

SPORT

FOR AN ACTIVE
AND COMPETITIVE
EUROPE



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European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation





Introduction

Sport is the largest social activity in Europe. Developments in sport affect more people across the continent than in any other movement. More volunteers are active in sport than in any other area and more people participate in sport– about 60% on a regular basis– than in any other activity. A third of the population rely on sports clubs, which themselves often rely on volunteers; 90% of clubs in some European countries utilise volunteers.

The European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO) and the European Olympic Committees (EOC) are the European umbrella bodies for the National Sport Confederations and National Olympic Committees. The organisations represent bodies in over 50 different European countries extending far past the EU's borders and thus represent the movement in its broadest sense - from children and youth sport, to sport-for-all activities up to elite sports.

Despite the extent to which sport affects the lives of the European citizens, not enough is done to promote sport in Europe. This document, written by the sports movement, summarises the main issues and produces a series of recommendations for European decision makers.

Many challenges lie ahead for sport in Europe, such as the implementation of the EU White Paper on Sport and the Lisbon Treaty including, for the first time, an article on sport. We trust that, with your support, we can continue to promote an active and competitive Europe.

1. Autonomy of Sports Organisations

The European Council supports “the independence of sports organisations and their right to organise themselves through appropriate associative structures. It recognises that, with due regard for national and Community legislation and on the basis of a democratic and transparent method of operation, it is the task of sporting organisations to organise and promote their particular sports, particularly as regards the specifically sporting rules applicable and the make-up of national teams, in the way which they think best reflects their objectives” (Preseidency conclusions Nice, 2000).

We ask European policy makers to:

- Respect the autonomy of sport organisations and the European sporting model to allow subsidiarity to be applied and decisions to be made at appropriate levels
- Consult and listen to sports associations when important questions affecting sport are at issue
- Intensify the dialogue of governmental and non-governmental sport organisations- including those outside the EU- at European level such as through participation in working groups, ministerial or sport directors meetings

2. Specific Nature of Sport

Sport has a special place in the hearts of Europeans and is recognised as having a specific nature within the European legal framework. For example, national teams are permitted, although this prevents free movement and doping penalties are legal, despite bans affecting free competition. The specific nature is just as vital for grassroots sports, for example through allowing reduced VAT rates to be applied to the use of sports facilities. The specific nature needs to be protected and the limits need to be interpreted by the Olympic and sports movement as sport does not wish to act outside EU law. The Commission should be encouraged to keep its word and help sport define its future by examining EU law and sport on a theme-by-theme basis before cases are brought to court.

We ask European policy makers to:

- Respect the specific nature of sport in EU law and the European sporting model as sport is not an economic activity per se
- Co-operate with sports organisations by seeking analysis of the effect of EU law and sport on a theme-by-theme basis instead of allowing the courts to decide on sport future
- Consider the unintended consequences on sport and grassroots sport when approving European legislation



3. Non-profit voluntary sports organisations

Non-profit voluntary sports organisations lack appropriate public recognition, despite the fact that, like many areas of European society, they function only because of the voluntary work of the general public. This situation is worsened by the fact that voluntary structures are not as developed in some Member States. Further and additional programmes have to be initiated to nurture and promote the culture of volunteering in Europe and protect non-profit sport organisations.

We ask European policy makers to:

- Protect non-profit voluntary sports organisations as European sport structures are largely based on volunteers' contributions.
- Create additional tax incentives to promote volunteering in sport such as exemptions for allowances for volunteers or deduction of voluntary work for income taxes
- Reduce bureaucratic burdens and red tape as much as possible in order not to impede volunteers in their work

4. Sport and Education

The European Year of Education through Sport in 2004 highlighted the benefits sport can deliver in education and fostered partnerships between educational institutions and sports organisations. School sport plays a crucial role in inducing young people to be physically active, which is especially important as sedentary lifestyles amongst school children are rising. Thus, school-based physical education is effective in increasing levels of physical activity and improving physical fitness.

We ask European policy makers to:

- Increase cooperation between educational institutions and sport clubs
- Make EU funding programmes more accessible for sport and education
- Recommend an increase in Physical Education lessons at all schools at all levels

5. Financing of Grassroots Sport

European institutions tend to look on sport as a purely economic activity, and applying standard European competition policy threatens the existence of the sport movement in Europe. National sports structures can only exist due the special status of sports organisations with respect to taxes and also often from revenues guaranteed by state owned or licensed lotteries. Such funding structures, and therefore the whole of sport in Europe, is under threat through infringement proceedings on national tax systems and proposed deregulation of gambling markets. Meanwhile, where sport can produce its own income through its intellectual property rights, the European institutions have failed to properly support sport.

We ask European policy makers to:

- Secure the current system of public financing of non-professional sport through contributions from state-run lotteries and state-licensed gambling bodies and guarantee that the EU will not interfere with national funding schemes
- Guarantee not-for-profit and voluntary sport organisations continue to be tax exempt and/or benefit from special taxing regimes
- Encourage member states to allow VAT exemptions permitted by the EU VAT directive
- Protect the intellectual property rights of sports and encourage solidarity mechanisms to fund grassroots sport

6. Sport and Health

Sport and physical activity are essential for improving health and well-being and can play a significant role in preventing as well as helping to cure many of the world's leading non-communicable diseases. Evidence shows that regular participation in sport and physical activity programmes provides all people with a wide range of physical, social and mental health benefits.

We ask European policy makers to:

- Recognise the role sport and physical activity play in European public health policies by allocating more resources to physical activity projects
- Encourage member states to implement EU Physical Activity guidelines



7. Ethics and Sport

That sport is grounded in fair competition, contests are fought on equal terms and the best competitor or team wins is fundamental to both sport and citizens' desire to follow sport and emulate their heroes. It is vital that sport is able to eradicate cheating through doping and match fixing; but a global problem requires international action.

Ethics in sport extends far past the professional game and fair competition means equal access to sport at all levels of the game. Promoting the ethics of sport means ensuring equality at all levels of competition and guaranteeing access to sporting opportunities regardless of gender, race or social background.

We ask European policy makers to:

- Recognise that the integrity of sport is threatened by suspect betting practices and promote the prospect of betting operators providing a fair return for sports to ensure integrity
- Promote equal opportunities in sport and recognise the use of sport as a tool for social inclusion and equality
- React quickly to new ethical challenges in co-operation with current Council of Europe initiatives

Summary

Sport is the biggest social movement in Europe and, as the influence of the European institutions continues to develop, policy makers should:

- Protect non-profit voluntary sports organisations and the structures of grassroots sport
- Allow public financing of grassroots sport through contributions from state-run lotteries
- Prevent the EU interfering with national funding schemes
- Protect the specific nature of sport in EU law and help to clarify the sport's legal position
- Engage sports associations in dialogue
- Recognise the role sport and physical activity play in European public health
- Promote equal opportunities in sport
- Defend the integrity of sport and promote the prospect of betting operators providing a fair return for sports to ensure integrity
- Use the supporting competence in the Lisbon Treaty to mainstream sport

8. Commitment of the EU Institutions to Sport

The EU White Paper on Sport was the first comprehensive strategy on sport from the European Commission; and the subsequent implementation of the Pierre de Coubertin Action Plan is crucial to sport in Europe. With a reference to sport included in the Lisbon Treaty for the first time, the European institutions must show their commitment to sport and follow up on past recommendation and promises.

We ask European policy makers to:

- Use the supporting competence in the Lisbon Treaty in the field of sport to mainstream sport in all EU policy fields and provide funding opportunities to sport
- As a responsible European legislator, take the concerns of sport organisations on board in future work and follow up and hold institutions accountable for past European initiatives