

## **Project Tsorbatzoudis**

### **Team Dynamics and Doping Behavior in Elite Athletes: A Focus on Normative Processes**

Doping use is a major concern in contemporary sports, and unless preventive measures are taken doping will continue to hurt the image and meaning of sports worldwide. Recent studies have shown that team-related normative pressures can increase the risk for doping use among elite-level athletes, whereas Antidoping team norms may act as a protective factor against doping (Gilley, 2009; Lentillon-Kaestner & Carstairs, 2010; Tsorbatzoudis, 2009). Normative influences to engage in doping can range from mere peer pressure and perceived social acceptability of doping by teammates, to pressures associated with results and enhanced performance. Although social norms can play a key role and explain part of the doping process in team sports, related studies have been rather scarce. The proposed project aims to fill in this gap in the existing knowledge base, by employing a theory-driven integrated approach to social norms. More specifically, Project NORM aims to:

- a) Identify the team norms with the strongest influence on pro-doping intentions
- b) Examine whether the effects of team norms on pro-doping intentions are intensified by related variables, such as group identity and group orientation
- c) Investigate the processes linking athlete's motivational tendencies with team norms and doping intentions
- d) Assess the role of situational self-efficacy in resisting normative influences for doping use

To fulfill these aims, Project NORM will employ an innovative theoretical model integrating key concepts and processes in social norms research. This model will be examined through structured questionnaires in a representative sample (N =500) of elite team sport athletes. The project's findings are expected to

- a) set the basis for subsequent evidence-based interventions targeting normative influences in doping use;
- b) provide policy recommendations for more effective primary prevention of doping in sports, and
- c) provide a conceptual, thorough and comprehensive understanding of the effect of team-related pressure on doping intentions and behavior.