



## The European Health and Fitness Association Anti-Doping Code of Conduct

### Background and Context:

In 2010, the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA) was funded by the European Commission to conduct research into the prevalence of doping within the European health and fitness sector. The *Fitness Against Doping report* found that while doping was not widespread nor prevalent within the sector, there was a level of use of banned substances and other recreational drugs in fitness centres which needs to be reduced.

The context of the project was emphasised by the EU Communication on Sport in January 2011 which stated that “doping remains an important threat to sport. Use of doping substances by amateur athletes poses serious public health hazards and calls for preventive action, including in fitness centres. Doping prevention and doping sanctions remain within the remit of sport organisations and Member States. It encourages Member States to adopt and share national anti-doping action plans aimed at ensuring coordination among all relevant actors. There is a need for anti-doping rules and practices to comply with EU law in respecting fundamental rights and principles.”

Based upon the findings of the Fitness Against Doping Report there were specific recommendations which included development and integration of campaigns and policies, the promotion of social responsibility in the fitness sector through an anti-doping charter and the development of training for exercise professionals.

This Code of Conduct aims to complement and add to these recommendations and ensure a standardised approach across Europe which can be adhered and signed up to by fitness facilities and professionals and forms the basis of a workplan for the European Health and Fitness Association and all of the operators with the European health and fitness sector.

The Health and Fitness Anti-Doping Code of Conduct is based on the underlying principle that fitness and leisure facilities are placed to increase levels of physical activity and in doing so improve the health of the citizens of Europe. Therefore any level of doping is counter-productive to the aim of the sector and the perceived motivations of “doping users”, such as “to improve physical appearance”, are not consistent with the aim of individuals who engage with physical activity the majority of which state the aim is to improve their health and fitness.

It should be noted that the Code is not prescriptive – it is a voluntary process and participant facilities have agreed to abide by the following principles. To that end the Code will not suggest specific reprimands or sanctions for those that are found to be using prohibited substances in a fitness environment. Through this process EHFA hopes to achieve a “real” commitment from participating operators, exercise professionals and other stakeholders to reducing the prevalence of doping.

The underlying principle of the fitness sector’s position of social responsibility on anti-doping is that all users and workers in fitness centres have the right to use and work in a doping-free environment, where they are free from any intimidation, criminal activities, or witness to people who are causing physical harm to themselves by taking doping substances. Furthermore, and in particular it is recognised that doping practices in fitness centres:

- Can threaten the health of individuals who use doping substances

- Be threatening to other people in a doping users' immediate environment
- Can be harmful to the integrity and perception of the fitness sector
- Is often linked to criminal activities such as drug trafficking
- Can particularly affect young people and other vulnerable people

## **The European Fitness Code of Conduct on Anti-Doping**

The code of conduct focuses on the following areas:

1. Educate professionals to combat doping
2. Educate consumers to reject doping
3. Research the sector to build a responsible approach to doping
4. Cooperate at a European level

### **1. Educate professionals to combat doping**

#### *Improve the education of fitness professionals*

Stakeholders within the fitness sector commit to including doping awareness and intervention strategies within the education and training of its professionals to ensure it becomes part of the culture of promoting the benefits of regular exercise without the need to take any performance or image enhancing substances which are harmful to health. This training will provide the knowledge and understanding to be able to “spot the signs” of doping practices and how to intervene to proscribe alternative exercise routines.

#### *Educate managers/owners*

Managers and owners include an anti-doping condition in contracts of the users of their fitness centres which prohibits the use of any banned, performance or image enhancing substances.

Managers and owners will only sell and promote food supplement products which have been satisfactorily tested by recognised best practice methods, and are certified free from contamination of any doping substances

### **2. Educate consumers to reject doping**

Fitness sector stakeholders commit to work with other European Agencies and other amateur sport bodies in anti-doping networks to provide clear information to educate consumers on the harmful effects on the risks and dangers to their health by taking doping substances.

Fitness centres will display copies of the European Fitness Anti-Doping Code.

### **3. Social Responsibility and Research**

The European fitness sector has a commitment to act in a socially responsible manner in promoting fitness centres as doping-free environments which are safe for use by all consumers and citizens without fear from any intimidation, criminal activities, or witness to people who are causing physical harm to themselves by taking doping substances.

The European fitness sector commits to undertaking and participating in further research into doping practices and potential anti-doping interventions, which could be put into place as prevention and to bring about behaviour change.

The European fitness sector commits to continually evaluate the success of any anti-doping interventions, programmes or activities and to review these in a timely manner.

#### 4. At a European level

The European Health and Fitness Association, as the sector representative, will promote close cooperation between European agencies, authorities, the Commission and other actors in recreational sport to develop joint working, share good practice, and to develop guidance and effective interventions on anti-doping activities.

The fitness sector will join with European networks to support trans-national public awareness campaigns on anti-doping.

Brussels August 2012



The European Health & Fitness Association  
Rue Washington 40  
B-1050 Brussels

Tel: +32 (0) 2 649 90 44

Fax: +32 (0) 2 642 90 44

[thesecretariat@ehfa.eu](mailto:thesecretariat@ehfa.eu)

[www.ehfa-programmes.eu](http://www.ehfa-programmes.eu)