

NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Estonia

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:
Mogens Kirkeby



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

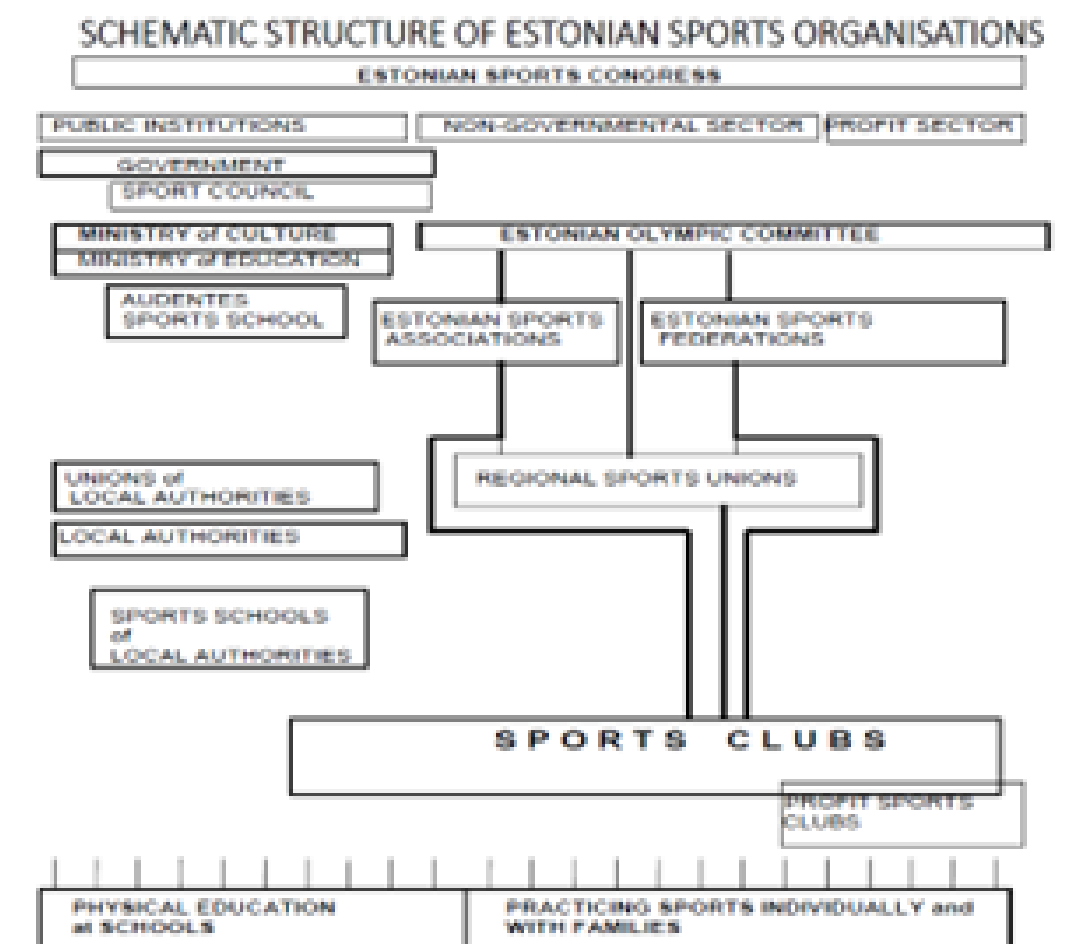
1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The Estonian Sport Register provides an updated version of the sport structure, the number of federations, clubs, schools and membership: <https://www.spordiregister.ee/en/main>. Below is an overview. Besides the International Olympic Committee, sport for all oriented organisations are organised both at national and county levels.

In the late 1980s, the building and re-building of sport organisation was initiated. The Soviet model was changed to the European Sport Model. This meant that some structures were ready by the official independence in August 1991. Since then, the development has taken place to reach the numbers below.

The legislative structure was also developed and today consists of legislation supporting freedom of association, such as the Non-Profit Associations Act (a non-profit association is a legal person in private law. It may be founded by at least two persons - natural or legal) and the Sport Act.

Overview from Sport Register:



2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

There is no national public strategy on sport diplomacy in Estonia.

In the government document “Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Resolution of the Riigikogu “Fundamentals of Estonian Sports Policy until 2030”, the term sport diplomacy is not mentioned directly, but a few paragraphs describe sport diplomacy actions in order to create a positive image through various actions and ensure representativeness in international sports movements. This document explains that an “essential development trend is aimed at achieving a positive image and representativeness of Estonia through the results of competitive sports, successfully organised sports competitions and events, as well as competent and distinguished representatives – Estonia is represented in an effective and dignified way at international level. Ensuring representativeness in international sports movement – for this purpose, a financial support mechanism will be created to ensure Estonia’s representativeness in international organisations, strategic interests of Estonian sports will be implemented through competent and capable representatives of the sports movement by the means of cooperation and carrying out lobbying activities with partners.”¹

In overall terms, the most important objective in Estonia will be to promote and brand Estonia.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

As organisations and athletes operate independently, there is no coordination model as such. Some *ad hoc* coordination and initiatives can occur.

Generally speaking, the engagement of official diplomats in sport diplomacy actions is not very significant. However, Cultural Embassies in five European Countries and in the USA can be used in *ad hoc* situations. The same is the true of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, Estonia is a member of the European Union, UNESCO, WADA and the Council of Europe and it sports collaboration EPAS.

The recent Joint Statement from EU Ministers responsible for sport against the war in Ukraine is an example of political governmental action in the field of sport diplomacy, whereas the practical handling of refugees from Ukraine is a matter for the local municipalities.

In general, the limitation of human resources might influence the engagement in the field of Sport Diplomacy.

Regarding the role of city authorities and local institutions/politicians in Estonia, Town Twinning exists and it can include sports initiatives. Estonian cities have also participated in the European Sport Cities/Towns contest and three cities were awarded the title for 2020-2021. Tallinn is nominated as European Capital of Sport in 2025. Tartu is nominated as European Capital of Culture in 2024.

Sports organisations are independent and operate as such. Public authorities can support international representation and as well bidding for and hosting events.

¹<https://www.spordiinfo.ee/est/g22s448>

The sports organisations (Olympic and non-Olympic) do pursue representation in international federations both at technical and executive committee levels. Historically, this has also been successful towards the European Olympic Committee and the Volleyball Federation and European Athletics.

It is important to note that whereas the media are considered to have a role at national level in promoting sport and physical activity, regarding sport diplomacy, the media are not considered to be very active.

Regarding the private sector, Estonia is quite prominent in the development of IT tools and some programmes and apps are international and sport-oriented such as a tool for sports events like <https://www.sportity.com/>.

Athletes are free to operate independently. The Olympic Committee can offer advice and guidance. The Estonian Gerd Kanter is elected as chair of the European Athletes Commission.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

There is no direct dedicated budget as such, but the government does support Estonian representation in international bodies and the hosting of events.

Different types of sport diplomacy activities implemented can be mentioned: for example, there are Baltic initiatives such as a Baltic Tour cycling race which is a professional Cycling race dating back to 1955. The race was re-established as the Baltic Chain Tour in 2011. The name Baltic Chain Tour clearly relates to the Baltic Chain which was established in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1989 as a peaceful protest to the occupation.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities implemented in collaboration with less developed countries, some examples can be given: the recent Youth Olympic Festival in Finland in March 2022, where support for Ukrainian participants was established, or the fact that the former vice president and president of the Estonian Olympic Committee Jüri Tamm worked as Chief of Staff on the Ukraine National Olympic Committee from 2012 to 2015.

No sport diplomacy activities in order to empower sport diplomacy actors are developed. However, a special programme for IOC sports leaders does exist.

The most important sport diplomacy activity could be the *Joint Statement by Sports Ministers: respect for human rights and peaceful relations are the foundation of international sport*, which includes the Estonian Minister and was announced on the Ministry website on 9th March 2022. Moreover, hosting events and competitions are also noted as important activities.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

There is no long-term plan or coordinating policy and there are no long-term dedicated resources.

Generally, there is a lack of prioritisation, in respect of sport diplomacy specifically, but also the area of sport overall. From a government perspective, levels of physical activity are still the main goal.

Considering the EU perspective, Estonia is of the opinion that a common Sport Diplomacy policy would be rather ambitious. The sports systems in the European countries are quite different and

therefore, a common policy is expected to be difficult. Defining principles and recommendations may be more appropriate.

From the Estonian perspective, an EU sport diplomacy policy with coordinated actions by Sports Ministries could be a political instrument in the future. It is also important that the last 15 years of Estonian-European collaboration indicate a success – but the voice could be louder.

To Estonia, several lines of thinking could be relevant. For example, the promotion of physical activity initiatives would be appreciated, or a guideline and green book for hosting events, which would be valuable for smaller countries.

More generally, basic EU values can be used as a common platform on which to act.

6. INTERVIEWS

- Margus Klaan, Head of Department, Sports Department, Estonian Ministry of Culture;
- Peeter Lusmägi, Head of Sport for All, The Estonian Olympic Committee, www.eok.ee.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- National Sport Register: <https://www.spordiregister.ee/en/main>
- Sports Ministers Joint Statement: <https://kul.ee/en/news/joint-statement-sports-ministers-worldwide-respect-human-rights-and-peaceful-relations-are>
- App for sports event organisers developed by Estonians: <https://www.sportity.com/>
- Platform for employees and employers developed by Estonians: <https://stebby.eu/>



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del SACRO CUORE



Universidad
Carlos III
de Madrid



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union