Annual Newsletter1#
May, 2026

Project Number: 101190133

Supporting the mental well-being of young athletes

Empowering Minds: Enhancing children's mental fitness is a European project funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV).

The MINDFIT partnership consists of seven partners:
1. CYENS Centre of Excellence (CYENS CoE - Coordinator, Cyprus)
2. GDA Sports (Cyprus)
3. Inquiry Fuse LTD (Cyprus)
4. Symplexis (Greece)
5. University of Thessaly (UTH) (Greece)
6. CESIE ETS (Italy)
7. Regional Government of Thessaly (RoT) (Greece)

Mental well-being is crucial to overall health, encompassing the capacity to recognise one's potential, manage life's stresses, and actively participate in community life. Youth sports offer an environment that can be nurturing and conducive to both physical and mental well-being. However, it is important to acknowledge that various psycho-social stressors and negative experiences may also be part of this context. While sports can support development, they may also reinforce stress, gender stereotypes, and inequality; particularly, girls and gender-diverse youth often face additional barriers, discrimination, and limited access to support. Children, especially young athletes, face increasing mental health challenges such as performance pressure and academic stress. Competitive environments can lead to anxiety, burnout, and emotional fatigue from an early age.

MINDFIT promotes a holistic, rights-based approach to children's mental fitness and early intervention. The project aims to address the challenges faced by children, particularly young athletes, and to provide recommendations for the formulation of policies to safeguard children's mental health and resilience. By bridging the gap between sports science and psycho-social support, our consortium is dedicated to developing a comprehensive ecosystem of resources. Based on the multidisciplinary expertise of our partners, the project will deliver:

1. Innovative educational materials.
2. An interactive mobile application.
3. Policy recommendations.

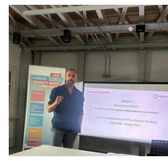
Project's Kick-off meeting in Cyprus

The official kick-off meeting for the MINDFIT project took place in Cyprus on July 22-23, 2025. Hosted by the project coordinator, CYENS Centre of Excellence, the event provided a valuable opportunity for our international consortium to meet in person and collaboratively map out the essential first steps of this transformative journey.

INQUIRY FUSE & GDA Sports presented MINDFIT project at CERV Programme networking day

On October 9th, INQUIRY FUSE participated in the Information & Networking Day for the European programme "Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)" in Cyprus. The event was organized by the Organisation of European Programmes and Cultural Relations (OEPPS) in collaboration with the Limassol 2030 – Candidate City organisation.

During the event, INQUIRY FUSE's Communication Manager, Elena Tsangaridi, presented the MINDFIT project along with the partner, Nectarios Alexandrou, Founder of GDA Sports Ltd. This event was an excellent platform for networking and sharing our vision for supporting youth mental health.



MINDFIT focus groups in Cyprus, Greece and Italy

In MINDFIT, the focus shifts to mental health in sports, aiming to impact young athletes, boys & girls, and stakeholders (e.g. families) and professionals (e.g., educators, coaches) who interact with them daily. This initiative will strengthen their ability to navigate mental health challenges, breaking down stereotypes and barriers to mental well-being, thereby enhancing opportunities and support within the sports and educational environments.

The focus groups organized in Cyprus, Greece and Italy from July to November 2025 aimed to gather qualitative insights from both children/young athletes and adult stakeholders participating in the project's Local Forums on perceptions, needs, and experiences regarding mental fitness in youth sports, contributing directly to the design of MINDFIT materials at the next stage.
The MINDFIT focus groups successfully engaged a total of 160 participants across three countries, significantly surpassing initial recruitment targets to gather diverse perspectives on youth mental fitness in sports. In Cyprus, the sessions involved 58 children and youth alongside 40 parents, Greece included 21 children and 11 adult stakeholders (parents and coaches), and Italy engaged 13 children and 17 adult stakeholders.

Key findings revealed that while young athletes deeply value the joy and team spirit of sports, they face significant performance pressure, anxiety, and emotional overload coming from academic demands and high expectations from coaches and parents. Participants emphasised the need for practical, age-appropriate digital tools such as mood trackers, interactive videos, and scenario-based learning to normalize emotional dialogue and build resilience. Ultimately, the results underscore that a supportive, non-judgmental environment led by emotionally aware adults is the most critical factor in safeguarding the mental well-being and long-term engagement of young athletes.

University of Thessaly presented the project on Greek national television (ERT3)

On January 5, 2026, Dr. Asterios Patsiaouras, Assistant Professor at the University of Thessaly and a key member of our expert team, appeared on the ERT3 informational program "Perimeter." During the interview, Dr. Patsiaouras introduced the core vision of MINDFIT Project.

As Dr. Patsiaouras highlighted on air, the modern environment places unique pressures on youth, from academic stress to performance anxiety in competitive sports. MINDFIT aims to bridge the gap between physical health and mental fitness, providing children, educators, and coaches with the tools they need to navigate these challenges.

Watch the Interview ***HERE.***

Interactive mobile application

The content of the mobile application has been developed and is currently being integrated into the Android application. This work has focused on translating the outputs of WP2 into an interactive digital format suitable for end users, with particular emphasis on usability, engagement, and age-appropriate design.

A central component of this task has been the development of the application content and narrative script, led by CYENS Centre of Excellence in close collaboration with partner organisations. Experts in psychology, mental health, and sport and exercise sciences have contributed to ensuring that the content is scientifically grounded, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with the project's objectives on mental fitness and resilience. The application content has been structured in the form of a detailed storyboard, which defines the narrative flow, learning objectives, and user interactions across different modules.

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