Para-Sport Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success (Para-SPLISS)  

A Three-Year International Comparative Research Project

Project Rational

Why examine sport policies?
Para-sport has taken many strides over the last decade on both international and national levels. Nevertheless, inclusion in sport systems and pathways for athletes with disabilities remain complex and fragmented. In order to increase participation rates and improve inclusion, a systemic analysis of the components leading to successful para-sport policies is needed. The main objectives of this project are to analyze policy factors contributing to successful development of national para-sport systems and to build a model of effective Paralympic sport policy development in a systematic way, in an international context. This study will specifically examine Paralympic sport structures from first entry opportunities (grassroots participation) to elite competition in the Paralympic Games. A better understanding of the key policy components contributing to successful development of para-sports will allow nations to streamline their investments and provide an international structure on which emerging countries can start to build their systems.

How does Para-SPLISS work?
This research project will identify commonalities (pillars) and critical success factors (CSF) of successful Para-athlete development, defined by experts, athletes, coaches and administrators working within the Paralympic Movement. These pillars will be analyzed in a pilot study of comparable nations and will build on the SPLISS model that analyzes 9 pillars and 96 critical success factors. Example pillars could include NPC structures, coach development pathways, athlete support, talent identification systems and so forth.

What is SPLISS?
SPLISS (Sport Policies Leading to International Sporting Success) is an international network of research cooperation that coordinates, develops and shares expertise in innovative high performance sport policy research. In 2004, the first joint project that compared six nations resulted in the publication of the book “A Global Sporting Arms Race”. Since 2009, the SPLISS group has set up a new collaborative project with 15 partner countries. Results of this project are due to be published. More information: www.SPLISS.net

Timeline: START September 2015

The project can develop in three subthemes: (a) elite sport policies, (b) sport policy development and (c) developing countries. Each 3 years project will produce results in three phases, each one having several tangible outcomes.

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<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Phase Description</th>
<th>Phase short term goal</th>
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<tr>
<td>YEAR 1</td>
<td><strong>Phase 1 - Model Development</strong> Thorough literature reviews and interviews with para-sports stakeholders will produce: 1. a model of critical success factors (CSF) allowing for successful Para-athlete development; 2. two practical tools to test and evaluate the model: A. The Para-Sports Policy Inventory, B. The Para-Sports Climate Survey</td>
<td>Completed Para-SPLISS model of critical success factors in Para-sports and corresponding evaluation tools</td>
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<td>YEAR 2</td>
<td><strong>Phase 2 - Field Development</strong> The model and tools will be tested and validated in a sample of (max) 6 comparable nations for each project. Using the two developed Para-SPLISS instruments, in-country researchers will collect data on the pillars (and CSF) at the national level, in collaboration with their NPC. Results will be collated for each participating nation, thus providing an analysis of their current policies.</td>
<td>Completed para-sport policy effectiveness evaluation of your country against each pillar (based on national data collection), usable for strategic decision making and advocacy.</td>
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<td>YEAR 3</td>
<td><strong>Phase 3 - International comparison</strong> Comparison analysis will be made by the lead researcher (PhDs) and findings will provide recommendations on program elements that NPCs/IPC could use to shape their own programs and that policy makers could use towards developing inclusive sport policies.</td>
<td>Benchmark of your country against other countries/competitors</td>
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<td>YEAR 4</td>
<td>Follow up and instrument - Optional: instrument to measure Para-Sport policy effectiveness</td>
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**Project Outcomes**

Para-SPLISS main outcomes provide policy makers and Para-Sports managers with a sound structure to strengthen their support towards better coordinating athlete development, enhanced participation in Para-sports and stronger stakeholder relationships.

1) A framework (pillars) of effective Para-sports policy development (structured yet flexible enough for application to different cultures and environment) allowing for the identification of areas of focus (eg. priority programs elements) where resources and money could be streamlined for nations towards more efficient program development and results.

2) Practical and validated tools used by nations to monitor and evaluate process and policies, thus allowing them to measure improvement and track how resources are spent.

3) A benchmark study allowing nations to situate their performance against policy pillars in comparison with other nations, thus providing sport managers and policy makers with crucial information to improve their country’s competitiveness in international para-sports events.

4) An International network providing a communication platform that strengthens relationships between governments, researchers and the Paralympic Movement.

**Project management & Research team**

The project will be driven by a steering committee composed of International experts and the leading funding partners. Involvement of the Paralympic Committee (IPC), IFAPA (International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity board member), will depend on their roles in the projects. Research design and analysis will be overseen by Prof. Dr. Veerle De Bosscher (SPLISS coordinator, Vrije Universiteit Brussel). Each project will be managed by a full time lead researcher (PhD student).

**Financing**

Each participating nation is asked to contribute to coordination funding, varying from 5000 EUR to 30000 EUR for the three years (based on 6 participating nations), depending on the external subsidies that were found and collaborating PhDs, funded by universities. This includes cost associated with project coordination, use of SPLISS instruments, data analysis and international reporting. In addition, individual nations will be responsible for financing their own data collection. The rational behind this is first to ensure commitment to the international study and secondly to encourage national stakeholder relationships. We refer to the full research proposal for more details.

**Achievements**

- Project meeting between Para-SPLISS and IPC (Brussel, May 2013)
- Awareness raised during MINEPS V (Fifth World Sport Ministers Conference) through poster presentation and side discussions (Berlin, May 2013)
- Project presentation to IFAPA board during ISAPA Conference (Istanbul, July 2013)
- Stakeholder meeting at SPLISS Conference brought together 23 interested researchers from 13 nations for methodological discussion (Antwerp, Nov. 2013)
- Several countries have expressed high interest in the project (and started to search for funding), including Australia (funding secured), Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Brazil and Canada

**Next Steps**

- Secure projects coordination funding and national partners
- Define projects samples and key terminology
- Build international Para-SPLISS network, collaboration with national and transnational organisations, policy makers, NPCs

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