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**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORT MANAGEMENT IN  
LATVIA: A REVIEW OF SPORT FEDERATIONS’  
MANAGERS VIEW**

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**Abstract**

*The current economic environment throws a sharper focus on sport management and the performance of sport organizations than ever before. All governments play an active and a crucial role in developing and supporting the sporting life of their nations. This is true at the high-performance level and in community sport systems for people of all ages and abilities. Growing body of literature highlights the importance of sport organizations in high-performance sport management and success. Robinson, Chelladurai, Bodet, and Downward (2012) point out that there is no model of governance that will transform a poor-performing organisation into a pillar of high-performance. The performance of the board is almost entirely dependent on the people involved; models or frameworks can only help them by providing tools to work with. The purpose of this paper is to examine the process of Latvian high-performance sport management from an organisational perspective of 89 national sport organisations - recognised sport federations. The study is based on a review of laws and regulations and a survey. Managers of sport federations were contacted to complete an online survey, a questionnaire related to theoretical issues. Overall, 50 federations completed the questionnaire. The data were analysed with the method of descriptive statistics. The results show that it is necessary to pay more attention to specific factors – the high-performance sport development planning in the long-term, involving more participants in the sport; development of talent recognition, sport development system in the country, and athlete support during and after career. In order to provide high quality training opportunities, it is necessary to ensure education for coaches and develop sport infrastructure. Also, it is essential to ensure scientific support for sport.*

**Keywords:** *high-performance sport, high-performance sport system development factors, high-performance sporting success*

## **Introduction**

The delivery of sporting opportunities tends to fall into three main sectors which, according to Robinson et al. (2012), are characterized by different principles, different objectives, and different governance methods. The work of local authorities, municipalities, and schools are components describing the first sector. The second is the private or commercial sector, primarily consisting of the health and fitness industry and professional sport leagues. The third is the voluntary sector, primarily made up of clubs and national federations. It is, however, more complex than this as it is often difficult to determine what sector an organization operates within.

The universal principles of good governance articulated by the International Olympic Committee include having (a) vision, mission and strategy, (b) appropriate structures, regulation and democratic processes, (c) highest level of competence, integrity and ethical standards at every level of the organization, (d) being accountable, transparent and in control, (e) focused on solidarity and development, (f) caring for athletes and allowing their participation in governance, and (g) cultivating harmonious relationship with governments while preserving autonomy (International Olympic Committee, 2014).

Management can be considered as a formal process that occurs within organizations in order to direct and organize resources to meet stated objectives. Different working spheres and objectives of sport emphasize the need for planned and careful sport management. The field of sport management has changed significantly over the past few decades, becoming more formalized better planned and arguably more professional (Robinson et al., 2012). With the increasing level of investment in national high-performance sporting systems it is not surprising that governments, the principal investors, have been keen to learn from successful sporting nations (Aquilina & Henry, 2014).

Nowadays, the high-performance sport is completely dependent on systems of people and resources that are directed at athletes. While the Olympic medal can be given to an individual sport athlete, in reality it is a reflection of a process and a team, which have supported the particular athlete, and its success. Behind every athlete is a team. It is a system starting from athletes, coaches, medical staff, equipment provision, science and technology, managers and organizations, sponsors, marketing, business, and also mass media and journalists, fan clubs, and society. The sport

development system, also known as “totalization process”, urges the athlete to be a part of an enormous team or organization, which is competing with each other in different ways – not only in the sport environment, but also in mass media, for sponsors and politics. Often athletes are the spectators of their own career development (Joyce & Lewindon, 2014).

Athlete representatives (within the property rights holder’s executive board (e.g., International Olympic and Paralympic Committees; Commonwealth Games Federation)) have an important role in preparing athletes to deal with the new realities of competing in major sport event competitions. Therefore, there comes a need to have a strong working knowledge of how national sport governing bodies function, of the governance structure and policies that impact the athletes they represent (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). The athlete representatives’ role is multifaceted and demanding. Some of the current functions of the athlete representatives include the development of national level athlete engagement models, career and post career transitioning, assisting in host city selection, discussing future Games with the host organizing committee, contributing to governance decisions, ensuring the fulfilment of the strategic plan, mission, vision and values, and advocating for athletes’ rights (MacIntosh & Weckend Dill, 2015).

It could be argued that the literature on organizational effectiveness would provide a list of activities a sport governing body should carry out. Unfortunately, that is not necessarily the case. For instance, the model of goal effectiveness focuses on the attainment of stated goals, while the system resources model stresses the resources necessary to carry out organizational activities, and the process model emphasizes the logic of internal processes linking the resources to desired outcomes (Chelladurai, 1987).

SPLISS project – research that has determined the dimensions of a high-performance sport system in order to manage high-level performance perceived to be necessary:

- Financial support;
- An integrated approach to policy development;
- Participation in sport;
- Talent identification and development system;
- Athlete career and post career support;
- Training facilities;
- Coaching provision and coach development;
- (Inter)national competitions;
- Scientific research and innovations.

SPLISS model can be used to evaluate national high-performance sport policy (De Bosscher, Bingham, Shibli, van Bottenburg, & De Knop, 2008).

Smolianov and Zakus (2008), made a “Model of Integrated High-performance Sport and Mass Sport Development” by mixing the previously made models that have been used to analyse and compare the national high-performance sport systems. Their model reflects the hierarchy of high-performance sport system development:

- Balanced and integrated funding and structures of mass and high-performance sport;
- Partnerships with supporting agencies;
- Educational, scientific/medical, philosophical, promotional support;
- Domestic and international competitions;
- Training centres and multi-facility activity hubs;
- Talent identification and development;
- Advanced athlete preparation and support;

The model includes the foundational necessities of national sport systems with a value the country places for the sporting success in different sports (Smolianov, Gallo, & Naylor, 2014). It is important to note that the above-mentioned factors are not the only ones included in different models and different authors’ variations.

Before examining the existent situation of each factor in detail, it is important to primarily consider the management and the structure of sport in Latvia to set a context for the discussion around the various factors.

The term – “sports” in Latvia is understood as all types of individual or organised activities for person's physical and mental health, as well as to achieve success in sports competitions (LR Saeima, 2002). The goal of the Latvian national sports policy is the formation of healthy, physically and mentally highly developed personalities.

The general legal basis of sports organisation and development in Latvia is determined by the Sports Law, adopted in 2002. The purpose of this Law is to specify the general and legal basis for sports organisations and development, mutual relationship of sports organisations, the State and local government institutions and basic tasks in sports development, and the basis for the financing of sport, as well as the principles that shall be observed when taking part in the international sports movement (LR Saeima, 2002).

The Ministry of Education and Science is the state administration institution responsible for the area of sports as it is stated in the Sports Law

(The Ministry of Education and Science, 2016b). The latest Sports Policy Guidelines were created by the Ministry for the period of 2014–2020. It is a medium-term planning document of policies that regulates the sport politics in the State during the closest two Olympic cycles. This document addresses the promotion of children and youth sport, sport for all, and also the high-performance sport. This is the only document in Latvia in which the term – high-performance sport is defined – “youth (15 years old, in some sports from the age of 12), junior/cadet and adult/national team candidate, and participant preparation to represent the country and participate in international sports competitions in order to achieve high results and everything related to training – training and work, contest organizational, methodological, financial, scientific, medical, technical, etc. provision accordingly to outstanding achievements in sports criteria” (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013).

“Latvian Olympic Committee” by the Sports Law is committed to implement the programme for the participation of the State’s best athletes in the Olympic Games, youth Olympiads, and other international and regional complex competitions. However, this is just one out of five programmes the committee has to implement by combining the State’s, local governments’, and its own financial resources (LR Saeima, 2002). For the implementation of the Olympic programmes and events, Latvian Olympic Committee receives funding from the general budget of the State, International Olympic Committee, donations, and its own generated income (Latvian Olympic Committee, 2016).

The preparation of the country’s best athletes for participation in the Olympic Games, youth Olympiads, and other international sports competitions in the individual Olympic sports shall be ensured by the specialised sports organisation – the limited liability company – “Latvian Olympic Team” (LR Saeima, 2002). The main task of the unit is to support the best Latvian athletes organizationally and financially with an aim to improve the quality of trainings as it could lead to high-performance success in official international competitions (Latvian Olympic Team, 2004). This organisation has its own criteria, and not every athlete can fulfil the requirements to get the support.

Sport federations in accordance with the Sports Law are sport organisations. The non-governmental organization “Latvian Council of Sport Federations” coordinates the activities of the sports federations recognised in Latvia, represents and implements their shared interests. “Latvian Council of Sport Federations” is an independent union of 89 sports federations of the sport sector recognized in accordance with the procedures set by the regulatory enactments, which, in accordance with the Sports Law,

represents and implements common interests of these federations. The aim of “Latvian Council of Sport Federations” in Latvia is to unite all recognised federations to accomplish the highest sporting goals (Latvian Council of Sport Federations, 2016).

A sports federation is an association, which is composed of sports clubs and other legal persons, the work of which is associated with a specific type of sport or field of activities. The purpose of association is to manage and coordinate the work in the relevant type of sport or field of activities, as well as to represent such type of sport or field of activities in the relevant international sports organisations. A sports federation may represent several types of sport or fields of activities (LR Saeima, 2002). A sports federation has the right to manage and coordinate the work in the relevant type of sport (in the relevant types of sport) or field of activities in the State, as well as to represent the State in the relevant international sports organisation if such federation has been recognised in accordance with the procedures specified in this Law.

The Sports Law determines that only one sports federation may be recognised in one type of sports or field of activities.

A sports federation shall be recognised if it meets the following criteria:

1. the objective of activity specified in the statutes of the sports federation is the development of the relevant type of sport (the relevant types of sports) or the field of activities in the State;
2. the sports competitions are organised in the type of sports represented by the sports federation or in the field of activities thereof;
3. the term of office of the executive body specified in the statutes of the sports federation does not exceed four years;
4. the members of the sports federation are only legal persons;
5. the head of the sports federation is a citizen of the Republic of Latvia;
6. merchants in the sports federation form not more than a half of the total number of the members of the sports federation;
7. the sports federation observes the requirements of anti-doping in the activity thereof;
8. the information regarding the sports federation and the events organised by it is available on the Internet.

A decision regarding the recognition of a sports federation, refusal to recognise it or a decision regarding the withdrawal of the status of a sports federation shall be taken by the association “The Council of Sport Federations”. The Cabinet shall determine the procedures for the recognition

of a sports federation. It is mentioned in the Sport Law that the field of activity of the recognised sports federations shall be controlled by the association “The Council of Sports Federation”. The Cabinet shall specify the procedures, by which the activities of the recognised sports federations in the field of sports shall be controlled (LR Saeima, 2002). Sports federations recognised in Latvia have the right to receive financial resources from the State budget. The Council of Sport Federations annually summarizes the information regarding the activities of sport federations and distributes the intended federation funding on the basis of the criteria created by the board within the framework of the State budget programme (Latvian Council of Sports Federation, 2016).

In order to investigate the management of the high-performance sport in Latvia, sport statistical factor analysis in the context of specific factors defined by the theory was carried out – financial support, an integrated approach to policy development, participation in sport, talent identification and development system, athlete career and post career support, training facilities, coaching provision and coach development, (inter)national competitions, scientific research, and innovations.

### **Financial support**

*Factor 1 is concerned with measuring the financial support made by nation in sport generally and in high-performance sport specifically.*

The regulation that the Saeima adopts every year is the one regarding the State budget, and it also involves the sport sector – the programme “Sport” with one of the sub-program “High-performance sport”. In the sub-program “High-performance sport” the priority is set to support the programmes of Latvian Olympic Committee (including TOP50), Latvian Olympic Team and Latvian Olympians Social Fund (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2016a).

Besides state funding, there are also other sources for funding the sport (according to the Sports Law, funding for sport is also provided by the funding of municipal, legal and physical entities, sport organisations and provisions from international sport federations) (LR Saeima, 2002).

**Table 1.**

Funding from the State for sport and high-performance sport (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2016a)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Funding for Sport (EUR)</b>	<b>Funding for High performance sport (EUR)</b>
2013	25.244	4.759
2014	36.304	5.223
2015	31.949	5.980
2016	36.893	6.558

The vast majority of funding for high-performance sport tends to be derived from central government. Table 1 shows what is the amount given to high-performance sport from the total. It is the quantification of this data that is most important for Factor 1.

### **An integrated approach to policy development**

*Factor 2 is concerned with the organisation and structure of sport. At a strategic level it is thought that for nations to have a realistic chance of high-performance sporting success, an appropriate lead needs to be given by governments.*

According to Oakley and Green (2001) and Clumpner (1994), it is particularly important to delineate clearly the responsibilities of different agencies, to ensure there is effective communication between them, and to simplify administration. In 2002, the principal normative act in sport was issued – the Sports Law, which determines organisational and legal basis for sport, the mutual relations between sport social organisations and the state and municipal institutions, funding and participation in the international sport movement.

The Sports Law determines that the Ministry of Education and Science is the state administration organisation responsible for the sport sector. The most important collaboration partners of the Ministry are the Latvian Olympic Committee, the Latvian Sports Federation's Council, the Latvian Paralympic Committee, the Latvian Olympians Social Fund, the Latvian Team Sport Games Association, and the Directors' Council of Latvian Sports Education Institutions. In 2016, approximately one hundred non-governmental sports organisations were active, including 89 sports federations accredited following the Sports Law procedure. Non-governmental sport organisations perform the tasks delegated by the state and defined in the Sports Law (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013; The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2016a). In turn, the Latvian National Sports Council was created to facilitate collaboration between the governmental and the non-governmental sport organisations, which is an international consulting institution, participating in the development of the governmental politics in sport, and facilitating the development of sport and collaboration in the sport sector, as well as making decisions on sports-related issues (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013).

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science developed important legal acts regulating the sport sector – laws, regulations, and guidelines of the Cabinet of Ministers, as well as initiating the development and completion of several legal acts regulating the sport sector. Currently, over 40 normative acts regulate sports activity in Latvia (Luika, 2012).

The medium-term planning document of policies that regulates the sport politics in the State during the closest two Olympic cycles is “Sports Policy Guidelines”. The latest guidelines were created by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2013 for the period of 2014-2020. The guidelines include the main principles, goals, directions, target groups and priorities, action directions and tasks for achieving the goals of sports policy and problem resolution (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013).

### **Participation in sport**

*In Factor 3, the focus is on sport at three levels: sport during or after school time, non-organised sports participation and organised sports participation.*

Albeit the relations between the “high-performance sport” and “sports for all” are undefined, most high-performing athletes originate from grassroot sport competitions. The importance of grassroot sport is likewise confirmed by de Coubertin’s assertion that, for one hundred people to turn to sport culture, it is necessary that fifty people engage in sport, and, to engage fifty people in sport, twenty must specialise in it and five must achieve high results (The Olympic studies centre, 2017).

The main guidelines of sport politics for 2014-2020 on priority directions in sport politics in Latvia declare the development of Children and Youth Sport and Sports for All. The aim of sports politics defined in the main guidelines is to increase the proportion of Latvian residents who participate in physical or sports activities at least 1-2 times a week (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013). Table 2 shows the number of sports participants registered by the sport federations in 2013-2016.

**Table 2**

Number of participants in sport federations (LCSF meetings)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Number of participating youths</b>
<b>2013</b>	109488	67817
<b>2014</b>	106812	65799
<b>2015</b>	121378	73596
<b>2016</b>	125850	74309

### **Talent identification and development system**

*Factor 4 is concerned with two aspects of elite sport development: first talent identification, and second talent development.*

One of the most important challenges high performance sports system faces is the way of retaining young, talented athletes in sport and not leaving it when growing up (Bergsgard, Houlihan & Mangset, 2007).

The system of selecting athletes enables finding talents in sport, to direct young athletes to a sport that meets his/her abilities best.

Selection in sport determines not only the usefulness of practicing a particular sport type, but, mainly, the finding of the potential options for the future athlete, namely, planning and forecasting (Nikiforova & Žīdens, 2004).

The development of the Children and Youths Sports in Latvia is based on professionally-oriented sport education. Among other things, the acquisition of professionally oriented sport education is a way of raising a new generation of high-performing athletes (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2014). The number of professionally oriented sport education institutions (sport schools) and sport clubs and their participants is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

Professionally oriented sport education institutions (sport schools) and sport clubs and their participants (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2017b)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Sport schools and sport clubs</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>2013</b>	91	32912
<b>2014</b>	101	34288
<b>2015</b>	380	20946
<b>2016</b>	266	41679

The Ministry of Education and Science has the only state-established and state-funded general education and sport education institution under its control. The aim of the gymnasium is to organise the process of education following the standards and programmes defined in the state for general education and general educational subjects. The main directions of the institution's activity are educational, sport and instructional activities. The process of education is subjected to conditioning athletes following the specific requirements of various sports. The aim of the educational institution is to facilitate the achievement of sporting results in Olympic sports and the creation of an educational environment (Murjani State Gymnasium, 2009).

On 16 November 2015, based on Order No. 721 of the Cabinet of Ministers, the Government examined and supported a conceptual report prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science on the creation of a system of centres for preparing high-ranking athletes. The conceptual report is developed following the Main Guidelines for Sport Policy in 2014-2020. The report envisages the creation of centres for preparing high-ranking athletes (further – Centres for Preparing Athletes), which will provide high-quality environment and amenities to facilitate the development of excellence among young athletes. The aim of creating Centres for Preparing Athletes is to develop a high-quality system for preparing high-ranking

athletes in Latvia, providing initial conditions for the development of internationally competitive athletes (Cabinet of Ministers, 2015; The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2015). Up to 31 December 2017, the first stage of introducing a system of centres for preparing high-ranking athletes takes place in Ventspils and Valmiera, and it involves 32 young athletes in five Olympic disciplines – weightlifting, track and field athletics, short track speed skating, BMX and swimming (Latvian Council of Sports Federations, 2015).

### **Athletic and post career support**

*Factor 5 is concerned with support for athletes during and after their sporting career.* Support means not only funding but also the possibility of benefitting from necessary services on a daily basis, for instance, medical provisions, insurance, psychological support, consulting for career opportunities, media trainings, and availability of sport infrastructure. In many sport disciplines the competition level necessary to reach the podium requires from athletes complete devotion to sport and full-time training (Houlihan & Green, 2008). However, in only a few disciplines and only a few athletes are able to earn their living due to career income. Due to this reason, the state provides financial support to athletes to ensure the daily availability of the necessary services and to cover their expenses (De Bosscher et al., 2008).

In Latvia, the state support for preparing athletes and ensuring the process of training is provided following the procedure set in the Sports Law using the mediation of accredited sport federations. Municipalities likewise provide substantial investment into preparing athletes and ensuring the progress of athletic accomplishment. The aims and tasks of the support programme for the best athletes by the Latvian Olympic Committee is the creation of a national selection system for high performing athletes following the LOV criteria; provision of working environments for athletes' training; provision of participant expenses for Olympic qualification competitions; medical provision and insurance, and maintenance of information exchange between the International Olympic Committee, the Latvian Olympic Team, and national and international sports federations (Āķe – Vīksne, 2012).

The Ministry of Education and Science maintains specialised sport organisation: performance of the sport programme of the Latvian Olympic Team (LOT), supporting, following the LOT criteria, the best national athletes in individual Olympic discipline in their preparation for participation in the Olympic Games, the World and the European Championships and other international competitions, as well as substitute athletes and their trainers, while also providing benefits for veterans in sport

for their life-long investment in sport (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2016b). Latvian athletes, their trainers and sports employees providing services to athletes, including medical employees, service staff and the respective sport federation are allocated annual monetary prizes for excellent achievements in sport (LR Saeima, 2002).

The Latvian National Sport Council at the meeting on 17 September 2014 decided to support financially the performance of athlete support programme of the Latvian Olympic Committee pilot project "Top 50" (Latvian National Sport Council, 2014). The mission of the newly created programme "TOP 50" was to provide additional financial support to the most talented and best athletes and teams in Latvia, to ensure all the necessary amenities for the process of preparing athletes on their way to the Olympic Games with the aim of winning Olympic medals (Latvian Olympic Committee, 2015). To facilitate the combination of studies and athletic development by high-performing athletes, the LCSF allocates, from 2007 onwards, bursaries for athletes-students. Table 4 shows the amount of allocated bursaries and the number of students who received the bursaries in 2013-2016. The bursaries are allocated from state budget grant sub-programme "Sport Federations and Sport Events" (Latvian Council of Sports Federations, 2015).

**Table 4**

Number of sport bursaries and funding amount of the LCSF (LCSF meetings)

<b>Year</b>	<b>EUR</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
<b>2013./2014.</b>	33153	38
<b>2014./2015.</b>	36600	35
<b>2015./2016.</b>	39800	44
<b>2016./2017.</b>	40900	48

A career in sport is much shorter than other careers or employments, and many athletes leave sport eventually, either voluntarily or involuntarily. All athletes, irrespectively of whether they compete internationally or professionally, have to leave the sport of high performance. Athletes must get prepared for life after a career in sport while they are still involved in sport (Dana & Terry, 1993). The International Olympic Committee has created a career programme for high-ranking athletes to help high-ranking athletes successfully engage in the employment market after a career in sport (International Olympic committee, 2012).

In 2011, the activity of a locally-established "Latvian Olympians' Social Fund" became supported, providing the allocation of monthly benefits to athletes and trainers that are part of the LOT groups A and B, as

well as benefits for life-long investment in sport to sport veterans (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2017b).

### **Training facilities**

*Factor 6 is concerned with high-performance sport facilities and infrastructure. These factors were identified as being important by, among others, Oakley and Green (2001) who identify 'well developed and specific facilities with priority access for elite athletes' as one of ten characteristics commonly found in elite sports development systems.*

Sport complex is one of the primary requirements for sport training. The construction of sport buildings for sport of high performance ensures that a country has sufficient places for training and athletes are provided access to raining places in view of their load. The fact that a country has specialised buildings does not necessarily mean they are accessible to athletes. In many disciplines, there remain unresolved needs peculiar to high-performance athletes in difference from the needs of other athletes or sport clubs in the infrastructure of sport buildings. Research shows that athlete's points to problems not in the infrastructure of sport buildings but in the possibilities for training in these buildings, because the load on the buildings largely depends on the buildings' owners and the owners' aims in relation to high-performance sport or grassroot sport (Houlihan & Green, 2008).

Following part one of article 12 of the Sports Law, sport complexes in Latvia are created and maintained to provide inhabitants with possibilities of participating in sport, while the sport complexes belonging to the state or the municipality are used for providing the necessary sport services for residents. Following part three of the above article of the law, information about the sport complexes in the country is collected in a register of sport complexes maintained by the Ministry of Education and Science (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2016b). At the end of 2017, the register of sport complexes included 1211 sport complexes and 3123 sport objects (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2017a)

To facilitate the development of national sport complexes and to create environments for preparing Latvian athletes for competing in the Olympic Games, in the World and European Championships and other competitions, and to provide for the organization of international competitions in Latvia, the law "On the Status of National Sport Complexes" was issued in 2009. For a sport building to acquire the status of a sport complex, it must meet the requirements for organising competition of the World and European Championships, their sections, the Cup or qualification contests. Following the law "On the Real Estate", national sport complexes and the land for their maintenance are not taxed with the

real estate tax, and the owner of a national sport complex may receive co-funding from the state budget for maintaining a sport complex following the procedure set by the Cabinet of Ministers (LR Saeima, 1998, 2009).

**Table 5**

State-supported national sport complexes and the amount of allocated funding (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2016b)

Year	Supported NAC activity	Funding (EUR)
2013	21	1 254 240
2014	10	5 256 129
2015	9	7 156 230
2016	7	6 342 683

Latvia has over 3000 sport objects maintained by both the state and municipalities and by non-governmental organisations and private enterprises. A fragmented administrative structure hinders centralised acquisition of new information on sport objects (The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, 2016c)

### Coaching provision and coach development

*Pillar 7 focuses on the different areas of career development for coaches and the existence, or otherwise, of high level opportunities for coaches to develop all aspects of their high-performance coaching career. Secondly the factor addresses the employment status of coaches and the provisions made for coaches.*

The quality and quantity of trainers are important at each level of sport development as a whole. In this respect, two criteria in high-performance sport provide the principal grounds for comparison. The first point is quality and trainer certification system, and the second – individual living circumstance of high-performance sport trainers (De Bosscher et al., 2008). These circumstances should motivate talented amateur trainers to engage in this profession as full-time work rather than as a collateral job (Houlihan & Green, 2008).

In Latvia, the procedure for certifying specialists in sport and requirements that a sport specialist must meet to become entitled to work in sport industry are defined by the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. Following point 11 of the Certification Regulations, a person who manages a sport training (class) or performs educational or methodological work in sport industry, as well as persons who support the above, who attend sport trainings (classes) or acquire a professionally-oriented sport educational programme must have the certificate of specialist in sport. The terms of certification provide three categories, A, B and C for issuing a certificate. The number of certified specialists in sport is outlined in Table 6. The

Sports Law states that specialists in sport are certified by the “Latvian Sport Federations’ Council”.

**Table 6**

Number of certified specialists in sport classified by category of certificate (LCSF meetings)

Year	A	B	C
2013	65	338	149
2014	181	1024	463
2015	193	1118	555
2016	227	1268	894

On 10 November 2010, a sport industry federation was accredited – Latvian Trainers’ Centre of Continuing Education, entitled to manage and coordinate trainers’ education in the country. The aim of the organisation is to provide the conformance of Latvian sport trainers and other sport specialists to modern requirements, which would be confirmed by a state-accredited certificate. The aim of the centre’s activity is to provide education and/or continuous education to sport trainers and other sport specialists, as well as developing suggestions for trainer qualification requirements and participating in the process of certification (Latvian Trainers’ Centre of Continuing Education, 2011).

### **(Inter) national competition**

*Factor 8 is concerned with the organisation of competitions at national and international level as both have been identified as important factors in athlete development.*

The national system of competition is an important criterion, because competitions are integral to athletes’ development. The Sports Law states that a “sport event” means a sport competition, demonstration or any other sport event. In turn, “sport competition” is an event for determining the best athlete or team, which takes place following the regulations confirmed by the organiser of the competition (LR Saeima, 2002). Table 7 shows the number of international competitions in which a sport federation participated and Latvian championships and cup contests for adults organised by sport federations.

**Table 7**

Participation of Latvian athletes in international competitions and competitions organised by sport federations in Latvia (LCSF meetings)

Year	International competitions	Latvian championships
2013	772	385
2014	719	372
2015	801	391
2016	809	419

Criteria and procedure for accrediting a sport federation specify that a federation can be accredited if it meets several criteria, one of which is that a sport federation organises sport competitions in the represented sport discipline or area of activity. The participation of the national selection team in international sport competition is organised by the Latvian sport federation representing the respective international sport organization.

### **Scientific research and innovation**

*The ninth factor is concerned with the scientific input to high-performance sport and seeks to examine the extent to which nations take a coordinated approach to the organisation and dissemination of research and scientific information.*

Scientific studies related to systematic collection of scientific information and its dissemination in such fields as talent recognition and development, medicine, nutrition, psychology, physiology and biomechanics (De Bosscher et al., 2008).

The Ministry of Education and Science (further – the Ministry), following regulations No. 528 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 16 September 2003 “Regulations of the Ministry of Education and Science”, is the main governmental administrative body in the area of science. The Ministry controls the institution of direct management – the Latvian Council of Science, the aim of which is to facilitate the execution and coordination of science, technology and innovation policy, ensure the organisation of the application of the scientific research projects and assessment results.

16 November, 1999 the Latvian Council of Science confirmed at its meeting the list of Science Branches and Sub-branches. Sport science was confirmed as a separate branch, which is the science studying the relations between human physical health, development, conditioning and achievements in sport. It includes studies in issues in pedagogy, psychology, medicine, biology, biomechanics, sociology and economics related to sport (Latvian Council of Science, 2009). The state funding for scientific research is reflected in Table 8.

**Table 8**

Total funding for scientific research (Central Statistical Bureau, 2017)

<b>Year</b>	<b>State funding (mil. /EUR)</b>	<b>Funding for higher educational institutions (mil. /EUR)</b>
<b>2013</b>	33.4	3.7
<b>2014</b>	41.7	3.8
<b>2015</b>	49.8	3.4
<b>2016</b>	52.7	3.2

One of the Latvian higher educational institutions coordinating and performing research in sport as well as educating specialists in sport science

is the Latvian Academy of Sport Education (LASE). The educational methodological materials and lectures prepared by the LASE teaching staff, as well as the students' bachelor, master and doctoral theses (2010-2014) can be viewed at the library devoted to the sport industry of the LASE.

Overall, it can be concluded that the data to be found to describe the situation in Latvia are in most cases of limited availability or remain unrecorded.

### Material and Methods

Research data were collected in two ways; the investigation and analysis of the literature sources, laws and regulations, and an on-line survey – questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of questions the respondents had to answer without the assistance of the interviewer. To investigate the views of sport federations' managers on high performance sport, the survey based on theoretical findings of de Bosscher (2006) and Smolianov (2008) were stated. Respondents were given statements about the high-performance sport management with five multiple choices in Likert scale: strongly agree (1), agree (2), neither agree neither disagree (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5). The respondents had to choose one answer, which in their opinion was the most appropriate.

As shown in table 9, the participants in survey were 50 managers of sport federations (68% male and 32% females) and 50% of respondents had a Master's degree.

**Table 9**

Demographic Profile of respondents

Variable	Category	Respondents (%)
Gender	Male	68%
	Female	32%
Education level	Secondary education	16%
	Bachelor's degree	26%
	Master's degree	50%
	Doctor's degree	8%

In the survey participated 50 sport federations from 89 in total. 32 different kinds of sports were represented: alpine skiing, arm-wrestling, basketball, beach volleyball, bobsleigh, canoeing, curling, cycling, BMX cycling, road cycling, floorball, freestyle wrestling, karate, lacrosse, luge, modern pentathlon, motocross, orienteering, powerlifting, rallycross, rowing, sailing, sambo, shooting, short track, skeleton, skiing, sport climbing, swimming, table tennis, track and field, and windsurfing.

However, response rate among federations from different disciplines varied.

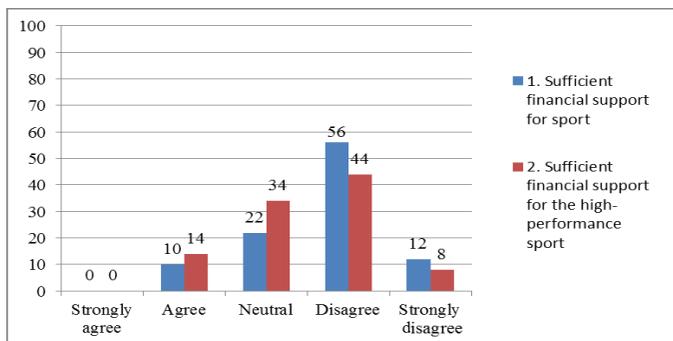
Nine main groups of statements in questionnaire with respect to the aim were as follows: 2 focused on the Financial support, 5: on an Integrated approach to policy development and 4: on the Participation in sport, 5: on Talent identification and development system; 3: on Athletic and post career support; 6: on Training facilities; 6: on Coaching provision and coach development; 6: on (Inter)national competition and 3: on Scientific research and innovation. 1 of the questions was open and 39 were closed questions. All data were processed and calculated using computer programme MS Excel. Descriptive statistics indicators were computed (mean, median, mode and standard deviation). Directors of sport federations most often (Mode) chose answer “disagree”. Only for 2 of all the statements the most often (Median) chosen answer was “agree”.

The findings were summarized with the help of mathematical statistics. From the analysis of the sport federations managers’ views on the processes ongoing in high performance sport, with induction or cognition method were drawn the conclusions.

## Results

Survey responses were illustrated as aggregated percentages. The aggregated percentages of responses allow the appreciation of the distribution of manager’s responses.

Summarizing the data regarding “Financial support” (indicators: the existence of sufficient financial support for sport in general and the financial support for the high-performance sport – Figure 1), was found that more than a half of sport federation managers have similar views - 56% of respondents disagree that financial support for sport is sufficient.

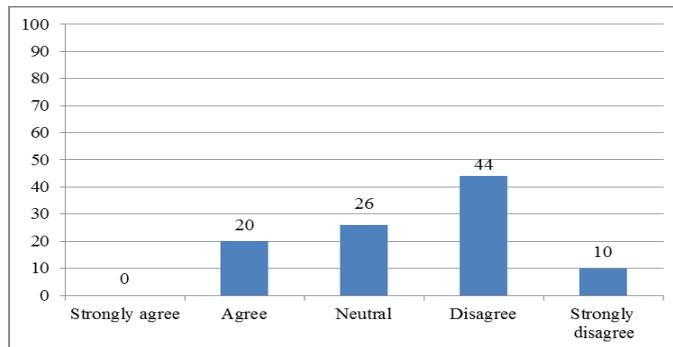


**Figure 1.** Respondents’ views on the sufficient financial support for sport and high-performance sport

44% of respondents disagree that there is sufficient financial support for high-performance sport. Comparing the responses of the managers by

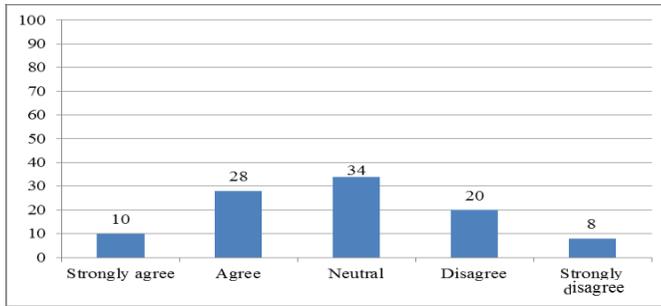
federations it can be concluded that more satisfied with financial support are federations which gain more success in international competitions. The results are likewise confirmed by the Sports Law, which states that, for excellent achievements in sport, the Cabinet of Ministers may allocate monetary prizes not only to athletes and related persons but also to sport federations. Also, one of the criteria set by the Latvian Sport Federations Council on the division of funding among certified federations is achievements in sport.

It is important to observe that data show different views among sport federations managers with respect to an integrated approach to policy development. The analysis was focused on the existence of coordination, long-term planning, communication, and role of each and every one organisation involved in the management of the high-performance sport. Just 16% of managers agree that there is a coordination of all agencies involved in the high-performance sport with clear task descriptions. Confusion may occur in relationship between sport organisations as there is more than just one organisation responsible for high-performance sport in Latvia.



**Figure 2.** Respondents' views on the existence of long-term planning for the high-performance sport

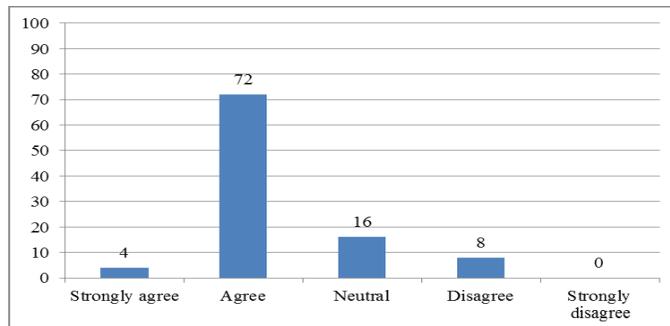
None of managers would totally agree that there is a long-term planning for the high-performance sport in the country (Figure 2), while 20% agree with the statement. 38% of respondents strongly agree and agree that resources are targeted at relatively few sports through identifying those that have a real chance of success in the whole world level (Figure 3). At the same time, 28% of respondents strongly disagree and disagree that resources are targeted at relatively few sports. With the statement "There is a structured communication and cooperation between organizations, commercial partners and the media" agree 30% of managers, whereas 36% disagree, and 26% stay neutral.



**Figure 3.** Respondents' views on statement that resources are targeted at relatively few sports

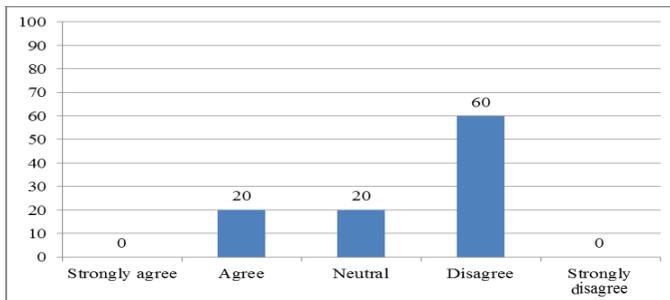
Almost half of respondents (48%) disagree and 12% strongly disagree that athletes are involved in the planning of the high-performance sport policy.

It is important to observe that sport federation managers agree (72%) that children have opportunities to participate in sport at school, during physical education or extracurricular activities (Figure 4).



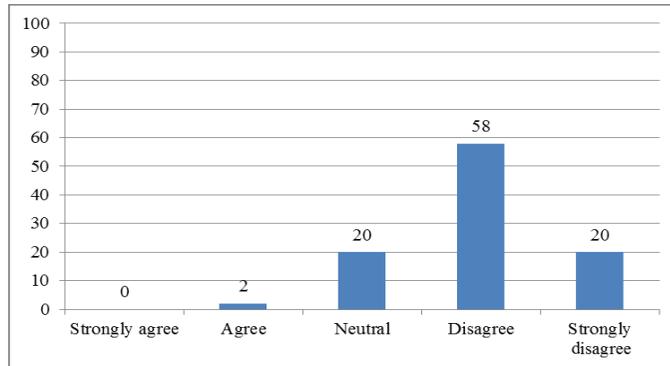
**Figure 4.** Respondents' views on children opportunities to participate in sport

At the same time, 60% of managers disagree that there is a high general sport participation rate (Figure 5). High-performance sport requires a strong base of mass sport participants to ensure new talented athletes.



**Figure 5.** Respondents' views on generally high sport participation rate

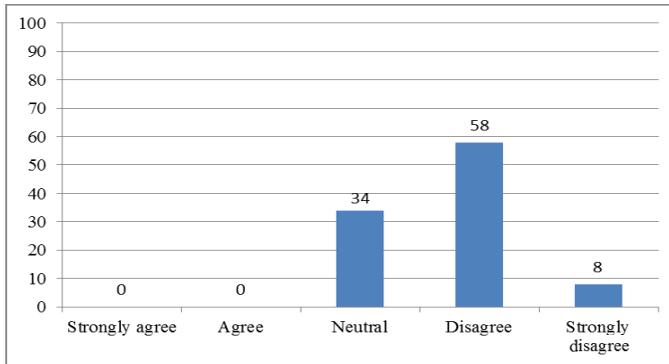
All statements regarding talent received negative feedback from the sport federation managers. Data obtained prove that more than half of the respondents (58%) disagree that there is an effective system for the identification of young talented athletes in Latvia, so that the maximum number of potential talents are reached at the right time (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Respondents' views on the existence of an effective system for the identification of young talented athletes

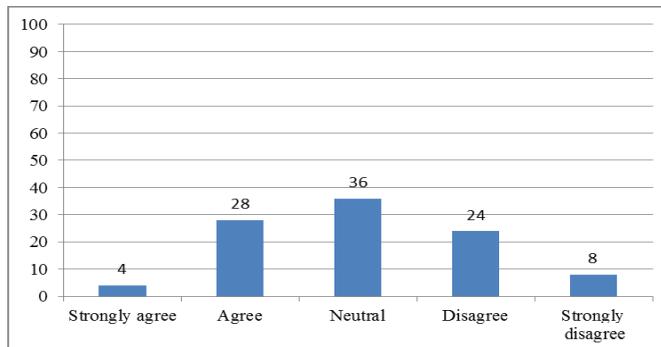
On the other hand, Figure 6 also shows that there are some sport federation managers that agree with the statement despite theoretical review which did not verify existence of any talent identification system. 58% of respondents also disagree with the statement “Young talents receive a multidimensional support to develop them as young athletes at the highest level” (Figure 7).

52% of managers disagree that young talents receive a nationally coordinated support for the combination of trainings and studies in secondary school (12-16/18) and, also in primary education for early specialisation sports where such a system is required. Considerably less, but also a remarkable part of respondents – 40% disagree that young talents receive a nationally coordinated support for the combination of trainings and studies in higher education (university/college level). It can be concluded that the support athletes receive is insufficient. It is important to support athletes during their education years. One of the reasons athletes quit sport is insufficient support for the combination of trainings and studies.



**Figure 7.** Respondents' views on young talents receiving a multidimensional support

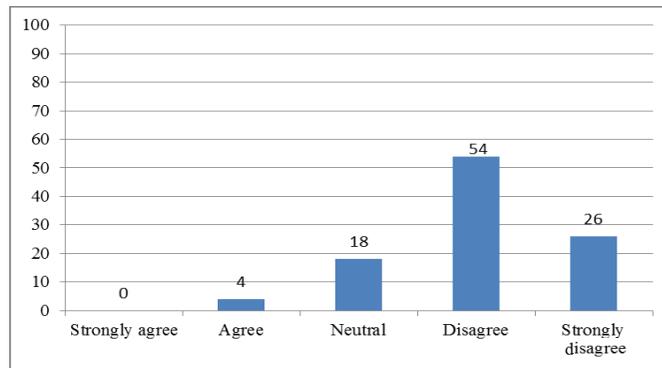
6% of managers strongly agree with this statement that High-performance sport is a full-time job, and athletes receive a financial support so that they can fully concentrate on their sport, while 46% of respondents disagree. Respondents show different response to the statement on the existence of coordinated support programme for the high-performance sport athletes (Figure 8): 28% of respondents agree, but 24% - disagree, and 36% stay neutral.



**Figure 8.** Respondents' views on the existence of coordinated support programme for the high-performance sport athletes

More uniform view managers have on statement about athletes' post-career.

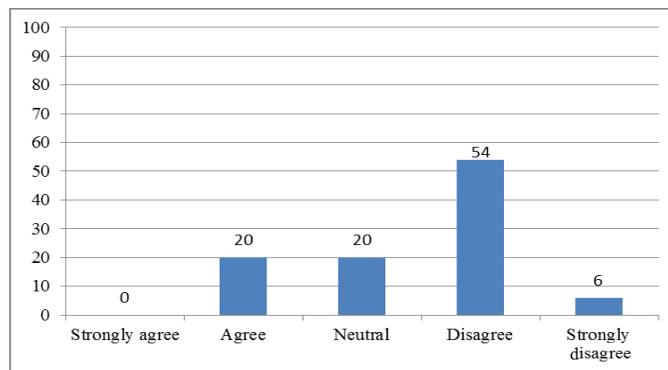
54% of respondents disagree with the statement Athletes can receive a post-career support from the government and they are ready for the life after sporting career, and 26% of respondents strongly disagree with it (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Respondents' views on the statement that athletes can receive a post-career support from the government

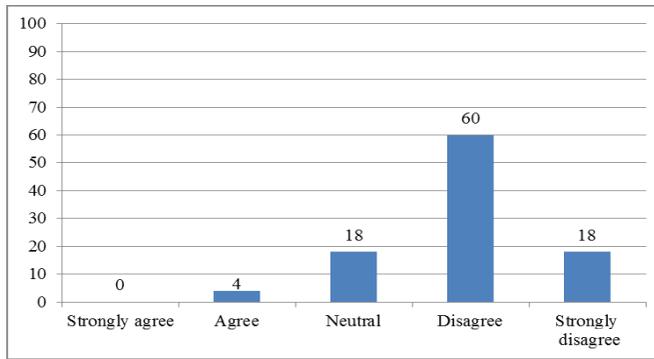
The data analysis regarding training facilities shows various responses. 32% of sport federation managers agree with the statement that there is a database with information about sport facilities, their availability, and quality, but 28% disagree with this statement. In their turn, 30% agree and in the same time 30% disagree that there are functional sport facilities in the country, while 36% of respondents stay neutral in this respect.

Regarding statements about coaching provision and coach development, just 20% of sport federation managers agree that there is a sufficient number of well-trained and experienced high-performance sport coaches in the country (Figure 10).



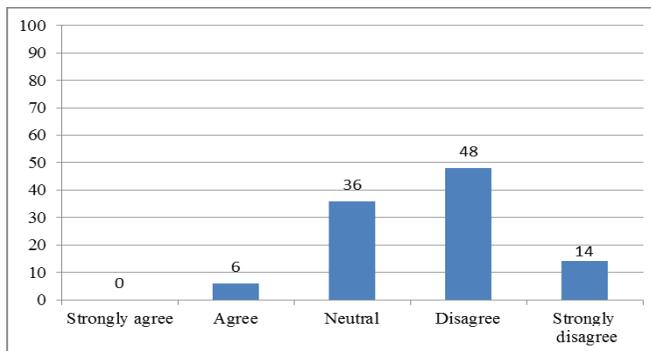
**Figure 10.** Respondents' views on the sufficient number of well-trained and experienced high-performance sport coaches in the country

Similarly, just 4% of respondents agree that coaches have sufficient opportunities to develop their coaching career to become a world-class high-performance sport coaches (Figure 11).

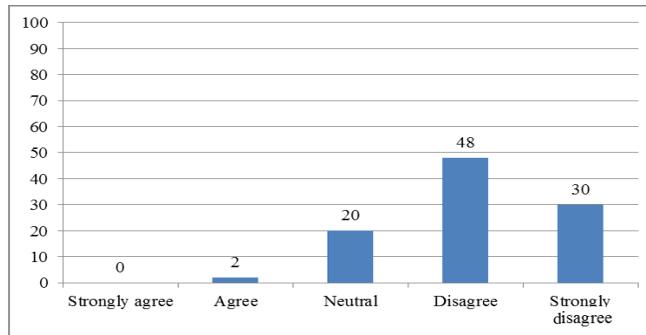


**Figure 11.** Respondents' views on the sufficient opportunities to develop coaching career in Latvia

This study found extremely low agreement (2%) to the statement that coaches' general monthly income is sufficient to provide for living. Also, just 4% of respondents agree that high-performance coaches receive a support for life after their coaching career. Not all the trainers currently working in the country are certified. There is no defined system that may control the qualification acquired by a practicing trainer. Likewise, normative acts do not foresee administrative liability for failure to conform to the terms of certification for sport specialists. The above mentioned may be one of reasons why trainers lack motivation for education. Concerning (inter)national competitions, 30% of sport federation managers agree to the statement that young talents can sufficiently participate in international (high-level) competitions at the right age, while 44% disagree with this statement. More than a half (52%) of the respondents agree that high-performance athletes can sufficiently participate in international (high-level) competitions. The analysis of the answers to the statements about scientific research and innovation data shows almost similar views (Figure 12 and Figure 13).



**Figure 12.** Respondents' views on the statement that scientific research is collected, coordinated and disseminated



**Figure 13.** Respondents' views on sufficient financial support for scientific research and innovation

48% of respondents disagree that scientific research is collected, coordinated, and disseminated among coaches and sport organisations, also 48% of respondents disagree with the statement that there is a sufficient financial support for scientific research and innovation.

## Discussion

The study analyses the opinions of the heads of accredited sport federations on the management of high-performance sport in Latvia.

The opinion of the heads of sport federations acquired indicates a contradiction: if the accredited sport federation works efficiently and performs the terms of the Sports Law, namely, a Sport Federation is entitled to control and coordinate work in the respective sport discipline or area of activity in the country, why do the obtained data reveal such evident general level of disagreement to the statements included in the study questionnaire? In view of the fact that the aim of the Latvian Sport Federations' Council is to unite all sport federations acknowledged in Latvia to perform the highest sport goals and meet the criteria developed by the Council (number of members in the federations, number of practitioners, the participation of the federation in the World and European Championships, in the championships for adults and youths in Latvia organised by the federation, international competitions in Latvia organised by the federation, etc.) for receiving the state funding to facilitate the development of the sport industry, it is surprising that the opinion expressed in the study testifies to insufficient funding, lack of long-term planning for the development of high-performance sport, absence of a talent identification system and an insufficient support to athletes during and after their career in sport. It should also be mentioned that the heads of sport federations neither think that there is a well-organised trainer education and support system, nor the heads of sport federation consider that sport buildings in the country are of

good quality. Likewise, the impact of sport science in the development of sport is insufficient. At this point, it is essential to note that the above factors also fall within the field of competence of the accredited sport federations. Sport federations should work more efficiently to improve the existing situation. An important theme for a future study would be the analysis of the extent to which a pre-set level has been achieved.

Besides, it is possible that a more precise and detailed opinion could be obtained by analysing the obtained data using other criteria – such as the criteria of the Olympic and non-Olympic sport discipline federations, of team sports, of individual sports and others.

## Conclusions

A sports federation has the right to manage and co-ordinate the work in the relevant types of sport or in the field of activities in the State, as well as represent the State in the relevant international sports organisation and only one sports federation may be recognised in one type of sport or field of activities. Therefore, it is essential to determine the opinion of representatives of sport federations on the management of high-performance sport in Latvia. The results show that managers of sport federations think that:

- Funding allocated to sport is insufficient – 68% (56% disagree + 12% strongly disagree);
- Funding allocated to high-performance sport is insufficient – 52% (44% disagree + 8% strongly disagree);
- Development of high-performance sport is not planned in the long term – 54% (44% disagree + 10% strongly disagree);
- The inhabitants of Latvia participate in physical activities too little (60% agree);
- The state needs to create an efficient system for identifying and developing talents – 78% (58% disagree + 20% strongly disagree);
- It is necessary to improve the support provided to athletes after they finish their athletic careers – 80% (54% disagree + 26% strongly disagree);
- Sport science has insufficient financial support – 78% (48% disagree + 30% strongly disagree).

Therefore, purposeful use of resources, long-term planning, participation in sport, talent identification and development, support to athletes throughout their careers and after they leave sport, a developed infrastructure, provisions for trainers, and the involvement of science in high-performance sport has to become more lucid.

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