

Active Local Europe Forum

Summary

The Active Local Europe Forum took place on the 28th and the 29th of October in Leuven, Belgium. On Thursday, all representatives of the national networks for sport and physical activity were invited. That first day it was all about getting to know each other. In the afternoon there was a bike ride organised in the city of Leuven and in the evening the participants were welcomed by Cindy Winters, Director of Sport for the city of Leuven. This was followed by a light-hearted introductory activity and a walking dinner where networking was central.

On Friday 29 October, in addition to the representatives of the national associations, delegates from European sports organisations were also invited. Among others, the following organisations were present: ENGSO, Europe Active, It's Great Out There Coalition, TAFISA and Sport & Citizenship. All those invited were welcomed by Michael Serneels, policy officer of the European Commission's Sport Unit, and Simon Plasschaert, delegate for Flanders in the European Council. The background to the project was outlined and two substantive sessions were organised. During the first session the discussion started and the focus was on which themes on sport and physical activity are important for every participant. A much discussed theme during this first session was the restart after corona. Many were particularly interested in how others deal with this. The use of public space for sport and exercise was another important theme that came up. How can our cities and towns best organise public space to facilitate sport and exercise?

During the second session, the framework needed by the attendees to facilitate exchange around their themes was discussed. During this session the importance of a good network emerged, a platform that connects different cities and municipalities. Important and a possible pitfall is that the network will have to be kept active and lively. There will be a need for a moderator to monitor the network and facilitate contact between members on an ongoing basis. Before closing the Forum with a network lunch, André de Jeu was given the floor. As Director of the Association for Sports and Municipalities in the Netherlands, André has been involved in the project from the start.

During the Forum, the national associations were triggered to think and exchange with the associations of other countries. This way they saw the importance of an organisation like Active Local Europe facilitating this kind of exchange in the coming years. For the next two years we are looking for six associations from six different countries that believe in the project and want to be part of the creation of Active Local Europe. This means that these six organisations will finance the project for the next two years. With the funds raised by these six organisations, a half-time worker can be hired who will spend the next two years setting up an online platform and communities of practice focused on a number of themes around sport and exercise. The six funding associations will sit on the board of directors and together determine the themes that will be worked on. An important part of the future of Active Local Europe will be 'Learning Mobility'. Through Learning Mobility, the European Union makes study visits within Europe possible. An example of this that everyone is familiar with is the Erasmus exchange of students. From 2023 onwards, also in the field of sports and exercise, it will be possible to organise exchanges which are financed by the EU. Active Local Europe wants to play an important role in supporting cities and towns in this. It is also important that Active Local Europe wants to position itself within Europe. The possibilities of submitting Erasmus + projects to ensure the long-term survival of Active Local Europe are also examined.