



China in Europe Research Network (CHERN) - CA 18215

Sports and Public Diplomacy (CHERN WG4)

Basics

Host Organization: Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences, University of Aveiro-DCSPT-UA, Portugal

Host Organizations's representative: Carlos Rodrigues

Representative's contact: cjose@ua.pt

The tentative length of the STSM: cca 3 weeks

Call's description and objectives

Sport, as argued by Giulianotti and Robertson (2004), is among the most dynamic, sociologically illuminating domains of globalization. It is a mass cultural phenomenon, as well as a mass spectacle (sporting mega-events, commodification, disneyfication, etc.), thus emerging as a manifestation of international dimension. Accordingly, one can identify a clear connection between the history of modern sports and factors such as national pride, international prestige and diplomacy (Cha, 2016). Moreover, as suggested by Gupta (2009), elite sports have long been used as a political tool, put at the service of geopolitical and ideological strategies.

Western dominance in sports international decision-making settings has been put at stake by a new international balance, stemming from the growth of emerging countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). The simple observation that all the BRICS have hosted mega sporting events in recent years provides a sound illustrative ground (Leite Júnior & Rodrigues, 2019). In addition, these nations are good examples of the power that can be accrued to sports as a political

tool. Among them, China is particularly active in taking advantage of sports, which is not a complete novelty since the proclamation of the PRC (e.g., the ping-pong diplomacy).

The role of sports in the development of the Belt and Road Initiative is highly valued by Chinese leaders, namely as a means to strengthen “trust, friendship and cooperation, common development and prosperity” (Xi, 2014, p. 316). This is well evidenced in several policy documents, strategies and plans. The “China’s football development plan (2016-2050)” and the recently published “The Chinese Football Association Action Plan 2020” are two illustrative examples of the prominent place of sports in Chinese politics and policy. Leite Júnior and Rodrigues (2019) have shown that the attention paid to football in China concerns domestic and international aims: respectively, the one of ‘educating’ in order to change behaviour and habits, i.e., to ensure the transformative power necessary to overcome barriers deeply rooted in culture; the one expanding international influence and promoting China’s image in the world, i.e., to transform sports into a strong diplomatic tool and ‘soft power’ instrument (particularly relevant in the context of this call).

The main aim of this STSM is to know more about the role China’s sport development policy and practice plays as diplomatic tool and ‘soft power’ instrument, in a context characterized by a growing deterioration in terms of China’s international image and an extensive degradation of its relations with the EU and the US.

Objectives:

The STSM will require collaborative work between the visiting researcher and the researchers working at the Sports, Power and Politics Group (at DCSPT-UA), namely Carlos Rodrigues, and Emanuel Leite Júnior. Specific aims are:

- To discuss and outline an international research project on the role sports play as a diplomatic tool in the context of a changing global order;
- To facilitate the insertion of the researcher in international networking dynamics, to be further explored in the future (e.g., Centro Cultural e Científico de Macau, East Asia Network, European Chinese Studies Association, Political Science Association);
- To know more about sports as public diplomacy and ‘soft power’ tool, focusing on the case of China.

Call’s specific requirements

In addition to COST rules (see section “Who is eligible to be an STSM Applicant” in the [STSM BASIC FACTS](#)), the candidate should have:

- Knowledge on international relations, particularly EU-China relations;
- Expertise in public policy (preference);
- Expertise in the field of sports (policy, economy, sociology, cultural studies, etc.) (preference).

Results

- Preparation of one policy paper on EU-China relations, focusing on the role of sports as diplomatic tool and soft power generator;
- Outline of an international research project on the role sports play as a diplomatic tool in the context of a changing global order;
- Preparation, in cooperation with Carlos Rodrigues and Emanuel Leite Júnior, of one manuscript to be published in a refereed journal in 2022, on the expectations of the Chinese leadership towards the power of sporting related activities as a diplomatic tool and 'soft power' generator, in a context of international degradation of image and relational environment;
- Initial contacts with research networks engaged in Asian/Chinese studies;
- Two events of dissemination of research findings (one of them on-site, if conditions so allow, other online), directed mainly at students and early-stage researchers;
- Requirements by COST Organization or CHERN Action (for details see section »How does it work?« in the [STSM BASIC FACTS](#)).

Practical details

All applicants must carefully read the [STSM instructions](#) on the CHERN website before applying.

Pandemic restrictions would mean that initial meetings and activities would be done remotely. As restrictions lift, we hope that a visit to Host institution at University of Aveiro in September 2021 might be possible. The exact dates and timing shall be determined together with the selected applicant.

Deadlines

Deadline for applications to be submitted: **June 5, 2021**

Notification of application outcome: June 20, 2021

Period of STSM: cca 3 weeks in September 2021 (the length and the exact timing will be determined together with the host institution)

Submitting the reports: **within 30 days from the end date**

Accepting/ rejecting the reports: **within 2 weeks** after submission of the report

Execution of the payment of the grant: **within 4 weeks** after submission of the report.

More information

For more information please contact STSM Coordinator Martina Bofulin (martina.bofulin@zrc-sazu.si).