

REVIEW PAPER

FITNESS IN THE SPORT STRUCTURE OF LATVIA

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E-mail: Aleksandra.cuprika@lspa.lv, andra.fernate@lspa.lv**Abstract**

Origination of physical activities in Latvia territory, the necessity for sports sector to be developed, as well as the change of people's understanding about physical loads and the essence of active lifestyle caused by rapid growth of the fitness sector where the main principle is load applied to strengthen and improve one's health condition. One of the most important problems is a uniform understanding of the term "fitness", and its place in the sports sector in Latvia. Therefore the aim of the article is to evaluate fitness as structure element inclusion possibilities in the Sports Structure in Latvia. The research is based on the investigation and analysis of the literature sources and sports policy planning documents, such as "Basic Positions of Sport Policy in Latvia", project 2013- 2020, "National Sport Development Program 2006 –2013" of Latvia, "National Development Plan of Latvia 2012 –2020". The place of fitness in the sports system in Latvia, the necessity and possibility to include fitness in the "National Sport Development Program" and in the "Basic Positions of Sport Policy" in perspective were studied. Commercial fitness clubs and the Latvian Fitness and Health Promotion Association (LFVVNA) are not included in the sports structure of Latvia; however, fitness is socially-cultural phenomenon which is necessary to be included in the development program of sport sector.

Introduction

It is known that innovative processes are an integral part of nowadays progress. In the framework of research more and more new terminology which characterizes the development process of society is being used. Socially-cultural environment requires also the development of the sports sector and spread of innovations within it. Today the analysis of the literature sources testifies that the aim of inhabitants' of several countries physical activities is not only to improve abilities to do definite physical

work, but, to spend one's free time actively, to improve lifestyle, whose main ingredient is health (Eichberg, 2004; Scanlan et al., 2011; Ford et al., 2012).

Today the decisive factor to improve and strengthen health is one's own position, his/her attitude towards social, mental and physical health. A new notion in society about a human's life abilities orientates a personality to the development processes of physical and mental health to improve one's feelings and harmonize mental and physical health (SKDS, 2007; Tuyckom et al., 2010).

Rapid changes in the sports sector regarding physical activities among society were caused by the origination of physical activities in Latvia territory and rapid spread of fitness sector with the main principle of load to strengthen and improve health condition.

Therefore *the aim* of the article is to evaluate fitness as structure element inclusion possibilities in the Sports Structure of Latvia.

Methods: the investigation and analysis of the literature sources and sports policy planning documents. The research is based on such information sources as *Basic Positions of Sport Policy in Latvia*, project 2013- 2020, *National Sport Development Program 2006 –2013* of Latvia, as on the national level Sport Policy in Latvia is regulated by exactly these two documents. *Basic Positions of Sport Policy 2013 – 2010* state the main principles, aims and tasks to implement the state sport policy, but the *National Sport Development Program 2006 – 2012* has been worked out as an implementation mechanism of basic positions of sport policy 2006 – 2020. As the third planning document which serves as the basis of this study is the *National Development Plan of Latvia 2012 –2020*, which is the highest national level medium term planning document, including the chapter *Priority – human's safety ability* and one of the priority directions is a healthy and workable individual. The place of fitness in the sports system of Latvia, the necessity and possibility to include fitness in the *National Sport Development Program* and in the *Basic Positions of Sport Policy* in perspective were studied.

Results and Discussion

Fitness gradually developed from simple physical condition to 20th century culture phenomenon, as another development way from a human's physical health, which reflects in its readiness to do physical work up to the desire to improve one's life quality, which includes social, mental and physical components (Howley & Frenks, 1998).

One of the most important problems in the fitness sector in Latvia is a uniform understanding of the term *fitness*, and its place in the sports sector. Fitness is not clearly defined in Latvia, what makes difficult to understand and adopt it in sport science. When analyzing the tendencies of the fitness sector in Latvia the authors conclude that up to now it has not been studied and described deeply enough. In Latvia there are data available from the Latvian Fitness and Health Promotion Association (LFVVNA), which are cited from the international fitness organization – International Health, Rasquet and Sportclub Association (IHRSA).

The American term “fitness”, which appeared in the 20th century and has become popular today is widely used in such sectors as management, sociology, sports, medicine, and biology, however, the understanding of its essence is different. It can be explained by the fact that phenomena, which are described using the word *fitness* in Latvia and the USA are different. In the society of the USA *fitness* is understood in much broader meaning than in Latvia. In America fitness includes such terms as physical condition, physical activity, recreation, rehabilitation, proper diet, health, etc. In Latvia the word *fitness* does not have a uniform definition, but it is understood as both physical condition and the ability to do a definite action, as well as the desire of a human to be healthy. However, fitness in its broadest meaning is a lifestyle, which gives a possibility to maintain and strengthen one’s health, to balance the emotional condition, to improve physical shape and promote active lifestyle (Лисицкая & Сиднева, 2002).

Having analyzed *Basic Positions of Sport Policy in Latvia*, project 2013- 2020, it can be concluded that commercial fitness clubs and the Latvian Fitness and Health Promotion Association (LFVVNA) are not included in the Sport Structure of Latvia (see fig. 2). The structure is an inner formation of a definite system, relations between sub-systems and system elements, composition of these sub-systems and elements, where each of them has a definite function (Лопатников Л. И., 2003). Sports structure is formed in order to logically state mutual relations between the grades and functional parts of the system to effectively reach the aims of the system. So, it can be concluded if fitness clubs are not included in the system, they do not facilitate the process of reaching the aim. More definitely, as one of the aims the improvement of inhabitants health and promotion of active lifestyle should be mentioned.

However, in the *National Sport Development Program 2006 –2013* in the chapter *Sports for All* it is spoken about sports as healthy lifestyle and meaningful spending of leisure outside children and youth sports and outside top sports, for example, attending of sports and fitness centers,

development where competitions are used as an instrument and means, getting individuals interested and participating in various sports. LFVVNA was established in Latvia in 2007 with the aim to unite the representatives of the leading clubs as employers (legal persons), sector specialists – trainers, academic staff of the Latvian Academy of Sport Education to develop the fitness and health sector, as well as promote physical activities of society and improve its health condition, so it plays a great role in the health improvement process of society and promotion of active lifestyle.

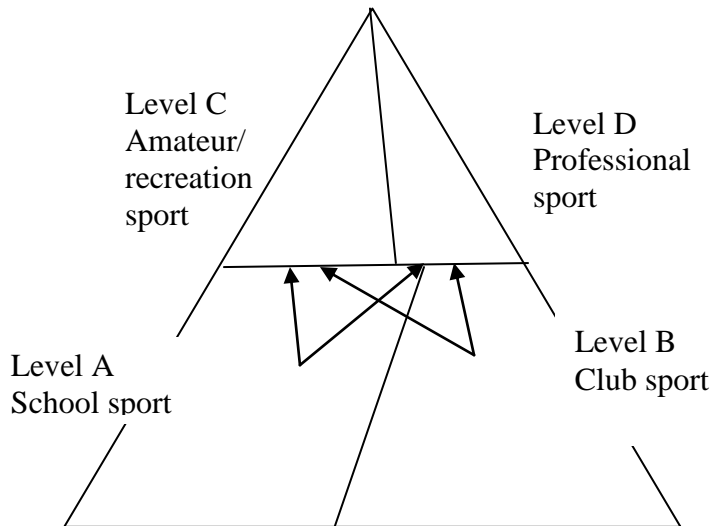


Figure 1. Scheme of sport level interaction (Laios, 1995)

All sport levels in the state should mutually interact (see Fig. 1). Such levels as school sport (children and youth sport), club sport (sport and fitness club), amateur/recreation sport and professional sport should be included in the sport system. School sport or children and youth sport, and club sport is potential forge of professional level athletes, and to great extent it provides also the health and life quality of the state inhabitants (Laios, 1995). There should be transparent, sustainable and towards future directed cooperation between the state, sports clubs, schools and federations on the one hand and sport patrons on the other hand to develop also professional sport in Latvia. To promote more active people's lifestyle it is necessary to get people interested in sport and other physical activities. It is necessary to create a positive attitude towards sport in society and family, emphasizing its role in health strengthening and maintaining of physical condition (Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of Chronic

Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, 2006), what is also done by commercial fitness clubs holding active events for the clients and their families.

In 2007 Social Idea Research Center (SDPC) carried out research about sporting habits of Latvia inhabitants. According to the inquiry data almost a half or 49% of inhabitants have answered that they do not do any physical or sports activity at all. Riga inhabitants (57%) do physical activities more often than other inhabitants of cities (50%) and the countryside (45%) in Latvia. The respondents who had pointed out that they did not do any physical/sports activities, had mentioned the lack of time (44%) as the main reason, 27% of them pointed out that it was not necessary for them to do that, but 22% answered that they could not do that because of their present health condition. Only 2% of the respondents pointed out that they did not do physical or sports activities because it was too expensive (SDPC, 2007).

In 2010 a research was carried out on *Sex and Age Inequality Regular Participation in Sport: European state research* with 25 countries taking part, including Latvia. The results show that only 19.6% of respondents after the age of 18 participate actively and regularly in sports classes in Latvia. The research shows that men are more active than women, and they do sports more regularly (Tuyckom et al., 2010).

Fitness clubs and LFVVNA are not included in the Sport Structure of Latvia, therefore there are no data about them in the Latvia State Central Statistics Department, and so it is not possible to substantiate them scientifically. However, on LFVVNA homepage there is information about the campaign of active lifestyle popularization “Sweat off Your Tire!”, which in 2012 involved 48 sports and fitness clubs, swimming pools and other institutions of active relaxation in Riga and other cities of Latvia. Comparing to 2011, when the campaign was supported by 37 sports clubs, we have experienced a significant increase of interest. The interest from the side of society has increased, too – in 2011 on the day of the campaign sports clubs were attended by about 4700 people, but in 2012 – about 5500. The oldest participant was 76 years old, the youngest – only 5 years old. 23% of all visitors attended a fitness club for the first time, 46% did fitness irregularly, and this event raised motivation to come to a sports club, and only 31% of the participants attend fitness clubs regularly.

The Sport Structure of Latvia (see Fig.2.) includes such sub-systems as Sport Medicine State Agency, the state capital companies, the Latvian Academy of Sport Education, subordinate institutions and non-governmental organizations. Every sub-system consists of definite elements, and their work is regulated by a definite ministry. Non-governmental

organizations are Sport Federation Council of Latvia, Latvian Olympic Committee, Latvian Paralympic Committee, School Sport Federation of Latvia, Latvian People Sport Association, Latvian University Sport Association, Latvian Sport Veteran Association and the Latvian Fitness and Health Promotion Association could be added as one more element in this Structure, as this association has a very important function in the Latvia state – the popularization of healthy lifestyle and regular physical activity among the inhabitants of Latvia. Commercial fitness clubs could be joined to the element sports clubs.

To understand better fitness position in EU we compare Sport Structure in Latvia with a Sport Structure in other European countries. According to information, we can conclude, that in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and United Kingdom fitness clubs are not included in the Sport Structure as well as in Latvia. At the same time in Finland there are 2 fitness sport organizations in the Sport structure, which are regulated by the Finnish sport association (SLU), in Spain on the Local level organize and manage sport services for citizens (fitness, sport schools, technical centers). The reason for the high rate of sport practice in The Netherlands as one factor was mentioned the rapid growth in the number of fitness centers (from 400 in 1995 to more than 2,000 in 2007). The Czech Republic the Association of Sport for All is an association of sport clubs, institutions and civic associations which focuses on the organization of recreational and physical activities for people of all ages, including commercial activities – for example fitness clubs attendance. Cyprus Olympic Committee has a sport-for-all programm which supports the practice of sport for children, adults, senior citizens and the disabled, and organizes sport events at regional and district level in certain disciplines (Sport statistics data in EU,2013)

The number of sports clubs in Latvia is 84, capital companies whose work involves organization of sports classes and events are 19 and fitness clubs in Latvia are about 150, what is more than sports clubs. The number of sports organizations in Latvia from 2009 till 2011 has decreased from 1024 to 762 organizations (Sport statistics in Latvia, 2012), but the number of fitness clubs from 2009 till 2012 has increased from 118 to 150 commercial fitness clubs (IHRSA, 2012). It allows conclude once more that fitness clubs are popular among inhabitants of Latvia and help to reach the aim of strengthening and improvement of health condition, and healthy lifestyle popularization among inhabitants of Latvia.

Nowadays the development of society cannot be conceivable without sports. Therefore it is necessary to include fitness clubs and the Latvian Fitness and Health Promotion Association in the Sport Structure of Latvia, as:

1. The opening of various fitness clubs in Latvia affects the number of people, who do physical activities to improve and strengthen their health condition, so affects the health condition of inhabitants of Latvia and facilitates the development of sports sector in Latvia.

2. To develop the sports sector in Latvia it is necessary to make contacts with several international fitness organizations on the state level, such as International Health, Racquet and Sportclub Association (IHRSA), European Committee of Development of Sport (CDDS) and International Dance Exercise Association (IDEA), etc.

3. There is a common international terminology, which includes several derived words: a fitness club, fitness sector, fitness technologies, fitness programs, fitness trainer, etc.

4. The effect of globalization on the sports sector decreases language barrier all over the world, using common terms, such as „fitness”, which allows unite countries in one sports sector community.

5. Fitness gives positive impact on the economics environment. The fitness clubs segment of the global leisure facilities sector generated total revenues of \$62.9 billion – over 45 per cent of the sector’s overall value – representing a compound annual growth rate for the period 2006 to 2010 of almost 3.5 per cent (Datamonitor, 2011). A more encompassing analysis of the fitness industries conducted on behalf of the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA, 2012) reported that, in 2009, the sector was worth \$70 billion.

Fitness includes various physical activities, health improvement programs, innovative technologies, diet programs, whose main principle is health improvement. As it is mentioned in the action direction *Healthy and Workable Individual* of the *National Development Plan of Latvia 2012 – 2020*: 30% of all the dead in Latvia have lost their life at the age of being able to work. The main causes of death rate are different diseases (cardio-vascular, oncologic, mental, loco-motor, a.o.), as well as outer death causes (injuries, accidents, suicides, murders), which often cause the loss of work ability. Therefore it is necessary to implement purposeful and effective health promoting and risk limiting events, forwarding as one of the objectives – to strengthen healthy and active lifestyle habit in society by developing health promotion cooperation nets: of healthy diet, active lifestyle and the facilitation of mental health.

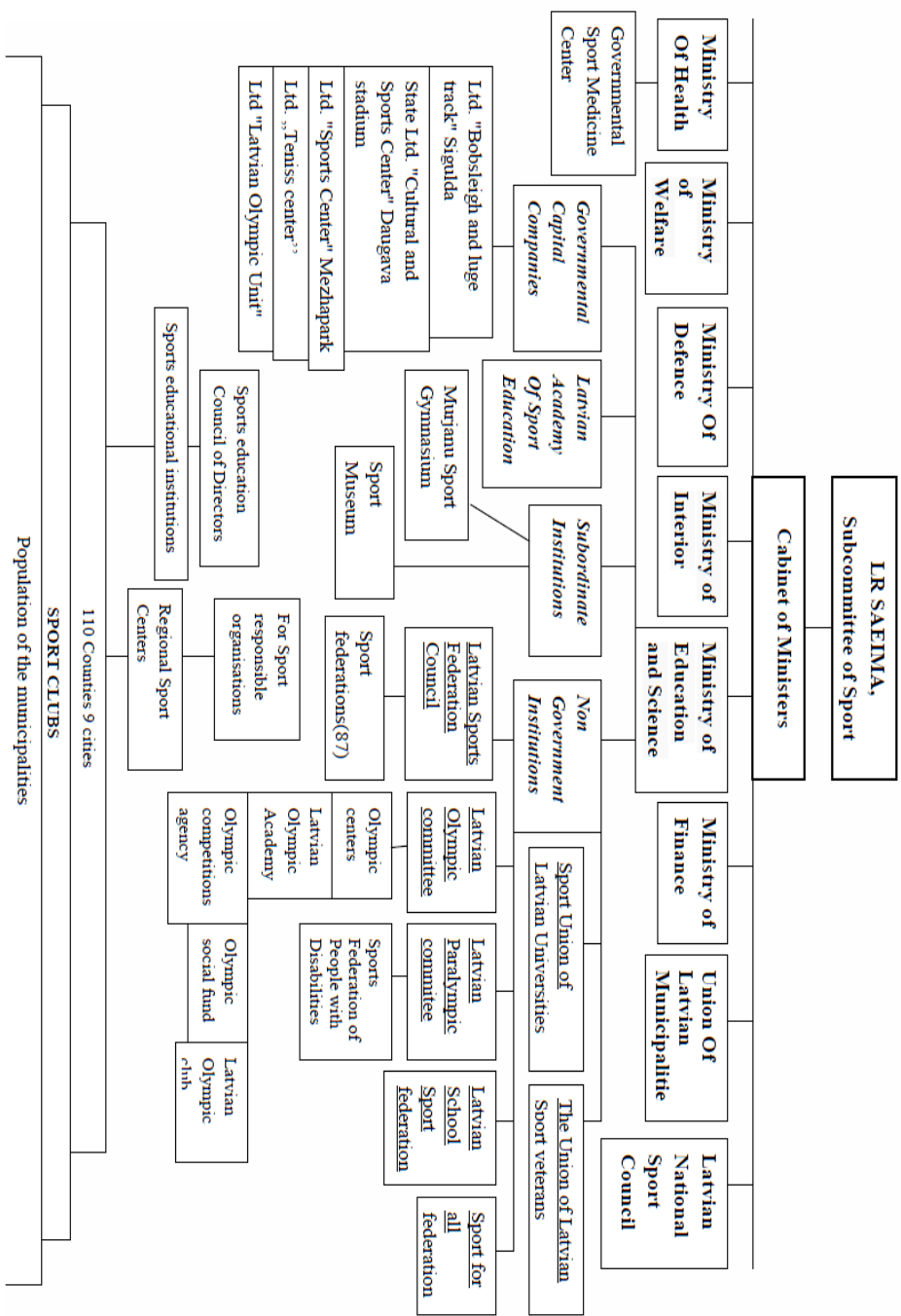


Fig. 2. Sport Structure in Latvia after the state sports institution reform on December 31, 2011 (Sport politics guidelines 2013 - 2020)

It can be mentioned that the development of the fitness sector is very rapid and continuous, characterizing any socially-cultural phenomenon. So, it can be concluded that fitness is socially-cultural phenomenon, necessary to be included in the development program of sports sector in Latvia. The fitness sector is very broad and involves such parts as physical activity, recreation, rehabilitation and education (see Fig.3). Fitness integrates in several sectors, also in the medicine sector. Fitness sector is related to the health field of the economic sector, and it shows that fitness has several functions and an essential place in the sports sector in Latvia.

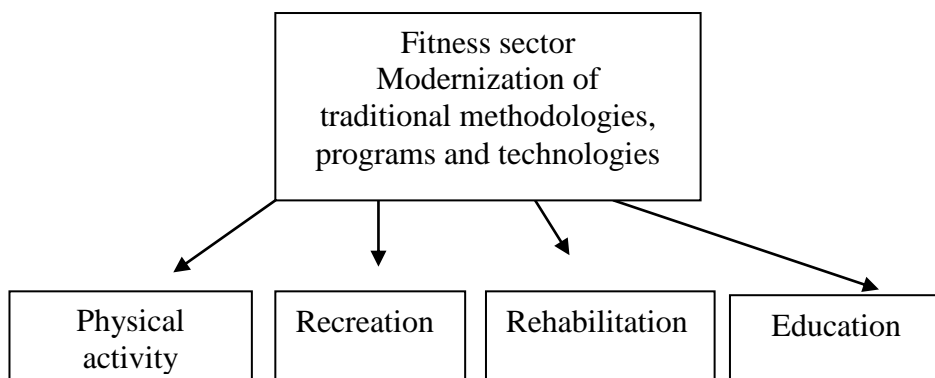


Figure 3. Parts of fitness sector (Сайкина, 2008)

Already for some years fitness is topical and popular among inhabitants of Latvia, and it affects their lifestyle and habits of spending their leisure. It is an innovative phenomenon in the sports sector, and by its essence it corresponds to innovative development logics.

Conclusions

1. One of the more important problems in the field of fitness in Latvia is the understanding of the term *fitness* and its place in the sports sector.

2. The number of sports clubs in Latvia is 84, the number of capital companies whose activities are related to organization of sports classes and sports events is 19 and the number of fitness clubs throughout the Latvia is approximately 150, that is more than sports clubs.

2. Commercial fitness clubs and Association of Fitness and Health Promotion of Latvia (LFVVNA) are not included in the overall Sport Structure in Latvia.

3. In the section *Sports for All* of the *National Sport Development Program of Latvia, 2006-2012*, it is spoken about sport as a form of healthy

lifestyle and meaningful leisure activity, for example, attendance of sports and fitness centers.

4. Association of Fitness and Health Promotion of Latvia can be included in the scheme of the Sport System of Latvia as one more element since it has one very important function – popularization of healthy lifestyle and regular physical activities among Latvian people.

5. Fitness is a socially-cultural phenomenon that needs to be included in the sport development program in Latvia. Fitness clubs need to be added to the element *Sport Clubs* in the Sport Structure of Latvia.

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