

Module 2. Modern System of Central Funding and Government Support in Sport

In this module, we will focus on the modern system of central funding and government support, a significant and active topic in public discourse. First, we will look into public sport policy and what it represents. We will then move on to discuss the features or assumptions each public support policy has. Following this, we will focus on government funding and support systems and the similarities that can be found in the systems encountered around the globe. We will then move on to discuss the government funding and support priorities by looking at both the main priorities and the secondary priorities encountered. Finally, we will finish this module by looking into the actual government spending on sport and, as such, the numbers encountered within the current funding and support systems.

Unit 2.1 Public Sport Policy

The topic of central funding and government support in sport is a difficult topic to fully capture. Simply put, that is because different governments operate in different ways. Different political systems, norms and socio-cultural expectations also influenced the way in which sport has been funded in different countries and regions within them (Houlihan, 2005).

For us to understand better how central government funding and support operates, we need to first appreciate the public policy behind it. Public policy is rather complex to define (Houlihan, 2005). Public policy represents:

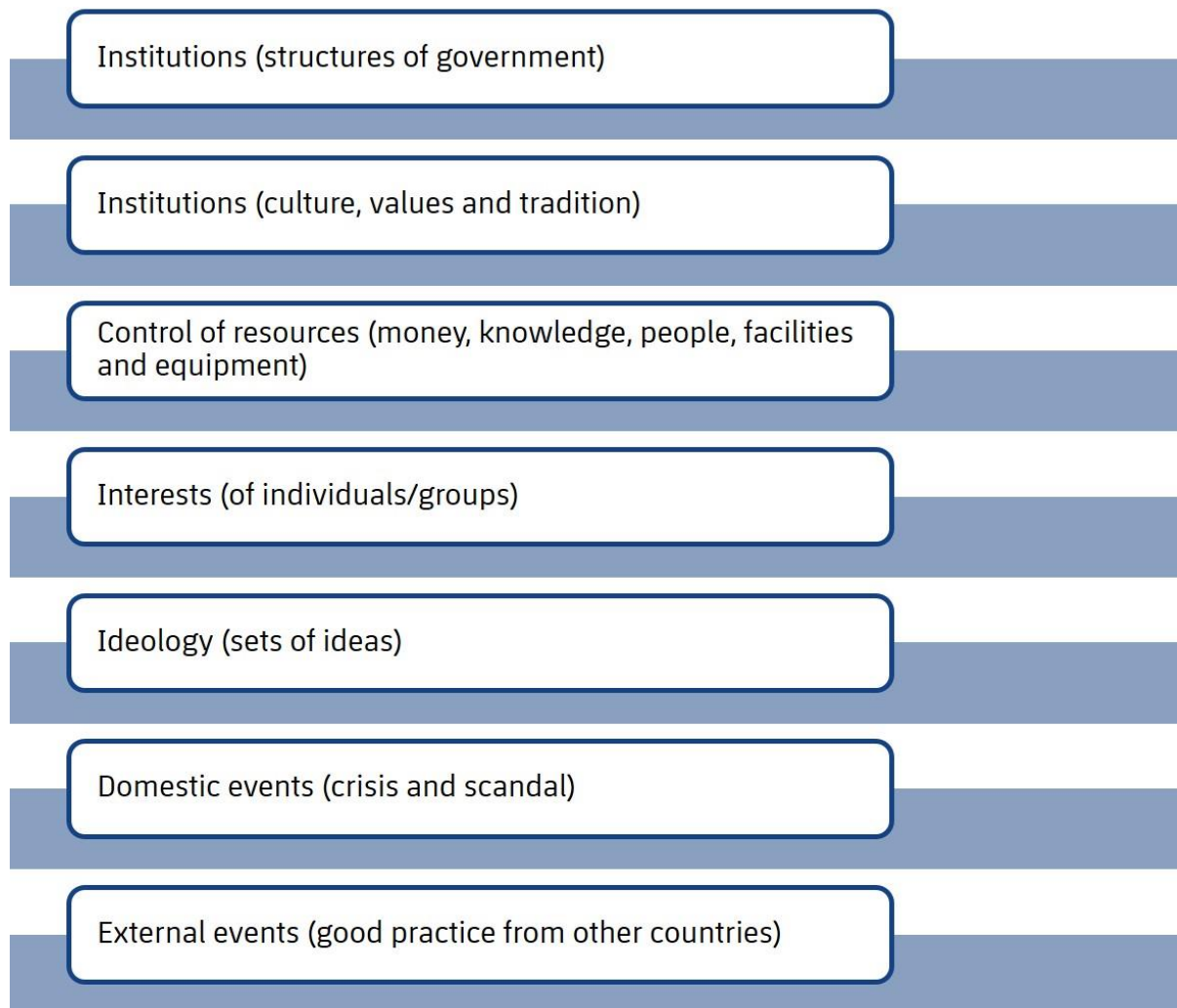
1. The aspirations each government would like to have.
2. How they can put this in action by committing particular resources, such as staff, money, time and materials.
3. The process by which a government can allocate money to a particular sport, and allow individuals within the sport ecosystem to compete for additional funds so that this system further develops.

Once again, the challenging issue of public policy is appreciating how the options are identified and how they are, of course, implemented. The assessment of impact or outcomes of public policy also comes into question, as well as the overall background of policymaking, implementation, and evaluation.



A number of factors appear to be shaping the way in which governments shape their policy (Bergsgard *et al.*, 2009); these are illustrated in figure 1 and discussed below.

Figure 1. Factors Influencing Public Policy



Source: own source.

First, the institutions themselves are a factor influencing public policy (Bergsgard *et al.*, 2009); in other words, the structures of the government, or how is a local and national government structured, and what is the culture within it and the values and traditions to which they adhere. We then need to consider the interests of the individuals and the groups involved within it because all these can influence the control of resources they have. In other words: how much money can they invest and be allowed to invest in a particular issue such as sport? What knowledge do they have of sport? What are their perceptions of sport? What are their views on the value of sport and how (or whether) it should be funded?

The people within it are also important, not only because they influenced the previous issues, but most importantly because they are a valuable resource. Equally, existing



facilities and equipment need to be considered because they also need to be managed appropriately.

Since we are referring to culture, we need to appreciate that the ideology adopted by each government also tends to influence the behaviour they will have towards sport and how it is funded. The set of ideas individuals in government hold is also believed to influence the amount of time and emphasis put on sport, which directly influences the funding and support they can provide (Bergsgard *et al.*, 2009).

Domestic events such as particular crises in political or more regularly financial aspects can also influence the flexibility or willingness of the government to fund sport. At the same time, particular scandals can also affect the way in which sport is regarded by the national government. Finally, external events can be considered a key influential factor (Houlihan, 2005). That is because they can act both as a deterrent if neighbouring countries are, for example, not engaging in programmes supporting sport, or as a positively influential factor by providing countries with examples of good practice from their neighbours. In simple terms, if neighbouring countries are engaging in public supported sport, then a country may be more interested in themselves implementing some support and funding programmes for sport.



Unit 2.2 Public Sport Policy Features

Each country's public sport policy has a number of features or assumptions to consider (Houlihan, 2005).

1. First, what should physical education be about? Is it a mere school subject, a core school subject, or a subject that should not be prioritised at school?
2. What is the elite sport for each country? Is it high on the political agenda to ensure that elite athletes are being produced by the sporting systems of the country or not? Depending on the country in question, and the way in which they perceive elite sport, the priority of producing elite athletes can diminish. For example, in a country in which the government assumes that producing elite athletes will affect them positively in managing their country, and developing positive feelings towards the state, assisting in morale and pride towards a nation, elite sport will be higher in the agenda of topics to support. Equally, in a country in which elite sport is not considered to be important, since other factors are being prioritised, elite sport will not be a political priority (Bergsgard *et al.*, 2009).
3. Community sport is also another feature of a sport policy. Community sport refers to sport provided on the local community on a free basis. Understanding how high on the political agenda community support can also assist us in understanding how much funding and support can be provided by the government. Once again, if community sport is believed to be a high priority because of any potential health, social and psychological effects it might have, then resources will be spent on it, placing it high as a political priority. If community sport is not believed to be adequately beneficial for the people or the government in power, then community sport funding will not be high on a government's agenda as well (Bergsgard *et al.*, 2009).
4. Both elite sport and community sport require for infrastructure to be created. Infrastructure and equipment require in turn high spending, and, as such, we need to appreciate this as a key feature of public sport policy. The existing spending and support on sport infrastructure and equipment is thus believed to be an important feature of public sport policy, as well as the consideration to maintain such a spending to preserve them. Extensive infrastructure can allow for spaces to be created, for equipment to be provided to local amateur sport clubs, as well as organisations that can ensure that community and elite sport is progressing. However, bearing in mind that the effects it can have on people might not always be appreciated as important, spending on these resources can be considered low on a government agenda (Bergsgard *et al.*, 2009).



5. An additional feature influencing all the above is a government's beliefs towards sport. These can include that sport can produce individual community and national benefits, to help increase social order and combat forms of social exclusion, to boost economic and urban regeneration, to produce public health benefits, and thus reduce the national budget. If these beliefs are considered important, then public sport policy will take this into account and increase government spending and support. Equally, if these beliefs are not shared by the government in question, then they will not form a key feature of the public sport policy and thus will result in minimising government funding and support of sport (Houlihan, 2005).

6. An additional feature or consideration of public sport policy are commercial sports. The decision a government needs to make is to what extent the sport industry as a whole is seen as a viable element of the economy. As such, in countries in which sport and corresponding sport leagues have not been highly commercialised, the sport industry is often lower on the political agenda, since it is not perceived to be as a viable industry that could have higher returns to the country. This, in turn, influences the overall perception that spending on sport can have for each country and government. At the same time, in countries in which the sport industry has been commercialised, the returns to the government through taxation, employability, and gross domestic product will determine how much the overall sport industry is and, as such, how high sport and funding sport are high on the political agenda (Houlihan, 2005).

All these features depend, of course, on the priorities of each government, and this is why we see a wide variety of approaches being implemented around the world. The differences between these approaches are often linked to each country's history and the socio, economic and political environment that exists in each country, in each moment. Interestingly, similarities can be identified between the different approaches; however, the features or considerations we discussed above might differ when comparing particular examples of different systems of government funding and support.

In the remaining sections of the module, we will therefore focus on drawing common themes within the different systems of government funding and support to sport noted around the globe in order to better capture how it manifests today.



Unit 2.3 Government Funding and Support Systems

The first point to consider when examining any potential similarities or dissimilarities among different government funding and support systems is how is each government provides funding and support to sport, that is, how the processes are coordinated and who is responsible for assisting sport. Most importantly, is it a direct or indirect assistance from the government to sport? In the case of most countries around the world, mostly developed and developing economies, based in predominantly in North America, Europe and Oceania, as well as to a lesser extent in South America, Asia and Africa, particular organisations have been created in order to be responsible for directly dealing with sport, with the government keeping the oversight of these organisations (Tacon, 2018). As such, intermediaries have been created to better manage the everyday requirements of funding and supporting sport, and to have a more objective viewpoint when allocating funds and arranging for additional support to sport.

This step, which is now followed by the majority of countries around the world, was introduced as a way in which distance between each government and sport is to be created, with the aim to avoid direct influence from the government on local sport (Tacon, 2018). This is also to create distance between a government's ideology and believes and sport, in order to allow for a more objective view of funding allocation and support provision, not influenced by said believes.

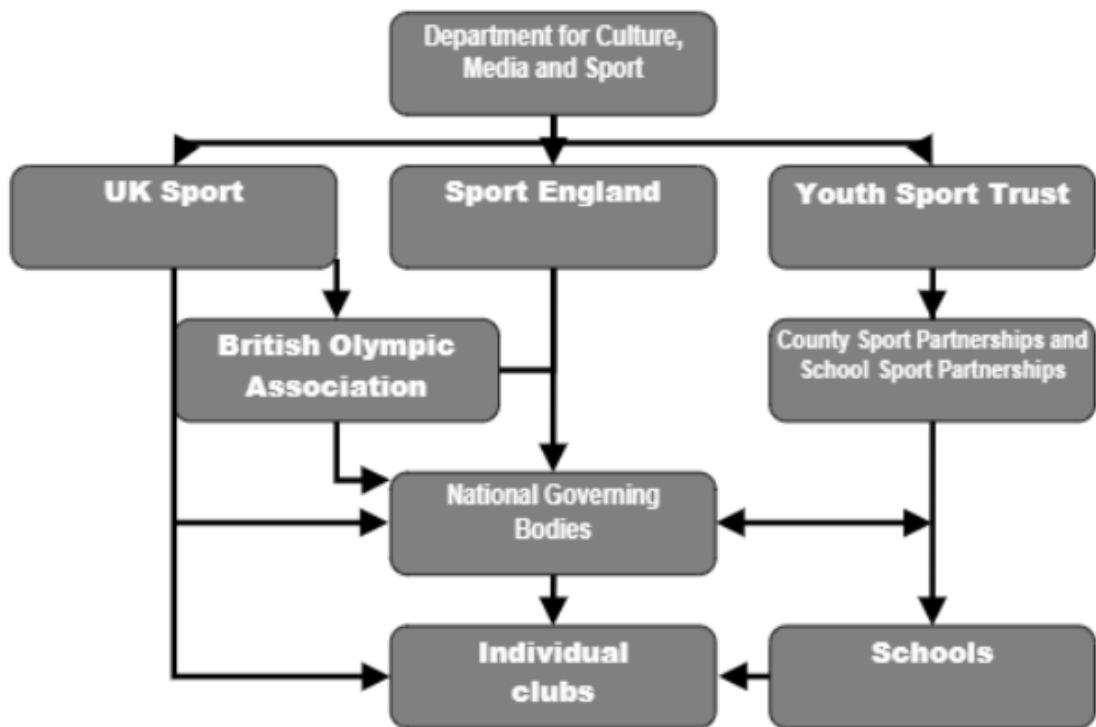
It is also worth noting that creating a separate organisation that is responsible for providing funding and support would allow for continuity in the provision of government funding and support. This organisation might remain the same even when governments change, allowing sport to not have to deal with a change of personnel and key contact stpoakeholders every time a government changes.

Depending on the country and the system examined, we can see different models of sport organisations being created. In some cases, it is multiple organisations that are being created by a government to ensure that their focus, objectives and priorities are more precise.

This is best examined through the example of England. In the case of England, as it is well illustrated in figure 2 below, the government funding and support system for sport operates through multiple organisations or intermediaries between the government and sport.

Figure 2. The English Sport Delivery System





Source: Berry, 2011, p. 48.

Each of these organisations has different aims, objectives and key actors within them, based on the area of sport they are focused upon. If we look at figure two above, we can better understand how they sit in the wider sport ecosystem of the country.

As we can see in the figure, the three organisations sitting directly under the Department for Sport work in parallel because they are also focused on different aspects (Berry, 2011). UK Sport tends to be more focused on elite sport and producing athletes that can compete in the international tournaments and the Olympic Games. Sport England tends to be more focused on wider sport participation and sport provision, caring for non-elite sport. It is interesting to note that Youth Sport Trust is another organisation in this system, which aims particularly at supporting schools and increasing physical education within them.

These organisations sit almost in parallel with the British Olympic Association, which is primarily focused on Olympic athletes. The National Governing Bodies of each sport interact with all these actors and sometimes assist in delivering some funding and support to individual clubs.

While these organisations all operate in the same system, each one has different roles or responsibilities.

The International Olympic Committee and the British Olympic Association manage all Olympic matters and promote the Olympics.



The International Sports Federations manage their sports worldwide, with the national governing bodies of sport sitting directly under them, and benefit through their provision of funds and support.

The national governing bodies of sport offer their support to sports clubs, help promote and run sport, and organise competitions and events. They also help select teams, set coaching standards, organise award schemes, and enforce rules. They are thus responsible for managing sport, but not for offering funding.

UK Sport, Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust are the organisations that manage funding and assist in supporting sport in the country, by funnelling it into the appropriate channels. The funding and support they provide originates from the government, but it is nonetheless managed by them. As a result, these three organisations are the ones that can assist in actively helping the other key organisations to filter down their support to the end users, in this case athletes, sport participants and children in the UK (Berry, 2011).

Whilst this is a rather complex structure, it is worth noting that it has been implemented in similar ways in various countries around the world. From Canada to Australia, we see a very similar system of government funding and support being implemented (Tacon, 2018). While the name of the key organisations involved might change, a similar complex, yet effective (it could be argued) system is being implemented in those countries and in a number of other developed and developing countries too.

It is worth noting that this system of intermediaries has yet to be implemented worldwide, but it is nonetheless believed to be a step forward in offering government funding and support to sport, while allowing for a distance to be created between each government and sport.



Unit 2.4 Main Government Funding and Support Priorities

While in the previous section we focused on the ways through which government funding and support is being distributed, and on how it is organised around the world, it is worth asking a different question this time: where is government funding being targeted towards?

As we discussed before, and based on the different intermediaries created, we can see that particular attention tends to be drawn on elite sport and ensuring that international success is achieved in international competitions, especially in the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tacon, 2018). In the countries that choose to place particular support on elite athletes, we tend to see that sport can be presented as a cultural institution, and as such it can be considered a significant contributor to the international profile of the nation. Countries that do that tend to also achieve particular success in the Olympic Games, reflecting the public policy, government spending and support they have shown to sport within them.

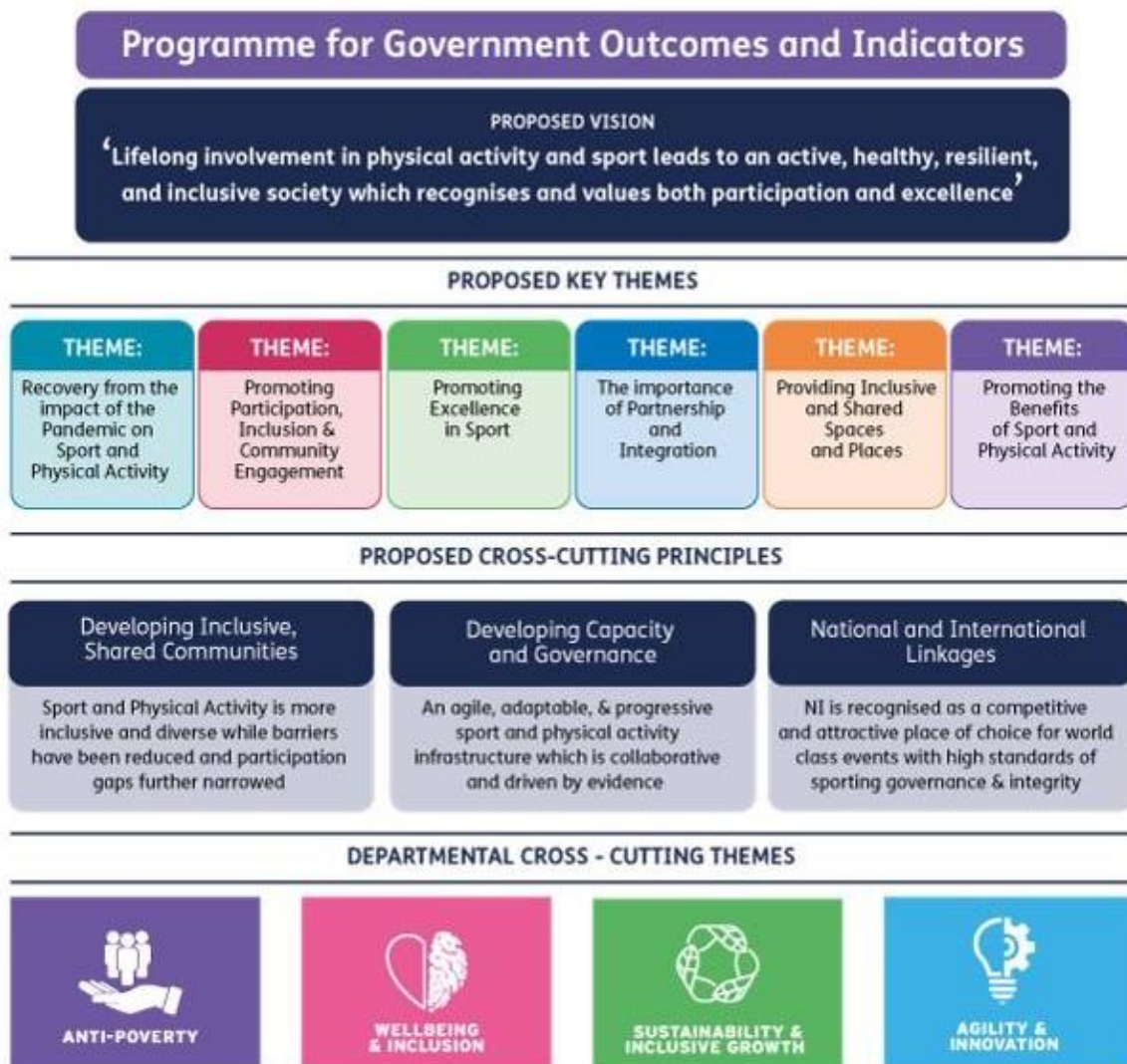
Government funding has also been directed specifically to children of school age because, through the support mechanisms and funding in physical education, it is believed to set the basis for both the increase of wider sport participation in the community and the potential for the future elite athletes to be assisted (Houlihan *et al.*, 2009).

This leads to the most popular priority for government funding and support around the world, which tends to be to assist the population in becoming more active. This is because often, associations are made between increasing sport participation and decreasing health costs, especially in an era in which obesity is increasing. At the same time, we see that governments have been utilising sport programmes and various initiatives to achieve a number of objectives in their wider policy. These include social inclusion, crime reduction, urban regeneration, raising school standards, reducing obesity, and improving international prestige (Houlihan *et al.*, 2009). All of these are believed to be achieved or even assisted through the promotion of sport participation.

As the following detailed figure illustrates, when government funding and support has this priority of increasing sport participation, a complex and wider system exists to justify and better operationalise this priority.



Figure 3. The Sports Strategy Framework



Source: Department for Communities, 2021, p. 34.

So let us try and understand this difficult, complex system as we see it in the figure above. Firstly, we see that the overall programme for government support and funding to sport is being guided by a particular vision, and that vision is sport participation and participation in physical activity overall, stemming from the belief that that leads to an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society (Department for Communities, 2021).

This overall vision is then translated into particular key themes. The first theme is to recover from the impact of the pandemic and the effect it has had on sport and physical activity. The subsequent lockdowns substantially reduced physical activity, so such a system promoted by this strategy would allow for these levels to increase once again. The second theme would be to promote participation, inclusion and community engagement through people's involvement in sport. The third theme would be to promote excellence in sport, linking the wider strategy with elite sport funding and support that we



mentioned before. Another key theme which is important to note is that of partnership and integration, which ensures that private funding and support are also involved in the overall funding system for sport (Department for Communities, 2021).

Inclusive and shared spaces and places are also an important theme of this system, since they point towards inclusive sport participation. Whilst less similar and less complex systems might exist in other countries, it is worth noting that inclusive sport is now gaining traction on the worldwide stage. Promoting benefits of sport and physical activity is also believed to be an important theme, since that will allow for sport participation to increase.

Through these proposed key themes, we see some wider cross-cutting principles that are being proposed (Department for Communities, 2021). The first being developing inclusive, shared communities, in order to ensure that previously existing barriers that have led to reduced participation are removed. We also see the development of capacity and improving of existing governance being presented as one of these principles. This means that the strategy proposed aims at more progressive sport and physical activity infrastructure, which is again led by a collaborative approach, suggesting that privatisation of some of these facilities is possible.

Another clear principle is the linkage between national and international connections. This, in simple words, would mean that promoting sport participation on a wider scale beyond the borders of the country should be considered. While this strategy we see illustrated in the figure is based on the proposed scheme for Northern Ireland, it clearly suggests that staging events that will attract people's attention to the country would benefit sport participation within the country itself (Department for Communities, 2021).

A similar belief has been long held by the wider country, the United Kingdom, which has thus invested in bidding and hosting a number of mega sport events in the past years (Tacon, 2018). Examples of this can be the successful bid for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games, the right to host the Rugby League World Cup in 2013, the Commonwealth Games in 2014, the Rugby Union World Cup in 2015, and the Cricket World Cup in 2019.

Finally, at the bottom of the figure, we see the cross-cutting themes of the strategy. It is suggested that funding sport participation through this strategy can assist in fighting poverty, possibly by offering additional income to people that are currently struggling with poverty and through sport assisting them in developing a better future and being better included in society. They believe that sport can assist in the promotion of mental and physical well-being, which is widely documented in government policy documents, and it is thus once again reinstated in this strategy.

We also see that sustainability and inclusive growth are highlighted in the proposed strategy. These two themes are connected with sport participation, since it is proposed that governments can ensure that we also integrate green efforts that assist sport to



improve the wider environment in which it operates. Finally, agility and innovation are recognised as a theme, since it is argued that sport can utilise this wider strategy to improve the way it is funded and supported by the government using innovative ways that had not been used before, potentially assisting in better allocating the existing funds (Department for Communities, 2021).

While the above proposed strategy looks rather complex, it encapsulates the main priorities encountered in a number of government funding and support systems encountered around the world. Additional priorities encountered in some government funding and support systems will be discussed below.



Unit 2.5 Secondary government funding and support priorities

Additional or secondary government funding and support priorities can be considered those identified in less countries around the world, or those that are lower in each country's public sport policy agenda. These will be discussed in this section of the module.

First, it is argued that spending is high on facilities for training and that is because—as we argued earlier on in this module—facilities, infrastructure and equipment can account for a very high cost both to be created and maintained. As such, developing facilities for training on either elite or local level needs to be considered one of the highest expenditures on behalf of a government (King, 2009).

Selected clubs at a local level might also be attracting collectively a very high amount of funding, and that is because a very high number of local clubs exist, covering a wide variety of sport. It is estimated that even a small amount of support received by local clubs can accumulate into very high amounts of money (King, 2009). Selected clubs that achieve success in regional and national competitions will then receive additional support and additional funding through the central government systems. Combining all sport clubs in every part of a country might thus collectively account for a very high demand of government funding and support.

Regional facilities to assist these local clubs will also require for more money, especially if the regional facilities can also be used by potential future elite athletes (King, 2009). Facilities for major sport events tend to attract significant attention, especially when a government is interested in potentially hosting a future sport event. While mega sport events are not very common in a number of countries around the world, the high expenditure they are associated with means that a high amount of money will be directed by the government to them if the decision to host one is made.

Ensuring that enough coaches and physical education teachers are provided is also a secondary priority for government funding (Houlihan, 2005). As such, funds are being spent by the government to recruit these individuals and train them accordingly, as well as assist them in positioning them in regional/local clubs or in schools.

Major facilities such as big stadia for particular sports might also be considered a priority for some countries. Major facilities refer to investments for sizeable stadia, which are the ones that will be used by very popular sports in each country, such as football or rugby. These stadia—while often funded by the government—tend to end up being used by professional commercial sport clubs, and, as such, this funding priority gets significantly less public support than others in this list (Scherer and Sam, 2008). This, in turn, means that government funding allocated to them is often accompanied by severe criticism from the public.



Table 1. Top 10 Federal Subsidies for Professional Sport Stadiums since 2000

Top 10 Federal Subsidies For Pro Sports Stadiums Since 2000

Team	Stadium	Subsidy (in millions)
New York Yankees	Yankee Stadium	\$431
Chicago Bears	Soldier Field	\$205
New York Mets	Citi Field	\$185
Cincinnati Bengals	Paul Brown Stadium	\$164
Indianapolis Colts	Lucas Oil Stadium	\$163
Cincinnati Reds	Great American Ballpark	\$134
Houston Texans	NRG Stadium	\$129
Brooklyn Nets/New York Islanders	Barclays Center	\$122
Houston Rockets	Toyota Center	\$112
Milwaukee Brewers	Miller Park	\$104

Source: Bull, 2016, <http://bit.ly/3mltI73>.

As the figure above illustrates, this widely contested issue has received increasing attention recently, since the amount of government funding allocated to such major stadia tends to be significantly high. As it is suggested, for example, the Government funding (subsidy) for the Yankee Stadium, in which the New York Yankees team host their matches, was \$431 million, while the funding for the Soldier Field stadium in which the Chicago Bears play was \$205 million. These significant amounts of money highlight why this priority of government funding has been met with severe criticism (Bull, 2016).

After all, it is argued that looking at the North American sport, since 2000 alone, federal taxpayers have indirectly paid \$3.2 billion towards private sports stadia through various subsidies, mostly in the form of tax-exempt municipal bonds. If we then add the additional tax benefits that the high-income bondholders receive, we reach a figure of \$3.7 billion.

A simple way to better understand this is that a family located in a different part of the country is paying their taxes, and yet those taxes are being spent on a private stadium for a team that is often valued very high. This highly valued team that is therefore making a very high revenue is being funded by the money that they themselves are paying through their hard work.

Table 2. The Finances of NFL Stadia Built from 1997 to 2015



Stadium/Team	Team	Year Opened	Total Project Cost	Private Funding		Public Funding	
				Total Private	% of Total	Total Public	% of Total
San Francisco 49ers (Proposed)	San Francisco 49ers	2015	\$987.0	\$873.0	88%	\$114.0	12%
MetLife Stadium	Giants/Jets	2010	\$1,600.0	\$1,600.0	100%	\$0.0	0%
Cowboys Stadium	Dallas Cowboys	2009	\$1,194.0	\$750.0	63%	\$444.0	37%
Lucas Oil Stadium	Indianapolis Colts	2008	\$719.6	\$100.0	14%	\$619.6	86%
University of Phoenix Stadium	Arizona Cardinals	2006	\$455.0	\$147.0	32%	\$308.0	68%
Lincoln Financial Field	Philadelphia Eagles	2003	\$518.0	\$330.0	64%	\$188.0	36%
Soldier Field (renovation)	Chicago Bears	2003	\$587.0	\$200.0	34%	\$387.0	66%
Lambeau Field (renovation)	Green Bay Packers	2003	\$295.2	\$126.1	43%	\$169.1	57%
Gillette Stadium	New England Patriots	2002	\$412.0	\$340.0	83%	\$72.0	17%
Ford Field	Detroit Lions	2002	\$440.0	\$330.0	75%	\$110.0	25%
Reliant Stadium	Houston Texans	2002	\$474.0	\$185.0	39%	\$289.0	61%
CenturyLink Field	Seattle Seahawks	2002	\$461.3	\$161.0	35%	\$300.3	65%
Heinz Field	Pittsburgh Steelers	2001	\$280.8	\$109.2	39%	\$171.6	61%
Sports Authority Field at Mile High	Denver Broncos	2001	\$400.8	\$111.8	28%	\$289.0	72%
Paul Brown Stadium	Cincinnati Bengals	2000	\$449.8	\$25.0	6%	\$424.8	94%
LP Field	Tennessee Titans	1999	\$291.7	\$84.8	29%	\$206.9	71%
Cleveland Browns Stadium	Cleveland Browns	1999	\$271.0	\$71.0	26%	\$200.0	74%
M&T Bank Stadium	Baltimore Ravens	1998	\$226.0	\$22.4	10%	\$203.6	90%
Raymond James Stadium	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	1998	\$194.0	\$0.0	0%	\$194.0	100%
FedEx Field	Washington Redskins	1997	\$250.5	\$180.0	72%	\$70.5	28%
Average			\$525.4	\$287.3	44%	\$238.1	56%

Source: Kelaher, 2021, <http://bit.ly/43rNQVr>.

The figure above helps us better illustrate the difficult decision here. Whilst government funding and support of sport has been historically praised, the reality of it today, especially in a world in which commercial sport and community sport collide, results in these significant numbers. We see that, for example, the total project cost of building a stadium is increasing and alongside it, so does public funding (Scherer and Sam, 2008).

What we covered in the previous module focused more on commercial sport, and thus we could now assume that government funding would then focus on non-commercial sport. However, what we see here is that, when it comes to major stadia, public funding remains until now the main source of funding for them to be created. We can therefore see that on the table, that for major stadia to be built, public funding accounts for more than 50% of their funding source. This will, in turn, suggest that the total public spending for these stadia that are to be privately used, was approximately \$238.1 million (see table 2 above).

The wider justification as to why public financing of stadia occurs is based on the belief that new stadia will create a significant impact on the local community through the introduction of new jobs, in the short and long term, and through potentially higher spending through tourism in the long term. Now, the short-term impact can indeed be important. Previous research suggests that when a stadium is being built, new positions open up, particularly in the sector of construction. It is then also argued that a long-term benefit can exist for the local community when new positions open towards hospitality around the stadium (Scherer and Sam, 2008).



However, it is now openly discussed that the main issue why public funding for new stadia is given is through the threat of the teams leaving and relocating to a new area. It is thus widely argued that, unfortunately, and despite these promises, government subsidies and government funding directed towards mega stadia that are to be used by private sports organisations do not result in the local impact they were originally believed to have. In fact, it is argued that, whilst the average stadium in the US generates \$145 million per year, none of this revenue goes back to the community (Farmer, 2018).

It is also reported that these potential effects are over-estimated, highlighting that subsidised stadia have very limited or possibly even negative local impact (Farmer, 2018). This would suggest that public spending should be instead provided to other projects directly influencing the local community, rather than building stadia subsidised by a government.

This point, and the wider debate on whether government spending should exist on sport, will be addressed in the following section of this module. However, before we do that, it is worth mentioning that all the above priorities of government spending and support, both the main and the supplementary ones, are often presented in different order, depending on the priorities of each government in each country. While the list presented above cannot be considered exclusive, the priorities discussed above nonetheless collectively capture a wide and detailed image of the government funding and support priorities of most countries around the world.



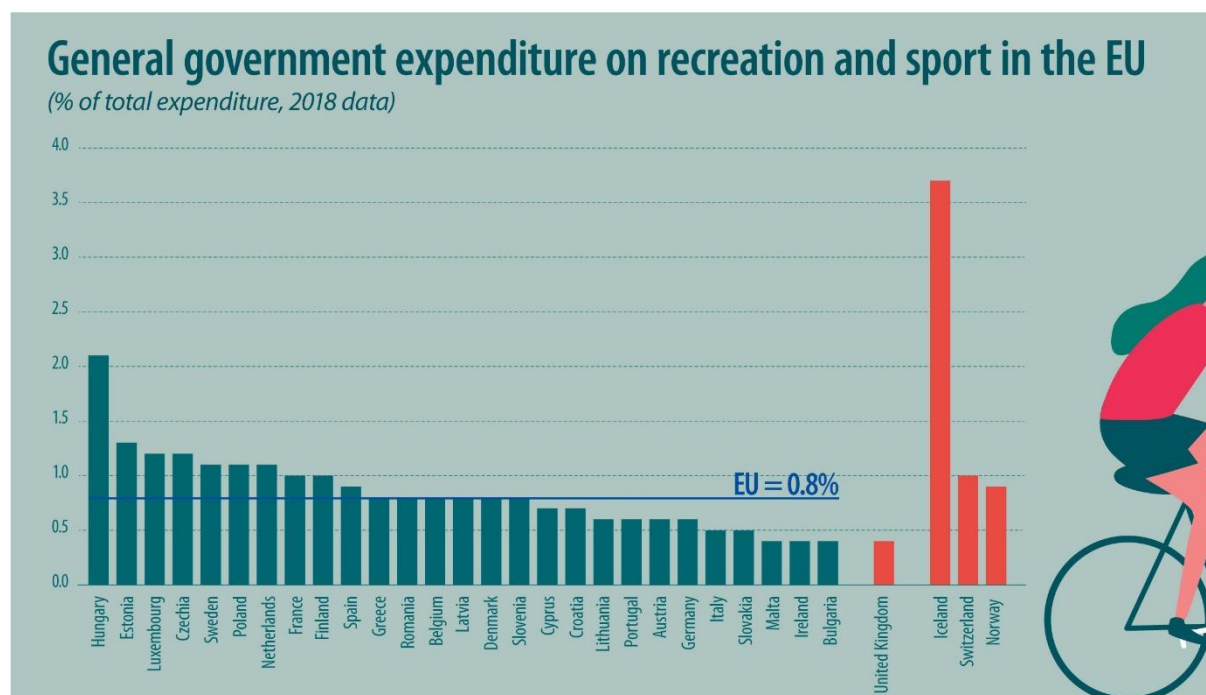
Unit 2.6 Government Spending on Sport

It is worth at this point to focus a bit more on the actual funding governments invest in sport, in order to better appreciate the magnitude of government funding to sport.

While the numbers, of course, differ depending on the geographic region in which each country is based and the surrounding norms, as well as the individual conditions experienced within the country, we can see that internationally government spending on recreation and sport can be, at times, relatively high. When looking at the European Union's 27 member states, for example, we can see that, in 2018, they spent a total of 50.7 billion euros of government expenditure on recreation and sport. Government expenditure in EU countries has remained relatively stable as a percentage of the total expenditure since the beginning since the early 2000s (Eurostat, 2020).

What we see today is that the average amongst the EU countries is at 0.8% of the total expenditure of the countries, with some countries like Hungary, Estonia, Luxembourg, and Czechia being above it, and countries such as Bulgaria, Ireland, Malta and Slovakia being below that 0.8 percentage, as illustrated in figure 4 below.

Figure 4. General Government Expenditure on Recreation and Sport in the EU



Source: Eurostat dataset gov_10a_exp

ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Source: Eurostat, 2020, <http://bit.ly/3mtZTkC>.

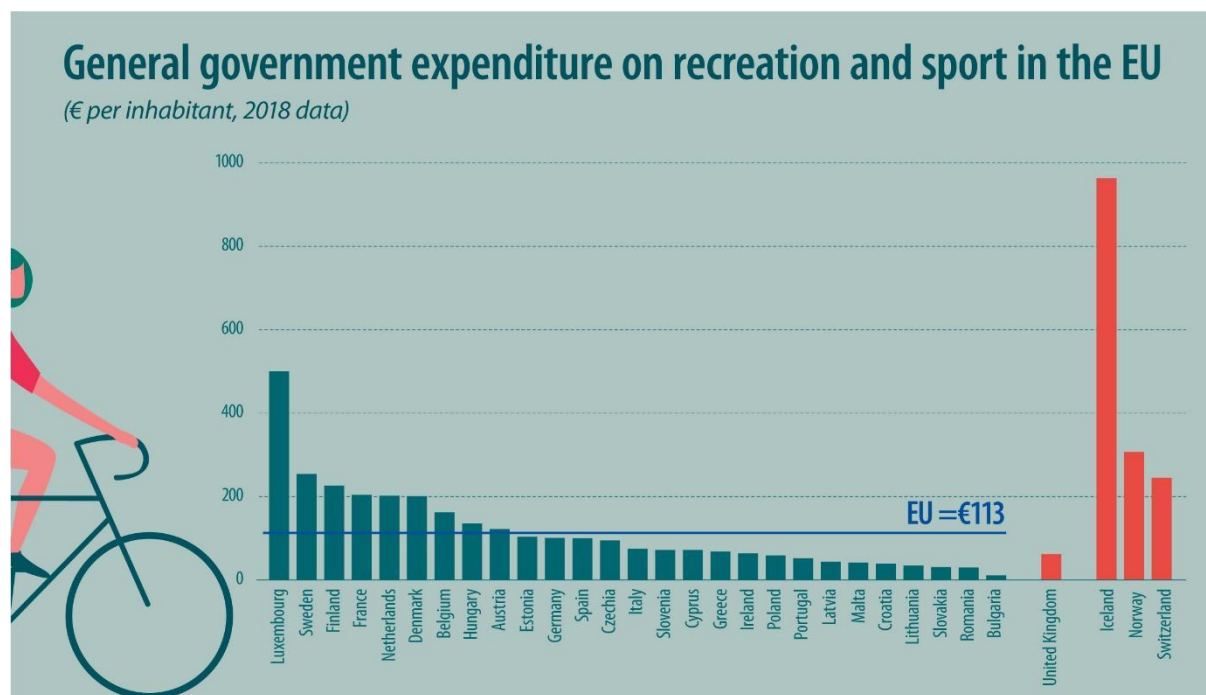
It is worth comparing this percentage with other European countries that are not members of the EU, such as the United Kingdom, which tends to have a lower spending than even the lowest member states of the EU, while countries in Northern and Central



Europe that are outside the EU, such as Iceland, Switzerland and Norway, seem to have a very high spending on recreation and sport (Eurostat, 2020).

If we look at the actual numbers, it is estimated that the average spending on recreation in sport in the EU per inhabitant of each country is 113 euros. Again, the number 113 represents the EU average, with some countries such as Luxembourg, Sweden, Finland and France, spending significantly more money and countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Lithuania, spending less, as is illustrated in figure 6 below.

Figure 5. General Government Expenditure on Recreation and Sport in the EU



Source: Eurostat dataset gov_10a_exp and nama_10_pe

ec.europa.eu/eurostat

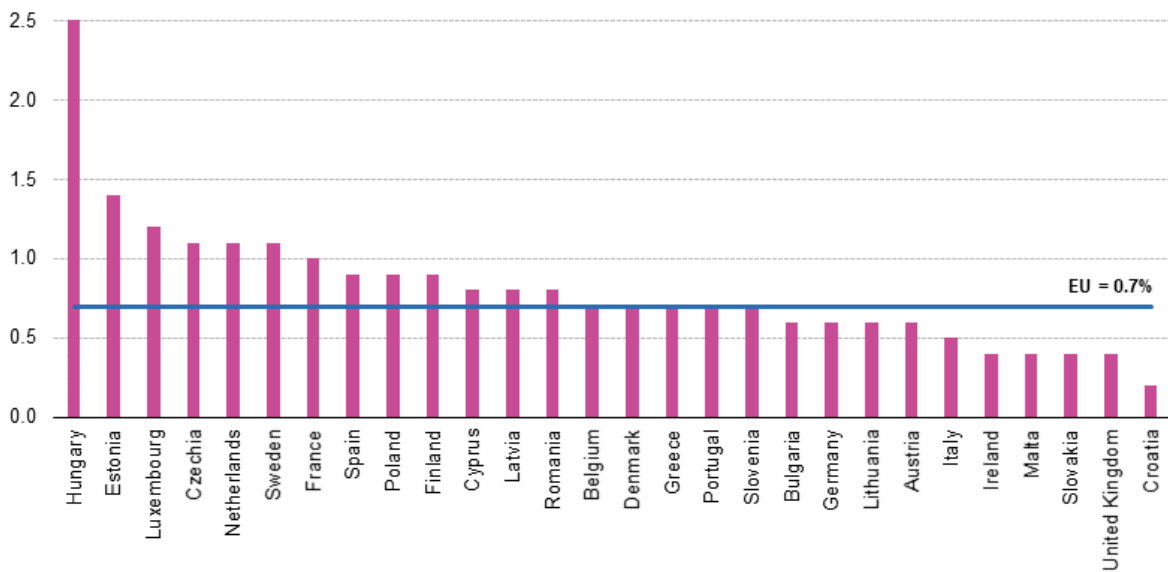
Source: Eurostat, 2020, <http://bit.ly/3mtZTKC>.

It is once again worth looking at what other European countries that are not members of the EU are doing, with Iceland, Norway and Switzerland spending once again more than the average EU member states and the United Kingdom spending less (Eurostat, 2020).



Figure 6. General Government Expenditure on Recreation and Sport in the EU in 2017

General government expenditure on recreation and sport in the EU, 2017
 (% of total expenditure)



Source: Eurostat dataset gov_10a_exp



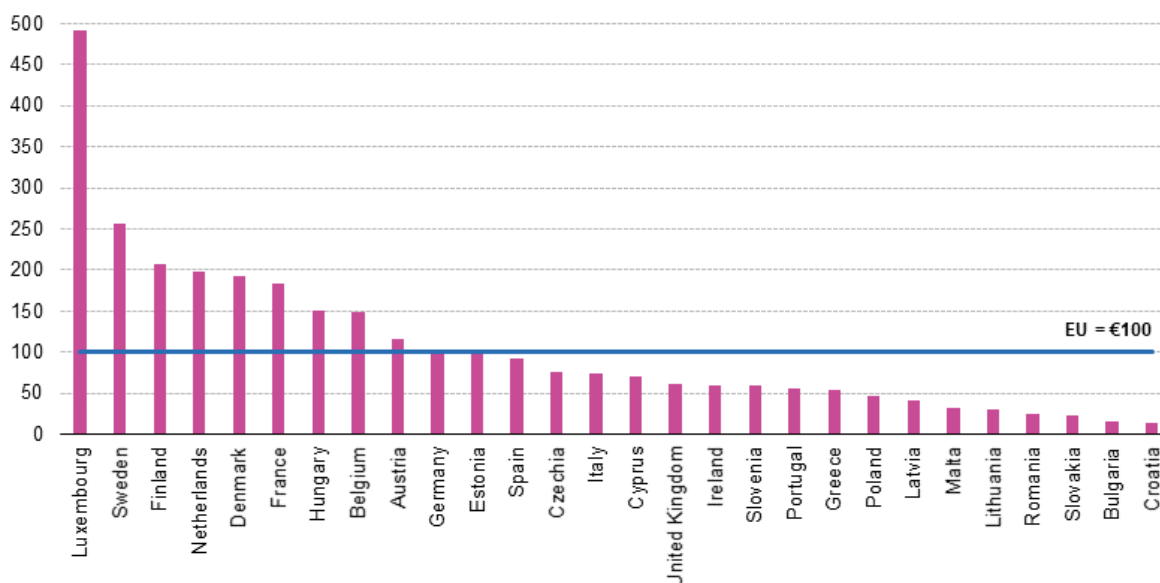
Source: Eurostat, 2019, <http://bit.ly/3KUNsYC>.

An additional interesting point to note is that, when we compare those numbers with the year before, we can see that the overall government spending on sport and recreation represented a lower percentage of the overall spending of each government (Eurostat, 2019). So, on average, in 2017, the EU member state spending was at 0.7% of the overall spending with a slight increase noted in just a year.



Figure 7. General Government Expenditure on Recreation and Sport in the EU in 2017

General government expenditure on recreation and sport in the EU, 2017
(€ per inhabitant)



Source: Eurostat dataset gov_10a_exp and nama_10_pe



Source: Eurostat, 2019, <http://bit.ly/3KUNsYC>.

This spending translates into an average of 100 euros being the general government expenditure on recreation and sport in EU member states. This would suggest that, again, some countries like Luxembourg, Sweden and Finland spent above it, while countries like Croatia, Bulgaria and Slovakia spent less than this amount (Eurostat, 2019).

In simple financial terms, this would show that an increase of 13 euros per EU inhabitant has been achieved in only a year, leading us to understand that governments are increasing the money spent on sport and recreation, potentially suggesting that sport and recreation are believed to be a good investment for government funding and support, despite the potential criticism some of this spending might be met with.

Summary

In this module, we focused on the modern system of central funding and government support in sport. We therefore began our discussion with an overview of public sport policy and what it entails. We then looked into the characteristics of public support policy, and in particular the features or assumptions that it has. Following this, we moved on into the different government funding and support systems by trying to identify potential similarities among the various systems encountered around the world. We then focused on the main government funding and sport priorities by looking at the main themes that can be identified, shortly before moving to the secondary government funding and sport



priorities. We then concluded our discussion with an overview of government spending on sport, to put the numbers behind the various government funding and support systems.

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