

**Interview with Luis Horta,  
Former Chair of the Working Group on Science of the Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping  
Convention  
(20.06.2006)**



**Question:** *You were Chair of the Working Group on Science of the Monitoring Group to the Anti-Doping Convention of the Council of Europe for four years, until 2006. In 2003, you were also involved in the team of Independent Observers from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on the Tour de France 2003. Since this year, there have been no other mission by WADA independent observers on the Tour de France. Could you explain why?*

**Luis Horta:** It is the WADA Executive Committee who decides each year which events will receive missions of Independent Observers. For this reason, I am not in a position to answer this question, however, I can say that I am extremely satisfied with the outcome of the mission for the Tour de France 2003, as the UCI (Union cycliste internationale) took many of our recommendations into consideration.

**Question:** *Which significant changes have you noticed in cycling in the last years?*

**Luis Horta:** In the last years, we have worked towards an increase in the fight against doping in cycling, however, I believe that there is still a long way to go to reach the most important goal - the health protection of cyclists.

A number of years ago UCI launched health controls, submitted before and during races, and it has an extensive database on the longitudinal results of some blood parameters of the best cyclists in the world. We suspect, however, that cyclists use different strategies to obtain “good” results at the ideal moment and that they are using low dosages of EPO and blood transfusions between races, in the knowledge that, during these periods, the possibility of control is very low.

In my opinion, the best strategy would integrate high quality doping controls between the most important races, initiatives by the Governments to combat the trafficking of prohibited substances and methods, like the ones done recently in Spain, and would use abnormal changes in the profile of some blood parameters to sanction athletes.

At present, cyclists are not confident with the fight against doping in certain countries and for this reason must use doping as a means to maintain their position in the ranking. I fear for the health of cyclists in the future, and we urgently need a better strategy to protect their health.

**Question:** *You were also involved in the doping control programme of the Euro 2004 in Portugal. Could you give us your opinion on the main challenges facing organisers of major sports events in the fight against doping in the oncoming years?*

**Luis Horta:** The Doping Control Programme of the Euro 2004 in Portugal was an excellent experience, mainly due to constructive cooperation between UEFA and CNAD (the Portuguese National Anti-Doping Organisation). In my experience, the final result of the Anti-Doping Programme at major sports events depends on the cooperation between the Anti-Doping Commission of the event, the National Anti-Doping Organisation of the country, and the International Federations involved in the event.

The different stakeholders involved must meet beforehand to make strategic planning of the Anti-Doping Programme and sign protocol which gives a detailed description of the responsibilities, duties and rights of all parties involved, in order to prevent conflicts and problems arising during the event.