

Speech by the General Secretariat for Sports at the Conference 'Sports, Socialization and Economic Development'

Catalan Observatory at LSE, June 8, 2010

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

In this speech, I'd like to tell you about the sports policies of the Catalan government. I will outline for you the political vision and actions – the mission – of the government I represent. And I will focus specifically on the strategic core of the government's policy as it deals with the relationship between sports, business, innovation and economic development.

First, however, I'd like to provide some background on Catalonia and the great importance that Catalan society has always placed on sports.

Catalonia has always been defined as an industrial and mercantile country, open to Europe and the world. With a large capital, Barcelona. And a strong personality of its own, which is the product of its own language and culture. It would be a mistake, however, to overlook the fact that we are also, in terms of sports, a leader in Europe and the world.

Sport has a great capacity to transform cities and put them on the international map. It has done just that for Barcelona. The Olympic Games of 1992 mark a before and after in the city's transformation and its impact on an international level. Besides the short term impacts, one of the most relevant economical outcomes has been the placement of Barcelona in the ranking of best cities to locate a business today. It has risen from the eleventh to fourth place in the past twenty years.

Indeed, investments in sports facilities didn't exceed 9%; the rest was used to improve the city and Catalonia.

The Games also encouraged an increase in the practice of sports, making Barcelona today the third most sports-oriented city in the world. Similarly, the Games also promoted tourism; the number of visitors to the city doubled in the year after the games and almost six times more than before the games.

It present, Catalonia is again considering the possibility of hosting the Games, this time the 2022 Winter Olympics, to promote the entire region of the Pyrenees.

Catalonia also boasts very strong sports brands, which act as genuine calling cards and ambassadors around the world. I'm referring here to the Futbol Club Barcelona.

In addition to having hosted the Olympic Games, we organise the Formula One (F1) race (which has an annual economic impact of hundred and seventy -170-million euros), tennis championships, motorcycle races, football, basketball, hockey, swimming, track and field, etc, demonstrating our organisational capacity and our sporting potential.

Catalonia is, therefore, a real Sports country. We mustn't forget, however, that sports also play a very important economic role in our country.

Following this introduction, I'd like to give you an outline of sports policy in Catalonia. We shall examine it part by part.

We in the Catalan government firmly believe in sports as a motor of change. This is why our motto is 'Sports move Catalonia'. Because we truly believe that sports have this positive, transformative capacity.

And to carry out this transformation, we have organised our governmental actions around four strategic areas,

- a) Sports as a healthy lifestyle (within everyone's reach)
- b) Recognition of the social role of sports
- c) Support for sports organisations and their quality
- d) And to make sports a motor of economic development

In this context, we must acknowledge the vision, will and conviction of Rafel Niubó, the present general secretary of the vice-presidency of the Catalan government.

I will now provide you with some examples of actions in each of our four core areas.

- 1) The first area is '**Sports as a healthy lifestyle**'. To give just one example, this area includes all actions related to sport and health. We are convinced that sports are essential to preventing illnesses and combating sedentary habits.
For this reason, we have created a specific program in which health centres prescribe physical activity.

At the same time, we have created healthy walking routes around the Catalan territory.

Finally, through the sports promotion plan I will speak about in a moment, and the healthy food pyramid, we are working to reduce childhood obesity and successfully establish healthy habits starting in school.

- 2) In terms of the second strategic area, **the recognition of the social role of sports**, I would like to highlight the Catalan Plan for Sports at School.

The present academic year marks the fifth year of this plan to raise the low level of sports participation in schools and to get the maximum number of children in Catalonia to practice some type of extra-curricular physical activity inside the educational centre. I don't need to tell you the importance of increasing physical activity among young people.

An innovative and notable element of this plan is that it contributes to the training of future leaders. And how does it do this? Well, at each centre, a club is created within the school. And it is here that the training of future leaders has its start and is encouraged.

- 3) We now move to the third area: **support for sports organisations and their quality**. I shall highlight here the Plan for Quality Sports. We began this plan in 2008 for Catalan sports entities. It is a way to provide organisations with more efficient management and to support them in offering improved services to their members.

We began with the sports federations. At present, seventeen federations have been certified.

- 4) Finally, in respect to the fourth strategic area, we firmly believe that **sports are a motor of economic development**.

It is about this final, central area that I'd like to talk to you today.

I shall provide you with some facts.

The sports production sector in Catalonia represents more than 80% of the production total in Spain. In this context, Catalonia is the territory with the greatest concentration of sports businesses in Europe. Some 500 Catalan companies are engaged in production activities totally or partially related to sports: industrial design, textiles, nutrition, motor, nautical, and the construction and management of sports facilities, among others.

And these companies provide work for more than 22,000 workers. The total volume of turnover of the sports industry in Catalonia is more than 4,000 million euros. The sports industry, in sum, represents 2.3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Catalonia, more than sectors such as textiles, graphic design, or computer science, and on a par with motor vehicle manufacturing.

Despite this figures, however, we found ourselves in a clearly paradoxical situation. While the fabric of the sports business existed, it was a sector that had never been organised.

Similarly, although there were a large number of professionals dedicated to the world of sports, our sector was just known, not renowned.

The Catalan government, therefore, established two specific goals:

- Firstly, to make sports a renowned sector. To achieve this, we drew up and passed the Law of Sports Professions, which regulates the activity of professionals in the world of sports in order to guarantee the quality of sports services and do away with unauthorised activity.
- Secondly, to create specific measures for the real organisation of the sports sector.

These measures are based on three specific actions that share the common goal of placing the economic and business sector of Catalan sports in the place it deserves.

A) First of all, we have formed the **Consortium for the Scientific Development of Sports in Catalonia**.

Different departments of the government are involved: sports, health, education, innovation, universities and business, along with other universities and research and development foundations.

The consortium will promote interaction between research and university and non-university teaching, the production sector, the world of science and technology, and activity to improve the quality of life through sports activities.

B) Secondly, we have promoted the creation of the **EsportParc Internacional de Catalunya**.

This is a one-of-a-kind project in Europe that combines business development and scientific research in the field of sports. A business and technology park located in a pioneering complex dedicated to innovation, next to the 'High Performance Centre' for sports in Catalonia. The first stage is the construction of the Business Park, which will be managed by a public-private consortium, and the technology centre, which will promote research in the field of sports.

Let's take a look at the project together.

(DVD EPIC plays)

I'm sure you will agree, the EsportParc is a project for all of Catalonia. And we are convinced that it will make Catalonia a worldwide reference in innovation and research for manufacturers in the sports sector.

C) Thirdly, we have promoted the **creation of INDESCAT**, the 'Sports Industry Association in Catalonia'. The primary goal of this new entity is to encourage innovation, competitiveness, efficiency and growth in the sports sector.

To reach this point, a study was made of the Catalan sports industry, a strategic analysis of the sports sector and business trends, in order to identify in which direction and strategic challenges.

Six work areas have been identified: Research, Development and Innovation (R&D&I), education, market actions, internationalisation, sports promotion, and coordination and visibility.

From now on, the Catalan government will advance and support the Association.

The creation of INDESCAT, the EsportParc Internacional de Catalunya, and the constitution of the Consortium for the Scientific Development of Sports constitute the three specific actions to strengthen the role of sports as a motor of economic development in Catalonia.

Through all of this, the Catalan government aims to strengthen the existing synergies in the sports sector in our country in order to improve and reinforce its competitiveness.

As you see, the government of Catalonia is working to help the productive capacity of the sports sector to grow, fully backing a model that is based on innovation, research, development and knowledge, to be more competitive on both a business and sports level.

Even so, as a government, we don't overlook sports on a popular level. We provide access to sports within reach of all citizens. We facilitate resources and the construction of sports facilities. We have specific programs to promote sports activities as an educational, integrating tool, and to promote health.

And we also ensure that our sports organisations continue to be strong, efficient, effective and autonomous in their management.

Sports are a great generator of social change. And Catalonia will continue working to place sports at the highest level. At the level it deserves. And we insist again: it is not enough for sports to be known; they must be renowned.

Although there's still more work to be done, we believe we have achieved this renown. And that the business and production sector in the field of sports in Catalonia is already a reference. We can state, with pride, that 'sports move Catalonia'.

Thank you very much for your attention,

Anna Pruna I Grivé