



2015 Survey of PDGA International Affiliated Countries: Report & Analysis

Summary of Responses

27 of 27 PDGA Affiliated Countries Responded = 23 in Europe, 2 in East Asia & 2 in Oceania = 100% response rate.

11 of the countries are governed by stand alone National Disc Golf Associations, while in 14 Disc Golf falls under the/is part of the National Disc Sports Federation. 1 country is led by a Disc Golf Club (Lithuania), and 1 country is part of another National Body (France – FNSMR (National Federation of Rural Sports)).

14 countries listed national/official sports related bodies providing recognition, including National Sports and Recreation Federations and Associations, National Olympic Committees, and Government Ministries.

12 countries are receiving official funding, which in the majority of cases is modest (less than \$5000 per annum), for administration, promotion, and events.

In the 27 countries there are currently slightly more than 500 disc golf clubs, led by Finland with 160. About 2/3 of these clubs are members of the national association.

Collectively there are more than 100,000 regular players in the 27 countries, if we conclude that Sweden and Denmark, who stated that this figure was unknown, have in fact at least 3650 regular players between them, which is a safe presumption. Note that of these 100K+ players, almost 80K are in Scandinavia, and an estimated 70K are in Finland alone. 8500 are in Continental Europe and the UK. Japan represents the large majority of the estimated 12000 regular players in East Asia and Oceania.

About 9000 or just under 10% of these “regular” players were members of their national associations in 2014, of which 2/3 were in Scandinavia, >20% were in the rest of Europe led by Germany, UK, France and Austria, and >10% were spread fairly evenly between the 4 Asia/Oceania countries. There is quite a wide range in the cost of a national membership, with most of the larger countries falling between \$40 and \$60, and many of the smaller younger countries charging the equivalent of \$15 or less.

The countries anticipate having a collective total of about 4000 current PDGA members in 2015, an increase of almost 30% from 2014. Slightly more than half of these PDGA members will come from Finland and Sweden alone.

There are about 1150 total disc golf courses in the 27 countries, led by Finland’s remarkable 423 in a nation of only 5.5 million inhabitants, giving it the highest ratio of courses to population in the world, including all 50 individual American States. Norway, Sweden and Japan each have about 100 courses. Unlike USA where most courses are > 9 holes and usually 18 holes, in Europe and in Asia/Oceania the significant majority (62%) of courses are 9 holes or less. The reasons for this are essentially two-fold: in many countries where Disc Golf is a relatively young sport and recreational activity, a 9 hole course is a more modest investment that introduces and develops interest in the game; in some other countries like Switzerland and Japan the density of population and land use restricts the amount of land available for new activities.

Just under 2/3 of the 600+ tournaments sanctioned by national associations are also PDGA sanctioned/Tour Events. A few countries (Norway, Australia, Japan) have relatively high entry fees, other countries offer a wide range of entry fees from low to high reflecting the different levels of events from local to national series or championship. The younger and smaller European countries typically offer low entry fees (<\$20) for all events and divisions, including events with zero entry fees.

Almost all of the 27 countries have a national Disc Golf website. Approximately half of the countries, where English is not a primary language, have translated the PDGA Rules Book & Competition Manual into their national language, have a national course directory, and a brochure or similar info that introduces and outlines the sport.

Media coverage tends to be usually at the level of local newspapers and TV/web TV coverage. However in the largest Disc Golf countries of Finland and Sweden, national level coverage is increasing. Some of the geographically smallest countries (Iceland, Baltic States) are also receiving national coverage because this is the predominant medium in their locales.

Issues Facing the Countries

There are several prevalent themes in the answers that the countries provided to this question:

- The need for more volunteers, organizers, and resources to meet increasing demand for events, course installations and course maintenance.
- Lack of available funding in country, especially in southern Europe (Spain, Italy)
- More effort needs to be placed on attracting and developing younger/junior and women players and on getting players to join clubs
- Building national disc golf/disc sports organizational structure that will increase recognition and opportunities
- Population density and land pressure on a national basis (Switzerland, Japan) or in urban areas (Australia) which restricts new course installations or limits them to outer lying less populated areas where public exposure is less.
- In Finland and Estonia where disc golf is exploding the challenges are indicative of this exciting trend: not enough places in events to handle demand, and the challenges of helping to develop players on a national scale along the continuum from junior to amateur to professional athletes.

Conclusions

The information garnered by the survey is indicative of the different and unique national approaches to disc golf as well as the different stages of development that the countries across Europe and in East Asia and Oceania are at. In this broad and diversified context the best practice strategies that the PDGA can pursue are to:

- Continue building the International Program in ways that accommodate the different country models and stages of development through such mechanisms as minimum standards for C tier events, modest membership fees (which also recognizes that most International PDGA members are also paying National Association member fees), and the ability of each country to determine the extent to which the Competition Manual is applied in their country.
- Continue providing leadership and coordination in support of the growing number of affiliated countries, new disc golf countries, and on a global basis, through the Marco Polo Program, funding of translations of key texts including the Rules Book/Competition Manual, through the formation of continental chapters and tours (i.e. PDGA Europe & PDGA EuroTour), and through PDGA acting as a major source of information on the sport, including how to run events, develop courses, build clubs, attract media and sponsorship, etc.
- With WFDF recognizing PDGA as the global governing body of Disc Golf, it is suggested that the PDGA examine the potential strengthening and securing of its brand and future Internationally that could be gained by restructuring and reorganizing itself into a collective of closely related entities, potentially consisting of:
 - A “PDGA Global” “mother” institution in charge of the Rules of Play, Technical Standards, World Championships events, and other trans-continental responsibilities
 - Continental PDGA arms or chapters, i.e. PDGA North America (USA/Canada), PDGA Europe, PDGA Asia/Oceania, that are given increasing responsibility for event and other standards in their geographic areas and that become increasingly self-governing and empowered through registration of these entities within their regions, the establishment of continental Boards of Directors, by-laws, and other related mechanisms.