MOTIVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF VOLUNTEERS AT HELSINKI 2005
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The 10th IAAF World Championships in Athletics were held in Helsinki, Finland, August 6-14th, 2005. In the spring of 2005, a research project was launched with the support of the Ministry of Education. The purpose of the research was to find out what effects the Championships have on civic activities of sports. The research was part of the extensive analysis of the social impacts of the IAAF World Championships 2005, and it was conducted in collaboration with the Research Institute for Olympic Sports and the University of Jyväskylä.

The purpose of the present study was to examine 1) volunteer motivations and 2) the effects the championships have on volunteers’ motivation to volunteer in future events and in club activities in general. The interest in this theme derived from the importance of volunteer work in sports and civic sector. The motives of volunteers were studied by an internet questionnaire in the spring of 2005. The volunteers were asked to assess the importance of 18 items that would influence their decision to volunteer at the championships. Items were based on a previous research on volunteer motivations (Farrel et al. 1998). A link to the questionnaire was mailed to all volunteers. The answering percent was 45. The experiences were also surveyed by a questionnaire at the end of the championships. 500 volunteers received the questionnaire and the answering percent was 72.2.

The most important reason to volunteer at the Helsinki 2005 was this is a unique opportunity, as 70 % of respondents stated this item as very important. Also the willingness to be part of the community of the championships and the willingness to help to make the event a success were considered important motivational factors. The least important reason was the willingness to continue family tradition of volunteering. It emerged that especially young volunteers were motivated by the personal experience and skills that they would get at the event. The traditions of volunteerism and responsibility were reasons to volunteer more often among older volunteers. It seems that the young are interested in short-term volunteerism and projects while the middle-aged commit themselves primarily to routine club work. This reflects the rising cultural meaning of individual interests and experiences. On the other hand, the willingness of being part of the community of the championships displays that community has not become meaningless.

After the championships, 76 % of the respondents stated that their experience of the Helsinki 2005 will probably increase their attendance in major events in the future. Over one third mentioned that they would probably increase their volunteer work on a regular basis. In this light the championships had a positive impact on civic activities of sport.

References:

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