

# STAY!

*Decreasing teenage dropout in sport*

## EVENTS REPORT

# STAY! CONFERENCE & LOCAL CONFERENCES



Co-funded by  
the European Union



## 1. INTRODUCTION

## 2. LOCAL CONFERENCES ORGANISED BY PARTNERS

2.1 TSV Bayer 04 Leverkusen – Germany

2.2 “Levski – Sport for All” – Bulgaria

2.3 HAŠK Mladost – Croatia

2.4 Sports Union of Slovenia – Slovenia

2.5 Fondazione S.S. Lazio 1900 ETS – Italy

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## 4. CONCLUSION



# 1. Introduction

The STAY! project organised a series of local and international events across Europe, designed to share key results, engage stakeholders, and promote the adoption of youth retention strategies in sport. These events provided a platform for discussing challenges, sharing best practices, and exploring innovative solutions to prevent youth dropout from sport, with a focus on alternative roles for young athletes.

The events were a core part of the dissemination strategy, aimed at raising awareness about the STAY! approach and encouraging the widespread adoption of similar practices across sport organisations in Europe. Each event also contributed to building a community of practice focused on addressing youth sport dropout.



## 2. Local conferences organised by partners



### 2.1 TSV Bayer 04 Leverkusen – Germany

#### Basic information about the local conference



“STAY! Konferenz  
von TSV Bayer 04”



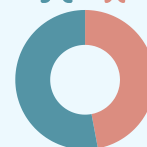
8 May 2025



Bayer Facilities,  
Leverkusen, GER



51



#### Overview of Conference Topics

The conference covered several key themes and activities, aimed at addressing youth dropout and promoting youth retention in sports. The topics were designed to provide insights, share best practices, and explore solutions for engaging youth beyond competitive sports. The agenda included:

- Welcome & Overview of the Event – introducing the project and the event structure.
- Project Overview & TSV Action Plan – outlining the project’s goals and the specific actions undertaken by Bayer.
- Best Practice Spotlights – showcasing successful strategies implemented by partner organisations.
- Panel Discussion & Q&A – Focused on the challenges and solutions related to youth dropout, with 4 panelists including the project coordinator, a mentor and two youth participants.
- Wrap-up & Outlook – summarising Key findings, Next Steps and Recommendations, and good practice materials.
- Networking & Closing – an informal networking opportunity for attendees.

#### Presentation slides and more info



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## Key Discussions & Insights

During the conference, several important topics were discussed, providing valuable insights into how to prevent youth dropout in sport:

- **Lessons Learned from Other Clubs in Reducing Youth Drop-out:** The event highlighted various successful strategies that keep young athletes involved, such as creating alternative roles and providing support to balance academics and sport.
- **Typical Age Range at Which Young Athletes Leave the Club:** The panel discussed the critical age range of 14–18, during which many young athletes decide to step away from competitive sport due to academic pressure, changing interests, or lack of support.
- **Using the E-learning Platform to Upskill Coaches:** Coaches shared how the platform provided valuable tools to help them support young athletes, especially in guiding them through challenges that could lead to dropout.
- **Balancing Club Ambitions:** The panel explored the dilemma of offering a broad amateur pathway for young athletes versus focusing on early high-performance tracks. The discussion emphasized the need for clubs to find a balance that allows young athletes to continue in the sport, even if they do not pursue high-performance careers.

## Next Steps and Recommendations

Several key next steps were proposed to ensure continued engagement and success in future phases of the STAY! project:

- **Ongoing Coach Education:** Keep coaches engaged through continuous professional development and involvement in youth retention efforts.
- **Quarterly Youth Feedback Loop:** Regularly collect and analyse feedback from youth to improve engagement.
- **Ready-to-Use Event Templates:** Provide smaller clubs with templates to organise youth engagement events like Kids Karneval and Come Together.
- **Meaningful Roles for Youth and Volunteers:** Continue assigning responsibilities to young athletes and volunteers to maintain their involvement.
- **Structured Mentoring Scheme:** Formalise mentoring to provide ongoing support for youth athletes.
- **Local Funding Scan:** Identify local funding opportunities to support future youth engagement projects.



## 2. Local conferences organised by partners



### 2.2 “Levski – Sport for All” – Bulgaria

#### Basic information about the local conference



STAY!  
конференция



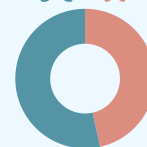
13 May 2025



166 Sports school “Vasil  
Levski”, Sofia, BUL



58



#### Overview of Conference Topics

The conference focused on youth retention in sports, specifically exploring successful pilot programs, their outcomes, and strategies for expanding these initiatives across various sports disciplines. Key topics discussed included:

- Presentation of the STAY! Pilot Programs: Overview of the project's objectives, partners, and the results of pilot actions implemented in sports clubs.
- Discussion on the Impact: Exploring how the programs impacted judo, karate, rhythmic gymnastics, and water polo.
- Program Replication: Possibilities for adapting the pilot programs to other sports.
- Cross-Sport Interaction: The relationship and interaction between sports sections and organisations, as well as the role of families and schools in supporting youth retention.

#### Presentation slides and more info



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## Key Discussions & Insights

Several important insights emerged during the discussions, which highlighted both the successes and challenges of implementing dropout prevention strategies:

- **Impact on Four Sports:** The pilot programs showed positive effects across judo, karate, rhythmic gymnastics, and water polo, with a focus on how different sports disciplines can implement similar strategies.
- **Cross-Sport Application:** There was strong support for applying the programs in other sports, with participants expressing interest in adapting the STAY! approach across various disciplines.
- **Role of Sports Specialists:** A key point discussed was the critical role of sports specialists in maintaining youth participation in sports and how their support is integral to long-term retention.
- **Involvement of Families and Schools:** The role of families and schools was highlighted as essential in supporting youth athletes and ensuring they stay engaged in sports.
- **Toolkit for Retaining Athletes:** The importance of providing ready-made programs and tools for sports professionals to help retain athletes was discussed, with a particular focus on disseminating resources like the EMCA Studia platform.

## Next Steps and Recommendations

Several next steps and actionable recommendations were proposed to ensure the continued success and scalability of the STAY! initiative:

- **Maintaining Programs:** Ensure that the pilot programs become an integral part of the sports and organisational calendars for sports clubs and sections.
- **Enhanced Communication and Coordination:** Improve communication and coordination between sports sections and coaches to facilitate the transfer of athletes between sports or ensure continuity during events.
- **Youth Motivation:** Provide further support for youth engagement, ensuring they stay involved in sports even after stepping away from competition, with continued mentorship and volunteering opportunities.
- **Dissemination of Tools and Resources:** Encourage wider use of ready-to-use programs and resources, including access to the EMCA Studia platform, to ensure the sustainability of youth retention efforts.





## 2. Local conferences organised by partners



### 2.3 HAŠK Mladost – Croatia

#### Basic information about the local conference



STAY! konferencija  
HAŠK Mladosti

“Women Sport  
Managers”



20 May 2025

21 May 2025



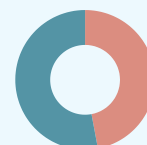
Faculty of Kinesiology,  
Zagreb, CRO

Sports Park Mladost,  
Zagreb, CRO



36

15



#### Overview of Conference Topics

The HAŠK Mladost STAY! Conference held on 20th May 2025 focused on innovative strategies to reduce youth dropout from sports by presenting results from the STAY! project and showcasing local pilot actions. An additional presentation of the project and its outcomes was also delivered during a dedicated meeting of Women Sport Managers, further supporting knowledge-sharing and leadership engagement in inclusive sport development.

Key topics included:

- Introduction to the STAY! Project: Presentation of the project’s core mission, objectives, and partner network.
- Project Results and Research: Overview of desk research, focus group insights, and the development of an e-learning platform.
- Pilot Program Implementation: Exploration of how HAŠK Mladost developed and integrated dropout prevention activities within multiple sports sections.
- Open Discussion: Exchange of experiences, challenges, and successful practices among participants.
- Women’s Sport Leadership: Insights shared during the Women Sport Managers meeting focused on promoting supportive environments for girls and young women through organisational change.

#### Presentation slides and more info



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## Key Discussions & Insights

### Key Discussions & Insights

Several insights were shared during the conference and the Women Sport Managers meeting, shedding light on both successes and ongoing challenges:

- **Volunteering as a Retention Tool:** Programmes engaging youth in refereeing, statistics, social media, and event organisation proved effective in keeping them involved beyond active competition.
- **Pathways Within Sport:** Initiatives like the Young Coaches Development Programme and participation in the Poolcast series highlighted new career routes in sport—from coaching to management.
- **Support Structures:** Tutoring by older peers and parents helped student-athletes manage school obligations, reinforcing club loyalty and academic balance.
- **Recreational Training Options:** Providing non-competitive training sessions allowed young athletes to maintain a healthy lifestyle and social connections through sport.
- **Women in Sport Leadership:** The additional presentation emphasised the importance of empowering female leaders to support gender-sensitive approaches within clubs and foster inclusive team environments.

## Next Steps and Recommendations

To build on the momentum and ensure long-term impact, several key actions were proposed:

- **Institutionalise Pilot Programs:** Incorporate successful activities—such as youth refereeing, social media volunteering, and tutoring—into the regular operations of sports organisations.
- **Strengthen Mentoring and Peer Learning:** Expand mentorship roles within clubs, especially in coaching and tutoring, to support retention and skill development.
- **Promote Career Awareness:** Use platforms like Poolcast to raise awareness about diverse career opportunities in sport, encouraging long-term involvement.
- **Broaden Adoption Across Sports:** Encourage replication of these good practices in other organisations and disciplines by sharing results through the EMCA Studia platform and local networks.
- **Support Female Leadership:** Ensure ongoing engagement with women sport managers to promote equitable policies, inclusive culture, and role modelling for young female athletes.



## 2. Local conferences organised by partners

### 2.4 Sports Union of Slovenia – Slovenia

#### Basic information about the local conference



“STAY! konferenca  
- SUS”



20 March 2025



SUS Facilities,  
Ljubljana, SLO



39

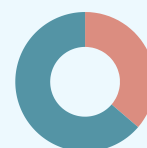


“STAY! konferenca  
- SUS”

21 May 2025

SUS Facilities,  
Ljubljana, SLO

10



Congress of Sport  
for All

21 Nov 2024

Congress Centre,  
Celje, SLO

112

#### Overview of Conference Topics

The Sports Union of Slovenia (SUS) organised two key dissemination events under the STAY! project: the STAY! Local Conferences (March and May 2025) and a presentation at the 18th National Congress of Sport for All (November 2024). Both events addressed the issue of youth dropout in sport, with a strong emphasis on gender-sensitive approaches and the specific challenges faced by adolescent girls.

Key topics discussed included:

- Presentation of the STAY! Project: Introduction to the project's aims, methodology, and European scope.
- Causes of Dropout: Exploration of why teenage athletes, especially girls, disengage from sport—including social norms, academic pressure, and coaching culture.
- Pilot Testing in Slovenia: Insights from national implementation across four clubs, focusing on mentoring, flexibility, and inclusion.
- Best Practice Sharing: Highlighting effective strategies to retain youth, presented through plenary lectures and workshops.
- E-learning Platform: Launch and demonstration of the online resource to support coaches and sport staff.

#### Presentation slides and more info



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## Key Discussions & Insights

Across both events, several significant insights were shared by coaches, trainers, club representatives, policymakers, and educators:

- **Adolescent Girls at Higher Risk:** All stakeholders recognised that girls are disproportionately affected by early dropout due to factors like body image concerns, menstruation-related discomfort, lack of female role models, and social pressure.
- **Need for Inclusive Sport Environments:** Traditional performance-based systems often exclude those with different motivations. A shift toward supportive, flexible, and enjoyable participation was seen as essential.
- **Mentorship and Role Diversification:** Programs offering girls non-competitive roles—like assistant coaches, event organisers, or mentors—helped maintain engagement and strengthen peer networks.
- **Coach Education Deficit:** A recurring theme was the lack of training in soft skills and adolescent psychology for coaches. Effective communication, empathy, and understanding teenage development were identified as critical competencies.
- **Impact of Slovenian Pilots:** Participating clubs reported increased cohesion, stronger athlete retention, and better team dynamics thanks to STAY-inspired methods.
- **National Support and Visibility:** Presenting STAY! at the Congress of Sport for All amplified the conversation to a national level, with broad support for policy shifts toward youth-centred sport environments.

## Next Steps and Recommendations

### Next Steps and Recommendations

Participants from both conferences and the national congress agreed on several priority actions to sustain and expand the STAY! impact:

- **Integration of STAY Methodology:** Clubs committed to implementing key elements like recreational training, mentorship, and flexible participation paths for youth.
- **Promotion of E-learning Platform:** Clubs and federations pledged to incorporate the STAY! modules into their internal training systems and recommend them across local networks.
- **Raise Community Awareness:** Clubs were encouraged to host awareness sessions, share stories online, and partner with schools, municipalities, and families to tackle systemic dropout drivers.
- **Cross-sector Collaboration:** A coordinated approach between clubs, schools, local governments, and health bodies was recommended to provide holistic support for youth.
- **Sustainable Funding Advocacy:** Long-term success requires public investment beyond the life of individual projects—stakeholders called for strategic alignment between policy and practice.





## 2. Local conferences organised by partners

### 2.5 Fondazione S.S. Lazio 1900 ETS – Italy



#### Basic information about the local conference



Conferenza STAY!  
di Lazio

“STAY! Konferenz  
von TSV Bayer 04”



25 May 2025

3 June 2025



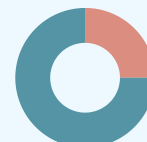
Circolo Canottieri,  
Rome, ITA

Stadio Olimpico,  
Rome, ITA



80

TBD



#### Overview of Conference Topics

On 25 May 2025, Fondazione S.S. Lazio 1900 ETS hosted a STAY! conference at Circolo Canottieri Lazio in Rome, gathering 80 participants to explore strategies for reducing youth dropout from sport. The event included institutional greetings, expert presentations, and an open discussion, followed by a networking buffet. To further promote the STAY! initiative, a follow-up event is scheduled for 3 June 2025, continuing the organisation’s commitment to inclusive youth engagement in sport.

Key topics discussed included:

- Inclusive Access to Sport: How offering free training and club access can reduce barriers for young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Youth Engagement Beyond Competition: Alternative roles such as volunteering and mentorship as tools to maintain long-term involvement in sport.
- Equity in Participation: The value of removing financial barriers and fostering inclusive, welcoming club environments.

#### Presentation slides and more info



[stay.multiportclubs.eu/news](https://stay.multiportclubs.eu/news)



## Key Discussions & Insights

The event sparked meaningful discussions among speakers and participants, with a clear focus on practical, community-oriented solutions:

- **Free Access as a Gateway:** Eliminating financial costs was identified as a powerful way to increase participation, especially in economically vulnerable groups.
- **Redefining Success:** The importance of viewing sport not solely as performance-based but as a platform for inclusion, personal development, and social connection.
- **Volunteering and Mentorship:** Presenters highlighted the effectiveness of offering young people roles beyond competition—strengthening engagement while developing life skills.
- **Club and Community Responsibility:** The role of clubs in proactively creating flexible and inclusive structures was widely endorsed as a key element of long-term youth retention.

## Next Steps and Recommendations

To capitalise on the momentum of the event and strengthen the project's local impact, several recommendations were outlined:

- **Expand Free Access Programs:** Encourage broader adoption of no-cost training initiatives in other clubs and communities.
- **Formalise Youth Roles:** Integrate structured opportunities for mentoring, volunteering, and peer support within club activities.
- **Continue Awareness-Raising:** Use platforms like the upcoming June 6 event to promote the project further, engage new stakeholders, and inspire replication of successful practices.
- **Share Outcomes Through the STAY! Network:** Feed local insights and outcomes into the EMCA network to amplify visibility and ensure sustainability at the European level.



# 3. STAY! Conference organised by EMCA



## Basic information about the conference



EMCA Connect



4-6 Oct 2024



Ferencvaros Facilities,  
Budapest, HUN



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STAY! Conference  
at EMCA Connect  
event

8 March 2025

Olympiacos Facilities -  
Peace and Friendship  
Stadium, Piraeus, GRE

48

EMCA Connect

Sep 2025

Istanbul, TUR

TBD

## Overview of Conference Topics

The STAY! international conference hosted by EMCA on 8 March 2025 at the Peace & Friendship Stadium in Piraeus (Athens) was held as part of the EMCA Connect event. The conference gathered representatives from approximately 30 multisport clubs across Europe and served as a unique platform for sharing outcomes, experiences, and innovations from the STAY! project.

Unlike local events, this international gathering showcased each partner's pilot activities, discussed cross-border strategies, and focused on how to scale successful practices across different sporting and cultural contexts.

Key topics on the agenda included:

- Introduction to the STAY! Project: Framing the initiative's European objectives and scope.
- EMCA Studia Platform: Presentation of the e-learning tool and its role in supporting youth retention efforts.
- Partner Presentations: partners shared their implementation results and lessons learned.
- Interactive Discussion & Q&A: Engaged dialogue focused on collective challenges, strategic alignment, and ideas for future cooperation.
- Networking Session: A networking session facilitated informal discussions, including conversations about additional translations of the project's materials, further extending the reach of the STAY! project to more diverse communities.



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European  
multisport clubs

## Presentation slides and more info



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## Key Discussions & Insights

The event fostered an atmosphere of open exchange and highlighted key shared insights:

- **Empowering Youth through Active Roles:** All partners agreed that offering roles such as volunteer, mentor, assistant, or media contributor was key to sustaining youth interest and belonging in sport.
- **Tailoring to Local Contexts:** Presentations demonstrated how STAY! activities could be adapted for cultural, organisational, and demographic realities. For instance, HAŠK Mladost's programme included tutoring, recreational training, coaching education, and digital engagement.
- **Digital Tools as Enablers:** Initiatives like the DigiRoot project were presented as complementary, demonstrating how digital avatars and multilingual video tools can support youth-focused communication.
- **Building a Collective Knowledge Base:** The forthcoming Best Practices Handbook and educational programme were announced, reinforcing the project's commitment to structured knowledge-sharing through the EMCA Studia platform.

## Outcomes & Decisions from the Participants

The conference produced a number of strategic decisions and action points for future implementation across the EMCA network:

- **Adoption of STAY! Practices:** Clubs expressed a strong interest in institutionalising the STAY! approach, including integration of the e-learning platform into coach education.
- **Translation and Localisation:** Participants committed to translating STAY! materials into national languages and tailoring examples to reflect local needs.
- **Youth-Centric Development:** Emphasis was placed on involving young people in programme creation, from advisory roles to peer-led media content.
- **Cross-European Cooperation:** Clubs reaffirmed their commitment to sharing resources, experiences, and progress through EMCA's channels.
- **Policy Advocacy:** The network agreed to collectively advocate for policies that reduce barriers to youth sport participation and fund long-term inclusion efforts.



## Next Steps and Recommendations

Following the event, several key next steps were recommended for all participating clubs and stakeholders:

1. **Expand Language Accessibility:** Translate educational and e-learning content and adapt case studies to national contexts.
2. **Youth Involvement:** Establish youth advisory boards and support peer-created content, mentoring, and programme co-design.
3. **STAY! Certification:** Develop a badge system to recognise coaches and clubs who implement STAY! principles—useful for community credibility and funding applications.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Create systems to track dropout data and impact over time, publishing findings in annual reports.
5. **School and Community Integration:** Partner with schools and community centres to deliver STAY! modules and activities as part of education or after-school programs.
6. **Leverage Policy Influence:** Align local and European advocacy efforts to promote sustainable youth sport frameworks inspired by STAY!.





European  
MULTISPORT CLUB  
ASSOCIATION



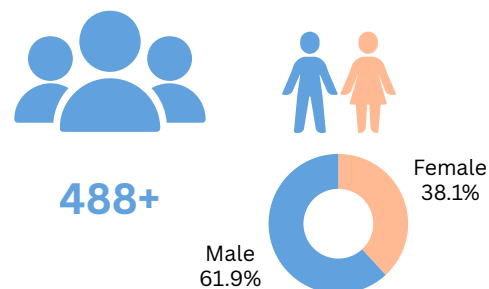
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## 4. Conclusion

The series of events held under the STAY! project successfully engaged a wide range of stakeholders across Europe, with key outcomes that will continue to influence youth retention strategies in the future.

### Summary of Participation:

- Total number of participants across all events:
  - Male: 302
  - Female: 186



### Key Findings:

- **Alternative Roles for Youth:** The introduction of alternative roles (assistant coaches, mentors, event organisers) was identified as one of the most effective strategies for keeping youth engaged in sport.
- **Peer Mentorship:** The value of peer-to-peer mentorship was consistently emphasised as a key factor in sustaining youth involvement.
- **Community-Based Approaches:** Engaging local communities and schools was a crucial strategy for attracting new participants and ensuring long-term youth retention.
- **Scalability:** There was strong interest in scaling the STAY! model, with non-partner clubs and stakeholders expressing their intent to adopt similar strategies in their own contexts.

The series of dissemination events had a significant impact beyond the immediate participants. The interest in the project led to the translation of the e-learning platform into 8 additional languages, bringing the total number of available languages to 14 by the end of the project. This broader accessibility allowed the STAY! project to engage a much larger audience across Europe and extend its reach to new countries and contexts.



Additionally, all project partners reported a marked shift in engagement from the public. Initially, when recruiting sections for participation, there was hesitation from some clubs and sections within organisations to be involved in the pilot actions. However, after the successful implementation of the pilot actions and the dissemination of results through the events, these same clubs and sections have now expressed strong interest in recreating the STAY! approach. They have seen the impact on youth retention and are eager to adopt similar youth engagement strategies in their own operations. Beyond youth retention, these clubs also recognised the positive effects on their operations, including improved internal communication, volunteer engagement, and more inclusive club cultures that are better equipped to meet the needs of diverse youth.

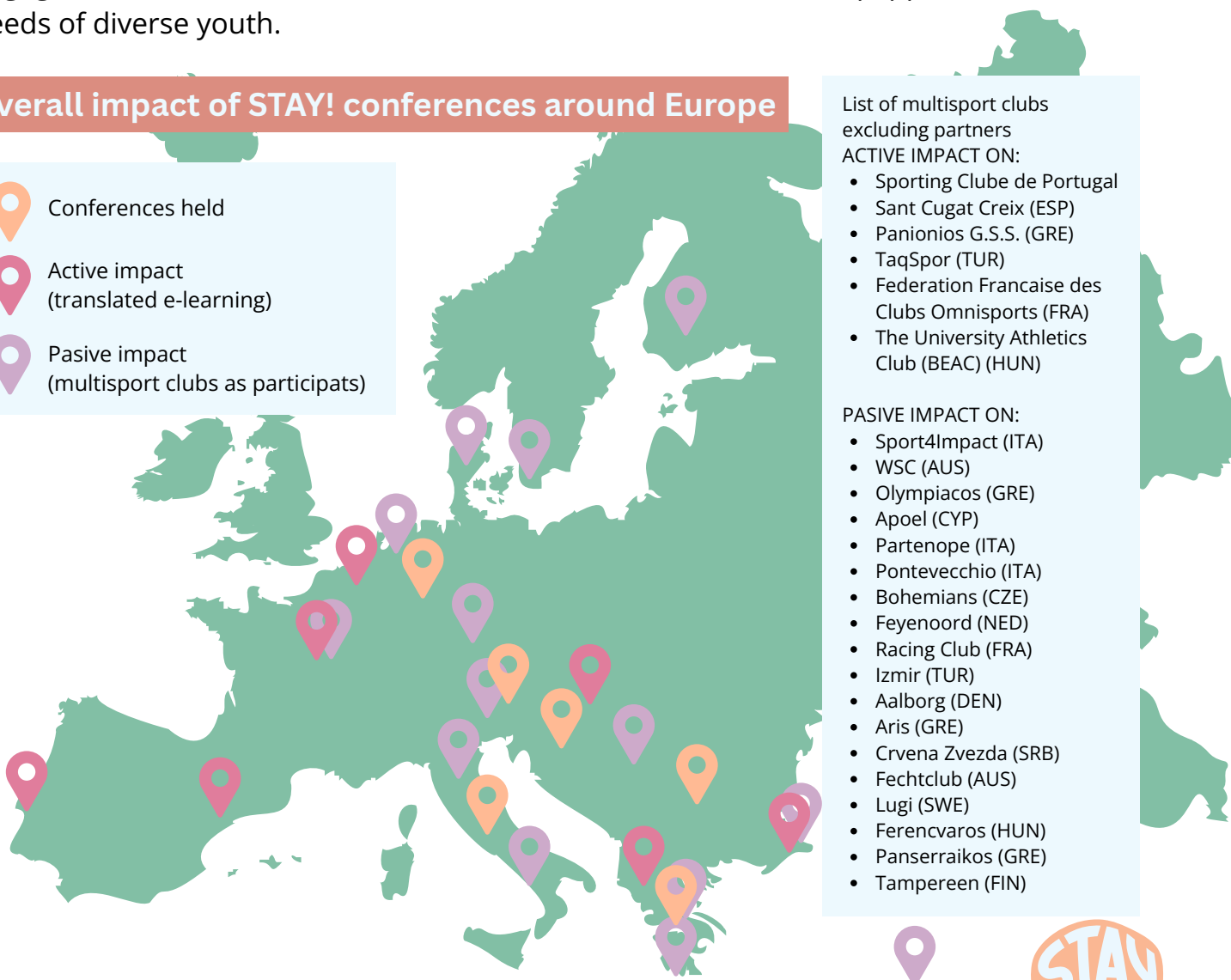


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### Overall impact of STAY! conferences around Europe

-  Conferences held
-  Active impact (translated e-learning)
-  Pasive impact (multisport clubs as participats)



- List of multisport clubs excluding partners  
ACTIVE IMPACT ON:
- Sporting Clube de Portugal
  - Sant Cugat Creix (ESP)
  - Panionios G.S.S. (GRE)
  - TaqSpor (TUR)
  - Federation Francaise des Clubs Omnisports (FRA)
  - The University Athletics Club (BEAC) (HUN)

- PASIVE IMPACT ON:
- Sport4Impact (ITA)
  - WSC (AUS)
  - Olympiacos (GRE)
  - Apoel (CYP)
  - Partenope (ITA)
  - Pontevecchio (ITA)
  - Bohemians (CZE)
  - Feyenoord (NED)
  - Racing Club (FRA)
  - Izmir (TUR)
  - Aalborg (DEN)
  - Aris (GRE)
  - Crvena Zvezda (SRB)
  - Fechclub (AUS)
  - Lugi (SWE)
  - Ferencvaros (HUN)
  - Panserraikos (GRE)
  - Tampereen (FIN)





# STAY!

*Decreasing teenage  
dropout in sport*

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