

CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING PRACTICING SPORTS ACTIVITIES IN CLUJ-NAPOCA - BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT. The beneficial influences of practicing sports activities are well known. However, benefiting from these influences requires time, continuity, and not least the guidance of a sports specialist. So, whoever wishes to enjoy such benefits has to be aware that a training session per month is not enough. Therefore, in this paper we intend to present what the situation of sport activities is in the European Union and Romania, focusing on the following aspects: how active citizens are, which the organizational form of practice is and the reasons for which they engage in sports. Our objective is to compare data from the European Union and Romania with data from the research conducted in high schools in Cluj-Napoca.

Key words: Sports activities, organizational form, motivation

REZUMAT. *Considerații privind practicarea activităților sportive în Cluj-Napoca – între Uniunea Europeană și România.* Este bine cunoscută influențele benefice ale practicării activităților sportive. Totodată accesarea la această influență benefică necesită timp, continuitate și nu în ultimul rând de dirijarea de către un specialist în domeniul sportului. Astfel, cei care doresc acest lucru trebuie să fie conștienți că o lecție de antrenament pe lună nu este îndeajuns. Așadar, în această lucrare ne propunem să prezentăm concret care este situația activităților sportive în Uniunea Europeană și România, axându-ne pe criteriile: cât de activi sunt cetățenii, care este forma organizatorică de practicare și care sunt motivele pentru care se angrenează în activități sportive. Obiectivul nostru este de compara datele de la nivelul Uniunii Europene și România cu datele obținute din cercetarea efectuată în cadrul liceelor din Cluj-Napoca.

Cuvinte cheie: activități sportive, forma organizatorică, motivație

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Introduction

Sport is one of the most dynamic social activities aiming to improve of the human being in all its aspects. In a world of political change and socio-economic transformations, different religions, multiple cultures and ethnicities, sports can be perceived as a universal communication language understood by the whole world. From this point of view, it is part of a common culture (regardless of cultural or ethnic affiliation). Although today it is found in very diverse forms- performance sport, high performance sport, school and university sport, sport for all, etc.- sport, through the last decades, has proved to be a consistently and increasingly popular social phenomenon. (Dragnea & Teodorescu 2002; Teodorescu 2009)

In the White Paper on Sports the term “sports” is used under the definition established by the Council of Europe: “all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.” (Comisia Europeană 2007 p. 7).

We believe that although sports can be practiced almost anywhere whether in an organized manner or individually, the most important element related to its form of organization is the organized setting, namely in associations, clubs and other institutions with activity in the field of sports.

From the perspective of the European Union, sport is an area of human activity that greatly interests its citizens and has enormous potential for bringing them together, reaching out to all, regardless of age or social origin. Sport is a growing social and economic phenomenon that makes an important contribution to the European Union's strategic objectives of solidarity and prosperity. Moreover, the Olympic ideal of developing sport promotes peace and understanding among nations and cultures as well as the education of young people, including teenagers. The values conveyed through sport help develop knowledge, motivation, skills and preparation for personal effort. Time spent in organized sport activities (but not only) at school and at university (in sports associations, sports clubs, school sports activities) produces health and education benefits that need to be enhanced. Sport makes an important contribution to the economic and social cohesion and to the creation of more integrated societies. Therefore, all residents of EU should have access to sport, which can support intercultural and interethnic dialogue. (Comisia Europeană 2007)

With the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty at the end of 2009, the sports phenomenon has become one of the jurisdictions of supporting, coordinating and complementary of European Union by establishing a process of proposals for the individual Member States with which they should be encouraged to

implement evidence-based policies, in order to improve the provision of facilities and sporting opportunities. This means that for the first time, the European Union is actively involved in promoting sport and physical activity at the level of politics - not only to improve health and physical well-being throughout the European Union, but also to enhance the role that the sports phenomenon can play in increasing social cohesion and its educational value. Thus, in 2009 the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission has commissioned a special Eurobarometer survey related to sports and physical activity in the European Union on a sample of 26 788 Europeans subjects of which 1010 were from Romania. The respondents were aged between 15 and 70. (Special Eurobarometer 334, wave 72.3-Sport and Physical activity, 2009)

This research reveals that the majority of EU citizens (60 %) say that they rarely or never practice sport. However, a minority of respondents - 40 % of those surveyed – are participating in sports activities regularly or with some regularity (once a week or more), 9% of them (who practice sports 5 times per week or more) may be considered as athletes. Regarding Romania, the level is very low, namely 77 % of the people surveyed say that they don't practice sports or less than once a month, and only 8% of them can be considered as athletes. It is shown that 71% of the respondents aged between 15 and 24, practice sport regularly or with some regularity (once a week or more), and only 14 % can be consider athletes practicing sport 5 times a week or more.

Also, according to this research, there are different contexts in which the sport and physical activity is practiced. Thus, among the respondents in the EU who state that they practice sports or exercise, most of the time, the activity is conducted in informal settings such as parks and other outdoor environments (48 %) and in Romania is 29 %. The data concerning practicing physical activities in formal and organized settings reveals the followings: practicing in fitness centers the European average is 11%, and only 4 % in Romania; practicing in sport clubs EU average is 11%, and Romania 3%; in sports centers EU average is 8%, and in Romania around 3 %. It is shown that 17 % of the respondents aged between 15 and 24 practices in sports in clubs and 13% in fitness centers.

Regarding individual motivation for practicing sport and physical activities, it can be inferred that in a world becoming more and more health conscious, it is probably not surprising that 61% of EU citizens who practice sports or other forms of physical exercise do this to improve their health, while in Romania only 43 % of people have pointed this reason. The most frequently mentioned reasons for practicing sport are: “to improve their fitness”, European average being 41 % and only 10 % in Romania; “to relax” European average was

39 % and in Romania 30 %; “to have fun” European average was 31 % and in Romania only 11 %. Improving personal image is less inspiring, but still a significant reason for the 24% of people practicing the in the European Union to improve their physical appearance while in Romania the percentage is 15 %. Considering exercise as a way to spend time with friends is relatively common in some Member States, but the EU average is 22 % and 11% in Romania. It is shown that 51% of the respondents aged between 15 and 24 practice sport to improve their health, 47 % “to improve their fitness”, 57 % “to have fun”, 34 % “to relax” and 43 % to be with friends.

The study of the research data reveals certain impediments that prevent people from practicing sports and physical activities. One such obstacle is time or the lack of it. This is the main reason why 45% of the people in the EU and 57% in Romania don't practice sport.

The purpose and objectives of the research

The purpose of the research was to create a clear picture of the phenomenon of sport among high school students in a multicultural and multiethnic environment, but also to highlight the level of practicing organized sports activities and students' motivation for practicing sports activities.

The main objective of the research was to compare the general data collected in the European Union and in Romania, concerning practicing sports activities, organizational form and motivation for practicing with the data obtained through a research conducted by us into these issues among high school students in a multicultural and multiethnic environment.

Materials and methods

The first method used in this research was the study of scientific documents related to the sporting phenomenon, organizational and motivational problems of practicing sport.

The second method used in this research was the questionnaire survey method. The questionnaire consisted of 12 closed and open questions that were elaborated both in Romanian and Hungarian. Among these questions were selected question no.1, no.1.2 and no. 4. The questionnaire was applied from October 1st to November 15th 2010 and it was processed and analyzed from November 15th to December 5th 2010.

A third method was the statistical method. Thus, data processing was performed using Microsoft Excel statistical software from Microsoft Office programs package by showing the percentage of the results.

The research was carried out in nine high schools in Cluj-Napoca, namely Liceul Teoretic Gheorghe Șincai Theoretical High School, Nicolae Bălcescu Theoretical High School, Mihai Eminescu Theoretical High School (schools where Romanian is the language of instruction); Brassai Samuel High School, Báthory István High School, Apáczai Csere János High School, János Zsigmond Unitarian College, Reformed High School (schools where Hungarian is the language of instruction) and Onisifor Ghibu High School (school where Hungarian and Romanian are the languages of instruction).

The research subjects were high school students in educational institutions where Romanian and Hungarian are the languages of instruction, on a sample of 1574 subjects (762 subjects in schools where Romanian is the language of instruction and 812 subjects in schools where Hungarian is the language of instruction). The respondents were aged between 14 and 20, the average age being 16.3 years (in schools where Romanian is the language of instruction) and 16.5 years (in schools where Hungarian is the language of instruction).

Results

The data are presented in the following format: type of institution - teaching in Hungarian respectively in Romanian language.

When the subjects had to answer the question - "Do you practice sport at a competition level?", it can be highlighted the following: only 20.16% (in schools where Romanian is the language) and 19.23% (in schools where Hungarian is the language of instruction) practice a sport at competition level, and 78.38% and 76.14% don't and 1.46% and 4.55% didn't know. (Chart no.1 Performance Sport)

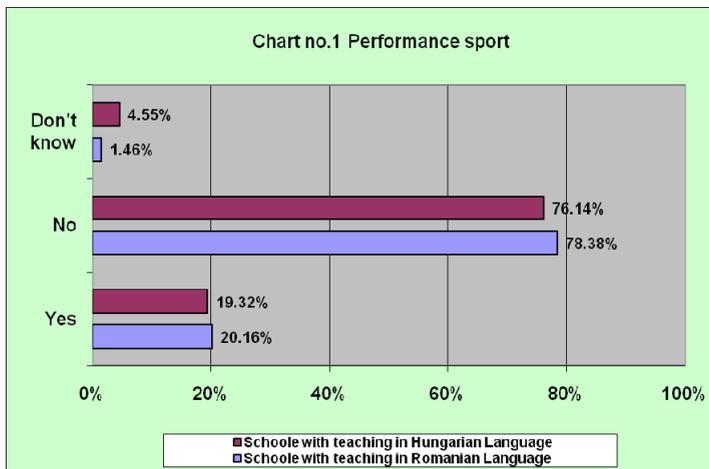


Chart no. 1. Performance sport

Regarding the organizational form of practicing sports, the results are: the students who practice sports at competition level in a proportion of 11.84% - 16.99 practice it in sports associations, 73.03% - 32.68% in sports clubs and 13.16% - 58.82% in the sports classes in school. (Chart no.2 - The organizational form of practicing)

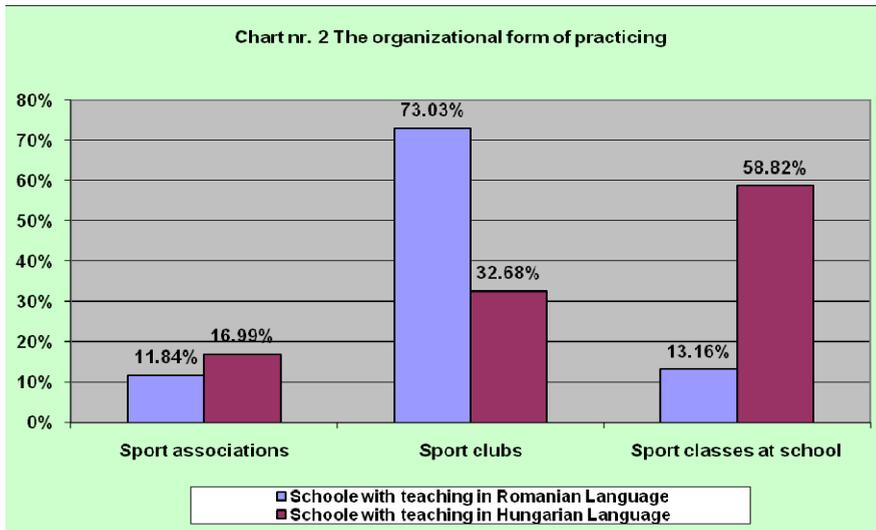


Chart no. 2. The organizational form of practicing

Subjects asked “Why do you practice/would you practice your favorite sport?”, the results are: 80.65% -76.49% of respondents believe that sport is healthy, 45.60% -56.57% believe that sport is a way to spend time, 62.42% of the subjects in schools where Hungarian is the language of instruction believe that sport is a way to relax, while those in schools where Romanian is the language of instruction only 24.62% thought the same thing; 38 57% -48.47% of respondents believe that by practicing sports you can meet other people.

Conclusion

We can conclude that in the case of practicing organized sports activities, only 9% of EU citizens practice them at a level to make us believe that they are athletes, likewise in Romania where the percentage is 8%. As the sample of 15-24 percentage increases to 14% and the research conducted by us reveals that almost 20% of students falling in the 15-24 age group, practice sports at competitive level that involves at least 5 workout lessons per week. In

these circumstances we conclude that, although it seems an increase in the percentage of EU to the level of Cluj-Napoca, it is worrying that so few young people practice sports daily.

Regarding the practice of sports activities in an organized setting, only 11% of the EU population practices them in sports clubs and in Romania only 3%. In the 15-24 age group the percentage rises to 17% but almost 20% of the students surveyed in Cluj-Napoca practice sport in an organized setting, the difference being that in this case the organizational setting is a sports club, sports association and sports classes in schools, characteristic to Romania.

The motivation to practice sports activities reveals that 61% of EU citizens practice to improve their health, 51% of the respondents aged between 15 and 24 years consider the same, and 80% of the students from Cluj-Napoca also believe that practicing sport activities is healthy.

As a final conclusion we can state that, although there are differences between the percentages in the EU, Romania and local level, in terms of daily sports activities, as well as regarding the organizational settings and motivation to practice, we consider the trend shown in the data at EU level is found at the local level too, in our case Cluj-Napoca.

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