



REVIVING TRADITIONAL SPORTS

THE FINAL DECLARATION OF THE 3rd ETHNOSPORT FORUM ANTALYA, 2020

The 3rd International Ethnosport Forum was successfully held in Antalya on 22-23 February 2020. The Forum hosted more than 200 participants from 55 countries. Among the participants that honored the Forum were esteemed Ministers of Youth, Culture and Sports from eight countries.

The Forum's main theme was "Reviving Traditional Sports". In the spirit of this theme, opening speech by Necmeddin Bilal Erdoğan, President of the World Ethnosport Confederation, emphasized the importance of traditional sports together with folklore, music, language, and cultural activities for preventing estrangement to native values and promoting national pride. In addition, Mr. Erdoğan underlined the facilitative role of traditional sports for respecting other nations and cultures, engaging in open dialogue, and establishing a foundation for mutual respect between nations.

The panel by honorable Youth, Culture and Sports Ministers resulted in a Joint Statement that pledged revival of traditional sports as a means for strengthening national identity as well as promoting solidarity between nations and cultures.

The Forum was instrumental for developing new strategies for revival of traditional sports and games. In this vein, a series of roundtable discussions were held with the involvement of experts from all participating countries.

Under the working title of "Reviving Traditional Sports" three significant subjects were taken up by participants: the role of governments in preserving and strengthening traditional sports, their effects on youth empowerment and skills, and cooperation of universities, federations and clubs for the revival of traditional sports and games.



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With regard to the role of governments, the forum showed determination to place pressure on the government institutions for a change in policy direction towards making traditional sports as a distinct but inseparable area of current/modern sports understanding and activities. The participants of the Forum strongly believe that unless government institutions, especially youth, sports, and cultural organizations change their approach towards preserving and developing their sporting heritage, the extinction of traditional sports is the unavoidable destiny. In order to prevent this unfortunate prospect the Forum suggests a number of actions to be taken:

- Governments must develop national strategies regarding how traditional sports and games must co-exist with modern sports. This does not mean traditional sports should be just added to the modern ones. They should be treated with consideration for their unique qualities.
- Traditional sports and games should be closely integrated into each nation's sporting system in order to enhance the prospects of achieving continuity between past heritage and future. Government institutions are thus encouraged for the development of necessary policy initiatives.
- Traditional sports and games are hampered by resource limitations which causes a sustainability problem. Government support is therefore essential to the revival and sustainability of traditional sports and games policy at local, regional, national, international and global levels.
- Governments can contribute by undertaking necessary legislation and regulations, developing infrastructures and institutionalization, encouraging media to release pertinent news, and extending and motivating sponsorship.
- Dedicated government agencies should embrace a strategic orientation centered on sustainability of traditional sports activities, and lead strategy implementation, monitoring, and evaluation accordingly.
- Local governments and communities should promote traditional sports and games as embodiments of their identity.
- An international as well as national ethnosport funds should be established to ensure continuance of activities aiming at revival of traditional sports and sustaining a functional international infrastructure, especially in the early years of this revival period.



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Second, regarding youth empowerment and skills, the participants of the Forum express their worries about the future of sports, given the fact that sports have been dominated by commercial, industrial, Euro-centric perspectives and practices, which lessens the richness, cultural and self-developmental side of sports. Moreover, the social, economic and technological transformations of the last century have brought deculturation, de-socialization, de-politicization, and de-idealization as rising and threatening trends. For a better and brighter future for next generations the Forum advocates the following actions:

- We should shift sports from a simple competition model towards a socio-cultural context. In order to establish a socio-cultural context, nations must develop a sociolegal, a socio-institutional, a socio-political, a socio-economic, a socio-education and training system, in which solidarity is the essential function.
- It is crucial to reflect past values onto future visions in order to alleviate problems caused by commercialized and competitive nature of mainstream sports. Traditional sports and games must be taken into societal life as a counterbalancing force, teaching values such as kindness, respect and tolerance to society.
- Traditional sports must be used to prevent social ills of current society such as terrorism and decadence. Traditional sports could help develop peaceful and progressive values that improve solidarity and cooperation between people and nations, as well as transitioning children into the world of adults.
- Practicing traditional sports should result in social recognition in a way that helps youth pursue traditional sports as a career. Events should be organized to reward successful practitioners, and motivate aspiring youth.
- Nations must invest in developing professional athletes, coaches, skills, and competencies.

The Forum believes it is the joint duty of multiple actors to revive traditional sports and games. No single actor is capable of protecting the legacies of the past. More importantly, they should work together to develop a strategic orientation that envisages a future in which traditional sports are core elements of national identity and community life, capable of generating a new generation. In this respect, cooperation between universities, federations and clubs is inevitable. In this respect, the Forum advocates the following:



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- In order to preserve traditional sports and games the first and the most urgent step that needs to be taken is encouragement of historical, ethnographical, anthropological, and sociological research with the help of universities to generate knowledge regarding traditional sports and games. Such research could help with recovering information that has been lost, codifying tacit knowledge into explicit, transferable knowledge, classification of traditional sports and description of their core values and key activities, and generation of essential statistics about activities and performers.
- Universities, ministries, and federations should cooperate for identification of core elements of traditional sports and games, codification of standards for implementation and evaluation, ethical principles, and professional certification rules and procedures.
- Aforementioned institutions should enrich educational material and put it to the service of enthusiasts and potential spectators through convenient means.
- Traditional sports must become an academic discipline in an increasing number of University programs. In this respect, research about current functions and uses of traditional sports is needed. The results of scientific research should be disseminated to raise awareness.
- Teacher and coach training should become a major initiative for human resource development, which could be achieved through joint efforts of universities and federations.
- Trained personnel should have career prospects in schools as well as in dedicated facilities.
- Last but not least, change in school curricula in a way that helps integrate traditional sports into physical education from early ages onwards is necessary.

Participants wish the international community for traditional sports and games success in their endeavors and hope to take stock of what has been achieved with respect to sustainability until the next Forum.