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## **STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORT IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

### **STRATEŠKA PITANJA RAZVOJA VRHUNSKOG SPORTA U REPUBLICI HRVATSKOJ**

#### ***ABSTRACT***

*The aim of this paper is to examine a realistic strategic approach to further develop high-performance sport in Croatia. The methodology used involved an analysis of the data collected in questionnaires administered to national sport federations concerning coaches and other high-performance sport indicators. Selection and development of talent, sport schools and sport clubs, technology of sports preparation, coaches and other professional staff, organisation of sport activities on the local, regional and national levels, material and technical requirements, funding in sport, international cooperation and scientific and research activity were analysed. The most important findings of this analysis are: the selection of future athletes in Croatia is not conducted in a scientific, evidence-based manner, the programme of universal sport school established by Croatian School Sport Federation was attended by 6,712 students and it included 156 PE teachers, coaches lack understanding of the technology to be used when working with young athletes as oppose to the one used on adult high-performance athletes, there are only 11,500 coaches in sport clubs, i.e. approximately only 2.3 coaches per a sport club, total annual revenue of the sport system in Republic of Croatia is approximately about HRK 2.5 billion, public sources account for about 55 % of total revenues in sport, whereas households contribute with another 45 %. Due to this information's, strategic goals are defined.*

**Key words:** *strategic approach, high-performance sport, development, analysis, strategic goals*

## SAŽETAK

*Cilj ovoga rada je analiza realnog strateškog pristupa daljnjem razvoju vrhunskoga sporta u Republici Hrvatskoj. U metodološkom smislu, analiza podataka prikazanih u ovom radu napravljena je na temelju anketnih upitnika koje su ispunili nacionalni sportski savezi o trenerima i drugim pokazateljima stručnoga rada. Područja koja su obuhvaćena analizom su: selekcija i razvoj sportskih talenata, sportske škole i sportski klubovi, tehnologija sportske pripreme za potpuni razvoj darovitih sportaša, treneri i ostali stručni kadrovi kao temeljni resurs razvoja sporta, organizacija sporta na lokalnoj, regionalnoj i državnoj razini, materijalno-tehnički uvjeti, financiranje sporta, međudržavna suradnja i znanstveno-istraživački rad. Neke od važnijih spoznaja do kojih se došlo analizom su: selekcija budućih sportaša ne provodi na egzaktan i znanstveno utemeljen način, program univerzalne sportske škole organizirane od strane Hrvatskog školskog športskog saveza je u godini 2011/2012 pohađalo oko 6.712 učenika s kojima su kao voditelji radila 256 profesora kineziologije, treneri nedovoljno razlikuju tehnologiju rada s mladima i tehnologiju rada sa već formiranim vrhunskim sportašima, u sportskim klubovima radi samo 11.500 trenera što po klubu iznosi 2.3 trenera, u hrvatski sport godišnje uđe približno 2,5 milijarde kuna, proračunski izvori sudjeluju s oko 55%, dok kućanstva sudjeluju s oko 45% u financiranju sporta u Hrvatskoj. Sukladno ovim saznanjima te ostalim rezultatima analize ponuđeni su strateški ciljevi za razvoj hrvatskog sporta.*

**Ključne riječi:** *strateški pristup, vrhunski sport, razvoj, analiza stanja, strateški ciljevi*

### 1. Introduction

The concept of high-performance sport is perceived, around the world as well as in Croatia, as referring to the achievement of top sport results. The focus on the result has set the course for the development of sport science and shaped the priorities of sport professionals. Accordingly, the following topics emerge as the priority areas: the selection and systematic inclusion of children and youth in sports; athletes' motivation; technology of training; qualifications and competences of coaches; and the organisation and material and technical conditions for acquiring and mastering sport skills and for planning, programming and implementing sport preparation.

This paper sets out to examine a realistic strategic approach to further develop high-performance sport in Croatia. In the past 30 years a number of documents and studies have been drawn up and published focussing on the conceptual, strategic or programming baseline of sport, i.e. on the analysis of sport or some of its elements in Croatia: *Plan for the Development of Top Sport Achievements in the Socialist Republic of Croatia* (1978), *Analysis of the Development of Physical Education in the Socialist Republic of Croatia in the Period 1981 – 1985 and the Analysis of the Development Potential in the Period 1986 – 1990* (1984), *Physical Education Models* (1987), *Future Sport Development Policies of the Republic of Croatia* (1991), *Report of the Croatian Sport Convention* (1999), *Sport Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia* (2000), *Sport Models for Croatia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2000), *Croatian Sport Development Strategy Proposal of the Work Group of the President of the Republic of Croatia* (2000), *The Present State and the Future Prospects for Sport in Zagreb* (2001), *Developmental Goals of Croatian Sport* (2004), *Sport Development Programme of the City of Zagreb 2006 – 2010* (2005), *Strategy for the Development of School Sport in the Republic of Croatia 2009 – 2014* (2009.), *Principles and Guidelines for Sport Development in the Republic of Croatia* (2011), and *Coaches and Positions in Sport in Croatia* (2011). However, a comprehensive document primarily focussing on the strategic goals of the high-performance sport development has not been developed yet.

The methodology used involved an analysis of the data collected in questionnaires administered to national sport federations concerning coaches and other high-performance sport indicators. Of the total of 82 national sport federations, 44 have filled out the questionnaires. The authors of the paper collected other high-performance sport indicators. The results were processed using the basic descriptive methods for data analysis.

### **3. Strategy for the development of high-performance sport in the Republic of Croatia – setting and achieving goals**

#### **3.1. Strategic approach**

In Croatia, the position of high-performance sport has still not been clearly defined in relation to other human activities. The jobs, rights and obligations related to certain segments of high-performance sport – such as coaches and other sport staff; sport clubs, sport federations and other sport organisations; or school and club sport – have not been clearly marked out either.

The problem of insufficient level of systematization of certain segments of the sport system must be dealt with by passing and implementing legal acts and subordinate legislation. These documents shall form the baseline for the development of a development strategy. Lacking data on the number of sport clubs, the number and education level of professional staff and other sport staff, and the number and the condition of sport facilities can hamper the efforts to systematically approach the development of sport strategy. The data reflecting the state of high-performance sport in Croatia should be further expanded on the basis of analysis and studies examining the state of individual segments of sport.

Legislation regulating all segments of sport, data on the current state of affairs, projections for the future, the standards and values to aspire to, as well as the goals and priorities incorporating the professional and national interests, form the baseline of strategic efforts.

All the elements of high-performance sport development are very complex and involve their own objectives and measures. It is thus important to find the balance between well-argued needs and wants and realistically available resources of the Croatian society, and sport as its important element.

#### **3.2. Strategic approach to sport development in the Republic of Croatia**

##### **3.2.1. Selection and development of talent: *Identifying and guiding future high-performance athletes***

###### *Definition of the strategic element:*

Selection is the process of identifying talented individuals who might, under certain criteria, be capable of outstanding sport results. The selection process should begin early on and at the time when anthropological dimensions of potential athletes can be determined with a high level of reliability. Selection of athletes is carried out by comparing individual's characteristics with the explicitly defined model characteristics for a particular sport and by analysing the similarity between the anthropological profile of the individual and the dimensions in the hierarchical structures of the sport success specification equation. The process of selection requires an insight into the required specific characteristics of an individual capable of achieving a certain result.

###### **Current state of affairs:**

Nowadays, the selection of future athletes in Croatia is not conducted in a scientific, evidence-based manner. The choice of a sport is very often left to chance and athletes often choose a sport which

does not match their abilities and skills. Furthermore, the current system makes it almost impossible to encompass an entire age group of children and gain an insight into their sport potential.

Strategic goal:

Steps must be taken to improve the quality of selection criteria. This involves the development of specification equations for specific sport fields and, more importantly, development of model characteristics of athletes of various ages and different quality levels by sport fields and disciplines.

To develop the top athlete model for a specific sport field and to monitor the (qualitative and quantitative) changes taking place simultaneously with the improvement of sport performance in a multi-annual cycle. Such a model will serve as a role model to be followed by other athletes on their path to top sport results in adult sport age.

### 3.2.2. Sport schools and sport clubs: *Places of high concentration of talent*

*Definition of the strategic element:*

Long-term sport specialisation is to be implemented in sport schools. Universal sport schools involve an organised approach to sport activities of children and they can be organised in kindergartens, primary schools, sport clubs and other public or private institutions. They carry out exercise and learning programmes focussing on multifaceted psychosomatic development and on gaining various motor experiences. The training process is conducted and monitored within sport activity groups.

Talent for a specific sport field needs to be recognized at a very early age. This is especially true when it comes to sports requiring the implementation of the selection process at the age of seven or eight. At that time the final choice of a sport takes place. All children that demonstrate talent in sport schools should be included in a highly organised and professionally guided training process in sport clubs, since sport clubs should be the places of top-quality sport in Croatia.

Current state of affairs:

At this point, an organised and professionally-led system of universal sport schools in Croatia can only be found within the school sport system. Croatian School Sport Federation launched the programme of universal sport schools in the school year 2007/08. Universal sport schools were designed for children aged 6-10, i.e. grades 1-4 of primary school. In the school year 2011/2012, a total of 307 groups in 263 primary schools were founded. The programme was attended by 6,712 students and it included 256 PE teachers (Jukić, G., 2012)

Unfortunately, the school sport and the club sport systems have not yet forged close cooperation aimed at the selection, monitoring and directing talented children towards the club sport system.

Strategic goal:

The development of universal sport schools within the Croatian School Sport Federation must be further improved and a national system of selection, monitoring, guiding and directing sport talents towards the matching fields of sports, i.e. towards the club sport system involving children in a high-quality, competitive sports activity and a high-quality and systematic training process.

3.2.3. Technology of sports preparation for a full development of talented athletes: *Coaches must know how to manage the training process in order for the athlete to realise his or her full potential and achieve top sport results*

*Definition of the strategic element:*

Technology of sports preparation comprises high-quality systems of training, competition and recovery process. Each phase of athlete's development should be characterised by clearly defined criteria and standards of the training process, an adequate number and level of competitions, and an adequate and multiple recovery methods.

Croatian professionals and scientists should define the laws of transformation processes in youth sport more clearly in order to ensure reliable realisation of genetic predispositions of young athletes. This is the area where coaches uncritically use the "recipes" which they remember were used by their coaches or which they were advised to use, even though they have no scientific or professional justification. This is especially the case in training of young athletes.

*Current state of affairs:*

Coaches lack understanding of the technology to be used when working with young athletes as oppose to the one used on adult high-performance athletes. It is sometimes the case that athletes enter the adult category with insufficiently developed skills and underdeveloped basic and specific motor abilities. Due to inadequate training technology, many of them were left at the threshold of top sport without realising their potentials.

*Strategic goal:*

The strategy for the development of a Croatian sports training school should be developed. A comprehensive strategy is to be developed first, followed by strategies for particular sport fields, primarily those that seem to be the most appealing ones to youth and in which professionals have identified the most talent.

There is an urgent need for discontinuing the practice of premature specialisation of very young sport talents. Accelerating sport development of a young athlete for a short-term success of a sport club, personal gain of a coach or because the young athlete cannot handle the uncertainty of the final success can jeopardise the athlete's future development as well as his or her health.

In terms of technology, special attention should be given to athletes that have the potential to compete at major international competitions. Considering the fierceness of international competition, these athletes need to be prepared based on the most advanced scientific principles and bearing in mind the long-term goals.

3.2.4. Coaches and other professional staff as the driving force of the development of sport: *Coaches that have received adequate qualifications and training should carry out only the part of the work that corresponds to their level of expertise*

*Definition of the strategic element:*

Extremely important questions regarding the development of sport refer to professional staff carrying out professional activities in sport. In the professional staff hierarchy, coaches are at the top of the pyramid, representing the most significant profession in sport.

The decisions on the level of load put on the athletes, the selection and time distribution of training programmes and the implementation of control methods for monitoring the effects of training should be left to coaches with adequate education and level of professional competence.

Within the sport system there is a need for qualified coaches of various profiles. In Croatia, the education of coaches is organised in the form of training courses (assistant coach – teacher – instructor of a particular sport), undergraduate professional study programmes for coaches, full-time university study programme and postgraduate specialist study programme.

*Current state of affairs:*

An analysis of the data obtained from national sport federations on coaches and the professional work carried out in the Croatian sport system suggests that the position of the coaching profession in the Croatian sport system is an unfavourable one. A significant lack of coaches has been identified.

Currently, there are only 11,500 coaches in sport clubs, i.e. approximately only 2.3 coaches per a sport club. There is a particularly noticeable deficiency of coaches in certain sports and in certain counties. The imbalance between the number of coaches and the number of sport clubs suggests that there is a general deficiency of coaches and that too little attention is given to professionalism in the activities of sport clubs. A huge gender imbalance has also been observed, with only 6 % of female coaches in the total number.

The majority of coaches in the Croatian sport system (75 %) coach younger age groups, while 15.5 % coach adult athletes. There is a very small percentage of assistant coaches (4.6 %) and strength and conditioning coaches (0.8 %), suggesting that coaches in Croatia are still perceived to be “universal” coaches, working without the support of an adequate professional team of specialised coaches. This is a major adverse factor affecting the quality of coaching in Croatian sport (Table 1).

Table 1 The structure of coaching jobs (Čustonja, Jukić, Milanović, 2011)

| Coaches of adult athletes | Assistant coaches of adult athletes | Strength and conditioning coaches | Coaches of younger age groups | Other |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 15.5%                     | 4.6%                                | 0.8%                              | 75%                           | 4.5%  |

The situation is also unfavourable with respect to the qualification level of the coaches. Of the total number of the coaches included in the analysis, 2,194 or 37.2 % does not meet legal requirements prescribed for the coaching job, i.e. they are underqualified and, consequently, they lack competences required to carry out a coaching job. The identified qualification level of male coaches was higher than that of female coaches. Almost 50 % of the coaches included in the sample were entry-level coaches who had recently received a qualification in a training course. Most of them received training organised by the Football Academy of the Croatian Football Federation (NFL) (Table 2).

Table 2 Qualified and underqualified coaches (Čustonja, Jukić, Milanović, 2011)

| Qualified coaches | Underqualified coaches |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 62.8 %            | 37.2 %                 |

\* The minimum level of qualification required to carry out a coaching job is prescribed in the Sports Act (Official Gazette NN 71/06, Article 9, Paragraphs 2 and 3)

Only 30% of the coaches have received the full qualification in Croatia, i.e. graduated from of the faculties of kinesiology or the former Coach Education and Training Department, which has since November 2011 been operating at the Faculty of Kinesiology in Split and in Zagreb under the name Study Centre for Coach Education and Training. There is no doubt that there is both a significant potential and demand of the coaching staff and that there are many possibilities for future activation of that potential. The sport system must develop the capacity for the absorption of the coaches with the highest qualification level, create conditions for their employment and stimulate kinesiology graduates to become involved in the sport system.

It is also necessary to stimulate the existing providers of coach education and training to make more coach training and education programmes available in order to generate more qualified coaches and to develop new programmes for coach education and training, especially in sports plagued by a major deficiency of qualified coaching staff (Table 3).

Table 3 Education structure of coaches (Čustonja, Jukić, Milanović, 2011)

| University education                  |                    | Professional education   |                    | Croatian Olympic Academy (HOA) <sup>2</sup> | Football Academy of Croatian Football Federation <sup>1</sup> | Student <sup>2</sup> | Other <sup>2</sup> | Total |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------|---|---|----------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Faculties of kinesiology <sup>1</sup> | Other <sup>2</sup> | Coach Education and Training Department/ Study Centre <sup>1</sup> | Other <sup>2</sup> |   |   |                      |                    |       |
| 15.6%                                 | 1.7%               | 14.4%  | 6.9%               | 16.3%                                       | 32.9%   | 7%                   | 5.2%               | 100%  |

<sup>1</sup>qualified to carry out some coaching jobs

<sup>2</sup>generally underqualified to carry out coaching jobs

The minimum proportion of qualified coaches in an Olympic sport is only 1.5 % and there are a few national sport federations of non-olympic sports which do not have any qualified coaches. Underqualified coaches, i.e. the coaches who do not hold legally prescribed minimum qualification for the coaching job, make up the majority of coaches in the majority of sports.

Only 27.4% of the coaches are employed in sport clubs on either a temporary or a permanent employment contract. These coaches are considered to be professional coaches. Most coaches (as many as 72.6 %) are not professional coaches – they either work as volunteers or as contractors (paid based on a temporary service contract) (Table 4).

Table 4 Employment status of coaches (Čustonja, Jukić, Milanović, 2011)

| Permanent employment contract | Temporary employment contract | Temporary service contract | Volunteers | Total |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-------|
| 11.1%                         | 16.3%                         | 28.7%                      | 43.9%      | 100%  |

The fact that the smallest proportion of coaches, only 11.1 %, is employed on a permanent employment contract is alarming. That means that the smallest percentage of coaches makes a living coaching. This fact can deflect young people from pursuing education and career in coaching.

Coach profiles in the elite sport include:

- Master of sports kinesiology – university specialist in sports kinesiology (postgraduate specialist study programme)
- Kinesiology graduate (master) – sports coach (integrated five-year university study programme)
- Professional bachelor degree – sports coach (professional study programme for coach education and training)
- Teacher – instructor – coach – training courses within the Croatian Olympic Academy and Football Academy of the Croatian Football Federation.

Strategic goal:

Principal strategic objectives for raising the level of coaching expertise are the following:

- different levels of selection of potential candidates for future coaches;

- basing the education and training of coaching staff on the most recent findings in order to improve their efficiency as coaches;
- ensuring continual professional education of coaches in the form of seminars, consultations and national and international conferences.

Considering the vital role that the coaching staff has in all the future top sports results, all the future strategies for sport development in Croatia will have to focus on overcoming the challenges posed by the number, qualification level and employment status of coaches.

There are several clear strategic goals to strive towards achieving: 1) a significant increase in the number of coaches in sport clubs; 2) promotion of professional team work and inclusion of relevant experts in different segments of sport preparation; 3) making it impossible for the unqualified and underqualified individuals to perform coaching jobs; 4) a significant increase in the number of coaches with a higher education degree in the population of qualified coaches; 5) increased attention to regulating and improving the employment status of coaches in the Croatian sport system.

It is of strategic importance to delineate the area of professional competences, jobs and responsibilities of professionals of various profiles with respect to sport preparation and sport results. Professional teams led by a sport coach should be a guarantee of top sport results in Croatia.

### 3.2.5. Organisation of sport activities on the local, regional and national levels: *Governmental and non-governmental sector of sport management*

#### *Definition of the strategic element:*

Organisational needs of sport vary considerably depending on the age, sex, level of sport achievements as well as the position of sport in society and the sport value system. Sport is characterised by a wide spectrum of organisational forms, ranging from sport rehabilitation to high-performance sport, from swimming schools for young children to performances at the Olympics. Considering this variety, it is of utmost importance for the providers of these services to meet the quality requirements with respect to their organisational structure.

#### *Current state of affairs:*

Organisational prerequisites for achieving top sport results involve the existence of a system of various organisations and institutions with a view to:

- enabling transition from the lower to the higher levels of sport engagement
- enabling mass participation in sport on the lower levels of sport engagement and elitism on the highest levels (pyramidal character)
- for each level of sport engagement, clearly defining the participants, activities, levels and types of sport preparation programmes, conditions for the implementation of the activities and methods for controlling their effects
- belonging to a single system, but simultaneously participating in networks of institutions and organisations from other systems, enabling them to achieve their goals and objectives through primary and secondary activities.

#### Strategic goal:

Responsibilities of principal institutions and organisations, as well as the relations among them, should be determined in the organisational scheme comprising the Croatian Olympic Committee



with national sport federations, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport with the National Council for Sport, and the Faculty of Kinesiology in Zagreb and the Faculty of Kinesiology in Split with their respective science institutes and sport research and development centres.

It is strategically important to include regional high-performance sport research centres in the organisational structure, in particular the national high-performance sport institute to be founded in the near future, as well as to ensure reliable funding for the required projects and studies.

### 3.2.6. Material and technical requirements: *Capacity building*

#### *Definition of the strategic element:*

Material and technical requirements for the development of high-performance sport include planning, development, maintenance and availability of sport facilities and equipment. Funding has a key role in the realisation of this segment of the sport preparation system and high-performance sport development.

Tackling the ownership and estimate value issues relating to the sport infrastructure should be made a priority; a high-quality infrastructure cannot be built without clearly defined jurisdiction and accountability, and a high-quality and availability of infrastructure is a prerequisite for a greater inclusion of the population of all age groups in sport.

#### *Current state of affairs:*

Sport facilities should meet the size, quality and sanitary requirements. In the context of an ongoing expansion of sport in Croatia, a general lack of sport halls, pools and outdoor courses has been observed. However, no concrete data is available since there have not been any comprehensive studies carried out regarding the current state of sport facilities in the past 20 years and no plan for the development of a network of sport facilities has been adopted.

To date, no legislation has been passed prescribing the spatial requirements, standards and norms for sport facilities in a sport facility network and the special requirements for planning, programming, designing, developing and maintaining sport facilities and ensuring the safety of their users.

Installing adequate equipment for the implementation of the training process is essential. Modern equipment and instruments ensure a higher quality of training.

#### *Strategic goal:*

A registry of sport facilities should be compiled as soon as possible, providing a list of the existing facilities and indicating the areas where further development of indoor and outdoor (open-air) facilities is required, considering the special demands of different sports.

Investments in maintenance of the existing sport infrastructure and development of new capacities cannot be directed in an effective manner without a detailed insight into the available sport infrastructure, their ownership structures (owned publicly, locally, privately, or by a sport federation) and their use and management. Instrumental in achieving this goal would be the above mentioned legislation (a by-law) regulating spatial conditions, standards and norms for sport facilities and a universal sport information system.

Significant funds should be allocated for the acquisition of modern diagnostic and training equipment for top athletes. Sport centres should have diagnostic instruments enabling objective measuring of the preparedness of athletes.

### 3.2.7. Funding in sport: *Find reliable sources and distribute funds rationally*

#### *Definition of the strategic element:*

The issue of financing in sport is vital for further development of sport in Croatia. There are three sources of financing of the sport system: households, public funds (the state budget and the local budgets), and the business sector (sponsorships, media, broadcasting rights, etc.).

In the mixed financing model, budget funds allocated for sport, i.e. usually for sport organisations, are a very important source of financing. Regarding the public financing, the majority of funds are allocated from local budgets, whereas the state budget has a less significant role.

#### *Current state of affairs:*

According to Škorić and Čustonja (2011) “the basis of sport financing is the revenue which the legal and natural persons that perform sporting activities obtain by performing sporting activities, the membership fees obtained by sports associations, a part of the revenue from organizing games of luck, and the funds given by local and regional self-governing units, the City of Zagreb and the State to help the performance of sporting activities. The Republic of Croatia, the local and regional self-governing units and the City of Zagreb shall determine the public needs in sports and ensure the funds for their achievement from their own budgets in accordance with this Act. The task of central government is to help the functioning of the entire sports system through determining the public needs in sport and providing the necessary funds to finance those needs. Public needs in sport at the state and local levels are determined by the Sports Act” (Official Gazette NN 71/06, Articles 75 and 76). The public needs catered for from the budgets of local and regional self-governing units and the City of Zagreb are not significantly different, and they are also set out in the Sports Act (Official Gazette NN 71/06, Article 76).

However, it is not possible to clearly identify the origins of funding in sport, i.e. the share of private and public sources. This is primarily a result of a lack of comprehensive analyses and studies examining the funding and economic impacts of sport in Croatia.

According to the available data, in 2008, Croatian households spent an annual average of HRK 3,359 on sport, which was about 5.2 % of their total income. The majority of money was spent on clothes (34.4 %) and footwear (27.1 %), fees (12.9 %), entrance tickets (10.5%), equipment (9.1 %), and gambling (5.9 %) (Sever, 1999:43). Assuming that the household expenditure relating to sport has not changed in the past 13 years and that it still amounts to HRK 3,359, and considering that there are 1,477,377 households in Croatia according to the 2001 census, the total annual household expenditure on sport in Croatia is almost HRK 5 billion (Table 5). The system directly receives 23 % of the total amount referring to fees and entrance tickets, or about HRK 1.16 billion. It receives almost another HRK 300 million indirectly, from gambling.

If we accept this currently available estimate of the household expenditures as realistic and if we add up other known revenues in sport, we come to the total annual revenue of the sport system of about HRK 2.5 billion (Table 5).

Table 5 Estimate of the structure of financing of sports in Croatia in 2008 (in HRK million) (Škorić, Čustonja, 2011)

|            | Households | Business sector | State Budget | Local budgets | Private sources-total | Public sources-total | Overall financing of sport |
|------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Amount     | 1,161.2    | /               | 328.5        | 1,093.6       | 1,161.2               | 1,422.1              | 2,583.3                    |
| Percentage | 45 %       | /               | 12.7 %       | 42.3 %        | 45 %                  | 55 %                 | 100 %                      |

Having in mind methodological limitations related to data collection and analysis, it may be concluded that the financing of sport and the structure of revenues in sport differs from those of the

analysed EU countries. Public sources account for about 55 % of total revenues in sport in Croatia, whereas households contribute with another 45 %. However, the data on the revenues from other sources, such as sponsorships, donations, etc. are still not available.

*Strategic goal:*

The system of sport, in particular the children, youth and student sport, the sport for the disabled, sport recreation and high-performance sport, can only be further developed if a strong financial support from the public sources is ensured. In this sense, the following steps should be taken (Škorić and Čustonja, 2011):

- draw the line between the club sport and other types of sport activities; high-performance club sport would not receive significant funding from the public sources;
- increase the quality and transparency of the allocation of funds according to public needs programmes;
- propose categorization of sports to be taken into consideration in the public funds allocation, both on the local and the regional levels, and taking into account specific public needs of the given area;
- introduce a tax relief system to provide incentive to potential sponsors, especially those interested in sponsoring high-performance club sport;
- create legal preconditions to enable high-performance sport clubs that are not publicly financed to engage in business and entrepreneurial activities;
- increase sport revenues from the gambling business and improve the system of the allocation of these funds.

3.2.8. International cooperation: *Inclusion in European sport and financial institutions*

*Definition of the strategic element:*

Organised Croatian sport institutions maintain different forms of cooperation with international partners, bringing the global know-how and experience closer to Croatian sport staff and coaches. This cooperation most often takes place via national Olympic committees and higher education institutions.

*Current state of affairs:*

There are too few Croatian representatives in *international sport* organisations and associations. These representatives should have an important role in promoting and safeguarding the interests of Croatian sport in general as well as those of individual sport fields and athletes. The international sport organisations concerned include primarily European and world sport federations and the IOC working groups.

Our experts and scientists from different fields of sport science partake in annual international conferences worldwide. Some of them are members of European and global scientific organisations.

*Strategic goal:*

International sport activity should be given a strong impetus through intensification of cooperation with the IOC and international sport associations. A greater number of experts should be selected and encouraged to use their knowledge and positions in particular sports to promote Croatian sport and sport federations on the global scene.

3.2.9. Scientific and research activity: *Partnership of the science, profession and practice*

*Definition of the strategic element:*

The majority of countries whose athletes achieve world-class sport results have a high level of scientific and professional activity. Improved financing of applied science projects carried out by

sport research and development centres within sport institutes operating on the national and regional levels can give an impetus for the development of sport and sport achievements.

*Current state of affairs:*

In Croatia, a scientific centre primarily carrying out sport research has not been established yet. The Faculty of Kinesiology of the University of Zagreb has highly-qualified academic personnel from the field of sport study and interdisciplinary studies that develop and conduct projects and research generating results that are potentially instrumental for the development and affirmation of Croatian sport but rarely applied in sports training technology.

*Professional and scientific journals and publications*, available to the wider public, including sport coaches, are another platform for international communication among experts and professional institution.

*Strategic goal:*

Research results should be taken into consideration by athletes and coaches. The transfer of knowledge can only be complete if coaches, athletes and sport researchers participate in seminars and workshops.

It is necessary to encourage new forms of involvement of highly qualified staff, especially researchers, in sport clubs, sport federations and professional bodies of the Croatian Olympic Committee.

Sport research and development centres and sport institutes on the national and regional levels should be able to tackle various theoretical aspects of sport and sports training methodology with a view to creating conditions for a safe and humane development of talented athletes, reaching an optimum level of readiness of athletes and achieving top sport results at major national and international competitions.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This paper lists only the most important elements of the high-performance sport development strategy. These elements require further elaboration, including more detailed data and figures that will ensure more accurate representation of the current state and the set goals.

#### **Main strategic goals for the development of Croatian sport:**

1. Developing and improving the quality of the criteria for the selection of future athletes.
2. Continuing the development of the universal sport school system and introducing the selection system for talented children in a particular sport, resulting in basic preparation and sport specialisation of children and young athletes for achieving top sport results at the adult age.
3. With respect to sports technology, focussing on continual improvement of the sport preparation process based on research results as well as academic and practical expertise.
4. Clearly defining the complexity levels of coaching jobs and the level of qualification required to perform jobs of a certain complexity level. Professional teams led by highly qualified sport coaches should be a guarantee of safe sports preparation and top sport results.
5. Defining the responsibilities of key institutions in the organisational scheme – the Croatian Olympic Committee, Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, Faculty of Kinesiology of the University of Zagreb and Faculty of Kinesiology of the University of Split – and the relations among these institutions.
6. Urgently compiling a detailed registry of sport facilities, providing a list of the existing facilities and indicating the areas where further planning, development, maintenance and utilisation of indoor and outdoor facilities is required, considering the special demands of different sports.

7. Increasing the quality and transparency of the allocation of funds according to public needs programmes; introducing a tax relief scheme; encouraging business and entrepreneurial activity in sport; and increase sport revenues from the gambling business.
8. Selecting a greater number of Croatian experts and encouraging them to use their knowledge and positions to promote Croatian sport and sport federations on the global scene.
9. Intensifying the funding of applied scientific research and disseminating research results to coaches and athletes through transfer centres.

Considering the present state of affairs, the safest course of action in further development of sport in Croatia is that of **launching a nation-wide project** involving definition of priorities and goals for sport development by 2020 (Sport Development Strategy) and compilation of an action plan for the implementation of the strategy, elaborating the actions to be taken, timeframes for their implementation, methods for monitoring the implementation and evaluating the effects (National Programme for Sport Development by 2020).

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