

6th edition

The future of the European Sports Model

EASE

European Association of Sport Employers

With the participation of our members



CONFEDERAZIONE DELLO SPORT



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The definition of the European Sport Model

The European Sport Model is a concept that refers to the construction and the current functioning of the European sport system. This system emerged in England at the end of the 19th century, in connection with the creation of sports associations and clubs.

There is no consensus on a specific definition of the European Sport Model, but some specific principles and pillars are great indicators of this model.

Pillars of the European Sport Model

- The monopoly of federations,
- The regulatory power of federations,
- Membership of sportspeople in clubs,
- The organisation of sport according to a hierarchical system,
- The structuring of sporting bodies in the form of federations,
- The voluntary nature of the leaders of sportings bodies and the associative nature of sports structures.

Principles of the European Sports Model

These principles make the European Sport Model a unique sport system, that focuses on the social impact of sport.

- The solidarity within the sports system,
- The social functions attributed to sport,
- The territorial coverage of sport,
- The integrity of competitions and the moral and physical integrity of athletes,
- The training of talent.

Under this model, sport can't be considered as a normal economic good nor as a normal economic activity, as the social impact of sport cannot be monetized.

Evolutions of the professional sub-sector

The professional sub-sector is usually structured under a pyramid model, from the upper levels of the elite sport to the lower levels of grassroots structures. This structure comes from the initial development of professional sport in Europe, which is based in particular on :

- The promotion/relegation system,
- The solidarity among all levels of the pyramid.



The promotion/relegation system



The solidarity among all levels

The recent development of private commercial competitions, such as the EuroLeague Basketball or the idea of a SuperLeague for football, show that this sub-sector could evolve towards profitability only.

This model has been criticized by the promoters of the European Sport Model, as it goes against the social and associative philosophy of the European sport system.

Some pillars and principles of the European Sport Model seem to be at risk in the face of recent developments of the professional sub-sector of sport.

The European Sport Model, while presenting important pillars, remains difficult to apply to the day-to-day operation of associative sports structures.

For instance, even though the solidarity principle is often mentioned at the core of the European Sport Model, it appears that the financial solidarity between professional sports and grassroots organisations is not as important as it seems to be:

- **56.3%** of the total budget for grassroots sports came from households*.
- **32.6%** of the total budget for grassroots sports came from local authorities' fundings*.

* Figures are from 2013 ([Study on the European Sport Model of the European Commission](#)).

Sport: a specific sector or a typical economic good?

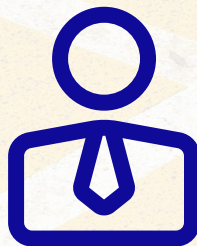
Reflecting on the assimilation of sport to a typical economic good or a specific sector presenting a unique social impact still resonates with the European Sport Model.

This model always relied on a perspective presenting sport as a specific sector, promoting the social impact of sport and enhancing the non-monetary externalities of sports activities. This explains the traditional associative form of sports structures. However, sports structures also tend to get more professionalised and to get structured as commercial services. Indeed, to face a growing economic pressure, sport has to be considered as a classic economic and labour market to help the sustainability of local sports structures.

In the meantime, sports structures have to adapt to:



The trends towards individual and informal sport practice



A need for professionalisation and structure



The concurrence with active leisure structures

Here comes the reflection on how to reconcile the **social vocation and associative nature of sports structures** and their **gradual professionalisation**, as they need to present sport as a classic economic and labour market.

In this process, sports associations tend to create partnerships with active leisure structures, that already apply a commercial perspective to sports activities and can help the structuring of sports associations.

Associative sports structures have to find a balance between the traditional associative and social philosophy of sports activities, and their growing commercialisation and professionalisation.