ERASMUS+ PROJECT
"SPORTS WITH MEANING"
(SWIM)

HANDBOOK

PROJECT CONSORTIUM

The project "Sports With Meaning" is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This Handbook is designed by four teams from four countries – Latvia, Turkiye, Spain and Lithuania within Erasmus+ Programme project. The coordinator of this partnership consortium is association "Latvijas Sporta izglitibas iestazu Direkoru padome" (LSIIDP) from Latvia. Project partners are: School Sports Federation of Turkiye and School Activities Association of Turkiye, San Gabriel School from Spain and Football School Lituanica from Lithuania. This Handbook is meant to serve as the basis for further researches and deeper analysis of which online applications, already available in the digital world, are appropriate to be used in sport VET to promote professional sport features in young athletes.

Co-funded by the European Union

Main **objective** of the project SWIM was to address the digital transformation through distance training/learning possibilities.
Aims to reach the main objective were to:
1) raise awareness of a necessity and possibilities of digital technologies and transformation;
2) raise awareness of innovative learning and teaching approaches of vocational education;
3) raise awareness of flexibility of opportunities in vocational education and training (VET);
4) promote digital skills and competences of sport coaches/trainers/teachers;
5) create a link of doing/learning sports in presence and in distance;
6) promote physical and mental health, and well-being;
7) promote values of EU, Erasmus+ Programme and VET.

The project was inspired both by outcomes of restrictions due to the pandemic and by pilot activities done by two LSIIDP coaches regarding a remote, digitally organized two pilot sport events in Cesis. The competitions proved its effect referencing to the feedback of the involved parties – coaches, administration workers and sport club's trainees. The two remote events were held in running and cycling gathering 181 participants in total. LSIIDP and Limbazi Regional Sport School prepared both the event segments online and the routes in nature. Both segments were open for 3 weeks. And sport school athletes were able to do the segments either during their scheduled sport practices (remote during the spring of 2021) or during any other time convenient for the trainees within the 3 weeks when the segments were open.

THE STORY OF SWIM HANDBOOK

This freely accessible and practical Handbook provides a complete grounding in both qualitative and quantitative research methods for the remote sport and physical education lesson possibilities. The Handbook offers guidance to the research process, collection and data analysis, research summary report. The Handbook richly illustrates personal experience and opinions of coaches, athletes and students provided by the open-ended questions. The Handbook covers key topics such as:

1. **Methodological assumptions**:
- Research on dropout from sport and data analysis;
- Role of sport competitions in young athletes of sport VET;
- Online, digital possibilities for sport competitions.

2. **Sharing of the personal experience of the project team on remote sport possibilities in different sport practices.**

3. **Conclusions and recommendations.**

This Handbook is designed by VET, sport VET and sport professionals from four countries:

- **"Colegio San Gabriel"** – a VET school from Spain,
- **"Türkiye Okul Sporlari Federasyonu"** – a School Sport Federation from Türkiye,
- **"Latvijas Sporta izglītības iestāžu Direktoru padome"** – an association representing vocational oriented sport educational institutions of Latvia,
- **"VsI Sportuokime kartu"** – a sport NGO from Lithuania.

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INTRODUCTION

On the surface level, we all understand what is sport and physical activity, and why we are practicing it.

Yet the understanding of sport is much deeper. Social, political, technological and economic contexts all influence sport. Thus, our comprehension of sport is never complete. And only through continual research that our understanding of sport is maintained and enhanced.

Research on sport studies and possibilities is important not only for science. The huge growth in sports employment in the last years has led to a number of professions where a knowledge and understanding of research methods is important. Thus, coaches, for example, may wish to identify the impact of sport competitions on their athletes' performance. Sport institutions may wish to measure the economic impacts of a particular sporting event – onsite and online, and so on. Research also develops a number of human skills such as the ability to communicate ideas to a wider audience, critical thinking and the ability to analyse data to draw conclusions.

This Handbook will help sport coaches and sport physical education teachers to understand the effect of remote sport competitions on their athletes and students. It will reveal reasons on dropout from sport, and during the recent pandemic years in particular. Next, the Handbook will describe the experience of the project team in organizing remote sport events. And finally, it will give conclusions and recommendations for other sport institutions based on own experience.
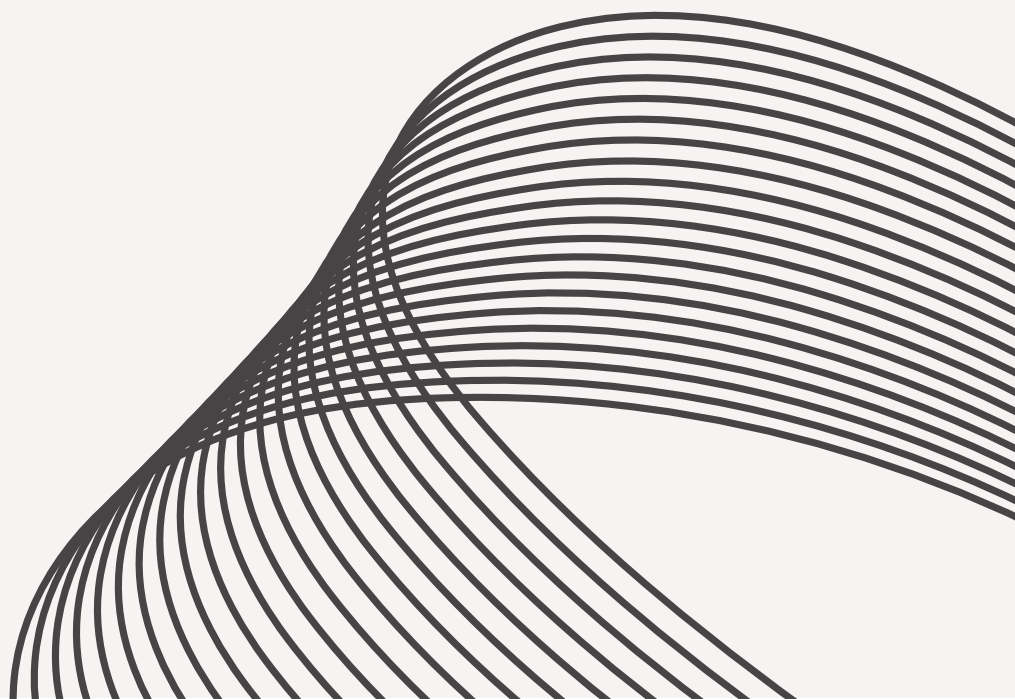
Methodological assumptions

As already mentioned in the introduction, much of the knowledge about sport is based upon research carried out by others. The project SWIM Handbook researches impact of the recent pandemic effects on sport, physical activity and dropout from sport. The project team chose a mixed approach consisting of quantitative and qualitative approach. This mixed approach was ensured by the project SWIM questionnaires.

The characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research on the basis given by R.Streefkerk is summed up in the Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research

Quantitative research	*Qualitative research*
• Uses numerical analysis to measure social phenomena to provide 'facts' • Assumes a single, objective social reality • Assumes social reality is continuously across different times and settings • Uses statistical analysis to determine causal relationships • Studies samples with the intention of generalising to populations • Researcher is objective, and 'detached' from the subjects under investigation • The setting is often contrived • Data is collected using inanimate objects, for example pen and paper • Associated with the positivist approach • Generally deductive	• Relies on non-numerical analysis to provide understanding • Assumes social reality is a subjective experience • Assumes social reality is continuously constructed and related to the immediate social context • Objectives are description, understanding and meaning • Uses smaller samples, or 'cases' • Data are rich and subjective • The location of the research is often natural • Flexible approach to data collection; often non-traditional approaches, e.g. content analysis • The researcher is the data collection instrument • Associated with the interpretative approach • Generally inductive

This Handbook includes collection of quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires.

A total of 158 questionnaires consisting of 12 questions were collected with the participation of project partners.

- Latvia – 32 respondents,
- Lithuania – 31 respondent,
- Spain – 40 respondents,
- Turkiye – 55 respondents.

This primary data collection is an important part of the project SWIM, yet it also considers the data collection as a part of a wider process involving also the important stage of practical application after the data collection through the organization of remote sport events by all partners.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative approach within the project SWIM is a numerical measurement and analysis involving measurable 'quantities'. This gave a set of numerical data that were statistically analysed and formed into charts. It was done on the basis of 8, out of 12, questions of the 158 questionnaires.

The first three questions of the questionnaire were related to personal information of respondents.

The first question was regarding the occupation of respondents. The answers reveal that most – more than a half, of the respondents were coaches – 85 (54%). The rest on equal percentage parts were athletes and students – 36 and 37 respondents accordingly.
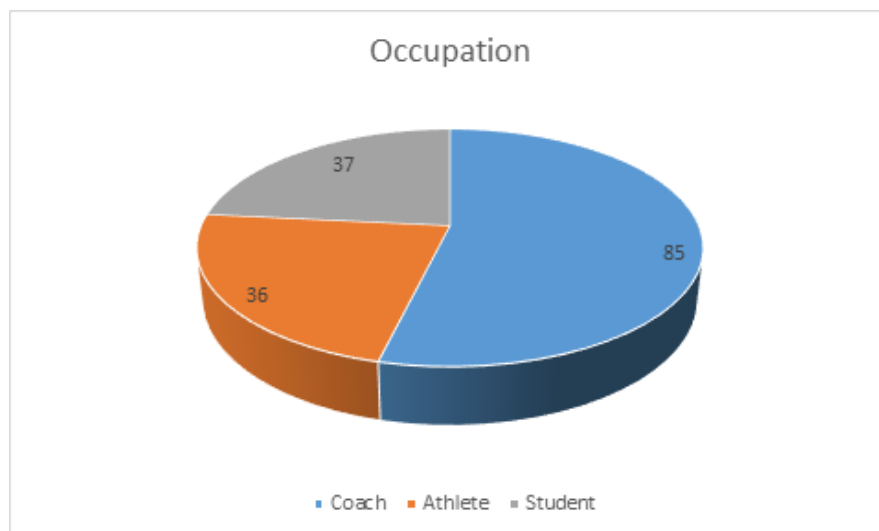

FIGURE 1. OCCUPATION

Regarding gender the percentage was close – 86 (54%) male and 72 (46%) female, which shows that a good level of gender equality was achieved.
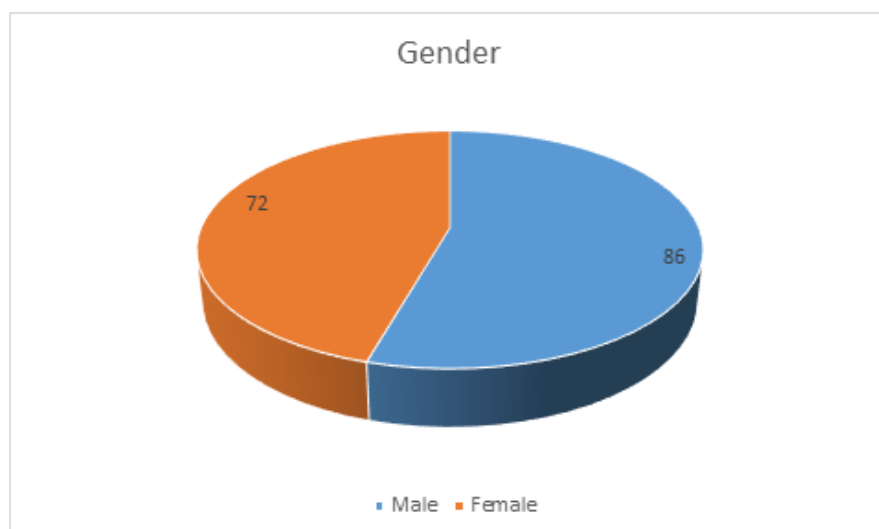

FIGURE 2. GENDER

The third question displays the age of respondents divided into four categories: between 18 – 25, between 26 – 35, between 36 – 55 and above 55 years of age. The responses reveal that the highest number of respondents were coaches between ages of 36 – 55. This part formed 58 (37%) out of 158 respondents. Close to this number were the youngest respondents forming all three categories – coaches, students, athletes, of respondents. This group formed 54 (34%). The third biggest number formed was by the group of ages between 26 – 35. This group formed 35 (22%) respondents. The smallest group of the oldest category 55 years and above formed 7% of the respondents, i.e. 11 respondents.
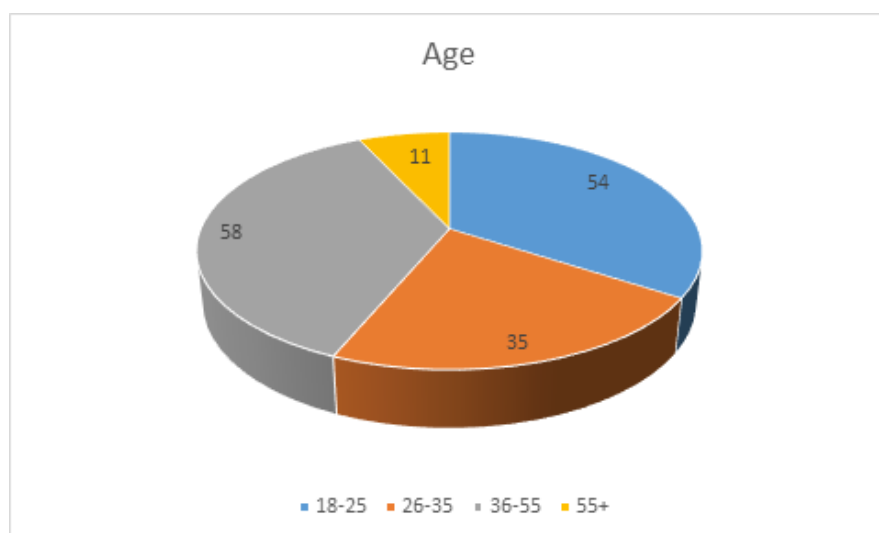

FIGURE 3. AGE

The fourth question is the first apart from the personal information, and it is regarding dropout from sport during the pandemic years. Almost one third of respondents – 51, admitted that between 11% – 20% of children / young people have dropped out from sports during the pandemic years. 42 respondents measured the dropout of children / young people from sport up to 50%, which reveals that the dropout happened up to a half. Yet even more worrying figures give 32 respondents saying that more than half of their training groups dropped out from sports during the restriction periods due to the pandemics. Only 33 respondents, which forms 20% of all respondents, were relatively optimistic, saying that less than 10% of the children / young people dropped out from sports from their training groups.
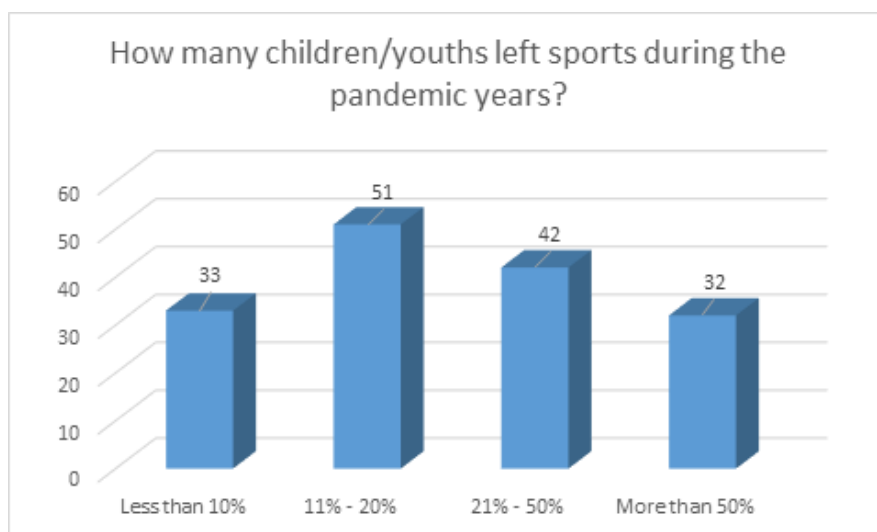
FIGURE 4. CHILDREN / YOUNG PEOPLE DROPOUT FROM SPORT

Responses of the question 8 – How have the COVID-19 restrictions affected the mental health of young athletes/students? – give answers in 4 categories of a Likert scale. The biggest group of respondents – 63 (40%) said that Covid-19 has impacted the mental health of young athletes and students quite much. Additional 40 (25%) of respondents admitted that it has impacted the target group's mental health significantly. And only 41 (26%) and 14 (9%) of the respondents agreed that Covid-19 has not made much or has made just a very little mental impact on the target group accordingly.
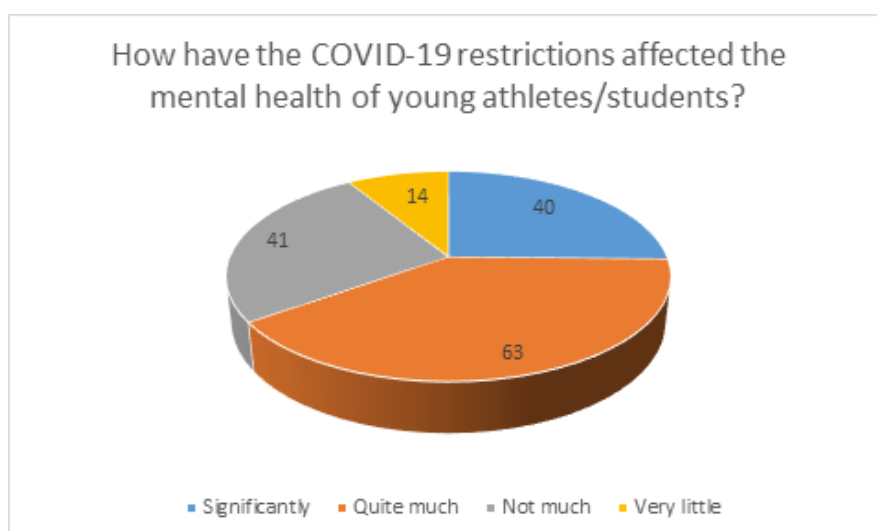

FIGURE 5. MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ATHLETES/STUDENTS AFTER THE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

The question 9 gives an insight into today's condition of the young athletes / students regarding sports. The answers were given in three categories. A half of the respondents (79) admitted that today the young athletes / students have a good condition to play sports. Yet 43 (27%) of the respondents say just the opposite, while 36 (23%) cannot decide between "yes" and "no".
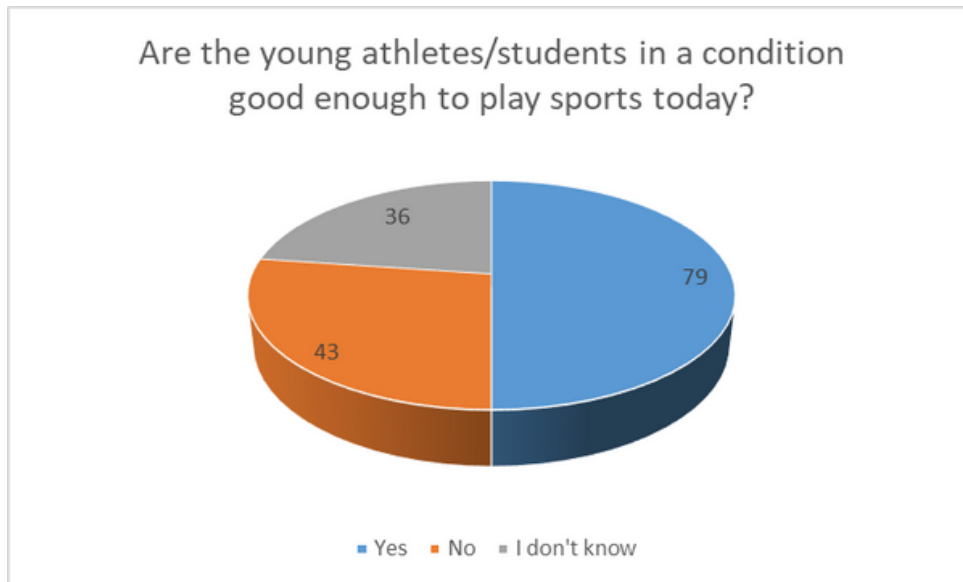
FIGURE 6. CONDITION OF YOUNG ATHLETES / STUDENTS TODAY

Question 10 shows the activity level of the young athletes / students after the end of the Covid-19 restrictions. The answers were given among increased – the same – decreased. 63 (40%) of the respondents gave a highly optimistic answer saying that their athletes' / students' activity level has increased. 54 (34%) said that it has stayed the same, but 41 (26%) said that it has decreased.
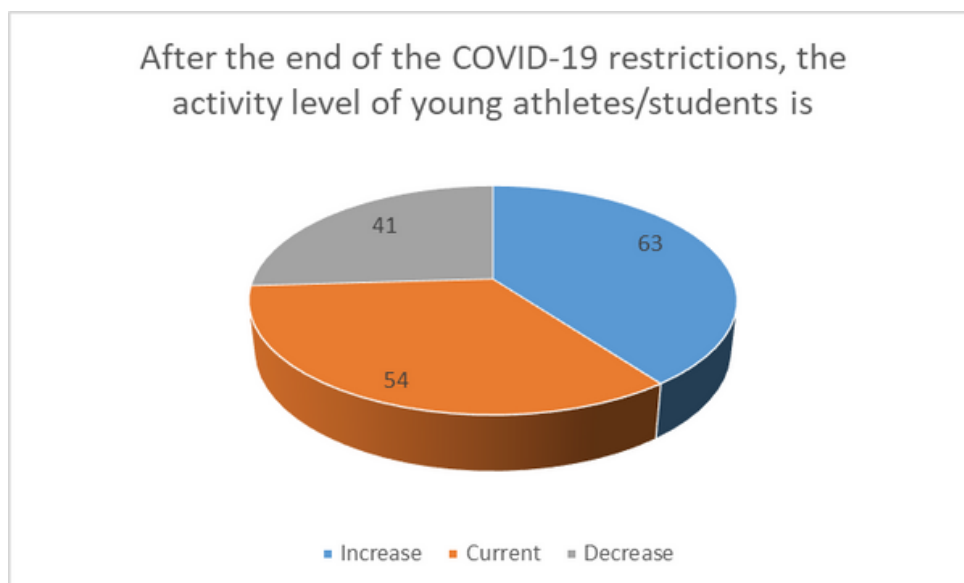
FIGURE 7. ACTIVITY LEVEL OF THE YOUNG ATHLETES / STUDENTS AFTER THE END OF THE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

The last question of the quantitative research part – the question 11, reveals if the young athletes/students give more priority to physical activities after the end of the Covid-19 restrictions. Almost half of the respondents – 68 (43%), say that the young athletes / students give the same priority to physical activities after the end of the Covid-19 restrictions as before the pandemic restrictions. 48 (30%) of the respondents think it has raised, while 42 (27%) say that it is, however, less.

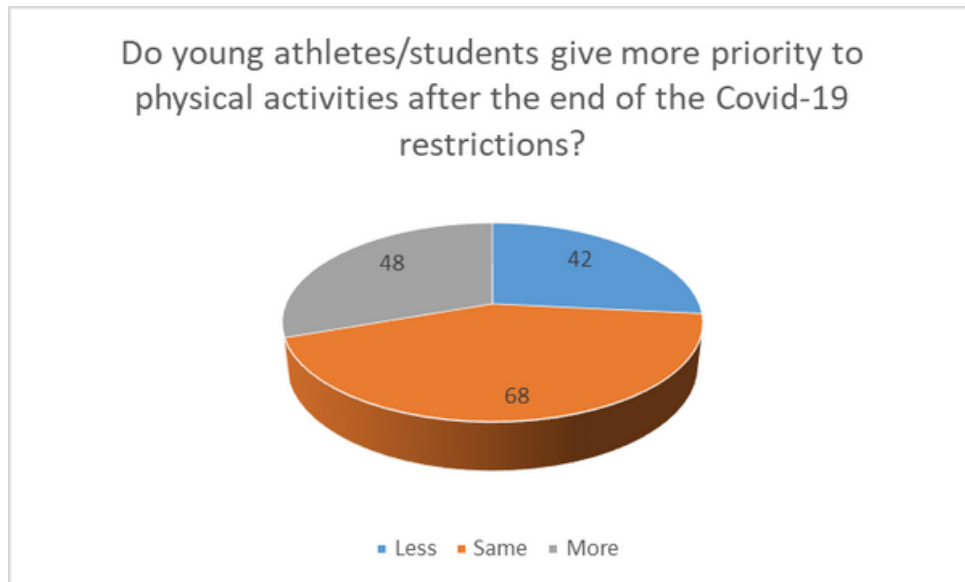**FIGURE 8.** PRIORITY LEVEL OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AFTER THE END OF THE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

QUALTITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research of the project SWIM aimed to reveal qualities of coaches, PE teachers, athletes and students that were not quantifiable, such as feelings, thoughts, opinions and experiences, thus forming concepts associated with interpretative approaches regarding physical activity and sports.

Within the qualitative research of the project SWIM non-numerical data and analysis to describe and understand concept were used.

Questions 5, 6, 7 and 12 were open-ended questions giving a more personal insight in the issue raised by the project SWIM research through the questionnaires.

QUESTION 5

Question 5 gave answers to what were the most common reasons for quitting sports.

LATVIA

Within the responses of the partner from Latvia, six main reasons were mentioned. As the most common of them was mentioned lack of sport competitions – 9 respondents forming 28% out of 32 Latvian respondents. Close to the main reason was mentioned lack of friends forming 22%. Loss of interest, bad weather conditions and laziness were mentioned as the next three reasons for dropping out from sports by 16%, 13% and 13% of respondents accordingly. The least reason mentioned by 8% respondents was a lack of motivation.
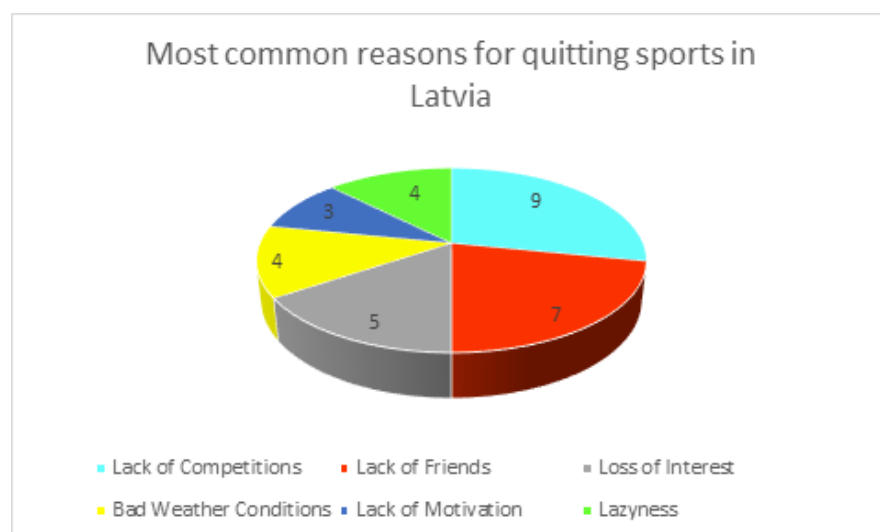

FIGURE 9. MOST COMMON REASONS FOR QUITTING SPORTS IN LATVIA

SPAIN

The survey conducted with young individuals in Spain to identify the factors that helped them stay active during the pandemic restrictions yielded a range of diverse responses.

Below, an analysis and assessment of the provided responses are presented:

Space and Movement Restrictions: several participants mentioned the lack of space in their homes as a limiting factor for staying active. The inability to leave the house due to government restrictions was also highlighted as a limitation.

Impact of Health Measures: the mandatory use of face-masks was repeatedly mentioned as a factor that made physical activity difficult, both in team sports and individual activities. Prohibitions and the required distancing in team sports were also notable challenges.

Lack of Motivation: the lack of motivation was mentioned in numerous responses as a key challenge. The loss of interest due to the cessation of extracurricular activities and other distractions such as television and video games also affected motivation.

Fear of Contagion and Laziness: fear of contagion and laziness were cited as reasons for not resuming physical activity after the mandatory break.

Shift towards Sedentary Habits: several respondents mentioned that during the lockdown, they became used to a sedentary lifestyle. Lack of time and prioritization of leisure activities, such as console gaming, were also cited as factors contributing to sedentary behaviour.

In summary, the survey responses of the question 5 indicate that factors such as lack of space, movement restrictions, public health measures, lack of motivation, fear of contagion, laziness, and a shift towards sedentary habits were all influential in young people's ability to stay active during the pandemic restrictions. These findings underscore the importance of addressing these challenges to promote an active lifestyle among young people facing similar situations in the future.

TURKIYE

A wide range of answers were obtained in the survey conducted with young people to determine the factors that caused young people to quit sports during pandemic restrictions. Below is the analysis and evaluation of the responses given:

Closure / Inaccessibility of Sports Facilities: many participants emphasized that sports facilities were closed following the decision taken by the government. And many of them stated that they could not access sports equipment at home or in their neighbourhoods, which both reduced their motivation and could not do group exercises.

Parents' Anxiety and Fear: it was stated that parents were extremely anxious and afraid in the face of this unusual situation. It was stated that parents are very worried about both the health of their children and the health of the society, and therefore they thought that sports are not a priority for families during that period. When we look at the family structure in the Turkish society, it is generally seen that the elderly people (grandmothers, grandfathers, etc.) live with their children in most of the houses. The fact that these people are in a risky situation due to their chronic diseases also increased the anxiety of families.

Switching to an Unusual Lifestyle as a Result of an Unusual Pandemic: what was generally expressed in the answers given was the transition from a regular lifestyle to a very different lifestyle. It was stated that many situations such as sleeping patterns, eating habits, social activities, group work, etc. have changed. It was seen in the answers that all of these caused loss of motivation. It was also emphasized that motivation is a very good trigger to continue sports.

Infectious Effect of the Virus: the rapid infectious effect of the virus was also cited as another reason for not continuing physical activity. It was stated that this effect negatively affects both individual and social behaviour and causes people to move away from common areas and social life.

LITHUANIA

Survey results were summed up and 9 factors were identified.

Lack of Motivation: the pandemic stuck super-fast, and it was hard for young people to understand that they are responsible for their physical activities. Even though they had online training sessions and individual plans, some of youth lacked motivation.

Laziness: survey participants mentioned that laziness was one of the important reasons for quitting sports in Lithuania. Laziness can be prevented in contact training sessions by trainers and teammates. However, doing sports in online training sessions was really hard for young athletes who tend to be lazy.

Closed Sports Areas: sport areas are important to youth athletes – without them they cannot do any sports and more important participate in sport competitions. Closing sport areas and forcing to attend training online or outdoor elsewhere was very uncomfortable for youth athletes.

Other Interests: spending hours at home without physical activities outside led to young athletes finding new interest, such as reading books, listening to music and so on.

Illnesses / Injuries: these factors are not related to pandemic, but are very important, too. Some of athletes cannot continue do sports after injuries, but some of them are just afraid to get new injuries and leave the sport.

Lack of Face-to-face Communication: sport is not only an action of physical activity, but also a place for socializing with like-minded people. Staying at home and being not able to speak with teammates or coaches face to face led to drop out from sport.

Lack of Time: some survey participants mentioned lack of time. It must be related to lack of motivation in many cases, because young athletes had a lot of free time in pandemic just staying at home.

Computer Games: it is other interest than sport. This factor was mentioned as separate because survey participants mentioned it specifically and more than one time.

Need of Vaccination: only one survey participant mentioned that the need of vaccination was a factor for quitting sport.
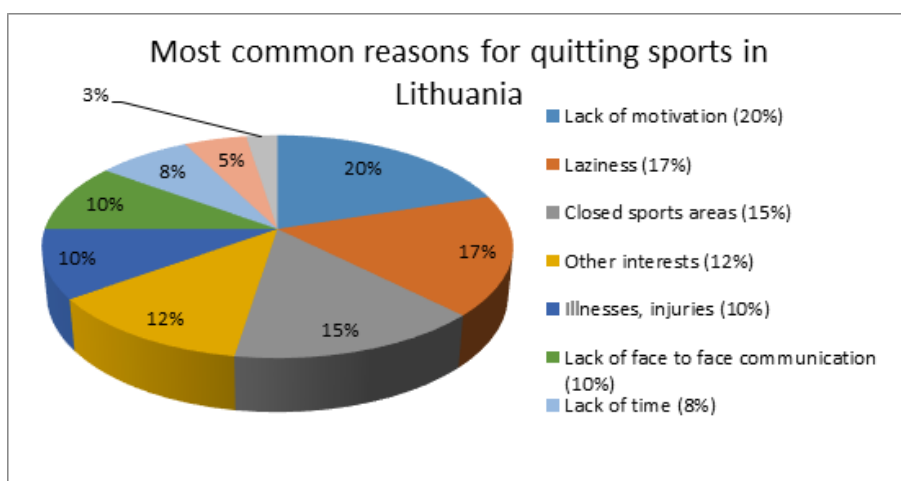
FIGURE 10. MOST COMMON REASONS FOR QUITTING SPORTS IN LITHUANIA

QUESTION 6

Question six revealed motivators that helped to keep young athletes/students active during the restrictions

LATVIA

Respondents from Latvia revealed five main motivators. As the biggest motivator was mentioned friends with 37% of respondents. The second motivator forming 31% of all the respondents was mentioned an individual approach and encouragement. Coaches and parents were mentioned the next forming 16% and 13% accordingly. One respondent mentioned also a good physical appearance, thus forming 3% of the respondents.

FIGURE 11. MOTIVATORS TO STAY ACTIVE LATVIA

SPAIN

Based on the responses provided, several factors and strategies that influenced the physical activity of young individuals during this challenging period can be identified. Respondents from Spain highlighted six main factors that helped their students to stay active during the restrictions.
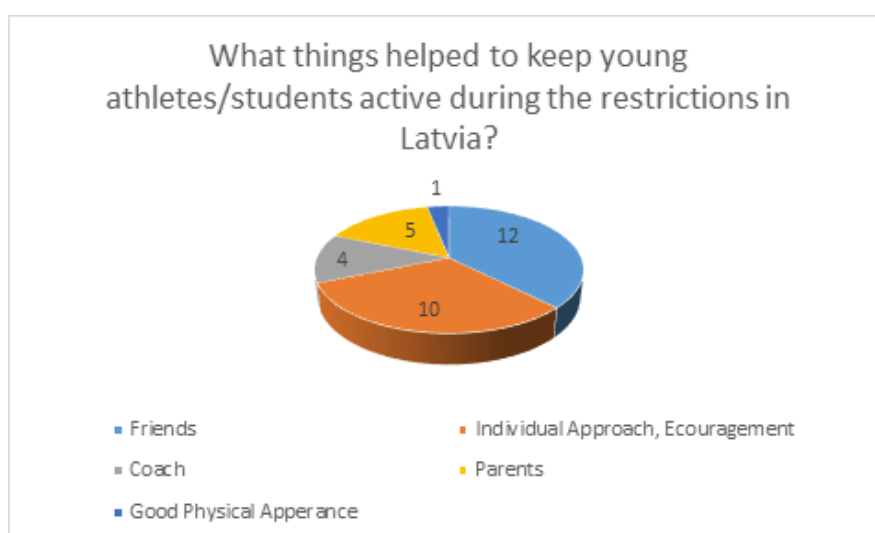
Sports Practice and Outdoor Activities: the most common response among the survey participants was engaging in sports, going for walks, and meeting with friends. These activities stood out as effective ways to stay active and socialize within the restrictions.

Home-based Activities: many young people mentioned the importance of engaging in activities within their homes and making use of open spaces in their yards. This demonstrated that adapting to restrictions did not prevent them from maintaining physical activity.

Motivation and Positive Attitude: maintaining a positive and active attitude was mentioned as a key factor in staying active. Motivation from parents and the need to keep their minds occupied also influenced the physical activity of young people.

Technological Resources: the availability of mobile apps and exercise-related games was mentioned as a helpful resource. Additionally, online tutorials and internet videos were a valuable source of guidance for home workouts.

Free Time: the free time resulting from the restrictions allowed many young people to dedicate more time to home exercise. It was also mentioned that practicing sports at home became one of the exceptions for leaving the house.

Family and Social Support: the positive influence of parents and communication with friends who were engaging in physical activity during the pandemic were highlighted as factors that encouraged young people to stay active.

TURKIYE

Within the scope of the answers given in the survey, it is seen that the factors that caused young people to continue sports and stay active during the restriction period are expressed as follows:

To Maintain/Protect their Athletic Performance: in most of the answers given, young people stated that they wanted them to be stronger and ready by maintaining their performance on the day they would return to their active sports lives. This was a situation that motivated them to be active even if there were restrictions.

Access to Online Training Program: it was stated that many online applications were used during this period. It was also stated that many individual coaches/instructors offered their online training free of charge, and the fact that participation is free, kept the spirit of group dynamics alive. In addition, it was stated that coaches constantly updating/diversifying the athletes' training programs was also a motivation booster.

Staying Healthy, Increasing Physical Capacity: it was stated that during this unusual pandemic period, physical and mental well-being should be kept high in order to reduce both the diseases/negativities that a sedentary lifestyle may bring and the risk of transmission of the virus. For this reason, the importance of staying active despite all impossibilities or restrictions was mentioned.

ERASMUS+ Projesi

SWIM
SPORTS WITH MEANING

Avrupa Birliği tarafından ortak finanse edilmektedir

AMACI

Dijital dönüşümün ve dijital teknolojilerin mesleki ve mesleğe yönelik spor eğitiminde uzaktan eğitim/öğrenme sürecine dahil edilmesi

FAYDALARI

- Belirlenen dijital teknolojilerin kullanımı yoluyla uzaktan eğitim ve öğretime yönelik yenilikçi yaklaşım geliştirilmesi
- Spor eğitmenleri, antrenörler ve öğretmenlerin dijital becerilerinin geliştirilmesi
- Bir aradayken ve uzaktayken spor yapmak/öğrenmek arasında sıkı bir bağ kurulması
- Fiziksel ve zihinsel sağlık durumunun ve iyi olma halinin geliştirilmesi ve iyileştirilmesi

SONUÇLARI

- Tasarlanacak spor kulübü de dahil olmak üzere, mesleki ve mesleki odaklı spor eğitiminde dijital araçların kullanım olanaklarına ilişkin hazırlananacak kılavuz hazırlanması
- Uzaktan spor müsabakaları/eğitimleri düzenlenmesi

SÜRESİ

1 Şubat 2023 - 31 Ocak 2024

ORTAKLAR

LSIIDP — LATVIJAS SPORTA IZGLĪTĪBAS IESTĀŽU DIREKTORU PADOME

Pasionistas Colegio Sangabriel Zizur

SCHOOL SPORTS FEDERATION OF TURKEY 2005

FMK Lituanica sportuokimekartu

LITHUANIA

Survey results were summed up, and 8 main factors were identified.

Internal Motivation: survey participants mentioned that self-motivation was most important factor to stay in sports. Youth participants lost face-to-face connection with teammates and coaches – so they needed to find their way for motivation of themselves.

Online Trainings: online apps and internet connection saved a lot of youth from dropping out from sport activities. Computers and internet were the most common reasons to leave sports in most of the cases – however, it helped in pandemic situation.

Friends / Family: connection with friends and family members helped youth athletes stay in sport and solve pandemic challenges.

Trainers: they were really important – no matter whether youth athletes were speaking with them face to face or online. Trainers were important persons to youth athletes.

Constant Connection: this factor was connected to friends and family, trainers and teammates. It was highly important to keep same connection with everyone to be able to solve pandemic issues.

Team Unity: there was huge difference for individual and team sport athletes in the pandemic situation. Individual sport youth athletes used to train alone or in small groups – so, it was much easier for them to face pandemic situation. However, team sports athletes needed additional support from their teammates because they probably had used to communicate more while doing sports.

Videos: Online videos were one of the interesting non-contact training parts – youth athletes liked to watch their matches' highlights from the past or to analyse training sessions or professional matches. Videos containing sport celebrities were very interesting for youth athletes, too.

Individual Plan: youth participants had lots of time to work individually on attributes they lacked before. Trainers had enough time to prepare individual plans for their athletes. If a youth athlete had the right motivation, it worked out really well and most of the athletes had an option to become better athletes individually.

Other Mentioned: various games, healthy lifestyle, more free time, possibility to do sports in open space.
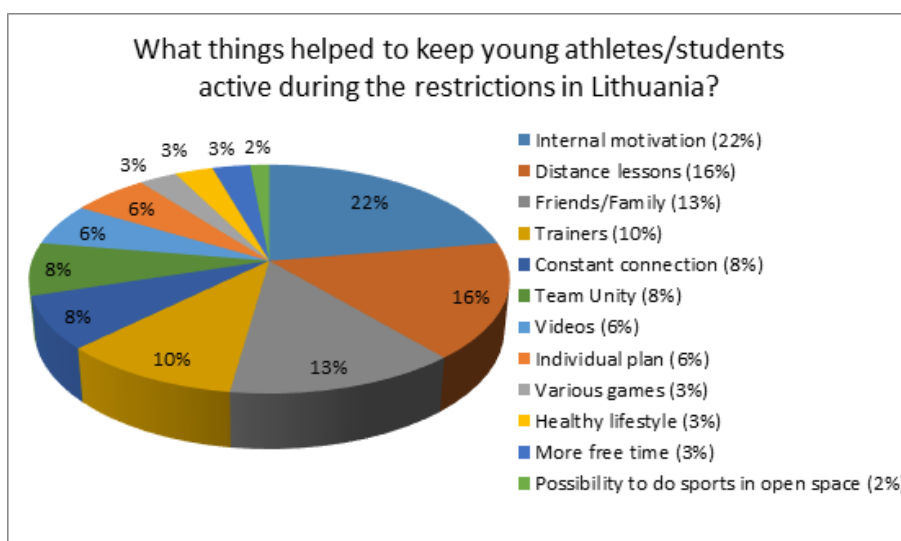

FIGURE 12. MOTIVATORS TO STAY ACTIVE LITHUANIA

QUESTION 7

Question 7 gives an insight in what things prevented from being active during the restrictions.

LATVIA

Respondents from Latvia clearly stated their mind admitting that the biggest hinderer from being active during the restriction periods were the weather conditions. In the year 2021, the winter in Latvia was hard and long. Sport practices were allowed only outside. Latvia had also huge amounts of snow, and coaches had to switch in all possible inspirations to lead their sport practices. This experience is very likely to have formed 19 (60%) respondents mentioning that due to the weather, they skipped practices, and some even dropped out from sport and not all returned after the restrictions had finished. 6 (19%) respondents mentioned lack of competitions, thus forming the second biggest group of respondents of this question. Next, 3 (9%) respondents openly admitted that it was due to the lack of interest, and the last two groups equally – 2, mentioned loss of motivation and lack of regularity, forming 6% of respondents each.
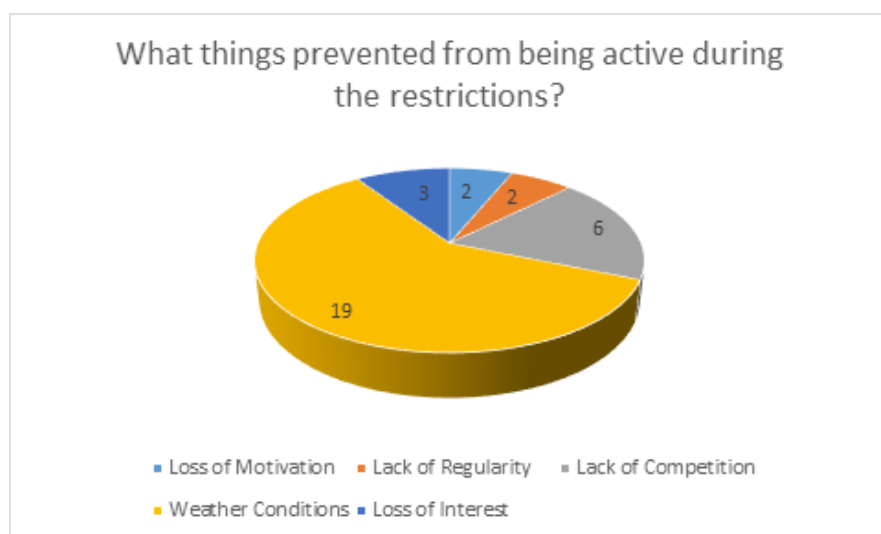

FIGURE 13. HINDERS TO STAY ACTIVE LATVIA

SPAIN

Among the situations that hindered young people from being active during restrictions in Spain, the points highlighted were the following:

Isolation and Lack of Routine: news of the pandemic, confinement at home and lack of routine led many young people to feel trapped and disoriented.

Space and Resource Limitations: lack of space at home, shortage of activity materials, and difficulty performing physical activities were common obstacles.

Loneliness and Emotional Stress: coping with the situation alone, the lack of physical contact and the feeling of overwhelm and sadness affected the mental health of the respondents.

Entering Restrictions and Mask Use: exit restrictions and mandatory mask use limited freedom of movement and social interaction.

Increase in Sedentary Lifestyle: increased time at home led to an increase in sedentary lifestyle, with more people spending time on video games and passive activities.

Demotivation and Boredom: lack of motivation, boredom, and difficulty maintaining a routine contributed to the loss of healthy habits.

Impact on Mental Health: stress, anxiety and deterioration in mood were common due to the uncertainty and limitations imposed by the pandemic.

Changes in Eating Habits: poor diet became a problem for some people during quarantine.

Increased Use of Technology: increased time at home resulted in increased use of electronic devices, such as consoles and social media.

Lack of Motivation and Structure: lack of structure in the daily routine and lack of motivation to engage in physical activities contributed to a more sedentary lifestyle.

In summary, the pandemic and the restrictions associated with it had a significant impact on people's mental health, physical activity and habits, leading to challenges such as lack of space, sedentary lifestyle and loss of motivation.

TURKIYE

Among the situations that were seen as obstacles to young people's participation in sports and physical activities during the restricted periods due to the pandemic, the following were common:

Families' Extreme Anxiety about the Situation: just like in the answers of the question 5 of the survey, it was seen that one of the biggest obstacles to young people's participation in sports and physical activity during the pandemic period in Turkiye was the anxiety of their families.

Restriction Rules Set by the Government: it was stated that many rules taken by the government (which was known to have taken similar decisions in many countries), such as curfew, closure of gyms, obligation to use masks, and social distance rules, made it impossible to practice sports and physical activity. Although these rules were established for the benefit of the public, they became an obstacle to practice sports and physical activity.

Psychological and Mental Unpreparedness: young people who were socially limited stated that they were greatly affected by the feeling of loneliness and uncertainty. Respondents emphasized that they had difficulty in continuing their routine pre-pandemic lives due to the lack of motivation caused by the pandemic. Rather than physical difficulties, mental and psychological difficulties were stated as the priority to be solved.

LITHUANIA

A total of 19 factors were identified by survey respondents. They were summed up and classified in 9 groups.

Various Restrictions: survey participants did not mention particular restriction. Some of the restrictions were mentioned separately, for example, doing sport only at home, closed sport clubs / gyms, cancelled sport seasons.

The Possibility of Doing Sports Only at Home: youth athletes had only two options – to do sports at home or quit. It was hard for some of youth athletes to stay active at home during the pandemic period.

Lack of Intrinsic Motivation: self-motivation was a key factor whether an athlete does sports under regular conditions or in a pandemic situation. Youth athletes who had strong intrinsic motivation stayed in sports and became even stronger in most of the cases.

Cannot Meet Team Members: meeting team members and sport colleagues was very important for youth athletes' social lives and intrinsic motivation. They needed to socialize and speak about the same passion – their sport.

Sports Clubs / Gyms Closed: closure of gyms and sports clubs was a very strong restriction. It forced youth athletes to do sports at home.

Computers / TV / Smart Devices: youth spent a lot of time at home, and it was super easy to get addicted to video games and social media apps. It forced them to spend less time doing sports at home.

Lack of Matches: youth athletes love to compete and lack of matches hit their motivation quite hard.

Laziness: coaches and colleagues were far away – it was much easier to get lazy and miss some of the online trainings.

Wearing a Mask: released restrictions allowed youth to do sports in sport clubs, but there was a rule that sportsmen have to wear a protection mask. Many youth athletes complained about it.

Other: IT problems, small space at home, lack of the communication, lack of the inventory, vaccines, deteriorating psychological state, loss of the communication with a coach, increased a monotony, fear of the infection, lack of time.
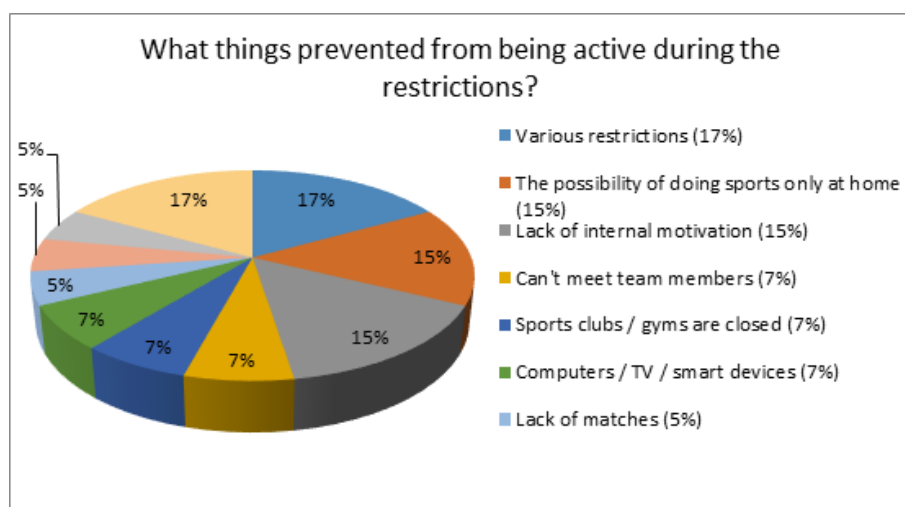

FIGURE 14. HINDERS TO STAY ACTIVE LITHUANIA

Role of sport competitions in young athletes of sport VET and sport

Summary of the last question (question 12) of the questionnaire reveals the role of sport competitions in young athletes of sport VET and sport.

LATVIA

The question 12 of the survey clearly showed that the most important factor for future solutions was sport competitions. Sport competitions were highly important among the VET athletes of Latvia forming 44% of the total of respondents (14). The second most important factor was mentioned indoor practices, which may be considered obvious due to the geographical location of Latvia. This group formed 28% of the respondents (9). 16% (5) had no suggestions, while 9% (3) suggested cooperation with psychologists and other experts and 3% (1) suggested at least regular outdoor practices.
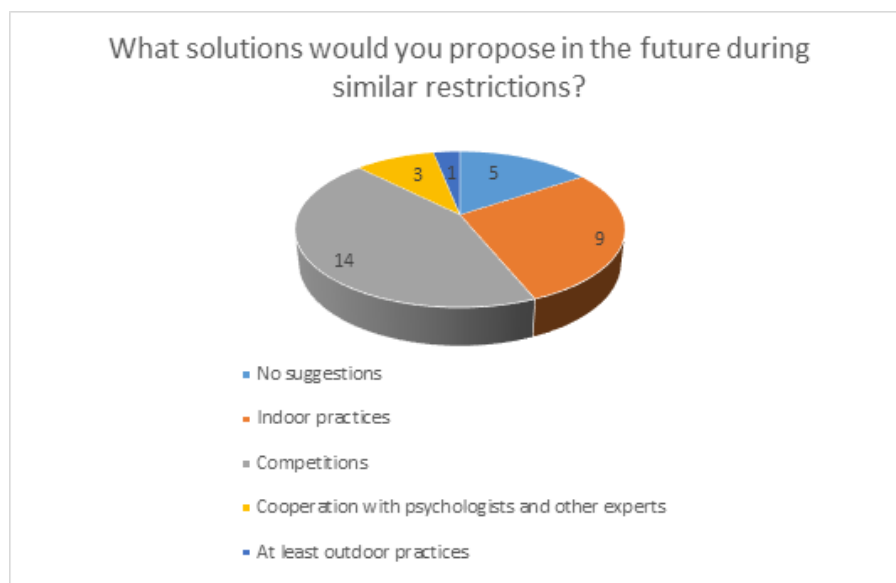

FIGURE 15. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR FUTURE IN CASE OF SIMILAR RESTRICTIONS IN LATVIA

SPAIN

The survey responses highlighted the importance of physical activity during the pandemic restrictions. Responses offer a range of valuable solutions and recommendations for keeping young people active in the future, even in similar restriction situations. These suggestions address aspects such as education, technology, flexibility in restrictions, and the promotion of physical activity within a community:

- Develop online physical education programs that emphasize the importance of physical activity for overall health.
- Continue using technology, such as apps and online platforms, to guide and motivate young people in physical activity.
- Consider more flexible sports restrictions that allow people to continue exercising while maintaining safety measures.
- Encourage family physical activity as a means of motivation and mutual support.
- Ensure that everyone has access to technological resources and exercise programs, regardless of their economic situation.
- Continue promoting self-discipline and personal motivation as key drivers to stay active.

TURKIYE

Considering the answers to the last question of the survey, evaluations about what can be done or possible measures that can be taken during such a restriction period in the future were as follows.

More Widespread Use of Digital Tools: it was stated that the effective use of digital tools in these and similar restrictions would ensure sustainability in participation in sports and physical activities.

Adapting Activity and Training Programs to Open Spaces: it was stated that since the measures taken during this period were primarily the closure of sports / training halls, it would be effective to expand outdoor training programs and design facilities and equipment to suit open areas as much as possible.

Reduced Family Anxiety: looking at the responses given by young people, it was seen that families were very concerned about the health of their children during the pandemic period. Although families' concerns were understandable, the benefits of sports and participation in physical activity in terms of the physical and mental health of young people, especially during such restriction periods, should be well explained to families.

Keeping Sports / Training Halls Open: although the correctness of the government's decision to close the halls was partially accepted, it was considered that it would be beneficial to work on how to keep the gyms / training halls open in a safer way, rather than making this a priority.

LITHUANIA

A total of 11 factors were identified by survey respondents. They were summed up and classified forming 7 factors.

Allow to Do Outdoor Sports (at least alone): youth athletes preferred training outside rather than training via online apps. They had lots of difficulties staying at home for a long period and trying to do sports via online apps.

Allow to Choose the Type of Training Individually: youth athletes liked to have trainings related to their needs. It happened most of the time in contact trainings – however, it was harder to offer individual online trainings.

Encourage to Exercise: it was important to motivate youth athletes to do sports regardless of situation – it was even more important in restriction periods.

I Have no Answer: some survey respondents did not mention any solutions.

Have a High Intrinsic Motivation to Do Sports: youth athletes who had a strong intrinsic motivation handled restriction periods easier.

Have a Plan Ahead for Potential Restrictions: the first weeks of pandemic was very stressful to sport organizations. They needed time to plan their activities. All organizations have to have plans for possible future restrictions from now on.

Have More Frequent Online Training: Some survey respondents mentioned that it is really important to have an equal amount of online trainings and contact (regular) sport trainings. It is even better to have more online trainings and online meetings with team because youth athletes need more attention and communication in pandemic situations.

Other: among other possible factors exercise in online trainings, organize online competitions, take all possible security measures, maintain a strong relationship between coaches and athletes, was mentioned.
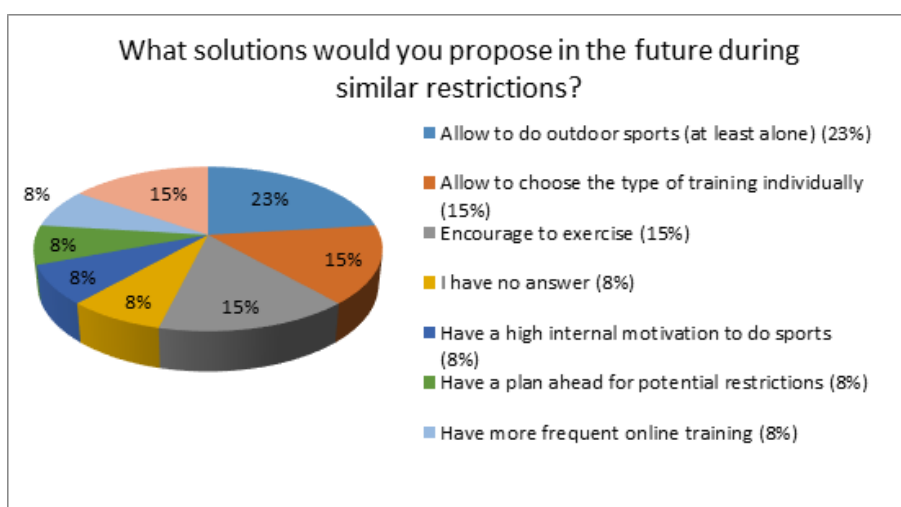

FIGURE 16. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR FUTURE IN CASE OF SIMILAR RESTRICTIONS IN LITHUANIA

Online, digital possibilities for sport competitions for VET athletes

Sport Competitions of the partner from Latvia 'Latvijas Sporta izglitibas iestazu Direktoru padome'

The first remote sport competition in Latvia was held within May as planned within the project schedule. The first competition gathered 87 participants from sport schools throughout the whole country, 10 of which were sport coaches. The second competition was held in September gathering 26 participants. In total, Latvia held two remote sport competitions gathering 113 participants for both project target groups – vocational oriented educational institutions athletes and their coaches, in total. The first event was created in an online application Strava, which prior to the event was analysed and discussed by all 4 project partners and finding it the most appropriate option for the case of Latvia.

FIGURE 17. STRAVA CLUB "SWIM PROJECT LSIIDP

The aim of the first remote event for LSIIDP was to gather participants throughout Latvia as many as possible. This was possible either through Strava Cahllenge or through Strava Club. In the case of LSIIDP, Strava Challenge was not the best solution because one Challenge allows only 25 participants. This meant to create several Challenges and the participants would only see the other 24 competing with. Yet they would not see participant results of other challenges. Such type of competition may not be considered fully open and transparent. Therefore, LSIIDP chose to create a Strava Club named "SWIM project LSIIDP". One hundred participants registered for the club and 87 started the activities. Two of those 87, who were athletes and not coaches, and who had gathered at least 15 kilometres within one week, apart from the prize winning, participated also in a draw for a precious prize – Garmin Instinct 2 Solar smartwatch.

FIGURE 18. GARMIN INSTINCT 2 SOLAR SMARTWATCH

A challenge that was faced during this remote event, was a fact that one of the participants was unfairly competing and gathering kilometres impossible for a human being exceeding the maximum limits of all world's records. Additionally, this participant was hiding his activities having made his Strava account private. This participant was excluded from the competition, but he was joining the club again and again, and the organizer – LSIIPD, could block this participant only for small periods of time. This was an annoying experience and, by discussing it with Strava helpdesk, for the moment it was not possible to do it differently. So, this may be considered as a minus for such remote events and leads to the next step – a specific online app's creation for sport schools of Latvia. Yet, this step would automatically lead to the next step – specific apps for different sports. LSIIDP team believes this can be a future possibility and perhaps not even so far away from today.

FIGURE 19. PRIZE AND DRAW WINNERS OF THE FIRST REMOTE SWIM PROJECT EVENT HELD BY LSIIDP

The second event was held through Strava Segment. Segments limit number of participants because they are created as a digital map, and it is possible to do them only in the real place following the digital route. The segment, therefore, was created in the hometown of LSIIDP – Limbazi. It was proposed to Limbazi Regional Sport School's athletes and out of five sports available in Limbazi two – basketball and track and field athletics, participated in it. With this segment, they fulfilled Control Normative tests, which are mandatory for sport schools in Latvia for the athletes to pass to the next training groups.
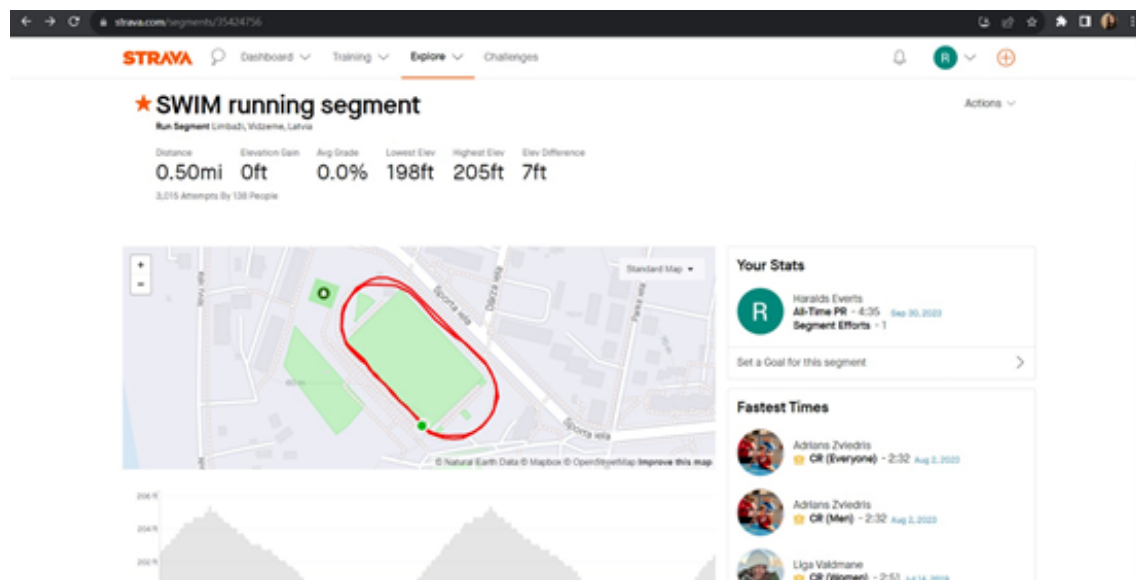

FIGURE 20. STRAVA SEGMENT "SWIM RUNNING SEGMENT"

LSIIDP suggests to other sport organizations both – segments, clubs and also challenges, but LSIIDP recommends to start with smaller number of participants, learn all smallest aspects of each remote possibility and only then create them as competitions for a wider number of participants.

Sport Competitions of the partner from Lithuania 'VSI Sportuokime Kartu'

FIGURE 21. STRAVA SEGMENT "FMK LITUANICA: PRASMINGAS SPORTAS NR.1"

The first remote sport competition in Lithuania was held in June for 3 weeks between June 7, 2023 – June 28, 2023. The first competition was held in two places: Domeikava and Kaunas district, and a total of 19 participants attended the running sport even.

A segment was created in the Domeikava Gymnasium Stadium and athletes, schoolchildren, coaches and teachers were invited to participate.

It was hard to reach high numbers of participants due to summer holidays that had just started.

Actual attendance numbers were 33, but it did not count according the rules. Once a segment is created, it stays there in Strava forever. It turned out that a segment specifically in the exact place was already created by somebody else years ago. It also turned out that 15 participants had run the segment previously with a better time, and therefore their time did not count in the projects activity time between June 7 – 28, 2023, because Strava counts the best time ever done. This meant that the Lithuanian partner had no proof of their effort in Strava.

FMK Lituanica: Prasmingas sportas Nr.2

Run Segment Domeikava, Kaunas County, Lithuania

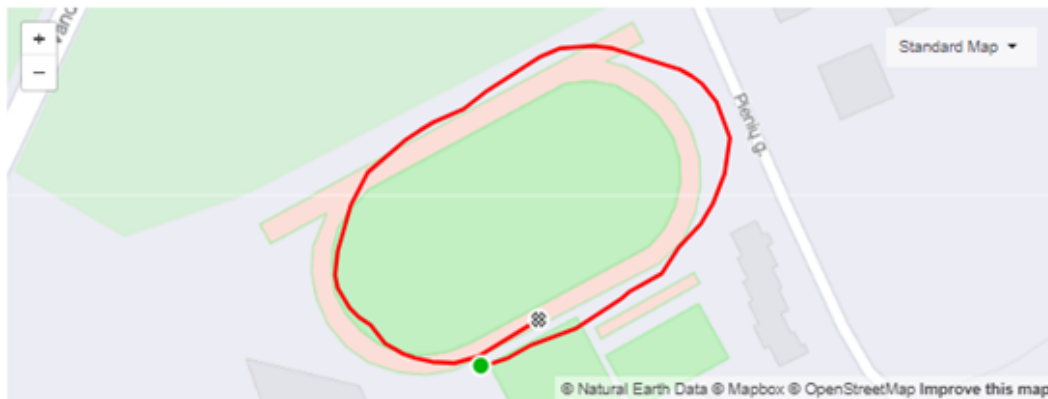| Distance	Elevation Gain	Avg Grade	Lowest Elev	Highest Elev	Elev Difference
0.30km	0m	0.0%	81m	83m	2m

6,831 Attempts By 73 People

FIGURE 22. STRAVA SEGMENT "FMK LITUANICA: PRASMINGAS SPORTAS NR.2"

The idea of the second remote event was to have 4 locations in school stadiums (Domeikava, Rokai, Kaunas, Rokiškis) plus 1 bicycle remote event. At the first event, there were some issues that past activities were better than activities in remote event period. And those activities did not show up in the project's segment list – only the best participant effort is registered for a segment. Football school coaches were doing some tests using Strava app, and it was only 8 participants, who were valid for a period October 4, 2023 – October 25, 2023, when the project's activity was held. There is a statistics of the total number of participants vs valid participants:

1. Domeikava – 8/63;
2. Rokai – 0/12;
3. Kaunas – 0/23;
4. Rokiškis – 0/14.

This situation gives a possible solution for future events – if any organization is planning a remote event via Strava Segment, it must use a route, which has not been used before for such competition. Otherwise, many participants' efforts will be overwritten by possible old, but better results.

FIGURE 23. STRAVA SEGMENT "FMK LITUANICA: PRASMINGAS SPORTAS NR.3"

Bicycle remote event was successful, because it gathered 103 participants. The period of bicycle event was longer – the whole October month due to the fact that participants needed more time to prepare. The idea was to ride from their living place, riding a specific ~1km route near Nemumas River in Kaunas centre. This meant that participants took at least 20 km bicycle ride (home – route – home) in order to participate in this event.

Participants were invited from FMK Lituanica football youth club, Kaunas sport school "Gaja", Kaunas sport school "Startas" and other participants from Kaunas region.

Other things to be considered organizing a remote event:

1. Application security settings – many participations needed a help to make their activities fully public and visible to qualify the participants for the event;

2. Possible issues sharing activities from one app to another – in VsI Sportuokime kartu experience, few coaches were using Polar watch and sharing their activities for Strava account. However, it was found that short activities meet problems to be shared, for example, from Polar Flow to Strava app.

3. In total VSI Sportuokime Kartu reached 130 participants.

Online, digital possibilities for sport competitions for other VET students

Sport Competitions of the partner from Spain 'Colegio San Gabriel'

The first sport event in Spain took place on June 6, with the special fact that all the partners of the project were present and participated in it.

The event was a part of a lesson plan previously prepared for the VET students in San Gabriel school, where they practiced a segment of 2,5 km around the school. The PE teacher in charge of the VET students used CALADU, an online tool created by the University of Zaragoza, where it is possible to register the student's speed and rhythm.

However, that day all the students brought their mobile phones so they could use STRAVA, where the partners had already designed a segment. We had some difficulties using the Strava app, because some students did not turn on their mobile's location or the app could not register their race properly. That is why 88 students and teachers registered for the race, but only 44 were finally visible in Strava. Apart from the 88 students, also the whole project team did the segment and 10 of San Gabriel School's teachers.

Since the Latvian partner LSIIDP had already carried out the first remote project activity, and LSIIDP already had experience with technical problems of smart devices, the project partners, anticipating possible difficulties, prepared participant registration sheets, which really turned out to be necessary when carrying out this "pioneer" activity.

FIGURE 24. PARTICIPANTS OF THE REMOTE SPORT COMPETITION FOR VET STUDENTS IN SPAIN

The second sport event was not so crowded, but it was also successful. It was held in September and again, it was one of the lesson plans of the Physical education lessons for VET students in San Gabriel school.

This time, the project team created a challenge, where they had to complete a 2,5 km run with the condition that they could follow their own pace, but always running, and they used the app NIKE RUN.

It was a good activity because most of the students were able to complete it. They showed a pretty good attitude to complete it, and made a great effort. The project team found some issues with the app again, but in the end, 18 students were registered in the app. The challenge was completed by one teacher of the school as well. In total San Gabriel School had 117 participants within the two remote events.

FIGURE 25. PARTICIPANTS OF THE REMOTE SPORT COMPETITION FOR VET STUDENTS IN SPAIN

Sport Competitions of the partner from Türkiye 'School Sport Federation of Türkiye'

As part of the project, the first remote sport event for sports teachers was held in Türkiye, both to popularize the project and to introduce teachers to the Strava application, which was decided to be used in the project in June. This segment was made in the Public Youth Park, which is a very large park in Ankara. The Strava app, which is widely used in Türkiye as well as many European countries, was preferred and was very useful. First, a meeting was held in which 12 physical education teachers participated. It was very productive. The teachers learned both the goals of the project and all the details of the Strava application. Segments were created in Strava for the project's remote sports events in Türkiye. Unlike the other partners, the Turkish partner chose walking, which is also an Olympic sport. A special segment was created for walking. Since the participants were teachers and students, the segments that promoted the competition also served the purpose of the project.
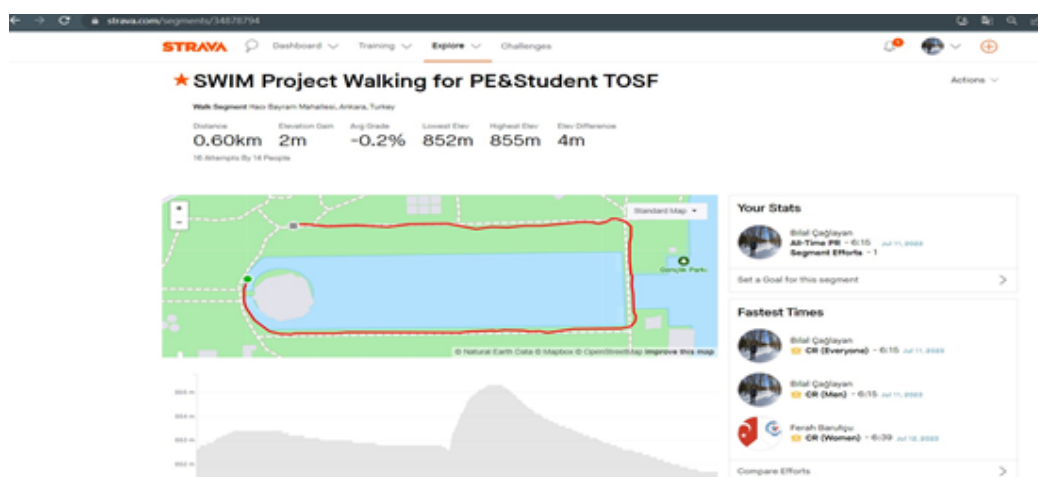
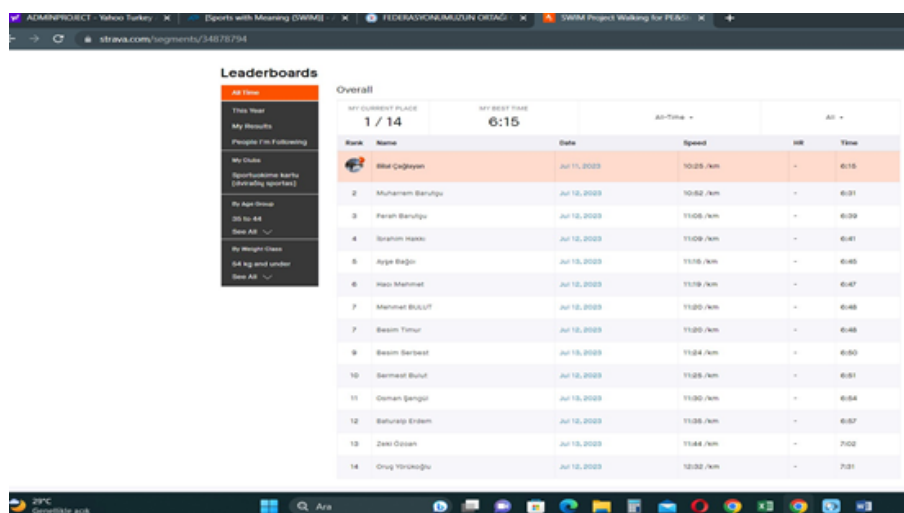**FIGURE 26.** STRAVA SEGMENT "SWIMPROJECT WALKING FOR PE&STUDENT TOSF"

FIGURE 27. STRAVA SEGMENT PARTICIPANT LIST "SWIMPROJECT WALKING FOR PE&STUDENT TOSF""

The second remote sport event took place at the Anatolia Vocational Technical High School in Balgat. The target of 100 students was reached by 101 student participant with the participation of students from the sports department and other departments of the school. Some of them did not have a Strava account, but watching other students who already had one, the sports teachers were able to encourage teachers and students from other departments to download the Strava app and participate in the activity.

The Turkish partner faced challenges such as necessity to update their phones to newer versions, many students struggled with poor internet connections and some were reluctant to participate for reasons of the unknown, despite the teachers' insistence and encouragement. However, the project team managed to explain the nature of the activity and convince most of the students. The project team gave the students access to their own mobile data connection, and in this way the poor internet connection was solved. The decisive factor was, the creation of a successful segment in the school garden. The students performed the marching activity during the PE lessons. In this way, the project team could easily explain the Strava application, the project and what the students needed to do. The sports teachers also gave an evaluation of the activity to the students involved. In addition, the project team presented the students and the school administration with symbolic sports equipment to use in future sports lessons.

In the light of this experience, TOSF notes that Strava is a very effective application.

In future it will be easier for participants to keep the competitive spirit to compete with other participants registered in the activity. It may be more useful to create segments according to the target group and geographical location, especially during periods of restriction. In addition, this may be effective for longer periods and for different target groups.

In total, TOSF reached 113 participants within both remote events.

FIGURE 28. INFORMATIVE SEMINAR IN THE SCHOOL OF THE SECOND REMOTE SPORT EVENT

FIGURE 29. SECOND REMOTE SPORT EVENT WALKING RACE SEGMENT IN THE SCHOOL
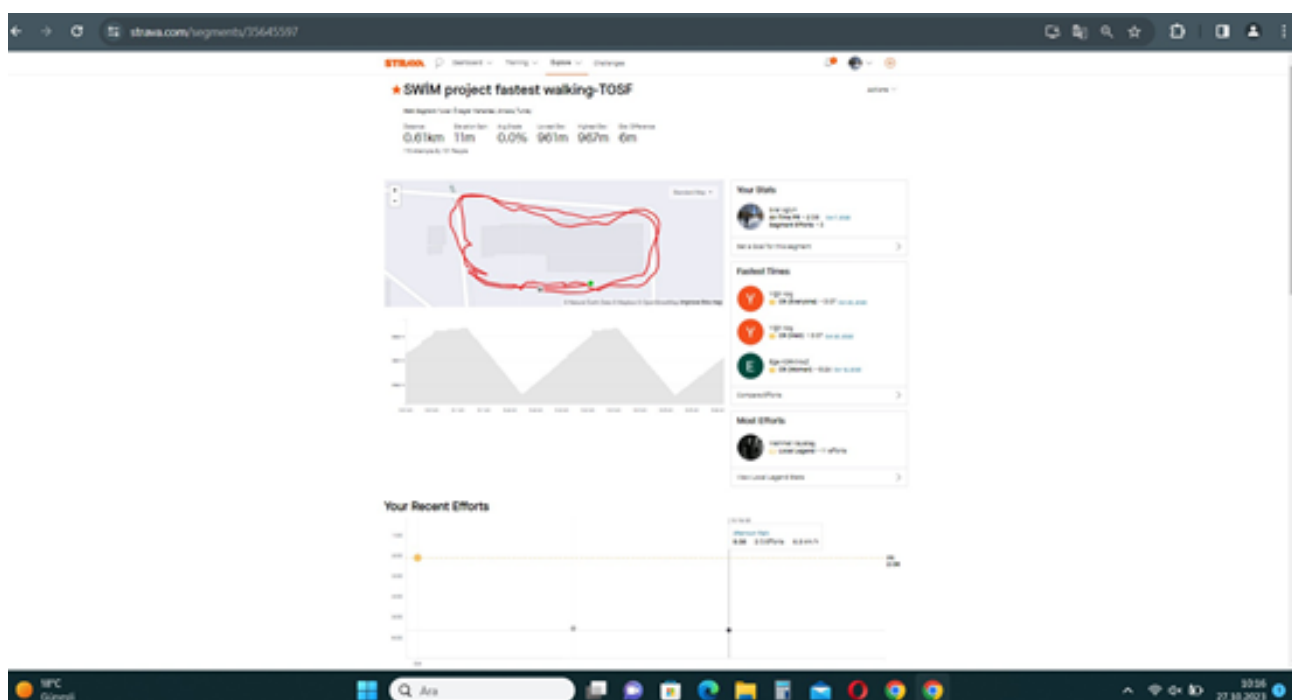

FIGURE 30. SWİM PROJECT SEGMENT FASTEST WALKING – TOSF

Conclusions and recommendations I

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about significant changes in how young people engage in sports activities. Movement restrictions and the temporary closure of traditional sports facilities accelerated the adoption of technological solutions to maintain sports practice remotely. 2020'S lockdown really affected the practice of sport in young people, making them more sedentary.

After the researches done during the project and the two lesson plans made with VET students from the San Gabriel School, it was seen that technology would play a crucial role during restriction periods like the pandemic world faced a few years ago.

The main conclusions done by the project partners were the following:

- The digitalization of sport lessons can facilitate the transition to virtual training and competition models.
- Online platforms, personalized training applications, and wearable devices are essential tools to maintain connectivity also among coaches, athletes, and sports enthusiasts (this was confirmed in November's Multiplier Events by all four partners).
- Virtual sports practice has emerged as a viable and popular modality, providing flexibility to athletes and fostering inclusive participation.
- Gamification and virtual reality were effectively integrated to enhance the experience and motivation of participants.
- The adaptation of new technologies in the sports domain had a direct impact on vocational education.
- The incorporation of online educational platforms and applications like Caladu, Strava or NikeRun and multimedia resources in professional training programs has improved accessibility and the quality of education in this field.
- The use of apps like NikeRun or Strava is more and more common, not only to register students and athletes times and achievements, but also as a way to show themselves in social media.
- The necessity to operate in virtual environments has driven the development of digital skills in sports education.
- Both teachers and students have had to acquire technical skills to make the most of available digital tools.
- Online sports events can provide sport events in various cases: pandemic situations, same event for participants in different place, additional tasks for students as "homework".
- Online digital sport apps are of a low cost and effective.

Conclusions and recommendations II

- Student motivation is really important factor to be active in sports. However, it is even more important in restriction periods – all stakeholders (teammates, coaches, friends, parents and etc.) must put efforts, which for the digital online sport apps are of a great help.
- Even that it is a low cost way to organize a remote sport event, various factors must be taken into considerations:
  - strict participants' rules;
  - new (never used before by other organizers) routes, if it is a segment type remote sport event;
  - personal information in apps must be appropriately registered;
  - the right selection of smart phones and smart watches in order to be able to connect an online event.
- Due to data protection laws in the EU, young users (mostly less than 14 years of age) of sport apps are prohibited to use all apps functions and might need their relative confirmation before they create account. It must be taken into consideration because even sports organization has agreement with athletes' relatives to collect their sports related data; third parties such as apps providers need same agreement too.
- Lecturers in the sport faculties of Turkiye were inspired by the project team to include a specific subject about the usage of online applications in sport training in curriculum.
- Participants of four different countries got new experiences on using online application in sport training and thus having a chance to diversify exercises.
- And finally, all project partners disseminated values of European Union and Erasmus+ programme.

Because the project team mostly used Strava App, below are some suggestions experienced by the project team. They will help others to organize remote sport events through Strava.

Challenges

1. It is possible to create Challenges for a limited number of participants – up to 25.
2. One person can participate in not more than 3 Challenges. After the limit is up, the person has to become a subscriber, which is a charged option monthly.
3. In order to involve participants in a Challenge, participants must follow the creator of the Challenge. Otherwise, it is impossible to invite a participant into the Challenge.
4. It is possible to create Challenges only on mobile devices.

Conclusions and recommendations III

Clubs

1. It is possible to create Strava Clubs for an unlimited amount of members. However, be careful! Only the first 100 participants will appear in the Leaderboard. And if an organizer is making an event, for example, with a lottery for those participants that pass a definite threshold margin of activities / time / kilometres, then it is necessary to the result of all participants. So, Clubs better suit for a regular competition with award of the first participants.

2. The list of Club results for the first 100 participants is available only in computers. Mobile devices show only the first 10 participants, plus 2 participants above, and 2 participants below the competing participant, if he or she has not achieved the first ten. And this is also a value added, because, if the participants are above 100, and if the organizer records a very small activity result with a specific purpose to be the last one (seeing only 2 participants above and 1 or 0 below), it is possible to see the total number of participants.

3. It is possible to chat within Clubs with other participants and give common Club messages.

Conclusions and recommendations IV

Segments

1. Check the Privacy Controls. Sometimes participants register with a limited access to their activities. However, in a competition organizers will be willing to see proofs of the activities done. Therefore, it is advisable that the participants choose "Everyone" in their privacy settings at least for the visibility of activities.

2. Check Activity setting, and the Map Visibility in particular:
   - "Hide Entire Map" must switched off. Otherwise, the participant will not be visible in the Segment Leaderboard.
   - "Hide Start Point" line must be all in an orange colour. If a part of it is grey, the participant will not be visible in the Segment Leaderboard.
   - "Hide End Point" line must be all in an orange colour. If a part of it is grey, the participant will not be visible in the Segment Leaderboard.

3. Make sure the participants choose the correct sport. For example, if the segment is created for Running, but if a participant does it with a Cycling mode, the participant will not be visible in the Segment Leaderboard.

4. If the map has been fully or partly hidden during the activity, it can be edited after the activity and then the participant will appear in the Leaderboard.

5. If a wrong sport has been chosen for the activity, it can be edited after the activity and then the participant will appear in the Leaderboard.

6. Mark longer and more complicated segments in the nature in order to help the participants do it right.

List of Methodology creators

Sandija Zaļupe

LSIIDP – project manager of sports schools of Latvia and a project coordinator of local, Erasmus+ projects since 2009. Limbazi Regional Sport School – deputy director since 2016 – 2020. Municipality of Limbazi Region – chief economist of Limbazi town and Limbazi Region since 2014 – 2016.

S.Zalupe has obtained a Master Degree of Social Sciences in "Public Management", the University of Latvia, Faculty of Economics and Management and a professional Bachelor Degree of English Language, the University of Latvia, Faculty of Education and Psychology.

Estefanía Vives

Project manager in all the Erasmus+ projects in San Gabriel school since 2008, also coordinating the Bilingual project and all the activities related to it. The English language teacher from 12 to 18-year-old students.

E.Vives has obtained a Bachelor Degree in English Philology in the University of Zaragoza (Spain).

Bilal Çağlayan

Youth and Sport Expert for 15 years in the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Project council member of TOSF and project manager of TOSF's Erasmus+ Sport. B.Çağlayan has obtained a Master Degree of Sport Sciences in "Sport Sciences" in the University of Kırıkkale – Sport Institution and Sport and a Bachelor Degree of Sport Science in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport in the University of Kırıkkale.

Darius Kreivėnas

VšĮ Sportuokime kartu – project manager in youth sports club, head coach in youth football club FMK Lituanica, Erasmus+ projects manager since 2019. Darius Kreivenas obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Administration and Management in the University of Vytautas Magnus and a Master's Degree in Marketing and International Commerce in the University of Vytautas Magnus. D.KReivenas has a teacher's qualification in professional studies' program of "Pedagogy" in the University of Vytautas Magnus.

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