



Introducing Ecological and Sustainable Practices Into Fitness Training

D3.1 Best Practices Report

Four Elements

Contribution by all partners

Project information

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Introduction

In the first stage of the project, the consortium has run a focus group round with experts and stakeholders in order to validate the requirements that were indicated in proposal-level, and then run a brainstorming session among the partnership to share and validate the conclusions of the needs analysis.

This report gathers the **best practices** identified by partner organisations in the field of sustainable practices in fitness training containing the recommendations for the design of the EcoFitness facility and services, taking into account the previous stakeholders' requirements (at proposal stage) and the input gathered through the focus groups.

All partners have:

- **interviewed** a small number of stakeholders (5-7 people) to validate the requirements that have been identified in the needs analysis stage in the early stage of the project. The following criteria were discussed:
 - a. **Green** products and services – made of recycled materials or provided by companies that work with sustainable materials/products
 - b. **Low-cost** solution, so that anyone can create/adapt the EcoFitness facility
 - c. **Tailored** to diverse condition levels – different levels so that anyone can participate (from beginners to professionals)
 - d. **Accessible** to all audiences – irrespectively of practiced individually or in group.
 - e. **DIY** – easy to assemble
 - f. **Gender balanced** – production, testing
- participated in the **brainstorming** session among the consortium on November 09th 2022 to share their conclusions.

Results

All partners were encouraged to discuss all questions during the focus groups and interviews, but especially to address the most significant ones, as time is valuable during Focus Groups with experts.

The participating organisations were the project partners, namely:

- Cesur, Spain, a private VET centre as well as training centre for employment, involving a fitness instructor, horse instructor, a coordinator in a sports centre, a mountain guide and a sports teacher;
- CESIE, Italy, a European Centre of Studies and Initiatives aiming to promote educational innovation, participation, and growth, involving fitness instructors, project managers, sports practitioners and the president of a fitness society;
- Four Elements, Greece, a Non-Profit, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) about social and scientific issues involving fitness and yoga instructors, gym owners and a personal trainer;
- Maieutica, Portugal, the Polytechnic Institute of Maia comprises 2 higher schools and offers undergraduate and master's programs, involving a director of a gym chain, teacher trainers, a director of fitness equipment production, and researchers.

i. General ideas: (individual level)

1. How can environmental sustainability be related to fitness?

The team of sport experts who participated in the group discussion reached several conclusions. Overall, the key aspects that have been pointed out when discussing sport and environmental sustainability, are that such relation is related both to people's habits towards the environment, and their awareness towards the issues, as well as depending on the materials used while training. It is also easier to include environmental sustainability in outdoor sports.

When mentioning the link between environmental sustainability and fitness, experts suggest to look at the **rural environment and try to extrapolate some practices to the cities**, such as the daily activity in the rural environment, i.e., collecting and **chopping wood** for the cooker requires activity and exercise and, in the same way, implying less consumption of non-renewable and polluting energies. Strategies such as **walking to recycling bins, training in outdoor facilities**, and getting rewards for doing so were also proposed.

Another example proposed was to hold **outdoor activities and exercise events** with a solidarity theme (zumba classes, running events,...) together with municipalities and local councils and to run **awareness campaigns** on the regular practice of physical exercise and the waste that exists in the fitness world

Indeed, people may enhance their health and fitness by going to **eco-friendly gyms** while also doing their part to protect the environment. These green gyms emphasise the **use of equipment that is safe for both human and environmental health** while finding novel ways to use less energy and water. Being an environmentally conscious gym or fitness centre has numerous commercial advantages. Marketing your gym as a responsible steward of the environment can **strengthen your brand** and set you apart from your rivals. Additionally, green business methods not only reduce your expenses but also draw in a new generation of youthful consumers who may be both excellent clients and collaborators. These customers form close relationships with the businesses they believe are contributing to society and the environment.

*"Looking at sustainability we can say, and this is proven by literature, that physical exercise is directly linked to sustainability because it promotes the **creation of healthy habits** and most of these habits are all related to sustainability, i.e. the issue of having a better diet this directly affects our planet and the respective living beings, as well as the creation of life without excesses."*

2. What does fitness/a healthy lifestyle mean to you from a physical and mental perspective?

Our mental health is closely related to our physical health; consequently, regular physical exercise and a healthy diet can improve people's quality of life. However, there is still a great deal of illiteracy and ignorance in the population regarding this subject, as people do not realise that physical exercise is extremely beneficial.

All experts agree on **the importance between mental health and a good physical state**, the former often being the promoter of the latter, contrary to what has traditionally been thought. This is the reason why nowadays many psychological therapies include physical activity as part of the treatment.

Another viewpoint is that a healthy lifestyle varies from person to person, and the best thing is to let people do what they want and know what is good for them and make them feel good about it.

"The most important thing, in my opinion, is that people do what they enjoy the most, but to do so, they must be aware of what makes them feel good and the various options they must have to feel good. So, we believe that what is lacking here is a bit of general understanding of people for them to practise activities that are appropriate for their reality, not only in the psychological, mental sphere but also in the physical field".

ii. Needs of participating organisations

1. Sports providers need to adapt to the needs/requirements of our diverse society – stakeholders. How does your organisation come off as innovative that cares about environmental issues?

According to the experts, the contribution of the companies for which they work is **minimal** in this regard. Mandatory requirements for quality certificates are met, such as signs next to

switches to **remind people to turn off the light** or on bathroom taps for water consumption; however, aspects such as heating and air conditioning are not well managed, taking into account the building's orientations, the **use of the lift** is not restricted (which is related to the previous issues, as this would not only imply less energy expenditure, but is also a physical activity that adds to the health of the building's occupants).

iii. Market demands

1. Have you noticed an increase / decrease / stability in the demand for fitness-related education since 2019?

Due to the covid pandemic and lockdowns, there has been a decline in fitness demand since 2019. There has been a complete decline in participation in indoor sports. Individual and/or outdoor sports are the most common form of physical fitness.

In Spain, there is an increase in demand for gyms, as they are no longer seen as places reserved for bodybuilders and are used more by the rest of the population. However, it is true that the health factor is deteriorating a bit as there is a tendency to replace the fitness trainers with mobile apps.

On the contrary, Italy has experienced a high decrease in the demand for fitness, due to the pandemic, especially for in-door sports. In Portugal, there was a decrease in the demand for fitness centres during the Covid-19 pandemic, and more people started to do exercise outdoors, in what was considered as a more “safe” context. After the Covid-19 pandemic, there was an increased demand for low cost gymnasiums, as well as more offers for personal training activities in open space.

2. Going green has been a winning strategy to attract consumers. How do you think this is related to the fitness industry?

The stakeholders from Spain have reported that while it is a growing aspect of society and most businesses, the fitness world still has a long way to go to achieve a much greener profile that also

serves as a public attraction. In Portugal, the stakeholders mentioned that providing activities and having companies or public institutions that show interest and care for the environment, has a positive impact on population and people adherence to the activities. Moreover, there are several public and private physical activities that try to promote ecological concerns, as well as healthy habits.

The group of experts does see a link between this green aspect and growing activities such as CrossFit, which, with few materials and very little pollution, allows for a great workout.

iv. Ecological impact, & current state of affairs

1. What are the social issues that deem the need for an ecological approach in gyms necessary?

Several ideas and points of view were raised by this question.

According to one respondent, the topic of an ecological approach in fitness is beginning to flourish in society, even though this is just the beginning of a long journey.

The current economic and bureaucratic systems are not always consistent; things are not conducted in a sincere or genuine manner, but rather for the purpose of attracting individuals. There is a lack of awareness and understanding.

The identified issues at the societal level involve a general shift toward a holistic approach and environmental sensitivity. There is a trend toward open places, and many individuals choose to practice group yoga in parks. The younger generation is much more conscious of the environment as a part of themselves. There is an increase in general understanding, which impacts nutrition and exercise as well. In Portugal, the main challenge presented was that normally, using ecological equipment is more expensive, at least in indoor activities. On the other hand, in outdoor activities, ecological equipment or spaces (many are public), can be less expensive.

2. What are the positive measures adopted in your working context that promote an ecological approach in fitness?

Regarding such topic and question, we gathered significant responses in positive measures that are adopted in this working context, such as:

i. Equipment

Energy saving

- solar panels for hot water
- installing a smart thermostat
- using led lamps
- using an occupancy sensors for lighting and switch to led exit signs rather than ones with incandescent or fluorescent bulbs
- buildings that take advantage of natural light
- use of photovoltaic panels and solar panels, heat pumps for swimming pools
- better building isolation
- regular caulking checks of windows and doors so as not to lose energy

Water saving

- Switching to motion-detection taps for water

Waste management

- using taps that are designed to spray hands evenly so that less water is used
- handing out reusable bottles
- using towels instead of paper
- investment in ecopoints
- ecopoint rubbish bins

ii. Training

- Energy-generating bicycles
- Gyms such as Cubogym in the Community of Madrid that allow the use of green spaces.
- Outdoor classes
- Use of recycled materials
- Fitness clothing made from recycled materials, purchased from sustainable companies and eco-friendly fabric
- Recyclable bottles

iii. Awareness raising

- Raising awareness using fun posters
- Awareness of the use of more eco-friendly means of transport (electric scooter, bicycle or carpooling)
- More information for the community on best practices.
- Training the community by promoting Ecofitness related events.
- Exchanging recyclables (such as the quantity of plastics for a prize)
- Encourage outdoor activities, and group classes in natural spaces to maintain loyalty.
- To sponsor green habits through funny/practical activities with a reward (i.e., a contest for promoting good practices, a “point” for each green action).
- To sponsor green ways of transportation, buying from sustainable firms/enterprises, use of solid shampoo, and of water bottles.
- To create promotional videos made by a local famous person within the fitness world, who promotes green practices.

v. Conclusions

1. What are the benefits / challenges in implementing this approach? Is there enough infrastructure, knowledge?

All participants are aware of certain green fitness spaces. All agree that it is an asset to society because everyone has access, it increases the practice of activity and physical exercise, it is free, and it is a way to increase the supply and opportunity as a complement to everything that is already done daily. Also, all agree that some care should be taken in the use of these spaces and that the ideal would be for these spaces to be accompanied by a professional who could provide initial guidelines for their use.

By consuming less energy, one will ultimately consume fewer resources and incur fewer expenses, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of business operations. Try turning off unnecessary office lights and printing documents on both sides to reduce monthly expenses. It was suggested that it makes sense to design a brand to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers by incorporating sustainable principles. These include manufacturers of equipment and nutrition products. There are numerous opportunities for originality and creativity in this new economy of "green" consumers. According to studies, businesses that care about the environment attract more customers and foster loyalty over the long term.

With a company's eco-friendly business practices, a professional may enhance the reputation and brand image of the company. People value caring businesses, and your company will be more successful if it has a positive public image. It is a subject that has a long way to go, and a lot of fieldwork is needed to get it right. There is a lack of knowledge and training to improve ecological aspects that would allow real actions to be implemented. Lack of basic knowledge regarding sustainable practices, lack of infrastructure (i.e., gyms are often located in old structures – difficulty in saving energy; the city is not well connected – difficulty in promoting green ways of transportation).

Additionally, most people are not ready to understand and implement such practices: it is too early to talk about sustainability within the fitness practice.

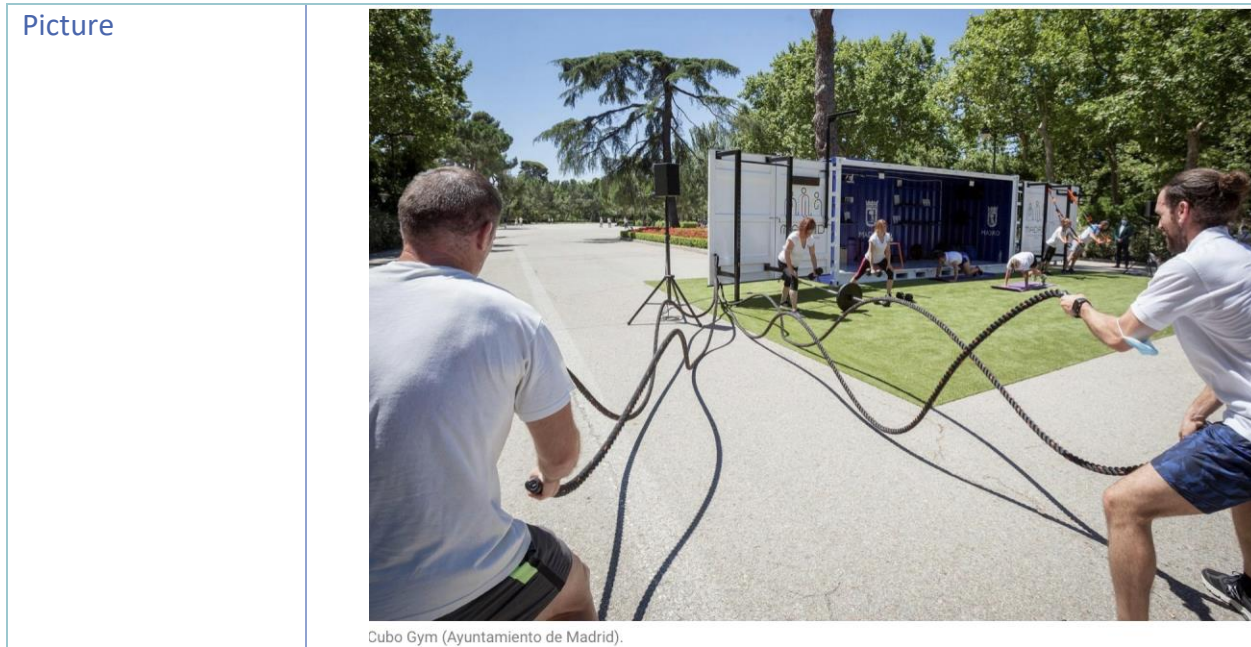
2. What would be some practical solutions / best practices to turn a space into a sustainable fitness space that follows the *solution requirements*¹:

Best practices collection

1	ENERGY BIKES (Spain)
Brief description (150-200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stationary bicycles that generate energy for the elements that are plugged in by pedalling. More here: https://www.roigsat.com/es/bicicletas-que-generan-electricidad/ https://computerhoy.com/noticias/hardware/genera-tu-propia-electricidad-pedaleando-casa-58092
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate clean energy Combine work, ecology and exercise
Estimated Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low cost
“Green” approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parts of exercise bikes discarded by gyms could be used or chairs could be created from old bikes.
Application level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensity can be adjusted Everyone can make use of it.
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could also be implemented in high schools or colleges As it does not require specific characteristics it can be implemented in any country. The condition would be that, in order to have energy to plug in the laptop, to be able to use the WIFI, etc., one has to pedal and the watts generated will be measured.

¹ Stakeholders have been involved in the proposal level of the project, for the discovery and decomposition of needs into the project and products requirements and by the care taken in determining, documenting, and managing the requirements of the project results.


2	CUBO GYM (Spain)
Brief description (150-200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cargo containers converted into portable gyms with sports equipment. There are 15 travelling and 25 stationary cubo gyms used for fitness, which have been installed in parks of Madrid. More available here: https://www.antena3.com/noticias/deportes/contenedores-mercancias-reconvertidos-gimnasios-aire-libre-pleno-madrid-asi-son-cubo-gym_2022080762efcd4e142d7b0001842471.html
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote healthy lifestyles, improve health and quality of life and well being through functional outdoor training.
Estimated Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium (the price of buying a cargo container and the service)
“Green” approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycle materials • Outdoor sports
Application level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of training programmes can be prepared • Both men and women can have access to them.
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can be easily transported and installed in new locations providing new experiences. • Guided classes could be incorporated. • Permits for use of public spaces.



3	Fitness Circuits (Spain)
Brief description (150-200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circuits for sports activities in large parks or green areas in the Community of Madrid equipped with bars, rings, fixed benches...
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage exercise and physical activity in the open air and having to move between stations. • To increase the rate of exercise and reduce sedentary lifestyles
Estimated Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low cost
“Green” approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can take advantage of the natural elements of the park.
Application level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each person can adapt their practice • Available for use by anyone, regardless of gender or age.
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows each person to carry out the desired activity and even organised activities with monitors.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be transferred to other environments and countries such as coastal areas. • Can be installed in public spaces.
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5	Green Forest Rovers - GFR (United Kingdom)
Brief description (150-200 words)	<p>The Green Forest Rover is a football club located in Nailsworth (UK), known for being the only vegan football club in the world and for making environmental sustainability the core of its actions. It strives to push the boundaries of environmental consciousness in sport, and in 2017 it was described by FIFA as the greenest football club in the world.</p> <p>https://www.fgr.co.uk/another-way</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting emissions from travel (by introducing the use of electric minibuses and cycle parking both for the football teams and the fans). • Vegan food and less waste (by avoiding the use of single packaging and of plastic). • In harmony with nature (by having an organic pitch to capture rainwater and by recycling it back for irrigation). • Measuring and lowering our carbon footprint. • Spreading the word (by raising awareness on environmental sustainability).
Estimated Cost	<p>We believe some of the actions to be low cost (i.e., the use of rainwater to irrigate the garden, avoid the use of plastic bottles, raise awareness on environmental sustainability).</p>
“Green” approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the use of (packaging) plastics. • Promote the use of recyclable materials. • Reduce carbon dioxide and fuel emissions. • Save water.



Application level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some activities can be easily implemented both by fitness centres and fitness practicants. • Possibility to adapt the activities to one’s own possibilities and resources.
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such activities can be transferred to most environments and countries. • Such activities can increase the popularity of a fitness centre by presenting itself as a green fitness institution and generating interest towards its approach.
Start and end date	-
Contact	-
Picture	<p>Link: https://www.fgr.co.uk/partners/faith-in-nature</p> 

6	Gaining a reward for each green action
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<p>Brief description (150-200 words)</p>	<p>This practice can be implemented by fitness centres and gyms to raise awareness of environmental sustainability and motivate people to engage in eco-friendly actions.</p> <p>A gym can reward those who use their own bottle and avoid the use of plastic, or by supporting cycling or carpooling to the gym.</p> <p>For each eco-friendly action, people earn a point, which can be translated into a small gift (e.g., a complimentary water bottle from the gym or free admission to the gym, for themselves or a friend).</p> <p>At the end of each month, one can be proclaimed the greenest person in the gym.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.greenapes.com/en/sustainable-rewards-for-eco-friendly-actions/
<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness on environmental sustainability. • Motivate people to engage in eco-friendly actions by also competing with one another.
<p>Estimated Cost</p>	<p>We believe such practice to be low cost.</p>
<p>“Green” approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the use of plastics. • Reduce fuel emissions. • Save water.
<p>Application level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such practices can be easily implemented by fitness centres. • Possibility to adapt the activities to one’s own possibilities and resources.
<p>Sustainability and Replicability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such activities can be transferred to most environments and countries. • Such activities can increase the popularity of a fitness centre by presenting itself as a green fitness institution and generating interest towards its approach.
<p>Start and end date</p>	<p>-</p>

Contact	-
Picture	

7	Plogging
Brief description (150-200 words)	<p><i>Plogging</i> is a new global movement that originated in Sweden. It takes advantage of jogging and of other outdoor sports to pick up the garbage that spoils cities and natural spaces. The idea of this sustainable initiative is simplicity itself: the participants, 'ploggers', take to the streets with rubbish bags to pick up the garbage they come across while exercising.</p> <p>The word 'plogging' comes from the Swedish <i>plocka upp</i> (pick up) and the English word <i>jogging</i>.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vG_ZKgE1N6Y https://www.iberdrola.com/social-commitment/what-is-plogging</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clean public and green spaces while exercising.
Estimated Cost	We believe such practice to be low cost .
"Green" approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cleaning the environment.
Application level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Such practices can be easily implemented by most people by adapting the activities to one's own possibilities (i.e., walking instead of running, using a stick to pick up the garbage). ● Include competition dynamics by playing in teams with other 'ploggers' to see who can pick up the most litter in the shortest time.

Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Such activities can be transferred to most environments and countries.
Picture	 

8	Free prescription office for physical exercise for the Municipality – Matosinhos (Portugal)
Brief description (150-200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project offers a physical assessment and exercise prescription to the population, free of charge
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help municipalities find the most suitable sport for their physical condition, through a free assessment carried out by sports professionals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once assessed, the population will be able to benefit, free of charge, from training plans and periodic evaluation
Estimated cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown
Green" approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exercise in open and public spaces and in contact with nature
Level of application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone can participate. Gender balance is ensured.
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it possible to incorporate it in some other activities (run by you or other entities)? The initiative can easily be implemented in different contexts (different countries) and benefit different target groups. What are the conditions (institutional, social, etc.) for the initiative to be successfully replicated?
Start and end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24/09/2019 - ongoing
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matosinhos Sport . Matosinhos City Hall

9	Outdoor Gymnasiums (Portugal)
Short description (150-200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of exercise equipment for free outdoor activities open to the community.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting outdoor physical exercise
Estimated cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown
Green" approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical exercise with ecological footprint
Level of application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the entire population of the city hall
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is possible to replicate in other cities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires maintenance
Start and end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matosinhos and Maia City Hall

10	Green spaces and public parks (Portugal)
Short description (150-200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of green spaces and public parks
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of walking and physical exercise activities
Estimated cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires geographic spaces
Green" approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical exercise with ecological footprint
Level of application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To all residents
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is possible to replicate in other cities • Requires maintenance
Start and end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matosinhos and Maia City Hall

11	Reduction of plastics and use of recycled materials (Portugal)
Short description (150-200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using recycled rubber and reducing plastic in fitness materials

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing the ecological footprint
Estimated cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They buy material in the Middle East
Green" approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical exercise with ecological footprint
Level of application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BoxPT customers
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is possible to replicate in other companies
Start and end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BoxPT

12	Improving the roof isolation of sports facilities (Portugal)
Short description (150-200 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovating the roof of the municipality's sports facilities, which will reduce the use of artificial heating or cooling.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save energy costs
Estimated cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depends on the size of the sports hall
Green" approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing the ecological footprint
Level of application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Maia City Hall sport infrastructures
Sustainability and Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is possible to replicate in other cities
Start and end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maia City Hall

Recommendations For the Design of the Ecofitness Facility And Services

From what we have learned through the collection of best practices, we recommend that the make-over of the facilities into green ones is separated into three pathways:

1. **equipment**
2. **training/trainers' approach,**
3. **awareness**

Regarding the equipment, we can sum up the tips and advice into highlighting the acquisition of equipment that uses **recycled materials**, increasing the possibility of **natural light, water heating** with solar panels, promoting **digitization of information** instead of paper, installing **ecopoint rubbish bins** and using **recyclable bottles**.

When it comes to a training approach, the most common and popular resolutions were **outdoor classes**, use of fitness clothing and equipment from **sustainable materials**, the use of **recyclable bottles** and the reduction of paper towels.

Lastly, regarding awareness, the approaches that sum up the best practices identified were **exchanging recyclables** (such as the quantity of plastics for a prize), encouraging **outdoor activities**, and group classes in natural spaces to maintain loyalty, **sponsoring green habits** through funny/practical activities **with a reward** (i.e., a contest for promoting good practices, a “point” for each green action), **green ways of transportation**, buying from sustainable firms/enterprises, use of solid shampoo, and of water bottles and creating promotional videos made by a local famous person within the fitness world, who promotes green practices.

Summarising:

1. To invest in equipment (both installations and materials) that helps reduce the carbon footprint
2. To promote environmentally friendly practices in fitness training (such as the examples we have identified)

3. To raise awareness among practitioners (trainers and users) to practise fitness with environmental responsibility.

