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# **The strategy to increase physical activity among children and adolescents through athletics**

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## I. General description of the Project.

### 1. Problems of physical activity.

In recent years we have observed a decrease in physical activity among children and adolescents as well as adults. This is one of the main reasons, in addition to bad eating habits, for the increase in the number of overweight and obese people.

In its document 'Promotion HEPA' (No. 13, August 2017), EuropeActive indicates that 51.6% of the population (18 years of age and older) and 1 in 3 children (about 30%) are overweight. It is considered to be the fourth major risk factor for death.

Studies have shown that these people are more likely to experience such health problems as:

- Heart diseases,
- Hypertension,
- Type 2 diabetes
- Breathing problems,
- Fertility problems,
- Degenerative joint diseases,
- Cancers,
- Mental disorders.

In support of the above data, WHO published a report on November 22, 2019, which shows that about 80% of children aged 11-17 do not comply with the recommendations of taking up a physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day. In many countries, the percentage of non-exercising girls is significantly higher than boys, with the average ratio of 85% to 78%.

**The cited results require immediate preventive actions.** Unfortunately, based on trend observations, it is concluded that the adopted strategies do not bring the expected effects and the level of 70% will not have been reached by 2030.

Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that the governments and local organizations **increase their activity** to change this situation. It is suggested that new policies are created and those already proven are developed.

Recognizing this problem, the European Union conducts a number of studies and initiatives to change these worrying trends.

The Communication of the European Commission to the European Parliament (18.01.2011) 'Developing the European dimension in sport' clearly indicates the significant benefits of physical activity for health and observes large disparity in



its undertaking between EU Member Countries. The current situation can only change by increasing international cooperation efforts and sharing good practices. This should lead to the development of common guidelines (strategies) with regard to physical activity.

The above remarks are confirmed by the Council of the European Union (EU) which, in a document of November 26, 2013, indicates that although some countries have taken steps to improve this situation, **in many countries, physical activity experienced regression**. Unfortunately, the Council concludes that the actions carried out so far have not been successful and recommends the use of experience of programs that have been effectively implemented in EU countries. It puts an emphasis on increasing the involvement at all levels of organization that have an impact on physical activity, from the relevant Ministries to local clubs.

In 2020 and 2021 we also had to fight with **negative results of Pandemia Covid -19**. It multiplied all above bad habits and raised few new ones. Many local researches shows that people who had to stay at home became more nervous. That leads to many mental problems.

Polish Athletic Association with support of the Partner had conducted **research on the impact of the pandemic on children and adolescents**. For this purpose, 1,072 electronic surveys were conducted among parents.

It was found that the pandemic and lockdown had a negative impact on the daily life of children, whether they were active or not. Although on a general level, parents of active and inactive children reported a similar ratio of negative and positive sides of lockdown, it is:

- the activities of children exercising regularly as part of organized activities changed the least - they spent more time with their peers and in sports / movement activities, which can be attributed to children's involvement,
- lockdown in active children was less likely to cause mental problems such as apathy, anxiety or learning difficulties.

Interestingly, it was also found that active children, exercising regularly, have a much healthier diet and exhibit better eating habits than inactive children, and their parents have a more pro-sports and pro-health attitude.

## 2. Objectives of the project.

Based on the analysis of the above documents and own experience gathered while running children's programs, the Polish Athletics Association together with its Partners decided to take the initiative to create a project called '**Athletics 4 Health**'.



Its goals include:

- Increasing the level of physical activity of children and adolescents aged 7-15,
- Activation of sports organizations that have the greatest impact on the physical activity of children and adolescents aged 7-15,
- Creating a '**A strategy to increase physical activity among children and adolescents through athletics**', addressed to national sports associations, sports clubs and associations, schools and parents.

It has been decided that it should be implemented based on athletics, a discipline considered to be the sport of first choice. This is in line with EU guidelines to go back to the 'grassroots of sport'.

The choice of athletics as a 'tool' to increase participation in broadly understood physical activity is supported by:

- A guarantee of comprehensive and safe development of all basic physical features,
- Opportunities to conduct classes in various public places (parks, forests, running paths),
- Independence of atmospheric conditions,
- Low equipment requirements,
- Ease of conducting classes,
- Competition versatility allowing to take part in them regardless of the physical conditions of the exercising person,
- The ability to use acquired skills in other sports.

### 3. Project realization.

The idea of the Project is the cooperation of sports organizations that are top decision-makers in a given country, i.e. the Athletics Associations or Federations. This guarantees the access to the most experienced people working in sports, and thus guarantees the implementation of the Project's assumptions at the highest level.

The project will be implemented by five national athletic associations:

- Polish Athletics Association (Coordinator / Partner 1),
- Austrian Athletics Association (Partner 2),
- Finnish Athletics Federation (Partner 3),
- Bulgarian Athletics Federation (Partner 4),
- Slovak Athletics Federation (Partner 5).

The results of the project will be:

1. A detailed **Resource Analysis** in each of the countries participating in the Project related to physical activity and practicing sports (athletics), i.e.:



sport infrastructure, equipment, human resources and a collection of 'Good Practices',

2. A detailed **Needs Analysis** related to physical activity and practicing sports (athletics), i.e.: the assessment of the proposed solutions, quality of classes or availability of various forms of activity, factors that hinder the undertaking of physical activity, etc.,

and based on them

1. Creating of '**A strategy to increase physical activity among children and adolescents through athletics**', which will include a summary of the analysis of resources and needs together with conclusions, a collection of 'Good Practices', as well as proposed system solutions to increase physical activity among children and adolescents at the age of 7-15 prepared for five groups that have the greatest impact on the level of physical activity among children and adolescents:
  2. National sports organizations (proposed new system solutions to increase the percentage of physically active children and adolescents aged 7-15 in accordance with HEPA recommendations),
  3. Sports clubs (proposed actions to increase the interest of children and adolescents aged 7-15 in sport),
  4. Schools (suggestions to make physical education lessons more attractive, and possible suggestions to change the core curricula),
  5. Sports associations (suggestions of new forms of promoting physical activity),
  6. Parents (proposed actions that parents can implement to encourage children to be more physically active).

The jointly developed Strategy will be prepared for target groups for 2024-2030 and will be a document that indicates the course of actions necessary to increase physical activity among children and adolescents aged 7-15.

It will be disseminated among all organizations that have an impact on the physical activity of children and adolescents in the countries that implement the Project and beyond.



## II. Analysis.

### 1. Resources – Clubs

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Bulgarian Athletic Federation.

#### a. Data collection

An online questionnaire was sent out to the registered athletic clubs in Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Poland and Slovakia in 2021. Clubs were reached by the perspective federations, and in the given time period between 20 and 30% of the clubs of each country have participated in the survey. In this report, their answers are summarized and analyzed. The exact percentages can be found in tables in a separate excel file. For an easier overview, every country has been assigned a color (Austria – yellow, Bulgaria – green, Finland – blue, Poland – red, and Slovakia – white), which can be seen in the graphs below. The project summary is in the color grey.

#### b. Results

- *Sport infrastructure*

The access possibilities of the clubs to sport infrastructure have been separated in three graphs – unlimited access, limited access and no access. When it comes to unlimited access, it is no surprise that the highest availability is within the public sport areas (nature, forest, parks etc.). Only in Finland that is not the case, where the gym is the most popular answer by the clubs.



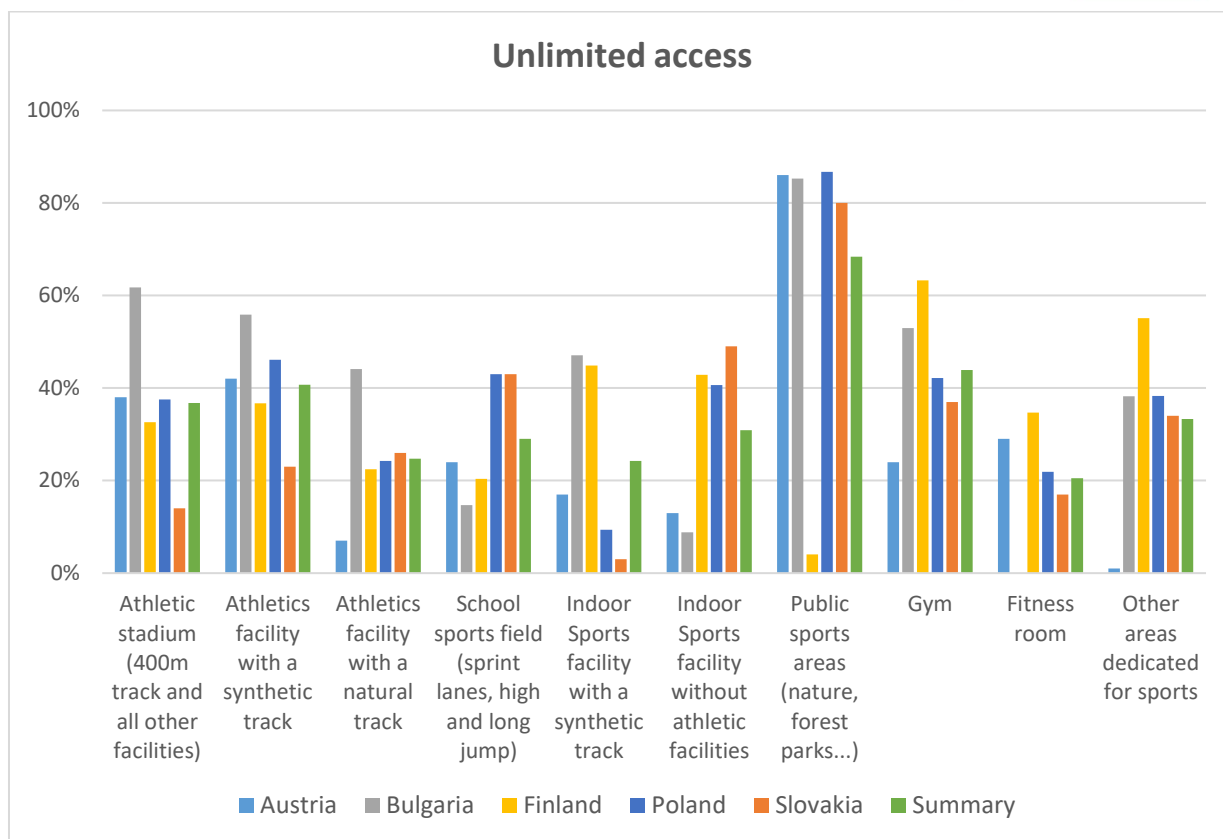


Figure 1: Unlimited access to sport facilities

Looking at the limited access to facilities, the results in most countries are similar to each other. What stands out the most is the usage of the public sport areas. Whereas in Austria, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia this was the most selected option for unlimited usage, in Finland they have stricter regulations, and these facilities cannot be used at any time. Nevertheless, 40% of clubs in Finland have access to athletic facility with a synthetic track, whereas in the other countries the numbers are twice as low.

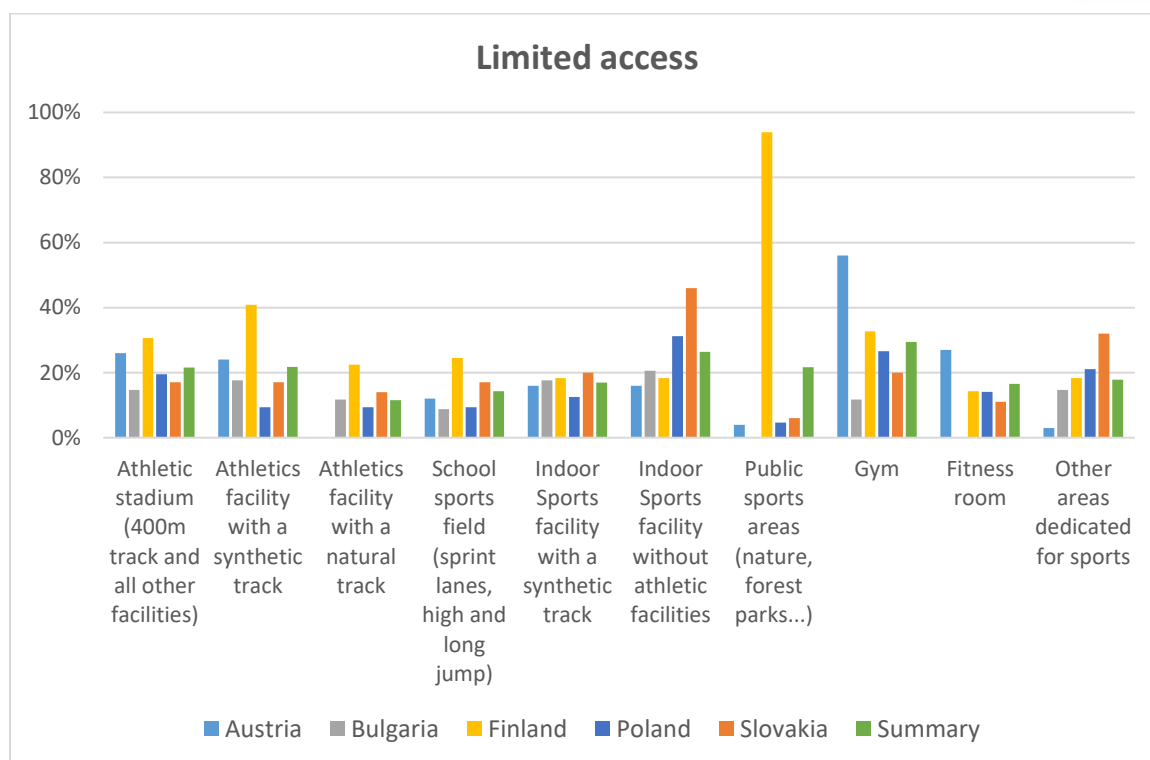


Figure 2: Limited access to sport facilities

When it comes to no access, the results are alarmingly high in the majority of the sections. Over 70% of the participating clubs in Slovakia have no access to an athletic stadium, nor an indoor sport facility with a synthetic track. The indoor sports facility is something that is really missing for the Polish clubs as well, followed by athletics facilities with a natural track and fitness rooms. The natural track facilities and school sports field are not available for over half the clubs in Finland. Bulgarian clubs are mostly missing access to school sports fields, and indoor sports facilities. Austrian clubs have the lowest overall results in this section, meaning out of the participating countries, their clubs have the most access to facilities. However, they still have improvements to do, especially in the athletics facilities with natural track, and the indoor facilities with synthetic track.

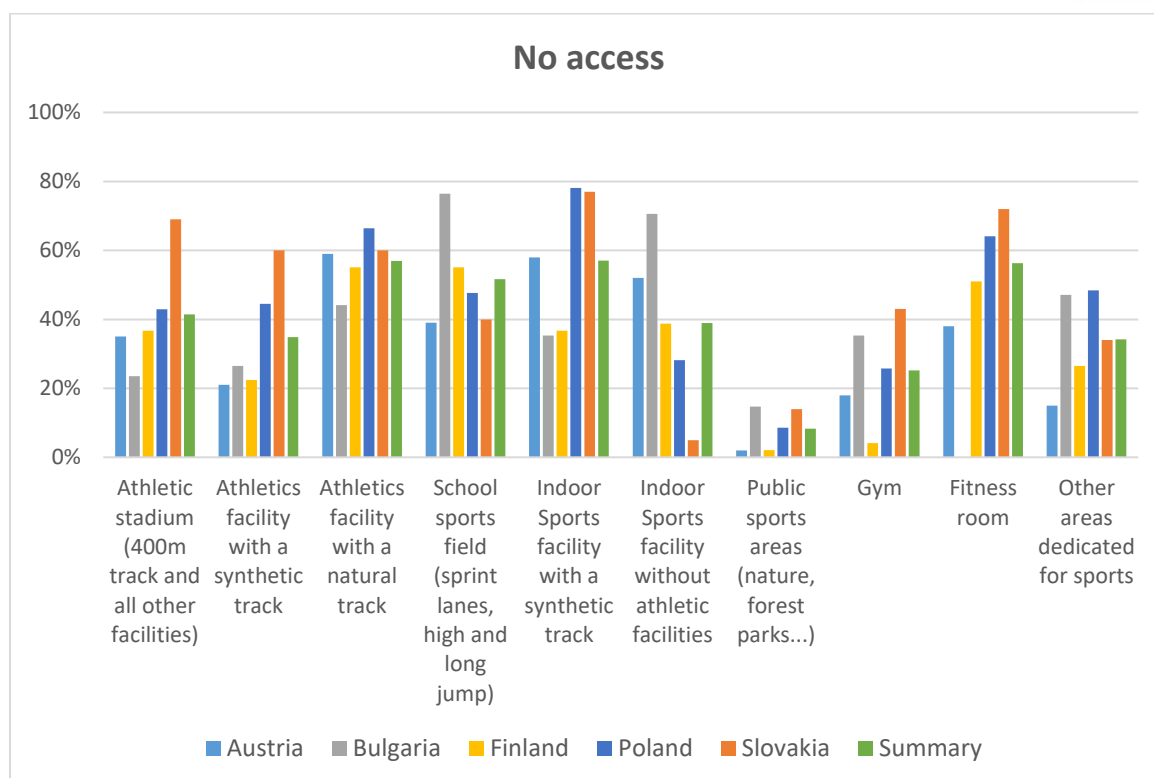


Figure 3: No access to sport facilities

- *Training possibilities for different groups*

Figure 4, which can be seen below, represents the training possibilities for people from different age groups. What can be seen is that, besides the first category (younger kids), the older the age group, the less opportunities for trainings are provided in the majority of the participating countries. The least represented overall are the para-athletes, with only 22% of the clubs in all countries, providing trainings for them.

Further below, the free training opportunities can be seen as well. Looking at the summary results, about half of all types of trainings are provided for free. Nevertheless, the results per country differ. In Bulgaria most of the trainings are free of charge, followed by Poland and Austria. On the other hand, in Finland and Slovakia, the percentage is way lower, where the majorities of trainings are paid.

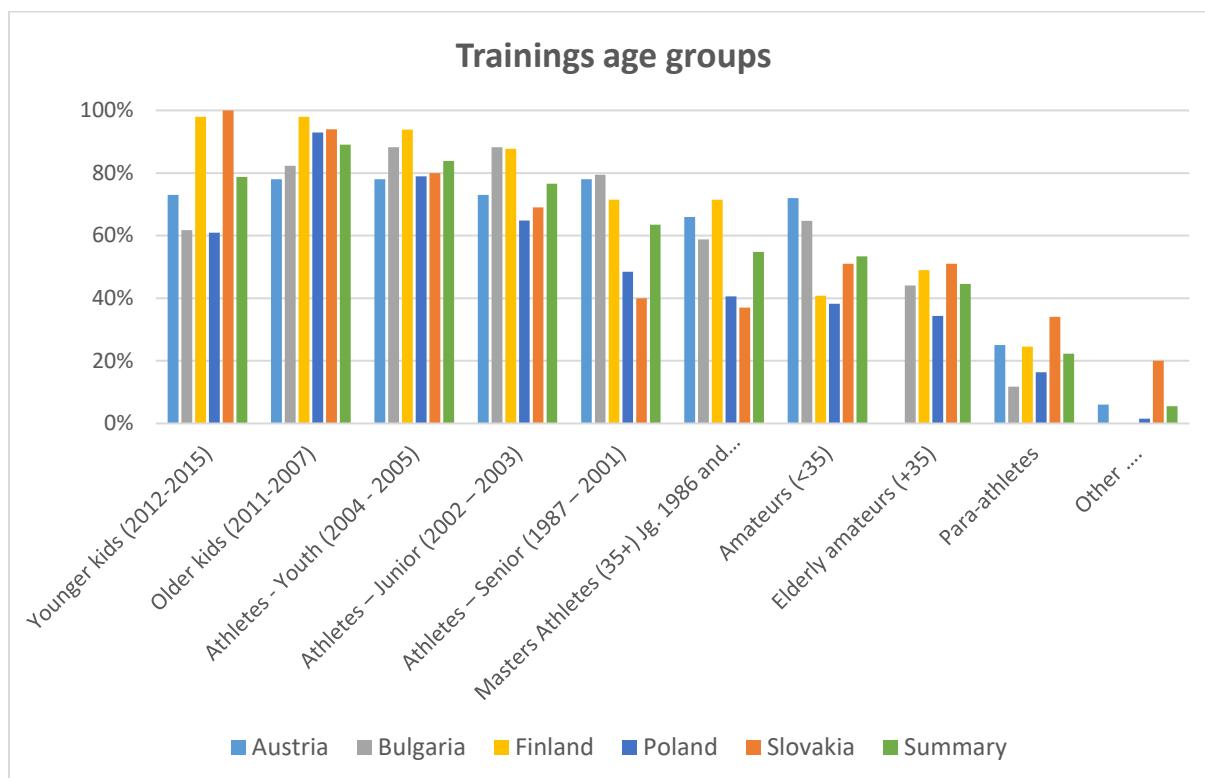


Figure 4: Trainings age groups

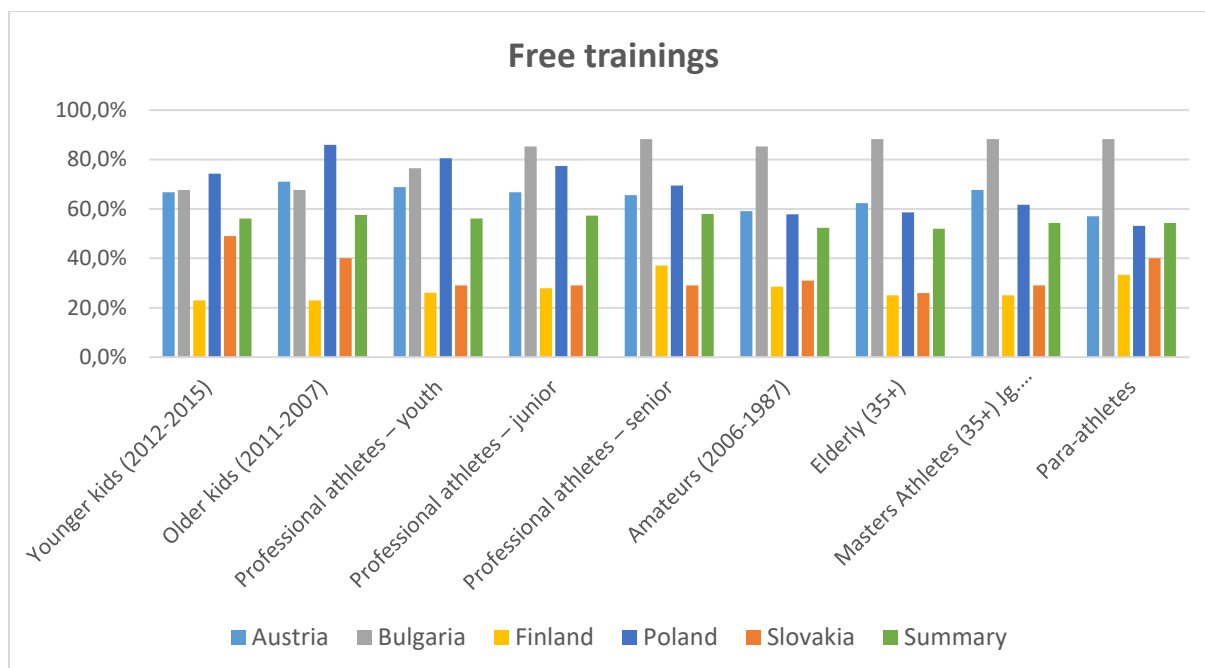


Figure 5: Free trainings

- *Sport specific education level of the clubs' staff*

In the figure below, the different level of education of the clubs' staff can be seen. Most of the staff is represented by coaches or trainers, followed by

instructors and school teachers. The lowest score for almost all countries is people without any formal license.

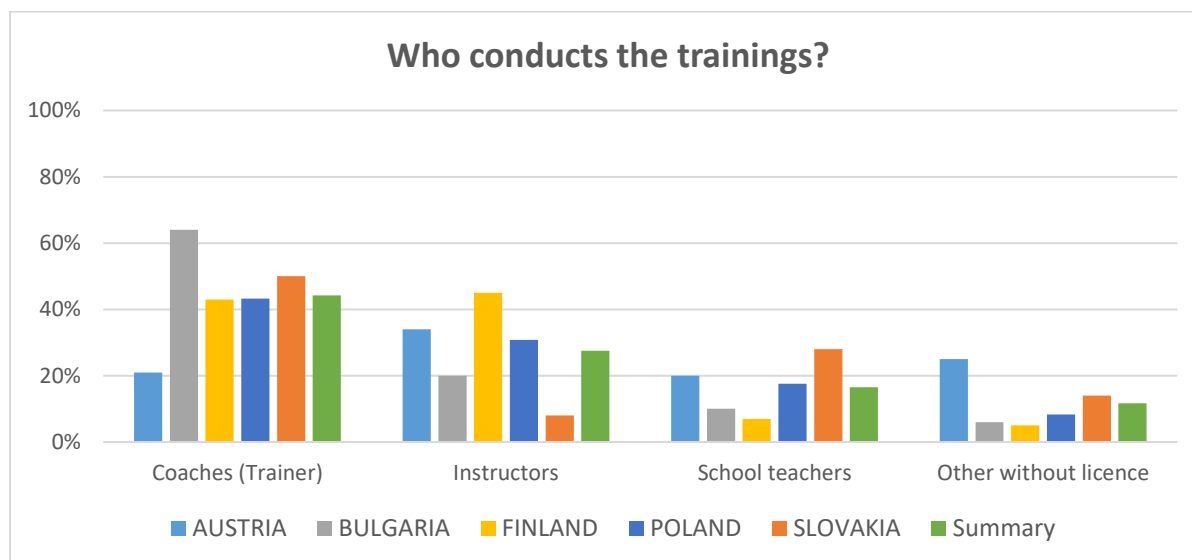


Figure 6: Who conducts the trainings

Looking at the scientific reasoning behind the trainings, Finland is the one that takes the lead, with about 70% of trainings, being led with scientific support. Bulgaria follows with 40%, whereas Slovakia and Poland have lower scores. For this part the Austrian results are missing, since the data collected was not reliable enough.

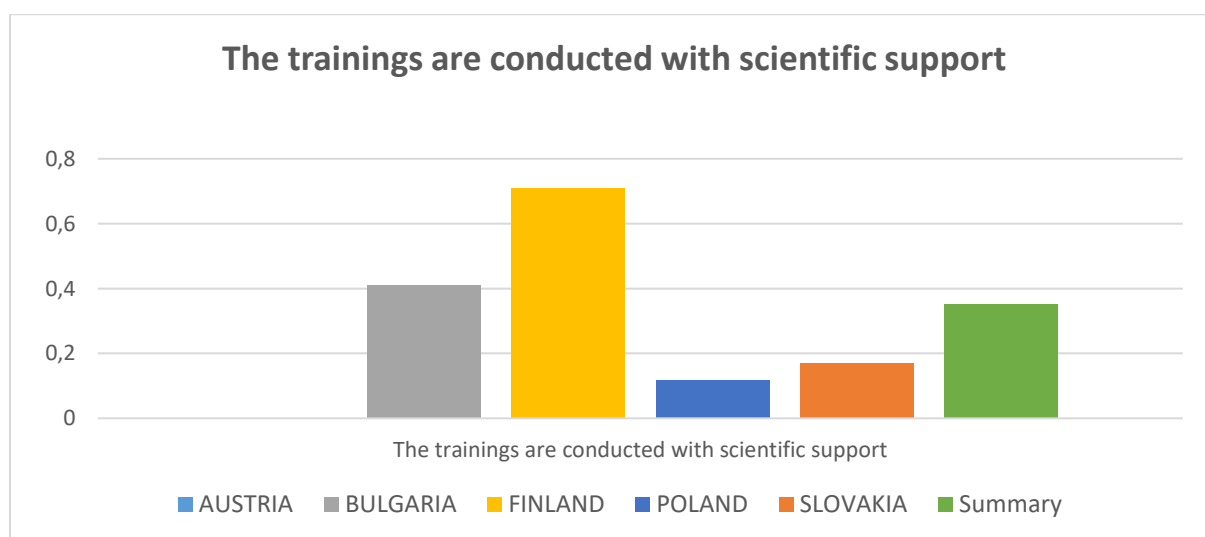


Figure 7: Trainings conducted with scientific support

- *Training hours*

The results for the training hours are separated in three parts – 6-9 years old, 10-14 years old, and 15+ years old. For the youngest children, it comes to no surprise that the majority of answers are within the first given categories (0-2 hours and 2-4 hours). Young children slowly get more active into their hobbies,

and with age more hours of trainings are added per week. This can be easily observed in the following graph, where the majority of the 10-14 year olds train between 2 and 6 hours weekly.

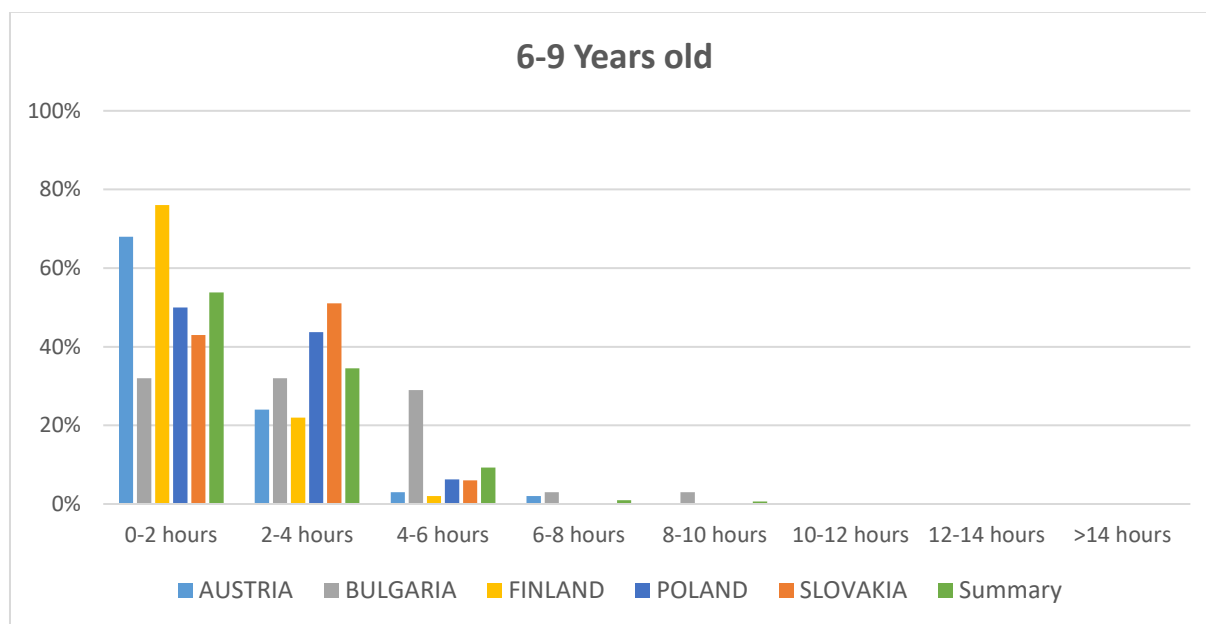


Figure 8: 6-9 years old

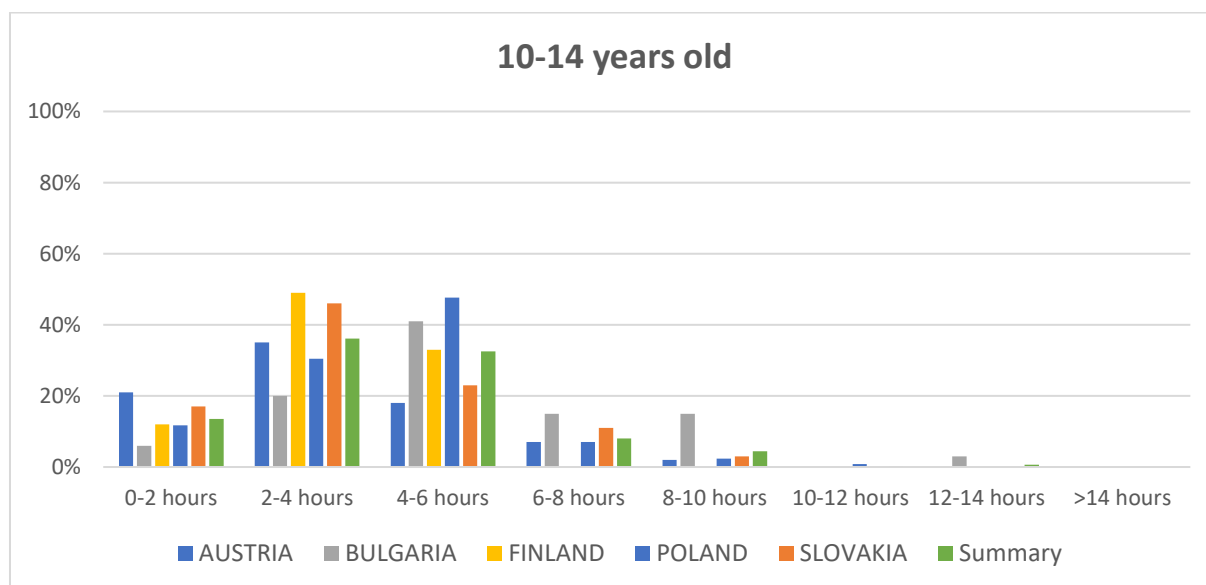
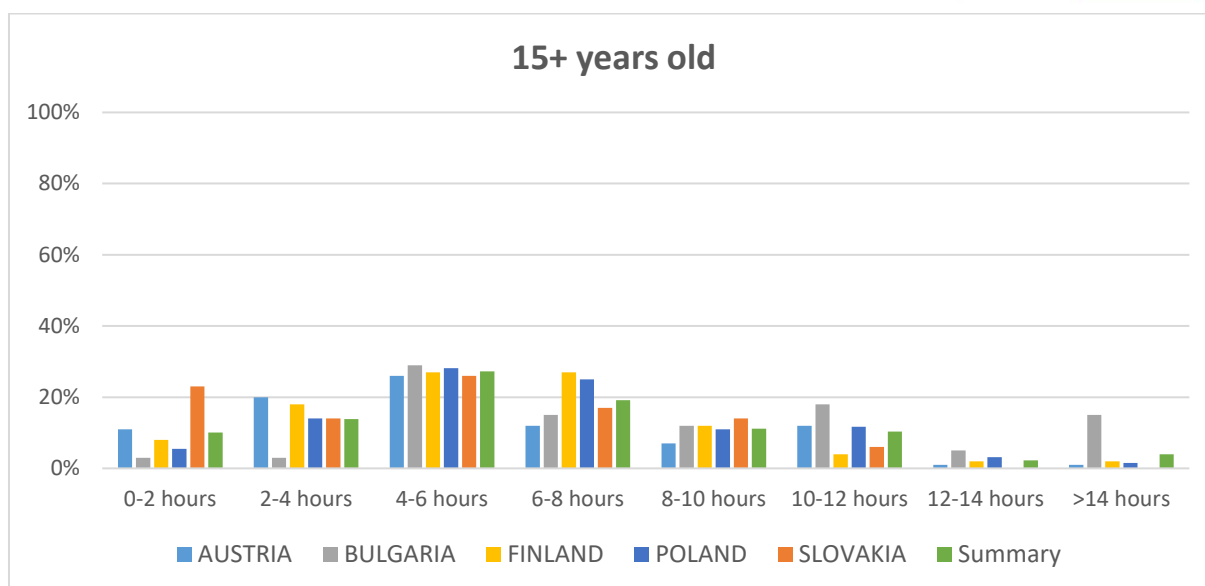


Figure 9: 10-14 years old

Coming to the 15+ year olds, the biggest variety of answers can be seen. Therefore, no concrete summary can be done based on these results, it depends purely on the individual clubs and athletes how much time they put into their trainings.



- School cooperation*

Another subject, which was discussed in the surveys, was the cooperation of the clubs with primary schools in their area. Over half the clubs have some kind of cooperation with primary schools, however the results vary. The majority don't make tests for younger classes, however organization of competitions seems like the most popular activity. Organizing school activities after the end of the school day is also something that happens the cooperation of the clubs. This way coaches can see potential new athletes, and invite them to trainings, popularizing the sport.

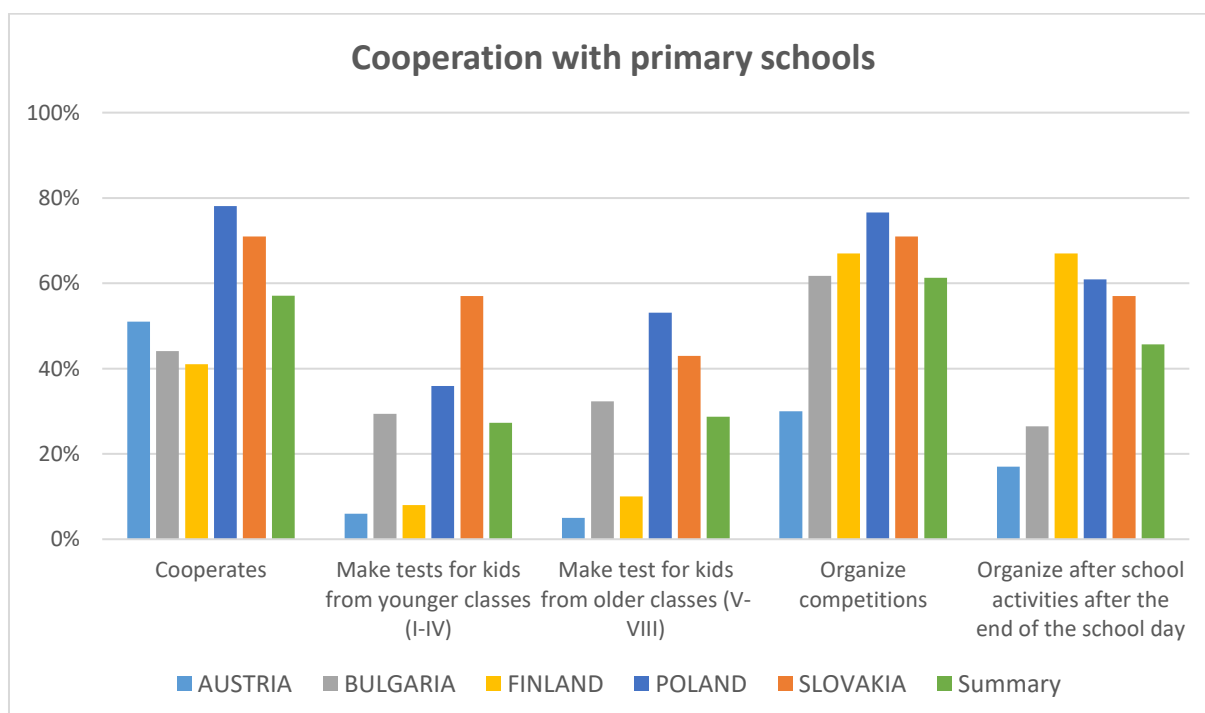


Figure 10: Cooperation with primary schools



- *Financial support: Source of income*

Coming to the financial issue, the results really differ per country. Austrian clubs are mostly financed by membership fees, followed by sponsors, local government and the clubs' own events. Bulgarian clubs also receive support from local governments, and regional athletic associations. Out of the participating countries, Finland is the one with most clubs receiving financial help from multiple sources. They have high results (over 90%) for membership fees, sponsors, local governments, and own events. Polish clubs' main source of income is through local governments, followed by membership fees. Slovakian clubs also depend on fees, as well as the national athletic federation. This is the only country with high results on the section with National federation funding. These results show how much things can differ per country with regulations and priorities of not only the clubs, but on national level as well.

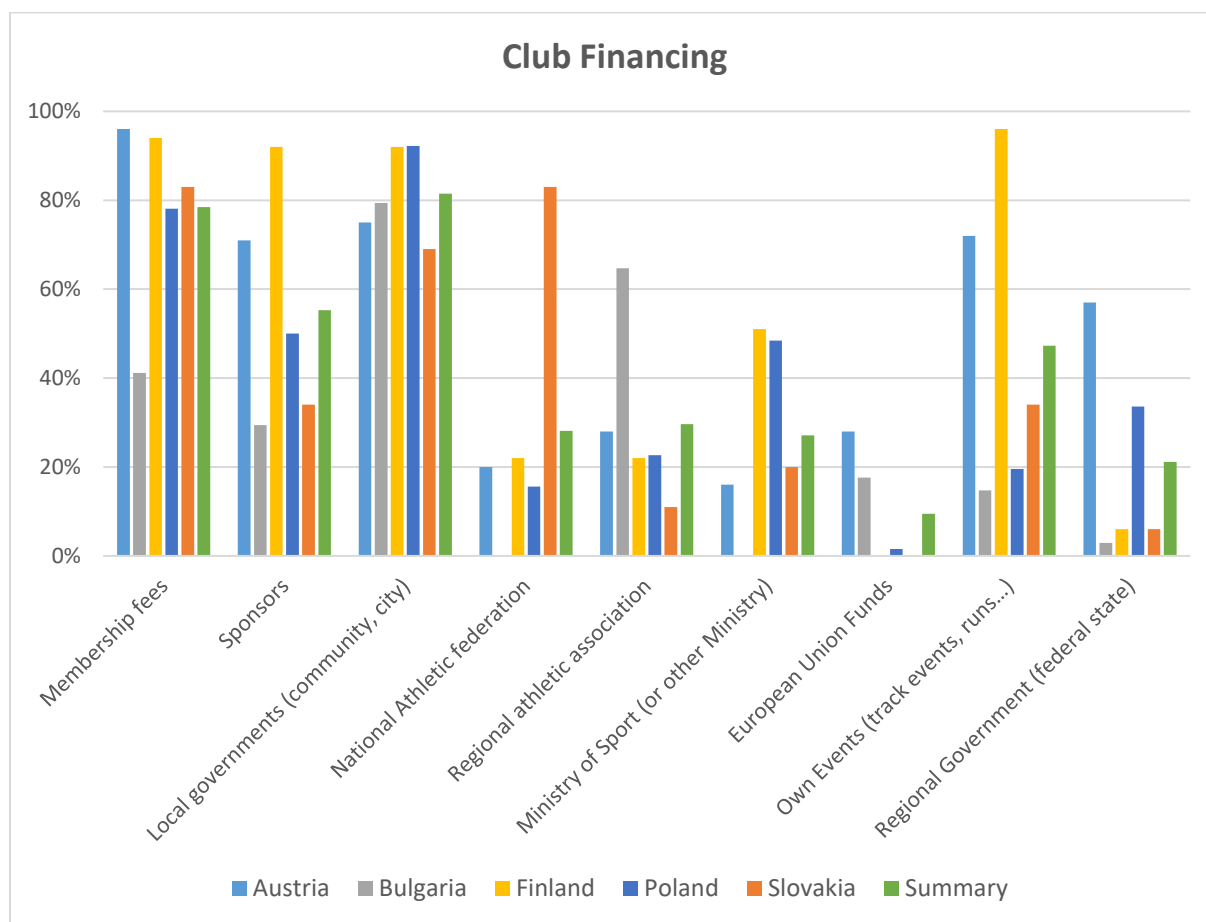


Figure 11: Club financing





### c. Conclusion

In conclusion, the data collected through the online questionnaire sent to registered athletic clubs in Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Poland, and Slovakia in 2021 provides valuable insights into the state of athletic clubs in these countries. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

1. **Sport Infrastructure:** The availability of sport infrastructure varies among countries. Public sport areas are widely accessible, except in Finland, where gyms are more popular. Limited access to facilities is common, with stricter regulations in Finland. Many clubs in Slovakia have no access to athletic stadiums or indoor sport facilities. Overall, Austrian clubs seem to have the most access to facilities, but there is still room for improvement.
2. **Training Possibilities for Different Groups:** Training opportunities decrease with age groups, with the least representation for para-athletes. Around half of all types of training are provided for free, with Bulgaria leading in free training opportunities. In contrast, Finland and Slovakia have a lower percentage of free training, with most training being paid.
3. **Sport-Specific Education Level:** Most staff in these clubs are coaches or trainers, followed by instructors and school teachers. The lowest representation is among those without any formal license. Finland stands out with about 70% of trainings being led with scientific support.
4. **Training Hours:** Training hours increase with age, with 10-14 year-olds training the most hours per week. The 15+ age group shows significant variation, depending on individual clubs and athletes.
5. **School Cooperation:** Over half of the clubs have some form of cooperation with primary schools. Organizing competitions and school activities after the end of the school day are popular activities that help clubs identify potential new athletes.
6. **Financial Support:** The source of income for athletic clubs varies significantly by country. Austrian clubs rely heavily on membership fees, while Finnish clubs receive support from multiple sources, including membership fees, sponsors, local governments, and club events. Polish clubs primarily depend on local governments, while Slovakian clubs rely on fees and support from the national athletic federation.

In summary, this data highlights the diverse landscape of athletic clubs in these five European countries, with variations in access to facilities, training opportunities, staff education, and financial support. These findings can serve as a basis for further discussions and actions aimed at improving the state of athletic clubs and sports development in these nations.



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## 2. Resources – Schools

Prepared by Baudis Helmut, Rauch Bernhard and Methlagl Michael,  
Austrian Athletic Federation

### a. Data collection

Online questionnaires to teachers/schools (1 teacher per school answered the questions) were sent out in 2021.

### b. Sample

In total 1061 schools from Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Finland, and Austria filled out the survey. The following results refer to teacher reports. Sample sizes in the countries are between 31 and 411 teachers (see figure 1). The highly varying sample sizes have to be considered when interpreting the results. Especially the low number of participating schools in Finland and Bulgaria must be considered when comparing the results. Comparisons between countries will have a bias and should not be over-interpreted.

Most surveyed schools in all countries are public schools (between 94 % and 100 %; see figure 1). In all school samples except schools in the Slovakian sample (70% have a specialization) most schools do not have a specialization (schools with specializations: between 5.3% and 23,9%; see figure 2). Most schools teach children between 6 and 15 years but the age groups in schools differ between the countries due to different school systems (see table 2 for details).

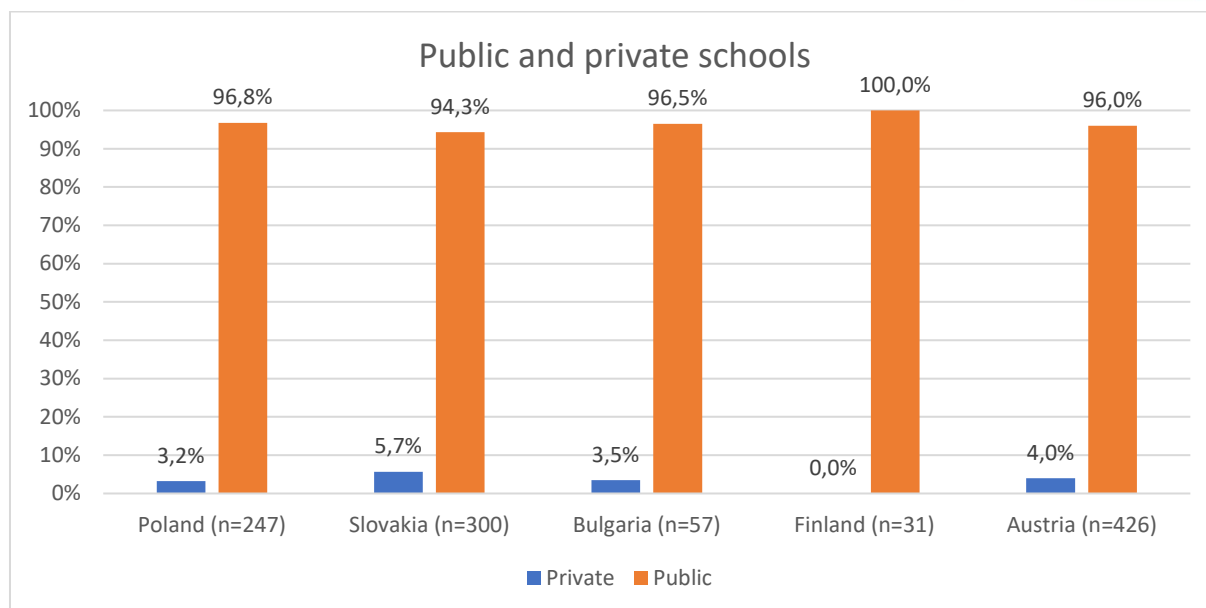


Figure 12: School characteristics: private and public schools; percentage

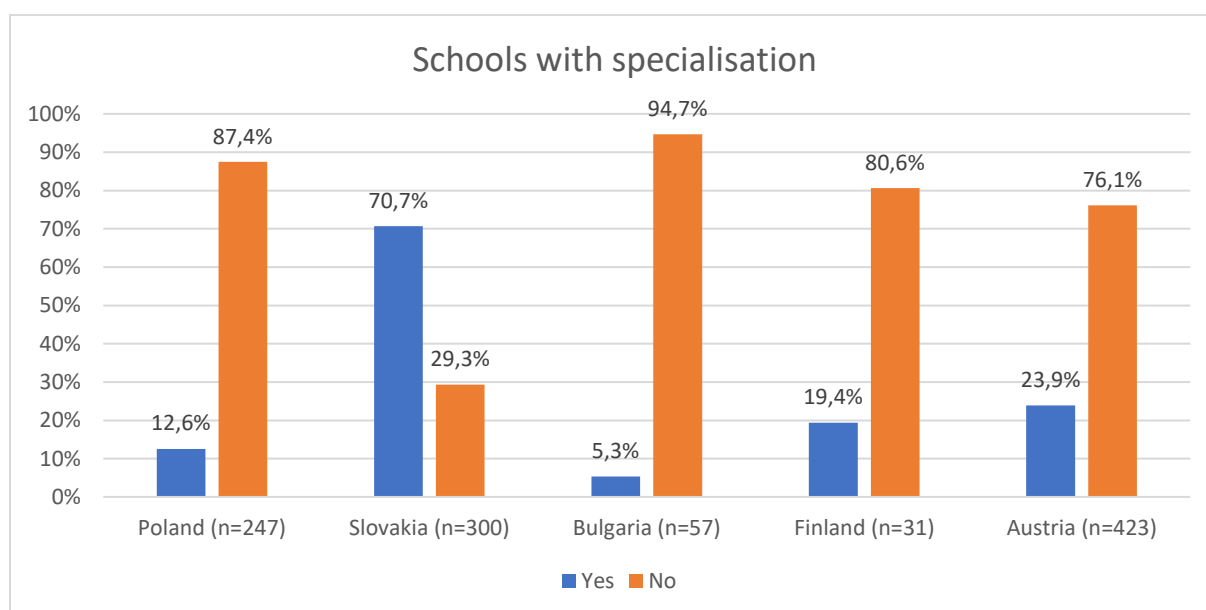


Figure 13: School characteristics: schools with and without specialization; percentage.

Most surveyed schools are in areas with less than 100,000 residents (see table 1).

Table 1: Number of residents of the area where the secondary schools are located; percentage.



Population	Poland (n=247)	Slovakia (n=300)	Bulgaria (n=57)	Finland (n=31)	Population	Austria (n=426)
Less than 10,000	34%	49%	19%	55%	Less than 3000	44%
Between 10,000 and 50,000	30%	26%	28%	26%	3001 to 15,000	37%
Between 50,000 and 100,000	11%	12%	14%	3%	15,001 to 100,000	11%
Between 100,000 and 200,000	7%	10%	11%			
Between 200,000 and 1 000,000	13%		4%		100,001 to 1,000,000	1%
Over 1,000,000	4%		14%		Over 1,000,000	8%
Missing	1%	4%	11%	16%	Missing	0%

Table 2: Age groups of the students in the different countries; percentage.

	Age groups (years)	percentage
Poland (n=247)	3-15	4,0%
	5-15	4,9%
	6-15	24,7%
	7-15	57,9%
	Other	8,5%
Slovakia (n=300)	3-15	2,3%
	6-15	77,7%
	6-10	17,3%
	11-15	1,3%
	missing	1,3%
Bulgaria (n=57)	7-13	42,1%
	7-19	45,6%
	14-19	5,3%
	7-16	0,0%



Finland (n=31)	7-10	0,0%
	4-13	0,0%
	missing	6,9%
	grade 1.- 6.	68,0%
	grade 1.- 9.	16,0%
	grade 3.-9.	6,0%
	grade 5.-9.	3,0%
	separate grade	6,0%
	missing	0,0%
Austria (n=426)	6-9	11,5%
	6-10	60,6%
	6-11	0,7%
	6-12	0,7%
	7-10	0,5%
	10-14	12,0%
	10-15	1,4%
	10-18	8,5%
	10-19	0,5%
	missing	1,6%
	Other	2,1%

Table 3 displays the number of students on the schools. In Slovakia the average number of students per school was 264.

Table 3: Number of students in the schools; percentage.

Number of students	Poland (n=247)	Slovakia (n=300)	Bulgaria (n=57)	Finland (n=31)	Austria (n=426)
Less than 200	23,9%	na	19,3%	38,7%	60,8%
200-499	40,5%	na	24,6%	51,6%	27,9%
500-799	23,5%	na	28,1%	9,7%	5,6%
800-1199	8,5%	na	19,3%	0,0%	3,5%
1200 and more	3,6%	na	8,8%	0,0%	1,4%
missing	0,0%	na	0,0%	9,7%	0,7%
Notes: na = not available					



### c. Results

- Sports education of the teachers*

The number of teachers with sport specific education level is higher in schools with higher grades. In Slovakia and Bulgaria, the percentage of teacher with a sport specific education is higher than in Austria and Poland (see table 4).

Table 4: Teachers with sport specific education; percentage (na= not available)

	Poland (n=247)		Slovakia (n=300)		Bulgaria (n=57)		Finland (n=31)		Austria (n=396)	
Teachers with sport specific education level	early grades (class 1-3)	higher grades (class 4-8)	early grades (age 6-10)	higher grades (age 11-15)	early grades (age 7-10)	higher grades (age 11-13)	early grades (grade 1-3)	higher grades (grade 4-8)	early grades (age 6-10; n=312)	higher grades (age 11-14; n=84)
Yes	30%	99%	69%	75%	65%	97%	na	na	40%	83%
No	70%	1%	31%	25%	35%	3%	na	na	60%	17%

- Popularity of different sports among students based on teachers' reports*

In all countries, except Poland, soccer is the most popular sports. In Poland athletics is more popular than soccer showing similar mean values. In Slovakia athletics is the 2nd popular, in Bulgaria the 3rd popular and in Finland and Austria the 4th popular sports among students (see table 5).

Table 5: Popularity of different sports among students; teachers reports; the means are ranked from 1 most popular to 9 less popular

Popularity of different sports	Poland (n=247)		Slovakia (n=300)		Bulgaria (n=57)		Finland (n=1-31)		Austria (n=417-421)	
	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n
Soccer	3,60 (2)	192	4,39 (1)	286	3,96 (1)	48	3,68 (1)	31	4,26 (1)	421
Athletics	3,67 (1)	214	3,11 (2)	253	3,22 (3)	46	2,97 (4)	29	2,69 (4)	417
Handball	2,67 (4)	128	2,36 (6)	101	2,14 (6)	22	3,33 (2)	3	2,24 (7)	421
Gymnastics	2,01 (7)	67	2,25 (7)	162	2,28 (5)	25	2,70 (6)	20	3,14 (3)	421
Swimming	2,63 (5)	54	2,44 (5)	86	1,60 (7)	10	2,95 (5)	19	3,39 (2)	420
Volleyball	2,94 (3)	176	2,94 (3)	170	3,60 (2)	40	2,43 (8)	7	2,36 (6)	417
Basketball	2,60 (6)	150	2,57 (4)	184	3,15 (4)	40	2,64 (7)	25	2,56 (5)	418
Rugby	1,50 (8)	14	1,00 (9)	26	na	0	na	0	1,26 (8)	417
Netball	1,25 (9)	4	1,60 (8)	15	1,00 (8)	2	3,00 (3)	1	na	na



Other	2,54	37	3,17	104	2,00	13	3,11	18	table tennis: 2,06; floorball: 1,65	419, 417
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**Notes: 5-point rating scale 1=not popular to 5=very popular; due to missing values the number of people who rate the different sports varies highly. This should be taken into account when interpreting and comparing the mean values e.g. Finland netball mean rating is based on 1 individuals rating and Finland soccer mean rating is based on 31 individual ratings.**

- Importance of different sports in physical education lessons (teachers' point of view)?

Teachers in Poland report that athletics are most important in their physical education lessons. In Slovakia soccer and other team sport are seen as more important than athletics. In Bulgaria athletics is the 4th important sports in physical education. In Austria and Finland athletics is the second important sports in physical education lessons (see table 6). The mean values of the importance ratings of athletics are similar in all countries (ranging from 3,5 to 4,16; see table 6; 1=not important at all, 5= very important)

Table 6: Importance of the sports in physical education lessons (teachers view); the means are ranked from 1 most popular to 8 less popular

Importance of different sports in physical education lessons (teachers' point of view)?	Poland (n=247)		Slovakia (n=300)		Bulgaria (n=57)		Finland (n=21-31)		Austria (n=421-423)	
	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n
Soccer	3,45 (4)	218	4,19 (1)	295	3,89 (2)	45	4,42 (1)	31	2,70 (3)	423
Athletics	3,95 (1)	232	3,50 (3)	274	3,63 (4)	48	4,16 (2)	31	3,64 (2)	419
Handball	3,21 (5)	198	2,19 (7)	241	2,47 (7)	38	2,03 (7)	31	2,33 (5)	419
Volleyball	3,62 (2)	220	3,24 (5)	260	4,10 (1)	48	3,20 (6)	30	2,29 (6)	421
Basketball	3,51 (3)	214	3,31 (4)	270	3,84 (3)	50	3,87 (3)	31	2,63 (4)	420
Rugby	1,30 (7)	134	1,14 (8)	220	1,00 (8)	25	1,10 (8)	30	1,21 (8)	418
Other team sports	3,51 (3)	181	3,93 (2)	285	3,53 (5)	40	3,50 (5)	30	na	na
Other	2,93 (6)	114	3,13 (6)	207	2,25 (6)	20	3,71 (4)	21		
Austria	Other ball games: 4,56 (1); Floorball:1,69 (7)						other ball games:421, Floorball:417			

**Notes: 5-point rating scale; 1= no significance to 5 high significance; due to missing values the number of people who rate the different sports varies highly. This should be taken into account when interpreting and comparing the mean values**





- Importance of athletics disciplines in physical education lessons (teachers' point of view)?

Teachers in all countries, except Finland, indicate that running-sprints are the most important (rather important) athletics disciplines in their lessons. In Finland jumps and throws are ranked as most important disciplines (rather important) (see table 7; 1=not important at all, 5= very important).

Table 7: Importance of athletics disciplines in physical education lessons (teachers view); the means are ranked from 1 most popular to 8 less popular

Importance of athletics disciplines in physical education lessons (teachers' point of view)?	Poland (n=247)		Slovakia (n=300)		Bulgaria (n=57)		Finland (n=30-31)		Austria (n=420-425)	
	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n	Mean (rank)	n
running - sprint	4,12 (1)	238	4,10 (1)	296	4,49 (1)	51	3,65 (3)	31	3,98 (1)	424
running - hurdles and obstacles	2,48 (6)	186	4,10 (1)	296	2,13 (7)	30	3,52 (4)	31	2,80 (7)	420
running- middle and long distance	3,67 (2)	225	3,52 (3)	285	3,33 (3)	48	2,32 (7)	31	3,25 (5)	422
running - relay race	3,37 (4)	201	3,39 (5)	276	3,55 (2)	47	3,83 (2)	30	3,67 (3)	424
Jumps	3,50 (3)	223	3,48 (4)	294	3,24 (4)	51	3,84 (1)	31	3,61 (4)	424
Throws	3,27 (5)	222	3,65 (2)	292	3,04 (5)	49	3,84 (1)	31	3,96 (2)	425
Walks	1,85 (8)	169	2,74 (6)	253	2,17 (6)	36	2,68 (5)	31	3,10 (6)	423
Combined events	1,91 (7)	162	1,69 (7)	235	1,23 (8)	30	2,45 (6)	31	1,69 (8)	420
Notes: 5-point rating scale; 1= no importance to 5 high importance; due to missing values the number of people who rate the different disciplines varies highly. This should be considered when interpreting and comparing the mean values										

- How important are the following goals in your exercise and physical education classes?

Table 8 displays the importance rating (1... not important to 5... very important) of physical education goals showing that improvement of general motor skills and abilities, promotion of physical activity behavior, fitness and health, children's fun in movement, promotion of children's social development and improvement of athletic specific movements /technics are high rated goals. Childrens preparation for competitions is more important in Poland and





Slovakia and Bulgaria than in Finland and Austria. Preparation for tests is an important goal in Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Poland but less important in Austria and Finland (see table 8)

Table 8: Importance of different educational goals in physical education classes (teachers view)

How important are the following goals in your exercise and physical education classes (using athletics)?	Poland (n=247)		Slovakia (n=300)		Bulgaria (n=57)		Finland (n=30-31)		Austria (n=420-423)	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Improvement of general motor skills and abilities (speed, strength, endurance, mobility)	4,60	231	4,44	298	4,40	55	4,84	31	4,77	423
Promote physical activity, fitness, and health	4,44	235	4,36	293	4,50	54	4,61	31	4,81	423
Fun in movement	4,04	222	4,46	295	3,64	50	4,32	31	4,93	422
Promote social development of the children	3,98	204	3,83	266	3,67	48	4,42	31	4,76	422
Improvement of athletic specific movements/technics	3,84	216	3,83	266	3,51	47	3,26	31	3,93	422
Preparation for competitions	3,68	225	3,21	266	3,05	41	1,87	30	2,49	420
Prepare children for tests	3,49	208	4,18	263	3,76	46	1,39	31	2,12	421
Notes: 5-point rating scale; 1= no importance to 5 high importance										

- Which statements apply to children with special needs (children with disabilities, etc.)?

In all countries most teachers report that it's up to the teachers to find ways to include children with special needs into physical education lessons (77% to 94%). Most of the schools reported that children with special needs are not excluded from physical education lessons even though there are differences between the countries. In Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Poland 33% to 42% of the teachers report that children with special needs are exempt from physical education lessons. In Austria only 3% and in Finland 0% report that children with special needs are exempt. The existence of special curricula are reported in Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Finland (between 23% and 42%). Further 36% to 40% of the teachers in Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Finland reported that there are also separate physical activity programs for children with special

needs outside the school (medical centers etc.). In Austria 72% of the surveyed teachers report that there are separate programs outside the school (see figure 3).

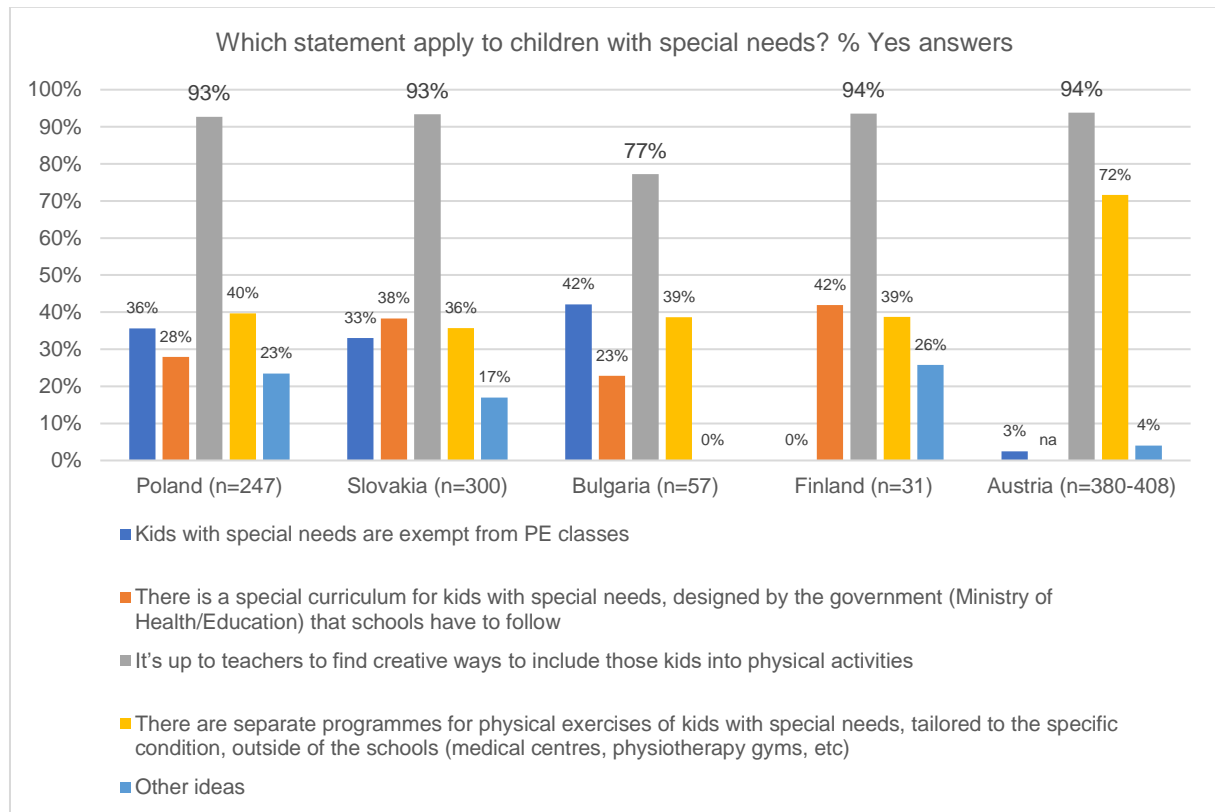


Figure 14: Physical education and students with special educational needs; percentage.

- Teachers interests in further education

In all countries teacher's motivation in further education in teaching sports in general (between 60% and 88%) and athletics (between 44% and 65%) is rather high (see table 9).

Table 9: Teacher's motivation in further education

	Poland (n=247)		Slovakia (n=300)		Bulgaria (n=57)		Finland (n=31)		Austria (n=419; 407)	
	sports	athletics	sports	athletics	sports	athletics	sports	athletics	sports	athletics
<b>Yes</b>	75%	64%	60%	44%	68%	56%	na	90%	88%	65%
<b>No</b>	25%	36%	40%	56%	32%	44%	na	10%	12%	35%

- How often do you use the following sources of information to acquire new skills for teaching athletics?

In all countries there is a trend to use the internet to acquire new knowledge in teaching athletics (see table 10).



Table 10: Teacher's source of information for acquire new knowledge in teaching athletics.

	Poland (n=247)		Slovakia (n=300)		Bulgaria (n=57)		Finland (n=31)		Austria (n=419)		(n=411-415)
Source of information	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	
Books	3,10	196	2,91	256	na	na	2,71	31	2,59		418
Magazines	2,62	184	2,85	247	na	na	2,52	31	2,3		417
Trainings, conferences, courses	4,11	227	3,20	254	na	na	3,26	31	2,57		411
Internet	4,34	240	4,46	290	na	na	4,68	31	3,55		414
Other	2,00	99	2,16	140	na	na	2,29	17	1,90		415
Austria - other	Austrian Athletics Federation Brochure: Athletics in school										
Notes: 5-point scale 1=not important to 5=very important; na= not available											

- *Is there a way to combine physical education with other subjects?*

In Austria, Finland, and Slovakia most teacher report that a combination of physical education with other subjects in early grades is possible (between 69% and 87%). In Poland and Bulgaria most teachers report that a combination is not possible (65% and 61%) (see figure 4). In higher grades most teachers from Poland, Slovakia and Bulgaria report that a combination is not possible (between 70% and 74%). In Finland 50% and in Austria 42% report that there are no ways to combine physical education with other subjects in higher grades (see figure 5).

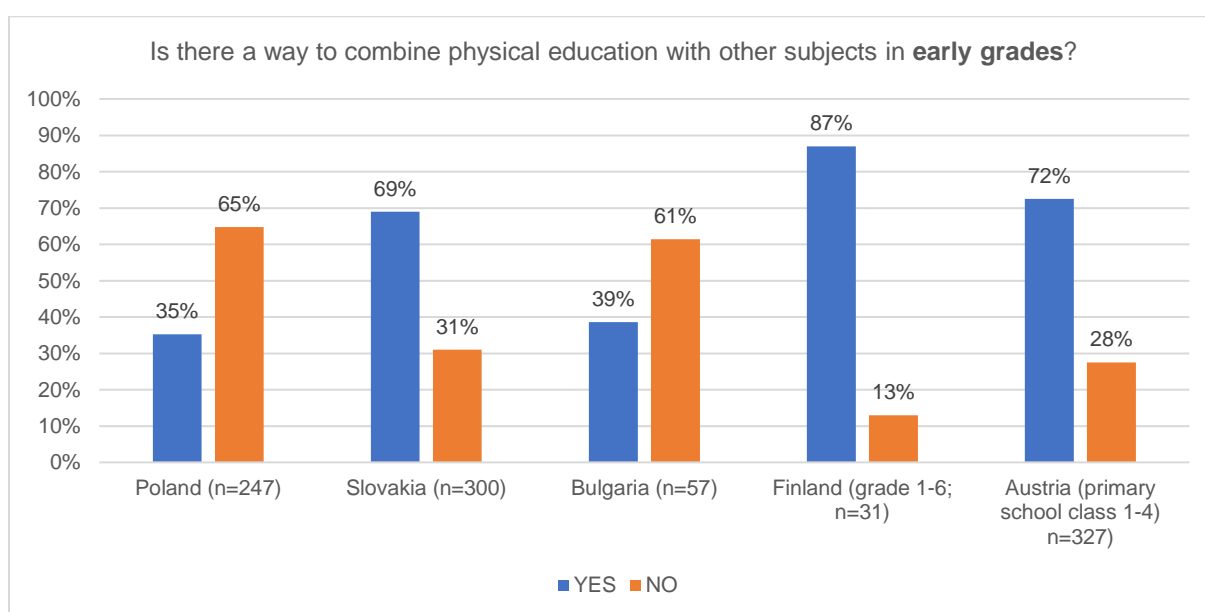




Figure 15: Possibility to combine physical education with other subjects in early grades

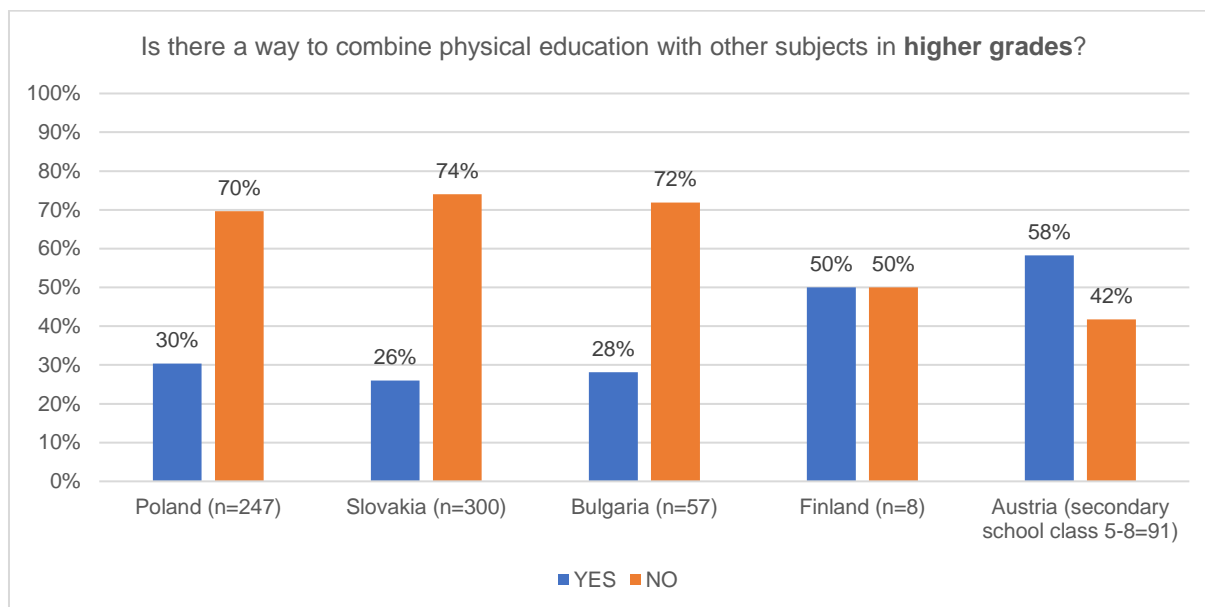


Figure 16: Possibility to combine physical education with other subjects in higher grades

- *Organization of and participation in competitions and sport tests*

In all countries (between 63% and 87%) except Austria (46%) most teachers report that they organize competitions in early grades. In higher grades in all countries most of the teachers (except Finland 50%) report that they organize competition (between 70% and 90%). In all countries most schools participate in local (between 72% and 96%) and regional competitions (between 62% and 82%). In Poland and Finland most teachers (54% and 65%) report to participate in national competitions. Most schools in Poland, Slovakia and Finland organize tests in early as well as higher grades (see figure 6).

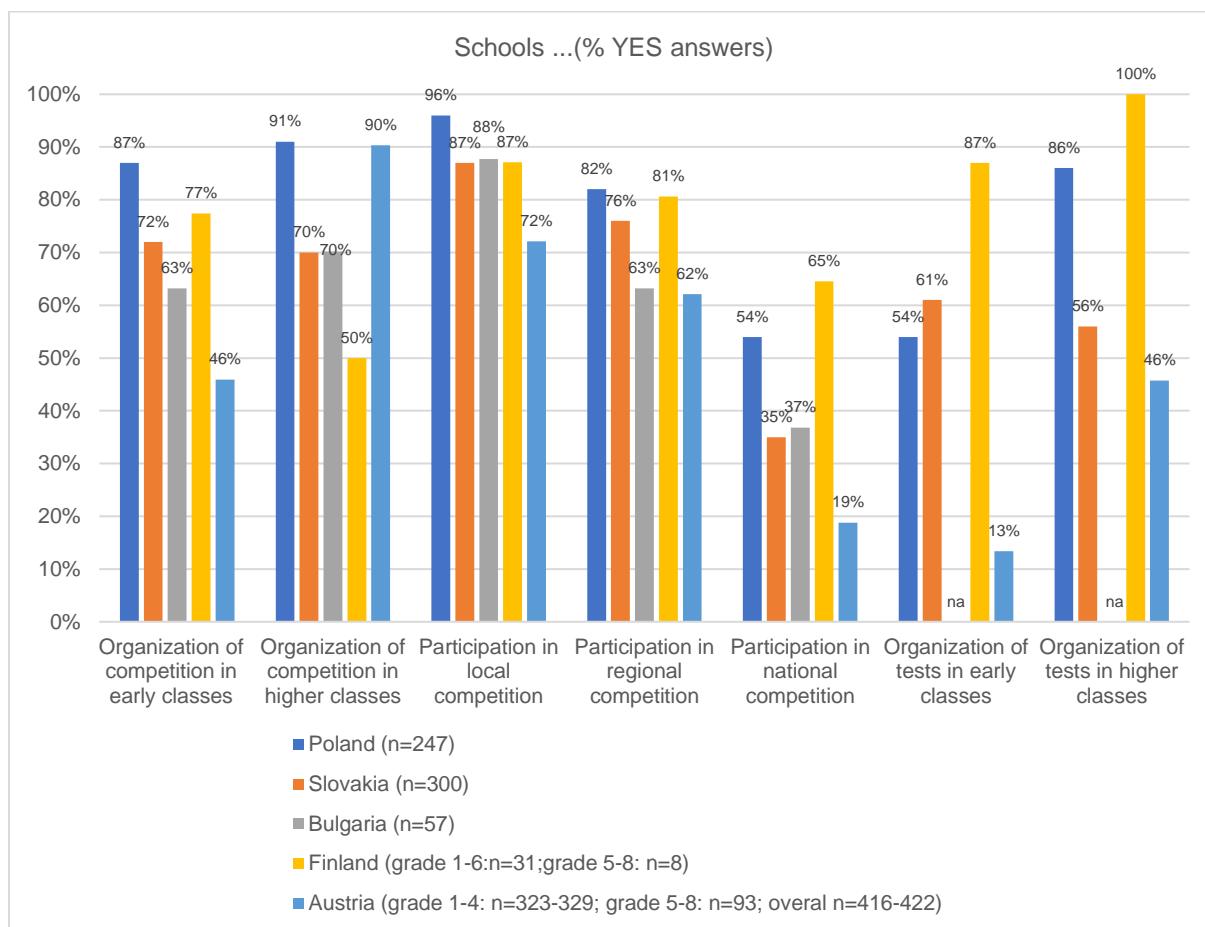


Figure 17: Organization and Participation in competitions and sport tests; percentage

- School-sports club cooperation*

Schools in Poland cooperate most frequently with local athletic clubs. In Finland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Austria most teachers report that they rarely or never cooperate with local athletic clubs (see figure 7).

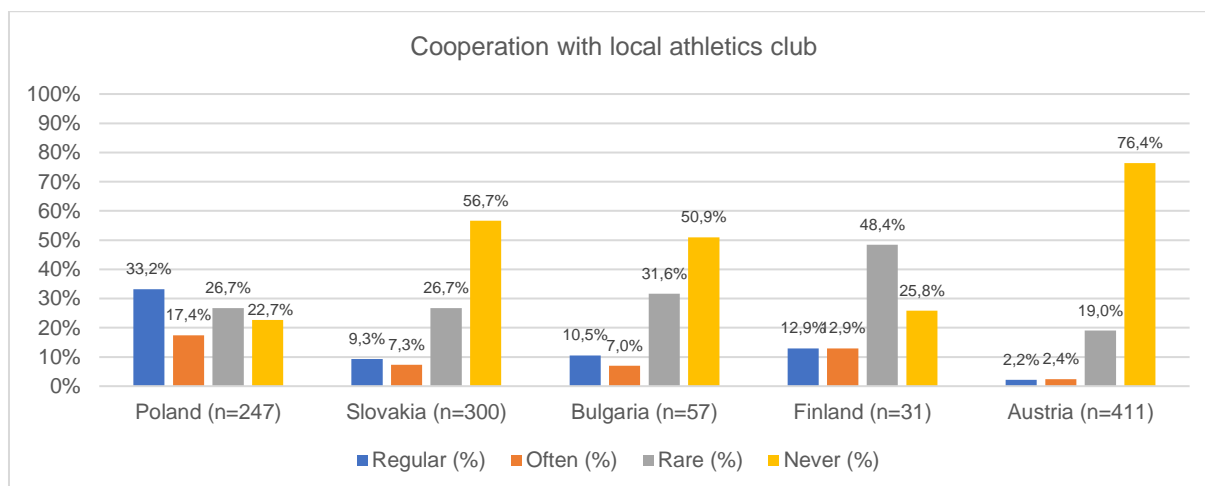




Figure 18: School cooperation with local athletic clubs; percentage

Schools in Poland cooperate most frequently with regional athletic associations even though most teacher cooperate rarely or never. In Finland, Bulgaria, and Slovakia most teachers report that they rarely or never cooperate with local athletic clubs. In Austria 93% report that they never cooperate with regional athletic association (see figure 8).

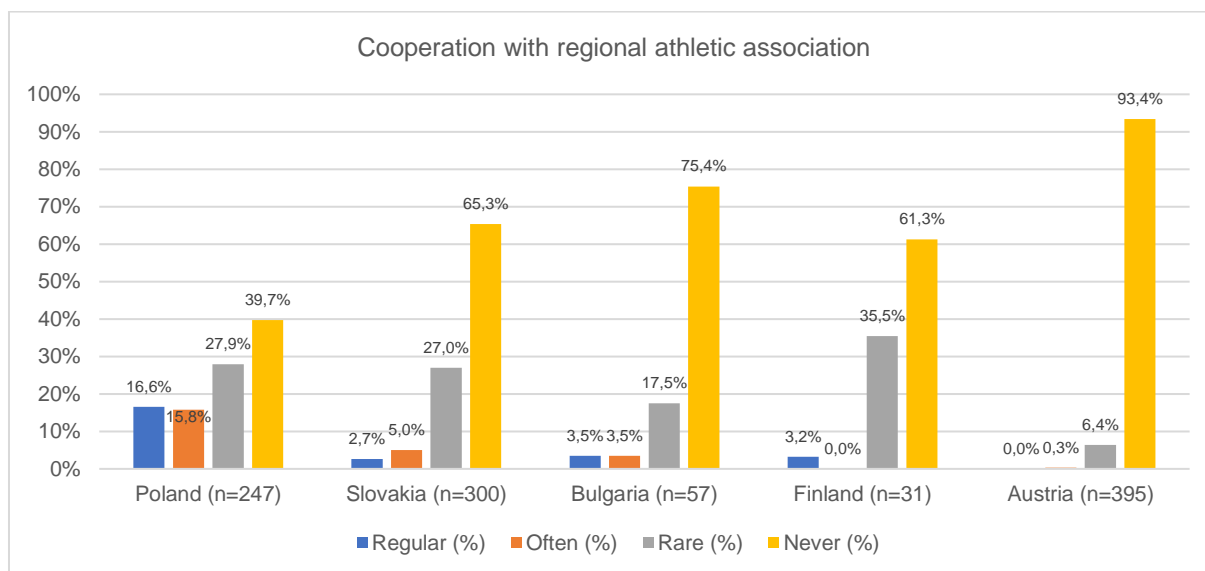


Figure 19: School cooperation with regional athletic associations; percentage

Cooperation with national athletic federations is not very frequent in all countries (51% to 97% never cooperate). In Poland schools cooperate most frequently with national athletics federation among all countries (see figure 9).

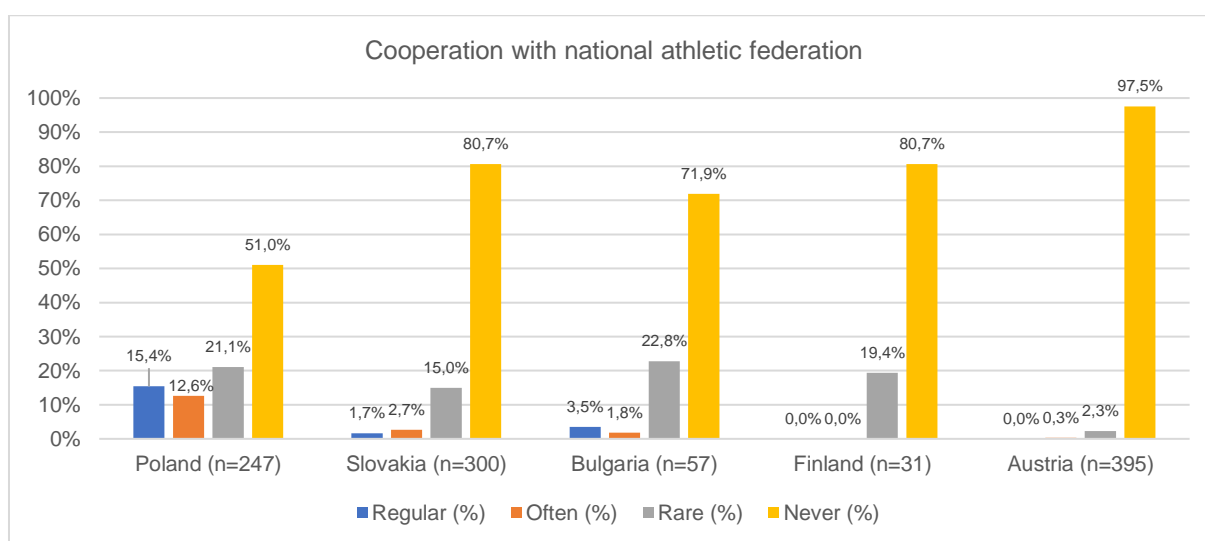


Figure 20: School cooperation with national athletic federations; percentage



- *Parental Support*

Results show that there is rarely or no parental support in organizing competitions (see figure 10), providing coaching support (see figure 11) and assistance with sport events (see figure 12) in Austria, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Finland. Teacher in Poland report frequent participation of parents in organizing competitions and in coaching and the most regular parent participation in volunteering activities in comparison to the other countries (see figure 10, 11 and 12).

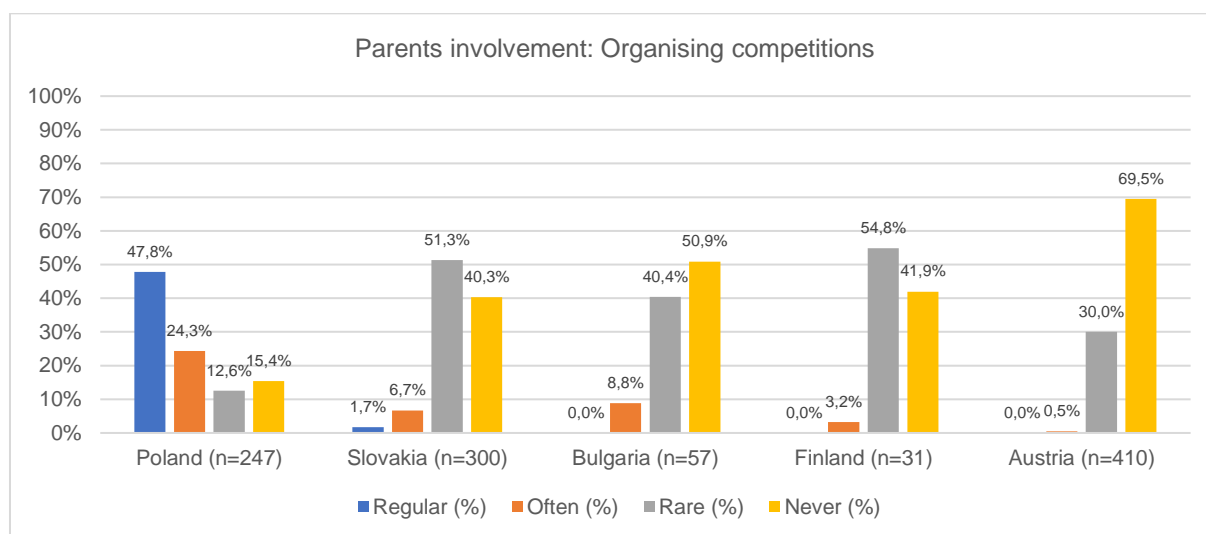


Figure 21: Parents involvement in organizing competitions.

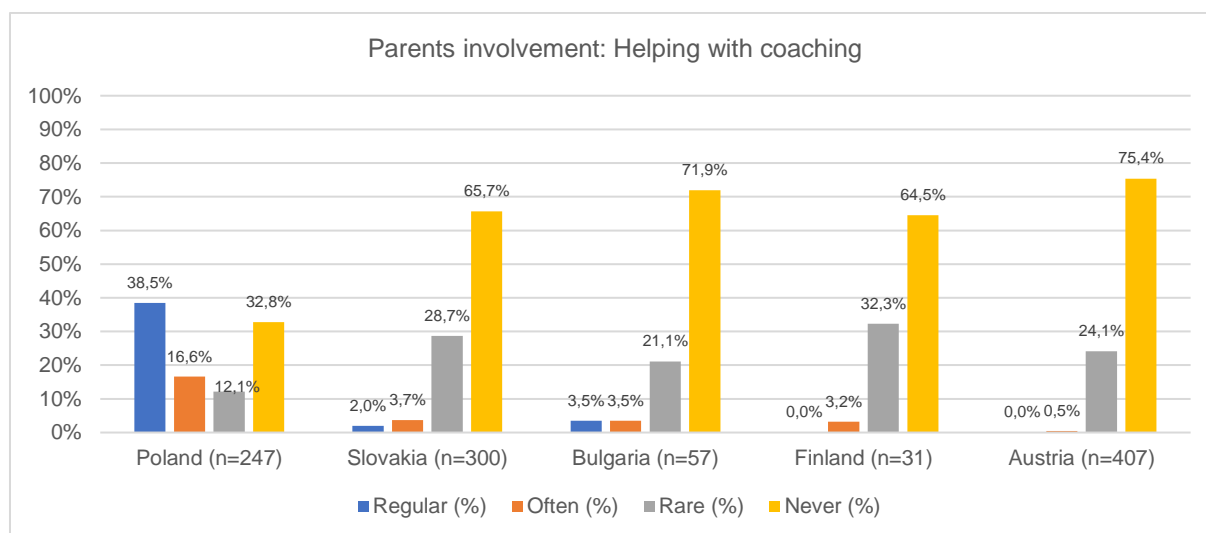


Figure 22: Parents involvement in helping with coaching.

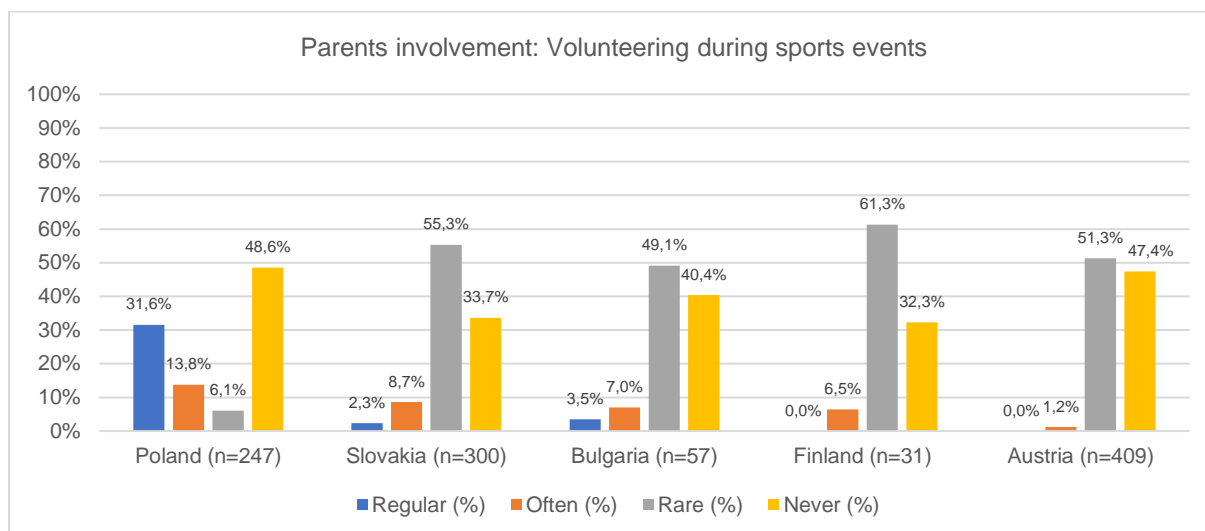


Figure 23: Parents involvement in volunteering during sport events

- *Invitation of elite athletes to the school*

Most schools in all countries (between 44% to 85%) do not invite top athletes as motivational speaker (see figure 13).

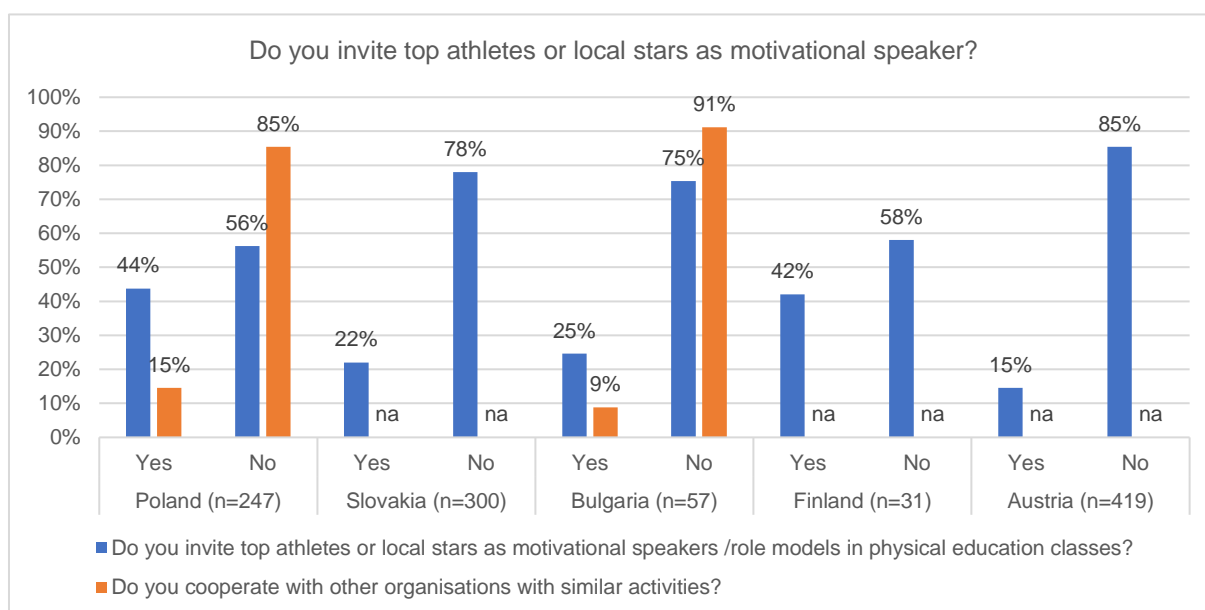


Figure 24: Invitation of top athletes or local stars as motivational speakers or similar activities

- *Access to athletics infrastructure*

Most schools in Poland and Bulgaria have access to school sports field and indoor multi events halls within school area. In Slovakia and Austria most schools have access to a gym within school area. In Finland most schools have access to school sports field outside school area. Most Schools in all countries have no





access to athletic stadiums even though a small percentage of schools (except Poland: 47% and Finland: 48% have access to an athletic stadium within or outside the school area) report to have access in the school area or outside the school area (see figures 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18).

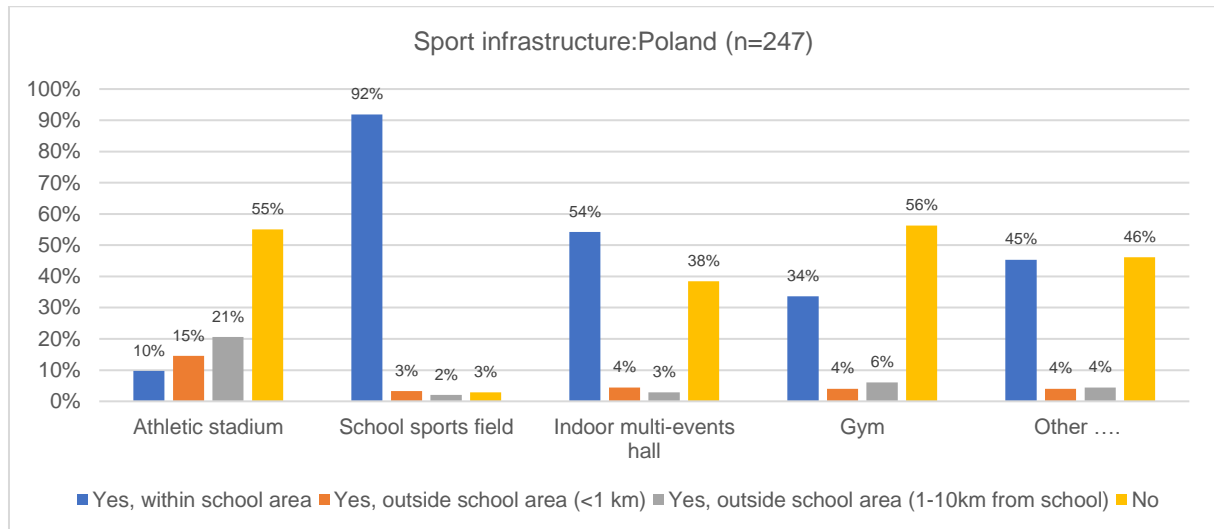


Figure 25: Access to sport infrastructure: Poland schools

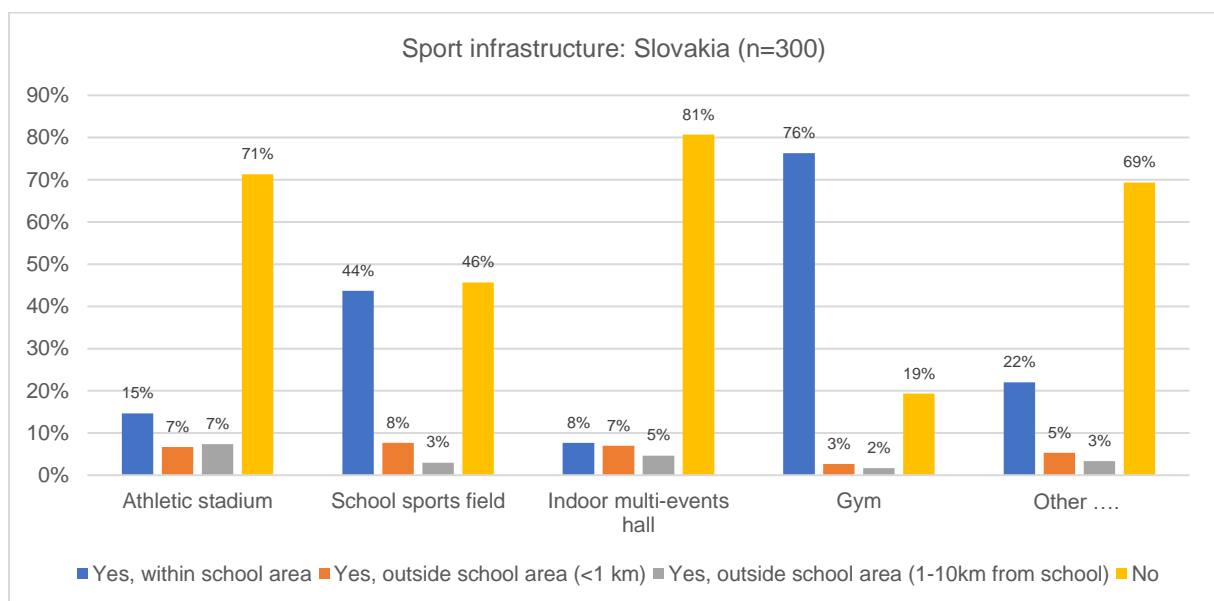


Figure 26: Access to sport infrastructure: Slovakian schools

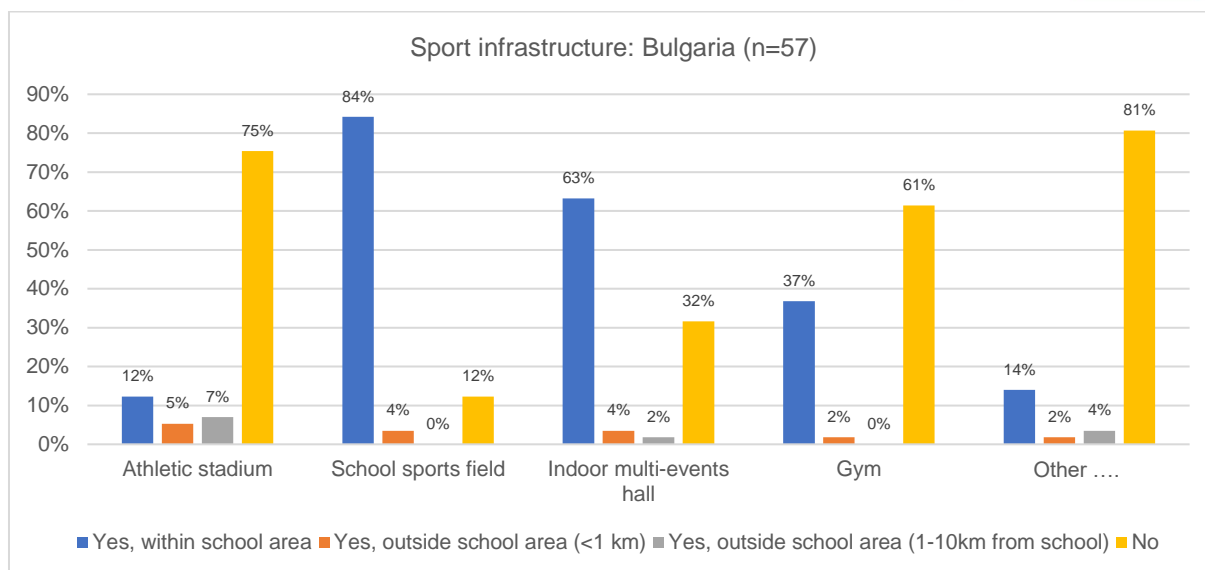


Figure 27: Access to sport infrastructure: Bulgarian schools

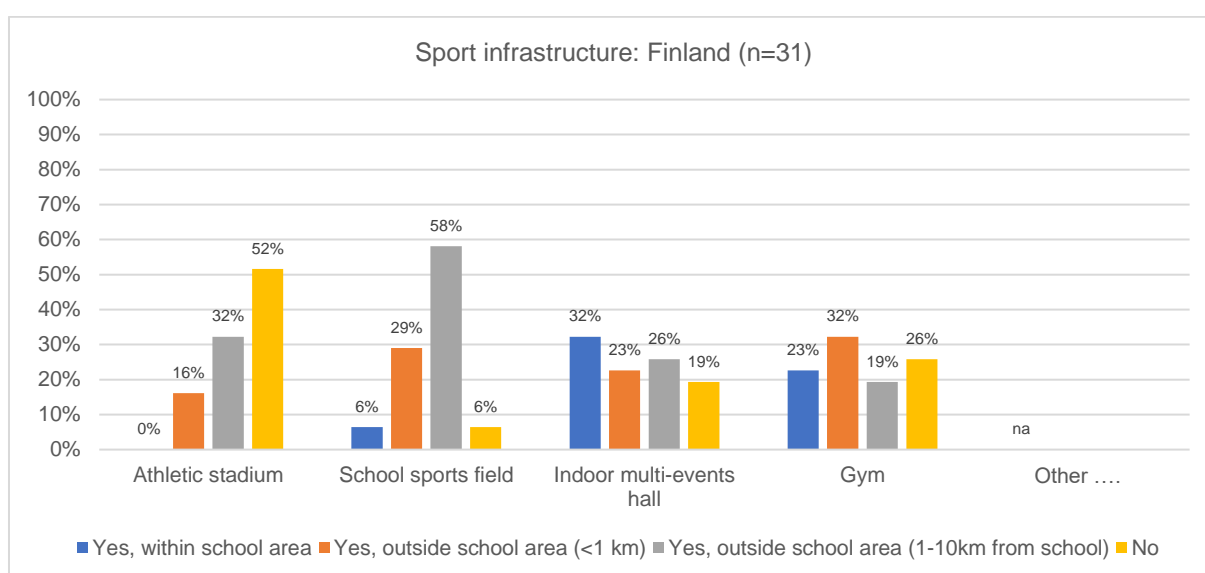


Figure 28: Access to sport infrastructure: Finnish schools

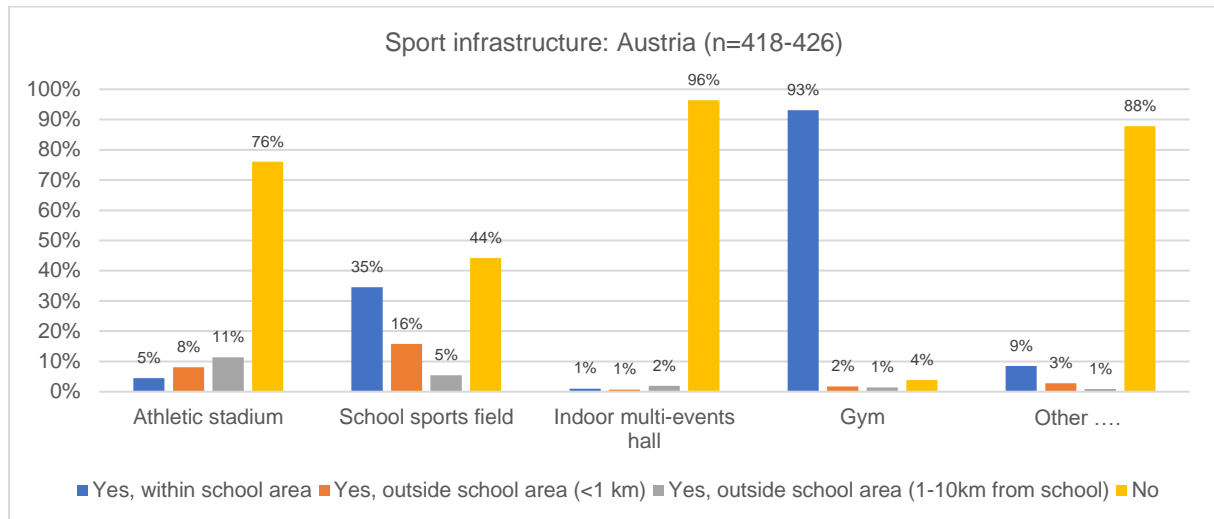


Figure 29: Access to sport infrastructure: Austrian schools

In all countries most children have access to changing rooms (between 65% and 97%) or changing rooms with showers (between 18% and 94%) (see figure 19).

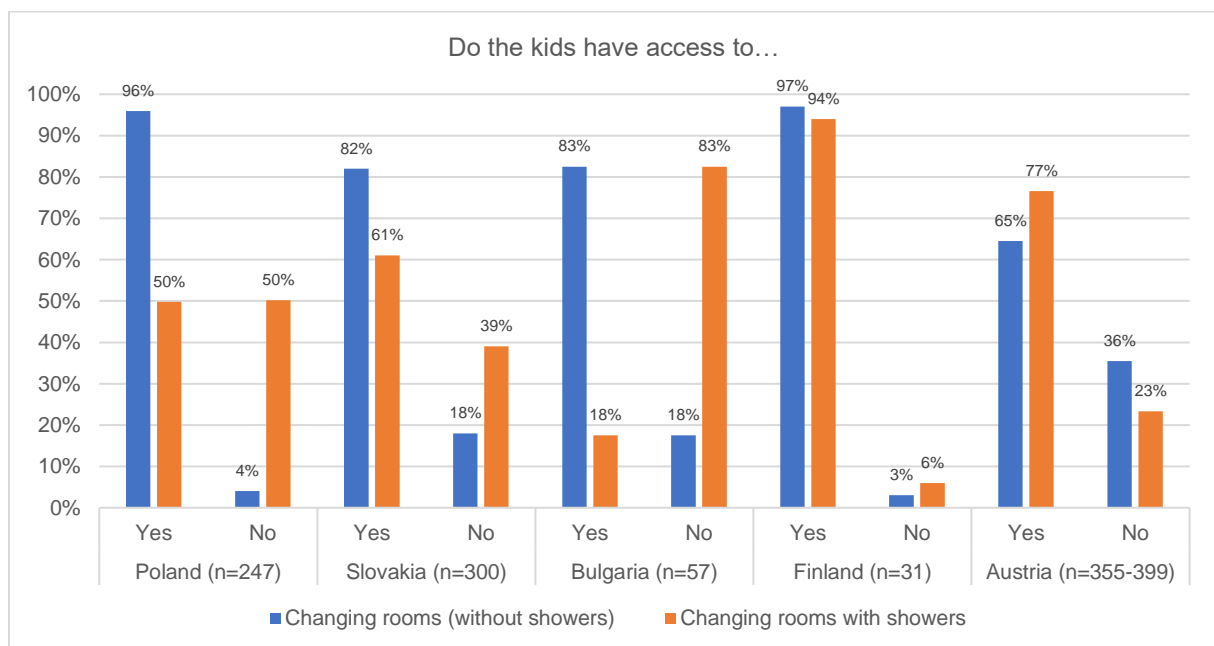


Figure 30: Access to changing rooms; percentage.

- Availability of athletics equipment

The availability of athletics equipment in schools are shown in figure 20 to 24. Results show that there is a lack of availability (more than 50% not available and too less equipment) of discs and javelins, hurdles, starting blocks, long jump and high jump equipment in Poland. Most schools (more than 50%) in Poland have enough medicine balls, stop watches and measuring equipment (see figure 20).

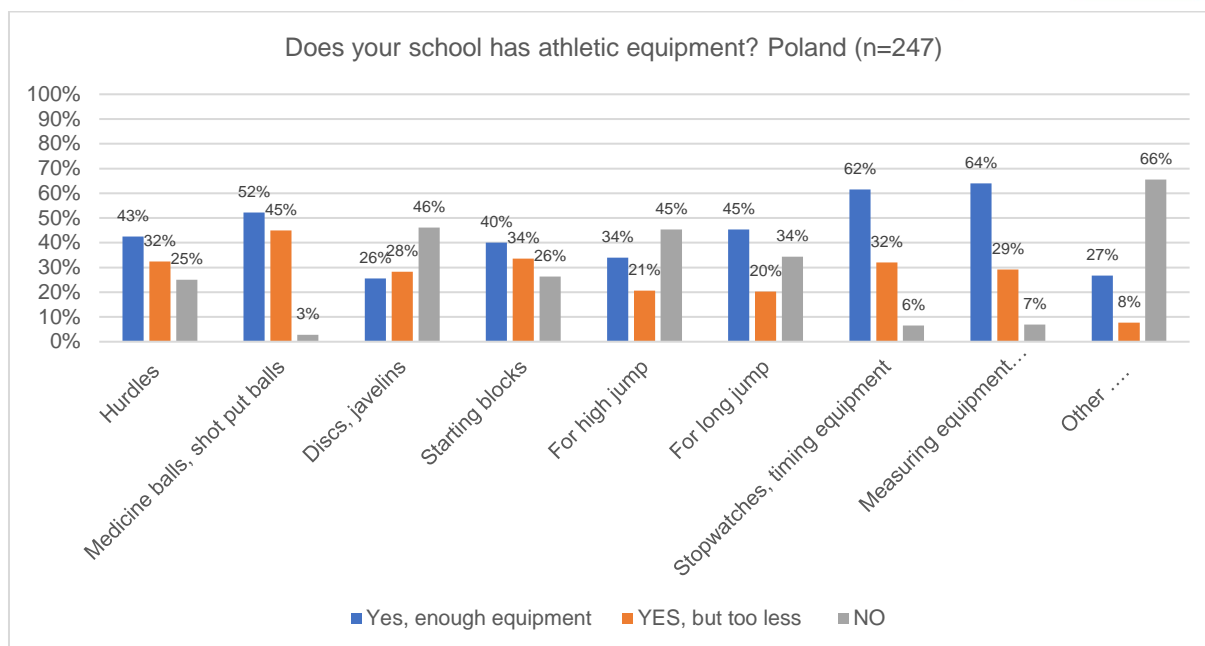


Figure 31: Availability of athletics equipment: Poland

Results from Slovakia show that there is a lack of availability (more than 50% not available and too less equipment) hurdles, medicine balls, discs and javelins, starting blocks, long jump and high jump equipment and measuring equipment. Most schools (more than 50%) in Slovakia have enough stop watches (see figure 21).

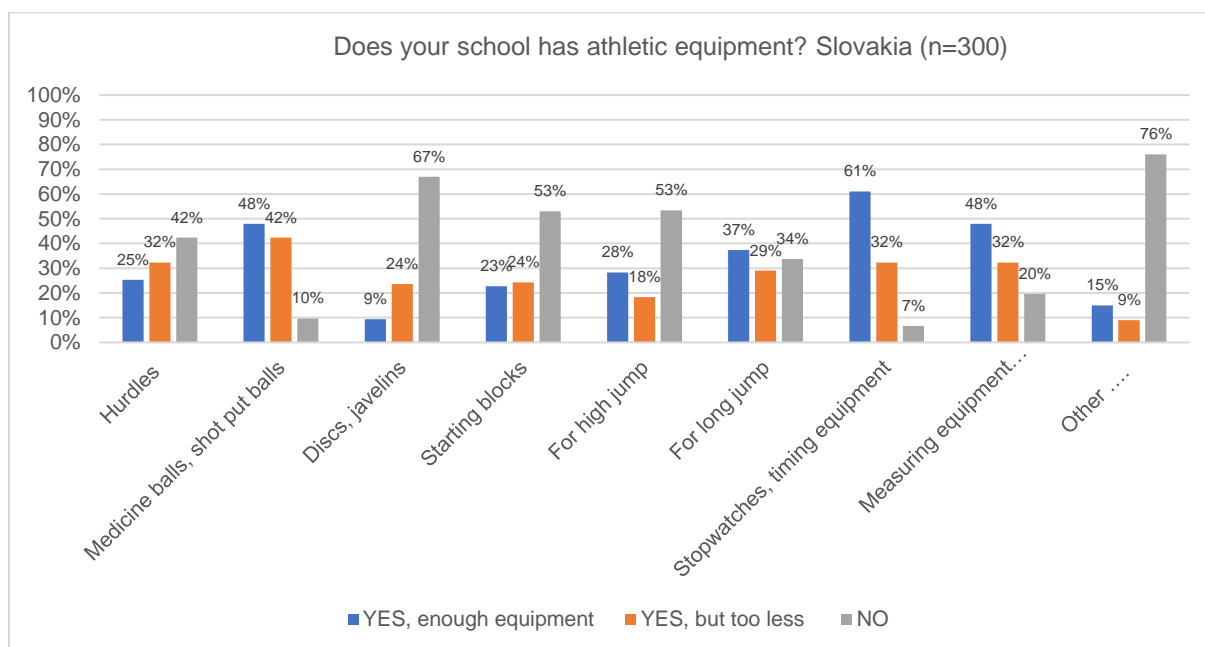


Figure 32: Availability of athletics equipment: Slovakia

Results from Bulgaria show that there is a lack of availability (more than 50% not available and too less equipment) hurdles, medicine balls, discus, and javelins, starting blocks, long jump and high jump equipment and measuring



equipment. Most schools (more than 50%) in Bulgaria have enough stop watches (see figure 22).

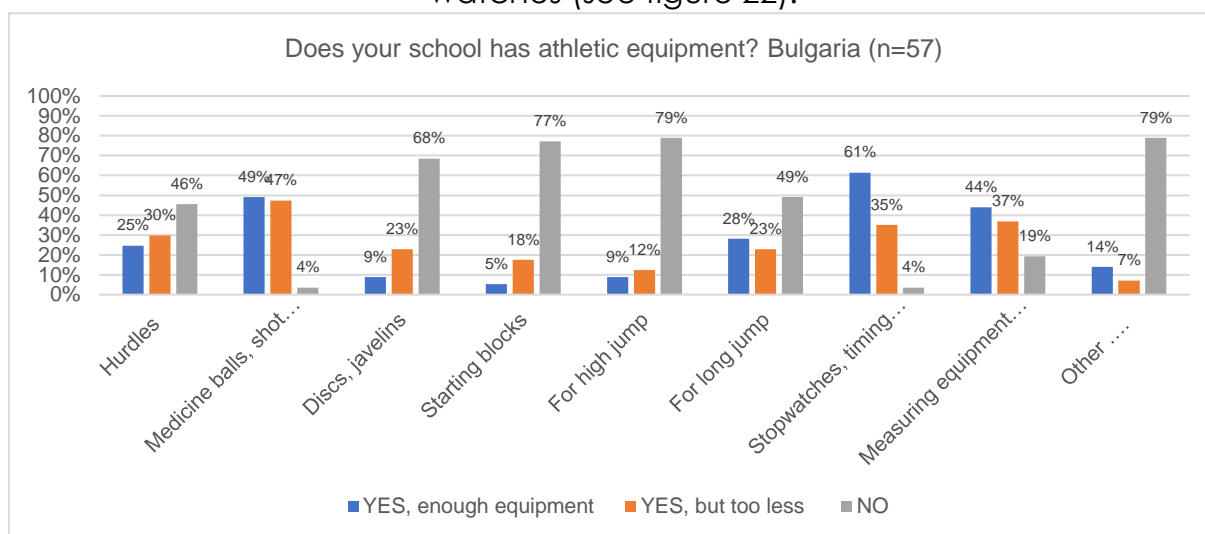


Figure 33: Availability of athletics equipment: Bulgaria

Results from Finland show that there is a lack of availability (more than 50% not available and too less equipment) hurdles, discus, and javelins, starting blocks and high jump equipment. Most schools (more than 50%) of the surveyed schools in Finland have enough medicine balls, long jump equipment, stop watches and measuring equipment (see figure 23).

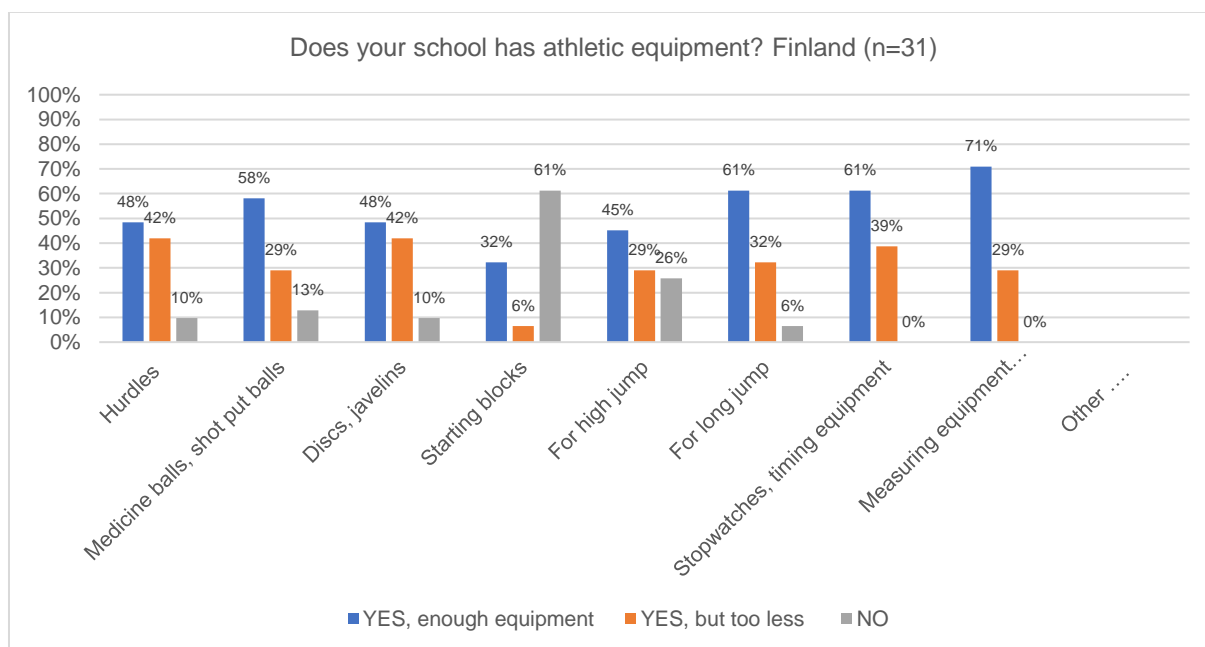


Figure 34: Availability of athletics equipment: Finland

Results from Austria show that there is a lack of availability (more than 50% not available and too less equipment) hurdles, discus, and javelins, starting blocks, long jump and high jump equipment. Most schools (50% or more) of the



surveyed schools in Austria have enough medicine balls, stop watches and measuring equipment (see figure 24).

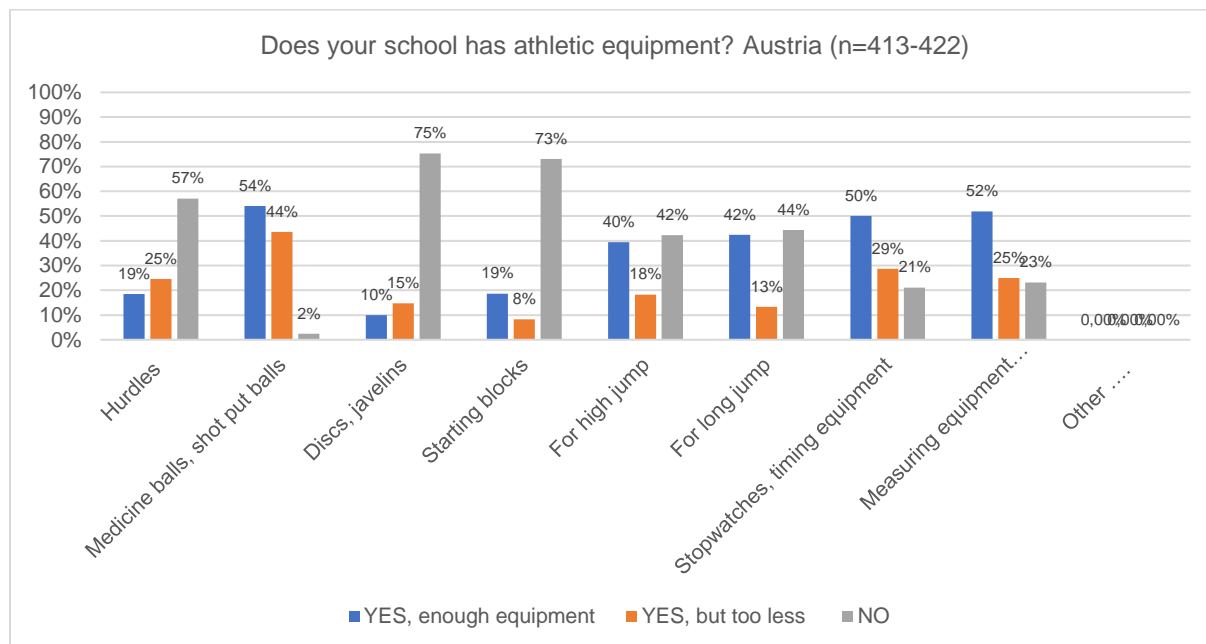


Figure 35: Availability of athletics equipment: Austria

- *Athletics equipment in schools is funded by...*

In all countries except Austria athletics equipment is mostly bought from school budget. In Austria it is mostly funded by the government. In Poland and Slovakia private and company sponsors also play an important role (see figure 25).

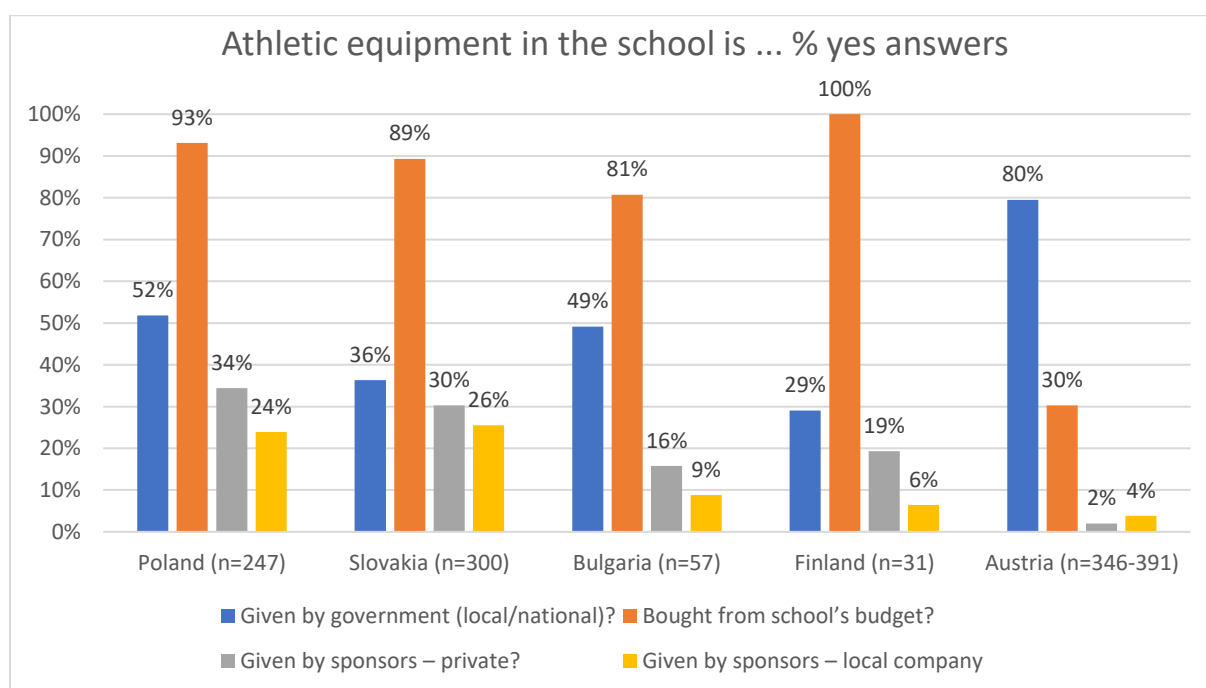


Figure 36: Athletics equipment is funded by; % Yes answers



- *Accessibility of sport infrastructure in the schools for different groups of persons outside physical education lessons?*

Sport infrastructure in schools is widely accessible (more than 50% yes answers) for rent für adults in Austria, Finland, Slovakia, and Poland. Further, sport infrastructure is widely accessible outside physical education for kids from the same school in Finland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Poland. High accessibility for children from other schools can be found in Finland, and Poland. Most school provide their infrastructure for events in Austria, Finland, Slovakia, and Poland (see figure 26).

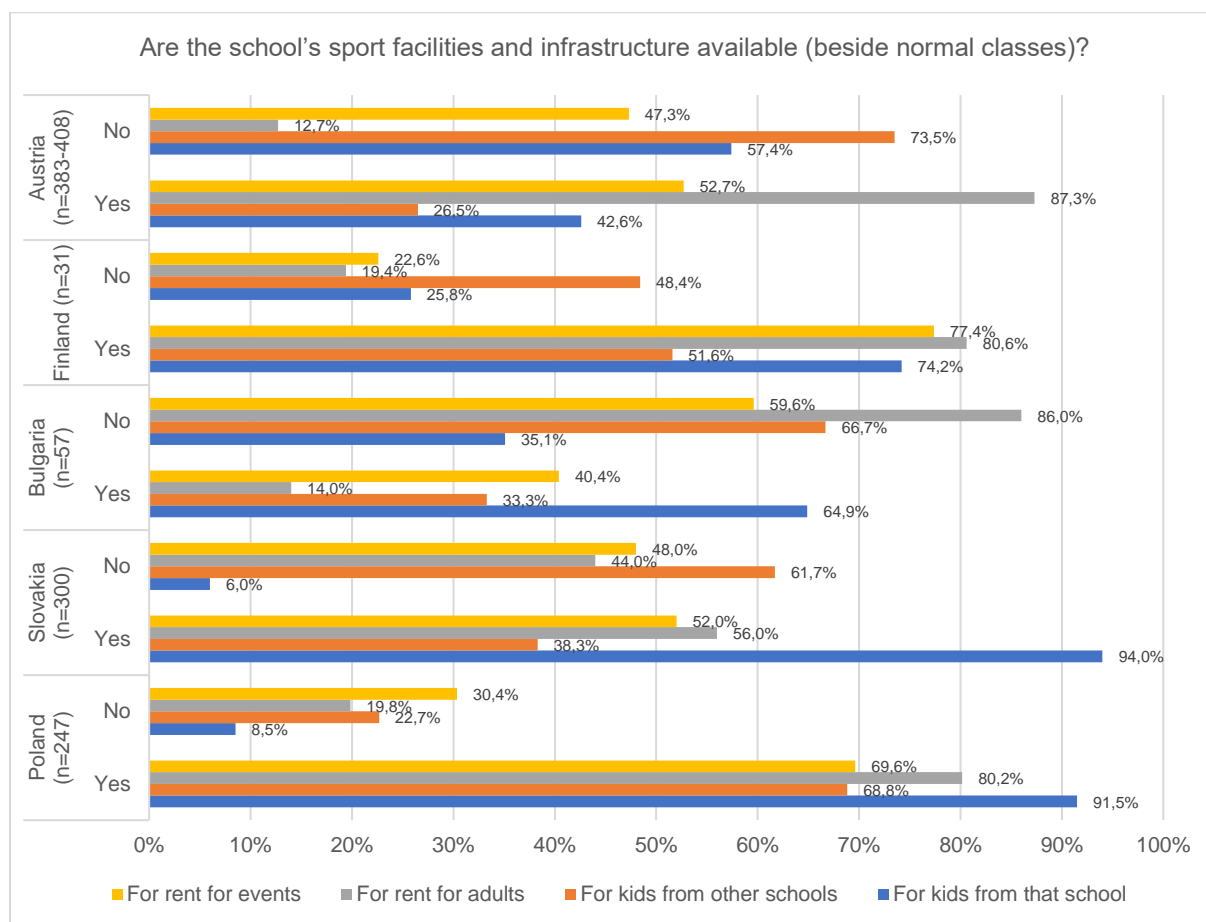


Figure 37: Accessibility of sport infrastructure in schools für different persons outside physical education lessons

- *Conclusion*

The highly varying sample sizes must be considered when interpreting the results. Especially the low number of participating schools in Finland and Bulgaria must be considered when comparing the results. Comparisons between countries will have a bias and should not be over-interpreted. Furthermore, the different school systems must be taken into account.



- Even though soccer is almost more popular among students than athletics, athletics is a rather important discipline in physical education lessons in most countries. In most countries running-sprinting is an important discipline in physical education. Combined events are the least important disciplines.
- Teachers interest in further education in teaching athletics is rather high but could be improved. Teachers widely use the internet to acquire new knowledge in teaching athletics. This source of information could be used to improve teachers' knowledge in athletics. It must be mentioned that the contents should be designed by professionals. International cooperation, exchange, and networks in designing further education courses could also be beneficial to improve further education structures in the countries.
- Future strategies should also focus on building strong school-athletic clubs/athletic associations relationships. Country-specific aspects could be a barrier in building this cooperation. Austria has a very special sports system. Besides the Sports Federations which are dedicated to specific sports on high performance level there are three umbrella organizations (ASKÖ, ASVÖ, SPORTUNION) with clear focus on sport for all and health and fitness activities. The Federal Sport Funding Law has foreseen that these three umbrella organizations should support the clubs on local level and especially the age group 0-14. But especially the support for the clubs is not high enough. The Special Sport Federations like Austrian Athletics, Austrian Basketball Federation etc. don't receive any funding from the State for supporting their clubs on grassroot level or for kids activities, they receive funding for the national teams (preparation, traveling, coaching etc.), so only for the competitive or high performance part of sports. The mentioned three umbrella organizations are providing with State Funding and hundreds of employees movement lessons to kids and are building up a kind of competition between their lessons and normal sports clubs. To prevent athletics clubs from this competition situation Austrian Athletics has set up a brand-new school project with own money. Within this project Austrian Athletics would like to foster the clubs' structures and bring more kids from schools to the clubs.
- In general, access to school sport infrastructure for children of the same school and other schools could be improved to give more children the opportunity to do sports outside school and physical education lessons.





- Most schools have sufficient athletics equipment even though there is a lack of availability of equipment like javelins, discs or starting blocks in some countries. A strategy to find sponsors could be beneficial.

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### 3. Needs – Kids

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Finnish Athletic Association

#### a. Introduction

This summary is part of the international EU-funded Erasmus project *Athletics 4 Health* that aims at constructing a strategy for increasing physical activity among children and youth. This summary is a conclusion for one part of the surveys that were conducted within the project in five different countries. In Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Poland and Slovakia, the Athletics Federations have conducted three surveys through which information about the background and the motives for doing athletics as a club sports activity has been gathered.

The main goal of this summary is to analyze the results of all of these five countries, exploring the results of one part of the journey. The Finnish Athletics Federation was directed to analyze the part of the survey that deals with children and their needs in athletics.

The summary will proceed in the order of the questions in the survey, one by one. In this part of the survey, there were 5 general questions and 18 specific questions. All the five national federations were allowed the possibility to modify the survey basis if needed. This is why the results from the five different countries are not perfectly similar but can differ a little. This has been taken into account in the summary.



## b. Results

- General question 1: Gender

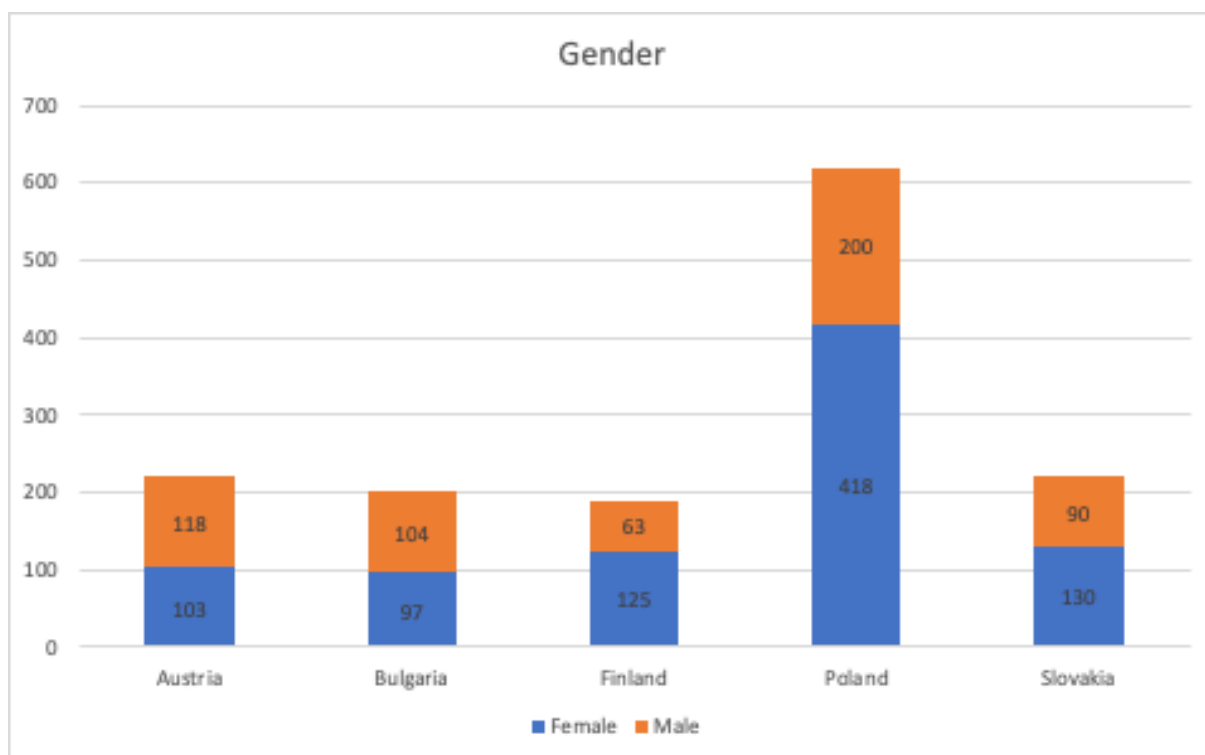


Table 1: Gender – numbers.

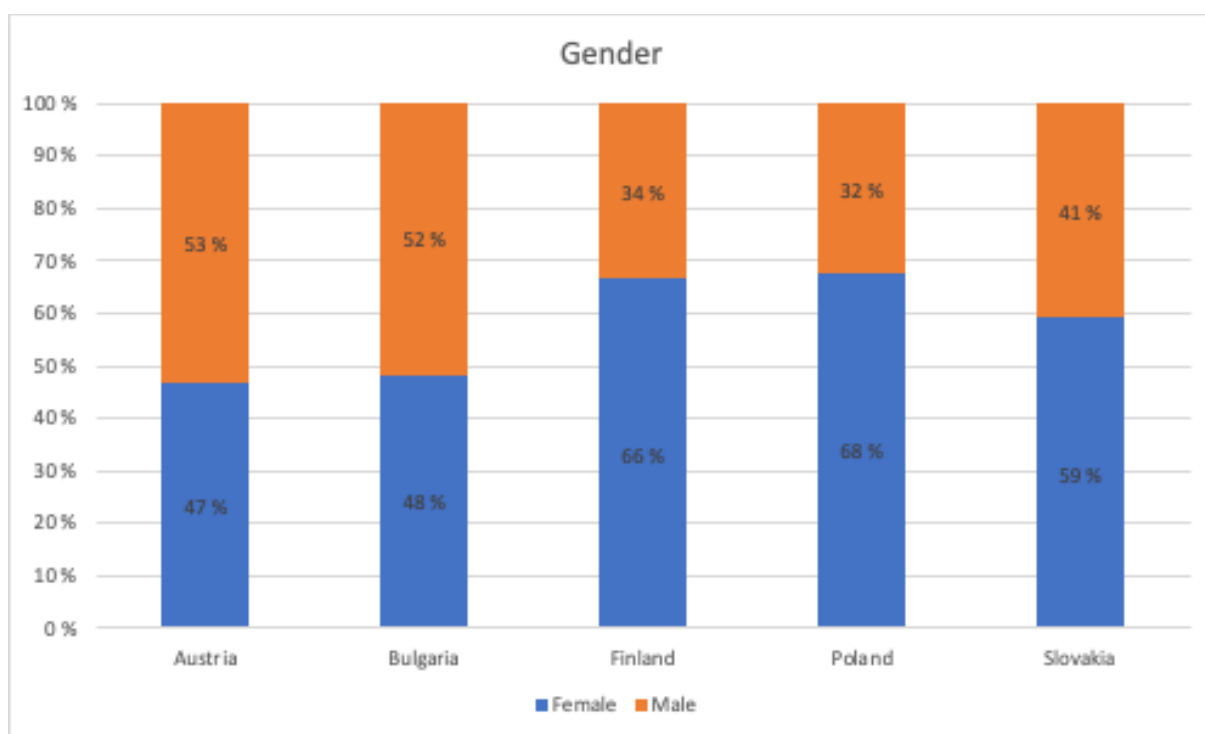


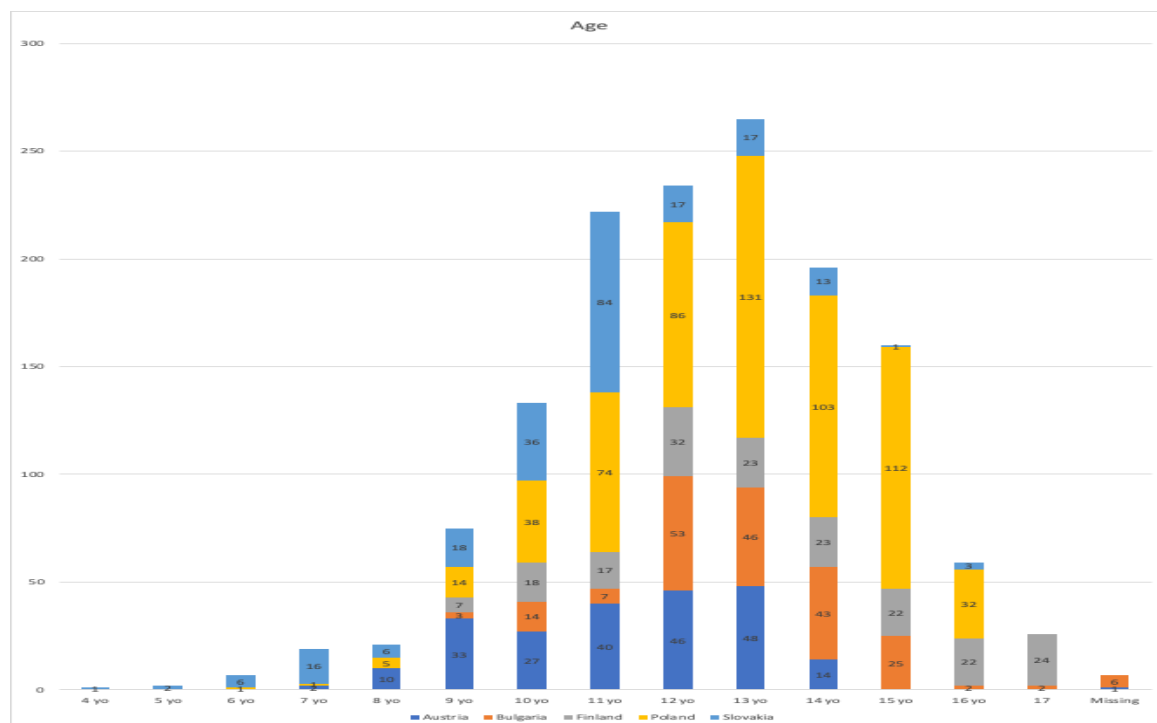
Table 2: Gender – percentage.

Conclusion:



Of all the participants to the survey, 60% were female (873) and 40% were men (575). Altogether, 1448 children took part to the survey.

- General question 2: Age



Country	4 yo	5 yo	6 yo	7 yo	8 yo	9 yo	10 yo	11 yo	12 yo	13 yo	14 yo	15 yo	16 yo	17	Missing
Austria					2	10	33	27	40	46	48	14			1
Bulgaria							3	14	7	53	46	43	25	2	6
Finland							7	18	17	32	23	23	22	24	
Poland				1	1	5	14	38	74	86	131	103	112	32	
Slovakia	1	2	6	16	6	18	36	84	17	17	13	1	3		
All	1	2	7	19	21	75	133	222	234	265	196	160	59	26	7
Percentage	0 %	0 %	0 %	1 %	1 %	5 %	9 %	16 %	16 %	19 %	14 %	11 %	4 %	2 %	0 %

Conclusion:

Of all the participants (1427), 19% were 13 years old, 16% 11 years old, 16% 12 years old, and 14% 14 years old. Thus, 65% of the participants were 11–14 years old.

- General question 3: Height and weight

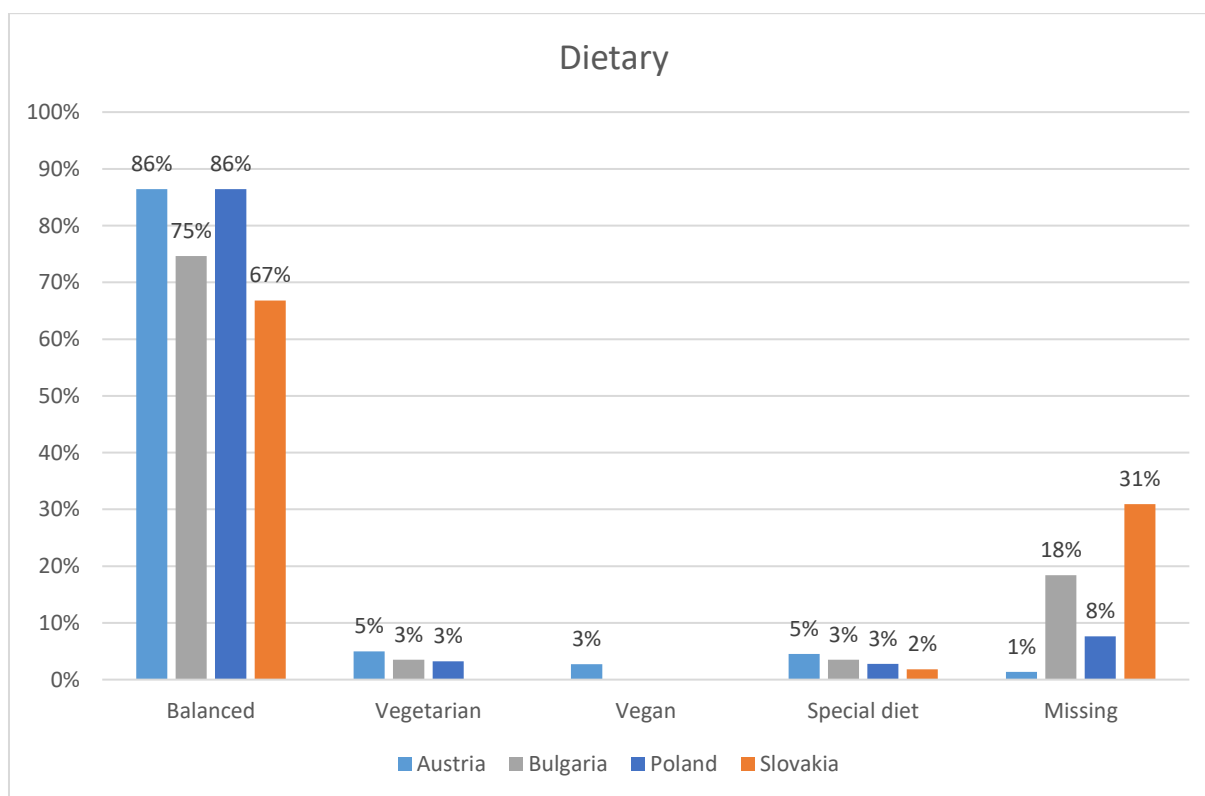
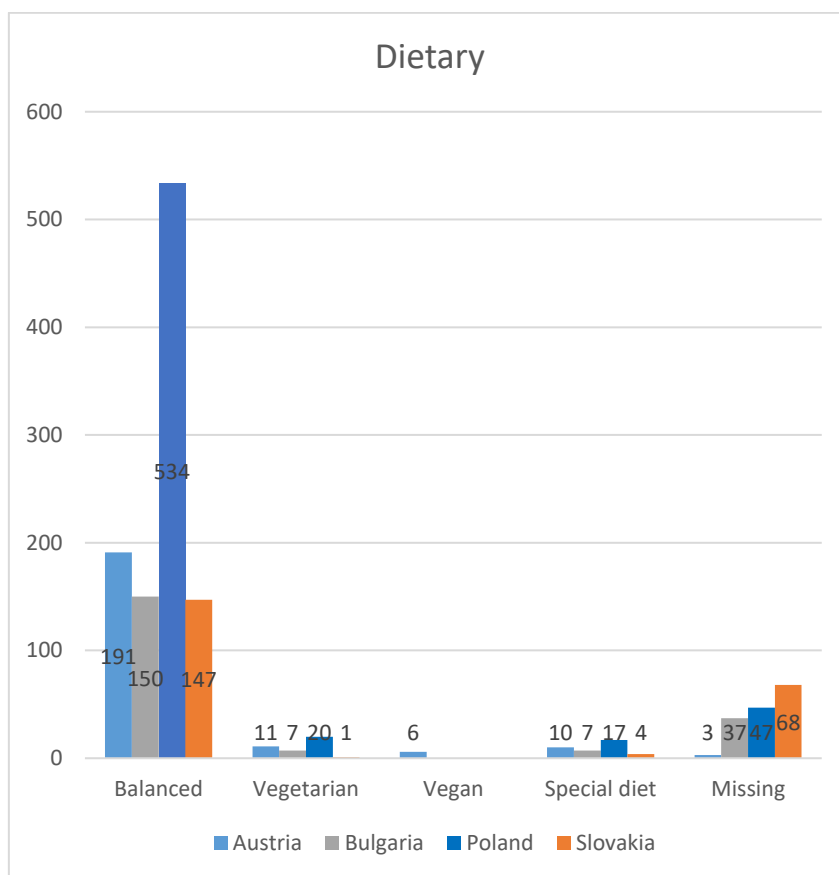
Country	Age average	Height average (cm)	Weight average (kg)
Austria		152,44	41,47
Poland	13,15	162,81	50,56
Slovakia	10,57	149,15	37,39

Conclusion:

For this question, Bulgaria and Finland did not have any data to share. The data was shared by Austria, Poland, and Slovakia.



- General question 4: Dietary preferences

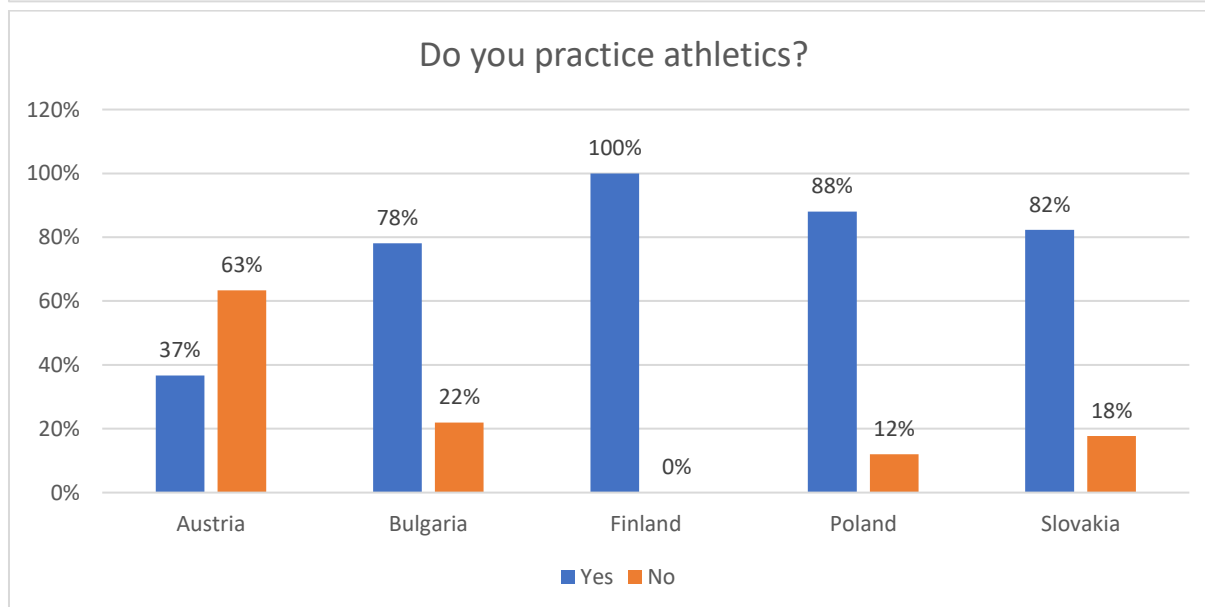
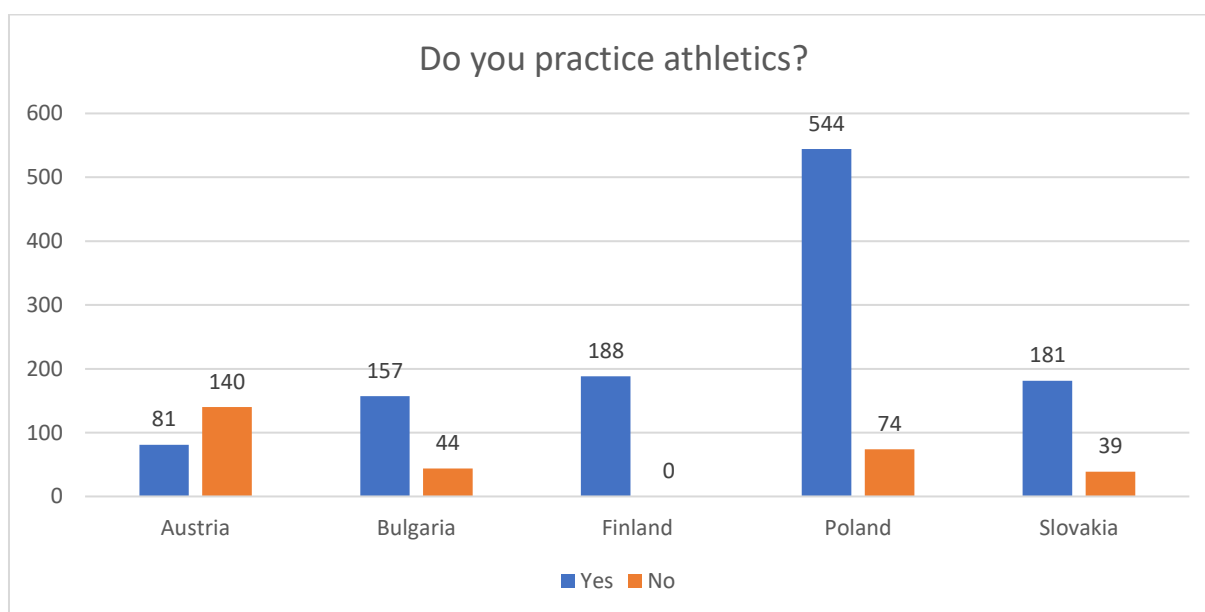




## Conclusion:

For this question, Finland did not have any data to share. Based on the participants (1260) from Austria, Bulgaria, Poland, and Slovakia, balanced diet is the most popular one for all countries. In Slovakia, there was no one with vegan or vegetarian diet.

- *General question 5: Do you practice athletics?*



## Conclusion:

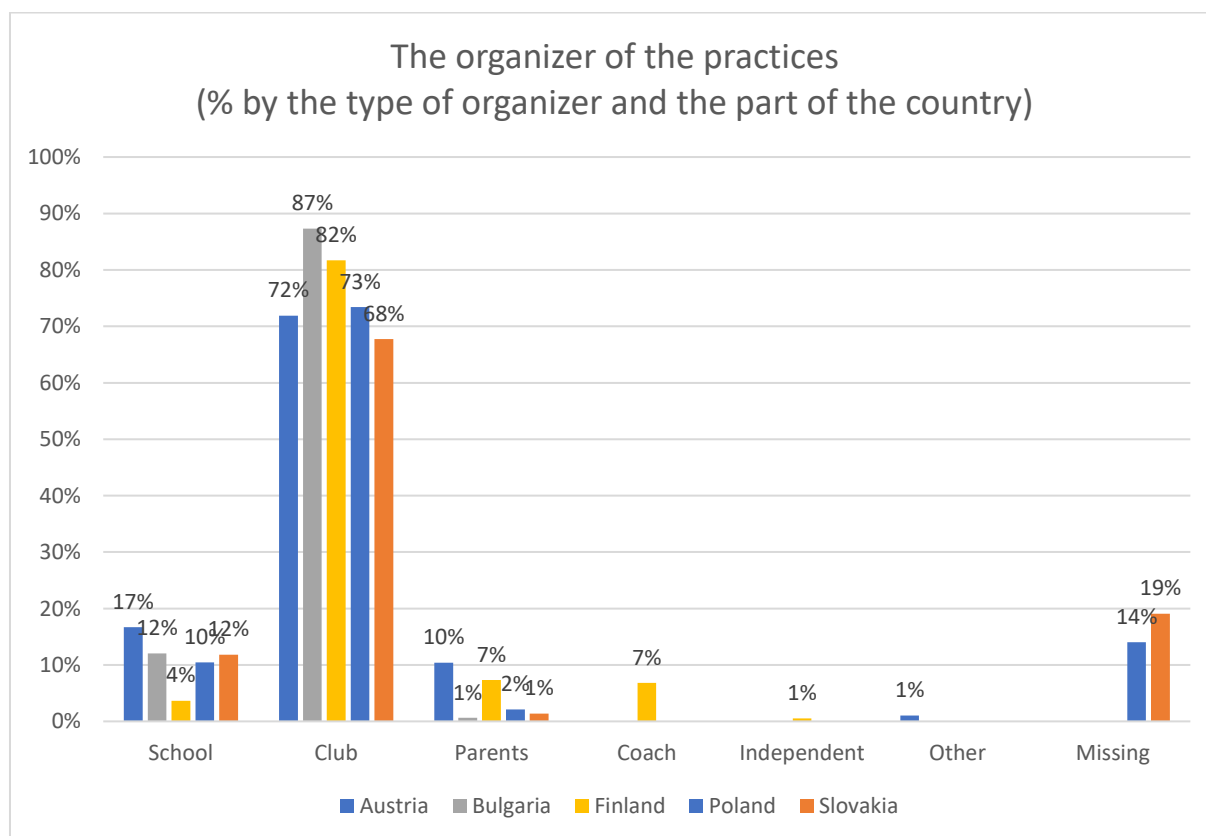
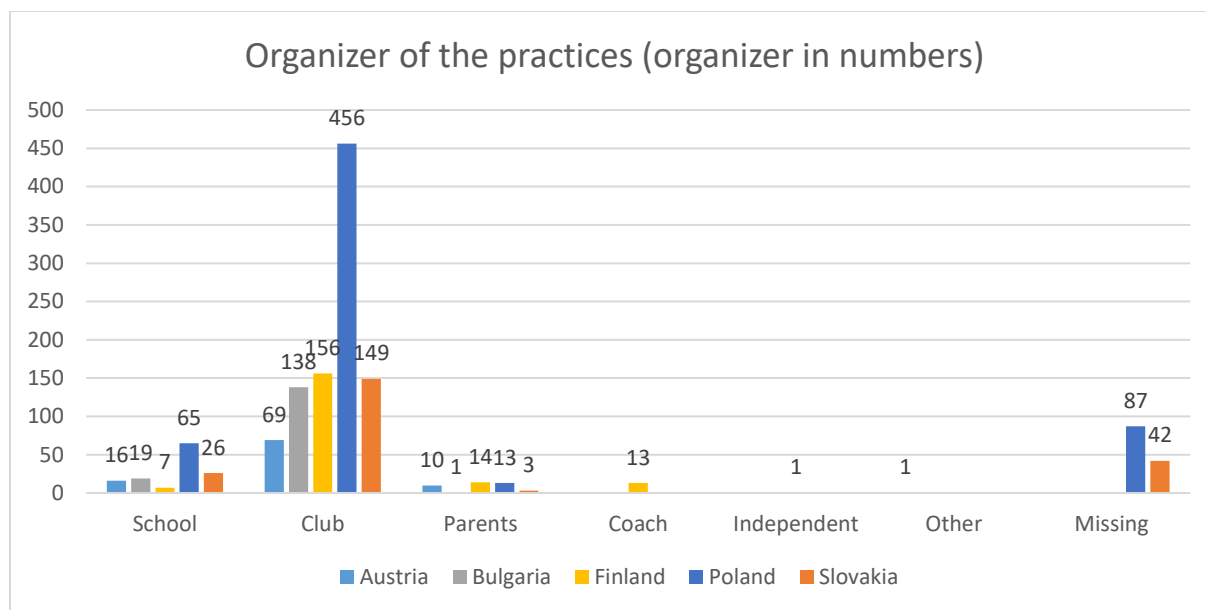
Of all the participants (1448), 1151 practices athletics whereas 297 do not practice athletics. In Finland, all of the participants practiced athletics. In



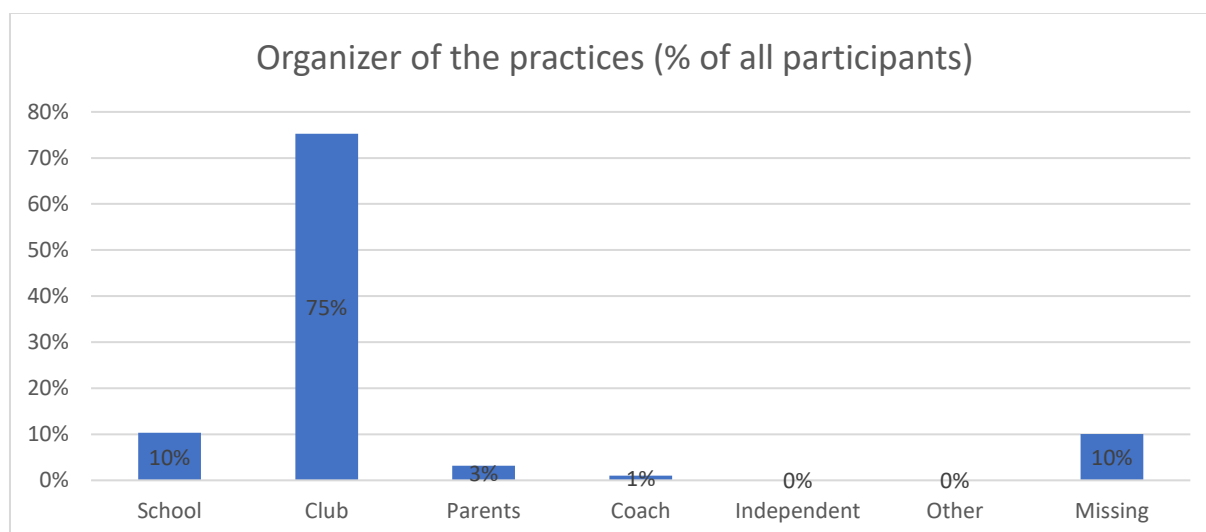
Austria, more participants did not practice athletics compared to the ones who did. In Bulgaria, Poland, and Slovakia, more participants practiced athletics compared to the ones who did not.

- *Specific question 1: Organizer of the practices*

Question: Who is the organizer of the practices?





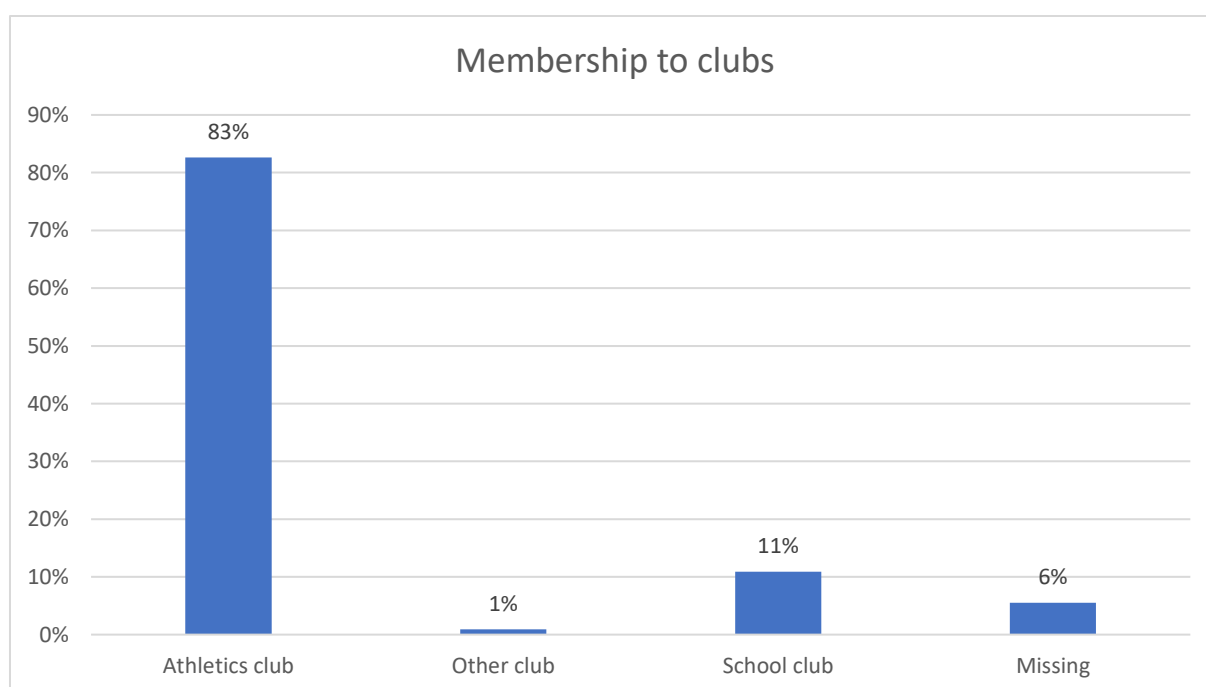


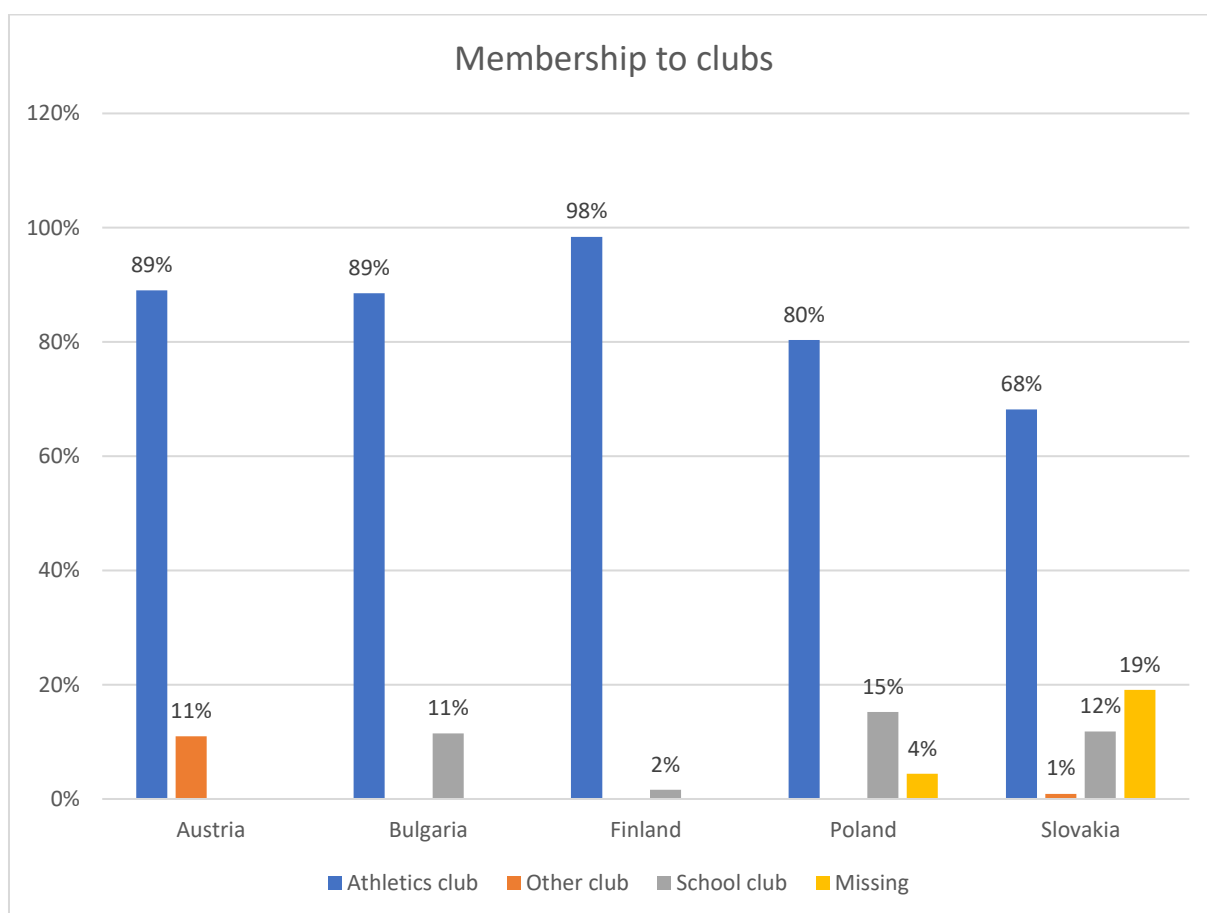
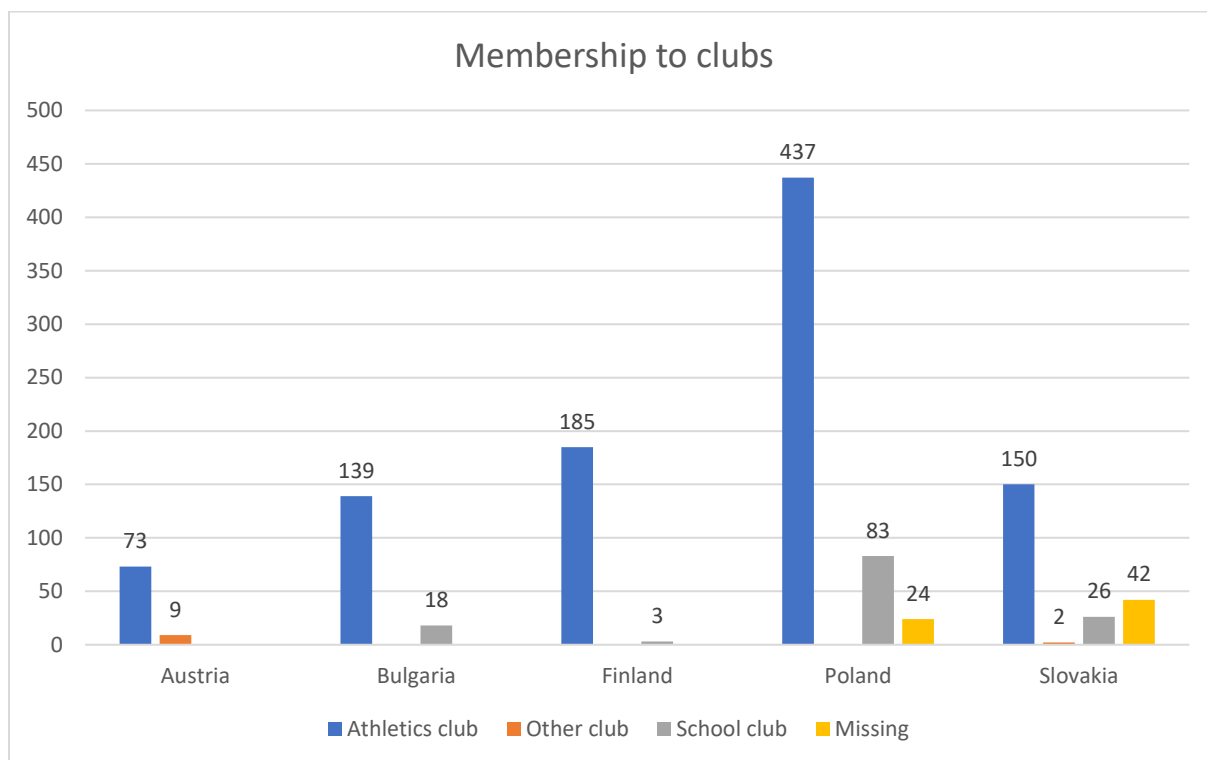
#### Conclusion:

Of all the participants (1286), 75% attended athletics practices organized by a club. For all countries, the club was most common organizer of the practices – especially for Bulgaria (87%) and Finland (82%). The second common organizer was a school, especially in Austria (17%).

- *Specific question 2: Membership*

Question: Do you have a membership to a club for athletics?





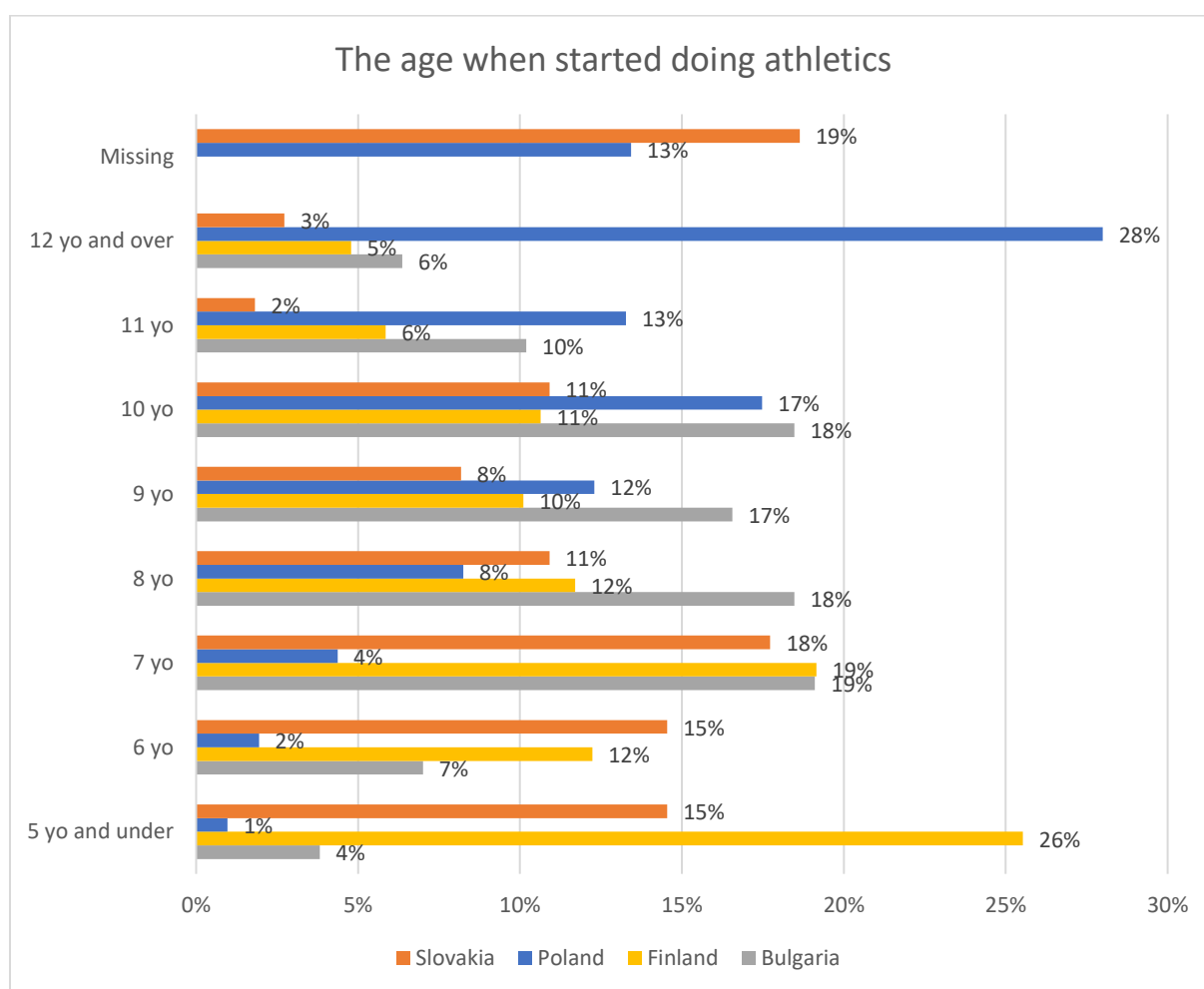


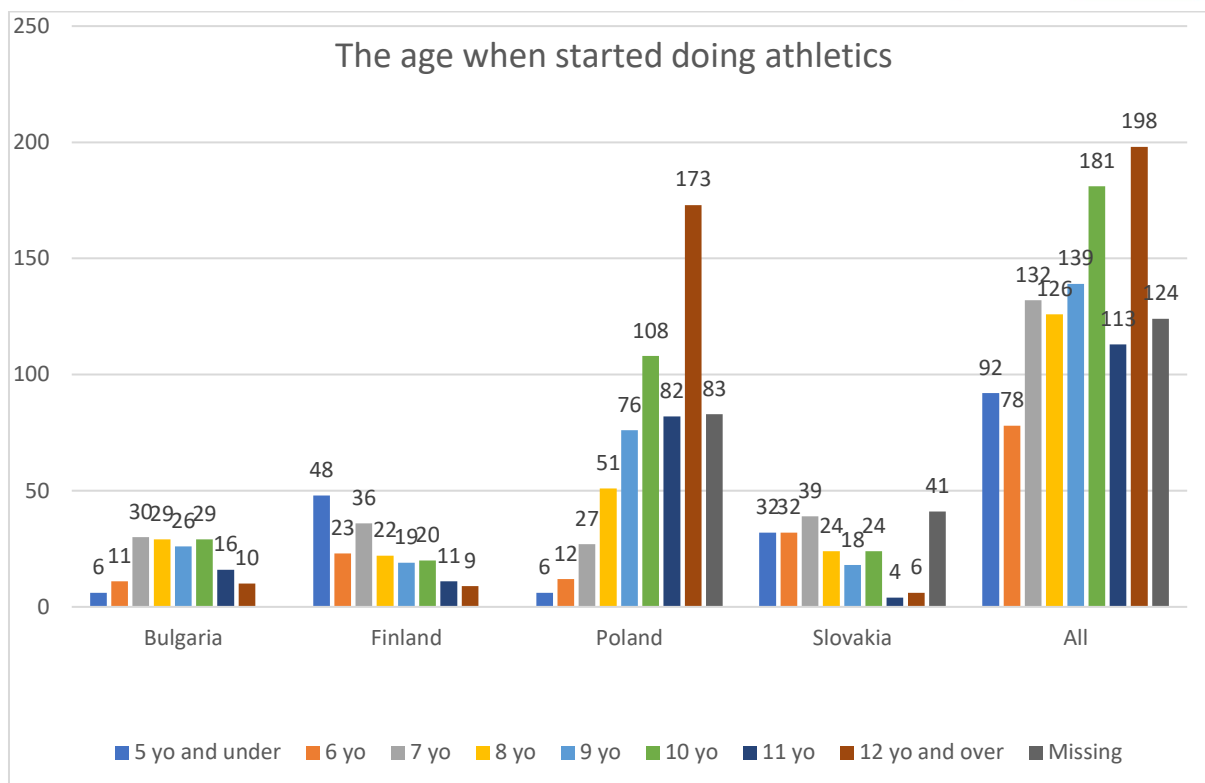
## Conclusion:

Of all the participants (1191), it was most common to have a membership to an athletics club. Also, it was the most common option in all countries as well. Slovakia was the only country, where people belonged to three different kind of clubs. Austria was the only club, where none belonged to school clubs.

- *Specific question 3: The age when started doing athletics*

Question: What was the age when you started doing athletics?





Country	5 yo and under	6 yo	7 yo	8 yo	9 yo	10 yo	11 yo	12 yo and over	Missing
Bulgaria	6	11	30	29	26	29	16	10	
Finland	48	23	36	22	19	20	11	9	
Poland	6	12	27	51	76	108	82	173	83
Slovakia	32	32	39	24	18	24	4	6	41
All	92	78	132	126	139	181	113	198	124
Percentage	8 %	7 %	11 %	11 %	12 %	15 %	10 %	17 %	10 %

### Conclusion:

In Bulgaria, 7–10 years old was the most common age to start doing athletics.

In Finland and Slovakia, from 5 years or younger to 7 years old was the most common age to start doing athletics. In Poland, from 9 years to 12 years old or older was the most common age to start doing athletics.

Overall based on the data shared by Bulgaria, Finland, Poland, and Slovakia, 7–10 years old was the most common age to start doing athletics.

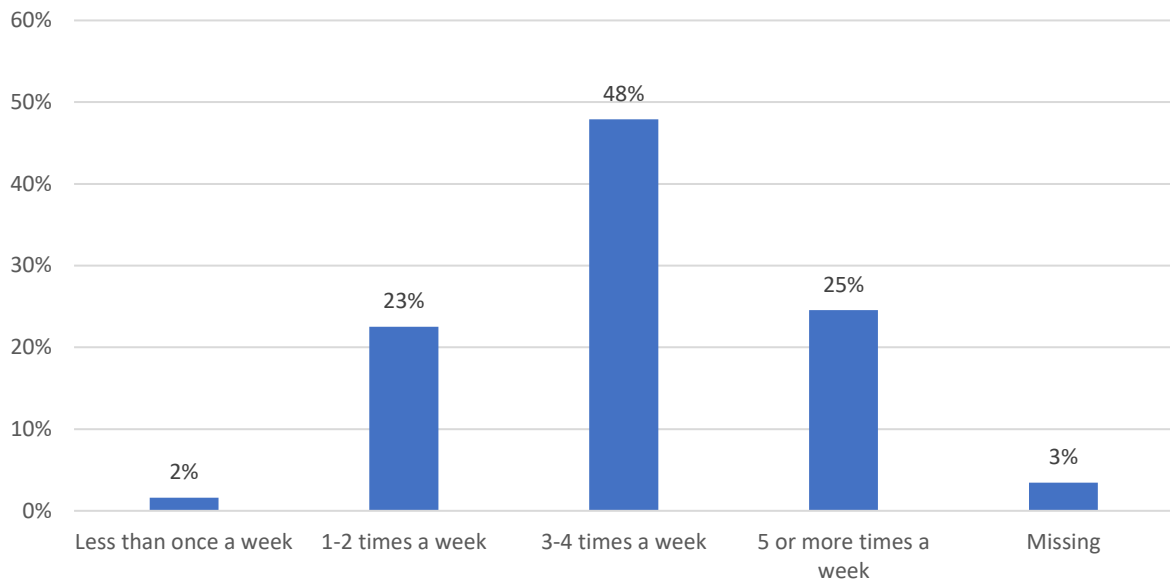
In Austria, the data shared was only the average age of started doing athletics, which was 8 years old (8,455).

- *Specific question 4: How often do you practice athletics?*

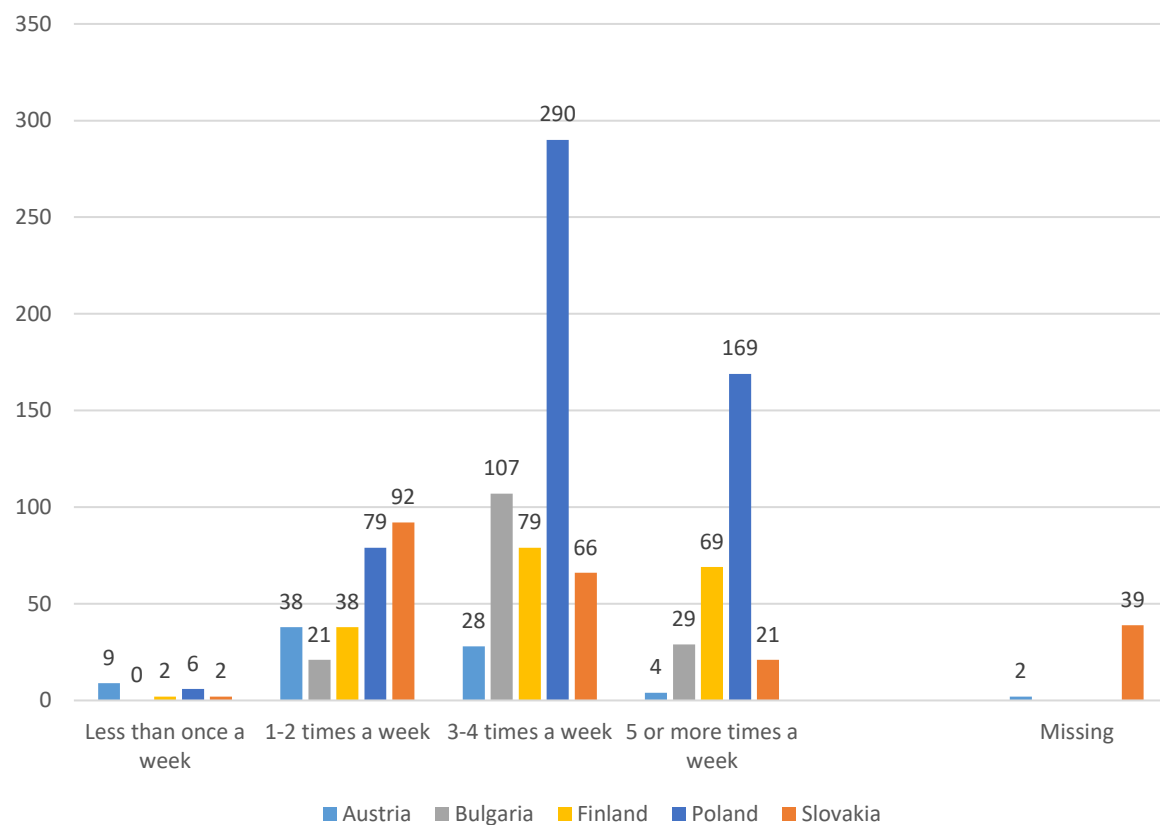
Question: How often do you practice athletics?

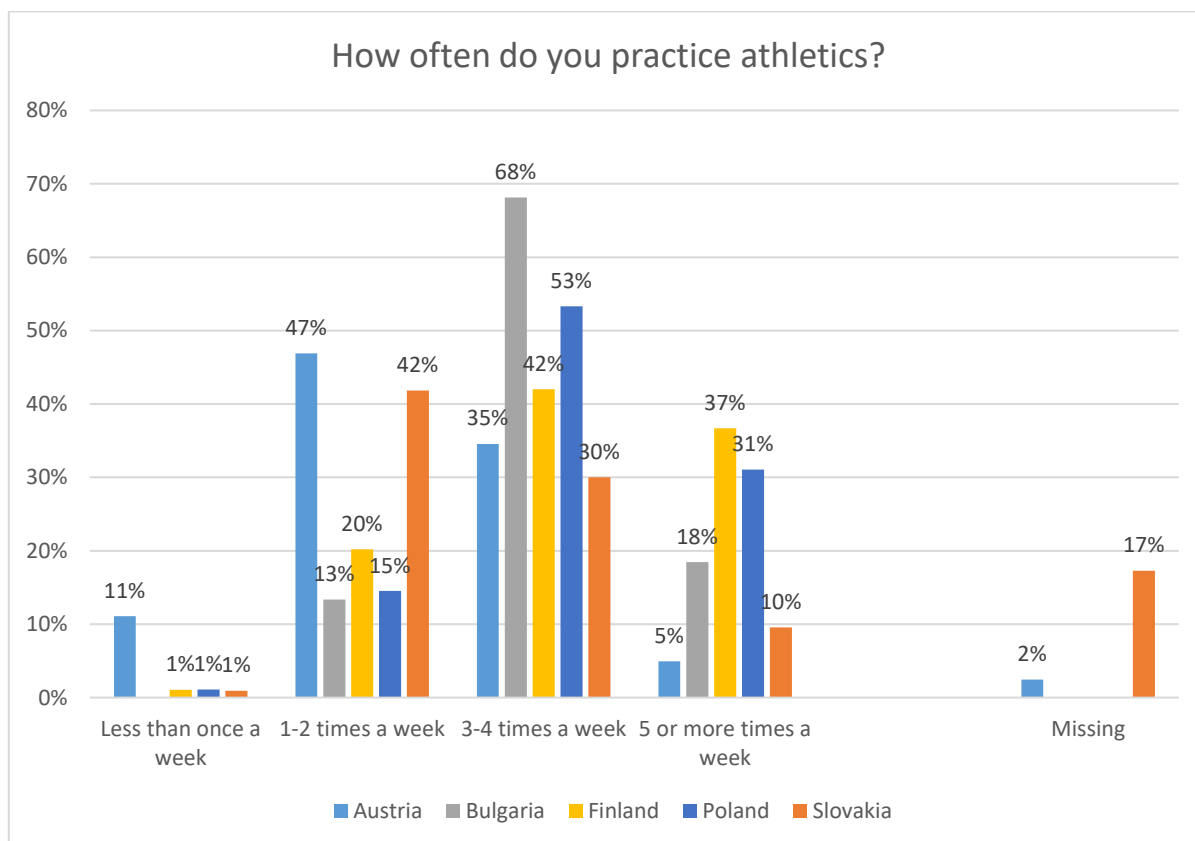


### How often do you practice athletics?



### How often do you practice athletics?



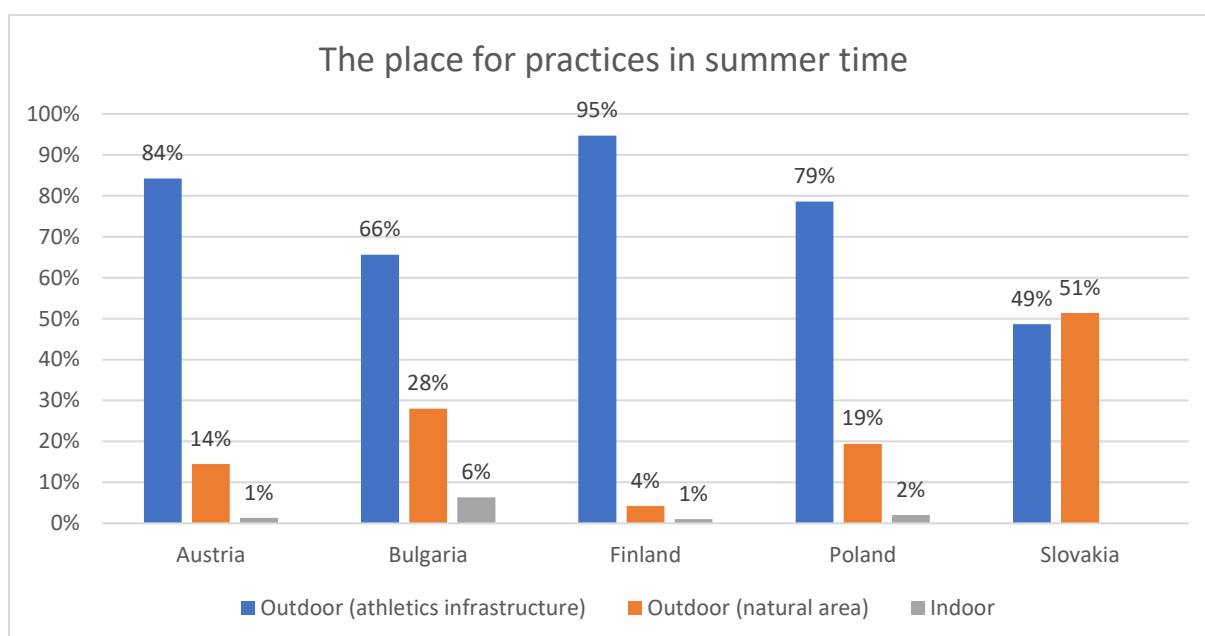
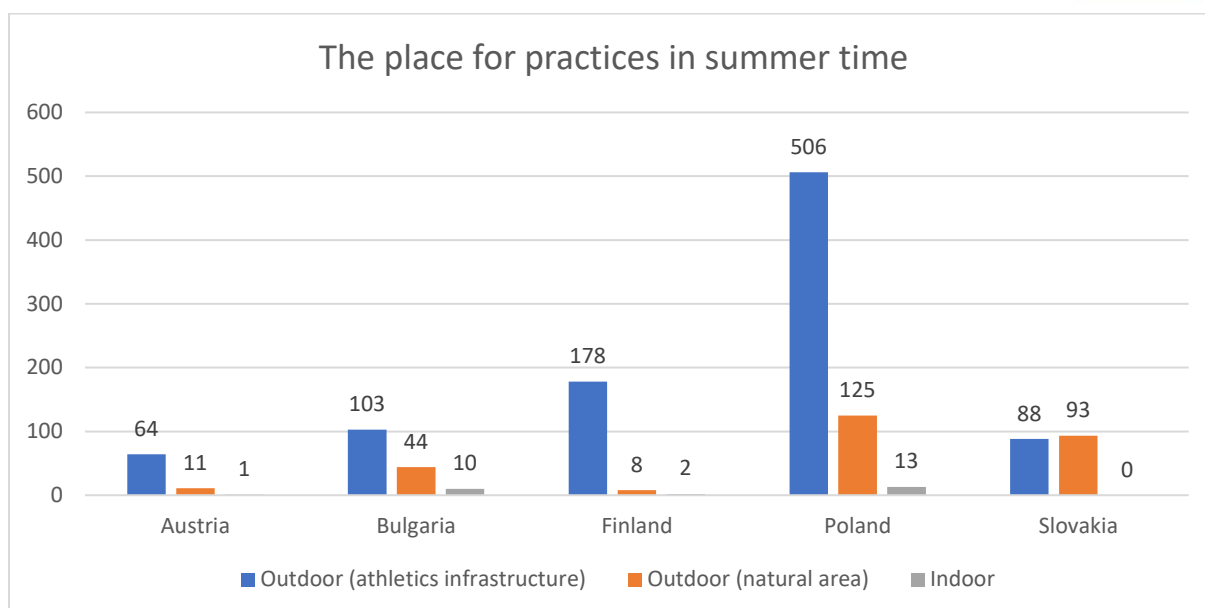


#### Conclusion:

Of all the participants (1190), 48% practices 3–4 times a week. Of all the participants, 25% practices 5 or more times a week and 23% 1–2 times a week. In Austria, 47% practices 1–2 times a week. In Bulgaria, 68% practices 3–4 times a week. In Finland, 42% practices 3–4 times a week. In Poland, 53% practices 3–4 times a week. In Slovakia, 42% practices 1–2 times a week.

- *Specific question 5: The place of practices in summer time*

Question: Where do you train in summer time?

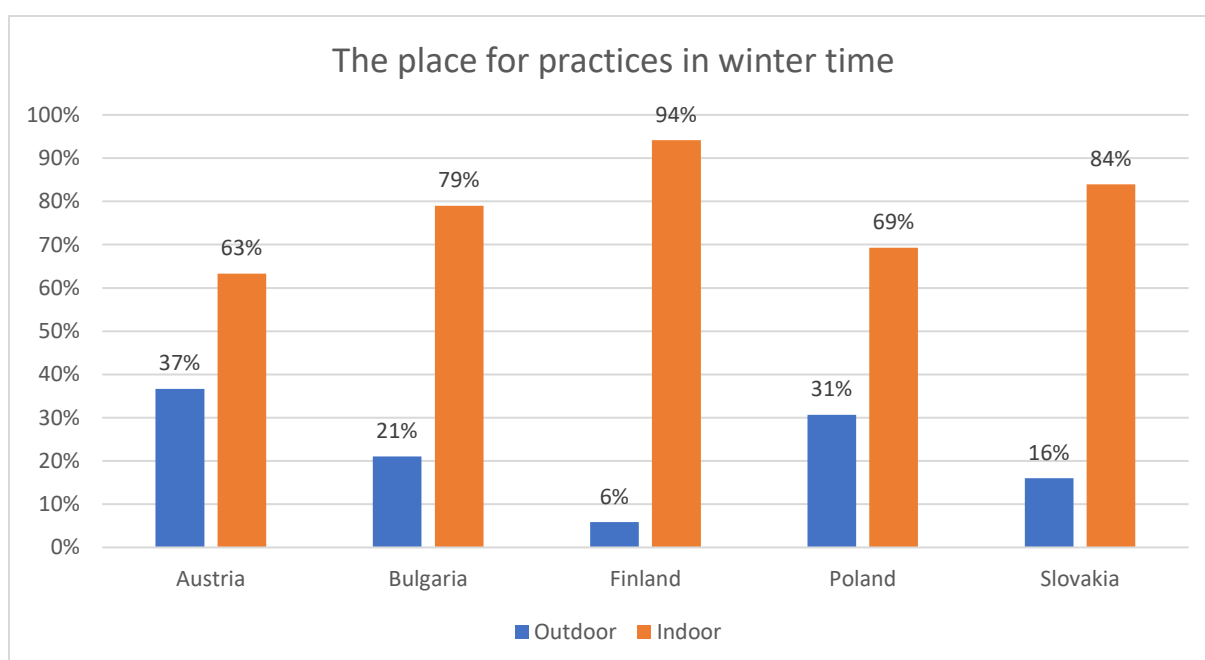
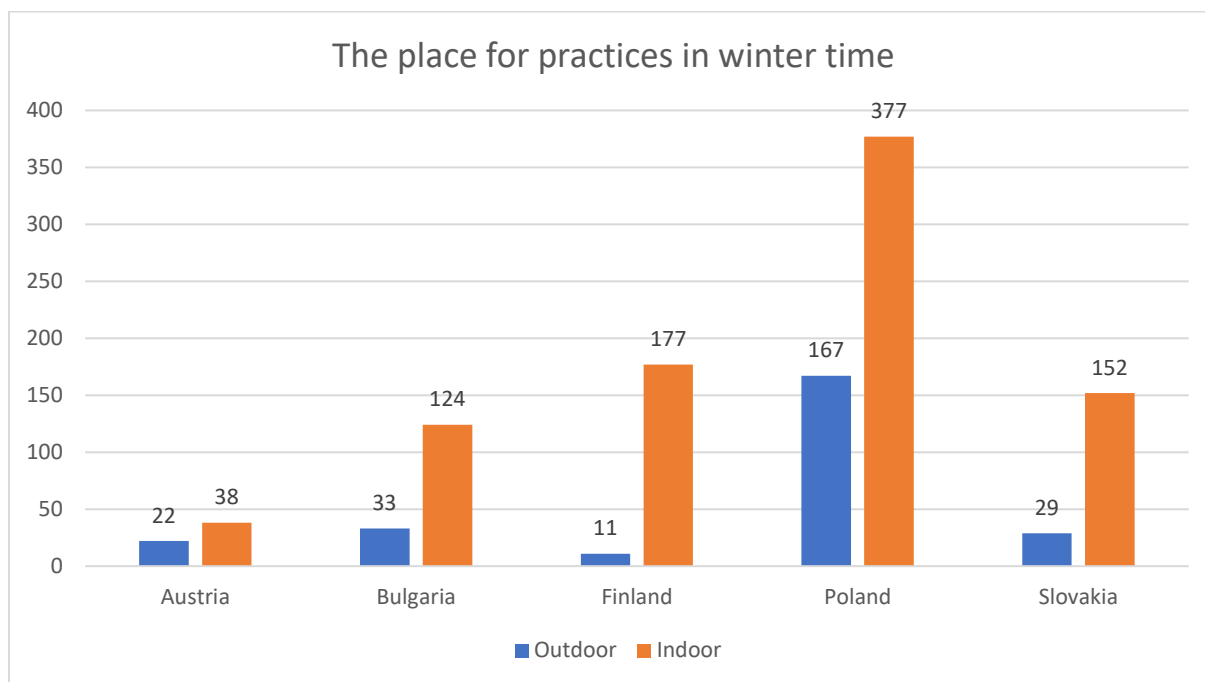


#### Conclusion:

In all of the countries, it was most common to practice outdoors with athletics infrastructure in summer time. In Slovakia, none of the participants practiced indoors. In Finland, it was the clearest choice to train outdoors with athletics infrastructure compared to other options.

- *Specific question 6: The place of practices in winter time*

Question: Where do you train in winter time?



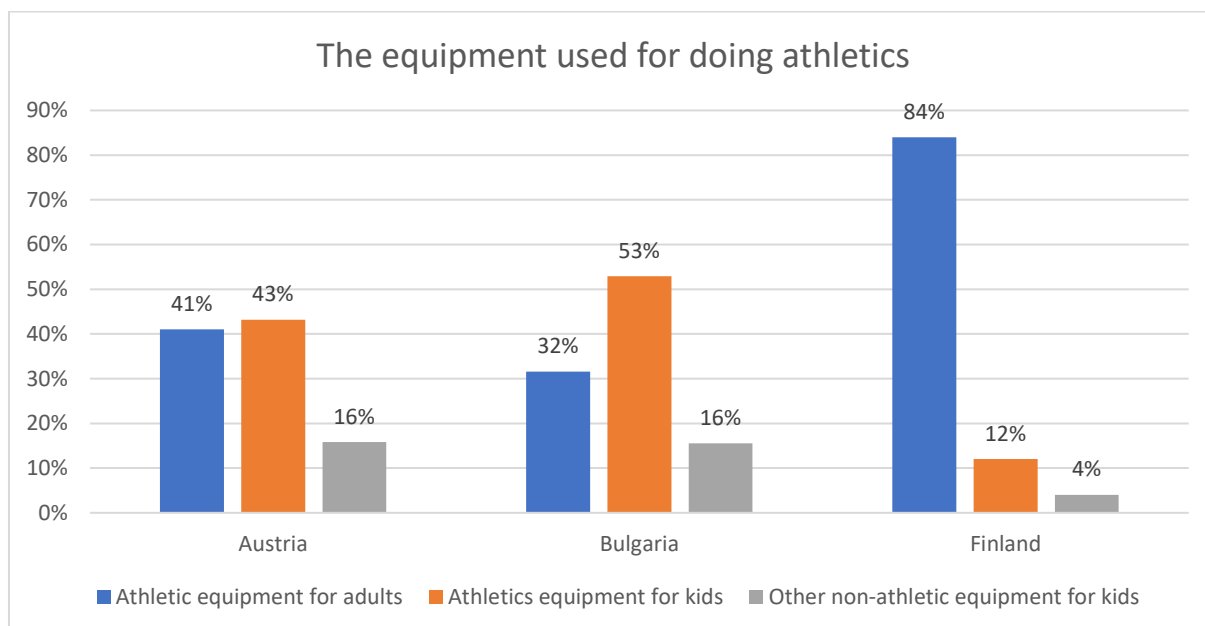
#### Conclusion:

In all of the countries, it was most common to practice indoors in winter time. In Finland, it was the clearest choice to train indoors. In Austria, the percentages were most close to each other (37% outdoors, 63% indoors).

- *Specific question 7: Equipment for doing athletics*

Question: What kind of equipment do you use for doing athletics?





Poland	Number
Athletics equipment for children	64
Other non-athletics equipment for children	22
Athletics equipment for adults and athletics equipment for children	108
Athletics equipment for adults and other non-athletics equipment for children	350
Slovakia	Number
Athletics equipment for children	112
Athletics equipment for adults	18
Other non-athletics equipment for children	8
Athletics equipment for adults and athletics equipment for children	33
Athletics equipment for children and other non-athletics equipment for children	5
Athletics equipment for adults and other non-athletics equipment for children	1
Athletics equipment for adults, athletics equipment for children and other non-athletics equipment for children	4
Missing	39

Conclusion:

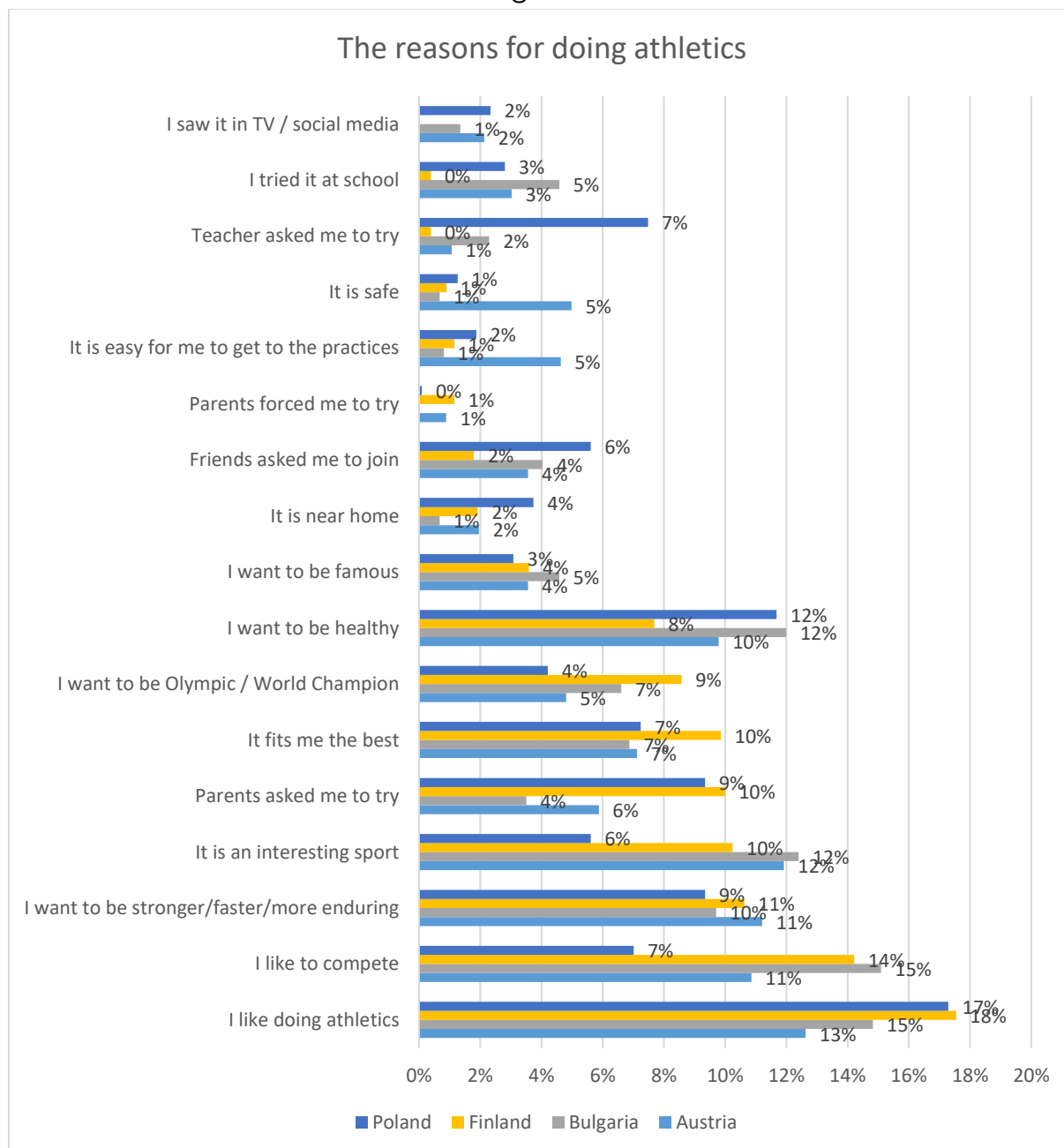
The data shared by Austria, Bulgaria, and Finland was comparable with each other. It shows that in Finland it is most common to use athletic equipment for adults, whereas in Austria and Bulgaria it is most common to use athletic



equipment for kids. In Slovakia and Poland, it is more common to have different variations of the equipment use.

- *Specific question 8: The reasons for doing athletics*

Question: What is the reason for doing athletics



Conclusion:

The most popular reason to do athletics on all other countries than Bulgaria is that the participant likes doing athletics. In Finland, the other popular reason is that the participant likes to compete. In Poland, the other popular reason is that the participant likes to be healthy. In Austria, the other popular reason is

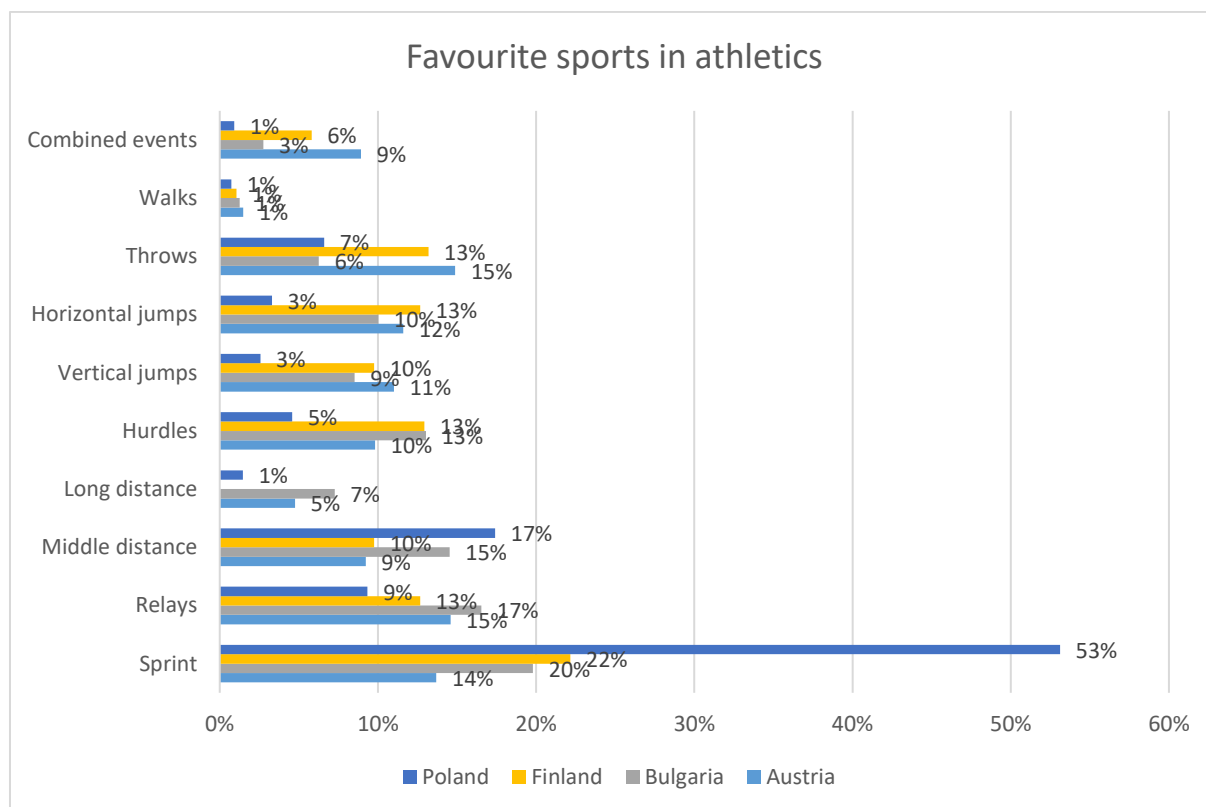


that the participant thinks athletics to be an interesting sport. In Bulgaria, the most popular reasons are that the participant likes doing athletics and likes to compete.

Slovakia did not have any data to share.

- *Specific question 9: The favorite sports in athletics*

Question: What is your favorite sport in athletics?



Conclusion:

In Bulgaria, Finland, and Poland, sprinting was the favorite sports among the participants (1660). In Austria, the favorite sports were relays and throws (both 15%), but sprinting was just behind them (14%). Walks, long distance running, and combined events were the least favorite among the participants.

In Poland, running sports (sprints and middle distance) were the clear favorites. In Bulgaria, running sports (sprints, relays, middle distance, and hurdles) were the favorites as well. In Finland, sprinting, hurdles, throwing, and horizontal jumping were the favorites. In Austria, relays, throws, and sprinting were the

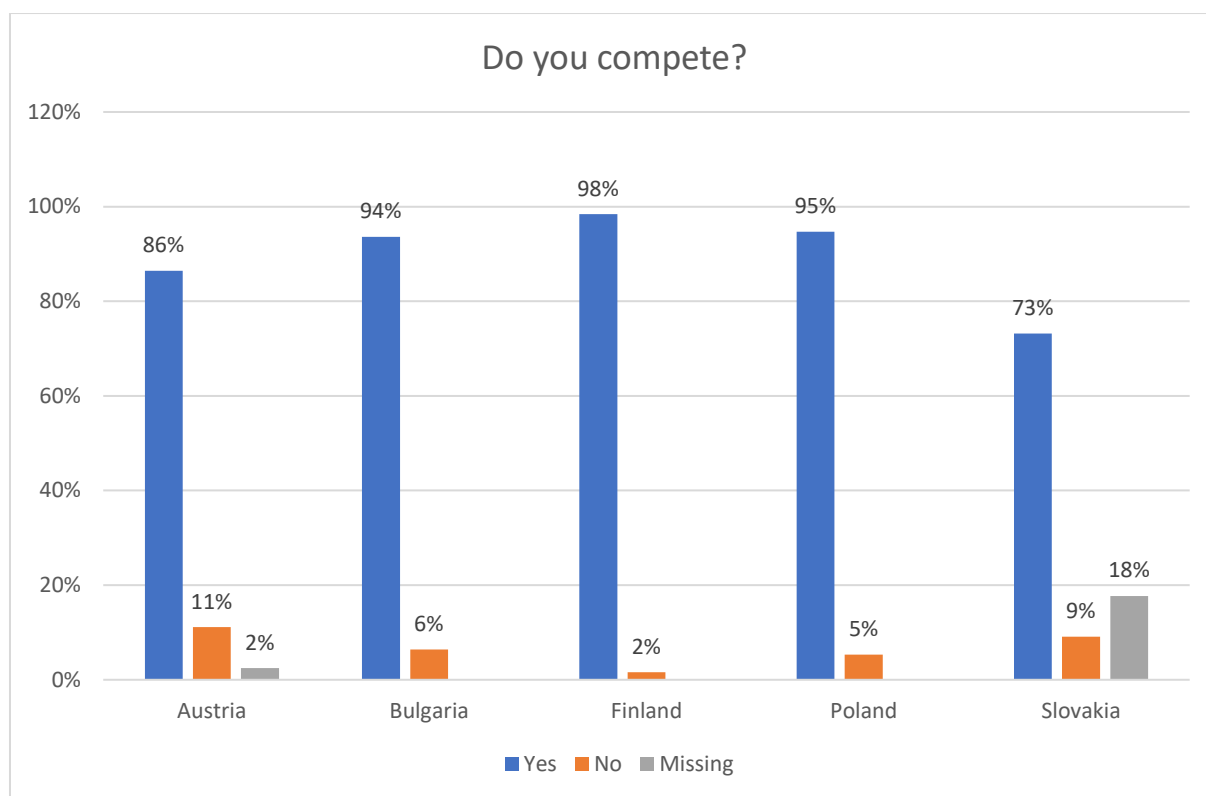


favorites. In Poland, the top-one-favorite was the clearest compared to other countries.

Slovakia did not have any data to share.

- *Specific question 10: Do you compete?*

Question: Do you compete?

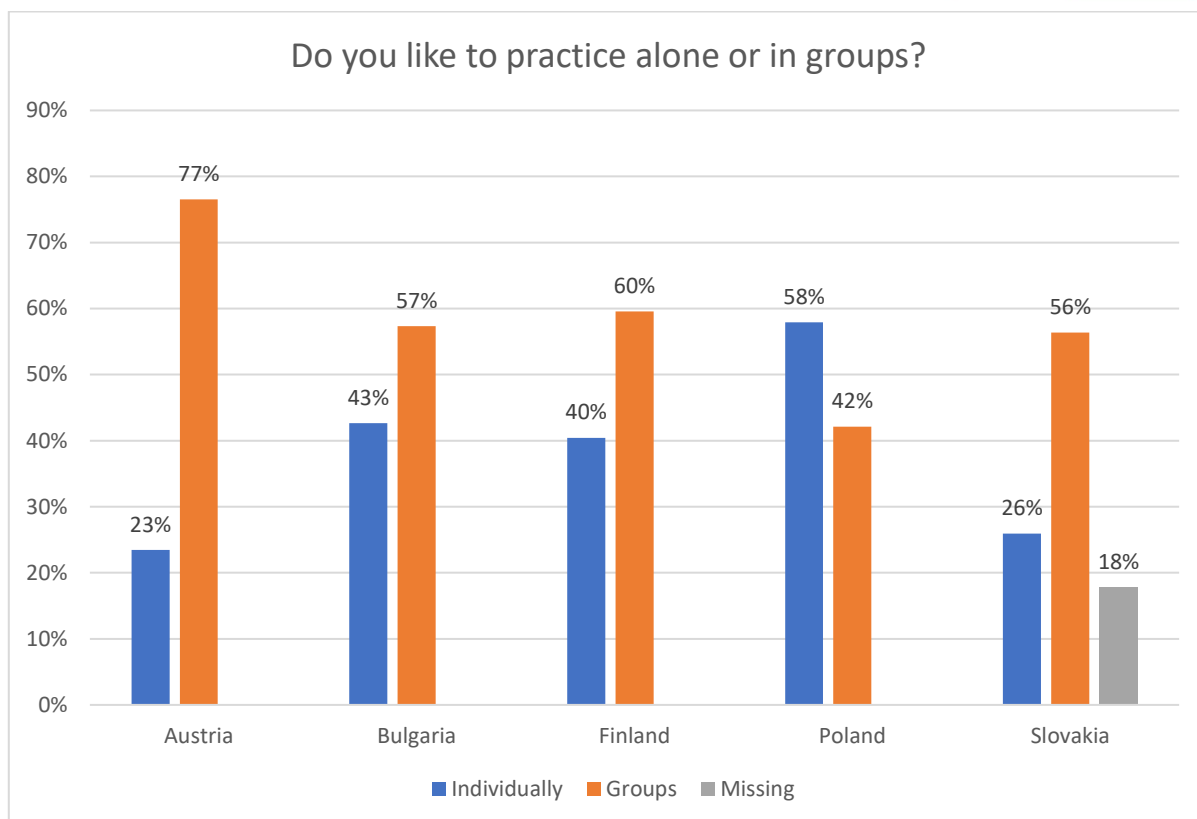


Conclusion:

In all countries, most of all the participants (1190) competes in athletics. In Finland, 98% of the participants competes, while in Poland 95% and in Bulgaria 94% competes. In Slovakia, 73% competes.

- *Specific question 11: Practicing alone or in groups?*

Question: Do you like to practice alone or in groups?

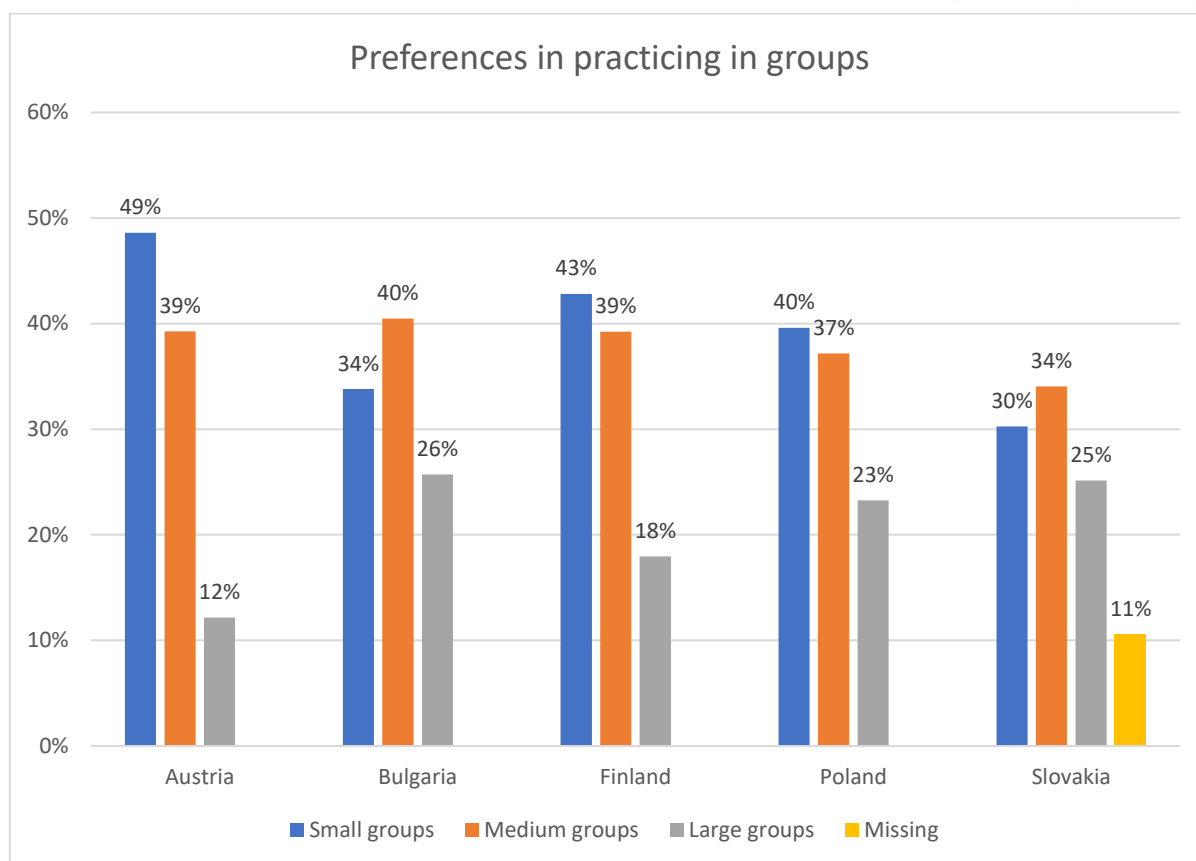


#### Conclusion:

In Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, and Slovakia, most of the participants liked to practice alone or individually. In Poland, it was more popular to practice individually rather than in groups. Of all the participants (1190), 45% liked to practice individually and 52% liked to practice in groups.

- *Specific question 12: Practicing in groups*

Question: Do you prefer practicing in groups that are small (2–5 persons), medium (6–11 persons), or large (12 or more persons)?



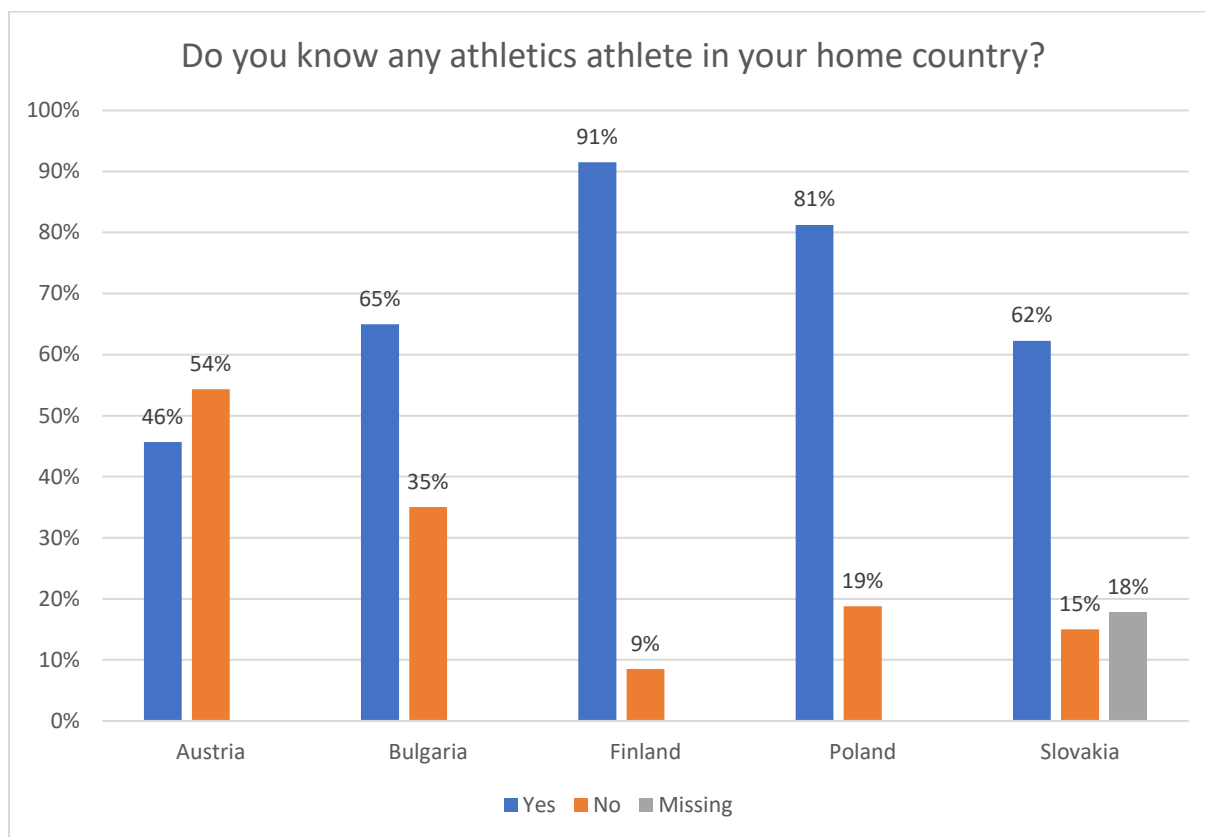
#### Conclusion:

In Austria, Finland, and Poland, it is most popular to practice in small groups (2–5 persons). In Bulgaria and Slovakia, it is most popular to practice in medium groups (6–11 persons). In all countries, it is least popular to practice in big groups (12 or more persons).

In Austria, it is the clearest preference in practicing in small groups, whether in Bulgaria it was the clearest preference to practice in medium groups. In Slovakia, the differences between the options are the smallest.

- *Specific question 13: Role models in sports for children in their home country*

Question: Do you know any athletics athlete in your home country?

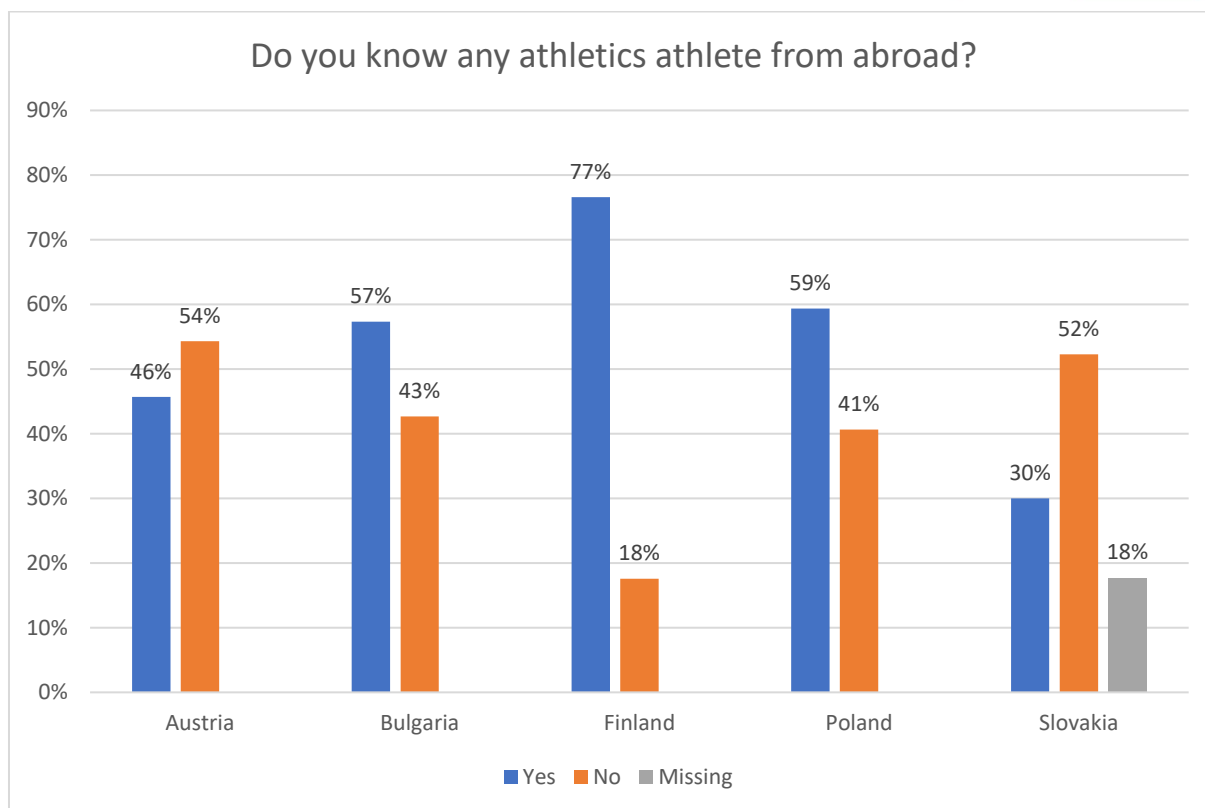


#### Conclusion:

In Bulgaria, Finland, Poland, and Slovakia, most of the participants agreed that they know an athletics athlete from their own home country. In Austria, 54% of the participants do not know any athletics athlete from their own home country. In Finland, the awareness of their domestic athletic athletes was the best.

- *Specific question 14: Role models in sports for children in abroad*

Question: Do you know any athletics athlete from abroad? Can you name anyone?



Name	Bulgaria	Finland	Poland	Slovakia	Overall
Usain Bolt	53	62	87	50	252
Armand Duplantis	8	39	60	12	119
Jacob Ingebrigtsen	4	10	7	1	22
Yulimar Rojas	4		8		12
Karsten Warholm	2	9		1	12
Daniel Ståhl		10			10
Mamona			6		6
Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce	4				4
Jan Železný				4	4
Emil Zátopek				4	4
Gianmarco Tamberi				4	4
Mo Farrah	3				3
Tomasz Majewski	3				3
Miltiadis Terziotis	3				3
Ivana Vuleta	3				3
Yaroslava Mahuchikh				3	3
Femke Bol				3	3
Allyson Felix				2	2
Vít Müller				2	2

In the list, there are all the mentioned athletes with at least 2 mentions.  
Conclusion:





In Bulgaria, Finland, and Poland, more participants were aware of athletics athletes from abroad than participants who could not name any athletics athlete. In Finland, 77% of the participants could name an athletics athlete from abroad – thus, in Finland, the awareness of athletic athletes from abroad was the best.

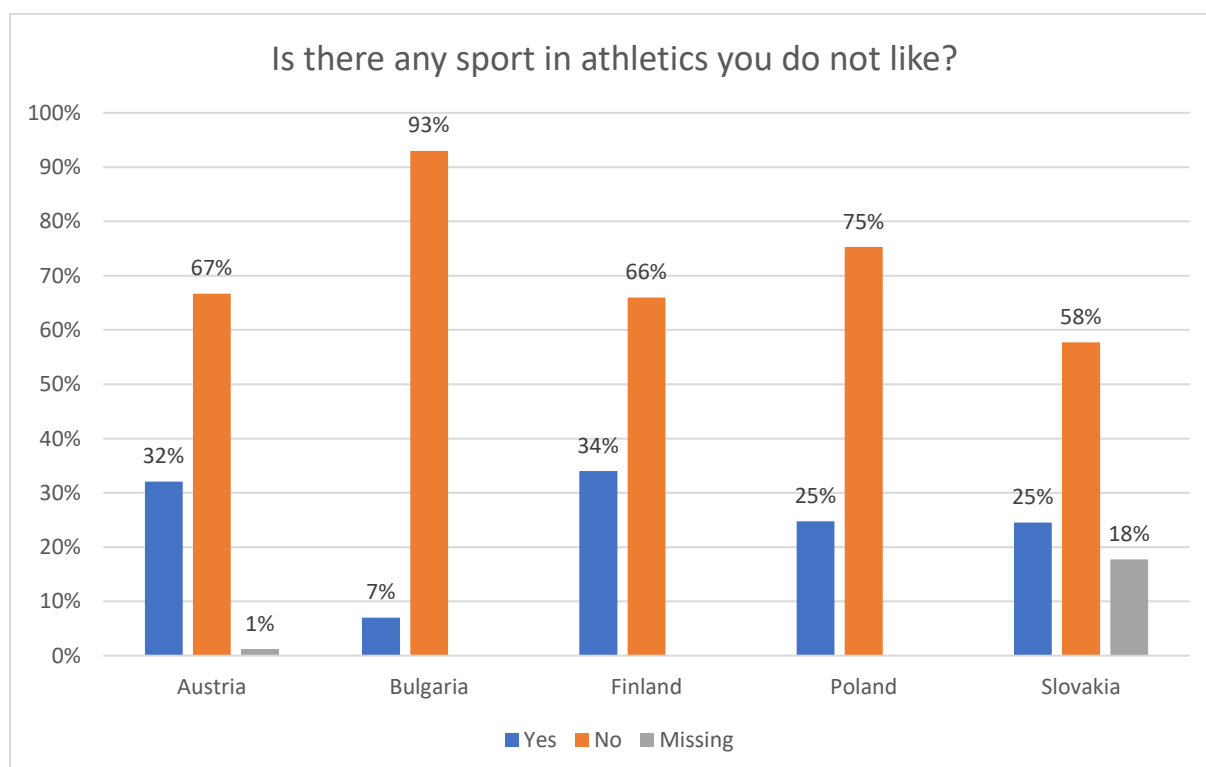
In Austria 54% and in Slovakia 52% of the participants did not know any athletics athlete from abroad.

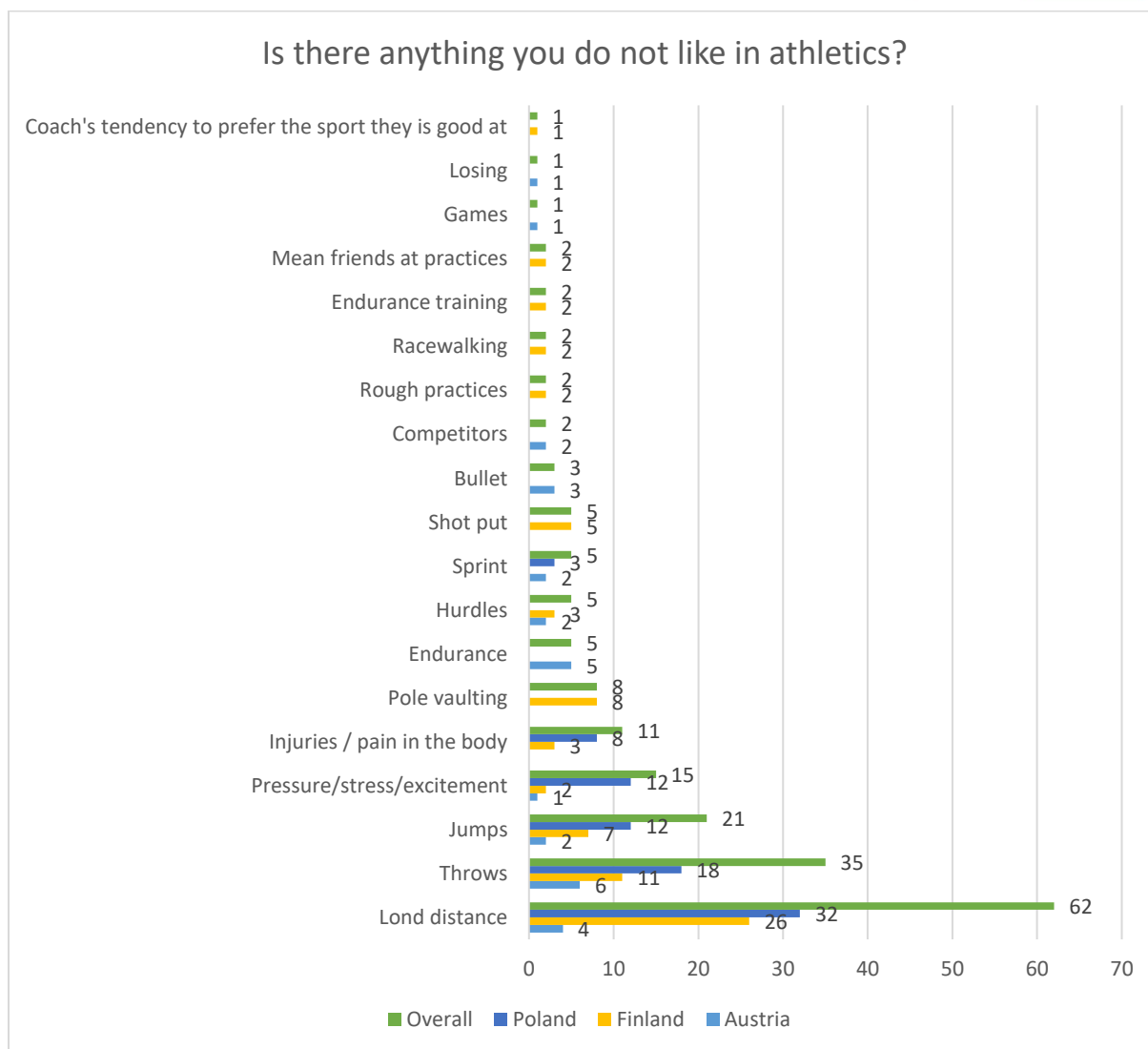
When the participants were asked to name an athlete from abroad, most of the participants (252) named Usain Bolt. The second best known athlete was Armand Duplantis with 119 mentions. The third best known athlete was Jacob Ingerbritsen with 22 mentions.

Austria did not have the data to share about naming the athletes.

- *Specific question 15: The least favorite sports in athletics*

Question: Is there any sport in athletics you do not like?





### Conclusion:

In all countries, most of the participants did not have anything they did not like in athletics. Of all the participants (1200), 72% did not have anything they did not like in athletics. Especially in Bulgaria, only 7% of the participants had something they did not like in athletics.

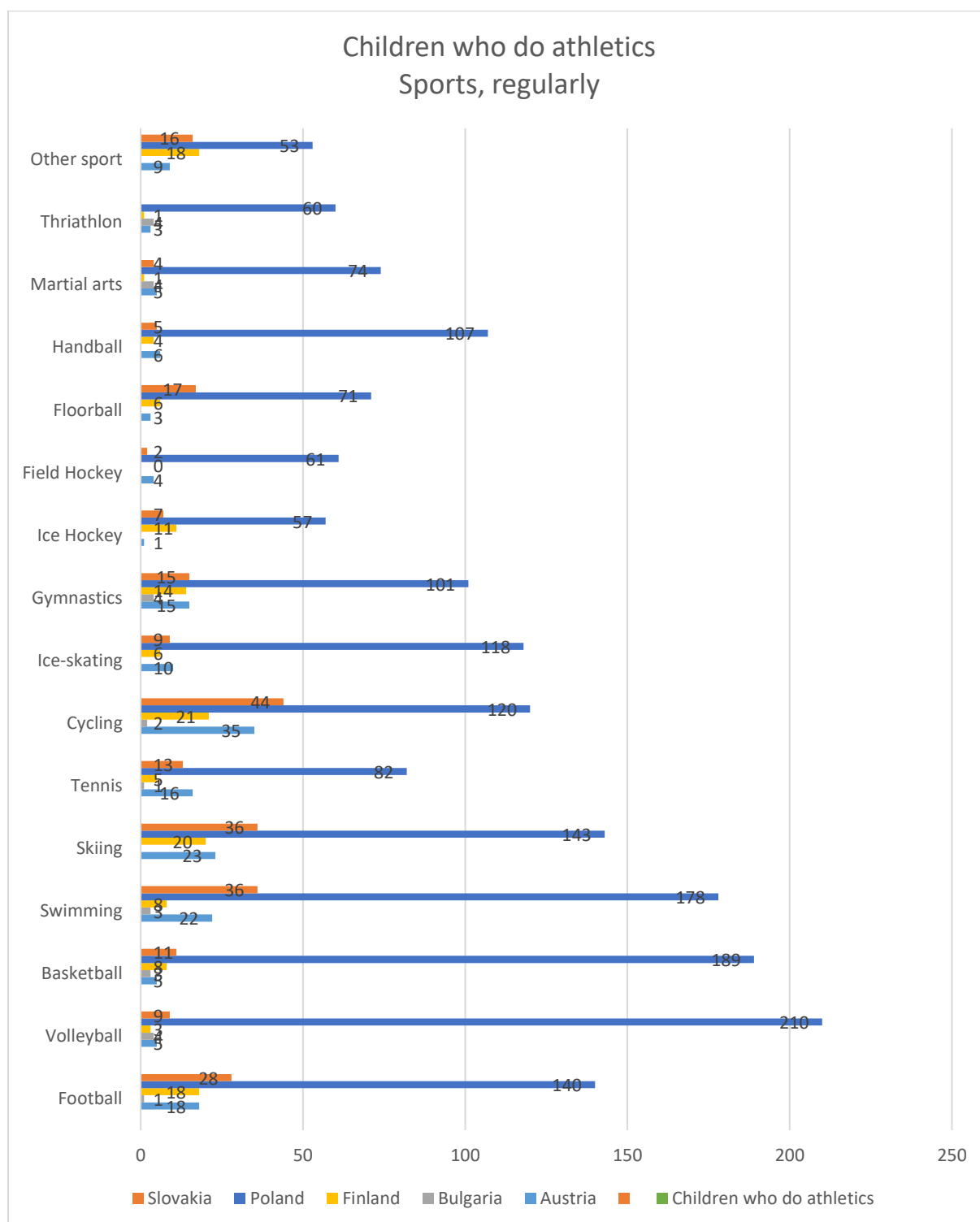
When it comes to the things the participants did not like in athletics, long distance running, throws, and jumps were the top three with most mentions. Also pressure, stress, excitement, and injuries were mentioned several times. Slovakia did not have any data to share about naming the athletes. For Bulgaria, there were only the mentions that long distance running and jumping sports were something the participants did not like. Also, the mention that the

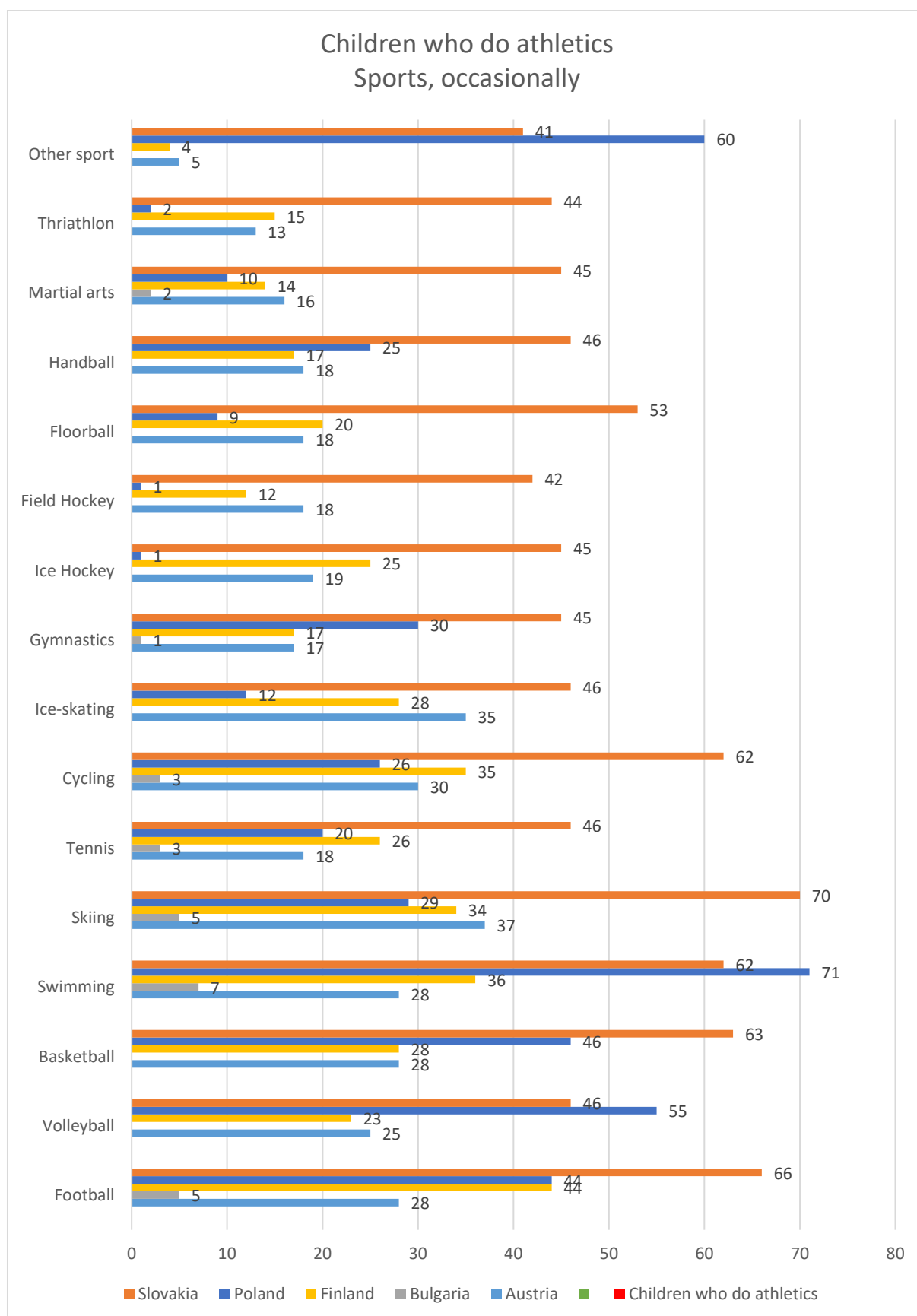


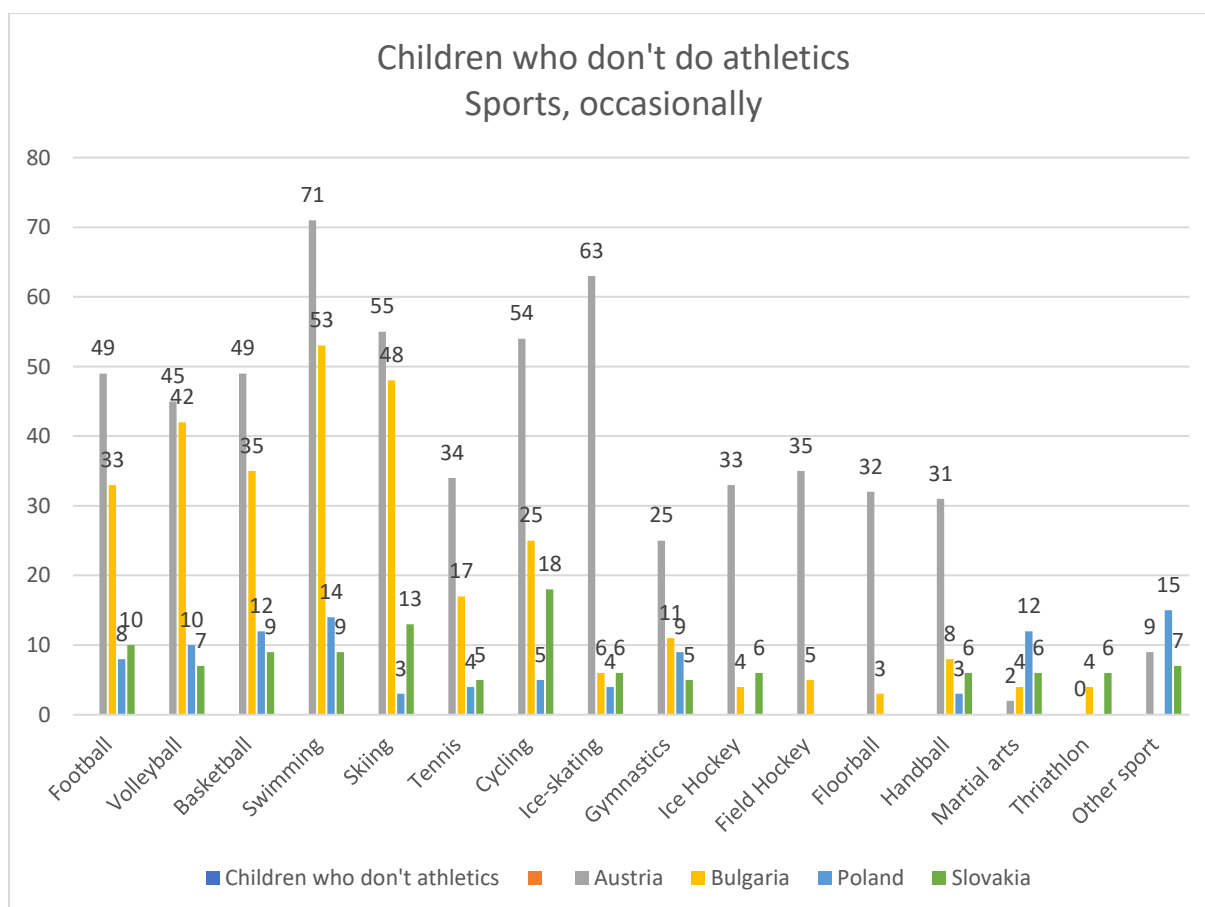
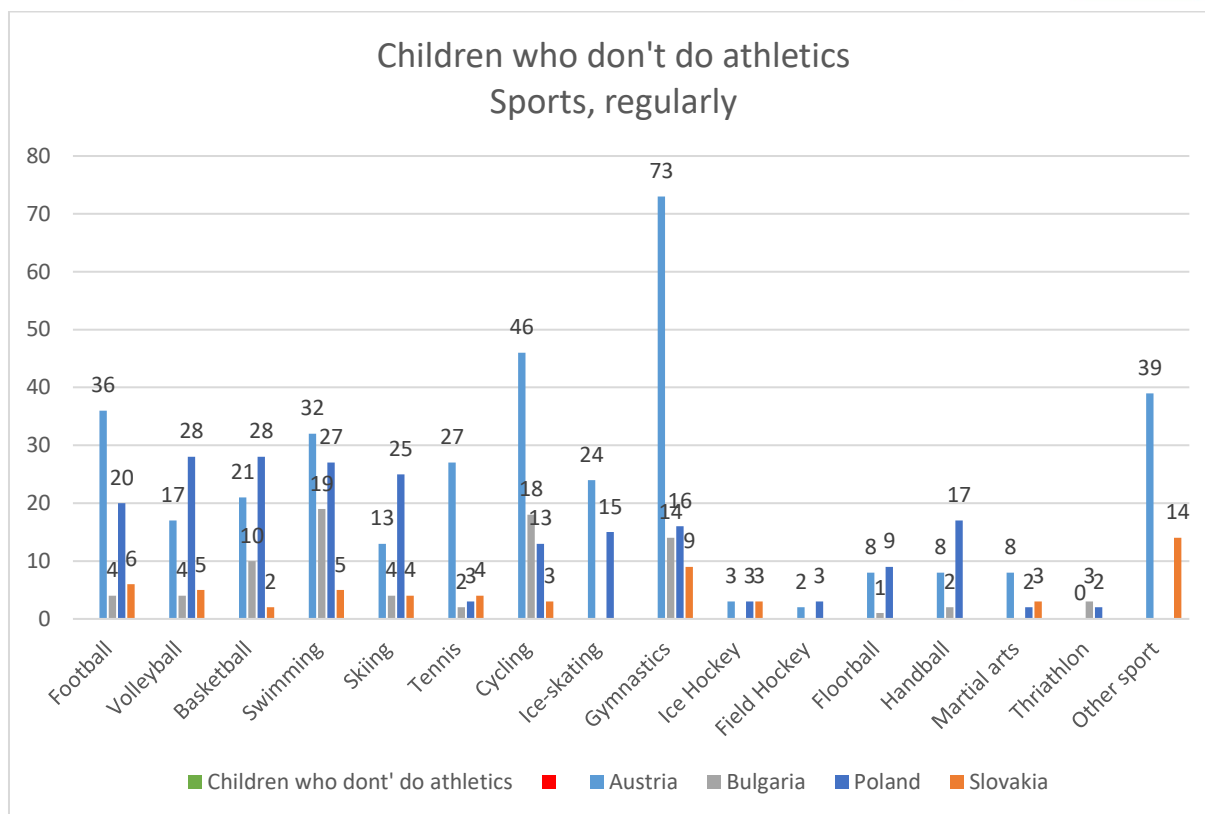
hall someone trains in is not heated and that the sport is not popular in one's country, were mentioned in Bulgaria.

- *Specific question 16: Other sports hobbies*

Question: Do you have other sports hobbies? How often do you do those sports?









#### Conclusion:

Swimming, volleyball, and cycling were the top three sports that the participants, who also do athletics, do regularly. Swimming, football, and basketball were the top three sports that the participants, who also do athletics, do occasionally.

Gymnastics, swimming, and cycling were the top three sports that the participants, who do not do athletics, do regularly. Swimming, skiing, and basketball were the top three sports that the participants, who do not do athletics, do occasionally.

In Finland, cycling was the most popular sport done regularly and football done occasionally. In Finland, there is no record of children who do not do athletics, because everyone who participated do athletics.

In Austria for children who do athletics, cycling was the most popular sport done regularly and skiing done occasionally. In Austria for children who do not do athletics, gymnastics was the most popular sport done regularly and swimming done occasionally.

In Bulgaria for children who do athletics, volleyball, gymnastics, martial arts, and triathlon were the most popular sports done regularly and swimming done occasionally. In Bulgaria for children who do not do athletics, swimming was the most popular sport done regularly and occasionally.

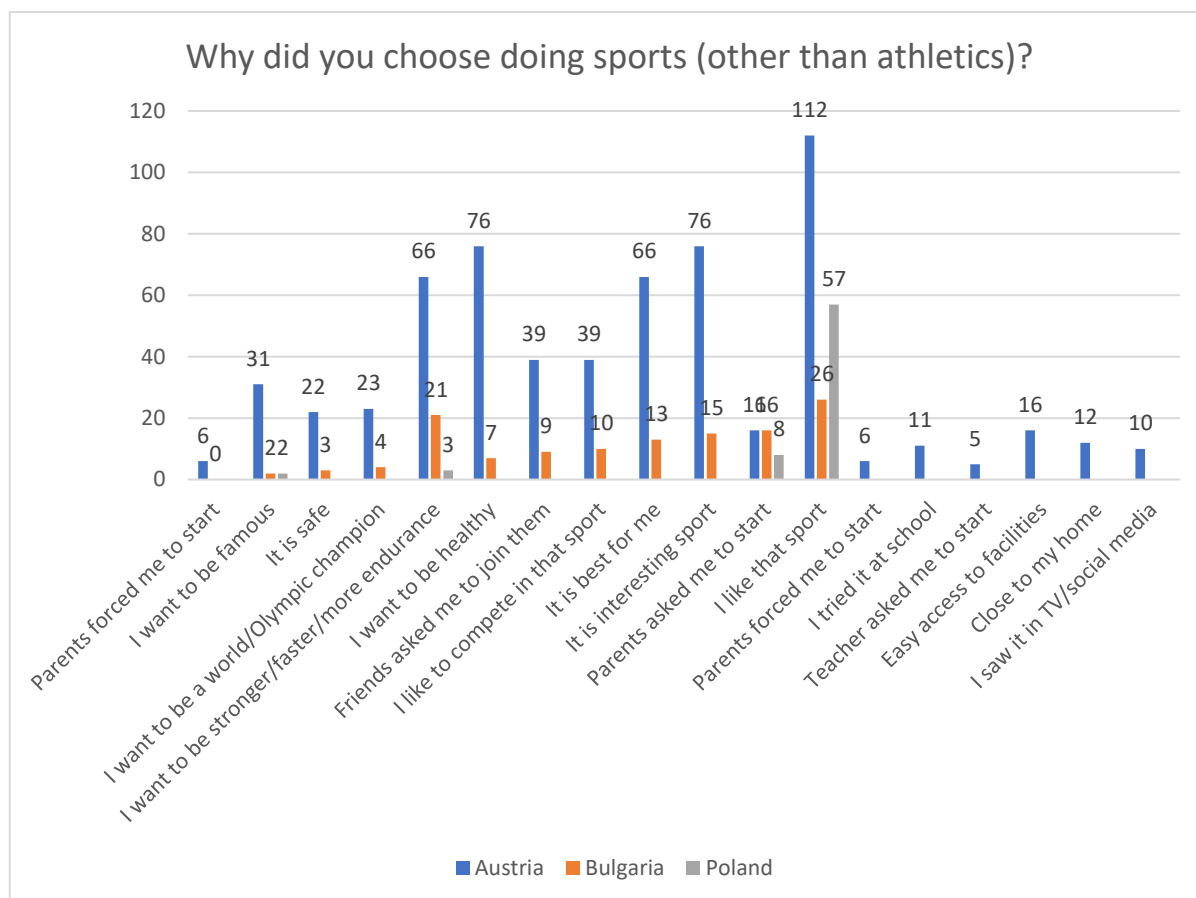
In Poland for children who do athletics, volleyball was the most popular sport done regularly and swimming done occasionally. In Poland for children who do not do athletics, volleyball and basketball were the most popular sports done regularly and swimming done occasionally.

In Slovakia for children who do athletics, cycling was the most popular sport done regularly and skiing done occasionally. In Slovakia for children who do not do athletics, gymnastics was the most popular sport done regularly and cycling done occasionally.



- *Specific question 17: Why to choose other sports?*

Question: Why did you choose to do other sports than athletics?



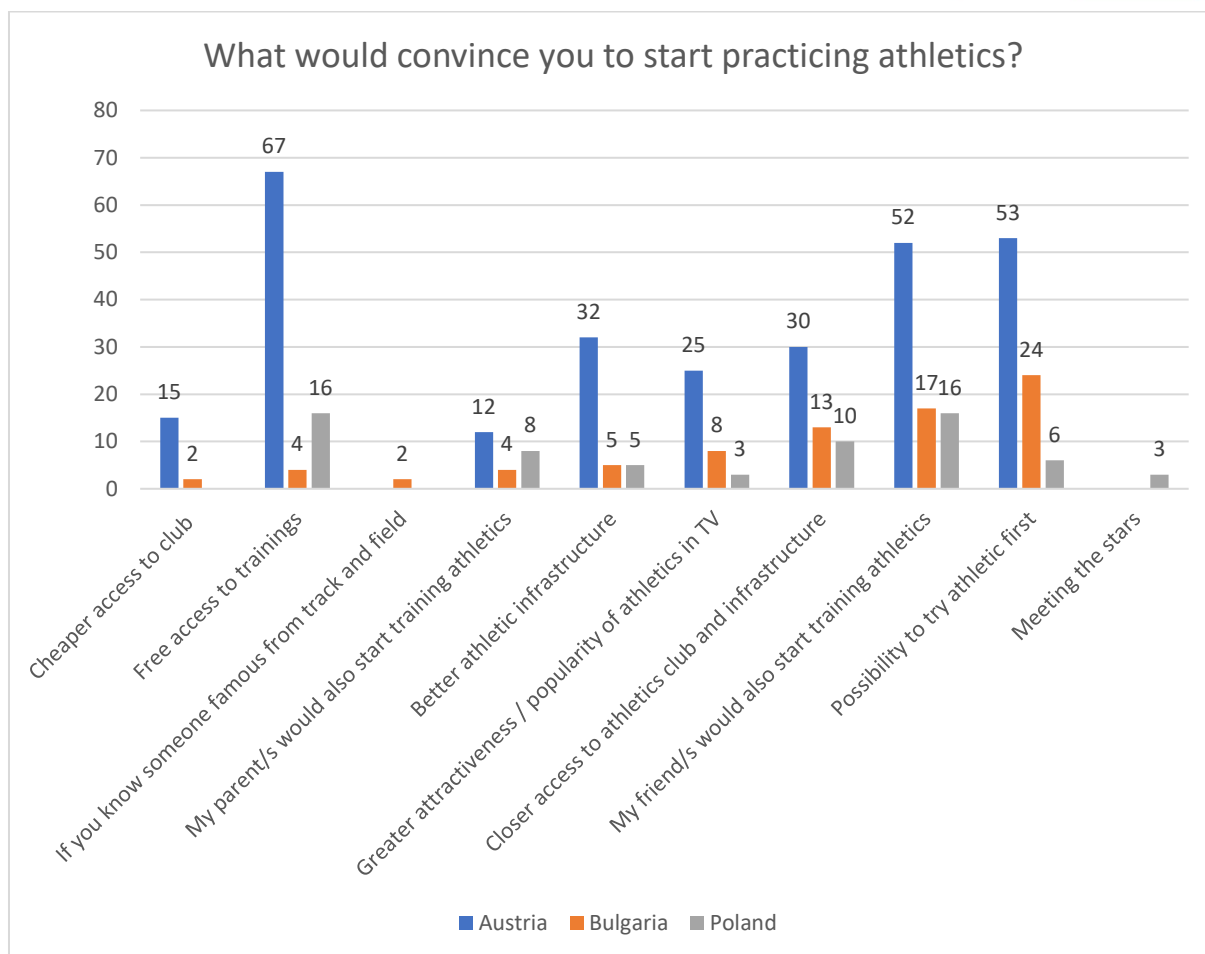
Conclusion:

For participants from Austria, Bulgaria, and Poland, the most popular reason to start a sports hobby other than athletics was that a participant liked that sport. In Austria, other popular reasons were that a participant wants to be healthy or that the sport is interesting. In Bulgaria, other popular reason was that a participant wants to be stronger, faster, or better at endurance. In Poland, other reason was that parents asked the participant to join.

Slovakia and Finland did not have any data to share.

- *Question 18: What would convince you to start practicing athletics?*

Question: What would convince you to start practicing athletics?



### Conclusion:

In Austria, the most popular reason would be to have free access to trainings. Other popular reasons were the possibility to try athletics first and that a friend would also start doing athletics as well. In Bulgaria, the most popular reason would be to have the possibility to try athletics first. Other popular reasons were that a friend would also start doing athletics as well and closer access to athletics club and infrastructure. In Poland, the most popular reason would be to have free access to trainings and that a friend would also start doing athletics as well. Also having closer access to athletics club and infrastructure was one of the most popular reasons. Slovakia and Finland did not have any data to share.





#### 4. Needs – Parents

Report prepared by Anna Kirnová, doc. PaedDr Martin Pupiš  
Veronika Lašová,  
Slovakian Athletic Federation

##### a. Data collection

The online questionnaire was sent to parents in five countries at the end of 2021: Poland (n=235), Slovakia (n=95), Bulgaria (n=113), Finland (n=169) and Austria (n=148).

##### b. Basic information of parents

Most of the parents who completed our questionnaires were female (see figure 1). The largest representation (74%) among respondents from Slovakia were women.

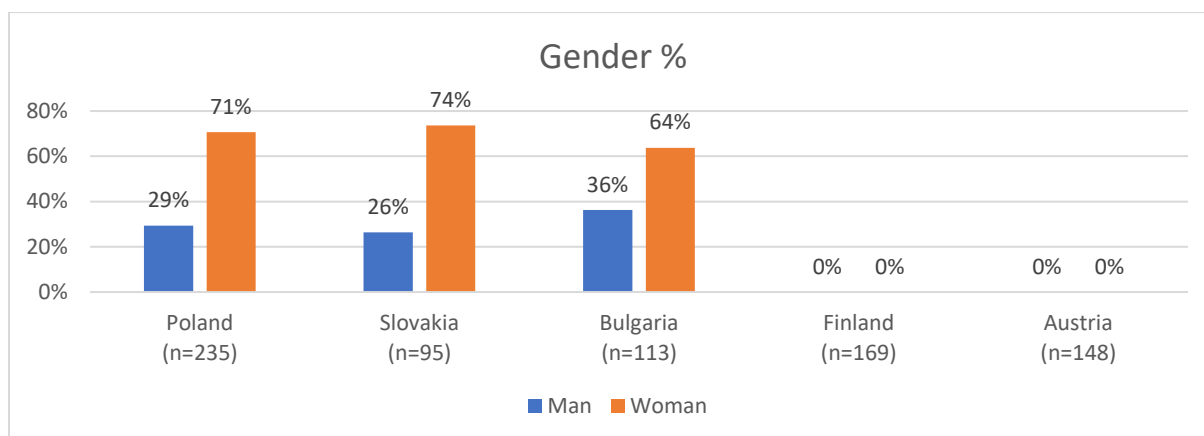


Figure 1: Gender of parents

More than half of the Polish respondents were between 41 and 50 years old at the time of completing the questionnaire. For Bulgarian respondents, half were between the ages of 31 and 40 (see figure 2). For Slovak respondents, the average age was  $42.07 \pm 6.63$  years. Finnish and Austrian respondents did not state their age.

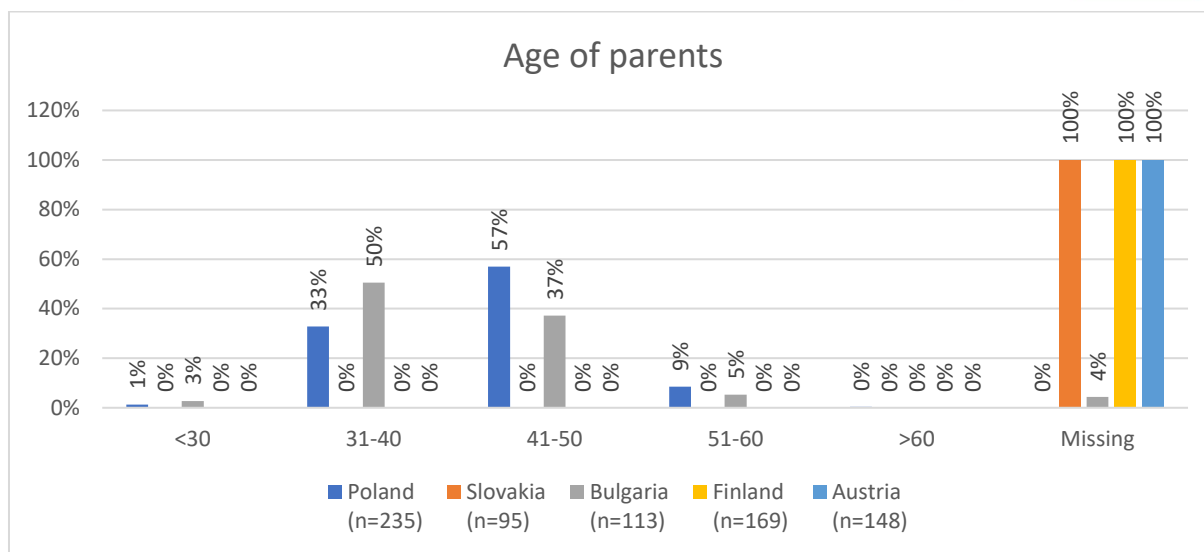


Figure 2: Age of parents

Figure 3 demonstrates that the majority of respondents reported having a university degree (Poland = 78%, Slovakia = 62%, Bulgaria = 70% and Finland = 76%). Only primary education was reported by 0% of respondents in all countries.

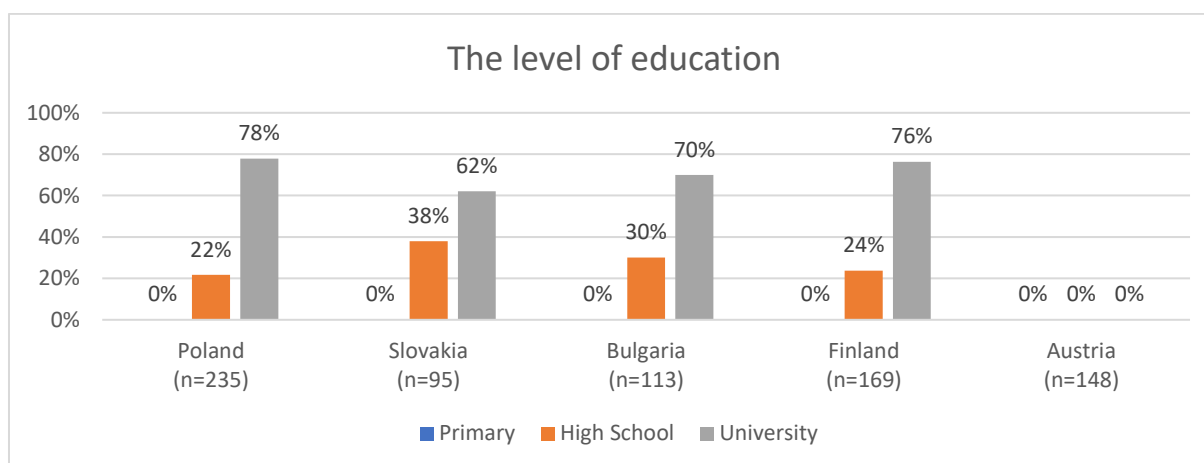


Figure 3: The level of education

Most parents (68%) receive an above-average income in Austria. Most Slovak parents (65%) receive an above-average income as well compared to others. Most parents have an average income in Poland (49%), Bulgaria (46%) and Finland (44%).

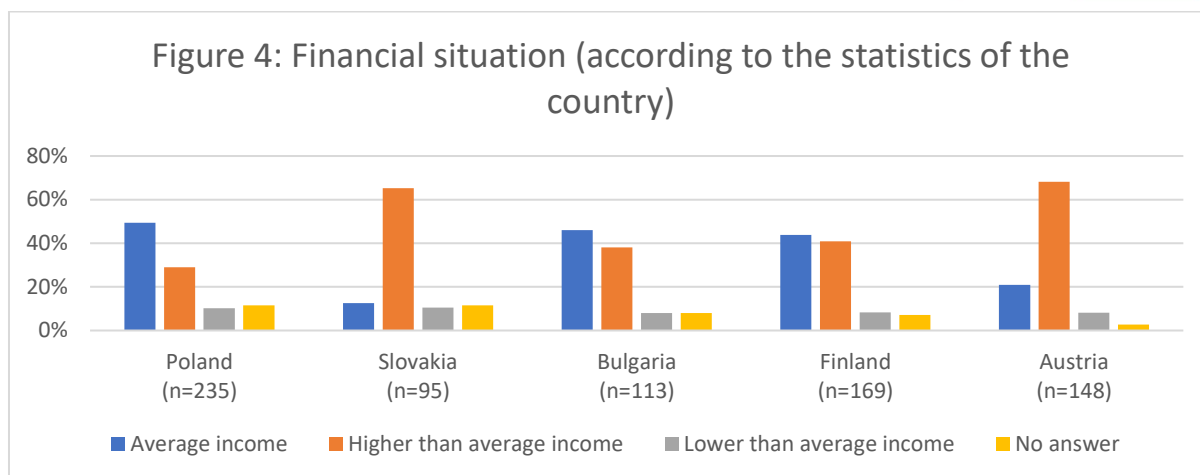


Figure 4: Financial situation (according to the statistics of the country)

Only 7% of respondents (Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria) were unemployed at the time of the survey. There were only 5% of respondents unemployed in Finland.

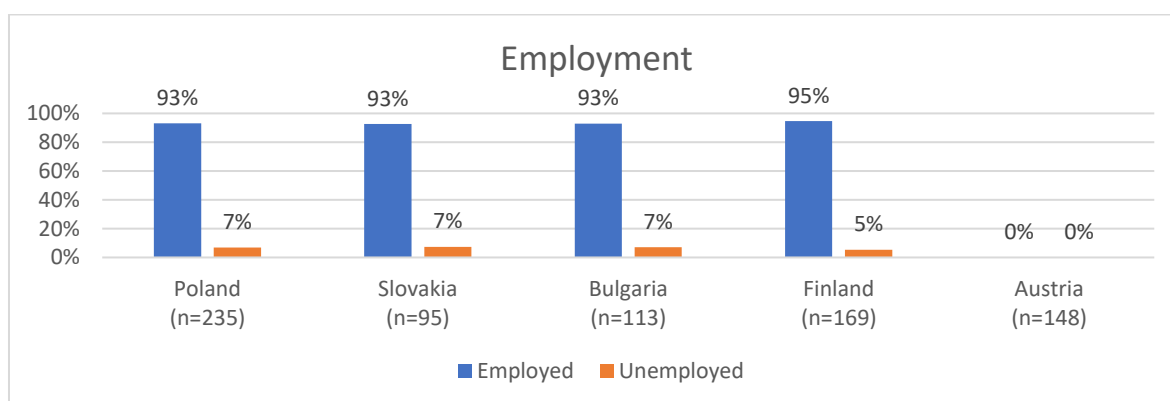


Figure 5: Employment of the participants

In Slovakia, as many as 73% of respondents live in a town with up to 20,000 inhabitants. On the contrary, in Bulgaria (38%), the majority of respondents live in a city with a population of between 20,000 and 100,000, as well as in Poland (37%). The smallest number of respondents live in the capital, with the exception of Bulgaria, where 30% of respondents live in the capital.

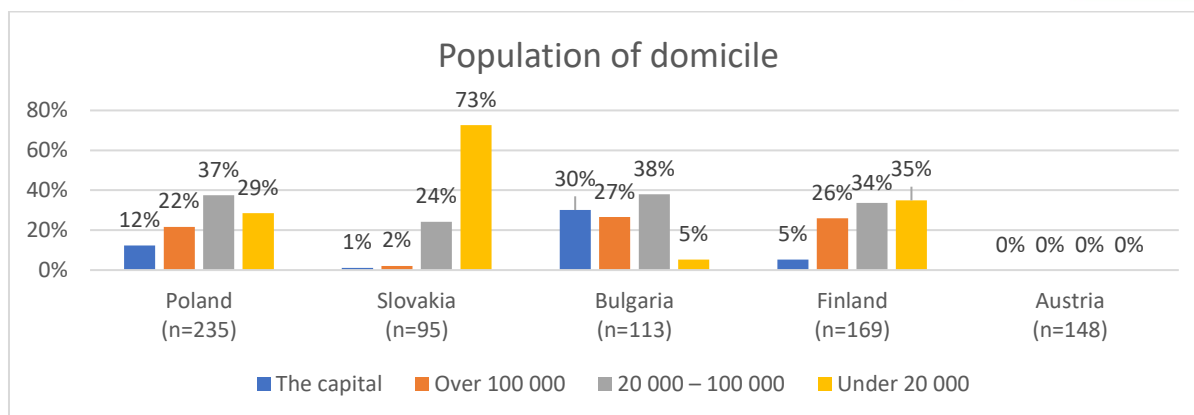


Figure 6: Population of domicile

Most respondents reported having 2 children. 25% of Finnish respondents have 3 children, 11% of respondents have 4 children and 5% of Finnish respondents have 4 or more children. 24% of Polish respondents, 23% of Slovak respondents, 29% of respondents from Bulgaria, 11% of respondents from Finland and 5% of respondents from Austria have one child.

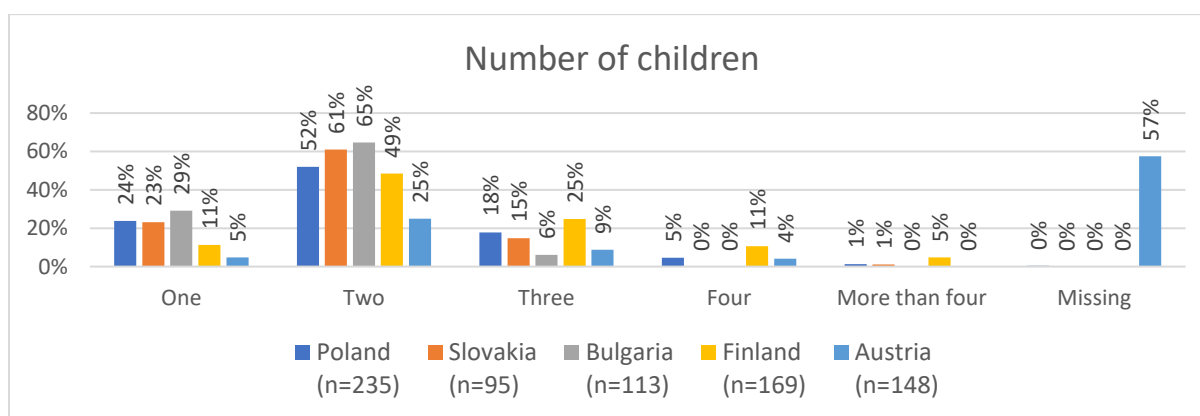


Figure 7: Number of children

### c. Results

- Information about physical activity of the respondents*

Slovak (63%), Bulgarian (75%) and Finnish (50%) respondents did not engage in any sport in the past. In Poland, the majority of respondents (41%) have been involved in some sport in the past. 32% of Polish respondents, 8% of Slovak respondents, 5% of respondents in Bulgaria and 24% of respondents in Finland devoted themselves to athletics.

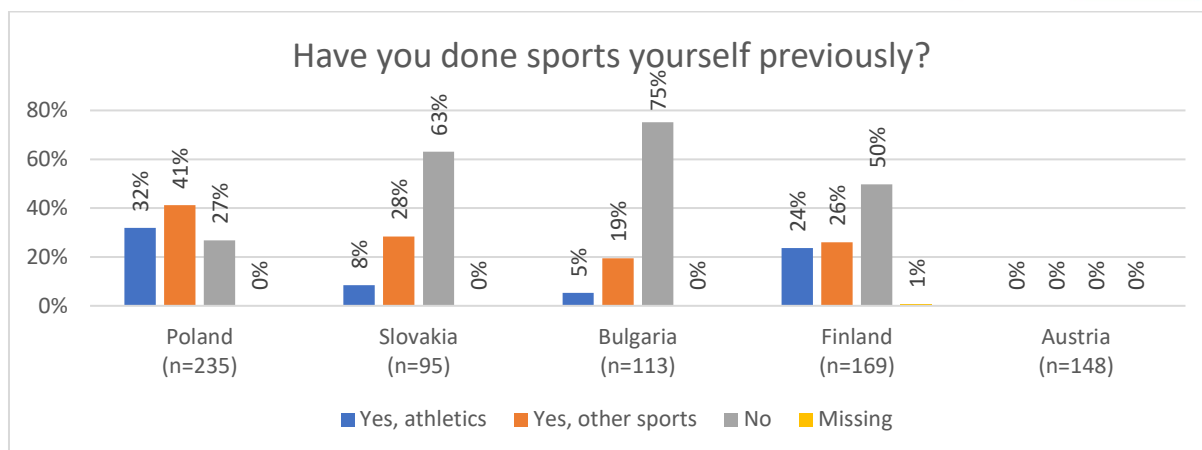


Figure 8: Previous physical activity

The fewest respondents do not perform any physical activity in Slovakia (7%) and Finland (9%). Approximately a third of all respondents perform irregular or occasional physical activity. Most respondents perform regular sports activity in Finland (38%) and Slovakia (29%).

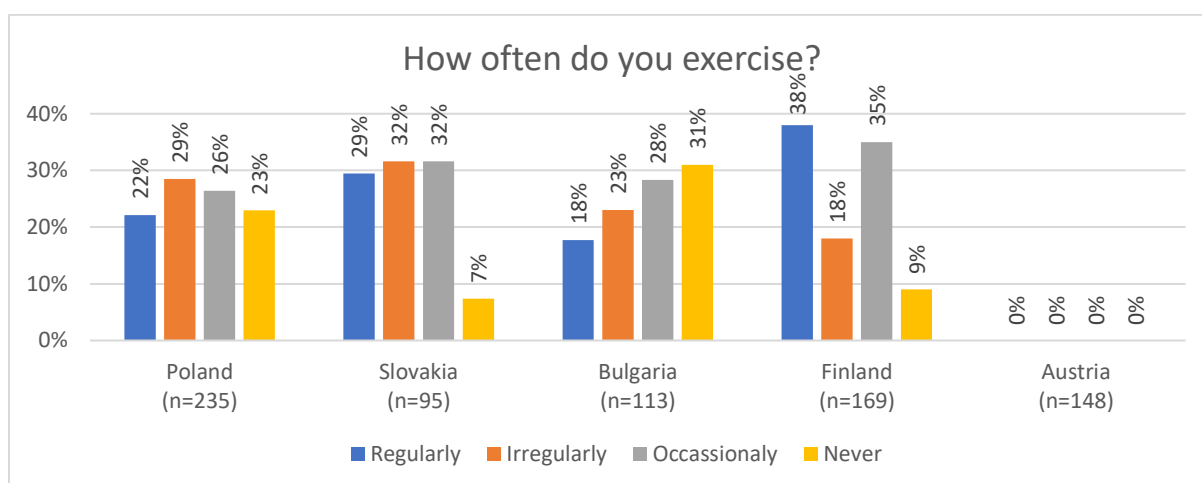


Figure 9: Frequency of physical activity

Most respondents engage in recreational sports activity. Only 9% of Slovak and 7% of Finnish respondents perform sports activity in an athletic club. 17% of Finnish 4% of Slovak and 3% of Bulgarian respondents perform their sports activity in a non-athletic club.

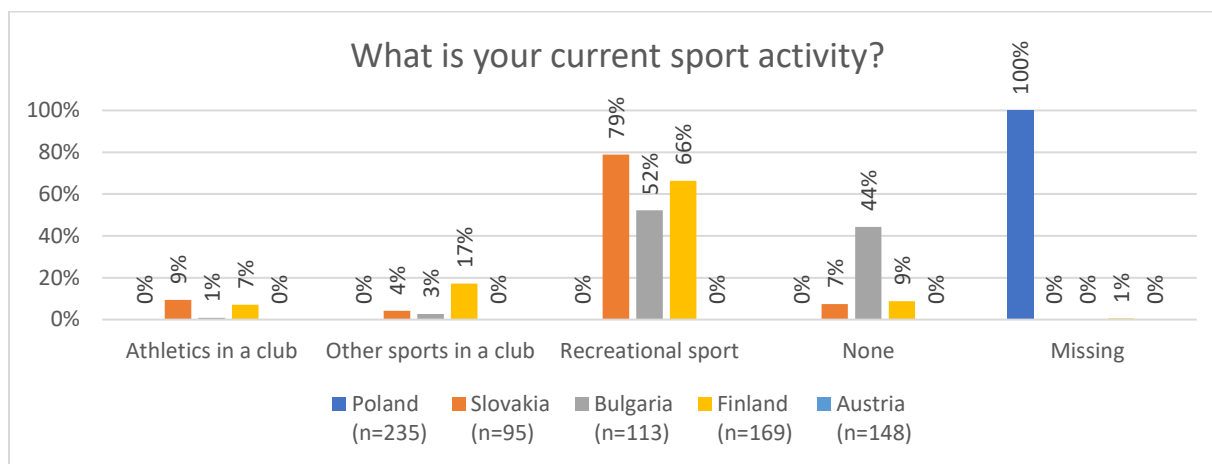


Figure 10: Type of sport activity

- Number of children practicing sport

Most children devote themselves in athletics in Austria (91%) and Poland (82%). 69% of Slovak children and 64% of Bulgarian children practice athletics.

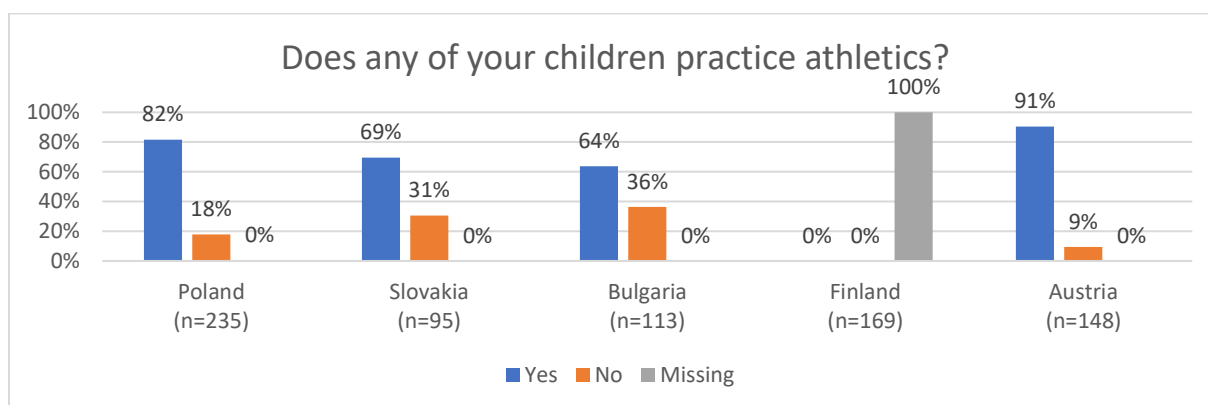


Figure 11: Children practicing athletics

More than half of the respondents stated that only one child practices athletics, with the exception of Slovakia (48%). The most respondents who claim that two children practice athletics were from Austria (37%). On the contrary, the lowest number was in Poland (15%).

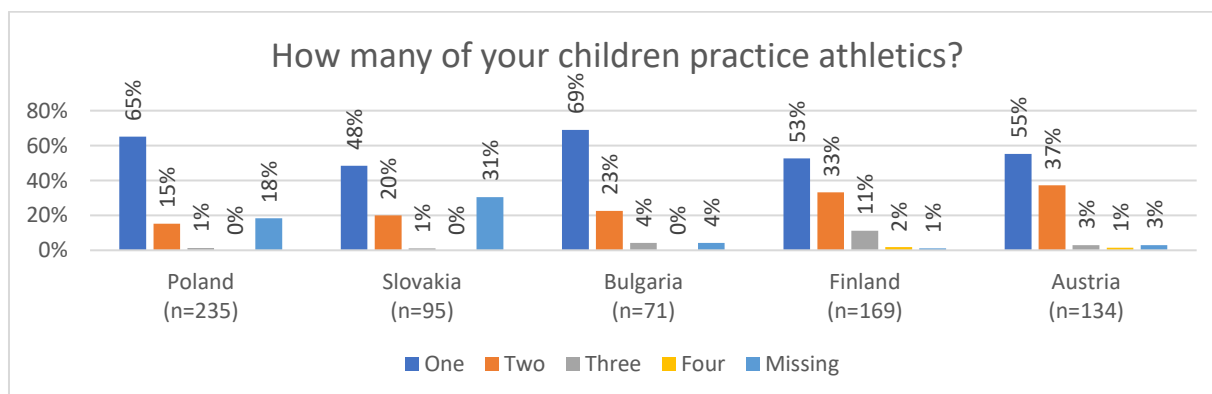




Figure 12: Number of children practicing athletics

The largest number of children who practice athletics regularly, practice swimming, football and basketball as well.

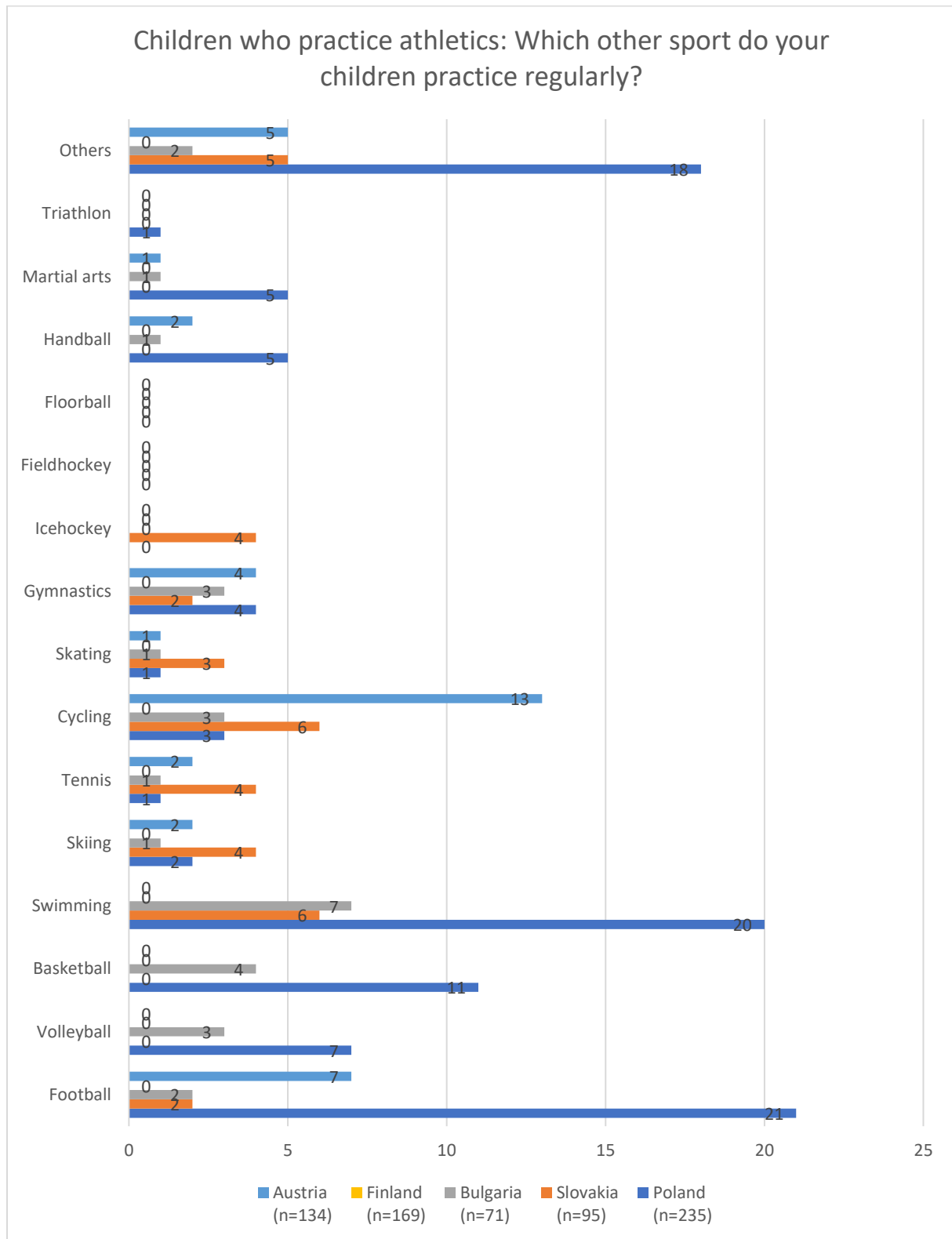


Figure 13: Other sports regularly (children practicing athletics)



The largest number of children who practice athletics occasionally, practice swimming, skiing, cycling, football and volleyball.

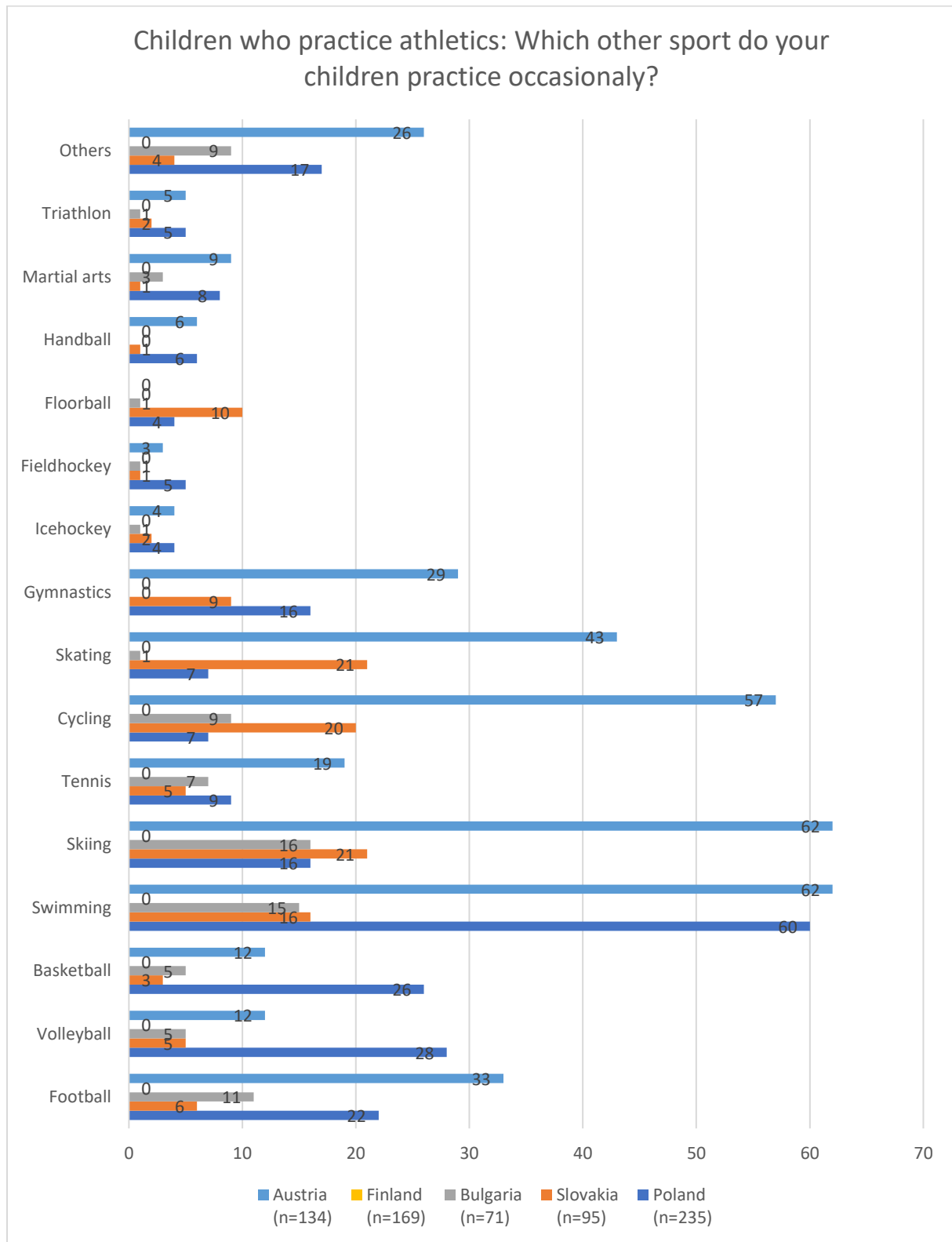


Figure 14: Other sports occasionally (children practicing athletics)



The distance from the athletic infrastructure in each state is mostly 15 to 45 minutes from the place of residence. The fewest respondents live more than 45 minutes from the athletic infrastructure.

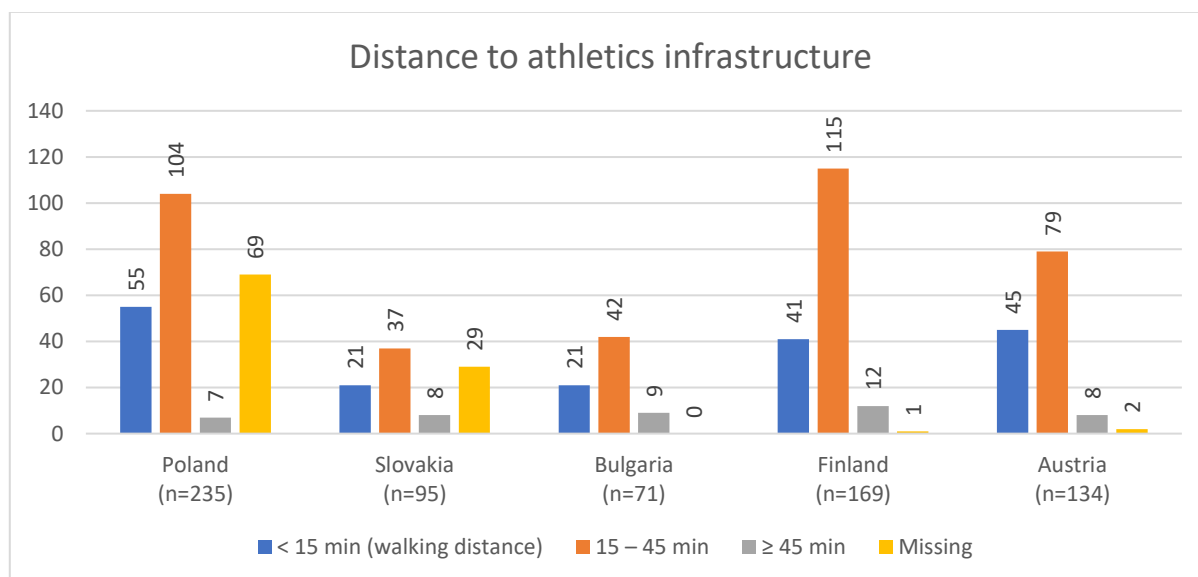


Figure 15: Distance to athletics infrastructure

Most respondents take their children to trainings and competitions. Approximately half of parents engage in children's activity during competitions. Only 7% of Bulgarian, 5% of Polish and 2% of Finnish and Austrian parents do not engage in sports activities of their children in any way.

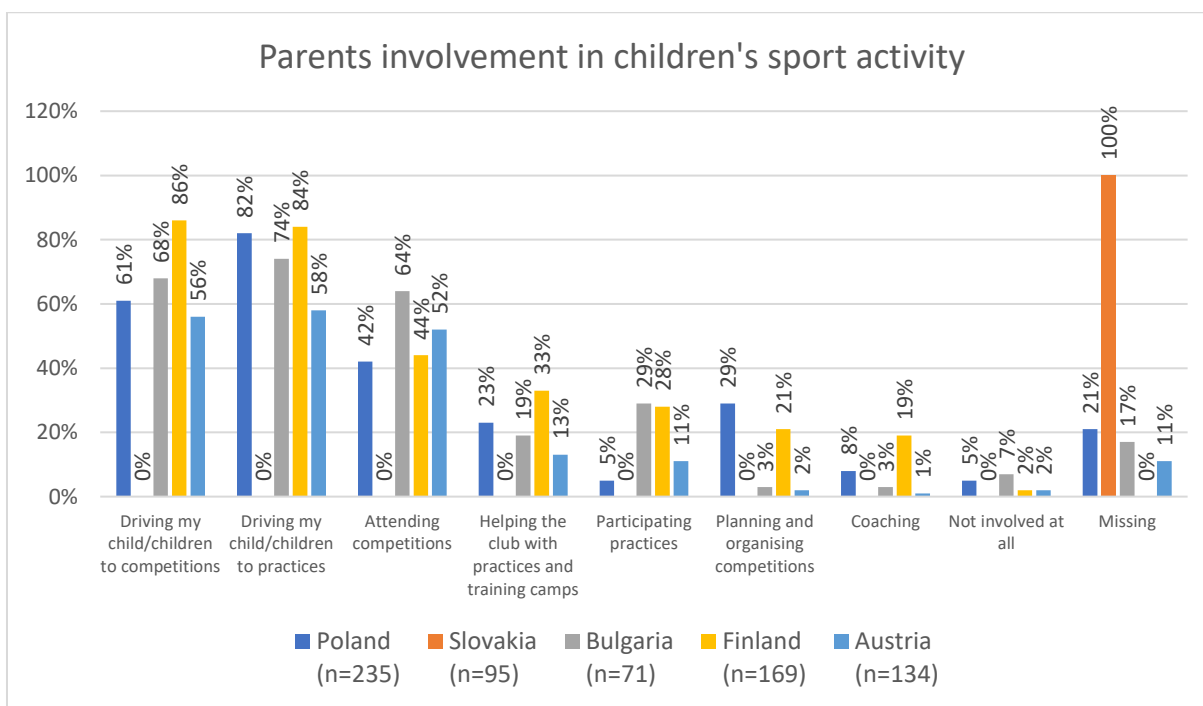


Figure 16: Involvement in children's sport activity

Most children who do not practice athletics regularly play football, swim, ski or play another sport (see figure 17).

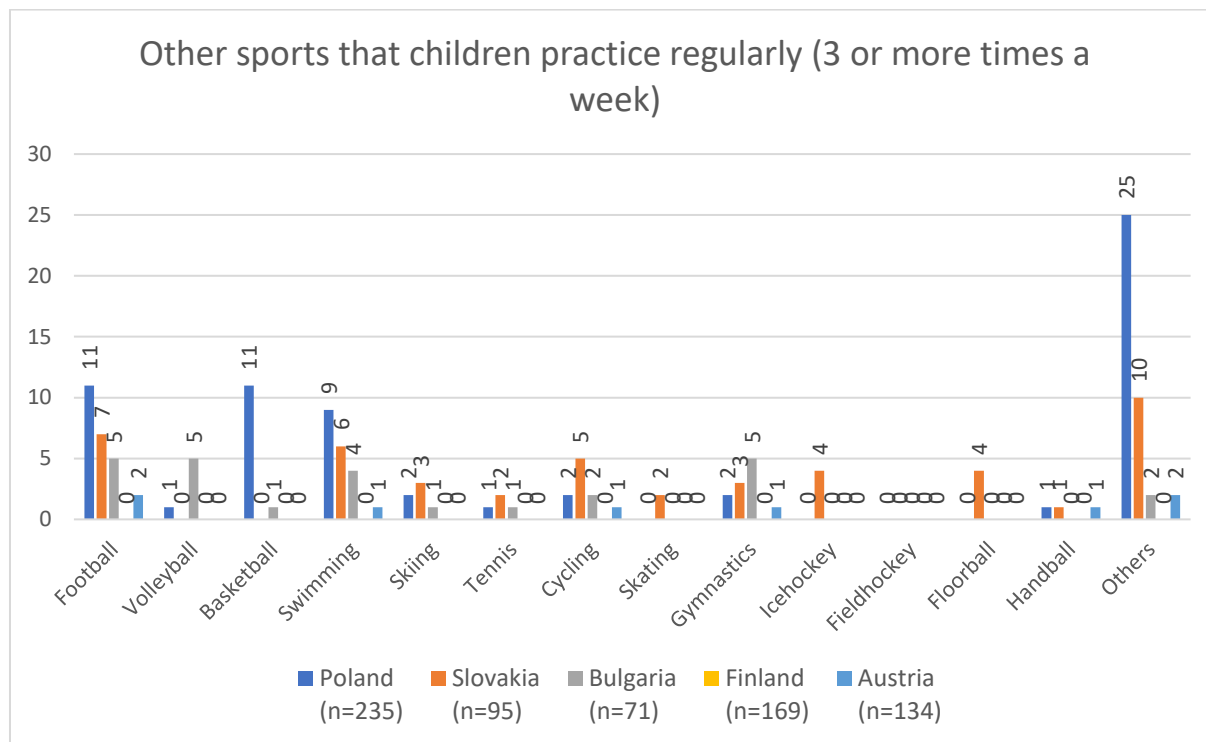


Figure 13: Other sports regularly (children not practicing athletics)

Most children occasionally play football, basketball, swim, ski or practice any other sport (see figure 18).

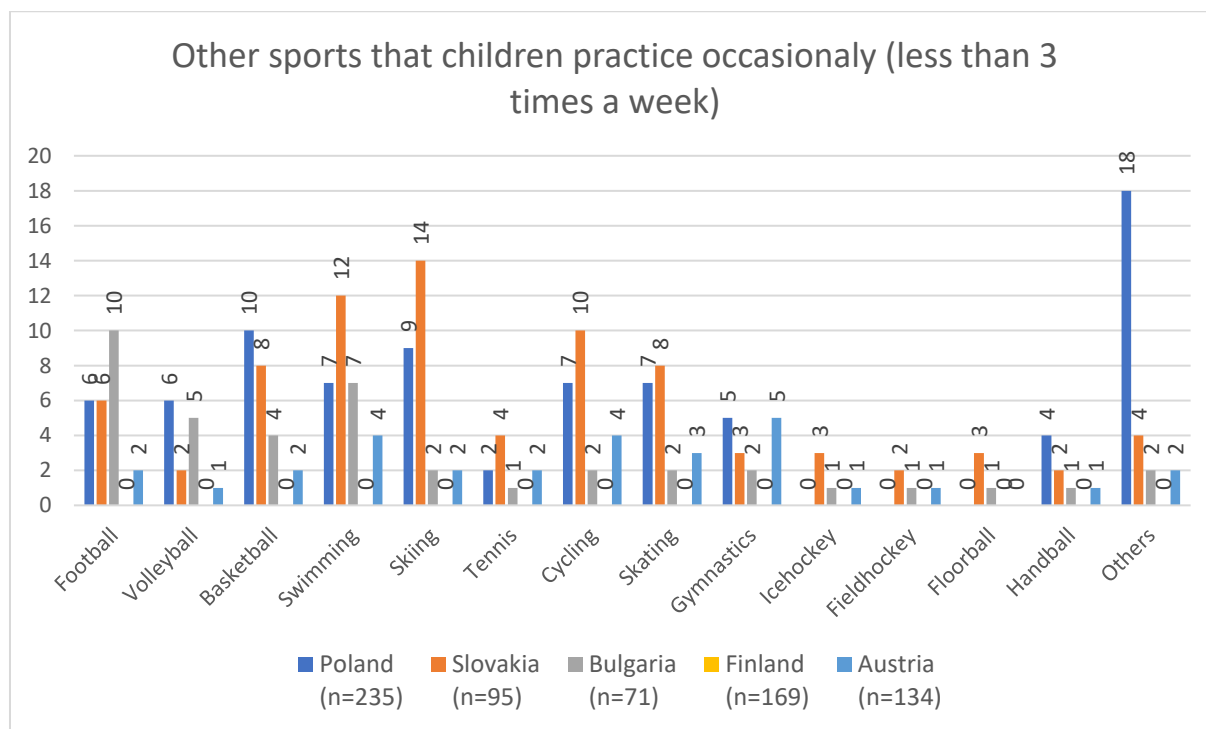


Figure 14: Other sports occasionally (children not practicing athletics)

- Opinions on practicing athletics

Parents in Austria are the most satisfied with the decision to enroll their child in athletics (92.5%). In Bulgaria, 74.65% of parents are most satisfied, in Finland it is 72.19% of parents, in Slovakia it is 63.16% of parents and in Poland 60.85% of parents.

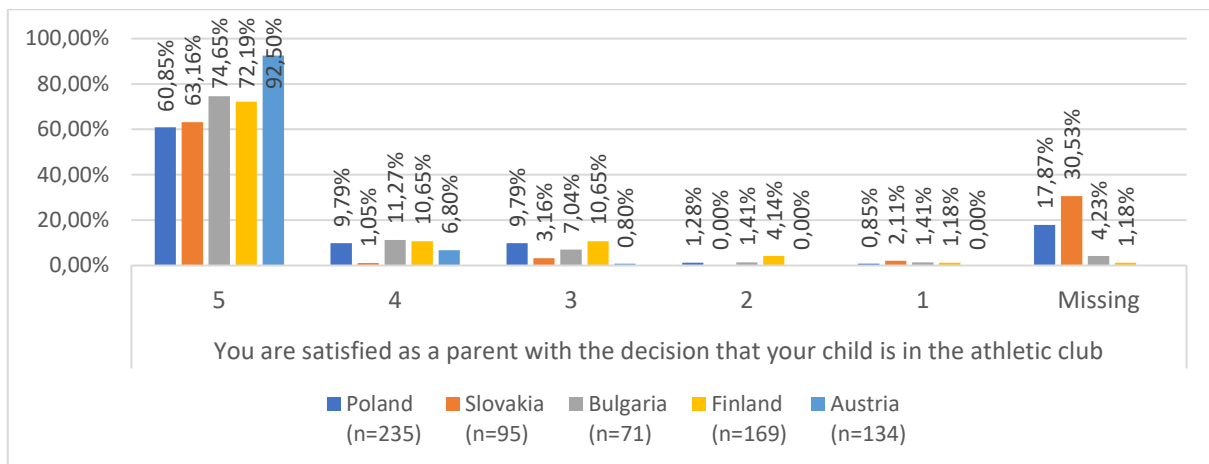


Figure 19: Parents' satisfaction with children attending an athletic club

Figure 20 demonstrates the satisfaction of children with the decision to join an athletic club. More than half of the respondents are satisfied with their decision in each country. Children in Austria are the most satisfied (82.70%).

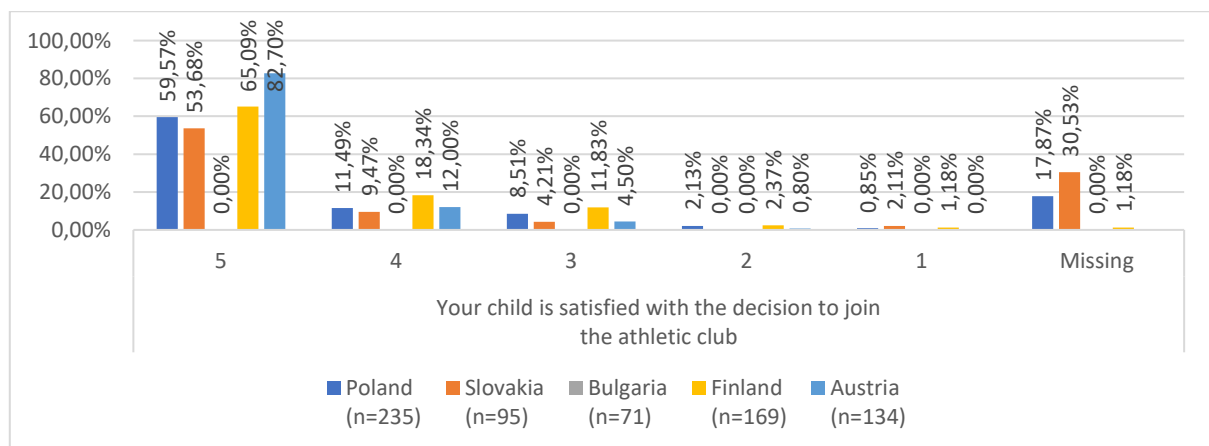


Figure 20: Children's satisfaction with attending an athletic club

Most parents are satisfied with the quality of the training process. Parents in Austria (67.90%) and Bulgaria (67.61%) are the most satisfied. Parents in Finland are the most dissatisfied (3.55%).

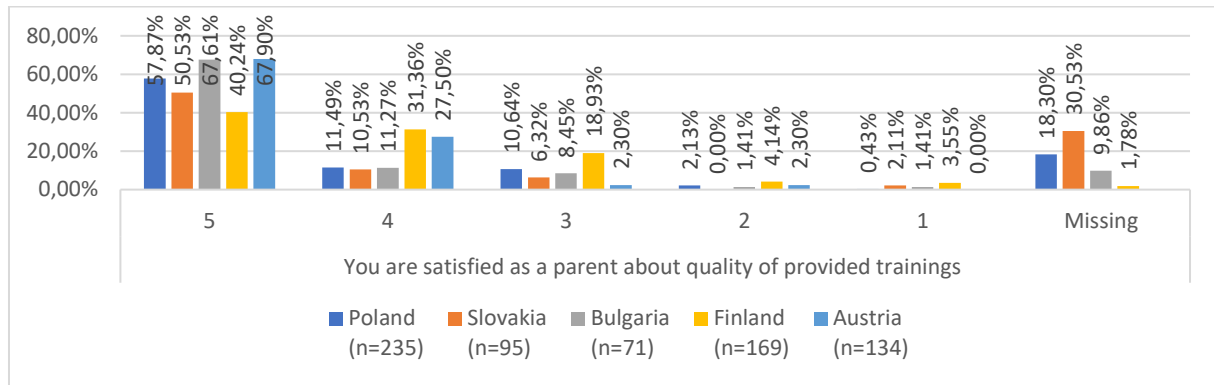


Figure 21: Parents' satisfaction with the quality of the training process

Most parents are maximally satisfied with the impact of athletic training on their children's health. In Finland, 30.77% of respondents answered the question about improving the health of their children with four out of five points (Figure 22).

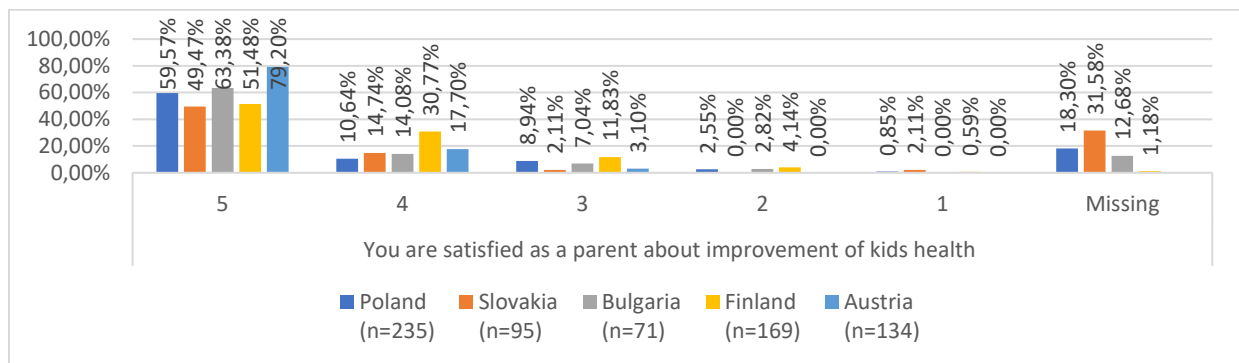


Figure 22: Parents' satisfaction with the impact of athletics on children's health

Respondents from Bulgaria (56.34%) and Austria (54.10%) are the most satisfied with the quality of organizing competitions (see figure 23).

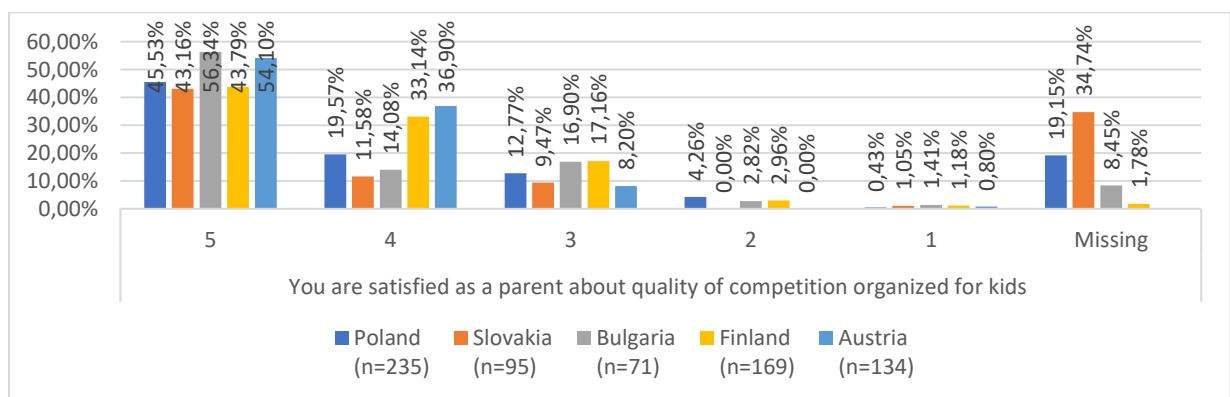


Figure 23: Parents' satisfaction with a competition's organization

Most children are very satisfied (see figure 24) with the organization of the competition in athletics. Children in Bulgaria (61.97%) and Poland (48.51%) are the most satisfied.

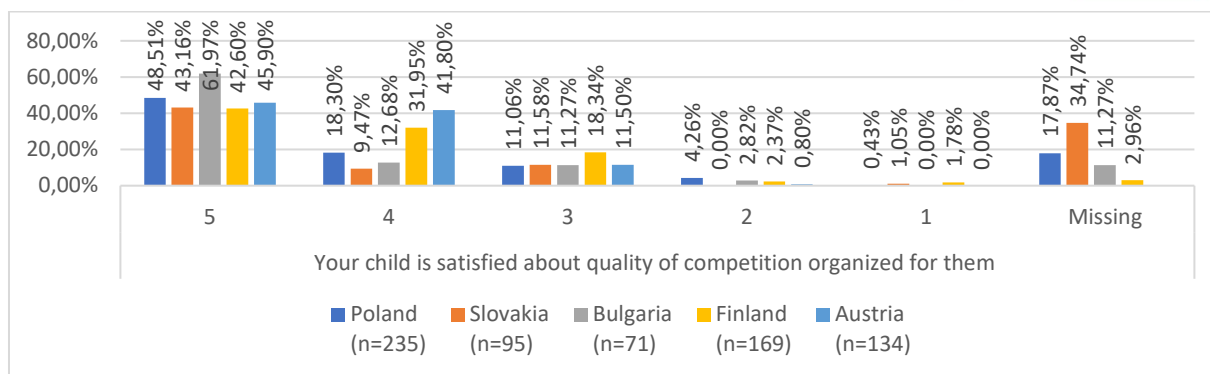


Figure 24: Children's satisfaction with a competition's organization

More than half of the parents are very satisfied with the pedagogical skills of the trainer (see figure 25). The exception is Finland, where only 41.42% of parents are very satisfied. Parents from Austria (75.80%) and Bulgaria (71.83%) are the most satisfied.

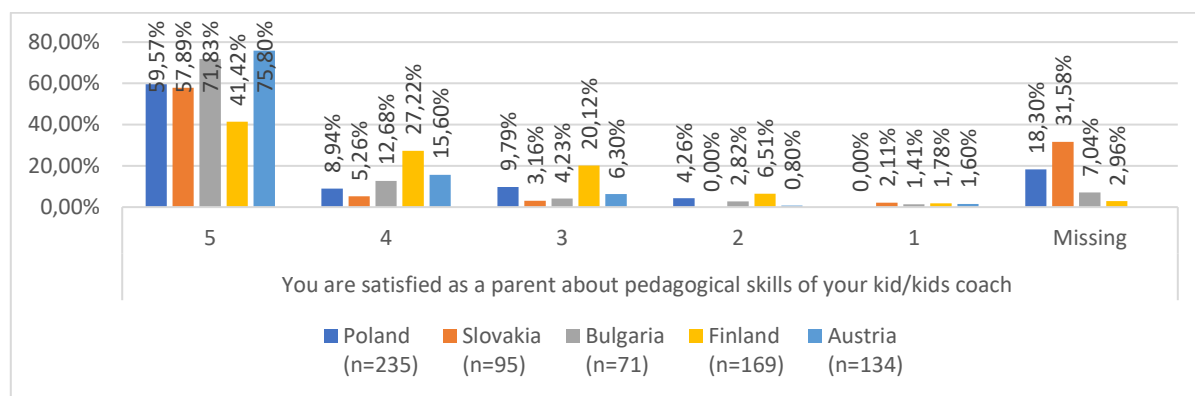


Figure 25: Parents' satisfaction with the trainer's pedagogical skills

Respondents from Finland (38.46%) are the least satisfied with the trainer's education. 2.11% of Slovak respondents and 1.78% of Finnish respondents are dissatisfied (see figure 26).

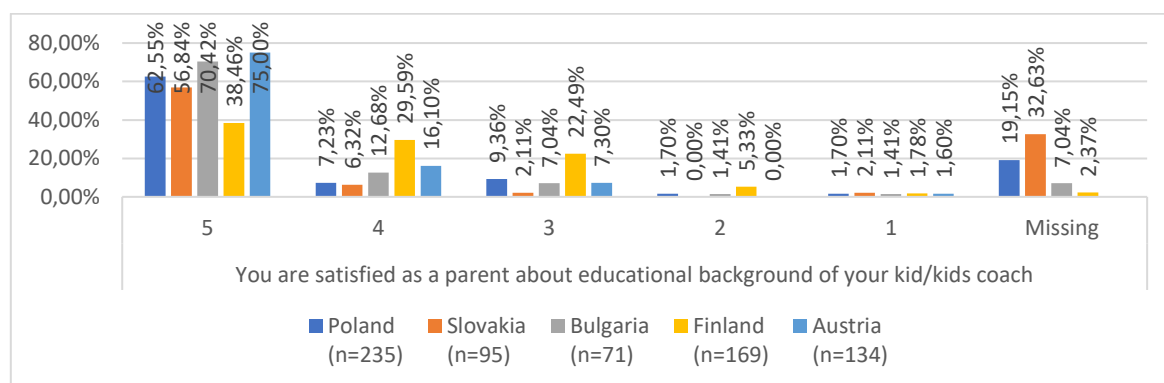


Figure 26: Parents' satisfaction with the trainer's educational background

Organizational obligations in athletics training are best synchronized according to respondents from Bulgaria (53.52%). Only 32.65% of Slovak and 32.54% of

Finnish respondents state that organizational responsibilities in training their children are very well aligned with family life (see figure 27).

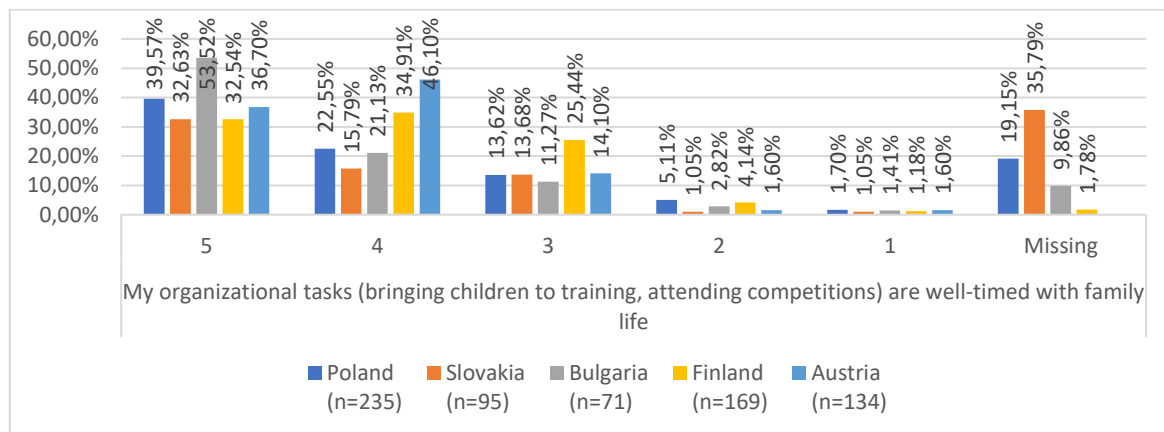


Figure 27: Alignment of organizational tasks with family life

Work duties with athletic training of their children are best handled by respondents from Bulgaria (56.34%). In Slovakia, work duties are very well aligned with the training process in 31.58% of respondents and in Finland it is in 31.36% of respondents (see figure 28).

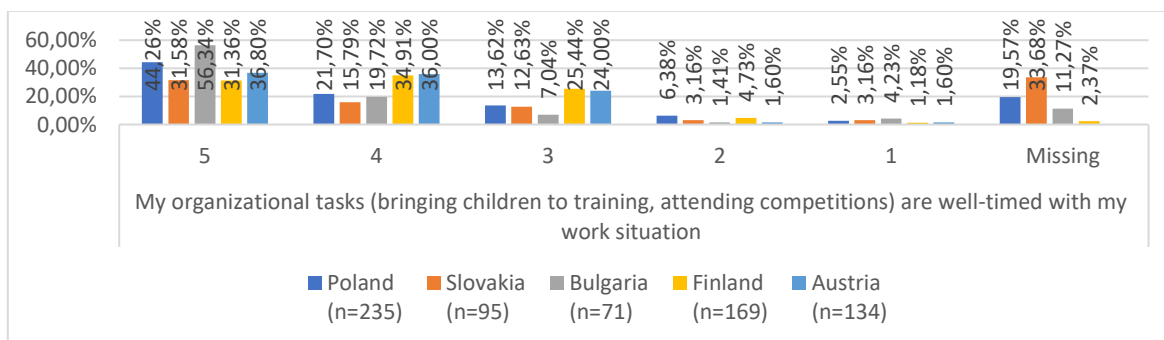


Figure 28: Alignment of organizational tasks with work situation

As many as 59.15% of respondents from Bulgaria fully agree with the statement that athletics is an attractive option because it is inexpensive for parents (see figure 29). In Austria, 57.30% of respondents fully agree with this statement. 4.73% of Finnish respondents disagree with this statement at all.

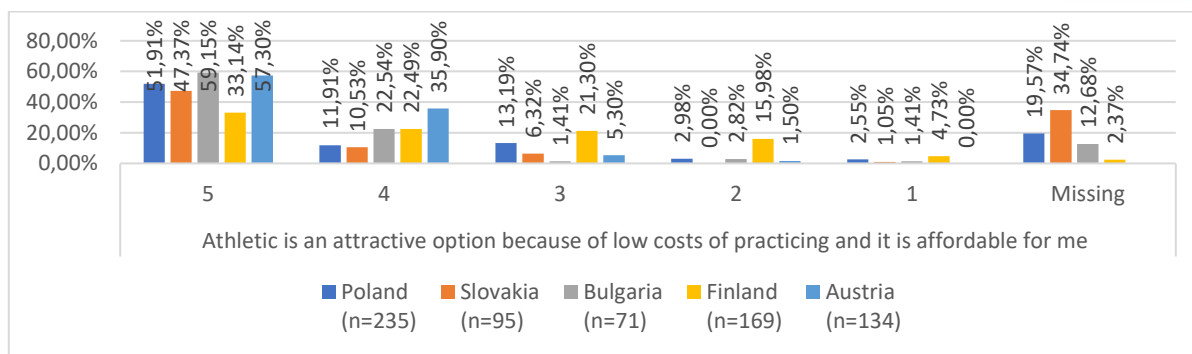


Figure 29: The attractiveness of athletics because of its affordability

## 5. Needs – Coaches

Report prepared by: Prof. Janusz Iskra, Paweł Jesień, Dominik Witczak  
Justyna Jędrych, Maciej Jałoszyński  
Polish Athletic Association

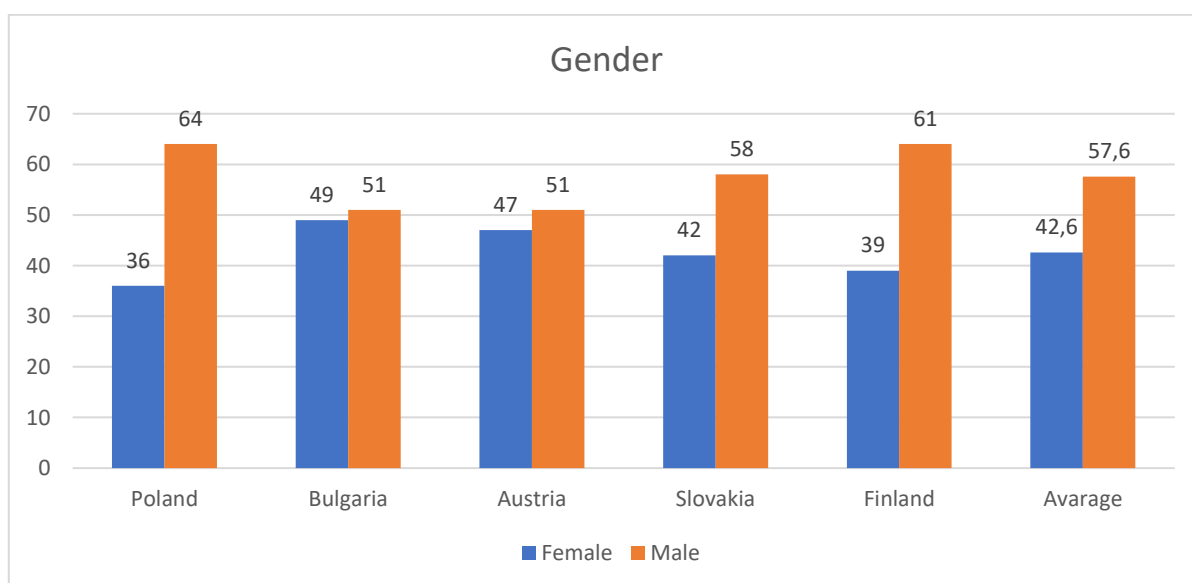
### a. Data collection

An online questionnaire was sent out to coaches in 2022. The coaches could participate in the survey and answer its questions from June till October 2022. In the given time period 473 coaches participated in the survey. In this report, their answers are summarized and analyzed.

### a. General information

- Gender (in percents).

Group	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland	Avarage
Female	36	49	47	42	39	42,6
Male	64	51	51	58	61	57,6





## Comments.

Despite the lack of parity, women coaches constitute an important part of the coaching staff in youth athletics

The greatest differences to the detriment of women occur in Poland.

- *Age of participations (Year of birth)*

Birth	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland
<1954 (>70)	11	0	(Brak – 25)		
1946-1955 (60-69)	24	4	13		
1956-1965 (50-59)	41	7	15		
1966-1975 (40-49)	40	18	18		
1976-1985 (30-39)	27	11	8		
1986-1995 (<30)	5	15	19		
Avarage			44,6±16,5	Av.48,7±14,0	No data

## Comments.

The vast majority of athletics coaches are 40-50 years old, born at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s.

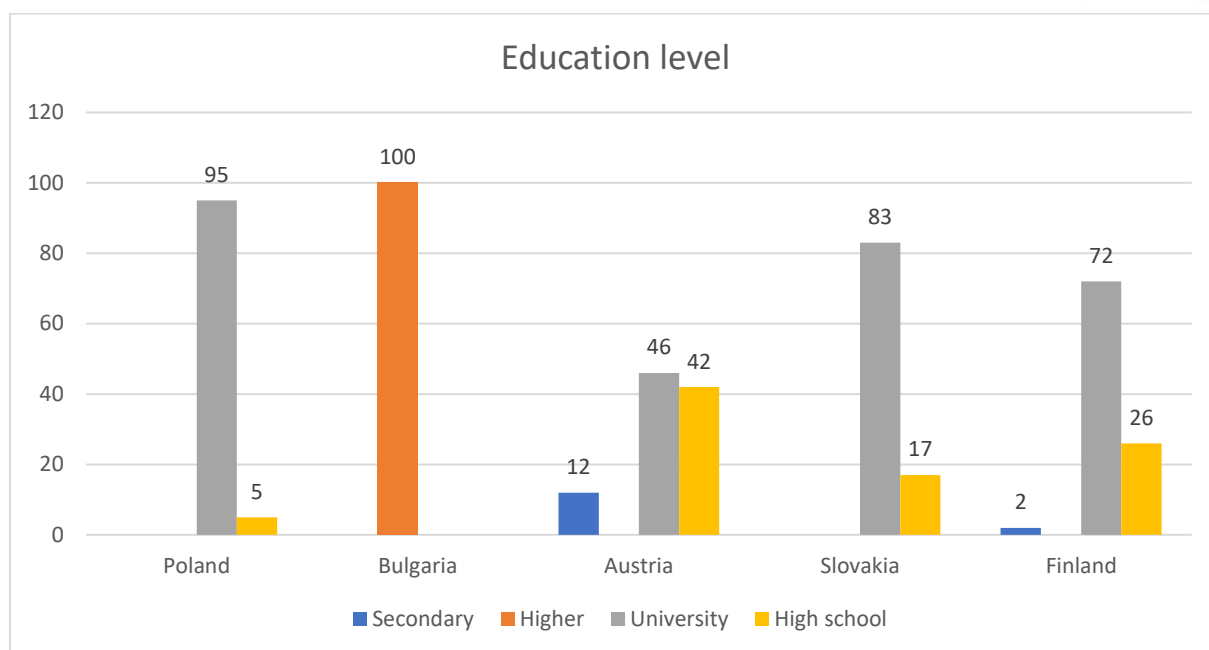
There is a lack of young coaches in Poland - the reason - most likely a financial issue.

Good practice: work of a young trainer alongside an older one (mentor)

- *Level of Education (in percents)*

Level	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland
Secondary			12		2
Higher		100			
University	95		46	83	72
High school	5		42	17	26





### Comments.

The Internet is the basic source of information for coaches of 2022. A common platform for athletics knowledge of selected countries can be organized. This can protect against a lot of, often false, information.

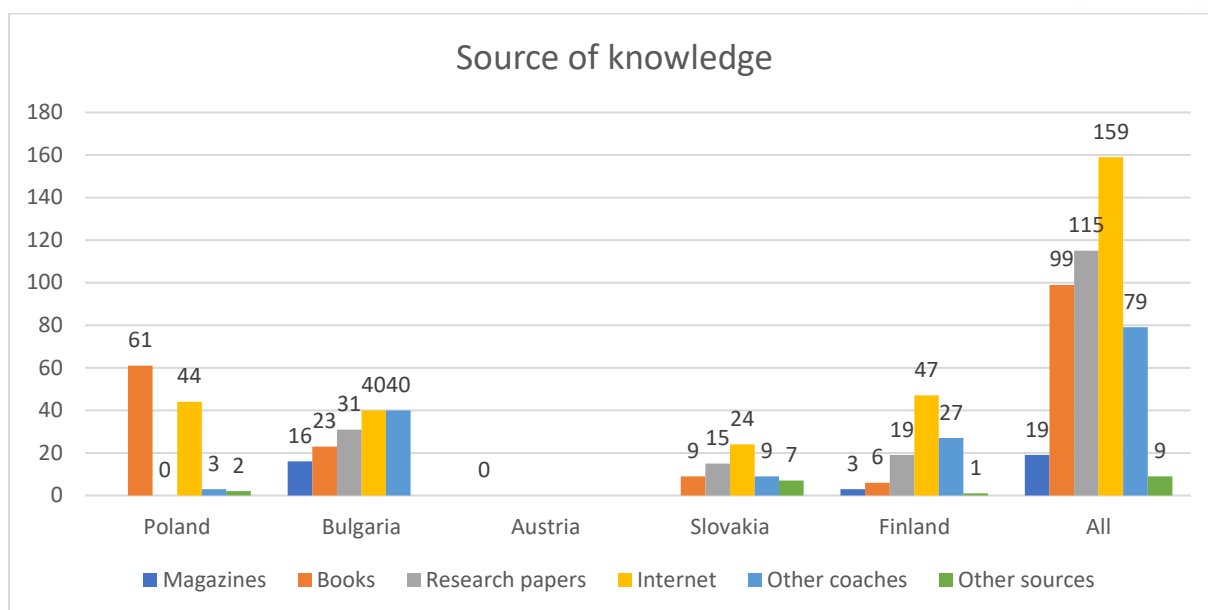
The analysis of scientific research results is also important. This proves the increase in the general knowledge of the coaching staff.

Good practice: Extending the conclusions of scientific articles to include application forms intended for trainers.

#### b. Results.

- *Athletics knowledge.*

Knowledge	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland	All
Magazines		16	n.d.		3	19
Books	61	23	n.d.	9	6	99
Research papers	50	31	n.d.	15	19	115
Internet	44	40	n.d.	24	47	159
Other coaches	3	40	n.d.	9	27	79
Other sources	2		n.d.	7	1	9



## Comments.

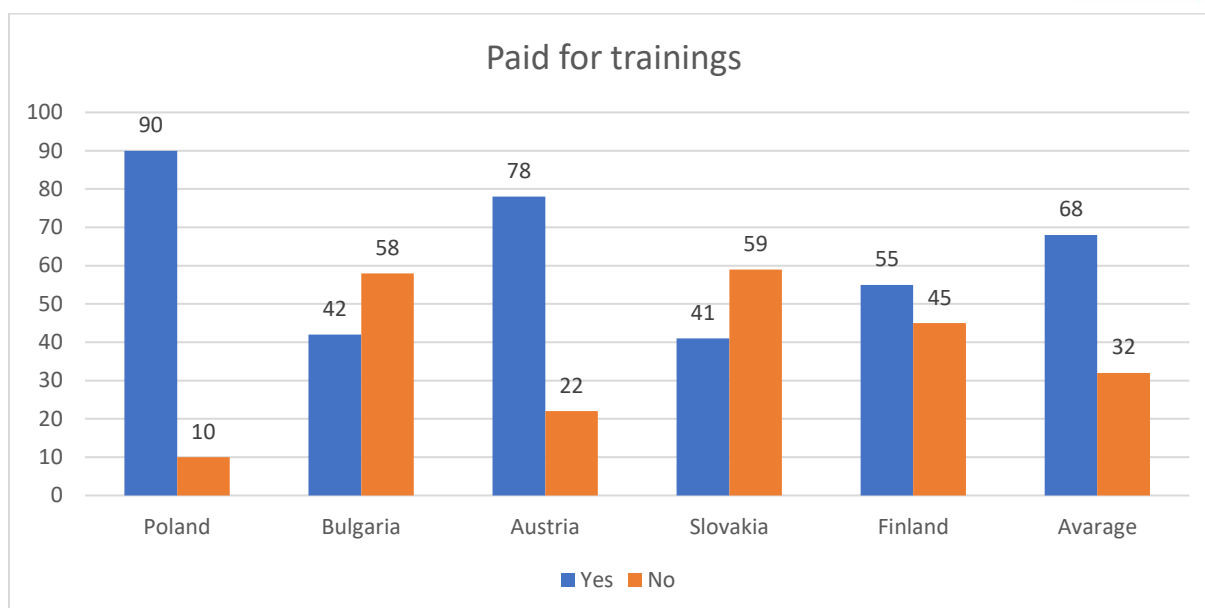
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The analysis of scientific research results is also important. This proves the increase in the general knowledge of the coaching staff.

Good practice: Extending the conclusions of scientific articles to include application forms intended for trainers.

- *Paid for trainings (in percents)*

Paid	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland	Avarage
Yes	90	42	78	41	55	68
No	10	58	22	59	45	32



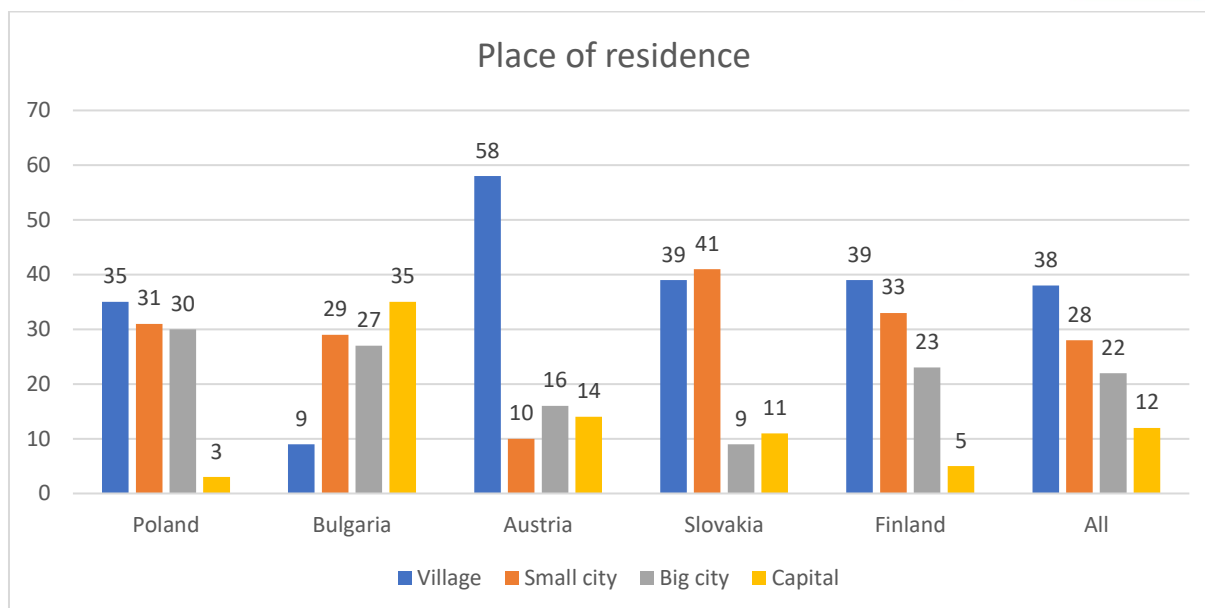
### Comments.

Most (2/3) coaches are paid for their coaching work. The survey did not provide the level of earnings - it seems that most trainers treat coaching as an additional job.

The system of rewarding coaches for achievements seems to be one of the motivators for the work of coaches.

- Place of residence (in percents)*

Place	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland	All
<b>Village</b>	35	9	<b>58</b>	39	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Small city</b>	31	29	10	<b>41</b>	33	28
<b>Big city</b>	30	27	16	9	23	22
<b>Capital</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>35</b>	14	11	5	12



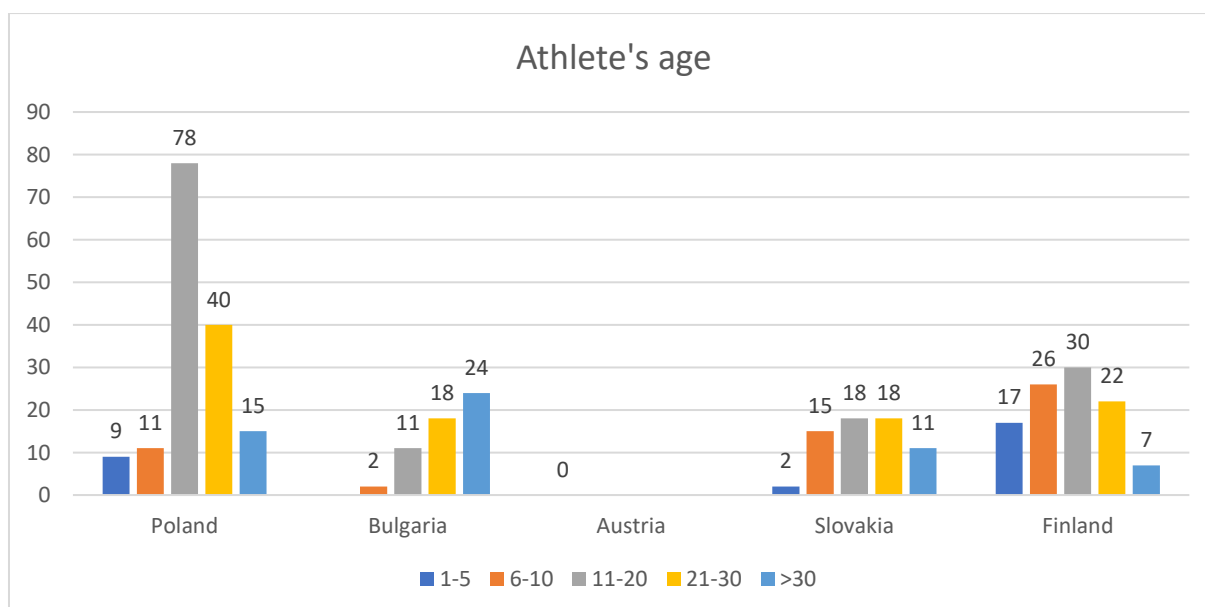
## Comments.

Most trainers (over half) work in small centers.

Creating athletics centers in small towns and villages may be an opportunity to search for talents outside large clubs in cities.

- *Amount of athletes per coach*

Nr athletes/coach	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland
1-5	9		n.d.	2	17
6-10	11	2	n.d.	15	26
11-20	78	11	n.d.	18	30
21-30	40	18	n.d.	18	22
>30	15	24	n.d.	11	7





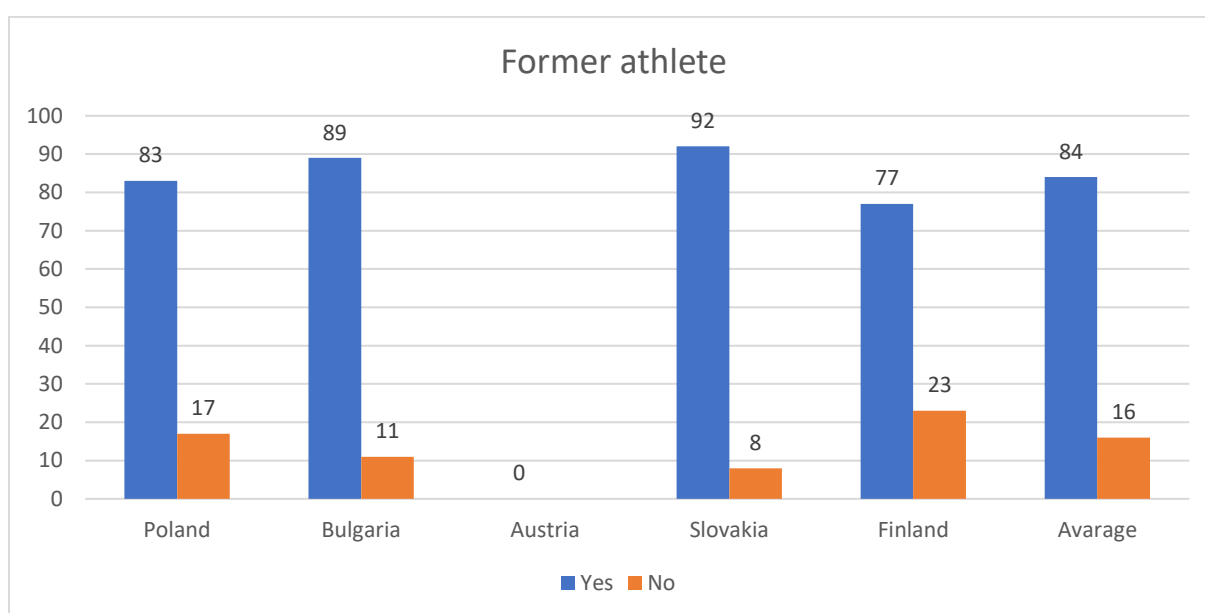
## Comments.

Most coaches take care of a large (10-30) group of players. This requires comprehensive preparation to conduct classes in various competitions.

It is difficult to apply the principle of individualization in such wide groups. Cooperation between trainers may be an important element.

- *Coach – previous athlete (in percents)*

Coach/athlete	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland	All
<b>Yes</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>89</b>	Brak	<b>92</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>No</b>	17	11		8	23	16



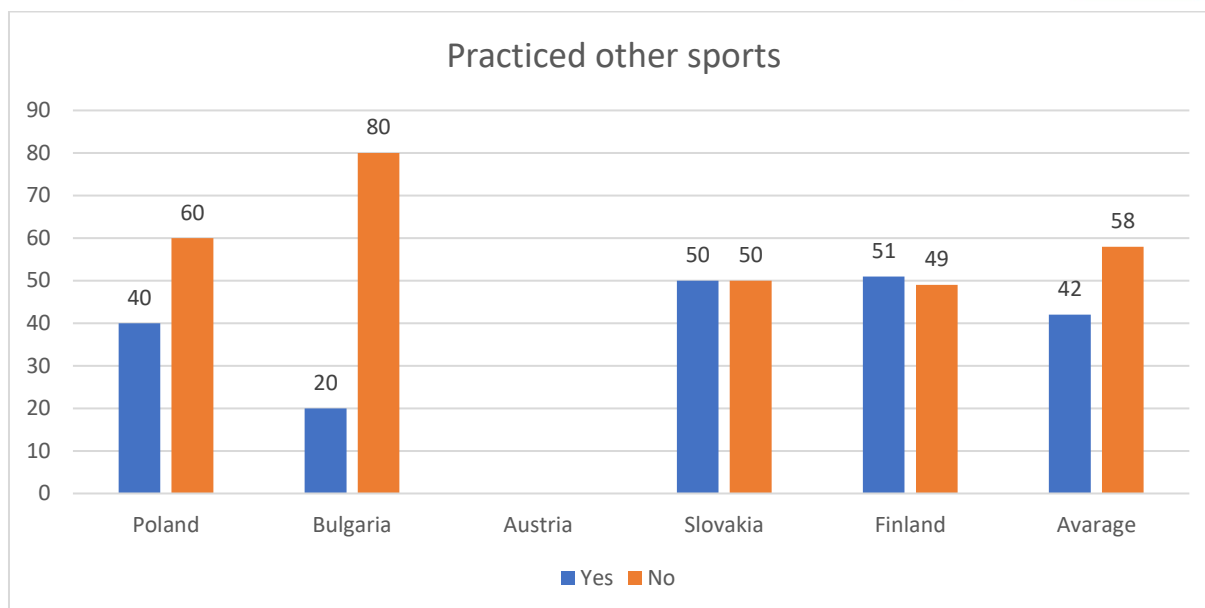
## Comments.

The vast majority of coaches are former athletes - track and field athletes.

Positive player-coach relationships are important, allowing players to take up coaching jobs in the future.

- *Coaches – previous athletes in other sports (in percents)*

Coaches/other sports	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland	Average
<b>Yes</b>	40	20	n.d.	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>80</b>	n.d.	<b>50</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>58</b>



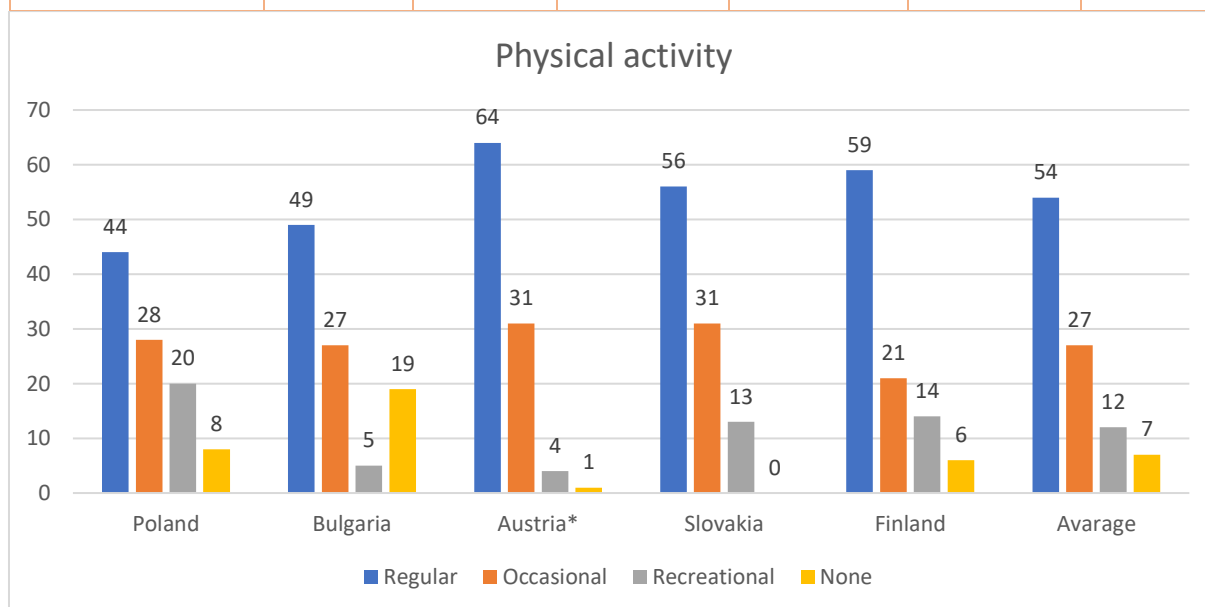
### Comments.

The training athletes were clearly divided into two groups - those practicing only athletics and those who also train in other sections.

Good practice: Athletics at the initial stage of advancement is (for some young people) an important stage of motor preparation.

- *Current physical activity (in percents)*

Physical activity	Poland	Bulgaria	Austria	Slovakia	Finland	All
Regular	44	49	64	56	59	54
Occasional	28	27	31	31	21	27
Recreational	20	5	4	13	14	12
None	8	19	1	0	6	7





## Comments.

The vast majority of trainers are very active

Most often, trainers participate in the following forms of physical activity:

Half of the coaching staff regularly engages in various forms of activity; the rest engage in various sports occasionally - for recreation. Only one in 15 does nothing.

A large group of coaches (often in "Masters" groups) still participate in various athletics competitions.

Apart from classic athletics, the most popular forms of physical activity among trainers are jogging, cycling, strength training and various forms of fitness. Cross-country skiing is popular locally (Finland).

- Coaches' opinion about athletics*

Question	POL	BUL	AUT	SLO	FIN	Average
You are happy with your work with athletics	4,42	4,25	4,31	3,72	4,02	<b>4,14</b>
You are happy with your work at the club	4,03	4,36	4,40	3,92	3,53	<b>4,05</b>
You are happy with your income level	3,57	3,22	3,24	2,45	2,50	<b>3,00</b>
You are happy with the training facilities	2,77	3,22	3,55	2,75	3,48	<b>3,15</b>
You are happy with the used sports equipment	2,52	3,40	4,05	3,26	3,81	<b>3,41</b>
You are happy with the work done for enhancing the level of athletics in your country	2,84	3,35	2,69	2,89	3,35	<b>3,02</b>
You are happy with the support from Athletic Federation	3,22	3,96	3,26	3,23	2,86	<b>3,31</b>
You are happy with the support from your city government	3,50	3,20	3,29	2,56	2,49	<b>3,00</b>
You are happy with the support from regional level	3,39	3,05	3,20	2,02	2,40	<b>2,81</b>
You are happy with the support from sponsors	3,99	2,64	2,86	2,05	2,15	<b>2,74</b>
You are happy with the support from athletes' parents	2,97	4,00	3,81	3,08	3,57	<b>3,49</b>
You are happy with the support from club	2,74	4,35	4,54	3,63	3,34	<b>3,72</b>
You have noticed that the athletic level of children beginning with athletics is not as good as it used to be 7-12 years ago	1,87	3,11	3,84	3,47	3,68	<b>3,19</b>
Athletics is in need of innovation and changes	2,24	3,62	3,71	3,42	3,85	<b>3,37</b>
All questions	<b>3,15</b>	<b>3,55</b>	<b>3,62</b>	<b>3,03</b>	<b>3,22</b>	<b>3,31</b>



## **Comments:**

Trainers from Bulgaria and Austria are the most satisfied with the work of an athletics coach, while Slovaks and Poles are the least optimistic.

The greatest needs are related to cooperation with local authorities and lack of sponsorship.

Despite the difficulties, coaches are satisfied with their training work in clubs and schools.

One of the important factors is the low level of earnings for coaching work.

Satisfaction with the profession is based on the help of the club and the support of parents.

3/10 Opinions about athletics, or how to attract children to the "queen" of sports

Based on the trainers' suggestions (no response from Slovakia), the opinions can be summarized into a few points.

The most important thing is to treat athletics broadly and for everyone.

Inclusion in athletics is essential.

Athletics is a multi-directional sport (sprints, endurance competitions, jumps, throws) and therefore its forms can be adapted for everyone - more or less fit, slim and obese, disabled and disabled, older and youngest... A personal (individual) approach is the power of athletics exercises .

Cooperation of teachers and trainers with various organizational units (kindergartens, schools, universities, clubs, municipal, city, regional and national offices, sports associations, ...) is necessary.

Athletics needs marketing. Promotion at every level (schools, internet, TV,...) is essential. Athletics should be promoted in all environments.

Infrastructure (stadiums, halls,...) and appropriate (age-appropriate) equipment are still one of the elements influencing the popularity of athletics.

Lack or poor organization of competitions in groups of children.

Lack of development of model solutions ("LA at school", "Talent schools", training models in competition blocks,...).

Financial problems (related to the previous points – marketing, organization of competitions,...).





### III. Good Practices.

#### 1. Austria

##### **Athletic Teens project** (<https://www.athleticgirls.at/>)

This project has the aim getting young girls (secondary education level 1) interested in athletics in Lower Austria. It was initiated by the Regional Government in cooperation with the Regional Sport Federations (e.g. Lower Austrian Athletics Federation). There are training sessions with successful Austrian athletes like Ivona Dadic or Beate Taylor and the girls get coupons for 6 months free trainings in an athletics club which is located near their place of residence. Furthermore, Athletic teens and Sportland Niederösterreich (sport department of the Regional Government) organized an Athletic girls sprint challenge in 2022 with participation of Austrian top female athletic athletes (autographs sessions tips & tricks from the professionals)

##### **School project**

Inspired by the "Athletics 4 Health" studies between schools and clubs the Vienna based club ATSV OMV Auersthal initiated a cooperation with a school close to their training facility. The club has not been active in this segment before. The project now includes in total 3 hours of athletics training offered to kids in this school. Some of the kids are still in the project – all three years in a row. Some of the most talented athletes from this school project joined the club for a more specific athletics training – the project runs perfectly as a role model.

Kids pay 5 euros for one hour of athletics training a week – in total around 70 euros each semester. With this money the coaches are paid, and some money is left to the club. The equipment was paid by World Athletics in the initial phase.

Based on this project Austrian Athletics put in some more efforts into this project. Funded by the federation's money and the Grant for Growth program from World Athletics, the Austrian Athletics federation, in cooperation with some regional associations and other clubs, started the school project with other (elementary and middle) schools in Austria in autumn 2023. In addition to the weekly organized exercise sessions for children aged at least six and over, carried out by trained athletics trainers, there are many other advantages for interested schools:

- New sports equipment funded by World Athletics and Austrian Athletics
- No additional organizational effort for parents/teachers and the school
- No additional costs for school
- Further training opportunities for interested teachers.



The aim is still the same as at the beginning, to bring enthusiastic children to the surrounding clubs and thus promote Austrian athletics with new talent. To ensure the sustainability and the financial feasibility (buy new equipment and cover the coaching costs) of the project a small semester fee is being considered.

## 2. Finland

### **Athletics Training at Afternoon in the School**

(<https://www.yleisurheilu.fi/iltapaivakerho-koulussa/>)

After school there are Athletics Training Afternoon in the school. Ten training sessions challenge kids to the many-sided world of jumping, throwing, and running. Local sport clubs' instructors organize training sessions by using school facilities. Kids get information of healthy food supplementation by using institute of UKK Healthy Kid material.

Sport clubs and coaches get ten easy and ready-to-use models for implementing training in the school. They get marketing materials and contents for 10 social media posts, material for 15 minutes nutritional info, t-shirts for coaches and package for kid training (balls, ropes, Mini hurdles).

One important content is activity challenges for classes. Class can give points if pupils do rights things in the morning "I ate breakfast". After two weeks coach or teacher calculate points together and all teachers give surprise gift.

### **National Athletic Week in May**

(<https://www.yleisurheilu.fi/valtakunnallinen-yleisurheiluviikko-23-29-5-2022/>)

National Athletic Week (NAW) invite all citizens to introduce themselves to athletics. The goal is to organize happenings where is possibilities to introduce sport club actions and experience the joy of athletics.

During National Athletics Week is National Athletics Competition Days which is normally in the middle of the week. It is targeted to get many easily accessible competitions to all cities in Finland. It is encouraged to change competition facility to parks, walking streets or school yards.

Sport clubs register for NAW and Finnish Athletics draw five national team athletes to join and visit in clubs happening. Federation gives prize money for three best organized happenings.

### **School Action Day**

(<https://www.yleisurheilu.fi/yleisurheilupaiva-koulussa/>)

Finnish School Action Day (FSAD) is titled as main sponsor" Elovena Voimapäivät". It is one day happening in school yards where pupils can jump,



throw, and run by doing base athletic skills. FSAD is day for activating schoolchild for athletics but on the other hand tell them the meaning of health nutrition. Elovena Voimapäivät is open for day-care center kids, too.

Pupils can test all kind of events near the school. There are many kinds of events with nice exercises and instructors. One important advantage is to bring sport facilities and equipment's near the school without moving pupils out of their normal environment. School Action Day could be organized by normal way in normal athletic venue, of course.

School Action Day offer ideas to do athletics for both pupils and teachers. Teachers are working as assistant instructors in different points of field, and they are getting involved in speedy day. There are many kinds of low-level safety planned tracks that works for all kind of schoolchild's depending on their level of skills.

All actions are organized with active sport clubs.

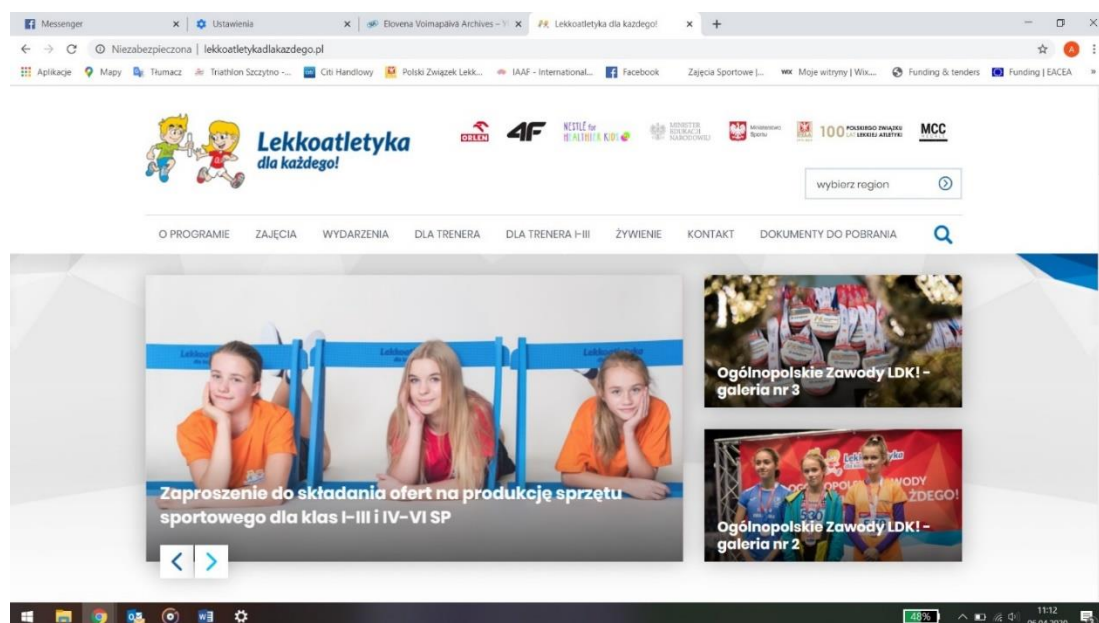
### 3. Poland

For many years, the Polish Athletics Association has been involved in the promotion of physical activity.

#### **Athletics for Everyone! project.**

Since 2014, it has been running the Lekkoatletyka dla każdego! project (Athletics for Everyone), which is complementary to school activities. It is aimed at children aged 7-16 and based on proven formulas, developed for the first time by IAAF, and promoted under the name Athletics for kids.

Every year, over 10,000 children participate in regular classes throughout Poland.



Website of the Athletics for Everyone! project.

The advantages of the Athletics for Everyone! include:

- Free regular sports activities,
- Nationwide coverage,
- Use of existing sport infrastructure,
- Using the knowledge of experienced PZLA coaches (over 600 people),
- Increase in the activity of local sports organizations (clubs, associations),
- Popularization of athletics among children and adolescents aged 7-15 years.

As part of the Project, promotional activities are also implemented to increase interest in physical activity and healthy diet.

Websites: [www.lekkoatletykadlakazdego.pl](http://www.lekkoatletykadlakazdego.pl)

### **Athletic Olympic Hopes.**

The idea of the Athletics Olympic Hopes project is to organize a series of sports and athletics events for primary school children, the aim of which is to promote physical activity and patriotic education. The project is aimed at children aged 9-13 who do not regularly practice sports.



An important element of the project is the combination of sports offers with patriotic education.

The sports part of the project assumes the organization of 16 qualifying competitions at the stadium, 16 cross-country events between and the national final. Classic athletics competitions will be supplemented with a series





of school (inter-school) events aimed at both promoting physical activity and encouraging young people and schools to participate in the project.

All events will be organized with appropriate audiovisual setting and the participation of sports stars.

A special element of the project will be a campaign promoting physical activity among children and young people by encouraging them to take part in sports competitions. By implementing the Athletics Olympic Hopes project, the Polish Athletics Association plans to increase the reach of its influence on school youth and, in particular, encourage more of them to practice sports, especially athletics. This will allow us to increase the number of children practicing this discipline and select young people who are talented in sports.

The long-term effect of the project will be a greater number of Polish representatives winning medals at international events.

In 2023 over 24 000 kids took part in Project.

#### 4. Slovakia

##### **Kid's athletics.**

This project, by its very nature, creates the foundations for all sports industries. It is playful, attractive, appealing and comprehensively develops children's motor skills and skills. We have been developing the Kid's Athletics project in Slovakia for several years and it is intended for the age group of 5 to 11 years. The project can be implemented in elementary schools as well as in extracurricular activities in various sports clubs. Running, jumping, throwing and walking are basic human locomotion, and their proper mastery creates a prerequisite for the proper development of every child.

The main goal of the project is to offer parents and their children a new opportunity to develop movement skills in the form of regular year-round sports activity. The project has a nationwide scope, and SAF's ambition is to involve the maximum number of elementary schools and sports clubs in which the athletics club will take place. The long-term goal of the project is to provide parents with the opportunity to find a "Kid's Athletic Club" in every corner of Slovakia, if they are interested, just for their child and in their region.

During the year, Kid's Athletics prepares various competitions for children, such as:

Kid's mixed relay cross-country race, Spajkys regional cup, Kid's P-T-S, Children's relay league, Triathlon of athletic training students, and with the help of regional coordinators, we also organize a number of promotional

events and competitions, where coaches and children are just getting to know Children's athletics.

During the operation of the project, we published 2 publications that help new coaches at schools and clubs. The project also includes the education of new coaches and the training of new coaches



## The Youth Athletics.

Project is an extension of the Kid's Athletics project, and during the operation of the project, it had the task of helping the athletics club and its competitors, especially in terms of material and technical support. During the duration of the project, SAF distributed several dozen athletic aids for the age category of younger and older students to clubs that actively work with this age category. The project brought several youth races to the area and contributed to increasing the attractiveness of athletics in cities and towns. It enabled clubs to have a better variety of exercises and practice new athletic disciplines. The project also brought with it new forms of education for youth coaches in the form of seminars.



### IV. Guidance for sport organizations and bodies responsible for promoting physical activity among kids and youth.

#### 1. Schools

##### 1.1. Austria.

###### *a. Cooperation of schools.*

Based on the results of the conducted surveys we figured out that there is a huge lack of cooperations between schools and athletics clubs in Austria.

The Austrian Athletics Federation implemented a tailor-made strategy for the specific needs within these cooperations. Based on the first experiences described in point III (best practices – school project) the federation set up a project which focuses on developing athletics in school on elementary and middle school level.





Additionally, to this strategy the federation applied for fundings at World Athletics to secure financial support for the expensive equipment which is needed in the starting phase of the program. The federation receives funds to buy full equipment for ten schools (hurdles, starting blocks, tires for throwing, vortex, relay batons...).

#### *b. Education for teachers*

It is clear that with the initiation of the school project more coaches for kids athletics are needed. In the early stage of the project (October 2023) the plan is to promote the school project during the coaching education program “Übungsleiter” in Q1/2024. This education program is focused on coaches who are working on basic level of athletics and is also offered by the regional athletics federations.

Austrian Athletics intends to motivate these educated coaches to contribute their knowledge to the school project. This will bring the project to the next level of professionalisation. Another step in the future will be to offer further education courses for interested teachers. These teachers will receive basic competences and knowledge to motivate and implement athletics athletic trainings in their lessons.

The educational concept of the “Übungsleiter” is – regarding the practical inputs - partially based on the official Austrian Athletics brochure “Leichtathletik in der Schule” for kids athletics in Austria. The brochure is only available as paperwork. A next step is to digitalize this brochure to make it available on a website where every interested coach can access it. For this project development extra fundings will be necessary.

#### *d. Sponsors*

Schools on the elementary and middle school level in Austria normally don't have sponsors from the private sector. In some cases, higher schools have sponsors. One of the partner schools from the project – the VS Gramatneusiedl on elementary level – has published some partners on the website. Partnerships in this case means that kids receive some financial support for traveling to school competitions or support for their “healthy breakfast”.

For the school project itself it's not a target for the federation to become active in generating new sponsors for schools.

#### *e. Access to sports infrastructure*

Most schools in Austria have access to a gym within the school area, one third has access to a school sports field.

The access and spatial distance to sports infrastructure in Austria varies depending on the location of the school in cities or rural areas. Our partner





schools in Gramatneusiedl and Vienna have perfect conditions to organize trainings for kids.

#### *f. Promotion*

To further promote our project in schools we want to motivate some of our top athletes to visit those schools for motivational speeches or to simply take part in one of these lessons.

#### *g. Conclusion*

During launching phase in autumn 2023 we got the feedback that teachers are convinced about the advantages of athletics for the physical development of kids. Athletics was often mentioned in the research phase as a good way to develop basic motoric and sport skills which are also needed for other sports. Teachers in elementary schools are open minded to implement athletics in the school lessons. The involvement of headmasters in sports in general is beneficial.

A challenge is that most of the kids are still playing football or have gotten in touch with football more than with athletics on the media. Especially boys starting from the age of 10 are consuming football via social media or on TV. If they are still playing for a local club it is hard to convince them to shift "their" sport. We figured out that the most efficient strategy is to promote athletics in the first and second grade (8-9 years of age) in elementary schools. We assume that starting early in the promotion of athletics could be beneficial to bring more kids to athletics.

Austrian Athletics will initiate more cooperations between clubs and schools nearby in the next months. In the current project mentioned before we have a best practice example which could also be implemented in other schools.

#### *1.2. Poland.*

- Assistance in organizing athletics competitions and festivals integrating children with and without disabilities (also with the participation of parents).
- Supplement the topics of other (except PE) subjects with "athletics" content (physics - hammer throw trajectory, mathematics - determining running speed, Polish - songs with athletics in the background). A good way is to combine the issues of athletic training and dietetics,
- The school, in cooperation with parents, should inspire individual development of athletics skills - through inspiration, examples, content of PE classes and organization of competition.
- Family (neighborhood, friendly) athletics activities may be valuable in addressing youth's unwanted athletics efforts.



- Combine athletics activities with activities in other sports disciplines as part of school activities. This teaches (e.g. football players) how to accept athletics for the needs of other competitions.

### 1.3. Finland

There has been long tradition at schools to co-operate with athletic club's long time ago. Nowadays it is harder for many reasons, but it is important to understand we have same kids at schools and clubs.

- There are many tools for promoting athletic for schools. It needs to find right times to present all activities that are in use. Athletes are huge capacity to use promoting athletics for kids at school.
- Many schools have own facilities for physical education. In many cities facilities are closed after school days. Many schools can make independent decisions to open doors. Opening doors can be one very important key to more active life and life-time active behavior in physical activity.
- Educating teachers. Many teachers are willing to teach physical education, but they have minor knowledge of basic movement patterns. There need to be learning material (videos, books) for teachers which are key persons to tell joy of athletics.
- Athletics is very complicated event to organize competitions. Sport clubs need to go for helping teachers to organize competitions. There are also new ways and new technology available, and it may encourage schools.
- It might very useful if schools have training sessions which are integrated to another school subject. For example, it could be useful and interesting to calculate how many meters (or marathons) one class can run during one lesson. Or how many jumps (or throws) one class can produce during one lesson.
- Schools need to have special days for Sport and exercising. In the wintertime they could focus for skiing and skating and in the fall or spring season athletics, ball games and orienteering are in focus.

### 1.4. Slovakia

- To improve the awareness of the benefits of athletic exercise training among primary school teachers so that they use it more often during physical education lessons.
- Improve material equipment at schools by purchasing athletic aids from grants or directly from subsidies from the Ministry of Education.
- To include children with disabilities in the process of education and physical training.
- Cooperate more often with local sports clubs to popularize exercise training among today's young people to improve their health and movement skills.



## 2. Clubs

### 2.1. Austria

For clubs the school project is a good opportunity to generate new talents and to receive a new source of income. For a small fee kids can take part in the athletics lessons and from this money the coaches will be paid. The remaining money is for the club, not for the federation. The federation will motivate more clubs to implement this project with school partners.

As far as the association's educational offering is concerned, the clubs have the opportunity for their coaches to receive further education free of charge. This education contains the newest scientific insights.

To offer young kids international experiences from the cultural and sports view the Austrian federation offers international competitions, whenever possible, to take part in. In 2022 80 kids from different clubs took part in the EU-funded project "Athletics Unlimited Games" in Krakow. In 2023 18 kids took part in the EU-funded project "Athletics 4 Health" in a competition in Spala (POL).

A further challenge regarding infrastructure for clubs with a high number of members is the limited access to indoor facilities during winter when training outside is difficult due to weather conditions. In Vienna e.g., there are only a few schools where clubs can enter to train in the gyms during winter months – spaces for indoor training are limited, also because there is only one small athletics facility in Vienna.

Another challenge is that clubs hardly not receive any direct financial support from the three umbrella organizations (ASKÖ, Sportunion, ASVÖ – see graphics below). Those three big organizations in the Austrian sports system do invest more in their own projects than investing in clubs on grassroots level. They are hiring even more coordinators for their own projects but are not putting 50% of their budget directly into the clubs as it is foreseen in the law ("federal association grant"). E.g. "Hopsi Hopper" project by the ASKÖ is a project which forces movement for kids – sport federations like athletics are not involved in this projects.

To face this challenge it would be a political debate which is very hard. How can we get athletics into these ongoing projects? This is a question we must think about soon.

### 2.2. Poland

- Make sports facilities available to children and teenagers, equipped with equipment adapted to the age of the participants.
- The club should have a person responsible for cooperation with the city and schools. This will make it easier to organize local events.
- Clubs should initiate proposals for athletics competitions, and cities should initiate sports festivals.



- Clubs should coordinate selection tests conducted in all schools.

### 2.3. Finland

Finnish Athletics have 550 registered clubs and about half of them are quite an active and about 50 of them are super active. Most of the club are volunteer-based and they have 2-3 half or full-paid person. Tradition to have paid person is quite a new and during last five years it has hired persons only some new positions. Sport clubs can affect many ways to athletes.

- It must be first selection to co-operate with schools. There need be one person who has time and passion to work closely with schools. All kids are at schools five days a week and nine months a year.
- Federation have built practical tools for promoting athletics at schools. These elements need to be able to use more efficiently.
- Competitions are vital core of track & field. Kids competitions can't be copy of adult ones. It important clubs can organize and generate modern style competitions for schools. Team element is essential.
- In respect of earlier (3), clubs need co-operate with school organization and Federation and encourage school to participate larger national relay events. By participating bigger events schools can find other perspective for their daily learning.
- It is normal that sport clubs have limited number of training sessions per week. Coaches need to give special tasks for kids and young athletes, for example by using bicycles while coming training and giving homework that includes small training session with parents. It is essential to activate parents for co-operation, too.

### 2.4. Slovakia

- To improve cooperation and communication between sports clubs and teachers in primary schools so that sports talented children can smoothly transition to sports clubs.
- Get more involved in the organization of school, club and regional competitions and at the same time find a responsible person in the club who would have the task of searching for talents at these competitions.
- Start communicating and presenting athletic training in other sports clubs with a focus other than athletics. This concept works in some cities and it would be important to get it to most cities so that coaches from other sports understand the importance of athletic training for all sports as the basic pillar of a successful athlete.

## 3. Federations

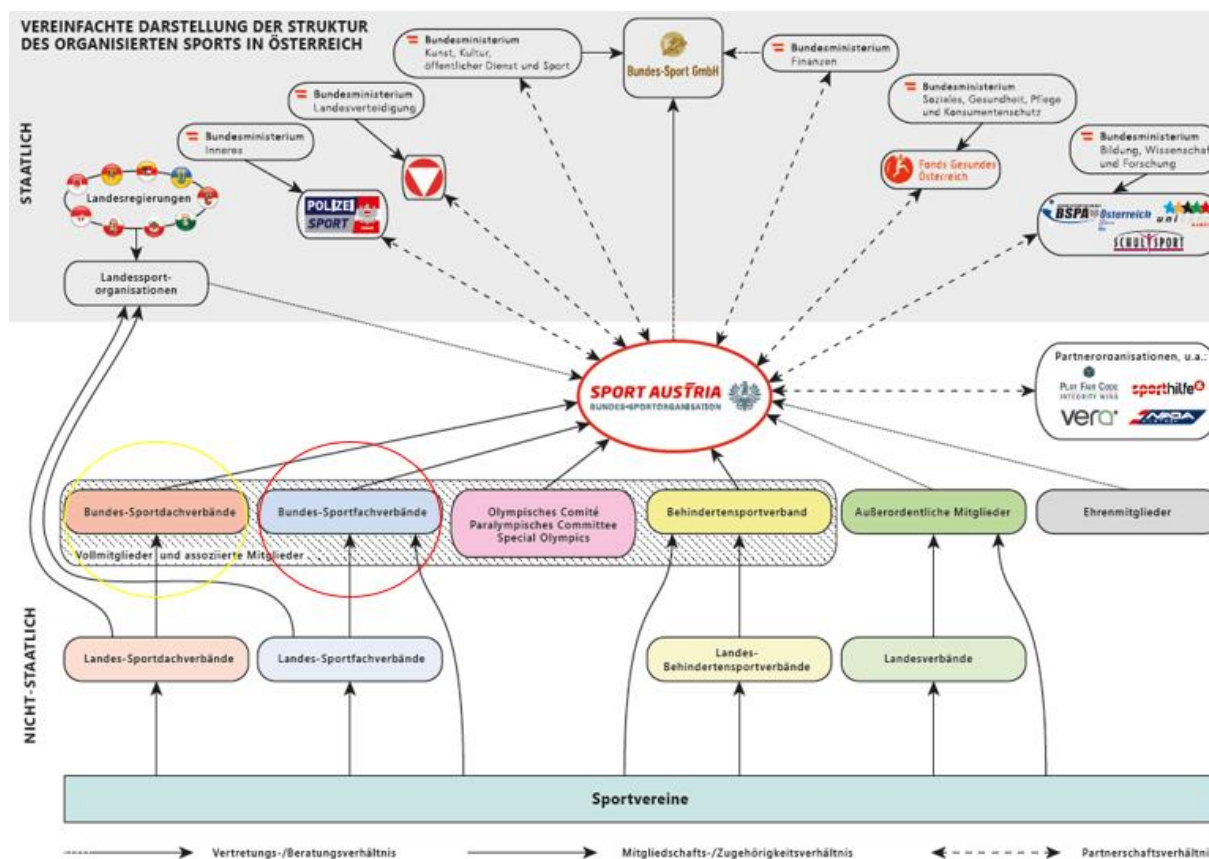
### 3.1. Austria.

The sports promotion by the Austrian state is unique in Europe. On the one hand we have the professional sport organizations like Austrian Athletics – in total 60 federations (see red circle). They are responsible for the development

and success of Olympic and non-Olympic sports and are accepted by Sport Austria – the rooftop sports organization in Austria.

Beside this Austria has three umbrella federations (see above and in the graphics below in the yellow circle) – they are called ASKÖ, Sportunion and ASVÖ and are originated from the political past. The ASKÖ was founded by the social democrats, the Sportunion by the Christ democrats and the ASVÖ was founded by non-political people. In fact, all these three umbrella federations are promoting the same – they are supporting the grassroots sport. By law they are obliged to support the grassroots sports e.g., the local clubs. But the support in local clubs this is decreasing.

For example: They cancel the “ASKÖ Leichtathletik Cup” for the best ranked clubs in athletics even though this support is necessary for the clubs. As a result, Austrian Athletics must support even more clubs to maintain their club life.



Grafics: Sport Austria (Österreichische Bundessport-Organisation)

A second challenge is that the regional athletics federations (in total 9) are becoming weaker regarding the structural strength and the ability to handle all tasks of a modern federation. In most clubs a single person is responsible for the continuity of the club. To strengthen the clubs, we are convinced that the school project is a perfect solution. New kids and their parents will join the clubs and will revitalize the club's life.





## European and World Athletics

From our area and world athletics federations we receive a huge support in organizing athletics projects in Austria. This year our youth coordinator got invited into the European Athletics "Coach the Coaches" seminar in Belgrade, where he learnt how to educate youth coaches in clubs on grassroots level.

From World Athletics we applied for funding regarding the huge investment in equipment as mentioned above.

### 3.2. Poland

- Propose and organize workshops and courses promoting athletics at school under the slogan "Athletics for All". Coaching courses should cover issues for a selected sports group (children, standard, champions).
- Developing proposals for using runs, jumps and throws in general development training in other sports disciplines (we can be the first).
- Coaching courses enriched with the preparation of trainers to work with disabled people.
- Development of new athletics textbooks (paper and online versions) - most of them are quite distant. You can look for teams to implement, e.g. "Athletics for every student", "Scientific foundations of athletics".
- Develop a systematic way of organizing competitions for children and youth (urban + regional + national).
- Strengthen cooperation with research units, mainly based on AWF.

### 3.3. Finland

Our feeling is that all Federations are full of work of their own. It causes situations that there is lack of shared information and lack of shared vision.

- There are lot of information available. It should increase leading by researched data.
- There need to be modern style models for coach and instructor education. Because most of coaches and instructors are voluntary based, they will stay more permanently as they have last evidence-based material for doing their volunteering.
- Federations will promote athletics more as a base element for all sport. They can take more ownership that athletics is multievent and it can lead for success is all sport.
- Clubs and schools are working independently. That is very big problem because kids are same.
- There should be modern rewarding system for kids and young athletes. One option is to give awards to those who perform many events per year. By doing many events it encourages kids and young athletes train in their own time, too.



### 3.4. Slovakia

- Professionalization of coaches in clubs.
- Improve communication with schools - according to the questionnaires, it is at a very poor level.
- Regularly educate coaches and teachers in all areas from psychology to periodization of sports training, etc...
- Organize more promotional events at schools for the popularization of athletics, discussions with the best athletes and easy competitions also in the online space for valuable prizes.
- Improve availability of existing facilities, stadiums, sport halls for the kids by improving cooperation between schools, clubs, owners of facilities.

## 4. Government – Decision makers.

### 4.1. Austria.

From the federations point of view athletics does need more infrastructure in some parts of Austria. In Vienna we don't have a single track with eight 400m lanes. This means that we cannot organize national championships in the capital.

The federation is in exchange with the authorities of Vienna to modernize the athletics center in the Prater (Vienna) and is involved in the development and planning of the new Sport Arena Vienna – the successor of the famous Ferry-Dusika-Stadium. This indoor stadium will be reopened in 2025.

In Upper Austria the regional government started an investing campaign in 2019 to establish some new athletic tracks in Linz and other cities.

For future projects it could be an option to face cooperations with other stakeholders in the sports sector.

Other sports stakeholders

To strengthen athletics in schools and clubs other stakeholders should be involved. It would be beneficial if the federation/clubs get in contact with school headmasters to promote our school projects together in front of the education directorate of Vienna. The federation's president is working for the sports directorate of Vienna and supports all our projects with huge reprint.

To set up athletics projects the Austrian Ministry of Sports can also be a key stakeholder in the future to develop athletics projects in schools or clubs.

### 4.2. Poland.

- Transdisciplinary cooperation of sports associations in the field of general preparation, using athletics-related physical activity (e.g. elements of warm-up in various sports disciplines) as a common sports good). I think track and field is the No. 1 sport in this set.
- Cooperation of sports associations with Paralympic organizations.



- The profession of coaching in athletics in school youth groups is practically social. Additional benefits certainly influence the selection of training staff.
- (Universities) Internships of primary education students at sports universities. On the one hand, this will be inspiring for future teachers of grades 1-3, and on the other hand, it will force universities to develop the "Athletics for grades 1-3" program.

#### 4.3. Finland.

The biggest impact will get if the biggest investor understands the role of active sport life. First time ever recent Government have done written markings to their Government Program 2023-2027.

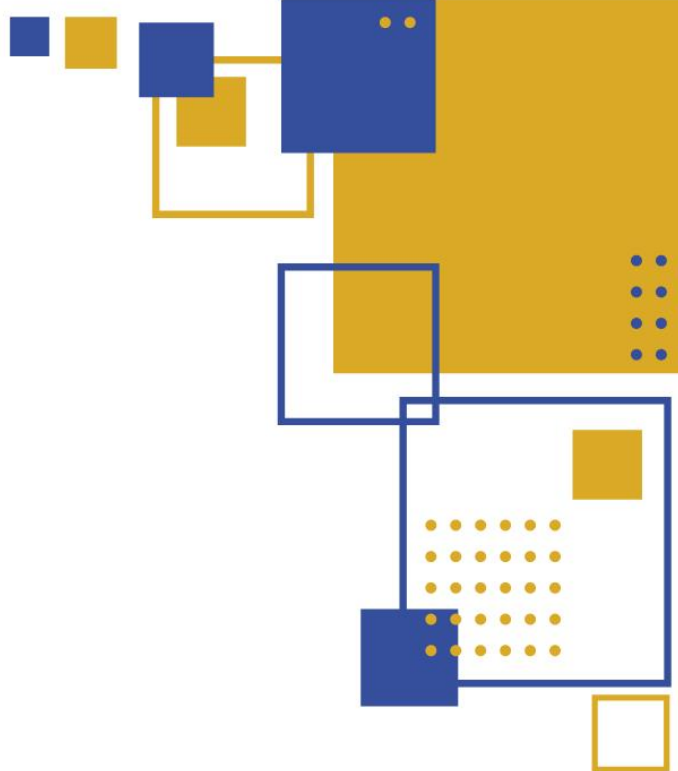
- There must be enough investments for facilities and renovations, especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area which is growing every year
- Education investments are very essential for all levels. As a one example we have only one university which educate PE teachers. There need to educate more teachers for teaching motor skills for kids.
- As mentioned earlier third sector, for example clubs, and schools are isolated from each other. There need to be organized associations or other low level threshold regimes to smoothing co-operation between clubs and schools. Government needs to facilitate project. One idea is to hire shared persons for instruct PE and club work.
- One hour PE has been dreamt for many years. Government needs to speed up that dream come through.
- It should be special National Sport Day for kids and young ones. It will focus importance of regular exercising and it will turn attitude for regular exercising more attractive.

#### 4.4. Slovakia

- Provide enough sports grounds, gymnasiums, and athletic tracks at primary schools so that young people can fully participate in sports.
- Increase the number of hours of physical education from 2 to 3 hours.
- To prepare educational material for teaching physical education for the 1st and 2nd grade of elementary schools in a fun way, also with the use of non-traditional aids, and also to prepare a manual for teachers and coaches on how to integrate fully disabled children into sports.
- Higher number of specialized sports secondary schools with a professional team of coaches, conditions, regeneration and diagnostic center.



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