

EU CITIES OF SPORT

THE POWER OF SPORT!



EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF SPORT

The success of Marseille 2017
Sofia 2018 – chances for the youth
Málaga 2020 – strenghts under the sun

THE LEGACY

Oostende 2017 & Logroño 2014

HOW THE ACES EUROPE AWARDS HELP CITIES PROMOTE

- Public health
- Social inclusion
- Common values

Kim Clijsters

'GET OUT AND MOVE!'

ADVERTENTIE

FOREWORD

As we are now celebrating our awarded cities in the European Parliament in Brussels on 6th Dec 2017, it's worthwhile to reflect on how far ACES Europe has come and how much our awards have helped cities and communities since its very first award in Madrid in 2001.

The first thing is to perhaps identify some of the many benefits our awards bring. The ACES Europe awards – whether it is the Town, City, Community or the Capital of Sport – offer a great deal for the winners and I can highlight some of those benefits below.

1. You become part of a European network of professional sports managers.
2. We all share the same issues in delivering sport for all and promoting healthy activity.
3. Share best practices in European projects such as Sport We Can, Good Governance, Insport+, TeleTurf...
4. Share best practices by visiting awarded cities to see excellence at the delivery end in person.
5. Share best practices by taking part in ACES Europe conferences all over Europe.
6. Get the media and press on board with positive news our awards bring.
7. Get more political recognition and give sport a more powerful voice through the positive message our awards bring.
8. Use our awards to help get special events. For example, Leicester used our award to help get the Special Olympics and Glasgow used the award to help get the Commonwealth Games to Glasgow.

Since the very first award in Madrid in 2001, we now have over 500 awarded Towns, Cities, Communities and Capitals. Our awards have created significant investments in sport and health through the municipality, creating events, capital investments and targeted policies to increase participation. Two recent capitals have invested 26 million euros between them, to ensure that their award left a real legacy for their cities in terms of capital investment and increased participation.

Overall all awards have resulted in hundreds of millions of euros being invested throughout Europe for the simple aim of getting more people, more active, more often and through this ensure a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, I think it's fair to say that ACES Europe have come a long way and achieved a lot since President Lupattelli handed over the first award in Madrid in 2001.

Stay healthy and have a great Christmas and a happy New Year!



John Swanson
vice-president ACES Europe



COLOFON

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'SPORT IS FOR EVERYONE!'

PRESIDENT GIAN FRANCESCO LUPATELLI ON THE HISTORY OF ACES EUROPE, ITS GOALS AND AMBITIONS

By Giacomo Margutti

Gian Francesco Lupattelli is the president and founder of ACES Europe, that has been responsible since 2001 for making the annual recognition of the European Capitals, Cities, Communities and Towns of Sport. What is the philosophy of this non-profit, Brussels based association?

What is the history of ACES Europe and how is it connected with your own?

"Everything started 50 years ago. I was a 24-year-old physical education teacher, and I created the ISEF (Advanced Physical Education Institute) graduates' association – the first one among sport instructors to promote sport and physical activity – called MSP, Movimento Sportivo Popolare Italia (Popular Sport Movement). First I established it in Milan, then in the Liguria region, where during the summer I was a sports director. When we started it all, we were five people and it has been going on for 50 years now. "The association then grew more and more and in 1980 was recognised by the Italian Olympic Committee as a Meritorious Association and in 1984 as a Sport Promoting Institution. It is an association that has a presence across all the national territory with 550,000 affiliates. "About 20 years ago, my organisation used to work a lot with Spain and especially with Madrid's mayor Alvarez del Manzano, who in 1999 wanted Madrid to bid for the 2012 Olympics. So, he asked me to help find a way to launch Madrid's Olympic bid. I thought about it for some time and after a few days I came up with the idea of promoting Madrid as the European Capital of Sport. There was already the Capital of Culture, so why not?"

"Madrid's mayor really liked my idea, so we created a promotion committee that spread that idea among the 15 European capitals. At that time, Madrid was the most organised one in terms of sport management and sport offerings to its citizens. About 300,000 Madrid inhabitants in fact did already participate to the activities organised by the municipality, which managed 80 sport venues. "We took into account all of that, and concluded that Madrid was the best European capital in those terms, so we proposed Madrid as the European Capital of Sport for the 2001 year. Our idea was a huge success and things rapidly moved from that stage on. After Madrid, we had several other capitals selected by the committee."

What do the awarded capitals have to accomplish during their year? Do they have any special duties?

"Yes, they have to organize big and small sport events for an average of 365 days, because they are awarded the status from January 1 to December 31. That is the minimal requirement. Torino did exceptionally well in 2015 for example, as they did 1,220 days of sport events allocating 2,5 million euros for that cause. "The events can last one day, three days or even one week. It does not matter how long and it doesn't matter if they are big or small events. What matters is that the Capitals organize events for at least more than 300 days. "This year, the 2017 European Capital of Sport Marseille has already organized more than 1,000 events, as they invested something like 20 million euros to accomplish that goal, renovating some sport venues and putting together small and big events. I have to say that Marseille has been doing really well, their great efforts have been well recognized in the European Parliament and Commission. Obviously the more you invest, the more you can accomplish."

What is it going to be like in the next future?

"Next year it will be the time of Sofia, Bulgaria as the European Capital of Sport. Next year's first semester will be the semester of Bulgarian presidency in the European Council and so it will be a fantastic year for them all. In 2019, it will be Budapest, Hungary and this is very important because the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Tibor Navracsics is Hungarian and obviously, there is a great interest from the European Commission in Budapest 2019.

"Málaga will be the Capital for 2020, while for 2021 there were two finalists we have visited at the end of November: Den Haag, the Netherlands and Lisbon, Portugal. On December 6, we will be attending the official ceremony at the European Parliament where we are going to nominate the European Capital of Sport for 2021."

Does ACES have other projects in addition to the European Capital of Sport?

"In 2007 I came up with the idea of the European City of Sport. Every year we wanted to recognize around 50 cities in Europe that have between 25,000 and 500,000 inhabitants. In Italy, Spain and all other big countries there are four of them. Smaller ones like Finland or Portugal have one European City of Sport. "In 2010, we created the European Town of Sport for cities with less than 25,000 inhabitants, and in 2012 the European Community of Sport – a group of small cities throughout all of Europe sharing a common idea. "All these projects have had a lot of success so far, even political. For example, there have been very interesting cross-border co-operations such as the ones in 2014 with Italy, Slovenia and Austria all involved in this European Community of Sport project."

What is the main accomplishment and the main target of ACES Europe?

"Our main goal is to promote the idea that sport actually is for everyone. Sport equals well-being and healthy citizens equals less expenses for public health. It is not even all about sport, it is actually just about being active. We do not want to create successful sportsmen nor champions – we just need our European citizens to be healthy. Walking and moving around should be a basic concept for every single European country by now. "Of course, we are happy with capitals, cities, towns or communities that organize big and grand events, but as we are all going through rough times and increasing budget cuts, we cannot force them to arrange huge things for their citizens. We just want their budget to be spent in a good and proper way on behalf of their people. "Our biggest success, our major joy is to see that every year there are more and more municipalities from all over Europe that want to take part in our project and they bid for it. Already 120,000 European municipalities have understood the importance of sport management through public administrations that promote basic sport associations, schools and universities. Nowadays their mayors are well aware of the benefits that come from sport as well as just normal physical activity. "We do all this with passion, because we are all passionate and fond of our project, and our biggest satisfaction is that all throughout Europe there are so many public administrations that would like to join these projects, in part financed by the European Commission. We started 20 years ago and now we are facing such a great success and our satisfaction comes from knowing that it is an honest, correct and politically neutral thing. No politics nor parties to spoil it. We are backed by every party at the European Parliament because our project just aims for the well-being and health of the European citizens, nothing less and nothing more than that."

“SPORT EQUALS WELL-BEING AND HEALTHY CITIZENS EQUALS LESS EXPENSES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH”

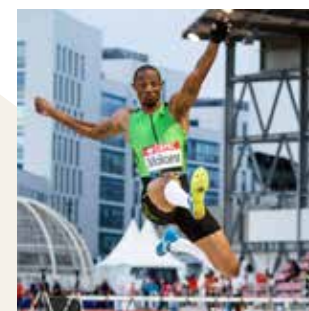
Gian
Francesco
Lupattelli



PHOTO'S: JC VERCHERE

What is your next main event?

"On October 30 in CONI's (Italian National Olympic Committee) Hall of Honour in Rome, we have presented the Italian 'European Cities of Sport' for 2018 and 2019, with the presence of CONI president Giovanni Malagò. On December 6 at the European Parliament we will hand out some 50 flags to the next European City, Town and Community of Sport. Sofia will take over the main title from Marseille. It will be a very important day for us, and my satisfaction will be in seeing, one more time, so many mayors believe in our healthy project. Sport is a factor in the aggregation of the society, improvement in the quality of life, psycho-physical well-being and complete integration within social classes in the community. And the mayors all understand these very important principles."



SPORTPHOTO'S: JC VERCHERE

CAPITALS, CITIES, COMMUNITIES AND TOWNS

European Capital of Sport

This is a single annual award to a capital of a country or a city with more than 500,000 inhabitants.

European Cities of Sport

Multiple annual awards throughout Europe to cities between 25,000 and 500,000 inhabitants.

European Communities of Sport

Multiple annual awards throughout Europe for small groups of cities.

European Town of Sport

Multi awards throughout Europe per year to cities of less than 25,000 inhabitants.

European City or Town of the year

The cities and towns compete during the year for becoming the best city preparing a summary file of activities which will be evaluated by an independent body.

ACES EUROPE: IN THE SPIRIT OF PIERRE DE COUBERTIN

By Giacomo Margutti

“Sport is part of every man and woman’s heritage and its absence can never be compensated for,” said Pierre de Coubertin, founding father of the modern Olympic Games. De Coubertin’s words were used as a motto for the 2007 European White Paper on Sport. This paper endorsed the European Capitals of Sport initiative of ACES (l’Association des capitales européennes du sport). Madrid was the first Capital of Sport in 2001 and 17 other cities were Capital of Sport with Marseille carrying the honour in 2017. Apart from Capitals of Sport, ACES also assigns annual recognitions of European Cities, Communities and Towns of Sport.

ACES Europe is a non-profit association based in Brussels and funded by the European Union. The organisation seeks to promote sport and support sport events by allocating its recognitions to Capitals, Cities, Communities and Towns of Sport. The allocation of these recognitions is done, according to the principles of responsibility and ethics, being aware that sport is a factor of aggregation of the society, improvement in the quality of life, psycho-physical well-being and complete integration within social classes in the community.

ACES Europe has joined forces with DCH – International Organization of Human Capital Directors (EHCA – European Healthy Companies Association) to recognize publicly the effort made by those companies promoting sport and health among their employees.

Benefits

The ACES awards hand cities many opportunities to develop their own sports programs, to increase local sports participation and public health. It creates possibilities to ask for local, regional and national investments. For example, European Capital of Sport 2017 Marseille, invested 20 million euros: 10M for activities, 10M for infrastructure. Apart from the local benefits, the awards also create international visibility. European Capitals, Cities and Towns of Sport are part of a Europe wide network, in which experience

is shared. Cities have the opportunity to participate in different EU grants with other cities. More than 50 cities have been involved in different EU grants during the last years. ACES cities hold several congresses and conferences during the year to support cities, to share ideas about improvement of sport policies, and to create the opportunity to exchange best practices. The ACES recognition puts cities in the spotlight of the European sports community.

Obligations

Award cities face the responsibility to respect the ACES rights and promotion rules. They have to design a sport calendar with activities which promote health, wellbeing and integration. They also have to organise an International Congress or an international sports competition as minimum requirement. At the end of the year award cities have to produce a summary of the activities in the municipality with results and conclusions after a year of sport.

Network

The ACES network of awarded cities is composed of more than 400 members with Capitals of Sport such as Madrid, Glasgow, Stuttgart, Milano, Copenhagen, Dublin, Istanbul, Valencia, Cardiff, Torino, Stockholm, Antwerp, Marseille, Sofia, Budapest, and Cities of Sport such as Firenze, Marbella,

Santander, Leicester, Innsbruck, Ostrava, Iasi, Plovdiv, Nice, Parma, North Lanarshire, Bilbao, Noordwijk, Gondomar, Gartehead, Kosice and Liepaja.

Awards ceremony

Once a year (normally in November), ACES Europe gathers all cities awarded in the European Parliament for the Awards Ceremony. President Gian Francesco Lupattelli delivers the flag to the winners, accompanied by European Authorities, MEP’s and policy makers. Achievements of the award winners are highlighted and there is an official handover between the previous and the upcoming Capital of Sport.

World Capital of Sport

After the success in Europe, ACES wants to export the format all around the world looking for the best sport policies and practices, and presenting the opportunity for communities to unite throughout the world under the same flag of sport and health for all.

ACES Projects

ACES has initiated several European projects such as **European Cities for Volunteering in Sport**. This project is co-funded by the European Commission and aimed at gathering best practices and establishing benchmarks for volunteering in sport. The project started with the ambition of collecting further information and analysis on volunteering in sport by gathering experts in the field from nine cities and towns across Europe, which are active in promoting sport and volunteering at local level. Each of the partners involved has

been awarded recognition by the Association of the European Capitals of Sport (ACES).

Another ACES project is **SportWeCan**. The project is part of the framework of Preparatory Action in the Field of Sport 2012, co-funded by the European Commission. Under the leadership of ACES Europe, ten European Cities of Sport have joined efforts to address the low level of public awareness and intake of sport and physical activity in European cities, by coordinating to exchange and highlight best practices on the promotion of sport around five key themes: education, integration, quality of life, health, and social inclusion.

ACES also participates in the **INSPO+** and **TELETURF** projects. INSPO+ is co-funded by the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission. It falls within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and aims to promote the social inclusion of people with mental health illnesses and disabilities through sport. TELETURF is included in the European Union Erasmus+ Call for education, training, youth and sport. The main objective is improving safety and quality conditions of artificial turf sport fields, as well as extending its useful life through improving its maintenance. In order to achieve this, the TELETURF plans to research and increase in knowledge about sport fields maintenance and it aims to distribute this knowledge among all European professionals in maintenance of artificial turf sport fields through an on-line course in four languages (English, French, Dutch and Spanish).

“ WE DO NOT WANT TO CREATE
SUCCESSFUL SPORTSMEN NOR
CHAMPIONS – WE JUST NEED OUR
EUROPEAN CITIZENS TO BE HEALTHY „

Gian Francesco Lupattelli





About 120.000 people attended the opening festivities of Marseille as Capital of Sport in 2017. It was the beginning of a very successful sporting year for the French city, which hosted the start of the major time trial in the Tour the France, but also ran a 'healthy coach project' in which some 7000 inhabitants participated to exercise in public space.



PHOTO: JC VERCHERE

"The awareness of our city and its inhabitants regarding sports has grown immensely"

Francois Noel, MP2017 Sport Director



PHOTO: JC VERCHERE

Ambitions were high when Marseille applied for the Capital of Sport award. "We see fundamental factors of social integration, knowledge, cohesion and openness to others", says Francois Noel, MP2017 Sport Director. "To develop our territories, we used sport in two different ways. Firstly, we organised big events to change the mentality and inspire citizens, and secondly we organised a lot of projects which directly promote sport in everyday life." Marseille started its Capital of Sport year with one of the big events. On 14 January, American Cameron Naasz and Canadian Jacqueline Legere won the Men's and Ladies' first Red Bull Crashed Ice race held on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. "It was a great

event", Noel says. "We combined the festivities with fireworks and there were about 120.000 people on the streets, a bigger crowd than we usually have for the celebratory fireworks on the French National Day on 14 July. And that's in summertime when the weather is much more pleasant."

Inspiration and economic boost

Red Bull Crashed Ice came to Marseille to stay. As a legacy of the Capital of Sport year, the event will return to the Mediterranean shores in 2018. The Tour de France will not return next year, but hosting the key time trial in the biggest cycling race in the world, had a lasting impact on the development of Marseille. "It was a real challenge

because we organised the departure and the finish of the time trial at the same location, the Stade Vélodrome which is also home of football club Olympique Marseille", Noel says. "It was a 22km time trial through the city, a six-hour-event, very difficult to organise but it had massive exposure, an incredible impact on the city, and it gave a real boost to tourism."

As part of the Capital of Sport initiatives Marseille also hosted the semi-finals of the French Top-14 National Rugby League. Noel: "We are not a traditional rugby city so this was a chance for our citizens to come and appreciate that particular sport and it was a big economic boost for the city too. Almost 150.000 people came to Marseille for

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF SPORT 2017

MARSEILLE: A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

By Leo Aquina

two days, spending on average 120 euros per person on food, drinks and goodies.”

Healthy Coach

In total, Marseille held twenty top sport events, varying from World, European to national championships, but seeing sport does not necessarily make people exercise themselves. That’s why Marseille also launched a couple of projects to get people involved in sports themselves. “One of these projects was Healthy Coach”, Noel explains. “It’s very simple: we provide coaches for people and specifically adults. We already have many projects and coaches for children in sports and we often forget the adults, but if parents discover the value of sports, they can inspire their children too.” In order to connect the coaches to the people, Marseille launched a website. Citizens could subscribe for activities, which were held in public parks. “We invested about 80.000 euros and about 7000 people participated. The activities were held in public parks and participation was free. Thus, it became a great tool to break barriers for people who did not do any sports beforehand.”

Via Massilia

With Healthy Coach, Marseille literally brought sports to the public space. Increasing access to natural playful and sportive spaces was a big part of Marseille’s ambition as a Capital of Sport. With Via Massilia the city creates an open sky stadium as a legacy. “The Via Massilia is a circular route of 30 kilometres inside the municipality of Marseille, crossing its eight sectors”,

Noel explains. “This loop will be addressed sequentially to walkers, runners, cyclists or roller skaters. It will be embellished with user-friendly sporting areas (already existing or to be created) that will be the nerve centres of the sports device.” The Via Massilia is work in progress. By the end of 2017 it will be 20 kilometres and it will be completed over a three-year span.

Immaterial legacy

The Via Massilia is material legacy of the Capital of Sport year, but Marseille also treasures the immaterial legacy. Many events which were initiated last year, will be held annually in the future. The Marseille Capital of Sports bid joined forces with the Paris 2024 Olympic bid and this cooperation led to Marseille being involved in the Paris Olympic Games. “We will host the sailing events in 2024”, Noel says. “The legacy of 2017 will continue at grassroots level too.

Many people who discovered sport for the first time in 2017, will continue their healthier lifestyle. The awareness of our city and its inhabitants regarding sports has grown immensely”, Noel says. What would Noel’s advice for future Capitals of Sport be? “It’s very important to write things down”, he says. “As Director of Sport I’m the only one who has been working on the project from the very start until the very end and I often found that the many people involved, whether it were politicians or people working at the municipality, would forget about things that we had agreed upon beforehand. It’s important to know what your goals are and to know what you had agreed upon, so write it down beforehand. Another advice would be to involve the people. In French, we say: ‘Une place pour chacun et chacun a sa place.’ There’s a place for everyone and everyone has a place.”

“The Healthy Coach project in public parks became a great tool to break barriers”

Francois Noel, MP2017 Sport Director



PHOTO: JC VERCHERE

CAGLIARI BEST EUROPEAN CITY OF SPORT IN 2017

“The most important legacy is how the people of Cagliari think about sports and how they perceive sports in the future”, says Yuri Marcialis, alderman of sport in Cagliari. The Italian municipality received the yellow flag as Best European City of Sport in 2017, ahead of Portuguese Gondomar and Belgian Ostend. The Capital of Sardinia, which has an extremely high life expectancy, improved the standard of its sporting facilities both in hardware and in software throughout their award year.

Life expectancy in Sardinia is on average slightly over 82 years (85 for women and 79.7 for men. The Italian island shares together the highest rate of centenarians in the world (22 centenarians/100,000 inhabitants), with the Japanese island of Okinawa. Scientists have pointed at genetic factors and the Mediterranean diet as explanations for Sardinia’s longevity, but sports, physical exercise and the environment may also have contributed to a healthy population. The 2017 City of Sport Award helped Cagliari build an even better environment for exercise. “We invested in public works, non-sport facilities too”, Marcialis says. “We changed our roads. In the last years, we have built cycle lines, walking routes and we turned our seafront in the biggest gym facility. And of course, we work hard to get and keep our sport facilities up to standard.”



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Giro

Apart from infrastructure, Cagliari also invested in sport promotion. Marcialis: “We are working together with CONI (Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano, the Italian Olympic Committee) and sport promotion agencies in order to plan events.” Cagliari organised a number of events as part of their European City of Sport year. “We hosted the Giro d’Italia start on Sardinia with a stage finish in Cagliari this year. There was a Triathlon World Cup, the Italian fencing championships, the Paralympic track and field Italian championships. But we did not only organise top sport events. For example, we also hosted the National Erasmus Games. We had 5000 women running and walking in the Solo Women Run and we used the natural conditions of our Island for the Poetto Beach Games, which were open for everyone.”

Ask not what sport can do for your town...

The impact of the City of Sport Award on Cagliari was significant. Marcialis: “At the start it was not so easy changing the idea of sports in Cagliari, but we worked on the culture of sport and sport is everywhere now. We have facilities in many places and sport really is one of the main topics in our public agenda. We also have tight relationship with many federations now, and therefore we’ll have important events during 2018.” Looking back on Cagliari’s City of Sport Year Marcialis has some advice left for future award winning cities: “Ask not what sport can do for your town, ask what your town can do for sport. Because anything you do for sport will be repaid in future wellness, wealth and citizen health.”

'SPORT IS OF SIGNIFICANT IMPORTANCE FOR THE COMMUNITY AND THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT'

GIOVANNI MALAGÒ, PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, ON THE CO-OPERATION WITH ACES EUROPE

“WE ALL SHARE THE BELIEF THAT SPORT ACTUALLY IS FOR EVERYONE”

Giovanni Malagò

By Giacomo Margutti

Former futsal player and sports manager, Giovanni Malagò, 58, has served as president of the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) since his election to the post in 2013. On October 30, 2017 Malagò attended the ACES Europe official ceremony at the CONI Hall of Honour handing out the awards for 2018 and 2019 to Italian municipalities for their sporting achievements, and the flag to Cagliari since the Sardinia regional town was elected European City of Sport 2017 for Italy.

What do you think of the ACES projects? What is ACES relevance for the European sport movement and, in general, for the European citizens' physical activity and well-being?

"It is a project that focuses on the promotion of sport activity as it recognizes the importance of our movement as an extraordinary tool of social integration and well-being. ACES actually manages to pursue this target with capability and enthusiasm, promoting initiatives that enhance the concept and the ideals we are all trying to spread on a daily basis."

How much importance does the ACES - CONI cooperation have for Italy and how is it developing? What are the benefits for both?

"There is a constant synergy which is put into effect through the significant and qualified relationship of reciprocity between the Italian Popular Sport Movement (MSP Italia), which is a Promotion Institution of CONI, and ACES Europe, thanks to the passionate activity of ACES Europe President Gian Franco Lupattelli. Behind all this, there are shared goals and a vision whose foundation is the belief that sport actually is for everyone. It is a messenger of positivity and of significant importance for the community and the country's development."

Does CONI actively support Italian cities that would like to organize big sport events like European or World Championships, by lobbying or putting pressure on the international sport federations?

"CONI factually supports the federations' bids for the awarding of big sports events, as a way to build a path made up of ambitions and shared thoughts. We are ready to consider these opportunities and to put moral persuasion at an international level when the objective circumstances and the necessary budgets are in place, because we know the added value that these important kinds of events can give not only to our movement but also to those cities that host them. And to a country that can boast an unarguable landscape allure and a great tradition of organizing sports events. All these elements make Italy a centre of excellence in our field."

How important is it for CONI and ACES to be an active and positive force for sport among local and regional authorities, to produce and help national sport heroes who can win Olympic medals and be the pride of Italy?

"It is a key factor, that corresponds more and more to the policies developed in collaboration with various administrations. The percentage of Italians who declare that they regularly practice any kind of sport has reached 25.1%. So, in 2016, one person out of four practiced sport - that is a growth, in the past three years, of 4.2%. It has been possible to realize this increase also thanks to the message, daily conveyed through several different types of characters, that practicing sport is positive and healthy at all ages. Our institutional representatives are getting more and more aware of the positive consequences that this data holds under a social and value-related context - also in the formation of our future champions, both on and off the fields."

What are the achievements that have been reached so far thanks to the ACES - CONI cooperation and what future accomplishments do you expect to see?

"Every year here at CONI we host the spectacular ceremony organized by ACES, which showcases the territorial and local communities and municipalities that have managed to be awarded as 'City of Sport', real spokespersons of the genuine message that characterizes us. It is a bridge between the civic reality and our world, a link that strengthens the aims of interaction and exchange and directs them - more than ever - to spread that culture which positions sport as a crucial element of growth."

GET MORE PEOPLE MORE ACTIVE MORE OFTEN

THE POWER BEHIND THE EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF SPORT AWARD

By Leo Aquina

"Our awards have been a catalyst", ACES vice-president John Swanson says. "Capitals, cities and communities which received our award have invested tens of millions of euros more in sports, recreation and health care projects, than they had done before the award." ACES certainly achieved the aim of getting more people more active more often, since Madrid was the first Capital of Sport back in 2001. "The organisation has become bigger, more professional and the awards have become more recognised and sought after", Swanson says.

“It’s great to see that cities not only want the award as a plaque in the mayor’s office, but to promote sport and health and reduce inequalities”

ACES vice-president John Swanson

Discussing the history of ACES, Swanson starts with president and founder Gian Francesco Lupatelli: “As a professor of physical education he saw inequalities of all sorts in different cities all over Europe and he came up with the idea to share good practices of sport as a catalyst of development. Some cities have a good infrastructure to promote sport, for example for children and immigrants. Awarding the European Capital of Sport title was a great tool to highlight such good practices and spread the word all over Europe.”



PHOTO: JC VERCHERE

Valuable badge

Madrid was bidding for the Olympic Games at the time, and the Spanish capital invested a lot in sports facilities. Madrid did not win the Olympic bid, but it did win the European Capital of Sport award, thus initiating a vast network of European capitals, cities and towns investing more in sports events and facilities not only for top sports, but for all of their inhabitants.

Looking back on the seventeen Capitals of Sport so far, Swanson does not want to single out any of those being more



“Awarding the European Capital of Sport title is a great tool to spread the word all over Europe”

ACES vice-president John Swanson



successful than the others. “They were all a success for different reasons. Marseille has been a great Capital of Sport in 2017, investing 20 million euros, but it’s not all about budget. For example, Antwerp invested 6 million euros in 2013, but it’s not as if the one or the other is better or worse. They’ve all done great things in their own right.” Swanson was director of sport in Glasgow when the Scottish capital won the award in 2003. He passionately speaks about the benefits. “It was a very valuable badge for the city. We got great recognition and we used the label to promote Glasgow and initiate sports and health care projects within the city. We held an international conference on education and sport, which was a great success. We also rebranded a lot of events, because we already were a major events player with for example

the Team GB versus USA and Team GB versus Russia events in Athletics and the European Championships Badminton.”

Prevention instead of pills

More important maybe than the elite sports events, Glasgow used the Capital of Sports Award to use sport as a health care tool. Swanson explains: “Glasgow used to be an industrial city with a lot of blue collar workers and the diet was very poor, a lot of fish and chips, too much bread, cheap food. There were a lot of problems with obesity and high blood pressure. We started a project called GP referral (GP means: General Practitioner). Rather than giving patients a pill to stop the symptoms, we tried to look at prevention. The project started with one doctor in a tough neighbourhood. When patients would

come to him with obesity or high blood pressure problems, he would discuss their diet and prescribe the local sports centre and a personal coach instead of a pill to reduce blood pressure. The project rapidly expanded from one GP to hundreds of GP's and it was copied internationally. Nowadays it's common sense, but it was revolutionary at the time."



Past, current and future European Capitals of Sport

2001	Madrid
2002	Stockholm
2003	Glasgow
2004	Alicante
2005	Rotterdam
2006	Copenhagen
2007	Stuttgart
2008	Warsaw
2009	Milano
2010	Dublin
2011	Valencia
2012	Istanbul
2013	Antwerpen
2014	Cardiff
2015	Torino
2016	Prague
2017	Marseille
2018	Sofia
2019	Budapest
2020	Málaga

One event each day

Understanding the value of the award and the merit to get it, is key to a successful year as European Capital of Sport. "For us it's great to see that cities not only want the award to use it as a plaque in the mayor's office, but to use it as a tool to promote sport and health and to reduce inequalities", Swanson says. "A great example is Antwerp in 2013. They organised 365 events through the year, one event every day. These would be small events in community halls in difficult areas with a lot of immigrants, up to high profile events like the European Gymnastics Championships. Those were all branded as European Capital of Sport events. Antwerp were making sure the whole city benefitted. They increased sports participation throughout the city by more than ten percent. At the end of the year they did a survey to find out that 89 percent of the inhabitants knew about Antwerp being Capital of Sport and what it meant to the city." Valencia had a different approach, but the European Capital of Sport in 2011 also managed to use the award to their advantage. Swanson: "Valencia is always competing with Barcelona and Madrid, who are the better known cities and tourist attractions in Spain. In a partnership with the university the city of Valencia used sport to compete with Madrid and Barcelona. Valencia organised a Davis Cup event and hosted the America's Cup in sailing. They used the power of sports both to increase economic prosperity and they used the award to inspire people to participate in sports themselves. It was a showcase of what Valencia as a city could do."

Encouragement rather than prescription

The past seventeen Capitals of Sport all had different objectives, different approaches and different ways to achieve their goals, but all cities managed to increase sport participation in various levels of success. "The award is a great badge, but it's up to a city how it uses this badge", Swanson says. "As ACES we look at what a city has done, what a city is doing and what a city is going to do if it gets the award. But we are not prescriptive. We don't tell cities what they must or must not do. More than anything the ACES awards are an encouragement. Applying for the award makes cities asses themselves, it makes them aware of what they're doing. Going for the award makes them look at their sports policies closer: what they want to do and how they want to shape their future."

One of the few requirements for an ACES Capital of Sport award is holding an international conference on a sports related topic. Becoming a European Capital of Sport has become much more difficult over the years. "The measurement criteria have not changed", Swanson says. "But we enforce the criteria more stringently. Cities really have to step up their game." Sofia, Budapest and Málaga did just that. The Bulgarian Capital will be the 2018 European Capital of Sport, Hungary's Budapest in Hungary will have the honour in 2019 and Málaga in Spain in 2020.



FUTURE CAPITALS OF SPORT

By Leo Aquina

SOFIA AND MÁLAGA, BUILD UPON EXPERIENCE

Previous European Capitals of Sport are an inspiration for future ones. "Antwerp was an example for us", says Mila Andreeva, executive director of Sofia European Capital of Sport 2018. Málaga 2020 also took benefit from the ACES network of Capital of Sport alumni. "We have learned that if you work hard, with an appropriate management team and an anticipated planning, you can achieve great things", says Elisa Pérez de Siles, city councillor of sport and youth of Málaga.

SOFIA 2018

THE GREEN CITY WITH A WINTER WONDERLAND

“Sofia is a very green city with dozens of parks and gardens and numerous opportunities for exercise. Sport is a way of life for the youth”, Mila Andreeva says proudly. “We think the ACES award hands us a way to promote sport for both youth and adults. We have a very ambitious program with lots of events.” Andreeva says that information is vital in many respects: “We created a physical information centre, which is situated at one of the busiest crossroads in the capital. It’s open to everyone and there is a wealth of information available. There is a hall with thirty seats and multimedia enabling the organisation of conferences, seminars, meetings, presentations with video and photo projections.”

Sofia also has an online information platform: sofia2018.bg, on which everyone can look up events anytime. “Our focus is on grassroots sport and the importance of sport as a priority in people’s lives”, Andreeva says. “We included 975 sport venues, 128 events, and all sport federations on this website. If people want to do any sport, they can search by keyword, place and date.”

To promote Sofia 2018 the Capital of Sport initiative is supported by Bulgarian Gymnastics legend Jordan Jovtchev, a six-time Olympian, four time world champion and president of the Bulgarian Gymnastics Federation. Many other Bulgarian sport greats support Sofia 2018.

Grassroots

Sofia 2018 invests a lot in grassroots sport events. Andreeva: “In 2018 alone we organise more than hundred events, not only in the city itself, but also

in the surrounding mountains. In the winter, Sofia is unique because of the mountains next door. We have skiing possibilities at a 30-minute-drive from the city centre. In the winter, we have many events in the mountains for kids.”

In the summer, Sofia also uses the mountains for hiking events. But Andreeva wants to get the people out on the streets in the city too: “We organise activities on the streets, like street dancing, and we have a project called Sofia breathing, for which we close a lot of streets off for cars during four Sundays.”

Antwerp

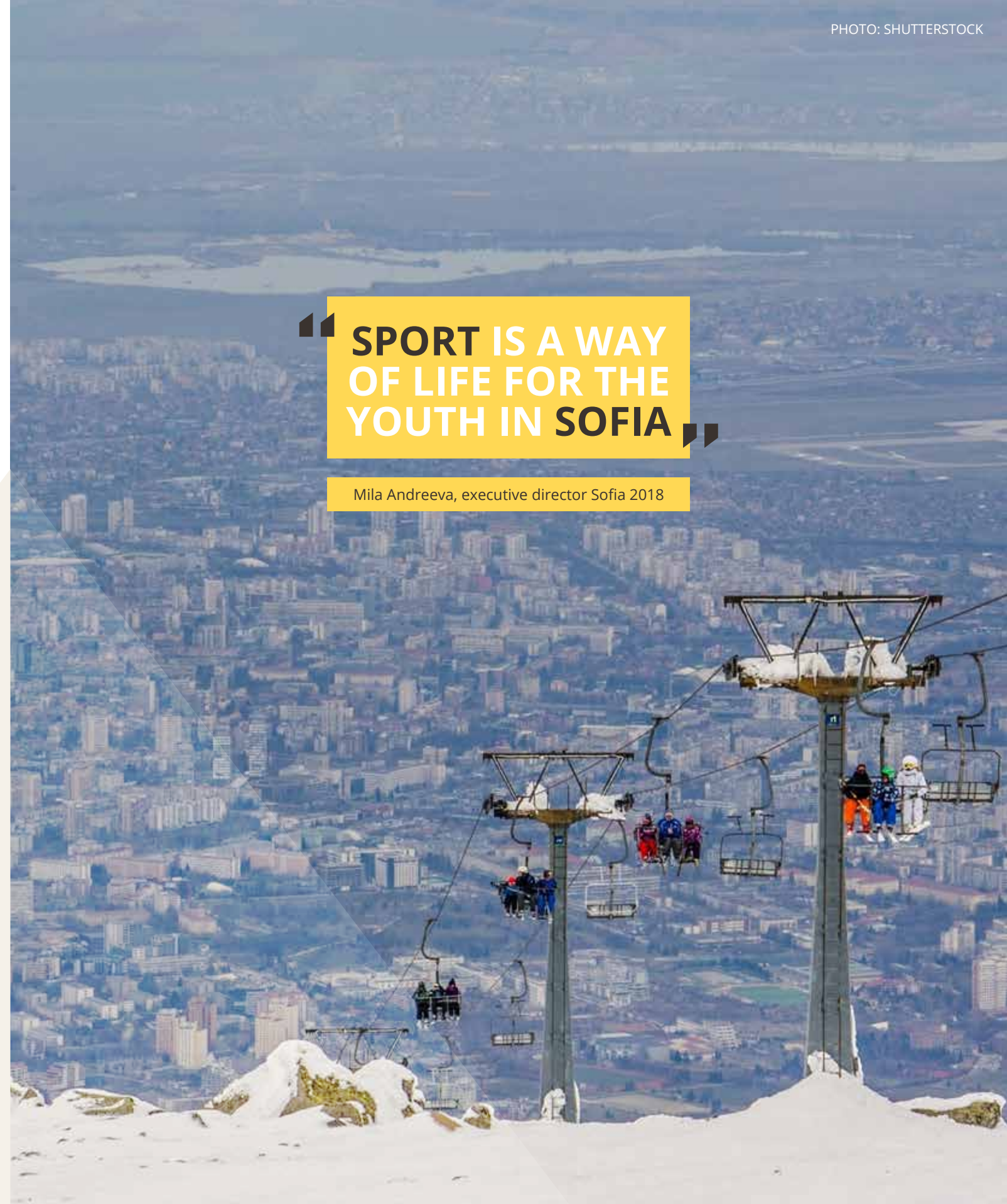
Sofia looked closely at Antwerp, which was the 2013 European Capital of Sport. Andreeva: “We picked them as a very good practise to learn from. They had a mobile sport centre, where people could rent sport equipment, a mobile football pitch, a mobile street fitness place, volleyball and basketball gear, all sorts of different sports. We copied that idea and we also copied events they organised like street yoga.”

Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to Sofia 2018. Therefore, the municipality works together with the sport academy. Andreeva: “It’s a win-win situation. The students get an opportunity to gain valuable working experience and the city benefits from their expertise in organising sport events. This human capital is as big a legacy as the development of good facilities and infrastructure.”

“SPORT IS A WAY OF LIFE FOR THE YOUTH IN SOFIA”

Mila Andreeva, executive director Sofia 2018



MÁLAGA **2020**

STRENGTHS AND CHANCES UNDER THE MEDITERRANEAN SUN

“Our candidature was made up of strengths and chances”, says Elisa Pérez de Siles. “We will organise great events and sport for children and we’ll invest in sports facilities in our city. Our main ideas focus on a healthy life and education.”

Cooperation was key to the Málaga Capital of Sport bid. Pérez de Siles: “We believe in our project and we have involved all of Málaga, the clubs and the sports federations and sport centres licensed with the City Hall. We hope to increase the involvement of the population and to raise sport participation to more than 50 percent of the population in 2020. Apart from that, we want to establish our city as a sport touristic destiny, supported by a pleasant and warm climate, our airport, the AVE railway station and the great connections with the rest of the towns of the Costa del Sol.”

Professional and amateur sport join forces in Málaga. “We are home of top male football and basketball teams, and a female handball club. We aim to keep our sports facilities in the best possible condition and create more sports infrastructure. There are 266 outdoor free sport courts, 37 football pitches, many of them on artificial turf and 9 indoor sports accommodations”, Pérez de Siles says.

New sports facilities will be among others: a new accommodation for basketball in the Teatinos Area, an accommodation to play handball and a Roller Skate City, which is also located in Teatinos.

Schools and local games

Málaga offers its citizens a broad program of sport activities. “Children can learn to practice specific sports in the municipal schools and there are possibilities to compete all season in local sport games”, Pérez de Siles says. Grassroots sport and top level events go hand in hand: “We hosted an international friendly football match between Spain and Costa Rica in the run-up to the 2018 World Cup next year. We will enjoy with the World Masters Athletics 2018 in Málaga and we will also see the opening stage of the Vuelta Ciclista a España next year. We are bidding for the basket Copa del Rey in 2019, and this year Málaga could admire the athletes from the World Transplant Games 2017, with many different nations, ages and different sports.”

Professional people

Like Sofia, Málaga took a close look at the previous European Capitals of Sport to learn from their experience. “It’s very important to surround yourself with professional people to get the challenges off the ground and to have the support of local private companies.”

Málaga does not only want to learn from others however. The city aims to become a centre of knowledge itself too. “We want to lead by example”, Pérez de Siles says. “The rest of Europe could benefit from our work in education, leisure, infrastructure and the health targets we pursue. We hope thousands of athletes in Málaga will participate in the hundreds of competitions that we are organizing until 2020, or come and visit as spectators. In 2020, we aim to raise our efforts to become a model for sport in Europe.”

**WE HOPE TO
RAISE SPORT
PARTICIPATION
TO MORE THAN
50 PERCENT IN
2020**

Elisa Pérez de Siles, Málaga city councillor

**ALSO, WE WANT
TO ESTABLISH
MÁLAGA
AS A SPORT
TOURISTIC
DESTINY**

THE HAGUE **2022** **SPORTS FOR ALL**

The Hague competes to become European Capital of Sport in 2022. Councillor of sport Rabin Baldewsingh thinks becoming part of the ACES network is of mutual value for the Dutch city and the other affiliated cities: "If we are awarded with the 2022 European Capital of Sport title, we will encourage knowledge sharing among European cities on a permanent basis."

IT'S ALL ABOUT RAISING SPORT IN OUR CITY TO A HIGHER LEVEL AND MAKING THE CITY **GROW STRONGER**

Rabin Baldewsingh, The Hague councillor of sport

The ACES label could both be a catalyst for sports participation in The Hague itself, and a way to promote the city internationally. Baldewsingh: "It's all about raising sport in our city to a higher level and making the city grow stronger through sport. Apart from a lot of roots programs, we also want to bring more top level events to our city", Baldewsing says.

Participation 100 percent in 2030

The current rate of sport participation in The Hague is already is 70 percent. Baldewsingh is proud of what his city achieved over the past decade: "Despite the economic recession, The Hague has always kept investing in sport. We have recognised the social and societal benefits of sport and used sport to tackle all sorts of communal issues. The success of our sports policy has been noticed internationally. This title would be a major recognition for our efforts in the past, as much as it would be an incentive for the future. We

want to raise the sport participation in The Hague to 100 percent in 2030."

The Hague wants include everyone in the Capital of Sport Project. "In The Hague, we work hard on our goal of providing Sports for All, regardless of wealth and social background. We want to see all ages, all backgrounds, and people with any kind of disability moving for their health. Therefore, we work closely together with more than a hundred sports clubs, NGO's, other Dutch sport cities and private companies", Baldewsingh says. "Our candidacy is supported by the Dutch sports ministry, the Dutch national Olympic committee NOC*NSF, IOC, the Richard Krajicek Foundation, UNICEF Netherlands, Right to Play and the Vereniging Sport en Gemeenten (Association for Sport and Municipalities)."



PHOTO: ANP PHOTO

Example facilities

The WoW centre for health and lifestyle is an example of The Hague's efforts to include everyone. "WorkOutWijs is a lifestyle centre in one of The Hague's more deprived neighbourhoods, the 'Schilderswijk'. The centre focuses on people who do not move enough, people who want to move more and on people who want to improve their lifestyle", the councillor explains. The Hague also cherishes the 'Sporttuin Schilderswijk', a multisport complex of 2,000 square metres, which offers children the opportunity to participate in organised sport activities.

SportCampus Zuiderpark (see picture above) brings together sport, education, exercise and events. The recently opened 31,000 square metres complex has a 3,500-seat multifunctional indoor hall for top sport events, a professional beach hall with six beach volleyball pitches and one beach soccer court, a dojo for judo and taekwondo, two double

width multifunctional sport halls, one dance hall, 4 large multifunctional gymnasiums, a gymnastics hall, a fitness area, sauna, VIP and press lounges and extensive catering facilities. 1700 intermediate and higher educational students enter the building on daily basis. The state of the art Zuiderpark complex is no reason to stop investing. Baldewsing: "We want to keep on building extra facilities, like a skate centre, a beach stadium and we'll keep on investing in the basic infrastructure such a cycling lanes, parks and our beach."

Peace and justice

The Hague hopes to win the 2022 European Capital of Sport Award to further boost the sports policy. "The big European cities can learn a lot from each other and The Hague wants to help build a network of knowledge sharing. That perfectly fits with our profile as international City of Peace and Justice."



PULASTIC AT WORK

ZUIDERPARK SPORTS CAMPUS, ONE OF THE LARGEST SPORTS COMPLEXES IN THE NETHERLANDS

THE OLD ADO DEN HAAG FOOTBALL STADIUM IS NOW A DESTINATION FOR SPORTS, EXERCISE AND EDUCATION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The old ADO Den Haag football stadium in the Zuiderpark is now a destination for sports, exercise and education. Zuiderpark Sports Campus provides indoor sports facilities for elite sports, beach sports, gymnastics, as well as general sports facilities for use in sports education, athletics clubs, competitions and events. Zuiderpark is known for its sports and recreational facilities, and has been an important destination for many citizens of The Hague in the past eight decades. With the arrival of Zuiderpark Sports Campus, the park offers even more options for sports, exercise and education. Residents, especially those in nearby neighbourhoods, are involved with educational programs and activities organized by students in support of their studies.

PULASTIC SPORTS FLOORS

Floors in the elite sports facilities, general sports facilities, and four gymnasiums are covered with 6962 m2 of Pulastic Elite Performance 65 XLS. This system is especially suitable for very high training intensities and competitions at the very highest sports levels. A beautiful deep-red shade was chosen for the elite sports facilities: Oxydrood (Maroon). Duivenblauw (Pigeon Blue) was selected for the other sports floors. The upper floor is covered with about 330 m2 of wood Junckers flooring. Zuiderpark Sports Campus is an impressive sports complex as well as a meeting place for knowledge in the areas of exercise and state-of-the-art accommodations for sports.

CONSTRUCTION

The indoor elite sports facilities provide room for 3500 spectators. In addition, the complex has three gymnasiums, a dance hall, 12 lecture halls, indoor beach sports facilities, gymnastics facilities, and two additional halls for amateur sports. Eight football fields, a multipurpose artificial grass field, and a beach court are under construction outside. With an area of more than 30,000 m2, Zuiderpark Sports Campus is one of the largest sports complexes in the Netherlands, and the largest project we ever accomplished!

AREA SYSTEMS COLORS

Elite Sports Facilities	Pulastic Elite Performance 65 XLS Oxydrood (100)
General Sports Facilities	Pulastic Elite Performance 65 XLS Duivenblauw (308)
4 Gymnasiums	Pulastic Elite Performance 65 XLS Duivenblauw (308)
Wood floor	Houten Junckers

ASSOCIATED PARTIES

Client	Ballast Nedam B&O West
Contractor	Ballast Nedam B&O West
Architect	Faulknerbrowns Architects



SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND VOLUNTEERING IN SPORTS **IN EUROPE**

In many European countries, sports clubs constitute an important part of social life. For many people, the sports club is the most important organisation in their sports activities. Recent studies show that 12% of all EU citizens are a member of a sports club and a considerable number of citizens volunteer for their clubs. Because of their respect for diversity, sports clubs also could play a major role into the integration of refugees from other parts of the world.

SPORTS CLUBS COULD PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN SOCIETY

By Jan-Willem van der Roest (Mulier Institute), Jeroen Scheerder (KU Leuven),
Karsten Elmoose-Østerlund (University of Southern Denmark)

The 'Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe' (SIVSCE) project is a collaborative partnership co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. This project has sought to provide comparative knowledge across ten European countries, convert it into specific suggestions for action, and disseminate this knowledge to politicians and sports professionals across Europe. The main aim of this project is to promote social inclusion and volunteering in sports clubs in Europe.

As part of this research, two major surveys were implemented. The first one was answered by more than 35,000 sports clubs from ten European countries. The second survey was designed as a follow-up in which more than 13,000

club members and volunteers were interviewed. These club's members and volunteers were recruited from almost 650 clubs that were selected from the initial club survey. This article provides some highlights from this project, with a special focus on social integration: what role can sports clubs play in social integration in communities all over Europe? And, more specifically, what can we expect from sports clubs with respect to targeted initiatives to include specific groups in society in their organisations?

Goals of sports clubs

Sports clubs share a number of common characteristics across European borders. They are private, non-profit organisations, formally independent of the public sector, the



Refugees in Germany wearing SC Freiburg shirts during a free training in Egringen, Germany. The team donated 50 shirts, sport pants and soccer shoes to the refugees (see also next pages). PHOTO'S: ANP PHOTO

members participate voluntarily, and the decision-making structure is democratic. There is great variation in the goals of sports clubs. Sport includes many different types of sport and activity, and the purpose of organising sports can be very different. Several studies have shown that the kind of sport and the purpose of the clubs are of major importance for the social relationships between members and their involvement in democracy and voluntary work. Participation in a sports club is usually assigned to two key values: competition and performance, as well as social fellowship. In our study, the latter appeared to be the most important goal of sports clubs.

In the first survey, clubs were asked to give their opinion on the importance of the two following goals: 'Companionship and conviviality' and 'Sporting success and competition'. Social aspects seem to be very important to most sports clubs across countries and across sports types. Across countries, the mean value of the item 'Our club sets high value on companionship and conviviality' is 4.3 on a 1-5 Likert scale, and larger than 4 in almost all countries. Compared with the importance of social aspects within club life, sporting success and competition is not considered to be that high in the sports clubs. Although most clubs rather agree with this item, the average values are lower than the average value on the social aspects. Across countries, the mean value is 3.5.

Social role of sports clubs

The focus on social aspects within sports clubs is also one of the most important factors for members of sports clubs to retain their memberships. Our results show that the vast majority of members and volunteers understand how their respective clubs are run and how they can influence decision-making in clubs. Furthermore, many members and volunteers set high value on socializing with others in the club and many members say they have made new friends in their sports clubs. The results indicate that almost 90% of the members of European sports clubs have made new friends in a sports club.

One potential explanation for the high degree of social bonding and mutual respect reported by members and volunteers could be that they participate in relatively homogeneous groups. There is some support for this claim, as two out of five members and volunteers mainly socialise with people from the club who are similar to them (in terms of gender, ethnicity, employment, etc.). This also leads to questions with respect to social integration. In the past, many sports clubs have not been asked to fulfil this role. However, national and local policy makers, as well as board members have recognised the potential of sports clubs to foster social integration.

PARTNERSHIP

The 'Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe' (SIVSCE) project is a collaborative partnership co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The following partners participate in the project: The Centre for Sport, Health and Civil Society, University of Southern Denmark (Denmark); Institute of Sport Economics and Sport Management, German Sport University (Germany); Mulier Institute (the Netherlands), Sheffield University Management School, University of Sheffield (England); Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University of Valencia (Spain); Department of Organisation and History of Sport, Josef Pilsudski University of Physical Education (Poland); Department of Sporteconomics and Management, University of Debrecen (Hungary); Department of Kinesiology, KU Leuven (Belgium); Department of Cultural and Social Studies, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (Norway); Leadership Academy of the German Olympic Sports Confederation (Germany); Institute of Sport Science, University of Bern (Switzerland).



Social integration in sports clubs

Taking a first look at the role of sports clubs, they appear to play a big role in structural integration of different target groups in European society. More than two thirds mainly agree that they strive to offer sports to as many population groups as possible, while around half of the clubs mainly agree that they work for the integration of socially vulnerable groups. A significant number of the sports clubs in all ten countries have members from the selected target groups, take special initiatives to integrate one or more target groups and/or agree to work for structural integration.

But at the same time, a significant number of clubs neither have members from within the selected target groups, nor do they work strategically with structural integration. There are both similarities and differences in the integration of various target groups into sports clubs, both between the respective target groups and also within and between sports clubs in the ten countries.

Turning to sociocultural integration, the results show that the vast majority of members and volunteers understand how their respective clubs are run and how they can influence decision-making. At the same time, there seems to be respect

Nine-year old Marios and five-year old Mathieu from Iraq in a sports hall in Berlin. The Berlin Sport-Club (BSC) and PeWoBe, operator of private residential accommodation, have invited children of refugees to take part in a sports programme. PHOTO: ANP PHOTO

for diversity in most sports clubs, in that the vast majority of members and volunteers report that they feel respected for who they are. These results could be interpreted as indicators of successful assimilation and the co-existence of the value of pluralism within most clubs. However, people who were not born in the country in which they are currently a member of a sports club agree slightly less with the statements on assimilation than those for whom the sports club is located in their country of origin. This could indicate that for some people with a migration background, it is more difficult to know and master the skills necessary to understand decision making in their respective sports clubs.

In a time in which one of the biggest European challenges is to integrate refugees from other parts of the world in society, sports clubs could play a major role. Still, only a minority of clubs put special attention towards this challenge. A little less than one in five sports clubs (18%) have special initiatives to include people with a migration background. The most common initiatives are 'targeted sports activities' (6%), 'concessionary membership fee (reduced or funded)' (5%) and 'cooperation with municipalities/local government' (4%). This means further steps should be taken to fully fulfil sports clubs' promise.

Refugees in the Netherlands during a football clinic at Ajax Amsterdam. PHOTO: ANP PHOTO



EXAMPLE: BUDOKAN MAINTAL E.V.

A good example of a club engaged and committed to promoting the social integration of refugees is the Budokan Maintal e.V. sports club from Germany. One unique example of good practice has been to construct temporary refugee accommodation, which will be used as a club house and a judo boarding school in the future. The city of Maintal will rent the building with 68 places for a minimum of six years, with an option to extend the contract thereafter for two years. Other successful good practice examples initiated by the Budokan Maintal sports club include diverse social projects, such as cooperation with schools and childcare centres. To encourage integration, the sports club also offers organised sport to the asylum seekers, supports the preparation of healthy lunch meals, and provides educational work during or after lunch time. The Budokan sports club sees its engagement in the education and development of its trainees and volunteers as an investment for the future.

EUROPE'S HEALTHIEST COMPANY THE EUROPEAN SPORT AND HEALTHY COMPANY AWARD

By Philip Humphreys

In a sports hall on the edge of Alhama de Murcia in southeast Spain, an aspiring Lionel Messi can enjoy a lunchtime game of football inside a modern, purpose-built complex. But this is not a professional sports club, or the facilities of a prestigious university. First and foremost, this is a recreational area for the 4,150 employees of ElPozo Alimentación, an agri-food company which sells meat products to four out of every five Spanish households.

Senior staff members of ElPozo Alimentación receive the 2018 European Sport and Healthy Company Award from DCH President Juan Carlos Pérez Espinosa and ACES Europe President Gian Francesco Lupattelli at the company's headquarters in Alhama de Murcia, Spain.



Over the past two years, ElPozo has invested 170,000 euros in sports facilities exclusively for the use of its staff members. Arranged over an area of 5,000 square metres, the compound includes a gymnasium, paddle and regular tennis courts, and a covered pavilion designed for football and other sports such as table tennis. The company also sponsors the Spanish Paralympic Team, the 'La Vuelta' cycling tour of Spain, and the indoor football team, ElPozo Murcia.

The 2018 European Sport and Healthy Company Award presented to ElPozo Alimentación recognises not only

“This is a very important award for us, for its European significance”

ElPozo president Tomás Fuertes

this investment in sport and sporting facilities, but also the company's commitment to promoting good health in its working environment through other initiatives and programmes. These include vaccination and blood donation campaigns, a school of joint health, and doctors who are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To discharge these services, there are two modern surgeries and a complete ElPozo medical team comprising two doctors, six nurses, three auxiliary assistants and a clinical psychologist. Supplementing it all are healthy canteen menus and – since this is Spain – a dedicated siesta room.

“When we think about health and sport for our workers we never do so looking for earnings or returns in economic terms,” company president Tomás Fuertes says.

“We are convinced that if the facilities where you carry out your job are the most ground-breaking in the world, then we are favouring an environment where our workers feel prouder, identify more with the company and most certainly, are more productive.”

Rewarding good practice

The European Sport and Healthy Company Award was born in 2016 when ACES Europe joined forces with the International Organization of Human Capital Directors (DCH), a high-value contact network which gives a platform for top HR professionals to share their experiences and knowledge. “The promotion of good health practices among employees is an essential requirement in the work agenda of human



The ElPozo Alimentación company headquarters in Alhama de Murcia, Spain. The company's origins date back to 1935 with the opening of a modest food establishment located in 'El Pozo Concejil' square in the Murcian town.

“When we think about health and sport for our workers we never do so looking for earnings”

ElPozo president Tomás Fuertes

resources managers in the main companies,” says Juan Carlos Pérez Espinosa, president of the DCH Board of Directors. “This is in line with society's demand to promote policies related to health and sport.”

To further strengthen and extend the reach of the award, in March 2017 the DCH and ACES Europe created the European Healthy Companies Association (EHCA) through another partnership agreement.

“We wanted to build on the success of the award by creating a big portfolio of companies that are very committed to sport for employees,” says Hugo Alonso, the general secretary

of ACES Europe. “So we formed the European Healthy Companies Association to work as an independent body for the development of best practices in the corporate field.”

The bid process

In order to qualify for the European Sport and Healthy Company Award, candidate companies must be based in one of the countries of the European continent, and should be able to demonstrate a clear commitment to sport and to promoting physical activity and a healthy lifestyle among its employees. This can be shown through giving staff access to sports facilities – either owned by the company or provided in collaboration with third parties – and by implementing specific action programmes for employees in the fields of sport

The first company to be given the new distinction was Cofares, a Spain-based pharmaceutical business boasting over 9,500 pharmacists as cooperative partners, and more than 3,000 pharmacies as clients. It received the award on 16 November 2016 at a ceremony in Brussels attended by Tibor Navracsics, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports.

Cofares is followed in December 2017 by ElPozo Alimentación, which operates under the Grupo Fuertes umbrella. According to Kantar Worldpanel’s Brand Footprint 2017 ranking, ElPozo products are present in 78.9 per cent of Spanish households, making it the leading supplier of fresh and cured meat on the Iberian Peninsula.

Besides huge investments in sports facilities for its staff members, ElPozo Alimentación sponsors the Spanish Paralympic Team, the ‘La Vuelta’ cycling tour of Spain, and the indoor football team, ElPozo Murcia (white and red shirts).



and health. To begin the assessment process, an applicant company must formally declare its candidacy in a letter signed by the chief executive, managing director or president. “The companies vying for the award must then provide EHCA with a bid file which reflects implanted policies of sport and health in their organisations as a prerequisite of their candidatures,” says DCH Business Development Director, Nuria Simal. “The evaluation committee then visits the companies to gain a global view of their candidatures and to evaluate the content of the bid file.”

After ElPozo had presented its award candidacy to EHCA, an evaluation committee headed by ACES Europa President Gian Francesco Lupatelli conducted an audit of the company’s headquarters in Alhama de Murcia, a Roman spa town of 20,000 people set in the fertile valley of the river Guadalentín. Following the outcome of the first visit and the analysis of the bid file, the evaluation committee – formed of ACES Europe officers and representatives of DCH – assigned scores to each of the eligibility criteria. To pass, ElPozo needed a minimum of 80 points from a maximum achievable total of 100. Ultimately, the company’s membership in the programme was approved,

with the award presented on 6 December. “It is a very important award for us, for its European significance,” Tomás Fuertes says. “It is recognition for a company whose objective is not only to make the best healthy and nutritional products available to consumers, but also, in addition, a company which is obsessed that those who produce these products do so in the best environment of well-being possible.”

Post-award review

For ElPozo Alimentación – and for Cofares before it – the benefits of the European Sport and Healthy Company Award are not confined to a prestigious gala event in Brussels. Once a company is confirmed as a winner, it contributes a fee of 6,000 euros for membership of the programme.

maintenance and continuous evaluation of 2,000 euros. Once the three-year assessment process has been completed, a report will be issued including the validation of the company’s award in one of three categories: gold, silver or bronze. “Thanks to this distinction, a network of healthy and sporting companies will be created, which will promote good practices in this area,” says Nuria Simal. “In addition, it will provide a competitive advantage and an increase to their productivity.”

From 2018, the EHCA will additionally grant the International Sport and Healthy Company award to non-European companies operating worldwide. Both awards will be presented alongside the European Capital, City, and Town of Sport awards at the gala event in Brussels.



PHOTO'S: SHUTTERSTOCK

Each awarded company then enters into an ambitious development project, with realistic and measurable goals tailored to its own circumstances and needs. “The granting of the award in the European Parliament begins a three-year period of improvement and achievement of objectives following the adherence to the programme. This adds more value to the award,” says Nuria Simal.

The EHCA evaluation committee monitors each project by reviewing the resources included in the winning submission, and by making an annual physical visit to the company facilities. For this, the company pays an annual fee for

“ Good health practices among employees are essential for human resources managers in the main companies ”

DCH president Juan Carlos Pérez Espinosa



ELPOZO ALIMENTACIÓN

European benchmark for the promotion of health and sport in companies

ELPOZO ALIMENTACIÓN has been named European Sport and Healthy Company 2018, an award promoted by the European Parliament which publicly recognises the company's commitment to promote health and sport among its 4000 workers.

- 5000 m2 of their own sporting spaces for their staff's exclusive use
- Pioneer in starting The School of Joint Health
- Its premises include two 24 hours- a- day doctor's surgeries

ELPOZO ALIMENTACIÓN's commitment to the health and well-being of its workers dates back to the company's origins and constitutes the main focus of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy, both internally and externally. ELPOZO employees have 5000 square metres of their own exclusive sporting spaces at their disposition. The offer includes a gymnasium, paddle and tennis courts, basketball court and an extraordinary covered pavilion to play indoor football and other sports such as table tennis. The facilities are open from Monday to Sunday, in the morning, afternoon and evening until 9pm. A wide timetable which enables workers to use them more easily as they can be adapted to their interests and different working days. The company has invested 169,704 euros in the sports facilities over the last two years. Doing sport regularly and good food are the perfect way to promote a healthy life. For that reason, ELPOZO ALIMENTACIÓN also worries about its workers' food and offers healthy menus in its different cafes. The dishes are revised and approved weekly by the company's medical service depending on the activity and physical effort that the majority of the employees undertake.



ACTIVE, POSITIVE AND HEALTHY LIFE IN THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The implementation of health programmes in the company has a long history. The last one that the company started was a pioneering programme called 'School of Joint Health'. An instructor specialised in the mechanics of movement provides guidelines adapted to each professional profile so that workers can follow them before, during and after the working day. They have already trained 3000 workers and this month a new edition kicks off to continue increasing the number of beneficiaries in the company.

ELPOZO ALIMENTACIÓN's interest in health translates into more and better services every year. The company, with a surface area of 250,000 square metres, has two modern doctor's surgeries which offer medical assistance 24 hours a day and a system of medical check-ups all year long. The team of health workers is made up of two doctors, six nurses, three assistants and a clinical psychologist, guaranteeing a full and convenient service in the workplace.

LARGE SPORTING HELP

For ELPOZO ALIMENTACIÓN doing sport represents values which are completely in line with its business philosophy, such as discipline, commitment, effort, companionship, and overcoming difficulties. A clear example of this commitment is the sponsorship, for more than 25 years, of the ElPozo Murcia Indoor football team which is in First Division. In addition, it sponsors the Spanish Paralympic Team and the Spanish Cycling Tour "La Vuelta".

COMPANY DETAILS

- 100% family capital. It is a family-owned company, part of the Grupo Fuertes holding company, with 100% family capital.
- 63 years of history. The business undertaking began with a small food shop in ElPozo Concejil square, in Alhama de Murcia.
- 4150 workers. As well as the 23,000 indirect jobs generated through its activity.
- More than 1000 million euros turnover. The company exceeded a turnover of a billion euros last year.
- 82 countries. The company exports its products to 82 countries.
- 1500 references, of both processed products as well as fresh and cured.
- It sells more than 2 million hams a year

OOSTENDE 2017 RECOGNITION AND INCENTIVE

By Leo Aquina

“For Oostende, the 2017 European City of Sport Award was as much a recognition for our sports policy in the past 20 years as it was an incentive to raise the bar again”, says Marc Van De Poel, head of the sports department in the Belgian coastal city. The award has left Oostende a lasting legacy. “The award has been a great help to initiate projects, to open doors for cooperation with all sorts of organisations, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, and the label has also raised the awareness for sport of our citizens.”

Before discussing the impact of the European City of Sport Award, Van De Poel wants to point at the prolific sports policy of Oostende in the past decades. “We already had a lot of projects to stimulate sports participation, like school camps. For example, we also have a project called Sportkans, Sport Chance, to offer grants for children in deprived neighbourhoods.”

Apart from sports participation, Oostende also invested in sports infrastructure a lot before 2017. Van De Poel: “We have a very big 55-hectare sport park with 20 football pitches, a BMX track, a mountain bike course, a gymnastics hall and lots of other sport facilities. Thanks to our close links to the Belgian royal family, several historical accommodations in different locations are used for sports purposes: the royal stables, a tennis club, a yacht club, a horse racing track and a 9-hole golf course. As a coastal and touristic city of course we also invested a lot in water sport facilities, a beach house and a sports beach, but also a rowing track and an inland lake for the smaller sailing boats.”

Goals for 2017

Oostende built its candidacy for the European City of Sport Award around the five ACES goals: enjoyment in exercise, willingness to achieve, sense of community, learning fair play and improvement of health. “We added two goals to the list ourselves: events and infrastructure”, says Van De Poel. “In our bid-file we departed from what we considered to be our

strengths. Oostende is a small regional centre city with about 70,000 inhabitants, but as a tourist city at sea, we have about 200,000-300,000 inhabitants in summertime. Therefore, we do have a lot of events in the summer and we also have a lot of sports facilities.”

Enjoyment in exercise

As part of the enjoyment in exercise goal, Oostende initiated several so-called Multimove exercise schools for primary school. “We already had programs to increase sports participation, but mostly aimed at the older youth. We wanted to reach out to all age categories”, Van de Poel says. “In a special program for elderly people, we offer 25 different sports per week at a rate of 1,50 euros for the participants.”

Willingness to achieve

Oostende worked together with schools to hold sport tests for children. “The kids got their scoresheets to take home in order to raise awareness about the City of Sports projects among the parents too.” Not only at grassroots level achievement was recognised. Top athletes who won national and international trophies were invited to the city hall to celebrate success.

Sense of community

To raise the sense of community through sports, the municipality worked closely together with the three European level teams KV Oostende (football), BC Oostende (basketball)

and Hermes Volley Oostende (women’s volleyball). Van De Poel: “Those clubs all have a fan base and we matched their activities to generate more sense of community. Apart from that we started a database for volunteers, who deserve a lot of respect. Recruiting volunteers is difficult, so we wanted to know the people better, and also have easy access to available volunteers. To give volunteers the respect they deserve, we will organise a special celebration in December.”

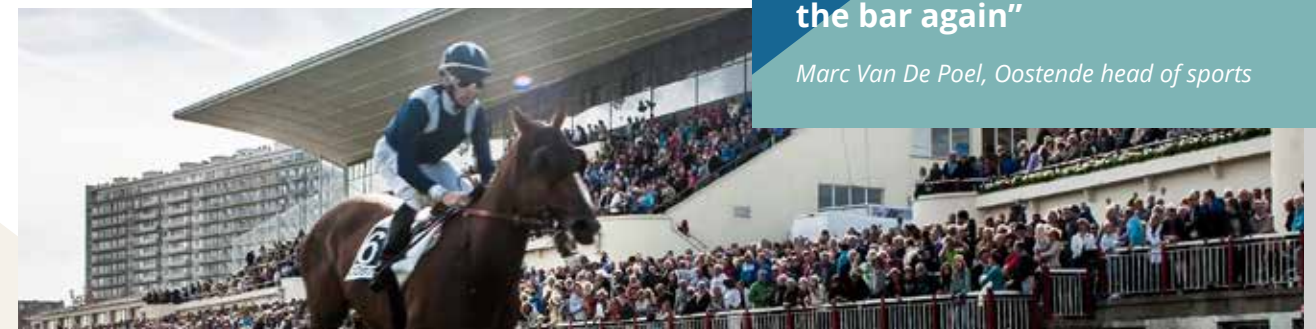
Fair play

“To draw attention for fair play, we invited all clubs in Oostende to publicly sign the Panathlon Declaration and we also organised special fair play celebrations at schools and sport clubs.”



“The European City of Sport Award was an incentive to raise the bar again”

Marc Van De Poel, Oostende head of sports



Health

Several Start-to-Sport projects were started in Oostende. "We also participated in a program in which doctors prescribe exercise and a health coach instead of medicine", Van De Poel explains. Oostende also invested in AED-systems at sport clubs and accommodations.

Events and Infrastructure

Although Oostende already hosted a wide range of regional, national and international events, the city invested in new top and grassroots events in 2017. The city hosted the Belgian National Championships Cyclo Cross and aims for the World Cyclo Cross Championships in the future. The Belgian National Championships Blokart (sailing) were held on the Oostende beach, there were a dance festival and a lot more. In total Oostende organised some 140 events in the European City of Sports year.

The Belgian city invested in infrastructure as well. Van De Poel: "We built a new artificial turf football pitch, a new cricket pitch, a swimming pool, a multi-sports indoor accommodation, a martial arts accommodation, a special blokart arena and last but not least the green ribbon, a route around the city for inline-skating, running and mountain biking.

Legacy

The Oostende European of Sports Award legacy will last far beyond 2017. "This title was not meant to remain theoretical", Van De Poel says. "To make sure it was recognised and used by sports organisations throughout the city, we invested in communication with a logo, flags and banners, and we labelled all events to raise awareness." Apart from the awareness for sport in Oostende itself, the title helped to raise funds nationally, and it handed the city an international network to draw from in future projects."

THE SUCCES OF LOGROÑO 2014

Logroño was European City of Sport in 2014. The University of Rioja researched the social and economic impact of the award. It concluded that sport had become more important within the city. Logroño organised 179 events (17 international, 48 national, and 114 local), in which 70.922 athletes participated and they brought more than 36.000 companions and hundreds of thousands of spectators. Some of the major sport events Logroño hosted were: an official match of the Spanish Football Selection against Liechtenstein, an International Basketball Tournament attended by

Spain, Brazil and Argentina, the Spanish Cup of indoor football and Davis Cup play-offs between Spain and Switzerland. The city also organised sports events for its own citizens with monthly themes such as Sport and Health (January), Sport and Women (March), Sport and Recreation (July), Sport and Integration (November). The city thus enacted the social function of sport to achieve an improvement in physical welfare, increase the quality of life of citizens and facilitating social integration.

44.52 million euros

The economic impact of the City of Sport year for the city of Logroño was 44.52 million euros. On estimate, sport in Logroño generates 1,654 direct jobs (2.16% of the employed population). The researchers conclude that Logroño reinvented a sector of activity within the field of services to society. In 2014, the total spending on sports in Logroño rose to 102.74 million euros (approximately 87% private funding and 13% public funding). Sport accounted for 2.42 percent of Logroño's gross added value, 2.75 percent of its GDP and 4.28 percent of the consumption of goods and services by families. Each public euro spent has generated a multiplier effect of 14.8, due to the direct, indirect and induced effects of spin-off in other sectors.

Discover sporty Noordwijk

Noordwijk prides itself on having been given the title of European City of Sport in 2017. Noordwijk's decision to focus on sports and exercise this year was not a random choice.

Both are key elements to the well-being of every individual. The ancient Romans affirmed this connection with the saying, 'Mens sana in corpore sano'. It means 'a healthy mind in a healthy body' and highlights the importance of both. The term well-being covers a lot of areas. It indicates that a person or group of people are doing well physically, mentally and socially. As such, well-being is an essential part of our lives. All the more reason to promote well-being for everyone. Sports and exercise are key ingredients for increasing feelings of well-being. This applies to young people, adults and the elderly alike.

Highest level of sports participation

Noordwijk's efforts to promote sports and exercise among all of its residents have not gone unnoticed. Many other municipalities are slightly envious of the sports and accommodation facilities we as a community have created. In turn, those investments were the prelude to a very high level of participation in sporting activities. This led the jury in charge of naming the European Cities of Sport to publicly state that they had not come across such a high level of sports participation anywhere else in Europe. The fact that Noordwijk promotes sports among the general public in a strategic,

targeted way with projects like Friends United, Reuring and Sportief voor Werk led to another prestigious award for the best initiative in the area of sports and exercise.

The number of people visiting Noordwijk has greatly increased as a result of the many sporting and sportsrelated events that were organized during the year that we held the title European City of Sport. Naturally, this benefitted the local economy. After all, well-being also costs money. We will continue our work. After all, regular, effective exercise promotes good health and prevents health problems and illness. Even later on in life. It goes without saying that this has a positive effect on well-being.

*"A healthy mind in
a healthy body"*



THE BEST PLACE TO MEET

The seaside resort has been conducting an active sports policy for many years. Visitors to Noordwijk will be able to enjoy much space and facilities where they can do all sort of sport: hiking and cycling routes, mountain bike trails, jogging trails, boot camps, gyms, safe bathing water, surfing hotspots and much, much more.

Noordwijk has, for many years, been the place for great sport events. The Dutch open championships (Golf), Kite Board Open, cycling events and running competitions and many other top annual events. The last years we proudly hosted two world championships. The Lifesaving World Championships and the Hobie Cat World Sailing Championships. And off course we are welcoming more great events in the near future.

The facilities for business meetings, incentives and conventions in Noordwijk are truly outstanding. A great diversity of (modern) conveniences and conference facilities are offered by a range of three-, four- and five-star hotels. There are few places on the European coastline offering such a complete package in such a compact and delightful setting. So, feel free to discover sport-loving Noordwijk!



NOORDWIJK 2017
EUROPEAN CITY OF SPORT

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UNCONQUERABLE SOULS

THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE DISABLED PEOPLE THROUGH INSPOORT+

By Petra Mihályi

A crazy game
is a fire
that wakes up
from this vital
anaesthesia
from this machine
of the reality.
A place where we can meet each other
It is the water
that fills
the pot of the emotions
that always needs to overflow
as fragile
and humble
as that simple
shiver
of a dream
of a smile
that can't wait
to unfold
and to see far away
humble, simple, wonderful
both banal and strong
and without illusions...
far away....

Titled "A poem dedicated to Insport+", this piece of modern literature was written by Italian Roberto D'Anna in Sofia, Bulgaria, on an integrational program brought to life by Insport+ with the support of Erasmus+ funds provided by the European Union. The poem is due to show what a social inclusion through sport project means for him – someone who suffers from psychiatric disorders. He suffers, we say, but it is the wrong expression. Richness and talent lie within every individual, also in those who live with intellectual disabilities. Bringing this to light is what Insport+ stands for.

“ The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind ”

4th principle of the Olympic Charter



Inspired by psychiatrist Franco Basaglia, who is considered the father of the modern mental health concept, in 1978, the Italian government was the first one in Europe to set up a law closing psychiatric institutes. This raised the community-based mental health care system to governmental level. While in mass institutes on the edge of the cities people with intellectual disabilities were considered as threat to other people, the new approach focuses on showing that they can be active members of their society. Instead of separating them, chaining them up and curing them with drugs to calm down, they started to get the opportunity to interact with people and find their own place within their communities. In 1984, Spain stepped on the same road and in 1993 the organization FAISEM has been established by the government of Andalusia to help the integration of people with intellectual disorders. A year later, Polisportiva Aurora was founded in Prato to support their social inclusion through sport.

A couple of decades have passed since Basaglia's activity and society is on a different level. Prato Municipality, together with Aurora and FAISEM, is now dedicated to further develop this system as well as spread the best practice all across Europe. Ms. Sara Monti, project manager of the coordinating organization Prato Municipality, hopes that their joint action with nine partner organizations from Belgium (ACES Europe), Bulgaria (NGO My World), France (OFIS), Germany (Initiative e.V.), Hungary

“We should not only speak about social inclusion, we have to do it”

Hermann Filipic, Secretary General Austrian Speed Skating Federation



(Megálló Group Foundation), Italy (Polisportiva Aurora), Portugal (PODES), Spain (FAISEM) and the United Kingdom (OxSPA) will have a great impact. In 2013/14, the first Insport project aimed at the social inclusion of disabled people, while in 2016/17, Insport+ focuses on mental disability. Their tool of integration is a language that everybody speaks: sports.

In the language of sports, we are all human

“It speaks to youth in a language they understand (...) It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination”, said Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela about sports in his famous speech at the Rugby World Cup in 1995. The event ended with South African victory, which became known as “Invictus” – the name inspired by the poem of William Ernest Henley. With already practicing other sports, in 2013, Polisportiva Aurora took up rugby and established their own “Invictus” team for people with an intellectual disability. “Participation in sport provides the opportunity to interact with peers and build relationships

beyond the family’s circle and the home environment. It also teaches the significance of teamwork and cooperation, goal-setting and discipline, fair play and respect of the rules. It is thus important for the personal growth and the education to basic social skills”, Sara Monti of Prato Municipality explains. In addition, as there is no need to express themselves through words, it is an excellent opportunity to build intercultural relations as well even without special language skills.

Roberto, a poet and guitarist, has been involved with the activity of Aurora, his life path and improvement were followed by the association in the past five years. Ms. Monti believes that his heart-warming poem, originally written in Italian, has clearly shown how much their work means for the participants. But it is still not always easy to get youngsters involved. “In some cases, parents and relatives prefer to protect their children with mental health disorders by keeping them in their home environment or limiting their exchanges within the mental health services since they are

afraid that contacts with peers could be possible sources of stress and anxiety. In these cases, isolation is often the consequence of a parental attitude”, Sara Monti shares. “But there are also “open” parents, who are the first ones trying to push their children and to look for opportunities for them”, she adds.

The organizations in Insport+ are preparing a handbook to share their results, impacts and knowledge with other organizations and the public to show them the importance of their practice and make the impact of the project larger than just increasing the idea within the organizations involved. They are ready to provide a structure which can be implemented in any country. The results will be published in Insport+ Vademecum at the closing event of Insport+ soon to be held in the European Parliament.

Touching spark of the Olympic Spirit

Even though the organizations involved with Insport+ are trying their best to bring the issue to spotlight with the help of the media, the real

boost comes with the Special Olympic Movement. “The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play”, says the 4th fundamental principle of Olympism in the Olympic Charter. The Special Olympic Games is a true manifestation of this statement. During the latest winter edition, held this March in Graz and Schladming, Austria, Olympic Champions such as USA’s short track speed skater Apolo Ohno and South Korea’s singles figure skater Kim Yuna raised their voices for this cause. The International Olympic Committee and the International Federations of the sports that were included provided professional support for the event. The European Commission has supported the event as well, setting up a “Healthy Athletes” program: realising the higher risk of health issues for people with mental disability, they provided on-the-sport health care for them. The organizers set up an agreement with the International

Sport Press Association to organize a Young Reporters’ Seminar during the event to raise media appearance and shape the view of the young, upcoming generation of sport journalists.

The event truly inspired those who got involved. Hermann Filipic, the Secretary General of the Austrian Speed Skating Federation and President of the Styrian Skating Association (Styria or Stiermarken is a state or Bundesland of Austria, PM), who was in charge of the short track events in Graz, had been trying to start a Unified Sports project of the Special Olympics Movement even before, but he always hit the wall of rejection. “In 2008, we had already started a Unified Relay which we did once a year, but the time to start the long-term program wasn’t there yet. The test events in 2016 and the Games in 2017 helped eventually”. The City Government finally approved Filipic’s program and as a result, kids aged 3-15 started training together with Special Olympic athletes in Graz. “We should not only speak about social inclusion, we have to do it. It is not just for media. I am grateful to the city and the Styrian

Government for the support”, he points out. “For these children, training together is completely normal, you can see the joy on their faces. This is how it should be in education, at art and music events as well. This project is very close to my heart”, Filipic adds. He is now working on further spreading the program in the Styrian region.

The circle has no start: the Special Olympic Movement and integration through sport programs keep on building each other up. Projects like Insport+ help build the broad base of Special Olympics and give methods to the world to make people with intellectual disabilities useful members of their communities. While Special Olympics inspire new social inclusion projects and grow awareness through media. Hand in hand, they help mentally disabled people – using Henley’s words – to be the masters of their fate, allow them to be the captains of their unconquerable souls.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND WELLBEING ACROSS EUROPE

By Robert Barreveld

Many countries in Europe have their own way of using sports as a means of stimulating social and physical wellbeing in their society. Let's have a look at the invaluable role of sports and exercise in the society in the Netherlands, Iceland, the United Kingdom, Hungaria and Sweden.

THE NETHERLANDS: AT THE HEART OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the Netherlands, the 'neighbourhood sports coach' has a key role in stimulating social and physical wellbeing. The coach is the link between local governments, sports clubs, schools and other organisations that are involved in making sports available for as many people as possible.



“I specifically focus on children from a difficult background who might not get as many chances as others”

Idzard Pruiksma, neighbourhood sports coach

The neighbourhood sports coach in the Netherlands is a true pivotal figure in recreational sports. Often the coach works for local authorities but is actually at the very heart of the social network around people in a specific neighbourhood and especially around children. Many of these children come from broken homes or their parents are dealing with financial and other problems and are just not able to support the children in every way necessary. Joining a sports club or a team where there is a safe social environment and where children can benefit both physically and mentally, would make a big difference. In these situations, the neighbourhood sports coach can help. “This is exactly where I come in”, says Idzard Pruiksma (31), neighbourhood sports coach in Friesland in the very north of the Netherlands and winner of this year’s

stimulation prize for neighbourhood coaches. The former physical education teacher is basically named the best neighbourhood sports coach of 2017.

Connecting the dots

“I specifically focus on children from a difficult background who might not get as many chances as other children do”, Pruiksma explains. “For example, if a child has the desire to do a specific sport but does not have the resources and the contacts to make that happen, I can help. And then money might not even be the biggest challenge. Because through subsidised programs from local governments, in corporation with sports clubs or other institutions we most often find the money. And when I know what is necessary in a specific situation, I can connect the dots. Often, I know



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

the child and I know what club and what environment would suit him or her. So I contact the club and explain the situation and together we will make it happen. That is what I can do. A much bigger challenge for me is seeing the need, knowing what a child wants or could benefit from.”

Because the neighbourhood sports coach can lead the way to a place where sport is accessible for the children and where they can enjoy all the good that sport has to offer. But the coach doesn’t know what happens at home. “I rely on other people to see the specific need. That could well be the school or someone from the same neighbourhood but often it is a social neighbourhood team as we call it. They go into these so-called ‘problem areas’ and visit the families, talk to parents. They are often the first ones to see special needs or get requests and realise that the neighbourhood sports coach can make a difference.”

‘I could do more’

Acting on specific needs is important but even more important might be the ability to make people in

the neighbourhood – Pruiksma not only works with (young) children, but also with adults, aged people, persons with a disability etc. – realize what they can do themselves. “So, recently in one of the neighbourhoods we handed them the basics of a plan to organise a tournament, in this case a fishing tournament. And it was a great success! These people got what they needed and they basically did it themselves. That’s the best way to help them because then the idea sticks. It is much better then when I do it for them.” Pruiksma started his career years ago as a physical education teacher, a job he loved. “I did what I do best, letting children enjoy sports and exercise. However, it had its limitations. I already had a feel for the social side of the job, I recognised quickly which children needed a little bit more attention and were dealing with certain personal problems. But as a teacher there is not so much that you can do. You cannot step beyond the boundaries of the school, that is not your territory. My role more or less developed into what I am doing now because it came naturally to me. I connected well with the kids, they trusted me, told me things. I realised that I could do more than just teach.”

THE YOUTH OF ICELAND

In many ways, the work of the neighbourhood sports coach in the Netherlands is about offering options. Paving the way for people and handing them tools to fully benefit from access to sports and exercise. And that was also the basis for a policy initiative in Iceland in 1997. It led to a project called 'The Youth of Iceland', a new, revolutionary way to keep the youngsters away from booze and drugs.



**“HAND YOUNG PEOPLE
THE ALTERNATIVE OF
SPORTS AND THEY
WILL CHOOSE SPORT
PARTICIPATION OVER
DRUGS”**

professor Inga Dóra Sigfúsdóttir

At that time, the use of alcohol and other substances under adolescents had reached an all-time high. The results from a survey among scholars in the age category of 10 – 13, 14 – 16 and the 16 – 20 years showed that from the 14- and 15-year-olds, 42% had been drunk at least once in the last thirty days ahead of the test. That had to change.

The survey was an initiative from sociology professor Inga Dóra Sigfúsdóttir from the Reykjavik University. The results shocked her. She realised that it was time for a different approach. Educating the youth about the risks of alcohol and drugs did not have the right effect. Sigfúsdóttir started to discuss the situation with several politicians, policy makers and even with parents. In a society with only a little over 130.000 people, these conversations led to the building of a movement, a

common understanding that something needed to be done. It was the start of the 'Youth of Iceland'. An agreement signed by mayors, social workers, coaches, scientists, parents and more to keep Iceland's youth away from alcohol and drugs.

How? By choosing a direction that is completely different from explaining the risks of alcohol and drugs to the adolescents, which is the standard policy in many countries. Sigfúsdóttir: "We learned much from other studies and we decided to target their behaviour, that was a key element of our approach. No longer tell them about the dangers of substances because they know. Kids are smart. They understand the risks but they use it anyway. Hand them the alternative of sports and they will choose sport participation over drugs."



Sports the standard

Of course, sports and other cultural and social activities such as music are an important element in the Iceland approach but the social surroundings of the children also needed to change. "The goal was to strengthen the protective factors around them such as the parents, organised youth work and especially sports. Iceland is a very liberal country. When kids at the age of 15 or 16 had a party at home, the parents would go out. That needed to change, too. Knowing where your kids are, knowing their friends, knowing the parents of the friends, those are important things." And at the centre of the new approach are of course the available alternatives. Being able to participate in sports instead of sitting around, drinking and smoking, had a result that Iceland's authorities could have never imagined. Now, only twenty years after the 'Youth of Iceland' originated, the behaviour of Iceland's adolescents has completely changed. Participating in sports is no longer the exception, it is the standard. Many youngsters do it four or five times a week. Where in 1998 almost half of the 15- and 16-year-olds had been drunk at least once in the month before doing the survey, that number is now down to an unbelievable 5%. And the theory behind the 'Youth of Iceland' is being explained all over the world.

UNITED KINGDOM: EXERCISE AS MEDICINE

In the United Kingdom, the principal of 'exercise as medicine' is getting more awareness every day. And that was about time, because the situation is critical, according to Dr. Andrew Boyd. "Until recently we were not used to asking: 'how physically active are you?' But that is now changing", he says.

“All the evidence says that telling people to do or don't do something is generally ineffective”



Dr. Andrew Boyd

It is common knowledge that regular exercise contributes to our general well-being. It makes people less vulnerable to diseases and can help fight the symptoms of chronic diseases. Internationally, but certainly in the United Kingdom there is a growing understanding among physicians about the effect exercise can have and how they can help patients fully benefit from it. The principle of 'exercise as medicine' is gaining ground. The Loughborough University in Leicestershire will soon even start a postgraduate master's degree course in exercise and medicine. But why is this so high up the agenda in the UK? Because the situation is critical, says Dr. Andrew Boyd, the RCGP's (Royal College of General Practitioners) Clinical Priority Lead for Physical Activity & Lifestyle, and a Clinical Champion for physical activity at

Public Health England. "In the UK, inactivity has lately been recognised as a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases like diabetes and heart disease", he says. A Lancet published study from 2012 found that more than 60% of the population in the UK was inactive versus 20 to 30% in countries like the Netherlands, Germany and France. So, something needs to change. And Boyd is working hard to help put that change in the UK into effect. "Public Health England have now funded a national training program, 'Moving Professionals' for trainee- and qualified doctors to learn about physical activity in the context of health and I teach on that program. And also, the RCGP, the national body that represents primary health care doctors in the UK, has declared physical activity a priority for a three-year period.

My aim is to empower and engage healthcare professionals like doctors, nurses and pharmacists to recognise their role within changing the behaviour of the population."

Sow the seed

That means that doctors need to change the way they approach their patients and the way they present the effect that physical activity can have to them. Boyd: "We're trained to identify diseases and to prescribe medication. Until recently, health care professionals were not trained in a useful way to talk to patients about changing their behaviour. My own medical school training was only ten years ago. We were told that obesity, physical inactivity, smoking and alcohol were risk factors, but we were not really told how to

effectively manage them. All the evidence says that telling people to do or don't do something is generally ineffective. But if you sow the seed at the right time in the right way and that message is matched by other messages from trusted sources, sometimes people do make changes."

Boyd is convinced that this approach will work. In time. "Take smoking for example. In the 1970's 46% of the adult population in the UK smoked and that number is down to around 15%. It is the result of a long, multi-pronged approach. We as doctors have been incentivised to talk to patients about smoking for years. We routinely ask, 'Do you smoke?' And if so, 'have you thought about stopping?' Until recently we were not used to asking: 'how physically active are you?' But that is now changing."



A CHANGE IN HUNGARY

In Hungary, before 2012 most schools had two or three hours of physical education per week in their schedule. However, for school children, regular sports and exercise at school can form a strong basis for a reasonably healthy life at a later age. Today, an hour of exercise is part of the daily routine in Hungarian schools.

“Last year was the year in which every class had a daily exercise program. Now we’ll have to wait and see for the results”



Dr. Anetta Müller

Life expectancy in Hungary has been one of the lowest in Europe (sixth-lowest in 2010, 74,7 years) and the death rate ranked among the five highest in the Europe Union, with almost half of these deaths caused by cardiovascular diseases. Around the same time, nearly two thirds of the adult population were classified as overweight or obese and these statistics were also seen among children and adolescents. “Already in 2006, we saw in statistics that 75% of Hungarian children were getting their only exercise from physical education in school”, says Dr. Anetta Müller from the Debrecen University, referring to statistics in the Hungarian national Sport Strategy (2007-2020), a long-term policy report on sports and exercise in Hungary.

Change

These statistics were one of the reasons to decide on a major policy change in 2012. The 2012 Public Act on Education in Hungary made physical education a mandatory part of the daily school schedule, starting in the 2012-2013 season. This was part of a

reorganisation of the Hungarian educational system. “So, from that school year, physical education was part of the normal school day, from first to 12th class”, Müller says. “This project started in the 2012/13 academic year in only the first, the fifth and the ninth class. The next year daily exercise was compulsory in the first, the second, the fifth and the sixth and the ninth and the tenth class. It was expanded every year. Last year was the year in which every class had a daily exercise program. So, we don’t have any data to see the program’s results. We will have to wait and see.” In primary school the five hours of physical education are for the most part focussed on physical development. So, every morning there are lessons in physical education. But in secondary education this can change. Müller: “In secondary education the 3+2 system is allowed. This means that in a week there are three hours of obligatory physical education in the morning; the school can decide to plan the other two hours in the afternoon and then organise sports training sessions in which the students can take part.”



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

SWEDEN ON TOP

And then there are the Scandinavian countries, where exercise and sports are very popular and where sport participation and life expectancy are one of the highest in Europe. In the 2013 Eurobarometer Sport and Activity report, Sweden tops the list with almost 70% of the population older than 15 years exercising at least once a week.

“A LOT OF SWEDISH WOMEN ARE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE, ESPECIALLY COMPARED TO COUNTRIES IN SOUTHERN EUROPE”



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



Dr. Susanna Hedenborg



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

This number is partly explained by the fact that in Sweden walking and cycling are common ways to get to work and school. And the same goes for the other Scandinavian countries. In Sweden, 38% of the people who engage in physical exercise on a regular basis, say they do this on their way to school, work or another destination.

“The voluntary organisation of sports is one of the discussed explanations in Sweden”, says Dr. Susanna Hedenborg, professor in sports science at the Malmö University. “But on the other hand, sports in many other countries is basically organised in the same way. I think part of the explanation in Sweden also has to be gender equity. A lot of women are physically active, especially compared to countries in southern Europe.” And that statement is supported by the statistics in the Sport and Activity report, with Sweden being only one of the very few countries where sport participation among women (69%) is even slightly higher than among men (66%).

Not at clubs

Voluntary societies indeed play a big role in Sweden. Nowhere else in the world is the ratio of societies and clubs to the population so high. However, the most remarkable statistic when it comes to sport participation in Sweden is the percentage of people (15 years and older) that regularly do sports at a sports club. It is only 11%, very low compared to the beforementioned 70% general sport participation. Hedenborg: “You need to take the demographic factor into account. Almost 90% of the Swedish children are members of a sports club within the Swedish Sports Confederation. But when they become teenagers, they drop out. So not many Swedes stay club member after the age of 15 and today in Sweden we have an aging population.”

There is one last factor that needs to be highlighted. The Sport and Activity report shows that of the Swedes that are physically active on a regular basis, 55% is

active in parks or elsewhere outdoors. It is one of the highest numbers among European countries. And Sweden has what they call the ‘Right of Common Access’, a quite unique right which allows people to move freely in nature, in forests and fields. Can it explain why sport participation outside clubs is relatively high? Hedenborg is not sure. “It is hard to say if that is a factor, but it would be very interesting to study that! But then you also have to look at the perception Swedes and also Norwegians have of themselves. We believe that we are outdoor people, that we are physically active outdoors. But are we? I’m not sure. These days, most people live in the city and when we go out into the forest to camp or do something else, generally we don’t meet many other people. An unbiased study is needed to check the assumption that Swedes and Norwegians are really so active as they say they are.”

'THE EU HAS A VITAL PART IN SUPPORTING SPORT PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE UNION'

TIBOR NAVRACSICS, EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS

By Mihályi Petra

His way to Brussels was paved with obstacles due to the stressed relation between the Hungarian government and the European Union. Even though first the Cultural Committee of the European Parliament rejected him, eventually Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker and the European Parliament have approved Tibor Navracsics as European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports for the period 2014-2019.

Since then, despite of the critics he has gained as a result of his party's activity in his country of origin, he has proved his commitment to the values of Europe and fulfils his role in the EC with great dedication. As the father of two daughters he may deeply understand the importance of the fields concerned. Mr. Navracsics plays a key role in balancing the tempered disagreements and fragile relation between the Hungarian government and the European Union, facing firm criticism from the government of his home land in the past period.

Why is it important for the EU to support sport projects within the European Union?

"I strongly believe that the EU has a vital part in supporting sport projects being run throughout the Union. Sport plays a unique role in bringing together people from different backgrounds for a common purpose, helping to break down barriers within our communities. And the EU is in a unique and strong position to work with Member States and key stakeholders in ensuring sport projects that do just that. Particular attention should be paid to engaging with minority groups, refugees and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Already, with the support of Erasmus+, we help grassroots organizations reach out to people from such backgrounds. This year, we organised the very first #BeInclusive EU Sport Awards. I was very honoured to announce the three winning projects at a ceremony in Brussels on 22 November.

"Furthermore, along with healthy nutrition, sport is a central part of a healthy lifestyle. To promote healthy living even more effectively, I have joined forces with my fellow Commissioners Vytenis Andriukaitis and Phil Hogan, in charge of Health and Agriculture, respectively. In September, we launched our "Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle". This initiative aims to raise awareness and encourage people, especially young people, to adopt simple lifestyle changes and lead a healthier lifestyle. The Tartu Call is based on 15 steps that we will implement over the next two years.

"Physical inactivity is a major societal problem globally, but also in Europe, with a huge impact on people's wellbeing: the lack of physical activity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality, causing 6% of deaths across the world. We have therefore decided to address physical inactivity and unhealthy lifestyles as a priority in the field of sport.

"There are other common challenges in sport that are reflected in the EU Work Plan for Sport for 2017-2020. This Work Plan sets priorities agreed between Member States and the Commission. Through EU sport policy, we address transnational challenges such as match-fixing, doping, the protection of minors, good governance in sport organisations, and promoting healthy lifestyles."

How does sport help to empower young people of all social and cultural backgrounds so that they can participate fully in civic and democratic life?

"Playing sport presents the perfect opportunity for all young people to become socially aware citizens in their communities. Through sport, young people get to know others who they might not otherwise come in contact with through their daily life. By building personal relationships with people from different backgrounds, young Europeans develop a greater awareness and appreciation of the diversity within our society as a whole. This contributes to young Europeans understanding and adhering to our common values of tolerance, respect and mutual understanding.

"Moreover, young people can take responsibility for the running and organisation of a sport club; learn how to work in a team, and develop confidence. They will be able to use these soft skills in other aspects of their lives. This is a great example of how sport can help enable people to become rounded individuals and more active citizens.

"Finally, sport projects which seek to include young people on the fringes of society and at risk of alienation must be supported. These projects will ensure that those involved develop the transversal skills and social confidence to become fully engaged citizens in their communities. Something I hope all reading this piece will support."

PHYSICAL INACTIVITY IS A MAJOR SOCIETAL PROBLEM, SPORT IS A CENTRAL PART OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Tibor Navracsics



What does the EU do to encourage sports at a local level?

"During the first years of my mandate I focused on making the Erasmus+ programme more accessible. I wanted local projects to be able to benefit from it because I believe in the power of innovative sport projects to bring people together and build communities. One major EU contribution is the European Week of Sport. The third edition took place from 23 to 30 September this year. More than 35,000 events were organised during the Week, and about 13 million people took part – such is the

enthusiasm that Europeans share for sport. “The Erasmus+ programme remains our main funding tool: in the first four years, we awarded over 400 grants, and in 2018 alone we hope to award 200 more. We see more and more local sport clubs and organisations applying for grants and participating in Erasmus+ projects. The 2018 call for projects has just been published.”

How important is the work of ACES for the EU?

“I greatly value the European Capitals and Cities of Sport Federation (ACES) as a partner that can contribute much in the development of sport and physical activity at local level. ACES is an official partner of the European Week of Sport. I had the pleasure of attending the ACES Galas in recent years and I know the exceptional atmosphere that is created in a city holding the title of European Capital of Sport: enthusiasm, passion for sport and sharing the joy of being European.

„The title of European Capital of Sport recognizes the important role cities have to play in promoting an active lifestyle, developing sport policies and good facilities infrastructure, programmes and activities. We share the same objective with the European Week of Sport. Cities and towns all across Europe remain our trusted partners to ensure that citizens have opportunities to be active.”



PHOTO: JC VERCHERE



WHO IS TIBOR NAVRACSICS?

Born in 1966 in Hungary to a teacher mother and a high school director father of Croatian descent, Mr. Tibor Navracsics graduated from university in law one year after the Revolutions of 1989, which meant the end of communist regimes in Europe. Three years later he completed a higher degree as judge and continued with his academic dreams while working which resulted in a PhD degree in political sciences in 2000. He became a university lecturer in 1993, and has been educating students at the University of Economics in Budapest (1993-2001), as a scholar at the University of Brighton (1996-1997) and at ELTE University in Budapest (2001-).

Mr. Navracsics, who speaks Hungarian, Croatian and English, has started his working career at the Municipal Court of his home town Veszprém as tribunal clerk in 1990, and two years later joined the Regional Assembly of Veszprém County as researcher. He joined the team of Hungary's reigning prime minister Mr. Viktor Orbán in 1998, when he became the Head of Communications Department during the first government of party FIDESZ with Mr. Orbán as prime minister. In 2002, he continued as Head of Department for Political Analyses in the Parliamentary Group of FIDESZ, and between 2003 and 2006 he served Chief of President's Cabinet in the party. He has been a member of the Hungarian Parliament representing Veszprém (2006-2014). During the second government of Orbán, he has taken up the role of Deputy Prime Minister as well as Minister of Public Administration and Justice (2010-2014). In 2014, at the start of the third Orbán-government he was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade in which position he only served for four months due to his mission as European Commissioner.



PHOTO: JC VERCHERE

SPORT IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: THE SPORT INTERGROUP

By Philip Humphreys

The Sport Intergroup of the European Parliament was formed in June 2015 with MEPs Santiago Fisas Ayxelà and Marc Tarabella as co-chairs. Officially recognised by the European Parliament, the Intergroup's aim is to assemble MEPs from across various political groups and committees to address themes relevant to sport which might not necessarily fall within the scope of the parliament's normal work. Fisas (69), former Spanish Minister of Sports (1998-99) and a MEP for the People's Party since 2009, on the role of the Sport Intergroup.

How does the Sport Intergroup function?

"We are one of the most active intergroups in the European Parliament. We meet formally once a month on a Wednesday morning, during the plenary sessions in Strasbourg. At least once every two or three months we try to organise a bigger sitting on a concrete topic, or we call a special breakfast meeting and invite expert people to speak. We also hold a lot of other informal discussions. The idea is to have a series of discussions about the most important topics in the world of sport, and to make field visits to different places to see what is happening on the ground."

What are the most important topics?

"One of the biggest threats to sport right now is illegal betting and match fixing. This is a phenomenon that not only belongs to the European Union, as many of the companies involved are not even in Europe. The problems are money laundering and that it goes against the spirit of sport, because match fixing changes the results of games. We have had a lot of meetings on this and contacted the Council of Europe to try to work together with them, but it is a very, very difficult issue. It is a case of cooperation, but we also see that it is very important to talk directly to the athletes, to make them conscious about these issues and to explain that they must not accept these kinds of illegal proposals."

"E-SPORTS IS SOMETHING NEW, TEAMS ARE COMPETING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER AND THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE DOING IT"

Santiago Fisas, co-chair Sport Intergroup EP

How does the problem of match fixing compare to doping?

"At least with doping there is WADA (the World Anti-Doping Agency), and for many years there have been other institutions working against it such as the International Olympic Committee and the different federations. It is not finished, of course; doping is still there but at least there are ways to try to stop the problem."

What other topics are discussed by the Intergroup?

"We have many other discussion topics, including on what we call the 'dual career' – what will happen to sports people after they retire? – and also on the role of women in sport. We have even had a very successful sitting about e-sports. That is something new, and although I'm not even sure if it is 'real' sport, there are teams competing against one another and thousands of people are doing it. Therefore, we think that we should have a reflection on this new sporting phenomenon and even if we don't like it, our role is to try to understand it."

How hard is it to form a consensus among the group?

"It is not difficult to form a consensus because all the main political groups in the European Parliament are represented in the bureau and all the intergroup's members love sport, so when we meet we put different proposals on the table and we always reach a consensus. Usually, we appoint the colleague who is making the proposal as the leader on a specific point, and then he or she invites experts on the topic to come to Brussels for a big meeting or hearing with us. It is not always easy to bring in famous sports people as they are often busy with training, but we have on many occasions had past champions, current professionals, journalists, and members of associations and federations who are real experts on a particular topic. Sometimes they have a very different point of view and for us that is the most interesting thing, as we then have many questions for them."

Do you think there has been a lost connection between elite sport and local clubs?

"Unfortunately, yes. I feel especially that some of the sports with the big money are not the best examples to many people. Of course, everybody likes these big teams and likes that they win, but they must also take care of the grassroots. That is the base of sport and the most important thing."

What can be done to restore the connection?

"The European Commission is now involved in many programmes to support grassroots sport. It is increasing the funding but of course the responsibility lies mainly with the member states. It is very difficult for the European Union to deal with grassroots sports across the whole of Europe, because it is too big. The first responsibility starts with the cities, the regions and the member states themselves, but of course the EU will try to help as much as possible."



Santiago Fisas

"ONE OF THE BIGGEST THREATS TO SPORT RIGHT NOW IS ILLEGAL BETTING AND MATCH FIXING"

How can the Erasmus+ programme help?

"In the last parliament, we proposed to have an Erasmus+ for sport and this was accepted by the commission. I think it is a very useful tool for many people who are in charge of sport. It is a very good programme and we were very satisfied that the commission accepted this proposal. I really believe that it is very important for young people to know each other and to know different cultures and ideas. Europe is so vast and with so many differences, but if one person from Portugal meets somebody from Finland, or if a guy from Ireland meets somebody from Cyprus, then that makes links between them. Sometimes a treaty is just a piece of paper, but these links of friendship between young people are very important for the union of Europe."

How can sport be used as a tool for integration and social inclusion in Europe?

"I believe very much in this because we know that in sport, the race or origin is not important. The important thing is to beat another team or to compete against each other, but always with respect for the rules. So, the people coming to Europe from abroad – not only refugees – can feel through sport that they are accepted. I remember the concrete case of one guy I encountered as the Spanish minister of sports. I was visiting a very complicated school in the 'barrios' (neighbourhoods) outside of Madrid, and there was a pupil there who was not good. His behaviour was difficult and he was not good with his studies, but as soon as he became the leader of the football team, everything changed for him. Because he became accepted, first his behaviour and then also his studies improved."

You received the gold medal for services to sport from the Spanish Golf Federation. What are your own sporting career highlights?

"I was captain of the Spanish team and the continental team that played for the St Andrews Trophy against the British Isles. I am also very proud that I am a member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews. I never got a hole in one, though. My mother is 92 and she got one. Unfortunately, now I do not have time to play very much."



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

BACK TO THE GRASSROOTS: THE EU SPORT POLICY

By Philip Humphreys

A self-proclaimed "obsession" for sport perfectly positions Yves Le Lostecque for his role as the head of the Sport Unit in the European Commission. From his base in Brussels, the former civil servant in the French government can push the fledgling EU sport policy agenda.

For a long time, however, the commission did not even have an official policy on sport, despite many of its other actions directly impacting the field, most notably in economic terms. Only after the Lisbon Treaty came into effect in December 2009 could the EU push forward an explicit agenda for sport for the first time. Since then, the EU sport policy has gained momentum through several new initiatives, including a first EU Work Plan for Sport adopted in May 2011. Two others followed in May 2014 and May 2017. Even now, Le Lostecque says the commission's dedicated Sport Unit must work within a key EU principle of subsidiarity, which ensures that for certain competences, powers are exercised as close to the citizen as possible. The Commission can intervene only if these interventions make sense and if there is a clear added value.

"We are in a similar field to education or culture or youth, where the Member States and the local authorities are mainly responsible for their own policies," Le Lostecque says. "This means that we are here more to support and to coordinate - and to help if necessary - but certainly not to rule." In a sector where professional clubs and transcontinental federations dominate, Le Lostecque readily accepts that there is nothing existing in the sport policy which is legally binding to the European Union member states. "While we realise that the notion of a European model of sport is not a unanimous one, sport functions more or less in the same way in all our member states," he says.

"There is the major role of amateur sports and the existence of professional clubs within these pyramidal structures and federations, while the notion of closed leagues or purely professional leagues which are not open is less developed here in Europe. All this we have in common."

Coordinated approach

Le Lostecque goes further to explain that some topics in sport are bigger than even the most powerful associations and bodies, and so they demand a coordinated approach. "Doping, match fixing, and violence in sport are all subjects which deserve and need a new cooperation, because any initiative which would be just national without coordinating with other Member States would probably be introduced without effect. "So we see that without needing to invent concepts or nice ideas without any substance, there is de facto some subjects where we have to cooperate." This cooperation begins within the European Commission itself, where sport must press its claims for attention. At the working level, sport-related matters are dealt with by the Sport Unit, which sits within the Directorates-General for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth (DG EAC). But because sport also overlaps into other EU policy areas, Le Lostecque must also build relationships with other DGs such as those for the Internal Market, Competition, and Employment and Social Affairs.

Le Lostecque says that on its own, the Sport Unit mainly has

two functions: to implement EU policy in the field of sport, and to enact the sport element of Erasmus+, a €14.7 billion programme aimed at boosting skills and employability across the EU which was launched in 2014 and will run until 2020. “The policy aspect I would say is about implementing the many orientations decided at the commission level in terms of good governance, integrity in sport, social inclusion in sport, and the promotion of sport and physical activity,” he says. “For Erasmus+, our role is to launch calls for proposals and to select projects corresponding to the political priorities of the programme, as defined by the Commission, the Parliament and the Member States.”

Sport as an integration tool

Le Lostecque is measured in response to the question of how far the initiation of a common sports policy has given the European Union a tool through which it can reinforce a feeling of belonging within the bloc. “It is true that in certain sports, people feel themselves to be European when they compete, but we don’t push necessarily for this,” he says.

“I think that rather than saying that sport is a tool in order for people to feel European, I would say more generally that sport is a tool to make people feel more integrated in society, and maybe also a tool for them to acquire more positive

values. But I would limit myself to saying that, rather than to creating a sort of European identity through sport.” This means there is still ample room for partisanship along the corridors of the European Commission, particularly during showpiece events. “During the Olympics each civil servant and each politician here supports his or her national team; this is absolutely natural and human and we completely respect this. We certainly don’t want to impose artificially some sort of European identity or nationality in sport,” Le Lostecque says.

Policy Priorities

Le Lostecque accepts that there are many priorities for the EU Sport Policy due to the myriad dimensions of the topic, but he nevertheless identifies three key action points: promoting healthy lifestyles, reinforcing integrity in sport, and investing in grassroots sport. “In general, promoting the value of a healthy lifestyle in Europe – and helping other organisation’s promote it – is more and more in the mind of my Commissioner, Tibor Navracsics from Hungary.” The second goal of safeguarding integrity in sport is “another dimension” altogether, according to the Sport Unit chief. In particular, Le Lostecque cites the scourge of match fixing and doping, which both extend beyond the reaches of the European Union. “Even the EU is maybe not the appropriate place to solve these problems, so we are negotiating in these fields precisely to put in place efficient

policies. For instance, the EU is negotiating partly on behalf of the Member States the entrance into an international convention on match fixing under the auspices of the Council of Europe,” he says.

Grassroot sport

The final key priority area identified by Le Lostecque is the one where he perhaps feels most at home. “More and more, my Commissioner wants to promote and support grassroots sport, because the idea is that professional sport including football and the big organisations don’t need much help and we must really focus, if possible, on trying to reach local organisations,” he says. Here, Le Lostecque is well qualified to lead, having played football for many years at an amateur level, as well as being a keen runner and scuba diver. As a spectator, the football fanatic has also followed the meteoric rise of En Avant de Guingamp, a small club of his native Brittany, from third division also-rans to two-time winners of the French cup. “I love sport and am passionate or even obsessed by football but like many of my colleagues in the sport unit, I practise it but not at the highest levels.” Le Lostecque is acutely aware that in order for the EU sport policy to succeed, he and his colleagues must show more than mere enthusiasm; they must also be targeted in their approach.

“We know that it will never be our role to support all local organisations in Europe – this is not realistic and it is not our task – but the idea is that when some original organisations have good projects and initiatives, we are able to support and mentor them.”

**Yves Le
Lostecque
presents in
the latest
developments
in EU Sport
Policy at the
ENGSO EU
seminar in
Paris,
June 2017**



GIRLY GAMES

MEN ARE THE KEY FACTORS FOR WOMEN TO SPORT

By Petra Mihályi

“The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”, says the 6th fundamental principle of Olympism in the Olympic Charter, the basic document of the Olympic Movement. A beautiful statement worded exactly after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, which however cannot yet be fully realized..

According to the Eurobarometer Survey from 2013, in Bulgaria only 7% of women do sports regularly every week. On the other hand, Scandinavian countries seem to be the ultimate leaders in these statistics: Denmark is on top of the list with 70%, closely followed by Sweden with its 69%. Even more significant is the fact that these two countries – along with Finland – are the only ones where women’s participation in sports is higher than men’s. The statistics for club-level participation – basically competitive sports – show a different picture. With just 1%, Cyprus is at the bottom of the rankings with Bulgaria, Poland and Romania barely squeezing ahead with 2%. The gap is huge here as well: Denmark and The Netherlands came

out on top with 20% each. In these rankings, Sweden is further down with only 7%. Men’s participation is always higher than women’s in the club-level category.

Big gap within the genders, small between them

In Sweden, the question of gender equality has been in the spotlight since the 1970s. Ms. Jenny Svender, Research and Development Manager and Manager of Gender Equality of The Swedish Sport Federation (SISU) believes that the key factor of the development has been that gender equality is not a special, separate topic anymore, but has been implemented into every field of life. “To achieve this, men had to understand that gender

equality is in their interest, too. Even though it is considered typically a women’s problem, men who are more sensitive and wish to speak about their feelings while they are expected to be strong, realised that they do not want to struggle from the masculine-feminine stereotypes either”, she explained.

A recent publication of European Institute for Gender Equality titled Gender in Sports states that “Sport is traditionally associated with ‘masculine’ characteristics, such as physical strength and resilience, speed and a highly competitive, sometimes confrontational spirit. In many societies, women who engage in sports are perceived as ‘masculine’, while men who are not interested in sports are



Dutch football star Vivianne Miedema (I), part of the team that won the Women’s Euro 2017 last summer, recently claimed that Dutch football federation KNVB like their Norwegian counterparts should consider payment of the national women’s squad to be on the same level as the men’s team.

PHOTO: ANP PHOTO

considered ‘unmanly’. Even though this stereotypical way of thinking has faded during the past years throughout Europe, Scandinavian countries are obviously far ahead of any other nations. They appear to be the winners of the gender equality race so far, in and out of sports.

Ms. Svender says no matter how developed the country is, Swedish society still struggles with some norms in sports. Disciplines that require power are considered masculine while the sophisticated, artistic ones are considered feminine sports – just like anywhere else. “We are good, but we are still not good enough”, she smiled.

Despite this, SISU and the Swedish Government use sport as a tool of promoting gender equality and educating youth from their very early years. Counties distribute money and provide practices for local sport organizations to provide youngsters sporting opportunities where there are no differences between how young boys and girls are treated. “In our opinion, there is a larger scale of differences between the representatives of the same genders, than between the two genders”, the expert said.

Religion or sport? Religion AND sport!

Their results in the field of women’s inclusion in sports are even more significant considering the number of immigrants and asylum seekers in Sweden. Doing sports is not a

significant part of the Islamic culture and religion for women. Even though more and more of them get involved for health and fitness reasons, it is still not easy to reach out to them. “As a welfare state, we could afford to pay attention to a problem like this. It has been discussed for approximately 20 years, out of which the last 15 were intense – and we are still not good at it”, Ms. Svender stated. “Two years ago, the Swedish government invested into sport programs to help the integration of refugees into Swedish society, and provided financial support to clubs to bring refugee kids into sports”, she said about their endeavours.

Swedes don’t have to look far to find other countries working on bringing Muslim women into sports - they just need to knock on their neighbour’s door. Norwegian experts Ms. Kristin Walseth and Mr. Aase Strandbu have interviewed eight Norwegian-Pakistani women aged between 17-24 about

their sporting habits and gathered their experiences in a study titled “Young Norwegian-Pakistani women and sport: How does culture and religiosity matter?”. They found out that Muslim communities may be a limiting factor due to bullying even for those girls whose parents would support their sporting careers even if they have to train with men. “They rather take part in segregated trainings, with women coaches, instructors”, she confirmed. “This is not how we imagine gender equality and integration in our country but at least it is a step ahead”, she pointed out. Participation is also highly influenced by the financial and educational background of the families, which is sometimes even more important than the religious background.

A big issue for Muslim women’s participation in competitive sports is that the strictly religious members of the community have to wear the hijab. Despite of the fact that more and more sport gear companies realise the growing demand for sport clothing that covers the whole body, sport federations still rarely allow them at competitions, which discourages Muslim girls from doing competitive sports even if their families would support them. “I know about a passionate and talented boxer girl in Sweden. She wears tights under her kit, but even though they do not increase the risk of injury or create any obstacles to perform the moves in an appropriate way, the official rules would not leave space for her to compete. Nevertheless, sometimes she gets the opportunity,

because some of the organizers still let her in, depending on how they feel about the issue themselves”, she explained about the obstacles. Muslim girls do not want to give up on their religion for sports, but some of them wish to do sports.

Men’s help

Soccer is the most popular sport in Sweden among both men and women, but the Swedish Football Association does not really share the views of the Norwegian which recently equalized the salaries of both national teams with men offering a part of their marketing income to women. Despite the worldwide echo, the Danish women’s squad has been unsuccessfully protesting to achieve the same. The Swedish men’s team is placed 25th in the FIFA World Rankings, while the women’s is 11th. “Media have been getting back to our federation asking

“WE WISH THERE WERE MORE TOP, POPULAR MALE ATHLETES LIKE ANDY MURRAY, WHOSE VOICE PEOPLE HEAR! HE IS AMAZING”

Jenny Svender, Manager
Gender Equality SISU

**“MEN HAD TO UNDER-
STAND THAT GENDER
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when they would do the same, but they did not wish to comment on the case. The Swedish Football Association is not really supportive about women in this case”, Ms. Svender said. “In 2013, at the annual award gala they have awarded Anders Svensson a car for the most games played on the national team. The Association has forgotten that Therese Sjögran was already 42 games ahead of him, and when the media scandal broke out they still refused to correct the mistake”, she explained. While this example is proof how much more work there needs to be done even in the advanced countries, some famous athletes have made themselves a name as equality advocates. One of the most well-known is the British tennis player Andy Murray who has repeatedly spoken up on gender topics. Ms. Svender considers famous spokespeople like him important: “We wish there were more top, popular

male athletes like him, whose voice people hear! He is amazing.” The system may not be perfect in Sweden and in all of Scandinavia, but the rest of Europe has a long way to go to catch up to them. With Ms. Svender’s coordination SISU gives trainings on how to support gender equality in sports: she thinks that doing research and follow-ups can be a good practice for every country, even for societies where gender equality is not a key topic. “No one can argue numbers and facts”, she said. “It is also important to make men aware of what masculine culture does to them. Everyone has a lot to win. Men often say that gender equality became important to them when they got daughters, but you can’t wait for that to happen to every man”, she laughed. So, it seems like, ironically men are the key factors for women to win their girly games.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



PHOTO: JC VERCHERE

'GET OUT AND MOVE!'

KIM CLIJSTERS, FORMER WORLD NUMBER 1 IN WOMEN'S TENNIS, ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SPORT

With 41 singles and 11 doubles titles, of which four single Grand Slams (US Open 2005, 2009 and 2010, Australian Open in 2011), Belgian Kim Clijsters was one of tennis' reigning queens between 2003 and her retirement in 2012. Daughter of football international Lei Clijsters and Belgian gymnastics champ Els Vandecaetsbeek, the former number 1 in singles and doubles tennis knows well the importance of being stimulated in practising sports. "Start young and do whatever you like most!", she says.

"When I look back on my childhood, it's only now that I realise how important sport was for me when I was a child. At the time, I didn't give it a thought. I just liked doing it, and it was a permanent part of my social life. I loved being able to participate in a sports club. After a while things became a bit more serious for me, but that pleasure always remained.

There are many ways in which sport and exercise provide added value to everyone – from the very young to the aged. The socio-economic effects of exercise have been researched thoroughly in recent years and the results are far and away positive. For the physical and mental health of the individual in the first place. But when a lot of people start feeling better about themselves, their immediate circle also benefits and society wins on a social level. Businesses also benefit when their employees are fitter. In the long run, everyone will have lower medical expenses, and the quality of life and life expectancy will improve."

"YOU ARE NEVER TOO YOUNG TO START WITH SPORTS"

Kim Clijsters



Start young!

"Like many things in life, you are never too young to start. That is why I go outdoors with my children as much as I can now: playing around with the dog in the garden, going for walks in the forest, giving them a taste of sport. As long as they are busy doing things, and preferably outside as well. Children were not made to sit inside and play on PlayStations all day. When you see how physical exercise also refreshes them mentally, that alone already makes it worthwhile.

With two parents who performed at the top level of sport, possibly it is more obvious for our own children. It is marvellous if your children spontaneously want to take up sport, but you cannot expect that from all of them. It is also not at all wrong to stimulate them in this. Encourage them at any rate to choose a sport or another hobby that involves a lot of exercise, and preferably in the outside air. In the first place parents can provide that stimulus, but schools or the (local) government can also do this. Looking at my own town (and in a European context, Bree is only a small municipality), I see very many initiatives to offer access to sport. There is a huge range of options, for all possible ages. If you want to take up a sport in our municipality, you definitely have the opportunity to do so.

I have seen much of the world, and one thing that struck me strongly was the importance of sport in life in Australia; it is extraordinary! It is simply embedded in the culture. Just like in the United States, and I am not talking only about top-class sport. On that level, both countries have a big head start. They start there at a young age at school. All kinds of resources and financial support are available later for children who continue learning and have talent in a specific sport, for instance through subsidies to participate in the college competitions where they can fulfil their promise. But on the streets too, it quickly becomes clear how important sport is: you see very many people running or walking. It is true that the climate might play a part, but that is not at all the only factor which accounts for the success of the sports culture."

Good initiatives

"In recent years, I have also seen quite a few good initiatives here in Belgium to encourage participation in sport from a young age. Take 'one mile a day' in the Belgian schools: within one year that got 160,000 children running or walking daily. It really does make children feel better, physically and mentally; after that exercise, they can concentrate much better. Outside school there are also very good initiatives, one of which, 'Multi Skillz', I would like to mention as an example: sports sessions aimed at developing motor skills through fun and games.

At our tennis centre (Kim Clijsters Sports & Health Club) we also provide for a varied range of sports for everyone: all ages, all levels, for recreation or for competition. There are regular tennis camps for children; we also foster the 'start to tennis' programme. For the most gifted persons we try to provide the best possible supervision in our Academy. With the Ten4Kim foundation we focus on financial support for the talented young people whose parents cannot afford that more expensive training. Everyone should be given the opportunity to develop their talents as best as possible."

Do what you like!

"So, it is up to the parents, the school, the municipality and numerous private initiatives to give children a taste of various sports. They should be able to try out all kinds of sports first, for instance through sports days at school, practice lessons in a club or at multi-sport camps. Whatever they do, children should choose a sport they really want to do. Only then will they take part in it with plenty of enthusiasm. Parents should not be guided by what they like doing themselves or, even worse, by choosing a sport they hope will turn out to be very lucrative one day.

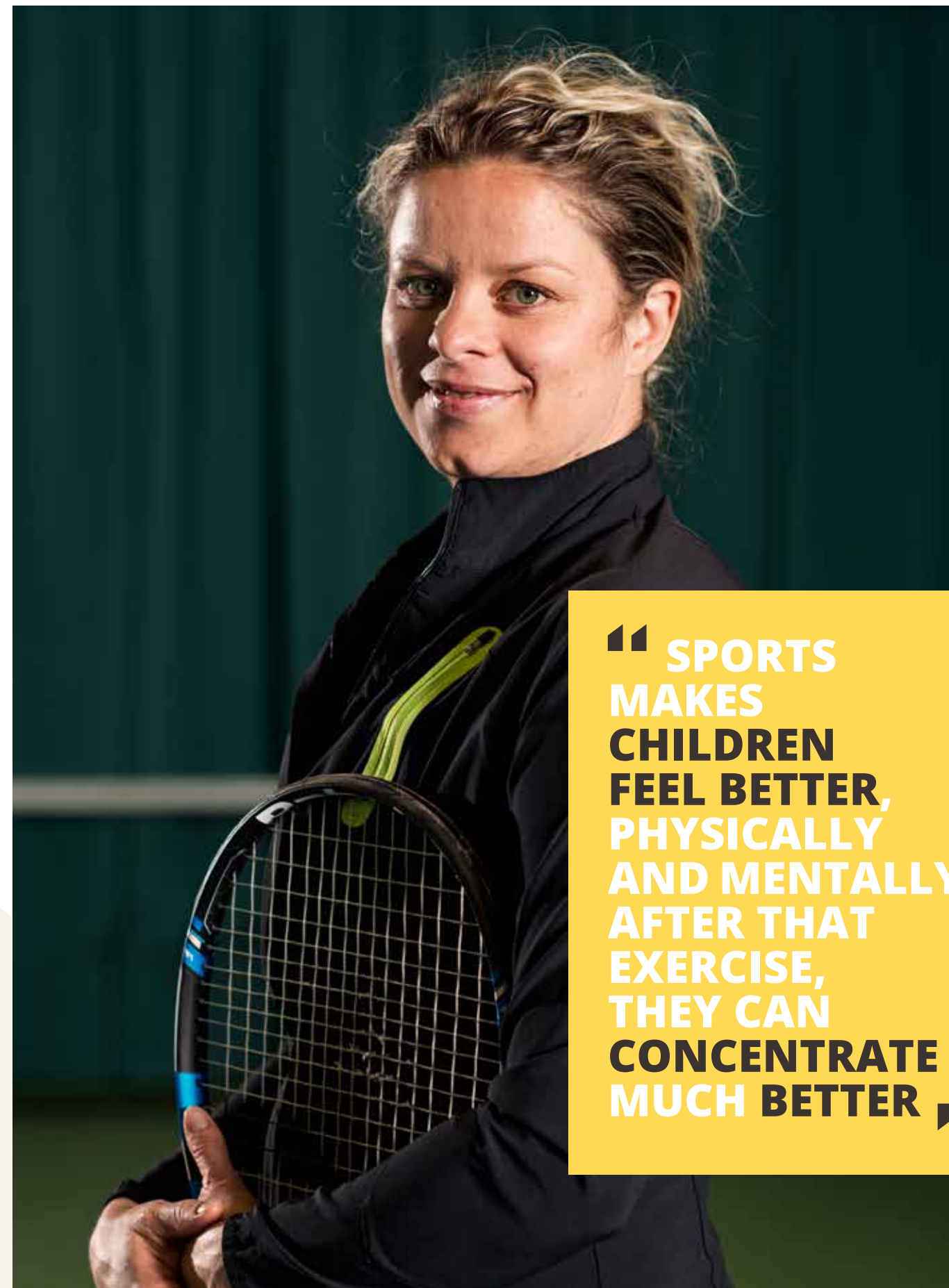
Looking at my own childhood: my father was a footballer and my mother did gymnastics. But I also had cousins who played tennis and when I was at their place, it really fascinated me: I picked up the balls along the side-lines, held a racket and started hitting a ball myself. The delight I got from those small things led to my decision at the time: I want to do this too! I quickly became obsessed. Everything happened automatically and so I decided to go further. Which does not mean that everybody has to end up with a career in top-class sport.

If I want to present myself as an example, it is to my children and children in general. That sport and exercise are good for body and soul. To give them that chance it is up to all of us, the schools and the authorities, to provide an enabling framework, to foster and propagate the value of sport. I really believe that our society will only benefit from doing so."



PHOTOS: ANP PHOTO

“EVERYONE SHOULD BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THEIR TALENTS AS BEST AS POSSIBLE”



“SPORTS MAKES CHILDREN FEEL BETTER, PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY; AFTER THAT EXERCISE, THEY CAN CONCENTRATE MUCH BETTER”

ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELDS

THE IDEAL PLAYING GROUND FOR EUROPEAN COOPERATION

By Giacomo Margutti and Lena Smirnova

One doesn't always have to look at newsstands to find problems. For many athletes, it is often enough to look down at their feet to find one: poorly maintained artificial turf that is a safety hazard to players and a money pit for municipalities. Goal of the EU's TeleTurf project is to create a cross-border, free online course for maintenance.

The widely-ignored issue of artificial turf maintenance is the problem that Enrique Orts, general manager of the TeleTurf project, has set to tackle through a cross-border project that unites concerned parties across Europe under a common cause. Orts and his team have devoted almost a year to improve the maintenance of artificial turf fields in Europe as part of the TeleTurf project. While the task at hand hardly sounds glamorous, there is no denying the safety and economic benefits it brings.

Maintenance a problem

Artificial turf fields are economic alternatives to natural turf. They are usable in most climates, aesthetically pleasing, and cheaper to maintain. The maintenance of natural turf requires, on average, 20,000 euros a year, per field. For

artificial turf, the maintenance is cheaper, at 3,000 to 6,000 euros a year, per field, depending on the type of field and the conditions.

However, there is a catch. "The problem with artificial turf is that people think that maintenance is not necessary. That's a big problem", Orts says. The life expectancy of artificial fields should be 10 to 12 years, but without proper maintenance, it falls to five to six years. In addition to a shorter life, if there is no proper maintenance, the quality of the fields decreases and athletes have more injuries when playing on them.

"Not only the life of these fields falls, even the quality of these fields. If you don't do maintenance, the surface is too hard and there is an increase in injuries. The children, especially, start to have a lot of injuries", Orts tells. "Our project aims to

“The big problem with artificial turf is that people think that maintenance is not necessary”

Enrique Orts, general manager TeleTurf project

avoid that, to improve the quality and safety. The quality is not good because the rebound of the ball, for example, is very high and you can't play high-quality football on a non-maintained field."

Orts estimates that with good maintenance the lifetime of artificial turf fields can be extended to 12 years. As such, the European Union could save an average 750 million euros per year because there will be no need to renovate the fields every 8 to 10 years. The project can also help to reduce carbon emissions since there would be less construction of new fields.

"We can save a lot of money in the European Union", Orts says. "But that is the secondary goal of the project, not the first. The main objective of the project is to increase the quality and the safety of the fields."

European solution

Valencia, where Orts is based, is one of the many European cities that were having issues with artificial turf maintenance. The city has almost 20 artificial turf fields and, largely due to their novelty, their maintenance became a headache for local officials.

"We have a problem with the maintenance because these fields are new", Orts explains. "We started to have problems with them and we talked about how to improve that. The quality of the fields is not as good as expected and because of that we started talking about how we can improve the quality of this artificial turf and we think that maintenance is the perfect way."

In 2011, ACES awarded Valencia the European Capital of Sport title. This, in turn, motivated the city's officials to start talking to other European municipalities that had the same problems, including that of artificial turf maintenance, and together they decided to form a consortium around the issue. "It's not only a local problem. It's a European problem. We started to talk to more people who ultimately made up the consortium", Orts explains.

In 2016, a consortium made up of seven European organizations filed a project proposal to the European Union Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport. The EU approved the project and allocated 147,550 euros for its implementation from 2017 to 2018.

The Municipal Sport Foundation of Valencia, which took the lead in the TeleTurf project, then brought on board its long-time partner, the Biomechanical Institute of Valencia (IBV), to



Good turf



Bad turf

Enrique Orts (third right) and his TeleTurf project group, together with a youngsters football team in Valencia, Spain.



find scientific solutions for better turf maintenance. The Netherlands-based KIWA-ISA-Sport is another research institution involved in the project. The end goal of TeleTurf is to create a free online course for turf technicians in Europe where they could learn better maintenance practices and find information about the unique features of artificial fields. The course will be available in English, Spanish, French and Dutch.

Cross-border synergy

A test version of the online course is now in development as the TeleTurf team works out what kind of structure and content would be most useful to the course users. Not an easy task, considering the geographical diversity of Europe and the multiple other factors that affect what kind of maintenance a field needs. There are a lot of differences to consider, not only regarding climate, but also with the types of sports the fields are used for, such as football, rugby or field hockey. To ensure that the course meets the needs of maintenance technicians across all of Europe, the TeleTurf team is reaching out to get feedback directly from them. A survey was sent out to multiple European countries and the TeleTurf team has received 104 forms back from technicians in 12 of the 28 countries. Also two focus groups were organized to discuss the course, as well as 11 one-on-one interviews conducted with technicians from eight different countries. "It's important to us to really put it in the hands of the people who work in maintenance to find what they really need", says Orts. "It's also

important for us to disseminate (the survey) in all of Europe", he adds. "We have, for example, respondents from Nordic countries and that is important for us not only to focus on the consortium but on all different climates and ways of thinking in order to obtain another point of view for the project. That is the spirit of the European Union."

“ The main objective of TeleTurf is to increase the quality and the safety of the fields ”

Enrique Orts, general manager
TeleTurf project

Virtual meetings

A project of this scope requires Orts and his team to be in regular contact with their European partners on the management side. The different partners of the TeleTurf project had a kick-off meeting in Valencia in April 2017 and a mid-term technical meeting in Marseille in November 2017. In addition, there are many virtual meetings to discuss the project – with all the trans-cultural challenges this entails.

"The languages are a challenge and so are the different cultures and our different timetables", Orts tells. "There are challenges, but we have another bag of benefits. We are learning from each other a lot of different points of view, a lot of different solutions. For example, in Valencia, we have a city of about 1 million inhabitants. In Spain, we have only two or three cities like that. If we work together in Europe, we have a lot of cities with the same or similar problems and we can discuss issues with their high-level technicians and we have a lot of benefits from that."

Orts expects the pilot course to be ready in the first part of 2018, approximately February or March. The course would then be shown to technicians to get their feedback and translated into the four languages of the consortium. The final course will be presented to the European Parliament in Brussels in September 2018. Once finished, the course will be accessible in all countries of the European Union for free.

For Orts, the project will not finish once the final online course is released. He anticipates that his Valencia team will continue to collaborate with its European partners to make sure the course is implemented well and with the highest benefit for Europe's sporting sphere. "I will be very happy if in two or three years, we watch the quality of the fields increase and the lifetime of the fields start to increase", Orts said. "I think the project will not end in two years. We expect to continue it and to measure the improvements."

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