SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF HARMONIZED SPORTS STATISTICS IN ALBANIA

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Abstract. Sport has a significant impact on the economy, both locally/nationally and globally, ranging from job creation and income generation to tourism and trade promotion. The basic approach to calculating the economic effects of sport across the EU is by expanding national Input-Output tables by sport-related sectors. The creation of a national Input-Output table for Albania will mean that all sports content will be extracted from the original sectors to form additional sectors, such as the construction of sports facilities, marketing, production of sports equipment, as example mechanisms that combine sport and economic development. The main goal of this study is to create a stable data base to serve as a reference point for subsequent analyses and generate a comprehensive assessment of the size of the added value related to sports and employment sectors in Albania. This study can also encourage methodological discussion between countries in the region and EU countries, which in turn can increase the quality and comparability of national assessments through SSA. The data collected for this study show that the responsible institutions in the country for the sports sector do not possess the mechanisms to extract all the figures related to sports while maintaining the structure of the National Accounts, which serve as the main point of reference for the drafting of economic policies at the national macro level and are normally kept by a country's statistical office.

Keywords: Sports statistics; National Accounts; sports and economic policies.

Introduction

Sport has a significant impact on the economy, both locally, nationally and globally, from job creation and income generation to tourism promotion and trade promotion. The basic approach to calculating the economic effects of sport across the EU is to first expand national Input-Output tables by sport-related sectors. According to Shangodoyin & Lasisi (2011), "statistics is an indispensable tool for national development, growth, and planning". Although statistics are applicable to disciplines such as economics, medicine, education, culture, sociology and political science, there is a lack of studies on the role played by these statistics in national development, especially in the sports sector. There is a claim (Kelegama, 2016; Khan, 2013; Shangodoyin & Lasisi, 2011; Kagame, 2007) that statistics is now a tool for achieving national and international development.

The development of harmonized sports statistics stands as a critical endeavor in Albania, promising to reshape the landscape of sports governance, policy formulation and resource allocation. This study describes the main strategies and implications for supporting the advancement of harmonized sports statistics in Albania. Albania's sports ecosystem faces a lack of comprehensive, standardized statistical frameworks, hindering effective decision-making and hindering the optimization of resources. Fragmented data sources and different methodologies exacerbate this challenge, underscoring the urgent need for concerted efforts toward harmonization. The main goal of this study is to create a stable data base to serve as a reference point for subsequent analyses and to generate a comprehensive assessment of the size

of the added value related to the sports and employment sector in Albania. In-depth research on the mechanisms and indicators that Albania has today for the collection of data from the sports sector and to evaluate the contribution that this sector gives to the GBT of the country.

The implementation of a sports satellite account and the combination with the national Input-Output table results in a methodological tool that shows sports-related activities and their various connections with the economy. Therefore, a sports satellite account is a means to answer important economic questions, related to the sport sector within the European society in a scientific way. The creation of a national Input-Output table for Albania will mean that all sports content will be extracted from the original sectors and will form additional sectors, such as the construction of sports facilities, marketing, the production of sports equipment, which are other mechanisms. that combine sport and economic development.

Methodology

As already suggested in the introductory discussion, the multifaceted dimension of sport and physical activity provides an argument for the sector's important contribution to a range of EU and international policy priorities related to health and well-being, economic growth, employment, social cohesion, education or regional development. In-depth research on available indicators, indicators and sub-indicators, data sources and definitions/scope and availability.

For research and data collection, it will be carried out first:

1. Identify appropriate data collection sources for this area and indicators

a. Research to identify indicators and use official data from national and international institutions, such as the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), Ministry of Education and Sports, Sports Federations as well as data from specific sectoral organizations.

b. Interviews with relevant stakeholders: to complement the initial desk research and to gain insight into the data available through this study, both nationally and internationally, and into the specific methodologies used to collect the various groups of data.

2. To understand the general availability of data and information both at the national level and at the international level, especially in the EU since Albania is now a potential candidate for a peaceful part of the EU, to identify data gaps and overlaps (in terms of availability, definitions and scope) and thus further suggest ways to overcome these challenges in policy recommendations.

The following organizations have been interviewed for this Study

- INSTAT;
- Ministry of Education and Sport;
- National Sport Federations;
- Professional Sport Clubs.

Results

Based on the interviews and research, the Institute of Statistic, as the main institution of production of official statistics and coordinator of the national statistical system, aims to provide reliable and comparable data, adapting the methodologies and adding a list of statistical indicators. It is noted that the activity of this institution extends to twelve main areas with the

corresponding sub-areas, among which is the sports sector, which are presented in the table below (table 1).

Table 1. *The main topics that National Institute of Statistics produces official statistics*

National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)	Statistics by Theme
	• Economy and finance • Demography and Social Indicators • Agriculture and fishery • Social Condition • Industry, Trade and Services • Labor Market and Education • International Trade • General and Regional Statistics • Science, Technology and Innovation • Environment and Energy • Prices • Censuses

Source, National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

Research showed that in the Thematic area of Demography and Social Indicators, one of the domains is the sector of culture and sport included (table 2).

Table 2. *Statistical spot for the domain included in the thematic area of Demography and Social Indicators*

Thematic Area	Domain
Demography and Social Indicators	Culture and Sport Gender equality Population Births, deaths and marriages Migration and migrant integration Projection Crimes and criminal justice

Source, National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

The findings showed that the National Institute of Statistics does not review any statistical database for the sports sector, any publication and obviously there is no methodology for collecting this data. Meanwhile, for other sectors such as culture, we have a statistical database consulted, with a methodology used on Eurostat recommendations (table 3).

Table 3. *Statistical spot for the domain Culture and Sport included in the thematic area of Demography and Social Indicators*

	Statistical database	Publications	Methods
	Total number of shows and spectators in the institutes of culture Students enrolled in higher education in fields of study related to culture	2017-2023	The methodology used is based on Eurostat recommendations.
Culture	Use of the Internet for cultural purposes by sex, (in %)		

	Statistical database		Methods
	Harmonized Consumer Price Index for some cultural goods and services		The statistics are provided by surveys conducted by INSTAT and by administrative sources such as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Sport, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Economy and Finance
	Visitors in Museum, Archaeological Parks, Castle and other monuments		
Sport	Empty	Empty	Empty
	No Statistical database	No Publication	No methodology used

Source, National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

The following table (table 4) shows the administrative data on official education in the country, administrative data on official education in the country, are provided to INSTAT through previously drafted questionnaires implemented by the Ministry of Education and Sport, as well as the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Questionnaires and indicators that are calculated after data processing, are an integral part of the Official Statistical Program. What is again worrying is the fact that the Ministry of Education and Sports responsible for the sports sector does not have any statistics to complete the questionnaires of the Institute of Statistics with the relevant indicators for this sector.

Table 4. *Statistical spot for the domain Education and Sport*

	Statistical database	Publications	Methods
Education	Pupils and students enrolled in education Pupil Teacher Ratio Student enrolled by field of study Students enrolled by University and Programs, academic year, in Public Education Graduated by educational level	2018-2024	Questionnaires and indicators that are calculated after data processing, are an integral part of the Official Statistical Program (PSZ). The statistics on education are provided to INSTAT through previously drafted questionnaires implemented by the Ministry of Education and Sport, as well as the Ministry of Economy and Finance
Sport	Empty	Empty	Empty
	No Statistical database	No Publication	No methodology used

Source, National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

The results showed that the Albanian Sports Federations have a lot of data on their activity. They have this data in order to have a clear overview of the activity of the Sports Federation but also their legal obligation that they have based on the joint Instruction of the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Finance and Economy on the way of using the grant fund internal current for the Olympic Sports Federations, the Albanian National Olympic Committee and the National Anti-Doping Organization (table 5).

Table 5. *The main thematic area for which the Albanian sports federation has statistics*

Albanian Sport Federations	Statistic about number of….
	• Sports organizations, members of the federation • Athlete members of the federation divided by gender and age categories

	- International and national activities carried out during the calendar year - Results achieved and ranking in national and international activities - Medals won by elite athletes - Athletes with different affiliations, members of the federation - Expenses for the Sports Federation - The projects and programs of the development of sports discipline are the function of the Federation

Source, Albanian Sport Federations

Discussion and Conclusion

Empowering stakeholders through targeted capacity-building initiatives to increase capacity in data collection, analysis and interpretation, fostering a culture of data-driven decision-making, is essential for sustainable development and meeting strategic objectives (Bevir, 2022; Oluwadare et al., 2022; Umbach, 2022; Lata, 2016). In an increasingly information-dependent world, the ability to meet the multiple needs of a society or organization depends on the ability to handle and process data efficiently.

During the past years, research and policy efforts have been made to better define and separate the sports and grassroots practices within the organizational structure of sports (Acquah-Sam, 2021; Phillpots et al., 2011). However, the constitution of grassroots sport as a subject in itself is still in its infancy in Albania and for this reason, little or no statistical data is available at national levels on the organization of grassroots sport. The results showed that for the sports sector, the responsible institutions do not have data, and this presents some significant disadvantages in policy making.

The lack of a database for the sports sector brings difficulties in monitoring and evaluating existing policies (Funahashi et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2023). Without sufficient data, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of existing sports policies (Lata, 2016; Oluwadare et al., 2022). Difficulty in international reporting and EU integration. In the context of EU integration, the lack of stable and validated data for the sports sector can cause obstacles in the reporting and monitoring of compliance with EU standards and criteria in this field, thus leading to obstacles in inclusion in the programs and the benefit of funds and programs offered by the EU for the development of the sports sector. This can lead to the loss of opportunities to increase the development and professionalization of sport at the local and regional level. Responsible institutions in Albania should work on formulating and implementing standardized methodologies and protocols in all sports fields to ensure stability, comparability and reliability of statistical data in sports, facilitating meaningful knowledge and informed interventions.

Facilitating the integration of various statistics from government bodies, sports federations, academic institutions and civil society organizations into a cohesive platform, fosters synergy and efficiency in data management and use, and shared responsibility towards the advancement of harmonized sports statistics (Robinson et al., 2023; Umbach, 2022; Yarrow & Kranke, 2016). The collection of accurate statistics on the economic impact of sports at the national level is an important step in raising Albania's position in the international sports arena through the provision of reliable, comprehensive sports statistics, strengthening visibility, credibility

and competitiveness, as it recognizes and maps the important follow-on effects of sport in other economic sectors of activity.

Research shows that some EU Member States collect in-depth data on a broader understanding of sport through dedicated SSAs, while other Member States limit their data collection to the core meanings of sport. Eurostat has also increased its efforts in collecting harmonized data on sport, therefore different datasets are currently compiled at EU level describing the sport sector according to some dedicated economic indicators. The basic approach to calculating the economic effects of sport across the EU is by expanding national Input-Output tables by sport-related sectors. The creation of a national Input-Output table for Albania will mean that all sports content will be extracted from the original sectors to form additional sectors, such as the construction of sports facilities, marketing, production of sports equipment, as example mechanisms that combine sport and economic development.

The search for harmonized sports statistics in Albania represents a key point in the evolution of its sports ecosystem. By embracing strategic interventions and fostering collaborative synergies, Albania can unlock the transformative potential of data-driven sports governance, heralding a new era of growth, inclusion and excellence in sports development.

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