

NEWSPAPER #2

| SEPTEMBER 2025



NEURO DANCE

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



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Funded by
the European Union

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HOW NEURODANCE PREPARED DANCE LEADERS FOR PARKINSON'S CARE



From March 31 to April 4, 2025, Ljubljana became a meeting point for science, dance, and care. Experts and educators from across Europe gathered for the first NeuroDance “Train the Trainer” workshop, organised by ZRS Koper, the project’s lead partner. The five-day event marked a major step forward in preparing future dance instructors to work safely and confidently with people living with Parkinson’s disease.

The workshop brought together representatives from all partner institutions, creating a lively, international learning environment where knowledge was shared, tested, and refined. The goal was clear: to ensure that

every future NeuroDance instructor understands both the science behind Parkinson’s disease and the human needs of those living with it.

Learning the Science, Understanding the Person

The week began with an introduction to Parkinson’s disease—what it is, how it affects movement and thinking, and why tailored physical activity is so important. Participants were also introduced to the overall structure of the NeuroDance programme, learning how dance, health, and education are carefully combined into one coherent approach.

Safety was a key theme throughout the week. Trainers learned how to adapt movements, prevent injuries, and create a supportive environment where participants feel confident and respected.

From Theory to the Dance Floor

Each day combined short lectures with hands-on practice. Participants didn't just listen—they moved, observed, practiced teaching, and reflected together. Practical sessions focused on:

- How to demonstrate movements clearly and safely
- How to engage participants with different abilities
- How to encourage confidence, enjoyment, and social interaction



One of the most meaningful parts of the workshop was the direct work with people with Parkinson's disease. Under expert guidance, future trainers practiced leading real dance sessions, gaining first-hand experience and learning how small adjustments can make a big difference.



Learning Together Across Borders

Beyond dance, the workshop also strengthened cooperation between partner institutions. Daily working meetings were dedicated to aligning the study protocol, ensuring that the dance interventions will be delivered and evaluated in the same high-quality way in all participating countries.

This collaborative approach helped blend different perspectives—from neuroscience and physiotherapy to dance pedagogy and psychology—into a shared, evidence-based framework.



Certification and Celebration

On the final day, participants took part in a certification exam, demonstrating their understanding of Parkinson's disease, dance intervention principles, and safe teaching practices. Passing the exam confirmed that they are ready to bring NeuroDance into their local communities.

The workshop concluded with a diploma-awarding ceremony, celebrating the hard work, dedication, and teamwork shown throughout the week. Workshop leaders highlighted key lessons learned and praised the collaborative spirit that defined the event. We can announce with pride that **26 students and professionals** successfully completed the training and became **certified dance instructors for people with Parkinson's Disease**.



A Milestone for NeuroDance

The Ljubljana “Train the Trainer” workshop was more than a training course—it was a milestone. By combining scientific knowledge, practical experience, and structured evaluation, the NeuroDance project is building a strong foundation for innovative, evidence-based dance interventions for people with Parkinson’s disease.

As these newly trained instructors return to their home countries, they carry with them not just a certificate, but a shared mission: to use dance to support movement, dignity, connection, and quality of life—one step at a time.

LIGHTING UP KOPER FOR PARKINSON'S: SCIENCE, SOLIDARITY, AND HOPE

On World Parkinson's Day, 11 April 2025, the Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper) and the Trepetlika Association joined a powerful global movement known as "Spark The Night." The initiative brings together people, communities, and institutions around the world to raise awareness and show support for the millions living with Parkinson's disease.

This year, the message of solidarity reached Koper, where Pristaniška Street was illuminated in blue. The color was not chosen by chance: blue is the international symbol of Parkinson's awareness. The global campaign aims to light 11.8 million blue lights worldwide—one for each person affected by Parkinson's disease.



But for ZRS Koper, the commitment to Parkinson's awareness does not end with a symbolic light. It is deeply rooted in research and action. One key example is NeuroDance, an international project supported by the Erasmus+ Sport programme. NeuroDance explores how dance-based interventions can help reduce symptoms and improve well-being in people with Parkinson's and other neurodegenerative diseases. Working closely with international partners, the project combines science, movement, and creativity to develop new, supportive approaches to care.



A crucial partner in this effort is Trepetlika, the Slovenian Parkinson's association, which has spent decades advocating for patients and their families. Through education, awareness-raising, and community engagement, Trepetlika helps ensure that the voices of people living with Parkinson's are heard and understood.

Together, ZRS Koper and Trepetlika show how collaboration between science and the local community can make a real difference. By lighting up the city and advancing research at the same time, they send a clear message: Parkinson's disease affects many, but no one faces it alone.

WHEN MOVEMENT BECAME A WEEKLY RITUAL: UNFOLDING OF THE NEURODANCE INTERVENTION

For many participants, the NeuroDance intervention was not just a programme—it became a regular rhythm of life. Over the course of 18 weeks, people living with Parkinson’s disease took part in two dance sessions per week, for a total of 36 one-hour classes. Importantly, sessions were never held on two consecutive days, allowing time for rest and recovery while maintaining continuity and motivation.

Dancing for Joy, Flow, and Confidence

The intervention was built around a multi-style dance programme, blending folk and social dances such as country dance, Greek dance, tango, and polka. The aim was not perfection, but pleasure, expression, musicality, and smoothness of movement. Through repetition and rhythm, participants practiced balance, coordination, and flowing transitions—skills that are often challenged by Parkinson’s disease.

At the heart of the programme was an inclusive pedagogical approach. Every movement and choreography was shown at different levels:

- seated,
- standing with support, or
- standing freely and moving through space.

Participants were encouraged to choose what suited them best on that particular day, respecting their bodies, energy levels, and confidence. This flexibility helped create a welcoming atmosphere where everyone could participate without pressure.

A Familiar and Reassuring Structure

Each dance session followed a clear and reassuring structure. It began with a greeting and settling-in period, allowing participants to connect and feel at ease. This was followed by a gradual warm-up, moving from seated exercises to standing.

The main dance section focused on learning steps and dancing to music, often followed by playful improvisation and movement games that encouraged creativity and laughter. Each session ended with a cool-down, helping participants relax and leave the class feeling calm and supported.

Participation Across Countries

In **Slovenia**, the dance intervention took place in three cities — Ljubljana, Maribor, and Izola. Of the 94 initial applications, 62 participants attended at least one session. Ljubljana and Izola each welcomed 20 participants, while 22 joined in Maribor. Attendance varied: 23 participants attended at least half of the sessions, while others participated more occasionally, reflecting the realities of living with a fluctuating condition.





In the Czech Republic, the programme included 15 people with Parkinson's disease, most accompanied by a caregiver or friend. Sessions were supported by students of physiotherapy and dance and led by experienced dance teachers and physiotherapists. On average, around 10 patients and 6 caregivers attended each session. Despite feeling physically tired at times, participants consistently reported high satisfaction, enjoyment, and a strong sense of support.



In **Germany**, approximately 17 participants took part in the dance sessions, of which 14 attended at least 2/3 of all the sessions, resulting in an engaged group of familiar people who worked together to explore movement, rhythm, and social connection.



In **Greece**, the dance intervention began later, starting in September. Due to the country's hot summer climate, the programme was carefully scheduled to avoid the hottest months, ensuring better comfort and participation. This thoughtful adjustment reflects the project's flexible and participant-centered approach.

Across all countries, NeuroDance became more than physical activity. It was a place to move, connect, laugh, and feel capable again.

MOVING TOGETHER ACROSS EUROPE: INTERNATIONAL GAMES WEEK CELEBRATES SPORT, INCLUSION, AND PARKINSON'S AWARENESS

In celebration of the [European Week of Sport](#), communities across Europe came together under the banner of the International Games Week, a public event series organised within the framework of the NeuroDance project. Taking place in Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Greece, the initiative highlighted how sport, movement, and shared experiences can promote health, inclusion, and quality of life—especially for people living with Parkinson's disease.

Although the events differed in format from country to country, they shared a common message: physical activity belongs to everyone, regardless of age, ability, or health condition.

Slovenia: Competition, Science, and Public Engagement

In Slovenia, the Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS Koper) organised a two-day International Games Week event that combined physical challenge with scientific insight.

The first day featured a “Triathlon against Parkinson's disease,” where participants tested themselves in table tennis, hand-grip strength, and balance tasks. Designed to be engaging rather than competitive, the activities highlighted the importance of maintaining strength, coordination, and confidence in everyday life. They were awarded participation medals in recognition of their dedication to engaging in physical activity.



On the second day, the focus shifted to knowledge and awareness. A public lecture by Dr. Robert Stojan from Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg introduced audiences to cutting-edge research on mobile brain imaging and motor-cognitive interaction in aging and Parkinson's disease. Together, the two days demonstrated how movement and science can complement each other in improving understanding and quality of life.



Czech Republic: Bowling, Dance, and Community in Olomouc

The Faculty of Physical Culture at Palacký University in Olomouc hosted a lively event titled “Bowl-Dance.” Held as part of the European Week of Sport, the gathering brought together people with Parkinson’s disease from several Czech cities, alongside members of the general public.

The event was built around the traditional bowling tournament *Memorial of Josef Salavec*, which this year gained a new dimension through the NeuroDance project. In addition to friendly competition, participants enjoyed a short demonstration of dance-based activities designed specifically for people with Parkinson’s.

The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, filled with smiles, conversation, and encouragement. Beyond sport, the event created space for sharing experiences and building motivation, showing how rhythm and movement can foster confidence and social connection. The initiative was made possible through cooperation between Palacký University, Parkinson Club Olomouc, and the Parkinson Society, and perfectly reflected the spirit of inclusion promoted by the European Week of Sport.



Germany: From Awareness to Clinical Practice

In Germany, the European Week of Sport opened doors between research and healthcare practice. At the invitation of Prof. Dr. Sailer, representatives of the NeuroDance project visited the Median Neurological Rehabilitation Clinic, where the project was presented to more than 30 medical doctors and therapists.

Dr. Kathrin Rehfeld and Ulrike Groß shared the NeuroDance concept, along with its theoretical foundations and early practical experiences. The discussion sparked strong interest among clinical professionals, leading the clinic to express its intention to integrate NeuroDance principles into daily rehabilitation therapy. Plans for follow-up educational sessions and tailored dance choreographies for people with Parkinson's are already underway—an example of how European Week of Sport activities can lead to lasting change.



Greece: Continuing the Celebration Beyond the Official Week

In Greece, the International Games Week event took place shortly after the official European Week of Sport. Due to the later start of some project activities, the Greek partners chose to hold their public event at a later date, ensuring it could be delivered with the same quality, care, and public engagement as in the other countries.

This adjusted timing reflects the project's commitment to meaningful participation rather than rushed delivery, allowing the Greek event to fully align with the NeuroDance values of inclusion, accessibility, and well-being. Despite taking place later, the event remained closely connected to the spirit and objectives of the European Week of Sport.

A Shared European Message

Across four countries, the International Games Week showed how diverse activities—from bowling and dance to scientific lectures and clinical collaboration—can all serve a shared purpose. Under the auspices of the NeuroDance project, the events promoted healthy lifestyles, raised awareness of Parkinson's disease, and demonstrated the power of sport and movement to connect people across borders.

Together, these celebrations reminded audiences that sport is not only about performance, but about **participation, dignity, and community**—values at the very heart of the European Week of Sport.

NEURODANCE STEPS ONTO THE SCIENTIFIC STAGE

The NeuroDance project reached an important milestone this September at the 1st International Conference on Human in Motion, held in Portorož, Slovenia. This event marked the first **scientific conference** where NeuroDance results were publicly presented, showcasing early findings from the Slovenian participant group involved in the project's first cycle of the dancing intervention.



The preliminary results were encouraging. Researchers reported signs that the dance-based intervention may help improve mobility, measured through the commonly used *Timed Up and Go* test, as well as dual-task ability—the skill of managing movement while focusing on another task at the same time. While still early, these findings suggest that dance could play a meaningful role in supporting everyday movement and coordination in people living with Parkinson's disease, and they underline the promise of NeuroDance as a novel, evidence-informed approach to therapeutic movement.



Beyond the scientific programme, the conference also provided a valuable opportunity for some NeuroDance partners to meet in person, exchange experiences, and reflect on the project's progress.

NEURODANCE IN MEDIA

<https://olomouc.rozhlas.cz/kazdy-pohyb-se-pocita-dobre-vi-kinantropolozka-jana-pelclova-ktera-se-zabyva-9421718>

<https://www.mujrozhlas.cz/dobre-dopoledne-s-ceskym-rozhlasem-olomouc/tanec-jako-terapie-projekt-neurodance-pomaha-lidem-s>

<https://www.regionalobala.si/novica/svetovni-dan-parkinsonove-bolezni-v-globalno-pobudo-stopimo-iz-teme-vkljucen-tudi-zrs-koper>

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