

Project number: 101183736, Project acronym: EUFestByala

D.2.7 FEST

IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT



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**Play clean,
keep green!**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Byala Beach Sports EU Fest was designed as a community-centred sports initiative aiming to encourage healthy lifestyles for wider audience by attracting the population in participating in variety of beach sports and physical activities, to promote volunteering in sport, strengthen social ties and social inclusion through sport by involving disadvantage groups, as well to promote traditional sports and games. And as a final outcome the event was designed to enhance awareness of healthy lifestyles among citizens of various ages and backgrounds. Rooted in the principles of “sport for all,” the project sought to demonstrate that even small communities can host meaningful, inclusive, and impactful sports events that reach far beyond athletic achievement.

Methodology for Impact Assessment

The impact of the EUFestByala project was assessed using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection tools in order to capture both measurable outcomes and experiential effects.

The primary data source consisted of four structured questionnaires, specifically designed to assess the key performance indicators of the project and distributed to

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the main stakeholder groups involved in or reached by the Fest: participants, referees and volunteers, guests and audience, and project partners. The questionnaires included both closed-ended questions (to measure changes in awareness, motivation, behaviour, and engagement) and open-ended questions (to collect reflections, perceptions, and qualitative feedback).

In total, approximately 180 valid contributions were collected, providing a broad and representative cross-sectional view of the Fest's impact on individuals, organisations, partners, and the wider community.

As part of the quantitative data the monitoring reports elaborated by the financial controller of the Municipality were taken into account, as they represent information on the key performance indicators achieved by the EU Fest Byala project.

To complement the quantitative data, the assessment also incorporated qualitative insights gathered through partners' meetings, structured discussions, feedback from stakeholders (sports federations and clubs, SMEs operating in the field of sport and physical activities, NGOs and associations in the field of sport, local authorities, referees), and observations from external events and communication activities. This triangulation of sources allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of short-term outcomes and longer-term effects.

The combined analysis enables an assessment of the Fest not only as a single event, but as a process and model, evaluating its capacity to generate sustainable behaviour change, organisational learning and growth, community cohesion, and transferable models at local, national, and European levels.

2. IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS

2.1. Growth in Awareness and Understanding

Across all respondent groups, the Fest succeeded in significantly improving awareness about physical activity and healthy lifestyles. Participants consistently reported that the Fest helped them better understand the connection between regular movement, health, and wellbeing. For many respondents, the event was their first exposure to structured health education (through the fest workshops) in a sporting environment.

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While initial awareness was already moderate among some groups, the data shows that the Fest **reinforced knowledge, introduced new concepts**, and made the information more accessible and relatable.

2.2. Motivation to Adopt or Maintain Healthier Habits

One of the strongest findings across all questionnaires is the role the Fest played in motivating people to adopt more active lifestyles. Respondents referenced:

- **renewed personal interest in specific sports (especially beach sports),**
- increased motivation to exercise regularly,
- positive shifts in daily routines such as walking, running, and informal exercise with friends or family.

Several months after the Fest, the majority of respondents reported *continued engagement* with physical activity—clear evidence of long-term behavioural impact. Notably, *no respondent* from the core participant sample indicated stopping sport entirely after the Fest.

2.3. Strengthening Personal Confidence and Social Belonging

The Fest fostered an environment where people felt welcome, included, and encouraged. The questionnaires reveal:

- high rates of new social connections formed during the event,
- enhanced sense of belonging to the community,
- increased confidence in participating in sports—even among those who previously felt hesitant or inexperienced.

Through approachable formats, friendly competition, and informal interactions, the Fest helped participants see themselves not only as spectators, but as active contributors to a vibrant community event.

3. IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS AND LOCAL CAPACITY

3.1. Skill Development and Organisational Learning

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For many participating organisations—clubs, volunteers, referees, local institutions—the Fest was a learning experience that strengthened their ability to manage and deliver large-scale, multi-day sports events. Partners highlighted improvements in:

- event planning,
- coordination and logistics,
- communication and outreach,
- volunteer management,
- incorporation of health education into sport programming.

The Fest served as a hands-on training ground, offering practical exposure that is often difficult to acquire outside real events. Organisations now feel more confident in applying these competencies to future initiatives, both locally and within European collaborative settings.

3.2. Enhanced Networking and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

A strong theme emerging from the responses is the creation of new partnerships and the revitalisation of existing ones. The Fest brought together:

- sports clubs,
- municipal stakeholders,
- volunteers from all ages and background,
- referees and coaches,
- health and educational bodies.

These actors worked side by side, laying the foundation for deeper cooperation. Organisations expressed interest in building on these networks, developing joint activities, and exploring new partnerships—including those beyond the project's formal structure.

3.3. Increased Readiness for European-Level Cooperation

Participating partners particularly emphasised how the Fest increased their understanding of Erasmus+ processes and international collaboration. The project familiarised them with:

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- transnational coordination,
- reporting and administrative responsibilities,
- cross-cultural communication,
- EU priorities in the field of sport and HEPA.

This experience positioned organisations to engage more confidently in future EU-funded initiatives.

4. IMPACT ON THE WIDER COMMUNITY

4.1. Community Engagement and Local Identity

For residents and visitors, the Fest represented a vibrant community moment—one that brought people together through sport, curiosity, and celebration. The audience questionnaire highlights that the Fest:

- presented an attractive and well-organised event in the community,
- offered meaningful content for all ages,
- generated a sense of pride and shared enjoyment among residents,
- attracted visitors and encouraged longer stays in the area.

This dual impact—health-related and socio-cultural—strengthened the perception of the town as a lively, active, and appealing place.

4.2. Encouragement of Volunteering and Civic Participation

The Fest also fostered a culture of volunteering. Many respondents, including those not previously engaged in community work, expressed an interest in contributing to future sports events. The Fest demonstrated that volunteering can be enjoyable, rewarding, and socially engaging.

This creates a long-term asset: a motivated volunteer base that can support continued sports development, community events, and future Fests.

4.3. Contribution to Local Wellbeing and Tourism

Although the Fest was not positioned as a tourism initiative, its influence on Byala's visibility and attractiveness was particularly pronounced — especially given the town's

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character as a small Black Sea resort with a population of just a few thousand residents. In communities of this scale, any well-organised public event has an outsized potential to shape local dynamics, support wellbeing, and create momentum that extends beyond the event days themselves.

Throughout the questionnaires, visitors and local residents repeatedly highlighted how refreshing it was to experience a large, positive, community-driven event in a town where the seasonal economy typically dominates public life. During the summer months, Byala attracts tourists who rarely integrate into local activities, while in the off-season the town often becomes quiet and socially fragmented. The Fest disrupted this pattern by creating a vibrant atmosphere that appealed not only to residents but also to guests who happened to be in the area or who chose to visit specifically for the event.

Participants described the Fest as something that “brings life to the town,” “creates a reason for people to gather,” and “shows that Byala can host modern, well-organised events just like bigger municipalities.” **Such impressions matter greatly in a small resort community where reputation and perceived vitality play a significant role in attracting return visitors, new families, and seasonal residents.**

From a wellbeing perspective, the Fest provided an opportunity for residents to experience their town differently: as a lively, cohesive, engaging place that supports healthy living. In smaller communities, such events play an essential role in strengthening identity, and offering meaningful activities for youth, families, and seniors alike. The social, emotional, and recreational value of such an event is amplified in places where events of such a scale are limited.

In this sense, the Fest contributed not only to the health and social activation of the local community, but also to positioning Byala as a destination where sport, wellbeing, and tourism can intersect. The event showcased the unique natural advantages of the town – its beaches, open spaces, and calm environment – demonstrating that Byala can successfully host inclusive and attractive sports initiatives. This lays the groundwork for potential future developments, including sport-based tourism, seasonal festivals, and youth engagement programmes that enhance both wellbeing and local economic activity.

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5. SUSTAINABILITY AND LONG-TERM POTENTIAL

5.1. Strong Demand and Clear Expectation for Continuation

Across all respondent groups, the desire to see the Fest recur annually is overwhelming. Participants, audience members, and partners alike expressed that the Fest should become a permanent fixture in the community calendar and across Europe.

Such unified enthusiasm is a powerful indicator that the Fest has established:

- a meaningful place in the local social ecosystem,
- a model that resonates with both individuals and institutions,
- a foundation strong enough to support regular editions.

5.2. Transferability of the Fest Model

The Fest demonstrates several characteristics that make it easily transferable:

- A simple organisational structure adaptable to town size, infrastructure, and resources;
- A mix of sports, workshops, and community activities suitable for various cultural contexts;
- High reliance on volunteers and local partnerships, reducing cost structures;
- Clear, tested methods for community mobilisation;
- Strong visual and experiential identity that enhances recognisability.

These elements allow the Fest format to be replicated:

- **locally** – by schools, municipal units, clubs;
- **regionally** – as part of health and youth strategies;
- **nationally** – by federations or networks promoting HEPA;
- **at European level** – within cross-border projects or as a shared model within networks.

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5.3. The Fest Know-How Manual: A Tool for Long-Term, Scalable Impact

One of the most significant outcomes of the project is the creation of the Fest Know-How Manual—a structured, easy-to-follow guide that captures the full organisational experience of the Fest, from planning and logistics to volunteer mobilisation, communication, and event delivery. While the Fest itself generated immediate and visible benefits for the community, the Manual transforms these short-term outcomes into a long-term, transferable, and replicable model.

The Manual consolidates practical methodologies, templates, checklists, safety considerations, and insights gained during the implementation of the Fest. Because it draws directly from real experience rather than theoretical frameworks, it provides an authentic, field-tested model that other organisations can adopt with confidence.

5.3.1. Extending Impact Beyond the Project Lifetime

By documenting the Fest's operational processes in a clear and accessible format, the Manual ensures that the knowledge generated by the project will remain available long after the funding period ends. The Partnership have now a ready-made toolkit enabling them to:

- organise future editions of the Fest without external assistance,
- design new sports and community events using the same principles,
- adapt the format to different age groups, settings, or themes,
- train new volunteers and staff using standardised instructions.

5.3.2. Supporting Growth Within an Already Established Transnational Network

Beyond the local context, the Manual has substantial potential to create multiplier effects across the wider partner network established through the project. Partners who participated in the Fest have expressed willingness to:

- replicate the event in their own communities,
- adapt the model to different cultural or sport traditions,
- use the Fest concept as an anchor for new Erasmus+ collaborations,
- train their staff using the Manual as a foundational resource.

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Because the Fest brought together organisations with shared values— education, sport-for-all philosophy, volunteering culture—the Manual naturally becomes a common reference point capable of supporting coordinated activities across borders. It enables partners to exchange experiences, refine the model collectively, and develop a growing basket of good practices.

5.3.3. A Scalable Model for Municipalities and Small Communities

The strength of the Manual is that it provides a scalable festival format suitable even for municipalities with limited resources. As demonstrated in Byala, a small town can successfully host a multi-day sports event when equipped with the right know-how. The Manual outlines how to:

- mobilise local volunteers,
- secure community engagement,
- design inclusive and accessible sports experiences,
- integrate health, wellbeing, and education components,
- use public spaces creatively without major investments.

This makes the Manual highly valuable not only for project partners but also for other municipalities, federations, schools, and youth organisations seeking tested models for community activation.

The Manual thus becomes a capacity-building mechanism that continues to strengthen local, national and international expertise year after year.

5.3.4. Potential for National and European Dissemination

Because the Manual aligns closely with EU priorities—HEPA, social inclusion, volunteering, community engagement—it has potential to be shared through:

- national sports federations and networks,
- municipal associations,
- Erasmus+ Sport dissemination channels,
- cross-border partnerships,

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Through these networks, the Manual can inspire other communities, spark new collaborations, and demonstrate that impactful sports festivals are achievable regardless of scale or budget.

5.3.5. Ensuring the Fest Continues to Grow and Evolve

Finally, the Manual establishes a framework for continuous improvement. Each future edition of the Fest can add updates, new insights, and refined practices, gradually expanding the shared knowledge base. Over time, this living document can become:

- a regional reference for community sports events,
- a quality standard for local sports festivals,
- a training resource for volunteers,
- a foundation for new Erasmus+ or national projects.

In this way, the Manual is not simply an output—it is a strategic resource that ensures that the Fest’s impact continues to grow, travel, and inspire well beyond its place of origin.

5.4. Alignment With European Priorities

The Fest aligns with key EU priorities in the field of sport:

- tackling inactivity through HEPA,
- fostering social inclusion,
- promoting volunteering and non-formal learning for volunteers,
- strengthening community participation,
- supporting mental and physical wellbeing.

This alignment further increases the potential for the Fest model to serve as **good practice** within European sport communities.

6. CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH TRADITIONAL GAMES

An especially meaningful dimension of the Fest was the opportunity it created for **cultural exchange**, most notably through the inclusion of **traditional games from each**

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participating country. These activities transformed the sports programme into a space where participants not only competed and played together but also learned about one another's cultural heritage in a lively, experiential way.

Unlike formal presentations or discussions, traditional games naturally invite participation, curiosity, and enjoyment. As participants tried unfamiliar games, taught their own cultural variations, and observed how others interpreted the rules, they engaged in a form of **informal intercultural learning** that is both impactful and memorable.

It was strongly recognised by all the participants in the Fest that the traditional games provided unique insight into:

- **the values and customs embedded in each country's play traditions,**
- **the ways different cultures approach competition, cooperation, and fun,**
- **shared childhood experiences that transcend borders and age.**

Participants frequently described these sessions as "fun", "eye-opening", and "something I've never experienced before." Through play, they were able to discover cultural differences not as barriers, but as sources of interest and enrichment.

These games were also assessed as fostering tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding. Understanding each other's traditions is a powerful foundation for **tolerance and mutual respect.** When participants engaged in traditional games:

- they encountered different ways of thinking and playing,
- they asked questions about origins, meanings, and customs,
- they respected rules rooted in other cultural contexts,
- they recognised how diversity enriches collective experiences.

This type of embodied cultural exchange encourages participants to become more open, empathetic, and curious about others. In a time when social cohesion and intercultural dialogue are more important than ever, such simple interactions carry deep significance.

Strengthening the Social Fabric of the Fest

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The traditional games sessions quickly became one of the most unifying elements of the Fest. Participants, volunteers, partners, and visitors came together to participate side by side, dissolving distinctions between “locals” and “internationals,” between “participants” and “audience.”

This helped create a festival environment characterised by:

- genuine human connection,
- shared laughter,
- inclusive participation regardless of nationality or background,
- collaborative learning rather than competitive pressure.

Such interactions strengthened the Fest’s overall social impact and contributed to the harmonious atmosphere noted throughout the event.

Cultural Exchange as a Long-Term Value

Beyond the immediate enjoyment, the cultural exchange achieved through traditional games has lasting implications for how communities perceive cultural diversity. Participants who experience positive, joyful intercultural encounters are more likely to:

- embrace diversity in their everyday lives,
- act with greater openness and acceptance,
- appreciate cultural differences rather than fear or avoid them,
- become ambassadors for intercultural understanding within their own environments.

In this way, the Fest contributes to longer-term changes in attitudes, helping cultivate a generation of individuals who value peaceful coexistence and cultural appreciation.

A Model for Future Intercultural Activities

The success of the traditional games demonstrates that **sport and play are powerful instruments of cultural diplomacy**. Future editions of the Fest or similar events across the partner network can build on this approach by:

- expanding the selection of traditional games,

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- adding short storytelling moments of each game's origin,
- involving intergenerational participants,
- creating mixed-nationality teams to deepen the learning process of the intercultural activities.

This positions the Fest not only as a health and sports initiative, but as a **platform for intercultural dialogue and community building**.

7. OVERALL REFLECTIONS

The Fest delivered a multilayered impact:

- **Individual level:**

Increased awareness, stronger motivation, deeper knowledge, healthier habits, and new social connections.

- **Organisational level:**

Strengthened capacities, broadened cooperation networks, improved readiness for EU collaboration.

- **Community level:**

Greater cohesion, heightened interest in sports, revitalised civic energy, and boosted visibility of the town.

- **Strategic level:**

A validated festival model that is sustainable, scalable, and widely transferable across local, national, and European contexts.

The success of the Fest demonstrates that meaningful sport initiatives rely on **engagement, cooperation, creativity, and continuity**. The Fest combined these elements effectively, leaving behind not only positive experiences, but also **lasting structures** on which future initiatives can be built.

8. FINAL CONCLUSION

The Fest achieved more than bringing people together for a sports event—it **activated a community, inspired individuals, strengthened organisations, and generated a**

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replicable model for promoting health and wellbeing. The data clearly shows a substantial and lasting impact across all dimensions evaluated.

The Festival achieved a significant and lasting impact by engaging a wide and diverse audience in sport and physical activity as a means to promote a healthy lifestyle. Through its inclusive and accessible format, the Festival contributed to increased awareness among participants and the wider community of the benefits of regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, and overall health and wellbeing.

The initiative also strengthened and expanded the network of organisations actively working to encourage participation in sport and physical activity for a healthy lifestyle, fostering cooperation at local, national, and European levels. In parallel, the Festival promoted volunteering in sport, generating strong interest and motivation for continued civic engagement in future sports events and related initiatives.

Furthermore, the Festival supported social inclusion through sport by creating opportunities for the participation of vulnerable groups, reinforcing the role of sport as a powerful tool for inclusion, connection, and equal access to healthy and active lifestyles.

The Fest stands as a powerful demonstration that sport, when meaningfully organised, can be a **driver of social connection, health improvement, and local development**.

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