

Summary

Sport Foresight Study: a more active Netherlands

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Sport Toekomstverkenning - een sportiever Nederland

The Netherlands Institute for Social Research

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Summary

In the Sport Foresight Study ‘Een sportiever Nederland’ (‘A more active Netherlands’), the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) explore the future of sport and exercise in the Netherlands.

If the present policy on sport remains unchanged, the Netherlands could face substantial challenges by 2030. There is a strong chance of a widening gap between elite and popular sport. The Netherlands could be overtaken in the medal rankings; fans will have less to cheer. At the same time, technological developments are bringing the ability to experience sport closer, for example through Virtual and Augmented Reality. It cannot be assumed that people in the Netherlands will be taking sufficient physical exercise in 2030. Traditional sports associations could come under pressure due to a drop in members and volunteers. Modern sports associations offer opportunities for promoting social participation and health.

Which of these challenges is the most important depends on the perspective adopted. Sport appeals to many people for different reasons. For some, it is mainly about the social life, while others like to exercise to benefit their health. For yet others it is about the performance, and finally there is a group whose main aim is to share the world of those at the top of their sport. Precisely this diversity of perspectives – summarised in the report as taking part, exercise, performance and shared experience – is what makes sport special.

Taking different perspectives into account

In formulating sports policy for the future, it could be useful to take these different perspectives on sport into account. That is not always the case today. The sports policy of many Dutch municipalities is focused primarily on taking part and exercise, with more social participation and healthier citizens as underlying goals. Elite sport plays a modest role, and sporting events only for larger towns and cities. At international level, global sports organisations and media companies take precisely the opposite view, with the principal focus being not just on elite sport but above all on finance, entertainment and viewing figures. Social participation and improving health receive scant attention in this arena. In this sense, the sports world increasingly appears to be facing a dichotomy.

Good examples

The Sport Foresight Study also highlights dozens of projects in which several perspectives are addressed simultaneously. For example, an expertise centre in Almere helps children and teenagers to discover and develop their exercise and sporting talents, each at their own level, and thus including at the top level. And during the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, people were able to practise

Olympic sports themselves on the beach at Scheveningen, near The Hague, before sharing in the experience of the Olympians in Rio by watching the event on a big screen.

Discussion tool

The Sport Foresight Study explores the future of sport and exercise in the Netherlands and is intended to focus minds on the future of sport and exercise and to help clarify and support discussions. It is explicitly not a prediction. The study is aimed at government ministries and national sports organisations, clubs, local authorities and other stakeholders. The findings will help them to engage in dialogue with their members and constituents about the future. The Sport Foresight Study is a joint product of the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP). It was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. The project team worked with experts and stakeholders from the field of sport and exercise.