

Strasbourg, 5 July 2001

T-DO (2001) 14 rev

Anti-Doping Convention (T-DO)

Report of the Advisory Visit to ROMANIA on the implementation of the Anti-Doping Convention

Bucharest, 14/16 May 2001.

At the invitation of the Romanian authorities, notably the Ministry for Youth and Sport and the Romanian Olympic Committee, a Council of Europe team visited Bucharest between 14 and 16 May in order to assess current anti-doping policies and programmes in the country and to make recommendations as to possible improvements. The invitation had put special emphasis on studying laboratory questions and the education and information aspects of the national anti-doping policy. The Council of Europe team was composed of: Professor R. K. Müller (Head of the Kreischa laboratory and German delegate to the T-DO); Ms L. Johnson, (International Manager at the Australian Sports Drug Agency and Australian delegate to the T-DO); and Mr G. Walker (Head of the Sports Department at the Council of Europe).

The programme of the visit was as follows:

- 14 May: 1800/2100: informal discussions and briefings with MM A. Lăzărescu (ROC) and A. Parachivescu (MYS)
- 15 May: 0915/1230 Meeting with the National Anti-Doping Commission Chair (Prof. Dr. I. Drăgan), members and other experts
1300/1400 Meeting with the Minister and State Secretary for Youth and Sport (MM G. Gingăraş and N. Mărăşescu)
1400/1600 Visits to the National Stadium and sports facilities within the Olympic training complex
1600/1800 Visit to the Doping laboratory (Head: Dr. Graziela Vâjâială, and staff)
1900 Official Dinner
- 16 May: 0930/1130 Meeting (at the headquarters of the Romanian Athletics Federation) with leaders of sports federations: Prof Yolanda Balaş Söter, President of RAF; M T. Badea, Secretary General; M N. Vlad, President of the

Romanian Weightlifting Federation; M Ş. Iamandi, General Secretary of the Romanian Swimming and Modern Pentathlon Federation; Ms Anca Grigoras, technical director of the Romanian Gymnastics Federation; and a representative of the Romanian Rowing Federation.

- 1145/1300 Meeting with M A. Predescu, Acting Secretary General, and staff members of the Romanian Olympic Committee.
- 1300/1400 Press Conference
- 1600/1800 Visit to the Romanian Shooting Federation.

The visiting team was provided with documentation, in English, describing the present situation, the laws and other governmental measures relating to anti-doping policy and measures, and statistics from the laboratory. The team takes this opportunity of thanking their hosts, and, in particular, MM Lăzărescu, Parachivescu, Prof Drăgan, and Dr Vâjâilă, for the careful preparation and excellent organisation of the visit and for the generous hospitality shown to them.

PRESENT SITUATION

a) Regulations

We were told that the present regulations derive from the Ministry of Youth and Sport order N° 452 of October 1996, setting out the national anti-doping policy and programme and creating the National Anti-Doping Commission. The relatively new Sports Law of 2000 includes in Article 86 specific anti-doping provisions. In application of this article, a Ministerial Order, dated 13 May 2001 (ie, just before our visit) sets out new and more detailed provisions for the National Anti-Doping Programme (with three major elements: education, scientific research, and doping control); rules for the work of the National Anti-Doping Commission; rules for the work of the doping laboratory; technical norms for the organisation and conduct of doping controls and sampling procedures; analytical procedures, including for the B sample; the list of banned substances (the IOC list); sanctions, etc. We were informed that another Act (N° 143 of July 2000), a law on drugs in general, which included in its annex 57 substances on the banned list, and involving penal sanctions for trafficking etc, had recently been withdrawn.

It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness or impact of these new regulations. However, we believe that the legal and regulatory framework for anti-doping work in Romania is sufficient and consistent with European standards, notably those of the Anti-Doping Convention. **Care must be taken to ensure that these regulations remain up-to-date in all respects**, including the list of prohibited substances and methods. **In this context, the regulations**, while allowing due room for the decisions of the International Olympic Committee and international sports federations, and of the Monitoring Group, **do not yet recognise the existence of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and of its role** (for example, in preparing and adopting new lists). **Provision should be made for this in due time.**

b) Organisation

There are two aspects to the way anti-doping programmes are carried out in Romania which appear to be specific to that country:

- i) the nature of the contracts from MYS and from ROC for doping controls;
- ii) the role of the laboratory in the management of the programme.

With regard to i), MYS and ROC negotiate annually with the laboratory the number of controls to be conducted and analysed for them and paid by each side (254 and 195 respectively in the year 2000). MYS and ROC each decide which sports and which sportspeople will be tested. Agreements are turned into contracts for each year. Similar contracts are agreed between the laboratory and other sports bodies (some federations, some clubs and the Football League (for a total of an additional 162 controls in 2000)). In some ways, this system of contracts represents an interesting partnership, or series of partnerships, amongst the leading sports bodies and the laboratory. It also provides a clear basis for each year's work. It is clear that the total number of controls is dependent to some large degree on the financial resources that are made available, but the way in which the controls themselves are decided is not clear, and we make below some proposals which we believe will lead to an improvement – in terms of transparency, effectiveness and independence – in this regard. With regard to the resources available for the anti-doping programme, we were encouraged by the remarks of Minister Gingaraş that the necessary resources would be made available and that the total would be increased. **We confirm the need for such an increase, which could be projected at about a 25% increase each year for four years, together with additional appropriations necessary for the re-equipment of the laboratory.**

With regard to ii), the role of the laboratory in the establishment of the contracts for each year's controls has been mentioned above. In addition, the NADC and the laboratory train and license the newly independent Doping Control Officers (currently 20, including 6 women), and provides them with their operational instructions and sampling kits for each mission. (Previously, doping control officers had been "hired" by the National Institute of Sports Medicine.) 2 DCOs have had their licence withdrawn, which implies a degree of effective supervision.

The laboratory is also responsible for the storage and distribution of the sample collections kits, which are similar to the Versapak kits. **These kits**, as we saw with two different sets, **are not tamper-proof.**

The National Anti-Doping Commission

It is encouraging that this body, similar to those in many other Parties to the Convention, exists since, we were told, 1966. It has a general supervisory and coordinating role, as well as an initiatory function. It has 4 leaders and 5 ordinary members, 2 of whom are from the laboratory.

Its duties are set out in the Order mentioned above. These include responsibilities in the field of education and information, and, from what we could judge, these tasks are performed properly. A considerable amount of information materials is produced each year and distributed to the key targets (athletes, sports doctors, coaches, federations, etc). A "Clean Sports Conference" is organised by the NADC each year. Sports federations also participate actively in the information and education work. The compulsory annual one-week refresher courses for all sports coaches also includes one half-day on anti-doping issues.

One of the tasks of the NADC is to carry out scientific research, and this includes research into psychological aspects. **We recommend that some part of the research budget is dedicated to research in the area of information and education, and notably into the impact of the NADC's work in this field, and into the specific needs of the different target groups.** Such research is necessary if the information and education activities are to be as effective as possible.

At the moment, the NADC's role does not extend to the planning or the distribution of testing. These questions are decided as the contracts are prepared. **We consider that the NADC should be responsible for deciding, within the total number of tests each year, which sports are tested, when, and which sports participants are tested, together with deciding upon the proportion of in-competition and of out-of-competition controls.** The latter, we were told, represented 57% of controls in the year 2000, (compared to 20% in 1999) and this proportion is satisfactory (though see below on the number of controls overall.) The present system of the contracts may give rise to the impression that doping controls are planned in advance by, or with the acquiescence of, the individual sports, and that the **surprise and deterrent effect of unannounced controls may be missing. Neither is it possible under the present system to target sports at risk.** There were 24 positives resulting from the Bucharest laboratory analyses in the year 2000, with at least another 14 positives resulting from controls carried out by international sports organisations. Such statistics show the need **for anti-doping policy in Romania to be able to react to new challenges and to channel the anti-doping effort to areas where it is most needed. The present arrangements do not, in our opinion, allow for this.** The NADC is well placed to assume an overall directing and leadership role and ensure that all sports and competitors are treated equally, with special attention given to those sports where doping seems to be too well established.

The high number of positives from Romanian sportsmen and sportswomen suggests that the authorities should make a determined effort, for example through a special inquiry, to try to learn more about the causes, reasons and patterns of doping in sport in Romania. This inquiry should not only cover individual cases, but should also investigate the role of national sports federations in recent years. There is enough prima facie evidence to indicate that doping habits are common, if not entrenched. We do not believe that there is systematic doping but it is clear that not everybody is cooperating with anti-doping work. The role of the athlete's entourage must also be examined if such an inquiry is put in place.

In this context, **we also believe that the total annual number of controls should be increased.** The current level (611 national controls in 2000) is barely enough. A sporting nation such as **Romania** (in the unofficial Sydney classification, ranked 11th in the world, and with a population of 23 million) **should aim at between 2000 and 3000 controls per year.** This target would require more money for the collection and the analysis of the samples, but would not otherwise require any major increase in laboratory staff capacity (see below). Consideration could be given to fixing a number (say 3 or 4) of unannounced out-of-competition controls international and national ranking elite sports athletes should expect in the course of a year.

We were pleased to hear the Minister state that the number of controls would be increased as well as that the NADC would have authority to decide on the planning of controls.

With regard to Test Result Management and sanctions, the authority of the NADC is not altogether clear. While it is normal that sports federations impose sanctions (though athletics and swimming, perhaps amongst others, appear sometimes reluctant to do so when confronted with positive cases), **NADC does not have power to follow up such cases.** It can only inform the Ministry and/or the Olympic committee and the mass media to draw attention to lapses. **The NADC should ensure that there is transparent and accountable system for test results management put in place by the national sports federations, or take over this responsibility itself. The latter solution would inject a needed element of independence into disciplinary procedures, which would then be the same for all sports.**

In this context, we consider that the **Ministry should have powers to be able to reduce the grant to those national sports federations who do not effectively apply anti-doping regulations and policies** (see Article 4.2 of the Anti-Doping Convention). **The NADC should be able to make proposals in this regard, and the Ministry should then implement the financial penalty. This financial provision should also be used in cases of inadequate test result management by federations. Consideration also should be given to encouraging the sports federations to play a more active and a more concerted role in the anti-doping struggle.**

The NADC does not at the moment enjoy its own operational budget (and has no bank account). **It would be appropriate for the monies currently used by MYS and ROC for anti-doping controls to be channelled through the NADC. This would reinforce its authority and complement the proposals made above on test planning and distribution.**

As with many other countries, Romania is concerned by the illicit import of performance enhancing substances and by the prevalence of the use of nutritional supplements. Two Romanian athletes are presently being pursued following the detection of nandrolone in their urines. **New legislation on reducing supply and on better labelling could help counter some of these problems.**

Laboratory

The Doping Laboratory is situated in the large sporting environment of the Olympic training complex. It is part of the National Institute of Sports Science and shares the building with the National Institute of Sports Medicine. **The integration of the laboratory into the sports and sports medicine environments has advantages and disadvantages. Close knowledge and involvement is useful to its work. But there are also arguments for ensuring that laboratories are independent of the anti-doping system in order the better to defend their reports (see below) and we recommend that thought be given to giving the laboratory more autonomy and independence.**

The laboratory is not accredited by the IOC and it has not reached ISO 17025 accreditation, though we were informed that that latter process should begin soon.

Laboratory aspects receive a great deal of attention and thought in Romania. We believe that a good and efficient laboratory is an important part of anti-doping work: but it is not the key element in a national policy, and should not dominate policy planning.

The majority of the staff of seven, including both the Director and Deputy Director, are women and process approximately 600 samples per year from Romanian athletes. We have made above recommendations on substantially increasing this number, without affecting the number of staff.

The instrumentation is now at a moderate level, with:

- 1 gas chromatograph;
- 1 high-pressure liquid chromatograph;
- 2 GC-MS systems (1 running);
- 1 HR-MS system ordered.

The laboratory is about to be enlarged (work has started on this) and the extra space will be appreciated.

In order to enhance the capacity of the Romanian Doping Laboratory, it would be necessary to purchase the following additional equipment:

- **one preferably two, desktop GC/MSD systems;**
- **automatic samplers for the above and for existing instruments;**
- **modern general laboratory apparatus for sample preparation, such as solid phase extraction and evaporation.**

On various occasions (and notably at the press conference) scepticism was expressed (but not, we stress, by the laboratory staff) as to some results of analyses of Romanian athletes at other foreign accredited laboratories. When the relevant samples would as always have been analysed anonymously and the laboratories concerned undergo a permanent external quality control and reaccreditation procedures, criticisms about such analyses are entirely unfounded. But such feelings demonstrate the **need**, especially once the Romanian laboratory receives ISO and IOC accreditations, for bodies ordering doping controls, **to treat laboratory results as objective and independent**, even when high-profile athletes or sports heroes are involved. This is also an educational matter.

Bilateral cooperation between the Bucharest and Kreischa laboratories was reinforced during the visit. The Kreischa laboratory offered:

- possibilities for Romanian staff to have individual training visits (for example, on the HR-MS system, ISO accreditation requirements, quality management) and exchanges of experiences;
- possibilities for single samples to be analysed with techniques not yet available in Bucharest, for example in "problem cases" using HR-MS or carbon isotope ratio MS.

Education

It was encouraging to see that the importance of education, as a critical element in an effective deterrence programme, is acknowledged and that education activities reach a range of target audiences.

Current situation

The Romanian authorities indicated that there are anti-doping lectures in all Physical Education and Sports Faculties, in the Central School for Coaches and in a range of other courses.

National Federations are expected to provide information and education to athletes. We talked with both swimming and weightlifting and they indicated that they provided education to ensure that "athletes avoided banned substances". Information provided includes facts about the adverse health effects of certain drugs. Athletics has translated a publication, developed by the IAAF, that lists the classes of banned substances and disseminates this to Romanian athletes.

We were told that trainers attend a course that includes drugs in sport information every twelve months. In addition they present "doping problems" to the School of Coaches.

It is compulsory for doctors to attend a drugs in sport meeting every twelve months; approximately 200 sports medicine doctors attend. We were informed that team doctors are required to promote and provide information to athletes and distribute a drugs in sport booklet that lists the classes of banned substances.

A general assembly is convened at the end of each year to consider and plan education activities for the following year. We were informed that in 2001 a new poster and information booklet is planned. The booklet will contain information on the banned list of substances as well as nutritional substances. It is also intended that the profile of positive doping cases will be promoted through the mass media.

Suggestions for future development

In very broad terms effective anti-doping education involves:

1. raising awareness and promoting an anti-doping ethos;
2. providing access to accurate and timely information; and,
3. influencing attitudes and beliefs to effect desired behaviour change.

To achieve optimal deterrence, **education initiatives (conformity) need to be reinforced and enhanced** with an effective testing and policy framework (compliance and regulation). If awareness of anti-doping efforts, including the visibility of the testing programme is raised, and an athlete's perception regarding the likelihood of being tested does not correspond with their actual experience of being selected for testing; if analytical detection methods are inferior or if positive tests are dismissed because policies are not legally robust, the credibility of both the education and testing initiatives are potentially undermined.

In Romania it would appear, from what we saw and heard, that education initiatives focus mainly on the provision of information. An increased number of tests, as discussed earlier in the report, and upgrading of the laboratory will create the opportunity for development of some **specific education messages aimed at increasing the profile and raising awareness of the Romanian anti-doping programme.** Providing these messages are consistent with the athlete's actual experience of drug testing, such a strategy will enhance the deterrence effect, which is directly linked to testing, and therefore optimize the use of limited resources. Athletes' perceptions regarding drug testing can provide significant and positive reinforcement in promoting a strong anti-doping message. (Research to determine elite Australian athletes' main information sources suggests that informal networks (ie other athletes) are very powerful).

Planning

It was good to see that in Romania education initiatives are planned through discussions at the yearly General Assembly. However, **it is suggested** that before additional resource is invested into producing new education publications and activities that **a tailored approach which is based on sound research, rather than a generic approach, be considered. This would involve looking systematically at individual target groups and conducting a needs analysis** to establish both

- the education/information needs of specific target groups
- the best medium to deliver/present the information to achieve the greatest impact.

For instance, what is the current level of information and knowledge within each target group (sports administrators, sports doctors, coaches, athletes)? What additional information is required – this may vary between different target groups? How can this information best be provided (eg. education sessions, through those with significant influence, such as coaches, sports doctors, written or electronic media etc)? An observation based on some discussions with sports administrators is that there appears to be some misinformation about Nandrolone.

It was also apparent that more information about the labelling of pharmaceuticals needs to be provided.

Depending on the level of information and knowledge amongst the various groups there may be a **need to differentiate between strategies that focus on prevention of inadvertent use and deterring those who deliberately choose to dope.**

Several years back we found in Australia that, in addition to knowing what was on the banned list, Australian athletes also wanted to know what they were permitted to use for common ailments such as flu, gastro-enteritis etc. We also found that printed "Fact Sheets" that provided timely information on topical issues, as they emerged, were useful particularly for sports administrators. Research also revealed that, consistent with sound general drug education principles, "scare tactics" such as promoting the detrimental health effects of drugs was not particularly relevant in influencing elite Australian athletes' decisions about whether to use a banned substance. Rather it was found that to influence behaviour "ethical" messages, combined with an effective testing regime would create a much greater impact.

That said, although the general principles for drug education are universal, the strategies employed need to be adapted and designed to recognise the unique cultural and structural characteristics of the Romanian sport system.

Campaigns and mass media

It is suggested that once the size of the testing programme is increased **complementary strategies designed to increase the awareness and visibility of the new Romanian programme should be implemented.**

Campaigns and mass media intervention strategies, like the information strategies, should be developed and designed around research findings. They should provide key messages that are designed to influence and motivate desired behaviours of specific target groups. Evidence based practice suggests that targeted strategies, as opposed to education for the masses, is the best way to achieve quantifiable outcomes (cf work in the HIV/aids area).

Generally mass campaigns are expensive and to be both cost effective and efficacious in terms of sustainable outcomes it is suggested that the campaigns need to be built on and integrated into the success and ongoing implementation of a strong national programme. A strong and credible national programme is not, however, built overnight.

Media can play an important role in providing drugs in sport information to the general public. It is important that media are provided with accurate information so that they can base their reporting on relevant facts as opposed to sensationalism (cf, the our remarks about the press conference on 16 May). Media can play a powerful role in promoting the transparency of the programme and instilling credibility. Conversely, if misinformed, misleading messages can undermine the whole national anti-doping agenda.

Conclusion

The current commitment to education initiatives and aspirations to further develop the programme will go a long reform and way in establishing sound foundations for an effective national anti-doping programme. We believe that the comprehensive approach that includes testing, education and policy initiatives is a significant step towards optimising deterrence and maximising the use of limited resources.

We recommend that in the immediate future the emphasis for education initiatives is placed on **identifying** the existing gaps and needs in information dissemination and developing the **appropriate** strategies to address these gaps. In addition, once the size of the testing programme **increases**, we suggest that more emphasis be placed on promoting the visibility of the **programme** and reinforcing a strong anti-doping message.

Lastly, we recommend that the developments we propose for Romania's anti-doping policy and programme is integrated into the common search for high minimum standards, notably those set down in the International Standard for Doping Control (ISO-PAS 18873). We suggest that the Ministry and Olympic Committee consider joining one of the forthcoming IPTs, partly financed by WADA, in order to ensure this international harmonisation. The need for a full-time dedicated staff member to follow this work must be borne in mind.

* * * * *

We are confident that with the continued commitment that we saw you will succeed in your endeavours.

Klaus Müller
Kreischa

Leonie Johnson
Canberra

George Walker
Strasbourg