaging and supporting local communities to participate in sports activities that foster personal development and community cohesion. We uphold the principles of fair play, respect, integrity, and inclusivity in all aspects of sports, ensuring a collective positive impact on society.*
- 3. **Advocate for Sustainable Practices:** We pledge to raise awareness about the environmental impact of sports activities and events. We will actively encourage and support the adoption of sustainable practices within sports organizations, venues, and events, aiming to minimize our ecological footprint.*

*Our Commitments Include:*

- *Sustainable Sports Events: Promoting eco-friendly measures at all our sports events, such as waste reduction, recycling programs, and the use of sustainable materials.*
- *Community Engagement: Collaborating with local communities to develop sports programs that prioritize environmental education and sustainability.*



- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly reviewing and improving our sustainability practices, staying informed about the latest advancements in green technologies and methodologies.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Transparently reporting our sustainability efforts and progress, holding ourselves accountable to the highest standards.

*Through this pledge, we commit to championing the European sport values while promoting sustainable practices that leave a positive legacy for current and future generations. We recognize that by combining the power of sports with a commitment to sustainability, we can create a healthier, more inclusive, and resilient world for all. Together, we harness the transformative power of sports to drive meaningful change and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.”*



### **Project Alignment with European Policies**

The INCLUSION FIRST project emphasized social inclusion through the values of sports, aligning originally with the latest EU sports agenda, including the EU Work Plan for Sport (2021-2024) and the Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027). Furthermore, there was a significant development of additional documents during the project lifetime, beyond the original plans described in the application.

A significant example might be an active involvement of Prof. Andrew Decelis from the University of Malta who contributed to the XG report on Green Sport. Leveraging his expertise, he raised awareness within the project consortium about the report's achievements. Participation of Prof. Andrew Decelis in the project brought additional value to the consortium work, significantly enhancing its scope and impact. Under his guidance, the project team members enlarged their knowledge on relevant topics within the Sport's contribution to the European Green Deal, a sport sector playbook prepared by the Green Sport Expert Group.

Another example we would like to mention is the project's alignment with several new topics and policies were the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 3 on good health and well-being, and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities. This alignment was greatly illustrated by an interview with Ayoubah Fona, a migrant in Malta who successfully integrated through sports.

Ayoubah Fona, born and raised in Liberia, shares a poignant life story marked by adversity and resilience. Growing up in challenging circumstances with hardworking yet financially struggling parents, Ayoubah faced the difficulty of an unstable life in Liberia. His father, a taxi driver, endeavoured to provide for the family amid the turbulent situation in the country.

Tragedy struck when Ayoubah lost his father in a religious riot in Lofa county at the tender age of four. This event left a lasting impact, as he, along with his senior brother, navigated life with their determined mother, who sustained the family through a small vegetable-selling business despite the unsafe conditions for Muslims in the country.



The backdrop of tribalism and violence between Lorma groups and Ayoubah's tribe, the Mandingo, added to the challenges of his upbringing. The precarious situation and witnessing ongoing threats adversely affected his mental health. The difficulties escalated with the Ebola outbreak, claiming the life of Ayoubah's mother, leaving him orphaned and facing an even more arduous journey.

In 2019, Ayoubah made the bold decision to migrate to Europe with his family, seeking safety and a fresh start. Grateful for the opportunities afforded by the European Union, he is determined to leave his painful past behind and focus on building a brighter future. Currently residing in Malta, Ayoubah is actively involved in self-improvement endeavours and has found solace in playing for Fgura Football Club. The interview with Ayoubah Fona, which was done for the purpose of the INCLUSION FIRST project can be found online on the project platform [www.run-and-smile.com](http://www.run-and-smile.com)



Finally, by focusing on FRIENDSHIP, INNOVATIONS, RUNNING, SUSTAINABILITY, and TEAMWORK, the project significantly contributed to:

- Support active European citizenship and bring the European dimension to the local level through sport values, such as FRIENDSHIP.
- Attract and widen access for newcomers, less experienced organizations, and small-scale actors to the programme, promoting INNOVATION and quality in organizational practices.
- Support the inclusion of target groups with fewer opportunities, using RUNNING as a replicable health-enhancing physical activity.
- Link SUSTAINABILITY to building organizational capacity for transnational and cross-sector work, ensuring ongoing funding for project outcomes.
- Address common needs and priorities in education, training, youth, and sport, capitalizing on TEAMWORK for transformative change at individual, organizational, and sectoral levels.

### **Digital, Green, and Innovative Focus**

The project highlighted digital and green transitions, aligning with Erasmus+ priorities. The INCLUSION FIRST platform, a pioneering digital initiative, exemplified our commitment to innovation and sustainability. By integrating green practices and fostering synergies among local, regional, national, and international policies, we established functional transnational networks in the field.

In conclusion, the INCLUSION FIRST project not only promoted physical health through regular workouts but also fostered a supportive, inclusive community that is conscious of environmental sustainability. Our comprehensive efforts to integrate sustainability into every aspect of the project contributed significantly to its overall success, setting a positive example for other projects and organizations to follow. Through our dedicated initiatives and commitment to sustainability, we aimed to create a healthier, more inclusive, and resilient world for current and future generations.



