

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON SOCIAL COMPETENCES AS PART OF COACHES' PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

RESULTS FROM A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON SOCIAL COMPETENCES AS PART OF COACHES' PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

24 June 2016, National Sport Academy "Vassil Levski", Sofia

The round table discussion organized on 24 June 2016 by the National Sport Academy, Sofia as part of the MOVE Project of the ERASMUS + Program, was focused on social competences necessary for the high level professional realization of every sport specialist, for personal development, for the application of acquired knowledge in various social environments and for participation in civil activities. The round table discussion was attended by over 30 academics, members of the academic body of the National Sport Academy, representatives of secondary sport schools, sport specialists and members of the political government of sport education.

Discussions were grounded on the presentations of the project team members, which outlined the basic ideas and the framework of the project involving several European countries – Bulgaria, Italy, Poland and Greece. The collected data and the analyses of coaches' self-evaluation with reference to various social competences were also in the centre of the discussions. The results from the presentations offered a wide scope for debates among the participants in the round table. All participants were united in the opinion that sport is the natural environment for the development of unique qualities and social skills, which are very difficult to gain outside sport – responsibility, team work, observation, intuition, care for the people with whom you work, time management, critical thinking and many others.

The representatives of academic education pointed out that all mentioned social competences are a constant part of the requirements for professional trainers and they have been part of the education curriculum for coaches in our country from the foundation of sport education to the present day. A general opinion was formed that social competences are among the components of the sport specialist's profile which can be acquired best in the course of working practice. In this relation it was observed that dual education is still not applied in professional sport education, i.e. theoretical education is still not combined with practical work environment. However, including social competences in the normative documents which regulate professional sport qualifications is a positive trend. The National

Agency for Professional Education and Training has started the development of standards for professional sport qualifications which represent a synchronized framework of qualification levels with reference to social competences and provide better understanding for educational institutions and employers.

Participants in the discussion shared an opinion that social competences could not be acquired within the process of theoretical education devoted to them. On the one hand, they are gained and developed through life-long education, on the other hand every individual has personal talents – with some people they develop faster, while with others more time is needed to meet their employer's requirements.

It was stated that there are completely new competences which have to be included in the lists of sport competences – media competences (as part of communicative competences, but with a specific stress on sport), sociological competences (reflecting the ability of self-evaluation and identification of the right place a person takes in society), and etc.

A major weakness of our education system was also mentioned, i.e. no matter the many years of reforms, the basic education model involves teaching education units which are to be simply reproduced by students. This model gives very little space for the development of individual skills and competences by means of informal and interactive means and methods. The only way of acquiring social competences in this method of education is through the personality of the coach, the teacher, or of good athletes who could be an example for the students. From their practical experience as coaches and lecturers, many participants supported the opinion that social competences are easy to describe and theorize on, but when it comes to creating them in reality, there are not many coaches who could do that easily and successfully with their students.

The round table participants also shared experience and useful practices from their professional fields. One of the participants presented a very successful initiative for introducing the game of chess in kindergartens, pre-school and primary school education, specifying that the aim of these sessions was not to make chess champions in early age, but to develop skills, such as critical thinking, evaluation of a situation, independence, discipline, communication between players, communication skills, which is the most important aim in the development of a child's personality. Unfortunately, not every parent can realize the importance of total personal development of the child – many parents are interested in the immediate success of their children which would distinguish them from their peers, making them the winners in one sport or another. That is why, as the members of some sport clubs related, it is very useful to work both with the children and their parents.

In conclusion, the round table participants stated the necessity of developing instruments for the adequate measurement of competences reached, especially in the field of sport education, as well as, the development of appropriate criteria and requirements at the entrance and at the exit of each education level, as a challenge for all sport specialists.