

5th edition

The reaction of the European sports sector to the energy costs crisis

EASE

European Association of Sport Employers

With the participation of our members



CONFEDERAZIONE DELLO SPORT



And the German Olympic Sports Confederation, the Ministry of Tourism and Sport of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Education and Science Sport Department of Latvia, the National Olympic Committee of Slovenia, ENGSO Youth, the Ministry of Culture and Sport of Greece, the Austrian Professional Association of Sports and Leisure Enterprises and Sport Austria, the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark, the Olympic Committee of Portugal, the Confederazione dello Sport, the UNESCO Chair of the Munster Technological University, the Institute for Sport Governance of Poland and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovakia, the Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee, the Czech Sport Union.

In November 2022, the European Association of Sport Employers gathered opinions and data from European sports structures about the energy costs crisis and its impact on the sports sector.

This consultation was completed with a new analysis in May 2023 to understand how sports employers dealt with the rise of energy costs during the winter of 2022/2023.

Sports structures facing the energy costs crisis

The consultation shows that sports structures had to face, at the same time, the direct consequences of the energy crisis, which are the rising energy costs and its indirect impacts, like inflation and its implications.

In November 2022, the primary identified risks were: the closure of swimming pools and skating rinks, the bankruptcy of sports clubs and businesses, or a decline in sports practice and attendance. Finally, there was some closure of sports facilities, but the other risks have been avoided.

However, sports facilities do not face the cost increase to the same extent. On the one hand, municipalities or public authorities cover the energy costs of the sports facilities for some sports structures: they are therefore protected from rising prices. On the other hand, some sports structures have to meet these costs and negotiate new energy contracts, making them vulnerable to higher energy costs for next winter.

In the Netherlands, 200 swimming pools and 6 ice rinks are threatened with closure because they have to conclude a new energy contract in the winter.



Prices have been dropping since January 2023, and even though they are still higher than they used to be, sports structures could face this crisis more easily than they had imagined. There has been less closure of sports facilities and bankruptcy of sports clubs and businesses than expected.

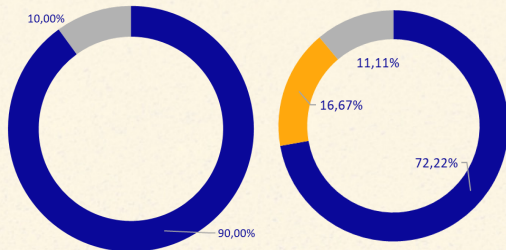
In Denmark, the prices have been stabilising since January, and swimming facilities have reopened some of their facilities.



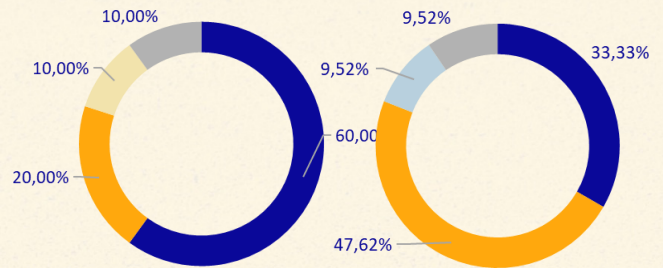
In Germany, even though prices are now dropping, sports structures still have to recover from the coronavirus crisis and the energy costs.



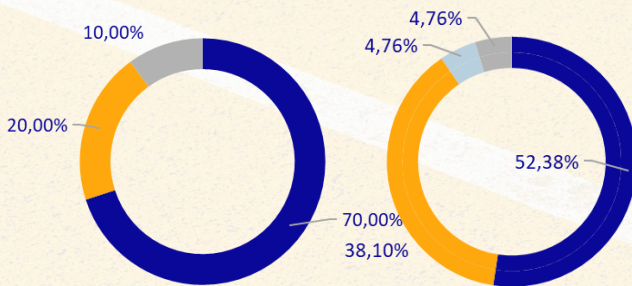
The impact of the energy crisis on sports structures



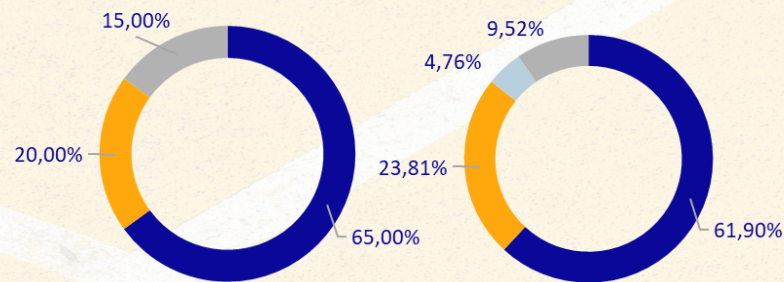
Swimming pools and skating rinks
(November 2022 / May 2023)



Professional clubs
(November 2022 / May 2023)



Indoor sport associations
(November 2022 / May 2023)



Active leisure structures
(November 2022 / May 2023)

*These percentages have been calculated from the answers received by national sports authorities in 21 European countries.



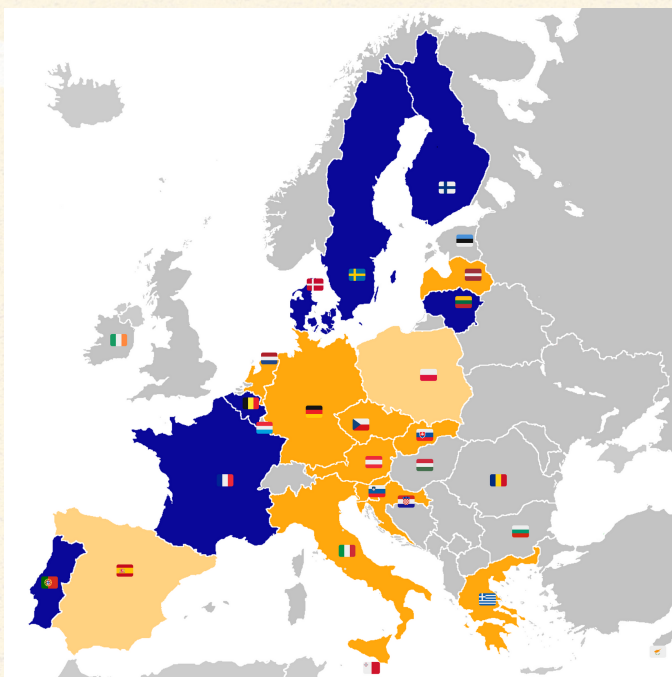
Between November 2022 and May 2023, energy prices fluctuated and seem to be now stabilised. This observation explains that the percentage of sports structures that used to be heavily impacted has reduced since then. Structures such as indoor sports structures, professional clubs and active leisure structures are less affected than at the beginning of winter.

Sports clubs finally cope better than expected with the energy costs increase, thanks to energy-saving measures and government interventions.

Unsurprisingly, sports employers of all countries implemented saving energy measures:

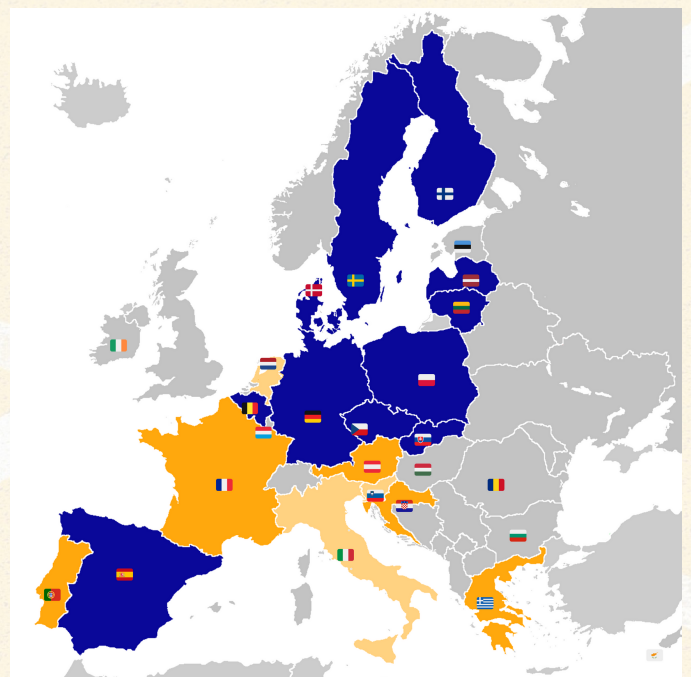
- **90%** of the consulted structures affirm that **lower heating** measures have been implemented in their country.
- **65%** of the consulted structures affirm that **lightning** has been reduced in sports facilities at the national level.
- **40%** of the consulted structures affirm that the **opening hours of sports facilities have been reduced** in their country.

National authorities also took action, implementing different measures to help sports structures facing this crisis.



Cap prices on electricity and gas

- Cap prices on gas and electricity
- Cap prices on electricity only
- No cap prices




Public subsidies


- Governmental subsidies or compensations for any sector
- Governmental subsidies specific for the sport sector
- No governmental subsidies

Depending on the national priorities and context, sports structures have received direct or indirect public support to face the rising energy costs. This support went with energy-saving measures, and this period has been a wake-up call regarding energy consumption.




This new reflection, related to the energy crisis, comes with developing new provisions for energy efficiency and sustainability of the sports sector.


The Dutch Ministry of Sports is currently on specific subsidies for sports clubs to help the energy renovation of sports infrastructures, together with the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry for Green Energy. 

It is just a start of a broader reflection that the sport movement must consider: energy efficiency is one of the elements that need to be addressed in the coming years. It comes with the observation that new crises may come after the COVID pandemic and this energy costs crisis. The resilience of sports structures, which mainly rely on fragile funding sources, still needs strengthening. Sports structures know that these issues might come back and are central to managing sports infrastructures.

In Sweden, 9 out of 10 sports clubs realised they lacked the tools to deal with such a crisis or any crisis. 

Despite this vigilance about future events, the vast majority of the consulted national sports authorities are pretty confident regarding the general national context for sports structures (inflation, energy costs crisis, etc.), except for a few countries where the sustainability of sports structures might be at risk.

Doubts are rising in countries like Belgium, Slovakia or Croatia regarding the general national context for sports structures.   

According to a survey realised by the Finnish Olympic Committee, 70% of sports clubs are optimistic about their futures. 

Sports structures are now much more confident than at the end of 2022. However, reflections are still ongoing on the issues of financial sustainability and energy efficiency that sports employers must address in the future.