

Sport in the system

2021-2024 working programme

2022

Foreword

2022

// Sport is a favourite (leisure) pastime for many people, as active participants as well as spectators. Sport is part of many people's daily routine. During the COVID-19 lockdown it became clear how much people missed their sport. At the same time, it also became clear how important it is to be active and keep fit. We already knew this in relation to other sicknesses, but the coronavirus made it once again painfully clear to us.

By now I have become convinced that sport is more than just a fun hobby. Elite sport, grassroots sport, and physical activity are more than just that. Sport has a great deal of importance for society, and I think everyone deserves to have an opportunity to experience it: young and old, men and women, rich and poor, in short anyone and everyone regardless of their background.

Together with the other council members of the Netherlands Sports Council, I will do my best to ensure that sport is systematically available in gyms, on sports fields, at sports events, and in the media as well as in the street, at school, at work, and at care institutions. In doing so, the Council will also not hesitate to take a hard look at the frameworks, systems, laws, sectors, and preconditions that facilitate or impede this. Based on its own independent position, the Netherlands Sports Council wishes to make a contribution to elite sport, grassroots sport, and physical activity in the Netherlands.

Michael van Praag, chair of the Netherlands Sports Council

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Chapter 1

Netherlands Sports Council

Statutory advisory body

On 1 April 2016, the Netherlands Sports Council (Nederlandse Sportraad) was established, the first advisory body that advises the cabinet and parliament on matters related to sport. After an external assessment, the cabinet decided to extend the mandate of the Netherlands Sports Council, as of 1 April 2020, for another two years. At the same time, a legislative process was initiated to make the Netherlands Sports Council a permanent advisory body. The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport has informed the Senate and the House of Representatives regarding the extension of the mandate of the Netherlands Sports Council and the intention to anchor the status of the Netherlands Sports Council in law. The Netherlands Sports Council views this as a recognition of the work that has been done in recent years.

Broad scope of advice

When its mandate was extended, the Netherlands Sports Council was assigned a broad range of tasks by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport: providing advice not only on sports events but also on sport in the broadest sense of the term, including

sport in general as well as sport in relation to societal themes (VWS, 2020). In recent years, the Council had already taken up this broader range of tasks in consultation with the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport (in the following referred to as the Minister). The long-term 2018-2020 working programme *'Dot on the horizon'* was already based on three pillars: sports events, a national sports agreement, and current issues (NLsportraad, 2017a). In its new working programme, the Council also views elite sport, grassroots sport, and physical activity as part of its domain, including interfaces with other policy areas. The Council provides strategic as well as operational advice in these areas.

Transparent positioning

From the external assessment (Duijvestein et al., 2019) and the opinion given by the Minister (VWS, 2020) the Netherlands Sports Council has distilled a number of important attention points for the future. First, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Council will pay more attention to its positioning. In their evaluation, the researchers concluded that the Netherlands Sports Council clearly provides added value within the framework of sport,

but that not all parties in the sports sector are familiar with the position and possibilities of an advisory body. Under the *Advisory Bodies Framework Act* (National Government, 2020), an advisory body is by definition independent and provides advice without any interests of its own. An advisory body can therefore never be part of a lobby group or campaign. There is also a clear distinction between an advisory body and a research institute. An advisory body bases its recommendations on the most recent scientific knowledge and, at most, will commission a third party to carry out a review or analysis of a specific subject. The Netherlands Sports Council does not carry out its own research.

Transparent composition

In their evaluation, the researchers recommended paying more attention to increasing the transparency of the Council's composition. In collaboration with the Minister, the Council immediately implemented this recommendation and established a protocol for appointing its members. At the start of the second term of the Council, three vacancies occurred which were filled via an open recruitment and selection procedure in 2020.

Significant advice/recommendations

The Netherlands Sports Council as well as the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport attach a great deal of importance to the independence and underpinning of the recommendations provided in order to maximise their quality and impact. It is this independence, in particular, that gives the recommendations from the Netherlands Sports Council their added value. In addition to their underpinning, the applicability of the recommendations is also a very important factor for the Council. The impact of recommendations always depends upon the significance of the recommendation for policy and the real world. The visibility of a recommendation is a precondition to be able to comply with it. The Netherlands Sports Council therefore pays a great deal of attention to the interaction and communication around the recommendations, not only when they are put on the agenda and formulated but also when they are issued and during the follow-up phase.

In brief

Four years after the Netherlands Sports Council was first established, a new chapter in its history is beginning. The Netherlands Sports Council intends to make even better use of its potential for the benefit of sport by further clarifying its position, working more transparently, and providing advice of significance. These are the points of departure for a new long-term working programme for the Netherlands Sports Council.

Chapter 2

Vision Sport for society

In its recent publication *The playing field for sport and the underlying analysis*, the Netherlands Sports Council (2020a) looked extensively at the value of sport for society as well as the challenges faced by the sports sector in relation to society. The Netherlands Sports Council discussed these issues in depth in order to be able to provide advice on a future-proof organisation and financing of sport in the Netherlands. The Council concluded that sport provides a great deal of value for society as a whole. However, at the same time, the Council concluded that the potential benefits of sport in relation to many of the challenges faced by society can be implemented more effectively than is presently being done. Sport provides significant benefits, or can at least do so, in many social domains including health, well-being, integration, education, economy and infrastructure, and the associated challenges in these areas such as ageing, individualisation, migration, and sustainability.

Urgency of sport and physical activity

When the Netherlands Sports Council refers to 'sport', it refers to the entire domain of elite sport, grassroots sport, and leisure time physical activity. The Council does not

differentiate between different forms of sport and physical activity, just as the general population does not do so. This broad-based definition is the point of departure in '*The playing field of sport*' and the underlying *Sports Sector Report* (KPMG, 2019). The Netherlands Sports Council also refers to these documents in its definition of the sports sector. The sports sector is the entire framework of (sports) organisations that facilitate participating in and experiencing sport activities in leisure time. The COVID-19 crisis has once again made it clear how urgent it is for the Council to deal with all forms of physical activity in addition to elite sport and grassroots sports. A lack of physical activity among the population is a pandemic that has already been with us for decades with disastrous consequences. Half of the population in the Netherlands does not participate in sufficient physical activity, develops overweight, and is therefore (more) vulnerable to the coronavirus than persons with a healthy and active lifestyle. It should be noted that this risk of vulnerability is also true of other (chronic) diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, depression, and Alzheimer's. The sports sector could make a bigger contribution to ensuring that the

population participates in sufficient physical activity, but it cannot do so without the help of other policy areas and sectors. The Netherlands Sports Council involves these neighbouring areas and sectors in its recommendations.

Maximising value for society as a whole

The document '*The playing field of sport*' makes it clear that sport provides a great deal of benefits for society as a whole, but at the same time the Netherlands Sports Council concludes that these benefits could be even greater if the areas of interface between sport and other areas of society were leveraged more effectively. The benefits of elite sport, grassroots sports, and leisure time physical activity do not always just happen by themselves but often need to be targeted proactively. For example, increased physical activity definitely leads to improved health, but it also helps if the built environment encourages people to move about. Sport and physical activity can lead to an improved learning performance, but it also depends upon scheduling a sufficient number of uninterrupted moments for physical activity in the study schedule. Elite sports persons can open doors for trade missions that remain

closed for others, but of course they must first be added to such a mission and be given a role. Sports events can have a major economic and social impact for the region, but only if appropriate policy is implemented accordingly. An integrated approach is needed on the part of the national government and local government bodies as well as intersectoral collaboration between sport and other sectors in order to optimise the benefits of sport and physical activity for the population.

Interdepartmental collaboration

In its advice '*Agreement with ambition*' the Netherlands Sports Council (2018) described the many interfaces between sport and other policy areas. In the advice, the Netherlands Sports Council calls on the Minister to work together in a structured manner with colleagues from other departments. The Netherlands Sports Council recommends doing so per cluster, for example for the themes sport and infrastructure, sport and international relations, sport and health, and sport and financing. The most urgent issue is the matter of intra- and inter-departmental collaboration on the theme of health and combating the lack of physical activity and overweight. In order to combat

the lack of physical activity, an integrated approach is needed in the areas of sport, health, care, childcare, education, working conditions, housing, spatial planning, infrastructure, and finances. International literature makes it clear that an *integrated* approach makes the difference (Scherder, 2020). Unfortunately, in real life we see rigid compartmentalisation much more often; this is also the case in the Netherlands. In addition, the policy area devoted to physical activity in a broad sense is an empty playing field: the responsibility of everyone and no one. When providing advice on sport, health and other topics, the Netherlands Sports Council will always consider the interfaces of sport with other policy areas and the resulting necessary forms of collaboration at the national and local level and between various sectors. In doing so, the Council will also make use of the knowledge that is available from other advisory bodies. The Netherlands Sports Council is also looking at other ways to encourage interdepartmental collaboration than simply giving advice.

Intersectoral collaboration

Interdepartmental collaboration at the national level is important because it also

improves the intersectoral collaboration at the local level between sports organisations on the one hand and schools, childcare centres, community centres, GP posts, care institutions, and businesses on the other. Of course, situations exist in which sports organisations and other parties know how to find each other in practice regardless of whether or not they are facilitated by the municipality. But there are also situations in which this does not happen. Sometimes, compartmentalisation at the national level even creates barriers for intersectoral collaboration. For example, in collaboration with the Education Council, and the Council for Public Health and Society (2018), the Netherlands Sports Council, in its advice *'Enjoying physical activity*, recommended that sports professionals at the intermediate vocational level (mbo) and licensed sports volunteers be allowed to contribute to increased sport and physical activity at school under the supervision of the physical education teacher. Until now, only trained teachers at the level of advanced professional education (hbo) have access to the gymnasium, which greatly limits the available opportunities. In its advice *'Tax regulations and sports events'* (NLsportraad, 2017b), the Council argues for making changes to tax

related measures, as they stand in the way of compensation for volunteer work and donations for sports events. Such structural conflicts and incompatibilities can only be resolved at the national level. In providing advice, the Council will always consider how intersectoral collaboration between the sports sector and other sectors can be established and how collaboration can be encouraged within and by the national government. Strengthening the sports sector: a strong sports sector is needed to realise the benefits of sport for society as a whole and for dealing successfully with social challenges. The targeted ambitions may be high – for example eliminating the lack of physical activity in the Netherlands – but the sector must be facilitated in helping to realise these ambitions. When considering the playing field in which sport takes place, the Netherlands Sports Council concludes that the sports sector needs to be strengthened at several points. The Council identifies these points as preconditions for the long-term perspective of sport in the Netherlands. These points involve the following: clarifying and structuring the relationship between the market and the government; professionalisation of the sports sector and strengthening the job market;

developing a shared vision and collective representation for the sector, and optimising the governance of the sport sector and transparency in the distribution of resources. The Netherlands Sports Council takes the efforts of the sports sector into account in all of its policy recommendations, and will also give specific recommendations aimed at fulfilling the requirements for a strong sports sector.

In brief

Via its recommendations, the Netherlands Sports Council aims to systematically facilitate elite sport, grassroots sports, and physical activity and to maximise the significance of sport for society as a whole. Its recommendations are based on an integrated vision and intersectoral approach for which interdepartmental collaboration is needed. The Council takes this into account in all of its recommendations. In addition, the Council also aims to provide advice on how to best strengthen the sports sector in order to enable the sector to maximise the significance of sport as a whole. The Council leverages its independent position as an advisory body to provide valuable advice and deliver added benefits to the sports sector.

Chapter 3

Themes

Accountability choice

In '*The playing field of Sport*' and the underlying analyses, the Netherlands Sports Council (2020a) focused on the importance of sport for society and the challenges facing sport in relation to society as a whole. Sport can (potentially) be of great importance for society in a wide range of areas including health, care, well-being, integration, quality-of-life, mobility, employment productivity, the economy, spatial planning, and the environment. A range of societal challenges can have an impact on sport: the ageing population and its consequences for public health and care, the economic recession caused by the COVID-19 crisis, lack of space in urban areas and lack of facilities in shrinkage

areas, climate change and related sustainability issues, and the digitisation and increasing flexibility of society. All the areas and challenges mentioned above are relevant, but it is simply not possible to deal with all of them at the same time. The Netherlands Sports Council has selected a number of themes for the 2021-2024 working programme that the Council wishes to prioritise when it comes to providing advice. These include themes whereby sport serves as an 'instrument' as well as themes whereby sport is the 'goal'. A strong sports sector is needed to use sport as an instrument for achieving goals in other areas. The Council also wishes to provide advice on strengthening the sports sector.



3.1 Sport and health

Importance of sport for health

In the coming years, the Council aims to prioritise advice in the area of sport and health. Sport and physical activity have a proven positive effect on the physical, mental, and social health of people. There is a direct relationship between sport and physical activity on the one hand and increased resilience, vitality, and employment productivity of the population on the other (Tiessen-Raaphorst & Pulles, 2018; Bailey et al., 2014). Sport and physical activity can also prevent or mitigate the effects of diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, depression, or Alzheimer's (see Lear et al., 2017; Livingstone et al., 2019).

The Netherlands as champion 'couch potato'

Sport and physical activity are an integral part of a healthy lifestyle, but data from RIVM and other research institutes (2020) show that only about half of the population in the Netherlands participates in sufficient physical activity for good health. Half of the adult population also suffers from overweight, of whom 15% to a serious degree. Compared to

other countries, the Netherlands has a relatively large number of people participating in sports on a weekly basis (53%) and a large percentage of children (80%) are members of a sports club, but this does still not result in sufficient physical activity from a health perspective. As it turns out, people in the Netherlands spend a lot of their time sitting. Within Europe as a whole, the Netherlands is actually the leader in this regard. A lack of physical activity occurs relatively frequently among pupils in secondary school (60%) who sit in class while learning, sit while doing their homework, and often stop participating in sports in secondary school as well.

Pandemic and ageing

Scientists describe inactivity as a pandemic (Scherder, 2020). It has become more urgent than ever before to devote more attention to an active and healthy lifestyle now that the COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that persons with a better health status are less susceptible to the virus and also recover better on average. Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 crisis, people have actually reduced

their level of physical activity (Van der Poel & Pulles, 2020). Various societal developments also increase the urgency of adopting an active lifestyle now and in the future. The average age of the population is continuing to increase, as a result of which an increasingly large group of people in the Netherlands is living to a very old age. If older people remain fit, they can continue participating in society for a longer period of time and their care costs are delayed.

Introducing physical activity standards

The Health Council has set physical activity standards for children (Health Council, 2017), and it is presently working on recommendations for children between the ages of 0 and 4 (Health Council, 2020). Setting physical activity guidelines is an important step. However, simply publishing these physical activity guidelines is one thing, implementing them is another. A great many factors have an influence on how people behave and how much they move, including psychological, social, economic, and spatial factors (Wendel-Vos et al. 2019; Health

Council, 2010). Of course, people are in the first place themselves responsible for ensuring that they participate in sufficient physical activity. However, the surroundings also have a major influence. That includes the built environment and the road network as well as the context provided by schools, workplaces (at home and at the office) and care institutions that, generally speaking, require children, adults, and older people to spend much of their time sitting down. In order to interrupt this cycle and to encourage people to participate in sufficient physical activity from birth to death, a systematic, coordinated, and integrated approach is needed at the national level, the local level, and in collaboration between different sectors (also see IBO Healthy lifestyle, 2016).

Physical activity during various phases

The Netherlands Sports Council wishes to analyse how it might be possible to promote improved compliance with the physical activity standard during the various phases in the life-cycle of human beings. In its advice *'Enjoying physical activity'* the Netherlands Sports Council, together with the Council for Public Health and Society and the Education Council (2018), answered this question for

pupils in primary and secondary education. The Netherlands Sports Council notes that too little has actually been done with this advice in policy and practice, and requests ongoing attention for this topic in the coming years. But the Council will also develop recommendations for other phases in one's life-cycle. In doing so, the Council always takes into account the factors that influence human behaviour, the personal circumstances, and the context. Various systems and frameworks have an influence on the physical activity or lack of such activity displayed by people, including childcare, school, care, well-being, and spatial planning. These external frameworks are often not sufficiently coordinated with each other and with the sports sector, so that the responsible parties end up working in an inefficient and compartmentalised fashion without any collaboration.

Government intervention is necessary

In the first place, the Netherlands Sports Council advises the national government, in particular the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and various other departments. As is the case with combating smoking, government intervention and an integrated

approach are needed to make a difference in dealing with the lack of physical activity. The government is the only party that can make changes to existing legislation and frameworks so that sport and physical activity are systematically encouraged and are anchored, as a matter of course, in relevant systems. In all its activities, the Netherlands Sports Council also takes the position of the sports sector into account: what can the sports sector do, and how can the intersectoral collaboration between sport and other sectors be further improved?

Recommendations 2021

In the first place, the Netherlands Sports Council will carry out an analysis of sport and leisure time physical activity throughout people's lives and will identify which (vulnerable) groups are more prone to a lack of physical activity and the most relevant context for these groups. This will be followed by a broad-based advice with a focus on an integrated approach and the necessary interdepartmental and intersectoral collaboration.

2021-2024

After the initial analysis, the Netherlands Sports Council will publish a series of recommendations on promoting more leisure time physical activity by various groups in various situations. These recommendations will apply to the vulnerable groups identified. There will be an ongoing focus on determining which areas of policy and which systems and frameworks can contribute to ensuring that these groups 'get moving again' (Public Health Act, Long-term Care Act, Health Care insurance Act, et cetera).



3.2 Sport and social values

Social significance of sport

Besides its effect on health, sport also has a strong influence on personal development (self-control, self-esteem, discipline, perseverance, and social skills) and on social values that are important for society as a whole: social well-being, participation, cohesion, and integration. Sport can be used to effectively deal with many of the challenges faced by society such as (re) integration, individualisation, and loneliness. As is the case in relation to health, this also requires an ongoing focus on the context within which this takes place (Breedveld et al., 2016). Governments generally view social values as evident: side-effects of sport in general. The Netherlands Sports Council is convinced that, in order to achieve optimum results, sport can be deployed in a much more targeted manner in various areas of policy including education, well-being, and integration. In doing so, the Council generally uses a broad-based approach to sport but, when relevant, also focuses on specific elements of the sector or forms of sport.

Sport and upbringing/education

The Netherlands Sports Council is very much aware that elite sport, grassroots sports, and leisure time physical activity in general can be of great value when it comes to the development and education of children (Netherlands Sports Council, Education Council & Council for Public Health and Society, 2018). The benefit of sport in raising some groups of children is greater than for other children. Examples are children in an underprivileged situation, children with behavioural problems, and children in the youth care or special education sector. Sport can be a stabilising and encouraging factor, and the sports sector can help parents and teachers with educating and raising children. Via sport, children learn to deal with challenges, to work together, and to relate to each other. However, this demands (professional) skills on the part of coaches/supervisors. The Netherlands Sports Council wishes to investigate what is necessary to strengthen the pedagogical climate in the sports sector in such a manner as to ensure that vulnerable youngsters can also

participate and develop themselves further via sport activities. To do so, the Council will also examine the interfaces between the sports sector and the frameworks and facilities for (special) education, welfare, childcare, and youth care. In addition, the Council is convinced that strengthening the pedagogical climate would have a positive effect on the prevention of unwanted behaviour.

Sport and integration

The population of the Netherlands is very diverse. The number of migrants to the Netherlands is expected to continue to increase. Two types of migrants can be differentiated: asylum migrants (e.g. from war-torn areas) and labour migrants (in recent years primarily from Eastern Europe and expats). These groups differ from earlier groups of labour migrants and migrants from the former colonies. CBS and NIDI (2020) expect that, over the coming 30 years, the group of labour migrants will represent two thirds of the total flow of migrants. The Netherlands Sports Council will do its best to

ensure that the diversity of sport in the Netherlands reflects the diversity of its society. Sport and leisure time physical activity are important for everyone, and participating in collective sport activities gives newcomers opportunities for developing themselves and meeting others. For them it is also important to have access to sport activities. The Council wishes to investigate why the participation of some groups in sport activities remains low and to provide recommendations in this regard. Other groups create their own forms of sport connected to international businesses and schools, separately from the regular sports infrastructure. An important question in this regard is how supply and demand can be better adjusted to each other and how society can benefit optimally from the potential value of sport.

Sport and well-being

People living at home (including those living alone) are increasingly subject to feelings of loneliness. Sport provides a perfect opportunity for meeting other people. Older people often have time to participate in sports and leisure time physical activity, and many of them possess skills that are valuable when it

comes to managing sports clubs or doing volunteer work. Although initiatives for older people are gradually becoming increasingly available in the sports sector, the sport activities offered by many sports organisations are not yet appropriate for older persons. In '*The fitness of sport*' the Netherlands Sports Council (2020b) notes that the regular range of sports activities on offer primarily targets the younger generation, competitive sports, and the section of the population that is already fit. The Council wishes to determine to what extent the mismatch between the (potential) demand by older persons on the one hand and the sports activities currently on offer on the other can be resolved, and how older persons can benefit more from the existing sports infrastructure. The Council also aims to determine to what extent the frameworks of the current welfare policy (including the Social Support Act) facilitate this goal.

Unwanted behaviour

If sport is intended for everyone, then it is also important to ensure that everyone also feels at home within the sport environment: young and old, men and women, rich and poor, and highly educated as well as persons with little

education, without any discrimination in terms of origin, ethnicity, religion, culture, or sexual orientation. According to the Netherlands Sports Council, a positive sports culture in which pleasure and performance go hand in hand is one of the preconditions for the further growth of the sports sector. Unwanted behaviour such as discrimination, homophobia, racism, sexism, violence, and (sexual) intimidation do not belong in the sport world. The sports sector and the government are increasingly aware of this. That is also why the sports sector, with support from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, implemented the programme '*Towards a safer sport environment*' (VWS, 2011, 2013; Romijn and Van Kalmthout, 2018), why in 2019 the Safe Sport Centre was established together with a helpdesk for sexual intimidation (www.centrumveiligesport.nl), and why a plan was drafted to combat racism in football (KNVB, 2020). The Netherlands Sports Council notes that various forms of unwanted behaviour have a long history in the world of sport and, in spite of the policy already implemented, have not yet disappeared. The Council wishes to identify the factors that make a real difference in promoting a positive

sports culture and to provide advice on follow-up policy. Promoting information and education in the world of sports is one of these factors. In addition, the Council also wishes to see what can be learned from other sectors or other countries, for example the pedagogical climate in the education sector and the childcare sector, how unwanted behaviour is being dealt with in English football stadiums, and the diversity-based policy of international companies.

Recommendations 2021

In 2021, the Netherlands Sports Council is advising the government on the pedagogical climate in the world of sport. Within the framework of improving the educational climate in the sports world, trainers receive better training, unwanted behaviour is prevented, and the added value of sport in educating children (underprivileged or not) is optimally leveraged. The Netherlands Sports Council will examine under which conditions the sports sector can improve the pedagogical climate.

2021-2024

The Netherlands Sports Council provides advice on the other subjects mentioned that are positioned at the interface between sport and social policy (integration and well-being). In addition, the Netherlands Sports Council will carry out a more in-depth study of the policy intended to prevent and combat unwanted behaviour.



3.3 Elite sport and society

Importance of elite sport

Elite sport has a great deal of value for society. Following elite sport creates a shared sense of community among the followers, creates positive energy, and makes the population proud (Nielsen, 2019; SCP, 2019). A feeling of national support for the athletes representing the Kingdom of the Netherlands is even part of the *Canon of the Netherlands*. The achievements of Olympic and Paralympic elite athletes put the Netherlands on the world map, and elite sport is also used as a tool in international commerce and trade. Sports events have a significant regional economic and social impact. Elite sport can be used as leverage for other areas of policy (NLsportraad, 2019), but the ability of a broad public to experience sports via sports events and media has evolved into a billion-dollar business in itself.

Large-scale sports events

In the report *'The Netherlands on the world map'*, the Netherlands Sports Council (2017c) analysed 25 large-scale (elite)sport events. The Council has since continued to monitor

such events and will continue to do so in the coming years. In evaluation talks after the event, the Council discusses the results and learning points with various event organisers on the basis of standardised questionnaires. The Council wishes to determine whether there is a positive trend discernible in the organisation and impact of sports events and to analyse success factors and obstacles. The COVID-19 crisis has led to a sharp downturn in the organisation of events. Together with the sports sector, the Netherlands Sports Council wishes to consider which new (business) models can be developed for sports events. The Council wants to make a sustainable contribution to leveraging and improving the value of sports events and to facilitating the necessary requirements (financing, collaboration, knowledge sharing, regulations, and technology).

Advice on subsidies for sports events

Since 1 January 2019, at the request of the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Netherlands Sports Council has provided advice on requests for subsidies for

prestigious international sports events. For that purpose, the Council has established a commission of experts that evaluates the requests for subsidies for sports events. To do so, the experts use the criteria and method developed by the Council in response to the modified *2019-2020 Policy Framework for sports events* from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (2018). The role of the commission is not yet clarified in the new, still to be published 2021 policy framework for sports events from the Ministry. The Netherlands Sports Council will enter into discussions with the Ministry on how the valuable knowledge and experience acquired by the commission can best be secured¹.

Mega- and multi-sport events

People in the Netherlands enjoy large-scale sports events. The feeling of national enthusiasm for those representing the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the world of sports (the so-called 'Oranjegevoel') is an important element of the Dutch identity (SCP, 2019). The Netherlands has a great deal of organisational capacity and, if the

1 The assignment of the assessment committee for sports events of the Netherlands Sports Council has since been terminated and the Coordination and Information Center for Elite Sports Events has been established.

international context is favourable, the question then arises whether the Netherlands is able to attract and organise mega- and multi-sport events of an international calibre. Such events can include elite sports events such as major European Football Championships and World Football Championships as well as multi-sport events such as the European Championships and the Olympic and Paralympic Games. One of the questions that then needs to be answered is the question of accommodations, but other issues include how the ongoing technological developments can be deployed to provide the public, at home and abroad, with optimum access to the events. The issue of sustainability in relation to sports events and the UN targets (GAISF, 2020) is also of importance.

Talent recognition and development

How do you become an elite sportsperson? How structured is the approach followed in the Netherlands and how much is it a question of chance? And is there a level playing field with equal opportunities for all? Are there differences in talent development between organised sports and commercial forms of sport? In contrast to the Anglo-

Saxon model, where talent development takes place via the schools, talent development in the Netherlands takes place mostly via the sports clubs and sports federations. Talents 'float to the top' in the local rounds of competition, and these players are then scouted by the sports federations for the regional selections and are given additional training via regional training centres. Within the football sports sector, the professional football organisations also scout talents for their own youth training centres. It is not clear whether all potential talents are actually identified (being a member of a sports club is a precondition here) in this way and whether children and youngsters should not be given broader opportunities to develop their talents in order to discover which sport suits them the best. As a result of the club-based system, children are sorted very early for a specific sport, which in turn can lead to a more limited form of motor development and also possibly to stopping earlier with sport altogether. It is also an open question whether all children and youngsters have equal opportunities for talent development, in view of the investments in time and money required for that purpose. The Netherlands Sports Council aims to carry out literature research and

engage in stakeholder discussions to explore which developments play a role in talent development, which success factors exist, and which obstacles need to be addressed.

Elite sport career and career in society

Talents and elite athletes devote a great deal of time to their sports career. The share of elite athletes that consider sport their full-time profession is increasing. Many of them indicate that their sports career had a negative impact on their educational career. Many of them also indicate that they earn only a limited income. Almost half of all elite athletes earn a minimum income or an income that is below modal (Dijk et al., 2018).

TeamNL@Work was established for the purpose of coaching (ex) elite athletes. Athletes are increasingly availing themselves of these services and many of them are satisfied with the guidance they receive (Dopheide & Elling, 2020). Nevertheless, the transition from a career as an elite athlete to a career in society turns out to be no easy matter for many elite athletes. In 2021, the Mulier Institute aims to acquire more insight into the experiences of (ex) elite athletes and other actors involved in support and coaching services. Based on the knowledge thus

acquired, the Netherlands Sports Council wishes to consider how effective advice could help in promoting dual careers.

Organisation and financing of commercial elite sport

Commercial elite sport exists in the Netherlands in three sports: football, cycling, and skating. Individual Dutch elite athletes also participate in international commercial competitions and tournaments (including athletics, tennis, darts, golf, baseball, car racing and motor racing). In *'The playing field of sport'* the Netherlands Sports Council (2020a) concludes that the organisation of commercial sports in the Netherlands is primarily in the hands of elite sports clubs, event organisers, and main sponsors. Income from media channels (from public and commercial networks) is an important source of funding for commercial elite sport events as is the support provided by municipalities or provinces, in particular for elite sport facilities. Sometimes, the sports federation is involved only indirectly. Changes in sponsoring and the absence of the sports federation introduce a great deal of uncertainty for the talents and elite athletes striving for a professional career. The organisation and financing of commercial

elite sport has long presented a challenge, but the COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated this challenge further. The government does not have a clear-cut strategy in its approach to commercial elite sport. The Netherlands Sports Council wishes to further explore the issues surrounding the organisation and financing of commercial elite sport, its sustainability, the consequences for elite athletes, and the direct or indirect role of the government.

Recommendations 2021

The Netherlands Sports Council provides advice on the value of large-scale sports events for society as a whole as well as on individual sports events in particular, including the development of new business models. In addition, the Netherlands Sports Council is taking a close look at the system of talent recognition and development.

2021-2024

In the coming years, the Netherlands Sports Council will provide advice on the other subjects mentioned: the feasibility of mega- and multi-sport events, the position of elite athletes in society, and the sustainability of commercial elite sport.



3.4 Strengthening the sports sector

Government support needed

The memorandum *'The playing field of sport'* lists a number of preconditions for the future sustainability of sport. The preconditions follow from a thorough analysis of the opportunities and challenges facing the sports sector as well as its strength and weaknesses (Netherlands Sports Council 2020b). Many of the external developments present an opportunity if the sports sector succeeds in responding effectively, but a threat if the sports sector does not know how to deal with the developments (in a timely manner). The Netherlands Sports Council expects that the sports sector will need support from the government in order to respond effectively to the developments. The Council considers the request for government support to strengthen the sports sector – as a goal in itself – to be justified. If the government wishes to optimally leverage the value of sport for society as a whole, then it will have to strengthen the sports sector and facilitate collaboration between sport and other areas of policy. Collaboration between sport and other areas requires improved quality of the sports sector and its further professionalisation.

Sectoral representation

The memorandum *'The playing field of sport'* concludes that a shared vision has to be developed, a mutual agenda needs to be formulated, and a collective sectoral representation must be established. On the basis of a shared vision, the sector will be able to enter into effective discussions with government actors and other partners. There are a great many topics for which different representatives from the sector now approach the government separately or for which there is simply no lobby at all, ranging from tax related measures and administrative paperwork and regulations to sustainability, prevention, and safety. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted this issue even more but, when it comes to long-term policy projects, the sports sector also often fails to send the right people to negotiate at the right tables in a timely and effective manner. The Netherlands Sports Council wishes to provide advice on an optimum organisational structure for the entire sports sector. In doing so, the Council wishes to compare the sports sector to other sectors: how can the

organisations within the sector work together effectively, and how can an optimum 'shared services' model and a strong lobby best be established? An important point to keep in mind in this regard is also the independence of the sectoral organisation(s) in relation to the government, which is intended to prevent conflicts of interest.

Transparency and planning in relation to the market and government

In *'The playing field of sport'*, the Netherlands Sports Council concludes that transparency and planning are needed within the sports sector in relation to the market and government. If the roles and relationships are clearly defined, then all the parties will have the opportunity to fulfil their roles and shoulder their tasks. The Market and Government Act also requires this kind of transparency. It is undesirable that large local differences exist or that different segments in the sports sector are treated in a significantly different manner. During the COVID-19 crisis, it became increasingly evident that the division of roles between the government and

the sports sector was not at all clear, nor between the various government bodies themselves. Municipalities deal differently with the situation. The large degree of discretion enjoyed by government bodies in relation to their policy on sport creates room for flexibility and initiative, but it also has its disadvantages: it creates inequality under the law for sports organisations and for athletes in the country. In a forthcoming advice, the Netherlands Sports Council discusses the desired content of tasks and roles, who is responsible for what, what consequences this has in relation to the existing legislation and regulations, and how the agreements between parties can be codified.

Transparency and good governance

Within the field of organised sports, the Netherlands Sports Council (2020b), in its publication '*Fitness of sport*', identified obstacles standing in the way of transparency and governance in the area of organised sports. The distribution of lottery funding and government resources via NOC*NSF raises questions and puts the NOC*NSF in a difficult position in relation to the members. Although the resources are distributed among the members within NOC*NSF democratically (via

decisions taken in the general meeting), the process itself is not transparent for other parties. The alarm has already been sounded several times in the House of Representatives because it is impossible to carry out any checks on the allocation of funds for matters such as elite sport. The Court of Audits (Algemene Rekenkamer) (2020) is critical about the manner in which the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport grants subsidies and asks questions about its legality, including in the area of sport. Sports organisations that are not a member of NOC*NSF also ask questions about the accessibility of government resources. The Netherlands Sports Council aims to provide advice on transparency and governance.

Professionalisation and employment market

It is important to further develop, renew, and professionalise the sports sector. More vigour is needed to expand the range of sport and other physical activities available to the public and to ensure that they are suitable for groups of the population that have not yet benefited from them. Improving the level of training, further professionalisation, and strengthening the job market are the answers to what needs to be done to ensure that the

sports sector is able to collaborate more closely with other sectors. The Netherlands Sports Council notes that attractive career opportunities are few and far between in the sports sector, that there are few full-time jobs available, and that the terms and conditions of employment are below par. The relatively poor position of the sports sector in terms of job opportunities in comparison to the overall job market is something that must be dealt with by the entire sector. It is important for all the parties in the sector to work together, to put the subject on the agenda of the government, and to request support in the area of employment market policy. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is presently having the job market in the sports sector mapped out in some detail (also see VWS, 2019). The results of this analysis are expected after the summer of 2020, to be followed by an agenda for the sports job market in the spring of 2021. The Netherlands Sports Council is keeping abreast of these developments, after which it will determine whether additional recommendations or activities are necessary.

Data and privacy in sport

Increasing amounts of data are being collected in the sports sector. For example, performances of elite athletes are closely followed and registered in the form of indicators and measurement data, or collected with an eye to potential recovery and medical treatment. Data on athletes and fans are also used for marketing purposes. Is it permissible for information on athletes to be sold to sponsors in order to make the price of participating in sport activities/sports services more affordable (also see Personal Data Authority 2020)? What is the relationship between the collection of such data and privacy legislation, and what risks are involved? How do other countries deal with this issue? The Netherlands Sports Council will explore this topic and seek collaboration with other parties such as the Rathenau Institute and the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), which also deal with issues of data and privacy in other areas.

Recommendations 2021

In 2021, the Netherlands Sports Council will, in the first place, consider the opportunities available for a collective representation of the sports sector.

2021-2024

In the following years, the Netherlands Sports Council will provide advice on the other requirements for strengthening the sports sector.

Chapter 4

Working procedure

Recommendations

The Netherlands Sports Council aims to publish 3 to 4 strategic policy recommendations per year. In the interim, the Council will also release operational recommendations and other publications such as letters of advice, open letters, columns, essays, and analyses. In addition, the Council organises physical and online meetings that are in line with the vision and programming of the Council, and the Council shares its knowledge and expertise at congresses and workshops as well as with other advisory bodies. The Netherlands Sports Council publishes its recommendations on its own website www.nederlandse-sportraad.nl, and communicates them via social media, and other publicity channels. Within three months after publication, the recommendations issued by the Council are sent to the House of Representatives by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport together with a policy opinion.

Advisory procedures

Depending upon the specific advice in question, the Netherlands Sports Council considers which working procedure is most

appropriate. Generally speaking, the Council establishes a committee consisting of council members and (independent) experts and professionals with experience in the field. The Netherlands Sports Council appoints these external committee members as advisers to the Council. For every advice, an analysis is first carried out of the current state of affairs. The analyses are often based on three pillars: desk research, expert meeting, and talks with stakeholders. In order to take stock of the current state of scientific knowledge, the Council sometimes commissions external researchers to write a *review*. After the analysis is carried out, the committee considers various scenarios and approaches for finding solutions, which are then evaluated against the framework of current policy and practice. The advice being prepared by the committee is discussed, in the interim, by the Council and is finally decided upon in the Council meeting.

Interaction

The Council wishes to continue with the interactive manner of working that it has developed in recent years. The Council maintains contact with players in the world of

politics and policy as well as science and daily practice. That is the only way to draft the desired kind of advice: relevant, grounded, feasible, and with a sufficient base of support.

Legal framework

The *Advisory Bodies Framework Act* provides the legal basis for the Netherlands Sports Council until it has its own specific legislation (no later than 1 April 2022). Within this framework, the Council has adopted *rules and regulations and a code of conduct*, which aim to ensure the integrity of the actions carried out by the Council and its committees. All the Council members and advisors sign a declaration of interests that is inspected by the integrity officer of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Council members and advisors are compensated for their work based on the *Decision on Compensation for the Netherlands Sports Council*. These and other documents are also published on www.nederlandse-sportraad.nl.

Composition of the Council

The composition of the Council changed at the start of its second term. Three vacancies occurred, for which an open recruitment procedure was started in the summer of 2020. The Netherlands Sports Council consists of a chairperson and nine members.

Composition of the secretariat

The Netherlands Sports Council is supported by a secretariat consisting of a secretary, four advisers, and two staff members.

In preparation for the coming period, the secretariat will be expanded to include one more advisor. In addition, when necessary, the secretariat hires extra manpower via the flexible pool at the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and via the communication pool at the Ministry of General Affairs, and in exceptional circumstances also extra external manpower.

The Netherlands Sports Council

The Netherlands Sports Council (NLsportraad) is an independent advisory body that focuses on strengthening the significance of sport for society. The Netherlands Sports Council provides strategic and operational recommendations on sport-specific themes as well as the relationship between sport and other policy areas. The Council drafts its recommendations in a transparent way and in cooperation with the relevant parties in the field. The recommendations from the Netherlands Sports Council are innovative, supported by research, and applicable in practice. The Netherlands Sports Council consists of a maximum of 10 members and is chaired by Michael van Praag.

More information: www.nederlandse-sportraad.nl

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