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## AVAILABILITY, ORGANIZATION AND HEALTH-SOCIAL BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES IN DISABLED CHILDREN – A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 2 REGIONS IN BULGARIA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

### ABSTRACT

**Background.** The European commission offers a special program oriented towards improving the public health for the period 2007–2013. The main purpose of the Public Health program is to ensure healthy European society. One of its tasks is the implementation and development of health education practices for everyone. One of the most obvious and unquestionable tools which influence positively human health over life is movement activity.

**Material and methods.** The aim of the study is a comparability analysis of availability (e.g. distance, offer) of intentionally organized physical activities for mentally disabled children under 15 years old (with mild mental retardation – F 70, IQ 50–69; moderate mental retardation – F 71, IQ 35–49) and for children with hearing disability and those with visual one under 15 years old in South Bohemia region (Czech Republic) and in Plovdiv region (Bulgaria). The research work included analyses of physical activities types and organization forms, e.g. integrated – non-integrated, at special schools – under sport clubs supervision, regular – occasional or in form of courses, etc. Also the quality of promotion and variety of physical activities for handicapped children were analyzed. The following methods were used during the research: exploration, interview, document analysis and content analyses of the regions' information systems. **Results.** It was found that a range of intentionally organized physical activities for children with mental and sensory disabilities is by 56% wider in the Czech region than in the Bulgarian region. As far as the variety of physical activities for the handicapped children is concerned, the situation in the Czech region is 10 times better compared to the Bulgarian region. The basic difference was found in the availability of website information, since in the Bulgarian region the website information is scarce. **Conclusions.** The situation in these two ex socialist countries is quite different in the discussed points. It is recommended to promote the concept of active living of handicapped children through the national education and training systems, including the training of instructors, trainers, volunteers and managers.

**Key words:** children with mental and sensory disability, personal and social development, motivation to physical activities, adequate movement activities

### INTRODUCTION

Participants of the EU high-level conference *Together for Mental Health and Wellbeing*, which was held in Brussels in 2008 ([http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/)) acknowledge the importance and relevance of mental health and well-being for the European Union, its Member States and citizens. Mental health was recognized as a human right. It was declared that mental health enables citizens to enjoy well-being, quality of life and health. Mental health allows learning, working and participation in society. The level of mental health

and well-being in the population is a key resource for success of the EU as a knowledge-based society and economy. However, mental disorders are increasing in the EU [1].

Physical activities can favour a better quality of life and mental health in children with disabilities by offering them a chance for independent movement, a chance to learn how to cooperate and socialize with others, to control and understand their own body. The teacher or trainer organises and guides physical activities according to individual skills and possibilities of the participating children. We call this method an adequate movement regime.

Kursová mentioned that the aim of physical activities is to reduce disability symptoms. During physical activities persons with disabilities master new social roles, which are based on cooperation, creativity and negotiation of obstacles [2].

Krejčí [1] defines the adequate movement regime as a coherent system of motor activities, which are adequate to one's individual skills, inclinations, interests and which are adequately implemented in everyday life. She characterizes principles of the adequate movement regime (mentioned below according to the importance and the consequence) in the following points:

- **Coping** – in the sense of individual managing and mastering of movement. What for somebody is easy, for somebody else is difficult. The main factors are: condition, age, health situation, impairments, etc. Coping is the key to progress in motor learning.
- **Spontaneity** – in the sense of freedom, facility, pleasure during the movement activity which leads to experience of the “flow” effect. The spontaneity is a condition for the saturation benefit.
- **Saturation** – in the sense of satisfaction, self-realization, self-determination during and after the movement activity. As a result the person tends to return to the movement activity again and again.
- **Repeatability** – in the sense of a wish to return to the movement activity and to improve the performance as much as possible. Only at this stage it is possible to begin regular training with varied training loads. The person accepts discomfort and even a pain.
- **Training** – in the sense of the varied intensity of physical exercise adapted to the person's health situation, age, condition, body structure, gender, etc. During the training process a positive dependency on the movement activity can be developed. Availability of the daily movement activity can be an obstacle.
- **Availability** – in the sense of regular, daily application of movement activity. It depends on natural conditions,

time factors, financial resources, laws, etc. At this stage usually begins combination of daily activity with season, temporal movement activities (for example yoga + alpine skiing + biking). The adequate movement regime is created.

- **Safeness** – in the sense of the accident prevention, rescue during the movement activity when it is necessary to keep principles of safety. Only safe movement activity is adequate to the person. Again an important role is played by: health state, age, condition, body structure, gender, availability of equipment, etc. [2].

An adequate movement regime can improve and maintain mental health if the optimal mode, intensity, frequency and duration of exercises are adopted. General movement insufficiency can be observed in able-bodied children as well as in children with disability. Lack of movement generally results in special psychic symptoms (so called “hypokinetic syndrome”), which are manifested through impulsivity, irritation, non-concentration, lack of self-control, discomposure and aggressiveness.

In 2010 the UN validated the new version of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. The new version includes numerous significant changes. For example, it defines the education of disabled children putting an accent on their inclusion in the educational system, which helps to develop tolerance and respect towards these children. In order to guarantee their participation in leisure, sport and top level sport and in all the levels of physical activities the UN member states agreed to accept the following principles:

- To guarantee possibilities of organising and developing sport and leisure activities for persons with disabilities and to guarantee them possibilities of participating in these activities.
- To guarantee persons with disabilities an access to sport and tourist areas and facilities.
- To guarantee disabled children the same opportunity as other children have to participate in play, games, re-

creation and sport activities in leisure time as well as in the school environment.

- To guarantee persons with disabilities an access to service of persons and institutions organising recreation, tourist, leisure and sport activities.

(“Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities”, Paragraph 39, pp. 116–117).

The above mentioned rules are part of legal order both in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic.

Having in mind the fact that motor experiences create a base for the disabled children's development, since 2000 Váľková have recommended to accept people with disability in sport clubs. Clubs should co-operate on the creation of new branches that are easy enough for people with disabilities to engage in sport activities, whereas it should be up to them to decide whether to join activities organized specially for the disabled or those meant for all. She stressed that people with disabilities are valid members of society and have all rights to demand such forms of physical activities which correspond to their specified needs and views [3].

## HYPOTHESES

**H1** Range, availability, organization of physical activities for disabled children will be significantly higher in the region of South Bohemia than in the region of Plovdiv.

**H2** Range, availability, organization of physical activities for mentally disabled children will be in both studied regions significantly higher than for children with hearing and visual impairments.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

During the research study the following methods were used:

- Documents, Literary and Internet References Analysis [4].
- Investigative Exploration:
  - E-mail correspondence [4] – enquiring e-mails to the sport clubs which were found in the Documents, Lite-

rary and Internet References Analysis and to local Associations in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria

- Direct Interview [4] – for our investigation in the region of Plovdiv this method was crucial due to the lack of information on the internet and poor e-mail communication.
- Telephonic Interview [4] – for our investigation in the region of Plovdiv this method was crucial due to the lack of information on the Internet and poor e-mail communication.
- Comparative Method [5]. For the process of data comparison the following statistical data were used:
  - of the Institute for Information in Education (<<http://www.uiv.cz/clanek/726/2025/>> ) in the Czech Republic,
  - of the National Statistics Office in Bulgaria ([http://www.pd.government.bg/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=222&cntnt01origid=15&cntnt01returnid=15&hl=bg\\_BG](http://www.pd.government.bg/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=222&cntnt01origid=15&cntnt01returnid=15&hl=bg_BG))
  - of the document “Regional development strategy for social services in Plovdiv“ ([http://www.pd.government.bg/uploads/files/OSR/Oblastna\\_strategia\\_zarazvitie\\_nasocialni\\_uslugi.pdf](http://www.pd.government.bg/uploads/files/OSR/Oblastna_strategia_zarazvitie_nasocialni_uslugi.pdf)).
- Inductive, Deductive Methods [4].

## Characteristics of the studied regions

**Region of Plovdiv – Bulgaria** (data validity to 01.01.2011, [http://www.pd.government.bg/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=222&cntnt01origid=15&cntnt01returnid=15&hl=bg\\_BG](http://www.pd.government.bg/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=222&cntnt01origid=15&cntnt01returnid=15&hl=bg_BG)) The National Statistics Office in Bulgaria (NSI, online) provided the statistical data for the research. It registers 604 children with mental disabilities, 76 children with hearing disabilities and 53 children with visual disabilities in the region of Plovdiv, all aged from 8 to 15 years. The children are registered in special needs schools or institutions. The region of Plovdiv has a population of 701,684 people. Out of them, 522,436 people live in cities and towns that is 74.5%. The regional capital, Plovdiv, has 348,465 inhabitants.

In the region there are 179 kindergartens, 186 primary and secondary schools, including 26 high schools and 8 colleges. The total statistical data about children with mental, hearing and visual disabilities are not available, but in the region there are 2 special needs schools, a school for children with hearing disabilities, 4 day social welfare institutions for children with hearing disabilities and a school for children with visual disabilities. General information about sport facilities in the whole region of Plovdiv is not available on the Internet. However, sport complexes are presented together with the towns where they are, for example, Assenovgrad, Bachkovo, Brezovo, Chepelare, Hissarya, Kalofer, Karlovo, Klisura, Laki, Perustitsa, Parvomay, Saedinenie, Stambolijski. In each of them there are a swimming pool, a stadium, various sport halls and sport grounds. Plovdiv has the biggest Sports Complex in Eastern Europe. It consists of the Plovdiv Stadium and several additional soccer fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, a vast park in the western part of the city on the Maritza river. There are also playgrounds for children. It is popular among the inhabitants of Plovdiv and its visitors to use it for jogging, walking and relaxing. The Plovdiv Stadium has 55,000 seats, which makes it the largest football venue in Bulgaria. Other stadiums include Botev Stadium (22,000 seats), Lokomotiv Stadium (11,000 seats), Maritsa Stadium (5,000 seats) and Todor Diev Stadium (7,000 seats). There are also six indoor sports halls – Lokomotiv, Dunav, Stroitel, Chaika, Akademik, Total Sport. In 2006 a water park was opened near the city centre called Aqualand. Several smaller water parks are situated in the city as well. There is a horse racing club and a stud near the city. Plovdiv has several volleyball and basketball teams. Three of the city's seven hills became protected natural areas in 1995. Two of the first parks in Bulgaria are located in the city centre – *Tsar Simeon Garden* (also known as the *City Garden*) and *Dondukov Garden*.

**Region of South Bohemia – Czech Republic** (data validity 01.01.2011 – Institute for information in Education – [>](http://www.uiv.cz/clanek/726/2025/))

According to the ÚIV (Institute for Information in Education) in the region of South Bohemia, there are 1355 children with mental disabilities, 84 children with hearing disabilities and 41 children with visual disabilities, all aged from 8 to 15 years attending special needs primary schools as well as children from integrated primary schools. The statistical data for our research were taken from the Internet. The total number of inhabitants in the region is 638,291, out of which 411,465 people live in cities and towns, i.e. 64.5%. The regional capital, České Budějovice, has a population of 94,906 people. In the region there are 294 kindergartens, 254 primary schools and 97 secondary schools including 26 high schools, a university and 4 colleges. For sport activities it is possible to use 65 stadiums, 13 swimming-baths, 132 swimming pools, 362 gyms, 930 sport grounds, 17 ice arenas, 405 other sports facilities.

Tab. 1 and Tab. 2 show the comparison of surface areas of the studied regions and the number of schools and institutions in the regions.

*Tab. 1. Comparison of surfaces of the studied countries and regions*

Surface	CZ	BG
Surface areas of the countries (km <sup>2</sup> )	78,867	110,879
Surface areas of the regions (km <sup>2</sup> )	10,056	5,973

*Tab. 2. Comparison of the number of schools and institutions in the studied regions*

Institutions	CZ Region of South Bohemia	BG Region of Plovdiv
Primary schools	351	186
Special needs schools	22	2
Schools for children with hearing disabilities	1	1
Schools for children with visual disabilities	1	1
Day social welfare institutions	10	4

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results of the Analysis and Investigative Exploration in the Region of South Bohemia – Czech Republic

Comprehensive information about the range of physical activities intentionally organised for children with mental and sensory disabilities in the region of South Bohemia is not available. It was found out that in the region of South Bohemia 17 sport clubs are specialised in physical activities for people with mental disabilities. What they offer includes activities for children with mental disabilities aged from 8 to 15 years (see Tab. 3). The sports offered for children under 15 years old with mental disabilities in the region of South Bohemia are as follows: adapted sports, athletics, ball games, basketball, biking, boccia, body-building, bowling, cross country running, cycling, dancing, darts, exercise in the countryside, field hockey, fitness, floor-ball, futsal, gymnastics, hippo therapy, indoor soccer, integrated music and physical education, ninepins, horseback riding, shooting, skating, skiing, skittles, sledding, snow games, soccer, sports rehabilitation, swimming, table tennis, tourism, walking, wandering ball.

It was found out that in the region of South Bohemia only 2 organizations are specialised in physical activities for children with hearing disabilities (Tab. 4). Both organizations are part of and work under the Czech Association of Deaf Sportsmen in Plzeň. Kurková found out that their main sport objective is to support physical activities, especially to improve sport skills and performance in Deaflympics in all age groups [6]. Unfortunately, the Czech association has a website only for some particular sports (e.g. for athletics: <http://www.csns-atletika.cz/>) but there are no websites and addresses of sport associations in the regions of the Czech Republic. There are two more sport clubs for people with hearing impairments in the region of South Bohemia ("TJ ČZ Strakonice", "BSKN Budějovický sportovní klub neslyšících" = "Budějovice Sport Club of the Deaf"), but they have no children members. The

South Bohemia regional counselling centre for the deaf and people with hearing impairments does not provide any information about physical activities on offer for children with hearing disabilities in the region. The best service in the studied area is provided by the special needs school for children with hearing disabilities (include pre-school, primary and secondary education) which organizes physical activities for children with hearing disabilities in recreational forms and at a high level as well (see Tab. 4).

It was found out that in the region of South Bohemia only one organization is specialised in physical activities for people with visual disabilities (Tab. 5). It is the same organization, the Centre for the Healthy Disabled in České Budějovice, which organizes physical activities for people with hearing disabilities (Tab. 5). The Centre is a member of all the Czech associations for the disabled, including the Czech Association of Visually Disabled Sportsmen. This national association unites all the organisations, clubs, schools that offer physical activities for people with visual disabilities.

From the data analysis results that the variety of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with visual disabilities is very poor in the region of South Bohemia. Since the number of children with visual disabilities is rather low, it would be better to support their inclusion in the existing sport clubs in the region of South Bohemia. But these clubs do not offer such a possibility. During a conversation with the president of the Czech Association of Visually Disabled Sportsmen he confirmed a very poor level of the range, availability, organization of physical activities for the visually disabled children in the region of South Bohemia. He also confirmed that there is only one sport organization which intentionally and on a professional level offers physical activities for visually disabled children in the region of South Bohemia. The situation in special needs kindergarten and primary schools is poor as far as the range of physical activities for visually disabled children are concerned. Their headmasters put the blame on the lack of financial support in recent years, bad communication with au-

*Tab. 3. Range and variety of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with mental disabilities in the region of South Bohemia – CZ (data validity 25.11.2010)*

Place	Name of Club	Contact	Offer of PA
České Budějovice	SK Special needs schools	Štítného 3 370 11 České Budějovice Tel.: +420 387 423 471 +420 777 155 057 E-mail: specscoly.cb@gmail.cz www: http://www.volny.cz/specscoly.cb/	Cross country running Floor-ball Indoor soccer Swimming Soccer Table tennis Walking
	Pluto	ul. Dlouhá 35 370 05 České Budějovice Telefon: +420 776054085 E-mail: skola@zpsviny.cz	Athletics Cycling Skiing Swimming Adapted sports
	Spiridon	Domov Libníč a Centrum sociálních služeb Empatie Pražská 88, 370 04 České Budějovice Telefon: +420 387 319 095 E-mail: empatie1@volny.cz Internet: http://www.empatie.cz/	Athletics Basketball Cycling Table tennis Swimming Body-building Fitness Dancing Ninepins
	1. Centrum zdravotně postižených jižních Čech (1 <sup>st</sup> Centre of healthy disabled in South Bohemia)	Vltavské nábřeží 5/a 370 05 České Budějovice Tel.: 385 347 806	Athletics Fitness Weightlifting Table tennis Indoor soccer Sculling
	SK Lišov	Vráto 76, 370 01 České Budějovice Tel: +420 602761845 Email: fenclova.mirka@seznam.cz	Athletics Indoor soccer Table tennis
Tábor	Fopik	ČSA 2244, 390 03 Tábor Tel.: +420 381 232 910 E-mail: osobitna@volny.cz	Athletics Floor-ball Indoor soccer
Záluží	Klíček	Betlémská 275, 390 01 Tábor Tel.: +420 381 281 619 +420 607808 084 E-mail: l.toupalik@seznam.cz kamil.or@seznam.cz	Adapted hockey Horseback Riding Biking Bowling Indoor soccer Soccer Wandering ball Darts Skittles Swimming Table tennis
Blatná	Mačkovské kočky	Domov PETRA, Mačkov 79 388 01 Blatná Telefon: +420 383 413 111 +420 602 434 429 Email:marouskova@domovpetra.cz	Athletics Ball games Bowling Cycling Exercise in the countryside Ninepins Skating Sledding Swimming



Strakonice	Plaváči Strakonice	ZŠ speciální, praktická a MŠ Plánkova 430, 386 01 Strakonice Telefon: +420 383 332 844	Athletics Cycling Skiing Swimming Table tennis
	SK Denní stacionář	Městský ústav sociálních služeb Strakonice, Denní stacionář pro mentálně postižené děti, mládež a dospělé, Elleroa 160 386 01 Strakonice Tel.: +420 739 155 370 E-mail: petr.martinek@muss.strakonice.eu Internet: <a href="http://www.muss.strakonice.eu/">http://www.muss.strakonice.eu/</a>	Athletics Cycling Futsal Ninepins Cross-country Skiing Table tennis
Zběšičky	Dravci	Domov pro osoby se zdravotním postižením Zběšičky, 39843 Bernartice Tel.: +420 382 734 011 E-mail: <a href="mailto:m.spalova@domovzbesicky.cz">m.spalova@domovzbesicky.cz</a> Internet: <a href="http://www.domovzbesicky.cz/">http://www.domovzbesicky.cz/</a>	Athletics Table tennis Wandering ball Swimming Cycling Cross-country
Kaplice	ZŠ	Omlenická 436, Kaplice 38241 Tel.: +420 380 313 336 +420 604 137 611 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@zsomlenicka.cz">info@zsomlenicka.cz</a> Internet: <a href="http://www.zsomlenicka.cz">http://www.zsomlenicka.cz</a>	Athletics Skating Snow games
Písek	DUHA Denní a týdenní stacionář (Daily and weekly social welfare institutions)	Mukařovského 2309, 397 01 Písek Tel.: +420 382 215 232 E-mail: <a href="mailto:dats.logry@centrum.cz">dats.logry@centrum.cz</a> Internet: <a href="http://datsduhapisek.unas.cz/">http://datsduhapisek.unas.cz/</a>	Shooting Field hockey In-Line skating Cross-country Sledging Table tennis Swimming
Prachatice	ZŠ Zlatá stezka	Zlatá stezka 387, Prachatice 383 01 E-mail: <a href="mailto:zspvt@olny.cz">zspvt@olny.cz</a> Internet: <a href="http://www.zlatastezka.cz/">http://www.zlatastezka.cz/</a>	Athletics Gymnastics Ball games
Soběslav	Centrum denních služeb pro děti a mládež Rolníčka (Centre of daily services)	Mrázkova 700/III, 392 01 Soběslav Tel.: +420 381 52 20 54; 39 570 420 E-mail: <a href="mailto:skola@rolnicka.cz">skola@rolnicka.cz</a> Internet: <a href="http://www.rolnicka.cz/">http://www.rolnicka.cz/</a>	Sports games Boccia
Tábor	KLUB NADĚJE o.s. Asociace rodičů a přátel zdravotně postižených děti v ČR	Kpt. Nálepky 2340, 390 03 Tábor Tel.: +420 381 261 749 +420 732 767 523 E-mail: <a href="mailto:klub-nadeje@seznam.cz">klub-nadeje@seznam.cz</a> Internet: <a href="http://klub-nadeje.com/">http://klub-nadeje.com/</a>	Sports rehabilitation Tourism Hippo therapy
	Kaňka o. s.	Helsinská 2731 Tábor Tel.: +420 381 212 872 +420 776 752 242 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@kanka.info">info@kanka.info</a> Internet: <a href="http://www.kanka.info/">http://www.kanka.info/</a>	Integrated music and physical education

*Tab. 4. Range and variety of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with hearing disabilities in the region of South Bohemia – CZ (data validity 25.11.2010)*

Place	Name of Club	Contact	Offer of PA
České Budějovice	1.Centrum zdravotně postižených jižních Čech (1 <sup>st</sup> Centre for the healthy disabled in South Bohemia)	Vltavské nábreží 5/a 370 05 České Budějovice Tel.: +420 385 347 806	Athletics Fitness General gymnastics Table tennis Weightlifting
České Budějovice	MŠ, ZŠ a SŠ pro sluchově postižené, České Budějovice (Kindergarten, Primary and secondary school for hearing handicapped)	Riegrova 1, 370 01 České Budějovice Tel.: +420 387 319 203	Athletics Indoor soccer Sport games Swimming Table tennis Walking

*Tab. 5. Range and variety of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with visual disabilities in the region of South Bohemia – CZ (data validity 25.11.2010)*

Place	Name of Club	Contact	Offer of PA
České Budějovice	1.Centrum zdravotně postižených jižních Čech (1 <sup>st</sup> Centre for the healthy disabled in South Bohemia)	Vltavské nábreží 5/a 370 05 České Budějovice Tel.: 385 347 806	Athletics Fitness General gymnastics Rowing Weightlifting

thorities and lack of instructors. Even the regional counselling centre for deaf/blind people cannot give any information about sport activities on offer in the South Bohemia region.

#### Results of the Analysis and Investigative Exploration in the Region of Plovdiv – Bulgaria

The exact statistical data and the central records of the number of children with disabilities in the region of Plovdiv are not available. The statistics of the “Regional social section” includes only the number of children with disabilities attending special needs schools or integrated primary schools – expressed as a percentage of the total number of general population of children in the region.

Using the method of documents, literary and internet references analysis it was not possible to find out a full offer of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with mental disabilities in the region of Plovdiv. Except the Bulgarian Paralympic Association and the Bulgarian Mo-

vement of Special Olympiads there are no other organisations that deal with physical activities of mentally disabled people in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Paralympic Association website mentions only one sport club in the region of Plovdiv which is oriented to support people with physical disabilities. On the Bulgarian Movement of Special Olympiads websites it is not possible to find any such sport clubs in the region of Plovdiv. In such a research situation it was necessary to use the methods of Investigative Exploration and to contact directly the headmasters of schools for children with mental disabilities and day social welfare institutions.

The document analysis found out that a regional special educational centre in Plovdiv is oriented towards integration of children with disabilities in schools. From telephonic interviews it results that a vast range of physical activities for children in the region of Plovdiv will be offered in schools and day social welfare institutions in the next 5 years. By means of the same method the information presented in Tab. 6 was found. The kinds of sports organized for children



*Tab. 6. Range and variety of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with mental disabilities in the region of Plovdiv – BG (data validity 25.11.2010)*

Place	Name of Club	Contact	Physical activities
Asenovgrad	DDLRG “TaniuVoivoda” (TaniuVoivoda Education centre)	Asenovgrad, 6-tiYanuari Tel.: + 359 331 68169 + 359 889 400 686 E-mail: ddlrg_tvoivoda@abv.bg websites: no	Soccer Table tennis Wandering ball
Plovdiv	Dnevnicentar za deca s uvrejdania DCUDU (Day Centre for Children with Disabilities)	Plovdiv, ul. Maritza 142 Tel.: + 359 32503224 E-mail: dcdu_olgaskobeleva@abv.bg websites: no	

*Tab. 7. Range and variety of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with hearing disabilities in the region of Plovdiv – BG (data validity 25.11.2010)*

Place	Name of club	Contact	Offer of PA
Plovdiv	SKG – Sporten klub na gluhi (Sport club for the hearing handicapped)	ul. Pepe Toshev No. 7-A, bl. 1513 Plovdiv – 4004 Tel.: + 359 898711727 + 359 888 325 960	Indoor soccer Wandering ball Athletics Swimming Badminton Greco-Roman wrestling style
Plovdiv	SSUDUS “Prof. Dr. St. Belinov” (Prof. Dr. St. Belinov School for children with hearing disabilities)	ul. Prohlada No.1 Plovdiv 40044 Tel.: + 359 32 624126 E-mail: ssudus.plovdiv@abv.bg Internet: http://ssudus.com/	Badminton Indoor soccer Wandering ball Volley-ball

under 15 years old with mental disabilities in the region of Plovdiv are: fitness, general gymnastics, hippo therapy, indoor soccer, table tennis, swimming, walking, wandering ball.

A similar situation was found out in the case of physical activities for children with hearing disabilities (Tab. 7). It was found out that in the region of Plovdiv only one organization is specialised in physical activities for people with hearing disabilities. This club is a member of the Bulgarian Sport Association for Deaf People (“Sportnafederacia za gluhite”) and only on official national website it is possible to find information about this club in Plovdiv (but contact information is not valid), which does not have its own website. The information about a real range and variety of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with hearing disabilities was collected through a method of direct and

telephonic interviews. In this way some basic information was gained – from the Bulgarian Sport Association for People with Hearing Disability (BDSF), which unites 10 regional organisations and sport clubs in whole Bulgaria. One of them is in the region of Plovdiv, i.e. sport club for people with hearing disabilities (SKG – “Sporten klub na gluhi”). Sports which can be practiced under the auspices of the association are as follows: athletics, soccer, bowling, shooting, table tennis, badminton, volleyball, beach-volleyball, Greco-Roman wrestling. The investigation included also the associations for deaf/blind people (NASGB – “Nacionalna asociacia za sliapo-gluhite v Balgaria”) from Plovdiv and a sport club of the blind/deaf (“Obedinenensporten klub na sliapo-gluhite”). In Plovdiv city (BG) like in České Budějovice city (CZ) a very good service is provided by the special needs se-

condary school for children with hearing disabilities, which organizes physical activities for its pupils in their leisure time. This school has also its own website (SSUDUS “Prof. Dr. St. Belinov” Plovdiv – “Sredno specialno uchilishte za deca s uvredensluh”).

Our investigation found out that there are no sport clubs or organizations specialised in physical activities for children with visual disabilities in the region of Plovdiv (Fig. 1). From the interviews it resulted that there are not many children with visual disabilities there, which means that the number is not high enough to create special sport clubs for them. If the children attend special needs schools, they have a bigger chance to be included in leisure time sport activities. If they are integrated in “normal” schools, they are exempted from PE at school or they are offered corrective gymnastics. There is an urgent need to find a way to include the disabled children in the sport clubs’ activity and give them a possibility of a full personal and somatic development.

In interviews with a member of the Bulgarian Paralympic Association board, the president of “TRAKI” sport club and the president of sport club for people with hearing and visual disabilities it was mentioned that children with visual disabilities are mostly educated in boarding schools, where they have better conditions than in day schools. There are only two boarding schools in Bulgaria (Sofia and Varna) and both have very active sport clubs.

In the interview with a member of the “Regional special educational centre in Plovdiv” it was mentioned that they do not register any physical activities on offer for the disabled children and reportedly parents of children with visual disability are not very much interested in physical activities.

### Results of comparative analysis

A. No significant differences between the Region of South Bohemia – CZ and the Region of Plovdiv – BG were found out in the following determinants:

- In both compared regions “Regional Sections of Education” do not provide information about the physical activities intentionally organized for children with mental disabilities in the region.
- In both compared regions there are no central records of organizations (e.g. sport clubs) for children with disabilities or of organizations (e.g. sport clubs) which accept children with disabilities in training process.
- In both compared regions the range and variety of the physical activities intentionally organized for children with hearing disabilities is at the same level. In both regions there are one sport club and another sport club which is in special needs boarding school. In both regions the range of physical activities offered by the above

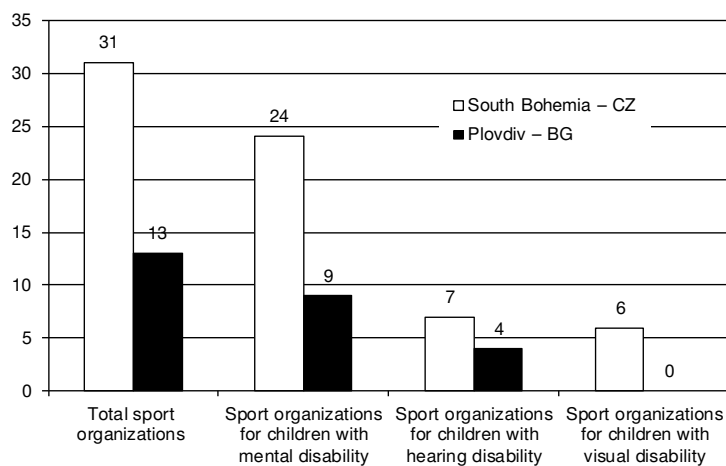


Fig. 1. Comparison of sport organizations offering physical activities for children with mental, hearing and visual disabilities

mentioned clubs is concentrated in the regional capitals, which excludes children from others parts of the region. Probably these children attend boarding schools, which means a better access to physical activities and sports, but isolation from parents.

- It can be constant that in both compared regions the range of physical activities intentionally organized for children with visual disabilities is very poor. In the region of South Bohemia there is only one organization with a small offer for children under 15 years old, whereas in the region of Plovdiv there is no special offer for children under 15 years old with visual disabilities.
- B. Significant differences between the Region of South Bohemia – CZ and the Region of Plovdiv – BG were found out in the following determinants:
- The number of organizations offered physical activities intentionally organized for children with mental disabilities in the region of South Bohemia is significantly higher than in the region of Plovdiv.
  - The variety of the offered physical activities for children with mental disabilities in the region of South Bohemia is significantly higher than in the region of Plovdiv.
  - The availability of information on the Internet is significantly higher in the region of South Bohemia than in the region of Plovdiv. 80% of organisations in Plovdiv region offering physical activities intentionally organized for children with mental, hearing or visual disabilities do not have their own websites. In the region of South Bohemia all the organisations offering physical activities intentionally organized for children with mental, hearing or visual disabilities have their own websites.

#### Hypothesis verification

Both hypothesis H1 and H2 were verified.

**H1:** In the region of South Bohemia, an

offer of physical activities intentionally organized for children with mental disability was found in 10 out of 17 districts. In the case of the region of Plovdiv such a possibility is offered only in 3 out of 18 districts. The facts correspond to a significantly higher number of special needs schools and day social welfare institutions in the region of South Bohemia compared to the region of Plovdiv. Other negative factors of the situation in the region of Plovdiv are architectonic barriers and unbalanced distribution of organizations offering physical activities for children with disabilities.

**H2:** The range of physical activities for children with mental disability in both studied regions is significantly higher than the one offered for children with hearing and visual disabilities. The variety of physical activities for children with mental disabilities in both regions is significantly richer than the one for children with hearing and visual disabilities. The following sports are mostly offered: indoor soccer, table tennis, athletics, swimming, floor-ball and cross-country race, which is more moderate for boys than for girls.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The range of physical activities for children with disabilities correlates positively with the number of special needs schools and day social welfare institutions in the regions. The range in the region of Plovdiv in 2011 was in comparison to the region of South Bohemia significantly lower, but in the next 5 years a number of day social welfare institutions should increase. Consequently, it may be presumed that the range of leisure time physical activities for disabled children will be wider. Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 and initiated integrated and inclusive processes. Sport and physical activities, a social learning determinant for children with disabilities, are developing slowly as a consequence of the economic crises in the EU countries.

Unlike in the region of Plovdiv, it is not a problem in the region of South Bohemia to get the information about the range of physical activities for children with disabili-

lities on the Internet. Also the variety is richer than in the region of Plovdiv and the sport clubs are more evenly distributed in the whole region of South Bohemia than in the region of Plovdiv.

For both regions it is very important to improve the state of availability, organization and health-social benefits of controlled movement activities in children with disabilities. We can conclude that still the reality is not adequate to the number of disabled children in the regions. In this context it is necessary to ask the question how to promote the concept of active living of disabled children through the national education and training systems, which should include training of instructors, trainers, volunteers and managers.

On the basis of an adequate movement regime it is possible to develop individual motor skills. All what is learned should be used in normal everyday life. Active lifestyle according to individual specificity and needs should include, for example, swimming, biking or relaxing so that one can experience well-being during a movement activity. It is very good if an adequate movement regime is concluded with some outdoor activities. An adequate movement activity in a combination with an outdoor activity has healing benefits in physical, mental, social and spiritual levels of health.

In an adequate movement regime it is not necessary to compare one's performance with others'. It is advisable for those who prefer non-competitive movement activity, because here everybody is special. Therefore, very good results are brought by non-competitive activities such as a bike trip, a boat trip down the river, a walk with a dog,

paragliding, snowboarding, etc. when one does not compare his/her skills and strength with others, but wants to excel more and to find fulfilment. If the adequate movement regime is practiced with friends, family members or a partner, it gets additional values like unforgettable experiences, new friendship bonds and closer relations with other generation members.

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