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## **The Role of Universities Sport in the Promotion of Social Equality and Integration**

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### **Abstract**

This paper understands Sports as a holistic phenomenon with a fundamental role in the promotion and maintenance of well-being as an historical and social practice, connected with the construction of the world and its significances. Universities Sports plays a fundamental role in the Higher Education Institution's governance, as well as in the life of the students who attend them and the academic community. The role of Universities Sports is analysed according to the promotion of Social Equality and Integration, in the dimensions of Social Status perception, Respect, Mutual Consideration, Concern about the Similar One, as well as in the Notions of Community, Fraternity and Solidarity. Reflexions are established upon Gender Equality, Respect for Sexual Orientation, Ethnic Diversity, Violence and Access to Goods and Opportunities. Assuming a constructivist ontological understanding and an interpretative epistemological reasoning, this investigation presents a Transnational Multiple Case-Study, comparing Universities Sport organization in Portugal and in Italy, using Mixed Methods. The main outcome establishes a close relationship between Universities Sport and the Goals of the Southern European Social States, indicating a dialog between these and

the production of a welfare society. The role of Sport as a catalyst for social change is also explored, as it diverts the focus from the individual to the community level, promoting the accountability and the training of the subject for a responsible and constructive social intervention in the public and private spheres.

**Keywords:** Universities Sport, Social Integration, Social Equality, Social Problems, Sports Management.

## Introduction

Sport appears as an uninterested and spontaneous phenomenon. From the French *deport*, indicating “free time” or “after work” the etymology indicates it very clearly. Despite this, the notion of sport as an event for the masses only appears in the literature after the XIX century due to its previous use as an aristocratic and exclusive activity. Sport for the masses come with the industrial revolution and the institutionalisation, in 1896, of the Modern Olympic Games (Pires, 2005). The rise of sport to the status of biggest human phenomenon during the XX century, commands the attention of the Governmental structures around the world when it comes to its sports policies and the way they shape and influence and reinforce the political action.

Modern games mirror an idealistic idea of society as it focuses on the alienating sporting feats to convey the charm of a fair and equal world, tackling the implicit supremacy of one country over the other (Guimar, 2003). Sport was described as phenomenon conveying the “essence of life”, “beauty”, “justice”, “audacity”, “honour”, “joy”, “progress” and “peace” by Pierre Coubertin under the pseudonym of Georges Hohrob and M. Eschbach (Sérgio, 1991; Esteves, 1999). Sport was used to promote the union of different people and countries, and generated social discussions that predicted world problems, such as Human Rights in 1933 with the Berlin Games, 1934 with the regime of Mussolini and the World Football Cup, 1968 with the Black Power movement in the City of Mexico Olympiads. As a tool for the social state, sport may constitute a fundamental piece for the assessment of conditions of living, democratisation and participation, given the correct instrumentalization (Heinemann, 2005). In Portugal, the geographical distribution of the 1<sup>st</sup> league football clubs in the territory is a good predictor of the degree to which the local economy is developed. Also, the international players transfer market can reinforce the trust between two nations (Mezzadri, Moraes e Silva, Figuéroa, & Starepravo, 2015).

These acceptations make the sporting phenomenon very much politically active. The idea of a sovereign state is based upon the Westphalian idea of mutual acknowledgement of the state’s autonomy, mutual respect for borders and the principle of autonomy (Olsen & March, 2001). Sport has been used to fulfil many goals.

Does it have responsibility in what comes to the stability of the social fabric? Is sport a political tool?

Three Worlds of the Welfare State have been described by Esping-Andersen (1990) as either Liberal, Social-Democrat and Conservative. But the literature also suggests the existence of the Southern Welfare regimes, where a cluster made out of Portugal, Italy, Spain and Greece compose a typology that derives from the typical Conservative regime (i, 1992; Petmesidou, 1996, Ferrera, 1996) and is characterised by unstable salary levels, low degree of state penetration in social protection, familiarism as a primary form of care, clientelist ways of accessing the mechanisms of wealth distribution and a combination of public and private institutions on the protection of the population (Karamessini, 2008).

Six moral values are referenced for what Social States, regardless of the formulation, have been traditionally supporting: Poverty reduction, Promotion of Economic Efficiency, Social Equality, Social Integration, Social Stability and Autonomy (Goodin, Headey, Muffels & Dirven, 1999), thus being the areas of intervention that legitimate the State (Habermas, 1973). Couldn't Sport be a social actor in these areas? According to the Eurobarometer of the European Union in 2004, "Citizens of the European Union and Sport", 73% of the population believes sport to be important for the integration of immigrants. Furthermore, 64% of the population thinks it is a way to promote social equality and reduce discrimination. These positions are reinforced and recognised in the White Book of Sport (2007) by the European Commission. In Portugal this is reflected in 25000 sporting entities representing 1.2% of the Gross Value Added in the country, and 1.4% of the Portuguese jobs according to the Satellite Account for Sports in the years 2010-2012 (CASES, 2010). Furthermore, it reflects 48,4% of the activity of 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector entities, as shown in the Satellite Account for Social Economy (2010). This reveals the intricacies of the relationship between sport and welfare (INE, 2016; Special Eurobarometer 213, 2004).

The European Union specifically recognises the value of the social function of Sport, having indicated its importance in education, health, voluntary work and active citizenship, having been infused with the capacity for the promotion of social inclusion, integration and equality (COM, 2007). According to the European Sports Charter (1992), the Council of Europe defines Sports as "every form of physical activity that, through occasional or organised participation, aims at expressing or improve the physical conditioning and the mental wellbeing, constituting social relations or granting results in competitions of every level", containing therefore, social, economic and political responsibilities that opens itself to discriminate and deliberate use. It is an activity where individuals fight for supremacy, an advantage or an opportunity. Sport will be, throughout this article, understood from the perspective of the social structures, representing the struggle for power and status, the conflict of man against man in the complex stratification of individuals in all their difficulties and inequalities (Esteves, 1999).

The present work will dissect the social dimensions of sport from the theoretical framework of the functions of the social state, looking at the European Legislation and analysing how and with which prevalence sport is used to promote Social Equality and Integration in Portugal and Italy. Though mixed methods, a qualitative based research was prosecuted through the application of Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups on two study cases: The Academic Association of Coimbra and the University Sports Centre in Reggio Calabria. Quantitative data was obtained through questionnaires on 106 Student-Athletes from over 30 cities in both countries, constituting a Trans-National study case (Bryman, 2015). A relation between University Sports and the promotion of Integration and Social Equality will be analysed, searching for a correspondence between this phenomenon and the social goals of the State as expressed by Esping-Andersen (1999).

### **Conceptual and Practical Delimitation of University Sports**

There is a multiplicity of sporting expressions in existence. One can certainly argue that some are more influent than others in the social order, making it hard to focus on one limited slice of the phenom. Sport can be promoted through Associations, Clubs, Companies, Foundations and other organisations, but it has been imbedded in the Higher Education Institutions. It grew in between the XIII and XVIII centuries in the first universities in the world in Britain, Spain and Italy but only as spontaneous expressions of the concentration of people (Renson, 1999; Pires, 2005; Parente, 2011). With a more anthropocentric view of the world with the advent of Illuminism, Sport was institutionalised in the XIX century in Britain, during the period of the creation of the Modern Olympics, appearing in Portugal in the Academic Association of Coimbra (Andrade, 2008). The third period of the history in University Sports came with the first National Federations with the first ones appearing in 1905 in the USA, and 1907 in Hungary. The XX century marked the appearance of the *Fédération Internationale du Sport Université* (FISU) created by Paul Schleimer in Luxemburg to unite the Eastern and Western European countries that were competing separately. In 1959 the University Sports Centre in Italy organises the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Summer Universiades in Turin (FISU, 2018). An emphasis was put upon the union between the peoples of the earth and political neutrality. Similarly, the European Universities Sports Association (EUSA) is the continental structure that promotes Universities Sports in Europe, and it was created in 1999 and had the first European Championships done in 2001 in Sérvia&Montenegro and Portugal. The first EUSA Games were first organised in Cordoba, Spain, in 2012, and under the new name of "European Universities Games" were last organised in Coimbra, Portugal, in 2018.

### **Sport, the Social State, Equality and Integration**

Sport constitutes itself as a total social fact under the perspectives of the social structures (Mauss, 1966), and it is often associated with problems such as misogyny, classism, job creation, instrumentalization, racism, economicism and politics (Santos, 2000). It is imperative to demonstrate the umbilical relation between its functions

and the functions of the Social State, taking it into consideration as a complex and multifactorial reality.

The concept of Social Exclusion was developed in 1974 by Renè Lenoir, a former French Secretary of State for Social Action in 1974 in its work, *Les Exclus*, as a complex concept founded in Socio-economic problems which expresses itself as a continuous process of construction and rupture of social bonds (Castel, 1997; Costa, 1998; Paugam, 2009; Alvino-Borba & Mata-Lima, 2011). Based upon a comparative review of the definitions of Social Inclusion, the present investigation will understand it as a multidimensional process to promote cultural, social, political and economic participation, through the intervention in the various segments of vulnerable population by the identification of manifestations of dissatisfaction in their discourses and social actions, applying administrative and practical measures to invest both financial and time resources in an active and efficient way, allowing for a cohesive and dignifying opportunity to access social well-being (Hunter, 2000; Lesbaupin, 2000; Sen, 2000; COM, 2003; Kowarick, 2003; Proença, 2005; Laclau, 2006; World Bank, 2013).

In another hand, Social Equality has been contrasting with the idea of egalitarianism, meaning it is not an equalization of some kind of currency of justice, but the creation of a society that regards everyone as equal to themselves (Fourie, Schuppert and Wallimann-Helmer, 2015). Asymmetric social relations regarding oppression, exclusion and hierarchy are some of the barriers to the achievement of these goals (Sen, 2000).

These aspects do not exist independently of each other, but they are mutually reinforced. In a society with low levels of access to education there will probably be more social injustice (Wixey, Jones, Titheridge and Christodoulou, 2005). Also, social exclusion is reinforced by unemployment, precarious job contracts, poverty and lack of access to goods and services. Cultural factors such as violence, social injustice and educational gaps are some of precursors of exclusion and inequalities (Alvino-Borba & Mata-Lima, 2011). Tackling these problems depends on the capacity to articulate international, national and local structures. No Universally applied action will solve these problems, and this becomes evident when realities across the globe are analysed (United Nations Economic & Social Affairs, 2016).

### **The Paradox in Sport**

The values adjacent to the creation of the modern Olympic movement correspond to the values of modern democracies in humanism, justice, equality, integration and laicism (Guimar, 2003), but Sport is also an event seeking the supremacy and optimization of the individual, feeding upon the overlaying of the weakest one by the strongest individual. In trying to level the playing field, is sport segregating or uniting everyone under the same rules? Where are boundaries drawn? Physical performance may be seen as an excuse to bring everyone together according to humanist

principles, every individual regardless of the nation, creed, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Sport tries hard to treat equally what's equal, and unequally the unequal ones, on the exact measure of their differences (Junior, 1999). How can we keep sport as a tool for world peace and prosperity being that humanity not always follows through with its goals (Gasparini & Talleu, 2010)?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Question, Problem and Goals**

The present study assumes sport as the interrelation space between different expressions of today's societies in their different expressions, either in the top levels of organisation, government and legislation, and in the base level with the athletes, coaches and technical teams. Sport is an historically and socially ingrained practice, deeply rooted in the construction of the perceived world and its significances, allowing Humankind to live and create representations of that life. Sport coins a vision and an articulation of the individual respecting the things that surround him (Merleau-Ponty, 1999).

Given the responsibility that sport has been assuming in the European Societies, in particular in the Portuguese and Italian ones, either in the characteristics of their Social States (Goodin, Headey, Muffels & Dirven, 1999), historic connections with military dictatorship (Esteves, 1999) and the formulation of the higher education institutions, we are in the presence of two *example cases* (Bryman, 2015), fit for analysis and juxtaposition. Therefore, the research question is as follows:

*What's the role of Universities Sport in the promotion of Social Equality and Social Integration in Portugal and in Italy?*

This comprehensive problem (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2000), seeks to understand reality from the perspective of those who actually live it, emphasizing the construction of significances in the world. From a constructivist ontological base, following an interpretativist epistemological base (Khun, 1970; Morgan, 2007) Mixed Method will be applied in order to establish a dialectic between the researched and the researcher (Coutinho, 2011; Bryman, 2015). The general goals of this research are:

Understanding how sports organisations and their university sports athletes approach Social Status, Respect, Mutual Consideration and Preoccupation, Ethnical Diversity and Sexual Orientation;

Identifying mechanisms for the promotion of the notions of community, fraternity and solidarity;

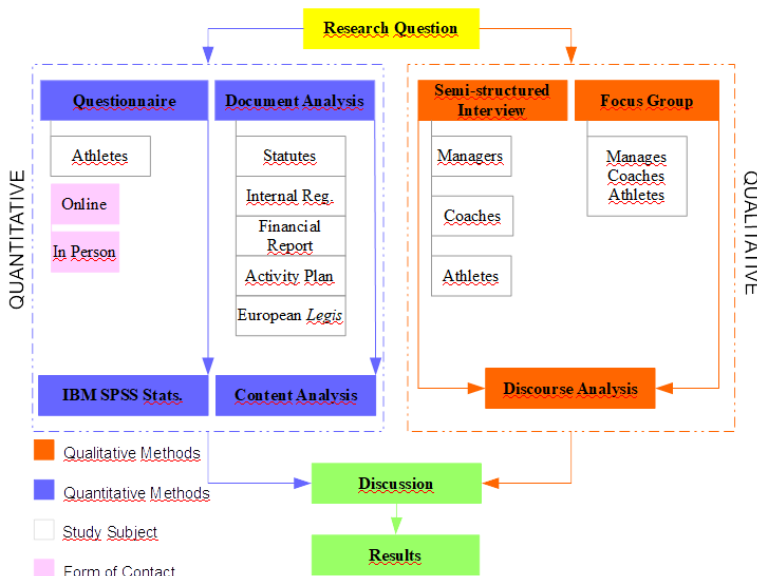
Evaluate the distribution of goods and materials, equality of access and distribution of opportunities;

Interpret the distribution and ethnic and gender composition.

As a way of assessing the ground operations of the organisations, we as specific goals:  
 Identify the content of the activities, frequency, sustainability of the target audience;  
 Research financing sources and procedures;  
 Contribute to the discussion of the role of Sports in the local and national entities;  
 Observe the interaction of Universities Sport with the national tutelage organisations;  
 Analyse the relationship between institutions and athletes.

**Method, Approach, Tools and Data Analysis Model**

A methodological approach contained within Mixed Methods was used, as both qualitative and quantitative tools were used, seeking data complementarity (Kosik, 1963; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The approach used a qualitative data methodological priority, followed by quantitative complementary data (Bryman, 2015), framing this investigation as a Transnational Multiple Study Case with a comparative design, aimed at maximising the differences between the cases, except for the phenomenon to be explained using the inductive method (Goggin, 1986; Yin, 2009; Coutinho 2011). The Sampling process was non-probabilistic based upon the 3 management levels of the Sports organisations: Managers, Coaches and Athletes. These three levels were analysed in both the Academic Association of Coimbra and the University Sports Center in Reggio Calabria using the Semi Structured Interview and a Focus Goup. Then the University Sports Athletes were inquired by a Nacional Questionnaire, and a Document Analysis was conducted to review Internacional, Nacional and Local *Legis* as per the Scheme 1. Model of Analysis.



**Scheme 1. Model of Analysis**

## **Sample**

The questionnaires had 111 valid answers on the questionnaires were obtained from both countries. 51 Italians from 15 different cities and 8 different sports. 60 Portuguese from 21 cities and 15 sports. 73,4% of respondents were male, in Portugal. In Italy 51% against 49% female. Two types of interviews were conducted: 8 individual semi-structured interviews and 2 focus groups.

In Portugal two athletes were interviewed (A2) and A3\_PT; Two managers, another University of Coimbra male named D3\_PT and D4\_PT, and a male trainer named T1\_PT. In Italy the male gender coded as A1\_ITA and two CUSI male leaders, D1\_ITA and D2\_ITA, were interviewed.

The focus group at AAC in Portugal was attended by an athlete, manager and a coach and was called FG2\_PT. Already the focus group held in non-CUS Reggio was composed of two leaders, one athlete, one coach and will be referred to as FG1\_ITA. The Manager, Athlete or Coach of each of the paired working groups (D / T / A) \_FG (1/2) \_ (ITA / PT) as the case may be. All subjects were granted an anonymous participation.

## **Discussion**

### **National Organisation**

The members of the Academic Federation of Universities Sport (FADU) are "the students associations of the Portuguese higher education institutions" (p.1 art.14 of the FADU Statutes), the associates of the Centro Universitario Sportivo di Italia (CUSI) are the Sports University Centers (CUS) (article 7 of the Statutes of the CUSI). This is an absolutely fundamental difference that varies the logic of project management sports. There will be 3 fundamental differences in the legal and organic framework in both cases.

### **As Local Sports Promoters**

The associations of students of higher education institutions in Portugal represent only one institution, i.e. in a hypothetical Portuguese city where 5 higher education institutions (HEI) coexist, 5 different members of the FADU can coexist. In a similar city in Italy a CUS is created by each university city, thus representing all HEIs in a given region.

### **Composition of Members Bodies**

The Portuguese student associations (SA) have, in their statutes (very similar to the AAC), the requirement of an active enrollment in the HEI they represent. However, with social bodies composed exclusively of students, FADU members have an average age in their social bodies that is much lower than the average age of the social bodies of the CUSI members. The CUS consists of two categories of partner: effective partner and former partner (page 3, article 15 of the CUSI Statutes). Both categories have the



same ability to belong to the board of CUS, however, the overwhelming majority of managers are old partners, while athletes remain as effective partners during the sports career. In this way it is guaranteed that the sports leadership is made by those who had experience as an athlete, even though they exercise it later in the life of the individual. A clear contrast to the Portuguese reality, where dirigism is an alternative career, in many cases, that of athlete, which results in an organized, managed and thoughtful sport expression of students for students.

### **Composition of the National Deliberative Assemblies of FADU and CUSI**

At FADU, the solution is to implement a system of delegates attending the General Assembly that follow a complex formula. In n.6, art. 36 of the FADU Statutes we have the following calculation formula:  $P = (2E / 3S) + (A / 3T)$  which means the following:

“(...) P is the weighting-base of each associate for the purpose of constitution of the General Assembly, E is the arithmetic mean of the number of students represented by the associate in the previous two academic years, A is the arithmetical average of the number of students- athletes enrolled in FADU in the previous two years by the associate, S is the arithmetic mean of the total number of students represented by all associates in the previous two academic years and T is the arithmetic mean of the total number of student-athletes enrolled in the FADU in the two seasons (Article 7 of Article 33 of the FADU Statutes).”

The representative method of Hondt is thus applied in order to obtain proportionality between the number of delegates present at the General Assembly (AG) and the number of students represented by each of the structures, in which each delegate exercises the right to one vote.

In the Federal Assembly of CUSI (body homologous to the FADU General Assembly), participation and the right to vote enjoy a representative consistency. Each CUS shall be represented by its president or its alternate. These hold a different number of votes according to the number of students represented and which obeys the following table, according to the provisions of paragraph 2 of art. 19 of the Statutes of CUSI:

- 1 vote up to 5000 students;
- 2 votes from 5001 to 10000 students;
- 3 votes from 10001 to 25000 students;
- 4 votes from 25001 to 40000 students;
- 5 votes from 40001 students.

These three factors (quality of associates, age group and participation method) directly influence the way in which university sport is organized, how structures are positioned, how they are distributed throughout the country, and even how they are inserted in society. sports leaders

The Academic Association of Coimbra and the Sport University Center of Reggio Calabria are two members of the FADU and CUSI, respectively. Their participation and local contribution are guided by their national structures and the ability to engage with their peers, participate in competitions or promote their own agenda reflects the political will and paths traced by the organization.

### **The AAC and the CUS Reggio di Calabria**

#### **The Academic Association of Coimbra**

The AAC is a superstructure with 4 fundamental pillars: The Cultural Associative Sections (16), Sport Associative Sections (26), Student Groups (26) and Autonomous Organizations (6), totaling 74 organizations, each with social bodies and activities. Its General Directorate oversees and presides over its medium councils: The Cultural Council, Inter-nucleus Council and Sports Council and it is incumbent upon each of these councils to convene its Assembly of Sections or Nuclei. The autonomous bodies have full statutory and fiscal independence, and are linked to the AAC for historical and practical reasons, some of them headquartered in the same building as the parent structure, and others have reached a broader financial and media dimension, as is the case of the Autonomous Football Organization.

The reality of AAC is profoundly complex and sports development is no exception. Although the Sports Sections are more than two dozen, its activity is directed to the respective sports federations. The University Sports is entirely bequeathed to its General Direction (GD), being responsible for the organization, selection of coaches and athletes, management of sports spaces and competitive calendars. The sport in the AAC stems from a bi-facet logic of operation: Federated Sports and Sports Sections, University Sports and GD / AAC

#### **The University Sports Center of Reggio Calabria**

The CUS Reggio Calabria is, like all other Sports University Centers, one of the peripheral components of CUSI, with specific competences in Sport, promoted by the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) and by the Decree of the President of the Republic n. 770, 04/30/1968. It dynamizes around 1400 students from all HEIs in the city, particularly the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria. The sports bet is the organization aimed at the students of the city, supporting most of its activity in boosting student participation and engagement.

The CUS Reggio, however, has a vastly larger non-competitive dimension, and organizes a much larger number of non-competition sports activities, adopting a sports strategy based on the Social Responsibility of Sport in the academic community. Of course, the multiplicity of other CUS development strategies is as large as the number of existing centers.

## Structures and Organisation

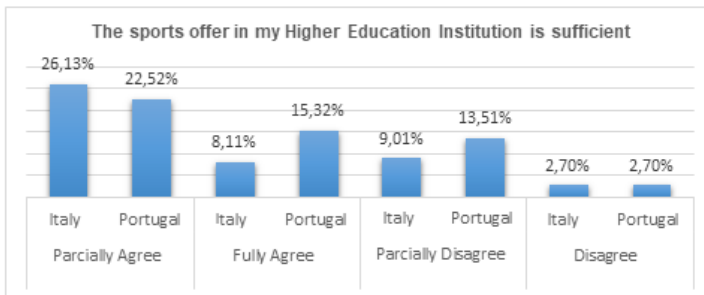
The research question relates University Sports to social issues of equality and integration. The aim of the entire data collection process was to draw up a framework to identify the objectives of the two structures that supervise sport in Portugal and Italy, FADU and CUSI respectively, through the study of two local structures: Academic Association of Coimbra and the University Sports Center of Reggio Calabria. The *modus operandis* are totally different, but they pursue the same objective. Although CUSI is a structure that precedes FADU in decades, it operates under an amateur model supporting former athletes and longtime leaders, where the rotation of the social cadres is quite low and the directives quite stable.

## Nacional and Local Structure

One of the leaders in the Focus Group held at CUS Reggio indicates that there was a President of the CUS Messina for 40 years, a reality absolutely unprecedented in Portugal. Created in 1990 by student associations, FADU members' boards have a maximum of 2 years mandate. The FADU Directorate itself has the same term in office, which provokes great dynamism in the structures, in addition to the fact that it is a statutory obligation an active enrollment in an HEI to hold a political position. If, on the one hand, the experience members and stability of the Italian model leads to the perpetuation of good results, it also drags the bad habits. The reports of leaders on one or another case that "there's always the same problems" (FG1\_ITA). In Portugal, US provides training of hundreds of young people in management positions, while in Italy CUSI has a much stronger and more entrenched presence and credibility. Both cases are successful. FADU is the most awarded structure by the (European University Sports Federation) EUSA, and CUSI is the body that organized more FISU events throughout history. Both compensate the amateurism of the leaders with a professional technostructure. One of the largest FADU partners is the Portuguese Institute for Employment and Professional Education, for example, and CUSI's officials have stated that the US rae increasingly a less precarious career opportunity. The Athletes were unanimous in considering US as a possible future employment, or at least a curriculum enrichment tool. The problem of unemployment could be, from the point of view of the respondents, combated by sport in universities. The AAC affirmed the need to establish a professional structure to stabilize the organization of the US Cabinet, and to allow a professionalization of an increasingly sought-after service. In Italy, the CUSI leaders defend the institutionalization of the US in universities that, for decades, have been relegated to partner institutions such as the CUS. In Portugal, Coimbra, the partner of the University of Coimbra is the AAC. The establishment of the UC's Sports Office was a response to the problem, which came from a felt need in the face of AAC's inability to respond to the EUG2018 organization. Two different countries, two different difficulties, the same solution pointed out.

## Sports Offer

Both in Portugal and in Italy the athletes agree that the sports offer in their cities is sufficient (as seen in Graph. 1, although the CUS Reggio the AAC has a fundamentally diverse strategy. While the CUS Reggio is committed to activities involving the academic community and the "Informal Sport", the AAC is based on two sporting pillars of *quasi* Kafkaesque organization. In Reggio the activities intend to exacerbate the advantages of the dynamization of sport as a way of connecting the University to the city. They organize races, rounds, inter-college tournaments, etc. Agonistic activity, or competition, is relegated to an ancillary plane. In the AAC, the 26 sports sections function as clubs in the city, while the dynamism of the academic community assumes a residual role, with only one activity worthy of registration, the Inter-Residences Tournament. The Sports Office of the UC, with a different vision, has already bet on "Open days of Sports" and sports projects in university residences where mostly scholarship holders live.



**Graph. 1 The Sports Offer in HEI**

## Financing

The financing of FADU and CUSI is almost entirely public, as is the CUS Reggio (Fascículo d'actività, 2006). In Coimbra, AAC has a self-financing capacity of almost 50% of a budget of 1M €. However, the amount they spend in DU is very equivalent. The State, as the main patron of the DU, also has a constant presence in major sporting events. In the EUG18 the summit figures of the Government of Portugal and the Presidency of the Portuguese Republic were present. In Italy the Ministry of Education feeds the US in such a way that the CUSI's growth project passes, in the words of D1\_ITA and D2\_ITA, by two vectors: Increase in appropriations of public funds and recognition as a National Federation of US, with a legal regime much more advantageous from this point of view. The DU is also seen as a growth factor of universities. Officials agree that this may appeal to more students who, growing in numbers, also increase the funding parcel for the University. In Italy this concern is serious. With a strong social cleavage between northern and southern territories, the US referred to as a way to promote underdeveloped areas, and CUSI, according to D2\_ITA, adopted logics of financing differentiated by poor areas.

## Social Mobility

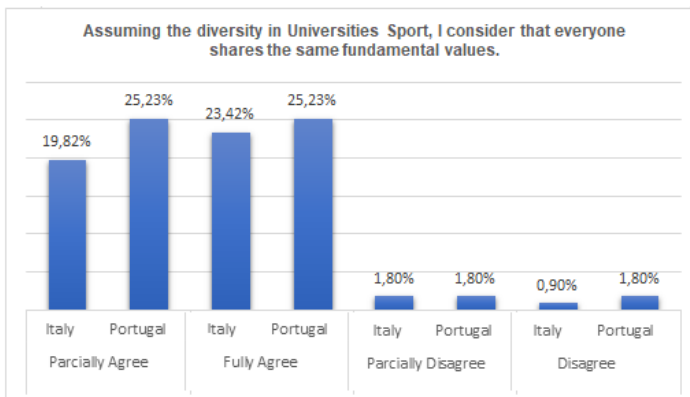
US also reveals a very clientelist character, in what regards the rise of its members to public office. However, two interpretations can be advanced: either there is in fact a personal favour being done to the leaders, or US really does, and as verified by the testimonies of the subjects of this investigation, create citizens more committed, responsible, trained and prepared for real world problems. In Italy the connection is not so obvious, even though this fact is used as a way of demonstrating the advantages of US participation.

## Volunteers

US volunteers are treated in two different ways. While, on the one hand, it is recognized as interesting for the personal valuation of the participants, and as a pedagogical tool for education for citizenship (D4\_PT) it is seen, on the other hand, as fundamental for the fulfillment of the social function of the US. Both in Portugal and in Italy it is stated that the price of these services is significantly lower and competitive due to the prevalence of volunteers in the structures. Coach T1\_PT states that the professionalization of US destroys its social purpose as well as creates inequalities within its structures.

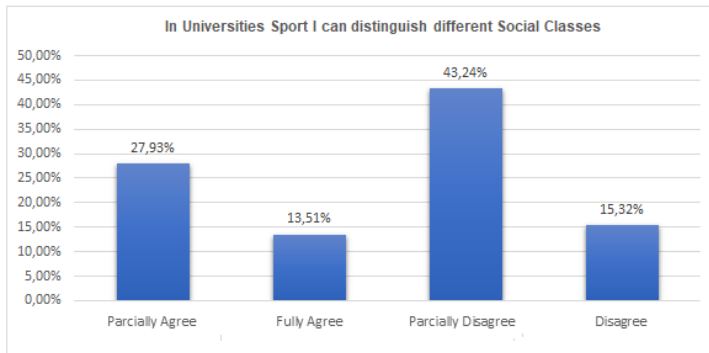
## Promotion of Equality

US is seen by all agents interviewed as a tool for social transformation. Athletes indicate that it can be used to identify problems in their colleagues' homes (assuming a role here in the informal networks of social protection), it acts as a lever for socialization, confronting different realities, highlighting the merit of individuals, ability to work as a team and creation of lifelong emotional bonds. In the words of the manager in the AAC focus group, "US gives you something you would never have if you stayed at home." The great merit identified is the fact that there can be a close contact with the athletes with difficulties, fostering tolerance, respect, fair play and perseverance.



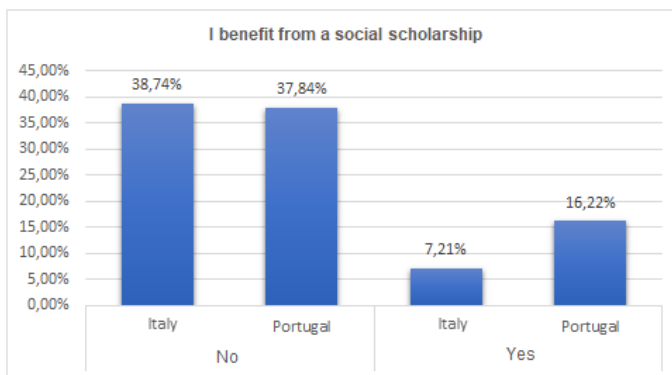
Graph. 2 Values in University Sports

Despite the differences, this position is corroborated by the Student Athletes surveyed by this research, with more than 90% agreeing to share the same fundamental values with colleagues and opponents (Graph. 2). No member of the sample denied the relationship of the DU with the values of Equality, even claiming that it brings with it "a lot of humanity" (A1\_ITA). The trainer participant in the Focus Group held in the AAC states that "the values of Olympism live much more of the DU than in federated sport".



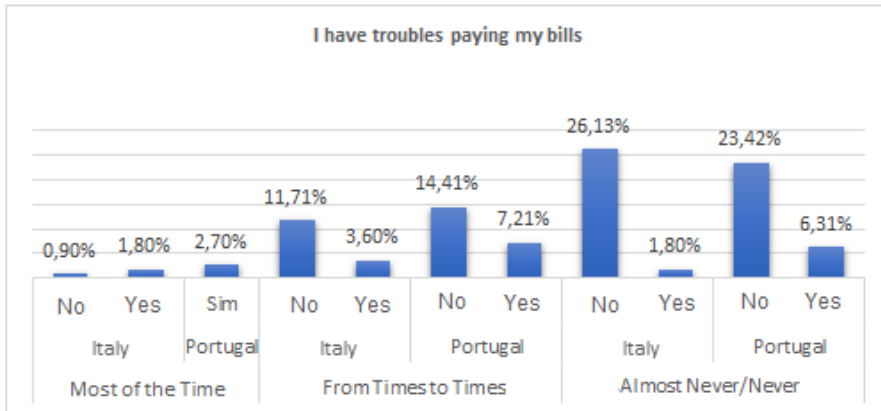
**Graph. 3 Social Class Perception**

In spite of these statements, 41.44% of the sample in the two countries reported observing different social classes in the US (Graph. 3), a situation explained by the respondents as being the result of sports a little more expensive than others. The groups in both countries demonstrate an ability to bridge financial differences with strategies that include sharing of expenses and use of University services. Needs were also pointed out in order to reinforce the Sports Merit Awards It was argued that, in spite of everything, US selects a small share of society that can access the Higher Education Institutions. Athletes and leaders agree that they are mutually respectful, and that they feel part of an extended family with great reciprocity in their concern for their fellow man.



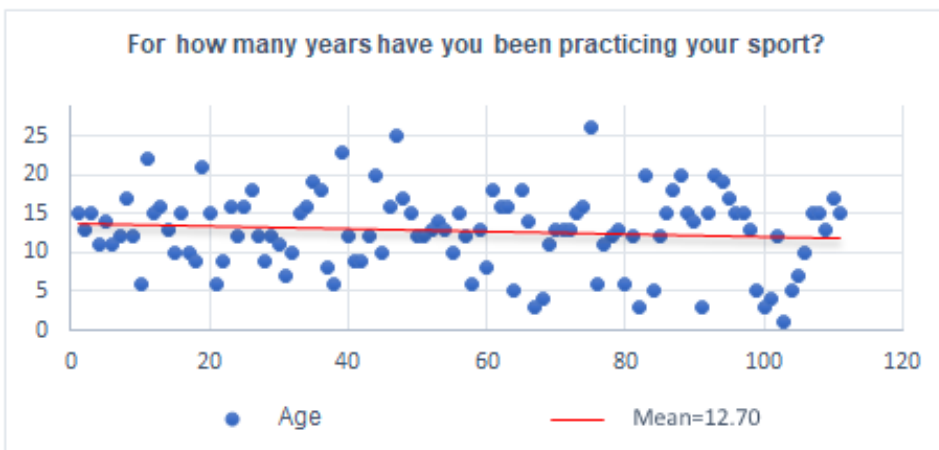
**Graph. 4 Athletes with Social Scholarship**

The US athletes are not, however, mainly scholarship recipients, nor do they suffer from financial shortages (Graph. 4 & Graph. 5) even though the testimonies refer that financial problems happen "more than they were anticipating." The suggestion of the manager D3\_PT is that the student's grantees do not participate in the US, not because they have no money, but due to the high competitive level.

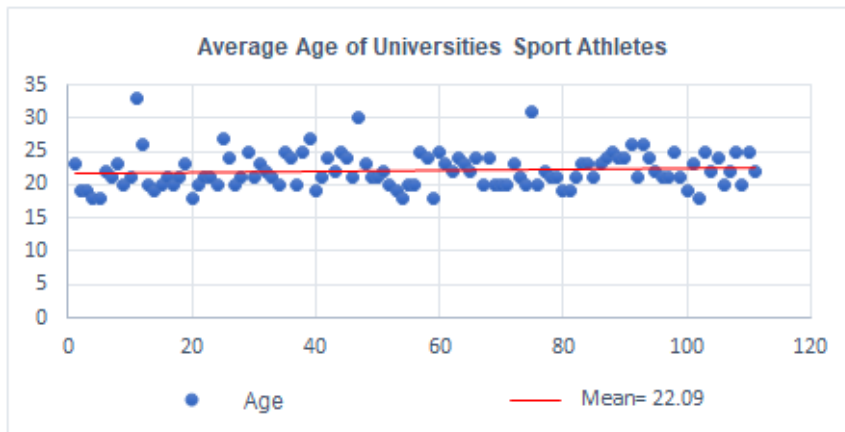


**Graph. 5 Troubles with bill payment**

Thus, the difference between the average age and the average years of practice of this sample (displayed in Graph. 6 and in Graph. 7) suggests that a competitive level athlete practiced its sport from the age of 10 years old, well before university age, revealing that even though economic impairments may be a problem to the access to HEI, it is not the main concern when it comes to the access to nacional competition in Universities Sport. A student that doesn't demonstrate a high level of sporting performance, will probably not see him or herself in the university sports team.



**Graph. 6 Years of Sport Practice**



**Graph. 7 Average Age of US Athletes**

### **Social Integration**

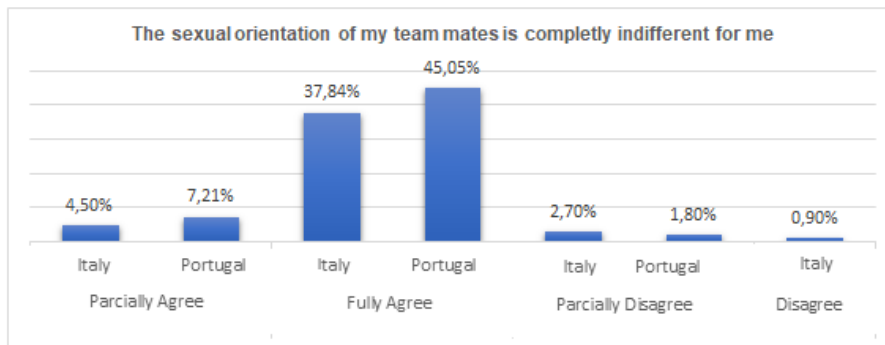
The common rhetoric established in the US, in relation to social integration, is that this happens naturally. This line of thought has already been identified in the literature (Ekholm, 2016). However, the ability to establish contact with informal networks of social protection, governing bodies, social mobility, competitions, exposure to new environments and strategies of coping within training, seems to have little to no casualty, especially when the largest share of funding are public institutions, and sports facilities are carried out through the same ministries. Research subjects maintain that Sport is "the best in training people". As for healthy personal relations building, we seem to find an integrative and fruitful environment. D4\_PT affirms that sports practice influences "the places we go to and with whom we live", allowing the induction of new behaviors.

The "team spirit" is the most mentioned. Friendship relationships on and off the field are shared across the three levels of management (managers, coaches and athletes), affirming the ability of all-new groups to create close-knit, lifelong memories. Accountability was also mentioned. The athletes learn from the coaches the value of the commitments. Our research has shown that more than 95% of the questioned athletes in both countries state that the 'Environment is fraternal and solidary. "They are the best friends I can have" says the athlete in the Focus Group held in the AAC. In Reggio Calabria the group was formed by "three different generations, of three different courses" that would otherwise "never be together" (FG1\_ITA).

Gender and the policies that promote it continue to be constraints on development. All respondents say they find more men than women in US, and that this may be because US is a "volunteer world" where it is "easier to find men with more time than women". This is justified, not because women practice less, but because the "drop out earlier) and late have "less time than men due to family care" (D1\_ITA). This problem is addressed by CUSI through events aimed at the female audience. They do not deny



the need for this gender to be more prevalent, and affirmed that "this (lack of women) is one of the biggest problems that we have to solve" (D2\_ITA). Both federations organize 100% of their sports activities for both genders, even though in the female participation is less prevalent. Regarding the sexual orientation of the team mates, on the Graph. 8 we can observe that 83% of Student-Athletes in Portugal and Italy state they are indifferent to the sexual orientation of their fellow players. The lack of discrimination in relation to gender and sexual orientation is described as follows: "University students have a different set of values. The students are prepared for this "(D1\_ITA).



**Graph. 8 Perception of Team Mate's Sexual Orientation**

There is no ethnic diversity in Reggio Calabria or Coimbra, although the University of Coimbra is one of the most international universities in Portugal, and Reggio has a University for foreigners. However, USs are recognized as a fundamental mean to welcome those who are displaced, allowing those who arrive to have a "family away from home" (D1\_ITA). Regarding violence in US, the case referred is Football 11. This modality encountered serious problems in the year 2018 provoking in the head of the AAC (D3\_PT) the "impression that violence in US is increasing". However, both focus groups (FG1\_ITA; FG2\_EN) report that this is not the case in "most modalities".

### Strategies Adopted

The three levels of management referenced herein demonstrate relatively sterile relationships with reduced internal communication. In AAC (FG2\_PT) the trainer says that what is lacking are "discussion spaces" in order to increase the capacity to generate solutions to perceived problems. The AAC plans to reinforce the professional technostructure, to create a long-term US organization in order to plan US and reduce the volatility of GD's that can change annually. In CUSI the solutions are funding by quotas of underdeveloped territories, increasing Networking, and the recognisment as national federation for advantages in political positioning and legal protection. At the University of Coimbra (D4\_PT), the feeling is clear and sums up the reasoning of both nations: the concern for inclusion and social equality is a "fundamental issue in the UC sports project, without which the project does not make sense, or we must see

Sport as a way to contribute to the development of people and human development. " He adds: "sport is a tool for everyone to be better and to minimize differences at birth".

## **Conclusion**

### **Social Mobility**

There were no significant differences in student-athlete responses between Portugal and Italy. According to the data obtained, both populations share a very close social and cultural capital, even in relation to dividing issues. This conclusion validates the views of Esping-Andersen (1999), which establishes common traits between State formulations for Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, namely regarding the familiarity and clientelism of public management. In fact, both realities share a close relationship with the country's governing bodies. In Portugal, the DU has the capacity to allocate in very short term its directors in positions of management and public representation. The data corroborate this interpretation. The two hypothesis advanced are that University Sports are a space where qualified individuals coexist academically and culturally. The acquired characteristics are a catalyzing factor of upward social mobility, making Student Athletes, Leaders and Coaches that accumulate interest in civic intervention and proactivity, allowing them to be more likely to explore their transforming potential. Another interpretation may be that Sports Leaders are already a privileged slice of society, who use sports as a way to leverage political influence and broaden their power in their local and national environments. Probably the two of them coexist, which may serve future investigations.

### **Financing and Volunteering**

The data has shown that volunteering is not only an experience valued as a pedagogical tool, but a structuring factor in both university sports realities. Volunteerism is seen as a way of connecting and disseminating US to local communities, but also as a key to maintaining service costs down, in low-income structures, increasing competitiveness and universalizing access. Volunteering is practiced by most managers, coaches and athletes. The US and the federated sport management model is fundamentally different in this respect. This research demonstrates that, while federated sport is income-oriented, US is almost entirely dependent on subsidies, making use of the public budgets through the respective Ministries of Education or Instruction (Portugal and Italy, respectively). This investment by governments reveals that both understand the outcomes of US as being responsible for much of the hidden curriculum in the users' *curriculum*, especially in Portugal, where it is organized by young students, an item discussed by Babiak & Wolfe (1991) regarding social responsibility of Sport. The development and growth strategy of Universities Sport in both countries have a complementary character. While the AAC seeks greater stability in the professional technostructure, CUSI and CUS look to the future as a national federation.

## **University Sport Institutionalisation and Development**

In Portugal, the institutionalization of US is viewed with reserve by student associations seeking autonomy and political power, but the advantages demonstrated by recent examples and the Italian reality leads one to believe that this is the way to a stable developing model, especially in a time of great visibility of this sporting expression. The US can be used as a way to promote universities, guaranteeing them greater budgetary slices in public budgets. However, the data points to restructuration in the national sports plan. It was verified that the athletes of university competition began the practice on average 10 years before entering higher education as shown in the Graph. **6** Years of Sport Practice and in Graph. **7** Average Age of US Athletes. For this reason, it is necessary to articulate University Sports with School Sports. Networking and internal communication are the main problems pointed out in the management of both realities. Frequent dialogue points should correct the "atomizing" of functions, and this will only be possible with positive government policies.

## **Social Equality and Integration**

According to the data gathered, in the DU reigns a healthy environment non-violent, responsible and rich in diverse experiences. However, the two aspects of sport in the universities should be distinguished: the promotion of sports practice with moments of internal competition and actions of connection to the city (strategy adopted by CUS Reggio); and, secondly, the orientation to attract athletes that can promote the University in national and international competitions, duly protected by regulations, statutes and incentive schemes (strategy planned by the UC / AAC). Both these realities are crucial and complementary, and a truly working US system can only be achieved by the healthy articulation of practice and competition.

Atkinson, Cantillon, Marlier & Nolan (2002) indicate that the concept of social integration is, although multidimensional, closely related to an individual's ability to participate in society. The present study establishes US as an environment that is eminently healthy, enabler and stimulant. According to the data, US represents, both in Portugal and in Italy, an opportunity to establish contact with diverse realities, promoting a sense of unity and tolerance. Similar narratives have been observed in both countries regarding the aggregating team dynamics, generalized feeling of union and belonging, and individual accountability based on collective goals. More than 90% of the interviewed athletes consider the US as a fraternal and solidary environment LGKL

## **Women and Foreigners in University Sports**

The data indicates that female participation in US, as well as that of citizens of other nationalities, should be further encouraged in order to ensure the pluralism of agents. The distribution of Student-Athletes regarding gender is not similar. Although a practical and political will has been established to accommodate more female teams,

all sports agents have emphasized that US is still eminently masculine. This research does not identify the likely causes of asymmetry, but "lack of interest" (A2\_PT) and "lack of time" D1\_ITA were mentioned as likely to cause the female audience to withdraw. Stigma is often associated with cases of exclusion (Barry, 1998), and perhaps the bet on School Sport is a way of slowly reducing the gender-segregating edge of the level of sports participation. Regarding the position of the athletes in relation to the sexual orientation of their colleagues, Graph. 8 shows that the sexual discrimination is close to a value of zero. The case is similar for the inclusion of diverse ethnicities. While US is seen as a way of acculturating a strange individual in the middle, there was a low prevalence of foreign athletes in the University teams. No cases of violence were reported in the US, except for rare exceptions in the case of Football.

### **University Sports and the Validation of the Social State.**

This study indicates that the core values of University Sports are complementary to the goals of the South-European Social States. Goodin, Headey, Muffels & Dirven (1999) establish the six criteria by which these have traditionally been governed as being the reduction of poverty, promotion of economic efficiency, social equality, social integration, social stability and autonomy. A correspondence between the US and the State was established regarding the dimensions of the Promotion of Equality and Social Integration that Habermas (1973) establishes as the legitimating tools of the governments of this typology. Further investigation should shed light on the other dimensions, further establishing Sport as an important tool for social progress and stability.

### **Future Research**

The other four dimensions of the Social State remain to be investigated. Studies on the economic dimension of University Sports are scarce, due to the difficulty in defining the concept. Contrasting the Portuguese and Italian reality with other models of organization would be interesting to establish bridges between models, pointing the European Universities Sport Association in the direction of a model of European University Sport that is not yet identified. Can Voluntarism be a common feature of the European interpretation of this phenomenon, similar to Portugal and Italy? The argument of the pedagogical advantages of the DU indicates another line of research on the success of sportsmen and women in the professional world; will these be better than colleagues not involved in sports? A longitudinal study on this issue is required. Also, the way social integration through sport is processed is not yet identified. The argument of the "naturalness" verified by this investigation has already been pointed out, leaving the origins of this phenomenon completely unknown. This way the tolerant and benign reality of University Sports could, perhaps, be multiplied by more and good examples (Ekholm, 2016).

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