Tweets of the month

EUSport
@EUSport 26 March
Remember that the #ErasmusPlus calls for proposals for #Sport projects are still open. Apply before 6 April! https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/sport-2017_en ...

EUSport
@EUSport 14 March
Apply for #ErasmusPlus funded #volunteer programme at the #European Youth Olympic Festival in July!
http://gyor2017.hu/en_GB/general-information ... @gyor2017 #youth

EOC EU Office
@EOCEUOffice 9 March
Excellent & fruitful meeting between Commissioner @TNavracsicsEU and @EOCmedia acting President Janez Kocijancic at #eusportforum @EU2017MT

SIGGS Project
@SIGGS_EU 3 March
Visit our information stand at @EuSport EU Sport Forum in Malta next week on 8-9 March!
@EOCEUOffice #GoodGovernance #BeActive #eusportforum

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European Youth Sport Forum gathers 120 young leaders in sport

EP Sport Intergroup Meeting on Digital Single Market and Sport Events

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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

One year ago, two brutal terrorist attacks hit Brussels and 32 civilians lost their lives while many others got seriously injured. I want to take this occasion to call your attention to the situation of our former colleague Karen Northshield, who, as one of the victims, is currently still in hospital, where she has recently started a rehabilitation programme. We are deeply impressed by the way Karen keeps her fighting spirit and strong will to come one day back to normal life. We all wish her the strength to continue in this way.

After the official opening of the Brexit-negotiations, the whole of the European Union will follow the upcoming two years of bargaining with utmost interest. What a “hard Brexit” really means at the end of the process is open, but in any case it is hard to believe that this process will produce any winners at the end. Regarding the impact on sport, we still hope that the Erasmus+ Programme will remain open with the same conditions for the UK sports organisations in order to allow sport stakeholders to fully participate in European projects. To shed some more light on Brexit’s possible impact on sport, you will find an assessment by Leigh Thompson of the Sport and Recreational Alliance in our Partners’ Corner.

The Work Plan 2017-2020 of the Sport Ministers will be adopted at the formal Sport Ministers Council on 23 May. In the last months, the EOC EU Office has provided several contributions on the expectations of the Olympic Sport Movement regarding future topics and structures. Being aware of the limited competence of Art. 165 TFEU, the European Sport Policy should concentrate on activities that would help grassroots sport to develop on the one hand and to tackle existing problems in professional sport on the other hand. In this regard, the promotion of volunteering, the better consideration of environmental aspects or the protection of non-profit orientated sport structures are objectives worth to be followed. Furthermore, safeguarding the integrity of sport by financing activities regarding good governance, fight against match-fixing or doping should remain on the “to do list” of the European Union.

Thursday, 6 April, is the deadline for submitting project applications for the Erasmus+ Sport Programme. We do hope that the share of projects by the Olympic Sport Movement and grassroots sports increased due to the new budgetary simplifications (simplified grants) and due to the fact that the budget has gone up to more than 30 Mio. € (and will be even higher in the upcoming years). The EOC EU Office will apply as well with a proposal based on the successful SIGGS Project that was finalised at the end of December 2016.

To conclude, I just want to announce that the EOC EU Office will again organise its “European Evening of Sports” this year, which will take place on 19 June in Brussels. As a special guest, IOC President, Dr Thomas Bach, will hold the keynote speech. Apart from that EOC acting President Janez Kocijančič as well as Commissioner Navracsics already confirmed their presence.

Enjoy your read,

Folker Hellmund
Director EOC EU Office
EUROPEAN UNION AND SPORT

Malta hosts the EU Sport Forum 2017

On 8 and 9 March 2017, the European Commission, together with the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU, organised the annual EU Sport Forum in St Julian’s, Malta. For this edition, the Commission divided activities between plenary sessions, focusing on traditional EU topics such as grassroots sport and good governance, and workshops targeting specific, and in some cases not yet well explored areas, such as gender-based violence in sport, role of agents, volunteering or e-sports.

Following a general introduction by Mark Cujatar, Deputy President of the Maltese National Olympic Committee, three high level speakers opened the Forum: Jens Nymand-Christensen, Deputy Director General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture at the European Commission, Petra Kammerervert, Chair of the CULT Committee of the European Parliament, and Janez Kocjančič, acting President of the European Olympic Committees. Jens Nymand-Christensen insisted on the necessity to restore public trust on the integrity of sport and underlined the actions already taken by the European Union in this direction, notably through the support of the Programme Erasmus+ Sport.

Janez Kocjančič emphasised the recent progress regarding the cooperation and the understanding between the EU and the sport movement recalling that, despite the importance of the autonomy of sport organisations, sport always is an important and integral part of society. In addition, he asked the European Union and the general public to not only focus on challenges that sport organisations face, but also to underline their positive initiatives and activities.

Following these introductory words, Elena Malikova, in charge of Sport for the Slovak Presidency of the EU in 2016, and Heidi Pekkola, Sport Director of the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisations (ENGSO) discussed the follow-up of the High Level groups on Grassroots Sport and Sport Diplomacy.

The rest of the first day was organised in different workshops, including discussions on anti-doping or the environmental impact of sport. On anti-doping, an interesting panel debate was organised between Chris Agius (Maltese presidency of the Council), Jens Nymand-Christensen, Benjamin Cohen (World Anti-Doping Agency), Michael McNamee (Professor at Swansea University) and Rozle Prezelj (Chair of the IAAF Athletes Commission). Nymand-Christensen started by recalling that the fight against doping should be focused on both grassroots and professional sport while Benjamin Cohen underlined the close link between WADA’s functioning and the willingness of its stakeholders to support. He notably stated that “WADA is as efficient as its stakeholders want it to be. It is clear that WADA needs more efficiency and less politics and in order to achieve this we need to invest in a better way, including less testing and more investigation”. Other aspects such as rights of athletes and their involvement in WADA’s decision-making process were also discussed by the panellists.
Entitled “Greening the Sport”, another panel provided space for an interesting discussion on the environmental impact of sport, and the prospects that “going green” can bring. Andreas Klages, Deputy Director of Sport Development for the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), stressed that “making sport environmentally friendly is an opportunity to be more innovative”. Giving the example of Portland Trail Blazers, a professional NBA basketball club which by investing in green technologies not only saved considerable financial resources, but also attracted more fans, Mary Harvey of the Green Sport Alliance US, showed that environmental sustainability should be seen as a great opportunity rather than burden.

Two other topics were on the Forum’s Agenda for the second day: the future of grassroots sport in Europe and Good Governance in sport. The panel on the latter started with Darren Baily (Chair of the Council Expert Group on Good Governance) who stated that, even if several sport organisations already started the process to improve their governance, more efforts are still necessary, notably regarding the inclusion of stakeholders. He also stressed the necessity to be patient with sport organisations, as improving their governance required a long-term strategy and an evolution of the global culture of the organisation. Furthermore, Janez Kocijančič pointed to the different actions already taken by the Olympic Movement, including the Olympic Agenda 2020 and the SIGGS project conducted by the EOC EU Office, to improve the governance not only of the National Olympic Committees, but also of national, European and international federations.

In parallel to the different sessions, the SIGGS Project of the EOC EU Office used the opportunity to promote the outcomes of the project as well as to invite all the participants from sport organisations to make use of the self-evaluation tool at a dedicated information stand.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Website EU Sport Forum 2017

European Youth Sport Forum gathers 120 young leaders in sport

On 10-13 March 2017, the Maltese Presidency of the Council organised the European Youth Sport Forum, in cooperation with the European Commission and ENGSO Youth, in Malta. The event gathered 120 young leaders aged between 18 and 35 from the sport and youth sector, among them participants from several National Olympic Committees.

The Participants discussed and drafted recommendations on three main topics: healthy lifestyle, social inclusion and volunteering, and sport diplomacy.

The final recommendations were published as a so called ‘Pink Paper’. This Pink Paper will be handed over to Commissioner Tibor Navracsics later this year.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Pink Paper of the 2017 EU Youth Sport Forum
On 7 March 2017, the Sport Intergroup of the European Parliament (EP) hosted a meeting to discuss the influence of the proposed Digital Single Market (DSM) measures on the broadcasting of sporting events. The Conference was divided into two panels: one regarding the views from sport organisations, and a second with the views from broadcasters.

The first Panel, moderated by MEP Bogdan Wenta, (EPP, POL), started with Mark Lichtenhein, Chairman of the Sports Rights Owners Coalition (SROC) and of Golf Europe, emphasising the friction between the Commission’s proposals and the territorial licensing that underpins most of the current broadcasting deals. He presented how in sport, the same product will have a different value in different countries and how territorial exclusivity of broadcasting rights allows broadcasters to develop different offerings according to market demands. Therefore, breaking down the barriers currently in place would likely not lead to better offers or better prices for the consumer. He furthermore insisted on the large amount of revenue from licensing rights that is invested back into grassroots sports. Finally, Stefan Brost, Head of the EU Office of German Bundesliga, brought up the issue of granting neighbouring rights to producers and broadcasters, so that piracy and illegal streams could be tackled more effectively. He called for the copyright Directive to ensure better protection of sports broadcasting, including a call to grant neighbouring rights to sport event’s organisers, which is already the case in several Member States.

The second panel was moderated by MEP Virginie Rozière (S&D, FRA). The public broadcasters’ representative from the EBU had cancelled her participation, leaving three private broadcasters presenting their views. Helena Burrows, Head of Policy for BT Group, emphasized the various costs involved in sports broadcasting besides the price of broadcasting rights. She also explained how nearly all the value of the rights is in live broadcasting, and that there is a high motivation for customers to find grey market or illegal access and by changing the transmission regulations, you might make it easier for customers to find these grey markets. Burrows therefore argued, similar to Stefan Brost, that piracy and intellectual property protection should be a stronger focus of legislation in this field.

Emilie Anthonis, Director of Legal and Public Affairs, Association of Commercial Television in Europe ACT, added to this that with a competition case currently under investigation by the DG COMP of the European Commission (see here) that might lead to geo-blocking clauses becoming void, and the current proposals for the Digital Single Market, the contractual freedom and copyright foundation of sports broadcasting are under threat from two directions. Ross Biggam, Vice-President Government Affairs EMEA, Discovery Communications/Eurosport, considered the proposal regarding portability a success, but saw a lack of clarity with the other proposed EU regulations. He also pointed out that there are a lot of overlapping initiatives: Geo-blocking,
SatCab, DG COMP court case, CJEU Case law (Murphy 2011) that together rapidly diminish contractual freedom and the exclusivity of broadcasting rights.

In summary, all sport organisations and broadcasting organisations present were of one mind that the current proposals for a Country of Origin principle for online streams are creating a problematic situation for the sector. While it is clear they pose a danger to the current business model for broadcasting of sport events, the benefits for consumers and business aimed for by the Commission do not seem to be achievable in the special field of sports. While the portability Regulation is not controversial and welcomed by most participants of the event, panellists made clear that the other proposals needed to be changed.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Report on the DSM Meeting of the EP Sport Intergroup on the EOC EU Office Intranet (Login needed)
Council Press Release: Portability of Digital Content Services

XG HR: Contribution of sport to the employability of young people

The European Commission has published the second set of recommendations of the Council Expert Group on Human Resources Development in Sport (XG HR) under the current Working Plan. This document is dedicated to the topic of employability; in particular to the methods and conditions under which sport can be used as an effective tool in fighting the unemployment of young people.

Led by Marc Theeboom, Professor at the Free University of Brussels, Member States experts and observers decided to limit the scope of the recommendations to the target group of NEET’s (not in education and training) and focus on “employability” which relates to a person’s skills, knowledge and abilities to get in stay and progress in employment, rather than on “employment” and job creation.

Even with the subject of the recommendations restricted to the above mentioned target group and area, the issue proved to be a complex one: While it was agreed that “the general belief is that (employability-related) soft skills can also be acquired through sport”, the group found that “the cumulative evidence base for the social role of sport in relations to the specific groups and specific (non-sport) related objective is rather weak.”

Addressing the challenges stemming mainly from the lack of hard evidence and uncertainty when it comes to the concrete benefits of using sport as a tool to increase employability of young people, the XG HR has come to the following findings:

- Focus should be primarily on the role of sport as a tool for soft skills development of low-educated youth;
- It is necessary to have realistic expectations to which extent sport can achieve youth employability goals;
- Focused policy and initiative based on well-defined terms and priorities are needed;
- The position of the traditional sport sector, which may not always be in the position to take up this specific social role to the full extent, should be rethought;
- It is necessary to analyse the identity and motives of non-active people;
- What makes an effective collaborative partnership needs to be better defined;
- The non-formal learning process needs to be understood better;
- Good practices and policies need to be mapped, monitored and evaluated;
A good contact with the employment sector is necessary.

Building on these findings as well as on the previous developments in the area of recognition and validation of informal and non-formal skills, and on the Recommendations of the High-Level Group on Grassroots Sport, the Experts have recommended that the EU should:

- Make full use of the existing tools and initiative set up to facilitate educational and employment opportunities for young people (e.g. Youthpass etc.).
- Set up a general valorisation framework of transferable skills development through sport for NEETs;
- Stimulate knowledge development regarding the critical success factors of developmental sport-based practices to increased employability for NEET's.

With regard to the sport sector, the XG HR has addressed some of its recommendations directly to national governments. The Experts have suggested that the Member States should consider:

- To primarily stimulate and support organisations that are explicitly aiming to use sport as a means for increasing the employability of NEET's;
- To encourage local partnerships between the sport sector and other relevant domains and structures;
- To encourage the employment sector to participate in collaborative partnerships with sport and social organisations to enable a better understanding regarding the required employment skills;
- To develop more understanding of the non-formal learning processes in sport, including insight into what type of expertise is needed for coaches and mentors.

FURTHER INFORMATION

XG Recommendations on the contribution of sport to the employability of young people
Website of the EU Youthpass

EWoS Partners and National Coordinators meet in Malta

The European Partners and the National Coordinators (NCBs) of the European Week of Sport (EWoS) met on 9 March 2017 following the EU Sport Forum hosted by the Maltese Presidency.

In this meeting, the European Commission presented its take on last year’s EWoS (see January article for more details) and provided an outlook for 2017. Regarding National Coordinators, the Commission has highlighted three changes:

- Sweden has joined the EWoS for the first time (the Swedish Sports Confederation RF is the NCB),
- Österreichische Bundes-Sportorganisation (BSO) has taken over the NCB role from the Ministry.
- In the UK, Sport England has handed over the NCB’s tasks to UK Active.

Regarding events, the Commission confirmed that the opening event would take place in Tartu (Estonia) on 23 September. It will include a round table on healthy lifestyles and a children cycling festival. The BeActive Awards Gala, which will take a bigger stage this year, will take place after the end of the Week itself – probably together with a de-briefing of partners and NCBs in mid-October – and might be staged in Marseille instead of Brussels. Prices will be awarded in three categories - workplace, schools, and local
hero - with both National Coordinators and European Partners having right to nominate (up to 3) people and projects per category.

Additionally, the European Commission aims to create a network of EWoS ambassadors connecting all the people who have taken up this role nationally and at European level over the last years. A first meeting is planned for 20 June in Brussels.

Looking at online and social media activities, the Commission aims to improve the website, keeping it up-to-date and making it relevant throughout the year. Social media will again play a central role in the #BeActive campaign (which will be launched on the Olympic Day – 23 June – this year). New emoticons and a digital mascot are to join the recurring photo competition.

European Parliament approves agreement on new Firearms Directive

On 14 March 2017, the European Parliament endorsed an agreement reached by Parliament and Council negotiators ("trilogue") on an update of the 1991 EU firearms directive, which had been reached at the end of December 2016.

The update to the firearms Directive is a package of measures to strengthen the provisions on the acquisition, possession and import/export of firearms in the European Union. It enforces tougher controls on blank-firing “acoustic” firearms, as well as revises deactivation standards to ensure that deactivated firearms are rendered irreversibly inoperable. Stricter controls will also be put in place for certain semi-automatic firearms. As such it has an impact on sport shooting, which was one of the aspects discussed in the trilogue negotiations.

Under the new Directive, Member States will be able to give Category A authorisations to target shooters, provided the individual is actively practising for or participating in shooting competitions. The exemptions provided for sport shooters cover those entering the sport as well as those already competing, and will not restrict the current freedom of choice of equipment used by competitors in their shooting disciplines.

The draft law now approved by the European Parliament still needs to be formally approved by the other co-legislator, the Council of the EU. Afterwards, Member States will have 15 months to transpose the new rules into national law, and 30 months to put in place data-filling systems to register all information needed in order to trace and identify firearms.

FURTHER INFORMATION

European Parliament Press Release (14/03/2017): “Parliament approves revised EU gun law to close security loopholes”

European Parliament Background Note (26/01/2017): Firearms Directive

Council of the EU Press Release (20/12/2017): “Control of firearms: Council confirms agreement with the European Parliament”
FUNDING PROGRAMMES, STUDIES AND PROJECTS

EESC: Expert Hearing in course of Erasmus+ Mid-term Evaluation

On 15 March 2017, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) of the EU organised an expert hearing on the Mid-term Evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme.

The hearing was opened by Günter Lambertz, President of the Study Group in charge of the evaluation report, who presented the findings of the EESC fact-finding mission to Member States together with Tatjana Babrauskiene, the Co-Rapporteur of the Information Report.

In a first panel, moderated by Indre Vareikyte, Rapporteur of the Information Report, representatives of the Life-long learning Platform, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education as well as of the Erasmus Student Network discussed the situation for their institutions and made their suggestions to make the programme more effective.

The second panel was moderated by Tatjana Babrauskiene and consisted of representatives of the European Youth Forum, the European Trade Union Committee for Education and the EOC EU Office. Felix Schäfer represented the EOC EU Office and analysed the issues that prevent sport organisations from higher involvement in the Programme. He emphasised the low share of the organised sport as project partners (25%) and criticised the prevalence of large projects, explaining the barriers that grassroots sport organisation face concerning co-financing and administrative burden. He also pointed out positive developments like the introduction of small collaborative partnerships that had created higher interest.

Like the other speakers he emphasised the general success of Erasmus+ and the important role that the Programme plays to engage young people in Europe with the EU and to invest in their development. However, it was also pointed out that the European Commission needs to improve and simplify conditions for application and implementation to reduce the barriers for small organisations.

The EOC EU Office will continue to closely follow the developments in the field of Erasmus+.
**PARTNERS’ CORNER**

**Finnish NOC follows VALO as partner of the EOC EU Office**

Since the merger of the Finnish Olympic Committee and the Sports Confederation (VALO) in the beginning of 2017, the Finnish Olympic Committee is now the official partner of the EOC EU Office. VALO had been an active partner of the Office since 2009, and the new Olympic Committee will continue the established partnership. The Finnish NOC is therefore the tenth European NOC to directly partner with the EOC EU Office.

**Sports and Recreation Alliance (SARA): Brexit: A tricky trade-off for the sports sector?**

On 29 March, the UK triggered Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, launching the withdrawal of the country from the EU. In that perspective, Leigh Thompson, Policy Manager at the Sport and Recreation Alliance considers what Brexit could mean for trade in sports goods and services:

In her first major speech back in January 2017, the Prime Minister Theresa May outlined the UK Government’s key negotiating priorities for Brexit. These priorities will shape the forthcoming negotiations following the UK’s formal Article 50 notification delivered on 29 of March.

Perhaps the most important element of the speech was the confirmation that the UK will be leaving not just the EU but also the Single Market and, most likely, the customs union. This is an outcome variously described as a ‘hard’ or ‘clean’ Brexit, in large part because it will result in a very significant restructuring of our trading relationships with the EU.

But what will it mean for the UK sports sector specifically? To shed some light on this requires digging into some of the available data on trade in sporting goods and services. Taking first the trade in sporting goods – everything from

![Fig. 1: Exports of sporting goods: % share intra-EU versus extra-EU, 2014 (Source: Eurostat)](image)
clothing and footwear to golf clubs and bicycles – one of the most striking statistics is that the UK currently has the largest trade deficit in sporting goods in the whole of the EU. The UK currently imports sports goods to the value of EUR 2.9bn and exports just EUR 1.7bn. And in trade flow terms, we sell around 60% of our sporting goods to other EU countries (Fig.1).

This trade deficit means that consumers of sports goods are arguably more exposed to two risks related to Brexit – one short-term, the other longer-term. The first is Brexit-induced currency depreciation, whereby imported goods rise in price as the value of the pound falls. As an example, following the pound’s recent post-referendum slump and its impact on import prices, UK retailer Halford’s announced recently that buying a bicycle may be about to get more expensive.

The second, longer-term consideration is the potential for new or additional trade barriers such as tariffs on imported sporting products including clothing and footwear. Importantly, these barriers may arise even where UK trade is with countries outside the EU if, post-Brexit, the UK cannot negotiate similar trading terms to those that have been agreed as a member of the EU.

From an export point of view, the fall in the pound may deliver a boost to UK producers of sporting goods as it has the potential to make UK goods more price competitive both in Europe and overseas. However, in the longer term, any post-Brexit imposition of tariffs and potentially, non-tariff barriers (e.g. quotas or additional customs checks) will make UK producers less competitive and limit their ability to penetrate the very EU markets to which they currently enjoy unrestricted access.

But it’s not all about trade in goods. When considering the impact of Brexit on sport, we should also take into account what it could mean for those businesses providing services closely related to our sector. These businesses provide a wide range of services, from professional services such as law and finance through to design, engineering and creative services.

Recent data certainly seems to indicate that sports services is a fast-growing sector in trade terms. In 2010-2014, UK exports of sports services grew by over 90% to a value of £1.8bn. This suggests that the UK is developing a real depth of expertise in these service areas and, given the scale of its economic contribution, it is important that sports services sector is not overlooked in the Brexit debate.

Given that it is now the UK Government’s intention to exit both the EU and the Single Market, it may become much harder for UK businesses to offer sports services into the remaining EU member states and, equally, for UK-based organisations to source important EU expertise. The UK currently exports a third of total sports services to the EU which, in value terms, equates to over half a billion £ (Fig.2). Imports of sports services from the EU contributes over 85% of total UK sports service imports, which makes up a similar figure in value terms – in excess of half a billion £ (Fig.3).
While these flows are not huge in the context of total UK trade, they nonetheless illustrate how interdependent the UK-EU sports services sectors are and how Brexit could impact on cross-border trade in sports services. The risks become magnified when one considers the facilitative role played by the EU’s mutual recognition of qualifications framework (which enables qualified professionals to work in other EU member states) which itself is underpinned by the broader freedom of movement and freedom to provide services provisions enshrined in the EU treaties.

At this point we can only speculate on the potential impact of Brexit on sport; much will depend on the shape of the final deal the UK Government negotiates with the remaining EU member states. However, with the UK set to formally trigger Article 50, what is now clear is that there is much at stake from a trade point of view, both for participants (who are, after all, consumers of sports goods) and the businesses that provide goods and services in support of the sector.

More Information

Note: This is an updated version of an article that was first published at: sportandrecreation.org.uk

* The data published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is based on a narrow statistical definition of ‘sport’ which does not include all sports services activity, some of which is included in other DCMS sectors. If a wider definition is used, the total value of sports services is likely to be significantly higher than indicated.
### NEXT MONTH

**Dates in April 2017**

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