

Dealing with electronic sport simulations, eGaming and "eSport"

Positioning of the DOSB Presidential Board and Executive Board

1) Introduction

The digitalisation of our society is developing dynamically and poses new challenges for sports clubs and organisations. In the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) and its member federations, in the international sports organisations, in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and in the International World Games Association (IWGA), but also in the associations and business enterprises of the games industry, in the media and in the political arena, there are intensive and controversial discussions about what is meant by "eSport" and eGaming and what the associated phenomena, manifestations and organisational forms mean for sport in Germany, but also in international sport. By mid-2018, a series of statements, expert opinions and contributions are available to shed light on and classify "eSport" from different perspectives.

Almost everyone comes to the conclusion that the question of what "eSport" is and whether this can be attributed to the sport that is organised under the umbrella of the DOSB cannot be answered unequivocally. At the same time, they develop central elements for a well-founded positioning from their different perspectives. These include, above all, questions about one's own motor activity, competition character, ethical norms, participation and autonomy as well as organisational forms, business models and orientation towards the common good.

2) DOSB Working Group

Against the background of this dynamic development, the DOSB Executive Board has convened an "eSport" working group and commissioned it to draw up recommendations for the future use of "eSport". 25 personalities from the DOSB and its member federations, from science and the "eSport" industry have intensively exchanged ideas on the topic of "eSport" and, in particular, have developed various development scenarios which the DOSB has based its positioning on and which are attached to this positioning as an annex.

3) Four scenarios as a result of the working group

In its own positioning, the DOSB is primarily concerned with the question of whether eGaming/"eSport" fits the DOSB and the sports club and federation system in Germany, and if so, in what form.

For this purpose, four scenarios with different focal points and perspectives were developed, in which arguments were brought together, advantages and disadvantages explained and options for action pointed out. These four scenarios are based on the framework conditions required and, if necessary, to be designed for ...

- A. ... Inclusion of "eSport" in the structures of sport,
- B. ... future-oriented association development with a view to new, virtual sports offers,
- C. ... contemporary youth work and an extension of the range of activities of the club sport,
- D. ... well-founded rejection of "eSport".

In the following, partial aspects from the scenarios are explained in more detail and the central positions of the DOSB are summarised.

4) Electronic sports simulations (short: virtual sports), eGaming and "eSports"

The term "eSport" stands for an extraordinarily wide range of highly diverse virtual forms of offer and play with a competition character. Since in this broad understanding the term "sport" is not purposeful and to a large extent misleading from our point of view, we will refrain from the term "eSport" in the following and use the term eGaming instead. We distinguish between eGaming and electronic sports simulations (or virtual sports for short).

The term electronic sport simulations (short: virtual sports) is used whenever the transfer of sports into the virtual world is meant. Examples can be found in football, archery, sailing, basketball or tennis, although the relevant national or international sports federations are not always involved. The characteristics of electronic sport simulations are manifold and range from video and computer games to virtual forms of offering that integrate sporting movements.

All the other virtual game and competition forms are called eGaming. The definition proposed by the eSport-Bund Deutschland (ESBD), according to which "eSport is the playing of video or computer games in a sports competition, in particular on computers and consoles, according to fixed rules", is expressly not adopted. This is because there is an unmanageable variety of offers ranging from "Counter Strike" and "League of Legends" to virtual card games and electronic sports simulations such as football (FIFA). Thus, a meaningful and necessary differentiation is not possible.

5) Opportunities and risks of electronic sports simulations

Virtual sports expand sports into virtual space, offer new and modern possibilities for the development of sports in federations and thus open up development and growth potential for sport and the organisational system under the umbrella of the DOSB. With virtual sports, the connection to the DOSB sports system is sought in different ways. The analogue training and competition practice are combined with digital activities in the virtual world via tailor-made concepts. For example, in analogue and virtual archery, the movements are identical, while the technology of the bow is different. In football, eSoccer offerings are systematically linked to training and match operations on the pitch via pedagogical concepts and are currently played as console games (FIFA). In some cases, however, virtual sports are not anchored in sports organisations, e.g. eTennis.

The risks essentially lie in the fact that, without being integrated into existing offers, the "analogue" image of sport that has been valid up to now loses its central core of meaning, namely that of the motor movement, which consistently determines the type of sport. In addition, there are virtual sports whose development is not controlled at all or not sufficiently by the expertise specific to them, so that here too there is a risk of a loss of autonomy and influence. In principle, the effects described below as risks of eGaming also apply to most virtual sports.

6) Opportunities and risks of eGaming

One chance of eGaming is the fundamental ability to follow current trends in youth culture; however, the offers also reach people in older age groups. Under certain conditions, these offers can be used to find new ways of retaining and acquiring members, to open up new perspectives for the future of sports clubs and to make a contribution to more commitment and participation in virtual space.

In addition to the possible opportunities eGaming offers for club development, the central and constitutive elements of eGaming do not correspond to the core meanings, logic of action and value system on which the sports and federation system under the umbrella of the DOSB is based.

- A self-motor, sport-determining movement is not a constitutive feature of eGaming. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has now classified video games as a potentially addictive activity and therefore a health risk, and this is not easily compatible with the objectives of a healthy and eventful lifestyle that the DOSB and its member organisations stand for.
- There is almost no discernible organisational bridge between the public welfare orientation of the sports system and the market orientation of eGaming.
- In eGaming, there is no differentiation according to ethical principles; on the contrary, a large number of games are in clear contradiction to these and to the ethical values of sport formulated in the DOSB mission statement and in the basic documents of the DOSB member organisations.
- The vast majority of eGaming offerings are based exclusively on business logic. This is incompatible with the principles of autonomy (also rule autonomy) and participation in the sports system, threatens the common good orientation of club sport and the associated privileges and thus dissolves the organisation-related self-image on which the sports system is based.

With a growing eGaming market, the pressure of competition for resources that are scarce in sport anyway is increasing. Thus, for example, today's alarmingly limited time for active sport and exercise competes with the new time requirements in the virtual worlds. In addition, the financial support for club sports is limited at all levels and is generally already inadequate, so that a new competitive situation would be created.

7) Role of virtual sports for a modern and future-oriented association development

The DOSB recognises the importance of virtual sports for the development of sport and sports federations. It recommends the systematic elaboration of strategies for the development of sports in the virtual space and of tailor-made instruments for club counselling and development in the associations. It is therefore up to the associations and federations to decide on their own responsibility to what extent activities are to be developed in this area. The aim is to make targeted use of the opportunities offered by virtual sports on the basis of the respective organisational forms and values for the development of sports and federations at national level. Thus, specific virtual sports become part of the regular federation work in those member organisations that see it as an added value for the expansion of their offer. These federations autonomously develop the necessary concepts and rules and report the persons active in the virtual sports through their regular sport reporting mechanism. Therefore, the question of the inclusion of one or more independent so-called "eSport" associations under the umbrella of the DOSB does not currently arise.

8) The role of virtual sports and eGaming for a contemporary youth culture and for broadening the range of activities for club sports

The DOSB recognises the importance of virtual sports and eGaming as part of a modern youth and everyday culture. In this context, eGaming is not classified as an independent sporting activity. The DOSB supports the development of qualifications and educational concepts for dealing with electronic sport simulations and eGaming in clubs. Clubs can thus expand their extra-sports activities, such as holiday camps, excursions or numerous socio-political cooperations. Furthermore, clubs can take social responsibility for media consumption and develop concepts for a constructive approach. The DOSB promotes its mission statement and the canon of values described therein and works to ensure that, if at all, only those eGaming activities are offered that correspond to this canon of values.

9) Charitable law and tax code

As a non-profit sports confederation, we currently see no reason to change the tax code and to include eGaming/"eSport", an area that primarily pursues commercial exploitation interests. In addition, we want to counteract a dilution of the concept of sport which, in our view, would exist if "eSport" were equated in the tax code with sport oriented towards the common good. At the same time, we are committed to recognising virtual sports as charitable under the umbrella of organised sport.

10) Monitoring

The DOSB will carefully monitor further developments, evaluate them together with its member organisations and, if necessary, reposition them. This also applies to the international area, in which the DOSB is working within its means to ensure that the standards described above are applied worldwide in the discussions on eGaming. The DOSB expressly welcomes the declaration of the IOC of 21 July 2018, with which the IOC is currently clearly refraining from recognising "eSport".

The Big Picture

The DOSB

- ... distinguishes between electronic sports simulations (virtual sports) and eGaming: When the transfer of sports into the virtual world is meant, one speaks of electronic sports simulations (or virtual sports for short). By eGaming, the DOSB understands the competitive play of video and computer games of all kinds according to established rules, which do not correspond to the virtual sports.
- ... recognises the importance of electronic sport simulations for the further development of sport and sports federations. It recommends the systematic elaboration of strategies for the development of sports in the virtual space and of tailor-made instruments for club counselling and development in the federations.
- ... assumes that eGaming in its entirety does not meet the central criteria for admission that constitute and shape the sports and federation system under the umbrella of the DOSB.
- ... recognises the importance of eGaming as part of a modern youth and everyday culture, but not as an independent sporting activity. The DOSB supports the development of qualifications and educational concepts for dealing with electronic sport simulations and eGaming in clubs. This will expand the range of extra-sport activities on offer and the social responsibility of clubs and federations.
- ... does not see any independent eGaming departments in clubs, so for the time being no organisational and reporting obligations for clubs offering eGaming. The DOSB recommends that those active in the field of virtual sports be reported via sports. This means that there is currently no need for one or more independent eGaming/"eSport" federations under the umbrella of the DOSB.
- ... works consistently towards ensuring that no eGaming activities are offered in clubs that do not correspond to the recognised canon of values of the DOSB sports system.
- ...is committed to the recognition of virtual sports as charitable under the umbrella of organised sport and is strongly opposed to the inclusion of eGaming/"eSport" in the tax code.

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DOSB Presidential Board and Executive Board