



Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Corrected oral evidence: National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Wednesday 3 February 2021

3.25 pm

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Members present: Lord Willis of Knaresborough (The Chair); Lord Addington; Baroness Brady; The Earl of Devon; Baroness Grey-Thompson; Lord Hayward; Baroness Morris of Yardley; Lord Moynihan; Baroness Sater; Lord Snape.

Evidence Session No. 11

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 79 - 89

Witnesses

I: Mads Andreassen, Head of Activity Development, Norwegian Sports Confederation; Dr Josef Fahlén, Associate Professor at Umeå University, Sweden, and Visiting Professor, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Norway; Dr Eivind Å Skille, Professor of Sport Sociology, Faculty of Social and Health Sciences, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Mads Andreassen, Dr Josef Fahlén and Dr Eivind Å Skille.

Q79 **The Chair:** Good afternoon. Welcome to our witnesses today from Norway and Sweden. We are absolutely delighted that you have joined us. We wanted to get a flavour from outside the UK of what is happening in other nations that have a strong history and commitment to sport and recreation. You are the best in the business, I am told, so we are delighted to have you. The committee will not mark you on presentation, but I can assure you that it will have some interesting questions for you. Please feel free to ask for a question to be repeated if there is any doubt about it.

We welcome Mads Andreassen, the head of activity development at the Norwegian Sports Confederation; Dr Josef Fahlén, associate professor at Umeå University, Sweden, and visiting professor at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences in Norway; and Dr Eivind Å Skille, the professor of sports sociology at the faculty of social and health sciences at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences.

You will get a transcript of this meeting. If you feel you have been misrepresented, please let us know and we will correct it before we publish any evidence.

My question will go first to Mads, but I would like all three of you to answer it. What are the main objectives and targets for sport and recreation policy in Norway and Sweden? Is policy determined mainly at the centre by central government, or are the municipalities involved directly in developing the policy? How successful are the respective Governments of Norway and Sweden in delivering on what are really quite impressive objectives?

Mads Andreassen: Thank you for that question and for having us. Let me give you a brief overview of Norwegian sports first. We are a voluntary organisation with over 2.2 million members in a population of 5.5 million. We have almost 12,000 sports clubs all around the country, and you will find a sports club in every municipality in Norway.

The difference between us and several other European countries may be that all sports are together in one organisation. We have participatory grass-roots sport in the same organisation as elite sport, Paralympic sport, and corporate sports. That means that we have a strong relationship with government because we are only one body that communicates and discusses with government, and it gives us a unique position. Of course, gathering all this together also creates a lot of tension and discussions, but the discussions are within the sports organisation and not necessarily about taking decisions at a national level.

The national policies coming from government are very similar to those of the sports organisations. What comes first? Is it government policy or is

it the sport organisation policy? It is kind of a hen-and-egg discussion because it is very similar.

The main policy is to create opportunities for everybody to be active in sport, and our vision is joy of sport for all. If you ask youth in Norway today, 93% will say they have been part of a sports club during their childhood years and that they have participated in youth sport between the ages of 13 and 19; 75% of them have been part of youth sport.

We have a huge responsibility to include everybody. If we were only 20% of the population, maybe we could narrow the policies, but being such a big organisation it is important that we look to everybody.

Lifelong participation is the ground value of it, and facilitating that will be the main policy.

You asked about the municipalities. I would not say that they necessarily ground the sport policies, but they have a very important role in building facilities—both facilitating land for it and financing and building facilities. Most of the facilities are built with one-third finance between government, the municipality and the sports club. There is close co-operation, so to speak, between them.

The Chair: Josef?

Dr Josef Fahlén: Thank you for having me. Sweden and Norway are very similar in many ways, especially given what Mads said about the hen and the egg. Whose policy is it?

Taking it at face value, the official sports policy in Sweden has three main objectives: public health, social cohesion and entertainment. All three should be strived for by participation in club-based sport. Those are the main objectives.

As for the division between central and municipal governments, the policy exists only on a national level even though many municipalities in Sweden—290 in total—have their own policies, but they are very much in line with central government.

Central funding is about €200 million annually to club sport, while municipal support amounts to some €700 million. Even though it is difficult to see the municipal impact at policy level, there is a big impact on funding.

The Chair: You said €200 million from central government and €700 million from the municipalities.

Dr Josef Fahlén: That is right.

The Chair: That is mostly spent on capital investment, is it, in sport and recreation?

Dr Josef Fahlén: It is. Some goes to the national and regional sports organisations, but the majority of the funds goes straight down to sports

clubs to activate children. In Sweden, a normal sports club would get a sum from the central government and a sum from the municipal government for each participant and each time it arranged an activity. That amounts to a third of sports clubs' revenues in Sweden.

The Chair: Does the sports club have to have some form of registration to qualify for those grants? What are the qualifications they have to meet?

Dr Josef Fahlén: It has to be registered as a non-profit, volunteer membership-based sports club and a member of its specific NSO—the Swedish Ski Federation or what have you. To get that registration, it has to be open for all and non-profit, and it cannot accumulate capital.

The Chair: Eivind?

Dr Eivind Å Skille: Thank you for the invitation. It is an interesting scene, I have to say. I hope that we do not let you down. I had some indication beforehand of the questions today, so I would say that we probably have the same challenges as you, and it is interesting that you look to us for the answers.

I admit that we have good numbers compared to the population. As Mads said, we have many sports participants compared to the overall population of the country. We have very similar systems, which Josef sketched, to Sweden. We have some money going straight from the state—the Ministry of Culture, where the sports policy is designed—down to the clubs. To register, they need to be members of the Norwegian Sports Confederation and, by definition, a non-profit organisation.

Of the approximately 2.9 billion NOK, 55 per cent goes on building facilities, and, as Mads sketched, there is very often a one-third agreement between central government, municipal government and the voluntary organisation, building and maintaining it for their own activity.¹

Most of the central policy is money for facilities. Then, most of the rest of it goes to the Norwegian Sports Confederation in one form or another: to the central administration where Mads works, for example; to the national federations for skiing, football and so on; and to regional sports organisations.

The difficult part of the question, in my view, is the municipal involvement. In Norway specifically, you need a property to build something, and that is a city council or municipality council issue. Also, you usually get some economic support for that.

¹ Note by witness: figures were sourced from the Norwegian Ministry of Culture's 2019 *Distribution of gaming funds for sporting purposes (the main distribution)* figures, found at: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kud/tilskudd/Distribution-of-gaming-funds-for-sporting-purposes-the-main-distribution/id764857/>. The total distribution for 2019 was 2.861.459.000 NOK, with 1.580.237.000 NOK (55 per cent) distributed to sports facilities: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kud/tilskudd/Distribution-of-gaming-funds-for-sporting-purposes-the-main-distribution/id764857/>

When it comes to more than that, it is very hard when we teach these issues in sports politics, because the municipalities vary so much. We often say that, when we teach sports policy, we teach the central government because that is for all over the country. The municipalities differ very much literally in how rich they are and in how interested the politicians are in sport or other cultural activity, which is the definition of sport in the Norwegian system. It is defined as culture, not as health or defence. It competes with other soft policy issues, if that is a way to put it.

Q80 The Chair: Before I hand over to my colleagues, Mads, can I ask this? We are particularly interested in increasing the number of UK citizens who lead active lives. Sport is part of that, but recreational activities are part of it, too. Do you make that division in Norway and Sweden?

Mads Andreassen: Yes, we do.

The Chair: Let me give you an example. If I was a yoga club or a dance club, could I affiliate and therefore get a draw-down of money from central government to sponsor and support that activity?

Mads Andreassen: It is important to understand that the sports clubs are driven from the bottom. People living in an area go together because they have the same interests; they want to go skiing, for example. They want someone to organise it. Then you form a sports club. At some point, some of them in this sports club want to compete with other sports clubs and do competitions, so they organise a federation that can help them to organise sports competitions. At the next level, the federations see that what they need is someone to help them to do the framework, facilities and financing, so they organise the sports organisation on top.

The sports clubs are members of their own national sports federation and of NIF, the sports organisation on top. They have to do one of the activities that the national sports associations are doing. You have to fit into the 55 different national federations to be part of that.

Of course, there are different demands on how you are organised. You have to be a volunteer-based democratic organisation, and so on. There are legal distinctions, and you cannot earn money, as Eivind said earlier.

The Chair: I understand that. Eivind?

Dr Eivind Å Skille: I would say a clear “yes” to your question. There is a slight difference between the goal of the organisation and the Government. The Government’s ambition for sports policy is sport and physical activity for all. Physical activity includes yoga. Skiing perhaps is the typical Norwegian thing these days that you can do either within or outside an organised sports club. I went skiing yesterday. I used the tracks of the ski club. I pay a membership, because I have an over-average interest in sport probably, but I do not have to. I could just go outside and do my skiing. It is a tricky question when it comes to politics, because you need the channels to get things done—and the confederation is the channel—but providing facilities helps.

The Chair: We will follow this up a little bit later. I will bring in the Earl of Devon now. We have slightly more time on each question today, so if anybody wants to come in, please put your hand up in the normal way.

The Earl of Devon: Before I start, I will read for the record my declaration of interests as this is my first appearance on the committee. I am a patron of Exeter City Football Club's community trust. I am a patron of the Devon Gardens Trust. I am a patron of the Devon Wildfowling & Conservation Association and the Starcross Yacht Club. I am a member of the Liveable Exeter Place Board and I chair its visitor economy recovery subgroup. I am a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Rural Business and the Rural Powerhouse as well as the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Conservation, Places and People. I own Powderham Castle, an estate that is a venue for sports, recreation and community well-being, and we have a number of academic partnerships with Exeter, Plymouth, Oxford and Pennsylvania Universities, which involve heritage, recreation and well-being.

I am a member of and former player for the London Scottish Rugby Football Club. I am a member of the St Moritz Tobogganing Club, the Cambridge University Hawks' Club, and the BASC. I am a fan of and former player for Harlequins, Exeter, and Santa Monica rugby clubs. I played last year for the parliamentary cricket team. I am an employed barrister at Michelmores, solicitors, with clients who are active in sports and recreation. That completes the list.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Q81 **The Earl of Devon:** I have a question on diversity and inclusion. The committee understands that countries like Norway and Sweden achieve better results in gender equality in sport and recreation participation than England, at least in certain age groups. What approach do Norway and Sweden take to promote gender equity and participation among, for example, women and girls, people from lower socioeconomic groups and LGBTQ people?

Dr Eivind Å Skille: It is a good question, and a hard one. What do we do? We would say we struggle with the same issues, especially higher up in the age groups. I just taught about these things for a master's class. The graphs are very clear that during primary school the participation numbers are relatively similar between boys and girls. I cannot exactly say because there are some issues between sports disciplines.

The inequality increases with age. It seems to be normal for all children starting school to start playing sport. I used to tell conferences that on your first day of school in Norway you go home with your bag full of papers. If you have 10 notes from different clubs and organisations, there will be approximately seven from sports clubs. Everybody then goes to the football club the next week to join a parents' meeting, and then there is some other music and dance class information.

It is hard to say. Perhaps Mads will say something better from the sports organisation side. I would say that there is a kind of grass-roots culture and that there is an expectation among at least primary school age groups that you play sport independent of categorisation by gender, ethnicity or anything else. The divisions appear later. The general expectation is that children play sport, if that is the way to put it, but we struggle when they grow up and with probably the same things you struggle with.

The Earl of Devon: I know you work with the indigenous Sámi people and minority groups. Is it the same for those groups in society as for society as a whole?

Dr Eivind Å Skille: That is a very good question. I would say that for the Sámi people we cannot see any difference. The Sámi people are very integrated. They live normal lives, if that is the way to put it, just like you and me. They go to the same schools. They go to the same clubs.

The big challenge when it comes to gender equality is immigrant girls from, to be precise, certain Middle East countries. Those are the huge challenges when it comes to participation for girls, especially in the big cities. I guess Mads can say more.

The Earl of Devon: Josef, will you give us the view from Sweden?

Dr Josef Fahlén: It is a very good question. From a policy perspective, the idea is to provide quite extensive block grants to support nationwide sports club presence—the main vehicle for reaching everyone—and with these funds to allow sports clubs to provide activities at a very low cost. That would be the main idea behind reaching all groups.

In addition, policymakers and sports organisations are struggling with inequalities in different ways. We have just introduced gender quotas in the sports governing bodies as one way to address things from the top, so to speak, hoping for a trickle-down effect. We also have big national programmes to which sports clubs can apply for special funds to keep costs even lower, to address specific neighbourhoods, and to address specific ethnic groups or girls, or what have you.

It is a combined effort of trying to take policy measures from the top on gender quotas and stimulating them from the bottom, making it possible for sports clubs to offer what they usually offer via the block funds and to go the extra mile for certain groups by providing them with extra funding.

The Earl of Devon: Thank you, Josef. Will you comment on the point that Eivind made with respect to school-age children being more equal in gender participation but that as you go up the age groups it becomes less? Is that the same in Sweden?

Dr Josef Fahlén: I recognise the number Mads mentioned initially. I am not familiar with the percentage, but we used to say that nine out of 10 kids in Sweden have been members of a sports club at some point during their upbringing. The numbers are very high. As Eivind said, everyone

starts when they are six years old, and most quit when they are 13, 14, 15 years of age. Girls quit more than boys do. In Sweden, it is between middle school and secondary school when the girls tend to find other interests, and boys, being more devoted to the competitive elements of a sport, usually hang on a few more years before they are out of the competition, so to speak.

Mads Andreassen: I will try not to repeat what Eivind and Josef have been talking about. Please ask me to follow up if you want me to go into more depth on some of those areas.

Looking at women or girls in sport, it is true what Eivind says: it is very equal. If we look at the organisation as a whole, around 42% of girls of all ages are part of the organisation.

What is important to bring in here is that there is a huge difference in the gender balance between the federations. In some of the federations you will find almost 100% men, and in others you will find a higher average—for example, in gymnastics, dancing, handball or horseback riding, where the percentage of women is much higher than men. There is a difference between the different federations, and they have different challenges.

I looked at the inquiry for the committee. I am very interested, because we have made special efforts to include the same groups as you guys have set out here. For example, girls from immigrant families have been a priority, and we see quite a good increase in that group in Norwegian sport because there are targeted efforts from sports clubs and municipalities. They are definitely developing.

Going back to women, I would say that our main focus is increasing the number of female leaders in sports clubs and in the organisation in general. We are all the way down, in that 24% of all leaders of sports clubs are women. There is definitely a need to improve that, and it is very politically enhanced.

On inclusion, we are working a lot with special money coming from government down to 15 of the biggest cities where sports clubs work directly in areas with higher percentages of immigrants, trying to include more. There is definitely extra effort there.

We are making extra effort with children living in families with financial barriers, both in helping those children in those families, but also looking at the sports structure and the costs of taking part in sport to try to reduce the barriers.

You asked also about LGBTQ work. We have had special emphasis on this since 2012, especially looking at harassment and the use, for example, of “gay” as a curse word. The work here is especially important to increase openness in sports clubs, to make coaches aware and actually tell their players or their team that if someone is gay or lesbian it does not matter—they are all welcome there. They are opening the arena to be

open about it. There is definitely an awareness, but there is also a long way to go.

The Chair: Baroness Brady, you wanted to come in.

- Q82 **Baroness Brady:** Both Mads and Eivind mentioned targeted policies and projects to increase equality, particularly among young girls and the LGBTQ+ community. Can you give us any examples of anything specific that we could look at? If you cannot tell us on this call, perhaps you could follow up with us.

Dr Eivind Å Skille: It is a good question. Some of what Mads was talking about was specific projects. There is a special arrangement to support sports clubs in targeting the underprivileged, especially in the cities where the density of immigrants is higher than in the other parts of the population.

Some years ago, I did my PhD on the forerunner of that programme. They support sports clubs, perhaps paying staff to do what parents usually do as voluntary work. That is a big, related issue to the one we are speaking about, because we say that sport is colour blind but voluntary work is white. That tells us quite a lot.

It is a culture barrier for immigrants to understand the Norwegian sports system, which is very much volunteer based. It is based on privileged parents or families with higher education, perhaps not elite athletes necessarily but with some cultural competence with sport and sports organisation taking part, and more or less running their voluntary sports clubs at the grass-roots level. If you combine that with the fact that the white person is usually a male, girls—and especially immigrant girls—have close to no local idols and coaches. That is the specific programme that Mads mentioned: getting immigrant coaches into sports clubs to attract and facilitate immigrant participation.

- Q83 **Lord Addington:** The question I have to ask you is: how do you balance between organised sport and general participation? What is the balance in your two countries?

I would like to ask one other question. In Britain, we have a culture that sports and sports clubs tend to maintain their own property. In your nations, do you require the local football club or the football association to maintain pitches, or is that done by the state? Will you work that in as well, because I think there might be a big cultural difference?

Dr Josef Fahlén: Those are very good questions. I would say that the balance is drawn in favour of formal sport participation. Since one of the main objectives of supporting organised sport in Swedish sports policy is social cohesion and community, the Government want people to get together. That is why most of the money is poured into organised sport.

Even so, in Sweden and Norway we acknowledge that some groups do not find themselves being attracted to club activities for different reasons—religious or what have you—and we are aware that in Norway

money is mainly allocated to facilities to keep tracks, ski slopes and ice rinks open for informal, self-organised sport participation.

On your other question about facilities, I would say that, even though many facilities in Sweden are owned by local municipalities, especially in the bigger cities, you will also find a lot of facilities being owned and maintained by local sports clubs. You will see all sorts of arrangements from the municipality owning it, the club renting it or the club maintaining it, or the club owning it and the municipality taking care of it. There are no clear patterns, I would say. It is perhaps a third of each.

Dr Eivind Å Skille: I would say that it is somewhat similar in Norway. If I combine the answer to these two questions, I would say that facilities are the link. I often use the example of the city of Bergen in the west, which has a huge unit in the municipal administration taking care of sports facilities. It is easy for sports clubs to rent it more or less for free. However, where I live, which is a small town, I would not say that the municipality does not care, but it feels like that when you represent local football clubs. When I lived in Oslo, the municipal park unit kept the grass and marked the football pitches. Where I live now, I have to pay more as a parent to the football club and it does it itself.

There are huge differences, as Josef says. I do not know, Mads, what the confederation says about these things, but that is my experienced reality combined with some research.

Mads Andreassen: It is hard to argue with your final point.

I would say that there is definitely interest in government to increase self-organised or informal activities. For us as a sports organisation, I would say that building facilities opens up that self-organised sport. As Eivind said, the ski slopes are open and most of the facilities around are open to self-organised activities when children and youths are not using them. That means that, if you facilitate or build facilities or open areas and think about how people can be more active in that area, it will be open for self-organised activities.

There is also a unit that got money outside organised sport for looking into how the municipalities can build facilities or build activity areas to enhance the possibility of doing self-organised activities. I would say there is definitely a way of doing it. It is not contradictory to organised sport, because they facilitate each other.

I would probably bring in one more aspect, and that is that when children and youth are active, a lot of the parents do self-organised sport. It is connected to the sports club, but it is still self-organised. You have, for example, a driver's cup in table tennis, which means that those who have been driving children and youths go together and play. Different exercises are done while the children's training is organised. A lot of self-organised activities go on around sports clubs because they are such a strong environment.

We encourage municipalities to look at how you can combine facilities built for school with facilities built for sports clubs so that they can be used both in the daytime and in the evening, and they will then be open to the public in general because they are owned by the municipality.

Lord Addington: As a supplementary, in both nations, where a sports facility is provided for a school or a club, is there an expectation and pressure to make sure that it is available to people outside those key groups? We have underusage here in Great Britain, certainly recently. Let us start in Sweden again.

Dr Josef Fahlén: I would definitely agree. I do not think it is possible for a municipality to build a facility these days without having voiced concerns about the access for outsiders or for those who are not organised in sports clubs. The municipality where I live introduced regulations stating that it is not possible to book a certain amount of the available time at a facility, so that my kids or other kids can go there when they please and do whatever they want.

Dr Eivind Å Skille: In Norway, I would say that we have the same arrangements. Very often, the facilities are connected to schools, and when the school day ends it is booked time for sports clubs. Smaller football pitches and smaller facilities are regulated so they should be open for the self-organised, as we call it.

The Chair: You mentioned schools. I would like to come on to children and young people, and bring in Baroness Morris.

Q84 **Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Thank you very much. That is a very good link because I want to ask you about sport in school and what part it plays in your national approach to sport and recreation. In particular, we noticed two things that seemed to be different in Norway and Sweden compared with what we have experienced here. One was the focus on children's rights and particularly what seemed to be non-competitiveness in terms of openness in the under-13s. We were also interested in the recreation declaration in Norway, which seemed to give children an entitlement to get involved in one sport. Those are two specific things.

The question really is how you see what happens in sport in schools fitting into what you have already said, and how influential it is.

Dr Eivind Å Skille: We do not have sport in school like you are used to. I stayed half a year in New Zealand, which is similar to your system. That was very interesting to me because it was very different.

We have PE in school and sport outside school. It is as simple as that. Therefore, it is very easy to say that, in Norway, sport is a voluntary organised system; it is outside.

It is interesting that you ask about children's rights, because my feeling is that it is very contested in Norway. Some would say that it hinders elite athlete development to deny people ranking before the age of 12 or 13. Some would say that, because of that, we make a very broad base before

we select the best, because it probably makes the youth stay longer in sport. If you can pick from 100 17 year-old talents, it is better than picking from 10 because the rest of them quit before 12. There are different opinions. That is the fair thing to say about it.

When it comes to the declaration part of it—you have to help me, Mads—I do not feel that we have any declaration in an Act kind of way. We do?

Mads Andreassen: Yes.

Dr Eivind Å Skille: Okay, please help me.

Mads Andreassen: We have something called the declaration of recreation that is signed between government, different ministries, sports federations and NGOs—music, boy scouts and so on—to ensure that all children have the opportunity to participate in at least one organised recreational activity with others.

It is an interesting co-operation. It is mainly words on paper, but it gives us as a sporting organisation a way of trying to get the ministries to work together—to combine their different efforts and to talk together. It creates an arena where all the volunteer organisations can discuss and see what efforts we are making to reduce costs or what mechanisms we have to capture those who cannot afford to participate. In many ways, it is just a declaration, but in other ways it works effectively in creating a discussion.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: I think I know the answer to this, but am I right in assuming that what you mean by PE as opposed to sports is that, in school, the children might learn basic skills?

Dr Eivind Å Skille: By PE, I mean physical education as a school subject, and it is not sport.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: Is it teamwork? How does that differ from sport outside school? Is it not team based? Is it more skill based, for example?

Dr Eivind Å Skille: Physical education is a subject alongside Norwegian language, history and maths. It should contain both team sports and individual sports skills.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: One of the things we struggle with is that, if somebody is very keen on something in school, the link when they leave school to join a club is quite difficult. That is one of the points at which they drop out. Does your approach make it easier for children and young people to move from sport in school to sport in clubs?

Mads Andreassen: To emphasise Eivind's point, we do not have school sports. There are a few single competitions between schools, but those are the exception. People do not join one sport in school. They will do different sports and get introduced to different physical activities.

If I may come back to rights, you talked about the rights of the child and how we organise children's sport. That may be the single reason why we are so organised in sport. It is also one of the most important reasons why we are the best sporting nation in the world, according to statistics: because we combine the two. We make sure that as many as possible participate as early as possible.

We have the rights of the child, which is led from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, looking at safety, mastery, influence, the freedom to choose whichever sport you want to do or several sports, making sure that competitions are open for everybody, and that family income or family support is not necessarily the basis of whether you can participate or not.

The other part of it is what we usually get reactions from. As Eivind said, there are different opinions on it. All the national federations have confirmed those provisions on children's sport and said that they agree that that is the way to organise it. The way we organise it is that we have different levels of how far you can travel to compete.

When we introduce rankings and result lists, for example, prizes should be given to everybody. From six years old, you are allowed to participate only locally, which means within your own municipality for most sports. Then you can go regionally at nine, and national at 11, and go to the other Nordic countries, but you are not allowed until the age of 13 to compete outside of that. The reason we do this is not only cost-related, because you have to travel less, but to reduce the focus on competitions and results. If you do that, you encourage them to think about development instead of results.

By making sure that we do not make the competitions too serious too early, we maintain many more children in sports for longer. We know that, for every year they participate in organised sport, they will increase their skills and interest in the sport. Public health-wise, every year they participate in organised sport increases the chance of them being physically active after they quit organised sport. It is also a public health argument to keep them inside organised sport as long as possible.

Dr Josef Fahlén: I will try to add something that has not been said already concerning the PE/sport divide in Sweden. The advocates of PE teachers and unions for PE teachers have struggled for a century to distance themselves from sport having legitimacy as a school subject and not as a leisure time activity. The link is to provide schoolchildren with the joy of learning how to move, and then they will eventually find their way into sports clubs. That is the model that they are going for in Sweden. At some point, they bring in sports clubs, perhaps once per semester, so that local sports clubs can introduce themselves.

Eivind talked previously about leaflets in bags so that students or pupils can meet local sports clubs and learn about squash, table tennis, skiing or what have you. The main purpose of PE in school is to train students

to be versatile and to enjoy moving their bodies, and hopefully this will lead to a lifelong interest in physical activity inside or outside sport.

As for the children's rights perspective, we recently put the UN convention into law. All sport activities must adhere to the rules stipulated in the convention.

We have for many years—I would say 20 years—looked very enviously at our neighbours who have been more progressive in dictating rules, which Mads talked about: rules against competing outside your region, and rules on doing this or that before you are 13. A lot of Swedish scholars and people interested in sport question why we have not gone the same way in Sweden. Instead, we have installed ombudsmen, whistleblower functions, educational programmes, and gone that way instead, and tried to use soft policies instead of hard measures. When I teach about this, I always take the Norwegian example as the most progressive.

- Q85 The Earl of Devon:** This is a follow-up question for Mads because he explained how competition is not an evaluation for children under 13. How are sports clubs evaluated, and how do they compete? In the UK, they all love to talk about their records and successes. How are sports clubs in Norway evaluated on performance? Is it numbers of participants or some other measure?

Mads Andreassen: I would say that in many ways they are not really measured. The recognition is in two ways. It is, of course, producing elite athletes in the future. That is also important. Becoming a huge talent is recognised especially by parents of young athletes. I would not say that this is totally non-existent.

The participation rate is very important, and keeping youth as long as possible may be the highest political goal for the Norwegian Government. It is to have youth continue as long as possible. The challenge is that, by the end of high school, only 25% of 19 year-olds participate in organised sport. There is a huge drop-out during the youth years, but we see it pushing longer and longer. Participation, I would say, is the most evaluated. If you look at evaluation, the more members you have, the more money you get both from national funds and local funds. That is a way of valuing the efforts to keep youth, for example. You get more money for retaining youth than you get for retaining adults or children, for example.

- Q86 Baroness Grey-Thompson:** Thank you very much. I am really interested in how you work with disabled children and adults and enable them to be active. Figures were published in the UK today to show the huge gap that exists for disabled people. I am interested in your model of inclusion and how the governing bodies of the different organisations have come together to deliver activity and maybe sport.

Mads Andreassen: I am head of activity development, and in my department I also have guys working with parasports—people with disabilities. We call it parasports, not meaning elite Paralympic sport but parasport in general.

This is also a subject in which there is a high effort from government. Earmarked government money is given to us to be used for sport for disabled people, and we also give the national federations money that is specially earmarked for working with people with disabilities. That was an important factor when we went for an inclusive model.

In 2007, the national sports organisation for the disabled was dissolved, and that was their own goal: to be fully included in all the special federations. That meant that, if you were doing alpine skiing, as I was, it was important to be part of the Ski Federation and have skilled ski coaches available, not necessarily coaches who were good at telling me how it was to be disabled.

Mainstreaming sport for disabled people has been important both politically and for our sport organisation, and that has increased the variety of activities that you can participate in.

In the national sports organisation for the disabled, there were maybe 10 or 15 sports. Now, at least the 54 federations and over 250 sports disciplines are in principle available to everybody. There are a lot more people working towards including people with disabilities.

It is a high effort but definitely not an easy one. Recruitment and information are challenging. We see a rise in the competence of the coach, for example, as one of the most important aspects. When parents with a disabled child come to a club, the first meeting with the club is so important for them to feel welcome and to stay in the activity.

Dr Josef Fahlén: Similarly, as I said about the UN convention, we in Sweden lag a bit behind our Norwegian brothers and sisters. Two years ago, we started this marathon process of the Swedish Parasports Federation with the same goals that Mads talked about, which Norway did way back. The goal is that, next year or the year after, all parasports should be included in their respective discipline. If you are a disabled downhill skier, you will be a member of the Swedish skiing federation and not a member of the Swedish Parasports Federation. We are going the same way in this regard, but lagging a bit behind.

Q87 **Lord Snape:** May I ask you to return to the question of participation for the sake of participation, compared to winners and losers? The right-wing press in the UK belittle that concept and say that winning and losing is a part of training for life. Do you get similar criticism in Norway or Sweden about participation for the sake of being involved in sport rather than winners and losers?

Dr Eivind Å Skille: It is a very good question. The answer is yes. There are voices. On the other hand, I have been involved in the last couple of years in some research into elite sport culture. We have researched several elite national teams in Norway in seven different sports. It has already been mentioned during the conversation. The key word here is focus, the focus on development, because you can focus on development when you are 11 years old, and you can focus on development when you

are 32 and at the top of your career in the national handball team or whatever.

It is perhaps blowing sunshine over Norway to say this, but the national team coaches in, for example, handball and swimming—I can say that, because they are already identified—themselves emphasise that the result is a by-product of good development work. I would say that it is probably not the only answer, but that is the key word in my answer on the relationship between participation and elite achievements.

Q88 Baroness Sater: National campaigns can be hugely successful in encouraging more people to get active and specifically more groups to engage in physical activity. We had The Daily Mile and This Girl Can campaigns, for example. Can you give us any examples of successful campaigns that have been run in your country? Do you think they are a positive in encouraging more of the difficult groups that we are trying to get more active?

Mads Andreassen: I do not think I can refer to any successful campaigns on physical activity, and I do not believe in campaigns for physical activity. I am sorry to say that.

I think the main, important, thing for us to communicate, and what makes our organisation different from other countries, is that politicians should not get too focused on public health, inclusion, integration or diversity. The main goal is to deliver quality sport. If we deliver quality sport, people will participate. If you try to motivate children with inclusion, health or other objectives, they will leave sport because they are there to have fun, to be with their friends, and to do physical activity.

Eivind has done research on it or knows someone who has done so. After the Lillehammer Olympics in 1994, we had huge activity campaigns concerning getting people into shape before the Olympics, but those campaigns are so short term and they die out. I do not know if they worked at that time, either.

I am sorry, but I do not know of any campaigns. The most important thing we do to include people in more physical activity is to make sure that the clubs deliver quality sports activities—quality in the way they include people, and have people who see everyone, good coaches—and that we make sure that we deliver quality activity every day. Everything else will be a consequence of that, including elite sport.

The Chair: I will bring in Lord Moynihan to have the final word. I am pretty sure that our other two guests would like to make a comment about Baroness Sater's and Lord Snape's questions, but I will bring you in at the moment, Lord Moynihan, and we will see whether we can manage all that before 20 to the hour.

Q89 Lord Moynihan: Thank you, Lord Chair. Maybe our guests will be able to answer those questions in the context of the very wide question that you asked.

The Chair: I thought so.

Lord Moynihan: We have looked at the past and the present. My question focuses on what you believe will be the future direction of sport and recreation policies in your country. Josef, I will ask you when answering that to focus on one aspect that is happening in the UK. We are moving away from the formal sector of sport to focusing on policies that use sport as a catalyst for engaging a healthy lifestyle and recreation—for example, in the criminal justice system and health education as well as sport. Do you see your Government also moving in that direction to recognise that policies towards an active lifestyle will become increasingly important?

Dr Josef Fahlén: That is a very good question. First, we also see in Sweden the politics surrounding the idea of using sport as a catalyst for a wide range of objectives—obesity, criminality, what have you. But we also see that sport organisations—and Mads said it very well—do not want that because they think, and we have good research supporting this, that, whatever objective you are aiming for, you need sports club presence. Whatever catalyst you are aiming for, you have to have a sports club. In order for us to have sports clubs all over Sweden catering for all kinds of groups, we need block funding. No campaign can solve that in the long term as much as block funding can.

I would say that even if you want to use sport as a catalyst—and that is fine with me, because that is a political decision and not a decision for us researchers to have an opinion on—you need someone to address. You need someone to send programmes to or to do campaigns with, and in order for that to happen you need a speaking partner. In Sweden, the sports club or the Swedish Sports Confederation have been the go-to guy for 118 years. If we are to pick out something that seems to have worked in Sweden and Norway, it is that relationship. Despite all the disadvantages and drawbacks, both parties—government and sports organisations—agree on the fact that they are in the same boat, so to speak, and need each other.

If I were to say anything as advice for the future, I would advise you to try to do something for the longevity of the common sports club, because if you do not have them in place it does not matter what programme you have.

Lord Moynihan: Tanni Grey-Thompson reflected in her question on a very dark day here because of the Activity Alliance report on disabled people showing that the pandemic was widening existing inequalities for disabled people and creating new ones, and that is to be found in the world of sport as well. Will the sport and recreation policy direction of your Government focus in the future more on opportunities for the disabled in sport? What will be the priorities for the sport and recreation policy going forward?

Mads Andreassen: There are several questions there. The sports policy that we have in the Nordic countries, and Norway especially, will continue

to be there. Mass participation among children and youth, and emphasising using government money on good children and youth sport, will continue. We see that some of our federations want government to put more money into adult sport because of public health discussions, but I think that across politicians the view is that we need to emphasise putting money into children and youth sport. I think that will continue.

Sport for people with disabilities is already a very highlighted area, and I would say that probably about 10% of the money going to the federations is especially earmarked for doing sport for people with disabilities. A lot of resources have been put into this. This is one special subject that we have to report on every year. Special emphasis is important, but it also aligns with our organisation's goal of the joy of sport for all. It fits well into our policies also.

Lord Moynihan: Thanks very much. Eivind, moving to you finally, what are the key policy changes that will come in the next five years? What will be the drivers behind them? Is the focus going to retain a spotlight on the club structure, or do you think the informal structure will be more prevalent in policy-making decisions?

Dr Eivind Å Skille: That is a very good question. My answer to your very last question would be yes, both. As Josef and Mads have already mentioned, there will still be the same structure and there will still be focus on children and youth within organised sport, but the complexity increases and there is more focus on informal participation. So try to merge those.

If there is one piece of advice, it is to make facilities, and preferably administrative facilities through the public sector system, free for use by sports clubs, sports organisations and the public—so somewhere in between that.

The Chair: On that note, may I say what a splendid afternoon we have had? I thank you all very much indeed. Mads, Josef and Eivind, we have enjoyed very much indeed hearing your views, including the directness, may I say, Mads, of your dismissal of one of the planks of our inquiry? However, the purpose of having witnesses before us is to create that debate, and you certainly did that. As an advocate for what is happening in Norway and Sweden, I would give you 10 out of 10 for your performance. On that note, I thank you all very much and declare this part of the meeting closed.