

Chapter 17

Sport Clubs in Norway

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17.1 Introduction

This chapter is about sport clubs in Norway. Norway is a constitutional monarchy with about five million inhabitants. It is part of the Scandinavian tradition of social democratic welfare states which comprises both a strong state and a relatively large civil sector (Esping-Andersen 1990). The largest proportion of the civil sector is voluntary sport organisations (Seippel 2008; Ibsen and Seippel 2010; Sivesind 2012). In this chapter Norwegian sport clubs are first presented as a historical phenomenon and as part of a societal context. Then there are two main sections: on the role of sport clubs in policy and society, and on the characteristics of sport clubs. Next, we discuss a central characteristic of Norwegian sport as the special topic, namely, the close and intricate state–sport relationship and some current trends challenging this relationship. We end the chapter with a conclusion.

17.2 History and Context

Sport has a long history in Norway. At least back to the Nordic (Norse) middle-ages—the Viking era—the existence of activities or skills which we today would call sport can be documented. Such skills—sprint oriented as well as endurance

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oriented running, swimming and use of various weapons (sword, axe and javelin)—were all related to what gained status among young men in the Viking community (Goksøy 2008). In a similar vein, based on desired competences for young men, the first sport clubs were established in order to prepare for military readiness. While shooting skills were always a prioritised element in the first sport clubs, gymnastics and skiing were also important. When the first national umbrella sport organisation was established in 1861, several sport clubs already existed both in the cities and in countryside (*i by og bygd*). For example in Oslo (Christiania), *Christiania weapon exercise club* (Norwegian: *Christiania Vaabenøvelsesforening*) was established in 1859 (Olstad 1987, p. 11), and *Trysil shooting and ski club* (Norwegian: *Trysil Skytte-og Skiløberforening*) was established in 1861 (Goksøy 2011, p. 12).

The dominance of the military element of sports lasted until the detachment from the union with Sweden in 1905. It should be noted that it was a peaceful process, where the shooting skills of the sport clubs were never needed. From the start in the 1860s the sport organisation has received economic subsidies from public actors (Goksøy 1992). During the first decades sport was mostly a matter for the Ministry of defence, but there have been multiple interests in and influences upon sport. These changes reflect the shifts in the sport trends, the political foci from the state and from the wider society.

Norwegian sports have been influenced by national traditions as well as international trends. As a start, skiing and gymnastics were often added to shooting in the work of the first sport clubs. Interestingly, skiing and gymnastics represent two different traditions of sport in Norway. First, skiing is the typical Norwegian *idrett*. Second, gymnastics in Norwegian sport clubs is a result of influence from the German *turnen* and the Swedish gymnastics. Both skiing and gymnastics were considered good supplements to shooting in preparing military fitness, as skiing represented endurance and ability to stay out in the winter cold, and gymnastics represented bodily exercise combined with discipline in a group (Olstad 1987; Goksøy 2011). During the last half of the nineteenth century, shooting, gymnastics and the Norwegian winter sports were all main features of Norwegian sport clubs.

Around the turn of the century (1900 that is) a new influence of international sport trends came over Norway. Unlike the gymnastics, which could fit into the existing sport clubs and sport organisation, the English sport represented another value system and partly challenged the then hegemonic Norwegian *idrett*. Since the Viking literature, the Norwegian or Norse word *idrett* (or *idrott* in Old Norse) has had a special standing. It is the Norwegian word for sport, and today both words as used more or less interchangeably. However, *idrett* refers more to the old and traditional Norwegian sports such as skiing and ice skating, while sport refers more to the English sports such as typically football. The point is that for Norwegians (at least for those with influence in the sport organisations), the new sports were considered a threat to the traditional Norwegian *idrett*. Nevertheless, English sport, especially football (soccer) gained popularity; the Norwegian football association was established in 1902 and has been the largest sport for most of its more than 100 years of existence (Goksøy and Olstad 2002).

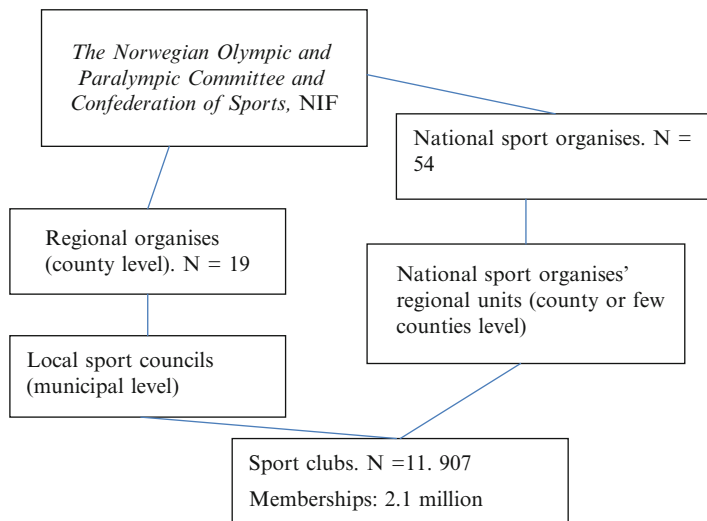


Fig. 17.1 The NIF system, with the two lines of organisation: the national sport associations and their regional extensions on *right side*; the district sport organisations and local sport councils on the *left side*. It shows the umbrella organisation NIF on *top*, and the sport clubs at the *bottom*

Historically, a most consequential incidence for the organisational development of Norwegian sport took place in the interwar period with the establishment of a workers' sport federation in 1924. This was a reaction to the bourgeois profile of the existing sports federation (a successor of *Centralforeningen*). For the sport clubs, the everyday sport was split into two systems, often with two sets of competitions (i.e. leagues) for each sport. In 1939 it was agreed, after governmental pressure, to merge the two sport organisations. The formal merger was delayed due to World War II, and was formalised in 1946, in the name of the Norwegian Confederation of Sports (Norwegian: *Norges idrettsforbund*, NIF).¹ However, since both sport organisations were hesitant to change their organisational structure, the outcome was the *double line* organisation seen in Fig. 17.1. NIF's and the district sport organisations' focus on sport for all stem from the mass-oriented worker organisation, while the special national sport federations' focus on competitive sport stems from the bourgeois organisation (Skille and Säfvenbom 2011; Tønnesson 1986).

After World War II sports have developed into important actors for societal development and sport is concerning more and more people. Supplementary activities based on the population's needs and desires were developed and during the 1970s, organised sport appeared as a recreational activity for everybody. From 1965 to 1985 the number of members almost quadrupled, from 430,000 to 1.6 million,

¹In 1996, NIF merged with The Norwegian Olympic Committee into The Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports. In 2008, The Norwegian Paralympic Committee was also included; the name is now The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports. It is still abbreviated NIF in Norwegian (Skille and Säfvenbom 2011).

first and foremost by recruiting youth and women. Sport historians have labelled this period *the sport revolution* (Tønnesson 1986), a revolution which was made possible by the construction of new sport facilities and—as indicated above—by opening the sport clubs to new groups of the population: women, children and youth. Since then, NIF has been Norway's largest voluntary organisation, mainly built up by a member base and the vision—shared by public authorities and the voluntary sport organisation—has been *sport for all* (Meld. St. 26 2011–2012; NIF 2011; St. meld. nr. 41 1991–1992; St. meld. nr 14 1999–2000) Moreover, the ideology, understood as the dominant view of how best to organise sport in Norway, has been to join all sport into one organisation.

This unitary organisation then includes mass sport as well as elite sport. There are, nevertheless, challenges to this ideology, from both the inside and the outside of the conventional sport system. Within the sport system, processes of commercialisation and professionalisation challenges the traditional and voluntary culture of Norwegian sport (Enjolras et al. 2011). Moreover, the old tension between mass sport and elite sport has gained new relevance and a new form after the introduction of the concept of elite youth sport; elite youth sport has entered the scene paralleled with the establishment of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) which is to be hosted in Norway in 2016 (Skille and Houlihan 2014). From the outside of the sport organisation, the most visible development in the field of physical activity, and therefore, a potential challenge for the sport organisation is the establishment and popularity of fitness centres as well as the very fact that the—by far—most popular form of exercising is unorganised/self-organised. (See empirical part below, Figs. 17.6 and 17.7). Let us elaborate a bit on the elite youth sport issue.

The concept of elite youth sport is ambiguous. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as a continuation of a history and process of uniting apparently different interests into one organisation (cf. the two lines model). However, within that one organisation there used to be relatively clear divisions of labour, where one side takes care of elite sport and the other takes care of youth sport. This division of labour is institutionalised through a mutual understanding between the sport organisations (as it is evident in NIF's sport policy document; NIF 2011) and the representatives of society (as in White Papers from the Government to the Parliament; Meld. St. 26 2011–2012). Hence, the very expression of *elite youth sport* contains a contradiction, as the word 'elite' for many Norwegians—laypersons and policy-makers alike—does not have a positive connotation when used in association with youth sport (Skille and Houlihan 2014). However, while this distinction is still recognised, it is perhaps less clear than it has been previously. The tensions involved in attempting to maintain the distinction are evident in the most recent report into Norwegian elite sport (NIF 2013b), which treats the relationship between youth sport and elite sport as more closely intertwined and even interdependent.

Moreover, there are—in addition to the elite sport versus mass sport tensions—a number of more general tensions in the NIF system: between large/popular sports and small sports, between rich sports and poor sports (often related to sponsor incomes and media coverage), between the concerns given from the international

federations versus national or regional/local concerns, between sport in itself versus sport for societal goods (health, social integration, etc.), focusing on the talents versus protecting drop-outs, between volunteerism and professionalism, and so on. In sum, it could be claimed that the strength of the Norwegian sport model also is its weakness: the aim of uniting all types of sport into one organisation. Leaning on this historical sketch, we move on to present data on the contemporary situation in Norwegian sport, focusing upon Norwegian sport clubs.

Even though we could always wish for more, better and more recent data, we have a relatively rich source of information on Norwegian sport clubs. In the next sections, we address three topics which each illustrates both the situation and the development of Norwegian sport clubs. First, we look at some basic numbers. For clubs we will ask how many and how large. For members we ask how many, which genders and which sports. Second, some of the derivative sides of sports (reflected in the political arguments in favour of sports) are looked into: What are the aims of the clubs? Why are people active in sport? As in many other nations, voluntary work is the foundation for large parts of the sport sector and a third perspective relevant for sport clubs concerns volunteering. In the last section before conclusion, we discuss a central characteristic of the Norwegian sport, namely, the state–sport relationship and current trends challenging these institutional relations.

17.3 Role of Sport Clubs in Policy and Society

Regarding the role of sport clubs in the Norwegian society, we highlight two main features: one more internally oriented and one more externally oriented. First, we treat the characteristics of Norwegian sport clubs including issues into members and activity; second, we treat organised sport and its social aspects.

Regarding characteristics of sport clubs, the single most illustrative picture of the development and situation of organised sport in Norway is the number of memberships in Norwegian sport clubs. As we see from Fig. 17.2, there has been an enormous growth during the last 60 years: From—as shown in the history section above—being an organisation primarily for young and adult men, to being an organisation also for women and children and youth. Figure 17.3, on the growth in number of sport clubs, shows reasonably enough, a similar pattern to the figure of memberships. There is, however, one difference between the two: the growth of clubs stops and even reverses in the late 1990s, indicating that there are more large clubs now than previously. Looking into the development of the sizes of sport clubs more specifically, Fig. 17.4 shows how many members there are—on average—per Norwegian sport club during the period from 1954 until 2010.

The growth represented in these figures is basically reflecting the latter part of the modernisation in Norway. It reflects a nation with a tradition for sport and outdoor life which has become a more prosperous nation, but also a nation with a specific policy toward sports and especially the building of sport facilities (Goksøy

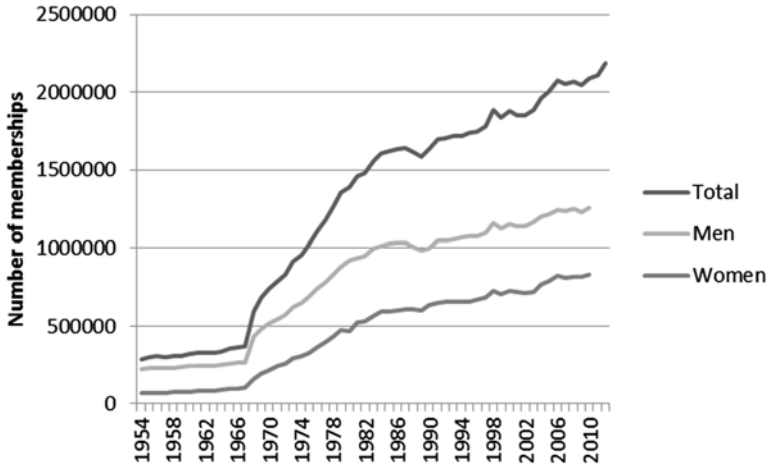


Fig. 17.2 The development of the number of memberships in Norwegian sport clubs from 1954 until 2012

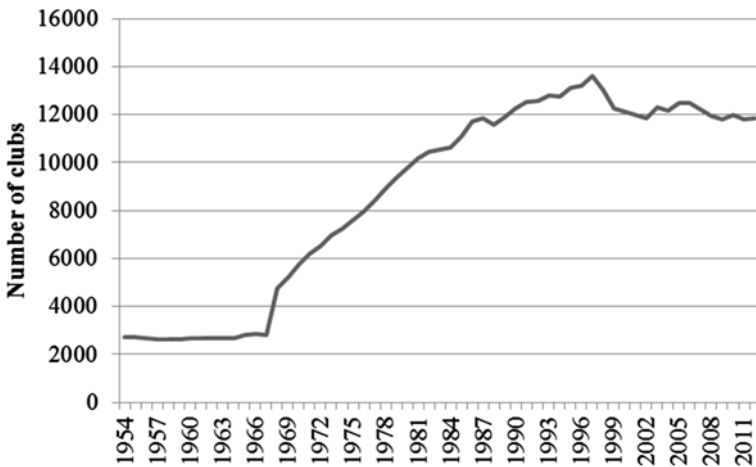


Fig. 17.3 The development of number of Norwegian sport clubs from 1954 until 2012

et al. 1996), a nation where children have a more central and active place, a more gender equal society, a less elitist society. These characteristics of equality are valid on a general economic and political level of the Norwegian society (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010) as well as for sport (Bairner 2010).

Behind the expansive figures we also find a process of differentiation where a third indication of growth within the organised sport system is the number of

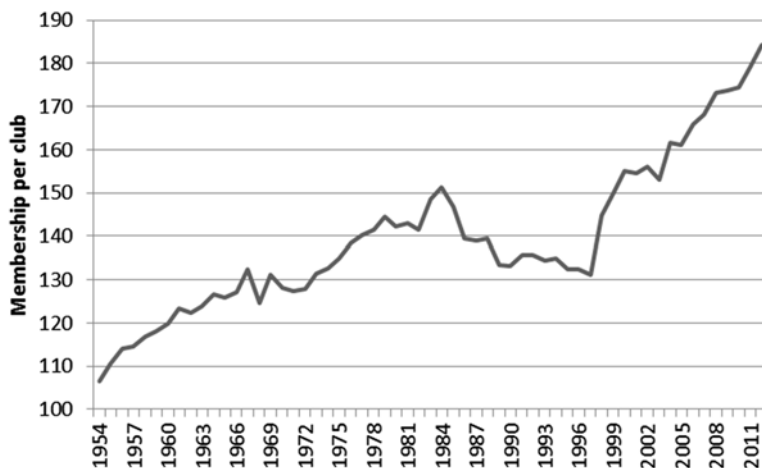


Fig. 17.4 The development of number of membership per sport club from 1954 until 2012

associations, where each association in principle offers and governs one specific sport.² In 1946, there were 24 associations, while in 2014 there are 54 associations.³ The two most popular sports, counted by memberships in associations, which are based on reports of memberships in sport clubs, are football (369,305 members) and skiing (178,091 members) (NIF 2013a). That indicates that the outcome of the historical tension between English sport and Norwegian/Norse *idrett* is that both survived and live well. This is shown in Fig. 17.5a, while Fig. 17.5b shows next four sports according to size (company sports not included).

The societal development reflected in the growth of sport clubs and members do also reflect shifts within the more general picture of physical activity. We do not have as good data as we could have hoped for this development, but we do have survey results (Norsk Monitor) going back 30 years and which document how the Norwegian adult population exercises. Figure 17.6 shows how the Norwegian population above the age of 15 is physically active in sport clubs, at fitness centres and on their own.

²It should be noted that there are huge differences across the associations, both in size (from 337 members in the Sledge, bobsleigh and skeleton association, to 369,305 members in the football association), and regarding structure and sports. Taking two apparently similar sports as examples, the biathlon association governs one sport discipline only (although there is a huge number of competition forms), while the ski association governs six disciplines and have six specific committees (sub-boards with a relative autonomy and responsibility): cross country skiing, ski jumping, Nordic combined, alpine skiing, freestyle skiing and telemark skiing.

³There have actually been as many as 56 associations, but some (of the small ones) have merged aiming at more effective administration. For example, tae kwon do, karate, jiu-jitsu used to have separate organisers, and are now federated in the same association (called the martial arts association).

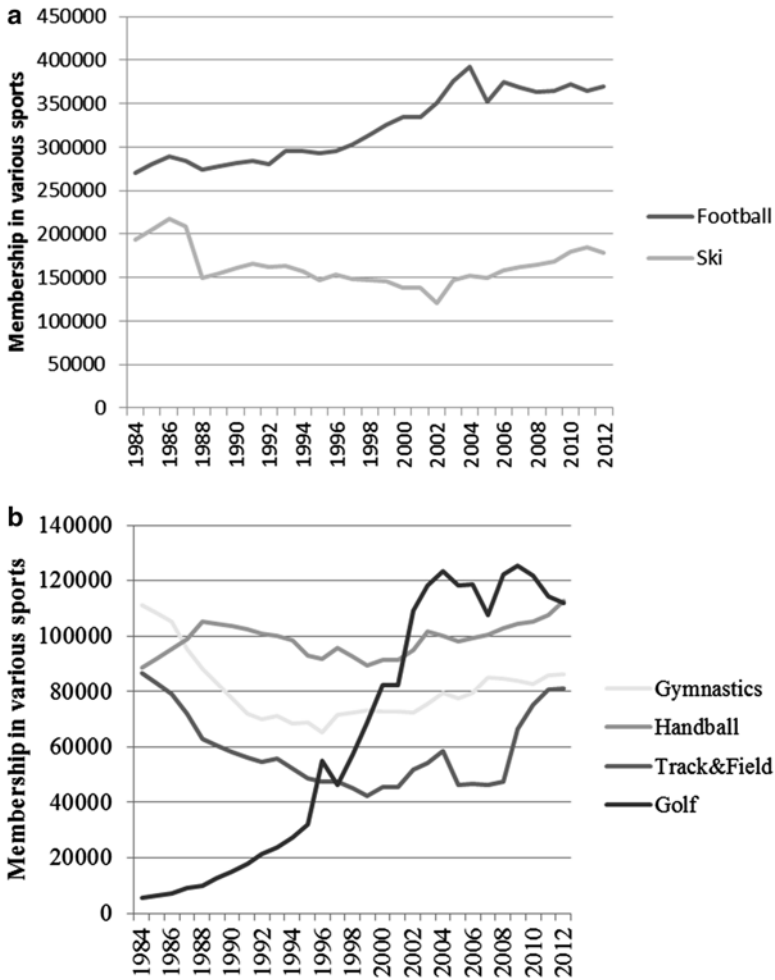


Fig. 17.5 The development of the five largest sports in 1982 and 2012 (which adds up to six sports (Golf on the rise, Track and field on the wane) largest organised sports from 1982 and until today

The results presented in Fig. 17.6 give important additional information to the above picture about sport clubs. First, we see that exercise in sport clubs among adults have decreased in the same period as the number of memberships in general has increased. This indicates or confirms that the sport clubs have specialised more than previously in being an organisation for children and youth. Second, we see that there has been a strong growth in the proportion of the population saying that they exercise at fitness centres. While the proportion of adults in Norway training in sport clubs have decreased steadily the last two decades, the proportion of adults training at fitness centres have increased steadily; the lines actually mirrors each

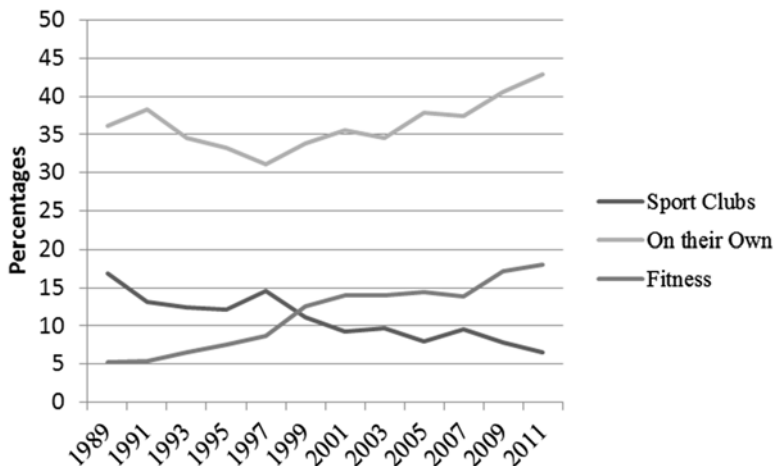


Fig. 17.6 Percentage of the population over the age of 15 in Norway (2010) being physically active in sport clubs, fitness centres, and on their own, respectively

other, crossing just before the turn of the millennium. Both for sport clubs and fitness centres the data indicate trends which if continued will imply a serious shift in the pattern of physical activity in the Norwegian population and they do also imply challenges for the policies towards these areas. The final finding emanating from Fig. 17.6 is that exercise *on their own* is by far the most used form of physical activity among the adult population in Norway.

Further insights into the question of the role of sport clubs are found in youth research, where studies shows how very large proportions of young people take part in sport clubs, but we also see very clearly how this activity drops and how fitness exercise is strengthening its position. Figure 17.7 shows how the proportion of youth being physically active versus inactive from eighth grade to second year of high school.⁴ The figure further shows the proportion of youth being active in the three different organisational forms: sport clubs, fitness centres and on their own.

The overall picture of Fig. 17.7 shows a slight decrease of the physically active proportion of the youth population, from 76 % in eighth grade to 71 % in second year of high school, and an increase of the inactive proportion of the population from 24 to 29 % in the same age span. Regarding organisational form of physical activity, there is a clear decrease of the proportion of youth being active in sport clubs, from 55 to 28 % from eighth grade to second year of high school. The most significant drop in sport club participation is between tenth grade (which is the last year at upper primary school) and the first year of high school. This finding is in line with the idea that all transitions in life challenge patterns and habitual behaviour such as sport participation (Roberts 2006). On the other hand, there is a clear

⁴Eighth grade starts in August the year the youth turn 13 (and lasts until June the year after); second year of high school starts the year the youth turn 17.

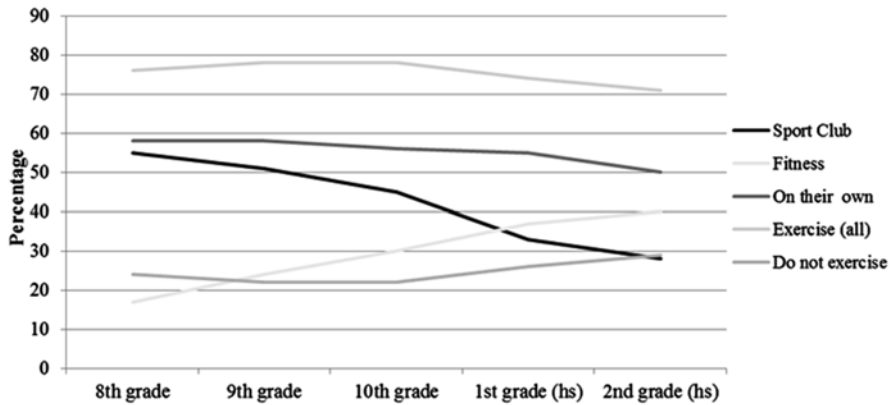


Fig. 17.7 The proportion (%) of youth (2010) being physically active (in any form; *upper line*), and being inactive (*lower e, line*) from eighth grade until second year in high school; and the proportion of youth being active in sport clubs, fitness centres and on their own (Seippel et al. 2011, p. 64)

increase in the proportion of youth training at fitness centres over the same age span, from 17 to 40 %; there is even similar (contrary to sport clubs figure) leap from tenth grade to first year of high school, from 30 to 37 %. It is, moreover, interesting to see that also for youth, the—by far—most popular organisational form of physical activity is to exercise on their own, which shows a decrease from 58 to 50 % but which is much more stable over the analysed life span than any of the other organisational forms of physical activity among youth.

Regarding organised sport and its social aspects, it was indicated in the historical section that sport is said—both by public policymakers and in the sport organisations (NIF 2011; Meld. St. 26 2011–2012)—to contribute to a broader spectre of goods. Empirically, there are obviously many possible ways to shed light on this question; here we provide three brief answers. First, we take a look at how sport clubs consider their situation. Second, we look at it simply by asking people why they are active in sport, using a 10 year old study of motives for training in sport clubs and motives for training at fitness centres. Third, we refer very briefly to some studies on sport and social capital.

A first approach is to look at what representatives of sport clubs see as the sport clubs' main mission in society. In that respect, we have qualitative data from a case study of sport clubs investigating how sport club leaders (board members) consider the sport club as an institution with a role or a function in society (Skille 2010, 2011). The qualitative empirical evidence can be summed up like this: 'sport club representatives were concerned with sport development and competitiveness, and to varying degrees—or at least with various expressions—were concerned with healthy outcomes of sport'. Sport club representatives are engaged in sport because they see sport participation for their children and their peers as a healthy way of spending leisure time, of growing up, and of personal and social development

Table 17.1 Motives for exercising in sport clubs and at fitness centres by gender

Motives	Fitness				Sport Clubs				% dif
	Total	Female	Male	% dif	Total	Female	Male	% dif	
To keep fit	95 (1)	97 (1)	90 (1)	7	83 (2)	90 (1)	80 (2)	10	12
Mental	77 (2)	80 (2)	69 (2)	11	73 (3)	80 (3)	70 (3)	10	4
Joy	67 (3)	68 (3)	65 (3)	3	88 (1)	89 (2)	88 (1)	1	-21
Appearance	32 (4)	36 (4)	24 (4)	12	9 (7)	15 (7)	6 (7)	9	23
Expression	18 (5)	20 (5)	13 (5)	7	37 (5)	41 (5)	34 (5)	7	-19
Achievement	5 (6)	4 (6)	8 (6)	-4	26 (6)	21 (6)	29 (6)	-8	-21
Social	4 (7)	3 (7)	5 (7)	-2	46 (4)	48 (4)	45 (4)	3	-42

Percentages reporting that the various motives are important and ranking (in parenthesis; Ulseth 2003, p. 34)

(Skille 2010). Healthy here refers not only to a positive physiological outcome of physical activity, but as much to the social elements related to being part of a group, and a system where rules and fun are integrated in everyday activities. All in all, sport clubs are seen as an arena for social interactions for both youth participants and adult volunteers, which enables development for both parties. In the same qualitative study, it is discussed whether, as long as the competitive sport is the main activity in sport clubs, a consequence of the situation is limited possibilities for the realisation of social goods such as health (Skille 2011). Nevertheless, the main finding is that sport club representatives (the interviewees in the study) consider sport clubs as a total package including a number of ingredients that a healthy upbringing requires. The perhaps most interesting finding from the qualitative sport club study was the taken-for-granted belief in sport as something good, yet the difficulty to express what the goods were. In that respect, the quantitative data below give an important contribution.

A second approach to disclose a picture of what sport club activity implies is simply to ask people why they participate in organised sport and then comparing this to respondents from fitness centres.

The findings shown in Table 17.1 indicate very clearly that doing sport in sport clubs is an activity with unmistakably different qualities from exercise at fitness centres. Starting with the sport clubs, we see that *joy*, followed by a wish to *keep fit* and *mental recreation*, are the most prevalent reasons for being active. The most important comparisons are found in the right-most column showing the differences in prevalence of motives between sport clubs and fitness exercise. Here we see that the largest difference concerns the *social aspects* of exercise, followed by *appearance*, *joy*, *expression* and *achievements*. Overall, the sizes of the differences are remarkable, but also the indication of what we could call existential motives—*joy*, *social* and *achievements*—being so much more important in sport clubs than in fitness are telling. What is clearly more important at fitness centres than in sport clubs is appearance.

A third approach shedding some light on the societal value of sport clubs is studies related to the question of social capital. By time, there are now several approaches

to sport which also addresses aspects of social capital related to sport clubs and one of their core characteristics: being organised voluntarily. There is a debate in the international literature on social capital which is concerned with the aspect of social trust and the role civil society actors play in this regard. As a contribution to this debate, a study of members and volunteers of Norwegian sport clubs indicate that—in line with expectations from the literature—being active in a sport club generate more social capital (measured as general trust) than not being active, but less than taking part in more outwardly-directed organisations (Seippel 2006, 2008).

One bottleneck or challenge of the Norwegian sport system is related to the tension between professionalisation and volunteering. Even though there are close bonds between public authorities and the sport clubs, the largest proportion of the clubs' incomes comes from the members: either as member fees or as voluntary work. For a majority of the sport clubs, they are also run without paid staff (Enjolras et al. 2011). This makes the topic of volunteers an important question indeed, and the challenge of how to recruit volunteers is a recurrent theme. So far, the situation seems to be that the level of volunteering is keeping up, at the same time as there are more professionals—both paid and educated—in the clubs (Seippel 2010). This makes the question of how to work with volunteers and what the process of professionalisation implies timely and relevant. The question of volunteering could be approached both from a general (individual) perspective and from the clubs point of view.

From the individual perspective, data from the Norwegian part of the Johns Hopkins Study (Sivesind 2012) show that from 1997 to 2009, sport's proportion of hours volunteered in voluntary organisations has been more or less constant: from 21 to 24 %. For sport, the proportion of volunteers has also been rather stable: decreasing from 23 to 20 %. Looking at data from Norsk Monitor, we see a similar pattern where about a fourth of the population answers that they have volunteered for a sport association the previous year. Figure 17.8 shows that these numbers have been stable for at least a decade.

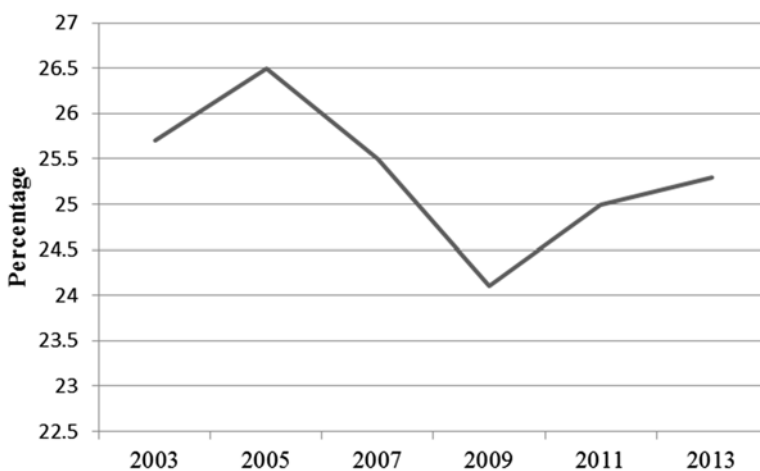


Fig. 17.8 Percentage of Norwegian population volunteering in sport clubs

From the clubs point of view, the sport clubs study of 2002, shows that in close to 70 % of all sport clubs all work is done by volunteers, whereas more than 90 % of all work is done by volunteers in about 90 % of the clubs (Seippel 2003). Thus, the most striking empirical finding regarding volunteering in sport is that the proposed scenario of a collapse in volunteerism seems exaggerated. We move on to treat other claimed challenges related to sport clubs in the next section.

17.4 Special Topic: Sport Policy, Governance and Voluntary Sport Clubs

Above we have focused on Norwegian sport clubs and the voluntary sport system (NIF system). In this section we return to a feature touched upon in the introduction, namely, that, historically, there has been (and is) a strong relationship between the Norwegian authorities and the sport organisation(s). State sport policy and voluntary sport organisations (and thus implementation of the sport policy) have lived in some kind of symbiosis based on a mutual dependency. The traditional division of labour between the public and the voluntary sector is that the government supports the physical and economic infrastructure for sport and the voluntary sport clubs provide activities. As such, there has traditionally been a relatively clear distinction between sport facilities policies on the one hand side, and sport activity policies on the other. The public sector (both state and municipality) has the responsibility for construction of sport facilities, while the sport clubs in the NIF-system have the responsibility to fill these sport facilities with sport activities.

Researchers have discussed whether the state–sport relationship is best conceptualised as corporatism or not (Goksøyr et al. 1996; Mangset and Rommetvedt 2002; Houlihan 1997). Regardless of these discussions, at the national level of sport policy the relationship between the voluntary sport organisation and the public sector is highly institutionalised and has retained its present form since 1946. Recently, three processes of change have been claimed to challenge this institutionalised and corporatist model of sport policy: politisation (Enjolras and Waldahl 2007), governmentalisation (Bergsgard and Rommetvedt 2006) and pluralisation (Bergsgard and Norberg 2010).

Politisation refers to increased lobbying from NIF towards parliament and government. For example, when the formula for distributing the revenues from the state owned gambling agency was changed in favour of sport in 2002, it happened after NIF representatives' extensive parliamentary lobbyism. According to the NIF president, NIF representatives had 100 meetings with politicians in order to persuade them to vote for a raise in the sport share of the revenues (Bergsgard and Rommetvedt 2006).

Governmentalisation is a process reflected in an increased and detailed steering from the state in order to fulfil state policy objectives through the voluntary sport organisations (Bergsgard et al. 2007). In this respect, current sport policy is ambiguous. On the one hand, there are less-targeted subsidies from the state to the NIF

compared to earlier periods. On the other hand, the state requires more monitoring on how the subsidies are spent than before (Enjolras 2004, 2005). Nevertheless, the Norwegian sport policy model is, compared to other countries (Bergsgard et al. 2007; Enjolras 2003; Houlihan 1997), relatively stable with regard to the state–sport relationship, the twin organisation of NIF, and the voluntary dependence of sport provision.

While politisation and governmentalisation addresses processes taking place on the national level pluralism refers to developments on the grass roots. Regarding pluralism of sport, it refers first to developments in sport clubs in the NIF system, and it refers to developments outside the NIF system. For example, as we have seen in the empirical part above, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of sports offered by NIF organised sport clubs; at the same time much of the development in the field stems from the increased fitness centre popularity. Another example, although it is rather marginal, is that since 2005 the Sami sport organisation of Norway has received public funding allocated by the gambling revenues (Skille 2012). All these are signs of pluralism in the field of sport/physical activity, inside and outside the NIF system.

Despite some weaker indications of changes, there are few signs of major shifts in the sport policy models in Norway where the lack of interest in sport politics in the parliament is noteworthy, as in the other Scandinavian countries (Bergsgard and Norberg 2010). In sum, the state has limited policy tools to use in order to really control the implication of its sport policies through the voluntary sport clubs. What the state does have is money; two thirds of the state revenues for sport is spent on (building new and recovering established) sport facilities, and about one third is spent on support to NIF and the national sport organisations.⁵ Indirectly, these tools support and facilitate sport activity. Nevertheless, some voices speak up for more change and higher degrees of pluralisation in order to reach out to more groups.

Among others, two different points have been presented in order to discuss future development of sport policies, especially for adolescent in the risk-age for dropping out. Skille (2008) argues that there is a need to develop theories which take the sport club as the point of departure for analysis, in order to understand the implementation of sport policy in Norway. The grass-roots implementer has no obligations for the decision-maker in the public policy system, or for the administrators in the central staff of the NIF (Skille 2010, p. 80). Säfvenbom (2010) argues that the point of departure for policy making regarding movement activities and sport among children and youth has to be in contemporary knowledge on how children and adolescents act and develop as modern individuals.

All in all, sport clubs—and all the empirical data presented about sport clubs—must be seen in relation to the special standing sport has in Norway (probably not unique for Norway, though). To understand the sport club participation, the social values of sport, and the volunteerism in sport, it is crucial to have an idea about the NIF relationship, the NIF system, and the relative autonomy of the national sport organisations. Moreover, it is crucial to have an idea about all the expectations

⁵The latter includes 10 % of the state sport budget going directly down to the local sport councils to distribute to activity support for the sport clubs in the council's area.

sport clubs meet, perhaps especially regarding the main target group which is youth and adolescents. It is however, out of the scope of this chapter to go into detailed discussion here.

17.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we provide an overview of Norwegian sport clubs; historically but first and foremost with regard to developments in the post war era and regarding the current situation. It is evident that the number of both clubs and members in sport clubs has increased tremendously the last five decades, and that the main membership group contents children and youth. We also show that sport is practised for various reasons, and thus it was what we called existential motives, such as joy, social elements and achievement orientation, which most clearly showed what motives for sport club participation was all about compared to training in fitness centres. And it is evident that volunteerism is crucial for sport clubs in Norway. The patterns painted in the main sections of this chapter seem to be relatively stable, although there are challenging processes of change going on, as discussed in the section above. In that respect, more research should be initiated, in order to find the mechanisms leading to stability in this specific sector of society, when the rest of the social world seems to change rapidly.

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