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Survey 2021 results – Athletic clubs Bulgaria

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1. Data collection

An online questionnaire was sent out to the registered athletic clubs in Bulgaria in September 2021. The clubs could participate in the survey and answer its questions from September till December 2021. Clubs were reached by the federation and reminders were sent out. In the given time period 34 clubs participated in the survey (28% of all registered clubs in Bulgaria¹). In this report, their answers are summarised and analysed.

2. Results

2.1 Sport infrastructure

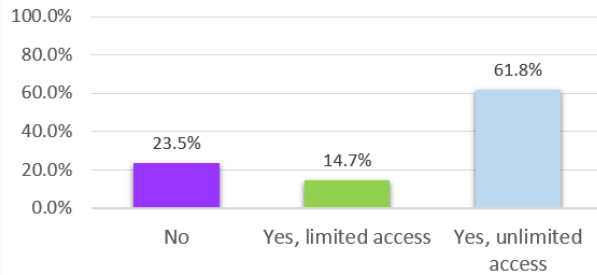
The access possibilities of the clubs to sport infrastructure are presented below in figure 1. Nearly 62% of the respondents have unlimited access to an athletics stadium, which has a 400m oval track and all necessary facilities, while 14,7% can use it for a limited time and 23,5% don't have access at all. Athletic facility with natural track has the same percentage of 44,1% for both no access and unlimited access, with the middle criteria of 11,8%. When it comes to synthetic track, nearly 56% have unlimited access to one, 26,5% don't have an access and 17,6% have limited access. Looking at the indoor facilities with synthetic track, 35,3% of the participants have no access to one, 17,6% have limited and a bit over 47% have unlimited access. The number of clubs which don't have an access to indoor facilities with no athletic equipment is high (70,6%). Nevertheless, the number for access to school fields with sprint tracks, high jump and long jump equipment is also very high, at 76,5%, with only 14,7% who can use them frequently. The highest number in these charts can be seen at the public sport places, with a bit over 85% at the unlimited access. This is not surprising, since most cities and towns have public sport areas in parks and nature. Looking at the gyms, over half the respondents have unlimited access, whereas 11,8% have limited and 35,3% have no access to one. When it comes to other sport areas used by the Bulgarian clubs, a bit over half have limited or unlimited access to facilities, which have not been mentioned so far.

What can be concluded by looking at these results is that most clubs in Bulgaria don't have the needed access to the facilities they require for proper training of the athletes. Further in the report, some of the reasons why, such as financial situations, will be further discussed.

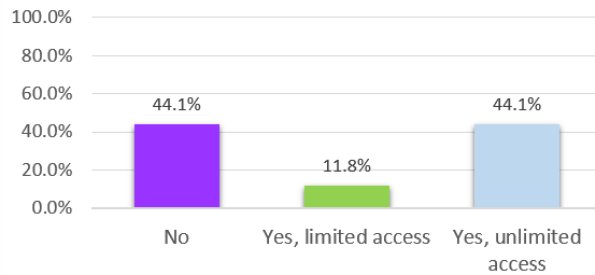
¹ Registered athletic clubs in Bulgaria = 121



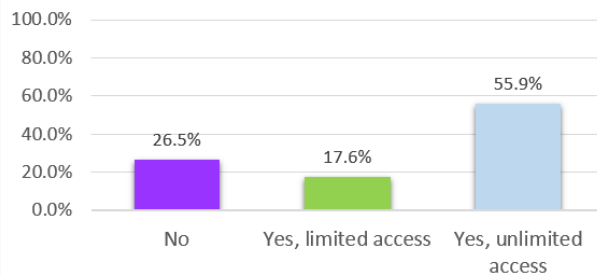
Athletics stadium (400m track and all necessary facilities)



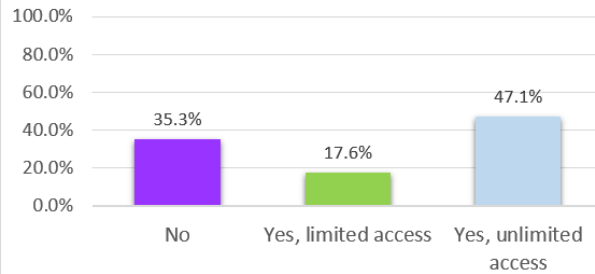
Athletic facility with a natural track



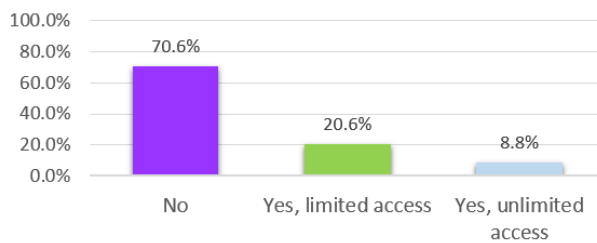
Athletic facility with a synthetic track



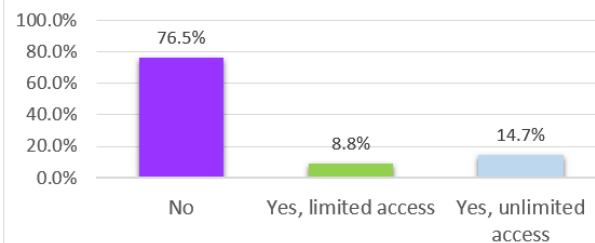
Indoor facility with a synthetic track



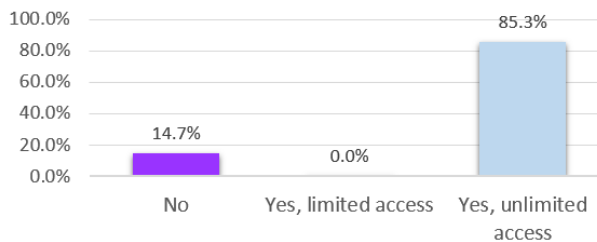
Indoor facility with no athletics equipment



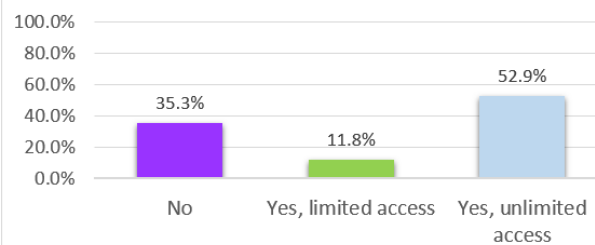
School field (sprint tracks, high jump and long jump equipment)



Public sport places (in the park or nature)



Gym



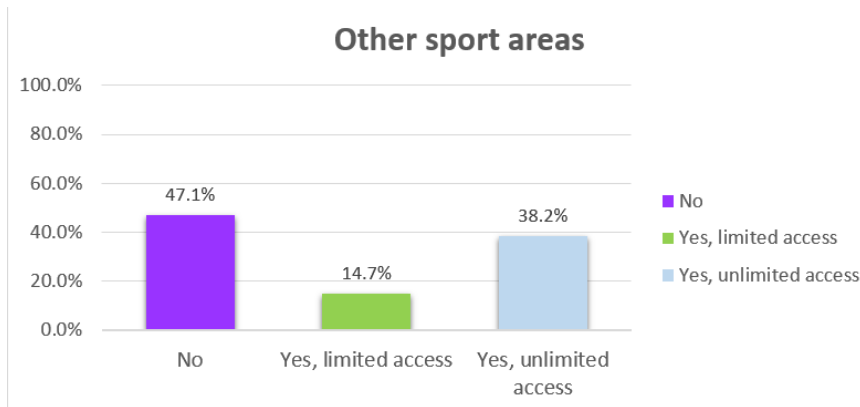
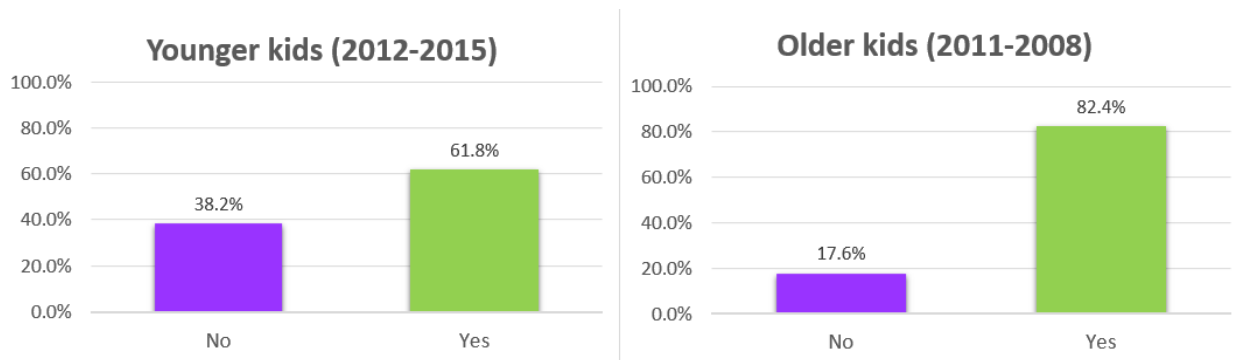


Figure 1: Access to sport facilities (n=34 clubs)

2.2. Training possibilities for different groups

Figure 2, which can be seen below, represents the training possibilities for people from different age groups. What can be seen is that most of the clubs provide trainings for older kids (2011-2008), youngsters (U16, U18) and adults (U20 and elite level). A bit fewer clubs give trainings for younger kids (2012-2015), Masters athletes and amateurs, however, they all have numbers higher than 50%.

The two categories with less than half of the clubs giving them the opportunity to train, are the Masters amateurs and athletes with disabilities. This can be due to a lower demand for them, nevertheless, this can be seen as an opportunity to grow and further develop. Out of the 34 clubs only 4 (or 11,8%) offer trainings for athletes with disabilities. This could be because of limited resources and facilities, however clubs should strive to give people of all backgrounds equal chances.



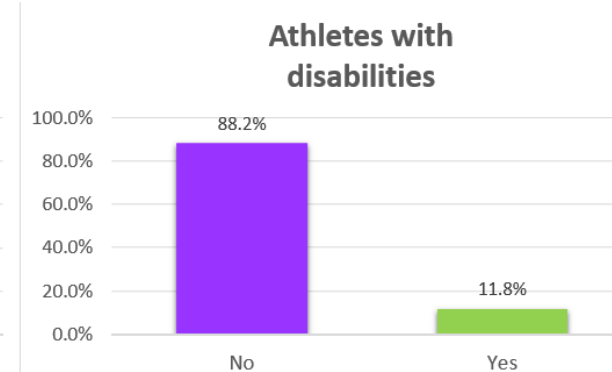
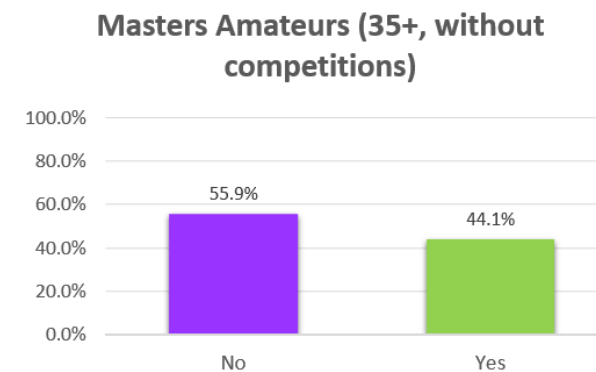
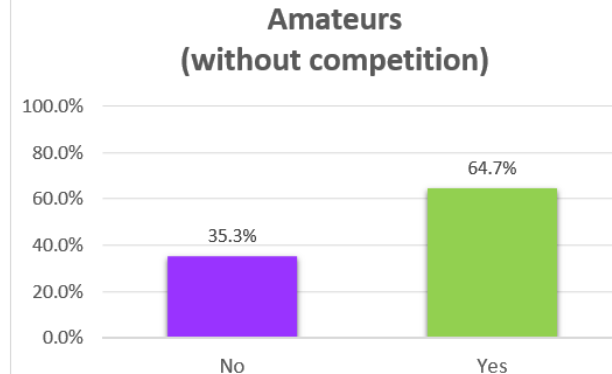
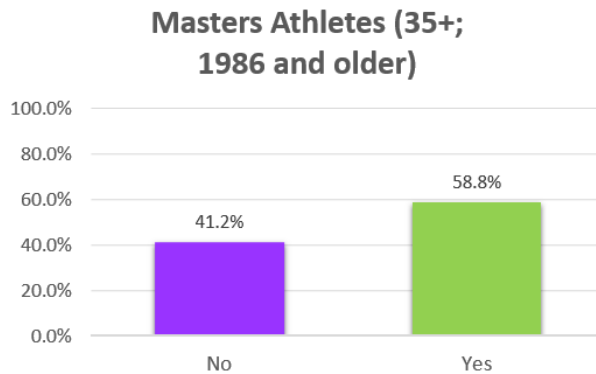
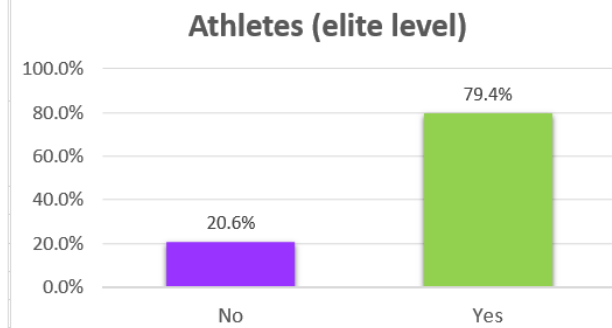
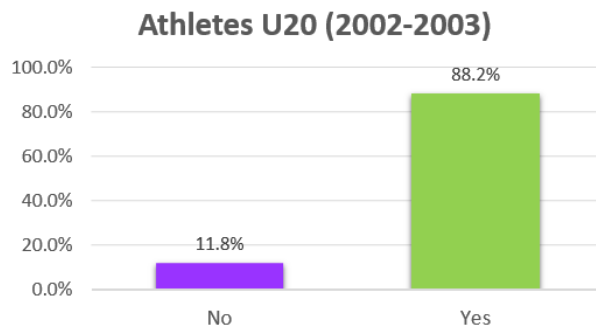
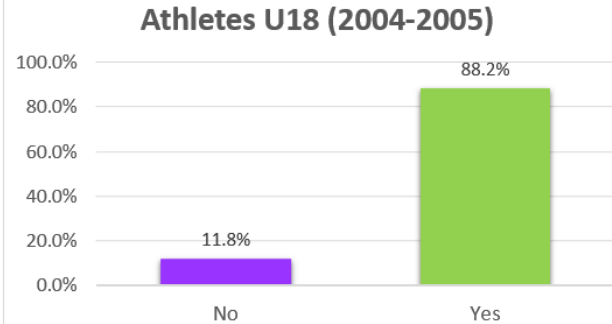
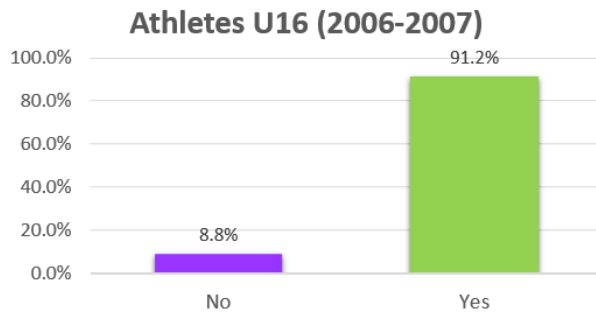


Figure 2: Do clubs provide trainings for different groups (n=34 clubs)

Looking at prices for the trainings, most of the clubs provide free coaching. Only between 10 and 33% of the clubs are charging this service, depending on the age of the athletes, as can be seen in the table below.

	Trainings are free of charge	
	No	Yes
Younger kids (2012-2015)	32.4%	67.6%
Older kids (2011-2008)	32.4%	67.6%
Athletes U16 (2006-2007)	23.5%	76.5%
Athletes U18 (2004-2005)	23.5%	76.5%
Athletes U20 (2002-2003)	14.7%	85.3%
Athletes (elite level)	11.8%	88.2%
Amateurs (without competition)	14.7%	85.3%
Masters Amateurs (35+, without competitions)	11.8%	88.2%
Masters Athletes (35+; 1986 and older)	11.8%	88.2%
Athletes with disabilities	11.8%	88.2%

Table 1: Percentage of clubs, providing trainings free of charge (n=34 clubs)

2.3. Number of Athletes

The two tables below indicate the number of athletes in the different groups of the clubs. 23,5% of the clubs have between 1 and 4 professional athletes with sport as their main source of income. Amongst the clubs there are 3 professional and 9 amateur athletes with disabilities (see table 2). Not surprisingly, most of the athletes in the clubs are amateurs, where sport is not the main source of income. What can also be seen is that the majority of the Bulgarian master athletes are all training in the same club (see table 3).

	Number of athletes				
	0	1	2	3	4
Clubs with professional athletes (sport as main source of income)	26 (76.5%)	3 (8.8%)	3 (8.8%)	1 (2.9%)	1 (2.9%)
Clubs with professional athletes with disabilities (sport as main source of income)	32 (94.1%)	1 (2.9%)	1 (2.9%)	0	0
Clubs with amateur athletes with disabilities (sport is not the main source of income)	30 (88.2%)	1 (2.9%)	2 (5.9%)	0	1 (2.9%)

Table 2: Number of professional athletes with and without disabilities and amateur athletes with disabilities (n=34 clubs)



	Number of athletes						
	0	1-10	11-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	175-200
Clubs with amateur athletes (sport is not the main source of income)	6 (17.6%)	6 (17.6%)	8 (23.5%)	6 (17.6%)	2 (5.9%)	3 (8.8%)	3 (8.8%)
Clubs with master athletes (1986 and older)	13 (38.2%)	17 (50.0%)	3 (8.8%)	0	0	0	1 (2.9%)

Table 3: Number of amateur and master athletes (n=34 clubs)

2.4. Sport specific education level of the clubs' staff

In the table below, the different level of education of the clubs' staff can be seen. 32 of the clubs (or 94%) have state certified coaches and almost no clubs have people without a license working there. The coaches are the majority of educators, however, there are some instructors and teachers as well.

	Number of people							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	10
State certified coaches	2 (5.9%)	10 (29.4%)	11 (32.4%)	3 (8.8%)	5 (14.7%)	2 (5.9%)	0	1 (2.9%)
Instructors	25 (73.5%)	6 (17.6%)	2 (5.9%)	0	0	0	1 (2.9%)	0
Other type of educators	29 (85.3%)	5 (14.7%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teachers	29 (85.3%)	4 (11.8%)	0	1 (2.9%)	0	0	0	0
People without a license	31 (91.2%)	3 (8.8%)	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4: Clubs' staff with different educational level (n=34 clubs)

What was surprising to see from the survey, was that over half of the clubs (58%) don't use any scientific support or instruments for their trainings. From the rest, most turn to books and latest researches online. Six of them have mentioned video recordings as a frequently used method, as well as using specialised equipment.



2.5. Training hours

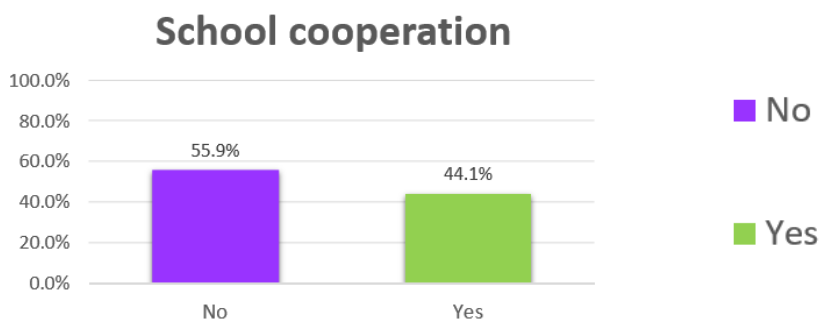
Most of the children aged 6-9 (64,8%), train between 0-2 and 2-4 hours per week (Median=2, this means 2-4 hours per week). Looking at the 10-14 year olds, their majority is training mostly 4-6 hours per week (Median=3). The average training of the older kids, aged 15 and above, is between 6-8 and 8-10 hours (Median=4/5), therefore we can conclude it is about 8 hours.

Age groups	Hours of training per week							
	0-2	2-4	4-6	6-8	8-10	10-12	12-14	14+
6-9 years (2012-2015)	32.4%	32.4%	29.4%	2.9%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
10-14 years (2007-2011)	5.9%	20.6%	41.2%	14.7%	14.7%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%
15 years and older (2006 and lower)	2.9%	2.9%	29.4%	14.7%	11.8%	17.6%	5.9%	14.7%

Table 5: Hours of training of different age groups

2.6. School cooperation

When it comes to cooperation of clubs with schools, most of the categories have a surplus for the negative. The only category where “yes” was the more common answer (61,8%) is on the question wheter or not the clubs organise competitions for the schools. The overall cooperation with schools happens only in 15 (44,1%) clubs and tests for the kids are made in roughly 30% of them. Nearly three quarters of the clubs never organise out of school activities, which is something they could look into in the future if they want to attract more potential athletes.



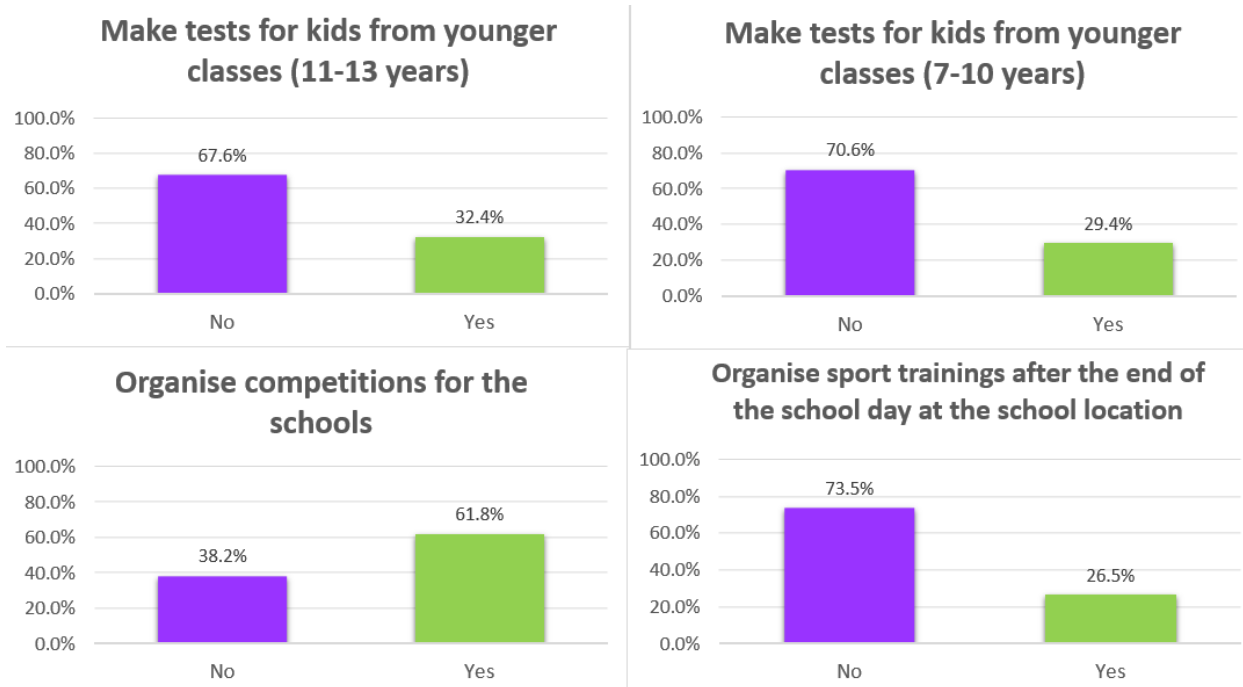


Figure 3: Cooperation with schools (n=34 clubs)

The respondents were also asked to describe their cooperation with the schools. The most common answer, given by 7 of the clubs was that they organise competitions with the schools, 2 or 3 times per year. Other repeated answers were related to observations of the school sport classes and special events around the holidays, such as Christmas. Last but not least, there were answers about sport activities outside of schools on weekends, such as hikes in nature. This shows the variety of opportunities the clubs have for development.

2.7. Participation in sport projects

In this survey, the participants were also given the chance to explain in which projects they partake. In the chart below, the three most popular projects in Bulgaria can be seen, as well as the clubs' responses. Besides these projects, the most common answers were about participation in the national competitions, as well as local and international championships. "Go kids" has been mentioned a few times, as well as the tournament "Detsata na Beroe" ("Beroe's children").



The club participates in

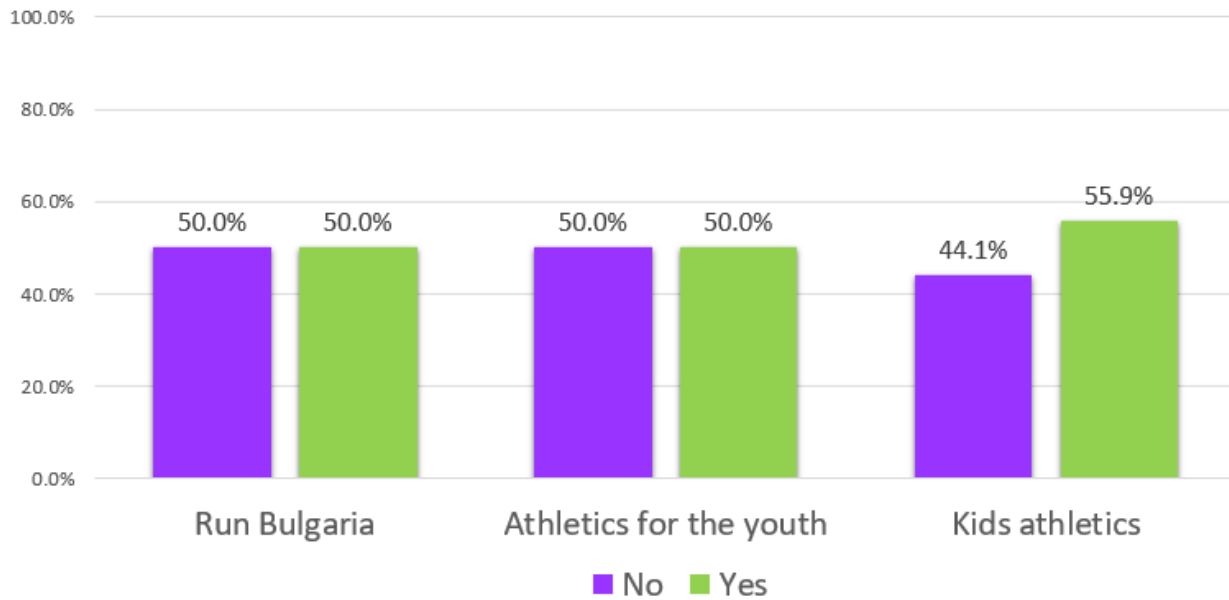


Figure 4: Participation of the clubs in some events

2.8. Financial support: Source of income

Coming to the financial issue, most of the support for the clubs (roughly 70%) comes from the local governments and funds from the Ministry of youth and sport. Nearly 35% count on receiving membership fees and financial support from sponsors. Something that sticks out is that no club has their main source of income from a regional government or EU funds. Around 15% of the clubs get financial support by their own events and the Bulgarian athletic federation, which can be seen in the charts below.

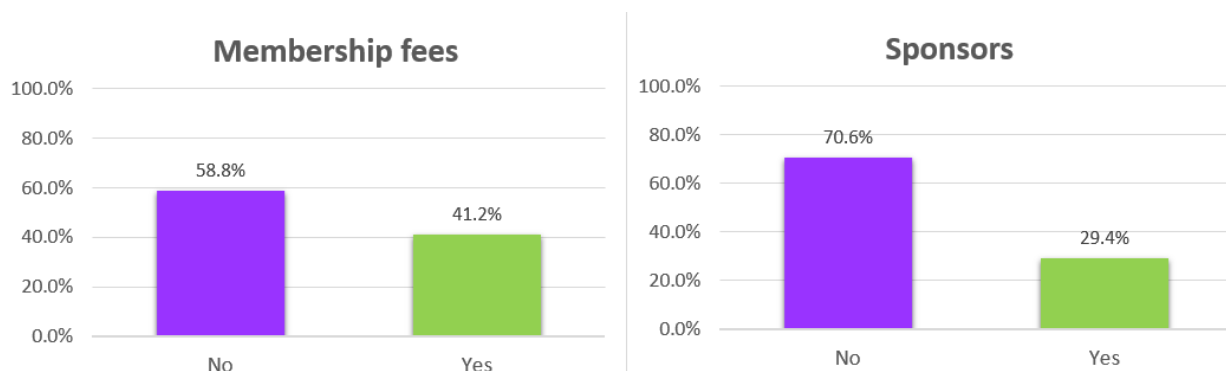




Figure 5: Sources of income (n=34 clubs)



3. Conclusion

There is a substantial number of clubs who don't have available facilities or sufficient equipment for the proper training of the athletes, mainly with regards to indoor facilities. The majority of the clubs are working with children and young athletes of all age groups. Very few however include athletes with disabilities or masters.

A great deal of the athletes registered to the clubs are not paying any fee for being trained, which shows athletics is a very affordable sport to be practiced in Bulgaria. On the other hand those who can actually gain money through the sport are very few. Athletics is mainly practiced on the amateur level.

Due to the legislation in the country, the majority of the coaches have graduated from the National Sports Academy, therefore are state licenced. Those coaches however are not inclined to using scientific support or instruments for their training. They rather prefer to rely on books or online researches in their work.

Most of the clubs in the country are rarely involved in cooperation with schools, though are quite actively participating in the various programmes offered by the Federation. Their sources of income include mostly support from the local municipalities, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, membership fees and sponsors. None is using EU funds.



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