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**ANALYSIS OF THEORETICAL, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES  
OF BASKETBALL MANAGEMENT IN BULGARIA**

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**Abstract**

Management and development of basketball is a complex social and economic system. The objective of this study is to analyze some of the principle aspects of the management and development of basketball in Bulgaria through BFB. In this publication we have presented: theoretical and scientific research results from modern research studies and best practices in the management and development of basketball in Bulgaria and in other countries; European policy of sports management; design of a theoretical model for management of sports organizations and a sports federation; main areas of activity of the Bulgarian Basketball Federation (BFB). There are also recommendations for optimization of its functions and its contribution to basketball management in Bulgaria.

**Keywords**

System – Basketball – Federation – Program – Structure

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## Introduction

In today's society, there is a steady trend towards increasing the importance of sport in the European Union. Member Countries are carrying out an intensive process to create a set of conditions for involving more citizens in various forms of motor activity. This is aiming to increase sport's influence on the fight against socially significant diseases, to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Within social systems for management and development of sport (policy, strategy, programming), there are constant efforts to increase the role of the government and sports organizations, to support their collaboration, functioning and progress.

Sports organizations – unions, federations, associations, clubs – are important factors for building, managing and developing the sub-systems: physical education and sport in schools; sport in the spare time; sport for high competitive achievements.

The objective of this study is to analyze some of the principle aspects of the management and development of basketball in Bulgaria through BFB.

## Research methods

Methodology of the approach for the achievement of the objective: Analysis of the theoretical aspects of the management of sports organizations and BFBasketball; Design of theoretical models; European sport policies and specific features in the BFB activity. The research used the following scientific methods: content analysis, functional analysis, systematic approach, questionnaire, expert evaluation, multifactorial analysis, Case Study.

## Problem definition

In the last 20-25 years, theoretical, scientific and practical studies in the management of sports organizations have been conducted in most European countries.

Many authors provide research results, related to the application of a systematic approach, expert studies, structural and functional analyzes of the processes of creation, operation and development of national systems for the management of physical education and sport. In this context, the theoretical model for development of sport as a system is original. It includes interrelated elements such as: subject, object; natural capital; institutions; resources; factors; functions; principles; structure; technology; organizational culture; products (usefulness)<sup>1</sup>. In addition to those, it also covers the impact of a set of political, social and economic factors in the external and internal environments of the systems in the sport area<sup>2</sup>.

There is methodological importance for the composition of the structure-functional elements, the organization, environment, hierarchy structure, strategy and planning, as parts of a theoretical model for the development of the organization<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Chausheva, Upravljenje na razvitiето na sporta v Bulgaria (Sofia: Monografia, Nais-An, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> R. Chausheva y P. Bankov, Politika na Evropeiskiq suiyz i ypravleniето na razvitiето na sporta v Bulgaria (Sofia: Sport i nayka, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> G. Pires, Agôn Gestio do Desporto. O jogo de Zeus (Porto: Porto Editora, 2007).

Subjects of researches are the methodology and theory of strategy design (technology, life cycle, management, implementation, planning, processes, resources, environment)<sup>4</sup>. Some authors suggest application of organizational culture theory with elements; structure; organization; socialization; communication; motivation; management; analysis; information<sup>5</sup>.

Several elements are highlighted in the field of management of sports federations, such as: the legal regime, nature and origin of sports federations, modern theoretical aspects of functioning, as well as the possibilities of applying sports legislation depending on the specific features of sports federations in individual countries.

I. Sandanski formulates arguments for the first time in the area of management of physical education and sports, the actual need and opportunity for strategic selectivity of the state sports policy. In this way the development of this social sphere in the future will correspond and be in line with the real needs of the Bulgarian society<sup>6</sup>.

The theoretical aspects of management and development of sports organizations in Bulgaria are the objects of scientific research studies with practical, timeless relevance<sup>7</sup> – B. Naidenov. The author proposes structural-functional models for managing the development of sports organizations (federations, associations, sports clubs), of their interaction in the conditions of their external and internal environment of social systems.

The Bulgarian Sambo Federation, as a social system (policy, strategy, programming), is the subject of theoretical, scientific studies and best practices studying<sup>8</sup>. Several factors have been discovered to influence the management and development of sambo, at different levels in the country.

A theoretical framework has been designed for a current scientific research of the changes in the sports organizations in Bulgaria. The following federations were studied: weightlifting, water sports, field hockey<sup>9</sup>.

In the Republic of Bulgaria after 1990, intensive and profound changes – political, economic, social – have been taking place in the society. In the management of physical education and sport, these changes cause the replacement of the principle of public-state governance with the principle of state-public. There is a dynamic process in the policy, strategy and programming of the activities of the state and public sports organizations in the goals, functions, structure, principles, legislation, resource provision of the activity for the development of the main subsystems: physical education and sports in educational establishments; leisure sports; children's and youth sports; sport for excellence - at national, regional and local levels.

<sup>4</sup> Tz. Semerdjiev, *Strategiq (sreda, resyrsi, sposobnosti, planirane)* (Sofia: Klasika i stil, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> I. Groshev; P. Emelianov y V. Iyrev, *Organizatsionna kylytura* (Moskva: Iyniti, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> I. Sandanski, *Strategicheska izbiratelnost na durjavata i sportnite politiki* (Sofia, Sport i nayka, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> B. Naidenov, *Teoritichni aspekti na upravlenieto i razvitiето na obshtestvenite sportni organizacii v Bulgaria*, (Sofia, Sport i nayka, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> R. Stoilov, *Osobenosti na politikata, strategiqta i ypravlenieto na sportnite federacii* (Sofia, Sport i nayka, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> V. Girginov y I. Sandanski, *Sushtnost na promeni v sportnite organizacii v Bulgaria* (Sofia, Sb. „Sport – sotzialni i politicheski analizi”, Yniversitetsko izdanie “Sv. Kliment Ohridski”, 2012).

A government body was founded in 1992 – the Committee for Youth and Sports at the Government. In 1996 the Parliament passed the Law for Physical Education and Sports.

The Republic of Bulgaria became a full member of the European Union in 2007. In recent years, the bodies of the European Union have been adopting a set of documents – charters, conventions, programs, strategies, which are recommended to apply in the management of physical education and sport in Bulgaria. The aim is to enhance their social functions – educational, social, health, cultural and restorative, among the various socio-demographic groups of the population. Particular attention is paid to the functioning of public sports organizations – federations, associations, clubs, unions and other civic voluntary associations.

Based on the above, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has adopted national programs and strategies for the development of the physical education and sports in the country. The documents envision the specifics, the opportunities to establish, the operation and development of sports organizations in Bulgaria – one among them is BFB. The Federation was founded 100 years ago (1919)<sup>10</sup>. Today, BFB is an organization with strong traditions – it is the founder of the European Basketball Federation. It has achieved high results in the performance of the National Teams (men, women) in the Olympic Games, World and European Championships and Tournaments<sup>11</sup>. BFB is an independent voluntary association of clubs and basketball associations in Bulgaria. It executes variety of activities for management and development of basketball: organizational, programming, methodological, teaching and coaching methodology, sports competitions, technical, resources, legal and regulatory.

On this basis, by applying a systematic approach (aspects; structural; functional; component; informative; integrative; resource), two theoretical models for the management of sports organizations in Bulgaria have been designed.

The first model, "Management of sports organizations at national level", including: external and internal environment; sports policy, strategy and programming; management entities – state, public and private institutions and organizations; subsystems; socio-demographic groups; forms of motor activity; resources: human, infrastructure, financial; scientific; medical; information; program-methodological management.

The national external environment with its elements – systems: political; economic; social; educational; information; legislative, influence at different extents.

The second model is derived from the first one – "Management of a National Sports Federation" – BFB is given as an example – the main management subject of the development of basketball in the country (with national, regional and local levels). Key elements of the model that predetermine the sustainable and effective functioning and development of the Federation, of the fuller realization of its functions in the development of basketball, among the various socio-demographic groups, are: the external environment – entities (Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Education and Science; International

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<sup>10</sup> M. Tzankova-Kaloyanova; Q. Asparyhiv y G. Tomov, 100 godini basketbol v Bulgaria (Sofia, Godishnik na Natzionalna Sportna Akademiq "Vasil Levski", 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Ts. Tsankov, "Management, condition and prospects for the development of basketball of Bulgaria", Revista Inclusiones. Vol: 6 num Esp (2019): 54-60.

Basketball Federation; European Basketball Federation; Bulgarian Olympic Committee; Ministry of Defense; Ministry of the Interior; Ministry of Labor and Social Policy; economic institutions and organizations, municipalities. Their involvement on the basis of interaction (public, private, social) with the BFB, is a condition and a prerequisite for social and resource support to the management of basketball. Other elements are: structural establishment (standing and temporary committees; administrative structure), effective functioning of BFB units at regional level through regional coordinators and local level (sports clubs); implementation of the principle of "Balanced centralized and decentralized management", professionally prepared human resources (coaches, methodologists, managers, organizers, medics, marketing, information system and more).

One of the main indicators, and a limited factor with timeless relevance, for the efficient management and development of basketball, is the establishment and operation of sports clubs. According to data from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in 2018 there are 5147 national sports organizations established in Bulgaria (unions – 5, federations and associations – 105, of which – 39 for olympic sports and 61 for non-olympic sports). The greatest number of sports clubs have: football – 825 (16,0%); wrestling 167 (3,2%); within the Bulgarian Tourist Union (152); athletics 131 (2,5%); basketball 125 (2,4%); volleyball 124 (2,4%); tennis 123 (2,4%); table tennis 116 (2,2%). Figure 1. shows the structure of territorial distribution of basketball sports clubs in the 28 regions: in 2015 the total number is 105, in 2017 – 125, in 2018 – 125. In 2018 the number of basketball clubs increases with 20 (by 19%) compared to 2015. The largest number of basketball clubs are situated in the following regions: Sofia City – 17 (13,6%), Sofia Region – 13 (10,4%), Plovdiv – 13 (10,4%), Burgas – 11 (8,8%), Varna – 11 (8,8%). Only in Smolyan region there are no basketball clubs existing in 2018. For the process of building, functioning and management of sports organizations (unions, federations, associations and clubs), a unified legislative and legal framework for sports licensing has been introduced. They are related to more effective performance of their functions in the development of physical education and sports in the country, including of basketball, among various socio-demographic groups of the population.

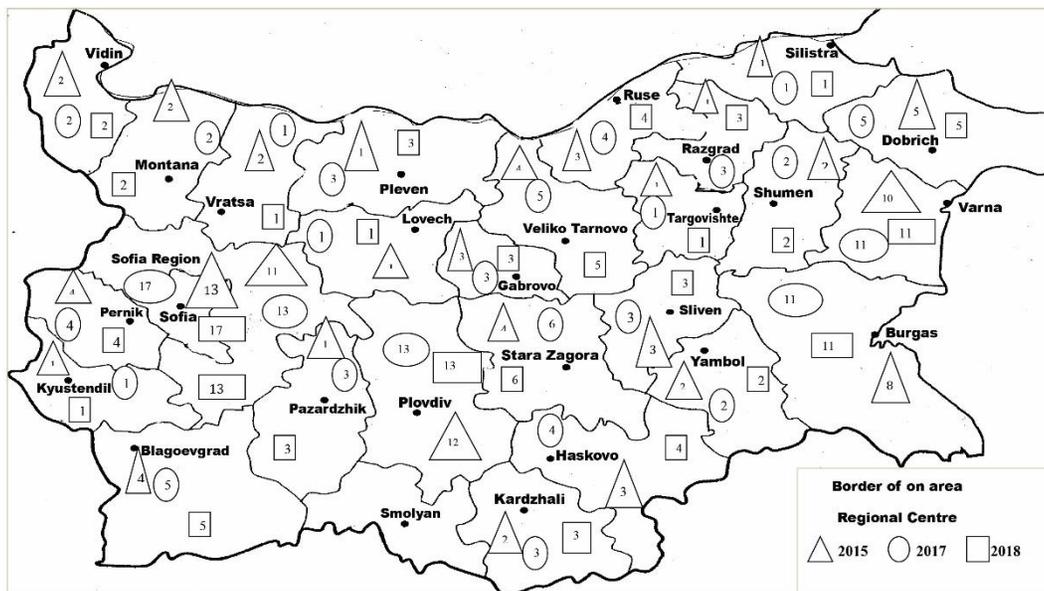


Figure 1  
Territorial distribution of basketball sports clubs in Bulgaria (number)

Based on data from a sociological research with 10 000 respondents in Bulgaria, covering 38 kinds of sports, basketball ranks third among the most popular sports listed<sup>12</sup> with 38,2%. In different age groups, respectively: 15-24 y.o. – 42,2%; 25-64 y.o. – 36,2%; 65+ y.o. – 80,1%. Overall, the most popular sports are: football – 80,1%; volleyball – 67,1%. Fourth place takes the wresling – 36,6%. This result for the popularity of basketball can be considered in terms of the activity of the BFB and the sports clubs over a long period of time. This is a prerequisite for more active engagement and involvement of the different socio-demographic groups of the population in coaching activities (training), sports and competitions.

For the future, the National Program of BFB for the Development of Basketball in Bulgaria 2020-2023 envisions: changes in the creation of effective administrative capacity; promoting the basketball game; selection of children for growing of basketball talents; development of the 3x3 format to achieve high sports achievements; improving the qualification of sports-pedagogical staff; optimizing the preparation of national teams; the fight against doping; improving the forms and mechanisms for financial security, and others.

One of the major activities of BFB is attracting and involvement of players (in 6 age groups) in training preparation and participation in sports competitions of 6346 persons in 2017 and 6346 in 2018. The results of our research are presented in figure 2. The Figure displays the balanced structure of participants from different age groups throughout the annual activities of BFB. A pyramid-shaped structure has been set for the involved players in different age groups, i.e. 30,9% in 2017 and 31,2% in 2018 are up to 10 y.o. One of the end products of this structure is the group of basketball players aged 20-23 and above 23 y.o., in 2017 – 6,3%, and 6,3% too in 2018. In this relation, it would be useful to make comparative analysis of the sports achievements of the basketball players at events – matches and championships.

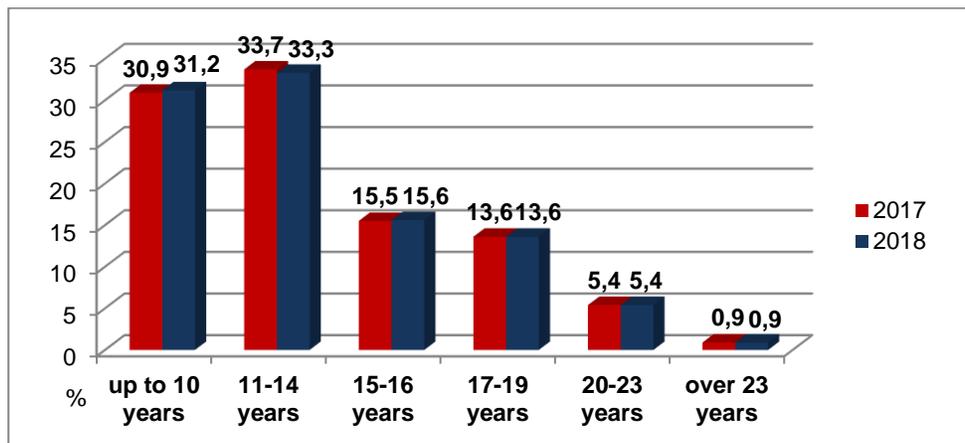


Figure 2  
Structure (relative share) of the age groups included in the training process and listed in BFB (in %)

<sup>12</sup> I. Tzenov y V. Pavlov, Izsledvane na interesa I odnoshenieto na grajdanite kum fizicheskoto buzpitanie i sporta v Bulgaria (Sofia, Sport i nayka, 2013).

A guide and a compilation of reports by specialists from 13 countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Latvia, France, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, England) are presented<sup>13</sup>. This is a hot, key topic, relevant for enhancing synergies between sports federations and public authorities at different levels of sport management. On the basis of a theoretical framework and application of unified methodology, the differences in the approach, structure and functions of interaction between the types of national sports systems, in the different countries, have been investigated and substantiated, with the emphasis on the characteristics of specific relationships between sports federations and state structures (specialized state bodies for management). A comparison has been made about the attitude of the state, its support of sports federations in the management of motor activity of the population and sports for excellence (professional sport) – represented in a pyramid structure.

## Conclusion

The further improvement of the management and development of basketball in Bulgaria is a complex, continuous social and economic process. It requires optimizing the following aspects: the interaction between the state and basketball sports organizations; balanced centralization and decentralization of governance.

It is also necessary to emphasize on more active involvement of public authorities and sports clubs in municipalities; applied research projects (social, psychological, pedagogical, managerial), aiming to shape the motivation, needs and interests of children, young people, adults and people with disabilities to practice basketball; application of modern models and methodologies for the preparation of basketball players and teams for high sports results; qualification of sports-pedagogical staff.

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