

EU Conference on Sport Statistics, Brussels,  
23rd March 2011

# The constraint of data collection in the sports economy

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In sports economics, «the devil is in the data» (in the details as well).

EU ahead of the US: first attempt at estimating the economic significance of the US sports economy in 2009, data from a number of sources, since the North American Industrial Classification System does not identify the sports industry...

... while the EU Working Group has elaborated on a harmonised methodology for a EU SSA.

Some hindrances remain with data collection that I would list relying on my past experiences ...

... which pave the way to some trade-offs regarding further work with the EU SSA in the face of evidenced-based sport and economic policies

# 1. First priority: identify hindrances to data collection

A/ Data collection is *time consuming*: from the 1970 French SSA (5 year work) to the EU SSA since 2006.

B/ Data collection must be *comprehensive* for the sake of comparison (across EU Member States). Collection cost increases with data comprehensiveness. Data for all economic sectors in the broad Vilnius definition ... the price to pay for designing performance benchmarks and policy guidelines.

C/ Data *creation* must somehow be undertaken when crucial information is missing. Long lasting and costly. Done by three Member States so far.

D/ Accounting *classification* of the sports economy must be harmonised (has been by the WG). Product classifications have not been conceived by statisticians for providing data about the sports economy. Ex: UN Comtrade only identifies an unknown share (2/3?) of sport goods foreign trade: raw material instead of use value (destination) classification of sporting goods.

E/ *Non trade sport goods and services* of crucial importance in the sports economy. Big advantage of the SSA technique: capable to encompass non monetary flows (Ex: voluntary work).

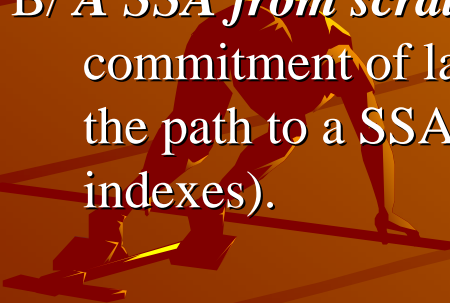
F/ *Reconciling* the different approaches previously adopted for data collection and how adjust available data (Ex: sport expenditures and finance) to the SSA harmonised framework. A specific reconciliation working group to be set up?

Most of these hindrances would not be overcome without putting data collection as a top priority on the agenda and without creating a «routine» for data collection.

## 2. Implementing tools for evidence-based policies

A/ *Academic prerequisites* for the best tools, SSA and economic modelling of the sports economy *vs. policy makers' expectations* and request of a swift response to shocks. A solution might be a set of indexes representative of the sports economy (C, VA, E, FT), consistent with the SSA, published on an annual basis.

B/ *A SSA from scratch vs. some intermediary accounting steps?* Toward a commitment of lagging-behind Member States to reach an intermediary step on the path to a SSA within a given deadline (Ex: the aforementioned set of indexes).



*C/ Long term data vs. short term policy requirements.* A sophisticated tool like the SSA usually available for the year  $t-4$  or  $t-5$  (2004 in the EU SSA) while policy decision calls for  $t-1$  data at worst. Routinise data for a simple/crucial set of indexes

*D/ Toward a routine for data collection* providing new data on the sports economy every year (needed for evidence-based policy). Maintenance of the sports economy accounts calls for updating them year after year, and at least every fifth year with the SSA. Requires a tight co-operation with the national statistics institute and, probably less tightly, with Eurostat.

The size of the routine to be envisaged is in proportion with the magnitude of the data requested, bigger for the SSA than a set of macro-indexes of the sports economy.

## Conclusion: recommendation for facilitating data collection through organizational arrangements

Overcoming hindrances to data collection has various budgetary implications (beyond my area of expertise as an academic)

1. Create a long-lasting administrative structure of data collection about the sports economy capable to routinise this work – a specific statistics office at the ministry (or sports direction) level (when not existing yet).

2. Sign an agreement between the sports ministry (or direction) and the national statistics institute committing the latter to automatically deliver data pertaining to the sports economy (creating a «data pipe» between the two institutions).

Second possible commitment of the statistics institute: collect more detailed and better classified data on economic dimensions of sport (hard to obtain?).



**Thank you for  
your attention!**