

PROJECT "Riding a Bicycle is for Body Advisable"

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Similar to many other countries, Slovenian youth has been strongly affected by a Covid-19 virus. During the first and second wave, schools were closed and many pupils experienced a lack of opportunities to do sport - school and extracurricular sports activities were canceled, municipalities and schoolyards closed. First studies show a sharp decline in motor skills and heightened levels of subcutaneous fat among the youth (SLOfit 2020, Fakulteta za šport, Univerza v Ljubljani)- link to the research: <http://www.slofit.org/aktualno/ID/216/Upad-gibalnih-sposobnosti-otrok-med-epidemijo>).

Results are not encouraging - a decline of motor skills was experienced by girls and boys alike and the general motor efficiency of Slovenian children fell by 13%. General physical endurance decreased the most, as well as movement coordination of the entire body.

In the spring, when our school first switched to a remote learning model, I noticed how the effects of Covid-19 measures were harming the health of our students. As it became clear that the pandemic would not go away in the foreseeable future, I started to make plans on how to help students stay healthy during the lockdown in the upcoming fall months. I am a physical education professor and I assessed the situation from my field. I realized that students need to work on endurance and coordination, they need to use calories, get some fresh air, and improve their balance. Bike-riding ticks all the boxes.

Our school - Secondary School of Civil Engineering, Land Surveying, and Environmental Studies (SGGOS) Ljubljana participates in the "Schools for Health" program.

As a mentor of the "School of Health" program, I sat down with a group of students at the start of this year and we made a plan - we decided on the project "Riding a Bicycle is for Body Advisable." Our main goal was to raise enthusiasm for bike-riding among our students and teachers.

1. The poster

To address students directly, we made a poster about all the benefits of bike-riding. We hung it in the student lobby, where most students were able to notice it.

Content of the poster: RIDING A BICYCLE IS FOR BODY ADVISABLE



Picture 1: SGGOŠ's bike park on the first day of school (1.9.2020)

Teachers and members of "*Schools for Health SGGOŠ*" are this year trying to encourage students to use bikes more frequently. Riding a bicycle is very beneficial, which will be attempted to be emphasized in this school year.

At the time of the pandemic riding a bike also makes it possible for us to avoid big groups of people, therefore that is another advantage to be mentioned in 2020.

A BIKE IS SUITABLE FOR EVERYONE

Benefits of bike-riding:

- Bikers are independent of traffic jams and public transport delays
- Bike-riding is cheap
- Bike-riding is healthy
- Bike-riding protects the environment
- Bike-riding is relaxing and a great free-time activity
- Bikers are less exposed to infections in a crowd

- Suitable for all ages and levels of stamina!

MOUNTAIN BIKING AS A POPULAR SPORT AMONG ALL GENERATIONS



Picture 2: In the Bike-park

ROAD CYCLING IS A GREAT FORM OF RECREATION AS WELL!

Cycling and its effects on your body:

- heightens endurance and physical strength
- lowers stress levels
- helps burn body fat
- protects the joints
- improves life satisfaction

SLOVENIAN CYCLISTS ARE HIGHLY SUCCESSFULL ON INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Primož Roglič and Tadej Pogačar are currently one of the top sportsmen in the global cycling scene.

SGGOŠ's alumni Luka Pibernik is a successful competitive cyclist in the Bahrain-Merida team.

SGGOŠ's alumni Tanja Elsner is a successful cyclist and finished 6th in national cycling competition and came first in the 2015 Alpe marathon.

SGGOŠ's current student Vidian Šalehar, student of environmental technician studies, won a silver medal among juniors at the first race of the Unior Downhill Cup in Pohorje park.

A BICYCLE IS THE MOST ECOLOGICAL TRANSPORT DEVICE
LJUBLJANA'S CYCLE LANE SYSTEM IS GREAT AND THE CITY'S FREE BIKE
HIRE SYSTEM IS WELL-ORGANIZED.



Bikelj, Ljubljana's city cycle hire system, includes 60 bike stations in a radius of 300-500 m from one another.

The bike stations are user-friendly and perfect to take advantage of when traveling to short-distance destinations.

For 3 euros/year, bikes can be hired without any limitations.

SLOVENIA IS CYCLING HEAVEN FOR BIKERS OF ALL AGES AND PHYSICAL
PREPAREDNESS LEVELS.



Picture 3: SGGOŠ students at the sports camp in Planica.



Picture 4: SGGOŠ students at the sports camp in Portorož.

2. School library's new book about cycling

We were lucky because at the same time we started our project, Slovenian professional cyclists were better than ever before and that sparked an interest in cycling nationwide. Tadej Pogačar won Tour de France this year and popular Primož Roglič was second to Pogačar in Tour de France, won La Vuelta and many other competitions.

To learn more about cycling and our national hero Roglič, we have decided to order his biography for our students' library. We encouraged students to borrow it and read it.

3. Making space for everyday bikers

We invited our professors and students to participate in the project. Enthusiastic bikers were asked to publish their stories about cycling, explain their reasons for practicing this sport, and share photos from biking trips. We posted these contributions on the school's social media and website.



Picture 5: One of our students on the bike

We tried to show fellow students that many of their friends and peers already cycle and to encourage them to try it out as well.

4. 23rd of September, the Day of Sport

On 23rd of September, the Day of Sport, we raised awareness about the positive effects of regular physical activity by publishing on social media and bulletin boards.

We prepared a list of activities, they can practice to be healthier and feel better:

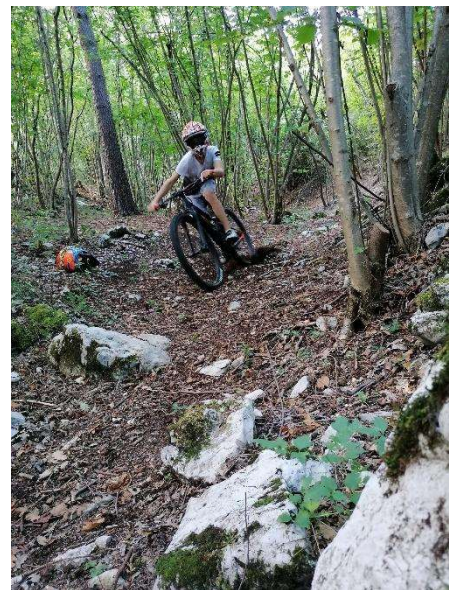
- Try to spend a lot of time in nature and admire the beauties of the outdoors. You can either walk or bike!
- Enjoy the refreshing peace of nearby forests and meadows.
- Listen to the music that relaxes you.
- In your free time, try to do activities that make you happy.
- Try hard to keep your health by staying fit and in good shape.
- Spend time with good friends.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Drink lots of water.
- Eat locally produced, seasonal food.
- Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques.
- Be positive about yourself and others.
- Respect other people.
- Travel as much as possible to see how people live elsewhere.
- Take care of your hygiene.
- Take care of the environment.
- Your power is in your kindness.

- Say no to addiction - nicotine, marijuana, drugs, alcohol, sugar, fast food. Think independently and do not let others have a negative influence on you.

5. Best bike photo competition

We prepared the best bike photo competition for our students. Teachers and students can participate by sending a photo where she or he is next to the bike or on the bike. These photos will be published on social media and our website. The winner will be chosen by students online. There will be awards for winning photos.

Some of the photos by our teachers and students.



Picture 6: Some of the photos from our best bike photo competition

In December, when the competition is over, all the photos sent in will be compiled on a big billboard to showcase how many cyclists there are among our students and teachers.

6. The survey

Ten weeks after our project I have decided to ask students to fill out a survey about the activities of our SGGOŠ “Schools for Health” program.

Questions:

1. Have you noticed posters about cycling?
2. Did you like our project “Riding a Bicycle is for Body Advisable”?
3. Have you thought of cycling more because of the presentations you encountered?

Results:

The number of respondents: 93

1. YES 72%, NO 28%
2. YES 88%, NO 11%
3. YES 57%, NO 43%

Our survey found out that the students were satisfied with the activities that had been offered to them.

More than half of them were thinking about cycling because of our activities and this is important to us. I hope some of them will actually go riding a bike, which was one of the goals of the project “Riding a Bicycle is for Body Advisable”.