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The Charles University Faculty of Physical Education and Sport had the privilege to host the first [European conference](#) devoted to the philosophy of sport in Europe. The three-day event organised by the European Association for the Philosophy of Sport (EAPS), will be declared open on May 19 in the Karolinum Small Hall. The meeting of the 60 delegates from 20 countries will be held in the main building of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport. One of the main organisers of this important international gathering, PhDr. Irena Martíková, Ph.D. from the Department of Kinanthropology, Humanities and Sport Management at the Charles University Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, told i-Forum about the significance and objectives of the conference.

The main goals of EAPS include the development of the philosophy of sport and cooperation in this field within Europe. The first EAPS conference titled the Philosophy of Sport in Europe, organised in cooperation with the Charles University Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, focuses on these goals. As many more guests registered for the conference than had been expected following the previous BPSA conferences, we can expect the conference to contribute significantly to the EAPS efforts.



PhDr. Irena Martíková, Ph.D.,
Department of Kinanthropology,
Humanities and Sport Management at the
Charles University Faculty of Physical
Education and Sport

As opposed to the sociological, social and technical aspects of sport, this conference is devoted solely to philosophical questions. Which are the most important ones?

The thematic scope of the conference titled Philosophy of Sport in Europe is quite broad. The most important themes include various ethical questions related to sport (e.g. cheating, violence, doping), and various issues related to sport and physical education from the point of view of analytic philosophy and phenomenology. These include questions such as: What is a human being; the problem of the soul and the body; what are sports and games; and the issues of competition, gender, health, and technology in sport. Another area the conference guests will deal with is aesthetics in relation to sport, and issues related to sport spectatorship, spirituality in sport, various themes to do with martial activities, the Olympic movement etc.

The philosophy of sport is meant for theoreticians but how about the athletes themselves? Do they have the ideas, the interest, the inclination to think about philosophy during training or before a performance? What is sport then? Fighting, philosophy, a health exercise, a pastime or an art?

It depends on how we look at the philosophy of sport. During training and before a performance, an athlete usually doesn't think about philosophical theories. However, understanding themselves, their goals, the values in society, their team-mates and rivals may help the athletes understand better what they are doing and improve their activity. As for the second question: the definition of sport is one of the themes the philosophers of sport deal with and return to repeatedly. The athletes need to answer for themselves what sport means to them. Until they are sure about it, they do not even know what they are doing and why. Therefore, one of the goals of the philosophy of sport which aims to educate the athletes is to ask questions regarding different aspects of sport – what relation it has to competition, spirituality, health, etc.

What do the European history of sport, with its ideas expressed by the Olympic movement, and the Asian martial arts, involving philosophical and religious stands, have in common? How do they enrich one another?

The underlying idea of the Olympic movement in Europe has evolved from de Coubertin's idea: "The important thing is not the triumph but the struggle" to the motto: "Citius, altius, fortius", which prevails these days. In competitive sport the struggle for achievement, victory and consequently money has prevailed. As opposed to that, the traditional martial arts are more linked to codes of ethics; some also put into practice the philosophical or religious ideas of the given system. A different goal calls for a different route. For example, in Japanese martial arts which are closely linked to Zen Buddhism, the objective to win makes no sense and this has an impact on the practice. In our circumstances the martial activities have different forms – but mostly we have turned the traditional martial arts into martial sports which are mainly about winning.

The Philosophy of Sport in Europe conference is being held for the very first time. Apart from the election of the presidium and the executive committee and a discussion on the philosophical issues of sport, what will be the main activity of this organisation and what will it look like? Will you offer cooperation to the Olympic movement, for example?

At the moment, one of the basic goals of the European Association for the Philosophy of Sport is to support the development of the philosophy of sport and cooperation in this area in Europe. The EAPS meeting is going to discuss the possibilities of development on a European level and possible ways of participation of individual national societies in the process. The aim of EAPS is to promote the development of different philosophical traditions in Europe as regards sport, the development of ethical thinking, cooperation with other fields and the Olympic movement, and last but not least to provide support to doctoral students who devote themselves to the philosophy of sport.

Thank you for talking to i-Forum.

[More on the conference](#)