

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO ELITE SPORT IN SPAIN

Author:

Maria Romeo-Velilla

email:

mromeovelilla@gmail.com

Co-authors:

Shibli, Simon

University:

Sheffield Hallam University

Faculty:

Sport Industry Research Centre

Abstract

Background:

The publication Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success also known as 'SPLISS', by De Bosscher et al. (2008), was a pilot study completed between 2004 and 2008, which entails a comparative study on the success of six nations elite sport policies. The SPLISS research group is currently collecting further data to produce a second version of the SPLISS project by 2012. This project is once again based on a nine pillar model (De Bosscher et al., 2006), which corresponds to nine policy areas. The current SPLISS project involves additional countries, of which Spain is one. This study presents the initial results from the policy questionnaire constructed to address Pillar 1 -the financial support policy area- within the context of the Spanish sport system.

Research questions

- How are the funding streams for elite sport in Spain allocated?
- What have the trends in national expenditure on elite sport been in Spain over the last three Olympiad cycles?
- How does Spain's expenditure on elite sport compare with other countries which were analysed in the first version of the SPLISS project?

Methodology

An extensive semi-structured questionnaire called overall sport policy inventory 2010-11 was designed by the SPLISS research group. This policy questionnaire covers all 9 pillars and includes open and closed questions. The present study focuses exclusively on Pillar 1 -financial support-, which involves 29 pages, 32 questions and 13 critical success factors (De Bosscher et al., 2011). The 32 questions were first addressed through an exhaustive examination of the relevant online resources within the areas of sport and finance. As a result, 11 questions were fully completed, 15 were partly answered, 4 were impossible to answer, and 2 were not applicable. Various financial figures were compared to the corresponding statistics for the six nations reported in The

Global Sporting Arms Race .

Results:

Distribution of funding

The structure of sport in Spain is based on a collaborative system between the private and public sector (CSD, 2011). Figure 1 illustrates how the funding streams flow within the Spanish sport system (solid arrows) and also how the funding to support elite sport flows (dotted arrows). The Consejo Superior de Deportes is the main funding body for sport. However, in the case of elite sport, private companies also provide extra support to Olympic athletes.

Spanish expenditure on (elite) sport

In 2011 the central government allocated eur167m to sport of which eur86m will be utilised for elite sport. This implies eur3.54 per head in the case of sport and eur1.83 for elite sport. National expenditure on sport involves 0.05% of the total government expenditure, of which 52% is allocated to elite sport (table 1).

Total Spanish expenditure on sport varied. In 2011 it increased 12% relative to 2003, by contrast in 2011 it decreased 7% compared with 2007. This finding was not replicated within elite sport as financial figures stayed relatively constant (+2% when comparing 2011 to 2003 and +1% when comparing 2011 to 2007).

Comparison of Spanish financial support with other nations

Although an exact comparison is not possible due to different collection periods (2011 vs. 2003), when comparing Spain (2011) to the nations reported at the SPLISS project (2003), Spanish expenditure on sport per head (3.54 €) in 2011 was only higher than Canada in 2003 (2.1 €). However, the percentage of total Spanish expenditure on elite sport was the second highest (51.52%). In addition, the Spanish expenditure on elite sport per head (1.83 €) was also one of the highest (Table 2).

In the case of the percentage of the total government expenditure, Spain's proportion (0.05%) equalled two countries, was above Italy, and was below Norway and the Netherlands.

Conclusions:

Financial support to Spanish sport is primarily provided by the public sector through a decentralised structure. Spanish elite sport is also supported by private firms (economic figures from private sector have not been included). Although Spain's expenditure on sport has fluctuated, the national expenditure on elite sport has largely stayed the same. While Spanish expenditure on sport (per head of population) is one of the lowest in this study, the Spanish sport system makes an important effort through a significant proportion of resources being allocated to elite sport. This research provides further evidence to test the argument that success in elite sport is a function to absolute, rather than relative, expenditure on elite sport.

References:

- Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD). (2011). Estructura del deporte español. Evolución y síntesis. Retrieved February 21, 2011, from <http://www.csd.gob.es/csd/legislacion/estructura-del-deporte-espanol/3-estructura-del-deporte-espanol/>
- De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., Van Bottenburg, M. & Shibli, S. (2006) A conceptual framework for analysing sports policy factors leading to international sporting success. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 6 (2), 185-216.
- De Bosscher, V., Bingham, J., Shibli, S., van Bottenborg, M., & De Knop, P. (2008) *The Global Sporting Arms Race. An international comparative study on sports policy factors leading to international sporting success.* Oxford: Meyer & Meyer sport.
- De Bosscher, V., van Bottenburg, M., & Shibli, S. (2011) *Manual and Research protocol for the Overall sports policy comparison (2011-2012)*, SPLISS Consortium, unpublished guidance document for participating nations.