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Subject: Physical activity as an essential element of quality education at all levels -
cooperation models with the sport sector
- *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 the basis for the policy debate at the EYCS Council meeting on 18-19 May 2015.

**Physical activity as an essential element of quality education at all levels –
cooperation models with the sport sector****Introduction**

The promotion of physical activity (PA) is a priority EU policy making in the field of sport, with notably the Council Recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity across sectors, with the upcoming first edition of the European Week of Sport and with funding under the Erasmus+ programme in the field of sport. In the context of the EU Work Plan for Sport 2014-2017, the Expert Group on HEPA is mandated to compile recommendations to encourage physical education in schools, including motor skills in early childhood, and to create valuable interactions with the sport local authorities and the private sector. Sport Ministers had a policy debate under Italian Presidency on sport and PA at school age. Preliminary ideas developed by the Expert Group have been integrated in this background document and are reflected hereafter.

In most Member States, education institutions (alone or accompanied by other stakeholders) are responsible for the coordination of physical and sporting activities, including extracurricular activities and events that complement the physical education (PE) curriculum offer.

Since PE is not mandatory at later stages of education, the role of further education institutions and universities in providing sporting opportunities should be emphasised in achieving the recommended levels of PA¹ in European societies, either through formal curriculum (physical education classes) or through extracurricular sport and physical activities.

¹ Global recommendations on physical activity for health, World Health Organisation, 2010

Along with education institutions, sport sector organisations (such as Olympic committees, sport federations, associations and foundations, as well as sport clubs) are also in the frontline of these challenges, reinforcing the relevance of efficient cooperation and complementarity.

Although numerous good cooperation models and examples exist, the relationship between education institutions and the sport sector merits further discussion, improvement and promotion to ensure valuable interactions and create sustainable collaboration programmes, mutually benefitting from synergies which may increase sport and PA participation levels in Europe.

Synergies and mutual benefits of cooperation

Based on the principles of good governance in sport, the foundations for cooperation and mutual benefits between various stakeholders can be laid down already during policy planning at all levels. Institutional frameworks can support and encourage cooperation with the sport sector through providing the fundamental conditions to the development of various cooperation activities.

Cooperation between education institutions and the sport sector, especially in local communities, can yield various positive results - increased opportunities for being physically active with more appealing and a greater range of activities available; wider pedagogical practice, improved standards in PE, improved and more accessible infrastructure (facilities and equipment); as well as a greater talent pool for future.

Furthermore, research has confirmed that pupils are more likely to be physically active in schools with well-established school-community partnerships.²

² Leatherdale, S.T., Manske, S., Faulkner, G., Arbour, K., and Bredin, C. (2010). A multi-level examination of school programs, policies and resources associated with physical activity among elementary school youth in the PLAY-ON study. *The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 7 (1), p. 6. (Accessed 20/11/2014).

Educational institutions in close cooperation with the sport organisations should therefore seek to promote both curricular and extracurricular activities, creating sustainable collaboration programmes in and outside scholar environment. It would allow for PE and sporting activities in educational institutions to include a broader variety of sports to increase opportunities to experience different activities. Moreover, certified coaches and other sport sector professionals can contribute to physical education and extracurricular activities by providing novel experiences and learning opportunities which may not always be assured by physical education teachers.

Schools and physical education with the expertise of the sport sector, can not only ease the search for talent but also create and strengthen the conditions to support the progress of young athletes aspiring to a career in elite sports, promoting the adoption of flexible curricula and weekly schedules, allowing them to have sufficient time to train and compete.

At the same time, such cooperation should strive to develop programmes ensuring an inclusive approach, adjusting the activities to children with disabilities or special education needs, and prevent negative experiences resulting from inadequate practice settings. A special focus should be on adapting the offer of sporting activities also to higher and adult education.

Partnerships with community sport organisations should extend to use of community facilities to reduce costs and encourage young people to engage in extracurricular sport and PA, beyond the school day. This can be a two-way process, ensuring that the school facilities are also made available to the community at evenings and weekends.³ Cooperation between schools, sport organisations and local authorities should ensure that sport facilities are available, fulfil the necessary technical and safety standards, and managed efficiently in order to provide opportunities to children to remain active as often as possible. Such cooperation should prevent infra-structure duplication or its underutilization.

³ UNESCO (2015), Quality Physical Education Guidelines for Policy-Makers, p.44, available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002311/231101E.pdf> . p.49

Examples of cooperation

FIBA (*Fédération Internationale de Basketball*) Europe has been implementing a development programme for many years by which all European national federations are encouraged to apply for financial support. The focus of the development programme is on projects working towards the development of the game in their respective countries. Many projects run by the national federations are implemented in close cooperation with schools thereby increasing both the frequency of PA and interest in basketball. There is a similar type of support to the national federations by CEV (*Confédération Européenne de Volleyball*) with substantial focus on children and youth within the education system.

Considering the bilateral importance of the swimming skills (safety on water and development of physical fitness), it is important to emphasise the initiative of FINA (*Fédération Internationale de Natation*) for running the programme *Swimming For All, Swimming For Life*. To implement the programme national federations play an important role. Mandatory swimming lessons are part of the curriculum in many EU Member States, in particular at early stages of education; therefore the cooperation between the sport sector and education providers in this area provides mutual benefits.

Floorball sport began as something that was played for fun as a pastime at schools. Currently IFF (*International Floorball Federation*) are running programmes in cooperation with education institutions. Cooperation is encouraged, for example, through guidance on how to set up a floorball-oriented afternoon club at a school. The afternoon activities are based on the fact that the club provides guidance for schools and school facilities.

Ministerial debate

The Presidency would like to make further progress in identifying possible solutions and best practices on how to further advance cooperation between educational institutions at all levels and the sport sector. In this context and in the preparation for the policy debate in the Council, the Ministers are invited to reflect on the following questions:

1. How do you assess the cooperation between educational institutions at all levels and the sport sector in your country? Which are the best practice cooperation models or examples that you would like to promote?
 2. Which are the main obstacles and challenges for such cooperation? How could more synergies and mutual benefits be created?
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