

**POSITION PAPER OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH  
AND THE COMMITTEE ON REHABILITATION, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND  
SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF THE POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
on improving the quality and effectiveness of physical education in schools in Poland**

**Summary**

Physical activity is considered as key element of healthy lifestyle and as the basic biological need of human being in all periods of life. Physical inactivity is a risk factor of noncommunicable diseases (e.g. obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular and skeletal system diseases).

Recommended by WHO levels of physical activity for health for children and adolescents aged 5-17 years are:

- at least 60 minutes of moderate-to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily,
- most of daily physical activity should be aerobic; vigorous-intensity should be incorporated, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, at least 3 times per week.

Level of physical activity of the majority of adults and children population in Poland is too low. The results of *Health Behaviour of School-aged Children Study* showed that recommended level of physical activity in 2010 was achieved by: 27% of 11-year-olds, 16% of 15-year-olds and 10% of 17-year-olds. It may be the reason of increasing prevalence of obesity and decreasing of physical fitness of children and adolescents.

Level of physical activity of school-aged children depends on their participation in physical education (PE) classes in school. The number of these classes (3 or 4 per week) in Poland is the highest in Europe but the participation of students in these classes is indispensable for them to maintain the recommended level of physical activity. The results of survey carried out in 2012/2013 showed that in the school year, only 74% students participated in all or almost all the PE classes, while 11% took part in half of the total classes or fewer. Students' participation fell as they got older and it was lower among girls than boys. 70 % of the students were exempted from PE classes on parental request, while 43% were excused following their own request. A doctor's certificate was obtained by 33% of the students, usually for a period shorter than one month, and 4.5% were exempted longer than 3 months. Also the results of control of the Supreme Audit Office showed many deficits in implementation of school PE, low level of active participation of students in these classes, as well as a lot of deficiency in training of physical education teachers.

**Recommendations.** In order to counteract such an unfavourable situation, it is necessary to undertake systemic activities on improving the quality and effectiveness of physical education in schools in Poland. The members of the Committee of Public Health and the Committee of Rehabilitation, Physical Education and Social Integration of the Polish Academy of Sciences suggest the undertaking the following activities:

- **In education sector:**
  - to develop and implement a new procedure of exemption from PE classes and for cooperation between PE teachers and school nurses,
  - to make as obligation for PE teachers to register students' absences in PE lessons, their reasons as the basis for planning activities for decreasing of absence prevalence,
  - to organize alternative forms of PE adjusted to students' individual needs and possibilities,
  - to improve the supervision of school headmaster on implementation of PE classes,
  - to improve the system of postgraduate training of PE teachers and motivate them to develop competencies for realization new core curriculum.
- **In health sector** – to oblige physicians to limit of exemption from PE classes for long period and to give detail information concerning acceptable and prescriptive forms of physical activity for children with chronic diseases and during convalescence period.
- **In universities and college** which carried out pre-service PE teachers' training to adjust their curricula to new school core curriculum, especially in health education.

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