

# WL NEWS

**ISSUE 61**

**A THEME FOR THE YEAR AHEAD:  
LEISURE FOR A BETTER SOCIETY IN 2025**



**February 2025**



# Editorial

Are you a  
WLO Premium  
member?  
Submit your  
news here!

Dear members, dear colleagues,

In our first newsletter of 2025, you will encounter the theme of 'Leisure for a better society' in several places. This is the idea that will be headlining both our celebration of World Leisure Day on the 16th of April and the World Leisure Congress from 25th-28th of August, both of which you can read more about below. Stay tuned for more updates on the biennial World Leisure Expo & Forum in Hangzhou, China.

We welcome three new members to our Board of Directors and two new institutions to our prestigious network of World Leisure Centers of Excellence. We also tell you a bit about our experience at the FITUR 2025 International Tourism Fair last month.

You are invited to join a call to the UNFCCC to include cultural heritage, the arts, and creative sectors in climate policy, and to check out the insights revealed in UN Tourism's 3rd World Sports Tourism Congress report.

A fascinating article linked in our Research section discusses the benefits of positive attitude towards exercise in children, and you will find a selection of free WLJ research articles to access this month, along with a call for abstracts for a special WLJ issue and for the World Leisure Congress.

You are also invited to express your interest in establishing your institution as a World Leisure Centre of Excellence.

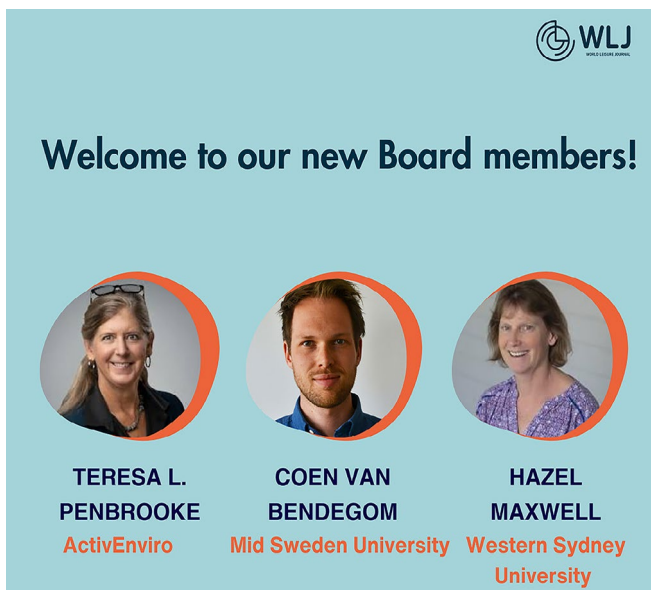
We are looking forward to another eventful year continuing to explore and advocate for the positive impacts of leisure and wellbeing on society as a whole. Read on for a first look at everything we have in store.

Yours truly

Dr. Cristina Ortega Nuere  
WLO Chief Operating Officer



# WLO News



## WLO welcomes new members to the Board of Directors

After an open call for nominees launched in September of last year, we are delighted to welcome [Dr. Teresa L. Penbrooke](#) (ActivEnviro), [Coen van Bendegom](#) (Mid Sweden University) and [Dr. Hazel Maxwell](#) (Western Sydney University) to the WLO Board of Directors. We extend our warmest thanks for their willingness to contribute to the development of WLO's programmes and activities!

[Dr. John Dattilo](#), [Maria Luiza de Souza Dias](#), [Dr. Giyasettin Demirhan](#) have also been re-elected for an additional term.

We would also like to give special thanks to departing member [Dr. Arianne Reis](#), who

has served as a WLO Board member for many years and continues to act as coordinator of the World Leisure Centers of Excellence (WLCE) network; [Prof. Oksana Grybovich](#); and [Dr. Alixon Reyes](#).

Coming from Australia, the USA, and Sweden, five members are joining the WLO Board of Directors for the 2025-2027 term. They have been elected by current members of the Board after our open nomination process closed in November 2024.

The newly elected members of the Board are: Teresa L. Penbrooke, PhD – Executive Director, [ActivEnviro](#) (formerly GP RED), United States

Coen van Bendegom – PhD candidate at Mid Sweden University, Sweden

Hazel Maxwell, PhD – Director of Academic Programs – Health/PE/Sport Development - School of Health Sciences, Western Sydney University (WSU), Australia

**We thank our Board for their continuous support and wish to express our profound pleasure at having such a diverse and committed group of people forming our main governance body.**





## WLO returns to the FITUR 2025 International Tourism Fair

As a UN Tourism Affiliate Member, the World Leisure Organization has once again participated in the prestigious [FITUR 2025](#) International Tourism Fair, held in Madrid from 22 to 26 January.

We were represented by our Chief Operating Officer [Dr. Cristina Ortega](#) and our Communication & Events Officer Dr. Mireia Iglesias. This presence underscores WLO's commitment to supporting the global tourism sector in its efforts towards a more resilient and inclusive future.

[UN Tourism](#) organised a series of activities at FITUR 2025 and, as a vital bridge between public and private sector leaders, emphasized the importance of innovation in tourism and the promotion of accessible travel for all. Participation at FITUR 2025 focused on fostering collaboration and advancing key objectives that ensure sustainability and inclusivity in global tourism development.

Throughout the event, UN Tourism engaged with its member states, business leaders, and key industry stakeholders in a series of high-level meetings and strategic events. These interactions aimed to strengthen partnerships, align strategies, and inspire new initiatives that will enrich the global tourism landscape.

Our presence at FITUR 2025 reaffirmed WLO's active collaboration with UN Tourism, further amplifying our efforts to promote leisure, accessibility, and innovation within the sector.

**Together, we will continue working towards a brighter and more inclusive future for global tourism.**



## World Leisure Day 2025: A day to explore how leisure transforms lives and communities for the better!

Step into a world where imagination fuels innovation and leisure becomes the catalyst for a better world!

On **April 16, 2025**, the World Leisure Organization proudly celebrates the 5th annual WL Day, dedicated to the transformative theme of **'Leisure for a Better Society.'**

World Leisure Day 2025 is a global call to explore the transformative role of leisure in building a more inclusive, equitable, and harmonious society. WL Day will unite communities worldwide to examine how leisure can address critical societal challenges and inspire positive change.

Join us in celebrating the vital role leisure plays in building a healthier, more sustainable and connected world. Together we'll explore, learn, and embrace the transformative power of leisure to create a better society for everyone.

[READ MORE...](#)

**SHOWCASE YOUR  
RESEARCH IN BREDA.**  
**MAKE A GLOBAL  
IMPACT!**

Extended Abstract Deadline: 17 March



worldleisure.nl

## World Leisure Congress 2025: Late Abstract Submission is open until Monday, 17th March

The World Leisure Congress 2025 will be held in Breda, The Netherlands from **25-28 August 2025. Make sure you submit your abstract on time!**

The WL Congress brings together leisure professionals from academia, industry, and government to discuss, share, and address the latest issues in the domain of leisure in its broadest sense, encompassing tourism, sport, recreation, hospitality, media, and events.

Leisure is an ever-stronger determinant of both individual and collective wellbeing. Thinking strategically about leisure as a catalyst for promoting wellbeing and inducing increased social and ecological sustainability is what binds together academics, governments, and industry.

The overarching theme of the Congress is **'Leisure for a Better Society'**. This theme refers to the central position that leisure takes in the lives of people worldwide.

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## Two new WL Centers of Excellence

We are excited to welcome two new [World Leisure Centers of Excellence](#) (WLCE) to our prestigious international network of higher education institutions who have committed to advancing graduate and post graduate education and research in the fields of play, recreation, arts, culture, sports, festivals, health and wellness, travel, and tourism- all with a global perspective.

Our new WLCEs are:

### Western Sydney University

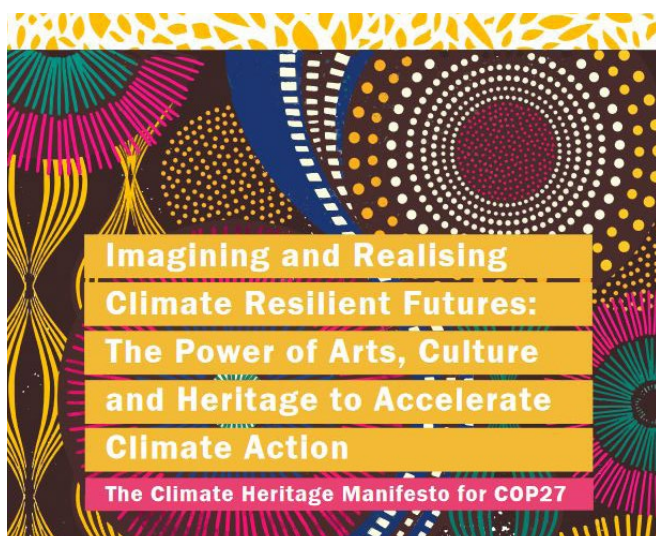
Through cuttingedge and collaborative teaching, research and community engagement, and with a commitment to sustainability principles, the Centre of Excellence at Western Sydney University aims to contribute to creating a thriving, inclusive, and resilient community in which all members enjoy their human right to leisure. [Read more about everything WSU offers...](#)

### Hungarian University of Sports Science

The Hungarian University of Sports Science (HUSS) is Hungary's oldest and most comprehensive institution dedicated to sports, physical education and active leisure. Located in Budapest, HUSS offers a range of programs, including BSc, MSc, and PhD degrees in fields such as Recreation Management and Health Promotion, Physical Education, Sport Management, Sports Coaching, Adapted Physical Education. [Read more about everything HUSS offers...](#)

If you are interested in establishing your own institution as a WLCE, please see the **Opportunities** section of this newsletter!

# Network



## Global call to the UNFCCC to include cultural heritage, the arts, and creative sectors in climate policy

Cultural voices from across the world are uniting. Together, we're asking national governments' climate negotiators who assemble at UN Climate Conferences (known as COPs) to make decisions that put cultural heritage, the arts, and creative sectors at the heart of climate action.

If you recognize culture's power to unlock climate action, join our global call to the COP to put culture at the heart of climate policy.

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## UN Tourism's 3rd World Sports Tourism Congress report

The [Summary Report of the 3rd World Sports Tourism Congress](#) (WSTC) is now available. It details the primary insights, best practices, and conclusions extracted from the event held from November 28-29, 2024.

The theme of the [3rd WSTC](#) was **Tourism and Sports Creating a Lasting Legacy for Destinations**, and the congress featured compelling keynotes and insightful panels covering a wide array of topics, including:

- Sports tourism on government agendas
- Partnership models between governments and sports entities
- Long-term planning in Sports Tourism
- Sponsorship trends
- Brand alignment between destinations and sports businesses
- Brand activation
- Community engagement in sports events
- Best practices in bidding for sports events
- Innovation in sports infrastructure and tourist experience
- New technologies (e.g. virtual reality, augmented reality, IoT, artificial intelligence)
- Sustainability and net-zero strategies
- Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) integration in destination planning
- Measuring impact

[Download the report](#) to learn more about these topics and get inspired by the projects, ideas, and recommendations shared during the congress.



# Research



## Children and young people are significantly more active when they have a positive attitude to exercise

by Kath Hudson

Sport England's Active Lives Children and Young People Survey for the academic year 2023-2024 has found that one of the biggest determinants of physical activity levels is children having positive attitudes towards exercise.

The annual report summarizes sport and physical activity behaviours of 5- to 16-year-olds in the UK. The definition of physical activity covers fitness activities, gym, dance, cycling, sport, walking, scooting, active travel, team sports, swimming, active play, and informal activity.

Researchers found that where children had three or more positive attitudes towards physical activity (counted as happiness, resilience, and trust), 62 percent were active, 17 percent were fairly active, and 21 percent were less active.

[READ MORE...](#)

From *Sports Management*

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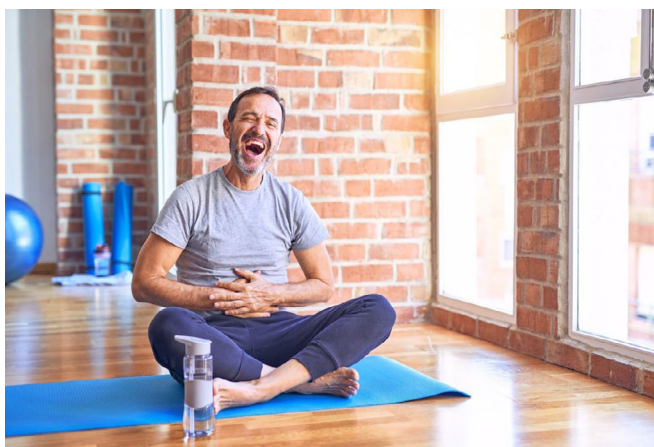
Courtesy of Leisure Media

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Sign up for free magazines and ezines at <http://leisuremedia.com/signup>



# Industry



## Will cardio fight back against strength training in 2025? A look at the upcoming trends

by Kath Hudson

As we enter 2025, HCM reflects on the key trends of last year and what else might break through this year.

Reformer Pilates was one of the standout trends of 2024. The modality skyrocketed in popularity, and we saw operators starting to create their own concepts in-house, including Everyone Active in the UK and SATS in Scandinavia, which has announced it will also be launching a reformer concept this year.

Recovery was another strong trend that looks set to build momentum this year. Many operators are looking to add recovery areas to

their offering, whether this be infrared saunas and cold plunges, or just a place to chillout with foam rollers.

[READ MORE...](#)

From HCM

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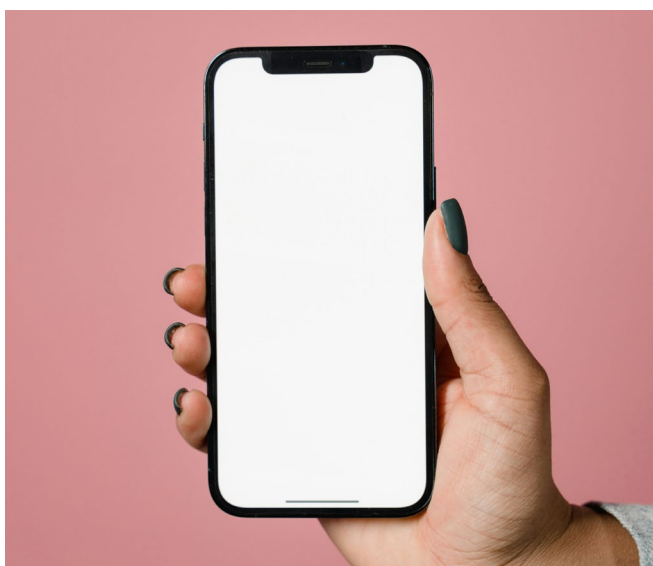
Courtesy of Leisure Media

Find out more at [www.leisuremedia.com](http://www.leisuremedia.com)

Sign up for free magazines and ezines at <http://leisuremedia.com/signup>



# Publications



## **World Leisure Journal articles with free access in February**

Join us in recognizing **World Braille Day** and the **International Day of Education** with free access to articles from the World Leisure Journal that explore the powerful connections between leisure, accessibility, and lifelong learning.

Discover thought-provoking research on how leisure fosters inclusive learning environments, supports accessibility for people with visual impairments, and enriches educational practices worldwide.

Highlights include our **Global South Paper of the Month**, which amplifies the voices of scholars from the southern hemisphere researching leisure's role in social equity,

education, and community empowerment. Access these articles for free throughout the month and explore how leisure can drive accessibility, education, and global dialogue.

### **Leisure education and recreation participation: a niche for recreational therapy in South Africa**

Cindy Kriel, J. Theron Weilbach, and Linda L. Caldwell

### **Experiências de lazer da comunidade LGBTQIAP+ no Brasil**

José Manuel Alvarez Seara & Christianne Luce Gomes

### **Accessibility of national parks and other natural protected areas for people with disabilities: a scoping review of the academic literature**

Mark Weiler, Alison Whiting, Waqas Sajid, Neha Dewan, and Tilak Dutta



# Opportunities



## Last chance to submit your abstracts for WLC 2025 in the Netherlands! (Deadline: 17th March 2025)

Share your groundbreaking research, innovative practices, and fresh ideas with the global leisure community. By submitting your work, you'll not only help shape the future of leisure but also inspire meaningful connections and collaborations within our vibrant community. The 18th World Leisure Congress will be hosted by the World Leisure Center of Excellence at Breda University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands from 25-28 August 2025. The event's theme will be **"Leisure for a Better Society"**.

The congress brings together leisure professionals from around the world in academia, government, and industry to promote informative, stimulating, and challenging discussions on the latest issues in leisure.

**Submit your abstract by Monday, 17th March 2025!**

[READ MORE...](#)



## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: *World Leisure Journal* Special Issue titled **"Of Borders, Borderlands, and Crossings: The Poetics and Politics of Leisure at/from the Edge(s)"**

The World Leisure Organization is pleased to announce a call for abstracts for a special issue of the *World Leisure Journal* titled **"Of Borders, Borderlands, and Crossings: The Poetics and Politics of Leisure at/from the Edge(s)"**.

Borders and crossings are not just the margins of our world – they are central to shaping lives, identities, and experiences of leisure. Inspired by critical thinkers like Walter Benjamin, this issue seeks to explore leisure through the lens of borders, borderlands, and crossings – their poetics, politics, and transformative possibilities.

**The deadline for abstract submission is 30 April 2025.**

We invite interdisciplinary contributions from fields including sociology, anthropology, cultural geography, gender studies, migration studies, and beyond. We particularly encourage submissions from voices in the Global South, early-career researchers, community activists, artists, and cultural producers.

**Key themes:**

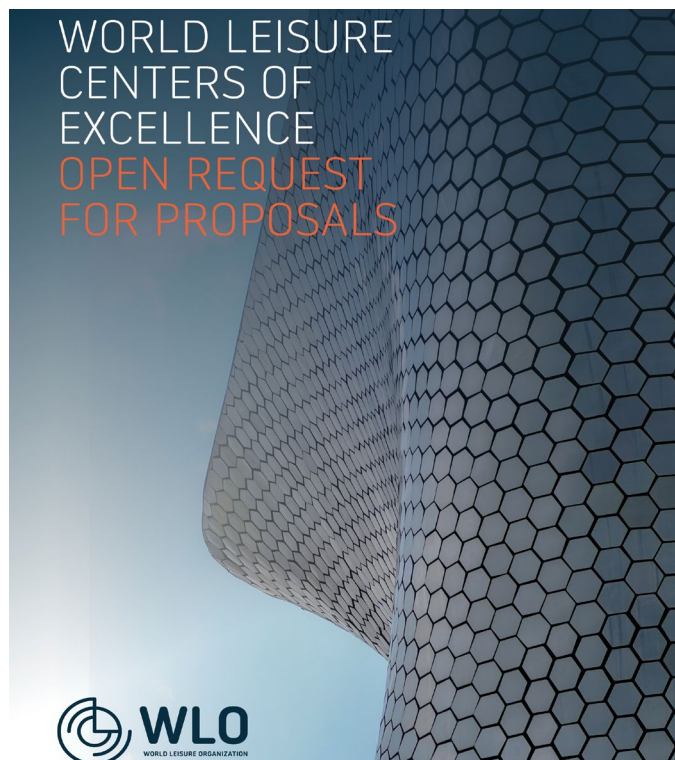
- Leisure in/through/across borderlands
- Displacement, disablement, and leisure
- Queering leisure and (forced) migration
- Leisure, settler colonialism, and Indigenous sovereignties
- Participatory leisure research and global inequalities
- Crip, decolonial, and more-than-human leisure perspectives

**Submission guidelines:**

- Abstracts should be 300 words and clearly outline the research contribution
- Submissions in multiple languages are welcome
- Submission deadline: 30 April 2025

This special issue seeks to amplify diverse perspectives and foster critical conversations on the intersections of leisure, borders, and global dynamics. We look forward to your contributions that illuminate the politics and poetics of leisure at and across the edges of our world.

**For more information and to submit your abstract, visit the [WLJ website](#).**



## **Become a World Leisure Center of Excellence**

From now and until July 2025, express your interest in establishing your institution as a World Leisure Center of Excellence (WLCE).

A request for proposals (RFP) was recently launched to solicit proposals from interested colleges or universities to establish and implement a [World Leisure Center of Excellence \(WLCE\)](#) and become a recognized member of the WLCE network.

Currently, this network includes [Breda University of Applied Sciences](#) (the Netherlands), [Vancouver Island University](#) (Canada), [University of Sao Paulo](#) (Brazil), [University of Otago](#) (New Zealand), [Zhejiang University](#) (China), and [Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières](#) (Canada).

WLO is especially interested in the establishment of selective additional WLCEs in geographic areas without representation of such programs. However, all proposals will receive consideration by the WLO Board of Directors.

Notices of Intent to respond to this RFP are due before **July 5, 2024**.



# Encounter



**The World Leisure Congress 2025 is coming to Breda, The Netherlands, from August 25-28, 2025. Prof. Dr. Marcel Bastiaansen invites you to be part of this inspiring experience!**

[Watch the video](#) and get ready to connect, innovate, and shape the future of leisure.





WORLD LEISURE ORGANIZATION (WLO)

World Leisure Organization is a non-profit organization registered in the State of New York in Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council since 1990.

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