

NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Finland

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT:

Hannu Tolonen (Senior Specialist, Ministry of Education and Culture, Sports Division), Saska Benedicic Tomat (ISCA), Terhi Liintola (Finnish national agency for education)



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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

In the central government, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for creating favourable conditions for sports and physical activity as well as for the coordination and development of sport policy. The work is done in cooperation with various different sectors.

Sport policy is designed to promote sport and physical activity and, through them, the wellbeing of the population, as well as competitive and performance sports and related civic activity.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for creating favourable conditions for sports and physical activity as well as for coordinating and developing sport policy. Governance in this sector is based on the principle of knowledge-based management and impact assessment.

The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasises the importance of sport and physical activity for people's health and wellbeing as well as the role that sport and physical activity play in strengthening civil society and inclusion. The Ministry supports ethically sustainable elite sports that aim to achieve international success.

The sport policy objectives are specified in the **Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity** and key policies for development are adopted in the **Government Programme¹** and in various other programmes.

The report on sport policy² outlines sport policy in Finland for the 2020s. The report covers policies on ways to increase physical activity at different stages of life, the construction of sports facilities, civic activity in physical activity and elite sports. The aim is to significantly increase people's physical activity.

The issue of people's low physical activity is identified government-wide, and all administrative branches are involved in resolving it.

The body responsible for coordinating the sport policy (LIPOKO)³ of the Government and organisations promoting physical activity aims to find solutions to reduce sedentary lifestyles. Previous work by the broad horizontal steering group for health-enhancing physical activity as well as the ministries' scorecards on physical activity and mobility prepared by the National Sports Council are key guiding principles for the work.

The Ministry of Education and Culture participates in various international organisations in sport-related cooperation between different countries, as well as in the preparation of sport-related matters in the European Union. Finland's most important cooperation organisations are the European Union, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

In recent years, the focus in cooperative efforts has been on areas such as strengthening of integrity in sports; the prerequisites of civic activity; legislative and administrative development; promotion of equal rights; anti-doping activities; prevention of spectator violence; and issues related to the status of athletes.

Finland has ratified the following international conventions: European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events, European Anti-Doping Convention, UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport, and Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions. Cooperation in the resolution of ethical problems is monitored by the Ministry of Education and Culture's advisory board for sport-related ethical matters.

¹<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/marinin-hallitus/hallitusohjelma>

²https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/JulkaisuMetatieto/Documents/VNS_6+2018.pdf

³<https://okm.fi/hanke?tunnus=OKM030:00/2020>

Finland's positions on EU sport-related matters are prepared in the EU32 sub-committee under the Committee for EU Affairs in the government. Sport organisations are also represented in the EU32 sub-committee: the Finnish Olympic Committee and the Finnish Centre for Integrity in Sports (FINCIS). This is a non-profit organisation which deals with sport ethics in Finland and cooperates with international parties. FINCIS was established in 2016 to continue the anti-doping activities of its predecessor. Ethical issues have become increasingly important. The Ministry of Education and Culture has launched extensive studies concerning the administration of the new sports conventions in practice. The task of FINCIS is to reinforce an ethically sustainable sports culture in cooperation with other parties. FINCIS is responsible for implementing international treaties on anti-doping activities, manipulation of sports competitions and spectator comfort and safety in Finland. FINCIS is responsible for the practical implementation in Finland of the Council of Europe's Anti-Doping Convention, the UNESCO International Convention Against Doping in Sport, the Council of Europe's Convention on Spectator Violence, and the Council of Europe's Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is a Unit for Public Diplomacy⁴, which plans and directs the nation-branding work of the Foreign Service and is responsible for producing and implementing the content of nation-branding work in cooperation with stakeholders. The unit serves as the Secretariat of the Finland Promotion Board, which directs nation-branding work and is responsible for its coordination at the national level. The main duties of the Unit for Public Diplomacy are:

- planning, directing and implementing public diplomacy and nation-branding work in the Foreign Service
- producing content and services for nation-branding work and nation-branding communications for the Ministry and its missions abroad
- national coordination of nation-branding as the Secretariat of the Finland Promotion Board
- providing expert services within the Finland Promotion Board, including coordination and production of international web communications supporting nation branding

Sports organisations: <https://okm.fi/en/sports-organisations>

- Sport and physical activity organisations in Finland have over 1.1 million members. The Ministry of Education and Culture allocates government grants to national organisations that promote sport and physical activity, while municipalities grant financial support to local sports clubs and actors.

Sports institutes: <https://okm.fi/en/sports-institutes>

- Finland has eleven national and three regional sports training centres, i.e. sports institutes (colleges of physical education). The Ministry of Education and Culture provides support for the operation of these institutes.

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

There is no formalised national sport diplomacy strategy in Finland, but there are many activities that follow "Sport Diplomacy" principles (that are not in place).

Sport diplomacy strategy is not officially integrated with wider government action. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for creating favourable conditions for sports and physical

⁴<https://um.fi/unit-for-public-diplomacy>

activity as well as for coordinating and developing sport policy. **Governance** in this sector is based on the principle of knowledge-based management and impact assessment. The Ministry issues guidelines on Good Governance to the sports sector and, by following the guidelines, it can also be successful in the field of Sport Diplomacy. Sport diplomacy is not mentioned in the guidelines, but the guidelines do mention key sport diplomacy principles like “representation, negotiation, dialogue and communication.”

There are no officially defined objectives of sport diplomacy in Finland, but they usually follow programme guidelines like:

- E+ programme
- Action plans of Sport Federations and the OC
- Top priorities in international work are strengthening equality, human rights, good governance and sustainable development in international sports and sports organisations and IFs in which Finland has positions
- ENGSO, that has had a strong influence in Finland (European Sports NGO and the leading voice for voluntary-based grassroots sport in Europe)
- Events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, World Cups/Championships and sport events at a lower level

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

There is no official governance or coordination among sport diplomacy actors in Finland. However, in Finland, there are links between diplomacy and business.

There is no official governance or coordination among sport diplomacy actors in Finland, and no official guidelines for the engagement of official diplomats in sport. However, a few actors (individuals and organisations) can be mentioned as active sport diplomats:

- ENGSO (Ms. Birgitta Kervinen)
- (I)OC (Ms. Emma Terho, Ms. Sari Essayah)
- Chairpersons of all the Sport Federations (the most active is probably the Ice Hockey Federation)
- Local sport clubs have a strong diplomatic influence in local communities as well as on the development of a national sports policy.

Regarding city authorities and local institutions/politicians in sport diplomacy actions, the experts note a strong role of local communities (authorities, politicians) in sport diplomacy with a few key principles:

- Building dialogue in a local community between different actors (clubs, schools, churches, municipalities, etc.)
- Integration through sport (very visible at the moment in the field of integrating refugees into local society)
- Sporting events with international participation (and dialogue)
- Multi-sector networks (some also based on Erasmus+ or other EU projects)

The roles of the country's sports bodies in sport diplomacy actions are diverse. For example, sport federations are traditionally very active in sport diplomacy, but it is really up to the individual federation (or even person) to act in the field of sport diplomacy.

The Olympic Committee, together with its member organisations, set targets for the parliamentary and municipal elections to be held for each candidate.

They use the power of international collaboration to foster peace, dialogue and mutual understanding and create an environment for building bridges between countries/communities through sport.

The Finnish Media focus very much on top elite sport rather than grassroots sport and there is a clear lack of media coverage of sport diplomacy.

It is important to note that the private sector does not seem to be involved in sport diplomacy.

Athletes seem to be the new actors in sport diplomacy where experts note more and more activities. They recognise their role in representing Finland abroad; they also empower communication and dialogue with other athletes from other countries and engage in dialogue with politicians when invited.

It is also important to highlight the role of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Sports Division) in :

- fostering the appeal of nation branding and global reputation, through sport events (organised in Finland or attended abroad);
- strengthening diplomatic relations, by involving politicians and athletes in Sport Diplomacy;
- guiding sports organisations (federations) towards sport for peace, development and good governance.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Finland does not have public economic resources available strictly for sport diplomacy. Funding is provided to the Sport Federations and allows them to use it for sport diplomacy. It is up to the federation to decide how they use the financial resources.

Sports organisations (local and national) are very much involved in Erasmus+ projects. There is a strong belief that this is a very helpful resource for building a stronger society in the field of sport as well as Sport Diplomacy.

Different types of sport diplomacy are implemented in Finland: organisation of sports events (local and national), and the integration of refugees through sport has increasingly meaningful value and more and more activities. Here, we are talking about: International participation and intercultural dialogue.

Finland is currently working on guidelines on how local sports clubs can work with Ukrainian refugees. Once these guidelines are published and implemented, a strategy could be designed.

Regarding sport diplomacy activities implemented in collaboration with less developed countries, a few examples can be given.

LiiKe - Sports & Development is a non-governmental organisation whose vision is to create a sustainable and wellbeing world through physical education and health education, taking into account four different dimensions of wellbeing: mental, physical, economic and ecological. LiiKe operates globally in Finland and in developing countries, where its operations target the most vulnerable people in society: women, children and young people. In schools and local

communities, exercise and health education serve as tools for equality work, education and development.

The Friends of Sports project was launched in 2003, and Finnish sports federations have since supported their own sponsorship schools in Tanzania in the provinces of Mtwara and Lindi.

The most important sport diplomacy activities in the country are monitoring good governance of sports organisations and giving them clear guidelines on GG in Sport.

This will help organisations to develop (and improve) good governance and at the same time sport diplomacy; and to learn better communication, dialogue and negotiation but also to empower dialogue between sports federations.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The major weaknesses of sport diplomacy activities in Finland are that the sport movement is still very much a closed circle. There is a strong historical background in sport, which has an inflexible decision-making process and does not allow "newcomers" or young people to be part of the process (or the sport federation boards).

The greatest challenges of sport diplomacy activities in Finland are filling the gaps in knowledge of sport diplomacy and what sport diplomacy can do for society (not just in sport) and addressing the lack of a national strategy on sport diplomacy.

Nevertheless, a few opportunities could be exploited. It could be relevant to include sport diplomacy as a topic in the education programmes in schools, mostly in the Faculty of Sport.

It could be also interesting to recognise and promote (Grassroots) Sport Diplomacy as a useful tool for bringing people together from different cultures, origins and philosophical convictions, and for promoting peaceful dialogue, cooperation and understanding amongst them.

Setting up a national strategy on sport diplomacy, or at least initially a set of practices, methods and activities built on common elements of cultural diplomacy and sport diplomacy, could be relevant. This would not only be about promoting the interests of a state but transferring knowledge and values and learning from each other.

It could also be a good idea to provide resources and guidelines to sports organisations to support them in developing sport diplomacy and intercultural dialogue between stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels.

According to the Finnish experts and literature, the common sport diplomacy in Europe does not seem clearly defined. To them, the EU does not need a common sport diplomacy policy, but more key principles that can guide in the development of a national and local strategy.

Nevertheless, they would support more E+ projects where different actors can raise their voice and contribute to the principles.

From the Finnish perspective, few principles could guide the development of an EU Sport Diplomacy policy:

- Educate young people in intercultural dialogue and decision-making processes.
- Build a curriculum at the Faculty of Sport with Sport Diplomacy (and social development goals).

- Do not concentrate solely on elite sport but make more resources available for development of sport diplomacy in local communities and local sport clubs – this is where the real sport society is built and where sport is much more than business.
- Start local and act global – start with small steps on a local level and build long-lasting intercultural dialogue by bringing different nations together (international participation).

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