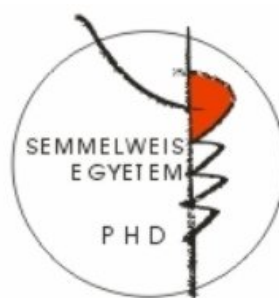


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SPORT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION FROM A CYPRIOT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract of PhD thesis



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INTRODUCTION

Sport is arguably the most commonly practiced activity in the countries of the European Union. It is practiced by the masses as a free-time activity and by professional athletes as an occupation and a way of making a living. In addition, sport is met almost everywhere in people's everyday lives and it is consumed in its various forms at sporting events, through televised broadcasts of sport matches, in newspapers, magazines and through radio. Evidently, sport is indeed pervasive in the societies of the member-states of the EU. As an integral part of society and culture, sport has the ability of bringing people together. This has made possible the cooperation between European countries long before the ideas for enlargements of the EU had emerged.

Nevertheless, sport's increased professionalisation and commercialization with the subsequent dramatic economic productivity have created the need for policy and regulation creation in order to control it and minimize disputes and conflicts in interests. In the EU sport is principle autonomous but still within the boundaries of the EU Law and the principles of the Single European Market, since these are applicable at all sectors of public life. In fact, the more increased sport's economic productivity is the more sport is moving further from its autonomy and becoming more dependant on the EU.

Within the European Union two forms of sport policy can be identified; the direct and the indirect forms. Until the early 90s the European Union had only considered sport for its economic dimensions. Increased lobbying and efforts for the recognition of sport's social and cultural dimensions, which took place at that time, had led to several attempts to include sport in the Treaties of the European Union, which would then provide a legal formal obligation of the EU in the field of sport. In all the attempts sport has not been included in the actual Treaties and was instead amended to them. Thus, the hopes for a formal legal basis for sport in Europe were lost along with the unsuccessful ratification of the draft European Constitution, in the summer of 2005. Nonetheless, the amendments to the Treaties are representing the direct sport policy of the European Union, which are the measures initiated having sport in mind.

The indirect sport policy of the European Union refers to the measures and regulations which have been initiated for other sectors or purposes but are ending up having and impact on sport

at a national level. In most cases when sport falls in the jurisdiction of the EU is due to these indirect policies, for instance as an employer, an economic entity and part of media or education and so on.

Within Europe the organization with a direct commitment and significant contribution in the field of sport is the Council of Europe, which however is not a body of the European Union. In contrary with the EU, since the early 70s the Council of Europe has recognized sport's social and cultural dimensions, as well as sport's ability to contribute to better and healthier societies. The Council of Europe has provided over the last three decades several documents, which can constitute the "European Sport Policy" of it. These include the "Sport for All Charter", the "European Sport Charter" and "Code of Ethics", two "Anti-doping Conventions" and "Convention against Spectators' Violence". Moreover, the Council organizes in regular intervals the meeting of the European Sport Ministers, in order to have updated information and battle problems within sport at their appearance and provided recommendations for the member-countries. However, the Council of Europe has weak legal power, due to its confederal status and it has a rather consultative role. In this respect, the adoption and ratification of its decisions depends on the willingness of the member-countries.

The European orientation of the Cyprus Sports Organization started as early as the mid-70s, right after the 1974 Turkish invasion of the country. It served as a means of promoting Cyprus' future EU integration, which has been thought to be the only avenue for a solution of the "Cyprus Problem" of the Turkish occupation. Since then the Cyprus Sports Organization has been following the sporting matters of the Council of Europe and its core policy is to adopt and ratify the decisions of the Council and the resolutions of the European Sport Ministers. Issues of EU sport policy have been appearing from time to time in the Organization's website and informational magazine, which is an indication of the Organization's consideration of such matters. Nonetheless, throughout the relevant documentation of the CSO, it was found that the emphasis was disproportionately placed on only the policy of the Council of Europe and the Organization has not yet recognized the relationship between Cypriot sport and the EU Law and all the implications brought by it.

The current sport policy of the European Union along with the fact that while there is no legal basis for sport in the EU sport is still subject to the Union's laws and policies in influencing sport and the people involved in it. The relevant literature has provided that the integration of

Cyprus in the European Union has been received with mixed feelings of hope and worry and it has been associated greatly with the implications on Cypriot economy and the possible solution of the Turkish occupation. In addition, the Special Eurobarometer on Sport of 2004 has revealed that the Cypriot public favored a more active role and more intervention of the EU in Cypriot sport. Nevertheless, the Hungarian and Estonian studies, which were conducted with people involved in sport, have revealed that the integration of the aforementioned countries has been received controversially by the sport actors, while the knowledge about the functioning of the EU and the EU sport policy was significantly low.

In theory, as well as in practice the people involved with a subsystem- the actors- have a critical role in the creation of policy. The most prominent example in sport in Europe is J.M. Bosman, whose case and subsequent ruling changed the world of professional sport in Europe. In this regard and considering the important role of the sport actors in the policy chain and due to the lack of studies dealing with Cypriot sport actors, this study is intending to discover the opinions, knowledge and expectations of four groups of Cypriot sport actors about Cyprus' integration in the EU, the EU sport policy the future of Cypriot sport in the context of EU.

PURPOSES

This study is aiming to discover through the responses of the Cypriot sport actors:

- What is the Cypriot sport actors' opinion about the integration of Cyprus in the European Union?
- How much do Cypriots sport actors know about the European Sport Policy and what is their opinion about the impact of the EU integration of Cyprus on Cypriot sport?
- What are the expectations on Cypriot sport actors from the European Union in connection with sport in Cyprus and what are their personal expectations as European citizens?

HYPOTHESES

In order to realize the aims of this study the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- It is assumed that the Cypriot sport actors' occupation within sport and other demographic characteristics influence in certain extend their feelings about Cyprus' membership in the EU.
- It is assumed that the Cypriot sport actors' occupation within sport and other demographic characteristics influence their knowledge about the European Sport Policy.
- It is assumed that the Cypriot sport actors' opinion about the impact of Cyprus' EU integration on Cypriot sport is influenced by their opinion about the integration and their knowledge about the EU sport policy.
- It is assumed that the Cypriot sport actors' expectations from the EU in the context of Cypriot sport are influenced by their opinion about the EU integration and their knowledge about the EU sport policy.
- It is assumed that the Cypriot sport actors' knowledge about the European sport policy is influencing their opinion about the impact of the EU membership on their personal careers.

METHODS

This study is mainly based on a survey conducted with four groups of Cypriot sport actors with supplementary documentary analysis and in-depth interviews.

The population of the study consisted of four groups of Cypriot sport actors: the Primary Education teachers, the Physical Education teachers, the university sport students and the football players, that is 8813 sport actors. The Primary Education teachers and students were included in the population of the study, due to a feature of the Cypriot Educational system, whereas the Physical Education class is taught at Primary schools by them. In this aspect they are relevant with sport.

For the sampling process, documents of the Cyprus Statistical Service, the Cyprus Educational Service and the Cyprus Football Federation have been used. The stratified random method of sampling has been used following certain grouping variables for each group. The sample size of the study was 912 subjects and it is 10.3% of the total population.

The data have been collected by the means of four questionnaires which consisted of four parts of open and closed questions according to the study's variables. The first versions of the questionnaires were given to fifteen subjects from each group in April 2005, as a part of the pilot study. The final versions of the questionnaires were based on the methodological findings of the pilot study. The data collection was initiated in October 2005 and was completed in November 2006 due to the large sample size. The questionnaires were delivered by the author at the place of occupation of the subjects, where the subjects had answered in groups of 5-40 persons in the presence of the author.

The collected questionnaires were coded and merged in a data base in the SPSS 13.0 statistical program. For the treatment of data Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) and Cross-Tabulations with Chi-Square have been used. The findings of the open questions and the interviews were processed in a qualitative based on the study's research dimensions.

The method of documentary analysis was applied with the treaties of the European Union, reports and action plans of the Cypriot Sport Association between 2000 and 2006, and reports and work plans of the Cyprus Olympic Committee and several sport associations in Cyprus. In-depth interviews were made with Cypriot sport leaders and key actors of the sporting life of Cyprus (n=).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the objectives of the thesis, the findings of the research are going to be summarized along the following dimensions:

- Opinions about the EU integration of Cyprus
- The knowledge of the Cypriot sport actors about the EU sport policy
- Opinions about the impact of Cyprus' EU integration on Cypriot sport
- Expectations from the EU in the context of Cypriot sport
- Personal career expectations as EU citizens

Opinions about the EU integration of Cyprus

The first dimension in the interpretation of the data was to discover the opinion of Cypriot sport actors about Cyprus' integration in the European Union. The four groups were different in their opinion about the integration of the country in the EU. The most positive group

towards the country's EU membership was the Primary Education teachers and at a lesser extent the Physical Education teachers. The most negative group was the football players, while the university sport students remained mostly neutral. The differences between the groups can be attributed to the individualities of each group and the occupational challenges in Cyprus and the way each group has perceived the meaning of the EU and the integration as it was formed by the mass media.

Similarly with findings of the several Eurobarometers, the positive respondents associated the integration of Cyprus in the EU with the possibility of solving the problem of the Turkish occupation. In contrary, the most negative respondents mentioned mostly, the negative effects of the integration on the traditionally strong Cypriot economy and the concern that small Cypriot industries would be swept away by EU giants. The subjects who remained neutral stated that either they were not well-informed to take position or they were completely not interested to the whole EU issue. This usually occurred with younger subjects. Only the groups belonging in the education professional could make some mention about the education and multicultural opportunities the EU offers. Some university students could identify the chances to work and study in the EU domain.

The knowledge of the Cypriot sport actors about the EU sport policy

The second dimension was to establish the knowledge of the Cypriot sport actors through four questions referring to EU sport policy. Very few sport actors were aware of bodies within the EU relevant with sport policy and sport development. The university sport students appeared to be somewhat more knowledgeable, while the Primary Education teachers, being the less relevant with sport were the less knowledgeable. The quantitative finding initially suggested that some respondents knew about the work of the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, the findings from the qualitative data contradicted this. Almost all the subjects who stated that they were aware of bodies relevant with sport policy, instead of mentioning the Council of Europe, mentioned sport federations like FIFA, FIBA, UEFA and so on. Clearly, their knowledge was incorrect and rather superficial.

The second and third knowledge-determining questions were aiming to discover whether the Cypriot sport actors knew about the inclusion of a paragraph referring to sport in the draft European Constitution. A relatively high awareness was found as far as it concerned the European Constitution. In all three groups more than half of the subjects have heard about the European Constitution. However, the older respondents were more familiar with this issue

than the younger sport students. The relatively high awareness, might have been due to the fact that the topic of the EU Constitution was very popular and was discussed widely in television, radio and newspapers at the time of data collection.

Nevertheless, the awareness about the inclusion of sport in the Constitution was much lower. The vast majority of the Cypriot sport actors did not know about the inclusion of a paragraph referring to sport in it, while some subjects supposed that it had not been included. Moreover, the Cypriot sport actors who correctly know about the paragraph, they could not state what was included in it.

The fourth question was aiming to discover whether the Cypriot sport actors knew about sport autonomy in the countries of the EU. The responses of the Cypriot sport actors were marked again by ignorance and very few knew that in the EU each country has its own structure in sport. The most knowledgeable group was the Physical Education teachers, while subjects from all groups mistakenly suggested that the 25 member-states of have a common structure in sport.

Football players' knowledge about European Union Sport Policy

The knowledge of the Cypriot football players was established on the basis of the awareness of the Bosman case. The majority of the football players have never heard of it. Differences were found between professional and not-professional footballers, mainly because the Bosman case and the subsequent ruling are referring to professional athletes who practice sport as a job. Differences were also found among football players who had signed a contract and those who had not. It could be argued that the process of signing a contract, which usually requires the presence and assistance of a lawyer, could have been educational at least to one third of the footballers.

Opinions about the impact of Cyprus' EU integration on Cypriot sport

Despite the fact that there were some differences between the pro-integration and the against-integration Cypriot sport actors and some differences between the knowledgeable and non-knowledgeable respondents, the general opinion about the impact of Cyprus' EU integration on Cypriot sport was rather positive. The Cypriot sport actors supported that most areas of Cypriot sport would be winners after the integration. This tendency was in agreement with the findings of the Special Eurobarometer on Sport of 2004.

Expectations from the EU in the context of Cypriot sport

Similarly to the sport actors' opinion about the future of Cypriot sport in the context of the European Union, their expectations from the EU in connection with Cypriot sport were rather high. Nevertheless, some differences were discovered between the actors who supported the EU integration of Cyprus and those who did not. The high expectations found in this study are similar with findings of the Eurobarometer on sport and the findings of Foldesi (2003) referring to the Hungarian case. The high expectations are another sign of the lack of knowledge, since the EU has no intention yet to support at a high level sport at a national level. Besides, they may represent the sport actors' desire for a more active contribution of the EU in the field of sport.

Personal career expectations as EU citizens

As far as it concerns the Cypriot sport actors' opinion about how the country's EU integration would impact their personal career, the respondents from all four groups appeared to be rather reserved and less optimistic in comparison with their opinion about the future of Cypriot sport after the integration.

The most positive groups were the football players and the university sport students, while the responses of the Primary Education and Physical Education teachers were marked by negativism and neutrality.

The differences were attributed to the challenges of each professional field in the Cypriot labor market. The fact that the subjects were more reserved could have been due the fact that people are usually more sensitive when it comes to their personal careers and lives. The football players generally believed that the arrival of other football experts and players eventually would have a positive impact on their careers as footballers. The university sport students perceived the integration as a good opportunity to seek job out of the borders of Cyprus. However, the respondents belonging in education stated their concern for the possible loss of jobs because of the arrival of EU nationals, mainly from Greece and the concern for the chance of having lowered salaries in order to be in line with the other EU countries.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study it can be concluded that factors rooted in the wider Cypriot society are influencing the opinion of the Cypriot sport actors about the EU integration. It has been discovered that the excessive attention given to the political and economical dimensions of the EU has had an impact on the formation of their opinion.

Similarly with the findings of other studies (Foldesi, 2003, Arvisto et al, 2004) the integration of Cyprus in the European Union has been received controversially by the Cypriot sport actors. The individualities of each group and the way the perception about the EU was formed for each group were critical in the differentiation of their feelings.

Moreover, the knowledge of the Cypriot sport actors about the EU sport policy is low and insufficient and marked by lack of in-depth knowledge and superficial understanding. The lack of knowledge is caused by several factors appearing to be working together. Firstly, sport at Cyprus is not getting as much attention as other sectors by decision-makers in the context of sport's interaction with the EU Law. Additionally, issues of EU sport policy are not favored in the sport and non-sport means of mass media. Moreover, the Cyprus Sport Organization has not had a systematic informational plan, although publications about the sport policy of the Council of Europe have been made and the relationship between Cypriot sport, EU and Single European Market is already considered. The lack of orientation points and the lack of self-initiated interest have led to the significant lack of knowledge with the consequence of the creation of misinterpretations, false impressions and a utopist belief of the role of the EU in Cypriot sport.

It can further be concluded that the Cypriot sport actors appear optimistic about the future of Cypriot sport in the context of the EU and they have rather high expectations from the EU, showing a certain lack of knowledge on the one hand and a desire for a more active contribution of the Union in national sport on the other.

However, they are reserved as far as it concerned their personal career expectations and it seemed that the earlier discovered lack of knowledge is making the Cypriot sport actors unable to fully explore their opportunities as EU citizens.

Since much of the lack of knowledge has been caused by the lack of orientation points, in order to promote the proper informing and fostering adequate knowledge it is recommended that efforts should be made to include issues of the EU and the EU sport policy in the popular mass media, by the devotion of articles and the contribution of experts. In addition, the Cyprus Sports Organization should reform its informational plan and campaigns concerning this issue by publishing new materials and finding better ways to deliver the already published materials at the targeted groups. Regular updating of the Organization's website may also be beneficial since the Internet is widely used. The CSO should reform its policy about the EU by identifying the relationship between Cypriot sport and EU Law in an effort to protect Cypriot sport from the negative consequences. Moreover, the introduction of subjects in the university curricula dealing with EU and EU sport policy may be a proper way of educating the young sport students.

Considering the delimitations of this study it can be recommended that further investigation should be made in order to discover:

- The causal factors of the lack of knowledge about the EU sport policy and the formation of the opinions
- The impact of the EU accession of Cyprus on Cypriot sport as an institution and legal system
- The changes in opinions, knowledge and expectations in regular intervals, since these are subjects to time and societal changes
- The knowledge and opinions of highly-positioned sport administrators
- The impact of the Bosman ruling on Cypriot team and individual sport, as well as Cypriot national teams' performance and fans' opinions.

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