

S03-3: Local Community Engagement Mechanisms in Five Countries (Denmark, France, Italy, Malta, and Spain) in the Placemaking & Sport Project

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Purpose: The EU funded Placemaking & Sport project enabled sport organisations to rethink their sport and physical activity offers through placemaking and local community involvement. The project encouraged sport organisations and towns in Denmark, France, Spain, Malta, and Italy to explore new ways of engaging communities in an active lifestyle to bring public space to life.

Project Description. Development and Implementation: Coordinated by ISCA, the project paired grassroots organisations with city representatives – Azur Sport Santé and the City of Nice (France), UISP and UISP Matera (Italy), MOVE Malta and Sport Malta (Malta), DGI and the City of Copenhagen (Denmark), DES and City of Valencia (Spain). The project showcased how, by engaging the local communities' needs, movement can thrive in unexpected spaces, promoting healthier and more connected cities.

After 18 months of experimentation in diverse cities across Europe, various placemaking methodologies were piloted with the focus on engaging local citizens in decision-making and together transforming spaces into active thriving public places. This included teenagers in Italy, elderly in Denmark, schools, sport and nature organisations in Malta, neighbourhood associations in Spain, and street art associations & museums in France.

Through physical activity and play, but also sharing memories, rekindling childhood connections to parks and squares, inventing games, and telling stories, the transformative power of placemaking in creating more vibrant and inclusive communities was showcased.

Dissemination: The dissemination efforts were focusing on the storytelling of the local activities that were amplified through podcasts and videos. A follow-up initiative in France has already been funded to continue developing their pilot. The learning materials and resources are collected on <https://placemaking.isca.org> to further build capacities of the sector.

Conclusions: With urban areas facing a shortage of sport facilities, the project demonstrated how squares and parks could serve as accessible venues for physical activity. It sought to reshape the perception of where and how people move while keeping the community at the centre of it through diverse engagement activities. It promoted flexible, inclusive spaces that encourage walking, socialising, and informal recreation ensuring that movement becomes a natural part of everyday life for people of all ages and abilities.

Keywords: Participation, placemaking, physical activity, sport, urban development

