

ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTRODUCTION PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

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Abstract: In 2023, the 60th anniversary of the introduction physical education (physical activities) at the University of Ljubljana was celebrated. Regular physical activity is one of the most important factors for maintaining health and preventing disease. The effects of regular physical activity strengthen physical and mental health. This represents a logical transition from high schools to universities and is the basis for the vertical (hierarchical) connection of all universities sports programs that are already implemented at universities. The beginnings were difficult, so in the study year 1969/70 at University of Ljubljana, 34% of students were regularly physically active, and in the study year 1981/82 even 63% of students were physically active. After a partial decline in the 1993/94 academic year, an enviable 50% of students were regularly physically active in the 2003/04 academic year. With the renovation of the Bologna study programs in the field of university sport (after 2006), changes occurred that caused a drastic drop in the number of regularly physically active students. At University of Ljubljana, after the renovation of the study programs in the academic year 2022/23, the proportion of regularly physically active students amounted to just under 14%. As for the influence of the European model of sport on university sport, we can point out the encouraged lifelong physical activities, which dictates that universities sports programs must include as many students as possible who are regularly active in sport.

Key words: university sport, physical education, physical and mental health.

INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the 60th anniversary of regular sports activities at the University of Ljubljana (UL) was celebrated. It should be noted that the content of the article is mostly presented through the lens of sports activities at UL, although it is right not to overlook the activities at the University of Maribor and the University of Primorska.

It is the right and duty of every educational system, including in the field of sports, to be better organized, to have a broad, more sophisticated offering for students, and to introduce changes and innovations that can be enhancements and special features in the regional and European space. Just as young people need food, rest, and normal human relationships every day, they also need sports activities. The entire educational system, including universities, should be organized so that all young people have sports activities available to them every day.

The focus of the work of sports educators at UL is to enable and offer forms of sports expression to as many students as possible. Sports educators, the university, and the state must realize that the foundation of modern sports at universities is regular sports activities, which enable and simultaneously oblige students to participate in sports programs at least once a week, which the university should offer. This is the basis for increasing the number of physically active students in all university sports programs, including recreational sports programs or sports for all, and in competitive programs (Jamnik, 2024).

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

Regular physical activity is one of the most important factors for maintaining health and preventing diseases, strengthening both physical and mental well-being. Beyond health benefits, the need for regular sports activities can also be justified from sociological, social, and educational perspectives. Sports also enhance Slovenia's reputation globally and unite us as a nation and community.

The prevalence of insufficient physical activity among young people is very high. Recent research published in the renowned journal *The Lancet* shows that 80% of young people worldwide do not meet the minimum levels of physical activity recommended by the World Health Organization (Jamnik, 2024).

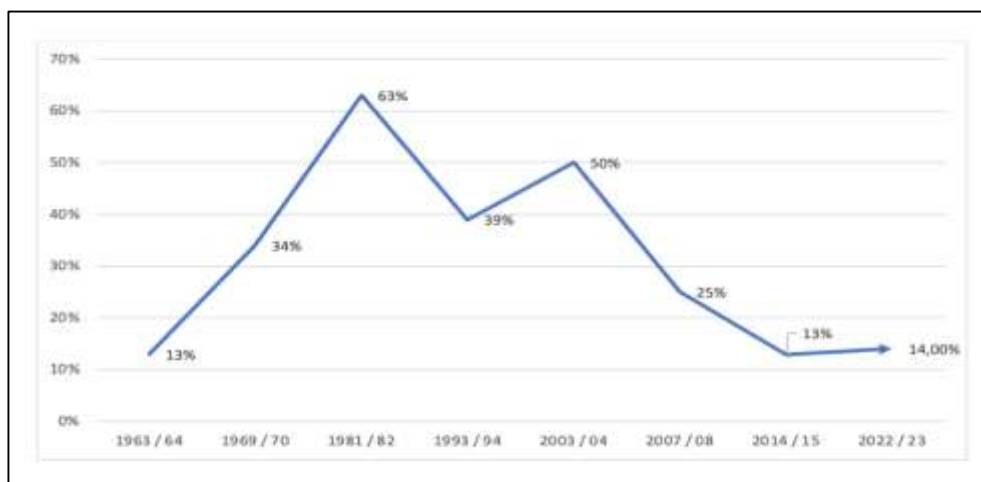
It is high time to reverse these negative trends and reintroduce regular sports programs into the Slovenian university environment, making them a mandatory component of all study programs. As Edvard Kolar noted in the Strategy for the Development of Student Sports Activities at the University of Ljubljana (Kolar, 2010), such programs would serve as a social environment where young intellectuals from various backgrounds, with different social statuses, worldviews, professional knowledge, and sporting abilities, can meet at the beginning of their studies. In such a diverse social environment, students can gain new experiences, knowledge, and connections that significantly impact their personal growth, intellectual development, and life success. It is crucial to transform unhealthy habits through sports programs and equip students with knowledge (understanding the importance of physical activity for physical and mental health, preparing various exercise routines independently, using apps, etc.) that will help them combat a sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy living habits. Students should acquire knowledge and skills that build on what they learned in primary and secondary school.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS ACTIVITIES AT UL AND THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE BOLOGNA REFORM ON UNIVERSITY SPORTS AT UL

Sports education has long been an important part of student life at UL, with a rich and interesting history. It is widely believed that regular participation in sports during studies plays a significant role in promoting a healthy lifestyle, academic success, better student connections, and the overall development of students (Bratuž, Kavčič, 2024).

The beginnings of sports education at UL date back to the 1960s. In 1963, the UL Council recommended that its faculties include Physical Education in their curricula, treating it as equivalent to other subjects (Kališnik, 1993). Initially, only a few faculties adopted the subject, but others followed in subsequent years. Six years later, in 1969, regular sports education was also introduced at the University of Maribor. Before the Bologna reform, most faculties at UL offered regular sports education in at least one year of study, resulting in a high percentage of students participating in regular sports activities. In the 1980s, 63 percent of students regularly attended sports education. However, with the introduction of the Bologna study programs and the subsequent elimination of regular sports education at most faculties, by the end of the transition period in the 2014/2015 academic year, the percentage of physically active students at UL had dropped to about 13 percent (Filipič Jeras 2019).

Graph 1 Number of regularly physically active students in UL programs (1963–2023)



Jamnik, M. (2024). Šport že desetletja krasi univerzitetni prostor. V: K. Filipič Jeras and J. Vodičar (ur.), 60 let športne vzgoje na Univerzi v Ljubljani 1963-2023: Zbornik strokovnega posveta, pg. 21-29. Športno društvo zaposlenih na Univerzi v Ljubljani.

On Graph 1, we can see that in the last ten years, we have returned to the beginning. In the previous academic year, we had only 1% more students in sports programs at UL member institutions compared to 1963. Accordingly, the number of employed sports educators has also decreased. Such a catastrophic situation is a consequence of the implementation of the Bologna reform. At this moment, most faculties have opted for their own path, resulting in various models of sports activities being developed at UL.

In 2023, the National Sports Program 2014-2023 (NSP) came to an end, which meticulously planned the entire development of Slovenian and university sports. Within the structure of NSP programs under the substructure of Sports Education in the educational system, the measure "Increase the amount of mandatory hours of sports education" is recorded as follows: Reintroduction of sports education as mandatory content in the first year of all study programs. Due to all the aforementioned reasons, it was a guiding principle to include the return of sports activities as accompanying content in undergraduate study programs in the first year that are not evaluated with ECTS in the National Program of Higher Education until 2030 (NPHE by 2030). The proposal of NPHE by 2030 was also approved by the Rectors' Conference of the Republic of Slovenia with its resolution in September 2021 (Vodičar, 2024).

Due to inconsistent and inadequate implementation of NSP and neglect of the entire field of university sports, it is an appropriate time for analyses, amendments, and changes to NSP and the university sports system. Additional problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic have indicated the necessity for a serious approach to revitalizing NSP and thus sports education programs. It is necessary to ensure a long-term systemic approach to the healthy lifestyle of the student population across the entire educational vertical: from kindergarten to university.

Kolar (2010) already stated in the strategy for the development of student sports activities at UL that a systemic regulation of university sports is necessary at all levels of operation. The vision for the development of sports activities at UL anticipated that UL would become a university of sports excellence and achieve the following important strategic goals:

- Adaptation of the organizational and personnel structure in the field of sports at UL to implement the strategy.
- Achieve 50% participation of students in regular organized physical activity by 2012, and even 65% by 2015.
- Become the most recognized university in sports in Slovenia and the southeastern European region.

The most important feature of the strategy for the development of student sports activities at UL from 2010 is that UL did not achieve the set strategic goals, and it did not seriously address the problem of developing university sports systemically and professionally.

PROPOSAL FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF UNIVERSITY SPORTS AT SLOVENIAN UNIVERSITIES

Considering the current state of university sports, sports educators at Slovenian universities believe that we need a new systemic arrangement of sports that will precisely define all three interconnected segments of university sports (sports-educational, sports-recreational, and sports-competitive).

- Placement of sports-educational, sports-recreational, and sports-competitive programs.
- Regular sports education programs in the first stage of study programs in at least one academic year (in the first years of the first stage of Bologna study programs).
- General elective ECTS courses with sports content that enhance regular sports education programs (in higher years of the first and second stage of Bologna study programs).
- Extracurricular sports programs at faculties and extracurricular activity centers (recreational programs or sports programs for all).
- Sports-competitive programs.

Figure 1 Hierarchical Model of University Sports Organization



Katedra za univerzitetni šport 2012, sourced from Kolar, E. (2010) Izdelava strategije razvoja športne dejavnosti študentov Univerze v Ljubljani. Univerza v Ljubljani, rektorat.

The foundation of the pyramid structure of comprehensive university sports is the sports-educational segment, primarily regular sports education programs, which should be integrated into the first-year study programs at all member institutions of Slovenian universities. This segment forms the basis for the success of the other segments. Through regular sports education programs, we capture students from organized secondary education systems and facilitate a meaningful transition into sports programs tailored to the student population with their specific goals. Also included in the sports-educational segment are general elective courses, credited with ECTS, focusing on sports content, which should also be incorporated into the study programs of member institutions at the first and second Bologna levels. Enhancement of sports-educational programs at Slovenian university members includes extracurricular sports programs and sports-competitive programs at member institutions and extracurricular activity centers.

THERE IS NO SPORTS WITHOUT PROPER SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the fundamental prerequisites for the development of university sports is the long-term planning of the construction, maintenance, and optimal management of appropriate sports infrastructure, which must be largely owned by the university or student dormitories (potentially through public-private partnerships).

The UL has one multi-purpose sports hall (Rožna Dolina University Sports Hall), built in the 1980s. The hall includes: a large multi-purpose hall, and two smaller halls for fitness and group exercises with accompanying infrastructure (changing rooms, toilets, a room for the hall manager).

In the immediate vicinity, there are two outdoor volleyball courts, an outdoor asphalt futsal court, and several fitness exercise machines. These areas are owned by the Ljubljana Student Dormitories, primarily used for recreational purposes by dormitory students.

The Faculty of Education of the UL and the Secondary School of Education and Gymnasium in Ljubljana have a large sports hall and two smaller halls for aerobics and dance activities, along with supporting infrastructure (changing rooms, toilets, a room for physical education teachers).

The Faculty of Sport at the UL has its own sports infrastructure, primarily used for its own educational purposes during morning and early afternoon hours. At other times, the sports facilities (gyms, pool, etc.) are mostly rented out to external users.

Based on Jamnik's analysis (2019), it can be concluded that the sports infrastructure for the needs of university sports at the UL is inadequate and outdated. Perhaps now is the time for its renovation. Serious consideration should be given to building a new University Sports Hall in Rožna Dolina, as this area houses the largest number of students. The idea should involve a mutual agreement between the

UL and the Ljubljana Student Dormitories (with the involvement of other partners), as they ultimately serve the same students – students of the UL.

Figure 2 and 3 University Sports Hall (Extracurricular activity center UL archives).



There is a belief that for success in this area (all that is mentioned), it would be necessary to engage a competent professional service. This service would be responsible for comprehensive development (construction, maintenance, management) of sports infrastructure for university sports needs, as well as for coordinating all university sports programs.

IMPACT OF THE EUROPEAN MODEL OF SPORT ON UNIVERSITY SPORT

Upon adoption of the resolution on the European model of sport, two key principles were highlighted that directly impact university sport:

- Ministers for Sport of the European Union adopted a decision to promote lifelong sports activities (with a particular emphasis on sports education from kindergarten through university).
- Ministers for Sport of the European Union also discussed dual career paths for athletes (athletes' dual careers - during and after their sports careers).

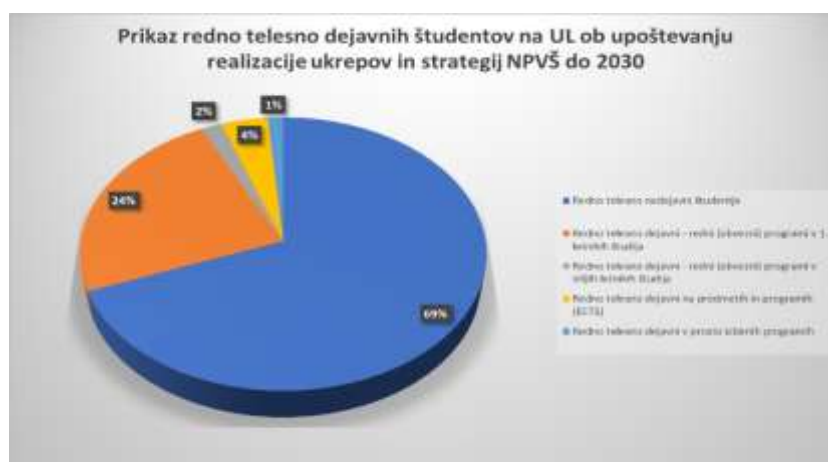
Support for the European model of sport was also provided by prominent figures active in Slovenian politics and international sports organizations.

- Minister of Economy, Tourism and Sport Matjaž Han publicly emphasized the importance of the European model of sport, while State Secretary at the Ministry of Economy, Tourism and Sport (SLO) Dejan Židan highlighted its significance as a counterbalance to "Americanization in sports" (Židan, 2024).
- The European model of sport was endorsed by UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin, who vehemently opposed the introduction of the "SUPER LEAGUE." Čeferin stressed that the European model of sport must be based on solidarity, sustainability, and fundamental values - this is the only way for sports to survive. The guiding principle is that profit should not be the sole motivation.

CONCLUSION

The European sports model promotes lifelong sports activity. This obliges us all to offer students as many sports programs as possible from the first year of their studies, making regular sports activities an important part of their daily lives not only during their studies but throughout their lives. Therefore, there is a broader question in the professional community about the direction of the UL's leadership, which did not include regular sports activities in the strategy for UL in the first years of study (NPHE do 2030), which is somewhat unusual given the efforts to increase the number of students engaged in sports. By introducing regular sports programs in the first years of study at UL, the proportion of students regularly engaged in sports could potentially be much higher - around 35%! (Vodičar, 2024).

Graph 2 Display of regularly physically active students at UL considering the implementation of measures and strategies of NPVŠ until 2030.



Vodičar, J. (2024). Kakšna bo prihodnost univerzitetnega športa? V: K. Filipič Jeras and J. Vodičar (ur.), 60 let športne vzgoje na Univerzi v Ljubljani 1963-2023: Zbornik strokovnega posveta, pg. 5-9. Športno društvo zaposlenih na Univerzi v Ljubljani.

Conclusion of the expert consultation on the 60th anniversary of physical education at the UL 1963 - 2023:

CONCLUSION 1: We support the prompt regulation of legislation in the field of higher education - Higher Education Act (amendments/supplements to the Higher Education Act or a new appropriate Higher Education Act), where the strategies and measures from NPVŠ until 2030 are defined.

CONCLUSION 2: Until the mentioned legislative regulation (Conclusion 1), UL students do not have equal opportunities to achieve recommended physical activity standards, therefore we propose that regular physical activity programs be implemented in the first years of UL members who do not implement sports programs and do not have a sports pedagogue employed, starting from this fall.

CONCLUSION 3: Upon the introduction of regular physical activity programs in the first years of Slovenian universities (including UL), it is necessary to content-wise and programmatically align regular programs in the 1st year of study with elective ECTS courses with sports contents, which should complement the regular programs in the 1st year of study.

CONCLUSION 4: Considering the proposed hierarchical organization of university sports, upon the adoption of legislation (Higher Education Act), it is necessary to sensibly differentiate between programs implemented at members and programs implemented by the Extracurricular activity center UL in the field of university sports. Based on expert recommendations, the UL should decide which sports programs Extracurricular activity center UL will implement after the introduction of regular programs.

CONCLUSION 5: It is necessary to formally appoint a coordinating body to include sports pedagogues at UL.

CONCLUSION 6: The Sports Association of the University of Ljubljana is responsible for implementing university competitive sports programs at UL, to be coordinated by the managements of both legal entities (Sports Association of UL and UL) before the start of each new academic year. Sports associations are necessary in the Slovenian university environment due to current legislation and consequent funding methods. The National Program of Sport in Higher Education also defines providers of extracurricular activities in this way.

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UZ 60. OBLJETNICU UVOĐENJA FIZIČKOG VASPITANJA NA UNIVERZITETU U LJUBLJANI

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Sažetak: U 2023 godini obilježeno je 60 godina od uvođenja fizičkog vaspitanja (fizičkih aktivnosti) na Univerzitetu u Ljubljani. Redovita fizička aktivnost jedan je od najvažnijih čimbenika očuvanja zdravlja i prevencije bolesti. Učinci redovite fizičke aktivnosti jačaju fizičko i mentalno zdravlje. To predstavlja logičan prijelaz iz srednjih škola na univerzitete i temelj je za vertikalno (hijerarhijsko) povezivanje svih univerzitetskih sportskih programa koji se već provode na univerzitetima. Počeci su bili teški, pa je tako u studijskoj godini 1969/70 na Univerzitetu u Ljubljani bilo redovito fizičko aktivno 34% studenata, a u akademskoj godini 1981/82 čak 63% studenata. Nakon djelomičnog pada u akademskoj godini 1993/94, zavidnih 50% studenata bilo je redovito fizičko aktivno u akademskoj godini 2003/04. Obnovom bolonjskih studijskih programa u području univerzitetskog sporta (nakon 2006) došlo je do promjena koje su uzrokovale drastičan pad broja redovito fizičko aktivnih studenata. Na Univerzitetu u Ljubljani je nakon renoviranja studijskih programa u akademskoj godini 2022/23 udio redovito fizičko aktivnih studenata iznosio nešto manje od 14%. Što se tiče utjecaja europskog modela sporta na univerzitetski sport, možemo istaknuti podsticanje cjeloživotnih fizičkih aktivnosti, koji nalaže da univerzitetski sportski programi moraju uključiti što veći broj studenata koji se redovno bave sportom.

Ključne riječi: univerzitetski sport, fizičko vaspitanje, fizičko i mentalno zdravlje.