HEALTHY STADIA CONCEPT

Sport plays an important role within society, and sporting stadia are iconic within their communities. Millions of people across Europe attend a sports stadium each week to watch their team, to work, to volunteer or to use the stadium’s facilities.

Stadia are often located in less affluent areas and are traditionally attended by ‘harder to reach’ groups. Stadia therefore offer themselves as an excellent setting to support initiatives aimed at addressing a broad range of issues under the themes of health, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. These can include initiatives concerned with increased physical activity, environmentally friendly transport, food and nutrition, alcohol misuse, racism and xenophobia, urban regeneration / neighbourhood renewal and men’s health.

BACKGROUND TO HEALTHY STADIA

The Network builds upon a highly successful 30 month pilot project funded by the European Union (DG SANCO) that has worked in eight European countries to promote the Healthy Stadia concept, and develop guidance for stadia to help roll out healthy initiatives with the support of local service providers. This pilot project has been coordinated by UK-based cardiovascular disease prevention charity, Heart of Mersey.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

• Establishing a strong partnership of nine European ‘steering group’ partners
• Engaging another 125+ collaborative partner agencies from public health, academia and sport (including UEFA)
• A ‘benchmark’ audit of current Healthy Stadia practice with 88 European stadia
• Development of a Healthy Stadia website: www.healthystadia.eu
• Implementation of a programme evaluation process
• Launch of a European Healthy Stadia Network to commence work from 2010 onwards.
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK

The Network will expand the programme’s initial work and geographical reach within Europe, and will have the following broad aims and objectives:

- Promoting healthier practices to stadia concerning lifestyle, social and environmental issues and increasing the recognition of corporate and social responsibilities towards staff, customers and local communities
- Supporting stadia and national governing bodies/leagues to form successful partnerships with key stakeholders (health agencies, local authorities, transport providers, third sector) to roll out healthy initiatives
- Specialist public health advice and support for stadia and intermediary agencies across Europe
- Development of specialist guidance documents for stadia to help the planning, roll out and evaluation of established initiatives, e.g. active travel plans to and from stadia
- To collate and disseminate new developments and examples of current practice across the Network and to act as a communications and signposting hub for key stakeholders
- Supporting national governing bodies of sport and major sports events to develop public health policies and strategies as part of their commitment to the growing CSR agenda.

SUPPORT FOR STADIA

Whilst there are obvious public health benefits from engaging with stadia, there is also a business case to be made to stadia management and organisations involved in the Healthy Stadia agenda. Healthy Stadia good practice can support both business and corporate objectives – it can help build a positive corporate profile, engage with a broader audience, nurture new partnerships, uncover further business opportunities and help secure additional sources of funding.

Recognising that healthy lifestyle options and environmental initiatives can bring tangible business benefits to stadia, the Network will research, develop and promote case studies that demonstrate either increased revenue streams or reductions in running costs for stadia, and bring these examples to a wider audience.

DRIVING FORWARD THE NETWORK

Membership of the Network is free of charge, and our intention is to engage with as many sports stadia, national and European governing bodies of sport, and intermediary agencies concerned with improving public health. The Network will need support from members and key stakeholders to facilitate the following areas:

- Expertise, insight and advice from stakeholders within specialist fields
- Communications and promotion of Network, dissemination of documents/developments
- Recruitment of new stadia within European Network
- Financial support

In order for the Network to develop effectively we are appealing to governing bodies of sport and government departments for financial or in-kind support, and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss potential options.

If you would like your organisation to become a member of the European Healthy Stadia Network, or have any initial questions concerning Healthy Stadia and our programme of work, please do not hesitate to contact us using the details below.

We look forward to working with you.

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