

Rethinking Turkish National Youth and Sports Organization: An Analysis of the Debate over the Proposed Reform Legislation of 2006 and Prospects for the Future

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Abstract

Turkey is rare among countries of the world in having a constitutional article, number 59, which commits the government to fostering the 'physical and mental' education and the 'spread of sports among the masses'. Despite the great popularity of sports in Turkey, the national sports structure continues to be highly centralized, frequently out of touch with local needs and under funded.

Much of the growing interest and participation in sports activities nationwide has moved into the hands of private and volunteer groups or clubs. In light of Turkey's growing population and the fact that 60% of the population is under 30, the need for an effective organization of the Turkish sports network which meets the needs of its citizens is of primary importance.

If in member countries of the European Community there has been generally a movement to decentralize the youth and sports network giving more control and input to the local region this has not happened in Turkey. Current Turkish sports organization policy is regulated by a law passed in 1986 called Genclik ve Spor Genel Müdürlüğü which is built on the centralized model dating from the 1930's. In 2006, in response to growing dissatisfaction with the Turkish sports structure, a draft proposal for legislative action called Türk Spor Kurumu, was debated at the national level. This proposal would have made major changes in the existing law creating a more decentralized national sports association system which would give more control of sports activities to regional and local entities. After some debate this draft proposal was rejected.

The aim of this paper is to examine the changes the proposed draft legislation of 2006 would have made in the existing structure created in 1986. The presentation will look at the reasons such changes were proposed, the models on which these changes were based and those groups supporting or opposing the new changes. Some attention will also be given to the future prospects for changes in the organization of sport in Turkey. As a back ground for this discussion, a comparative framework will be provided by looking briefly at the national organizational structure of youth and sports activities in the EU. The paper will also consider the proposed changes of 2006 against the background of the Commission of the European Community's White Paper on Sport published in 2007.

With regard to methodology, existing research on Turkish sports organization will be consulted as well as scholarly research on the national organization of sports in the EU and developing countries. Regarding the draft legislation, interviews with participants