

NEWSPAPER #1

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NEURO DANCE

Dancing intervention to ameliorate the symptoms and promote the well-being of patients with Parkinson's Disease and related neurodegenerative Disorders



ALMA MATER EUROPAEA
AKADEMIJA ZA PLES
DANCE ACADEMY



OTTO VON GUERICKE
UNIVERSITÄT
MAGDEBURG



Palacký University
Olomouc



UNIVERSITY OF
THESSALY



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PRESENTATION OF THE NEURODANCE PROJECT

Across Europe, more than one million people live with Parkinson's disease—a progressive, incurable neurological condition that affects movement, thinking, mood, and daily independence. While medication remains essential, it is no longer enough on its own. A new European project called NeuroDance is stepping in with a different rhythm: using dance as a scientifically grounded tool to improve quality of life and ameliorate the symptoms.

Launched in January 2025 and running until the end of 2027, NeuroDance is funded by the Erasmus+ Sport programme with a total value of €400,000. The project is coordinated by the Science and Research Centre Koper (Slovenia) and brings together universities, research institutes, dance academies, and Parkinson's patient organizations from Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Greece.

Why NeuroDance?

Parkinson's disease is the second most common neurodegenerative disorder worldwide, and its impact reaches far beyond tremors and stiffness. People with Parkinson's often face cognitive decline, mood disorders, social isolation, and increasing dependence on caregivers. These challenges affect not only patients, but also their families and healthcare systems.

Research has shown that dance therapy—which combines movement, rhythm, coordination, memory, planning, social interaction, emotional engagement, and artistic expression — can improve balance, walking, mood, and overall well-being. Yet despite its proven benefits, specialized dance programs remain difficult to access for many people living with Parkinson's and related neurological conditions. NeuroDance was created to close this gap.

What Does the Project Aim to Do?

At its core, NeuroDance has three main goals.



DANCE INSTRUCTOR

First, it aims to **train and certify a new generation of dance instructors** who are equipped to work safely and inclusively with people who have Parkinson's Disease or related disorders. Students and professionals from fields such as physiotherapy, psychology, neuroscience, kinesiology, dance, and art therapy will receive interdisciplinary training that blends science, pedagogy, and creativity.



DANCE INTERVENTION

Second, the project will run **annual five-month dance interventions** in all participating countries. These programs are specifically tailored to the needs of people with Parkinson's and their caregivers, with the goal of improving movement, mental well-being, social connection, and quality of life. Caregivers are encouraged to take part as well, recognizing that their health and emotional well-being matter too.



SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION

Third, NeuroDance will **study the effects of these dance programs scientifically**, measuring changes in motor skills, cognitive function, mood, and quality of life. This research will help build stronger evidence for non-drug therapies and support better care models across Europe.

Beyond the dance floor: A european vision

NeuroDance aligns closely with European priorities: promoting healthy lifestyles, encouraging social inclusion, reducing inequality, and supporting people with fewer opportunities due to chronic illness. The project also embraces digital transformation by developing an open-access online platform with lectures, videos, practical guidance, and teaching materials. This platform will ensure that NeuroDance continues to educate and inspire professionals long after the project officially ends.

Environmental responsibility is also part of the plan, with eco-friendly venues, sustainable materials, and green transportation choices integrated into project activities.

A step toward the future

Supported by Parkinson's Europe (formerly the European Parkinson's Disease Association) and national patient organizations, NeuroDance responds directly to Europe's call for better access to care, innovative therapies, and improved quality of life for people living with Parkinson's. By combining science, movement, education, and compassion, the project offers a hopeful model for how health, culture, and community can move forward—together, and in step with the music.



MANY PARTNERS, ONE GOAL: BRINGING NEURODANCE TO LIFE ACROSS EUROPE

Behind the NeuroDance project stands a strong European partnership united by a shared belief: movement, sport, and dance can significantly improve health, well-being, and quality of life—especially for people living with Parkinson’s disease and related conditions.

The NeuroDance consortium brings together seven institutions from four European countries—Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Greece. These organizations were carefully chosen not only for their expertise, but also because they all work closely with students, professionals, patients, and local communities, helping the project reach far beyond academic walls.

Together, the partners combine science, education, dance, and lived experience. Each contributes unique knowledge to develop, test, and deliver an evidence-based dance program that is both scientifically sound and accessible to real people in real communities.

The Coordinator: **Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS), Slovenia**



The project is coordinated by the Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS), a respected public research institution with over 30 years of experience. Established by the Slovenian government, ZRS is known for bringing together different disciplines—from health and movement science to psychology and neuroscience.

Within ZRS, the **Institute for Kinesiology Research** plays a central role. Its researchers study how movement affects physical health, brain function, and overall well-being. The institute is also home to advanced facilities for rehabilitation and brain-body research and has been involved in pioneering studies with people with Parkinson's disease.

As coordinator, ZRS ensures that the project runs smoothly, stays on track, and meets European quality standards. It also leads research, oversees dance interventions in several Slovenian cities, and makes sure that results are shared clearly and responsibly.



Dance Expertise: Alma Mater Europaea – Dance Academy, Slovenia



ALMA MATER
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UNIVERSITY
DANCE ACADEMY

The Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy is Slovenia's only accredited higher-education institution dedicated entirely to dance. It educates future dance professionals and teachers, combining artistic creativity with pedagogy and innovation.

In NeuroDance, the Dance Academy plays a key role in shaping how dance is taught and adapted for people with Parkinson's. It leads the **certification of dance instructors**, helps design training programs, and is responsible for developing the project's **digital learning platform**, ensuring that NeuroDance knowledge remains available long after the project ends.

The Voice of Patients: Trepetlika – Parkinson's Disease Society of Slovenia



TREPETLIKA

Trepetlika is the heart of the patient community within NeuroDance. With over **1,300 members**, it represents people with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers across Slovenia.

For more than three decades, Trepetlika has worked to educate patients, support families, and improve daily life for people living with Parkinson's. Its close ties to European Parkinson's organizations ensure that patient perspectives are heard at both national and international levels.

In NeuroDance, Trepetlika helps connect the project to those who matter most: the end users. It supports recruitment, local organization, and communication, ensuring that the program responds to real needs rather than abstract ideas.

Movement and Rehabilitation Science: **Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic**



Palacký University
Olomouc

With a history stretching back 440 years, Palacký University Olomouc is one of Central Europe's leading universities. Its Faculty of Physical Culture specializes in movement, health, and active lifestyles.

The university brings strong expertise in **rehabilitation, physiotherapy, psychology, and dance-based movement therapies**. Its teams have long experience working with people with Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders.

Within NeuroDance, Palacký University leads the **training of dance instructors**, hosts international workshops, and implements dance programs locally, helping translate theory into practice.

Aging and Neuroscience through Dance: **Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg, Germany**



OTTO VON GUERICKE
UNIVERSITÄT
MAGDEBURG

Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg is a research-driven university with a strong focus on health, science, and society. Its experts in sports science and aging have studied the effects of dance on older adults for over a

decade.

What makes this partner unique is its blend of **scientific research and hands-on dance practice**. The team has worked closely with care homes, research centers, and people with mobility limitations, even developing innovative mobility aids for dance.

In NeuroDance, the university coordinates the **local implementation of dance interventions** across countries, ensuring consistency while respecting national differences.

Physical Activity and Health Promotion: **University of Thessaly, Greece**



UNIVERSITY OF
THESSALY

The University of Thessaly is a major Greek institution known for excellence in physical education, sport science, and health research. Its School of Physical Education and Sport Science focuses on how physical activity improves health, mental well-being, and quality of life.

The university contributes deep knowledge on **exercise, Parkinson's disease, and health psychology**, and plays a leading role in addressing **ethical aspects** of the project. It also hosts training activities and implements dance interventions in Greece.

Spreading the Message: **Rhythms of the Planet** (Associated Partner)

The Association Rhythms of the Planet adds a strong community and cultural dimension to NeuroDance. Founded to promote inclusion, intercultural understanding, and tolerance through dance, the association has years of experience working with seniors, people with mobility limitations, migrants, and refugees.

Although not a core project partner, its role is vital: **sharing results, reaching new audiences, and promoting European values**. Through workshops, events, and networks, it helps NeuroDance reach far beyond academia and healthcare.

A True European Collaboration

Together, these partners form a well-balanced team—linking science and art, universities and communities, professionals and patients. By pooling their expertise, the NeuroDance consortium ensures that the project is **credible, inclusive, sustainable, and impactful**, bringing movement, dignity, and connection to people living with Parkinson's across Europe.

LAUNCH OF THE NEURODANCE PROJECT – THE KICK-OFF MEETING

The **Institute for Kinesiology Research of the Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper)** hosted the kick-off meeting of the **NEURODANCE project** at the premises of the Humanities Centre. ZRS Koper, as the lead partner, is collaborating with six organisations from four countries in a joint effort to improve the quality of life for people with neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's disease.

Using dance as a tool to improve the physical and mental well-being of patients with neurodegenerative diseases, the partners are embarking on an ambitious and innovative three-year project that will be implemented in **Slovenia, Greece, Germany, and the Czech Republic**. In Slovenia, dance workshops will be held in various locations, with a particular focus on accessibility for people from more remote areas.





The kick-off meeting served as an opportunity to solidify the project's vision and foster connections between the partners. **Project leader Manca Peskar, MSc**, presented the workflow. The goal was simple but ambitious: to use dance as a scientifically grounded tool to improve the lives of people living with Parkinson's disease (PD).

During the kick-off, the researchers, health professionals, and dance experts came together for a series of five intensive working meetings, each one aiming to answer to an important question and set direction for forthcoming NeuroDance activities.

Key Question 1: How to best **combine our expertise** to build the NeuroDance program?

The first working meeting focused on teamwork. Experts from psychology, neuroscience, physiotherapy, movement science, dance, and sociology mapped out what each institution brings to the table.

The key concern was avoiding overlap while making sure no important area was missing. By clearly defining roles—such as mental health, physical rehabilitation, movement training, and dance pedagogy—the group agreed on a holistic approach that treats Parkinson’s not just as a medical condition, but as a lived experience affecting body, mind, and social life.

Key Question 2: How do we **train the next generation** of NeuroDance instructors?

The second working meeting tackled education. The team agreed to launch a five-day “train-the-trainers” program, with each partner institution contributing to teaching the future trainers.

Every year, around 18 new trainers will be certified, selected internally from fields such as psychology, physiotherapy, neuroscience, kinesiology, dance choreography, and art therapy. Demand is already high, with many more applicants than available places.

This ensures that NeuroDance will not remain a small pilot project, but can grow sustainably across Europe.

Key Question 3: How should the **dance intervention for Parkinson's** patients be carried out?

The third working meeting moved from planning to action. The partners agreed to run the dance intervention in parallel across several countries, following the same structure everywhere.

Participants with Parkinson's will attend two dance sessions per week for 18 weeks, each lasting about an hour. Classes will take place in suitable dance halls and will be promoted through Parkinson's disease associations, care centers, and nursing homes.

Each country aims to involve both people with Parkinson's and their caregivers, ensuring the program is inclusive while still scientifically robust. Students may also take part as part of their academic training or thesis work.

Key Question 4: How do we **scientifically measure** if NeuroDance works?

Dance may look joyful and expressive, but the fourth working meeting made clear that the project is also firmly rooted in research.

The team agreed on a pre- and post-intervention study design, measuring changes in motor abilities, cognitive function, and quality of life. Participants will complete health and demographic questionnaires, and some may undergo more detailed measurements such as brain activity recordings.

By comparing people who take part in the dance program with those who do not, researchers aim to clearly understand the real benefits of NeuroDance.

Key Question 5: How can we bring NeuroDance to **the wider public**?

The final workshop looked beyond the laboratory and dance studio. Each year, during the European Week of Sport, all partner countries will host a one- or a two-day public event called International Games Week.

These events will include lectures, playful sports challenges adapted for people with Parkinson's disease — such as table tennis, cycling, or simple strength tasks — and opportunities for winning medals and public engagement.

The idea is to celebrate movement, raise awareness, and show that physical activity can be both safe and empowering for people with neurodegenerative conditions.

A Shared Vision

Together, the five working meetings form a clear roadmap. NeuroDance is not just about dance—it is about cooperation across disciplines, rigorous science, meaningful training, and public inclusion. If successful, this European initiative could change how movement, art, and health come together to support people living with Parkinson's disease.

NEURODANCE IN MEDIA

<https://znanost.sta.si/3371134/z-raziskavami-vpliva-gibanja-na-mozgane-do-ucinkovitejsih-terapij-za-nevrodegenerativne-bolezni>

<https://znanost.sta.si/3386657/institut-za-kinezioloske-raziskave-zrs-koper-zagnal-projekt-neurodance>

<https://radiokoper.rtv slo.si/podkast/dopoldan-in-pol/173250483/175109950>

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