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from: Presidency

to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) / Council

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Subject: Annual European Week of Sport
"...From virtual sports to real sports... a step from the sofa to the playing field"
- *Policy debate*
(Public debate pursuant to Article 8(2) CRP [proposed by the Presidency])

Following consultation of the Working Party on Sport, the Presidency has drawn up the attached discussion paper as a basis for the policy debate on the above subject at the EYCS Council meeting on 26-27 November 2012.

Presidency background paper
Annual European Week of Sport

"...From visual sports to real sports... a step from the sofa to the playing field"

I. Introduction

The Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU wishes to engage the EU public authorities in a debate on the future challenges relating to HEPA and in particular in establishing the annual European Week of Sport. The debate aims at providing a platform of exchanging views on the direction of the future establishment of the annual European Week of Sport, including the EU cooperation in the field.

II. Policies to promote Health Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) adopted in May 2004 the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health aiming at the development, strengthening and implementation of sustainable, comprehensive policies and action plans on physical activity, at all levels, with the active engagement of all sectors¹. The WHO also developed global recommendations on physical Activity for Health addressed to three age groups. Additionally, the HEPA Europe, the WHO Regional Office for Europe, focuses on population-based approaches aiming to develop, support and disseminate effective strategies and multi-sectoral approaches in the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity². Besides the WHO, the EU has also been active on this area through multiple channels such as Council Conclusions³ and Resolutions⁴, White Papers⁵, implementing the EU Physical Activity Guidelines⁶ etc.

¹ <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/goals/en/>

² <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/disease-prevention/physical-activity/activities/hepa-europe>

³ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09363.en07.pdf>

⁴ OJ C 162 of 1.6.2011, p. 1 & 3

⁵ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/public_health/health_determinants_lifestyle/c11542c_en.htm

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/sport/documents/wp_on_sport_en.pdf

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/20120703-eu-pag-progress_en.htm

All the above has led the Cyprus Presidency to choose the HEPA topic as one of its priorities. In the relevant Council Conclusions, to be approved on 27 November 2012, a proposal is made for the establishment of an annual European Week of Sport, as a means to promote sport and physical activity and participation in sport at all levels taking into account similar national initiatives and in cooperation with relevant sport organisations. In a nutshell, a common European week, where we can all celebrate sport's ability to contribute to a better (both economically and socially) society, is proposed.

III. Establishment of the Annual European Week of Sport – Future challenges

Despite the substantial steps and actions taken by several bodies (i.e. EU, Member States, Sport Movement, etc) in promoting sport and physical activity, it appears that the diverse benefits of HEPA are facing constraints in reaching the citizens. In an attempt to raise the awareness of citizens, in cooperation with all key stakeholders and reach a common understanding and consensus on the ways how these benefits could be better obtained, the Council invites the Commission to consider the establishment of an annual European Week of Sport. The initiative could coordinate the existing trans-national events in the field of HEPA, such as ISCA's Move Week, TAFISA's Challenge Day and of those sporting and physical activity events and best practices developed on national, regional and local level. However, there are still several challenges in this regard.

One challenge could be the mobilisation and motivation of citizens to engage in sport and physical activity. Although it is generally accepted that regular physical activity has health, social and costsavings benefits, people do not include sport and physical activity in their daily lives. Recruitment and retention of the general population into sport and physical activity remains a key issue. The establishment of a week devoted to sport could reinforce the effort and raise awareness in engaging citizens, in particular young people, in sport and physical activity.

A second challenge that concentrates special interest is the cooperation among relevant stakeholders in HEPA. It is widely recognised that diverse key-actors in sport and physical activity have taken, on an individual basis, significant actions. A more concerted and cooperative effort could build consensus and commitment, avoid overlapping and join together stakeholders to foster bridged and integrated strategies and actions in HEPA.

Another aspect that deserves particular attention is the potential social and economic added value generated by sports. Through the establishment of such an initiative it is aimed at engaging more people into sport and physical activity, thus increasing the potential benefits derived from sport. The realisation of an annual European Week of Sport could showcase how investment in low cost resources and strategies can reveal and promote sport and physical activity and therefore contribute to economy growth.

IV. "Food for thought"

FIFA Soccer 13 video game:

- *It is the biggest sports video game ever. It sold over 4.5 million copies in the five days after launch - an astonishing sales feat that makes it 2012's biggest game so far.*
- *FIFA 13 was the number one selling game in at least 40 countries. One of these was the UK, where it went on sale on the last Friday of September and sold more than 1.23 million copies in the first 48 hours. That's 7.6 copies a second over the weekend. Electronic Arts (EA), the developer of the game, said FIFA 13 is only the second video game franchise ever to sell more than one million units in the UK within just one day, the first being Call of Duty. That means FIFA 13 sold 11.5 copies per second on the first day.*
- *Sunday, 30th September was the busiest day for online gaming for a single title in EA history. 800,000 people played FIFA 13 simultaneously, and more than 66 million online game sessions have already been played. That's 600 million minutes of online play. FIFA Soccer 13 is a critical and commercial success unprecedented in sports entertainment.*
- *Every minute of every day millions of fans around the world are experiencing what the critics have already said - FIFA Soccer 13 is the biggest and best sports game EA has ever created.⁷*

⁷ Source: <http://www.eurogamer.net/>

The above statement highlights that there is an immense interest in football (and sport in general). Can we build on this interest or is this where their interest stops? How can we motivate people to move from their sofas to the playing field? Is the proposal for the establishment of an “Annual European Week of Sport” a step in this direction?

In view of the above, Ministers are invited to reflect on how they perceive the above-mentioned challenges and identify possibly new ones and how these could be handled at all levels, i.e. EU, Member States and sport movement. Consequently, Ministers are invited to consider the following questions for discussion:

- 1. What are the main challenges in establishing an annual European Week of Sport? How this initiative could contribute to HEPA?**
- 2. How can public authorities and sport stakeholders co-operate more effectively to make the European Week of Sport a reality?**
- 3. What measures can be taken at European and national level to shift people, especially children, teenagers and young adults, from these virtual sports to real sports?**
