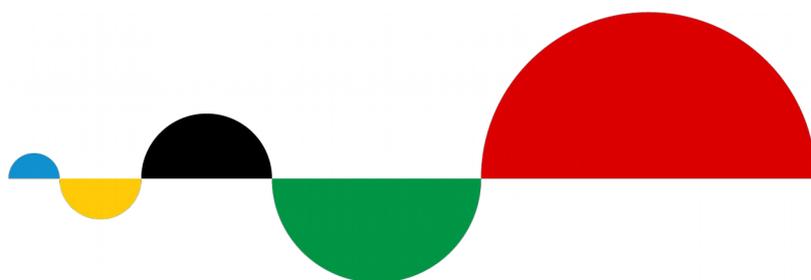


51st IPhO Survey Report



IPhO Lithuania
2020

Analysis provided by the Lithuanian Centre of Non-formal Youth Education
May, 2020

Introduction

Due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19, we, the organisers of the 51st International Physics Olympiad, found it impossible to organise the Olympiad in Vilnius in July, 2020. We immediately ruled out the option of holding the same physical event later in 2020 because of the fear of the second wave of the infection as well as due to the fact that holding the physical version of such a large event requires thorough planning. We therefore considered three alternatives:

- 1. Postpone the 51st IPhO to 2021 to be held in Vilnius in July, 2021;**
- 2. Hold an online alternative contest in the summer, 2020;**
- 3. Cancel the 51st IPhO.**

To help us make the decision, we initiated a team leader survey to better understand the status of the participating teams.

A total of 76 responses were received from 66 countries out of 95 that originally expressed interest in participating in the 51st IPhO.

We learned that almost 12% or 9 countries are not planning to participate in any kind of contest this year and 25% or 19 countries have already formed their teams. All others have not picked their teams but plan to select students this year if needed.

At the estimation of the team leaders, if all the teams were selected, about 150 students from all responding countries would have the only chance to participate in the 51st IPhO this year. This would be about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total number of expected participants in the year 2020. While this is a large number, the previous question indicates that only about 25% of these students have been officially selected to participate.

About 50 team leaders out of 76 will have considerable difficulty to join the event in 2020. Lastly, 48 respondents said they would not participate in the online version of 51st IPhO or were unsure. Many suggested shifting the Olympiads by one year, to hold a physical 51st IPhO in Vilnius in 2021.

Having these data in mind, we drew conclusions that the 51st IPhO should be a physical event and that the best option would be to shift the following IPhOs by one year. We presented our case to the IPhO President who was like minded about the situation.

Analysis

In this section we provided question by question analysis of the survey.

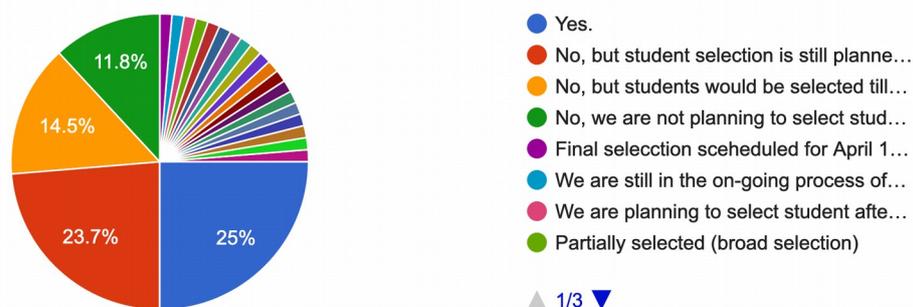
The following countries' representatives participated in the survey:

Country	France	Nepal	South Africa
Armenia	Georgia	Nigeria	Spain
Austria	Germany	Norway	Sri Lanka
Azerbaijan	Greece	Oman	Suriname
Bangladesh	Hong Kong, SAR	Pakistan	Switzerland
Belgium	Hungary	People's Republic of China	Syria
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Iceland	Perú	Taiwan
Brazil	India	Philippines	Tajikistan
Bulgaria	Indonesia	Poland	Tunisia
Cambodia	Israel	Portugal	Turkey
Canada	Latvia	Russia	Uganda
Colombia	Liechtenstein	Romania	UK
Costa Rica	Luxembourg	Saudi Arabia	Ukraine
Croatia	Macao, SAR	Serbia	USA
Czech Republic	North Macedonia	Singapore	Uzbekistan
Denmark	Mexico	Slovakia	
Ethiopia	Montenegro	Slovenia	

19 respondents answered that they already selected the team. However, 9 respondents indicated that they don't plan to select students for the competition this year. Many responded that the selection had been initiated but was paused at some point signifying the uncertainty of the commitment of numerous teams to participate in this year's event.

Have you selected the students for IPhO 2020?

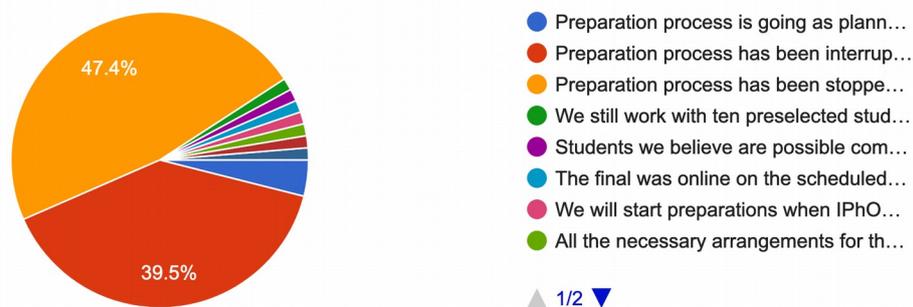
76 responses



The previous assumptions were fortified by the status of the preparations for IPhO which were largely interrupted. 36 respondents indicated that the selection process has been completely stopped, and further 30 had significant issues in the process. Other respondents indicated having most troubles preparing for practical examinations.

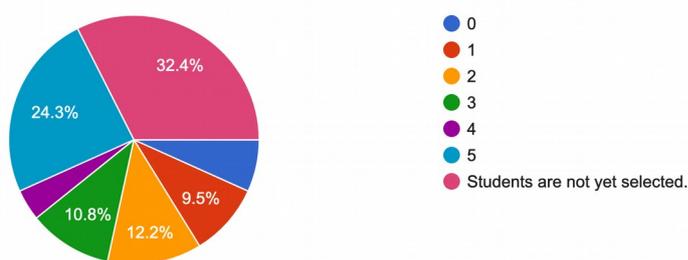
How is your team's preparation process going?

76 responses



We also analyzed the team leaders' predictions about the students who would join the IPhO. While considering different options for the Olympiad, we wanted to estimate the impact that the postponement of the Olympiad to 2021 would have on the participants. We realized that a very significant portion (29 respondents) have not selected the team or would not have any students who would have only this year to participate. On the other hand, summing up the rest of the answers we found that for about 150 students 2020 would be the only year they can participate in the IPhO. It's a very significant part of the estimated 450 student attendance but far from the majority.

In your estimation, for how many of the selected students IPhO 2020 would be the only chance to participate in IPhO? (They have not participated in...Os and would not be able to participate next year)
74 responses



Another metric we wanted to estimate was the team leader ability to attend the Olympiad. We had formed an impression from the previous communications with the team leaders that many have other engagements through the year and will not be able to attend outside the month of July. Our assumptions turned out to be correct. Only 26 out of 76 responders indicated a clear ability to lead the team any time in 2020. Among those who indicated uncertainty the major obstacles in the decreasing importance were: 1. Financing, 2. Flight situation, 3. Health concerns.

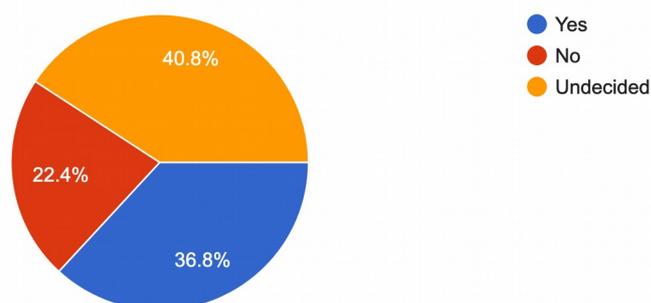
As the team leader, would you have a possibility to participate in IPhO later this year. If other, please explain.
76 responses



As we observed other events such as International Biology Olympiad, International Chemistry Olympiad and others, we noticed a trend leaning towards the online event format despite the obvious hurdles to exercise such an event as well as the lack of the official Olympiad status. We wanted to verify the feasibility of online competition instead of IPhO 2020. What we discovered was that only 28 out of 76 responders would undoubtedly choose such a format.

Would your team participate in the IPhO Competition online this year? (If such event would be planned)

76 responses



In the last question we asked the team leaders' opinions about the online olympiad alternative. 48 out of 76 (63%) clearly indicated a negative view. The main concerns of the objection were the fairness of the olympiad, the lack or difficulty to do a practical experiment, and also the lack of the olympiad spirit of meeting new people and networking.

In the other notes 16 team leaders mentioned that the 51st IPhO should take place in Vilnius in 2021, 21 team leaders suggested to postpone the olympiad to 2021. While 12 said that IPhO this year would be their choice even if it was online.