Intellectual Output No 2:
Innovative offers in sport

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Sport Clubs for Health-enhancement, Activation, Modernisation and Participation

1.0
Introduction

The topic that CHAMP addresses is encouraging participation in sport and physical activity, especially by supporting the implementation of the Council Recommendations on healthenhancing physical activity and is in line with the EU Physical Activity Guidelines. The main aim of CHAMP is to give the sport movement innovative tools and education for modernisation, offering fresh insights of current trends and solutions for promotion of physical activity.

As mentioned in the report Definitions and background research (from now on referred to as IO1), organisations face increasingly competitive environments as they try to attract resources and growth. In response to this, they need to adapt and change in order to differentiate themselves from competitors and other distractions on people's time. One way of doing this is to implement new services, products, and systems. The CHAMP Project initially spoke about these changes in terms of 'modernisation', and there is a wide scale acceptance among agencies and researchers in this area that sports organisations and sports clubs need to become more "modern" in order to operate successfully. Unfortunately, the word 'modernisation' has been adopted in a rather wide range of contexts and is often now associated with issues of governance and policymaking in sport,

rather than the main concerns in this project, namely club development. For this reason, it was decided by the CHAMP Project partners to supplement the use of the word modernisation with the word 'innovation' (IO1, p.4).

The CHAMP project is addressing the challenges connected to a decreasing number of members within European sport clubs through research and a collection of best innovative practices from the sports movement and from organisations outside of the sport sector. This report is a product of the second intellectual output (IO2) of the project where the project partners have collected good and innovative practices within the sport movement. Below we describe challenges that sport clubs throughout Europe are facing today together with possible solutions and best practices on how to tackle these challenges in an innovative way.

2.0
Data collection

The data has been collected by the project partners which all are representatives of the national sport movement in the following countries: Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy and Portugal. A questionnaire with 22 questions concerning the challenges of sport clubs as well as the possible solutions for these challenges was distributed in the seven countries throughout the period: November 2019 to January 2020. The survey was directed towards representatives of sport clubs in the seven countries and was collected in three ways:

1. The survey was distributed directly to the respondents online.
2. The answers of the survey were collected through telephone interviews.
3. The survey questions were discussed during workshops with the respondents.

The reason why different data collection methods were used is that the aim of this Intellectual Output (IO) was to reach a wide range of sport clubs to collect their testimonials 4 on challenges and innovative practices. By using different methods, the project partners have been able to reach out to a sufficient number of sport clubs. The respondents have answered the same questions regardless of data collection method (see survey in appendix 1). In total, the project consortium has collected testimonials from 429 sport clubs in the seven countries (see Table 1 below).

(Table 1)	Organisation	Country	Number of respondents	Data collection method
		Latvia	112 Sport clubs	Online survey
		Italy	7 sport clubs	Telephone interviews
		Portugal	37 sport clubs	Online survey
		Lithuania	11 sport clubs	Online survey
		Sweden	49 sport clubs	Workshops
		Estonia	164 sport clubs	Online survey
		Denmark	49 sport clubs	Telephone interviews
		Total	429 sport clubs	

The partners have analysed the collected data and summarized the overall trends emerging from the data in relation to challenges and innovative practices. These findings were collected by the leader of the Intellectual Output (the Swedish Sport Confederation).

3.0
Disposition

This report aims to give an overview of challenges that sport clubs are facing as well as a collection of innovative practices used to battle these challenges. The following seven themes has emerged through the collected data, categorized under two main areas:

People

- *Professionalisation/Management*
- *Volunteers*

Operations

- *Offers/Activities*
- *Economy/Funding*
- *Facilities/Availability*
- *Communication – internal and external*

This report is divided into seven sections based on the themes above. Firstly, the report will give a background to each area by using the findings of IO1. Secondly, challenges, consequences and best practices connected to the areas will be described. Finally, a short conclusion will wrap up each area with the aim to reflect upon the collected data and discuss what these findings possibly could mean for the further process within the CHAMP project.

4.0
Professionalisation/Management

4.1 Background

As mentioned in the IO1 report most sport clubs rely on the contribution of volunteers. One major aspect in the successful implementation of innovative ideas is the leaders' attitude and competence in the areas of business and management. A challenge for sports clubs may be connected to the volunteers' lack of competence and experience needed to manage the club (IO1 report, p.4 – 5).

When analysing the data collected by the project partners in regards of identifying challenges and best practices among European sports clubs, there seem to be a need for developing the management of sport clubs. Perhaps this is a sign that professionalisation or at least a semi-professionalisation is needed among the management of sport clubs?

4.2 Challenges

The challenges regarding management of the sport club presents itself in several aspects, for example; lack of structure, organisational issues, recruiting or being able to create new offers/activities.

Some associations, for example a club in Italy, mentions underlined organisational problems due to the lack of management and limitations because the people in charge are only volunteers or not properly skilled. Lack of time and recourses are a common challenge for sport clubs (see sec-

tion about Economy/Funding). These challenges also affect the management of sport clubs which, in some cases, will affect the decision-making process and can ultimately give negative consequences for the members of the sport clubs. It is mentioned by sport clubs in several countries that organisational problems, due to the lack of management, often exists because the clubs not seldomly are managed by volunteers without proper education or experience.

"Many associations have indicated their desire to involve more people in management, but the lack of resources and time determine that only a few people are in charge of these aspects." (ITA)

4.3 Challenges

As mentioned in the quote above there is a desire to involve an increased amount of staff members with proper experience and knowledge. Another challenge is that it is difficult for the clubs to keep a professional internal communication process and that this ultimately can affect the decision-making process as a respondent from Estonia describes it:

"There is a need to improve the communication within the club, we need to involve specific shareholders when questions and plans concerning them are discussed, a need for regular feedback from trainees and club members, optimizing number of decisions makers on certain matters, encouraging volunteers take more responsibility by giving them (training staff, coaches and volunteers) more autonomy,." (EST)

The quote above describes a club facing challenges related to the internal communication, a more rational and professional way of communicating could lead to more engaged volunteers and democratic decision-making processes.

4.4 Consequences

The consequences of the challenges explained above is mainly that the clubs do not find time or energy to create new, innovative solutions and offers for their members:

"Creating activities for different types of target groups is very hard. The clubs are busy trying to manage the existing activities and work those out. They just don´t have the energy or power, creating extra activities." (SWE)

If the underlying organisational structure is weak, the result is a short-term mindset in the club. They solve problems as they go, with little time left to think of long-term solutions, strategies or innovative ideas for the future.

4.5 Best practices

The first set of solutions are related to education. Accessible educational programmes, open for all, could be a solution:

"Education plays a really big part in the club's success rate regarding management. Both clubs and federations are looking for new ways of making education more accessible, mostly by different types of online education." (SWE)

In one country sport clubs have clearly taken steps towards professionalisation through hiring staff members who can take care of the administrative tasks:

"Some clubs have hired an administrative employee who takes care of all the practical and structural tasks in the association, with the purpose of reducing the volunteer's tasks, due to the multiple functionalities the volunteers are having in many sports clubs. This makes it possible for the volunteers to focus more on the tasks that makes the members happy and less on the administrative ones." (DEN)

However, it is not only administrative staff that can contribute to a more professional approach. There are also opportunities to hire trainers or even educate the volunteers to create a more professional environment:

"Some places have 1-2 payed trainers, who provide the association with professionalism and expertise and in these cases, the clubs are very good at helping and sharing knowledge across the trainer teams. Almost every sport club are putting a lot of effort in providing their volunteers with courses as for example; trainer courses, management courses and whatever they find relevant for their volunteers to increase their competences inside the field of sport and volunteering. Sparring and sharing knowledge in general are also a very common thing across the 49 sports clubs, both inside the club but also with other relevant stakeholders, (see Bolbro GIF, Tåsinge Tennis and Padel association, Knabstrup Shooting association)." (DEN)

4.5 Best practices

Another step towards the development of the management of sport clubs is to digitalise for instance the board meetings. A more digitalised way of running things could give the club more time to work with their members and more time to come up with new innovative strategies to attract new members as well as keeping existing members happy:

> "Also, a way to manage meetings via online solutions is very popular. The physical meeting for the board used to be the corner stone in the club but now the most important thing is time efficiency." (SWE)

The examples of best practices are all looking for ways of making a non-professional organisation to act more professionalised while still keeping the "non-profit way" of doing things. A quote from Lithuania describes the challenge many sport clubs are facing and what is needed to evolve:

> "The number of sports users is growing every year in Lithuania. Nevertheless, according to various analyses carried out, sports clubs in Lithuania lack practical skills to carry out existing activities and initiate new ones. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of know-how in the workplace, the non-governmental sports sector is special and the needs concerning the management of sports organizations are exceptional. This factor is a key fundamental factor for successful development of sports clubs in the matching of consumer needs and expectations by improving the quality of services provided, because quality of service promotes customer loyalty, attracts potential customers, employee satisfaction and creates a positive image in the market." (LIT)

4.6 Conclusion

A conclusion based on the data presented above is that it seems to be a correlation between a lack of professional staff and a stagnation of new and innovative ideas. It is important to empathize that a sport club does not have to be a professional organisation in order to professionalise their management. There are many sport clubs driven by professional staff still depending on a great number of volunteers doing amazing work.

A lot of times professionalisation is viewed as a substitute for volunteers, but the examples from the partners seem to highlight the possibility to build even stronger volunteer recruitment by professionalising parts of the management. The trend seems to be building larger organisations. IO1 also points to that larger clubs tend to receive more public funds and are better equipped to deal with fluctuations in volunteer contributions.

5.0
Community/Social aspects/Democracy

5.1 Background

One big advantage for sport clubs in relation to private businesses is the ability to create a good social environment. IO1 points out the contributions of a sport club such as being inclusive of different groups within society and socializing members into democratic practices. (p.12) Most clubs claim to have features beyond sports in their mission, as the promotion of appropriate values and a sense of community. (p.15) A sport club by the definition within the CHAMP project (self-governing, voluntary and not commercially oriented (p.9)) differences from private actors within the field of sport activities. This creates a unique opportunity for sport clubs both in attracting new members and being able to show benefits beyond physical activity.

This section will focus on the different aspects of community, involvement of members and the importance of creating a community within the sport club. This is certainly one of the strengths with the non-profit clubs.

5.2 Challenges

This challenge is a bit different; it is not described as most other areas: as an issue or challenge. Only the Latvian partner mentioned creating good social atmosphere as a challenge. But overall, the data shows that social aspects are described as the sport clubs' advantage and the "unique selling point" (USP) of sport clubs. Maybe this could be a sign that sport clubs are taking the social aspects in the sport club community for granted? They view the social and democratic atmosphere as an advantage and important part, but they do not seem to think it's a challenge. However, there is no doubt that the partners think that a key aspect in creating a well-functioning sport club is the social aspects and an atmosphere characterized of inclusive decision making and democratic values.

5.3 Consequences

As with the challenges, there are no emphasis on the consequences of not being able to offer a good social and democratic atmosphere. However, taking IO1 and the many examples of creating a strong social environment into account, you might see this as the one big essence of sport clubs. Team spirit does not have anything to do with the amount of money you spend. Private actors do try to "copy" some of the ways, for example creating "membership programs" or putting a lot of emphasis on team building, as in CrossFit boxes.

The consequence, one might argue, is that as the sport clubs try to professionalize by looking at private actors, private actors try to look at sports clubs for creating a sense of community and democracy. The effect in the long run might be that if the sport clubs do not actively see this area as a challenge needed to actively meet, private businesses will overtake.

5.4 Best practices

Even though the social aspects are not mentioned as a challenge by the sport clubs in this study, there is a wide range of examples on how to create these types of environments. Several partners mention the importance of creating an attractive social environment in order to make people connect outside the sport activities. Participating in local events as volunteers of the club, being at a local event having a stand and being visible or arrange activities/events for the local community or arranging events inside the club for members only such as video nights. (DEN, ITA)

The local sport club plays a big role in creating a community beyond playing sports, something people do not expect from the local gym. The way this is created may seem hard to grasp in actions, for example the Estonian partner describes a roller derby club (Tallinn Roller Derby) were the community is as important as the sport and participation is based on friendship and the sake of belonging in a community. Many say that being a member of the competitive team increases the feeling togetherness. But there are also examples of sport clubs actively working on the social environment.

"... a club with a mentoring scheme for new members, trainers and new volunteers, where older members are mentors for the young members and helping them during the training and are active in social activities, see Copenhagen Fence club, Tåsinge Tennis and Padel association and Gentofte Volley." (DEN)

5.4 Best practices

Another example of creating social commitment among the members is Kerteminde Kayak club, where they have implemented a handshake rule among the members. This rule entails that every member must shake hands every time they greet each other.

The democracy aspect is seldom mentioned by the sport clubs; However, the Estonian partner has captured the importance of this area within their sport clubs:

"Mentioned were all known good initiatives - improving communication within the club, need to involve particular shareholders when questions and plans concerning them are discussed, need for regular feedback from trainees and club members, optimizing number of decisions makers on certain matters, encouraging volunteers take more responsibility by giving them more autonomy, training staff, coaches and volunteers." (EST)

One possible way to enhance democratic pathways are that the volunteers and executive members strive to be visible for the other members inside the sport club, by participating in meetings, trainings etc. Thereby they achieve active feedback and a dialog with the members, which gives them the possibility to capture the trends in different age groups and on different teams and levels. Thereby they can act upon their members feedback.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the data in IO2, with a few exceptions, the social environment is pinpointed as important but few clubs seem to have a strategy for this to happen. Especially compared with the examples regarding creating new activities. Trying to compete with private actors regarding professionalism and their range of activities is probably very hard for most sport clubs. But democracy and a sense of community is in the DNA of a sport club, maybe this aspect also needs proper strategies and action plans in order for the sport club to develop.

6.0
Volunteers

6.1 Background

IO1 makes a definition of volunteers. Even though there can be a wide range of how countries make their own definition, it is possible to single out a few common areas where volunteers can be placed on a continuum. These areas are:

- *Free choice (from free will to obligated to volunteer)*
- *Remuneration (from none to a low pay)*
- *Structure (from informal to formal)*
- *Intended beneficiaries (from help others to help oneself) (p.17–18)*

Most sport clubs are, as previously mentioned (see section "Professionalism/Management") dependent of volunteers managing the club and the activities. In European countries, the role of volunteers has undergone significant change in recent years, forcing clubs to modernize their management structures and systems (see section "Professionalism/Management"). The role of volunteers has shifted and so has the experience of volunteering, with the result of risking that the motives of the volunteers do not align with the club's goals anymore. (p.16)

From the perspective of the CHAMP project, IO1 establish volunteer's engagement as being a vital part of the club's ability to adopt innovative practices. (p.18) In this section we will look at the importance of volunteering and ways of enhancing and creating good conditions for people to engage in the sport club.

6.2 Challenges

Recruiting and retaining volunteers is a challenge within all partner countries. The lack of volunteers plays a huge part in the clubs´ ability to offer activities. The clubs lack time and resources to attract, train and retain volunteers. In the majority of the cases, volunteers are parents of children playing sport which means that they lose the volunteers when they lose the member. The Danish partner makes an elaborated description of these challenges:

"Difficulties with recruiting volunteers, especially with getting young trainers from outside the sport club to manage teams and stay for a longer period. This can also be seen in relation to the bullet point regarding "retention of youngster". Some places have solved the challenge by hiring an employed and paid trainer. **Volunteers who does not have a current or earlier connection with the sport club in some way, are difficult to recruit as volunteers à most sports clubs are depending on passionate members or parents who gives an extra hand, or members who have been in the sport club for many years.** This overall problem may cause the modern society changes but also the sports club's way of recruiting volunteers. In many sports clubs, they recruit volunteers by word of mouth, whereas they get volunteers who are already a member of the sport club." (DEN)

6.3 Consequences

The challenge of recruiting new- and younger volunteers, results in difficulties managing the tasks that must be done. The Swedish partner describes the main reason for not being able to offer a wide range of activities as a lack of volunteers.

It's common that a few volunteers must do many different tasks and the sport club is depending on the volunteers to invest and spend a lot of time and energy in the club. Smaller clubs can be dependent on one or a few volunteers running the whole sport club. The effect of this is divided: on the one hand the club is very vulnerable, on the other hand it can be hard for new volunteers to participate if all decisions are made by a small group of members (see section Democracy/Social aspects/Community).

The Danish partner also points out the effect of stagnation in the club if new people do not engage and form new ways:

"Furthermore, the lack of newcomers, causes that some of the clubs are staying in the same "track" as the last 50 years and have troubles by targeting the modern youngsters and adult and their needs, with new and innovative initiatives." (DEN)

6.4 Best practices

Even though the lack of volunteers seems to be a constant problem for most sport clubs there is surprisingly few examples of strategies within this area.

In Denmark there is an example of a club trying to approach this in a strategic way, for example volunteer mentor agreement, where newcomers get paired with an older volunteer and get to learn how to be a coach or a volunteer for example Copenhagen Fence association.

There are also examples of clubs in Denmark creating specific ways of leading the volunteers:

_ *A volunteer activity calendar, where all tasks during the year are showed, and then the volunteers are obligated to separate the task between them, but after **their own choice**. This is a way to give the volunteers a voice and give them responsibility for a task they want to have, with a looser management.*

_ *Some places all members are **obligated** to do voluntary work in the sports club, or there are more specific tasks for the single individual, where you join the voluntary team with the purpose of solving one specific task. This is a way to have a more stringent management of the volunteers. In Hørsholm Figure Skating association, they have a point system where everyone who is training in the centre, must help as a volunteer in a certain number of hours, relative to the hours they are training.*

_ *A third way to manage the volunteers is to look at your volunteers and all your members competences and ask them if they want to be responsible for a specific task or adjust the tasks for the single individual. This gets people with **specific competences doing specific tasks**, and a way to acknowledge the individual, see examples on this in Kerteminde Kayak association.*

The importance of not only focusing on recruiting but acknowledging the work done by those who already are volunteer is also high-lighted:

"In the work with managing volunteers, almost all sports clubs are putting a lot of effort in acknowledging the work the volunteers are doing, in form of making social initiatives for the volunteers, personal recognition, and giving them benefits inside the sport club. This is an important source in retaining the volunteers and creating a good volunteer atmosphere.
Passionate volunteers are often the driving force for the association, and most of the sports clubs do not have or only have 1-2 employees, either as trainer or administrative worker." (DEN)

6.4 Best practices

Trying to approach challenges regarding the lack of leaders, (that are not parents) there are examples of clubs trying to establish "leadership programs" with the purpose to make young athletes into leaders taking care of younger children. In some areas in Sweden, a concept called "kids - and youth developers" have been created. These are members devoted to coach and support young leaders.

Strategies to educate and empower young people to take a role within the organisation also seems powerful, trying to create an environment enhancing this. Finding ways to involve member in club management issues and decision making.

6.5 Conclusion

There is no doubt that this is a shared major concern for all partners. Volunteers are the heart of many sport clubs, even large and somewhat professionalised sport clubs, are depending on volunteers in many aspects. Combined with the sport clubs' concern regarding the number of volunteers it is surprising not to see more clubs putting this on top of their priority list and agenda. This probably also goes hand in hand with the ability to create a good social atmosphere and social environment (see section about Community/Social environment/Democracy) as well as management (see section about Professionalism/Management).

7.0
Offers/activities

7.1 Background

IO1 describes how organisations in general face increasingly competitive environments as they try to attract new members. Sport clubs are no exception and they must adapt and implement new services, activities and offers. In the CHAMP project, these changes initially were mentioned as "modernisation". However, the project consortium found the word modernisation too wide of a concept to use in this project. Therefore, the decision to use the word "innovation" were made. Within the context of sport, innovation suggests the introduction of new and effective ways of working. (IO1, p.4). It is also clear that even though sport clubs serve activities for people at all ages, most of the operations are targeted towards children and adolescents. (IO1, p.15).

In this section we will look at innovation in connection to sport clubs´ offers, regarding activities, flexibility and target groups. The common ground is ways of attracting new members and trying to adapt to a changing environment.

7.2 Challenges

All partners pinpoint two challenges: the lack of time and money, in other words resources. They have issues finding funding for their ideas and/or finding people with the will and right competence to fulfil them. The Italian partner describes it as follows:

> "Many associations have indicated that even if they have some new ideas they would like to implement, in most cases, the ideas are not applicable due to the lack of funds and the lack of time". (ITA)

Other than the above, the challenges vary, mostly depending on the size of the city where they operate and the size of the club itself. Two partners emphasize the differences between clubs in bigger cities versus clubs on the countryside:

> "In bigger cities the threshold is often availability, there is not enough sport centres regarding their desired volume of activities. This means that they often must prioritize some target groups." (SWE)

> "Hard to attract people, especially in the countryside, where the number of inhabitants decreases." (LAT)

7.2 Challenges

The size of the club itself seem to influence the interest or possibility in recruiting. Estonia describes the differentiation as follows:

> "For many clubs, especially from small places the question is not in their scope or interest. They know all the people in the area and their human resources. They reported that they are open for new members but not actively searching." (EST)

The Italian partner also describes the clubs as being unwilling to extend their offer:

> "Very few associations in the survey indicated that they have extended their activities during the years, in order to make every level available for individuals who approach the association and giving also them the opportunity to grow inside (from one level to the higher one)." (ITA)

Being able to create new activities and attract new target groups is a major challenge shared by all partners, mostly surrounding retaining youngsters and attracting adults.

> "Retention of youngsters, because of the geographical draining when youngsters are moving from one city to another for education and/or working possibilities. It is very typical that youngsters are members, who have been in the sports club since they were kids. Therefore, when the youngsters are moving, it often results in a drop-out from the sport." (DEN)
>
> Almost the 2/3 of the associations interviewed has indicated that there is a problem to extend the target, involving adult people. In some cases, courses for adults have been done but they have been closed the following year due to the limited number of participants. The problem to extend the target is also related to difficulties to include people with disabilities and people coming from families with a low income." (ITA)

7.2 Challenges

The quote from Italy shows that there is a challenge in reaching target groups with special needs of some kinds. Several partners highlight this issue and it is often linked to the organisational ability, for example human resources. (see section about "Professionalisation and Management" and "Volunteers") Estonia elaborates with this issue:

"New target groups need new approaches both from coaches and from the administration. Often there is a challenge to organize training if the participants' age, skills and expectations are quite diverse." (EST)

A few partners also highlight the difficulty in offering "sports for all" and at the same time trying to focus on elite sport. In Scandinavia there is a trend towards offering sport activities that are non- competitive and recreational and flexible. These sport clubs have to look beyond their "traditional way" of organising sport and this takes a lot of effort.

7.3 Consequences

The most obvious consequence is that sport clubs are not able to offer sports activities to a diversity of target groups. The effect of this is fewer options of activities leading people to seek for other, perhaps private options. The market for private sport business is rapidly growing larger, if the sport clubs are not able to offer activities someone else will.

The demand on sport clubs being more versatile also causes the members who search more expertise and high professional carrier to leave the club in favour of another sport club, as described:

"The differences from elite sport to non-elite sport, gives the sports clubs challenges with structuring the trainings after level, and with the purpose of development for the individual. This is also seen in making non-competitive sports, sport for beginners or recreational athletes, where the area is new and thereby demands a lot of energy and hard work. Without the volunteers, and especially new volunteers this can cause that the sports clubs will lose their members, because they are not able to fulfil the wishes." (DEN)

People may be interested in the sport club and want to participate, but the club itself cannot handle the burden on the volunteers. (see section about "Professionalisation/ Management").

7.4 Best practices

A general approach is that it seems more common to try to find flexible ways to offer activities in order to make people stay in sports rather than creating completely new activities for new target groups. The Swedish partner describes this here:

"Most of the testimonials are about trying to find different approaches in organising their sport rather than trying to create new activities. They are trying to adapt to the new circumstances regarding facilities and other spaces. In the last couple of years there has been a lot of attention on how you suppose to organize activities in the best interest of children, for example smaller fields, less players, less focus on results." (SWE)

In the quote below the Estonian partner express how clubs, in an innovative way, can solve problems concerning organising trainings:

"Nõmme Cycling Club address differences in level and motivation: "Cycling tours on variable surfaces and landscapes. During the tour we map skills and motivation of the participants and according the results drafting personal approach." And to problem: "It's complicated to get to the trainings and back home when family do not have car, specially complicated is it for younger ones." Solution: Coach gives kids lift to home after training. Children may leave their cycles to designated room in the club." (EST)

7.4 Best practices

Another way of creating flexible memberships is described in an example from Denmark where alliances are made among several sport clubs. The model is that members can join all activities in the clubs included in the alliance. Prior to the alliance and the flexible membership, the sport clubs had difficulties gathering enough players for games. Today it looks completely different, this because the clubs can support each other, across different sport settings and disciplines. Since several of the members now have experience with all sports, they are able to fill up teams and attend games and leagues.

There are existing sport clubs who created teams targeting minority groups but it seems to be easier for new clubs to reach new target groups. Here, the Swedish partner gives an example of how the development of new target group is developing:

"One area in which Swedish sport have received a lot of extra resources is regarding trying to include immigrants within sport activities. This seems to have the effect that a lot of new clubs are forming. They often have a different approach to sport, more focus on the social aspect of participating and less on the competitive aspects." (SWE)

The main factor in being able to reach new target groups lies in funding, or finding ways to collaborate with different actors, and finding the right competence. As for example in Italy:

"Many associations have stipulated agreements with the municipality to allow people with low income to do sport. In most cases, the municipality individuates people and put them in contact with the associations, municipality covers expenses such as the one related to the payment of sport uniform." (ITA)

7.4 Best practices

One major target group, that many sport clubs are trying to reach, are adults, and most commonly parents to the children already participating in activities. A common strategy trying to reach them is to create "family activities":

"Facilitating family sport or adult/parent orientated sport with the intention of getting parents to be active in the sport club, either as volunteer or active members in the sport club. Hørsholm Figure Skating Association for example tried to get adults on the ice by creating something they call "adult fit", and furthermore they put effort in telling all parents, that if you want to do something good for your children, it is important to be active as volunteer in the association and to support their children in their sport. Tåsinge Tennis and Paddle Association host events, such as Family Padel, where parents and their children are playing together. This has resulted in that families are getting to know each other and gets their network expanded, new members and new volunteers." (DEN)

"Getting out of the associational facilities, and bringing the sport to the people, for an explicit example there is Nørrebro United, were they worked on a project with exposed residential areas, and on how to get children and adults into the association – they created something they call "backyard football", where they bring the football to the children and put some socioeconomically advantaged in action in these exposed areas, and then children are coming, playing and having fun, because the sport is easy accessible". (DEN)

The Italian partner also mentions the same kind of experience, clubs mentioning that the best way to make their sport offer visible is to offer sport activities for free (for one day) so that people directly experience the offers and decide to join.

7.5 Conclusion

For sport clubs, mainly depending on volunteers, it's very challenging to be innovative. The possibilities to realise the ideas are connected to several circumstances, as for example: management, volunteers, financial resources and traditions. The examples highlighted by the partners seem to be related to the theme of sport clubs doing what they do extra well, rather than coming up with big innovative ideas. This raise the question of what innovation is in the context of a sport club? Because on the other hand, innovation within the field of sport is always present, training methods and ways to evolve the sport is to say the least very innovative. How can the CHAMP project help sport clubs connect the mindset of innovation within the sport to organisation, offers etc? What is possible, realistic and helpful in terms of innovation for them.

8.0
Economy/Funding

8.1 Background

Within the CHAMP project's definition of sport clubs lies the criteria of being non-profit oriented. (IO1 p.9) The economy however is a huge factor for the possibility of being a healthy sport club. IO1 gives an example of a Finnish study arguing that the effectiveness of sport clubs depends on their ability to retain resources and manage these in relation to their goals and level of activities.

Also, one of the main driving forces of innovation is the need for more resources. (p.20) Economy is obviously deeply integrated with other aspects of the sport clubs and money is only one resource. However, in this section, we will highlight the challenge and importance of a stable economy and a way of funding activities.

8.2 Challenges

The challenge related to funding is an overarching issue, mentioned by all partners. The cost for sport, trying to attract new target groups and starting new activities, is high and the general sport club does not have this leverage. As described by the Swedish partner:

"Another challenge is the cost for sports. Especially if you are trying to reach new target groups. Those are target groups the club won't be able to seek financial support for, and groups with possibly less ability paying for sports." (SWE)

Even in cases where there is a possibility to seek funding it is a challenge; several partners mention complex processes demanding competence from the club (i.e. the volunteers). Not having this competence or resources leads to a decreased ability to access funds, leading to less activities. It becomes a negative cycle.

"Challenges with searching for foundations grants, where many sports clubs find it complex and advanced searching for grants. They do not have the time or competences to immerse in this kind of work, which in the end is related to the lack of volunteers." (DEN)

8.3 Consequences

It is already motioned that financial restraints leads to less ability to offer activities to a wide range of target groups. The lack of volunteers with the competence and/or time to seek projects and/or grants leads to less activities which leads to less volunteers. This cycle leads to that the sport club is not being able to come up with new ways of doing things. The effect is sport clubs that are not able to offer sports activities to a diversity of target groups and a wide offer of sports. Even offering existing training groups/teams the support they need in developing, for example sending them to competitions could be an issue.

8.4 Best practices

Project applications for funding is a common way of finding resources, in some countries there are special support for clubs in this matter, for example in Sweden and Denmark.

The Danish partner mentions that one way to find competence and an ease in the burden of writing project applications could be by establishing strategical partnerships with schools and health institutions, thereby they target another segment of people, and achieve profitable cooperation's regarding managing the sport club. The Italian partner describes one of these examples, like this:

"Many associations have stipulated agreements with the municipality to allow people with low income to do sport. In the majority of cases, the municipality individuates people and put them in contact with the associations, municipality covers expenses such as the one related to the payment of sport uniform." (ITA)

A few partners mention arranging events or other activities outside the field of sports:

"In the work with earning money beside the membership fee is hosting events inside and outside the association and in the local community. Here, festivals or city gatherings are a very good examples, where for several consecutive years, sports clubs have been successful in activating about 120 volunteers and earning money to supply the activities in the club the rest of the year, see **Ribe Badminton association**, Kerteminde kayak association, Bolbro Gymnastics and Sports Association, Copenhagen Fence Association." (DEN)

Sponsors are of course a way to finance but there are not any concrete examples of this in the data. As mentioned earlier it is clear that the finances are closely connected to other areas of the club and economics itself seldom seems like the only reason not being able to do things.

8.5 Conclusion

In contrast to the field regarding social aspects/democracy, where clubs seem to see a wide range of solutions to a not-so-big problem, this is an area where the problem description is wide, but the possible solutions are few. A reflection surrounding this is that the culture within the traditional sport club isn't very "entrepreneurial". Maybe it is hard for the clubs to see how making money fits within their own values, making it difficult for them seeking possibilities or creating conditions within the organisation to encourage this.

9.0
Facilities/Availability

9.1 Background

It goes without saying that facilities are important for sport clubs. It is an area where most sport clubs are dependent of another actor, most commonly the municipality. This stands in contrast to private actors mostly hosting and controlling their own facilities. At the same time there is a trend in many European countries to reconsider their way of playing sports, especially children's sport, and this affects the use and upbringing of facilities. The main aspect of this trend revolves around why children play the sport in the same way adults do, for example full size field, goals etc. The new way of looking at the way sports are being presented may open a wide range of possibilities for sport clubs. Another trend in society is the expectation of availability, having activities close to home, school or work. The activity must be easily accessible, as seen in the Eurobarometer, 32% answer that they exercise at home and 23% on their way between home and school. These options are by far more common than being at a sport club or a commercial health and fitness centre. (IO1, p.13)

9.2 Challenges

Most of the partners find that a lack of facilities is a challenge among sport clubs in their country. Thus, the challenges differ depending on where in the country the clubs are based or whether it is based in a bigger city or on the countryside. In bigger cities the threshold is availability, there is not enough facilities regarding the desired volume of activities. This means that they often must prioritize target groups and activities, not being able offer the level of activities to the number of people that they wish that they could.

In the countryside there are, however, often a lot of potential space for sports and sport facilities, but the problem is maintenance of the facilities. If the municipality does not care for the facilities, they will fall apart and no longer be suitable for activities. Few clubs have resources enough managing facilities on their own. The Estonian partner summarize their view on the challenge around facilities as follows:

"Shortage of indoor facilities. Specially mentioned in connection with ice halls and swimming pools but also with gym times. Partly plays here the fact of changing climate in, snow comes very late or if at all, weather is often cold and rainy what causes that both ski sportsmen and recreational skiers (skiing used to be quite popular recreational sport at winter time in Estonia) need to find other possibilities to practise. Connected problem is that time when people can do sports concentrating in quite a narrow time space. The facilities can be under used in other times." (EST)

9.2 Challenges

The availability of facilities is not only connected to the lack of facilities but also to the accessibility. The sport club is often dependent of the municipality and the relationship with them. The Italian partner describes this problem of access like this:

"Many associations which took part of the survey, indicated that the availability for a gym is linked to a call for tender published every year by the municipalities. This situation has three main negative consequences:

1. If the association does not apply to the call or does not manage to have the request approved, it remains without space to do sport, with the only option to rent spaces;

2. In some cases, the municipality recognizes to a specific association the possibility to use a gym for one year (it is the usual time for this call). It may happen that the following year, the same association has recognized the use of a different structure. According to the associations interviewed, this change often destabilizes the users.

3. Public calls sometimes do not respect a schedule timeline and this may cause delays in the beginning of sport activities." (ITA)

At the same theme, the Swedish partner raise a challenge in getting access to facilities in order to pursue activities for adults and elder, kids and youngsters are prioritized. The "window" for scheduled activities is narrow due to that leaders are most commonly volunteers, and due to their everyday work, they are not able to be flexible during the daytime.

9.3 Consequences

The obvious result of this is the ability of offering activities, especially options of flexibility for kids as they grow older and for adults to participate at all. They are instead forced to seek private options. The effect of not being able to control their availability to sport centres and being forced into a narrow mindset due to circumstances, the sport clubs cannot control that there are no room left for innovative ideas and new activities.

9.4
Possible solutions

To be able to play sports in their local environment is an aspect that almost all partners highlight as a key factor in attracting new members. Here, good collaboration with the local school is mentioned as important. The school is also a place where sport easily can reach even those who are not already active in a sports association. It can be anything from projects to organise a specific day at school where kids can try several different sports for free. In addition, more countries are promising that they will try out activities under the auspices of the associations where they offer it free for beginners.

In Denmark one club have twelve-week courses or programs with the local schools where beginners once a week for twelve weeks can try a new sport. At some schools, the pupils also get a diploma for their participation, and thereby get recognition for their activity during the twelve weeks. Another way of getting beginners or school pupils inside the sport club, is by hosting an "open house" event, where children all over the city, can come an try different sports for a whole day.

Another club in Denmark had a project to get out of the associational facilities, and bringing the sport closer to the people, for an example there is Nørrebro United, were they worked on a project with exposed residential areas, and on how to get children and adults into the association:

> "They created something they call "backyard football", where they bring the football to the children and put some socioeconomically advantaged in action in these exposed areas, and then children are coming, playing and having fun, because the sport is easily accessible." (DEN)

Not getting stuck in a mindset of focusing on the things the club cannot control seems to be central in finding ways to overcome this challenge. Successful clubs tend to investigate different ways in both execution and facility "demands". Seeking places were people already occupies (availability) and finding innovative ways in the offered environment (facilities).

9.5 Conclusion

Access to facilities is without a doubt a major threshold for sport clubs to expand their offer and activities. In comparison to private actors with their own facilities this can seem as a somewhat hopeless battle. Sport clubs need to explore ways beyond the structures of a certain facility or environment. Many private actors offer very available activities "nearby", for example running clubs and outdoor "boot camps". To investigate a mindset of how the physical activity can be organized in order to meet peoples demand for flexibility rather than the "rules" of the sport is probably a huge part of being a successful and relevant sport club.

10.0
Communication – internal and external

10.1 Background

Communication is without a doubt a vital part for all organisations and the growing market for physical activity makes it harder for sport clubs to get through with their message. People often doesn't know the difference between a private actor and a traditional sport club, they only see an offer of activities that looks appealing and sign up.

However, communication is not only about attracting new members, it also about communicating within the sport club, between volunteers and with members, trainers and parents. A non-functioning communication is not acceptable in modern society, so being able to engage all target groups within the sport club is necessary for building a wellbeing club (see section about Community/Social aspects/Democracy).

In this section we will separate the areas of external and internal communication, both being a vital part of the sport club.

10.2 Challenges

The major challenge is connected to the description above, sport clubs having a hard time reaching potential new members. There seems to be a difference between clubs in larger cities compared to clubs on the countryside. The "buzz" is much bigger in larger cities and the sport clubs have a harder time getting their message through. There is also a large number of options for physical activity and sports from both other sport clubs and private actors. The result is a competitive market. Clubs in smaller cities and communities does not seem to have this challenge to this extent at all. They describe their position in the community as "everybody knows us" and not having to position themselves.

Based on all partners testimonials, the clubs in general appear to have a traditional approach when trying to reach their existing or potential members and they don´t seem to have a well thought strategy for communication. A website is the most common way; however, social media is also a growing communication channel.
The challenge of internal communication is mostly showing in the clubs' management ability (see section about "Professionalisation/Management") but it is probably fair to say that it also shows in the clubs' ability to recruit volunteers.

**10.3
Consequences**

The consequences of a lacking external communication in a modern society where communication skills become more and more vital is that the sport clubs, especially in areas where there is a lot of "competition", are weakened. If other actors succeed in capturing the core values (see section about "Community/Social aspects/Democracy") and offering attractive activities, there may not be a place for the "ordinary" sport clubs. This development is also challenging the sport clubs' position regarding support from governments or municipalities.

Bad, or slow, communication within the sport club can lead to frustration, volunteers dropping out, membership dropouts and, in the long run, same effect as above. The ability to within the sport club communicate in an adequate way is vital. If there for example is a Facebook account (most partners mention this a common way to communicate) people expect their questions to be answered almost immediately. If the sport club does not have the possibility for this, communication channels like Facebook can cause more harm than good.

**10.4
Best practices**

The way successful private actors are communicating is, for most sport clubs not, an option. They need to rely on other factors. Perhaps the most effective channel for spreading a message is the mouth-to-mouth method or a "bring a friend" approach. Making sure the club is visible in the nearby community by participating in events is one way to market the club without need for money:

"Being visible and active in the local area, for example as sport club providing volunteers under a local event or arrangement, being a stakeholder regarding an event or just being visible with having the club's logo shown in different connections. An example on a sport club, who is very focused on marketing and branding their club through cooperation and showing off their logo is Allinge-Sandvig gymnastic association." (DEN)

The Latvian partner describes one possible solution to make the club and its offers more visible:

"A good solution to how to show sports, but also to tell how sports work with rules, etc. is to use the technology to make simple video films that describe it. It could cause more people to be interested in sports and start practicing it." (LAT)

**10.5
Best practices**

As for internal communication, clubs highlight the opportunity to use for example applications as a tool. Making communication fast and available seem to be key aspects in succeeding:

"Some innovative ways to manage the sport associations are related to the use of social media such as WhatsApp or Facebook group. This allows for sharing information with the users and their families and allows for taking decisions based on an exchange of opinions. Groups give also the opportunity to create a welcoming environment within the associations, with the exchange of information also related to extra activities (not only sportive ones)." (ITA)

**10.6
Conclusion**

Marketing is a big issue for most sport clubs and at the same time the means to do it are often small. Clubs who work with the close by neighbourhood and focusing on making existing members satisfied are more likely to succeed without the need of money. A reflection is that sport clubs often sees marketing as the main threshold for them in order to grow bigger. They focus a lot on external aspects as the reason for not being able to attract new members, the lack of "professional" marketing. But very few see their own members as the best marketers, instead focusing on internal aspects for getting them satisfied and willing to recommend the sport club to other. Not as a part of an official "strategy" anyway.

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