

Professional review

SUPPLEMENT TO THE METHODOLOGY OF STRATEGY PRODUCTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRANCH SPORTS IN SERBIA WITH THE EXAMPLE OF ATHLETICS

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Abstract: One of the main goals of the existence of national branch sports in the Republic of Serbia is the development of sports branches. In order to fulfill this goal, the existing of official strategic orientations and directions is essential in the near future, which should be found in the Strategy of the development of branch sport. The starting point and methodological frame for the production of the Strategy for the development of specific branch sports is represented in the Strategy for the development of national sport generally. This paper considers the organizational, technological and methodological aspects of the process of development of a strategic document for the development of one branch sport in Serbia and represents potential solutions, using the Strategy for the development of athletics as an example.

Key words: national branch sport federation; development strategy, action plan for strategy implementation.

INTRODUCTION

The national branch sport federation involves the supreme modes of unity in the Republic of Serbia in specific sport branches (Law on Sport,

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the Republic of Serbia, 2010). The existence of the national strategic document for the sport area represented in the Strategy for Sport Development in the Republic of Serbia and the regulations of the new Law on Sport of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the dynamic development of sports internationally, puts branch sport federations under the obligation to have a specific strategic document as a special platform which provides yearly, periodic and long term planning, programming and financing. The Strategy for development, as a part of the process of planning in branch sport, also represents a scientific approach and the skill of using various steps, procedures and acts with the aim of reaching the goals planned by the appropriate branch sport federation.

The Athletic Federation of Serbia has developed and implemented the Strategy for the development of athletics in Serbia for the period from 2012 till 2016, based on the instructions in the Strategy for sport development in the Republic of Serbia 2009-2013 and on the new law documents in the sport area.

The Strategy for the development of athletics represents a cluster of principles regarding the management and development of athletics and its strategic tendency in the next five years.

ORGANIZATIONAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE PRODUCTION OF STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The production of such an important document as the Strategy for the development of a sport branch demands an organized and systematic approach, with the implementation of accepted methods, techniques and acts. The first step is the formation of a special team, which includes persons with adequate professional and scientific competencies, and which should define the schedule, contents and manner of the implementation of specific phases. In a organizational and technological manner, the work on the production of the document can be divided into the following phases: (1) literature study and data gathering; (2) definition of the structure of the document; (3) text writing and esthetic/language shaping of the text; (4) organizing public discussions and adoption of the Strategy; (5) production and adoption of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

Every branch sport, in its scientific sense, represents a more or less multidimensional occurrence which belongs to the social area. The research of such occurrences demands a thorough and interdisciplinary approach and the view from the aspect of almost all social sciences and the humanities, with sociology, history, politics (as the activity in the sport domain aiming at specific goals), law, ethics, culture, economics, and, definitely, sport science (Krsmanović, 2006) as the leaders. This specifically refers to the processes

of anticipation and planning of long term sport development. In that context, the choice of methods, acts and techniques in the production of the Strategy depends on the complexity and peculiarity of a specific sport branch.

Having in mind all the complexity of athletics, the work on the production of strategic document for five years' development has demanded a combination of theoretical and empirical methods. Therefore, in accordance with the phases of the document production, the general introduction methods (analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, generalization and concretization, and classification) and explicatory methods (the speculative-bibliographical and empirical method) have been used.

Literature study and data gathering

The study of the current regulations and acts, professional and scientific literature, development documents from the previous life cycle of branch sport, the study of experience from other sports in the country and abroad, the implementation of appropriate research procedures and other ways of gathering relevant data represent the initial and fundamental phase in the process of the development of the Strategy. The team for the production of the Strategy of the Athletic Federation of Serbia, along with the study of the above-mentioned sources and balancing the documents from the previous period, conducted a special research based on survey and interviews (from June till October 2011) with the aim of an unbiased, objective perception of the current and more realistic projection of the future state of the matter.

The research includes sport and athletic experts, representatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, Olympic Committee of Serbia, Sport Federation of Serbia, the Paralympics Committee of Serbia, Sport Federation of the Disabled of the City of Belgrade, Sport Federation of the City of Belgrade, Ministry of Defense, Army of Serbia and active athletes. For the purposes of the research, two research documents have been used (Questionnaire and Interview Protocol), with six questions on each.

Defining the document structure

During the structural planning of the document, it is essential to take care of the level of generality of specific parts and unities, which is done by deductive approach, i.e. gradual elaboration of parts from the most general to less general, specific and individual.

Although the structure of the document of the Strategy, its number of headings and sections cannot be unified, as it depends on the nature, content and complexity of the sport branch and methodological approach to the document production, the strategy for the development of the national sport, as the

supreme document, should be regarded as the guiding document in its systematization and definition.

The document Strategy for sport development in the Republic of Serbia 2009-2013 contains the following main parts (Strategy for sport development in the Republic of Serbia, 2008): Introduction: The State of Sport in the Republic of Serbia; Legal Acts in sport and the system of sport financing; Vision and mission; Strategic principles; Coordination of the activities for goals fulfillment; Periods in the implementation of the Strategy for Sport development; Steps for goals fulfillment; and the Action Plan. Apart from the mentioned main parts of the text, the document also contains a Final Regulation (which specifies that the document is to be published in Sluzbeni Glasnik - the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia), abbreviations, List of participants in the process of the production and the Decision on the training of a work group for the production of a National Strategy for Sport Development.

Respecting the above mentioned criteria, the content of the document, the Strategy for the development of athletics in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2012- 2016 was constructed in the following order: Introduction, the state of athletics in the Republic of Serbia, Vision and Mission, strategic principles, strategic goals, structure of the system of athletics in Serbia, coordination of the activities for strategy implementation, priorities and periods in strategy implementation, measures for goal fulfilling and the Action Plan for strategy implementation.

Text writing and language shaping

The correct writing and text-shaping of the Strategy is an extremely responsible and complex task and demands the professional skills and competencies of the person in charge for the formulation of the content, as well as demanding grammatical correctness, simplicity, balance, accuracy and precision, and other very demanding characteristics of a document of such a ranking. It is also necessary to have in mind all the technical details regarding the structuring of the textual parts with the illustrative parts (charts, graphs, etc.) and the designing shape of the document (Perić, 2006). Therefore, in the first part of the writing of the document, it is necessary to split the work group into subgroups, according to the structural parts of the text, and in the second phase it is essential to finally shape the text in order to achieve the necessary coherence of specific parts and the overall text, with the help of skilled professionals who are theoretically and methodologically well-educated.

When writing specific parts of the document, the content should completely be in accordance with the title, with enough arguments and explanations to give answers to specific questions. It is also relevant to respect the principles of writing the main parts of such types of documents.

In the Introduction of the Strategy, the main idea and aim of the document should be defined and the motives and reasons for writing the document should be visible, as well as the brief content of the document, with an accent on the priorities of the development and methodology of the document production.

The Strategy of the development of athletics in the Republic of Serbia 2012-2016 represents a set of principles on the management and development of athletics and its strategic tendency in the next five years.

The main reasons and motives for the production of the Strategy for the development of athletics are, along with the necessity to balance the norms, plans and programs of the development with the new Law on Sport and national strategy for sport development: an unbalanced development of athletics in the regions and local autonomies regarding sport facilities, organization, services, selection and leadership, competition, etc.; the necessity of promotion of organization and systematic development of all levels in the pyramid of national athletics, from the lowest (kindergarten) to the highest; promotion of the structure and work of refereeing and coaching organizations and sports clubs; better conditions for trainings, preparations and better results of professional athletes in future international events.

The state of the specific branch sport should be seen overall, from the regulatory, organizational, infrastructural, administrative and professional aspect, in accordance with the methodological approach in the Strategy for development of national sport in Serbia, and the advantages and disadvantages and exceptions regarding the expected results should be depicted in a realistic and unbiased manner. In order to conduct it as previously described, it is recommendable to define the relevant strategic areas through which the state of the specific sport is seen first, and then to conduct a structural, functional and comparative analysis and estimate of the state in specific strategic areas.

The state of athletics in the Strategy for the development of athletics can be seen through 12 strategic areas: (1) the legal-normative framework, (2) financing, (3) athletic federations, associations and councils, (4) athletic facilities, (5) athletics for children and youth, (6) professional and competitive athletics, (7) athletics for the disabled, (8) recreation and mass athletics, (9) health care in athletics, (10) education and development of professional and assisting staff in athletics - coaches, referees, administrative staff, doctors, physiotherapists, volunteers and other personnel, (11) scientific and research work in athletics and (12) public relations and athletics.

Vision, as a stage of strategic planning, comes from the political framework as the basis for its definition and should answer the following questions (Nešić, 2007): What are we like now? What should we be like? The answer to the first question can be found in the previously explained state of branch

sport, and the answer to the second question must be obtained from the projection of the future state of national sport overall and defines the vision in the Strategy for the development of national sport in the Republic of Serbia and the roles of branch sport and the national branch sport federation in charge in the system of national sport according to the new Law on Sport of the Republic of Serbia (Article 99-102).

The vision of the Athletic Federation of Serbia is that Serbia should be a country with a developed system of athletic and athletic culture, in which athletics is available to everyone and in which there are conditions for the fulfillment of top achievements.

The mission of a sport organization is the logical continuation of the created vision, which should transform the vision into realistic and planned action. By defining the mission, it should clearly be defined what should be achieved via a sport and what the best way to reach this is. The general formulation of the mission of sport and sport organizations creates the base to reach strategic goals. Mission refers to what we want to be, which is the creating of such a branch sport which should realize a projected vision.

Based on the above mentioned vision, the mission of athletics in Serbia is: 'Athletics and athletic activities on all levels and in all forms contribute to health care and the fulfillment of physical, mental and social needs of the citizens of Serbia, to the promotion of other sports and of sport values of our country in the world' (Strategy for development of athletics, 2012; 11).

Considering the length of the period for planning and the complexity of the development of branch sports in contemporary conditions generally, in the country and in the world, it is necessary to adopt certain strategic principles in the Strategy as the main leaders of future development. The bases for such principles can be found in the Strategy for the development of national sport and in the appropriate documents for the development of international branch sport organizations.

The promotion of the system of athletics and its development are set upon nine strategic principles which cover the following: the role and significance of athletics in sports and a wider social and health plan; universality, mass and adjustability regarding the possibilities of dealing with athletics; training of professional staff; scientific and research work and the implementation of scientific achievements; a functional allocation of duties and cooperation of athletic organizations on the national, regional and local levels, and the financing of athletics.

Strategic goals can be seen as the future state, which is realistically feasible, if they are directed towards the appropriate activities for the realization of the accepted vision and mission of branch sport and branch sport federations. They are logically conducted from the previous strategic elements and

realistically depict the legal, formal, structural and functional duties of branch sport, the position of branch sport, the role of branch sport in the system of national sport, the existing state of branch sport and the possibilities of promotion of the state and long-term development of branch sport. During the choice and defining of strategic goals, the following should be paid attention to: that they clearly depict what a desirable aim is; that they are acceptable and in accordance with the expectations and strategic principles; that they are flexible - adaptable to changes in the environment; measurable and achievable - that they are easy to achieve in a specific period, with the effort of all the members of branch sport federations, and in accordance with the mission of branch sport.

With the Strategy for the development of athletics in Serbia, 14 strategic goals have been set, starting from 'the setting and functioning of the system of athletics in accordance with the Law on Sport of the Republic of Serbia, Strategy for the development of sport in the Republic of Serbia, principles of the Olympic Charter and the legal acts of the Olympic Committee of Serbia, normative documents of the Sports Federation of Serbia, principles of the functioning of the World and European Athletic Federation, the Codex of Sport Ethics and Convention on the elimination of doping in sport', to 'the improvement in public informing about athletic events and a more intense promotion of dealing with athletics in the media' (Strategy for the development of athletics, 2012; 12).

The structure of the system of branch sports should be such to provide further improvement of the system and minimize the uncertainties in the projection of sport development. During the structuring of a sport system, it is possible to use the following familiar theoretical models of the organization of sports (Jevtić, 2007): the pyramidal organization model with supreme sport achievement, with the levels of mass - national, supreme sport; the model of sport organization to national junior and senior levels; model of mass sport with individual achievements in international sport events; model without mass sport and with individual achievements in international sport events.

Without doubt, the choice of the model of organization and system depends on the nature and specific characteristics of branch sport, but the implementation of the model of pyramidal organization should be the aim, as it is implemented in the Strategy for the Development of national sport in Serbia, and it can include all organizational levels and all categories of sport users and participants. The subsystems and organizational parts should be clearly presented and functionally connected in the structure of the sport system. In its setting, there must be a synergy of the public and private sectors, because that is the only way to achieve and accomplish various interests in the sport area.

The structure of the system of athletics is designed by the model of pyramidal organization with top sport achievements. That system includes all categories of citizens and implies athletic activities on all levels and types, from kindergarten athletics and mass recreation athletics to competing and professional athletics and provides the implementing of the main roles and duties of certain subsystems and organizational parts.

In order to implement the Strategy for the development of branch sport in Serbia, it is necessary to coordinate the planned activities of all the relevant factors, both on a horizontal and vertical level. Moreover, this process should be an integral part of the overall process of the implementation of the strategy for development of national sport and in accordance with the main streams of the development of branch sport internationally. This means the accordance of various development aspects, interdepartmental cooperation and compliance with the solutions in other national and international strategic documents. Furthermore, for the successful implementation of the Strategy, the transparency of acting, exchange of information and constant consultations of participants in all stages should be achieved.

The activities regarding the implementation of strategic goals and taking certain measures for the fulfilling of strategic goals should be coordinated from one mutual center, which is the national branch sport federation in charge. The prioritized tasks of branch sport federation in that sense are supervision of the planned activities, evaluation of the success of the realization, with necessary adjustments of activities and procedures for the potential changes of the state in the surroundings and especially the provision of financial means for the implementation of the Strategy.

When it comes to separating the main priorities for the development of branch sport in the Strategy, it is necessary to start from the previously established strategic principles and to coordinate them with the priorities defined in the Strategy for the development of national sport, which are: sport for children and youth; the development of sport infrastructure and supreme sport. Apart from the three above mentioned priorities for national sport in the current five year period, the orientation shown in the Strategy for the development of national sport is that recreational sport should be generally accepted, as well as a desirable model of social behavior. The set priorities of the development should depict the essential needs of branch sport federation and they should be the main fields of activities at all organizational levels.

The main priorities of the Strategy for the development of athletics in the Republic of Serbia are: harmonizing the regulations in the area of athletics with the legal and normative solutions in national and international frameworks and setting a functional organizational structure of athletics; the development of an athletic infrastructure and the development of professional athletics.

It is very important to realistically measure the general time periods of the practical usage of the Strategy for development, starting from the defined priorities and following the periods in the implementation of the Strategy for the developing of national sport, as it is easier to follow the achieved effects of the projected branch sport and the contributions of specific participants in the implementation of strategic goals in that way.

The implementation of the Strategy for the development of athletics in the Republic of Serbia will be done in three periods: the first period - 2012-2013; the second period 2013-2015; and the third period from 2015-2016.

The setting of measures for achieving the strategic goals includes a planning of specific activities, their carriers and the sources of financing in the function of goal achievements. As this part of the document in the Strategy for the development of national sport is presented in tables, it is recommendable to use the same approach in the strategic document for the development of branch sport. That model is also used in the Strategy for the development of athletics and it includes all the previously defined areas of athletics, its strategic goals, and activities for achievement of those goals, responsible carriers of activities and sources of financing.

Public discussion and adoption of the Strategy for development

It could be said that, the setting of measures for achieving the defined strategic goals ends the stage of the document writing albeit only in the Draft, as the text of the Strategy for the development of branch sport should be checked through the institution of public discussion before its final delivery. A public discussion can be organized in many ways: as a brief discussion in public panels, round tables, etc.; written opinions, suggestions and ideas for the Draft of the document, or the combination of oral discussions and written recommendations. It is important that the Work Group for document production has enough time to select and study all the collected suggestions and recommendations in order to add any potential changes, or even more serious acts regarding a modification of certain solutions presented in the Draft.

The Draft of the Strategy for the development of athletics in the Republic of Serbia is firstly adopted by the Administrative Board of the Athletic Federation of Serbia before the public discussion, and then delivered to the Ministry of Youth and Sport. After a positive opinion from the Ministry of Youth and Sport, it can be concluded that there is the required harmonizing of the strategy for the development of athletics with the strategy for the development of national sport in Serbia as well as a satisfying level of realistic definition of strategic elements in accordance with the current and future state of athletics in Serbia. Therefore, there are necessary conditions for publishing

the Draft in public discussions by sending the text of the document (both via e-mail and post) to relevant sport organizations and individuals in the country.

After the correction of the text of the document in public discussions, it is necessary for the Strategy to be adopted by the Administrative Boards of the branch sport federation, and then the document is put under procedure at the Assembly of the branch sport federation. These procedures imply an earlier delivery of the document to the assembly delegates, under the obligation of delivering certain amendments to specific solutions or parts of the text of the document, which are publicly discussed at the assembly, and by voting, these amendments can be accepted or rejected. And, finally, the Assembly of the branch sport federation adopts the document at the assembly dedicated to the discussion about the suggested Strategy for the development of branch sport and puts the Administrative Board under the obligation to produce and adopt an Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

The above mentioned procedure of the adopting of a strategic document has been used with the adoption of the Strategy for the development of athletics, as it is in accordance with the regulations from the Statute of Athletic Federation of Serbia, which does not have to be the case with other branch sports and depends on the legal and normative principles in specific situations.

Creation and adoption of an Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for development

The Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the development of branch sport (hereinafter: the Action Plan) provides a further development of specific priorities through strategic goals, activities and planned deadlines for their achievement. The Action Plan includes all strategic areas presented in the Strategy, which should cover the overall system of branch sport, while strategic areas are used to define specific goals and activities for achieving strategic aims.

The Action Plan should be structurally divided in two parts, in accordance with the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the development of national sport. In the first part, it is necessary to present a systematization of specific goals, activities, duties, deadlines and indicators of the realization of planned activities in the form of tables, through which the supervision of the implementation of Action Plan will be done.

The second part of the Action Plan is important for highlighting the managing of the process of the implementation of the Strategy for the development of branch sport and the implementation of the Action Plan.

Having in mind the dynamics of change in the social and sport processes in the Republic of Serbia as well as international sports, and the impossibility of a precise projection of the future yearly budgets for branch sports,

the Action Plan for the implementation of the strategy for the development of athletics defines goals with a certain level of generality when it comes to setting activities and deadlines. Therefore, the branch sport federation is under the obligation to make annual operational plans at the end of every calendar year and in accordance with the Action Plan and expected budget, by which it would develop the defined activities and set the deadlines.

The Action Plan is generally adopted by the highest administrative body of the branch sport federation. The Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the development of athletics has been adopted by the Administrative Board of Athletic Federation of Serbia.

With the aim of a consistent management of the process of implementation of the strategy for the development of branch sport and the Action Plan, it is desirable to form a special Work Group in the branch sport federation. For the management of the process of implementing the Strategy for the development of athletics and the Action Plan, the Work Group of the Athletic Federation of Serbia (AFS) consists of the General Secretary of the AFS, the Executive Secretary, the Sports Director and the Solicitor.

CONCLUSION

The producing of the Strategy for the development of a sport branch represents a process which demands an organized and systematic approach with the usage of accepted methods, acts and techniques. Organizationally and technologically, that process can be divided into several stages: literature study and data gathering, the document's structure definition, text writing and language shaping, public discussions and document adoption, and the creating and adoption of an Action Plan.

Methodologically, the work on the preparation of such a complex document demands a thorough and interdisciplinary approach, combining the appropriate theoretical and empirical methods.

The basis and directions for the defining of certain strategic solutions in the document should be in accordance with the solutions and principles found in the Strategy for the development of national sport as the umbrella strategic document, which has been implemented during the producing and adoption of the Strategy for the development of athletics in the Republic of Serbia, written by the Athletic Federation of Serbia for the period 2012-2016.

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