

Structural integration of selected target groups in sports clubs in Europe

OBJECTIVE

What is it about?

These Quick Facts are about the **structural integration** of selected target groups in the sports club, or in other words about the question of whether sports clubs are actually open to all population groups.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

What is structural integration?

Structural integration is an aspect of social integration. If one understands social integration as a process, one could describe structural integration as a first step → Fig.1. **At this stage, integration is simply defined by formal membership.** Thus, in this context, structural integration is given if people from all population groups have similar access to the sports club and are represented as members in the sports clubs according to their respective share of the population.

Qualitative aspects of integration in the sports club will then be discussed as part of socio-cultural and socio-affective integration → Quick Facts N° 4.

RELEVANCE

Why should sports clubs and federations worry about structural integration?

In numerous socio-political declarations ranging from the European Sport Charter (1975/1992) to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008), the social claim that all people should have access to sport and exercise was repeatedly formulated, and organised sport in Europe supports this claim. For decades, umbrella organisations of

sport and sports federations have been implementing numerous programmes and projects to open up access to sport for different target groups.

How these efforts are reflected at club level and whether they actually lead to an opening of sport for all is a question that can generate relevant steering knowledge for sports federations and sports clubs.

Aspects of Social Integration in Sports Clubs

I. STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

Representation of various social groups as members of sports clubs compared to the general population – and the rights of minority groups to form sports clubs.

Efforts of sports clubs aimed at increasing the representation of various social groups.

II. SOCIO-CULTURAL INTEGRATION

a.] ASSIMILATION - The degree to which members feel they know the values and norms of the sports club and the sports activity – and their perceived ability to behave accordingly.

Efforts – and experienced barriers and opportunities – expressed by members in relation to knowing and mastering the dominant values and norms in the sports club and the sports activity.

b.] PLURALISM - The degree to which members feel that their values and norms are respected by the sports club and its members.

Efforts of sports clubs to foster a climate that is accepting of people from different social backgrounds (multicultural climate).

III. SOCIO-AFFECTIVE INTEGRATION

a.] INTERACTION - The degree to which members play an active role in the club – in the sports activity, democratically, as volunteers and in social life.

In context to the latter, how much they socialize with other members, with how many, with whom, how, whether they form social networks or even communities and whether they make new friends.

b.] IDENTIFICATION - The degree to which members identify with and feel emotionally connected to the sports club and its members – the entire club as well as the team or group in which each member is active.

Fig. 1: Aspects of Social Integration in Sports Clubs

METHOD

How was structural integration in the sports club examined?

Comparative data was collected for the “*Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe*” - Project (SIVSCE). As part of this research two major surveys were implemented. The first one was answered by more than 35,000 sports clubs from 10 European countries. The second survey was designed as a follow-up in which more than 13,000 club members

were interviewed. These club members were recruited from almost 650 clubs that were selected from the initial club survey → Quick Facts N°1.

The questions on structural integration are based on the evaluation logic shown in Fig. 2: First of all, the attitudes of club representatives on *how open the club should be to as many population groups as possible* were analyzed. Secondly, it was recorded which target groups the clubs are particularly interested in and which measures they take to reach these target groups, and thirdly, it was asked whether the clubs actually succeed in achieving the result that these target groups are also represented as members of the club to an appropriate extent → Fig.2.

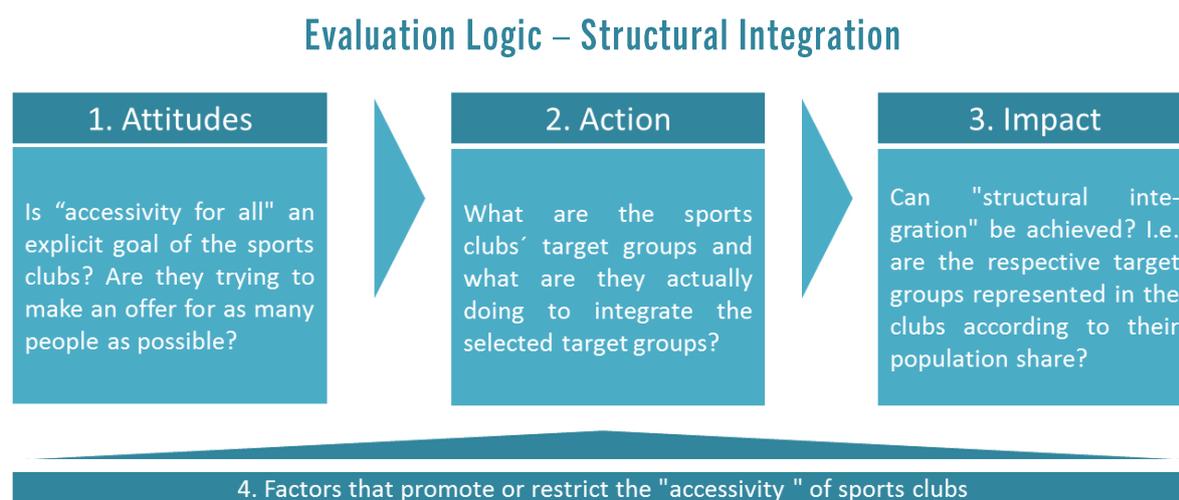


Fig. 2: Evaluation Logic – Structural Integration

The greatest methodical difficulty in this context was the exact registration of the member's share from the individual target groups. In most cases, sports clubs do not have differentiated member statistics that cover the profile of the members beyond the characteristics of age and gender. The information on the composition of the members of the club is therefore based on the estimates of the interviewed club representative and it is certainly not always obvious whether a person belongs to one of the mentioned target groups or not. The data on the representation of the individual target groups in the clubs must therefore be interpreted with due care.

RESULTS

Are sports clubs interested in making sports and exercise activities available to as many people as possible?

Sport clubs are independent organizations which, regardless of the overall social mission of sport, decide for themselves whether and how they contribute to providing access to sport and exercise.

In this context a distinction can be made between a fundamental openness (everyone who would like to join the club is welcome) and a pro-active approach with targeted offers and measures for individual target groups.

The results of the SIVSCE study show that a large proportion of clubs actively strive to provide sporting offers for as many groups as possible. Almost 70 percent of the clubs state that they are trying to do this. When explicitly asked about the integration of socially vulnerable groups, the values fall slightly. Nevertheless, more than half of the sports clubs claim that the club is endeavoring to better integrate these target groups → Fig.3a und 3b.

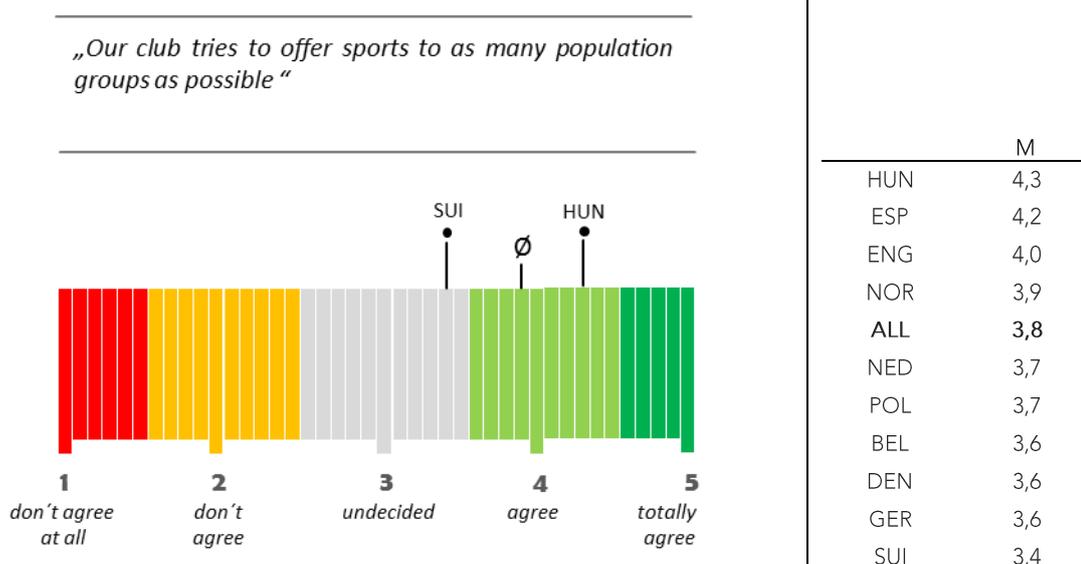


Fig. 3a: Club's attitudes towards structural integration

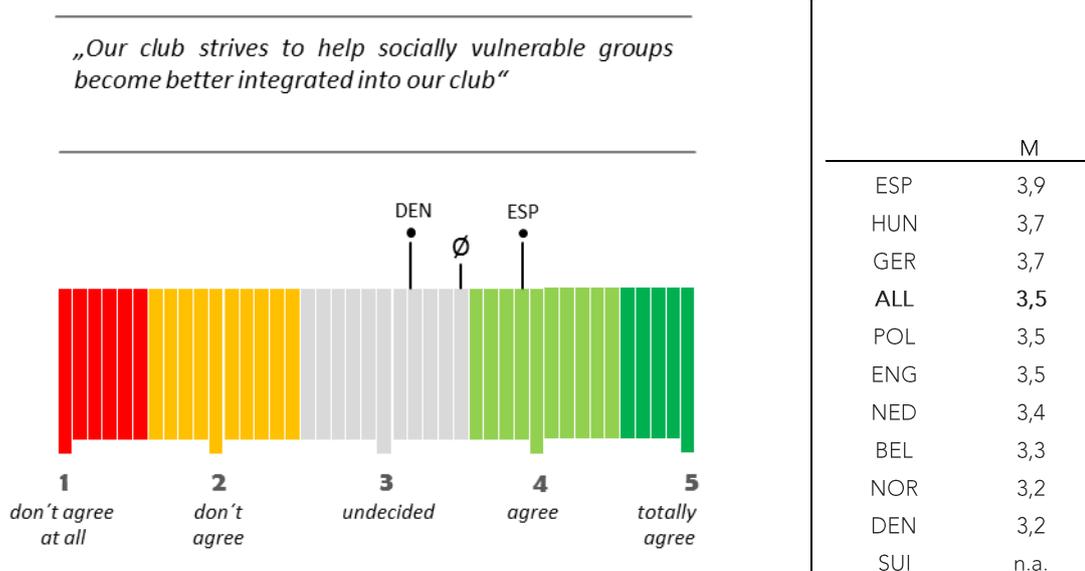


Fig. 3b: Club's attitudes towards structural integration

Which target groups are supported by the clubs through targeted measures?

Not all sports clubs carry out targeted measures to attract members from different target groups. On average, however, three-quarters of the clubs in the participating countries pursue such a strategy for at least one target group. Attention is particularly focused on children, young people and people with low incomes → Fig. 4. On the other hand, people with disabilities or immigrants are much less likely to be targeted by special initiatives and offers in the sports club.

However, the big differences between the participating sports systems are remarkable. While in Hungary, Spain, Poland and Germany, targeted measures for individual groups are part of the strategy of many clubs, this approach plays a much smaller role in Denmark, Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands.

In Hungary, only 15 percent of the clubs have no target-group-specific measures at all, while in Belgium, Denmark and England, around 40 percent of the clubs do without such measures.

This applies in particular to the socially disadvantaged target groups (i. e. people with disabilities, low incomes or migrant backgrounds).

„Our club has special initiatives to increase participation among the following population groups “



Fig. 4: Target groups of sports clubs' special initiatives

As expected, the instruments used by the clubs differ depending on which target group is to be addressed. However, the strategies for integrating individual target groups also often differ from one country to another.

Overall, special sports activities, reduced membership fees and individual groups or teams are the most frequently applied tools, while cooperation with other sports organisations or local authorities is rarely used → Fig.5.

Clubs in Hungary, Germany, Poland and Spain use target-group-specific instruments to an above-average extent compared with other European countries, while clubs in Denmark, for example, seem to do almost entirely without special measures for the selected target groups.



MOST FREQUENTLY USED TOOLS

1. Special Sports Activities
2. Reduced Membership Fees
3. Special Groups/Teams

Fig. 5: Most frequently used instruments for the structural integration of selected target groups

How well are people with disabilities structurally integrated into the sports clubs in Europe?

- People with disabilities are the target group that is most often excluded or underrepresented in sports clubs.
- Although the proportion of people with disabilities in all the countries under study is similar (17-25%), the proportion of clubs in which this target group is not represented at all is different in the individual countries (25-75%)
- In all countries, people with disabilities are excluded or at least underrepresented in 9 out of 10 clubs.
- Only approx. 2-6 percent of the clubs (probably exclusively specialized disabled sports clubs) have more people with disabilities as members than the proportion of this group in the population.

Article 30.5 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities affirms the right to equal participation in recreational, leisure and sporting activities and asks to encourage people with disabilities to participate in sport for all in the widest possible and to promote their participation.

Quick Facts [3]: Structural integration of selected target groups in sports clubs in Europe

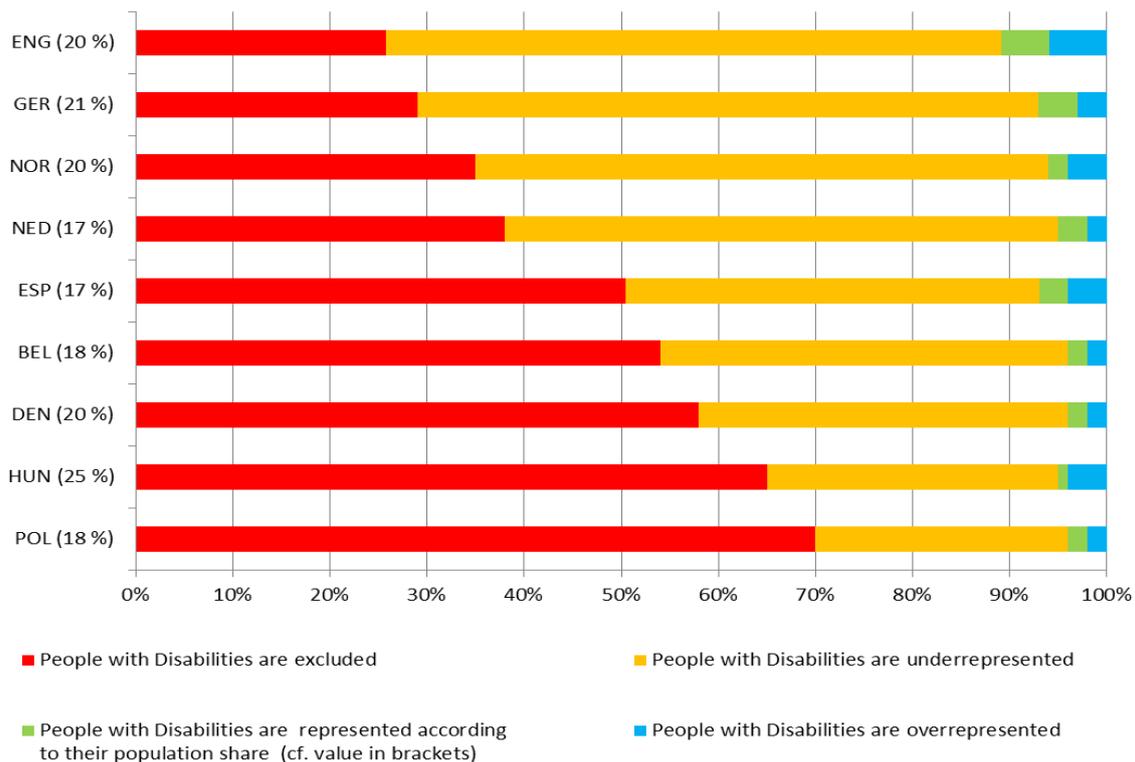


Fig. 6: Structural integration of people with disabilities in sports clubs in Europe

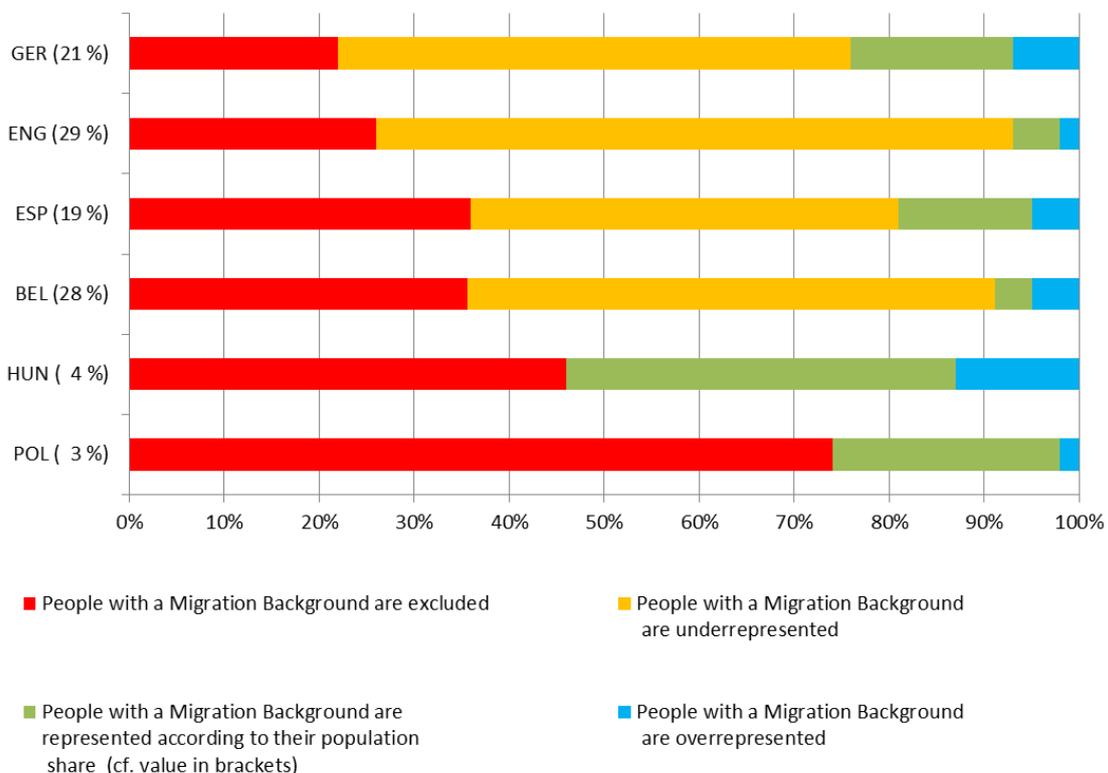


Fig. 7: Structural integration of people with a migration background in sports clubs in Europe

How well are people with a migration background structurally integrated into the sports clubs in Europe?

- People with a migration background are not represented in at least one fifth of the clubs in all countries; in the majority of the other clubs, migrants are underrepresented.
- Only in a few sports clubs in Germany, Belgium, England and Spain the proportion of people with a migration background is higher than in the corresponding population.
- The situation in Poland and Hungary is to be considered separately, since the proportion of persons with a migration background is also very low within the population.

How well are the elderly (65+) structurally integrated into the sports clubs in Europe?

- A particularly interesting picture emerges with regard to the structural integration of the elderly. While the elderly are, just like the other target groups, excluded or underrepresented in many sports clubs in Europe, there is also a large number of clubs (particularly in Germany, Denmark and Switzerland) where the elderly are overrepresented compared to their share within the general population.

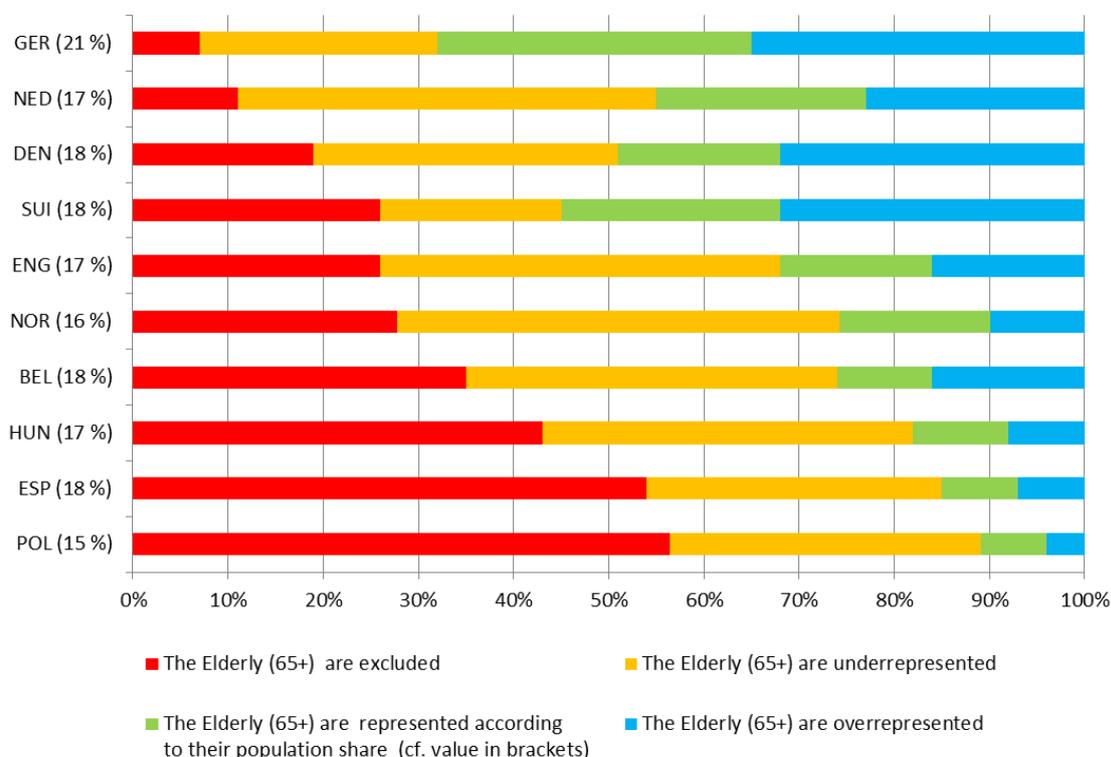


Fig. 8: Structural integration of the elderly (65+) in sports clubs in Europe

How well are girls and women structurally integrated into the sports clubs in Europe?

The participation of girls and women in sport has grown considerably in almost all countries in Europe over the past decades. In spite of this, the results confirm that still more men than women are members of a sports club.

- In three quarters of the clubs interviewed, the share of female members is less than 50 per cent.
- In contrast to the target groups already described, girls and women are only completely excluded in very few clubs. Only in Belgium, Hungary, Spain and Poland around 10-15 per cent of the clubs do not have any female members.
- However, in about one third of the clubs in all partner countries, women and girls are clearly underrepresented (i.e. less than a quarter of the members are female).
- In just under 10 per cent of the clubs, girls and women are clearly in the majority (that is, more than three quarters of the members are girls or women)



Fig. 9: Structural integration of girls and women in sports clubs in Europe

What other factors promote or restrict structural integration in the sports club?

- Of all factors which were examined in the evaluation of the SIVSCE study for their influence on the structural integration, the size of the club has emerged as the only variable that positively influences all aspects mentioned in Fig.2 (i.e. attitudes, measures and the actual representation of the target groups in the clubs).
- As expected, the sports and disciplines offered by the clubs play an important role in determining which target groups are part of the club.
- Other structural parameters or characteristics of club management correlate with individual aspects of structural integration, but cannot be clearly identified as promoting or limiting factors.
- It is also not clear from the data whether overall political programmes have a positive impact on the structural integration of individual target groups.

STARTING POINTS FOR PRACTICE

What are the common, practical action points that can be derived for clubs and federations?

The results presented above are just a first indicator of how well different population groups are structurally integrated in sports clubs in Europe. More in-depth analysis is needed to fully understand how integration into sports and sports clubs can be promoted.

However, the results indicate some pointers for sports clubs that are keen to keep up with the competition for members. More than 50% of all clubs claimed that they are already trying to integrate the various target groups into their club membership. For the remaining clubs, it might be an important strategic question, if they need to take similar measures to attract new members. For clubs that are objectively looking to increase their membership, bring in more volunteers or better integrate their local community, several clues can be gained from the data at hand. Sports clubs that are below their national average in any of the analysed indicators may look to actively respond to this challenge.

- (1) For example, one-fifth of clubs have no members with migration background, which means they are losing members to the other four-fifths.
- (2) Similarly, one-third of clubs reported that the share of female members is less than 25%. Yet, the participation of women in sport has grown over the past decades, and this trend is likely to continue.
- (3) In all countries, people with disabilities are excluded or are at least underrepresented in 9 out of 10 clubs. Yet the role of parasport is increasing world over, with para-

athletes rising to the limelight not only during Paralympic games. More and more differently abled individuals are looking to realise the benefits from sport.

Developing special offers to attract these under-represented groups will ensure that the club is not losing out to competition. For clubs in countries that fall below the European average, the insights gained from the data presents an opportunity to adopt tried and tested measures from other countries, keeping in mind the situational and cultural differences.

Overall, the data serves as a good indicator for clubs to gain an understanding of the changing demands of society at large, and of their members, and to respond effectively to them.

A large number of clubs have for example already responded to the challenge of providing sport opportunities to the elderly, with good success. The next opportunity for growth then maybe lies in integrating the other target groups into the club.



QUICK FACTS FOR SPORTS CLUBS

Research on sports clubs should also be research for sports clubs. With the "Quick Facts for Sports Clubs" series, the partners of the "SIVSCE-Project" want to take this claim into account.

Selected results of the study are represented in this series in such a way that they provide the responsible persons in the clubs and federations with a quick overview of the gained insights, and highlight the most relevant points for the sports sector.

The description deliberately follows the principles of clear language and systematic presentation and limits itself to only the most important aspects and insights.

Readers who are interested in the complete and detailed results of the study can refer to the website for the corresponding research reports, scientific publications and quick facts on other topics → www.sdu.dk/sivsce

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