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# Research Report

## Developing and enhancing club structures



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Project Shuttlers Rationale

Even though the benefits of participating in sports are widely known, low participation rates and high dropout rates from sports during the teenage years continue to persist in Europe. The project, titled 'Kid Shuttlers – Attract and Nurture Young Badminton Players' (SHUTTLERS), aims to address the recruitment and retention obstacles faced by most badminton clubs at grassroots level, while facilitating and enhancing a healthy and active lifestyle for our future European communities. The specific objectives of this project are to:

- Strengthen the organizational and administrative element of clubs towards a more sustainable model
- Identify best practices in relation to the recruitment and retention of children in sport with a focus on badminton.
- Develop strategies regarding how best to recruit and retain young badminton players.
- Test and evaluate novel initiatives to ensure that the deliverables could be adopted across different European countries.
- Education Toolkit 'Strengthening the Badminton Club Model' and its digitization.

The project is led by Badminton Europe – the governing body for 53 European Member Associations – together with Sports Coaching Europe, Universidad Europea, Austrian Badminton Association, Deutscher Badminton-Verband e.V. and the Lithuanian Badminton Federation. The main deliverables of the project include:

- The European Framework on Recruitment of Young Badminton Players Report
- Education through Sports Training Modules
- Badminton Open Week Guidebook
- The European Framework on Retention of Young Badminton Players Report and its digitization.
- Dissemination Plan and Sustainability Plan to ensure a multiplier effect amongst all Badminton clubs across Europe.



### 1.1. The research on developing and enhancing club structure report

To better understand the challenges, successes and strategies for clubs across Europe, we decided to interview people involved in managing the clubs on a daily basis. This report details the findings of the interviews, draws conclusions from them and offers some preliminary recommendations to inform the development of the deliverables described above.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Interviews

Following consultation with the project partners, an interview guide was developed to obtain valuable information on the structure of the clubs, the initiatives that make the clubs successful and to understand their needs and the challenges to consolidate their current development level and even improve it.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted covering the following four areas:

- Administration and Finance
- Sport (Badminton)
- Events
- Communication

The interviews were conducted by six different researchers from each of the partners.

### 2.2. Participants

Through consultation with the partners, it was agreed to select clubs who were well established yet had room for development. A set of criteria were set when identifying the clubs being included in the research:

- Registered players at the club: 75 player – 250 players
- Have a junior (players younger than 18 years of age) section of minimum 50 players and senior (player older than 18 years of age) section of minimum 25 players
- Have training with minimum 8 players younger than 8 years of age
- Have a board of minimum 4 board members
- Have a website or Facebook page



- Organise minimum 1 junior tournament a year

The persons being interviewed were people managing the club on a daily basis. This could be a club manager or board member.

Due to the diversity of the badminton landscape and needs of badminton clubs across Europe, it was decided to involve several countries in the research. In total 17 people were interviewed:

Country	Number of clubs
Austria	2
Denmark	2
England	2
Germany	2
Lithuania	2
Serbia	1
Sweden	2
Switzerland	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>

### 2.3. Analysis

The analysis of the interviews focuses on what the clubs consider as their strengths but also their areas for growth. The strengths will indicate what is needed to reach the current development level of the club and the areas for growth will inform which next step is needed for the club to develop. Trends across the interviews will be identified and analysed.

## 3. Findings

As explained in the methodology section the interviews covered four different areas. We report these features in the following order: 1. Administration and Finance, 2. Sport (Badminton), 3. Events and 4. Communication.



### 3.1. Administration and Finance

The below table describes the features the clubs perceive to be a requirement within the administration and finance area to have a club at the current development level (please refer to the criteria for clubs being identified and selected for interviews under 2.2. Participants). The table also shows the challenges faced to further improvement within this area.

#### **Strengths**

##### ***Board and Administration***

- Organised board with clearly defined roles including description of roles.
- Stability of the board through having board members being there for multiple years
- Strategy for identification and recruitment of volunteers to the board are based on the professional background of the volunteers but also that parents must help with smaller tasks during the season (see the next bullet point).
- Focus on involving as many volunteers as possible in the club, which will allow the board to divide the many daily tasks amongst more people. Focus on having smaller and clearly defined tasks for the volunteers. Those volunteers may be ready in the near future to play a bigger role in the club, for instance as a board member.
- Strategic and structured approach with managing meetings in terms of agendas, notes after the meeting, regular meetings throughout the season.

##### ***Finance***

- Stable financial situation with good understanding of income stream (Government support, Membership fees) but also strong control of expenses.

#### **Challenges**

- To increase the income stream by finding and committing sponsors to the club
- Professionalisation of administration would ease the workload on the volunteers especially due to increased demands on player registration, entering teams for team events, reporting of results from team matches, booking and cancellation of hall time, regulatory updates etc.

- Constant challenge to continue to recruit new volunteers (parents) to contribute to handling the daily tasks of the club, and to develop a succession plan for the ones currently managing the club.

### 3.2. Sport (badminton)

The below table describes the sport-related features the clubs believe are needed to reach the current development level (please refer to the criteria for clubs being identified and selected for interviews under 2.2. Participants). The table also shows the challenges faced to further improvement within this area.

#### **Strengths**

##### **Coaching**

- Strategic priority and plan for educating coaches by considering internal and external coaching education.
- A structured and strategic approach of having a critical mass of coaches for the youth section (especially having experienced coaches supporting and mentoring less experienced coaches is useful).
- Coaches are contracted and receive financial compensation.
- Players are recruited as coaches.

##### **Training**

- Training setup with clear training goals and training content for each training.
- Composition of training groups which is mostly based on level and to some degree considering social aspects
- Long term planning meaning that players are offered training possibilities based on current but also future performance level.
- A full pathway within the club from beginners to adults.
- Age-related training approach meaning that kids are being training and treated as kids.
- Training offers for a wide range of players (i.e., recreational and tournament/competitive players).
- Provision of a variety of badminton activities such as camps, individual and team competitions in different formats, etc.

**Recruitment**

- Player recruitment strategy: Through schools, after school clubs, kindergarten, bring a friend days, free one-month tryouts etc

**Challenges**

- Need more and better educated coaches
- Lack of hall capacity due to influx of players, how to maximise use of available hall time
- Too few female players, ultimately creating a structural challenge as the club will not be able to participate in team competitions for mixed teams.
- Organising teams for the team matches is time consuming and requires more players than the needed players for the match
- Taking responsibility for the local area with a focus on increasing the level and commitment of badminton by cooperating with neighbouring clubs
- Coordination of training planning among training groups
- How to attract and recruit new young players (6-7 years of age)
- Retention of players to the sport – the drop out is too high, especially in junior years

### 3.3. Events

The below table describes the features needed within the event area of a club to reach the current development level (please refer to the criteria for clubs being identified and selected for interviews under 2.2. Participants). The table also shows the challenges faced to further improve within this area.

**Strengths****Events team**

- Experienced people in tournament management (especially using the digital tournament management software).
- Some clubs have many volunteers ready to help.

**Types of Events**

- Different events, not just tournaments. Events like “It’s shuttle time”, “Super girls play badminton”, celebration of club competitions, etc.



- Smaller events could be more lucrative financially as you have less expenses and they are easier to manage.
- Clear action plan for team matches in writing, which new people in the club can use as support for delivering team matches.

**Promotion and communication around events**

- Communication strategy to effectively use communication channels to promote and advertise for the events.

**Challenges**

- Requires specifically educated people to run tournaments, navigating and effectively using tournament management software, tournament marketing, communication about events (SoMe management), promotion/advertisement of events.
- Human Resource challenges for some clubs - difficult to find volunteers to help – for instance engaging parents or volunteers to transport kids to events is difficult.
- Events friendly facilities with cafeteria, seating possibilities in the hall, viewing areas, etc.
- Sponsorship strategy – how to find and attract sponsors
- A challenge is to understand which kind of activities, can lead to earning “quick and easy” money (with limited people and effort).
- Compliance with safeguarding regulations requires additional human and material resource. Some clubs do not prioritise tournaments and do not deliver them.

### 3.4. Communication

The below table describes the features needed within the communication area of a club to reach the current development level (please refer to the criteria for clubs being identified and selected for interviews under 2.2. Participants). The table also shows the challenges faced to further improve within this area.

**Strengths****External Communication**

- Using different SoMe channels like facebook, Instagram etc

- Having responsible persons for SoMe like a SoMe officer or a young group of players responsible for SoMe
- Using SoMe to give sponsors some attention/exposure
- Up to date website with basic information about the club
- Communication with members: people responsible for different areas being regularly in the hall and making themselves available to answer questions and discuss specific topics,

#### ***Internal communication***

- IT solutions to help with communication: Whatsapp groups, Whatsapp community, Spond, different IT tools designed for clubs to ease the internal communication
- Using mails and newsletter for internal communication
- Training members in using in different software tools

#### **Challenges**

- Develop a communication strategy which ensures more people are involved in external communication and how to reach different target groups most efficiently
- Lack of understanding of how to more optimally use different SoMe channels
- Needs basic knowledge of how to do good communication – a sort of do's and don'ts using the different communication channels.
- Creating SoMe content – for instance how do you create a video
- Communication has low priority, external communication is not easy and requires a lot of time, internal communication has higher priority than external communication

## 4. Recommendations

### 4.1. Preliminary considerations

The analysis of the 17 interviews provides an indication of what the clubs which met the relevant criteria have done well to reach this development level, but also which challenges they face to consolidating their current level and further improve it. As the interviews were conducted with people from 7 different countries, these data and analysis are relevant and useful in European context. Many different cultures are represented and how clubs are being manage in those cultures is shown. Despite the different cultures, clubs of this size have many of the same strengths and also many of the same challenges.



However, it is also important to note that this is a relatively small sample of only 17 clubs, and thus the recommendations presented in the following section must be considered in that context.

## 4.2. Recommendations

The recommendations presented are divided into the four areas in which the data was collected and should be seen as recommendations for developing a club into a solid, well-functioning and medium sized club.

### 4.2.1. Administration and Finance

- Stability of the club is closely related with having consistency of the Board and Administration. Having a clear understanding/description of roles and responsibilities within the board allows people who sign up for such position to clearly understand, what is expected of them but also to understand the workload associated with the position. As people will leave the Board and Administration it is also important to have a succession plan to ensure that the future of the club is safe.
- When recruiting people for a Board position, it is vital to identify and select people based on their professional background and ensure that their qualifications and experience can be used on the Board. Becoming a board member should not just be based on availability and desire but competence and expertise.
- Many clubs have a challenge in getting more people involved to help with daily tasks. Having a clear description of all smaller or bigger tasks will help the volunteers to understand what they can do to help. It has been shown that people are more likely to help when they know exactly what they need to help with.
- Financial stability is created by having strong control of the income and expenses, hereunder understanding the possible income streams and how to maximise them, but also understanding how to reduce expenses without compromising on the services provided to club members.

### 4.2.2. Sport (badminton)

- Coaches are essential for providing high-quality and inspiring training which develops the players competencies but make the players continue playing badminton for life. Having a strategy to support the development the competencies of the coach through



formal (internal/external) coach education or through exchanges of experiences from experienced coaches with less experienced ones.

- Having a coach recruitment strategy which describes which kind of coaches the club would like to identify and attract will ensure continuity and stability. Being aware of and having clearly clarified the coaching philosophy of the club will make the identification process much more targeted. Often players are being identified to also take on the coaching responsibilities for certain training group and a clear coaching philosophy will support that process.
- A pathway that explains how you move from one training group to another will create clarity for players and parents on how they progress through the club. Therefore, creating a training pathway which covers all steps from beginners to adult training will ensure that training possibilities are offered to all levels. It will also reduce the risk of players dropping out due to having no interesting and suitable training opportunities available to them.
- Creating a training setup and age-related training content which matches the players age and development level will allow the players to be challenged in an optimal way.
- A player recruitment strategy is fundamental to ensure the stability of club. A strategy which outlines which initiatives and activities should take place to recruit identified target groups of players is central to this. So, for instance school badminton possibilities for young players could attract kids in the age 6-8 age years of age or initiatives and activities which are aimed at recruiting girls could be another approach.

#### 4.2.3. Events

- Getting started with organising events like a badminton tournament requires a group of people who understands managing a tournament and how to use IT tools like tournament software. Getting the expertise and experience requires a bit of training and time. Creating a strategy which focuses on identifying people who can take on this role, provide them with the right training and allow them to start with smaller tournaments and over time increase the level of ambition of organising bigger tournaments will be key. The strategy should also include a succession plan, so the tournaments can continue to be organised. Tournaments are very important for the income of the club but also as great experiences for the players to not make it a priority.



- Having an Event strategy which not only focuses on tournaments but also on other events like internal activities, club events focusing on celebrating the club, recruitment events, and training camps will create a diverse portfolio of events which will create memories for life for the persons involved. These events can be important for retaining players at the club too.
- Events are a possibility to get an additional income through interesting activities. Income can come through entry fees and sponsorships. Creating a sponsorship strategy which links potential sponsors to specific activities can either reduce costs of the events by offering equipment, food, souvenirs etc which clubs might have to pay for otherwise.
- Education in creating a sponsor network and keeping the network engaged over time would probably be a good investment. But having events could be one of the products to sell to sponsors.

#### 4.2.4. Communication

- Communication is often an area which clubs find time consuming and challenging, especially due to the many different communication channels available. To be efficient with the communication, it is important for the club to get an understanding of how to create useful information for the different communication channels, but also which communication channels are best used for reaching specific target groups like members of the club, kids, sponsors etc. Creating a communication strategy which covers internal and external communication will be of great importance to avoid spending numerous of hours communicating with limited impact.
- The use of different IT tools from mails, Whatsapp groups, specialised communication systems for clubs and SoMe channels are needed in the technological world of today. It means the people working with communication in the club must be educated in using the different tools. For the internal communication, it is also important that the member of the club is educated in using the specific IT tools.
- Despite many possibilities of using advanced IT tools and systems for internal and external communication, it is important not to underestimate the importance of physically meeting people. Having regular meetings with the members or key personnel of the club like board members showing up at trainings for talks is paramount. Meeting the members physically creates a welcoming atmosphere which



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will increase the likelihood of members enjoying their time in the club and will continue playing badminton for a long time.

## 5. Closing comments

The conducted interviews are the first step towards understanding how medium sized badminton clubs in Europe are organised and managed along with the challenges faced in terms further development. The findings provide some clear points for consideration which will be taken into account during the development of the various outputs of project SHUTTLERS.

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