

Tweets of the month



EU Sport

@EuSport Feb 26

We are one month away from the [#EUSportForum](#) in Zagreb Flag of Croatia 26-27 March 2020, mark your calendar!

LIVE streaming available

Check the draft agenda and keep an eye on the website for more updates →

https://ec.europa.eu/sport/forum_en
[#BeActive](#) [#BeInclusive](#).

EOC EU Office

@EOCEUOffice Feb 20

Our [@EUErasmusPlus](#) co-financed [@POINTS_EU](#) Project is entering its final year of activities with 14 national workshops in all partner countries. Find all relevant information on the project website: <http://points-project.com>
[@EuSport](#) [#integrity](#).

POINTS Project

@POINTS_EU Feb 20

Congratulations [@COPPORTUGAL](#) for the success of the [@POINTS_EU](#) national workshop & for your commitment in the fight for sport [#integrity](#) & against [#matchfixing](#)

More info on the event can be found here: <http://points-project.com/2020/02/20/noc-portugal-cop-successfully-organised-points-national-workshop/>
Next workshops: [@hrv_olimp_odbor](#) [@nocnsf](#) [@teambelgium](#).

EOC EU Office

@EOCEUOffice Feb 19

What happened to the plans to double or even triple the new [#Erasmus](#) budget [@eucopresident](#)?! Erasmus is one of the biggest EU successes. Proper budget needs to be ensured in new [#MFF](#)! [@vonderleyen](#) [@GabrielMariya](#) [@EUCouncilPress](#) [@sabineverheyen](#) [@MilanZver](#)

The House of European Sport

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

On 20-21 February the President of the European Council Charles Michel has invited the Heads of States or Governments to a special summit in order to align the divergent positions of the 27 EU Member States on the future EU financial framework 2021-27. This attempt failed, but only the boldest optimists had expected an agreement at that time.

The starting position for sport is relatively good. If almost all policy fields are more concerned with the question of what percentage of future budgets will be reduced, the sports programme will experience a substantial increase in the framework of Erasmus+. A 50 % increase from € 265 million to around € 400 million in the future financial period currently seems realistic. In addition to the financial resources, the future range of topics is of course also of great importance. A stronger focus on topics that aim at the sustainability of sport would be in line with the general political reorientation of the new EU Commission: the "Green Deal". Although the introduction of mobility as a new field of activities of the sports programme is in principle worthy of support, it should not lead to financial reductions of the existing collaborative partnerships and not-for-profit sports events.

The negotiations on the new Work Plan of the European Sport Ministers are now entering the decisive phase before the new plan 2021-24 will be adopted under the German Council Presidency later on this year. From the point of view of organised sport, the activities agreed in the Plan can only be implemented successfully and sustainably if the relevant sports organisations are involved from the outset. Too often in the past, guidelines and recommendations have been adopted that were not taken seriously by any of the actors in sport and politics and were therefore never implemented.

The aim should therefore be to formulate common goals in a cooperative effort to which the representatives of organised sport and governments then feel more committed. The focus should be on finding solutions to counteract the most pressing problems in sport. What can sport and politics, each in its own area, do to ensure that sports clubs, for example, can survive in a more profit-oriented environment and make their important contribution to maintaining local cohesion? How can voluntary work be strengthened and the European Sport Model be preserved in the long term, including its existing solidarity system. The role and competences of sports federations must be maintained even when European competition law is applied. On the other hand, sport must also be prepared to meet the highest standards of good governance and work actively to give all relevant key players in sport an appropriate voice.

These are examples of issues that the new Work Plan for Sport should address.

Finally, allow me to reiterate that the EOC EU Office looks forward to welcoming all guests who will attend the "6th European evening of Sports" in Brussels on 16 March!

Kind regards,



Folker Hellmund
Director

EUROPEAN UNION AND SPORT

No agreement between Member States for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027

On 14 February 2020, Charles Michel as President of the European Council, published draft on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2021-2027. The MFF is the EU's long-term budget, negotiated between the different EU Institutions, which sets the limits for EU-spending over a period of at least five years. The multiannual budget for the next period will cover seven years.

The proposal of Michel follows the figures of the Finnish Presidency's negotiating box that was published on the 5 December 2019. In concrete, he proposed an overall level of €1087 billion that represents 1,07% of the gross national income of the EU27. In comparison to the Commission and Parliament proposals these figures include cuts in funding for cohesion, infrastructure investments, digitalisation, agriculture, youth employment, defence, SMEs, migration and Erasmus. Regarding Erasmus, the amount on the table is 48% below the position of the Parliament and 20% below the Commission's position.

[The proposal of Michel could however not count on the support of the European Parliament.](#) The Parliament previously expressed its disapproval of the Finnish Presidency negotiating box. The Parliament stressed that Michel's proposal is far below the Commission's financial position and their own MFF proposal. The MEPs pointed out that they expected Michel to significantly invest in the Green Deal, in digital transition and in a stronger Europe.

MEPs Sabine Verheyen, Chair of the CULT Committee, and Milan Zver, Rapporteur for Erasmus at the EP, furthermore specify that they are disappointed with [the budget for Erasmus+](#),

[within the proposed MFF of Michel.](#) The two MEPs stressed that the Parliament asked to triple the budget for Erasmus+ funding with the objective to enable more people, especially those with fewer opportunities, to participate in the programme across education, youth and sport.

In spite of the critics it should be noted, that the adoption of Michel's proposal would lead to an increase of the Erasmus+ budget of 50 %. The sport programme would benefit from this rise accordingly.

The adoption of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework is always a long and difficult journey and the Brexit contributes to the complexity of the current negotiations. In this regard, and due to the many different concerns, interests and opinions, no agreement on the MFF 2021-2027 was reached during the special meeting of the European Council, held on the 20-21 February. The process will continue and Michel must consult EU leaders on how to take things forward.

A clear overview on the different proposals on the MFF made by the Finnish Presidency, the Commission, the Parliament and Charles Michel can be found through [this link](#). The different propositions on the budget for Erasmus+ are located under title 7 (Investing in People, Social Cohesion and Values).

Stakeholder consultation on the implementation of the current EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020

On 3 February 2020, the European Commission's Sport Unit organised an informal meeting to consult sport organisations and stakeholders on the implementation of the current EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020. The aim of the event was to gather feedback from the sport stakeholders as the Commission will prepare an Implementation Report on the current EU Work Plan in the coming months. This Implementation Report will feed into the negotiations on the new EU Work Plan for Sport, which will be negotiated and adopted by the Council and will be the priority of the German EU Presidency during the 2nd half of 2020.

EOC EU Office was present in the meeting and made several comments related to the priorities, developed outputs and working methods under the current Work Plan and also suggestions for the future. The comments took on board the feedback gathered from the Office's partners.

The general comments of the EOC EU Office included the acknowledgement that the Work Plan is needed in order to ensure that the different outputs, such as studies, recommendations, EU Presidency priorities etc. are developed in a logic order and are in line with each other.

Furthermore, to increase the impact of EU activities in the field of sport, the Work Plan should take up the needs and challenges of the sport movement and should provide ideas and activities to overcome these problems. In this regard, it would be also important to develop a more cross-sectoral approach. A good example was the Tartu Call where three Commissioners responsible for sport, health and agriculture set up a common strategy. Similar approach could notably be considered regarding the structural funds or the application of the EU competition policy to sport. In addition, the EU Work Plan should keep some room for flexibility, since there can always be new topics arising that would need to be discussed at EU level.

Regarding the working methods the main comments of the EOC EU Office included the following elements. First of all, there should be no discussions without the organised sport movement being around the table. Secondly, the Expert Groups should always have clear tasks and objectives in the future and include real experts in the composition. Thirdly, the structured dialogue at the national level should be developed between the Ministries and the Olympic Committees and other organised sport representatives. Involving sport organisations at an early stage would increase the commitment and also improve the implementation of the adopted documents at the national level. In addition, the working method of "group of interested member states" should be further developed as it can have good potential. However, it should better involve organised sport movement actors.

Regarding the future topics, the EOC EU Office highlighted the importance to include the key elements of the European Sport Model and the application of the EU competition policy to sport as a main priority. Sustainability, being one of the main priorities of the new von der Leyen Commission, should be added on the list as well. Other relevant topics should be: sport facilities, volunteering in sport, support for the existing integrity activities of the sport movement, promotion of Olympic values and ideals, further development of the sport satellite accounts and initiatives to promote private investments in sport projects. The EOC EU Office also contributed with similar comments to a written consultation for members and observers of the current Commission Expert Groups.

The Commission is supposed to publish the Implementation Report in May, and the negotiations on the new Work Plan will be officially done during the German EU Presidency. The

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Council of Sport Ministers is supposed to adopt the new Work Plan in November 2020.

[EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020](#)

[Tartu Call](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sports Group replaces the Sport Intergroup at the European Parliament

On 18 February, the opening cocktail of the Sports Group, formerly known as the Sport Intergroup, took place at the European Parliament. On this occasion, the Co-Chairs of the Group who are MEPs Marc Tarabella (S&D, Belgium) and his new colleague Tomazs Frankowski (EPP, Poland), presented the new Bureau of the Sports Group and the main priorities they will focus on over the next five years. In addition to Tarabella and Frankowski, the Bureau of the Sport Group will include MEPs Tiziana Beghin (NI, Italy), Dragos Pilaru (Renew, Romania), Iban Garcia del Blanco (S&D, Spain), Theodoros Zagorakis (EPP, Greece) and Viola Von Cramon-Taupadel (Greens/EFA, Germany) as Vice-Chairs.

This Sports Group was not officially recognized by the European Parliament as part of the Intergroups, although 125 MEPs were in favour of it. However, the Co-Chairs decided to continue their work and promote the benefits of sport in European societies

and thus created the Sports Group. With regards to the main priorities, the Sports Group will organise some conferences on sport and environment, sport and innovation, the UEFA EURO 2020, fight against doping and digital piracy of sporting events. In addition, the new Bureau planned several actions on different topics such as, the pressure for the ratification of the Macolin Convention, the continuation of the existing pilot projects and preparatory actions for sport and safeguarding the budget for sport for the next Erasmus period 2021-2027. Following the presentation of the priorities, the newcomers of the Sport Group also expressed their expectations and points of view on the role of sport for European societies.

Croatian EU Presidency Conference facilitated discussions on competences of coaches

On 27–28 February 2020, the Croatian EU Presidency organised an international sport seminar on “Why does European sport need skilled and competent coaches” in Zagreb, Croatia.

The seminar was opened by Kresimir Samija, Deputy State Secretary from the Croatian Central State Office for Sport, welcoming the participants to Zagreb and the conference. Yves Le Lostecque, Head of Sport Unit at the European Commission,

explained the importance of the topic – in today’s society, coaches play a key role in e.g. attracting more people to grassroots sport, ensuring a safe environment to practice sport, teaching values, and supporting the personal development of the participants. Martina Jericevic, Chair of the Working Party on Sport, presented the priorities of the Croatian EU Presidency – the role of media in sport, and skills and competences of coaches.

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During the first session, Agata Dziarnowska presented the Guidelines Regarding the Minimum Requirements in Skills and Competences for Coaches, a document that was prepared by the European Commission Expert Group on Human Resources and Skills Development in Sport. The EOC EU Office and ENGSO played an active role in shaping the guidelines so that they are relevant for the organised sports movement, reflect the reality and diversity of systems and situations in Europe, and take into account the role of volunteer coaches, which compose the vast majority of people active in coaching functions.

After the presentation, a panel consisting of experts on coaching discussed the Guidelines. Wiebke Fabinski from the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), who represented Germany at the Expert Group, highlighted the need for government support in order to put the recommendations into action, describing the prior experiences from Germany in renewing coaches' education. Without government funds, the big change process would not have been possible.

The second session presented interesting cases on the qualifications and occupational standards in sport. Doru Simion from the European Handball Federation presented how handball coaches' education has been harmonised in Europe through the creation and implementation of the EHF "RINCK" Convention in 40 countries.

During the next panel, high-level coaches and athletes discussed and shared their thoughts about the current needs and gaps in coaches' competences. Épee fencer and IOC Athletes' Commission member Britta Heidemann mentioned leadership qualities, psychological and mental health aspects as areas to be developed. A good coach today helps an athlete reach their personal best – not just medals.

During the last session of the day, representatives from Estonia, the Netherlands, Belgium and Poland presented how in each country the coaches' education systems have been bound to the European Qualification Framework. The framework allows comparing the competences of coaches regardless of where in Europe the

qualifications have been acquired. In all examples the sports movement has played an active role in the process.

The second day kicked off with a session on the social impact of coaching, presenting cases from different sports and countries. Tabo Huntley from the Liverpool John Moores University presented the Paracoach project. Ivan Perzel presented the Natator inclusive swimming club, where participants with and without disabilities train and compete together.

Henry Utku from the National Basketball Association explained their work on coaching development and how social impact is now considered from youth activities until elite level, aiming at keeping players engaged, especially children and girls, by giving them encouraging experiences.

Christian Hajj, an ENGSO Youth Young Delegate presented the case of including youth in coaching. Organisations that make room for youth-initiated and led projects, and take decisions together with young people, can best reap the benefits of involving youth.

Ales Solar from the National Olympic Committee of Slovenia presented the €5 million project on the training of educational staff in sport, funded from the European Social Fund. The current project has facilitated the participation for more than 7,700 individuals, awarding 6,545 staff a diploma for expert work in sport.

The conference was concluded by Kresimir Samija, summarising the two-day event. Mr. Samija highlighted the long-term work and collaboration done at the EU level during the past years and hoped that the XG Guidelines will be implemented in order to enable the life-long development of coaches' competences in Europe.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[International Sport Seminar: "Why Does European Sport Need Skilled and Competent Coaches?"](#)

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Role of sport in integration and social inclusion discussed at the Sport Unit Breakfast



On Monday 3 February, the Sport Unit of the European Commission organised the first Sport Unit Breakfast of 2020. This initiative brought together representatives of the Unit, other parts of the European Commission, sport movement representatives and social inclusion experts to discuss whether “sport is a tool for the promotion of integration and social inclusion.”

Yves Le Lostecque, Head of the Sport Unit, welcomed the participants and introduced the main speakers: Wim Poelmans, from the Belgian Vlaamse Atletiekliga and Volker Rehm, from the German Sportjugend Hessen.

Both speakers argued that sport is a tool to promote integration and inclusion. Wim Poelmans introduced to the audience the different projects, where his organisation offers athletics activities to refugees, ethnical minorities, people in poverty and athletes with disability. The aims of these projects are:

- Respond to social changes and individual needs;
- Give back dignity to the people;
- Improve mental and physical strength.

He further explained that athletics is a sport that is well-suited to immigrants/people in poverty as it claims little costs and can be practiced almost

anywhere. Besides the natural accessibility of athletics, Mr. Poelmans added several other elements, which, according to his experience, are strategies for success:

- Running Teams for Refugees
- Buddy System
- Train the Trainers
- Learning the local language
- Network

As a second speaker, Volker Rehm, Manager of the 2018 #BeInclusive EU Sport Awards winning project “Sport & Refugees”, outlined in his intervention that such [social inclusion through sport] projects are the ‘glue that put society together’. As success factors, he named the following points:

- Voluntary as well as professional activities;
- Mandatory training for sport coaches to guarantee quality;
- A contact person for the refugees to gain trust;
- Involvement of the local community through e.g. tandem solutions, local experts.

The presentations were followed by a dynamic discussion with a high interest in the questions of acceptability, funding, and different approaches necessary to cater for the needs of women, children or the disabled. Moreover, an interesting query regarding racism in elite sports was put forward. It was discussed how the above-mentioned grassroots initiative can serve as an example for tackling this negative phenomenon.

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In conclusion, all participants unanimously agreed that sport can be a good tool to promote integration and inclusion.

The next Sport Unit Breakfast is planned to take place on 6 April 2020.

“Esports Europe” founded in Brussels

On 20-21 February the European Esports Federation (EEF) “Esports Europe” was founded in Brussels. The foundation took place in the European Parliament and was supported by MEP Adam Bielan (Poland (PiS party), Group of European Conservatives and Reformers).

After the Berlin Declaration in April 2019, the formation of Esports Europe was accelerated by a founding committee. Now, the founding members of Esports Europe are 23 national esports associations and three external stakeholders (ESFORCE, ESL, Burson Cohn & Wolfe). The association was established under Belgian law and will have its headquarters in Brussels. The 23 founding members are: Denmark, Austria, Turkey, Hungary, Slovakia, Azerbaijan, Germany, Poland, Russia, Finland, Israel, Georgia, Belarus, Belgium, Sweden, Portugal, United Kingdom, Macedonia, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Norway, Italy, Serbia.

The German Hans Jagnow (31) was elected as President of Esports Europe with 91% of the votes, with no opposing candidate. Jagnow is also President of the German Esports Federation ESD.

After its founding, the federation officially states the following objectives:

- “The EEF will create a unified representation, a strong vision for digital communities and a

platform for its members to develop esports even further.

- The EEF will have its headquarters in Brussels.

Within the esports scene the foundation of the federation is discussed very controversially. Especially team owners and big names in the scene criticize the lack of legitimacy of the federation, arguing that the federation does not represent the whole ecosystem of esports. Publishers as well as important teams are not included, furthermore there is no concrete added value of the association, the critics state. Furthermore, the lack of women in the association was strongly objected.

No official statements were made by the EU institutions during the reception at the European Parliament. Against this background, it is difficult to assess how the European institutions will deal with esports in the future.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Website: Esports Europe](#)

[Insidethegames: German elected first President of Esports Europe](#)

Sport vs Homophobia: A Must Win Game

On 4 February, three Members of the European Parliament organised the “Sport VS Homophobia: a must-win game” conference. Tiziana Beghin (NI, Italy), Thomasz Frankowski (EPP, Poland) and Marc Tarabella (S&D, Belgium) brought together different speakers to the Parliament to join forces with the European Commission, NGOs, UEFA and athletes to fight hate and prejudice. The conference firstly tackled the role of institutions and secondly discussed the role of athletes and NGOs.

The Role of Institutions

During the first panel, different speakers from various institutions, such as Yves Le Lostecque, addressed the topic of homophobia. They concluded that homophobia in sport is a poison that affects the well-being of athletes and their performances. It is therefore of importance that the issue is tackled. This can be done by initiating discussions, sharing good practices, funding projects and working with the relevant stakeholders more closely together. The European Commission and the European Parliament have a pivotal role in safeguarding LGBTQI+ athletes, but the institutions need the help of different stakeholders as well to get the issue on the agenda.

The phenomenon of homophobia is deeply rooted in our society and is characterized by a wide range of preconceptions. The number of famous athletes that are ‘coming out’ is increasing, but they need more than just the support of their direct environment. A zero-tolerance policy against homophobia needs to be emphasized more so that every athlete feels powerful to tell his or her story. The legislation should support LGBTQI+ athletes by initiating a cultural change and make sport a place free from discrimination. The work of the institutions is essential to win the fight against homophobia.

The Role of Athletes and NGOs

The second panel, consisting of current athletes and representatives of the Brussels Gay Sports organisation and the European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation, collected personal speeches and individual stories. Through sharing these stories, the present Members of Parliament and the different policymakers were activated to see sport as a fundamental right. Fighting against homophobia in sport has to be a policy priority and more research and evidence are needed before sustainable impact can be made. Conversations are furthermore essential and the phobia needs to be understood. One solution does not fit all the different needs, so intervention needs to be improved. Only by amplifying stories and standing up as a community, the views of the people can be turned away from hatred into the direction of pure athleticism.

The conference ended with an overall conclusion that was made by Marc Tarabella. He said that:

“It is of importance that the European Institutions are directly involved in battling homophobia in sport. Nevertheless, our whole society needs to change and we are all involved in this. The Commission should publish recommendations and legislation because laws are useful. The mentality of the people must however change through education. For this, we should have trust in the new generation. Sport is subsequently a driver of positive human values and we should use sport to make our mentality more tolerant. The world has no right to judge”.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Tackling homophobia in sport](#)

FUNDING PROGRAMMES AND STUDIES

SHARE Initiative Seminar: What is the contribution of sport to regional development?



On February 13, a seminar on sport and regional development was organised by the SHARE initiative. SHARE is an initiative launched by the European Commission in 2018 that aims to highlight the contribution of sport to regional development in fields such as urban regeneration, tourism, social cohesion, and healthy communities. SHARE aims to ensure that the potential of sport-related projects is adequately taken into account as part of policy and investment decision-making at European, national and regional levels. Thus, the seminar discussed how to better mainstream sport in the future EU cohesion policy 2021-2027.

In his opening remarks, Yves Le Lostecque, Head of the Sport Unit at the European Commission, pointed out that sport can be a great tool to achieve the priorities of the new cohesion policy. Blazej Gorgol of DG REGIO shared this view. In his presentation, he emphasized that even though sport was not mentioned in the proposal for the regulation, it surely can contribute to the achievement of objectives.

The new cohesion policy will focus on five main objectives for regional development. Therefore, the seminar showcased best practice examples of

sport projects contributing to exactly those five cohesion objectives.

A smarter Europe, through innovation, digitalisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses.

Example: [NANO4SPORT](#) – a cross-regional project, developing a technology for an active lifestyle.

Greener, Low-carbon Europe, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change.

Example: [Vuokatti Campus](#), Finland – uniting training center, education institutions and a tourist destination in one city.

A more Connected Europe, with strategic transport and digital network.

Example: City of Leuven – urban space development through constructing cycling highways to improve environmentally friendly infrastructure.

A more Social Europe, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare.

Example: NOC Slovenia – use of ESF to strengthen further education of Slovenian sport staff as well as dual careers of athletes.

A Europe closer to citizens, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

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Example: City of Liverpool– using public space to create an inclusive environment for citizens to become active, aiming to become England's most active city by 2026.

The presentations were followed by a policy debate, moderated by EOC EU Office Deputy Director Heidi Pekkola, on the role of sport in national policy-making in the context of regional development, and composed by governmental and municipal representatives from the Netherlands, Croatia, France and Slovenia.

André de Jeu from the Association of Dutch Municipalities on Sport Policy deplored that sport is often just seen as a nice-to-have tool, but not taken seriously enough. He pointed out to the steadily increasing health costs, which could be reduced through a more active lifestyle. He noted some positive development, as the Dutch government spends more funding on sport every year, with a large amount going to the local level.

Madeleine Delaperriere from the French Ministry of Sport pointed out that managing authorities and sports actors have a hard time finding and understanding each other. A common language would be needed in order to better benefit from each other.

Luka Zivic, permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia in the EU, explained that in Slovenia sport is mainly embedded in education

policies. Thus, mainstreaming of sport into regional policies needs to be improved, he added.

Ana Odak from the Croatian Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds shared a positive development. In Croatia a national development strategy has been drafted, including sport for the first time.

Heidi Pekkola welcomed the openness of the panellists and closed the session by encouraging all participants to promote the integration of sport into the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) regulation texts within their national governments, as the negotiations on the future programmes are currently ongoing. Against the background of the ongoing Trialogue negotiations, now is the decisive moment to ensure the mainstreaming of sport into the EU cohesion policy for the coming years, she emphasised.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[More about the SHARE Initiative](#)

[Study on the contribution of sport to regional development through the structural funds](#)

[SHARE project database](#)

[New Cohesion Policy 2021-2027](#)

INTERNAL AND VISITS

Kick-off Meeting of the RINGS Project on Strategic Management of NOCs



On 11-12 February the kick-off meeting of the RINGS project took place in Brussels. Led by the EOC EU Office, the project will run for two and half years, from January 2020 to June 2022. The main purpose of the project is to develop and modernise strategic management of National Olympic Committees (NOC) in Europe. The aim is that the tools and outputs developed in the project will equip and support the NOCs in their daily operational management and thus improve their governance. In order to achieve this objective, several activities such as transnational meetings and national training workshops will take place in the different countries included in the consortium.

In his opening speech Folker Hellmund, Director of the EOC EU Office, underlined: "It is obvious, that sport organisations have to work more proactively in order to meet the challenges in a rapidly changing world. In this regard, the setting up and use of strategic management tools is key".

The second day of the meeting gathered together the Secretary Generals and CEOs from the 11 partner NOCs to discuss the biggest challenges for the management of their NOCs and to find profound answers on mega-trends, that are impacting the domain of sport. The day started off

with interesting and eye-opening keynote speeches from Marc Coudron, President of the Royal Belgian Hockey Association, and Remco Hoekman, Director of Mulier Instituut. In addition, Joanna Zipser-Graves from the Olympic Solidarity stressed the interest of the IOC for the RINGS project, and mentioned that the tools to be developed could be very interesting for all NOCs, also outside Europe.

Mr. Coudron shared his lessons learnt in building the success of a national federation. During his Presidency, the Royal Belgian Hockey Association has had a big increase in their memberships, from 16 000 in 2005 to 52000 in 2020. Furthermore, the sport success has also improved massively as, for instance, Belgium won the Men's Hockey World Cup in 2018 and got silver at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games.

The second keynote speaker, Remco Hoekman, focused on the current and upcoming mega-trends in society and shared his vision on how these mega-trends will impact sport. This very stimulating presentation gave a good basis for the afternoon discussions. Building on this dialogue and the expertise of Professor Doctor Holger Preuss from the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, in the discussions the partners started to reflect upon the way to further develop a strategic approach with public affairs and stakeholders.

Project Manager Heidi Pekkola was very pleased with the successful kick-off: *"The project consortium is very motivated and full of expertise, which will help us to run this ambitious project. There seems to be a need for a project like RINGS, as some NOCs also outside the consortium have already shown interest. Thank you to all Secretary Generals and CEOs who took the time to join us for*

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this kick-off meeting and shared their knowledge, expertise and concerns.”

For the next steps of the project, the consortium will meet in Vilnius, on 4-5 May 2020. They will continue to work on developing the strategic management concept and contribute to one of the key outputs of the RINGS project, a handbook on strategic and change management of the NOCs.

Co-funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Sport Programme, the RINGS project gathers an important consortium with 13 organisations including 11 NOCs (Denmark, Belgium, The Netherlands, Turkey, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Cyprus and Greece) and the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, as well as the EOC EU Office as project leader.

NOC Portugal (COP) successfully organised POINTS national workshop



On 17 February, the third national workshop of the POINTS (Single Points of Contact for Sports Integrity) project took place in Portugal, in the headquarters of the Portuguese Olympic Committee (COP). The meeting brought together international experts from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), EOC EU Office, INTERPOL and Portuguese Judiciary Police (PJ) as well as SPOCs from national federations for a day of work around the prevention of manipulation of sports competitions. Another aim of the meeting was to introduce the work done by COP in the field of integrity and in the frame of the POINTS project.

The morning session was dedicated to European and international actions while the afternoon was focusing on the Portuguese situation. José Manuel Araújo, Secretary General of the COP, opened the session by highlighting the importance of the issue and to ensure that "athletes are aware of the risks and consequences" before stressing that "making

an effort to ensure good governance and maintaining fair competition is absolutely essential". General Director of the COP, João Paulo Almeida, praised the work done in the POINTS project and called for the application of "zero tolerance" in cases of manipulation.

As associated partner, the International Olympic Committee is deeply involved in the POINTS project and Evangelos Alexandrakis, NOCs Contact Manager in the Olympic Movement Unit on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions presented the IOC strategy and stressed the importance of such a project for National Olympic Committees. He added that the IOC considers the work done by the COP in the area of integrity in sport as "an inspirational model", as it is "a good practice in terms of activating the National Olympic Committees, also including the support for the federations and an extended programme, with many actions". Valentin Capelli, Project Manager, presented the work achieved within the POINTS project stressing that the project "works on the development of good governance and integrity projects and not only on the manipulation of sports competitions". He added that it is essential "for sport organisations to move into practice" in the way they view this issue. On his side, Claudio Marinelli, from INTERPOL, addressed the Research Network created by INTERPOL and the IOC and argued that "criminal and disciplinary

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investigations can work in parallel". Success depends on mutual recognition and respect. Understanding the differences will help to define the parameters of cooperation.

Following a presentation of good practices by Rute Soares, from the Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) a round table on the "Implementation of an Integrity Programme" took place between the different speakers. The cooperation between sport organisations and public authorities as well as the role that Single Points of Contact can play in establishing integrity strategies were discussed.

The second part of the day was dedicated to the work at Portuguese level with a presentation made by Joana Gonçalves, Project Manager in COP, of the new Integrity strategy developed by the Olympic Committee. To conclude the day, two case studies related to Competition Manipulation were discussed, creating inspiring exchanges between

the participants on the way to react to different cases.

The POINTS national workshops will continue in March with meetings in Croatia and the Netherlands.



Seminar of "Parcours Ambition Internationale" at the EOC EU Office

On 11 and 12 February, the second meeting of the 2020 edition of "Parcours Ambition Internationale" organised by the French National Olympic Committee (CNOSF) took place in the premises of the EOC EU Office in Brussels. The meeting represents a good opportunity for the participants to learn more about the framework of European sports policies. To achieve this objective, several representatives of European institutions as well as experts in lobbying and sport policies presented their activities and exchange with the participants on the impact of the EU sport policy at national level.

Created in 2013, this programme aims to support French high representatives in their commitment and activities within European and international sport organisations. For this 7th edition, 27 participants from different national federations, including three athletes, are involved in the programme. The key purpose of the Parcours Ambition Internationale is to strengthen

participants' ability in an international environment by exchanging with actors involved in international sport organisations.

Following a visit to the European Parliament, the two-day session started with the presentation of Valentin Capelli, Policy Officer at the EOC EU Office, who provided a comprehensive overview on the EU sport policy and the activities of the Olympic Movement in Brussels. In addition, the recent Erasmus+ projects carried out by the EOC EU Office, namely, "POINTS" and "SIGGS" were also introduced to the participants.

The second speaker of the day was MEP Marc Tarabella (S&D, Belgium) and Co-Chair of the European Parliament's Sports Group. Mr Tarabella presented the main actions and priorities (see the dedicated article) of the Sports Group and explained the role of MEPs in EU sport policy. Then, the group received the latest updates regarding the Erasmus+ Sport Programme for the

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next period 2021-2027 and the EU Work Plan for Sport, with the intervention of Yves Le Lostecque, Head of the Sport Unit at the European Commission. The first day ended with a presentation of Mathieu Moreuil, representative of the Premier League in Brussels. Several questions were raised by the participants and led to a valuable discussion about Brexit and the potential challenges that may rise for sport organisations regarding the player transfers for example.

On the second day, the participants received a presentation of EU legislative activities in the field of sport, given by Alexandre Husting, Sport Attaché

at the Luxembourg permanent representation towards the EU. The day ended with an intervention of Luciano Di Fonzo, from the EACEA on the call 2020 of Erasmus+ Sport.

Two meetings are still on the agenda of the Parcours, in Paris and Lausanne.

PARTNERS' CORNER

Sustainability of National Olympic Committees at the core of ASAP project



The Czech Olympic Committee has launched, with a training for sustainability managers and a kick-off meeting, a new project titled AS SUSTAINABLE AS POSSIBLE (ASAP). The aim of the project is to motivate all engaged Olympic Committees to create, implement and, where applicable, improve sustainability strategies, to effectively move from one-off activities to an integrated sustainability approach in their operations, events, and projects.

Led by the Czech Olympic Committee, which has drawn inspiration from its international project "[Sport Parks Inspired by the Olympics](#)", co-financed by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union, the ASAP project brings together on the side of mentees the NOCs of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, and on the side of mentors their counterparts from Denmark, Germany, and Finland.

"We are very happy that the European Commission decided to provide the Czech NOC a grant for the ASAP project. We are glad that we have the opportunity to learn from the best and we are sure that the experience gained will be beneficial not just for the Czech NOC, but for the entire Czech sports environment," said Jana Janotová, International Relations Manager of the Czech NOC, at the start of the project. The aim of the Czech NOC within the

framework of a sustainability strategy was described by Petr Graclík, Czech NOC Secretary General: "In the coming years we will strive to adopt a sustainable approach not just with respect to our daily operations, but also for our events and projects."

Support for the project was also expressed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). "Sustainability is one of the three communication pillars of the IOC for the upcoming years alongside credibility and youth. It is also our objective to take this direction and within our sustainability strategy to focus on all three related aspects," said Roman Kumpošt, Czech NOC Vice-President. During the training, IOC representative Julie Duffus offered all engaged Olympic Committees detailed guidance and all available materials. "Sustainability cannot be viewed as simply a project, it is a long-term process thanks to which you will gradually start to adopt a new way of working within the organisation," said Duffus. An expert from the Spanish Olympic Committee, Manuel Praga, recommended an initial focus on simple changes that will, however, be visible. "It is nothing revolutionary; sustainability has long been a part of the Olympic Charter. It is also one of the working principles of the Olympic Movement," said Praga. An approach to the theme in the commercial sector was presented by Martin Peleška, director of Toyota Central Europe – Czech s.r.o. as a representative of the Czech NOC marketing partners.

During the practical part of the conference NOC representatives were acquainted with western concepts of an integrated approach to sustainability; they agreed on the next steps and together selected a logo that will represent the project over the next three years.

NEXT MONTHS

6 March	POINTS national workshop meeting, Croatia
11 March	European Commission's Seminar on social inclusion and integration of refugees through sport, Brussels
16 March	European Evening of Sport, Brussels
19 March	Gender Equality Conference, Dublin
23-24 March	POINTS meeting, Netherlands
26-27 March	EU Sport Forum, Zagreb
1 April	POINTS national workshop meeting, Brussels
6 April	European Commission Sport breakfast, Brussels
7 April	EPAS European Sport Charter event, Paris
21-22 April	Expert Group on skills and human resources, Tallinn