

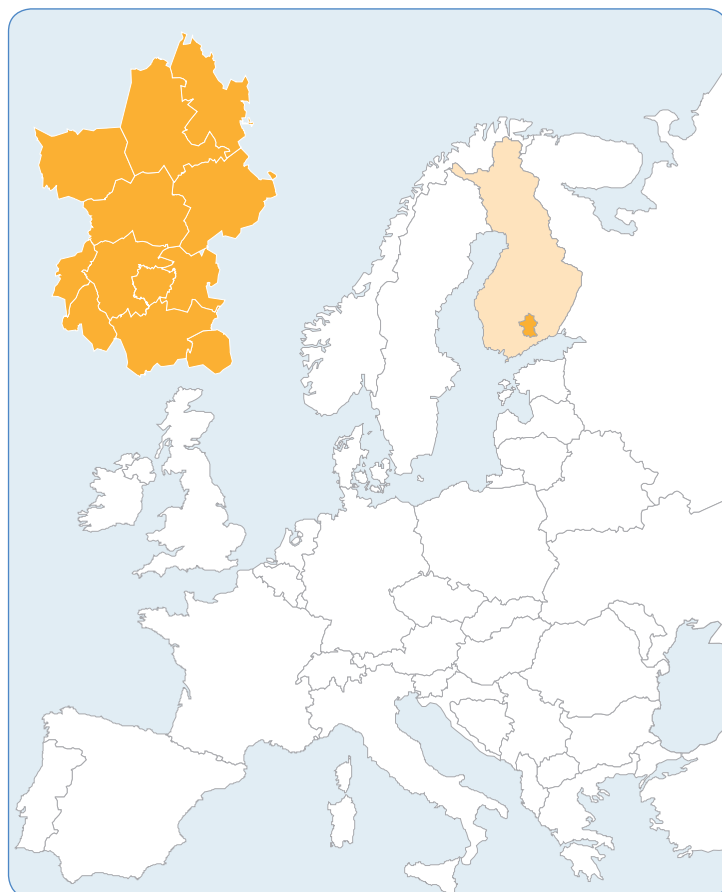


PÄIJÄT-HÄME REGION OF SPORT AND HEALTH

Sport and physical activity can make a major contribution to health promotion and disease prevention in areas such as overweight and obesity, diabetes and cardio-vascular diseases.

Health-enhancing physical activity could be promoted at all levels and in a wide range of sectors, such as urban planning and building projects, transport, education, family and youth, the economic sphere, research, as well as in the workplace to improve employees' health and performance and reduce absenteeism. Physical activity as a determinant for health plays a particular role in urban and transport planning, for example by allowing more people to go to work on foot or by bicycle.

Päijät-Häme has set itself an objective of becoming a pioneer in health and sport exercise in Finland. The idea is to use this regional Health Exercise Strategy to develop a regional operations model which covers all age groups from babies to the elderly. Furthermore, the strategy is meant to be used by municipalities as a tool in developing their own health exercising models.





Päijät-Häme Region of Sport and Health

Physical activity encompasses a range of activities from organised sports to "active commuting" or outdoor activities such as gardening. Daily exercise refers to exercising while leading one's normal life, such as commuting to school or work or running errands on foot or by bicycle. In addition to 'active commuting', daily exercise includes any voluntary physical activities during leisure time which muscles consume more energy.

There are exercising recommendations for different age groups which specify the amount of exercise, the exercise frequency and the exertion during exercise that will maintain or promote health. Daily exercise can be included in this category if the duration and exertion comply with the recommendations.

> Exercising recommendations for children under the age of seven

The number of children affected by overweight and obesity is estimated to be rising by more than 400,000 a year, adding to the approximately 14 million EU citizens who are already overweight. According to an exercising recommendation for pre-school education providers, a child under the age of seven requires at least two hours of brisk exercise per day as a precondition for their normal growth and development. Exercising for children under the age of seven mainly refers to independent activities of the children, which early education employees and parents can support by ensuring that each child has several opportunities to practice versatile exercise each day for at least the recommended time.

> Exercising recommendations for schoolchildren

According to an exercising recommendation for schoolchildren (2008), seven-year-olds should exercise at least two hours and 18-year-olds at least one hour per day. If the children exercise at least this much, they will avoid most of the health hazards caused by lack of exercise, such as obesity and metabolic disorders. The minimum exercising amount should be achieved by exercising for several fairly short periods of time, most of the exercises being at a low exertion level. However, the benefits will be highest if the daily exercise includes at least some periods of more brisk exercising during which the heart rate and breathing accelerate at least a little.

> Exercising recommendations for people of working age and the elderly

Lack of physical activity and the overweight and obesity have become a major societal problem. It is increasingly putting individuals at risk and is an economic burden as a result of the impact on health budgets and lower productivity due to the sub-optimal fitness in the workforce. According to an international health exercise recommendation (2008), people of working age and the elderly should practice reasonably exerting cardiovascular exercise (such as brisk walking) for at least 30 minutes five times a week, or more demanding cardiovascular exercise (such as jogging) for at least 20 minutes three times a week. Furthermore, exercises promoting muscle tone should be practiced a couple of times a week. The total amount of exercising can be achieved by a combination of several shorter exercise sessions, but each individual session should last for at least ten minutes. For the elderly, mobility and balance exercises are recommended in addition to the cardiovascular and muscle tone exercises.



Changes under the Lisbon Treaty allowed the EU to contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues.

The social effects of sport have become an increasingly important factor in the sport policies of various European countries. The Commission has expressed the view several times that member states could learn from each others' good practices and how (and under which conditions) sport could contribute to physical health.

European Commission is preparing a Commission Communication on Sport (new communication should be published in November) and a proposal for an EU Sport Programme for coming years.

In a Communication Commission will propose the four major targets for sport; Relation between sport and health, Doping, Sport and education and Social inclusion and sport.

Sport can also be considered as a tool for local and regional development and rural development. Synergies can be identified between sport and tourism (including leisure sports, such as winter sports in Lahti/Päijät-Häme area, water sports in lake areas or golf tourism). Sport can also stimulate the upgrading of public infrastructure, such as transport networks including pedestrian paths.

➤ Good practices from Päijät-Häme region

- In health care centers people fill up a questionnaire for physical activity habits and get an exercise referral to physical education instructor in a recreational office.
- In lifestyle groups for prevention of type 2 diabetes people set goals to change their physical activity habits and try new sports together.
- Nurses in health care centers measure functional capacity in elderly and refer them to strength and balance exercise groups to the third sector.
- Local village communities arrange physical activity events where villagers can test their lifestyles and try new sports.

There is a strong focus on public health issues in regions. The regions should strengthen the cooperation between the social, health, education and sport sectors and implement coherent strategies to reduce health risks. In this context, we encourage regions to examine how to promote the concept of active living through the national and regional education and training systems.

Sport organizations and other co-operation organizations are encouraged to take into account their potential for health-enhancing physical activity and to undertake activities for this purpose. We should facilitate the exchange of information and good practice with a focus on the grassroots level.

Päijät-Häme region would like to invite all interested parties to discuss and develop sport and health issues together! We will organize seminar related to this issues in early 2011 and we hope to see all regions to get involved.

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