Sport SPOTS FOR Girls

REPORT

DATA ANALYSIS SUMMARY



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PART I

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND PURPOSE OF THE ANALYSIS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides an analytical summary of the data collected under Work Package 2 of the "Sport Spots for Girls" (SSG) project. While previous deliverables presented the research process and its main findings, this analysis has a different purpose – to interpret the collected quantitative and qualitative data, to highlight the interconnections between them, and to derive strategic guidelines for the planning and design of more inclusive public spaces.

The research views public spaces not merely as physical infrastructure, but as an environment that influences daily behavior, the sense of belonging, social interactions, and opportunities for an active lifestyle. **In this context, the question is not solely whether a given space exists, but to what extent it is accessible, attractive, and usable by different user groups.**

At the center of the analysis are the experiences of girls and young women – a group whose needs often remain underrepresented in the planning of the public environment. The data show that decisions related to the use of public spaces rarely depend only on the presence of sports facilities. They are shaped by a complex set of factors, including the perception of safety, the quality of the urban environment, opportunities for socialization, the presence of greenery, the accessibility of the infrastructure, and how the space is perceived by its users.

This analysis aims to translate these observations into a coherent analytical framework that helps understand the reasons behind the established behavioral patterns. Instead of looking at individual results in isolation, the document seeks connections between different information sources and traces how quantitative data are complemented by expert observations and the shared experiences of young participants in the focus groups.

1.2. ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The analysis is based on the combination of three mutually complementary information sources – a quantitative survey, semi-structured interviews with experts, and focus groups with girls and young women. This approach allows the results to be examined from different perspectives and creates an opportunity to verify observed trends by comparing statistical data, professional experience, and direct user experiences.

The quantitative survey provides information on the frequency of certain attitudes, preferences, and patterns of public space usage. It allows for the identification of the main dependencies between the participants' age, perception of safety, preferred types of activities, and the factors that limit or encourage the use of the urban environment.

Qualitative interviews broaden this picture by placing the results in a wider professional context. Expert opinions explain how the characteristics of existing infrastructure, urban planning practices, and management processes affect the daily use of public spaces and why certain needs remain insufficiently addressed.

Focus groups supplement the analysis with the perspective of the young people themselves. They reveal how participants experience the urban environment, what qualities they value in public spaces, and which characteristics determine whether a place is perceived as attractive, safe, and suitable for meetings, movement, and staying.

Comparing the three information sources reveals a high degree of consistency between quantitative and qualitative results. The observed dependencies are consistently confirmed by statistical data, focus group discussions, and expert interviews. This allows the conclusions to be viewed not as isolated findings, but as sustainable patterns that can serve as a basis for formulating principles for the inclusive design of public spaces.

1.3. LOGIC OF THE ANALYSIS

The following sections of the document examine the results thematically rather than by individual research methods. Each analytical section compares quantitative results with observations from interviews and focus groups to derive a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the use of public spaces by girls and young women.

This approach allows the analysis to go beyond the description of individual statistical indicators and focus on the causal relationships between the characteristics of the urban environment, social behavior, and the sense of belonging. In this way, the data becomes a tool for formulating strategic principles that can be used both in developing the "Sport Spot for Girls" concept and in future inclusive urban planning initiatives.

PART II

MAIN ANALYTICAL DEPENDENCIES

2.1. THE PERCEPTION OF SAFETY CHANGES WITH AGE

One of the most clearly pronounced results of the study is the relationship between age and the perception of safety in public spaces. The data show that the sense of security decreases as young women enter early adulthood, with women aged 18 to 26 being the most critical of the urban environment.

The quantitative survey records significantly lower safety ratings among this age group compared to girls aged 12 to 18. While younger participants still perceive public spaces as places for meetings, free movement, and spending time with friends, young women demonstrate a significantly higher sensitivity to environmental characteristics and potential risks during its use.

Interview results complement this dependency by showing that the perception of safety is not solely determined by the presence or absence of real danger. Factors such as lighting, visibility, environmental activity, the possibility of natural social control, and the overall quality of the space have a significantly greater impact. According to experts, women evaluate not only the specific place but the entire experience associated with reaching it and staying there.

Focus groups confirm these observations. Participants repeatedly point out that they avoid certain places after dark or when the space appears isolated, poorly maintained, or difficult to survey. The lack of enough people nearby, high vegetation, hidden areas, and limited visibility also influence the choice of whether a given place will be used.

> **Comparing the three sources of information shows that safety should be considered a complex characteristic of the urban environment. It is the result of the interaction between spatial, social, and psychological factors and directly influences how girls and young women use public spaces.**

2.2. PUBLIC SPACES ARE PERCEIVED AS SOCIALLY MARKED

The analysis shows that a significant part of existing public spaces is perceived as intended primarily for specific user groups. This perception is formed not only by the presence of specific people but also by the character of the space, its functions, and how it is organized.

Quantitative data indicate that a large proportion of participants perceive existing active spaces as overly oriented towards competitive sports and activities traditionally dominated by boys and young men. This leads to a limited sense of belonging and reduces the desire of girls and young women to use these places as part of their daily lives.

Expert interviews provide a further explanation for this trend. According to specialists, current sports infrastructure is built mainly around football pitches, basketball courts, and street fitness facilities, which attract a relatively uniform user profile. As a result, public spaces **gradually acquire a social identity that does not encourage diverse participation from different groups.**

Focus groups confirm this perception. Participants share that they often do not feel like the primary users of these spaces and prefer places that allow for more informal forms of socialization and movement. For them, an attractive public space is not necessarily a place for intense sports, but an environment that allows for meetings, conversations, free movement, and various ways of use.

> **The results show that the social atmosphere of a space is just as important as its physical equipment. Designing more inclusive public spaces implies a variety of functions that simultaneously encourage movement, stay, and social interaction.**

2.3. SOCIALIZATION IS A DRIVER OF MOVEMENT

One of the most important analytical conclusions from the study is that for girls and young women, physical activity often emerges as a natural continuation of social interaction, rather than as an independent goal.

Quantitative results show a clear preference for spaces that combine opportunities for movement with comfortable conditions for staying and socializing. The desire for active public furniture, green environments, shaded areas, and non-competitive activities indicates that users are seeking a comprehensive experience, not just sports infrastructure.

Focus groups complete this picture by describing the public space as a place to meet friends, talk, study, rest, and spend free time. Movement happens naturally in such an environment – through play, dancing, walking, volleyball, badminton, balance equipment, or other informal activities.

Experts also note that many of the activities preferred by girls do not require specialized sports infrastructure. It is much more important for the space to be flexible, accessible, and adaptable to different usage patterns.

This dependency highlights the need for public spaces to be designed as social environments that encourage movement through opportunities for communication, rather than through the dominance of competitive functions.

2.4. COMFORT IS A PREREQUISITE FOR A PROLONGED STAY

The study shows that the quality of public space is determined not only by its functions but also by the conditions it creates for a daily stay. The presence of adequate seating, greenery, natural shade, drinking water, sanitary facilities, and a well-maintained environment directly influences people's desire to stay longer in a given space.

> **These characteristics are perceived as essential conditions for comfort, not as additional amenities. The findings also confirm the principles laid out in the "Placemaking for Active Recreation" methodology, according to which comfort, functional diversity, and environmental quality are fundamental prerequisites for the active and prolonged use of public spaces.**

Focus groups repeatedly emphasize the importance of a cozy atmosphere and the ability of the space to be used for various daily activities. Similar observations are confirmed by experts, who identify service infrastructure as a key element in turning public spaces into actively used places.

In summary, a well-designed environment increases the duration of the stay, encourages social contacts, and creates conditions for more active use of the space throughout different parts of the day.

2.5. THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT MUST BE VIEWED AS A CONNECTED SYSTEM

The analysis indicates that the use of public spaces does not depend solely on the quality of the specific place. The decision of whether a space will be used begins long before reaching it.

Expert interviews emphasize that the route, lighting, sidewalk quality, visibility, and the presence of other active spaces along the way significantly influence user behavior. A well-designed space cannot compensate for the unfavorable environment surrounding it.

Focus groups confirm this dependency through descriptions of their daily routes and the places they prefer to avoid. The data show that the choice of public space is the result of a sequence of decisions related to the overall experience of the urban environment.

This finding highlights the necessity for public spaces to be planned as an interconnected system, where safety, accessibility, and environmental quality are considered in a broader context, rather than as characteristics of isolated objects.

2.6. INCLUSIVE DESIGN CONSIDERS USER DIVERSITY

The final analytical dependency shows that the needs of girls and women cannot be treated as homogeneous.

Both quantitative results and qualitative research show differences between various age groups, different patterns of space usage, and diverse daily needs. School-age girls place a stronger emphasis on socialization and free movement, while older women pay more attention to safety, functionality, accessibility, and service infrastructure.

Experts add that inclusive design should also account for the diversity in life situations – including the needs of mothers with small children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with limited mobility. Instead of offering a universal solution, a successful public space must be flexible enough to allow for various ways of use.

This conclusion confirms that inclusion does not mean creating separate spaces for different groups, but developing an environment that allows for shared use, a variety of activities, and equal access to the opportunities that the city provides.

PART III

FROM DATA TO PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE URBAN PLANNING

The quantitative and qualitative research results outline a consistent picture of the factors that determine whether a public space will be actively used by girls and young women. Although the different methods view the problem from different perspectives, they all lead to similar conclusions regarding the role of safety, social interaction, comfort, and the quality of the urban environment.

The derived principles are not ready-made design solutions, but an analytical framework that can support future processes of planning, designing, and managing public spaces.

3.1. SAFETY IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF THE ENTIRE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

The data show that safety cannot be viewed as a characteristic of a specific park, square, or sports zone alone. For users, the sense of security begins with the choice of route, continues during movement, and is influenced by how different spaces are interconnected.

Good lighting, visual openness, active facades, the presence of other people, and clear spatial orientation create a sense of predictability and control. Conversely, isolated areas, lack of visibility, and insufficient maintenance can negate the quality of an otherwise well-designed space.

This result supports the need for public spaces to be viewed as an interconnected system, rather than as separate investment objects.

3.2. SOCIAL INTERACTION IS THE BASIS FOR ACTIVE SPACE UTILIZATION

The research demonstrates that public spaces are simultaneously places for socialization, recreation, and physical activity. For a significant portion of the participants, the opportunity to meet, talk, and spend time together is the primary motive for visiting a particular place.

> **Physical activity often arises as a natural outcome of social presence, not as a pre-planned goal. This highlights the need for spaces to be designed in a way that encourages both movement and daily communication.**

Multifunctionality should be considered a key principle in creating inclusive public spaces.

3.3. COMFORT DETERMINES THE DURATION OF THE STAY

Comfort emerges as one of the most substantial factors for the active use of the urban environment. Well-maintained spaces with sufficient greenery, shade, seating, drinking water, and accessible sanitary facilities stimulate a longer stay and more frequent use.

Elements that allow the space to be used across different seasons and times of the day are of particular importance. In this sense, **service infrastructure should not be viewed as an addition to the public space, but as its core functional characteristic.**

3.4. AESTHETICS INFLUENCE THE PERCEPTION OF SECURITY

The results indicate that the visual quality of the environment is directly related to how it is perceived by users. Well-maintained spaces, quality materials, rich landscaping, and attractive design create a sense of care, public presence, and security.

> **Aesthetics should not be viewed merely as a matter of visual identity. It has a functional significance, as it affects people's desire to visit, use, and recognize the public space as part of their daily lives.**

3.5. A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES CREATES CONDITIONS FOR INCLUSION

The research shows that spaces oriented solely toward competitive sports reach a limited circle of users. Broader participation is observed where there are opportunities for different forms of movement, socialization, and the free use of the space.

Non-competitive activities, play elements, zones for balance, dancing, yoga, or free movement create opportunities for the participation of people with diverse interests, ages, and physical activity levels.

An inclusive public space does not encourage a single behavioral model but offers a variety of possibilities for use.

3.6. DESIGN MUST ACCOUNT FOR THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF WOMEN

The data demonstrate that women do not constitute a homogeneous user group. The needs of teenagers, students, young professionals, mothers with young children, elderly women, and people with limited mobility differ significantly.

Effective urban planning should account for this diversity right from the conceptual design stage. Instead of universal solutions, public spaces must offer enough flexibility so that different groups can use them simultaneously and in various ways.

This approach is at the core of inclusive design and corresponds to the understanding that a quality urban environment must be accessible and usable for the widest possible range of people.

PART IV

STRATEGIC CONCLUSIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS

The data analysis reveals that existing public spaces cannot be evaluated solely by the presence of sports infrastructure. The way people perceive and use the urban environment is determined by the interaction between the physical characteristics of the space, the social atmosphere, accessibility, safety, and opportunities for daily stay.

The comparison of quantitative and qualitative results confirms that girls and young women seek spaces that combine movement, socialization, and comfort. This dictates the need to rethink the traditional approach to sports infrastructure and directs attention toward creating multifunctional public spaces that encourage various forms of participation.

The obtained results also show that safety should not be viewed as an independent technical issue. It is the result of the quality of the entire urban system – from the organization of routes and street lighting to environmental maintenance, landscaping, and the presence of active public life.

The research also demonstrates the importance of involving future users in the planning processes. Data from focus groups and expert interviews show that engaging the local community leads to a fuller understanding of real needs and supports the development of solutions that are both practically applicable and socially sustainable.

In this context, the "Sport Spot for Girls" concept can be viewed as a model for inclusive planning that transcends the boundaries of an individual space. Its value lies not only in proposing a specific spatial intervention but in the approach to design – an approach based on real user experiences, inter-institutional cooperation, and active community participation.

The accumulated data demonstrate the potential of this model to be adapted in other urban contexts.

Although the research was conducted in the South district of Plovdiv, the established dependencies are related to universal characteristics of the urban environment and can support the development of policies and interventions aimed at more inclusive, sustainable, and safe public spaces.

CONCLUSION

This analysis integrates the results of the quantitative survey, expert interviews, and focus groups into a common analytical framework that allows for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the use of public spaces by girls and young women.

Comparing the different information sources shows consistency in the main conclusions. **Regardless of the method used, participants outline similar priorities – safety, comfort, social interaction, a quality urban environment, and opportunities for diverse forms of movement.** This consistency increases the reliability of the analysis and creates a stable foundation for formulating principles for inclusive urban planning.

The obtained results confirm that creating better public spaces does not require new infrastructure alone. **A rethinking of how the urban environment is planned, connected, and used is necessary so that it meets the diverse needs of its users.**

In this sense, the "Sport Spots for Girls" project offers not just a concept for a new type of public space, but an approach based on evidence, participation, and interdisciplinary cooperation. The derived analytical dependencies and principles can serve as a basis for future policies, investments, and design solutions aimed at building more beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive cities in the spirit of the New European Bauhaus (NEB).

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