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## **A comparison of sport management study programs at Austrian universities**

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### **Background**

The small circle of Austrian higher education institutions offering sport management degree programs is currently starting to network and cooperate under the umbrella of a recently founded national sport management association. The main objectives are to raise the overall level of teaching and learning as well as potential employers' awareness of potential recruits. Academic programs were first offered in Austria in the 1980s when university institutes for sport science added sport management concentrations to their existing sport science degree programs. However, most courses prescribed within these study tracks were introductory - level classes in business administration requiring cross-registration at business schools.

As a first analytical step this study investigates all current study programs in sport management which as a minimum requirement are explicitly labeled as such. These programs were asked to respond to a questionnaire detailing their organization, structure and curriculum.

### **Objectives**

This paper investigates the status quo of study programs in sport management at Austrian universities and universities of applied sciences. The premier objective is to have all relevant data for the planned mutual recognition of bachelor degrees as a prerequisite for master programs available. Also, a certain homogenization of the terminology used, for example of content areas, and even the formulation of a common 'core curriculum' might be considered useful for strengthening the position of sport management programs on the Austrian job market. At some point a more formal national or international program accreditation might become an issue.

### **Method**

Various data of the individual study programs were collected by questionnaire, then analyzed and compared (spring/summer 2010). All Austrian sport management study programs currently operational were included: bachelor and/or master level programs at two public universities, one private university and one university of applied sciences as well as two non-post-secondary programs offered by other institutions. The questionnaire was modeled after the sport management segment of AEHESIS or 'Aligning a European Higher Educational Structure In Sport Science' (Petry, Froberg & Madella, 2006). Organizational aspects such as type and length

of the program, but also the composition of the student body were investigated. Special emphasis was given to describing the curriculum, the qualification of the faculty and matters of internationalization.

### **Preliminary Results**

Currently, seven institutions are offering specific sport management study programs in Austria, whereas only two (University of Applied Sciences Kufstein and Private University Seeburg) qualify at bachelor and consecutive master level. Four out of seven label their degree as a combination of sport management with neighboring disciplines such as event management and/or management of the arts.

Historically, during the 2000s three out of the four institutes for sport science at universities (Wien, Salzburg, Graz) dropped out of offering sport management study programs. Thus, the University of Innsbruck is the only public university with a bachelor level program.

General findings are that due to the almost complete lack of tenured or full-time sport management faculty, a vast majority of the courses are taught by external part-time lecturers. Sport management teaching personnel professionally and academically qualified are the exception to the rule. This fact is mirrored in the minimal research output and the obvious absence of more complex, well-funded and international research projects.

### **Conclusion/Application to practice**

The newly founded national sport management association should work with all Austrian study programs in sport management as well as major stakeholders in the sport and leisure industry for a more strategic and coordinated approach towards the development of study programs in the sector of sport management.

### **References**

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