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# Information material for migrant populations in Switzerland: the example of physical activity promotion

## Abstract

In order to develop information material on physical activity and sports for migrant populations, the specific needs of these target groups with regard to motivation, barriers and accessibility were analysed. Based on the results, an information brochure was developed and its use was evaluated both by monitoring of incoming orders and by semi-structured interviews with professionals. The main motives and obstacles for physical activity of different migrant groups as well as other important topics to be covered were identified. Important insights could be gained regarding design and distribution. Brochures in eight different languages were published, ordered and distributed. Most of the conclusions from the needs assessment were confirmed in the evaluation and possibilities for further developments were identified.

## Zusammenfassung

Mit dem Ziel, Informationsmaterial zu Bewegung und Sport für Migrantinnen und Migranten zu entwickeln, wurden die Bedürfnisse dieser Zielgruppe in Bezug auf Motive, Hindernisse und Erreichbarkeit analysiert. Basierend auf den Erkenntnissen wurde eine Informationsbroschüre entwickelt. Um ihre Brauchbarkeit und ihren Einsatz beurteilen zu können, wurden die eingehenden Bestellungen analysiert sowie halbstrukturierte Interviews mit Fachpersonen durchgeführt. Mithilfe der Bedürfnisanalyse wurden die wichtigsten Motive und Hindernisse sowie weitere anzusprechende Themen identifiziert. Ebenfalls wurden wichtige Erkenntnisse in Bezug auf die Form und die Verteilung der Broschüre gewonnen. Die Broschüre wurde in acht verschiedenen Sprachen publiziert, bestellt und verteilt. Die Evaluation der Verwendung der Broschüre hat den Grossteil der Erkenntnisse aus der Bedürfnisanalyse bestätigt. Ausserdem wurden Möglichkeiten zur Weiterführung der Arbeit identifiziert.

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## Introduction

From August 2007 to January 2009 the Swiss Federal Institute of Sport, Magglingen, developed and evaluated an information brochure for migrant populations on physical activity and sports. The project was carried out in cooperation with the Swiss Red Cross and financed through the Federal Strategy "Migration and Public Health" (BAG 2007) implemented by the Federal Office of Public Health.

The Federal Strategy aims at the improvement of the health situation of the migrant population and the establishment of equal opportunities in different areas of public health. A number of studies have been carried out on the health situation of the migrant population in Switzerland (FOPH 2007, BAG 2006, Weiss 2003). They have shown that the state of health of certain immigrant groups is worse than that of Swiss citizens. Some groups show a higher level of risk behaviour – including a lower level of physical activity – and a lower level of health literacy. Surveys (Lamprecht et al. 2008) on the level of physical activity and sport engagement in Switzerland show that especially migrant women are underrepresented in organised and non-organised sports. Knowledge about the needs of different migrant groups in physical activity and about specific interventions for these target groups is sparse.

In order to learn more about the motivation, barriers and accessibility concerning physical activity, a needs analysis was carried out with migrants of different backgrounds. The results were used in the development of specific information material. A draft of the information brochure was sent to the participants of the needs assessment and to experts in physical activity promotion for further feedback, before it was finalised and translated into seven additional languages.

In order to assess the use and acceptance of the brochure and to gain more insight into possible distribution and communication channels, an evaluation was carried out. The following short report gives an overview of the results of these two work steps. More details are available elsewhere (Pieth 2009).

## Methods

The data for the needs assessment was collected through three focus group discussions. One of them was composed of key players of different migrant groups with an expert knowledge on the needs and fears of their compatriots. The other two were composed of "normal" representatives of the target group. The number of participants varied from 8 to 10, women were considerably overrepre-

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sented with 23 participants compared to 4 male participants. The participants represented groups from Sri Lanka, Turkey, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia, Italy, Switzerland and Latin America. The discussions were moderated according to a guideline addressing the perception and impact of existing information material on physical activity, the demand for specific information material for migrants as well as the needs, motivations, obstacles and accessibility of the target group. The discussions were recorded, transcribed and thematically coded for analysis.

The evaluation of the information brochure used a quantitative analysis of the orders received for the different language versions and semi-structured interviews with five professionals in the fields of social integration and public health. These professionals worked as course instructors, moderators of discussion rounds and counsellors, and used the information material in their institutions. Three of them had a migration background. The interviews were structured by a guideline; they were recorded, transcribed and thematically coded for analysis.

## Results

*Need for information material*

In the needs assessment, it was deemed that specific information materials on physical activity and sports for migrants were needed. Most of the focus group participants didn't feel addressed by existing information material, which was perceived as too text-centred with too few pictures taking into account the diversity of society. Language was another important obstacle.

Between April 2008 and April 2009, a total of 7271 copies of the brochure have been ordered by mail and some 800 copies have been distributed through other channels.

In the individual interviews, the social integration and public health professionals generally affirmed the relevance of physical activity promotion targeted specifically at migrant groups. They perceived a need for specific motivational efforts and also mentioned that migrant groups don't feel addressed by existing interventions. One of the interview partners with migration background said: *"Migrants don't feel addressed by the offers and adverts in newspapers or public places. I know that of myself. Everything is in German and migrants are not addressed specifically."*

*Preferred form of information material*

In the focus groups, text-based information material in different mother tongues and with an appealing design was judged important. Some of the participants also stated that practical suggestions and information about local offers would be important: *"You should have the material in different languages. Information on where you can be active, how much it costs, if there are special women groups and if German is required would also be useful."*

According to the number of orders placed, the demand for brochures in German was highest with 26%. About 12% of the brochures were ordered in each Albanian, French, Turkish and Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian. Portuguese, Spanish and Italian brochures were ordered a little less (between 7% and 10%).

The professionals felt that the brochure met the needs and requirements of their organisations by delivering relevant information in different languages. They felt supported in their work because the brochure gave them the possibility to broach and communicate a very important issue in an understandable way.About half of the interviewed professionals thought that the brochure was only a useful instrument for people used to written material. The visual design *(see figures 1 and 2)* was assessed positively by all individual interview partners because of the choice of pictures and testimonials representing social diversity, The humorous element of the illustrations was also mentioned positively. One of the interview partners with migration background described her impression of the design in the following way: *"The title picture is very good. You can see immediately that it is a foreign family and you feel addressed. The pictures show a great diversity: there's family activities, activities with friends, team sports, dance, elderly people being active, etc. And also purely informative elements like walking or running trail signs are displayed."*

*Figure 1:* Title page of the information brochure in Spanish. Versions in this language as well as in Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, Portuguese, Italian, French and German are available at www.migesplus.ch

*Figure 2:* Content of the Turkish version of the brochure. The two pages deal with the social benefits of physical activity

*Issues covered*

With regard to the content of the brochure and the issues to be covered, the focus group participants described the central motives and obstacles for migrants to be physically active. They thought that one of the main motives was the possibility to be active with friends or

to meet people. Especially the women in the focus group discussions stated the importance of physical activity in everyday and family life. For some of them the term "sports" was opposed to "movement" and had a negative connotation of effort and coercion: "The term causes negative associations: I have to start at a specific time and in a specific team – that's rather coercive." Other motives to be physically active were to enjoy the nature, to relax and to lose weight and to form the body. Health reasons – mental and physical – were also an important motive for most of the discussion participants. However, some of the participants stated that information material focussed only on health issues was plentiful and not very motivating: *"For me a brochure shouldn't tell me how healthy sport is. Most of the brochures have that focus and everybody knows about it. It should rather mention the possibilities to be active."* With regard to obstacles, time and costs were perceived as the central arguments for not being active. Other obstacles were lack of knowledge where and how to be active, inhibitions to join a group of unknown people, and not being able to communicate in the mother tongue.

The individual interview partners stated that the information in the brochure was relevant and that the suggestions and examples were well chosen

*Distribution*

According to the focus group participants, a general distribution of the brochures to individuals would not be effective. They should not just be displayed but transferred and explained personally in a specific context: *"It needs an authority who distributes something like that. That can be migrant associations, clubs, social welfare organisations or information centres for migrants. Or mediators and key players with contacts."* Distribution channels mentioned were among others communal and cantonal integration, health and sports departments, integration, language and health courses, doctors and psychologists, pharmacies, counselling offices, migrant associations, cultural mediators, embassies and regional employment offices.

The actual demand was partly in line with the distribution channels suggested in the focus groups. The brochure was mainly ordered by organisations in the field of integration (59%) and a little less by individuals and organisations in the field of public health (30%). Organisations represented were governmental offices and agencies, social aid organisations, counselling offices, courses, migrant associations and private practices. Sports organisations (governmental offices and associations) were significantly less frequent with 6%.

Also the individual interview partners stated that it would be of little use to just distribute the brochure without mediation. The mediator should also be able to complement the brochure with additional information on physical activity and on local possibilities. The perceived usefulness of the material for the interview partners was dependent on their professional context. In courses and discussion rounds broaching the subject of physical activity and sports, the brochures were very useful. Within counselling interviews which didn't primarily focus on physical activity, the use of the brochures was less obvious. In language courses the brochures were only of limited use.

## Conclusions

The results of the focus group discussions were essential in developing the content, form and distribution of the information brochure. It can be assumed that the brochure takes into account the main motives and obstacles for physical activity in different migrant groups in Switzerland and that these feel adequately represented in the content and design of the material. It was deemed important that the brochures are not distributed anonymously, but that a person of trust who has knowledge about physical activity and practical possibilities transmits the information. However, because of the female majority in the focus groups, some conclusions might have a gender-specific focus.

The numbers of orders placed show that the brochure was in demand especially with organisations active in the fields of integration and public health. This might be due to the fact that these institutions have most contact with the target group, but also because the existence of the brochure has been mainly communicated to these organisations. The languages ordered reflected the tendency to work mainly with the "newer" immigrant groups. The high demand in German could be explained by an interest to use the brochure in both the migrant and one of the country's languages in parallel or by the use in other contexts than migration.

The results of the evaluation have widely confirmed the conclusions of the needs assessment and the usefulness of the brochure in different contexts. The content of the information material was deemed relevant by professionals of different areas. The form of the brochure was generally adequate for the needs of most of the interviewed professionals and their clientele. Though the effect of the use of the brochure on the target group itself was not studied, the professional interview partners were able to observe that some of their clients had started to change their attitude towards physical activity and even their behaviour.

Despite the encouraging experiences with the information brochures, they can only be seen as a first step in promoting physical activity in migrants. Further language versions will be needed – a translation into Tamil is already underway – and less text-based communication materials such as videos or DVDs will be needed to address also individuals with limited reading skills. The general information in the brochures should be supplemented by specific information about local physical activity offers, and specific offers and interventions should be implemented for migrants.

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