

THE REGIONAL ROLE OF THE SPORT

NAGY ÁGOSTON¹

ABSTRACT. The sport is a very impulsive department that can contribute to the economy. This fact and capability can be used by the states of the European Union. The sources of this tendency can assist the local and the regional development, the urban and the countryside innovation. There are connections among the sport, the tourism, the facilities, the health, labour force, culture etc.

Keywords: sport, regional development, sport tourism, life quality, infrastructure, European Union, sport events, health, labour, sponsorship, communication, European Committee

Introduction

In the speech of the 22nd of November 1930 made by the famous professor Albert Szent- Györgyi he said: „As far as I know there are still schools where students have five lessons each day and only 2 PE lessons a week- which means that students have to move as much in forward to save for the remaining 3 weekdays of the week. Can any of you ladies and gentlemen eat or sleep in forward for 3 days?... Only healthy people can be fully useful members of our society. Sport is not only curing our body but also our health, so all schools from the lowest to the highest should regard this mental curement as their saint and most desired aims!” (Szent- Györgyi, 1930, Sportcongress in Szeged)

According to the morals of the unifying Europe one of the most aims of the state’s is to develop its citizens life quality, and health state. Quality job can be produced only by a well trained, powerful society and people. This can be reached through the support of the active sport- not only in financial means. Studies made on this field prove that in an optimal case sport is essential part of our lives, which not only needs but also deserves

¹ Sport director of University of Debrecen; *Present address of author*;
Email: sportigazgato@sport.unideb.hu

support, as it can serve as a comprehensive means against the negative effects of modern society. It doesn't only compensate these negative effects but also offers useful solutions against them. Any government's main aim should be to recognize and use the possibilities which sport offers. (Sport XXI National Sport Strategy 2007)

Because of globalization our economy continuously alters and transforms. Regionalization is getting a stronger emphasis, which means that the different regions and the big cities have more and more powerful role. This can be recognized in the European Union as well, because the Union also puts regional development programs to the front. It became clear in the last decade that in the contest of global markets the geographical location of economical activities have a huge importance according to the advantages they offer. That's also the reason why the preservation and development of life standards became even more important in the „Europe of regions”. (Lengyel, 2003)

There are many 100 thousands of students studying in the Hungarian higher educational institutions studying at different faculties. The society of the future, the output of the Hungarian citizens highly depend on the young generation's carrying capacity, health and its developing conduct and demand for sports. For this reason the steadying of sport at the educational system and the formation of student's demand for sports is a highly important task.

The aim of the contest between the countries and different regions is to develop the life standards for its inhabitants, and with this to shape up such an economical environment which strengthens the success of the local economical endowment. The regions are competitive only in case their economy is open and the income of each person is permanently high and developing, the rate of employment is on a high level and not declining, which means that from the national income many layers of society can benefit. In the contest of local regions every place has the chance to develop its inhabitant's life standards and qualities.

Hungary's joining to the European Union brought with itself the formation the so-called big regions. These units of planning and statistics get more and more important roles in the life of local politics and in the decision of expansions. The most important strategic aim of the regional politics of the European Union is to make the underdeveloped regions fall into line with the more developed ones. Hungary, as full member of the EU

also gets new possibilities for this project. (Horváth, 1998; Baranyi, 2008; Buday-Sántha, 2001)

From the seven main planning and statistics region of Hungary the Northern- plain region is the most underdeveloped part of the country in many aspects. The rate of development and the competitiveness is clearly shown in the numbers of GDP- which is the lowest in the whole country in this region. The region built up by the three counties of Hajdú- Bihar, Szabolcs- Szatmár- Bereg and Jász- Nagykun- Szolnok has many reasons for being underdeveloped. Amongst these reasons is the limited competitive ability, the low life standards of local people, the domination of agriculture and the less importance of industry and customer service, the lack of modern transport infrastructure and the lack of funds which would enable investments. Even if there is big rate of human resources- and with this also the number of students in high educational institutions is bigger- the educational standard is low because the trained and learned professionals leave the region. (The development concept of the North- Plain region, 2002)

Material studied, area descriptions, methods, techniques

While putting the different factors that influence life quality in systems I took the principles made by the Sport XXI National Sport Strategy (2007). This strategic guideline that serves as a role model serves as the logical basics not only for measuring the regional life quality and giving ideas for development, but also highlights the long determining success factors of developing life standards. This article surveys the topic's theoretical basics, and through the work off of the national and international professional literature it shows sport's potential regional role.

Results and discussion

According to the European Charta: sport is all kind of physical activity that occasionally or according to a managed form serves the physical and mental development of the body with the aim of building social relations or reaching high- standard results at different competitions. The Charta gives a very broad interpretation of sports. According to the European moral the state's most important duty is develop the citizens' life quality. Quality job can be produced only by a well trained, powerful society and people. This can be reached through the support of the active sport- not only in financial means. Studies made on this field prove that in an optimal case sport is essential part of our lives, which not only needs but

also deserves support, as it can serve as a comprehensive means against the negative effects of modern society. It doesn't only compensate these negative effects but also offers useful solutions against them. Any government's main aim should be to recognize and use the possibilities which sport offers. According to this theory the main aim of the formers of the strategy is to make sports to become "everyone's passion"!

In the process of unifying Europe sport has played a very important role. It's enough to think of the competitions throughout the whole Europe, which served and still serve the principles of the European Community: to strengthen the friendship, understanding and respect amongst the different nations. Above all theses sport has represented an important economical role in the past decades as well. According to statistics, 2,5% of the world economics the European Union brute local product (GDP) 1% is produced by sport economy. As the Community has recognized the economical and social importance of sport it handles sport in three dimensions:

1. the studies of interactions between sport and communication
2. starting new sport development programs
3. the studies of relations between sport and economics.

The European Commission has started concrete programs and palatial actions on the following areas:

- drawing in sport associations and European organizations into the programs of the Community
- strengthening the relations and ideas for the development of sports between the member countries
- support of programs accepted by all members in certain cases
- search for financial background for the realization of certain projects, etc.

According to the attitude of the European Commission concerning sport: sport is the most widely used activity throughout the whole Europe, it puts people in a better mood, preserves one from diseases and also plays an important role in the diminishing of cultural and ethnical differences; it is a significant economical factor. Millions of people in the European Union are involved in some sport activities, sport events. In the member countries there is a rate of 30-60% of members in some sport associations, the number of people is around 130 million.

It is widely known that sport has a great positive impact on people and also preserves us from diseases, what's more, in certain cases it is also

able to cure. It is not accidental therefore to support diseased people's sport. Sport develops such abilities which are important in life; it gives not only endurance, fitness and muscles but also provides us with impulse for forming human communities. With this feature of its sport provides a big rate of society with the possibility of belonging to a community. In the sport associations members can learn sport cultural and democratic ways of understanding.

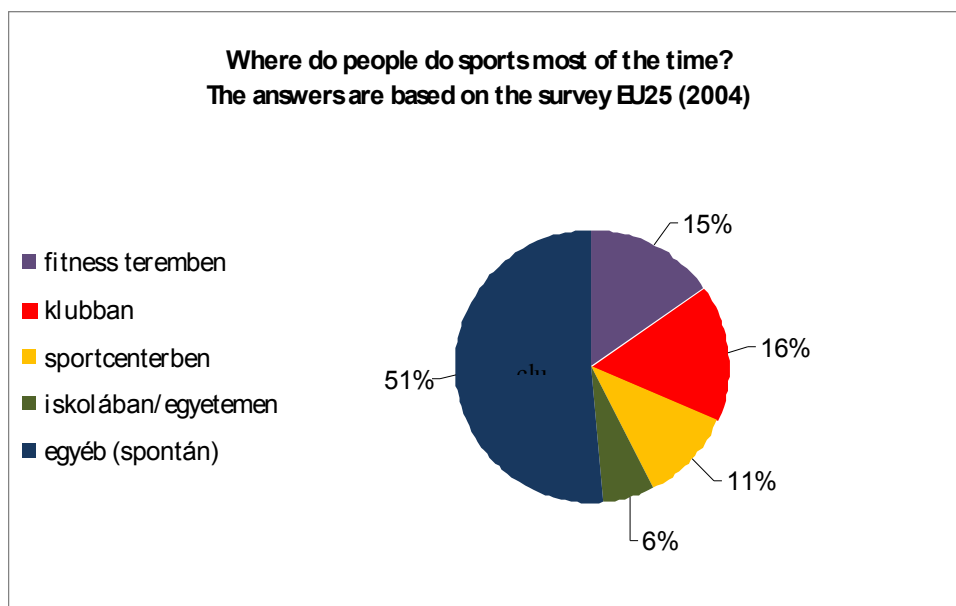
Sport takes a significant role in bridging cultural and ethnical differences, helps in integrating into society, and it's also a highly appreciated means of creating international peace and understanding.

It's widely known that sport- both professional and amateur- is an important economic factor. There is not only a lot of money in it but also provides thousands of workplaces, there is a high industrial potential in it. The world of money raised its interest not only on building new sport centers and developing new sport equipments but also on the legal backgrounds of mediation and services. (Nádori-Bátonyi, 2003; Net1)

The European Union has developed its guidance concerning its attitude towards sport based on a survey made amongst citizens in 2004. The survey took place in 2004 because that year was not only the year of the Summer Olympic Games and the World Football Championship, but it was also declared to be „the year of education through sport”. It analyzed the most important questions of sport together with the question of sport habits. The office of the survey commission, the Euro barometer asked 16thousand people in 15 member countries of the EU. It can be stated that 46% of the citizens of the EU does some sports regularly, at least once a week- though there are huge differences between the sport habits depending on the residence in the continent's Northern or Southern regions. (European Commission- Special Euro barometer, 2004)

While the Finnish and the Swedish nation's 70% does some sports regularly, only 19% of the Greeks and 22% of the Portuguese and 31% of the Italians does so. Another interesting sequel is that sport is becoming more and more individual. 47% of the asked people said that they don't go to any sport clubs, fitness- centers schools or universities when they feel like doing sports. Clubs are most popular in the Netherlands, where 43% of people doing sports regularly visit some sport associations.

1. picture: Citizens of the European Union and sport 2004



Source: Net2

Four- fifth of the asked people claimed that the biggest advantage of sport is to preserve health, 47% added fun as an important factor besides health. Concerning other values of sports 61% of Western-Europeans said that it develops team spirit, while 47% emphasized its means to develop discipline.

1. chart: Citizens of the European Union and sport 2004

According to the answers, which are those rates that sport activities develop?

	EU 25	Cip-rus	Cze-ch Rep	Éston	Hun-gary	Lat-via	Lithuan	Malta	Poland	Slovakia	Serbia
team spirit	52	61	29	42	51	38	38	44	29	33	45
Tolerance	23	21	21	20	20	24	22	34	21	19	28

THE REGIONAL ROLE OF THE SPORT

accepting others	32	45	21	27	26	26	27	43	24	17	35
fairness	32	56	40	28	20	26	25	40	34	40	48
Self control	33	53	31	52	38	39	44	36	22	29	36
accepting rules	31	29	37	24	33	22	31	32	25	35	36
discipline	46	44	47	54	57	57	50	71	52	51	60
Understanding	15	19	17	18	12	23	23	22	13	16	32
solidarity	18	21	15	16	9	18	18	31	15	10	31
friendship	38	34	46	26	34	30	40	46	26	43	57
racial integration between men and women	15	25	16	12	9	13	16	23	14	14	31
efficiency	36	41	37	47	26	33	27	32	38	33	54
other (spontain)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
none	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	2	1

Source: Net2

81 percent of the asked thinks that sport helps in intercultural communications, while 59% claims that it helps in fighting against the different forms of discrimination. At the same time 70% of these people are worried of the doping, and almost every 6th person disapproves the huge influence of money in sport. Three- fourth of the EU citizens claims that sport should be provided with bigger space at schools, and this rate in

Greece- at the residence of the Athenian Olympic Games- is almost 95%. (Net3)

As a result of the survey the European Parliament entrusted the European Commission of Communities in Brussels to develop the “Pierre de Coubertin” guideline, which shows way for the Commission in its sport-related activities in the following years. The document which is called the “White Book” contains lots of activities that should be realized or supported by the Commission. These activities make up the guidance. The Commission organized conferences during the fall of 2007 to promote the White Book for parties interested in sport. The results of the White Book were shown to the sport ministers, to the European Parliament, to The Commission of the Regions and to the Economical and Social Commission. (White Book, 2006; Net4)

The areas of sport activities

The EU clearly distinguishes between the two areas of sport as an economical activity and sport as a social phenomenon. Hungary’s joining to the EU will have such long- term effects which will occur parallel to the social development: the growing life quality and more free time sport culture also develops, and more people will do regularly outside sports in our country as well. Concerning the relationship between the EU and sport the European Commission committed itself to the following topics:

1. The European institutions
2. Sport in the Social Contracts, documents
3. Employment in the fields of sport
4. Mutual accepting of degrees
5. Development sources in the field of sport
6. The European Year of Education through Sport- 2004
7. Governmental support of sports
8. The relation to the European legal rights of sport as an economical activity
9. Televisions’ legal rights of mediation
10. The sports of the disabled
11. Fight against doping
12. Violence in sport
13. The abundance of tobacco products during sport events
14. Guns, animals in sport- the free transportation of products
15. The foreseen effects on sport because after joining to the EU

Sport strengthens the human principals of Europe. The values transformed through sport contribute to the enrichment of knowledge to the development of skills and to the growth of personal commitment. *Time spent for sport in school or university has health and educational advantages, therefore it must be supported.* Based on its experiences gained in the “Year of education through sport”- 2004 the European Commission encourages people to do sports and physical activities, containing also the social and citizen key competences that are declared to be developed since 2006.

Sports and physical activities can be supported through the program of life long learning. The educational possibilities hidden in sport should be used therefore, and this has been an important question of the partner schools of the Comenius program, just as much as the Leonardo da Vinci program pays attention to the structural activities on professional field or the Erasmus program develops thematic networks and mobility and also the Grundtvig program supports the adult educational projects. The European Parliament and Commission’s suggestion about the necessary key competences for life long learning has been made up at 18th December 2006.

Sport is a dynamic and quickly developing sector, which can highly contribute to the economical growth and creating new places, which are the target aims of the congress of Lisbon 2000. *Therefore it can be used as means for local, regional development, rebuilding of cities and development of the countryside.* There are synergies between sport and tourism, and sport can inspire the reformation of the infrastructure, as much as the development of new partnerships around financing sport- and recreation centurms.

There are no concrete data about sport’s economical value, but its importance is confirmed by studies and analyses about the financial backgrounds of big sport events and costs of the lack of moving (containing the data about the aging societies). The studies written during the Austrian presidency in 2006 shows that sport generated 407 milliard Euros in 2004, which is the 3,7% percentage of the EU GDP, what’s more, it employed 15 million people, 5,4% of the employees of Europe. Sport’s contribution should be made more visible therefore, and with the help of the EU’s professional politics it should be developed. (D. Dimitrov / C. Helmenstein / A. Kleissner / B. Moser / J. Schindler, 2006)

Sport plays a significant role in sustainable development. Sport, sport institutions and the different sport events effect the environment on a very positive way. It is important to develop our economy with respect to the environment, so sustainable development contains green supply, the

outcome of gases causing greenhouse effect, the efficiency of the use of energy, the problem of waste and the handling of water and soil. In order to make their activities accepted by sustainable developmental attitude the organizers of the European sport events should take all these aspect in consideration. With developing their accuracy in environmental questions these institutions and organizers can count with special benefits in tenders and also in financial income through the rational usage of natural forces.

Conclusion

Hungary's joining to the EU can bring lots of benefits on different fields of sport life. Long- term tendencies can be started in Hungarian sport which will be able to bring important development. The new sport act since 2004 contains much more new factors than before. Concerning the EU standards, it suits to all the expectations. The most important new aspects and factors are the followings:

1. The joining will hopefully bring positive changes not only to the support of sports by society but also to the participation of individuals in sports. The rate of people doing regularly sports in the EU is very high-around 50%- while Hungarian rates are valued less then 30%.

2. In the Union the infrastructure of sport is convenient, sport institutions are in a good condition and there are enough number of them provided for the public, while in Hungary these institution's state is less then sufficient, there are not enough of them, and those also serve only the professionals.

3. Based on European financial sources the new development of infrastructure will serve the development of the Hungarian sport institutions, especially the local and regional ones.

4. In the EU civil culture is flourishing. The joining will hopefully have a positive effect on sport's local civil associations as well. In the fields of sport the principal problem is not the lack of sport associations, much more the orientation of these associations towards professional sports. These associations will hopefully take bigger role in the satisfaction of society's sport needs.

5. The hoped growth of life qualities will bring the growth of free time as well, which obviously brings with itself the free- time culture and the movement culture- the development of outdoor sports as well.

6. In the Union disabled people are also helped by sport, amongst other needs it also helps in their integration into society. The support of

disabled people's sport is also an important question in Hungary. Though there are more and more projects targeting them, there are still too many institutions which need to be restored in order to make it fit for the disabled as well.

7. In the general labor market politics the EU and Hungary are searching for those sectors which can provide people with workplaces. One of these sectors is the show- business, which contains entertaining through sport as well. The big sport events, quality championships can only exist in big economical projects for example, and all the activities related to such events can create workplaces.

8. Finally there are new possibilities opening up for the local governments, sport associations and also for other members of the sport society concerning areas of international exchange of experiences as much as other fields of sport and physical education.

The European Institutions have recognized the importance of sports in the European society, especially considering its role in the civil associations, health care, education, cultural integration and cultural fields. (The Year of Sport, 2004)

After 1990 the number of students visiting high educational institutions has grown incredibly in Hungary. Because of this, the number of people getting a degree has grown to its 1,5 times- comparing to data from a decade before; this year one third of them, almost 2000 graduated students exist.

Education, economy, life quality, competitiveness and the competences are the most important sectors of the European educational policies. The universities are facing the problems of the XXI. century and they are looking for ways of development through communication with society and economy.

Health and the optimal life quality became the main targets of knowledge, qualification, innovation skills, economical achievement and personal carriers. Therefore the expectations towards universities and colleges about giving modern knowledge and skills to its students has grown, because these students need to be dynamic in their attitude towards life as much as in their attitude towards work so that they can make benefit to economics with their intellectual potential. The expectation of the labor market towards fresh graduates is high quality professional knowledge, which means creative, practical professional background knowledge. All for all such intellectuals are needed who are healthy and are able to work a lot.

Sport's effect on life quality is obvious. It's role needs well- planned and continuous care to reach its goals. The connecting strategic elements are

catalyzing the closely connected programs. The social, economical and therefore global benefit of sport is above any doubts in the Northern- Plain region as well.

REFERENCES

1. Net1:
http://www.nsh.hu/fileadmin/download/sportigazgatas/eu/sport_eu_politikajaban.pdf
2. Net2:
www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_213_report_en.pdf
3. Net3:
<http://www.harmonet.hu/cikk.php?rovat=104&alrovat=129&cikkid=4445%20-%2068k%20-#>
4. Net4: ec.europa.eu/sport/whitepaper/wp_on_sport_hu.pdf
5. Eurobarometer Az Európai Unió polgárai és a sport (2004) / (European Commission- Special Euro barometer, 2004)
6. Baranyi B. szerk. (2008): *Észak-Alföld..* Pécs–Budapest: MTA Regionális Kutatások Központja – Dialóg Campus Kiadó, 2008. 517 p. (Kárpát-medence régiói, 8. kötet. – Sorozatszerk.: Horváth Gyula) / (The development concept of the North- Plain region, 2002)
7. Buday-Sántha A. (2001): Regionális felsőoktatás 2000. – Falu, Város, Régió. 2. sz.
8. D. Dimitrov – C. Helmenstein – A. Kleissner – B. Moser – J. Schindler (2006): Die makroökonomischen Effekte des Sports in Europa, Studie im Auftrag des Bundeskanzleramts, Sektion Sport, Wien.
9. Fehér Könyv a sportról Európai Bizottság (Brüsszel 2007)
10. Horváth Gy. (1998): Európai regionális politika, Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest–Pécs.
11. Lengyel I. (2003): Verseny és területi fejlődés: térségek versenyképessége Magyarországon. JATEPress, Szeged.

THE REGIONAL ROLE OF THE SPORT

12. Nádori L. – Bátonyi E. V. (2003): Az Európai Unió és a sport: Uniós csatlakozás a sportban, Dialóg Campus Kiadó
13. Nagy Á. (2007) Debreceni Egyetem Sportigazgatóság beszámoló
14. Nagy Á. (2004) Sportigazgatósági beszámoló Sport Éve
15. Sport XXI National Sport Strategy 2007
16. Szent- Györgyi, 1930, Sportcongress in Szeged