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**EUROPEAN YOUTH OLYMPIC FESTIVALS AND EUROPEAN
YOUNG OLYMPIC AMBASSADORS PROGRAMME**

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ABSTRACT

Kamil Pavlinský: European Youth Olympic Festivals and European Young Olympic
Ambassadors Programme

(Under the supervisor of Dr. Thierry Zintz, Professor)

The purpose of this study is to uncover the current European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme and its activities. Also to find out how successful was this programme during the European Youth Olympic Festival 2022 in Vuokatti, what could be improved for the next editions and what are the conditions to develop successful European Young Olympic Ambassadors programme in the future. The review of literature is built on quantitative data about the European Youth Olympic Festival, its educational programme – the European Young Olympic Ambassadors and about the international youth sport events in general. We did a questionnaire with all seventeen current ambassadors and alumni and interviewed five of them. Results are divided into three parts – online webinars happening before the EYOF, activities for the athletes happening during the event and whole EYOA programme itself. The thesis aims to provide possible practical ways how to improve the programme for the next editions. In all three parts we provide suggested improvements – for the online webinars, activities and for the EYOA programme itself.

Keywords: international youth sport events, educational programme, mega events, European Young Olympic Ambassadors, Olympic values

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
CONTENTS	Error! Bookmark not defined.
LIST OF TABLES	7
LIST OF FIGURES.....	8
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	9
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 Introduction.....	10
1.2 Purpose of the Research.....	11
1.3 Significance of Study.....	11
1.4 Structure of the Thesis	12
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	13
2.1 International youth sport events	13
2.2 The European Youth Olympic Festival	14
2.3 Filiation between EYOF and YOG	18
2.4 Youth Olympic Games	18
2.5 Education programmes during the international youth sport events.....	19
2.6 European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme.....	21
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	28
3.1 Introduction.....	28
3.2 Research design.....	28

3.3 Data Collection.....	28
3.4 Nature of the Data	29
3.5 Data Analysis	29
3.6 Validity of Data.....	29
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	31
4.1 Introduction.....	31
4.2 Online webinars before the event.....	31
4.3 Conclusion	59
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	60
5.1 EYOA programme – possible ways how to improve it	60
5.2 Suggestions for Future Research.....	61
5.3 Limitations	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY	62
APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTION.....	66
APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE	67
APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW ANSWERS	75

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. All past and future Host Cities of the EYOF since 1991	16
Table 2. Interviewee Labels and Demographics	30

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Satisfaction with the online webinars	32
Figure 2. Usefulness of the online webinars	33
Figure 3. Photo booth rating	36
Figure 4. Photo booth engagement.....	37
Figure 5. Guess a country rating	38
Figure 6. Guess a country engagement	39
Figure 7. Trust game rating	40
Figure 8. Trust game engagement.....	41
Figure 9. Human bingo rating	42
Figure 10. Human bingo engagement	43
Figure 11. EYOF Podcast rating	45
Figure 12. EYOF Podcast engagement	45
Figure 13. Chat with a champion rating	47
Figure 14. Chat with a champion engagement	47
Figure 15. Kahoot quiz rating	49
Figure 16. Kahoot quiz engagement	49
Figure 17. Cultural day rating.....	51
Figure 18. Cultural day engagement	51
Figure 19. The whole EYOA Programme rating	55
Figure 20. EYOA Programme recommendation	57
Figure 21. Participation in the next EYOA edition.....	58

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CEP** – Cultural and Education Program
- EOC** – European Olympic Committee
- EYOA** – European Young Olympic Ambassadors
- EYOD** – European Youth Olympic Days
- EYOF** – European Youth Olympic Festival
- FIFA** – Fédération Internationale de Football Association
- FINA** – Fédération Internationale de Natation
- IF** – International Federation
- IOC** – International Olympic Committee
- NF** - National Federation
- NOC** – National Olympic Committee
- OCEP** – Olympic Culture and Education Program
- YCM** – Young Change Makers
- YOG** – Youth Olympic Games

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The education of athletes about Olympic values and principles at sport events is very important and it has become a trend. The connection between sport and education is the strongest in the philosophy of Olympism. According to the Olympic Charter, Olympism is a philosophy of life that is based on the idea of the unity of mind and body in the development of human beings as well as blending sport with culture and education. (IOC, 2015). This is one of the reasons, why the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the world's largest multisport organization and the governing body of the Olympic Movement, created the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) – to catch up with the educational objectives.

Educational programs associated with international sport events provides athletes a great learning platform. It is an amazing platform to exchange skills, knowledge, experience but also cultural differences between peers. The mission of educational programs during the international sport events is to bring Olympism and education to the forefront of athletes' minds. For the young athletes is much more interesting to gain knowledge through participating in the Young Olympic Games or in the European Youth Olympic Festival than attending school classes.

In our thesis we are focusing on the European Youth Olympic Festivals and education program during them, which is called European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme. This programme was established by the Olympic Culture and Legacy Commission of the EOC in 2016. Its main mission is to embrace the Olympic values of excellence, respect and friendship. The core principle of this programme is that young ambassadors (usually former athletes) prepare the activities for the participants and they are taking part in them during the event. The young ambassadors prepared the activities before the event through online meetings.

The main purpose of this study is to learn which activities work the best and which not and then find practical and possible ways how to improve them or change them. We are not focusing only on the educational activities happening during the EYOF, but also on the online webinars happening before the event and on the whole programme itself. Our mission is to find conditions which are important in order to develop successful EYOA programme. We did a survey and few interviews with recent EYOA to fulfil the previously mentioned points.

1.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to uncover the current European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme and its activities. To find out how successful was this programme during the EYOF 2022 in Vuokatti, what could be improved for the next edition and what are the conditions to develop successful EYOA programme in the future. The research questions are as follows:

Main Research Question:

How successful was the EYOA programme 2022 in Vuokatti globally and in specific activities?

Sub-questions:

What could be improved until the next edition of the EYOA programme?

What are the conditions to develop successful EYOA programme in the future?

1.3 Significance of Study

This study is significant because of the importance of young athletes' education during the international youth sport events. One of the main priorities during these events is to educate young athlete, to spread the philosophy of Olympism and to spread the Olympic values. There are not enough researches about educational programmes for young athletes, so we want to bring more light into this topic. It is important to hear the perspective from the young ambassadors who are involved in creating the activities for athletes. From the interviews, we can take many useful suggestions how to improve the activities and the EYOA programme in general. It is very young programme and it is important to develop it and improve with every next edition. Interviews together with surveys provided very good view into the programme and describe the positive parts, but also parts which need to be improved or changed.

Using these views from young ambassadors and alumni, we suggested some possible ways how to improve the EYOA programme and how to bring it to the next level.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis follows the standard structure and includes five chapters which are summarized below.

Chapter I: An introduction into the ‘why’ of the thesis. The research questions and background information are provided to establish a baseline understanding of the topic.

Chapter II: A literature review of the international youth sport events, the educational programmes during them and the EYOA programme information are included. Some quantitative data is presented and used to help guide the qualitative research conducted through interviews.

Chapter III: A list of steps taken in conducting research is provided. The methodology described includes research design, data collection and validity of the data.

Chapter IV: The results of the data retrieved from interviews and questionnaires are presented. The data are organized in three sections. Each section includes quotes from the interviewees that support the thematic analysis.

Chapter V: The thesis concludes with the discussion and conclusion of the analysis of results.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 International youth sport events

Within the Olympic Movement, youth has always played a crucial role (Wassong 2012). Pierre De Coubertin envisioned an athletic event focused on educational ideals for his Olympic event, with athletes of student age as the primary target group. He believed that educating the world's youth to think and act in less nationalistic ways would help to promote better transnational understanding (Quantz 1993). The Olympic athlete, according to Coubertin, was to be a role model, teaching the Olympic educational values. He believed that Olympic competitors' actions should serve as a motivation for others, particularly the young, to join in and profit from sport (Wassong 2006).

International sport organizations, on the other hand, have increasingly attempted to explain that they have gained a better knowledge of the function of education in sport and the value of engaging young people in the last two decades. The European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF), which was founded in 1991 by the European Olympic Committees (EOC) under the presidency of Jacques Rogge in effort to bring young generation from Eastern and Western Europe together, is an example of this (Wong, 2011). The IOC also put a greater emphasis on elite athlete education, with one of its top priorities being the advancement of Olympic athletes' educational, physical, mental, and social well-being (Wassong, 2009). The International Olympic Committee established an Athlete Career Programme in 2005 to assist elite athletes in balancing training, competition, and everyday living. The IOC also supports the dual career concept, which states that sportsmen should be able to combine a successful athletic career with finishing their studies.

Despite the fact that competitive youth sport has been a part of many countries' school and community life for over a century, the phenomena of elite level international competition for young people is relatively new. FIFA (the International Football Federation) hosted the inaugural FIFA Under-16 World Cup in 1985, whereas FINA (the International Swimming Federation) hosted the first Juniors Road Race World Championships in 1975. In addition to these and other sports where peak performance is typically achieved in adulthood, there are sports like gymnastics, where peak performance is frequently achieved in adolescence, and where top youth competition has a considerably longer history. The European Youth Olympic Games was held in 1991 for the first time. The Youth Olympic Games (YOG) is thus a relative latecomer and is also the first new global Olympic competition since the introduction of the winter Olympic Games in 1924 (Hanstad, Parent, Houlihan, 2015)

2.2 The European Youth Olympic Festival

Summer and Winter European Youth Olympic Days (EYOD), as the Games for Europe's youth were originally known, were suggested by EOC President Jacques Rogge in 1990 on a biennial basis in odd years. The First Summer EYOD took place in Brussels (Belgium) in 1991, followed two years later (1993) by the First Winter Youth Olympic Days in Aosta (Italy). These contests for Europe's young athletes changed name and became known as the European Youth Olympic Festivals (EYOF) over time (Bulatova, 2020). "This Festival provides young European athletes with great motivation, as it gives sense to their careers from the very beginning." Jacques Rogge (EOC and the European youth Olympic festival section history, n.d.).

The European Youth Olympic Festival is the first premier European multi-sport event geared at young athletes aged 14 to 18. It is held under the auspices of the IOC and is the pride of the European Olympic Committees with a 25-year tradition. There are two editions, one for the winter and one for the summer, which alternate every two years in odd-numbered years. The EYOF belongs to the European Olympic Committees (EOC).

The event is held under the Olympic flag and is full of Olympic traditions, from the burning flame to the oaths taken by participants and authorities. Many of Europe's outstanding sports stars of the future take their initial steps on the international stage at the EYOF. While some may see EYOF as a stepping stone to Olympic glory, everyone who participates leaves with lifelong friendships and experiences.

The EYOF symbolizes the coming together of Europe's youngsters in one Athletes' Village. Many medalists have gone on to win medals at the Olympic Games, and it gives top young athletes a first taste of what an Olympic event is like, while also encouraging more young people to participate in sports and live a healthy lifestyle. The summer festivals attract roughly 3,600 young people and their representatives, while the winter festivals attract around 1,600 people (EOC and the European youth Olympic festival section history, n.d.).

The EYOF encourages young people to participate in sports and physical exercise

- It promotes a sense of friendship, fair play, and tolerance by adhering to Olympic principles
- The event brings together youth from 50 European countries, promoting European integration

- The EYOF also provides hundreds of young volunteers with the opportunity to gain experience organizing a large event, improve their professional skills, and meet people with a strong passion for sport from other European nations

Jean-Michel Saive, now the President of the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee, said about The EYOF that: "The EYOF is a perfect occasion to teach young athletes from all over Europe about the importance of ideals such as fair competition, respect, tolerance and friendship." (Values, Mission and Values, n.d.)

The European Olympic Committees own, organize, and regulate the EYOF. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is the patron of the European Youth Olympic Festivals. Local organizing committees, in collaboration with the host city, are in charge of delivering the EYOF. The EOC's work on providing the EYOF is managed by a specific commission inside the European Olympic Committees.

The EOC Articles of Association, as well as the regulations in the EYOF Charter and other EYOF rules and regulations, govern the EYOF. The duration of the EYOF, the bidding process, the choosing of the host city, and the overall organization of the EYOF are all governed by these (Governance, n.d.).

All European young athletes nominated by their National Olympic Committee and who are members of the EOC are eligible to compete in the European Youth Olympic Festival, according to the current EYOF Charter and EOC restrictions on age categories and quotas for each EYOF edition.

With the exception of ice hockey, curling, basketball, handball, and volleyball, where the qualification systems/conditions are established up by the appropriate IF/EF, the NOC/NF determines the qualification standards for athletes/teams (Who can take part, n.d.). Originally, as a rule, the Summer European Youth Olympic Festivals' schedule consisted of 10 sports, four of which were team sports. Except for the host country, each participating country could only participate in one team sport (Bulatova, 2020).

At the EYOF, all competitors must be citizens of the country or territory of the NOC that enters them, or be eligible to become citizens when they reach legal adulthood. In any instance, the NOC must duly prove the competitor's nationality, citizenship, or right to obtain one or the other when required by the Organizing Committee or the EOC.

If a NOC wants to enter an athlete who does not match these standards, they must make a written and thorough request to the EOC EYOF Commission at least two months before the Opening Ceremony (Who can take part, n.d.).

Despite the brief history of the EYOFs they have made an impact and are now an important events on Europe continent's sports calendar. When looking at the list of EYOF competitors, the following pattern emerges: majority of the participants subsequently join their national adult teams and compete successfully in Olympic Games and other important international tournaments. Some examples of the EYOF participants who have gone on to become Olympic champions are following: Yana Klochkova from Ukraine – four time Olympic champion (swimming), Pieter Van den Hoogenband from the Netherlands – three time Olympic champion (swimming), Kristina Smigun from Estonia – two time Olympic champion (cross country skiing), Gabriela Szabo from Romania and Carolina Klüft from Sweden – Olympic champions both in athletics, Justine Henin Hardenne from Belgium – Olympic champion in tennis, Evgenia Radanova from Bulgaria – many time Olympic Games medalist (short track speed skating), Janica Kostelic from Croatia (alpine skiing) and Marita Björger from Norway (cross country skiing) – many time Olympic and World champions, Yevgeniy Plyushchenko from Russia – Olympic champion in figure skating, Jason Lamy Chappuis from France – Olympic champion in Nordic combined, Fabian Cancellara from Italy in cycling and many others athletes (Bulatova, 2020, Cassar, 2007).

Table 1: All past and future Host Cities of the EYOF since 1991

YEAR	HOST CITY	SPORTS	NOCs	PARTICIPANTS
1991	BELGIUM - Brussel	10	33	2840
1993	ITALY - Aosta	5	33	708
1993	NETHERLANDS - Valkenswaard	10	43	1874
1995	ANDORA – Andora la vella	4	40	740
1995	GREAT BRITAIN - Bath	10	47	1709
1997	SWEDEN - Sundsvall	6	41	991
1997	PORTUGAL - Lisbon	10	47	2500
1999	SLOVAKIA – Poprad-Tatry	7	40	819
1999	DENMARK - Esbjerg	11	48	2324
2001	FINLAND - Vuokatti	7	40	1111

2001	SPAIN - Murcia	10	48	2500
2003	SLOVENIA - Bled	7	41	1242
2003	FRANCE - Paris	10	48	2500
2005	SWITZERLAND – Monthey	8	41	1184
2005	ITALY – Lignano Sabbiadoro	11	48	3965
2007	SPAIN - Jaca	6	43	1284
2007	SERBIA - Belgrade	11	48	3000
2009	POLAND – Slask Beskidy	9	47	1615
2009	FINLAND - Tampere	9	49	3302
2011	CZECH REPUBLIC - Liberec	8	44	1492
2011	TURKEY - Trabzon	9	49	3138
2013	ROMANIA - Brasov		45	1465
2013	NETHERLANDS - Utrecht	9	49	3143
2015	AUSTRIA, LIECHTENSTEIN – Vorarlberg, Liechtenstein	8	45	1519
2015	GEORGIA - Tbilisi	9	50	3304
2017	TURKEY - Erzurum	9	34	650
2017	HUNGARY - Gyor	10	50	2503
2019	BOSNA I HERCEGOVINA – Sarajevo and East Sarajevo	8	46	905
2019	AZERBAIJAN - Baku	10	48	2627
2022	FINLAND - Vuokatti	9	46	932
2022	SLOVAKIA – Banská Bystrica			
2023	ITALY - Friuli Venezia Giulia			
2023	SLOVENIA - Maribor			

Summer editions

Winter editions

2.3 Filiation between EYOF and YOG

Following his election to succeed Juan Samaranch as IOC President in 2001, Jacques Rogge was able to pursue the idea of a competition focused at youths, saying, "It's a project I've had in mind since my arrival in the IOC president." Given Rogge's encouragement of young athletic competition while president of the European Association of NOCs, such an idea should come as no surprise. He received consent for a European Youth Olympic Festival in 1990, which was held for the first time in his country in Belgium, Brussels a year later. Despite the irony of recent IOC decisions that "resulted in raising the minimum age for participation in the sports of swimming, gymnastics, and skating," the YOG proposal was debated by the IOC board in April 2007 and approved by the IOC in July of the same year (Judge et al. 2009, 173). In February 2008, Singapore was chosen to host the first Youth Olympic Games in 2010. The competition was aimed at athletes between the ages of 15 and 18 and was built around a set of lofty goals, including:

- reach out to young people all over the world to promote Olympic values,
- increase young people's awareness of sports and their participation in sports,
- serve as a forum for Olympic Movement projects,
- to be an international sporting event for young people of the highest caliber,
- in a joyful atmosphere, share and celebrate the world's cultures,
- to be creative in educating about Olympic values and addressing and discussing societal issues,
- provide a one-of-a-kind and powerful introduction to the Olympism,
- bringing together and celebrating the world's greatest young athletes (Hanstad, Parent, Houlihan, 2015).

2.4 Youth Olympic Games

The Youth Olympic Games (YOG) were founded by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during its 119th Session in Guatemala City in July 2007, making it the most significant event formed within the Olympic Movement since the Winter Olympic Games were established in 1924. Aimed at young top athletes as well as the global youth, the IOC believes that the YOG are a "flagship event that illustrated the IOC determination to reach out to young people." (IOC, 2011).

The YOG's mission is to inspire, educate, and engage young people all around the world to participate in sports and to embrace the Olympic Values. Obviously, the goal will be to bring together the world's most gifted athletes for high-level tournaments, possibly as a step forward to the Olympic

Games. However, the concept is that the sports events should take place in an educational and cultural setting, so that the athletes stay at the Youth Olympic Village, which is similar to the Olympic Village, and there is an educational and cultural program to provide experiences and encourage learning (Parry, Lucidarme, 2011). Jacques Rogge, the founder of the YOG, said about them: “These Youth Olympic Games should not be seen as mini-Olympic Games.” (Wade, 2007). Rogge also explained it: “There will be competition, of course, but the main goal . . . is not competition as such. The main goal is to give the youngsters an education based on Olympic values.” To put it another way, the YOG were conceived as a significant and unique Olympic pedagogical endeavor. As the IOC put it, “the YOG would be true to the vision of educating young people through the values sport teaches.” (IOC, 2007).

The YOG is a multi-sport event aimed towards young people aged 16 to 19. The purpose is to bring together the best young athletes from around the world, give them an introduction to Olympism, innovate in education about Olympic values, and debate societal concerns. Furthermore, the tournament strives to provide high-level competition in an Olympic setting. The YOG has also committed to leave a legacy in a variety of areas, including encouraging youth participation in sports and volunteerism (Houlihan et al., 2014). In order to appeal to a broader target range, the event will also serve as a trial ground for sports innovation. Offering new event types (like as relays with mixed genders and nations) and altogether new events are examples of this (such as the ice hockey skills competition) (Schnitzer et al., 2014). The YOG is unusual from other Olympic (and major Norwegian) events in several aspects, the most notable of which are the two substantial Cultural and Educational Programs (CEP), which strive to "recapture the original Olympic values." Another key feature of the CEP is that it emphasizes social conscience, among many other things. In terms of the number of events and athletes, the YOG is likewise on a significantly lower scale than the Olympic Games (Houlihan et al., 2014).

2.5 Education programmes during the international youth sport events

Sport regulatory authorities have acknowledged the importance of athlete education as a top priority on their agendas. The International Olympic Committee, the world's largest multisport organization and the Olympic Movement's governing body, is leveraging the potential of the newly founded Youth Olympic Games to meet educational goals (Berdnikov, Krieger, 2019)

Within the modern Olympic Movement, the relationship between sport and education has long been a source of contention. Sport, particularly the Olympic Games, has evolved into a cultural, political, and economic phenomena that can be viewed as a media event, a tourist attraction, and a marketing opportunity (Toohey and Veal 2007). Nevertheless, over the last few decades, the IOC has

made a concerted effort to emphasize the educational nature of its Movement, and it has been asserted that the Olympic Games have a special status among major sporting events as a result of this insistence on sport organizations' educational commitments (Payne 2006).

The IOC established the YOG in 2007 with the goal of raising the visibility of athlete education within the Olympic Movement. The YOG was notable for not only having sporting events, but also having a Culture and Education Programme (CEP) through which the young participants could learn about the educational components of sport. The CEP was renamed Learn and Share after the first two editions, but the content remained the same. Athletes are the YOG's primary target group, and they should be involved in the event's development and evaluation, — in particular the double method of combining high-performance athletic ability and education at a worldwide sporting event, reviving Coubertin's original pedagogical vision of the Olympic Movement (Wassong 2014).

The European Olympic Committee, having established the European Youth Olympic Festival much earlier in 1991, have very recently followed the example of YCM and introduced the programme of the European Young Olympic Ambassadors. Having different names at different events (YCM at the YOG; EYOA at the EYOF) and different executive bodies (YCM of IOC; EYOA of EOC). These new education facilitators are seen as an important aspect of educational programs since they serve as a vital link between athletes and educational activities (Peters and Schnitzer, 2015).

Educational programs associated with international sporting events provide players with an innovative learning platform. According to MacIntosh (2017), having a venue to engage is a necessary condition for athletes to be able to exchange "information, skills, and understanding." Coaches and administrative personnel accompanying athletes to tournaments do not have extra time to participate in educational activities, and they are rarely interested in debating the relevance of education with athletes (Schnitser *et al.*, 2014). That was allegedly why the IOC and the EOC proposed having a group of persons (YCM and EYA, respectively) at the event who might contribute to the mission of bringing Olympism and education to the forefront of athletes' minds. The programs adopt an 'experiential method,' in which athletes gain knowledge through participating in Olympic festivities rather than attending school classes (Naul, 2008). To better meet the settings of sporting events and improve the learning environment, multiple teaching approaches and content should be in place.

The CEP was invented to expose athletes to Olympic values and Olympism in an enjoyable and celebratory environment. It's just as crucial as the competition schedule. It has around fifty activities

for athletes to participate in in order to spread Olympic values. They're all staged in a variety of ways. The overarching goal is to inspire individuals to address critical topics related to sport, as well as global and societal issues (Torres, 2010).

The IOC recruited 30 young activists aged 18 to 28 for the YCM (formerly known as the Young Ambassadors) program, which was inaugurated in conjunction with the 2010 Singapore Youth Olympic Games. The athletes were nominated by their NOCs to 'effectively boost the YOG in their regions and communities, as well as support the athletes before, during, and after their participation in the CEP' (IOC, 2010a). The IOC requires that successful candidates be positive and proactive, willing to build a long-term relationship with the IOC and other YCM, speak fluent English, and actively use social media, according to the most recent version of the project (IOC, 2018). The YCM's pre-Games, game-time, and post-Games responsibilities are outlined in the program's manual, and include concrete actions such as connecting with delegation officials, promoting the YOG on social media, communicating with athletes and coaches, accompanying athletes to activities, organizing team-building events, creating information sheets for athletes, and participating in training and evaluation sessions (IOC, 2018). In the next few pages we are going to analyze the European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme.

2.6 European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme

The EOC Olympic Culture and Legacy Commission at the EOC General Assembly in 2016 decided to create and launch an Olympic education project targeted towards the athletes participating at the European Youth Olympic Festivals. At that time, the aim of this project is to strengthen the Olympic Values. The project has three phases. At first, each NOC chooses their own Young Athlete Ambassador. At second, the commission educates online the ambassadors for their task and at third, the ambassadors facilitate discussions and discuss the aims of the Olympic movement, the Olympic Values and so on (EOC, 2016).

The both EYOFs in 2017, Erzurum and Győr, had their own educational project and process, which followed the three major parts:

1. National Young Athlete Ambassadors were chosen; all NOCs were contacted and briefed about the programme. The National Olympic Committee chose their own Young Athlete Ambassador.

2. The commission's virtual education program run to prepare activities for the EYOF. Young Athlete Ambassadors met online with commission members in live interactive webinars, used Claned, a learning management system, for activities, and established a Facebook page for further discussion.

3. The EYOF: At both EYOFs, the Young Athlete Ambassadors organized and facilitated value-adding activities and discussions with the young athletes.

The three-step procedure was designed to ensure that all participating athletes were paired with a discussion partner who was nearby, close in age, easy to communicate with, and spoke a language they understood. The participating countries' Young Athlete Ambassadors were ready to coordinate events that would appeal to 14 to 18-year-olds. Both the winter and summer editions featured four two-hour virtual sessions, as well as a wealth of interesting reading materials and group projects. The second edition was significantly developed based on the feedback and experience gained throughout the pilot process.

Twenty-three Young Athletes Ambassadors joined the winter edition of the programme and sixteen travelled to Erzurum with their team. The summer edition joined seventeen ambassadors and finally fourteen travelled with their team to Győr (EOC, 2017).

After EYOF 2019 in Baku, the Olympic Culture and Legacy Commission has been working to establish the fourth European Young Olympic Ambassadors programme in EYOF 2021 in Vuokatti. The Commission gathered detailed comments from Baku event collaborators. The most significant progress has been made in the selection of new ambassadors, program communication, educational program content, and arranging the Commission task force more fairly among the members. The ambassadors were also asked to categorize their responsibilities into three groups: reporters, facilitators, and promoters. This specification provides extra options for broadening and deepening the impact. The Commission has also maintained in contact with former event Ambassadors, and some of them have begun working closely with the Commission as team leaders and mentors for the new ambassadors.

The European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme aims to strengthen Olympic Values among young athletes participating at the European Youth Olympic Festival. During the Winter EYOF 2022 in Vuokatti & Summer EYOF 2022 in Banská Bystrica the educational programme will be carried out for the fourth and fifth time since 2016 under the auspices of the EOC Olympic Culture and Legacy Commission. The EYOA Programme invests in a group of young people who are inspired by sport and

Olympic principles and want to help the international sports community establish a solid value-based foundation (EOC, 2020).

The European Young Olympic Ambassadors

The European Young Olympic Ambassadors are young individuals aged 18 to 25, who are either Olympians who have competed in the European Youth Olympic Festival or in the Youth Olympic Games or those who are inspired by the Olympic Movement and Olympism. They are energetic young people who are good communicators with strong English abilities and can work in a group or independently. They like working in an international environment and are enthusiastic about creating new activities for the EYOF athletes. They share the same passion, energy, motivation and they strive to inspire young athletes to follow the Olympic values on and off the field.

The EYOA's objective is to promote Olympic ideals of respect, friendship, and excellence, to act in accordance with the EOC's own principles of integrity, solidarity, and innovation, and to encourage participants to interact with their peers, enjoy good times, and form long-lasting friendships. The Ambassadors' job is to introduce young athletes to the international sports community and urge them to learn about the Olympic Movement's power and the strength of Olympic values and ideals. Ambassadors serve as a conduit between the EOC and the athletes (EOC, 2020).

Values and tasks

The European Young Olympic Ambassadors' fundamental values are:

- to respect others and serve as role models
- to foster the team spirit and friendship
- to strive for greatness in sport and in life

The European Young Olympic Ambassadors' responsibilities include:

- supporting young athletes
- to contribute to the unique life experience for the athletes
- to raise awareness of what it takes to become a champion on and off the field
- learning about the Olympic values through their National Olympic Committee's existing Olympic Education network
- to motivate and inspire young athletes to participate in the Olympic Culture and Education Programme (OCEP)

- to be able to create a vibrant and positive atmosphere in the team
- sharing Olympic ideals through specially planned programmes
- to contact and support Twinning Schools in their countries with promotional and educational activities (EOC, 2020).

EYOA Roles

Facilitator

A facilitator is someone who is creative, open-minded, a good listener, and can create a welcoming environment. In the European Young Olympic Ambassador booth, a facilitator develops, guides, and manages events. The facilitator(s), in collaboration with other team members, create educational activities for the athletes in order to promote Olympic values. A facilitator can introduce the exercises and explain the games' goals, as well as manage small post-game feedback sessions. A facilitator will accompany athletes throughout their visit to the EYOA booth.

Reporter

A reporter is someone who enjoys or has previous experience working in the media, with a focus on social media. This ambassador should be able to conduct interviews, produce articles for the company's website, and use social media platforms with ease. The reporter's key responsibilities include conducting interviews with athletes, writing news stories, developing and editing images and videos for social media, and working as part of a team to develop a communication plan for the EYOF before, during, and after the event.

Promoter

A promoter is an outgoing ambassador who is sociable, creative, and enjoys conversing with persons they have never met. The promoter's main responsibilities include developing cultural programs to promote multiculturalism among athletes, particularly national dances, cuisines, and customs; coming up with innovative ways to promote the activities and how to engage and motivate athletes to participate in the EYOA program; and working as part of a team to develop a promotion plan for the EYOF (EOC, 2020).

European Young Olympic Ambassadors responsibilities

Pre-EYOF

- To take an active part in virtual training programmes and discussions (at least in the written form)
- To complete monthly tasks and contribute to the development of a values-based education programme for the athletes (interactive games, quizzes, challenges, etc.)
- To connect with previous EYOA, if there is one
- To connect with the NOC - Chef de Mission and NOC Culture and Education Champion
- To share the EYOF and EYOA journey on social media
- To meet and inform athletes about the OCEP

During EYOF

- To take part in group work sessions, team building activities, daily tasks and briefings
- To share their EYOF and EYOA journey on social media
- To deliver a values-based education programme to the athletes
- To motivate athletes to take part in the OCEP and help with translation when needed
- To write a diary about their EYOA journey
- To follow daily schedules
- To actively promote achievements of the athletes on social media
- To know where and when the OCEP activities are taking place
- To connect with other EYOA & Alumni

Post-EYOF

- To continue spreading the Olympic spirit
- To highlight their EYOF and EYOA journey on social media
- To share their experiences and EYOA journey with their NOC and local community
- To write a report
- To stay in contact with athletes and other EYOA

National Olympic Committee's role

- To select an EYOA and consider them as part of the delegation
- To connect the EYOA with the Chef de Mission in order to understand their roles and responsibilities before, during and after the EYOF
- To connect the EYOA with the NOC Culture and Education Champion in order for the EYOA to learn about Olympic values and existing Olympic education programmes within the NOC

- To inform coaches about the EYOA role
- To introduce the EYOA to the athletes and organise meeting(s) if possible
- To connect the EYOA to the chosen Twinning School if there is one
- To let the EYOA post content on the NOC's social media platforms
- To support the EYOA throughout their journey (EOC, 2020).

Benefits

Benefits for the NOC

The selection of a European Young Olympic Ambassador for a national young Olympic team offers NOCs a variety of benefits, including:

- Having a prospective candidate to contribute to national projects focused on Olympic Education with improved knowledge of the Olympic Movement through increased collaboration and exchange with the EOC
- Providing expert support to young people who want to develop their own ideas and abilities
- Increasing the distribution of Olympic Values news through various communication platforms
- Providing athletes with a better opportunity to profit from the event's socializing and communicative capabilities
- Having a prospective candidate to contribute to national projects focused on Olympic Education with improved knowledge of the Olympic Movement
- Creating and expanding international networks of young leaders

Benefits for the participants

The EYOA offers the following options based on input from prior participants and the program's goals:

- To get experience in a variety of sectors, such as leadership, project management, communication, and marketing
- To contribute to the promotion of Olympic Values and athlete education
- To be a member of the national delegation for the EYOF
- To learn about and comprehend the Olympic Movement
- To network with other young people who are inspired by the Olympic Movement
- To collaborate with EOC members and other European sports leaders (EOC, 2020).

Selection process

In the selection process there are three main stages. In the first stage young ambassadors need to submit the application, need to write the CV and the letter of motivation and then is needed to pass the interview. In the second stage are trainings and education through online webinars and young ambassadors need to take an active part in them. In the last third stage the best young ambassadors will be chosen from those who complete all the tasks successfully and then they will travel to the EYOF. In the motivation letter European Young Olympic Ambassadors should say what is their motivation, why they want to join the EYOA programme, how they want to contribute to the programme. They should also explain the reasons why they chose their preferred role and what are their expectations from the EYOA programme. In the interview stage all candidates are interviewed with an NOC representative. The interviews are a perfect way how to get to know the candidates better and to find the best roles for them. Candidates can also understand the whole EYOA programme, roles and the expectations of the EOC Olympic Culture and Legacy Commission (EOC, 2020)

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The review of literature in the previous chapter gave insight into the international youth sport events such as European Youth Olympic Festivals, Youth Olympic Games and filiation between them. Then the review of literature also brought insight into the education programmes during these international youth sport events and especially during the EYOF. In the last part detailed information about the European Young Olympic Ambassadors programme was provided. However, the literature reviewed did not include a qualitative study that detailed the whole process of EYOA programme, preparation through the online webinars before the event and all activities during the event. The following sections of this chapter provides insight on the research methodology and design used in this thesis to investigate the EYOA programme and to find ways how to improve it for the next editions.

3.2 Research design

This study used qualitative methods to discover the European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme and its activities for athletes. We divided it into the three parts – the online webinars happening before the event in order to prepare activities for the athletes, activities during the event and the whole EYOA programme itself. Then the resulting narrative from these parts of the research were analyzed to help and assist young ambassadors and managers of the programme by offering practical ways to improve the programme, its activities and online webinars happening before the event.

A review of literature was conducted to create a foundation in knowledge of the current education programmes during the international youth sport events and EYOA programme specifically. Following the literature review, surveys and interviews were conducted to answer the research questions.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected between the 24th of March and 3rd of April in 2022. Interviews were taken through recording voice memos on a mobile application between 24th and 26th of March during the last days of the European Youth Olympic Festival in Vuokatti, Finland. Survey was conducted week after the EYOF between 26th of March and 3rd of April using “surveyhero” website. All communication between participants and the interviewer were conducted in English. Open-ended questions were used in the interviews. Participants were chosen in a purposive

sampling. The reason for this was for them to be from different European countries to maintain diversity. Participants described their experience in the EYOA programme, they rated the online webinars before the event and activities prepared for the athletes during the event and they suggested some improvements for the next edition of the programme.

3.4 Nature of the Data

The nature of the data compiled from the literature review was a combination of quantitative and qualitative, and used to create a comprehensive understanding of the international youth sport events, educational programmes during them and the EYOA programme specifically.

The data compiled from the interviews was qualitative and focused on more specific in-depth examples from the perspectives of the European Young Olympic Ambassadors and was analyzed to find ways how to improve educational activities for athletes and the programme in general. A list of interview questions can be found in Appendix I. The data compiled from the questionnaires was quantitative and focused on rating the activities, online webinars and the whole programme in general and on finding suggestions to improve the activities, online webinars and the programme. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix II.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed with the understanding of the history of the international youth sport events, their educational programmes for the young athletes and with the understanding of the EYOA programme. Interviews with participants were taken in person by recording voice memos on a mobile application during the last two days of the EYOF in Vuokatti, Finland. Later on they were described and corrections made by author. The interviews answers can be found in Appendix III. Questionnaires were taken online using the surveyhero website in the first week after the EYOF. Answers from questionnaires were analyzed and graphs were made to better illustrate the outcomes from the survey.

The results were organized in a way to help having a greater insight into the EYOA programme and its activities and to help find ways how to improve the preparation of the activities, the activities themselves and the whole programme in general.

3.6 Validity of Data

Interviews and questionnaires were conducted to understand the perspective of the individual and their specific experiences as the European Young Olympic Ambassadors, their understanding of the programme and they were asked to suggest some improvements for the activities and the programme in general. Ample time was allowed for detailed responses to be given. Follow up questions were asked if required to clarify any misunderstandings. Interviews were semi-structured to have the same main set of questions for all participants in order to create a baseline for the comparison and to help avoid outliers that may be created by inconsistent interviews.

The interview questions and questionnaires were created to answer the research questions. Under the guide of sampling validity, participants were asked to respond to questions regarding the online webinars happening before the EYOF in order to prepare the activities for the athletes, the activities themselves and the EYOA programme in general.

For the questionnaire we chose all EYOA. For the interviews we selected five of them. They were chosen in a purposive sampling. The reason for this was for them to be from different European countries to maintain diversity. Participants described their experience in the EYOA programme, they rated the online webinars before the event and activities prepared for the athletes during the event and they suggested some improvements for the next edition of the programme.

Table 2 shows the identifier given to each interviewee along with details about their interview.

Table 2: Interviewee Labels and Demographics

Interviewee	Date of Interview	Interview Type	Country of Origin
1	March 26, 2022	In person	Czech Republic
2	March 25, 2022	In person	Estonia
3	March 24, 2021	In person	Germany
4	March 25, 2021	In person	Iceland
5	March 24, 2021	In person	Serbia

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Educational programmes at the international youth sport events are very important and essential part of them. Thanks to these programmes we can see the difference between the Olympic youth sport events and another sport events for youth. The motivation for this study was to learn more about these education programmes for youth at sport events as well as learn from the ambassadors and alumni about their experiences during the European Youth Olympic Festival in Vuokatti in order to improve the European Young Olympic Ambassadors programme for the next editions. We divided the result chapter into 3 parts exactly the same as we divided the survey. The first part is about online webinars which took place before the event in order to prepare ambassadors for the event. Second part is about activities during the event and the last third part is about the whole EYOA programme together.

4.2 Online webinars before the event

The To prepare for the EYOA programme ambassadors had 9 online webinars in total. The main goals of these online webinars were to introduce the EYOA programme to the ambassadors, to get to know each other, to learn more about the Olympic values, to prepare the activities for the athletes and many more. Here is the list of the online webinars:

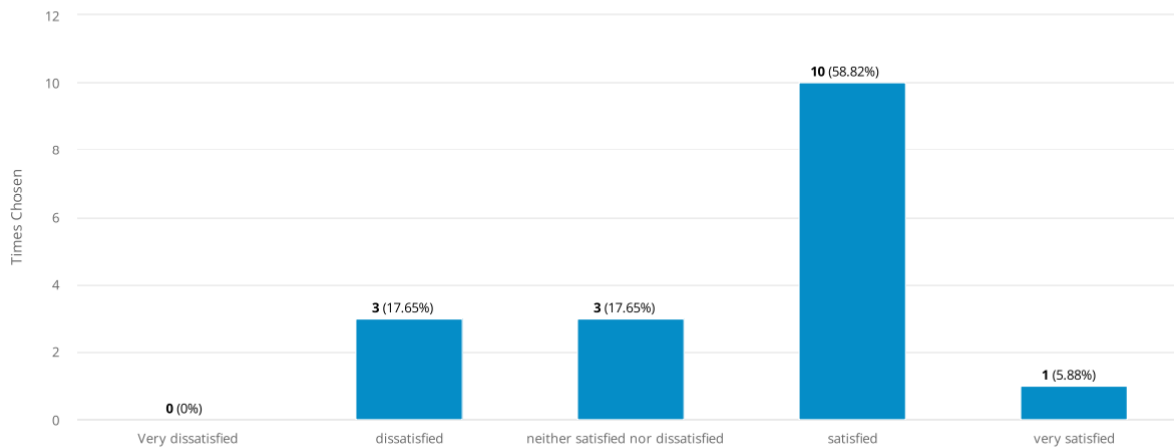
- WEBINAR 1: KICK OFF AND INTRODUCTION (BIG GROUP)
- WEBINAR 2: TOPIC: INTRODUCTION ABOUT THE OLYMPIC VALUES
- WEBINAR 3: FROM MIXED GROUPS TO SPECIAL GROUPS: « How Olympic values will be integrated in group special tasks according to the role of the group” – EOC Media presentation
- WEBINAR 4: VIRTUAL OLYMPIC WEEK EYOF VUOKATTI 2021 -Presentation of the groups initial ideas.
- WEBINAR 5: DEMO OF THE FINAL IDEAS FOR VIRTUAL VUOKATTI 2021 with Feedback from social experts
- WEBINAR 6: GETTING READY FOR VUOKATTI
- WEBINAR 7: KICK OFF, INTRODUCTION AND UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES AND DUTIES OF EACH ROLE
- WEBINAR 8: PREPARATION OF THE ACTIVITIES
- WEBINAR 9: PRESENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES

In the survey we asked four questions about these online webinars happening before the event – how satisfied were you with the online webinars happening before Vuokatti, how useful were they for you in order to organize the activities on Vuokatti, what did you learn from these online webinars and what would you improve regarding these online webinars. First and fourth question was similar in our interviews as well.

Figure 1: Satisfaction with the online webinars

How satisfied were you with the online webinars happening before Vuokatti?

Number of responses: 17

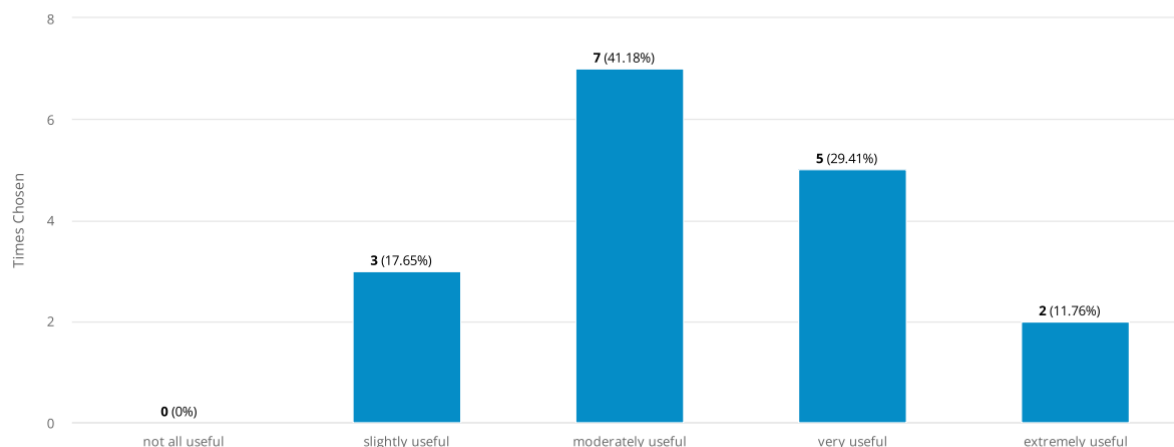


In the graph, it is shown that only one ambassador voted for very satisfied option, ten ambassadors voted for satisfied, three ambassadors voted for neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and also three ambassadors voted for dissatisfied. We can say that two thirds (63%) were mostly satisfied and one third (37%) were mostly dissatisfied. The reasons why they could be dissatisfied will be uncovered in third and fourth question.

Figure 2: Usefulness of the online webinars

How useful were the webinars for you in order to organize the activities in Vuokatti?

Number of responses: 17



The second question was how useful were the webinars for the ambassadors in order to organize the activities in Vuokatti. Seven ambassadors answered that the online webinars were very useful or extremely useful and ten ambassadors answered that the online webinars were moderately or slightly useful.

The third question was what did the ambassadors learn from these online webinars. Claudia from Great Britain said: “It made us be organized and also it was good to listen to other people ideas and expert’s ideas.” Lena from Slovenia commented: “First of all, I met a super nice group of people, which is in today’s world the most important in my opinion. We also had a chance to meet some experts who shared interesting information and knowledge.” Many ambassadors answered this question in a way that they learned a lot about the Olympic values and they had some knowledge about the Olympic values before, but online seminars helped them to discover more and understand them better. Anna-Lisa from Lithuania mentioned about the online webinars: “Since our podcast project was pretty clear since day one and we didn’t actually need any extra guidance or whatsoever, we agreed inside our group that one of us attends a webinar and makes notes for others in order to save some time. The webinars were held on rather uncomfortable times regarding school and work schedules, this seemed like a good solution for us three and eventually did no harm. I can’t say we learned much about the on site management and how everything is going to look like but we for sure got to know everyone better and when we finally met in Vuokatti it was very easy and nice to work together.” During the interview Anna from Czech Republic said about the online webinars: “I think that during pandemic when online meetings became so popular, it is very usual to have meetings in this way now. Also, it was very

reasonable to make these meetings online, because for so many people from different countries it wouldn't be possible to meet face-to-face before EYOF. The only thing, that I didn't quite like is that it was difficult to agree on a time, because there was too many of us. So, when it was always at 5PM on a working day, I was not able to participate. That upsets me, because I was not able to get all the information. Fortunately, Sindy and Anna-Lisa filled me in on things that I missed in the meetings, but it wasn't the same as hearing in the meetings. They always informed me what happened in the meetings in a WhatsApp group." (interview lines 30-38). Alfred from Estonia reacted similar way in the interview, however he suggests that webinars should be more discussion based: "I think the online webinars are just a part of this programme and I mean they have to be. Even before Covid, the online webinars were something that was obvious to make because we are all from different countries and we are all busy people. So, finding a time to go somewhere and meeting there is just not feasible. So, I think, that the online webinars are a good way to do it. The structure, however.. it's too much of the situation where one person speaks, then the other person speaks and it is like a presentation type thing, whereas I think the webinars would work a bit better if they were more discussion based. Because most of the time, at least half of the people, especially ambassadors, are muted and black screened. So, we don't actually get the ideas from ambassadors and we just listen to whatever is said in the presentation." (interview lines 172-180). Ambassador Kristin from Iceland in her answer from the survey agrees with working in smaller groups during the online webinars, because is often more effective than working in a large group. For Peter from Luxembourg online webinars provided some insight into what the competition in Vuokatti will be like and also feedback on activities was very useful for him. He believes that webinars are important in order to keep the ambassadors on a track and have everything prepared for the event. Peter – Young Ambassador from Germany proposed in the interview to make webinars little bit shorter, because is not possible to focus for 2 hours. Alumni Mirjana from Serbia totally agrees with him saying in the interview: " Maybe it would be easier for the ambassadors to have 2 webinars per month, but like 30-45 minutes, because 90 minutes or more is too much, especially for ambassadors, who some of them are 19-20, and I am not sure how much they can concentrate to listen for 1h30min. For me, who I am older and older in the process, it's really too much, especially in the end of the day when I am really tired." (interview lines 518-522).

When we look at the last question in our survey – what would you improve regarding the online webinars – there are some interesting answers and improvements. Lena from Slovenia suggested that instead of online webinars we should have one team-building meeting during the weekend with educational content in order to meet each other and prepare the activities for the festival. Claudia from

Great Britain would bring more experts into the webinars in order to “train” ambassadors. Many ambassadors would make the online webinars shorter, because it is impossible to focus for so long time and also because there were many unnecessary parts which took too much time. Mario from Spain proposed to make the roles of "promoters" and "facilitators" more flexible, as we have seen in the event that they are closely related. In the webinars he would improve communication between these groups and would make a combined program of activities. Alfred from Estonia would increase the amount of discussions and interactions between ambassadors. He would make way less items on the agenda in order to have shorter webinars and have more space for feedback and discussion. He would advise to the groups of promoters, facilitators and reporters to have group meeting between them to increase the teamwork and overall understanding of the tasks in the hand. Peter from Luxembourg would simplify the webinars and promote more discussion of ideas as well, because sometimes the tasks for the following webinar were not clear. He added that the way how the individual groups work to create activities could be better managed by the Alumni.

Suggested improvements for the online webinars

- Need to be more discussion based, not like the presentation mode – one person speaks and others are listening
- Need to divide ambassadors in smaller groups, in order to have more discussions and work more effective
- Make online webinars shorter – difficult to focus for 2 hours
- Do one teambuilding during the weekend with educational content instead of online webinars
- Bring more experts in order to “train” the ambassadors
- To have more meeting between the ambassadors – not with everyone
- To combine the activities program of facilitators and promoters group
- To increase the amount of discussions and interactions between the ambassadors
- To have group meetings between the webinars to increase the teamwork and overall understanding of the tasks in the hand
- The way how the individual groups work to create activities could be better managed by the Alumni

4.3 Activities during the event

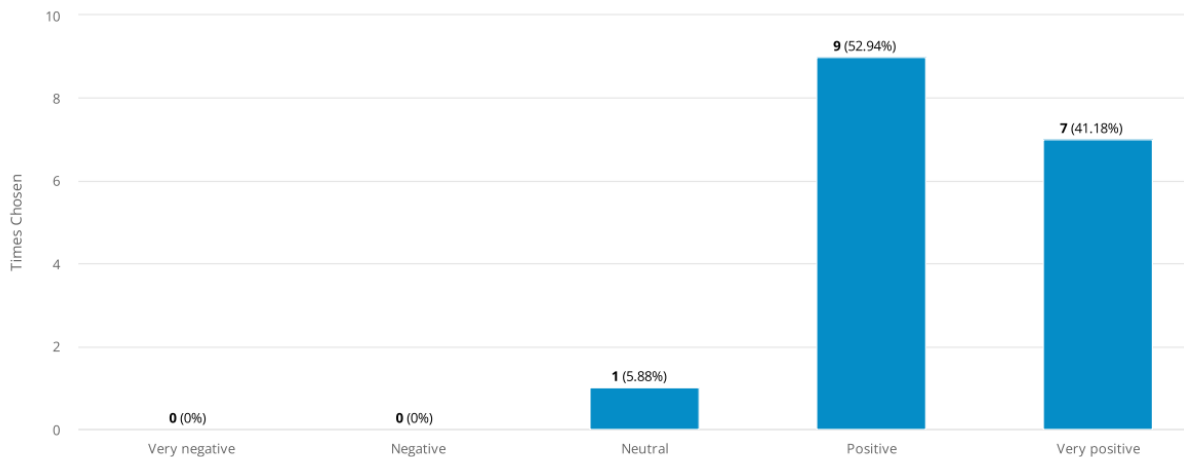
During the online webinars happening before the event ambassadors prepared a bunch of activities for the athletes with focus on Olympic values, cooperation, fair-play, relations, fun and so on. The next part of the thesis is focusing on these activities. In the survey there were three questions for each activity – how would you rate the activity, how engaged in this activity do you think that athletes were and what would you change or improve in this activity. We will bring answers to these questions and will explain aims of the activities as well.

“Photo booth” activity

The main goal of this activity is to get athletes know each other and make long lasting friendships between them. Another goal is to promote the European Young Ambassadors programme on social media canals. Athletes have the possibility to take picture with a photo frame in different poses. Promoters are walking around the playing fields in order to talk with athletes, connect them and promote our programme. If athletes take the photo with the frame and use hashtags on social medias, it will promote the programme there as well and more athletes can be aware of it and can come to the young ambassadors booth.

Figure 3: Photo booth rating
How would you rate a „Photo booth“ activity?

Number of responses: 17

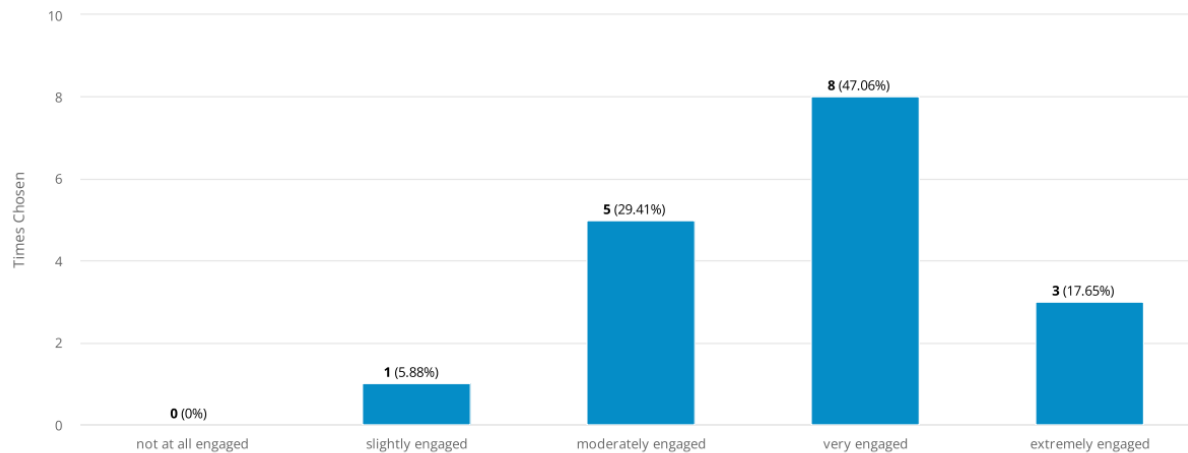


As you can see from the graph, this activity was very popular from ambassadors’ point of view. Sixteen out of the seventeen ambassadors think that “photo booth” activity was positive or very positive. Only one ambassador rated the activity as neutral. This activity was very easy to do, it was fun, athletes could meet peers from different countries and take pictures together, get to know each other and exchange contacts as well. Also, from promoting point of view. This activity was extremely useful and meet its goal for one hundred percent, what is very important.

Figure 4: Photo booth engagement

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

Number of responses: 17



From ambassadors' point of view athletes were engaged moderately or slightly in 35% responses and very or extremely engaged in 65 % of responses. Some of the athletes were shy to talk or to take a photo, that is why one third of them were not very engaged. Besides that, photo booth activity was very useful and athletes were engaged. In the next part some suggestions from young ambassadors will be provided.

Mirjana, alumni from Serbia, suggested to have a real photo booth, where athletes can get photos physically and have them as a memory from the event. Young ambassador from Estonia, Anna-Lisa, wrote: "I think the photo booth was great! Maybe it would be more engaging if it was in different venues as well." Hilla, young ambassador from Finland, agrees with her writing that the location of the frame is very important for engaging athletes. Kristin from Iceland added that this activity was amazing for getting athletes to post more on social media with hashtags to make the programme more visible. Alfred from Estonia commented that it could be improved by having promoters and facilitators going around with the frame more often, for which we need more ambassadors present. All other young ambassadors answered this question similar way, that activity was quick, funny and very important for promoting the European Young Olympic Ambassadors programme.

Suggested improvements for the "photo booth" activity

- To do real (physical) photos for athletes
- To include Olympic values more in this activity

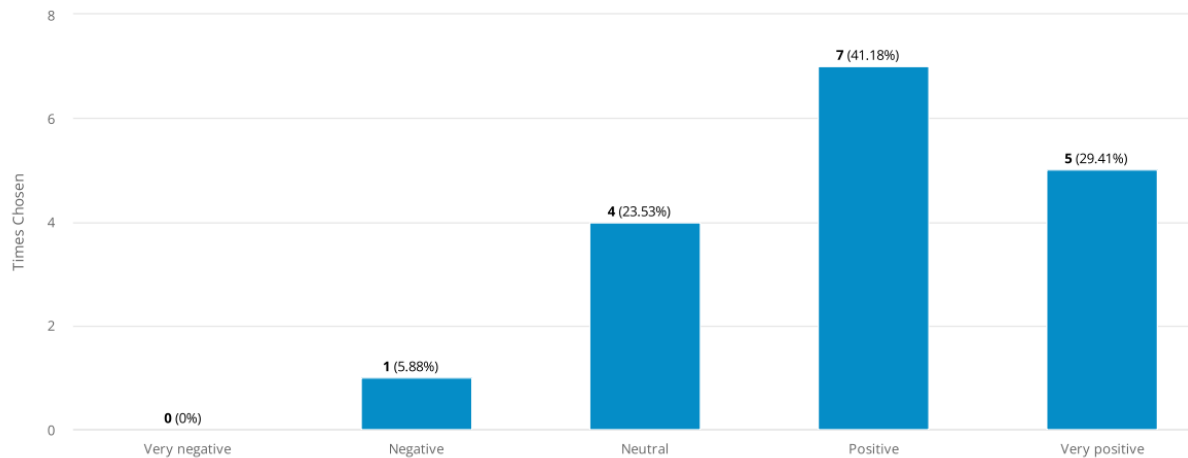
- To make sure that athletes will post the photo on social media with hashtags in order to make the programme more visible
- To go around with a frame more often

“Guess a country” activity

This activity aims to bring athletes from different European countries closer by learning about their capital cities and flags of their countries. In this activity 80-100 cards with different European flags and names of capital cities on them are prepared and also, two big boards with two maps of Europe on them. The mission for athletes is to select five cards with either a flag or capital city on it and pin them at the right countries on the map on the board. Athletes had a possibility to test their knowledge and learn at the same time. They also had an opportunity to exchange some cultural information about their countries and learn more about their flags, capital cities and symbols.

Figure 5: Guess a country rating
How would you rate a „Guess a country“ activity?

Number of responses: 17

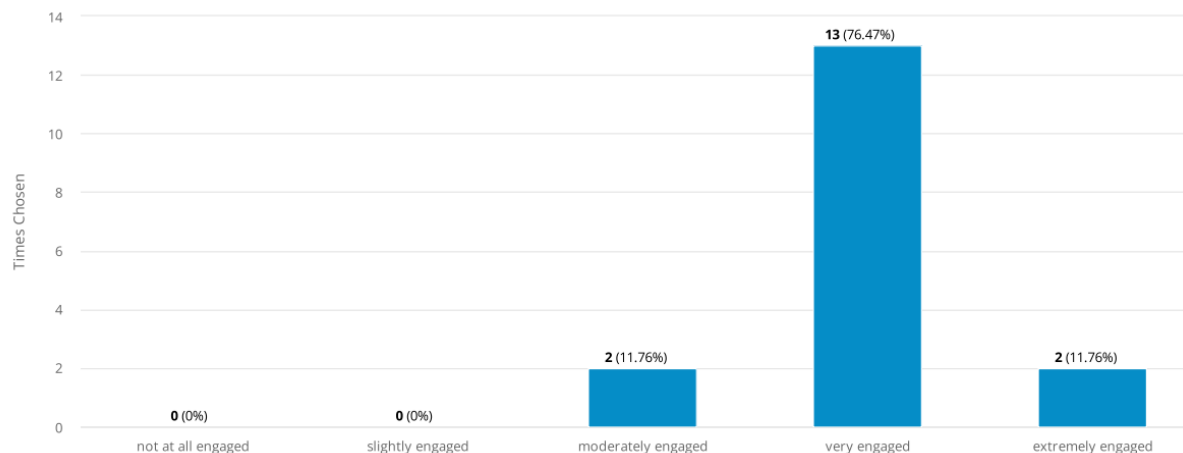


As in all other activities first question in our survey was how would you rate the activity. As you can see there are five very positive answers, seven positive, four neutral and one negative. Seventy percent of ambassadors evaluated this activity positive or very positive, twenty-four percent neutral and six percent negative. One of the reasons for negative answer could be that this activity was about geography more than about Olympic values, as Mirjana mentioned in the interview. In next part we will provide athletes’ engagement graph and suggestions for improvements from ambassadors.

Figure 6: Guess a country engagement

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

Number of responses: 17



The graph above shows that athletes were very engaged in this activity as 77 percent of ambassadors voted for very engaged option. Two ambassadors voted for extremely engaged and two as well for moderately engaged option. Many of the ambassadors suggested to include traditional symbols, dress, dishes or animals in order to increase the difficulty and in order to make it more educational and connected to the Olympic values more as well. In next part suggestions for improvements from young ambassadors will be provided.

Claudia, young ambassador from Great Britain, suggested to make it bigger and more impactful on the wall or having a digital version of it. Mirjana from Serbia agreed and she would add some small magnets that can be put on the board when the country has been found. Anna-Lisa from Estonia answered the question how she would improve this activity as following: “it could be more interactive or bigger. It would engage more athletes if, for example, the map was super big and on the floor like a big game so the players could mark different landmarks like eg. The Eiffel tower, Big Ben, Colosseum etc.” Kristin from Iceland suggested after showing the country athlete should say some inspiring words in these countries’ language. They could even say the Olympic values in that language. Young ambassador Paulius from Lithuania agreed. He would change it to the activity, where you have to randomly select a country and say some motivational sentence in that country language. The last idea for improvement is from alumni Rebekka from Denmark. She would let the athletes compete for finding the same countries, then ambassadors do not need to facilitate this activity on spot.

Suggested improvements for “Guess the country” activity

- To make a bigger map
- To have a digital version of the activity
- To have small magnets for showing countries
- To have a big map on the floor
- To add countries´ traditional symbols, dresses, dishes or animals – to make it more educational and more connected to the Olympic values
- After showing the country athlete should say some inspiring words in these countries´ language. They could even say the Olympic values in that language
- Let the athletes to compete for finding the same countries

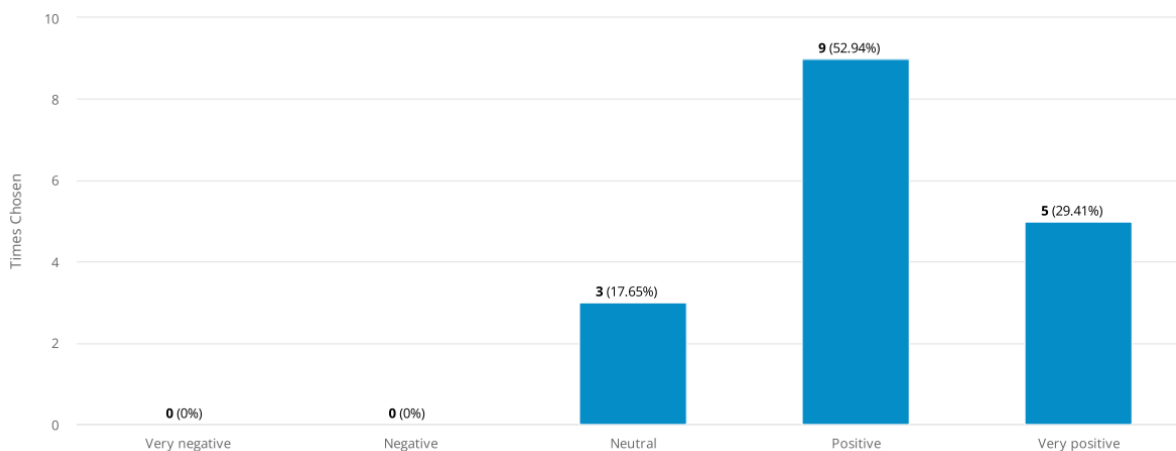
“Trust game” activity

This activity encourages teamwork requiring the athletes to develop trust between one another. One athlete is blind folded, while another athlete directs him/her around a course from start to finish. Obstacles must be navigated and markers on the ground represent zones that are out of bounds. This activity can be played inside and outside as well. This activity is about the teamwork, trust, respect, and friendship.

Figure 7: Trust game rating

How would you rate a „Trust game“ activity?

Number of responses: 17



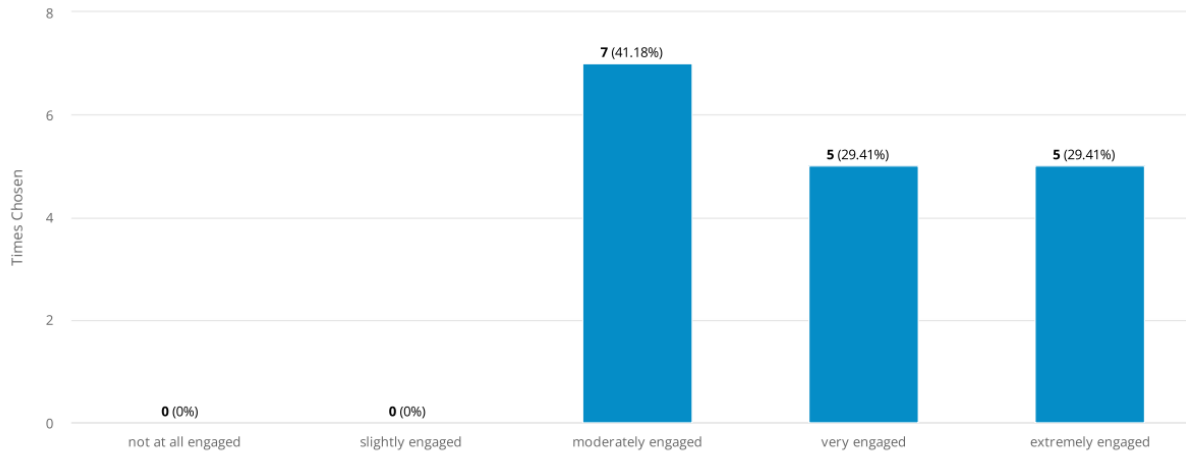
Fourteen out of seventeen young ambassadors rated this activity very positive or positive. Only three young ambassadors rated it as a neutral. It indicates how popular this activity as during the event. Athletes really liked it and had a lot of fun playing it. What is also important to say, that this activity

represents all the Olympic values – respect, friendship and excellence. It was interesting to see when two athletes from the same country played it and when two athletes from different countries played it. There was a big difference in trusting each other.

Figure 8: Trust game engagement

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

Number of responses: 17



Ten young ambassadors rated engagement of athletes in this activity as very engaged or extremely engaged – five each, which represents almost sixty percent. Seven young ambassadors rated engagement of athletes as moderately engaged, which represents forty-one percent of ambassadors. No one rated it as slightly engaged or not at all engaged. This rating also means that activity was interesting, athletes liked it and their engagement was very good.

When we look at ambassadors’ answers about improvements for this activity there is not many ideas, but we can find there some. Hilla, young ambassador from Finland, would change the time and location for this activity in order to make it available for more athletes. Young ambassador Alfred from Estonia would use larger variety of obstacles and a true designated area to make this activity even more popular. Peter from Luxembourg agreed with him saying: “Not enough cones and string were asked for, which limited the amount of people able to do it. About 4-5 times the equipment would be necessary for the next time. Ilayda, young ambassador from Turkey also agreed. She would use more material to make various fields, so athletes could try it more times with different level of difficulty.

Suggested improvements for “Trust game” activity

- Location and time for this activity could be better next time

- More markers and equipment needed
- Larger variety of obstacles
- To do a second field – to engage more athletes at the same time

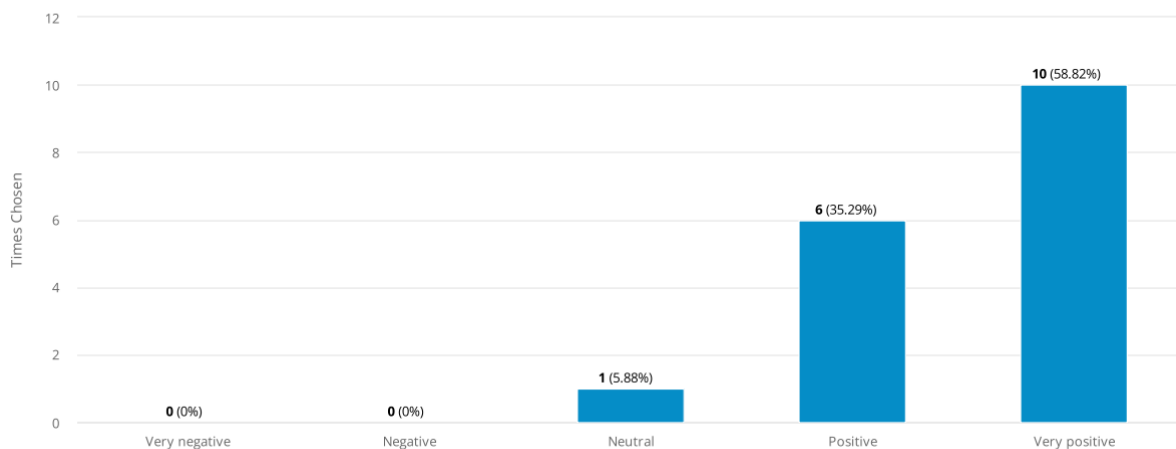
“Human Bingo” activity

This activity aims to get the athletes interacting with people from different countries, as well as learn interesting facts about each other. To each athlete is given a sheet with questions arranged as in a game of bingo (e.g., find someone from a different country, find someone who is participating in different sport, find someone who speaks three or more languages, ...). The athletes must find fellow athletes who have this experience or trait. This activity can be played inside and outside and best place for playing this game is a space where is many athletes such as dining hall. For this game you need only a sheet of paper including the Bingo questions for each athlete and pens or pencils.

Figure 9: Human bingo rating

How would you rate a „Human Bingo“ activity?

Number of responses: 17

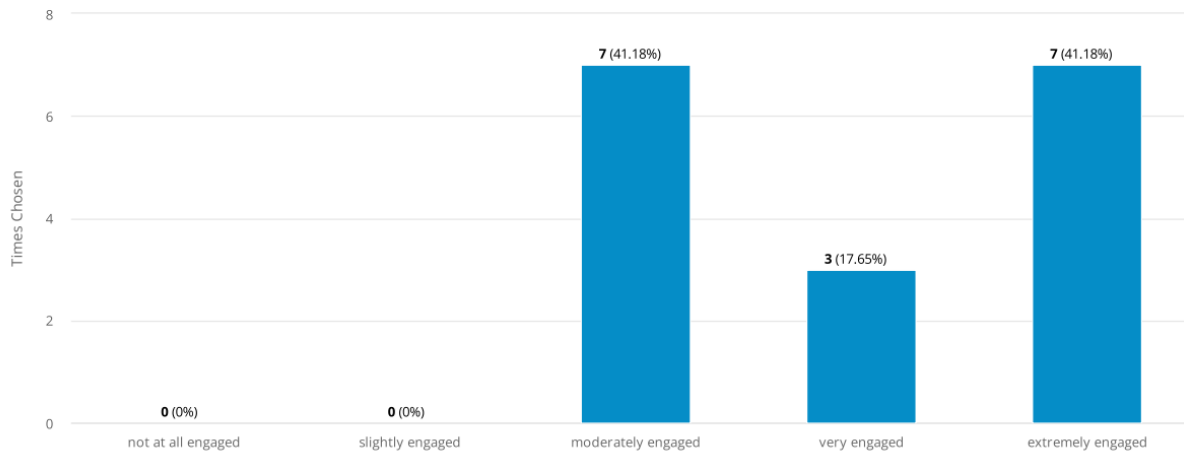


In the graph you can see that this activity has one of the best ratings from young ambassadors. Sixteen out of seventeen young ambassadors voted for positive or very positive option and only one young ambassador for neutral option. It means that ninety-four percent of ambassadors considered this activity as really amazing. Mainly reasons are that this activity is very interactive. Athletes need to find athletes from different countries and need talk to them, ask them questions. They can also have much fun doing this activity and can make relationship with athletes from different parts of Europe, they can exchange their social media canals and stay in contact even after the event.

Figure 10: Human bingo engagement

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

Number of responses: 17



When we have a look at the athletes' engagement graph, we can see that is a little bit worse than a rating graph. Ten young ambassadors considered engagement of athletes in this activity as very engaged or extremely engaged, what represents fifty-eight percent of all young ambassadors. Seven young ambassadors considered athletes as moderately engaged in this activity, what represents forty-one percent of young ambassadors. Some young ambassadors' points of view will be presented in next part of the thesis.

Many young ambassadors mentioned two main reasons why not all athletes were extremely engaged in this activity. One of them is that some of athletes were shy to speak with the athletes from different European countries, especially in English – not native – language. Second reason is that this activity was time consuming and some of the athletes did not want to spend so much time doing this activity. Anna-Lisa, young ambassador from Estonia, wrote in the survey about this activity: "This activity was very interactive and engaging, questions were interesting and I guess everyone enjoyed it. I can not currently think of any improvements actually." Alfred from Estonia mentioned: "I think it would be great to include more sports-themed questions or questions about certain participating countries." Jan, young ambassador from Germany and also Ilayda from Turkey, suggested for the next time to prepare second or even third sheet with other tasks. This will secure the opportunity for athletes to do Human Bingo more than just once.

Suggested improvements for "Human Bingo" activity

- To make second or even third sheet – to have more tasks so athletes can do it more than just once
- To include more sports-themed questions or questions about certain participating countries
- To make it harder to accomplish

EYOF Podcast activity

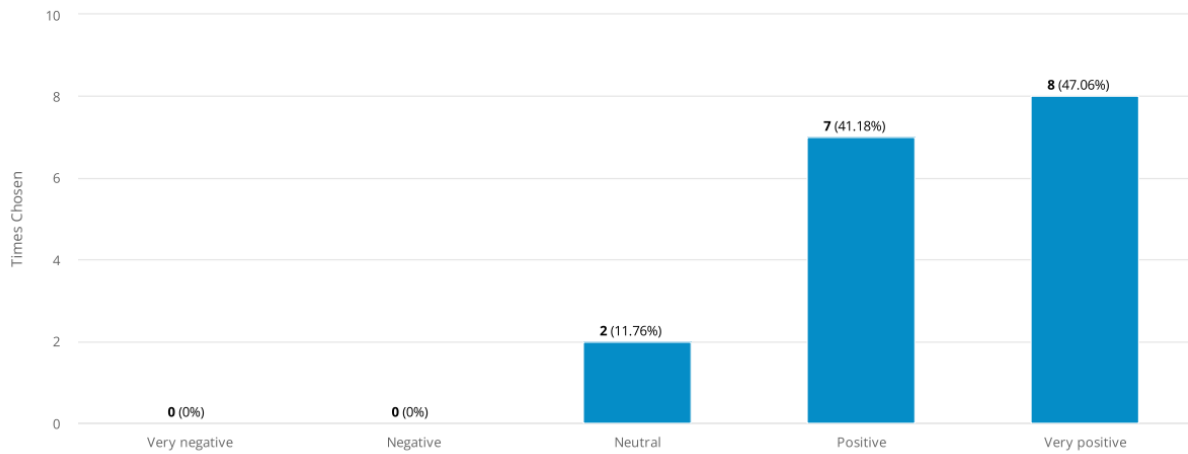
Three young ambassadors are running the European Youth Olympic Festival Podcast. The main goal of this podcast is to educate young athletes in different areas such as mental health, healthy food, anti-doping, organization of the event and similar. The podcasts' episodes can be founded on Spotify and until now there are 5 episodes:

1. UNWRAP VUOKATTI 2022 – with Marita Kaipainen – Secretary General from Organizing Committee of Vuokatti. She spoke about her life's work, the ongoing process of organizing the EYOF 2022 and told also why is it such a special event.
2. MIND, BODY and SPORT – with Jan Muhlfeit – He uncovered his secrets to mental well-being as this episode is all about the mental health. Jan Muhlfeit is a global strategist, coach of executive, Olympic Games winners and author of bestselling business book The Positive Leader.
3. SNEAK PEEK OF WINTER EYOF 2022 – with Mirjana Ivkovic – the alumni of the programme and social media manager of the EYOA programme gave some sneak peaks of what can the athletes expect during the week in Finland, she spoke about the insights about the Olympic Village, sports venues, sports schedule, fun activities and even food.
4. FIRST YOU HAVE TO LOSE – with the EOC President Spyros Capralos – an inspiring interview with a former swimmer and a water polo Olympian, the current President of the European Olympic Committee.
5. IT'S A WRAP! VUOKATTI 2022 – with Marita Kaipainen – wrapping up the Vuokatti 2022 EYOF with Secretary General from the Organizing Committee of Vuokatti. She spoke about her thoughts on the games.

Figure 11: EYOF Podcast rating

How would you rate a „EYOF Podcast“ activity?

Number of responses: 17

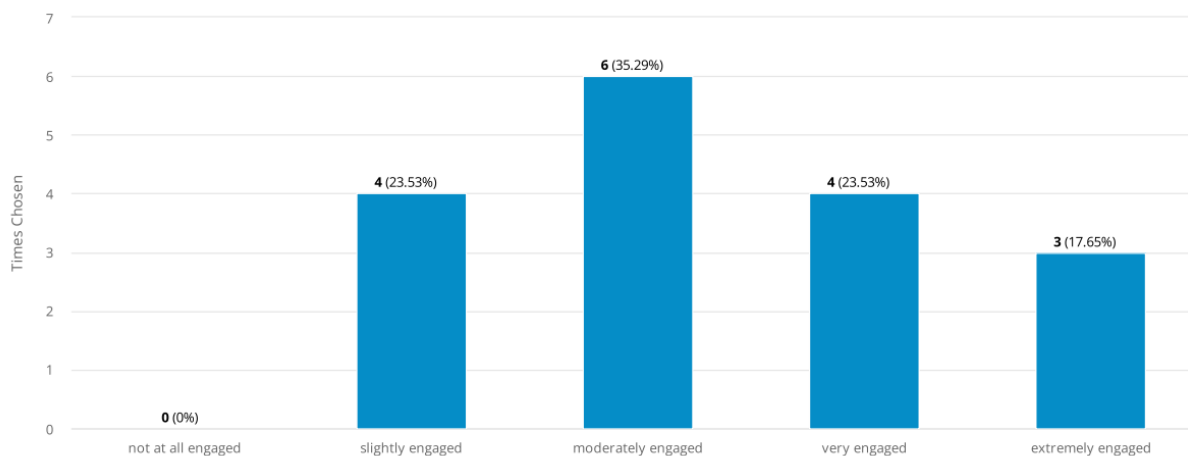


This activity has a high rating from young ambassadors. As you can see in the graph above eighty-eight percent of ambassadors rated the podcast as a positive or very positive activity. Only two ambassadors voted for neutral ranking. It is important to say, that podcast activity runs not just during the event, but also before and after the vent which makes podcast a long-term activity and it is a legacy of the EYOA programme.

Figure 12: EYOF Podcast engagement

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

Number of responses: 17



Ten young ambassadors out of seventeen rated the athletes as slightly engaged or moderately engaged, what represents fifty-nine percent of young ambassadors. Seven young ambassadors rated the

athletes as very engaged or extremely engaged, what represents forty-one percent of young ambassadors. This rating is not the highest, because during the event there is not too much time to listen podcast episodes, but after the event they can listen them at any time. In the next part of the thesis some reasons why athletes were not engaged that much will be provided.

Claudia, young ambassador from Great Britain, suggested to make short cuts of the podcast on social media and also record the podcast episodes face to face. Mirjana, Alumni from Serbia, definitely agrees with her. Anna from Czech Republic, who is also a member of the podcast team, would improve the sound quality with upcoming episodes. Many young ambassadors had comments such like – not visible enough, more advertisement needed, need to improve the marketing, requires more promotion. Mario’s idea is to have a “live” podcast during the next event. Peter, young ambassador from Luxembourg, wrote about the podcast: “It’s an interesting activity with a lot of potential depending on the quests, hosts and how it’s marketed. Although potentially challenging, regular upload of episodes may help.”

Suggested improvements for “EYOF Podcast” activity

- To make short cuts of the podcast to post on social media
- To do a video from the podcast as well
- To improve the quality of the sound with upcoming episodes
- More promotion and advertisement needed

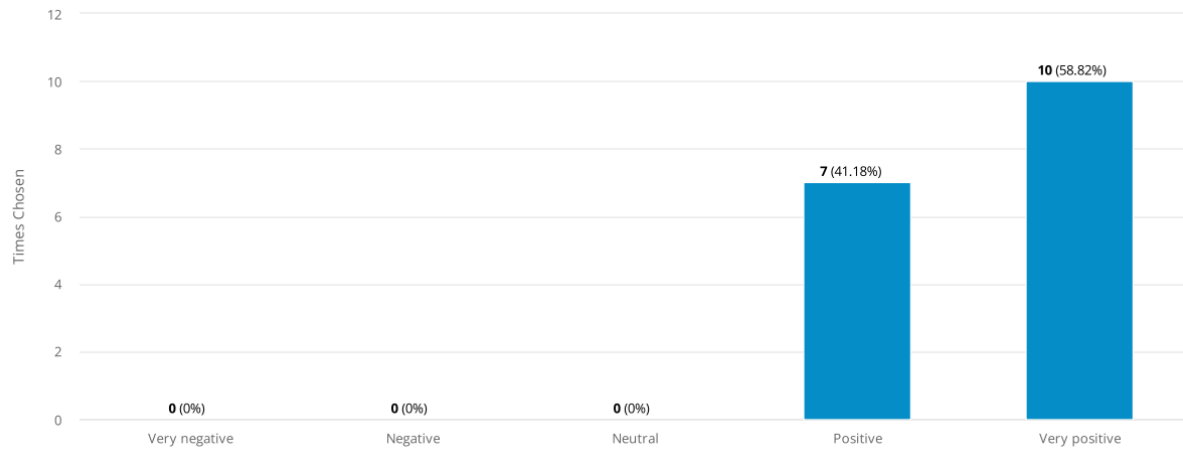
“Chat with a champion” activity

Chat with a champion is an activity, where one of the ambassador talks live with an Olympian, Olympic medalist or even Olympic winner. Athletes are there as spectators and they can ask questions and discuss with the host. This activity is very educational as athletes can learn from the Olympian’s life, from their experience and can ask them what is interesting for the athletes. During the EYOF in Vuokatti two chats with a champion were held. One with Luiza Zlotkowska, two times Olympic medalist in speed skating. She has silver medal from Sochi Olympic Games and bronze medal from Vancouver Olympic Games. Second one was with Emma Terho, two times Olympic bronze medalist and Chair of the IOC Athletes Commission.

Figure 13: Chat with a champion rating

How would you rate a „Chat with a champion“ activity?

Number of responses: 17

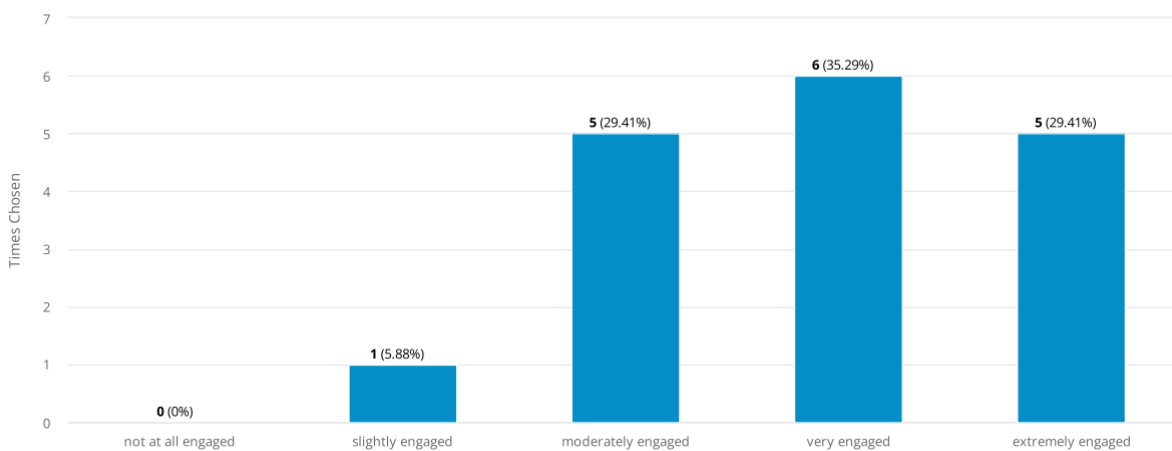


Chat with a champion activity has one of the best rankings from young ambassadors. All seventeen young ambassadors voted for positive or very positive ranking – fifty-nine percent went for very positive and forty-one for positive. This activity is very educational, very interactive and athletes can see their idols face-to-face. They asked question and that is why this activity is so popular. In the next part of the thesis engagement graph and some improvements for this activity will be provided.

Figure 14: Chat with a champion engagement

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

Number of responses: 17



In the engagement graph you can see that eleven young ambassadors rated the engagement athletes into this activity as very or extremely engaged, what makes sixty-five percent of them. Six

athletes rated the engagement of athletes as slightly or moderately engaged, what means thirty-five percent of ambassadors. Some of the athletes can not attend these chats with champions because of busy schedules. Some ideas and improvements for the next EYOF from young ambassadors will be provided in the next part as well as their feedback on this activity.

Lena, young ambassador from Slovenia, reacted on this activity: “Our athletes loved it it definitely is a great opportunity for young athletes to hear a story from someone who was one of the best athletes of his/her time and therefore had an amazing career. More of this!” Claudia from Great Britain suggested to make it little bit shorter and also to create fun questions tailored to younger athletes, making it more informal. Many young ambassadors agreed that this activity needs better promotion, because some of the athletes did not know that it happened. Anna-Lisa, young ambassador from Estonia, wrote about the activity: “I think it is such a great activity and I dearly wish I would have had such possibilities during my career. Ivana Perovic from Serbia and many other young ambassadors would like to do better promotion for the next edition, so more athletes can come and be motivated to listen and be encouraged to ask questions indeed. Also, promotion from respective NOCs is required. Paulius, Alumni from Lithuania, commented on this activity: “It was very emotional, super informative. It would need more Olympians in it and make more of chat with champions.

Suggested improvements for “Chat with a champion” activity

- To make it little bit shorter and more informal
- Better promotion needed, from NOCs as well
- More questions from athletes needed - to make it more discussion based

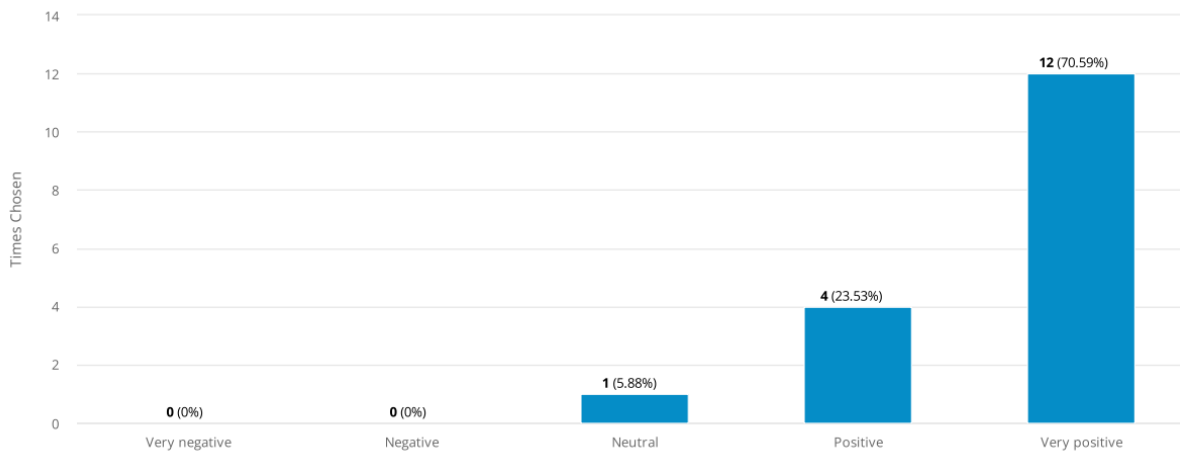
“Kahoot quiz” activity

This activity aims to educate athletes about a philosophy of Olympism, Olympic values, about the European Youth Olympic Festival and many more. We changed a little bis this quiz, to make it more interactive. Athletes could play individually or as a team and they did not play it on their mobile phones. They needed to stand on a symbol, which represented an answer which they thought is the correct one. This way it was way much funny and interactive.

Figure 15: Kahoot quiz rating

How would you rate a „Kahoot quiz“ activity?

Number of responses: 17

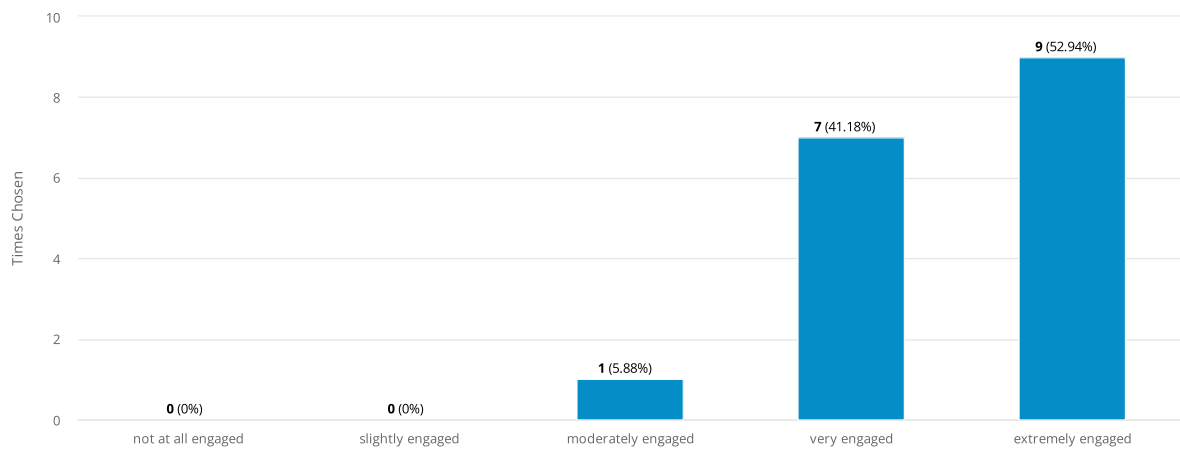


This activity was rated very positive by twelve out of seventeen young ambassadors, what means seventy-one percent. Four ambassadors rated the kahoot quiz positive, what represents twenty-four percent and neutral ranking was only from one young ambassador, what represent six percent. In overall this ranking is very high and activity has a big success during the event. The EYOA prepared three versions of the quiz and athletes could choose one or come later to complete all of them. They also run a scoreboard by countries for this activity.

Figure 16: Kahoot quiz engagement

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

Number of responses: 17



The engagement of athletes in this activity was one of the highest. The young ambassadors rated the engagement as extremely engaged (nine ambassadors – fifty-three percent), very engaged (seven

ambassadors – forty-one percent) and moderately engaged (one ambassador – six percent). This activity was very popular, educative and funny. That is why the athletes liked it and came more times to play different versions of the quiz. Some improvements for this activity will be provided in the next part of the thesis.

Anna-Lisa, young ambassador from Estonia, commented on this activity: “I think it was a very funny activity! Maybe a bigger playground, so there could be more people participating at once, but otherwise, the athletes seemed to enjoy it much! Sintija, young ambassador from Latvia, suggested to create different topic quizzes for athletes to choose from. Mario, young ambassador from Spain, agreed and added that another improvement should be to have questions more graduated in difficulty and also to increase educational questions. Peter from Luxembourg came with the idea: “It may be more interesting to incorporate the quiz into a workshop. This would mean that the athletes have to learn something about the Olympic values in a short ten minutes workshop, then take a short quiz (about ten questions) about what they learned.” Rebekka, Alumni from Denmark, commented on this activity: “The improved version in Vuokatti with making it without phones was really good, for one because it gave another opportunity to talk about the questions and got people moving. Downside is that you can see what people vote which is not the meaning of Kahoot. If it should be done with phones we need to assure better internet connection for all. Alternative is if we are rich to get four tablets so four teams can play at a time,”

Suggested improvements for “Kahoot quiz” activity

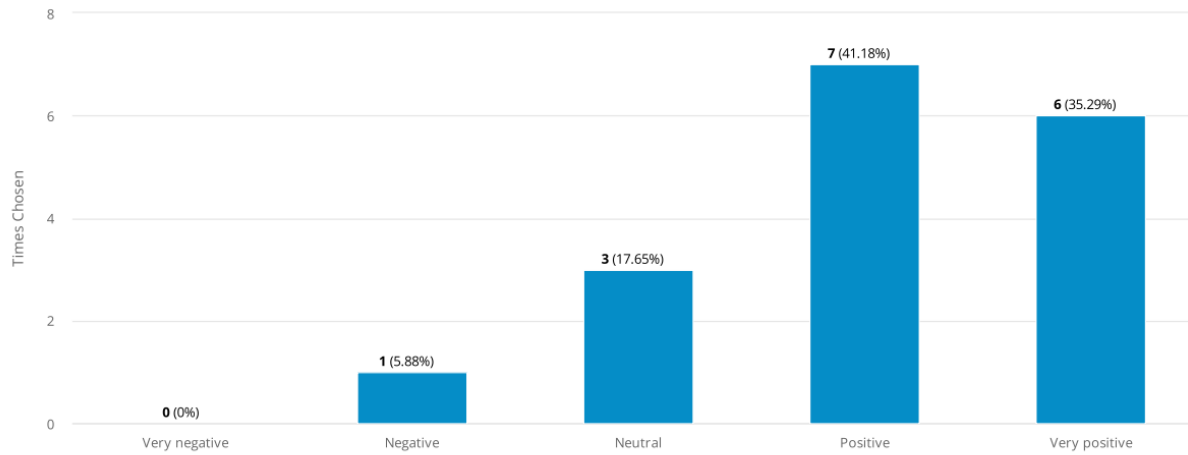
- To make bigger playground, so more athletes could participate at once
- To create different topic quizzes for athletes to choose from
- To do short educational workshop before the quiz will take place

“Cultural day” activity

This activity was a special one. The young ambassadors did it only once and in one day during the event. Each young ambassador brought one traditional sweet from his/her country and came up with traditional game from his/her country. Then the athletes had a possibility to come, try different sweets from different European countries. They also could play different traditional games and could talk about the culture, traditions or sports of their countries. Simply, the athletes had a platform where they could freely discuss and exchange cultural information about their countries, taste sweets and play games, all in amazing atmosphere.

Figure 17: Cultural day rating
How would you rate a „Cultural day“ activity?

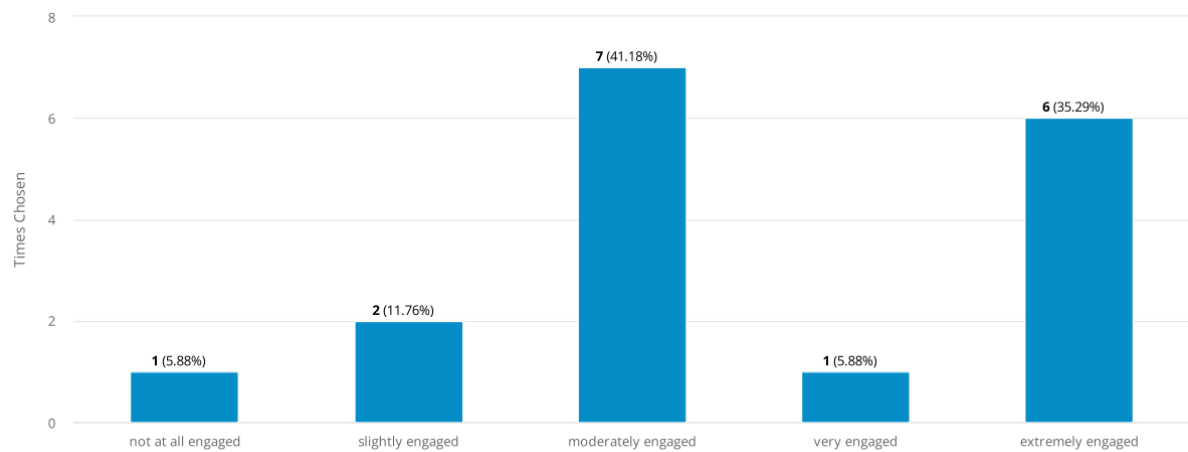
Number of responses: 17



Thirteen out of seventeen young ambassadors rated this activity as positive or very positive. Six of them, thirty-five percent, rated it as very positive and seven, forty-one percent, rated it as positive, what is together seventy-six percent. Three young ambassadors rated the activity as neutral and one as negative, which is together twenty-four percent. This activity had some problems, which we will write about later, and that is why the rating is not the highest.

Figure 18: Cultural day engagement
How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

Number of responses: 17



When we look at athletes' engagement graph, we can see that is not the highest neither. Only seven ambassadors rated it as very or extremely engaged, what means forty-one percent. The same

number (seven) of young ambassadors rated it as moderately engaged, two young ambassadors rated it as slightly engaged and one even not at all engaged. Some reasons why the engagement was not the highest were mentioned in a survey from young ambassadors. We are going to uncover them in the next part of the thesis.

Lena, young ambassador from Slovenia, stated in a survey about this activity: “It is important to get to know other countries and this kind of event is the perfect opportunity for that.” Claudia from Great Britain suggested to make it like a game of guessing where the sweets are from. Some of the young ambassadors suggested in the survey that this activity was not very visible and it needs better promotion for sure. Mario, young ambassador from Spain, reacted on this activity: “It was an interesting activity, but difficult to make in a winter festival perhaps. It may be organized as a gymkana, with the possibility to play at different games at a time I case of large groups. Taking the cultural activities outside to an open space could also be an improvement.” Alfred, Alumni from Estonia, came with his proposal as well: “I think it would have been way more successful yet again if it was properly promoted through NOCs and the cultural aspect had a bit more body to it. Booth of each country or each area (Baltic nations, Nordic nations, ...). Thus having actually informative and educational information.

Suggested improvements for “Cultural day” activity

- To make a game of guessing where the sweets are from
- Needs better promotion
- Needs better planning before hand – tradition games especially
- Promotion from NOCs needed
- Each country or each area (Baltic nations, Nordic nations, ...) to have a booth

In our interview we asked young ambassadors three questions about activities happening during the EYOF – First one was how do they like the activities, second one as what would they change or improve and the third one was which activity did they like the most and why. In next part of thesis answers on these questions will be provided and analyzed.

Anna, young ambassador from Czech Republic complained about a space for EYOA programme: “To be honest, the class, in which we worked, was rather hidden and it was too cold to be in a tent outside the whole day” (interview lines 61-62). Because of that activities were hidden as well and many athletes didn’t know about the programme, especially in first days of the festival. From the activities she liked the most the trust game with a scarf over eyes. She found it to be a very teambuilding

activity and also chat with the champion: “I really think that chat with a champion was a great idea and if we had more time and the event lasted longer, like for example the Olympics which are for 3 and more weeks... so if every 3 days... let’s say... there was an inspirational athlete it would be appreciated from all the sports, because these young athletes would want to attend if there was someone who they look up to. They would attend and want to talk to them.” (interview lines 96-100). Anna’s biggest improvement is to have activities located more in the center, then more athletes would get involved in them.

Alfred, Alumni from Estonia, suggested to make activities more interesting for the age groups: “I feel like the activities could be improved in a way of making it actually interesting for the age groups, because at the moment I feel like they are maybe a bit too childish, whereas the people here are like 17 or so. I think, their interests don’t necessarily align with the games that we have here. But, at the same time it’s been relatively successful” (interview lines 202-206). As Anna, he liked the most chat with champion: “From a very non-athletic point of view the Chat with champions was really good, because I feel like that actually has a very important value for the athletes. It’s a process where you learn something and you remember it. Hearing it from people, that actually have been through the exact same situation” (interview lines 211-214).

Jan, young ambassador from Germany, liked the activity a lot. He also had a feedback from the athletes that they had fun and liked the activities. Regarding improvements he didn’t like the location for the activities and he would also improve the promotion before the event: “This isn’t really our fault, but the location isn’t ideal. And also, it would be ideal to have more promoters or more facilitators...just to help us out, because that would help to get more people, have more breaks and to just work better on the stuff that we are doing. So, that is something I would improve. And also, I would try to engage more athletes and to do promotion before the event, so that athletes would know about this programme” (interview lines 311-315). From the activities he liked the most human bingo and photo team challenge, because athletes kept coming back and these activities helped athletes to make new connections and to get to know athletes better.

Kristin, Alumni from Iceland, said about the activities: “I really like the activities. Some of them are better, some of them are not as good. But I think that in overall they represent our values and what this programme is about” (interview lines 395-396). Regarding the improvements for the activities she mentioned: “I would make them more educational, because some of the games and activities, in my opinion, didn’t really have a purpose... it sounds bad when I say it... but the purpose of the games

should be more clear. For example: Kahoot was very educational and the athletes left knowing what the values actually were. However, in some of the games it is not that clear” (interview lines 400-403). Kristin liked the most chat with champion from all activities, because from her point of view it is very inspirational.

Mirjana, Alumni from Serbia picked the EYOF podcast as the best activity: “I really like the podcast that the girls made, because it is something new for the EYOF, something new for the EOC... and EOC is getting a little bit out of their comfort zone, you know” (interview lines 543-545). She also mentioned some improvements for the next editions in the interview: “I think we need more games and more diversity in the games. Now it came out good, because we have a small place. Hopefully, in Banska Bystrica, in Italy or Slovenia in the next years we will have a better place, so that we can have more different activities, more easier activities... activities where when you see a poster or people – it attracts you as soon as possible to come and to play” (interview lines 532-536).

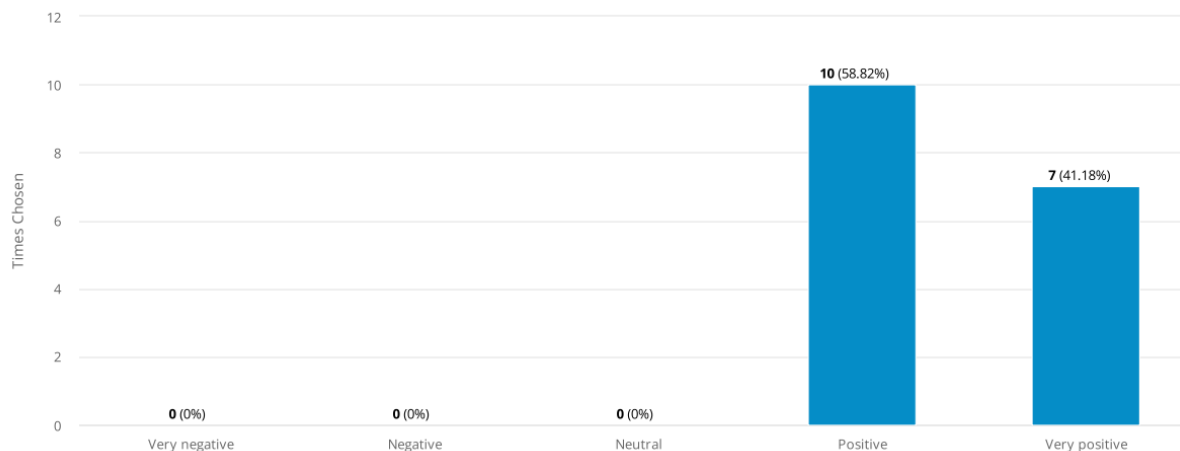
4.4 The whole European Young Ambassadors Programme

In the last part we had a look on the whole European Young Ambassadors Programme. In the survey we had three questions regarding this part. First one, very important, what do you consider to be the added value of the EYOA programme for the athletes. This question we asked in the interviews as well. Second one was if young ambassadors would recommend the EYOA programme to their friends and they should also explain their answers, why would they do it. The last one was about the next edition of EYOF, which is going to take a place in July, in Slovakia. The question was if they are planning to participate there. The young ambassadors should also rate the whole EYOA programme.

Figure 19: The whole EYOA Programme rating

Please, rate the whole European Young Ambassadors Programme.

Number of responses: 17



As you can see in the graph, ratings from the young ambassadors are very high. There are only positive and very positive ratings. Ten young ambassadors rated the whole EYOA programme as positive, what is fifty-nine percent and seven young ambassadors rated the whole EYOA programme as very positive, what means forty-one percent. We will look in some reasons why the ratings are so high and what young ambassadors considered to be the added value for this programme in the next part of thesis.

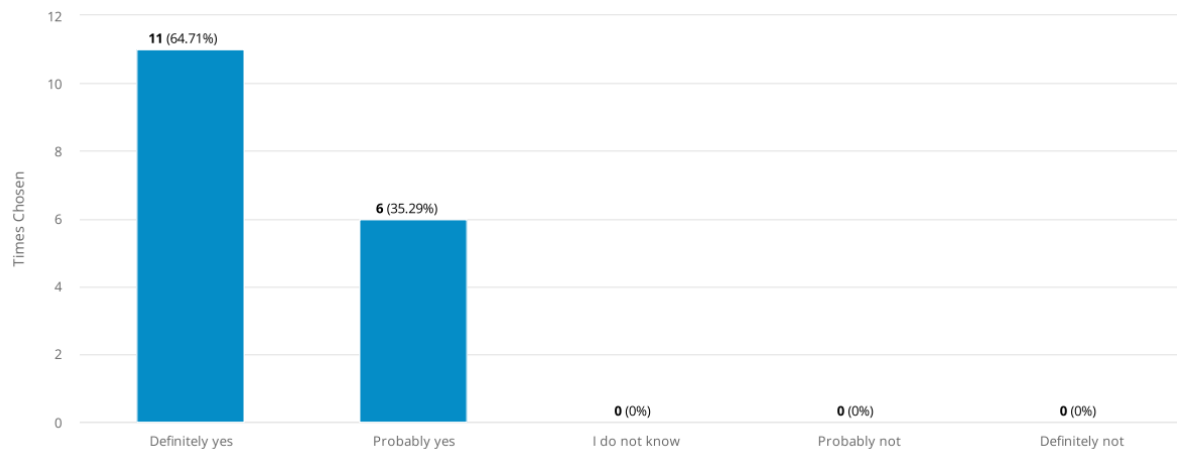
For Claudia, young ambassador from Great Britain, the added value of this programme was that it brought fun, opportunities to meet new athletes from different countries and also provided them opportunities to learn and display the Olympic values. Mirjana, Alumni from Serbia, wrote in the survey about the value added of the EYOA programme: “In any other competition, they don’t have this opportunity. What I want to say is, that the EYOF is a unique opportunity for them to take a part in this programme, but also it is a lifetime opportunity, since as an athlete you can only once participate at the EYOF.” Anna-Lisa, young ambassador from Estonia, wrote about the added value: “Most definitely number one would be socializing and all activities and games are a reason for them to get out of their hotel room and do something other than compete and train. From my point of view – when I was an active athlete in international races mostly all free time we had we spent in our hotel room totally doing nothing and missing out on all the socializing stuff. One time in Spain our hotel had a pool table. We spent all of our free time there and had tournament with other athletes. That pool table was our reason to get out of our rooms. So, in my eyes, the EYOA programme along with its activities is a very good reason for athletes to get out of their rooms and add some extra value to their competitions – to meet

people, to practice their English, to find new friends and make memories for a lifetime. Big international events like the EYOF along with its side events is so very important for young athletes in determining their sports career. Some of them might not see nor feel it now but years later when they think back to those days at the big competitions, they will get it. Even if they understand the value of human bingo and cultural day years later – it is still a value and it has affected their life, most likely in a good way.” Peter, young ambassador from Luxembourg, mentioned that programme helps teach the athletes about the Olympic values and helps them to interact with each other. Also, he as an active athlete who competed at the same event, he was able to directly support the athletes from his country. Anna, young ambassador from Czech Republic said in the interview: “I think it’s another activity for them to do when they don’t have a competition or training. I feel like, the athletes don’t necessarily come to the booth to learn about the values. But I do believe that through the series of activities that we have, we do educate them” (interview lines 230-232). Jan from Germany said in the interview: “: I think it’s definitely having discussions with us ambassadors who are also former athletes or engaged into sports. But also getting to know each other better and also, I would say, getting to know Olympic values a bit, which helps them for their future careers” (interview lines 328-330). Mirjana, Alumni from Serbia, gave her own explanation during the interview: “Definitely learning, knowledge, experience and people they met – because here are more than twenty people who are coming from different countries and each one of us grew up differently, there are different cultures and religions here. We don’t think the same way, but when you work with someone in a group, you have to learn how to do that and not to work as an individual. So, the added value is definitely learning, educating yourself, because you are not getting this learning in the school” (interview lines 553-558). Jan from Germany added three points. First – get to know other cultures and athletes and engage with each other. Second – get to know the values and how they are lived. Third – interesting programme in addition to their competitions. Rebekka, Alumni from Denmark, wrote in the survey about the added values of the EYOA programme: “Right now the programme offers another aspect and level to the Olympic community, knowledge of experiences that goes beyond sport but is attained through it.”

Figure 20: EYOA Programme recommendation

Would you recommend the European Young Ambassadors Programme to your friends?

Number of responses: 17



Positive rankings regarding the EYOA programme are also displayed in the next graph above. This graph shows that sixty-five percent of ambassadors would definitely recommend the EYOA programme to their friends. Other thirty-five percent of young ambassadors would probably recommend this programme to their friends. In the young ambassadors' answers we can find that this programme brought them new people with similar thinking to their lives. Some of the reasons why they would recommend this programme to their friends:

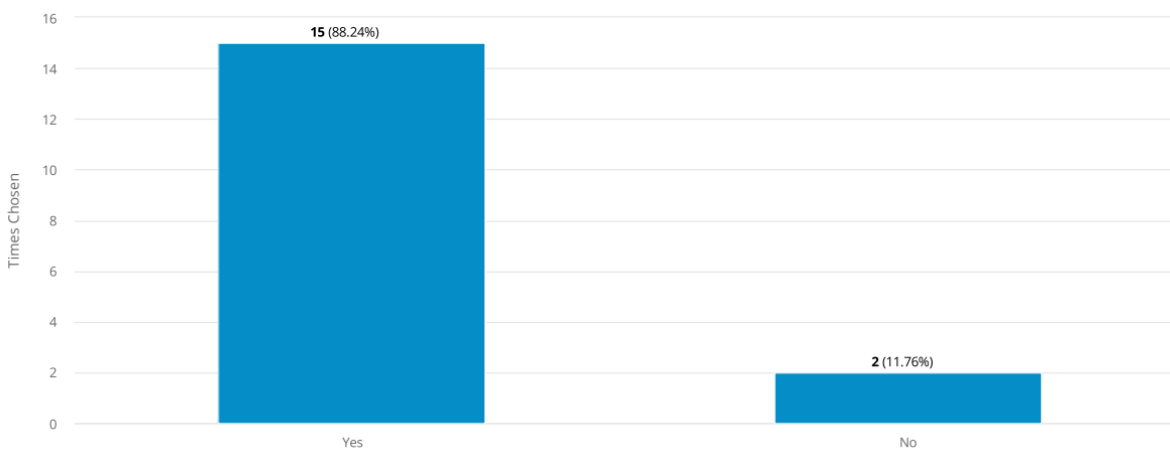
- Opportunity to meet new people, a chance to be a part of the big multisport event (Lena, Slovenia)
- Opportunity to develop skills, to meet like-minded people within the sport community (Claudia, Great Britain)
- To work in a multicultural team, to develop activities, to gain experience, to expand your CV (Mirjana, Serbia)
- To have fun, personal skills development, getting out of the comfort zone, making new friends, discovering yourself (Anna-Lisa, Estonia)
- Great idea behind the programme (Kristin, Iceland)
- Great platform to contribute to the Olympic sports world, establish new friendships for a life (Sintija, Latvia)
- To gain incredible experience, to get know great people (Mario, Spain)
- It is a good and fun experience (Alfred, Estonia)
- Great learning experience, interacting with the athletes (Peter, Luxembourg)

- Great experience, lot of fun, to interact with people, to teach Olympic values (Ilayda, Turkey)
- Having fun at the same time learning by yourself and helping to learn others (Paulius, Lithuania)
- It evolves you as a person to shape and execute the programme, to get more intuned with the Olympic values, to create new friendships, to learn about fellow European countries, contributing to keep Olympism and sport a big peace-promoting and connecting community (Rebekka, Denmark)

Figure 21: Participation in the next EYOA edition

Are you planning to participate as an ambassador in the next EYOF in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia?

Number of responses: 17



The last question in our survey was if young ambassadors are planning to participate in the next EYOF, which will take place in July, in Slovakia. Fifteen out of seventeen ambassadors answered yes, what means eighty-eight percent and two of them answered no, twelve percent. One no was because of university exams during the next EYOF. The second no was no as ambassador but maybe yes as alumni. This rating also indicates how popular is the programme and how young ambassadors like it and enjoy it. Many of them are coming back for the next edition.

The last question our interview was about anything else what young ambassadors or alumni would like to say. We can find some interesting messages in their answers. Mirjana, Alumni from Serbia would like to have more ambassadors in the future: “I would really like to encourage those NOCs who don’t have their ambassadors to have them in the future. It doesn’t cost too much and it is great, because they can get very educational and good experience to work in the Olympic departments, marketing, sports departments” (interview lines 563-566). Kristin, Alumni from Iceland, said: “It is kind of new programme, so we are still figuring out what is the best way to do things. So, it needs a lot

of improvement, but I am happy about the programme and what it stands for” (interview lines 438-440). Jan, young ambassador from Germany, mentioned in his last answer: “: I think it is a great programme and I love it and am grateful to be a part of it. And I would always do it again. I can say that I am looking forward for the rest of journey to Banska Bystrica and I already know that I definitely also want to become an alumni and do the same... help facilitators, promoters and reporters like we are getting help and support now from our alumni” (interview lines 334-338). Alfred, Alumni from Estonia, reacted in similar way as Mirjana did: “I believe that all NOCs should send an ambassador to make it more international. That would add more value to it definitely. At the moment, I know there are many NOCs that don’t particularly agree with the programme and don’t think that is necessary. Whereas, I feel like if every country was required to have an ambassador, there would be a much more success (interview lines 243-247).

4.3 Conclusion

The results from the interviews and questionnaire are very useful for the next editions of the EYOA programme. We divided results into three parts and suggested possible ways how to improve individual parts. In the first part we suggested possible ways how to improve the online webinars happening before the EYOF. Some useful recommendations were provided from the ambassadors such as online webinars need to be more discussion based, there is also a need to divide ambassadors into smaller groups in order to work in a more effective way. Young ambassadors also suggested to have shorter online meeting because it is difficult for them to stay focused for two hours. They also want to bring more experts into the online webinars in order to have better preparation or to have one teambuilding during the weekend in person instead of online webinars and many more. In the second part we described the activities happening during the EYOF. Young ambassadors rated the activities themselves and they rated the engagement of the athletes into the activities as well. They also provided many possible ways how to improve the activities. This year the EYOA programme is built for both EYOFs winter edition and summer edition as well. These edition are very close to each other, there is only 4 month between them, so it is very important to react quickly and improve or change the activities in order to have more successful EYOA programme. The last third part was the feedback for the whole programme and what could be done to improve it for the next editions.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 European Young Olympic Ambassadors programme – possible ways how to improve

The purpose of this study was to uncover the current European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme and its activities. To find out how successful was this programme during the EYOF 2022 in Vuokatti, what could be improved for the next edition and what are the conditions to develop successful EYOA programme in the future. The review of literature and analysis of responses from interviewees and from questionnaires can be summarized into the following recommendations to have successful EYOA programme in the future:

Online webinars

- For online webinars to be more discussion based
- To provide quality training and support for young ambassadors – bring more experts into the online webinars
- To divide ambassadors into smaller groups, to have more discussion and to work more effectively
- To make online webinars shorter – difficult to focus for two hours
- To do one teambuilding during the weekend with educational content instead of online webinars

Activities during the EYOF

We described detailed all the activities in the results - chapter four. For each activity we suggested few possible ways how to improve it.

The whole EYOA programme

- To combine the activities program of facilitators' and promoters' group
- To promote more the EYOA programme – be as much visible as possible
- Some activities need to be more connected to the Olympic values

These recommendations are not groundbreaking or difficult to accomplish. The simplicity of these best practices reflects on the nature of activities happening during the EYOF. Activities need to stay simple and easy to do on one side, on other side they need to be funny and educative. The young ambassadors need to find a balance between these two sides in order to engage as many athletes as possible. Some of the recommendations could be done by young ambassadors

and some by directory of the EYOA programme. Majority of the recommendations could be done for the next edition of the programme – until the next EYOF in Slovakia, Banská Bystrica.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Definitely main suggestion is to do the study on athletes participating in the European Youth Olympic Festival. Let athletes to rate the activities and the EYOA programme itself. It would be very interesting to find out how they enjoyed the activities, how useful was the EYOA programme for them and what they took from it. Another suggestion is to do this study in the future. The EYOA programme is very young project, running just few years. It would be interesting to do this study five, ten or twenty years later and to compare the outcomes. Also, one of the programme's goals is to have more young ambassadors in the future, so the study could be done on bigger group of ambassadors and the outcomes could have higher quality.

5.3 Limitations

The main limitation of this study was the narrow group of ambassadors (12 young ambassadors and 5 alumni). Another limitation is that the study was done only on ambassadors and not athletes. Ambassadors are well informed and they are the ones who prepared the activities and, therefore, know the process of planning as well as the delivery of the activities. They had the best conception on how the activities should be done and what values should athletes receive from them. Ambassadors were the right group to do this study on, however, as it was mentioned in suggestions, it could be done on athletes as well to get the whole perception of the quality of activities.

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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTION

- Please say your name, country which you represent at EYOF and your position (ambassador or alumni)
- Is this your first EYOF as an ambassador/alumni?
- How did you become the EYOA and what was your motivation?
- How did you like the process of online webinars before Vuokatti?
- Would you change or improve something regarding the online webinars?
- How do you like the activities and games, which are prepared for the athletes in Vuokatti?
- Would you change or improve something?
- Which activity/activities do you like the most and why ?
- What do you think is an added value of this programme for the athletes ?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about the EYOA Programme in general ?

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

European Young Olympic Ambassadors Programme Vuokatti 2022 - survey

Hello! Thank you so much for taking part in this survey and contributing to the making of my master's thesis. This research is a part of the International Olympic Academy master's program on Olympic Studies. The answers are confidential and will only be used in the thesis. This is a medium long survey, which will take around 20 minutes to be completed.

Best regards,

Kamil Pavlinský

kamilpavlinsky@gmail.com

GENERAL INFO

Name :

Country :

Age :

I am Ambassador/Alumni :

I am covered by the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and I consent to the collection of my personal information for the needs of this survey.

BEFORE VUOKATTI – online webinars

How satisfied were you with the online webinars happening before Vuokatti?

very dissatisfied – dissatisfied – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – satisfied – very satisfied

How useful were the webinars for you in order to organize the activities in Vuokatti?

not at all useful – slightly useful – moderately useful – very useful – extremely useful

What did you learn from the online webinars?

What would you improve regarding the online webinars?

ACTIVITIES DURING VUOKATTI

How would you rate a „Photo booth“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate an „Anti-doping quiz“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Treasure hunt“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Sports date“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Guess the country“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Today at the Festival“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Human Bingo“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Podcast“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate „A day in a life of an athlete“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Get to know the athlete“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Heads up“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Chat with a champion“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Trust game“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Behind the scenes EYOF“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

How would you rate a „Kahoot! Quiz night“ activity?

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

How engaged in this activity do you think that the athletes were?

not at all engaged - slightly engaged - moderately engaged - very engaged – extremely engaged

Please write what would you change or improve in this activity.

In your opinion, what did the activities give to the athletes ?

Which type of the activity/activities did you like the most?

Why?

How satisfied were you with the activities and games overall during the EYOF in Vuokatti?

very dissatisfied – dissatisfied – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – satisfied – very satisfied

The whole EYOA Programme

Please, rate the whole European Young Ambassadors Programme.

very negative - negative - neutral – positive – very positive

What do you consider to be the added value of the EYOA programme?

Would you recommend the European Young Ambassadors Programme to your friends?

Definitely yes - probably yes - I do not know - probably not - definitely not.

Explain your answer please. (Why yes or why not)

Are you planning to participate as an ambassador in the next EYOF in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia?

Yes - No

If not Why?

APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW ANSWERS

1 **Anna Dušková – EYOA from Czech Republic**

2
3 K: Hello, I'm glad you found time for this interview. Please, say which country you represent
4 at EYOF and what is your position, whether it is ambassador or alumni and also in which group
5 you are (facilitators, reporters or promoters).

6
7 A: I am representing Czech Republic as an ambassador.

8
9 K: Ok, and which group?

10
11 A: Reporters.

12
13 K: Is this your first EYOF as an ambassador?

14
15 A: Yes, this is my first EYOF as an ambassador. However, in 2015, I competed at EYOF as an
16 athlete. So, it is my second EYOF.

17
18 K: How did you become an ambassador and what was your motivation?

19
20 A: I got an email from Czech ice-skating association with the offer. The general secretary wrote
21 in this email whether this programme would be interesting for me. This email was probably
22 sent from Czech Olympic committee. I discussed this opportunity with my coach and we agreed
23 that it could be a different experience for me as an athlete. I wanted to see a different
24 perspective, not just from the athlete's point of view. Now , I see how difficult it is when it
25 comes to organizing.

26
27 K: I know exactly how you mean by that.

28 How did you like the process of online webinars which we had before Vuokatti?

29
30 A: I think that during pandemic when online meetings became so popular, it is very usual to

31 have meetings in this way now. Also, it was very reasonable to make this meetings online,
32 because for so many people from different countries it wouldn't be possible to meet face-to-
33 face before EYOF. The only thing, that I didn't quite like is that it was difficult to agree on a
34 time, because there was too many of us. So, when it was always at 5PM on a working day, I
35 was not able to participate. That upsets me, because I was not able to get all the information.
36 Fortunately, Sindy and Annalise filled me in on things that I missed in the meetings, but it
37 wasn't the same as hearing in the meetings. They always informed me what happened in the
38 meetings in a WhatsApp group.

39
40 K: Would you change or improve something in these online webinars for the next EYOF?

41
42 A: Probably the time of the webinars.

43
44 K: So maybe to make a poll about that to find out when the most of the people are able to meet?

45
46 A: Well, probably that would be good. So, that there would be at least one person from the
47 group. It is not necessary for every person from the group to be there, because they can tell
48 others what was discussed during the meeting. Also what I didn't like is that at the beginning
49 we were organized into different groups and then they regrouped us and we did various
50 activities. This is probably due to the fact that the programme was elongated. Maybe they
51 should have assigned us to the groups - facilitators, promoters and reporters at the beginning,
52 because we could get used to each other and plan things earlier. Because in this way we met
53 people, made people in groups and then we got regrouped, which wasn't logical from my point
54 of view.

55
56 K: I agree. How did you like the activities and games which were prepared for the athletes in
57 Vuokatti?

58
59 A: Well, I think that considering the background that we had there, mainly concerning
60 facilitators conditions of working... it wasn't so bad. To be hones, the class, in which we
61 worked, was rather hidden and it was too cold to be in a tent outside the whole day... the
62 activities were okay, but they were too hidden and people didn't know about them and all

63 ambassadors had to try really hard to get people to notice them and I don't think that was
64 supposed to be such a big part of our job. From the games, I really found interesting that path
65 game with the scarf over eyes that you had outside. I found it to be a very teambuilding activity.

66

67 K: Would you change or improve something in these activities or in a process of us working
68 there?

69

70 A: I think, everyone did a good job and I can't say anything bad about anyone. But, if I was to
71 look at it from a neutral point of view, maybe... Well, I found all the activities to be very nice,
72 but there was bad promoting and locality of the activities...that athletes didn't know about
73 them. I know that competing was the most important there and that our activities were supposed
74 to be the second thing beside that and in my opinion that's how it is supposed to be, but if our
75 activities were located more in the center, then more people would get involved in them.

76

77 K: Yes, certainly. That's how it is supposed to be in Banska Bystrica, where we will be located
78 in a chill-out zone for athletes. So, we will be right where they will spend their time.

79

80 A: For example, there was an arena in Vuokatti. When you walked inside that arena there was
81 that big hall with all the seats and the VIP zone.

82

83 K: That's a pity that we weren't located there.

84

85 A: Yes, if it was there it would be more convenient, because there was a lot of people and
86 everyone would see us there.

87

88 K: Yes, I was also surprised that we were not located there. Which of the activities did you like
89 the most here and why?

90

91 A: I really liked the Chat with Champion. I will repeat myself, when I say that the room where
92 it took place was nice, but it was not visible, so many athletes didn't know about it. However,
93 I really think that Chat with Champion was a great idea and if we had more time and the event
94 lasted longer, like for example the Olympics which are for 3 and more weeks... so if every 3

95 days... let's say... there was an inspirational athlete it would be appreciated from all the sports,
96 because these young athletes would want to attend if there was someone who they look up to.
97 They would attend and want to talk to them.

98

99 K: Great idea. What do you think is an added value of this programme for the athletes? Why
100 do you think that the programme is important?

101

102 A: I think that it makes them think about different things, not just competing. It also gives them
103 different insight on their sport. Our goal was to show them this different part of sport and
104 Olympic values, so they would realize that it is not all only about concentrating on their
105 performance when competing. Athletes should also now about anti-doping and it is important
106 to educate them on this.

107

108

109 K: Great, thank you. And my last question is whether there is anything else you would like to
110 say about the programme or just something in general?

111

112 A: Well, I don't know. Maybe, I would add that the promoting on the social media wasn't the
113 best.

114

115 K: Do you mean promoting of our programme on Instagram?

116

117 A: Yes and also promoting of activities in general. If you want people to know about you it is
118 possible to pay for promoting on Instagram. I think we were missing that, because the event is
119 not big enough for people to be interested, so you need to find a way to attract them to come.
120 I'm not an expert on marketing and promoting of events, but I think it could be done better.

121

122 **Alfred Varnik – EYOA from Estonia**

123
124 K: So, hello my friend. Please say your name, a country which you represent at EYOF and your
125 position (ambassador or alumni) and also if you are in the facilitators', reporters' or promoters'
126 group

127
128 A: I am Alfred Varnik and I am from Estonia and I am an alumnus for the facilitators' group

129
130 K: Is this your first EYOF as an ambassador/alumnus?

131
132 A: So, since I am an alumni, I was an ambassador in Baku in 2019, so, this is my first time
133 being an alumnus

134
135 K: Yes, but this is your second EYOF?

136
137 A: Yes

138
139 K: How did you become an ambassador and what was your motivation?

140
141 A: My motivation was actually, I think, quite different from other people, because I genuinely
142 saw it as an opportunity to go to a country I've never been to and be a part of the biggest sports'
143 events because I didn't have any experience like that. So, when the tennis committee of Estonia
144 contacted me, I just said yes right away, wrote an application for it and then I actually worked
145 quite hard and then I realized the motivation for it... how important it is to have something else
146 for the athletes to do, not only competing. I saw it as a way for athletes to have a way to make
147 new connections.

148
149 K: So it was your tennis federation who nominated you? Not national committee?

150
151 A: Yes, tennis federation.

152
153 K: Ok. And what was maybe your motivation then after your first time as an ambassador to

154 continue as an alumni?

155

156 A: So, I think, the main thing was that we had a very solid group, that decided to stay on as an
157 alumni - me, Rebecca, Christine and Paulus. Because we were friends already in Baku. So,
158 alumni were no brainer for us being like: „Oh, lets just go there as well.”

159 It wasn't necessarily the fact that I believed in the success of the programme, I generally thought
160 that I could make it better...for this time. Nevertheless, it is quite difficult to make changes to
161 the programme... the leaders of the programme say that the alumni are in charge and the
162 ambassadors are in charge and is us that make the programme. But in reality, we get given a
163 very small certain options of what to do and then we just follow them and we make the most of
164 it of what is in our vision.

165

166 K: Yes, I can see your strong relationships between alumni. So, I can understand it. How did
167 you like the process of the online webinars which we had before Vuokatti?

168

169 A: So, I think the online webinars are just a part of this programme and I mean they have to be.
170 Even before Covid, the online webinars were something that was obvious to make because we
171 are all from different countries and we are all busy people. So, finding a time to go somewhere
172 and meeting there is just not feasible. So, I think, that the online webinars are a good way to do
173 it. The structure, however.. it's too much of the situation where one person speaks, then the
174 other person speaks and it is like a presentation type thing, whereas I think the webinars would
175 work a bit better if they were more discussion based. Because most of the time, at least half of
176 the people, especially ambassadors, are muted and black screened. So, we don't actually get the
177 ideas from ambassadors and we just listen to whatever is said in the presentation.

178

179 K: Yes. Actually, my next question was if you would improve or change something? So I think,
180 you already said that. Do you have something else on your mind?

181

182 A: Yes, I think it would be beneficial for everyone involved if the programme if it was a bit
183 more strict. And I would actually say that every ambassador would need to make a presentation
184 of what they want to do, for example. I think, in that way, there would be way more ideas, way
185 more discussions, that I was telling you about earlier, and I think it would just improve the

186 programme, because once you talk it through with everyone, then you get understanding of
187 what peoples' values are and what kind of things would work. So, I think, there is a certain
188 amount of honesty... like brutal honesty... needed in the webinar system...actually telling
189 people what you think.

190

191 K: Yeah, I see it in the same way, so I agree with you. Now, we are here in Vuokatti. How do
192 you like the activities and games which are prepared for the athletes here?

193

194 A: I think that the activities are good. I like the broad range of it. I like that we got some really
195 serious ones, for example like with the longest pieces of text with the Spirit of sport quiz, which
196 is more so about doping and fair-play. And at the same time, we've got like these silly games
197 which are like obviously easier to do and people probably like them better, especially younger
198 athletes. But overall, I feel like the activities could be improved in a way of making it actually
199 interesting for the age groups, because at the moment I feel like they are maybe a bit too
200 childish, whereas the people here are like 17 or so. I think, their interests don't necessarily align
201 with the games that we have here. But, at the same time it's been relatively successful.
202 Nevertheless, I do think, that maybe most of the people just come for prizes and not for what
203 actually matters, which is learning about the values.

204

205 K: Yes, I agree. Which activity/activities do you like the most and why?

206

207 A: I think, in Vuokatti, in my opinion, from a very non-athletic point of view the Chat with
208 champions was really good, because I feel like that actually has a very important value for the
209 athletes. It's a process where you learn something and you remember it. Hearing it from people,
210 that actually have been through the exact same situation...I think...that's what makes it special.
211 And from the facilitators' activities, I think 2 of them are really good. One of them is called
212 Photo team challenge, because I think that that keeps it interesting for all the teams and they
213 can create this sense of competition which every athlete likes. Then I also like the Human bingo,
214 although, I think there could be an easier...or a BETTER... way... better system for the actual
215 activity. But it is good, in sense of athletes to go out in the Olympic village and talk to other
216 people and that is what matters, that is what matters to me at least... is the aspect of meeting
217 new people from different countries and broadening your horizon in many ways.

218

219 K: Yes, you did very well.

220

221 A: Thanks ☺

222

223 K: What do you think is the added value of this programme for the athletes?

224

225 A: I think it's just another activity for them to do when they don't have a competition or training.
226 I feel like, the athletes don't necessarily come to the booth to learn about the values. But, I do
227 believe that through the series of activities that we have, we do educate them. I think it could
228 be done better. I'm not sure how. That's for the discussion and why webinar should be
229 important. But I think it does add a value of learning...actually learning.. the Olympic vales,
230 even if they don't know what they are. For example, through the Kahoot quiz, even I learn new
231 things. So, I think it does have an added value.

232

233 K: Ok. My last question: Is there anything else you would like to say about the programme in
234 general?

235

236 A: I would say that the 2 leaders of it – Clea and Sasha. I can't believe how much effort they
237 put into the success of the programme and the fact that the EOC are also very supportive of it,
238 I think that's a good sign. And I believe that all the NOCs should send an ambassador to make
239 it more international that would add value to it definitely.

240 At the moment, I know there are many NOCs that don't particularly agree with the programme
241 and don't think that is necessary. Whereas I feel like if every country was required to have an
242 ambassador, there would be a much more success, because out of the... we've got 30 people in
243 the programme and we had 16 here or even less maybe.. 15,16? Half of them came here and I
244 think that the number has to be way higher. Because to work in a way that has been set up now
245 in sense of having reporters, promoters, facilitators (nerozumela), because what ended up
246 happening is that everyone had to be a facilitator pretty much. So, we couldn't do the actual
247 promotional bit, because there was only 3 promoters here. Usually, I think, the promoters would
248 go around the Olympic village, go to the venues and actually promote a programme, which I
249 think lacked this time. Again I am going to come back to my previous point, that the programme

250 should be stricter, because I feel like the programme is the amazing opportunity for the
251 ambassadors and they need to realize that, because when you have a chance to go and create an
252 international network from almost all the countries in Europe, work on something that you
253 probably care about, because most the people who become ambassadors are from the very
254 sports' background or probably do sport in the university or have a job related to that. And
255 you'll get contacts in your NOC and the EOC, so I think people need to realize that... ok, you
256 can say that, yes I am a volunteer, I am not required to do anything...but it is a fantastic
257 opportunity. Even up close, the NOCs are paid like thousands euros for their clothes, it is worth
258 it. I think too many ambassadors take it for granted.

259

260 **Jan Steinmuller – EYOA from Germany**

261

262 K: Hello, please say your name, a country which you represent at EYOF and your position
263 (ambassador or alumni) and also if you are in the facilitators', reporters' or promoters' group

264

265 J: Hello, Kamil. Good to be here. My name is Jan. I'm 26 years old. I'm from Germany. I am
266 a facilitator at the EYOF.

267

268 K: Is this your first EYOF as an ambassador?

269

270 J: Yes, it is indeed.

271

272 K: How did you become an ambassador and what was your motivation?

273

274 J: I did an internship at the German Olympic Academy and I think I didn't do so bad at the
275 internship and my former boss asked me if I wanted to participate EYOF as an youth
276 ambassador and I didn't have to think twice to participate because I thought it was gonna be a
277 great chance, I've heard about the programme before and I wanted to be a part of it.

278

279 K: Yeah, nice. How did you like a process of online webinars which we had before Vuokatti?

280

281 J: Of course meeting in person, like we are now in Vuokatti, is way way much nicer and I would
282 definitely prefer it every time over online webinars but in times of Covid, especially if you live
283 so far away, I think it is a good alternative to keep updated and I think it is a good chance to do
284 them regularly...just to plan ahead and do stuff and also to get to know each other a bit better
285 at least or see each other at the webinars. But definitely meeting in person is so much nicer.

286

287 K: Would you change or improve something regarding these online webinars?

288

289 J: Maybe, just don't do them too long, because people can focus for one hour and then they at
290 some point turn off... or maybe do them a bit shorter. But I think once in a month.. the
291 frequentation of the webinars is more than ok. So, I would just make them a bit shorter.

292
293 K: Yes, I agree with you. How did you like the activities and games which are prepared for the
294 athletes here in Vuokatti?
295
296 J: I liked them a lot. I think we thought about them really well. Of course, there is also some
297 stuff we need to improve for Banska. But these kind of activities...you have to try them, try to
298 implement them and then you really know what you need to improve, so you can plan that
299 ahead. But I think we did a good job so far. This is also reflected in the athlete's feedback and
300 they are having fun, so I like it.
301
302 K: And would you change or improve something after a few days we are doing them?
303
304 J: Yeah, as I said. This isn't really our fault, but the location isn't ideal. And also it would be
305 ideal to have more promoters or more facilitators...just to help us out, because that would help
306 to get more people, have more breaks and to just work better on the stuff that we are doing. So,
307 that is something I would improve. And also I would try to engage more athletes and to do
308 promotion before the event, so that people know our group ...the first 2 days were kind of really
309 lonelier. So that could help to get more people there.
310
311 K: Yeah, you said it really well. I totally agree with you. Which activity/activities do you like
312 the most and why?
313
314 J: I think one really good activity is Human bingo, because people just keep coming back...and
315 same is with Photo team challenge...also helps to make new connections to get to know other
316 athletes better... and I think that's just a good activity that includes value of friendship.
317
318 K: And what do you think is an added value of this programme for the athletes?
319
320 J: I think it's definitely having discussions with us ambassadors who are also former athletes or
321 engaged into sports. But also getting to know each other better and also, I would say, getting to
322 know Olympic values a bit, which helps them for their future careers.
323

324 K: Is there anything else you would like to say about our programme in general?

325

326 J: I think it is a great programme and I love and am grateful to be a part of it. And I would
327 always do it again. I can say that I am looking forward for the rest of journey to Banska Bystrica
328 and I already know that I definitely also want to become an alumni and do the same... help
329 facilitators, promoters and reporters like we are getting help and support now from our alumnis.

330

331 **Kristin Ornlfsdottir Valdis - EYOA from Iceland**

332

333 K: Hello Kristin, thank you for finding time for this interview. Please, say which country you
334 represent at EYOF and your position – whether it is ambassador or alumni and also in which
335 group you are – facilitators, reporters or promoters.

336

337 Kr: So, I represent Iceland and I am an alumni for the facilitators group.

338

339 K: Is this your first EYOF or not?

340

341 Kr: No, I actually competed in 2015 in figure-skating myself. And then I was an ambassador at
342 the EYOF in Baku, Azerbaijan 2019 – summer version. So, this is my third one.

343

344 K: So, one was as an athlete, one as ambassador and now it is your first time as an alumni?

345

346 Kr: Yes.

347

348 K: How did you become an ambassador and what was your motivation?

349

350 Kr: Well, the Icelandic NOC was looking for the ambassadors, so I applied. I also kind of knew
351 what the programme was about and it was really inspiring to me. They also wanted someone
352 who had actually gone to EYOF before. What motivated me was that I really liked the Olympic
353 movement and I wanted to learn more about it as well.

354

355 K: What was your motivation to continue in this programme as an alumni?

356

357 Kr: Well, I really like being the ambassador and I really liked the programme – what values it
358 was promoting. I wanted to keep going with that, I thought that just being an ambassador for
359 one year was not enough and I wanted to help and promote the values more and get more people
360 into the project and make it better.

361

362 K: Yes, perfect. How did you like the process of online webinars which we had before Vuokatti.

363
364 Kr: I think it worked fine. It was a long process, but that was because of special
365 circumstances...meaning covid... I think we had maybe too many webinars. In my opinion,
366 there should be less of them and instead have a more structured agenda for the next year. But I
367 mean...it worked fine if we think about the circumstances – everybody lives in different
368 countries, so webinars online is a great solution. But I personally like meeting face-to-face
369 more.

370
371 K: Would you change or improve something in these online webinars? You already said one
372 thing, but maybe do you have something else on your mind?

373
374 Kr: Except for making them fewer I also mentioned having them more structured. Maybe give
375 the ambassadors more opportunities to not only tell us about activities, but also to have more
376 chances to say something else also.

377 K: Yes, to get to know each other more maybe?

378
379 Kr: Yes, because I feel like we had so many webinars, but the people there were not really
380 talking to each other. It was more formal.

381
382 K: Yes, I agree with you. Now we are here in Vuokatti. How do you like the activities and
383 games which are prepared for the athletes?

384
385 Kr: I really like the activities. Some of them are better, some of them are not as good. But I
386 think that overall they represent our values and what this programme is about.

387
388 K: Would you change or improve something in these activities?

389
390 Kr: I would make them more educational, because some of the games and activities, in my
391 opinion, didn't really have a purpose... it sounds bad when I say it... but the purpose of the
392 games should be more clear. For example Kahoot was very educational and the athletes left
393 knowing what the values actually were. However, in some of the games it is not that clear.

394

395 K: Which of the activities do you like the most here and why?

396

397 Kr: I really liked the Chat with champions, because I thought it was very inspiring. As an athlete
398 myself, if I would have had that activity when I was competing, I think that would be great and
399 motivational.

400

401 K: Yes, I was there for both Chats with Champion and I also enjoyed it, it was very educational.

402

403 Kr: Makes you want to start training again.

404

405 K: What do you think is an added value of this programme for the athletes?

406

407 Kr: Added value?

408

409 K: Yes, what is important for the athletes, what they can take out of this programme.

410

411 Kr: For the athletes?

412

413 K: Yes.

414

415 Kr: I think that now after the programme they should know more about what the Olympics
416 actually are about and what EYOF is actually... it is the part of the Olympic movement. I hope
417 they all know three values of the Olympic games. Another added values is learning about
418 friendship.

419

420 K: Yes, I agree with you. It is not just like the European championships or World
421 championships, but it is an Olympic festival. So, I am very happy that we have some kind of
422 programme for the athletes here.

423 And my last question is whether there is anything else you would like to say about the
424 programme in general?

425

426 Kr: I think, there is a lot of room for an improvement. The organization can be better and it will

427 be better, I hope, for the next EYOF. But it is kind of a new programme, so we are still figuring
428 out what is the best way to do things. So it needs a lot of improvement, but I am happy about
429 the programme and what it stands for.

430

431 K: Yes, it's been running for just a few years, so there is still a lot of space for improvement.

432

433 Kr: Yes, it is still in the making.

434

435 K: Thank you very much for your time.

436

437 **Mirjana Ivkovic – EYOA from Serbia**

438

439 K: Please say your name, country which you represent at EYOF and your position.

440

441 M: My name is Mirjana Ivkovic. I'm from Serbia. Currently in Vuokatti I am representing as
442 an alumni, but in 2019 in Baku I was an European Olympic ambassador.

443

444 K: So this is your second EYOF?

445

446 M: This is my second EYOF, yes.

447

448 K: Are you promotor, reporter or facilitator?

449

450 M: I am a reporter.

451

452 K: Can you please explain what alumni means in this programme?

453

454 M: Yes. The role of alumni is actually to guide the new ambassadors, but also to help them
455 because this is their first time. And I remember that for us it was so much easier when we had
456 someone who already knows what to do. But we also have one unthankful role, because
457 sometimes it happens that ambassadors don't do the job. We have to ask them few times and it
458 happens that I am sending several emails, messages and no one replies or I am left on seen, but
459 you see that those people are active on social media, but they somehow are not working with
460 the programme. So, anyway, I think that it may sound that the role of alumni is easy, but I
461 wouldn't agree with that, because I don't think it's easy if you are in charge of one group as
462 Paulius and I are with reporters, Paulius with the girls and podcast and me with Claudia and
463 Ivana with social media. There is many things to be covered. I think it is one of the hardest
464 groups to work with, because as someone who is promoting/reporting on social media – you
465 need to cover all 3 groups. Promotors and facilitators as well – especially facilitators, who are
466 creating those activities. You need to promote the activities and so on. So, I would say that the
467 role of alumni is great, sometimes unthankful, because of all the work that has to be done, but
468 still that's something that we applied for, no one was chasing us, but at the moment I am still

469 enjoying this.

470

471 K: How did you become the ambassador and what was your motivation?

472

473 M: In 2019 or now?

474

475 K: Your first time.

476

477 M: In 2019 I was already working in the Olympic committee of Serbia and few months before
478 Baku I was a Young Change Maker for Youth Olympic games in Buenos Aires within
479 International Olympic committee. My role as the Young Change Maker was to motivate the
480 athletes to participate in the educational activities. Since I am working with the NOC of
481 Serbia...one day a letter came from EOC about European Olympic Ambassadors' programme
482 and Natasha, who is now leader of this programme, said that she was thinking about me to
483 become an ambassador for Serbia since I was already taking a part in something not so different
484 and at the moment I was the youngest one in the NOC of Serbia. So, they wanted to teach me
485 more, educate me more, so I could do my job even better. After that, I can't remember how the
486 process went. I think we just applied through application form and that was it. And why I wanted
487 to is, because as I said for Youth Olympic Games we didn't do that much, we just went to
488 Buenos Aires and we had a really nice time with our athletes and our teams, but we didn't create
489 the activities and games and I wanted to experience something different. So, that's why I wanted
490 to become an ambassador for Baku and that's how it went. We were there for 7 days, we were
491 also working online as ambassadors now did. We created some games. And actually, Natasha
492 and I, we got the idea of creating social media, especially Instagram, because it's the most
493 popular one with the younger generations. And I also didn't want the project to die, so I
494 continued promoting ambassadors or now alumnis and so on. Promoting everyday work in the
495 Olympic world. So that's how it went for Baku.

496

497 K: How did you like the process of online webinars before Vuokatti when we were preparing
498 the activities?

499

500 M: For Vuokatti it was really hard for me because I work from 8am to 4pm and meeting were

501 always around 5pm. It was a little bit hard because I stay in the office until 8/9 pm – whole day
502 in the office and I am losing my life a little bit and lasted really long because of postponements
503 and everything. I think people were not as much enthusiastic as they were in the beginning, but
504 we did that virtual Olympic week last year, that was really nice. At least we created something
505 during those webinars. I believe that for the people... maybe they think that the webinars
506 happen too often - they were once in a month, but they lasted a little bit longer. Maybe it would
507 be easier for the ambassadors to have 2 webinars per month, but like 30-45 minutes, because
508 90 minutes or more is too much, especially for ambassadors, who some of them are 19-20, and
509 I am not sure how much they can concentrate to listen for 1h30min. For me, who I am older
510 and older in the process, it's really too much, especially in the end of the day when I am really
511 tired.

512

513 K: How do you like the activities and games which are prepared for the athletes here in
514 Vuokatti?

515

516 M: From my perspective the games are good. In some of the games I actually don't understand
517 which Olympic value they promote – Guess the country game let's say – I'm not sure... it
518 promotes learning about geography, but it doesn't have anything with the Olympic values. I
519 like the trust game – it's interesting... that game promotes fair-play.. if you are cheating, putting
520 legs on different plates and so on... But anyway, I think we don't have many games... I think
521 we need more games and more diversity in the games. Now it came out good, because we have
522 a small place. Hopefully, in Banska Bystrica, in Italy or Slovenia in next years we will have a
523 better place, so that we can have more different activities, more easier activities... activities
524 where when you see a poster or people – it attracts you as soon as possible to come and to play.
525 Overall, I think it's good. We had some changes in the Ambassador's programme, some
526 ambassadors are not ambassadors anymore and we have some new ones – like Jan and Peter
527 who joined us a little bit later. I think the ambassadors did the best they could in this position.

528

529 K: Which activities do you like the most and why?

530

531 M: I don't want to brag about my team , but I really like the Podcast that the girls made, because
532 it is something new for the EYOF, something new for the EOC... and EOC is getting a little bit

533 out of their comfort zone, you know. I also like the Chat with champions, because I did this
534 once with Serbian national team for young athletes with Ivana Spanovic, who is like the best
535 jumper in the world. So, I think these two activities I really liked. But also the Photo challenge
536 game – it is very nice, very creative, it makes you to think and work with your team.

537

538 K: What do you think is an added value of this programme for the athletes?

539

540 M: Definitely learning, knowledge, experience and people they met – because here are 20+
541 people who are coming from different countries and each one of us grew up differently, there
542 are different cultures and religions here. We don't think the same way, but when you work with
543 someone in a group, you have to learn how to do that and not to work as an individual. So the
544 added value is definitely learning, educating yourself, because you are not getting this learning
545 in the school.

546

547 K: Is there anything else you would like to say about the programme?

548

549 M: Yes. I would like to ask all other... I think 27 or 28... national Olympic committees of Europe
550 to have their ambassadors. It doesn't cost too much and it is great, because they can get very
551 educational and good experience to work in the Olympic departments, marketing, sports
552 departments. I would really like to encourage those NOCs, who don't have ambassadors, to
553 have them in the future, because we are having the 5th edition in less than 4 months.

554

555 K: Thank you for your interview.

556

557