

**ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS
BY MS. PĂUNESCU S.MIHAELA CRISTINA**

Thesis submitted to: **NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PHYSICAL
EDUCATION AND SPORTS, Bucharest, Romania, 2010**

Thesis Advisor: **PROF.UNIV.DR. MARINESCU GHEORGHE**

**THESIS TITLE: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF INCREASING
ACTIVE POPULATION QUALITY OF LIFE IN
ROMANIA BY DIAGNOSIS AND PROGNOSIS OF THE
REPORT BETWEEN FREE TIME AND RECREATIONAL
SPORT**

The doctoral thesis was worked out within the framework of the National Plan for Research, Development and Innovation, of the Human Resources Programme (increasing number of researchers in Romania) and of the IDEAS programme (scientific results at European level), CNCSIS Grant No. 283/2008-2010.*

This doctorate thesis is structured in three parts. Part I is the theoretical substantiation of the thesis and includes subjects like: quality of life and the protection of it within educational and health policies; free time and the correlation with quality of life; recreational sports – free time spending option.

The second part of the thesis is represented by the pilot experiment. Pilot research had the purpose to verify logistics and the research instrument. The pilot research represented a general rehearse of the actual research and included testing the interview scheme and work protocols. The pilot research was made at a smaller scale with the purpose of verifying the feasibility and improve the design of the actual research.

The third part of the thesis represents the personal contribution in regard to the study of improving active population quality of life in our country by the relationship between free time and recreational sports.

The doctorate thesis ends with a chapter that incorporates the final conclusions that arise from the theoretical documentation and the practical study and has over 150 bibliographic titles.

The main theoretical conclusions that we can extract from this study are:

19 of 24 European countries had at least one project of promoting health through physical activities, 5 countries promoted health through sports using 7 projects. We must mention that in this context, physical activities include care and home management. These projects were targeted on specific groups of population: adults, children, senior citizens, people with a low level of education, persons with disabilities etc. According to European statistics, more and more people are overweight or obese due to a sedentary life style. We analyzed and noticed that the level of physical activity in some European countries does not respect the 30 minutes a day recommended by the WHO.

It was noted that the highest frequency of physical activities is once a week, 40% of the population has physical activities once a week, which is not efficient and does not comply with WHO recommendations regarding moderate physical activity at an adult age. 26% of European Union adults practice physical activities 1-3 days a week, 16% 4-6 times a week and only 18% every day (according to WHO, 2005). The highest number of sedentary hours in an usual day is 4-8, and 43% of adults have this time; 29% of respondents “enjoy” 1 to 4 hours of sedentary time, followed by a percentage of 24% that have 8 hours; is noteworthy that a small number of people has less than 1 hour (4%).

From the bibliographic data we had in this study, it has been found that at sedentary people, as number of inactivity hours increase, the number of hours for practical activities decreases. It is probable that people who realize the harmful effects of sedentariness allow more time for sports or physical activities, which means that in the countries where sedentariness is blamed, the consequence might be allowing for a greater number of hours for physical activities. A WHO prognosis shows that in 2012 over 65% of the adult population in Europe will practice physical activities following the recommended standards in order to improve quality of life.

The quality of life concept, as understood in the European Union, is a result of education, acquired with historical evolution. The last survey, Eurostat from 2010, shows that the majority of Europeans are satisfied with the conditions of living. In the EU, the number of people who practice sports or some form of physical activity in their free time – like walking, dancing or gardening - is much higher than those that practice sport in an organized manner. A worrying aspect from the perspective of public health is that 14% of EU citizens declare that they never practice any kind of physical activity, and 20% are active only “sometimes”. Although Europeans live longer and are healthier, they could make greater efforts in order to protect themselves from the two main causes of death - heart disease and cancer. According to WHO recommendations, a healthy and active life style is a positive factor.

In Romania, the research „*Diagnoza calității vieții*”, made in 1999, had in perspective 21 aspects of quality of life. The perceived quality of life research covered 9 areas: factual variables, economical standard, perceived quality of life, perception of change, work, free time behaviour, human environment, concerns (fears), life satisfaction (L. Urse, 2008). The studies of quality of life in Romania, in 1990-2003, were made on representative population samples at a national level, probabilistic-stratified, taking into account the population over 18 years. (I. Marginean).

A series of statistical researches made by the Romanian Federation „Sportul pentru toti”, revealed some interesting aspects with regard to the population perception to free time structuring, in relation with sport and recreational activities. Regarding the distribution of free time in our country, it has higher values in weekends for active people, regardless of marital status, education level or profession. For the elderly, housewives, unemployed, free time has equal representation throughout the week.

The concept of recreational sport, developed by us in this thesis, follows the rules of a scientific definition, being justified (avoiding multiple meanings, sometimes confuse, encountered in literature), having a consistent content by stating the main causes and effects, being consistent through processuality, and observable, eliminating the triviality of feed-back – motivation confusion.

In carrying out the scientific enterprise, we considered necessary to outline the concept of quality of life. Thus, in our opinion, the term quality of life includes the following defining issues: freedom and peace, safety “of tomorrow”, health, happiness, physical and mental comfort, physical and spiritual wellbeing, acceptable time management, consideration and understanding from within the social group, professional effectiveness, hobby, pleasure, joy, etc. The lack of one or more indicators could mean that the quality of life would be compromised.

In this research we concur with those people who consider that leisure time is the time devoted to self-fulfillment after professional activities, domestic and passive leisure. Theoretic and utopic: a healthy adult should use (usually and on average) 8 hours for passive recreation, 8 hours for professional activity and 8 hours for free time. Practical and concrete: in rare cases passive leisure time is 8 hours, and real free time is much more reduced than in theory, and is used for personal needs and familial obligations and social. In other words, the time used as freedom of choice is the free time that remains after the strictly necessary bio-socio-cultural activities, like: socialization, enculturation, documentation, entertainment, care for children and the elderly, healthcare, travel etc.

The research was conducted on a randomized sample consisting of 730 adults, professionally active, aged 22-32 and 33-43 years. The “face to face” interview was applied on a randomly chosen sample of the population. The interview was realized with each subject's consent. The study sample subjects for this study were chosen with the intention to be evenly distributed in the statistic population category and with the probability for each individual to be part the sample. The interview included simple, clear and precise, questions with the option of anonymity. For this reason the responses were prompt and the information received had a high plausibility.

The research was done in the campaign “*Sport pentru Viață/2008 – 2009*”, 2-nd and 3-rd edition. The campaign is initiated by Gabriela Szabo and is primarily objective is promoting sports among children and young people.

The interviews revealed different situations which require a clear and distinct tabular presentation for each stage of the interview. The research

highlighted the following aspects regarding the two topics of interest: which means that they represented the largest category of subjects.

There seems to be no surprise that the respondents aged between 33-43 years, who are engaged in professional and social activities, have no free time. These categories of people, with above the average education, above average income, with well-defined personal and professional aspirations are the preferred target for all marketers, whether it's pool subscriptions or concert tickets. Unfortunately, nowadays, not all of them manage to go out in the evening or on weekends or simply relax at home. Theoretically, sociologists and psychologists say that every day we should have at least two to three free hours outside the hours of sleep. In practice, sometimes this is impossible.

In terms of free time spending options, most of the responses were represented as moving activities (38,3%), followed by sedentary activities, like reading a book, watching TV, computer games, etc. (18,6%), and a rate of 23.50% stated they have no free time.

Moving activities were invoked by one third of those interviewed. The principal argument for the percentage who say they prefer moving activities in their free time is that the research subjects were mainly young people from 22-32 years, this segment of the population said that it has the most free time. It was found that approximately 70% of the respondents aged 22-32 years practice a recreational sport in their free time, compared to only 9% of the subjects aged 33-43 years who prefer this type of activity. The most obvious way in which young people spend their spare time is sports, clubs or by themselves; as age group increases, the share of practicing recreational sporting activity in their free time changes considerably. We believe that this a consequence of the attitude towards recreational sport, daily concerns of adults, especially those in the category 33-43 years, active socio-professional, with family responsibilities, child-raising , care for elderly etc. And the elderly involves a number of problems that are targeted in two directions: the alteration of all functions and the tendency towards disease. We believe that, for this indicator of quality of life, as an instrument to measure a standing of life, this reflects the rather low interest of society for recreational sport. Among the preferences of those who practice recreational sport are: (R1) ball games among friends, home fitness or at the gym, jogging. Among those less

practiced are Romania traditional sports. Regarding the way of practice, it is noted that a significant percentage of respondents (59%) practice recreational sport in a systematic and somewhat appropriate way - more than twice a week. There were people who said they only practice seasonal recreational sports (22%), which do not meet the main premise: leisure, physical and psychological comfort derived from the conscious knowledge of the benefits. The socioeconomic situation of the time of the survey data is known, and we do not comment on it, but we have to conclude that it is not favorable for recreational sport practice. However, the research has, by its specific, also forecast a destination that is expected to apply to medium and long term.

We believe that results of this research can be scientifically sustained for taking important decisions by the competent bodies and for this reason, we propose to disseminate the results, especially in the form of sets of proposals to decision makers.

Given current trends in recreational sport in the European Union, we believe that in the training of students and professionals should be present aspects of diagnosis and prognosis of free time.