

# about the project

The **INCLUSION FIRST** project shines a spotlight on social inclusion through the values of sports. Its strategic objective is to promote recent developments in the EU's sports sector. At its heart lies "RUN AND SMILE," a collection of inspirational stories featuring insights from 24 personalities on various facets of social inclusion. Their motivational journeys will be interwoven with pertinent EU sports policies.

A key goal of the project is to bring EU sports policies closer to non-governmental sports organizations, particularly making them more accessible and understandable for stakeholders at all levels, including the local level. This objective will be pursued through the **INCLUSION FIRST platform**.

The project name cleverly underscores its focus on prioritizing inclusion, while also serving as an acronym for its five core elements: **FRIENDSHIP, INNOVATIONS, RUNNING, SUSTAINABILITY, and TEAMWORK**.

The proposed consortium aims to concentrate on the latest EU sports agenda, including the sport policies outlined in the EU Work Plan for Sport (2021-2024) and the priorities of the EU's Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027) in the sports sector. Notably, the consortium will develop Council conclusions on sport as a platform for social inclusion, as devised during the Maltese Presidency, and Council conclusions on sport diplomacy, as formulated during the Slovak Presidency. By collaborating with selected countries, the project seeks to practically follow up on the EU sports agenda set forth during the presidencies of Malta and Slovakia in the Council of the EU.

Digital, environmentally friendly, and innovative, the project places a significant emphasis on the green and digital transitions, aligning with the priorities of the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme and the current call for proposals.

The project is well-suited to the call's scope, designed with small-scale partnerships in mind. It aims to broaden access to the programme for small-scale actors and individuals who are traditionally hard to reach in the sports sector. Furthermore, the project contributes to the establishment and growth of transnational networks and fosters synergies among local, regional, national, and international policies.



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INNOVATIONS  
RUNNING  
SUSTAINABILITY  
TEAMWORK

[www.run-and-smile.com](http://www.run-and-smile.com)

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# Dušan Poláček

Sports uniquely offer opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their circumstances or disadvantages. Sport is a space that gives and creates opportunities for everyone, without exception, even in the case of various disadvantages. It allows people to meet in a common space, as equals, on the same starting line. It serves as a platform where people from diverse backgrounds can come together on equal footing, sharing a common space. This inclusivity is unparalleled, providing a space where everyone can participate and thrive, regardless of differences. In a world where such inclusive spaces are often rare, sports stand out as a beacon of unity and equality. Where else can you find such a space for inclusion?



# Elena Malíková

I recognize that modern pentathlon has played a role in shaping my identity. It has instilled within me the spirit of a dreamer, encouraging me to pursue ambitious aspirations with tenacity and courage. Moreover, it has fostered a sense of adaptability and versatility, equipping me with the skills to navigate life's challenges with resilience and grace.

In essence, modern pentathlon has become an integral part of my identity, shaping me into the person I am today - a dreamer, a versatile individual, and a steadfast believer in the power of discipline and determination.

However, the ethos that resonates most deeply with me is the concept of "embracing the joy of effort." This principle has been integral to my life philosophy since my teenage years and continues to be a guiding force in all my endeavours. It serves as a perpetual wellspring of inspiration, propelling me forward in my daily pursuits.



# Andrea Gondová

I was encouraged to engage in sports from a young age, fostering a lifelong appreciation for exercise. As I grew up surrounded by mountains, I used to ski and enjoyed the ice skating during the winter and in summer it was hiking, cycling and running. It helped me to stay committed to be active throughout the whole life. The decision to enhance my swimming technique with the guidance of a professional coach, especially after my thirties, reflects a proactive approach to personal development and fitness. Now I consider swimming as an excellent full-body workout. Establishing a morning routine that begins with training, whether it is running, weight training, or swimming, is commendable. Starting the day with physical activity has numerous benefits for both physical and mental well-being. The fact that I miss it when circumstances prevent me from participating in sports highlights the positive impact it has had on my life.



# Julián Vojtech

Sport, for me, is primarily an irreplaceable source of daily movement, through which I balance the mental aspect of my work. However, I perceive it as entertainment, which has brought me pleasure, joy, relaxation, inspiration, and later also stress relief since childhood. It can be said that sport has also changed my view of the world. Another dimension of sport is its impact on personality. Looking back, I realize that sport has always shaped me mentally and personally. Victories, failures, humility, disappointment, recognition, challenges, patience, emotions... and much more, including sporting ideals, have been transferred from sport to everyday life, thereby influencing my overall personality.

The project affinity to the general objectives of the call is very close. The project provides cooperation opportunities in sport in light of the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme. It highlights five basic project elements: FRIENDSHIP, INNOVATIONS, RUNNING, SUSTAINABILITY and TEAMWORK while addressing general objectives of the call:

1. Support active European citizenship and bring the European dimension to the local level through sport values, such as FRIENDSHIP.
2. Attract and widen access for newcomers, less experienced organisations and small-scale actors to the programme. This partnership acts as a role model for organisations willing to start cooperation at European level. Its INNOVATION element focuses on increasing quality in the work and practices of the organisations and institutions involved, opening up to new actors not naturally included within one sector.
3. Support the inclusion of target groups with fewer opportunities, notably vulnerable groups. It uses RUNNING as an example activity, which might be easy replicable in any other health enhancing physical activity.
4. SUSTAINABILITY is linked to building capacity of organisations to work transnationally and across sectors. It includes green aspects and is guaranteed by a pledge of stakeholders to keep project outcomes financed after its initial funding from the Erasmus+ programme.
5. Addressing common needs and priorities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport the project capitalises on a synergic effect of those areas. TEAMWORK lies in enabling transformation and change at individual, organisational and sectoral level, leading to improvements, in proportion to the context of each organisation.

The project's contributions to the priorities outlined in the call are extensive, particularly with regards to its digital, green, and innovative aspects within the sports sector. With a strong emphasis on green and digital transitions, the project aligns closely with the objectives of the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme and the current Call document. Notably, the anticipated outcome of the project, the INCLUSION FIRST platform, exemplifies its digital orientation. Sustainability and environmental consciousness permeate all project activities, with innovation serving as a core element, including the development of a pioneering platform aimed at a global audience.