

CLUBS – THE BRIDGE BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPEAN MODELS OF SPORT

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ŠPORTNA DRUŠTVA – MOST MED VZHODNO-EVROPSKIM IN ZAHODNO-EVROPSKIM MODELOM ŠPORTA

Abstract

Following the so-called socialist model of sports, Slovenia adopted the Western European model. Slovenian sports organisations fund up to 70 percent of their needs through their own activities, which is typical for Western Europe. Taking into account the share of the active sports population, as well as competition results achieved relative to population size, Slovenia can easily be compared with Western Europe. We share the opinion that clubs, being a significant part of civil society and the foundations of sport in both the past and today, are crucial to the accelerated transformation of Slovenian sports funding.

Key words: model of sports, clubs, financing, organisations

Izvleček

Slovenija je bližje zahodno evropskemu modelu športa kot tako imenovanemu socialističnemu modelu. Slovenske športne organizacije se v 70% financirajo z lastno aktivnostjo. To pa je značilno za zahodno evropske države. Tako glede na odstotek športno aktivnega prebivalstva, kot glede na tekmovalne rezultate v razmerju do števila prebivalcev, se Slovenija zlahka primerja z zahodno evropskimi državami. Vzrok za tako stanje je verjetno v tem, da športna društva so in so bila pomemben del civilne sfere. Že v preteklosti so se financirala iz javnih financ pa tudi z lastno dejavnostjo, torej s privatnimi sredstvi. Prav zaradi take društvene organiziranosti športa, se je lahko slovenski model financiranja športa lahko hitro približal evropskemu.

Ključne besede: model športa, društva, financiranje, organiziranost

INTRODUCTION

According to the findings of Andreff (1), the major sources of sports financing in the Western European model of sports funding are primarily households, i.e. the population at large, followed by local governments. This model significantly differs from the American one, where private capital and enterprises are the main sources of sports funding realised through TV rights, sponsorship, the owners of private clubs, etc. Both models are quite different from the so-called socialist model, where the major role of sports financing lay in state hands.

Slovenia is now also undergoing a process of transition in sport. Sport is itself so multidimensional that all changes cannot be evaluated at once. In this paper we shall try to evaluate the Slovenian model of sports in relation to funding, the organisation of sport, the percent of the active sports population, the success of the country's top athletes and to draw a comparison between the Slovenian model with that of Western Europe.

METHODS

Three samples were selected for the purposes of this study. The first represented the Slovenian adult population aged 18 years and over. The sample comprised 1036 people, and was described with the help of the following variables: the forms and manner of sports participation, membership in sports clubs, sports participation in clubs in private enterprises or elsewhere. The second sample encompassed all national sports associations, incorporating some 3,274 clubs. We described it using the following variables: number of sportspeople participating at the latest Olympic Games and results achieved of at least 3rd place, number of

sportspeople gaining in the last two years at least 16th place at the Olympics or World Championships, at least 12th place at the European Championships, at least 3rd place at World Cups, as well as the number of registered sportspeople.

The third sample included all sports organisations (clubs, institutions, i.e. legal entities from the field of physical culture and sports as well as commercial associations from the sports arena) which filed financial reports in 1995 with the institution responsible for supervising financial management. Some 1,579 sports organisations were included in the analysis and represented by the following variables: budget subsidies – public sources (includes the budget for sports from all central ministries and local governments), income from own activities – private sources (sponsors and TV rights, gambling, membership fees, sporting services consumption, also for sports events – excluding the consumption of sporting goods.

RESULTS

The ratio of finance that Slovenian sports organisations obtain from the central government and from local governments is 1 : 3.8 (Table 1). According to Andreff (1), a similar ratio also exists in Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Spain and France. In certain other states, state-level public funding is significantly lower than at the local level. These states are Germany, Switzerland (typical federal countries) and Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Finland and Sweden. Quite the opposite (1) holds for Hungary where the central »budget« is larger than the local. This is probably the consequence of the previous sports ideology and the type of financing.

Table 1: DISTRIBUTION OF SPORTS FUNDING SOURCES IN EUROPEAN COMMUNITY STATES AND SLOVENIA (%)

The table showing European Community is a summary taken from Andreff (1). Data for Slovenia are abstracted from sport organisations' financial reports presented to the Slovenian institution supervising financial management (third sample).

	DEN %	FIN %	FRA %	GER %	ITA %	POR %	SWE %	SWI %	UK %	HUN %	SLO %
State budget	6.3	4.3	8.9	0.6	8.2	9.9	2.2	0.4	0.8	30.2	5.5
Local authorities	32.5	24.7	29.5	26.6	11.0	11.6	20.4	5.2	15.1	16.6	20.8
Public financing total	38.8	29.0	38.4	27.2	19.2	21.5	22.6	5.6	15.9	46.8	26.4
Private financing total	61.2	71.0	61.6	72.8	80.8	78.5	77.3	94.4	84.1	53.2	73.6
total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total financing GDP (%)	0.56	1.13	1.1	1.28	1.04	1.77	0.8	3.47	1.49	0.6	0.6
Public financing GAB (%)	0.22	0.33	0.42	0.35	0.2	0.61	0.18	0.2	0.24	0.28	0.16

Percentages are calculated from the total of defined sources evaluated within an individual state, but are not necessarily the actual totals:

- public sources – budget subsidies – includes the budget for sports from all central ministries and local governments (1). For Slovenia, all funds from the state budget obtained by sports organisations, excluding finance schools get for their sports activities, are considered.
- private sources, i.e. income from own activities – includes sources of sponsors and TV rights, gambling, membership subscriptions, utilisation of sports services (including sporting event visits) and goods (1), in Slovenia these sources are those which sport organisations create by own activities (sources from household consumption of sporting goods is not included).

Slovenian sports organisations finance themselves mostly through their own activities (Table 1). Financing where private sources have a 70% share is characteristic of Western Europe, but not for post-socialist states, such as in the example of Hungary (Table 1).

Sports subsidies from public financing and own activities cannot be directly compared between states in absolute sums due to their different sizes and levels of development. However, comparisons of income levels in the context of gross domestic product (GDP) do make sense. Compared to Western Europe, total funding intended for sport (measured as % of GDP) is lower in Slovenia than in those states, but parallel to this Slovenia also obtains a lower level for sport from public finance (in terms of GDP). Compared to Hungary, the amount of all subsidies for sport (in terms of GDP) is the same, while the amount of public funding in Hungary is much greater than in Slovenia. We believe that a comparison with other former socialist states would reveal relatively similar results.

In Slovenia the foundations of sport, having the main aims of participating, competing and achieving top results are clubs established under the Clubs Act (according to data from the Slovenian Olympic Committee – Association of Sport Unions there are 2,500 registered sports clubs). These clubs are vertically connected into national sport unions and the Olympic committee of Slovenia – Association of Sport Unions, primarily regarding their interests and sport-branch affiliations. There are 88,227 registered competitors within these associations, representing 4% of the nation's population (data from the Institute of Sport). Given its population size (2 million), Slovenia can easily compare with Western Europe and former socialist states as regards the number of its registered competitors and their achievements (Table 2).

Slovenian competitors have so far won 50 medals at the Olympic Games, and another 359 at world championships in member categories. The number of top sportspeople, i.e. those achieving at least 16th place in the last two years at World Championships or at the Olympics, at least 12th place at European Championships, or at least 3rd at World Cups increased in 1996. In 1995, the number was 251, while in 1996 it grew to 305.

Considering the number of registered competitors and data gathered from the sample of the adult population of Slovenian citizens, we can estimate that approximately 320,000 citizens are members of sports clubs, representing 16 % of the total population (in Germany almost 30% (3)).

According to the percentage of the population active in sports, Slovenia is equivalent to Western European countries, noting that the percentage is higher than for other post-socialist countries under comparison (Table 3).

Table 2: Number of medals won at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, relative to the number of inhabitants in individual states

States	No. of medals	No. of inhabitants	No. of inhabitants per medal	rank
Hungary	21	10588000	504190	1.
Bulgaria	15	8990000	599333	2.
Denmark	6	5146469	857745	3.
Czech Republic	11	10362000	942000	4.
Slovenia	2	1972227	986114	5.
Switzerland	7	7040119	1005731	6.
Sweden	8	8778461	1097308	7.
Romania	20	23181415	1159071	8.
Germany	65	80293000	1235277	9.
Finland	4	5029002	1257251	10.
Kazakhstan	11	16700000	1518182	11.
France	37	56681000	1531919	12.
Italy	35	57103833	1631538	13.
Ukraine	23	52100000	2265217	14.
Poland	17	38645561	2273268	15.
Russia	63	149608000	2374745	16.
U.S.A.	101	255600000	2530693	17.
Kenya	8	25241000	3155125	18.
G.B.	15	57384000	3825600	19.
Portugal	2	10524000	5262000	20.

DISCUSSION

In light of the results obtained on the sample of Slovenian sports organisations, we may conclude that Slovenia has a model of sports funding which is typical of European Community states.

Top sporting achievements and activities of the Slovenian population are today at an equal, or even higher, level than during the socialist period and in comparison with European states.

The reason for this state of affairs can also be found in the fact that Slovenia is economically more developed compared to certain other former socialist states. However, we are of the opinion that the main reason lies in the fact that clubs are and have been the major pillars of Slovenian sport. Sports clubs also existed in other socialist countries. But the difference was that in socialist Slovenia the clubs were organised and financed in such a way that no major changes were necessary in adapting them to the new demands of the free market economy. In the former socialist regime, clubs were financed from public funds and other sources. Other resources obtained by clubs often included the resources of enterprises. Albeit they were politically dictated but, all the same, they were treated as sponsor donations.

Clubs can be identified within the Chelladurai (2) classification of sports organisations. They are a part of civil society which, based on law, may be founded by Slovenian citizens. Their income comes from publicly

Table 3: Percentage of active sports population in individual states

States %	sports active
Slovakia, Russia*	8%
Bulgaria*	10%
Ukraine,	Poland* 12%
Croatia*	15%
Estonia*	18%
Spain**	35% 1XW, 15 to 60
Italy**	22% 1XW, 3 to over 65
Portugal**	27% 1XW, 15 to 59
Hungary**	19% 1XW, 15 to 49
Germany**	
GDR	34% par., 28% 1XW, over 16
FRG	69% par., 44% 1XW, over 16
France**	47.7% par., 20% 1XW, 14 to 80
Denmark**	60% par., over 15
Finland**	82% par., 15 to 65
Sweden**	57.7% par., 16 to 74
Belgium**	67.5% par., 15 to 64
Switzerland**	74% par., 15 to 74
United Kingdom**	65% par., 16 to 70
Slovenia***	50.9% par., 33.4% 1XW, over 18

* Ref. J. Palp in ref. Z. Krawczyk (4), no data available on age limits and what kind of sports activities are defined by the percentages, ex. periodically or regularly.

** Ref. Andreff (1), 1XW means percent of the at-least-once-weekly active, par means self-declaration of sports activity, i.e. periodical sport activity, the numbers following define the age limits of the population included.

*** Ref. Petrovic (6), 1XW means the percent of the at-least-once-weekly active, par. means self-declaration of sports activity, i.e. periodical sport activity, the numbers following define the age limits of the population included.

finance, their own activities, and donations from private sources. Club property is categorised as private property. Clubs are non-profit organisations which use the remainder of their funds for their own activities. The key objective of marketing is to turn customers into markets (5).

Other sports organisations are privately funded enterprises but retain the option to apply for public funding. They engage in service activities in the sports field, are available to all, they organise sporting events and deal with sports marketing. With few exceptions (for example, tennis), they do not participate in activities whose main aim is to nurture top competitors and make a profit from their results.

In Slovenia, very few public sports bodies are owned by the state and financed solely by public funds. They perform activities for the needs of local communities and for the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

Sports education in Slovenian schools occurs within individual classes, while outside of school it is offered as classes of interest activities. In school there are no sporting activities distinctly competitively oriented and able to produce the foundations for top-level sports. Yet the strong relationship between sport and the education

system is clearly significant since some 2,800 sports educators are employed to teach children basic sports proficiency and the meaning of sport.

At present, there are very few private enterprises in Slovenia employing sportspeople with the intent of profit-making. This is no doubt a consequence of the socialist past which did not allow such sporting activities. But it is expected that such organisations, typical for America and also found in Western Europe (7), will appear in the near future, first in team-sports and the commercially attractive sports – basketball, football (soccer), and handball.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe the main reason for Slovenian sport's relatively successful transition from the socialist model to the Western European model has been its pattern of club organisation and financing, which was not merely in the public (state) sphere during the socialist period. Sports organisations were and remain a significant part of civil society and have accordingly managed to adapt to the new conditions of work more easily. Reorganisation of at least some of the larger sports clubs cultivating the professional sports (basketball, football, handball), i.e. through establishment of new private organisations (for example, joint-stock companies) employing professional sportspeople will bring the Slovenian model of sports organisation nearer to that which is typical for Western Europe, whilst remaining significantly different to the American model. We may conclude that, notwithstanding certain specific details, Slovenia's model of sports financing and organisation, is very close to the Western European model.

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