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Subject: Main challenges facing sport in the 21st century and cooperation between the EU, governments and the sport movement
- *Discussion paper*

Following consultation of the Working Party on Sport, the Presidency has prepared the attached discussion paper, which is submitted as the basis for the policy debate to take place at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 20-21 November 2017.

**Main challenges facing sport in the 21st century
and cooperation between the European Union, governments
and the sport movement**

Presidency discussion paper

The role of sport in our European society has changed a great deal in recent decades. Sport is no longer seen as a simple leisure activity, contributing to the personal well-being of individuals. Sport is now recognised as an economic sector¹ of significant importance, generating jobs and providing ever more products and services. The sport sector is clearly a contributor to employment and growth². Today's society is becoming more and more aware of the major impact of sport in areas such as working ability, education, health and social inclusion. Sport and physical activity are seen as important elements of a healthy lifestyle, having a positive impact on quality of life and life expectancy³. At the same time sport faces major threats such as match fixing, corruption, doping, violence, etc. Also, lack of transparency in funding and increasingly sedentary lifestyles are significant challenges. The popularity and credibility of sport can be affected by inappropriate behaviour which can negatively influence the image of the whole sport family. All these trends, both positive and negative, require regular attention from the sport movement, governments and the European Union. All those involved must work together in order to safeguard the positive values of sport and contribute to its improvement.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/competition/sectors/sports/overview_en.html

² Study on the Contribution of Sport to Economic Growth and Employment in the EU (2012)
European Commission, Directorate-General Education and Culture

³ http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/87545/E89490.pdf

Main European Union initiatives in the field of sport

Since the introduction of competence of sport in the Lisbon Treaty, the EU sport policy and initiatives have seen rapid development. The Council has adopted EU Work Plans for Sport⁴ in order to develop the European dimension of sport in an agreed and coherent way. As underlined in evaluation reports produced by the Commission, this working method has proven to be efficient. Recently, the Council has adopted a third EU Work Plan for Sport for the years 2017-2020. On this basis, over the next three years, the activities undertaken at the EU level in the field of sport should focus on the priority themes, key topics, outputs as well as the working methods and structures listed in the work plan. This work plan also aims to contribute to improved good governance and integrity in sport.

Policy cooperation in the field of sport can now be supported by a financial instrument of the European Commission. Since 2014, the Sport Chapter of Erasmus+⁵ aims to support projects and events in order to pursue the following objectives:

- tackling cross-border threats to the integrity of sport, such as doping, match fixing and violence, as well as all kinds of intolerance and discrimination;
- promoting and supporting good governance in sport and dual careers of athletes;
- promoting voluntary activities in sport, together with social inclusion, equal opportunities and awareness of the importance of health-enhancing physical activity, through increased participation in, and equal access to sport for all.

This policy cooperation and the financial support available through Erasmus+ Sport allow the EU to contribute to some of the main challenges sport will be facing in the coming years.

The Presidency deems that these main challenges can be divided into three main groups: governance, integrity and contribution of sport to society.

⁴ Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014; Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017) and Work Plan for Sport (1 July 2017 - 31 December 2020)

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en

Good governance

Recent scandals have shown that the sports governance must improve. Public authorities and EU institutions can contribute and cooperate with sports organisations to improve their governance while respecting the specific nature of sport. Within the framework of the EU Work Plan for Sport, an Expert Group on Good Governance was established. In 2013 this expert group adopted a broad list of principles of good governance in sport⁶. In September 2016, amongst the initiatives taken at the EU level, a pledge to implement Good Governance in European Sport⁷ was launched by the European Commission. Several international sports organisations have spontaneously accepted to join this pledge and to promote, implement and follow-up on the principles of good governance in sport. The Commission's approach has been to provide added value to the work undertaken by sports organisations by collecting and sharing good practices and providing practical recommendations that will help increase standards of good governance in sport. Commitments are made on a voluntary basis in the spirit of helping sports organisations to improve themselves. The current work done in this field needs to continue in the future in close cooperation between the European Union, Member States and the sport movement.

The respect for the autonomy of sport is one of the key principles of the EU cooperation in this field. However, sports organisations have to integrate the need to respect EU law and to make progress in terms of transparency, democracy and accountability. Also, the central role of federations and the pyramidal structure of sport need to implement some necessary adjustments, in terms of labour rights, sharing of benefits and organisation of competitions.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/policy_documents/xg-gg-201307-dlvrb12-sept2013.pdf

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/organisation-of-sport/pledge_en

Integrity⁸

Match fixing and doping threaten the principle of integrity of sport and integrity within sport. The wide-scale exploitation of match fixing by organised criminal groups which takes advantage of technology giving easy access to betting markets, has transformed the phenomenon into a major tool for corruption. Sports organisations (e.g. the IOC or FIFA) have taken steps and have developed governance structures and procedures in order to fight match fixing. The reality is that the investigation capacities of sports organisations are still limited, as are the sanctions they are able to impose on match fixers. To make headway in the fight against match fixing, help is needed from public authorities and governments. The fight against use of doping has also involved a lot of effort from all actors involved. Through the World Anti-Doping Code, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has been the monitoring body and main instrument in the fight against doping. In November 2016, the WADA Foundation Board adopted recommendations⁹ and furthermore, the organisation wishes to increase the budget by 50% in upcoming years to fulfil these recommendations. Currently WADA and existing anti-doping system are undergoing the necessary changes. A well-coordinated strategy between the European Union, Member States and sport movement is needed to maintain the integrity of sport in the future.

Contribution of sport to society

Sport is the largest social and voluntary activity in Europe. Many people take an interest in it and sport plays an important role in bringing people from different backgrounds together. In addition to teaching integrity and fair play, one of the main contributions of sport to society includes the benefits related to physical activity. Regular physical activity not only makes one feel good, it has significant health benefits. It reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers, helps control weight, and contributes to mental well-being. Physical inactivity has become one of the main societal challenges of the 21st century.

⁸ <https://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Crimes-in-sport/Integrity-in-sport>

⁹ <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/media/news/2016-11/foundation-board-press-release-foundation-board-equips-agency-to-be-fit-for-the>

Social inclusion in and through sport has become a priority topic over the last few years¹⁰. Sport can create a stronger sense of belonging to society among its more vulnerable members. This, in turn can contribute to promoting active citizenship. Social inclusion involves engaging with older people, people with disabilities, socially vulnerable young people, migrants and refugees, and promoting sport and physical activity in all social groups.

The social role of sport and its visibility have become especially important during the last few years due to various challenges Europe has been facing such as the economic and refugee crisis, terrorism etc. In the recent years, the sport movement has already made a considerable contribution to making European society more integrated. This effort should continue and be developed further.

EU scope for intervention in sport

The EU scope in sport is based on the respect for the competence of the Member States and the concept of the specificity of sport, including the autonomy of sport's governing structures. The EU scope for intervention in sport, as stated in the Treaty, is limited in two ways. Firstly, the competence attributed to the EU since 2009 under Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) is a supporting one. It means that the EU can only intervene to support, coordinate or complement sports policy measures taken by its Member States. Consequently, it has no legislative power and may not intervene in their exercise of this competence. Secondly, EU scope for intervention is limited by the need to take into account the specific nature of sport and to respect the autonomy of sport's governing structures. However, although not directed specifically at sport, many of the general rules and policies of the European Union (single market, state aid, free movement etc.) affect the field of sport or are of interest to it.

¹⁰ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ET/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017XG0615\(04\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ET/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017XG0615(04))

Cooperation between the EU, national governments and sport movement

In 2010, the Council adopted a resolution on the EU structured dialogue on sport¹¹. The resolution has been renewed during the Estonian Presidency in 2017, with the aim of strengthening the EU dialogue with sports stakeholders to serve as an opportunity for a continuous and well-structured exchange of views on priorities, implementation and follow-up to EU cooperation in the field of sport. The main bodies of the EU structured dialogue on sport are: the EU Sport Forum, the EU high-level structured dialogue on sport in the margins of the meeting of the Council and, since 2018, also the EU operational-level structured dialogue on sport in the margins of the meeting of the EU Sports Directors or other informal Presidency events.

Proposal to debate

In the situation where sport is facing increasingly more challenges, cooperation and coordination between the main actors - the EU institutions, governments and international sports governing bodies – is more important than ever.

During the meeting of ministers responsible for sport on 21 November in Brussels, the Presidency has decided to inspire an interactive discussion by inviting a distinguished guest speaker **Mr Thomas Bach, the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)**, to share his insights on how to address the main challenges facing sport in the 21st century and how governments and sport movement could cooperate better.

¹¹ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32010G1127\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32010G1127(01))

At the policy debate, the Ministers are kindly invited to give their reactions to the introductory speech of the guest speaker and to the following questions. These interventions should not take longer than 3 minutes:

- 1) **What are the main challenges facing sport in the 21st century that the European Union, its Member States and the sport movement should address together?**

 - 2) **How can the European Union and its Member States work more closely together with the sport movement in facing the main challenges in terms of governance, integrity and the contribution of sport to society?**
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