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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on
11 and 12 May 2026:
Brain injuries in sports
- Information from the Netherlands

Brain Injuries in Sports

Information from the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, The National Health Council published an advisory report in early 2025 on brain injury in sport. In this report, the Council drew on the most recent international literature. It concluded that repeated head contact, such as heading the ball or blows to the head, can have a negative effect on cognition and behaviour, and that it also increases the risk of Parkinson's disease and dementia.

Building on this, the Dutch Sports Council issued an advisory report in the summer of 2025 containing recommendations for measures to protect athletes. Current medical and sporting protocols in the Netherlands and across Europe are not always uniform and are moreover mainly focused on head contact that directly results in brain injury. The Dutch sports sector has independently started working on these recommendations and is taking various steps toward healthier sports participation. Examples include improved registration of brain trauma during sports matches, in-depth research, adjustments to the rules of play, and revision of protocols. Where possible, the Dutch government supports the sports sector in this effort.

With this contribution, we aim to raise awareness among all Member States of the potential dangers of brain injury in relation to sports participation. This concerns traumas such as concussions, but certainly also the risks associated with repeated head contact. We thank all Member States that responded to our earlier request for information and thereby helped expand the knowledge base. We call on Member States to continue actively sharing any experiences and new research findings. Ultimately, we want to work together to reduce as much as possible the number of athletes in Europe who are exposed to brain injury.
