



MANAGEMENT OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORT

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SUMMARY

Relevance of the subject matter

The system ensuring physical activity and high-performance sport is one of the Eighteenth Government's priority projects.¹ The United Nations, the World Health Organisation, the International Olympic Committee and the European Commission underline the importance of sports and its contribution to promoting progress in many areas of public interest, including sustainability, peace, cooperation, solidarity, integrity, social inclusion, and health. International organisations recognise that sports are even more important when facing the COVID-19 crisis and calls for special attention to be paid to high-performance sport and the promotion of physical activity, and to integrate measures into national strategies for sustainable development. The success of high-performance sport not only increases the country's visibility, international prestige, but also people's interest, citizenship and good emotions. The achievements of athletes encourage society, especially young people, to exercise, which leads not only to participation in high-performance sport but also to higher physical activity. In view of the importance and changes in this area, we have chosen to examine the management of high-performance sport, including its funding from the State budget. Following the adoption of the new Law on Physical Education and Sport in 2018 by the Seimas, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is responsible for the implementation and shaping of sports policy, which has taken over this function from the Department of Physical Education and Sports, which demonstrates the growing importance of sports in the country's life.

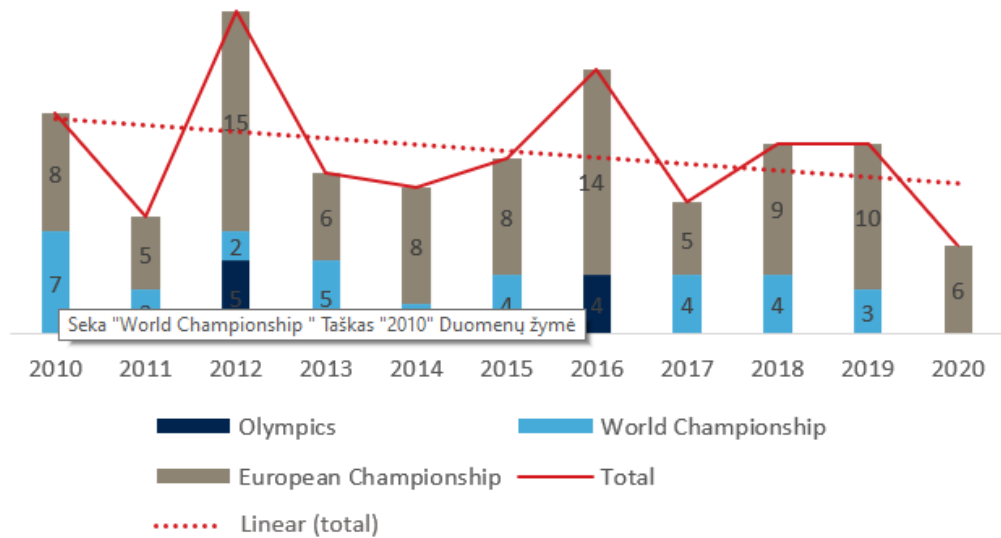
The subject matter of the audit is the management of high-performance sport.

Lithuania, as an independent state, has developed Olympic teams and high-performance athletes who have achieved good results in the Olympic Games and have won 25 medals,

¹ The Programme of the Eighteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania adopted by of the 11/12/2020 Resolution No XIV-72 of the Seimas, Clauses 61-62

including six gold, seven silver, and 12 bronze medals. Funding for high-performance sport aims to enable athletes to prepare and compete at the most important international competitions and achieve high results. In 2019, Lithuanian high-performance athletes won 13 medals in team and individual competitions, and in 2020 they won 6 medals, as due to the pandemic a part of the planned competitions was cancelled (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Medals won by Lithuanian Olympic sports athletes in international competitions



Source – National Audit Office (according to data provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport)

Objective and scope of the preliminary study

The objective of the preliminary study² is to analyse the high-performance sport system, ongoing or planned changes and to identify related problems.

Key questions of the preliminary study addressed:

- Strategic documents and legal regulation for the development of sports;
- System of governance and the participants,
- Funding from the State budget,
- Training and promotion system for athletes,
- Sports infrastructure and planned development.

Audited entity – Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, which is responsible for shaping the State policy in the field of sports, organising, coordinating and controlling its

² Preliminary study is a phase of the performance audit process, during which information on the subject matter is collected and evaluated in order to identify the problems it contains. The main study is performed on the basis of the results of the preliminary study. However, in certain circumstances, in order to rationalise the use of audit resources, the main study may not be performed, and the audit is completed by the preliminary study: for example, the audited entity has taken action to address the problems, changes in the audited area have occurred, for which the further conducting of the audit may not create the required impact, etc. The preliminary study report presents identified problems without making recommendations to the audited entity.

implementation. Its subsidiaries: Lithuanian Sports Centre and the Education Exchanges Support Foundation.

The period assessed was 2019–2020. The report does not contain statistics on sports for 2020, as the Lithuanian Sports Centre will start collecting the information in 2021. In order to assess trends, in some cases we have used the data of the previous year and the changes that took place in 2021.

We collected information and organised meetings with representatives of the Lithuanian International Olympic Committee, Lithuanian Paralympic Committee, the Special Investigation Service, the Lithuanian Sports University, municipal administrations, the heads of Lithuanian municipal sports units, and the National Sportsman and “Sports for All” associations. The methods for data collection and evaluation are described in more detail in Annex 2 “Applied Methods for Data Collection and Assessment” (p. 25).

The preliminary study has been performed in accordance with the Public Auditing Requirements and International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions.

Key results of the preliminary study

As the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport implements changes in the management of high-performance sport, it is necessary to improve the processes of policy shaping, implementation and monitoring, plan infrastructure development in a targeted manner, improve the funding of sports federations and link settlement with set objectives and results, and take measures regarding the education of a reserve of athletes.

Decision-making on changes in high-performance sport does not use all available measures

No evaluation of the implementation of the 2011–2020 National Sports Development Strategy³ has been carried out and the changes that have taken place have not been analysed. The National Physical Education and Sports Council, which is responsible for contributing to the National Sports Development Strategy, has not made proposals for the sports development. Members of the Council individually submit proposals concerning policy shaping and improvement of implementation to the Seimas, the Government, etc. The Minister of Education, Science and Sport has not hitherto approved the sports monitoring indicators and procedure of implementation. Data on athletes and coaches collected by the Lithuanian Sports Centre are presented in summarised form by type of sports organisations, municipalities and sports, however, it does not include data by skill levels, age, qualification, achievements, etc. Insufficient attention of sports policy makers and the sports monitoring system do not allow for sound decisions to improve high-performance sport (Section 1, p. 10).

³ 2011–2020 National Sports Development Strategy approved by the 24/03/2011 Resolution No. XI-1296 of the Seimas.

The development of sports infrastructure lacks data and clear directions

The planned number of 40 sports infrastructure facilities per 10 thousand of population foreseen in 2011–2020 National Sports Development Strategy⁴ will not be reached (20 facilities in 2019). The indicator of accessibility of sports facilities intended for the education of high-performance athletes is not monitored. The criteria for selecting investment projects in the State Investment Programme established by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport includes the priorities of the Government Programme, the territorial location of similar objects and the size of a city or settlement according to population.⁵ However, the criteria do not reflect the needs of high-performance sport. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has not defined directions regarding the development of this infrastructure at the country's level, has not carried out an analysis of the need for sports facilities and does not have data on their use and condition. As a result, the development of sports infrastructure funded from the State budget is insufficiently targeted (Section 2, p. 13).

Funding for federations lacks the assessment of their performance's compliance to the requirements as well as the assessment of their results

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport underestimates the achievement of performance objectives, tasks and measures by allocating funding for high-performance sport programmes of federations and analysing the settlement regarding used funds. Not all the results achieved in the programmes of the nine selected federations are measurable. The funding arrangements for high-performance sport programmes⁶ do not cover all the information specified in the Law on Physical Education and Sport. The federations do not disclose all mandatory information on their websites: one of the 64 federations that received funding does not have a website, 52 (81%) disclose only a part, and in 12 (19%), 2019 reports on the use of State budget funds have not been disclosed. Five federations were excluded from funding in 2020 due to shortcomings in the rotation of members of the management bodies. No action is envisaged on the provision of advice or methodological assistance to federations in the implementation of the principles of good governance. Due to under-estimation of relevance and achieved performance results, the responsibility and transparency of federations in obtaining the highest sporting achievements are not stimulated (Section 3, p. 15).

Lack of measures for the education of a reserve of athletes

Viable athletes are identified and educated in sports gymnasiums, clubs and sports education centres. Municipalities contribute significantly to financing the activities of all

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The criteria and their values for the selection of investment projects in the field of management of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport for the State Investment Programme approved by the 01/08/2018 Order No. V-697 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport.

⁶ The Description of the Procedure for Funding the Implementation of High-Performance Sport Programmes from State Budget Funds approved by the Government Resolution No 85 of 05/02/2020, Clause 6.

89 sports education centres and other measures to involve children in sports activities. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport aims to increase the involvement of children in sports, however, does not implement measures to educate a reserve of athletes, except for education in sports gymnasiums. For funding high-performance sport programmes from the State funds, there is no requirement for the federation to have a system for identifying and educating viable athletes. Having assessed the 2020 high-performance sport programmes of nine selected federations, we found that only three have foreseen a reserve of viable athletes, however, no concrete measures are identified. Without taking measures to educate a viable reserve, an increase in the number of athletes who can represent the country in high-performance sport events may not be ensured (Section 4, p. 21).

Reasons for completing the audit by a preliminary study

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport implements processes for improvement of sports system management, which include high-performance sport. The draft Law on Physical Education and Sport⁷, registered in the Seimas in 2020, was not considered and did not satisfy the sports community. In November 2020, the Constitutional Court⁸ recognised as unconstitutional the provisions of the Law on Physical Education and Sport regulating the financing of the Sport Support Foundation and the procedure for allocating funds⁹. As a result, in January 2021, the Ministry set up a working group to review the law and present proposals for monitoring sports, supporting high-performance sport, preparing young athletes and coaches and funding projects from the Sport Support Foundation¹⁰. It is planned to draft the amendment of the Law by 01/06/2021.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport provided information on the planned substantive amendments to the Law on Physical Education and Sport: clarify the concepts of high-performance sport, establish a register of sports, separate funding for physical activity and high-performance sport, increase State grants for athletes, supplement criteria for federations funding with a requirement to audit financial statements, provide sports data and financial accounts to registers, and establish sports performance contracts with athletes. It is planned to link the criteria of strategic sports not only to achievements but also to the popularity, prevalence of the sport branch and the results of the organisation of the federations.¹¹

The draft Government Programme Implementation Plan also includes more effective structures for sports management and sporting achievements: to develop sports infrastructure on the basis of criteria and data from the sports register; to specify the assessment criteria for the activities of the federations and the performance model of the

⁷ Draft Law No XIIIIP-5192 amending Articles 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 24 of the Law on Physical Education and Sport was registered in the Seimas on 21/09/2021.

⁸ Constitutional Court Ruling No. KT187-N15/2020 of 13/11/2020.

⁹ The Sport Support Foundation must become a budgetary instrument, without a special source of revenue and amounts defined by law, and the amount of funds to be determined annually by the Government and approved by the Seimas.

¹⁰ 25/01/2021 Order No. V-124 "On the Formation of a Working Group" of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport.

¹¹ 02/03/2021 Letter No. SR-838 "On the Draft Preliminary Study Report" of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

Sport Support Foundation; to set up a centre of excellence to provide methodological support to federations in implementing the principles of good governance; to prepare and implement a plan for the development of sports gymnasiums and sports classes. Measures for the development of sports infrastructure and improvement of training of high-performance athletes are also provided for in the draft Sport Development Programme prepared for the implementation of the National Progress Strategy.¹²

On the basis of the assessment of the changes planned, the audit is completed by a preliminary study. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic sports activities have been restricted or completely suspended and therefore the data of 2020–2021 is not comparable to those of previous years. The results of the preliminary study are relevant and could contribute to the drafting of the amendment of the Law on Physical Education and Sport and to the planning and implementation of high-performance sport management. We will analyse the changes underway by monitoring the field of sports.

¹² Internet access: https://www.smm.lt/uploads/documents/Administracine%20informacija/planavimo%20dokumentai/pletros%20programos/Sporto%20PP%20rengimas_%20I-III%20dalis_11-17_%20redag_maket.pdf (accessed on 10/03/2021).