

STANDOUT PROJECT

Set of Clear Standards for an Outdoor City

Deliverable No.	Deliverable 4.1
Authors	WP4 Core Group and Project Partners
Organisation	Silkeborg Kommune (WP4 Leader)
Due Date	30.06.2026
Abstract	<p>The STANDOUT Standards provide a common European framework consisting of twelve categories and sixty-five indicators covering natural conditions, infrastructure, accessibility, governance, inclusion, knowledge, communication and community engagement. Developed through research, expert input and pilot testing, the standards support self-assessment, strategic planning and future development, helping local authorities strengthen outdoor sports and recreation while contributing to healthier, more active, inclusive and sustainable communities.</p>



Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	3
2. Purpose of the STANDOUT Standards	4
3. Value for Cities and Municipalities	5
3.1 Strategic planning and decision-making.....	5
3.2 Cross-sector collaboration and stakeholder engagement	5
3.3 Learning, reflection and continuous improvement.....	5
3.4 Knowledge exchange and good practice	6
3.5 Long-term impact.....	6
4. Principles of the STANDOUT Standards	7
5. Categories of the STANDOUT Standards	9
6. Indicators.....	19
7. Using the STANDOUT Standards.....	21
8. Conclusion and Next Steps	22

1. Executive Summary

This deliverable presents the STANDOUT Standards for Outdoor Cities and Municipalities, developed within the Erasmus+ Sport project STANDOUT. The standards provide a common European framework to support cities and municipalities in assessing, planning and developing outdoor sports and recreation as part of broader local development.

Outdoor sports and recreation contribute to a wide range of societal objectives, including health and wellbeing, social inclusion, environmental awareness, sustainable mobility, education, tourism and local attractiveness. Despite their growing importance, cities and municipalities have lacked a comprehensive framework to help understand, assess and strengthen the conditions that support outdoor sports and recreation. The STANDOUT Standards address this gap by providing a structured yet flexible framework that can be applied across different European contexts.

The standards have been developed through a collaborative process involving research, expert input, partner workshops and pilot testing in municipalities across Europe. The result is a framework that combines strategic relevance with practical applicability and recognises the diversity of local governance systems, geographical conditions and outdoor sports cultures.

The framework is organised into twelve categories covering the key dimensions of outdoor sports and recreation, including natural conditions, infrastructure, accessibility, planning, knowledge, communication, inclusion, community engagement and service provision. Together, these categories are supported by sixty-five indicators that provide a comprehensive basis for assessment, reflection and future development.

The STANDOUT Standards are intended primarily as a tool for self-assessment, reflection and future development. They help cities and municipalities identify strengths, recognise development needs, involve relevant actors and integrate outdoor sports and recreation into decision-making processes. The standards are designed to be relevant both for municipalities that are beginning to develop outdoor sports and recreation opportunities and for those seeking to further strengthen existing approaches.

This deliverable presents the purpose, value, principles, categories and indicator structure of the STANDOUT Standards. Additional implementation resources, including assessment questions, guidance materials and scoring methodologies, are presented in Deliverable 4.2. Together, these outputs provide the foundation for the practical application of the standards and support their future use across Europe.

2. Purpose of the STANDOUT Standards

The STANDOUT Standards aim to provide a clear, inclusive and practical framework to support cities and municipalities in developing, assessing and strengthening outdoor sports and recreation opportunities. The standards have been designed to help local authorities integrate outdoor sports into planning, management and decision-making processes, contributing to healthier, more sustainable and more inclusive communities.

The standards are based on the understanding that outdoor sports and recreation can generate benefits across multiple policy areas. They contribute to physical and mental health, social inclusion, community wellbeing, environmental awareness, nature connection and local attractiveness. At the same time, they support municipalities in balancing recreational use of outdoor environments with nature protection, climate adaptation and long-term sustainability objectives.

The STANDOUT Standards are intended to provide a framework for both long-term planning and practical action. They provide a structured framework that enables cities and municipalities to identify strengths, recognise areas for improvement and prioritise future investments and initiatives. The standards are designed to be applicable across different European contexts, recognising the diversity of governance systems, geographical conditions and levels of maturity in outdoor sports development.

Throughout the STANDOUT project, the standards evolved through research, expert input, co-creation processes and pilot testing with cities and municipalities from different countries. This process demonstrated that the framework can serve not only as an assessment tool, but also as a catalyst for discussion, cooperation and organisational development. Participating municipalities reported that the assessment process itself encouraged cross-departmental cooperation, stronger stakeholder involvement and discussions about future priorities for outdoor sports and recreation.

The standards are not intended as a rigid checklist or a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, they provide a flexible framework that supports self-assessment, exchange of experience and improvement over time. Cities and municipalities can adapt the framework to their local context while benefiting from a common European approach and shared understanding of good practice.

In the longer term, the STANDOUT Standards are expected to support more strategic investment in outdoor sports and recreation, improve access to outdoor opportunities for citizens, strengthen cooperation between stakeholders and contribute to healthier, more active and more sustainable communities across Europe.

3. Value for Cities and Municipalities

The STANDOUT Standards are designed to provide practical value for cities and municipalities seeking to strengthen outdoor sports and recreation opportunities. Beyond serving as an assessment framework, the standards support strategic planning, organisational learning, stakeholder engagement and long-term development. They provide a structured approach to understanding current conditions, identifying priorities and guiding future action.

The value of the standards lies not only in the results they generate, but also in the process of applying them. Through self-assessment and reflection, cities and municipalities can develop a more comprehensive understanding of their strengths, challenges and opportunities related to outdoor sports and recreation. The standards encourage a holistic perspective that considers infrastructure, nature, access, governance, inclusion, information, education and community engagement as interconnected elements of a successful outdoor environment.

3.1 Strategic planning and decision-making

The standards provide a framework for evidence-informed planning and decision-making. By assessing a broad range of factors influencing outdoor sports and recreation, cities and municipalities can identify strengths, gaps and development priorities. The framework helps local authorities move from isolated projects towards more coordinated and strategic approaches that support long-term objectives.

The standards can also support political and administrative decision-making by providing a common reference point for discussions about investments, priorities and future development. They help demonstrate how outdoor sports and recreation contribute to wider policy objectives, including health and wellbeing, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, climate adaptation and local attractiveness.

3.2 Cross-sector collaboration and stakeholder engagement

Outdoor sports and recreation are influenced by many different sectors and stakeholders. Planning departments, environmental authorities, health services, tourism organisations, educational institutions, sports clubs, community groups and citizens all play important roles in shaping local outdoor opportunities.

The STANDOUT Standards provide a common framework and language that facilitate cooperation across departments and sectors. By bringing together different perspectives, the standards support more integrated planning and encourage dialogue between stakeholders who may not traditionally work together. This can strengthen coordination, improve the quality of decisions and increase shared ownership of outdoor sports and recreation initiatives.

3.3 Learning, reflection and continuous improvement

A central objective of the standards is to encourage reflection and support ongoing development. Rather than providing a one-time assessment, the framework helps cities and municipalities review current practices, identify priorities and monitor progress over time.

The experience gained through the STANDOUT project showed that the assessment process itself can create value. Pilot municipalities reported that working with the standards increased

awareness of outdoor sports and recreation, encouraged cooperation across departments and helped identify future priorities. In this way, the standards function not only as an assessment tool, but also as a practical framework that supports informed decision-making and future development.

3.4 Knowledge exchange and good practice

The standards aim to support the exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices between cities and municipalities. By using a common framework, local authorities can more easily learn from one another, identify innovative approaches and share successful initiatives.

The standards encourage municipalities to document and communicate their experiences, contributing to a growing body of practical knowledge on outdoor sports and recreation. This exchange can help accelerate development, avoid duplication of effort and strengthen the overall capacity of cities and municipalities to create high-quality outdoor environments.

3.5 Long-term impact

The long-term value of the STANDOUT Standards extends beyond assessment and planning. By supporting more strategic and coordinated approaches to outdoor sports and recreation, the standards are expected to contribute to increased participation, improved access to outdoor opportunities, stronger connections between people and nature, and healthier and more active communities.

At the same time, the standards promote balanced and sustainable development by encouraging consideration of nature protection, environmental stewardship, accessibility, inclusion and long-term maintenance. Through their continued application, the standards can help cities and municipalities create outdoor environments that generate lasting benefits for citizens, communities and natural ecosystems.

Ultimately, the STANDOUT Standards aim to support a shared European ambition: enabling more people to enjoy the benefits of outdoor sports and recreation while ensuring that outdoor environments remain accessible, inclusive and sustainable for future generations.

4. Principles of the STANDOUT Standards

The following principles guided the development of the STANDOUT Standards and continue to provide a common framework for their application and future development. They provide a shared point of reference for the formulation of categories, indicators and assessment questions within the standards.

The principles help ensure that the standards remain coherent, relevant across different European contexts, and usable both as a development tool and as a practical framework for cities and municipalities. They have informed the selection and design of categories and indicators, as well as the overall structure of the framework.

The principles are not intended as assessment criteria in themselves, but as a common foundation for decision-making throughout the development and future evolution of the standards. They support a consistent approach across the framework and help ensure that the standards reflect the overall ambitions of inclusivity, usability, collaboration and the long-term development of outdoor sports and recreation.

4.1. Inclusive and relevant

The standard aims to be relevant for cities and municipalities across the EU. Categories and indicators are designed to reflect different national contexts, governance structures and types of areas, including municipalities, cities, outdoor destinations, and both urban and rural areas. Not all categories and indicators are expected to be relevant for all contexts, but all users should be able to identify meaningful and applicable elements.

4.2. Easy to use and flexible

The standard aims to be easy to use with reasonable demands on resources and competencies. It is designed to support different levels of ambition and maturity. Cities and municipalities at an early stage of developing outdoor sports and recreation can use the standard as an entry point for assessment and inspiration, while more advanced users can engage more deeply and gain additional value from a comprehensive use of the standard.

4.3. Learning, progression and development

The standard aims to support continuous learning and development. Working with the standard should always include a learning element and encourage reflection on current practices, future priorities and progression over time. Repeated use of the standard should provide added value by making development visible and supporting long-term improvement of outdoor sports and recreation.

4.4. Exchange of knowledge and good practice

The standard aims to facilitate exchange of knowledge and good practice between cities and municipalities. Indicators, questions and examples are designed to inspire new approaches to developing outdoor sports and recreation. Cities and municipalities are encouraged to share their own experiences and examples as part of working with the standard, contributing to a growing pool of practical knowledge.

4.5. Strategic and organizational relevance

The standard aims to function as both a learning tool and a strategic support tool for cities and municipalities. It should be applicable in administrative and political contexts and support prioritization, coordination and dialogue across departments and sectors involved in outdoor sports and recreation.

4.6. User-centred and collaborative

The standard aims to promote development that is based on the needs and experiences of users. It encourages involvement of citizens, user groups, associations and other relevant stakeholders, and supports collaboration between public, private and civil society actors in the development of outdoor sports and recreation.

4.7. Credible and transparent

The standard aims to ensure transparency and credibility in assessments and results. The structure, indicators and scoring logic should be clear and understandable, enabling both internal use and external communication. Results should support meaningful comparison and communication without oversimplifying local contexts and differences.

4.8. Long-term and balanced development

The standard aims to support long-term and balanced development of outdoor sports and recreation. Considerations of environmental sustainability, nature protection, accessibility, and long-term operation and maintenance are embedded across categories and indicators, supporting responsible use and development of outdoor environments.

5. Categories of the STANDOUT Standards

The STANDOUT Standards are organised into twelve categories that provide a comprehensive framework for assessing and developing outdoor sports and recreation at local level. The categories reflect the diverse factors that influence participation, accessibility, quality, sustainability and long-term development of outdoor sports and recreation (Figure 1).

The categories were developed through research, expert input, partner workshops and pilot testing. They recognise that successful outdoor sports environments depend not only on infrastructure and natural assets, but also on planning, governance, information, education, inclusion, community engagement and long-term management.



Figure 1. Structure of the STANDOUT Standards Framework

Each category addresses a specific dimension of outdoor sports and recreation and is supported by a set of indicators that enable cities and municipalities to assess their current situation, identify strengths and development needs, and support future planning and decision-making.

5.1. Natural Conditions and Nature Protection

- **Why:** Natural environments form the foundation of outdoor sports and recreation. Access to attractive, healthy and resilient natural areas creates opportunities for a wide range of outdoor activities while contributing to physical activity, wellbeing and nature connection. Protecting and enhancing these environments is therefore essential for the long-term development of outdoor sports and recreation.

- **What:** This category focuses on the availability, quality, protection and development of natural areas that support outdoor sports and recreation. It considers existing natural assets, protected areas, environmental qualities that enable outdoor activities, ecological restoration, land-use transformation and climate adaptation measures.
- **Indicators included:**
 - 1.1 Existing nature areas
 - 1.2 Existing protected natural areas
 - 1.3 Existing nature areas with valued characteristics for outdoor sports and recreation
 - 1.4 Protection, conservation and restoration of nature
 - 1.5 Transformation of land use to new natural areas for recreation and outdoor sports
 - 1.6 Climate considerations and climate adaptation measures

5.2. Outdoor Infrastructure and Management

- **Why:** Accessible, well-designed and properly maintained infrastructure plays a central role in enabling participation in outdoor sports and recreation. While natural environments provide the setting for outdoor activities, infrastructure and management determine how easily, safely and sustainably people can access and enjoy these opportunities.

Cities and municipalities influence the quality of outdoor experiences through the planning, development and maintenance of trails, access points, supporting facilities and activity areas. Effective management helps balance user needs, safety, accessibility and environmental protection, ensuring that outdoor sports can develop in a sustainable way while preserving the natural environments on which they depend.
- **What:** This category focuses on the infrastructure, facilities and management systems that support outdoor sports and recreation. It includes gateways and trailheads, trail networks, activity hotspots, supporting facilities, visitor monitoring and maintenance systems. The category also considers the sustainable operation of infrastructure, responsible land-use practices and measures that enable outdoor sports and recreation while protecting sensitive natural and protected areas.
- **Indicators included:**
 - 2.1 Welcoming and safe trailheads and gateways to nature areas for outdoor sports
 - 2.2 Quantity, quality and variety of trails
 - 2.3 Hotspots for outdoor activities
 - 2.4 Visitor monitoring
 - 2.5 Management and organisation for regular maintenance of outdoor sport infrastructure

- 2.6 Management and organisation for regular maintenance of supporting facilities
- 2.7 Sustainable operation of outdoor sports infrastructure
- 2.8 Promotion and regulation of sustainable land use and environmental practices in outdoor sports and recreation
- 2.9 Creating possibilities for sustainable outdoor sports and recreation in protected areas

5.3. Safety Procedures and Risk Prevention

- **Why:** Safety is a fundamental prerequisite for participation in outdoor sports and recreation. While outdoor activities inherently involve varying levels of challenge and exposure to natural environments, cities and municipalities can play an important role in reducing unnecessary risks, providing relevant information and ensuring that users are able to make informed decisions.

Effective safety procedures contribute to user confidence, accessibility and enjoyment, particularly for newcomers, families, visitors and less experienced participants. At the same time, a proactive approach to risk management helps protect users, supports responsible use of outdoor environments and strengthens the long-term sustainability of outdoor sports opportunities.

- **What:** This category focuses on the systems, procedures and organisational practices that support safety in outdoor sports and recreation areas. It includes safety planning, emergency preparedness, communication of risks, incident reporting and learning processes, as well as procedures for identifying, managing and repairing unsafe or damaged infrastructure. The category recognises that safety is not only about preventing accidents, but also about creating a culture of awareness, continuous improvement and responsible participation.
- **Indicators included:**
 - 3.1 Safety and rescue plans
 - 3.2 Incident reporting and safety feedback
 - 3.3 Routines for shutting down and correcting dysfunctional outdoor sports infrastructure

5.4. Access to Nature and Facilities

- **Why:** Access is a fundamental condition for participation in outdoor sports and recreation. The existence of natural areas, trails and facilities does not automatically ensure that people can use them. Opportunities must be physically reachable, affordable and accessible to people with different needs, abilities and circumstances.

Barriers to participation can take many forms, including distance, lack of transport, limited access to equipment, restrictive regulations, financial constraints, cultural factors or

a lack of confidence in using outdoor environments. Addressing these barriers is essential to ensuring that outdoor sports and recreation contribute to health, wellbeing and social inclusion for all citizens.

- **What:** This category focuses on the different factors that influence access to outdoor sports and recreation opportunities. It considers proximity to nature and facilities, regulations that support access, availability of equipment, public transport connections, active mobility infrastructure and practical access arrangements. The category also addresses the identification and removal of social, cultural and economic barriers that may prevent participation among specific groups.

Together, these elements help cities and municipalities create more inclusive, equitable and sustainable opportunities for outdoor sports and recreation.

- **Indicators included:**
 - 4.1 Distance to nature and outdoor sport facilities
 - 4.2 Good regulations on access
 - 4.3 Easy access to outdoor sports equipment for all
 - 4.4 Understanding and addressing other barriers to participation
 - 4.5 Good public transportation to outdoor sport infrastructure
 - 4.6 Infrastructure for active commuting to outdoor sport facilities and nature areas
 - 4.7 Parking areas near outdoor sport facilities and nature areas
 - 4.8 Possibility of equipment transportation on public buses, trains and trams

5.5. Strategy, Planning and Investment

- **Why:** The development of outdoor sports and recreation does not happen by chance. It requires political commitment, strategic direction and the ability to coordinate actions across multiple sectors and stakeholders. Decisions related to land use, mobility, health, nature management, tourism and community development all influence the opportunities available for outdoor sports and recreation.

When outdoor sports and recreation are integrated into policies, planning processes and investment priorities, municipalities are better positioned to protect and enhance opportunities over the long term. Strategic approaches also help ensure that resources are used effectively, responsibilities are clear and development efforts remain consistent beyond individual projects, funding cycles or political terms.

- **What:** This category examines how outdoor sports and recreation are embedded within the governance and decision-making structures of a city or municipality. It considers whether there are clear policies, plans and responsibilities that support the development of outdoor sports and recreation, as well as the organisational capacity required to implement them.

The category also considers coordination across municipal departments and collaboration with external stakeholders, including sports organisations, community groups, tourism actors and informal outdoor communities. The category also recognises the importance of learning from others through regional, national and European cooperation.

Financial commitment is another key element. Sustainable development depends not only on strategic ambitions but also on the availability of resources to maintain infrastructure, support programmes, engage communities and invest in future improvements.

– **Indicators included:**

- 5.1 Outdoor sports and recreation strategy and planning decided in policies, strategies, masterplans or other relevant governing papers
- 5.2 Permanent employed and dedicated staff for outdoor sports and recreation
- 5.3 Integration of outdoor sports into spatial planning
- 5.4 Permanent and dedicated inter-departmental stakeholder forum
- 5.5 Permanent organisation of stakeholders to promote participation, development, communication and management
- 5.6 Involvement of outdoor sport stakeholders in the development of specific projects, initiatives and programmes
- 5.7 Outdoor sports in self-organised communities outside sport clubs
- 5.8 Cooperation and networking across municipalities, regions, nations and within the European Union
- 5.9 Funding secured and allocated to outdoor sports and recreation
- 5.10 Funding from different stakeholders for outdoor sports and recreation

5.6. Knowledge, Education and Training

- **Why:** The successful development of outdoor sports and recreation depends on informed decision-making, continuous learning and the ability to adapt to changing needs and opportunities. Knowledge helps cities and municipalities understand the value of outdoor sports and recreation, identify priorities, evaluate progress and make better decisions about future investments and actions.

Building awareness among decision-makers, citizens and stakeholders can strengthen support for outdoor sports and recreation and help highlight their contribution to health, wellbeing, social inclusion, environmental stewardship, tourism and local development. At the same time, access to training, education and professional expertise helps ensure that outdoor sports opportunities are safe, inclusive, sustainable and responsive to the needs of different user groups.

- **What:** This category examines how knowledge is generated, shared and applied to support the development of outdoor sports and recreation. It considers awareness and understanding among both decision-makers and citizens, the evaluation of policies, facili-

ties and initiatives, and the extent to which municipalities seek to understand the needs and preferences of users and stakeholders.

The category also recognises the importance of knowledge exchange, professional competence and volunteer education. It therefore includes the sharing of experiences and good practices, the availability of trained professionals and instructors, and opportunities for education and training within clubs, associations and the wider outdoor sports community.

– **Indicators included:**

- 6.1 Decision makers are aware of the benefits of outdoor sports and recreation to society
- 6.2 Raising awareness of benefits of outdoor sports and recreation to citizens
- 6.3 Evaluation of outdoor sports facilities, projects and initiatives
- 6.4 Mapping and needs analysis of citizens and stakeholders
- 6.5 Sharing knowledge, experiences and ideas
- 6.6 Trained instructors and other professional providers
- 6.7 Formal education in civil society for volunteers

5.7. Communication and Events

- **Why:** Communication plays an important role in enabling participation in outdoor sports and recreation. People are more likely to engage in outdoor activities when they are aware of the opportunities available, understand how to access them and can easily find reliable information about facilities, routes, events and local conditions.

Communication also helps shape the identity of a city or municipality as a place that values outdoor sports and recreation. By promoting opportunities, sharing information and highlighting local strengths, municipalities can encourage participation, strengthen community engagement and increase their attractiveness as places to live, visit and be active.

Events provide additional opportunities to showcase outdoor sports and recreation, activate public spaces and bring communities together. They can introduce new participants to outdoor activities, celebrate local outdoor culture and contribute to tourism, local pride and economic activity.

- **What:** This category examines how cities and municipalities communicate, promote and celebrate outdoor sports and recreation. It considers strategic communication, information services, digital tools and the accessibility of information for different user groups. It also includes the role of events in encouraging participation, strengthening local identity and increasing the visibility of outdoor sports and recreation.

Accessible and reliable information helps residents and visitors discover opportunities, understand local conditions and regulations, and participate with confidence regardless of age, background, language or ability.

– **Indicators included:**

- 7.1 A communication strategy for promoting the city or area as an outdoor area
- 7.2 Analog material, web and social media communication
- 7.3 Digital services, online maps and digital systems for maintenance and status of outdoor sports infrastructure and facilities
- 7.4 Information accessible to all
- 7.5 Outdoor sports events

5.8. Outdoor Sports and Recreation for All

- **Why:** Outdoor sports and recreation should be accessible to everyone, regardless of age, background, ability, experience or personal circumstances. While access to nature and facilities is an important starting point, participation is often influenced by a wider range of social, cultural, physical and economic factors that affect different groups in different ways.

Cities and municipalities can play a key role in reducing barriers to participation and creating opportunities that reflect the diversity of their communities. By considering the needs of children, young people, older adults, migrants, people with disabilities and other groups with fewer opportunities, outdoor sports and recreation can become a more inclusive and welcoming part of everyday life.

- **What:** This category examines the extent to which inclusion is reflected in policies, programmes and infrastructure related to outdoor sports and recreation. It considers whether municipalities have clear ambitions to promote participation for all citizens and whether these ambitions are supported through concrete actions and initiatives.

The category also considers whether outdoor environments and facilities provide opportunities for people with different levels of experience, confidence and ability. Creating a range of entry points and progression opportunities can help ensure that outdoor sports and recreation remain accessible throughout different stages of life and for people with varying needs and aspirations.

– **Indicators included:**

- 8.1 Clearly formulated ambitions or goals for promoting opportunities for all citizens to participate in outdoor sports and recreation
- 8.2 Provision of inclusive outdoor sports initiatives to support participation for all
- 8.3 Outdoor infrastructure and facilities for all levels of experience

5.9. Professional Services

- **Why:** Outdoor sports and recreation are supported by a broad range of professional actors that contribute to the quality, accessibility and visibility of outdoor opportunities. These actors often provide services, expertise, equipment, accommodation and experiences that complement the role of municipalities, clubs and community organisations.

A strong professional ecosystem can make outdoor sports more accessible to residents and visitors, support local economic development and strengthen the identity of a city or municipality as a place for outdoor recreation. Professional providers can also play an important role in introducing new participants to outdoor activities, supporting tourism and contributing to the long-term sustainability of outdoor sports environments.

- **What:** This category examines the presence and contribution of professional providers within the local outdoor sports ecosystem. It considers businesses and organisations that provide services, products or experiences related to outdoor sports and recreation, as well as the extent to which they contribute to the wider development of outdoor sports within the community.

The category recognises that professional providers can contribute in many ways beyond their core commercial activities, including supporting infrastructure, collaborating with local organisations, participating in events and initiatives, and contributing knowledge, resources or expertise to the development of outdoor sports and recreation.

- **Indicators included:**
 - 9.1 Professional providers in a city or area
 - 9.2 Professional providers contribute to outdoor sports locally

5.10. Civil Society, Communities and Voluntary Sports Clubs

- **Why:** Civil society organisations, sports clubs and informal communities play a central role in the development of outdoor sports and recreation. They create opportunities for participation, build social connections, transfer knowledge and skills, and often act as long-term stewards of local outdoor environments. For many citizens, clubs and community groups provide the first point of entry into outdoor activities and help create a sense of belonging and shared identity.

The outdoor sports landscape extends beyond formal organisations. A growing proportion of participation takes place through self-organised groups, informal networks and online communities that arrange activities independently of traditional club structures. Recognising and supporting this diversity is important for understanding how outdoor sports are experienced and developed at local level.

- **What:** This category examines the contribution of civil society to outdoor sports and recreation. It includes the presence and diversity of clubs and associations offering outdoor activities, the extent to which opportunities are available to people with different backgrounds and experience levels, and the role of informal communities and self-organised groups within the local outdoor sports ecosystem.

The category also considers the contribution of volunteers to the development and maintenance of outdoor sports infrastructure, facilities and events. In many cities and municipalities, volunteer engagement provides valuable local knowledge, strengthens community ownership and supports the long-term sustainability of outdoor sports opportunities.

– **Indicators included:**

- 10.1 Sport clubs providing different types of outdoor sports and recreation
- 10.2 Outdoor sports in local clubs for all levels of experience and all parts of society
- 10.3 Outdoor sports in self-organised communities outside sport clubs
- 10.4 Volunteers helping with the creation and maintenance of outdoor sport infrastructure

5.11. Public Sector Providers

- **Why:** Public institutions play an important role in shaping how people experience nature and outdoor activities throughout their lives. Schools, kindergartens, health services, elderly care providers and other public sector organisations can introduce people to outdoor environments, support healthy lifestyles and strengthen connections between nature, learning and wellbeing.

The benefits of outdoor sports and recreation extend beyond participation itself. Outdoor experiences can contribute to education, physical and mental health, social inclusion and quality of life. Integrating outdoor activities and nature-based approaches into public services can therefore generate positive impacts across multiple policy areas and support broader societal objectives.

- **What:** This category examines how public sector institutions use nature, outdoor activities and outdoor learning as part of their services and programmes. It considers opportunities for children and young people to experience nature through education, as well as the use of outdoor environments within health promotion, rehabilitation and elderly care.
- The category also explores the capacity of public institutions to deliver these activities through staff development, training and dedicated facilities. In doing so, it recognises that outdoor sports and recreation can contribute to public welfare in ways that extend beyond traditional sport participation.

– **Indicators included:**

- 11.1 Learning in nature and nature pedagogy in kindergartens
- 11.2 Learning in nature and nature pedagogy in schools
- 11.3 Learning in nature and nature pedagogy in high schools
- 11.4 Use of nature and outdoor activities in elderly care
- 11.5 Use of nature and outdoor activities in public health care

- 11.6 Continuous capacity building, education and knowledge to support public welfare in nature
- 11.7 Facilities to support public welfare in nature

5.12. Other Support

- **Why:** No standards framework can fully capture the diversity of initiatives, partnerships and innovations that exist across different cities and municipalities. Outdoor sports and recreation continue to evolve, and local authorities often develop creative solutions that respond to specific local opportunities, challenges and priorities.

Providing space for additional initiatives helps ensure that the STANDOUT Standards remain flexible and adaptable while recognising leadership, experimentation and good practices that may fall outside the scope of the defined categories and indicators.

- **What:** This category provides an opportunity for cities and municipalities to identify and describe forms of support, initiatives or achievements related to outdoor sports and recreation that are not adequately reflected elsewhere in the framework. It recognises that innovation often emerges through local experimentation, cross-sector collaboration and context-specific solutions.

The category also supports the identification and sharing of good practices, helping to strengthen knowledge exchange and inspire future development across Europe.

- **Indicators included:**
 - 12.1 Any other support given by the city, municipality or area to stakeholders about outdoor sports and recreation

6. Indicators

The STANDOUT Standards are supported by a set of indicators that translate the principles and categories of the framework into concrete and assessable elements. The indicators provide a structured way for cities and municipalities to understand their current situation, identify strengths and development needs, and support the future planning of outdoor sports and recreation.

Each indicator is linked to one of the twelve categories within the framework and contributes to a broader understanding of how outdoor sports and recreation are supported at local level (Table 1). Together, the indicators provide a comprehensive picture of the policies, infrastructure, services, partnerships and environmental conditions that influence participation and development.

Table 1. Overview of categories and number of indicators

Category	Indicators
1. Natural Conditions and Nature Protection	6
2. Outdoor Infrastructure and Management	9
3. Safety Procedures and Risk Prevention	3
4. Access to Nature and Facilities	8
5. Strategy, Planning and Investment	10
6. Knowledge, Education and Training	7
7. Communication and Events	5
8. Outdoor Sports and Recreation for All	3
9. Professional Services	2
10. Civil Society, Communities and Voluntary Sports Clubs	4
11. Public Sector Providers	7
12. Other Support	1
Total	65

The indicators have been designed to support reflection, informed decision-making and future development. Rather than serving solely as a measurement tool, they encourage cities and municipalities to consider how outdoor sports and recreation are integrated into planning, management and community development. The indicators are intended to stimulate discussion, inform priorities and identify opportunities for future action.

The framework includes both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Some indicators focus on the existence of policies, plans or infrastructure, while others examine management practices, stakeholder involvement, accessibility, information provision and support services. This combination reflects the understanding that successful outdoor sports and recreation depend on multiple interconnected factors.

The complete indicator framework, including assessment questions, guidance notes, and answer options, is presented in **Deliverable 4.2 – Resources Associated with the STANDOUT Standards**.

7. Using the STANDOUT Standards

The STANDOUT Standards have been designed as a practical tool to support the development of outdoor sports and recreation in cities and municipalities. While the framework can be used to assess current conditions, its primary purpose is to support reflection, planning and improvement over time.

Cities and municipalities can use the standards to:

- gain a better understanding of their strengths and areas for development;
- identify priorities for future action;
- support strategic planning and policy development;
- inform infrastructure planning and investment decisions;
- strengthen cooperation with stakeholders and partners;
- monitor progress over time.

The standards can also serve as a platform for discussion and collaboration. The assessment process encourages engagement across municipal departments, public institutions, sports organisations, community groups, businesses and other stakeholders. This can help create a shared understanding of local opportunities and challenges while strengthening cooperation around common objectives.

The framework is intended to be flexible and applicable across different local contexts. The standards are equally relevant for municipalities that are beginning to develop outdoor sports and recreation opportunities and for those with more mature systems seeking to further strengthen their approach.

To support implementation, the STANDOUT project has developed additional resources associated with the standards, including assessment questions, guidance notes, scoring methodology and supporting materials. These resources are presented in Deliverable 4.2 and are intended to assist municipalities in applying the framework in a consistent and meaningful way.

Through regular use, the STANDOUT Standards can help municipalities track progress over time, facilitate exchange of experience and contribute to the long-term development of healthier, more active, inclusive and sustainable communities across Europe.

8. Conclusion and Next Steps

The STANDOUT Standards establish a common European framework for understanding and developing outdoor sports and recreation at local level. By bringing together environmental, social, organisational and infrastructural dimensions, the standards provide cities and municipalities with a structured approach to strengthening outdoor sports and recreation as part of broader local development.

The framework reflects the diversity of European contexts and recognises that there is no single model for becoming an outdoor city or municipality. Instead, it provides a shared reference point that supports local decision-making while allowing flexibility to respond to different geographical, cultural and governance conditions.

Outdoor sports and recreation can contribute to a wide range of societal objectives, including health and wellbeing, social inclusion, education, environmental awareness, sustainable mobility and local attractiveness. The STANDOUT Standards help make these connections visible and support a more integrated approach to planning and development.

The next phase of the STANDOUT project focuses on supporting implementation through practical resources, guidance materials and assessment tools. Together, these elements will help cities and municipalities apply the standards, share experiences and strengthen understanding of the role of outdoor sports and recreation in creating healthier, more inclusive and sustainable communities across Europe.