



Evaluation of the Special Olympics
Europe/Eurasia Unified Football Pilot-Project:
Findings from Austria, Poland, Romania,
Serbia and Slovakia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Global mandates like Education For All (1990) and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Education (1994) emphasize the importance of inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities worldwide. The European Union (EU) in particular has been a strong supporter of educational inclusion and encourages its members, and those countries striving to join the EU, to increase the opportunities available to children with disabilities to learn in regular classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers. While progress is being made with regard to inclusive practices worldwide, there remains considerable variation, ranging from full inclusion, where students with disabilities are educated alongside their non-disabled peers in the regular classroom, to separate classrooms in mainstream schools, to completely separate school environments.

Throughout Europe in particular, progress is being made. For example, in Austria students with intellectual disabilities are, for the most part, educated alongside their peers without disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Other countries in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, are at different levels of development and different stages of inclusion. Poland is making strides toward providing opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to learn alongside their peers without disabilities. Romania has also in recent years begun to promote the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in regular schools, but at present only includes those students with more mild impairments. Slovakia is also working to promote inclusive education, although special schools remain the norm for most students with intellectual disabilities. Finally, in Serbia, most students with intellectual disabilities are educated in special schools, with many still not attending school at all.

While regular school placement is considered critical to promoting inclusion throughout society, it is not the only means of accomplishing this goal. The history of inclusion in the United States demonstrates that physically placing students with intellectual disabilities into the regular classroom does not result in their social inclusion; students with intellectual disabilities are rejected and isolated from their non-disabled peers. In fact, it is clear that although inclusive policies have been in place for over 30 years, youth in the United States perceive students with intellectual disabilities as markedly different from themselves and are unwilling to interact socially with students with intellectual disabilities as they would other peers (Siperstein, Parker, Norins Bardon, & Widaman, 2007).

Recognizing that there are many challenges to promoting true social inclusion in the school, the United States and many other countries have begun to consider alternative ways to bring youth with and without disabilities together outside of the classroom, such as through sports. One such sport program is Special Olympics Unified Sports™. While being a worldwide leader in providing sports training and competition experiences for individuals with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics developed this program to promote inclusion. Special Olympics Unified Sports brings individuals with and without intellectual disabilities of similar ages and abilities together to train and compete as equals on a competitive sports team. Through the shared team experience the Unified Sports program provides the opportunity for players with

intellectual disabilities (athletes) and players without intellectual disabilities (partners) to learn about each other and overcome the barriers that have thus far prevented the social inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities in schools and in society.

THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS *GET INTO IT*^{®TM} /UNIFIED FOOTBALL PILOT PROJECT

In 2005, in response to the growing trend toward inclusion in Europe, particularly in schools, the Special Olympics *Get Into It*^{®TM} (*SOGII*)/Unified Football pilot project was introduced in five European countries (Austria, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia) by Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia as a way to promote the social inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities and increase youth involvement in existing Unified football programs. The *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project brought together athletes and partners to train and compete as equals on the football field. Before joining the Unified Sports teams, partners received classroom instruction about intellectual disabilities through the *SOGII* curriculum.

Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia and Special Olympics, Inc. commissioned the University of Massachusetts Boston/Special Olympics Global Collaborating Center (GCC) to implement a comprehensive evaluation of this pilot project, similar to the evaluation of the Unified Sports program in the United States (Siperstein, Hardman, Wappett, & Clary, 2001). The evaluation sought to identify the impact of the school-based Unified football program on athletes and partners and document the program's implementation by surveying those involved with the Unified football teams from participating countries. Specifically, there were two objectives of this evaluation: (1) to assess the impact of the program on the athletes and partners sport skills and sport experience, and (2) to assess the extent to which the program promoted greater understanding and acceptance of intellectual disabilities and facilitated social relationships between athletes and partners.

To accomplish the objectives of the evaluation, athletes, partners, coaches and family members from 65 inclusive football teams from the five countries were asked questions about the overall Unified Football experience, reasons for participating in the Unified football program, and the impact of participation in Unified Football. Coaches and parents were asked additional questions about how the teams were implemented and about the impact of participation on the children involved. The survey instruments were developed by UMass Boston evaluation staff with assistance from Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia staff and the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The survey instruments were adapted from questionnaires utilized in the "National Evaluation of the Special Olympics Unified Sports Program" (Siperstein, Hardman, Wappett, & Clary, 2001), the "Attitudes of Special Olympics Family Members in the United States, Japan, and China" (Siperstein, Parker, & Norins Bardon, 2005) and the "Comprehensive National Study of Special Olympics Programs in the United States" (Siperstein, Harada, Parker, Hardman, & McGuire, 2005).

The evaluation of the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project took place over a period of seven months. Evaluation staff worked closely with Program staff in each country on translation of survey instruments, selecting teams to participate in the evaluation, and training interviewers. In total, over 600 athletes and partners from 65 teams participated in the *SOGII*/Unified Football

pilot project over a one year span, from June 2005 to June 2006 (See Table 1). Each of these 65 teams was primarily composed of boys, between the ages of 12 and 17.

Table 1. Evaluation participants by country.

Country	Teams	Athletes	Partners	Coaches	Parents
Austria	4	23	20	4	*
Poland	23	113	93	*	44
Romania	14	57	69	14	*
Serbia	16	141	149	36	*
Slovakia	4	39	31	11	56

*Missing data

KEY FINDINGS

The results of this evaluation demonstrate that although each Unified Football program was unique with regard to the level of inclusion in each country and with regard to scope and size of project implementation, the goals of the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project remained consistent. Overall, Unified football allowed athletes and partners the opportunity to develop themselves as sportsmen and to engage socially with their teammates. Specifically, the 7-a-side Unified football teams engaged in regular training and competition over a year-long period, with most training more than once per week. This consistency of training and competition was important in making the Unified football experience similar to any other mainstream sport experience, at either the school or sport club level. In addition, coaches brought a wealth of experience to the program and provided quality training to athletes and partners that was appropriate to their football skill levels and promoted skill development. Coaches also emphasized fair play, team work, and equal participation on their teams. Finally, it should be noted that a critical aspect of the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project was that athletes and partners came to the experience with homogeneity of skills (i.e. all participants share similar sports skills and previous sports experience). As a result, all players were seen to have equal status and each player was able to benefit from the same training and competition activities.

The findings of this evaluation reflect the unique perspectives and experiences of the athletes and partners from the five participating countries. While there was some variation in the experiences of athletes and partners across the five countries, there were also some consistent trends that emerged. Unified football was an experience that allowed participants to learn new skills and have fun, achieve their own goals, contribute to their team's performance, learn about one another, and share social experiences. In short, the Unified football pilot project can be viewed as a positive experience for all involved. Overall, it can be stated that:

- Most players enjoyed participating on the Unified teams a great deal, and many athletes and partners alike, would like the opportunity to play on a Unified team in the future

- Most players reported great improvements in their sport skills and feelings about themselves as a result of their participation in Unified football.
- Most players were motivated to participate in Unified football by their enjoyment for the game and for the social opportunities afforded. Many athletes and partners reported that they joined to play on a team, learn new football skills and be with friends.
- Most players enjoyed the social aspects of Unified football. Teammates provided an important and valuable source of friendship, both on and off the field. Many players formed relationships across disability groups that did not exist before the Unified experience.
- Many partners stated that their understanding of their peers with ID had improved. Many also noted that athletes were “just like us”, good football players and fun to be with.
- Most partners perceived the contributions of the athletes on their teams to be equal to, if not greater than, their own.
- While playing on Unified football teams, most athletes and partners reported that they played to their best all or most of the time.
- Most partners felt that there was an appropriate level of challenge in Unified Football to maintain their own interest and involvement.

Coaches and parents confirmed much of what was said by the participating athletes and partners. Both noted similar improvements in sport skills, confidence and social skills. In addition, coaches and parents also noted improvements in partners’ understanding of intellectual disabilities. Taken together, these findings suggest that this model of Unified football was successful in promoting social inclusion and though many of the athletes and partners are separated by their educational settings, they can come together on the playing field to learn about sport and one another.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Unified football pilot project demonstrated its potential in promoting social inclusion through sport. By pairing the Special Olympics *Get Into It*TM school curriculum with a year-long Unified Sports program, students with and without intellectual disabilities have had the opportunity to build sport skills, social relationships, and understanding of one another. The following recommendations are offered to guide Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia and Special Olympics, Incorporated in the future expansion of the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project.

- *Strengthen the relationships between regular and special schools and sport clubs.*

Without partnerships between regular and special schools, the Unified football program could not have come to fruition. Because of the voluntary nature of the program, where players were

invited by their teachers to participate, the development and maintenance of relationships between teachers and administrators from both regular and special schools was critical. This is especially important in those countries where school inclusion was not a standard practice.

- *Create more opportunities for students at regular and special schools to interact with one another.*

Special Olympics can further promote the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities by creating more opportunities for interaction between students at regular and special schools through programs like Unified Sports. This is especially important in countries where inclusion is still not the norm.

- *Identify resources to increase the frequency of organized social activities and identify ways for players to maintain social relationships/ties to the team after they leave.*

Some Unified teams were more successful at organizing and facilitating social activities than others. Finding ways to maximize the opportunities for social interaction among teammates and the potential that social relationships are formed and maintained will only enhance the Unified experience for all participants.

- *Promote Unified Sports so that it can be used to support the social inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout the lifespan.*

Without opportunities to play organized sports and develop their sport skills as youth, athletes with intellectual disabilities will be at a distinct disadvantage as adults in comparison to their peers. Ensuring that people with intellectual disabilities have access to these opportunities will be critical to promoting the acceptance of athletes with intellectual disabilities within their communities.

- *Present Unified Sports as a model for the educational community as it strives toward inclusion, by emphasizing that all players' contributions and achievements are equal.*

Although there are many challenges to successful social inclusion, one starting point to promoting acceptance and inclusion is overcoming the common belief that students with intellectual disabilities are unable to perform tasks similar to their peers without disabilities. Unified football, and Unified Sport in general, promotes equality and interdependence among team members and provides participants with the opportunity to experience inclusion outside of the school setting. Through this structured environment, where students with intellectual disabilities are given valued roles as equal team players, youth without disabilities are able to witness firsthand all that students with intellectual disabilities are capable and come to understand that athletes and partners are more alike than they are different.

CLOSING REMARKS

This evaluation represents one of the first multinational program evaluations of a Special Olympics initiative. Considering the diversity of language and culture represented by the five participating countries, the evaluation's success was not without challenges, including developing a standard set of questionnaires that were applicable to the various experiences of the children in all countries, training local interviewers, and working with Program staff and volunteers who had often tight time schedules and few resources. The results of this evaluation suggest that although each there was some variation across countries in terms of implementation, the Special Olympics *Get Into ItTM* (SOGII)/Unified Football pilot project was successful in providing a quality experience for the athletes and partners. The success of pilot project is largely due to the dedication and efforts of the Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia project coordinator, and the national Special Olympics program staff and volunteers. Overall, the evaluation successfully described the project and identified the impacts of the pilot project on the participating athletes and partners.

I. INTRODUCTION

Global mandates like Education For All (1990) and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Education (1994) emphasize the importance of inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities worldwide. A central theme of such mandates is the recognition that education is critical if individuals with disabilities are to actively participate in society. As suggested by Koffi Annan, education is “central to development, social progress and human freedom” (The Millennium Report, 2000). In addition, it is expected that educating students with disabilities alongside their peers without disabilities promotes greater acceptance, confronts discriminatory attitudes, and can improve the educational experience for all students (Salamanca Statement).

Despite the progress that is being made with regard to inclusive practices worldwide, there remains great variation in inclusion practices implemented throughout the world, ranging from full inclusion, where students with disabilities are educated alongside their non-disabled peers in the regular classroom, to separate classrooms in mainstream schools, to completely separate school environments. The European Union (EU) in particular has been a strong supporter of educational inclusion and encourages its members, and those countries to striving to join the EU, to increase the opportunities available to children with disabilities to learn in regular classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers.

Throughout Europe in particular, progress is being made. For example, in Austria students with intellectual disabilities are, for the most part, educated alongside their peers without disabilities in inclusive classrooms. While special separate schools do still exist in Austria, students with disabilities attend only at their parents’ discretion. Other countries in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, are at different levels of development and different stages of inclusion. In Poland, most students with intellectual disabilities are being educated in special schools, however, there are some opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to learn alongside their peers without disabilities in inclusive classrooms in mainstream schools (European Agency for Development in Special Education, 2003). In recent years, Romania has made great strides toward the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in regular schools but at present, inclusion is readily available only to those students with more mild impairments. Slovakia is also working to promote inclusive education although special schools remain the norm for most students with intellectual disabilities. Finally, in Serbia, most students with intellectual disabilities are educated in special schools, with many still not attending any school at all.

While regular school placement is considered critical to promoting inclusion throughout society, it is not the only means of accomplishing this goal. The history of inclusion in the United States demonstrates that physically placing students with intellectual disabilities into the regular classroom does not result in their social inclusion; students with intellectual disabilities are rejected and isolated from their non-disabled peers. In fact, it is clear that although inclusive policies have been in place for over 30 years, youth in the US perceive students with intellectual disabilities as markedly different from themselves and are unwilling to interact socially with students with intellectual disabilities as they would other friends (Siperstein, Parker, Norins Bardon, Widaman 2007). Recognizing that there are many challenges to promoting true social

inclusion in the school, the United States and many other countries have begun to consider alternative ways to bring youth with and without disabilities together outside of the classroom, such as through sports.

The EU has been vocal in its belief that sport is a way to help facilitate inclusion. In 2005 the EU convened an expert meeting to address equal opportunities through and in sport for people with disabilities. A major conclusion of this meeting was that social integration of people with disabilities can be accomplished through sport. Moreover, in a recent survey, the Sport unit of the Directorate General of Education and Culture surveyed EU citizens about the benefits and social aspects of sport (Directorate General, Education and Culture, 2004). EU citizens noted that sport participation improved physical and mental health, provided opportunities for social interaction with friends and teammates, and enhanced sport skill development. In addition, this survey revealed that citizens view sport as a means to promote the integration of disadvantaged people into society and to fight against discrimination.

One such sport program is Special Olympics Unified Sports. While being a worldwide leader in providing sports training and competition experiences for individuals with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics developed this program to promote inclusion. The Special Olympics Unified Sports program provides individuals with and without intellectual disabilities the opportunity to play together in competitive sports, thereby breaking down barriers that have historically kept these individuals isolated from one another. To do so, the program creates teams of players with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and players without intellectual disabilities (partners) of similar ages and abilities, who come together to train and compete as equals. Participating in Unified Sports, like all sports, requires the commitment of its participants to work together toward team goals. It was expected that Unified Sports would create an atmosphere of respect and acceptance as athletes with intellectual disabilities and partners without intellectual disabilities come together as a team to work and communicate with his/her teammates to achieve common goals. Through the shared team experience the Unified Sports program provides the opportunity athletes and partners to learn about each other and overcome the barriers that have thus far have prevented the social inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities in schools and in society.

In response to the growing trend toward inclusion in Europe, particularly in schools, Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia developed the Special Olympics *Get Into It*TM (*SOGII*)/Unified Football pilot project in five European countries (Austria, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia), as a way to promote the social inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities and increase youth involvement in existing Unified football programs. The pilot project was unique in that youth without disabilities would receive instruction about intellectual disabilities through the *SOGII* curriculum, and then have the opportunity to join a year-long Unified Football team with students with intellectual disabilities. Using sport, especially football, as a medium for social interaction allows students (with and without intellectual disabilities) the opportunity to experience inclusion in an environment where all players are equally involved in a sport activity that is highly valued in European society.

Therefore, the objectives of the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project were: (1) to establish structures for the Unified Sports program in local communities, (2) to promote greater inclusion

of athletes with intellectual disabilities in schools and local sport clubs, (3) to expand the growth of Unified Sports in the Europe/Eurasia region, particularly among younger players, and (4) to positively impact athletes' and partners' sport skills, social relationships, and attitudes. The *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project brought together students with and without intellectual disabilities to train and compete as equals on the football field. In addition, partners received instruction about intellectual disabilities through the *SOGII* curriculum.

To implement the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot-project, Special Olympics Program staff in Austria, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia recruited teachers in regular schools to implement the *SOGII* curriculum in their classes. In May 2005, the pilot project officially began when students from *SOGII* classes joined with students with intellectual disabilities to participate in European Football Week¹. From the classes that participated in these activities, students with and without intellectual disabilities were recruited to form football teams that practiced and competed over the 2005-2006 school year.

Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia and Special Olympics, Inc. commissioned the University of Massachusetts Boston/Special Olympics Global Collaborating Center (GCC) to implement a comprehensive evaluation of this pilot project, similar to the evaluation of the Unified Sports program in the United States (Siperstein, Hardman, Wappett, & Clary, 2001). The evaluation sought to identify the impact of the school-based Unified football program on athletes and partners and document the program's implementation by surveying those involved with the Unified football teams from participating countries. Specifically, the evaluation sought to assess the impact of the pilot program on the athletes' and partners' self-esteem/self-confidence, social skills and sport skills, as well as to assess the extent to which the program promoted greater understanding and acceptance of intellectual disabilities and facilitated social relationships between athletes and partners. The results of this evaluation will inform Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia about the viability of school-based programming that includes educating students about intellectual disabilities and also provides opportunities for social interaction, and subsequently social inclusion, through sport.

¹ European Football Week is a program developed by Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia, in collaboration with UEFA, to promote access to football opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities and to improve the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into the community. European Football Week represents a range of activities between Special Olympics programs, local schools, and local and major football clubs.

II. METHODS

A. PARTICIPANTS

The evaluation of Special Olympics *Get Into It*TM (*SOGII*)/Unified Football pilot project focused on 65 inclusive football teams from the five countries. Each team was primarily composed of boys, between the ages of 12 and 17, who trained and competed together over a one year span from June 2005 to June 2006. A total of 373 athletes (students with intellectual disabilities) and 362 partners (students without intellectual disabilities) participated in the evaluation.

To obtain a complete the picture of the Unified Football experience, the athletes, partners, coaches of each team, and parents of athletes and partners were included in the evaluation. Coaches from four countries and 45 inclusive football teams (N = 65) and family members from two countries (N = 100) participated in the evaluation. (Note: While family surveys were given to all country Programs, completed surveys were received from only two countries. Country Programs projected low return rates, as in their experience family members were difficult to access particularly at the end of the school year.) Table 1 shows the distribution of teams and participants involved in the evaluation in each country.

Table 1. Evaluation participants by country.

Country	Teams	Athletes	Partners	Coaches	Parents
Austria	4	23	20	4	*
Poland	23	113	93	*	44
Romania	14	57	69	14	*
Serbia	29	141	149	36	*
Slovakia	4	39	31	11	56

*Missing data

In addition to the evaluation of the impact of the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project on participants, youth without intellectual disabilities from each country were also surveyed to better understand the current perceptions and beliefs about people with intellectual disabilities and to better understand the environments from which Unified Football participants were drawn. The results of this survey are presented separately, beginning on page 94.

B. INSTRUMENTS

The survey instruments for athletes, partners, coaches, and family members were developed by evaluation staff with assistance from Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia staff and the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The survey instruments were adapted from questionnaires utilized in the “National Evaluation of the Special Olympics Unified Sports Program” (Siperstein, Hardman, Wappett, & Clary, 2001), the “Attitudes of Special

Olympics Family Members in the United States, Japan, and China” (Siperstein, Parker, & Norins Bardon, 2005) and the “Comprehensive National Study of Special Olympics Programs in the United States” (Siperstein, Harada, Parker, Hardman, & McGuire, 2005). The survey instrument for youth was adapted from “A National Study of Youth Attitudes toward the Inclusion of Students with Intellectual Disabilities” (Siperstein, Parker, Norins Bardon, & Widaman, 2007). Below are descriptions of the survey instruments for athletes, partners, coaches, family members, and youth (See Appendix A for complete survey instruments).

1. Athlete Survey

The purpose of the athlete survey was to obtain information about athletes’ background and demographics, prior sport experience, motivation for joining Unified Football, overall Unified Football experience, and the impact of participation in Unified Football. The survey included items that addressed athletes’ motivation for joining the Unified team, their perceptions of personal effort on the team, and their goals for competition. In addition, athletes were asked about their perceptions of improvement, both in sport skills and in overall feelings of self. Finally, athletes were asked questions about their relationships with other team members both on and off the playing field.

2. Partner Survey

The partner survey was structured similarly to the athlete survey and included many of the same questions. However, the partner questionnaire included additional questions about partners’ prior contact with the athletes on their teams and with people with intellectual disabilities in general. In addition, the questions about partners’ personal effort on the team were expanded to include their perceptions about the contribution they made to the team and whether they felt challenged during team training sessions. More specifically, the evaluation staff felt it was important to determine if the Unified experience offered partners an appropriate level of challenge to maintain their involvement/interest in the team. Because a major objective of the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project was to change the attitudes of the partners toward people with intellectual disabilities, additional questions focused on partners’ perceptions of the amount of effort, challenge and contribution put forth by athletes. Finally, partners were also asked about changes in their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities.

3. Coach Survey

Unified Football coaches were given two surveys to obtain full information about the coaches’ previous experience, program implementation and perceived impact on athletes and partners. The first survey included items that addressed the coach’s educational, sport, and coaching background, experience with Special Olympics and Unified Sports, and identified his/her goals for coaching a Unified Football team and expected challenges. The second survey included questions about the organization of training sessions and competitions, how athletes and partners were utilized in specific positions and roles, contributions of athletes and partners, improvements made in athletes and partners in various skill areas, and overall successes and challenges.

4. Family Member Survey

The family member survey was developed to gather information that would supplement that received from athletes and partners as well as information about the family members' experience with Unified Football. The survey included questions about their own prior experience with Special Olympics, the athletes'/partners' prior experience with Special Olympics, and the athletes'/partners' prior sport participation. Family members were also asked questions about the Unified Football training and competition activities, the goals they have for their athlete/partner, their perception of improvement in the athlete/partner in a variety of skill areas, the athletes'/partners' social interactions with teammates both in and out of training and competition, and their interest in having their child participate in Unified Sports again. Family members of both athletes and partners were also asked about their exposure to people with intellectual disabilities and their attitudes toward inclusion.

C. PROCEDURE

The evaluation of the pilot project took place over a period of seven months and involved a number of people, including UMass Boston evaluation staff, Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia project coordinator, Program staff and volunteers at the country and local levels (Note: Evaluation staff refers to the UMass staff and the SOEE coordinator; Program staff refers to both paid and unpaid staff and volunteers). In November 2005, evaluation staff presented the basic outline and purpose of the evaluation to the Program coordinators from the five participating countries during a *SOGII/Unified Football Seminar* hosted by Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia. This presentation explained how the evaluation would be structured and who would be involved, and also informed Program staff about the type of assistance needed to in order to carry out such an evaluation.

Given the diversity of the countries that participated in the pilot project, and the short time frame in which the evaluation was to be conducted, evaluation staff relied heavily on the assistance of Program staff to achieve the objectives of the evaluation. For example, evaluation staff, in collaboration with Program staff, refined the multiple survey instruments to accurately reflect the language and culture of each country. In addition, evaluation staff worked with the Program staff from each country to determine the appropriate number of teams to survey so that all regions with teams were represented in the evaluation. Evaluation staff also provided Program staff with detailed guidelines for recruiting schools to participate in the Youth Attitude component of the evaluation. Finally, evaluation staff prepared letters and other materials for Program staff to use when presenting information about the evaluation to coaches, family members, and participating schools.

Evaluation staff visited each country during the spring of 2006 to conduct training sessions with interviewers who would conduct the athlete and partner surveys. Interviewers had been previously recruited by Program staff from Special Olympics volunteer lists as well as through their relationships with university programs (e.g. adapted physical activity, special education, and physiotherapy programs).

The training seminar held in each country provided information about Special Olympics, intellectual disabilities, the purpose of the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project, and the evaluation. Interviewers received copies of the survey instruments for both athletes and partners, and mock interviews were conducted with the assistance of Special Olympics athletes. During the training, interviewers were also instructed in how to conduct the interview (e.g. where to conduct the interview, how to encourage the respondent, the type of additional information to record, etc.).

1. Survey Administration

Athletes and partners were surveyed during one-on-one interviews with the trained interviewers. Program staff and interviewers coordinated with coaches to organize training sessions for the survey administration at the end of the school year. Coaches were asked to structure the training session to allow athletes and partners the opportunity to participate in the survey without disrupting the activities of the whole team. Each interview was approximately 15 minutes and a minimum of two interviewers attended each team session.

The coach surveys were designed so that one survey was implemented at the beginning of the school year and one at the end of the school year. These self-administered surveys were distributed to coaches by Program staff in a variety of ways including: electronic mail, postal mail, or at coach meetings. The family member survey was completed at the end of the school year. Most often, paper copies were distributed and collected by coaches at team events.

The Youth Attitude Survey was administered to students in their classrooms by their teacher. As was mentioned previously, Program staff in each country were provided with guidelines for recruiting and selecting schools and classes for participation. More specifically, these guidelines instructed Program staff to select classes from which Unified partners were recruited (i.e. classes involved in *SOGII*), along with classes which had no involvement in Special Olympics activities (no *SOGII* program, or any involvement in Unified Sports). This distinction was made so that some differentiation could be made between those students who had been involved with Special Olympics programs through their schools and those that have not. These surveys were filled out by youth in groups during class and supervised by teachers or the trained interviewers.

III. PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

A. AUSTRIA

Special Olympics Austria began organizing events in the early 1970's. Over the last 30 years, Special Olympics Austria has grown to serve more than 46,000 people with intellectual disabilities who train and compete in over 25 summer and winter sports. There are currently Special Olympics programs in each of the nine states in Austria. While each program is managed by a Special Olympics coordinator, most of the ongoing activities in these states are run by volunteers. At present, Special Olympics Austria organizes training units, events, regional, national, and international tournaments, and training for coaches. In addition to sports training and competition, Special Olympics Austria offers, Healthy Athletes, Family Support programming, Motor Activities Training Program (MATP), Unified Sports and most recently, Special Olympics *Get Into It*TM (*SOGII*) curriculum.

In 2005, Special Olympics Austria decided to implement the *SOGII*/Unified Football as a pilot project in the Styria region, and included participants from four schools: three junior high schools and one technical school. Unlike the other four countries that participated in the pilot program, Austria is unique in that they are the only one have an inclusive educational system where students with disabilities are educated alongside their peers without disabilities. Therefore, it was necessary to make some modifications to the *SOGII* curriculum to ensure that it fit within the existing national integrated curriculum. For example, some of the information presented in the *SOGII* curriculum was not considered relevant because students and teachers are exposed to people with intellectual disabilities in their everyday lives. Thus, the participating schools primarily used Lesson 2 (Understanding) and Lesson 4 (Taking Action/Service learning).

When creating the Unified Football teams, each school was responsible for choosing the athletes and partners to participate, following age and ability guidelines put forth by SO Austria. The team selection process was reviewed by the Program volunteer. In one instance, the teammates, all boys, were selected from an intensive sports class that had been together since the beginning of their junior high school career. In other schools, team members were selected based on interest and ability level. Overall, during the 2005/2006 school year, the *SOGII* curriculum was presented in six classrooms across the four schools and four Unified Football teams (one from each school) were established.

1. Athletes

From the four teams, 23 athletes were interviewed about their experience in the Unified football pilot project, giving a response rate of 98%. The majority of the athletes were male (87%), while 13% were female. The athletes ranged in age from 11 to 17 years old, with the majority of athletes between the ages of 13 and 14 years (57%). Over half of the athletes came to the team with previous sport experience, with football being the most commonly cited sport for these athletes (48%). (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Athlete demographics (N=23).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	87%
Female	13%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	13%
13 -14	57%
15 -16	26%
17 or older	4%
<i>Previous Sport Experience</i>	
Yes	52%
No	48%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Unified Sports	0%
Special Olympics	0%
School Team	0%
Club Team	8%
Other Team	48%

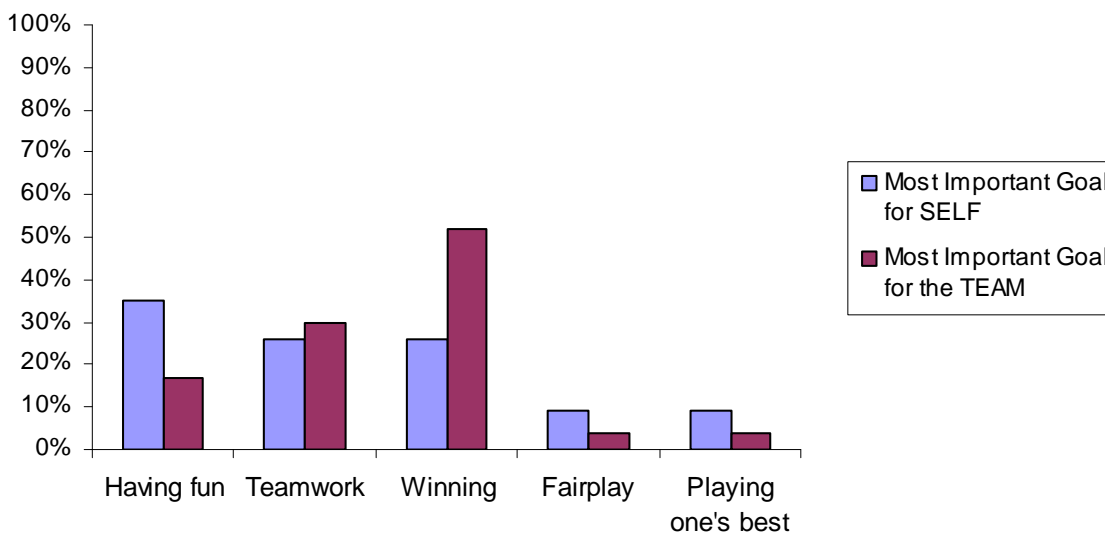
The athletes in Austria joined the Unified football team for a number of reasons (see Table 3). As this project was school-based, it is not surprising that over half of the athletes reported that their teacher invited them to join the team (52%). However, athletes had other reasons for wanting to join the football program with the main reason being that they wanted play football as part of a team (87%). In addition, many athletes said that they joined to learn new football skills (70%). Athletes also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; many athletes expressed that they wanted to join the team because their friends were playing (57%) and nearly half said they joined in order to make new friends (48%). It is clear that although many athletes were asked to participate in Unified football by their teachers, they were primarily motivated to join to be part of a team. Interestingly, previous sport experience had no impact on the reasons athletes joined the Unified football team (for each reason $p > .05$). That is, athletes with previous sport experience were just as likely to join the Unified football team for sport and social reasons as athletes without previous sport experience.

Table 3. Athletes’ reasons for joining Unified football team.

Item	Percent Agreement
To play football on a team	87%
To learn new skills	70%
Friends playing	57%
Teacher signed up	52%
To make new friends	48%
Play football for fun	35%

Similar to reasons for participating, athletes may also have different goals for participation (see Figure 1). Therefore, to better understand athletes’ perception of the Unified football experience, each was asked about his/her personal top goal for competition. Sample goals included teamwork, playing one’s best, winning, and having fun. For athletes in Austria, having fun was the most commonly cited goal for competition (35%), followed by winning and teamwork (both 26%). In contrast, when asked about the goal they perceived as important for the team, just over half of the athletes perceived winning as the most important goal to the team overall. Teamwork (30%) and having fun (17%) were the next two important team goals mentioned by the athletes. The results suggest that although athletes’ overall goal for participating was having fun, they recognized that teamwork is an important part of participating on a team. It is clear that athletes’ also believed that as a team, winning is the most important thing.

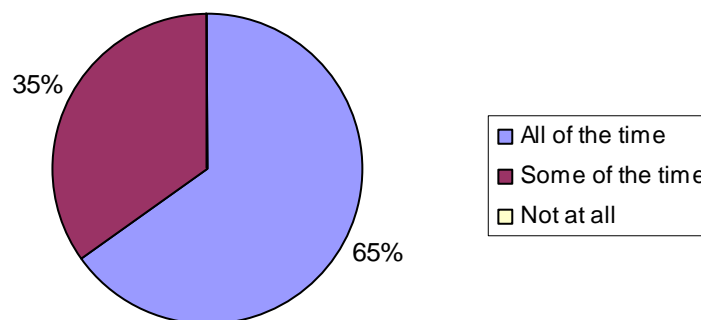
Figure 1. Athletes’ goal for competition.



Exertion of personal effort is a key determinant as to how participants perceive the quality of a program. In reflecting on their own effort, all of the athletes expressed that they played to the best of their ability all (65%) or some (35%) of the time (see Figure 2). When asked to explain what it meant to play to their best ability, athletes mentioned sport skills, such as running fast, shooting the ball, getting the ball away from the other team, or protecting the goal. In addition, several athletes mentioned that playing one's best meant playing well with others or playing even when feeling frustrated or tired.

Figure 2. Athletes' perception of personal effort.

How often do you play your best?



The Unified football pilot project also provided athletes with an opportunity to interact socially, with both other athletes and with partners. Many athletes took advantage of the opportunity as over half (65%) reported that they engaged in some type of social activity with other teammates (see Table 4). Of these athletes, half (52%) reported spending time with other athletes on their team, and half (52%) also said they spent time with partners on their team. When asked to describe the types of activities they most often did with their teammates, athletes reported that they played sports or just 'hung out'. For those athletes who did not report engaging in social activities with the partners on their team, distance was the commonly cited reason (40%). While only a quarter of the athletes (26%) engaged in activities outside of Unified football that included the whole team, all of these athletes enjoyed these team social activities a lot.

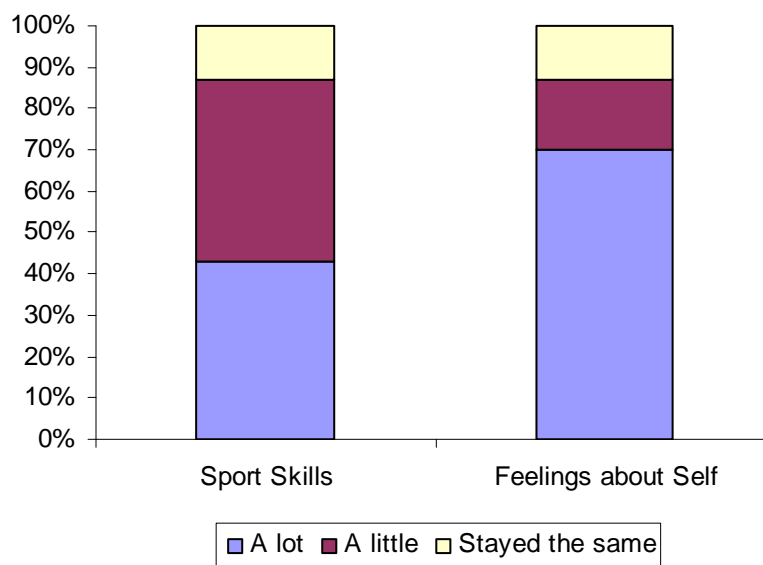
Table 4. Athletes' perceptions of social activities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	65%
No	35%
<i>If yes, who did you engage in activities with....</i>	
your whole team?	26%
other athletes?	52%
other partners?	52%

One of the objectives of the pilot project was to not only improve the sport skills of athletes, but also improve their feelings about themselves. Most athletes expressed that their sport skills improved a lot or a little as a result of their participation in the football program with only 13% reporting that their sport skills stayed the same (see Figure 3). Similarly, most athletes reported a lot of improvement in their feelings about themselves with almost two thirds (70%) reporting that they felt better about themselves as a result of their participation in Unified Football.

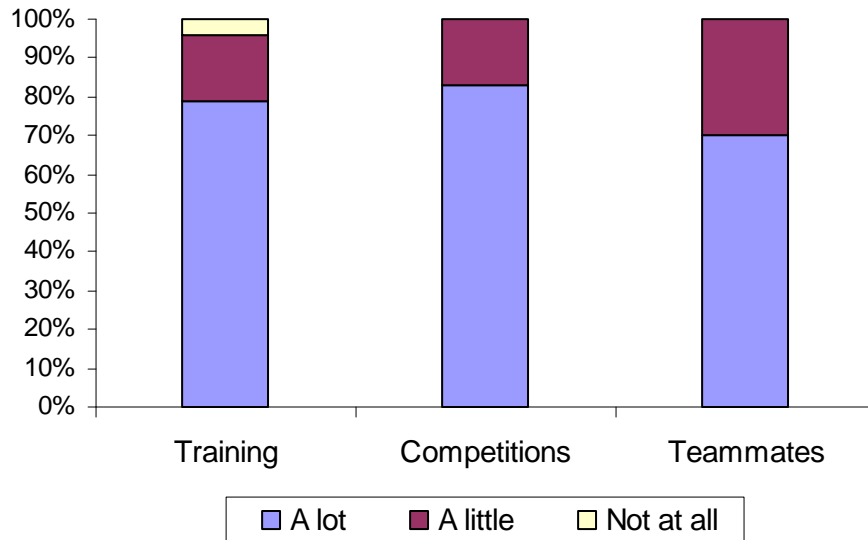
Figure 3. Personal gains of athlete.

Athlete improvement in...



Overall, Unified football was a positive experience for the athletes in Austria. Most athletes said that they very much enjoyed both the training and competition in Unified football as well as being with their teammates (see Figure 4). In addition, more than two thirds (70%) of the athletes reported that they would like to participate in Unified football again in the coming year. Athletes also expressed hope that the relationships they formed with other players on their team would continue, regardless of whether they continued participation in Unified football.

Figure 4. Athletes’ enjoyment of the Unified Football experience.



2. Partners

From the four teams, 20 partners were interviewed about their experience in the pilot Unified Football project, resulting in a response rate of 85%. All but one of the partners were male and ranged in age from 11 to 17 years old, with most of the partners between the ages of 12 and 14 years (75%). Nearly two-thirds of the partners (65%) came to the team with previous sport experience, having played primarily in sport clubs (60%). Similar to the athletes, the most popular sport that the partners played before joining the pilot project was football. (See Table 5.)

Table 5. Partner demographics (N = 20).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	95%
Female	5%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	35%
13 – 14	40%
15-16	20%
17 or older	5%
<i>Previous Sport Experience?</i>	
Yes	65%
No	35%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Club Team	60%
School Team	10%
Unified Sports	0%
Special Olympics	0%
Other	0%

Because Austria has an integrated education system, where students with disabilities are educated alongside their peers without disabilities, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the partners (70%) reported that they knew a person with an intellectual disability (see Table 6). Further, and again not surprisingly, partners most often had contact with a person with an intellectual disability in school (65%). However, some partners also reported having an acquaintance (20%) or knowing a neighbor (10%) with an intellectual disability. In addition, many of the partners (65%) said that they knew at least one of the athletes on their team before they started training together, primarily through contact at school.

Table 6. Partners’ contact with people with intellectual disabilities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Know Anyone with ID?</i>	
Yes	70%
No	30%
<i>Who do you know?</i>	
Someone at school	65%
Acquaintance	20%
Neighbor	10%
Other	5%
Someone in your sports club	0%
Family member	0%
<i>Related to Teammate</i>	0%
<i>Know any athletes before training?</i>	65%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

The partners in Austria joined the Unified football team for a number of reasons. As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that well over half of the partners reported that their teachers invited them to join the team (80%) (see Table 7). However, all partners had other reasons for wanting to join the football program with the main reason being that they wanted to play football on a team and they wanted to learn new football skills. Like athletes, partners also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; many expressed wanting to join the team either because their friends were playing (70%) or to make new friends (50%). Most of the partners were motivated to join the Unified Football teams to learn new football skills and have more social opportunities. For example, 80% of the partners said they joined the Unified football team because it was an opportunity to both learn football skills and to play alongside their friends. It is clear that playing football on a team is not mutually exclusive from the desire to develop friendships. Similar to what was found with athletes, partners’ previous sport experience had no relationship with the reasons they joined Unified football (for each reason, $p > .05$). That is, partners with previous sport experience were just as likely to join the Unified football team for sport and social reasons as partners without previous sport experience.

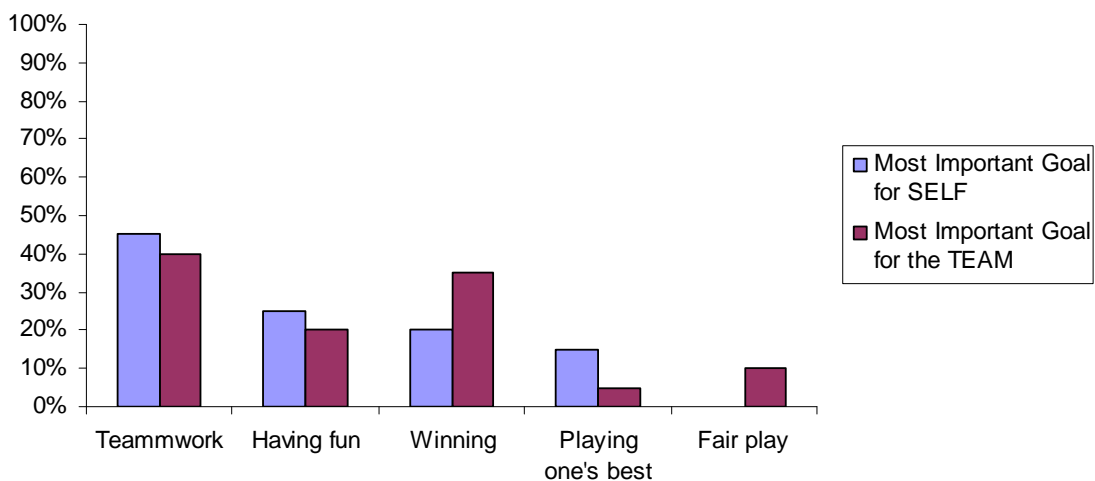
Table 7. Partners’ reasons for joining.

Item	Percent Agreement
To play football on a team	100%
To learn new skills	100%
Teacher signed up	80%
Friends playing	70%
To make new friends	50%
Play football for fun	45%
Meet kids with ID	10%*

*Responses falling into this category were offered by spontaneously by the partners.

Similar to reasons for participating, partners may also have different goals for participation. Therefore, to better understand partners’ perception of the Unified football experience, each was asked about his/her personal top goal for competition. Teamwork was an important goal for many partners (45%), while other important goals included having fun (25%), and winning (20%) (see Figure 5). Partners perceived the overall important goals of their football team as being similar to their personal goals. However, unlike athletes, who perceived winning as the most important goal for the team, partners’ perceived teamwork as the most important goal (40%), followed by winning (35%) and having fun (20%).

Figure 5. Partners' goals for competition.

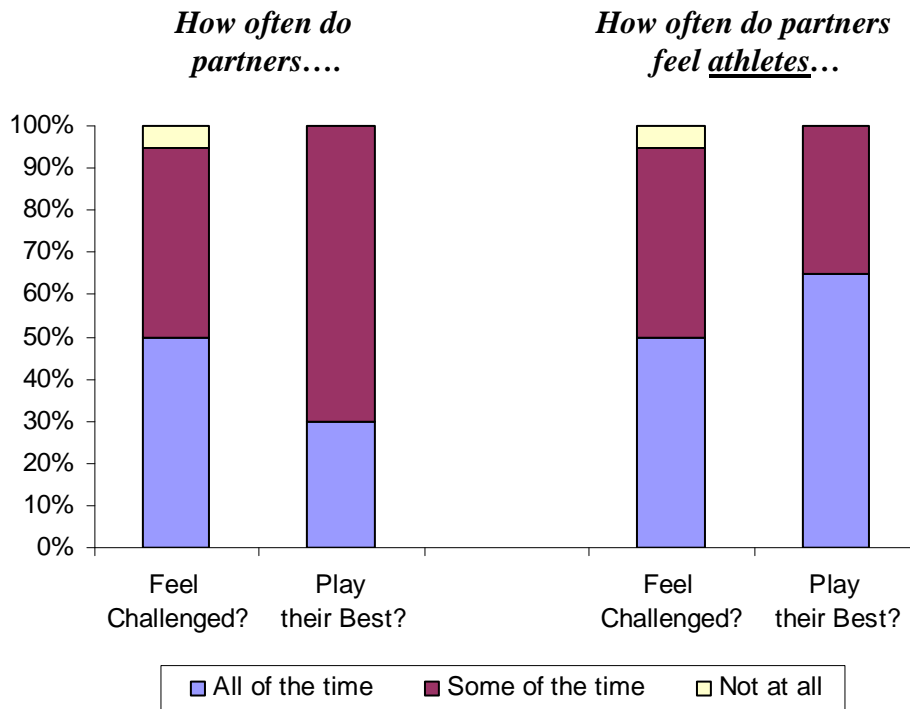


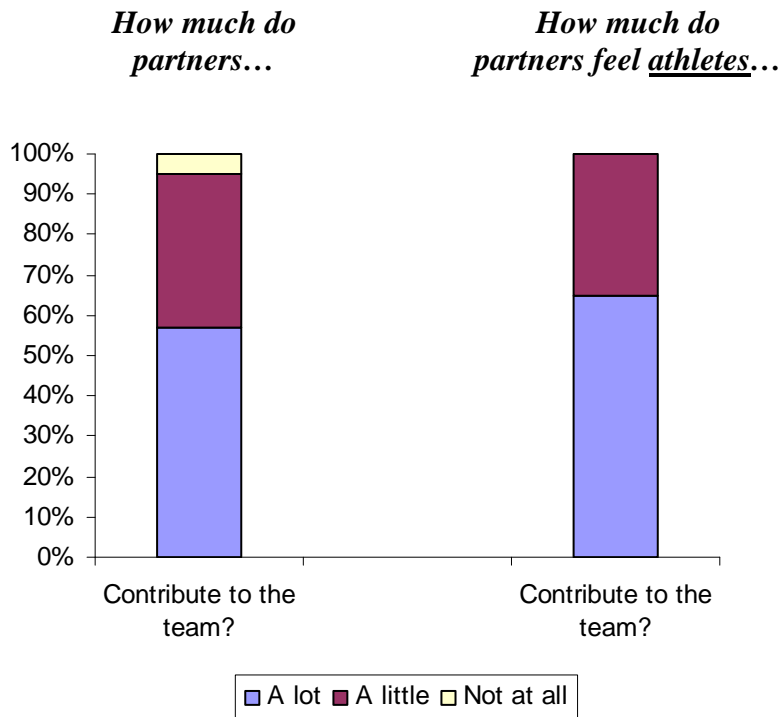
One of the concerns when developing a program such as the Unified Football pilot program is ensuring that the experience is challenging and exciting for the participating partners (i.e., Does the experience keep the partners engaged and interested? or Was the program challenging enough?). Most of the participating partners felt that they were challenged some (45%) or all the time (50%) during training (see Figure 6). In fact, only 5% of the partners expressed that they did

not feel challenged at any time during training. When asked to explain their perception of what it meant to feel challenged, partners expressed that being challenged meant playing better together. Partners' also reported that they played to the best of their ability either most of the time (30%) or some of the time (70%) during competitions. For partners, playing to their best meant passing to different players and other sport skills like shooting and kicking. When asked about their contribution to the team, more than half of the partners reported that they contributed a lot to the team (55%).

One of the expectations of the Unified football project was that through playing with athletes with disabilities, partners would better appreciate these athletes as teammates. Therefore, in addition to reflecting on their own effort and contribution, partners were asked to reflect on the effort and contribution of the athletes. The partners in Austria perceived that athletes put in about the same amount of effort to the team as they themselves did. Also similar to themselves, partners felt that athletes were challenged by the trainings either all of the time (50%) or some of the time (45%) and that in competition, athletes played to the best of their ability all (65%) or some (35%) of the time. Many partners also believed that athletes contributed a lot to the team (65%), even more so than themselves.

Figure 6. Partners' perceptions of challenge.*





*Totals do not always equal 100% due to missing data.

For many partners, the Unified football project also provided an opportunity to interact socially with teammates. Almost all partners (90%) took advantage of the opportunity and reported that they did engage in social activities with other teammates (see Table 8). More specifically, almost all of these partners (80%) said that they spent time with other partners and half (50%) reported spending time with athletes outside of football activities. Common activities that partners reported included playing sports and just hanging out. Interestingly, less than half (40%) of the partners reported engaging in social activities with their whole team, however those that did enjoyed these activities a lot. The most commonly cited reasons that partners did not interact with teammates outside of training or competitions were lack of time or distance.

Table 8. Partners' perceptions of social activities.

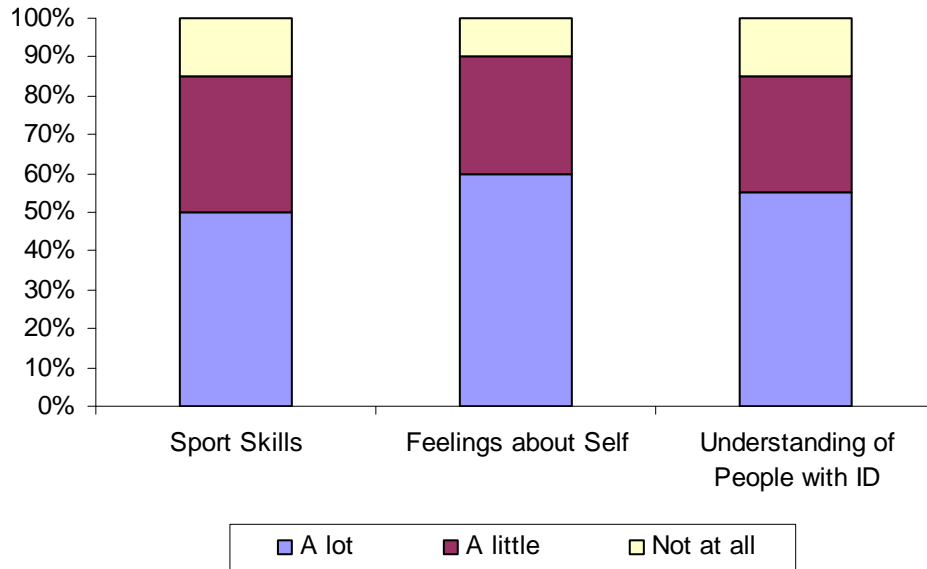
Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	90%
No	10%
<i>If yes, who did you engage in activities with....</i>	
your whole team?	30%
other athletes?	50%
other partners?	80%

While one of the goals of Unified Football for athletes was improvement in sport skills and sense of self, this improvement was not restricted to athletes. Half of the partners (50%) reported that their sport skills improved a lot, and 35% felt they improved a little (see Figure 7). Similarly, most partners reported improvement in their feelings about themselves as a result of their participation in Unified Football, with 60% reporting that they felt a lot better about themselves and 30% reporting that they felt a little better.

An additional goal of the evaluation for partners was to determine if their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their participation in Unified Football. Almost all of the participating partners felt that their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their involvement either a lot or a little (55% and 30% respectively). This is encouraging considering that most of the partners in Austria had previous contact with people with intellectual disabilities in school. When asked more specifically about what they had learned about people with intellectual disabilities, several partners stated that they now recognized that the athletes were really good competitors that were capable of playing football.

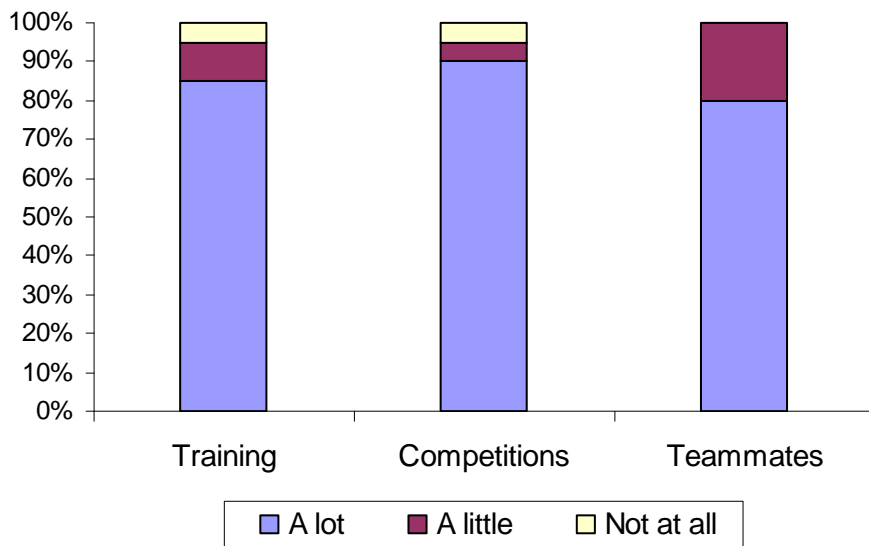
Figure 7. Personal gains of partners.

Partner improvement in...



Overall, the Unified football experience was satisfying for the partners in Austria. Almost all the partners reported that they liked training (85%), competition (90%) and being with teammates (80%) a lot (see Figure 8). In addition, many of the partners (85%) said they would like to participate in Unified football in the coming year, and many of the partners (65%) said that they had shared information about their experience on the team with others.

Figure 8. Partners' enjoyment of the Unified Football experience.



3. Coaches

Description of Coaches. Four head Unified football coaches, representing each of the Unified Football teams, were surveyed about their participation. All four coaches completed the survey at the beginning of the school year, and two coaches completed the survey at the end of the school year. Data from both surveys administrations are presented.

All four coaches were male, with a mean age of 47 years. Two of the coaches have been involved in sports throughout their lives (including, for example, participating in track and field, football, ice hockey, tennis, and skiing), and reported playing sports competitively, ranging from the school to club level. All four coaches were also teachers in inclusive schools, and had students from their classes on their teams. However, only one coach reported using *SOGII* in his classroom.

Three Unified football coaches were paid to coach as a part of their jobs as teachers, and one was a volunteer coach. None of the coaches had experience coaching in traditional Special Olympics events but two had coached Unified football for two years prior to the pilot project. In addition, two coaches had previous coaching experience in sport organizations outside of Special Olympics, including schools and sport clubs. Two coaches also reported having received training to coach and to work with people with disabilities, through workshops and internships. However, none of this training was through the Special Olympics organization.

Description of Unified Football Players. Coaches were asked a series of questions about the athletes and partners on their Unified Football team. Coaches reported that most of the athletes on their Unified teams had mild intellectual disabilities and lived with their families. In general, partners were not family members of athletes.

When asked about their goals for the athletes and partners on their team, coaches reported similar goals for each. For athletes, coaches reported that improved social skills was a primary goal, followed by improved friendships and improved self-esteem and self-confidence. For partners, coaches reported that improved social skills was their top goal, followed by improved attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities and improved self-esteem and self-confidence.

Description of Unified Football Teams. Each Unified Football team had a head coach who was also assisted by Special Olympics staff volunteers. One team also had an assistant coach. Training sessions were held regularly, with each team meeting at least once or more per week. During training, coaches worked with both athletes and partners equally to play in offensive and defensive positions and coaches substituted both athletes and partners during competitions by position. Each team did designate one or two athletes and partners solely to the goalkeeper position. To help coaches better structure the training sessions and drills, coaches assessed players' football skills regularly, most often through note taking, with nearly all reporting that they assessed athletes and partners at least once a month. When asked to compare the skill levels of athletes and partners in a variety of skill areas, including for example, basic skills like ball control, dribbling, passing, and shooting, as well as more complex skills, like heading and tackling, in general, coaches rated athletes as being more skilled or about the same as partners in all skills.

Coaches were also asked about their goals for the team during competitions. The goal most often reported by coaches was having athletes and partners achieve his/her personal best performance. Teamwork was the second most important goal with camaraderie and team spirit the third. It is clear from the results that most coaches emphasized performance and team-oriented goals. In line with their emphasis on team goals, there was a perception of equality on the playing field by coaches. That is, when reflecting on the contributions of athletes and partners, nearly all coaches stated that both athletes and partners contributed to the team equally.

Finally, coaches were asked about their communication with family members of both athletes and partners. Coaches reported that they rarely communicated with the family members of athletes or partners. However, when communication did take place coaches most often disseminated information about the team through telephone calls and mailings. Interestingly, two coaches stated that they communicated with one another as well as Special Olympics Austria staff.

Challenges and Successes. When asked about problems they experienced throughout the year with their Unified football teams all coaches cited at least one challenge in implementation such as problems with facilities and equipment needs, financial resources, recruiting athletes, and matching athlete and partner ability levels. However, these challenges were outweighed but the many successes. After a year of involvement with the Unified football team, coaches reported that athletes and partners alike improved in various skill areas. For athletes, the change was most notable in those areas cited by coaches as their goals for athletes (e.g., improved social skills, friendships, self- esteem, etc.) Similarly, while partners improved in those same skill areas, a significant change was also seen by coaches in partners' attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities and in their respect for differences.

4. Summary

Unified football in Austria provided all players with the opportunity to develop their sport skills and to engage socially with teammates. Most came to Unified football for the opportunity to play alongside their friends and be part of a team. Participants in Unified football received sport instruction from coaches who not only had experience working with children with intellectual disabilities, but also were licensed in the sport. The coaches in Austria made great efforts to provide a serious but fun experience for the athletes and partners on the Unified football teams. Coaches treated athletes and partners equally during team training sessions, emphasizing supporting each athlete and partner in achieving their best performance and teamwork.

Overwhelmingly athletes and partners enjoyed the Unified football experience; not only the training and competition but also being with their teammates. Most also felt that the experience was challenging and that they played to the best of their ability and put forth their best effort during training and competitions. As a result of their participation, all participants felt that they improved their sport skills and their feelings about themselves and most would like to participate again. Coaches also noted that they saw improvements in athletes and partners sport skills

For athletes in particular, Unified football provided them with the opportunity to participate in training and competition with their peers without intellectual disabilities. For partners, Unified

football provided them with the opportunity to witness firsthand the capabilities of athletes: the partners themselves acknowledged an improvement in their understanding of intellectual disabilities. Coaches also recognized improvements in athletes and partners understanding and acceptance of each other. From the perspective of the athletes, partners and coaches, the Unified football Austria project was successful.

B. POLAND

Special Olympics Poland became an accredited Program in 1985, though sport activities and social programs for people with intellectual disabilities have existed since the mid-1960's. For its first five years, Special Olympics Poland was a part of the National Society for Children (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci). Presently, Special Olympics Poland, with headquarters in Warsaw and a core staff of four, is comprised of 18 semi-independent regional programs and 562 Special Olympics sport clubs which operate out of special schools and social welfare centers. In 2005, nearly 15,000 people with intellectual disabilities trained and competed in local, regional and national sports events throughout Poland. In addition to offering 24 traditional Special Olympics sports and the Motor Activities Training Program, Special Olympics Poland also offers the Athlete Leadership Program, Healthy Athletes, Family Support programming, Law Enforcement Torch Run, Partner Clubs, and the Special Olympics *Get Into It*TM (*SOGII*) curriculum. Special Olympics Poland also offers a variety of Unified Sports (basketball, table tennis, kayaking and bocce), however, historically these Unified activities have included mostly older athletes.

Special Olympics Poland has also established a notable relationship with the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Board of State Rehabilitation for Disabled People Fund (PFRON) and since 1990 they have been recognized by the Polish Olympic Committee. Several major national and international corporations sponsor/support Special Olympics Poland including Totalizator Sportowy, Marriot-Warsaw, American Airlines, and Coca-Cola.

Unlike Programs in other countries involved in the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project, Special Olympics Poland began implementing the *SOGII* curriculum in 2002, separate from the pilot project. To prepare the curriculum for distribution, Special Olympics staff translated and modified the curriculum to fit the needs of regular (mainstream) school teachers. These modifications included adding supplementary information about disabilities in general for teachers, including for example, definitions of disability types, and examples of athletes' life stories. In addition, Special Olympics Poland included their own brochures, newspapers and videos to enhance the curriculum's cultural relevance. The curriculum was also modified for special schools as a means for recruiting more athletes into Special Olympics. Since beginning *SOGII* in 2002, over 42 regular schools and 53 special schools have used the curriculum, including over 1,300 regular and 1,700 special school students. During the 2005-2006 school year, there were 48 regular schools using *SOGII*. Special Olympics Poland began planning for the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project in January of 2005, after the regional seminar. An objective of the pilot project for Program staff was to further develop both their *SOGII* program as well as their Unified Sports activities with school-aged children. In addition, Program staff saw the pilot project as a new way to involve mainstream school youth in Special Olympics (i.e. beyond volunteering).

In preparing for the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot program, national and regional Program staff visited each region and held meetings at the schools for teachers and parents. In these meetings, the staff presented and explained the goals of the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project. Coaches for the pilot project were recruited from every region by the regional football coordinator and were current Special Olympics coaches, teachers, or football players. Coaches were trained

according to the Special Olympics rules, using the Unified Sports Guidebook, Special Olympics Football Rules, and the goals of *SOGII*. The coaches were responsible for recruiting athletes and partners for participation on a Unified football team. Athletes were recruited from local special schools and from current Special Olympics programs. Partners were recruited from mainstream schools. Overall, during the 2005-2006 school year seven mainstream schools and seven special schools participated in the *SOGII*/Unified football project, and created a total of 24 Unified football teams that were organized by age. These teams came from Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Łódzkie, Opolskie, Podlaskie, Śląskie, Wielkopolskie, and Warsaw.

[Note: Data reported for Poland is different when compared to the data presented for the other countries. Specifically, due to miscommunication between evaluation staff and Program staff, athletes and partners were given slightly different versions of the questionnaires than were given in the other participating countries. In addition, no coaches from Poland were available for participation in the evaluation.]

1. Athletes

One hundred and thirteen athletes were from 23 teams were interviewed about their experience in the pilot football project, giving a response rate of 87%. The majority of the athletes were male (80%), while 20% were female. The athletes ranged in age from 12 to 21 years old, with the majority of athletes between the ages of 14 and 16 years (66%). Some of the athletes came into the pilot football project with previous sport experience (55%), including participation in a club team (38%) and playing on a school team (66%). Specific sports were not given. (See Table 9.)

The athletes in Poland joined the Unified football team for a number of reasons. As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that over a third (37%) of the athletes reported that their teachers invited them to join the team. However, athletes had other reasons for wanting to join the football program with the main reason being that they wanted to learn football skills (80%). Athletes also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; over half of the athletes expressed that they wanted to join the team in order to make new friends (58%) and many because their friends were playing (40%). It is clear that many athletes were motivated to join Unified football to learn new football skills and make new friends. (See Table 10.)

Table 9. Athlete demographics (N=113).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	80%
Female	20%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	3%
13-14	25%
15-16	46%
17 or older	26%
<i>Previous Sport Experience</i>	
Yes	55%
No	45%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Unified Sports	0%
Special Olympics	37%
School Team	66%
Club Team	38%
Other Team	0%

Table 10. Athletes’ reasons for joining Unified Football team.

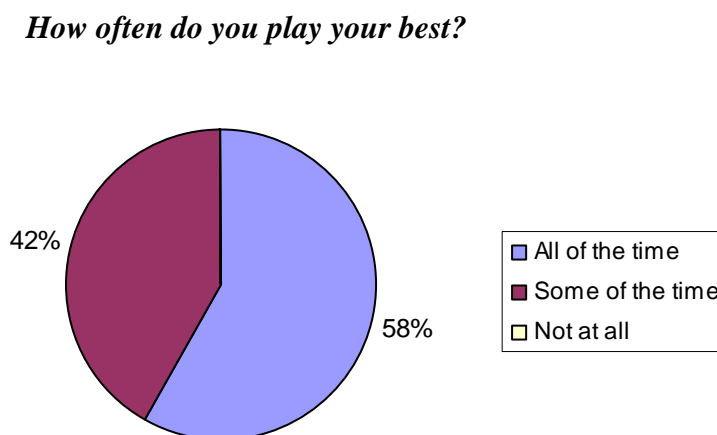
Item	Percent Agreement
To learn new skills	80%
To make new friends	58%
Friends playing	40%
Teacher signed up	37%
Play football for fun	33%
To play football on a team	7%
Improve skills	3%*

*Responses falling into this category were offered by spontaneously by the athletes.

Exertion of personal effort is a key determinant how participants perceive the quality of a program. In reflecting on their own effort, all of the athletes expressed that they played to the best of their ability all (58%) or some of the time (42%) (see Figure 9). When asked to explain what it meant to play to their best ability, many athletes mentioned their sport skills, such as running after the ball, kicking the ball, defending the ball or preventing goals.

[Note, due to a complication in the conversion of the questionnaire from the GCC evaluation staff to the Special Olympics Poland office, the questions about the athletes personal goals and perceived team goals for competition were not asked.]

Figure 9. Athletes’ perception of personal effort.



The Unified football experience also provided athletes in Poland with an opportunity to interact socially both with other athletes and with partners. However, not all athletes engaged in social activities outside of football. In fact, less than half of the athletes (45%) reported that they engaged in social activities with their teammates (see Table 11). Interestingly, athletes from six of the 13 teams were more likely to report social activities, suggesting that there were differences in how teams structured or facilitated social opportunities among team members. Overall, athletes who did report engaging in social activities enjoyed these activities either a lot (74%) or a little (22%). When asked to describe the types of activities they did with their teammates, athletes reported that they played sports, went out to eat, or just ‘hung out’. [Note, due to a complication in the conversion of the questionnaire from the GCC evaluation staff to the Special Olympics Poland office, questions about why athletes were unable to interact with teammates were not asked.]

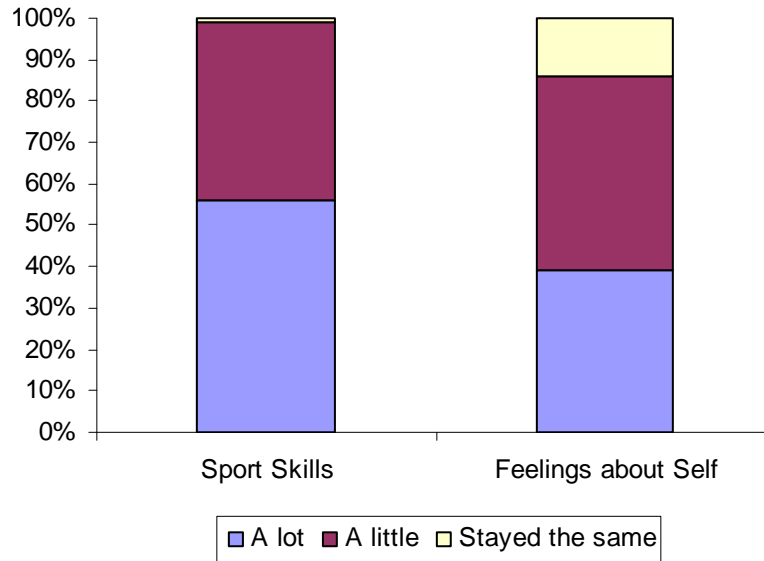
Table 11. Athletes’ perceptions of social activities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	45%
No	55%

One of the objectives of the pilot project was to not only improve the sport skills of athletes, but also improve their feelings about themselves. Almost all athletes expressed that their sport skills improved a lot or a little (99%) as a result of their participation in the football program (see Figure 10). Fewer athletes (39%) reported a lot of change in the way they feel about themselves, with almost half (47%) reporting a little change.

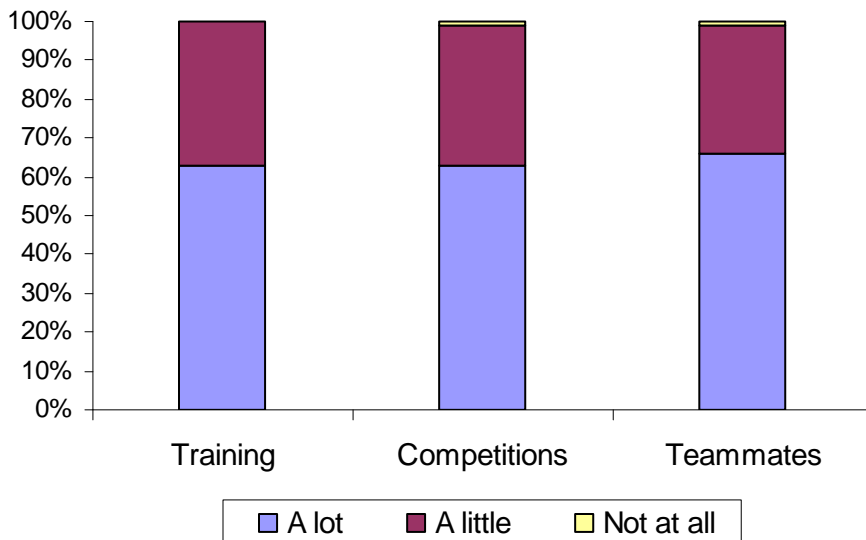
Figure 10. Personal gains of athlete.

Athlete improvement in...



Overall, Unified football was a positive experience for the athletes in Poland. Many athletes (about two-thirds) very much enjoyed the training sessions and competitions as well as being with their teammates (see Figure 11). In addition, over two-thirds of athletes (77%) reported that they would like to play Unified football in the coming year. In reporting what they would tell their friends to recommend the program, athletes noted that it was a way to make nice friends, it was “cool”, and it provided opportunities for travel and to have official uniforms.

Figure 11. Athletes’ enjoyment of the Unified Football experience.



2. Partners

Ninety three partners from the 23 teams were interviewed about their experience in the pilot football project, giving a response rate of 72%. Most of the partners (81%) were male, while 18% were female. The partners ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old, with most of the partners between the ages of 14 and 16 years (61%). One-third of the partners (42%) came to the team with previous sport experience, such as playing with a school team (29%) or a club team (20%). (See Table 12.)

Table 12. Partner demographics (N = 93).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	81%
Female	18%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	0%
13-14	26%
15-16	42%
17 or older	32%
<i>Previous Sport Experience</i>	
Yes	42%
No	58%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Unified Sports	0%
Special Olympics	0%
School Team	29%
Club Team	20%
Other Team	0%

For more than half of the partners (61%), the Unified football pilot program was a new opportunity to meet people with intellectual disabilities. Others who participated reported

previous contact with people with intellectual disabilities including having a general acquaintance (12%) or interestingly, knowing a student in their school who has an intellectual disability (4%). In addition, 11% of partners reported having a family member with an intellectual disability and of those, 10% were related to an athlete on the team. (See Table 13.)

Table 13. Partners’ contact with people with intellectual disabilities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Know Anyone with ID</i>	
Yes	39%
No	61%
<i>Who do you know?</i>	
Acquaintance	12%
Family member	11%
Someone at school	4%
Neighbor	4%
Someone in your sports club	1%
<i>Related to Teammate</i>	10%
<i>Know athletes before training</i>	0%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

The partners in Poland joined the Unified football team for a number of reasons. As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that over half of the partners reported that their teachers invited them to join the team (61%) (see Table 14). However, partners had other reasons for wanting to join the football program with the main reason being that they wanted the opportunity to compete (86%). However, unlike athletes from Poland, and partners from other countries, the opportunity for social interaction was less of a draw for partners in Poland. In fact, less than half of the partners (32%) said they joined the team because their friends were playing, and only 4% joined to make new friends. It is clear that although many athletes were asked to participate in Unified football by their teachers, they were primarily motivated to join to play football competitively.

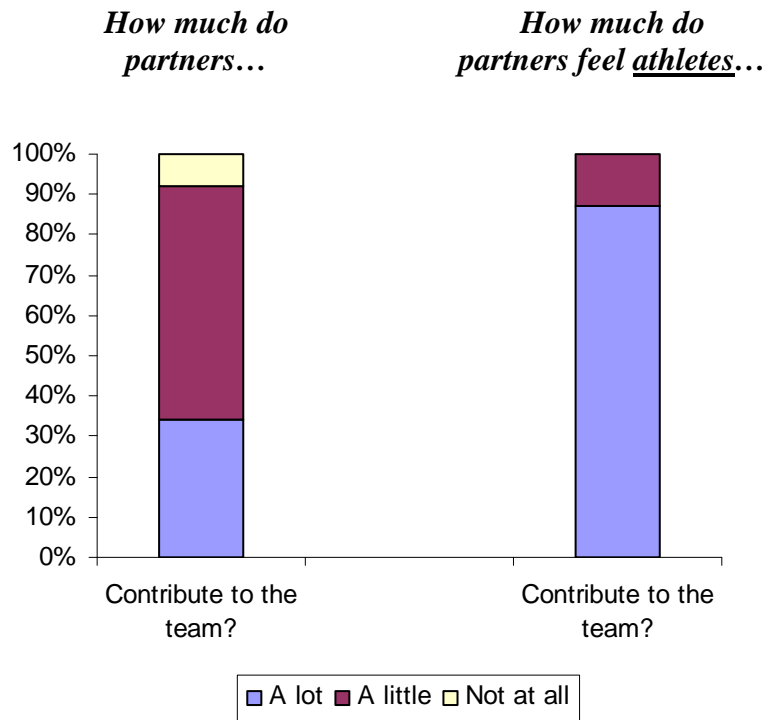
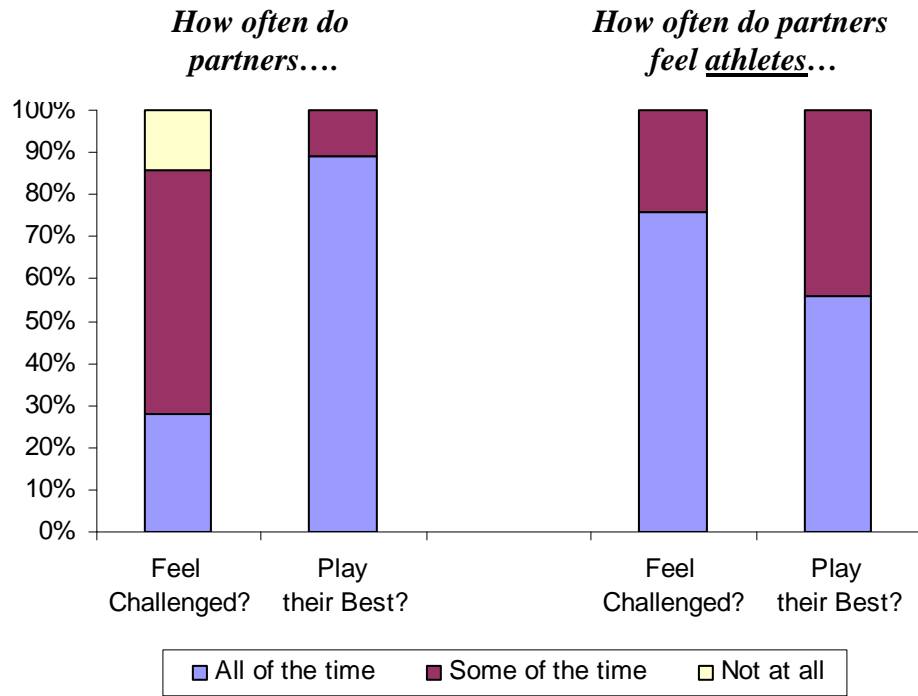
Table 14. Partners' reasons for joining.

Item	Percent Agreement
To compete	86%
Teacher signed up	61%
To learn new skills	38%
Friends playing	32%
Play football for fun	12%
To make new friends	4%
To play football on a team	5%

One of the concerns when developing a program such as the Unified Football pilot program is ensuring that the experience is challenging and exciting for the participating partners (i.e., Does the experience keep the partners engaged and interested? or Was the program challenging enough?). Most of the participating partners felt that they were challenged some (58%) or all the time (28%) during training (see Figure 12). In fact, only 14% of the partners expressed that they did not feel challenged at any time during training. Many partners believed they played to the best of their ability either all of the time (56%) or some of the time (44%) during competitions. When asked about their contribution to the team, partners were more modest, with about one third (34%) reporting that they contributing a lot to the team, and more than half (58%) reporting that they only contributed a little.

One of the goals of pilot project was to change the attitudes of the partners toward students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, in addition to reflecting on their own effort and contribution, partners were asked to reflect on the effort and contribution of the athletes. Interestingly, the partners in Poland believed that overall athletes put in much more effort than they did themselves. Most of the partners believed that athletes were challenged by the trainings all of the time (76%) and that in competition, athletes played to the best of their ability all of the time (89%). Unlike their assessment of themselves, partners believed that athletes contributed a lot to the team (87%).

Figure 12. Partners' perceptions of challenge.



For many partners, the Unified football project also provided an opportunity to interact socially with teammates (see Table 15). However, similar to athletes in Poland, few partners (28%) reported that they engaged in social activities with teammates, although again, team association seemed to be an influential factor. That is, partners from three of the thirteen teams were more likely to report engaging in social activities with teammates. Overall, partners who did report engaging in social activities enjoyed these activities either a lot or a little (77% and 23% respectively).

Table 15. Partners' perceptions of social activities.

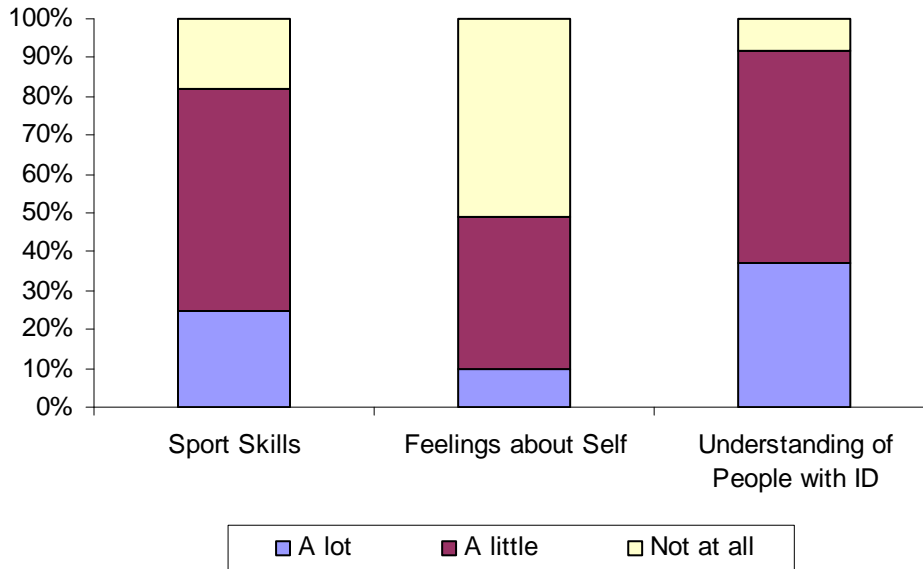
Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	28%
No	72%

While one of the goals of Unified Football for athletes was improvement in sport skills and sense of self, this improvement was not restricted to athletes. Over half of the partners in Poland reported that their sport skills improved a little (57%) and 25% felt that they improved a lot (see Figure 13). However, partners did not report similar change in their sense of self. In fact, 51% of the partners reported that they experienced no change in how they felt about themselves.

An addition goal of the evaluation for partners was to determine if their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their participation in Unified football. Encouragingly, most partners did feel that their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their involvement. In fact, almost all partners felt that their understanding improved a little or a lot (55% and 37% respectively). When asked about what they had learned about people with intellectual disabilities, partners stated that they recognized that the athletes were really good players, friendly, funny, and similar to themselves.

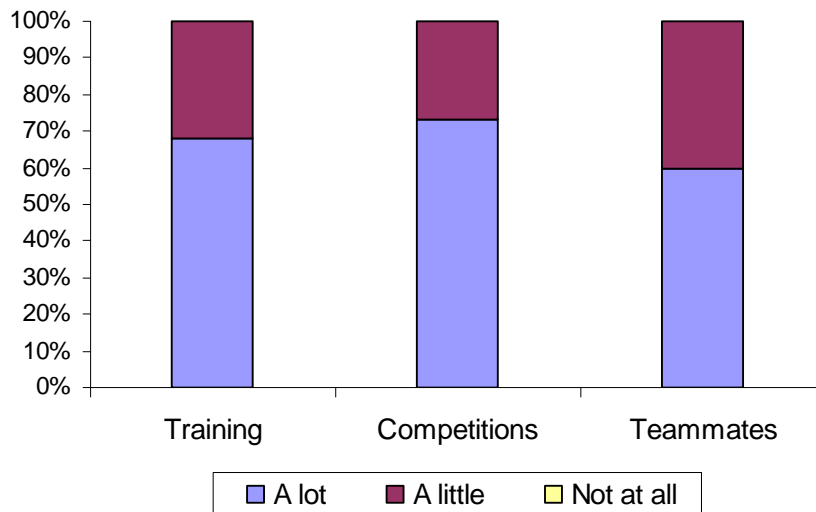
Figure 13. Personal gains of partners.

Partner improvement in...



Overall, the Unified football experience was satisfying for partners in Poland. Most of the partners reported that they liked training (68%), competition (73%) and being with teammates (60%) a lot (see Figure 14). In addition, many of the partners (72%) said they wanted to play Unified football in the coming year, and many of the partners (80%) said they would recommend Unified football to their friends. Several partners also noted that Unified Football is something you have to experience for yourself to see what it is like to play with people with intellectual disabilities, and that you should not be afraid of them.

Figure 14. Partners’ enjoyment of the Unified Football experience.



3. Family Members

In Poland, 28 family members of athletes and 16 family members of partners were surveyed about their child's experience in the Unified football project. These family members were primarily parents of the participants, with mothers the parent most often surveyed (80%). The parents ranged in age from 29 to 51, with the mean age of 39. Most of the parents had at least some university experience although there was some variation between mothers of athletes and mothers of partners. Approximately 60% of the parents of the athletes had attended some university, while 69% of the parents of the partners were university graduates. There was also some variation with regard to employment status. While almost all of the parents of partners (88%) were employed full time, only 64% of the parents of athletes' were employed full time.

To better understand the experiences of family members of both athletes and partners with intellectual disabilities, questions were included that asked about previous contact with individuals with intellectual disabilities. Interestingly, in addition to having a child with an intellectual disability, over one-third of the family members of athletes (36%) reported that they have other family members with intellectual disabilities, including a sibling (40%) or a cousin (50%). Not surprisingly, all of the parents of the athletes also reported knowing a person with an intellectual disability outside of their family, solely through their child's school. In addition, most of the athletes' parents (71%) have been previously involved with Special Olympics, while the Unified football team was a new experience for most (88%). In contrast, only two of the parents of partners surveyed reported knowing a person with intellectual disabilities.

When asked about how their child became involved in the Unified football program, the parents of athletes and partners varied in their responses. Family members of athletes reported that their children became involved in the program because a teacher signed them up. In fact, none of the parents said that their child joined voluntarily or that they had signed their child up for Unified football. In contrast, 39% of the parents of partners reported that their children volunteered to participate and one parent reported signing up her child personally to be on the football team.

The parents of athletes and partners also differed in terms of their communication with the coaches. Overall, parents of athletes communicated with coaches more frequently than the parents of partners. For the parents of athletes, all reported that they often or sometimes communicated with their child's coach (43% and 57% respectively). When asked how they most often received information about their child's team, parents of athletes reported that they learned about the team activities from their children (82%) or through meetings with their child's teacher or the coach (75%). Most parents of partners (93%) reported that they only sometimes communicated with their child's coach however they received much of their information about Unified sports through meetings with the coach or their child's teacher (71%). Unlike parents of athletes, only 57% of parents of partners reported that they learned about team activities from their children.

Interestingly, parents of athletes were also more likely to communicate with the family members of their child's teammates than the parents of partners. In fact, almost all (82%) of the parents of athletes reported that they sometimes communicated with other Unified football families while

only 9% of the parents of partners reported the same. This may be in part due to the fact that the parents of athletes may have been familiar to one another from school or sports events.

The parents of athletes and partners were similar however, with regard to their personal involvement with the team. All of the parents of athletes, and close to three quarters of parents of partners (73%), reported going to at least one of the training sessions. In addition, over half of the parents of athletes (57%), and most of the parents of partners (80%), attended at least one of their child's competitions. All parents of athletes reported that they brought their athlete to the training sessions while just under half of the parents of partners (40%) reported the same. However, for competitions, all of the parents of both athletes and partners reported that their child was brought to the competitions via transportation provided by the coach. Other than providing transportation to trainings and attending trainings and competitions, no parents were involved in their child's team in any other capacity.

One of the goals of the Unified football project was to benefit the athlete and the partner personally (social skills, sport skills, friendships, etc.). Therefore, parents of athletes and partners were asked about how the Unified football experience benefited their child. All of the parents of athletes (100%) and most of the parents of partners (75%), rated the coaches' ability to coach a team of children with and without intellectual disabilities as very good. Interestingly, 19% of parents of partners felt they could not make a judgment as to the coaches' ability in this regard perhaps due to their own limited understanding of intellectual disabilities. As for their child's participation on the team, all of the parents of both athletes and partners believed that their child had an equal chance to play and most also believed that their child was challenged by the trainings and competition (85% parents of athletes and 94% parents of partners). In addition, most parents of athletes and partners (85% and 75% respectively) did not believe that their child's playing time was impacted by being on an integrated team. That is, parents of partners did not believe that their child played more or less because there were players with intellectual disabilities on the team. Similarly, parents of athletes did not feel that their child played more or less because there were players without intellectual disabilities on the team. These findings are particularly encouraging given that there is often an expectation that integration will have a negative effect on the child without disabilities.

Parents of both athletes and partners were also asked to rate the top goal they held for their child's participation in the Unified football project from a list of five (improved sport skills, self-esteem and self-confidence, health, social skills, and friendship). The most important goal parents of athletes held for their children was improved self-esteem and self-confidence (41%) and improved social skills (37%). The next top goal, reported by only 15% of these parents, was improved sport skills. Parents of partners shared the same goals for their children as parents of athletes. The most important goal parents of partners held for their children was improved self-esteem and self-confidence (56%) and improved social skills (38%). However, no parents of partners ranked improved sports skills as a number one goal. It is interesting that even though Unified football is a sports program, parents' top goal focused on the social and personal growth opportunities of sport participation, and not necessarily on sport skill development.

Parents were also asked about the values they emphasized to their child during competition including winning, teamwork, sportsmanship, best performance, and fun. Among these values

family members of both athletes and partners both emphasized personal best as their top goal (50% athletes and 50% partners), while parents of athletes also emphasized sportsmanship (50%) and parents of partners emphasized fun (56%).

Parents were also asked to rate the extent to which their athlete had improved in a number of areas (for example, sport skills, self-esteem and self-confidence, friendships). Overall, both parents of athletes and partners saw improvement in their child. All parents of athletes and partners reported that they saw a lot of improvement in their child's social skills as a result of the Unified football project as well as improvements in their self-esteem and self-confidence. Parents of partners also reported improvement in this area; 75% of parents reported that their child's self-esteem and self-confidence improved a lot while 25% reported a little improvement.

Although not top goals for participation, all of the parents of athletes saw a lot of improvement in their child's sport skills, in their child's overall health, and in their child's friendships with other athletes and with partners. Similarly, although not top goals, most parents of partners (88%) saw a lot of improvement in their child's sport skills, and many (69%) saw improvements in their child's overall health. Fewer parents of partners (39%) reported seeing a lot of improvement in their child's friendship with athletes; though all parents did notice some improvement in this area (62% of parents of partners reported a little improvement). On a positive note, many parents of partners (69%) reported that they noticed a lot of improvement in their child's understanding of people with intellectual disabilities.

In addition to asking parents about their perceptions of the Unified football experience for their children, parents were also asked about their own attitudes toward children with intellectual disabilities, in terms of participation on sports teams as well as in terms of inclusion in school settings. While all parents of athletes and partners perceive children with intellectual disabilities as capable of playing on an integrated sports team, and of making friends with other children without intellectual disabilities, approximately one-third of parents of partners (31%) do not perceive children with intellectual disabilities as capable of learning with children without disabilities. Although the reasons are unclear, over half of the parents of athletes (57%) and just under half of the parents of partners (40%) believe that having children with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team creates more safety concerns.

Overall, parents of athletes and partners were very to mostly satisfied with their child's experience on the Unified football team. All of the parents were interested in their child continuing participation in Unified football. In addition, over half of the parents of athletes (54%) and most of the parents of partners (81%) said they would definitely recommend Unified Sports to other families.

4. Summary

For athletes and partners in Poland, the Unified Football experience provided an opportunity to participate in integrated sports. Not surprisingly therefore, athletes and partners joined mainly for sport-related reasons; athletes joined to learn new sport skills and partners joined for the opportunity to play competitive sports. For many, the Unified Football program was satisfying, in that both athletes and partners alike enjoyed training, competing and being with their teammates, and most expressed that they would like to participate again. Overall, the Unified football experience proved engaging for athletes and partners in that they both put forth their best effort. While partners perceived athletes as experiencing more challenge during training and competition, they also recognized that the athletes exerted more effort and contributed a lot more to the team than they themselves did. However, it is also important to consider that this may be due to their deference for their peers with intellectual disabilities and a desire not to flaunt their own accomplishments.

Partners and athletes did derive somewhat different benefits as a result of their participation; athletes experienced a lot of improvement in their sports skills while partners reported that they experienced change in their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities. This is encouraging given that for many partners, this was their first experience interacting with other children with intellectual disabilities. Parents of partners also reported major changes in their child's understanding of intellectual disabilities. In addition, like their children, parents of athletes and partners were satisfied with the Unified football program and reported seeing improvement in their child's social skills and self-confidence as a result of their participation in the program. Overall, most parents were pleased with how the teams were structured and how the coaches gave athletes and partners equal opportunities to contribute on the team.

C. ROMANIA

Special Olympics Romania was reestablished as an accredited Special Olympics Program in 2003. Presently, Special Olympics Romania, with headquarters in Bucharest and a core staff of five, offers local programs throughout all 42 counties in Romania, primarily through schools. In 2005, Special Olympics Romania served over 16,000 people with intellectual disabilities, with most coming from Bucharest and the Prahova, Constanta, Galati, Cluj, and Bacau counties. In addition to offering seven traditional Special Olympics sports, Special Olympics Romania also offers Unified Sports, the Athlete Leadership Program, Healthy Athletes, Young Athletes, Family Support programming, and the Special Olympics *Get Into ItTM* (*SOGII*) curriculum. Part of Special Olympics Romania's success in growth is its partnerships. In 2005, Special Olympics Romania has also formalized a partnership with the National Academy of Physical Education and Sport, which is the most highly recognized school in the field of adapted physical education in Romania. Partnerships have also been formed with the Ministry of Education and US Agency for International Development.

In December of 2004, Special Olympics Romania began planning for the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project. Overall, three goals for participation were identified. First, Program staff was interested in using the project to educate children without disabilities about people with intellectual disabilities. Further, Program staff also wanted to promote involvement in sport activities that include people with and without intellectual disabilities. Finally, they felt that sport was a good vehicle for supporting the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities.

In preparing for the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot program, Program staff approached the Ministry of Education to get their approval to use the *SOGII* curriculum in schools. In addition to their approval of *SOGII*, the Ministry of Education also gave authorization to Special Olympics Romania to use any school sport halls and venues needed for their activities. Following this initial approval, Program staff then approached school directors with whom they had existing relationships, as well as other school directors suggested by the Ministry of Education and school inspectorates in each county.

After these contacts were made, Program staff prepared the curriculum for use in Romanian schools. This involved translating the *SOGII* curriculum manual from English into Romanian, and adapting the materials to enhance its cultural relevance. For example, Program staff substituted some of the supplemental materials with their own Special Olympics Romania materials (i.e. newsletters from Special Olympics Romania and DVDs of short films from World and National Games), rather than using the American materials (such as the "Loretta Claiborne Story"). In addition, "student booklets" were created that included athlete bios and Lesson 4 activities. It was also determined that *SOGII* instruction would take place during a tutoring class which students attend once per week. According to the national curriculum, the tutoring class is the least structured, allowing teachers to easily integrate *SOGII* into their lesson planning.

Program staff provided training seminars for teachers about the curriculum, Special Olympics, and intellectual disabilities. Program staff also offered suggestions to teachers and challenged them to think creatively when implementing the curriculum, particularly for service-learning activities in Lesson 4. For example, teachers were encouraged to have their students engage in

small projects, such as visiting special schools or other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), attend a Special Olympics event, host a sport competition, or participate in a Unified Sports activity. Special Olympics Romania provided assistance (transportation, materials, or small funds) to teachers to support the Lesson 4 service learning projects. By the end of the school year (2005), fourteen schools implemented *SOGII* as a part of the pilot project and at the end of 2006, a total of 69 schools had implemented the *SOGII* curriculum

After the 2005 European Football Week, staff from Special Olympics Romania worked with teachers who implemented *SOGII* in their mainstream classrooms as well as teachers from special schools to create teams to participate in Unified football. One mainstream school and one special school from seven regions were matched to form two teams. Overall, seven mainstream schools and seven special schools participated in the *SOGII*/Unified football project, and created a total of 14 Unified football teams. These teams came from Ploiesti, Bacau, Iasi, Bucharest, Timisoara, Arad, and Cluj.

Teachers from the mainstream schools and the special schools recruited players based on their knowledge of student performance in physical education classes and participation in European Football week activities. More specifically, teachers from regular schools recruited partners from the *SOGII* classes who were identified as having limited football experience/skills, while special school teachers recruited athletes who demonstrated good football skills. Program staff recruited Unified Football coaches through existing lists of Special Olympics coaches and volunteers. These individuals received training using the general Special Olympics coach training materials as well as on the rules and goals of Unified football. To determine the team groupings, coaches from a regular school and a special school scheduled matches for the players who were recruited for the Unified team to see which athletes and partners worked/played best together. As a result, players were placed onto one of the two teams based on their performance in these matches – one team for lower ability players, and one team for higher ability players. Each Unified team consisted of 10 or 11 players – at least five athletes and five partners.

1. Athletes

Fifty seven athletes from the 14 teams were interviewed about their experience in the Unified football pilot project, giving a response rate of 81%. Almost all of the athletes in Romania were males (97%) and ranged in age from 12 to 18 years old, with the majority of athletes between the ages of 15 and 17 years (61%). Over one third of the athletes (37%) came into the pilot football project with previous sport experience, including participation in Special Olympics, sport clubs, and school teams. Football was the most commonly cited sport for these athletes (32%). (See Table 16.)

Table 16. Athlete demographics (N = 57).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	97%
Female	3%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	5%
13-14	30%
15-16	41%
17 or older	21%
<i>Previous Sport Experience</i>	
Yes	37%
No	58%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Unified Sports	2%
Special Olympics	7%
School Team	7%
Club Team	5%
Other Team	18%

The athletes in Romania joined the Unified football team for a number of reasons (see Table 17). As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that over half of the athletes reported that their teachers invited them to join the team (58%). However, athletes had other reasons for wanting to join the football program with the main reason being that they wanted to learn new football skills (81%). In addition, many athletes said that they joined because they wanted to play football as part of a team (72%). Athletes also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; many athletes expressed wanting to join the team either make new friends (63%) or because other friends were playing on the team (61%). It is clear that although many athletes were asked to participate in Unified football by their teachers, they were primarily motivated to join to learn new football skills and be part of a team. For athletes, the football experience was both about the sport and about the social aspects. For example, 61% of the athletes said they joined the Unified football team because it was an opportunity to both learn football skills and to make new friends.

It is clear that playing football on a team is not mutually exclusive from the desire to develop friendships. Interestingly, previous sport experience had no impact on the reasons athletes joined the Unified football team (for each reason $p > .05$). That is, athletes with previous sport experience were just as likely to join the Unified football team for sport and social reasons as partners without previous sport experience.

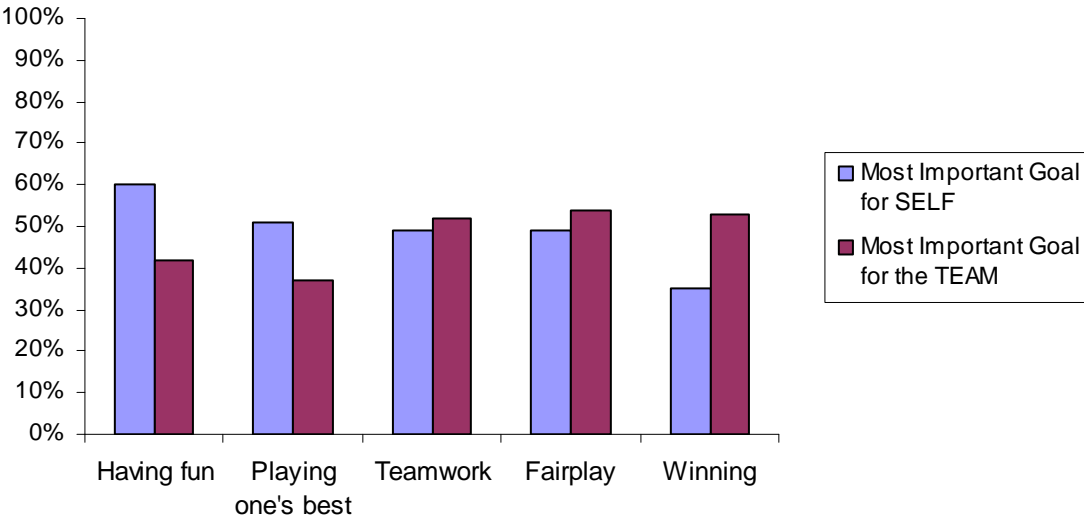
Table 17. Athletes’ reasons for joining Unified Football Team.

Item	Percent Agreement
To learn new skills	81%
To play football on a team	72%
To make new friends	63%
Friends playing	61%
Play football for fun	60%
Teacher signed up	58%
Improve skills	7%*

*Responses falling into this category were offered by spontaneously by the athletes.

Similar to reasons for participating, athletes may also have different goals for participation. Therefore, to better understand athletes’ perception of the Unified Football experience, they were asked about their personal top goal for competition (see Figure 15). Sample goals included teamwork, playing one’s best, winning, and having fun. However, many athletes in Romania gave more than one goal. For athletes in Romania, having fun as the most commonly cited goal (60%), followed by playing one’s best, teamwork, and fair play (ranging from 49% to 51%) Interestingly, winning was by far the lowest ranked goal for athletes (35%). In contrast, when asked about the goal they perceived as important for the team, most athletes ranked winning (53%) and teamwork (54%) as the most important goal overall. The lowest ranked team goal by athletes was playing one’s best as (37%).

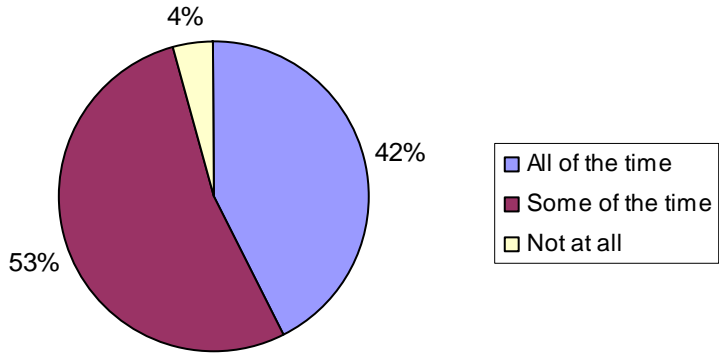
Figure 15. Athletes' goal for competition.



Exertion of personal effort is a key determinant how participants perceive the quality of a program. In reflecting on their own effort, almost all of the athletes expressed that they played to the best of their ability all (42%) or some (53%) of the time (see Figure 16). When explaining what it meant to play to their best, many athletes (40%) commented that playing to their best ability primarily was related to their sport skills, such as scoring goals, catching, kicking, dribbling, shooting better, or running.

Figure 16. Athletes' perception of personal effort.*

How often do you play your best?



*Totals do not always equal 100% due to missing data.

The Unified football experience also provided athletes with an opportunity to interact socially, with both other athletes and with partners. Many athletes took advantage of the opportunity as over half (60%) reported that they engaged in some type of social activity with other teammates (see Table 18). Of these athletes, half (50%) reported spending time with other athletes on their team, and one quarter (26%) also said they spent time with partners on their team. When asked to describe the types of activities they most often do with their teammates, athletes reported that they played sports or just ‘hung out’. While only one-third (35%) of the athletes engaged in activities outside of Unified football that included the whole team, almost all of these athletes (95%) enjoyed these team social activities a lot. For those athletes who did not report engaging in social activities with the partners on their team, time (44%) and distance (12%) were the most commonly cited reasons.

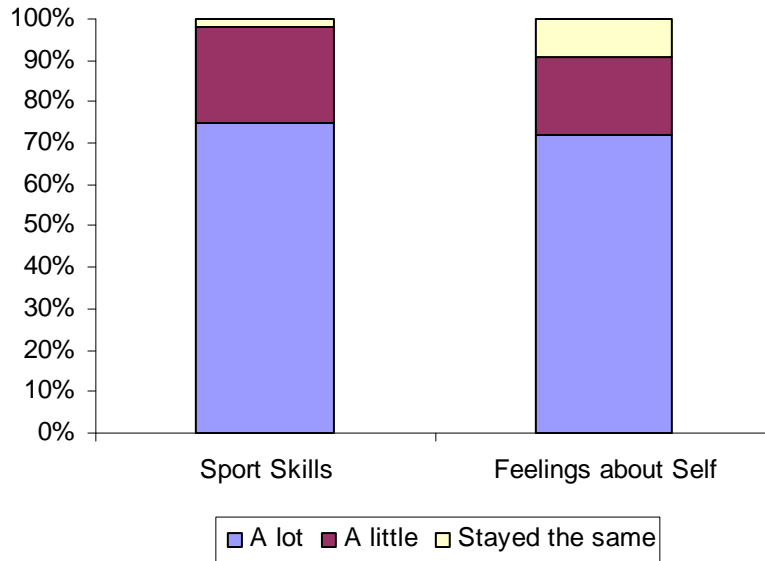
Table 18. Athletes’ perceptions of social activities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	60%
No	40%
<i>If yes, who did you engage in activities with....</i>	
your whole team?	35%
other athletes?	50%
other partners?	26%

One of the objectives of the pilot project was to not only improve the sport skills of athletes, but also improve their feelings about themselves. Three quarters of the athletes expressed that their sport skills improved a lot (75%) as a result of their participation in the football program, with only 2% reporting that their sport skills stayed the same (see Figure17). Similarly, most athletes reported improvement in their feelings about themselves, with 72% of the athletes reporting that they felt a lot better about themselves after participating in Unified football.

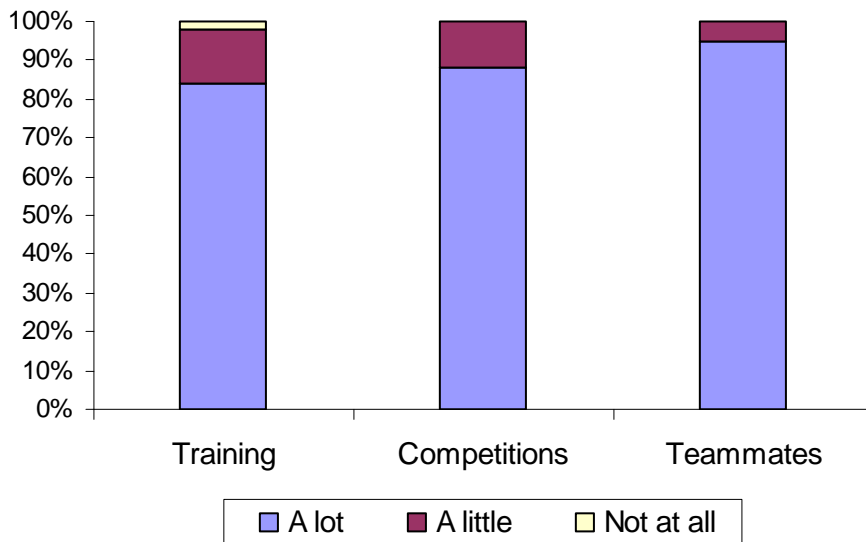
Figure 17. Personal gains of athlete.

Athlete improvement in...



Overall, the Unified football experience was a positive experience for the athletes in Romania. Most of the athletes said that they very much enjoyed training (84%) and competitions (88%), and almost all of the athletes (95%) said they liked being with their teammates (see Figure 18). The experience was so positive that almost all of the athletes (83%) reported that they would like to participate in Unified football again in the coming year.

Figure 18. Athletes' enjoyment of the Unified Football experience.



2. Partners

Sixty nine partners from the 14 teams were interviewed about their experience in the pilot football project, giving a response rate of 98%. Nearly all of the partners were male (99%) and ranged in age from 10 to 18 years old, with 69% of the partners between the ages of 13 and 16. Nearly half of the partners (45%) came into the pilot football project with previous sport experience, having played on sport club or school team. Similar to the athletes, the most popular sport that the partners played before joining the pilot project was football (87%). (See Table 19.)

Table 19. Partner demographics (N = 69).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	99%
Female	1%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	21%
13 – 14	35%
15-16	24%
17 or older	19%
<i>Previous Sport Experience</i>	
Yes	45%
No	55%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Unified Sports	4%
Special Olympics	0%
School Team	17%
Club Team	25%
Other Team	0%

For about half of the partners (52%), the Unified football pilot program was a new opportunity to meet people with intellectual disabilities (see Table 20). Others who participated reported previous contact with people with intellectual disabilities including 20% who know a student in their school who has an intellectual disability, and 16% who have a neighbor with an intellectual

disability. Almost no partners reported being related to an athlete (1%). Interestingly however, 45% of the partners reported that they knew an athlete on their team before they joined the Unified team and of those, 11% said they met the athlete through school. Most likely, some partners may have met some of the athletes during a visit made by their regular school to the special school as part of the *SOGII* curriculum or during Unified football week.

Table 20. Partners’ contact with people with intellectual disabilities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Know Anyone with ID?</i>	
Yes	47%
No	52%
<i>Who do you know?</i>	
Someone at school	20%
Neighbor	16%
Acquaintance	12%
Family member	7%
Someone in your sports club	4%
Other	0%
<i>Related to Teammate</i>	1%
<i>Know any athletes before training?</i>	45%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

The partners in Romania joined the Unified football team for a number of reasons (see Table 21). As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that many of the partners reported that their teachers invited them to join the team (41%). However, the partners had other reasons for wanting to join the football program, with the main reason being that they thought it would be fun (75%). In addition, many partners said that they joined because they wanted to play football as part of a team (61%). Like athletes in Romania, partners also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; many athletes expressed wanting to join the team either make new friends (75%) or because other friends were playing on the team (58%). It is clear that although many partners were asked to participate in Unified football by their teachers, they were primarily motivated to join because it would be fun and they could be part of a team. Interestingly, and somewhat surprisingly, 25% of the partners said they joined Unified football so that they could meet people with disabilities. This is even more notable, given that 64% of these partners reported no previous contact with a person with an intellectual disability. Similar to what was found with athletes in Romania, partners’ previous sport experience had no relationship with the

reasons they joined Unified football (for each reason, significance ranged from $p > .05$). That is, partners with previous sport experience were just as likely to join the Unified football team for sport and social reasons as partners without previous sport experience.

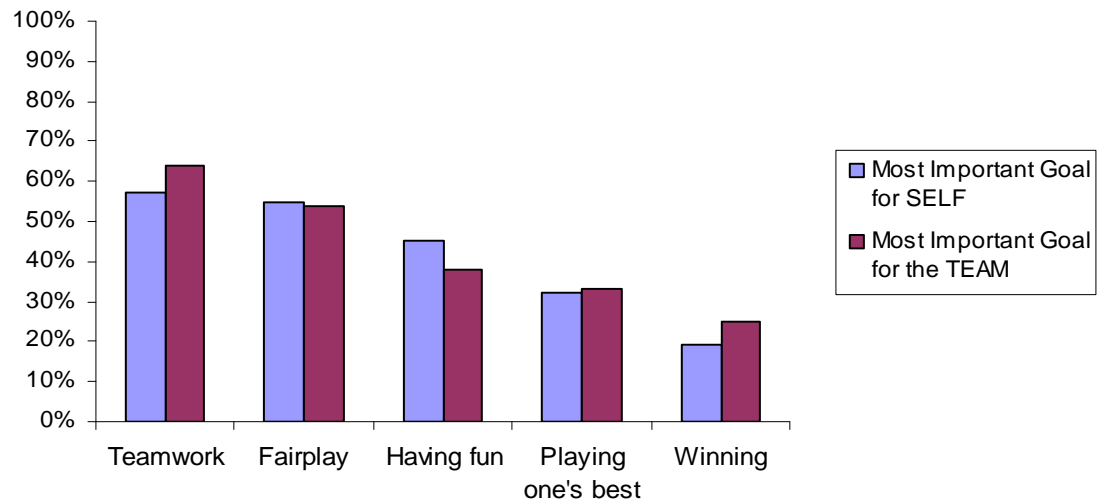
Table 21. Partners' reasons for joining.

Item	Percent Agreement
Play football for fun	75%
To make new friends	75%
To play football on a team	61%
Friends playing	58%
Teacher signed up	41%
To learn new skills	36%
Meet kids with ID	25%*
Improve skills	19%*

*Responses falling into this category were offered by spontaneously by the partners.

Similar to reasons for participating, partners may also have different goals for participation. Therefore, to better understand partners' perception of the Unified football experience, each was asked about his/her personal top goal for competition (see Figure 19). However, similar to athletes, partners in Romania gave more than one goal. Winning was partners' lowest ranked goal (19%), while teamwork and fair play were important goals for partners (57% and 55% respectively). Partners' perceived their overall team goals for competition as similar to their personal goals. For example, unlike athletes who perceived winning as the most important goal for the team, partners' perceived teamwork as the most important goal (64%), followed closely by fair play (54%).

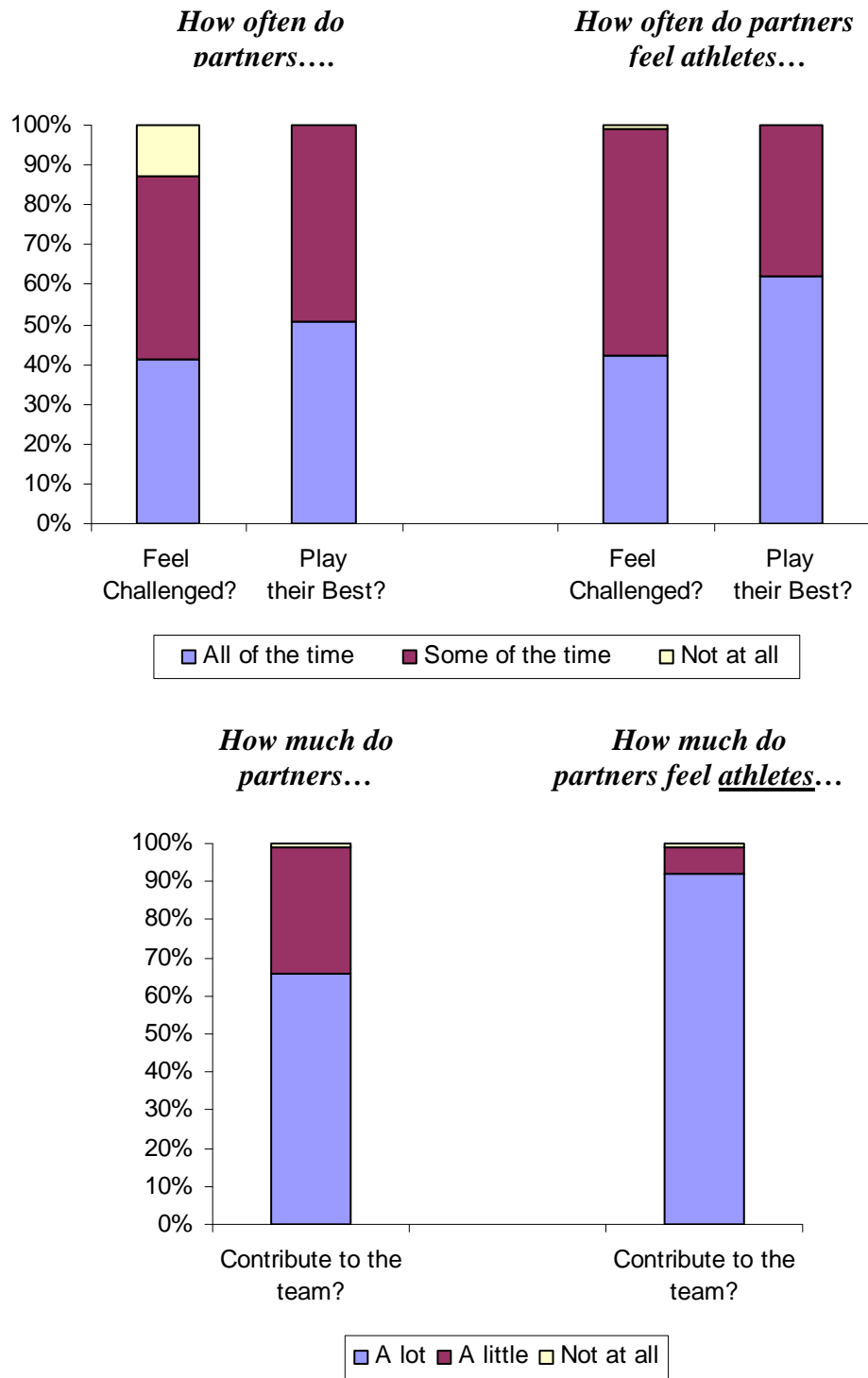
Figure 19. Partners' goals for competition.



One of the concerns when developing a program such as the Unified Football pilot program is ensuring that the experience is challenging and exciting for the participating partners (i.e., Does the experience keep the partners engaged and interested? or Was the program challenging enough?). Most of the participating partners felt that they were challenged all the time (41%) or some of the time (46%) during training (see Figure 20). In fact, only 13% of the partners expressed that they did not feel challenged at any time during training. When asked to explain their perception of what it meant to feel challenged, partners expressed that being challenged meant working hard, being focused or serious, or working to be a better player. When asked about their contribution to the team, more than half of the partners reported that they contributed a lot to the team (65%) and played to the best of their ability either all of the time (49%) or some of the time (48%) during competitions. For partners, playing to their best meant improving their sport skills and trying hard as well as working together.

One of the goals of pilot project was to change the attitudes of the partners toward students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, in addition to reflecting on their own effort and contribution, partners were asked to reflect on the effort and contribution of the athletes. Overall, the partners believed that athletes put in the same or more effort than themselves. Similar to themselves, partners believed that athletes were challenged by the trainings either all of the time (42%) or some of the time (57%), and that in competition, athletes played to their best all of the time (62%) or some of the time (38%). However, in contrast to themselves, almost all partners believed that athletes contributed a lot to the team (91%).

Figure 20. Partners' perceptions of challenge.*



*Totals do not always equal 100% due to missing data.

For many partners, the Unified football project provided an opportunity to interact socially with teammates. Almost all partners (91%) took advantage of the opportunity and reported that they did engage in social activities with other teammates (see Table 22). More specifically, almost all of these partners (83%) said that they spent time with other partners; however less than half (44%) reported spending time with athletes outside of football activities. Common activities that partners engaged in included playing sports and taking trips. Interestingly, half (53%) of the partners engaged in social activities with their teammates (i.e. that included both partners and athletes), and most of these partners enjoyed these activities a lot. Time (40%) was the most commonly cited reason that partners did not interact with teammates outside of training or competitions.

Table 22. Partners’ perceptions of social activities.

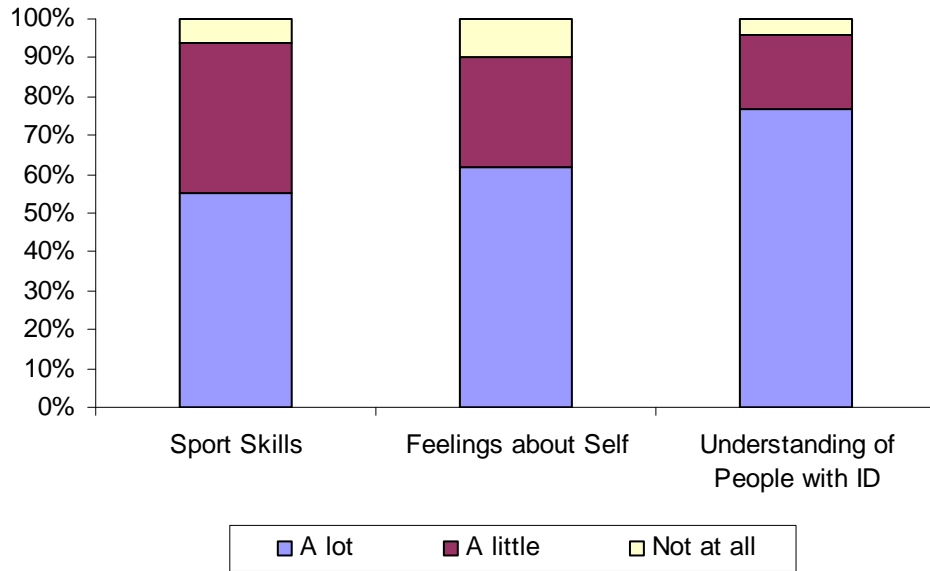
Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	91%
No	9%
<i>If yes, who did you engage in activities with....</i>	
your whole team?	53%
other athletes?	44%
other partners?	83%

While one of the goals of Unified Football for athletes was improvement in sport skills and sense of self, this improvement was not restricted to athletes. Over half of the partners (55%) reported that their sport skills improved a lot, and 39% felt they improved a little (see Figure 21). Similarly, partners noted that they felt better about themselves, with 62% of the partners reporting that they felt a lot better about themselves after participating in Unified football.

An additional goal of the evaluation for partners was to determine if their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their participation in Unified football. Encouragingly, most partners did feel that their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their involvement. In fact, almost all partners felt that their understanding improved a little or a lot (19% and 77% respectively). When asked more specifically about what they had learned about people with intellectual disabilities, many partners stated that they recognized that the athletes were just the same as them. One partner noted that “when we play football, we can’t see differences”.

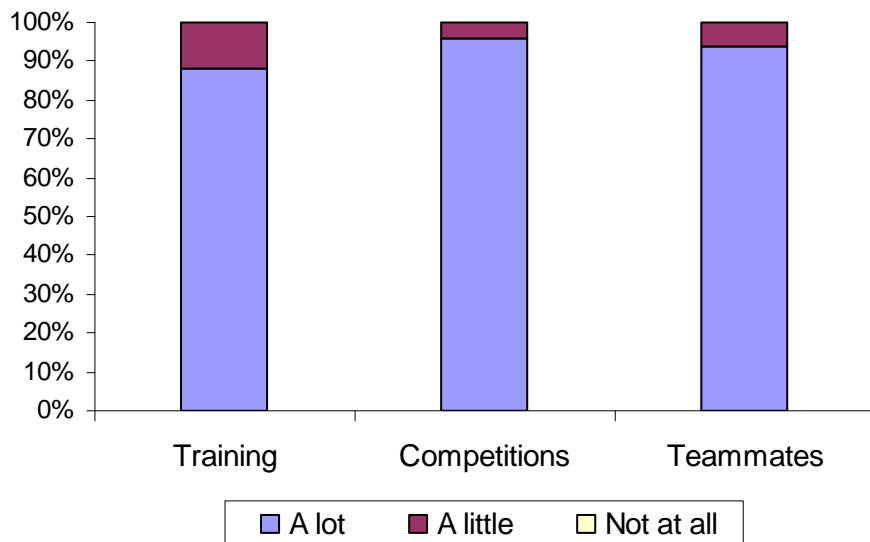
Figure 21 . Personal gains of partners.

Partner improvement in...



Overall, the Unified football experience was satisfying for partners in Romania. Almost all the partners reported that they liked training (88%), competition (96%), and being with teammates (93%) a lot (see Figure 22). In addition, almost all partners (90%) said they would like to participate in Unified football in the coming year, and that they told others about their experience on the team. When commenting on what they liked most about their experience, 30% stated that it was the fact that they played as a team and 17% of the partners responded that they liked making new friends.

Figure 22. Partners’ enjoyment of the Unified Football experience.



3. Coaches

Description of Coaches. Fourteen Unified football coaches representing each of the 14 Unified football teams were surveyed about their participation. All coaches completed the survey at the beginning of the school year, and 12 coaches completed the survey at the end of the school year. Data from both surveys will be presented in this section.

Just over half of the coaches were male (8), and had a mean age of 49 years. Almost all had been involved in sports throughout their lives (with 13 reporting that they have played sports competitively). The sports played by coaches varied widely, with half having played football competitively, from the club level to the professional level. All coaches were also teachers, evenly split between regular and special schools. Twelve of the coaches had students from their classes on their teams (six from each type of school), and all seven regular school teachers used the *SOGII* curriculum in their classrooms.

All of the Unified football coaches were volunteer coaches, with eight having also coached traditional Special Olympics sports. Most of those involved in traditional Special Olympics have been involved for five or fewer years. Interestingly, nearly all of these coaches were new to Unified football; twelve coaches reported that this was their first year of coaching. In addition to their involvement with Special Olympics, many coaches were also active at the community recreation level with twelve having coached teams in sport organizations outside of Special Olympics. Coaches stated that they were motivated to coach in Special Olympics because they wanted to help people with intellectual disabilities become integrated into the community and to give people with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to participate in sports, like their peers without disabilities.

In addition, eleven of the coaches also had an educational background in physical education and eleven of the coaches completed some type of training in coaching, whether through Special Olympics or another organization. In fact, half of the Unified football coaches had training outside of Special Olympics, including university coursework and sport federation training. Further, the majority also have extensive training in disabilities.

Description of Unified Football Players. Coaches were asked a series of questions about the athletes and partners on their Unified football team. Coaches reported that most athletes had either mild or moderate disabilities, and most lived with their families. In general, partners were not family members of athletes. When asked about their goals for the athletes and partners on the team, coaches reported similar goals for each. For athletes, coaches reported that improved self-esteem and self-confidence was a primary goal, followed by improved social skills and improved friendship. For partners, coaches reported that improved attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities was their primary goal, followed by improved social skills and improved friendships. To help achieve their goals for partners in particular, coaches held separate orientation meetings while primarily included information about Special Olympics and Unified Sports, with a few coaches including information about intellectual disabilities.

Description of Unified Football Teams. The majority of the Unified football teams had two coaches who were assisted by family member volunteers and individuals from the school or

community. Training sessions were held regularly, with nearly half of the Unified teams training once or more per week and five of the Unified football teams competing monthly. During training, coaches worked with both athletes and partners equally to play in offensive and defensive positions and coaches substituted both athletes and partners during competitions by position. Each team did designate one or two athletes and partners solely to the goalkeeper position. To help coaches better structure the training sessions and drills and to plan competition strategies, coaches assessed athletes' football skills regularly, most often through note taking, with nearly all reporting that they conducted their assessments at least once a month. While coaches stated unequivocally that they assessed athletes' skills, only half also stated that they assessed partners' skills; most often partners' assessments were conducted quarterly. When asked to compare the skill levels of athletes and partners in a variety of skill areas, nearly two-thirds of coaches rated athletes as being more skilled or about the same as partners in the basic skills, like ball control, dribbling, passing, and shooting. However, for the complex skills, like heading and tackling, half of the coaches rated partners as being more skilled than athletes.

Coaches were also asked about their goals for the team during competitions. The goal most often reported as important to the team by coaches was camaraderie and team spirit. Teamwork was the second most important goal and achieving team best performance the third. It is clear from the results that most coaches emphasized team-oriented goals. In line with their emphasis on team goals, there was a perception of equality on the playing field by coaches. That is, when reflecting on the contributions of athletes and partners, nearly all coaches stated that both athletes and partners contributed to the team equally.

Finally, coaches were asked about their communication with family members of both athletes and partners. While most coaches reported that they often or sometimes communicated with athletes' family members, this communication was less frequent with the families of partners. This was particularly true of coaches who were also teachers from the special schools. When communication did take place, coaches used a variety of methods to disseminate information about the team, including telephone calls, flyers, and parent meetings. Interestingly, some of the coaches stated that they communicated with one another as well as with Special Olympics Romania staff. In addition, because all of the coaches were also teachers, communication with school staff was very frequent.

Challenges and Successes. When asked about problems they experienced throughout the year with their Unified football teams, coaches cited a variety of difficulties, most notably problems with training schedules, communication with families, facilities and equipment needs, financial resources, volunteer assistance, and transportation to competitions. Many coaches, as well as Program staff, stated that athletes' and partners' school schedules weighed heavily on the availability of training time. For example, there were days when athletes attended classes in the morning, while partners attended in the afternoon. Further, though they employed a variety of techniques to communicate with players' families, nearly all coaches cited communication as a problem. As might be expected for a project in its pilot phase, nearly all coaches rated the availability of financial resources as a challenge for their teams.

While all coaches encountered some difficulties coaching a Unified football team, these challenges were outweighed but the many successes. After a year of involvement with the

Unified football team, coaches reported that athletes and partners alike improved in various skill areas. For athletes, the change was most notable in those areas cited by coaches as their goals for athletes (e.g., self-esteem/self-confidence, social skills, and friendship). Similarly, while partners improved in those same skill areas a significant change was seen by coaches in partners' attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities and in their respect for differences.

4. Summary

For many participants in Romania, the Unified program provided the first opportunity to play football on an organized team and certainly for many partners, the first time they had the opportunity to interact with people with intellectual disabilities. While athletes and partners had slightly different reasons for joining, most viewed the program as an opportunity to participate in sports and in social activities with friends. Participants in Unified football also received sport instruction from coaches, many of whom had experience working with children with intellectual disabilities and also had expertise in football. The coaches in Romania made great efforts to provide a serious but fun experience for the athletes and partners on the Unified football teams. Coaches treated athletes and partners equally during team trainings, emphasizing teamwork and fair play.

Overwhelmingly athletes and partners enjoyed the Unified football experience; not only the training and competition but also being with their teammates. Most also felt that the experience was challenging and that they played to the best of their ability and put forth their best effort during trainings and competitions. While athletes noted more improvements than partners, both athletes and partners felt that the Unified Football experience resulted in improvements in their sports skills and made them feel better about themselves, and almost all would like to participate again. Coaches also noted that they saw improvements in the sports skills of both athletes and partners.

For athletes in particular, Unified football provided an opportunity to participate in training and competition with their peers without intellectual disabilities. For partners, Unified football provided them with the opportunity to witness firsthand the capabilities of athletes; the partners themselves acknowledged an improvement in their understanding of intellectual disabilities. Coaches also reported improvements in athletes and partners understanding and acceptance of each other. From the perspective of the athletes, partners and coaches, the Unified football Romania project was successful.

D. SERBIA

Established in 2002, Special Olympics Serbia operates with a core staff of four out of its headquarters in Belgrade. At the time the pilot project began in 2005, Special Olympics Serbia served over 7,000 people with intellectual disabilities across all eight regions of the country, with most coming from the Kragujevac region. Special Olympics Serbia's local programs are primarily school-based, though some programs are based out of group homes or residential facilities for adults with disabilities. In addition to offering traditional Special Olympics sports, Special Olympics Serbia also offers Unified Sports, the Athlete Leadership Program, Young Athletes, Family Support programming, and Special Olympics *Get Into It*TM (*SOGII*) curriculum.

Special Olympics Serbia has built strong connections with local communities, schools, and sport clubs, which is further evidenced by the endorsement of their programs and support for their events by local government officials. In addition, they have established notable relationships with the department of defectology at Belgrade University, as well as the Ministry of Education. In December of 2004, Special Olympics Serbia began planning for the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project. Overall, two main goals for participation were identified. First and foremost, Program staff saw the pilot project as a means to better develop their Unified programming. Before the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project, Serbia's Unified programming focused primarily on basketball. This pilot project allowed the local programs to branch out to include football and to attract new participants. Second, program staff viewed the pilot project as a way to further fulfill to one of their main goals – promoting inclusion. More specifically, they saw the Unified football pilot project as a way to better integrate children with intellectual disabilities into society through sport.

In preparing for the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot program, Program staff approached the Ministry of Education to get their approval to use the *SOGII* curriculum in schools. The Minister of Education gave Special Olympics Serbia approval to distribute the curriculum to schools, as there is currently no component of the national curriculum that addresses either people with disabilities or topics about tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion. Along with his endorsement, the Minister of Education provided Program staff with a list of schools to contact for participation.

Special Olympics Serbia staff approached the headmasters of regular schools in the eight regions of the country about the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project – both schools suggested by the Ministry of Education, as well as schools with which Special Olympics Serbia had an existing relationship. Because schools in Serbia follow a standard curriculum throughout the country, which heavily emphasizes academic subjects, Program staff presented the *SOGII* curriculum to school headmasters as a subject that could be implemented during a period for “democratic studies”. It was determined that this would be the best approach because teachers and school headmasters have more flexibility to decide on the topics taught during this class period. For example, some schools use this time for religious studies, and other schools use the time for additional sport lessons or academic lessons.

After these contacts were made, Special Olympics Serbia prepared the curriculum for use in the schools. This involved working with professional translators with an education background to

translate the curriculum into Serbian and to enhance its cultural relevance. Program staff took great care to ensure that all parts of the curriculum would be accessible for teachers and students in Serbia, which included translating the title to mean “Come, Join Us!”. For the English materials (e.g. videos, stories) that supplement the lessons, Program staff provided teachers with translations and alternative materials. For example, to accompany videos like the Loretta Claiborne Story, which were in English, Special Olympics Serbia staff provided translations of the audio to teachers, which could be used to explain the content of the videos to their students. In addition, rather than relying entirely on American materials, a video of Serbian athletes from the 2003 Summer World Games in Dublin, Ireland was also included.

In each school, training seminars were held by Program staff for teachers, and meetings were held with school headmasters, to answer any questions school staff might have before implementing the curriculum. Program staff requested that all four lessons were taught; however, teachers had some autonomy in how the lessons were implemented. Because *SOGII* differs from the national curriculum, Program staff provided teachers with suggestions and guidelines for implementation and activities. Some of these guidelines were drawn from the experiences of other Special Olympics Programs in the Europe/Eurasia region. For example, for the service-learning activities in Lesson 4, teachers were encouraged to take their students to visit special schools and attend Special Olympics events. In some cases, the service learning activity included Unified Sports. Implementation of the curriculum began in early 2005 and during the 2005-2006 school year, a total of 28 schools implemented the *SOGII* curriculum in their classrooms.

The “kick-off” of the Unified Football activities of the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot program in Serbia took place during European Football Week 2005. Special Olympics Serbia staff worked with the teachers who implemented *SOGII* in their mainstream classrooms, as well as with teachers from special schools, to create teams to participate in Unified football. Each of the eight regions was responsible for forming teams and to do so, mainstream schools were matched with special schools to form teams. Coaches and teachers were trained on the goals of the Unified football component of the pilot project, on the selection of partners and athletes, and the formation of teams. Training materials also included the Unified Sports Guidebook, the coaching guide for football, the Special Olympics general rules book, and the 2003 Special Olympics Summer World Games video. Guidelines for forming teams were derived from Unified basketball. In total, 32 teams were created as part of the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project in Serbia. These teams came from 16 mainstream schools and 12 special schools representing Pirot, Krusevac, Cacak, Leskovac, Zajecar, Kragujevac, Pancevo, and Pazova. Twenty nine of the 32 teams participated in the evaluation representing each of the eight regions.

1. Athletes

One hundred and forty one athletes from 29 teams were interviewed about their experience in the pilot football project, giving a response rate of 81%. Almost all of the athletes in Serbia were male (99%) and ranged in age from 12 to 17 years old, with most athletes between the ages of 14 and 15 years (70%). Very few of the athletes, only 18%, had previous sport experience, primarily in clubs. Unlike athletes from the other participating countries, where football was the most popular sport, volleyball and track and field were the most commonly cited sports for these athletes. (See Table 23.)

Table 23. Athlete demographics (N = 141).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	99%
Female	1%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	3%
13 – 14	35%
15 – 16	62%
17 or older	1%
<i>Previous Sport Experience</i>	
Yes	18%
No	82%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Unified Sports	0%
Special Olympics	0%
School Team	0%
Club Team	16%
Other Team	0%

The athletes in Serbia joined the Unified football team for a number of reasons (see Table 24). As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that half of the athletes reported that their teachers invited them to join the team (51%). However, athletes had other reasons for joining the football program with the main reason being that they wanted to play football as part of a team (98%). In addition, many athletes said that they joined because they wanted to play football to learn new football skills (92%). Athletes also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; many athletes expressed wanting to join the team either to make new friends (92%) or because other friends were playing on the team (78%). It is clear that for athletes, the football experience was both about the sport and about the social aspects. For example, 97% of the athletes said they joined the Unified football team because it was an opportunity to both learn football skills and to make new friends. That is, playing football on a team is not mutually exclusive from the desire to develop friendships. Given that so few athletes had previous

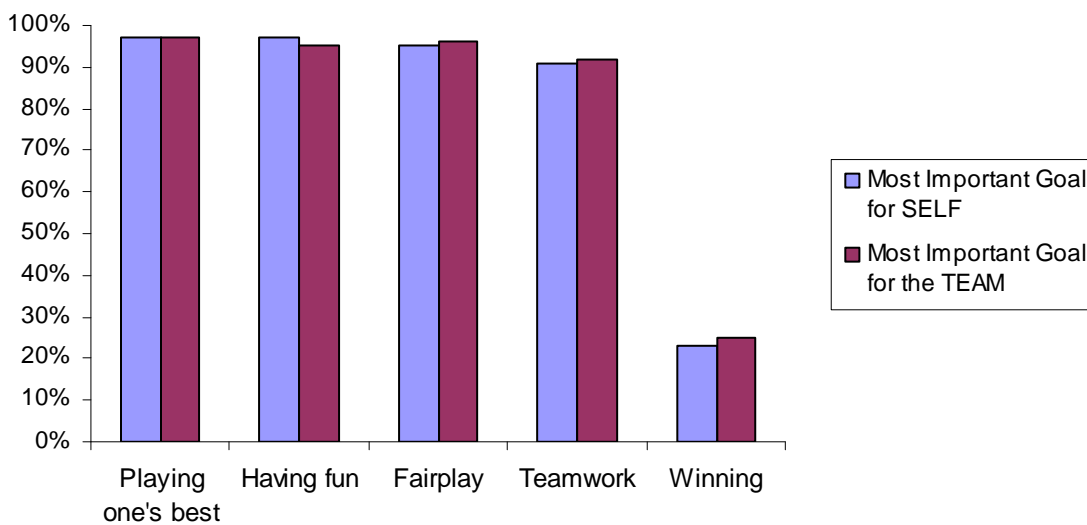
experience playing sports, it was not possible to look for relationships between previous sport experience and reasons for joining.

Table 24. Athletes’ reasons for joining Unified Football team.

Item	Percent Agreement
To play football on a team	97%
To learn new skills	92%
To make new friends	92%
Friends playing	78%
Teacher signed up	51%
Play football for fun	1%

Similar to reasons for participating, athletes may also have different goals for participation. Therefore, to better understand athletes’ perception of the Unified Football experience, they were asked about their personal top goal for competition (see Figure 23). Sample goals included teamwork, playing one’s best, winning, and having fun. However, athletes in Serbia gave more than one goal. For athletes in Serbia having fun (97%), playing your best (97%), fair play (95%) and teamwork (91%) were all important goals for competition. Interestingly, winning was by far the lowest ranked goal for athletes (23%). When asked about the goal they perceived as important for the team, athletes saw these goals similarly to their own personal goals.

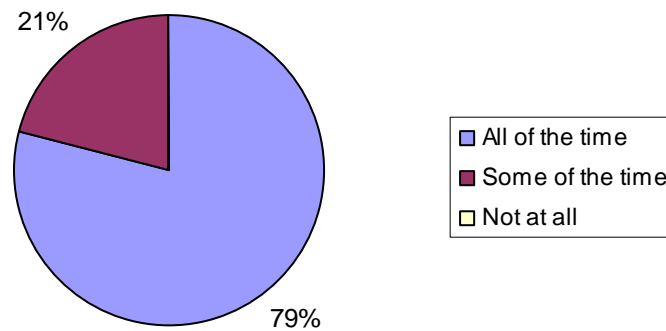
Figure 23. Athletes’ goal for competition.



Exertion of personal effort is a key determinant as to how participants perceive the quality of a program. In reflecting on their own effort, all of the athletes expressed that they played to the best of their ability all (79%) or some of the time (21%) (see Figure 24). When explaining what it meant to play to their best, several athletes (13%) commented that playing to their best meant giving their all, and a few mentioned that it means running fast and scoring goals.

Figure 24. Athletes' perception of personal effort.

How often do you play your best?



The Unified football experience also provided athletes with an opportunity to interact socially, with both other athletes and with partners. Many athletes took advantage of the opportunity as almost all (94%) said that they engaged in some type of social activity with other teammates (see Table 25). More specifically, almost all (92%) reported spending time with other athletes on their team while only one third (38%) reported spending time with partners on their team. Overall, 88% of athletes engaged in activities outside of Unified football with their whole team and most enjoyed these activities a lot or a little (77% and 17% respectively). When asked to describe the types of activities they most often do with their teammates, athletes reported that they played computer games or just 'hung out'. For those athletes who did not report engaging in social activities with their team, distance (27%) was the commonly cited reason.

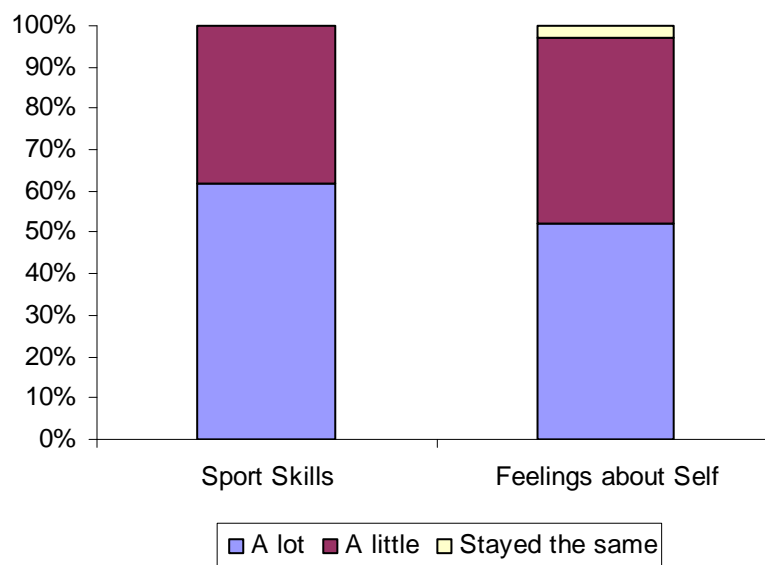
Table 25. Athletes' perceptions of social activities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	94%
No	6%
<i>If yes, who did you engage in activities with....</i>	
your whole team?	88%
other athletes?	92%
other partners?	38%

One of the objectives of the pilot project was to not only improve the sport skills of athletes, but also improve their feelings about themselves. All athletes expressed that their sport skills improved a lot (62%) or a little (38%) as a result of their participation in the football program (see Figure 25). Similarly, many athletes reported improvement in their feelings about themselves, with 52% of the athletes reporting that they felt a lot better about themselves after participating in Unified football.

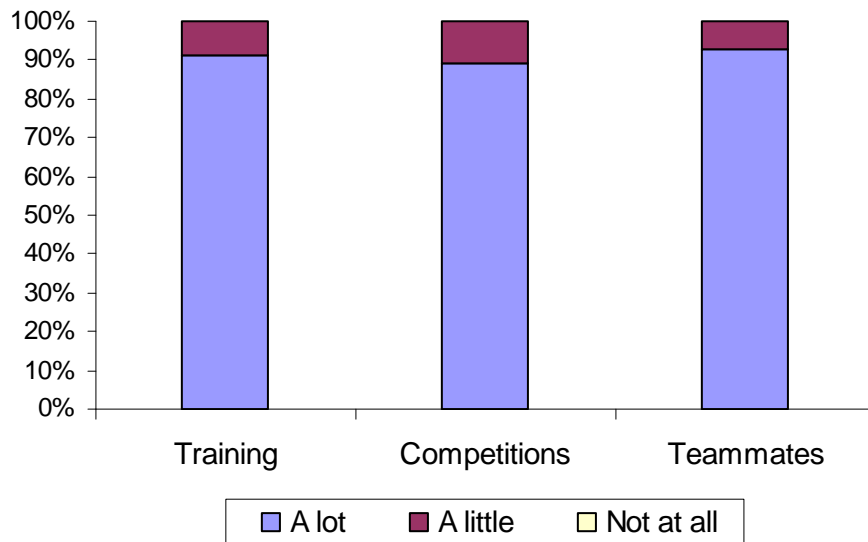
Figure 25. Personal gains of athlete.

Athlete improvement in...



Overall, the Unified football experience was a positive experience for the athletes in Serbia. Almost all of the athletes said that they very much enjoyed training (91%) and competitions (89%), and almost all of the athletes (93%) said they liked being with their teammates (see Figure 26). The experience was so positive that many of the athletes (77%) reported that they would like to participate in Unified football again in the coming year.

Figure 26. Athletes’ enjoyment of the Unified Football experience.



2. Partners

One hundred and forty nine partners from 29 teams were interviewed about their experience in the pilot football project, giving a response rate of 98%. Almost all of the partners were male (99%) and ranged in age from 11 to 17 years old, with many of the partners at age 15 (40%). As with the athletes, very few partners (11%) had previous experience on a team sport. However, unlike athletes, football was the most common sport for those few partners who played previously on either a school or club team. (See Table 26.)

For almost all of the partners (93%), the Unified football pilot program was a new opportunity to meet people with intellectual disabilities. In fact, only 5% of the partners reported knowing a person with an intellectual disability, primarily through an acquaintance. Not surprisingly, none of the partners knew an athlete before they began on the Unified team. (See Table 27.)

Table 26. Partner demographics (N = 149).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	99%
Female	1%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	26%
13-14	22%
15-16	50%
17 or older	1%
<i>Previous Sport Experience</i>	
Yes	11%
No	87%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Unified Sports	0%
Special Olympics	0%
School Team	7%
Club Team	4%
Other Team	0%

Table 27. Partners’ contact with people with intellectual disabilities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Know Anyone with ID?</i>	
Yes	5%
No	93%
<i>Who do you know?</i>	
Acquaintance	3%
Neighbor	1%
Someone at school	0%
Someone in your sports club	0%
Family member	0%
Other	0%
<i>Related to Teammate</i>	0%
<i>Know any athletes before training</i>	0%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

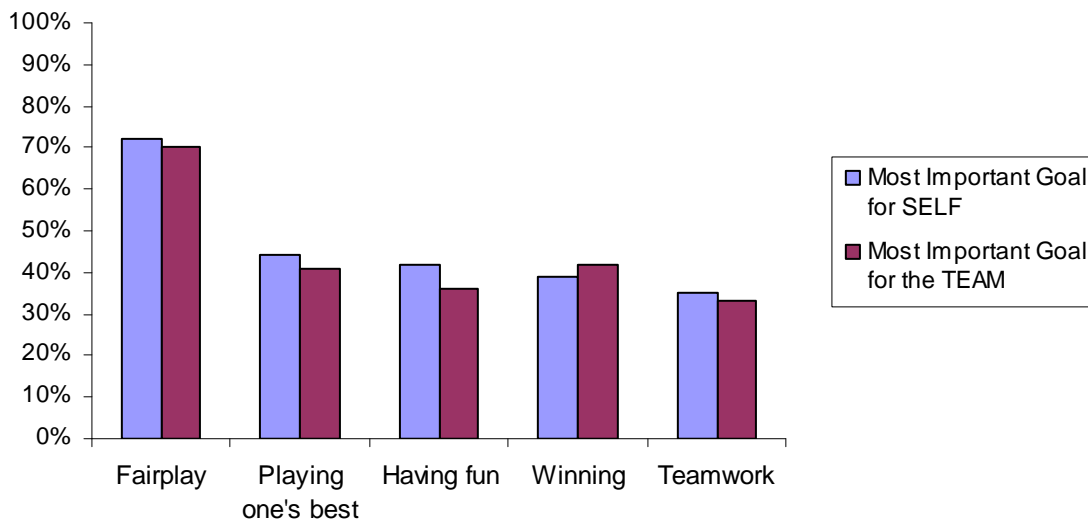
The partners in Serbia reported a variety of reasons for joining the Unified football team (see Table 28). As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that over half of the partners reported that their teachers invited them to join the team (56%). Others reported being asked by someone other than a teacher (31%). However, partners had other reasons for wanting to join the football program with the main reason being that they wanted to play football as part of a team (58%). In addition, many athletes said that they joined because they wanted to learn new football skills (40%). Partners also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; many partners expressed wanting to join the team either to make new friends (58%) or because other friends were playing on the team (40%). It is clear that for some partners in Serbia, the football experience was both about the sport and about the social aspects. For example, 40% of the partners said they joined the Unified football team because it was an opportunity to both learn football skills and to make new friends. Given that so few partners had previous experience playing sports, it was not possible to look for relationships between previous sport experience and reasons for joining.

Table 28. Partners’ reasons for joining.

Item	Percent Agreement
To make new friends	58%
To play football on a team	58%
Teacher signed up	56%
Friends playing	40%
To learn new skills	40%
Play football for fun	7%

Similar to reasons for participating, partners may also have different goals for participation. Therefore, to better understand the partners’ perception of the Unified football experience, they were asked about their personal top goal for competition (see Figure 27). However, similar to athletes, partners in Serbia gave more than one goal. Like athletes, winning was one of the partners’ lowest ranked goal (39%). However, partners showed more discrimination in their goals than athletes. Fair play was the most important goal for the majority of partners (72%) followed by playing your best and having fun (44% and 42% respectively). Partners’ perceived their overall team goals for competition as similar to their personal goals. For example, similar to the athletes, winning was one of the partners lowest ranked team goals (42%). Partners perceived fair play as the most important goal for the team (70%).

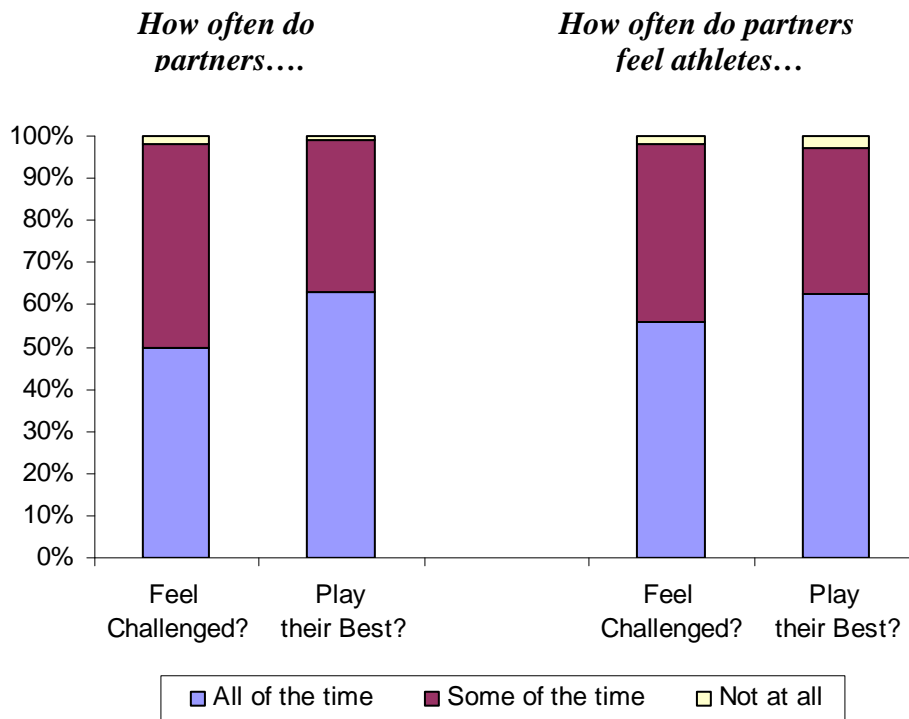
Figure 27. Partners’ goal for competition.



One of the concerns when developing a program such as the Unified Football pilot program is ensuring that the experience is challenging and exciting for the participating partners (i.e., Does the experience keep the partners engaged and interested? or Was the program challenging enough?). Given the lack of sport experience by partners in Serbia it was not surprising that overall most of the partners felt challenged all or some of the time (98%) by the experience (see Figure 28). In fact, only 2% of the partners expressed that they did not feel challenged at any time during training. Partners also reported that they played to the best of their ability either all of the time (62%) or some of the time (36%) during competitions, and that they contributed a lot to the team (45%).

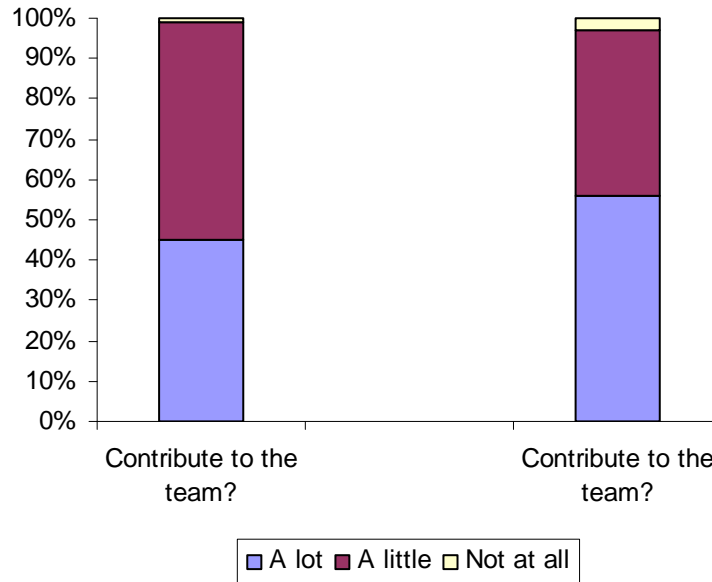
One of the goals of pilot project was to change the attitudes of the partners toward students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, in addition to reflecting on their own effort and contribution, partners were asked to reflect on the effort and contribution of the athletes. In all cases, the partners in Serbia perceived athletes as putting in the same or more effort than themselves. Partners believed that athletes were challenged by the trainings either all of the time (56%) or some of the time (42%), and that in competition, athletes played to their best all of the time (62%) or some of the time (34%). Many partners also believed that athletes contributed a lot to the team (56%).

Figure 28. Partners’ perceptions of challenge.*



How much do partners...

How much do partners feel athletes...



*Totals do not always equal 100% due to missing data.

For many partners, the Unified football project provided an opportunity to interact socially with their teammates. However, unlike athletes in Serbia, less than half of the partners (35%) reported engaging in any social activities with their teammates; only one-quarter (28%) of the partners reported engaging in activities with their whole team (see Table 29). The most common activity that partners cited was ‘hanging out’. Most partners that did participate in social activities with their team enjoyed these activities very much (83%). None of the partners gave a reason for why they did not engage in social activities with teammates.

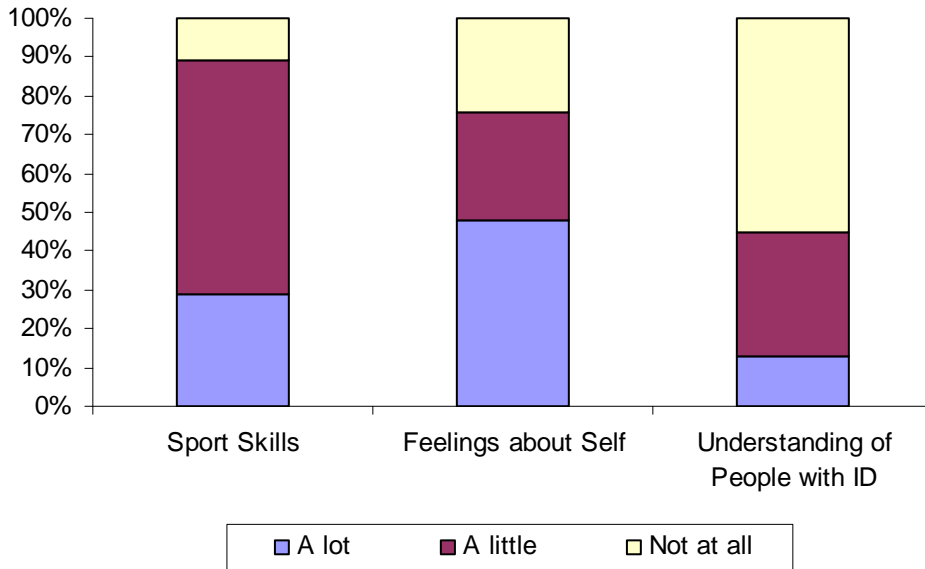
Table 29. Partners’ perceptions of social activities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	35%
No	65%
<i>If yes, who did you engage in activities with....</i>	
your whole team?	28%
other athletes?	22%
other partners?	32%

While one of the goals of Unified football for athletes was improvement in sport skills and sense of self, this improvement was not restricted to athletes. The partners in Serbia also perceived some improvements in their sport skills and feelings about themselves. Many partners (60%) reported that their sports skills improved a little, while just under half (48%) reported improvement in their feelings about themselves.

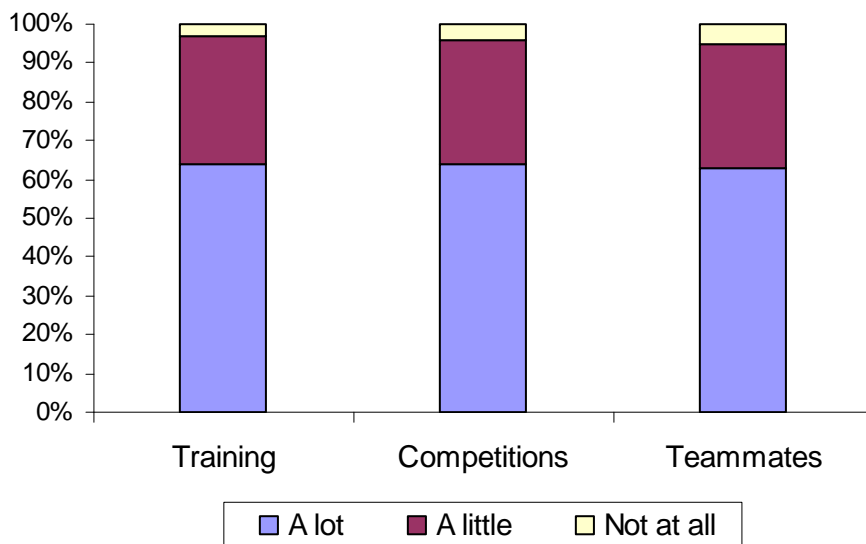
An additional goal of the evaluation for partners was to determine if their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their participation. Unexpectedly and somewhat discouragingly, half of the partners expressed that their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities did not change as a result of being on the team, with only 13% reporting that they experienced a lot of improvement in this area (see Figure 29). When asked about what they had learned about people with intellectual disabilities, several partners stated that people with intellectual disabilities are great to hang out with and can be your friends.

Figure 29 . Personal gains of partners.



Overall, the Unified football experience was satisfying for partners in Serbia. Most partners reported that they liked training (64%), competition (64%), and being with teammates (63%) a lot (see Figure 30). In addition, many partners (69%) said they would like to participate in Unified football in the coming year. When commenting on what they liked most about their experience, several of the partners responded that they liked making new friends and being with friends, and some also mentioned having the opportunity to travel.

Figure 30. Partners’ enjoyment of Unified Football experience.



3. Coaches

Description of Coaches. Thirty-six Unified football coaches representing 32 Unified football teams were surveyed about their participation. Twenty-one coaches completed the survey at the beginning of the school year, and 19 coaches completed the survey at the end of the school year. Four of the 36 coaches completed both surveys. Data from both surveys will be presented in this section.

Just over half of the coaches were male (17), and had a mean age of 41 years. Almost all have been involved in sports throughout their lives (with 20 reporting that they have played sports competitively, from the club level to the professional level) and although the sports played by coaches varied widely, most played football. All coaches were also teachers, 13 coming from special schools and 8 from regular schools, with an educational background in physical education and special education. Over half of the coaches (18) had students from their classes on their teams, and fourteen coaches, from regular and special schools, used the *SOGII* curriculum in their classrooms.

All of the Unified football coaches were volunteer coaches, with 12 having also coached traditional Special Olympics sports. Nearly all of those involved in traditional Special Olympics have been involved for three or fewer years. Nine coaches also coached other Unified Sports teams. In addition to their involvement with Special Olympics, many coaches have also coached outside of Special Olympics, with three having coached teams at the professional level. In addition, eight coaches completed training in coaching through Special Olympics, while two received training from another organization. Further, twelve have received training to work with people with disabilities. Nearly all of those coaches with involvement in either traditional Special Olympics or Unified Sports had received this training (10 coaches of traditional SO, 8 coaches of Unified Sports).

Description of Unified Football Players. Coaches were asked a series of questions about the athletes and partners on their Unified football team. Coaches reported that most athletes had either mild or moderate disabilities, and most lived with their families. According to the coaches, none of the partners were family members of athletes. When asked about their goals for the athletes and partners on the team, coaches reported somewhat different goals for each. For athletes, coaches reported that improved self-esteem and self-confidence was a primary goal, followed by improved social skills and improved sport skills. For partners, coaches reported that improved attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities was their primary goal, followed by improved friendships and improved sport skills. To help achieve their goals for partners in particular, coaches held separate orientation meetings which primarily included information about Special Olympics and Unified Sports, and a few coaches including information about intellectual disabilities.

Description of Unified Football Teams. The majority of Unified football teams had between two and four coaches who were assisted by family member volunteers and individuals from the school or community. Training sessions were held regularly, with almost all of the coaches reporting that their teams trained several times a month. Similarly, most Unified football teams competed several times per month as well. During training, coaches worked with both athletes

and partners equally to play in offensive and defensive positions. Each team did designate one or two athletes and partners solely to the goalkeeper position. To help coaches better structure the training sessions and drills and to plan competition strategies, coaches assessed players' football skills regularly, most often through note taking and the Special Olympics football skill checklist, with nearly all reporting that they assessed athletes and partners at every training session. Coaches used information gathered during the assessments to make position assignments, structure training sessions and drills, and to plan competition strategies. When asked to compare the skill levels of athletes and partners in a variety of skill areas, the majority of coaches rated partners as being more skilled than athletes in all skills areas, from basic skills like ball control, dribbling, passing, and shooting, to more complex skills, like heading and tackling.

Coaches were also asked about their goals for the team during competitions. The goal most often reported by coaches as important to the team was teamwork. Sportsmanship was the second most important goal, with achieving team best performance the third. It is clear from the results that most coaches emphasize team-oriented goals. In line with their emphasis on team goals, there was a perception of equality on the playing field by coaches. That is, when reflecting on the contributions of athletes and partners, nearly all coaches stated that both athletes and partners contributed to the team equally.

Finally, coaches were asked about their communication with family members of both athletes and partners. While most coaches reported that they often or sometimes communicated with athletes' family members, this communication was less frequent with the families of partners. With family members, coaches used a variety of methods to disseminate information about the team, including telephone calls, flyers, and parent meetings.

Challenges and Successes. When asked about problems they experienced throughout the year with their Unified football teams, coaches cited a variety of difficulties, most notably problems with training schedules, attendance of partners at training, facilities and equipment needs. As might be expected for a project in its pilot phase, nearly all coaches rated the availability of financial resources as a challenge for their teams.

While all coaches encountered some difficulties coaching a Unified football team, these challenges were outweighed but the many successes. After a year of involvement with the Unified football team, coaches reported that athletes and partners alike improved in various skill areas. For athletes, the change was most notable in those areas cited by coaches as their goals for athletes. Similarly, partners improved in those same skill areas; in particular, significant change was seen by coaches in partners' attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities.

4. Summary

For many participants in Serbia, the Unified football pilot project provided the first opportunity to play football on an organized team and certainly for most partners, the first time they had the opportunity to interact with their peers with intellectual disabilities. While athletes and partners had slightly different reasons for joining, most viewed the program as an opportunity to participate in sports and in social activities with friends. It is interesting that the Serbian athletes were more definitive in their responses about their experiences in Unified football than the

partners. Though the themes of social opportunity and learning sport skills were the same for both, athletes were much more effusive in their reasons for joining. Participants in Unified football received sport instruction from coaches, many of whom had experience working with children with intellectual disabilities and also had expertise in football. The coaches in Serbia made great efforts to provide an engaging and fun experience for the athletes and partners on the Unified football teams. Coaches treated athletes and partners equally during team trainings, emphasizing teamwork and sportsmanship.

Almost all athletes and many partners enjoyed the Unified football experience; not only the training and competition but also being with their teammates. While many partners felt the experience was challenging, they were hesitant to acknowledge the amount of effort they put forth. Similarly, most athletes reported improvement in their sport skills and in feelings about themselves while partners reported only some change in these areas. The reason the partners responded less positively could be due to cultural expectations for modesty. In fact, coaches noted that they saw much improvement in the sports skills and self-esteem of both athletes and partners.

For athletes in particular, Unified football provided an opportunity to participate in training and competition with their peers without intellectual disabilities. For partners, Unified football provided them with the opportunity to witness firsthand the capabilities of athletes; the partners themselves acknowledged an improvement in their understanding of intellectual disabilities. Coaches also reported improvements in athletes and partners understanding and acceptance of each other. From the perspective of the athletes, partners and coaches, the Unified football Serbia project was successful.

E. SLOVAKIA

Special Olympics Slovakia has been operating since 1990, when it was originally part of Special Olympics Czechoslovakia. Accredited in 1993 as an independent Program, Special Olympics Slovakia is currently headquartered in Bratislava, with two full time staff and several volunteers. At the time of the pilot project, Special Olympics Slovakia served 1,754 people with intellectual disabilities in 130 sports clubs across the three regions of the country. Special Olympics Slovakia's local programs are primarily school-based, though many athletes also come from social service shelters/internats for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Slovakia offers eleven summer sports and four winter sports as well as Unified Sports, Healthy Athletes, and the Athlete Leadership Program.

Since its inception, Special Olympics Slovakia has developed relationships with many organizations and sports clubs, including the Slovak Humanitarian Council, the Slovak Olympic Committee, and the Faculty of Sports at the Komenius University of Bratislava. In addition, relationships also exist between Special Olympics Slovakia and Slovak radio and the TV station TA3. Special Olympics Slovakia has strong working relationships with local high schools in Bratislava, Trenčín and other regions for recruiting volunteers for the different local events. Since 2002, Special Olympics Slovakia has offered a number of Unified Sports for players of all ages and is viewed as one of Special Olympics Slovakia's most successful programs. Currently, there is Unified cross-country skiing, swimming, volleyball, floor hockey, pairs ice skating, skiing, athletics, football and rhythmic gymnastics. Special Olympics Slovakia views Unified Sports as an opportunity to reduce or remove social and communication barriers between people with and without disabilities. Unified participants are generally primary-middle school age and college age. Every year, 10 to 15 Unified teams participate in the European Football Week and during the traditional Christmas tournament in Unified football, this number increases to 20 to 25 teams.

While Unified Sports was already an established component of Special Olympics Slovakia, Program staff decided to participate in the Special Olympics *Get Into It*TM (*SOGII*)/Unified football pilot project in 2004/2005. Special Olympics Slovakia hoped that the program would better their relationships with both special and regular schools, and improve the understanding and awareness in the community about Special Olympics activities. In addition, Program staff saw great value in the curriculum because it promotes Special Olympics while also teaching youth about intellectual disabilities and the importance of being tolerant.

To prepare the curriculum for schools, Program staff translated the *SOGII* curriculum into Slovak and made minor changes to the supplemental materials to enhance its cultural relevance. For example, the title "SO Get Into It" was translated to "*SOGII* – Join Us!". Program staff also substituted some of the supplemental materials with their own Special Olympics Slovakia materials, (i.e. stories of Slovak athletes, newsletters, and information on local programs), rather than using the American materials (such as the "Loretta Claiborne Story"). However, Program staff ensured that the final translated and adapted curriculum remained true to the original kits.

Special Olympics Slovakia presented the *SOGII* curriculum to the Ministry of Education and asked for their assistance in recruiting schools for participation. Personal calls were made to

school headmasters to recruit them into the program; these headmasters were given the option of using the Slovak version or the English version. Special Olympics Program staff arranged training sessions for teachers in the different towns. It is interesting to note that approximately one-third of the teachers were already familiar with Special Olympics.

As of December 2006, 30 schools in Slovakia had implemented the *SOGII* curriculum, most often presented during PE class, Civics class or English class. Generally, most teachers went through the whole curriculum as laid out in the kit, though they had some freedom to implement the curriculum as they wanted.

A total of 16 mainstream schools and 14 special schools were recruited for participation in the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project, resulting in a total of 16 Unified football teams. The *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot project was formed through partnerships established between special schools and regular schools. In recruiting athletes and partners for the Unified football teams, teachers and coaches looked at ability level as a major determinant and partners with lower football abilities were targeted for participation. Approximately half of the partners came from classes where the *SOGII* curriculum was being used. Only four teams were selected to participate in the evaluation due to concerns about access to athletes and partners on the teams.

1. Athletes

Thirty-nine athletes from the four selected teams were interviewed about their experience in the pilot football project, giving a response rate of 98%. All the athletes were male and ranged in age from 13 to 17 years old, with the majority of athletes between the ages of 13 and 16 years (93%). Over half of the athletes (54%) came into the pilot football project with previous sport experience, having participated in Special Olympics (91%) and playing on school teams (91%). Football was the most commonly cited sport for these athletes (81%). (See Table 30.)

The athletes in Slovakia joined the Unified football team for a number of reasons. As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that well over half of the athletes reported that their teachers invited them to join the team (72%). However, athletes had other reasons for wanting to join the football program, with the main reason being that it allowed them to play football on a team (85%). In addition, many athletes said they joined to learn football skills (64%). Athletes also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; many athletes expressed wanting to join the team because other friends were playing on the team (69%) or to make new friends (44%). It is clear that although many athletes were asked to participate in Unified football by their teachers, they were primarily motivated to join to be part of a team and to participate alongside their friends. For athletes, the football experience was both about the sport and about the social aspects. For example, over half of the athletes (59%) said they joined the Unified team because it was an opportunity to play on a football team and play alongside their friends. Previous sport experience had no impact on the reasons for athletes to join a Unified football team (for each reason $p > .05$). That is, athletes with previous sport experience were just as likely to join the Unified football team for sport and social reasons as partners without previous sport experience. (See Table 31.)

Table 30. Athlete demographics (N=39).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	100%
Female	0%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	0%
13-14	47%
15-16	46%
17 or older	3%
<i>Previous Sport Experience</i>	
Yes	54%
No	46%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
Unified Sports	0%
Special Olympics	49%
School Team	41%
Club Team	0%
Other Team	0%
<i>Related to Teammate</i>	8%

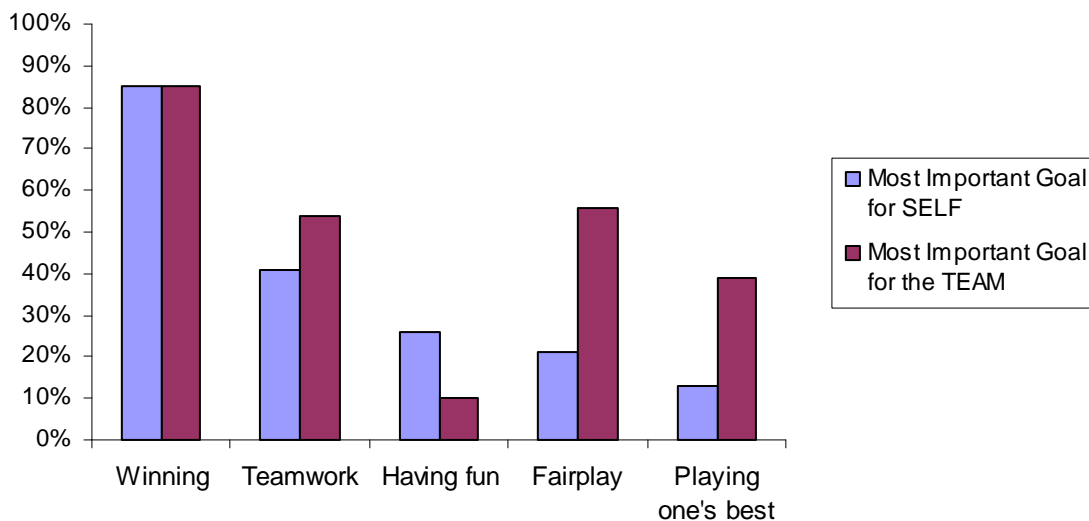
Table 31. Athletes’ reasons for joining Unified Football Team.

Item	Percent Agreement
To play football on a team	85%
Teacher signed up	72%
Friends playing	69%
To learn new skills	64%
To make new friends	44%
Play football for fun	23%
Improve skills	5%*

*Responses falling into this category were offered by spontaneously by the athletes.

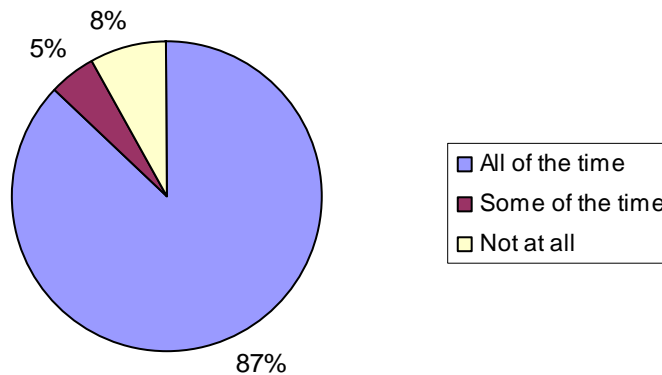
Similar to reasons for participating, athletes may also have different goals for participation. Therefore, to better understand athletes’ perception of the Unified Football experience, they were asked about their personal top goal for competition (see Figure 31). Sample goals included teamwork, playing one’s best, winning, and having fun. However, athletes in Slovakia gave more than one goal. Interestingly, unlike all other participating countries, for athletes in Slovakia, winning was the highest ranked personal as well as top team goal (85%). Other personal goals included teamwork (41%) followed by having fun, fair play and playing to one’s best (26%, 21%, and 13% respectively). When asked about the other goals they perceive as important to the team, athletes ranked fair play (56%) and teamwork (54%) as important. The lowest ranked team goal by athletes was having fun (10%).

Figure 31. Athletes’ goal for competition.



Exertion of personal effort is a key determinant as to how participants perceive the quality of a program. In reflecting on their own effort, almost all of the athletes (87%) expressed that they played to the best of their ability all of the time (see Figure 32). When explaining what it meant to play to their best, some athletes commented that playing to their best was related to sport skills, such as running, shooting, getting the ball or protecting the goal. A few athletes mentioned that playing one's best meant playing their best, like being the best shooter, being a captain or playing as well as the others.

Figure 32. Athletes' perception of personal effort.



The Unified football experience also provided athletes with an opportunity to interact socially, both with other athletes and with partners. All of the athletes (100%) reported that they engaged in some type of social activity with other teammates (see Table 32). More specifically, all of the athletes reported spending time with other athletes on their team, and nearly half (49%) reported spending time with partners on their team. Overall, nearly half of the athletes engaged in activities outside of Unified football with their teammates (i.e., that included both partners and athletes). When asked to describe the types of activities they most often do with their teammates, athletes reported that they played sports or just 'hung out'. For those athletes who reported not engaging in social activities with the partners on their team, time (5%) and distance (10%) were the commonly cited reasons.

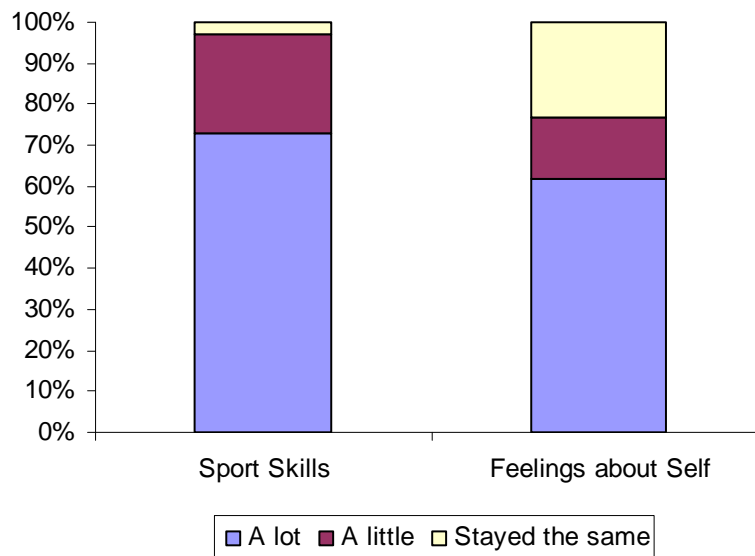
Table 32. Athletes’ perceptions of social activities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	100%
No	0%
<i>If yes, who did you engage in activities with....</i>	
your whole team?	44%
other athletes?	100%
other partners?	49%

One of the major objectives of the pilot project was to improve the sport skills of athletes, and also improve their feelings about themselves. Almost all athletes expressed that their sport skills improved a lot (72%) as a result of their participation in the football program, with only 3% reporting that their sport skills stayed the same (see Figure 33). Similarly, most athletes reported improvement in their feelings about themselves, with 62% of the athletes reporting that they felt a lot better about themselves after participating in Unified football.

Figure 33. Personal gains of athlete.*

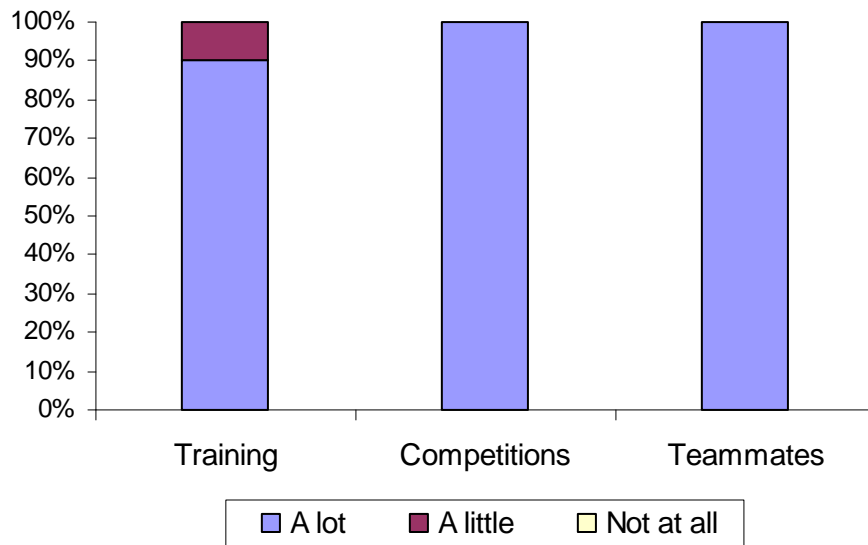
Athlete improvement in...



*Totals do not always equal 100% due to missing data.

Overall, the Unified football experience was a positive experience for the athletes in Slovakia. Almost all of the athletes said that they very much enjoyed training (90%) and all of the athletes (100%) said that they enjoyed the competitions and being with their teammates (see Figure 34). In fact, almost all athletes (82%) said they would like to participate in Unified football in the coming year. In addition, when asked what they liked most about their experience, close to half of the athletes said they valued the friendships they had made through Unified football.

Figure 34. Athletes’ enjoyment of with Unified Football experience.



2. Partners

Thirty-one partners from the same four selected teams were interviewed about their experience in the Unified football project giving a response rate of 78%. The partners, all male, ranged in age from 13 to 16 years old, with most of the partners between the ages of 15 and 16 years (71%). Nearly two-thirds of the partners (61%) came into the pilot football project with previous sport experience, having played in a sport club (42%) or on a school team (79%). Similar to the athletes, the most popular sport that the partners played before joining the pilot project was football (74%). (See Table 33.)

For almost all partners (87%), the Unified football pilot program was a new opportunity to meet people with intellectual disabilities. For the partners who reported previous contact with people with intellectual disabilities, two partners reported having a family member with an intellectual disability and two partners knew a neighbor with an intellectual disability. Very few partners (16%) reported knowing any of the athletes on their team before the Unified football training began. (See Table 34.)

Table 33. Partner demographics (N=31).

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	100%
Female	0%
<i>Age</i>	
12 or younger	0%
13-14	26%
15-16	71%
17 or older	0%
<i>Previous Sport Experience?</i>	
Yes	61%
No	39%
<i>What type of experience?</i>	
School Team	48%
Club Team	26%
Unified Sports	3%
Special Olympics	0%
Other Team	0%

Table 34. Partners’ contact with people with intellectual disabilities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Know Anyone with ID?</i>	
Yes	13%
No	87%
<i>Who do you know?</i>	
Family member	7%
Neighbor	7%
Someone at school	0%
Acquaintance	0%
Other	0%
Someone in your sports club	0%
<i>Related to Teammate</i>	10%
<i>Know any athletes before training?</i>	16%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

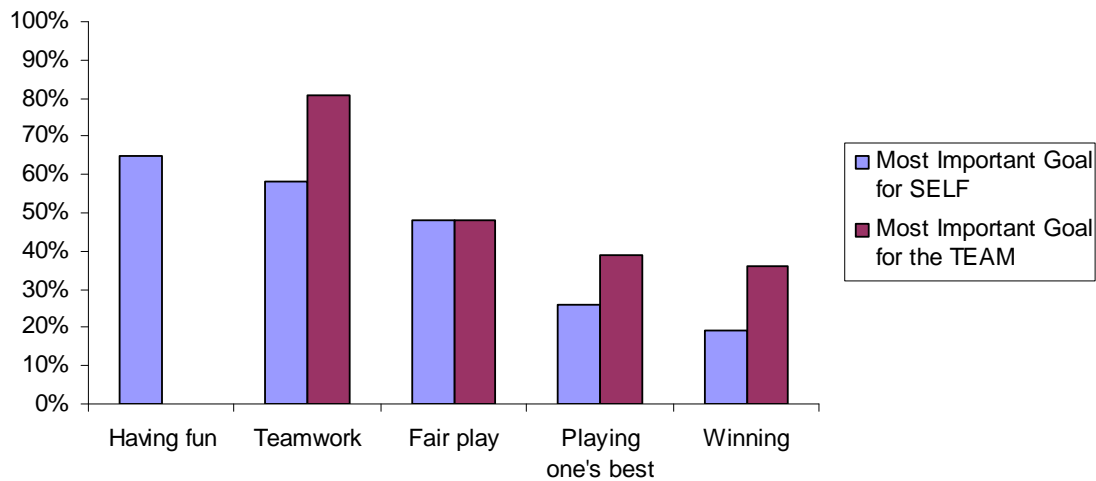
The partners in Slovakia reported a variety of reasons for joining the Unified football team. As this pilot project was school-based, it is not surprising that many of the partners reported that their teachers invited them to join the team (42%) (see Table 35). However, partners had other reasons for wanting to join the football program with the main reason being that they wanted to play football on a team (52%). In addition, many partners said that they joined because they wanted to learn new football skills (36%). Like athletes in Slovakia, many partners also had social motives for joining the Unified teams; many partners expressed wanting to join the team either because they wanted to make new friends (39%) or because other friends were playing on the team (32%). Somewhat surprisingly, a few partners said they joined Unified football so that they could meet people with disabilities (13%) and over a third joined out of curiosity (36%). This is quite notable given that so many partners reported no previous contact with a person with an intellectual disability. Similar to what was found with athletes, previous sport experience had no impact on the reasons for partners to join a Unified football team (for each reason, significance ranged from $p > .05$). That is, partners with previous sport experience were just as likely to join the Unified football team for sport and social reasons as partners without previous sport experience.

Table 35. Partner's reasons for joining.

Item	Percent Agreement
To play football on a team	52%
Teacher signed up	42%
Friends playing	32%
To make new friends	39%
To learn new skills	32%
Curiosity	36%*
Play football for fun	7%
Meet kids with ID	13%*

*Responses falling into this category were offered by spontaneously by the partners.

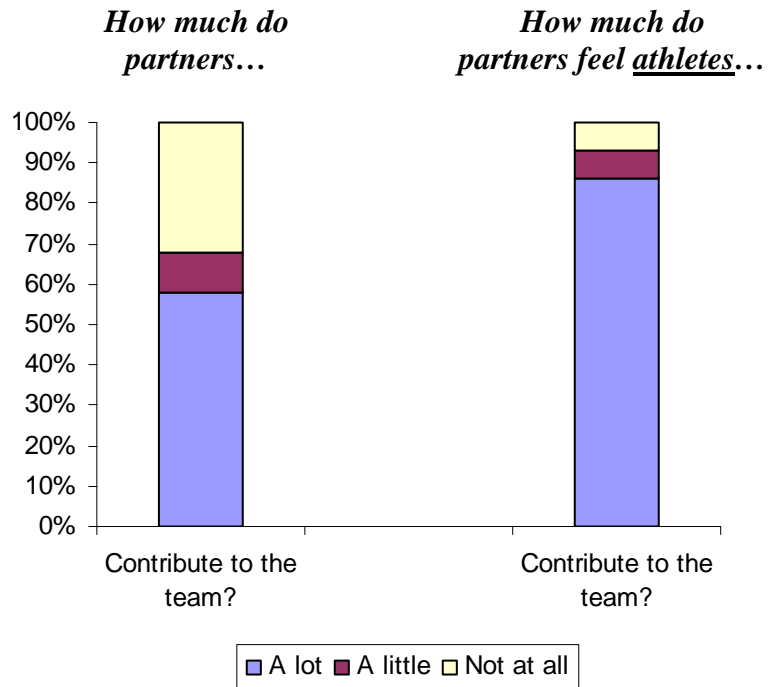
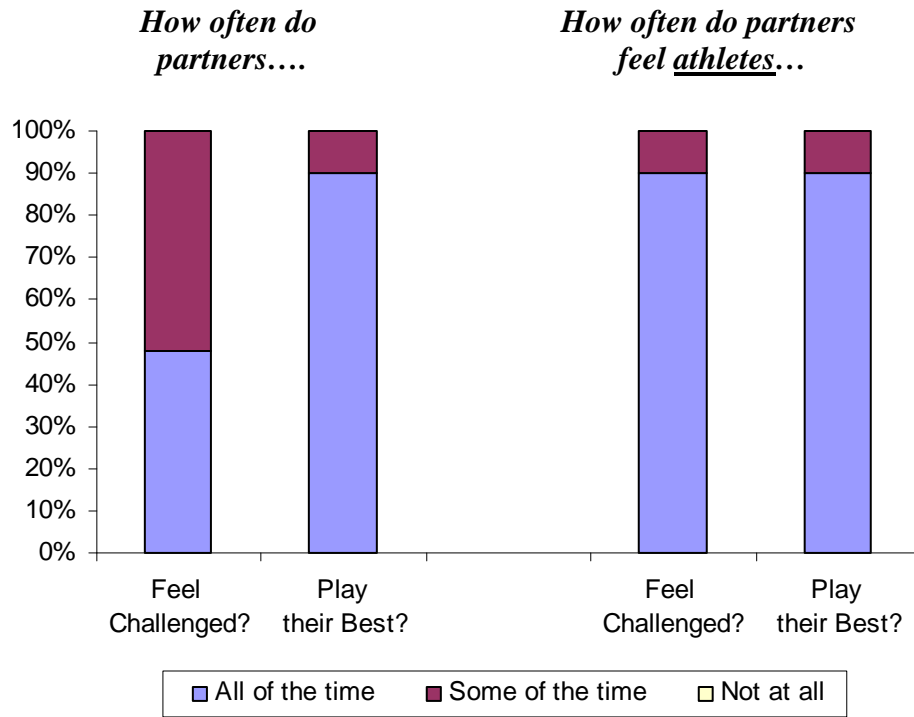
Similar to reasons for participating, partners may also have different goals for participation. Therefore, to better understand partners' perception of the Unified football experience, each was asked about his/her personal top goal for competition (see Figure 35). However, similar to athletes, partners in Slovakia gave more than one goal. In stark contrast to the athletes in Slovakia, and more similar to partners from other countries, winning was partners' lowest ranked goal (19%). Having fun was an important goal for partners as was teamwork (65% and 58% respectively), followed by fair play (48%). Partners did perceive the overall team goals as different from their personal goals and from the goals of athletes. For example, unlike athletes who perceived winning as the most important goal for the team, partners' perceived teamwork as the most important goal (81%) and only one-third of the partners perceived winning as the most important goal of the team overall. Interestingly, their top personal goal of having fun was not mentioned at all.

Figure 35. Partners' goal for competition.

One of the concerns when developing a program such as the Unified Football pilot program is ensuring that the experience is challenging and exciting for the participating partners (i.e., Does the experience keep the partners engaged and interested? or Was the program challenging enough?). Most of the participating partners felt that they were challenged all the time (41%) or some of the time (46%) during training (see Figure 36). In fact, no partners expressed that they did not feel challenged at any time during training. When asked to explain their perception of what it meant to feel challenged, partners expressed that being challenged meant training hard and not slacking. When asked about their contribution to the team, more than half of the partners reported that they contributed a lot to the team (58%) and played to the best of their ability either all of the time (90%) or some of the time (10%) during competitions. For partners, playing to their best meant doing their best during competition or supporting the team.

One of the goals of pilot project was to change the attitudes of the partners toward students with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, in addition to reflecting on their own effort and contribution, partners were asked to reflect on the effort and contribution of the athletes. Overall, the partners believed that athletes put in the same or more effort than themselves. Partners believed that athletes were challenged by the trainings either all of the time (71%) or some of the time (29%), and that in competition, athletes played to their best all of the time (90%). Even more striking, almost all of the partners believed that athletes contributed a lot to the team (87%).

Figure 36. Partners' perceptions of challenge.



For many partners, the Unified football project provided an opportunity to interact socially with teammates. Similar to athletes in Slovakia, almost all partners (93%) took advantage of the opportunity and reported that they did engage in social activities with other teammates (see Table 36). More specifically, most partners (87%) said that they spent time with other partners outside of Unified football and half (52%) reported spending time with athletes. Common activities that partners engaged in with other partners and athletes included playing sports and just “hanging out”. Interestingly, less than half (45%) of the partners engaged in social activities with their whole team (i.e. both partners and athletes together) however those that did enjoyed these activities a lot. Time and distance (20%) were the most commonly cited reasons that partners did not interact with teammates outside of training or competitions.

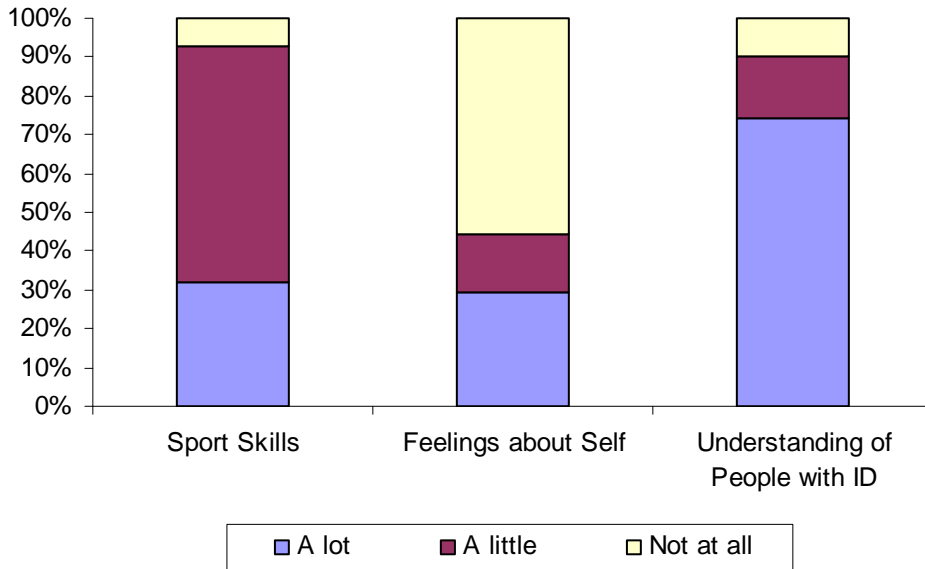
While one of the goals of Unified football for athletes was improvement in sport skills and sense of self, this improvement was not restricted to athletes. Over half of the partners (61%) reported that their sport skills improved a little, and 32% felt they improved a lot. However, unlike partners from other countries, the majority of partners in Slovakia (55%) noted that being on the Unified football team did not change their feelings of themselves, with only 29% reporting that they felt a lot better about themselves as a result of their participation.

An additional goal of the evaluation for partners was to determine if their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their participation in Unified Football. Encouragingly, most partners did feel that their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities improved as a result of their involvement (see Figure 37). In fact, almost all partners felt that their understanding improved a little or a lot (74% and 16% respectively). When asked more specifically about what they had learned about people with intellectual disabilities, 42% of the partners stated that they recognized that the athletes were just the same as them and others (28%) noted that they can be your friends. Some partners also recognized that athletes may need more time to do things and may need help, but that they try hard.

Table 36. Partners’ perceptions of social activities.

Item	Percent Agreement
<i>Did you engage in social activities with other teammates?</i>	
Yes	93%
No	7%
<i>If yes, who did you engage in activities with....</i>	
your wholeteam?	42%
other athletes?	52%
other partners?	87%

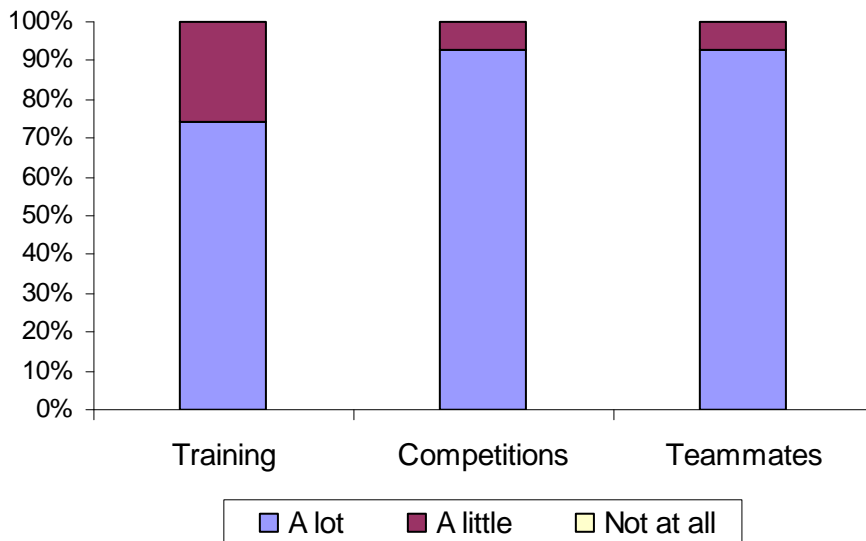
Figure 37. Personal gains of partners.*



*Totals do not always equal 100% due to missing data.

Overall, the Unified football experience was satisfying for partners. Almost all the partners reported that they liked training (74%), competition (93%) and being with teammates (93%) a lot (see Figure 38). In addition, half of the partners (52%) said they wanted to participate in Unified football in the coming year, and all of the partners said that they told others about their experience on the team. When commenting on what they liked most about their experience, 23% of the partners responded that they liked making new friends, while 33% stated that they enjoyed providing opportunities for their teammates to play and feel good.

Figure 38. Partner enjoyment of Unified Football experience.



3. Coaches

Description of Coaches. Eleven Unified football coaches representing four Unified football teams were surveyed about their participation. Ten coaches completed the survey at the beginning of the school year, and one coach completed the survey at the end of the school year. Data from both surveys will be presented in this section.

Coaches were mostly male and had a mean age of 38 years. Almost all have been involved in sports throughout their lives (with all reporting that they have played sports competitively) although the sports played by coaches varied widely, with just under half having played football competitively, from the club level to the professional level. Most of these coaches (8) were also teachers, with seven teaching at special schools. All of the coaches had students from their classes on their teams and all used the *SOGII* curriculum in their classrooms.

All but one of the Unified football coaches were volunteer coaches. Nearly all also coached traditional Special Olympics sports as well as other Unified Sports teams. Six of these coaches have also coached outside of Special Olympics in schools and sport clubs. Most of those involved in traditional Special Olympics have been involved for more than three years, with one coach stating involvement for 15 years. In addition, nearly all reported that they chose to coach Unified football because of their belief in inclusion and their desire to work with people with intellectual disabilities.

In addition, just over half of the coaches (7) also had an educational background in physical and special education and all coaches completed training in coaching through Special Olympics. Some coaches also received additional training from other organizations, including federation licensure, while many had training to work with people with disabilities.

Description of Unified Football Players. Coaches were asked a series of questions about the athletes and partners on their Unified football teams. Coaches reported that most athletes had either mild or moderate disabilities, and most lived with their families. In general, partners were not family members of athletes. When asked about their goals for the athletes and the partners on their team, coaches reported similar goals for each. For athletes, coaches reported that improved self-esteem and self-confidence was a primary goal, followed by improved friendship and improved sport skills. For partners, coaches reported that improved attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities was their primary goal, followed by improved friendships and improved sport skills. To help achieve their goals for partners in particular, coaches held separate orientation meetings which primarily included information about intellectual disabilities, and some coaches also provided information about Special Olympics and Unified Sports.

Description of Unified Football Teams. The majority of the Unified football teams had two coaches who were assisted by family member volunteers and individuals from the school or community. Teams in Slovakia were mostly organized through schools, but two were identified as being run through the local sport club. Training sessions were held weekly, and all teams competed monthly. During training, coaches worked with both athletes and partners equally to play in offensive and defensive positions, however, each team did designate one or two athletes and partners solely to the goalkeeper position. To help coaches better structure the training

sessions and drills and to plan competition strategies, coaches assessed athletes' football skills monthly or quarterly, most often using the Special Olympics-provided football skill checklist, checklists they created, and through personal note taking. When asked to compare the skill levels of athletes and partners in a variety of skill areas, coaches rated athletes and partners as being equally skilled in the basic skills, like ball control, dribbling, passing, and shooting. However, for the complex skills, like heading and tackling, coaches rated partners as being more skilled than athletes.

Coaches were also asked about their goals for their team during competitions. Coaches most often reported sportsmanship and teamwork as important goals for the team. In line with their emphasis on team goals, there was a perception of equality on the playing field by coaches. That is, when reflecting on the contributions of athletes and partners, nearly all coaches stated that both athletes and partners contributed to the team equally.

Finally, coaches were asked about their communication with family members of both athletes and partners. While most coaches reported that they often or sometimes communicated with athletes' family members, this communication was less frequent with the families of partners. This may be due in part to the fact that many coaches were also teachers from the special schools. When communication did take place, coaches used a variety of methods to disseminate information about the team, including telephone calls, flyers, parent meetings and even email. Interestingly, coaches also stated that they communicated with one another and other school personnel as well as with Special Olympics Slovakia staff and members of the community.

Challenges and Successes. When asked about problems they experienced throughout the year with their Unified football teams coaches cited a variety of difficulties, most notably problems with recruiting partners, matching ability levels, transportation to competitions, and financial resources. However, while all coaches encountered some difficulties coaching a Unified football team, these challenges were outweighed but the many successes. After a year of involvement with the Unified football team, coaches reported that athletes and partners alike improved in various skill areas. For athletes, the change was most notable in those areas cited by coaches as their goals for athletes (e.g., self- esteem, friendships, sport skills, etc.) Similarly, while partners improved in those same skill areas a significant change was also seen by coaches in partners' attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities.

4. Family Members

In Slovakia, 18 family members of athletes and 30 family members of partners were surveyed about their child's experience in the Unified football project. In addition, eight educators reported as care-givers for athletes were surveyed. [Note, these care-givers are not included in the following description.] Almost all of these family members for both athletes and partners were parents (89% and 90% respectively). Two-thirds of the family members of the athletes (67%) were male, and one third (33%) were female. Over half of the family members of partners were male (55%) and 41% of the family members were female. The family members ranged in age from 22 to 50, with the mean age for family members of athletes and partners being 40 years. The family members of partners were slightly more educated than family members of athletes. Approximately one-third of the family members of partners had at least some university level

education, with 29% of these family members being university graduates. High school was the highest level of education for 61% of family members of partners. Many more family members of athletes (78%) were educated at the high school level with only 17% having a university degree. However, most family members of athletes (78%) and partners (81%) were employed full-time.

To better understand the experiences of family members of both athletes and partners with intellectual disabilities, questions were included that asked about previous contact with individuals with intellectual disabilities. Very few of the family members of athletes or partners (6% and 4% respectively) reported having another family member with an intellectual disability. Not surprisingly, all of the parents of the athletes reported knowing a person with an intellectual disability outside of their family, solely through their child's school. In contrast, only 31% of the parents of partners surveyed reported such contact. In addition, most of the athletes' parents (89%) have been previously involved with Special Olympics, with almost all reporting that their child participated on a SO team before (89%). Many parents of athletes have personally attended an SO event (72%) and almost half (48%) have volunteered for SO in the past. Interestingly, some family members of partners have also had some previous exposure to with SO (35%). In fact, on third of parents of partners (30%) have attended an SO event.

When asked about how their child became involved in the Unified football program, the family members of athletes and partners were similar in their responses. Most family members reported that their children became involved in the program because a teacher signed them up (83% for both family members of athletes and of partners). A quarter of the family members of athletes (28%) reported that their children volunteered to participate, while two-thirds of the family members of partners reported the same (66%).

The parents of athletes and partners did differ in terms of their communication with the coaches. Overall, parents of athletes communicated with coaches more frequently than the parents of partners. For the family members of athletes, almost all reported that they communicated with coaches either often or sometimes (72% and 22% respectively). When asked how they most often received information about their child's team, parents of athletes reported that they learned about the team activities through meetings with their child's teacher or the coach (100%), directly from their children (89%) or through attending a training or competition (89%). Half of the parents of partners reported that they only sometimes (48%) communicated with their child's coach, while one-third reported communicated often with their child's coach. Similar to parents of athletes, almost all parents of partners reported that they learned about team activities from their children (93%). In contrast, fewer parents of partners reported receiving information about Unified sports from meetings with their child's coach or teacher (66%) or through attending a training or competition (62%).

Interestingly, family members of athletes were also more likely to communicate with the family members of their child's teammates. However, communication was almost entirely with the family members of other athletes (94%). Only a few family members of athletes (11%) reported communication with family members of partners. Similarly, family members of partners were

more likely to report communication with other partner families (59%) than with athlete families (19%).

The family members of athletes and partners were also somewhat different with regard to their personal involvement with the team. Overall, the family members of the athletes were very involved in their child's team with most attending trainings and competitions (94%). Fewer family members of partners reported the same, with just over half (62%) attending a training or competition (55%). Family members of athletes were also involved in the Unified football teams in other ways with over half (61%) reporting that they volunteered for the team and just over a quarter (28%) reporting that they participated in some of the organized social activities. In addition, some family members of athletes reported that other family members were also involved in the Unified football teams; for example, their spouse attended trainings (72%) or competitions (61%), acted as a volunteer (50%) or participated in other team social activities (67%). The family members of partners were not as involved in the team activities. One-third of the family members of partners volunteered with the team (31%), and only 7% participated in team social activities. Some family members of partners did report that their spouse also attended trainings (17%) or volunteered (10%).

One of the goals of the Unified football project was to benefit the athlete and the partner personally (social skills, sport skills, friendships, etc.). Therefore, family members of athletes and partners were asked about how the Unified football experience benefited their child. Most of the family members of athletes (78%) rated their child's coach as very good in coaching children with and without intellectual disabilities, while 45% of the family members of partners felt the same. However, many family members of partners (43%) did not feel that they could rate the coach in this regard, perhaps due to their limited involvement in the team or to their own limited understanding of intellectual disabilities. As for their child's participation on the team, most family members of athletes and partners believed that their child had an equal chance to play (89% athletes, 69% partners) and most also believed that their child was challenged by the trainings and competition (83% athletes and 76% partners). However, parents of athletes and partners had differing views regarding whether their child's playing time was impacted by being on an integrated team. Interestingly, two-thirds of the family members of athletes perceived the integrated team as having a major impact on their child's time on the field, while the remaining third perceived no impact. That is, less than half of the parents of athletes did not believe that their child played more or less because there were players without intellectual disabilities on the team. In contrast, the majority of the family members of partners (71%) did not think that the integrated team was adversely impacting their child's time on the field. These findings are somewhat encouraging given that there is often an expectation that integration will have a negative effect on the child without disabilities. Interestingly, parents of partners were more likely to believe that the teams worked very well together than parents of athletes (65% partners and 6% athletes). It is clear that family members of athletes and partners had somewhat differing perceptions of their child's experience.

Family members of both athletes and partners were asked to rate their top goal for their child's participation in the Unified football project from a list of five goals (improved sport skills, self-esteem and self-confidence, health, social skills, and friendship). The most important goal family members of athletes held for their children was improved health (87%), while improved sport

skills was the second most important goal (47%). Family members of partners had a different goal for their children as the family members of athletes; the most important goal family members of partners held for their children was improved sport skills (61%), while improved friendship was the second most important goal (50%). Other important goals included improved self-esteem (40% of family members of athletes, and 47% of family members of partners saw self-esteem as a top second goal) and improved social skills. Parents were also asked about the values they emphasized to their child during competition including winning, teamwork, sportsmanship, best performance, and fun. Among these values, family members of athletes and partners both emphasized sportsmanship the most (86% athletes and 70% partners).

Family members were also asked to rate the extent to which their child had improved in a number of areas (for example, sport skills, self-esteem and self-confidence, friendships). Overall, both parents of athletes and partners saw improvements in their child. Many family members of athletes (67%) and almost all family members of partners (93%) saw a little improvement in their child's health as a result of their participation in Unified football. In addition, over half of the family members of athletes (61%) saw a little of improvement in their child's sport skills and nearly three-fourths of the family members of partners (73%) also saw a little of improvement in this area. Further, while not a top goal for family members, 61% of the family members of athletes reported a lot of improvement in their child's social skills, and almost all (89%) reported a lot of improvement in their child's relationships with other athletes. Dramatically, all family members of athletes reported some improvement in friendships with partners. Half of the parents of partners saw some improvement (50%) in their child's social skills, and almost all of the parents of partners saw a little improvement in their child's friendships with athletes. On a positive note, many parents of partners (69%) reported that they noticed a lot of improvement in their child's understanding of people with intellectual disabilities.

In addition to asking family members about their perceptions of the Unified football experience for their children, they were also asked about their own attitudes toward children with intellectual disabilities. Specifically family members were asked about their beliefs about inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities on sport teams as well as in terms of their inclusion in school settings. While all family members of athletes and partners perceive children with intellectual disabilities as capable of playing on an integrated sports team, and of making friends with kids with out intellectual disabilities, the majority of family members of partners (80%) do not perceive children with intellectual disabilities as capable of learning with children without disabilities. Although the reasons are unclear, many of the parents of athletes (67%) and almost all of the parents of partners (97%) believe that having children with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team creates more safety concerns.

Overall, family members of athletes and partners were very to mostly satisfied with their child's experience on the Unified football team. All of the family members were interested in their child continuing participation in Unified football. In addition, almost all of the family members of athletes (89%) and over half of the family members of parents (52%) said they would definitely recommend Unified Sports to other families.

5. Summary

For many participants in Slovakia, the Unified program provided the first opportunity to play football on an organized team and certainly for most partners, the first time they had the opportunity to interact with people with intellectual disabilities. For both athletes and partners, their teacher's invitation to join the Unified Football teams was an important reason for their participation, as was the opportunity to play on an organized sports team. Participants in Unified football received sport instruction from coaches, many of whom had experience working with children with intellectual disabilities and also had received expertise in football. The coaches in Slovakia made great efforts to provide an engaging and fun experience for the athletes and partners on the Unified football teams. Coaches treated athletes and partners equally during team trainings, emphasizing sportsmanship and teamwork. Athletes and partners differed in their personal and team goals, with the athletes emphasizing winning as their top goal and partners emphasizing fun. However, both groups also recognized the importance of teamwork.

Overwhelmingly athletes and partners enjoyed the Unified football experience; not only the training and competition but also being with their teammates. Many would like to participate again. While partners perceived the experience as more challenging for the athletes than themselves, both athletes and partners played to the best of their ability and put forth their best effort during training and competitions. However, partners did acknowledge that athletes often exerted more effort and contributed more to the team than they themselves did. This may be due to their deference for their peers with intellectual disabilities and their desire not to flaunt their own accomplishments. In addition, while athletes noted more improvement in their sport skills and feelings about themselves than partners, coaches recognized that both groups improved in each area. Coaches also noted that athletes and partners were well matched in skill level – equally in many basic as well as complex football skills – and that they both contributed equally to the team.

For athletes in particular, Unified football provided an opportunity to participate in training and competition with their peers without intellectual disabilities. For partners, Unified football provided an opportunity to witness firsthand the capabilities of athletes; the partners themselves acknowledged an improvement in their understanding of intellectual disabilities. Coaches also reported improvements in athletes and partners understanding and acceptance of each other. This is encouraging given that for many partners, this was their first experience interacting with other children with intellectual disabilities. Parents of partners also reported major changes in their child's understanding of intellectual disabilities. Like their children, parents of athletes and partners were satisfied with the Unified football program and reported seeing improvement in their child's social skills, self-confidence and health as a result of their participation in the program. Overall, most parents were pleased with how the teams were structured and how the coaches gave athletes and partners equal opportunities to contribute on the team. From the perspective of the athletes, partners, coaches and parents the Unified football Slovakia project was successful.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot program carried out in Austria, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia demonstrated that a year-long intensive sport and teaching program could be successfully implemented in countries with diverse education systems and inclusion practices. The success of the pilot project is largely due to the dedication and efforts of the Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia project coordinator, and the national Special Olympics program staff and volunteers, many of whom personally visited schools, worked with coaches, and observed training and competition. Frequent communication with the evaluation team through email and telephone, as well as trips to each country assisted in ensuring that the evaluation maintained certain levels of standardization across the countries and helped to diminish the possibility of inconsistencies. The evaluation would not have been possible without the close working relationship between evaluation staff, Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia staff and country program staff and volunteers.

Overall, the evaluation of the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot program was successful in describing the project and identifying its impact on the participating athletes and partners. Specifically, the results of the evaluation suggest that the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot program was successful in its goals of promoting inclusive sport opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities and in providing local programs greater opportunities to connect to schools and the local community. This evaluation represents one of the first multinational evaluations of a Special Olympics initiative. Considering the diversity of language and culture represented by the five participating countries, the evaluation's success was not without challenges, including developing a standard set of survey instruments that were applicable to the various experiences of children from all countries, training local interviewers, and working with Program staff and volunteers who had often tight time schedules and few resources.

The evaluation of the Unified football pilot project was designed to identify the impact of the *SOGII*/Unified Football pilot program on athletes and partners and to document the program's implementation in the five participating countries. There were two objectives of this evaluation: (1) to assess the impact of the program on the athletes and partners, and (2) to assess the extent to which the program promoted greater understanding and acceptance of intellectual disabilities and facilitated social relationships between athletes and partners. The findings of this evaluation reflect the unique perspectives and experiences of the athletes and partners from five countries. While there was some variation in the experiences of athletes and partners across the five countries, there were consistent trends that emerged. Overall, it can be stated that:

Impact of the Program on Athletes and Partners

- Athletes and partners value their participation in Unified football. All players enjoyed participating on the Unified team a great deal, including the training, competition, and being with their fellow teammates. Many participants, athletes and partners alike, would like the opportunity to play on a Unified team in the future.

- Participation in Unified football provided many personal benefits to the players. In fact, many athletes and partners reported that they made great improvements in their sport skills and feelings about themselves as a result of their participation in Unified football. Coaches and parents also noted improvements in self-confidence, social skills,, friendship as well as sport skills.
- Athletes and partners were motivated to participate in Unified football by their enjoyment for the game and for the social opportunities sports afforded. Many athletes and partners joined to play on a team, learn new football skills and be with friends.
- The social experiences that accompany participation in sport training and competition were enjoyed by both athletes and partners. Teammates provided an important and valuable source of friendship for each other, both on and off the field. Moreover, many players formed relationships across disability groups that did not exist before the Unified experience.

Promoting Understanding and Acceptance Among Athletes and Partners

- The Unified football experience provided partners with the opportunity to witness the abilities of their peers with intellectual disabilities firsthand. Partners overwhelmingly stated that their understanding of their peers with ID had improved. Many partners noted that athletes were “just like us”, good football players and fun to be with. Coaches and parents also noted improvements in partners’ understanding of intellectual disabilities.
- An important aspect of participation in any sport is the effort and contribution each player makes to the team. While playing on Unified football teams, both athletes and partners reported that they played to their best all or most of the time. Interestingly, partners perceived the contributions of the athletes on their teams to be equal to, if not greater than, their own. Partners also stated that they felt that there was an appropriate level of challenge to maintain their own interest and involvement in Unified football.

Implementation of Unified Football

- The 7-a-side Unified football teams engaged in regular training, with most training more than once per week. The consistency in training was important in making the Unified football experience like any other mainstream sport experience, at either the school or sport club level. Again, similar to other mainstream sports, the teams also competed regularly, with other Unified teams and with school teams from their local areas.
- Coaches provided quality training to athletes and partners that was appropriate to their football skill levels. Coaches also conducted regular, formal assessment of players’ abilities in order to promote skill development and better structure training.

- A critical aspect of the Unified football pilot project was that athletes and partners were similar with regard to their sport skills in football. A certain level of homogeneity of skills ensured that athletes and partners alike could participate and benefit from the same training activities and promoted equal status among all players.

Overall, Unified football allowed athletes and partners the opportunity to experience the social aspects of sport while developing themselves as sportsmen. The results of the evaluation demonstrate that through Unified sports players had access to regular training and competition opportunities, participated on teams where fair play, team work, and equal participation were emphasized, and were afforded opportunities to engage socially with teammates. In the words of the athletes and partners themselves, Unified football was an experience that allowed them to learn new skills and have fun, achieve their own goals, contribute to their team's performance, learn about one another, and share social experiences. In short, the Unified football pilot project can be viewed as a positive experience for all involved.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Unified football pilot project has demonstrated its potential in promoting social inclusion through sport. By pairing the Special Olympics *Get Into It*TM school curriculum with a year-long Unified Sports program, students with and without intellectual disabilities have had the opportunity to build sport skills, social relationships, and understanding of one another. The following recommendations are offered to guide Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia and Special Olympics, Incorporated in the future expansion of the *SOGII*/Unified football pilot project.

- *Strengthen the relationships between regular and special schools and sport clubs.*

Without partnerships between regular and special schools, the Unified football program could not have come to fruition. Because of the voluntary nature of the program, where players were invited by their teachers to participate, the development and maintenance of relationships between teachers and administrators from both regular and special schools was critical. For example, without such relationships, it would have been difficult to sustain the involvement of the athletes and partners over the course of the school year. In addition, the partnerships provided opportunities for all students without intellectual disabilities, whether on the Unified teams or not, to learn about their peers with intellectual disabilities through educational curricula like *SO Get Into It*TM, service learning projects, and personal experience. This was especially important in those countries where school inclusion was not a standard practice. In addition, the relationships formed between the schools and sport clubs can also promote increased opportunities for athletes as well as partners to participate in sport outside of school. This is particularly important as players transition out of school and into community life, where sport clubs provide most of the opportunities for sport and physical activity participation for adults.

- *Create more opportunities for students at regular and special schools to interact with one another.*

Unified Sports provides a positive environment for promoting social interaction between people with and without intellectual disabilities, one that is built on common goals and collaborative efforts. Special Olympics can further promote the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities by creating more opportunities for interaction between students at regular and special schools through programs like Unifies Sports. Programs and curricula like *SOGII* can be an effective way introduce students from regular schools to students with intellectual disabilities. In addition, innovative service learning projects that serve as a culminating experience in such programs can provide students in regular schools with meaningful, positive interactions with students with intellectual disabilities. This is especially important in countries where inclusion is still not the norm. By including an educational component about disability and difference, students from regular schools will be better informed and prepared to interact with people with

disabilities in their communities. Using Unified Sports as an extended service learning project provides students from regular schools with alternative environments to interact with their peers with intellectual disabilities in non-academic contexts. It also provides them opportunities to witness the success of students with intellectual disabilities as they participate in challenging activities and come to perceive their peers as equals.

- *Identify resources to increase the frequency of organized social activities and identify ways for players to maintain social relationships/ties to the team after they leave.*

Many athletes and partners participated in social activities with teammates as part of their Unified football experience and all enjoyed this aspect of the program. However, some teams were more successful at organizing and facilitating these activities than others. According to the coaches, resources were a big limitation faced by all teams. While players themselves identified challenges to social interaction as time and distance to one another's homes, some coaches were able to promote social interaction among team members through structured as well as spontaneous activities held after training sessions. To maximize the potential that social relationships are formed and maintained, more attention needs to be given to this aspect of Unified programming. Finding ways to maximize the opportunities for social interaction among teammates and the potential that social relationships are formed and maintained will only enhance the Unified experience for all participants.

- *Promote Unified Sports so that it can be used to support the social inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout the lifespan.*

In Europe, involvement in sport clubs is an important part of community membership, for both the sport and social opportunities they provide. However, without opportunities to play organized sports and develop their sport skills as youth, athletes with intellectual disabilities will be at a distinct disadvantage as adults in comparison to their peers. By continuing to offer sport programming focused at the school level, Special Olympics provides the groundwork for children with intellectual disabilities to learn the sport skills they can use later in life to participate at the club level. Ensuring that people with intellectual disabilities have access to these opportunities will be critical to promoting the acceptance of athletes with intellectual disabilities within their communities.

- *By recognizing all players' contributions and achievements as equal, Unified Sports can serve as a model for the educational community as it strives toward inclusion.*

Early research in youth's attitudes toward students with intellectual disabilities suggests that perceived difference is one of the main barriers to successful inclusion. That is, those youth that perceive students with intellectual disabilities as more competent are more supportive of inclusion. Although there are many challenges to successful social inclusion, one starting point to promoting acceptance and inclusion is overcoming the common belief that students with intellectual disabilities are unable to perform tasks

similar to their peers without disabilities is a starting point. Unified football, and Unified Sport in general promotes equality and interdependence among team members and provides participants with the opportunity to experience inclusion outside of the school setting. Through this structured environment, where students with intellectual disabilities are given valued roles as equal team players, youth without disabilities are able to witness firsthand all that students with intellectual disabilities are capable and come to understand that athletes and partners are more alike than they are different.

VI. YOUTH ATTITUDES

A. Introduction

Historically, people with disabilities around the world have been marginalized within their communities. Within recent years however, the value and rights of individuals with disabilities increasingly have been recognized by governments and non-governmental agencies worldwide and numerous declarations and laws have been established to promote the rights of people with disabilities. Despite such legislative and political progress, challenges persist in successfully integrating people with disabilities into society. Most often it is the negative attitudes of the public that pose a major barrier to inclusion and acceptance.

As part of its goal as a community development organization, Special Olympics has made changing public attitudes a major priority in its efforts to improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities throughout the world. To that end, Special Olympics and the University of Massachusetts Boston have been engaged in a global effort to document the attitudinal barriers that impede the inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities in the community, workplace and schools worldwide. More recently this work has been expanded to include youth, as this next generation will play a critical role in creating a world where people with intellectual disabilities are accepted and included in all aspects of society. Understanding youths' attitudes toward their fellow students with intellectual disabilities and their beliefs about inclusion in their classrooms is essential in creating action steps necessary to promote positive attitudes and to achieve successful social inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities not only in schools, but in society. To date over 13,500 youth in the US, Japan and China have been surveyed, with results suggesting that perceptions of competence is a key factor in determining youth's intentions to interact with students with intellectual disabilities and their beliefs about inclusion in the classroom.

The *SOGII*/Unified Football Pilot Project presented an opportunity to expand the Multinational Youth Attitude Study to include the five countries in Europe. Not only does the Multinational Youth Attitude study help to direct future planning, but it also provides a better understanding of the contexts from which the Unified football players come and interact. While inclusion is a goal for most countries in Europe, many countries primarily still educate children with disabilities in special schools. Considering these current conditions, it was expected that youth without disabilities not only have little exposure to Special Olympics, but also hold misconceptions and misunderstandings about students with intellectual disabilities.

B. Methods

The Youth Attitude Survey in Europe involved close to 3,000 youth in middle school/lower high school from the five countries participating in the Unified Football program. Because the goal was to administer the Youth Attitude Survey to youth attending schools involved in the *SOGII*/Unified project, guidelines were given to Special

Olympics Program staff in each country to recruit classes through their existing relationships with schools. These guidelines instructed Program staff to select classes from which Unified partners were selected (i.e. classes involved in *SOGII*), along with classes which had no involvement in Special Olympics activities (*SOGII*, Unified Sports or other Special Olympics event). Please note, because selection guidelines were provided, the sample of youth cannot be considered random, and therefore the findings cannot be used to represent youth overall in a given country.

It was expected that those youth who participated in the *SOGII*/Unified football program would have more positive attitudes than those youth not involved in the program.² Information about *SOGII*/Unified football participation was only available in 4 of the 5 participating countries. It is also important to note that even in those countries where we know the *SOGII* curriculum was implemented, there is no measure of program fidelity for *SOGII* other than knowing that it was or was not implemented in a given classroom.

Due to the diversity of the five countries both in their educational contexts and in the sample sizes of youth surveyed, the reporting on the results will be presented by country. In Poland, Austria and Slovakia, between 100 and 300 youth were surveyed, while in Romania and Serbia over 1,000 youth were surveyed. Youth completed the questionnaire in class and were supervised by teachers or the trained interviewers.

Using the Multinational Youth Attitude Survey, employed previously with youth in the United States, China and Japan, youth in Europe were asked questions about prior contact with and exposure to people with intellectual disabilities, their perceptions of the competence of students with intellectual disabilities, their beliefs about including students with intellectual disabilities in their academic and non-academic classes, and their willingness to interact with students with intellectual disabilities.

D. Findings

1. Austria

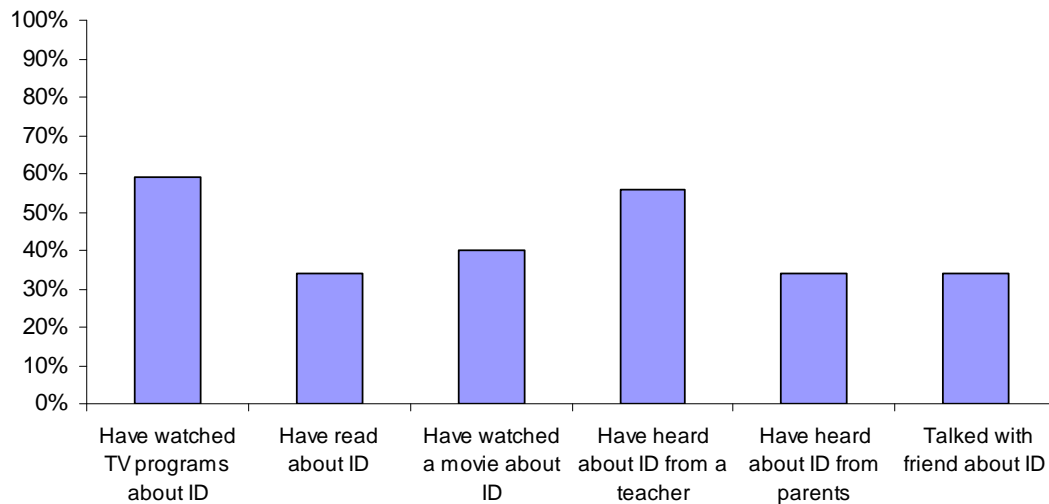
In Austria, 258 youth from four schools in the Styria region participated in the Youth Attitude Survey. Of these youth 63% were male and 37% were female, and ranged in age from 11 to 15 years old with 73% aged 12-14. Approximately two-thirds of the youth surveyed (38%) were from classes where *SOGII* was implemented.

In Austria, most youth (84%) reported having contact with a person with an intellectual disability. Considering that Austria has a totally inclusive school system, it is not surprising that just over half of the youth surveyed report knowing a classmate with intellectual disabilities (59%) or a schoolmate with intellectual disabilities (56%). In fact, 63% of the youth report more than one type of contact in school (e.g. knows both a

² Questions were provided on the Youth Attitude survey for youth on Unified teams to name their team or coach. However, youth gave unreliable information (some youth gave names of national football teams, for example) and because the survey was anonymous, youth respondents could not be linked with names on team rosters.

classmate and a schoolmate). In addition to school-based contact, youth in Austria have had many opportunities to be exposed to information about people with intellectual disabilities (see Figure 39). Over half of the youth (60%) report learning about people with intellectual disabilities from media sources, such as reading about intellectual disabilities in a book (34%), watching a TV show about intellectual disabilities (59%) or watching a movie about intellectual disabilities (40%). In addition, and perhaps not surprisingly given the inclusive nature of Austrian schools, over half of the youth (56%) have heard about intellectual disabilities from teachers in their school.

Figure 39. How do Austrian youth learn about people with intellectual disabilities?



Given that youth in Austria have many opportunities to interact with their peers with intellectual disabilities at school, it is perhaps not surprising that most hold a fairly positive view of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities. The mean on the Perceived Capabilities scale was 11.22, higher than the midpoint of 8, indicating that youth from Austria hold positive perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities. In fact, well over half the youth from Austria view students with intellectual disabilities as less impaired and more able to do all that the average adolescent can, more so than youth from other European countries and the US.

However, while youth view students with intellectual disabilities as being capable of certain skills, particularly simple skills, they are less likely to view these students as capable of more complex independent skills (see Table 37). For example, youth in Austria believed that students with intellectual disabilities could make friends with other students without intellectual disabilities (85%), engage in physical activities such as running or riding a bike (82%), play on a sports team with other students with intellectual disabilities (79%) or choose their own clothes (77%). Youth were less confident that students with intellectual disabilities could learn the same academic subjects as students with intellectual disabilities (51%), handle their own money (59%), be responsible for a house key (60%) or act appropriately toward strangers (62%).

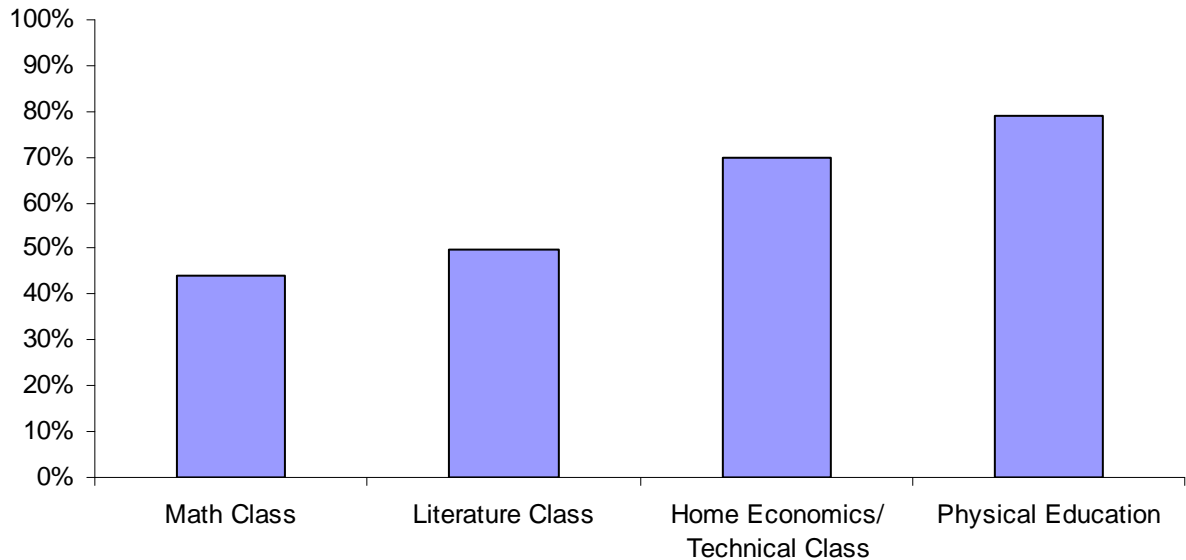
Table 37. Austrian youth's perceptions of the abilities of students with intellectual disabilities.

Item	Percent Agreement
Make friends with students without ID	85%
Do physical activities like running or riding a bike	82%
Play on sports team with other players with ID	80%
Help other students on class projects	79%
Get to school without help from an adult	77%
Choose own clothes	77%
Play on sports team with other players without ID	73%
Talk with other youth about common interests	73%
Understand the rules of a competitive sports game	73%
Use a cell phone	69%
Follow directions	69%
Recognize when help is needed	66%
Act appropriately when introduced to strangers	62%
Be responsible for a house key	60%
Handle their own money	59%
Learn same academic subjects as students without ID	51%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

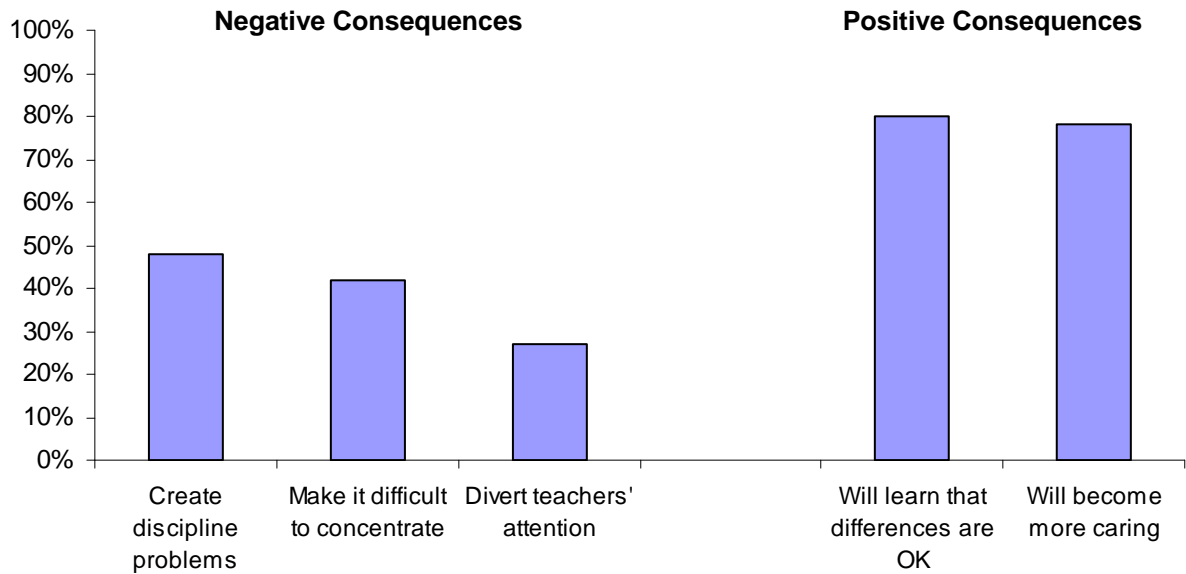
Given the push for inclusion in Austria, it is somewhat surprising that less than half of the youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in literature class (50%) or math class (44%) (see Figure 40). Yet it becomes less surprising when one considers that only half of the youth believe students with intellectual disabilities are capable of learning the same academic subjects. In contrast, many more youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in physical activity which is demonstrated by the finding that well over half of youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in non-academic classes like a technical/home economics class (70%) or physical education (79%).

Figure 40. Austrian youths' beliefs about classes in which students with intellectual disabilities can participate.



It is also interesting to note that when asked about the best learning environments for students with intellectual disabilities, youth in Austria reported mixed views. While Austria has a fully inclusive educational system, only 38% of youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities should learn in regular classes. In fact, over a third of youth (41%) believe that special separate schools are the best place for students with intellectual disabilities to learn. Those youth who perceived students with intellectual disabilities as more capable were more likely to believe in inclusion ($F=18.427$, $p < .001$).

Although few youth in Austria believe students with disabilities should learn in regular classes, most youth thought that including these students would have a positive impact. In fact, the mean on the Inclusion Impact scale was 9.23, well above the 7.5 midpoint, indicating that on average, youth in Austria thought that including students with intellectual disabilities would have positive effects. The majority of the youth expected that the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in their classroom would make them more caring (78%) and accepting of people's differences (80%) (see Figure 41). However, close to half of the youth also expected negative consequences to inclusion in that it would impede their learning by either making it harder to concentrate (42%) or creating more discipline problems (48%). Some students (27%) also believed that teacher would focus more on the student with intellectual disabilities than the rest of class.

Figure 41. Austrian youth's expectations of the consequences of inclusion.

Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

Despite their mixed beliefs about inclusion, overall youth in Austria are positive in their willingness to interact with students with intellectual disabilities. In fact the mean on the Behavioral Intentions scale was 22.6, again well above the midpoint of 18. In school, more than 60% of the youth said they would choose a student with intellectual disabilities to be on their gym team, lend the student a pencil, work on a school project with a student with intellectual disabilities, and talk with a student with intellectual disabilities between classes (see Table 38). Outside of school, about half of the youth report that they would interact with a student with intellectual disabilities, such as inviting a student with intellectual disabilities to go out with their friends (55%), going to the center of town together (49%), or talking about personal things with a student with intellectual disabilities (45%).

Table 38. Austrian youths' willingness to interact with students with intellectual disabilities.

	Percent Agreement
<i>What would I do in school?</i>	
Say hello to a student with ID	94%
Lend a student with ID a pencil or pen	88%
Talk to a student with ID in your after school activity	75%
Work together with student with ID on a project in class	70%
Choose a student with ID to be on your team in gym class	69%
Talk to a student with ID between classes	65%
<i>What would I do outside of school?</i>	
Play sports or games with a student with ID	65%
Sit next to student with ID on the bus	60%
Spend time with a student with ID outside of school	55%
Invite a student with ID to go out with you and your friends	55%
Go to the center of town with a student with ID	49%
Talk about personal things with a student with ID	45%

Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

There was some expectation that involvement in *SOGII* classes would influence youths' attitudes. To assess this impact, t-tests were run to determine if there were differences in mean scores between those youth who were in classes where the *SOGII* curriculum was presented, and those youth in classes where the curriculum was not presented (see Table 39). Overall, youth in *SOGII* classes held more positive views regarding the competence of students with intellectual disabilities and had more positive behavioral intentions to interact with such students. In addition, youth in classes where *SOGII* was implemented were also more likely to support the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in both non-academic and academic classes. It is also important to note that this was true for both male and female students as no differences were found with regard to gender.

Table 39. Difference in the attitudes of Austrian youth, based on *SOGII* participation.

Item	Mean (s.d.)	t-test
Perceived Capabilities Scale		
<i>SOGII</i>	12.65 (3.5)	4.8 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i>	10.36 (3.8)	
Behavioral Intentions Scale		
<i>SOGII</i>	25.4 (8.8)	3.8 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i>	21.0 (9.1)	
Inclusion Impact Scale		
<i>SOGII</i>	8.71 (2.3)	-3.1 (p<.05)
Non- <i>SOGII</i>	9.55 (2.0)	
Inclusion Scale - Academic		
<i>SOGII</i>	1.23 (.91)	4.1 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i>	.76 (.87)	
Inclusion Scale – Non-Academic		
<i>SOGII</i>	1.59 (.69)	1.8 (p<.05)
Non- <i>SOGII</i>	1.42 (.75)	

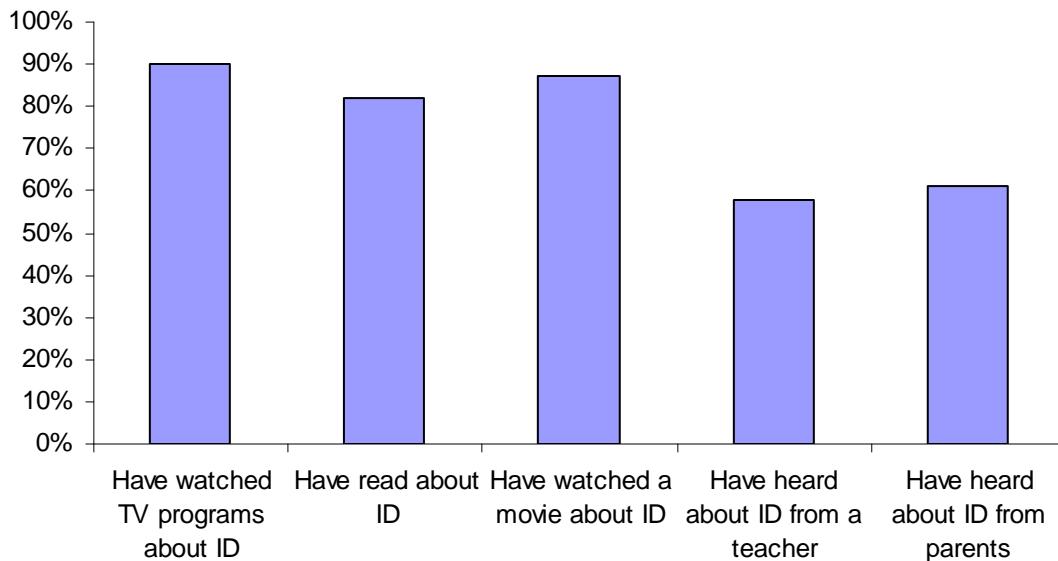
2. Poland

In Poland, 110 youth³ participated in the Youth Attitude Survey. Of these youth, approximately half were male and half were female and ranged in age from 12 to 15 years old, with 68% aged 14 and 15. No information was provided regarding the schools these youth attended or as to their participation in *SOGII*. The majority of these youth surveyed in Poland (74%) reported no previous contact with a person with intellectual disabilities. In fact, only 13% reported knowing an acquaintance and only 2% reported knowing a student at their current school.

³ The results of the Polish youths' responses cannot be generalized to all of Poland because of the small sample size and the uncertainty of where these youth came from (i.e. there is no data about what town, school etc. that these youth came from/attended.). When data reported is only representative of the 110 Polish youth surveyed.

Despite lacking contact with individuals with intellectual disabilities, the Polish youth surveyed have had many opportunities to be exposed to information about people with intellectual disabilities (see Figure 42). In fact, almost all of these youth report learning about people with intellectual disabilities from media sources, such as watching a TV show (90%) or a movie about intellectual disabilities (87%), or reading about intellectual disabilities in a book (82%). In addition, over half of these youth have heard about intellectual disabilities from adults, either from teachers in their school or their parents, or talked about intellectual disabilities with their friends.

Figure 42. How do Polish youth learn about people with intellectual disabilities?



Despite their lack of personal contact with people with intellectual disabilities, youth in Poland have a very positive view of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities. The mean on the Perceived Capabilities scale was 12.79, much higher than the midpoint of 8 indicating that youth from Poland hold positive perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities. However, while youth view students with intellectual disabilities as being capable of certain skills, particularly simple skills, they are still somewhat less likely to view them as capable of more complex independent skills (see Table 40). For example, youth surveyed in Poland view students with intellectual disabilities as capable of many sport related skills, like playing on a team with other players with intellectual disabilities (98%), doing physical activities (93%), and even playing on a team with players without intellectual disabilities (87%). In addition, 85% believe that students with intellectual disabilities can understand the rules of a competitive sports game. These youth in Poland also perceive students with intellectual disabilities as capable of simple social skills like making friends with other students without intellectual disabilities (94%) and talking with students without intellectual disabilities about common interests (92%). Somewhat surprisingly, youth in Poland also see students with intellectual disabilities as capable of certain complex skills like using electronic gadgets (94%) and getting to school on their own (83%). However, these

Polish youth are much less likely to view students with intellectual disabilities as capable of other complex skills like being responsible for a house key (36%) or handling their own money (37%).

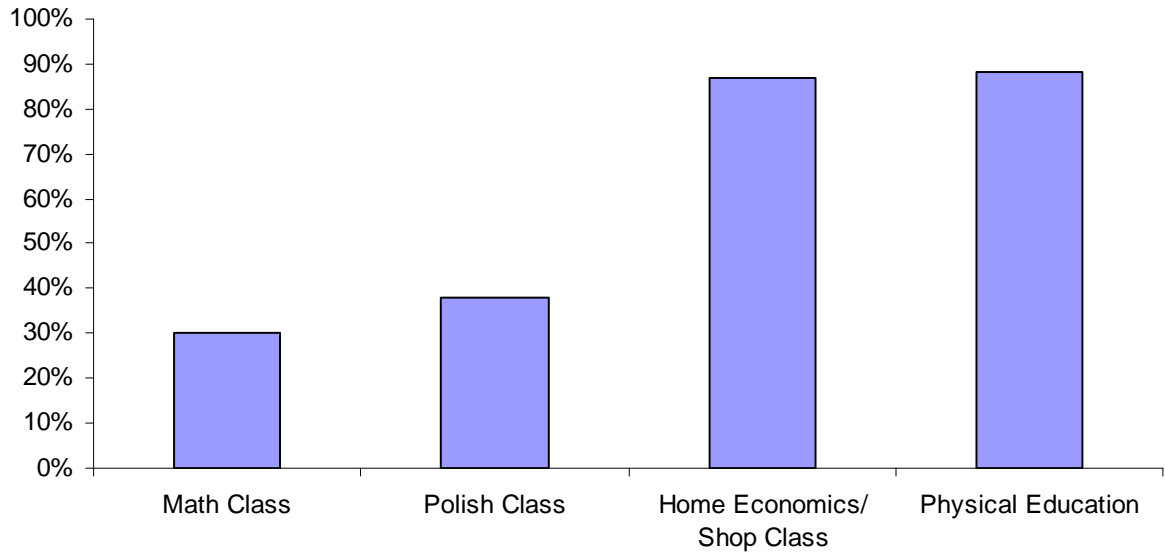
Table 40. Polish youth's perceptions of the abilities of students with intellectual disabilities.

Item	Percent Agreement
Play on sports team with other players with ID	98%
Make friends with students without ID	94%
Use a cell phone	94%
Follow directions	94%
Do physical activities like running or riding a bike	93%
Talk with other youth about common interests	92%
Choose own clothes	88%
Play on sports team with other players without ID	87%
Help other students on class projects	86%
Understand the rules of a competitive sports game	85%
Recognize when help is needed	84%
Get to school without help from an adult	83%
Act appropriately when introduced to strangers	82%
Learn same academic subjects as students without ID	81%
Handle their own money	37%
Be responsible for a house key	36%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

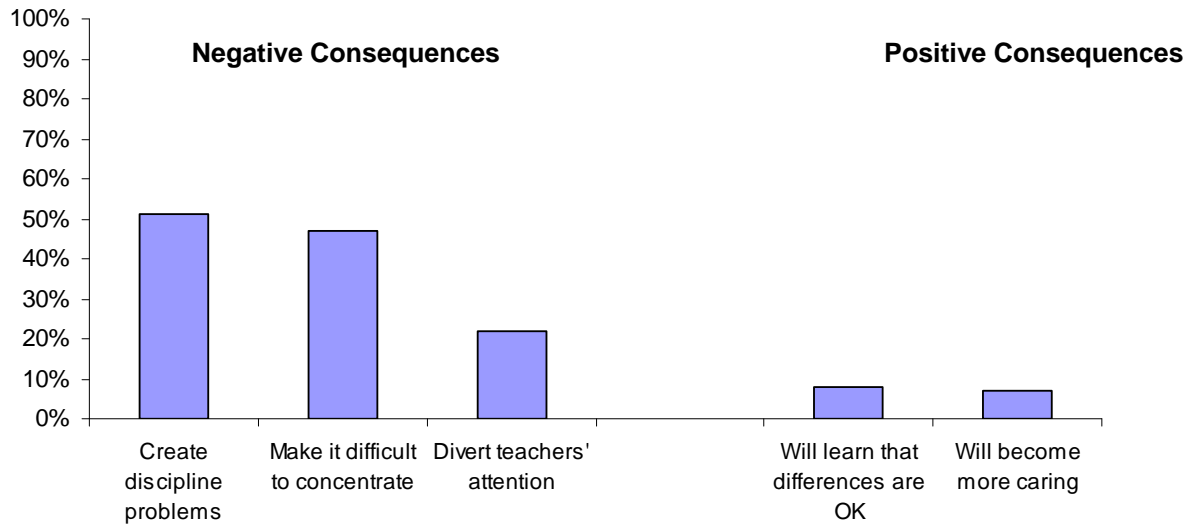
Given how positively these Polish youth perceive students with intellectual disabilities, particularly their perception that students with intellectual disabilities can learn same academic subjects as students without intellectual disabilities, it is somewhat surprising that so few believe that students with intellectual disabilities are capable of participating in academic classes such as Polish class (38%) or in math class (30%) (see Figure 43). In fact, these Polish youth clearly delineate the types of classes in which students with intellectual disabilities can participate. Most of the Polish youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in gym class (88%) or in home economics/shop class (87%).

Figure 43. Polish youth's beliefs about classes in which students with intellectual disabilities can participate.



Given that overall this sample of youth in Poland do not believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in the same academic classes, it is not surprising then that most of these Polish youth also believe that students with intellectual disabilities should learn separately from students without disabilities. Specifically, only 27% of the youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities should be educated alongside students without intellectual disabilities. However, just over half of the youth surveyed in Poland (51%) do believe that youth should participate in special classes within the regular school setting. This perhaps reflects their belief that students with intellectual disabilities would be capable of participating in home economics/shop class and gym class alongside their non-disabled peers.

In addition to believing that students with intellectual disabilities should learn in special schools, most youth Poland expected that including these students would have a negative impact. The mean on the Inclusion Impact scale was 6.3, lower the 7.5 midpoint indicating that on average, youth in Poland expect that including students with intellectual disabilities would have more negative, rather than positive, effects. Approximately half of the youth in Poland expect that inclusion will make it harder for them to concentrate (47%) and will create more discipline problems in the classroom (51%) (see Figure 44). Interestingly, very few of the youth believed that the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities would have positive impacts, like making them more caring or teaching them that differences were okay.

Figure 44. Polish youth's expectations of the consequences of inclusion.

Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

Like their positive perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities, these Polish youth also report very high intentions to interact with students with intellectual disabilities. In fact the mean on the Behavioral Intentions scale was 23.58, well above the midpoint of 18. Almost all youth report that they would interact with students with intellectual disabilities in the most basic ways, like saying hello to a student with intellectual disabilities (96%) or lending the student a pen or pencil (99%) (see Table 41). The youth surveyed in Poland also report high intentions to interact with students with intellectual disabilities in social situations as well. For example, 85% of youth report that they would sit next to a student with intellectual disabilities on the bus or would play sports or games with a student with intellectual disabilities (94%). Youth in Poland were only reluctant to interact with students with intellectual disabilities in those social situations deemed most personal, such as talking about personal things or inviting a student with intellectual disabilities to go out with them and their friends. However, it is important to point out that these intentions to interact with students with intellectual disabilities are more positive than other countries where inclusion has been implemented for many years, such as the US and Austria. Without knowing if these youth had exposure to the *SOGII* curriculum however, it is difficult to explain their attitudes. Moreover, people with disabilities still face many challenges in Poland, including public attitudes, (Otrebski, Northway & Mansell, 2003; Kim, 2003)⁴ and these results may not

⁴ Otrebski, W., Northway, R., and Mansell, I., 2003. Social Policy and people with intellectual disabilities in Poland. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 7(4) p. 363

³ Kim, I. 2003. Poland: Slow and Unsure: The government could ease the strain on its budget by easing integration of the disabled into the workplace. Transition Online web-based magazine. http://www.soros.org/resources/articles_publications/publications/integrating_20031209/mdap_tol_poland.pdf

truly reflect the current attitudes of Polish youth and be reflective of their misunderstanding about intellectual disabilities.

Table 41. Polish youth's willingness to interact with students with intellectual disabilities.

	Percent Agreement
<i>What would I do in school?</i>	
Lend a student with ID a pencil or pen	99%
Talk to a student with ID in your club	98%
Say hello to a student with ID	96%
Talk to a student with ID between classes	93%
Work together with student with ID on a project in class	86%
Choose a student with ID to be on your team in gym class	85%
<i>What would I do outside of school?</i>	
Play sports or games with a student with ID	94%
Sit next to student with ID on the bus	85%
Spend time with a student with ID outside of school	84%
Go to the center of town with a student with ID	77%
Invite a student with ID to go out with you and your friends	61%
Talk about personal things with a student with ID	51%

Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

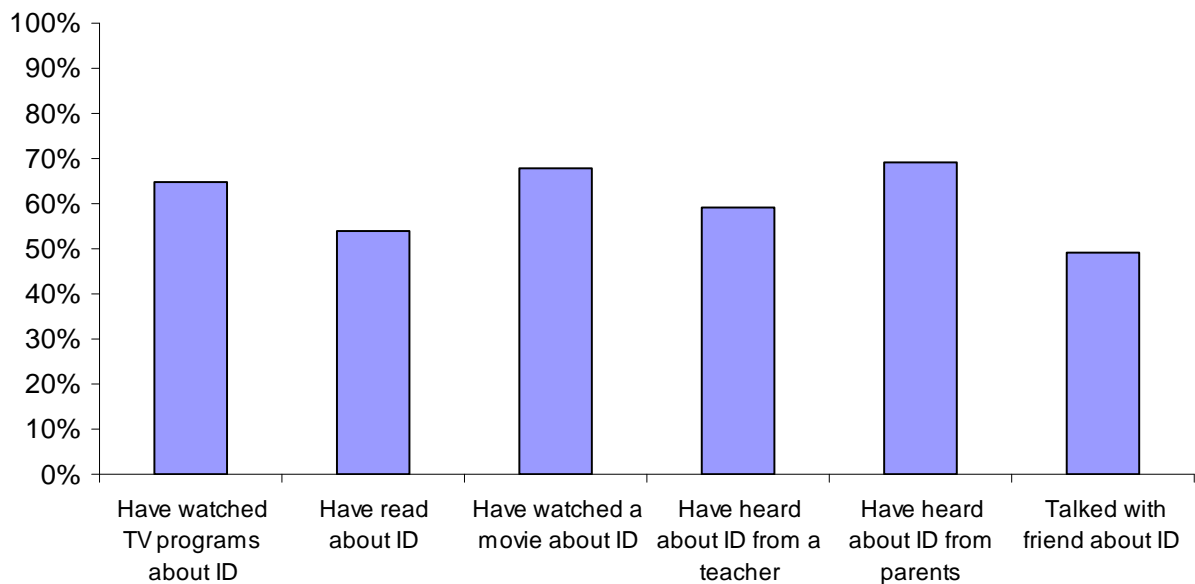
3. Romania

In Romania, 1007 youth from 12 schools in the seven regions participated in the Youth Attitude Survey. Of these youth, 58% were female and 42% were male, and ranged in age from 11 to 14 years old, with the majority (62%) being 14 years old. Approximately one-third of the youth were from classes where *SOGII* was implemented (35%). Just over half of the youth in Romania (59%) reported having contact with a person with an intellectual disability. While many students with intellectual disabilities are educated in special schools, some youth report knowing a student with intellectual disabilities in their school (12%) and even in their class (8%). In addition to the school context, some of the youth (22%) report knowing an acquaintance or a neighbor (18%) with an intellectual

disability. A few youth (7%) reported having a family member with an intellectual disability.

Youth in Romania report learning about intellectual disabilities through a number of different sources, including school, media, and family (see Figure 45). Over half of youth report learning about people with intellectual disabilities from the media sources, such as reading about intellectual disabilities in a book (54%), watching a TV show about intellectual disabilities (65%) or watching a movie about intellectual disabilities (68%). In addition, over half of the youth (59%) said that they heard about people with intellectual disabilities in school, and 49% said they talked with their friends about people with intellectual disabilities.

Figure 45. How do Romanian youth learn about people with intellectual disabilities?



Given youths' limited personal contact with individuals with intellectual disabilities, it is understandable that there is some variation in youths' perceptions of the competence of students with intellectual disabilities. The mean on the Perceived Capabilities scale was 10.66, higher than the midpoint of 8, indicating that youth from Romania hold fairly positive perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities. However, while youth view students with intellectual disabilities as being capable of certain skills, particularly simple skills, they are still somewhat less likely to view them as capable of more complex independent skills (see Table 42). For example, for school related items, youth in Romania see students with intellectual disabilities as capable of following directions (81%) and working on class projects (70%) but only half of the youth (53%) perceive them as capable of learning the same subjects as students without disabilities. With regard to sports, youth in Romania see students with intellectual disabilities as capable of many sport related skills, including engaging in physical activities (77%), understanding sports rules (71%), and playing on a sports team with other players with intellectual disabilities (88%). Fewer youth however believe that students with

intellectual disabilities can play on an integrated sports team with players without disabilities (61%).

Finally, with regard to activities outside school, almost all youth in Romania believe that students with intellectual disabilities are capable of skills like choosing their own clothes, making friends with students without intellectual disabilities, and talking with students without intellectual disabilities about common interests. In fact, more than half of the youth also see students with intellectual disabilities as capable of more complex skills like using a cell phone (65%) and getting to school without the help of an adult (61%). However, Romanian youth are less certain that students with intellectual disabilities are capable of independent functioning in the community, for example handling their own money (45%) or being responsible for belongings like a house key (39%).

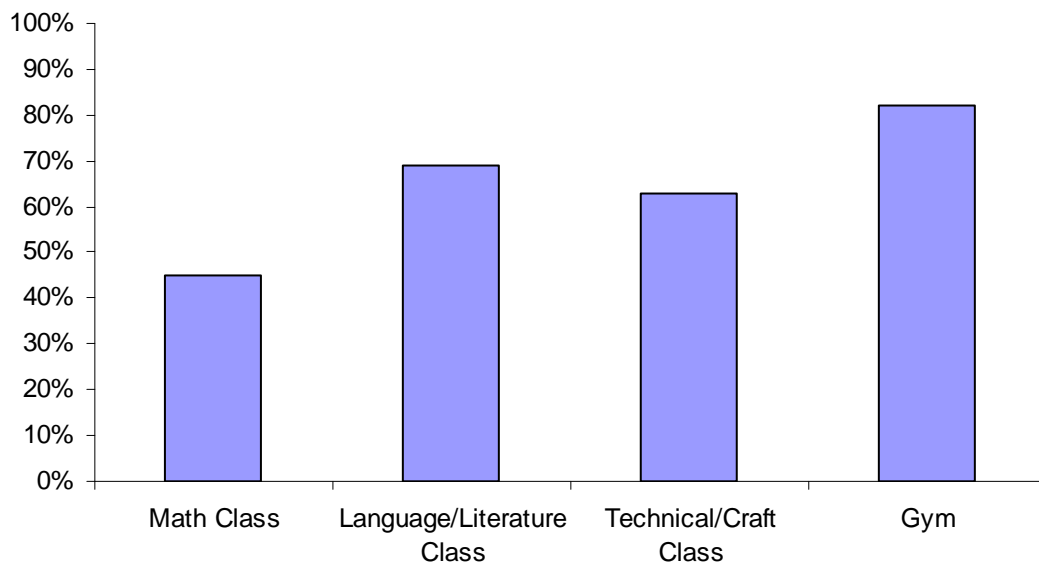
Table 42. Romanian youths' perceptions of the abilities of students with intellectual disabilities.

Item	Percent Agreement
Make friends with students without ID	92%
Play on sports team with other players with ID	88%
Talk with students without ID about common interests	81%
Follow directions	81%
Do physical activities like running or riding a bike	77%
Understand the rules of a competitive sports game	71%
Help other students on class projects	70%
Recognize when help is needed	68%
Act appropriately when introduced to strangers	67%
Use a cell phone	65%
Choose own clothes	65%
Play on sports team with other players without ID	61%
Get to school without the help of an adult	61%
Learn same academic subjects as students without ID	53%
Handle their own money	45%
Being responsible for a house key	39%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

Given their relatively positive perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities, it is not surprising that Romanian youth are open to the participation of students with intellectual disabilities in their classes. Many youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in their language/literature class (69%), their technical/home economics class (63%) and most youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in their gym class (81%) (see Figure 46). Fewer youth (45%) believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in math class.

Figure 46. Romanian youth's beliefs about classes in which students with intellectual disabilities can participate.

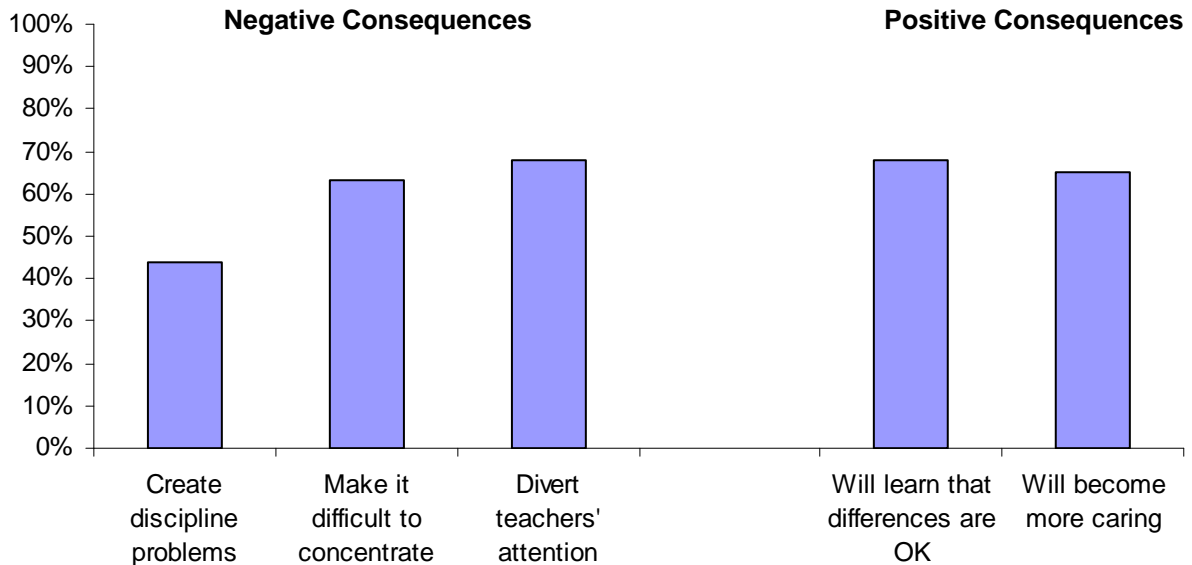


Despite their relatively positive beliefs about the participation of students with intellectual disabilities in their classes, and their positive perceptions as to the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities, it is somewhat surprising that most youth in Romania believe that it is best for students with intellectual disabilities to learn in separate environments from students without disabilities. Overall, almost all youth in Romania believe that students with intellectual disabilities should be educated separately from the peers without disabilities, either in special classes (37%) or in special schools (39%). Fewer than one-third of the youth believe that inclusion is the best option for students with intellectual disabilities. These beliefs perhaps reflect the current practices in Romania rather than youths' attitudes.

Romanian youth may be reluctant to include students with intellectual disabilities in their academic classes because they have mixed expectations of inclusion. The mean on the Inclusion Impact scale was 7.6, just at the 7.5 midpoint indicating that, on average, youth in Romania believe that including students with intellectual disabilities would have positive as well as negative effects. Approximately two-thirds of youth believe that including a student with intellectual disabilities in their classroom would make it harder

for other students to concentrate (63%), or that the teacher would focus more on the student with a disability (68%) (see Figure 47). On the other hand, over two thirds of the youth expected that the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in their classroom would make them more caring (65%) and accepting of people's differences (68%).

Figure 47. Romanian youth's expectations of the consequences of inclusion.



Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

Despite their mixed beliefs about inclusion, overall youth in Romania are positive in their willingness to interact with students with intellectual disabilities. In fact, the mean on the Behavioral Intentions scale was 24.34, well above the midpoint of 18. For activities taking place in school, many youth are willing to interact with students with intellectual disabilities. For example, most youth report that they would say hello to a student with intellectual disabilities (83%) or lend a pen or pencil to a student with intellectual disabilities (79%), and just over half would talk with a student with intellectual disabilities between classes (55%) or at their club (53%) (see Table 43). Over two thirds were willing to work on a school project with a student with intellectual disabilities, or to choose a student with intellectual disabilities to be on their gym team. Youth in Romania were only reluctant to interact with students with intellectual disabilities in those social situations deemed most personal, such as talking about personal things with a student with intellectual disabilities (15%) or inviting the student to go to the center of town with them (20%).

Table 43. Romanian youth's willingness to interact with students with intellectual disabilities.

	Percent Agreement
<i>What would I do in school?</i>	
Say hello to a student with ID	83%
Lend a student with ID a pencil or pen	79%
Talk to the student with ID between classes	55%
Talk to a student with ID in your club	53%
Choose a student with ID to be on your team in gym class	41%
Work together with student with ID on a project in class	38%
<i>What would I do outside of school?</i>	
Sit next to student with ID on the bus	45%
Play sports or games with a student with ID	43%
Spend time with a student with ID outside of school	29%
Invite a student with ID to go out with you and your friends	26%
Go to the center of town with a student with ID	20%
Talk about personal things with a student with ID	15%

Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

There was some expectation that involvement in *SOGII* classes would influence youths' attitudes. To assess this impact, t-tests were run to determine there were differences in mean scores between those youth who were in classes where the *SOGII* curriculum was presented, and those youth in classes where the curriculum was not presented (see Table 44). Overall, youth in *SOGII* classes held more positive views regarding the competence of students with intellectual disabilities and had more positive behavioral intentions to interact with such students. In addition, youth in classes where *SOGII* was implemented were also more likely to support the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in both academic and non-academic classes. These youth also held more positive, rather than negative, expectations of inclusion. No differences in attitudes were found with regard to gender.

Table 44. Difference in the attitudes of Romanian youth, based on *SOGII* participation.

Item	Mean	t-test
Perceived Capabilities Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (313)	12.01 (3.3)	8.6 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (645)	9.9 (3.8)	
Behavioral Intentions Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (312)	27.30 (7.9)	8.8 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (642)	22.77 (8.0)	
Inclusion Scale - Academic		
<i>SOGII</i> (312)	1.28 (0.8)	4.0 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (639)	1.05 (0.8)	
Inclusion Scale – Non Academic		
<i>SOGII</i>	1.63 (0.6)	6.6 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i>	1.32 (0.7)	
Impact Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (311)	7.96 (2.5)	3.4 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (642)	7.35 (2.8)	

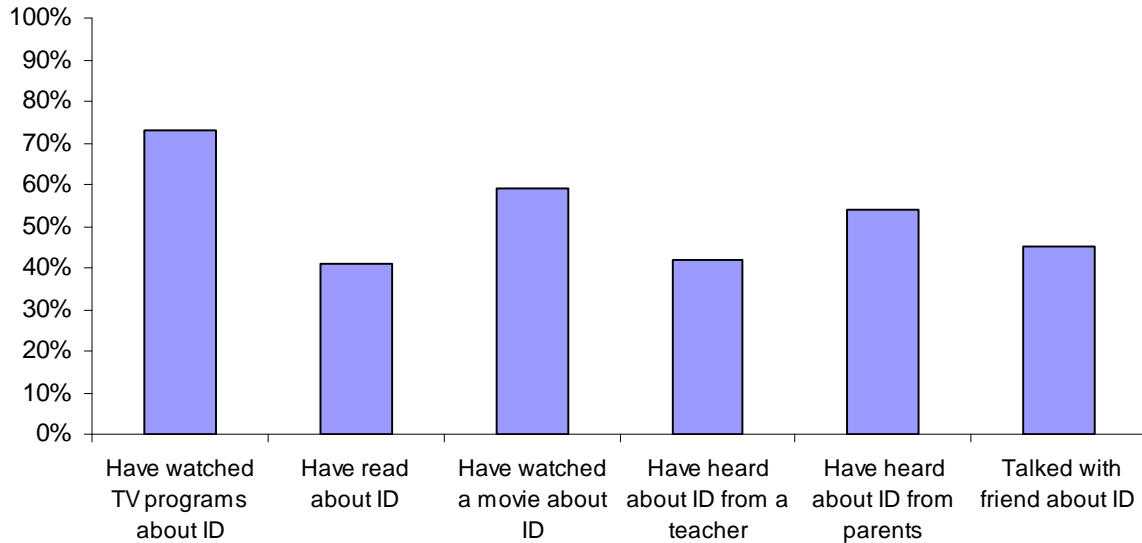
4. Serbia

In Serbia, 1411 youth from 14 schools in eight regions participated in the Youth Attitude Survey. Of these youth, 51% were male and 49% were female, and ranged in age from 11 to 15 years old with the majority (66%) aged 12 and 13 years. Approximately 20% of the youth surveyed were from classes where *SOGII* was implemented.

Just over half of the youth (58%) in Serbia reported having contact with a person with intellectual disabilities. Interestingly, despite the absence of inclusion in Serbia schools, there are some youth who report knowing a student with intellectual disabilities in their class and in their school (9%). In addition to the school context, some youth report knowing an acquaintance or a neighbor with an intellectual disability (19% and 14% respectively). Despite the fact that just over half of the youth know someone with intellectual disabilities, many report learning about people with intellectual disabilities

from medial sources such as watching a TV program (73%) or movie (59%) about a person with intellectual disabilities (see Figure 48). However, less than half of the Serbian youth (41%) report reading about intellectual disabilities in a book or having heard about intellectual disabilities from teachers in their school (42%).

Figure 48. How do Serbian youth learn about people with intellectual disabilities?



Given youths' limited personal contact with individuals with intellectual disabilities, it is understandable that there is some variation in youths' perceptions of the competence of students with intellectual disabilities. The mean on the Perceived Capabilities scale was 9.42, just higher than the midpoint of 8, indicating that youth from Serbia hold somewhat positive perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities. However, while youth view students with intellectual disabilities as being capable of certain skills, particularly simple skills, they are still somewhat less likely to view them as capable of more complex independent skills (see Table 45). For example, for school related items, over half of the youth in Serbia see students with intellectual disabilities as capable of following directions (63%) and working on class projects (57%) but less than half of the youth (44%) perceive them as capable of learning the same subjects as students without disabilities. With regard to sports, youth in Serbia see students with intellectual disabilities as capable of many sport related skills, including engaging in physical activities (65%), understanding sports rules (64%), and playing on a sports team with other players with intellectual disabilities (73%). Many youth also believe that students with intellectual disabilities can play on an integrated sports team with players without disabilities (56%).

Finally, with regard to activities outside school, most youth in Serbia believe that students with intellectual disabilities are capable of making friends with students without intellectual disabilities (81%) and talking with students without intellectual disabilities about common interests (84%) and even acting appropriately toward strangers (75%). In fact, more than half of the youth also see students with intellectual disabilities as capable of complex independent skills like getting to school without help from an adult (58%)

and using a cell phone (58%). However, Serbian youth are less certain that students with intellectual disabilities are capable of independent functioning in the community, for example handling their own money (39%) or being responsible for belongings like a house key (48%).

Table 45. Serbian youth's perceptions of the abilities of students with intellectual disabilities.

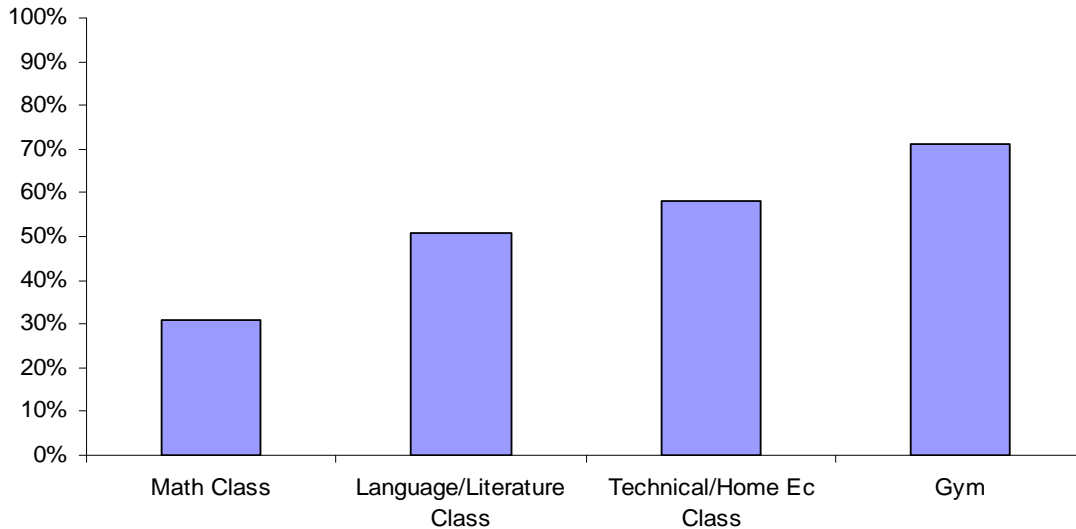
Item	Percent Agreement
Talk with other youth about common interests	84%
Make friends with students without ID	81%
Act appropriately when introduced to strangers	75%
Play on sports team with other players with ID	73%
Recognize when help is needed	68%
Choose own clothes	66%
Do physical activities like running or riding a bike	65%
Understand the rules of a competitive sports game	64%
Follow directions	63%
Use a cell phone	58%
Get to school without help from an adult	58%
Help other students on class projects	57%
Play on sports team with other players without ID	56%
Be responsible for a house key	48%
Learn same academic subjects as students without ID	44%
Handle their own money	39%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

Given their relatively positive perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities, it is not surprising that Serbian youth are open to the participation of students with intellectual disabilities in their classes. Many youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in their gym class (71%) or their technical/home economics class (58%); many also believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in their literature/language class (51%) (see Figure 49). Fewer youth (31%) believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in math class. It is clear from the results that unlike youth in the US and other countries, youth in Serbia do not

make as strong a distinction between academic classes and non-academic classes or, at least, that these youth do not view language class as particularly challenging.

Figure 49. Serbian youth's beliefs about classes in which students with intellectual disabilities can participate.



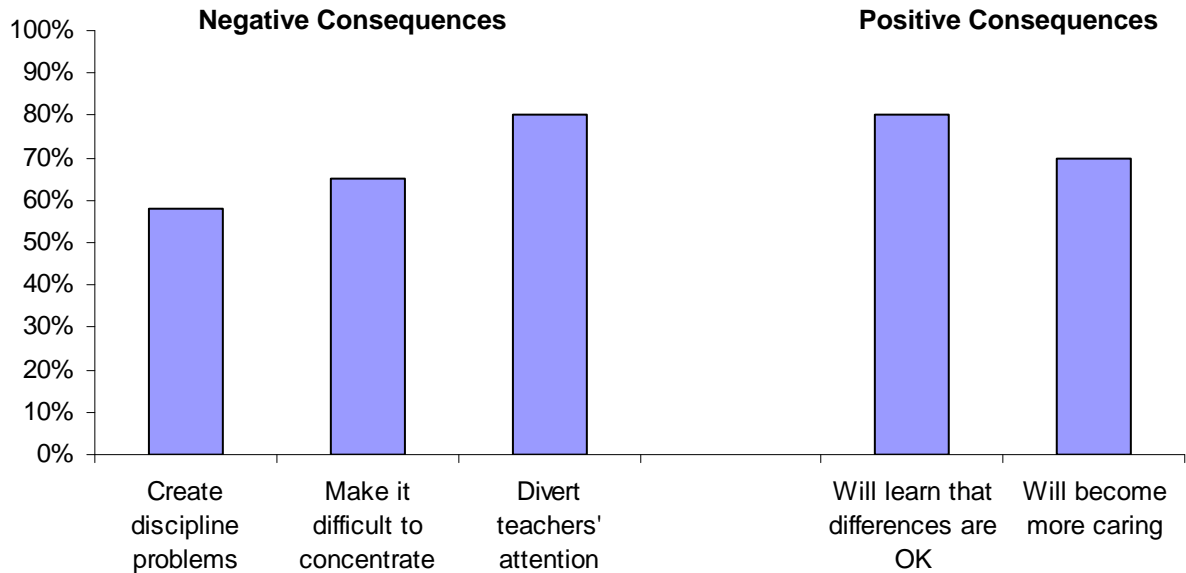
Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

Given that youth in Serbia are fairly open to the idea of students with intellectual disabilities participating in the same academic classes, it is somewhat surprising that the majority of these youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities should learn separately from students without disabilities. Specifically, 69% of these youth believe that special schools are the best place for students with intellectual disabilities to learn while only 27% believe that students with intellectual disabilities should learn in special classes in regular schools. Very few of the youth believe that full inclusion is the best place for students with intellectual disabilities. Youths' beliefs about inclusion are likely a reflection of the current educational practice in Serbia in that students with intellectual disabilities are educated in separate, special schools. It is interesting to note that those who perceived students with intellectual disabilities as more capable were more likely to believe in inclusion ($F=36.88, p<.001$).

Serbian youth may be reluctant to include students with intellectual disabilities in their academic classes because they have mixed expectations of inclusion. The mean on the Inclusion Impact scale was 7.19, just below the 7.5 midpoint indicating that on average, youth in Serbia believe that including students with intellectual disabilities would have more negative than positive effects. Approximately two-thirds of youth believe that including a student with intellectual disabilities in their classroom would make it harder for other students to concentrate (65%) and just over half believe it would create more discipline problems (58%) (see Figure 50). Further, most also believe that the teacher

would focus more on the student with a disability (80%). On the other hand, many youth also expected that the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in their classroom would make them more caring (70%) and accepting of people's differences (80%).

Figure 50. Serbian youth's expectations of the consequences of inclusion.



Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

Despite their beliefs about inclusion, overall youth in Serbia are fairly positive in their intentions to interact with students with intellectual disabilities. In fact the mean on the Behavioral Intentions scale was 20.92, above the midpoint of 18. For activities taking place in school, many youth are willing to interact with students with intellectual disabilities (see Table 46). For example, almost all youth report that they would say hello to a student with intellectual disabilities (89%), lend a pen or pencil to a student with intellectual disabilities (88%), and many would talk with a student with intellectual disabilities in their club (79%) or between classes (74%). Over two thirds were willing to work on a school project with a student with intellectual disabilities, or to choose a student with intellectual disabilities to be on a gym team. Youth in Serbia were most reluctant to interact with students with intellectual disabilities in those social situations deemed most personal, such as spending time with a student with intellectual disabilities outside of school (47%), talking about personal things with a student with intellectual disabilities (37%) or inviting a student with intellectual disabilities to go to the center of town with them (40%).

Table 46. Serbian youth's willingness to interact with students with intellectual disabilities.

	Percent Agreement
<i>What would I do in school?</i>	
Say hello to a student with ID	89%
Lend a student with ID a pencil or pen	88%
Talk to a student with ID in your club	79%
Talk to the student with ID between classes	74%
Choose a student with ID to be on your team in gym class	61%
Work together with student with ID on a project in class	64%
<i>What would I do outside of school?</i>	
Play sports or games with a student with ID	72%
Invite a student with ID to go out with you and your friends	61%
Sit next to student with ID on the bus	54%
Spend time with a student with ID outside of school	47%
Go to the center of town with a student with ID	40%
Talk about personal things with a student with ID	37%

Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

There was some expectation that involvement in *SOGII* classes would influence youths' attitudes. To assess this impact, t-tests were run to determine if there were differences in mean scores between those youth who were in classes where the *SOGII* curriculum was presented, and those youth in classes where the curriculum was not presented (see Table 47). Overall, youth in *SOGII* classes held more positive views regarding the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities and had more positive intentions to interact with such students. Youth in Serbia who participated in *SOGII* classes were also more likely to support the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities; however this support was only for non-academic classes. There were no gender differences in youth attitudes.

Table 47. Difference in the attitudes of Serbian youth, based on *SOGII* participation.

Item	Mean	t-test
Perceived Capabilities Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (260)	10.14 (3.8)	3.40 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (1116)	9.25 (3.8)	
Behavioral Intentions Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (261)	22.71 (8.5)	3.87 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (1130)	20.51 (8.2)	
Inclusion Impact Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (254)	7.45 (2.2)	2.17 (p<.05)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (1114)	7.12 (2.5)	
Inclusion Scale - Academic		
<i>SOGII</i> (255)	0.83 (0.9)	0.36 (p=.720)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (1100)	0.81 (0.8)	
Inclusion Scale – Non Academic		
<i>SOGII</i> (255)	1.40 (0.7)	3.01 (p<.01)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (1107)	1.24 (0.8)	

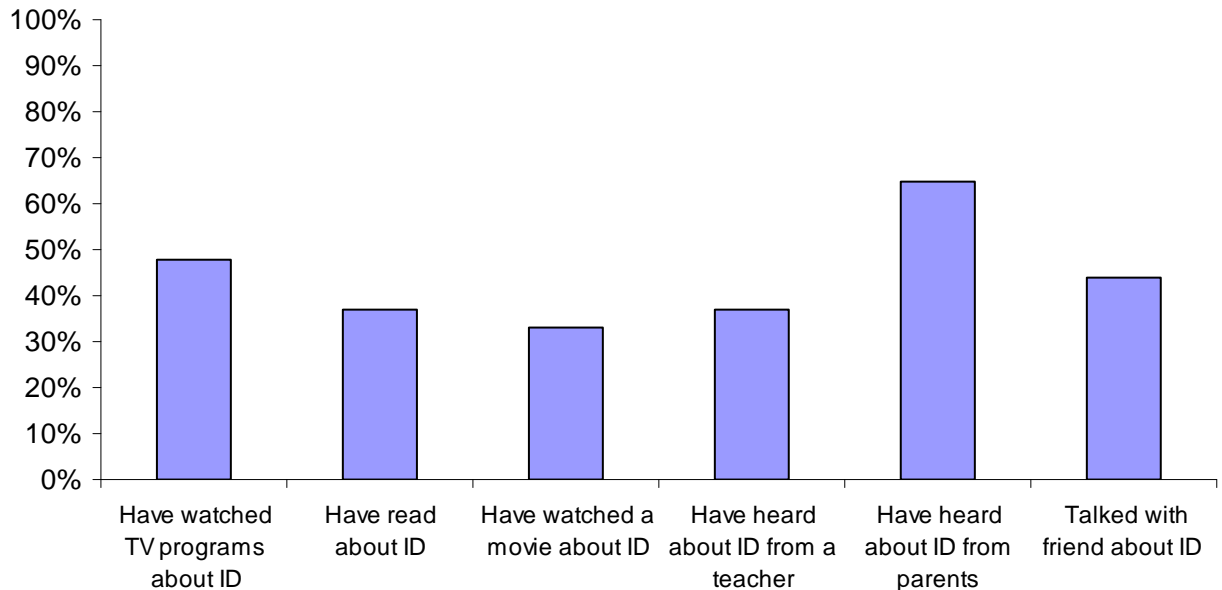
5. Slovakia

In Slovakia, 166 youth from 3 schools in the three regions participated in the Youth Attitude Survey. Of these youth, 48% were male and 52% were female, and ranged in age from 11 to 14 years old with the 49% of the youth being 14 years old. Approximately 15% of the youth were in classes where *SOGII* was implemented. Just under half of the youth surveyed in Slovakia (46%) reported having contact with a person with an intellectual disability, such as knowing an acquaintance (17%) or a neighbor (10%). No youth reporting previous contact with a student with intellectual disabilities in their school.

The youth surveyed in Slovakia also have somewhat limited exposure to information about intellectual disabilities (see Figure 51). Less than half have read about intellectual disabilities in a book, watched a television show about intellectual disabilities or watched

a movie about intellectual disabilities. In addition, only 37% of the youth have heard about intellectual disabilities from teachers in their school although over half of the youth have heard about people with intellectual disabilities from their parents (65%).

Figure 51. How do Slovakian youth learn about people with intellectual disabilities?



Given these youth in Slovakia have had limited personal contact with individuals with intellectual disabilities, it is understandable that there is variation in youths' perceptions of the competence of students with intellectual disabilities. The mean on the Perceived Capabilities scale was 8.39 just at the midpoint of 8 indicating that youth from Slovakia hold mixed perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities. While the youth surveyed view students with intellectual disabilities as being capable of certain skills, particularly simple skills, they are still somewhat less likely to view them as capable of more complex independent skills (see Table 48). For example, Slovakian youth perceive students with intellectual disabilities as capable of simple social skills, like making friends with students without intellectual disabilities (81%), talking with other students without intellectual disabilities about common interests (64%) and even of acting appropriately toward strangers (76%). With regard to sports, youth in Slovakia see students with intellectual disabilities as capable of many sport related skills, like engaging in physical activities (82%) and playing on a sports team with other players with intellectual disabilities (92%). Far fewer youth however believe that students with intellectual disabilities can play on an integrated sports team with players without disabilities (33%).

Youth were less confident that students with intellectual disabilities could learn the same academic subjects (41%) or work on class projects with students without intellectual disabilities (35%). The Slovakian youth surveyed were also less certain that students with

intellectual disabilities are capable of independent functioning in the community, for example handling their own money (11%), using a cell phone (21%), being responsible for belongings like a house key (36%), or getting to school without the help of an adult (41%).

Table 48. Slovakian youth's perceptions of the abilities of students with intellectual disabilities.

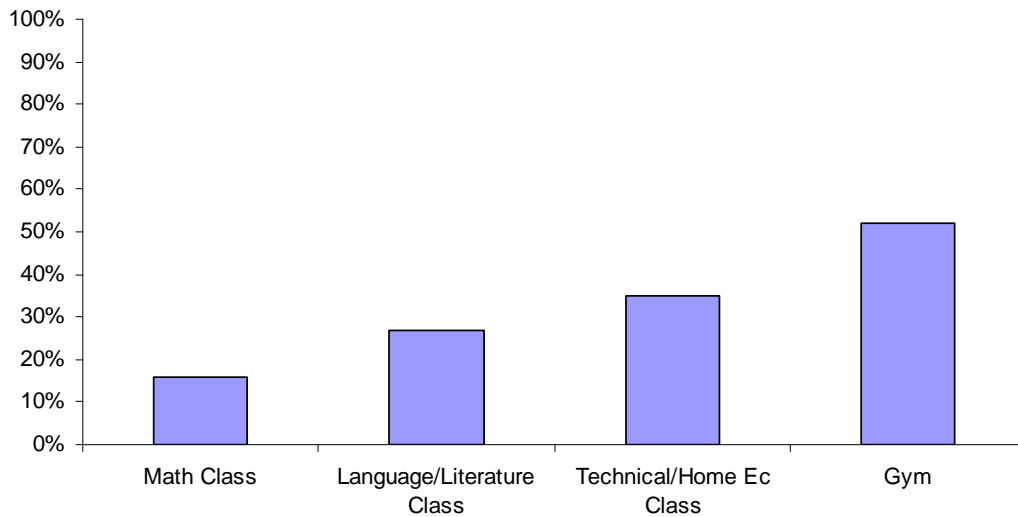
Item	Percent Agreement
Play on sports team with other players with ID	92%
Do physical activities like running or riding a bike	82%
Make friends with students without ID	81%
Act appropriately when introduced to strangers	76%
Choose own clothes	74%
Talk with students without ID about common interests	64%
Follow directions	58%
Understand the rules of a competitive sports game	51%
Recognize when help is needed	51%
Get to school without the help of an adult.	42%
Learn same academic subjects as students without ID	41%
Being responsible for a house key	36%
Help other students on class projects	35%
Play on sports team with other players without ID	33%
Use a cell phone	21%
Handle their own money	11%

Note: Each item was answered on a 0 = No, 1 = Yes scale, and tabled values are the percent of students responding Yes to the item.

Given the less than half of the youth surveyed in Slovakia believe that students with intellectual disabilities can learn the same academic subjects, it is not surprising that few believe that students with intellectual disabilities can take part in the same classes as students without intellectual disabilities (see Figure 52). This is not only true for academic classes, but non-academic as well. Only 27% of the youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can take part in their Slovakian class, and only 16% believe

they can participate in their math class. For non-academic classes, 35% of the Slovakian youth believe that students with intellectual disabilities can be in their home economics class, while 52% of the youth believe gym is okay for students with intellectual disabilities. Slovak youth see clear distinction between the types of classes students with intellectual disabilities are capable of participating in, and even many youth do not believe students with intellectual disabilities can participate in any classes, academic or non-academic.

Figure 52. Slovakian youth's beliefs about classes in which students with intellectual disabilities can participate.

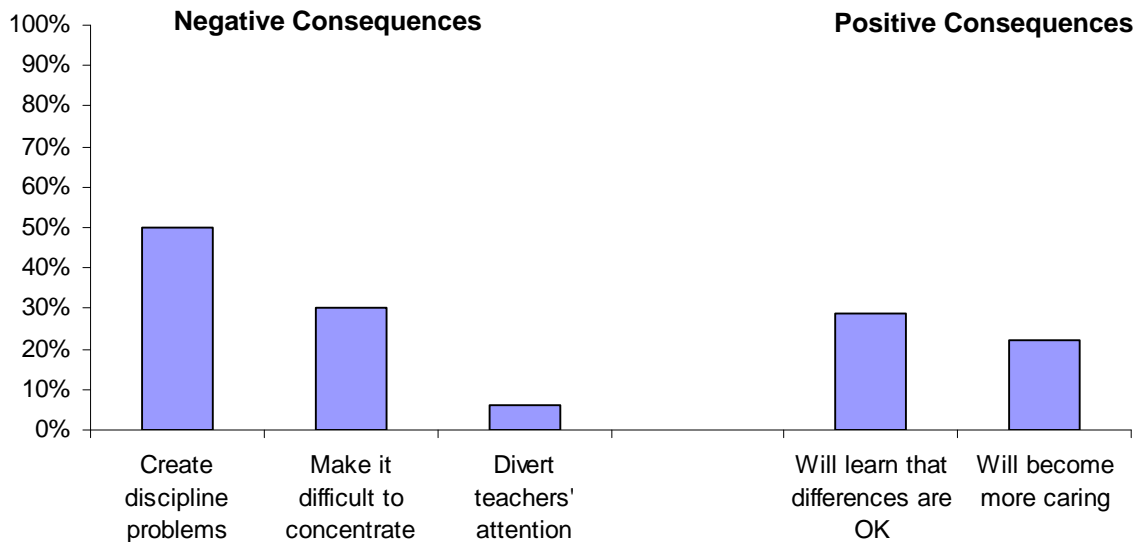


Given that overall the majority of youth surveyed in Slovakia do not believe that students with intellectual disabilities can participate in the same academic or non-academic classes, it is not surprising then that the majority of these youth also believe that students with intellectual disabilities should learn separately from students without disabilities. Specifically, 55% of these youth believe that special schools are the best place for students with intellectual disabilities to learn, while 36% believe that students with intellectual disabilities should learn in special classes in regular schools. Few of the youth believe that full inclusion is the best place for students with intellectual disabilities. Those youth who perceived students with intellectual disabilities as more capable were more likely to believe in inclusion ($F=56.25$, $p<.001$).

Slovakian youth may be reluctant to include students with intellectual disabilities in their academic classes because they have mixed expectations of inclusion. The mean on the Inclusion Impact scale was 7.96, just above the 7.5 midpoint indicating that on average, the youth surveyed in Slovakia believe that including students with intellectual disabilities would have negative as well as positive effects. Given the beliefs youth hold about the best school placement for students with intellectual disabilities, it is somewhat surprising that they tend to see minimal impacts on the classroom as a result of inclusion of a student with intellectual disabilities (see Figure 52). Only about one-third of the youth expect that including a student with intellectual disabilities will make it harder to

concentrate (30%), though half of the youth believe there will be more discipline problems as a result of inclusion (50%). On the other hand, less than one third of the youth expect inclusion to have positive benefits for them like teaching them that difference is okay (29%), or making students more caring (21%).

Figure 53. Slovakian youth's expectations of the consequences of inclusion



Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

Because youth are unsure of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities and their ability to learn in the same schools and classes with youth without intellectual disabilities, it is perhaps not surprising that these Slovakian youth are also unsure about interacting with students with intellectual disabilities. In fact the mean on the Behavioral Intentions scale was 17.55, below the midpoint of 18 indicating that, on average, Slovakian youth are not willing to interact with students with intellectual disabilities. Many of the Slovakian youth surveyed are willing to interact at the most basic level, like lending a pen or pencil to the student (93%), talking casually with a student in between classes (73%) or in their after school club (79%) (see Table 49). In school however, only 39% of the youth report that they would choose a student with intellectual disabilities to be on a team, and 35% of the youth report that they would work on a school project with a student with intellectual disabilities. Youth in Slovakia were also reluctant to engage with students with intellectual disabilities in those social situations deemed most personal, such as such as spending time with a student with intellectual disabilities outside of school (36%), talking about personal things with a student with intellectual disabilities (25%) or inviting a student with intellectual disabilities to go to out with them and their friends (25%).

Table 49. Slovak youth's willingness to interact with students with intellectual disabilities.

	Percent Agreement
<i>What would I do in school?</i>	
Lend a student with ID a pencil or pen	93%
Talk to a student with ID in your club	79%
Talk to the student with ID between classes	73%
Say hello to a student with ID	64%
Choose a student with ID to be on your team in gym class	39%
Work together with student with ID on a project in class	35%
<i>What would I do outside of school?</i>	
Play sports or games with a student with ID	51%
Spend time with a student with ID outside of school	36%
Sit next to student with ID on the bus	34%
Go to the center of town with a student with ID	33%
Invite a student with ID to go out with you and your friends	25%
Talk about personal things with a student with ID	25%

Note: Each item was answered on scale where 0 = No, 1 = Probably No, 2 = Probably Yes, and 3 = Yes. Percents indicate combined Yes and Probably Yes responses.

Finally, to assess the impact of the *SOGII* curriculum on youths' attitudes, t-tests were run to determine if there were differences in mean scores between those youth who were in classes where the *SOGII* curriculum was presented, and those youth in classes where the curriculum was not presented. Overall, youth in *SOGII* classes held more positive views regarding the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities and had more positive intentions to interact with such students. However, youth in Slovakia who participated in *SOGII* classes were also not likely to support the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities; however this may be more a reflection of current practices than their beliefs. There were no differences between males and females in their attitudes toward students with intellectual disabilities.

Table 50. Difference in the attitudes of Slovakian youth, based on *SOGII* participation.

Item	Mean	t-test
Perceived Capabilities Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (25)	12.1 (2.4)	5.2 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (140)	7.7 (4.1)	
Behavioral Intentions Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (25)	23.28 (6.2)	3.9 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (140)	16.49 (8.4)	
Inclusion Impact Scale		
<i>SOGII</i> (25)	5.2 (2.4)	-5.7 (p<.001)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (140)	8.5 (2.7)	
Inclusion Scale - Academic		
<i>SOGII</i> (25)	0.72 (.9)	2.2 (p<.05)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (140)	0.38 (.7)	
Inclusion Scale – Non Academic		
<i>SOGII</i> (25)	1.24 (0.7)	2.6 (p<.01)
Non- <i>SOGII</i> (140)	0.79 (0.8)	

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