

Narrative for FIFA/ German Sport University Cologne literature review on the economic return on investment in physical activity

FIFA, the world governing body of association football, is charged with safeguarding and developing football worldwide and plays an active role in promoting sports as a vehicle for social development. Moreover, FIFA is committed to participating in relevant public policy processes and debates in its areas of activities. For example, FIFA – notably by means of its membership and participation in the Permanent Consultative Council (PCC) of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - wishes to contribute to relevant policy debates, within a broader context of follow up to UNESCO's 5th World Conference of Sport Ministers (MINEPS V), held in Berlin, Germany, in 2013, as well as with regard to the preparatory process to MINEPS VI.

One of the key themes of MINEPS V was “promoting investment in sport and physical education programmes”, pertaining, in particular to quality physical education and the sustainability of major sport events. The Declaration of Berlin highlights that “the funding of physical education and sport programmes [is] a safe investment that will result in positive socio-economic outcomes”, and stresses “the need for further research, evidence-based policy and knowledge sharing at national, regional and international levels”. It also calls upon all stakeholders to support the development of common methodologies and to share comparable data on the socio-economic benefits of physical education and sport. Over the past years, advocacy for public and private investments in sport has been a constant priority of CIGEPS. This topic will also feature prominently in the agenda of MINEPS VI.

Beyond this policy context, a persistent concern amongst sports stakeholders worldwide is that the importance of physical education is often underestimated, and that specific evidence supporting the promotion of investments in physical activity is not sufficient. While the positive medical and psychological impact of physical activity is well known and documented (cf. FIFA- Medical Assessment and Research Centre (F-MARC) 10 years of research), there is a gap in research literature as regards the economic impact of sport and physical activity. Acknowledging the fact that economic arguments are of key importance for contributing with evidence and data to relevant public policy and decision making processes, this research project focuses on the economic “return on investment” in physical education, physical activity and sport, with the purpose of substantiating and supporting relevant public policy discussions.

Against this background, the paper on “The economic return on investment in physical education, physical activity and sport” aims to support evidence-based public policy making. By way of outlining the monetary returns (at the level of the individual and the community) as well as the non-monetary outcomes of physical activity for example in the areas of physical health, subjective well-being and mental health, education or the labour market, it supports increased public investments in physical activity and sport programmes, which can make a contribution to the realisation of important public policy objectives. While the German Sport

University Cologne provided the part on the economic evidence / monetary returns, F-MARC contributed relevant scientific evidence on the medical research side.

The study – a systematic review of empirical studies examining economic inputs and outputs of participation in physical activity – starts from the evidence that different kinds of public investments in physical activity will trigger non-monetary outcomes (i.e. improved health and social parameters). These will subsequently lead to monetary returns of value to the individual and to the community, thus drawing a positive correlation between economic investments in physical activity and economic outputs.

Countries with higher government spending on sport, health and education (e.g. supply of sport infrastructure and facilities, school campaigns, investment in elite sport) have higher participation rates in physical activity. The latter has a positive effect on various health parameters, such as reduction of blood pressure, improved heart function, decreased blood sugar and is beneficial to integration and social inclusion as well as for the development of social capital. Moreover, evidence suggests that physical activity leads to positive educational and labour market outcomes (e.g. less health care needs, reduced absenteeism, increased likelihood to exit from unemployment). As a result, on the *individual level*, physically active people tend to earn higher incomes and have lower medical costs, while on the *community level*, the economic costs of inactivity are significant, with indirect costs (i.e. productivity losses) typically exceeding the direct costs (i.e. health care costs).

The German Sport University Cologne is Germany's only, and Europe's largest, university in the field of sport and exercise science. Research at the 21 academic institutes covers many aspects – all pertaining to sport and exercise. The orientation of the research projects is interdisciplinary; besides current socially relevant issues, basic research is also important. Fields of research cover the ethical, sociological, economic and educational aspects of sport as an integral element of society.

The FIFA Medical Assessment and Research Centre (F-MARC), established in 1994 as an academic body within FIFA to actively participate in FIFA development programmes, has been active in promoting the objective to develop the scientific basis to protect the health of all players and promote football as a health-enhancing leisure activity (for communities and society as a whole). Football's popularity gives it the potential to play a unique role in awareness and prevention of diseases and in supporting the achievement of related public policy goals.