

NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
AUSTRIA

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
BELGIUM

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The sport system in Belgium is that of a federal state where sport, considered as a personal matter, has been allocated to the Flemish-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking Communities.

The Communities, their Sport Ministers and their Sport Administrations (ADEPS, DG Sport and Sport Vlaanderen) are responsible for sport policies at grassroots and elite levels. They subsidise the Community sport federations, which means that every national sport federation is divided into two sub-federations (as German-speaking sports people are members of the French-speaking sub-federation).

The Regions are responsible for sport facilities, namely Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels Region.

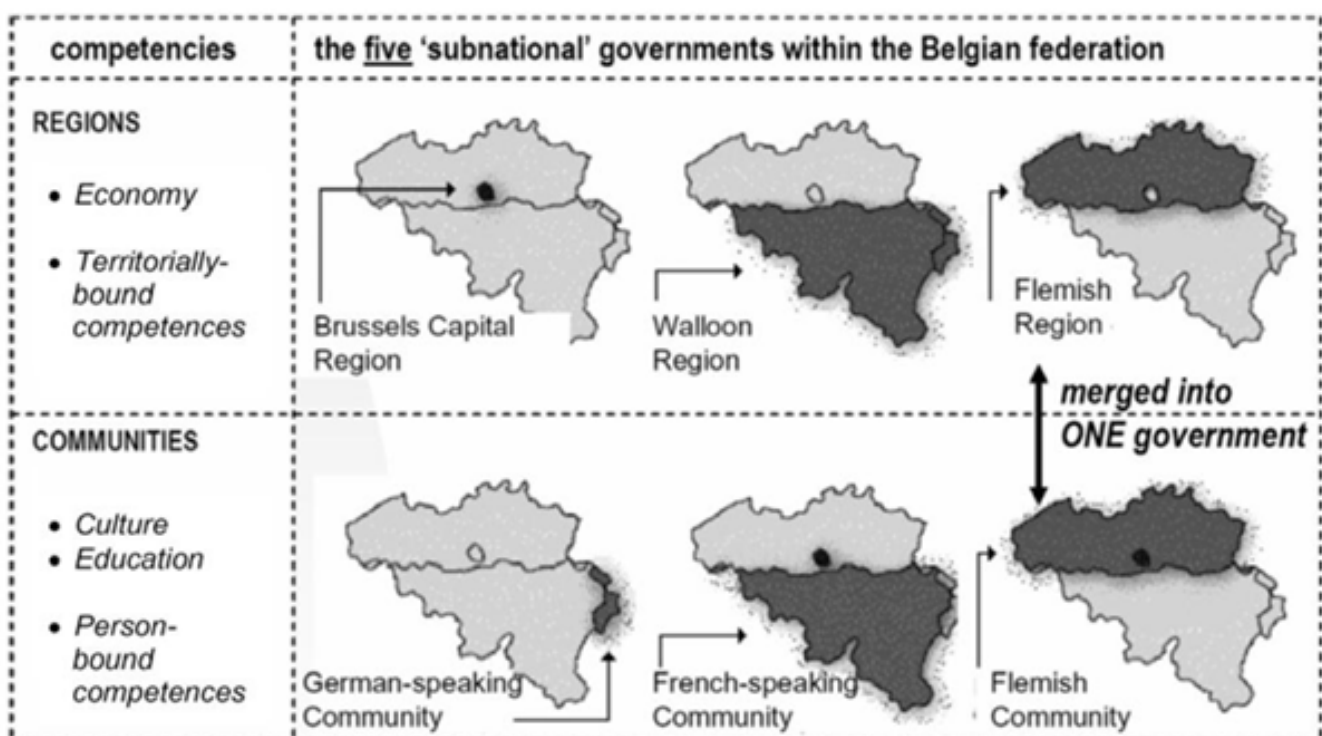


Fig 1 – The Belgian Solution - ©Crikemans

The Flemish-speaking Community and Flanders Region united in one structure in the 1970s. This allowed an integration of sport policies and sport infrastructure development.

This was not done for the other Communities and Regions, resulting in complex sport strategies and financing.

The Belgian Olympic and Inter-Federal Committee's members are the national sports federations.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

As sport is a competency of the Communities (sport activities) and Regions (sport facilities), specific sport diplomacy strategies are developed at these levels. They are formalised when it comes to their international notoriety and non-formalised when taken by sports federations or sport actors.

At Belgian level, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Belgian ambassadors and their representations, acts as a facilitator for formalised and non-formalised sport diplomacy initiatives of the Communities, Regions and sports federations.

Considering the above and the role of facilitator played by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Belgian ambassadors and their representations, sport diplomacy initiatives are supported by other Ministries such as Defence, Economy and Employment, based on a subsidiarity principle between federal state, Communities and Regions.

Sport diplomacy initiatives pursue two main objectives in Belgium: the first objective relates to public authorities at federal, community and regional levels supporting sports federations and private organisers in their candidacies to host major sports events. Examples are the World Road Cycling Championships in Flanders in 2021 and the European Cyclocross Championships 2023 in the French-speaking Community.

The second objective relates to notoriety sport diplomacy initiatives where public authorities at Community level will support – for example – Cycling Team Vlaanderen¹ (Flemish-speaking Community) and Equipe cycliste Wallonie – Bruxelles² (French-speaking Community). Both are professional cycling teams promoting the image of their Community in Belgium and abroad.

It is worth noting that the Belgian National Lottery (an emanation of the Federal Ministry of Finances) supports the Communities and Regions through subsidies and sponsorship in their international branding initiatives.

One specificity of the French-speaking Community is that it is a member of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) under which the CONFES³ is in charge of the “Jeux de la Francophonie”.

¹<https://www.sportvlaanderen-baloise.be/>, since 1994

²<https://www.wbca.be/>, since 2011

³<https://e-confes.org/>

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

If we focus on sport governance in Belgian, Figure 2 gives a macroscopic approach to the model of governance and coordination of Belgian diplomacy.

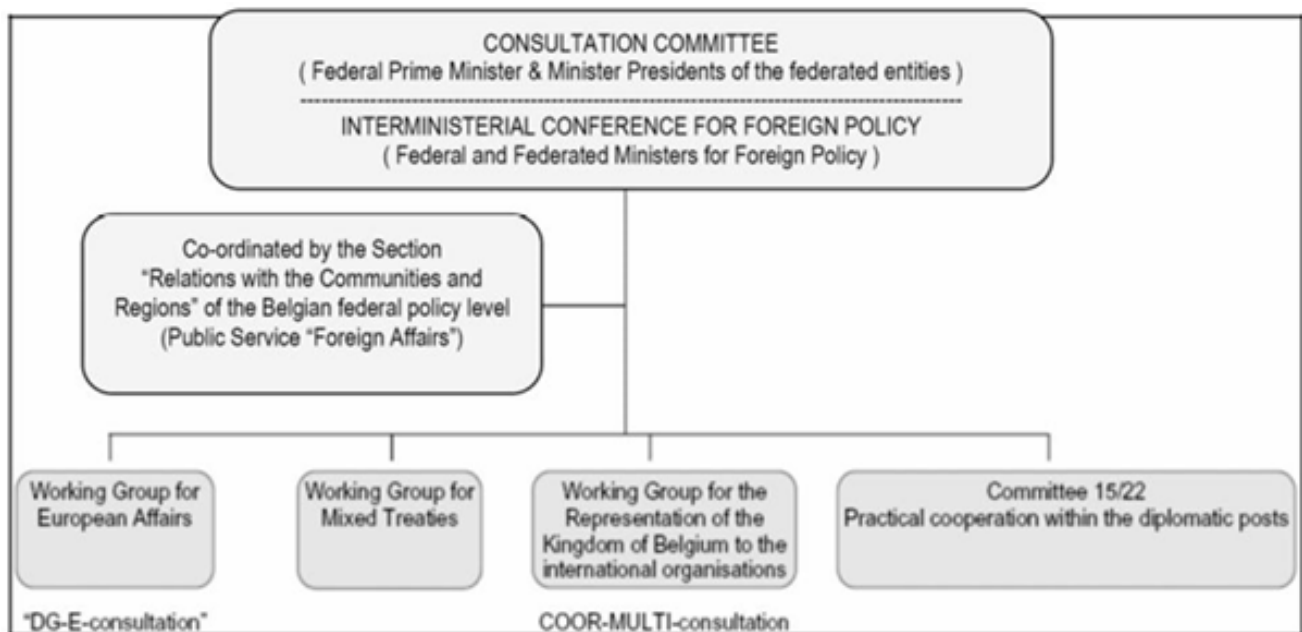


Fig 2 - Macroscopic approach to the model of governance and coordination of Belgian diplomacy - ©Crikemans

The Regions and Communities want to “further develop (their) international legal position and recognition” (Crikemans).

When it comes to sport (as this is a Community / Region matter), federations and private sport organisers refer to the sport administrations of their Communities, those being Sport Vlaanderen⁴ (Flemish-speaking Community), ADEPS⁵ (French-speaking Community) and DG Sport⁶ (German-speaking Community). Through these administrations, they link with the Foreign Affairs Department of their Regions (as sub-state sport diplomacy is one of their geopolitical and functional priorities)⁷ and with the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Political / governmental players, at federal (national) and regional levels, play a central role in sport diplomacy.

The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the network of ambassadors and economic attachés, on one hand, Wallonie – Bruxelles International (WBI) and the Permanent Representation of Flanders and their economic, touristic and cultural (sport being included here) attachés, on the other, serve the interests of sport diplomacy.

⁴<https://www.sport.vlaanderen/>

⁵<http://www.sport-adepts.be/>

⁶<https://ostbelgiensport.be/>

⁷Other sub-state diplomacy priorities are culture, economy, tourism, education and political relations.

Furthermore, the representations of the regions in multilateral organisations such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, OSCE, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, and United Nations sub-organisations, also interact with sport diplomacy.

Official diplomats provide support to national and regional sports organisations in their bi- or multi-lateral engagements when it comes to participating in / or organising international sports events. As such, they facilitate sport diplomacy initiatives. The recent example of the 2021 UCI Road World Championships in Flanders is particularly relevant.

“Flanders has been at the head of the European peloton for a while now when it comes to recycling and reusing used goods. Thanks to EVENTFLANDERS, we can now also show that leading position to the world during an international top event in Flanders. Our far-reaching commitments and achievements on the ground have also further convinced the UCI to make their organization more sustainable, no longer approaching international top competitions as an end in themselves, but to use them as a means for a healthier living environment.”⁸

Concerning city authorities and local institutions/politicians, they interact with sport diplomacy through the responsibilities they take in co-organising international sports events. The recent example of the 2021 UCI Road World Championships in Flanders and the implication of the cities of Knokke-Heist, Bruges and Leuven is particularly relevant.

“Welcome to Flanders! The Time Trials are ridden from Knokke-Heist on the coast, to Bruges, one of the art cities in Flanders. The Road Races will start in Antwerp, one of those other art cities and city with the second largest port of Europe. The final of the Road Races will be in and around Leuven, art city and provincial capital of Flemish Brabant.”⁹

Regarding the role of sports bodies, it is worth remembering that sport is a matter within the remit of the Communities (sport activities) / Regions (sport facilities). In this context, major sport event organisations and international sporting relations should be supported by Wallonie – Bruxelles International (WBI) and the Permanent Representation of Flanders, with the external help of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the network of ambassadors and attachés.

However, the Communities’ Sports Federations are typical consequences of the federalisation of the Belgian state in the 1970s. They have no international recognition. Consequently, the national umbrella bodies governing sport are the sole contact with international sport-governing bodies.

The role of the media is marginal in normal times. In times of crisis, such as the Russian – Ukrainian war or when it comes to participation in major international sports events such as the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, they will point out the strengths and weaknesses of sport diplomacy initiatives.

The role of the private sector is marginal in normal times. When it comes to supporting Belgian teams in their participation in major international sports events such as the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, their support or refusal to support can be seen as sport diplomacy initiatives.

On April 6, 2022, ING Bank, the main sponsor of the Belgian and Netherlands national teams announced its decision not to go to Qatar for the FIFA World Cup 2022, due to the breaches of workers’ rights in that country.¹⁰

⁸Quote of the Foreword of Mrs ZUHAL DEMIR, Flemish Minister of Tourism and Environment, in Deloitte, 11/2021, UCI Road World Championships Flanders 2021: Sustainability Report, https://www.flanders2021.com/storage/media_documents/document_nl/79/sustainability_report.pdf
⁹<https://www.flanders2021.com/en/visits>

¹⁰S.N. – Le Soir, 14/04/2022 – “ING, sponsor des Diables rouges, se distancie de la Coupe du monde au Qatar” – <https://www.lesoir.be/436256/article/2022-04-14/ing-sponsor-des-diables-rouges-se-distancie-de-la-coupe-du-monde-au-qatar>

However, athletes, in particular when they are well-known, are influencers. As such, in times of crisis, such as the Russian – Ukrainian war or when it comes to participation in major international sports events such as the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, their statements are real sport diplomacy initiatives. The initiative of tennis icon Kim Clijsters towards Ukrainian tennis players can be seen as such.¹¹

Being the former head of The Chair Henri de Baillet Latour and Jacques Rogge in Management of Sport Organizations at the Université catholique de Louvain, and co-rapporteur of the High-Level Group on Sport Diplomacy initiated by former EU Commissioner Navracsics, my role is one of researcher and advisor to the Sport Minister of the French-speaking Community and to several sport-governing bodies.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

It is also difficult to put a figure on the public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities as they come from different levels (national, regional, communities, and even local). To summarise, we could say they are *ad hoc*, considering the level of initiatives.

The level of national budget dedicated to sport diplomacy, and its allocation, cannot as such be identified in the national budget.

When referring to the UCI Road Racing World Championships 2021 in Flanders, the following figures show that 16,290,00 Euros were paid by public authorities; the Flemish Region paid 13,000,000 Euros, while the cities paid 3,290,000 Euros.

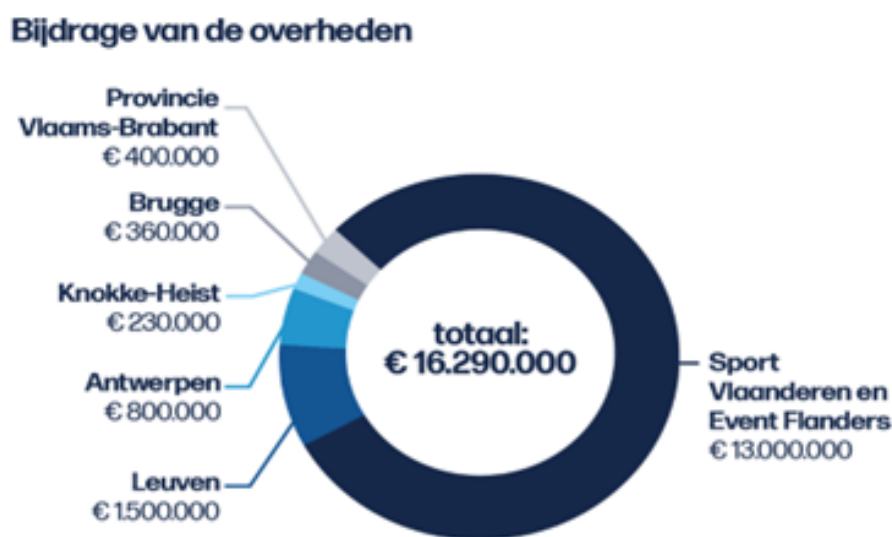


Fig 3 - UCI Road Racing World Championships 2021 in Flanders.
Public authorities' budget dedicated to the initiative¹²

Two categories of sport diplomacy activities are implemented in Belgium: one relates to the organisation of mega sporting events such as the Football Euro 2002, the UCI Road Racing World Championships 2021 or the European Cycling Cross Country Championships 2023.

¹¹https://au.sports.yahoo.com/tennis-2022-kim-clijsters-gesture-for-displaced-ukraine-players-005113345.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAIJDUI7rkWKUG4M3RvclvD0aNc_JbydXocIGIQnkiTAWQF-PnM5wbq8KCvAhLvkyqevM7iLBZD1tkmITHJ7mV0b1SXYBXeuvidjPynmEdbMbC5U1ZYiuKjOmbhYdv1Pf4kJBTUtJwdOpt-St_Nhg2v72ZG-zmgmlOu1W4kQLHmShM

¹²<https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2021/09/24/wk-wielrennen-een-goede-investering/>

The other one relates to grassroots sport diplomacy events. As an example, “the Brussels 20km race takes you on a journey through Brussels’ most beautiful monuments and parks”. 137 nationalities are represented among the participants.¹³

Some initiatives are developed in Belgium. Kraainem Football Club has initiated sustainable initiatives for refugees. An overview can be found on their website.¹⁴

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY’S FUTURE

The major weakness / challenge of sport diplomacy activities and strategies in Belgium lies in the multiplicity of public (federal state, communities and regions) and sport (national and community federations) actors. The fragmentation of competencies increases the complexity in building positive sport diplomacy initiatives.

6. INTERVIEWS

- Hr. Ambassador Raoul Delcorde;
- Hr. Ambassador Piet Steel;
- Pierre-Olivier Beckers-Vieujant, IOC Member and former President of the Belgian Olympic and Inter-Federal Committee;
- Jean-Michel Saive, President of the Belgian Olympic and Inter-Federal Committee;
- Prof. Dr Tanguy de Wilde d’Estmael, Institut de Sciences politiques Louvain-Europe de l’UCL, he heads the Chairs Baillet Latour EU-Russia and EU-Chin

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¹³<https://www.20kmdebruxelles.be/en/>

¹⁴<https://www.kraainemfootball.be/we-welcome-young-refugees/>



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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
BULGARIA

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The main institution in the sports pyramid of Bulgaria is the Ministry of Youth and Sport, which is mainly responsible for the development and implementation of the sports policy established by the government. The Ministry is divided into two structures, General Administration and Special Administration. The former manages the finances, proposes a legal framework, has administrative functions and directs PR actions. The Special Administration is focused on sport for all, performance sport, and youth activities, and includes various departments for investment and public offers. The Ministry of Youth and Sport develops relationships with other actors of Bulgarian sport, such as national federations and the Bulgarian Olympic Committee, and finances these organisations. The Bulgarian Olympic Committee is responsible for Olympic sports.

Bulgarian Sport actions are based on the National Strategy for Physical Education and Sport adopted by the National Assembly in 2011, which planned the period 2012-2022. The strategy had two directions of development: modernisation of sports facilities and improvement of the national system for physical education and sport. In this direction, local authorities, and other ministries, like the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Defence, are involved in supporting regional sport, and sport preparation for different categories of people.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Sport was part of cultural diplomacy in Bulgaria during the socialist period (Gadjeva, 2019). The Bulgarian Communist Party decided on the sport strategy, and sport was an important tool for the state (Girginov, 2009). The fall of the political regime in 1990 changed the strategy of the Bulgarian authorities in terms of sport (Girginov, 2001). “During the socialist period of Bulgaria, sport diplomacy was part of the politics, but in the modern era, Bulgarian officials underestimate sport as a part of diplomacy and they use it mainly for their image”, explains Teodor Borisov, historian, journalist and expert in socio-political aspects of sport in his country.

Bulgaria has never had a formal national sport diplomacy strategy. When it comes to objectives that could be attributable to sport diplomacy in Bulgaria, some directions followed by the Bulgarian actors can be identified, like improving the country’s reputation, promoting the Bulgarian identity, improving diplomatic relations, and developing business opportunities.

During the regime of Prime Minister Boyko Borisov (2009-2013, 2014-2017, and 2017-2021), Bulgaria hosted many international sports events in disciplines where the country has a tradition. For example, in 2018, Sofia hosted the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships, and in September 2022 the city hosted this event again. Also, in 2012 and 2018, the city of Plovdiv hosted the FISA World Rowing Championships. Another international sports event that was used to promote Bulgaria’s image was the ATP 250 tennis tournament Sofia Open, hosted in the Capital since 2016. Previously, between 2012 and 2014, the same city hosted a WTA tournament. The soft power of sport was recognized by some officials. “Conventional diplomacy, of course, is very important and decisive, but sport diplomacy also has great power and opportunities for influence. Such a strong tournament, Sofia Open, with good organisation, generates benefits for everyone. It is both a pleasure for lovers, an image, and inspires confidence”, explained Daniel Mitov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2014 and 2017.

Sport was used as a tool for diplomatic meetings when Bulgaria together with Romania, Serbia and Greece expressed their intention to host the 2030 World Cup. In Sofia, on 25 February 2019, ministers of sport from Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Serbia agreed to submit a joint candidacy for this mega-event.

This kind of activity shows that the Bulgarian authorities are interested in hosting important sports events. Officials from Sofia publicly expressed their wish to host the 2014 Winter Olympics, but an official candidacy was not submitted. Bulgaria has focused on more realistic targets, such as the Winter Youth Olympics, and the city of Sofia applied to host the event in 2024, but lost to Gangwon.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

There is no model of governance for sport diplomacy in Bulgaria, but if there was experts consider that it should be decentralized, given the specific nature of Bulgarian sport.

Each of these actors, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Youth and Sport could be relevant in the field of sport diplomacy, and this aspect was proven during the 1970s and 1980s, when Bulgaria was actively involved in initiatives that could be regarded as sport diplomacy. At that time, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had diplomats abroad, who were also responsible for sport, and they used sport in the field of international relations. The practice was considered successful, but changes in the political field caused sport diplomacy to disappear.

The Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is involved in some sport diplomacy activities. One of them is the organisation of a regular competition for diplomats in Bulgaria, called the Ambassadors League. Its main goal is to meet representatives of diplomatic missions and Bulgarian institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations on the ground. The event promotes sport as a mean of diplomacy for peace and understanding between nations.

Bulgarian diplomacy actions are rare in the field of sport. One episode that shows how political players in Bulgaria understand sport diplomacy was seen in April 2022, when Bulgarian President Rumen Radev visited Madrid. He met with Real Madrid president Florentino Perez and received a team jersey. A similar situation happened in 2018, when during the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships, IOC president Thomas Bach met the President of Bulgaria and the Minister of Youth and Sport.

Local authorities are involved in organising sports events. Some of them use the standard method and choose to financially support local volleyball or basketball teams and thus promote their city's image. Sofia is an exception, as it also uses a cultural approach. For example, Sofia was designated as the European Capital of Sport in 2018, and on this occasion, multiple activities attributable to sport diplomacy were organised. Sport as a cultural activity has been used by Sofia City Council on various occasions, like the 110th anniversary of the Spanish-Bulgarian relationship, in 2020, when sports events were organised around the Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain to the Republic of Bulgaria.

The media play a minor role in the sport diplomacy of Bulgaria and simply cover the events. “During the socialist period of Bulgaria, the media used to organise sporting events, but today, the media’s activity is just to report on an event”, said Teodor Borisov.

The private sector is not very visible and does not seem to be involved in sport diplomacy actions. However, there are some companies from Bulgaria that support sport, and a few of them are investing in sport to create an international image. For example, the Bulgarian betting company Efbet, which gives the name of the first football league, has entered other markets in the Balkan region. “The private sector is very important, and is more flexible than the government, but these companies are looking for their interest”, explains Teodor Borisov.

Athletes are the natural ambassadors of their sport, of their country, and of the European Union, considers Joanna Dochevska. Today, the most important figures of Bulgarian sport abroad are Grigor Dimitrov and Kubrat Pulev, but their private life has surpassed their performances in terms of notoriety. Recent performances of the Bulgarian athletes at the Tokyo Summer Olympics, where they won six medals, contributed to improving the image of the country.

Some organisations are aware of the importance of sport diplomacy and they are involved in projects of this type. The Bulgarian Sports Development Association was part of a European project on sport diplomacy and continues to dedicate activities to this topic. “Our organisation is a pioneer in this topic in Bulgaria. We are pleased to be innovative and to bring the topic to the table in Bulgaria; we have taken some very successful initiatives, like the Sport Diplomacy Academy, and we are trying to find different options to continue working on the topic because we believe it is truly important”, explains Joanna Dochevska.

The actions of the “Vasil Levski” National Sports Academy are along similar lines. “As a university, we use our students, who are former famous athletes, to present us all over the world, and at the same time we have activities which could be attributable to sport diplomacy, like partnerships with other institutions abroad”, explains Kornelyia Naidenova, professor at the academy. One example in this direction was the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and the Republic of South Korea, celebrated with tennis and Olympic taekwondo demonstrations at the “Vasil Levski” National Sports Academy in 2020.

The sports federations are important actors in Bulgaria, and they are most visible in sport diplomacy through their international connections.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

The level of public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities is non-existent, as the experts in the field see it. Apart from European funding, like Erasmus+ projects, at the national level, there is no money for sport diplomacy.

It is hard to measure the actions of sport diplomacy, but some activities attributable to sport diplomacy could be identified. Diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events are medium, but there is growing media coverage and international broadcasting, and a high rate of employment of high-profile sports people.

Sport diplomacy activities implemented in the country in collaboration with less developed countries are visible. Bulgaria is very well represented in this area because it is involved in many Balkan sports associations, in which it plays a leading role. As a result, multiple partnerships for competitions are possible. In collaboration with less developed countries, Bulgaria has some mentoring and training programmes, partnerships for competitions, funding for collaborative projects, and sports exchange programmes.

Very few sport diplomacy activities are implemented in Bulgaria with the aim of empowering sport diplomacy actors. In Bulgaria, training for diplomats and athletes is lacking, there are no dedicated resources and coordination tools, and monitoring and evaluation processes and political support are lacking.

The Sport Diplomacy Academy, mentioned above, could be considered the most important sport diplomacy activity in Bulgaria. The first edition of this event took place from 11-17 October 2019 in Sofia and brought together 80 sports administrators, coaches, and volunteers from four countries. Another important action was developed by the Bulgarian Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation in 2022, when the Russian war against Ukraine started. President Iliana Raeva invited the Ukrainian National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team to train in Bulgaria. Also, sport clubs from Bulgaria included Ukrainians in the sports system to ensure continuity, and in this case, diplomatic relations were important.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

Considering that in Bulgaria, there have already been some sport diplomacy initiatives, like the Sport Diplomacy Academy project, there is a foundation for development in this direction. An opportunity for sport diplomacy activities in Bulgaria is the fact that the country has many well-known international athletes, such as Hristo Stoichkov (football), Vanja Gesheva-Tsvetkova (canoeing), Maria Grozdeva (shooting), Yordan Yovchev (Gymnastics), and Stefka Kostadinova (athletics) and they are considered symbolic ambassadors of the country. Also, some federations have strong connections at the regional and global level, like the Bulgarian Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation. This aspect could facilitate the organisation of major sports events in Bulgaria and the use of sport diplomacy. "Each actor and federation should have sport diplomacy as a tool to use in national and international activities, and as a country, we should have a coordination body for sport diplomacy overall", considers Joanna Dochevska.

A major weakness of sport diplomacy activities in Bulgaria is the presence of politics in sport, and the monopoly imposed by politicians leads to a misunderstanding and the misuse of the power of sport.

From this perspective, several disadvantages were mentioned by the Bulgarian side if the EU were to implement a common sport diplomacy policy. There is the risk of creating an imbalance between politics and athletes. A common policy must take into account the specific features of each country, something that is difficult to achieve politically, from the Bulgarian point of view. Also, financial support is usually not strictly controlled and the money provided to support sport is either redistributed or disappears in Bulgaria. The bureaucratic aspect is seen as a problem and this could lead to less concrete solutions.

If the EU were to have a common sport diplomacy policy, some advantages were identified, like the fact that it would strengthen EU foreign policy and the capacity of sports organizations and athletes, and it could bring a positive image of sport and greatly further the power of sport. At the same time, the activity of the leading countries would compensate for the passive attitude of countries like Bulgaria concerning global issues and sports problems.

In terms of good practices, Bulgarian experts have mentioned smaller countries, like Croatia and Slovenia, which use their diaspora for sport diplomacy purposes. Furthermore, countries like Hungary and Turkey are appreciated for their attention to sport. "Although widely criticized for their authoritarian rule, Viktor Orban and Recep Tayyip Erdogan have invested heavily in building sports facilities, including outside the country. The construction of stadiums and sports halls is a long-term investment and as long as it is implemented according to the needs of the

country, it can be taken as a positive example”, says Teodor Borisov. Germany was another example mentioned because it offers strong education for sport diplomacy, and alongside non-European countries, like the United States and Japan, it is considered a good example. China and Russia are seen as powers that have used sport diplomacy efficiently for a long time.

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Teodor Borisov:** Sports historian at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. He is also a journalist and published a book on football history in Bulgaria.
- **Joanna Dochevska:** Chairwoman of the Bulgarian Sports Development Association. She was part of the “Sport Diplomacy Academy” project, co-founded by the European Union in 2019-2021. Details on: <https://www.eusportdiplomacy.info/>.
- **Korneliya Naidenova:** Associated Professor at the “Vassil Levski” National Sports Academy.

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NATIONAL REPORT



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Croatia

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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Sport is regulated by the Croatian Sports Act. Governmental competence for sport policy falls within the remit of the Ministry of Tourism and Sport. The Sports Act establishes the basic organisational structure of sport which consists of sports clubs associated in local/regional and/or national sport federations, as well as in local sports communities.

At the top of the sports pyramid sits the Croatian Olympic Committee. It acts as a National Olympic Committee but it incorporates all Olympic and non-Olympic sports - the Croatian Paralympic Committee; the Croatian Deaf Sports Association; the Croatian University Sports Federation and the Croatian School Sports Federation. The Ministry of Tourism and Sport provides financial support to these umbrella organisations, each having their own distinct pyramid structure.

The National Council for Sport is the highest professional body that takes care of the development and quality of sports in the Republic of Croatia. Its members are appointed by the Croatian Parliament. The tasks of the National Council for Sports are, among others, to discuss issues of importance for sport and propose and encourage the adoption of measures to improve sports; to set out guidelines for drafting regulations on the categorisation of athletes and to give opinions and recommendations on draft proposals for regulations related to sport.

Based on the Sports Act the Government proposed, and the Croatian Parliament approved, Croatia's first ever National Sports Program which runs from 2019-2026. The key features of the National Sports Program are: defining sports management, creating conditions to stimulate investments into sports as well as transparent and purposeful spending of funds, maintenance of sports facilities through a creation of a network of sports facilities and construction and maintenance of sports facilities, as well as encouraging and regulating the education of professional personnel in sports, care of athletes as the main stakeholders in sports and providing conditions for recreational sports activities in order to protect and better the health of the citizens of the Republic of Croatia.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Since independence, sport has played an important role in promoting the image of Croatia abroad. However, despite the obvious ability of sport to achieve diplomatic successes, there has been no national sport diplomacy strategy in the Republic of Croatia. At the time of writing, this is changing. For the first time since independence, there is now a national strategic document on sports, which was enacted in 2019 - the National Sports Program (2019-2026).¹ In this document 'sport diplomacy' is mentioned for the first time, under the objective 6.3. *Strengthen the management and administrative capacity of stakeholders in the sports system* Here, under the sub-measure 6.3.4. (*Encourage international cooperation in the field of sport*) the commitment is to: 'Establish a body in charge of sports diplomacy'.² The body is yet to be established but is due in 2023 (although according to the National Sports

¹National Sports Program (2019-2026). Available at: <https://mint.gov.hr/UserDocImages//dokumenti-sdus/docs//NATIONAL%20SPORTS%20PROGRAM.pdf>

²National Sports Program, p. 151

Programme it was planned in 2020). The responsible authorities and executors of the activity are the Ministry of Tourism and Sport & the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. At the time of writing, little more is known concerning the operation of this body (but see below).

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

As discussed above, Croatia is planning to establish a centralised national body, to be established in 2022, whose role is to coordinate the sport diplomacy activities in Croatia. This marks a significant departure from previous practice in which sport diplomacy initiatives were not strategically orientated. The two ministries involved in establishing the national body are the Ministry of Tourism and Sport & the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

Given that establishing sport diplomacy as a national priority is a new development, to date diplomats, local public authorities, sports bodies, athletes, the media and private bodies have not played a significant formal strategic role in sport diplomacy.

However, despite the absence of strategic thinking, the potential of sport to achieve diplomatic objectives has been recognised by Croatia. For example, representatives of the Croatian Chamber of Commerce and the Croatian Tourist Board have been known to follow national teams to international events with the objective of building relationships, promoting Croatian brands, attracting new investments, and fostering new cooperation with host economic partners. Sports stars are frequently employed by the Croatian tourism sector to promote Croatia as a tourist destination, for example through promotional videos. Politicians have also been known to associate themselves with sport at major events, best highlighted by the appearance in a Croatia football kit of the President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, at the FIFA World Cup in Russia.

Going forward, it is planned to have representatives of the public sector (economic actors) in the National Body, together with the representatives of the sports governing bodies, ministries and academia representatives.

There is growing academic interest in the area of sport diplomacy in Croatia. For example, the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law developed the Sports Law, Sport Policies and Sports Diplomacy Centre (SLPD Centre).

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

At the time of writing there is no public resource committed to sport diplomacy activities.

On the specific questions concerning the tools of sport diplomacy, the national experts consider that few efforts are made to concretely implement structured sport diplomacy within the country. It appears that there is not necessarily any strong political or diplomatic commitment to attract mega-events, to increase media coverage and international broadcasting, to employ high-profile sports people or to organise trade missions.

They also note that little is currently being done on training for diplomats and athletes, dedicated resources and coordination tools.

Finally, they note that links with less developed countries are still little exploited. Little is developed in terms of mentoring or training programs, sport fellowship schemes and grants, sport exchange programmes, funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values or partnerships for sports competitions.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

Despite being known throughout the world for its sporting achievements, sport diplomacy has only recently been identified as an important tool in the performance of political, economic, touristic, geostrategic and other national priorities. Croatia is an excellent example of a small country with a large sporting footprint.

Regarding the relationship between an emerging EU sport diplomacy strategy and that of Croatia, one national expert commented: "I do not see any disadvantages. My personal impression is that a common EU sport diplomacy policy could help smaller countries with important sports footprints in developing its potential by a strong tool like sport diplomacy."

The national expert expressed the view that an EU sport diplomacy strategy could help the development of common EU values in EU-27 member states whilst also highlighting national specificities – unity in diversity. An EU strategy would assist member states developing their own strategies. The national expert expressed the view that the use of famous athletes and the staging of major sporting events can assist in promoting Croatia and its values.

6. INTERVIEWS

- Assoc. Prof. Vanja Smokvina; University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law, Sports Law, Sports Policies and Sport Diplomacy Centre.
- Anonymous officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, Croatia.



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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Cyprus

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Carmen Pérez-González



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The highest public authority for sport in Cyprus is the “Cyprus Sport Organisation”. It was established by Law No. 41 of 1969 under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and is responsible for promoting and implementing health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) in the country. It is an independent, non-profit institution governed by a nine-member Board. Its members are appointed by the Council of Ministers. According to the law, its functions include:

- (i) exercise control over sport activities and sport grounds and take all steps required for the promotion of sports;
- (ii) advise all athletic and gymnastic clubs on their athletic programmes and regulate their activities;
- (iii) give financial and technical assistance to communities, sport clubs, gymnastic clubs, athletic teams and representatives abroad;
- (iv) establish and set into operation athletic centres for use by the public;
- (v) build stadiums and create athletic playgrounds for use by communities, athletic and gymnastic clubs, etc.;
- (vi) encourage, promote, organise and finance the participation of Cyprus in international athletic meetings;
- (vii) organise local and international seminars and meetings;
- (viii) publish and circulate bulletins and other publications for the promotion of sports in general;
- (ix) act as arbitrator and resolve disputes between the various athletic, gymnastic, football and other sport clubs;
- (x) impose punishments on athletic, gymnastic, football and other sport clubs;
- (xi) award prizes and trophies to persons rendering high sport services;
- (xii) attest to and recognise federations, gymnastic, football and other athletic clubs. It has its own offices and staff and is publicly funded.

Also worth noting is the role of the sports movement. The Cyprus National Olympic Committee was recognised in 1978 and has sent athletes to every Olympic Games held since 1980. Furthermore, the country is gaining prominence as a host of major sporting events. In 2025, Cyprus will co-host the EuroBasket 2025, the quadrennial international men’s basketball championship organised by FIBA Europe. This will likely be one of the largest sporting events ever organised in Cyprus. Previously, the island hosted the Aphrodite Hills Cyprus Open, as part of the PGA (golf) European Tour.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no formalised national sport diplomacy strategy in Cyprus. However, sport is perceived as a potentially useful tool in the field of foreign relations and diplomacy by both public and private actors, in particular in order to improve the country's global reputation, create and promote a nation-brand and create business opportunities and drive economic growth.

It is relevant to note that intercommunity sporting events involving young people are already taking place in connection with the attempt at reconciliation with the Turkish Cypriot population. However, these events do not receive sufficient media attention and are mostly organised by non-governmental organisations and the United Nations, and to a much lesser extent by the Cypriot government.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Sport diplomacy governance is decentralised in Cyprus since different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources. The various actors do not work in a coordinated manner.

Central government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry dedicated to sport) is the main actor. City authorities and local institutions do not have a specific role and are not engaged in sport diplomacy. Furthermore, national experts do not consider the role of sports authorities, the media, the private sector or athletes to be significant in this area.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities in Cyprus are non-existent, as is the national budget dedicated to it.

On the specific questions concerning the tools of sport diplomacy in Cyprus, the experts considered that several sport diplomacy activities like employment of high-profile sports people or the organisation of trade missions are quite rare. Nevertheless, they consider that diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events are made, like increased media coverage and international broadcasting.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities in collaboration with less developed countries, the experts consider that partnerships for sports competitions are implemented, unlike mentoring or training programmes, funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values, sport exchange programmes or sport fellowship schemes and grants.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities aiming at empowering sport diplomacy actors, the experts consider that neither training for diplomats and athletes, nor dedicated resources and coordination tools are implemented. Nevertheless, political support can be perceived.

When referring to Cyprus' experience in the field of sports diplomacy, the national experts cite two examples. The first is the above-mentioned organisation of the FIBA EuroBasket 2025.

The tournament will be co-hosted by Cyprus, Latvia and Finland. There has been political involvement in the process, but not from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The second concerns the attempted reunification of the two football federations which, in the end, was not possible.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

Both the fact that it is a small and remote country and the lack of adequate facilities have been identified as specific challenges in strengthening Cyprus' role as a major sporting event organiser. Besides that, among the obstacles that would hinder the design of a national strategy in Cyprus, the following were mentioned:

- a. Lack of both funding and expertise.
- b. The specificity of Cyprus. This is an issue on which there are very different "sensitivities" that should be carefully taken into account.

At the same time, the national experts interviewed pointed out some advantages of the country if it decided to boost its image abroad through sport. These include the climate and the natural facilities for organising sporting events associated with water sport disciplines.

The national experts have identified the following possible disadvantages in connection with the existence of an EU common sport diplomacy strategy:

- a. Smaller Member States might be left behind.
- b. Risk of resource overburdening in small Member States.
- c. Some of the Member States that already have a sport diplomacy strategy may "drag" States that have not designed one and "impose" a sport diplomacy policy on them. Risk of asymmetric participation in strategy design.

As for the possible advantages, they mention:

- a. The reinforcement of European unity and identity.
- b. Smaller Member States can benefit through co-hosting major sporting events, both economically and branding-wise.
- c. The possibility of developing a stronger global brand.
- d. The improvement in sharing good practices.
- e. A common sport diplomacy policy could facilitate a spillover to other "harder" issues.
- f. The facilitation of cooperation between Member States that would not otherwise have close relationships/common interests in the area of external relations.

Both national experts agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Two of the suggestions for national experts' work stand out. Firstly, the suggestion to combine sport diplomacy with cultural diplomacy, an area in which the EU already has some experience and on which it could draw in order to make faster progress. Secondly, the proposal to strengthen the role of sport diplomacy as a tool for promoting reconciliation in conflict-torn regions.

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Constantinos Adamides** is an Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Nicosia.
- **Christos Liperis** is a political scientist. He currently works at the Council of Europe Development Bank

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Czech Republic

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Mirko Olivieri



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

According to Topendsports (Sport + Science), the national ice hockey team of Czechia is one of the very best in the world. In fact, the most popular sports in this country include ice hockey and football. In general terms, “in the Czech Republic, and formerly in the Czech countries, sport has been associated with numerous significant historical events” (Safankova and Svoboda, 2020).

The ministry responsible for sport in the Czech Republic is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and “the main strategic document is the ‘Concept of Sport Support 2016-2025 - SPORT 2025’ (referred to as the Sport 2025 Concept), which sets out the directions of development and support of Czech sport, pillars, priorities, strategic goals and conditions for fulfilment in the period 2016 – 2025” (ESSA-Sport, 2019).

Specifically, the key objective of the sports policy of the Czech Republic 2016 – 2025 is to improve the conditions for sport and the national representation of the Czech Republic to reflect the importance of sport for society and individuals, respecting the tradition and sporting policy of Europe. To achieve this objective, strengthening the institutional provisions on sport in the Czech Republic, without which the necessary transformation of the sport system cannot be achieved, is fundamental.

Various actors work jointly on these objectives, collaborating with the aforementioned Ministry, namely the National Council for Sport, which includes a Chamber of Regions (representatives of the Association of Regions, the Association of Towns and Municipalities and the Association of Local Authorities); the Czech Olympic Committee (WWTP); and the Czech Sports Union, which is the largest sports organisation in the Czech Republic established in 2013.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

From the research we conducted with key informants from the Czech Republic, we found they do not perceive the presence of a formalized national sport diplomacy strategy, and they think it is an autonomous strategy, not integrated with other governmental activities.

The essential objectives of sport diplomacy in the Czech Republic are to normalize or reinforce diplomatic relations:

- (1) to promote peace and inclusiveness, spread and share values and development,
- (2) to create business opportunities and drive economic growth, and
- (3) to improve the country’s global reputation, for which creating and/or promoting our nation-brand are “important goals” of Czech Republic sport diplomacy.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Regarding the organisation of Czech Republic sport diplomacy governance, our research shows that it is based on a flexible structure and/or task-specific arrangements, such as committees, forums and networks.

As for the actors involved in sport diplomacy processes, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not important, the Ministry dedicated to Sport is quite important and a dedicated institutional body is important.

However, the Czech Republic sports bodies are involved on an ad hoc basis through other sport diplomacy actors.

As for the country's media in sport diplomacy actions, key informants from the Czech Republic say that "they are empowered and constantly involved, and they receive specific training in sport diplomacy."

For the other actors, "private companies are involved on an ad hoc basis / only few of them are involved"; athletes "are empowered and constantly involved, they receive specific training in sport diplomacy and can play an autonomous role", and the organisations of the key informants (i.e., universities) "are empowered and constantly involved, and we receive specific training in sport diplomacy." City authorities and local institutions do not have a specific role and are not involved in sport diplomacy.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Regarding the level of public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities in the Czech Republic, the key informants say they are scarce or adequate and, by considering the pre-Covid19 period, many actions were attributable to sport diplomacy.

In particular, extensive diplomatic and political efforts are made to attract mega-events in the Czech Republic. However, activities of employing high-profile sports people, media coverage and international broadcasting and organisation of trade missions are less implemented.

As regards the sport diplomacy activities implemented in Czech Republic in collaboration with less developed countries, mentoring or training programmes, funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values, and sports fellowship schemes and grants are widely implemented; however, partnerships for sports competitions and sport exchange programmes are less implemented.

As for sport diplomacy activities implemented in our country aiming at empowering sport diplomacy actors, political support and training for diplomats and athletes are the most implemented, followed by dedicated resources and coordination tools and monitoring and evaluation processes.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

Regarding the major weaknesses of the Czech Republic's sport diplomacy activities, our key informants point out that they are: "a small country with less sporting success."

The greatest challenges and opportunities of sport diplomacy activities are to "involve former athletes in sport diplomacy who can use their skills, abilities and contacts in this area."

Finally the key informants identified three possible disadvantages if the EU were to have a common sport diplomacy policy, namely (1) different interests of individual countries; (2) different support for sport in different countries; and (3) politicization of sport.



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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Denmark

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Mogens Kirkeby



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Sport participation in Denmark is composed of a sector of civil society organisations, private companies, self-organised sport and schools.

Denmark has a history of sports associations which date back to the middle of the 1800s and today there are around 10,000 local sports associations. Sports associations/clubs cover a variety, from multisport clubs to clubs with a single activity. Around 40% of the Danes are members of one or more sport clubs and participation is especially high among children.

Legislation defines support for voluntary based associations (including sport) and in practice, this means that municipalities support civil society organisations by providing access to public facilities and to some extent support for the activities. The average amount of municipal public support is €120 per capita. Average individual spending is at a level of €720 per capita +16 years.

Most sports clubs are members of one of more national sports organisations: either a sport federation (and thereby the Danish Sport Confederation/Olympic Committee), the sport for all organisation DGI (having a regional structure) or the Danish Federation for Company Sports. The national organisations are financially supported by national level resources from lottery income.

The private commercial sector operates in the fitness sector where two major companies are dominant. Furthermore, a number of smaller companies exist. They are various services and programmes such as yoga, outdoor activities, personal training, etc.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no national public strategy on sport diplomacy. The relationship between the government and civil society organisations operates on an “arm’s length basis”, which means that the government provides funding with only general expectations and the government as such does not commit on behalf of sports organisations.

However, both the Danish Sport Confederation/Olympic Committee and the Danish sport for all association DGI have international strategies which include sport diplomacy objectives and actions. There are also elements in the events support strategy of Sport Event Denmark which are clearly for sport diplomacy purposes.

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs does occasionally use sporting events and sports actors (both professional and grassroots athletes) in public diplomacy actions. These include references to events and activities in external communication or closer collaboration around official/state visits or at diplomatic actions by Danish Embassies.

Sport is handled by civil society organisations with support from, but without much involvement of, the government. And locally or nationally organised events with international participation/dimensions are capable of presenting the culture and the country through their own initiatives. This is true of both grassroots and elite sporting events. Some events have various levels of collaboration between civil society, municipality, state or state-driven entities.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Ministries may have support systems which target diplomacy actions. An example is the peace and stability interventions after the Yugoslavian war, where public and civil society coordinated activities where supported. Another example is the 'Open Fun Football Schools' by the NGO Cross Cultures Project Association. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports the independent platform CISU - Civil Society in Development. CISU includes 270+ Danish Civil Society Organisations, actively engaged in development work in Asia, Africa, Latin America or Eastern Europe. CISU also supports sport development programmes.

Official diplomats engage in sport diplomacy on an *ad hoc* basis.

City authorities and local institutions play a minor role. Towns/cities may have Twin Towns where sports exchanges are part of the programme. Some cities brand themselves via supporting events and conferences or being a sport/physical activity-friendly city.

The national sports organisations have their strategy and their engagement consists of promoting their sport perspective and views: bidding for and hosting events, representation in international sports organisations or bilateral partnerships.

Media in Denmark do not have an important role within sport diplomacy. However, one of the most direct and prominent examples is the establishment and support of the institution Play the Game. Play the Game is an initiative run by the Danish Institute for Sports Studies, aimed at raising the ethical standards of sport and promoting democracy, transparency and freedom of expression in world sport. Play the Game has existed for 25 years.

The private sector occasionally acts as sponsor for international initiatives taken by sports organisations. This engagement is primarily as sponsor and does not have a direct 'political agenda' behind the engagement.

Athletes – be it at elite or grassroots levels – are free to act on their own behalf. This also means that athletes with opinions supporting the strategy of organisations and the opposite do occur from time to time.

As the sport structure is based on freedom of association and the 'arm's length' principle between public authorities and civil society, collaboration and competition between various organisations in the field of sport diplomacy is the reality.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

There is no dedicated budget for sport diplomacy activities, but various support programmes may be available for sport diplomacy-related activities.

The approach is one of individual projects where typically NGO initiatives in support of entities, organisations or communities in less developed countries are publicly and privately supported. There is an 'arm's length principle' between implementing organisations and the funder/public authority.

To summarise, it is difficult to identify the most important sport diplomacy activity. But as civil society and individual athletes are free to act on their own behalf, this feature which illustrates

an important pillar of democracy in Denmark could be described as the 'most important' sport diplomacy activity

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The major weakness of sport diplomacy is the limited financial and human resources within the relevant ministries, which is a barrier to 'time consuming' participation in international relations and cooperation (for example in the Council of Europe/EPAS, UNESCO, etc.).

For Denmark, it is important to keep in mind three major difficulties that EU sport diplomacy could face:

- The complexity could make it difficult for many smaller entities to participate.
- It would likely be very difficult to reach a consensus on a precisely defined common policy.
- It would mean that a consensus would only be reached within a reasonable time in special situations.

For the Danish point of view, it is important to keep in mind three advantages of a structured EU sport diplomacy policy:

- Such a policy could provide guidance or principles for individual countries with less human resources at political/ministerial level in their sport engagement with countries outside Europe and with different political governance structures.
- Such a policy could also frame governance considerations and principles for major sporting activities and events managed by independent organisations.
- Such a policy could also strengthen the sport priority of the European Parliament focusing on grassroots sport – as was the case with the EU programme called EURATHLON where the aims were: *to promote meetings, exchanges and other activities linked to sports policy, in a European framework, which would contribute to better understanding between young citizens of the Union and would increase awareness of their belonging to a multicultural entity.*

6. INTERVIEWS

- Jens Sejer Andersen, director of Play the Game, journalist.

Furthermore a chapter on Sport diplomacy in the book "Dansk Diplomacy" (Danish Diplomacy) by professor Dr Phil Hans Bonde, has served a background information.

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- Game, www.game.ngo
- Play the game, www.playthegame.org
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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Estonia

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Mogens Kirkeby



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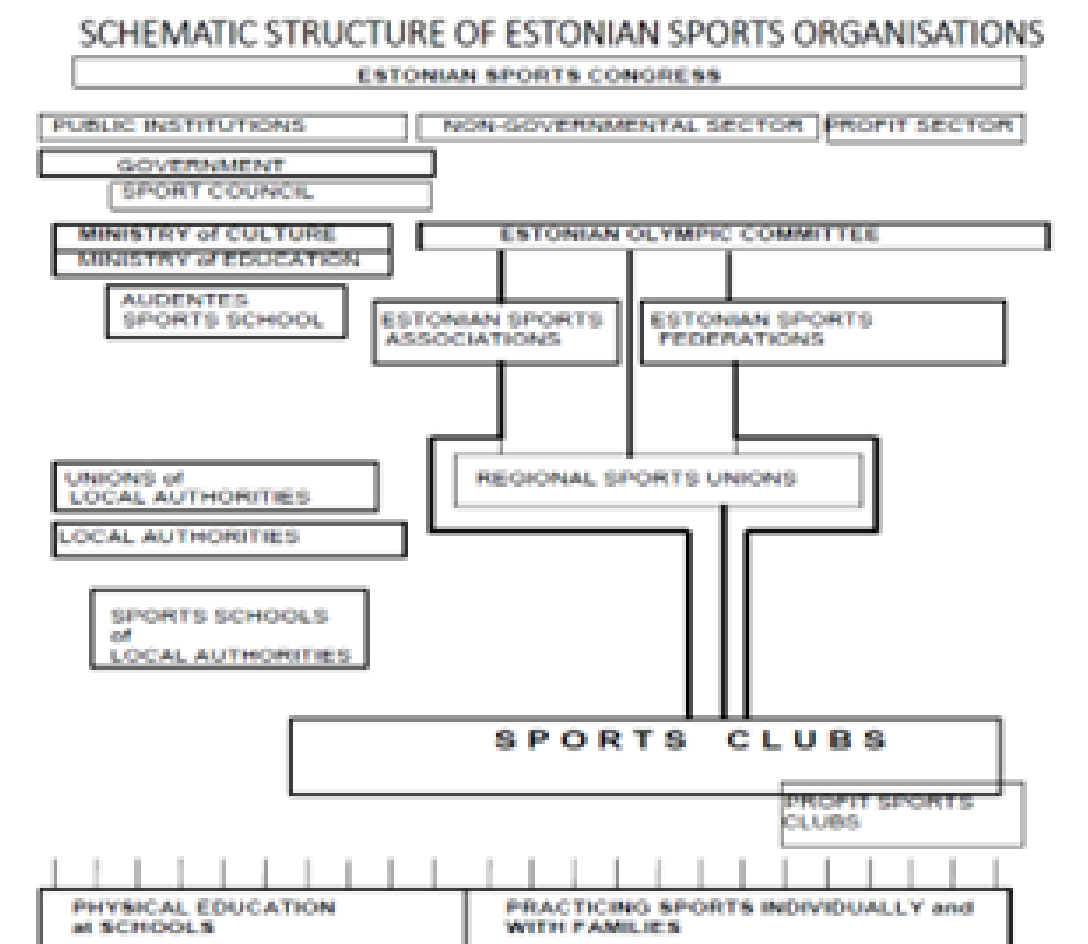
1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The Estonian Sport Register provides an updated version of the sport structure, the number of federations, clubs, schools and membership: <https://www.spordiregister.ee/en/main>. Below is an overview. Besides the International Olympic Committee, sport for all oriented organisations are organised both at national and county levels.

In the late 1980s, the building and re-building of sport organisation was initiated. The Soviet model was changed to the European Sport Model. This meant that some structures were ready by the official independence in August 1991. Since then, the development has taken place to reach the numbers below.

The legislative structure was also developed and today consists of legislation supporting freedom of association, such as the Non-Profit Associations Act (a non-profit association is a legal person in private law. It may be founded by at least two persons - natural or legal) and the Sport Act.

Overview from Sport Register:



2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no national public strategy on sport diplomacy in Estonia.

In the government document “Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Resolution of the Riigikogu “Fundamentals of Estonian Sports Policy until 2030”, the term sport diplomacy is not mentioned directly, but a few paragraphs describe sport diplomacy actions in order to create a positive image through various actions and ensure representativeness in international sports movements. This document explains that an “essential development trend is aimed at achieving a positive image and representativeness of Estonia through the results of competitive sports, successfully organised sports competitions and events, as well as competent and distinguished representatives – Estonia is represented in an effective and dignified way at international level. Ensuring representativeness in international sports movement – for this purpose, a financial support mechanism will be created to ensure Estonia’s representativeness in international organisations, strategic interests of Estonian sports will be implemented through competent and capable representatives of the sports movement by the means of cooperation and carrying out lobbying activities with partners.”¹

In overall terms, the most important objective in Estonia will be to promote and brand Estonia.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

As organisations and athletes operate independently, there is no coordination model as such. Some *ad hoc* coordination and initiatives can occur.

Generally speaking, the engagement of official diplomats in sport diplomacy actions is not very significant. However, Cultural Embassies in five European Countries and in the USA can be used in *ad hoc* situations. The same is the true of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, Estonia is a member of the European Union, UNESCO, WADA and the Council of Europe and it sports collaboration EPAS.

The recent Joint Statement from EU Ministers responsible for sport against the war in Ukraine is an example of political governmental action in the field of sport diplomacy, whereas the practical handling of refugees from Ukraine is a matter for the local municipalities.

In general, the limitation of human resources might influence the engagement in the field of Sport Diplomacy.

Regarding the role of city authorities and local institutions/politicians in Estonia, Town Twinning exists and it can include sports initiatives. Estonian cities have also participated in the European Sport Cities/Towns contest and three cities were awarded the title for 2020-2021. Tallinn is nominated as European Capital of Sport in 2025. Tartu is nominated as European Capital of Culture in 2024.

Sports organisations are independent and operate as such. Public authorities can support international representation and as well bidding for and hosting events.

¹<https://www.spordiinfo.ee/est/g22s448>

The sports organisations (Olympic and non-Olympic) do pursue representation in international federations both at technical and executive committee levels. Historically, this has also been successful towards the European Olympic Committee and the Volleyball Federation and European Athletics.

It is important to note that whereas the media are considered to have a role at national level in promoting sport and physical activity, regarding sport diplomacy, the media are not considered to be very active.

Regarding the private sector, Estonia is quite prominent in the development of IT tools and some programmes and apps are international and sport-oriented such as a tool for sports events like <https://www.sportity.com/>.

Athletes are free to operate independently. The Olympic Committee can offer advice and guidance. The Estonian Gerd Kanter is elected as chair of the European Athletes Commission.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

There is no direct dedicated budget as such, but the government does support Estonian representation in international bodies and the hosting of events.

Different types of sport diplomacy activities implemented can be mentioned: for example, there are Baltic initiatives such as a Baltic Tour cycling race which is a professional Cycling race dating back to 1955. The race was re-established as the Baltic Chain Tour in 2011. The name Baltic Chain Tour clearly relates to the Baltic Chain which was established in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1989 as a peaceful protest to the occupation.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities implemented in collaboration with less developed countries, some examples can be given: the recent Youth Olympic Festival in Finland in March 2022, where support for Ukrainian participants was established, or the fact that the former vice president and president of the Estonian Olympic Committee Jüri Tamm worked as Chief of Staff on the Ukraine National Olympic Committee from 2012 to 2015.

No sport diplomacy activities in order to empower sport diplomacy actors are developed. However, a special programme for IOC sports leaders does exist.

The most important sport diplomacy activity could be the *Joint Statement by Sports Ministers: respect for human rights and peaceful relations are the foundation of international sport*, which includes the Estonian Minister and was announced on the Ministry website on 9th March 2022. Moreover, hosting events and competitions are also noted as important activities.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

There is no long-term plan or coordinating policy and there are no long-term dedicated resources.

Generally, there is a lack of prioritisation, in respect of sport diplomacy specifically, but also the area of sport overall. From a government perspective, levels of physical activity are still the main goal.

Considering the EU perspective, Estonia is of the opinion that a common Sport Diplomacy policy would be rather ambitious. The sports systems in the European countries are quite different and

therefore, a common policy is expected to be difficult. Defining principles and recommendations may be more appropriate.

From the Estonian perspective, an EU sport diplomacy policy with coordinated actions by Sports Ministries could be a political instrument in the future. It is also important that the last 15 years of Estonian-European collaboration indicate a success – but the voice could be louder.

To Estonia, several lines of thinking could be relevant. For example, the promotion of physical activity initiatives would be appreciated, or a guideline and green book for hosting events, which would be valuable for smaller countries.

More generally, basic EU values can be used as a common platform on which to act.

6. INTERVIEWS

- Margus Klaan, Head of Department, Sports Department, Estonian Ministry of Culture;
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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Finland

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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

In the central government, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for creating favourable conditions for sports and physical activity as well as for the coordination and development of sport policy. The work is done in cooperation with various different sectors.

Sport policy is designed to promote sport and physical activity and, through them, the wellbeing of the population, as well as competitive and performance sports and related civic activity.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for creating favourable conditions for sports and physical activity as well as for coordinating and developing sport policy. Governance in this sector is based on the principle of knowledge-based management and impact assessment.

The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasises the importance of sport and physical activity for people's health and wellbeing as well as the role that sport and physical activity play in strengthening civil society and inclusion. The Ministry supports ethically sustainable elite sports that aim to achieve international success.

The sport policy objectives are specified in the **Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity** and key policies for development are adopted in the **Government Programme**¹ and in various other programmes.

The report on sport policy² outlines sport policy in Finland for the 2020s. The report covers policies on ways to increase physical activity at different stages of life, the construction of sports facilities, civic activity in physical activity and elite sports. The aim is to significantly increase people's physical activity.

The issue of people's low physical activity is identified government-wide, and all administrative branches are involved in resolving it.

The body responsible for coordinating the sport policy (LIPOKO)³ of the Government and organisations promoting physical activity aims to find solutions to reduce sedentary lifestyles. Previous work by the broad horizontal steering group for health-enhancing physical activity as well as the ministries' scorecards on physical activity and mobility prepared by the National Sports Council are key guiding principles for the work.

The Ministry of Education and Culture participates in various international organisations in sport-related cooperation between different countries, as well as in the preparation of sport-related matters in the European Union. Finland's most important cooperation organisations are the European Union, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

In recent years, the focus in cooperative efforts has been on areas such as strengthening of integrity in sports; the prerequisites of civic activity; legislative and administrative development; promotion of equal rights; anti-doping activities; prevention of spectator violence; and issues related to the status of athletes.

Finland has ratified the following international conventions: European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events, European Anti-Doping Convention, UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport, and Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions. Cooperation in the resolution of ethical problems is monitored by the Ministry of Education and Culture's advisory board for sport-related ethical matters.

¹<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/marinin-hallitus/hallitusohjelma>

²https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/JulkaisuMetatieto/Documents/VNS_6+2018.pdf

³<https://okm.fi/hanke?tunnus=OKM030:00/2020>

Finland's positions on EU sport-related matters are prepared in the EU32 sub-committee under the Committee for EU Affairs in the government. Sport organisations are also represented in the EU32 sub-committee: the Finnish Olympic Committee and the Finnish Centre for Integrity in Sports (FINCIS). This is a non-profit organisation which deals with sport ethics in Finland and co-operates with international parties. FINCIS was established in 2016 to continue the anti-doping activities of its predecessor. Ethical issues have become increasingly important. The Ministry of Education and Culture has launched extensive studies concerning the administration of the new sports conventions in practice. The task of FINCIS is to reinforce an ethically sustainable sports culture in cooperation with other parties. FINCIS is responsible for implementing international treaties on anti-doping activities, manipulation of sports competitions and spectator comfort and safety in Finland. FINCIS is responsible for the practical implementation in Finland of the Council of Europe's Anti-Doping Convention, the UNESCO International Convention Against Doping in Sport, the Council of Europe's Convention on Spectator Violence, and the Council of Europe's Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is a Unit for Public Diplomacy⁴, which plans and directs the nation-branding work of the Foreign Service and is responsible for producing and implementing the content of nation-branding work in cooperation with stakeholders. The unit serves as the Secretariat of the Finland Promotion Board, which directs nation-branding work and is responsible for its coordination at the national level. The main duties of the Unit for Public Diplomacy are:

- planning, directing and implementing public diplomacy and nation-branding work in the Foreign Service
- producing content and services for nation-branding work and nation-branding communications for the Ministry and its missions abroad
- national coordination of nation-branding as the Secretariat of the Finland Promotion Board
- providing expert services within the Finland Promotion Board, including coordination and production of international web communications supporting nation branding

Sports organisations: <https://okm.fi/en/sports-organisations>

- Sport and physical activity organisations in Finland have over 1.1 million members. The Ministry of Education and Culture allocates government grants to national organisations that promote sport and physical activity, while municipalities grant financial support to local sports clubs and actors.

Sports institutes: <https://okm.fi/en/sports-institutes>

- Finland has eleven national and three regional sports training centres, i.e. sports institutes (colleges of physical education). The Ministry of Education and Culture provides support for the operation of these institutes.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no formalised national sport diplomacy strategy in Finland, but there are many activities that follow "Sport Diplomacy" principles (that are not in place).

Sport diplomacy strategy is not officially integrated with wider government action. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for creating favourable conditions for sports and physical

⁴<https://um.fi/unit-for-public-diplomacy>

activity as well as for coordinating and developing sport policy. **Governance** in this sector is based on the principle of knowledge-based management and impact assessment. The Ministry issues guidelines on Good Governance to the sports sector and, by following the guidelines, it can also be successful in the field of Sport Diplomacy. Sport diplomacy is not mentioned in the guidelines, but the guidelines do mention key sport diplomacy principles like “representation, negotiation, dialogue and communication.”

There are no officially defined objectives of sport diplomacy in Finland, but they usually follow programme guidelines like:

- E+ programme
- Action plans of Sport Federations and the OC
- Top priorities in international work are strengthening equality, human rights, good governance and sustainable development in international sports and sports organisations and IFs in which Finland has positions
- ENGSO, that has had a strong influence in Finland (European Sports NGO and the leading voice for voluntary-based grassroots sport in Europe)
- Events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, World Cups/Championships and sport events at a lower level

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

There is no official governance or coordination among sport diplomacy actors in Finland. However, in Finland, there are links between diplomacy and business.

There is no official governance or coordination among sport diplomacy actors in Finland, and no official guidelines for the engagement of official diplomats in sport. However, a few actors (individuals and organisations) can be mentioned as active sport diplomats:

- ENGSO (Ms. Birgitta Kervinen)
- (I)OC (Ms. Emma Terho, Ms. Sari Essayah)
- Chairpersons of all the Sport Federations (the most active is probably the Ice Hockey Federation)
- Local sport clubs have a strong diplomatic influence in local communities as well as on the development of a national sports policy.

Regarding city authorities and local institutions/politicians in sport diplomacy actions, the experts note a strong role of local communities (authorities, politicians) in sport diplomacy with a few key principles:

- Building dialogue in a local community between different actors (clubs, schools, churches, municipalities, etc.)
- Integration through sport (very visible at the moment in the field of integrating refugees into local society)
- Sporting events with international participation (and dialogue)
- Multi-sector networks (some also based on Erasmus+ or other EU projects)

The roles of the country's sports bodies in sport diplomacy actions are diverse. For example, sport federations are traditionally very active in sport diplomacy, but it is really up to the individual federation (or even person) to act in the field of sport diplomacy.

The Olympic Committee, together with its member organisations, set targets for the parliamentary and municipal elections to be held for each candidate.

They use the power of international collaboration to foster peace, dialogue and mutual understanding and create an environment for building bridges between countries/communities through sport.

The Finnish Media focus very much on top elite sport rather than grassroots sport and there is a clear lack of media coverage of sport diplomacy.

It is important to note that the private sector does not seem to be involved in sport diplomacy.

Athletes seem to be the new actors in sport diplomacy where experts note more and more activities. They recognise their role in representing Finland abroad; they also empower communication and dialogue with other athletes from other countries and engage in dialogue with politicians when invited.

It is also important to highlight the role of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Sports Division) in :

- fostering the appeal of nation branding and global reputation, through sport events (organised in Finland or attended abroad);
- strengthening diplomatic relations, by involving politicians and athletes in Sport Diplomacy;
- guiding sports organisations (federations) towards sport for peace, development and good governance.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Finland does not have public economic resources available strictly for sport diplomacy. Funding is provided to the Sport Federations and allows them to use it for sport diplomacy. It is up to the federation to decide how they use the financial resources.

Sports organisations (local and national) are very much involved in Erasmus+ projects. There is a strong belief that this is a very helpful resource for building a stronger society in the field of sport as well as Sport Diplomacy.

Different types of sport diplomacy are implemented in Finland: organisation of sports events (local and national), and the integration of refugees through sport has increasingly meaningful value and more and more activities. Here, we are talking about: International participation and intercultural dialogue.

Finland is currently working on guidelines on how local sports clubs can work with Ukrainian refugees. Once these guidelines are published and implemented, a strategy could be designed.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities implemented in collaboration with less developed countries, a few examples can be given.

LiiKe - Sports & Development is a non-governmental organisation whose vision is to create a sustainable and wellbeing world through physical education and health education, taking into account four different dimensions of wellbeing: mental, physical, economic and ecological. LiiKe operates globally in Finland and in developing countries, where its operations target the most vulnerable people in society: women, children and young people. In schools and local

communities, exercise and health education serve as tools for equality work, education and development.

The Friends of Sports project was launched in 2003, and Finnish sports federations have since supported their own sponsorship schools in Tanzania in the provinces of Mtwara and Lindi.

The most important sport diplomacy activities in the country are monitoring good governance of sports organisations and giving them clear guidelines on GG in Sport.

This will help organisations to develop (and improve) good governance and at the same time sport diplomacy; and to learn better communication, dialogue and negotiation but also to empower dialogue between sports federations.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The major weaknesses of sport diplomacy activities in Finland are that the sport movement is still very much a closed circle. There is a strong historical background in sport, which has an inflexible decision-making process and does not allow "newcomers" or young people to be part of the process (or the sport federation boards).

The greatest challenges of sport diplomacy activities in Finland are filling the gaps in knowledge of sport diplomacy and what sport diplomacy can do for society (not just in sport) and addressing the lack of a national strategy on sport diplomacy.

Nevertheless, a few opportunities could be exploited. It could be relevant to include sport diplomacy as a topic in the education programmes in schools, mostly in the Faculty of Sport. It could be also interesting to recognise and promote (Grassroots) Sport Diplomacy as a useful tool for bringing people together from different cultures, origins and philosophical convictions, and for promoting peaceful dialogue, cooperation and understanding amongst them.

Setting up a national strategy on sport diplomacy, or at least initially a set of practices, methods and activities built on common elements of cultural diplomacy and sport diplomacy, could be relevant. This would not only be about promoting the interests of a state but transferring knowledge and values and learning from each other.

It could also be a good idea to provide resources and guidelines to sports organisations to support them in developing sport diplomacy and intercultural dialogue between stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels.

According to the Finnish experts and literature, the common sport diplomacy in Europe does not seem clearly defined. To them, the EU does not need a common sport diplomacy policy, but more key principles that can guide in the development of a national and local strategy.

Nevertheless, they would support more E+ projects where different actors can raise their voice and contribute to the principles.

From the Finnish perspective, few principles could guide the development of an EU Sport Diplomacy policy:

- Educate young people in intercultural dialogue and decision-making processes.
- Build a curriculum at the Faculty of Sport with Sport Diplomacy (and social development goals).

- Do not concentrate solely on elite sport but make more resources available for development of sport diplomacy in local communities and local sport clubs – this is where the real sport society is built and where sport is much more than business.
- Start local and act global – start with small steps on a local level and build long-lasting intercultural dialogue by bringing different nations together (international participation).



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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
France

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Carole GOMEZ



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of sport in France is schematically based on two pillars.

The French State is responsible for the coordination, control and support of sport. Although other ministries could be involved, the Ministry for Sport and the Olympic & Paralympic Games that has a central role in setting the objectives of the national sport policy and establishing its legal framework. Four key action areas are identified:

- development of sport for all
- organisation of elite sport
- prevention in sport, protection of athletes and the fight against integrity violations
- the promotion of sport professions and the development of sport employment.

The Ministry for Sport and the Olympic & Paralympic Games works at national level in collaboration with other ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of National Education or of Health for example) and other national authorities. It also works on the international influence of French sport and participates in the regulation of sports activities at European and international levels.

The second pillar is the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF) which represents the sport movement and in particular the federations in France and abroad. It is the privileged interlocutor of the public authorities and civil society.

It seems important to remember that the actions of these two institutions are carried out at the regional, departmental and local levels thanks to decentralised institutions.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

France sought to structure a formalized sport diplomacy. It is important to highlight the fact that one had previously existed but was not officialised as such. For example, after the First World War, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered that “ensuring the prestige of France was a priority objective and sport could contribute to this”, thus making sport “a matter of State”.¹

Current French sport diplomacy has really developed since the beginning of the 2010s. This strategy was expressed in speeches but also through the creation of specific initiatives.

Indeed, in November 2013, on a joint initiative of the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a specific post specialised on sport diplomacy, attached to the Quai d’Orsay, was created. Jean Lévy at the time, and Laurence Fischer today is in charge and carries the 5 objectives of French diplomacy aiming at:

- Making French regions more attractive in order to host major international sporting events, particularly by supporting French candidacies; it also implies the development of the tourism industry.
- Supporting the work of Business France and France Sport Expertise

¹Alfred Wahl, « Sport et politique, toute une histoire ! », Outre-Terre, 2004/3 (no 8), p. 13-20. DOI : 10.3917/oute.008.0013. URL : <https://www.cairn.info/revue-outre-terre1-2004-3-page-13.htm>

in order to promote the businesses and expertise of the French sports sector and strengthen their position on international markets;

- Promoting French expertise in the areas of:
 - o training and education,
 - o sport as a tool for health and gender equality,
 - o sport as a lever for the development and structuring of civil society,
 - o promoting projects which make a lasting impact on the population;
- Encouraging the use of French at sporting events, especially the Olympics, in collaboration with the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF);
- Implementing the provisions of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Legacy Plan in collaboration with the Interministerial Delegate for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (DIJOP).²

Moreover, in December 2012, the CNOSF launched the French Committee for International Sport (CFSI), chaired by Bernard Lapasset, (vice president of the CNOSF and president of World Rugby) with 3 defined objectives:

- to consolidate the influence of French federations in their international environment, by providing them with engineering support, guidance and advice;
- to strengthen the influence of French sport on the international scene;
- broaden the scope of French sport by creating synergies with players from other sectors.

However, this structure slowly disappeared after the Games were awarded to Paris. A new structure taking up some of these objectives was relaunched in October 2021 by the Ministry of Sport: “French Sport Touch”, with the aim of “federate to win”, establishing a collaboration between the Ministry, CNOSF and the business community.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

The French sport diplomacy governance is relatively complex to analyse. Although diplomacy is traditionally carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of the Economy, in the name of economic diplomacy, also claim a role and a place within this strategy. In addition, other actors, public and private, also want to take part in this strategy.

- Regarding the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is worth noting the French specificity at the European Union level of having a thematic ambassador dedicated to sport diplomacy. Since 2013, this post, attached to this ministry, has had the objective of promoting sport within the entire French diplomatic network, notably through embassies, “Alliances françaises” and “Instituts français”, and many other institutions through initiatives. The aim is to put sport at the heart of the diplomatic network around the world. The imminence of international sporting mega-events such as the Rugby World Cup 2023 or the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games also encourages the development of actions around this topic. Francophonie and sport for development are also key.

² Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/sports-diplomacy/>

- The Ministry of Sports also plays an important role in representing France at the European and international levels. Through the actions and statements of its ministers or its international relations office at political or technical meetings of international organisations, it also participates in the definition of French sport diplomacy.
- The French National Olympic and Sports Committee, through the former CFSI, its “parcours ambition Olympique” with various training courses on the diplomatic stakes of sport and the geopolitics of sport, also seeks to better understand contemporary international sport and how France can pursue its actions.
- It is also worth noting the creation of the National Sports Agency, an institution created in 2019 to renew the model of sport in France. It will work on the development of sports practices but also on the development of high level and high performance.
- The French Development Agency, a state-owned industrial and commercial entity, took an increasingly important place since few years when it has made sport a strong focus of its action and especially sport and development, especially in Africa. 5 actions are particularly targeted: the development of local infrastructures and animation, the reinforcement of the associative and sports fabric, school sports, governance and sport and gender. Since 2019, more than 150 projects have been supported, committing more than 110 million euros.
- It is also worth noting the growing importance of key actors working on economic issues in the development of French sport diplomacy, particularly through economic diplomacy. For example, Business France or the economic interest grouping France Sport Expertise are internationally minded while SPORSORA or structures like Union Sport et Cycle are more focused on the national market.
- As France is a centralised state, the role of cities and local institutions is not predominant within the French sport diplomacy. Nevertheless, Paris, as the capital and future host of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, nevertheless has a special place and voice in the French sports landscape. Although various initiatives can be launched in certain cities (Marseille, Lyon, Bordeaux and Lille), they are not necessarily part of a fully-fledged French sport diplomacy.
- Lastly, athletes are engaged on sport diplomacy on an ad hoc basis, called upon to participate notably through official trips by French representatives abroad and the organisation of bilateral initiatives or exchanges. However, even though their voices are becoming more and more important, their speeches remain relatively limited, sometimes held back by their federations in the name of the apolitical nature of sport.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

As mentioned earlier, French sport diplomacy is shapeshifting. National experts note mainly diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events. Indeed, in addition to recurring world-class sporting events such as Roland Garros and the Tour de France, France has hosted and will host some of the biggest international sporting competitions, including the men’s Euro football tournament, the women’s Euro handball tournament, the women’s World Cup football, NBA matches, the World Ski Championships, Ryders Cup, the men’s World Cup rugby, and of course, the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It should also be emphasised that the performances of French athletes and teams also ultimately benefit French sports diplomacy by highlighting the training and coaching system as well as the infrastructure. In this way, exchanges are regularly organised between sports players, thus strengthening French influence in international sport.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities implemented in collaboration with less developed countries, national mentoring or training programs are considered an important tool and are developed as are partnerships for sports competitions. Sports exchange programmes are also an interesting tool that could probably be used to a greater extent.

We should also mention the launch of various calls for projects such as the “International Sport Cooperation” for federations and institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Sport. This initiative allows the Ministry’s bilateral agreements to be brought to life, but also encourages organisations to carry out projects with priority countries.

Finally, given the importance of economic diplomacy in recent years, companies can also be considered as relevant tools for sport diplomacy.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY’S FUTURE

While French sport diplomacy has sought to structure itself since 2013, three major weaknesses need to be mentioned.

On the one hand, the multiplicity of French actors with various ministerial institutions (Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Economy), sports bodies (National Olympic Committee and the National Sports Agency), personalities (Ambassador for Sport), structures (French Sport Touch), bodies not linked to sport (Business France, French Development Agency), claiming a place within this sport diplomacy makes understanding the role of each one relatively complex. In addition to this confusion, there is also a risk of duplication and even contradiction.

On the other hand, the relatively limited means deployed to implement this diplomacy should be highlighted. The lack of human and financial resources are thus elements that weaken the various initiatives that can be implemented.

Finally, launched at the time of a reflection on a bid for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, this sport diplomacy was able to be deployed and show its effectiveness. Nevertheless, many projects, initiatives and discussions are still mainly focused on the now very near future of 2024. Despite various mobilisations, the post-2024 orientations of this policy remain unclear and give rise to fears that the momentum will be lost.

As a result, the main challenge for French sport diplomacy will be to think about the post-2024 period and to structure more formally the areas of development for the coming years, so as not to lose the benefits of the efforts made over the past ten years. This challenge is all the more important as we have witnessed the rise of new state actors on the international sports scene over the last ten years and competition between states is becoming increasingly fierce. As an important player on the sports scene, France must try not to lose ground and must build on this legacy.

Despite their involvement in the field of sport and diplomacy, several national experts were not aware of the reflection and deployment of a sport diplomacy at the European level. This lack of knowledge shows, for them, that there is still a long way to go to achieve this.

Several national experts consider that the deployment of a European sport diplomacy would allow them to influence the current discussions on sports governance reforms. Following the example of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the coordinated response of European states, including in the field of sport, a collective push for reform could move some lines.

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- **Jean LEVY**, former French Ambassador for Sport.
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- **Magali TEZENAS DE MONTCEL**, CEO SPORSORA.
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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:

GERMANY

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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Germany has a long tradition of using sports as a tool of soft power. The bilateral sport diplomacy developed between Germany and Israel from the 1960s onwards is an important example in the history of sport diplomacy. The first football match between the two countries took place in 1969 and formalized bilateral relations, as explained by deputy ambassador of Israel to Germany Emmanuel Nahshon during a 2014 conference. This initiative was indeed part of a broader German strategy to use sport as a tool to normalize the countries (West and East Germany before their unification in 1990) in the European “post-war” period, as argued by historian Heather L. Ditcher. Sport was then clearly included in German public diplomacy programmes (Ditcher, 2016), as seen in East Germany where international sports competitions were used to improve its global reputation with their athletes called “diplomats in tracksuits” (Albert & Grix, 2018).

In contemporary Germany, notably under the Federal Foreign Office, improving Germany’s international image in such competitions continues to be a part of the country’s sport diplomacy. In this vein, the hosting of the men’s football World Cup in 2006 was described as an attempt to improve Germany’s international reputation in a post-WWII context (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). The event was even described as “the best World Cup of all time” by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior (Grix & Houlihan, 2014).

Under the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), sport is used as a tool to promote sustainability, education, inclusion and gender equality in Germany and abroad, notably through partnerships between Germany/German organisations and developing countries

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

According to all experts, Germany does not have a formalized national sport diplomacy strategy. However, several ministries and foundations have been consciously using sports as a tool “within their spheres of jurisdiction”. These include the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The main goals of sport diplomacy in Germany consist of creating business opportunities and driving economic growth as well as promoting peace, inclusiveness and sustainable development, according to all participants. Improving Germany’s global reputation and reinforcing its diplomatic relations were also described as relatively important goals by all participants but one. According to a representative of the development agency polled, Germany has developed partnerships with 40 countries over the past decade in an effort to build a “broad and effective sports portfolio”. In line with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, it has effectively used sport to contribute to the development goals, such as “health, education, employability, gender equality, and integration and migration”.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

As the model of sport diplomacy governance in Germany is decentralized, with different actors working on different programmes and activities, there is very little coordination in place between actors.

Government-level entities, such as the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Federal Foreign Office are important actors in sport diplomacy governance in Germany with projects organised around grassroots sports structures and focusing on strengthening civil society through sports in developing countries, as well as the BMZ alongside key partners including the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), the German Football Association (DFB), the German Athletics Federation (DLV), the German Sport University (DSHS), International coaching courses (ITK, University Leipzig), and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). City authorities and local institutions are also involved on an ad hoc basis, notably through Twin City Partnerships with developing countries, or city sports association mobility projects.

Non-government sports bodies also play a key role in Germany's sport diplomacy. Perceived as 'diplomats in tracksuits', German athletes do represent their country when participating in mega-sporting events abroad and are prepared by sport bodies to "promote values such as democratic principles, inclusiveness, fairness, clean sports" and are expected to behave responsibly. The BMZ Sport for Development Ambassadors, the German Olympic Sports Confederation and the German Football Association were cited as examples of sports bodies which are involved in sport diplomacy.

The media is not actively involved in sport diplomacy actions while the private sector only participates in such actions on an ad hoc basis, as it is the case of the Partnership between German Development Cooperation and the German Football League (DFL).

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

The public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities could not be specified but were described as adequate by most of the participants. Thanks to these economic resources, diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events and the employment of high-profile sports people in Germany are well implemented. Germany notably has an ambassador function during mega-sporting events. International broadcasting and the organisation of trade missions as sport diplomacy activities were described as somewhat to not implemented by participants.

In order to empower sport diplomacy actors, activities could be better implemented or developed in Germany. Political support for empowering sport diplomacy actors, as well as monitoring and evaluation processes, dedicated resources and coordination tools, and training for diplomats and athletes were all ranked as activities that are not well implemented.

When asked about the most important sport diplomacy activity in the country, one interviewee responded: "The holistic development in and through sports" such as "strengthening sports structures in partner countries and involving different stakeholders in development through sports programmes".

A good practical example of Germany's sport diplomacy is a toolkit¹ developed by the 'Sport for Development' Programmes under the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH designed to help in the implementation of sport diplomacy projects.

Most participants indeed considered that funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values and sport exchange programmes were well implemented in Germany.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

For its future, sport diplomacy in Germany should try to strengthen relations between different sport diplomacy actors and activities, through a long-term overarching sport diplomacy strategy. Indeed, the lack of coherence between various stakeholders was cited as a weakness by all participant.

When discussing sport diplomacy at the European Union level, all participants but one appeared to believe that the potential benefits outweigh the disadvantages of a sport diplomacy strategy common to the EU. Better relationships and policy coherence between member states were cited as advantages, as well as the potential to implement a broad and clear definition of sport diplomacy which encompasses all its aspects. Globally, it could also position the EU as a stronger actor for external action and international partnerships. However, in seeking to develop such a broad strategy respecting all the different countries' values and individual goals will be a major challenge.

6. INTERVIEWS

Representatives from five organisations answered survey questions designed by the TES-D team and disseminated to all partners and used for all reports, but they wished to remain anonymous. The organisations are:

- one German umbrella organisation focusing on promoting physical activity,
- two German governmental organisations, and
- one German development agency.

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
GREECE

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Denise Di Dio



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Greece is the home of the ancient Olympic Games, which is why, during the parade of nations, Greece is always called first and is among the few countries that has constantly participated in all Summer Olympic Games. In line with such a unique legacy and tradition in sport, athletic activity is declared an institution by the Greek Constitution (art. 16¹), which places it under the protection and highest supervision of the State.

Constitutional recognition guarantees the right to free development of sports activities, and empowers the legislator as regards the regulation of and support for organised sports and competitive activities. Under the Constitution, State regulation and grants, both of which are framed by law, are directed towards several aims that are relevant to sports activity: free development of personality; free individual or collective sport action; and through these, the establishment of sport education, and contribution to the social, cultural, financial and political life of the country.

The structure of sport governance in Greece is built around the Ministry of Culture and Sport, which hosts the General Secretariat of Sport (GSS). The GSS is responsible for the strategic planning and implementation of the country's sports policy, within the framework of the constitutional obligation of the State to protect, supervise and provide financial support for sports. The Secretariat is responsible for tasks such as: developing and implementing national sport policies, promoting participation in sport, optimising use of public sports facilities and funding national sports federations.

The GSS brings together and funds the different National Sports Federations, the individual governing units of sports; they are aimed at developing and promoting sport and are in charge of distributing GSS funds among the sport clubs and associations connected to them.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no formal process for promoting sport diplomacy in Greece, as there is no strategy or effective coordination between the ministries and the organizations. There is no guidance from the government, and no coordination under a governmental umbrella.

Greece is starting to acknowledge the power of sport in promoting a different culture and approach to international relations, but it is still underestimated.

The few efforts made in sport diplomacy are mainly dedicated to promoting the idea of and need for a peaceful world, coherently with the tradition of Olympic values. Sport is therefore connected to issues such as conflict resolution, but also to climate change, gender issues and more socially-oriented missions. Sport diplomacy is never connected to objectives of economic growth.

¹Art. 16 comma 9, Greek Constitution "Athletics shall be under the protection and the ultimate supervision of the State. The State shall make grants to and shall control all types of athletic associations, as specified by law. The use of grants in accordance with the purpose of the associations receiving them shall also be specified by law."

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

There is no efficient governance for sport diplomacy, as the few actors involved in the related activities operate without any concrete, constant connection.

The main State actor is the Ministry of Culture and Sport, and more specifically the General Secretariat of Sport, which has a department in charge of international relations: the “Directorate of Sports for All, Promotion, Development of Sports Scientific Support and International Relations”. The operational objectives of this Directorate include: the organization, implementation, monitoring and support of Sports for All Programmes and the development of sports at the Panhellenic level; support for and development of sports tourism and alternative sports; promoting the country’s international sports relations, and connecting with World and European Sports Organizations and Institutions. Within this Directorate, the Department of International Relations, European Politics and Olympic Affairs of Sports and Cultural Promotion is responsible for:

- Cultivating and developing public and international relations and organising events.
- Promoting transnational relations and representation in international institutions and other bodies.
- Collecting information and statistics on sports issues at the level of the European Union and the Council of Europe for International programmes and sports policies as well as informing the competent Departments of the GGA.
- Providing information and statistics on the country’s sports to the European Union and the Council of Europe and to other International Institutions in which we participate as a Member State.
- Operating and supporting the work of the Observatory for Women, Sports and Physical Education under the auspices of UNESCO (NPID).

This list of functions highlights the lack of efforts towards the development and dissemination of awareness of sport diplomacy and its potential, as well as the lack of formalized national coordination of sport diplomacy. Nevertheless, the perception of sport diplomacy experts is that this Ministry is focused on national sport, and puts less energy into sport diplomacy.

As regards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we have seen discontinuous involvement in sport diplomacy, depending on the Minister’s personality or specific opportunities, while its standard function is focused on bureaucratic issues (visa and certificates for foreign athletes entering Greece or for national athletes competing in foreign countries). An important example of this Ministry’s full involvement in sport diplomacy is the case of the candidacy for the 2030 FIFA World Cup. In 2018, the Ministry, driven by the role and aura of the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexis Tsipras, took the opportunity of the World Cup to strengthen cooperation in the Balkan region and proposed a joint candidacy for it to be hosted by Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. As the words of the Minister himself show, this candidacy emerges from profound reflection on the role of sport diplomacy: *“For very many years, we have been accustomed to the Balkans being the powder keg of our region. World War I began in the Balkans. The Balkans were a focal point during World War II. Immediately after, there was nationalism, the war in Yugoslavia,*

conflicts, hate. This continues even today. Now the message we send, from four Balkan countries, is that we leave behind this period of strife and we join forces for a good purpose, to be awarded a great sporting event. This message is invaluable, regardless of whether we succeed or not.”²

Other relevant actors are the three Olympic institutions based in Greece: the National Olympic Committee, the Olympic Truce Center, and the Olympics Academy. They have developed trilateral cooperation that is driven by their common link to the Olympics and is not coordinated by or with any governmental actor.

As regards other possible actors:

- Local authorities, especially cities relevant for the Olympic Games and the Peloponnese region, sometimes substitute for the government in sport diplomacy, but on ad hoc basis and in exceptional cases. However, they do not have any clearly defined sport diplomacy strategies.
- Sports bodies do not have any role in sport diplomacy. Moreover, there is no coordination for their engagement in such activities and they are not even connected to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In special events, finals or semifinals of most popular sports, they occasionally work together.
- The private sector and the media are engaged in sport diplomacy only in cases of major events in popular sports, and on an ad hoc basis.
- Finally, athletes are not systematically trained in sport diplomacy, as they are not considered likely to promote Greece in the international context through direct and deliberate behaviour/actions. Nevertheless, some athletes involved in the Olympics are trained – for instance by the Olympic Truce Center – to promote Olympic values and the notion of truce. There is no structural training programme in sport diplomacy for athletes and they are not involved as “ambassadors”.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

The only relevant sport diplomacy activity in Greece aims to attract mega events, for instance the Olympic Summer Games, the FIFA World Cup and the Rally Acropolis.

In cooperation with less developed countries, Greece focuses on mentoring and training programmes, through the Olympic organisations and not at a governmental level, and it funds collaborative projects, exchange programmes and sports fellowships and grants.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY’S FUTURE

Greece’s major weaknesses in sport diplomacy are the lack of clear acknowledgment and recognition of sport diplomacy’s value and role, and – consequently – the lack of a single strategy and point of reference to stimulate and effectively coordinate the (few) current efforts.

Greece could use its Olympic legacy, which is greatly connected to global values, to promote and be seen as a country that is not only the birthplace of democracy and the Olympic Games, but also one that has influenced some of the global values and principles that drive us today. Greece should showcase and demonstrate that these values are timeless and that it can play a role in their dissemination and understanding even today.

²Interview of the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexis Tsipras to the ITAR TASS News Agency with journalist Mikhail Gusman. Link to the interview: <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/top-story/interview-of-the-prime-minister-and-minister-of-foreign-affairs-alexis-tsipras-to-the-itar-tass-news-agency-with-journalist-mikhail-gusman.html>

Another relevant use of sport diplomacy is aimed at economic growth, and in particular drawing tourists to less visited areas that could become venues for specific sports events.

Moreover, Greece should leverage sport and sport diplomacy more as a tool to normalize bilateral relations with Turkey; for instance, they could promote joint sports events or competitions, and use these occasions as opportunities to ease relations by leveraging the shared values promoted by sport.

The priorities to be addressed in order to build a sport diplomacy strategy in Greece include dedicated training for diplomats, athletes and sport managers in sport diplomacy, and more structural investment in the local dimension of sport diplomacy.

As regards the possibility of a regional sport diplomacy policy, driven by the EU, the interviewees pointed only to the advantages, asserting that it would be beneficial.

First and foremost, an EU sport diplomacy policy would help member states to realize the importance of sport diplomacy, and it could persuade them to also promote sport diplomacy at the national level.

Finally, if sport diplomacy were on a European level, different national organisations could be connected, we could let them share their different points of view, build a common vision and work cooperatively to overcome problems – even internal/regional ones – through sport. European sport diplomacy would also be very effective externally, in relations with other continents and populations, as a more effective and influential soft tool to promote the EU vision and ideas.

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Dr Konstantinos Filis**, Director, International Olympic Truce Centre – Member, Hellenic Olympic Committee – Director, Institute of Global Affairs, Associate Professor, American College of Greece
- **Prof. Dimitris Gargalianos**, Associate Professor, Democritus University of Thrace, Sports Management – Event Management – International Relations of Sport

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Hungary

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Hungary is a small country, but with important sports performances at the international level throughout its history. For this reason, the State pays attention to this area. The governmental body responsible for sports in Hungary is the State Secretariat for Sport, which has been operating under the Ministry of Defence since May 2022. Until the beginning of this year, sport was under the umbrella of the Ministry of Human Resources. This move confirms that sport is still an important 'strategic' sector in Hungary.

The State Secretariat for Sport represents and coordinates the sports affairs of Hungary on national and international levels, prepares and coordinates legal regulations, and implements the national sports strategy. At the same time, this institution takes part in the education and training of sports professionals and endorses the organisation of international sporting events in Hungary.

The legal framework of sport in Hungary is based on the 2004 Act on Sport and the amendments made in 2011, which govern the mechanisms of sport. In 2017, a new and important modification to the laws of sport stated that companies in Hungary could sponsor sports organisations using their corporate tax.

Because the Hungarian state considers the development of the sports sector to be a key priority, it has made important investments in this area, with an estimated \$6 billion over the past 12 years.

The main actors, besides the State Secretariat for Sport, are the Hungarian Olympic Committee (responsible for Olympic sports), the Hungarian Paralympic Committee (which coordinates sports activities for people with disabilities), the National Sports Agency (which organises mega-events and it is also responsible for the management of key state-owned sport facilities and youth sports development), the National Competition Sport Federation (which covers all non-Olympic sports), the National School, University and Leisure Sport Federation (which is responsible for sport for all activities) and the sports federations.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Hungary has a formalized national sport diplomacy strategy, with clear objectives and visible actions. The main activities in this area are conducted by the Sports Diplomacy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary. At the national level, there is a coordinated strategy, aiming mainly "to make Hungary a sporting nation while maintaining its sports nation status" (Garamvölgyi & Dóczy, 2021). To this end, the Hungarian government has invested large sums of money in sport since 2010.

As Bence Garamvölgyi and Tamás Dóczy observed, the sport diplomacy strategy of Hungary is underpinned by five major pillars:

1. Improving the image of Hungary through the organisation of international sports events and conferences;
2. Sport as a tool for strengthening international relations;
3. Representing Hungarian sports interests in international sports federations;

4. Representing the interests of Hungarian sports companies and inventions abroad;
5. Ex-athletes and sports journalists in diplomatic positions. (Garamvölgyi & Dóczy, 2021)

Each of these aspects can be identified in concrete actions. For example, when it comes to hosting international events, Hungary is a very active country. In the last five years, major events like the FINA World Aquatics Championships (two times), the European Youth Olympic Festival, the Judo World Championships, World Wrestling Championships, World Table Tennis Championships, matches of the 2020 UEFA Football Championship, and many others were hosted by Hungary.

These international sporting competitions were opportunities for Magyar officials to strengthen inter-state relations. The most visible example is that of the Hungary-Russia collaboration, and more precisely between Viktor Orban and Vladimir Putin, facilitated by sports events hosted in Hungary.

At the same time, the Hungarian authorities have sought to support the nomination and election of sports leaders to important positions in international sports federations and organisations. For example, Sándor Csányi, president of the Hungarian Football Federation, became vice-president of FIFA in 2018 and vice-president of UEFA in 2019. He is just one of many Hungarian sport officials who play an important role in international federations. There is a direct connection between hosting international events and having people elected to international federations. For example, during the 2022 FINA World Aquatics Championships in Budapest, elections for the FINA commissions were scheduled and Hungary succeeded in having members in five of six of this organisation's commissions. This aspect was presented as a success of sport diplomacy by the Hungarian Swimming Association.

Sport diplomacy was also visible through the promotion of Hungarian initiatives and inventions in sport, like teqball, a sport played on a specially curved table, combining elements of football and table tennis. This sport was invented in 2012 in Hungary and in 2019, Budapest hosted the Teqball World Championships with 160 athletes from 58 countries. To promote this sport, the International Teqball Federation signed an agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which made it possible for hundreds of teqball tables to be donated to organisations around the world and popularized this sport with the help of the Hungarian embassies.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Sport diplomacy is well represented by many actors in the Hungarian strategy. The main actor in sport diplomacy is the Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who is very keen on sport and is interested in promoting the Magyar identity through sport. His central role can be seen at every important sports event hosted by his country. In this context, the National Sports Agency, established in 2018 under the guidance of the Prime Minister's cabinet, plays an important role in organising sports events and building facilities.

Another important actor is the Sports Diplomacy Department, created in 2018, which has an active role and establishes connections with other actors at the national and international levels. The umbrella of this institution, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is a dynamic

institution when it comes to sport. For example, when Hungary launched its candidacy to host the 2024 Olympic Games, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade coordinated activity through its embassies to promote the candidacy and communicated constantly with the Hungarian Olympic Committee, and the organisation committee.

The Hungarian Olympic Committee has a long history of being one of the International Olympic Committee's founders. This legacy is part of the institution's identity, which seeks to work together with other institutions to promote Olympic sports, host Olympic events, and popularize Hungarian sports legends.

Athletes and former athletes are seen as important actors in Hungarian sport diplomacy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade since 2014 is Péter Szijjártó, an ex-futsal player, so he understands the importance of sport diplomacy. "The Minister has strong connections in sports and he likes to position himself as one of the key actors of sport diplomacy", says Bence Garamvölgyi. Other former athletes have been appointed to positions with diplomatic opportunities. For example, in 2019, Hungary's former Olympic swimming champion, Dániel Gyurta, was named as a senior advisor in sport diplomacy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and in 2022 he was promoted as ambassador. In 2020, Miklós Górnagy, the world champion water polo player was named foreign trade attaché of the Consulate General of Hungary in New York. Former athletes in Hungary are better represented in diplomacy than in other European countries, considers Bence Garamvölgyi.

Politicians are frequently associated with sports situations. Alongside Viktor Orbán, other political figures have connected their activity with sport diplomacy. In this context, media outlets close to the government are more involved in promoting sport diplomacy actions and its results. "The general editor of the Nemzeti Sport daily newspaper also acts as a sport diplomat to promote the heritage of Ferenc Puskás", explains Bence Garamvölgyi. He considers that Nemzeti Sport is close to sport diplomacy and that it follows government activities in this direction.

Local authorities are involved in organising sports events. Budapest municipality has the leading role, but other cities like Debrecen, Szeged, or Győr have hosted important sports events. It is not necessarily something coordinated, but local authorities follow the government strategy because this is how they obtain funding for these events. "Local authorities actively look for opportunities to host events, as was the case with the Swimming World Championships, which were supposed to be in Japan this year, but they had to cancel it because of the Covid situation and Budapest was quite eager to jump in, so it is not just "wait and see", explains Peter Zsedely on how Budapest hosted the FINA World Aquatics Championships in 2022.

The private sector is involved in sport diplomacy actions, through some companies which were stimulated by government legislation to support Magyar sports entities. In the same vein, the authorities have created The SportTech Hungary Program. This initiative promotes Hungarian sports technology innovations for the international market.

The sports federations are important actors in Hungary. For example, the Hungarian Judo Association is an active member at the international level and uses sport diplomacy often. In this respect, through sport diplomacy, in 2019, Budapest convinced the International Judo Federation to relocate its headquarters to Hungary. They both collaborated in 2022 and started the "No Borders" campaign, which offered the possibility for 300 Ukrainian children and 20 coaches to be evacuated to Hungary in the context of the war started by Russia in Ukraine.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Hungary has high-level expertise in the field of sport diplomacy, not only at the national level but also on an international scale. In this regard, it should be noted that in 2015, the Hungarian Tibor Navracsis, who was the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, created a European high-level group on sport diplomacy, of which another Hungarian official, Pal Schmitt, former President of Hungary and former athlete, was a member.

Hungary allocates public economic resources to sport diplomacy activities, but also educational resources. "For former athletes, for example, Hungary provides them with the tools to become sport diplomats if they want to be and if they have the talent for that", considers Bence Garamvölgyi.

Facilities represent another important tool, and the Hungarian government has invested important sums of money in them, thus allowing Hungary to host mega-events. Hungary has the facilities, which are well located, and has experience in organising events, so it has some advantages in sport diplomacy, considers Peter Zsedely. In addition, Hungary has invested in facilities in other countries, like Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. The inauguration of stadiums or football academies by Hungarian government officials in those countries was an opportunity to meet officials from the aforementioned nations.

At the same time, courses and conferences focusing on sport diplomacy have been organised frequently in recent years in Hungary. The Hungarian University of Sports Science collaborates with the Sport Diplomacy Department and other institutions to organise this type of activity. In this vein, for example, in 2022, the Hungarian University of Sports Science conducted a pilot project within the TES-D project organising a workshop on 6 May 2022, entitled "Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Ping-Pong Diplomacy on the Day of Hungarian Sports". On this occasion, important figures of sport diplomacy in Hungary attended the event.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

In the short term, sport diplomacy appears to have the same important role for Hungary, considering that Prime Minister Viktor Orban won his fourth consecutive term as Hungary's Prime Minister. His ambitions in terms of sport diplomacy can be identified in his quotes, like "apart from the FIFA World Cup, which is another matter, there's no major world event that is beyond Budapest's capabilities" (Garamvölgyi & Dóczy, 2021). This suggests that hosting mega sports events remains an important objective. A change in the political regime could influence this strategy.

Another vector of development for sport diplomacy in Hungary is the influence of some national federations at the regional and global level, where they could use their position to promote their organisation and country. This aspect is related to the organisation of important competitions in Hungary. Some examples in this regard are the Hungarian Swimming Federation, the Hungarian Fencing Federation, and even the Hungarian Football Federation.

Sport legacy is an opportunity for Hungarian sport diplomacy, especially when it comes to the results at Summer Olympics. Hungary has many former athletes who are active and visible at the international level and it could use their profiles and performances to strengthen sport diplomacy actions.

If the EU were to have a common sport diplomacy policy, the disadvantages identified are the difficulty to bring together all the national strategies, because of strong nationalism; the difficulty to coordinate such a project, and the laborious implementation due to the legal aspects.

If the EU were to have a common sport diplomacy policy, some advantages mentioned include: knowledge sharing; uniting all European sport heritage; increasing the competitiveness of the European Union; creating a better identity of the European Union; an increase in funding and resources allocated to this area to implement the strategy; and a serious orientation towards grassroots sport diplomacy.

In terms of good practices, Hungarian experts have mentioned the Australian sport diplomacy strategy as a model. France, Japan, and the USA were also pointed out, Colombia was considered an interesting case, and Qatar, although a controversial case, was mentioned for using sport diplomacy. Peter Zsedely added that some national leagues also do sport diplomacy, like La Liga, Bundesliga, or Premier League: "In Brussels, they have dedicated personnel who work with the EU or lawmakers and they use sport power and sport diplomacy".

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Bence Garamvölgyi:** expert in sport policies, Managing Director of the Budapest Sports Service Provider Nonprofit Ltd and researcher at the Hungarian University of Sports Science.
- **Peter Zsedely:** Founder and managing director of Sports marketing Hungary, an organisation which operates within the sports business area in Hungary and on an international level.

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Ireland

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Sport in Ireland is primarily organised by the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) which are independent and autonomous organisations. NGBs organise, promote and facilitate opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity in both recreational and competitive forms. They train and deploy coaches, officials and administrators, organise representative level sport, provide opportunities and pathways leading from local sports to national and international competition, deliver critical national sports programmes in areas such as the safeguarding of children in sport, and organise and host international sporting events. They are the delivery agents for the rollout of many essential programmes and are at the forefront in the Government's policy and practice in sport and physical activity.

Ireland operates a recognition system for NGBs. This is operated by Sport Ireland, the national statutory agency for the development of sport established in 2015. Sport Ireland has the mandate to develop sport in Ireland. Its main other functions relate to participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching and the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. There are 66 recognised NGBs currently in Ireland. A significant number of these operate as all-Island bodies, that is they oversee sporting activities both in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The Local Sports Partnerships (LSP) network is tasked with increasing participation levels in sport and physical activity, especially among those sectors of society that are currently underrepresented in sport. A key priority of the LSPs is to continue to support a sustainable level of development within the local sport infrastructure, through support to clubs, groups, coaches and volunteers. LSPs receive government funding to carry out their activities.

Within the government, sport falls under the remit of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (D/TCAGSM). In 2018, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport published the National Sports Policy 2018-2027. Sport Ireland plays a central role in operationalising the national policy. In previous years, the national sport strategies were developed by the predecessor to Sport Ireland, the Irish Sports Council.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

For a country with a small population of approximately 5 million, Ireland has a disproportionately large global footprint. Many millions of people born in Ireland have emigrated and this diaspora of over 70 million has played an important role promoting Ireland overseas. To advance its interests overseas, the government adopted 'Global Ireland – Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025'.

In a wide-ranging document covering a number of diplomatic actions, Global Ireland highlights sport as a means through which Irish identity can be expressed on the international stage and how the competitiveness of Irish athletes and sports teams can widen Ireland's global footprint. However, standing alone, Global Ireland falls short of being considered a sport diplomacy strategy, rather an acknowledgment that sport has a role to play in Ireland's wider public diplomacy.

Sport is highlighted in other government initiatives including a Diaspora Strategy (currently 2020-2025), an Emigrant Support Programme (ESP), in 'Global Ireland: Ireland's Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean to 2025' and in 'Global Ireland: A Strategy for the Nordic Region'. Despite the obvious interest in sport diplomacy "there is no formalised national SD strategy in Ireland at present" (national expert). Sport is also mentioned in a number of bilateral government strategies, including those with France, Germany, Wales and Scotland.

It is also the case that sport diplomacy does not explicitly feature in the National Sports Policy 2018-2027. However, the terrain covered by that policy, and in the above-stated documents, touches upon a number of areas of relevance to sport diplomacy:

- *National branding and elite performance*: The National Sports Policy places an emphasis on high performance sport with the aim of increasing the number of Irish athletes and players winning medals at major international championships. Elite level performance is frequently connected to national branding. The website of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media acknowledges that the development of high performance in Irish sports enhances "our sense of national achievement, and the image of Ireland overseas."
- *National branding and the Irish diaspora*: Due to widespread emigration, large Irish communities can be found across the world. Article 2 of the Constitution of Ireland recognises that the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage. From that principle, the government recognises that these communities play an important part in promoting Ireland abroad. In recognition of this, the government has in place a Minister of State for Overseas Development and Diaspora. It has adopted a Diaspora Strategy (currently 2020-2025) and funds actions through the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP). The role of traditional sports, such as those regulated by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), is highlighted in these documents and the National Sports Policy. The funding partnership between the GAA and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has resulted in the funding of the GAA Games Development Officers Programme in Britain and the US and a Global Games Development Fund for the rest of the world.
- *National branding, economic growth and major events*: In the first half of 2022, the Minister of State for Sport launched a public consultation on the development of a new Major International Sports Events Policy. The Minister commented that "Ireland and the government is ambitious about hosting Major International Sports Events in Ireland. These events have the potential to drive participation in sport, contribute to trade, tourism, community pride, community engagement, regional development and economic growth. These events can also drive national pride and affect both how we see ourselves as a nation and how we are viewed internationally".¹ The consultation exercise signals the government's intention to adopt a more strategic approach to the bidding for major events. At ref.6.6 in the government's Sports Action Plan 2021-2023, the government committed to "develop a policy on the hosting of international sports events that will align the efforts of state bodies, national governing bodies, local authorities and all other relevant stakeholders, to ensure Ireland can compete with the best in the world when bidding for major events."²
- *Peace and reconciliation*: The National Sports Policy also highlights the 'all island' nature of sport on the Island of Ireland. This approach sees sport as a vehicle for peace and reconciliation between communities and also as an opportunity to develop new all-island

¹Accessed at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/50b4b-public-consultation-on-the-hosting-of-major-international-sports-events-launched/>

²See Sports Action Plan 2021-2023, accessed at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/93232-sports-action-plan-2021-2023/>

competitions at elite and recreational levels and as an opportunity to make joint North/South bids in the future for international tournaments.³ To facilitate this approach, Sport Ireland works closely with its partner agency in Northern Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

From the above discussion, it is evident that Ireland practices sport diplomacy, but there is no formal sport diplomacy strategy in place. Consequently, there is no centralised sport diplomacy coordinating body, but sport diplomacy actors do interact on a more ad hoc and flexible basis. According to one national expert, the current structure is “decentralised” but in relation to certain specific events, such as the recent Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, “structures are put in place to help coordinate messaging and promote Irish interests.”

As explained above, sport falls within the remit of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. That department operates a number of grant programmes for sport and sets national sports policy, however its role in sport diplomacy appears limited as sport diplomacy was not explicitly mentioned in that national policy.

Of more significance in terms of sport diplomacy is the role of the Department of Foreign Affairs as it funds a Diaspora Strategy (currently 2020-2025) and funds actions through the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP).

Sport Ireland is the national sports council tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. Its remit is determined by the National Sports Policy and as that policy does not explicitly discuss sport diplomacy, this area does not feature prominently in its work.

The GAA, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs, plays an important role in Irish sport diplomacy. The GAA now has over 400 clubs outside Ireland and it runs the GAA World Games.

Politicians do occasionally attend sporting events and it is common for the government to publish messages of support for Irish athletes and teams on the government website. Diplomats are generally engaged on an ad-hoc basis, especially to support the attendance of Irish athletes and travelling fans abroad at major international competitions. The level of engagement can be variable, depending on the nature of the event and the assistance sought by the relevant NGB or athletes concerned. For major events, such as the 2020 Tokyo Games, public diplomacy actions may have taken place under the auspices of local embassy officials.

According to a national expert, local authorities do not play a role in sport diplomacy, although on a local basis some activity may take place, such as through urban area twinning or similar local initiatives. A national expert expressed the view that the media only focuses on sport diplomacy issues when connected to the sporting success of an Irish athlete or team and that the private sector plays a very limited role in sport diplomacy. It seems that athletes play a limited role in formal sport diplomacy activities, beyond promoting Ireland through sporting success. No formal training is provided to athletes, who become informal natural ambassadors if they are successful.

³The ‘all island’ approach is also highlighted in the Sports Action Plan 2021-2023, accessed at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/93232-sports-action-plan-2021-2023/>

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

There is no dedicated national budget for sport diplomacy, although as explained above, the government (Department of Foreign Affairs) resources sport diplomacy initiatives through the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP). Since its inception in 2004, the Emigrant Support Programme has assisted over 530 organisations in over 36 countries with grants totalling over €200 million, although not all are sports initiatives. Grants have ranged from small amounts for grass-roots groups to major allocations awarded to voluntary and community organisations operating on a large scale. Less formally, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media funds elite performance.

On the specific questions concerning the tools of sport diplomacy, the national experts consider that Dublin is relatively proactive in terms of diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events. However, other activities such as the Organisation of trade missions or Increased media coverage and international broadcasting remain relatively non-mobilised.

Concerning relations with less developed countries, here again, few initiatives are implemented, whether it be mentoring, exchange programmes or sport fellowship schemes and grants. Nevertheless, a national expert explained that “collaboration is ad hoc, but Bohemians football club, for example, regularly engage with Chernobyl children in providing summer experiences in Ireland.”

In terms of identifying the most important sport diplomacy activities in Ireland, it seems that although there is no formalised sport diplomacy strategy, the Irish government currently uses sport to enhance the Irish brand abroad. This is facilitated by the presence of large Irish communities abroad. Consequently, Irish sport diplomacy is viewed through a diaspora lens. One national expert stated that sport is used “to promote Ireland as a partner and destination for tourism and investment, and as a way of engaging with diaspora communities.” Recently, the government has also turned its attention to developing a major events policy (see above).

One national expert wanted to highlight the importance of the relationship between the DFA and the GAA. One of the most significant ways in which the DFA engages in sport is through support for initiatives involving Gaelic Games. The Global Games Development Fund provides funding to support the promotion of Gaelic games abroad, and has funded 450 projects since its initiation in 2013. The Fund aims to support the Irish Diaspora and strengthen Irish networks and Irish identity internationally. As well as offering a source of community and identity for our diaspora, Gaelic games abroad possess a public diplomacy dimension by offering platforms for representations of Irish culture and heritage.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY’S FUTURE

Although Irish sport diplomacy “is in its infancy, and is not currently a major area of focus” as defined by a national expert, it is apparent that Ireland is beginning to recognise the value of sport diplomacy and it possesses the tools, such as a large Irish diaspora, to advance its interests on the world stage. However, the focus on the diaspora dimension can be quite limiting and strategic thinking could widen the scope of Irish sport diplomacy, for example to include a new focus on major events, a focus on trade and tourism opportunities and more of a focus on how sport can contribute to and be integrated into wider public diplomacy initiatives.

Reflection on the need for greater strategic thinking has begun. In October 2021, the Irish Embassy in Tokyo produced the paper, ‘DFA Sports Diplomacy: Enhancing Ireland’s Global Impact in and Through Sport’. The aim of the document was to research and analyse how the impact of Ireland’s

global footprint can be enhanced in and through sport. In seeking to advance more strategic thinking in the area of Irish sport diplomacy, the document claims that this can be effectively achieved through two interlinked and mutually reinforcing channels:

- *The use of sport as a tool for achieving Irish foreign policy goals:* sport and sporting events, both abroad and in Ireland, regularly generate organic opportunities for public diplomacy and the strengthening of bilateral political, economic, and people-to-people links. Sport is also increasingly regarded as an innovative driver and platform for policy and change, particularly in its contribution to the 2030 Agenda in areas such as human rights, gender equality, and social inclusion. Engagement in sport can therefore link across high-level DFA goals, offering opportunities to extend influence and promote values, contributing, in particular, to the achievement of Goal 4 of the DFA Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 (to advance Ireland's prosperity by extending our influence and promoting our interests internationally).
- *The international success and reputation of Irish sports:* Ireland's international profile and high level of achievement across a diverse range of sports is a major asset and provides platforms for projecting Ireland's influence and interests. A coherent 'Team Ireland' vision to support Ireland's sporting interests internationally can therefore strengthen the ability of sport to create spaces for the achievement of Ireland's high-level international goals. DFA can play a key role in this by working closely with Irish sports stakeholders to support international operations on the ground for athletes and teams, strengthen international sports governance, and assist in the bidding for and hosting of major events in Ireland.

A national expert expressed the view that a main weakness of sport diplomacy activities in Ireland is the absence of coordination. This view was echoed in the Embassy paper which stated that "there would be significant shared benefits to a more coordinated Irish Government approach to sport internationally." More strategic thinking connecting Irish sport diplomacy to wider Irish public diplomacy activities would also be mutually reinforcing.

In terms of coordination, it seems that relations between key actors would benefit from being strengthened so as to facilitate a more strategic approach to sport diplomacy in the future. In particular, closer coordination between the DFA, D/TCAGSM, Sport Ireland, NGBs and civil society actors within Ireland and abroad is recommended. It also seems that closer coordination between the DFA and its network of almost 100 diplomatic missions could be enhanced. The document made the overarching recommendation to "embed and resource an organisational structure in DFA to support coordination and coherence of the Government's international engagement in sports." The document highlighted that enhanced coordination could assist in advancing four key policy goals:

- the objectives of the Irish Government and Irish sports-governing bodies in international sports events, bidding, administration and governance;
- the promotion of political, trade, investment and tourism goals through sports and sporting events;
- the projection of our values in and through sports, including the promotion of human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and improved health outcomes;
- the strengthening of diaspora communities and people-to-people connections abroad through sports, including educational and cultural relations links.

On the question of the EU developing its own sport diplomacy strategy, one national expert identified two potential disadvantages: (1) loss of or reduction in clarity of unique national identity and (2) a focus on mainstream sports alone. Three advantages were identified (1) a clear and

dedicated policy (2) pooling of resources (3) reduces political aspect of funding coming from a specific national source.

A second national expert claimed that should the EU develop its own sport diplomacy strategy, this “would allow Member States to speak with one voice on issues that are of serious concerns to European sport. Matters such as anti-doping, integrity in sports and human rights are frequent subjects at European Union level, and promoting these interests with a collective voice could help advance their cause throughout the world.”

In terms of national good practices, a national expert stated: “I think certain soccer clubs have a very positive and progressive view of international connections that can be made. Bohemians, for example, are a small club by international standards but have long engaged with refugees, certain disadvantaged groups, etc. and made it part of their identity. The way the GAA attempts to engage with the diaspora and keep them connected to Ireland is also extremely positive and often gains positive coverage.”

6. INTERVIEWS:

- **James Hendicott**, freelance journalist.
- Members of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.



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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Italy

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Mirko Olivieri



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

In Italy, the sports system is covered by the Department for Sport at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Specifically, this department regards sport in all its forms, at both a competitive and amateur level, as an important training tool for social integration and cultural dialogue, as well as a driving force for the dissemination of fundamental values such as loyalty, commitment and team spirit.

More specifically, the Department for Sport identifies the lines for strategic planning at the administrative level within the framework of the Government's priorities. Its actions aim at strengthening the coordination of protection and social inclusion policies and offering opportunities for self-employment activities for the new generations, also by leveraging convergent pathways with the industrial sector.

For these purposes, the Italian Sport Department works in synergy with local authorities, sector associations and key figures. In this sense, an important contribution is made, for example, by the CONI Sports System Observatory, which was created to measure the economic and social dimension of sport, at the request of the European Commission, in order to provide data and information to public and private decision-makers to guide strategic decisions.

The Italian sports system is also composed of:

- The governmental Agency Sport e Salute: <https://www.sportesalute.eu>, which designs and implements the policies to promote the social role of sports;
- The Italian Olympic Committee CONI and all affiliated federations: <https://www.coni.it/it/>

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

From the results of the interviews conducted with Italian key informants, it is clear that they do not perceive any formalized national sport diplomacy strategy. In general, they think that the sport diplomacy strategy implemented by their organisations is currently not integrated with wider government action.

More specifically, the key informants say that the main objectives of sport diplomacy in Italy are to promote peace and inclusiveness, spread and share values, and drive development. Normalising or reinforcing diplomatic relations and creating business opportunities and driving economic growth are, according to our findings, important goals of Italian sport diplomacy. Finally, improving the country's global reputation and creating or promoting a nation-brand are not important for the sport diplomacy strategy.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

As for the organisation of Italian sport diplomacy governance, our research shows that it is decentralised and different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources. In other words, coordination of sport diplomacy actors and activities in Italy is weak.

More specifically, regarding the actors involved in sport diplomacy processes, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is quite important, the Ministry dedicated to Sport is important and a dedicated institutional body (e.g., an agency, a department) is essential. For instance, among other actors, one Italian key informant said that UNAR (Antidiscrimination Office) is a relevant player for the national sport diplomacy strategy.

As for the role of Italian city authorities and local institutions in sport diplomacy actions, they are involved on an *ad hoc* basis / only some of them are involved and receive funds for sport diplomacy. Generally, “we can say that the concept of sport diplomacy is not known or used by local authorities. They participate in events/debates promoted by associations (sports organisations or NGOs) working directly on this topic.”

Likewise, the Italian sports bodies are involved on an *ad hoc* basis by other sport diplomacy actors, as “they are involved (especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) when some special activities are carried on in projects abroad (e.g., international cooperation using sport as a tool of sport diplomacy). In general, sport is seen mainly as a physical activity, used for education and socialisation, not as a real tool of diplomacy.”

As for the mainstream media, the key informants say that they are not involved in sport diplomacy activities, and most are not interested in this specific topic, but it is possible to involve them in specific projects working with sport and integration/social inclusion/international cooperation. “It is stronger than the position of media managed by sports organisations/NGOs which underlined the role of sport diplomacy.”

“Private companies use their brand to communicate powerful messages conveying values connected with sport diplomacy. Some of these companies take direct action in specific projects in disadvantaged areas of big cities to bring people together and promote social inclusion and peaceful resolution of problems.”

The perception of our key informants changes in respect of athletes. They are empowered and constantly engaged, they receive specific training in sport diplomacy and can play an autonomous role, according to our findings. “They are fundamental as representatives. Sometimes it is difficult for them to join a project/event completely or be part of a real sport diplomacy strategy. It is easier involving athletes of a single sport or former athletes, not linked with their team or sponsors.”

Finally, the role of organisations, such as UISP Roma, is to develop skills and competences working in projects abroad together with different NGOs (e.g., ISCA, Terres des Hommes, CTM) and in disadvantaged areas in Italy in cooperation with different associations (e.g., Save The Children). From this different experience, the organisation develops training courses and tools using sport diplomacy. They try to pass on these skills at all levels of associations and to involve more and more national and local authorities in working on this topic.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Regarding the level of public economic resources available for Italian sport diplomacy activities, the key informants involved in our research say they are scarce and, considering the pre-Covid19 period, few actions were attributable to sport diplomacy.

In detail, diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events and activities of employing high-profile sports people are very much implemented in Italy. However, media coverage, international broadcasting and the organisation of trade missions are less implemented.

As regards the sport diplomacy activities implemented in Italy in collaboration with less developed countries, partnerships for sport competitions often implemented, and, in descending order, mentoring or training programmes, funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values, sport exchange programmes and sport fellowship schemes and grants are less implemented.

As for sport diplomacy activities implemented in our country aiming at empowering sport diplomacy actors, political support is the most implemented, followed by training for diplomats and athletes, dedicated resources and coordination tools, and monitoring and evaluation processes.

Generally, the most important sport diplomacy activities include “using sport as a tool for cultural mediation, conflict resolution, and the creation of a network including local/national authorities, third sector associations, target groups, and beneficiaries, as well as activities that we do working with prisoners, refugees, people with mental illnesses, and migrant communities.”

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

As for the major weaknesses of Italian sport diplomacy activities, “recognition of the importance of sport can play a major role in the work of diplomacy, not only for the logical role of organising international events or sports exchanges, but because it is possible to develop complex strategies where different stakeholders can work together and engage in social dialogue starting from sports activities, even in contexts where the power of *normal* diplomacy cannot succeed.”

Moreover, according to our results, creating a synergic network of different stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors represents the biggest challenge and opportunity of sport diplomacy activities, and the possible disadvantages are the different national points of view and the interference of professional sport.

Among the advantages, the key informants mentioned: the better use of EU funds and differentiation of EU funds (at the moment there is only one specific programme on sport and it is often difficult to use other programmes for sport diplomacy); better networking and a closer relationship between sport diplomacy and other forms of diplomacy; and, finally, a better understanding of the definition at EU level.



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NATIONAL REPORT

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**COUNTRY:
Latvia**



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The goal of the Latvian national sports policy is to form healthy, and highly physically and mentally developed personalities. The general legal basis of sports organisation and development in Latvia is determined by the Sports Law. The Ministry of Education and Science is the state administrative institution responsible for sports.

The Association “Latvian Sports Federations Council” is the largest representative sports organisations in Latvia, bringing together and representing 94 recognised sports federations, 184 recognised sports types and 1,915 collective members having more than 120,000 people who do sports. It is composed of 87 sports federations, five sports sphere federations and three custom sports federations for the disabled.

The Latvian Olympic Committee (Latvian: Latvijas Olimpiskā Komiteja or LOK) is a non-profit organisation that is the National Olympic Committee for Latvia.

The “Board of Directors of Latvian Sports Education schools” (sport schools) coordinates and manages the implementation of professional sports education programmes in the country through more than 90 sport schools in more than 40 sports.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Latvia seems to have a non-formalised sport diplomacy strategy. Usually, sport diplomacy depends on the initiative of certain federations or sports, for example, during major events in Latvia.

Usually, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) is informed about major events or stakeholders arriving. Since 24 February 2022 and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, sport diplomacy has been based on the MoFA’s guidelines, where the main objective is for everyone to show as much solidarity as possible with Ukraine and its inhabitants, to support them. The Latvian sports community welcomes young Ukrainian athletes in basketball, ice hockey, etc. More than 30,000 refugees from Ukraine have arrived in Latvia since February.

The objectives in diplomacy are based on major issues – to support Ukraine and condemn Russia and Belarus at every level. This has been more or less the direction since 2014 (Crimea annexation).

Regarding the sports industry, Latvia also supports sanctions on Russian athletes (worldwide ban) due to Doping scandals at the Sochi Olympics and afterwards.¹

On 28 April 2022, the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia supported amendments to the Sports Law, which provides for a ban on sports teams, athletes, and sports workers participating in competitions and championships in Russia or Belarus.²

¹<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2016/dec/11/latvia-skeleton-team-to-boycott-world-championships-russia-sochi-doping-scandal>

²<https://eng.lsm.lv/article/culture/sport/latvian-athletes-banned-from-competing-in-russia-belarus.a454390/>

The Ministry of Education and Science calls all sports stakeholders to use sport diplomacy options to condemn the Russian Federation's and Belarus Republic's aggression in Ukraine and not to participate in any events in these countries. Latvia also supported this statement.³

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Usually sport diplomacy depends on the initiative of certain federations or sports, for example, during major events in Latvia. Furthermore, some stakeholders are not familiar with sport diplomacy (as a definition and in global) and its benefits.

Political or governmental players do not have a specific role and are not engaged in sport diplomacy. However, a few examples can be seen on an ad hoc basis.

Official diplomats do not have a specific role and do not engage in sport diplomacy. They are usually informed about major sports events in Latvia.

City authorities and local institutions/politicians do not have a specific role and do not engage in sport diplomacy. If a local municipality is able to support an event, then local politicians take part in sport diplomacy, but there are only a few examples. The most recent example was when a local city mayor banned Russian and Belarus athletes from coming and competing last May.⁴

Sports bodies try to position Latvia as a safe and trustful country (or partner) to repeatedly host major events. Usually sport diplomacy depends on the initiative of certain federations, for example, during major events in Latvia.

The private sector does not have a specific role and does not engage in sport diplomacy. If we look at some activities of the Russian Federation over the last 15 years in countries of the former Soviet bloc, where the so-called "soft power" of the Russian Federation was exercised through sports, then the main sponsor of the Latvian ice hockey club "Dinamo Riga" (participated in the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL) – also the Russian Men's Hockey Championship) since its establishment in 2008 was a local company "Itera Latvija SIA". This company and its shareholders were affiliated to "Gazprom Export" (a Russian company). Such expressions of "soft power" divide our society, which is also one of Russia's real long-term goals. In April 2022, "Dinamo Riga" suspended its operations.⁵

Athletes do not have a specific role in sport diplomacy actions. They are an "unused resource" (for example, NBA, NHL, and EPL Players (including former players)).

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Regarding the public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities, they are difficult to evaluate. There are no available resources for the Ministry of Education and Science, but the Ministry of the Economy offers some support through the "Promoting international competitiveness" programme.⁶

³<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-russias-war-on-ukraine-international-sport>

⁴[https://www.itftennis.com/en/tournament/w60-liepaja-\(postponed\)/lat/2022/w-itf-lat-01a-2022/draws-and-results/](https://www.itftennis.com/en/tournament/w60-liepaja-(postponed)/lat/2022/w-itf-lat-01a-2022/draws-and-results/)

⁵<https://www.dailyfaceoff.com/jokerit-helsinki-dinamo-riga-officially-withdraw-from-khl-for-2022-23/>

⁶<https://www.liaa.gov.lv/lv/programmas/skv-turisms/starptautiska-kulturas-sporta-pasakuma-izstades-organizanas-veidlapa>

The most important sport diplomacy activity will come in the future. But, the last one was a letter of support from the government to the International Ice Hockey Federation with a view to hosting next year's World Championship 2023 in Riga ⁷ - and the competing candidate (Hungary), for example, could not secure support at this (government) level.⁸

Also, it is important to note that the Latvian Ice Hockey Federation seems to be a good partner to the Finnish Ice Hockey Association and this is their successful internal diplomacy.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The major weakness seems to be that the strategy is decentralised, and different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources. There is no or at least very little coordination of all sport diplomacy actors and activities.

Developing a national sport diplomacy strategy is currently a challenge, but it should first be discussed with the MoFA, for example, on how to make it more appropriate. It is also important for other sports stakeholders (such as federations) to come and explain the benefits and issues at stake – to engage in constructive dialogue on sport diplomacy.

In the future, major sporting events should be more sustainable and environmentally-friendly so here the EU could be a pioneer. However, this “one key strategy for sustainable development” depends on the decisions of the big EU countries (since Germany, France, Spain and Italy are “big names” and could act (in sports) on their own).

⁷<https://www.iihf.com/en/events/2022/wm/news/36477/to-tampere-riga-in-23-to-switzerland-in-26>

⁸<https://eprimefeed.com/economy/hungary-refuses-to-host-the-ice-hockey-world-championship-because-of-russia/94441/>



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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Lithuania

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Pim Verschuuren



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Since 2018 and the latest Sports Law, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports has been the main body responsible for the Lithuanian sports public policy strategy. For the implementation, it relies on a partnership with national non-government sports organisations (the national federations in particular). Starting July 2022, a separate national sport agency will be in charge of monitoring the implementation of sport policies at national level.

At the municipal level, according to the Law of Sports of the Lithuanian Republic (2018), it is for city and county departments of physical education and sports to develop and implement public sports policy. A Lithuanian Association of the Heads of the Municipality Sport Divisions (LAHMSD) was also created in 2001. It acts as an umbrella organisation and works closely with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee and other stakeholders.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

No formalised or non-formalised Sport Diplomacy strategy exists in Lithuania, beyond periodic investments such as the hosting of international sports events.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Many actors could potentially be involved in international sports events, programmes or measures:.

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports
- The Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- The Lithuanian National Olympic Committee
- Lithuanian national sport federations (e.g. the national basketball federation or the football federation)
- Municipalities (e.g. Vilnius or Kaunas)
- Sports clubs
- Individual athletes
- Business or media organisations

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Since the 2018 Sports Law, the allocations of the Sports Support Fund for financing sports projects have more than doubled (€13.6 million in 2019, €6.69 million in 2018). 50% of the allocations are directed to projects that promote physical activity (Lithuania lies far behind the leading EU member states in terms of the population ratio that engages in regular sport and exercise. See WHO (2021)). This significant increase in sport investment shows that, in theory, financial capacities do exist to promote international projects. .

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

Although no state-led sport diplomacy can be reported, Lithuania could tap into one source of soft power: basketball. The sport is often referred to as Lithuania's "second religion" after Catholicism. The men's national team won the European Basketball Championship in 1937, 1939 and 2003; and in 1995, 2013 and 2015 it came second. The team also won bronze medals in the World Basketball Championship in 2010. Lithuania has won bronze medals at three Olympiads: 1992 (Barcelona), 1996 (Atlanta) and 2000 (Sydney). Not only has basketball played a key role in building the Lithuanian identity, but it contributes to the reputation of the country on a global scale. Leading clubs (such as Zalgiris Kaunas) or athletes (such as Arvydas Sabonis or his son Domantas Sabonis, an NBA player) could take part in potential Sport Diplomacy programmes (Čingienė & Mizeras, 2020). The influence of basketball on the acquisition of soft power can be asserted by enhanced attraction, global glorification and intensification of the positive image of the state (Čingienė, Damijonaitis & Komskienė, 2014).

Lithuania could also invest in major sports events. It hosted the European Men's Basketball Championship in 2011, which enhanced the self-promotion and image-building of the state (Čingienė & Špokas, 2011). In 2021 Lithuania hosted the FIFA Futsal World Cup, which confirmed the country's capacity in bidding for and hosting large sports events.

A third potential vector for Lithuanian Sport Diplomacy lies in a unique international sport event hosted in Lithuania every four years. The "World Lithuanian games" are games for members of the Lithuanian diaspora at the global level. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport provides funding for these games and requires cities willing to host them to go through a formal bidding process. The games are held every four years and the first one dates back to 1938 (it was named "1st Lithuanian National Olympiad" and was held in Kaunas). The number of disciplines and participants are decided at each edition, and then proposed at the global level. The network of Lithuanian embassies is involved in the preparation and logistics for participant travel. This event plays a key role in nurturing Lithuania's cultural identity through its large diaspora worldwide (there are about 1.3 million Lithuanians worldwide in addition to the 2.8 million who live in Lithuania. See World Bank (2022) and the Innovation in Politics Institute (n.d.)).

6. INTERVIEWS

Experts interviewed:

- **Vilma Čingienė**, professor of the Faculty of Public Management and Business at Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), active member of the European Observatory of Sport and Employment (EOSE).
- **Ramunė Bistrickaitė**, head of the integrity department of the Lithuanian football federation and former lawyer at the Department of Physical Education and Sports under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania between 2011 and 2017.

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Grand-Duché de Luxembourg

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Thierry Zintz



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE ¹

“Around 500 Luxembourgish athletes have participated in the Olympic Games since the 1900 edition in Paris. The Luxembourg Institute for High Performance in Sports offers services and optimal resources adapted to high performance athletes since 2019, with a view to developing high performance sport and preparing athletes for competitions in the best possible conditions. This support highlights Luxembourg’s desire to provide elite sports figures with the best conditions.” (...)

(...) “The institute offers services to athletes preparing for the Olympic Games or with realistic prospects of qualifying for the Olympic Games, to all other high-level sportspeople who are part of the high-level squad or of the promotional squad of the Luxembourg Olympic and Sports Committee (COSL squads), who are in the Army’s High-Level Sports Section (SSEA) or who benefit from any of the COSL’s other support measures. National teams of team sports can also benefit from certain services offered by the LIHPS.” (...)

(...) “By coordinating specialist services for high performance athletes, the institute puts into practice the essential principles of the integrated concept for sports in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. This concept was designed by the COSL in 2014 with a view to ensuring the future and development of Luxembourgish sport at all levels: sports at school, competitive sports, elite sports, the training of coaches, sports medicine, etc.” (...)

(...) “Luxembourg’s Olympic Medical Centre (CMOL – Centre médical olympique luxembourgeois) was created in 2008-2009. It provides the COSL’s athletes with medical support and passes on its know-how to sports federations. There is also a structure for implementing the medical and sports projects of athletes and federations.” (...)

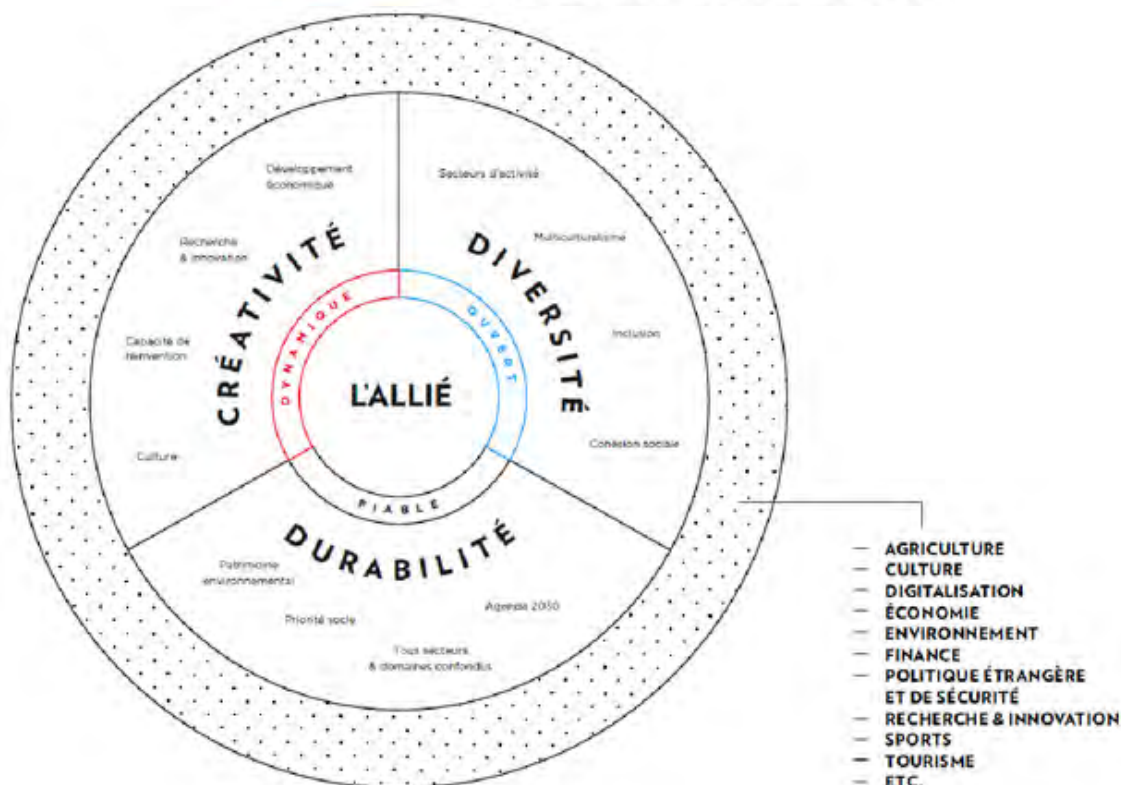
(...) “In 2014, the COSL designed the integrated concept for sports in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which promotes the development of Luxembourgish sports at all levels while remaining in touch with international competition.” (...)

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Luxemburg is developing a global strategy called “Stratégie et base de plan d’action 2021-2025” dedicated to the promotion of the image and brand of Luxembourg. The slogan is “Let’s make it happen” and the document appears to be a “call to action”. The mission is clarified in the following way “Inspiring, connecting all players and promoting Luxembourg abroad, in order to bring Luxembourg to the world and the world to Luxembourg.”

Sport is considered to be a tool (a sector) to facilitate the implementation of the three pillars of this strategy.

¹Information in this point was gathered from <https://luxembourg.public.lu/en/living/sports/institut-high-performance-sports-luxembourg.html>
- Accessed on June 12, 2022.



The WTA Luxembourg Tennis Tournament and the Tour du Luxembourg are considered to be perfect tools for branding Luxembourg abroad.

In the general context of the “Luxembourg – Let’s make it happen” strategy, specific “Nation Branding through Sports”² is suggested. “In order to differentiate the country and to enhance its attractiveness towards talents, tourists, trading, investors and companies, the image carried abroad by sport people has to become consistent through the coherence of messages, in particular through an authentic, credible and convincing communication, based on its strengths, namely liability, dynamism and openness.”

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

The Comité Olympique et Sportif Luxembourgeois (COSL), the Ministry in charge of Sport and other public entities have close coordination. However, this cannot be considered a specific model of governance and coordination among sport diplomacy actors at work.

²<https://sports.public.lu/fr/sport-compétition/partenariat-lux.html> - Accessed on June 12, 2022.

As there is no specific sport diplomacy approach, political / governmental players aim to develop the global branding of “Luxemburg – Let’s make it happen”. While supporting elite athletes in their career, they also use them as informal ambassadors of the country (Charles Greeten,³ Bob Jungels⁴). They also make agreements with foreign athletes who accept to promote the image of Luxemburg.

Official diplomats do not engage in specific sport diplomacy actions. However, the Luxemburg ambassadors develop the “Luxemburg” image in the countries where national athletes compete in major / mega sporting events.

As the general strategy called “Stratégie et base de plan d’action 2021-2025” dedicated to promoting the image and brand of Luxemburg applies at all levels of society, city authorities and local institutions/politicians will use the potential of sporting events to support the “Luxemburg – Let’s make it happen” moto.

It is interesting to note that the Comité Olympique et Sportif Luxembourgeois is involved in several projects. For example, it plays a coordinating role in very specific initiatives such as agreements between Luxembourg and the Chinese People’s Republic with regard to table tennis. The COSL also uses the opportunity of the Games of the Small States, and European Olympic Committee General Assemblies to develop bilateral cooperation with other European countries (Iceland, Andorra, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Belgium, etc.). Quite often, these cooperation agreements are then followed by agreements with or support from the governments of the countries concerned.

The WTA Luxembourg Open (Tennis)⁵ and the Tour du Luxembourg (Cycling)⁶ are regarded as common initiatives of national (and international) sport governing bodies and public authorities (Ministries and local authorities).

The Luxembourg Institute for High Performance in Sports (Mission: developing high performance sports in Luxembourg)⁷ welcomes Luxemburg and foreign high-level athletes in the best conditions for their preparation. As such, the Institute acts as an “ambassador” of Luxemburg’s sporting excellence.

While public authorities support elite athletes in their career, they expect them to act as informal ambassadors of the country.⁸ As already mentioned, agreements with foreign athletes who accept to promote the image of Luxemburg are used to support the general strategy.

4. SPORT DIPLOMACY’S FUTURE

From a national perspective, a specific sport diplomacy strategy is still to be built in the future. This will happen in the coming years when the granularity of the global branding of “Luxemburg – Let’s make it happen” has been developed sector by sector.

A major advantage of EU sport diplomacy would be the promotion of European integrated teams in some competitions.

³<http://teamletzebuerg.lu/athlete/grethen-charles/> - Accessed on July 19, 2022

⁴<https://firstcycling.com/rider.php?r=6413> - Accessed on July 19, 2022

⁵<https://www.wtatennis.com/tournament/300/luxembourg> - Accessed on June 13, 2022

⁶<https://skodatour.lu/> - Accessed on June 13, 2022

⁷<https://luxembourg.public.lu/en/living/sports/institut-high-performance-sports-luxembourg.html> - Accessed on July 15, 2022

⁸<https://luxembourg.public.lu/en/living/sports/top5-cyclistes-luxembourggeois.html> - Accessed on July 15, 2022

On the other hand, the COSL considers that it is the duty of athletes to be “diplomats in tracksuits”. They consider that the Young Ambassadors Programme at EYOF⁹ is a priority.

There is no information in Luxembourg about sport diplomacy activities abroad or good practices or links that Luxembourg wants to/is undertaking.

However, the choice has been made to present Luxembourg as a potential host for foreign delegations that will participate in the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, as well as for tourists coming to the Olympic Games.

5. INTERVIEWS

- Laurent Deville, Coordinateur général, Ministère des Sports, Gouvernement du Grand Duché de Luxembourg.
- Beryl Koltz, Responsable de la promotion de l'image de marque, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Gouvernement du Grand Duché de Luxembourg.
- Ralph Lentz, Secrétaire général du Comité Olympique et Sportif Luxembourgeois.
- Prof. Dr. Mathieu Winand, LUNEX University, Differdange.

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- Le Luxembourg, profil d'un pays. Nation branding.lu - Comité de coordination interministériel Nation Branding, <https://luxembourg.public.lu/dam-assets/toolbox/documents/Luxembourg-profil-d-un-pays.pdf>

⁹https://www.eurolympic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EYOA_Brochure_web_light.pdf - Accessed on July 19, 2022

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Malta

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Carmen Pérez-González



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

In Malta, sport policy is under the responsibility of the Ministry for education, sport, youth, research and innovation. The Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport (AIMS), SportMalta and the Commercial Sports Facilities Commission are bodies officially appointed by the Ministry. Malta has recently separated the Sports Operator (SportMalta) and the Sports Regulator (AIMS). Policy work (excluding Sport Promotion and physical activity) shall fall within the remit of the AIMS which shall create collaboration, networking and competence in this area.

In May 2019, Malta's third national sports strategy covering a 10-year period was launched by the Maltese government.¹ It identifies five strategic themes:

- (i) Building a more active and healthier Malta;
- (ii) Enhancing the competence of all stakeholders;
- (iii) Stimulating a new sporting culture;
- (iv) Transforming Malta into a centre of sporting excellence;
- (v) Achieving success at the top of international competitions.

From a regulatory point of view, the recent adoption of the Sports Governance and Integrity Act (Act No. LIV of 2021) is worth mentioning. Its main purposes are to provide for the regulation of Sports Governance and Integrity in Malta; establish the Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport; support the development and implementation of the objectives described in the Act; promote consistent principles to uphold the principles of good governance and defend the integrity of Maltese sport; exercise regulatory functions and perform related services; and make provision with respect to matters ancillary thereto or connected therewith.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

At present, Malta does not have a sport diplomacy strategy per se. Nevertheless, references to sport diplomacy are made in the "National Policy for Sport in Malta and Gozo 2017-2019"². According to this document, "sport is a tool which can bring about change as it has the ability to bring people together no matter what their background. Particularly, the diplomacy of sport has the potential to bring down barriers caused by ethnicity, religious belief, gender or other differences. The world is in turmoil more than ever, but sport can play a very significant role. Sport diplomacy facilitates communication, being in itself a soft power bringing about peace."

In 2021, through the Sports Integrity Act, Malta created a Sports Regulatory Authority that should be pursuing sport diplomacy, as it is currently at the design stage. Malta is currently drafting a Sustainable Development strategy (to which Sport is directly related in its goals) based on a vision document that was published in 2018.³ The sport diplomacy Strategy is expected to be published this year.

¹Available at <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/PublishingImages/Pages/2019/May/21/pr191132/PR191132a.pdf>.

²National Policy for Sport in Malta and Gozo 2017-2019, [https://meae.gov.mt/en/public_consultations/mede/documents/sports%20calendar%20output%20\(1\).pdf](https://meae.gov.mt/en/public_consultations/mede/documents/sports%20calendar%20output%20(1).pdf)

³https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/Msport_diplomacyEC/Documents/Malta%27s%20Sustainable%20Development%20Vision%20for%202050.pdf.

As for the most relevant objectives of sport diplomacy in Malta, national experts affirm they would be to improve the country's global reputation and create a Maltese nation-brand, promote peace and inclusiveness and create business opportunities and drive economic growth.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Sport diplomacy governance is decentralized in Malta since different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources. A number of Ministries are involved in sport diplomacy governance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry for education, sport, youth, research and innovation (mainly through the work of the Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport (AIMS) and SportMalta), and the Ministry for Environment, Energy and Enterprise (regarding sport and tourism). One of the national experts affirmed that the Maltese diplomatic services are trained in and aware of sport diplomacy and that most diplomats have received academic training on this topic.

Other actors have been also mentioned by national experts:

- a. Sports bodies are considered to play a relevant role in this regard.
- b. Media: promotion and awareness, raising interest and participation in sporting issues.
- c. Private sector: larger companies have introduced sports into their policies.
- d. As for the role of athletes, one of the national experts claimed that they should be seen as ambassadors, since they have a major responsibility when they represent the country.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

From a budgetary perspective, economic resources dedicated to sport diplomacy are difficult to quantify as a variety of actions and measures are related to it. However, a specific budget line does not exist. One national expert considers that before allocating a specific sport diplomacy budget, a sport diplomacy vision and clear output indicators are needed.

On the specific questions concerning the tools of sport diplomacy, national experts provided some interesting answers although they did not always share the same analysis. While they agree on the deployment of diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events, or on the setting up of media coverage and international broadcasting, opinions diverge on the employment of high-profile sports people or the organisation of trade missions.

Concerning collaboration with less developed countries, the experts' opinions are relatively similar and they consider that there are a few mentoring or training programmes as well as partnerships for sports competitions.

Moreover, the experts' opinions diverge concerning funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values, which is very present to one and relatively absent to another.

Concerning activities implemented with the aim of empowering sport diplomacy actors, the experts agree on the relatively significant implementation of dedicated resources and coordination tools, as well as monitoring and evaluation processes. On the other hand, opinions diverge concerning training for diplomats and athletes and political support, which are

considered to be underdeveloped by one expert, while the other considers them to be relatively present.

The most important sport diplomacy activities in Malta are sporting exchanges conducted under bilateral agreements with third countries..

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The greatest weaknesses of sport diplomacy in Malta are:

- a. Lack of awareness (this is changing -see section 2 of this Report).
- b. Geographical situation and small size of the country.
- c. Bringing together private actors and public authorities.

National Experts have identified the following possible disadvantages in connection with the existence of an EU common sport diplomacy strategy:

- a. Agreement on objectives would take a long time. One national expert suggests that sport diplomacy may be better achieved through the Subsidiarity principle (closer to the communities). Another option is for the EU to agree on minimum standards which could be a start.
- b. Lack of harmonisation at EU level.

As for the possible advantages, they mention:

- a. Better coordination.
- b. EU Projects (and Funds) may get better value. Studies and research would be better conducted as data would derive from the EU and not from Member States.
- c. More relevance of the EU at international level and less transaction costs for Member States.

All national experts agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Suggestions made by the national experts include:

- a. Offering technical assistance to neighbouring countries and other continents which could serve as assistance.
- b. Including Sport Diplomacy information in all national educational curricula.
- c. Create a budget strand for Sport Diplomacy under Erasmus+ to enhance its promotion further.
- d. Sharing good practices on Sport Diplomacy. In the case of Malta, a good practice mentioned by the national experts is the creation of a Voluntary Desk to transfer knowledge and capacity: <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-and-malta-establish-new-desk-enhance-voluntary-sector>.

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Ryan Borg** serves as Director for Strategy, International Relations and Support at the Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport (AIMS).
- **Robert Dingli** is a lawyer and expert in sports law.

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
The Netherlands

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Thierry Zintz



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

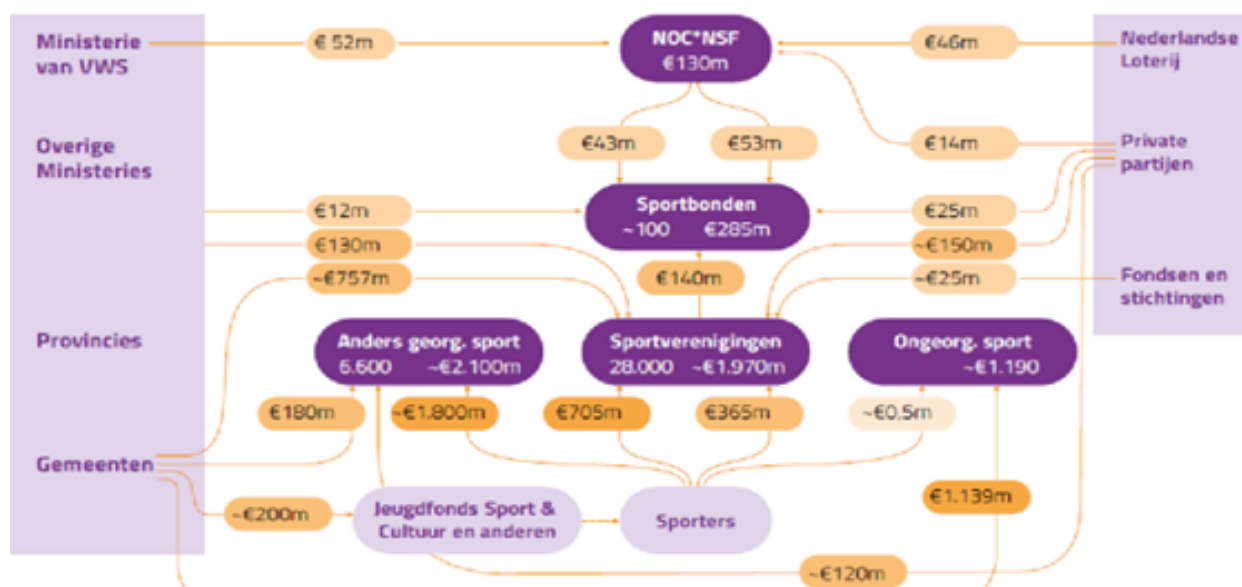
The Netherlands is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy with a head of government - the prime minister - and a head of state - the monarch. A council of ministers holds executive power. The country is divided into 12 provinces and 388 municipalities. It is also divided into 22 water districts, governed by an executive board that has authority in matters of water management. The Netherlands also includes six overseas countries and territories in the Caribbean. These territories are not part of the EU.

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (HWS) is the ministry responsible for sport in The Netherlands. It has the authority to develop and enforce policy. Secondly, the ministry is responsible for financial endorsements in sports. Together with the Dutch government, the Ministry has the ability to create and enforce law to regulate sport. In The Netherlands, there are no specific rules regulating sport. The general law of The Netherlands must be used to solve any problems.

Sport promotes health and brings pleasure, pride, and solidarity. That is why it demands attention. This attention is important because clubs and federations experience difficulties finding volunteers. They also face difficulties with regards to financial possibilities to further professionalize amateur and top-level sport. The Dutch government aims, together with the sport sector and municipalities, to enhance sport in financial and organisational ways. Federations and clubs that flourish occupy a central position in this strategy.

In 2014, the NOC*NSF already had the ambition of being one of the 10 best countries in the world in terms of sport performance. Since then, the NOC*NSF has focused on proven successful programmes (equestrian sports, field hockey, judo, rowing, ice skating, cycling, sailing and swimming). Furthermore, available resources are used for potential successful programmes. Municipalities need to save on sport and assume sport facilities to be self-reliant. At the same time, they focus on the affordability of sport and accessibility for low-income people and people with disabilities.¹

Here is an overview of how the sport system is financed by public authorities (left) and the private sector (right) including Dutch Lotteries).²



¹EOSE, ESSA National Report – Analysis of Labour Market Realities and Challenges in the Sport and Physical Activity Sector – Netherlands, 2021

²KPMG (2019), Brancherapport Sport

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is a “Nationaal Sport Akkoord”³, which consists of six partial agreements and one of those partial agreements is called “Elite Sports, that inspire.”⁴

One aspect of the “Elite Sports that inspire” part is the objective of having a widely supported sports events strategy in the Netherlands. The national government and regional governments and the private sector reflect together on how to develop a national events strategy.

This strategy means that every city, every organiser should refer to it in order to avoid competing for the same event, which has happened in the past. For example, the start of the Tour de France in 2010 was organised in Rotterdam, but The Hague bid for the same event.

This strategy focuses on the fact that all events should be sustainable and aims at hosting multi-sport and multi-city events. If one event is organised in one city, the idea is that the event should be translated into other events or related events in other cities.

Meanwhile, a lot of attention has been paid to Paralympic sports, for many years. The idea for a new elite multisport event for disabled people, which is a combination of European Championships, is actually owned by a private company. This company wants to join forces with local governments, but also with the national government.

One of the inspirations is possibly that it should inspire people to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Before the national sport agreement, there was no formal policy on this issue of sport diplomacy, but there was indeed an informal policy. Anton Geesink⁵, for instance, the All-Round Judo Olympic Champion from Tokyo 1964, or Johan Cruyff⁶, the football player, were very frequently involved in all kinds of international contacts, between the Netherlands and foreign countries.

There were also several bids for international events, such as the 2028 Olympics and others. There is close cooperation between national sports federations or national organisations and the government to make proposals to the international federations. The idea is that it somehow promotes the Netherlands as a country, which has many nice things to offer.

“Several municipalities invested several millions in hosting international sport events [...] to build a track record - e.g. world championships in judo (Rotterdam, 2009), gymnastics (Rotterdam, 2010), cycling (Valkenburg, 2012), hockey (The Hague, 2014), beach volleyball (The Hague, 2015), and other events such as the European Athletics Championships (Amsterdam, 2016), and the European Youth Olympic Festival (Utrecht, 2013).”⁷

The idea that several cities together host an event has already been mentioned and implemented in 2020, when the European Soccer Championships took place in the Netherlands. The idea of sport as a vehicle through which international contacts can be influenced has been accepted for a long time.

In recent years, Dutch international business missions have usually included sports people. They act as a sort of lubricant between the delegations of countries.

³Freely translated into “National Sport Agreement” - <https://www.sportakkoord.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/12/Nationaal-Sportakkoord.pdf> - accessed May 6, 2022

⁴<https://nocnsf.nl/en/elite-sports-in-the-netherlands> - accessed May 6, 2022

⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Geesink - accessed May 6, 2022

⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johan_Cruyff - accessed May 6, 2022

⁷Waardenburg, M. & van Bottenburg, M. (2013). Sport Policy in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 5(3): 465-475.

Sport is a lubricant for international contacts between governments:

- On the issue of international trade, sport is involved, but also on the issue of sport and development, so international development aid is connected with Sports Aid, for instance, in the Score project from the Soccer Union.⁸
- Sport is part of Development Programmes for countries in Africa and on other continents.
- The role of King Willem Alexander, as a member of the Olympic Committee, appears to be very important in this respect.

The sports events strategy⁹ is a formalized strategy until 2030. It describes how the sector is going to achieve the objective defined in the national sports agreement.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

In addition to the national sports agreement, there are several organisations active in this field. One example is the Orange Sports Forum¹⁰, which is a coalition of international and national enterprises that have been participating in trade delegations to other countries, such as China or Japan in the unlocking to the Beijing (winter) and Tokyo (summer) Olympics.

The Orange Sports Forum consists of 11 organisations that are active in trade and sport. Trade delegations are not the core business of the organisation, but it has a role in sport diplomacy and the same is true of some umbrella organisations like the NOC NSF, which develop ideas about how to use sports in international diplomacy issues.

The VSG¹¹, translated as the Association of Sports and Municipalities, organises trips abroad with people from the sports industry and people from local, regional and national governments, basically to export knowledge, services and products, but also to import knowledge and experience.

The Minister in charge of health and sport is quite involved. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister were present in the trade mission to Tokyo, before the Olympics in Japan.

A review was done a couple of years ago of the events that were attended by the Royal Family or members of the Royal family and the Prime Minister for example. It is worth noting that international sport events are seen and used as a platform for networking, from a government perspective, as well as from a business perspective.

In some circumstances, there are discussions about whether people should attend or not, with regard to human rights in the organising country.

Diplomats (ambassadors and economic attachés) take part in promoting international events

⁸<https://www.scp.nl/binaries/scp/documenten/monitors/2018/12/12/rapportage-sport-2018/Rapportage+sport+2018+web.pdf> - accessed May 7, 2022

⁹Nederelandse Topsportevenementen Strategie 2021-2030 - <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2020/11/25/startdocument-nederlandse-topsportevenementen-strategie-nts-2021-2030> - accessed May 7, 2022

¹⁰<https://www.orangesportsforum.com/> - accessed May 7, 2022 - "To create and maintain a national and international sports network. Cooperation is key to stimulating Dutch exports. Therefore, a strong national and international network is vital. In order to make this feasible, we organise networks and information conferences for companies, organisations and institutions. Naturally, Holland Sports & Industry works closely with the Dutch government (e.g. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Sport) and the Dutch embassies and consulates worldwide"

¹¹<https://sportengemeenten.nl/visie-beleidsplein-artikel/?id=24557> - accessed May 7, 2022

and are involved in trade missions in foreign countries with sports people. One example is the Embassy of the Netherlands in Tokyo, which was involved in an Olympic Tokyo project, to help the NOC to achieve their goals.

Three provinces (Brabant, Gelderland and Limburg) are quite active and have a formal support policy. This is quite interesting because a regional government is not obliged to have a policy or to intervene in this sports sector, but they do it because it helps them achieve their economic or environmental objectives. They focus on some specific type of sports to have some specialisation, for example, cycling and the equine industry in Limburg, and they try to cooperate with the private sector.

Regarding the role of the country's sports bodies in sport diplomacy actions, at least the national soccer association, the volleyball association and the hockey association work most prominently in this area. The issues on which the media are most active are the more critical ones, concerning for instance, Qatar and the human rights situation of workers over there. In the past, several discussions over the participation or non-participation of Dutch athletes in international events concerned the Melbourne Olympics (1956), the FIFA World Cup in Argentina (1978) and the Moscow Olympics (1980).

The private sector is also present in this field. The reference to the Orange Sports forum is relevant to this question. Industry is currently involved, for example, at the House in the Olympic Games, which is a showcase for Dutch industry. We should not overlook the role of private companies, in terms of sports sponsoring and partnerships. For example, the company ABN-AMRO became the sponsor and supplier of Ajax Football Club because Ajax opened up contacts to Asia. Sports or professional sports offer very interesting networks for private companies and *vice versa*, of course.

Regarding the role and place of sportsmen and sportswomen in the Netherlands, it is clear that athletes open doors. The World Table Tennis Championships in Rotterdam in 2011 are a good example. The delegation of the organising committee wanted to visit and try to find some partners in Asia. They asked Bettina Vriesekoop¹², the famous former table tennis player, to be part of the delegation. Everybody in China opened the door to her (and the delegation) because she was a Table Tennis hero and helped start discussions through informal talk about sports.

When an Olympic champion puts his medal up for sale, considering that he will help Ukrainians by selling his medal, this is a diplomatic initiative as the line between sports and diplomacy and sports and politics is not very clear.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Regarding the public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities, the most accurate description of the situation is that a little bit of money comes from everywhere. As an example, the Innovation Authority of the Netherlands has subsidized an initiative like the Orange Sports Forum.

Concerning the level of national budget dedicated to sport diplomacy, the experts are unable to put an exact figure on the level of national budget dedicated to sport diplomacy, as they come from a variety of departments.

The Netherlands has organised a few types of sport diplomacy activities. For example, in International Development policy, for instance, regarding Surinam or the Antilles, sport diplomacy is a part of it. Some activities focus on the development of facilities or leadership.

¹²https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bettine_Vriesekoop - accessed May 7, 2022.

The NOC*NSF has set up some projects in a specific city to contribute to local goals. For example, the Geo project¹³ was developed in Rio de Janeiro (2016). In Tokyo (2021), “The Gamechanger Project”¹⁴ was launched to help the local authorities develop policies for disabled people because the position of disabled people in Holland is very different to those in Japan.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY’S FUTURE

The major weakness of the Netherlands is that an overall sport diplomacy strategy is currently lacking. Several actors are taking initiatives but these are not integrated, or even planned for the next few years.

The Netherlands is still becoming aware of the possibilities of sport diplomacy at this stage. National reflection is needed on what possibilities sport diplomacy can have for the country. Generating a strategy from that reflection, and then an evaluation of the situation, would really help the country to be more efficient in this area.

Most countries have some kind of sport diplomacy strategy. It is a national sports diplomacy strategy very much aimed at their national interests, and not at international interests.

The Netherlands should at least think about which international interests we would try to improve by having a common EU sport diplomacy policy. For instance, considering the current war in Ukraine and the way in which we handle international events in which Russian sportsmen compete could be a very concrete issue.

One advantage of a European strategy is that countries would be forced to think about the long term because of that European strategy and possible synergy effects by joining forces.

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
POLAND

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Elite sport and sport infrastructures fall under the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, which was created in 2005. Whereas the national sport system falls under the jurisdiction of the Polish Ministry of Sport and Tourism, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for public diplomacy and currently cites sport as a tool of soft power on its website. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, in post-communist Poland, cultural diplomacy became particularly politicised and started including sports-related matters in its public diplomacy strategy (Ociepka, 2021; Kobierecki et al., 2021).

The department within the ministry in charge of promoting Poland abroad was renamed Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy in 2008 (Ociepka, 2012). According to its definition of public diplomacy, the Ministry notably aims to promote Polish culture through the “conduct [of] ‘soft’ pressure on institutions and people who take decisions” (Ociepka, 2012).

The men’s European football championship (Euro) co-hosted by Poland and Ukraine in 2012 played a central role in Poland’s sport diplomacy as part of its broader public diplomacy strategy—it was described as “a great national celebration and proof that Poland belonged to the family of ‘modern’ nations” (Jaskulowski and Majewski, 2015). As it was preparing for the event, the prime minister at the time, Donald Tusk, emphasized the importance of sport in promoting Poland in front of the Polish parliament in 2007 (Kobierecki et al, 2021). The Ministry of Sport and Tourism even described the event as having a ‘Polish effect’, with reference to the acknowledged ‘Barcelona effect’ following that city’s hosting of the 1992 Summer Olympics, and resulting in “a strengthening of the image of Poland” and “a larger-than-expected increase in foreign tourism” (Kobierecki, 2021; Ministry of Sport and Tourism, 2012).

The term ‘sport diplomacy’ was mentioned in reports published by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2013 and 2016 (Koberecki et al., 2016). In 2021, sport diplomacy expert Michał Marcin Kobierecki explained that a clear strategy around sport diplomacy in Poland was still emerging (Kobierecki et al., 2021). The 2012 Euro remains the main accomplishment of Poland’s sport diplomacy strategy, while the Polish Olympic Committee has increasingly emerged as a key player in sport diplomacy activities.

Three recent examples of sport diplomacy activities include the ‘Sports UP Initiative’ by the United States embassy in Warsaw which aims to bring both countries closer together through sports (particularly American sports), and a 2021 contest around public diplomacy which enabled sports clubs wishing to develop projects aimed at strengthening Poland’s image to apply for grants. Following the Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, forms of aid provided by Poland included hosting Ukrainian athletes, sometimes organizing competitions in which they could participate. .

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Poland does not have a formalized sport diplomacy strategy, but it does have ad hoc activities integrated into government policies with clear tools and objectives. According to interviewees, the most important objectives are: improving Poland’s global reputation; creating business opportunities; and normalizing and/or reinforcing diplomatic relations.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

The governance model among sport diplomacy actors in Poland is mostly decentralized. Different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources, with the Ministry of Sport being a key player in the field. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is only relatively important. At a more local level, city authorities – including municipalities – and other local institutions engage in ad hoc activities and a few of them receive funds dedicated to sport diplomacy.

Whereas sports bodies are not highly involved in sport diplomacy, the Polish Olympic Committee was cited as a relevant player by all interviewees. Among other players that can be regarded as important actors in the field of sport diplomacy, the media does not particularly engage with sport diplomacy while the private sector and Polish athletes are involved on an ad hoc basis. Two other institutions mentioned by this report's interviewees – the Polish Cycling Federation and the University of Lodz – also engage in sport diplomacy activities on an ad hoc basis.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

The public resources available for sport diplomacy activities were described as adequate by all interviewees with the exception of Grzegorz Botwina who described them as 'scarce'. Where there is investment in sport diplomacy it usually focuses on diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events. Other sport diplomacy-related activities such as employment of high-profile sports people or international broadcasting are yet to be fully implemented in Poland. The country does not engage in activities in collaboration with "emerging" countries but does rely on its Ministry of Sport and Tourism – in conjunction with sports bodies such as the Polish Olympic Committee – to use sport as a tool to promote international cooperation.

The most important sport diplomacy activities in Poland are centred on the hosting of mega-sports events, although the last mega-event was the UEFA Euro 2012.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

Today, Poland lacks an independent strategy, and perceives sport diplomacy as a minor part of its broader public diplomacy. The lack of general awareness of the stakes of sport diplomacy and the limited resources available further limit sport-diplomacy-related activities in the country. On a more local level, sport diplomacy exists through grassroots activities and may be a good starting point for developing a distinct strategy in Poland.

According to the two interviewees working for the unnamed national NGO:

"The biggest challenge is to build a coherent strategy that would be sustained through a changing government, as well as the involvement of the private sector, especially now in a pandemic and war. When it comes to opportunities, an important aspect is the presence in the European Union, which opens the door to many possibilities."

At EU-level, different interests among states may present challenges to the implementation of a common sport diplomacy strategy, although this goal remains highly desirable according to the interviewees. Such a strategy could provide the necessary framework and funding that are currently missing at the national level, while enriching each participating country with valuable shared knowledge. For example, good practices of the cycling diplomacy initiative of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs could inspire other countries..

6. INTERVIEWS

- Grzegorz Botwina, President of the Polish Cycling Management and an Assistant Professor in Management at the Faculty of Management, University of Warsaw. He is also the president of the Institute for Sport Governance foundation
- Michał Marcin Kobierecki, Associate Professor at the University of Lodz and a national reference in the field of sport diplomacy.
- Two participants from a national sport non-governmental organisation also participated anonymously.

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

In Portugal, a Secretary of State for Youth and Sport, under the Minister in the cabinet of the Prime Minister and for Parliamentary Affairs, directs sport policy in the Portuguese government. The Basic Law on Physical Activity and Sports (Law no. 5/2007) defines the bases of the policies for the development of physical activity and sport. According to article 11, in order to increase international cooperation in the area of sport, the State shall (i) ensure Portugal's full participation in European and international sporting bodies, namely the institutions of the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the Ibero-American Sports Council; (ii) establish cooperation programmes with other countries and encourage international sporting exchanges at the various age levels; (iii) give priority to sporting exchanges with Portuguese-speaking countries, in particular within the framework of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries; and (iv) ensure that sports programmes aimed at Portuguese communities established in other countries are implemented, with a view to developing ties with their community of origin.

From an institutional perspective, it is also worth mentioning:

1. The Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth (Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, IPDJ), whose mission is to implement an integrated and decentralized policy in the areas of sport -and youth-, in close collaboration with public and private entities, including sports organisations. IPDJ is involved in the definition, implementation and evaluation of public sport policy, promoting the widespread use of sport, as well as supporting regular and high-performance sport through the provision of technical, human and financial resources. The preservation of ethics in sport remains one of the core areas of the IPDJ.
2. The Portuguese Sport Confederation, formed by the national sports federations. Its tasks include (a) Defending the exercise of the right to sport as an essential factor in the full development of the human being and as an obligation arising from the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and the Basic Law of the Sports System; (b) Promoting sporting associations and relations with similar bodies in other countries; (c) Contributing to national sports policy and participating in strategic sports guidelines in general, as a social partner, with the State; and (d) Representing the group of sports federations before the State, the European Union and similar bodies in other countries.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no formalized Portuguese sport diplomacy strategy. Nor is there a "Strategic Plan for Sport". A "Plan for Physical Activity" and a "Plan for Sport in Schools" have been adopted, but neither of these refer to sport diplomacy or use sport diplomacy as a tool. There is not a single reference to sport diplomacy in the Government Programme, or in the legislation that establishes and governs the mission of the Government body responsible for sport, i.e. the Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth. Portugal recently adopted a "Recovery and Resilience Plan" in the context of European Union funding, which only contains a few references to sport, and does not mention sport diplomacy. The "Tourism Strategy 2027" refers to sports events as "strategic assets" of the country, and to the state's intention to promote Portugal by making it an international destination for cultural and sports events. The government programme also refers

to an integrated strategy to attract international sport events and promote sport tourism to Portugal, with a dedicated working group having been created on this topic in 2022. However, these documents do not make any reference to the role of sport diplomacy either.

In this context, the most relevant objectives of sport diplomacy in Portugal are attracting athletes to the national high-performance centres, improving the country's global reputation, creating and promoting its nation-brand, creating business opportunities, promoting the country as a sport tourism destination and driving economic growth.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Sport diplomacy governance is decentralised in Portugal, since different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources. Among the ministries, the one most involved in this area is the Ministry in charge of Sport.

Regarding the role of diplomats, national experts affirm that they are involved on an ad hoc basis, for example, for national representation at major international events. They provide points of contact in the hosting country and support the dissemination of the national brand. As for the role of city authorities and local institutions, they are involved in the scope of their functions (for instance, when they host major sport events in their regions), but not as part of any national or general sport diplomacy strategy or policy.

Other actors are also relevant in this field:

1. The Portuguese Sport Confederation has traditionally strived for Portugal to hold important and decision-making positions in international sport NGOs.
2. The Portuguese Sport Foundation, which is a private organisation that manages the National Network of High-Performance Centres, seeks to encourage the largest possible number of national teams and other international representatives of various third countries to train and spend time in these facilities.
3. The Portuguese Olympic Committee, the body in Portuguese sport that places most emphasis on sport diplomacy, has already persuaded the Portuguese Government to sketch out a sport diplomacy plan.
4. Some sports federations work with the government, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and/or the government body with ultimate responsibility for equality, to promote sport as a way to foster the social inclusion of immigrant athletes. Korfball is the sport that has had the most success in this area.
5. There are no known social partner-promoted sport diplomacy initiatives in the non-sport private sector, i.e. industry, commerce, and services.
6. The role of the public television broadcaster, which has a channel for emigrants, and people, who speak or know Portuguese, i.e. RTP Internacional, which uses sport as one of its primary contents, is particularly noteworthy.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities are scarce in Portugal and no specific budget is allocated to sport diplomacy.

On the specific questions concerning the tools of sport diplomacy, a national expert considered that diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events are important as is the employment of high-profile sports people, whereas media coverage and international broadcasting and organising trade missions seem less implemented.

Regarding collaboration with less developed countries, mentoring or training programmes and partnerships for sports competitions seem to be more developed, like sport exchange programmes, rather than funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values or sport fellowship schemes and grants.

When we questioned experts on the sport diplomacy activities implemented with the aim of empowering sport diplomacy actors, they consider that monitoring and evaluation processes are almost non-existent, and training for diplomats and athletes, or dedicated resources and coordination tools, like political support, are also rare.

Regarding the most important sport diplomacy activities in Portugal, it is important to note that, as a consequence of the provisions of Article 11 of the Basic Law on Physical Activity and Sport (see above), the main emphasis is on relations with former colonies through sport. In this regard, Portugal organises and participates in both the CPLP (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries) Games, organised in partnership with the Portuguese Sports Confederation, and the Conferences of CPLP Ministers of Sport. Sporting relations with the Portuguese Speaking Countries' Community also includes support for sport development, capacity building, and information and best practice sharing. Also the participation in the Lusofonia Games, promoted by the Association of Portuguese Speaking National Olympic Committees has to be mentioned.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The major weaknesses of the sport diplomacy strategy in Portugal are linked to the absence of an explicit strategy for sport diplomacy:

1. Lack of clear and explicit objectives.
2. Lack of structured dialogue and coordination between organisations and between policy areas, and between the latter and economic players.
3. Difficulty in monitoring and reporting activities developed at all governance levels and connecting them to sport diplomacy.
4. Lack of political and social awareness of what sport diplomacy is and how it is linked with sport policy and overall diplomacy.

The greatest challenges and opportunities of Portuguese sport diplomacy are:

1. Promoting the social value of sport and its importance as a driver of social and economic development.
2. Harnessing the full potential of a sport diplomacy strategy in the context of national policy.
3. Strengthening links with Portuguese-speaking countries (which is both a challenge and an opportunity).

4. Fostering the engagement of economic actors in sport diplomacy efforts.¹
5. Mainstreaming sport diplomacy in sport policy and diplomatic efforts.

National Experts have identified the following possible disadvantages in connection with the existence of a common EU sport diplomacy strategy: potential for overlapping activities and “grey areas”; Difficulty defining common goals and strategies; Possible dilution of funding opportunities (if no additional targeted funds are made available).

As for the possible advantages, they mention:

1. Greater outreach to areas and people through sport, that could not otherwise be reached,
2. Greater potential for cooperation at different levels (building on the experience that each Member State already has in the field),
3. Strengthening/fostering the development of national sport diplomacy strategies (complementarity) and those of civil society organisations.

National experts agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Further suggestions of national experts include raising awareness of the relevance of sport diplomacy, building the capacity of the different actors and players (incl. public actors), both at EU and national level, and sharing best practices. The US, Australia and grassroots diplomacy are mentioned as good practices to be taken into account.

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- **Cristina Almeida** is Director of the research and projects department of the Portuguese Olympic Committee.
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- **Alexandre Miguel Mestre** is a lawyer and expert in sports law.

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¹The President of the Portuguese Olympic Committee has recently reflected on the link between the economy and sport diplomacy: <https://www.dn.pt/opiniao/economia-e-a-diplomacia-desporti-va-14899461.html>



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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Romania

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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Romanian sport is coordinated by the Ministry of Sports, which is responsible for the development and implementation of the sport policy established by the government. Its attributions are mentioned in the law no. 69/2000, and include the establishment of the sport strategy, initiation of projects, administration of sport facilities, representing Romania at the international level in sport matters, and collaborating with other institutions and organisations in the field of sport. The Ministry of Sports has 42 regional offices for sports and youth, corresponding to the 42 counties of Romania. Also, over 70 national sports federations are affiliated with this institution.

An important actor is the Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee, which is responsible for Olympic sports and Olympic education. The Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee collaborates with the Ministry of Sports, which funds it. National sports federations are financed both by the Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee, if they are Olympic federations, and by the Ministry of Sports.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Sport is an important area for the general public in Romania, and it was perceived distinctly by the political regimes. Until the fall of communism (1989), sport was a priority for the State and was used as a diplomatic tool. Romania hosted some international events, like the 1981 Universiades, and established relationships with countries including sports issues in official exchanges. For example, Romania received commercial facilities and sent sports experts to countries like Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Albania, and Syria (Constantin, 2020). Also, sport was used to celebrate international diplomatic relations.

Romania has never had a formalized national sport diplomacy strategy, but objectives that could be attributable to sport diplomacy are identifiable. Sport is considered an instrument to improve the country's reputation, promote the Romanian identity, and even develop business opportunities.

In many periods after 1989, officials were not interested in developing sport, and implicitly sport diplomacy. The opinion of Prime Minister Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, who said in 2005 that sport was not included in his 10 priorities, became famous and nationally debated (Buzarin, 2006). His successors were more sport-oriented, and sometimes demonstrated sport diplomacy actions. "Between 2007 and 2010, Romania manifested interest for sport diplomacy, and particularly for hosting important sports events", explains the sports historian Anita Sterea.

In the last 10 years, Romania has invested in facilities and hosted major sports events in Bucharest, Braşov, and Cluj-Napoca. For example, on 9 May 2012, the National Arena in Bucharest, inaugurated in 2011, organised the Europa League football final between Atletico Madrid and Athletic Bilbao. In 2013, Braşov hosted the European Youth Olympic Winter Festival. "This competition was a plus for Romania in terms of country branding, and also contributed to improving the infrastructure for some winter sports. It was an event conceived to help Romania in the long term to host the Winter Youth Olympic Games in 2020", says Anita Sterea.

The European Men's and Women's Artistic Gymnastics Individual Championships were held in April 2017 at the Polyvalent Hall in Cluj-Napoca. Euro 2020 matches were hosted in Bucharest and each of these events facilitated sport diplomacy dialogue through political meetings on the occasion of or before the event. Romanian officials from the political arena and federations have continued to regard hosting sports competitions as an important aspect and the country has bid for other sports events. In this vein, football was used as a tool for diplomatic meetings when Romania together with Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece expressed their intention to host the World Cup 2030 and signed an agreement for this.

Despite these highlights, experts note the lack of a coordinated strategy, perceived as an "illiteracy" in sport diplomacy. "We do not know how to use occasions given by the hosting of events in our country in terms of media, bilateral relations, we are not using those opportunities when our athletes are going for important competitions abroad, when we could send someone to make sport diplomacy", considers Elod Lajos Abraham. This aspect is explained by the lack of a broader vision because each sport or each federation is focused solely on its field.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

There is no model of governance for sport diplomacy in Romania, but various actors are familiar with using sport diplomacy or have knowledge in this area. Even though the draft of the National Strategy for Sport of April 2022 made no mention of sport diplomacy, a former counsellor of the Ministry of Sports, Elod Lajos Abraham, stated that sport diplomacy would be included in the strategy (Strategia Națională pentru Sport, 2022). Organisational actors are interested in being involved in this field, but there is no coordinated process or any detailed written collaboration.

Some steps have been taken recently. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee signed a collaboration agreement for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2021. The two institutions worked together for a common representation at the international level in the context of the mentioned events. "I have met diplomats, and politicians interested in being involved in sport diplomacy, but they were not very well connected with sports reality. They knew diplomacy, but they were not aware what type of product sport is and how to take advantage of this product internally or externally", says Elod Lajos Abraham. Robert Adam mentions that in some particular situations, diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were involved in actions specific to sport diplomacy.

Politicians are frequently associated with sports situations. For example, in 2021, Bucharest hosted the European Championship of the parliamentarians. The Romanian team won the tournament organised by the Romanian Football Federation. This institution is an important actor in Romanian sport diplomacy. Its president, Răzvan Burleanu, was a member of the High-Level Group on Sport Diplomacy created by Tibor Navracsics, in 2015-2016, and used this opportunity to improve his skills in the field and to make his organisation, the Romanian Football Federation, a visible actor abroad.

Local authorities are involved in organising sports events. From this perspective, Cluj-Napoca is competing with Bucharest and has become a serious rival for the Capital in this respect. In 2018, Cluj-Napoca became the European City of Sports, and from that moment, the local authorities promoted the idea that Cluj-Napoca is the Romanian Capital of Sport. "Local authorities have a

crucial role and, in this regard, Cluj-Napoca is a positive example, because it has built facilities, hosted some international events, it has a sport for all policy, and there is synergy between the private sector and public authorities, and this creates an area of expertise in Cluj-Napoca”, considers Robert Adam. On the other hand, Elod Lajos Abraham says that “some local authorities are doing sport diplomacy without knowing that they are. They do not know how to exploit such aspects, and this comes from a misunderstanding of sport diplomacy principles.”

The private sector is involved in sport diplomacy actions. Some projects initiated in Romania have grown at the international level. The Superkombat project initiated by Eduard Irimia became a worldwide event and was broadcasted on a large scale, in almost 100 countries. In the same way, the bicycle producer Pegas has become a continental brand. Some important companies, like Dedeman, Transilvania Bank, and Alexandrion are involved on a large scale in sport and they are associating their image with sport at the national level, but searching for athletes with international visibility.

Athletes are considered to be symbolic ambassadors of the country. The most important sports figures in Romania today are Simona Halep, former WTA leader, swimmers David Popovici and Robert Glință, and fencing champion Ana-Maria Brânză-Popescu. They have often been involved in meetings with a diplomatic character and have showed how their presence is a lubricant for international relations. For example, in 2014, Simona Halep received a diplomatic passport and the title of “Ambassador of Romanian tourism” from the Prime Minister. However, former athletes are used rarely as actors in sport diplomacy. An exception occurred in 2015, when the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, visited Bucharest and the Romanian Prime Minister invited former footballer Gheorghe Hagi, who played in Istanbul, to gift a T-shirt to the Turkish president.

The sports federations are important actors in Romania, and they are the most visible in sport diplomacy through their international implications. Some federations have an important place, like the Romanian Judo Federation, which has a central role in the International Judo Federation, because its president, Marius Vizer is Romanian.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

The level of public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities is non-existent because there is no policy in this area. Very few sport diplomacy activities are implemented in the country in collaboration with less developed countries. Romania has collaborations with the Republic of Moldova, based on the historical link between the two countries. In the same context, Romania has some mentoring and training programmes at the regional level.

Very few sport diplomacy activities are implemented in Romania with the aim of empowering sport diplomacy actors. The first major conference on this topic was organised in 2014 by the Student Sports Association. This event had three main topics, which reflect the sport diplomacy concerns of Romanian actors at that time: promoting Romania through sport, sports in universities and the private sector, and the role of athletes as vectors of image.

Another important project was organised in 2021. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee, and the Romanian Sportive Institute organised on 28 June-1 July 2021 the Diplomacy and Geopolitics of Sport training course. Forty participants attended this event which mainly aimed to familiarise them with sport diplomacy. Robert Adam was one of

the speakers at the event and explained that “the course wanted to raise awareness of this need and to avail people from the sports field and institutions to some basic competencies in terms of sport diplomacy.”

An earlier diplomatic action that involved sport in Romania was hosting the EU Sport Forum, on 8-9 April 2021, of the Education, Youth, Sport and Culture Department of the European Commission under the auspices of the rotational Council Presidency held by Romania. This event was an opportunity for athletes to meet with politicians and other officials to meet diplomats.

A more recent tool of sport diplomacy has been developed in the context of the Russian war against Ukraine. At the grassroots level, some actions to support Ukrainians have been started. Football clubs, the Romanian Football Federation, and municipalities have welcomed athletes and coaches since the first days of the military conflict.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

“The biggest asset of Romanian sport diplomacy is the sports branding, because Romania has extensive expertise in this field”, comments Robert Adam. The general impression is that sport diplomacy in Romania has the potential to develop, considering the experience of some national federations and figures like Răzvan Burleanu, Octavian Morariu, and Mihai Covaliu. For this reason, the Romanian Football Federation and the Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee could play a crucial role in sport diplomacy because they already have international connections. “Those relations made through the Romanian Olympic Committee have great validity and importance”, considers Elod Lajos Abraham. The problem is that these officials have not transferred their knowledge to the lower levels of sports administration or to other institutions that could be interested in sport diplomacy.

One opportunity for sport diplomacy activities in Romania is the fact that the country has many well-known international athletes, like Gheorghe Hagi (footballer), Nadia Comăneci (Gymnastics), Ecaterina Szabo (Gymnastics), Ilie Năstase (tennis), Ion Țiriac (tennis), and others who are considered symbolic ambassadors of the country.

Some national federations have strong connections at the regional and global level, and they could use their position to promote sport diplomacy actions. This aspect is related to the organisation of major competitions in Romania, which are also opportunities to plan sport diplomacy activities.

A major weakness of sport diplomacy activities is the lack of credibility of the Ministry of Sport, caused by frequent changes, political influence and lack of vision. These aspects prevent a continuous connection with other actors when it comes to sport diplomacy. Similarly, ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, or Ministry of Health, do not see sport diplomacy as a priority and the lack of experts in this area makes it difficult to set priorities along these lines. “Structured competencies at the level of public authorities in the field of sport diplomacy need to be created”, says Robert Adam.

If the EU were to have a common sport diplomacy policy, disadvantages identified by Romanian experts relate to national identity and the fact that the EU only has supporting competences in the field of sport, therefore each country implements its own national policy, which will make it difficult to structure coordination. In this regard, the interviewees expect that some EU countries will not accept a common policy. At the same time, the lack of specialists in sport diplomacy in many EU countries will create a problem in terms of implementation. There will also be the problem of financing such a project because it would require significant resources and would also need to integrate the sport diplomacy policy in the EU external action.

If the EU were to have a common sport diplomacy policy, some advantages were identified, such as professional expertise in the field, resulting from the unified action of all the actors across Europe, together with powerful sports branding in Europe, and the benefit for sport, which is at a high level and in multiple areas, from grassroots to research, marketing, and sport performance.

In terms of good practices, the Romanian experts mentioned France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and also Hungary, even though on Hungary the opinions are mixed, considering that the Hungarian government invests in Romanian sport, supporting sports entities from the region with a Magyar ethnic majority.

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Elod Lajos Abraham:** former counsellor for two ministries of sport, expert in sport policies.
- **Robert Adam:** diplomat, former director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Brussels, guest lecturer at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Bucharest, PhD in political sciences from the Free University of Brussels.
- **Anita Sterea:** Lecturer at the Romanian Olympic Academy and at the Faculty of History (University of Bucharest).

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
SLOVAKIA

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Slovakian sport is coordinated by the State Secretariat for Sport, which is a subdivision of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport. This branch is responsible for planning strategies for sports and youth, with the aim of creating a favourable context for sports and physical activity at the national level. The activity of the aforementioned ministry in the field of sport is stipulated by Law no. 440/2015. The main directions of the law include the promotion and development of sport for all and performance sports in the Slovak Republic and the protection of the integrity of sport. The conception of Sport has two strategic objectives: a healthy and active society; and the successful representation of Slovakia.

The Slovakian Olympic and Sports Committee also plays an important role in Slovakian sport. Created in 1993, this organization has connections with the national sports federations, which are responsible for training, competitions, and the development of their sports activity. The Slovakian Olympic and Sports Committee is also responsible for over 20 regional Olympic clubs and promotes education through the Slovak Olympic Academy.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Sport is considered an important element of the Slovakian identity. The most popular sports are ice hockey, football, cycling, tennis, volleyball, swimming, ski sports, and snowboarding. During the interwar period, sports were used by Czechoslovakia for diplomatic purposes, but the split of the country into two states changed the strategy of the Czech Republic and Slovakian authorities in this area.

Slovakia does not have a formalized national sport diplomacy strategy, but some objectives that could be attributable to sport diplomacy are visible. The Slovakian authorities are seeking to improve the country's reputation through sport at a global level; they promote the Slovakian identity in connection with some sports performances, but also with the sports facilities that the country offers; and they use sports to improve diplomatic relations with other countries. "Sport diplomacy in our country is connected with the public policy goal of sports representation and also with sporting integrity", explains Jozef Kučera.

In practical terms, Slovakia has sought to promote its winter tradition and organise the Winter Olympics. The Slovakian Olympic and Sports Committee applied to host the 2006 Winter Olympics at Poprad-Tatra but lost to Turin. This candidacy, like a similar intention in 2002, helped Slovakia to gain visibility at the international level. The country prepared for these candidacies by hosting the 4th Winter European Youth Olympic Days (EYOD) in Poprad-Tatra in 1999.

In addition to the aforementioned events, Slovakia hosted other major international events with a diplomatic character, like the Seminar of the Chefs de Missions for the 2000 Olympic Games and Secretaries-General of the European National Olympic Committees in Bratislava in 1998. The country also hosted the General Assembly of the European Fair Play Movement and the 4th European Fair Play Conference in 2001.

One of the biggest sports events hosted by Slovakia is probably the IIHF World Championship, that the country has organised twice. In 2011 and 2019, the most important countries in ice hockey battled for the title in Slovakia. A similar situation was in canoe slalom. Bratislava hosted

the 2011 and 2021 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships. Also, in 2012, Slovakia organised the 19th Biathlon European Championships in Osrblie. In terms of international events, the annual road cycling Tour of Slovakia is an important competition with global visibility and in which some of the top cyclists take part.

Sport diplomacy is used by Slovakia to build good international relationships and the most relevant case in this regard is the relationship with the Czech Republic. The two countries have common activities in the field of sport diplomacy. For example, in 2017, the Czech Olympic Committee and the Slovak Olympic and Sports Committee prepared a sports diplomacy educational programme for those interested, as a part of a Dual Career project, which helps athletes ensure a smooth transition from a sports career to diplomacy. Two years later, experts from the two countries organised a summer school on sport diplomacy in Pilsen. Also, bilateral sports competitions are organised.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

There is no model of governance for sport diplomacy in Slovakia, but sport diplomacy is an important topic for the Slovakian authorities. The theme of sports diplomacy was promoted by the Slovak presidency in the Council of the EU in 2016 and this confirmed that it was a subject at the national level in Slovakia. Some institutional actors are interested in developing this field.

The most important are the State Secretariat for Sport, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Slovakian Olympic and Sports Committee. They are collaborating to promote Slovakian interests in the field of sports. Also, with the help of the tourism division, Slovakia has been promoted as a friendly country and sports nation through videos that have been broadcast on Eurosport over the last 10 years. These campaigns aimed to introduce Slovakia to the general public in over 50 countries and reach out to millions of viewers.

Local authorities are key actors involved in organising sports events. Bratislava, Kosice, Banská Bystrica, and Poprad-Tatra are the most active in this respect. Another important actor in sport diplomacy is the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. Since 2012, this institution has regularly organised a series of conferences entitled Významné športové udalosti z pohľadu športovej diplomacie [Significant Sports Events from the Perspective of Sport Diplomacy]. The goal is to highlight the potential of sport in Slovakia and to explore the mutual interconnectedness of sport, diplomacy, and politics (Zákravský et al., 2021).

The private sector is trying to be visible, and various companies from Slovakia are associating their image with that of former athletes. One example is the Audi branch in Slovakia, which signed a contract with Olympic champion Petra Vlhová. Betting companies are also very active and visible.

Athletes, former athletes, and coaches are empowered with a sport diplomacy role in Slovakia. Some of them hold public positions and use their social capital to promote Slovakian interests. For example, Ivan Husar, the state secretary for sport, was the coach of the national men's volleyball team. Former Top 10 ATP player Karol Kučera has been a member of the Slovak Parliament since 2020 and is plenipotentiary commissioner of the Slovakian government for youth and sports.

Various organisations are aware of the importance of sport diplomacy and they are involved in projects of this type. For example, in the context of the Russian war in Ukraine, many NGOs and clubs from Slovakia registered hundreds of athletes from Ukraine to help in their training process in Slovakia. Similarly, hundreds of children from Ukraine play sports in Slovakia in various school sports clubs and sports organisations.

The national sports federations are important actors in Slovakia and some of them are active within international federations, like the Slovak Ice Hockey Federation

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

The degree of knowledge of sport diplomacy in Slovakia has increased in the last two decades through the involvement of the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, which has started to develop this field of study in collaboration with other organisations and institutions (Zákravský et al., 2021). One example of such collaboration is The Agreement on Cooperation signed in 2017 by the Department of International Relations and Diplomacy of Matej Bel University and the Slovakian Olympic and Sports Committee.

Some former athletes, like Danko Bartekova, who has been a member of the International Olympic Committee since 2013, have specialised in sport diplomacy and their involvement in this field is a key tool for increasing Slovakia's visibility at the international level.

Alongside the human resources and academic interest in sport diplomacy, Slovakia constantly improves its sports facilities, enabling the country to bid to host major events. In this respect, the level of public economic resources available for sport in general and sport diplomacy, in particular, is increasing.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

Slovakia has many former athletes well-known at the international level, like the biathlete Anastasiya Kuzmina, ice hockey players Miroslav Šatan and Martin Štrbák, footballers Miroslav Karhan, Marek Mintal, Ľubomír Moravčík, and Stanislav Šesták, the white-water slalom paddlers, twins Peter and Pavol Hochschorner, Michal Martikán and Elena Kaliská, the road racing cyclist Ján Svorada and many others whose celebrity could help to develop sport diplomacy in Slovakia.

One major weakness of sport diplomacy activities in Slovakia is the lack of attention paid to sport diplomacy considering the human potential and the role that Slovakia could play in hosting winter sports events. Sports like ice hockey, road cycling, tennis, skiing disciplines, and canoe slalom are vectors of development for sport diplomacy in Slovakia.

Some opportunities could be used by Slovakia to increase its involvement at the international level. One example is the 16th Summer European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF), organised by Banská Bystrica in 2022. Over 3,600 athletes from 50 countries are expected to compete in this event which will be an important experience for Slovakia and give the country visibility.

A few disadvantages were mentioned by the Slovakian respondents if the EU were to implement a common sport diplomacy policy. The most important is the influence of politics that could suffocate sports. Other aspects are the usage of sport diplomacy in global politics and the misrepresentation of sports activities. If the EU were to have a common sport diplomacy policy, advantages identified by the Slovakian officials are social inclusion, the connection of sports

policies from different countries, supporting a healthy lifestyle across Europe, sport diplomacy exchanges, and the expansion and applicability of sport diplomacy to other fields, such as business.

In terms of good practices, the Slovakian expert mentioned the United Kingdom, and Ukraine, and more precisely the Klitschko brothers' actions in the context of the war started by Russia. In one way or another, each country is involved in sport diplomacy, considers Jozef Kučera.

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Jozef Kučera:** Head State Counsellor - Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic .

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Slovenia

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

Slovenia is a small, young country and according to the definition on the Official website of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union it is one of the “Top countries in terms of the number of medals won at the Olympics per capita”. The success of Slovenian athletes in the world demonstrates how sports-oriented Slovenia really is.

The Slovenian sport system is built around the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport and the Foundation of Sport. Each area of the Ministry (education, science, and sport) works in consultation with specific professional boards interested in different topics. In the field of sports, the main topics are professional and recreational sport, sport for all and the historical legacy of “rehabilitation”. The sport board has 17 members (9 nominated by the Government, 6 from the IOC, 1 from the Paralympic Committee, 1 from Sport University). The challenge for the Slovenian Ministry is its broad scope: it must deal with science education and sports at all levels (from primary school to university, from grassroots activity to agonistic sport).

Sport is viewed as a tool for cooperation between the Ministry of Sport, Ministry of the Economy and the Tourist Board, and the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for the Marketing and Promotion of Tourism.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no formalized national sport diplomacy strategy, but Slovenian athletes make an important contribution to the visibility and the identity of the country. “Slovenian Diplomacy is stronger through sport than through politicians.” “There could be a new beginning, thanks to the shift of the Department of Sports from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of the Economy, with more resources for Diplomacy and probably also a greater investment in sport diplomacy.”

The most relevant objectives of Slovenian Sport Diplomacy are the improvement of the country’s global reputation, nation-branding and the opportunities to promote business. This is clear in the marketing project of the Tourist Board presenting Slovenia as the perfect place to host training for overseas athletes thanks to the excellence of research in the field of Sport Science.

Sport diplomacy is also an important tool for reinforcing diplomatic relations and promoting the value of sport. Slovenia demonstrated the relevance of its role during the Presidency of the European Council which led to the resolution of a European Model of Sport (30 November 2021): *“The adoption of the Resolution on the European Model of Sport is a valuable achievement for sport in Europe and at the same time a remarkable success for the Slovenian Presidency. The model emphasizes values in sport such as justice, solidarity, good governance, human rights, and the voice of sportsmen in all sports organizations. Today, we have advocated for sport that inspires and brings people together, for sport that includes and is and will be accessible to all, at all levels.”* (Simona Kustec, Minister of Education, Science and Sport).

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Sport diplomacy is considered to fall within the Public and Economic Diplomacy unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This approach is based on a flexible structure including research centres, Universities and experts nominated by the Government. Dialogue between the board of experts and the Government can be challenging (for example: during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a heated debate over the reopening of skiing activities).

There is a lack of agreement within the Government on the perception of the role of the players and the coordination of all SD actors and activities. It depends on the function of the stakeholder we interviewed. According to diplomats from the Government or Olympic Committee, sport diplomacy is a specific strategy in the Unit of Diplomacy of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. According to those working at the Ministry of Education and Science as experts, the most important role in sport diplomacy is covered by the Ministry of Education and by institutions such as Universities, Research centres and the Foundation for Sport which funds research, professional support, and programmes for children.

The National Olympic Committee is above all a key player for promoting Slovenia and its economic potential through major sports events and grassroots activities. The engagement of official diplomats depends on their personal priorities, interest, and knowledge of how to use sport diplomacy as a convenient tool, but they are not trained in a wide-open strategy. The Olympic Committee promotes collaboration between sports bodies from different countries and uses sport diplomacy in various areas. The organisation of Mega Events could be an important tool for improving sport diplomacy even though it is difficult for a small country like Slovenia to host them (there was a project for a Slovenian, Austrian and Italian bid for the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games but no agreement was reached).

The role of local institutions is based on *ad hoc* engagement according to the opportunity of receiving funds, for example projects of town twinning through sport or the organisation of international events (marathons, cycling, basketball). Collaboration with international events is worth noting: the Slovenian stage of the Giro d'Italia is an opportunity for the country, where cycling is one of the most popular activities, as was with the 2019 CEV for volleyball movement.

The involvement of sports bodies in sport diplomacy strategies is linked to the National Olympic Committee. An interesting project is the participation of sports bodies in the organisation of a National Sports Day to involve the general population in grassroots activity. The larger federations, such as football and basketball, are engaged in economic opportunities thanks to the presence of high-level Slovenian players abroad (Luca Doncic, NBA-Dallas Mavericks; Jan Oblak, Atlético Madrid).

The country's media do not directly engage in sport diplomacy actions, although they contribute to the promotion of Slovenia through reports on top, internationally famous athletes and report on achievements of sport diplomacy if they occur. National media developed a project to raise awareness of sports activity among young people through a training programme linked to basketball.

The private sector is a relevant player for creating opportunities and growing economic interest. The traditional contribution is through the sponsorship of athletes, and many private companies in the sports sector also stand out with excellent products. This is the result of knowledge

and its application to sport (such as Elan and Slatmar, producers of the most widely used ski bindings in the World Cup circuit). Companies developing devices useful to sport have access to Government funding for research, if it is recognised as valid.

Top athletes provide testimonials and contribute to building the Identity of the Country abroad: Tadei Pogcar (the youngest Tour de France winner, 2020 – 2021); Primoz Roglic, (Gold medal chrono in 2021, Vuelta, Tour de France 2° in 2020); Janja Garnbret (world's best climber), Jan Oblak (Atlético Madrid goalkeeper). Thanks to Luca Doncic (NBA, Dallas Mavericks), the "I feel Slovenian" night was organised in Dallas as a partnership between the team and the Slovenian Tourist Board, to increase the visibility of the country.

Top athletes themselves are not directly engaged in SD strategy but they are important ambassadors, proud of their country and *"have been inspiring Slovenians to spend their free time actively"* (I feel Slovenian, Public Tourist Board). Furthermore, there is a Dual Career programme to professionalise athletes after their athletic careers.

Dialogue between the different stakeholders engaged in the Slovenian sport system is not easy because experts from research centres and universities struggle to find answers from the political world. Therefore, coordination is not easy, especially because there is no well-defined sport diplomacy project. The Olympic Committee is the best structure to conduct dialogue with a view to improving the entire sports movement as an opportunity for sport diplomacy.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

There is no global strategy or budget for sport diplomacy although it is included in general Diplomacy activities. The most important activity in terms of sport diplomacy is the implementation of nation-branding.

The different point of view between the Ministry or the Olympic Committee and the board of expert consultants is clear: to the Ministry, the sport diplomacy challenge is the organisation of Mega Events to improve National Branding and partnerships for competitions, to the experts Slovenia is too small to host mega events and if there is the capacity, the Government budget allocated for them is too small. In their opinion, a sport diplomacy strategy useful to international relationships could be based on specific research activity applied to sport, as a tool for all high-level athletes in the world (for example research on injury prevention through Artificial Intelligence).

Sport fellowship schemes and grants are also important projects in which all the organisations are involved (Ministry, Board of Experts and Olympic Committee) with particular attention paid to Erasmus+ projects and International Cooperation Programmes (such as "Sixteen plus China" in which Slovenia was responsible for winter sports) as an opportunity to share experiences at international level.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The major weaknesses of the country's sport diplomacy strategy are the lack of dedicated programmes, personnel, and funds. The activities are not integrated into a global perspective that includes sport diplomacy as a key tool to help achieve different goals that are important for the country or for a wider region. Sport diplomacy's main asset is the quality of scientific research applied to sport which allows the training of high-level athletes and can add value abroad. The

organisation of International Events could certainly be an important tool for improving the identity of Slovenia as a sporting country.

Furthermore, organising a sporting embassy in the form of a National Hospitality House at the Olympic Games allowed Slovenia to establish a platform during recent Olympic and Games. Equally, the nation has promoted the active participation of sport officials in executive bodies of international sports organisations.

The first steps should be to build a national sport diplomacy policy and implement it, and establish a practical structure to oversee it, including appropriate training for colleagues.

A common EU sport diplomacy policy presents challenges in sharing experiences to improve cooperation among countries and a boost for less developed countries. Nonetheless, a common approach might also be an important tool for improving EU branding, financial and human resources, and larger impact due to economies of scale.

Potential disadvantages stem from the lack of coherence among EU Member States, a different understanding of what Sport Diplomacy is and diversity at the national level. Smaller countries would lose some of their advantages compared to larger ones, due to the diversity of approaches to solving specific diplomatic issues, in a slow and complex decision-making process.

A European Sport Model should be a significant part of EU Sport Diplomacy as it includes values and respects for human rights, athletes' rights and solidarity (see Council Resolution on the key features of a European Sport Model of November 2021).



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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Spain

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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

According to Spanish Law, competences for sporting issues are shared among local, regional and central authorities. At the central level, the National Sports Council is the Spanish autonomous agency responsible for the promotion, planning and development of physical and sports activities, the coordination and support of non-state sporting entities and the coordination of relations between the Spanish Government and the Spanish Olympic Committee. Also, local and regional authorities have assumed and developed their own competences in this field. Article 148.1.19 of the Spanish Constitution¹ states that the Autonomous Communities may assume competences over the promotion of sport and the proper use of leisure. Based on this constitutional provision, all the Spanish Autonomous Communities have legally assumed competences on sporting issues and approved their own legal and institutional sports frameworks.

In 2020, the Royal Decree-Law 15/2020 established the “Spain Global Sport Foundation, F.S.P.” (Fundación España Deporte Global, F.S.P.). The main goals of the Foundation are the promotion, encouragement and dissemination of federated, Olympic and Paralympic sport, as well as the internationalisation of Spanish sport. In order to achieve these aims, it will design projects for the dissemination and national and international promotion of the Spanish sporting model. The Foundation is attached to the National Sports Council, and includes the participation of the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), LaLiga and representatives of the different Spanish sports federations, as well as official and unofficial competitions.

At the time of writing, a new Sports Act is under discussion in the Spanish Parliament. The text has been promoted and drafted by the Ministry of Culture and Sport through the National Sports Council with the contribution of other Ministries, the Autonomous Communities and a variety of public and private sports actors. The main purpose of the new Act is to adapt the legal framework to the new reality of the Spanish sports sector. Among other new features, it recognises sporting activity as a right, promotes the presence of women in the sector and regulates the figure of the sportsperson and sports organisations. The text makes no mention of sport diplomacy, nor does it include any specific measures in this regard, although it explicitly recognises sport as a way to improve Spain’s international reputation.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no formalised national sport diplomacy strategy in Spain. However, a report was published in 2019 entitled “Sports Diplomacy as an actor for Global Spain. The need for a model for Spain” [in Spanish] can be considered a first attempt to build a more ambitious plan aiming to design a Spanish sport diplomacy strategy which should be achieved in different phases. This report was drafted by the Spanish Secretariat for Global Spain (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in consultation with other governmental departments, in particular, the National Council for Sports and sporting organisations. The National Council for Sport (Ministry of Culture and Sport) also drafted a document of intentions that systematized an action plan to be implemented in collaboration with Spain’s diplomatic representations abroad. However, it has never been developed. In any case, it should be borne in mind that awareness of the potential role sport can play in the international sphere comes before these initiatives. The establishment of the “Marca

¹Available at <https://www.boe.es/legislacion/documentos/ConstitucionINGLES.pdf> (accessed on July 17, 2022).

España" (Brand Spain) project in 2000 can be seen as the starting point in this regard. This was a public initiative developed in partnership with some of the largest Spanish companies. Not having an overall, coordinated and formalised sport diplomacy strategy as a country does not mean that a good number of public initiatives linked more or less directly to sport as a diplomatic tool cannot be identified.

Improving peaceful relations among nations and enhancing the inclusion of all human beings and communities -also pursued by private sport actors as a part of their corporate social responsibility programmes-, and normalizing or reinforcing diplomatic relations would definitely rank high in Spanish sport diplomacy action. However, the main purpose is still to improve the country's global reputation and promote the Spanish nation-brand. And it is the reputational challenge that shows the biggest need for improvement, as it is an area that usually requires clear public support and direction.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

As already mentioned, sport diplomacy governance in Spain is decentralised. Different public and private actors are responsible for specific programmes and resources:

- a. In the public sphere, both the State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation) and the National Council for Sport play a leading role in this field. Along with these central initiatives, local and regional action should be considered. City authorities and local institutions are currently gaining momentum within sport diplomacy beyond participating in the organisation of major sporting events, such as the Olympic Games. Many of them are discovering how fruitful sport can be for their cities in the medium-long term, especially in achieving additional goals (such as tourism). Also, certain regional authorities are developing their own sport diplomacy strategies or have at least become fully aware of the powerful role sport can play regarding their traditional claims for more political autonomy, even if according to Article 149 of the Spanish Constitution the central government has exclusive competence over international [relations](#)².
- b. As for the role of diplomats in the implementation of sport diplomacy strategy/measures, there is no standard/specific training in sport diplomacy within the diplomatic training syllabus, neither before nor after joining the Diplomatic Corps. Involvement of diplomats in sport diplomacy actions basically stems from a vocational choice made by those who are already familiar with the importance of sport or those discovering its power to change and shape social/international relations throughout their career.
- c. Even if Spain does not have a public sport diplomacy strategy, and no specific role has therefore been assigned to the media as real and tangible actors for sport diplomacy, the media have nonetheless been engaging over the last decades when major sports events were at stake. We could thus define media in the sport diplomacy context as an efficient, responsive actor.

²The Act on Sport of the Basque Country is an interesting example in this regard. It provides for the approval within one year of a Strategic Plan for herri-kirolak, Basque pelota and rowing that will seek to develop these sports disciplines. The Basque federations involved, the Basque Sports Council and other agents related to these sports must take part in drawing up the plan and it must contain measures aimed at the promotion of these disciplines abroad. This provision is clearly linked to the promotion of the image of the Autonomous Community abroad through sport. The Act is available at: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2011-20657>

d. Taking into consideration the different sizes and powers of each different sports sector/ concrete actor, some specific private entities are currently the ones assuming a significant number of Spanish sport diplomacy actions and efforts. Clubs like Real Madrid or F.C. Barcelona, major federations (such as LaLiga, Real Federación Española de Fútbol) or individual sportspeople and their constellations of foundations and sponsors are the biggest asset in sport diplomacy that Spain can currently count on.

e. Universities and researchers have a residual role that should be enhanced.

Although the National Council for Sport has recently been redoubling its efforts to appear as the coordinating body, effective coordination, with no overlaps or inconsistencies, remains one of the key challenges in the case of Spain.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Public economic resources available for sport diplomacy activities are scarce in Spain. To begin with, there is no such thing as a national budget dedicated to sport diplomacy, but one-off budgetary allocations for concrete and short events and goals. It is therefore an indeterminate budget. The creation of the Spain Global Sports Foundation does not seem to have contributed to change this situation, given that no significant steps have been taken towards its implementation since its creation.

With regard to the sports diplomacy activities implemented, the experts note mainly diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events. Media coverage and international broadcasting, the employment of high-level athletes or the organisation of trade missions remain relatively undeveloped.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities implemented in collaboration with less developed countries, mentoring or training programs are considered an important tool and are developed as are partnerships for sports competitions. Sport exchange programmes are also an interesting tool used sparingly.

To summarise, the most important sport diplomacy activities in Spain are:

- a. Private corporate actions aiming for growth towards new markets.
- b. Public relations spontaneously carried out by top sportspeople and their entourage (foundations and sponsors).
- c. Attempt to organise major sporting events.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

Sports are of great importance in Spain and Spanish sportspeople are generally very well known all over the world, however, this is not the case with Spain's sport diplomacy. The great many actors taking part in sports and in diplomacy require a major coordination effort. An overall sport diplomacy strategy would be the key to success, as well as capitalising on Spain's drive within the sports sphere in many aspects (sports performance; sports management; etc.) into public diplomacy.

The greatest challenges and opportunities of sport diplomacy in Spain are:

- a. Recognising the importance of sport diplomacy as a first-degree diplomatic tool.

- b. Initiating the process towards the completion of an inclusive national sport diplomacy strategy.
- c. Public authorities need to be aware of the potential that our country has in this field (well-known athletes, facilities, climate, historical links with a good number of countries - especially in Latin America).

The National Experts have identified the following possible disadvantages in connection with the existence of an EU common sport diplomacy strategy:

- a. The reluctance to transfer national resources and identities to create a European sport diplomacy actor, as national sports are still considered by many Member States to be one of the most powerful national (internal) binding forces and part of their “core” national identity.
- b. A mismatch between having several more or less independent European sports systems/competitions but just one single sport diplomacy system. Although in reality sports competitions – internal and external ones, such as the Olympics – and sport diplomacy are not strictly the same, they must somehow appear to go hand in hand, or there could be a risk of lacking credibility.
- c. Disparity in the economic interests of national public/private actors across Member States may interfere in the process.

All three national experts agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. As for the possible advantages, they mention:

- a. A step forward towards an internally even more united EU. Sooner or later, European teams and individuals representing the EU as a single common entity within international competitions must be put on the table. The advantages are of such a nature and scope (quantitative, qualitative; internal, external, etc.) in favour of a stronger EU that no other measure would be more effective or cost-effective than this. But as long as sport is structured on a national level, states see each other as competitors.
- b. Strengthening EU public diplomacy around the world.
- c. Better economies of scale/Better funding.

Purpose and ambition are very much needed. Most sport diplomacy actions lacking purpose do not achieve any measurable results because they become more process-aimed than purpose-aimed. It is important to be honest and link adequate means to adequate goals. To take advantage of the potential, maybe it is about time to put all actors into action in a coordinated effort.

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Diego Calatayud Soriano** is a Spanish Diplomat. He is the author of the Report “La Diplomacia deportiva como actor de la España Global. La necesidad de un modelo para España”.
- **Belén Lara Martínez** serves as the head of the Projects Division at the Spanish National Sports Council (Consejo Superior de Deportes).
- **Javier Sobrino de Toro** is a Professor of Business Strategy at Universidad Pontificia de Comillas and ICADE Business School.

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NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Sweden

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet-RF) and Swedish Sports Education (SISU Idrottsutbildarna) are the main structures for sport in Sweden. As the names indicate, they consist of a traditional federation structure and an education structure called SISU Idrottsutbildarna. There are two legal bodies but one office.

The organisational structure is based on 71 federations, 19 districts and includes around 18,000 clubs. The Swedish Sports Confederation and Swedish Sports Education distribute financial resources to both the federations and the districts (around SEK 720 million/€67 million in 2021). The resources of the Swedish Sports Confederation and Swedish Sports Education are primarily state support from the Swedish fiscal budget.

The Swedish Olympic Committee is a separate organisation. The committee consists of 41 member federations, the national sports federations for the Olympic sports and 15 recognized federations (recognized by the International Olympic Committee, but not currently on the Olympic programme). It is the Swedish Sports Confederation that distributes the financial resources to the Swedish Olympic Committee.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

Sweden does not have a specific sport diplomacy strategy. Themes in line with such topics are included in the 'International Strategy 2018-2025 of the Swedish Sports Confederation' and in the good governance work of the sports federations.

Due to the governance structure with considerable delegation of tasks to the Swedish Sport Confederation, the Swedish Sports Confederation can be said to 'own' the topic: it is leading in its development. The Swedish Sports Confederation has close relations with the Government built on delegation and trust.

Considering the Swedish Sports Confederation's "International Guidelines for Swedish Sport", decided at the General Assembly in 2015, Swedish sport should work according to the principles of good governance, which includes democratic processes, transparency and anti-corruption.

The document "RF's code for democratic governance of sports federations and clubs" is modelled on the "Swedish Code of Corporate Governance" and uses the governance principle "Follow or Explain".

In the International Strategy 2018-2025 of the Swedish Sports Confederation the goal is described as the following:

- 35% of the federations with international operations must complete training, a workshop or project on Good Governance nationally or internationally.
- The need for work with Good Governance has become increasingly clear and is of great importance. It is important for the Swedish sports movement to be aware of what is happening at the international level and for sports federations to follow best practice. In the international guidelines, Good Governance is described as work with democratic processes, transparency and anti-corruption.

- **Responsibility of federations:** Sports in Sweden must always stand for Good Governance and international representatives at international level must work for and support the development of a transparent and democratically structured sports movement without corruption.
- **Responsibility of the federations and Swedish Sports Education SISU:** Based on the needs of the federations, they should offer training and meeting places for both new knowledge acquisition and exchanges. The federations must also contribute to disseminating good examples and support federations to achieve the goals.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

The model of governance is a combination of what is written in the international strategy and the international guidelines, the implementation of the code and the ambition to have more international representatives. The Swedish Sports Confederation has very good cooperation with the Ministry for Sport but is working to get the Ministry of Foreign affairs more involved in sport. It is said that the international representatives of the Sport Federations have a broad network beyond the Government network, in the field of public entities, and that this could be put to greater use.

Generally, there are good relations between the Swedish Sports Confederation and the Ministry responsible for Sport. Sport has been under various ministries over time: currently it is part of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

In general, Sweden sees sport as a national competence, and not a competence that should be delegated to international inter-governmental institutions such as the European Union or Council of Europe. Sweden holds the Presidency of the European Council in the first half of 2023. According to the Council on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 January 2021-30 June 2024), the topics to be addressed during the Swedish Presidency could include: Good Governance development and promotion within sport.

Regarding the level of engagement of official diplomats in sport diplomacy, it is suggested that the Swedish Sports Confederation aims to enhance relations and cooperation between the international representatives in the Sport Federations and Swedish ambassadors around the world. However, the code for democratic governance is relevant and useful for all stakeholders operating in the field of sport.

Only a few sports federations are active in this field, but all federations are obliged to follow the international guidelines.

Regarding the media, they could raise questions and increase the volume of sport diplomacy actions and the private sector would indirectly influence by following and placing emphasis on the code for democratic governance in its collaboration with the sports sector.

Moreover, athletes and their federations are independent. Many athletes and federations have refused to compete with Russian athletes – and are free to do so.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

The work on good governance has been increased and made more precise and concrete in recent years. A timeline is set for entities to follow the code for democratic governance:

- 1 January 2023: the Sports Confederation should follow the Code.
- 1 January 2023: the 19 districts of the Sports Confederation should follow the code
- 1 January 2024: all 71 federations should follow the code.

It is not mandatory for clubs, but bigger clubs will be encouraged to adapt the code.

As the organisational structure is based on a single organisation, the Swedish Sports Confederation is in practice the organisation handling the governmental financial support for sport. The strategy to implement the code for democratic governance is incorporated into the budget, including education and guidance for entities and leaders.

The main activities are education and training towards implementation of the code for democratic governance. Federations must comply with statutes and work according to the principles of democracy and transparency and can apply for both financial and personal support for this work.

No sport diplomacy activities are coordinated at a national level, but some districts work on the international level on the topic of democracy.

It is worth noting that sport diplomacy activities could be linked to education and training in implementation of the code for democratic governance and transparency.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The field is not very broad. However, concerning the code for democratic governance, there is good support and competences. The ambition is to disseminate knowledge of sport diplomacy internationally through the international representatives in the sports federations, but these federations have a lot of topics to advocate for, so this is naturally not always the highest priority.

The greatest challenges and opportunities are getting the federations to fulfil all the obligations of the code at a good pace. But awareness is definitely raised and their interest is growing.

Concerning a European policy the national experts have identified the following possible disadvantages considering that sport is mainly a national competence:

Countries are very different and there are also different perceptions in different countries of how sport should be governed. A European policy would need to be very general to be accepted by all the countries.

As for the possible advantages, it is considered that a European policy could help countries and organisations facing the biggest challenges. But it is estimated that such a policy would be less than the requirements set out in the Swedish code for democratic governance (and therefore, less relevant for Sweden).

6. INTERVIEWS

- Marie Denitton, International coordinator, Riksidrottsförbundet/Swedish Sports Confederation | SISU Idrottsutbildarna/Swedish Sports Education.
- Two researchers from Idrottsforum.org were contacted, but they referred the matter to the Swedish Sports Confederation.
- A senior advisor at the Ministry responsible for Sport was contacted by email – but no response was received.

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- International guidelines for Swedish sport
- Business Orientation 2022-2023



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The Federal State primarily exercises a competence to fund sport, which is based on Article 17 of the Constitution. Since January 1, 2018, the legal base for funding sport by the Federal State is the “Bundes-Sportförderungsgesetz 2017” and the “Glücksspielgesetz” (“Federal Gambling Act”) in its current version. In Austria, on the one hand, state institutions are responsible for sport, which operate on federal and provincial level, and on the other hand there are important non-governmental organisations, such as Sport Austria (the national umbrella organisation for organized sports), federations or clubs.

At the federal level, the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport, the Federal Ministry of Defence, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research are primarily responsible for the various areas of sport. In addition, individual sport-specific areas may also fall into the competence of other federal ministries.

According to Article 15 of the Constitution, sport is a competence of the regions. Nine regional directors for sport have also been established.

The “Bundes-Sportförderungsgesetz 2017” established the Bundes-Sport GmbH (BSG) as a funding agency, owned by the Federal State. The tasks of this agency include the distribution, controlling and monitoring of funding according to the law, the processing of other funding in the field of sport, funding for the preparation and implementation of major sports events of international importance (Olympic and Paralympic Games, Special Olympics World Games, World Cup and European Championships as well as sports events of general importance for Austria), the promotion of sport for women, girls and disadvantaged groups, the promotion of sporting science-projects and the promotion of top-level sport and the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport.¹

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

In Austria, in addition to the structural framework (see 1), the principle of autonomy of the federations and associations is valid.

A national strategy in the field of sports diplomacy does not exist.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Due to the national specifics described above, Austria carries on diplomatic activities in the framework of bilateral and international cooperation. Until now, despite its engagement in international bodies or within the course of international conventions, Austria has further tried to contribute to international understanding and the promotion of social and cultural values by

¹Struktur und Organisation: Sport Austria. 2022. Start: Sport Austria. <https://www.sportaustria.at/de/sport-in-oesterreich-und-europa/sport-in-oesterreich/struktur-und-organisation/>, (accessed December 28, 2022).

organising major international sporting events. As a nation specialized in winter sports, Austria has held numerous Alpine and Nordic World Championships. Innsbruck, the capital of the federal province Tyrol, has hosted the Winter Olympics twice, in 1964 and 1976, and in 2012, the Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG). While the Games in 1964 were above all a project to support the economic and political reconstruction of Austria after the Second World War and to contribute to the identification of the population with the re-established neutral Republic of Austria; the Winter Olympics in 1976 were intended as a “bridge builder” between the two geopolitical blocs during the Cold War.²

Another major sports event was held in Austria 2008: on the occasion of the EURO 2008, which was organised together with Switzerland and Austria, Austria’s 81 embassies, six permanent representations to international organisations, two branch offices of embassies and 15 consulates general were further commissioned to act as “embassies of passion” for the EURO 2008 around the world.³

In 2025, the Alpine World Ski Championships will take place in Saalbach/Salzburg, where certain values such as the important topic of sustainability in the field of sport will be emphasised.⁴

Austria supports initiatives related to sport and human rights in multilateral bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council⁵ and the UN General Assembly. This includes the support of resolutions and initiatives connected with sport-events to promote human rights. At the same time, Austria strives to ensure that the need to respect human rights is adequately considered in the organisation of sporting events itself. In 2022 Austria made a financial contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for projects related to combat antisemitism through sport.

Austria’s accession to the Advisory Board of the Centre for Sports and Human Rights and its permanent participation in the Working Group on Sport and Human Rights⁶ were also sport-diplomatic activities to emphasize the topic of human rights together with other countries. The Working Group on Sport and Human Rights has worked together with stakeholders in organised sport in Austria since 2015 in order to address human rights challenges and potentials in sport. In this working group the participants exchange ideas and share experiences and best practice examples.

Building on Austria’s extensive experience as an organiser for sporting events, the Federal Ministry responsible for sport published the handbook “International Sporting Events & Human Rights” in 2021. This handbook addresses sport-federations, organising committees of sports events with an international dimension (including cities, municipalities, and regions) as well as companies, sponsors and the media.⁷

²Siehe “Die Olympischen Winterspiele 1964 und 1976 in Innsbruck im Vergleich”; Schober, Hannes, Graz, 2016

³Österreichische Diplomaten: “Botschafter der Leidenschaft” für die EURO 2008. OTS.at. https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20070906_OTS0009/oesterreichische-diplomaten-botschafter-der-leidenschaft-fuer-die-euro-2008 (accessed January 11, 2023).

⁴Saalbach 2025. Skicircus Saalbach Hinterglemm Leogang Fieberbrunn. <https://www.saalbach.com/de/saalbach2025/Saalbach2025> (accessed January 11, 2023).

⁵Österreich im VN-Menschenrechtsrat. Startseite – BMEIA, Außenministerium Österreich. <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/themen/menschenrechte/oesterreich-im-vn-menschenrechtsrat/> (accessed January 11, 2023).

⁶<https://www.sportundmenschenrechte.at/ag-sport-menschenrechte/> (11.01.2023).

⁷Internationale Sportereignisse & Menschenrechte. Fairplay. <https://www.fairplay.or.at/projekte/sport-fuer-entwicklung-und-menschenrechte/internationale-sportereignisse-menschenrechte> (accessed December 28, 2022).

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Austria was engaged in the “Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group”. In the course of the work in the group, close contacts were also established with the organisation “Peace and Sport”, which is based in Monaco and carries out projects and initiatives together with international sport-federations and NGOs in the field of sport & development cooperation. Symbolically, April 6th became the “International Day of Sport for Development and Peace”. This day, many Austrian sport-organisations and the members of government, responsible for sport, draw attention to projects that use sport achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

At the diplomatic level, Austria promotes cooperation between countries through agreements or memoranda of understanding. Occasionally, bilateral relations are deepened through events.

Examples from the recent past:

- In 2020, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Austria and Japan, a 75-person Japanese martial arts delegation from the Nippon Budokan Foundation visited Austria. Various events and martial arts demonstrations were held.⁸
- In September 2021, a diplomatic “cricket match” of the embassies of cricket-playing countries (Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa, UK) took place at the De la Salle sports centre in Vienna. The winner received the “Embassy Cup”.⁹
- The Danube Cup was founded in 1990, shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain, as a peace-building and cross-border sports project of three countries (Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary). Later, Czechoslovakia was replaced by the successor State Slovakia. The Danube Cup is an annual series of events in the countries mentioned (mainly in the youth sector). Currently, competitions of the following associations are held: Baseball/Softball, Archery, Judo, Modern Pentathlon, and Table Tennis. The country with the most points in total receives the Danube Cup (challenge cup, currently Slovakia). Austria would like to cultivate this tradition and possibly expand it in the future. For the 30th anniversary in 2020, the idea was to expand the range of sports. Promising talks have already taken place with three national karate federations. However, due to the current Covid-19-crisis, plans in this regard have been postponed for the time being (presumed new start: 2023).¹⁰

Another example of sport diplomacy in Austria is its engagement in the sports association CISM (Conseil International du Sport Militaire). CISM is the worldwide international military sport organization dedicated to bring together armed forces personnel from all nations through sports activities, thus enabling the physical training, military readiness and education for the armed forces.¹¹ Motto of the association is “Friendship through Sport”. The aims of CISM are as follows: to develop military sports on a broad basis, to develop friendly relations between the armed forces and member countries, to support the sports technical field, to promote progressive and harmonious development of youth and to contribute to the worldwide efforts for general peace.

⁸<https://www.judo-vienna.at/archive/2272> (accessed January 10, 2023).

⁹*Kricket-Turnier “Embassy Cup” organisiert von der Botschaft Sri Lanka*. Diplomacy&Commerce Austria. <http://diplomacyandcommerce.at/kricket-turnier-embassy-cup-organsiert-von-der-botschaft-sri-lankas-d-eng/> (accessed January 10, 2023).

¹⁰*The Danube Cup*. Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlichen Dienst und Sport. <https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/en/Topics/sport/the-danube-cup.html>, (accessed January 11, 2023).

¹¹*What is CISM*. CISM - International Military Sports Council, Friendship through Sport! <https://www.milsport.one/cism/what-is-cism>, (accessed January 5, 2023).

These objectives are to be achieved by establishing permanent contacts between the various armed forces, promoting research in the field of physical education, delegating the organisation of the various CISM events to the member countries, promoting or deepening comradeship among military athletes and establishing close cooperation with other international sports organisations. Austria officially joined CISM on 7 July 1958 as the 23rd member country.

A number of CISM events have already taken place in Austria. Most recently, the 45th World Military Parachuting Championship was held in Güssing from 20 to 30 June 2022.¹²

In the police sector, the two unions USPE and USIP are relevant in this context. The Union Sportive des Polices d'Europe (USPE)¹³ and the Union Sportive Internationale des Polices (USIP)¹⁴ are internationally active organisations that organise police sport championships at European and international level and are recognised and supported by the IOC. In addition to promoting police sports, these competitions help to foster contacts between nations and at the same time raise awareness and understanding of different cultures, which ultimately leads to a harmonisation of intercultural cooperation and subsequently to sustainable sport diplomacy.

Austria is a member of both organisations and regularly sends police athletes to participate in competitions. In addition, Austria will host the 15th USPE European Police Championships Alpine Skiing from 6 to 10 March 2023 and implement the common values directly on site. The European Ski Championships will take place in Hinterstoder, Upper Austria.

With regard to gender equality, Austria has been represented by the association "100 % Sport" in the "High Level Group for Gender Equality in Sport", which published new recommendations in 2022.¹⁵

Since the beginning of its activities in September 2021 the project ReFocus Austria¹⁶ has carried out a large number of sport-related events. Sport serves as the basis for exchange between young people, people interested in sport and businesspeople. The focus of activities is on sport areas such as extreme sports and winter sports, due to good infrastructural possibilities. The goals of the events are knowledge transfer between sports and businesspeople, international networking of professional sportsmen and sportswomen and the support of Austrian initiatives on a multilateral level.

Activities in the field of organised sport

From 2019 to 2020, Sport Austria, the national umbrella organisation for organized sports, was a partner in an Erasmus+ funded project, together with the DOSB, Swiss Olympic and the Swedish Riksidrottsförbundet. The aim of the project "Sport for Europe: Strengthening European values through sport values"¹⁷ was to reflect on the role of sports organisations as promoters of values in society and to strengthen their activities. This strengthened the idea to link European values and the values of sport, strengthen sports organisations in their role as organisations acting sustainably and socially responsibly. The project promotes exchange between the participating countries in order to learn from each other and to further develop programmes and projects.

¹² CISM Events in Austria. CISM. <http://www.cism-austria.at/index.html> (accessed January 5, 2023).

¹³ USPE European Police Sports Union - About the USPE. USPE European Police Sports Union. <https://www.uspe.org/ueberuns.php> (accessed January 2, 2023).

¹⁴ About the USIP. USIP. <https://internationalpolicesports.com/about-the-usip/> (accessed January 2, 2023).

¹⁵ Geschlechtergerechtigkeit im Sport - Neuer EU-Aktionsplan - Genderkompetenz im Sport. Genderkompetenz im Sport. <https://genderkompetenz-sport.at/geschlechtergerechtigkeit-im-sport/> (accessed December 28, 2022).

¹⁶ ReFocus Austria. Außenministerium Österreich. <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/foreign-trade/refocus-austria/> (accessed January 11, 2023).

¹⁷ Werte: Sport for Europe: Strengthening European values through sport values. Sport Austria. <https://www.sportaustria.at/de/schwerpunkte/soziales-und-gesellschaftspolitik/good-governance-werte/sport-for-europe/> (accessed December 28, 2022).

The working method in this small cooperation project was the joint exchange among the project partners, the exchange of knowledge and experiences through the network and the member organisations in the four countries. The result was a brochure, and there may be opportunities for further cooperation in the future. The second of four project-meetings took place in Vienna on 28-29 August 2019 and was organised by Sport Austria.

Sport Austria also acts as the national coordinator for the European Week of Sport¹⁸, an initiative of the European Commission. Within the European Week of Sport, socio-political topics – like inclusion, integration, youth empowerment, gender equality – are integrated to bring more awareness to them.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

In the future, Austria will continue to promote and foster international cooperation in the field of sport, within international organisations as well as in cooperation with the federal regions “Länder” and the organised sport. The EU Work Plan on Sport, the European Sports Charter and, in particular, the SDGs provide orientation in this context. In the course of international events on Austrian soil, the joint efforts around sport diplomacy by politicians, athletes and officials are to be further deepened. A future enrichment within the context of “sport diplomatic” efforts could also be the new Erasmus+ programme, which offers new opportunities for promoting the mobility of sports staff.¹⁹

6. INTERVIEWS

- Members of the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport.

¹⁸ *European Week of Sport*. Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlichen Dienst und Sport. <https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/en/Topics/sport/european-week-of-sport.html>, (accessed January 11, 2023).

¹⁹ *Mobility of sport staff*. Erasmus+. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals/sport-staff-mobility/mobility-of-sport-staff>, accessed January 11, 2023).



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