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European Union and Sport

Council of the EU: Formal meeting of the Ministers in charge of education, youth, culture and sport

The European Ministers in charge of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport met in Brussels on 25 and 26 November 2013. During the two days meeting, many issues were covered. The meeting was closed by a discussion related to sport.

Erasmus + 2014/2020: the Minister for Education of Lithuania, Mr Pavalkis, confirmed that following the formal adoption of the Erasmus + Programme by the Council in the beginning of December 2013, the new programme can start, as scheduled, on 1 January 2014. It will benefit from a significant increase in funding in real terms: over 40% more than the programmes which it will replace (Life Long Learning 2007/2013).

Youth: It is worth mentioning that the Council adopted conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people unemployed, education or training and further discussed the future EU Work Plan for Youth.

Sport: The 28 Member States were represented on November 26 to discuss sport related matters. The agenda was the following:

Health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA): The Council adopted a **recommendation on promoting HEPA**, aiming to develop a cross-sectoral approach involving policy areas such as sport, health, education, environment and transport.

It sets out a monitoring framework with a minimum set of reporting requirements on general aspects in promoting HEPA that can be addressed by all member states. It will be implemented in close synergy and cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO). Two member states, the Netherlands and Sweden, did not support this recommendation, as they considered that the competence on this topic should remain within member states.

Contribution of sport to the EU economy: The Council adopted **conclusions on the contribution of sport to the EU economy** and in particular in addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion. Considering that sport is "a resilient sector of the economy", this document underlines that "sport can play an important role in giving impetus to economic recovery and tackling the urgent problem of youth unemployment".

The Member States call to make more efficient use of the possibilities provided by EU funding instruments, including EU structural funds (ERDF, ESF), as well as the ERASMUS+ Programme. During the discussion, several member states supported the idea that relatively small-scale investment of public money in local sports facilities, and/or support for community-based sports clubs can generate enormous benefits in terms



of stronger, safer and more cohesive communities, and lower levels of vandalism and criminality.

Good governance in sport:

Following the adoption by the Expert Group of the Council on Good Governance of recommendations on good governance in sport (November 2013), which were presented by the European Commission, the Ministers led a debate on this topic. It was recalled in general by the Member States that, while respecting general principles of good governance, the autonomy of sport organisations must

be respected. It was added by most member states that close cooperation at all levels between governments, sporting organizations and the EU are an essential element for implementing good governance principles. This might soon be materialized through the sport chapter of the Erasmus + programme, which will give the opportunity to see European scale projects implemented in this area.

Further information:

[Press release - 3275th Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting \(provisional version\) - Brussels, 25 and 26 November 2013](#)

European Commission and Gambling: Member States are requested to comply with EU law when regulating gambling services

On 20 November 2013, the European Commission called on a substantial number of Member States to ensure compliance of their national regulatory frameworks for gambling services with the fundamental freedoms of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

In its Communication concerning online gambling from October 2012, the European Commission announced that it would accelerate completion of its assessment of national provisions in the pending infringement cases and complaints and take action wherever necessary. After consultation with the

Member States involved, decisions on a first series of pending cases have now been taken.

Indeed, the European Commission has:

- requested **Sweden** to comply with EU rules on the free

movement of services with regard to the regulation and supervision of its gambling monopoly. The European Commission enquiries cover the cross-border provision of online sports betting and poker services, but also deal with issues such as advertising and sponsorship. If Sweden fails to act within two months in relation to these two proceedings, the Commission may refer these cases to the EU Court of Justice.

- closed an infringement case against **Finland** on the compliance of the national provisions establishing exclusive rights for the offering of gambling services with EU law. The European Commission concluded that the revised Finnish law, which entered into force in January 2012, constitutes a consistent and systematic pursuit of the



objective sought by the establishment of a gambling monopoly in a Member State and corresponds to the requirements set by the CJEU for this establishment. The Finnish authorities have sufficiently demonstrated that the revised law, its implementation and application comply with these requirements.

- decided to send to **Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland and Romania** an official request for information on national legislation restricting the supply of gambling services. The Commission has general concerns about the compatibility of national provisions to EU law.

In addition:

-Concerning Belgium, the European Commission has also raised questions about the transparency of the Belgian legal framework for gambling, in particular with regard to the rules governing the legal conduct of online gambling business and in view of the grant of a betting licence through Royal Decree to the National Lottery.

-Concerning Romania, the European Commission asked further questions on the coherence of the national gambling policy.

-To Cyprus, the Commission has submitted additional questions concerning the scope of the Cypriot Gambling Law with regard to different operators authorised to offer their services in the Member State. The European Commission has concerns about the equal treatment of gambling service providers.

The European Commission has also closed investigations and proceedings against several Member States who had not reached the stage of a formal infringement proceeding.

Proceedings against other Member States remain open – either because the national rules in question are still under investigation or in the process of being substantially amended.

Two new European studies on prevention and fight against match fixing for 2014

The European Commission has just launched two new studies related to the prevention and fight against betting-related match-fixing, which are expected to be finalised by mid-2014.

The first study, to be carried out by TMC ASSER Instituut, covers **risk assessment, management and the prevention of conflicts of interest in the prevention and fight against betting-related match-fixing in the EU 28.**

The second study, to be carried out by a consortium composed of Oxford Research and VU Amsterdam, covers the **sharing of information and reporting of suspicious sports betting activities in the EU 28.**

Relevant stakeholders, in particular sports organisations, betting operators, gambling regulators and providers of betting surveillance mechanisms are invited to cooperate with the contractors in charge of the studies in order to ensure an optimal collection of relevant data and information.



More information on the overall objectives of the studies can be found below.

Further information:

[Press release of the European Commission](#)
[European Commission website: "European Commission launches studies on betting-related match-fixing"](#)

Priorities of the Greek EU-Presidency in sport

The upcoming Greek EU Presidency has introduced its priorities in the field of sport to the EU Member States. Greece will hold the Presidency from 1 January until 30 June 2014.

Due to the elections of the European Parliament in May and the start of the new European Commission end of 2014, only a limited number of new political initiatives on sport are to be expected. The following activities are foreseen:

- Sport Minister Council Meeting on 20/21 May
- Conference on sexual harassment in sport in Athens (March)
- Adoption of the Sport Ministers' Work Plan 2014-2020
- Launch of a discussion on criteria for the awarding of mega sport events

- Additional topics: fight against doping, dual career, sport and economics

Apart from the Presidencies' priorities, the implementation of the new sport chapter of the Erasmus+ programme will be the main activity regarding sport on European level. In this regard a conference on the European Week of Sport is scheduled for 10 June 2014 chaired by Commissioner Vassiliou.

Furthermore, the Commission will start monitoring the implementation of European guidelines and principles previously adopted in the Council Expert Groups, namely on health enhancing physical activity (recommendation), dual career (guidelines) and good governance (principles).

First preparatory seminar on "European Week of Sport"

On 20 November 2013, the European Commission organised a first preparation meeting with key stakeholders on the future European Week of Sport. This seminar was a first occasion for the Commission to discuss a few key elements of the future Week of Sport. The EOC EU Office was also invited to this meeting.

Existing national initiatives

With a large variety of already existing initiatives in the EU Member States such as a national day/week of sport, one of the main challenges for the Commission will be to map all good practices and to ensure that this European Week of Sport will bring added value to the existing activities



at national level. The Commission has therefore started gathering information on existing good practices over recent months. For example, in September they ran an online questionnaire.



During the seminar, some of the good practice examples, including the French Week "Sentez-vous Sport" of the French Olympic Committee (CNOSF) presented by CNOSF President Denis Masseglia and the Dutch National Sport Week of the Dutch Olympic Committee (NOC*NSF), were presented. Both initiatives received positive feedback, mainly due to their connections with other sectors such as education, health or industry.

Other existing European Weeks, such as the European Mobility Week and

the European Youth Week, were also presented. These Weeks can certainly serve as a source of inspiration.

European Week of Sport

It was announced that the general objective of the European Week of Sport would be to promote physical activity throughout Europe and that the first edition of this European Week of Sport would take place in 2015. On many organisational aspects however, a considerable number of questions remain open. It is for instance not clear what the main activities of this Week should be nor when exactly it should take place.

Regarding budget matters, a number of possibilities also remain open. With regard to EU-funding, there will most likely be a link with the sport chapter of the future Erasmus+ Programme. But additional financial resources coming from the national level as well as the private sector deem to be necessary.

Further discussions on the European Week are therefore needed. One occasion will be a Conference on the European Week of Sport, which will take place on 10 June 2014 under the patronage of Commissioner Vassiliou.

State aid: the Commission approves aid scheme for Belgian football stadiums

On 20 November 2013, the European Commission approved an aid scheme for the construction or renovation of football stadiums in the Belgian regions of Flanders and Brussels according to the EU state aid rules. The stadiums are to be used mainly

by first and second league football clubs.

The aim of the scheme is to improve the quality of the stadiums, by ensuring that they meet UEFA criteria for European football games in the future. The planned scheme runs from 2014 to 2017 and has a total budget

November 2013



of 8 million EUR. Eligible projects may receive a one-time grant of 10 % of the investment amount, with the maximum per selected project of 2.5 million EUR for new constructions and of 750,000 EUR for renovations.

The chosen projects will be selected through an open tendering procedure. In order to become eligible for funding under the scheme, applicants must demonstrate that the new or renovated stadium meets UEFA criteria and contributes to broader societal goals. The eligible football stadiums that receive state aid under the scheme must be multifunctional and also accessible for other user groups. Professional football clubs and other commercial users of the

stadiums must pay adequate market prices for the use of the state-subsidized infrastructure, based on a benchmark. In addition, in-depth monitoring and control mechanisms are established in order to ensure the proper implementation of the aid scheme.

After appropriate investigation, the Commission concluded that the planned state aid of the Flemish government does not unduly distort competition in the internal market and therefore is compatible with the EU rules.

Further information:[Press release](#)

Funding programmes, studies and projects

EP gives final approval to EU budget 2014-2020 and Erasmus+

After months of very intensive negotiations, the European Parliament finally approved the EU's budget for 2014-2020 and the new programme for education, training, youth and sport, Erasmus+, on 19 November 2014.

EU budget 2014-2020

The overall EU budget for the next seven years is €960 billion in commitments and €908 billion in payments. According to the European Parliament, all of the conditions which were set out by MEPs in a first agreement in July of this year were met.

It was particularly important for the European Parliament to find a solution to adjust shortfall in payments. These shortfalls resulted in the situation that the European Commission was unable to pay its own bills in the financial year 2013. Member States therefore agreed to add another €3.9 billion to the 2013 budget.

As a consequence more flexibility was agreed to move unpaid funds between years and flexibility for commitments, both between years and between categories of expenditure. It was recognized that this flexibility is needed to ensure that all money is used where it is needed.



Another important achievement for the European Parliament was to insert a "revision clause", which will require the European Commission to present a review of the functioning of the EU's long-run budget in 2016. The review will be accompanied by a legislative proposal for revision.

Erasmus+ and sport chapter

Erasmus+, the new EU-programme for education, training, youth and sport which was voted in the same week as the EU budget will receive 14,7 Billion €. This is an increase of 40% in the budget compared to the previous financial period 2007-2013.

Erasmus+ includes, for the first time, its own budget line for sport. It will allocate around €265 million over seven years to contribute to developing the European dimension in sport by helping to address cross-

border threats such as match-fixing and doping. It will also support transnational projects involving organisations in grassroots sport, promoting, for example, good governance, social inclusion, dual careers and health enhancing physical activity (HEPA). The sport budget will be managed by the Executive Agency EACEA which is based in Brussels.

The first call of proposals is expected to be published during the month of December 2013 on the websites of the European Commissions' Sport Unit and of the Executive Agency.

Further information:

Press release: [Green light for Erasmus+: More than 4 million to get EU grants for skills and employability](#)

Press release: [One trillion euro to invest in Europe's future – the EU's budget framework 2014-2020](#)

European Parliament approves Structural Funds

On Wednesday 20 November 2013, the European Parliament finally approved the Common Provisions as well as the individual Regulations on the Structural Funds. This approval concludes an extensive period of Trilogue negotiations between the Commission, the Parliament and the Council and paves the way for a timely start of the new financing period 2014-2020.

Eligibility of sport projects

As reported in previous editions of the Monthly Report, the situation for sport with regards to both the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund

(ESF) seems comparable to the previous financing period 2007-2013.

In the Regulation on the ERDF on the one hand, sport has not explicitly been mentioned although several references to recreational services have been included. As sport could definitely fall within the scope of recreational services, it will depend on the Management Authorities within the Member States and the regions to decide if a sport-project will be selected. The Regulation on the ESF on the other hand contains several direct references to sport. Especially in connection with active and health ageing or with social inclusion, sport



projects are eligible to receive EU funding.

Youth unemployment

The fight against youth unemployment has been high on the agenda of the EU throughout the year. With the new Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), which is a funding scheme that will support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, the EU has an additional tool to create or find more jobs for young people. This YEI will be linked to the ESF.

Sport can undoubtedly contribute to combating youth unemployment in many ways, for instance directly by creating jobs in the sports sector or in related sectors such as tourism, media or culture, or indirectly by informal and non-formal learning.

Additional recognition of the contribution of the positive impact of sport in this regard followed on 26 November when the Sport Ministers adopted "Council conclusions on the contribution of sport to the EU economy and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion". These initiatives should further increase the possibilities of sport projects to find EU support out of the Structural Funds.

Further information:

[EP Report on the Common Provisions of the Structural Funds](#)

[EP Report on the ERDF](#)

[EP Report on the ESF](#)

[Council conclusions on the contribution of sport to the EU economy and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion](#)

Internal and visits

42nd General Assembly of the EOC: Patrick HICKEY elected for a third mandate as President of the EOC

The 42nd General Assembly of the EOC was held in Rome from 21-24 November 2013. The event gathered 400 participants.

Patrick HICKEY elected for a third mandate as President of the EOC



November 2013



During the General Assembly, Patrick HICKEY was elected as president of the EOC for a third term (2013/2017). Janez KOCIJANCIC (President of the NOC of Slovenia) was elected as new EOC Vice-President, and Secretary General Raffaele PAGNOZZI (Italy) together with Treasurer Kikis LAZARIDES (Cyprus) were also re-elected.

The 12 remaining elected members of the Executive Committee of the EOC are:

Hasan ARAT (Turkey); Alejandro BLANCO (Spain); Spyros CAPRALOS (Greece); Mr. Frantisek CHMELAR (Slovakia); Lord Sebastian COE (Great Britain); Alexander KOZLOVSKY (Russian Federation); Andrzej KRASNICKI (Poland); Zlatko MATEŠA (Croatia); Niels NYGAARD (Denmark); Marc THEISEN (Luxembourg); Michael VESPER (Germany); Efraim (Ziggy) ZINGER (Israel).

Patrick HICKEY declared after the election: "I am delighted to secure my third term as President of the European Olympic Committees with such powerful support from my colleagues across Europe's National Olympic Committees. The next part of my presidency will be particularly exciting as we move towards the inaugural European Games in 2015. I was also delighted that new IOC President, Thomas BACH, agreed to speak at our General Assembly. President BACH gave a strong and thought-provoking opening address to the assembly and I am very much looking forward to working closely with him in the years ahead."

1st European Games of Baku2015 unveiled new logo

The new official logo of the 1st European Games of Baku2015 was also unveiled: it symbolizes the five key elements of the contemporary and historical traditions: fire, carpets, the Simurg flying creature, waves and the grenadine.



Baku2015 presented to the delegates the current evolution of the organisation. President Hickey said he was currently reflecting on the 2nd European Games for 2019 as he already received interests from potential hosts.

Pope FRANCIS receives the Olympic delegation



The participants were received by Pope FRANCIS at a private audience held in the Vatican's Sala Clementina. In the frescoed Renaissance hall,

November 2013



Pope Francis greeted the leaders of the Olympic Family. On this occasion, the EOC made a donation to the Church, for charity, and the President of the IOC awarded him the Order of Merit.

EOC EU Office

The head of the EOC EU Office, Folker HELLMUND, provided an activity report to the General Assembly,

following a 4 year overview shared by Octavian MORARIU, who was vice-chair of the EOC EU Commission between 2009 and 2013. An information desk of the EOC EU Office was also at the disposal of the delegates during the entire event.

Further information:

[EOC Website](#)
[Baku2015](#)

Special Competence Seminar at the EOC EU Office

On 18 – 19 November 2013, the EOC EU Office organised its annual Special Competence Seminar for its partner organisations. On the first day, the EOC EU Office provided a detailed overview of the recent developments in sport-related policy fields at EU level. On the second day, the partners were given an overview of funding programmes and received advice on how to apply. Over the course of the seminar, exchanges of views took place with the Head of the Sport Unit, Yves Le Lostècque, and the Head of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), Luciano Di Fonzo.

Moreover, the following topics were discussed:

- Implementation of the Erasmus+ programme and the roles of the EACEA and the EU Commission;
- Selection criteria, deadlines and the available funding for sport projects;
- The structural funds and how sport-related projects could become eligible;
- Recent developments in the fields of data protection, match-fixing/gambling, competition policy, gender equality and VAT and their relevance for the sports movement;
- Project ideas of the EOC EU Office's partners and how to facilitate the search for project partners.



Dates in December

2	EU Sports Directors Meeting, Vilnius
2	ENGSO Executive Committee, Copenhagen
3-4	EU Conference on Gender Equality and Sport, Vilnius
6	DOSB General Assembly, Frankfurt
16	EOC EU Office Board Meeting, Brussels
23/12/13-03/01/14	EOC EU Office closed

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