

# CHANGE LEADERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL SPORT – BASED ON INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL EXAMPLES

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**Abstract:** Accelerated and turbulent changes – partly driven by external operating environment – are determining day-to-day operations and operational decisions of organizations. They need to be able to respond appropriately, in line with their strategy, yet proactively, in order to maintain competitiveness and future prospects. This is also the case in the world of sport. Our focus is on professional sport – on a domestic sport federation and on one of the most successful clubs in Hungary. The study attempts to adapt the change management theory to professional sport to make it strategic and proactive by creating adapted basis for change management rather than change. Primary and secondary sources were processed using qualitative methods. We investigated three areas of change management / leadership: financial strategy, organization of international sport events and facility management. We conclude that change leadership can be identified in practices of the sports organizations studied, and the theoretical framework can be adapted and applied.

**Keywords:** sports management, professional sport, change management, sportinnovation, sport events, facilities management  
(JEL code: M10, M16 , L83)

## INTRODUCTION

Our environment is changing at an ever-increasing scale and ever-faster pace. For leaders, the aim is to prepare for changes and make informed decisions and leadership responses. However, a key feature of changes is that it is unexpected. Change is now part of our everyday lives. You could say that without change there is no progress. Changes can be both negative and positive, and in both cases it needs to be led and managed. Organizations that are able to adapt their operations to their environment are the ones that can survive (BURNS & STALKER, 1961, LAWRENCE & LORSCH, 1967, TEECE, 2007, cited in CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 17). The nature of the changes focused on in this research and identified in professional sport are the decisive economic events of 2022, the roots of which can already be found in 2020 and 2021, and which have caused decisive changes in both the international and domestic sport worlds.

In our study, we provide a theoretical foundation for change management in Hungarian professional sport. We do so in a practice-oriented way and through concrete examples, thus putting into perspective all the events that the world of professional sport has experienced in recent years. We are convinced that the approach followed in this study is very important and innovative in this field, but that it can also con-

tribute to both increasing the theoretical knowledge of those interested in the subject and to provide appropriate responses to the changes taking place around us. It can thus become an important tool for future research and for management training in sport management.

The often-cited context is that the challenges of the 21st century require a different solution than the ones offered by past practice and experience. At the same time, however, today many emphasise the importance of a complex approach in which, for example, we are aware of historical contexts and can discover recurring patterns, so-called fractals, over larger horizons. In our research, therefore, we aim at a complex approach on the one hand, and the distinction between changes and changing is our theoretical pillar on the other, so that the grouping of underlying drivers and the identification of the different models that are related to them can add novelty to our study. Our focus is always on the effects of external factors.

The correctness of managerial decisions can be affected and adversely affected if the period for which future decisions are based is chosen inappropriately, and even if history is overlooked that has a serious impact on it and even forms the picture of the present and future decisions. This may explain why the payback period as a criterion for the economic viability of an investment/investment cannot be the recom-

mended and followed methodology in the financial decisions of companies, because it introduces a subject into the decisions that may even influence the right decision (BREALEY & MYERS, 1994, p. 73).

Our research is on change management / change leadership in professional sport. In a review of research in sport economics and management, this topic is still considered to be a niche, it does not appear in the research reviewed by András et al. (2019). In our work, we investigate how change leadership (implementation of concepts, identification of knowledge and contexts) can be understood (practical examples) and applied (practical examples) in professional sport.

Literature Review

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of some of the literature on change management and change leadership that is applicable to the management of professional sport.

In this subsection, we briefly present the theoretical foundations that are dominant in the international and domestic literature on the topic, and we seek to highlight the main in-

terrelationships. First, the conceptual approach of change vs. change is discussed, followed by theories of change, such as evolutionary motor theory and Lewin's force field motor theory. The literature review concludes with an interpretation of change leadership.

Changes vs. changing. Bennis (1966) made a distinction between the theoretical framework of what we call changes and changing. He sees the difference in that theories of changes tend to answer why and how changes occur, whereas theories of changing seek answers to questions such as how changes can be generated and how changes can be successfully managed. Changes are by all accounts a dynamic phenomenon, a differentiated approach refined by Porras and Robertson (1992). Changes are a continuous adaptation to environmental conditions. Changes are an objective process with a defined and interpretable direction. It exists independently of our will and is present both in the surrounding systems and within those systems. Modification in environmental conditions force changes in order for organisations to adapt to new conditions (CSATH, 1999).

"Changes are a process that results in new or novel alter-

Table 1: Interpretation of changes and changing in the national and international literature

<i>Changes</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Literature</i>
Why and how do changes happen?	How to generate change and how to lead changing successfully?	Bennis, W. G. 1966
Changes are dynamic phenomena.	Differentiated approach	Porras és Robertson, 1992
Changes exist independently of our will and are present both in the surrounding systems and within those.	Modification in environmental conditions force changing to enable organisations to adapt to new circumstances.	Csath, 1999
Changes are a process whereby new or novel alternatives are introduced into an organisation's structure, behaviour, culture and approach.	Organisational changing should always be understood as leaded changing, since the very term 'organisational changing' implies the active involvement of leadership".	Gál, 2020, p. 259
Strategic decision making is not a seamless process in which changes do not occur at a steady pace.	Many dynamic factors can occur that interrupt or delay the process (interruption, delay and acceleration, cycles).	Zoltayné, 2002, p. 114
The open systems approach of organisations implies that they need to adapt to changes in their external environment.	In a dynamic environment, an organisation is only effective if it is constantly renewing and changing. The way in which the environment-organisation fits together is determined by the conscious choice of the organisation's leaders. We can distinguish between reactive, preactive and proactive leadership choices.	Bakacsi, 1996, p. 284 Dobák, 2006

Source: Own editing based on, Bennis, W. G. (1966), Porras és Robertson, 1992, Csath, 1999, Gál, 2020, p. 259, Zoltayné, 2002, p. 114, Bakacsi, 1996, p. 284, Dobák, 2006

natives being introduced into the structure, behaviour, culture and approach of an organisation. Organizational changing should always be understood as led change, because the term organizational changing refers to the active involvement of leadership" (GÁL, 2020, p. 259). And changing is a consciously shaped process (intervention) with a direction towards the future. Its aim is to achieve a new (more advanced) equilibrium state compared to the current one (NÉMETH, 1997). To summarise, changes are autonomous processes; changing is a volitional process (Table 1).

Managing changes is a managerial activity while leading change (changing) is an organisational process. According to Gál (2020), organisations are constantly affected by events that generate changes. It is necessary to react effectively to these events, and this reaction is a prerequisite for the survival of the organisation. In all cases, it is true that changes create uncertainty and therefore tension (GÁL, 2020, p. 257). Change management is a managerial activity that aims to identify, prepare, plan, implement and sustain the changes necessary for environmental adaptation and organisational renewal (CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 14). According to Dobák (2006), many and diverse changes can occur in organisations at the same time, but in the present interpretation, change management refers to the management of organisational changes for environmental adaptation and organisational renewal (CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 17).

Theories of change. Two theories are closely related to the discussion of this topic and are briefly described below. First, the so-called evolutioner motor theory and then the Lewin force field model will be presented.

Evolutionary engine theory. Van de Ven and Poole (1995), through a review of 200 articles on change management, concluded that theories of emergent changes can be classified into four major groups. Their distinction is based on what drives (facilitates, energises, motivates) changes. On this basis, four distinct groups have been distinguished: 1) the teleological motor, 2) the life cycle motor, 3) the dialectical motor and 4) the evolutioner motor. Related to the topic at hand, the evolutioner motor postulates a continuous cycle in the triad of versions-selection-maintain and the main focus of changes is on the organisational responses generated by the pressure of environmental conditions. Underlying this is the assumption that someone notices the changes in the environment, which – if there is capacity and capability in the organisation to change – will then initiate organisational changing.

In professional sport, the focus is on the organisational reactions and changes generated by the pressure of environmental conditions, i.e. the changing are brought about by the modification of environmental conditions, then this is the so-called evolutionary engine theory (GÁL, 2020, p. 259). Possible grouping of the theory: the need for change leadership can be given by 1) changes in external factors, 2) internal factors can also generate changes (CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 18) – hence change leadership is defined as: environmental adaptation and organisational renewal. In the evolutionary theory approach, every organization acts in its own self-interest for its own survival and success – all processes should

point in this direction (monitoring the environment, detecting environmental changes, forming reactions to changes, implementing the reactions, and continuously repeating this process) (POÓR, 2017).

Organizations are understood as open systems – they are in constant contact with the external environment (DOBÁK, 2006, cited in CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 25). External factors that require changes can be identified using strategic management tools such as Porter's five forces model or PESTEL analysis. Adapting to a changing environment is not easy – all organisations strive for a degree of stability, so change management must be able to manage against organisational inertia (DOBÁK, 2006, cited in CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 18).

Lewin's Force Field Model. According to Gál (2020), Lewin's Force Field model of 1972 is used to describe changes (GÁL, 2020, p. 258). According to Gál (2020), in the Lewin's force field model approach, changes can be interpreted as changes in the characteristics of a system, i.e. "as we move forward in time, along some of its parameters, they show different patterns than before". According to Gál (2020), Lewin's basic theory suggests that the balance of factors that impede and generate changes that affect a stable, equilibrium state is upset, whereby the previous stable state is broken and the organism becomes unstable. Referring to this, Gál (2020) identifies adaptation, i.e. changing the previous state, as a need for the organism to be able to survive in the new situation (GÁL, 2020, p. 258).

Changing – change leadership and change management. Today's changes and their turbulence have accelerated, which means that organisations have less time to create and implement responses to changes. Changes can be both negative and positive, with consequences in both cases. However, according to Gál (2020), this process does not necessarily ensure that this stable, final state can be achieved. For these reasons, Gál (2020) argues that it is not always the case that a state of completion is reached. Organizations are thus in a process of constant adaptation, in addition to permanent changes, and we can hardly speak of a stable state. According to Gál (2020), „organisations are characterised by permanent instability and a conscious and controlled managerial response to changes becomes essential, the framework for which is provided by change management” (GÁL, 2020, p. 258-259).

Today, learning and leadership are becoming increasingly important. Organisations that are able to adapt to changes are those that are able to learn from changes, manage and develop the knowledge they have already acquired. The fundamental link is that changes are generated by external-internal processes, but can only be managed by the leaders of organisations. Basic premise: for sustainable competitive advantage, environmental changes and organisational changes must fit together, organisational changes must be conscious, and the conscious management of these changes is change management, which aims at organisational renewal, adaptation to the changing environment - changes - novelty - innovation (CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 13).

Adaptation paradox: the more an organization adapts to

current external factors, the more its ability to adapt to the future decreases (BURGELMAN, 1991, cited in CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 26) – a high degree of adaptation to the current environment may even be detrimental if the environment changes again.

Change management: change management is about tackling complex, often messy problems where cause and effect relationships are far from clear. Thus, the order of factors to be considered may be interchangeable, depending on the research and practice objectives or priorities (FARKAS, 2006, p. 12).

Based on the review of international and domestic literature, the following interpretations of change management can be distinguished (FARKAS, 2006, p. 12): 1) change management as resource development, 2) change management as the art of balancing, 3) change management as the practice of dealing with turbulent situations, 4) change process as problem identification and resolution. Each of these distinctions works with different interpretations of changes. In the case of interpretation 4), changes as a “why” emerges, then: 'changes are always about starting from one state and arriving at another, and on the way to that state, tasks are solved, giving way to something entirely new' (FARKAS, 2006, p. 15).

"All this is being done in line with pre-defined objectives, with milestones set and with careful planning and stakeholder engagement. The range of terms used to replace the word "problem" in change management terminology is wide, such as: opportunity, challenge, crossroads, controversy, issue, phenomenon" (FARKAS, 2006, p. 15).

The way in which the environment and the organisation fit together and the success of the adaptation, the results of the organisational changes that occur, are determined by the conscious choice of the organisation's leaders. We can distinguish between reactive (adapting to environmental changes), preactive (anticipating expected environmental changes) and proactive (seeking to change environmental conditions) managerial choices (DOBÁK, 2006). Based on Nadler et al. (1998), the four basic types of change are depicted as follows (Figure 1).

Nadler et al (1998) interpret the four basic types of changing along two dimensions. It considers both the rate of changing and its timing. He speaks of adaptation when the rate of changing is a quantitative changes in state and its timing is a post hoc reaction. In the case of a reactive, ex-post reaction, he refers to the basic type of changing as recovery, when the degree of changing is already qualitative and can therefore be described as a revolutionary change of state. He speaks of fine-tuning when the rate of changing is a quantitative changes of state and the timing is characterised by anticipation, i.e. proactivity. According to Nadler et al. (1998), a change of direction is said to occur when the timing of the changing is proactive and the degree of changing is qualitative, i.e. a revolutionary state change.

According to Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002 (cited in CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 34), adaptation to environmental changing is ensured by three main factors: 1) highly specialised organisational units called "centres of excellence", 2) rapid and efficient sharing and global management of local knowledge, and 3) the context of integration and cohesion (culture, systems).

Dynamic capabilities is a resource-based strategic approach, in the framework of which adaptation-innovation and changes are linked and connected in the sense of understanding (TEECE et al., 1997, TEECE, 2007, 2016, cited in CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 37). According to this approach, in turbulent environments, it is a more reliable decision to base the strategy not on industry positioning, but on organisational resources and their development. Furthermore, innovation created as a combination of organisational resources also feeds back to the market environment as an output, and it is not only the environment that affects the organisation.

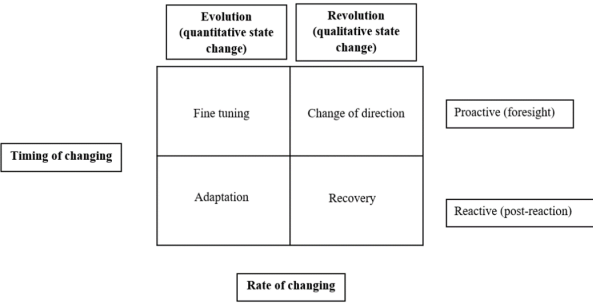
The DC framework is based on the premise that in order to keep pace with rapid environmental changes, companies need the capabilities to sense new business opportunities, develop business models capable of seizing opportunities, mobilise the necessary resources (seizing) and transform their operations accordingly (CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 37). The environment is changing very rapidly, with competitive challenges allowing shorter time than ever to adapt.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The subject of our primary research is the Budapest Honvéd Sports Association and the Hungarian Canoe Federation, and to identify practical examples we will examine the practices of these two organisations as a case study, through interviews with their leaders. In evaluating and analysing the management interviews, we identified the change leadership practices in the three areas.

The Budapest Honvéd Sports Association has 14 divisions (athletics, wrestling, judo, kayak-kenu, karate, handball, basketball, pentathlon, shooting, recreational sports, gymnastics, swimming, fencing, water polo) and 9 sections (B33, e-sport, football, laser run, diving, boxing, synchronised swimming, taekwondo, wave riding) (honved. hu, 2023). It is Hungary's most successful club in terms of Olympic results. The aim of

Figure 1: Four basic types of changing



Source: Nadler, D. A. & Nadler, M. B.: *Champions of Change: How CEOs and Their Companies are Mastering the Skills of Radical Change*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1998



the sports club is to be the number one sports club in Budapest and in the country and to offer everyone the possibility of leisure sport and a healthy lifestyle.

The Hungarian Canoe Federation can look back on 81 years of history, currently counting 191 member organisations and 5076 athletes. It has 28 Olympic gold medals, one Paralympic gold medal, 280 World Championship gold medals and 217 European Championship gold medals. The Maty-ér in Szeged has hosted four World Championships and several World Cups, World Youth Championships to date and again in 2027. Its current disciplines are speed kayak, kayak polo, marathon, parakenu, water touring, rafting, SUP, kayak polo, slalom (kajakkenusport.hu, 2023).

The association is a public benefit organisation, so its main objective is not to make a profit, but rather to create social value, to serve the community, to create opportunities for sport and to support the operation of kayak canoeing sports clubs to the highest possible level. The Hungarian Canoe Federation is also a holding company (mainly for its asset management activities) and owns three other companies which carry out various activities (Sportrendszer Fejlesztő és Tanácsadó Non-profit Kft., Canoe Üzemeltető és Szolgáltató Nonprofit Kft., BJMOKK Sportüzemeltetési Nonprofit Kft.).

In our research, we examined the management of change/ changing in international and domestic professional sport from several perspectives. In our methodology, we used qualitative methods to analyse primary and secondary sources. Our aim in using qualitative methods was to focus on understanding from the perspective of the respondent (the changing leader).

Qualitative research can be used to explore a person's experience or behaviour, or to understand a phenomenon (GHAURI, 2004). It also provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study and to gain insights into the experiences and opinions of participants. This method places less emphasis on quantifiable data, but is more fundamentally suited to exploring and revealing certain characteristics and contexts. Qualitative methods: literature analysis, documentary second analysis, primary expert interviews. The different tools complement each other and help to develop a broader understanding of the topic through national and international examples. In the secondary research, we reviewed the international literature and identified theoretical frameworks in international practice cases. Our primary research involved interviews with experts.

In our primary research, we had expert interviews with Gábor Schmidt, Social President of the Hungarian Canoe Federation, Deputy State Secretary for Sport Administration and Development, State Secretariat for Sport, and István Gergely, Executive President of the Budapest Honvéd Sports Club. The interviews took place on MSTeams in spring 2023. The two organisations differ in organisational form, but are comparable in terms of the research question. Main common characteristics: mainly publicly funded organisation, performance pressures, exposure to external environmental factors both in terms of facilities management, financial strategy (opportunity for business revenues).

The research was built on two pillars. First, we identified the changes that are shaping the professional sporting life.

Then we examined the practice of change in three areas of change management in international and domestic professional sport. Our aim is to present and second-analyse practical examples that help us to interpret our theoretical framework for sport.

The three practice areas are interrelated. Financial strategy and the organisation of international sporting events have an impact on facilities management.

Our research question: How to understand (theoretical framework) and apply (practical examples) changes, and even more so change leadership in professional sport. Our question: How is change leadership as a leadership activity implemented in professional sport? How is it practised in professional sport?

Research limitations. As a research limitation, it can be identified that no general management responses can be derived from inhomogeneous sample items, therefore one of the aims of the study is to identify good practices in the context of changing leadership in domestic sports organisations. A future development opportunity is to increase the number of organisations studied according to the different organisational forms.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Situation analysis – Identifying macro-level environmental changes.*

In professional sport, the nature of changes will be determined by the decisive economic events of 2022, the roots of which can already be found in 2020 and 2021, and it is worth taking a step back and placing the events of the 21st century in a broader historical perspective, because this will allow us to identify patterns that show the historical events in their context and draw attention to recurring phenomena and interrelationships. All these changes in the general environment have brought about changes in both the international and domestic sporting world. An analytical presentation of environmental changes has been made by examining secondary and primary sources.

It is also useful to have a kind of grouping between environmental changes, which helps to create a professional order between the changes. Such a grouping could be the temporality mentioned above, but the following also give the possibility to distinguish between several dimensions: 1) sport or non-sport, 2) international or domestic, and 3) chronological effects.

Global trends include digitalisation, which is emerging as a tool to transform operational processes and management activities. The need for digitalisation as a successful development policy tool (see Estonia's success). It is also necessary when structural, temporal and spatial boundaries are loosened and processes are and have become decentralised, multi-actor, networked. According to Davensport-Westerman (2018), digital transformation is not only about developing and implementing new technologies, but also about continuous changes in the organisation, investing in new capabilities and recombining people, tools and business processes (DAVENSPORT & WESTERMAN, 2018, cited in CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ,

2019, p. 26).

Digitalisation as an external trend leads to organisational changes in the field of facility management, operation and development (transformational and transactional variables, according to which the primary driver of organisational changes is environmental adaptation (BURKE & LITWIN, 1989, cited in CSEDŐ & ZAVARKÓ, 2019, p. 26).

It is characterised by a competition for innovation and a broad, cross-cutting drive for sustainability. Csath (2023) argues that in the current rapidly changing economic environment, with its new technological breakpoints, the conditions for competitiveness and its improvement are also changing (CSATH, 2023, p. 126). He states that "a high rate of investment in intellectual capital and a high level of intellectual wealth are prerequisites for a country to move from competing on the basis of "cheapness" to competing on the basis of knowledge and innovation, i.e. to move up a level and become a knowledge economy" (CSATH, 2023, p. 126). It can be concluded that today, in order to maintain and improve competitiveness, it is necessary to quickly match problems with solutions (market needs and technologies) and to develop technological infrastructure.

International consultancy firms (Deloitte, Nielsen) report and forecast on sport economic and marketing trends on a regular basis, with technological focus on data analytics, digitalisation, social media, facilities, wearables, web3.0 (DELOITTE, 2017). The future of globalisation is an important phenomenon, with Halmai (2023) suggesting that the competition between the US and China, the impact of certain trade policy restrictions and the consequences of the coronavirus epidemic threatening global production chains could spell the end of globalisation. In his view, the globalised world economy is undergoing a fundamental transformation, in which identifying the main directions of changes is an inescapable task of economics and a prerequisite for far-sighted economic policy action (HALMAI, 2023, p. 5). This also has implications for Hungarian economic policy, which has used sport as a strategic sectoral instrument over several cycles.

In the case of environmental changes on a global scale, pandemics were the first and most frequently mentioned in the online expert interviews, and have had a profound impact on the international and domestic sporting world, its operations, its competitive system and its supply chain, which is considered global. In second place and also mentioned in all interviews was the changes in energy prices, which interviewees linked to the war conflict in our neighbourhood and the related inflation as adverse changes in energy prices in their operations. Either these were not immediate, because longer-term and pre-contracted agreements either delayed the impact somewhat, or the immediate and rapid response (closing plants, reducing the indoor temperatures to a level that match the legal requirement, starting up a smart home-like system and related education) helped to blunt the impact. A difference could be in the third mentioned external environmental changes, which could be linked to the fact that a sport specific association tends to focus on sport specific factors, thus the mention of climate changes in the case of kayak canoeing, while the need for IT system improvement was mentioned in

the case of a multi-sport association.

Table 2 provides a summary of the three main external environmental variables identified by the primary research findings, i.e. the interviews, and the secondary sources.

**Table 2: Main external environmental changes identified through secondary sources and primary interviews**

Secondary sources	MKKSZ, Schmidt Gábor	BHSE, István Gergely
Digital transformation	Covid-19	Covid-19
Innovation competition	War inflation	Energy price changes in 2022
The future of globalisation: De- or reglobalisation	Climate changes	Need for IT system development

Source: Interviews with experts by Schmidt, Gergely, 2023

*Changes in Hungarian sport*

The year 2022 brought changes to the state governance system of Hungarian sport. The former ministerial structure was replaced by the Ministry of Defence (hereinafter: MoD), changing the person of the State Secretary and linking the previously established National Sports Agency Nonprofit Limited Liability Company (hereinafter: NSC) as an important back-up organisation. In a government decree, the tasks of the, which is under the ownership of the Ministry of Defence, were defined, as well as the transfer of tasks and the creation of financing conditions for the performance of certain tasks, with regard to the reorganisation of tasks resulting from the restructuring of the central sports governance system (kormany.hu, 2023). A new head was appointed to both the State Secretariat for Sport of the Ministry of Defence and the NSC, as well as to the Hungarian Olympic Committee. The former is headed by Dr Ádám Schmidt, State Secretary for Sport, Péter Biró, CEO of the National Sports Agency Nonprofit Limited Liability Company, while the National Olympic Committee (MOB) is headed by President Zsolt Gyulay.

The management of Hungarian sport has been challenged by the pandemic and the energy crisis that, as well as by the price increases caused by inflation. In addition, the regulation of TAO (Corporation tax) resources has evolved continuously.

The communicated objectives were to increase the efficiency of the newly established sports governance and to reduce bureaucracy, the latter also applying to the use of TAO funds, whereby the aim is for TAO to support and develop sport and the profession, and for this funding system to have a future.

The above analysis of the situation in professional sport identifies changes in environmental conditions at both macro and micro levels, which will force sporting organisations to changing in order to adapt to the new circumstances. The

question is how to lead changing successfully? How is change management as a leadership activity implemented in professional sport?

### *International and national examples of change leadership (changing)*

Practical examples (Table 3) of change leadership in three key areas of professional sport have been identified and analysed by examining secondary and primary sources. The three areas are interlinked, with financial strategy and the organisation of international sporting events having an impact on facilities management, and this is reflected in reverse.

**Financial strategy.** The financial strategy is built around three pillars. The first is the investment strategy. The owner of capital invests his money in the business or sports company because he hopes to increase his wealth and the value of the company. Changing environmental factors, changes in the economic situation of market players and the state (uncertainty, increased risk) change the propensity and willingness to invest. In uncertain economic times, investors seek stability and predictability. Sport (sports teams, championships, events) is not immune to economic shocks. The demand for sport as entertainment also depends on the general economic conditions. And the economic situation influences who is able to invest in sport. The subject area can be understood in an international context. In this area, the world of sport has undergone constant change over the last 10-15 years. One of the main trends is the significant increase in the involvement of Asia and the Arab world. Qatar has invested \$200 billion in sport through the organisation of the football world cup in order to use its impact to achieve its goals.

A good example of the impact of geopolitical changes is that in 2022, when the Russian-Ukrainian war broke out, Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich was sanctioned for his links to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The club was therefore put up for auction in 2022. The £4.25bn takeover (theguardian.com, 2022), the largest ever in the history of the sporting giants, required the approval of the Premier League and the UK. The buyer was a consortium led by US businessman Todd Boehly.

In the case of the Olympics, obtaining the right to host the event requires a large financial investment. In recent years, the number of bidding countries has steadily decreased and the bidding system has changed. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), the owner of the hosting rights, is in preliminary negotiations with countries with hosting ambitions. The process is changing, making it more attractive for new countries to organise and invest in sport.

In October 2021, the Premier League authorised the acquisition of Newcastle United by the Saudi-based Public Investment Fund, becoming the flagship Saudi Arabia project with sporting ambitions and sports business objectives. And the football project, which will run from 2023-2024, aims to triple the market value of the Saudi series (\$2.1 billion target) by placing it among the top ten leagues in the world (MONCZ, 2023).

The second element of the financial strategy is financing. In this case, we use three practical examples from Hungary to illustrate how the funding and financing of Hungarian sport is being implemented and has been transformed.

**Changing public sport funding system.** Between June and November 2022, the new sports governance leadership reviewed the previous programme and, instead of the previous 16 sports, all Olympic sports were included in the National Competitive Sports Development Programme, grouped into five different categories in the spirit of the five rings (SCHMIDT, 2022).

In the National Programme for the Development of Competitive Sport, the basis for classification, and therefore the amount of funding, is "the expected performance in future cycles in addition to past performance" (SCHMIDT, 2022). Furthermore, the new system is much more dynamic than the previous one, in which sports are treated not only on the basis of past performance but also on the basis of expected future performance. "From a sporting point of view, a category 1 sport, which is expected to win medals at the Olympics and World Cups, is approached in a very different way than a category 3, 4 or 5 sport (Table 4). The latter cannot be expected to be judged at the same level as swimmers or wrestlers, based on the organisation and strength of the competitors. There is a constant concerted effort to categorise the sports so that they

**Table 3: Causes and effects of financial changes**

Country	Reason for changes	Changing and its impact
<b>Qatar</b>	Building soft power, strengthening international economic and political position	Investing \$200 billion in sport, organising the football World Cup.
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Russian-Ukrainian conflict	The Russian owner has been replaced by an American investment group.
<b>India, Egypt, Indonesia</b>	Reduction in the number of bidders – the Olympic bidding system has been restructured – based on preliminary negotiations	The new countries will be attracted to organise the Olympics, to invest in sport.
<b>China</b>	Leadership ambition, political objective Xi Jinping's programme	Increasing participation in recreational sports. Chinese professional athletes' performance has increased, China hosts major international sporting events.
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	Sports ambition, sports economy objectives, improving national image	2021: Acquisition of Newcastle United, 2022: Signing of Cristiano Ronaldo, 2023: signing of Karim Benzema and other star footballers

*Source: own editing, 2023*



are ranked as high as possible on the basis of their performance" (BAJI, 2022). Some sports have moved up, such as cycling or sailing, while others have slipped back, such as gymnastics.

**Table 4: Five categories of the National Competitive Sport Development Programme**

<b>Category 1</b>	"Due to their structure, professionalism and highly developed talent management system, they have a good chance of winning medals at the next two Olympics."
<b>Category 2</b>	"There is a good chance that the next two Olympic Games will feature high-scoring sports."
<b>Category 3</b>	"In some cases", scoring at the next two Olympics is expected."
<b>Category 4</b>	"In the six-year period starting with the 2028 Olympics (two Summer and two Winter Games), there is a possibility of quota and possibly points scoring."
<b>Category 5</b>	"Based on their current situation and potential, Olympic qualification is neither expected nor achievable."

*Source: Schmidt G., 2022*

*Funding and financial planning for domestic sports organisations*

In the case of Budapest Honvéd Sports Club, 95 percent of its revenue comes from state subsidies, according to the interview. The 5 percent comes from event management, a pillar that is profit-driven and expected to generate a profit. A future goal is to increase the share of own income in the funding, and the association would like to open up to day admission services. This concept was already formulated before 2020, but changes over the last three years have confirmed the need for this new approach. Developments have therefore been made which offer the possibility of generating own income, such as the construction of a kitchen with a capacity of 600 people and thus the provision of catering, and the rental of facilities. In the case of COVID-19, independent income has been reduced, operating costs have fallen, but new costs have arisen: decontamination, masks. As a changing, the club has introduced new protocols to ensure that sporting facilities can

be provided under these rules as soon as possible.

The Hungarian Canoe Federation, is characterised by a multi-legged approach to funding, and the "holding-like" operation of the organisation has been a conscious strategic goal of the organisation in recent years. This allows for the generation of business revenues alongside state support. The Federation has a specific recreational sports strategy aimed at providing high quality services to consumers (athletes). The investments have enabled the member organisations to carry out these activities. From a financial point of view, the Federation acts as an intermediary for the redistribution of public subsidies. Therefore, the funding objective of the Federation is to enable its member organisations to generate their own income and to reduce as far as possible their dependence on public subsidies.

The third element of the financial strategy is the analysis and planning of the financial system (Table 5). Changing environmental factors determine cost management. In this ever-changing environment, a major challenge is whether and how to manage costs effectively. In times of changes and uncertainty in terms of investment and financing, the role of financial planning becomes paramount.

At the Budapest Honvéd Sports Club, financial planning is done on a departmental basis, with the financial manager, professional manager and department chairman jointly preparing the plan, which is sent to the head office. The consultation phase is part of the process, the prepared plans are reacted to by the managers and the final version is created through a process of consultation. The aim is to have a zero balance between the income and expenditure side; it is not the responsibility of the departments to make a profit, as we are talking about a non-profit organisation. Centralisation, avoiding duplication and rational financial management are important objectives. 'Not everyone has a physiotherapist, a psychologist or a bus of its own' (GERGELY, 2023). The changes of the last three years have highlighted the need for centralisation and responsible financial planning. Centralised resources – facilities, gym, equipment, buses, health centre – are used by departments on a time-schedule basis. "It is no longer the case that the swimming pool is only for the swimmers – they have priority and choose the first appointment – but then the other disciplines and recreational sports are also accommodated in the pool" (GERGELY, 2023). In the situation created by the changes, the association was helped by the fact that it "had financial reserves, had a vision for survival, and proactively sought the most efficient ways of operating" (GERGELY, 2023). After several years of preparation, by 2022 BHSE's facilities had an energy system in place that allowed energy consumption to be accurately measured and planned. In the sports facilities, "the temperature required for sports purposes was ensured, with drastic reductions and the introduction of a home office in the other premises" (GERGELY, 2023). In financial planning, the primary objective is to "ensure that the association's operations are in order in terms of sports at the end of the day (i.e. every four years, at the end of the Olympic cycle)" (GERGELY, 2023).

In the case of the Hungarian Canoe Federation, financial planning will start in the autumn of the previous year and will



be voted on by the General Assembly in October. The budget planning is based on the objectives set out in the strategy. In the current situation, the priorities are (1) support for member organisations, salary increases for coaches – this is now justified by the rise in energy prices, (2) Olympic qualification tasks – especially in the years prior to Olympic Games (3) continued operation of the regional system – increasing the number of member organisations. In financial planning, the obligation to set aside reserves is a priority, without which the budget cannot be adopted (SCHMIDT, 2023). This conscious planning has been well tested in the case of COVID-19 and wartime inflation. In the case of COVID-19, the federation's goal was to emerge as a winner as an outdoor sport, and to do this, it needed the support of the clubs. In 2020, there was "an unprecedented increase in numbers; in 2021 there was no increase, but no decrease in numbers" (SCHMIDT, 2023). This increased consumer demand, mainly from recreational athletes, needed to be met by the member associations, and the goal was achieved: they were able to manage this increased demand. In professional sport, the Federation did not abandon the clubs, cutting back on membership fees and reducing competition fees, with a rapid budget reallocation in 2020. Even in the case of wartime inflation, the Federation's stable financial position and conscious financial planning enabled it to provide immediate extra funding for the 20 largest clubs in August 2022.

Table 5: Changes and changing in the organisations surveyed

	Covid-19	Energy crisis/ wartime inflation	Changing financing situation
Hungarian Canoe Federation	Support for clubs. Cut back on membership fees and competition fees. A rapid budget reallocation to impact 2020.	Provide immediate additional resources to the top 20 clubs.	Conscious budgeting, holding-like operations, business continuity, multi-legged operations.
Budapest Honvéd Sports Club	Introduction of new protocols, providing sporting opportunities under these rules.	A remotely controlled energy system that provides the necessary environment for athletes, but also brings significant savings.	Departmental financial planning, centralisation.

Source: own editing based on interviews with experts,  
2023

Sport events

The three areas chosen interact with each other: (1) who can and who will be the organising city? – the transformation of the landscape of financial investments (discussed in the first part) determine and transform the list of countries that will

be able and willing to organise international sport events in the short term; (2) COVID-19, (3) the war situation [in the neighborhood] and the energy crisis are forcing further changing (Table 6). In our approach, the changing in the field of international sport events can be divided into two parts. When a changing is needed in the concept, in the way the event is organised; in the organisation, in the factors, and when the organising city itself the venue changing.

The changing in the organisational concept was mostly due to the COVID-19 effect. The issue of safety has long been included in sport economic trends, "but since 2020 this area has been reinterpreted and health safety has become the main issue, with the health situation affecting (international) sporting events that attract crowds and consumers who attend them in person on site" (MÁTÉ & ANDRÁS, 2022, p. 46). The "Watch Games. See More." was a complex strategy of the 2022 Handball European Championship that, through conscious planning, would have ensured that the international sporting event would achieve the desired positive effects, not only in sport but also in other related areas (MÁTÉ, 2022a). The programme was intended to showcase the culture, gastronomy and diverse programme offerings of the organising country (see more, taste more, feel more, chill more, spot more, do more). However, these could not be achieved in that health situation. During the event, the number of illnesses among the players was high, the level of performance of the Hungarian team was below expectations.

Another example of a changes in organisational concept is the World Cup in Qatar, in which adapting to environmental conditions has created ever-changing factors. Stakeholder consensus created different changes, to which management responded with changes. The decision by the International Football Federation in 2010 meant to hold the World Cup in an Arab country for the first time and the first to be held in Asia since 2002. The adaptation to environmental factors to avoid the summer heat generated a sporting change, with the World Cup being held in the winter, in the middle of the national championships, in an unusual move. Another important environmental factor is the adaptation to the culture of the organising country, Qatar, as a conservative Muslim state, has strict regulations on the sale of alcohol. The host country and FIFA negotiated this so-called "beer issue" until the last minute, which created a new situation for Budweiser. Budweiser paid out \$75 million to be the exclusive beverage sponsor, but it was decided before the event that there would be no alcoholic beer in the stadiums despite the preliminary agreement (bloomberg.com, 2023).

The other major changing, when the host city is changed, is the venue. There may be several reasons for cancellation, backtracking, re-planning. Each sporting organisation has a different approach when a country or city withdraws from hosting a major sporting event. No two cancellations are the same, every case is different and therefore the consequences and sanctions are different. Table 6 collects ten cases where the changes have brought about a changing. The Norwegians pulled out of the 2020 Women's Handball European Championship half a month before it was due to start, leaving the hosting to the Danes alone. The Dutch, who had returned the

**Table 6: Causes and solutions for changes in international sporting events**

Sport event	Organiser	Reasons	Solution
Winter Olympics, 1976	Denver	[The originally planned budget would have been triplicated – mainly due to the rise of the costs of clean up and of adversing the unforeseen environmental impacts.]	Innsbruck
World Kayak Canoe Championships, 2011	Vichy, France	Weather forecasts predicted bad weather conditions.	Szeged, Hungary
European Women's Handball Championship, 2012	Netherlands	Financial reasons	Serbia
Africa Cup of Nations, Football 2015	Morocco	Ebola outbreak in West Africa.	Equatorial Guinea
FINA World Aquatics Championships, 2017	Mexico, Guadalajara	The funds needed to run the event were not available.	Budapest
European Women's Handball Championship 2020	Norway, Denmark	COVID-19	Denmark
Billie Jean King Cup (formerly known as the Fed Cup), 2011	Budapest, Hungary	COVID-19, financial reasons	Prague, Czech Republic
FINA World Aquatics Championships, 2022	Fukuoka	COVID-19	Budapest, Debrecen, Szeged
U18 Girls' Handball World Championships, 2022	Georgia	War	Skopje, Northern Macedonia
World Wrestling Championships, 2022	Russia	War	Belgrade, Serbia

*Source: Own editing, 2023*

hosting rights to EHF the 2012 European Women's Handball Championship shortly before the start, had to pay a hefty fine and were excluded from that tournament.

For the 2022 FINA World Aquatics Championships, Hungary was the back-up country again after 2017. Originally, the FINA World Championships, postponed from 2021 to 2022, were due to take place in Fukuoka in the second half of May 2022, but the Japanese organisers, citing the pandemic, have indicated that they will only be able to hold the event in July 2023. With thousands of athletes starting their preparations to compete at the 2022 World Championships, the International Swimming Federation did its best to offer a suitable alternative – and the Budapest World Championships were agreed. The Hungarian Swimming Federation took on the task and challenge only by leading changing. Instead of six sports, five were organised, and this time the programme did not include the giant steeplechase. It was a novelty to start the event with the swimming competition along with the diving and open water swimming events and the group matches of the water polo tournament in the first week, followed by the diving and open water swimming events and the straight knockout stage of the polo tournament in the second week. Using only existing facilities, the World Championships venues included cities in the countryside, with Debrecen, Sopron and Szeged among the organising cities, making use of the available sports facilities. The event was organised with a reduced capacity, and the

10,000 capacity required by FINA for the World Championships was not guaranteed for the swimming competitions in the Duna Arena.

The U18 Girls' Handball World Championship was originally scheduled to be held in Georgia in 2022, but after the outbreak of war, the event was moved to a new venue (Skopje, North Macedonia) for security reasons.

The venue for the 2022 World Championships was changed by the International Wrestling Federation (UWW) due to sanctions against Russia, and the new venue was Serbia and its capital Belgrade.

Hungary "has already repeatedly demonstrated its ability to host major international and domestic sporting events at world-class level and to exploit their tourism potential" (MÁTÉ, 2022a, p. 65). However, in 2022, it initiated the withdrawal from the 2024 European Women's Handball Championship, which will be partly hosted by Hungary. When this bid was awarded, there was no war, no energy crisis and no resulting financial difficulties. 'One of the keys to the successful organisation of an international sporting event is a supportive social environment', something that could not be achieved in the current economic climate (MÁTÉ, 2022b, p. 474). Constructive re-planning resulted in the rights holder reducing Hungary's original commitments in view of the changed situation. Debrecen will host one group and one main-round group instead of the originally planned two groups, one main-round group and Final Weekend in Budapest and Debrecen.

## *Facilities Management*

The financial strategy and the possibility of organising international sporting events have an impact on facilities management. In professional sport, a significant proportion of expenditure is incurred in the operation and maintenance of facilities. The organisation of sporting events contributes to the capacity utilisation of facilities. The renting of sports facilities is a source of income for sports organisations. COVID-19 was the first of the changes identified in the first part of the study to place facility owners in a new situation. The main challenge was the closure of facilities and the loss of rental income. In the case of the Budapest Honvéd, revenues were practically nil, rentals were not possible, summer camps could not be realised. At the same time, although operating costs were reduced, new expenses were incurred, such as disinfection, masks, introduction of new protocols (GERGELY, 2023). As an outdoor sport, kayak canoeing could be a "winner" of sorts from the restrictions. Because of the restrictions imposed on indoor facilities, people who wanted to play sport sought outdoor activities. By implementing appropriate protocols, they were able to operate outdoor facilities safely and serve the increased demand (SCHMIDT, 2023).

Subsequently, the energy crisis has reinforced the old-new sustainability drive. Facilities that are energy efficient through conscious design are the winners in the current situation. In the field of facilities management, the new situation has again called for innovation. One such example is the smart facility development of the Budapest Honvéd, which is a major solution for saving energy in the context of the energy price crisis. The essence of this energy system is that everything can be measured accurately and the settings can be monitored and controlled remotely, bringing conscious savings to the management, complemented by education of colleagues. In the case of the Hungarian Canoe Federation, all facilities, including the headquarters, were reviewed as a result of the rise in the electricity bill, and there were some facilities that were closed. In terms of facility upgrades over the past ten years, there has been a strong emphasis on supporting rural affiliates where energy efficiency of facilities has been improved through solar panels, replacement of windows, insulation (SCHMIDT, 2023). These measures have considerably strengthened small and medium sized clubs.

Change leadership can also be identified in the management of swimming pools needed to maintain the viability of wet sports. Thanks to the cooperation of the stakeholders, the Hungarian Swimming Federation, the State Secretariat for Sport, swimming pool operators, managers and clubs, changing have been made to ensure the operation of the sports. In July 2022, at the first signs of the energy crisis, the Federation started to assess the situation of the swimming pools and to collect data. In addition to cost optimisation and forced pool closures, the aim was to ensure that the successful programmes already in place (Future Champions, Swimming Nation Programme) were not compromised and that those who wanted to play the sport would not have to travel more than 30 kilometres. In addition to financial support, the swimming pools that remained open also received operational advice, which led to

significant energy savings. The optimisation of the facilities required sacrifices from all concerned, both in terms of training numbers, training times and use of the courts.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this study, we examined the issue of changes and changing professional sport. According to Bennis' interpretation of changes and alteration, why and how changes occur, we identified the changes that affect professional sport (BENNIS, 1966). Changes are objective process that has a defined and interpretable direction. Thus, we identified the biggest changes that have affected professional sport in the last three years as: the Covid-19 epidemic, digital transformation, the innovation race, wartime inflation and the energy price change in 2022.

In order to bring together theory and practical examples to analyse changing, we categorised the changing that leaders of organisations made to ensure that environmental adaptation was successful and that the organisation could innovate into the four basic types of changing distinguished by Nadler and mtza (1998). Nadler et. all (1998) interpret the four basic types of changing along two dimensions – the rate of changing and its timing (Table 7).

Adaptation occurs when the extent of the changing is a quantitative change of state and the timing is an ex-post reaction, examples include budget reallocation, additional resources (MKKSZ), the 2022 European Men's Handball Championship's "Watch Games. See More" concept change, Qatar World Cup winter organisation and the beer issue, implementing new protocols in facilities (BHSE) and catering for the increased demand for outdoor sports (MKKSZ).

In the case of recovery, ex-post reaction, they refer to the basic type of changing as recovery, where the degree of changing is qualitative and can be described as a revolutionary change of state. Examples include the changing of ownership of Chelsea, the hosting of the FINA World Aquatics Championships 2017 and 2022, the changing of venue for the U18 Handball World Championship 2022 and the World Wrestling Championships 2022.

Fine-tuning can be said to occur when the degree of changing is a quantitative change of state and the timing is characterised by foresight, i.e. proactivity, such as conscious financial planning (MKKSZ), centralisation (BHSE), constructive re-planning of the organisation of the 2024 European Women's Handball Championship, rethinking of the operational solutions for swimming pools.

A change of direction is proactive in terms of timing and qualitative in terms of scale, i.e. a revolutionary change of state. Examples include: the significant increase in the involvement of Asia and the Arab world, Qatar's investment in sport: the organisation of the Football World Cup, Hungary's new sports financing system, event management as a revenue generator (BHSE), holding company-like operations (MKKSZ), energy system innovation, smart facility development (BHSE) and the implementation of energy efficient facilities (MKKSZ).

Table 7: Categorisation of changing according to Nadler's (1998) basic types

<p>Fine tuning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Financial planning (MKKSZ)</li><li>▪ Centralisation (BHSE)</li><li>▪ Constructive re-planning of the organisation of the 2024 European Women's Handball Championship</li><li>▪ Rethinking swimming pool management solutions</li></ul>	<p>Change of direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Significant increase in the engagement of Asia and the Arab world</li><li>▪ Qatar's investment in sport: hosting the Football World Cup</li><li>▪ New sports funding system in Hungary</li><li>▪ Event management as a source of revenue (BHSE)</li><li>▪ Holding-like operation (MKKSZ)</li><li>▪ Energy system innovation, smart facility development (BHSE)</li><li>▪ Energy efficient installations (MKKSZ)</li></ul>
<p>Adaptation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Budget reallocation, additional resources (MKKSZ)</li><li>▪ 2022 European Men's Handball Championship - Watch Games. See More concept change</li><li>▪ Qatar World Cup winter organisation, beer issue</li><li>▪ Implementing new protocols in facilities (BHSE) Serving the growing demand for Iranian outdoor sports (MKKSZ)</li></ul>	<p>Recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Chelsea change of ownership</li><li>▪ FINA World Aquatics Championships 2017 and 2022</li><li>▪ U18 Girls' Handball World Championships, 2022</li><li>▪ World Wrestling Championships, 2022</li></ul>

Source: Based on Nadler (1998) own ed.

In the examples we studied, the need for change management was driven by changes in external factors. Validating the evolutionary theory approach, the organisations acted for their own survival and success, and the direction of changing points in this direction. In answering our research question, change, and even more so change leadership in professional sport, can be understood and applied in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Based on practical examples in all three areas, we were able to identify processes that required changing. Change leadership as a leadership activity is a crucial part of the management of professional sport. Our research also confirmed Gál's (2020) finding that changes is a process in the life of (sport) organisations, resulting in the introduction of new alternatives, solutions and approaches.

For the financial strategy of sports organisations, the changes – in our practical examples, the negative changes – have forced them to adopt a new approach and to re-design their capacities and capabilities.

There has been a shift in the organisers of international sporting events, a change of direction, and the question is obvious: who is willing and able to organise major international sporting events in the future?

Proactivity in facilities management is a necessity. Investing in sustainable operations, developing smart facilities is a long-standing expectation, yet changing environmental factors are forcing change and a breakthrough, a change of direction in this area. In all three areas of professional sport, proactivity and qualitative change leadership are key. A common feature is conscious planning and flexibility, which at first sight seems contradictory, but is nevertheless what we expect in order to be successful. It should be stressed that ineffective responses to a rapidly changing environment do not necessarily affect survival, but rather performance in a dual sense, i.e. sporting and/ or economic performance.

A limitation of the research is that there is limited scope for drawing consistent and coherent change management conclusions from the inhomogeneous sample elements under investigation, and these need to be differentiated from a managerial perspective depending on the organisation to which they are

applied.

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