

## THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN SPORTS

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**Abstract:** Sports represents one of the most important means of advertisement of the social responsibility concept using two methods: the approach of social responsibility in managerial policy of the sports entities (sports organizations, federations, clubs, sports facilities, sports and event organization companies) and the involvement of sports in social responsibility policies of economical organizations/companies.

Sports has been an important support in social responsibility practice since its beginning in different communities. As a result, it has determined nowadays the appearance of notoriety clubs such as football clubs from U.K. taking into account the potential that sports gives regarding the social integrity, teenagers' education and their protection against temptations (alcohol, doping, corruption).

In this document there are approached particular aspects of social responsibility regarding sports field taking into consideration sports organizations, sports facilities and sports/event organization companies.

An important type of research has been developed in our country especially in companies. The aim of this research is to outline the social responsibility. But only few companies truly involve in projects regarding Sports as responsibility in the process of assuring better conditions of living and safety for employees.

**Keywords:** sports, managerial policy, social responsibility, event organization.

### Introduction

Social responsibility (CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility, according to international vocabulary) is a concept that enshrines the principles of sustainable development and provides a compromise between economic efficiency and business ethics.

According to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, CSR is defined as “*the permanent commitment of companies to behave ethically and to contribute to economic development, while improving the quality of life of employees and their families, as well as local communities and society as a whole*” [1].

Howard R. Bowen introduced the term “*social responsibility*” in 1953 when he published “*Responsibility of the Businessman*”, the author stating the biblical principles on which the philanthropic tradition practiced in the US was based and pointing out that companies have the responsibility to voluntarily redistribute some of their benefits to the communities where they conduct their business (Community Involvement) [2].

This is consistent with the interests of companies because their profits depend largely on the prosperity and stability of the environments in which they operate.

Archie B. Carroll proposed in 1979 a pyramidal model that includes four levels of responsibility for corporate sector managers, namely: *economic responsibility* that forms the basis of the pyramidal model and enhances the idea that the

main task of an enterprise is to produce goods and services that meet the needs of society; *ethical responsibilities* that are consistent with the respect for social norms and values; *responsibility of preserving business legality*; *philanthropic responsibilities* at the top of the pyramidal model, through which the enterprise or organization contributes to society's well-being and quality of life improvement. The two responsibilities, namely ethical and philanthropic, fall within the expectations and demands of society [3].

In this context, sport is an important actor in implementing, promoting and applying CSR in the opinion of authors Smith and Westerbeek, who highlight the interference between CSR and sport in *Sport Corporate Social Responsibility (SCSR)*[4].

Sport valences, which recommend it as an instrument for CSR implementation, are determined by the fact that sporting activities always support socializing, at the same time bringing along remarkable opportunities to mobilize a large number of people and organizations and representing a platform for philanthropic donations (Educational Initiatives, Community Development Health, Related Initiatives, Community Based Environmental Progress), support for people with disabilities, elimination of discrimination (on color or sex), control and fight against harmful practices (doping, alcoholism, tobacco, violence, hooliganism, corruption, desire to win at any cost).

At the same time, due to its popularity, sport provides a basis for promotion and communication in the mass-media, thus providing opportunities for companies that interfere with sports in the field of CSR and helping them to make themselves known and to acquire advantages such as new markets, new suppliers, growth of customers' number and, last but not least, social respect.

The Olympics are an example of interaction between sport and social responsibility according to the first principle of Olympic Charta: "*Olympism is a philosophy of life that inspires, by combining in a balanced manner the qualities of body, will and mind*". By linking culture and education to sport, Olympism seeks to create a lifestyle built on joy in effort, on the educational value of good example, on social responsibility and respect for fundamental and universal ethical principles (International Olympic Committee, 2011).

The implementation of social responsibility principles in the corporate sector is currently practiced in two ways:

- *Active way*, when CSR policies are managerial rules being addressed in the management of sports organizations;
- *Passive way*, when sport and sports organizations are subject to the social responsibility policy of companies / organizations and sport becomes an instrument, a platform for corporate social responsibility practice.

The second method to implement social responsibility policies through sport is most often used nowadays because the sport offers, first of all, maximum visibility in society and, secondly, sport is a demanding activity that addresses large segments of the population of different ages and with different interests, which offers companies the opportunities to broaden their spheres of influence and increase their number of stakeholders or shareholders.

The importance of sport for the practice of social responsibility also arises from the fact that interference between CSR and sports has taken place since the beginning of this concept's development, i.e. from the second half of the nineteenth century, when the most notable football clubs in the world were founded: Sheffield Football Club (October 24, 1857), the world's oldest internationally recognized club, Aston Villa (1874), Manchester United (1876), Manchester City Football Club (1880), Arsenal Football Club (1886), Everton Football Club (1898).

The establishment of these football clubs was due, on the one hand, to the decision to solve social problems determined by the living conditions of that period and, in particular, the need to integrate children and young people into the community life. For example, Manchester City Football Club was founded in 1880 at the initiative of the members of St. Mark's Church of England (the original name of the club being St. Mark's West Gordon).

On the other hand, in the second half of the nineteenth century, England was in full industrial revolution, and in this context, companies were interested in creating, besides working conditions, living conditions that would ensure a better state of mind for the workers, reduce their inclination towards alcoholism and give them moments of relaxation through sport, which also had a good effect on labor productivity.

Football was an opportunity for companies so that Lancashire Yorkshire Railway in 1876 or Thames Ironworks in 1895 laid the foundations for football clubs that served the same social and philanthropic goals.

Over time, sports organizations, whether clubs or federations, have evolved into themselves as providers of social responsibility, the concept being also an objective in the management of sports equipment manufacturers, sporting event organizers or sport organizations' sponsors.

### **Promoting Social Responsibility Through Sport**

Social responsibility in the corporate sector has the potential to create the fair image and strengthen the reputation of companies, and is a prerequisite for ensuring long-term success. As a result, companies need a visibility instrument to help create their image through CSR, sports providing opportunities especially when it comes to athletes and teams with outstanding sports performances.

This is the reason why companies act in two directions to implement CSR rules in their management: one direction is to capitalize on this concept through sponsorship, philanthropic actions, supporting sports competitions, financial contributions to build or repair and maintain sports facilities, by developing performance sports, motivating young people through amateur and leisure competitions. All actions are dedicated to promoting among the population the need to practice sport for maintaining and improving health by supporting various different educational

activities related to sport and helping vulnerable communities with projects related to sport.

The implementation of such CSR methods is external to the company's usual activities. Companies can propose activities to encourage sport among employees so to provide a beneficial working climate capable of determining a high production, improving the quality of their lives and health (thus reducing the number of medical leaves or cases of job abandonment due to health) and eliminating stress.

In order to carry out the CSR projects, companies develop programs that include sporting activities among employees able to involve them in volunteer activities that can contribute to both recreation and increased appetite for sport. Companies can award bonuses to employees either through subscriptions to sports competitions or access to various sports facilities (tennis courts, swimming pools, etc.)

This set of sport-related activities is employee-oriented due to the interest shown by companies in ensuring the well-being of employees, being a feature of policies that include social responsibility, applied through projects and programs commonly found in national and multinational companies with expertise in the field and good results.

In Romania, a study was carried out between 2015-2016 by an agency dedicated to sports communication Adrenaline Sports & more, titled *"Top of Romanian companies involved in sports"* [5].

The study considered 100 large companies in the banking, retail, communications, oil, gas and energy domain. Based on the data collected and processed, the project team reached the following conclusions:

- out of the 100 companies, only 30 have sports related activities, 6% of them having a strategy of involvement in sport mentioned or communicated on the official website;
- nearly half of the 30 companies "are associated with social causes to support vulnerable communities through projects that consider sports a responsibility to maintain health, meaning a better life for the community".

According to the survey data, social responsibility through sport is a poorly resonant practice in Romania at the level of large companies and the specialized literature points out that CSR action are sporadic at the level of small and medium enterprises.

### Social Responsibility in Sports Organizations

The current pattern of professional sports organizations focusing on their own social responsibility activities was felt in the 50s of the last century on the North American continent and about 30 years later on the European one. Chronological difference is due to different concepts and principles in terms of social responsibility and its norms on the two continents. Thus, on the North American continent, the SR is a philanthropic concept and is based on the principle of Protestant Church according to which people are obliged to orient themselves towards philanthropic acts by which to give back to the communities in which they live what God has given them, while on the European continent SR is based on the principles of sustainable development, in line with good paternalist norms. SR practice in the field of professional sports organizations on both continents was determined, in addition to tradition, by the system of organization and functioning of professional sport. In North America, professional sport is organized under the franchise system [6], which relies on franchised sports clubs that form closed-loop systems known as professional leagues, which, under the franchise system norms, can develop economic / commercial activities that produce income.

For this reason, most US sports franchisees are run by business executives, such as Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, alongside Bill Gates, who owns two franchises, one of American football, the other from the basketball league.

On the SR side, both professional clubs and American leagues can associate with charitable organizations, forming private, public or donor advised foundations, through which they practice philanthropic activities, which in turn bring benefits such as income tax exemption, but also other tax benefits.

The first SR partnership in American sport was concluded in 1953 between Boston's Red Sox baseball club and The Jimmy Fund Association, focused on the fight against cancer.

Numerous examples of charitable foundations and programs initiated by renowned professional clubs in the USA and Canada are presented in the specialized literature and, since the 1980s, major and national professional leagues have created their own foundations by which they have developed programs and policies of Social Responsibility [7,8].

In Europe, performance sports have a pyramidal structure that is made up of clubs, national,

international, or global federations, different from North America, in the sense that it is an open system in which teams or clubs promote in superior divisions or are relegated to lower divisions depending on their performances in sports.

This organization and the conduct of competitions have generated differences between clubs in terms of their income, which affected their position in relation to the adoption of SR practices in a great, small or occasional extent.

For example, FC Barcelona is one of the richest clubs in Europe, with major concerns regarding SR, creating in 1994 the FC Barcelona Foundation through which it develops RS projects focusing mainly on transmitting values to children through sports, both in Catalonia and around the world. The Foundation currently has over 700,000 beneficiaries in over 50 countries of the world.

FC Barcelona Club joined the United Nations' "Millennium Development Goals" Project in 2006 and donates 0.7% of the club's revenue for this project, and as of 2010, its players and coaches donate 0.5% of their salaries to the club's foundation.

Apart from European clubs implications in the area of RS, such concerns can be identified at the level of national sport federations. Thus, a survey regarding European national football federations, The Birkbek Sport Business Centre, identified that 52.5 percent of national federations have a budget for CSR activities and only 39 percent of national federations have in plan a formal CSR strategy [9].

The report was funded by the UEFA European Forum (Union of European Football Association), which illustrates the involvement of European sports forums in SR issues in sport.

Involvement in the SR area is also identified in the case of international or world forums (federations or associations). For example, at the 2005 Congress, FIFA (International Federation of Football Associations) has created a new structure in its - Corporate Social Responsibility Department - through which it has developed SR programs such as "My Game", "Fair Play Say No to Racism", "20 Centres for 2010", "Football for the Planet" and "Football for Hope", and FIFA Congress also adopted in 2005 a resolution that stated it contributes to RS programs with 0.7% of Federation's revenue [10].

In Romania, the SR approach at the level of sports organizations is at an early stage and is particularly prevalent in football.

In this respect, the Romanian Football Federation (RFF) has had, over time, a number of initiatives such as "Diversity Cup" (in partnership with the Department for Interethnic Relations), "Supercup for All! Feel the pressure of football" (held on the stadium Ion Oblemenco from Craiova, during the match of Super Cup with CFR 1907 Cluj, attended by members of the Association of Blind People in Romania, Dolj local branch, who, by way of sound and vibration, lived the emotions for football, along with the other 26,000 spectators), "Your Chance Cup", "Women's Football Tournament", "Football for Hope" and others.

RFF was also involved in other RS-themed events organized by UEFA or FIFA, such as: The First Workshop on Diversity and Social Inclusion in Football, held in Brussels, where Romania has been highlighted as a model of good practice due to the implementation of anti-discrimination strategy, UEFA Seminar for Social Inclusion, Football for Friendship, etc [11].

It is also worth mentioning the efforts of the high performance Romanian sportsmen for their involvement in SR specific activities, such as the tennis player Horia Tecău, who was appointed UNICEF Ambassador to Romania for his contributions to UNICEF.

Adoption of RS policies also extends to sports related fields of activity, such as sporting products firms, sports facilities, and companies organizing sports events.

The main direction in which these areas are involved in SR is the one aimed at protecting the environment. Thus, in the case of sporting products, increased attention is paid to the nature of the materials used; for example, for the manufacture of table tennis rackets, it was forbidden the use of volatile organic compounds that are very harmful to health.

Construction, operation and maintenance of sports facilities is focused in particular on making savings in terms of water and energy by using water recirculation or solar energy production systems.

## Conclusions

Sport had represented and still represents due to its popularity an effective means of promoting social responsibility projects by the corporate environment and, at the same time, sport is an important provider of good SR practices through sports organizations.

The importance of sports in the SR domain is due to the wide range of means by which this concept can be implemented among the population.



Sport strengthens team spirit, encourages solidarity and fair play, maintains and recovers health, achieves social inclusion, carries on the fight for equal opportunities, but also the one against racism and vices, especially against doping, alcoholism and smoking, ensuring a correct education for young people.

These attributes of sport in society led both nationally and globally to the orientation of corporate governances towards issuing some referential acts on social responsibility, in which sport occupies a significant position.

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