

Comments and Suggestions on
Working Paper – Draft 10 April 2009
“Corruption and Sports: Building Ethics and Preventing Abuses”

Paolo Bertaccini
TI-Italy, Bergamo University

1. Preliminary information

From TI-Italy point of view, “sports” is an issue which deserves specific attention in anti-corruption strategies; the issue has been started being handled around 2002 with inquiries in schools, and many other actions, products and by-products till today; this long-dated performing has gained TI-It a first reputation-basis with institutional interlocutors and social stakeholders; this reputation-basis is being strengthened at the present with up-grade initiatives and a partnership policy which make possible to aim at increasingly-scaled objectives in a near future (18-24 months); particularly strong have been:

- the public relation strategy to the “world of sports” (athletes, sports organization leaders, schools and universities, public policy makers, company managers);
- the “long-term and gradual approach”, which has brought to sign with the National Government a “*Protocollo d’Intesa*” where sports is specifically mentioned as a tool against corruption and with the Provincial Government of Milan (the most relevant local one in Italy) a “*Protocollo d’Intesa*” as a commitment in using sports as a leverage for promoting legal culture and rules respect; contextually is being discussed at a preliminary stage a similar private-public agreement with the Regione Lombardia Government, which counts over 35% of Italian GDP; the strategy aims at steadily extending the agreements, according to a policy focused on strong relations with territories.

In this context, the Working Paper (10 April 2009) finds high appreciation from TI-IT and represents the opportunity both to operate since now on within a larger framework which enhances its effectiveness, and to contribute effectively to international activities of TI on the issue.

The approach of TI-It has been so far:

- deliberately uniquely based on a “not denouncing” policy, with tools and actions aimed at “ploughing and seeding” the terrain both culturally and politically;
- deliberately based on initial exclusion of football, due to the not governable media impact and effects, concentrating on other very popular sports (athletics/track and field, basket, fencing, swimming, rowing, bob, tennis, rugby, and others).

Taking into account that:

- Italian has a leading international image in sports, with high media potential;
- Italy is playing a recognized leading role in anti-doping policies and strategies (with consequent and visible effects in lower performances of top athletes), specially compared to USA, developing countries and recent EU States;

It looks affordable to implement strategies from with other National Chapters, coordinated from Berlin “headquarters”, which combine a “bottom up/cultural educative approach” and a “top down approach/denunciative”, according to sub-issues, priorities, tools, communication logics to be discussed and shared in a common “platform”. Italian experience, know-how and qualified/”grassroots” networks are at disposal.

2. Comments directly related to the Working Paper

The contents of Paper is very much to be appreciated, since it summarizes briefly the key topics of the issue and articulates the question in a pragmatic way.

As far as the Italian perspective allows to say, it is possibly true that there is a growing “gap” between:

- the perception of public opinions in general of what sports is: they look at it increasingly as a problem, not less than they look – used to look - at it as a “positive value”;
- the perception of the “world of sports”, which underestimate this public feeling” and conceives itself like non having to be binded to any form of accountability and procedures aimed at social responsibility practices; this idea moves from the self-postulated persuasion that “the implicit values of sports” justifies full autonomy, to some extent under the “symbolic protection” of volunteering and non profit approaches.

The Italian incidence of Sports in GDP (*Data 2001, the most reliable one, “Primo Rapporto sullo Sport in Italia”, Nomisma/IlSole24Ore/SWG; it includes national tourism activities related to sports practices*) has been estimated 2,5%.

It is likely to have increased since then.

A correct diffusion of reliable data and figures on sports might prove to be pretty important both on the side of fostering self-consciousness in sport operators and on the side of gaining attention by other civil society components.

The Paper proposes the structuring of the issue “sports and corruption” in four areas:

- Organized Crime
- Governance
- Contracts
- Private Sector

At “first sight” it looks appropriate. It might be taken into consideration to include a sort of distinction between:

- “*What the sports operators can do on their own*”
- “*What the sports operators have to rely also on other actors*”

Another “area” which might deserve specific attention is Media.

Specific importance might be attributed in theoretical analysis to the concept of “*volunteering*” and possibile misuses/abuses of it.

3. Some general considerations on the issue

In order to be as effective as desirable, it is likely very important to refer to general data on the sports industry, and more widely on the “sports impact on societies”. In last analysis, the real legitimation for TI in dealing with the issue “must be demonstrated” and the best way to do it is to be very solid in showing how “corruption in sports” affects deeply societies and economies. It is no longer “a matter of sport practicants”, on the contrary “a matter of society”.

The “statistic and qualitative” challenge to measure, describe and interpret the “sports phenomena” seems to be a constitutive part of the challenge of coping with sports corruption.

To this regard, any kind of analysis to be conducted and broadcasted must reveal real and direct knowledge of sports practices, if is to be considered by sports operators; otherwise the legitimation will be limited to the “denunciation role” and limit the chances of effective adoption of Codes, Integrity Pacts and similar instruments.

It is equally very important to define the concept “corruption in sports” as most precisely as possible, so that no confusion arises on it.

It is to be suggested not the vehiculate the idea that “Sports” was sometimes in the past universe characterized by full integrity: sports has been to some extent “corrupted” since its very beginning, and all sports practicants are conscious of this matter of fact.

The “Betting Industry” is to be considered as a “dimension” of corruption of sports well recognized by sports practicants and operators: at their eyes, this attributes a legitimate role to “external actors”.

4. Possible approaches to adopt and actions to implement

Related to its high potential and the specific peculiarities of sports operators, the Italian experience suggests to proceed very gradually with the issue “sports”, aiming at finding a pragmatic balancing between “*unveiling problems*” and “*promoting sports values*”.

In this sense, it looks very effective to be “partner” of Governments, and not their counterpart (as TI-It is implementing). A prerequisite for effective action is to positionate TI as a brand to be perceived as an allied to accompan “denunciation” with “solutions” and clearly identified as not political partisan, and not be perceived as “*the Greenpeace of Corruption in Sports*”; it must be taken into account at the same time that sports practicants have most political sensibilities where an excessive stress on “politics” risks to produce opposite effects. At the same time, self-estimation of “sports people” is pretty high: any denunciation obtains real effects only if accompanied by specific activities.

To this regard, it looks opportune to be at the same time “partner” of sports societies and associations, after a preliminary confrontation phase without public visibility.

In order to coordinate the different TI-Chapters it might be taken into consideration to.

- *Individuate a Steering Committee*
- *Build a Shared Digital Archive on Initiatives on Sports*

From a global perspective, it should be taken into consideration the very deep differences in sports between “developed countries” and “developing countries”.

At an action level, a possible articulation to set any strategy on sport corruption is:

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| OBJECTIVIZE/MEASURE THE PHENOMENA (PreRequisite) |
| INDIVIDUATE BESTPRACTICES/EDUCATION (Bottom Up) |
| DENOUNCE/SOLUTIONS (Top Down) |