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Australian Federation of Adapted Physical Activity, **Austria**
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Institute for Physical Education, Torino, **Italy**
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Free University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Movement Sciences, **Netherlands**
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Associate partners

EGREPA - European Group for Research into Elderly and Physical Activity
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Psychology department of the University of Prishtina, **Kosovo**
Saint Petersburg State Academy of Physical Culture, **Russia**
Institute for Special Pedagogics, Saint Petersburg, **Russia**
Univerzitetski centar za rodne studije Univerziteta u Novom Sadu, **Serbia & Montenegro**
Zenske studije i istrazivanja - NGO, **Serbia & Montenegro**
International Society for Ageing and Physical Activity (ISAPA), **USA**
EWAH Womens University, **South Corea**
Active Australia - governmental joint action program, **Australia**
Physical Activity Autonomy Program - PAAP, **Brasil**
Swimming training for middle-aged and older women, **Japan**
Seniors Fitness and Wellness program, **Canada**
The Canadian Centre for Activity and Ageing, **Canada**

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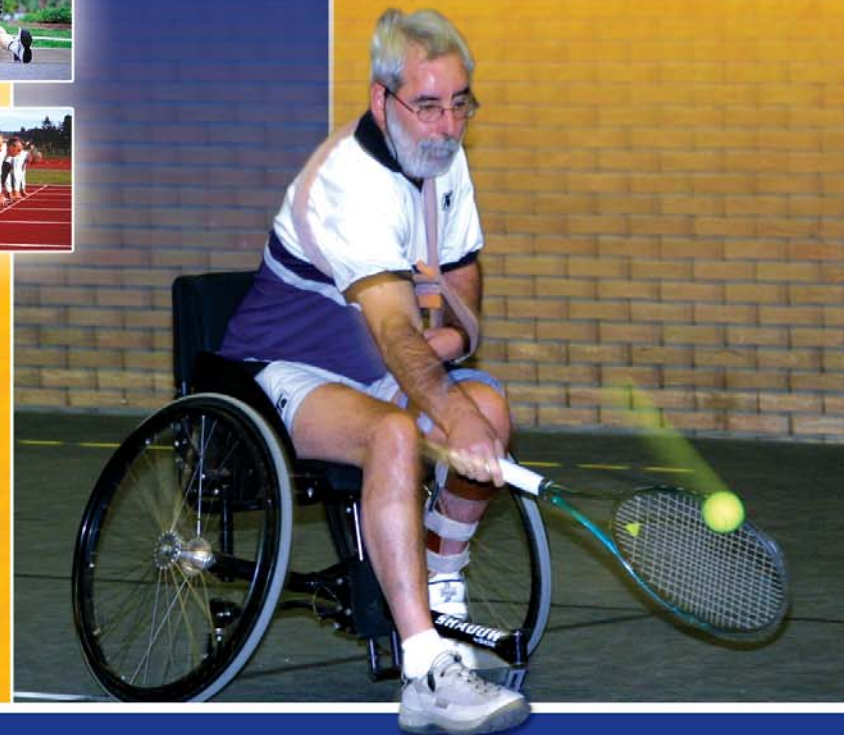
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THEMATIC NETWORK IN ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

"Ageing and disability - a new crossing between physical activity, social inclusion and life-long well-being"

Funded by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Socrates / Erasmus programme: Thematic Network Projects



Recently, the traditional disability model has changed to agree with the suggestion that disability develops not only from disease but also from lifestyle choices. Ageing is a process that often affects and restricts the people who are growing old, on physical, psychological and social level. As older adults are the fastest growing age group, attention needs to be given to them as a special population in the area of exercise and sport. Qualified professionals in the area of physical activity for the elderly have to be prepared now, so they can meet the new demands of the future.

The Thematic Network is needed:

- to define the current situation at the European Higher education institutions in relation to what extent the subject of Adapted Physical Activity (APA) is included in the curricula of the future service providers (physical educators, sport and fitness instructors, kinesiologists, occupational therapists, nursing staff, all professional elderly caregivers, social workers).
- to create a basic profile and implement the subject of adapted physical activity for the elderly with and without disabilities in the European higher education curricula, in order to compensate for the current lack of information and resources in that specific domain.

Vision

Based on strong scientific evidences our conclusion is that only APA specialists will not be enough to serve on the society future demands. **Our believe is that basic knowledge of APA for elderly is necessary to be included in a large number of academic studies.**

This new network will follow the path of our former Thematic Network - "THENAPA: educational and social integration of persons with a disability through Adapted Physical Activity (APA)" (<http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/thenapa> or <http://www.adapt-europe.org>), which final goal was the formation of the best model for education and training of professionals in APA.

Background

One of the most important changes in Europe over the last 50 years has been the rapid increase in the number of people living into their 70s, 80s and beyond. Today the people of 75 years old and over form 7.5% of the overall European population, but in 30 years this percentage will rise to 14.4%. **Most of those ageing people will have some physical**



or mental disability, regardless the fact if they acquired this disability at birth or obtained it later in life or just it happened as a consequence of the normal process of ageing. The "Eurostat" data estimate that **by the end of 2040 the severely impaired adults** will be 6.5% of the total population in Europe, or **24.5 million people.**

The medical model says that health is the absence of disease. **But by age 60, most older adults have been touched by some disease or disability.** Recently, the traditional disability model has changed to agree with the suggestion that disability develops not only from disease but also from **lifestyle choices.**

Ageing is a process that often affects and restricts the people who are growing old, on physical, psychological and social level. Numerous research projects have demonstrated that the benefits of planned physical activities for health for elderly are indisputable. As older adults are the fastest growing age group, attention needs to be given to them as a special population in the area of exercise and sport. **Qualified professionals** in the area of physical activity for the elderly **have to be prepared now**, so they can meet the new demands of the future.

An additional feature to the global demographic picture is one special and also quickly growing group of citizens, those with congenital or long term disabilities who live much longer nowadays due to the increased quality of life and advanced medical care. For this specific group the need of physical activity is of **extreme importance.** But because of the fact that this group didn't exist some years ago, there is a complete lack of knowledge and respectively professionals prepared to meet the needs of this population.

Another very important but very often neglected aspect is **the cost of Physical Inactivity.** The cost of Physical inactivity is a sum of Direct costs (medical care, compensations, lost productivity), Indirect costs (lost opportunities, longer rehabilitation times, drug reactions, additional usage of medical services), Cost drivers (faster ageing population, inflation) and Cost accelerators (new technologies, increased incidence of chronic and new diseases and disabilities). So the best way to diminish the costs of physical inactivity is to prepare specialists who will deal with this problem.

For the purposes of this project we will consider under the term "elderly" the following group of persons: all ageing adults in a relevantly good physical and mental state; all ageing adults with a disability, acquired due to the process of ageing; and all persons with congenital or long term disability who are reaching older age.

For the purposes of this project the concerned elderly population is defined as follows: Ageing disabled - Persons with a congenital disability; Persons with a disability acquired later in life; Persons with significant decrease in functional capacity due to ageing.

The academic subject area is **Adapted Physical Activity (APA).** Many times for shortness' we will use just the term physical activity, but we always mean APA with respect to **the "specialness"** of the beneficiary ageing population.

Aims and objectives

The aim of our project is to collect and bring together on European level, the information concerning physical activity and sport for older adults and to make possible the identification and the fulfilment of relevant educational programs in the students' curricula. In turn these programs have to motivate students from different academic domains to work with and for the elderly population and at the same time - **to help expand the concept of active lifestyle for the elderly.**

The objectives of the network are:

- To define the European dimensions and the role of the physical activity for:

Decreasing the risk factors for secondary disabilities
 Maintaining functional independence of the elderly
 Prevention of the "premature ageing" in older adults
 Increasing life-long well-being and health promotion

- To analyse existing structures of education and examples of "best" practices in the field of physical activity and sport for elderly in the curricula of the students of Physical Education, Physiotherapy, Recreation, Rehabilitation, Health Sciences, Kinesiology, Sport and Human Movement Sciences
- To disseminate those examples through co-operation between university faculties and departments, which will contribute to the students mobility in search for the best expertise in the area
- To promote independence, productivity, self-determination, community inclusion and full citizenship for the older adults
- To create competencies in a variety of specialists in order to increase their employability
- To induce collaborative effort among University departments, local counties and the government
- To contribute to the lifelong learning process by raising the awareness that not only the adoption of positive health related behaviours but also their maintenance is crucial as the population is continuously ageing

Co-ordinating institution

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