

Anti-doping policies and reasons (not) to dope – a need for diversified prevention strategies?

Anti-doping policies and reasons for (not) doping – a need for diversified prevention strategies? The aim of this project is to explore if and how differences among elite athletes (e.g. in terms of gender, age, type of sport, and level of competition) may influence 1) their reactions to factors that may potentially deter or motivate the use of doping and 2) their perceptions of existing anti-doping measures, thus suggesting a need for diversified prevention strategies. Key questions are: 1) Which factors may deter elite athletes from the use of doping? Which factors may trigger it? 2) How do athletes react to and judge doping penalties? How do they perceive the preventive effect of the sanctions? Which penalties and their consequences such as exclusion from competitive sport, financial losses or social marginalization do they regard as effective? To what extent do athletes trust the anti-doping control system, e.g. its functioning and the equal treatment of athletes? And how does this relate to doping deterrents and motivating factors? 3) Are there differences in the (anti-)doping perceptions and considerations of women and men, of different age groups, of athletes in different types of sport or at different levels of competition? The project will explore, among other factors, the role played by positive and negative social reactions, accessibility, penalties, health issues, financial consequences, moral considerations and the use of doping by other athletes. In so doing, the project will show which types of factors are considered by athletes to have motivating or preventive effects. This knowledge will contribute to evaluations of existing education and prevention programs. If differences between subgroups are found, the project provides insights that can be used to target anti-doping education and prevention strategies more appropriately towards various subgroups of athletes. It will thus convey essential knowledge for the development of diversified prevention strategies.

A review of the field shows that research with a social science approach and a focus on athletes' perspectives on anti-doping strategies is rare. In addition, most of the existing studies focus on athletes in a specific sport or in a specific country. (Backhouse et al. 2007). However, doping is a sport and culture specific phenomenon (cf. e.g. Alaranta et al. 2006; Brissonneau 2008). This project will be based on a survey that covers all elite athletes (approx. 1000) who are part of the Team Danmark support program and thus represent a variety of sports. The survey questions will mainly be inspired by PED decision models (Donovan et al., 2002, Strelan & Boeckmann 2003, O'Donnell et.al, 2006, Petrozci & Aidman 2008) as well as qualitative interviews with elite athletes from various sports (Overbye, PhD project, Department of Exercise and Sports Sciences, University of Copenhagen, work in progress). In connection with the conference "Body enhancement and (il)legal drugs in sport – a human and social

science perspective” (Copenhagen, November 2010), we plan to encourage potential collaborators from other countries to initiate similar projects in order to further explore the cultural specificity of our findings.