



## CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE EUROPE FOR CITIZENS PROGRAMME 2014-2020

### Introduction

Sport is the largest social activity in Europe. Developments in sport affect more people across the continent than in any other movement. 40% of European citizens participate in sporting activities at least once a week, and 60 million Europeans are members of sport clubs<sup>1</sup>. Sport is the biggest sector in volunteering, with as much as 35 million Europeans giving their time to sporting activities<sup>2</sup>. Sport can thus help bring the European Union closer to citizens and foster active European citizenship.

The European Union has repeatedly recognised the importance of sport and its links with the civil society. The Lisbon Treaty, article 165 (2), specifically states that the European Union shall take account of the social and educational function of sport and of its structures based on voluntary activity while contributing to the promotion of European sporting issues.

The Commission's White Paper on Sport<sup>3</sup> mentions the Europe for Citizens Programme as an important instrument for promoting volunteering and active citizenship together with health-enhancing physical activity. Notably, according to action (11) of the action plan attached to the White Paper, the Commission would "support grassroots sport through the Europe for Citizens Programme". Action (3) of the same action plan mentions taking health-enhancing physical activity better into consideration in the Programme, and actions (15) and (23) suggest promoting social inclusion through sport and the prevention of violence and racism in sport through the Europe for Citizens Programme.

The European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO) is the European umbrella body for the National Sport Confederations and National Olympic Committees and thus represents the movement in its broadest sense – from children and youth sport, to sport-for-all activities up to elite sports. In 2009, ENGSO implemented an EU-wide citizens project EU:SPORT:FUTURE, which gathered the input of more than 1000 Europeans through online contributions, workshops and conferences. One of the outputs of this project was a declaration with recommendations from citizens to policy makers on future steps in the field of EU sport policy. The declaration has since then been disseminated widely to decision makers both on national and European level, sports associations, the media, and other relevant actors.

Underlining the need to have a European programme concentrating on citizenship also in the future, ENGSO would like to highlight some key aspects related to sport and citizenship as a response to the public consultation on the Europe for Citizens programme 2014-2010.

### Objectives and activities of the programme

ENGSO agrees that sport has a strong potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. However, these are not the only contributions sport can make for Europe. The aims of the current Europe for Citizens Programme, namely fostering active European citizenship, creating a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens, enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding and developing European identity, remain essential under the new financial framework. ENGSO underlines that:

1. The legal basis of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020 should primarily reflect the citizenship aspects of the European Union, such as democratic participation, active citizenship and European identity.

<sup>1</sup> Special Eurobarometer 334, Sport and Physical Activity 2010

<sup>2</sup> Volunteering in the European Union. Final report 17 February 2010.

<sup>3</sup> White Paper on Sport. COM(2007) 391 final



2. Joint projects by local authorities, civil society organisations and other actors, transnational projects, and networking opportunities as well as capacity building of civil society organisations should remain key actions of the programme.
3. The following key themes should be included in the objectives of the future Europe for Citizens Programme:
  - Promoting active citizenship through volunteering in sport
  - Promoting people's well-being in Europe through sport
  - Sport for active citizenship and social inclusion
  - Promoting democratic participation through sport

Most of the time, European associations do not benefit from any subsidies from national public bodies, but depend on European support, which in the Europe for Citizens Programme take the form of operating grants. Annual operating grants and changing annual priorities make long-term planning difficult, which leads to a decreased effectiveness of planned measures. ENGSO underlines that:

4. Operating grants should be an essential part of the new Europe for Citizens Programme, with a more substantial budget reserved for them than in the current programme.
5. Operating grants should be developed further towards multiannual partnerships, which would enable better long-term planning.
6. Operating grants should be based on the quality of actions but also on the need of a grant; they should be reserved for European associations with a truly European scope.

## Scope and management of the programme

Due to the fact that sport is a major civic movement, ENGSO underlines the necessity of making the future Europe for Citizens programme more accessible for sport-related actions. This would ensure that the potential of sport in contributing to the EU citizenship policy and the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy is realised through sport-related projects and actions, and reflect the increased importance of sport at Community level after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Furthermore, sport is an international activity, and sporting activities in Europe are not limited to the European Union. Therefore, ENGSO underlines that:

1. Sport should be included as an annual priority in the programme guide and as a funding priority in relevant work programmes and calls for proposals.
2. The inclusion of sport in the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2010 should reflect article 165 of the Lisbon Treaty, notably the reference made to the "structures based on voluntary activity".
3. The future Europe for Citizens Programme should be open to the participation of non-EU countries.

In order to fully reach its aims, the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020 should be as close to citizens as possible. Information in one's own language is imperative for both individual citizens looking for opportunities to participate and for civil society organisations. Therefore, ENGSO underlines that:

4. National contact points or agencies should offer their services in the local language to national, regional and local associations and citizens encouraging them to get involved in the Programme.
5. The Programme should ensure that local actors who are not yet experienced in EU projects can apply for and implement actions under the programme; support should be available also for small, multinational cooperation projects, and heavy management structures should be avoided.



## Conclusion

To conclude, ENGSO highlights the necessity of having a substantial programme for promoting citizenship in Europe, with a budget at least equivalent to the current financial framework.

Following the above remarks on the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020, ENGSO encourages the Commission to take these suggestions into account when preparing the programme proposal. Accordingly, ENGSO wishes to offer its active support for the practical implementation of the future programme, and would take appropriate measures to inform sport organisations about existing opportunities, and to encourage their participation thus contributing to ensuring a steady flow of good quality project proposals to the programme.