



# Elite Sports Schools: An International review on policies and practices

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“Breaking down the barriers between high performance sport and education”  
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# Structure of presentation



## 1 Point of departure & Aims of the study

## 2 Aspects to investigate & Methods

## 3 Selected results

## 4 Conclusions

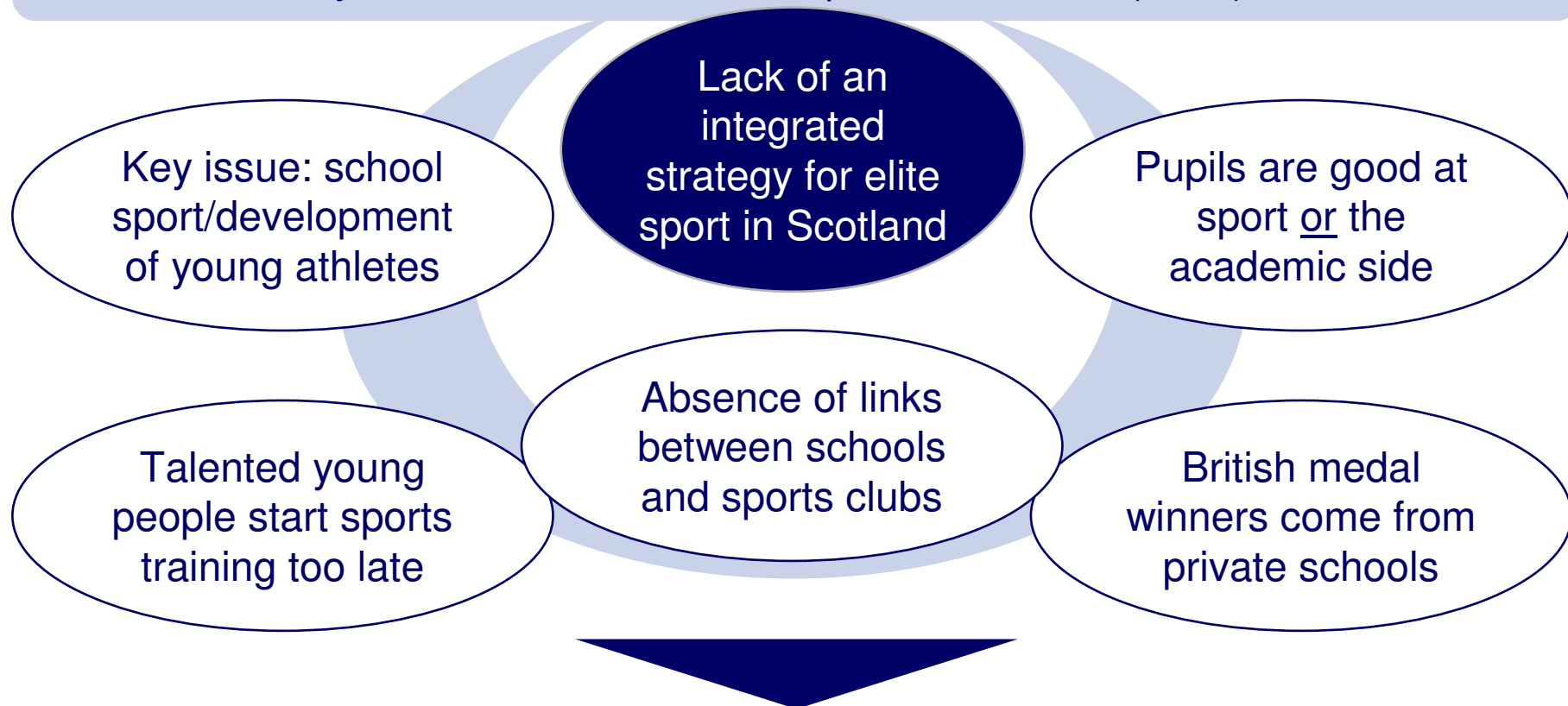
- Number of sports schools and pupils
- Funding
- Selection process
- Coaching
- Integration of sports pupils in regular schools
- Flexible curriculum
- Indicators of success

# Point of departure



## How to Achieve a Sporting Culture of Excellence in Scotland (Coalter, Radtke, Taylor & Jarvie, 2006)

Commissioned by the Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation (SISF)



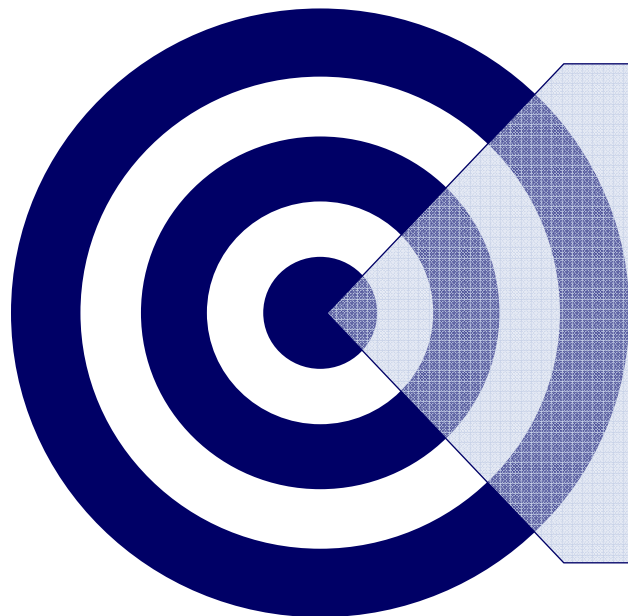
**Sports Schools – An international review** (Radtke & Coalter, 2007)  
Commissioned by the Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation (SISF)

# Aims of the study



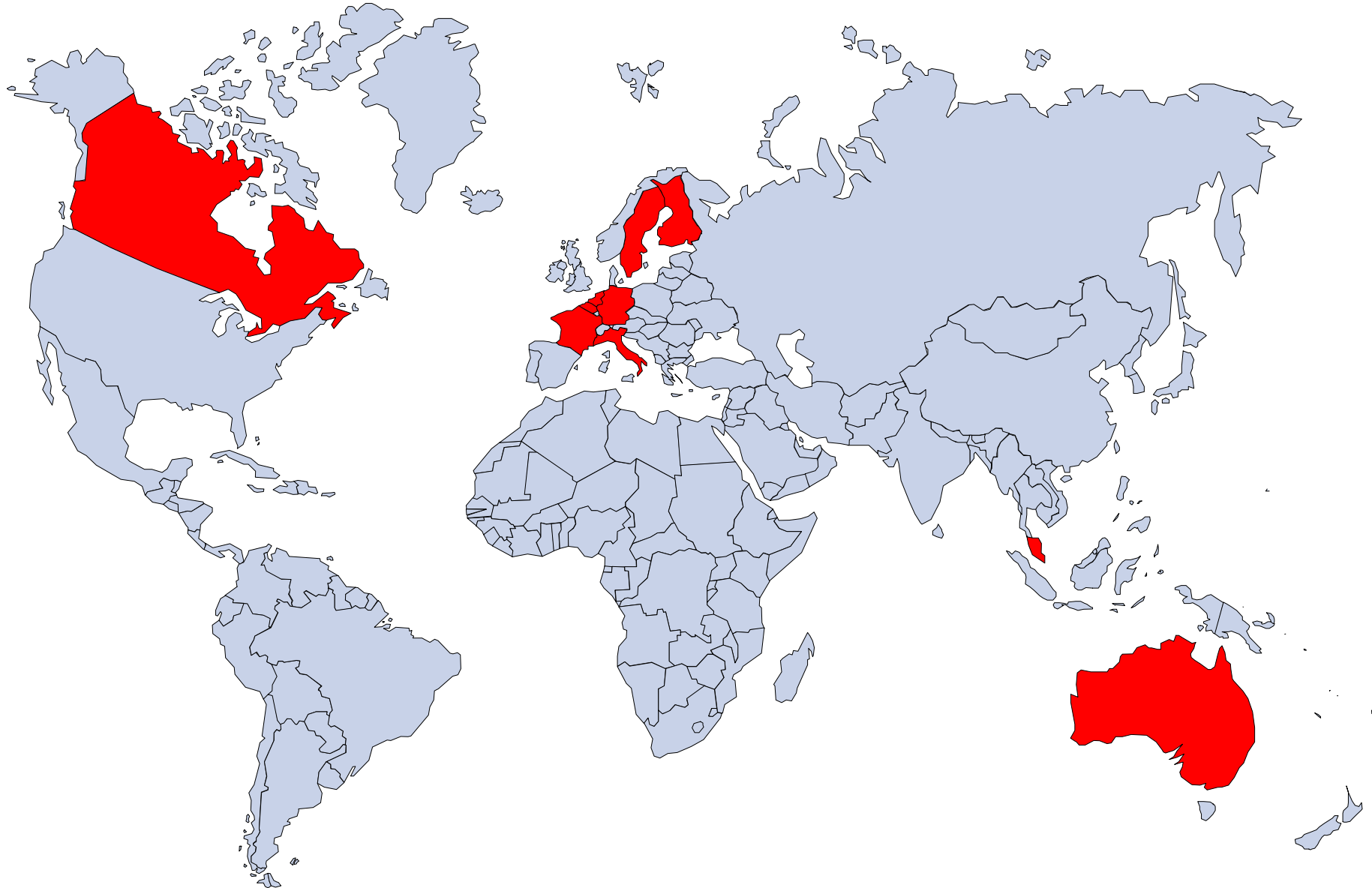
**Sports Schools – An international review** (Radtke & Coalter, 2007)

Commissioned by the Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation (SISF)



1. Examples of best practice in other countries
2. Implications for practice

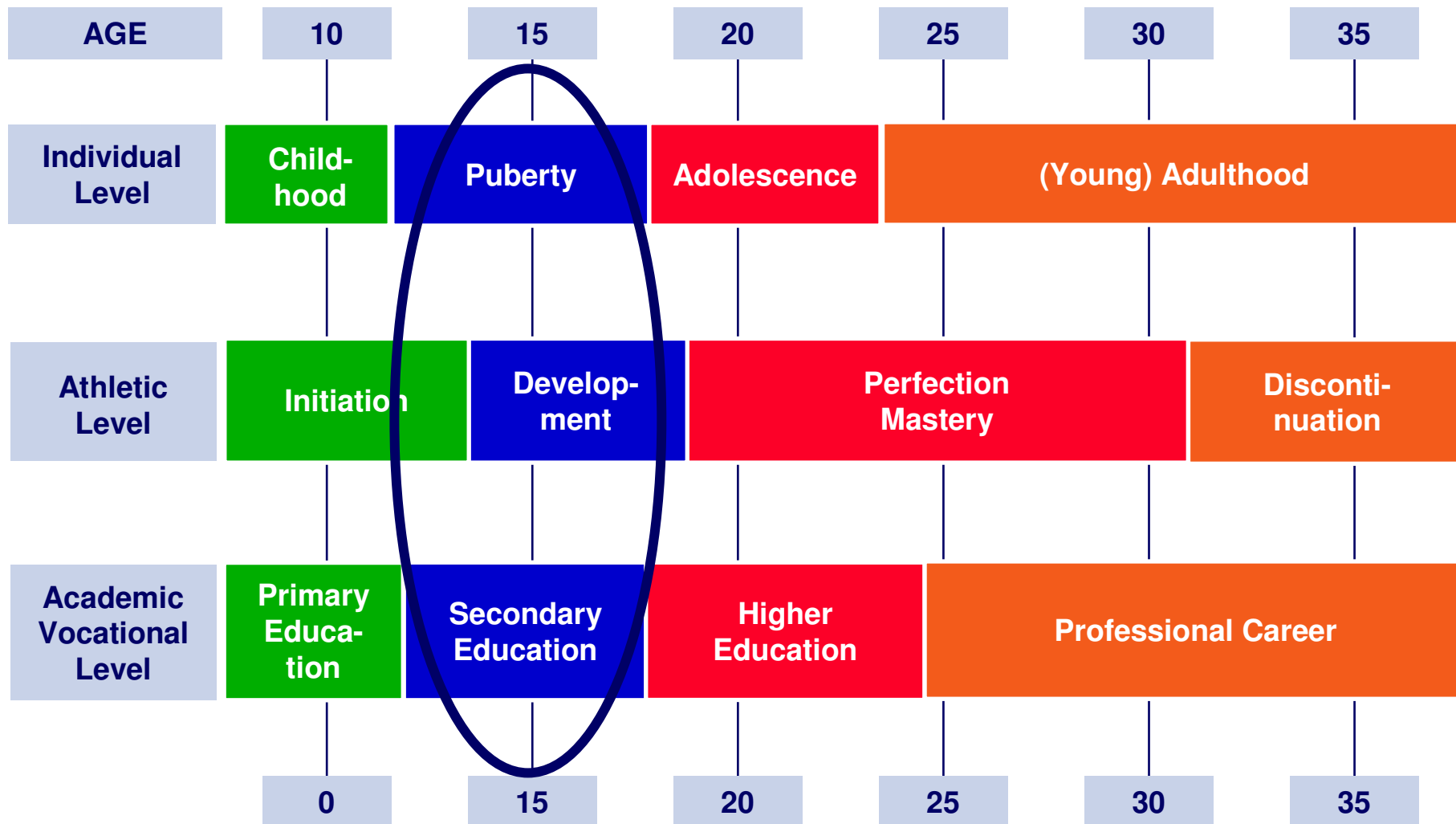
# Countries included in the study



# Previous research



Richartz & Brettschneider (1996); Brettschneider & Klimek (1998); Beckmann (2002); Lavallee et al. (2004); Beckmann et al. (2006)

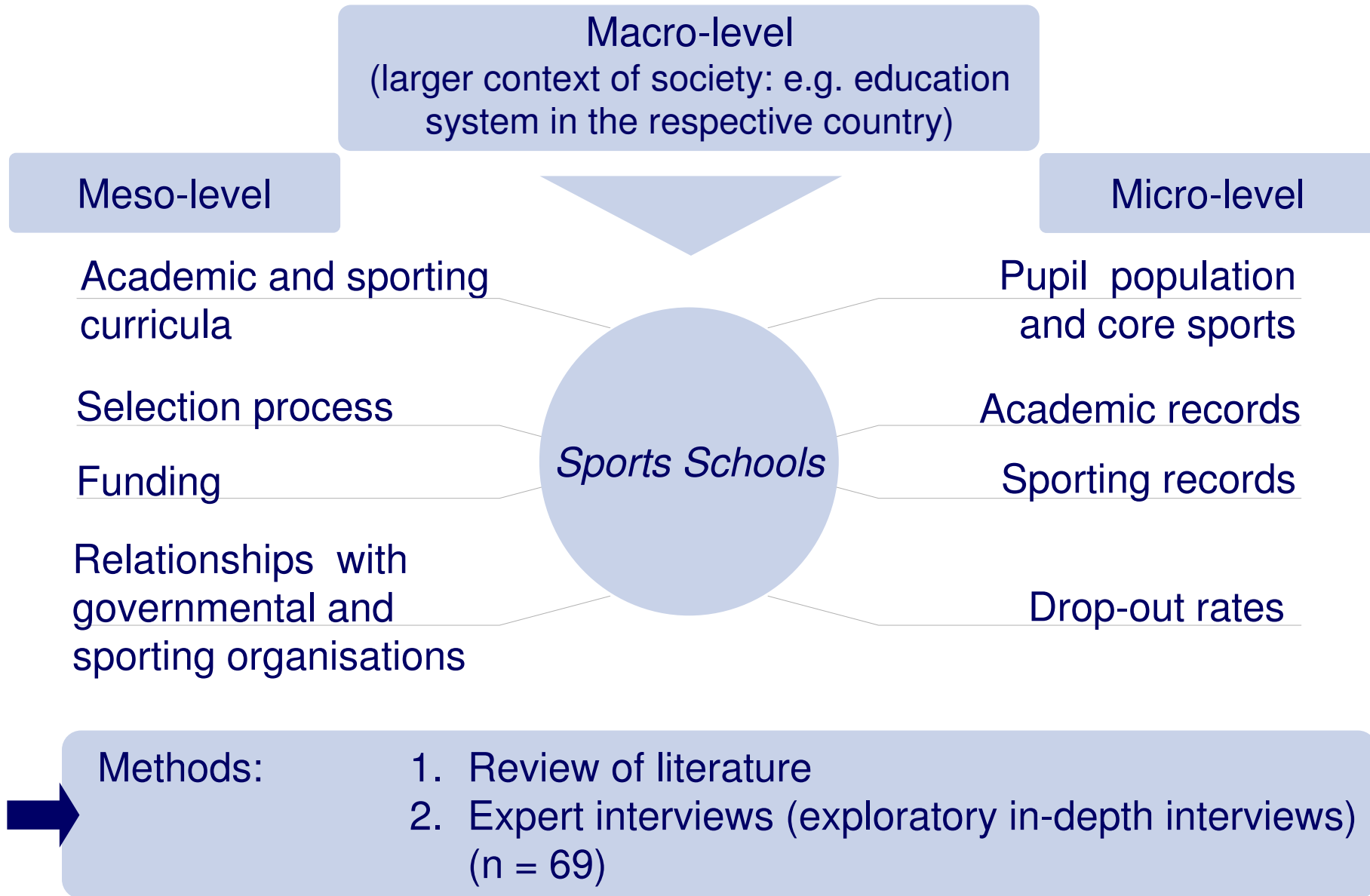


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# Aspects to investigate & Methods





# Structure of presentation



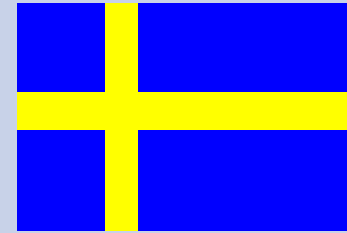
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# Case study countries



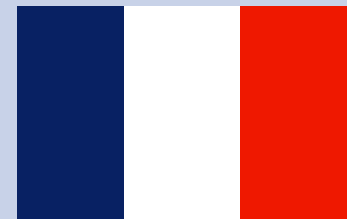
## Sweden: Approach of a (decentralised) national strategy

Population: 9.1 million inhabitants  
Area: 450,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
Density: 20 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>



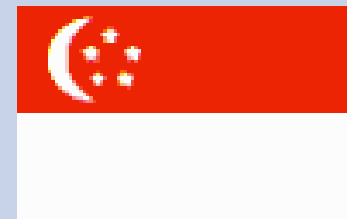
## France: Approach of a (centralised) national strategy

Population: 64.1 million inhabitants  
Area: 675,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
Density: 113 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>



## Singapore: Approach of a private sports school

Population: 4.4 million inhabitants  
Area: 704 km<sup>2</sup>  
Density: 6,500 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>



# Number of sports schools and pupils (in 2007)

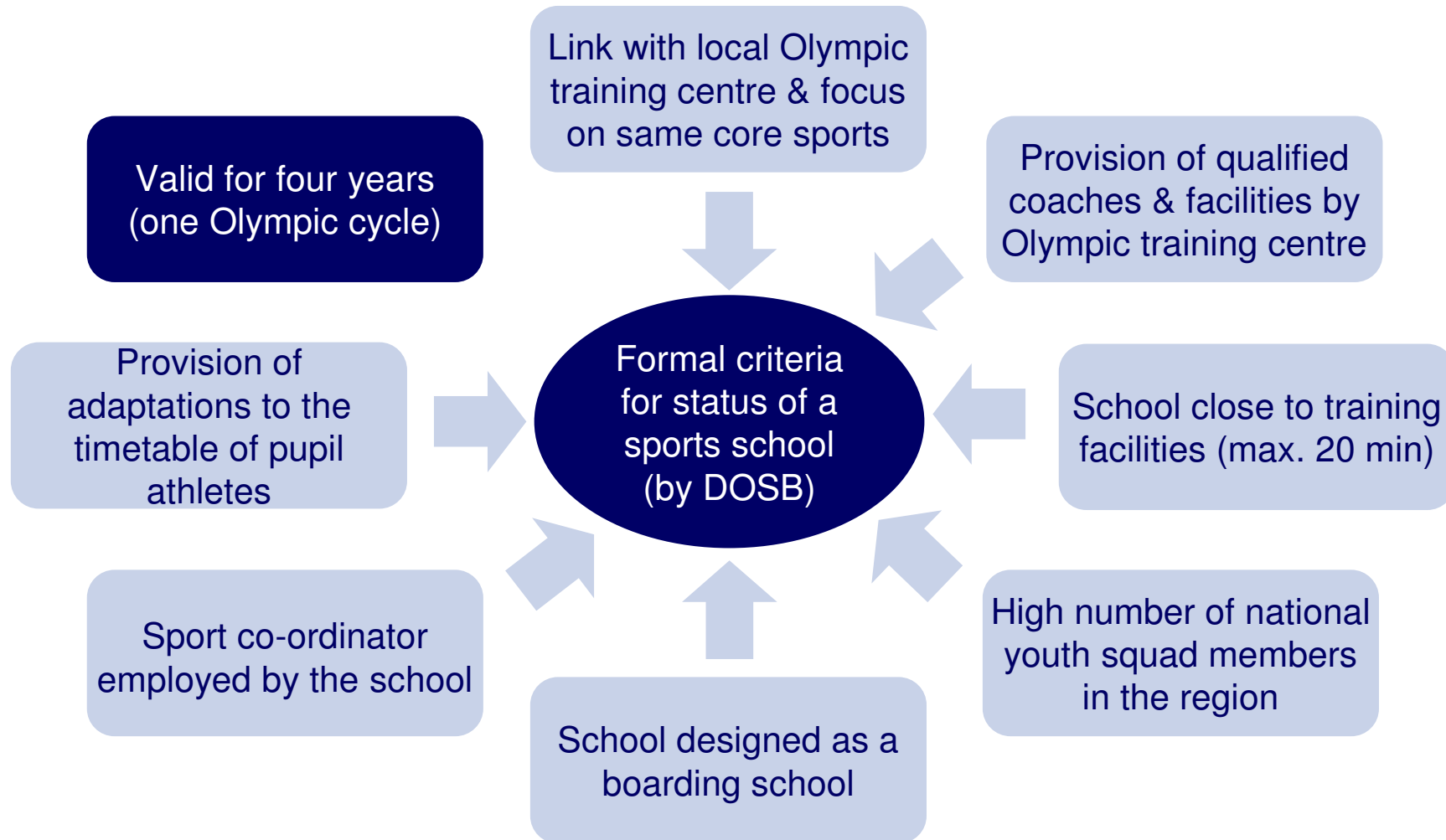


Most schools founded in the early 1990s

A relatively recent phenomenon in Singapore (2004)

Country	Number of sports schools (n)	Number of sports pupils (n)
Canada	1	138
Singapore	1	395
Belgium	10	590
Italy	10	?
Finland	22	1,595
Netherlands	25	2,500
Australia	36	?
Germany	40	11,300
Sweden	61	1,323

# German approach of a national strategy



# Funding



Government-funded state schools: no general school fees (exception: **SIN & NED**)

➔ Fees are charged for boarders, athletes' extra support, participation in the sport programme (**CAN, ITA, FRA, NED, SWE**)

➔ Additional governmental funding and/or funding from local authorities (**AUS, SWE, FIN, GER, NED**)

➔ Private industry supplementing government funding (**SWE, SIN, GER**)

➔ Private industry funding for scholarships (**CAN, FRA, SIN**)

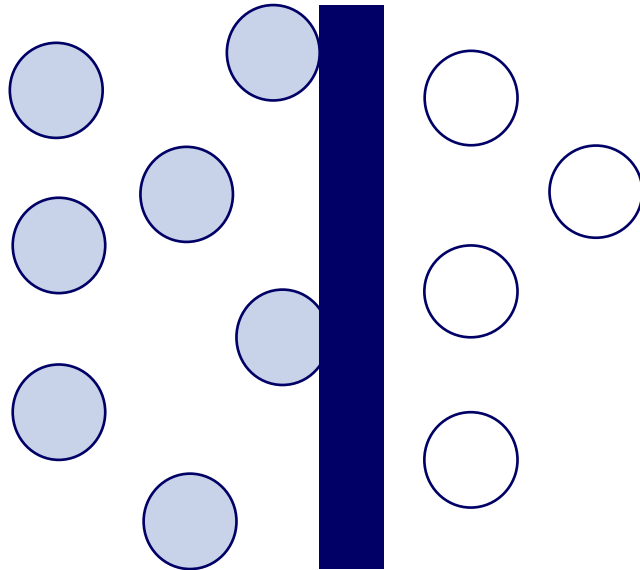
➔ Additional funding from sports federations (**NED, BEL/Flanders, GER**)

# Parent contribution per year (2007)



	NED	€ 50 – 200
	FRA	€ 700
	SWE	€ 500 – 1,500
	ITA	€ 2,600
	CAN	€ 2,800
	SIN	€ 2,900 (Singapore citizens) € 12,000 (foreigners)

# Selection process



Sports federations centrally involved in the process of selection

Pupils' academic merit taken into account



**SIN:** Annual selection trials to assess the technical skills, fitness and potential for further development & written psychological tests



**BEL (Flanders):** Sports performance re-assessment each year



**SWE:** no yearly sports performance assessment by the school, club or sports federation

# Coaching



High quality coaches & high level of cooperation between elite and club coaches



**GER:** Olympic training centre provides training via regional elite coaches who develop athletes' individual training programme in cooperation with club trainer.



**BEL** (Flanders): during school week, pupil athletes coached by coaches employed by sports federation – at the weekend club training and games at home



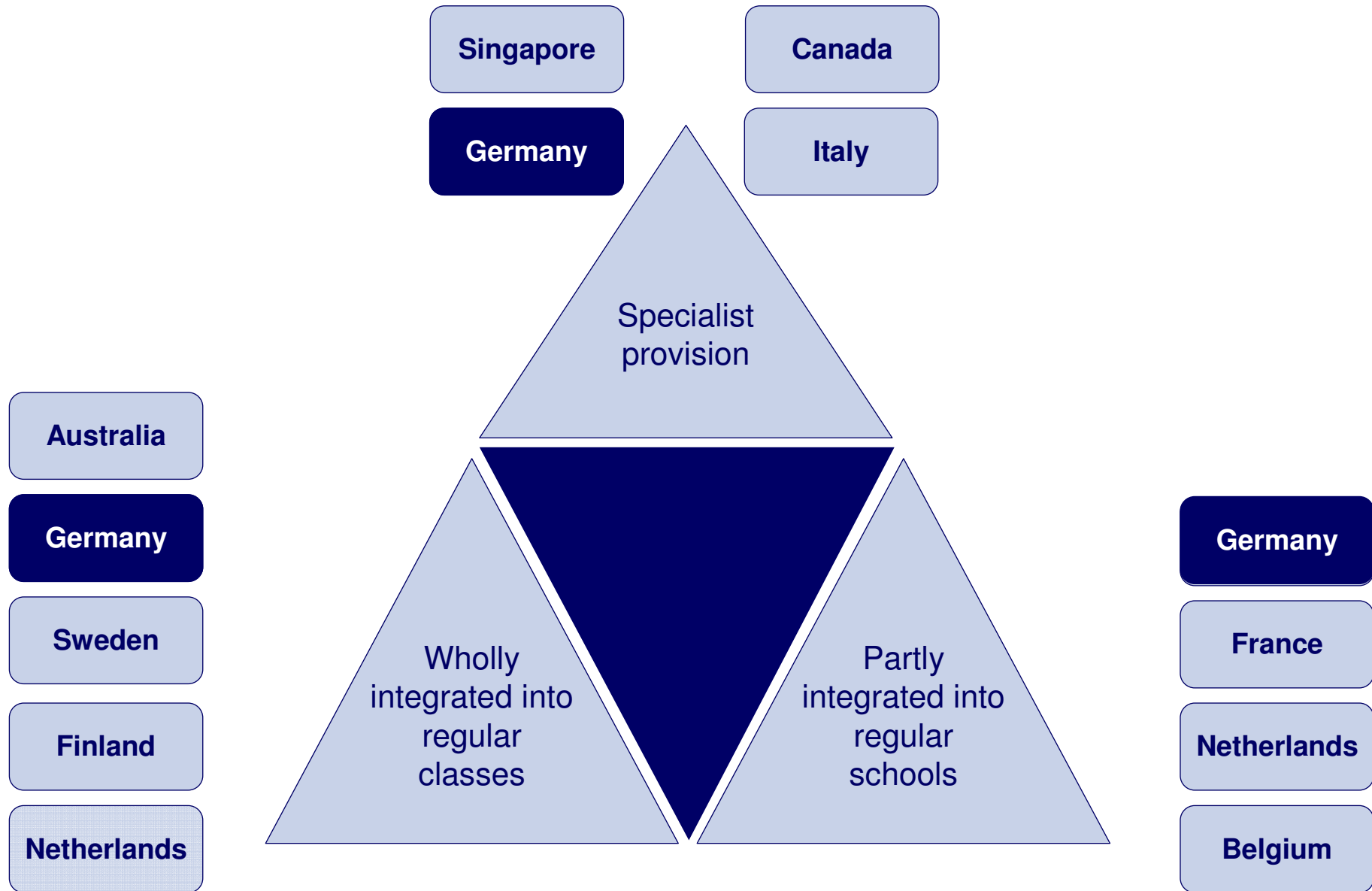
**SIN:** Training programmes run by federations and coached by federation coaches.



**CAN:** Coaching staff approved by national or provincial sport organisations. No sport training done at the school.



# Integration of sports pupils in regular schools

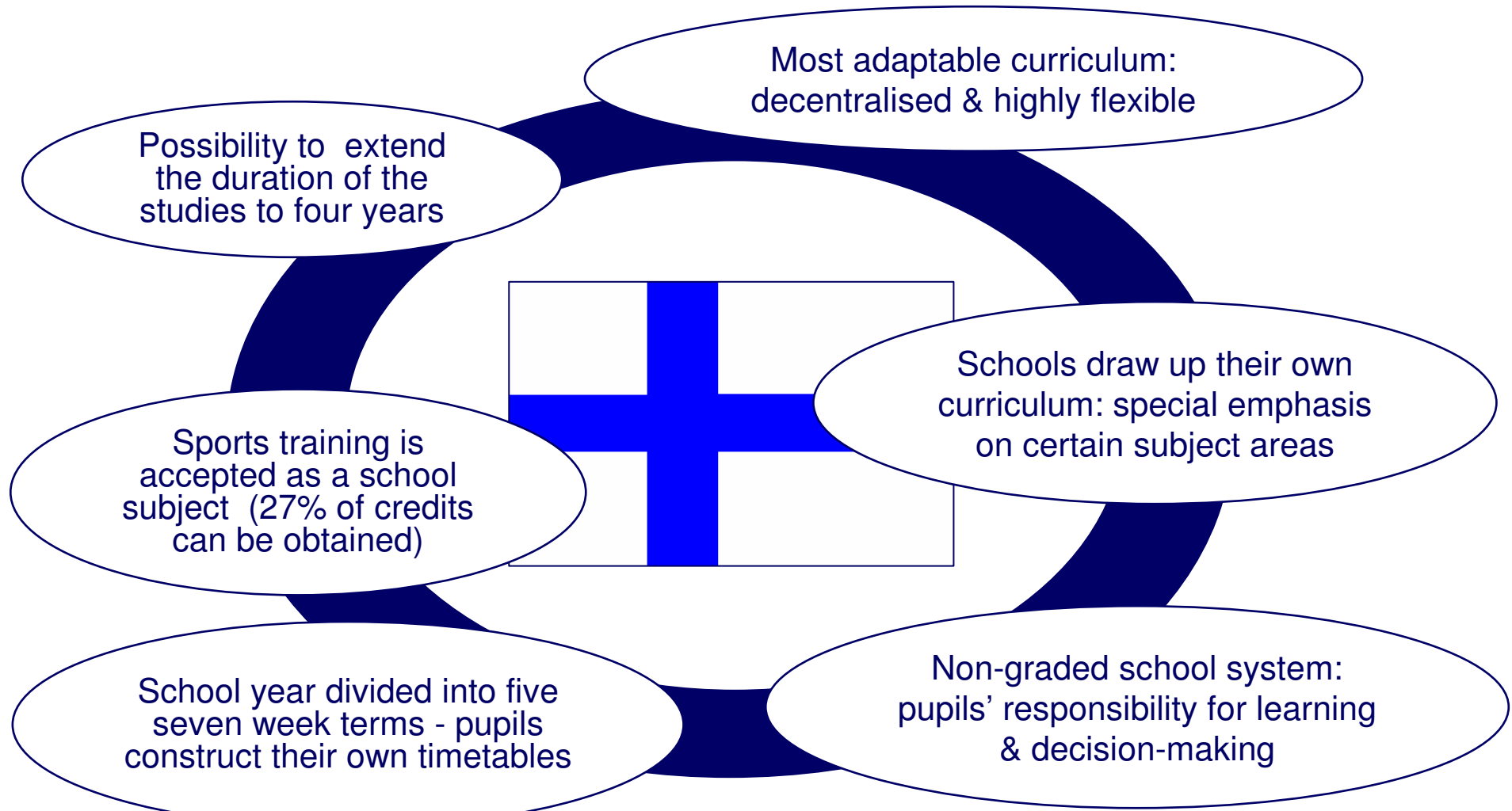


# Flexible curriculum



**FRA:** 24 hours of school lessons vs. 20 hours of trainings per week

**BEL (Flanders):** 32 hours of school lessons vs. 12 hours of training per week



# Flexible curriculum



Institut National des Sports et de l'Education Physique (INSEP) in Paris

INSEP houses up to 1,000 sports people (296 pupil athletes aged below 18)

On Fridays: pupil athletes attend classroom lessons in the respective *lycée* within sports classes (no mixed classes!)

Cooperation with four local upper secondary schools (*lycées*) & 68 teachers

Classes at INSEP from 8 to 11 am & from 2:15 to 4:15 pm (Monday to Thursday)

*Lycée Marcelin Berthelot*  
(148 pupil athletes)  
*Lycée Louis Armand*  
(75 pupil athletes)  
*Lycée Hector Berlioz*  
(48 pupil athletes)  
*Lycée Professionnel Jean Moulin* (24 pupil athletes)

# Flexible curriculum



## Approaches to compensate for the reduced classroom time

Extra tutorials & distance learning materials, lap-tops / internet support provided to enable school work to continue during long absences for training or competition  
(**CAN, FRA, GER, ITA, SIN**)

Year-round schooling provided by teachers on a separate summer contract (**CAN**)

Focus on fewer subjects reducing the required curriculum time (**NED**)

Modified school curriculum provided which contains additional sports-related subjects (**AUS, CAN, FIN, ITA, SWE, SIN**)

Modified curriculum includes *sports training* as a school subject with relevant credits  
(**SWE & FIN**)

Pupil athletes are allowed to extend the duration of their studies by one year  
(**AUS, BEL, GER, FIN, NED, SIN, SWE**)

# Indicators of success



## Academic achievement

- Above the national average (**AUS, CAN, NED, SWE**)
- No difference between pupil athletes and non-athletes (**FIN**)
- Below the national average (**FRA**)

## Sporting achievement

- **GER:** between 2001 & 2004
- 683 medals at junior world & European championships
- 327 medals at Olympic Games, world & European championships
- 82% of Olympic medals

## Drop-out rates

<b>GER:</b>	18 per cent
<b>BEL:</b>	9 - 23 per cent
<b>SWE:</b>	5 - 10 per cent
<b>FIN:</b>	3 per cent

## Swedish approach:

Attending a sports school in order to learn to set goals and to develop achievement orientation (regardless of the pupil athletes' sporting achievement)

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# Conclusion: Generic components



## Two key aspects

- Nature and degree of flexibility available within school curriculum
- Close relationships between sports schools and sports federations

## School as part of

- national system (**GER, SWE, FIN, NED**)
- less systematic approach (**AUS**)
- unique approach (**CAN, SIN**)

Substantial variations  
between/within  
case study countries

## Differences in the financial resources available to sports schools

- Number of available scholarships
- Level and quality of sports facilities provided by the schools

# Conclusion: Cautionary note

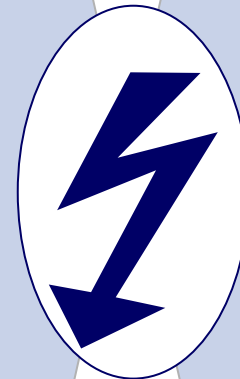


## Sports Schools – Effective and efficient institutions?

### Proponents

(e.g. Zinner, 2008; Meusel, 2008)

- Many successful athletes are former pupil athletes at sports schools (early vs. late specialisation)
- e.g. Turin 2006: 58% of German participants are former/current pupil athletes – 75% of German Olympic medals won by former/current pupil athletes
- Sports Schools are effective and efficient institutions for long term athlete development



### Critics

(e. g. Hohmann, 2009; Emrich et al., 2008; Prohl & Emrich, 2009)

- 50% of successful international athletes did other sports than today at school age (late vs. early specialisation)
- No advantages of pupil athletes taught at sports schools compared to pupil athletes taught at mainstream schools (in terms of sporting/academic achievement)
- Sports schools as multidimensional educational institutions – What about the pedagogical quality of sports schools?





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