

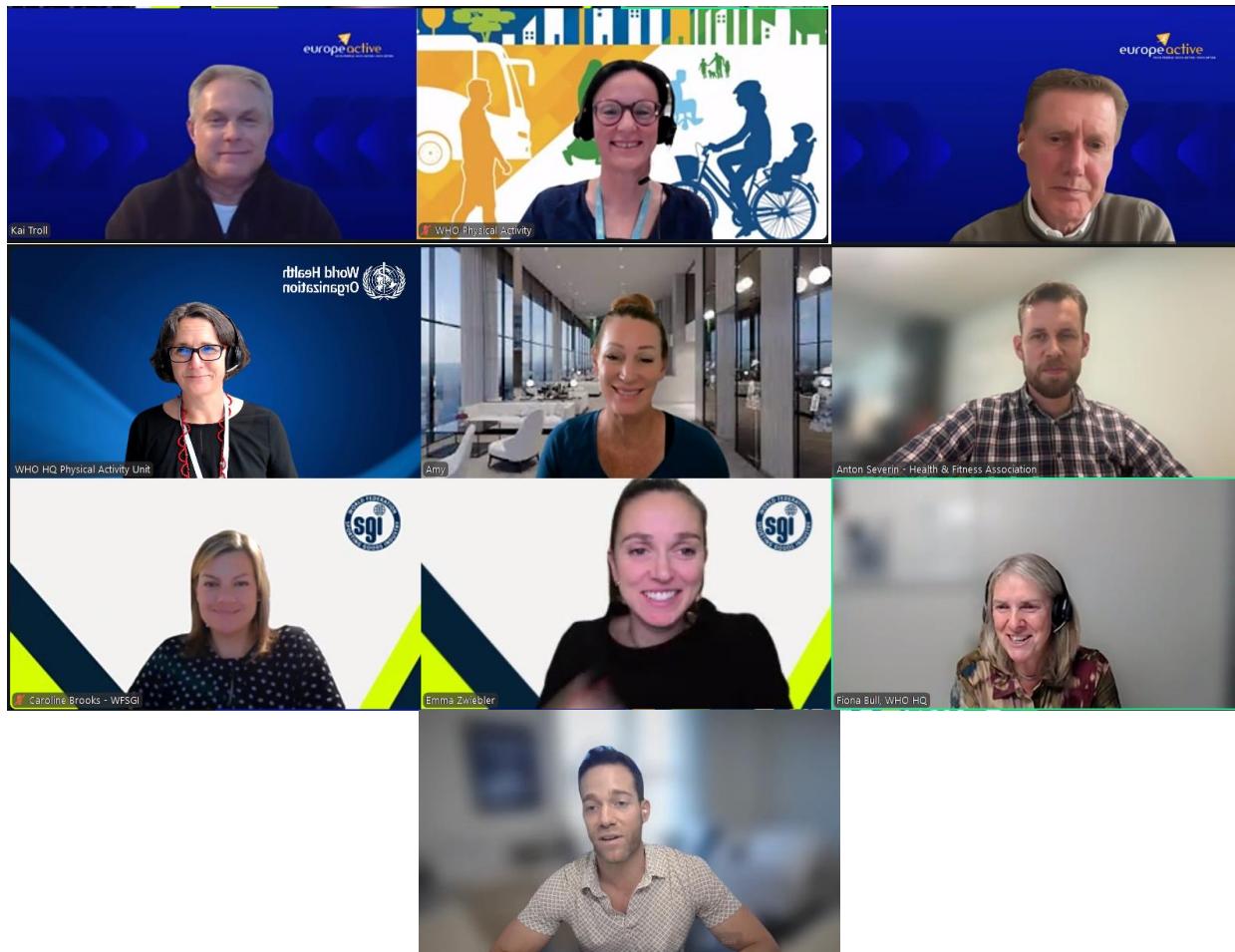
## More active people for a healthier world

**11<sup>th</sup> WHO Dialogue with Sports and physical activity-related industries on the implementation of the Global action plan on physical activity (GAPPA) 2018-2030**

Virtual (Zoom)

Thursday 16 October 2025

# Meeting report



## Meeting Summary Report

The World Health Organization (WHO) held its eleventh Dialogue with representatives of sports-related industries as a virtual meeting on 16 October 2025.

The objectives of the 11<sup>th</sup> Sports Dialogues was to provide an opportunity to review the 4<sup>th</sup> UN High level Meeting on NCD held in New York in Sept 2025 and discuss the implications and opportunities for policy action on physical activity, brief the industry on WHO work plans and priorities for 2026/2027 and receive industry updates on Year 2025 activities and achievements towards the promotion of physical activity.

The programme of the Dialogue is provided in Annex 1 and the list of participants in Annex 2.

### Welcome

Dr Bull welcomed everyone to the 11<sup>th</sup> Sports Dialogue and shared the apologies from Dr Etienne Krug, the new director of the Department of Health Determinants, Promotion and Prevention, who was unable to join the meeting. He looks forward to joining the next Dialogue.

Dr Bull provided the background to the Sports Dialogues, which commenced in 2018 as part of the global response to 3<sup>rd</sup> UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs to ensure contributions from all sectors, including economic operators were involved in addressing NCDs prevention. She reiterated that the attendance at WHO Dialogues is limited to invited representatives of private sector operators relevant to the fields of community sport, exercise, fitness and physical activity and are convened in accordance with the WHO Framework for Engagement with Non-State Actors ([FENSA](#)). Other forums are available for WHO to meet with civil society and other non-state actors which is why they do not attend these Dialogues.

### Session 1:

#### a. Reflections on 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Meeting on NCDs at UN General Assembly – Sept 2025

Dr Bull reflected on the recent forum and that it had been a long road to the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Meeting on Noncommunicable Diseases (4<sup>th</sup> HLMNCDs), in both the drafting and consultation on political declaration. The process had required changes which some deemed to be a weakening of the language, however the call for a comprehensive approach across all risk factors remained, including actions to increase levels of physical activity.

The political declaration [final draft outcome document](#) was discussed in New York on 25<sup>th</sup> September, with Member State interventions with relevance to physical activity including on technology and the value of WHO in developing norms and standards, monitoring and reporting on progress. The draft declaration was not passed unanimously by consensus for the first time, and the decision was postponed to the UN General Assembly agenda in October. A majority, if not unanimous vote is anticipated, that will endorse the declaration, including the targets being listed for the first time.

WFSGI, who was present in New York, noted the strong intervention by Ms Kirsty Coventry, President of International Olympic Committee (IOC) at the opening panel session of the HLMNCD. WFSGI also noted how well organized and coordinated the health-harming industries were both during consultation meetings and the drafting process. It was noted that this enabled these industries to get their policy positions heard within key forums and by governments. WFSGI recommended that from their

experience, it is advisable that the sport sector be better coordinated and engage earlier in the processes to ensure recognition of the perspective and contribution of the health-enhancing private sector actors, such as the sport and physical activity related industries.

### b. WHO update

Dr Bull provided an update on 2025 including the process of restructuring of WHO in response to a number of factors. She noted that the process was almost finalised and of relevance the technical area of physical activity is in a new unit merged with technical work to advance the prevention of alcohol harms and located in new Department of Health Determinants, Promotion and Prevention. Dr Bull advised that various roles have changed and overall there was a reduction in technical staff working on physical activity. As such, work priorities will need to be aligned to this new reality. The unit is currently developing workplans for the next biennium (2026/2027) which are required to focus on the roles and responsibilities specific to WHO HQ. The proposed plans fall broadly into two areas and include:

1. Development of global standards and normative guidance, and global monitoring and reporting:
  - a. Complete and launch updated global comparable estimates of the prevalence of physical inactivity in adolescents - planned Q3 2026
  - b. Continue to plan for the publication of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Global status report on physical activity, reporting on progress in policy implementation - subject to approval and resources
  - c. Continued work to develop global guidance on the use of digital devices for measurement of physical activity and sedentary behaviour in national health surveillance systems – starting with adult populations and over time addressing all ages.
  - d. Continue preparatory work to support updating the 2020 Global guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour - with planned publication in 2030 – this will require resource mobilisation to cover the substantive reviews of scientific evidence required
2. Provision of technical support in response to requests from WHO Regional and Country offices through to Ministries of Health and other sectors to assist in GAPPa policy implementation through:
  - a. Multi country initiatives - (1) RECAP (an externally funded initiative focussed on application of regulatory and legislative approaches to healthy diet and physical activity) - through technical support on application to improving road safety, walking and cycling, public open space; (2) Stop Obesity Initiative (a flagship initiative led by the Dept of Nutrition) - through supporting the set of “frontrunner countries” on physical activity policy action including PA public communications campaigns, PA promotion in schools, and PA counselling in primary health care settings and promotion of walking and cycling.
  - b. Direct support to countries as requested on specific policy areas

Dr Bull also reminded the group that the World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution 71.6 (from 2018) required formal reporting on the global progress on country implementation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity policy recommendations in WHA 2026 and a report will be submitted to the WHA and on the agenda in May 2026.

## Session 2: Industry updates

### *Europe Active (EA)*

Europe Active (EA) reported its focus is currently on public affairs, including a significant presence at The European Parliament and Commission, through DG Sport and connecting with other DGs that are also relevant. EA noted that the perception of policy makers and legislators is outdated when comes to the sports and fitness industry, and EA suggested there is a need to provide a more holistic overview. As such, EA has met with 57 Member of the European Parliament (MEPs) individually, who are members of a diverse number of groups, such as mental health, technology, trade and other committees, to support them in making the connection between physical activity and these interest areas.

EA reported wide recognition of their role as a key driver of the annual European Week of Sport and “Be Active” campaign. In 2025 the goal was to get 700,000 people involved; the final results still being assessed by national associations of participation across 30,000 activities at the grassroots level.

EA shared their plans to scale and grow action which included:

- Broadening membership base (there is interest from other regions, such as Middle East and North America wishing to expand in to Europe).
- Summer school for the next generation leaders in the sector.
- Exercise for Health Summit on 4<sup>th</sup> December in European Parliament, aimed at matching MEPs with their national associations.
- Continuing to work on EREPS Standards for exercise and fitness professionals.

### *Health & Fitness Association (HFA)*

Health & Fitness Association (HFA) reported on their internal restructure highlighting that a new Chief Operating Officer (COO) will be joining the organization shortly. As part of this advocacy, research, and communications are now being strategically aligned with a view to elevate and reposition the industry as driver of health and wellbeing, by ensuring research and messaging tips are shared with partners.

HFA updated on several new tools and research products designed to support facility operators and industry leaders in making data-driven decisions. At global level HFA has worked with consultancy firm Deloitte to quantify the economic impact of their industry (e.g. consumer outputs, tax contributions, employment) and the societal cost of physical inactivity. The report aims to help make the case with policy makers and other stakeholders on the importance of the industry. They have also undertaken complementary price elasticity research, to understand what reduction in price would drive health and fitness club membership.

Additionally, HFA has launched a new research initiative to model the economic impact of GLP-1 interventions when paired with structured physical activity programs. Specifically, the research will investigate the long-term cost savings for public health systems and the broader financial impacts on governments due to reduced healthcare expenditures when both interventions are deployed together, comparing it with GLP-1 interventions on their own.

HFA has taken a leadership role within the Physical Activity Alliance (PAA) and its engagement with the Make America Healthy Again initiative, advocating for positioning the industry as a contributor to mental and physical health. HFA is also active in backing legislation to ensure that the President’s Council on Physical Activity and the 10-yearly update of physical activity guidelines are positioned

formally in statute. HFA have also partnered with the American Cancer Society and Alzheimer's Society, providing evidence-based messages on physical activity to shift the focus to preventative physical activity, rather than just sport and leisure.

#### *World Active (WA)*

World Active (WA) outlined that it was established to provide a global fitness industry association and its mission is to unite the global fitness and physical activity sector, ensure equality of voice and to provide continental representation, transparency and inclusivity. WA updated that it has now formally established its charter and statutes and is a registered entity, headquartered in Prague, Czech Republic. To date it has 52 member associations and many other interested parties. As WA grows, a full-time secretariat will be established. WA would like to ensure that there is representation from every continent and are keen to strengthen collaboration with both EA and HFA.

WA shared their interests in:

- mental health, such as including Mental Health First Aid training for professionals
- youth and creating more entry points for university students to enter the workforce (through, for example, certification and /or, licencing).

#### *World Federation of Sporting Goods Industries (WFSGI)*

WFSGI shared an update on their activities and plans since the launch of the Impact Report at the World Health Assembly in May 2025. WFSGI noted that a new Impact Report is planned for 2027 to continue to showcase examples and case studies of member activities towards promoting global efforts to increase participation. WFSGI noted they had attended and presented at the IOC Olympism365 Summit in June 2025 and contributed a joint commitment along with the IOC and WHO "*... to share best practices and lessons learned on reaching inactive audiences, creating safe and positive experiences and transforming perceptions of sport and movement through powerful storytelling*".

WFSGI shared their engagement with the 4<sup>th</sup> HLMNCD in New York and that they had held an event, hosted by New Balance and attended by over 12 member brands, at a community gym, with attendance of IOC, C40 cities, UNICEF and United for Global Mental Health, with a call for action to governments and other stakeholders to prioritise physical activity. These advocacy efforts have resulted in greater profile for the sector and were supported by the WFSGI Physical Activity Committee (PAC). However, WFSGI noted that more needs to be done to ensure government engagement and attendance at such events in the future. In addition, the WFSGI PAC met in New York and endorsed three strategic priorities (1. Align for impact, 2. Promote physical activity and 3. Fuel the change) to increase the scale and impact of WFSGI initiatives and agreed to more impactful collaboration with international sport federations including through major sporting events. WFSGI noted their ongoing collaboration on these agendas with Business at OECD, IOC, World Economic Forum, C40 Cities and Mass Participation World.

WFSGI's shared that their Strategic Plan 2026-2029 had been finalised and for the first-time physical activity has its own pillar ("Grow Sport, physical activity and movement"), which would help ensure visibility and prioritisation of PA in ways that meet the needs of industry members.

### Session 3: Discussion on future opportunities and challenges

- There was significant discussion on the need for the sport industry sector to develop a strategic agenda for its advocacy activities aimed at raising the profile of physical activity and including a call for action from governments and other stakeholders. It was suggested that advocacy messages should take a primary focus on the importance of physical activity for preventative health, noting that currently the predominant narrative is on NCD treatment and management and prevention is getting less visibility. It was recognized that more needs to be done by Industry to raise the profile of physical activity and align messages to speak with one voice.
- Comparison was made with other industries, and despite some potential differences, they were seen to be well coordinated and well aligned presenting clear messages to governments and in consultation forums, despite all wanting slightly different things to serve their agenda. It was commented that the sport sector could have greater impact if it presented a common message with a common voice.
- Advocacy needed to be supported by the right data and convincing data. This could include the sector's contribution to growth, investment and GDP. It was however noted that for these data to be fully "trusted" they should ideally be developed with some independence.
- Discussion also explored the importance of understanding government priorities as this would permit the sector to align with important issues and inform how to influence relevant stakeholders.
- It was proposed to consider whether more frequent working group discussions amongst the industry associations represented to further discuss advocacy and alignment of messages would be valuable. These would be held independently of the WHO led Sport Dialogues and provide an opportunity for the sector to exchange ideas and consider how to develop a coordinated strategy to galvanise alignment of messaging.
- The challenge of mobilising government representatives, particularly Ministers of Health and of Sport to advocate for more physical activity promotion, programmes and opportunities was discussed. The work of EA in bringing together MEPs and sector representatives was noted. Global events such as the UN General Assembly and the World Health Assembly do provide a gathering of leaders, but are challenging venues to secure attendance, particularly at short notice, given the breadth of programme and side event at these events.
- It was proposed that the sector consider developing a set of joint actions for the next years, and to define events at which they will ensure high level participation and support, such as:
  - Events WHA in May (with a longer lead time and strategic planning)
  - International Day for Sport for Development and Peace on 6<sup>th</sup> April
- It was noted that with strategic planning, adequate lead-in time and coordination, it should be possible to ensure the participation of national and local government representatives.

### Next steps and follow up actions

- WHO to follow up on dates for convening WHO Dialogues with the sport and physical activity related industry associations in 2026 via email.
- Industry to follow up on convening additional communications and planning on advocacy and aligned messaging
- Industry to follow up with any proposals for joint industry events or activities in 2026

## Annex 1: Programme

### **MORE ACTIVE PEOPLE FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD**

11th WHO Dialogue with sports- and physical activity-related industries on the implementation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA) 2018-2030

**Virtual meeting convened by WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland**

16 October 2025, 16:00 – 19:00

#### **Objectives of the Meeting**

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1. Review the 4<sup>th</sup> UN High level Meeting on NCD held in New York in Sept 2025 and discuss the implications and opportunities for policy action on physical activity
2. Brief the industry on WHO work plans and priorities for 2026/2027
3. Receive industry updates on Year 2025 activities and achievements towards the promotion of physical activity.

#### **Provisional Programme**

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##### **PART I: 16:00-17:30 CET**

**Welcome** (10 minutes):

Welcome: Dr Etienne Krug, Director, Health Determinants, Promotion and Prevention (DPP)

Introductions - tour de table, Dr Fiona Bull, Head, Physical Activity Promotion & Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit, WHO

**Session one** (20 minutes)

Report on WHO physical activity: Dr Fiona Bull

Q&A

**Session two** (60 minutes)

Industry Association updates: Presentations of key work in 2025, insights and challenges, and priorities for 2026 (approx 10 minutes each followed by Q&A):

- WFSGI
- Health and Fitness
- Europe Active
- World Active

#### **STRETCH BREAK (15 minutes)**

##### **PART II: 17:45-19:00 CET**

**Session three – Priorities, Plans and Opportunities for Cooperation in 2026/2027** (60 minutes), facilitated by Dr Fiona Bull:

**Summary, follow up actions, and close** (15 minutes)

## Annex 2: List of participants

### **Industry Associations**

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#### **World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI)**

Emma Zwiebler

CEO, Switzerland

Caroline Brooks

Head of Physical Activity, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

#### **Health and Fitness Association**

Mike Goscinski

Vice President Government Affairs, United States of America

Anton Severin

Research, United States of America

#### **EuropeActive**

Kai Troll

Executive Director, Denmark

Marcel Boots

President, Kingdom of the Netherlands

#### **World Active**

Amy Boone Thompson

Chair, United States of America

## **World Health Organization**

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Fiona Bull (Unit Head)

Mariken Leurs (Health Promotion Officer)

Juana Willumsen (Technical Officer)

Physical Activity Promotion and Alcohol Harm Prevention

Department of Health Determinants, Promotion and Prevention

Division of Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Care