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Developing Estonian elite sport system –

Team Estonia

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Abstract

In 21st century elite sport has become more and more important for most countries. Competition in international sport has risen insanely and medals, especially Olympic medals, have become very valuable. This has created a need to develop strategically well functioning sport systems, largely funded by the governments.

In Estonia, 2019 was breakthrough in elite sport, when modern elite sport system “Team Estonia” was established. The aim was/is to keep up with the world in developing elite sport, significantly increase elite sport funding by the government and also to win more medals from Olympic Games.

As Team Estonia is very young and still in the phase of development, the aim of this project is to collect data from sport systems development and other countries sport systems to help to work out the best solution for Estonian elite sport.

Keywords: elite sport, elite sport system, elite sport development, managing elite sport, athletes.

Résumé

Au cours du 21^{ème} siècle, le sport de haut niveau a pris une importance croissante pour beaucoup de pays. La compétition dans le sport international s’est accrue de façon extrême et les médailles, en particulier les médailles Olympiques, ont pris une valeur importante. Il en est résulté la nécessité de développer des stratégies de systèmes sportifs fonctionnels, largement financés par les gouvernements.

2019 a été une année de saut qualitatif en Estonie, lorsque fut créé un système moderne de sport d’élite appelé « Team Estonia ». L’objectif était / est de rester concurrentiel dans le développement du sport d’élite, par un accroissement significatif de son financement par le gouvernement et du nombre de médailles aux Jeux Olympiques.

Considérant que Team Estonia est jeune et encore en phase de développement, l’objectif de ce projet est de récolter des données à propos du développement des systèmes sportifs dans d’autres pays afin de privilégier la meilleure solution pour le sport d’élite en Estonie.

Mots clés : sport d’élite, système de sport d’élite, développement du sport d’élite, gestion du sport d’élite, athlètes.

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Introduction

In situation, where Estonia had won only 6 medals from Olympics since 2008, before Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and Peking Olympics in 2022, we needed to make changes in our elite sport system.

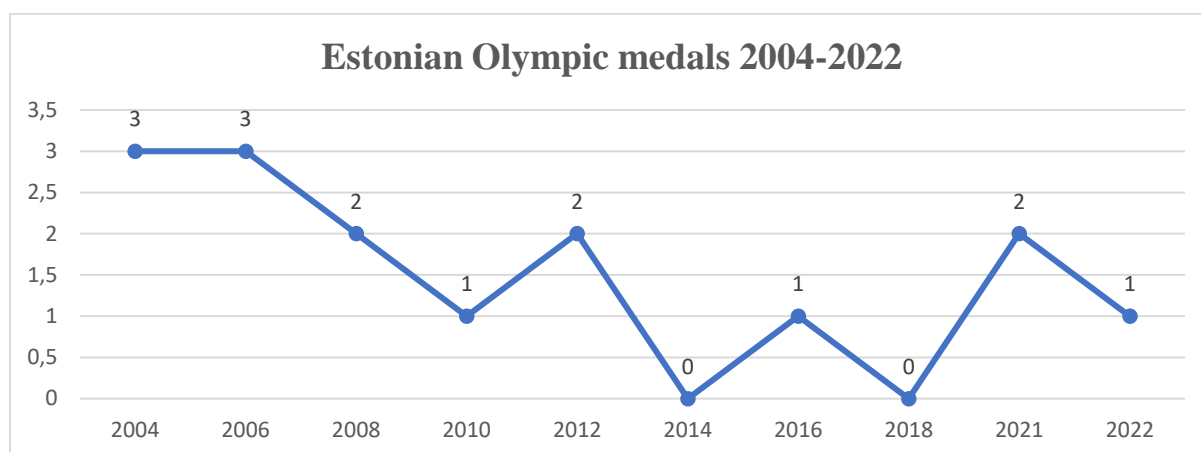


Figure 1 – Olympic medals won by Estonian athletes in 2004-2022.

In the beginning of year 2019, Estonian elite sport system Team Estonia was established. The purpose of the system is to support Estonian current and future elite athletes to perform successfully in international competitions, especially in the Olympic Games. Team Estonia is complementary to current support system of Estonian elite athletes. The aim is to build a complete supportive structure which enables selected elite athletes access to comprehensive sports related services. Additionally the main target is emphasizing importance of the coaches and enabling them to attend the training camps and competitions together with the athletes. In addition to individual sports Team Estonia involves also some team sports and partly fields of sport currently not included in the Olympic Games programme. As the Team Estonia is targeted to hundreds of athletes, then the Estonian sports federations are also involved as the distribution channels of financing. Majority of the system is expected to be financed through Estonian public budget.

Team Estonia development is highly dependent on the funds from government. Considering that Team Estonia has been funded already 3-4 years from public budget by now, the project is still in the planning phase.

The aim of the research

The aim of this project is to help to work out the best optimal solution for Team Estonia by learning from the modern elite sport systems, by other experience and by taking into account the available current funding and funding, which might be available in the future.

Key questions of this project are the following:

1. Which is the most effective and efficient elite sport system for Estonia?
2. What should be Estonian priorities developing elite sport?
3. How much Estonia should invest to elite sport system?

Persons also involved in this project are:

1. Erich Teigamägi – Vice President of Estonian Olympic Committee (responsible of elite sport)
2. Siim Sukles – Secretary General of Estonian Olympic Committee
3. Martti Raju – Sports Director of Estonian Olympic Committee
4. Tarvi Pürn – Sports Chancellor in Ministry of Culture
5. Estonian elite athlete and Olympic medalist Allar Raja, who is also a member of Athlete's Commission in Estonian Olympic Committee

My personal motivation

Working currently as coordinator of Team Estonia and sports federations and as elite sport manager, the project would give a great opportunity to tie the research with my daily work in Estonian Olympic Committee. As a result it would enable me to share my learnings with all the included parties to consult and guide about developing Estonian elite sport system in the future. Being an professional athlete in younger ages and quite strong hobby athlete nowadays, gives me extra motivation to help to develop Team Estonia and the idea to create the best possible system for Estonian elite athletes to perform their best.

Part 1

Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1 – The literature review

Key words of my research:

1. Elite sport
2. Elite sport system
3. Elite sport development
4. Managing elite sport
5. Athletes

1.1 Why we need elite sport systems?

Competition in international sport is increasing and more nations are adopting strategic approaches to develop world class athletes. Overtime, this phenomenon has resulted in increasing amounts of money being invested in elite sport development by many nations (De Bosscher et al. 2010). Given this scope of investment, the question of how national elite sport systems are most effective in developing top-level performances has become central (Barker-Ruchti et al. 2016). Increasing global competitions for sporting success is encouraging nations to adopt strategic elite sport policies. The net result of this is a seemingly homogenous elite sports development system which is ostensibly based around a near uniform model of elite sports development subtle local variations (De Bosscher et al. 2016).

Elite sport investment is usually justified on the basis that individual and team successes in major competitions have wider social benefits in terms of a “feel good factor” and by encouraging participation rates in sports and physical activities in the population at large. This relationship, coupled with claims relating to wider socio-economic benefits of sport more generally is a large part of the argument for government funding of elite sports and elite sporting competitions such as the Olympics (Grix & Carmichael, 2012; Liston, Gregg & Lowther, 2012).

Medals nurture national identity and pride, increase a sense of togetherness and well being. Heroes and role models are created, who infulent people and also help to achieve the desired social goals in other areas.

1.2 Elite sport systems development

While few would deny that the production of elite athletes has become increasingly systematic, there is far less clarity regarding the characteristics of effective elite sport systems. This is in part the results of the vagueness of the concept of an elite sport system, but also a legacy of the amateur ethos and the reluctance to see sporting talent as anything more than the demonstration of natural untutored ability. In the recent history of sport two factors hastened the rise of elite development systems. First, the model of athlete development introduced by the Soviet Union and refined by the East Germans, and second, the gradual acceptance of professionalism in the Olympic movement in the 1970s and 1980s. The initial impact of professionalism at the Olympics was more evident in the commercialization of sport through sponsorship, while the impact of the communist approach to athlete development was more substantial (Andersen, Houlihan & Ronglan, 2015).

Over the last twenty years, there has been a sharp increase in interest from national sport federations and governments in the promotion of effective elite sport development systems, particularly focused on achieving success in the summer and winter Olympic Games. Many countries now have in place publicly funded elite sport policies which provide specialized facilities and support staff and often provide direct financial support for athletes. These developments in federations and governments have stimulated academic interest in describing the elite sport systems, analyzing the processes by which the policy was established and evaluating the impact of these policies on elite athlete success and on other elements of the sport field. Far less attention has been placed on the operation of the elite sport systems and on how these systems interface with the athletes (Andersen, Houlihan & Ronglan, 2015).

Also De Bosscher et al. (2007) mention that achieving international and especially Olympic sporting success has become increasingly important to a growing number of countries. Both politicians and the media count medals as a measure for international success. As a result, governments have become more willing to intervene directly in elite sport development by making considerable financial investments, thus leading to the increasing institutionalisation of elite sport systems. The keynote idea from this “global sporting arms race” is that elite sporting success can be produced by investing strategically in elite sport. From this power struggle emerged and interest in elite sport systems and the desire to explain (mainly) Olympic successes.

For the same reason, to increase the success of Estonian athletes in Olympic Games, Estonian Olympic Committee started a discussion in sports congress in 2018 about to establish elite sport system in Estonia. It is remarkable that the sports congress took place in november 15th 2018, after what proposal to establish elite sport system Team Estonia was made to the board of the Estonian Olympic Committee, who immediately made the decision to establish it from 2019.

1.3 Different systems

Mainly elite sport systems are state-led or very dependent on the government.

For instance, France has a state dominated system, but that system is increasingly dependent upon cooperation with more autonomous regional and local public and private organizations (Andersen, Houlihan & Ronglan, 2015).

The elite sport systems in the UK, Australia and New Zealand are state-led, but in close partnership with national sport federations, universities and sport institutes (Andersen, Houlihan & Ronglan, 2015).

In Norway international elite sport success is prioritized systematically in government sport policy and purused by national sport stakeholders (Skille et al. 2020).

But also there are countries who have establish specific elite sport systems funded by the government. For instance Denmark – Team Denmark, Belgium – Team Belgium, Estonia – Team Estonia etc.

1.4 SPLISS 2.0

Key questions from SPLISS 2.0 project:

- 1. How much do countries invest in elite sport?**
- 2. How can policy makers influence the success of their athletes?**
- 3. What makes an elite sport policy effective and efficient?**
- 4. How do nations prioritize their elite sport investments?**

An international comparison in 15 nations through nine pillars about high performance sport policy helps to answer some of the key questions about the development of successful national elite sport development systems.

No blueprint for success. High performance sport is a highly specialised and dynamic environment that does not lend itself well to standard (blueprinted) bureaucracy that can be

replicated across national governmental systems, or across different sports. Accordingly, the key challenge for nations remains to find the right blend of system ingredients and processes that work best in their own context and culture, encouraging them to “benchlearn”, from rivals rather than merely benchmarking against them.

Funding does not guarantee success. Whilst “money in equals medals out” it does not follow that “more money in equals more medals out”. As a matter of fact in the case of most nations, more money was required to invest in the system, just to maintain a consistent level of success.

More efficiently organized countries perform better, efficient nations do more with less money and they have an integrated approach to policy development. The countries that win more medals given the resources at their disposal can be described as “efficient” countries (such as Australia, France, the Netherlands and Japan for summer sports). Interestingly these countries (apart from France) also have the best scores on the organisation, structure and governance of elite sport. It can be argued that these countries have the most integrated approach to elite sport development. What these countries have in common is a strong national coordination of activities, with a clear decision making structure, strong involvement of athletes and coaches in the policy making process, full-time management staff in the national sport association, a high level of service oriented policy towards their National Governing Bodies/federations/national Sport organisations, but with accountability principles, long-term policy planning and political recognition.

Chapter 2

Validation of the research question(s)

and

Methodology

2.1 Validated questions

The review of literature has given an overview of:

1. Which kind of different elite sports models different countries are using;
2. Government support in different countries;
3. Is There a One-Size-Fits-All Model to Develop International Sporting Success? (De Bosscher et al. 2016).

Based on a review of the literature, we consider the guiding questions of this report to be valid.

As a result the main question is the following:

Which is the best model or solution for developing Estonian elite sports system Team Estonia?

2.2 Methodology

The methodology for this project consist of collecting data through both, qualitative and quantitive methods. The collected data should be precise and well measured, but could be less tangible. Group to cover should be rather small, but detailed in-depth information collection should be used.

The main data collection methods that are used for this projects are interviews, benchmarking and case studies.

2.3 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a way of discovering what is the best performance being achieved. Benchmarking allows understanding best practice and provides a possible solution. Information can then be used to identify gaps in an organization's processes to achieve a competitive advantage.

For this project, benchmarking is a good opportunity to learn from other countries elite sport systems, but it's important to remember that what works for one might not work for others.

2.4 The case studies

A case study is a research methodology that can be described as an intensive and systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community, or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables.

A case study provides an overview of other elite sport models and helps to prevent some mistakes which may arise. For this project many well-working elite sport models from different countries were selected.

2.5 In-depth interviews

Interviews are useful to obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions and opinions. Interviews allow more detailed questions to be asked.

As perspective view is needed for this project, in-depth information collection is the best way to get much more detailed information.

For this project, in-depth interviews of people who play an important role in the development of Estonian elite sports will be conducted. Besides them, one of Olympic medalist, who is a big role model in Estonia, is also involved:

1. Erich Teigamägi – Vice President of Estonian Olympic Committee (responsible of elite sport)
2. Siim Sukles – Secretary General of Estonian Olympic Committee
3. Martti Raju – Sports Director of Estonian Olympic Committee
4. Tarvi Pürn – Sports Chancellor in Ministry of Culture
5. Estonian elite athlete and Olympic medalist Allar Raja, who is also a member of Athlete's Commission in Estonian Olympic Committee

All persons will be informed of the purpose of the interview.

The main topics which should be covered for perspective view are the following:

- Team Estonia as Estonian elite sports system development so far (especially from athlete's point of view)
- The impact of the sports areas that has been developed so far – is it enough?

- Priority sports areas in Team Estonia development
- Recommendations for the future

2.6 Group questionnaire

The group questionnaire is a recently developed survey that assesses the quality of the therapeutic relationship in group treatment. An anonymous questionnaire is a research technique, which involves collecting data by filling the questionnaire.

The questionnaire used in this project was organised by Athlete's Commission of Estonian Olympic Committee electronically in period 18th of January to 21st of March 2022. The survey was conducted among Team Estonia athletes.

The questionnaire was satisfaction survey and was conducted with a purpose to give input to sports federations and also to Estonian Olympic Committee to improve athletes conditions.

2.7 Data collection limitations

In this project, there can be following data collection issues:

- Information may be inapplicable
- Could be an incomplete data collection method because the researcher has less control over the results
- Some documents may be not publicly available

All these limitations could affect data collection and make it more time-consuming.

Part 2

Research

and recommendations

Chapter 3 – Research results

Which is a government rationale for investing in elite sport? Why should government invest in high performance sport?

Achieving international and especially Olympic sporting success has become increasingly important to a growing number of countries. Both politicians and the media count medals as a measure for international success. As a result, governments have become more willing to intervene directly in elite sport development by making considerable financial investments, thus leading to the increasing institutionalisation of elite sport systems. The keynote idea from this “global sporting arms race” is that elite sporting success can be produced by investing strategically in elite sport. In particular, the question of why some nations succeed and others fail in international competition has been raised (De Bosscher et al. 2007).

As the homogenizing global sporting arms race makes nations strive to position their sports at international rankings, international elite sport success is prioritized systematically in government sport policy and pursued by national sport stakeholders (Skille et al. 2020).

A theoretical issue appears because it is still unclear to what extent elite sport policies can influence the success of nations at major international competitions. There are a range of studies, which show that macro-level factors – of which population and wealth are identified as the most important – “explain” more than 50% of international sporting success (De Bosscher et al. 2007).

Governmental authorities across the globe spend large sums of money to compete against other countries to achieve superior sport performances. There is a lack of literature and data to explain how nations can sustain their competitive position amidst increasing competition and how the efficiency and effectiveness of their elite sport investments can be enhanced (De Bosscher et al. 2007).

De Bosscher et al. 2007 are bringing out that athletes and coaches are the key stakeholders responsible for delivering their nation’s success.

On the other hand, Grix & Carmichael (2012) have pointed out, that the majority of (western) advanced elite sports development systems appear to be based on the premise of what we term a “virtuous cycle of sport”. This cycle, as an elite policy discourse, has a convincing logic of circularity to it that appears commonsensical. It is such that competing in the global “sporting arms race” appears to be an unquestionable “given”. The virtuous cycle of sport touches and

builds upon similar phenomena as the “double pyramid theory”, which states that “thousands of people practising sport at the base lead to a few Olympic champions and, at the same time the existence of champion role models encourages thousands of people to take up some form of sport”. The notion of a virtuous cycle of sport takes this further, first by presenting the relationship between elite and mass sport as self-reinforcing and circular (see Figure 1). Thus, the virtuous cycle of sport holds that elite success on the international stage leads to prestige and elite sport contributes to a collective sense of identity; this, then, boosts a greater mass sport participation, leading to a healthier populace; this, in turn, provides a bigger “pool” of talent from which to choose the elite stars of the future and which ensure elite success. The process then starts over again. If we understand elite policy discourse as a virtuous cycle of sport, it helps explain governments over-emphasis on the ability of elite sport success to effect so much change (domestically and internationally).

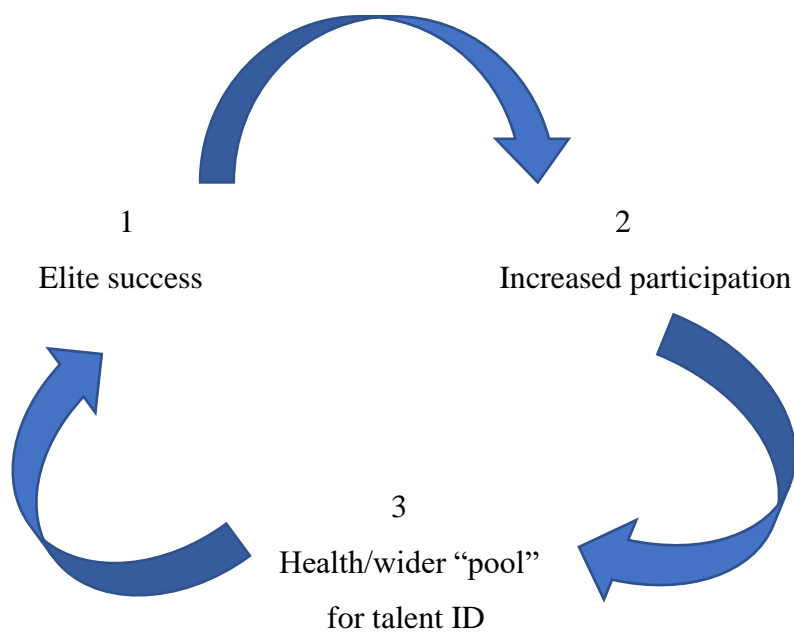


Figure 2 – The “virtuous cycle” of sport (Grix & Carmichael, 2012).

One of the main goal of Estonian elite sports system Team Estonia is also what Grix & Carmichael (2012) brought out:

“Positive evaluation of elite sport in society by publishing wider positive effects on sports and physical activity.”

According to Estonian elite sport system Team Estonia, one of the main questions using different case studies is the following:

Will it be aim to find a best model for Estonia according to currently working models?















3.1 Benchmarking

De Bosscher et al. 2007 are comparing elite sport systems and policies in six countries – Belgium, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and United Kingdom. The selection of these nations was initially based on:

1. The sport performances – to include good, medium and poorly achieving nations with the aim of observing the difference in policy;
2. The country's socio-economic nature – western industrialised countries;
3. A broadly comparable cultural background.

The aim is to explore the relationship between elite sport policy systems and success in international competitions. The study has sought to operationalise nine pillars, or key drivers in elite sport systems, into measurable concepts, which can be aggregated into an overall score for each pillar.

There are particularly two ways in which this research method may be distinguished from the previous studies. Firstly, since the ultimate goal of the study was to increase knowledge of the relationship between meso-level factors and international success, we sought to operationalise the nine pillars into measurable concepts, which could in turn be aggregated into an overall score for each pillar. Secondly, this study also involved the main stakeholders in elite sport, namely athletes, coaches and performance directors, with regard to the measurement of these concepts. The section discusses how the key success factors in sports policies have been used to measure the competitive position in nine pillars in the six sample nations. It will provide an overview of the critical success factors, which have been consolidated from the theoretical model described above and were compared in the six sample nations.

	ITA	UK	NED	CAN	NOR	FLA	WAL
1(a) Financial support for elite sport							
1(b) Financial support for national sport organisations							

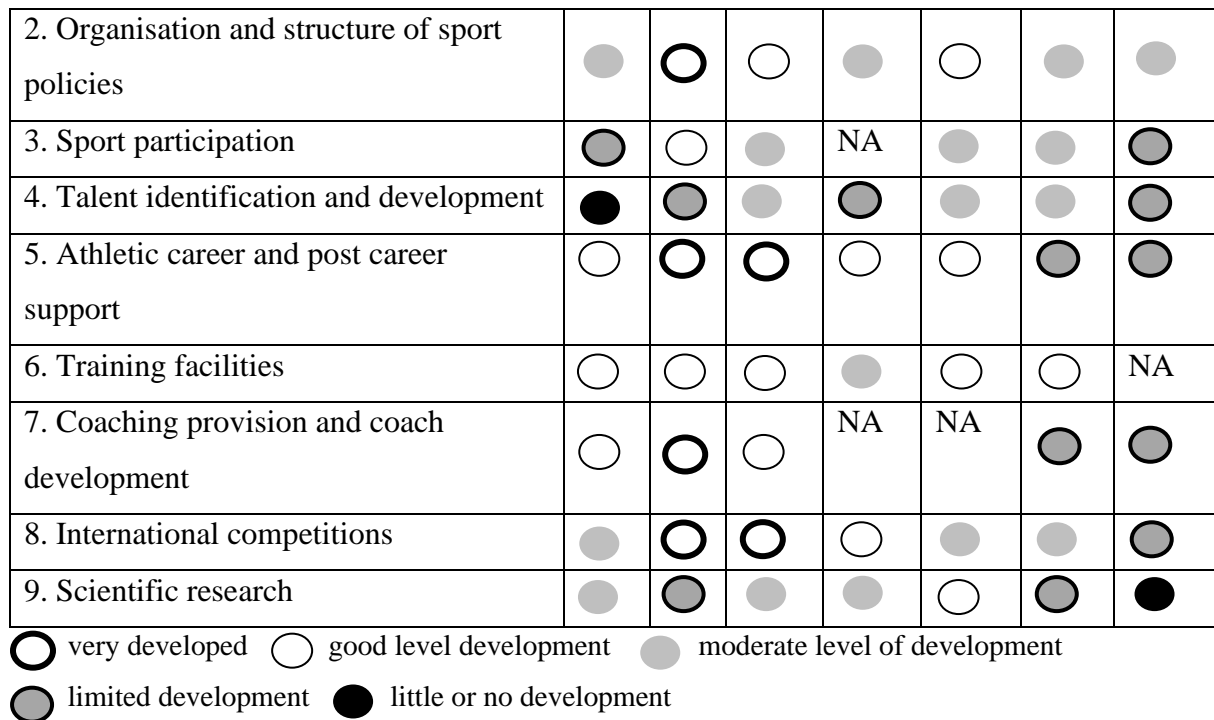


Figure 3 – An illustration of 9 pillars relate to six sample countries (De Bosscher et al. 2007).

According to figure 2 as the results and on the one hand, from a policy viewpoint, the study revealed that the countries with the highest absolute expenditures on elite sport and providing the highest elite sport funding for national sport organisations (pillar 1) were also the most successful ones in Olympic Summer Games. It could, therefore, be argued that a minimum absolute level of expenditure is required in order to increase the medal winning capabilities of athletes. On the other hand, the study contends that successful countries in international elite sport incorporate more of the key success factors than the unsuccessful countries, which indicates the probability that elite sport success is increasingly the result of investing in a blend of pillars. Moreover, Flanders and Wallonia were perceived to have the least developed elite sport policies and, interestingly also perform below expectations in international competitions. Mainly four pillars (pillars 1, 5, 6 and partly 7) were identified as key areas in which the three most successful nations from the sample of summer sports (Italy, UK and the Netherlands) have invested most.

According to De Bosscher et al. (2007) and developing Team Estonia, it seems to be very important to keep financial support for elite sport, financial support for national sport organisations and organisation and structure of sport policies in high level (pillars 1(a), 1(b) and 2 for Italy, United Kingdom and Netherlands, who are also very successful in Olympic Games). Beside that, according to example of those same three countries, it's very important

to offer good training facilities (pillar 6) for the athletes and keep coaching provision and coach development (pillar 7) in high level.

3.2 Case studies

For case studies, we decided to use the examples of three most relevant countries to Estonia according to size or population of countries or the structure of sport system in countries. Those three countries are Denmark, Finland and Iceland. Besides that there is also fourth example United Kingdom, which is a great example about “sporting arms race” and “the more money invested, the more medals wins”. United Kingdom increased their funding to sports a lot before Olympics in London 2012 and it was worth it.

3.2.1 Denmark – Team Denmark (according to Team Denmark presentation 18th of June 2018)

The case study of Denmark is probably the best example to compare with Estonia with a purpose of developing Team Estonia.

The size of Denmark is approximately same as Estonia, but population is much bigger – 5.8 million (2020) compared to Estonia 1.3 million (2020). Besides that Denmark is economically much more developed with GDP/capita 66.904 \$ (2021) compared to Estonia 44.778 \$ (2022).

Team Denmark structure and idea is very similar to Team Estonia. When Team Estonia was established, Team Denmark was one of the most reliable system, which also gave a good push to Team Estonia.

According to Team Denmark 18th of June 2018 presentation, there are many similar aspects to Team Estonia:

1. Team Denmark’s primary mission is to develop Danish elite sport in a societally appropriate manner with act on elite sport;
2. Team Denmark is also mainly funded by public sector. 15 million euro of total budget of 19 million euro (it means approximately 80%) coming from public sector (national lottery/ministry). In Estonia 100% of Team Estonia budget is coming from public sector (Ministry of Culture);
3. The percent from overall Team Denmark budget of direct support to sports federations is quite high (12.5 million euro from 20 million euro – ~ 63%). In Team Estonia it’s ~ 67% (2 million euro from 3 million euro).

Team Denmark provides the same integrated expert services as Team Estonia although the overall cost of those services is 4 million euro per year compared to approximately 1 million euros per year in Team Estonia:

- a. Sports medicine
- b. Sports psychology
- c. Sports physiology
- d. Physical training
- e. Sports nutrition
- f. Performance analysis

3.2.2 Finland (according to presentation of Elite Sport in Finland 5th of September 2018)

Similar to Estonia in Finland elite sport is also mainly funded by public sector and through Finnish Olympic Committee. Although in Finland there is created (2013) High Performance Unit (HPU) for that. HPU is an independent unit in the Finnish Olympic Committee and who leads and coordinates elite sport network.

Before Tokyo Olympic chapter, Finland also realised that they need some changes. Based on Finnish Elite Sport Evaluation Report (December 2016) they realised that Finnish Elite Sports network needs better agreement and clarification in support system for athletes, coaches and sports federations in 2017-2020 towards Tokyo Olympics.

Finnish performance targets in 2017-2020 are also medal winning based with 10 Olympic medals from Tokyo Olympics 2020. Similar to Estonia the mode of operation in Finnish elite sports is athlete-centered.

Key factors of Finnish elite sport:

1. Optimised processes for top athletes – coaching and training environments which are internationally competitive;
2. The development of expertise is in all sectors;
3. The development of leadership, co-operation and respect.

Key indicators of Finnish elite sport:

1. Number of athletes and teams with international top 8 potential;
2. Number of players in international top leagues;

3. Number of professional coaches;
4. Quality of training processes of the best athletes and coaches;
5. Quality of know-how of the key players in elite sports network;
6. Development of coaching systems in sports federations;
7. Development of Sports Academies and High Performance Centers;
8. Image of elite sports in Finland.

3.2.3 Iceland (according to presentation of The National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland. Visit from Estonia 6th of September 2018)

Similar to Estonia also in Iceland elite sport is funded by government through NOC elite fund. Iceland NOC elite fund has significantly increased after 2016, being 100% higher in 2017, 200% higher in 2018 and 300% higher in 2019.

In Iceland funding of elite sport and elite athletes is organised through sports federations by grouping them into 4 groups (A/Elite, B/International, C/Development and Other).

Development priorities are also set according to grouping, but the most important development priorities are quite the same as in Estonia:

- Medical support;
- World Championships and European Championships participation, also other international competitions;
- Facilities;
- Financial environment;
- Sports director or national coach;
- Talent development.

3.2.4 United Kingdom - Elite sport investment in United Kingdom

Funding for elite sport in United Kingdom rose exponentially after Labour's inception to office in 1997 and it set to continue up to the 2012 Olympics. In the 4 years prior to the Athens Games (2000) the UK government invested £70.1 million. With a haul of 30 medals (9 gold medals), this meant that each medal cost the tax-payer approximately £2.30 million each. For the Beijing Games the sum increased to £75 million, and the total medals won increased to 47 (£1.6 million per medal). In an unprecedented move, UK Sport, the government agency responsible for distributing elite sport funding, has been allocated £304.4 million of public and lottery funding for the Olympic funding cycle 2008-2012, together with another £100 million to be sought from

the private sector, adds up to around £400 million invested in elite sport in this period. UK Sport's "no compromise" approach to funding, focusing on people who can reach the podium, was seen as part of Great Britain's success at the Beijing Olympics. So much so, that the Lawn Tennis Association has recently turned to them for help to "overcome decades of underachievement". Presumably, it is hoped that success at elite-level tennis will both inspire people to take up tennis and improve England's standing abroad. Interestingly, even the once-in-a-lifetime combination of German stars, Boris Becker, Michael Stich and Steffi Graff, was unable to inspire the take-up of tennis among the masses (Grix & Carmichael, 2012).

The pattern of funding is revealing: the more money invested, the more medals Britain wins. This has been likened to a type of "sporting arms race", as governments in pursuit of more medals invest further into elite sport because rival nations do, which in turn ratchets up further investment (Grix & Carmichael, 2012).

3.3 In-depth interviews

The interviews were conducted with four sports official from Estonian Olympic Committee and Ministry of Culture. They lead Estonian sports today and also until at least next Olympics in Paris 2024. Besides them, one interview was conducted with Olympic athlete, who is also part of Athlete's Commission in Estonian Olympic Committee and who is also preparing for next Olympics in Paris 2024.

To start with, all the interviewees had the same opinion that Estonian sports need Team Estonia to develop Estonian elite sports systematically and in a coordinated manner. It will help to maintain money growth and creates good conditions for winning medals. Besides that, the interviewees also had the same opinion about Team Estonia development so far. It's good that it's finally started and movement is in a right direction, but there are still a lot to improve.

A short overview of the questions and answers about the main content of Team Estonia is the following:

1. How Many athletes Team Estonia should support?

Today's number is optimal (today we have approximately 250 individual athletes) considering our opportunities. The certain number isn't important, because years are different and we need to take into account the number of potential athletes. Important is also that the most top athletes will be kept.

2. Should we have priority sports?

Not specifically, because we already focus on Olympic sports and approximately 20% of sports federations get 80% of all funding.

3. Are non-Olympic sports important to be in Team Estonia?

Yes and it's very optimal as they are part of Team Estonia today (5 selected sports according to results, the number of participants and popularity/visibility in Estonia and also in the world).

4. What kind of services/support athletes should get from Team Estonia and what kind of medical services Team Estonia should offer (is there something to add to current list)?

1) Training bases all over Estonia. Possibility to train anytime in everywhere if you are part of Team Estonia.

2) Medical help as soon as possible.

3) Possibility to use physiotherapist as much as needed and also during the competitions.

4) Special equipment in some sports, for example boat for sailors etc.

5) More technological tools in some sports.

6) More specialists, who are very experienced.

Team Estonia should add:

- regular health and physical testing

- possibility to use psychologist

- nutrition knowhow and partners

- mental coach possibility

- possibility to use different trainers, for example physical preparation trainer

5. What should Team Estonia offer to young athletes and what about supporting athletes after graduating in age 19-23?

All the interviewees told that supporting young athletes is very important. The main idea was about supporting them with specific services like medical services. Besides that their recognition, especially young talents is also important.

About age 19-23, it's quite a problem and should be part of Team Estonia, but there isn't any specific idea how to solve this. One main opportunity seems to be the mapping of those potential top athletes and support with that they need.

6. Should we involve paralympic sports also?

There wasn't certain "yes" or "no" answer, but still there were rather 3 "no" out of 5.

7. Second career and mixing education and elite sport?

There were quite a lot different proposals, but overall opinion was positive and Team Estonia should offer opportunities for mixing education and elite sport and also should offer knowhow

about different subjects.

8. Is there a need for separate organization for Team Estonia?

It is clear “no”, because it’s working well as it’s working now.

9. What should be the priorities in the next 3 years, 5 years and 10 years?

- More personal approach to top athletes that they really focus only on sports.
- To increase Team Estonia budget to 8 million euros in 3-5 years.
- More elite coaches.
- Athlete’s salary should go hand in hand with national average salary.
- Developed medical services system.

10. How big should be the budget of Team Estonia?

All the answers were in quite the same range, in 5 years it should be 8-10 million euros and in 10 years 20 million euros.

11. If the budget isn’t increasing, should some changes have to be made right now?

There were different opinions:

- It depends on where more resources needed, because Team Estonia budget is dynamic.
- Fix the number of athletes.
- Main goal is to support the best athletes and if necessary, some changes need to be made.
- If needed, decreasing support of young athletes, because those decisions are most subjective.

3.4 The group questionnaire

The questionnaire was organised by Athlete’s Commission of Estonian Olympic Committee in period 18th of January to 21st of March 2022. The survey was conducted among Team Estonia athletes and 157 athletes from 35 different sports answered. 55.4% were men and 43.9% women, one person didn’t want to reveal the gender.

The questionnaire was satisfaction survey and was conducted with a purpose to give input to sports federations and also to Estonian Olympic Committee to improve athletes conditions.

Results

The most relevant questions and answers to Team Estonia are outlined from this survey.

First very important questions were **“Which kind of Team Estonia services have you used?”**, **“How satisfied are you with Team Estonia services?”** and **“How satisfied are you with medical services and opportunities for recovery in Estonia?”** The most used Team Estonia services are physiotherapy/massage (63%) and physical testing by sports doctor (54.8%). About

satisfaction of Team Estonia services, 36.6% of the respondents gave 8 out of 10, 21.6% gave 10 out of 10 and 17% gave 9 out of 10. Athletes also brought out that it's good that Team Estonia is active and trying to involve athletes to use those services as much as possible, but their feedback was also that they need more physiotherapy and sports doctor, they don't have enough knowledge about service providers and there should also be an opportunity to use sports psychologist, nutritionist and physical trainer. Besides that they pointed out that post-injury therapy system should be much better.

Second very important questions were about coaches: **“How satisfied are you with your personal coach?”** and **“How satisfied are you with national team coach?”** About personal coach, 44.4% of the respondents gave 10 out of 10, 17.2% 8 out of 10 and 16.6% 9 out of 10. Comments were that competence of some coaches isn't enough or professional knowledge should be better. About national team coach, 37.7% of the respondents gave 10 out of 10, 17.5% 9 out of 10 and 15.8% 8 out of 8. Overall most of the athletes are quite satisfied with coaches they are working with.

Last but not least, there was question about educational trainings: **“Which kind of educational trainings do you want to take part of?”** There are a lot of different subjects athletes want to learn: finding sponsors (67.5%), mental health (66.9%), nutrition (57%), social media (45%), activities with other Team Estonia member to improve belonging (34.4%), career planning (32.5%) and communication with media (32.5%). Educational trainings, which is actually part of second career, is also important part of Team Estonia. Purpose is to offer athletes different subjects which are also helping to improve sport performance. That's why it's inevitable to know input from athletes.

Chapter 4 – Recommendations and conclusion

4.1 Recommendations

Summarizing the work done so far and the results of research, there are a lot of recommendations for Team Estonia development. All recommendations are taken from the results of benchmarking, case studies, in-depth interviews and group questionnaire. Recommendations are not in a specific order and are not targeted to anyone specifically. They are rather good advice and there is also possibility to take them into account. The most important thoughts are pointed out in bold.

1. It seems nowadays it's quite difficult to develop elite sport without the principle "the more money invested, the more medals". De Bosscher et al. 2007 clearly brought out that very important is to keep in high level **financial support for elite sport, financial support for national sport organisations** and organisation and structure of sport policies.
2. De Bosscher et al. 2007 also brought out that very important is to offer **good training facilities** for the athletes and keep in high level coaching provision and **coach development**.
3. **Team Estonia funding, as it has been so far, should mostly come from government** as in the case of Team Denmark and as in Iceland. It came out also from in-depth interviews that Team Estonia should be system ordered by country, which creates good conditions for developing Team Estonia systematically and in a coordinated manner.
4. According to Finland, **increasing the number of professional coaches and development of coaching systems in sports federations**. From group questionnaire, it came out that some of the coaches aren't so competent or they don't have enough professional competent. Besides that, one very important need of development that came out from in-depth interviews, was also development of elite coaches.
5. **Improving Team Estonia medical services system**, by also adding some new services like possibility to use nutritionist, sports psychologist and physical trainer. Overall feedback to the system is good, but athletes pointed out that they would want to use those services more.
6. **Improving post-injury therapy system**.

7. One of the priorities should be that top of the top athletes are well kept, so if needed, some changes has to be made for supporting them. **More personal approach to top athletes** that they really an focus only on sports.
8. Athlete's salary should go hand in hand with national average salary.
9. Team Estonia budget, to do everything that needed, should be 8-10 million euros in 5 years and 20 million euros in 10 years.

4.2 Conclusions

Countries and their elite sport systems are different and what suits for one, might not suit for other, but still, there are a lot in common. Estonia is quite small country with a quite limited budget in sports, so it's really important to thing through next steps. Although it's quite difficult to copy from other countries, because most of the countries have a lot better possibilities.

One of the aims of this project was to find out which is the best model or solution for developing Estonian elite sport system Team Estonia. During the research it became more clear that Team Estonia is moving in the right way. Today's system, which has been working more than 3 years, is effective on optimal for Estonia today. It could be more efficient, but for that, Team Estonia need more support. This project also gave answer about the size of investment Estonia should do for developing Team Estonia.

Using in-depth interviews with persons, who are very related with Estonian sports development and answers of group questionnaire done with Team Estonia athletes, a lot of future developing priorities came out. It's good to see that sports officials and athletes are quite on the same page. Besides that, most of the other countries, which were investigated during this research, considered it necessary to develop the same things.

Hope that these recommendations, developed during this project, somehow help to make Team Estonia better in the future.

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Appendix 1

In-depth interview with Erich Teigamägi, Vice President and head of Elite Sport Commission in Estonian Olympic Committee.

16th of June 2022

1. Why do we need elite sport system Team Estonia?

Estonian sport needed Team Estonia, because many countries have been very successful in creating this kind of systems. For example, Norway, who has made great development in elite sport during last 20 years.

2. Team Estonia was established in 2019. How do you evaluate Team Estonia development so far?

Today we are still in the learning phase. Would like to do more, but there are limitations, mostly due to financial resources.

In terms of the system, we are on the right track, and we have the right vision.

Financial support of the athletes could be higher and there could be more elite coaches.

3. How many athletes Team Estonia should support?

Current number is optimal, because our current system will not be able to support more. Mostly it depends on ability to provide medical services.

Overall, it's rather good, if there are more athletes, because then internal competition is much stronger and its good driving force.

4. Should we have priority sports?

Today we rather have them (Olympic sports), but they are not and shouldn't be put in place.

5. Are non-Olympic sports important to be in Team Estonia?

Today they are part of Team Estonia, and it should continue as it is.

6. What kind of services/support athletes should get from Team Estonia?

1. Medical help as soon as possible.
2. Possibility to use physiotherapist as much as needed. Also, during the competitions.
3. Possibility to use sports psychologist.
4. Possibility to use quality gym service with expert counseling.
5. Possibility to use nutritionist.

7. What kind of medical services should we offer? Should we add something to current list?

Getting help for injury or trauma could be even more effective ja faster.

8. How important is to support young athletes (talents)? What should Team Estonia offer to them?

It's very important to support them. Financial support today is quite good, but medical side and provided services could be better.

9. Supporting athletes after graduating in age 19-23, should this also be priority?

This is the problem in many countries sport system and we could have system for supporting them.

10. Should we involve paralympic sport also and if yes, then how, supporting some athletes?

They should be part of Team Estonia, but decision should be made by them, and Paralympic Committee should be separate as it is now.

11. What about second career of athletes, should Team Estonia offer the possibility?

Team Estonia should continue offer that and especially for younger athletes, who should be aware of different opportunities.

12. Should Team Estonia also help to mix education and elite sport?

Yes, by for example making agreements with universities to create scholarship programs.

Informing young athletes about educational opportunities and it maybe even should be mandatory for them to start thinking about it as early as possible.

13. Should we need a separate organization for Team Estonia (which is under NOC)?

No, it's working well under NOC.

14. What should be the priorities in the next 3 years, 5 years, and 10 years?

1. We need more elite coaches.
2. Athlete's salary should also go hand in hand with national average salary.

15. How big should be the budget of Team Estonia to develop Estonian elite sport at the maximum level?

1. We should need at least 3-5 million euros more for Team Estonia to make next developments.
2. We should have an agreement with the state that the budget of Team Estonia is fixed, and they don't cut it, at least in the first phase.

16. If the budget isn't increasing (which happened in 2022 and probably will happen also 2023, because of the economic situation), should we change our priorities right now?

Fix the number of athletes.

Appendix 2

In-depth interview with Siim Sukles, Secretary General of Estonian Olympic Committee.

13th of June 2022

1. Why do we need elite sport system Team Estonia?

We need Team Estonia to develop Estonian elite sport systematically and in a coordinated manner. If we have correct system, we maintain money growth.

2. Team Estonia was established in 2019. How do you evaluate Team Estonia development so far?

While we are doing it the first time, step by step development is the most reasonable, helping us evaluate the process ongoing. Besides that, it's better when support of athletes and sports federations also growing step by step. Big amount of money once isn't the best solution.

3. How many athletes Team Estonia should support?

Considering acknowledge we have today, today's system is the most optimal.

4. Should we have priority sports?

We already have priority sports which are Olympic sports.

5. Are non-Olympic sports important to be in Team Estonia?

Should be, but not all of them.

We have 5 non-Olympic sports in Team Estonia and it's important, because medals from non-Olympic sports also support Team Estonia principle of cohesion, national image etc.

6. What kind of services/support athletes should get from Team Estonia?

Services that are guaranteed today – it's a good direction.

7. What kind of medical services should we offer? Should we add something to current list?

Services that are guaranteed today – it's a good direction.

8. How important is to support young athletes (talents)? What should Team Estonia offer to them?

It's very important and Team Estonia should support them.

Main support should be some specific services, which they can't get so easily.

9. Supporting athletes after graduating in age 19-23, should this also be priority?

Services should be provided, for example medical services, but not so much financial support.

One opportunity is that elite sport commission decide to support some of them more.

10. Should we involve paralympic sport also and if yes, then how, supporting some athletes?

No, but if we could support, then it would be reasonable to take Paralympics also under Estonian Olympic Committee.

11. What about second career of athletes, should Team Estonia offer the possibility?

Team Estonia should give an opportunity to study etc.

12. Should Team Estonia also help to mix education and elite sport?

We have this system right now and it's working. Team Estonia is giving an opportunity by covering scholarship.

13. Should we need a separate organization for Team Estonia (which is under NOC)?

Yes, if Team Estonia covers everything, also training basis, medical department etc. The whole system, where athlete enters after graduating 9th grade.

14. What should be the priorities in the next 3 years, 5 years, and 10 years?

3 years – medical services system is much better and ready.

5 years – we have more money in the system and more acknowledge about everything.

10 years – we have separate organization, which covers also training basis, medical department, educational system etc.

15. How big should be the budget of Team Estonia to develop Estonian elite sport at the maximum level?

20 million euros.

16. If the budget isn't increasing (which happened in 2022 and probably will happen also 2023, because of the economic situation), should we change our priorities right now?

Decreasing support of young athletes because those decisions are most subjective.

Not decreasing non-Olympic sports support, because their support is already quite low.

Appendix 3

In-depth interview with Tarvi Pürn, Sports Chancellor in Ministry of Culture.

28th of June 2022

1. Why do we need elite sport system Team Estonia?

It's a question of purpose and Team Estonia is a tool for achieving Estonian elite sports goals.

Talent development must be systematic, and opportunities have to be created. From the state's point of view, all the best conditions must be created to achieve the goals.

If there is a talent, there must be all the conditions that are needed.

2. Team Estonia was established in 2019. How do you evaluate Team Estonia development so far?

Today there is a system, and we also know, where we need more money.

We could ask more feedback from sports federations, what should we need to develop more. Besides that, we should analyze, where we put the money and what do we get for that – is it enough?

If there aren't well paid elite athletes in sports federation, there needs to be bigger base funding for elite sports development.

3. How many athletes Team Estonia should support?

No certain number. It depends on the number of potential athletes in current years.

4. Should we have priority sports?

No, because in Estonian sports approximately 80% of funding is going to approximately 10 top sports.

It wouldn't be a good signal if we separate sports like this. Every Olympic medal should be our priority.

If the budget increases, we shouldn't support more sports, we should continue supporting those we are supporting today.

5. Are non-Olympic sports important to be in Team Estonia?

We should continue with the system we have today (we are supporting 5 non-Olympic sports).

If Team Estonia budget will increase, we could discuss supporting some talents more.

6. What kind of services/support athletes should get from Team Estonia?

All sports need different approach and in some sports the system already exists internally.

Input for that should come from sports federation.

We need more technological tools in some sports, and we also need more specialists or to train specialists for us.

7. What kind of medical services should we offer? Should we add something to current list?

Mainly base services. Keep it simple.

We need dense testing, for example like in Norway.

8. How important is to support young athletes (talents)? What should Team Estonia offer to them?

We need to work with talents, otherwise we might lose them. We should support sports federations and teams, who need this for training camps, competitions etc.

Recognition of young athlete's good results is very important, but also we shouldn't put a lot of money of winning medals in youth sport, because the most important is long-term development.

9. Supporting athletes after graduating in age 19-23, should this also be priority?

Yes, because it's a pain point and there isn't concrete system.

One opportunity is to map those young athletes, who are very good and need support to stay alive.

10. Should we involve paralympic sport also and if yes, then how, supporting some athletes?

Under Team Estonia rather not. They could get same services, but from their organization, but from Team Estonia.

11. What about second career of athletes, should Team Estonia offer the possibility?

Estonian Sports School Audentes is the beginning, and it somehow should be continued.

12. Should Team Estonia also help to mix education and elite sport?

Should, because otherwise we might lose some athletes for some other areas.

13. Should we need a separate organization for Team Estonia (which is under NOC)?

No.

14. What should be the priorities in the next 3 years, 5 years, and 10 years?

Main goal is to increase Team Estonia budget to 8 million euros in 3-5 years. It should cover all the possibilities and services that needed to win the medals.

15. How big should be the budget of Team Estonia to develop Estonian elite sport at the maximum level?

Main goal is to increase Team Estonia budget to 8 million euros in 3-5 years. It should cover all the possibilities and services that needed to win the medals.

16. If the budget isn't increasing (which happened in 2022 and probably will happen also 2023, because of economic situation), should we change our priorities right now?

Team Estonia budget is a dynamic, so it depends on where more resources are needed. That's why it's possible that there might be some changes.

Appendix 4

In-depth interview with Martti Raju, Sports Director of Estonian Olympic Committee.

13th of June 2022

1. Why do we need elite sport system Team Estonia?

Targeted results ordering system of country. The most specific money for elite sports that must produce medals.

2. Team Estonia was established in 2019. How do you evaluate Team Estonia development so far?

The system has improved, and more money has come for Team Estonia comparing 2019 and 2022. Team Estonia is far from ideal, but we have taken a step forward. Anyway, very good, created elite sport system, a step forward in Estonian elite sport.

There are winners and there are losers. The winner in this case are medical services (system created 2020) and team sports, who's support has increased a lot of thanks to Team Estonia. Although personal support of individual athletes hasn't increased as expected.

3. How many athletes Team Estonia should support?

No need to define a certain number, because we don't want to take a risk to leave someone under the line. Purpose should be to support athletes, who bring medals or very good places from international competitions.

Today Team Estonia support approximately 250 individual athletes and it's ok.

4. Should we have priority sports?

No need to define them separately because we might kill some sports with that. Olympic sports have always been priority to us and it's also like this in Team Estonia.

5. Are non-Olympic sports important to be in Team Estonia?

Yes, and those, which are successful, with many people, popular in Estonia and with strong community.

Team Estonia purpose are medals, so we must consider it also, when we are choosing non-Olympic sports. We must consider impact to Estonia of this sport.

6. What kind of services/support athletes should get from Team Estonia?

1. Salary. We should support approximately 50 elite athletes, with who we have contracts, and they get support, which covers also all basic needs to help them concentrate only sport.
2. Medical services.
3. Coach.
4. Individual needs according to sport. For example, sailor needs a sailing boat etc.

7. What kind of medical services should we offer? Should we add something to current list?

Current list is very good for our athletes, and we have to offer medical services to them. But medical services can't be priority and can't be more important than trainings. We don't need to create systems that athletes don't use or don't need. Priority is athlete and his coach and trainings; medical services are just supportive functions.

8. How important is to support young athletes (talents)? What should Team Estonia offer to them?

They should be part of Team Estonia by getting medical services and little financial support, which give them acknowledge that they are noticed.

It would be not smart not to support them, because sports federations often couldn't offer them what they need.

9. Supporting athletes after graduating in age 19-23, should this also be priority?

This shouldn't be a main concern for Team Estonia, but Team Estonia should provide an opportunity. For example, there are 10-20 selected athletes, who get basic support to help to concentrate sport. Those athletes are decided by commission according to results, goals, potential etc.

10. Should we involve paralympic sport also and if yes, then how, supporting some athletes?

No, not in Team Estonia project.

11. What about second career of athletes, should Team Estonia offer the possibility?

Team Estonia should offer an opportunity.

12. Should Team Estonia also help to mix education and elite sport?

Team Estonia should help to organize that, but not all of it. Best solution should be scholarship for certain period.

13. Should we need a separate organization for Team Estonia (which is under NOC)?

Today, no need. But if decision making in Team Estonia going to be political (for example Executive Committee of Estonian Olympic Committee start making decisions about Team Estonia), we need separate organization and whole elite sports should then be under it.

14. What should be the priorities in the next 3 years, 5 years, and 10 years?

More money and athletes, who get paid and can only concentrate on sport.

15. How big should be the budget of Team Estonia to develop Estonian elite sport at the maximum level?

20 million euros.

16. If the budget isn't increasing (which happened in 2022 and probably will happen also 2023, because of the economic situation), should we change our priorities right now?

Our main goal is to support our best athletes and if we need to make some changes because of the inflation, decreasing budget etc, we need to reorganize.

Appendix 5

In-depth interview with Allar Raja, Olympic Athlete and member of Athlete Commission of Estonian Olympic Committee.

7th of June 2022

1. Why do we need elite sport system Team Estonia?

Team Estonia would give elite athletes the confidence about the future, even in situation, where there is a bad year or injury. They still have support and if you have been on the top, it's much easier to come back, if you are part of Team Estonia.

Besides that, Team Estonia is giving quality of services, without it's very difficult to keep up with athletes from other countries.

For athletes it's a sense of belonging, sign of status, advertising, and an outside image.

2. Team Estonia was established in 2019. How do you evaluate Team Estonia development so far?

To start with, it's good it's done and working. Usually there are discussions, but no actions.

Positive things are well-working medical services system and branding. Negative things are maybe a bit to unreal expectations for Team Estonia (suddenly everything must be free) and still some athletes don't understand, what Team Estonia really is and what to expect.

3. How many athletes Team Estonia should support?

Today's system is good, but Team Estonia should value more very experienced elite athletes, who are still on top. They should really get what they need, to be on top and also for their normal living.

One opportunity is to make a long-term agreement between Team Estonia (Estonian Olympic Committee) and athlete to ensure long-term support and responsibilities.

4. Should we have priority sports?

Today's system is working well – priority is Olympic sports, then team sports and non-Olympic sports.

5. Are non-Olympic sports important to be in Team Estonia?

Today we have 5 non-Olympic sports in Team Estonia and it's ok to continue with that.

6. What kind of services/support athletes should get from Team Estonia?

The main recommendation is training bases in all over Estonia. Possibility to train in everywhere anytime if you are part of Team Estonia.

7. What kind of medical services should we offer? Should we add something to current list?

Team Estonia should add:

1. Nutrition knowhow and partners.
2. Possibility to use mental coach to help planning whole life.
3. Possibility to use different trainers, for example physical trainer.

8. How important is to support young athletes (talents)? What should Team Estonia offer to them?

Knowhow, also from older elite athletes. Keep young athletes in Team Estonia is very important and it should continue.

Besides that, it's important to continue offering medical services as today.

9. Supporting athletes after graduating in age 19-23, should this also be priority?

It's one of the most important problems in Estonian sport.

One opportunity is to develop more university sport in Estonia. University supporting more for athletes – training facilities, accommodation, food etc.

10. Should we involve paralympic sport also and if yes, then how, supporting some athletes?

Yes, with belonging and offering at least medical services.

11. What about second career of athletes, should Team Estonia offer the possibility?

It should be on the list.

12. Should Team Estonia also help to mix education and elite sport?

Team Estonia should offer educational trainings and it should be organized like this:

1. Athletes take part of those trainings, they want, not all of them which are organized.
2. Team Estonia can organize trainings according to information, which trainings athletes want.
3. If athlete doesn't show up, he/she will pay for it, otherwise it's free.

13. Should we need a separate organization for Team Estonia (which is under NOC)?

No.

14. What should be the priorities in the next 3 years, 5 years and 10 years?

More personal approach to athletes who are on category A and B, so that they really can focus only on sports.

Besides that, add mentoring to the services and possibility to use trainings facilities all over Estonia.

15. How big should be the budget of Team Estonia to develop Estonian elite sport at the maximum level?

20 million euros in 10 years, 10 million euros in 5 years.

16. If the budget isn't increasing (which happened in 2022 and probably will happen also 2023, because of the economic situation), should we change our priorities right now?

Today's system is working well and doesn't need major changes.

Appendix 6

Group questionnaire for Team Estonia athletes conducted by Athlete's Commission of Estonian Olympic Committee.

Dear athlete,

Please answer satisfaction survey, which purpose is collecting data about athlete's needs and available resources. This is input for Estonian Olympic Committee to improve conditions. This survey is anonymous and it takes about 5 minutes to fill it.

Please fill it before 28th of february 2022.

Thank you for your contribution!

Athlete's Commission of Estonian Olympic Committee

1. Please state your sports.

Please select one answer.

- Paddling
- Motorsport
- Gymnastics
- Football
- Cycling
- Judo
- Ice-hockey
- Athletics
- 3x3 basketball
- Basketball
- Curling
- Handball
- Biathlon
- Shooting
- Wrestling
- Chess
- Modern pentathlon
- Motorcycle sports

- Orientering
- Boxing
- Sailing
- Beach volleyball
- Horse riding
- Badminton
- Winter sports
- Rowing
- Dance sport
- Tennis
- Triathlon
- Weightlifting
- Skating
- Swimming
- Fencing
- Bow sport
- Volleyball
- Other – write it down

2. How old are you?

Please enter your age.

3. Please state your gender.

- Female
- Male
- Do not wish to publish

4. Education level.

Please select one answer.

- Acquiring basic education
- Basic education
- Secondary education
- Secondary-professional education
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree

- Doctorate degree
- Other – write it down

5. Income source.

Please select one or more answers.

- Estonian Olympic Committee
- Sports federation
- Cultural Endowment
- Municipal support
- Parents
- Sponsors
- Full-time job
- Part-time job
- Stipendium
- Contract as an athlete
- Social media
- Entrepreneurship/investing
- Other – write it down

6. How big should be your monthly income for living and doing sports?

Please enter your answer and if you want, please explain.

7. What kind of competition have you competed?

Please select one or more answers.

- Estonian Championships
- Baltic Championships
- European Championships
- World Championships and/or Olympic Games
- Other – write it down

8. Which kind of Team Estonia services have you used?

Please select one or more answers.

- Physiotherapy/massage
- Testing with sports doctor
- Blood testing
- Heart screening
- FMS for young athletes

- Educational trainings
- National team clothes
- Other – write it down

9. Are you satisfied with Team Estonia services?

Please select 1 (not at all) to 10 (very satisfied) and if you want, explain it.

10. Are you satisfied with medical services and opportunities for recovery in Estonia?

Please select 1 (not at all) to 10 (very satisfied) and if you want, explain it.

11. Are you satisfied with information movement between your sports federation?

Please select 1 (not at all) to 10 (very satisfied) and if you want, explain it.

12. How satisfied are you with local training conditions?

Please select 1 (not at all) to 10 (very satisfied) and if you want, explain it.

13. How satisfied are you with your personal coach?

Please select 1 (not at all) to 10 (very satisfied) and if you want, explain it.

14. How satisfied are you with your national team coach? (If you don't have, you don't have to answer).

Please select 1 (not at all) to 10 (very satisfied) and if you want, explain it.

15. How satisfied are you with competitions organised in Estonia?

Please select 1 (not at all) to 10 (very satisfied) and if you want, explain it.

16. How many years are you planning to do sports?

Please enter your answer and if you want, please explain.

17. What is your goal as an athlete?

Please enter your answer.

18. What could help you the most for achieving the goal?

Please enter your answer.

19. Have you thought about the time, when you are not doing sports anymore?

- Yes
- No
- I have been thinking about it, but I don't know yet
- Other – write it down

20. Which assessment would you give to your mental health?

Please enter your answer and if you want, please explain.

21. Which kind of educational trainings would you like to take part of in the future?

Please select one or more answers.

- Nutrition
- Time planning
- Finding sponsors
- Social media
- Family and relations
- Lecture from certain athlete
- Finishing career
- Psychology, mental health
- Communicating with media
- Coaching with an other experienced athlete
- Activities with other Team Estonia athletes to improve belonging
- Other – write it down