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# HOW TO ENGAGE WOMEN IN OUTDOOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES IN GUIMARÃES (PT)

## WHERE ARE WE?



- GUIMARÃES, Portugal
- 158.124 inhabitants
- Area of the city in which the action took place:  
In the urban centre (Lectures sessions), in two urban parks (Parque da Cidade e Parque da Cidade Desportiva) and in another two parks located in the suburbs (Parque de Lazer da Ínsua e Parque de Lazer de Lordelo) for the sport activities.

## WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS FOR WOMEN TO PRACTICE SPORT OUTDOORS IN GUIMARÃES?



The five principle barriers that were indicated in the poll by women living in Guimarães were:

- The lack of company to practice outdoor sports
- The feeling of insecurity in open spaces
- The fact that participants had never participated in outdoor activities related to sports
- Being afraid of aggressive or uncomfortable behaviours by strangers;
- And also some insecurity regarding their own body and what other people might think of it.



# WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SWUP PROJECT?

## ACTIVITIES

The program “Mulheres + Activas” (trans. “More Active Women”) combined lectures related to active lives (chronic diseases, aging, pregnancy and high competition sports), a gymnastics session in the park and a walking that involved the community. These actions were complemented with health screenings and technical and medical advises on how to practice outdoor sports with safety and comfort.

## RESULTS

Participants (over 55 years old) showed interest to continue outdoor physical activities in group. The format of the program was, in fact, the main key that gave motivation to the community to join the activities. We can stand out the main advantages of these type of activities: more information regarding the benefits of practicing sports; the improvements that it can bring to our health and the engagement with the community that these activities provide.





## PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

"The creation of activities in the weekend that can involve entire families. Since "Mulheres + Ativas" can bring all the family members to participate."

"I would like to keep practicing sport in this program."

"Do more activities in places where we can reach more people."

"Keep debating important themes."

"You can do more to influence other people."

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?



### STRENGTHS

- Group activities in support of social interaction (the lectures or the outdoor activities)
- Activities engaging everyone, despite they were oriented to women
- Entertainment for family and friends favoring physical and psychological wellbeing.

### TO IMPROVE

- Difficulty in the mobilization of people and Institutions (mainly due to problems of conciliating time for family, work, school – issues that every age group faces daily)
- Difficulty in disseminating the message (since the elections to the European Parliament occurred simultaneously with the program, and the National Commission for Elections prohibited the city council to advertise their activities so the local project SWUP was definitely impaired by it.)
- We realized that the public was opened and motivated for a longer program, but that set-up wasn't possible.

### 3 KEY INFOS ON THE TARGET

- There are a lot of mobility and accessibility difficulties, mostly for elderly
- The women that were subjected to surgeries due to breast cancer also stated their interest in being active or continuing to exercise, however there are not specific programs with trained tutors for these types of rehabilitation (beyond physiotherapy)
- The younger community refers that they enjoy having physical activity in school, but it should have some different guidelines, better facilities and more time.

# WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS TO KEEP ON ENHANCING WOMEN'S OUTDOOR SPORT?

## WILL THE PILOT PROGRAM CONTINUE IN SOME WAYS?

The results obtained with the program “Mulheres + Ativas” and the positive reaction of the community induces the will to implement this activity annually. The idea of merging the physical activity program with lectures that gave the opportunity to the participants to share their stories and personal experiences was well received. However, the public suggested that other themes should be raised during the lectures – mainly the physical activity and diabetes (this disease has a great impact in public health in Portugal and it requires very specific treatments). Financially, it is vital to find the right support and funds to sustain this program.

## WHICH OTHER ACTIVITIES COULD BE CARRIED OUT IN GUIMARÃES?

The community values the fact that organisational entities promote awareness sessions besides the physical activity aspect (gymnastics program, walking, and outdoor sports). They also consider positive the theoretical dimension approach. As reinforcement, we should promote programs run by specialists oriented for groups with special needs related to exercise. For example: women with oncological diseases; pregnant women, victims of vascular diseases, participants with physical disability, exercise for diabetics and for women with small children.

