

Chapter 12

Switzerland: Autonomous Sports Clubs as Contributors to Public Welfare



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Abstract About 20% of the Swiss population practise sports in a club, and the nearly 19,000 sports clubs are a core element of the Swiss sports landscape and can contribute to public welfare. Sports clubs are accredited with various socio-political functions, although there are no far-reaching sports policy programmes – except Youth and Sport. The results of this chapter demonstrate that sports clubs can promote public health, social integration and democratic decision-making, particularly through voluntary work by the members.

Sports club members usually practise sports regularly. Thus, sports clubs can contribute to individual as well as to public health, even though sports clubs frequently have no specific focus on health promotion. There is considerable evidence that sports clubs are able to contribute to social integration, since they usually promote goals such as openness and conviviality and most members identify with their club and have social networks and friendships. The principle of bottom-up democratic decision-making ensures that the sports programmes fit the interests of the members. Therefore, sports clubs can promote democratic involvement and active citizenship. Particularly volunteering in sports clubs gives people the opportunity to engage for society and therefore can contribute to social cohesion and trust in Swiss society.

12.1 Sports Policy and Historical Context

The sports system in Switzerland consists of the public sector with sports policy institutions at the national, regional and local level, the voluntary sector and a market sector that has grown over the past decades (Kempf and Lichtsteiner 2015). Despite the move towards commercialisation and professionalisation, nearly 19,000

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voluntary sports clubs still remain a core element of the Swiss sports landscape. Swiss Olympic – the umbrella organisation of the non-profit sports sector in Switzerland – represents the interests of 86 national sports federations and their sports clubs. There are currently about 2.8 million out of 8.5 million people in Switzerland who belong to one or more sports clubs and 2 million members who actively practise sports with their club (Lamprecht et al. 2017). According to the *Sport Switzerland 2014* survey (Lamprecht et al. 2014), about three quarters of the Swiss population aged between 15 and 74 years (74%) participate in sports, and about one third of these people also hold a club membership (about 20% of the total population). Thus, sports clubs play a crucial role in the regular sports activity of the Swiss population, particularly for children and youth, although the commercial sports sector has grown considerably over the last decades.

The Federal Act on the promotion of sports and exercise (Sport Promotion Act, SpoPA; Bundesgesetz über die Förderung von Sport und Bewegung (Sportförderungsgesetz, SpoFöG) 2011), established in 2012, provides a legal framework to support private initiatives in sports, especially those of sports clubs and federations (for a detailed overview of the historical development and current legal framework of sports policy in Switzerland, see Chappelet 2010). This legal framework formulates the following main goals of sports promotion: promotion of health and physical performance of the population, integrated education and social cohesion. The main reason the Swiss Confederation, its cantons and its municipalities publicly promote and subsidise sports (clubs) are the (assumed) positive effects of sports activities (such as social integration of specific target groups, accumulation of cultural and social capital, health promotion, etc.). The Federal Act on the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities (Disability Discrimination Act, DDA; Bundesgesetz über die Beseitigung von Benachteiligungen von Menschen mit Behinderungen (Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz, BehiG) 2002) and the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, FNIA; Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer und über die Integration (Ausländer- und Integrationsgesetz, AIG) 2005) oblige the federation, cantons and communities to set conditions that facilitate participation, integration and equal opportunities in social life (and particularly access to sports activities) for disabled people and immigrants. However, there are no national programmes that assist the participation in a sports club among people with a migration background or people with a disability. Nevertheless, sports clubs are somehow expected to promote social integration and thus help to achieve social benefits. For example, sports clubs are the most important supporters of youth sports in Switzerland.

Although there is a Federal Act on the promotion of sports and exercise, the national government has no direct legal obligation to sports clubs and vice versa. This is the result of the traditional principles of subsidiarity and autonomy. Within this idea, tasks, actions and solutions to problems in society are undertaken, as far as possible, independently and autonomously by private initiatives (such as sports clubs). This means that sports clubs can plan their programmes without direct public intervention and only get support and funding if necessary. In this context, there

is an important programme (Youth and Sport programme; J+S) at the national level that supports sports clubs. The Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO) distributes over CHF 100 million per year to clubs engaged in the promotion of youth sports. This programme is predominantly realised through volunteers in sports clubs. Approximately 700,000 children and young adults have taken part in one or more courses in 75 different kinds of sports offered by J+S. This corresponds to about two thirds of the Swiss population aged between 10 and 20 years. Funding promotes courses, events and camps for children and adolescents in sports clubs. Funding also pays for the development of coaches responsible for sports groups. There are currently over 120,000 licensed J+S coaches in Switzerland. However, only clubs that offer sports activities where young people (aged between 5 and 20 years) can participate in their sports activities get funding (Kempf and Lichtsteiner 2015).

Furthermore, the Adults sport programme Switzerland (ESA) aims to promote sports activities among people aged 20 years and older. ESA aims to establish good conditions for physical activity in adulthood through the work of ESA coaches. ESA coaches can participate in specific courses, such as “Preventive action: integration” and “Sports and handicap”. If a club offers activities for adults within the ESA programme, it receives free training of its coaches who deliver this programme, but no other subsidy for the participants.

About half of all 26 Swiss cantons have a law regarding the promotion of sports and physical activity. Cantons are responsible for the regional development, construction and maintenance of sports-related infrastructure and implementation of Youth and Sport programmes. However, there are big differences in how the cantons use profits from lotteries for sports promotion and the support of special programmes in sports clubs. There are also large differences between municipalities when it comes to the support and funding of sports clubs. However, in most municipalities, sports clubs can use public sports facilities for free or by paying a fairly moderate fee.

Sports clubs played a decisive role in the historical development of sports in Switzerland because the establishment and operation of clubs were always simple and were seldom opposed by the authorities (for more details, see Stamm et al. 2015). The establishment of sports clubs in the nineteenth century was a decisive milestone for the introduction of modern sports. In Switzerland, clubs have always been considered a partial substitute for public initiatives (Stamm et al. 2015). The first gymnastic clubs (inspired by the German *Turnen*) had various social goals and considered themselves to be promoters of their members’ health and education. When gymnastics, sports and these first clubs emerged, there was no central institution to play a role in sports development. Thus, from a historical perspective, sports clubs can be viewed as a private alternative to public sports promotion and as fulfilling important functions in Swiss civil society (Stamm et al. 2015). Sports clubs and federations developed significantly in the early twentieth century and remain the main promoters of mass sports and elite sports in Switzerland. In general, the public society sector is relatively small in Switzerland compared to other countries (see Helmig et al. 2017), whereas voluntary organisations, such as sports clubs, play a significant role.

Swiss law has few prerequisites for establishing a club: clubs must be voluntary organisations with democratic structures where members share a common goal, and the club must not be oriented towards making an economic profit (for a general overview on characteristics of voluntary associations, see Horch 2018).

The principle and social value of solidarity and creating benefit to the public (*Gemeinnützigkeit*) have played an important role in the development of Swiss society since the beginning of the 1900s (e.g. Farago 2007). Thus, the social role of sports clubs has deep historical roots, and clubs are still “supposed to fulfil several welfare functions in the context of health promotion, the socialisation of children and adolescents and social integration” (Stamm et al. 2015, p. 408). Sports clubs also give their members the opportunity to participate in democratic decision-making especially when they engage as volunteers.

In summary: despite the lack of far-reaching sports policy programmes – except Youth and Sport – sports clubs are accredited with various social and political functions in the Swiss sports system. In the following discussion, we intend to elucidate the extent to which sports clubs can promote health promotion, social integration and democratic decision-making and involvement, particularly through voluntary work by the club members, and thus contribute to public welfare in Swiss society.

12.2 Structure and Context

Sports clubs in Switzerland are somewhat small organisations compared to other countries in central Europe, with a median of 58 members per club. More than two thirds of clubs have only 100 members or fewer (Fig. 12.1). Twenty-four per cent of the clubs have between 101 and 300 members, and only one out of 100 clubs has 1000 members or more. Thirty-six per cent of the members of Swiss sports clubs are women, and the majority of clubs have a large proportion of children and adolescents (Lamprecht et al. 2017). A reason for the high relevance of youth sport in the clubs is probably the influence of the national program Youth and Sport (see Sect. 12.1).

With regard to membership development, approximately half of the clubs indicate that the number of members has stayed more or less stable within the last 5 years (Fig. 12.2). Around one out of four clubs reported either a decrease or an increase in the number of members. Only 4% of the clubs reported a large decrease over the last 5 years. These figures for membership development are in line with the overall membership data from Swiss Olympic that shows a stable number of approximately 2.8 million memberships in Swiss sports clubs since the year 2000 (Lamprecht et al. 2017).

The results for member development indicate that few sports clubs in Switzerland have difficulties with retention of members (Table 12.1). In contrast, slightly more clubs have problems with recruitment of new members, with 21% reporting a big and 13% a very big problem. However, there are clear differences between the clubs that effect member recruitment and retainment. Some structural characteristics of

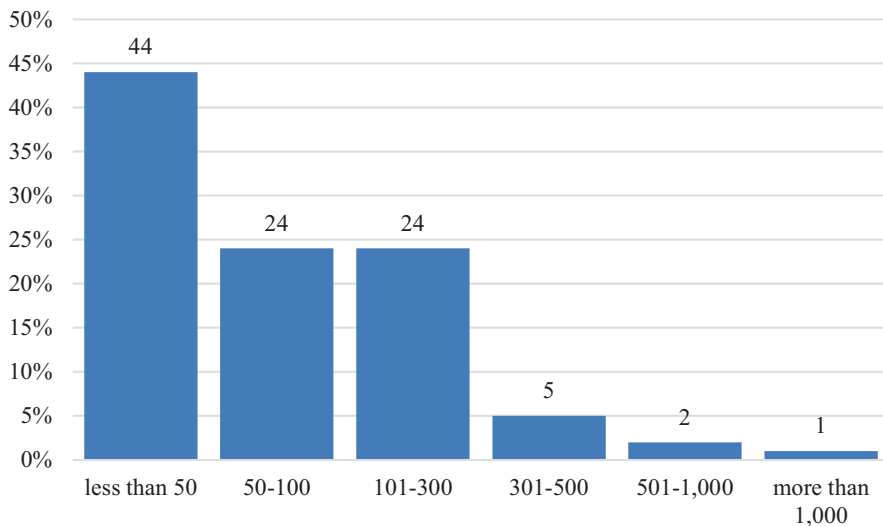


Fig. 12.1 Club size (number of members; club survey, $n = 4849$)

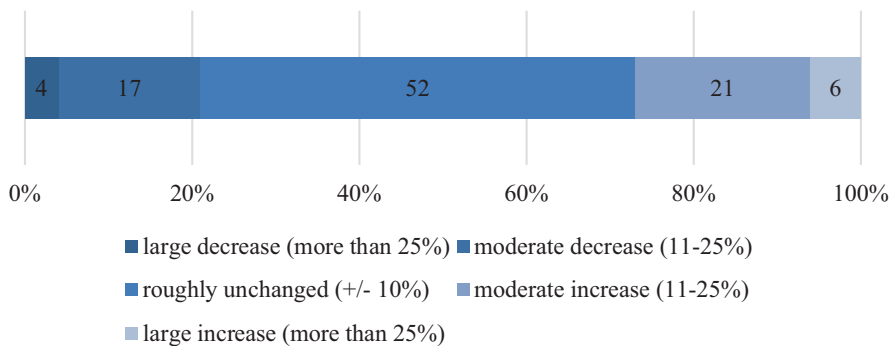


Fig. 12.2 Membership development within the last 5 years (club survey, $n = 5040$)

Table 12.1 Problems with recruitment/retention of members (club survey, recruitment $n = 4652$, retention $n = 4609$)

	No problem (%)	A small problem (%)	A medium problem (%)	A big problem (%)	A very big problem (%)
Problems with recruitment of members	17	22	27	21	13
Problems with retention of members	23	38	26	10	3

the club are most likely relevant to member development. Schlesinger and Nagel (2015) were able to show that member commitment is higher in those sports clubs that support sociability, which in turn correlates positively with the identification and perceived solidarity of club members. Furthermore, club memberships are more stable in rural areas.

Sports clubs in Switzerland have a long tradition. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, gymnastics clubs – with their roots in the German *Turnen* – were established. Before 1900, the first shooting, football, rowing, tennis clubs, etc. had already emerged – inspired by ideas of sports in England (Lamprecht et al. 2012; Stamm et al. 2015). As expected, around one out of seven sports clubs were founded before 1900 and about 30% between 1900 and 1945 (Fig. 12.3). Many sports clubs in Switzerland emerged in the decades after World War II, whereas only 11% were established from the year 2000.

The clear majority of Swiss sports clubs (79%) offer only one sport for their members (Fig. 12.4). Consequently, these single sport clubs do not diversify their programmes in response to new trends in sports or health-enhancing physical activities. In contrast, sports clubs in Germany are more often organised as multi-sport clubs, even though they have the same historical roots as Swiss sports clubs (Wicker et al. 2014).

The fact that most sports clubs in Switzerland have not greatly increased in size and number of sports over the last decades is assumedly influenced by the following aspects: the political communities in Switzerland are relatively small. Policies of

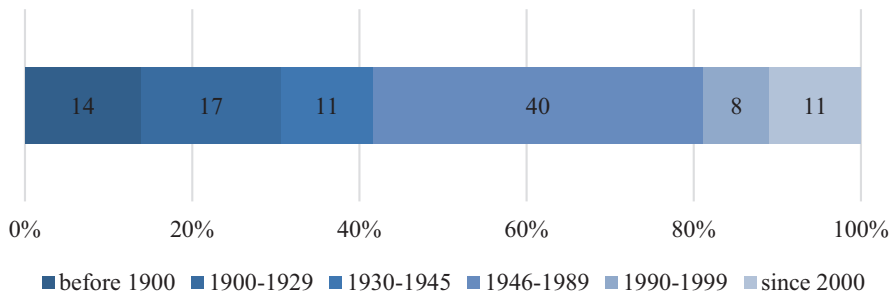


Fig. 12.3 Year of foundation (club survey, n = 5087)

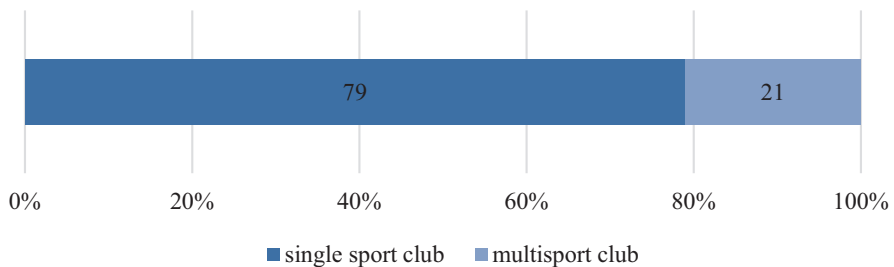


Fig. 12.4 Single or multisport club (club survey, n = 5224)

Table 12.2 Most common sports offered by sports clubs (top ten; club survey, $n = 5224$)

Rank	Sport	%
1	Shooting sports	18
2	<i>Turnen</i>	16
3	Football	15
4	Fitness/aerobic	11
5	Floorball	10
6	Volleyball	10
7	Gymnastics	9
8	Track & field	9
9	Artistic gymnastics	7
10	Ski/snowboard	7

Note: *Turnen* is a polysportive offer in which a combination of different forms of gymnastics, aerobics, apparatus gymnastics and often games is practised. In gymnastics, different forms of exercises are performed

the umbrella organisation Swiss Olympic and most of the federations across the various sports have no clear strategy for mass sports and growth.

Looking more carefully at the large number of small single sport clubs, it is not surprising that the (top ten) list of sports offered by Swiss sports clubs (Table 12.2) is made up of primarily traditional sports (e.g. shooting, *Turnen* & gymnastics, track and field) as well as team sports (e.g. football, floorball, volleyball). Fitness sports activities are also quite popular in Swiss sports clubs. (Alpine) Skiing is an important part of the Swiss (winter) sports culture and plays a significant role in top-level sports in Switzerland.

The majority of the clubs require sporting facilities so that their members can practice sports. However, only one third of the Swiss sports clubs have their own sports facility, whereas two thirds use public sports facilities (Table 12.3) – usually owned by the municipality. About half of the clubs that use public sports facilities have to pay a (mostly quite moderate) fee, whereas the other half can use the public facilities free of charge. Public funding through sports facilities is quite important to sports clubs. In total, around 14% of revenue stems from public funding.

It is clear that the majority of sports clubs have access to adequate sports facilities (Table 12.4). Nearly half of the clubs report no problems with the availability of (own or public) facilities. However, around 20% of the clubs have big or even very big problems in accessing adequate facilities for the sports activities of their members.

There are few sports clubs in Switzerland that have big problems with their financial situation (Table 12.4). The clear majority indicate no or only small problems, whereas in most other European countries, sports clubs indicate a more problematic financial situation. The stable financial situation of most Swiss sports clubs is presumably based on continuous public sports funding (e.g. programme Youth

Table 12.3 Ownership of facilities, payment of usage fees and the share of revenues that stem from public funding (club survey, own facilities $n = 4385$, public facilities $n = 4385$, usage fee for public facilities $n = 4385$, share of revenues $n = 3453$)

Share of clubs that use own facilities (%)	Share of clubs that use public facilities (%)	Share of clubs that pay usage fee for using public facilities (% of clubs that use public facilities)	Share of total revenues in clubs that stem from direct public funding (%)
33	67	54	14

Table 12.4 Problems with the availability of facilities and the financial situation (club survey, availability of facilities $n = 4559$, financial situation $n = 4620$)

	No problem (%)	A small problem (%)	A medium problem (%)	A big problem (%)	A very big problem (%)
Problems with the availability of facilities	44	22	14	11	9
Problems with the financial situation of the club	47	27	18	5	3

Table 12.5 Paid staff and paid manager/s in clubs (club survey, paid staff $n = 4537$, paid manager/s $n = 684$)

Share of clubs with paid staff (%)	Share of clubs with paid manager/s (%)
15	3

and Sport, availability of sports facilities) and the prosperous economic situation in the country that enables the clubs to generate enough revenue and achieve a positive annual balance.

Around one out of seven sports clubs in Switzerland have paid staff, and only 3% of clubs have a (full or part-time) paid manager (Table 12.5). Therefore, there is only slight professionalisation in Swiss club sports. An explanation for this could be the high rate of small single sport clubs and the traditional policy of clubs where mainly volunteers are responsible for decision-making.

Consequently, around two thirds of the clubs report that their number of paid staff has mostly remained stable over the last 5 years (Fig. 12.5). However, nearly 30% of the clubs indicate a moderate (17%) or large (11%) increase in paid staff. This increased development of paid work in sports clubs is not in line with the aggregated figures of the last two sports club surveys (2010 and 2016) that show a slight reduction of the number of paid positions (Lamprecht et al. 2017). Even more surprising is the increasing numbers of Voluntary positions in Swiss sports clubs.

In summary: Swiss sports clubs are attractive sports providers for many people and have mostly stable membership figures and financial resources as well as sufficient sports facilities. The usually small, single sport clubs with a long tradition and a strong culture of conviviality and solidarity are presumably able to promote

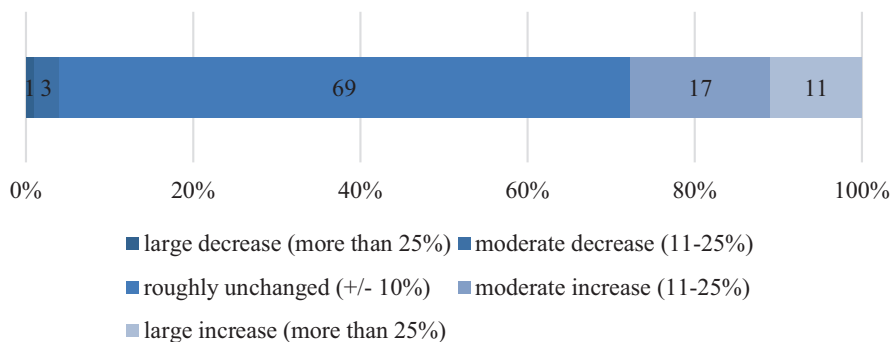


Fig. 12.5 Development in the number of paid staff in the last 5 years (club survey, $n = 667$)

social cohesion and democratic participation in society. Yet the question arises whether sports clubs can contribute to health promotion. Over the following sections, we will take a closer look at these particular functions of sports clubs.

12.3 Sports Participation and Health Promotion

Health promotion as a function of social welfare played an important role in the historical development of the first clubs in the nineteenth century geared towards the German Turnen. In contrast, the members of clubs that emerged in the context of the English sports movement were not primarily interested in health-enhancing physical activities.

The current data shows that more than one third of all sports clubs in Switzerland do not get involved with health sports, while 24% agree and 18% totally agree with this statement (Table 12.6). The rate of Swiss sports clubs that do not have integrated health promotion in their philosophy is fairly high compared to most other European countries. Several factors may be relevant to the relatively low significance of health sports programmes in Swiss club sports. The clubs focus mainly on one sport and set more value on competitive sports. This aligns with the fact that neither Swiss Olympic and their various sports federations nor the Federal Office of Sport have clear policy to promote and support health-enhancing physical activities in the context of sports clubs.

Regularity of sports activities is an essential condition for positive effects on physical and psycho-social health (Marti and Hättlich 1999). In this context, it is remarkable that a majority of the members who practise sports in the club do this at least once a week (Fig. 12.6). One third participate in club sports two times a week and nearly one fourth three times a week or more. In contrast, one out of six members does not play sports regularly. Thus, membership of a sports club is frequently connected to regular sports activity.

Table 12.6 The attitude of clubs towards health-enhancing physical activity (club survey, $n = 4664$)

	Don't agree at all (%)	Don't agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Totally agree (%)
Our club gets involved with health sports	15	21	22	24	18

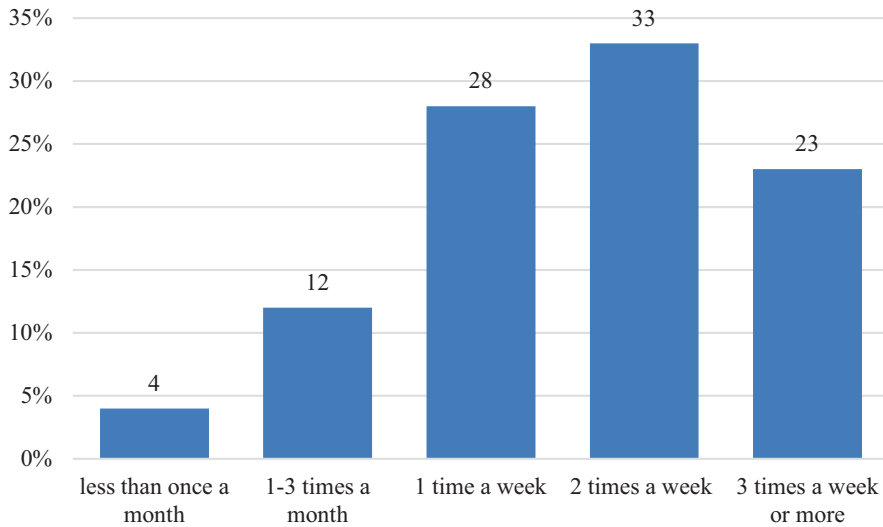


Fig. 12.6 Frequency of sports participation (member survey, $n = 755$)

Table 12.7 Participation in competitive sports (member survey, $n = 743$)

	Yes (%)	No, but I used to (%)	No, never (%)
Participation in competitive sports in the club	68	22	11

Additionally, membership of a sports club is often characterised by stable involvement. Three out of four club members in the survey indicate that they have been connected to the club for 5 years or longer (van der Roest et al. 2017).

Sports participation in a club is often combined with competitive sports (Table 12.7). Nearly nine out of ten club members currently participate in competitions for their clubs or used to do this previously. Although engagement in competitive sports has no clear focus on health effects, it has to be emphasised that certain goals of a sports competition can consequently lead to regular sport practice.

In summary: as sports club members usually practice sports regularly with the club, we can cautiously assume that sports clubs – despite the often lack of focus on health promotion – can contribute to individual and consequently to public health. However, as sports have various requirements (e.g. gymnastics, running, football, shooting), the effects may be quite different, and active engagement in a sports club may not automatically improve a member’s health.

12.4 Social Integration

The first and essential condition for sports clubs to contribute to social integration is for people of different population groups to become members and thus build their social networks. In this context, it is notable that only around half of Swiss sports clubs attempt to offer sports to as many population groups as possible (Table 12.8). In comparison with most other European countries, many clubs in Switzerland (47% don't agree at all, don't agree or are undecided) do not pursue – according to opinion of the board – a philosophy of openness to different population groups and a clear concept of Sport for All.

Nevertheless, the social groups women and elderly, that were often underrepresented in club sports some decades ago, are well represented in Swiss sports clubs today (Table 12.9). However, there are still clubs without any women or people over 65 years. The majority of clubs have members with a migration background who are particularly integrated in team sports such as football or basketball, as well in martial arts (see Adler Zwahlen et al. 2017). In contrast, nearly three out of four clubs have no members with disabilities. This is the highest rate compared to all other European countries in the comparative sample (Breuer et al. 2017).

The Swiss sports system is characterised by structures that have specific federations for handicapped sports. Thus, sports for people with disabilities are often organised in particular sports clubs. Furthermore, the integration of children and adolescents with a disability in regular schools is a relatively recent educational policy. Switzerland only ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2006) in 2014.

The figures on the representation of different population groups in sports clubs (Table 12.9) align with findings on the share of clubs that explicitly try to enable sports for a certain target group (Fig. 12.7). Sixty-four per cent of the clubs pursue

Table 12.8 Attitudes of sports clubs towards the integration of different population groups (club survey, $n = 4793$)

	Don't agree at all (%)	Don't agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Totally agree (%)
Our club tries to make a sports offer to as many population groups as possible	6	16	25	34	19

Table 12.9 Representation of different population groups in sports clubs (club survey, people with disabilities $n = 4734$, people with migration background $n = 4826$, elderly $n = 4246$, women $n = 4819$)

	0%	1–10%	11–25%	26–50%	51–75%	More than 75%
People with disabilities	73	25	1	0	0	1
People with migration background	27	43	18	8	3	1
Elderly (65+ years)	26	19	23	21	8	3
Women	17	17	23	24	8	11

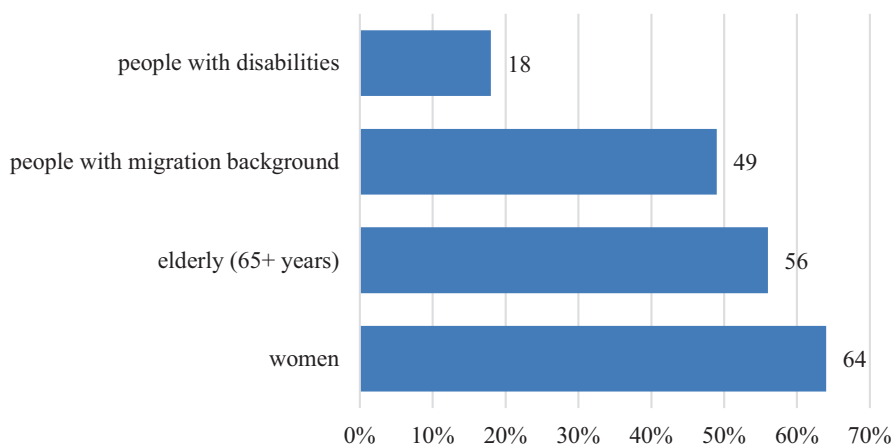


Fig. 12.7 Share of clubs that wants to enable sports for different population groups (club survey, people with disabilities $n = 4674$, people with migration background $n = 4671$, elderly $n = 4695$, women $n = 4685$)

the idea to offer sports for women (and girls), and 56% have groups that are open to elderly people (65+ years). About half of all Swiss sports clubs have the goal to enable sports for people with migration background, and some of them have specific initiatives. Here, the results of a current study in Switzerland show that members with migration background are relatively well socially integrated in Swiss sports clubs but less successfully than club members without migration background (Adler Zwahlen et al. 2018). Only 18% of the clubs have the clear objective to enhance sports for people with a disability. However, those clubs that have members with a handicap and/or specific initiatives (e.g. targeted sports activities, special teams) manage to integrate these people fairly well (Klenk et al. 2017).

Thus, sports clubs in Switzerland can, in a particular way, fulfil the ascribed ability to promote social integration of people with disabilities and migration background. However, integration is not reached automatically, and it is dependent on specific factors and conditions.

Turning to some general attitudes of sports clubs, the results reveal that the majority set a high value on companionship and conviviality (Table 12.10: 57% totally agree and 31% agree with this statement). Such club philosophy is fundamental to members' ability to create and foster social networks and friendships with other members. Obviously, more than half of the clubs also have a clear focus on competitive sports and are proud of the success of their teams and athletes. In this context, the question arises whether competitive sports are able to establish appropriate support processes for the social integration of the members.

To gain a broader picture of the function of clubs to promote social integration, the data from the member survey in selected Swiss sports clubs gives interesting results. More than half of all members regularly (at least every 2 weeks) stay behind after trainings, matches or tournaments (Table 12.11). Thus, regular training in

Table 12.10 Attitudes of sports clubs towards companionship and conviviality as well as sporting success and competitions (club survey, companionship $n = 4832$, competitive sports $n = 4749$)

	Don't agree at all (%)	Don't agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Totally agree (%)
Our club sets high value on companionship and conviviality	0	2	10	31	57
Our club is proud of his success in competitive sports	12	14	24	31	19

Table 12.11 Frequency of participation in the club's social life (member survey, social gatherings $n = 719$, stay behind after trainings $n = 702$)

	Never (%)	Once a year or less (%)	Once every half-year (%)	Once every 3 months (%)	Once a month (%)	Once every 2 weeks (%)	At least once a week (%)
Participation in the club's social gatherings	9	27	30	18	8	2	4
Stay behind after trainings, matches or tournaments to talk to other people from the club	9	6	6	8	15	17	38

particular, as well as sports competitions, provides opportunities to meet and talk with other members, especially those from the same team/group. In contrast, the members participate far less frequently in social gatherings (e.g. parties) to connect with other members. Only a minority of the members do not participate in the club's social life.

Based on these findings, it is not surprising that nearly 90% of all club members indicate they have gained new friendships through participation in the club (Fig. 12.8). Thus, club sports is an excellent setting to meet other people and to make friends. Three out of four members agreed with the statement that they socialise with people who they did not know before joining the sports club.

Furthermore, the member survey data demonstrates that sports clubs enable their members to create and foster social networks. One third of all members state that they know more than 50 people in the club by name (Table 12.12). Another 38% indicate they are personally acquainted with 21–50 people in the club. Only a minority of the club members know less than six members by name.

Finally, some selected attitudes of the members towards the social life in the club indicate that sports clubs can enable cohesion and solidarity between the members. A broad majority of the members agree strongly (55%) or partially (30%) with the statement "I am proud to belong to the club" (Table 12.13). For more than half of the members, the club is one of the most important social groups they belong to, while nearly all members – independent of their social background – feel respected and accepted within their sports club.

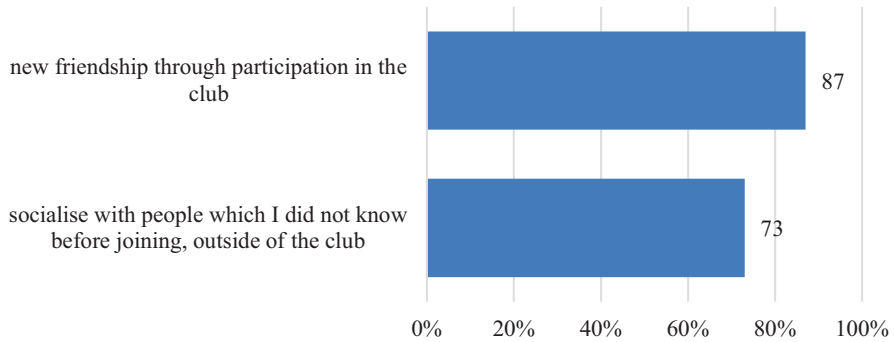


Fig. 12.8 Formation of social relations (member survey, new friendship $n = 714$, socialise with people $n = 700$)

Table 12.12 Number of people from the club known by name (member survey, $n = 761$)

	None (%)	1–2 people (%)	3–5 people (%)	6–10 people (%)	11–20 people (%)	21–50 people (%)	More than 50 people (%)
People known by name	0	1	3	6	19	38	32

Table 12.13 Attitudes of members towards social life in the club (member survey, proud to belong $n = 692$, most important social group $n = 722$, respect me for who I am $n = 699$)

	Strongly disagree (%)	Partially disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Partially agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
I am proud to belong to the club	1	3	12	30	55
The club is one of the most important social groups I belong to	9	15	19	29	29
Other people from the club respect me for who I am	1	1	7	37	54

More generally, a club culture of identification, familiarity and cohesion is an important foundation for the club to fulfil social functions and contribute to solidarity in the club and presumably to society as well (Nagel et al. 2004).

In summary: sports clubs in Switzerland have a predominant philosophy of openness and conviviality and the majority of the members indicate that they identify with the club and have social networks and friendships in the club. Thus, there is considerable evidence that sports clubs can contribute to social integration. However, some population groups are underrepresented in sports clubs (e.g. people with migration background, elderly; see Lamprecht et al. 2017), and there may be some practices in clubs that hinder the participation of these groups.

12.5 Democratic Decision-Making and Involvement

Swiss society and the political system have several central elements of grassroots democracy. In this context, clubs as voluntary associations with democratic decision-making structures historically developed in the nineteenth century are expected to be an essential part of the system. The question then arises as to the extent sports clubs contribute to democratic participation and socialisation in Switzerland.

The clear majority of boards of the clubs have the philosophy to involve members in making important decisions (Table 12.14). Four out of five clubs (totally) agree with this statement, and only 4% do not pursue the idea of democratic decision-making.

Do the members achieve this idea of democratic involvement and how is this integrated into discussions of strategies and long-term planning? Sports clubs are established from the bottom-up where the general assembly affords each member one vote, elects the president and the board members and makes important decisions. The results of the member survey show that more than half of the members participated at the last general assembly (Fig. 12.9). This proportion of 57% is clearly higher than in most other European countries in the study.

Furthermore, findings on democratic involvement demonstrate that four out of five members participate more or less regularly in club meetings at least once a year (Table 12.15). About half of the members probably attend the annual general assembly only, whereas a minority take part in meetings each month. Aside from this, the

Table 12.14 Attitudes of sports clubs towards democratic decision-making and involvement (club survey, $n = 4745$)

	Don't agree at all (%)	Don't agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Totally agree (%)
Our club aims to involve members when making important decisions	1	3	15	41	40

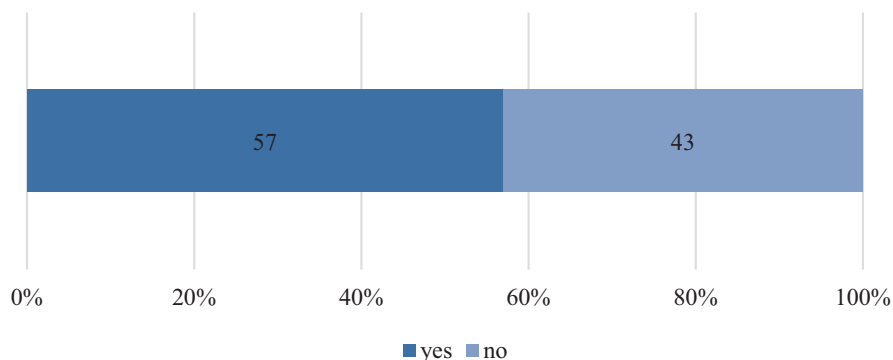


Fig. 12.9 Participation at last general assembly (member survey, $n = 805$)

Table 12.15 Broader democratic participation of members (member survey, participation in member meetings $n = 738$, speak my mind to key persons $n = 588$, share my view with other members $n = 604$)

	Never (%)	Once a year or less (%)	Once every half-year (%)	Once every 3 months (%)	Once a month (%)	Several times a month (%)
Participation in member meetings or other club meetings	16	51	12	13	5	3
I speak my mind to key persons in the club	23	24	16	18	10	10
I share my views with other members in the club	12	18	16	17	16	21

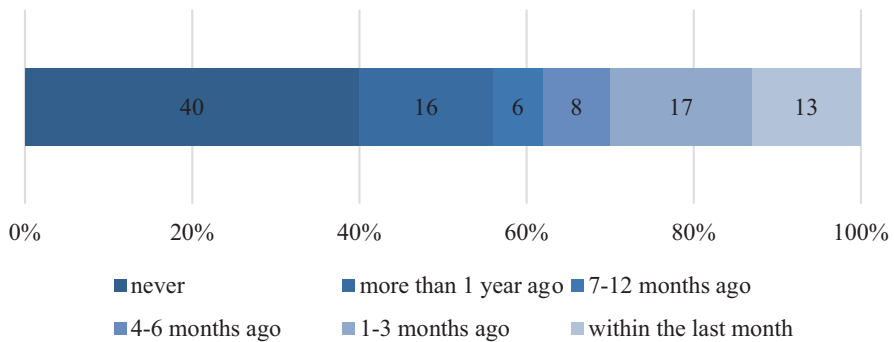


Fig. 12.10 Time since last attempt to influence decision-making in the club (member survey, $n = 775$)

results reveal that there are differences in active participation of the members in club policy and strategy. At least once a month, 20% speak their mind to key persons in the club, while nearly one out of four never does this. For the statement “I share my views with other members in the club”, we find that around half do this at least once every 3 months and the other half only once every half-year or even less.

According to these results, more than half of the members never attempted to become involved in decision-making in the club or did this more than 1 year ago (Fig. 12.10). In contrast, nearly one third of the members recently attempted to influence decisions in the club. Overall the findings show that one section of the membership participates actively and regularly in decision-making, whereas the rest is not interested in club policy.

Although not all members actively participate in decision-making processes, the clear majority have enough knowledge to understand how the club functions (Fig. 12.11). Only 6% of the members disagree (strongly or partially) to the statement regarding the functioning of the club.

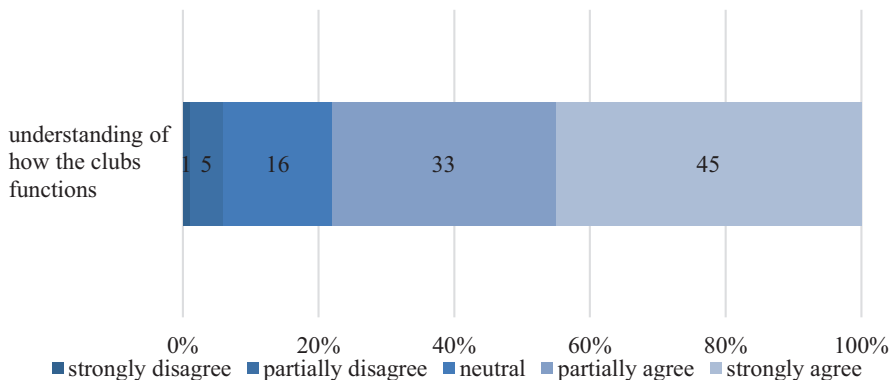


Fig. 12.11 Member's knowledge of how the club functions (member survey, $n = 725$)

In summary: the results of the member survey particularly demonstrate that most members know the principles of democratic decision-making in a (sports) club and within each club, there is usually a sufficient number of members who have an active role in club policy. Thus, they construct together the sports club programme to offer members various possibilities to play sports. Here, the principle of bottom-up democratic decision-making ensures that the sports programme of the club fit the interests and expectations of the majority of the members. Hence, sports clubs can contribute to active democratic involvement of the members in decision-making, which is the basis for attractive sports offers.

12.6 Voluntary Work

Decision-making by elected volunteers who represent the interests of the members and voluntary work in general is still the most relevant resource for most sports clubs in Switzerland (Nagel et al. 2018), although some (larger) clubs also have paid staff. Aside from this, most sports competitions and events arranged by sports clubs benefit from the engagement of volunteers.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, volunteering has played an important role in Swiss society and particularly in Swiss sports clubs (Nagel et al. 2018). Current figures from the Swiss Statistical Office (Bundesamt für Statistik [BFS] 2018) show that 20% of all adults in Switzerland engage as volunteers in formal positions within organisations. The highest amount of this voluntary work is done with sports clubs. The Swiss Statistical Office further estimates that 6% of all people aged 15 years and older are engaged as a volunteer in a sports club in Switzerland. The survey Sport Switzerland 2014 and the 2016 national survey of sports clubs report similar figures. Overall, around 335,000 volunteers deliver an average of 11 hours of unpaid work per month for their clubs (Lamprecht et al. 2014, 2017).

Table 12.16 Attitudes of sports clubs towards voluntary work (club survey, run by volunteers $n = 4800$, members as customers $n = 4333$, demonstrating passion $n = 4336$)

	Don't agree at all (%)	Don't agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Totally agree (%)
Our club should be run exclusively by volunteers	2	4	11	28	56
Our club considers members as customers that cannot be expected to contribute with voluntary work	52	27	13	6	2
Our club's members demonstrate passion, dedication and energy for the work that needs to be done	0	3	18	44	35

In view of these figures, it is not surprising that there is generally very high agreement among sports club representatives that volunteering plays an important role (see Table 12.16). The clear majority of sports clubs ascribe to the philosophy that their clubs should be run exclusively by volunteers. 28% of all clubs agree and 56% totally agree with this statement, whereas only 6% disagree. The idea of volunteer leadership is more popular compared to most other European countries in the survey. The reason for this may be the general importance of bottom-up decision-making in the Swiss political system and the strong historical roots of volunteering in Swiss sports.

Further results in Table 12.16 show that in four out of five clubs, the members demonstrate passion, dedication and energy when volunteering for their club, while about four out of five clubs disagree with the statement that the club considers members as customers who cannot be expected to contribute with voluntary work. Hence, the modern idea of service and customer orientation only plays a minor role in most sports clubs in Switzerland.

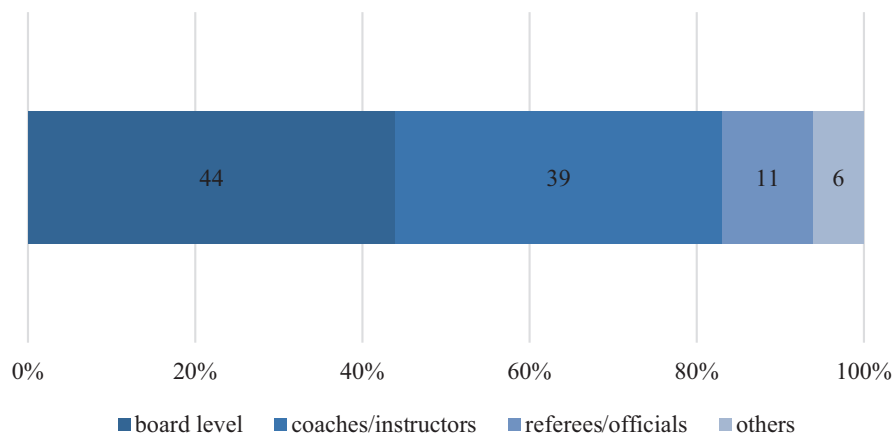
Corresponding to the results on the attitudes and philosophy of the clubs, Swiss sports clubs usually have at least six or more volunteers in different positions. Only 14% of the clubs have five volunteers or fewer, and one third have between six and ten volunteers in fixed positions (Table 12.17). In 28% of the clubs, between 11 and 20 members do regularly voluntary work. About one fourth of the (mostly larger) clubs have more than 20 volunteers in fixed positions (people who get less than CHF 2000 are defined as volunteers in the sports clubs survey, as this is considered symbolic compensation for their time spent as volunteers).

The majority of volunteers hold a fixed position at the board level (44%) or in the sports sector (Fig. 12.12). Thirty-nine per cent work as coaches or instructors of teams and sports groups, and 11% are referees or officials for competitions. These results are broadly in line with the findings of Schlesinger et al. (2014). In addition, these may indicate that a considerable number of members help with the organisation of sports competitions and events.

While volunteers are quite important for the successful development of sports clubs, the clubs frequently indicate they have problems with the recruitment and retention of volunteers for the board, for coaching and for refereeing (Table 12.18). These three types of fixed positions are very big problems for around one sixth of

Table 12.17 Total number of volunteers in clubs (club survey, fixed position(s) $n = 4527$, no fixed position(s) $n = 4312$)

Range (number of volunteers)	0–5	6–10	11–20	21–50	More than 50
Total number of volunteers in fixed position(s) (share of clubs in %)	14	34	28	19	5
Total number of volunteers in no fixed position(s) (share of clubs in %)	20	17	22	26	15

**Fig. 12.12** Distribution of volunteers in fixed positions according to their tasks (club survey, $n = 4527$)**Table 12.18** Problems with the recruitment and retention of volunteers (club survey, board level $n = 4604$, coaches/instructors $n = 4565$, referees/officials $n = 4274$)

	No problem (%)	A small problem (%)	A medium problem (%)	A big problem (%)	A very big problem (%)
Problems with the recruitment and retention of volunteers on the board level	14	22	27	22	15
Problems with the recruitment and retention of coaches/instructors	12	21	28	25	14
Problems with the recruitment and retention of referees/officials	25	17	21	20	17

the clubs, and more than half of the clubs declare this to be at least a medium problem. However, there are also clubs that have no problems to recruit and retain enough motivated and competent volunteers.

Along with Germany, the number of clubs with big problems at the board level is the highest in Switzerland (Breuer et al. 2017). It is interesting that, at the same time, the culture for volunteer club management is quite strong in these two countries.

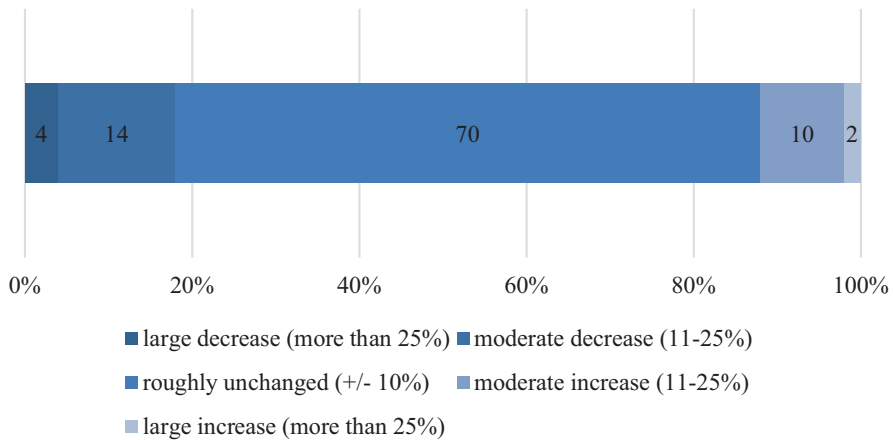


Fig. 12.13 Development in the number of volunteers in the last 5 years (club survey, $n = 4500$)

Although numerous sports clubs indicate problems with recruiting and retaining enough volunteers, more than two thirds broadly show unchanged numbers of volunteers over the last 5 years (Fig. 12.13). The reason for this may be that the requirements of the clubs have increased and therefore more volunteers are needed. Another explanation could be that in general volunteers are a scarce resource in sports clubs and thus problems tend to arise in this area.

Only 12% of clubs specify an increase in the number of volunteers. This result is surprising, as the current Swiss sports club survey shows that the number of voluntary positions in all sports clubs in Switzerland increased from 285,000 in 2010 to 335,000 in 2016 (Lamprecht et al. 2017; Nagel et al. 2018). One reason for this result is that job sharing appears to be a viable solution for the recruitment of enough volunteers to meet the increasing work in sports clubs. It is interesting that the number of volunteers has increased, although there is no specific policy or programme in Switzerland to promote volunteering in general or more specifically in sports (Nagel et al. 2018).

Why do some clubs have big problems with volunteering and others manage to recruit enough volunteers and retain them for a longer period? An explanation for this phenomenon could be the different measures sports clubs undertake to recruit and retain volunteers. The results in Table 12.19 show that the majority of the clubs try to recruit enough volunteers by informing the members they are expected to contribute with voluntary work (70%), by arranging social gatherings for volunteers (69%) and by encouraging and motivating volunteers (43%). Thus, the main strategy is to get enough members to volunteer, whereas external approaches, for example, by informing and recruiting parents of children (28%) or recruiting volunteers from outside existing club members (10%) are less frequent. About one quarter of clubs reward volunteers through benefits in-kind or by paying for training and qualification. Finally, the results reveal that only a minority of clubs have formalised the issue of volunteering through a written recruitment strategy or a person who is

Table 12.19 Measures taken by sports clubs to recruit and retain volunteers (club survey, encourage verbally $n = 4299$, social gatherings $n = 4355$, pay for training $n = 4289$, inform members $n = 4364$, inform parents $n = 4215$, benefits in kind $n = 4276$, recruitment outside $n = 4348$, volunteer management $n = 4336$, written strategy $n = 4340$)

	Yes (%)
The club encourages and motivates its volunteers verbally	43
The club arranges parties and social gatherings for the volunteers to strengthen group identity	69
The club pays for volunteers to take training or gain qualification	25
The club informs members that they are expected to contribute with voluntary work	70
The club informs parents of children who are members that they are expected to contribute with voluntary work	28
The club rewards its volunteers with benefits in kind	24
The club tries to recruit volunteers from outside existing club members	10
The club has a volunteer or paid staff member with specific responsibility for volunteer management	13
The club has a written strategy for volunteer recruitment	18

responsible for volunteer management. Here, Schlesinger et al. (2015) show that sports clubs dealing with problems of volunteering in a systematic and strategic way are more successful (see also Egli et al. 2016).

Additionally, it is worth noting that the specific conditions of volunteering in a club are quite relevant to volunteer satisfaction and as a consequence for long-term volunteering. Current studies in Swiss sports clubs show that the following factors are particularly relevant to the satisfaction and commitment of volunteers in sports clubs: appreciation and recognition, interesting tasks, support by the club and material incentives (Schlesinger et al. 2013, 2014).

The findings of the member survey demonstrate that there are large differences in the frequency and workload of volunteers. Table 12.20 shows that one third of all volunteers engage in their club at least once a week or even more often. Probably most of these people have a fixed position (e.g. as board member or coach), whereas those who do voluntary work once every quarter or even less do not hold fixed positions. These volunteers usually help sporadically in the organisation of competitions or other events for the club.

There are also big differences in the time volunteers dedicate to their work (Table 12.21). Nearly one third of all volunteers spend only 5 hours or less on voluntary work and slightly more than one fourth work on an average between 6 and 10 hours a month during the season. One sixth of all volunteers spend between 21 and 50 hours on volunteering and 5% engage more than 50 hours per month.

In summary, volunteering is still one of the most important resources for sports clubs in Switzerland, enabling clubs to offer interesting programmes to their members. The majority of clubs pursue the philosophy that strategic decisions have to be made by elected volunteers. Most of the clubs manage the challenge of recruiting and retaining enough volunteers by implementing specific measures to increase the number of volunteers and to enhance the commitment of volunteers.

Table 12.20 Frequency of voluntary work of volunteers (member survey, $n = 617$)

	Once a year or less (%)	Once every 6 months (%)	Once every quarter (%)	Once a month (%)	Every other week (%)	Once a week (%)	2–4 days a week (%)	5 days a week or more (%)
Frequency of voluntary work of volunteers	11	20	16	12	8	14	16	2

Table 12.21 Hours spent on voluntary work by volunteers in fixed positions on an average month in the season (member survey, $n = 314$)

	0–5	6–10	11–20	21–50	More than 50
Hours spent on voluntary work of members per month (share of volunteers in %)	31	28	20	16	5

Furthermore, volunteering is not only relevant to sports clubs and members but also to civil society, as integration in a club can lead to integration in the broader community and play an important role in social trust. Volunteering in sports clubs gives people the opportunity to engage in society and public welfare (Nagel et al. 2018).

12.7 Conclusion

From the beginning of the nineteenth century (sports), clubs in Switzerland have been considered as institutions that can, in part, substitute for public initiatives (Stamm et al. 2015). In fact, with a lack of central public authorities, clubs – not only in sports but also in areas such as science, education and politics – often replace official functions. To a certain extent, sports clubs and other clubs are private and officially encouraged alternatives to public interventions, and they have become an important feature of Swiss civil society (Nagel et al. 2018). As a consequence, the public civil society sector in Switzerland is small compared to other countries (e.g. the Northern countries; see Helmig et al. 2017), whereas voluntary organisations such as sports clubs play an important role.

In this context, the results of the club and member survey demonstrate that sports clubs can promote health, social integration, and democratic decision-making, particularly through voluntary work by the members, and thus contribute to public welfare of Swiss society.

Health Promotion On the whole, sports club members regularly practise sports with their club. Thus, sports clubs can contribute to individual and, as a consequence, to public health, even though sports clubs frequently have no specific focus on

health promotion. However, depending on the sports (e.g. gymnastics, running, football), the effects for health promotion may be quite different.

Social Integration Sports clubs in Switzerland usually promote goals such as openness and conviviality, and most members identify with their club and have social networks and friendships in the club. There is considerable overall evidence that sports clubs are able to contribute to social integration. In particular, sports clubs in Switzerland are able to fulfil to a certain extent the ascribed ability to promote social integration of people with disabilities and migration background. However, integration is not automatically attained and is dependent on specific factors and conditions. Furthermore, these population groups are underrepresented across sports clubs (see Lamprecht et al. 2017).

Democratic Decision-Making The results of the member survey particularly demonstrate that most of the members of Swiss sports clubs understand the principles of democratic decision-making in a sports club. In addition, there are usually enough members in each club to play an active role in club policy. Thus, together they construct the sports clubs programmes that offer the members various possibilities to play sports. Here, the principle of bottom-up democratic decision-making, important in the Swiss political system, ensures that the sports programmes of the club fit the interests and expectations of the majority of the members. Hence, sports clubs can contribute to active democratic involvement of the members in decision-making that forms the basis of attractive sports offers.

Volunteering Volunteering is still the backbone of sports clubs in Switzerland, and most have the philosophy that strategic decisions need to be made by elected volunteers. This bottom-up principle ensures that the members have the opportunity to gain experience in democratic decision-making in their club.

Volunteering is not only relevant to sports clubs and members but also to civil society, as integration in a club can lead to integration in the broader community, playing an important role in social trust. Volunteering in sports clubs gives people the opportunity to engage in society and public welfare. Thus, volunteering is an important promoter of social cohesion in Swiss society (Freitag 2014).

Overall, sports clubs and the more than 300,000 volunteers who engage in the club and in the welfare of the general public (e.g. by promoting youth sport) contribute to a vibrant civil society in Switzerland.

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