

WHO FUNDS WHO IN SWISS ELITE SPORT?

Marco Stopper, Andreas Ch. Weber
Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen SFISM
marco.stopper@baspo.admin.ch

Background

Since the establishment of the Federal Office of Sports FOSPO in 1998, the government adjusted and clarified its role within the Swiss sport system. The federal law on the promotion of sport has been adopted by the parliament on the 17th June 2011 and put in force in 2012. A significant renewal in the legislation was the support of competitive sport (SpoFöG, 2011). This leads presumably to an increased engagement of the central government in elite sport. At the same time the government initiated the formulation of an overall Swiss strategy for high performance sport. The lead in elite sport is allocated in the private sector, namely within Swiss Olympic, whereas the funding is mainly public. An important part of public money comes from lotteries, which are de facto owned by the 26 Cantons. Hence the Swiss funding system has grown organically in time and was heavily influenced by federalism. The federal government used to have a subsidiary role. (SOA, 2011). UK Sport proved that a central coordination and targeted funding measures can be key factors for sporting success. The UK team concluded the Olympic Games in London 2012 with its best result ever. A similar centralized top down approach might be difficult to implement in Switzerland, which is rather characterized by parallel funding streams.

Objectives

The key questions to answer are: who funds who in the Swiss elite sport system? How create a more efficient elite sport funding system in Switzerland? As a basis, the different players have to be identified and the cash flows within the system mapped. The analysis will increase transparency and enable a simplification of the system and the consequent elimination of unnecessary flow-heaters (money redistributors).

Method

Held (2001) analyzed the cash flows in the Swiss sport system. De Bosscher et al. (2008) defined the theoretical framework. The current study updates these figures setting the focus on elite sport and compares how the philosophy of funding in Switzerland differs from politically more centralized countries like the UK. In the first phase, a literature review and a secondary data analysis enabled the identification of the key players involved in the elite sport system. In the second phase, experts have been interviewed to complete and validate the data. The financial statements of all players have been analyzed, secondary data integrated and missing data inquired. Figures from the Sponsoring Barometer (Sport und Markt, 2012) have been used to estimate the private funding. Finally the output has been verified in each case with the input.

Results

Switzerland has a deep rooted basic democratic tradition, which influences the structures of its elite sport system. A central coordination instance doesn't exist. The different interests and stakeholders have to be considered to find a broad political support in funding elite sport. The implementation of measures to prioritize the financial efforts based on an overall strategy and on the success potential isn't always possible. The principle of indiscriminate all-round distribution is applied mostly (trade-off). The different funding partners enjoy a high autonomy. On cantonal and municipal level local interests are preserved. Some "flow heater" within the system can additionally decrease its efficiency. The total volume of money in elite sport has been estimated to exceed 1 billion CHF (incl. investments in sport infrastructure), which in international comparison appears to be a relatively high amount. The main financial sources from the public sector come from the cantons (230 million CHF) and the municipalities (1.35 billion CHF). Together they spend more than 1.5 billion CHF in the overall sport sector. It can be presumed that an important part flows into elite sport, but no accurate figures are available. The lotteries fund about 54.8 million CHF. The federal government for his part contributes directly and indirectly to the elite sport with 28 million CHF. From sponsors and media an amount of at least 251 million CHF is generated.

Conclusion

The study unveils a relatively high amount of financial resources available in the Swiss elite sport system. In relation with the overall spending, the expenditure of the central government results quite modest, which generally reflects the federal system and the subsidiary role of the central government. A top down approach like in the UK is in this structure difficult to implement. The high complexity of the system's cash flows is highlighted. An overall national strategy, with the involvement at an early stage of the main stakeholders, may contribute to a more specific funding and hence increase international sporting success of the nation on the long run.

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