



Sport psychology in Visegrad region – written report

Outputs of the 20.11.2025 Visegrad Sport Psychology Meeting in Olomouc, Czech Republic

1. PRESENT:

Following associations and their members were present on the meeting.

A.) Association of Sport Psychologists of the Czech Republic

Michal Vicar, Martin Machacek, Katerina Vejvodova, Veronika Balakova
www.apscr.info

B.) Slovakian Association of Sport Psychology

Michala Bednarikova, Peter Kuracka, Mojmir Trebunak, Michal Murarik
Website: www.sportovapsychologia.sk

C.) Polish Psychological Association, sport psychology division

Dorota Pietrzyk-Matusik, Wiktor Wiluś, Anna Kopiec, Pola Wawrzyniak
<https://osps.com.pl/>

D) Sport and Soul Sport-Psychotherapy Association (Hungary) –

Krisztina Bóna, Dominik Sárkány, Anna Kárász, Alexandra Somos
<https://www.sporteslelek.hu/>

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

This project is aimed at developing the field of psychology of sport in the Visegrad region. Psychology of sport and exercise is a rapidly developing field of applied psychology. During the communist era, one of the key world centers of this applied discipline was in Central Europe - Visegrad region. After the fall of the iron curtain the V4 area lost its importance. The best practice and connection among national representative bodies (currently represented by Asociace psychologů sportu ČR, Sekcja Psychologii Sportu Polskiego Towarzystwa Psychologicznego in Poland, Slovenská asociácia športovej psychológie and Hungarian Sport és Lélek Egyesület) diminished, with lack of coordination among these bodies and no existing platform. There are several consequences of current situation such as: 1. Lots of know-how from the region and previous era was never communicated to broad public. 2. The V4 region is losing its importance in the global context, with the UK, Germany, US, Canada and Australia

becoming the leading centers of Sport psychology in the world. 3.The research ideas and teams in the region handle diverse topics and do not cooperate. 4. There is no professional position of a “Sport Psychologist” recognized by legislative in any of the V4 countries. 5. Currently a university degree educational programme about sport psychology is established just in Poland and in Hungary. Therefore, this project focuses on creating the platform, cooperation, and best practice sharing of national bodies and its members in the V4 region.

This final report is one of the outputs of the project.

3. THE CURRENT STATE OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY IN THE REGION

The associations and their work were introduced, to target the current state of work in every country

A. Association of Sport Psychologists of the Czech Republic

Governance:

- President: Michal Vicar
- Vice-president: Veronika Balakova, Martin Machacek, Katerina Vejvodova
- General assembly held annually; elections every four years

Description:

Non-profit organization with nearly 70 members. Member of the UPA (Union of Psychological Associations, Czech Republic), FEPSAC. The association aims to develop sport psychology, provide educational activities, improve professional practices, participate in systematic changes in sports (including integrating sport psychologists into every sports federation), and contribute to establishing a safe environment in sports.

Main national partners:

Czech Union of Sport (ČUS), Active Czech, Czech Olympic Committee, Train With Respect, Gymnathlon

Current activities:

- Creating an interactive map of practitioners by region
- Publishing and translating books
- Establishing sport psychologists' participation in the Olympic Games
- Regular peer supervisions and sharing case studies
- Organizing small-group round tables for coaches
- Developing an online psychodiagnostics application accessible to members, with data available for research

B. Slovakian Association of Sport Psychology

Description:

Established in 2000 and refounded in 2017, currently with 44 members (one-quarter are students). Group member of FEPSAC. The association focuses on developing sport psychology in Slovakia, collaborating with national organizations such as the Slovak Olympic Committee. Since 2019, Michala Bednarikova serves in FEPSAC Managing Council.

Governance:

- President: Michala Bednarikova
- Vice-president: Peter Kuračka
- Board members: Mojmir Trebunak, Petra Pacesova
- General assembly held annually; elections every four years

Current activities:

- Organizing annual conferences since 2018 with invited national and international sport psychology professionals
- Collaboration with Slovak Olympic and Sport committee and Slovak Paralympic Committee
- Collaboration with Ministry of Health regarding the legislation about psychological services (2025) – sport psychology has been identified in the respective law as one of the applied psychological specializations
- Hosting FEPSAC Managing council meeting (2018, 2024)
- Organizing webinars for members with national and international speakers
- Creating network and developing collaboration among the members.

C. Sport and Soul Sport-Psychotherapy Association (Hungary)***Description:***

Established in 2022 by Gabriella Goschi (sport and clinical psychologist), Agnes Palvolgyi (sport psychologist), and Laura Csenki (clinical psychologist). The association promotes a paradigm shift in sports psychology, emphasizing personal development over performance.

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Governance:

- President: Gabriella Goschi
- Vice president: Ágnes Pálvolgyi
- Vice president: Dr. Laura Csenki

Key principles:

- Success is a consequence of development
- Athletes are first and foremost human beings
- Success in a development-focused mindset is different from only results
- Crisis is reality in sports

Current activities:

- Bringing a paradigm shift into sports and sport psychology
- Establishing the methodology of sports psychotherapy
- Publishing books on clinical and sport psychology – will be available in English
- Working with athletes, coaches, and parents
- Teaching coaches and broader sports public
- Organizing yearly conferences since 2022

- Running group supervisions (up to 8 participants), focusing on case studies
- Reforming sport psychology education at universities

Note: Hungary also has another Sport Psychology Association, which currently has very few members.

D. Polish Psychological Association – Sport Psychology Division

Description:

Part of the Polish Psychological Association (established in 1907), with the sport psychology division founded in 2002. The division currently has around 80 members. It focuses on enhancing member qualifications, providing research opportunities, and expanding sport-specific knowledge.

Governance:

- President: Marcin Krawczynski
- Vice-president: Jan Blecharz
- Secretary: Dorota Pietrzyk-Matusik
- Members of the board: Wiktor Wiluś, Aleksandra Zienowicz-Wielebska, Dagmara Budnik-Przybylska, Marcin Kochanowski

Current activities:

- Participating in the Polish Olympic Committee nomination process (since 2008)
- Creating certification system for sport psychologists (since 2012)
- Organizing regular meetings every 2–3 months, including lectures and organizational matters
- Hosting conferences and certification programs
- Maintaining an interactive map of sport psychologists
- National and international cooperation with sports bodies
- Contributing to the Polish Qualifications Framework – sport psychology

4. CHALLENGES AND NEEDS OF OUR REGION

Based on the group discussion, the following challenges and needs were identified:

1. **Supporting the sustainability of sport psychology associations and securing resources for their long-term functioning.** Currently, most of the work is done on a voluntary basis.
2. Clarifying the roles of sport psychologists, mental coaches, and psychiatrists, and clearly defining the roles of mental health professionals in sport. Addressing unethical practices in the field of sport psychology
3. **Reducing stigma around sport psychology practice** (e.g., normalizing that working with a psychologist is OK), which is still often present among older stakeholders.
4. **Promoting holistic approach to clients**—balancing wellbeing support with performance enhancement.
5. **Improving the public's, professionals', and various sports stakeholders' understanding** of the profession, its competencies, and its roles.

6. **Creating an educational system in each country**—a specialization in sport psychology after completing a Master's degree in psychology. Currently, such a system does not exist in the Czech Republic or Slovakia.
7. **Contributing to and shaping clear legislation for sport psychology professionals** so that they are formally recognized by sporting bodies.
8. **Strengthening recognition and acceptance of sport psychology across the entire system**, including the creation of clear positions within sports bodies and federations.
9. **Developing structured educational pathways and specialization programs** within sport psychology for non-psychologist – coaches, athletes, etc.
10. **Strengthening the position of sport psychology associations within national psychological organizations**, especially in Poland.
11. **Increasing member engagement within associations** to support the ongoing development of sport psychology in each country.
12. **Targeting the use and spread of technology and AI in sport psychology** in ways that benefit clients.
13. **Expanding the implementation of the “safe sport” concept** within sports culture.
14. **Strengthening career pathways for sport psychologists** as part of sustainable long-term professional development.

The points 1-5 were identified as the issues that need to be targeted most – by the participants of the meeting.

Educational systems

In all four countries there is a shared practice, that sport psychologist is a person with finished master's degree in psychology with practice in sport. Hungary and Poland currently offer several postgraduate programs at various universities and institutions that provide specialization in sport psychology. In Poland, this postgraduate education is followed by a comprehensive certification system managed by the national association.

In contrast, the Czech Republic and Slovakia currently lack formal postgraduate programs in sport psychology. Compared to the developments in the neighboring countries, the need to establish such programs is even more pressing. Following the new law on psychological

services in Slovakia that came into effect on Oct. 1, 2025, the specialization in sport psychology will need to be created and approved by the national accreditation committee before any postgraduate program can be developed.

5. BEST PRACTICES SHARING

Each partner from the Visegrad region offered to share 3 different best practices – with one of them to be shared more in depth. The following topics were offered:

a. Slovak Best Practice

1. Educational webinars series (4-6 per year)
2. Annual conference with national and international speakers (number of attendees is growing, inviting international guests – mostly coming without payment)
3. Sport psychology services for the youth national ice hockey teams

The topic that was discussed – Sport psychology services for the youth national ice hockey teams

Four sport psychologists worked for two years with the U16, U17, U18, and U20 youth national teams. Drawing on the Canadian sport psychology framework known as the *Gold Medal Profile*, they defined the behavioral expressions of the mental skills required for successful performance in ice hockey. Based on this framework, the psychologists' regular work during national team camps focused on developing these skills.

After two seasons, the collaboration in this full format came to an end due to economic constraints and a lack of buy-in from the head coaches. Limited collaboration has continued with two of the younger teams.

The main lesson learned from this experience is the critical importance of long-term commitment from both management and head coaches in order to achieve sustainable results. Nevertheless, after two seasons, early outcomes of the sport psychology program were already evident in players' communication and in the greater engagement of those who had previous experience working with sport psychologists in the younger age categories.

b. Hungarian Best practice

1. Methods of sport-psychotherapy in sport psychology
2. Complex sport-psychological service in clubs
3. Shaping sports environment by renewing the current education and by trying to clarify the psychological knowledge and how the roles can complement each other.

The topic that was discussed – Complex sport-psychological service in clubs

A systematic work has been done for 2 years by the Sport and Soul Sport-Psychotherapy Association in a big kayaking club including about 400 members. Coaches had to deal with different issues such as working with teenagers, dealing with eating disorders of their athletes, working with parents etc. Supervision groups for coaches were created. They included 2 coaches, 1 sport psychologist and 1 trainer and were held two times for 2hrs. Every coach had an opportunity to discuss their case study and get help to solve the problem. Mental skills training and mentoring focusing on emotional education were held for younger athletes (5x45min). The program for the older ones (14-16) focused on coaching and mental training. Sport psychologists also offered value-based coaching for parents. The motto of these sessions was "we raise champions for life". Life skills were taught. After that there was more focus on

the social organizational aspects looking at how everyone in the club feels and trying to improve leadership skills, team building, communication, work-life balance etc. This was a case study for presenting the systematic and holistic work done by the association, currently involving three big sport organizations in Hungary.

c. Polish best practice

1. Certification system for sport psychologists
2. System of education inside the association for its members including workshops of professionals from other fields (e.g., clinical psychology).

The topic that was discussed: Polish certification system for sport psychologists

The Polish association described its certification system, which consists of three levels: Class II, Class I, and Master Class. The levels differ according to the amount of theoretical knowledge, completed credits, required supervision, and applied practice.

- Class II
Entry requires completion of a Master's degree in psychology, at least one year of professional experience, theoretical preparation, supervised work (2×10 hours with different supervisors), and participation in workshops and conferences. Candidates must pass a theoretical exam in front of the Certification Commission.
- Class I
Advancement requires five years of practice after obtaining Class II, continued attendance at workshops and conferences, and 2×25 hours of supervision. Candidates must prepare one case study and discuss it in front of the Certification Commission.
- Master Class
Requirements include five years after obtaining Class I, regular participation in workshops and conferences, at least one nomination to a major sporting event (e.g., World Championships, Olympic Games), and a minimum of two years of work with one national team. Candidates must prepare two case studies and discuss it in front of the Certification Commission.

The system has been functioning effectively for 13 years. However, certain components—such as final examinations—still require further development. Additionally, official government recognition of the certification system is currently in progress. Each level costs approximately 400 Euro. On the basis of this programme the organisation is working on joining the Sport Psychologist Qualification to the Polish Qualifications Framework.

D. Czech best practice

1. Professional support inside the association:
 - Peer supervisions monthly
 - A 2-day meeting of members with various presentations, workshops, activities, discussions
2. Psychodiagnostic application - online database of the Czech sport psychological tests

3. A conference with psychiatrists – „Sport and psyche“

The topic that was discussed – Psychodiagnostics application

An application for online testing was developed. It focuses on assessing the quality of various psychological characteristics of athletes helping sport psychologists in their work with clients. The portal serves as a platform for collecting research data with the aim of deepening the understanding of how athletes' psychology functions and for standardizing psychodiagnostic methods. The goals are:

- to provide practitioners — sport psychologists — with tools for a comprehensive analysis of the psychological components of athletic performance
- to help athletes systematically work on the psychological aspects of their performance and monitor their development
- to streamline data collection, test administration, and interpretation through an online environment
- to obtain research data for the further development of tests and the field of sport psychology

The application offers three different types of access: respondent, psychologist interpreting the respondent's results, and researcher and is opened to sport psychologists in the Czech Republic that are members of the association

6. FUTURE PROJECTS

Future projects were discussed in 4 round tables. The main aim was to share and identify the projects that are targeting the shared needs.

The projects are:

Opened webinars for all members of V4

Many countries run their own webinars for their audience. If a webinar is in English, it can be easily open to all associations and their members. Possible project financing for these webinars can be developed.

Project “Say yes”

“Say yes” is the Erasmus + project unsuccessfully submitted by the Czech and Slovak partners. It is targeted for enhancing the supportive environment in sport via info materials. This project can be enriched by other partners, who can join.

Creating educational programs

Creation of educational programs. First for sport psychologists – based on the programs developed in Hungary and Poland, following the FEPSAC standards. Second for the coaches, to educate them in topics of sport psychology and mental training.

Clarification of the roles in “mental professions” and increasing the visibility

Project aiming at clarifying the roles of “mental professions” in sports. Probably based on the round tables of sport psychologists, psychiatrists, coaches, mental coaches, psychotherapists – main professionals working in the sports field.

Tour of the sport psychology

Presentations throughout the country – “standup comedy” – marketing the sport psychology – and so promoting the sport psychology to the sports public.

Psychodiagnostics in all languages

Adapting the psychodiagnostics application to other languages so it can be used by the sports public.

Best practice sharing events

Open events for the sport psychology associations, aiming to share best practice sharing regularly. Ideally annually.

Conferences within every country

The aim is to develop content for an international conference – probably a one-day event. This content and speakers would travel around the region and attend and present at the conference within every country, so the common knowledge is distributed.

Conclusion of the project

The partners were asked to vote for 3 most needed projects from their perspective.

- All partners voted for Say Yes project and conferences being held within every country,
- 3 partners voted for developing the educational program of Sport Psychology for coaches,
- 2 partners voted for clarifying the role of “mental professionals”,
- 1 partner voted for psychodiagnostics testing, webinars, and promoting the sport psychology.

As Slovak association was going to organize webinar in English already in the week following the meeting, all partners were invited to join it. The webinar took place on Nov 26, 2025 and the topic was Sleep of competitive athletes presented by Patricia Frytz (DE).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michal Vici".

President of the APS CR

13th of January, 2026,

Olomouc, Czech Republic