

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD OF SPORT MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

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<https://doi.org/10.35189/dpeskj.2024.63.2.6>

Abstract. Sport has diversified a lot according to social-individual and group interests, and because it is integrated into the lives of the members of a society that it influences, the sports movement becomes a social problem of national interest, taking into account the growing number of participants. The current situation of Romanian sport is a starting point to conduct a study that can lead to increasing its efficiency. If we examine the sports clubs in Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania through the prism of the two concepts, namely sports legislation and sport as a consumer product with the two branches of management and marketing, and if we analyse the forms of organization or the qualification level of the employed personnel, we will notice a tremendous difference. An analysis of some football clubs in Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania was carried out to see their financial outcomes from marketing activities, their sporting results at European level and the level of existence of a department with qualified personnel experienced in management and marketing within these clubs. Making a synthesis of the organization and management of sports clubs in different European countries and an analogy with the situation in Romania, an enormous gap was identified. Most European states have understood that sport is an engine for the economic development of a society and thus started many years ago to design development programmes for qualified human resources, understanding their crucial role in the future success of sports clubs.

Keywords: management; marketing; sport.

Received: 12 February 2024 / **Accepted:** 22 June 2024 / **Published:** 30 June 2024

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Introduction

Sport management is a unique area of academic interest for athletes as well because it is an important part of the global economy. Sport is an international product and service that influences business on a global scale. Although the world media pays much attention to sport in general, there is a gap in the literature on international sport management.

This paper will discuss the practical implications and research directions for international sport management. The role of entrepreneurial sport management in different countries is being debated because this fact highlights the changes that have taken place in recent years. Different areas of international sport management are discussed in terms of practical implications.

This article demonstrates how actors compete in the international market and the existence of great potential for entrepreneurial international sports businesses. The fields of sport management and marketing are unique areas of study that deserve more attention.

Current level reflected in the literature

Managers have always sought an international perspective on the issues of the complex world of sport. Millions of people around the globe work in sports organizations (for example, clubs) in various areas such as “event management, broadcasting, venue management, marketing, professional sport, community and collegiate sport, and coaching, as well as in allied industries such as sporting equipment manufacturing, sporting footwear and apparel, and retail”, according to Hoye et al. (2012, p. 4).

The above-mentioned authors say that, at the elite level, sport has moved from an amateur pastime to one of the world’s most important industries; the growth and professionalization of sport has led to “changes in the consumption and production of sport and in the management of sporting organizations at all levels” (Hoye et al., 2012, p. 4).

Marketing, which is involved in all fields, has become a significant concept encompassing ideas, people, institutions, events and facilities. As a core business, marketing has an important place in the sport industry. In recent years, the development of special sport marketing strategies and the presentation of sports products and services to consumers have gained importance (Vos et al., 2013).

For a sports organization to be successful, it must mean something to sport consumers. In practice, this requires a consumer to be aware of the sports organization, its brand and the products or services it offers and respond to them in a positive way. Therefore, sport marketing is best understood as the process of planning how a sports brand is positioned and how the delivery of its products or services should be implemented to establish a relationship between a sports brand and its consumers (Breuer et al., 2013).

EU Member States have sought and benefited from sport development solutions; they knew how to negotiate the introduction of funding axes for sports activities and infrastructure (Kemper, 1999).

In Romania, sport has never been established as a sectoral field with funding axes from European funds because it is not a national policy and has not been given the status and importance it deserves. The major problem in our country is that no solutions have been constantly sought and implemented, no national strategy has been created for this field and no governing body has been established to analyse and come up with optimisation proposals every year as in other EU countries. The management and administration of sports structures as a specialisation in higher education institutions appeared in Romania only in 2005. Unfortunately, Romania’s new sports managers are not always the best choices, the political interference in this field resulting in the apathy and disinterest of those who should lead the destinies of sport.

Appointments based on political criteria instead of mandates of at least 4 years with a “management contract” with clear objectives made it impossible to develop an efficient system under the right conditions. Also, the human resource, namely the specialists it had or the top experts who completed their specialised studies, preferred to migrate to other

countries that provided them with optimal conditions for performance and knew to pay them better, depriving the already-dying Romanian system of quality technicians.

Making an analysis of organizational charts and revenues in any country, it is normal to see a close connection between the two: high revenues are generated by the work of a large team that is well-structured for all needs. There are lots of departments with many tasks but also with great achievements. All those who run big clubs have understood the need for highly professional and high-quality management and marketing (Harvey et al., 1993).

Romanian sport should subordinate itself to the same progressive laws that are governed at this stage by the quantity and especially the objective quality of information and its management. Ignoring these aspects means failing to ensure that Romanian sport benefits from a development comparable to the international level towards which our entire society is striving.

Updating the Romanian legislation on the administration and management of sports clubs with that of the European countries will lead to improved management of sports clubs in our country. Matching the sports legislation with that of the EU Member States will result in the exploitation of potential financial resources intended for marketing in Romanian sport.

Unfortunately, sport in Romania is at a critical threshold. Romanian sports managers should understand the facts as they are, see themselves as businessmen (not athletes) with a solid management and marketing background and behave as such. In Romanian sport, there is a great need for a good development strategy, and club managers should see the technical-organizational side, the socioeconomic side being united in management and marketing activities.

Analysing the organizational charts and the position of the marketing and management side, one can notice a large difference between the people who deal with management and marketing. It seems that the biggest mistake made by club owners is to think that an athlete can automatically have management and marketing skills just because they can understand the field. Many club owners do not understand that experience is based on high-level education and specialised studies followed by long practice (Andreff et al., 2009).

When comparing the personalities chosen to run the big sports clubs with those in our country, one can see a huge difference between them. Factors include compliance with the law, previous experience as managers, analysis and selection of personnel, management and marketing directors or their skill levels. All this is also related to a very well developed higher education system anchored in the current economic reality, in modern management and marketing trends. For these clubs, high-level education, reputation and subsequent results are important. There is a requirement for all managers in the countries where clubs are located to have a master's degree in business administration. In Romania, legislative changes are needed to allow sports clubs to have positions and people qualified in sport management and marketing in their organizational charts.

If Romanian clubs want to have a path similar to the best clubs, they should redefine their decisions step by step. It is up to the staff of the decision-making body to be aware and understand what is needed in terms of compliance with the rules and legislation in force, and then to ask the Romanian authorities for financial support so that sports clubs can eliminate the socioeconomic gaps that are currently active.

With the tendency of Romanians to quickly specialise in advanced marketing and management courses, the need for a paradigm shift in sport will be blocked from the very beginning. We should understand the differences in education offered by specialised Romanian universities and various autonomous institutions other than universities.

Romania has well-prepared academics and therefore the possibility to train high-quality sports managers. Thus, our society has to understand that, only by having well-trained managers and modern sports marketing, Romanian clubs will be able to avoid those already traditional collapses and will be able to compete with international clubs.

For this reason, it is necessary to introduce the activity of sports manager in the specialised legislation and therefore in the organizational charts of sports clubs, which will raise this category to the need for higher education attestation in terms of the list of occupations.

The *aim* of the research was to analysis 1st place football teams, mid-ranking and bottom ranking football clubs in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Spain to observe their financial situation, their sporting results at European level and the level of existence of a department with qualified personnel experienced in management and marketing.

Methods

The methods used in the present study are the bibliographical study method, the observation method, the statistical-mathematical method, and the graphical method. Information regarding marketing and management budget, education and professional experience of managers and football teams' participation in European Cups were searched and collected. Using the Mann-Whitney test (U) the differences between top-ranked teams and mid-ranking, respectively bottom ranking teams were examined, in terms of budget. Using the graphical method and with the use of visual aids, the differences between the investigated football teams were highlighted.

Results

The most important results will be presented below in Tables 1-5 and Figure 1.

Table 1. *Marketing and management budget for each investigated team*

Country	Team	Marketing and Management budget
Spain – 1st place	Real Madrid CF	€296,020,000
Spain – mid-ranking	CA Osasuna	€6,639,208
Spain – bottom ranking	Deportivo Aleves	€6,370,742
Czech Republic – 1st place	Slavia Praga	€19,443,169
Czech Republic – mid-ranking	FC Slovan Liberec	€2,000,000
Czech Republic – bottom ranking	MFK Karvina	€290,000
Hungary – 1st place	Ferencvaros TC	€5,965,808
Hungary – mid-ranking	Gyirmot SM	€1,016,601
Hungary – bottom ranking	Paksi FC	€27,297
Romania – 1st place	CFR Cluj	€2,800,000
Romania – mid-ranking	UTA Arad	€428,225
Romania – bottom ranking	CS Mioveni	€105,808

Table 2. Data on examined football teams

Country	Team	Management and Marketing Department Director - Education and professional experience	Management and Marketing Budget 2021-2022	Participation in European Cups – Groups
SPAIN	Real Madrid CF (1 st place)	José Ángel Sánchez Education: Faculty of Philosophy and Letters Experience: 1990 Sales Promoter - El Corte Ingles 1992 Marketing Director - SEGA (video game manufacturer) 1995 CEO - SEGA Eastern Europe June 1, 2000-present Marketing and Sales Director Real Madrid	€296,020,000	Champions League - 15 trophies UEFA Cup - 2 trophies European Super Cup - 5 trophies Intercontinental Cup - 3 trophies FIFA Club World Championship - 5 trophies
	CA Osasuna (mid-ranking team)	Jorge Cobo Álvarez Education: 2014-2019 Loyola University of Andalusia, Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Management, General 2017-2018 University of Gdańsk Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Management, General 2021 LaLiga Business School Digital Strategy and Data Management Course: Sport and Fitness; Administration/ Management; Training course in the fields of Digital Strategy and Big Data, specialising in the Professional Football Sector; 2022 LaLiga Business School Brand Building and Management Course Experience: Alcabala Economist - Contributor July 2016 - September 2016 (3 months) - Seville area, Spain Cádiz Club de Fútbol SAD - Internship September 2018 - March 2019 (7 months) - Cádiz, Spain; Business Development - Spain, SportQuake October 2019 - April 2020 (7 months) - London, United Kingdom Marketing Department - CA Osasuna November 2020-present (3 years and 11 months) - Pamplona/ Iruña, Autonomous Community of Navarre, Spain	€6,639,208	- No participation in the European Cups since 2006-2007 - Conference League group stage in 2023-2024
	Deportivo Alaves (bottom ranking team)	Aitor Apesteguía Education: National University of Distance Education (UNED); 2007-2008 IE Business School Master's Degree in Business Management and Marketing Experience: 1998-2000 Marketing Director Coca Cola Europacific Partners 2000-2008 Sales Manager of the Commercial Department at BMW/Mini Motor Gorbea 2009-2014 Commercial and Marketing	€6,370,742	2001 - UEFA Cup Finalist

		Director at Baskonia Kirol Hiria SL 2014-2016 Manager at Baskonia Kirol Hiria SL; 2016-2019 Deputy General Manager la Baskonia - Alaves Group; 2019-2022 Group Marketing Director at Baskonia - Alaves Group 2023-present Marketing Director at Baskonia - Alaves Group		
CZECH REPUBLIC	Slavia Praga (1 st place)	Martin Riha Education: 2009-2015 Karlova University, Faculty of Law; 2013-2014 Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Law and Sport Marketing Experience: 2011-2013 Legal advisor at Pokorny, Wagner & Partners; 2014 Legal advisor at Rowan Legal; 2014-2017 Lawyer at the Czech Football Association; 2015-2018 Secretary of the Appeals Committee at the Czech Football Association; 2015-present Executive Director of the International Football Foundation; 2016-2019 Board member of the International Football Foundation; 2017-2020 Board member of the Fotbal Travel, A.s.; 2017-2020 Chairman of the Legal and Legislation Committee of the Czech Football Association; 2021-present CEO, General Director of the Management Department at SK Slavia Praha Football Club	€19,443,169	- UEFA Cup Semi-finalist 1995-1996 - UEFA Champions League group stage 2018-2019 - UEFA Champions League group stage 2019-2020 - UEFA Champions League quarter-finals 2020-2021 - Conference League groups 2021-2022/2022-2023
	FC Slovan Liberec (mid-ranking team)	Tomas Carnojursky Education: Faculty of Social Sciences Experience: 2009 Employment at Slovan Liberec 2018-present Director of Communication and Management at FC Slovan Liberec	€2,000,000	- Europa League group stage in 2014, 2016, 2017, 2021
	MFK Karvina (bottom ranking team)	Nela Jurygackova Education: 2018-2021 Silesian University of Opava - Trade and Marketing 2021 PhD at the Silesian University of Opava - Trade and Marketing Experience: 2015-2021 Advisor at the MFK Karvina Marketing Department 2021-present Marketing Director	€290,000	-
HUNGARY	Ferencvaros TC (1 st place)	No specialised department, management and marketing tasks being the responsibility of President Kubatov Gabor's Cabinet	€5,965,808	- Europa League group stage in 2019-2020, 2021-2022, 2023-2024 - Champions League group stage 2020-2021
	Gyirmot FC (mid-ranking team)	No separate department, management and marketing tasks being assigned to a member of the Club's Board	€1,016,601	-
	Paksi FC (bottom ranking)	No separate department, management and marketing tasks being assigned to a member of the Club's Board	€27,297	-

Table 2. Data on examined football teams - continued

ROMANIA	CFR Cluj (1 st place)	Tudor Pop Education: Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences – Journalism, UBB Cluj “Sigismund Toduta” Music High School Experience: September 2002 - September 2004 Print & DTP Assistant Manager at AIT Reel September 2004 - September 2007 Marketing Executive at CFR 1907 Cluj, NTT DATA Romania; September 2007 - September 2010 Media Officer; September 2010 - February 2017 Marketing & Media Manager; February 2017-present Operations Manager December 2016-present Managing Partner/Sport Marketing at TAQT Media	€2,800,000	- Europa League group stage in 2019-2020, 2020-2021 - Conference League group stage in 2021- 2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024
	UTA Arad (mid-ranking team)	No separate department, management and marketing tasks being assigned to a member of the Club’s Board	€428,225	
	CS Mioveni (bottom ranking)	No separate department, management and marketing tasks being assigned to a member of the Club’s Board	€105,808	

Table 3. Value scale with points awarded according to the specified criteria

Value scale with points awarded		
Marketing budget 2021	0 – 999,000 euro	1 point
	1 million – 4,999,999 euro	2 points
	5 million – 9,999,999 euro	3 points
	10 million – 19,999,999 euro	4 points
	20 million – 300 million euro	8 points
Existence of a Management and Marketing Department	-	1 point
	-	
Specific higher education completed by the Director of the Management and Marketing Department		1 point
Sales experience of the Director of the Management and Marketing Department	0 – 5 years	2 points
	6 – 10 years	4 points
	3 years in Champions League	9 points
Participation in the European Cup groups between 2019 and 2023	3 years in Europa League	6 points
	3 years in Conference League	3 points
	1 year in at least 1 European Cup	1 point

Table 4. Management, Cup and Budget points received

Team	Management Points	Cup Points	Budget Points
Real Madrid CF	6	9	8
CA Osasuna	4	1	3
Deportivo Alaves	6	0	3
Slavia Praga	4	9	4
FC Slovan Liberec	4	1	3
MFK Karvina	6	1	2
Ferencvaros TC	0	6	3
Gyirmot FC	0	0	2
Paksi FC	0	0	1
CFR Cluj	4	3	2
UTA Arad	0	0	1
CS Mioveni	0	0	1

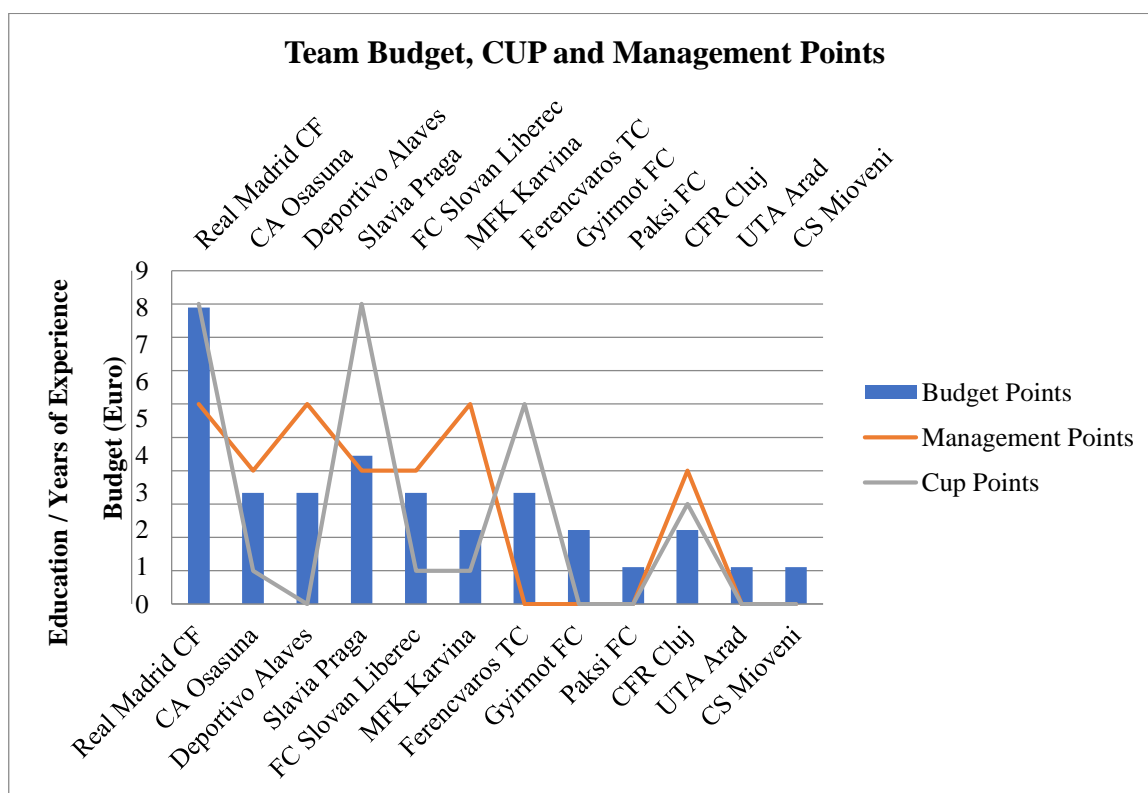


Figure 1. Situation of the football teams according to the conventional number of points

Using the U nonparametric test, the differences between top-ranked football teams and mid-ranking, respectively bottom ranking teams were investigated, in terms of the budget. Due to sample small size (four countries investigated) mid-ranking and bottom ranking teams formed one group (in the statistical analysis). Data in Table 5 reveal significant differences ($p = 0.048$), in terms of budget, between the teams ranked first at the national level (from the four countries), and mid- respectively bottom-ranked football teams.

Table 5. Mann-Whitney (U) test – 1st football teams vs. mid- and bottom-ranked teams

		Statistic	p
Budget	Mann-Whitney U	4.00	0.048

Discussion and Conclusion

Sport management should be a unique area of academic interest as it plays an important role in the global economy. Sport is an international industry that has a powerful effect on the global economy. Even if sport is generally the main topic for mass-media attention worldwide, there is a lack of studies in the literature about the sport management at international level. Managing sports organizations at the beginning of the 21st century involves applying techniques and strategies used in leading business, government and non-profit organizations (Hoye et al., 2012).

The current paper discusses the practical implications and research directions for international sport management, highlighting recent developments of entrepreneurial sport management in different countries. In Romania, Constantin et al. (2020) underlined the need of the society to know new resources for development and change in the entrepreneurial domain. Different areas of international sport management are addressed in terms of real-world applicability. The management of today's sports establishments can no longer be built and developed without the use of scientific methods and techniques that allow the effective understanding and application of the laws of Economic Law by using resources objectively, efficiently and reasonably.

Managers have an important role to play in this matter because they accurately evaluate the results achieved and thus enhance the decision-making process for all managerial functions, which is why quite a lot of emphasis is placed on sport marketing, which involves planning the positioning strategies of a sports brand and how the delivery of its products or services establishes a relationship between a sports brand and its consumers (Dolles & Soderman, 2013). It seems that Romanian sport managers “use more the lower right quadrant of the brain, being socially oriented individuals, empathetic, expressive and sensitive to others”, also, performing well mathematical, analytical activities, and having a good ability to understand the reactions of others (Predoiu et al., 2023a).

EU Member States have sought and benefited from sport development solutions as they have managed to negotiate funding axes for sports activities and infrastructure. In Romania, sport has never been established as a sectoral field with funding axes from European funds because it is not a national policy and has not been given the status and importance it deserves. An analysis of the legislation applicable to sports clubs in Romania shows that their financial resources mostly come from public authorities and only a small part comes from donors or private funds.

Sport management, as a field of business management, has made progress in the last decade, with more and more people becoming interested in how sport incorporates social benefits in a society. Sports managers have always sought an international perspective on the

complex issues they face. According to Hoye et al. (2012), millions of people around the globe work in sports organizations (for example, sports clubs) in various areas such as professional and collegiate sport, coaching, event management, marketing community, etc. In this context, “is necessary for the legal and legislative factors to be considered of major importance in the management of the institutions that have the object of activity - physical education and sports activities” (Voicu et al., 2020). In 2019, researchers emphasized that even if education for integrity and ethics (in Romania) has undergone positive transformations, there is still a long way to go to align „with the European policies in the field of education for ethics and integrity in sport” (Stănescu & Stănescu, 2019).

Sport integrates social initiatives by increasing the competitiveness of an organization and improving its public image, therefore qualified personnel will play a crucial role in its development. It is known that a sport manager requires certain temperamental and personality characteristics to successfully fulfill the job requirements (see Stănescu et al., 2016). Among the qualities of a sport manager are an assertive communication style (generally) and a relationship-oriented leadership style, focusing more on supporting, motivating and developing employees (Predoiu et al., 2023b). Also, experienced sports managers recognise and control their own emotions “and mobilise their resources to a higher level to achieve a goal [...] are more open, sociable and [...] rely significantly more, in the interpretation of information, on direct and concrete experiences, on the five senses (relating more strongly to external stimuli), and less on intuition” (Predoiu et al., 2021). Literature suggested the importance for more specific entrepreneurship competencies in the context of sport (Haski et al., 2024). And athletes have certain personality features which can help them to deal with the competitive socio-economic environment, having the possibility to continue as managers (e.g. after their retirement), keeping their sport perspective (Stănescu et al., 2019).

In the world of Romanian sport, the concepts of sport management and sport marketing are insufficiently known and almost never scientifically applied. Making a synthesis of the organization and management of sports clubs in different European countries and an analogy with the situation in Romania, an enormous gap was identified. Most European states have understood that sport is an engine for the economic development of a society and thus started many years ago to design programmes aimed at supporting and developing the community from a sporting point of view. Education or training policies for youth and sport play an important role in the knowledge-based economy, and these factors support economic growth and employment.

It is necessary for the Romanian state to declare sport as a national priority and create fiscal facilities, and for central and local authorities to get involved as much as possible in the development and modernisation of sports infrastructure, with an emphasis on the qualification of the employed personnel.

Talking about the educational gap, we cannot overlook that the policy of Romanian clubs, sports associations and even ministries depends on pressing needs dictated from outside rather than on the knowledge of the sport market demands and the existence of a coherent strategy for the development of sport.

The lack of investment in sport infrastructure, the underfunding of sport and poor training in sport management and marketing techniques that have to deal with these areas make us look with distrust towards the future of Romanian sport. The enormous differences

between the sports policies and visions in the European Union countries compared to Romania increase the gap in results.

A comparative testing of the activities, revenues and achievements of some sports clubs in certain Western European countries and Romania will highlight a harsh reality, namely the existence of major differences between these clubs, which also demonstrates the differences in economic, social and sporting qualities between Romania and many European nations.

At the same time, coaches should prepare specialised courses in collaboration with specialised universities and sports clubs, including those at lower levels; also, management should include people trained to cope with current requirements in terms of sport marketing and management because marketing has become omnipresent, influencing ideas, people, institutions and events in the sport industry, which reveals that specialised marketing strategies are becoming increasingly important to promote sports products and services to consumers (Vos et al., 2013).

About the statement that sport marketing is the process of planning the positioning of a sports brand and how the delivery of its products or services establishes a relationship between a sports brand and its consumers (Breuer et al., 2013), we can say that it is completely true, because especially marketing directors have to keep up with the new reforms in the field of sport knowing that training and specialisation strategies will be needed, legislative changes have to take into account current European trends, and human and financial resources have to be closely related to each other.

Funding: This study did not receive any external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The research was conducted according to the principles stated in the Declaration of Helsinki. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the National University of Physical Education and Sport in Bucharest (ID: 1025/0330).

Data Availability Statement: Data can be made available upon request to the contact author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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