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### **Analysing determinants leading to sporting success: the case of the Italian Athletics Federation**

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#### Background

The number of analysis attempting to identify determinants leading to sporting success at national and international level is growing rapidly. Literature is now revealing that sport performance is influenced by a combination of diverse factors. Those include, among others: the social and cultural context (macro-level factors), sport policies and politics (meso-level factors), individual athletes and their close determinants (micro-level factors). In this field, an empirically analysis of the Italian context has not yet been developed and a lack of empirical evidence that can be claimed. Thus, the study proceeded with an analysis of factors at meso and macro level that have a direct and indirect impact on the performance by focusing on the Italian Athletics Federation (IAF). IAF is one of the most important Italian sport federation with 134760 members and 67335 clubs.

#### Methods

To the purpose, besides a comprehensive literature review of the most important contributions in the field and a secondary analysis of existing data both at national and international level, a certain number of Delphi interviews (=10) with a representative sample of sport managers working with the IAF have been implemented. In addition, a Computer Assisted Interview (Cati) has been used with 30 structured qualitative interviews carried out. For the analysis of data collected the software known as *Atlas.ti* has been used.

#### Results/Conclusions

Results reveal that among the factors leading to sporting success, those at meso-level are the only that can be partially influenced by a direct intervention of IAF policy makers. Indeed, for what concerns the macro-level the analysis of the sport system revealed that many determinants of success are beyond of the control of policy makers being the results of both of internal

(controlled) factors and factors external to the social actors influence. In addition, the specific configuration of the Italian sport system with a large number of social actors operating, determine complex and articulated dynamics in the definition and the implementation of policies. Moreover, the study shows that IAF operates with a disproportionate consideration for micro-level determinants with a large number of resources invested. In this regard, it can be maintained the need to re-define a comprehensive strategy aimed at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of (elite) sports policies and investments. However, a more appropriate approach at meso-level do not seem appropriate to produce long-term effect if not associated with a global sports policy with new forms of collaborations and interaction between all social actors involved.