

The preparation of the proposal of National programme for sport in Slovenia for the next decade

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Abstract

The last National programme for sport (2000) has been prepared for the 2000 – 2010 strategic period and as such it will run its course at the end of 2010. Methodological starting-point for preparation of the new National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020, which could become a fundamental strategic document for progress and development of Slovenian sport in the coming decade, was based on the methodology of strategic management (Žnidaršič Krajnc, 1996; Kolar, 2007; Pučko, 2003; 2008). A project team has prepared a proposal for the new National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020, which will have to undergo a long path of changes and amendments until it will be passed in the Slovenian Parliament. Responses of all types of public were critical but encouraging.

Keywords: national strategy for sport, strategic management, Slovenia.

Introduction

The last National programme for sport (2000) has been prepared for the 2000 – 2010 strategic period and as such it will run its course at the end of 2010. In line with directives of the Ministry of education and sport, before the end of validity of existing National programme for sport (2000), »Project of preparation of the National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020« and the »Project of preparation of the amendments or preparation of the new Law on sport« have to be carried out. Slovenian Minister of education and sport, Igor Lukšič PhD, has named Marko Rajšter – general director of the Directorate for sport – as a project manager for preparation of these two documents. On the basis of recommendations from the Ministry of education and sport, Slovenian Olympic Committee – Association of Sports Unions and the Faculty of sport, the Minister has named a project team for realisation of both strategic documents. Documents should be finished and passed in the Slovenian National Assembly by the end of 2010.

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Methodological starting-points

A proposal of the National programme for sport (NPS) for the next decade has been prepared within the project »*Network and support to non-governmental organisations in sport*«, which has been run by the Association for sport of children and youth in Slovenia and was partly financed from the European social fund. The project team, working on the large project, included several experts and scientists from the field of sport, management of sport and economy.

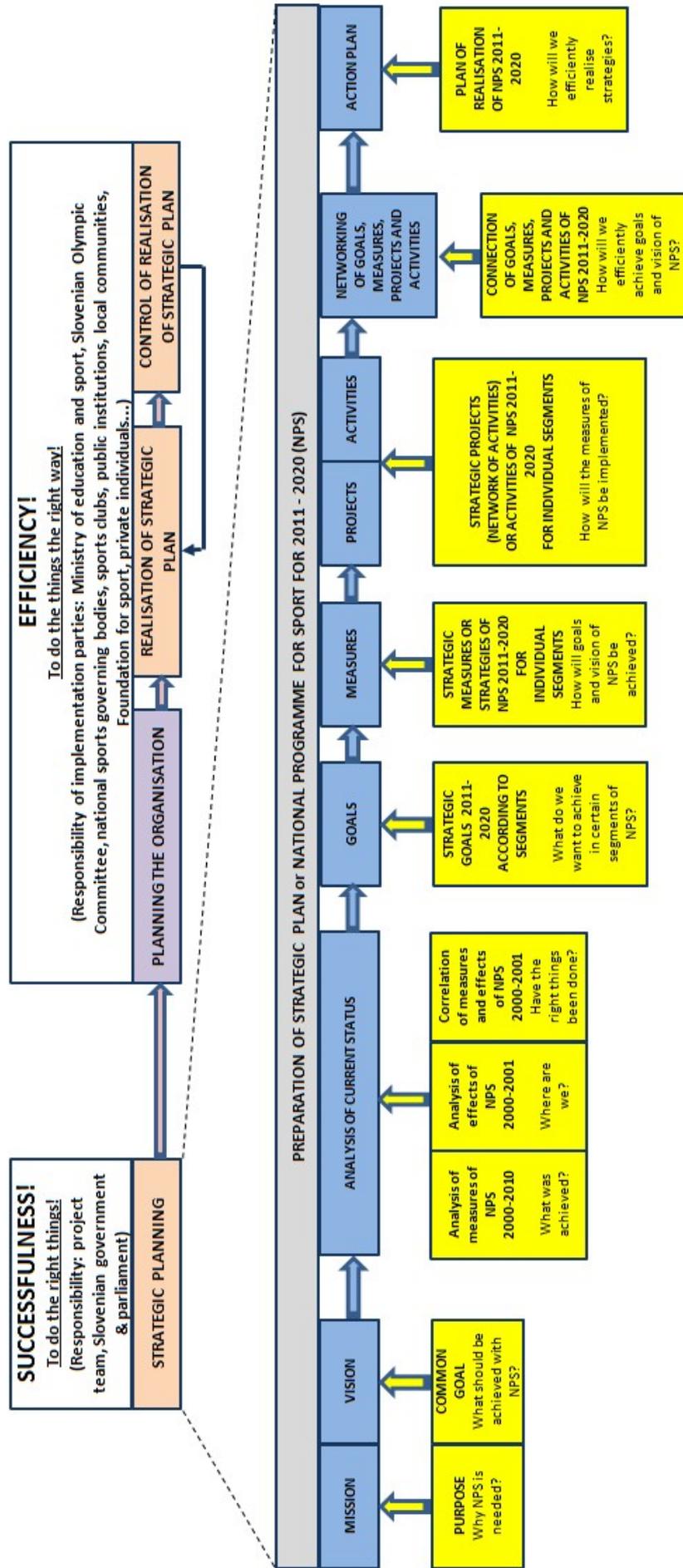
Methodological starting-point for preparation of the new NPS, which could become a fundamental strategic document for progress and development of Slovenian sport in the coming decade, was based on the methodology of strategic management (Žnidaršič Krajnc, 1996; Kolar, 2007; Pučko, 2003; 2008), which recommends a series of steps in preparation of such documents. The model of preparation of National programme for sport can be seen in Figure 1. The model in its top part presents the phases of strategic management or phases of preparation of National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020, preparation of the organisation for implementation of the National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020 and the control of implementation of National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020. Whereas the preparation of the strategic plan is connected with planning of successfulness (To do the right things!), the planning of organisation, implementation and control are connected with the efficiency (To do things in a right way!) of implementation of strategic goals and vision of the National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020. The successfulness of the National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020, which depends on establishing »right« strategic goals and measures, projects and activities, e.g. those that will increase successfulness of Slovenian sport and enable the implementation of strategic vision (common goal) and mission (purpose) of the National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020, will be a responsibility of the project team. The efficiency of the implementation of measures, projects and activities for accomplishing strategic goals will be a responsibility of all the acting parties in the process of implementation (organisation and realisation) of measures (strategies) and control of realisation of measures and achievement of the effects of measures (strategies). The lower part of the figure 1 shows a group of activities, which have to be carried out in the process of preparation of National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020 (NPS 2011 – 2020). Individual activities or steps in preparation of the NPS 2011 – 2020 follow consequently, as the realisation of one activity facilitates a sensible realisation of the next activity. Explanation is included for every step and activity as well as questions, which will have to be answered in the realisation of the activity.

Considering above mentioned points, the strategic team has in its introductory starting-points of the preparation plan written that four strategic documents will need to be prepared in order to deal with the entire future development of sport. Documents are proposed to be prepared in the following order:

1. Analysis of the National programme for sport in Slovenia (2000),
2. National programme for sport for 2011 – 2020,
3. Action plan for the implementation of the National programme for sport in Slovenia for 2011 – 2020,
4. The novelty on the Law on sport or a new Law on sport (on the basis of passed NPS).

According to the project team members, only all four strategic documents together can present a logical unit, which will enable rational, successful and efficient realisation of progress and development of Slovenian sport in the next decade.

Figure 1. Model of preparation of the National programme for sport 2011 – 2020.



Analysis of the National programme for sport in Slovenia (2000)

An analysis of the National programme for sport in Slovenia (NPS 2000) has been presented in an extensive scientific monograph, which on more than 350 pages presents an analysis of various aspects of sport between 2001 and 2008. The analysis consisted of a review of the entire internal setting of sport, which included those segments of sport that formed a part of NPS 2000. Strengths and weaknesses of implemented measures from the NPS 2000 were examined. Analysis also touched on the subject of some aspects of external setting of sport, namely those segments that in past already had and in future potentially could have important effects on the progress and development of Slovenian sport. Analysis of these aspects helped to understand the threats and opportunities of future development and progress of sport.

A method of whole analysis (evaluation) of sport in Slovenia has been used in order to examine the efficiency and successfulness of implementation of NPS 2000 for the period 2001 – 2008. Complete field of sport has been divided into substructures and each of the substructures of sport has been evaluated analytically. The field of sport has been divided into five substructures: organisational, financial, research & development, programme and materialistic (infrastructure) substructure. Within the individual substructures a finished analysis of individual contents of NPS 2000 has been carried out. The contents of NPS 2000 have been distributed according to their belonging to individual substructure of sport. Thus, within the entire analysis, in total 20 areas of sport have been reviewed and evaluated; namely, 17 segments (contents) of NPS 2000, which formed a part of internal setting of sport and three areas of external setting of sport (economic effects, taxation aspects and sport in educational system). In the segment of analysis of materialistic substructure, environmental as well as some other topics, related to construction of sports facilities, have been considered. The final chapters of the analysis included main findings from individual substructures and areas; furthermore, the evaluation of successfulness and efficiency of individual measures of NPS 2000 has been presented. Additionally, an analysis of correlation of financial measures and selected effects, indicating the development and progress of Slovenian sport for the period 2001 – 2008, has been carried out and the evaluation of successfulness of fulfilment of the goals and purposes through NPS 2000 has been presented.

Numerous indicators (the number of medals at major competitions, the number of sportingly active adult population, number of sporting organisation, new training and competition sport facilities etc.) revealed that sport in Slovenia has in the last ten years experienced all-around progress and quality development. Important factors of contribution have been measures, implemented by the state and local governments, which were defined in the National programme for sport 2000. Other supporting factors were introduction of sport into various social areas (particularly educational), self-initiative of social organisation of sport, development of private sector in sport, media attention, interest of general public and Slovenian economy for private financing of sport. Main findings of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Slovenian sport in numbers

Total expenditure for sport	597.521.712 € (1,93% of BDP)
Average annual expenditure of household for sport	496 €
Number of sports organisations	7.439
Number of sports clubs	6.115
Annual averages income of sports club	32.764 €
Resources from Yearly sport programme per person	49.28 €
Indoor sports facility (m ² per person)	0.33
Outdoor sports facilities (m ² per person)	3.15
Number of compulsory physical education lessons in education system	3 academic hours (45 minutes) in primary school and 1 to 3 in secondary school, 0 in higher education
Proportion of sportingly active adult population	64%
Number of children in sports programmes Golden Sun and Krpan	94.953 (approx. 70% of 6- to 9-year-old children and approx. 50% of 9- do 12-year-old children)
Proportion of swimmers among 12-year-old children	85.60%
Number of registered athletes in competitive systems of national sports governing bodies, competing for the title of national champion	87.520
Number of categorised athletes	4.520
Number of world-class athletes	52
Number of sports with categorised athletes	110
Number of local communities with categorised athletes	133
Number of children and youth, included in the project of National sports schools	7.016
Number of young athletes with scholarship	145
Number of suppliers of coaching education programmes and number of programmes	60 suppliers, 282 programmes
Number of researchers in sport	85
Average number of organised World and European championships per year	8

In the last decade, organised sport in Slovenia was on a rise. In 2008, 7.439 sports organisations were functional, 82% (6.115) of them were sports clubs. The number of sports organisations (private and public) has throughout the entire observed period increased by 91% (3.544). Particular expansion has been noticed in private sector, both in the number of organisations and the income made. Despite this fact, the model of extra-curricular sport is still based on sports clubs.

Clubs are main protagonists of Slovenian competitive sport. In 2009, 87.520 athletes were registered (Olimpijski komite Slovenije, 2009) as participants in competitive systems of national sports governing bodies up to the level of national champion (an estimate for 2000 was 15.000 athletes). In the same year, 4.520 athletes fulfilled criteria to become categorised (Olimpijski komite Slovenije – združenje športnih zvez, 2007). The number of sports, the number and proportion of Slovenian local communities with categorised athletes, the number of elite athletes and the number of medals won at major competitions has been increasing throughout the ten-year period, indicating larger distribution of quality and elite sport. In last decade, the number of elite athletes has increased by 14.7% or 102 elite athletes. The number of medals won at major international competitions (Olympic Games, World and European championships) has been during the years 2000 and 2008 increasing by 8% per year. With five medals won at the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, Slovenia placed second on the ranking list of medals won per capita¹; with three medals won Slovenia ranked third at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver (Olimpijski komite Slovenije, 2010). Slovenia is one of the five European countries and by far the smallest country (France, Germany, Serbia and Spain), which in 2010 had teams qualified for Football World Cup as well as World Championships in basketball and handball¹.

Such results were achieved with the help of various systemic measures. The level of expertise of working with children and youth has increased, particularly due to financial support for educated sports professionals, working with this sensitive part of population within the project of national sports schools. Among the important projects, enabling the athletes to acquire desired education, are also solutions in the field of balancing the academic and sport commitments of talented athletes (sports classes, scholarships, learning help and other types of modification of academic responsibilities) (Jurak et. al., 2005).

Various sports programmes for children (Golden Sun; Krpan; Learn to swim; Hoorah, free time) in the last ten years contributed to improvement of contents, workforce and materialistic resources of motor activity of pre-school and compulsory as well as free time physical education of pre-school and primary school children. Nevertheless, positive trends in organised free time sports activities of children did not manage to neutralise negative changes in lifestyle of children and youth. Consequently, increasing proportion of overweight and obese children, particularly between the ages of 8 and 13, has been noticed, as well as negative changes in functional indicators of aerobic endurance of children and youth (Strel, Bizjak, Starc, & Kovač, 2009). Negative trends are still significantly smaller in comparison to other European countries.

Ensuring the infrastructure conditions for carrying out sports activity has been accomplished through intensive investments of local communities into a network of sports facilities, thus providing 0.33m² of indoor sports facilities and 3.15m² of outdoor sports facilities per capita. In contrast, an efficient catalogue of sports facilities, which would ensure adequate overview for efficient supplementing of network, is still required and lacking. In some local communities, sports facilities that were built require expensive maintenance, which will be hard to keep up due to limitations of local budgets. In general, construction of network of sports facilities was very dispersed across Slovenian regions; mostly multi-purpose sports halls were

¹ <http://www.rtvlo.si/sport/preostali-sporti/slovenski-sport-svetovni-fenomen/217612>

constructed. Less sports facilities per person have been noticed in larger towns, particularly Ljubljana and Maribor.

The network of sports facilities ensures access to sport for the majority of population; the fact has been confirmed also with international comparisons. Slovenes are in first place according to the use of natural sports facilities and one of the most sportingly active nations of European Union (Eurobarometer, 2010), as 64% of population is sportingly active and 33% of population practice sport on a regular basis (Sila et. al., 2010).

In the last decade a second developmental sports infrastructure has been set up. A system of education, training and promotion of professional workforce in sport has been formed. Training programmes of workforce in sport have been set up by competent providers (three providers of university and high education programmes; 282 training programmes and 60 providers). In the studied period, 1.130 professional people finished university or further education sports degree. In the same period, 9.679 professional people were trained in sport. Supporting the transfer of knowledge are sports and other organisations, which on an annual basis publish 70 scientific and professional items of literature from sport. Supporting the athletes with monitoring of their preparation are 9 laboratories of the Institute of sport at the Faculty of sport in Ljubljana and one laboratory at the University of Primorska. Despite reduced financing, scientific-research activity of sport is extensive and successful, although as a result of national strategy in the field of science it is more directed into publicising abroad and less in studying practical problems of sport at home. A National anti-doping commission has been set up in order to prevent doping and the activities of the commission have in ten-year period resulted in identifying the use of illegal substances and procedures in 18 athletes.

An analysis of financing of Slovenian sport revealed that the entire expenditure for sport in the last decade has been increasing on an absolute level; however, in relation to the GNP it has been decreasing due to major investments in transportation infrastructure. In 2001, expenditure for sport amounted to 433.9 million EUR (2.38% of GNP), whereas in 2007 it was 597.5 million EUR (1.93% GNP). The proportion of private and public expenditure has not been changing significantly throughout the years; in average private expenditure represents 84% and public expenditure 16% of total expenditure for sport. Proportion of public expenditure for sport is lower than in other EU countries. Expenditure of households represents almost half of total expenditure for sport. The largest proportion of money is spent on sports equipment (78.2% - sport clothing and shoes and outdoor sport equipment), whereas three times less money is spent on sports services (21.8% - sports courses, sports clubs membership fees, training fees, ski passes and tickets to sports events). Average Slovenian household spends 496 EUR per year for sport, which is comparable with EU-15 member countries. Expenditure of businesses for sport (mostly as sponsorships) in average represents 18.1% of total expenditure for sport.

The income of sports organisations has in the last decade risen from 158.9 million EUR to 300.3 million EUR. Despite significant increase of income in private sector, the income of sports clubs grew continuously. In 2008, the total income of sports clubs came to 200.4 million EUR; however, the income of an average club is stagnating as a result of growing number of clubs.

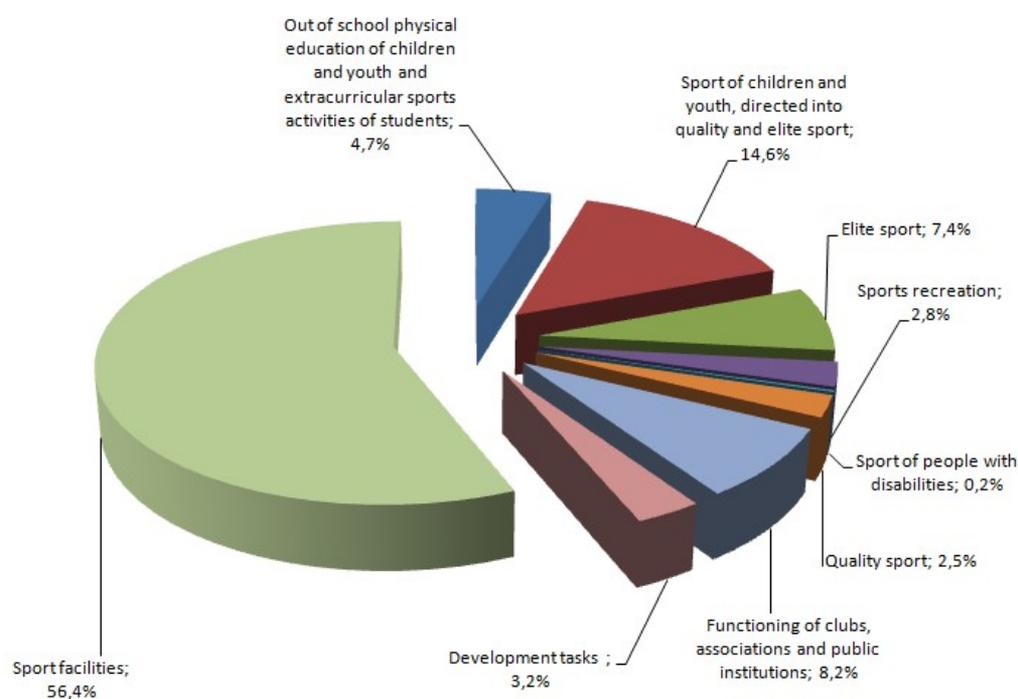
In 2008, 100.1 million EUR of public finances went to sport² in comparison to 63.4 million EUR in 2001. Local communities contributed 75.2% of this money and the state government 24.8% of total public expenditure for sport, signifying decentralised model of financing in sport, which can be compared to western European countries. Public finances have in the studied period reached almost 90% of planned expenditure in National programme for

² This includes finances for sport from local government, state government and Foundation of sport. Although sport is also financed from some other public sources (e.g. employment of athletes in state companies), data available was not adequate and have been neglected.

sport, although the realisation of individual contents of National programme for sport was very different. The best realisation has been noticed in the segment of construction of sports facilities. This category obtained the majority of public finances and its proportion within the total public expenditure has been increasing. In 2001, it represented 48.1 % and in 2008 56.4% of total public expenditure for sport (see Figure 2).

However, some supporting mechanisms of Slovenian sport were not implemented in the last decade. Problems keep occurring in implementation of physical education throughout the entire vertical of educational system, implementation of health status of athletes, caring for the complete personal development of elite athletes, development and implementation of sport activity of children and youth with special needs and sport participation of disabled people, rationalisation of the use of public sports facilities and the lack of adequate training infrastructure for certain sports. It has also been noticed that some national governing bodies depend too heavily on public financing and that professional teams have continuous financial difficulties. Wrong decisions in 2006 on functioning and development of information system in sport resulted in shortage of information, which are essential in decision making process. Additionally, balanced media coverage of different types of sport has not been achieved. Media report mainly on elite and quality sport and to a lesser extent fulfil its mission about the promotion of sport as an important factor of a healthy lifestyle. Non-governmental sports segment has warned about its reduced influence in decision making process on public finances and the functioning of sport on a local level. In the area of taxation it has been noticed that it is not encouraging for the development of sport. All the above mentioned arguments represent threats for the future progress and development of Slovenian sport.

Figure 2. A structure of public finances in 2008 according to the categories of National programme for sport.



A proposal of the National programme for sport of Republic of Slovenia for 2011 – 2020 and its action plan

Findings from the analysis of the previous decade represented a fundamental starting-point for planning and preparation of the proposal of the new NPS. In methodological sense, the new proposal follows the process of strategic planning, which happens after strategic analysis (see Figure 1). As such, NPS in its initial chapter includes definition of sport and the set of social roles of sport; this is followed by its mission, status (summary of analysis), vision, main goal and measures or strategies for achieving the goal.

Main **mission** of the NPS 2011 – 2020 is for the government to use the NPS for creation conditions for development of sport; in turn, sport to become an important factor of improvement of every individual and the entire society. National programme for sport defines public interest, which is carried out by acting parties and creators of Slovenian sport. Fulfilling of public interests will be achieved by:

- a) Ensuring each individual a possibility for active participation in sport in a safe and healthy environment,
- a) Providing all young people quality physical education lessons and out of school sports participation, which will enable acquisition of motor competency to the extent of sport becoming a part of their healthy lifestyle,
- b) Providing everyone with interest and ability a chance to improve personal sports achievement and a possibility of public recognition of his or her importance,
- c) Developing moral and ethical values of sport, respecting human dignity and safety of everyone involved in sport,
- d) Creating encouraging environment for the development of all types of sports activity and for all parts of populations.

A vision, written in the proposal of the NPS 2011 – 2020 states that in the coming decade *»Sport will become more important part of culture of our nation and should become a necessary part of a healthy lifestyle and positive attitude towards life for every individual.«*

Main strategic goals, which were set in order to fulfil a vision and mission of NPS 2011 – 2020, are:

- ⇒ To increase a proportion of sportingly active adult population in Slovenia by 5%,
- ⇒ To increase a proportion of regularly active adult population in Slovenia by 5%,
- ⇒ To increase a proportion of daily active children and youth by 20%,
- ⇒ To increase a proportion of sportingly active population in expertly led programmes by 3%,
- ⇒ To increase a number of athletes in competitive systems by 10%,
- ⇒ To increase a number of elite athletes by 5%,
- ⇒ To maintain the number of world class athletes.

Chapter *»Measures«* has been in the NPS proposal divided into six structures (sports programmes; sports facilities and natural facilities for sport; developmental activities in sport; functioning of sports organisations; tax benefits of sport; support for humanity in sport), consisting of 25 segments. Every segment (or structure, if it is a sole entity) includes: **set strategic goals**, which will support accomplishment of basic goals from NPS proposal,

indicators, which can objectively measure reaching the strategic goals of the segment and **measures**, which should be realised in order to fulfil strategic goals of the individual segment. In addition, for each segment a proposal of action plan has been prepared, stating activities (or projects) needed to be realised for each measure, deadline and the amount of financial resources and the creators (both financial and organisational) for each activity. Chapter »Measures« is followed by chapters »Managing«, which in methodological sense represents a process of sensible organisation for efficient realisation of measures (strategies) of NPS, and »Financing«, which summarises and represents financial volume of NPS, relations between different structures in sport and time schedule for provision of public finances, needed for realisation of the NPS proposal. The proposal ends with priority tasks for the next decade.

Prepared NPS proposal for the coming period has been regarding to its contents set significantly wider than the previous National programme for sport. The significance of social roles of sport requires intertwining of sport with various social areas: health, education, business, environment, tourism, culture, finances, transportation etc. Development of sport cannot depend only on sports organisations and government as well as local bodies, which support sport. Therefore, the proposal defines the role and responsibility of individual creators for providing the conditions for development of sport in the entire social sphere. Proposal particularly emphasises solving of professional, organisational and managing tasks, which are closely related to sport. These tasks represent annual programme of sport (operational document), which will be every year financed from government and local budgets for sport and Foundation for sport. In part, where sport is intertwined with other social areas, the NPS proposal defines guidelines for appropriate placement of sport into strategies and policies of these areas and mutual work for common public good. Contents of the starting points of the NPS proposal follow the directives of the »*White book on sport*«, the European Council, European policies on different areas, which regulate sport and the international conventions from the field of sport, which have been ratified by Slovenia. It is worth mentioning two other important aspects of the NPS proposal. First, the NPS proposal defines sport as a basic right of all human beings: children, youth, adults, old age people as well as people with special needs. As such, the proposal is also intended for individuals who are residents of Slovenia and those who only reside temporarily. Second, the NPS proposal grants non-governmental part of society an important role in the field of sport and suggests that it should become an important decision-maker in the managing process of the NPS.

Instead of conclusion

A project team has prepared a proposal for the new NPS, which will have to undergo a long path of changes and amendments until it will be passed in the Slovenian Parliament. When preparing the proposal, project team members have on the basis of available data and heterogeneous knowledge as well as familiarity with various segments of sport attempted to tackle sport in its entirety. A preliminary presentation of the proposal has been completed in front of all the committees of Slovenian Olympic Committee – Association of Sport Unions, which is the highest professional organisation from non-governmental sector in sport, in front of students of the Faculty of sport, which are potential users and creators of future image of sport, and also at 14 regional symposiums across the entire Slovenia. Responses of all types of public were critical but encouraging. Nevertheless, it is important to realise that only cultured dialogue, which will be based on professionally and scientifically founded arguments will contribute to national strategy that could represent an added value to future successfulness of Slovenian sport.

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