



Study Visit at the Bulgarian Ski Federation in the Frame of “Creating a Level Playing Field”

Visiting Partners

- Finnish Sports Federation

Date and Place

- 16 to 17 May 2011
- Sofia, Bulgaria

Participants

<i>Surname</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
Andreeva	Mila	Bulgarian Ski Federation
Beurling	Juha	Finnish Sports Federation
Maijala	Hanna-Mari	Finnish Sports Federation
Veneta	Dimitreva	Bulgarian Ski Federation

Further participants from the Bulgarian Sports Federation for Death People and local authorities joined the meeting in different sessions

I. STUDY VISIT SUMMARY

The Bulgarian Ski Federation has hosted the Finnish Sports Federation for a study visit throughout 16 to 17 May 2011. In conjunction with the seminar, also the Bulgarian Sports Federation for Deaf people as well as the Bulgarian Ministry were visited.

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The first day of the study visit contained an introduction about social inclusion in sports in Bulgaria. The main victims suffering from social exclusion in Bulgaria are, as considered by the Bulgarian Ski Federation, poor and deaf people. In the frame of a worldwide initiative “Bring Children to the Snow” launched by the International Ski Federation, deaf people are integrated with society through the involvement in snow events. In more detail, the Bulgarian Ski Federation is involving close to 40 deaf individuals as volunteers in World Cup events of Alpine Skiing, Cross-Country and other disciplines it organizes on a yearly basis as National Ski Association.

A visit of the Bulgarian Sports Federation for Deaf People has shown further concrete involvement of deaf people in sports, such as summer sports activities. A football tournament involving deafs is conducted on a bi-yearly basis and achieves large public recognition by both, sponsorship and newspaper coverage.

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On the following day, the Finnish delegation visited the Bulgarian Ministry involved in top sports. The director for the sports department explained the municipal strategy for sports in Sofia to the group which is to increase access to sports activities and infrastructure, particularly targeting socially disadvantaged people. In the city of Sofia, social inclusion focuses on poor Bulgarian families, oftentimes gypsies.

Projects providing assistance to these individuals is low, however, sometimes, bigger companies provide sponsorship for sports initiatives. In particular, sports with a large public popularity such as football and snow sports oftentimes attract private sponsorship. However, the main challenge remains to achieve sponsors and further public finances to develop programmes for social inclusion in sports in the city of Sofia.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION

The study visit in Bulgaria has shown that social inclusion is seen very differently among EU Member States. While in Finland, social inclusion mainly refers to people with a foreign background, in Bulgaria, people who are poor or “different” should be prevented from social exclusion of society. In particular, the work done with and for the deaf people in Bulgaria is rather extensive and showcases a good learning example for other EU nations. For example,

taking deaf children up to the mountains for skiing is a concrete activity for individuals who might never do it otherwise.

The study visit also revealed that the equality between men and women is still developing in Bulgaria. For example, at the Ministry, men are still seen as usually better leaders than women. The inclusion of women in higher levels of sports is thus also respectively low, hence, almost inexistent.

Suggestions for improvement would include integrating sessions on common sharing of information, for example with regards to general structures of sports, involvement of local partners, or development of programs from grassroots level.

This study visit has been an activity which could be seen as different as two delegations met which had quite different views and national initiatives on social inclusion. Although, sharing of common practices was rather low, the learning outcome has been particularly high. Especially, the Finnish delegation could develop an insight into how social inclusion can be seen differently and conducted for people which are victims of exclusion in all societies, but oftentimes do not seem to be the main focus of social inclusion.

Person in charge of the report: Juha Beurling, Finnish Sports Federation