

School of Human Kinetics
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Ottawa

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Athletes' voice in the Olympic movement – How can the Athletes' Commissions of Europe be strengthened to ensure the athletes' voice in the decision-making?

Heidi Pekkola

Tutored by Professor Thierry Zintz
Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium)



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1. Introduction and motivation

“The athletes are at the heart of the Olympic Movement” (IOC, 2021). This is the first sentence of the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) website on athletes. This statement is also often repeated in speeches by the leaders of the Olympic movement and promoted in several key documents of the IOC, such as in the Olympic Agenda 2020 (International Olympic Committee, 2014). Also the Olympic Agenda 2020+5 continues with “Reinforce athletes’ rights and responsibilities” being one of its main recommendations (International Olympic Committee, 2021).

Recent years, the discussion on the athletes’ voice and representation in sport and within the Olympic movement has got more active, and the athletes themselves have asked for a better involvement and a bigger say in the decision-making. As Chappelet (2020) wrote, the answer of the Olympic movement to this demand has been traditionally to create Athletes’ Commissions inside the organisations (Chappelet, 2020). The idea is that these Athletes’ Commissions represent the voice of athletes in the decision-making tables of the sport governing bodies.

Last years, there has been some critics towards the independence of the Athletes’ Commissions and on their power to represent the athletes’ interests, as they operate inside the sport organisations. In Germany, this has led to the establishment of “Athleten Deutschland”, as its own legal entity outside the German Olympic Sports Confederation. This critic can be seen fair in that sense that even though the Athletes’ Commissions as such have been a good step for the athletes’ representation, it does not automatically bring them power, capacities, skills and resources to represent the athletes’ interest in the sport governing bodies. Thus, it would be important to look into the question that how can they be strengthened.

Contrary to the Athletes’ Commissions, which are mainly established inside the sport governing bodies, recent years have seen also the rise of different player and trade unions of athletes, which operate outside the sport governing bodies as their own entities. Their establishment and development have been especially linked with the employment conditions and collective bargaining power of professional players, who are employed by clubs, and has mainly concerned the biggest team sports. Even though the interests of the player unions may be similar in several topics with the Olympic athletes, there are also differences, one of them being the fact that many Olympic athletes are not employed by clubs or sport organisations. As the interests of the professional players and Olympic athletes are many times different, and as the player and trade unions are more active in the sport political discussions at the European level, for instance at the platforms of the European Union and the Council of Europe, it would be important to strengthen the Athletes’ Commissions in Europe, that they would have more power, skills, capacities and resources to advocate for their interest in these sport political discussions.

As a conclusion, the motivation of this MEMOS project is to look into how the Athletes' Commissions can be strengthened in Europe, so that first of all, the athletes would have a greater say in the decision-making of the Olympic movement, and secondly also that they would be better equipped to contribute to the sport political discussions at the EU and Council of Europe and thus could better represent the interest of the Olympic athletes. My personal motivation to work on this topic links with my position as Deputy Director of the EU Office of European Olympic Committees (EOC EU Office). Our main task is to participate in the sport political discussions at the European Union and also in the Council of Europe. In these platforms we see, how usually the trade unions are invited as the voice of athletes, instead of the Athletes' Commissions. In addition, we also work with the Athletes' Commissions, for instance by hosting athletes' seminars as well as by supporting them in their preparations to EU sport political discussions. This experience has shown that the Athletes' Commissions would need to be strengthened by skills and capacities to fully participate in these political discussions.

As a disclaimer, I would like to highlight that the data and recommendations presented in this project are not my personal, neither my employer's opinions, but reflection of the collected data and discussions. I'm not presenting the recommendations from my professional position, but as an independent student of MEMOS. It is also known, that some of the recommendations may not be possible to be implemented now, but are presented for the future.

2. Research question

The topic of this MEMOS project is "Athletes' voice in the Olympic movement – How can the Athletes' Commissions of Europe be strengthened to ensure the athletes' voice in the decision-making?" With this project, the aim is to contribute to the discussion on the athletes' voice and involvement in the decision-making of the Olympic movement but also in the external sport political discussions in Europe, and how the Athletes' Commissions can be strengthened. This project will look into this topic through the current situation in the European Olympic Committees' (EOC) Athletes' Commission and in the Athletes' Commissions of the European National Olympic Committees (ENOCs), as well as compare the current situation to the expectations and recommendations on the role of athletes' representation and athletes' voice in the Olympic movement in Europe.

The research question will be looked at through the following sub-questions:

- What are the expectations and recommendations on the role of athletes' representation and Athletes' Commissions in the Olympic movement?
- What is the current situation of the Athletes' Commissions?
- How can the Athletes' Commissions be strengthened?

Literature review with an overview of the relevant academic and practical documentation on the topic gives a theoretical starting point to look into these questions, and especially to the first sub-question.

3. Literature review

In this literature review, an outline of articles, documents and theories (concepts) is given by focusing on the ones that are relevant for the research question, as it is impossible to give an overview of all the discussions related to the athletes' representation and voice in sport. As Chappelet (2020) wrote, the last two decades the athletes have asked for a greater say in the national and international federations, especially with regards to the Olympic Games and other major sport events (Chappelet, 2020). Furthermore, he explains that the answer of the Olympic movement regarding the demand of athletes to have a better say, has been the creation of the Athletes' Commissions (Chappelet, 2020). IOC itself created its Athletes' Commission already in 1981 and that time it was given a consultative role and its members were appointed by the IOC President (Wassong, 2021). Considering the research question, this literature review is focusing around the question of athletes' representation, voice and power in the Olympic movement and especially in the role of the Athletes' Commissions.

Regarding the representation of athletes, several academics have used the models of democracy as a theoretical framework, especially the deliberative democracy. These will be briefly discussed in chapter 3.1. After that, the review will focus on the existing guiding documents of the Olympic movement, which address the athletes' representation and the work of the Athletes' Commissions. The last subchapter will focus on the critical discussion around the Athletes' Commissions as representatives of athletes' voice.

These areas of the literature review acted also as a basis for the data collection survey of this project. The questionnaire sent to the European Olympic Committees' Athletes' Commission and the Athletes' Commissions of the European National Olympic Committees was based on the issues identified in the literature review.

3.1. Models of democracy

Many academics have used the models of democracy as theoretical frameworks for athletes' representation. As Geeraert (2021) writes it is commonly agreed, that democracy means rule by the people, more specifically that power derives *'from the people, belongs to the people, and must be used for the people'*, as he follows Della Porta. Furthermore, (Geeraert, 2021) claimed that *"the evolving conceptualisation of demos shows that the three models of democracy can be meaningfully applied to assess the position of athletes in sport governance"*, even though they provide only an ideal framework against which the actual arrangements can be assessed. With these three models of democracy he refers to representative, participatory and deliberative democracy. He defines demos as the actors that are addressees of a particular decision, policy or rule and thus states that athletes are an important group of addressees for sport governing bodies, since sport governing bodies make many decisions, policies or rules that target the athletes. (Geeraert, 2021)

Representative democracy refers to the fact that even though rule by the people is the ideal, the direct participation of all people is not realistic and is even undesirable. Thus, the power should be delegated to the agents as representatives of the constituents. This means that the accountability of these political agents towards their constituents is a key factor and this is guaranteed with free, fair and frequent elections. (Geeraert, 2021) Athletes' Commissions, which are elected by their peers, are an example of representative democracy. Participatory democracy is seen as a reaction to the limitations of representative democracy as it claims that elections do not give people enough power and leaves them outside of many important themes and discussions (Geeraert, 2021). Furthermore, it is seen that participation by all people prevents the abuse of power and makes the decisions more legitimate and informed and thus it is important that multiple channels for participation are created (Geeraert, 2021). Athletes' forums and different consultations can be seen as examples of participatory democracy.

Kihl and Vicki (2020) write that in a deliberative democracy the representatives generate power through deliberations by expressing their constituents' interests and participating actively in discussions, justifying their decisions and making mutually acceptable conclusions. They have done research regarding the student-athletes' representation in the USA by using the deliberative democracy as a conceptual framework. (Kihl & Vicki, 2020) Geeraert (2021) describes deliberation as a social process in which the actors are open to change their views and preferences during the interactions. Furthermore, he writes that the idea of deliberative democracy is to encourage the constituents to actively form opinions and not only to express them. (Geeraert, 2021) This links with the need to educate the constituents by providing them information that they understand issues and can better participate in the discussions and decision-making (Thibault, Kihl, & Babiak, 2010). Deliberative democracy as a theory can be seen in connection to the athletes' voice and representation in the Olympic movement and the work of Athletes' Commissions, as well as the athletes' involvement in the different decision-making bodies, such as different Commissions of the IOC, EOC or National Olympic Committees. It links with the idea that the representatives of the athletes' actively discuss with their peers (=constituents) to have justified positions to represent the athletes' voice and consequently then actively bring these positions to the tables of different cabinets of the Olympic movement. Education and sharing information is important that the athletes can properly represent their interests.

Based on their research on addressing issues with athletes' involvement in organizational policy with deliberative democracy as a framework, Thibault *et al.* (2010) identified several elements, and made recommendations, regarding the 1) representation and accountability; 2) type of representation; 3) potential for impact and 4) process challenges on athletes' representation in sport governing bodies. With regard to the representation and accountability, they recommend that the athlete representatives should be mainly elected as it guarantees their accountability. Regarding the type of representation, they point out that there is no single voice of athletes as their opinions, experiences and priorities vary and thus a range of viewpoints need to be ensured. In their view, the best representation of these different interests can be achieved not by mirroring themselves, but by selecting representatives who share their views and who have the capability to actively advocate for

their cause. Furthermore, they suggest that motivated and interested former athletes, more precisely recently retired, could be a solution, as they have more time compared to the still active ones. Regarding the potential impact of athletes' representation, Thibault *et al.* (2010) raise the issue that do the athletes' have enough capacity and power to influence policies, as athletes' representatives many times have only one vote within a decision-making body. Thus, to enhance the athletes' impact on decision-making, they recommend sport organisations to adopt further mechanisms for athletes to voice their concerns. Consultations and athletes' forums could be seen as examples of this. With regards to the process challenges Thibault *et al.* (2010) raised the question that do the athletes have necessary skills and resources to truly impact the decision-making. To overcome this challenge, they recommend that the sport governing bodies should provide the Athletes' Commissions resources and also consider that the athletes' who are representing their peers, should have interest, skills and resources, i.e. time. (Thibault, Kihl, & Babiak, 2010)

These recommendations were taken into account in the survey questionnaire of this project and many similar recommendations are also listed in the guiding documents of the Olympic movement on athletes' representation, which are explained in the next subchapter.

3.2. Overview of the existing guiding documents of the Olympic movement on athletes' representation and work of the Athletes' Commissions

As the focus of this project is to look into to research question through the current and wished situation of the Athletes' Commissions in Europe, it is important to have a look that what in the world of sport governance the Athletes' Commission actually means, and what are the expectations and recommendations on their role. This will be done with an overview on the existing documentation of the Olympic movement regarding the representation of athletes and the work of the Athletes' Commission. Even though the focus of this project is to look at the situation of athletes' representation in Europe, the overview focuses on the IOC documents, since the European Olympic Committees or its Athletes' Commission do not have a specific documents or strategies on the issue, but they follow the IOC guidance.

First of all, the demand for the NOCs to include an elected athletes' representative in their executive body and general assemblies is included in the Olympic Charter, with the recent update that was done in the Tokyo Olympic Games in August 2021. In addition, the same article 28 of the Olympic Charter also states: *"Those representatives must be elected by the athletes' commission of the NOC, which must be established by the NOC in accordance with the guidelines issued by the IOC Executive Board. Those representatives, or at least one of them, must have participated in the Olympic Games and, in this case, must retire from their posts at the latest by the end of the third Olympiad after the last Olympic Games in which they took part."* (International Olympic Committee, 2021)

In addition, both recent strategic documents of the IOC, i.e. Olympic Agenda 2020 and Olympic Agenda 2020+5 have highlighted the role of athletes at the heart of the Olympic Games and the need to reinforce athletes' rights and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the IOC Athletes' Commission has a strategy that was adopted in 2017. The strategy identifies two main responsibilities towards both the athletes and the Olympic movement. Towards the athletes these are: 1) empower athlete participation in Olympic movement decision-making processes (empowering athletes) and 2) support athlete development in their sporting and non-sporting careers (equipping the athletes with tools), whereas its main responsibilities towards the Olympic movement are 1) promote athlete involvement in decision-making across the Olympic movement (advocating for the benefits and importance for athletes' involvement in the decision-making) and 2) ensure athlete representation in Olympic movement decision-making (increasing awareness on the athletes' viewpoints). (International Olympic Committee, 2017)

Besides the constitutional and strategic documents, on a more practical level, the IOC Athletes' Commission has developed a "Guide to developing an effective Athletes' Commission" (2017), which is based on the same main responsibilities as listed on the Athletes' Commission strategy. The guide goes further with listing the benefits of having an Athletes' Commission, how to start to develop an Athletes' Commission, structure for success, case studies and guidelines for international federations as well as for the NOCs for the creation of an Athletes' Commission. Regarding this MEMOS project, especially the structure for success as well as the guidelines for the NOCs regarding the creation of an Athletes' Commission are the most relevant. They list many structural recommendations e.g. regarding the number of members, their election process and the balanced composition in terms of gender, different sports and active and recently retired athletes. As in the Olympic Charter, the requirement for the Commission to be represented both at the NOC's General Assembly and Executive Body with voting rights is reiterated in the document. (International Olympic Committee, 2017)

In addition, to the structural recommendations, which are linked to governance, the "Guide to developing an effective Athletes' Commission" also proposes some topics for the Commissions to address, such as the sport rules and regulations, anti-doping, athlete support and welfare, gender equality and athlete image rights as well as raises the importance of support and resources for the work of the athletes' commission. (International Olympic Committee, 2017) These strategic questions are crucial for the strengthening of the Athletes' Commissions next to the abovementioned structural recommendations regarding the governance. Thus, both areas were covered in the data collection survey to get a picture on the current situation.

3.3. Critical discussion

Recent years, some academics and player unions have questioned the power of Athletes' Commissions to represent the athletes' interests since they operate *inside* the governing bodies and are thus seen to be dependent on their affiliate. For instance McNamee *ed.* (2021) wrote on the IOC Athletes' Commission that *"the commission.. is theoretically independent, but they remain separate from major decision-making, and they act in the interests of the IOC rather than the athletes."* Furthermore, it goes on by saying that some critics claim that the

Athletes' Commissions are not the voice of the athletes towards their affiliate but merely a voice of the affiliate, e.g. IOC, to the athletes. In addition, it explains that the problem is that the power is not equally distributed between the athletes and the decision-makers of the sport organisations, and it is a problem as their interests do not always meet. (McNamee, 2021) Considering this, it would be important to strengthen the Athletes' Commissions that they would have more power and that they can have a stronger say in the decision-making.

Seltmann (2021) did research on the institutional position of athletes in the governance networks of the Olympic movement in three different national contexts, which are Canada, Germany and UK. In all these countries, there are also athletes' representation organisations *outside* the Olympic structures and his study considered both forms of athlete representation, meaning the Athletes Commission's inside the Olympic movement and the athletes' organisations outside the Olympic movement. His conclusion was that *"the specific relevance to the discussion of athlete power is the interplay of forces inside the governing bodies (that is, athletes' commissions and athlete representatives on boards of national sport governing bodies) and independent athlete organizations, operating outside the structures of the Olympic Movement."* (Seltmann, 2021) This was taken into account in the data collection and the Athletes' Commissions were asked whether there are athletes' organisations (such as player unions) outside the Olympic movement structures in their country and how the cooperation with these bodies is.

4. Data collection

As a method for data collection for this project, both survey and interviews were used. The topic of this project is "Athletes' voice in the Olympic movement – How can the Athletes' Commissions of Europe be strengthened to ensure the athletes' voice in the decision-making?" and as explained previously, it is researched by having a look on the current situation of the Athletes' Commissions in Europe and by comparing this to the recommended situation, based on the existing guiding documents of the Olympic movement and academic literature.

First of all, the data was collected with a survey that was sent to Athletes' Commissions of the European National Olympic Committees (ENOCs) and to the Athletes' Commission of the European Olympic Committees. The contacts were based on the database of the European Olympic Committees' Athletes' Commission's contact list of the NOC's Athletes' Commissions. Based on this, the survey was sent to 49 countries, and in most of the cases, the recipient was the current Chair. The survey questionnaire was technically prepared by using the Google forms.

The survey was used to collect data on the current situation of the Athletes' Commissions and how the Commissions themselves perceive it, as well as to collect their ideas to further strengthen the athletes' voice. The survey addressed two main aspects. First one covered all the structural and governance aspects regarding the athletes' representation and work of the Athletes' Commissions, whereas the second one focuses on the strategic questions. The strategic questions included three areas including the topics that the Athletes' Commissions are dealing with, resources, as well as questions on the skills, competencies, motivation, and

forming of common positions. As explained in chapter 3 “literature review”, there are several recommendations with regards to the structure of Athletes’ Commissions e.g. regarding the number of members, their election process and the balanced composition in terms of gender, different sports and active and recently retired athletes, as well as the demand for the NOCs to have an elected athletes’ representative in their executive body and general assemblies, as stated in the Olympic Charter. Besides the recommendations of the Olympic movement, the topics raised in the questionnaire derived also from the academic discussion. For instance, besides the institutional structures, the Athletes’ Commissions were asked if they are involved in the decision-making through consultations, if they receive sufficiently information and if their skills and capacities are supported, following the principles of deliberative democracy. Furthermore, they were asked that what could be done to improve that the athletes’ voice is better taken into account both inside the NOC (/EOC) and in the wider sport political discussions in their country (/European level), as well as if they have other athletes’ organisations/unions in their country and if they cooperate with them.

Regarding the strategic questions, the survey focused on inquiring whether the Athletes’ Commissions are addressing and have a say in strategic topics and questions that are relevant for the athletes, as well as that they are involved in the decision-making processes were policies that target the athletes are decided. Thus, it was requested if the Commissions address topics, such as the sport rules and regulations, anti-doping, athlete support and welfare, gender equality and athlete image rights. Furthermore, it was asked if the Commissions receive support (e.g. administrative, communication and legal), and are given financial resources for their work. Last but not least they were also asked to estimate the overall motivation, commitment as well as skills and competencies of the Commission members and also inquired, if they get any education or training for their role. The survey questionnaire is as appendix 1.

In addition to the survey, interviews were used to explore the topic more in depth. At the second stage of the data collection, IOC Athletes’ Commission Chair, Emma Terho, and EOC Athletes’ Commission Chair, Gerd Kanter, were interviewed to address similar topics and comment the main findings of the survey. However, these semi-structured interviews went more in depth and were used to also address couple of areas that were not in the survey to get further information. For instance, cooperation with the player unions and other potential athletes’ organisations was addressed more extensively in the interviews. The areas addressed in the semi-structured interviews are as appendix 2.

4.1. Data collection turnover

The questionnaire was sent to 49 NOC Athletes’ Commissions and in addition to the EOC Athletes’ Commission. Altogether 33 replies to the survey were received, which could be exploited in the analysis. This includes 32 replies from the European NOC’s Athletes’ Commissions and one from the EOC Athletes’ Commission, as presented in the table below. Regarding the reliability of the data and representativeness of the sample, it was important to guarantee that enough responses were received. Thus, several reminders were sent and AC

Chairs personally contacted to guarantee this. Overall, 33 replies can be seen as a good turnover, as the Athletes' Commissions in some countries are not so active or have been recently established and not working actively yet. Furthermore, as a comparison, another questionnaire was sent earlier this year to the NOC's Athletes' Commissions by the EOC Athletes' Commission, and 24 of them replied that time. So 32 replies from NOC Athletes' Commissions can be seen as a good result.

Albania	Great Britain	Poland
Azerbaijan	Greece	Portugal
Belgium	Hungary	Romania
Croatia	Ireland	Russia
Czech Republic	Israel	Slovakia
Denmark	Italy	Slovenia
European Olympic Committees	Latvia	Sweden
Estonia	Liechtenstein	Switzerland
Finland	Lithuania	The Netherlands
France	Malta	Turkey
Georgia	Norway	Ukraine

In most of the cases, namely 27, the survey was filled by the Chair/Co-Chair of the respective Athletes' Commission. In five cases, the survey was replied by another member of the Athletes' Commission and in one case, a board member of the NOC, who is an athlete, filled the questionnaire.

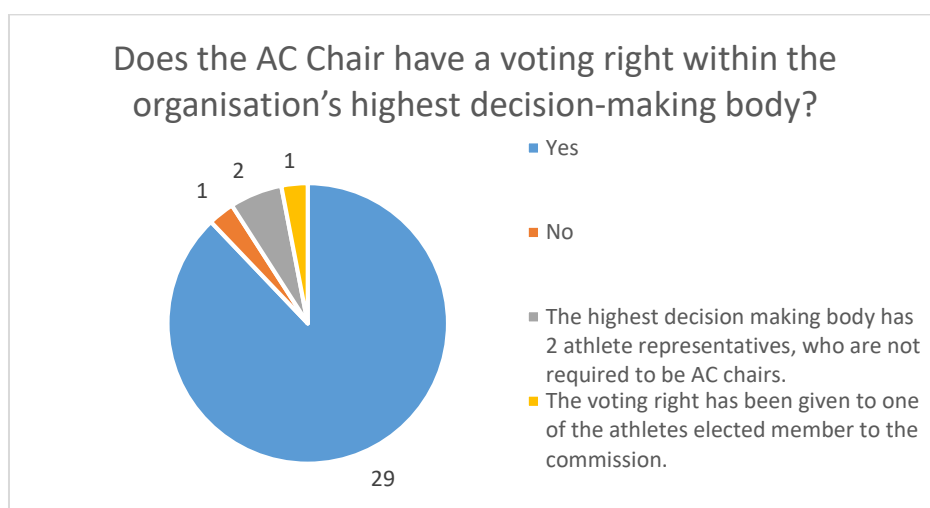
IOC and EOC Athletes' Commission Chairs, Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter, were interviewed after the results of the surveys were analysed to ask their comments to the main findings and gather more views and information with a semi-structured interview. The areas of the interview were sent to them beforehand and technically the interview was done with Google meet and the transcript function was used to facilitate the transcription of the interview. As an example, part of the Terho's interview transcription is in appendix 3. The full interview transcripts are available only for the MEMOS jury by their request.

5. Results and obtained evidence

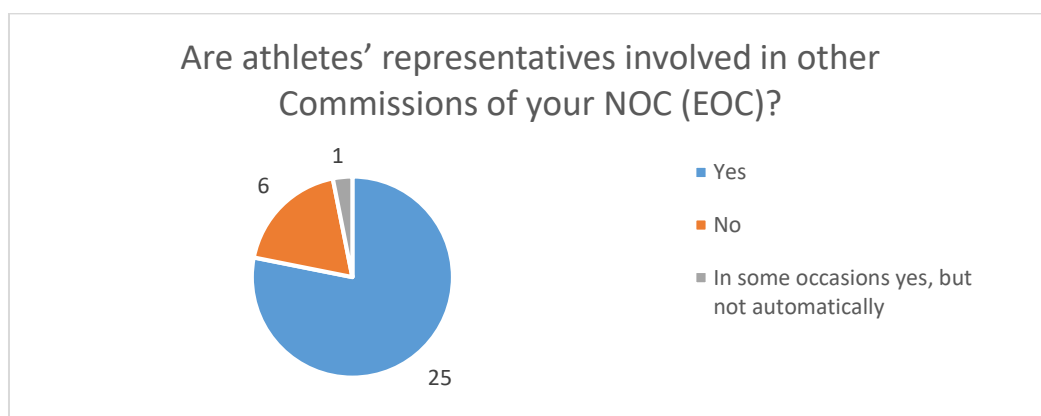
In this chapter, the results of data collection, both from the survey to the European NOC's Athletes' Commissions and the European Olympic Committees Athletes' Commissions as well as from the interviews with IOC and EOC Athletes' Commission Chairs, Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter will be presented in subchapters 5.1 to 5.4., following the areas that were identified in the questionnaire to the Athletes' Commissions based on the theoretical framework. Abbreviation AC is used for the Athletes' Commissions when presenting the data.

5.1. Governance and structures

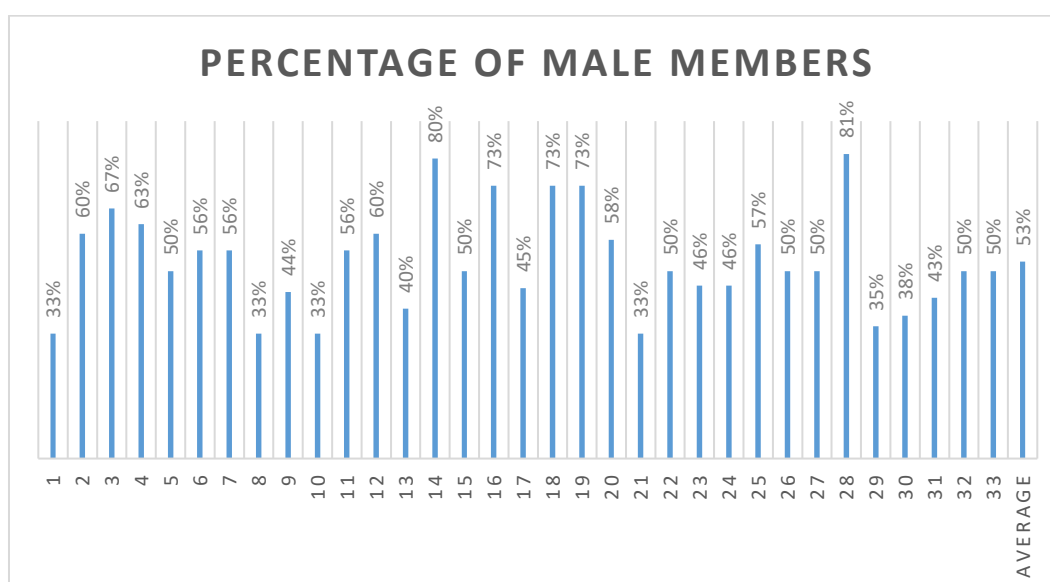
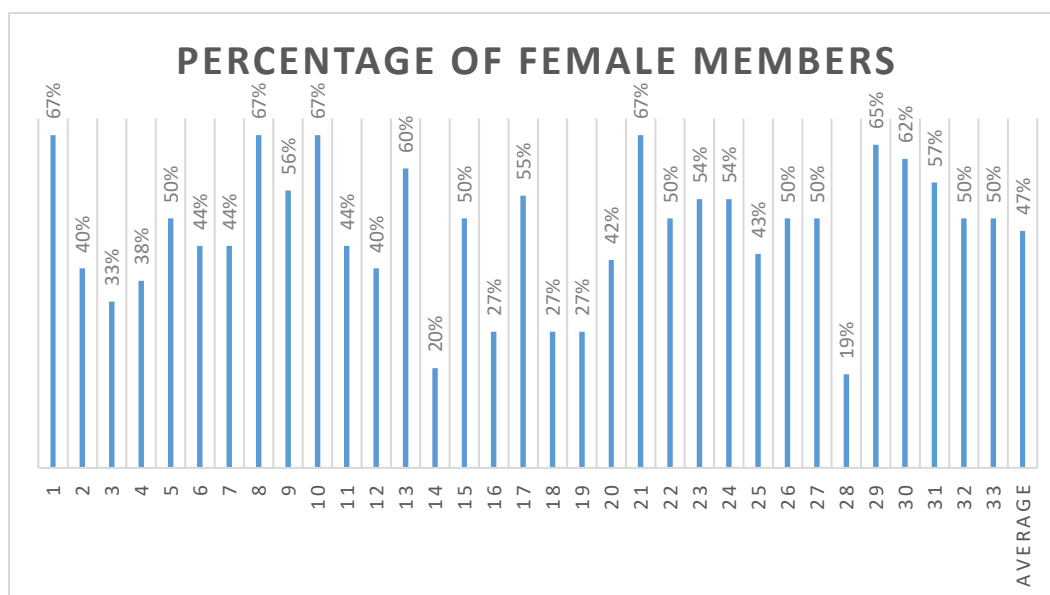
Regarding the *AC Chair's involvement in the highest decision-making body of the NOC/EOC with a voting right*, only one replied “no”. 29 out of 33 said “yes” and in two cases the Athletes’ Commission has even two athletes’ representatives in the highest decision-making body of the organisation, however, neither of the representatives is required to be the Chair(s). In one case, voting right has been given to one of the athletes’ elected members.



With regards to the *athletes' involvement in other Commissions of the organisation*, 25 out of 32 replied “yes”, 6 “no”, one replied that “in some occasions yes but not automatically” and one did not reply at all.

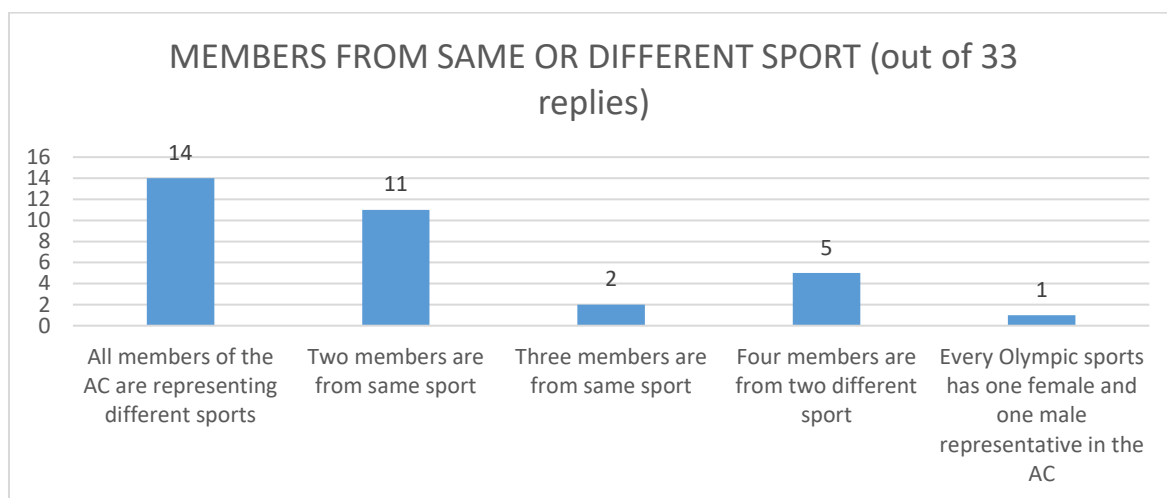
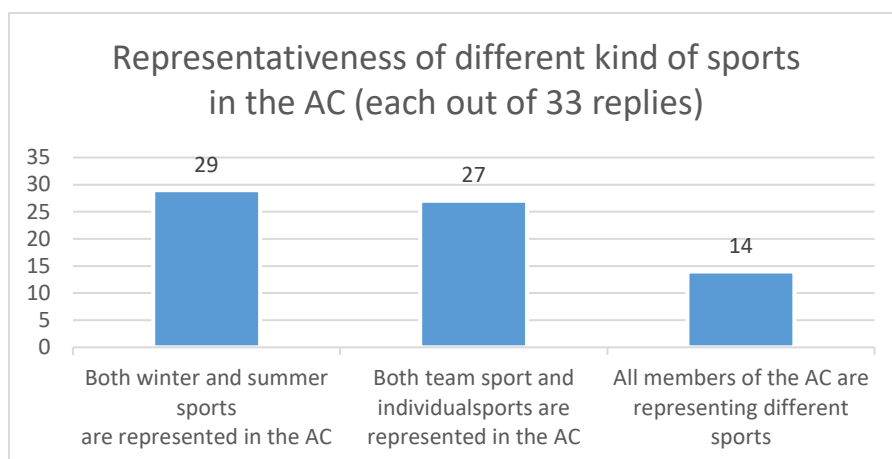


Regarding the *gender balance* in the composition of the Athletes’ Commissions, the data shows that the range of female members in the Athletes’ Commissions is from 19% to 67%, average being 47% of female members. Five Athletes’ Commissions have less than 30% of women. 20 out of the 33 Athletes’ Commissions that replied have the gender balance between 40% and 60%.

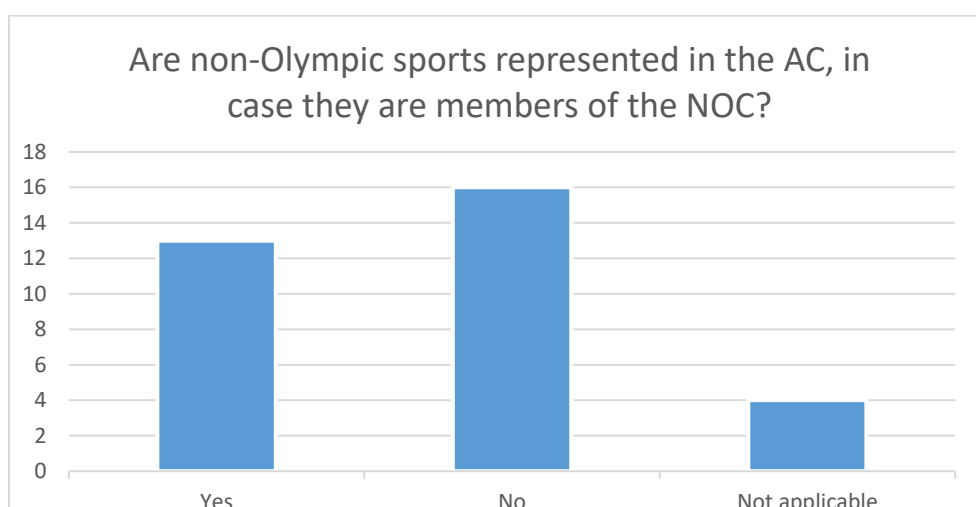


In the survey it was also asked if there are any *non-binary members* in the Athletes' Commissions. According to the responses, as far as they were aware, this was not the case.

As table below shows, 29 out of 33 ACs have both winter and summer sports represented in the AC, whereas 27 out of 33 have both individual and team sports representatives in the Commission. In case of 14 ACs out of 33, all members of the Commission represent different sports, in case of 11 ACs two members come from same sport, in two cases three members are from same sport and in five cases four members are from two different sport. In one Athletes' Commission, every Olympic sport has one female and one male representative in the Athletes' Commission.

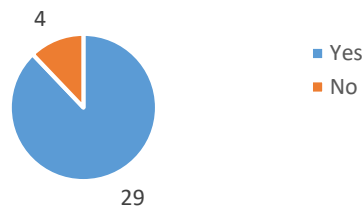


In 13 Athletes' Commissions also *the non-Olympic sports have representatives*, whereas in 16 Athletes' Commissions this is not the case and for 4 Commissions this is not applicable, as the NOC does not have non-Olympic sports as member federations.



In 29 ACs out of 33, which replied, the *members of the Commission are either still active athletes or recently retired*, which in this case is defined having retired in less than 8 years.

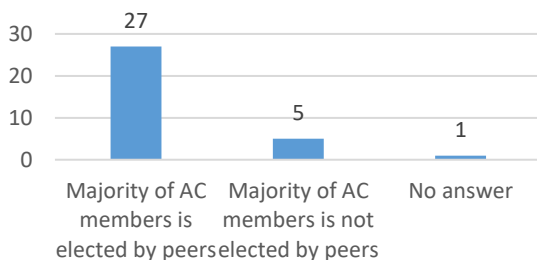
Are all members of the Athletes' Commission either still active or recently retired (less than 8 years)?



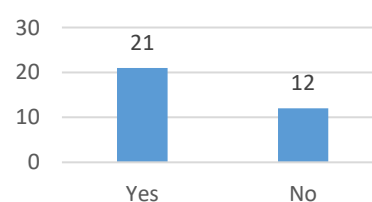
At the second stage of the data collection, IOC and EOC Athletes' Commission Chairs, Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter, were also asked about the composition of the Commissions regarding the balance between still active and retired athletes. Both saw benefits of having also retired athletes involved as athletes' representatives, as they have many times more time, experience and wider perspective as reflected in Gerd Kanter's comment: *"Generally yeah, I think retired athletes are maybe in one hand, they have more experience. And also probably we have better planning and you understand that there's different priorities [than only the sport results]."* However, at the same time both highlighted that it is important to have still active athletes on board as commented by Emma Terho: *"[It] is clear that the ones that are in the peak or kind of still in the very competitive phase of their career that they do have limitations with the time. However I think it's important to yet.. have also those athletes. So I'm thinking that combo of having athletes that are [active].. they do have very valuable feedback and also I think the main thing is to have that you would have the connections with the active."* and continued that the best would be to have a good combination of both active and retired and to find a way for still active athletes to participate: *"And as a Commission, I think the ideal situation would be having a combo where maybe the biggest responsibilities would be on someone, who has the time, but then that it would not prevent the ones fully concentrating on their career from taking part. So it needs to be just kind of the expectation management for them."*

Regarding the *election processes*, in 27 Athletes Commissions out of 33, the majority of AC members *are elected by their peer athletes*, whereas in five ACs this is not the case and one AC did not reply to the question. In addition, 21 ACs have the staggered elections in place, which means that only some of the places in an elected body are up for election at the same time to ensure continuous transfer of knowledge between members.

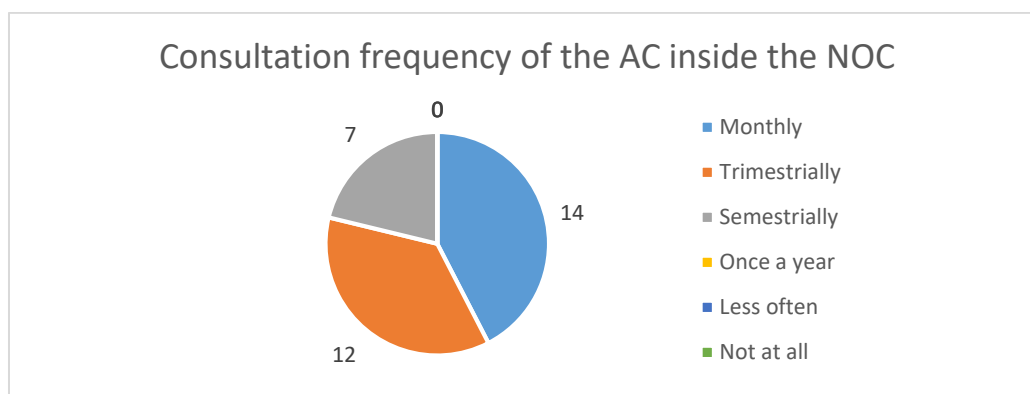
Election by peers (out of 33 ACs)



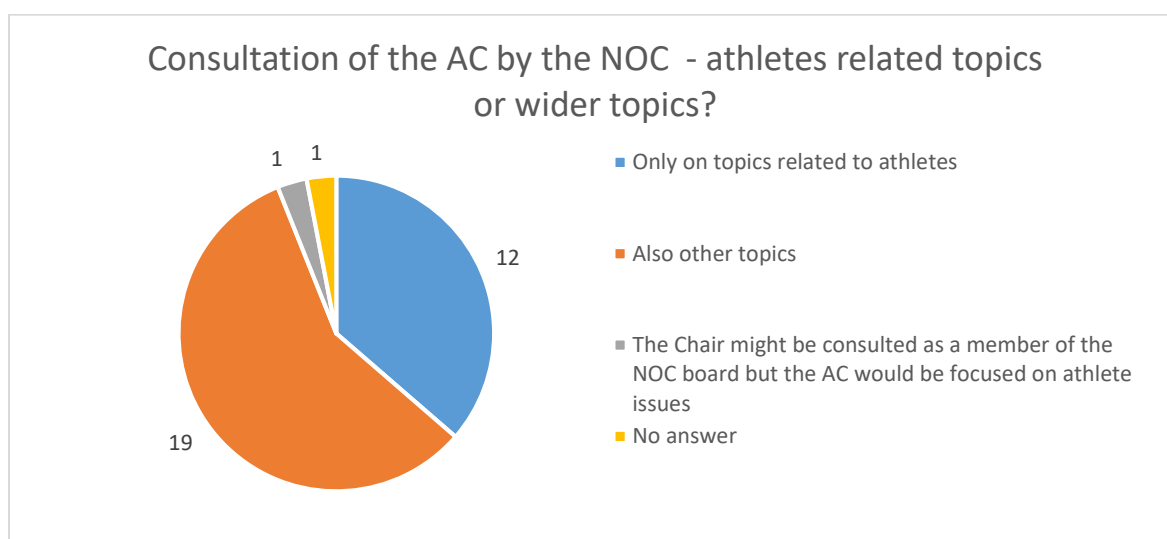
Application of staggered elections (out of 33 ACs)



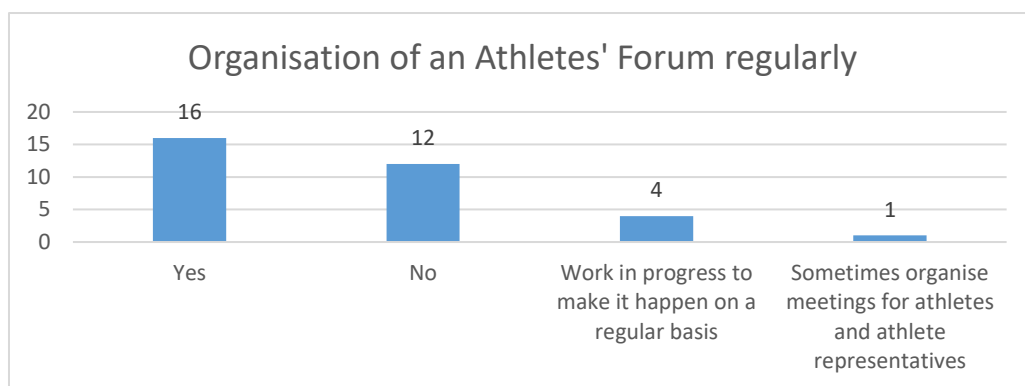
The survey shows that all 33 ACs, which replied, are *consulted by the NOC to ask the ACs opinion and contribution* at least semestrially, out of which 14 are consulted monthly, 12 trimestrially and seven semestrially.



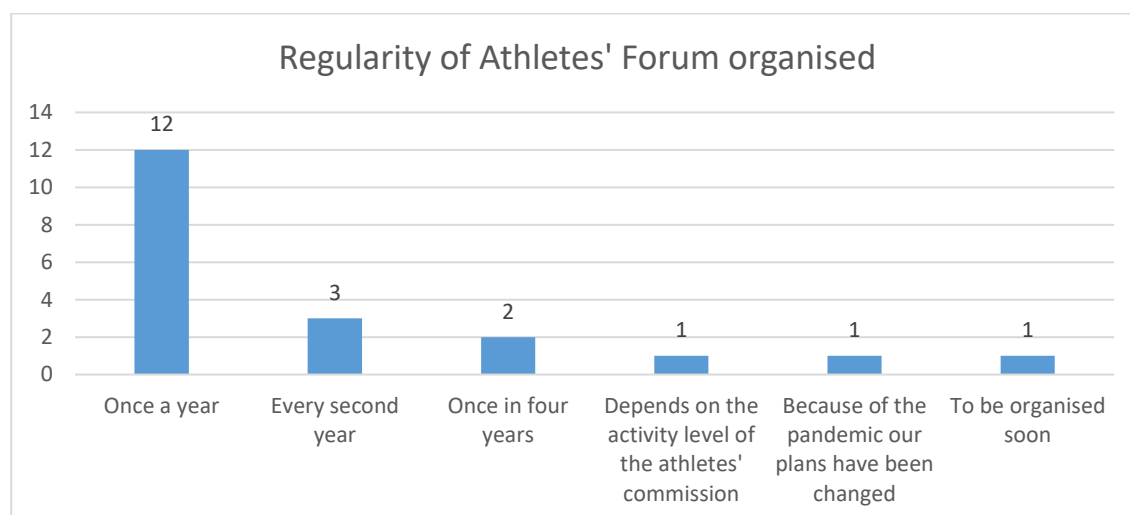
In addition, the data shows that 19 ACs are *consulted by the NOC also on wider topics than just the ones that are related to the athletes*, whereas 12 answered that the AC is only consulted on the topics that are related to the athletes. In addition, one answered that the Chair, in the capacity of NOC board member might get consulted on wider topics, but the AC itself focuses on athlete issues. One did not reply.



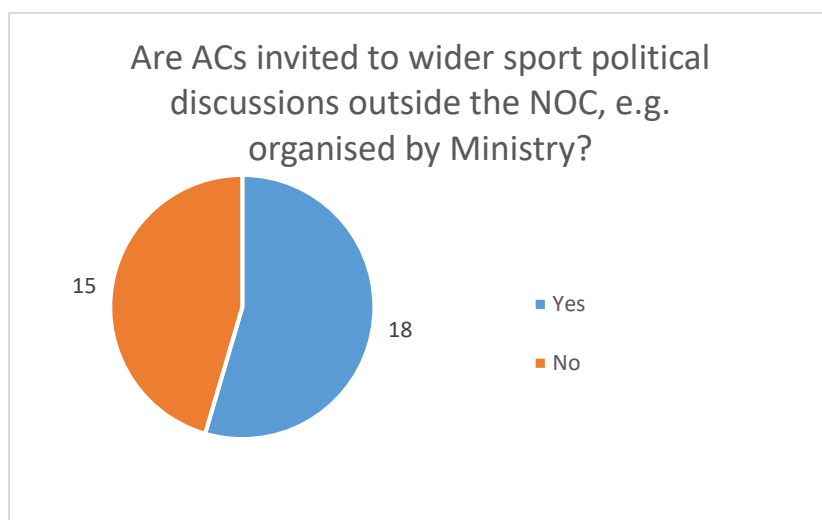
When the ACs were asked about the *organisation of an Athletes' Forums on a regular basis*, 16 out of 33 said "yes", 12 "no", four are in progress to make it happen on a regular basis and one replied that they sometimes organise meetings for athletes and athlete representatives. Regarding the ones that said that the work is in progress to make it regular, the reasons for this were for instance that the Athletes' Forum has been so far organised only once so it needs to be now established as a regular event, or that the AC has been created so recently that it is now working on to organise the Athletes' Forum.



On the *regularity to organise the Athletes' Forums* for a wider athletes' community, 20 ACs replied to this question. Out of them 12 organise the Athletes' Forum every year, three once in every second year and two once in four years. One AC responded that it depends on their own activity, whereas in one answer it was mentioned that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the plans and regular organisation has not been possible and in one answer it was mentioned that the Forum will be organised soon.



With regards to the *Athletes Commissions' involvement in the wider sport political discussions* in the country or at the European level, i.e. that are organised outside the NOC and for instance by the Ministry, 18 ACs out of 33 said that they are invited, whereas 15 are not.



When the ACs were asked that *in which topics they are invited to these wider discussions*, six times was mentioned in a general way that the AC is invited to discussions on topics related to athletes, sport policy or sport development. More specifically the following topics were also raised: anti-doping (4 times), professional career including also athletes' income (3), gender equality including also maternity policies (3), mental health (2), athletes' rights and representation (2) and dual career (2). In addition, for instance European Sport Model, Covid-19, human rights, Rule 40 and 50 and elite sport in the army were mentioned once each.

Regarding the question that *which entities organise these wider sport political discussions where the ACs get invited*, Ministries were mentioned 11 times. Most of the times it was the Ministry in charge of sport but also for instance the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was mentioned. Other sport organisations were mentioned three times and NADOs twice, whereas the EU, municipalities and army were mentioned each once.

27 Athletes' Commissions out of 33 replied to the open question *"What could be done to improve that the athletes' voice is better taken into account inside the NOC (/EOC)?"* The following areas were raised in the answers:

- 1) Give more decision-making power in the voting systems and decision-making bodies to the athletes

In six answers, it was raised that it would be important that the athletes' have more decision-making power in the voting systems and decision-making bodies inside the NOC. Out of these six answers, increasing the athletes' power in voting systems was mentioned three times and the following quote describes the issue: *"If athletes have a stronger voice in decision-making, they will be taken into account. Otherwise they will not be heard. In our NOC there are 23 members in the Executive Board, AC has therefore only one vote. This means a very small percentage regarding decision. I think just having a voice in decision-making bodies is not enough. Athletes should be guaranteed a sufficient percentage of the vote in order to be heard."* In addition, once were mentioned the following *"have a voice at the highest executive body"*, *"inclusion of athletes in all decision-making bodies"* and to *"have more athletes involved in high administrative positions and every time including at least one male and one female"*.

2) Organise meetings, discussions and consultations

Also in six answers it was raised that more meetings, discussions and consultations are needed to be organised. For instance it was proposed that there should be *“Mandatory meetings every 3-4 months between AC and NOC”*. In addition it was mentioned that NOC should have *“more interest to include us into discussions and decision-making consultations”* and should try *“to get more feedback and having athletes' voice more to the planning stage instead of being in the ‘nice to know’ section”*.

3) Increase resources and support for the ACs

Increase of resources and support was mentioned altogether five times, of which three times was raised the need to have a dedicated staff member from the NOC/EOC to support the AC. Salary to the athletes' representatives was mentioned once: *“It depends on how active are the athletes inside the AC, sometimes it is hard for them to be motivated. Maybe if they have some salary, they would take it more as a duty, not just volunteering.”* Also the need for technical and administrative support for meetings was mentioned once.

4) Improve the voice and existence of Athletes' Commissions in the different federations

In three answers the importance of having more Athletes' Commissions in different sport federations was highlighted. In one answer, it was mentioned that *“usually the athletes are not accepted in their own federation”*. So thus, in these three answers the importance of improving the voice of athletes in federations and to *“have as many athletes commission within different federations”* was raised.

5) Include athletes in wider discussions with other stakeholders

In three answers, it was raised that it would be important to include the athletes also in wider discussions with other stakeholders to improve that the athletes' voice is better taken into account in the NOC. It was mentioned that the *“AC should be more present in schools as early as primary school, making more awareness of AC to other institutions, sports associations and Ministry for Sport. If AC is present in every level of Sport Education, any decision taken the AC would be always consulted as a natural fact.”* In this regard, it was also mentioned that it would be needed to *“educate the stakeholders and help them understand the benefits of having athletes' involvement in decision-making”*.

6) Improve communication and information sharing

The need to improve communication and information sharing was mentioned in three answers by saying that the *“NOC must inform AC more often about actualities”* and that *“better communication between NOC and individual athletes”* is needed. However, it was also said in one answer that this communication needs to be improved both ways (*“More active communication on both ends”*).

7) Motivate and encourage athletes' participation

Two times it was raised that motivating and encouraging participation of the Athletes' Commissions would be important by recommending to *"encourage athletes to be more involved in all processes"* and to *"ask more from AC members to participate and give their opinion"*.

8) Athletes' Commissions to be active and raise the voice

In three answers was a reference to the need of the Athletes' Commissions themselves to be active either by organising *"specific activities"* or by *"raising core issues at the NOC Executive Board meetings where AC is represented, namely by the chair of the Athletes Commission"*. Furthermore, the need to raise the voice was highlighted by *"if athletes speak with voice via the AC, this could benefit the reputation and thus the impact of the athletes."*

Lastly, two Athletes' Commissions responded that they are already heard well inside the NOC and that they feel that they already get the needed support.

IOC and EOC Athletes' Commission Chairs Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter were also asked that what could be done to improve that the athletes' voice is better taken into account inside the NOC (/EOC) and also to comment the main finding of the answers by the Athletes' Commissions. Both highlighted the importance to give a legitimate role and power to the Athletes' Commission and understand that the athletes' input is important in every step. Emma Terho commented: *"..Giving them the legitimacy by using them as experts is something that.. like not being afraid of asking their opinions or using the group as experts on.."* and continued: *"I think that's also, like, it goes together with the resources because I think it's when.. There is, a chance to be brave enough to use them as experts and trust them in"*. Gerd Kanter said: *"..key is also NOC understanding or expectation on Athletes' Commission. I think really if I look at the European NOCs who have very active Athletes' Commissions and who really doing good they are also really well supported from the NOC. I'm not only talking about financially but also usually their ideas are really expected at the Executive Board. There is one NOC who has even two athletes in the board .. so I think it's a good example what kind of input we expect from athletes."* In addition, Emma Terho commented: *"I think it's important to have the voting power and have the athlete representation in the decision-making part of the NOCs because, yeah, it does give weight to the athletes. And importantly, to have maybe two there."* and added *"I also think that it's so important to add as much as possible, the athletes to.. if there's preparations for some topics that are going to be like where the input from athletes would be useful from an early state."* Both also highlighted the importance to communicate and share information and finding natural ways for interacting and consulting with athletes, where Terho said: *"So, or at least, there's never too much communication. So maybe making sure that.. try and finding out if it's some competition camps, if there's some natural way, there it can be interacting with athletes"*.

The Athletes' Commissions were also asked that *"What could be done to improve that the athletes' voice is better taken into account in the wider sport political discussions in your country (/European level)?"* and 30 out of 33 replied to it. The following areas were raised in the answers:

1) Improve the connection to and have more discussions with politicians, Ministries and authorities

Strengthening the connections to politicians, Ministries or authorities at different levels and have more discussions and meetings with them was raised in seven answers, whether with proposing athletes to be *“invited to different political discussions”*, *“have more meetings with politics”* or to have *“proactive engagement at local and national level of athletes through different institutions - municipalities and agencies”*.

2) Strengthen the Athletes' Commission

The need to strengthen the Athletes' Commission was also raised seven times as a way to improve that the athletes' voice would be better considered also in the wider sport political discussions. In five times this was related to give a stronger role to the AC within the NOC or sport organisation, for instance by giving *“more power when voting”* or giving the *“AC stronger decision-making role within NOC by including AC in every major discussion within NOC board and council meetings”*. Furthermore to *“create independently elected athletes' commissions within the sports federations' boards”* was proposed. The other two times it was related to increasing the resources either by hiring an employee or giving some salary to the athletes' representatives.

3) Encourage and involve athletes in decision-making, discussions and consultations

In seven answers was highlighted the need to encourage and involve athletes in decision-making, discussions and consultations. It was raised, for instance by asking to *“encourage athletes to be more involved in all processes and to explain them how sports system works and let them opportunity to speak out”* and having *“more discussions were athletes are also included. Not leaving them out from those discussions.”*

4) Raise awareness on the AC and improve communication

The importance to raise awareness on the existence of the AC was mentioned three times, e.g. by answering that we need to *“make people aware of our existence”*. In addition, improving communications, both from the athletes and other stakeholders' side was mentioned once.

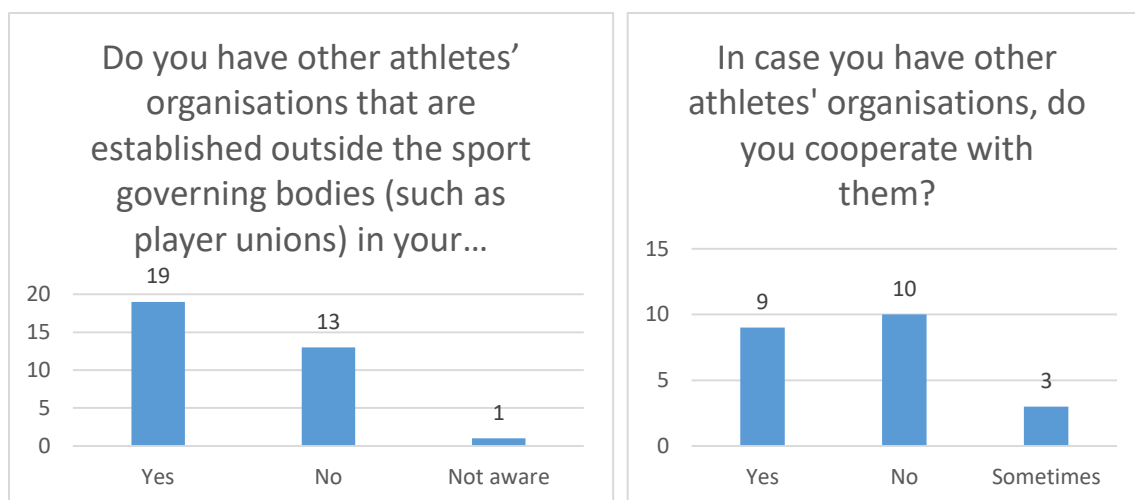
5) Take athletes' voice seriously and understand that it might differ from the federation / NOC

Taking the athletes' voice seriously was highlighted once by saying *“not only to include athletes but to take their suggestions into account”*. In addition, it was also underlined that it is important to understand that *“what's beneficial for the athletes might be different from the federation / NOC level”*.

Lastly in one respond, it was proposed to make the *"Athletes' Commission to be part of the Education system. From young age the athletes would be informed about the AC's role and that they should be involved and know how to communicate and deliver the message"*. Also once was suggested to build a *"better network between the European NOC's Athletes' Commissions"*.

Again, IOC and EOC Athletes' Commission Chairs, Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter were also asked about this. They highlighted the role of the NOC to recognise the importance of including the athletes' voice also in wider sport political discussions and that the NOC pushes actively that athletes are invited by other stakeholders to these discussions. For instance, Gerd Kanter said: *"It also starts from NOC and if NOC really values their [Athletes'] Commission work and people who [are] working for Commission, I think when they also include them into those wider discussions because, if you take it in very seriously and NOC sees importance, athletes being around different discussions then they include you... But first, it has to be, that NOC recognises you. Valuing your athletes input is needed and important."* In addition, direct connections of athletes to other stakeholders are seen important as highlighted in Terho's comment: *"It also would have both from the NOC to make sure that the ministry and different bodies.. They are actively offering or pushing that there are athletes body there, and then I think that also a pretty direct line to the different organisations so that there would be someone maybe building the bridge and.. it's of course I think it's a lot of personal relationships, but just kind of also pushing and letting know that there is this actually body [Athletes' Commission]."* Furthermore, she highlighted the need of athletes to be active themselves inside the NOC to push to be included: *"And I think the athletes should push within the organisations, the idea that they should be making sure that in those conversations, they [NOC] inform also that there is this quite important stakeholder group [athletes]."* In addition, Gerd Kanter reminded that politicians or other stakeholders themselves also need to recognise the value of including athletes, even though it would make discussions and decision-making process longer or more complicated: *"I think also general approach should be there, because politicians or whoever, like Ministries, make decent decisions that are associated with athletes. They shouldn't seek for an easy way out even sometimes extra input sets some new requirements.. so maybe process gonna be even more complicated. But the goal should be that those decisions are really athletes orientated... So, goal shouldn't be that we just search for an easy way out."*

The Athletes' Commissions were also asked about *the existence of other athletes' organisations that are outside the sport governing bodies (such as player unions) and if the ACs cooperate with them in case they exist*. All 33 Athletes' Commissions replied to the first question, and in 19 cases other athletes' organisations exist, in 13 cases "no" and one was not aware. Regarding the cooperation with other athletes' organisations, 22 out of 33 replied, and 9 of them said that they cooperate, 10 that they do not cooperate and three said that sometimes.



In addition, the Athletes' Commissions were asked that *in case they cooperate with other athletes' organisations, in which way, and how would they estimate the cooperation*. 11 replied to this question and six of them said that they have continuous dialogue and good cooperation for instance by answering that *"we meet in person or online discussing and deciding how to react and face problems of the athletes or protect athletes' rights"* or *"we work closely with the general union for athletes. Have meetings every month and they sometimes join our meetings"*. Two answered that they attend the meetings of the other athlete organisations or have participated in their panel discussion, whereas one mentioned that the cooperation is not so close but they meet and exchange ideas in same meetings. One said that it depends on the process and the situation of the union.

IOC and EOC Athletes' Commission Chairs, Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter, were also asked about the other athletes' organisations and player union, however also more widely regarding the cooperation and the role of different organisations as well as the critical discussions. Both underlined that there is a place for both the Athletes' Commissions of the Olympic movement and sport federations, as well as for player unions. However, there is a fundamental difference in their roles, but also many common interests with topics like athletes' wellbeing or dual career, where cooperation should be made. Emma Terho said: *"They [unions] have their [role in] negotiating work contracts. Whereas in the Olympic movement, for instance, it's quite different, the athletes are, heterogenic. So, I think there's a place for both have. Of course, it's not like it's two competing bodies. But something that could be working together since there are things like dual career. And with the mental health, athlete wellbeing. So those are very common topics."* and Gerd Kanter commented: *"Those two entities like they are, we are so different, you know, because if you take this players union, it is like what you represent, like those professional players and of course there's a lot of money involved and a lot of is theoretical stuff. So it is kind of different positions."*

Regarding the critics that is raised sometimes by the athletes'/player unions or some academics on the independence of the Athletes' Commissions of the Olympic movement and on their "place" inside the sport governing bodies, the two Chairs saw positive aspects of being inside the sport governing bodies, as it gives better chances to directly influence the decisions,

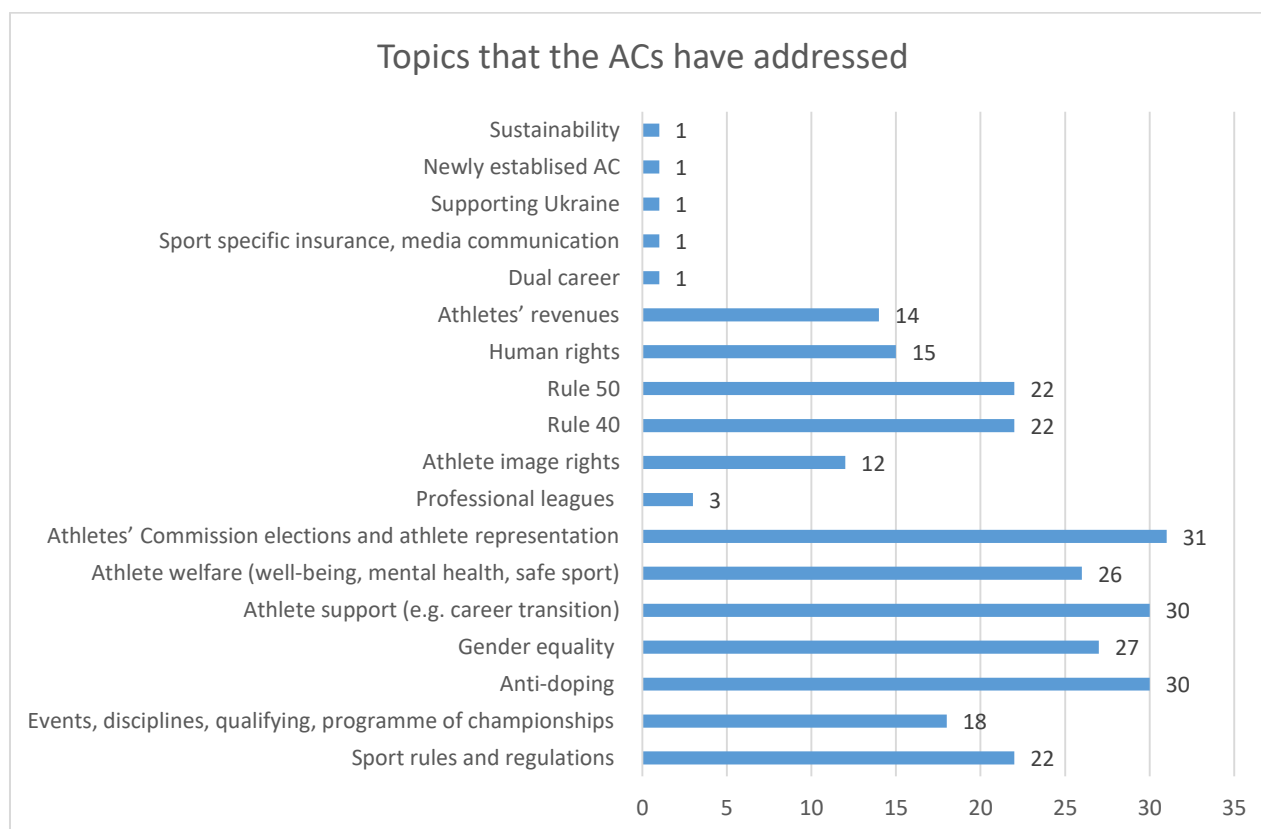
for instance for the best of athletes in the sport events, or to have resources for the work to represent the athletes. Emma Terho said: *"I think for resource-wise, it's good. And also I think it's beneficial [as] there's a lot of things that are in common, like, in the end, making sure that the [sport] events are the best possible for athletes. And in order to make sure that it's taken into account. I think there's manifold benefits and also, there's benefits that athletes can be pushing within the organisation, things that where the organisational resources should be used for. And I think also being able to affect the decision-making, from the very beginning, and kind of giving the positive input. It's not like that the first place should be thinking that the interest would be different because in the end the interests are not that different."* Regarding the critics, Gerd Kanter also underlined that the current sport model is beneficial for the athletes, especially in the development face: *"I think generally all stakeholders should understand big picture of a sport, that also includes athletes from professional leagues. How we're born. How they raised and developed. Because I think many of those professional athletes wouldn't ever exist if they wouldn't have this European sports model."* Furthermore, he reminded that as an Athletes' Commission member, you can have your own opinions: *"If you are Athletes' Commission member at your NOC, it's not that you need to agree everything that your NOC is doing or proposing"* and that Athletes' Commission members are elected by their peers with democratic elections, which gives them the legitimacy compared to the unions, which have a narrow focus: *"if you are elected it's in a way, a little bit more valuable, [than] when you are just appointed because you really like it, probably appointed member is hired of being representative of a union that really, you know, sets a very narrow target."*

Lastly, in the section on governance and structures the ACs were asked if they have any other comments regarding the structures and governance of the ACs or athletes' voice. Six out of 33 ACs replied to this open question by highlighting or recommending something. In two responses the importance of having proper resources was raised again, e.g. by saying: *"It is also very important that the AC has a person assigned by the NOC (employed at the NOC) to assist in the operations of the AC (e.g. who takes care of all administrative work, assists in various projects that the AC is working on). And that the AC has the right to replace that person in the event of failure to perform its duties."* Furthermore, in two replies the issue and challenge of how to deal with the athletes' availability was raised, which was reflected in the following comment: *"In our experience (AC) active athletes find it difficult to be active in the work of the Commission. Recently retired athletes are more engaged. We also came to the conclusion that newly elected members need quite some time to understand how AC and NOC works. Therefore, under our rules, we have increased the possibility of candidacy for AC to 3 Olympic periods."* In one response, the importance of proactive engagement was raised with a comment: *"Proactive engagement of athletes through different tools in governing body to increase awareness of sport. The engagement should be facilitated through NOC support."*

5.2. Strategic work and the topics that the Athletes' Commission is dealing with

Regarding the strategic work and the topics that the Athletes' Commissions are dealing with the ACs were given a predefined list and asked to tick all the topics that they have discussed

or addressed. In addition, they could also add additional topics that they have discussed in case it was not on the list. All 33 ACs replied to this question and the turnover was as follows:

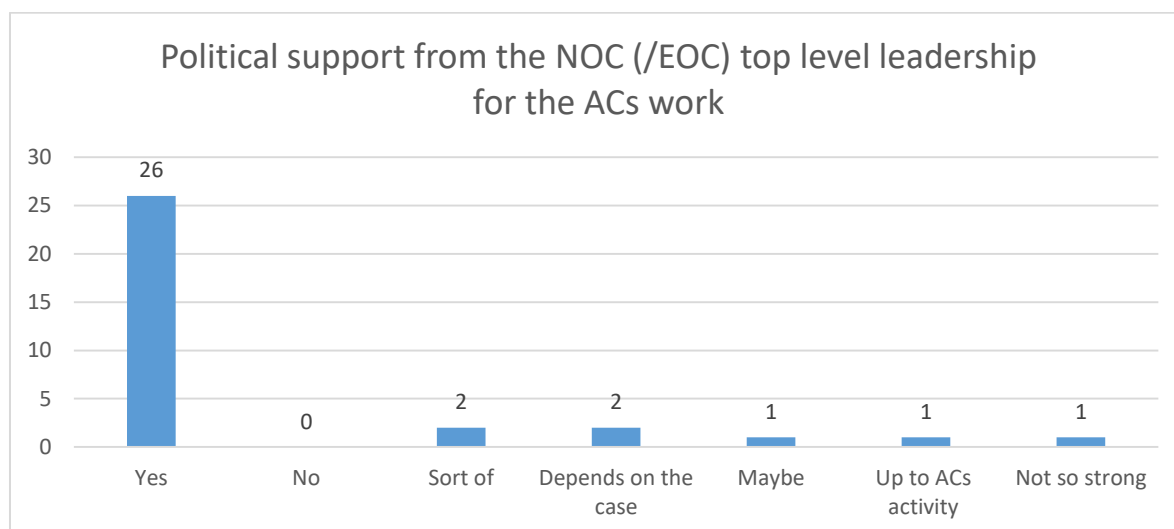


The most common topics that the different ACs have addressed and dealt with are Athletes' Commission elections and athlete representation (addressed by 31 ACs), athlete support (30), anti-doping (30), gender equality (27) and athlete welfare (26). In addition, Rule 40, Rule 50 and sport rules and regulations have been addressed by 22 Athletes' Commissions. Also, events, disciplines, qualifying and programme of championships (18), human rights (15) and athletes' revenues (14) had been discussed around half of the ACs. Furthermore, the ACs were asked if they have any other comments related to the topics that the AC is dealing with. Seven ACs replied to this, of which two mentioned that they are involved in facilitating the dialogue/cooperation between athletes and NOC/federations. Other answers included NOC governing crisis, competition manipulation, education of athletes, organising events to strengthen the athletes' community, integrity and safe sport environment and the inclusion of transgender athletes in elite sport, which were all mentioned once.

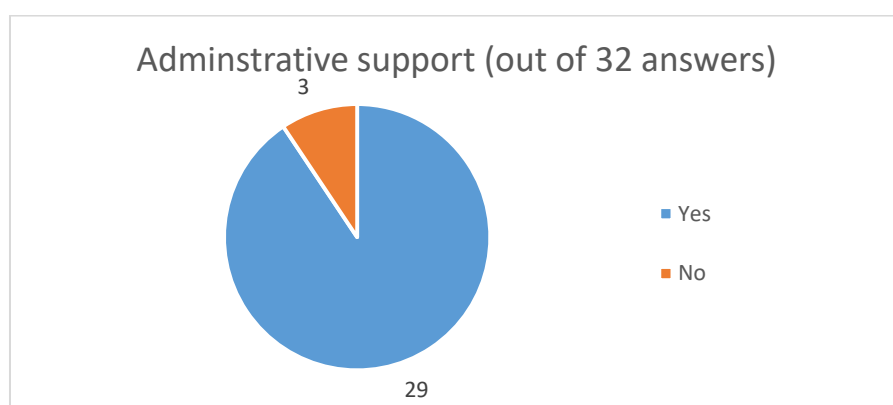
5.3. Resources

All 33 Athletes' Commissions replied to the question that whether the AC *has political support of the NOC's (EOC's) top level leadership*. 26 said "yes", whereas none of the ACs replied "no". However, two said that the support is there "sort of", meaning that it is there on paper, and two also replied that it depends on the case. "Maybe" and "not so strong" were answered

once, as was also that it is all up to the Athletes' Commission's itself and how active they can and want to be.



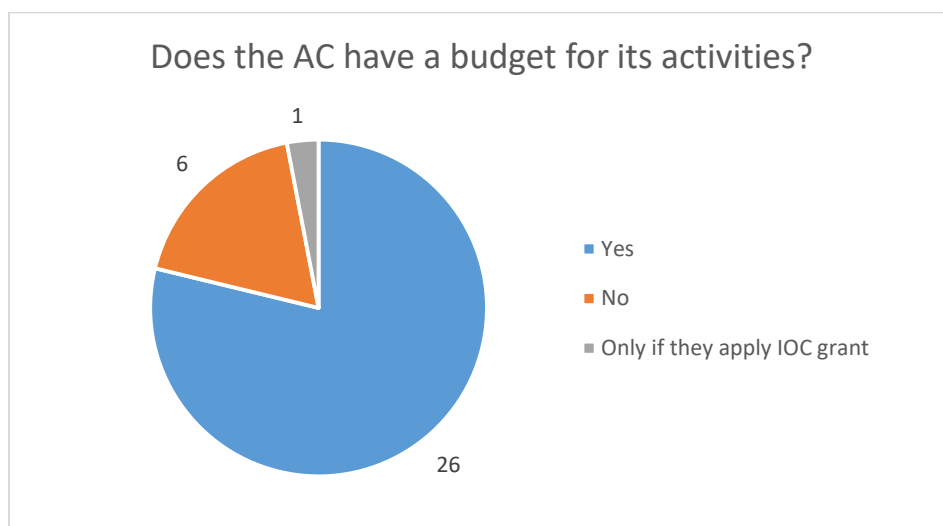
Regarding the question on *administrative support*, 32 ACs replied to it and 29 of them said that they get administrative support, whereas 3 do not get.



The ACs were also asked with an open question that *what kind of support they get*. 27 ACs replied to this and mostly they listed human resources, which was mentioned in 10 replies or financial support, which was mentioned in 4 replies. Regarding the human resources, it was not specified in all replies, but it seems to vary a lot, as some have full-time employee to support them, whereas some only have a secretary for the official meetings. Regarding the type of support, it seems that it is mainly to support the ACs in coordination and administrative work, which was mentioned in 21 different replies. This varies from taking minutes, helping organising meetings, booking trips and helping with logistics or writing articles and assisting with communications. In four replies was mentioned also assistance with strategic work or help to write documents. One replied that they get support for anything they ask for, whereas one said that the AC can use the office and network of the NOC.

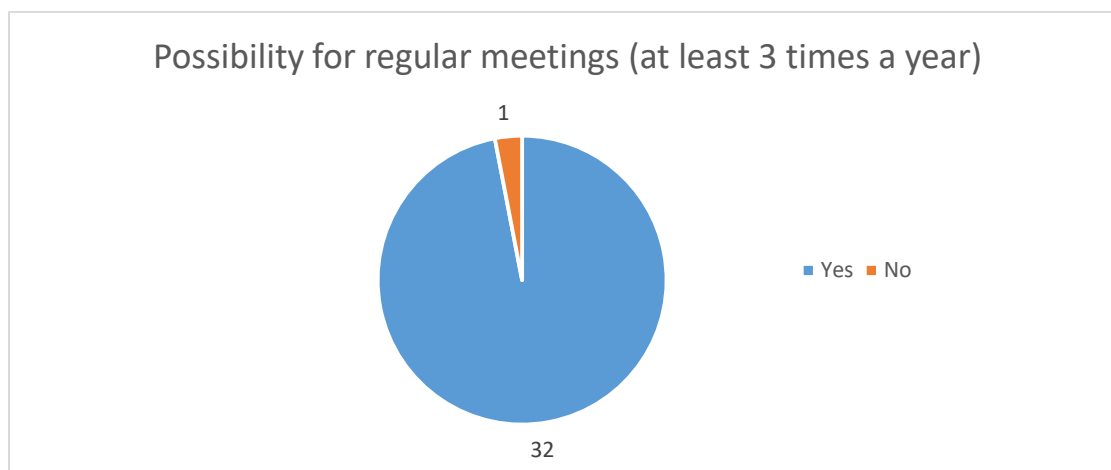
When the ACs were asked if they have a budget for their activities, all 33 replied out of which 26 have budget, six do not have and one has budget *only* if they apply for the IOC grant. Furthermore, when asked about how much the budget is, four more replied that they only

have the IOC grant. It is difficult to do a summary on the amounts of the budget, as in some cases it depends on the activities and in some cases currency was not specified in the answers. However, out of the 21 ACs, which replied to this question, 12 have a budget between 8 000€ and 15 000€. One AC has 100 000 €, which is the biggest budget, second biggest being 60 000-70 000€ and third one around 24 000€. Smallest budget specified in the answers was under 3 000€.



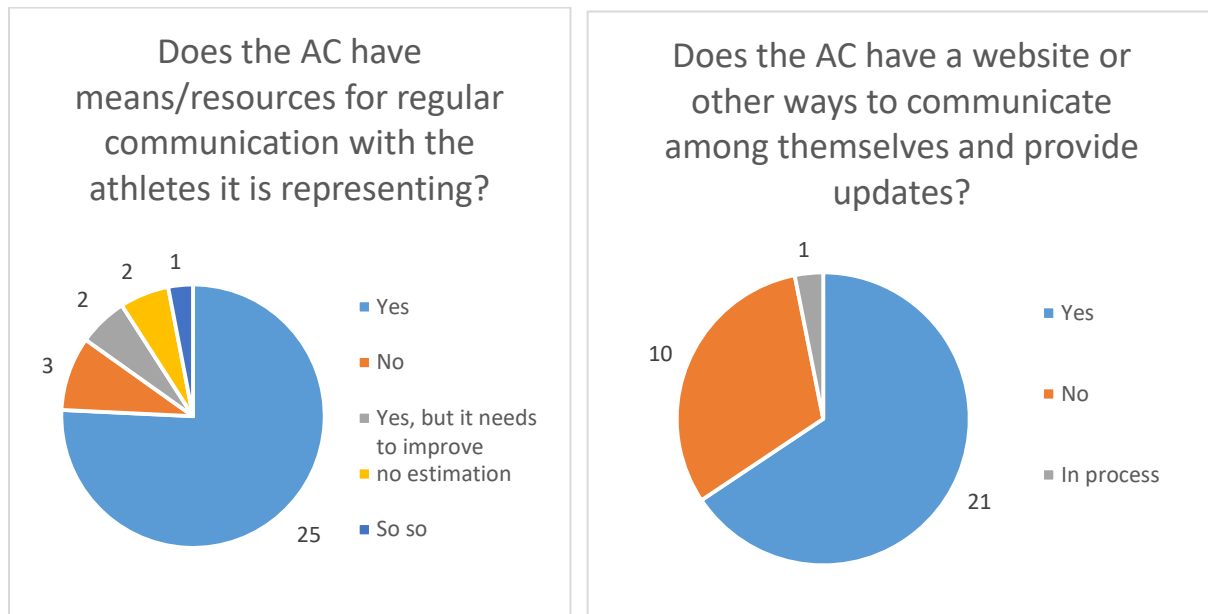
The IOC grant that some of the ACs are referring to, is a possibility for the ACs to apply funding from the Olympic solidarity, if they present a specific project or activity that they will implement. According to the statistics that were presented in the European Athletes' Forum on 21-22 June 2022, in year 2021, the IOC grant was applied only by 20 European Athletes' Commissions.

Regarding the *possibility to organise regular meetings*, which in the survey was defined to be at least three times a year, 32 ACs have this opportunity, whereas only one AC does not have.

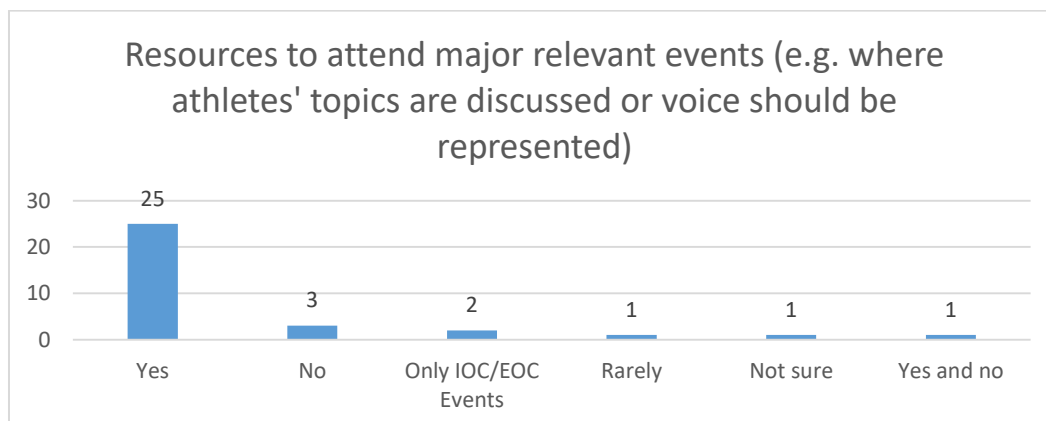


Regarding the communication, 33 ACs replied to the question if they *have means/resources for regular communication with the athletes they are representing* and 25 of them replied "yes", whereas three said "no". Two replied that "yes, but it needs to improve", whereas one said "so so". In two replies it was not estimated if they have the means for regular

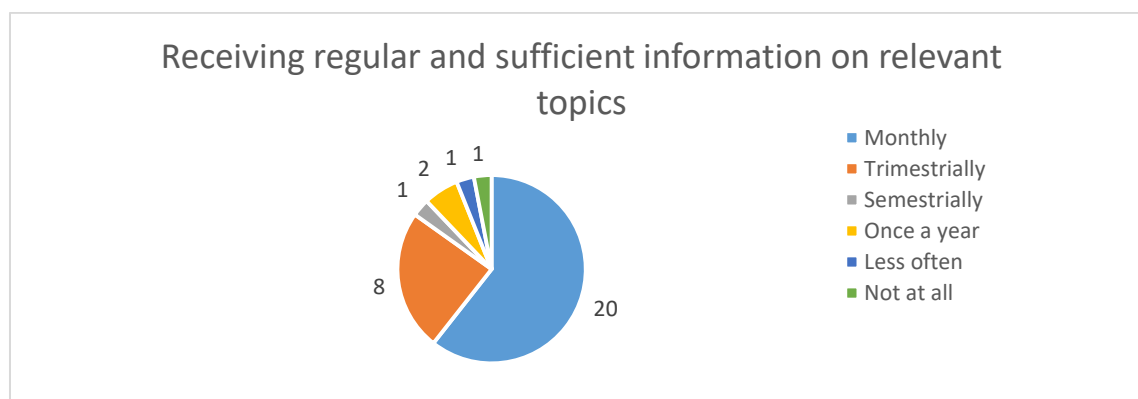
communication, but they replied in which way they communicate. Another question on communication was *if the AC has a website or other ways to communicate among themselves and provide updates*. 21 ACs replied “yes” and in this group are also counted the ones which use emails and WhatsApp/Telegram, whereas 10 said “no” and one replied that it is in process.



All 33 ACs replied to the question if the *AC has resources for its members to attend major relevant events (e.g. where athletes' topics are discussed or other sport political events where athletes' voice should be represented)*, out of which 25 has resources, three do not have, two said that they only have resources to attend the IOC or EOC events and one said rarely. In addition, also one replied that is not sure but thinks that it would be the case and another one said “yes and no” with specifying that everything is on voluntary basis. When they were asked that what are the major barriers, five replied to this question, and in four of them the lack of time or availability because of training, studies or work were raised, and in two of them the lack of information on the events.



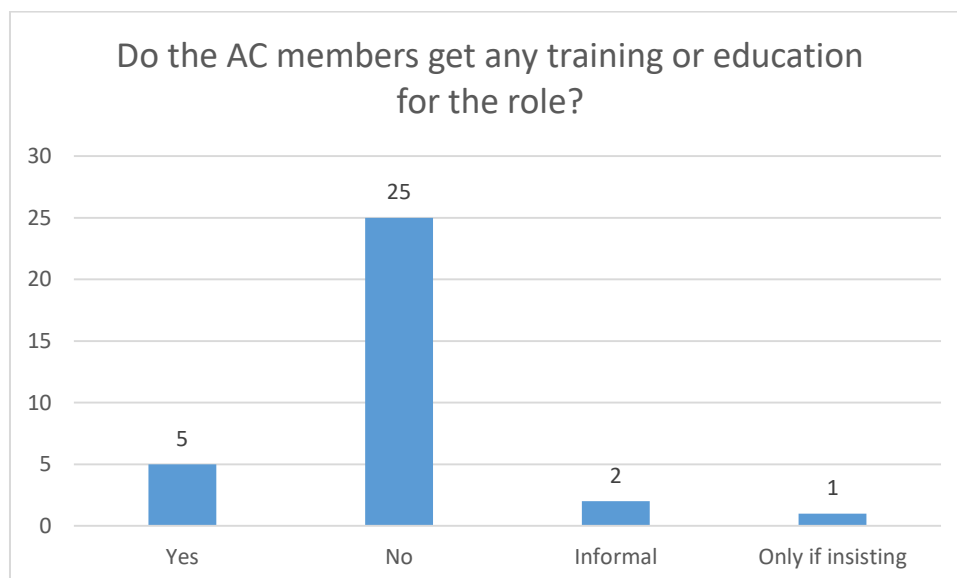
The ACs were also asked if they *receive regular and sufficient information on relevant topics*. Out of 33 ACs, 20 said that they receive it monthly, eight trimestrially, one semestrially, two once a year, one less often and one not at all.



Regarding the resources the Chairs of the IOC and EOC Athletes' Commissions, Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter, highlighted that in addition to financial resources, it is important that the Athletes' Commissions are supported by proper workforce, which takes initiatives and ideas forward, as the Athletes' Commission members are themselves only volunteers. Emma Terho said: *"I think it with regards to the resources. It would be important to have someone helping in taking forward the ideas that since a lot of the representatives from the Athletes' Commission are voluntary like the active athletes. It is more efficient and impactful to get help in driving some of the projects. So they would need to be supported from the organisational level.. it does help make sure.. if there is projects or ideas from the Athletes' Commission that they can be brought forward but I think as mentioned before it's also important that Commission will be used as an expert body, whenever if there's thing. That is because that also means that, then you can some sort of count the resources."* Gerd Kanter commented that it is also a difference to player unions, which usually have dedicated staff working for the organisation, and that gives them better chances to participate in different events to raise the voice of professional athletes: *"[it] makes a difference because, if you work, I don't know, even partly, you know, if you get the invitation, it's kind of part of your job, you have to go. But if you're not paid and you have other duties and in some cases also if invitation comes on last minute commitment is not 100%. It's quite hard to plan it that, okay, I can jump on board."* Gerd Kanter also reminded on the importance of proper financial resources as it makes more activity possible and also gives meaning for the work: *"But I think generally it has to have.. some kind of resources because if there's, nothing it's also I think like if you also as a group of people, like, if you really want to do something, and if you don't have a scratch, it also could be like obstacle.. IOC Grant, you know, probably gives at least good push to be more active to organise some events that can really give more. More activity for athletes' community. And also like.. Meaning because maybe when they feel okay, we can plan some events and then they just get also more involved."*

5.4. Skills and competencies, motivation, common positions

Regarding the skills and competencies, the ACs were asked if the *members get any training or education for their role*. 25 out of 33 said that they do not get any training, five said “yes”, and one that only if they insist. Two ACs mentioned that informally the Chair gets information and knowhow but nothing is established. When the ones that get training, were asked that what kind of training it is, five responded, in which seminars and conferences were mentioned three times, public speaking twice whereas structural understanding and general knowhow once.

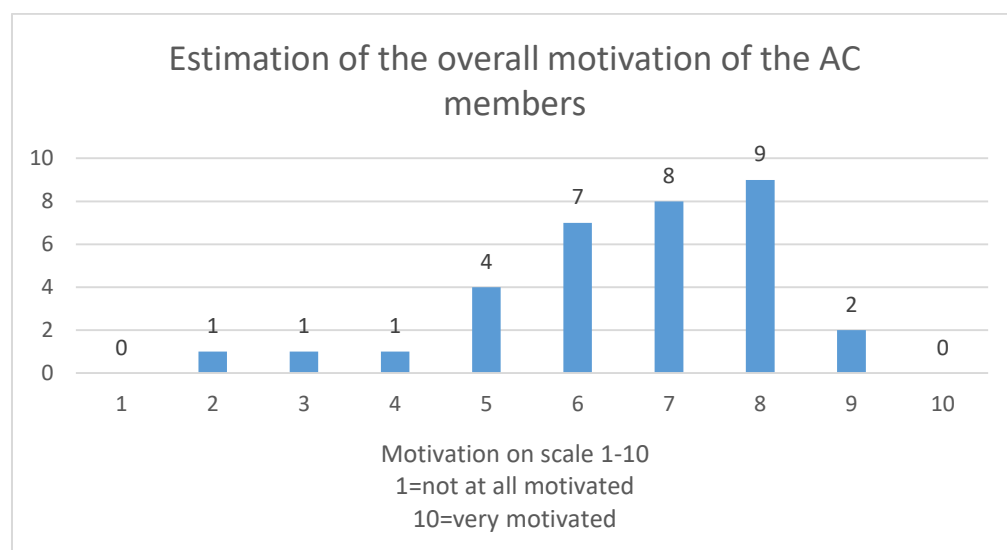


The lack of training and education was also raised to IOC and EOC Athletes' Commission Chairs, Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter, who were asked to comment it. Both underlined that it would be very important to have training and education in place from the very beginning when the athletes are elected that they would understand the role, what is possible and what is expected, how is the structure of the sport governing body and how the decision-making processes work. Emma Terho said: *"One thing is important to have education. So that the representatives would actually understand what it is about. And then, the more clear it is and therefore I'm thinking that like maybe someone who's more experienced. To kind of set [and] give examples of what the role could be because there's a lot of very skilled athletes but if they don't [have] more clear that we can ask from them, what is expected from them, the more efficient they can be because a lot of athletes have become to the role as totally new, and nobody's teaching them about what is expected or examples of what, what are the roles. Then it's hard to kind of start doing something because of course, there's some basic things of how the decision-making process is and especially if you have something that you want to bring forward that, you know, what is the correct place to bring the thing... The basics there is depending on where, I think, the structure of what kind of athlete representation there is. But especially like, so some basics of what is the structure within the body that they are. Being part of the body. That they are associated with. It doesn't mean that they would have to be thought about anything that what is the view of the body or anything like that. But just like the structure. What is the place to bring their views in, in order to be able to like, just knowing how the decision-making process goes, so that they can surely be early enough in their comments."*

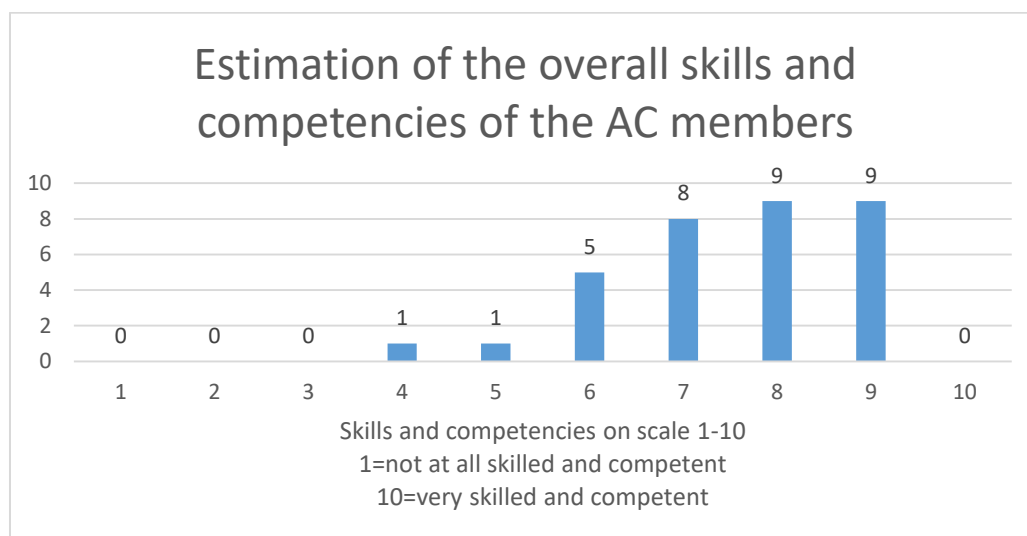
Gerd Kanter was of the same opinion: *“First of all, it [training] would be quite good. Like if you [get] elected and then there would be some kind of protocol what you go through, you get the most important information what is related to those responsibilities and activities. What is expected from athletes’ representatives... As simple as possible, I would say probably some kind of online training. Maybe a demo or introduction... There's no really strict guidelines how to be that active Commission member but it still could be thrown into attention, what can you do. How to be useful, how to be active? What is expected? What is your responsibility?”* Furthermore, he proposed that the more experienced Athletes’ Commissions could mentor the newcomers: *“..probably we can make and come out with some mechanisms. How to at least give basic guidance, how to start off and probably it could be also effective, that you use those already active NOCs who [are] doing really effectively? So they could have kind of mentoring program, from somebody who has very high level activity. They can really maybe liaise or somehow support some those newcomers who really start from beginning and we would have some kind of system.”*

Emma Terho commented also that the lack of training is a known problem and that the IOC Athletes’ Commission is currently developing training course for the Athletes’ Commissions: *“That [lack of training and education] is very, it's very much known and recognized. Now one, we've actually with the IOC AC, there's going to be this actually starting. With some education classes or some, some sort but just kind of like with the basics and we have been developing it for that exact purpose because there has not been much of the education, you know, that there are some ACs that do it well but just so that it would be available for everybody. We will start those courses now.”*

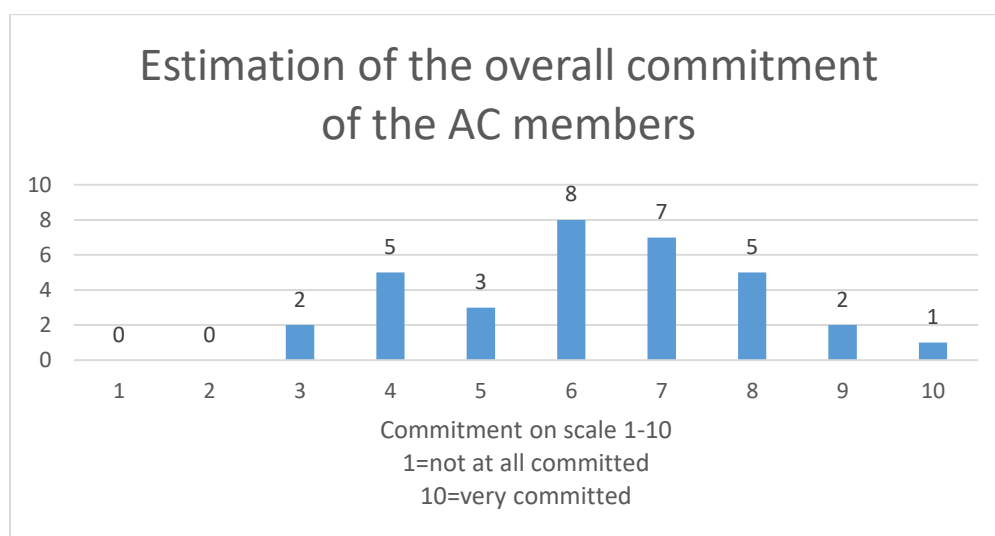
The ACs were also asked to *estimate first of all the overall motivation of the AC members, secondly their overall skills and competencies to contribute to the discussions and represent the athletes' voice, and thirdly their overall commitment for the AC work and dedication of time for the duties.* To all these three questions, all 33 ACs replied. Regarding the motivation, the replies can be seen in the table below. Accordingly, the average (mean) for motivation is ~6.57, whereas median is 7 and mode 8.



With regards to the skills and competencies, the average (mean) is ~7.52, whereas median is 8 and mode 8 or 9 (table below).



Regarding commitment and dedication of time, the average is ~6.24, median 7 and mode 6 (table below). Overall, skills and competencies of the AC members are estimated to be higher than motivation or the commitment and dedication of time, which is the lowest.



ACs were also asked if they have *further comments on how to improve the competencies, skills, dedication and motivation of the AC members*, to which 16 ACs replied. Education and training were mentioned five times as ways to improve the competencies, skills, dedication and motivation, whereas some kind of compensation or payment to the AC members for their time was mentioned four times. Lack of real impact and support from the NOCs was mentioned three times as a killer of motivation. Lack of time, better balance of retired and active athletes, having members who are truly motivated for the work, division of duties between AC members, and more funding from the IOC/EOC were each mentioned once. One replied with a general comment that it is necessary to invest heavily in the engagement of the various members in the works and activities of the AC.

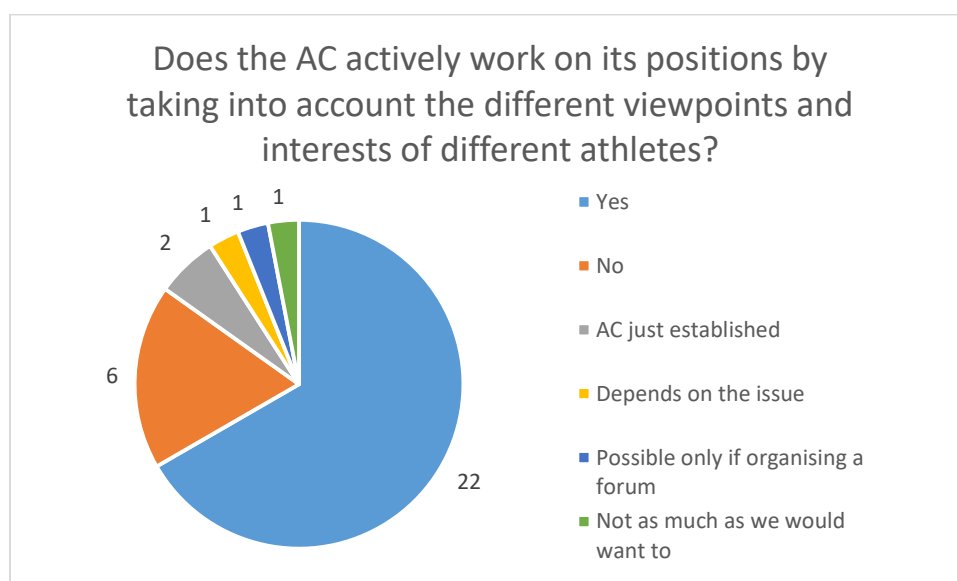
Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter, respective Chairs of the IOC and EOC Athletes' Commissions, also commented the results of the survey regarding motivation, commitment and skills and competencies. Gerd Kanter commented the lower levels of motivation and commitment as follows: *"I think also like it's probably question of understanding how those mechanisms work because probably some people would just say okay I don't know we gave some input. It wasn't taken into account, okay? It doesn't work. But generally we have to understand that we really talking about the politics, if you really planning something and trying to implement it, you know, it's not like a simple process it really needs different inputs and sometimes you know it's not that there are all stakeholders think the same. It's maybe fundamental questions, so it is a process. So probably I think many cases just athletes probably believe it or expect it's gonna be short dialogue and then okay we say so and when we expect it's gonna be so, but many times you need to dig into it deeper and understand. So and it's a little longer process... So that's why it needs more patience and also more maybe dialogue and more just consultations to really understand how can we influence something or even to really make some changes what is needed."*

Regarding the question that how especially motivation and commitment could be improved, both Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter raised the importance of clarifying the roles of athletes' representatives, giving them guidance from the early beginning when they are elected and using their expertise that they do not get frustrated. Gerd Kanter said: *"I think it's, like it has to be kind of guidance and support. So really because you know it's quite common with you when you get elected everybody's excited and ready to engage. But many times like its processes, it's quite slow. So it should be already planned with like that. Those new people get to their positions, they right away get some kind of guidance and some kind of support what is expected, how it's gonna be working out in the future and, also maybe what is expectation for time. Like, some NOCs told that, they have a certain times planned in advance that you know, like every second Tuesday, we're gonna have a meeting. So, and this is also quite something concrete."* Emma Terho suggested: *"I think they could be improved with the fact that the role is more clear... and that the Athletes' Commission will be asked or used for their expertise. Because I think it's true that there's a lot of skill but they are not always knowing the kind of structure, what the education is aimed to help in. And then there might be frustration if they don't know how and where to bring or use the skill and sometimes.. So, I think though, that's somewhat related. The more clearer the role is and the more education there is for the Commission. I think that would help with the [motivation and commitment]."*

Furthermore, Gerd Kanter also raised the importance of the athletes' representatives to understand their responsibility to be properly available for their role from the early beginning. He also raised the issue that motivation is more important than being a famous athlete with a successful sporting career. He said: *"Athletes availability is one of the main issues because some people just don't quite understand the responsibility that they have if they are elected. I would really compare this position, like, in schools, they have those, kind of chair of a class or, like person who's really organising everything. Often NOC's or federation's way of thinking is that they like to propose athletes who have a great achievement [in sporting career] and then those people getting more votes because they are more popular and more known."* To improve the situation, he is proposing to have some kind of profile or criteria that potential

candidates could self-analyse if they have the needed motivation: *“It would be good that we could set up also some kind of profile. Like some kind of requirements. Actually if somebody maybe trying to make this decision [to be a candidate], am I suitable or am I a good candidate, you could try to meet first some kind of criteria to understand. Okay, this requires this and then you just kind of make of self-analyse.”*

When the ACs were asked *whether they actively work on their positions by taking into account the different viewpoints and interest of different athletes*, again all 33 ACs replied, out of which 22 said “yes” and six said “no”. In two cases, the AC replied that they have been just established, whereas one time for each the response was that it “depends on the issue”, “possible only if they organise a forum” or “not as much as they would want to”.



Furthermore, the following question was that if they *work on common positions, in which ways they do it*. 22 respondents replied out of 33, and in big majority, i.e. 18 responses, consultations and discussions were mentioned as a way to work on common position.

As a very last point, the ACs had a chance to share *any further comments regarding strengthening the athletes' voice in decision-making*. This open question got three responses, which were all different. One highlighted that it would be important for the AC to have its own social network and capacity to talk to the athletes directly, one was impressed by the IOC and how strong is their AC and that it would need a lot of educational work at the national level to build a strong AC, whereas third one replied that it is hard even for the AC to get input from the athletes.

6. Discussion

The topic of this MEMOS project “Athletes' voice in the Olympic movement – How can the Athletes' Commissions of Europe be strengthened to ensure the athletes' voice in the decision-making?” was divided into the following sub-questions:

- What are the expectations and recommendations on the role of athletes' representation and athletes' commissions in the Olympic movement?
- What is the current situation of the athletes' commissions?
- How can the Athletes' Commissions be strengthened?

The first sub-question was covered in the chapter 3 "Literature review". The focus of this subchapter is to discuss the findings of the collected data that was presented in the previous subchapters and compare it to the theories and documents presented in chapter 3 "Literature review". The aim is to discuss the current situation, what do the findings mean, and what could be done to strengthen the Athletes' Commissions and athletes' voice in the decision-making of the European Olympic movement, and thus to answer the research question.

Regarding the current situation of the Athletes' Commissions, the data suggest that in the structural and governance questions, the ACs are included with a voting right in the highest decision-making body of the NOC/EOC very well, as out of 33 replies, 29 has one representative and two others have even two representatives in the highest decision-making bodies with a voting right. Only one replied "no". This follows the recommendations of the Olympic Charter, IOC Athletes' Commission "Guide to developing an effective Athletes' Commission" (referred here later as "IOC Athletes' Commission Guide") and the recommendations of Thibault *et al.* (2010) on athletes' involvement in organizational policy with deliberative democracy as a framework. Furthermore, the ACs seem to be quite well involved also in other Commissions of the organisation, as 25 out of 32, which replied to this question, are involved.

However, as raised in some of the answers to open questions either in the survey to the Athletes' Commissions, or in the interviews of Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter, the data suggest that this is not necessarily enough. Challenge is that if there is only one athlete representative with a voting right, their weight in the decision-making is pretty low. Thus, it should be considered to increase the number of athletes' representatives with voting rights at least to two. This is the case already in two NOCs, of which Athletes' Commissions replied to the survey. In addition, it would be important, as suggested in some of the answers, to ensure that Athletes' Commissions are involved in every step of the decision-making processes, from the early preparation stages to the implementation. Thus, the athletes should be included also in the preparation phases. This links also with the issue what was raised in the data that sometimes the real recognition of athlete's opinions is missing and their voice is not taken seriously in the decision-making, even though they would be formally included in the decision-making bodies. When the ACs were asked if they have political support of the NOC's (/EOC's) top level leadership, which is also an important aspect according to the "IOC Athletes' Commission Guide", 26 out of 33 Athletes' Commissions replied positively. However, it is interesting that two said that the support is there "sort of", meaning that it is there on paper, and two others replied that it depends on the case. "Maybe" and "not so strong" were answered once. As suggested by Gerd Kanter, the NOCs should trust the athletes, take them seriously and have them involved in all sport political discussions, including also to actively suggest athletes to be involved as a stakeholder in sport political discussions with other stakeholders, such as Ministries. Also, Emma Terho underlined the importance to actively use the expertise of athletes in all decision-making processes and discussions.

As suggested by the theories of representative democracy and also in the recommendations of Thibault *et al.* (2010) on “representation”, the majority of the Athletes’ Commission members should be elected by their peers. This seems to be the case in majority of the Athletes’ Commissions as 27 out of 33 answered that the AC members are elected by their peers. However, of course this should be implemented in all Athletes’ Commissions and NOCs.

Both the “IOC Athletes’ Commission Guide” and Thibault *et al.* (2010) in their recommendations on the “type of representation” highlight the need to have a range of viewpoints and balanced composition in the Athletes’ Commissions as there is no single voice of athletes as their opinions, experiences and priorities vary. This can be seen especially important in the Athletes’ Commissions of the Olympic movement as the athletes come from so different backgrounds. Following the “IOC Athletes’ Commission Guide”, and adding couple of other questions to the survey, the balanced composition was inquired by asking on the situation regarding gender balance, representativeness of different kind of sports (winter/summer, individual/team sport, Olympic and non-Olympic sports). In general, the situation seems to be relatively good regarding the balanced composition. In some of the aspects, especially regarding the representation of non-Olympic sports in the case, where also non-Olympic sports federations are members of the NOC, the situation should be improved. In 13 Athletes’ Commissions also *the non-Olympic sports have representatives*, whereas in 16 Athletes’ Commissions this is not the case and in 4 Commissions this is not applicable, as the NOC does not have non-Olympic sports as member federations. Regarding gender balance, the situation seems to be quite good, however, there are five ACs with less than 30% of women. This should be improved and there should be at least the very minimum of 30% of both genders in the Commissions, following the minimum IOC recommendation. However, it would be recommended to have the gender balance at 40% of both genders. This is the case now in 20 out of 33 ACs, which replied, so improvements are needed. Furthermore, one of the interesting things related to the gender balance is the lack of non-binary members. As far as the respondents were aware, there was no single non-binary member. This situation should be improved, when already considering the current discussions on the participation of athletes with different gender identities and sex variations in competitive sport.

Regarding the representation of both winter and summer sports as well as individual and team sports, the situation seems to be very good. 29 out of 33 ACs have both winter and summer sports represented in the AC, whereas 27 out of 33 have both individual and team sports representatives in the Commission. What should be considered is to improve that all members of the Athletes’ Commission would come from different sports, which is the case in 14 ACs out of 33. However, it can be also argued that this is not an issue, in case the representatives from same sport are otherwise skilled, competent, motivated and dedicated for their work. Furthermore, in 11 further ACs two members come from same sport, so overall in 25 out of 33 Athletes’ Commissions the members are either all from different sports or two of them are from same sport. So this seems to guarantee still a good variety of sports.

Moreover, Thibault *et al.* (2010) highlighted in their recommendations on the “type of representation” that the best representation of different interests can be achieved not by mirroring themselves, but by selecting representatives who share their views and who have the capability to actively advocate for their cause. Also, they highlighted that motivated and

interested former athletes, especially recently retired, could be a solution, as they have more time compared to the still active ones. These issues were also raised in the data collection. The data suggests that motivation, as well as especially commitment and dedication of time are lower than perceived skills and competencies. On scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very), the average (=mean) of motivation was 6.57, commitment 6.24, whereas skills and competencies were estimated to be 7.52. As the data suggests, motivation and commitment, as well as availability of the athletes' representatives for their duties, as raised in some of the open questions and interviews, can be seen as challenges. As proposed in some of the answers, to improve the situation, it would be important to clarify the roles of athletes' representatives. For this some criteria or profile for the athletes' representatives, already when they are considering to be candidates, would be good that they would know already before what it requires. That would clarify the expectations and the role. Furthermore, after being elected, it would be also important that they get immediately guidance to the role that they would know how the decision-making processes work. Education and training would be again important for this, as they are also for improving competencies and skills. Also mentoring, by more experienced members, as well as division of duties between the Commission members would be good ways to get immediately on track and could improve the overall motivation and commitment. In the open questions, also compensation or payment to the AC members for their time was proposed. Also the lack of real impact and support from the NOCs was mentioned as a killer of motivation. This comes back to how important it is that the sport governing bodies take seriously the athletes and that their voice would have a real impact in the decision-making. Regarding the lack of time, also a good balance between retired and active athletes can help. It is important to have both involved, but as suggested by Emma Terho, it can be recommended to have retired athletes in the biggest responsibilities, but at the same time ensure that the active athletes can also participate and to try to find flexible and natural ways for their participation, for instance by using their training camps for consultations. As mentioned above, the skills and competencies were estimated to be on a better level than motivation and commitment. Besides education and training, one way to ensure the transfer of skills is staggered elections. The data shows that 21 of the Commissions, which replied, have the staggered elections in place, but it would be important to have it implemented in all Commissions.

Thibault *et al.* (2010) raised as part of the "process challenges" that it is crucial to ensure the needed resources for the Athletes' Commissions. Also, the "IOC Athletes' Commission Guide" lists several aspects regarding resources, which were also inquired in the survey. As main findings regarding the resources, the data shows that it is important that the Commission has its own budget to be able to execute its own activities. Based on this MEMOS project and its data collection, it is difficult to say how much the budget should be, as it depends also for instance on the size of the country and the activity level of the Commission. However, it would be recommended that the budget should be enough to cover the costs of all recommended activities, such as to run the meetings, attend events, take initiatives, implement projects and have some training. In addition, it would be crucial to guarantee that all the European NOC's Athletes' Commissions utilise the IOC grant, as only 20 of them applied it in 2021. Besides the financial resources, it was highlighted in several occasions that it is important to have also administrative support and dedicated staff from the NOC. As the data shows, 29 out of 33

Athletes' Commissions get administrative support from the NOC. However, the level and type of support varies a lot. As highlighted in the answers, it would be highly recommended that the ACs have one dedicated staff member to work for the Commission. Besides the administrative work, this would guarantee that the ideas and initiatives of the Commission would have resources to be taken forward and better implemented as the AC members themselves are all volunteers.

Regarding the theories of participatory democracy and its recommendations to create multiple channels for constituents (=athletes) for participation to have more legitimate and informed decisions, which is also recommended by Thibault *et al.* (2010), the data suggests that this varies among the Athletes' Commissions and could be improved. Athletes' Forums, which can be seen as examples of these multiple channels or further mechanisms, and which are also recommended in the "IOC Athletes' Commission Guide", are organised regularly by 16 Athletes' Commissions out of 33 respondents, being around half of the overall answers. 12 out of these 16 said that they organise a forum every year, whereas three more organise it every second year. Considering the variety of Olympic athletes with different situations and backgrounds, these wider discussions with all athletes would be very important to have legitimate and informed decisions for the best of athletes. Thus, it should be considered that this national forum would be organised in every country once a year, or at very least once in every second year. IOC and EOC should organise these events at the international level at least every year. Furthermore, consultations can be seen as an example of participatory democracy. The current situation regarding consultations varies in Europe. Out of 33 ACs, which replied, 14 are consulted by the NOC monthly, 12 trimestrially and 7 semestrially. Furthermore, 12 replied that they are only consulted on the topics related to the athletes, whereas 19 are consulted also on other topics. Considering the importance to have multiple participation channels, the overall situation should be improved, and it would be recommended to consult the Athletes' Commission at least once a month and also on the topics that are not directly related to the athletes.

According to the theories of deliberative democracy, access to information is also very crucial. The collected data suggests that, lack of information seems to be sometimes a challenge. Even though 20 Athletes' Commission replied that they receive relevant information from the NOCs monthly, and even though many are consulted regularly, as explained above, still it was raised several times in the open questions on how to improve the athletes voice both inside the NOC and in wider sport political discussions outside the NOC, that more discussions, consultations and better involvement of athletes in the decision-making would be needed. Thus, it could be asked that is there enough discussion, sharing of information and exchanges of opinions happening that the athletes would be able to form positions and effectively participate in the decision-making as underlined in the theories of deliberative democracy. As suggested in some of the answers, regular meetings between the Athletes' Commission and NOC, e.g. every 3 to 4 months, could be a solution. In addition, as already elaborated, inclusion of athletes in every step of the decision-making, also in preparation phases with the NOC directors, and taking the voice of athletes seriously, would be crucial.

As the data shows, one of the biggest challenges seems to be the lack of education and training for the Athletes' Commission members as athletes' representatives. Only five Athletes'

Commissions, which replied, said that they had some training or education in place, 25 said that nothing is in place, whereas two said that they have informal training and one answered that only if they insist. Lack of education and training was also raised in the comments of Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter as one of the challenges, and Terho mentioned that the IOC Athletes' Commission has been developing a basic training, targeted to the Athletes' Commissions, that would be launched soon. Following the principles of deliberative democracy, the representatives generate power through deliberations by expressing their constituents' interests and participating actively in discussions, justifying their decisions and making mutually acceptable conclusions. For this education and possibility to have enough information is crucial. It would be very important that education and training is implemented urgently. It could be recommended that the IOC and EOC with their Athletes' Commissions take the main responsibility to develop training for the national Athletes' Commissions, with the support of the IOC and EOC. However, it would be also good that at the national level the Athletes' Commissions would have at least some kind of welcoming training for the new members, which the NOCs would support.

Following the theories of deliberative democracy, it would be also important that the Athletes' Commissions actively discuss and exchange with their constituents (=athletes) to form informed positions. 22 ACs replied that they actively work on their positions by taking into account the different viewpoints and interest of different athletes. This would be also important to be improved, and as suggested in some of the answers, the use of new technologies, e.g. instant messaging services, could be also a good way to increase exchanges with the wider group of athletes. Furthermore, as elaborated already earlier, the athletes' forum should be organised once a year to bring the athletes together to discuss.

Another aspect that the deliberative democracy highlights is that the representatives should actively participate in discussions by expressing their constituents' interests. The data shows that out of 33 Athletes' Commissions 18 are invited to wider sport political discussions outside the NOC, which are for instance organised by the Ministry, whereas 15 are not. This should be improved, and suggested ways to do this, would be that the Athletes' Commissions also build their direct relations and contacts to the politicians, civil servants and other relevant stakeholders and raise-awareness on their Commission and promote it as an important stakeholder. Here the Commissions own activity would be very important. However, besides that it is also crucial that the NOC and other stakeholders, including politicians and Ministries, recognise the athletes as an important stakeholder. Regarding the resources to attend these events, the situation seems better, since 25 ACs replied that they have resources for their members to attend major relevant events, where athletes' topics are discussed.

Regarding the critical academic discussions on the real independence and power of the Athletes' Commissions to represent the athletes' interests, as they are located inside the sport governing bodies, Seltmann's conclusion was that *the "interplay of forces inside the governing bodies (that is, athletes' commissions and athlete representatives on boards of national sport governing bodies) and independent athlete organizations, operating outside the structures of the Olympic Movement" would be important* (Seltmann, 2021). The data collected shows that 19 Athletes' Commissions have other athletes' organisations established outside the sport governing bodies, such as player unions, in their country. Nine of the ACs cooperate with them

regularly and three sometimes more occasionally. As highlighted by Gerd Kanter and Emma Terho in their interviews, in some aspects the Athletes' Commissions and athletes'/player unions have very different roles, for instance regarding the employment contracts, but on the other hand there are also topics, such as athletes' welfare and wellbeing and dual careers, where the interests are common. It would be recommended that the Athletes' Commissions cooperate with the athletes' and player unions, at least in these topics of common interests. This could be done with continuous dialogue, having regular meetings and attending each other's events, as some of the ACs are already doing according to the collected data. However, of course it is important that the cooperation is based on trust, mutual respect and is constructive for the best of athletes.

Regarding the independence and position of the Athletes' Commissions as part of the sport governing bodies, it can be agreed as raised by Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter, that there are many advantages in being inside the sport governing bodies, such as having better resources and most importantly better chances to actually influence the decisions from the early beginning, also in the topics that are very relevant for the athletes like the conditions in the sport events. Even though, some could claim that they are biased to elaborate this, it seems very realistic, as being part of the governing body, you actually get much better inside information and have direct access to the decision-making tables.

The Athletes' Commissions were also asked about the topics that they have addressed in their work following the suggestions in the "IOC Athletes' Commission Guide" with a couple of added topics. The data suggests that most Athletes' Commissions have addressed topics that can be seen as very relevant for the athletes. Athletes' Commission elections and athlete representation were addressed by 31 ACs, athlete support (e.g. career transition) by 30, anti-doping by 30, gender equality by 27 and athlete welfare (including well-being, mental health and safe sport) by 26. In addition, Rule 40, Rule 50 and sport rules and regulations have been addressed by 22 Athletes' Commissions. However, with the collected data, it is difficult to estimate if something relevant is missing, as this also depends on the situation and context of each Athletes' Commission. Further data collection and research would be needed for that.

One of the limitations of this MEMOS project is, that even though the response rate to the survey was relatively good, especially from a realistic point of view, there are still 17 European NOC's Athletes' Commissions, which did not reply to the survey. Thus, there is no data on the current situation in these countries to be taken into account in this project. This could have a statistical impact at least to some of the questions. It is known that the Athletes' Commissions exist also in these countries, and some of them are very active, for instance Germany, but on the other hand, in some of these countries, the Athletes' Commissions are relatively recently established, and unfortunately in the scope of this project, it is not possible to say anything on their current activity level, nor their inclusion in the decision-making processes.

7. Recommendations

Considering the topic of this project, the current situation regarding the Athletes' Commissions based on the collected data as well as the findings presented and discussed in

chapters 5 and 6 in the light of existing theories, some recommendations are presented in this chapter. As many of them are already reflected in the discussion part, this chapter is to summarise the recommendations.

With regards to the topic of this project, there are different stakeholders from which actions are needed to strengthen the Athletes' Commissions and ensure that the athletes' voice is considered in decision-making. Based on the collected data, three main stakeholder's groups are identified as follows: 1) IOC and EOC and their Athletes' Commissions, 2) NOCs 3) Athletes' Commission members as athletes' representatives and all the Olympic athletes. In the three tables below are presented the main recommendations for each of these stakeholder groups. As the writer of this project is not in a possession to estimate the timescales for each of the priority areas and recommendations, as it depends so much of the organisation's own situation, this is not covered in the given tables.

The main recommendation areas for the IOC and EOC and their Athletes' Commissions are: 1) Develop and execute regular education and training programmes for athletes' representatives and Commissions, 2) Lead by example and ensure that there are properly working Athletes' Commissions in each of the European NOCs, 3) Organise exchanges between the Athletes' Commissions regularly and 4) Consider giving more voting power to athletes. For each of these recommendation areas, several actions are listed, as well as the responsible to take the lead, potential resources needed and critical success factors.

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Critical success factors
1	Develop and execute regular education and training programmes for athletes' representatives and Commissions.	<p>Identify examples of good practice.</p> <p>Consult with all key stakeholders.</p> <p>Develop and execute the education and training programmes and consider having at least the following parts included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the structures and decision-making 	IOC/EOC Athletes' Commission with the support of professional staff and financial resources of the IOC and EOC.	<p>Time</p> <p>Financial resources,</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Potentially some travel expenses</p>	Commitment of IOC and EOC Athletes' Commissions and Boards, and relevant staff members.

		<p>processes of the Olympic movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocol and guidance for newly elected members on the role and possibilities • Public speaking • Networking 			
2	Lead by example and ensure that there are properly working Athletes' Commissions in each of the European NOCs.	<p>Map the current situation to ensure that the Athletes' Commissions in each of the European NOCs are properly in place and working according to the Olympic Charter and other guiding documents and recommendations of the Olympic movement.</p> <p>Push the NOCs and their ACs to apply the IOC grant.</p> <p>Develop a profile or a criteria for Athletes Commission candidates to know what the work requires and consists.</p>	IOC/EOC Athletes' Commission with the support of professional staff and financial resources of the IOC and EOC	Time Financial resources Staff	Commitment of IOC and EOC Athletes' Commissions and Boards, and relevant staff members
3	Organise exchanges	Organise athletes' forums at least once a year.	IOC/EOC Athletes' Commission	Time	Commitment of

	between the ACs regularly	<p>Organise regularly (online) meetings and events in between the forums for the Athletes' Commissions to exchange information and good practices.</p> <p>Organise mentoring between the national Athletes' Commissions of Europe, so that the more experienced and active ACs would mentor the newly established.</p>	with the support of professional staff and financial resources of the IOC and EOC	<p>Financial resources,</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Travel expenses</p>	IOC and EOC Athletes' Commissions and Boards, and relevant staff members
4	Consider giving more voting power to athletes	Consider increasing the voting power of athletes to two representatives in the highest decision-making bodies.	IOC and EOC Boards		Commitment of IOC and EOC Boards

Suggested recommendations for the NOCs are presented in the table below. The main recommendation areas are: 1) Take the athletes' voice seriously and include the AC in all sport political discussions, 2) Provide proper resources to the Athletes' Commission, 3) Consider giving more voting power to athletes and 4) Support the Athletes' Commission to organise its elections and to have a balanced composition in the Commission. Again, for each of these recommendation areas, several actions are listed, as well as the responsible to take the lead, potential resources needed and critical success factors.

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Critical success factors

1	<p>Take the athletes' voice seriously and include the AC in all sport political discussions.</p>	<p>Include athletes in all phases of the decision-making from the early preparations to the implementation.</p> <p>Consult the Athletes' Commissions at least once a month and also on wider topics than just the ones related directly to the athletes. Consider also having consultations with easy access to active athletes, e.g. in their training camps.</p> <p>Share information and organise regular meetings between the NOC Board and Athletes' Commission, e.g. every three or four months.</p> <p>Involve athletes into discussions with other stakeholders, e.g. with Ministries, and raise awareness on the athletes as an important stakeholder to</p>	<p>Sec Gen and the staff member in charge of supporting the AC.</p>	<p>Time Travel expenses</p>	<p>Commitment of Board and members</p>
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		other stakeholders.			
2	Provide proper resources to the Athletes' Commission	<p>Provide sufficient financial resources to the AC to take care of the recommended activities, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AC to organise regular meetings • AC to organise athletes' forum once a year • AC members to attend relevant events and meetings • AC members to have possibility for education and training • AC to have possibility to implement projects and activities <p>Make sure that the AC applies the IOC grant and support the application process.</p>	Sec Gen	Time Financial resources Staff	Commitment of Board

		Provide one dedicated staff member to support the AC, not only in administration, but also in taking initiatives and strategic projects forward.			
3	Consider giving more voting power to athletes.	Consider increasing the voting power of athletes to two representatives in the highest decision-making bodies.	Sec Gen	Time	Commitment of Board and members
4	Support the AC to organise its elections and to have a balanced composition in the Commission.	<p>Support the AC in the organisation of the elections of the AC members by peer athletes. Make sure that the staggered elections are in place.</p> <p>Ensure that there are both active and retired athletes in the AC and that the composition is also otherwise balanced (different sports, gender balance etc.), e.g. by appointing some further members, but only if needed.</p>	Sec Gen and the staff member in charge of supporting the AC	Time Financial resources Staff	<p>Commitment of Sec Gen, Board and staff to support the AC.</p> <p>Commitment of the AC.</p>

Suggested recommendations for the Athletes' Commission members as athletes' representatives and all the Olympic athletes are presented in the table below. The main recommendation areas are: 1) Ensure an effective Athletes' Commission with motivated, skilled and committed members, 2) Organise national forums & consultations, discussion etc. regularly with the wider group of athletes, 3) Push athletes to be involved in decision-making at all levels, 4) Apply IOC grant and 5) Cooperate with other athletes' organisations and unions in topics of common interest. Again, for each of these recommendation areas, several actions are listed, as well as the responsible to take the lead, potential resources needed and critical success factors.

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Critical success factors
1	Ensure an effective Athletes Commission with motivated, skilled and committed members.	<p>Ensure elections, where the AC members are elected by their peers.</p> <p>Use staggered elections to ensure the transfer of knowledge.</p> <p>Look for motivated, interested and committed candidates from different backgrounds and sports for the elections, and for instance use a criteria for candidates to self-scan their motivation.</p> <p>Ensure good balance between active and retired athletes.</p> <p>Consider the biggest</p>	Athletes Commission Chair with the support of the members and dedicated staff from the NOC.	Time Financial resources Staff	<p>Commitment of the Athletes' Commission</p> <p>Support of the NOC</p>

		<p>responsibilities for retired athletes, who have more time, but ensure that active athletes are also involved in the work of the Commission.</p> <p>Organise a welcoming training for the new members to understand the structures and decision-making processes.</p> <p>Organise mentoring by more experienced AC members to the newcomers.</p> <p>Clarify the roles and divide duties between the members.</p>			
2	Organise national forums & consultations, discussion etc. regularly with the wider group of athletes.	<p>Organise a national athletes' forum once a year.</p> <p>Organise regular exchanges and consultations with the wider group of athletes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise modern technology in this, e.g. with the help 	Athletes Commission Chair with the support of the members and dedicated staff from the NOC	Time Financial resources Staff	Commitment of the Athletes' Commission Support of the NOC

		<p>of instant messaging services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise consultations in places which are easy for active athletes, such as training camps. 			
3	Push athletes to be involved in decision-making at all levels.	<p>Raise awareness and promote the Athletes' Commission as an important stakeholder towards external stakeholders.</p> <p>Build direct contacts to politicians, Ministries and other relevant stakeholders.</p>	Athletes' Commission Chair with the support of the members	Time Financial resources	<p>Commitment of the Athletes' Commission</p> <p>Support of the NOC</p>
4	Apply IOC grant	Make sure to apply the IOC grant for the Athletes' Commission. Ask help in the application process from the NOC.	Athletes' Commission Chair with the support of the members and dedicated staff from the NOC.	Time Financial resources Staff	<p>Commitment of the Athletes' Commission</p> <p>Support of the NOC</p>
5	Cooperate with other athletes' organisations and unions in topics of common interest.	Cooperate with other athletes' organisations and unions, at least in topics of common interest.	Athletes' Commission Chair with the support of the members	Time Financial resources	Commitment of the Athletes'

		Cooperation should be constructive and based on mutual trust.			Commission Constructive cooperation and relations based on mutual trust.
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8. Conclusions

This project gives an overall picture on the situation of athletes' voice in the European National Olympic Committees and in the European Olympic Committees, as well as some recommendations on how to strengthen the athletes' voice in the decision-making of these organisations. This was researched by sending a survey to the Athletes' Commissions of European National Olympic Committees and to the EOC Athletes' Commission, as well as by interviewing IOC and EOC Athletes' Commission Chairs, Emma Terho and Gerd Kanter.

The main limitations of this project are related to the fact that even though the turnover to reply to the survey sent to the NOC's Athletes' Commissions was realistically good, there were still 17 NOC's Athletes' Commissions, which did not reply to the questionnaire. Currently, there are altogether 49 NOC's Athletes' Commissions in Europe that exist and are at least formally established. It is also known that some of these 17 Athletes' Commissions, which did not reply, like the one in Germany, are working very actively. However, regarding some other Commissions, there is no information how actively they operate, and unfortunately despite of several reminders, this project did not manage to gather this information. Furthermore, there were couple of replies to the open questions, which also suggested that in very few of the Athletes' Commissions that responded to the survey, sometimes their voice is taken into account on paper but not always in reality. Thus, the main recommendation for further research would be to clarify that what is the current situation in all the 49 NOC's Athletes' Commissions in Europe and make sure that all of them operate according to the different recommendations by the Olympic movement. This would be something for the IOC and EOC and their Athletes' Commissions to further investigate.

Additionally, it is important to take into account that as far as the writer is aware, the survey was most of the times filled in by one person as a representative of the Athletes' Commission. As requested in the instructions, this was usually the Chair, which is a natural choice as a main representative of the Commission. However, when the survey was sent, they were encouraged to also consult the whole Commission if possible, but there is no data how many did that.

Furthermore, the choice was done in the beginning of the project to focus on the Athletes' Commissions of the EOC and NOCs, and not to include the ones of the European or International federations, even though the Olympic federations are an important part of the Olympic movement. In the end, this was a clear and conscious decision to focus on the ones of the NOCs and EOC as their role is similar. Furthermore, including the Athletes' Commissions of the federations in this research would have made this project way too big when considering the scope of the given guidelines for the MEMOS project. However, it could be interesting to do further research, where also the Athletes' Commissions of the federations are included.

In addition, it would be interesting to do further research on the true resources of the Athletes' Commissions, especially regarding the financial and human resources, which are the crucial ones for the strong athletes' voice according to the outcomes of this project. In this project, it was inquired if the Athletes' Commissions have a budget and how big it is, as well as they were asked if they get any administrative support and if yes, what kind of support. However, it would need further research to get the real picture on the resources, for instance regarding the volume of the financial resources compared to the size of the country or the activities of the Athletes' Commission or on the volume of staff resources that the Commissions have at their disposal.

Abstract

Topic of this MEMOS project “Athletes' voice in the Olympic movement – How can the Athletes' Commissions of Europe be strengthened to ensure the athletes' voice in the decision-making?” is divided into three following sub-questions as follows:

- What are the expectations and recommendations on the role of athletes' representation and Athletes' Commissions in the Olympic movement?
- What is the current situation of the Athletes' Commissions?
- How can the Athletes' Commissions be strengthened?

The expectations and recommendations on the role of Athletes' Commissions are elaborated through literature review, in which three main areas are addressed: 1) models of democracy, 2) overview of the existing guiding documents of the Olympic movement on athletes' representation and work of the Athletes' Commissions and 3) critical discussions. Data collection survey and interviews, as well as the analysis, of this project are based on these.

Data collection methods used in this project are survey and semi-structured interviews. The survey was sent to the 49 European NOC's Athletes' Commissions that exist at the moment and to the European Olympic Committees (EOC) Athletes' Commission. 32 NOC's Athletes Commissions and the EOC Athletes' Commission replied to the questionnaire. With the survey, data was collected on the current situation of the Athletes' Commissions, as well as on the views that how the Athletes' Commissions could be strengthened. The survey was based on the theories and recommendations identified in the literature review. In the second stage of the data collection, two semi-structured interviews were carried out, namely with IOC Athletes' Commission Chair, Emma Terho, and EOC Athletes' Commission Chair, Gerd Kanter. They were asked to comment the main findings of the survey and further elaborate some aspects.

The collected data is thoroughly analysed and discussed in this project. Furthermore, some recommendations are made to different stakeholders. Considering the topic, the main stakeholder groups, to which recommendations for action are made are: 1) IOC and EOC and their Athletes' Commissions, 2) NOCs 3) Athletes' Commission members as athletes' representatives and all the Olympic athletes. For each of these stakeholder groups, there are four to five recommendation areas and for each area proposals for concrete actions, suggested person in charge, needed resources and critical success factors.

Main recommendation areas for the IOC and EOC and their Athletes' Commissions are: 1) Develop and execute regular education and training programmes for athletes' representatives and Commissions, 2) Lead by example and ensure that there are properly working Athletes' Commissions in each of the European NOCs, 3) Organise exchanges between the Athletes' Commissions regularly and 4) Consider giving more voting power to athletes.

Whereas the main recommendations areas for the NOCs are: 1) Take the athletes' voice seriously and include the AC in all sport political discussions, 2) Provide proper resources to the Athletes' Commission, 3) Consider giving more voting power to athletes and 4) Support

the Athletes' Commission to organise its elections and to have a balanced composition in the Commission.

Last but not least, the main recommendations areas for the Athletes' Commission members as athletes' representatives and all the Olympic athletes are: 1) Ensure an effective Athletes' Commission with motivated, skilled and committed members, 2) Organise national forums & consultations, discussion etc. regularly with the wider group of athletes, 3) Push athletes to be involved in decision-making at all levels, 4) Apply IOC grant and 5) Cooperate with other athletes' organisations and unions in topics of common interest.

Résumé

Le sujet de ce projet MEMOS "La voix des athlètes dans le mouvement olympique - Comment les commissions des athlètes d'Europe peuvent-elles être renforcées pour garantir la voix des athlètes dans la prise de décision ?" est divisé en trois sous-questions comme suit :

- Quelles sont les attentes et les recommandations sur le rôle de la représentation des athlètes et des commissions des athlètes dans le mouvement olympique ?
- Quelle est la situation actuelle des commissions des athlètes ?
- Comment les commissions des athlètes peuvent-elles être renforcées ?

Les attentes et les recommandations sur le rôle des commissions des athlètes sont élaborées à travers une revue de la littérature, dans laquelle trois domaines principaux sont abordés : 1) modèles de démocratie, 2) aperçu des documents directeurs existants du mouvement olympique sur la représentation des athlètes et le travail des commissions des athlètes et 3) discussions critiques. L'enquête de collecte de données et les entretiens, ainsi que l'analyse, de ce projet sont basés sur ces derniers.

Les méthodes de collecte de données utilisées dans ce projet sont l'enquête et les entretiens semi-structurés. L'enquête a été envoyée aux 49 commissions des athlètes des CNO européens qui existent actuellement et à la commission des athlètes des Comités Olympiques Européens (COE). 32 commissions des athlètes de CNO et la commission des athlètes des COE ont répondu au questionnaire. L'enquête a permis de collecter des données sur la situation actuelle des commissions des athlètes, ainsi que sur les points de vue sur la façon dont les commissions des athlètes pourraient être renforcées. L'enquête était basée sur les théories et les recommandations identifiées dans la revue de la littérature. Dans la deuxième étape de la collecte de données, deux entretiens semi-structurés ont été réalisés, à savoir avec la présidente de la commission des athlètes du CIO, Emma Terho, et le président de la commission des athlètes des COE, Gerd Kanter. Il leur a été demandé de commenter les principaux résultats de l'enquête et d'approfondir certains aspects.

Les données collectées sont analysées et discutées en détail dans ce projet. En outre, certaines recommandations sont faites aux différentes parties prenantes. Compte tenu du sujet, les principaux groupes de parties prenantes auxquels des recommandations d'action sont adressées sont les suivants : 1) le CIO et les COE et leurs commissions des athlètes, 2) les CNO, 3) les membres des commissions des athlètes en tant que représentants des athlètes et tous les athlètes olympiques. Pour chacun de ces groupes de parties prenantes, il y a quatre à cinq domaines de recommandation et pour chaque domaine, des propositions d'actions concrètes, une personne responsable suggérée, les ressources nécessaires et les facteurs critiques de succès.

Les principaux domaines de recommandation pour le CIO et les COE et leurs commissions des athlètes sont les suivants : 1) Développer et exécuter des programmes réguliers d'éducation et de formation pour les représentants des athlètes et les commissions, 2) Montrer l'exemple et s'assurer que des commissions des athlètes fonctionnent correctement dans chacun des

CNO européens, 3) Organiser régulièrement des échanges entre les commissions des athlètes et 4) Envisager de donner plus de pouvoir de vote aux athlètes.

Les principales recommandations pour les CNO sont les suivantes : 1) Prendre la voix des athlètes au sérieux et inclure la CA dans toutes les discussions politiques sur le sport, 2) Fournir des ressources appropriées à la commission des athlètes, 3) Envisager de donner plus de pouvoir de vote aux athlètes et 4) Soutenir la commission des athlètes pour organiser ses élections et avoir une composition équilibrée dans la commission.

Enfin, les principaux domaines de recommandations pour les membres de la commission des athlètes en tant que représentants des athlètes et pour tous les athlètes olympiques sont les suivants : 1) Assurer une commission des athlètes efficace avec des membres motivés, compétents et engagés, 2) Organiser régulièrement des forums et consultations nationaux, des discussions, etc. avec le groupe élargi des athlètes, 3) Pousser les athlètes à s'impliquer dans la prise de décision à tous les niveaux, 4) Demander une subvention du CIO et 5) Coopérer avec d'autres organisations et syndicats d'athlètes sur des sujets d'intérêt commun.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Questionnaire – EOC & ENOCs Athletes' Commissions

Topic: "Athletes' voice in the Olympic movement – How can the Athletes' Commissions of Europe be strengthened to ensure the athletes' voice in the decision-making?"

Background questions

- Which Athletes Commission are you completing this survey on behalf of?
- Who is filling the questionnaire (name and position)?

Governance / Structural perspective:

- Do you have an Athletes Commission in your NOC / (EOC)?
- Does the AC Chair have a voting right within the organisation's highest decision-making body (Executive Board, Executive Committee, Council..)?
- Are athletes' representatives involved in other Commissions of your NOC (EOC)?
- How many members are in your Athletes' Commission (total number of members)?
- How many of the Athletes' Commission members are female?
- How many of the Athletes' Commission members are male?
- How many of the Athletes' Commission members are non-binary?
- Regarding the composition of the AC, are different sports and/or disciplines represented? Please tick all the options that apply.
 - Both winter and summer sports are represented in the AC
 - Both team sport and individual sports are represented in the AC
 - All members of the AC are representing different sports
- In case your AC members are not from different sports, how many of them are from same sport?
- In case your NOC has as members also non-Olympic sports, are the non-Olympic sports also represented in your AC?
- Are all the AC members either active or recently retired (less than 8 years) athletes?
 - How many of the members are still active athletes?
 - How many of the members are recently retired athletes (less than 8 years)?
- Is majority of the AC members elected by their peers?

- Do you have staggered elections (=elections where only some of the places in an elected body are up for election at the same time) in place for your NOC (/EOC) AC to ensure continuous transfer of knowledge between members?
- Is the AC consulted regularly inside the NOC (/EOC)?
 - Monthly
 - Trimestrially
 - Semestrially
 - Once a year
 - Less often
 - Not at all
- Is the AC consulted only on topics related to athletes or also other topics?
 - Only on topics related to athletes
 - Also other topics
- Is an athletes' forum organised regularly in your NOC (/EOC)?
- If yes, how often is the athletes' forum organised?
 - Once a year
 - Every second year
 - Once in four years
- Is the Athletes' Commission invited to wider sport political discussions outside the NOC (/EOC) e.g. by Ministry (or European Commission)?
- If yes, on which topics?
- If yes, which entity/entities is/are organising these discussions?
- Open question: What could be done to improve that the athletes' voice is better taken into account inside the NOC (/EOC)?
- Open question: What could be done to improve that the athletes' voice is better taken into account in the wider sport political discussions in your country (/European level)?
- Do you have other athletes' organisations that are established outside the sport governing bodies (such as player unions) in your country?
- In case yes, do you cooperate with them?
- Open question: In case you cooperate with them, in which way and how would you estimate the cooperation?
- Open question: Any other comments on the structures / governance of athletes' commissions or athletes' voice?

Strategic level:

- Has the AC discussed or addressed the following topics? Please tick all the options that apply.
 - Sport rules and regulations
 - Events, disciplines, qualifying and the programme of championships
 - Anti-doping
 - Gender equality
 - Athlete support (e.g. career transition)

- Athlete welfare (well-being, mental health, safe sport)
 - Athletes' Commission elections and athlete representation
 - Professional leagues
 - Athlete image rights
 - Rule 40
 - Rule 50
 - Human rights
 - Athletes' revenues
- Any comments related to the topics that the AC is dealing with (e.g. if a topic that your AC has discussed is missing from the list or any issues you would think the AC should deal with to ensure a strong athletes' voice)?
- Resources
 - Does the AC have the political support of the NOC's (/EOC's) top leadership for their work?
 - Does the AC get administrative help from the NOC (/EOC)?
 - Open question: If yes, what kind of support?
 - Does the AC have a budget for its activities?
 - Does the AC have a possibility for regular meetings (at least 3 times / year)
 - Does the AC have means/resources for regular communication with the athletes it is representing?
 - Does the AC have a website or other ways to communicate among themselves and provide updates?
 - Does the AC have resources for its members to attend major relevant events (e.g. where athletes' topics are discussed or other sport political events where athletes' voice should be represented)?
 - If not, what are the major barriers?
 - Does the AC get regularly and sufficiently information on the relevant topics?
 - Monthly
 - Trimestrially
 - Semestrially
 - Once year
 - Less often
 - Not at all
- Skills and competencies, motivation, common positions
 - Do the AC members get any training or education for the role?
 - If yes, what kind of training?
 - On scale 1-10 how would you estimate the overall motivation of the AC members? (1=not at all motivated / 10 = very motivated)
 - On scale 1-10 how would you estimate the overall skills and competencies of the AC members to contribute to the discussions and represent the athletes' voice? (1=not at all skilled and competent / 10=very skilled and competent)
 - On scale 1-10 how would you estimate the overall commitment of the AC members for the AC work and dedication of time for the duties? (1=not committed / 10=very much committed)

- Open question: Any further comments on how to improve the competencies, skills, dedication and motivation of the AC members?
- Does the AC actively work on its positions by taking into account the different viewpoints and interests of different athletes?
- If yes, in which ways (position papers, consultations, discussions..)?
- Any other comments you would like to share regarding strengthening the athletes' voice in decision-making?

Semi-structured interviews – IOC Athletes’ Commission Chair Emma Terho and EOC Athletes’ Commission Chair Gerd Kanter

Athletes’ representatives

Availability of athletes’ representatives - Active athletes might find it challenging to find time however, the retired ones are not anymore active athletes.

Any ideas how to find a good balance?

Athletes’ voice and how to improve it

27 Athletes’ Commissions out of 33 replied to the open question “*What could be done to improve that the athletes’ voice is better taken into account inside the NOC (/EOC)?*” The following areas were raised in the answers:

- 1) Give more decision-making power in the voting systems and decision-making bodies to the athletes
- 2) Organise meetings, discussions and consultations
- 3) Increase resources and support for the Athletes’ Commissions
- 4) Improve the voice and existence of Athletes’ Commissions in the different federations
- 5) Include athletes in wider discussions with other stakeholders
- 6) Improve communication and information sharing
- 7) Motivate and encourage athletes’ participation
- 8) Athletes’ Commissions to be active and raise the voice

What reflections does this raise?

Do you have any further ideas?

Sport political discussions outside the NOC, e.g. organised by the Ministries, NADO, EU

With regards to the *Athletes Commissions’ involvement in the wider sport political discussions* in the country or at the European level, i.e. that are organised outside the NOC and for instance by the Ministry, 18 ACs out of 33 said that they are invited, whereas 15 are not.

What could be done that the ACs get more invited and involved?

The Athletes' Commissions were also asked that *"What could be done to improve that the athletes' voice is better taken into account in the wider sport political discussions in your country (/European level)?"* and 30 out of 33 replied to it. The following areas were raised in the answers:

- 1) Improve the connection to and have more discussions with politicians, Ministries and authorities
- 2) Strengthen the Athletes' Commission
- 3) Encourage and involve athletes in decision-making, discussions and consultations
- 4) Raise awareness on the Athletes' Commissions and improve communication
- 5) Take athletes' voice seriously and understand that it might differ from the federation / NOC

What reflections does this raise? Do you have any further ideas?

Other athletes' organisations, such as player unions

Other athletes' organisations, such as player unions – how do you see the cooperation with them?

Athletes' Commissions outside of the NOC/sport governing bodies

How do you see the place of Athletes' Commissions as some critics say that ACs should be established outside the structures of the NOC or sport governing bodies to ensure that the athletes can better represent their own interests?

Resources

6 ACs out of 33, which replied, do not have a budget, and one additional *only* has budget if they apply the IOC grant. Furthermore, four out of the ones which replied "yes", said that they only have the IOC grant.

Regarding the size of the budgets, 12 ACs have a budget between 8 000€ and 15 000€. One AC has 100 000 €, which is the biggest budget, second biggest being 60 000-70 000€ and third one around 24 000€. Smallest budget specified in the answers was under 3 000€.

What reflections does this raise?

Training and education

ACs were asked if the *members get any training or education for their role*. 25 out of 33 said that they do not get any training, five said “yes”, and one that only if they insist.

What kind of training from your point of you could help the AC members and athlete representatives?

Motivation and commitment of the Athletes’ Commission members

Motivation and commitment of athletes were estimated lower than skills and competences:

- Motivation: on scale 1 (not at all motivated) to 10 (very motivated), the average (mean) is 6.57, whereas median is 7 and mode 8.
- Commitment: scale 1 (not at all committed) to 10 (very committed), the average is 6.24, median 7 and mode 6.
- Skills and competencies: on scale 1 (not at all skilled and competent) to 10 (very skilled and competent), the average (mean) is ~7.52, whereas median is 8 and mode 8 or 9.

Any reflections why motivation and commitment are challenging and how could those be improved?

Appendix 3: Meeting transcript example

Meeting Transcription – part of Emma Terho’s interview transcript as an example. Full interview transcript is only available for the MEMOS jury by their request.

Participants: Emma Terho, Heidi Pekkola

Transcript

08:16 Heidi P.: Let's switch to English or the

08:48 Emma T.: Yes.

08:48 Heidi P.: So first area was this athletes like a representativeness and especially that how their availability, that how they are available. So, there were some things that the like somewhere raising like this, that many don't have time really, to be available, and especially with the still active athletes.

09:32 Heidi P.: And, and then like, sometimes that's somewhere raising that it's better to have like, retired ones also in the Commission and maybe then more and yeah, but I don't know if you have any comments.

09:45 Emma T.: That's right.

09:48 Heidi P.: on that that what is a good balance between the active and retired athletes? And and I guess in the IOC you have this recommendation of limiting, it eight years [after finishing athlete career] and not having later than that.

10:04 Emma T.: Yes, I think. One thing is defining what is an active athlete? So I think having the limited time. As far as how long. After that, let us finish his or her career, they can be considered active, but yes, it is. It is clear that the ones that are in the peak or kind of still in the very competitive phase of their career that they do have limitations with the time and therefore I think it's important to yet they still have it's important to have also those athletes. So I'm thinking that combo of having athletes that are [active] It's understandable that they might not or they are more restricted with the time that they have. But still, they do have very valuable feedback and also I think the main thing is to have that you would have the connections with the active. That there's a connection between the active athlete community and therefore, I think it's like for the representative. That's that's an important, of course, like have their own views but it makes sure that there's a connection with the link.