



Research Report on the Story of LGBTQI+ Sport in Europe

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**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Preface

On behalf of the European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF), it is with deep pride and reflection that we introduce this document—an insight into the history, achievements, and aspirations of our LGBTQI+ sports movement, and the place of our federation within that. This work offers more than just accounts of history and development; it stands as a testament to the strength, resilience, and unity of our community through sport.

Since our founding in 1989 in The Hague, the EGLSF has played a pivotal role in advancing equality and visibility for LGBTQI+ people in European sport, through many concrete initiatives; the main one being the EuroGames, the largest European yearly multi-sport event for athletes, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics. This account is not just institutional; it is deeply personal. It is built from the voices, struggles, and victories of individuals who dared to imagine a better, more inclusive sporting world.

What began as a vision for safe and inclusive sporting environments has grown into a dynamic movement that champions human rights, fosters belonging, and celebrates diversity in all its forms, all which continues to place sport at its heart.

This important research captures three vital dimensions: where we began, where we stand today, and the direction in which our movement continues to evolve. It stands in honour of the trailblazers who laid the foundations, examines the milestones we've achieved—often against adversity—and invites future generations to build upon the legacy with renewed energy and purpose.

In documenting the past and present, this publication offers not only a mirror to reflect upon, but alongside the rest of the incredible work of the PLUSS project, it is also a compass to guide us forward.

With gratitude for those who came before us, and hope for those yet to come, we hope the work of the PLUSS project informs, inspires, and empowers everyone committed to making sport a space of inclusion, pride, and transformation, and we dedicate this research to everyone who believes that sport should be a place for all.

Current and former Co-Presidents of EGLSF

Hugh Torrance, Erika Patrikainen, Conny-Hendrik Schälke, Paul Brummitt, Sarah Townsend, Annette Wachter, Lou Englefield, Lou Manders, Klaus Heusslein and Ben Baks.

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Cite as:

Braumüller, B., Schlunski, T., & Hartmann-Tews, I. (2025). *PLUSS. Research Report on the Story of LGBTQI+ Sport in Europe*. German Sport University Cologne. <https://www.eglsf.info/projects/pluss-project/research-report/>

1. Introduction to the PLUSS Project

The project “LGBTQI+ Policy and Leadership in Sport and Society – PLUSS” is an initiative funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ programme. Running from February 2023 to January 2026, this project is dedicated to fostering inclusion and increasing participation of athletes with diverse sexual identities¹, gender identities and expressions², and variations in sex characteristics³ in grassroots sports across Europe. PLUSS aims to address discrimination and intolerance against sex and gender-diverse athletes while creating an inclusive, equitable, and supportive sporting culture for all.

1.1. Objectives of the PLUSS Project

The project’s overarching goal is to combat discrimination while establishing a sustainable and inclusive sports culture. To achieve the projects' goal, four specific objectives were formulated.

The first objective is to build cooperation and understanding among LGBTQI+⁴ sports clubs across Europe. This aims to create a strong network where clubs and their leaders can find support, motivation, and accountability.

The second objective is to understand the mechanisms and interventions that effectively address exclusion and improve inclusion for LGBTQI+ individuals in and through sports. By identifying what works, the project seeks to establish an evidence base to guide the development of principles and strategies for LGBTQI+ clubs and initiatives.

¹ Sexual identity is described as a component of a person's identity that reflects their sexual self-concept. There is much more to ‘sexual identity’ than the term ‘sexual orientation’ suggest. Sexual identity’ is also about questions such as: who picks you up from training, who you can kiss, how your family is made up, who you spent your weekend with...

² Gender identity is understood as “one’s sense of one’s self as a gendered person”, while gender expression deals with the behaviour, mannerism, clothing, language and physicality through which gender identity is expressed (Enke, 2012, p. 12).

³ Variations in sex characteristics refer to differences in sex development involving genes, hormones and reproductive organs (genitals).

⁴ LGBTQI+ is used as an acronym throughout the report for people with diverse sexual identities (lesbian, gay, bisexual and further sexual identities), gender identities (male*, female*, trans*, non-binary and further gender identities) and sex characteristics (intersex* and further characteristics).

The third objective focuses on increasing the capacity of LGBTQI+ sports clubs and leaders, enabling them to provide safe and inclusive environments for individuals excluded from traditional sports structures. This also includes enhancing their ability to collaborate with mainstream sports organisations.

Finally, with the fourth objective, the project aims to advocate for policies and practices that maximise inclusion and accelerate progress in ensuring equality for LGBTQI+ people in sports throughout Europe.

1.2. Project Partners

The PLUSS project brings together a consortium of nine European partner organisations, each contributing expertise in grassroots sports, inclusion, diversity, anti-discrimination, and advocacy. Collectively, the partners represent a spectrum of competencies, from research and practical sports development to policy advocacy and dissemination, ensuring that the project is both comprehensive and effective. The organisations include the European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF), German Sport University Cologne (DSHS), Sportieq (formerly International Centre of Ethics in Sport; ICES), Out for the Win, Queer Sport Split (QSS), Atlasz Sportegyesület, Out in Slovenija (OIS), Team München, and Pan Idræt København. The geographical diversity of these partners reflects a range of cultural contexts and sports profiles, enriching the project's scope and impact.

1.3. Research Focus and Methodology

Research plays a central role in the PLUSS project, aiming to uncover insights into the history, development, and impact of LGBTQI+ sports organisations. The research focuses on understanding the formation processes and experiences of these organisations, including their opportunities, challenges, and important milestones in the organisations' history, as well as their broader influence beyond sports. The project employs a combination of desk research, qualitative interviews, and a quantitative survey to achieve this.

Desk research on the development of LGBTQI+ sports in Europe involved a thorough review of existing literature. This provides a profound understanding of the historical and structural factors (i.e., political climate and legal situation, nature of and integration into the national sports system) shaping the landscape of LGBTQI+ sports. Furthermore, together with the qualitative study, it formed the basis for developing the questionnaire as part of the quantitative study.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with key leaders from the five LGBTQI+ sports club partners of the PLUSS project, offering detailed insights into their unique journeys. These interviews highlight the barriers and enabling factors at various levels, as well as critical moments that shaped the development of these clubs in order to derive similarities and differences in the clubs' experiences.

To complement these findings, a standardised quantitative survey was distributed across Europe to LGBTQI+ sports organisations, that is LGBTQI+ sports clubs and groups. The aim of the survey was to strengthen the findings, capture broader experiences and identify general trends. Thematically, the questionnaire included questions that look at the past, present and future development of LGBTQI+ sports organisations. The quantitative data focused on the main barriers and challenges in the development process, the strategies to tackle the barriers, central mindsets and orientations of the clubs/groups, milestones of the organisations' development and evaluation of necessary measures for the future development.

The dissemination of the survey relied on collaboration among project partners, who disseminated the questionnaire in their national networks, and the EGLSF, which spread the survey to its extensive membership base. The aim was to receive one questionnaire per organisation, i.e., LGBTQI+ sports club or group. Following this dissemination strategy resulted in 84 completed questionnaires.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative data ensures that the research findings are both comprehensive and reflective of the diversity of experiences within the LGBTQI+ sports community. The insights gathered from the research inform the project's advocacy efforts and provide practical recommendations for fostering inclusion in sports.

1.4. Research Report

The purpose of this research report is to provide a concise yet comprehensive report on the research activities within the Erasmus+ project PLUSS. Against the background of the empirical data collected, we aim to answer the following two questions:

1. What are the past experiences of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups and leaders in creating opportunities for LGBTQI+ people to participate in sports?
2. What are important current and future perspectives of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups with regard to the development of their club/group?

Based on the qualitative interviews with contemporary witnesses, we will first depict the history of the LGBTQI+ partner clubs, focussing on their origins and development, milestones and achievements, challenges and barriers, as well as visions and future directions. Secondly, we will turn to the quantitative survey and start by describing the sample of the responding LGBTQI+ sports clubs and groups. The survey findings are structured in four topics: development, governance, current mindsets and future strategies of the responding LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups. Apart from these general findings, differences by club- and group-based aspects (i.e., founding year and membership size of the LGBTQI+ sports organisations) as well as by the legal situation in the respective countries (ILGA rainbow score) will be analysed. At the end, a conclusion is drawn and some recommendations are outlined.

2. Contemporary Witnesses - History of Partner Clubs

This section summarizes the history of the European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF) and of each of the five PLUSSS LGBTQI+ partner clubs. The focus lies on their origins and development, on milestones and achievements, on challenges and barriers as well as on visions and future directions. While the part on EGLSF is a self-description of the federation, the parts on the LGBTQI+ clubs are based on the qualitative written interviews with contemporary witnesses of the respective clubs.

2.1. European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF)



| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Country | Netherlands |
| Founding year | 1989 |
| Members | EGLSF is a European level federation and has 180 LGBTQI+ sport clubs and associations as members, representing around 25,000 European athletes. |
| Website | https://www.eglsf.info |

Introduction and vision

The EGLSF is the leading voice of LGBTQI+ sport in Europe acting as a sporting umbrella organisation for LGBTQI+ sports federations, clubs, and individuals. Its vision is for a world of sport that fully includes and promotes equality for all irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. Its mission is to organise and harness our experience to achieve LGBTQI+ inclusion and equality in sport; to ensure that sport fully reflects us in all our diversity; and to ensure all LGBTQI+ people are free to participate and enjoy sport everywhere in Europe. As a sports federation, EGLSF offers no sports directly itself, it is the cumulative sum of its members. The EGLSF licenses the EuroGames, which is bid for, then organised by a member club, mostly annually. The EuroGames offers a wide range of sports, according to the capacity of the hosting club to organise them.

Origins and Development

The EGLSF was officially founded in 1989 by clubs from Germany and the Netherlands, and emerged during a time when LGBTQI+ visibility in sport was scarce. Indeed, many of the early clubs often masked their identity to avoid unwanted attention and discrimination. The founding aim was to create a safe, affirming environment for lesbian and gay athletes and to establish a European multisport event—the EuroGames, taking inspiration from the Gay Games movement which had begun in the US a few years earlier. The first EuroGames were held in The Hague in 1992 with just 300 athletes. Since then, the EuroGames have grown into a flagship event for LGBTQI+ sport in Europe, with participation of as many as 6,000 athletes in its largest edition. The EuroGames can be organised in different sizes and different formats, to ensure that it remains flexible for smaller member clubs and smaller locations to be able to host it. As the Federation evolved, so too did the scope of its representation and eventually its statutes were formally amended in 2016 to reflect a broader representation including bisexual, transgender, intersex, non-binary, and queer individuals.



"AGA 2025" The EGLSF Annual General Assembly in Valencia, Spain, March 2025 – Credits: Tina Éowyn Šmid

Milestones and Achievements

In over three decades of activity, EGLSF has evolved into a powerful voice for LGBTQI+ inclusion in European sport through advocacy, campaigning, institutional partnerships, and strategic projects.

Milestones include:

- **EuroGames:** Held in 21 editions across 12 countries, fostering visibility and solidarity, with targeted efforts to attract FLINTA (female, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, trans, and agender) and CEE (central and eastern European countries) participants.
- **Supporting Members and Growing the Network:** EGLSF expanded knowledge-sharing opportunities through newsletters, webinars, and the AGA (Annual General Assembly). Targeted initiatives included Advocacy Awards to community leaders; a developmental programme to support the development of Eastern/Central Europe member clubs; writing of toolkits on topics such as promoting diversity in sport, and on trans and intersex inclusion; and research on key areas such as gender equality and LGBTI women in sport.
- **Advocacy Recognition:** Accepted as a member of the Consultative Committee of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) in 2012.
- **EU Projects:** EGLSF has coordinated and partnered in multiple EU-funded projects (funded by the EU Erasmus+ programme in the field of sport) where it helps with its mission or strategy, or where it enables members to collaborate and develop: apart from the coordination of the mentioned PLUS+ Project, EGLSF has also participated in several other strategic projects, reflecting its commitment to promoting inclusion and combating discrimination in sports while enhancing educational opportunities across Europe.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborations with ILGA-Europe, ENGSO, FARE, and Pride House International have amplified EGLSF members and key areas of advocacy across multiple platforms.

Challenges and Barriers

The EGLSF has faced many internal and external challenges over the years. The organisation reflects the diversity and disparities within its membership and reconciles a significant variance in club membership models and national operating systems, and thus big variations in the size and scope of member clubs. Some members wish EGLSF to prioritise EuroGames, whilst others push for a deeper advocacy role, and the federation has to find a comfortable operating zone in this.

As EGLSF was founded by Western European clubs, it has developed along a model in that image and remains predominantly represented by Western European clubs in both membership and governance. This also reflects a proportionately lower number of formally organised clubs in the Central and Eastern Europe area. The autonomy and specificity of how sport is organised, and often in a cross-border way too, means that sports bodies often operate with high independence, making it difficult to hold them accountable for advancing inclusion and equality or for human rights violations, presenting a challenge to making advancements in advocacy.

The EGLSF has been self-financing through membership fees and income generated from the EuroGames and has received no core operating funding. This has meant that the federation has been historically dependent upon voluntary leadership from sports organisers and activists which brings higher risks including burnout and can limit long-term planning.



"EG2024" The EuroGames flag being transferred from EuroGames Vienna 2024 to EuroGames Lyon 2025, through the EGLSF board and team, Vienna July 2024 – Credits: Martin Darling

Vision and Future Directions

EGLSF's vision of equality for all in fully inclusive sport, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, is being pursued through some key strategic goals.

- 1) To build a strong European LGBTQI+ sport movement with our members and beyond
- 2) To centre EuroGames at the heart of a vibrant European LGBTQI+ tournament scene
- 3) To prevent and combat exclusion, discrimination and hate in sport
- 4) To engage with institutions and federations towards inclusion, equality and diversity in sport

Some key priority areas within those goals include:

- Expanding diversity in EuroGames by addressing financial and cultural barriers, increasing outreach to underrepresented groups, and expanding non-competitive participation.
- Strengthening member diversity, specifically of central and eastern European LGBTQI+ groups and communities, and by having improved visibility and representation of trans, non-binary and intersex athletes.
- Diversifying membership services and finding new and innovative ways to get resources to the places that most need them.
- Expanding influence to deepen the advocacy role, by leveraging partnerships and opportunities, and lobbying for better monitoring and benchmarks for LGBTQI+ inclusion in sport at the European level.

The EGLSF remains a unique and vital voice in European sport, working to represent the interests of our members, and to ensure that sport is a place where all people, regardless of their identity, can belong, participate, and thrive.

2.2. Atlasz Sportegyesület



| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Country | Hungary |
| City | Budapest |
| Founding year | 2004 |
| Members | 78 |
| Sports | within Atlasz: Aerobics/Stretching/Fitness, Badminton, Running, Squash, Swimming with Partner groups: Dancing, Table Tennis, Hiking, Biking tours |
| Website | https://www.atlaszsport.hu/ |

The Atlasz Sports Club is currently the only official LGBTQI+ sports organisation in Hungary. With a membership of 78 individuals, the club offers a wide variety of sports, including badminton, fitness, squash, swimming, running, hiking, biking, table tennis, dancing, and aerobics/stretching. Some of these activities are conducted in collaboration with other LGBTQI+ organisations. Beyond its athletic focus, Atlasz emphasises community-building, and provides a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQI+ individuals. The club organises a range of leisure activities such as social gatherings, camping trips and tours, offering members opportunities to connect informally. Open to all, regardless of sexual identity, gender identity, race, religion, or political beliefs, the club embodies inclusivity and fosters a sense of belonging.

Origins and Development

Founded in May 2004, Atlasz was established to unite Hungary's gay sports community under a single umbrella organisation. Key objectives included enhancing the visibility of LGBTQI+ athletes, fostering personal identity exploration among members, and facilitating community-driven legal and social representation. As a non-profit organisation, Atlasz also aimed to leverage fundraising opportunities, such as collecting a percentage of personal income tax contributions.

Cooperation with mainstream sports organisations was not seen as an important goal, nor was political activism, as the following quote stresses:

“It [cooperation with mainstream sports organisations] never even occurred to the founders. Fighting for gay rights was not the goal. We did not compete in Hungarian championships. Only to the extent necessary for the organisation of the competition we have been associated with Hungarian sports organisations, e.g.: Swimmers joined the swimming federation - they got judges for competitions and swimming pool hire” (Atlasz, para. 257f)

From its inception, the organisation adopted a non-political stance, focusing on community-building rather than activism. This apolitical positioning has been central to its ethos, ensuring the association remains a space of support and connection for individuals of varying beliefs.



Atlasz delegation at the 2024 Vienna EuroGames - 20 years after our foundation – Credits: Atlasz

Milestones and Achievements

The association began with 35 members and quickly established a sustainable structure through membership fees and regular events. Annual highlights such as sports days and Christmas dinners became pivotal in maintaining engagement and fostering a sense of continuity. Despite fluctuations in membership and the addition and dissolution of divisions over time, the organisation has maintained a steady presence in Hungary's LGBTQI+ community. A significant milestone occurred in 2012 when Atlasz co-organised the EuroGames. This marked the first time that the EuroGames took place in a

country from the Central and Eastern European region, and a significant moment in the overall history of the EuroGames and moment. While this event was a source of pride and visibility, it also highlighted internal and external challenges. Organising a large-scale event amidst a politically hostile climate and increasing threats to LGBTQI+ Pride activities placed substantial strain on the association. As members of the boards favoured different strategies and approaches, some disruptions and divisions developed in the leadership. Despite these hurdles, the association persevered, solidifying its resilience.



Atlasz volunteers - at the Sports Day 2025 – Credits: Atlasz

Challenges and Barriers

Operating on a voluntary basis has presented ongoing challenges for Atlasz. Limited time and resources, have sometimes strained operations. The leadership structure, featuring three co-presidents, further complicates accountability and delegation of tasks. Changes in personal motivation among board members and the inevitable risk of burnout necessitate frequent replacements and renewed energy.

Integrating new members has been another significant challenge, particularly given the diverse skill levels across sports. Without dedicated coaching staff, ensuring inclusivity and engagement for both novice and experienced participants has been difficult. Additionally, the behaviour of long-standing members has occasionally discouraged new joiners, underscoring the importance of cultivating an open and welcoming culture.

Vision and Future Directions

Over the years, Atlasz has secured fixed rented facilities for its activities, moving away from reliance on non-permanent venues. While the association has not experienced significant growth since its founding, it has maintained a stable and enduring presence, reflecting its commitment to creating a safe space for LGBTQI+ individuals in Hungary. By combining athletic endeavours with community-focused initiatives, Atlasz remains a vital part of Hungary's LGBTQI+ landscape, embodying resilience and inclusivity in the face of ongoing challenges.



2.3. Out in Slovenija (OIS)

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Country | Slovenia |
| City | Ljubljana |
| Founding year | 2010 (2000 as informal sports group) |
| Members | 50 |
| Sports | Badminton, Beach Volleyball, Cycling, Dance, Hiking, Self-Defence; and other seasonal and occasional activities |
| Website | https://www.outinslovenija.com/ |

The sports association Out in Slovenija (OIS) is a non-profit organisation committed to promoting sports, recreation, culture, and human rights, with a strong emphasis on creating safe and inclusive spaces for the LGBTQI+ community. With a current membership of 50 individuals, OIS organises a wide range of activities, including weekly badminton sessions, monthly hiking and cycling events, and seasonal courses in self-defence and dance. Seasonal activities such as beach volleyball and other occasional events further enrich the association's offerings. While participation is open to all, the organisation prioritises fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where LGBTQI+ individuals feel valued and empowered.

Origins and Development

OIS began in 2000 as an informal sports and leisure initiative and became part of the Društvo DIH association in 2003. Društvo DIH was founded in 2003 as a voluntary, independent, and non-profit organisation working in areas related to sexual and gender identity, including the promotion and protection of human rights, political and cultural activities as well as sports and leisure. DIH's broader, politically oriented mission prompted the eventual separation of OIS, allowing the organisation to concentrate exclusively on sports and recreation. In 2010, OIS became an independent sports association, establishing itself as a dedicated space for LGBTQI+ individuals to engage in physical activity and community-building.

Initially, OIS's activities focused on hiking and outdoor events that provided safe opportunities for socialisation and connection within the LGBTQI+ community. Over time, the organisation expanded its offerings to include structured sports programmes and participation in international events, such as the EuroGames and the Gay Games. These international engagements played a significant role in shaping OIS's development, inspiring new programmes, and enhancing its visibility within the global LGBTQI+ sports community.

Milestones and Achievements

OIS has accomplished several significant milestones that underscore its impact and growth. In 2004, it organised a large Slovenian delegation to the EuroGames in Munich, marking a major achievement in international participation. That same year, OIS launched the Ljubljana Gay Bowling Tournament, a successful initiative that was held six times until 2010. Between 2011 and 2013, the organisation participated in the pioneering Pride in Sport project, one of Europe's first major initiatives focusing on LGBTQI+ inclusion in sports. In 2017, OIS joined the Sporting Equals Erasmus Youth Worker Exchange in Scotland, which led to successful collaborations and the development of new projects.

From 2019 to 2020, OIS played a key role in the CEEYouSport project, focusing on developing LGBTQI+ sports clubs in Central and Eastern Europe. Building on this experience, OIS successfully secured European co-funding for the ISSCCEE project, which it coordinated. These milestones reflect the dedication and perseverance of OIS's team and their commitment to fostering inclusion and representation in sports.



Team from Out in Slovenija on Queer sports camp in Slovakia (2024) – Credits: OIS

Challenges and Barriers

Despite its successes, OIS faces ongoing challenges. Slovenia's political climate, particularly regarding the rights of trans, intersex, and non-binary individuals, presents barriers to creating truly inclusive spaces. Limited government funding for LGBTQI+ initiatives further restricts the organisation's ability to expand its activities and improve infrastructure. Ensuring the safety and privacy of members, many of whom remain discreet about their identities, remains a constant priority.

"A major challenge over the years has been to provide sufficient and professional support for activities; there are many wishes and ideas, but not so many people to actively take on responsibilities and tasks. In addition, we are limited by resources, and the running of activities is done on a voluntary basis" (OIS, para. 18).

The quote underscores the difficulties in recruiting people running activities. The voluntary nature of the organisation's operations poses additional difficulties, particularly in sustaining professional

support and implementing ambitious programmes. Recruiting and retaining volunteers is an ongoing challenge, compounded by the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a temporary suspension of activities and a decline in participation.

Vision and Future Directions

Looking ahead, OIS is dedicated to increasing its visibility and impact within Slovenia's LGBTQI+ community. The organisation plans to revive activities that were interrupted during the pandemic, expand its offerings, and recruit new volunteers to ensure the sustainability of its programmes. Through its continued involvement in international networks such as EGLSF and FGG, and its participation in European projects, OIS aims to strengthen its capacity to support LGBTQI+ individuals through sports and community initiatives.

By integrating sports, social engagement, advocacy, and cultural activities, OIS remains a cornerstone of LGBTQI+ inclusion in Slovenia. The organisation's commitment to fostering well-being, empowerment, and community resilience ensures its ongoing relevance and impact, both locally and beyond.



2.4. Pan Idræt København

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Country | Denmark |
| City | Copenhagen |
| Founding year | 6 th May 1984 |
| Members | 1650 |
| Sports | Badminton, Basketball, Board Games, Boxing, Dancing, Dodgeball, E-Sports, Field Hockey, Fitness Walk, Floorball, Football, Golf, Gymnastics, Handball, Line Dancing, Outventures, Rugby, Running, Swimming, Tennis, TransFitness, Triathlon/Bike, Volleyball, Walkathon, Water Polo, Yoga |
| Website | https://panidraet.dk/ |

Pan Idræt is a collective term for two multi-disciplinary sports clubs, Pan Idræt Copenhagen and Pan Idræt Frederiksberg, which together form the largest LGBTQI+ sports organisation in Denmark. With 1,650 members Pan Idræt Copenhagen is the bigger club, together they have over 2,000 members and 26 different sports and activities, and create a vibrant and inclusive space for individuals to pursue their sporting ambitions while fostering strong social connections. Activities range from swimming and volleyball to e-sports, yoga, and rugby, with a focus on providing a safe and welcoming environment for all participants. Membership has been steadily increasing by approximately 4% annually, reflecting the organisation's success in addressing the needs of a diverse community.

Origins and Development

Pan Idræt was founded in 1984 by a group of gay and lesbian persons under the umbrella of what was then the National Association for Gays and Lesbians (LBL), now LGBT+ Denmark. The initiative began with a swimming course on January 5, 1984, which attracted 30 gay men and 3 lesbian women. The swimming department, now known as Copenhagen Mermates, became the foundation upon which the organisation grew, leading to the formal establishment of Pan Idræt Copenhagen on May 6, 1984. In 2000, Pan Idræt became an independent entity, solidifying its role as a dedicated sports organisation for the LGBTQI+ community.



Pan Idræt's dodgeball team in action at Rainbow Sports Square, our vibrant 3-day sports festival during Pride Week – Credits: Bjarke de Koning

Milestones and Achievements

Over the years, Pan Idræt has achieved several milestones that highlight its dedication to both sports and community building. In 1989, the organisation became a founding member of the European Gay and Lesbian Sports Federation (EGLSF), establishing its presence on the European stage. Hosting the EuroGames in 2003 was a landmark moment, bringing athletes and spectators from across Europe to Copenhagen and fostering friendships and networks that endure to this day.

The 2010s saw significant modernisation and professionalisation of Pan Idræt's structures. The organisation introduced comprehensive reforms, including new articles of association that clarified roles, improved governance, and strengthened management. This period also marked the adoption of digital tools, such as a centralised membership system, which enhanced communication and streamlined operations. These advancements have positioned Pan Idræt as a model for LGBTQI+ sports organisations, combining professionalism with a commitment to inclusivity.



Gamers from Pan Idræt's gaming team enjoying a fun meetup at Rainbow Sports Square as part of the Pride Week festivities – Credits: Bjarke de Koning

Challenges and Barriers

Despite its successes, Pan Idræt faces persistent challenges. Securing adequate funding remains a significant hurdle, particularly as the organisation seeks to expand its activities and facilities. Access to appropriate training spaces and sports facilities is another ongoing issue, reflecting a broader challenge faced by sports clubs across Denmark. These barriers require continuous advocacy and creative solutions to ensure that Pan Idræt can sustain its mission and meet the needs of its growing membership.

Vision and Future Directions

Pan Idræt remains committed to creating a free and inclusive space where individuals of all identities can participate in sports without fear of discrimination. From its origins as a refuge for gays and lesbians excluded from traditional sports clubs, Pan Idræt has grown into a community-driven organisation that emphasises social connections and personal growth. Its open-door policy ensures that all individuals, regardless of sexual identity or gender identity, are welcomed and valued.

"There will always be a need for sports communities that are open, inclusive and specifically focused on the LGBTQI community. I think it's natural for people to gather in communities with others who are similar to themselves, share the same attitude, culture, religion, interest or life circumstances. I think that's a human need that most people have." (Pan Idræt, para. 47)

Looking to the future, Pan Idræt aims to further professionalise its structures, expand its offerings, and strengthen its partnerships with local and international organisations. By continuing to advocate for funding and facilities, the organisation seeks to overcome existing barriers and enhance its impact. As a pioneer in LGBTQI+ sports, Pan Idræt's legacy of inclusivity, resilience, and innovation ensures its continued relevance and success in Denmark and beyond.



2.5. Queer Sport Split (QSS)

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Country | Croatia |
| City | Zagreb & Split |
| Founding year | 28 th May 2011, formally registered sports club (NGO) (2005 as informal sports group) |
| Members | 90 |
| Sports | Badminton, Beach volleyball, Cycling tours, Dodgeball, Hiking, Ice skating, Swimming, Vogue (Dancing), Volleyball, and occasional events like a Book club and board games, Bowling, and Ice skating |
| Website | https://www.qss.hr/ and https://hr.qsport.info/ |

Queer Sport Split (QSS) is a non-profit organisation based in Split and Zagreb, Croatia, dedicated to promoting physical and mental well-being within the LGBTQI+ community. With a membership of approximately 90 active participants, QSS primarily operates in Zagreb, offering a variety of sports and recreational activities. These include swimming, volleyball, badminton, hiking, beach volleyball, cycling tours, dance workshops (notably voguing), and occasional events such as ice skating, bowling, board games, and a book club. While QSS is open to individuals of all sexual identities and gender identities, its activities are intentionally designed to create a safe space where LGBTQI+ individuals can feel comfortable and supported.

The current membership predominantly consists of gay men, though the organisation has expressed a strong commitment to increasing the participation of women, as well as trans, intersex and non-binary individuals. Although Split does not currently host any sports activities, the presence of two board members in Split highlights the organisation's intention to expand and deepen its impact in both cities. In Zagreb, QSS is overseen by an eight-member board that works collectively to support its mission and activities.



Hiking – Credits: QSS

Origins and Development

QSS' origins are in 2005, when it was launched as an informal initiative named qSport during the EuroGames in Utrecht. In 2011, it transitioned into a formally registered non-profit organisation, marking a significant milestone in its development. Initially, QSS's legacy was rooted in sports, social activities, and advocacy for the local LGBTQI+ community. Over time, its focus expanded to include psychosocial support and personal development initiatives.

A pivotal aspect of QSS's growth has been its engagement with international LGBTQI+ sports tournaments, including the EuroGames and the Frankfurt XMAS tournament, an annual sports event for LGBTQI+ athletes organised by the queer sports club FVV Frankfurt. Participation in these events not only motivated members but also provided valuable experience that enriched local initiatives in Zagreb and Split. Outreach efforts at these tournaments were instrumental in cultivating the enthusiasm and leadership necessary to sustain QSS's diverse activities.

Milestones and Achievements

QSS has a history marked by impactful events and initiatives that have strengthened the LGBTQI+ sports community in Croatia. In autumn 2011, qSport Zagreb organised the first Queer Sport Weekend, an annual event that continued until 2016 and was revived in 2020. These weekends featured well-

attended women's football and basketball tournaments, organised in collaboration with informal lesbian and women's sports groups from Zagreb. Participants included teams and individuals from across Croatia as well as neighbouring countries like Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Alongside the sporting events, panel discussions were held to explore topics such as inclusive sports practices and creating safe spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals.

In 2019, QSS achieved another milestone by becoming a member of the LGBT Centar Split, a socio-cultural hub for the local LGBTQI+ community. This partnership has further solidified QSS's role as a leader in fostering community connection and inclusivity through sports and wellness initiatives.

Challenges and Barriers

While QSS has made significant strides, challenges persist. Expanding participation in Split remains a priority, as does diversifying the membership base to include more women, trans, intersex and non-binary individuals. Ensuring the sustainability of its activities and leadership structure in a largely voluntary organisation also requires ongoing attention.



Beach volleyball at Queer Sport Day – Credits: QSS

Vision and Future Directions

Despite these obstacles, QSS continues to create services that are vital to the LGBTQI+ community. The following quote stresses the need to adapt in the future to a growing membership.

"As the number of our members grows, we also have to structure ourselves more, master new skills, find certain means of financing, have people who will deal with social networks and communication in general, without overburdening ourselves. Communication through social networks should be more planned than it is now and we need more volunteers (or maybe paid individuals) to help with this." (QSS, para. 87)

By promoting inclusive sports, offering individual and group support, addressing violence and discrimination, and challenging gender binaries and heteronormative norms, QSS provides a safe, affirming, and supportive environment for its members. The organisation's commitment to fostering physical and mental health while celebrating the diverse identities within the LGBTQI+ community remains central to its mission.

2.6. Team München



| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Country | Germany |
| City | Munich |
| Founding year | 26 th June 1999 |
| Members | 1052 |
| Sports | Badminton, Basketball, Bowling, Boxing, Bridge, Dancing, Fitness, Flag Football, Football, Handball, Kickboxing-Pointfighting, Rowing, Rugby, Running, Step Aerobics, Table Tennis, Tennis, Triathlon, Volleyball, Yoga |
| Website | https://www.teammuenchen.de/ |

Team München is Bavaria's largest queer sports club with over 1,000 members and offers recreational activities in more than 19 different sports. Established as a registered non-profit organisation in June 1999, Team München emerged from the collaboration of smaller LGBTQI+ sports clubs in Munich,

which had previously operated independently. Today, the club is an example of the power of solidarity, offering a space where people of all identities are welcomed and empowered to pursue their athletic passions in a non-discriminatory environment.

Origins and Development

Team München's development began in 1998 when athletes from various LGBTQI+ sports clubs in Munich competed together as "Team Munich" at the Gay Games in Amsterdam. This collaboration inspired the idea that a unified multi-sports club could be more effective than a collection of smaller, single-sport organisations. The vision was to expand the LGBTQI+ sports programme and to amplify the community's voice in the city. A year later, Team München was officially founded with the goal of fostering inclusivity in sports, increasing membership, integrating existing LGBTQI+ clubs, and enhancing the visibility of the community. Since its founding, Team München has grown exponentially in size and scope. What started as a collaboration between a handful of smaller clubs has become a thriving organisation with over 1,000 members participating in sports such as badminton, football, basketball, volleyball, rowing, rugby, tennis, and yoga. The club has also expanded its activities to include events like the SommerSportFestival, a multi-sport tournament, and the annual Run for Life charity event, which supports Munich's AIDS-Hilfe.



Team München members & friends at CSD München 2023 – Credits: Dirk Neitzke

Milestones and Achievements

Team München has marked several significant milestones in its history, highlighting its contributions to both sports and the broader LGBTQI+ community. One of the earliest achievements was the co-organisation of the Run for Life charity run in 2001, reflecting the club's commitment to social causes. The organisation of the EuroGames in 2004 stands out as a defining moment, as Munich hosted the largest EuroGames in history with over 5,000 athletes and thousands of spectators. This event not only strengthened the city's LGBTQI+ sports community but also fostered greater visibility and cohesion among LGBTQI+ individuals.

In addition to its local impact, Team München maintains membership in international organisations like the European Gay and Lesbian Sports Federation (EGLSF) and the Gay Games Federation (FGG). These affiliations underscore the club's commitment to advocating for LGBTQI+ inclusion in sports on a global scale while fostering partnerships that enrich its members' experiences. Advocating for LGBTQI+ people's rights is seen as major task, which is underscored in the following quotes.

"Team München is visible in the queer community and in urban society with its commitment and sees this visibility as its task." (Team München, para. 34)

"Team München shows how normal it is to be LGBTQ+ and helps to break down stereotypical prejudices (e.g. that a gay man can't run)" (Team München, para. 36)

Challenges and Barriers

Despite its successes, Team München faces several challenges. A significant issue is the lack of sufficient training facilities and coaches, a problem many of Munich's sports clubs share. This shortage limits the club's ability to meet the needs of its growing membership fully. Another challenge lies in motivating new members to take on active roles in the organisation as volunteers, particularly at the leadership level. There is a tangible risk of weakening of the management capacity without a steady influx of committed individuals.

The club also grapples with societal changes. Many younger LGBTQI+ individuals now feel accepted in mainstream sports clubs and do not see the need to join a LGBTQI+-specific organisation. At the same time, political developments in Germany, particularly the rise of far-right ideologies, pose threats to the safe and inclusive spaces that Team München strives to maintain.

Vision and Future Directions

Team München remains steadfast in its mission to foster tolerance, acceptance, and equality through sports. The club's focus on inclusivity ensures that people are valued for their identities rather than their gender, making it a beacon for those seeking a safe and supportive athletic community. The club also continues to strengthen its ties to local and international LGBTQI+ organisations.

Team München aims to address its challenges by increasing outreach efforts, recruiting new leaders, and advocating for improved access to training facilities. By maintaining its commitment to solidarity and inclusion, Team München not only reflects the strength of Munich's LGBTQI+ community but intends to set an example for other organisations worldwide.



Team München athletes at EuroGames Vienna 2024 – Credits: Christoph Hertzsch

2.7. Summary

Structurally, LGBTQI+ sports clubs do not show major differences from mainstream clubs. While they may face some specific challenges, e.g., securing access to training spaces and facilities, these issues are not unique to LGBTQI+ clubs. However, the societal and political climate in different countries affects LGBTQI+ sports clubs in distinct ways, often posing additional barriers to their establishment and acceptance. In some regions, discrimination and a lack of institutional support can create further challenges, impacting the visibility, funding opportunities, and overall sustainability of these organisations. At the same time, most LGBTQI+ sports clubs emphasise the creation of inclusive spaces rather than engaging in overt political activism. Their primary focus is on fostering a welcoming and discrimination-free environment where individuals can participate in sports and build a sense of community. While some clubs may engage in advocacy efforts, their main contribution lies in providing a social and athletic space that supports LGBTQI+ individuals in a broader societal context.

A consistent feature across all clubs is the strong reliance on committed volunteers, particularly in leadership positions. These individuals play a crucial role in ensuring the organisational stability and development of the clubs. The clubs also mark their progress through specific milestones, including their establishment, growth in membership, and increasing recognition within broader sports communities. A notable and important aspect of their activities is the organisation and hosting of (international) sporting events like the EuroGames, Gay Games or the EGLSF Annual General Assembly, which significantly enhance the visibility and integration of LGBTQI+ athletes in mainstream sports.

Specific sports activities emerge as particularly prevalent regarding the range of sports offered. Among the five clubs analysed, the most practiced sports include Badminton, Cycling, Dancing, Hiking/Running, (Beach) Volleyball, which appear in at least four of the five organisations studied.

The findings from the interviews with the contemporary witnesses of the project partner clubs build the central framework and content for the quantitative survey. The reports on the historical development of their LGBTQI+ organisation, on past and present challenges, achievements and future visions were transferred into closed questions with categories and enriched with further relevant aspects derived from desk research on mainstream sports clubs and diversity management. To make this

procedure comprehensible and make the quantitative findings easier to read, we added associated quotes from the qualitative interviews with the partner clubs to the respective quantitative findings.

3. Survey on the Development of the LGBTQI+ Sports Movement in Europe

This section deals with the quantitative survey on the overall development of the LGBTQI+ sports movement in Europe. Firstly, the sample of organisations that took part in the survey is described. Secondly, the results of the survey are presented in a structured form based on four key topics: (historical) development of the club/group, governance of the clubs/groups, present mindset of the organisations and future strategies.

3.1. Sample Description

The final sample of the quantitative study consists of 84 European LGBTQI+ sports organisations (sports clubs or sports groups). While sports clubs are formally registered organisations, sports groups have an informal character or are part of another LGBTQI+ organisation. The data collection was carried out between July and November 2024 and resulted in 92 completed questionnaires. As part of the data cleansing process, 8 cases were removed from the data set, either because less than 80% of the questionnaire was answered or because several questionnaires were received from the same LGBTQI+ sports organisation. As we aimed at collecting organisational data, only one questionnaire per organisation was considered in the final data set. For those organisations who submitted more than one questionnaire, we combined all of them based on frequencies and means to one artificial case.

In the final data set (n=84), 87% (73) of the LGBTQI+ sports organisations are described as LGBTQI+ sports clubs and 13% (11) as LGBTQI+ sports groups (see figure 1). The highest share of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups in the sample is from Germany (26%), followed by Italy (11%), Spain (7%), Austria (6%), Belgium (6%), Netherlands (6%) and France (4%). Additional 11% of the clubs/groups stem from non-EU countries within Europe. German clubs also comprise the largest proportion of EGLSF members, followed by member organisations from the UK and the Netherlands (EGLSF, 2025).

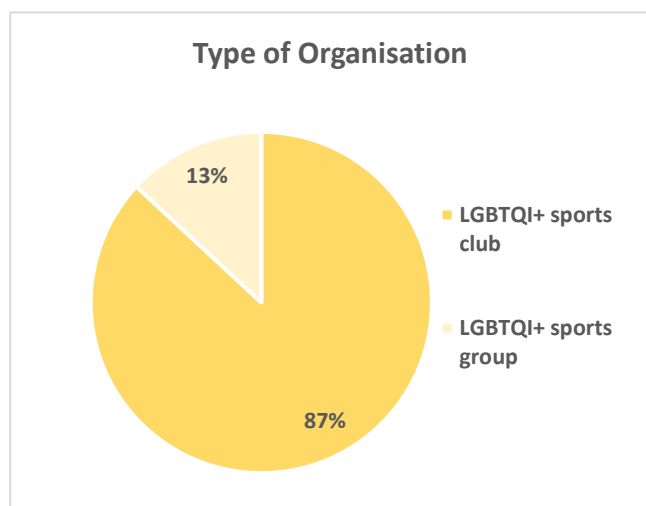


Figure 1: Types of Organisations (n=84)

The majority of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups are based in urban areas with more than 500,000 inhabitants (73%), followed by clubs/groups in smaller urban areas between 100.000 and 500.000 inhabitants (19%). 7% are in areas with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants and 1% of the responding organisations lack knowledge about the population density of the region they are located in.

The size of the responding sports clubs/groups in terms of the number of members varies considerably. The organisations report between 7 and 3000 members, with an average membership of 312 members. LGBTQI+ clubs are considerably bigger than LGBTQI+ groups, reporting an average of 343 members compared to 57 members in sports groups.

To get an impression of the openness and membership composition of the clubs/groups with regard to gender and sexual diversity, they were first asked to whom they are currently open. Almost all of the LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups report that they are open for lesbian and bisexual athletes (99%), hetero and cis athletes, and trans, intersex and non-binary athletes (each 98%). 93% of the clubs/groups in the sample are also open for gay and bisexual athletes (see figure 6). Secondly, the sports clubs/groups were asked to roughly estimate the composition of their membership in terms of gender identity and sexual identity. With regard to the gender identity composition, the sports clubs/groups roughly estimate that on average 60% of their members identify as male, 35.5% as female and 4.5% as non-binary (see figure 2). In general, the range extends from all-female to all-male sports clubs/groups and clubs/groups with up to 40% non-binary members. Furthermore, it is estimated that among the members, 93% identify as cis persons and 7% as trans persons on average. Again, there is a huge variety within the sample. The composition ranges from clubs/groups consisting of cis people only, to clubs/groups with a balanced membership of cis people and trans people.

In terms of the sexual identity of their members, the clubs/groups roughly estimate that on average 54% of the members identify as gay, 25% as lesbian, 8% as bisexual, 10% as heterosexual and 3% with a further sexual identity (see figure 3). The range of member composition extends from clubs/groups that have between 0% and 90% lesbian members, 0% and 100% gay members, 0% to 40% bisexual members, 0% to 70% heterosexual members and between 0% and 40% members with other sexual identities. The membership composition of the individual clubs/groups is illustrated in figures 2 and 3, where each horizontal bar in the chart represents one of the participating clubs.

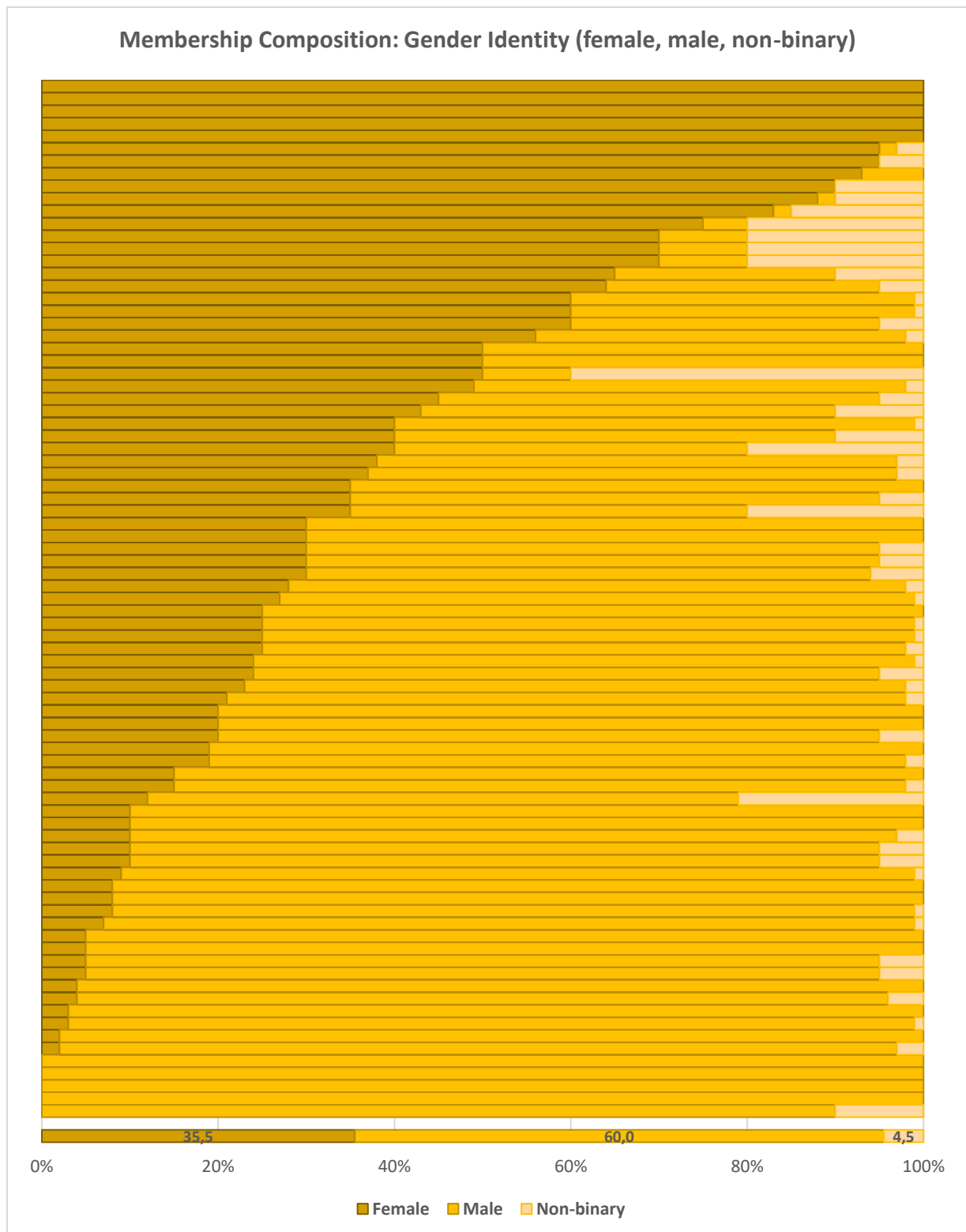


Figure 2: Membership Composition of each Sports Club/Group (n=83) by Gender Identity

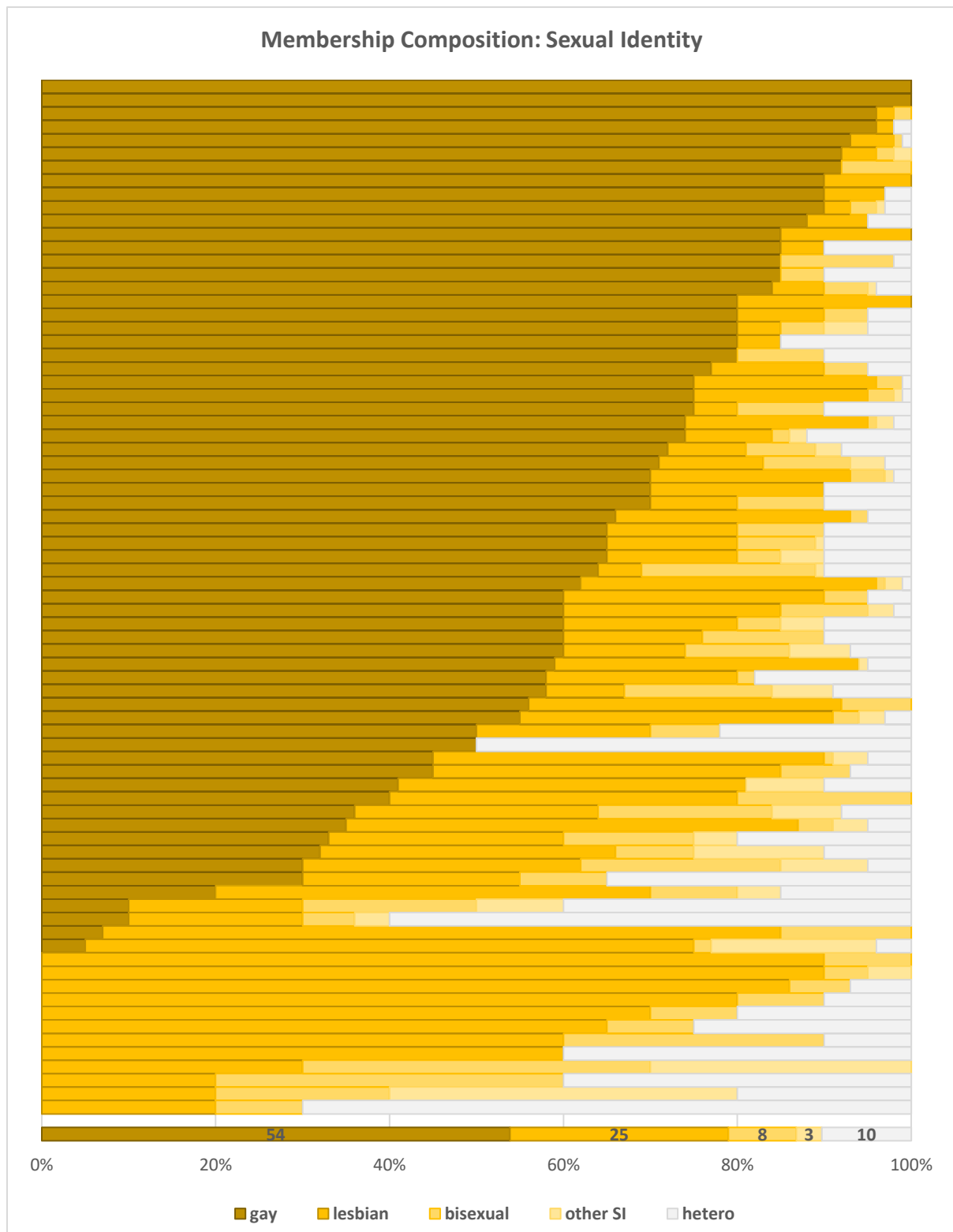


Figure 3: Membership Composition of each Sports Club/Group (n=77) by Sexual Identity (n=77)

The founding year of the clubs/groups ranges between 1980 and 2024 with 40% of them being founded before 2000 and 60% after 2000. On average, they were founded in 2005 ($\pm 1,3$ years). More specifically, 11% of the clubs/groups were founded in the 80's, 29% in the 90's, 18% in the 2000's, 32% in the 2010's and 10% in the 2020's (see figure 4). Today, 17% of the LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups have paid positions at the management level, which range from 0,4 to 13 paid positions in the respective clubs/groups. On average the respective clubs/groups have 3,8 paid management positions.

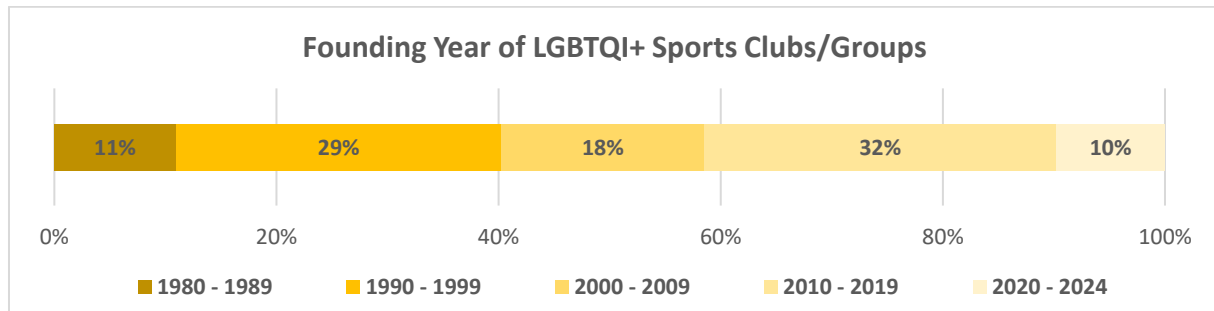


Figure 4: Founding Year of the LGBTQI+ Sports Clubs/Groups (n=82)

At the time of their founding, around two sports were organised per each club/group. Taking into consideration the variety of sports offered across the clubs/groups the documentation identifies more than 190 sports activities. The five most frequently represented sports were: volleyball (27 times mentioned), football/soccer (24), swimming (23), badminton (15), and hiking/walking (14). Today, the clubs/groups offer an average of around 4 sport activities, totalling more than 330 different sports activities. The five most frequently represented sports are volleyball (30 times mentioned), football/soccer (28), badminton (23), hiking/walking (22), and dancing (19; see figure 5). Currently, these sports are mainly practised at the recreational level (91%; 76), followed by a competitive level (70%; 59), and the elite level (5%; 4).

The increase in the number of sports activities from 190 at the time of the founding to currently 330 indicates, on the one hand, a diversification and expansion of the scope of sports on offer within the individual clubs/groups. On the other hand, new sports activities are also added to the programme or gain relevance, such as dancing, yoga, climbing or padel tennis.

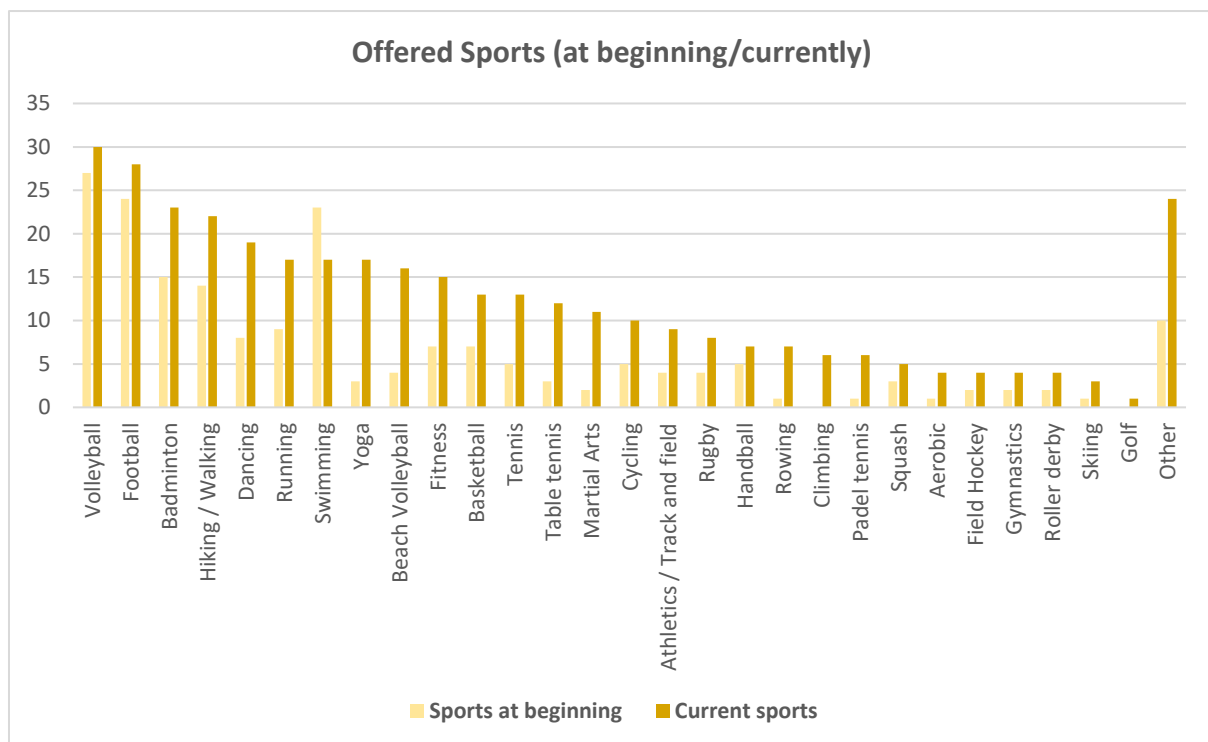


Figure 5: Offered Sports (at beginning/currently)

The interviewed representative from Out in Slovenija stresses the need to react to new challenges by adapting the offered sports programme and the settings/contexts:

„The main target audience was the wider [LGBTQI+] community, and the initial activities were mainly hikes and other outdoor activities. Over the years, the need for more organised activities has also become apparent, especially due to international participation in events such as the Gay Games and EuroGames” (OIS, para. 7)

With regard to the clubs/groups involvement in European networks, it is found that 72% of the clubs/groups in the sample are members of the European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF). The EGLSF is a European sporting body, that represents sport-oriented organisations in the LGBTQI+ community. Out in Slovenija stresses the relevance of being a member of EGLSF and other networks:

“International networking and active participation in international LGBTQI+ sports organisations, especially EGLSF, as well as participation in the activities of the FARE Network, have also been key to the

development of the organisation. Through both of these organisations we have gained a lot of experience, and also the possibility of co-funding activities and campaigns.” (OIS, para. 15)

3.2. Development of the LGBTQI+ Sports Clubs/Groups

A central part of the survey aims to look back to the time of the club's/group's foundation in order to draw a comprehensive picture of the historical development of the LGBTQI+ movement in Europe. The following section contains questions about the (1) openness of clubs/groups towards different LGBTQI+ identities with regard to the membership, (2) the reasons for founding the club/group, (3) and the barriers and challenges the clubs/groups faced at the time of founding.

(1) Openness to Gender and Sexual Diversity of the Clubs/Groups

To get an impression of the orientation of the clubs/groups towards gender and sexual diversity in their membership composition, we asked the clubs/groups who they were open to when they were founded and who they are open to now (see figure 6).

With regard to sexual identity, at the time of the founding, 90% of the organisations were open to gay/bisexual athletes and 84% were open to lesbian/bisexual athletes. With regard to gender identity, 82% of the clubs/groups were open to hetero and cis athletes at the time of the founding and 73% were open to trans, intersex and non-binary athletes.

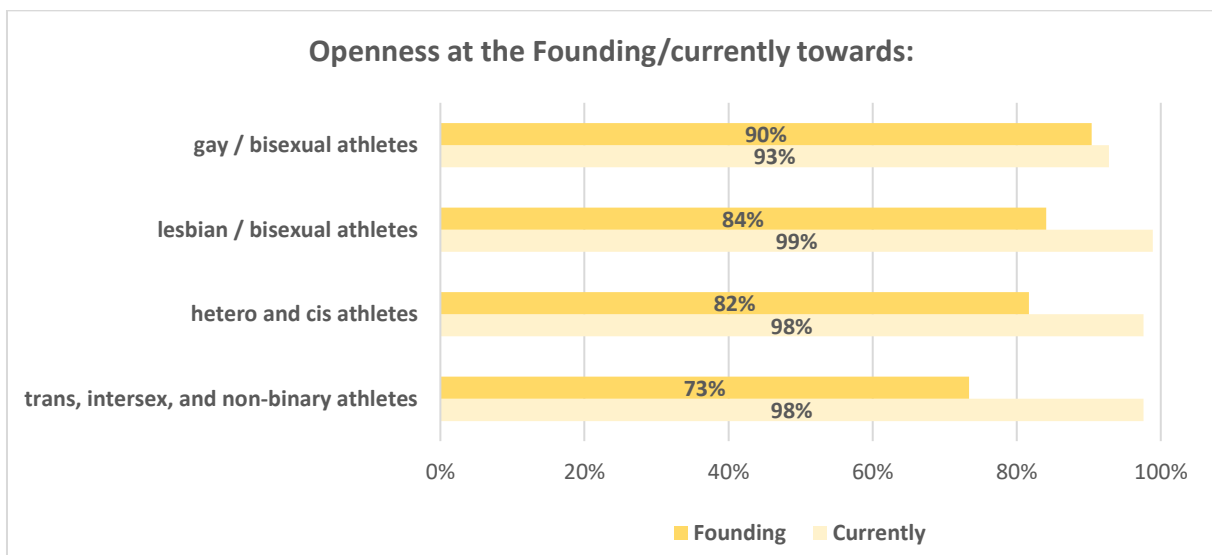


Figure 6: Openness of Sports Clubs/Groups at Founding and currently (n=79-84)

As figure 6 shows, the openness of the clubs/groups changed over time towards more LGBTQI+ inclusiveness. 99% of the LGBTQI+ clubs/groups are nowadays open to lesbian/bisexual athletes and 98% to trans, intersex and non-binary athletes. This points to an increase of 15% points for lesbian/bisexual athletes and to 25% points for trans, intersex and non-binary athletes. The openness for hetero and cis athletes also increased by 16% points from 82% to 98% of the clubs/groups being also open to hetero and cis persons. Openness to gay/bisexual athletes is fairly stable, with a slight increase to 93%.

(2) Reasons and Orientations for Founding the Club/Group

The organisations were founded between 1980 and 2024 with a majority of 60% being founded after 2000. We asked them about the main reasons and orientations for founding the respective sports club/group⁵ (see figure 7). The questions were grouped with regard to reasons targeting the inclusion of specific LGBTQI+ groups on the one hand and LGBTQI+ specific social issues on the other hand.

The most important reason was to *provide a safe space for gay/bisexual athletes*, indicated by 82% of the responding clubs/groups. This finding corresponds to the fact that clubs/groups were foremost open to gay/bisexual athletes at the time of their founding. Considerably less clubs/groups agree that *providing a safe space for lesbian/bisexual athletes* was a reason for the founding of the club/group (70%). Even less organisations indicated that they aimed at providing a safe space for trans, intersex, and non-binary athlete (54%).

Focussing on LGBTQI+ issues in general, 77% of the responding organisations agree that an important reason for founding was to *provide space to socialise and strengthen the LGBTQI+ community* and 67% agree that *expanding the local LGBTQI+ sports programme* served as an argument for founding a club/group. Almost 6 out of 10 of the responding clubs/groups (58%) also aimed at *increasing the visibility of LGBTQI+ people* in general when founding their organisation, while a fifth took a neutral position and 12% disagreed with this reason. In the qualitative interview, the representative from Team

⁵ A 5-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, ranging from *I strongly disagree* (1) to *I strongly agree* (5). For a clearer presentation in the report, the two response options of *disagreement* (1/2) and *agreement* (4/5) were combined in each case. The *neutral position* (3) was retained. *Not applicable* was offered as another option.

München mentions expanding the sports programme and the aim of becoming a big player and strong voice as central reasons for the founding of their club:

„The 1998 Gay Games in Amsterdam were the trigger for the founding of Team München as an LGBTQI multi-sports club. The aim was to expand the LGBTQ sports programme, increase membership, [...]and ultimately be heard as a "big and strong" voice by the city of Munich.” (Team München, para. 4)

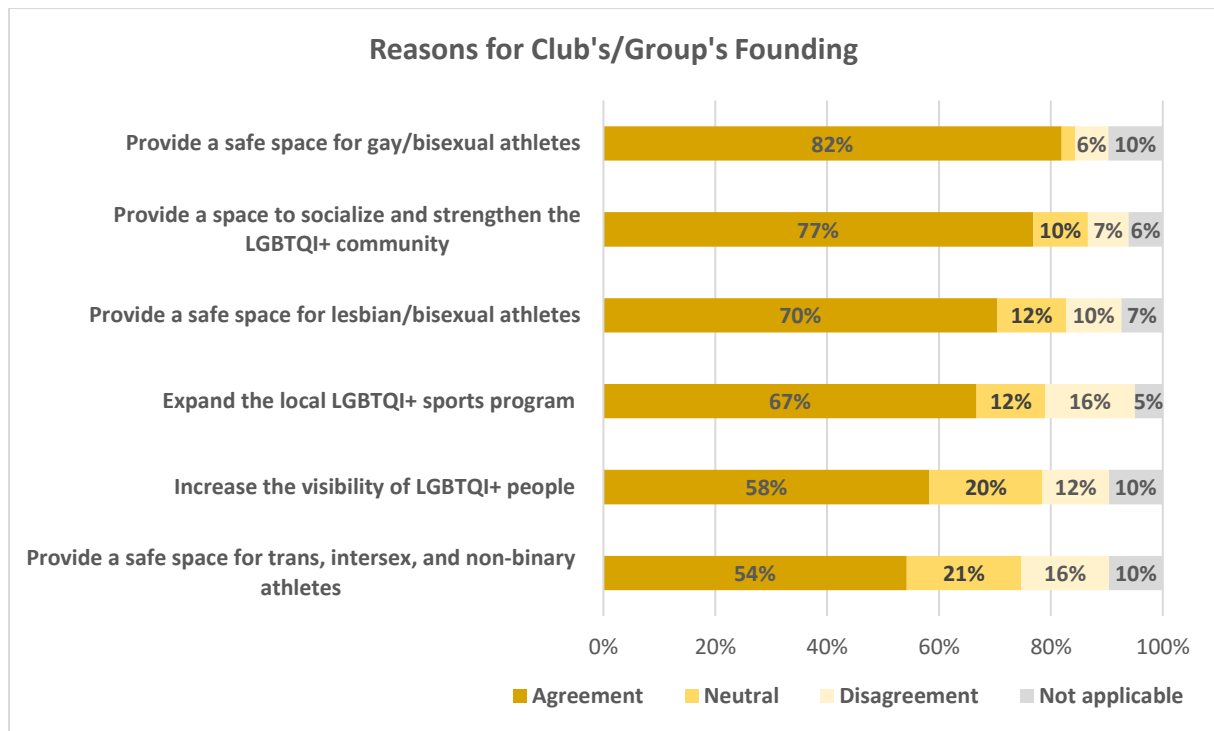


Figure 7: Reasons for Club's/Group's Founding (n=81-84)

Ten organisations add further reasons for the founding of their club/group, which are listed below. The number of clubs/groups that state the respective reason is shown in brackets.

- Preparation for participation in LGBTQI+ events / competitions (4)
- Provide a safe space for women (2)
- Fighting against all kinds of discrimination (1)
- Getting access to sports facilities, which is easier for registered sport clubs (1)
- Gay men were not allowed to go to public swimming pools (1)
- Organising a competition (1)

(3) Barriers and Challenges

In addition to the reasons for founding the club/group, we also asked about the barriers and challenges that the clubs/groups encountered at the time of founding in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture (see figure 8). The nine items we presented were mostly derived from the interviews and the clubs/groups were asked to indicate which of the challenges occurred at the beginning of the clubs/groups. As shown in figure 8 a considerable amount of responding organisations (between 15% and 24%) lacks knowledge about the barriers at the time of the founding of the club/group, which is a plausible fact for foundations dating back 10, 20, 30 and even more than 40 years.

With 59%, the highest share of responding organisations were initially confronted with a *lack of acceptance from mainstream sports organisations* – 21% did not experience this. Around half of the organisations report that they have encountered a *negative societal/political climate towards LGBTQI+ people* (51%) as well as a *lack of support from politics and local authorities* (48%). Queer Sport Split mentions it as a major barrier when the EuroGames were held in Eastern Europe:

“The very fact that the EuroGames were held in Eastern Europe was encouraging to us. On the other hand, we were aware that the organisers did not have the support of the city and the state and that they themselves ended up in debt, which of course was not encouraging.” (QSS, para. 56)

44% of the responding organisations faced *limited access to local sports facilities* at the time of the founding and 42% struggled with the *recruitment and retention of members*. 4 out of 10 clubs/groups surveyed cite the *financial situation of the sports club/group* as an obstacle, as well as problems in *recruiting and retaining volunteers*.

Recruiting and retaining board members was a major barrier for Atlasz Sportegyesület at two times in their development process, as the quote underscores:

„There have been two periods of decline, [...]: the preparation period leading up to the 2012 EuroGames and the few years after. And the period 2018-2022. In both cases, enthusiastic and talented board members left the association, without developing a competent successor. The 2018-2022 period was even more difficult because of the pandemic. In both cases, extra investment of energy and new ideas by the new management seems to be the solution.” (Atlasz, para. 275)

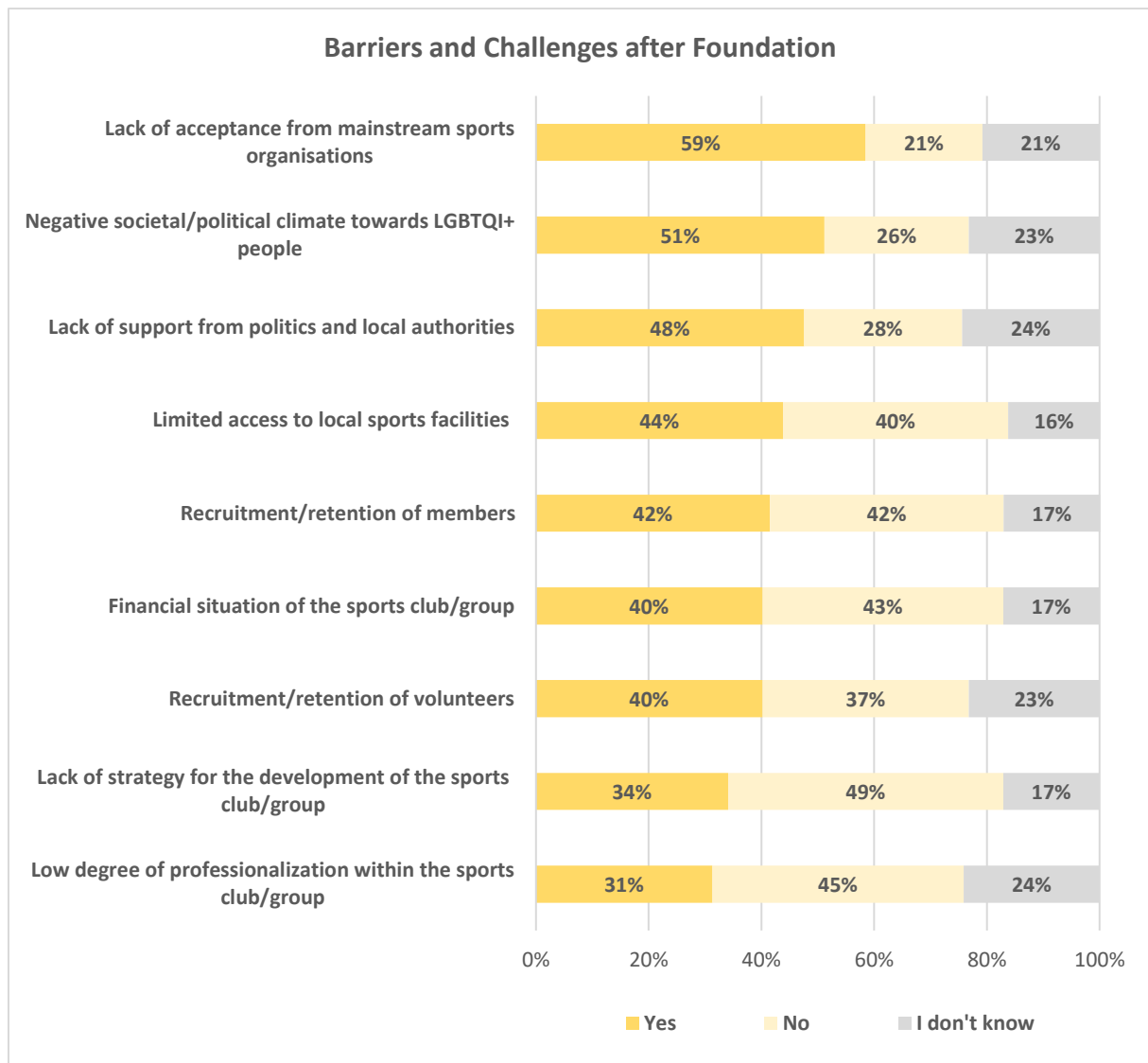


Figure 8: Barriers and Challenges after Foundation (n=80-83)

About one third of the responding clubs/groups report a *lack of strategy for the development of the sports club/group* (34%) as a barrier at the beginning as well as a *low degree of professionalisation within the sports club/group* (31%). 49% and respectively 45% did not encounter these barriers and challenges at the time their organisation was founded.

Three organisations mention further barriers and challenges that they encountered at the time of their founding. One organisation each also cites a lack of support from sports media, loss of engaged persons and the negative social climate towards women-only sports activities and club.

3.3. Governance of the LGBTQI+ Sports Clubs/Groups

An important part of the survey concerns the governance of the sports clubs/groups, which consists of questions about the strategies of the organisations for tackling barriers as well as important milestones in their development processes.

(1) *Strategies for Tackling Barriers*

As we have asked about major barriers and challenges in the beginning of the development process, we were also interested how the sports clubs/groups tackled these barriers and challenges. Thus, the organisations were asked to indicate the importance of some given measures/activities in combating existing barriers⁶ and could also add further measures/activities that were important (see figure 9).

By far the most important aspect to tackle existing challenges and barriers was identified with regard to individual engagement: 80% of the responding organisations indicate that *commitment of individuals within the sports club/group* was a (very) important activity, and 11% considered it as somewhat important.

In the interview with Pan Idræt, commitment of individuals and in particular leadership are also discussed as extremely important strategies to achieve the set goals.

“The key to achieving the goals is the willingness to put leadership at the centre. There is someone in the organisation (the board) who must take the lead and take responsibility - also for presenting new plans for further development.” (Pan Idræt, para. 31)

Far less of the responding organisations, however still 58%, indicate that both, *social/political activist work of the sports club/group* and *cooperation with other LGBTQI+ organisations* were (very) important in tackling the above-mentioned challenges and barriers. 27% and 28% respectively indicate that these measures were somewhat important.

⁶ A 5-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, ranging from *very important* (1) to *not important* (5). For a clearer presentation in the report, two answer options were combined into *(very) important* (1/2) and *somewhat important* (3/4). The *not important* category (5) was retained. *Not applicable* was offered as another option.

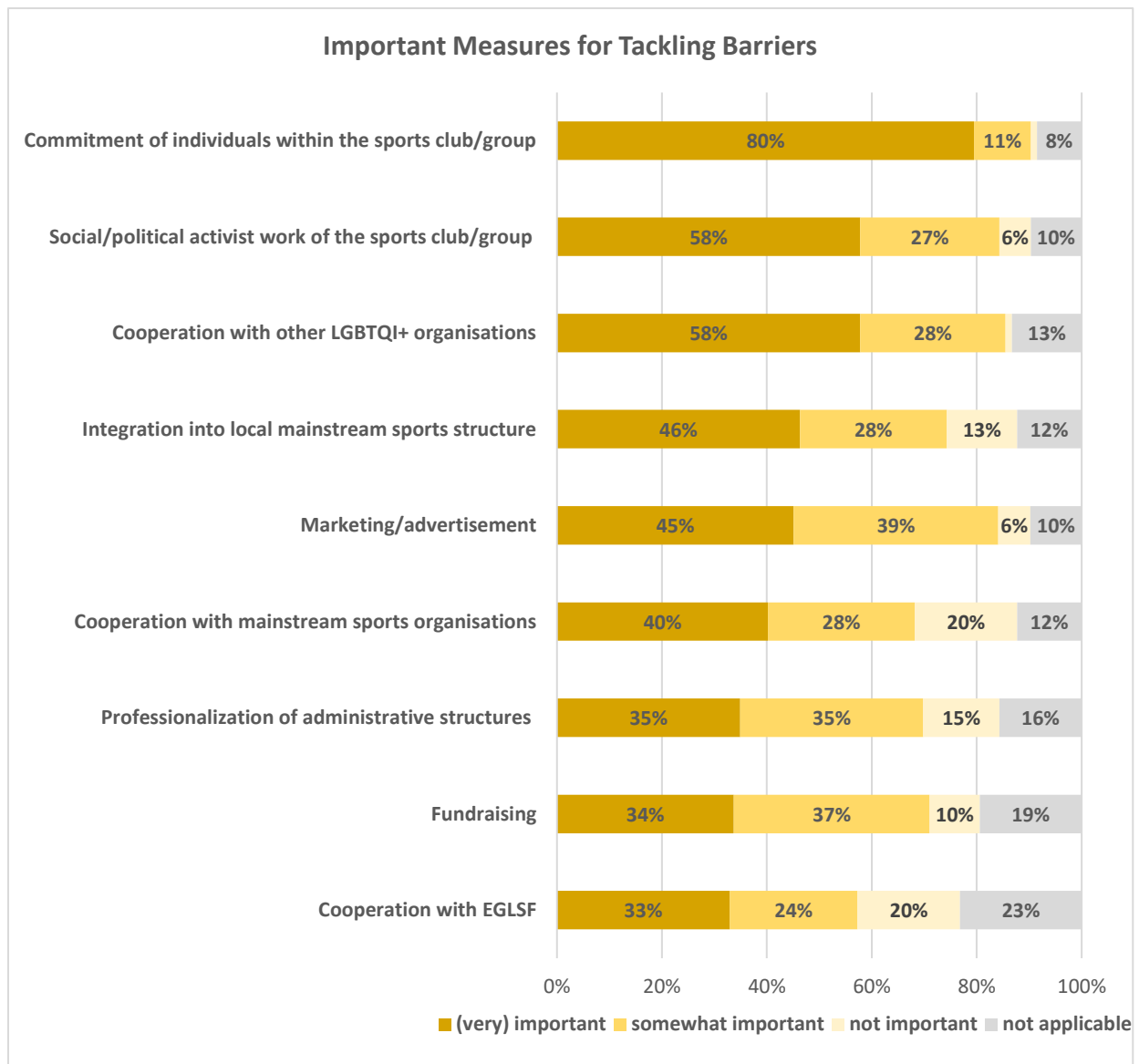


Figure 9: Important Measures for Tackling Barriers (n=82-83)

Slightly less than half of the organisations indicate that the *integration into local mainstream sports structures* (46%; 28% somewhat important) as well as *marketing/advertisement* activities (45%; 39% somewhat important) were (very) important measures for overcoming existing barriers in the beginning of their development. 4 out of 10 organisations value the *cooperation with mainstream sports organisations* as (very) important, 28% as somewhat important and 20% as not important. This strategy is also highlighted by Team München in the interview:

“The founding of the association was supported by the City of Munich from the very beginning [and] the new club immediately became a member of the [Bavarian] mainstream sports association (Bayerischer Landessportverband [BLSV])” (Team München, para. 4)

Around one third of responding organisations rate the following three measures as (very) important: *professionalisation of administrative structures* (35%; 35% somewhat important), *fundraising* (34%; 37% somewhat important) and the *cooperation with EGLSF* (33%, 24% somewhat important).

Three organisations add further measures/activities in the open question that prove helpful in tackling existing obstacles and challenges. One organisation mentions the importance of finding a sponsor, probably to solve financial issues. Another club/group states gaining media attention as a useful strategy and the third organisation stresses the relevance of raising awareness that there is need for women-only sport activities.

(2) Milestones

Tracing back historical moments of the LGBTQI+ sports movement in Europe is intended to identify crucial events and milestones in order to develop recommendations for successful development processes. Therefore, we want to know which activities and events are considered as important milestones in the development of the clubs/groups. Respondents are asked to indicate the importance of five listed respective activities or events⁷ or to tick that a specific activity/event is not applicable to their organisation (see figure 10).

Almost 80% of the responding organisations report that *participating in a LGBTQI+ sports event*, such as the EuroGames, the OutGames or the GayGames, marks a (very) important milestone in their history. 15% indicate that participating in these events is somewhat important, while only 5% do not see any importance. Apart from this outstanding result, additional 62% of the responding clubs/groups indicate that *organising/hosting a LGBTQI+ sports event* in their country is a (very) important milestone in their development (13% somewhat important). 17% of the responding organisations have not yet been part of an organising committee and therefore ticked ‘not applicable’, while 7% do not see any

⁷ A 5-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, ranging from *very important* (1) to *not important* (5). For a clearer presentation in the report, two answer options were combined into *(very) important* (1/2) and *somewhat important* (3/4). The *not important* category (5) was retained. *Not applicable* was offered as another option.

importance in hosting such events for their development. The importance of hosting a LGBTQI+ sports event for the development of the organisations is underscored in the qualitative interview with Team München, as the following quotation shows:

“The organisation of the EuroGames 2004 was a milestone in the history of the association. Through the necessary co-operation, the relationship between lesbians and gays, the visibility of trans people and the cohesion in the Munich community improved considerably. The success of these games has led to a large number of long-standing friendships and close networks.” (Team München, para. 26)

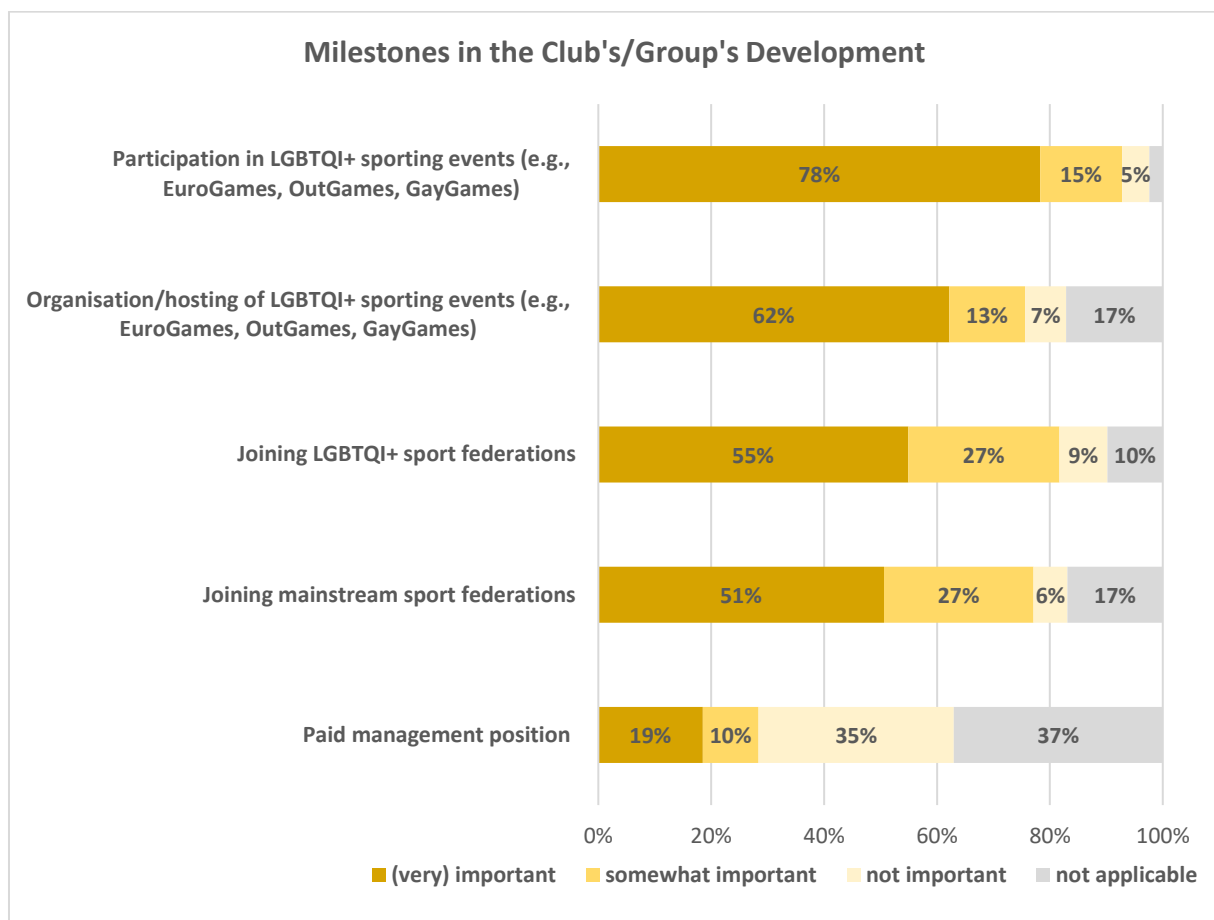


Figure 10: Milestones in Club's/Group's Development (n=81-83)

Also related to LGBTQI+ sports structures, 55% of the responding organisations indicate that *joining LGBTQI+ sport federations* was (very) important for their development (27% somewhat important). The shares for *joining mainstream sport federations* are quite similar with the exception that more

clubs/groups indicate that they are not yet integrated into mainstream sports federations (17% not applicable). Pan Idræt reports that it has been a member of the Gymnastics and Sports Associations almost since the beginning and underscores the relevance also for the mainstream sports federations in the following quote:

“Almost since its foundation, Pan Idræt has been a member of what is now called DGI (Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations), which focuses on grassroots sports. They have always been on our side, and we know that today they are really proud to have us as a member.” (Pan Idræt, para. 5)

With regard to a *paid management position*, the highest share indicates not to have it yet (37% not applicable), while 35% do not estimate it as important for the development of their clubs/groups. In contrast, 19% consider it as (very) important and 10% as somewhat important.

Four organisations add further milestones in their clubs/groups’ development process. One club/group each mentions the maintenance of the supply, the organisation of different conferences, the participation in public LGBTQI+ events outside of sports (e.g., Pride Week), and the search for political support as important milestones.

3.4. Present Mindsets of LGBTQI+ Sports Clubs/Groups

As we want to draw a comprehensive picture of the current aims and orientations of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups, we are interested in the present mindsets and orientations of the LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups. We therefore ask to what extent they agree to a set of 10 listed activities.⁸ Besides reporting the agreement to the given categories, the organisations can tick ‘not applicable’ and add further important goals and orientations that shape the mindset of their respective organisations (see figure 11).

Generally, the sports clubs/groups agree to a rather high extent to almost all of the given aims and orientations – the percentage of organisations that (strongly) agree varies between 58% and 92% across all activities.

⁸ A 5-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, ranging from *I strongly disagree* (1) to *I strongly agree* (5). For a clearer presentation in the report, the two response options of *disagreement* (1/2) and *agreement* (4/5) were combined in each case. The *neutral position* (3) was retained. *Not applicable* was offered as another option.

All items concerning the *provision of a safe space for various groups within the LGBTQI+ community* are strongly agreed with ranging from 82% to 92% agreement. In addition, *the mindset of providing a space to socialise and strengthen the LGBTQI+ community* is strongly shared by 89% of the organisations. This general focus on providing safe spaces in the mindsets of LGBTQI+ clubs/groups is also reflected in the interview with Out in Slovenija. They stress the need for safe spaces, particularly as many members have not yet disclosed their sexual or gender identity.

“One of the challenges of our organisation is that a large part of our community is not disclosed and/or is not willing to highlight it. Activities and their promotion are therefore often limited to ensure a safe environment and to protect users.” (OIS, para. 37)

A second focus of mindsets and orientations can be identified with regard to the internal decision-making and diversity of people. The mindset *democratic participation within the sports club/group* is (strongly) agreed on by 88%, and *diversity within their sports club/group* by further 86%. Another 83% are committed to *increasing the visibility of LGBTQI+ people*.

The importance of visibility and presence at sporting and non-sporting events and their impact on the acceptance of LGBTQI+ issues and people in the broader society is emphasised by Team München in the qualitative interview:

“Through our sports activities and our presence in the city (especially at CSD) for 25 years, we have achieved a great deal in terms of acceptance for LGBTQI people, both locally and globally.” (Team München, para. 35)

The orientations to *increase membership* or to *expand local LGBTQI+ sports programmes* is far less shared among the sports clubs/groups compared to aspects of safe spaces or to internal decision-making processes. However, around 60% (strongly) share these mindsets, while between 14% - 18% (strongly) negate these orientations as part of their organisation’s mindset. Likewise, 58% agree that their club/group is committed to *reaching out to society/activist work* (27% neutral, 13% disagreement).

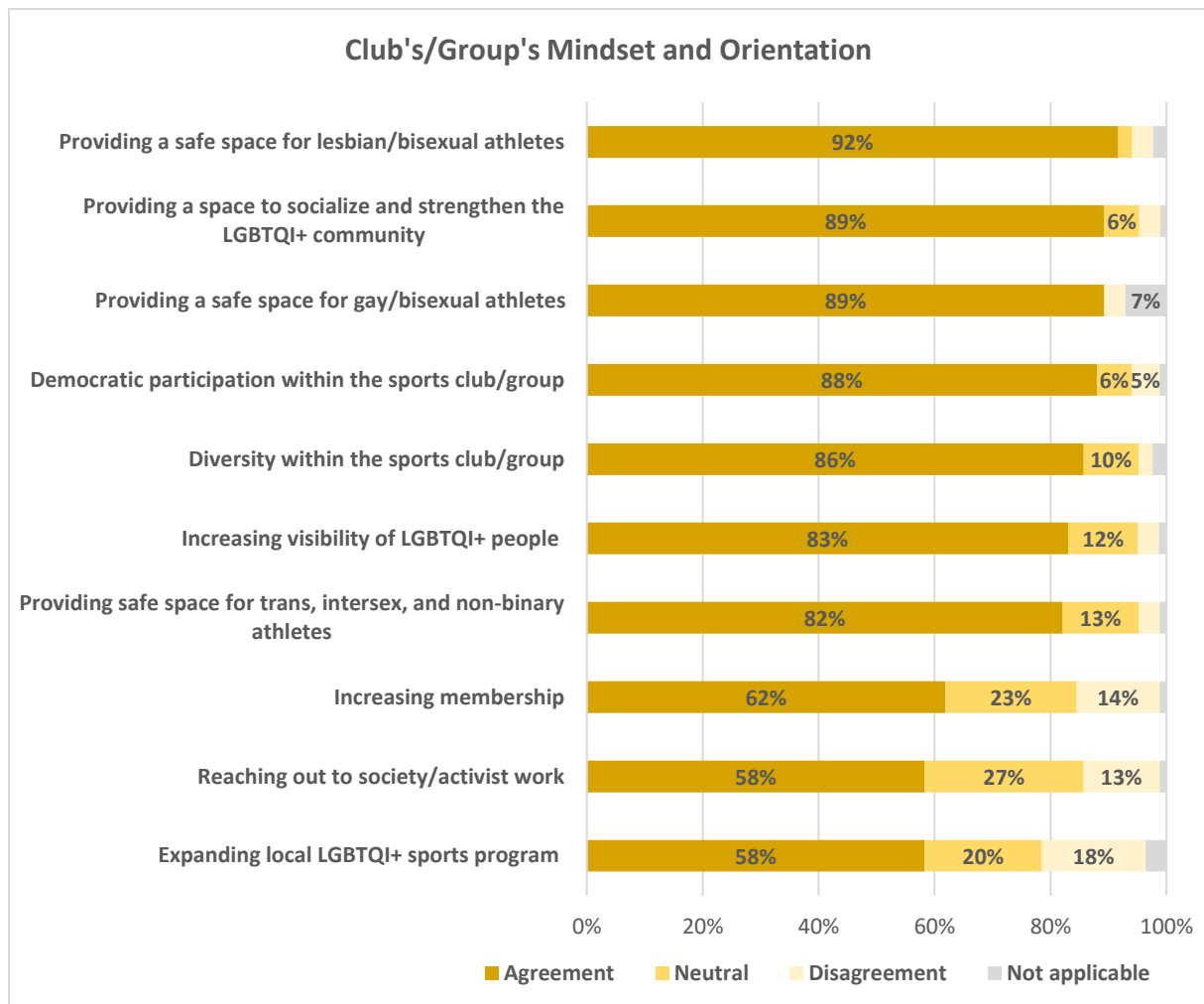


Figure 11: Club's/Group's Mindset and Orientation (n=83-84)

In the qualitative interview with the representative from Team München it is highlighted, that size and visibility somehow urge them to do some activist work as the quote shows.

“Due to our size and visibility, we initiate discussions in the heterosexual community in Munich. At the Pride parades, we do public relations work for everyone and act as a mouthpiece and contact for questions about homosexuality and sport.” (Team München, para. 13)

Again, 58% agree that *expanding the local LGBTQI+ sports programme* (20% neutral, 18% disagreement) is an essential orientation of their clubs/groups. In the interview, Pan Idræt emphasise their aim to expand their activities and offers across Denmark as the quote shows:

“We are looking at plans to expand the club's activities across the country. We have plans to establish new associations in some of the other major cities in Denmark that do not already have an LGBTQI sports programme.” (Pan Idræt, para. 43)

The findings about present mindsets clearly show that the provision of safe spaces for certain groups in relation to sexual and gender identity is a central core mindset of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups shared by almost all of them.

Two organisations each express a further orientation that their sports club/group is committed to: advising sports associations in developing inclusive policies for trans, intersex and non-binary athletes and contributing to health programmes for LGBTQI+ people.

3.5. Future Strategies and Importance of LGBTQI+ Sports Clubs/Groups

The above results of the research about the past and current development and situation of the LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups may already inform the project's advocacy efforts for fostering inclusion in sports. This will now be supplemented by a look into the clubs/groups own perspectives and priorities with regard to future strategies.

(1) Future Strategies

The organisations are asked to indicate the importance of given measures/strategies for the sports club's/group's future development.⁹ Respondents can also tick not applicable or indicate that certain measures/strategies are already implemented in the sports club/group (see figure 12). Again, there is an option to add further strategies that are important for the development of their club/group.

We list 14 different activities, that are partly derived from the interviews and complemented by results from studies on sports clubs'/groups' development. The share of clubs/groups that indicate the individual measures/strategies as (very) important varies between 40% and 85%. The most important measures/activities in the clubs'/groups' future development are *strengthen the community within the*

⁹ A 5-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire, ranging from *very important* (1) to *not important* (5). For a clearer presentation in the report, two answer options were combined into *(very) important* (1/2) and *somewhat important* (3/4). The *not important* category (5) was retained. *Not applicable* as well as *already implemented* were offered as other options.

sports club/group (85%) and increase visibility and awareness (83%). 9% and respectively 6% of the responding clubs/groups have already implemented these two measures.

In the interview Team München reports that finding committed people that want to be part of the management level occurs as a major challenge, which is attributed to a lack of cohesion and identification with the club, among other aspects. This rationale underlines the need to strengthen the community within the club/group.

“The number of members is steadily increasing and the end of this trend is currently not in sight. However, it is difficult to motivate new members to take an active part in the association. The danger that the management level will “die out” and there will be no successors is real. The cohesion and identification with Team Munich seems to me to be less than at the local traditional clubs due to the various sports departments.” (Team München, para. 38)

The OIS representative underlined the need to work with other relevant organisations and stakeholders to achieve the overall goal of creating visibility and awareness:

Cooperation is not usually easy, at least in our environment. In the past, we have had to invest a lot of energy in explaining the needs and wants if we want to address the issues of equality, visibility and inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in sport. With some of the organisations and institutions we have worked with, such cooperation is now easier; but we have not yet reached a consensus for a broader strategy of inclusion also for the LGBTQI+ community. (OIS, para 22)

About 7 out of 10 clubs/groups report that *diversifying the membership in the sports club/group* (72%) as well as developing and establishing *guidelines for non-discriminatory behaviour*, such as the correct use of pronouns, are (very) important measures, that should be implemented in the future. Both aspects are valued by another 17% as somewhat important.

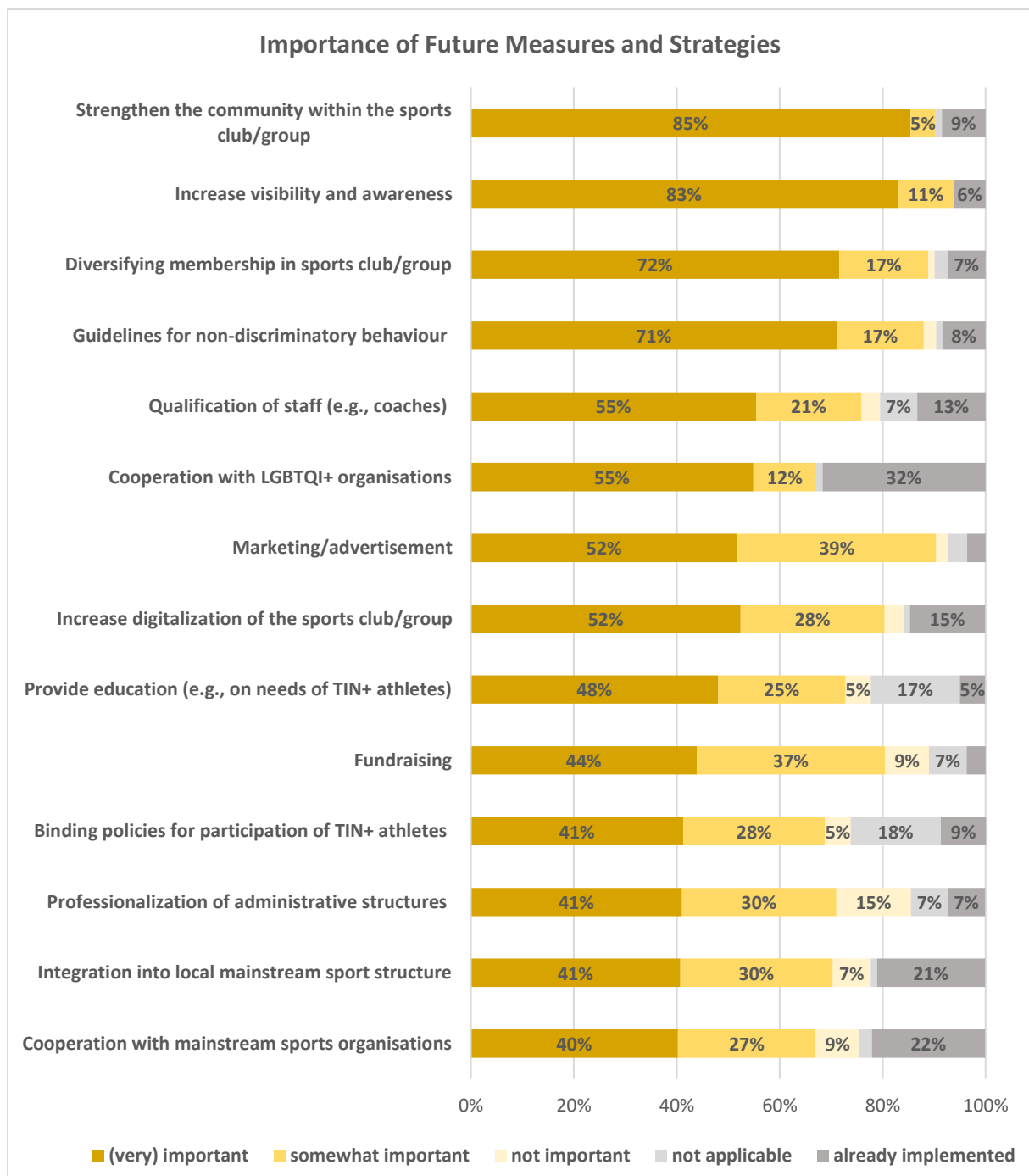


Figure 12: Importance of Measures and Strategies for the Club's/Group's Future Development (n=80-83)

55% of the responding organisations see *qualification of staff* as a (very) important measure (21% somewhat important) and also the *cooperation with LGBTQI+ organisations*. 12% value the cooperation as somewhat important and a third indicates that this activity is already implemented in their club/group (32%).

With 52%, slightly more than half of the responding clubs/groups estimate *marketing/advertisement* as well as an increasing *digitalisation of the sports club/groups* as (very) important upcoming activities in their future development. Both aspects are considered as somewhat important by a further 39% and 28% respectively.

Slightly less than half of the organisations think it is (very) important to *provide education*, i.e., on the needs of trans, intersex and non-binary athletes, in the future. While 25% rate this activity as somewhat important, only 5% have already provide educational activities and 17% tick not applicable. *Fund-raising* is rated as (very) important by 44% and as somewhat important by 37% of the responding clubs/groups.

For the other four activities/measures the shares are quite similar with about 40% of organisations considering these activities as (very) important and 30% or slightly less considering them as somewhat important. Differences occur in the implementation category: while *integration into local mainstream sport structures* and *cooperation with mainstream sport organisations* are already implemented by more than a fifth of the sports organisations, *binding policies for participation of trans, intersex and non-binary athletes* (18% not applicable) as well as *professionalisation of administrative structures* have been implemented by less than 10% of the responding organisations. Pan Idræt underlines the relevance of cooperating with mainstream sports organisations as well as increasing visibility and awareness in the following quote:

„Working with mainstream sports clubs and national sports organisations has always been part of the strategy and continues to be. Being visible and contributing to increased acceptance and inclusion in the world of sports is part of our purpose.” (Pan Idræt, para. 18)

Queer Sport Split cites the sustainability of its offshoot organisation in Zagreb as an important goal for the future, which can probably be achieved by professionalising the structures rather than by individual commitment:

“The sustainability of the organisation in Zagreb is important to us, in such a way that a sports section does not depend only on one person who at some point has a lot of enthusiasm for organising sports activities, but maybe in a year the person will move abroad or their life priorities will change, which may lead to the shutdown of that sports section.” (QSS, para. 71)

Four organisations report further strategies or measures for the future development of their clubs/groups. One club/group each reports diversification of the team, strategies to handle the heterosexual allies in the club, improvement of many strategies/measures, that have already been implemented, and the protection of women in women only spaces and sports activities as important future strategies.

(2) Need for LGBTQI+ Clubs/Groups

The question of the extent to which there is still a need for specific spaces for certain groups (e.g., LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups) and the extent to which these are useful for promoting inclusion is continuously put forward in society and in theories of inclusion. Thus, we also raise this question and ask the organisations if they think that there is still a need for sports clubs/groups specifically targeted at LGBTQI+ people. A filter question deals with 6 multiple choice arguments in favour of and 5 arguments against the need for LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups in order to gain a deeper understanding of the attitudes (see figure 13).

Unsurprisingly, an overwhelming majority (99%) of the responding organisations believe that there is a need for sports clubs/groups that specifically target LGBTQI+ people. Being asked about the reasons, 87% state, that these clubs/groups are needed for *connecting/socialising with LGBTQI+ people*. 8 out of 10 clubs/groups belief that the *lack of welcoming cultures in mainstream sports clubs* as well as the *lack of safe spaces for LGBTQI+ people in sports* are arguments in favour of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups.

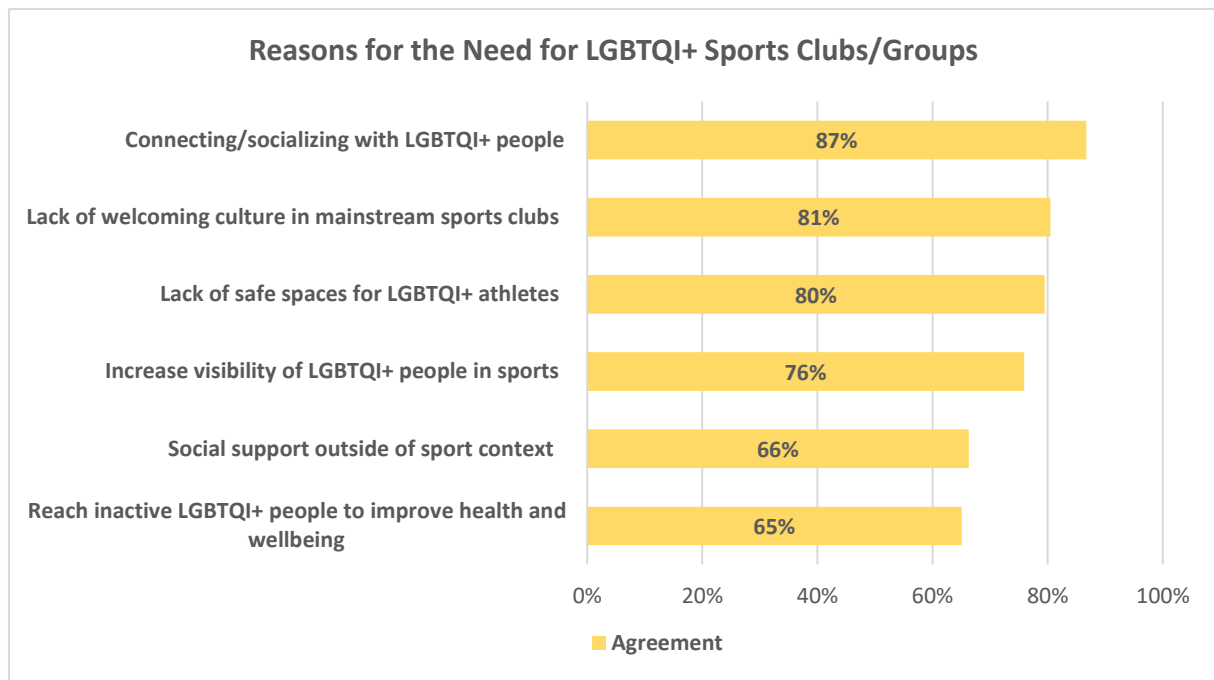


Figure 13: Reasons for the Need for LGBTQI+ Sport Clubs/Groups (n=82-83)

Three quarters further believe that these clubs/groups serve the need to *increase visibility of LGBTQI+ people in sports*. Two thirds of the responding organisations justify the need for LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups with the *provision of social support outside of sport contexts* and the chance to *reach inactive LGBTQI+ people to improve health and wellbeing*.

Representatives of Out in Slovenija explain the need for LGBTQI+ clubs/groups with a lack of improvement for the trans, intersex and queer (TIQ+) community in particular and the general political situation in their country:

“In Slovenia, the situation of the real LGB community is improving and progress has been visible in recent years. Unfortunately, for the TIQ+ part of the community, progress has been less. The consequences of the rise of right-wing, religious and anti-LGBTQI+ movements are reflected globally in sport, including in Slovenia, and directly and indirectly in Out in Slovenia.” (OIS, para. 35f)

These two aspects are also raised in the open answers section of the survey. 12 organisations shared further arguments why there is still a need for LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups. Among other aspects, the

open answers particularly address the provision of safe spaces, the protection of trans, intersex and non-binary athletes and activism/advocacy work:

- *“A nice safe place for refugees”*
- *“All of the above points specifically in relation to TIN athletes.”*
- *“All YES considering a very bad situation when it comes to the acceptance and human rights of LGBTQI+ people in Slovakia”*
- *“Because we fundamentally have a right to assemble with others like us”*
- *“Create a safe zone which makes excluded people like group sports again, long term more lgbtq people in high level sport”*
- *“Create a space where you as an athlete come and behave like a majority person”*
- *“Especially for TIN+ athletes there is (nearly) no safe space in mainstream sport clubs”*
- *“In the best-case scenario, LGBTQI+ sports clubs place more emphasis on intersectional approaches”*
- *“LGTBIphobia”*
- *“Other representation of gender concept in sport/progress in sport's reglementations”*
- *“Safe spaces for women and lesbians in women-only sports activities”*
- *“Using sport as a tool for activism and raising awareness”*

One organisation believes there is no need for sports clubs/groups specifically targeted at LGBTQI+ people anymore and points out to the following arguments: avoiding isolation from mainstream sports, already reached visibility of LGBTQI+ people in sports and awareness of LGBTQI+ topics in sports.

4. Differences by Club/Group-based Aspects and the Legal Situation in the Countries

Besides the descriptive findings of the survey, we aim at analysing differences in the data by two structural aspects of sports clubs/groups, namely the founding year of the clubs/groups and the number of members of the organisations. Founding year is selected for differentiated analyses, as we expect that both the time of foundation and the age or maturity of the clubs/groups can reveal different challenges and strategies in the past as well as in the future. This is supported by the interviewees from the Danish sports clubs Pan Idræt who emphasise the huge development that the club has undergone in the last decades.

“Pan Idræt is 40 years old - and today is fundamentally a different sports club than when the organisation was founded. However, it has always been in the organisation's DNA to have a variety of sports (multi-faceted sports association).” (Pan Idræt, para. 7)

With regard to the size of the clubs/groups, we expect that smaller and larger clubs/groups (in terms of membership) face different challenges, serve different target groups and also have different strategic logics and ways of overcoming them.

Besides these two club-based aspects, the ILGA score of the country, in which the club/group is located, is used as another criterion for more differentiated analysis of the data. Issued by the European part of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe) the score annually records the implementation of LGBTQI+ related human rights in Europe on the basis of seven dimensions¹⁰ with several indicators. Although none of the dimensions/indicators concern sport-related legal aspects, it can be assumed that the general legal situation for LGBTQI+ people influences the situation in sport and for LGBTQI+ organisations as a structural factor. With regard to EU country specific scores, Malta ranks first with 88% of all LGBTQI+ related human rights being implemented, followed by Iceland (83%) and Belgium (78%), while Azerbaijan and Russia with 2% each and Turkey (4%) are at the bottom of the Rainbow Index (ILGA-Europe, 2024). Among the seven EU countries from which most of the organisations in the survey sample are from, Belgium (78%) and Spain (76%) rank

¹⁰ Civil society space (85% of human rights for LGBTQI+ people are implemented), equality and non-discrimination (45%), family (41%), legal recognition of gender (41%), hate crime and hate speech (34%), asylum (33%) and physical integrity of intersex people (6%) (ILGA-Europe, 2024).

first in the ILGA score with more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the required LGBTQI related human rights being implemented in 2024 (ILGA-Europe, 2024), followed by Germany (66%), France (62%), Netherlands (59%), Austria (50%) and Italy (25%), which has only implemented $\frac{1}{4}$ of the human rights for LGBTQI+ people (ILGA-Europe, 2024). With regard to the project partner countries, Belgium (78%) ranks first, followed by Denmark (76%), Germany (66%), Croatia (50%), Slovenia (50%) and Hungary (33%; ILGA-Europe, 2024).

By analysing the differences according to the ILGA scores of the countries in which the club/groups are located, we want to place the survey findings in the context of the legal situation of LGBTQI+ people in the respective countries, which is likely to impact barriers, mindsets and strategies of the sports clubs/groups.

For all three differentiation criteria – founding year, membership size and ILGA score - we created a dichotomous variable with which we conducted analyses for all questions in the survey. In the following chapters, we report the significant results for each criterion at an Alpha level of 0.05.

4.1. Founding Year

As described in detail above, the range of the founding years of the clubs/groups is between 1980 and 2024, with 40% of them founded before 2000 and 60% after 2000. We split the data into two samples of same size (on the basis of the statistical distribution indicator *median*) representing the ‘old clubs/groups’ founded between 1980 and 2005 and the ‘young clubs/groups’ founded from 2006 onwards.

With regard to diversity of membership and the openness to specific target groups at the time of founding, it can be seen that a smaller share of old clubs/groups (59%) compared to young clubs/groups (88%) were *open to trans, intersex and non-binary athletes* at the time of their founding ($p=.004$). This result relates to our findings about reasons for founding: young clubs (73%) significantly more often name *providing a safe space for trans, intersex and non-binary athletes* as a reason for founding their organisation compared to old clubs/ groups (35%, $p=.007$). Both findings reflect a raising awareness for the specific needs for trans, intersex and non-binary athletes in the last years, which is reflected in specific offers for and consideration of trans, intersex and non-binary athletes in their

clubs/groups. The representative of Pan Idræt also underscores these changes in the organisational structures of the club:

“In the beginning, only gays and lesbians joined - often on gender-segregated teams. This has since changed - but it was not until 2010 that transgender people became part of the organisation.” (Pan Idræt, para. 4)

With reference to the barriers and challenges that occurred at the beginning of the sports club's/group's development process, most of the listed aspects are identified by all clubs/groups irrespective of the founding year. There are only two out of nine challenges that show significant differences. Young clubs/groups more often perceive the *recruitment/retention of volunteers* (55%, $p=.009$) and also the *financial situation of the sports club* (51%, $p=.03$) as barriers in the past compared to old clubs/groups (27%/30%). However, among the old clubs/groups the lack of knowledge regarding these barriers is significantly higher than among the young clubs/groups (35% vs 10% for recruitment/retention of volunteers; 28% vs. 7% for financial situation).

With regard to important strategies to tackle the aforementioned barriers, there is only one out of nine listed activities that is differently rated in its importance. *Professionalisation of administrative structures*, is significantly more important as a measure to tackle barriers for old clubs/groups (42%) compared to young organisations (29%, $p=.018$).

With reference to important milestones, the old clubs/groups (80%) rate *organising/hosting LGBTQI+ events* more often as an important milestone in the development of their organisations compared to the young clubs/groups (44%, $p=.004$). This difference can be explained with a high share of young clubs/groups that have not yet organised or hosted such an event, among other aspects (44% ticked not applicable vs. 10% among the old clubs/groups).

Most of the 14 measures listed, which are to be rated in terms of their importance for the future development of the clubs/groups, are evaluated similarly. Only one strategy is rated differently: 51% of the young clubs/groups rate *integration into local mainstream sports structure* as an important future measure, while 28% of the old clubs/groups rate this as important or have already implemented it (compared to 15% among the younger clubs; $p=.028$).

The reasons why there is still a need for LGBTQI+ clubs/groups are expressed in a similar way by young and old clubs/groups. There is only one significant difference in relation to the six reasons listed. While almost all of the young clubs/groups (95%) agree that a *lack of welcoming culture in mainstream sports clubs* is a reason for the need for LGBTQI+ clubs/groups, 68% of the old clubs/groups agree and 33% see no reason in that ($p=.002$).

4.2. Membership Size

The second club/group-based differentiation criterion is the size of the club/group, measured by the number of members. The membership of the responding clubs/groups ranges from 7 to 3000 members. Again, we split the data into two samples of comparable size, resulting in one group of 'small clubs/groups' with up to 70 members and one group of 'big clubs/groups' with more than 70 members.

Some differences occur with regard to formal aspects of the clubs/groups: big clubs/groups (97%) participate significantly more often in competitive sports settings compared to small clubs (53%, $p<.001$). Paid positions at the management level are reported more often by big clubs (28%) than by small clubs/groups (8%, $p=.025$).

Apart from that, we find some significant differences between small and big clubs/groups with regard to their past and current openness to certain individuals (see figure 14). At the time of their founding, significantly more small clubs/groups compared to big clubs/groups are open to lesbian/gay athletes (95% vs. 68%, $p=.003$), to trans, intersex and non-binary athletes (89% vs. 59%, $p=.004$), and also to cis and hetero athletes (92% vs. 71%, $p=.021$). Currently small and big clubs/groups are quite comparable in their openness to certain members of the LGBTQI+ community and beyond. One significant difference occurs: while 100% of the big clubs are open to gay/bisexual athletes, this holds true for 84% of the small clubs/groups ($p=.025$).

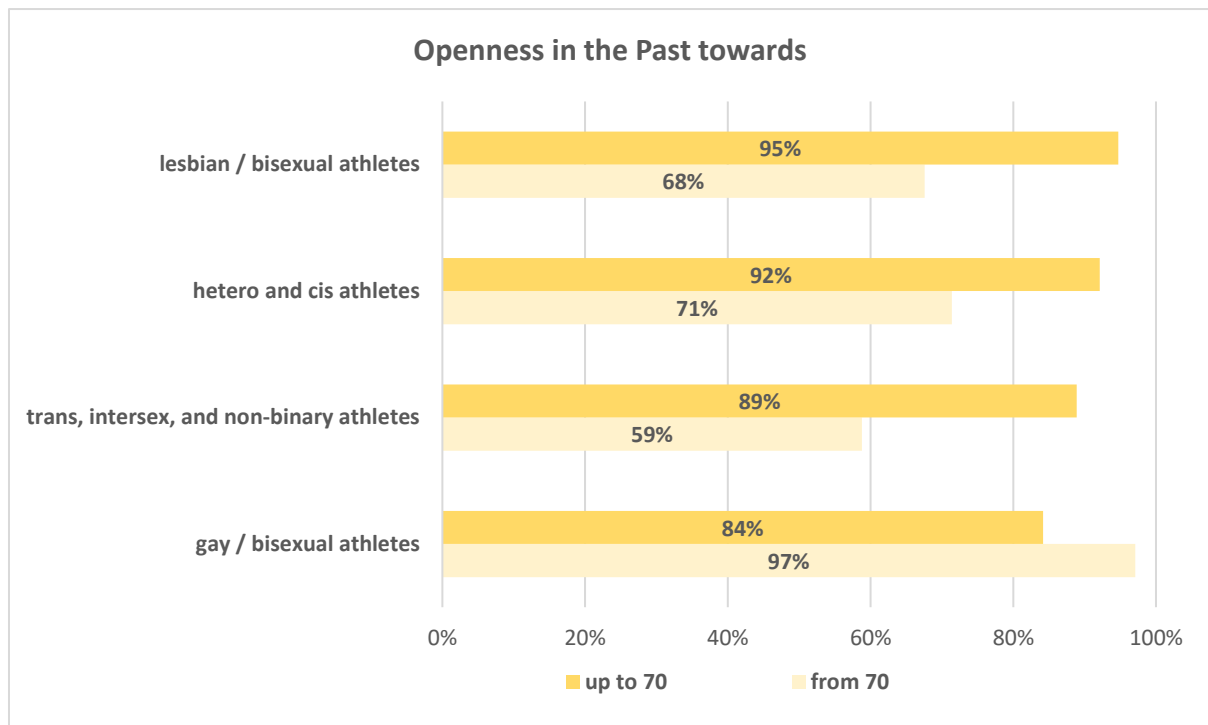


Figure 14: Openness in the Past by Membership Size (n=70-73)

The barriers and challenges at the time of the founding are more or less the same for small and big clubs. The only significant difference with regard to nine listed challenges touches the *limited access to local sports facilities*, which is more often agreed to by small clubs/groups (49%) compared to big clubs (33%, $p=.021$) and big clubs more often lack knowledge on that issue (30%). For tackling the particular barriers and challenges, again only one out of nine strategies shows significant differences with regard to membership size: big clubs (59%) perceive *professionalisation of administrative structures* more often as an important measure compared to small clubs/groups (29%, $p=.041$).

With regard to the future measures small and big clubs/groups differ only in one out of 14 strategies: *diversifying membership* is perceived as more important for the future development and is more often already implemented by big clubs/groups (82% important / 33% already implemented) than by small clubs/groups (63% important/11% already implemented; $p=.025$).

4.3. ILGA Score

Apart from founding year and size of the clubs/groups, we use the ILGA score to take the legal situation of LGBTQI+ persons in the country of the clubs/groups into account for a differentiated picture of the European development of the LGBTQI+ movement. Therefore, we relate the ILGA score of the respective countries to the individual questionnaires and split the sample into two groups based on the EU average of the ILGA score: clubs/groups in countries that are below EU average of the ILGA score (<50.61%) and above EU average of the ILGA score (>50.61%). In relation to the project's partner countries, three are above the EU average (Belgium, 78%; Denmark, 76%; Germany, 66%) and three are below the EU average (Croatia, 50%; Slovenia, 50%; Hungary, 33%). The relevance and impact of the legal and political situation in the country on the development of the LGBTQI+ sports organisations are particularly stressed by interviewees from the clubs from Slovenia (OIS, see quote on page 48) and Croatia (QSS), but also Germany (Team München) as the quotes show.

“The conservative trend in politics is slightly worrying. While the state government in Bavaria has always been Christian conservative and has turned a blind eye to the issue of LGBTQ+, the rise in popularity of right-wing leaning parties is not a good sign for the future and may make our work and the achievement of our goals considerably more difficult in the future” (Team München, para. 41)

“Split was problematic as far as the LGBTQI population was concerned. We put a topic on the LGBTQI+ forum and we had a lot of responses that people would come, but they are afraid, they don't want to expose themselves publicly. Although we were totally incognito. We did not perform as a queer club. It would probably be interesting to journalists, but that's exactly why we didn't want to expose ourselves. Many people said they would come but didn't show up. We were very careful in communicating with people, but they were still afraid to come to our training sessions.” (QSS, para. 68)

Firstly, we find differences with regard to the organisational form of the sports organisation by ILGA score. Among the organisations from countries with an ILGA score above EU average, 96% are clubs and 4% are groups, while among the countries with an ILGA score below EU average, 75% are clubs and 25% are groups ($p=.011$). This finding points to potential barriers in the formalisation process of LGBTQI+ sports organisations in countries with less human rights for LGBTQI+ people.

With regard to the openness to certain members, clubs/groups located in countries with an ILGA score below EU average are currently slightly less *open to gay/bisexual athletes* (82%) compared to those from countries with ILGA scores above EU average (98%, $p=.009$). At the time of founding, *openness to lesbian/bisexual athletes* is more prevalent in clubs/groups from countries with an ILGA score below the EU average (96%) compared to those with an ILGA score above EU average (77%, $p=.024$).

The question on barriers and challenges at the beginning of the clubs/groups 'development reveals significant differences in four out of nine categories (see figure 16). LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups that are located in countries with an ILGA score below EU average agree to a stronger extent that they were confronted with the following challenges compared to those from countries with ILGA score above the average: *a lack of support from politics and local authorities* (68% vs. 35%, $p=.017$), *limited access to local sports facilities* (63% vs. 31%, $p=.012$) and *financial situation of the sports club/group* (57% vs. 33%, $p=.030$). The barrier *low degree of professionalisation within the club/group* also significantly differs by ILGA score: while the agreement rates are quite similar, more clubs/groups from countries with an ILGA score below EU average (61%) do not encounter this barrier (compared to 38% among the countries with an ILGA score above EU average, $p=.03$).

Regarding the milestones, for clubs/groups from countries with ILGA scores above EU average *organising/hosting a LGBTQI+ sporting events* (71% vs. 46%, $p=.034$) as well as *joining mainstream sports federations* (60% vs. 36%, $p=.028$) is more important. The latter milestone is more often not applicable for clubs/groups from countries below EU average ILGA scores (32% vs. 8%).

With regard to the 14 listed measures and strategies for the future development, there are only two significant differences by ILGA score (see figure 15). *Cooperation with mainstream sports organisations* shows ambivalent findings: it is at the same time more important (46% vs. 39%) and less important (14% vs. 4%) for clubs/groups from countries below EU average ILGA scores. Clubs/groups from countries with an ILGA score above EU average rate this measure more often as somewhat important (31% vs. 21%) or report that they have already implemented it (27% vs. 11%, $p=.05$). *Cooperation with LGBTQI+ organisations* appears as more important for the future development of clubs/groups from below EU average ILGA scores (68% vs 48%), while those clubs/groups from countries above the average have more often already implemented this cooperation measure (42% vs 11%, $p=.019$).

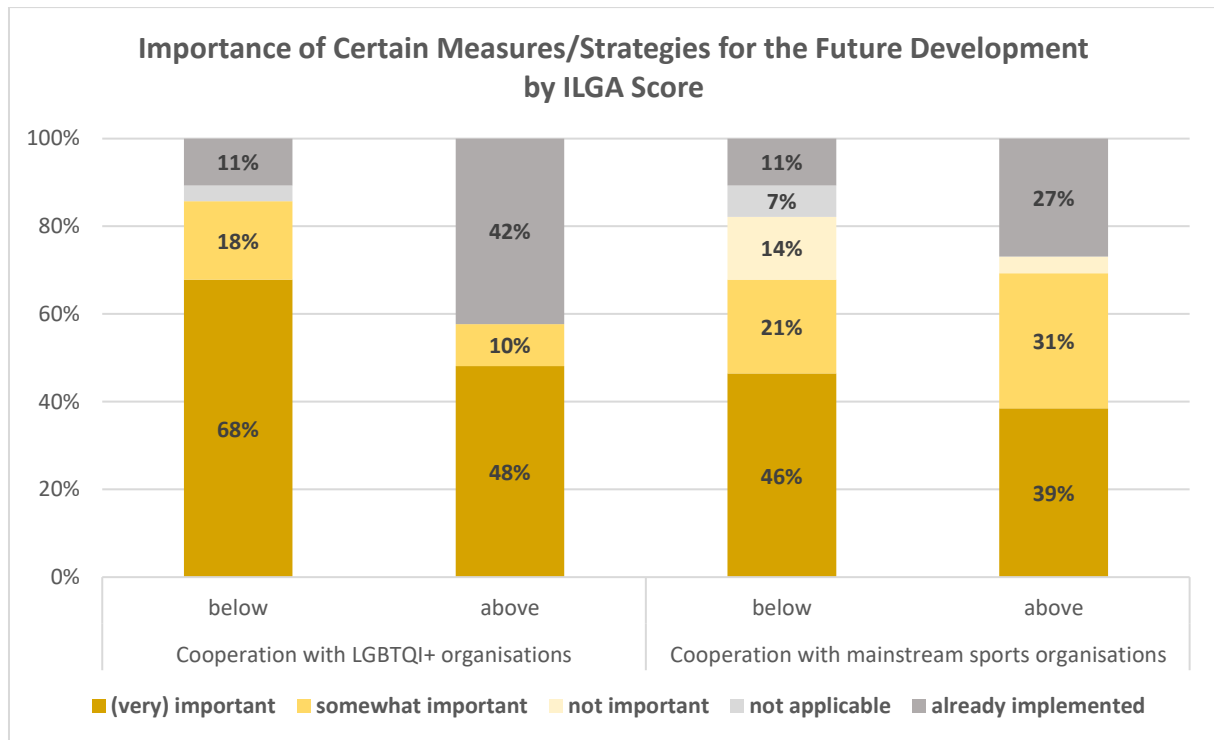


Figure 15: Measures for Future by ILGA Score (n=80)

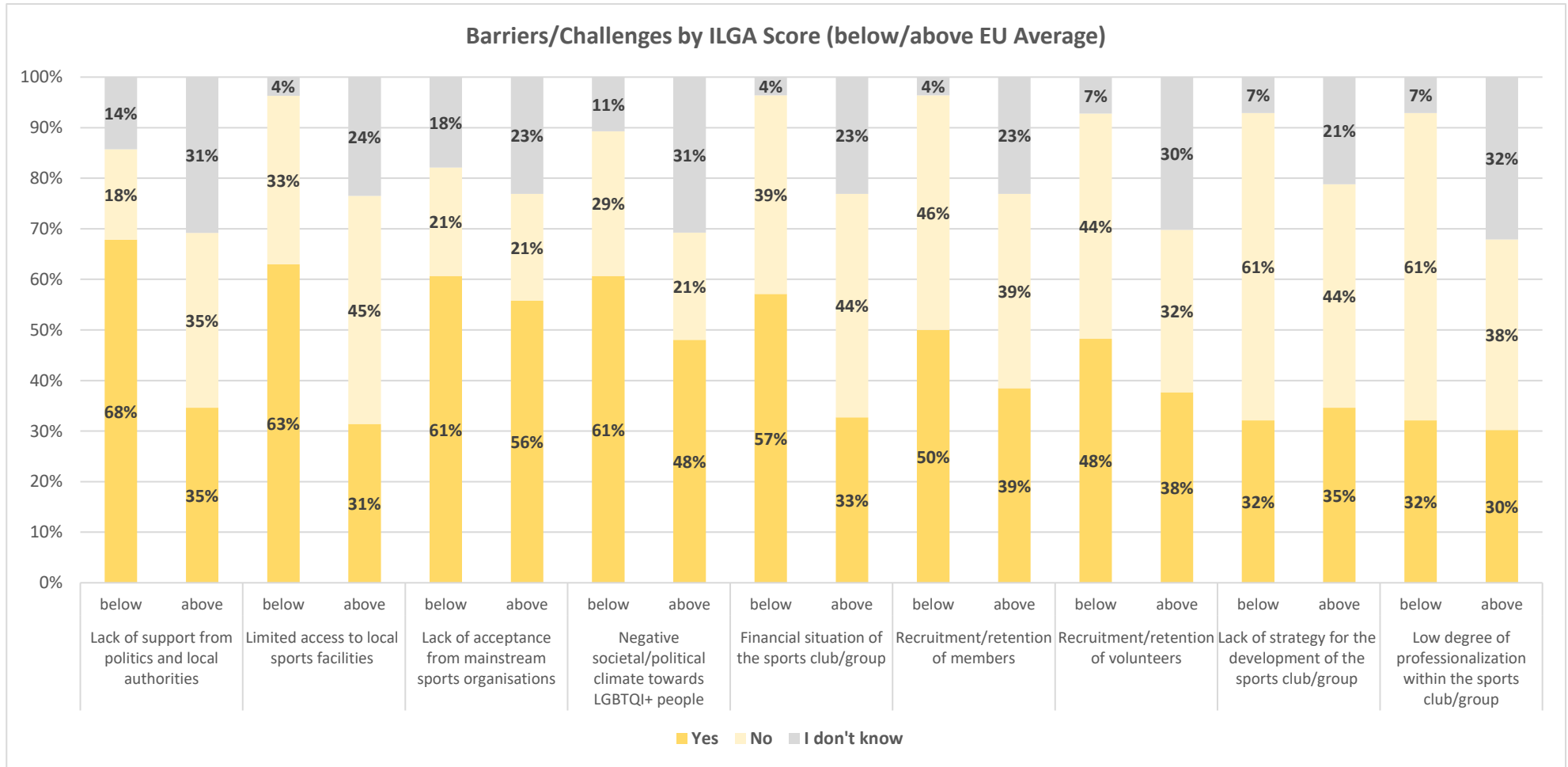


Figure 16: Barriers/Challenges by ILGA Score (n=78-81)

5. Summary and Final Conclusion

In the following section, we will briefly summarise the research results derived from the qualitative written interviews with the five LGBTQI+ partner sports clubs and the quantitative survey with European LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups. The quantitative sample consists of 84 LGBTQI+ sports organisations, mainly sports clubs from Western and Central European countries, mostly located in urban areas, with an average of 312 members and founded in 2005.

Firstly, the summary highlights key findings with regard to the two research questions that guided our work and secondly, summarizes crucial findings with regard to differences by founding year, membership size and ILGA score.

1. What are the past experiences of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups and leaders in creating opportunities for LGBTQI+ people to participate in sports?

The historical experiences of LGBTQI+ sports clubs and groups across Europe illustrate a significant narrative of resilience and advocacy for inclusion that is also shaped by societal and cultural change.

A crucial change can be seen in the increasing openness and inclusivity of groups/clubs towards all sexual and gender identities. Initially, the clubs/groups were predominantly established to create safe environments specifically for gay and bisexual men, reflecting societal contexts of their times. Over the following decades, the openness of these organisations has expanded considerably to include lesbian, bisexual, trans, intersex, and non-binary individuals as well as hetero and cis persons. Besides the provision of safe spaces, strengthening the LGBTQI+ community and offering a space to socialize were important reasons for the founding of the organisations.

The LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups frequently faced substantial barriers at the beginning of their development process including lack of acceptance and support from relevant stakeholders such as mainstream sports clubs or local authorities, as well as a general negative societal and political climate in their countries. These external pressures mirror broader societal challenges experienced by LGBTQI+ individuals and further emphasise the necessity of safe and supportive spaces provided by LGBTQI+ sports clubs and groups. As in mainstream sports, limited access to local sports facilities was and for

some LGBTQI+ sports organisations still is challenging, which underscores the widespread nature of this problem.

The most important strategy for tackling these challenges was by far personal commitment of certain members of the clubs/groups, which is also constantly emphasised in the qualitative interviews with the key leaders of the partner clubs. In addition, activist work and cooperation with other LGBTQI+ organisations were other important strategies for responding to the barriers and challenges.

Notable milestones in the clubs'/groups' development involve their active participation in and hosting of major international sporting events such as the EuroGames and Gay Games, which significantly contributed to enhanced visibility, community solidarity, and networking among LGBTQI+ athletes. Consequently, mechanisms supporting international cooperation and exchange are vital.

2. What are important current and future perspectives of LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups with regard to the development of their club/group?

Currently, LGBTQI+ sports clubs (still) prioritise providing and establishing safe spaces as well as strengthening social contacts and the LGBTQI+ communities within sporting contexts and increasing visibility in social and sports-related contexts. The growth in the number of sports offered and the consistent emergence of new LGBTQI+ sports clubs demonstrate the enduring necessity of these organisations as safe and inclusive spaces, particularly in countries with ILGA-Europe index scores below the European average. Enabling democratic participation and increasing diversity, visibility and membership are further orientations that are deeply rooted in the current mindsets of the sports clubs/groups.

The most important current mindsets are reflected in the most crucial future measures and strategies, e.g., strengthening the community and increasing visibility and awareness. Furthermore, diversifying the membership appears as an important future measure which is reflected in intentions to welcome TIN (trans, intersex, non-binary) and FLINTA (female, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, trans, agender) individuals. However, clubs consistently report challenges in translating these intentions into actual diversified membership. Addressing this discrepancy through structural and cultural adaptations is recognised as an essential focus area for future organisational development.

For the future, the clubs and groups underscore the necessity of finding committed people for the club's management level, of implementing explicit non-discriminatory guidelines, and intensifying staff qualification and educational initiatives. Moreover, strategic objectives such as increasing professionalisation and digitalisation, marketing/advertisement and strengthening cooperation remain critical.

The overwhelming majority of responding organisations stress the need for LGBTQI+ sports organisations and justify this need with social contacts (connecting/socializing) as well as a lack of welcoming cultures and safe space for LGBTQI+ athletes in mainstream sports.

3. What differences occurred with regard to club-based aspects and the legal situation of the respective country?

The contemporary witnesses of our LGBTQI+ partner clubs underscored the relevance of the political and societal situation in their country for the development of their LGBTQI+ sports club/group. This impact is visible to a certain extent in differences by the legal situation in the respective country (ILGA score). The results broke down by ILGA score reveal differences in the organisational form, external barriers and some future strategies between clubs/groups from countries with ILGA score below or above EU average. All in all, these findings disclose, that in countries with ILGA scores below EU average the clubs/groups are in earlier phases of their development processes, which is accompanied among other barriers by a lack of support or limited access to local sports facilities.

Apart from that, we also revealed some differences by founding year of the LGBTQI+ sports clubs/groups. Older and younger clubs are obviously also in different development phases, which is reflected in different barriers and challenges at their founding. Younger clubs mentioned more often barriers that refer to internal structures of the organisations, such as professionalisation of administrative structures or recruitment/retention of volunteers. Apart from that younger clubs are more aware for gender identity and focus stronger on the needs of TIN athletes. Membership size does not have a major impact on the development, governance, present mindsets and future strategies of the LGBTQI+ sports organisations.

In conclusion, LGBTQI+ sports clubs play a pivotal role in promoting inclusive and safe participation, fostering community cohesion, and facilitating social connections within LGBTQI+ communities. Recognising a predictable lifecycle in club development provides opportunities to devise targeted interventions and cooperative frameworks that effectively support the sustained growth and advancement of these essential organisations.

6. Recommendations

Finally, EGLSF aims to give some recommendations for policy work in the world of sports that are grouped into three parts: direct recommendations derived from the research findings, extended and associated recommendations.

Direct Recommendations

1. European Member States should Sustain and Expand Inclusive Sports Spaces.

LGBTQI+-inclusive clubs and events across Europe should be supported and expanded, ensuring long-term funding and infrastructure to foster safe and welcoming environments at all levels of sports.

2. Mainstream Sports Bodies should pursue long term LGBTQI+ Collaborations.

National and European sports federations, Olympic committees, and governing bodies should collaborate with EGLSF and members to embed LGBTQI+ inclusion in policy, practice, and education, moving beyond one-off initiatives.

3. European Bodies should Invest in LGBTQI+ Leadership and Activism in Sports.

EGLSF should prioritise learning from PLUSS and lobby policymakers across sports to increase support for leadership, advocacy and activism efforts within LGBTQI+ grassroots sports.

4. EGLSF should advocate for Prioritising of Intersectional Inclusion.

Decisionmakers right across sports should be encouraged to develop targeted strategies to support underrepresented groups within the LGBTQI+ sports community, including trans, intersex, BIPOC, and disabled athletes, ensuring their voices are centered in decision-making.

5. EGLSF should Foster Cross-Border Solidarity and Networks.

Activities designed at building stronger alliances among LGBTQI+ sports clubs across Europe, especially in regions where rights are under threat, should be prioritised, going beyond EGLSF existing members.

Extended Recommendations

6. Integrate LGBTQI+ Inclusion into the *EU Work Plan for Sport*¹¹.

LGBTQI+ rights and anti-discrimination measures should be explicitly included in future iterations of the *EU Work Plan for Sport*¹¹, ensuring Member States are encouraged to develop national strategies on inclusion.

7. Embed LGBTQI+ Sports Rights in the *EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy*¹².

Sports should be formally included as a key domain in the next version of the *EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy*¹², with concrete objectives, monitoring, and funding mechanisms.

8. Expand LGBTQI+ Inclusion in the *European Sports Charter*¹³.

Updates to the *European Sports Charter*¹³ and *Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)5*¹⁴ should more clearly define obligations regarding the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people, especially in grassroots and school sports.

9. Further Research in Sports Categories should be explored by EGLSF and European Sports Bodies.

LGBTQI+ sports tournaments in Europe have been creative and experimental hotbeds for alternative competition categories, and learning should be further extrapolated and shared, and further research pursued.

10. Protect Trans and Intersex Athletes at EU Legal Level.

There should be EU-level guidance on the rights of trans and intersex athletes regarding harassment and abuse, data privacy, and media and medical ethics, consistent with EU human rights standards.

¹¹ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 14 May 2024 on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 July 2024 – 31 December 2027). (2024)

¹² European Commission. (2020)

¹³ Council of Europe. Committee of Ministers. (2021)

¹⁴ Council of Europe. Committee of Ministers. (2010)

11. LGBTQI+ European Bodies should Collaborate to Develop Youth Sports.

New collaborations should engage LGBTQI+ young people in shaping the future of inclusive sports, considering EGLSF, IGLYO¹⁵, ILGA, TGEU¹⁶ and OII-E¹⁷.

¹⁵ The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) Youth & Student Organisation

¹⁶ Trans Europe and Central Asia

¹⁷ Organisation Intersex International Europe

Associated Recommendations

12. A Pan-European Observatory on LGBTQI+ Hate Speech and Discrimination in Sports should be established.

We would like to establish a new observatory to collect data, monitor hate speech, and track inclusion and discrimination trends across Member States.

13. EU Funding should be conditional on Human Rights Compliance.

The European Commission should make LGBTQI+ inclusivity a condition of sports-related funding through Erasmus+, Creative Europe, and other EU mechanisms, especially in projects receiving cross-border support.

14. Include LGBTQI+ Criteria in EU Accession and Monitoring Processes.

The EU should assess LGBTQI+ inclusion in sports as part of its human rights criteria for candidate countries during the enlargement process, and through mechanisms such as the *Rule of Law* reports.

15. Ensure Inclusion in European Capitals of Sport and Cultural Initiatives.

The EU and Council of Europe should require inclusive sport programming—including LGBTQI+ visibility and cooperation—as part of city bids for titles such as *European Capital of Sport*, *Youth Capital*, or *Cultural Capital*.

16. FRA, EIGE, and EP Bodies should coordinate on Inclusive Sports Research.

The *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)*, *European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)*, and relevant European Parliament committees should coordinate research and reporting on LGBTQI+ sports experiences.

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Cite as

Braumüller, B., Schlunski, T., & Hartmann-Tews, I. (2025). *PLUSS. Research Report on the Story of LGBTQI+ Sport in Europe*. German Sport University Cologne. <https://www.eglsf.info/projects/pluss-project/research-report/>