



STRATEGY OF HEALTH RELATED SPORT 2009-2020

Päijät-Häme, Finland

Paula Harmokivi - Matti Rantala (ed.)

PROJECT FOR REFORMING PUBLIC SERVICES

THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF PÄIJÄT-HÄME A186 * 2010



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WELCOME TO THE REGION OF SPORT

Päijät-Häme has declared itself a mega sports region. A logical continuation to this is for Päijät-Häme to become also a mega health related sport region. Supporting the wellbeing of residents by developing sports services and promoting health related sport has been included as an objective in both the Regional Strategy and the Strategy of education. The objectives are promoting the wellbeing of residents to a level higher than the national average level and improving the region's image as a sport and exercise centre.

Activities promoting health at the regional and municipal level require cooperation between different fields of government, and networking with an extensive group of actors. Therefore, the development of health related sport is challenging because the extensive network of actors ranges from groups within the public sector's social and healthcare services as well as educational services to third sector organisations and sports institutes of national significance, such as those in Heinola and Nastola.

Only a few drawbacks and risks are connected to health related sport whereas, by contrast, it benefits people and the entire society in many ways. Health related sport emphasises daily exercise, in particular associated with activities we do every day, such as commuting to the day care centre, school or workplace as well as exercising while doing one's chores. Such everyday exercise can be actively undertaken by anyone, thereby improving one's wellbeing without having to invest a lot of money or time.

The Strategy of Health related Sport lists objectives for developing health related sports in Päijät-Häme. Additional benefits are sought from already existing operations methods to establish new types of cooperation and operations models. The responsibilities and roles of different actors in promoting the development should also be identified, along with the means to commit these parties. The primary aim of the Health related Sport Strategy is to promote opportunities for daily exercise, thereby illustrating the objective of a positive energetic lifestyle and its impact on society as a whole.

The Strategy of Health related Sport has been prepared as part of the Project for Reforming Public Services in cooperation with municipalities of the region, sports organisations and the national wellbeing network of the Regional Centre Programme. The Päijät-Häme Sports Federation has the overall responsibility for preparing the strategy, which is co-authored by Ms. Paula Harmokivi (Master of Sports Sciences), and Mr. Matti Rantala (retired Sports Officer).

Päijät-Häme, October 2010

Tuula Loikkanen
Executive Director (acting)

INTRODUCTION

According to estimates, lack of exercising annually causes expenses of up to 400 million euro in Finland. Hence, if 100,000 people who do not currently exercise were to start exercising, the public expenditure could decrease by up to 20 million euro per year. In this respect, a person's own responsibility for his or her health and its management is a central issue. Proactive measures and the promotion of health could be used to support these independent activities by each individual.

Exercise is part of a more extensive approach to promoting health. Promotion of health is included in the objectives and tasks of several spheres of activities. A new Finnish healthcare draft bill includes a proposal on a statutory obligation for municipalities to prepare a cross-administrative plan for measures promoting health and preventing health problems as well as monitoring their achievement. National health promotion objectives are included in a Finnish public health programme called *Terveys 2015 (Health 2015)*.

Sufficient resources and their proper use can be ensured by developing cooperation between municipal administrative fields and by different actors agreeing on their mutual responsibilities. Municipalities are forced to find new kinds of operation models because municipal economies are experiencing a crisis and there is a shortage of labour. Cooperation with the third sector and private sector allows municipalities to develop new health related sport models and offer the residents a variety of health related sport services. The private sector is able to respond to the increased opportunities and willingness of residents to invest their income in exercising. Furthermore, the demand for customised product and service concepts is likely to increase in the near future.

Päijät-Häme has set itself an objective of becoming a pioneer in health related sport. The idea is to use this regional Health related Sport Strategy to develop a regional operation 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. The Finnish Sports Act states that a municipality shall provide its residents the necessary preconditions for exercising by developing local and regional cooperation, developing sports that promote health, supporting civic action, offering sports venues and arranging exercising opportunities also for special groups.

Preparation of the Strategy of Health related Sport started in spring 2008 after an innovation session which included a large group of participants from different sectors. The objective of the session was to find innovative solutions for practical health related sport arrangements and implementation of the strategy. The innovation session was prepared by a workgroup, and the workgroup also supported the authors when they were writing the draft strategy. Employees of the Päijät-Häme Sports Federation closely participated in editing the draft strategy once the initial materials were completed. Furthermore, several experts of different sectors commented on the draft strategy at different stages. The resultant strategy specifies the objectives of regional health related sport development and includes a plan for the implementation of the strategy. The strategy targets various of the different lifecycle stages of people.

WHAT DOES HEALTH RELATED SPORT MEAN?

In this publication, the term **health related sport or exercise promoting health** refers to any sports or exercise that maintains or promotes the health of people, regardless of why or how the exercising is carried out. Only a few drawbacks or risks are associated with health related sport and thus its efficiency ratio is high. Estimates in Finland show that around 50% of boys and around 40% of girls between the ages of fourteen and fifteen exercise sufficiently to maintain their health, and around 20% of boys and 25% of girls are extremely passive exercisers. Approximately one fifth of the students in vocational schools and Universities of Applied Sciences do not exercise at all or only exercise very little. Around 30–35% of the working population and approximately a third of the elderly (over the age of 65), both women and men, do not exercise enough to maintain their good health. The group that gets the least exercise among the adult population are those between the ages of thirty and forty-five – this is at least partially due to their life situation: working and maintaining a family consume much of their time and resources.

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 commuting, daily exercise includes any voluntary physical activities at leisure during 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

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

According to an international health related sport 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.



PÄIJÄT-HÄME STRATEGY OF HEALTH RELATED SPORT

HEALTH RELATED SPORT VISION 2020

Päijät-Häme will become a Finnish pioneer of health exercise. Päijät-Häme's regional attraction will be promoted by the sports venues, exercising opportunities and health exercise expertise it can offer. The residents of Päijät-Häme will practice more health exercise than the residents of other Finnish regions.

Spearheads of the strategy:

1. Health related Sport Advisory Board

An advisory board consisting of health related sport actors in Päijät-Häme will develop the region's Strategy of Health related Sport and issues proposals on implementation of health related sport measures as an expert body.

2. Each municipality of Päijät-Häme has its own health related sport action plan

All Päijät-Häme municipalities have prepared a health related sport action plan. The action plans are municipality-specific or shared with a neighbouring municipality/several neighbouring municipalities. The preparation of all municipal health related sport action plans has been based on the regional Strategy of Health related Sport.

3. Regional exercise counselling

Regional exercise counselling is provided in Päijät-Häme, aiming at offering all residents of the region sufficient information on how they can practice health related sport, what kind of exercising opportunities there are and how health related sport influences them. The plan is to motivate as many passive people as possible to take up regular exercise.

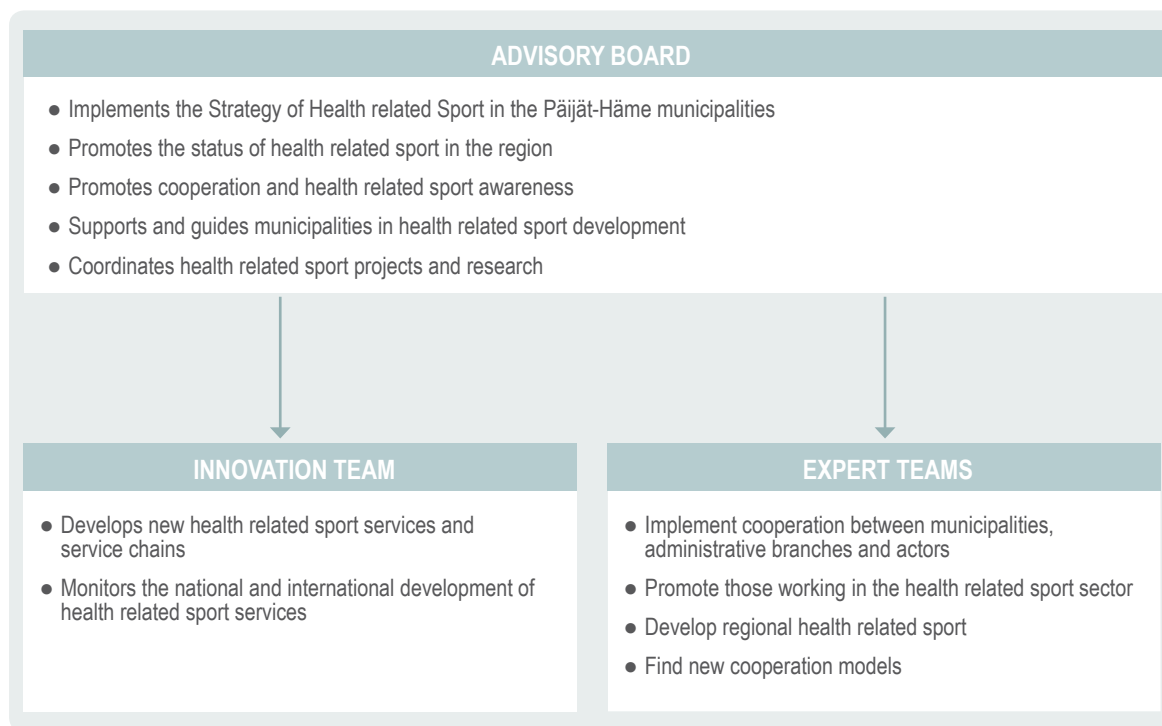
4. Sports venues and services

There is an extensive and well-maintained sports venue network in Päijät-Häme, and it promotes the residents' exercising. Health related sport services are provided as a result of cooperation between the municipalities, the third sector and the private sector.

5. Health related sport expertise and training

Päijät-Häme provides health related sport training at the highest level in Finland. All actors included in the health related sport service chain have the qualifications and experience needed to provide quality exercise counselling.

1. HEALTH RELATED SPORT ADVISORY BOARD



The Päijät-Häme Health related Sport Advisory Board was first introduced in 2006 in a survey called Päijät-Häme – Liikunnan megamaakunta terveystliikuntakonsepti –institutionaalinen innovaatio? (*Päijät-Häme – mega sports region; Health related Sport concept – an institutional innovation?* Parjanen & Harmaakorpi). The Health related Sport Advisory Board will promote the status of health related sport in Päijät-Häme by acting as a cooperative body between different actors and ensuring that health related sport is taken into account in decision-making and resource allocation. Expert teams will be established under the Advisory Board to develop exercising by children, youth, adults and/or the elderly. Innovation teams will also be established to develop new health related sport services.

2. MUNICIPALITIES' HEALTH RELATED SPORT ACTION PLANS

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED ACTIONS	ISSUES TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT
Promoting the status of health related sport in the municipalities	All Päijät-Häme municipalities appoint a person responsible for health related sport	Resources
Developing cooperation	Cross-administrative cooperation as well as cooperation with the third sector and private sector Health related sport service chain	Roles and responsibilities of different parties

The objective of the municipal health related sport action plans is to promote the status of health related sport within the municipalities as well as achieve cooperation between different administrative fields and other actors. Both funding and human resources are required in order to reach these objectives. The objective of the health related sport services is to identify people who do not exercise enough and/or people who are at risk of developing a lifestyle disease, and offer them appropriate health related sport counselling.



3. REGIONAL EXERCISE COUNSELLING

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED ACTIONS	ISSUES TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT
Services close to the residents	Cross-administrative cooperation Exercise counselling available in public Local health related sport coaches Regional communications Regional exercising tool bus/tool rental services	People of different ages with different exercise needs Sparsely populated areas
Cooperation across municipal borders/increasing resources of the municipalities	Planning and implementing a regional health related sport project: involving six to eight regional exercise counsellors	An extensive field of action and cooperation network Special features of the different municipalities
Utilising technology as an aid	A shared wellbeing service directory for Päijät-Häme	Updating the directory

Regional exercise counselling promotes the implementation of health related sport in the municipalities. It is part of the municipal health related sport services. Exercise counselling is proactive work that encourages people to take responsibility for maintenance of their own health and mobility. Exercise counselling in particular targets people who do not currently practice exercise to encourage them to become active exercisers. Promotion of health related sport can be part of a more extensive health promotion programme where nutrition and other special needs of the customers are also taken into account whenever necessary.

The objective of health related sport counselling is to offer the customers both the motivation needed to exercise and the readiness to practice health related sport. In health related sport counselling, it is important to find solutions that suit the customer's current life situation so that exercising becomes an integral part of their everyday life. The customer should be given the opportunity to try out different sports, learn and commit to exercising. Monitoring of the impacts of the health related sport counselling and motivation of the customers can also be done, whether online or by phone. New technologies can be used as an aid in sparsely populated areas.

The regional exercise counselling activities will be implemented as a project. The project will also promote development of the municipalities' health related sport services and offer the municipalities additional resources. The objective is to have six to eight regional exercise counsellors in Päijät-Häme. The exercise counsellors will provide the municipalities with shared operations models, promote cooperation between the municipalities in the development and implementation of health related sport, and offer exercise counselling.

Regional exercise counselling will utilise modern technology. The objective is to develop a wellbeing service system for the entire Päijät-Häme region to support independent exercising and to be used as a tool by professionals. The wellbeing service system will include information about service providers, services, venues and routes, as well as information on health, nutrition and exercising.

4A. SPORTS VENUES

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED ACTIONS	ISSUES TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT
<p>Making the everyday environment favourable to exercising by developing the local environment and constructing new sports venues suitable for health exercise</p>	<p>Cross-administrative planning</p> <p>Developing and creating new sports venues that take into account exercisers of different ages</p> <p>A comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle route network</p> <p>Developing playgrounds and the yard areas of schools and day care centres</p> <p>Developing the surroundings of nursing homes: routes with benches, routes suitable for zimmer frames</p>	<p>Maintaining and renovating sports venues</p>

When promoting the residents' exercise activities, the physical environment must be taken into account because it enables and supports independent exercise which is a basic precondition for health related sport. Cross-administrative planning and implementation can influence exercising environments and sports venues by developing the urban structure and land use planning, the pedestrian and bicycle route network, safety, sports venues and the natural environment from a health related sport viewpoint. When sports venues close to the residents are planned, the entire human lifecycle should be taken into account to enable families to exercise together and to arrange local activities for people of different ages.

Construction of pedestrian and bicycle routes will make commuting to school or work by foot or bicycle safer and provide people with opportunities to exercise at their leisure. Furthermore, pedestrian and bicycle routes will allow the elderly to exercise outdoors more safely. The lack of resting places makes it particularly difficult for the elderly to exercise outdoors, or to run their daily errands. Poorly maintained and slippery streets also increase the risk of falling. Furthermore, pedestrian and bicycle routes provide so-called "low threshold" local sports venues which are suitable for almost anyone. By developing such routes, equality and interaction between people can also be promoted.

4B. EXERCISING SERVICES

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED ACTIONS	ISSUES TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT
Providing versatile exercising and sports services	<p>Low threshold groups</p> <p>Local/village health related sport coaches, peer coaches</p> <p>Personal trainer</p> <p>Exercising in the great outdoors that also provides new experiences</p>	<p>People who currently do not exercise enough to maintain their health</p> <p>Services close to the residents</p>
Reaching a large number of people	<p>Family exercising events</p> <p>Sports/exercising mass events</p>	Developing already existing events from the viewpoint of health related sport
Early intervention and activating those who do not	Exercise is an integral part of the health promotion activities of different parties	Personnel resources and lack of time
Increasing the physical activeness of infants and schoolchildren as well as providing them with sports education	<p>Appointing an exercise manager for day care centres</p> <p>Arranging schoolchildren afternoon clubs with exercising</p> <p>Changing the curriculum to promote exercising</p> <p>Integrating exercising into different curriculum subjects</p> <p>Activating children during recesses</p>	<p>High personnel turnover rate</p> <p>Lack of time (planning lessons in cooperation by several teachers)</p> <p>Motivating teachers</p>
Promoting the physical activeness of the young	<p>Developing student exercising</p> <p>Presenting new sports and allowing the young to try them out in places where the young spend time</p>	Young people who are not enrolled in any school/educational establishment and who do not have a job
Promoting workplace exercising and promoting the wellbeing of employees	<p>Supporting commuting by foot or bicycle</p> <p>Exercising at the workplace</p> <p>Presenting sports/arranging sports campaigns</p>	<p>Management commitment</p> <p>People who currently do not exercise enough to maintain their health</p>
Promoting the mobility of the elderly	<p>Taking a rehabilitating approach to home care services</p> <p>Including exercising as part of the activities of nursing homes</p>	Lack of human resources and time

The earlier the wrong lifestyles of children and families with children are addressed, the better the results will be for the child, the family and society. Therefore, sports education should be provided at mother-child clinics and day care centres. The exercise managers of day care centres will plan and arrange systematic and versatile sports education, provide the children with an environment that attracts them to exercise and ensure that all the basic sports equipment is available.

The school has an important role in promoting the exercising of schoolchildren because it reaches all age groups. Promotion of daily exercising should be a common goal for the entire school. Sports clubs also have an important role in promoting the exercising of children and youth 50% of children between the ages of seven and fourteen are members of a sports club. However, the attractive power of sports clubs decreases among youth over the age of fifteen.

The Finnish occupational healthcare system covers approximately 92% of salary earners. This enables extensive sports, health and exercise counselling at individual workplaces and for individual people. Exercise should be considered a part of the comprehensive idea of wellbeing at work. Exercising in the working community should be systematic, including sufficient resources and follow-up activities. When exercise for the working community is being planned, the wishes of all employees should be surveyed, with special attention being paid to the ideas of employees who do not currently exercise enough. Furthermore, group exercising instructors should provide the customers with advice on how to exercise sufficiently and in the correct manner to promote their health.

Local/village health related sport coaches can arrange health related sport services for different localities within a municipality. The objective is to reach people who are hindered in participating in the arranged health and sport exercises by poor transport connections or because their capacity is deteriorated. Services offered close to local communities may also activate people who would not otherwise participate in any health related sport. Furthermore, local/village health related sport coaches are familiar with the local exercising service supply and needs.



5. HEALTH RELATED SPORT EXPERTISE AND TRAINING

OBJECTIVE	PROPOSED ACTIONS	ISSUES TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT
Competent actors	Further education in sports for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employees of mother-child clinics, day care centres and schools - youth service employees - home care employees - nurses - employees of sports clubs/associations Peer coach training Training for the exercising managers and contact persons of companies	High level of personnel turnover, training new employees Committing voluntary workforce
High-quality health related sport activities	Certificate of the Young Finland Association Health related sport certificate Strategy of Health related Sport for businesses; occupational health exercise certificate	High level of personnel/voluntary worker turnover, training new personnel
Providing and developing more health related sport training	Supplementary health exercise training Specialised studies in Universities of Applied Sciences	

Päijät-Häme has excellent preconditions for becoming a pioneer in health related sport expertise and training. Sports Centre Pajulahti and the Finnish Sports Institute are sports education centres of national significance. The Finnish Sports Institute and the University of Turku manage a professorship of health related sport. In addition to the Sports Institute, Vierumäki houses a unit of the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, which is Finland's largest provider of sports sector education.

Supplementary health exercise training promotes the status of health exercise in all counselling which promotes health both within the healthcare system and within the educational branch.

Sports clubs which do high-quality work with the young can be awarded a certificate of the Young Finland Association. A health exercise certificate available for sports clubs/associations confirms excellence in the club's readiness and competence in providing sports services for adults. The occupational health exercise certificate assesses the exercising programme resources and activities of working communities.

TARGET SCHEDULE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY OF HEALTH RELATED SPORT

YEAR	OBJECTIVE	PARTY IN CHARGE / <i>COOPERATIVE PARTY</i>
2010	All Päijät-Häme municipalities are health related sport municipalities.	Municipality
	There is a cooperative body with representatives from the third sector and the private sector in each municipality.	Municipality
	A health related sport Advisory Board for Päijät-Häme has been established.	Regional Council of Päijät-Häme/ Päijät-Häme Sports Federation
2011-2012	Each municipality of Päijät-Häme has implemented its own health related sport action plan.	Municipality/municipalities in cooperation <i>Third sector/organisations</i> <i>Wellbeing sector companies/entrepreneurs</i>
	A health related sport project for developing regional health exercise counselling has been launched in Päijät-Häme.	Regional Council of Päijät-Häme/ Päijät-Häme Sports Federation <i>Municipalities</i>
	There is a regional health related sport communication and marketing plan for Päijät-Häme.	Päijät-Häme Sports Federation/ Regional Council of Päijät-Häme
2012	A health related sport service chain has been implemented in all the municipalities.	Municipality <i>Occupational healthcare services</i> <i>Social and healthcare federations</i>
	Sports clubs/associations of Päijät-Häme have employed people to develop their wellbeing services.	Päijät-Häme Sports Federation <i>Sports clubs and associations</i>
2014	People working in the health exercise service chain have received proper training.	Municipality <i>Social and healthcare federations</i> <i>Education sector</i> <i>Päijät-Häme Sports Federation</i>
	Local sports venues support independent exercising.	Municipality
2015	Strategy of health related sport has been implemented in medium-sized companies and large enterprises.	Päijät-Häme Sports Federation <i>Companies</i> <i>Occupational healthcare services</i>

The staged implementation schedule specifies annual objectives, and the parties in charge of implementation and cooperative parties (if any). The Regional Council of Päijät-Häme carries the overall responsibility for the implementation and assessment of the strategy. The strategy will be assessed and revised every three years. Commitment of the municipalities in making Päijät-Häme a mega health related sport region is key to the implementation of the strategy. The municipalities are in charge of implementing and assessing their own plans.

STARTING POINTS OF THE STRATEGY OF HEALTH RELATED SPORT

STRENGTHS

- A variety of sports venues
- Beautiful nature and extensive outdoor exercising and hiking routes
- Sports institutes: Sports Centre Pajulahti and the Finnish Sports Institute
- Compact urban structure and short distances in urban municipalities
- Extensive health related sport supply in several of the municipalities
- A variety of sports events
- Adult education centres in sparsely populated areas
- Comprehensive and versatile training available

WEAKNESSES

- Less sports-related employees in the municipalities than before
- Maintaining sports venues/the municipalities' poorer economy
- Lack of coordination in the proactive work of the different parties
- Lack of information and non-standardised communications
- Long distances and poor public transport in the rural municipalities
- Lack of special groups and low threshold groups

OPPORTUNITIES

- Improving cooperation between different actors and initiating administrative cooperation
- Offering more health related sport services in cooperation with the third sector
- The private sector as a provider of health related sport services
- Motivating people who do not exercise enough in promoting their health
- New health related sport innovations
- Utilising the local educational establishments and sports institutes

THREATS

- Ageing of the population
- Lack of properly trained coaches/managers
- Continued poor financial status of the municipalities
- Extensive substance abuse
- Deteriorating public transport
- Maintenance of sports venues
- Lack of resources in constructing sports venues

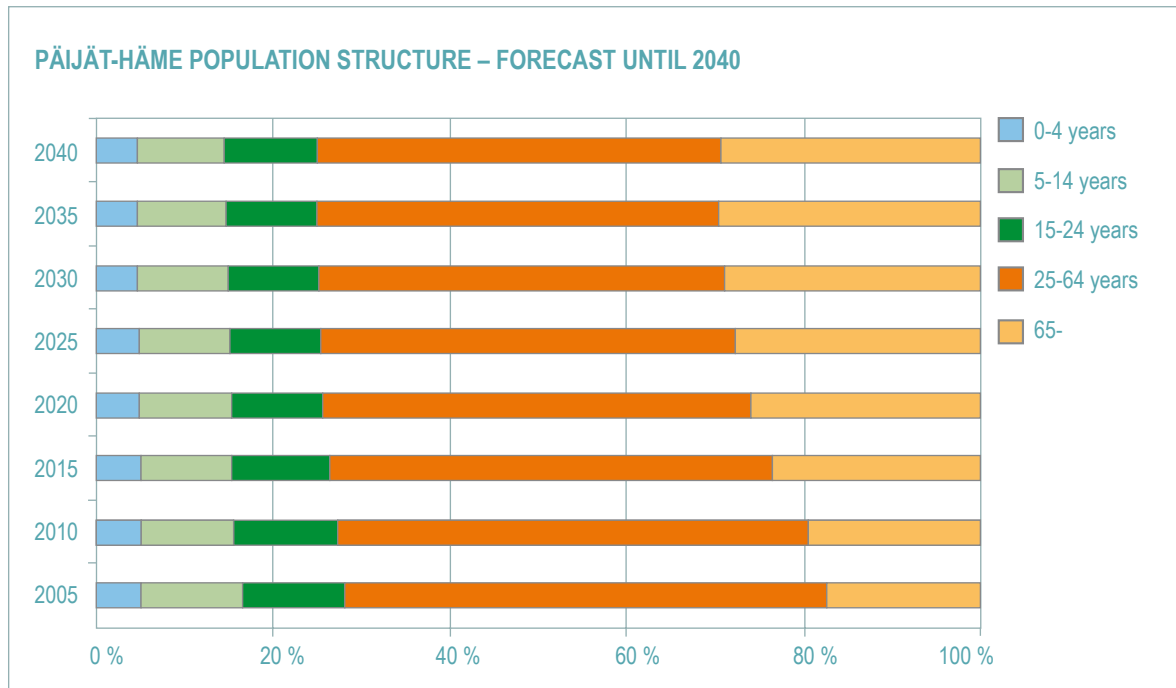
Exercising opportunities in Päijät-Häme

The variety of activities available in Päijät-Häme provides an excellent opportunity for health related sport and leisure activities for the region's approximately 200,000 residents. Scenic characteristics of Päijät-Häme include the Salpausselkä ridges, hundreds of lakes and islands, and the wonderful diversity of the local natural environment. The regional coat of arms, the Vellamo maiden, refers to the Päijät-Häme natural environment, water (meaning Lake Päijänne which cuts the region in two) and the long ridges.

Päijät-Häme is a sports and exercising centre of national significance. The Finnish Sports Institute in Heinola and the Sports Centre Pajulahti in Nastola are top sports training centres. There are a total of four such centres in Finland. In addition to top sports, the sports institutes provide versatile wellbeing services for exercisers of all ages, in close proximity to the natural environment. Furthermore, the Lahti Sports Centre is an extensive sports venue, particularly renowned as a winter sports centre.

Päijät-Häme population structure and population forecast

According to the population forecast for Päijät-Häme, the share of people over the age of sixty-five will increase at a steady pace so that in 2025 almost one quarter of the region's residents will be elderly. This adds to the social pressure within the municipalities to develop health related sport for the elderly.



Physical and functional environment promoting health related sport

In addition to attitudes, daily routines and habits, the living environment governs people's daily and health related sport. The physical environment, consisting of the natural environment and the built environment, may either limit independent exercising or, alternatively, enable and encourage people to be physically active. A safe and pleasant environment in which it is easy to move and which provides its residents with good opportunities for outdoor recreation and exercising, as well as functional services along good transport connections, support and promote physical fitness. Therefore, a functional environment which enables exercising is one of the basic services that needs to be provided for residents.

In the new millennium, the Ministry of Education and Culture has focused on increasing the number of local sports venues to support daily exercising. In Finland, there is one sports venue per 175 inhabitants. In Päijät-Häme, the number of residents per venue is above this national average – however, there are less residents per venue in the rural municipalities. Sports venues are more easily accessible in the urban municipalities than in the rural ones because of the compact urban structure and more comprehensive public transport system.

There are approximately 750 kilometres of pedestrian and bicycle routes in Päijät-Häme. Furthermore, there is a combined outdoor exercising and recreation route network covering almost the entire region. It consists of around 430 km of canoeing routes, around 250 km of hiking and nature tourism routes, around 420 km of bicycle routes and around 35 km of Nordic walking routes. This regional route network interconnects with a similar route system in Kymenlaakso, and complements the local exercising route networks of the municipalities.

The technical sectors of the municipalities are in charge of constructing sports venues. However, sports venues usually are maintained in the urban municipalities by the sports sector and in the rural municipalities by the technical sector.

Third sector and private sector involvement in health related sport

There are approximately 340 sports clubs and associations in Päijät-Häme. Their member base totals at around 39,000. More than twenty of the clubs and associations employ at least one person. In most of them, the employee is an executive director or an office clerk/secretary. Furthermore, some of the employees are qualified sports sector managers, training managers or junior training managers. Thirteen clubs and associations in Päijät-Häme have been certified by the Young Finland Association in recognition of their top-quality work. In addition to sports clubs/associations, there are several local public health associations, village associations and resident associations arranging exercising activities for their members. In addition, scout associations offer the young opportunities to exercise in the wilderness and to participate in other youth oriented activities.

There are four large folk high schools in the Päijät-Häme region: Harjula Settlement Association, Eastern Häme Institute, Jyränkölä Settlement Association and Wellamo Institute, the latter of which is maintained by the City of Lahti. The folk high schools arrange a total of 420 sports courses for exercisers of different levels and age groups. The folk high schools also provide extensive activities in sparsely populated areas.

The wellbeing sector – which consists of the social and healthcare sector, event services, sports services, tourist services and cultural services – employs around 4,600 people in more than 2,000 companies. The wellbeing cluster of the Lahti Science and Business Park is active in the region. The cluster refers to organised cooperation and development of wellbeing sector actors. The main objective of the wellbeing cluster is to promote cooperation between the public, private and third sectors and thus to develop business and to increase the efficiency and impact of all related activities.

Health related sport current strategies of the cities and municipalities

Among the Päijät-Häme municipalities, Asikkala, Heinola and Lahti have a municipal health related sport strategy aiming at promoting the residents' health and wellbeing by utilising health related sport opportunities. The strategies focus particularly on people who do not exercise enough and on the creation of cooperation models. The sports sector of the town of Heinola received an honourable mention as a sports promoter in 2008. The honourable mention was awarded not only due to Heinola's persistent activities in promoting general exercising, but also because of a particular health related sport project, called Heinolassa jyrää, which focuses on motivating people who do not exercise enough.

The business ideas included in several of the Päijät-Häme municipalities' social and healthcare sector and/or educational sector strategies include an objective of having a proactive, rehabilitating approach to all activities and related service production. An important objective of these strategies is to promote health related sport in cooperation with other actors.

Sports, social and healthcare sector training

A variety of sports and leisure sector training opportunities is currently provided in Päijät-Häme for both young and adult students. Two of Finland's eleven national sports training centres are in the Päijät-Häme region: Sports Centre Pajulahti and the Finnish Sports Institute. The Finnish Sports Institute and Sports Centre Pajulahti provide basic training in sports instruction. Graduates from these courses are called sports counsellors. Furthermore, the Applied Sciences unit of Haaga-Helia University in Vierumäki trains sports instructors. In addition to the basic degrees, the sports institutes offer additional training courses which prepare adults for vocational and special vocational degrees, as well as different types of seminars and sports courses. Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences offers also specialised studies as supplementary training.

In addition to the extensive variety of sports sector training available, the Social and Healthcare Faculty of the Lahti University of Applied Sciences offers physical therapy training. Qualification as a youth and leisure counsellor can be obtained in the Deacony Foundation Lahti or the Orimattila Unit of Salpaus Further Education.

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