

## Tweets of the month



### EOC EU Office

@EOCEUOffice Mar 30

The Tokyo [@Olympics](#) will be organised from 23 July to 8 August 2021 and the [@Paralympics](#) from 24 August to 5 September 2021. [@Tokyo2020jp](#) [@iocmedia](#)

### EurOlympic

@EOCmedia Mar 18

Gerd Kanter, 2008 Olympic Discus Champion from Estonia and Chair of the EOC Athletes' Commission, sends a supportive message to all European athletes: "Stay Smart! Stay Safe! Stay Strong! Stay united!"

[#COVID2019](#)

[#InspiringSportInEurope](#)

[#StaySafeStayHome](#)

### EOC EU Office

@EOCEUOffice Mar 17

New deadline for Erasmus+ Sport: 21 April

<https://twitter.com/EuSport/status/1239966453463318530>

### EOC EU Office

@EOCEUOffice Mar 16

Check out the statement of the EACEA on the [#COVID19](#) and its consequences for the

[@EUErasmusPlus](#)

and European Solidarity Corps

mobility activities!! [@EuSport](#)

[https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/news/news/corona-virus-consequences-for-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-mobility-activities\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/news/news/corona-virus-consequences-for-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-mobility-activities_en)

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### EDITORIAL

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Dear Readers,

First of all, on behalf of the entire EOC EU Office, I would like to wish you and your closest ones all the best and hope that you are not directly or indirectly affected by the Covid-19 virus.

Political and sporting life have been completely upside down since last weeks, and the speed with which the virus has spread has surprised even the health experts. Therefore, when assessing the reaction of sports organisations to the crisis, we cannot ignore the fact that the basis for their decisions, i.e. by the big number of health experts, has been subject to extremely rapid change.

It should be underlined that when it comes to cancelling sporting events or closing down sports facilities, the health of the population and of all sportspeople must be the first priority in the decision-making process. There is no alternative and I do not see that this general approach is questioned by any stakeholders in sport. Sport, like all other sectors of society, must play its part in stopping the further spread of the virus.

However, the particular challenge facing decision-makers in general and those involved in sport at present is how to minimise the social and economic impact on their respective clientele. It would be unrealistic and also unfair to expect sports organisations to be able to conjure up perfect alternative scenarios in a few days' time, showing the way in which lost revenues can be compensated and sports operations can be maintained. In any case, open and clear communication is advisable, which does not necessarily have to include perfect solutions, but clearly identifies the challenges and possible consequences.

With regard to the reaction of Member States, we are currently witnessing a race for national aid packages to limit the impact on national economies. Many sports leaders are already in active communication with regional and national governments to highlight the precarious situation of federations, clubs or athletes. Proactivity is definitely recommended in these discussions. In competing with other sectors, there should be no reliance on the fact that the social, economic and societal significance of organised sport will be always sufficiently taken into account when it comes to financial support by public funds.

Enjoy reading and stay healthy!



Folker Hellmund  
Director EOC EU Office

## EUROPEAN UNION AND SPORT

### Coronavirus, its consequences and the response of the EU

Today, Europe is the "epicentre" of the global coronavirus pandemic, according to the WHO. The arrival of Covid-19 has forced many sport organisations, to take precautionary measures, like postponing or cancelling events, meetings and sometimes even ceasing their activities. The "European Evening of Sports" which was supposed to take place in Brussels on 16 March has finally been postponed and we will come up with a new date as soon as possible.

Also the European Commission has postponed its annual EU Sports Forum supposed to take place in Zagreb, Croatia on 26-27 March. From a political and economic point of view, various measures have been implemented by the European Union since the very beginning of the crisis. According to Art. 168 of the TFEU, the EU has authority to take supportive actions in the domain of health where it "encourages cooperation" and "shall complement and not replace national policies". Subsequently and in accordance with Art. 23 of the Schengen Borders Code, the Member States shall have the possibility of establishing checks at their borders, for renewable periods of 30 days, in the event of a serious threat to public policy or internal security. It is the first time that European countries have implemented such measures on grounds of health and this means that they all retain control over their health policy. Following these initiatives, the Commission responded by presenting [guidelines for border measures to protect the health of the population](#).

While the Member States remain the main stakeholders in fighting the crisis, the Commission has set up a number of additional initiatives:

- On 10 March 2020, [the Commission presented a new initiative](#) called "[Corona Response Investment Initiative](#)", proposing to direct [€ 37 billion](#) from uncommitted means of European Structural Funds that would normally go back to the EU Budget of the following year. This amount sums up to almost €8 billion and will be added to the €29 billion of structural funding for the year 2020. On 13 March, the Commission called upon the European Parliament and the Council to swiftly approve this proposal. Five days later, the [Council gave a go-ahead to launch support from the EU budget](#).
- On 19 March, the Commission adopted the [new Temporary Framework](#) "which enables Member States to use the full flexibility foreseen under State aid rules to support the economy at this difficult time" [as stated by Commission Vice-President Margrethe Vestager](#). The Framework's strategy provides five types of aids:
  1. Direct grants, selective tax advantages and advance payments
  2. State guarantees for loans taken by companies from banks
  3. Subsidised public loans to companies
  4. Safeguards for banks that channel State aid to the real economy
  5. Short-term export credit insurance
- On 26 March in Brussels, [687 MEPs participated in the first vote of the extraordinary plenary session](#) of the European Parliament to deal with COVID-19 urgency measures. [Three main proposals](#) have been approved, namely, the Corona Response Investment Initiative, the extension of the EU Solidarity Fund, and the decision to

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temporarily suspend EU rules on airport slots. Afterwards, the Council approved the Parliament's position and the adopted measures will enter into force in the upcoming days.

- On 26 March, Commission President von der Leyen published [proposals to fight the economic effects of the Covid-19 crisis](#). In her statement, she called for a further flexibility regarding the existing EU funding programmes: "As a first step we are currently working on a full flexibilisation of existing funds - such as the structural funds. This will provide immediate support." It remains to be seen how this will impact the implementation of the Corona Response Investment Initiative. Interestingly, von der Leyen also stated that the Commission will propose changes also for the new Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) by saying: "The Commission will propose changes in the MFF proposal that will allow to address the fallout of the coronavirus

crisis. This will include a stimulus package that will ensure that cohesion within the Union is maintained through solidarity and responsibility".

All Member States are working on national funding schemes that go far beyond the support provided by the European Union. In general, sport organisations are eligible for support as soon as staff members are fully employed and the organisation is carrying out economic activities.

Since the spread of the coronavirus still develops, the EU is constantly introducing new measures and initiatives for the support. The EOC EU Office will closely continue to follow these activities.

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

[EU coronavirus response – latest updates](#)

## Coronavirus impacts the implementation of the EU funding programmes, Erasmus+ Sport projects included

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The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), which is in charge of the implementation of the Erasmus+ sport programme, is one of the European institutions that is influenced by the corona crisis. The implementation of projects organised by EACEA are affected and flexibility is now more needed than ever. In this regard, EACEA published on 25 March 2020 guidelines for beneficiaries, contractors and experts involved in projects organised by the Agency. Flexibility measures and hints for contractors, beneficiaries and experts that are affected by the crisis can be found in this [link](#).

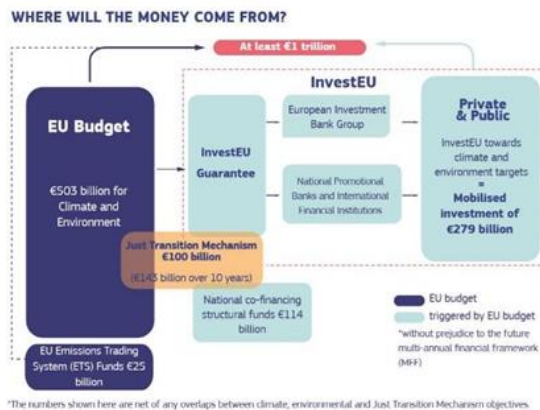
Furthermore, the EACEA has extended the deadlines for several open Calls for proposals. The new deadline for all Erasmus+ Sport Actions is 21 April 2020 (17h00 Brussels time). The specific new deadlines for submission of applications can be found through this [link](#).

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

[Extended Deadlines for EACEA Project Applications](#)

## European Green Deal – Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent



In July 2019, Ursula von der Leyen was elected the European Commission President with the objective to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent in the world by 2050 in line with her strong message “We need to act now!” Even though EU Member States are on the way to meet the Paris Agreement goals and United Nations’ 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda goals, there is still a lot to do. Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world, and this is why, in the matter of weeks after being sworn into office, von der Leyen’s Commission presented a new comprehensive strategy - the [European Green Deal](#) - as a response to these challenges.

This new growth strategy aims to transform EU’s economy into a fair and prosperous society in helping European companies to become world leaders in green products and offer aid to regions affected by this economic transition.” It aims also to protect, conserve and enhance the EU’s natural capital and improve the well-being of citizens.

To achieve the climate-neutrality objective, the European Commission published a proposal at the beginning of March for the first [European Climate Law](#), which aims to achieve zero net greenhouse gas emissions for EU Member States and the EU as a whole, and ensure that all EU policies and sectors contribute to the objective of climate neutrality. Moreover, various sectors of the EU’s

economy would need to take action, among other things, by investing in environmentally-friendly technologies, supporting industry to innovate, rolling out cleaner, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport, etc. The Commission proposals will now be scrutinised by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU under the ordinary legislative procedure.

In addition, making the EU climate neutral by 2050 requires significant investment from EU funds, Member States and the private sector. To achieve this objective, the Commission recently presented the [Sustainable Europe Investment Plan](#), which is the investment pillar of the Green Deal. The plan will mobilise at least €1 trillion in sustainable investments over the next decade through the EU budget (25 % of the envisaged programmes under the new Multiannual Financial Framework and beyond MFF) and associated instruments, in particular, [InvestEU](#).

### Green Deal’s relevance to sport

In accordance with the Commission’s strategy, the involvement and commitment of the public and all stakeholders is crucial to the success of the European Green Deal. Recent political events show that game changing policies work only if citizens are strongly involved in designing them. In order to make a Green Deal that suits everyone, the Commission is implementing a second climate action initiative, entitled “[European Climate Pact](#)”. It aims to collect the ideas and opinions of citizens on the needs and activities to be carried out within the framework of this pact.

A few days ago, the Commission [launched an open public consultation](#) in the framework of the Climate Pact for a period of 15 weeks (until 27th of May). It gives the opportunity to citizens and organisations, including sport stakeholders, to express their ideas and views on how to make this pact as effective, inclusive and ambitious as possible.



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Sport organisations and the Olympic movement are directly concerned by the impacts of climate change and by other environmental issues, and are increasingly becoming active in countering these negative impacts. By replying to the above-mentioned consultation and by following actively EU's developments in this area, sport organisations not only can demonstrate their

readiness to act and to raise awareness of the environmental issues among the general public, but they can also open new avenues of cooperation with the EU, including receiving possible financial support for their investment (e.g. sport infrastructure) and non-investment initiatives

## Sport featured in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the [Beijing Declaration](#); the first universal commitment and action plan to advance equality between men and women.

Since then, progress has been made in many parts of the world, and in particular within the EU, but no Member State has achieved full gender equality. The gender gap in education is being closed while gender gaps in employment, pay, care, power and pension persist and gender-based violence and harassment continue to be at an alarming level. Sport, as an integral part of society, is not an exception in terms of gender gaps.

To contribute to the Beijing Convention and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5), and to fulfil the Union's task under [Article 8 TFEU](#), the European Commission has set out a [new strategy](#) to give a fresh impetus to its work on gender equality. It needs to be recalled that the previous EU's gender equality roadmap ([Strategic engagement](#)) did not have a "status" of a proper "strategy", and therefore, the adoption of a strong strategic document confirms von der Leyen's Commission ambition in this area.

The Commission has divided its strategy into six topical areas, in which it has proposed a number of target measures:

- Being free from violence and stereotypes
- Thriving in a gender-equal economy

- Leading equally throughout society
- Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies
- Funding
- Addressing gender equality and women's empowerment across the world

These concrete proposals are to be accompanied by a reinforced gender equality mainstreaming across all EU policies and programmes.

While it is not the first time sport is mentioned in EU's strategic documents on gender equality ([2010](#) and [2016](#)), it is the first time that gender equality in sport is considered in the framework of "Achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy". In particular, the Strategy outlines that "the renewed strategic framework for gender equality in sport will promote women's and girls' participation in sport and physical activity and gender balance in leadership positions within sport organisations." The concrete form and content of the above initiatives have not been unveiled yet, however, we can already assume that the landmark EU document on gender equality in sport – [the 2014 Proposal for Strategic Actions](#) – will be reviewed and further activities will stem therefrom.

Gender equality in sport will be considered also as part of the "funding" topic. The Commission envisages to create an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy for the future Erasmus+ programme,

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which is to provide guidance on how the programme can help address gender inequalities in all education and training, youth and sport sectors.

Further to the above, the acknowledgement in the Strategy of the importance of education of girls and boys to combat and prevent gender-based violence, sexual harassment and abuse of women is also a relevant point for sport. The EU will table a Recommendation on the prevention of harmful practices, which the organised sport movement should follow. Additionally, the upcoming Victims' Rights Strategy 2020, addressing the specific needs of victims, could also be of interest.

Having already discussed funding, the EU's ambition to be as coherent as possible in its internal and external actions - i.e. in international

partnerships, EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policy - should not be overlooked, as the EU plans to step up its gender equality work in its external relations, including through its funding programmes.

The new strategy brings forward a number of initiatives and measures that concern sport both directly and indirectly. The EOC EU Office will continue monitoring the general developments, inform its stakeholders, and actively contribute to the Commission's work in this area, whenever and wherever the organised sport movement is directly concerned.

## The European Commission released a new Industrial Strategy

On 9 March, the European Commission presented its European Industrial Strategy for a globally competitive, green and digital Europe. The main aim is to drive Europe's competitiveness and its strategic autonomy at a time of moving geopolitical plates and increasing global competition.

The strategy is clearly connected with the main priorities of the von der Leyen Commission, notably regarding the ambition to help Europe's industry lead the twin transitions towards climate neutrality and digital leadership. Thierry Breton, Commissioner for Internal Market, stressed that: "Europe has the strongest industry in the world. Our companies - big and small - provide us with jobs, prosperity and strategic autonomy. Managing the green and digital transitions and avoiding external dependencies in a new geopolitical context requires radical change - and it needs to start now."

The strategy is organised around four Commission Communications:

- A New Industrial Strategy for Europe;

- The SME strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe;
- Long-term action plan for better implementation and enforcement of single market rules;
- Identifying and addressing barriers to the Single Market.

The strategy is dedicated to industrial businesses with a focus on big and small companies, innovative start-ups, research centres, service providers, suppliers and social partners. However, some elements could potentially interest or impact actors from the sport industry.

### **A new Industrial Strategy for Europe**

The Communication underlined fundamental elements of the Industrial Strategy:

- An industry that paves the way to climate-neutrality;
- An industry shaping Europe's digital future;

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- A deeper and more digital single market;
- Skilling and reskilling of the workforce.

Regarding the contribution to Climate-neutrality, the industrial sectors “should be invited and incentivised to define their own roadmaps for climate neutrality or digital leadership, enabled by high quality research and skills. A number of sectors have already taken this approach since the launch of the European Green Deal”. It is to be expected that requests for climate neutrality will also come more and more to the sport movement in the future.

Furthermore, some specific initiatives mentioned in the Communication must be closely monitored by sport actors. The Commission will notably encourage and finance companies developing the technologies to meet the objectives in the field of climate neutrality or digital leadership with the launch of Public Private Partnership in the Horizon 2020 Programme. Workers’ skills will also be on the agenda with an update of the “Skills agenda for Europe 2030” and a European Pact for Skills. Additionally, the question of the use of data by sport organisations and other actors in sport could potentially be impacted by the follow-up of the European Data Strategy.

Finally, the EU will initiate a review of its competition policy (including state aid) to evaluate if the functioning still fits with today’s fast changing world.

### **Identifying and addressing barriers to the Single Market**

Following a request from the European Council, the Commission produced a [study](#) focusing on the main obstacles reported by businesses when operating in the Single Market. Some identified

barriers can lead to activities with an impact on sport. The document notes:

- “The fact that content producers/right holders restrict cross-border accessibility of content in their copyright licensing agreement also seems to be a concern (still after the Geo-blocking Regulation). In this context an evaluation report on the Geo-blocking Regulation will soon be adopted”. The selling of sports competitions’ rights could be affected by such an evaluation.
- “Inconsistencies in the taxation regimes of Member States can lead to refusals of tax reimbursement and to double taxation”. This issue may concern both indirect and direct taxes and potentially concerns tax issues related to games/competitions played in different countries.
- “According to business associations, professionals moving from one Member State to another face obstacles relating to the recognition/exercise of their professional qualifications and/or meeting other requirements to access a regulated profession”. Surely this is also the case for sport staff, especially coaches as their qualifications are unevenly recognised throughout the Member States.

The EOC EU Office will continue to closely follow the relevant initiatives and to inform its partners regarding the different developments.

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

[EU Industrial strategy webpage](#)



## Eastern Partnership beyond 2020

On 18 March 2020, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) launched a joint Communication "[Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all](#)", which outlines EU's policy objectives and a roadmap of actions for the relations with its eastern neighbours for the years to come.

[The Eastern Partnership \(EaP\) was launched in 2009 as a joint policy initiative](#). It has deepened and strengthened the relations between the six Eastern European countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine - and the European Union during the last eleven years while always promoting the interests of each partner. The European Commission/EEAS postulate that the EaP has shown that it is a robust framework, which delivers valuable benefits for the people who live in Eastern Europe. After achieving valuable progress within the framework of the Partnership, new priorities needed to be defined for the period beyond 2020. These priorities emerged from a number of consultations, which were organised with Member States, civil society organisations, partner countries, financial institutions, academic institutions, and businesses.

Building upon results of these consultations and on the already agreed tasks, aims, objectives, principles and areas of cooperation, the Joint Communication sets out the measures that aim to "strengthen resilience, foster sustainable development and deliver tangible results for society". This means, in concrete terms, that the EU and its partners will strive to make the cooperation framework one that creates, protects, greens, connects and empowers. The policy specifications of these five characteristics can be found [here](#).

While climate protection and the cooperation on the implementation of the Green Deal present an area of increased cooperation compared to the previous years, the creation of sustainable people-to-people

contacts, support to (non-) formal education, and youth empowerment continue to play a prime role in the Eastern Partnership framework with a number of new initiatives envisaged and current activities strengthened:

- A new deal for youth, which will include, among other things, the setting up of a mobility and exchange programme for the EaP directed at young professionals.
- The Erasmus+ programme will provide greater mobility and capacity building opportunities in formal and non-formal education.
- Participation in the European Solidarity Corps will allow young people to volunteer or work in projects that benefit communities and people around Europe.
- The Civil Society Fellowships scheme and the Young European Ambassadors initiative will be strengthened.
- The EaP Youth Forum will play an even greater role and become better integrated in structured youth policy dialogue within a network of EaP youth councils, modelled on the EU-internal youth structured dialogue.

While sport as such is not explicitly mentioned in the Joint Communication, the above outlined youth- and civil society-related activities certainly are relevant to the sport sector, as are initiatives aimed at addressing non-communicable diseases. Indeed, the importance of sport in the EaP framework was outlined in the joint staff working document accompanying the Joint Communication, in connection, in particular, with the area of public health and wellbeing.

It is important to note, that the priorities outlined in the Joint Communication will also "underpin the future programming of EU assistance for 2021-2027 (the future [NDICI Programme](#), cross-border

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cooperation programmes, technical assistance etc.) along with the joint documents between the EU and partner countries setting out common priorities (e.g. Partnership Priorities and Association Agendas)".

The EaP Summit (EU, Member States, EaP countries) planned for June 2020 is expected to give a mandate to the EU institutions to develop a new set of tangible deliverables that build on the [current 20 Deliverables 2017-2020](#).

## Opening of EU accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania: political agreement reached

### **Green light for Albania and North Macedonia**

On 24 March 2020, EU Member States' foreign and European ministers met by video call to discuss a possible endorsement of the proposal of the Commission to open the EU accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania. While it was expected that the negotiations would be opened already at the October 2019 Summit (at that time France, the Netherlands and Denmark blocked the start of the negotiations), Albania and North Macedonia had to wait until the end of March 2020 for the long awaited political agreement, which had been strongly called for by the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Even though the political agreement in the form of Council Conclusions still needs to be rubber-stamped by the European Council, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, already noted that "[sends a loud and clear message to Western Balkans: your future is in EU](#)." The decision was also highly welcomed by the Croatian Presidency, for which a credible EU Enlargement Policy is one of the main priorities. Andreja Metelko-Zgombić, the Croatian State Secretary of European Affairs, stressed that the agreement "[is a recognition of the significant reform efforts made by these two countries](#)."

### **Enhancing the accession process**

The green light for the opening of the accession negotiation with Albania and North Macedonia is

part of the European Commission's goal to optimise the EU accession process. On 5 February 2020, the Commission published a new [Communication](#) outlining its plan to enhance the accession process and to provide a truly credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans.

The Communication focuses on the negotiation process rather than on individual thematic areas and chapters. It sets out concrete proposals, which are to build more trust among all stakeholders and make the accession process more effective, predictable, credible - based on objective criteria and rigorous positive and negative conditionality, and reversibility - dynamic, and subject to stronger political steering.

To reinforce process credibility, the Commission proposes to increase the focus on the fundamentals by opening the negotiations on chapters such as the Rule of law first and close them with these chapters too. Furthermore, to make the process more dynamic, the negotiating chapters are to be organised in thematic clusters. The Commission has specified that: "clustering chapters will allow a stronger focus on core sectors in the political dialogue and provide an improved framing for higher level political engagement. It will allow the most important and urgent reforms per sector to be identified." Sport is discussed under chapter 26 on Education and Culture, which will be part of the "Competitiveness and inclusive growth" cluster, together with e.g. economic and monetary policy, and science and research.

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Furthermore, the Commission plans to better define the conditions set for candidates to progress while improving the positive conditionality process. If countries move on reform priorities agreed in the negotiations sufficiently, this could lead, as the Communication outlines, to:

- (...) accelerated integration and “phasing-in” to individual EU policies, the EU market and EU programmes, while ensuring a level playing field.
- Increased funding and investments – including through a performance-based and reform-oriented Instrument for Pre-accession support.

The proposed changes can be accommodated within existing negotiating frameworks, ensuring a level playing field in the region. This means that the negotiating frameworks for Serbia and Montenegro will not be amended, but the changes can be accommodated there. Albania and North

Macedonia should, subject to the approval of the proposal by the European Council, thus start the negotiations under this improved process.

It remains to be seen what impact the proposed changes could have on the sport sector. However, we can assume that the more effective, predictable, credible and dynamic the process is, the more positively reflected this will also be in the negotiation of the Education and Culture chapter (incl. sport), as well as in the EU funding (future IPA III programme) aimed at assisting the candidate countries on their way to EU accession.

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

[Infographic on the EU-Western Balkans Relations](#)

[Steps towards EU accession](#)

[Factograph North-Macedonia](#)

[Factograph Albania](#)

## Human Rights and Democracy: striving for dignity and equality around the world

The European Commission and the High Representative have adopted a [Joint Communication and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for 2020-2024](#). With the new Action Plan, the EU continues to pursue the Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, which was adopted in 2012 and implemented with Actions Plans 2012 and 2015. The new Action Plan will build up on the achievements of the previous Action Plans and face new challenges, like new technologies or the global environment.

Accordingly, the Commission has set the following priorities of action:

- Protecting and empowering individuals

- Building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies
- Promoting a global system for Human Rights and Democracy
- Harnessing opportunities and addressing challenges posed by the use of new technologies
- Delivering by working together.

The priorities include topics, which are relevant in sport and could be of interest for the sport movement in the international context.

The new Action Plan is accompanied by a [joint proposal](#) to the Council aiming for faster and more

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efficient decision-making. This would allow the Council to act on issues falling under the Action Plan by qualified majority voting.

As a next step, the Joint Communication, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024), and its accompanying Joint Proposal will be transmitted to the Council which will decide

about the adoption of the EU Action Plan, including urging the European Council to adopt it as an EU policy of strategic interest.

The EOC EU Office will continue monitoring the developments in the implementation of the Action Plan.

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## PARTNERS' CORNER

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### Sport that fosters mental wellbeing: ENGSO-led SPIRIT project kicked off in Brussels

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Sport and physical activity have been demonstrated to have positive effects on mental health, and many researchers assess that sport can contribute to prevent mental health problems.

To unlock this potential, ENGSO has initiated a project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme called SPIRIT (Sport & Psycho-social Initiative for Inclusive Training). The project aims at developing a framework for human, inclusive and empowering coaching and sport clubs that nurture mental wellbeing.

During the project, running from 2020 until 2022, the partners will collect and analyse evidence-based research on sport and mental wellbeing, as well as good practices from clubs and coaches. Based on the analysis, recommendations will be formulated to address stakeholders from sport clubs to coach educators. In order to transform sport at the grassroots level directly, a handbook +for inclusive coaching will be developed, which can be used in coaches' training.

For maximum impact, an online learning tool will be developed to provide innovative and easy-access training for aspiring and practicing coaches. The online learning tool will be open to everyone and

help coaches become aware of the impact of their work on their participants' mental wellbeing, and get tools to develop their work.

In the course of the project, 13 national and international events will be organised across Europe to train coaches and put the recommendations into practice.

The project partners involved in SPIRIT are the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), Monaliiku – Well-Being and Sports for Multicultural Women, Bulgarian Union for Physical Culture and Sports (BUPCS), Minor-Ndako, Mental Health Finland (MIELI), Sports Federation Union of Catalonia (UFEC), International Table Tennis Federation Foundation, Hellenic Paralympic Committee, and Flemish Athletics Federation (FAF). The supporting partners are the Flanders Sports Agency and the European Lotteries.

The SPIRIT project was kicked off at its first Project Team meeting, organised on 2–3 March at the EOC EU Office in Brussels.

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#### FURTHER INFORMATION

[Article on the SPIRIT kick-off meeting](#)



## NEXT MONTHS

Unfortunately, due to the extraordinary current health situation, it seems that the only one having big events is COVID-19.

On behalf of the EOC EU Office, we hope that you are all safe and healthy, and let us keep united to win this race against Coronavirus so that we will be the ones leading next months' events very soon.

