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**ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STUDY PROGRAMS  
IN EUROPEAN MOBILITY SCHEMES**

**Key words:** adapted physical activity, European study, Erasmus-Mundus APA.

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the system of European networks of Adapted Physical Activity (APA) collaboration. Firstly, the historical background is presented covering the period from the times of John Amos Comenius up to the development of special education and adapted physical activity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a particular emphasis on Central Europe. Secondly, the present-day opportunities for cooperation in the area of adapted physical activity are discussed: Thematic Networks for APA – THENAPA I, II, III, European Standards in APA (EUSAPA), study programs for Central European Exchange (CEEPUS), Intensive Program (DEUAPA), Erasmus in APA, European Journal in APA, and European Federation for APA. Thirdly, a new Erasmus-Mundus APA two-year master's degree program is explained. The author also examines the role of the Palacký University in Olomouc as a center for APA development. The article aims to encourage potential students of APA from all over the world to participate in international study programs and networks.

ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – BASIC  
TERMINOLOGY

The term Adapted Physical Activity (APA) is a cross-disciplinary body of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the identification and solution of individual differences in physical activity and sports ([www.eufapa.eu](http://www.eufapa.eu)). The acceptance of “the other” and “the different” is the crucial principle of APA. In the event an individual is limited in any capability (mobility, perception, intellectual ability) an adapted environment is used to determine his or her individual limitations [4]. From this point of view APA is defined as a structured system of all movement activities (and sports) of persons with special needs in a separated, parallel or inclusive environment, which are undertaken with respect

(and harmony), in accordance with the interests, abilities and/or limitations of participants in such activities. In the cases of personal chronic limits APA must be undertaken in an environment involving modifications in:

- communication,
- methods and approaches,
- content (program),
- rules and regulations,
- conditions, e.g. accessibility, devices, tools.

APA is a service-delivery profession supported by an academic field of study, which consists in acceptance of individual differences, enhancement of access to active lifestyles and sports and promotion of innovation, cooperative service delivery and empowerment systems. APA includes

theoretical and practical aspects of physical education (PE) as well as sports and recreation related to individuals and/or groups of all ages. Adapted Physical Education (APE) is an individualized program created for students with disabilities in order to ensure safe and successful physical education opportunities. Terms such as “corrective” or “reparative physical education”, “special physical education”, “physical education of the disabled”, etc. are no longer relevant [4]. They were once often used in Central Europe, each with a slightly different meaning [8].

The term APA came to Europe from the United States in the early 1950s, but the roots of the APA content had lied in the old continent (Itard, Seguin, Ling) [3] and Central European countries had played an important role in its development.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The educational principles of the Teacher of Nations, John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), who was born in the Moravian region near the city of Olomouc, lived in Leszno and died in Naarden, can be regarded as the beginning of special education. Comenius stressed the importance of games, particularly movement games for children’s development and success in education (*Scholas Ludus*), and the right of education for all: poor, rich, clever and weak. His idea that all individuals are educable can be regarded as the starting point in the development of equal access to education for people with disabilities (*Didactica Magna*) [5].

The development of the education system was then influenced by legislative acts of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria (1717-1780) introducing obligatory education in trivium—reading, writing, arithmetic (the three “Rs”), and inclusion of manual skills in the education system [11].

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century first residential homes for persons with disabilities were founded. Manual motor exercises and physical exercises were often made use of in these institutions by various enthusiasts, philosophers or medical staff members. Through physical exercises people with disabilities from these homes realized the importance of self-service and were provided with opportunities of professional development. In spite of this progressive starting point the “charitable attitude” was the leading approach to adapted physical education in this period [5, 11].

The year 1869 was in many ways a breakthrough. The Austria-Hungarian imperial education law introduced two obligatory P.E. lessons per week at all school levels. Besides public schools, special institutions and schools were founded, but the system of training of physical education or special education professionals had not been established. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century first sports activities and sports clubs for the disabled were established, e.g. chess for the blind or the International Deaf Sports Federation in 1924 [5, 2].

## THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The period between 1918 and 1939 was important for physical education for people with disabilities (mostly caused by war events) and saw the establishment of a number of special (or supportive) schools, homes and institutions. The development of professional training of PE teachers followed: an extra exam was required (after participation in a part-time course) to be eligible for teaching physical education, and to obtain a license for PE teaching at special institutions [5, 2] (Women were generally excluded from the teaching profession, with the exception of single ones accepting celibate life). World War Two interrupted university and high school education of PE teachers, and exclusion of people with disabilities became one of the principles of population selection during the conflict.

After 1945 people with disabilities were again brought into focus as part of general reaction to the war. A special branch of study for professionals in education of the disabled was developed called “defectology” and later “special education”. The term “defectology” survived until the 1990s in some Central European countries. Generally however, physical education was given very little attention. Prospective P.E. teachers had to pass a special exam following a short course. The system of education was made strictly uniform for the countries of the entire Soviet Block [5, 11].

In the 1980s a number of legislative acts focused on people with disabilities in Europe, e.g. the Declaration of the Decade of Rehabilitation from 1981 or the Sports For All Charter: the Disabled from 1987; however, the issue attracted little attention in the countries of the Soviet Block [11]. A parallel development of university studies

focusing on education for the disabled started at the same time. First, “defectology” and later (from the 1980s) “special education” were included in several study programs at pedagogical faculties (teacher training colleges). Master’s programs at universities, which usually lasted 4-5 years, began to include basic “special education” disciplines, e.g. psychopedy, tyflopedy, surdopedy, somatopedy, etopedy as well as two PE classes per week. Still, they comprised mostly “academic” subjects and propagated the “descriptive” approach. School education for people with disabilities was in general segregated at all school levels [5, 11].

### PRESENT-DAY APA UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

At present, university studies in Central Europe are influenced by national law/legislation, national traditions and are becoming involved in various international cooperation schemes. The Lisbon Strategy, Bologna Accords and other European agreements have had a great impact on the process of PE and APA development. Special education is now a component of university studies in a great number of pedagogical faculties of universities of Central Europe. The terms “Adapted Physical Activity” or “Adapted Physical Education” (APA or APE) have been now fully accepted in the context of university education in Europe (and properly translated into many European languages). The terms such as “special physical education”, “defectology” or “physical education of the handicapped” are now perceived as obsolete, vulgar and non-accepted labels [4]. Adapted Physical Activity is a completely innovative study and professional branch of human movement sciences (or sports sciences or kinanthropology). APA university study programs in Europe are being developed according to three main models [5]:

- rehabilitation major with an extra sports and pedagogy module (Belgium, Poland),
- “sandwich” system composed of special study modules, e.g. (France, United Kingdom),
- physical education major with special education and APA didactics modules (Olomouc – Czech Republic).

A module is a composition of subjects (content, intensity) and requirements both for the bachelor’s and master’s levels, consistent with European professional development recommenda-

tions. A module usually concludes with a complex exam (state exam), can be part of different majors, e.g. international studies (open system), and can be offered as long-life education. The modules offer knowledge and skills necessary to develop professional competencies.

Four basic modules are typical for recognized APA study programs in Europe:

1. *BA – interactive competences, MA – teaching competences.*  
*Subjects:* pedagogy, psychology, developmental psychology, sports psychology, sports sociology, philosophy, sports history, law and legislation (including disabilities)
2. *Special education – competences of professional skills and communication with persons with special needs*  
*Subjects:* tyflopedy, surdopedy, somatopedy, psychopedy, etc.
3. *Physical Education and sports – competences of professional skills related to general sports environment*  
*Subjects:* biology and medicine (anatomy, exercise physiology....etc.)  
*Sports:* athletics, swimming, sports games, summer and winter outdoor activities, etc.
4. *Adapted Physical Activities – BA – competencies related to leisure time and recreation, MA – competences related to PE teaching, research*  
*Subjects:* adapted sports – wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, boccia, adapted swimming, mono-skiing, project development, integration-inclusion, etc.

The basic principles used in all the modules include integrative approach as a means of socialization, theoretical knowledge combined with practical skills, and emphasis on personal experience and attitudes through organization and participation in special activities in local centers and at schools. Graduates of APA studies can enter professions in the AEHESIS (Aligning a European Higher Educational Structure in Sport Science) four designated sport science areas:

- physical education (schools, organized leisure),
- sports management,
- health and fitness,
- sport coaching.

The module program described above is being developed at the Palacký University in Olomouc in the Czech Republic. A full APA module program (two-year master’s program)

meeting all the international requirements is offered to students from all over the world either in Czech or English. It has been also frequently attended by foreign students benefiting from special intergovernmental agreements, e.g. from Bosnia and Herzegovina or Serbia ([www.apa.upol.cz](http://www.apa.upol.cz)).

### ***CEEPUS – Central European Exchange Project of University Study***

The European APA studies started in the 1990s in Leuven (European Master in APA, one-or two-semester program in English); however, only students from the then European Union member states could participate in that program. The Central European Exchange Project of University Study (CEEPUS) was established in 1995, aiming to level the study structures and opportunities for students from the EU candidate countries. The APA program coordinated by the Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, began in 1997 [10]. Each partner university offered a one-month credit program for students from other Central European countries. A mobility scheme for teachers became available as well ([www.ceepus.cz](http://www.ceepus.cz)). The participating countries and universities included:

Czech Republic: Olomouc, Brno, České Budějovice;

Slovak Republic: Banská Bystrica, Bratislava;

Poland: Poznań, Wrocław, Warszawa;

Slovenia: Ljubljana, Koper;

Croatia: Zagreb;

Bulgaria: Sofia;

Serbia: Niš.

The CEEPUS lasted until 2008 and in the meantime the majority of the participating countries became EU member states. Then the concept and internal regulations were dramatically changed for the Socrates/Erasmus design, involving an obligatory credit system, one semester (minimum three months) study, issuance of joint diplomas or certificates and English as the language of instruction. Different levels of transition and adjustment of the participating universities to the new rules and increasing opportunities to participate in other Erasmus programs were the reasons for termination of the CEEPUS – APA program after 10 years [10]. The CEEPUS, however, played an important role in that period and became a bridge between the “old” and “new” EU universities.

### ***DEUAPA – European University Diploma in Adapted Physical Activity***

The DEUAPA was the next step in the European APA studies. It started as an intensive six-week program with French as the language of instruction in Milan, headed by Prof. Anna Bianco. The DEUAPA then moved to Torino, Pallanza, and Bordeaux. In the years 2005-2008, the program was carried out by the Paris-Nanterre X University; however, it witnessed a decreasing number of students (and teachers) who were able to communicate in French. In 2009 the program was taken over by the Lahti University in Finland ([www.haaga-hellia.fi/eudapa](http://www.haaga-hellia.fi/eudapa)), following the general Erasmus study regulations, i.e. a bilateral Erasmus agreement between the Lahti University of Technology and a home university, English as the language of instruction and French as a supporting language, and BA courses in “sport studies.” The DEUAPA participants can spend either one semester in Lahti (usually the summer semester is offered), or they can continue for another semester at another partner university.

### ***EMDAPA – European Masters in Adapted Physical Activity***

The EMDAPA has been offered by the Free University in Leuven, Belgium since 1989. The program was made available to students from Central European countries after 2003 in the form of Socrates (later Erasmus) bilateral agreements between the Free University and home universities. European Masters in APA started in 1991 with nine participating universities. In 2004/05 their number reached twenty-nine. One semester or one year of the study program focuses on academic research with an emphasis on pathology. Only holders of bachelor's degrees in physical education and sports (or graduates of any relevant BA study programs) with good English skills could be included in this program. The mobility scheme involves five phases: 1<sup>st</sup> phase – APA study at a home university (preparation for international study); 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> phases in Leuven (academic study); 4<sup>th</sup> phase field practice in another participating European university; 5<sup>th</sup> phase – completing an M.A. thesis in a selected participating university ([www.kuleuven.ac.be/thenapa](http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/thenapa)).

### ERASMUS-MUNDUS APA

The ERASMUS-MUNDUS APA is an innovation of the traditional EMDAPA program, based on a collaboration between EU and non-EU students. The objectives of the Erasmus-Mundus APA program are to:

- prepare citizens for global society;
- ensure worldwide recognition of European universities as centers of academic excellence;
- contribute to cultural understanding and improve duality of higher education in Europe.

The Erasmus-Mundus APA started in August 2005 by a consortium of universities composed of the University in Leuven, Belgium as the coordinator; University of Limerick, Ireland; the Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic; and University in Oslo, Norway. The third countries are represented by the University of Queensland (Brisbane – Australia), Charlottesville University (Virginia, USA) and Stellenbosch University (Stellenbosch, South Africa). Thirty-five students who studied in Olomouc successfully completed their MA theses and published their research results in *Acta Gymnica Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis*, *European APA Journal* or in other volumes of international conference proceedings [6]. The program owes its excellent quality to the participating world top level APA specialists and scholars from the consortium universities, e.g. D. Ulrych, G. Reid, L. Kelly, S. Tweedy, J. Walkley, D. Craft, C. Leitschuc, Y. Hutzler, Y. Natz, G. Roswal, L. Bressan.

In 2009 the Erasmus-Mundus APA program was modified according to new EU regulations. The current study program is structured for two years. The first year in Leuven concentrates on theory, research methodology and research project design. Students can continue their second year in a selected participating university (Limerick, Olomouc, Oslo). The University of Oslo offers high quality physiotherapy courses, while the Olomouc University focuses on pedagogy, teaching orientation and inclusion. The second year of the study involves three tasks: a) learning APA programs and development of teaching skills; b) practice in various centers or schools with patients/students with disabilities; c) completing MA theses in APA. The MA thesis quality criteria include public defense and acceptance for publication in recognized journals (e.g. EUJAPA). In the second year students can study at the universities in Charlottesville, Queensland or

Stellenbosch. The content of study is field practice again as well as data collection for MA projects. Application forms must be sent to Leuven every year in January (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education>). The new program will start in September 2010 with accreditation until 2013/14.

The main concept of studies involving students with disabilities or special needs is integration. In spite of the fact that integration in professional training is not easy (special equipment, safety, attitudes and prejudices of some university teachers) the principles of integration through APA and sports are fully respected [7].

### EUROPEAN NETWORKS

European study programs could be developed only with the support of European networks called Joint Action Programs. The APA programs are developed with the aid of the THENAPA – Thematic Network of Adapted Physical Activity (“Educational and Social Integration of Persons with Disability through Adapted Physical Activity” <http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/thenapa>). THENAPA I (2000-2004), which focused on integration and inclusion, was the first project involving both practical development and academic research. The research part was analytic/synthetic and comparative; the developmental part was targeted on program design, realization and evaluation. THENAPA was concluded with recommendations of European APA curricula for BA and MA levels in the areas of rehabilitation, leisure, physical education and competitive sport. Representatives of 27 European countries were involved in eight-year work. Their results were published and teaching materials were designed in 17 European languages (CD-ROM THENAPA I, II, III, CD-ROM “Count Me In”, textbooks in English with copyrighted translations in other languages). The teaching materials and CD-ROMs have greatly influenced the process of education and training of APA graduates in Europe [1, 9]. The current THENAPA program (Joint Action) involves three main areas:

- Paralympics education,
- aging and disability,
- APA inclusion, sport and employment [1].

THENAPA III (Aging) should be completed in 2010.

### ***European Standards in APA (EUSAPA)***

The EUSAPA (2008-2011) is the most recent network of universities from eight European countries (Czech Republic, Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Portugal) aimed at the leveling of APA education.

EUCAPA is the accepted abbreviation for European Conference in Adapted Physical Activity. The conference has been organized every two years in different European cities ([www.eufapa.eu](http://www.eufapa.eu)) since 1986:

1. 1986 Brussels, Belgium,
2. 1993 Leuven, Belgium,
3. 1995 Leuven, Belgium,
4. 1998 Thessaloniki, Greece,
5. 2001 Vienna, Austria,
6. 2002 Amiens, France,
7. 2004 Dortmund, Germany,
8. 2006 Olomouc, Czech Republic,
9. 2008 Turin, Italy,
10. 2010 Jyväskylä, Finland.

### ***European Association of Research into Adapted Physical Activity (EARAPA)***

The EARAPA was founded in Brussels on the occasion of the first APA European Congress organized by Jean-Claude De Potter in 1986 at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. One of the reasons for its establishment was to create a European branch of IFAPA in order to promote APA education, research and congresses in Europe. The EARAPA constitution was adopted at a congress in Portugal in December 1987.

### ***European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (EUFAPA)***

The EUFAPA continues the basic ideas of the former EARAPA. Having adopted its modified constitution in Olomouc 2006, the EUFAPA is a European organization focusing on promotion and dissemination of experience and research results in the fields of adapted physical activity and sports sciences as well as their practical application. Beside research presented in an on-line journal (*EUJAPA*) the EUFAPA also concentrates on APA pre-service and in-service training of teachers/educators as well as on practice. The main idea of the organization is integration/inclusion in recreational and school settings. The fundamental purposes of the EUFAPA are as follows:

- encouragement of European cooperation in the field of physical activity for the benefit of individuals of all abilities;
- promotion, stimulation, and coordination of scientific research and experiences in the field of APA throughout Europe, and application of research results;
- making scientific knowledge of adapted physical activity and practical experiences available to all interested national and international organizations and institutions ([www.eufapa.eu](http://www.eufapa.eu)).

The EUFAPA is based at the Palacký University in Olomouc, in the Faculty of Physical Culture, and constitutes a part of the EUSAPA network. The Palacký University is a member of the Erasmus-Mundus APA study consortium and can offer a full two-year MA program in APA in Czech or English as well as a PhD program. It also carried out APA research under the umbrella of EU Marie Curie Actions program (MC IEF – 2007 – 041326 AESTH-PRO, 2007-2009), which is a privilege of renowned and recognized research centers.

Thanks to a highly efficient online information system of the European APA networking, students and teachers can quickly find out about new opportunities for study mobility, volunteering and research possibilities.

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