Sport for All Programs for Health Improvement in Greece

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Goals and structure of sport for all services in Greece

It is well known and scientifically approved that systematic participation in sport may improve one's overall health. Sport for all (SfA) programs all over the world, should be designed to do this. In Greece, sport is provided as a social service through commercial recreation, state-supported programs and relevant organizations that offer SfA services as well (Graph 1).

Graph 1.

SfA Services in Greece

The state-supported SfA public services in Greece can be examined in two eras; a) prior to 1982, when their main focus had been on children/young individuals and the provision of related facilities and b) after 1982, when their programming interest shifted to people of all ages and ability, on top of the provision of related facilities. Currently, the goals of these programs in Greece can be summarized into:

- Improvement of the citizens' overall biological functions (Health)
- Development of sport character and fair play
- Positive utilization of free time and
- Recreation
The organization of the state-supported SfA programs is reflected on the Tables 1 - 3.

Table 1.

Organizational Chart of SfA in Greece

- MINISTRY OF CULTURE
  - DEPUTY MINISTRY OF SPORT
    - SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF SPORT
      - Strategic Planning & Financing of state-supported SfA programs (National Level)
    - PREFECTURES
      - Regional Supervision of SfA Programs (Regional Level)
    - MUNICIPALITIES-COMMUNITIES
      - Program Implementation by Sport Entities or SfA Managers (Local/Operational Level)

Table 2.

SGS Organizational Chart as It Pertains to SfA Programs

- SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF SPORT (Central Sport for All Organizing Committee)
  - Scientific SfA Committee
- GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF SPORT
- DIRECTORATE OF SPORT DEVELOPMENT
  - SCHOOL SPORT
  - COMMUNITY/LABOR/MILITARY SPORT
  - SPECIAL SPORT

In Table 1, one realizes that there is no national body to oversee all SfA services (commercial, state-supported and SfA organizations) in Greece. However, the Deputy Ministry of Sport has already drafted a new sport bill in which the formation of a SfA
federation is taken into account. Until this happens, the Secretariat General of Sport has formed the SFA Central Organizing Committee (SFACOC) (Table 2). Chairman of this committee is the director of sport development who is also the head of the secretariat’s SFA directorship. The SFACOC consists of seven members. Its role is to design the local SFA programs and to cooperate with the directorship of sport development’s personnel, for the organization and supervision of these programs. With regard to the scientific support of the state-supported SFA programs, another committee exists and operates within the SGS. It consists of seven members. Their specialties come from the recreation management, physical education for people with special needs, sport medicine, exercise physiology, sport psychology and sport sociology fields. Their responsibilities include, among other, conduct of seminars, related research and feasibility studies.

The use of regional SFA supervisors for the state-supported programs is considered as essential for coordination and problem-solving purposes. These individuals who are based at the regional physical education offices, are experienced, with know how and organizational skills. With regard to the organization of these programs at the local level, one may find either a municipal sport organization or a vice-mayor responsible of sport (Table 3). Starting this year, municipalities and communities interested to organize the state-supported SFA programs, submit to the SGS related proposals for evaluation and financial coverage.

Table 3. Local Government Organizational Chart of SFA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Organizational Chart of SFA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUNICIPAL COUNCIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAYOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICE-MAYOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPORT-ENTITIES, COMMITTEES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPARTMENTS, OFFICES, SFA MANAGERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPORT FOR ALL PROGRAMS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Profile of the Greek sport participants and sport organizations

Research indicates that the demographic characteristics of the local SFA organizations in Greece, based on all Municipalities with a population of more than 10,000 are the following (Afbinos, 1993):

- 51% have formed a SFA public entity
- 67% employ one to two SFA managers (22% employ 3 - 6)
- 47% use no volunteers in SFA programs, and
- 78% organize various SFA programs in addition to those officially sponsored by the state.

As far as the most frequently used sport facilities is concerned, the same research study showed the basketball courts (89%) at the top position, followed by gymnasiums (84%), volleyball courts (76%) and stadiums (67%).

With regard to the participation of Greek urban residents in physical activity, a study by Hatziharistos (1990) indicates that 22.5% of all study participants exercised regularly (3 days/week · 1 hour/session). This survey conducted in Athens and Thessaloniki metropolitan areas, the residence of almost half of the Greek population. The subjects were 1,400 randomly selected individuals. Among the participants, those with higher education had a tendency to exercise more, showing a preference in activities such as walking (20.2%), swimming (19.0%), gymnastics (17.7%), jogging (16.6%), cycling (10.8%), sport games (10.0%) and other activities (4.7%).

Hatziharistos (1990) study also examined the motivational factors for participation, indicating as the most important the improvement and maintenance of health (61.7%) and as the least important the increase of work efficiency (15.8%) as well as the need for recreation (18.7%). The same study examined the reason for non-participation with most common to be lack of time (42.1%) and the less common lack of interest (32.6%) and sport facilities (23.0%).
Current state-supported SFA programs in Greece

The current state-supported SFA programs are grouped into general and special programs.

a) The general programs are:
   
   Children and Sport. This program is offered to children 6 to 12 y/old as a free time activity. Its goal is to promote motor development, exercise and sport education.

   Adolescence Exercise. This program targets adolescents 13 to 18 years of age, with such physical activities as running, hiking, walking, recreational sport events, dance and aerobic dance.

   Adult Exercise. Under this heading different programs for women and men are offered. Their main goal is to improve participants' physical and overall health. The suggested activities are running, hiking, walking, recreational sport events, dance and aerobic dance.

   Exercise for Seniors. The same main guidelines as those of adults apply to this program as well.

b) The special programs are:

   - Exercise for Individuals with Special Needs. This program targets individuals with physical inability.

   - Exercise for Prisoners. This program is offered in prisons around the country.

   - Exercise for Substance Abusers. This program is utilized in substance rehabilitation centers.

   - Exercise for College and University Students.

   - Centers for Alternative Programs. In these centers pilot programs are tested for effectiveness in the areas of:

     - Family Exercise
     - Preschool physical recreation
     - Exercise for individuals with special needs

   - Innovative Programs Initiated by Local Communities. Proposals for innovative SFA programs are evaluated for possible economic support by the Secretariat General of Sport's SFA directorate.
Table 4 show participation statistics of selected 1996 state-supported SFM programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Programs</th>
<th>Special Children</th>
<th>Prisoners</th>
<th>Substance Abusers</th>
<th>University Students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>2.802</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>4.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>50.000</td>
<td>7.500</td>
<td>2.355</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td>67.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
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National promotion of state-supported SFM programs

The 1996 media campaign for the promotion of state-supported and local-based SFM programs in Greece, is based on a 30" television spot and a print advertisement. The implied theme of the TV spot is "be active", while the written slogans on the television screen are: health, quality of life, way of life and exercise. The scenario reflects the target group of the Secretariat General of Sport programs, showing the contrast between work and play/exercise in different age groups, i.e., children, adolescence, adults and seniors.

The print advertisement is of different nature. It is based on a main slogan written on top of the map of Greece. The slogan says: Everybody do exercise for quality of life, enjoyment, health and recreation. It is a way of life, it is a choice of life, it is a different conceptualization of sport.

References


COMMITTEE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT CDDS

REGIONAL SEMINAR ON SPORT FOR ALL AND HEALTH
Sofia (Bulgaria), 8 - 9 November 1996

REPORT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
ADOPTED BY THE PARTICIPANTS
and reviewed by the Bureau of the CDDS
Strasbourg, 3 - 4 December 1996