

Education and Culture DG



## EU Sport Forum, Madrid, 19-20 April 2010

### Second session: "Priorities for the planned Commission initiatives in the field of sport"

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

for

#### Workshop I: Sport's societal function

The choice of priorities for a new EU agenda in the field of sport should be based on the new Treaty provisions on sport while taking account of results and experiences gathered during the implementation of the White Paper on Sport, of new developments in the field of sport, of recent political developments (e.g. European Council Declaration, December 2008), and of the interests expressed in the course of consultations with sport stakeholders.

Part of the Commission's consultations with sport stakeholders will be the two workshops which will take place at the EU Sport Forum in Madrid in the afternoon of 19 April 2010. Workshop I will be devoted to the societal function of sport. In this framework, the following themes could be debated.

It is suggested that to prepare for the discussion, participants could ask themselves the following questions:

- Taking into account the challenges or problems which occur regarding the societal functions of sport, what objectives or actions should the EU focus on?
- Which tools should be used to implement the EU competence for sport in the societal field?
- Regarding a possible EU Sport Programme, what are the top priorities regarding the societal functions of sport that could be included in the programme?

#### **1. Health-enhancing physical activity**

Overweight and obesity are a growing problem in the EU. Surplus body fat comes from bad diets, lack of physical activity, or both. Health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) seeks to address the problem and the sport movement could be a key player in this connection. The 2008 EU Physical Activity Guidelines define how policies and practices of all actors (public and private) at all levels (EU, national, local) can be used to make it easier for citizens to move more in their daily lives. In this connection, various questions have been asked regarding the role of the sport movement. Is the idea that certain sports as well as wider physical activity could be offered within the same organisation a contradiction or a burden, or rather an opportunity to discover new synergies? Local networks with different types of actors – schools, parents, sport clubs, other associations – can explore new forms of cooperation. Local networks could be linked within EU-wide networks, promoting a mixture of competitive and recreational activities.

The first results of the 2009 Preparatory Action in the field of sport suggest that in view of the variety of practices and actors in different Member States and in respect of the role of the Member States in this field, support for transnational projects and exchange of information and good practices is likely to have a high European added value. Should other types of action be contemplated too?



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## **2. Sport and education & training**

Member States and the sport movement widely recognise the need for qualified professionals and volunteers in the sport sector. However, the organisation of sport-related education and training and of the regulation of qualifications in sport differs between Member States and sports. The continuing professionalisation of sport, combined with higher levels of mobility in the EU, is increasing the relevance of transparent national qualification systems and international qualification systems of the sport movement with a European reference (e.g. EQF). Cooperation between sport organisations and educational institutes could also be beneficial for other reasons: it increases participation in sport, motivates students in their school careers, contributes to the development of healthy lifestyles and makes it possible for talented young sportspeople to combine training and education.

The global race for medals and prizes is putting more and more pressure on the shoulders of athletes, coaches and managers. It is important to ensure school education besides sport training, to promote personal development programmes besides sport and to promote post-sports career preparation. On 12 December 2008, the European Council called for the strengthening of a constructive dialogue with the International Olympic Committee and representatives of the world of sport, in particular on the question of combined sports training and education for young people.

Different models of combined sports training and education already exist in Member States but the legal and financial framework is often lacking or not sufficient. Talented athletes looking for a sport apprenticeship in combination with study abroad often face problems. Suggestions have been made to improve the quality of training centres for talented youth and to investigate whether European guidelines are needed to facilitate the combination of education and training. Could such matters be developed through European networks? And if so, what form could such networks take? Can European added value be achieved through support for transnational projects and exchange of information and good practices, or are other instruments needed?

## **3. Volunteering in sport**

The value of sport organisations such as clubs, where members are active for other members as volunteers, has a long tradition in some parts of Europe but is hardly known in other parts. Such voluntary activities have made sport accessible and contribute to a high level of active citizenship inside and outside the sport community.

The 2009 study on volunteering in the EU confirms trends and challenges faced with regard to voluntary activity in sport in social terms (e.g. lack of recognition; better employability; dominance of male volunteers), political terms (e.g. lack of national strategies), legal terms (e.g. lack of specific legal frameworks; unclear tax regimes) and economic terms (e.g. funding needs; under-estimated economic value). In 2011 the European Year of Volunteering will bring attention to such matters. What follow-up is needed at EU level for the sport sector? Does the position of sport organisations that are based on voluntary work need to be promoted? If so, how?



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#### **4. Social inclusion and equal opportunities in and through sport**

The role of sport in promoting social networks and active citizenship is important. Sport has the potential to promote community identity, coherence, integration and gender equality.

##### *4.1. People with a disability*

The European Commission encourages Member States and sport organisations to adapt sport infrastructure to take into account the needs of people with disabilities. A new European Disability Strategy will be developed which will be based, on the one hand, on the European Union's human rights approach to people with disabilities and, on the other hand, on the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The UN Convention is the first legally binding international instrument to address the rights of persons with a disability with regard to sport. Training of monitors, volunteers and host staff of clubs and organisations for the purpose of welcoming athletes with disabilities at sport events are considered as possible actions to be supported at EU level.

##### *4.2. Migrants and persons of foreign origin*

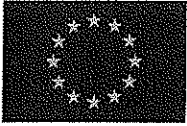
Sport promotes a shared sense of belonging and is therefore an important tool for promoting integration and inter-cultural dialogue in European societies. Sport could be included more intensively in specific integration-related programmes for immigrants, young immigrants in particular. Such programmes could help reach the aims of full citizenship and prevent people's exclusion from society. Is support of transnational projects and sharing of good practices between different countries, regions and actors likely to have high European added value? What form could they take?

##### *4.3. Gender equality*

The position of women in sport needs extra attention. The participation rates of women and girls practising sport and fitness are growing but still not in balance with men and boys. Sport can be an interesting tool to break with gender stereotypes, but in practice also often contributes to these stereotypes. Moreover, the number of women in leadership positions in sport governing bodies is still very limited. Gender equality is already a priority at EU level but how it should be implemented in sport remains a question.

#### **5. Protection of minors/integrity of young sportspeople**

Sport is practised by a considerable part of EU citizens from the youngest age. Young people are most actively involved in sport at all levels. This may require increased surveillance from public authorities, sport stakeholders and/or families. Young athletes involved in elite sports may put at risk their health and general wellbeing because of increasing pressure to achieve results even at the lowest levels of competitions. Risks faced by young sportspeople include overtraining and exploitation, missed education opportunities, use of doping substances, and sexual abuse and harassment. Young athletes coming to Europe from third countries may be in a fragile position. Public authorities and/or sports governing bodies have adopted various measures to ensure protection of young athletes, but these measures need to be balanced with the need to respect the athletes' fundamental rights as well as the EU's fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of movement.



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## **6. The fight against doping**

Doping is a threat to the physical and moral integrity of athletes and sports. It is a threat to European sport and European society alike. As the Treaty asks the Commission to protect the physical and moral integrity of athletes – especially the youngest ones – the EU should contribute to the fight against doping. But the EU also has to respect the role of Member States and that of the European sport movement. Many organisations are dealing with doping as a problem in high-level sports, including the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), national and regional anti-doping organisations, WADA-accredited laboratories in the EU, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. In relation to these organisations, the EU rather tends to get involved because EU law protects the individual rights of athletes and players. The criminalisation of trade in doping substances is a trend across the EU. How and to what extent should the EU contribute to these efforts?

Should the EU become involved in preventive action in amateur sport and fitness? If so, how?

## **7. The fight against racism and discrimination**

Racism and discrimination in sport can have a big social impact because of the interest of the public and the high media coverage of sport. European competitions and sport events need coordination among Member States to address these negative aspects of sport and society.

Based on the Framework Decision on Combating Racism and Xenophobia, Member States adapt their legislation, including sport-related legislation, to ensure that racism and xenophobia are punishable by effective, proportionate and dissuasive criminal penalties. In addition, preventive action is needed in sport and education. An updated strategy could be developed with stakeholders in sport, making use of existing good practices.

Should more action be taken outside professional football? How large are the problems in amateur sport and among children and young people? What action could be taken at EU level?

## **8. Violence in sport stadiums**

Violence in European sport stadiums remains a threat for sport and society. The Commission shares the view that integrated in-stadium safety and security arrangements should be developed for all football grounds hosting international matches. Other measures such as stadium or exit bans, expert evaluation of tournaments, training and exchange of best practices could also contribute to reinforcing security and safety at sport events.

In order to minimise risks for fans who are participating in sport events both legal and operational measures are needed. In this field close cooperation will continue with the Council of Europe in the framework of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches. Is additional action at EU level necessary?

## **9. Transnational mobility in the sport sector**

According to article 165 of the Treaty, EU action should be aimed at developing the European dimension in sport. In the fields of education and youth, mobility programmes have played an essential role in building a European dimension. "Youth on the Move" is one of the flagship initiatives proposed by the Commission as part of its EU 2020 Strategy, with the aim of promoting education and employment through mobility.

What role could sport play in this context? Should transnational mobility in the sport sector be supported? If so, what should the purpose of this mobility be and what categories of persons should benefit from it?