

“Winter Olympics in Kraków - Opportunities and Dangers”

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Organization of Olympic Games is an opportunity to significantly accelerate the development of the city and region in which they take place. An important example is so-called Barcelona effect involving, inter alia, multiplication of the number of tourists visiting the city in years following the games. It is obvious that after the Olympics, there is new or completely modernized infrastructure, not only sport facilities, but above all transportation, accommodation, gastronomic, etc. It serves not only tourists, but also inhabitants. In case of Poland that has a rather modest infrastructure adapter for winter sports, it should be emphasized that a significant number of sport facilities could change their function to recreational after the Games.

Preparation of implementation of such a global event revives domestic and local labour market through generating new jobs in many different sectors of the economy (construction, transport, IT, tourism, hospitality, gastronomy, trade). In the case of Winter Olympics (WO) held in Vancouver in 2010, approximately 20 thousand new jobs were created only in British Columbia.

Apart from the purely economic (quantitative, indicative) dimension of the results of decision on Olympics organization, the importance of the marketing and promotion aspect of the city and region, which get a great opportunity to build a strong brand, should be emphasized.

Perceiving above arguments as supporting efforts of Poland to obtain rights to organize Winter Olympics in 2022, serious threats of this decision should also be considered.

One of the most important of those is strong tendency of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and various other federations of winter sports to continuously expand the programme of the Games. For example, during the Winter Olympics in 2006 held in Turin the total number of competitions was 70, whereas in 2018 in Pyeongchang, which is only 12 years later, the programme consists of 98 competitions. Currently,

signals coming from different international federations indicate that this tendency does not fade away.

Another worrying trend is the increasingly higher requirements (quantitative, qualitative and technological) regarding the sport infrastructure, i.e. competition and training facilities. Again an example from Turin (2006), where the competitions in speed skating were played at an open track, while nowadays an indoor hall with a 400 m long track and stands housing 6 thousand seats is required. During the same Games, there was no women's hockey tournament, so there was only one hall with an ice rink suitable for competitions and another smaller one for training. Upon including women's hockey in the Olympic programme, additional two ice rink halls are required. There are many more examples of this phenomenon. Both previously discussed trends, i.e. an increase in the number of competition categories and requirements regarding infrastructure, lead to an abrupt increase in the cost of preparing and conducting Winter Olympics, to which there are additional increasingly higher costs related to ensuring safety, as well as transport and communication of so-called Olympic family.

The process of applying for the title of host city of the Winter Olympics has also been expanded, which undoubtedly results in further increase in expenditure. When Zakopane competed for organization of Winter Olympics in 2006, the process consisted of only one phase, whereas nowadays the application requires two phases.

In the case of Winter Olympic Games in 2022, first phase officially begun in October 2013 when the authorities of Krakow, Polish Olympic Committee and the Competition Committee Kraków 2022¹ filed in a letter of intent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), expressing the willingness to participate in the application process for hosting Winter Olympics in 2022.

¹ Competition Committee Kraków 2022 – established in October 2013 by three local administrations: Kraków, Zakopane, Małopolska Voivodship, to prepare applications for IOC.

Another important step was the submission of 'application form' to the IOC on 14.03.2014, consisting of basic information about Kraków and Małopolska region, as well as the concept of Winter Olympics 2022, written in accordance to the requirements and conveyed in 11 chapters and 116 pages of text. The concept predicts competitions in two zones. All competitions taking place on ice will take place in the first one - in Kraków, whereas all snow competitions will be played in the second one in Tatras, including alpine skiing on the Slovakian slopes of Chopok.

Between March and June 2014, IOC experts check submitted information to allow the Management of IOC to choose Candidate Cities in July.

In that moment, the second phase begins, during which the cities prepare so-called 'candidate proposal' that describe the concept of Winter Olympics 2022 in greater detail. That proposal should get to IOC in January 2015, where over the next months it will be verified and assessed by the IOC special committee. In July 2015 during the session, a secret voting will be held with participation of about 100 members

of IOC, who will choose the Host of Winter Olympics in 2022.

Described conditions of candidacy, and later possible hosting the Games (i.e. long-term procedure of electing a host city, followed by significant costs, and tendency to extend the programme and increase the infrastructural requirements), cause even the rich cities such as Munich, St. Moritz or Stockholm resign from applying to host the Games in 2022. Given the foregoing, it can be assumed that in the case of previously listed cities, their position is justified, as they are wealthy and already have a well-developed infrastructure. Therefore, giving up generating high costs without the guarantee of a positive financial outcome resulting from hosting the Games can be understandable. Meanwhile in the case of Poland, which is still poorly developed, organizing this global event could give a chance for significant progress through acceleration of construction and modernization of roads and communication facilities, as well as sport and recreational base. It could mean that there would be a possibility to make a developmental jump, which in 'normal conditions', i.e. without Winter Olympics, could take next decades.

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