

# **AN ANALYSIS OF THE POSSIBILITIES OF DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG SPORTS TALENTS IN ESTONIA**

**Aare-Maldus Uustalu**, University of Technology, Estonia, aareuus@hotmail.ee

**Mart Haruoja**, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

## **INTRODUCTION**

The sport system in Estonia is managed under private law. The government is the creator of expectations and terms. The Olympic Committee, sports federations and clubs realize the decisions of management. The population of Estonia is 1 361242. Estonia has 64 sports federations, 1600 sports clubs and 152242 registered athletes in organized sports. The number of registered young people under 18 years in organized sports is 69066, including 46233 women. The role of the government, local authorities, sports federations, specific organizations and clubs is the organization and promotion of sports activity for obtaining the physical and intellectual welfare and sporting way of life for the for the whole likewise the self-determination of young people.

The main purpose of our study was to analyze and identify on the macro level the ways of improving the legal and political framework for preserving and developing high-quality training of the young talents.

## **METHOD**

In Feb 2007 the European Commission organized a study on training of young athletes in all EU countries in Europe. The method of the study was interviews by the use of previously compiled and structured questionnaires. An interview has 4 parts (1. Youth elite programs overview 2. Macro description of the existing types of youth elite sport centres 3. Key issues for the future of the sport training of young talents 4. Selection of best practices) and 15 lower parts with 56 questions in all. We were included the method in this research in Estonia and we made interviews in Tallinn during the two weeks in February 2007 with the Secretary General of the Estonian Olympic Committee Mr Toomas Tõniste and the secretaries general of the Estonian Football Federation (Mr Tõnu Sirel), as well as Basketball Federation (Mr Karel D.Loide), Athletic Federation (Mr Urmo Raiend), Cycling Federation (Mr Urmas Karlson), Skiing Federation (Mr Jüri Järv) and with director of Audentes Sports School.

## **RESULTS**

Estonia does not have a high performance sports policy. In Estonia 30 % from available financial resources are primarily dedicated to 3 more successful sports federations (skiing, athletics, basketball) and 70 % to the next 12 successful sports federations.

Estonia has a specific policy of regarding and identification of young talents. The bodies in charge of these functions are federations on local, Audentes Sports School on regional and Estonian Olympic Committee and Ministry of Culture on national level. The number of sports schools is 65 and number of students 15844, including 6682 women or 42 %. In recent years the part of women in sports schools has considerably increased. In 1998 the part of women was only 35 %. The number of coaches in sports schools is 588. The most professional rate has the private Audentes Sports School in Tallinn, which has branch office in Otepää. The number of students is 230 and they have splendid sporting results first of all in athletics, tennis judo, basketball, volley-ball, cross-country skiing and cycling. Otepää department has 30 students places for skiers. Organizing “talent identification”, mainly with the age 15-16 years will be held by the coaches of Audentes Sports School with cooperation of sports federations and their coaches from different sports arts. In Audentes Sports School

the gymnasium student studies, trainings and their preparation for involvement of coach avocation are subsidized from education and fund of the Olympic Committee. Environment in Audentes Sports School for young talents is the best in Estonia. All the talents get by government free catering, tuition, training, medical support and housing. Global budget of Audentes Sports School is 1 million EUR. Split/breakdown of the budget is: training 40 %, education 25 %, housing 10 %, catering 20 %, services 5 %. Audentes Sports School transmit to young talents the following know-how: diets, healthcare, anatomy/physiology, understanding training, understanding competition, basics of sports psychology, individual skills, other languages and career management.

According to Estonian Football Federation a big problem is co-operation between school teachers and sports coaches to better combine sports training and school programmes for young athletes. Athletic Federation is trying to force physical education teachers to use more athletic exercises during the school lessons.

According to Estonian Basketball Federation the main current needs in youth sports training are lack of regional basketball training centres and the major risk to identify young talents is the lack of interest in sport at the early age too. According to Estonian Cycling Federation the main current needs in youth sports training are financing of coaches and the major risk to identify young talents is as above-mentioned the lack of interest for the sport at the early age.

According to Estonian Skiing Federation the main current needs in youth sports training are developing of supporting system for clubs that have youth groups.

## **DISCUSSION**

The main current needs of youth sports training in Estonia are to provide good athletes in senior level and to provide healthy society. The major risks to identify young talents are lack of information about possible talents and the fact that low school grades make sporting difficult. In the future we would like to make combined systems between sports training and school for students even more flexible, make sporting easier for students and make the system suitable for everyone. Major risks to identify young talents are “fighting for children” between different sports and that new hobbies will be more interesting. We have a big problem because during the school day there are too few physical education lessons, only 2 lessons per week. But in all of the country – it is not very easy to decide for sports, because it will not always be enough to manage the life of athletes after sports career.

## **REFERENCES**

Uustalu, A.- M. and Haruoja, M. (2007) Interviews with the Secretary General of Estonian Olympic Committee and with the secretaries general of Estonian Football, Basketball, Athletic, Cycling and Skiing Federations and with director of Audentes Sports School.

[www.eok.ee](http://www.eok.ee)

[www.spordiinfo.ee](http://www.spordiinfo.ee)