

ACTIVE4SME

Fourth Deliverable (D4.1)

**Adoption of steps, processes and training activities
for a successful implementation of physical activity
initiatives to SMEs at a system level**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of **Active4SME** is to develop and pilot a plan for implementing physical activity in SMEs of two European countries as a Proof-of-Concept; to be later co-adapted and validated across a wider range of European countries in a future Erasmus+ Sport Call 2026.

To do so, the second specific objective of **Active4SME** aims “to support SMEs across EU countries on tailoring the implementation of physical activity initiatives to their contextual needs”. To achieve this objective and according to the four stages of the RE-AIM framework for the successful scalability of physical activity interventions (Planification, Implementation, Follow-up and Maintenance), the current delivery (D4.1) fits within the Follow-up stage (WP4).

The Follow-up stage aims to identify what percentage of representative SMEs in each country (Catalonia & Finland) would be ready to uptake the steps, processes, awareness and training activities to successfully implement physical activity in SMEs. Results from this WP will assess the proof-of-concept integrity, quality and consistency of delivery at the system level in the real-world.

Deliverable D4.1 is built on the results from deliverables D2.2 and D3.2, which aimed to co-design and identify feasible steps and processes for implementing physical activity initiatives in the context of SMEs.

2. THE CASE STUDY OF CATALONIA

2.1 Processes and Steps for reaching out, training and supporting SMEs on the implementation of physical activity.

Deliverables D2.2 and D3.2 identified **six key processes** for reaching out and supporting SMEs on the feasible implementation of physical activity initiatives sustainably. Each process included steps and stakeholders’ roles for supporting the implementation of each step <https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVI5-OEAc=?focusWidget=3458764627227265224>.

The co-created six processes were: **Process 1**: Cross-sectoral alliances through agreements; **Process 2**: Joint coordination; **Process 3**: Incorporating physical activity within the Occupational Risk Prevention Services that support SMEs; **Process 4**: Crosscutting raising awareness and training within the SME ecosystem; **Process 5**: Evaluation, Impact and Feedback for tailored physical activity to SMEs’ specific needs; **Process 6**: Cultural and Social Transformation.

More in-depth information about the processes was explored to agree on specific implementation steps. Individual semi-structured interviews organized with each stakeholder further explored and validated the feasibility of implementing such processes and steps. **Agreement was reached that steps in processes 1,2,3,4 & 5 should be part of an Actions Checklist for implementation.** Process 6 was discarded from the checklist as it was a key process to be performed in Catalonia but not in Finland, where cultural and social transformation for promoting physical activity in SMEs is already part of supporting adults’ wellbeing at working age. How this is happening in Finland is described down below as part of the Finish case study.

2.1.1 Actions Checklist for Reaching Out and Scaling Physical Activity implementation in the context of SMEs (ACROSPA-SMEs Checklist)

After critical appraisal with stakeholders, a feasible checklist of implementation actions (n = 27) for reaching out and scaling physical activity in the context of SMEs was developed. The aim of the Checklist is to facilitate the SME ecosystem the inclusion of SME-tailored health-enhancing physical activity into SMEs day-to-day work life. Table 1 shows the Implementation action checklist (ACROSPA-SMEs Checklist) for reaching out and scaling physical activity in the context of SMEs.

Table 1. Actions Checklist for Reaching Out and Scaling Physical Activity implementation in the context of SMEs (ACROSPA-SMEs Checklist).

DEVELOPMENT & DEPLOYMENT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SME'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	
1.	Workplace mutual societies and occupational risk prevention services should lead the development and deployment of a strategic plan for physical activity in SMEs.
2.	The strategic plan for physical activity in SMEs should include tailored and targeted plans for locally geographically delimited areas
3.	Workplace mutual societies and occupational risk prevention services should organise Kick-off days, by local geographical areas, for tailored and targeted deployments of the strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity
4.	The kick-off days for initiating the tailored and targeted deployment of the strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity by local geographical areas should include the participation of:
	4.1 City councils
	4.2 County Councils
	4.3 Territorial Public Health Agencies (e.g. Public Health Agency Central Catalonia)
	4.4 Catalan Institutes of Health (ICS) by Territorial areas (e.g. ICS Central Catalonia)
	4.5 Counties Business Councils (e.g. Osona Business Council or Garrigues Business Council).
	4.6 Sport Councils
	4.7 Representation of public and private physical activity and sports centres that operate in the local geographical area
	4.8 Academic institutions and universities of reference
	4.9 Relevant others for each local geographical area.
5.	The kick-off days for the tailored and targeted deployment of the strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity by geographical area should include two modalities: (i) a session for workers' representatives, (ii) a session for SME's managers.
6.	The County Business Councils should decide the boundaries of the local geographical areas to which the tailored and targeted strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity will be deployed
7.	The County Business Councils should contact the managers of SMEs, industrial areas and trade unions that operate in the area to inform about the deployment of the SMEs' physical activity strategic plan.
8.	The County Business Councils should disseminate awareness-raising messages on the benefits of implementing an SMEs' physical activity strategic plan to the managers of SMEs, industrial areas and trade unions.
DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLANS TAILORED AND TARGETED TO SMES' WORKERS AND CONTEXT	
9.	The County Business Councils should be the reference agent for supporting the reach out of physical activity to local and municipal SMEs.
10.	The County Business Councils should be the coordinating agents of a public-private collaboration for the sustainable implementation of physical activity in SMEs.
11.	In the event of no existing County Business Councils, the Chambers of Commerce should be the reference agent for supporting the reach out of physical activity in SMEs at the municipality or county
12.	The County Business Councils should create and include -as part of their services- a Physical Activity Unit (UAL) responsible for designing physical activity plans individualized to the needs of SMEs in the area, their workers and for evaluating its impact
13.	The County Business Councils should identify the municipal/county agents and referents that should be part of the Physical Activity Unit (UAL)
14.	The municipal/county agents and referents that are recommended for being part of the Physical Activity Unit (UAL) are:
	14.1 City councils. To provide SMEs and Business Councils with physical activity resources and services close to SMEs location (mapping public leisure physical activity facilities/spaces and services).

14.2 Leading companies in the county. To act as a benchmark for workplace physical activity, by setting an example and sharing with SMEs some of their physical activity services and activities.	
14.3 Supra municipal Councils as a sustainable and stable funding agent	
14.4 Sport Councils. To organise and implement physical activity services and activities targeted and tailored to SMEs (sports technician suppliers, organise events, physical activity monitoring)	
14.5 County councils. To ask city councils to develop a map of the municipal facilities for physical activity; disseminate the role of the Physical Activity Unit (UAL) of the Business Councils within the municipality; disseminate the benefits of implementing physical activity in the SMEs.	
14.6 Municipal consortiums and associations as agents who know the territory very well.	
14.7 Academia/universities for designing and implementing the process and impact evaluation of the SME's individualised physical activity plan.	
14.8 Workplace mutual societies and occupational risk prevention services. Awareness-raising agent that should provide real, anonymous and aggregated data by geographical area on SME's workers sick leave and work-related health problems to business councils or chambers of commerce. Leadership in the development and deployment of Strategic Plans for SMEs' Physical Activity at Work by geographical area	
14.9 Physical Activity and Sport Sciences professionals as reference professionals for designing the tailored and targeted physical activity plan for SMEs by geographical area. These professionals should be the referent coordinator for SMEs' physical activity and the connecting agent between Business councils and sports councils, public-private physical activity services, public-private facilities and academy. Physical Activity and Sport Sciences professionals should be responsible for designing the individualised plan for SMEs' physical activity by geographical area and facilitate their implementation in connection with the other territory agents.	
15. Physical Activity and Sport Sciences professionals should play a leading role within the Physical Activity Unit (UAL) of Business Councils. They should oversee the following:	
15.1. After the kick-off day for deploying the strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity in the geographical area, invite each SME within the area for an initial assessment	
15.2 Perform SME workers' assessments on physical activity, fitness, sedentary behaviour, well-being and preferences for physical activity initiatives (format, delivery and type)	
15.3 Perform assessments with SMEs' managers to identify SMEs' business needs.	
15.4 Perform environmental assessments of SMEs locations for potential active transport initiatives and, location of physical activity spaces and location of public-private resources/services within a distance of 15 minutes	
15.5 To connect with city councils by using the maps of the area (at 15 minutes) with all public spaces usable for physical activity and public physical activity and sports centres.	
15.6 To connect with physical activity services offered by Sports councils and public-private physical activity and sports centres in the area (at 15 minutes) to use their services if appropriate to the needs of the SMEs' workers.	
15.7 Based on the initial assessments (individual, company and environment) and knowledge on the physical activity spaces, resources and services in the area, design an individualised physical activity plan for SMEs in the area (review annually).	
15.8 To facilitate the organization, if appropriate to the needs of SMEs, of specific physical activity initiatives that do not exist within the existing resources and services in the area.	
15.9 To facilitate the implementation of the Individualised SMEs' Physical Activity Plan in the area	
15.10 To connect with academic institutions/universities for implementing the process and impact evaluation of the individualized plan for SMEs' physical activity in the area.	
15.11 To perform data collection for the process and effectiveness evaluations of the Individualised plan for SMEs' physical activity in the area (annually)	
15.12 To communicate the results of the process and effectiveness evaluation to SMEs in order to update the Individualized Plan for SMEs' physical activity in the area (annually).	
15.13 To be the valid intermediary on physical activity between SMEs and the local/municipal/regional agents.	
16. The main functions of the Business Councils regarding SMEs' physical activity should be:	
16.1. To effectively disseminate messages and materials – by using relevant communication channels to SMEs in the county- that raise awareness and motivate implementing SMEs' physical activity.	
16.2 To be a connecting agent with academia and university in the dissemination and creation of training courses on SMEs' physical activity.	
16.3 To co-create with academia/university a University Expert Course on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity for SMEs' management roles.	
16.4 To co-create with academia/university (especially self-employed, micro and small enterprises) a short format course on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical	

activity.	
16.5 Key connecting agent with SMEs of the area.	
16.6 Provider of Individualised Physical Activity Plans for SMEs throughout the Physical Activity Unit (UAL)	
16.7 Provider of the process and effectiveness evaluation results of the Individualized Physical Activity Plans to SMEs.	
FUNDING FOR THE INDIVIDUALIZED SMES' PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLANS	
17. Training activities in SMEs' physical activity should be funded through Fundae (the State Employment Service)	
18. The Physical Activity Units (UAL) of the Business Councils should be public-private co-funded by SMEs, Supramunicipal Councils and the Regional ministry of Sports.	
19. The Supramunicipal Councils should provide funding to County councils. County councils should apply for subsidies to get financial support for the Physical Activity Units (UAL) as an innovative territorial project.	
20. The Supramunicipal Councils should provide funding to city councils. City councils should apply for subsidies to get financial support for the Physical Activity Units (UAL) as an innovative territorial project.	
21. The Regional Ministry of Sports should provide funding to the County councils. County councils should apply for subsidies to get financial support for the Physical Activity Units (UAL) as a sports promotion program for adults at working-age.	
22. The Regional Ministry of Sports should provide funding to the Sports Councils. Sport Councils should apply for subsidies to provide individualized services in SMEs' physical activity in the area as a sports promotion program for adults at working-age.	
TRAINING FOR DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALISED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLANS FOR SMES	
23. The academy/university should design -based on scientific evidence- and implement the "University Experts Course" training for management roles on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity.	
24. The academy/university should design -based on scientific evidence- and implement the short-format training on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity for management roles in self-employed, micro or small enterprises.	
25. The academy/university should design -based on scientific evidence- the contents of the awareness and training materials on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity.	
IMPACT AND PROCESS EVALUATION OF THE INDIVIDUALISED SMES' PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLANS ON THE AREA	
26. The academy/university should design the impact/effectiveness evaluation plan/methodology -based on scientific evidence- of the individualised plans for SMEs' physical activity.	
27. The academy/university should design the process evaluation plan/methodology -based on scientific evidence- of the individualized plans for SMEs' physical activity.	

2.1.2 Methodology for measuring the feasibility of implementing the **ACROSPA-SMEs Checklist** for reaching out and scaling physical activity in the context of SMEs

Feasibility research focuses on the intervention process and addresses questions about whether and how an intervention can be implemented: 'Can this intervention be done?' (Gadke et al, 2021). It provides the opportunity to test interventions in practice settings, considering real-world barriers and facilitators to implementation, addressing issues of cultural relevance (Gadke et al. 2021).

A feasibility study was conducted prior to implementing the **ACROSPA-SMEs Checklist** for reaching out and scaling-up physical activity in the real- world of SMEs. The following dimensions of feasibility were prioritized and measured in a survey: Acceptability, Practicality, Adaptability and Effectiveness- (Gadke et al, 2021). For each step/action, the following questions were approached:

- ✓ **Acceptability:**
Is this action appropriate, reasonable and necessary to facilitate the implementation of physical activity in SMEs?
- ✓ **Practicability:**
Is this action capable of being implemented using the existing resources available

to SMEs and their ecosystem?

- ✓ **Adaptability:**
Is this a flexible action that can be adapted and modified to the different contexts of SMEs?
- ✓ **Effectiveness:**
Is this action potentially effective to help SMEs implement physical activity on a regular basis?

A survey was sent out (20th of October 2025) to all SMEs (n=60) from the country of Les Garrigues. Participant SMEs had not been taken part in the co-creation sessions (WP2). The survey was organised in four different surveys: Survey 1 assessed acceptability; Survey 2 assessed practicality; Survey 3 assessed adaptability; Survey 4 assessed effectiveness. Surveys can be seen in the following links:

- Survey 1 - Acceptability: <https://forms.gle/D14YmoUkhiigsMoj6>
- Survey 2 - Practicability: <https://forms.gle/dJc26wLZRA9g9qZS9>
- Survey 3 - Adaptability: <https://forms.gle/PTqndw4ge14YCDYN8>
- Survey 4 - Effectiveness: <https://forms.gle/cHzTTBnuxdPvmGPT6>

The four surveys were sent by email to SMEs managers. Managers could either answer each survey individually or could answer them continuously. A weekly reminder was sent to managers during five weeks. Each survey took approximately 15 minutes to be completed. For each dimension, steps/actions were scored on a five-point-likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (from low to high acceptability, practicality, adaptability and effectiveness; Gadke et al, 2021). Scores from 1 to 2.5 indicated **low** acceptability, practicality, adaptability and effectiveness (marked in red colour). Scores from 2.51 to 3.5 indicated **medium** acceptability, practicality, adaptability and effectiveness (marked in orange colour). Scores from 3.6 to 5 indicated **high** acceptability, practicality, adaptability and effectiveness (marked in green colour). For each step/action of the Checklist and for each dimension, the mean and standard deviations for SMEs responses were provided.

2.1.3 Results

A total of 21 SMEs' managers completed the surveys (response rate of 35%) to measure the feasibility of implementing the **ACROSPA-SMEs Checklist** for reaching out and scaling up physical activity implementation and training activities in SMEs. Mean scores for acceptability, practicality, adaptability and effectiveness can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Actions Checklist for Reaching Out and Scalating Physical Activity implementation in the context of SMEs (ACROSPA-SMEs Checklist).

	Acceptability n=21 (mean)	Practicability n=21 (mean)	Adaptability n=21 (mean)	Effectivity n=21 (mean)	TOTAL (mean)
DEVELOPMENT & DEPLOYMENT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SME'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY					
1. Workplace mutual societies and occupational risk prevention services should lead the development and deployment of a strategic plan for physical activity in SMEs.	3.14	3	3.24	3.28	3.16
2. The strategic plan for physical activity in SMEs should include tailored and targeted plans for locally geographically delimited areas	3.76	3.28	3.52	3.76	3.58

3. Workplace mutual societies and occupational risk prevention services should organise Kick-off days, by local geographical areas, for tailored and targeted deployments of the strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity	3.35	2.95	3.19	3.14	3.16
4. The kick-off days for initiating the tailored and targeted deployment of the strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity by local geographical areas should include the participation of:					
4.1 City councils	3.81	3.24	3.67	3.62	3.58
4.2 County Councils	4.24	3.48	3.76	3.67	3.78
4.3 Territorial Public Health Agencies (e.g. Public Health Agency Central Catalonia)	4.09	3.43	4.19	3.71	3.85
4.4 Catalan Institutes of Health (ICS) by Territorial areas (e.g. ICS Central Catalonia)	4	3.67	3.76	3.62	3.76
4.5 Counties Business Councils (e.g. Osona Business Council or Garrigues Business Council).	4.05	3.86	3.52	4.19	3.9
4.6 Sport Councils	3.81	3.52	3.67	3.38	3.59
4.7 Representation of public and private physical activity and sports centres that operate in the local geographical area	3.95	3.52	3.52	3.62	3.65
4.8 Academic institutions and universities of reference	3.47	3.24	4.48	3.43	3.65
4.9 Relevant others for each local geographical area.	2.57	3	3.19	3.09	2.96
5. The kick-off days for the tailored and targeted deployment of the strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity by geographical area should include two modalities: (i) a session for workers' representatives, (ii) a session for SME's managers.	3.81	3.71	3.67	3.76	3.73
6. The County Business Councils should decide the boundaries of the local geographical areas to which the tailored and targeted strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity will be deployed	3.86	3.62	3.71	3.76	3.74
7. The County Business Councils should contact the managers of SMEs, industrial areas and trade unions that operate in the area to inform about the deployment of the SMEs' physical activity strategic plan.	3.71	3.67	3.81	3.71	3.72
8. The County Business Councils should disseminate awareness-raising messages to the managers of SMEs, industrial areas and trade unions in the area on the benefits of implementing an SMEs' physical activity strategic plan.	4	3.76	3.62	3.81	3.8
DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLANS TAILORED AND TARGETED TO SMEs' WORKERS AND CONTEXT					
9. The County Business Councils should be the reference agent for supporting the reach out of physical activity to local and municipal SMEs.	3.95	3.71	3.71	3.62	3
10. The County Business Councils should be the coordinating agents of a public-private collaboration for the sustainable implementation of physical activity in SMEs.	3.71	3.71	3.76	3.71	3.72
11. In the event of no existing County Business Councils, the Chambers of Commerce should be the reference agents for supporting the reach out of physical activity in SMEs at the municipality or county	3.57	3.14	3	3.33	3.26
12. The County Business Councils should create and include -as part of their services- a Physical Activity Unit (UAL) responsible for designing physical activity plans individualized to the needs of SMEs in the area, their workers and for evaluating the impact (return of investment)	3.86	3.09	3.48	3.38	3.45
13. The County Business Councils should identify the municipal/county agents and referents that should be part of the Physical Activity Unit (UAL)	3.76	3.43	3.43	3.57	3.555
14. The municipal/county agents and referents that are recommended be part of the Physical Activity Unit (UAL) are:					
14.1 City councils. To provide SMEs and Business Councils with physical activity resources and services that are close to SMEs location (mapping public leisure physical activity facilities/spaces and services).	3.9	3.38	3.52	3.71	3.63
14.2 Leading companies in the County. To act as a benchmark for workplace physical activity, by setting an example and sharing with SMEs some of their physical activity services and activities.	3.57	3.28	3.28	3.57	3.42
14.3 Supra municipal Councils as a sustainable and stable funding agent	4	3.86	3.67	3.71	3.81
14.4 Sport Councils. To organise and implement physical activity services and activities targeted and tailored to SMEs (sports technician suppliers, organise events, physical activity monitoring)	4.14	4	4.14	4.09	4.09

14.5 County councils. To ask the city councils to develop a map of the municipal facilities for physical activity; disseminate the role of the Physical Activity Unit (UAL) of the Business Councils within the municipality; disseminate the benefits of implementing physical activity in the SMEs.	4.05	3.86	3.76	4	3.92
14.6 Municipal consortiums and associations as agents who know the territory very well.	3.66	3.48	3.38	3.33	3.46
14.7 Academia/universities for designing and implementing the process and impact evaluation of the SME's individualised physical activity plan.	3.57	3.28	3.28	3.43	3.39
14.8 Workplace mutual societies and occupational risk prevention services. Awareness-raising agent that should provide real, anonymous and aggregated data by geographical area on SME's workers sick leave and work-related health problems to business councils or chambers of commerce. Leadership in the development and deployment of Strategic Plans for SMEs' Physical Activity at Work by geographical area	3.43	3.24	3.14	3.19	3.25
14.9 Physical Activity and Sport Sciences professionals as reference professionals for designing the tailored and targeted physical activity plan for SMEs by geographical area. Physical Activity and Sport Sciences professionals should be the referent coordinator of SMEs' physical activity and the connecting agent between Business councils and sports councils, public-private physical activity services, public-private facilities and academy. Physical Activity and Sport Sciences should be responsible for designing the individualised plan for SMEs' physical activity by geographical area and facilitate their implementation in connection with the other territory agents.	4.33	3.9	3.86	3.71	3.95
15. Physical Activity and Sport Sciences professionals should play a leading role within the Physical Activity Unit (UAL) of Business Councils. They should oversee the following:					
15.1. After the kick-off day for deploying the strategic plan for SMEs' physical activity in the geographical area, invite each SME within the area for an initial assessment	3.9	3.81	3.67	3.9	3.82
15.2 Perform SME workers' assessments on physical activity, fitness, sedentary behaviour, well-being and preferences for physical activity initiatives (format, delivery and type)	4	3.86	3.62	3.95	3.86
15.3 Perform assessments with SMEs' managers to identify SMEs' business needs.	4.09	3.86	3.57	4.05	3.89
15.4 Perform environmental assessments of SMEs locations for potential active transport initiatives and, location of physical activity spaces and location of public-private resources/services within a distance of 15 minutes	4.14	3.81	3.76	4	3.93
15.5 To connect with city councils by using the maps of the area (at 15 minutes) with all public spaces usable for physical activity and public physical activity and sports centres.	4.05	3.81	3.67	3.86	3.85
15.6 To connect with physical activity services offered by Sports councils and public-private physical activity and sports centres in the area (at 15 minutes) to use their services if appropriate to the needs of the SMEs' workers.	4.38	3.95	3.67	4.14	4.03
15.7 Based on the initial assessments (individual, company and environment) and knowledge on the physical activity spaces, resources and services in the area, design an individualised physical activity plan for SMEs in the area (review annually).	4.19	3.86	3.62	3.95	3.9
15.8 To facilitate the organization, if appropriate to the needs of SMEs, of specific physical activity initiatives that do not exist within the existing resources and services in the area.	4.05	3.76	3.71	3.95	3.87
15.9 To facilitate the implementation of the Individualised SMEs' Physical Activity Plan in the area.	4.24	3.71	3.52	3.95	3.85
15.10 To connect with academic institutions/universities for implementing the process and impact evaluation of the individualized plan for SMEs' physical activity in the area.	4.14	3.71	3.57	3.71	3.78
15.11 To perform data collection for the process and effectiveness evaluations of the Individualised plan for SMEs' physical activity in the area (annually)	4.24	3.86	3.76	4	3.96
15.12 To communicate the results of the process and effectiveness evaluation to SMEs in order to update the Individualized Plan for SMEs' physical activity in the area (annually).	4.19	3.86	3.9	4	3.99
15.13 To be the valid intermediary on physical activity between SMEs and the local/municipal/regional agents.	4.14	3.86	3.62	4	3.9
16. The main functions of the Business Councils regarding SMEs' physical activity should be:					

16.1. To effectively disseminate messages and materials – by using relevant communication channels to SMEs in the county- that raise awareness and motivate implementing SMEs' physical activity.	4.14	3.66	3.67	3.95	3.85
16.2 To be a connecting agent with academia and university in the dissemination and creation of training courses on SMEs' physical activity.	3.86	3.38	3.38	3.71	3.58
16.3 To co-create with academia/university a University Expert Course on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity for SMEs' management roles.	3.67	3.57	3.62	3.9	3.69
16.4 To co-create with academia/university (especially self-employed, micro and small enterprises) a short format course on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity.	3.86	3.43	3.67	3.86	3.7
16.5 Key connecting agent with SMEs of the area.	4.24	3.9	3.57	4.05	3.94
16.6 Provider of Individualised Physical Activity Plans for SMEs throughout the Physical Activity Unit (UAL)	3.86	3.57	3.86	3.76	3.76
16.7 Provider of the process and effectiveness evaluation results of the Individualized Physical Activity Plans to SMEs.	4	3.76	3.62	4	3.84
FUNDING FOR THE INDIVIDUALIZED SMES' PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLA.					
17. Training activities in SMEs' physical activity should be funded through Fundae (the State Employment Service)	3.76	3.57	3.43	3.38	3.53
18. The Physical Activity Units (UAL) of the Business Councils should be public-private co-funded by SMEs, Supramunicipal Councils and the Regional ministry of Sports.	4.09	4.05	3.62	3.76	3.88
19. The Supramunicipal Councils should provide funding to County councils. County councils should apply for subsidies to get financial support for the Physical Activity Units (UAL) as an innovative territorial project.	4.05	3.9	3.67	3.57	3.8
20. The Supramunicipal Councils should provide funding to city councils. City councils should apply for subsidies to get financial support for the Physical Activity Units (UAL) as an innovative territorial project	4.09	3.81	3.71	3.71	3.83
21. The Regional Ministry of Sports should provide funding to the County councils. County councils should apply for subsidies to get financial support for the Physical Activity Units (UAL) as a sports promotion program for adults at working-age.	3.9	3.57	3.48	3.62	3.64
22. The Regional Ministry of Sports should provide funding to the Sports Councils. Sport Councils should apply for subsidies to provide individualized services in SMEs' physical activity in the area as a sports promotion program for adults at working-age.	4.28	3.9	3.71	3.76	3.91
TRAINING FOR DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALISED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLANS FOR SMES					
23. The academy/university should design -based on scientific evidence- and implement the "University Experts Course" training for management roles on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity.	3.86	3.33	3.43	3.52	3.53
24. The academy/university should design -based on scientific evidence- and implement the short-format training on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity for management roles in self-employed, micro or small enterprises.	3.95	3.48	3.43	3.57	3.61
25. The academy/university should design -based on scientific evidence- the contents of the awareness and training materials on the implementation of individualized SMEs' physical activity.	4.05	3.48	3.28	3.52	3.58
IMPACT AND PROCESS EVALUATION OF THE INDIVIDUALISED SMES' PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLANS ON THE AREA					
26. The academy/university should design the impact/effectiveness evaluation plan/methodology -based on scientific evidence- of the individualised plans for SMEs' physical activity.	3.95	3.433	3.48	3.67	3.62
27. The academy/university should design the process evaluation plan/methodology -based on scientific evidence- of the individualized plans for SMEs' physical activity.	4	3.48	3.57	3.81	3.71
TOTAL (mean)	3.91	3.60	3.60	3.71	3.69

Mean values indicate effectiveness levels: 1–2.5 = low, 2.51–3.50 = medium, 3.51–5 = high level of effectiveness

2.2 Message content, format and delivery for raising SMEs' awareness to implement physical activity

According to the Physical Activity Message Framework (PAMF; Williamson et al, 2020, 2021) and Checklist (PAMC; Williamson et al, 2020, 2021), several tailored messages were developed for SMEs as a target audience. The aim of the messages is to raise awareness of SMEs to sustainably implement PA to their employees.

Message contents were developed based on existing literature and co-created with a sample of SMEs (n=20). Contents included information that address factors which motivate SMEs towards implementing PA (see delivery D2.1). Thus, messages content were related to: **(1) Workers' cohesion, teamwork and sense of belonging, (2) Brand image, (3) Employees' care and well-being, (4) Employees' sick leave and associated costs; (5) Work productivity, (6) Employees' motivation at work, (7) Talent retention and loyalty, (8) Make work environment more attractive.**

To ensure messages reach out and appealed to diverse groups of SMEs, a range of economic sectors from two different geographical areas in Catalonia (Osona and Garrigues) were involved in the message creation. Table 3 shows the messages that were developed based on existing literature and co-creation results.

Table 3. Content messages based on the target audience (SMEs) motivations towards implementing PA and scientific evidence (Brandt et al., 2021; Di Luizo et al., 2019; Jakobsen et al., 2017; Mincarone et al., 2024; Burn, 2019, Conn et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2021; Miragaua & Aleixo, 2021; Ojo et al., 2024; Pereira et al., 2018; López-Bueno et al., 2020; Dongen et al., 2012; WHO, 2020; REES, 2013–2030)

Message 1.1. Physical activity improves work environment and increases job satisfaction x3.
Message 1.2. Physical activity improves work environment and reduces the risk of depression -30%
Message 1.3. Physical activity improves work environment and reduces job productivity loss – 46%
Message 1.4. Physical activity improves work environment and helps to sleep better +82%
Message 1.5. Physical activity improves the working environment and reduces back pain -37%
Message 1.6. Doing physical activity with co-workers improves the connection between them.
Message 1.7 Doing physical activity with co-workers strengthens the relationship and cooperation between them
Message 1.8. Doing physical activity with co-workers improves the health of the company.
Message 1.9.). Doing physical activity with co-workers builds cohesion and social capital (+5.3 points): 10 weeks is enough
Message 1.10. Doing physical activity with co-workers forms social capital: For each week of physical activity in a group, social capital increases by 3.5 points.
Message 1.11. Physical activity strengthens the connection and feelings of belonging to the company
Message 1.12 Physical activity increases energy and enthusiasm for work.
Message 1.13 Physical activity strengthens mental acuity and emotional vitality at work.
Message 1.14 Physical activity improves social connection and life satisfaction.
Message 1.15 Physical activity reduces back pain
Message 1.16 Physical activity helps not to worry about back pain
Message 1.17 Physical activity helps to better manage back pain
Message 1.18 Physical activity improves the productivity and well-being of the company.
Message 1.19. Offering physical activity improves the corporate image and helps to retain talent.
Message 1.20. Offering physical activity improves the corporate image and attracts talent.
Message 1.21. The use of local services in physical activity, exercise and sport (<15 minutes away) improves the health of the company.
Message 1.22 Offering physical activity creates a healthy work environment
Message 1.23 Investing in physical activity is investing in the well-being and future of the company.
Message 1.24 Doing physical activity just once a week protects against burnout.
Message 1.25 Physical activity preserves mental health and prevents burnout.
Message 1.26 Doing physical activity with co-workers increases the number of daily steps walking +612
Message 1.27 Doing physical activity with co-workers improves cardiorespiratory fitness

Message 1.28 Doing physical activity with co-workers reduces blood glucose levels
Message 1.29 Doing physical activity with co-workers reduces work stress.
Message 1.30 Physical activity improves perseverance at work.
Message 1.31 Workplace wellness programs improve the quality of working life.
Message 1.32 Offering physical activity strengthens corporate social responsibility and creates entrepreneurship opportunities.
Message 1.33) Reducing sitting time at work improves motivation and work productivity +11%
Message 1.34. An active work environment encourages greater engagement and work performance: 8 weeks is enough
Message 1.35. Doing physical exercises of the cervical spine reduces the cost of lost productivity -276 euros
Message 1.36 Physical exercise reduces the number of days off work -0.7 days
Message 1.37 Physical exercise reduces presenteeism at work -0.4 points
Message 1.38 Every 60 minutes of weekly physical activity reduces 1.2 days of sick leave per year
Message 1.39 Regular physical activity reduces sick leave
Message 1.40 Incorporating physical activity into working days reduces absenteeism from work.
Message 1.41 Incorporating physical activity on weekdays generates cost savings
Message 1.42 Improving physical fitness extends people's working lives.
Message 1.43 Improving fitness decreases staff turnover
Message 1.44 Improving physical fitness improves the quality of work
Message 1.45 Improving physical fitness facilitates social relationships inside and outside the company
Message 1.46 Improving fitness reduces sick leave and associated costs
Message 1.47 Improving physical fitness increases productivity and reduces occupational accidents
Message 1.48 Improving physical fitness decreases staff stress
Message 1.49 Improving fitness improves the attractiveness of the company to attract and retain talent
Message 1.50 Improving well-being in the company is synonymous with generating a positive return on investment
Message 1,51 Improving well-being in the company is synonymous with generating a positive intangible asset
Message 1.52 Improving well-being in the company means improving the quality of life of society

Message delivery included *mode of delivery* (e.g. internet, email), *source of message provider* (e.g. peers, experts, healthcare professionals, organizations with a credible role for the target audience) and, *media, mode or channel of message* (e.g. poster, Instagram post, radio advert, mobile text messages). See table 4. **Frequency and dose of delivery** (e.g. sending short messages of 100 words or 20 seconds, when there is opportunity to act on them, a maximum of 2 messages per day or using images in social media posts) included how the content of the message could be conveyed (via text or words, using images or video, using audio). See table 5. For instance, “tweet that is sent 3 times a week between 9 and 10 and will be sent for 6 months”. **Context of message delivery** included “where” the messages should be delivered.

Table 4. Message modes of delivery, sources of message provider and channels of messages examined to raise SMEs' awareness for implementing physical activity

Mode of message delivery	
Using a short text (100 words)	
Using short videos (20 seconds)	
Using images	
Using music	
Using short audios (20 seconds)	
Others:	
Dissemination channels	
Radio advertisements	
TV advertisements	
Posters	
Leaflets	
Social media posts: X/Twitter	
Social media posts: Facebook	
Social media posts: Instagram	
Social Media Posts: TikTok	
Social media posts: Snapchat.	
Work Email	

Personal email	
SMS/Text Messages	
Internet: Web pages	
Internet: Platforms	
Company Intranet	
Other _____	
Message Providers	
Health professionals	
Media	
Family or friends	
Coworkers	
Government institutions	
Mutual Societies or Occupational Prevention Risk Services	
County Business Councils	
The company where I work	
Leading companies	
Experts (e.g. researchers or academics)	
Celebrities or famous people	
Others:	
In what context would you like the messages to be delivered?	
At work during working hours	
On weekdays at any time	
In the doctor's office	
In public spaces (bus stops, squares, streets, etc.)	
Others:	

Table 5. Frequency and dose of message delivery to raise SMEs' awareness for implementing physical activity

Frequency and dose of messages delivery	
A maximum of two messages per day	
A maximum of 3 messages per week	
At the beginning of the working day or working day	
On breaks from work	
At lunchtime	
At the end of the working day	
For 1 more maximum	
For a maximum of 3 months	
For a maximum of 6 months	
Others:	

2.2.1 Methodology for measuring the feasibility of message content, format and delivery to raise SMEs' awareness on implementing PA.

A survey examined the feasibility of message contents, modes of delivery, sources of message providers, context, channels of message and frequency and dose of message delivery for raising SMEs' awareness in implementing physical activity. The survey was a **formative evaluation** of the physical activity messaging for establishing message content preferences. The survey can be seen in <https://forms.gle/DkbXxM5o5Qnayıq17>. For message content, each message was assessed on its potential **effectiveness** for raising awareness and motivate SMEs to implement physical activity (see question 1).

Question 1-Effectiveness: *"Is it a potentially effective message to raise awareness and motivate SMEs towards the implementation of physical activity?"*

For mode of delivery, source of message provider, context, channels for message delivery and frequency and dose of delivery the feasibility dimension of acceptability was assessed. **Acceptability** for modes of delivery, source of message providers and channels for messages delivery was assessed by question 2. Acceptability on the frequency and dose of message delivery was assessed by question 3:

Question 2-Acceptability: "Is it an appropriate, reasonable and effective format/channel/provider to send messages of awareness and motivation towards the implementation of physical activity to SMEs? "

Question 3-Acceptability: "Is it an adequate and reasonable frequency of dissemination to raise awareness and motivate SMEs towards the implementation of physical activity?"

For the effectiveness of message contents, scores on a five-point-likert scale ranged between 1 and 5 (from low to high effectiveness; Gadke et al, 2021). Scores between 1 and 2.5 indicated **low** effectiveness (marked in red colour). Scores between 2.51 and 3.5 indicated **medium** effectiveness (marked in orange colour). Scores between 3.6 and 5 indicated **high** effectiveness (marked in green colour). For each message, the mean and standard deviations of responses were provided.

For the Acceptability of modes of delivery, source of message providers, context, channels for messages delivery and the frequency and dose of message delivery, mean and standard deviations for each option were provided. Low, medium and high acceptability were described as mean scores ranging between 1-2.5; 2.6-3.5;3.56-5 respectively. A survey was sent out (10th of November 2025) to the SMEs and stakeholders from Osona that had taken part of the co-creation sessions for verification (n=21).

2.2.2 Results

2.2.2.1 Message content

A total of 21 SMEs' managers and stakeholders completed the survey (response rate of 100%) for measuring the effectiveness of message content to raise SME's awareness for implementing physical activity. Mean scores for each message effectiveness can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Effectiveness of message content to raise SMEs' awareness for implementing physical activity

Is it a potentially effective message for raising awareness and motivating SMEs to implement physical activity?	Effectivity (mean)
Message 1.1. Physical activity improves work environment and increases job satisfaction x3.	3.77
Message 1.2. Physical activity improves work environment and reduces the risk of depression - 30%	3.77
Message 1.3. Physical activity improves work environment and reduces job productivity loss – 46%	3.77
Message 1.4. Physical activity improves work environment and helps to sleep better +82%	3.69
Message 1.5. Physical activity improves the working environment and reduces back pain -37%	3.62
Message 1.6. Doing physical activity with co-workers improves the connection between them.	4.00
Message 1.7 Doing physical activity with co-workers strengthens the relationship and cooperation between them	4.23
Message 1.8. Doing physical activity with co-workers improves the health of the company.	4.08
Message 1.9.). Doing physical activity with co-workers builds cohesion and social capital (+5.3 points): 10 weeks is enough	3.54
Message 1.10. Doing physical activity with co-workers forms social capital: For each week of physical activity in a group, social capital increases by 3.5 points.	3.46
Message 1.11. Physical activity strengthens the connection and feelings of belonging to the company	3.77
Message 1.12 Physical activity increases energy and enthusiasm for work.	3.46
Message 1.13 Physical activity strengthens mental acuity and emotional vitality at work.	3.62
Message 1.14 Physical activity improves social connection and life satisfaction.	4.00
Message 1.15 Physical activity reduces back pain	3.62
Message 1.16 Physical activity helps not to worry about back pain	2.85
Message 1.17 Physical activity helps to better manage back pain	3.15
Message 1.18 Physical activity improves the productivity and well-being of the company.	4.00

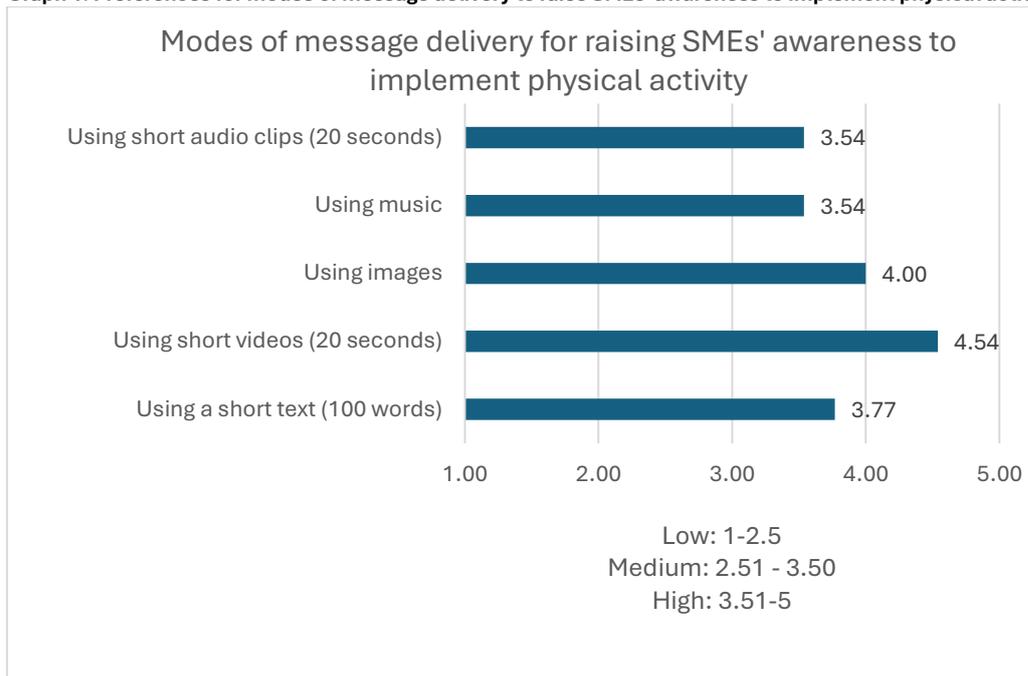
Message 1.19. Offering physical activity improves the corporate image and helps to retain talent.	4.15
Message 1.20. Offering physical activity improves the corporate image and attracts talent.	3.85
Message 1.21. The use of local services in physical activity, exercise and sport (<15 minutes away) improves the health of the company.	3.46
Message 1.22 Offering physical activity creates a healthy work environment	4.23
Message 1.23 Investing in physical activity is investing in the well-being and future of the company.	4.46
Message 1.24 Doing physical activity just once a week protects against burnout.	3.46
Message 1.25 Physical activity preserves mental health and prevents burnout.	4.08
Message 1.26 Doing physical activity with co-workers increases the number of daily steps walking +612	3.31
Message 1.27 Doing physical activity with co-workers improves cardiorespiratory fitness	3.77
Message 1.28 Doing physical activity with co-workers reduces blood glucose levels	3.54
Message 1.29 Doing physical activity with co-workers reduces work stress.	3.69
Message 1.30 Physical activity improves perseverance at work.	3.62
Message 1.31 Workplace wellness programs improve the quality of working life.	4.23
Message 1.32 Offering physical activity strengthens corporate social responsibility and creates entrepreneurship opportunities.	3.85
Message 1.33) Reducing sitting time at work improves motivation and work productivity +11%	3.69
Message 1.34. An active work environment encourages greater engagement and work performance: 8 weeks is enough	3.23
Message 1.35. Doing physical exercises of the cervical spine reduces the cost of lost productivity -276 euros	3.15
Message 1.36 Physical exercise reduces the number of days off work -0.7 days	3.46
Message 1.37 Physical exercise reduces presenteeism at work -0.4 points	3.23
Message 1.38 Every 60 minutes of weekly physical activity reduces 1.2 days of sick leave per year	3.38
Message 1.39 Regular physical activity reduces sick leave	3.92
Message 1.40 Incorporating physical activity into working days reduces absenteeism from work.	3.77
Message 1.41 Incorporating physical activity on weekdays generates cost savings	3.23
Message 1.42 Improving physical fitness extends people's working lives.	3.69
Message 1.43 Improving fitness decreases staff turnover	3.62
Message 1.44 Improving physical fitness improves the quality of work	3.77
Message 1.45 Improving physical fitness facilitates social relationships inside and outside the company	4.08
Message 1.46 Improving fitness reduces sick leave and associated costs	4.08
Message 1.47 Improving physical fitness increases productivity and reduces occupational accidents	4.23
Message 1.48 Improving physical fitness decreases staff stress	4.23
Message 1.49 Improving fitness improves the attractiveness of the company to attract and retain talent	3.77
Message 1.50 Improving well-being in the company is synonymous with generating a positive return on investment	4.15
Message 1.51 Improving well-being in the company is synonymous with generating a positive intangible asset	3.54
Message 1.52 Improving well-being in the company means improving the quality of life of society	3.77
TOTAL EFFECTIVITY (mean)	3.73

Mean values indicate effectiveness levels: 1–2.5 = low, 2.51–3.50 = medium, 3.51–5 = high level of effectiveness

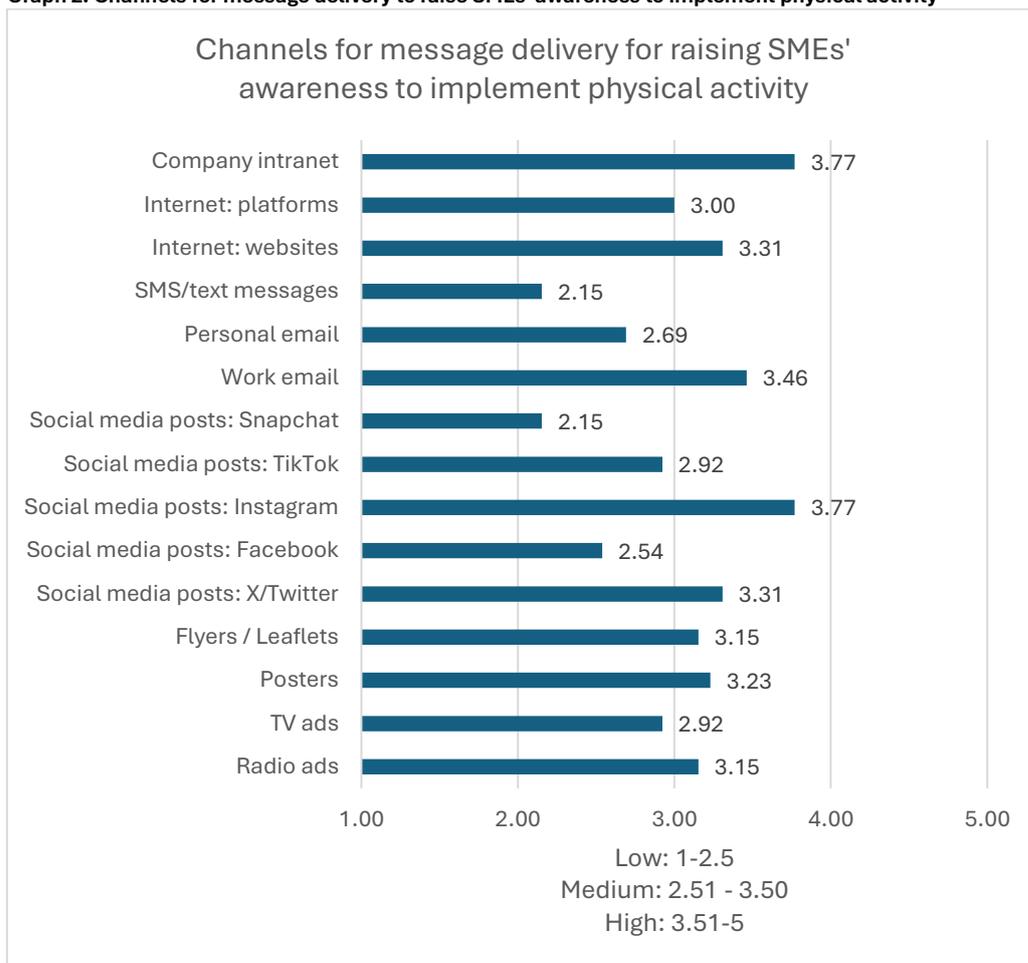
2.2.2.2 Mode, provider delivery, context, channels and context of message delivery

A total of 13 SMEs' managers and stakeholders completed the survey (response rate of 62%) for measuring acceptability for mode of delivery, message providers, context, channels for message delivery and context of delivery. Mean scores can be seen in Graphs 1, 2, 3 & 4.

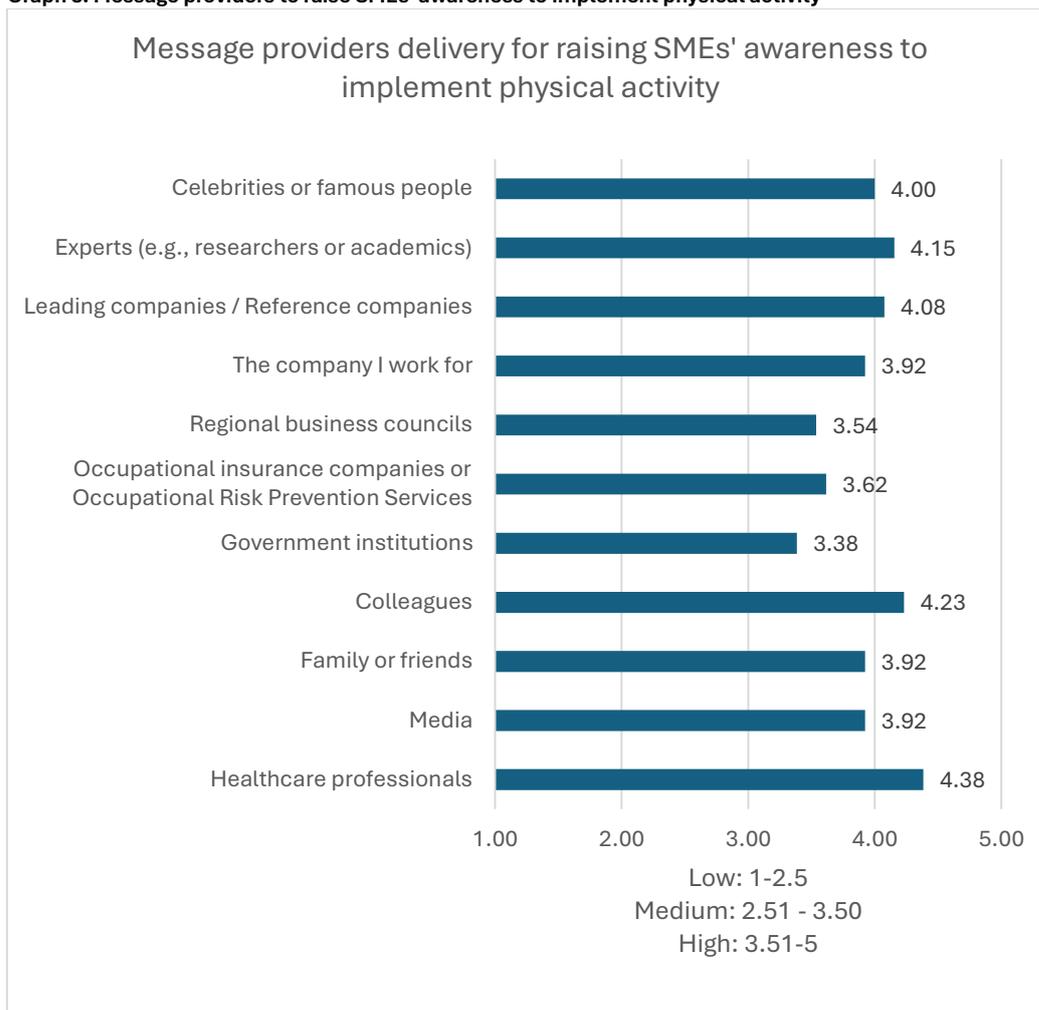
Graph 1. Preferences for modes of message delivery to raise SMEs' awareness to implement physical activity



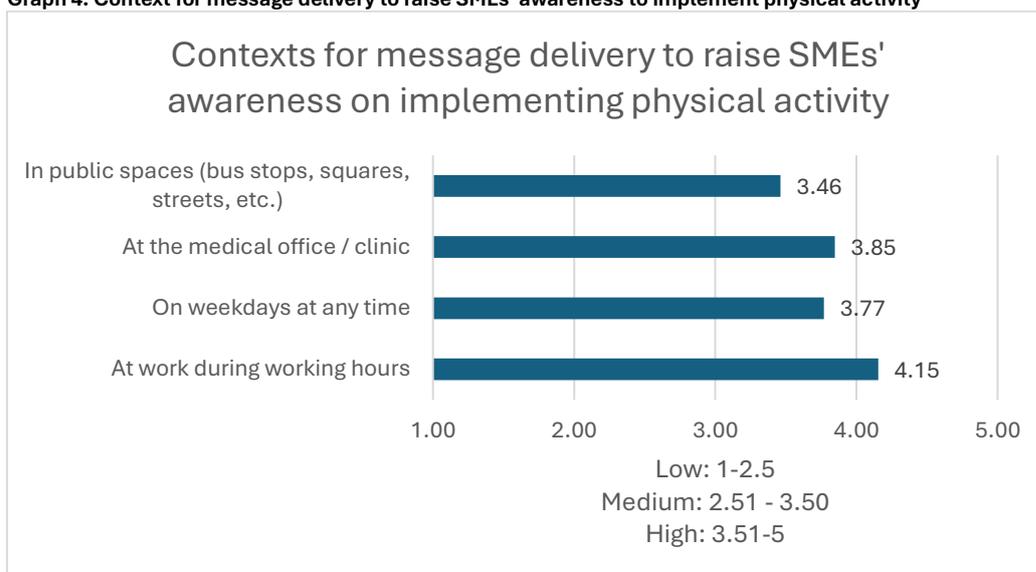
Graph 2. Channels for message delivery to raise SMEs' awareness to implement physical activity



Graph 3. Message providers to raise SMEs' awareness to implement physical activity



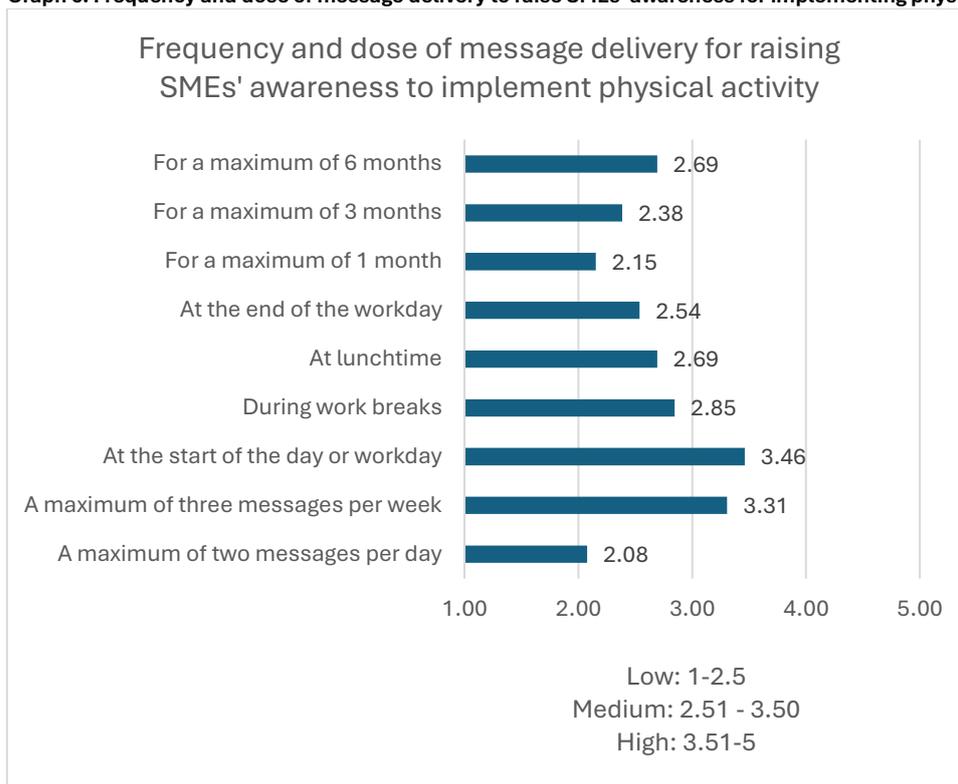
Graph 4. Context for message delivery to raise SMEs' awareness to implement physical activity



2.2.2.3 Frequency and dose of message delivery

A total of 13 SMEs' managers and stakeholders completed the survey (response rate of 100%) for measuring acceptability for frequency and dose of messages to raise SMEs' awareness for implementing physical activity. Mean scores can be seen in Graphs 6.

Graph 6. Frequency and dose of message delivery to raise SMEs' awareness for implementing physical activity



3. THE CASE STUDY OF FINLAND

In this extension we assess the proof-of-concept integrity, quality and consistency of delivery at the system level in Finland. In Finland, the Government Programme 2023 includes Get Finland Moving programme, which aims to increase physical activity in every age group. To achieve this, a cross-administrative action plan has been drawn up to promote physically active lifestyles and functional capacity. In addition, there is National strategy for physical activity promoting health and wellbeing 2020: On the move.

Physical activity plays a fundamental role in the regional strategies e.g. in Päijät-Häme. The aim of the Moving Päijät-Häme 2030 -Programme is to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour for all people in the region. In Finland, the responsibility for promoting physical activity for the people lies with the municipalities, the welfare region, clubs and organisations, workplaces, businesses, schools and educational establishments, decision-makers and many other actors. Each citizen has a responsibility for own well-being and that of those close to them. The following actions and the recommendations at three levels to increase the level of activity, and the benefits have been identified in Finland (Figure 1.) (www.liikkuvatyoelama.fi/en).

Figure 1. The recommendations for physical activity promotion at work (www.liikkuvatyoelama.fi/en).



3.1 Methodology

A retrospective real-world case study analysis of 37 Finnish physical activity promotion initiatives in SMEs was implemented. Existing documentation and reports from national and regional programs (e.g., Active Adult initiative, Terveystalo, Moving Päijät-Häme 2030) were used as data sources for implementing this retrospective study. The key evaluation dimensions were:

- Comparison of planned vs. implemented measures (e.g., physical activity counseling, exercise groups, communication).
- Quantitative indicators: implementation rates, participation numbers, and service usage statistics.
- Qualitative insights: success factors, challenges, and perceived impacts gathered from project reports and feedback.

The Impact Assessment Tools that were used for data collection were: (i) Pre- and post-intervention surveys, (ii) Physical fitness and well-being measurements, (iii) Monitoring of sickness absence, occupational health data, and employee feedback.

Unlike Catalonia, Finland did not use a prospective feasibility survey but relied on existing initiatives to assess systemic readiness and effectiveness.

The evaluation of the Finnish case study was conducted using a broad set of real-world data and diverse assessment tools. The information was collected from numerous existing physical activity promotion initiatives across Finland to assess the practical applicability of the intervention proposals. Specifically, data from 37 different physical activity and well-being projects (n=37) were compiled to examine the implementation of measures at the system level. These initiatives focused on promoting physical activity among working-age populations in workplaces and aligned with national strategies such as the Active Adult initiative.

Scope of Data: By aggregating data from dozens of projects, the evaluation provided a comprehensive picture of how various actions (e.g., physical activity counseling, workplace exercise groups, communication campaigns) were planned and how they were actually implemented. The evaluation focused on project objectives, implemented actions, and their coverage and quality. For example, implementation rates were measured by comparing planned and realized actions: physical activity counseling and lifestyle guidance were included in 84% of project plans and implemented in 78% of cases (a small 6 percentage point gap). Similarly, cooperation and networking activities were planned in 89% of projects and implemented in 73% (a 16% point gap). These numbers reflect delivery consistency: in most cases, planned actions were successfully implemented, though some deviations occurred. This quantitative analysis (implementation percentages) provided objective insights into the quality and fidelity of the concept's implementation.

Multi-Method Data Collection: In addition to documented metrics, the evaluation utilized other methods. Experiential data and feedback collected from project managers and participants served as important qualitative sources. The evaluation identified success factors and challenges: reports and feedback surveys revealed what worked well and where difficulties arose. Successes included reaching the right target groups, meeting participation goals, participant satisfaction, and positive health outcomes. Challenges included difficulties in engaging target groups, collaboration issues with the welfare sector, and problems related to staff turnover. This qualitative evaluation enabled an assessment of implementation quality: to what extent the actions achieved desired outcomes and what factors facilitated or hindered high-quality delivery.

Indicators, Evaluation Criteria, and Practical Implementation: A variety of indicators and evaluation criteria were used to comprehensively assess the achievement of the proof-of-concept objectives. Quantitative indicators described the coverage and impact of the actions, while qualitative criteria helped assess the quality and consistency of implementation.

- **Implementation Coverage (% Indicators):** A key metric was the implementation rate of actions compared to what was planned. The percentage of planned actions that were actually implemented served as a concrete indicator of delivery consistency. Small gaps between plans and outcomes indicated successful implementation; larger gaps suggested implementation challenges or shifting priorities during the project.
- **Effectiveness Indicators:** System-level effectiveness was assessed by tracking whether the projects achieved their intended outcomes. Key outcome indicators included changes in participants' physical activity levels and well-being. Many projects conducted pre- and post-intervention surveys among employees or participants to assess changes in physical activity habits, perceived well-being, or work ability. Some projects also measured physical fitness or health indicators (e.g., fitness tests, body composition) before and after the interventions to objectively assess health impacts. Participation rates and engagement levels were also tracked: how many companies and employees joined the initiatives and remained engaged. Service usage (e.g., frequency of physical activity counseling or participation in exercise events) was also recorded. These indicators provided quantitative evidence of the quality and impact of the actions e.g., whether physical

activity increased and whether this translated into improved well-being or reduced sick leave.

- *Evaluation Criteria and Qualitative Data:* Qualitative criteria included participant satisfaction, perceived acceptability of actions, and stakeholder views on implementation. Data collection methods included interviews and open-ended survey responses in project reports, where project leaders and participants reflected on successes and areas for improvement. These insights helped assess the relevance and quality of the actions: whether they were appropriate and adaptable to the SME context. Criteria also included whether the initiatives led to lasting changes or practices (e.g., permanent workplace physical activity routines). Many organizations reported tracking long-term impacts through sick leave statistics, occupational health reports, and annual employee surveys indicating attention to sustainability and continuity (aligned with the RE-AIM framework’s Maintenance dimension), even though the project’s follow-up period was limited.

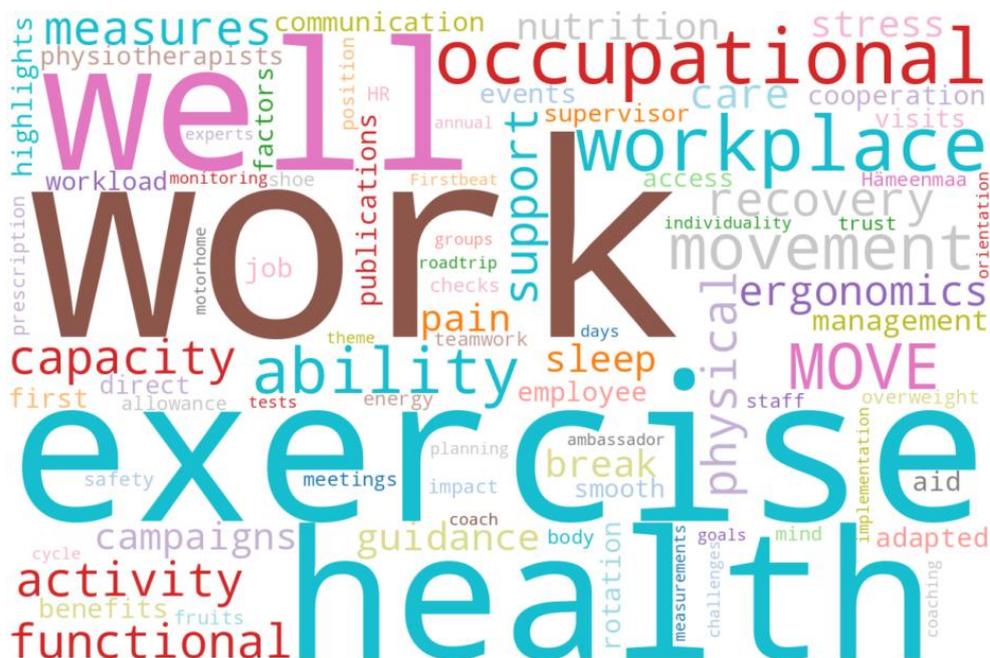
In Finland, data collection relied heavily on existing projects and their documentation. This meant that the evaluation drew on previous research reports and studies. The findings integrated from sources such as Syväoja et al. (2025) on physical activity promotion in the private table comparing planned and implemented measures in Finnish projects. Statistics from institutions like the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health were also used (e.g., data on employers’ well-being plans) to assess the general level of physical activity promotion in Finland. **In practice, no new survey data were collected in Finland to assess the feasibility of specific steps (unlike in Catalonia); instead, the evaluation relied on outcomes and experiences from already completed projects. This data was analyzed within the to assess how well the identified proof-of-concept actions aligned with the Finnish system and workplace practices.**

Data analysis. The compiled data was analyzed using both statistical methods (e.g., calculating percentages and distributions) and content analysis (e.g., identifying themes and recurring issues in qualitative feedback). Quantitative indicators (e.g., implementation rates and participation numbers) were analyzed descriptively, given the nature of the project, no experimental design was used, so statistical testing was not emphasized. The qualitative data were reviewed to identify key themes such as “success factors,” “challenges,” and “impacts on work life.” These themes were synthesized to highlight the quality of delivery e.g., whether implementation was consistent across actors and met expectations.

3.2 Results

The most common objectives of the initiatives were to develop the exercise counseling service pathway and to promote the well-being and work ability of working-age people. The topics of the physical activity promotion among staff in private healthcare service provider are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Word cloud of the topics of the physical activity promotion among staff in private healthcare service provider, Terveystalo, in Finland (Aro, 2025).



The objectives were in line with the priorities of the national Active Adult initiative. Most of the cases were initiatives that developed the exercise counseling service path. Overall, they were implemented well. The most common measures were exercise counseling and lifestyle guidance, cooperation, exercise groups, and communication and marketing. Sports trials, exercise groups, events, and fitness tests were implemented in several cases. Training, surveys, information dissemination, and staff well-being were promoted in a smaller proportion (see Table 7)

Table 7. Planned and implemented measures of the Finnish initiatives (n=37) (Syväoja et al. 2025)

Measure	Plan (%)	Implementation (%)	Difference
Physical activity counseling and lifestyle guidance	84	78	6
Cooperation and networks	89	73	16
Exercise groups	65	73	-8
Communication and marketing	59	73	-14
Service chains and paths	57	54	3
Sport-specific trials	41	51	-10
Events and campaigns	41	46	-5
Promoting equality and non-discrimination	46	43	3
Fitness, wellness, and body composition measurements	35	45	-10
Surveys and feedback collection	38	51	-13
Everyday physical activity and self-directed exercise	38	46	-8
Employee well-being	30	43	-13
Training and competence development	27	43	-16
Equipment procurement	27	24	3
Producing materials and websites	24	27	-3
Nature and outdoor activities	22	27	-5
Applications and digital solutions	24	19	5
Campaigns	19	19	0

The successes of the initiatives included reaching the right target group and achieving the desired number of participants, participants' satisfaction with the project activities, positive changes in the health of the target group, the development of the exercise counseling service path, and making exercise counseling more visible. The successes were influenced by professional project workers, the support of the project management team and senior management, the development of information flow, the attitudes of participants, and multidisciplinary cooperation. Difficulties included the lack of rights to record exercise advice, reaching the target group and getting them committed to the activities, challenges in cooperation with the welfare sector, and employee turnover and sick leave. The difficulties were caused by the different life situations of the target group, the changing and unclear roles and responsibilities of the partners, the accessibility of the selected communication channels, and the difficulty of finding suitable employees and substitutes. The most described effects of the initiatives were the strengthening of the exercise counseling service path, increased physical activity among the target group, and improved health and well-being among participants. Other common effects described were reaching the target groups, an increase in the number of customers, increased awareness of exercise counseling among residents, the integration of practices that increase physical activity and well-being into the working day and increased cross-administrative cooperation. The impacts of the initiatives were most commonly assessed through initial and final surveys, measurements of physical condition and well-being, statistics on participant numbers, and records of visits to exercise counseling services.

The concept of Finnish personnel physical activity in working life from both employers' and employees' perspectives includes commuting, movement during the workday, and employer-supported leisure-time exercise. It is a part of the strategic management of well-being, and the supervisors play a key role in implementing physical activity at workplaces. Physical activity at work is positively associated with self-assessed work ability, including mental capacity. Promoting healthy lifestyles at the workplace has positive effects on both physical and mental health, reducing sickness absences and related costs. Joint activities increase a sense of belonging and community at work. The most common support is exercise vouchers or similar benefits. Other measures include providing changing and shower facilities, organizing exercise campaigns and events, and offering exercise equipment at the workplace. Employee involvement in planning is crucial, especially for those with reduced work ability, who are less likely to participate in employer-supported activities. The most of organizations invest in personnel physical activity, but less of them measure the effectiveness of these actions. Effectiveness is typically monitored using sickness absence statistics, occupational health reports, employee feedback, and annual well-being surveys. There is a need for better practices to support physical activity in hybrid and remote work models. (Häkli, 2024)

3.3 Conclusion

The adoption of steps, processes and training activities for the successful implementation of physical activity initiatives to SMEs at a system level in Finland is high. Physical activity is a key factor in maintaining work ability and well-being, with proven benefits for both individuals and organizations. In Finland, 60% of employers had drawn up a written annual plan to promote the well-being of their staff at work. More than three-quarters of employers who had drawn up an annual plan mentioned that they had included physical activity solutions in the plan. Employee involvement, and the attention to remote work are the major areas for future development.

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