Results from Slovenia's 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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Introduction

Slovenian national surveillance data on physical fitness of children and youth (SLOfit)¹ show that after almost two decades of decline, the trends of physical fitness started improving after 2010, providing indirect evidence that declining trends of physical activity have been improving as well. More than eight out of ten Slovenian children and youth accumulate the recommended daily amount of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA; ≥ 60 minutes).²

The purpose of this paper is to summarize the results of Slovenia's 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (Figure 1). Grades are based on the best available scientific data, peer reviewed literature and grey literature, such as government reports and web pages.

Methods

The 2018 Report Card includes the 9 core physical activity (PA) indicators that are common to the Global Matrix 2.0 (Overall PA, Organized Sport Participation, Active Play, Active Transportation, Sedentary Behaviour, Family and Peers, School, Community and Environment, Government), and two additional indicators, Sleep, and Physical Fitness. The Report Card relies on the data from several sources to inform the indicator grades. The main sources are the national study Analysis of Children's Development in Slovenia (2013-14 ACDSi)^{3,4} and the SLOfit surveillance system (2010-17 SLOfit).⁵ Other sources include governmental reports, legislative documents, and web pages. ACDSi is the most comprehensive study of children's lifestyles, physical fitness and somatic development study in Slovenia while the SLOfit surveillance system includes annual population data on physical fitness and somatic development of children and youth.

The 2018 Active Healthy Kids Slovenia Report Card benefits from a Report Card Research Committee (RCRC) consisting of a diverse group of experts in all areas of physical activity covered in the Report Card. Some members of the group have access to important PA-related datasets and are able to run custom analyses that directly address some of the benchmarks for a given indicator that, in some cases, could not otherwise be graded (ie, Active Play, Family and Peers, Active Transportation, Organized Sport Participation).

Results and Discussion

All 11 indicators were assigned a grade in the 2018 Report Card (Table 1) although there are research gaps that would better inform the grades, if addressed. For example, the data for Organized Sport are self-report in nature while aggregated statistics on sport memberships would assist in providing a more complete picture of child and youth sport participation in Slovenia. Objectively measured sleep would also improve the accuracy of current self-reported data. Aggregated municipal data on public funding and number of

Figure 1 — Slovenia's 2018 Report Card cover.

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Table 1 Grades and rationales for Slovenia's 2018 Report Card

Indicator	Grade	Rationale
Overall Physical Activity	A-	Over 80% of children between 6 and 19 years are meeting the WHO PA guidelines according to self-reported data, but objectively assessed PA shows that the 60 minutes of daily MVPA is achieved by 88% of 11-year olds whereas the proportion in 14-year olds drops to 66% (ACDSi 2013-16). ^{3,4}
Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation	C+	Approximately 60% of boys and 47% of girls between 6 and 19 years are involved in organized sport participation (ACDSi 2013-16). ^{3,4}
Active Play	D	Less than 1/3 of children play actively more than 2 hours per day (ACDSi 2013-16). ^{3,4}
Active Transportation	C	Almost 49% of children commute actively to and from school and an additional 12% commute actively from school only (ACDSi 2013-16). ^{3,4}
Sedentary Behaviours	B+	Over 70% of children are meeting the screen-time recommendations of no more than 2 hours per day (ACDSi 2013-16). ^{3,4}
Family and Peers	B+	Over 75% of parents encourage children to be physically active and over 80% are providing material or logistic support for physical activity (ACDSi 2013-16). ^{3,4}
School	A	All schools in Slovenia provide equal opportunity for physical activity within regular Physical Education classes, sport days, schools in nature and extracurricular sporting activities. ⁶
Community and Environment	B	All municipalities are legally obliged to produce the annual programme of sport, to provide co-funding and cooperate with local sports organisations, and produce annual reports. ⁷ However, the share of public funding contributed to competitive sport and sport for all, varies from one municipality to the other.
Government	A	The government strongly supports children's physical activity. It transformed the Healthy Lifestyle intervention programme ⁸ into an experimental programme on 155 primary schools with the goal to introduce it in all primary schools after 3 years. The goal is for children to reach 60 minutes of MVPA daily within school only. The government also introduced Youth for Youth sports programme in secondary schools in 2018 to boost PA also in adolescent population.
Sleep	D	Less than 40% of children between 11 and 18 years are meeting the sleep guidelines during school days (ACDSi 2013-16). ^{3,4}
Physical Fitness	A-	11.8% of boys and 9.9% of girls have insufficient physical fitness (ACDSi 2013-16). ^{3,4} Contemporary girls have exceeded the levels of physical fitness of their mothers whereas boys are still lagging behind their fathers but are improving. ⁹

programmes of children's sport would also provide more accurate information on community support of physical activity, but would have to be complemented with data on the quantity, quality and accessibility of parks, playgrounds and other PA-enhancing areas.

Conclusion

The proportion of children and youth who achieve the recommended levels of daily physical activity is fairly high, which corresponds to the observed levels of children with sufficient level of physical fitness. The encouraging results signal that in Slovenia we have been able to develop effective solutions to address the growing risk of physical inactivity which are strongly rooted in the educational system.

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