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FRANCE IS POSITIONING ITSELF AT THE FOREFRONT OF AI, SPORTS, AND DATA INITIATIVES AHEAD OF PARIS 2024 OLYMPICS

IT and Data Protection | 21/05/24 | Florence Chafiol Mahasti Razavi



As the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games approach, France is taking significant strides in integrating technology and sports. The French National Sports Agency (ANS), in collaboration with France's National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance (INSEP) and the Department of Sport, has launched the Sport Data Hub. This platform utilizes artificial intelligence to process data from the French sports ecosystem, in order to enhance athletes' performance and assess their potential for winning medals.

What exactly is the Sport Data Hub, and who benefits from it?

The Sport Data Hub ("SDH") represents a major initiative designed to consolidate both application and human resources across the sports ecosystem.

Athletes now regularly use connected watches, neurotrackers, accelerometers, and other tracking devices that generate large amounts of data. However, until now, no tools have been put in place to fully capitalize on this data.

The cornerstone of this initiative is the creation of a common data warehouse that serves all stakeholders within the sports community, including institutions, such as regional sports centers (CREPS) and schools, regional high performance centers, and sports federations. This shared resource aims to significantly enhance the performance of elite athletes. The responsibility for this task is shared among[1] the State, sports clubs, and sports federations, which can now more effectively monitor the development of athletes, optimize their performance and assess their potential for winning medals at competitions. This data-driven approach also holds value for public authorities by providing a basis for more objective strategies and informed public investment decisions in sports.

Generally speaking, the objective of a data warehouse is to gather and consolidate data held by various stakeholders for the purpose of reusing it[2]. These promising systems greatly expand the uses of data, and numerous initiatives exist in various sectors such as healthcare[3] and banking[4].

Challenges faced by the Sport Data Hub

- **Sensitive Data**

The Sport Data Hub collects comprehensive data pertaining to athletes' physical conditions, such as sleep quality, heart rate, overall fitness, bone health, and weight. This data is classified as medical data, i.e. sensitive health data as defined by Article 9 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Despite its sensitive nature, the processing of this data is justified by substantial public interest objectives[5].

Furthermore, the French Data Protection Authority (CNIL) considers that certain uses of this data, specifically for purposes like tracking and analyzing injury patterns, are akin to processing health-related data. Consequently, these activities are subject to rigorous standards similar to those required for the hosting of health data[6].

- **Sensitive Hosting**

The Sport Data Hub is hosted at INSEP, located in the Paris region, which circumvents common and legitimate concerns regarding the physical location of data hosting. However, there remains a pertinent issue concerning compliance with recent regulatory updates. Specifically, circular 6404/SG dated 31 May 2023, which outlines the updated doctrine for the use of cloud computing by the State, referred to as "cloud at the center," mandates hosting solutions that are qualified under SecNumCloud. This requirement ensures that the data hosting is secure and not subject to regulations from outside the European Community.

- **Data Usage**

The Sport Data Hub's comprehensive data collection and processing capabilities are poised to propel France to the forefront of innovation in the sports arena, particularly through the use of artificial intelligence.

As with any major innovation, the introduction of the Sport Data Hub will raise significant questions that stakeholders must address. One area of particular interest will be assessing the impact of AI-generated "medal potential" predictions on athletes, their career paths and their motivation. Similarly, the ways in which clubs, sponsors, and agents consider such predictions when selecting athletes to support and promote will also be critical. The variety of issues arising from



the use of the Sport Data Hub will undoubtedly underline the vital importance of human involvement in decision-making processes that incorporate artificial intelligence.

Furthermore, issues related to consent, the uses of the platform, its users, and the data it generates, will likely be key to the system's success.

[1] Article L.100-2 of the French Sports Code.

[2] See, for example, the guidelines relating to the processing of personal data for the purpose of creating data warehouses in the health sector, published by the CNIL in October 2021.

[3] See the European Commission's project for a European Health Data Space: https://health.ec.europa.eu/ehealth-digital-health-and-care/european-health-data-space_fr

[4] See the initiative launched by the ACPR to pool banking data: <https://acpr.banque-france.fr/autoriser/fintech-et-innovation/experimentation-sur-la-mutualisation-de-donnees-en-lcb-ft>

[5] Article 9-2-g of the GDPR

[6] Article 43 et seq. of law no. 78-17
