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European Union and Sport

Council of the EU: Meeting of the Expert Group on "Sport, Health and Participation"

The Expert Group on Sport, Health and Participation met for the fourth time on 6 February in Brussels. The sports movement was represented by the EOC EU Office and ENGSO. Two topics were on the agenda: Deliverable 4 - The next Eurobarometer on sport and physical activity as well as Deliverable 5 - „Proposals for future EU level work in the field of HEPA promotion with a bearing on the sport sector“.

The Expert Group has the mandate to explore ways to promote health-enhancing physical activity and participation in grassroots sport and to identify respective measures by mid-2013. In its work schedule, the Group agreed on five deliverables to fulfil its mandate. The first three deliverables were finalised at the Group's 3rd meeting on 27 June 2012. They have been subsequently submitted to the Council Working Party on Sport, meeting on 4 July, and were orally presented by the Group's Chairman Jean-Francois Toussaint (France).

During the meeting, the European Commission gave a brief overview of the planned Eurobarometer on sport and physical activity which was followed by an extended discussion on the questions and its structure within the Expert Group.

Regarding the proposals for future EU level work in the field of HEPA, the representatives of the EOC EU office and of ENGSO pointed out in their contribution that they would welcome a clear concept of the "European Week of Sports". There should also be a specific budget for these activities to guarantee the added value of the week. Following the EOC EU Office and ENGSO, there should be a direct link to the already existing activities on national level and to promote best practice examples such as the Olympic day taking place on 23 June each year encouraging people of all ages to participate in sport.

Finally, the EOC EU Office and ENGSO also proposed to highlight the mainstreaming of physical activity both into other sectors and also into different funding programmes as a priority at the EU level in future. For example, infrastructure has a big influence on the physical activity of people. A Cross-sectorial approach should be applied to enhance the physical activity of European citizens.

Further information:

[European Commission - Sport Unit website](#)



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European Council reached an agreement on the next MFF 2014 - 2020

On 8 February, 2013, the Heads of State and Government of the EU 27 managed to find a compromise agreement on the next 2014-2020 EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

Although there were some disappointments, President Van Rompuy argued that it was "a good agreement for Europe as a whole". Indeed, after 26 hours of negotiations, and for the first time in the history of the EU, the Council has reduced the overall budget for the next seven years with cuts of €90 billion compared to the initial proposal of the European Commission from November 2011.

The final budget is 908.4 billion, corresponding to 1.0% of the EU's Gross National Income (GNI). This means that the overall expenditure ceiling has been reduced by 3.4% in real terms, compared to the current MFF (2007-2013). The expenditure ceiling for **sub-heading 1a**

("competitiveness") amounts to EUR 125.61 billion. To this point, the negotiations did not consider the sport field yet.

In order to finalize the budget, the Council of the EU needs now to reach a compromise with the European Parliament. The Presidents of the MEP groups quickly reacted in a common letter, stating that they will vote against this text when it comes into their hands, in April or May 2013. Some MEPs (Greens/EFA, Belgium) even proposed that the Parliament wait until 2014 to have its real debate on the budget, which would coincide with the European elections.

Further information:

[Website of the Council of the EU](#)

Funding programmes, studies and projects

Study on transfers of players: Commission asks for more solidarity payments

On 8 February the European Commission published the results of the "Study on the Economic and Legal Aspects of Transfers of Players", which had been carried out in 2012.

The study underlines the special impact of European law on the current regulation of the transfer system. Due to European jurisprudence (Bosman case) professional football is characterized by a high degree of cross-border mobility. Between 1995 and 2011 the number of transfers in European

football has more than tripled. The transfer sums paid by the clubs have increased sevenfold in the same period.

The highest share of the transfer revenues is concentrated only on a small number of clubs which generate the highest revenues or are owned by financially strong investors. According to the authors of the study solidarity mechanisms to close the financial gap between "poor" and "rich" clubs are insufficient. Less than 2 per cent of the transfer fees benefit smaller clubs or reach



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the grass-root level. With this amount the costs for promoting young talent could not be balanced. The growing financial disparities in professional football had influence on the competitive balance and the openness of competitions. Insofar the authors see a tendency towards the creation of closed professional leagues within Europe if structures do not change.

On the basis of these conclusions the authors of the study recommended to the European Commission to undertake the following measures:

- Improve fair and balanced competition through better and increased redistribution between clubs as well as control over financial transactions and accounting linked to transfers,
- Limit transfer fees,
- Support youth development and protection of minors,
- Improve governance through transparency and fair dispute resolution mechanisms,
- Develop cooperation with public authorities for better law and transfer rules' enforcement.

The study has to be regarded as one political recommendation to the Commission. The Commission does not plan any legal initiative, which would in any case be questionable with regard to a legal basis in the treaty. The competence for the regulation of the transfer system lies with FIFA.

At EU level the issue of transfers will be discussed further. Inter alia the Council Expert Group on "Good governance in Sport" will deal with the conclusions and recommendations of the study at its upcoming meeting in April. The expert group, which also debates on measures against match-fixing, is composed inter alia by representatives of the EOC EU Office, FIFA, UEFA, the European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL), the European Club Association (ECA) and the International Federation of Professional Footballers (FIFPro). The expert group will present its own recommendations to the EU Sport Ministers by the end of 2013 in a written report.

Internal and visits

"European Evening of Sports" 2013

On Wednesday 27 February 2013 the EOC EU Office organised the third edition of the "European Evening of Sports" in Brussels. The event, which is organised every two years, attracted more than 300 participants to the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union.

After welcoming the guests President Hickey, President of the EOC and Member of the IOC

Executive Board, expressed his clear expectations for EU sports policy for the upcoming years: *"I hope to be back here in 2 years with the deserved recognition of sport in the EU budget and in EU policy, with concrete measures, with our expectations fully matched"*.

Dr Thomas Bach, Vice-President of the IOC and President of the German Olympic Sports



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Confederation (DOSB), addressed in his keynote speech the relationship between the European Union, sports and athletes. He reminded the European institutions to consult the athletes' representatives when discussing topics directly influencing the life of athletes, such as dual careers. Furthermore, he called on the European Institutions to safeguard sports autonomy and to back sport federations in the fight against match-fixing.

The EU-financing of Sport beyond 2014?

This crucial question was tackled during a first high-level panel discussion including Patrick Hickey, Bernd Neuendorf, Secretary of State for Sport of North Rhine-Westphalia, Michael Ring, Irish Minister for Sport, Doris Pack, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education, and Jan Trzuszczynski, Director-General for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture.



All panellists agreed that sufficient funding should be foreseen for sports in a specific chapter included in the "Erasmus for All" Programme. Doris Pack, emphasized her full support for grassroots sport and reiterated her commitment for an increased budget for sport, in cooperation with the Irish Presidency and was immediately backed by Minister Ring. Furthermore the panellists agreed with Jan Trzuszczynski, who claimed

that: *"The sport chapter will not be the only program available for sport related projects"*.

What to do against Match-Fixing?

A second panel discussion, including Claudia Bokel, Member of the Executive Board of the IOC and Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission, Christophe De Kepper, Director General of the IOC, Harri Syväsalmi, Chair of the Council Expert Group on "Match-Fixing", and Friedhelm Althans, First Commissioner of the Police of Bochum, discussed one of the biggest threats to the integrity of sport and the fairness of competition: match-fixing.



Claudia Bokel took the occasion to promote the role of athletes' commissions in the fight against match-fixing by recalling that: *"educating athletes and their entourage is crucial"*. Christophe de Kepper recalled the international dimension of match-fixing and referred to the numerous initiatives of IOC and other federations with regard to prevention and monitoring. Friedhelm Althans emphasized the important role of regulation authorities and the need of appropriate legal provisions against corruption related to sport.

This last panel discussion concluded an evening of constructive debates and positive messages for the field of sport. The fruitful discussions showed once again that



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cooperation between all actors - sport organisations, athletes, public institutions, police forces - is essential on the road to success.

Further information:

[Download press release](#)

Athletes' Commissions met Sport Unit of the European Commission

On Wednesday 27 February 2013 athletes' representatives from the Olympic Movement met Pedro Velazquez and Bart Ooijen representing the Sport Unit of the European Commission for a lunch meeting.

The participating athletes' representatives were Claudia Bokel, Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission, Jean-Michel Saive, member of the EOC Athletes' Commission, Chiel Warners, member of the NOC*NSF

Athletes' Commission and Henrik Stehlik, elected personal member of DOSB.

The idea of the lunch was to exchange ideas on a number of topics. Specific issues were highlighted such as: The future implementation of the European dual career guidelines; EU support for the work or setting up free elected athletes commissions all over Europe and more frequent, concrete and sustainable interactions between elected athletes commissions and EU institutions.

The European Youth Olympic Winter Festival in Brasov

For the 11th time, Europe's best young athletes met to compete in different winter sports and to feel the Olympic spirit at first hand. From the 17th to the 22nd of February, the European Youth Olympic Winter Festival (EYOWF) took place in the Romanian city of Brasov. During the event, young athletes from 45 European countries competed for medals and took part in cultural exchange activities.

In total 910 talents, of which 559 boys and 351 girls from 14 to 18 years, participated in the EYOWF and showed their skills in 8 different winter sports. The staged disciplines were alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, biathlon, ice hockey, figure skating, short track, ski jump and snowboard. Altogether, 37 events were held and the Russian team was the most successful, winning 22 medals followed by Germany with 16 medals and France with 12 medals.

The fact, that 18 of the participating countries won at least one medal shows how well balanced the youth winter sport scene in Europe is.

The President of the European Olympic Committees, Patrick Hickey, was present in Brasov during the entire week and found praising words for the "very successful Games." He especially pointed out the good organisation and the work of the over 400 volunteers, who made the event possible: "It was a wonderful display of attitude from everybody, including the volunteers that worked very hard, that is why we wish to thank every person that contributed."

On the 22nd of February, the festival was closed with a ceremony and the Olympic Flame was extinguished. The NOC presidents of Austria and Liechtenstein, Karl Stoss and Leo Kranz, took part in the closing ceremony. They received the EOC Flag in



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order to take it to the venue of the next EYOWF, which will take place in Montafon 2015.

The summer edition 2013 of the EYOF will take place in Utrecht, Netherlands, from 14-19 July.

Further information:

[Link to EYOWF Website](#)

New EOC EU Office member

The EOC EU Office would like to inform about an internal change taking place as of March 1st.



Karen Northshield will strengthen the team as Office Manager, succeeding Anne Brüll who will return to her hometown to start a different career in the sports sector. Her last day at the office will be the 14th March.

Mrs. Northshield comes from Mons, Belgium, and speaks fluent English, French, German and Dutch. Coming from a strong competitive swimming background, she is looking forward to combine her passion for sports with working for the EOC EU Office. Mrs. Northshield can be reached by email at northshield@euoffice.eurolympic.org or by phone at +32 2 738 0320.

The EOC EU Office would like to take the opportunity to thank Anne Brüll for her much appreciated work at the office and wishes her all the best for the future.

Dates in March

- 7 EU-Sports conference on Sustainable Financing of Sports in Dublin
- 8 Sport Directors meeting in Dublin

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