

SPORTS AND CORRUPTION

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With only a few months to go to the opening ceremony of Beijing 2008 it seems like the Olympic Spirit has left the Olympic Games: FIFA-representatives are under suspicion of corruption in connection with the ISL/ISMM affair, equestrian tournaments have been supervised by a former anti-corruption expert of FBI in order to prevent bribery, the Olympic qualification for handball men in Asia was obviously manipulated, there are betting scandals in international tennis and in football all over the world - not to speak about doping, the biggest threat for modern sport. Will there be true results in Beijing with medals not to be withdrawn months or years later as just happened to Marion Jones – actually in jail - and her comrades, who had to return their medals won in the relay at the Olympics in Sydney 2000?

While the Olympic Charter claims the “educational value of good example” and “high ethical standards” sport worldwide in reality is in a bad shape and the Olympic movement risks to lose its main asset: the positive image. In addition corruption and other criminal actions always directly have a negative impact on the financial situation – even if one does not realize it at once, as the damage usually is hidden.

Lack of accountability and transparency in national and international sport associations, undemocratic structures, too little personal resources and the influence of money are the main reasons for the actual situation. Up to now companies still value the range of media contacts they can achieve in sport sponsoring but with the negative impact increasing that will change, too. Cycling for example has lost a huge amount of money from sponsors and TV since 2006 due to its unsolved doping problem.

And what about sport in Poland? Poland of course makes no exception, structural problems are similar to other countries and for example in football match fixing is recognized as quite common with several scandals in the past five years. So Polish football is not the premium sport it could be and adequate financial support from potential sponsors is still missing.

While preparing for the EURO 2012 as the biggest international sport event ever in Poland the Polish sport and as well the government have to face the fact that they are under attentive observation by the international community. So it is up to Poland to set a

good example just now and thus have a positive impact on the future development in international sports.

Actually the European Union finances a so called twinning project with the Polish and the German administration working together on the prevention of corruption. One part of this project deals with the Polish sports ministry and the sport federations – it includes an analysis of the actual situation, workshops on sport and corruption (for example regarding issues like bribery in daily situations in sport, the independence of referees, construction of sport facilities etc.) and the production of a manual on sport and corruption. The idea of the project has been presented to representatives of the ministry for sports and the sport associations during a meeting in Spala in November 2007 and in autumn 2008 the results shall be discussed with the representatives of Polish sport in a big conference organised by the ministry.

The project shall rise the awareness of the damage done to sport and the sport associations by corrupt behaviour and give advice how to prevent corruption, to detect dangerous situations and how to deal with any conflict of interest.

To let the ideals of sport positively influence the youth and set an example for Fair Play and ethical behaviour is crucial for a democratic and powerful society – Poland has the chance to demonstrate the value of sport to Europe and the whole world as host of EURO 2012.

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