

POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL of the journal / URL časopisu: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

Author(s) / Autor(i): Ivan Štulajter
Article / Článok: A Comparative Analysis of Sports Policies in the Nordic Countries
Publisher / Vydavateľ: Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2022.25.2.34-53>

Recommended form for quotation of the article / Odporúčaná forma citácie článku:

ŠTULAJTER, I. 2022. A Comparative Analysis of Sports Policies in the Nordic Countries. In *Politické Vedy*. Vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 34-53. ISSN 1335 – 2741. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2022.25.2.34-53>

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPORTS POLICIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

Ivan Štulajter*

ABSTRACT

Sport has been part of the life of humans and is no longer connected with the need of physical activity as it unites people despite political, cultural or religious differences. In the foreign policies of most states, sport is important aspect of prestige and reputation of the country in the world. States are aware of sports' social and political importance, it is therefore in their interest to ensure the best possible conditions for its development in the country. Besides promoting high-level sports, national teams and top athletes, the sports policy of the Nordic countries also focuses on athletes with disabilities, national and international sports competitions, national federations, anti-doping strategies, etc. The aim of the current study is to present individual sports policies of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, and to compare their approaches to the sports policy. We used a comparative method to find out essential peculiarities of the above mentioned Nordic countries in their approach to sports policy. Our comparative analysis revealed that many of the main characteristics of Nordic sport policy relate to strong cultural and political background. When financing sports policy in each country, we may conclude that while government funding in Sweden is based on tax revenues, in Norway, Denmark and Finland sports activities are largely funded through government revenues from the gambling market and the lottery. The results provide some interesting insights into selected secondary aspects of sports policy, namely strengthening sports in schools and the promotion of health benefits of sports activities.

Key words: sports policy, the Nordic countries, funding, Scandinavia, legislation, health, sport organisations, sport clubs, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland

Introduction

Scandinavia is a part of the European continent, located between the Arctic Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean and the Baltic Sea. Overall, Scandinavia represents

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2022.25.2.34-53>

12% of the total area of the European continent, but due to its low population density, it makes up only three and a half percent of Europe's population. Most of the area is uninhabitable and sparsely populated. The northernmost areas are located beyond the Arctic Circle. Thanks to the Gulf Stream, the average temperature of the peninsula is up to five to seven degrees higher than the temperature corresponding to a given geographical zone. Scandinavia is known for its large number of lakes and the largest forests in Europe. The Baltic Sea is very important for this region because of fishing, trade and migration. This area is the oldest part of Europe, it once formed the Baltic continent together with the Baltics, Poland and Russia. (Budil, 2017)

The Nordic countries have several specific features that distinguish them from other European countries. In general, this area is considered to be an interconnected coherent whole. The interconnectedness of the region is related to its historical development. The region was first united by the Nordic Viking tribes at the end of the 8th Century. Christianity, which came here almost a century later, was also an important unifying factor. Sweden and Denmark used to be the region's hegemony with imperial ambitions. Contemporary independent and sovereign states were once ruled by Denmark, Sweden and Russia and were part of their empires. Denmark dominated the region during the Middle Ages and played a key role in the Kalmar Union. In the 17th Century, Sweden became the strongest state in Scandinavia. In the first half of the 20th Century, the region took its current shape. Norway declared its independence in 1905 with the disintegration of the Swedish-Norwegian Union. Finland declared independence several years later in 1917, after taking advantage from the confusion caused by the revolution in Russia. The historical influence had some merit on the linguistic proximity of the states. Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are very close to each other and belong to one group of North Germanic languages. Finnish, on the other hand, is a completely different language belonging to the Finno-Ugric language group.

Common history, state and linguistic kinship were one of the reasons for the emergence of regional cohesion and Nordic identity. These states have many features in common, such as Viking history, pre-Christian mythology, evangelical Lutheran religion, similar administrative and legal systems, political institutions, economic cooperation, and membership in joint integration groups of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

At present, the free movement of citizens for work is allowed, mainly between Denmark and Sweden and between Norway and Sweden. Denmark is connected

to the Scandinavian Peninsula by the Oresund Bridge, which was built in the year 2000. From an economic point of view, we divide the Scandinavian countries into two groups. The first group is created by imperial states such as Denmark and Sweden. The second group includes states that gained independence only in the 20th Century, such as Finland and Norway. During the 20th Century, the economic situation of the countries slowly levelled off. At present, all Nordic countries are described as small rich countries with a pro-export-oriented economy and a high standard of living. (Brunclík – Havlík – Pinková, 2011)

After the Second World War, these four states created an economic and political system - the Nordic Social Model. This model is characterized by equal access to social services regardless of social background. As a result, the citizens of these countries are financially secure in the event of old age, illness or unemployment. Free education, social benefits and free health care are provided. A characteristic feature is also the high economic growth of the country and a relatively even distribution of income. The model is subsidized mainly by tax collection, which means that its sustainability depends on the ability of countries to maintain high employment for both men and women.

Each country has created its own model, but the essentials are the same. The diversity of models is closely related to the ruling political alliances of political parties. The development of the Nordic model is often associated with the social democratic labour movement. The model is characterized by equality and solidarity of society. In order to support these basic values, the government provides funding for the development of leisure and cultural activities of citizens. (Bergsgard – Norberg, 2010)

The social democratic conception of social policy, also known as the welfare states, has a great influence in this region. Social services are above standard compared to Western European countries. All states have a unicameral parliament, a parliamentary form of government, a proportional electoral system and the institute of an ombudsman, whose word comes from this area. The ombudsman of citizens' rights was first established in Sweden in 1809.

The party systems in the region are very similar as well. A new type of political party emerged here – pirate parties. In addition to the integration groups of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, there are still many official and informal Nordic organizations. Overall, the peoples of Scandinavia are based on the values of equality, peace, democracy, solidarity, cooperation, women's emancipation and the environment. The two main features of Nordic policy are the principle of consensus, openness and the possibility of free access to

information. In particular, Denmark, Sweden and Norway are based on a consensual style of politics, which is based on political culture and the specific structure of political institutions. The Nordic countries have many features in common, but that does not mean that they are not different. We can observe differences in different areas, such as in the area of the internal political constitutional arrangement, specifically the state establishment. (Brunclík – Havlík – Pinková, 2011)

1. An outline of sports policies in the Nordic countries

It is possible to imagine society without sports, but it is not possible to imagine sports without society. Since the Ancient Greece to modern globalized world sports and physical activities are evolving and influenced within specific cultural frameworks and political systems. Sports in Scandinavia are no exception. The main characteristics of Scandinavian sport policy is related to strong cultural and political background.

A clear example is the organizational structure of sport. From an international perspective, typical feature of Scandinavian societies is the presence of large "popular movements". As the term "sports movement" is often used hyperbolically, many sporting activities take place in voluntary clubs and associations gathered in large and united confederations.

It is difficult to assess to what extent the features of Scandinavian sports policies are the result, or at least a reflection, of Scandinavian social policies. On the one hand, there are links, such as extensive public participation in citizens' sporting and recreational habits and extensive public support for voluntary activities. On the other hand, there are also differences between countries and with regard to the role of sports policy in relation to social welfare policies. Sports systems in Scandinavia were created within the political frameworks of each country. The results of government sports policy can therefore make a significant contribution to understanding Scandinavian sports.

1.1 The model of the Norwegian sports policy

From the historical perspective, the organization of sport and the sports policy-making system established in Norway after the Second World War, both private and public powers were conducted more or less uniformly. The two sports confederations that existed before the war – one Labour and one bourgeois – merged into the Norwegian Confederation of Sports (NIF). Norwegian sports

have become a unified popular movement. The Confederation organizes sports for all, as well as top sports. In 1996, the Norwegian Olympic Committee was included in what is now called the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee (NOC) and the Confederation of Sports (NIF). The Confederation has a monopoly on organizing sports competitions in Norway. The number of specialized sports federations in the Norwegian Confederation of Sports has more than doubled, from 23 in 1946 to 55 in 2008. In 2009, there were more than 8,000 regular sports clubs and about 5,000 teams that were members of the NIF / NOC, and the number There were almost 1.6 million active members in 2010, which is more than a third of the total population in Norway. (Bergsgard – Norberg, 2010)

The philosophy of sport in Norway was deeply rooted in the international sports science conference in Munich in 1972. The relationship with the international environment was important as a starting point, which was strengthened by attending the annual conferences of the Philosophical Society for the Study of Sport from the mid-1980s onwards. Professors of the University of Sports Sciences in Norway, Gunnar Breivik and Sigmund Loland, became members and later chairmen of the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport. Its annual meeting took place in 1997 in Oslo. Norwegian sports philosophers currently regularly attend sports philosophy conferences, publish in international magazines and are active members of international sports organizations. (Breivik, 2010)

The state has been and still is an important contributor to the development of sport in Norway and also an important mediator in conflicts between organizations before the Second World War and a mediator in the establishment of the NIF after the war. When the Gambling Finance Act was passed and the National Gaming Corporation (*Norsk Tipping*) was founded in 1946, it was decided that gaming profits should be allocated to sports and research. The sports part of the game profits is allocated by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs to sports facilities and to support the income of the NIF. Therefore, the contribution of the mentioned gambling games to sport is not included in the Norwegian state's fiscal budget and decisions on allocations to sports organizations are taken by the ministry, not the parliament. (Bergsgard – Norberg, 2010)

By 2002, almost € 2.5 billion of gaming profits had been earmarked for sport, with an average annual allocation of € 150 million, representing around € 33 per capita. The advantage of gambling / lotteries is that they are the primary source of NIF funding. Since the 1990s, 80% to 90% of NIF's revenues consist of income support from gambling. Gaming profits make up a substantial part of the overall

budgets of some national sports federations. Although the average contribution represents about 20% of income, they account for up to 70% of one third of national sports federations. The central government also makes a significant contribution to the development of sports facilities throughout the country, with about 20% of capital support coming from lottery money, which is often used for additional funding from local authorities, sports clubs themselves or business interests. (government.no, 2016).

However, there are two other levels of government in the Norwegian political system, the county (*fylker*) and the municipalities. *Fylker* is relatively marginal in the system of sports policy, while municipalities play an important role in supporting sports activities. In 2005, municipalities supported sport with approximately EUR 186 million (EUR 39 per capita), both as capital support for the construction of sports facilities and as income support to cover the running costs of sports clubs. Municipalities also own about half of the sports facilities and are the dominant players in the construction and operation of large and expensive facilities. Thus, municipal financial support represents approximately 55% of total public support for sport. (Bergsgard – Norberg, 2010)

1.2 The model of the Swedish sports policy

Swedish sports policy is based on a remarkably unified organizational structure. The Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) has been operating as an umbrella organization for voluntarily organized sports since the beginning of the 20th century. With 68 specialized federations, more than 22,000 clubs and an estimated three million members, it covers almost all organized sports in Sweden. However, the administrative traditions of the Swedish political system, such as the large public sector, the political dominance of the Social Democrats and the high level of trade union organization. Also noteworthy are the number of organizational agreements between the government and strong interest groups, as well as the political culture characterized by consensus, pragmatism and a willingness to reach a compromise. (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2016)

Corporateism and consensus were also key elements of Swedish sports policy. The government's political ambition has always been to support the development of sport as a voluntary popular movement. There has never been any direct state administration of sport. On the contrary, this policy was developed in close cooperation between the government and the Russian Federation. An "implicit treaty" was created in which the government deliberately limited its

control, while the Russian Federation accepted social responsibility and a degree of government influence. There were several ideological conflicts. Several of the disagreements that arose concerned the movement's continued interest in more funding than the government, which secures its own finances. However, this is a general picture based on a long-term historical perspective. As discussed below, there are currently indications of Swedish policy undergoing significant transformation processes. (Bergsgard – Norberg, 2010)

In general, public support for the sports movement is based on a clear division of responsibilities, according to which the government provides funding to national confederations, while municipalities have the main responsibility for local sports life. Furthermore, state support mainly receives various forms of subsidies for voluntary organizations, while sports facilities were considered to be the primary interests of municipalities/cities. It is also important that government funding is based on tax revenue, unlike in Norway, Denmark and Finland, where sports activities are largely financed through government revenue from the gambling market. In this respect, government control of sport is stronger in Sweden than in other Scandinavian countries, as the scope and orientation of sport funding is subject to annual parliamentary scrutiny and is closely linked to the government's financial situation. (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2016)

1.3 The model of the Danish sports policy

In many respects, Denmark deviates from the general characteristics of the common model of Scandinavian sports policy. An important reason is the organizational pluralism of Danish sports life. As in Norway and Sweden, traditional competitive sports met under the joint umbrella organization of the Danish Sports Confederation (*Danmarks IdrætsForbund, DIF*). With its roots in the rural culture of the 19th Century, shooting movement and voluntary gymnastics gradually emerged, as well as an important sports movement without top sports elements, but with a clear cultural and health profile. From an organizational point of view, these activities have been collected since 1992 in the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI). The Danish Sports Association is a different national organization, unlike those in Norway and Sweden, which are part of the NIF and RF. In addition, elite sports are organized as an independent organization regulated by law, called the Team of Denmark. Therefore, in Denmark there are not just one, but several competing sports movements and ideological perspectives. (Bergsgard – Norberg, 2010)

The first important feature of Danish sports policy is the inconspicuous role

of the government. State control has been and still is low. The explanation can be found in part in specific cultural and social features of Danish society, educational ideas on "popular enlightenment", liberal attitudes, and strong opposition to regulations. The ideas of voluntariness and freedom of action in relation to club activities are therefore particularly emphasized in Denmark, and consequently government control needs to be avoided. (ibid.)

From an economic point of view, Danish sports policy is characterized by a clear division of responsibilities between the government and municipalities and the regulation of public support. Government support is focused on the organizational support of national confederations. This support, which was implemented in 1948, is based on revenue from the gambling market and is governed by the Football Typing Act and the Lotteries Act. This support generated a profit of more than EUR 80 million in 2002. (Ministry of Culture, 2017)

While the government is responsible for the economy of national organizations, cities and municipalities have the main responsibility for local sports activities. The financing of sport through towns and villages has been regulated by law since 1991, i.e., the law on general education (*Folkeoplysningsloven*). The city's first leisure laws were enacted in the 1950s, prompting municipalities to set up special funding for youth organizations and sports facilities. Its sequel, the Leisure Act (*Fritidsloven*) of 1968, reinforced the requirements, free use of the city's sports facilities and club funding. The Leisure Act has been described as the culmination of the idea of well-being, as the government is no longer responsible only for education and social security, but also for the leisure activities of its citizens. Leisure was identified as a "problem" and subsequently as the responsibility of the government. In 2002, municipal support was estimated at EUR 350 million. Since 1984, elite sports have also received their own legally binding government support. (Ministry of Culture, 2017)

1.4 The model the Finnish sports policy

Finland is a country dominated by extensive forests and lakes. In Norway, Sweden and Denmark, there is no language problem with each other, people in Finland belong to the Ural language family, so they speak a language that is completely different from other Nordic languages. However, many people in Finland speak Swedish, which they learn at school. Finland has Russia as its great neighbour and was a part of it for a long time, until it gained its independence in 1917 after the Russian Revolution. (Breivik, 2010)

The popular term is "*sisu*", a concept that describes the competitive spirit, the

so-called "drive", but also stoic determination, bravery, resilience or perseverance, and the Finns themselves like to express their national character with this term. As for sports, they excel in skiing, especially in ski jumping and cross-country skiing. They are great in athletics, especially in javelin throw and running. In ice hockey they are almost on the same level as the Swedes and the Finns are also some of the best car racers in the world. (Breivik, 2010)

Finland, like Norway, has created a strong sports science institution that dominates the Nordic region. The University of Jyväskylä is particularly important in the field of health, but also has programs and research groups in the field of biomechanics, pedagogy and sociology of sport. As for the sports philosophy, they pay less attention to it. The most famous sports philosopher in Finland, working at the Theological Academy in Åbo, **Mikael Lindfelt** wrote a monograph on sport and ethics, dealing with historical roots and the current situation in the ethics of sport. This was followed by a project where he told 21 top athletes about their views on the career and life of an athlete. (ibid.)

The Ministry of Education and Culture funds physical activity and performance sports using national lottery and betting proceeds and budgets. State funding of sport consists almost exclusively of state subsidies paid from national lotteries and proceeds from betting. In the national budget for 2017, approximately EUR 149.6 million of lottery proceeds and betting proceeds were allocated to sports activities in the area of physical activity and performance. Appropriations are also used to expand the Schools on the Move program as a key project and to renovate the Helsinki Olympic Stadium, and central government transfers are allocated to sports training centres. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017)

2. A comparative analysis of the Nordic sports policies

The Danish sports policy is not uniform. It is not within the competence of only one ministry, nor is it regulated by only one law. The Elite Sports Act is the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture, the Leisure Act is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, and the Lottery Act falls under the Ministry of Taxes. The Ministry of the Interior and Health also has certain competencies. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has created the Office for Sport, Copyright and International Affairs, which is responsible for sport. However, the Ministry has much less professional experience in this area, which is why some sports organizations and institutes are external offices of the Minister of Culture. Sport in Denmark does

not have a high status of political responsibility. The public sector does not participate in the organization of sports activities other than compulsory sports in primary schools.

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture has the main responsibility for sport, but it also cooperates with other ministries. The Ministry of Education and Culture finances and manages anti-doping issues, the Ministry of Justice is responsible for amending the Criminal Code, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for health treatment of athletes. The objectives of sports policy are defined by the sports legislation of Finland and its overall direction is determined in the government program and programs of individual ministries. The policy is implemented through cooperation between different sectors. The state participates in the organization of sports activities through various state projects, which are designed for all ages from young people through the adult population and to the elderly. There are approximately 36,000 sports facilities in Finland, most of which are managed by municipalities. The Ministry of Education provides funding for the construction of sports facilities and recreation centres through grants.

Norwegian sports policy is governed by the state and the NIF. Competence in this area is not entrusted to one ministry. The Ministry of Culture, through the Department of Sports Policy, is in charge of sport for all. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the implementation of physical education in schools and the Ministry of Health deals with the impact of sport on health. Norway is referred to as a liberalization model in the relationship between the government and sports organizations, and some refer to it as cooperative.

In Sweden, the Ministry of Culture and the Parliament are responsible for state sports policy. The Committee on Cultural Affairs deals with issues and problems in the field of sport in more detail. Through government programs, the state mainly supports the development of sports, sports clubs and sports activities for children and young people. Sports policy in Sweden is characterized by close links between local and national governance on the one hand and non-profit voluntary and sports clubs based on a membership base on the other.

The various Danish legislation on sport is also important from an economic policy point of view. The reasons for their incoherence may be the fact that sports laws were enacted before the Ministry of Education became responsible for the area of sport. The legislation on sport is not the same as in any other country. The individual laws determine only the general objectives of sports policy and the details of the method of financing are in the competence of sports organizations

and sports clubs. The laws that affect the field of sports are: the Act on the Support of Sports, the Act on Leisure Activities, the Act on Adult Education.

The most important piece of legislation in sport in Finland is the Act on the Promotion of Sport and Physical Activity, which defines the objectives of the state's sports policy. The provision of financial assistance is further regulated by the Decree on the Support of Sports and Physical Activity and the Act on the Financing of Educational and Cultural Provisions. The most important funding law in Norway is the Lottery Games Act, which stipulates that all funds raised will be provided for the development of sport. There is no comprehensive legal regulation of sport. The individual legal relationships of entities in sport are defined in various laws. The right to play sports and to join sports clubs is enshrined in the Constitution of Sweden. There is also no comprehensive legal regulation of sport and individual legal relationships occur in the laws of various social spheres. An overview of sport policies and sports legislation of Nordic countries is presented in Table 1 below

Table 1: Sport policy and sports legislation of the Nordic countries

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Number of members in sports clubs (mil.)	2	1,1	2,1	3,2
Number of sports clubs	16 000	10 000	10 787	20 164
Prominent sports organisation	Sport Confederation of Denmark (DIF) National Olympic Committee	Finnish Sport Federation (FSF)	Olympic and Paralympic Committee a Confederation of sport (NIF)	Swedish Sport Confederation (SSC)
Responsibility for the state management of sport	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance...	Ministry of Education and Sport in a co-operation with other organs	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health	Ministry of Culture, Parliament
Sports legislation	Inconsistent - many laws from different spheres	Law on the promotion of sports and physical activity	Inconsistent - many laws from different spheres (Law on Lottery Games)	Inconsistent - many laws from different spheres
Determining the direction of sports policy	Ministry of Culture	Sports laws, government and ministries	State and NIF	Ministry of Culture and Parliament

Target group of sports policy	Children and youth U19	All age categories	Children and youth U19	Children and youth U19
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Source: Bergard, N. – Norberg, J. 2010. *Sports policy and politics – the Scandinavian way.*

3. Overall assessment

The Scandinavian social model is characterized by a large public sector, redistribution of contributions and a high involvement of the state in ensuring the living conditions of the population. In the field of sport, this is reflected in strong state support for voluntary organizations through public funding of sports infrastructure and subsidies. The public sector provides the largest revenue for organized sport. A feature of the Scandinavian social model is the allocation of a significant amount from the state budget for the development of sport. Almost exclusively, state contributions are directed to voluntary organizations. In recent years, funding from advertising contracts, sponsorship and television rights has been growing and is a major source of sports federations and elite clubs in popular sports. Sport is an area where governments have voluntarily limited their influence in favour of NGOs, voluntary organizations and left them with a high degree of autonomy. (Bergsgard - Norberg, 2010)

All countries have contributed to the creation of a good structure of sports clubs, where managers and coaches are dedicated to the development of sports skills of young people and children. Clubs are a basic unit for the development of elite sports and talents. The countries of Scandinavia are characterized by the fact that team and individual sports are organized in a federal structure. Even all sports are covered by national sports federations. In Denmark it is the Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF) and the National Olympic Committee, in Finland it is the Finnish Sports Federation (FSF), in Norway the Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the Confederation of Sports (NIF) and the Swedish Sports Confederation in Sweden (SSC). The Scandinavian countries are similar in many ways. This is mainly due to the common Scandinavian social model, but nevertheless the countries differ significantly in the field of sports policy.

Table 2 presents essential geographical, economic, social and political factors which have an impact on the development of sports in Nordic countries:

Table 2: A comparison based on geographical, economic, social and political factors

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Population (mil.)	5,8	5,5	5,3	10,2
Area (km²)	42 916	338 440	385 178	450 295
Density of population (km²)	134,0	18,2	16,8	25,1
Climate	mild oceanic	mild continental	mild oceanic	mild continental
System of government	constitutional monarchy	parliamentary republic	constitutional monarchy	constitutional monarchy
Currency	Danish crown	Euro	Norwegian crown	Swedish crown
GDP (mil. USD)	329 866	252 302	399 489	535 607
GDP per inhabitant (mil. USD)	57 218	45 804	75 704	53 253
Unemployment rate	5%	8,4%	4%	6%
Membership in international organisations	EU, NATO, OSN, WTO, OECD,...	EU, OSN, WTO, OECD,...	NATO, OSN, WTO, OECD,...	EU, OSN, WTO, OECD,...

Source: Bergard, N. – Norberg, J. 2010. *Sports policy and politics – the Scandinavian way.*

Based on the table, it is possible to compare the various factors of the country's sports policy. Sweden has significantly the largest population as well as the largest area. Consequently, they have the highest value of GDP among the observed countries in 2017. But in terms of per capita, the value is lower than in Norway and Denmark. These indicators of the country's economic growth have determined that Finland was the least efficient economy in 2017. The unemployment rate is also the highest in Finland compared to other countries. In the area of state establishment, it also differs from other countries. Denmark, Norway and Sweden are constitutional monarchies and Finland is a parliamentary republic. Another different feature of Finland is the fact that, as the only country in Scandinavia, the national currency has the euro. In the field of foreign policy, only Norway is not a member of the EU. Sweden is the only country with neutral status. In terms of the number of members in sports clubs, Sweden has the largest base. Denmark and Norway have about the same number and Finland has significantly fewer members. Compared to the population, Norway has the largest sports population and is closely followed by Denmark. Finland has

the least active sports population. Finland is also the smallest in terms of the number of sports clubs, which is related to the active population. Norway has a low number of sports clubs compared to the sports-active population. Sweden has the largest number of sports clubs. In all countries, state sports policy is governed by the ministries responsible for sport in the respective country. In Denmark, public administration is decentralized and managed by the ministries responsible for each part of the sport. Overall political responsibility and control of sport is very low in Denmark. In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture has the main role, but it also cooperates with other ministries on certain issues. In Norway, sports policy is managed by the Ministries of Culture, Sports and Health, which each has a responsibility in their area. There is a more visible difference in the management of sports policy in Sweden. Competences in the field of sport are divided between the Ministry of Culture and the Parliament.

There is no uniform legislation on sport in Denmark and Sweden. A number of laws from different social spheres regulate certain legal relations concerning sport. There is no law that would regulate the whole issue of sport more comprehensively. There is also no comprehensive law in Norway, but the most important in the field of sport is the Law on Lottery Games, which regulates the financing of sport. The reason for the non-uniform legislative regulation of sport may be the fact that sport is an important part of other spheres of life and it is difficult to create one legal act that will deal with all kinds of sports. Finland, as the only Scandinavian country, has comprehensive sports legislation. The Act on the Promotion of Sport and Physical Activity deals exclusively with sports activities. There are differences between countries in determining the overall direction of sports policy. In Denmark, it is designated by the Ministry of Culture. In Finland, the direction of sports policy is defined by law, and the government and ministries set more specific sports policy objectives. In Norway, both the state and the NIF are involved in the direction of sports policy. In Sweden, this role is performed by the parliament and the Ministry of Culture. We can notice that in the observed countries, the goals of sports policy are set by various entities. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the development of sport in the country focuses mainly on the category of youth and children. The exception is Finland, which supports all age groups through government projects. One ministry, the Ministry of Culture, is responsible for state funding of sport in Denmark and Finland. In Sweden, the responsibility for state funding is shared between parliament and government. In Norway, it is managed by the Ministry of Culture and the parliament, each of which manages different sources of state funding. The

Ministry of Culture is responsible for the redistribution of funds from the state budget and the parliament takes care of the funds obtained from lottery games. Profits from lottery games are not included in the state budget in Norway. The financing of sport in Denmark and Finland consists mainly of profits from lottery games. Sweden is an exception in the area of funding sources, as state aid is provided from tax revenues. In Denmark, state financial support is mostly provided by sports clubs. In addition to sports organizations, Finland is the only country to support sports clubs through state subsidies. In both Norway and Sweden, funding for sport is channelled in large numbers to national sports organizations through the main national sports organization. States allocate funds to confederations, which redistribute them to individual national federations. The funding of sport at a municipal level is the same in all the Nordic countries compared. City councils support sports clubs and provide funding for the construction of sports facilities. An overview of funding policies of Nordic countries is presented in the table below:

Table 3: Funding of sport in the Nordic countries

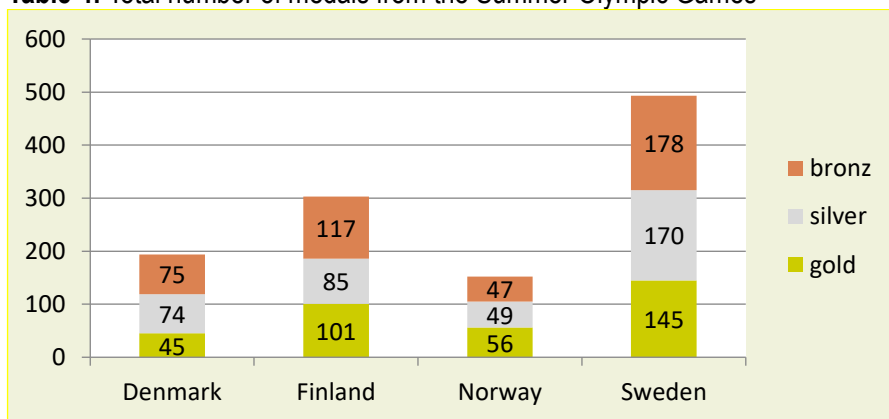
	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Responsibility for state funding of sport	Ministry of Culture	Ministry of Education and Culture	Ministry of Culture (state budget), Parliament (lottery games)	Parliament, government
Recipient of state funding for sport	Sports organisations	Sports organisations, sports clubs	Sports organisations (NIF)	Sports organisations (SSC)
Sources of state funding for sport	profits from lottery games	profits from lottery games	profits from lottery games, financial contributions from ministries	taxes
Funding of sport on municipal level	Sports clubs, sports facilities	Sports clubs, sports facilities, municipalities	Sports clubs, sports facilities	Sports clubs, sports facilities, municipalities

Source: Bergard, N. – Norberg, J. 2010. *Sports policy and politics – the Scandinavian way.*

Based on the sports success charts at the Olympics, we found out that Sweden has won the most medals at the OG so far. In winter sports, the most

successful country is Norway, which has won the most medals from the Olympic Games. Sweden has won the most Olympic medals in its history, which means that it is the most successful country in the field of sports in Scandinavia. It is followed by Norway in the total number of medals, then Finland and the least successful country is Denmark. The success of a country's sports policy can be defined on the basis of meeting its objectives. From the general tasks of sports policy, we chose the following measurable values for comparison: the expansion of the sports activity of the population and the sporting achievements of the country. Based on the size of the sports-active population, Norway is the most successful country in Scandinavia. The means of their sports policy are most effective in the direction of spreading active sports activities among the population. It is followed by Denmark, Sweden and the least active population in Finland. As stated in Table 4, Sweden is the most successful Nordic country in terms of Olympic medals. The second is Norway, then Finland and the fourth is Denmark.

Table 4: Total number of medals from the Summer Olympic Games

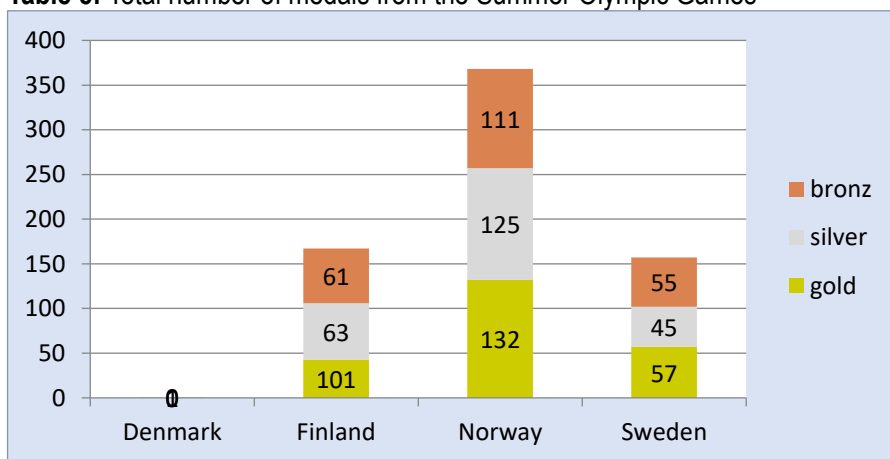


Source: <https://library.olympics.com>

If we take into account the population of the countries and calculate the medals obtained per capita, Norway has the largest number of medals achieved. Finland is second, followed by Sweden and Denmark. It follows that Norway's sports policy can be considered the most successful in terms of the prevalence of sport among the country's population and the proportion of sporting achievements per capita. Norway dominates highly in winter sports, but in

summer sports it is the worst in success among the Scandinavian countries, so the country is planning to focus more on summer sports in the future. Finland achieves very good sporting success due to its low membership base in sport. The most successful sports in Finland are summer sports. In comparison with the sporting successes of the countries, Finland is in second place in both summer and winter sports. For Finland's sports policy, we recommend focusing more on expanding the membership base, which would also have a positive impact on the country's sporting achievements. As stated in the Table below, Sweden has achieved the largest number of medals from the Olympic Games in its history, but its success compared to the countries has been declining in recent years. Sweden is the most successful in summer sports, but lags behind Norway and Finland in winter sports.

Table 5: Total number of medals from the Summer Olympic Games



Source: <https://library.olympics.com>

Based on the total population, its membership base is low, so it should be in the interest of their sports policy to motivate the population to play sports more actively and we recommend focusing more on winter sports. Denmark was the worst of the countries compared in terms of sporting success. Winter sports are achieving insufficient results in the country. However, also in summer sports, it was ranked last in the number of medals. Due to the high sports membership base, achieved sports results are very low compared to other countries. The country should focus more on success in individual sports. These results may be

related to the type of sports policy of the country. The Danish government does not address the issue of sport at the same level as the governments of Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Conclusion

The aim of the article was to present a comparative analysis of sports policies of the countries of Northern Europe, namely Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. From ancient Greece to modern globalized world of sports, physical activity is evolving and influenced within specific cultural frameworks and political systems. Sports in Scandinavia are no exception. In the individual models of sports policies of the Nordic countries, we have found a noticeable significance and role of the state. As for the structure itself, a typical feature of Scandinavian sports policies is the presence of federations, which are united by e.g., Norwegian Confederation of Sports (NIF) or Swedish Confederation of Sports (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF). The Danish Sports Association is a different national organization, unlike those in Norway and Sweden, which are part of the NIF and RF. In addition, elite sports are organized as an independent organization regulated by law, called the Team of Denmark.

As far as the sports funding, the exception is Sweden, where government funding is based on tax revenues, in contrast to Norway, Denmark and Finland, where sports activities are largely financed through government revenues from the gambling market. In this respect, government control of sport is stronger in Sweden than in other Scandinavian countries, as the scope and orientation of sport funding is subject to annual parliamentary scrutiny.

Physical activity and sport play an important role in promoting good health. In the future, their importance will even increase due to growing trends in obesity and an aging population. As a result, the Nordic countries have decided to carry out research, resp. evaluation in the field of sports sciences, one of the objectives of which was to determine the impact of human movement on human health and functioning. They also looked for the quality and overall level of publication of scientists in international professional journals.

¹ In addition to the fact that sports sciences and sport as such are effectively rooted in the countries analysed and continue to prosper, the results of this evaluation are also intended to help for closer cooperation not only between the Nordic countries but worldwide in sport and physical activity in general.

¹ Compare: Štulajterová, A. (2013)

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