



ACROSS

**INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES
THROUGH SPORTS**

RESEARCH REPORT

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Structure and methodology

The survey was conducted in 3 countries (Greece, North Macedonia and Serbia) and in 3 different languages and targeted in 3 different target groups which are directly involved in the topic, namely: children aged 12-18 years and seniors over 60 years (as the two groups of individuals related to intergenerational activities), and sports clubs, institutions and other stakeholders implementing sports activities as the potential service providers. The survey was divided into 2 sub-parts: questionnaires and interviews with relevant sport stakeholders. The survey was mainly web-based in the form of multiple choice and short-text questions, but it was also distributed in a printed form to the population that does not have the knowledge, skills or access to online tools. The interviews respectively were conducted with the main representatives of YOs as well as with relevant bodies and/or sports club coaches and stakeholders on the topic in the form of a one-on-one or an open discussion.

Main aim of the survey

The statistical processing of the data includes a sample of 181 respondents – children, seniors, representatives of sports clubs/institutions/associations and people who are likely to participate in pilot actions. Based on this sample, we examined their current general involvement with sports, their interest in participating in intergenerational programs, and their perspective regarding the challenges and benefits of intergenerational sports. The effort focuses in understanding their point of view as much as possible, defining the difficulties and fears of each of the individual

samples and figuring out a way to overcome them and engage the target groups in this kind of activities. At the same time, the wants and needs of each age group were explored and will be put into the spotlight in the following phases of the project. By combining, difficulties and desires of young and older people along with the challenges faced by the sports providers, the basis for the development of relevant methodologies and guidelines will be set, in order to promote intergenerational sports and engage more people in these activities



The characteristics of the sample

The research was conducted at a triple level, i.e. in three different target groups:

a) Children from 12 to 18 years old

Our sample here consists of 93 children, out of which 7.5 % were children younger than 12 years old, 28 % were children 13-15 years old and the largest percentage involved high school children, namely young people over 16 years old, reaching the 64.5% of the sample. An equal percentage of 64.5 % of the sample were girls of these ages, another 33.3% were boys and only a minimum portion of 2.2 % preferred not to reveal their gender. These statistics are depicted in the following Chart 1:

Chart 1. The structure of the sample – Target Group 1 (children)



b) People over 60 years old

Here the sample involves 47 respondents, of which 40.4 % are aged 60-65 years old, 31.9 % are in the group of 66-70 years old and a relatively smaller number (27.7%) of people are over 71 years old. Of the 47 who participated in the survey, 70.2 % are women and 29.8 % are men.

At this point it is interesting to mention that in both broader age groups (children and seniors), the majority of the respondents willing to participate in the survey are female.

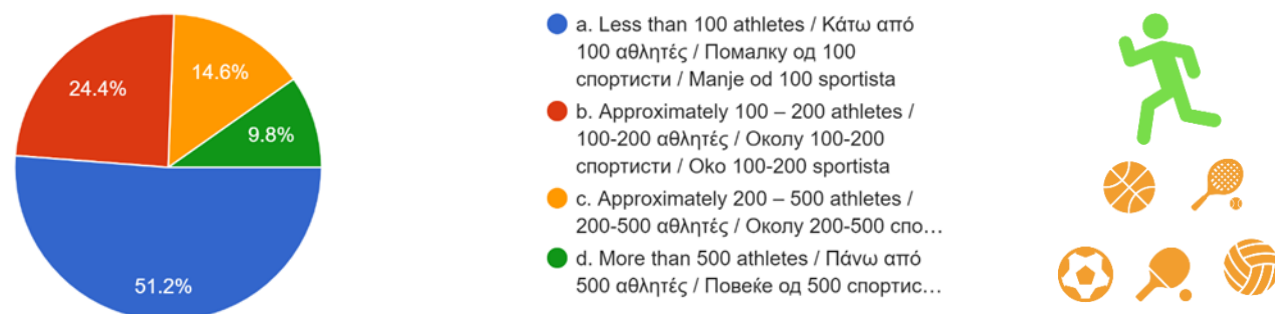
Chart 2. The structure of the sample – Target Group 2 (seniors)



c) Sports clubs and associations

As shown in the Chart 3 below, the majority of the respondents in this target group were small organizations with less than 100 athletes (51.2%), covering more than half of the total respondents. There is only a 9.8% of organizations with more than 500 athletes, and the rest of the participating sports clubs are of medium level. This leads us to the conclusion that the majority of the respondents (51.2 %) either include only 1 sport in their sports program or only a small amount of athletes in each sport.

Chart 3. The structure of the sample – Target Group 3 (organizations)



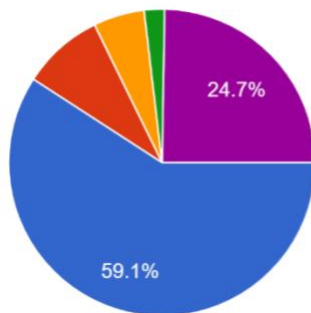
Research Results

This part of the Report presents the results of the survey and general trends in order to test the hypothesis and draw conclusions about the target groups' interest in participating in intergenerational sports programs. In more detail, the statistical data from the survey will provide important information about the difficulties and fears, needs and benefits of each age group regarding intergenerational activities. In addition, the survey explores what are the thoughts of children and seniors about intergenerational programs and what are

their wishes for better implementation of these programs. The survey provides information about the existing conditions of the clubs and institutions and whether they apply any regular programs which allow integration of the older generation. In addition, the results reveal what structural deficiencies they are currently facing and what is probably preventing them from integrating these programs in their annual plans. Finally, what kind of support could be given to associations and what elements, knowledge or skills they are lacking.

First, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of their training and the results are presented in Charts 4 and 5. A simple comparison among the diagrams shows a few differences between the responses of children and seniors. As for children, more than half of the participants (59.1%) exercise sports several times a week, and another 16.2 % at least once a month. That leave only a minimum of 25 % who appear distant from any sport activity, creating an image significantly opposite than the senior respondents. The latter stated that they rarely play any sports in their vast majority of 66.7 %.

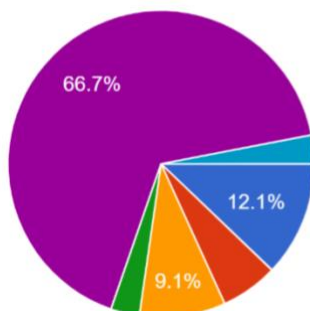
Chart 4. The training frequency of children



- a. Multiple times per week / Πολλές φορές την εβδομάδα / Ποσέке пати во...
- b. Once a week / Μία φορά την εβδομάδα / Еднаш неделно / Jednom...
- c. Multiple times per month / Πολλές φορές τον μήνα / Ποσέке пати месеч...
- d. Once a month / Μία φορά το μήνα / Еднаш месечно / Jednom mesečno
- e. Randomly / Σπάνια / Понекогаш / Ponekad



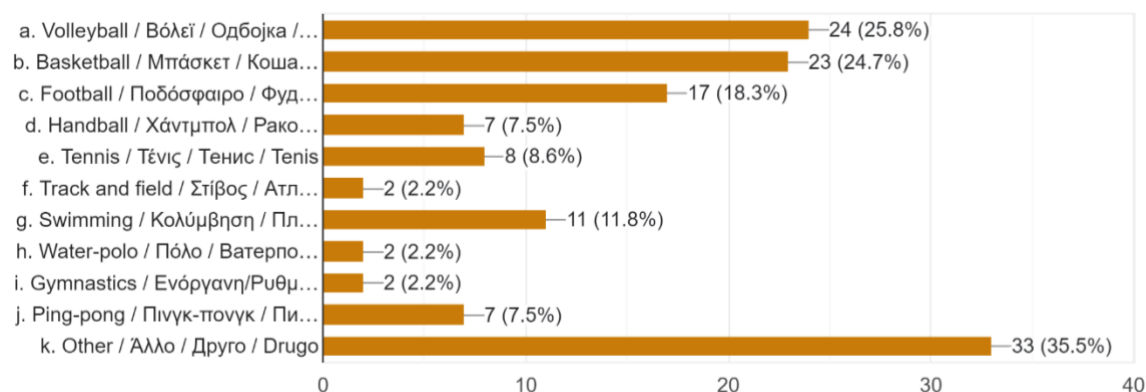
Chart 5. The training frequency of seniors



- a. Multiple times per week / Πολλές φορές την εβδομάδα / Неколку пати н...
- b. Once a week / Μία φορά την εβδομάδα / Еднаш неделно / Jednom...
- c. Multiple times per month / Πολλές φορές το μήνα / Неколку пати месечн...
- d. Once a month / Μία φορά το μήνα / Еднаш месечно / Jednom mesečno
- e. Randomly / Σπάνια / Повремено / ...
- Επιλογή 6

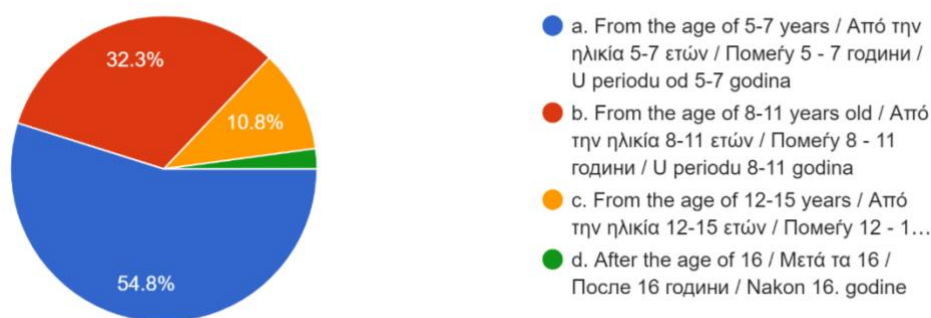
In an effort to map the current tendency of children when it comes to what kind of sports they prefer or exercise the most, the results appear to be quite surprising. In fact, according to Chart 6, the majority of the respondents, equal to 35.5 % of this sample, stated that they exercise some other sport, and not those who are acknowledged by common assumption as the most popular. However, team sports like volleyball, basketball and football follow in the next places with 25.8%, 24.7% and 18.3 % respectively, whereas individual sports seem to fall a lot behind in their preferences (i.e. track and field 2.2 %, gymnastics 2.2%, ping pong 7.5 %)

Chart 6. The most popular sports according to children



In the next 2 charts (No 7 and 8) the results indicate the average age that children normally started exercising some sport, as well as the source of influence for their involvement and selection of sport activity. The data in Chart 7 confirm that children normally start their participation in sports activities at a quite young age, with a strong 54.8 % of them stating that they did their first steps at the early age of 5-7 years, and another 32.3 % at least before the age of 11.

Chart 7. The age that children started to exercise sports



As for the second important part of their engagement in sports, namely the choice of sport, 60.2% of the children **admit to have been influenced by some person**. Out of those, 57.8% responded that they were specifically influenced by **their parents** (Chart 8).

In line with this result, in the respective question towards the seniors related to whether they have played any role in their children's selection of sports, almost all of them (95.7%) of them confirmed that they have influenced a child's decision in the past in terms of their sports motivation or choice of sport (Chart 9).

Chart 8. Influence of seniors in the selection of sport activity by children

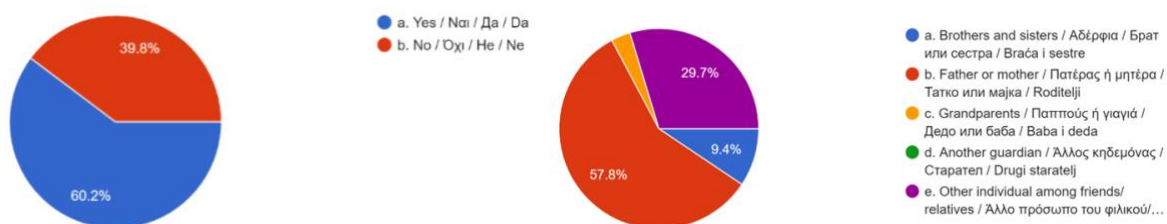
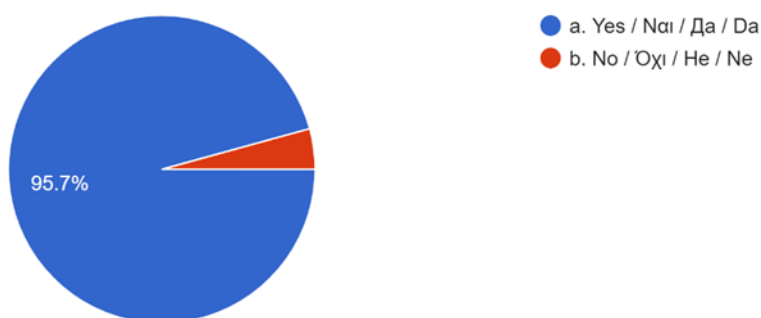


Chart 9. Seniors influencing the children's choice of sports activity



Getting more into the preferences of the 2 target groups in terms of the type of sports they prefer to watch or attend as viewers, children seem to lean towards popular sports (football - 25.8%, volleyball – 18.3%, tennis - 16.1%, basketball - 14% and handball - 9.7%). Almost the same preferences are stated by seniors, who also set football and basketball on the top of the list. In other words, the tendencies of both target groups are identical in terms of the most popular team sports, with the only exception that children also prefer to follow individual sports that have mostly developed in recent years, such as tennis (Charts 10 and 11).

Chart 10. Preferences for sports to watch – Target Group 1 (children)

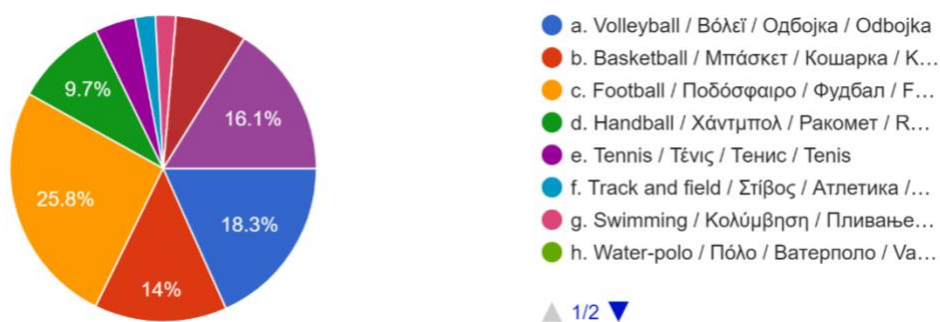
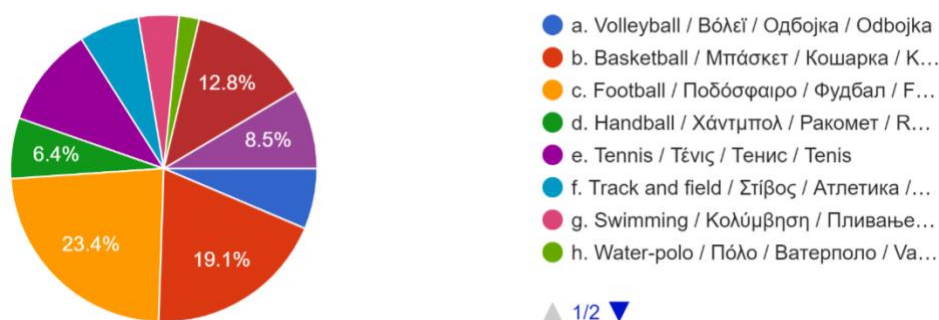
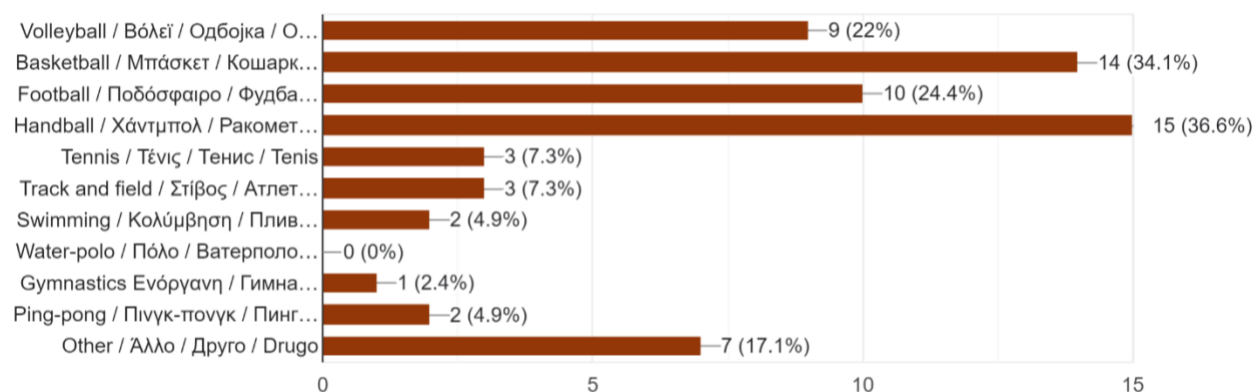


Chart 11. Preferences for sports to watch – Target Group 2 (seniors)



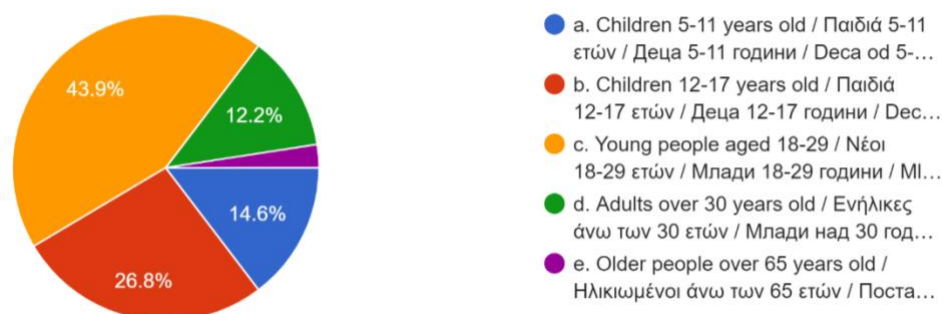
On the other hand, organizations and sports clubs were asked to determine the kind of sports they include in their regular training programs or sports activities. Most answers (48) mentioned team sports, such as basketball, handball etc. in comparison to only 10 responses that referred to individual sports (Chart 12).

Chart 12. Type of sports included in the regular program – Target Group 3 (organizations)



While exploring the level of involvement and engagement in sport activities, in Chart 13 sports organizations confirm the responses of the 2 main target groups (children and seniors), by stating that the majority of their activities refers to children and young people up to the age of 29 years (85.3%), a smaller portion refers to adults over 30 years old (12.2%) and an almost insignificant percentage of 2.5% implement any kind of activity for people over 65 years old in their regular sports programs.

Chart 13. Sport activities vs age



In the following questions, the focus was in **exploring the benefits of sports activities from the perspective of children and seniors**. Participants were asked to choose the 3 most important positive effects of sports according to their point of view. Luckily, both age groups agreed in physical and mental health and joy and entertainment as the most popular responses, confirming the rule that sports develop the body and mind in harmony, providing health to the body and physical vitality.



In more detail, according to Chart 14, the 3 most important categories in terms of the children's opinion are physical and mental health (53.8%), joy and entertainment (51.6%) and team spirit (35.5%), whereas antagonism figures only in the last place of the list. Seniors offered exactly similar responses with a small differentiation in percentages, as shown in Chart 15 (61.7%, 48.9% and 35.5% respectively), while no one chose antagonism as one of the main elements of sports.

Another common response between children and seniors in the perspective of sport, seems to be the opportunity for new friendships, however we can see that children are 2.5 times open and willing to make new friends through some sport activity (20.4%) in comparison to seniors, of which only 8.5% see this as an opportunity. Of course, this is quite expected, since the need for new friendships and socialization is stronger among children and sport is the perfect form to find both. A big difference can also be observed in the knowledge and experience they feel that the sports can offer. Children compared to seniors believe they can gain more in that regard, as sports are perceived by them as a place to educate themselves and learn how to behave in society, to cooperate, respect and discipline.

Chart 14. The most important aspects of “sports” - Target Group 1 (children)

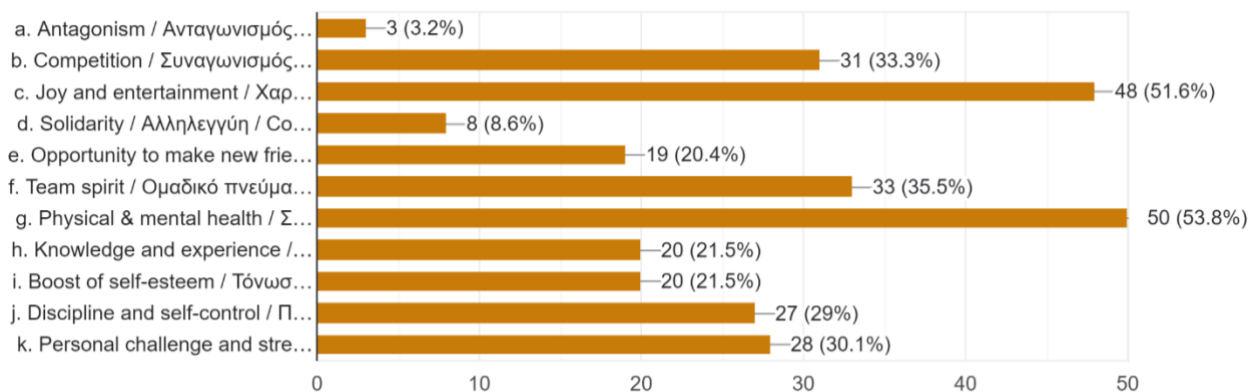
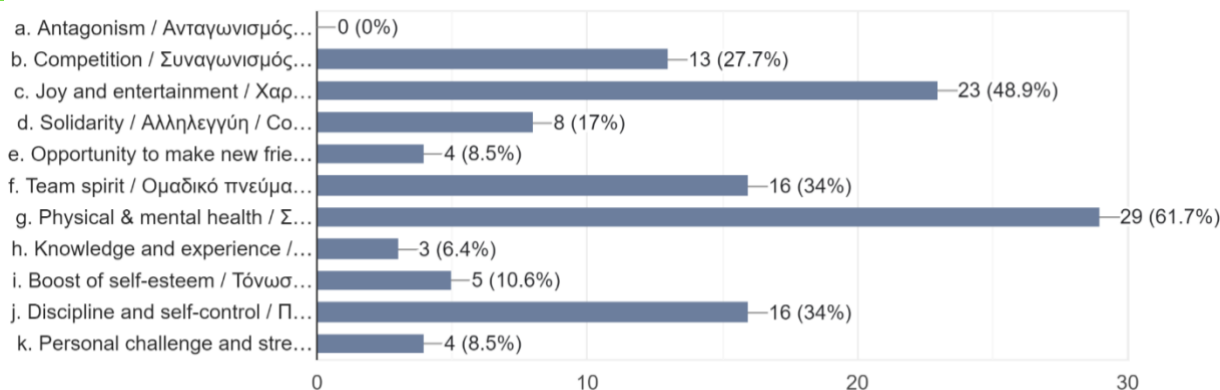


Chart 15. The most important aspect of “sports” - Target Group 2 (seniors)



In the next two charts we see that there is a strong belief among young people that they will be interested in sports even over the age of 65 years. Based on the results shown in Chart 16, we can state that most of the children believe that they will still be -at least- somehow interested in sports when they become over 65 years old, and only 1 respondent said that they would not be interested at all. This is quite interesting, as we saw in a previous Chart, 66.7% of seniors claimed that they rarely do sports anymore. This shows that although there is a belief among children that they

themselves will do sports when they reach that age, events that occur between the ages of 18 and 65 keep people away from sports. This can be also explained by the fact that playing sports is a habit and process, that if lost, it is harder to rejoin after the age of 65. However, children do not appear equally sure when it comes to the capability of seniors to exercise sports over the age of 65, as the majority of them believe that they are quite capable of practicing and only 5.4% of them are definitely sure that they are absolutely capable (Chart 17).



Chart 16. Interest of children in sports when they become over 65 years old

(1-Not interested at all, 2-not very interested, 3-...teresovan, 4-zainteresovan, 5-veoma zainteresovan)
93 responses

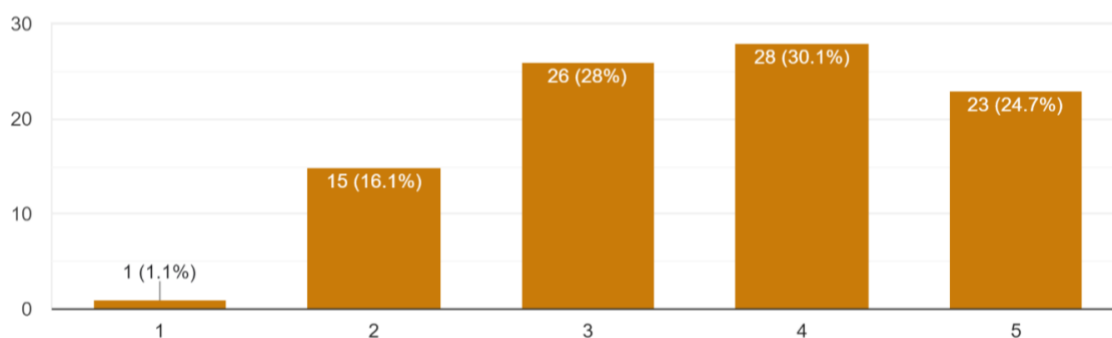
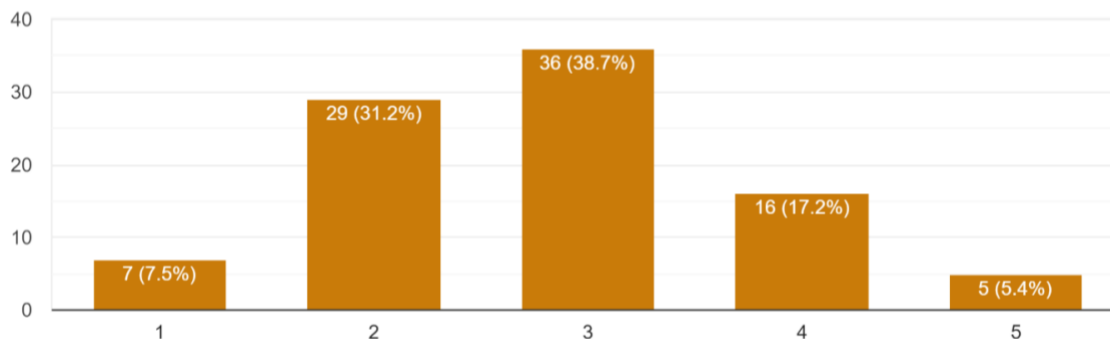


Chart 17. Capability of people over 65 years old to participating sports according to children

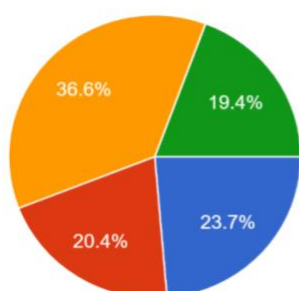
(1-not capable at all, 2-almost not capable, 3-quit...rilično sposobni, 4-sposobni, 5-potpuno sposobni)

93 responses



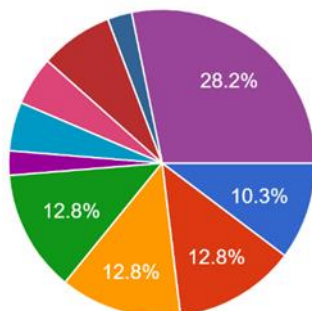
Followingly, the dominant opinion among children is that it is more likely for people over 65 to be involved in individual sports, such as tennis and athletics (36.6%) (Chart 18). This correlates with the data presented in Chart 19 on the sports that older people used to exercise, showing tennis as the most common sport for them (28.2%).

Chart 18. Categories of sports which is more likely for people over 65 according to children



- a. All sports / Σε όλα τα αθλήματα / Сите спортови / Svi sportovi
- b. Team sports (e.g. volleyball, basketball, football, etc.) / Ομαδικά αθλήματα (π.χ. βόλεϊ, μπάσκετ, ποδό...
- c. Individual sports (e.g. tennis, track and field, etc.) / Ατομικά αθλήματα (π.χ. τένις, στίβος κλπ.) / Индивидуални сп...
- d. No sports / Σε κανένα άθλημα / Никаков спорт / Nikakvi sportovi

Chart 19. Categories of sports in which seniors have practiced



- a. Volleyball / Βόλεϊ / Одбојка / Odbojka
- b. Basketball / Μπάσκετ / Кошарка / K...
- c. Football / Ποδόσφαιρο / Футбал / F...
- d. Handball / Χάντμπολ / Ракомет / R...
- e. Tennis / Τένις / Тенис / Tenis
- f. Track and field / Στίβος / Атлетика / ...
- g. Swimming / Κολύμβηση / Пливање...
- h. Water-polo / Πόλο / Ватерполо / Va...

▲ 1/2 ▼

Followingly, the largest percentage of children (79.6%) stated that they have never participated in any sports activities with people over 65 years (Chart 20). Nevertheless, when asked about their interest in participating to sports activities with people over 65 years if they had the opportunity, they appear quite cautious, as 54.8% of them answered that "maybe" they would. However, their tendency for a join sport activity is positive, since the second most popular answer is "yes" with 32.3% (Chart 21).



On the other hand, when seniors were asked whether they would participate in sports activities with young people, stated that they would like to participate in their vast majority - 76.6%. In fact, there was no negative response and only a small percentage showed some reservations about intergenerational programs. This is in absolute line with the opinion of children who also expressed some reservation (Chart 24), and can be perceived as a very encouraging fact for future intergenerational sports activities.

Chart 20. Joint sport activities for children and people over 65 years – Target Group 1 (children)

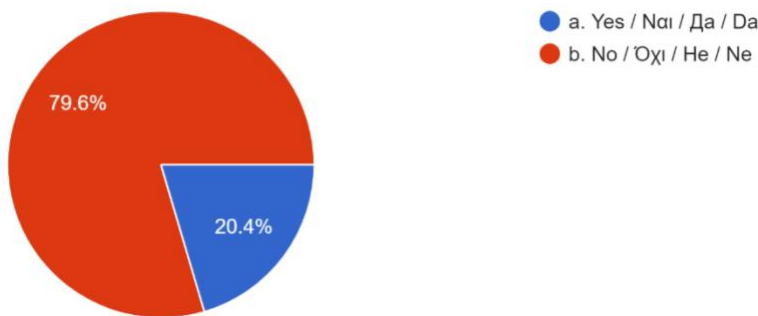


Chart 21. Interest to participate in intergenerational sport activities – Target Group 1 (children)

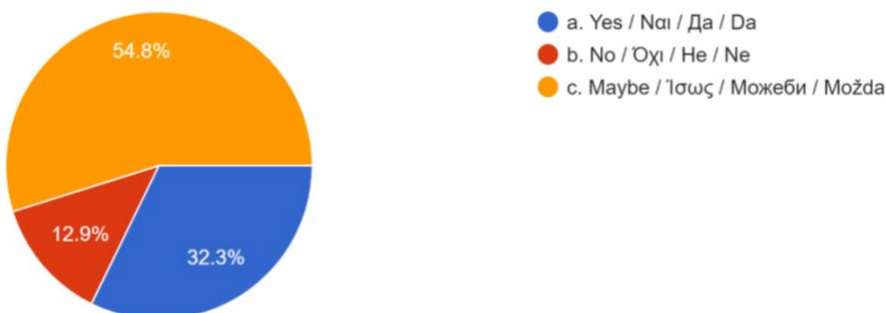
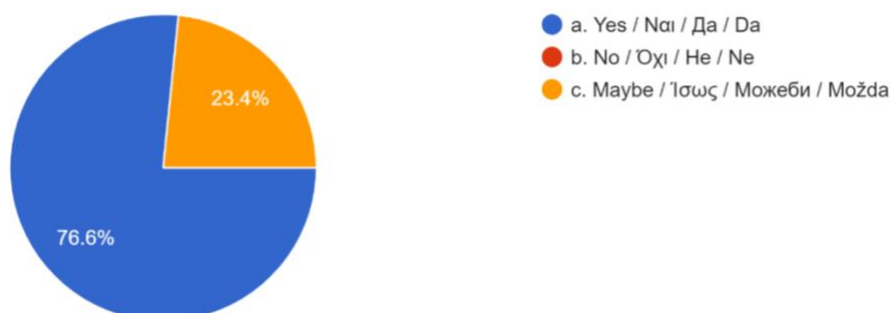


Chart 22. Joint sport activity for children and people over 65 – Target Group 2 (seniors)



On the other hand, organizations were asked if they have ever organized any sports activity involving different age groups (Chart 23). According to the responses, there is a high percentage (46.3%) who claimed to have organized such activities more than once. Overall, although we see that 70.7% have tried joint sports activities, which is quite encouraging, there is obvious room for improvement as a, not insignificant percentage (29.3%), have never implemented any joint sports activities for seniors and children.

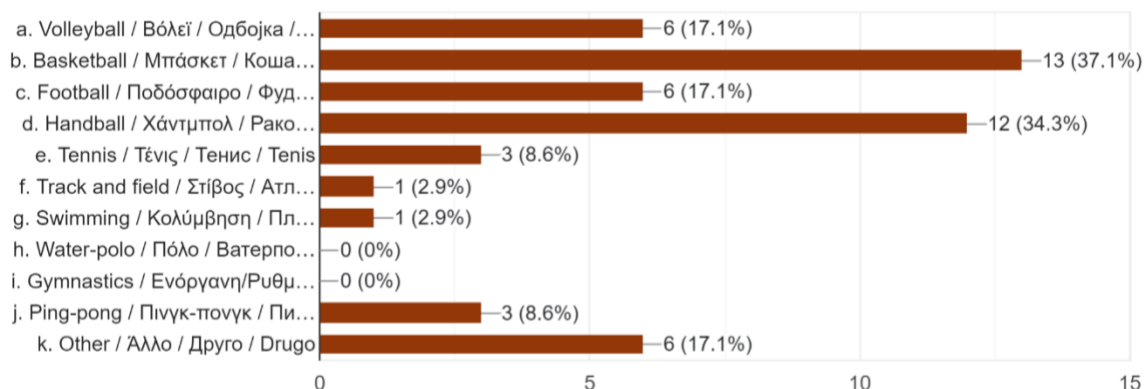
Chart 23. Joint sport activity for children and people over 65 – Target Group 3 (organizations)



In addition, the most common sports activities for organizations with engagement of both children and people over 65 are mainly team sports, such as basketball (37.1%) and handball (34.3%) (Chart 24). Based on the preferences seen previously in this Report regarding the

sports that children and seniors prefer to play, the results appear to match to a large extent, although more effort could be set on volleyball and football than in handball, in which children did not show the same inclination as in other team sports (Chart 8).

Chart 24. Joint sport activities for children and people over 65 organized – Target Group 3 (organizations)



Regarding the effort to bridge the gap between different age groups and how much intergenerational programs can contribute to this process, 40.4% of the seniors believe that such initiatives can be really helpful, and all of them appear to have at least somehow positive opinion (Chart 25). On the contrary, more reservations arise by organizations, who share the opinion that it can help but not to the maximum extent (Chart 26). However, none of those 2 target groups believe that there will be no benefit whatsoever (0% in both cases).

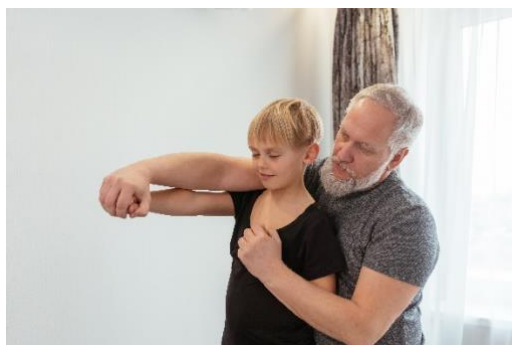


Chart 25. Intergeneration sports as a way to bridge the age gap – Target Group 2 (seniors)

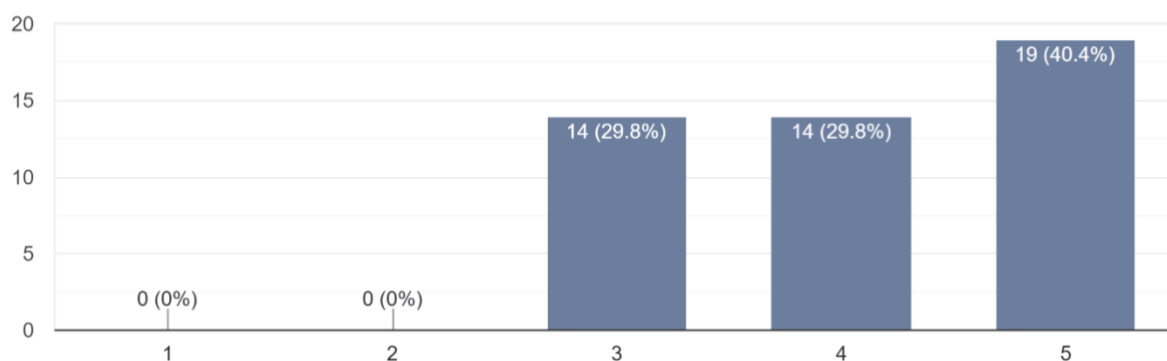
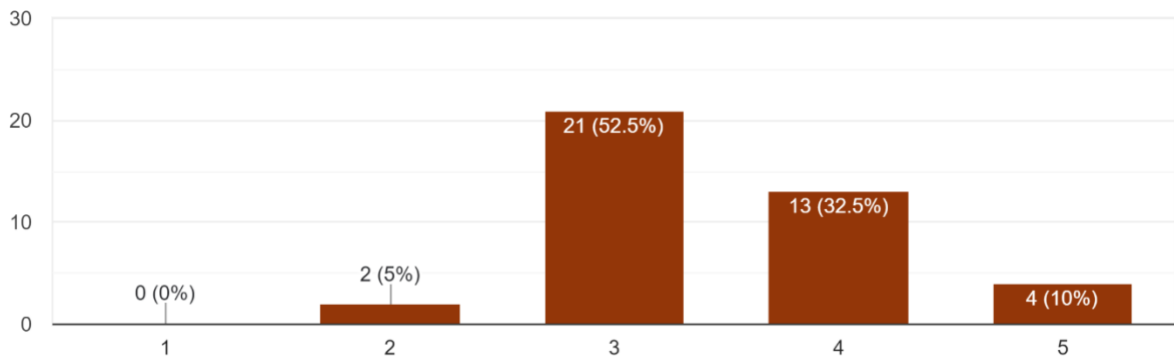


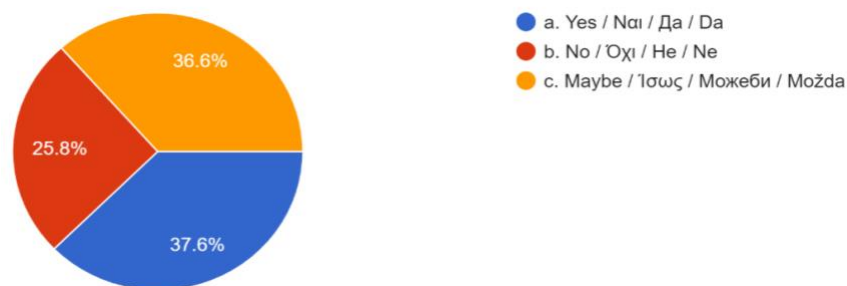
Chart 26. Intergeneration sports as a way to bridge the age gap – Target Group 3 (organizations)



Children were also asked to share their opinion on the competition between generations, and more specifically whether they believe that seniors could bear a child in a game/competition. In Chart 27 we see that children are divided among opposite answers with 37.6% of them responding positively and 25.8% negatively, while an almost equal percentage of 36.6% are not

sure about the result. Anyway, children from their blast are still quite competitive and are looking for more of a challenge and a mild form of competition. Therefore, the highest percentage overall (74.3%) think it is at least likely that they would lose to an older player, which would definitely give them extra motivation and appetite than if not having any interest in winning.

Chart 27. How possible is for people over 65 years old to win over a child in sports – Target Group 1 (children)



The results presented in Charts 28, 29 and 30 show a common line of children, older people and young people when it comes to the difficulties that older people may experience when participating in sports. A particularly important difficulty for seniors involved in sports, as highlighted by all survey participants, is related to physical hardships. Indeed, it requires more preparation to join any form of sport as well as rehabilitation time in any training facility. Similarly, the second most popular challenge is the fear of injury and hard rehabilitation, as spotted by all respondents. Next, responses varied with

smaller percentages in all possible responses. However, we can easily understand that their fear of failure by the seniors is not considered an important aspect, according to the participants. Based on the difficulties that certainly exist and are faced by seniors, we understand that pilot actions and intergenerational programs ought to take the form of gentle sports and minimize the possibility of injury, in order to limit the respective fear as expressed by those target groups. This can easily be achieved with proper information and preparation of sports clubs.

Chart 28. Main difficulties that people over 65 might face when participating in sports – Target Group 1 (children)

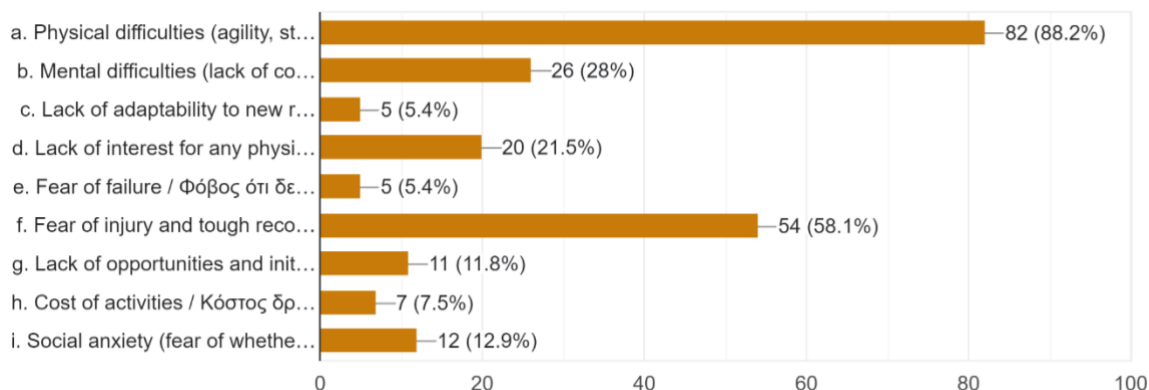


Chart 29. Main difficulties that people over 65 might face when participating in sports – Target Group 2 (seniors)

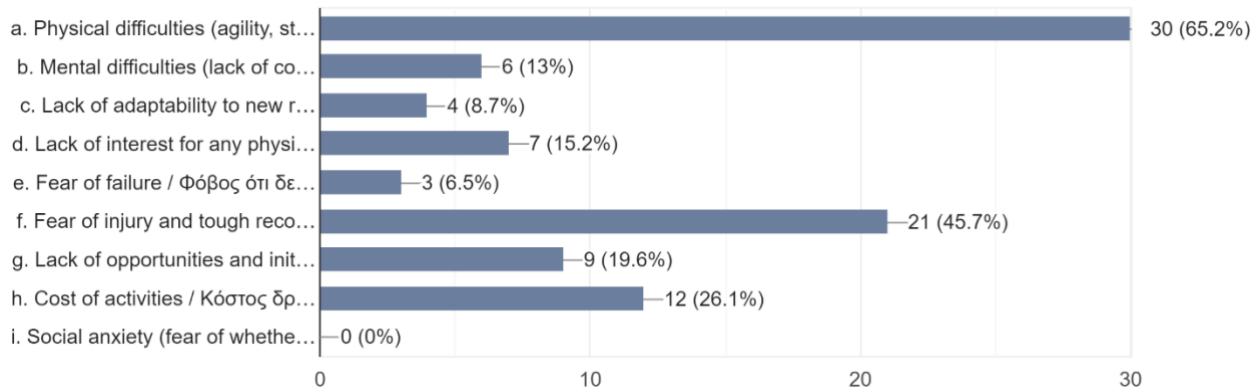
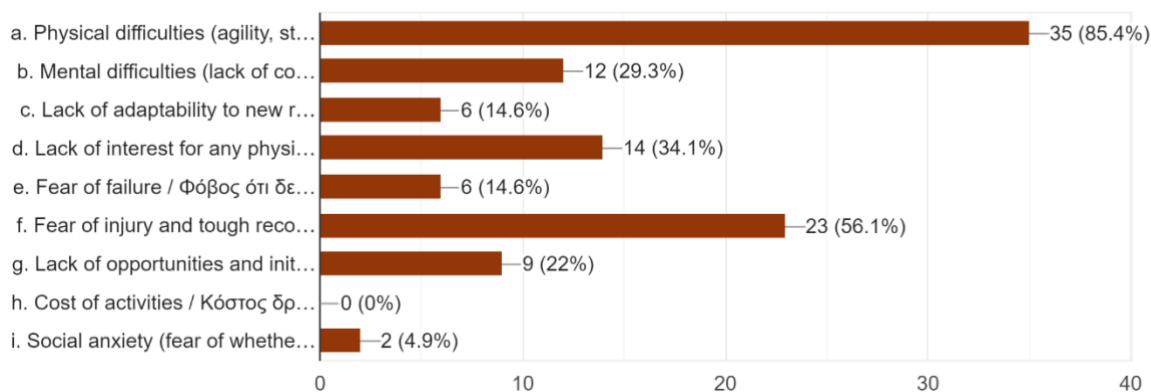


Chart 30. Main difficulties that people over 65 might face when participating in sports – Target Group 3 (organizations)



Followingly, Chart 31 presents the main benefits of participating in intergenerational sport activities according to children. Those are health enhancement (52.7%), the feeling of joy and entertainment (46.2%), creating memories and stimulation (44.1%). Seniors appear to ally with this perspective, as they also agree with physical and mental health (68.1%) and the feeling of joy and entertainment (46.8%). It is interesting to mention that this target group (seniors), pay special attention to the social aspect of intergenerational sports, as the next 2 most popular responses are the feeling of socialization (44.7%) -where they are direct beneficiaries- and the feeling of participation and contribution to society (29.8%) -where they serve as indirect beneficiaries. Lastly, organizations appear to have similar orientation.

Chart 31. Main benefits in taking part in intergenerational activities – Target Group 1 (children)

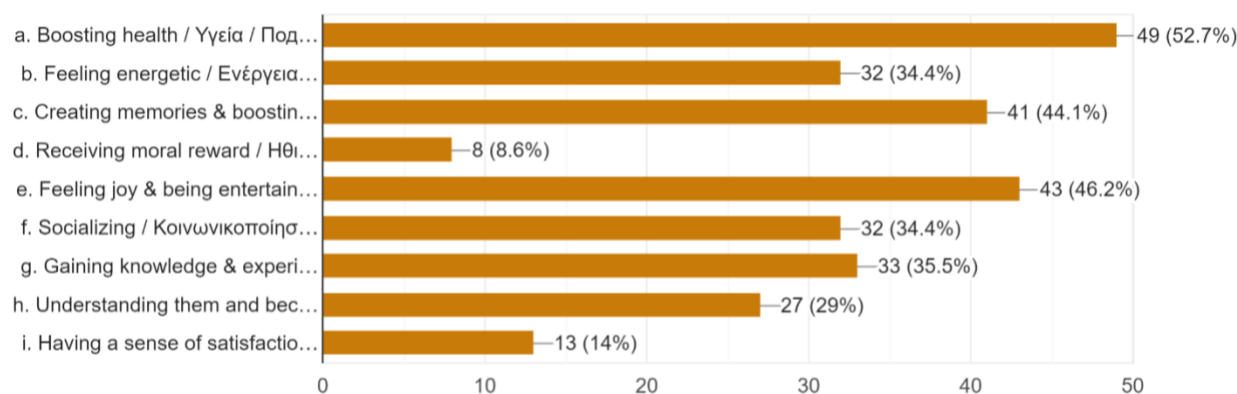


Chart 32. Main benefits in taking part in intergenerational activities – Target Group 2 (seniors)

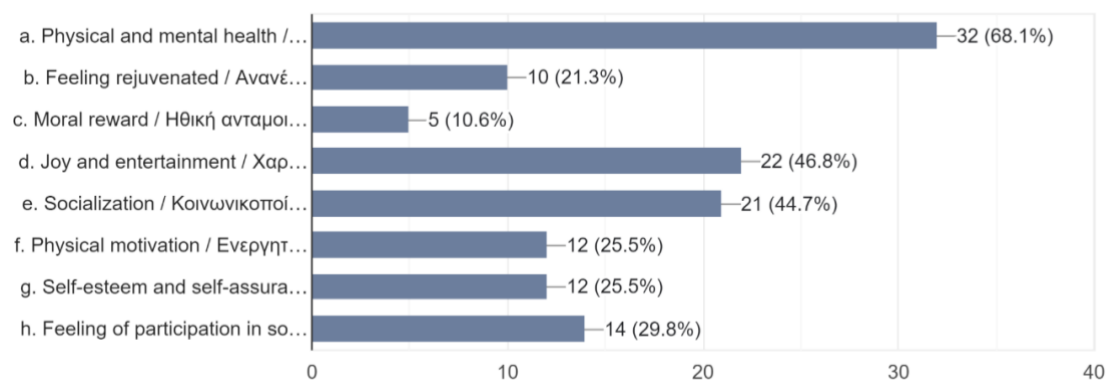
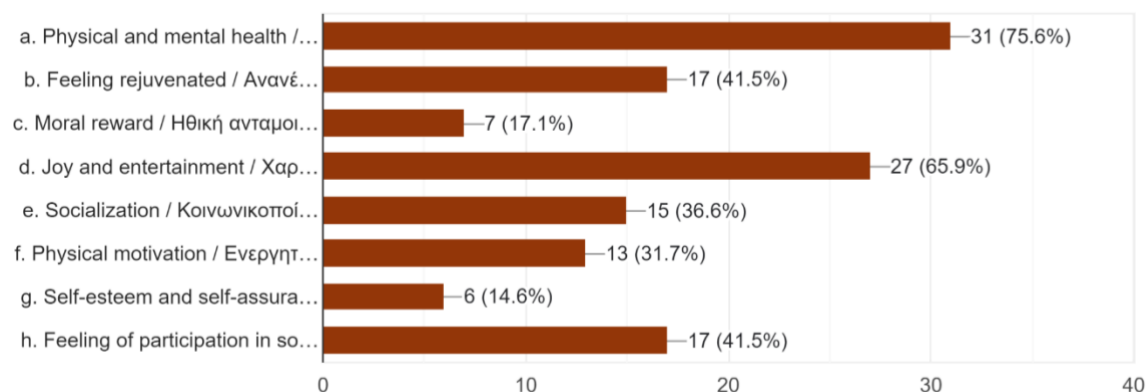


Chart 33. Main benefits in taking part in intergenerational activities for people over 65 – Target Group 3 (organizations)



Furthermore, as shown in Chart 34, the main difficulties faced by organizations in including intergenerational activities in their regular program are lack of interest from people over 65 years old (51.2%), financial difficulties (43.9%) and lack of sports facilities and equipment (36.6%). Regarding the benefits received by organizations by including intergenerational activities, most of them believe that it can innovate their profile compared to other clubs and organizations (63.4%). They also believe that it will attract more people (61%) and that it offers an integrated and well-rounded approach to sport (53.7%). Again, in this area, the difficulties and advantages of organizations lead to the conclusion that by enhancing their strong points and exploiting them can help in overcoming any difficulties and beyond – i.e. intergenerational programs can attract people through developing an innovative profile of the organization over some other, which will consequently increase the interest of more people to become active in that specific organization, and therefore the latter will acquire better financial capacities (Chart 35).

Chart 34. Main challenges of including intergenerational activities in their programming – Target Group 3 (organizations)

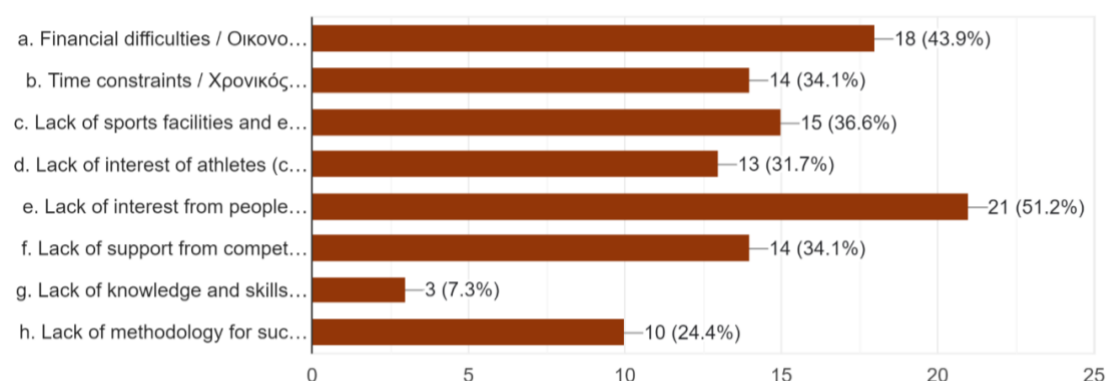
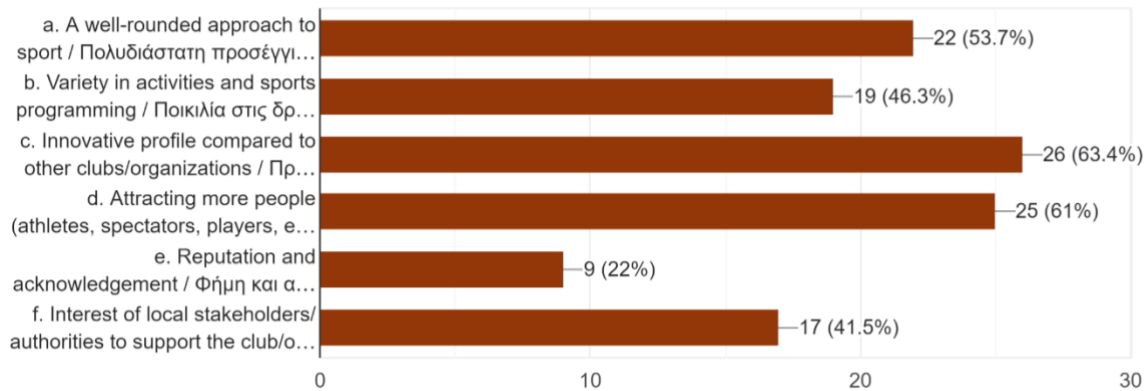


Chart 35. Main benefits of including intergenerational activities in their programming – Target Group 3 (organizations)



Building tolerance and respect can become a beneficial area for children through intergenerational sports according to seniors (34%), as also strongly confirmed by organizations (51.2%). Both of them also agree that intergenerational programs can help children build a sense of responsibility (31.9% and 46.3% respectively) and to get acquainted with different age groups (27.7% and 43.9% respectively), which will help them to further integrate into society (Charts 36 and 37).

Chart 36. Areas that intergeneration programs could help children – Target Group 2 (elderly)

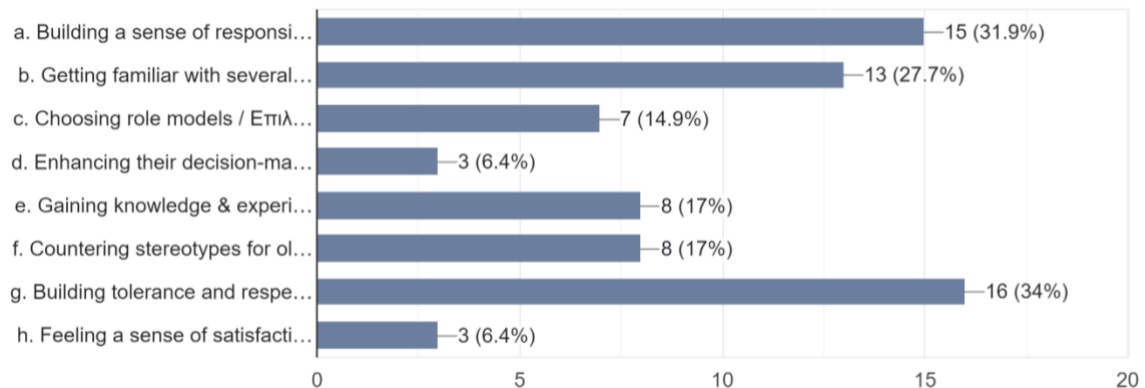
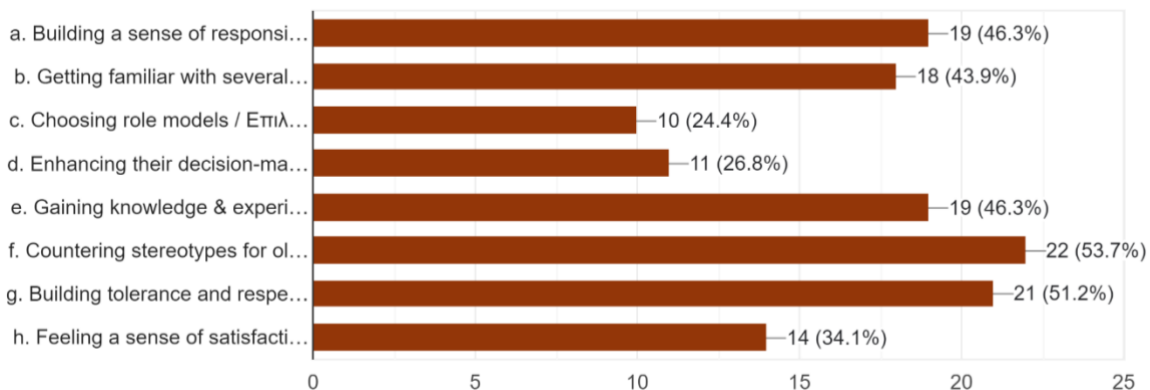


Chart 37. Areas that intergeneration programs could help children – Target Group 3 (organizations)



Interviews Analysis

As mentioned in the introductory section of this Report, apart from the questionnaires distributed to children, seniors and organizations, individual interviews and focus groups were conducted in the 3 project countries (Greece, North Macedonia and Serbia) with sports clubs, people involved in them as well as competent bodies, associations and centers for the seniors. In total, 51 interviews were conducted, of which 31 were conducted with competent sports clubs, 6 with other sports related clubs and 13 with competent organizations and bodies of associations.

The interviews' thematic areas were similar to those addressed in the questionnaires, and aimed at exploring in depth the details of the topic as they are noticed in practice in real life. After analyzing the information collected in this phase of the research, the following facts were acknowledged:

- ✓ It appeared that almost none of the interviewees have ever organized or co-organized any intergenerational sport activities.
- ✓ Concerning, the challenges and obstacles that may arise in intergenerational programs the most common ones where:
 - ✓ children and seniors are usually reluctant to participate in joint activities
 - ✓ older people generally do not engage in sports activities and this is one of the biggest challenges
 - ✓ there is a serious lack of facilities/places/equipment to exercise intergenerational activities
 - ✓ there is no concrete methodology for implementing such activities

Nevertheless, almost all participants mentioned a great variety of advantages and benefits of intergenerational activities as part of their future sports program, with the most important of them to be:

- ✓ Good atmosphere among athletes
- ✓ Engagement and interaction with parents and children
- ✓ Great promotion opportunity for the organization
- ✓ Attracting new sponsors who are interested in supporting these initiatives
- ✓ Personal development for youth and promotion of a healthy lifestyle for seniors
- ✓ Strengthening the self-esteem of seniors and making them feel active again

The general conclusion by analyzing these interviews is that there is a great desire for intergenerational sports opportunities expressed by all interested parties. It appears that with the right support and the required expertise, the majority of organizations, institutions and associations related to sports will be willing to establish joint sports activities between children and seniors.

Conclusions upon results

Taking into account the questionnaires and the responses collected by all target groups, we come to the conclusion that currently there is not a satisfactory level of intergenerational sports opportunities implemented by the relevant institutions. Although most of them have organized more than 1 time some joint sports activity, difficulties still dominate in these organizations. A few particularly important challenges for seniors to participate in intergenerational sports activities, as pointed out by the respondents, are:

- ✓ Physical difficulties (agility, stamina, strength etc.)
- ✓ Fear of injury and tough recovery
- ✓ Mental difficulties (lack of coordination, lack of concentration etc.)
- ✓ High cost of activities
- ✓ Lack of seniors' interest for any physical activity
- ✓ Lack of methodologies and concrete guidelines

On the other hand, the main advantages and benefits of these activities as pointed out by the respondents are:

- ✓ Physical and mental health
- ✓ Feeling joy and being entertained
- ✓ Creating memories and boosting imagination
- ✓ Socializing
- ✓ Feeling rejuvenated (*for seniors*)

Finally, it needs to be highlighted that all target groups showed a very positive attitude towards intergenerational sports activities and great enthusiasm and motivation to learn more about the subject. They appeared eager to live this experience and contribute in any possible role. All of them recognized the importance of these activities for all target groups involved and claimed ready and willing to receive further knowledge and training on how this can all be implemented.

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