

Open Water Swimming for All

OWS4ALL project presentation

Safe. Inclusive. Evidence-informed.



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What is Open Water Swimming?

Swimming in natural waters with real environmental conditions.

Natural venues

Sea, lakes, rivers, reservoirs and channels.

Changing conditions

Temperature, waves, visibility, wind, currents and marine traffic.

Different skills

Navigation, pacing, group swimming, communication and safety awareness.

Inclusive potential

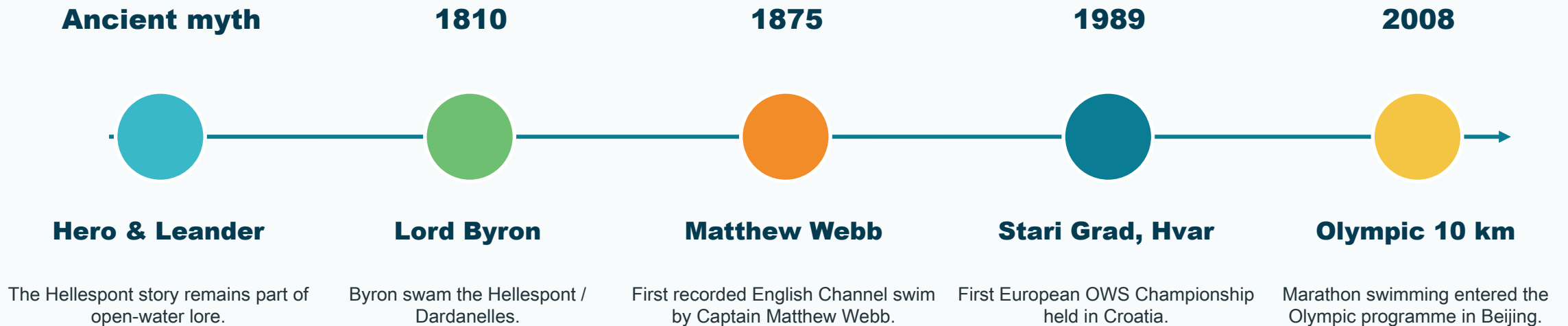
Accessible outdoor sport when preparation, support and risk management are in place.

OWS is not simply “pool swimming outside”: it requires preparation for nature, not against it.



From myth to Olympic sport

A short heritage timeline with a Croatian link.



Update: FINA is now World Aquatics. Use current terminology in all project materials.

Benefits we can communicate responsibly

Keep the message positive, but avoid medical overclaims.



Physical fitness

Aerobic endurance, muscular coordination, breathing control and low-impact movement.

Mental wellbeing

Rhythm, nature exposure and group support can improve mood and reduce stress.

Social connection

Shared goals, buddy systems and community events build belonging.

Confidence & autonomy

Gradual progression helps participants experience competence in a challenging environment.

Recommended wording: “may support health and wellbeing” rather than “cures”, “detoxifies” or “heals”.

Open water safety: know the risks

The more inclusive the event, the stronger the safety system must be.



Cold shock

Sudden gasping, fast breathing and panic risk.

Weather & sea state

Wind, waves and visibility can change quickly.

Fatigue

Open water effort can feel harder than pool swimming.

Navigation

Swimmers may drift, miss buoys or lose orientation.

Traffic & obstacles

Boats, rocks, ropes, jellyfish or uneven entry points.

Water quality

Avoid swimming after pollution warnings or unsafe conditions.

Safety-first protocol

A simple checklist to prepare every session or event.

1

Assess swimmer readiness

Pool ability, medical considerations, confidence and previous experience.

2

Check conditions

Temperature, wind, waves, visibility, route, entry/exit and water quality.

3

Brief clearly

Buddy pairs, signals, turning points, stop rules and emergency contacts.

4

Support in water

Visible caps, tow floats, kayaks/SUP, assistants and rescue coverage.

5

Debrief and record

What worked, incidents, participant feedback and next progression step.



Inclusion in open water swimming

Accessibility is a design choice, not an add-on.



KEY PRINCIPLES

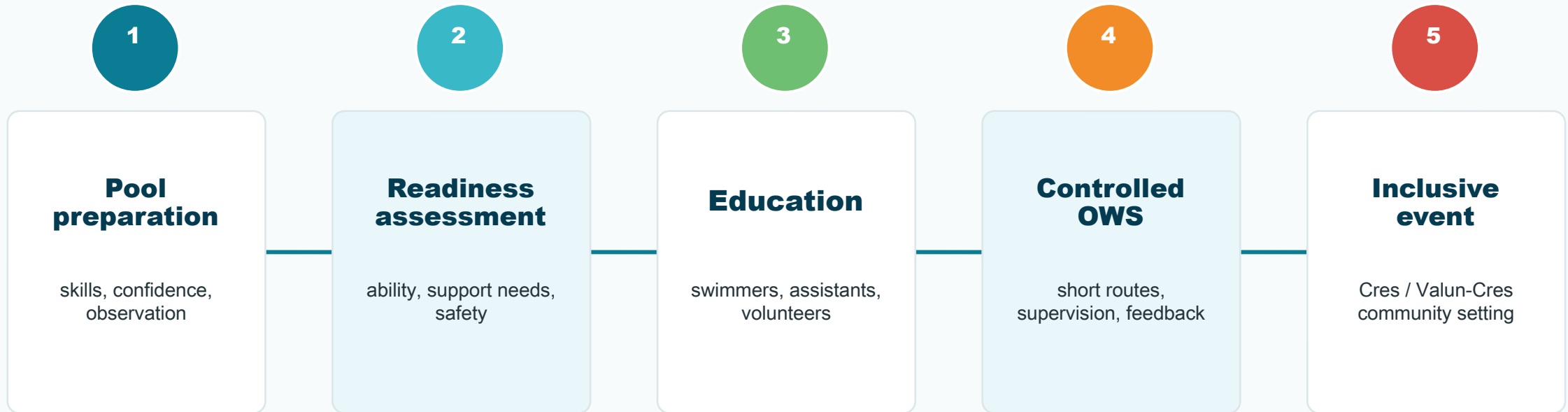
- Plan with participants, not only for them.
- Use individual risk assessment and consent.
- Match each swimmer with appropriate support.
- Communicate using accessible, simple instructions.
- Ensure dignity: independence where possible, assistance where needed.

PRACTICAL ADAPTATIONS

- Accessible changing, transport and entry/exit points.
- Visible caps, tow floats, assistants, kayaks or SUP support.
- Shorter route options and warm-up/cool-down zones.
- Clear “stop” signal and emergency handover plan.

OWS4ALL project model

A gradual pathway from safe preparation to inclusive open-water participation.



The model supports participation while respecting safety, autonomy and individual needs.

Pilot preparation: pool-based Slovenia event

Čatež pilot as a safe step before open-water participation.



PURPOSE

Introduce participants and assistants to the project approach. Observe swimming ability, confidence and support needs. Practice communication, entry/exit and safe group movement. Identify who is ready for the Cres open-water event and what adaptation is needed.

OUTPUTS TO RECORD

Participant readiness

Short checklist for route choice, support level and safety briefing needs.

Lessons learned

What needs to change before Cres: route, timing, staff, equipment, communication.

Cres / Valun-Cres inclusive event

A community setting where memory, sport and inclusion meet.

Floriu Burburan legacy

Use the story with respect: a local inspiration for courage, perseverance and inclusion.

Inclusive route options

Shorter distances, companion swimmers and local participants can increase access.

Safety & visibility

Clear course, marked buoys, support vessels and volunteer briefings are essential.

Suggested tone: not “special category only”, but shared event with appropriate support.

Communication messages

Use one coherent story across website, Facebook, Instagram and event materials.

MAIN MESSAGE

Open water is for everyone - safely, inclusively, together.

AVOID

“Sea cures disease”
“Detox” or “removes toxins”
“No risk” or “everyone can swim any route”

USE INSTEAD

“May support wellbeing”
“Safe progression and support”
“Inclusive participation with individual adaptations”

CONTENT IDEAS

Participant stories | safety tips | partner posts | Čatež lessons | Cres countdown | volunteer calls



Next steps for OWS4ALL

From presentation to action.

Finalize materials

Use corrected terminology, project logos, EU visibility and disclaimer.

Publish online

Website page, Facebook page and Instagram profile with shared visual identity.

Prepare Cres

Route, safety plan, participants, assistants, accommodation and transport.

Document impact

Attendance, feedback, photos, lessons learned and dissemination evidence.

Call to action: Join us in making open water swimming safer, more accessible and more visible for all.

Sources used for factual updates

Keep this slide in the working version or move it to notes for public delivery.

World Aquatics - FINA becomes World Aquatics, 12 Dec 2022

World Aquatics - Overview and history: IOC confirmed 10 km marathon swimming for Beijing 2008

European Aquatics - Stari Grad hosted the inaugural European Open Water Swimming Championships in 1989

NHS Inform - Risks of open water swimming: cold water shock and safety considerations

CDC - How to safely visit oceans, lakes and rivers: water quality, wounds and infection prevention

Suggested editorial rule for future versions:

Use clear, motivating language - but do not present seawater as a medical cure. For health claims, use cautious wording and cite credible sources.

Working presentation prepared from the previous "OWS Presentation.pdf" with major restructuring, updated facts, safer health messaging and OWS4ALL project focus.