

## The House of European Sport

### Tweets of the month



EUSport

@EuSport

23 May

Adoption of New Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020 - priorities: sport's integrity, economic dimension and sport & society #SportCouncil #EYCS

Yves Le Lostecque

@lelosyv

17 May

The @EuSport @EU\_Commission will attend with @TNavracsicsEU @Jens\_NC promoting @EUErasmusPlus and #GoodGovernance in #sport

EOC EU Office

@EOCEUOffice

16 May

More

The fifth European Evening of Sports of the @EOCEUOffice will take place on 19 June 2017 in Brussels! Official hashtag: #EEoS2017 @EOCmedia

EU2017MT

@EU2017MT

11 May

@EUCouncil adopts final agreement on visa free travel for Ukrainians. Final hurdle cleared. Signature & entry into force in next weeks.

Editorial 2

### EUROPEAN UNION AND SPORT

EU Sport Ministers adopt new EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020 3

Council and Parliament agree on revision EU Firearms Directive 4

State Aid – EESC Hearing and latest update 4

Education, Culture, Youth and Sports (ECYS) Council Meeting 5

### FUNDING PROGRAMMES, STUDIES AND PROJECTS

EOC EU Office contributes to Erasmus+ Mid-term Evaluation 6

### INTERNALS AND VISITS

European Olympic Committees' 38th Seminar in Skopje 8

EOC EU Office partners discuss EU policy during the Annual Partner Meeting 8

NOC of Portugal becomes partner of the EOC EU Office 9

### PARTNERS' CORNER

EOC EU Office welcomes the final seminar of the CNOSF "Parcours Ambition Internationale" 2016/2017 10

### NEXT MONTH

Dates in June 2017 11

## The House of European Sport

### EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

The month of May is traditionally one of the busiest months of the year, and May 2017 was no different with events such as the EOC EU Office's Annual Partner Meeting, the EOC Seminar in Skopje and the Sports Ministers Council meeting in Brussels.

Especially the latter was an important meeting since the new Work Plan of the Sport Ministers for the period until December 2020 has been adopted. At the EOC EU Office, we have followed the negotiations closely. Even though many positive elements in terms of diversity and flexibility have been included in this new Work Plan, some open questions remain for instance regarding the involvement of organised sport. We therefore invite the Council and the Commission to work closely together with the Olympic Movement to exchange expertise and to focus on those subjects that are vital to sports organisations. A Work Plan for Sport can only be a success and deliver a lasting impact when it is implemented for and in close cooperation with the organised sport.

The new Work Plan for Sport covers various topics from the integrity of sport to societal aspects such as social inclusion or education through sport. With the wide range of topics in the new Work Plan and with already two previous Work Plans and various deliverables, one can wonder if a more ambitious, strategic and targeted vision is needed for the future EU sport policy. This will also be the main question for the panel discussion during the European Evening of Sports on 19 June. High-level panellists from the EU Institutions (European Commissioner Tibor Navracsics, Member of the European Parliament Hannu Takkula and Estonian Minister Indrek Saar) as well as from sport (EOC acting President Janez Kocijančič, EOC Athletes' Commission Chair Jean-Michel Saive and NOC Finland Vice-President Susanna Rahkamo) will discuss what could be the way forward or *Quo Vadis*. Besides the panel discussion, the main highlight of the evening will be the keynote speech by IOC President Dr. Thomas Bach. The EOC EU Office is honoured to host so many esteemed and high-level speakers and guests. With more than 250 participants from the Olympic Movement and EU Institutions expected to gather in Brussels for the occasion, the fifth edition promises to be a success once again.

At the end of May, the public consultation for the Mid-term Evaluation for the EU funding Programme Erasmus+ was also concluded. The EOC EU Office provided a contribution following a broad consultation among its partner organisations and stakeholders. More information can be found later in this Monthly Report. In particular the needs to safeguard the participation of grassroots sports actors as well as the future of the EU sport funding Programme are key components when evaluating the implementation up until now. We are happy that we have contributed to the changes that have already been introduced, such as the creation of the possibility of small collaborative partnerships.

When I started this editorial by stating that May has been particularly busy, it is clear that June will be a challenge for the EOC EU Office as well, in particular with the European Evening of Sports. Make sure to follow our website and Twitter account for the most recent information on the event.

Enjoy your read,



Folker Hellmund  
Director EOC EU Office

## EUROPEAN UNION AND SPORT

### EU Sport Ministers adopt new EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020

On 23 May 2017, the EU Sport Ministers adopted the new EU Work Plan for Sport for the period July 2017 until December 2020. Compared to the two previous three-year versions adopted in 2011 and 2014, this third Work Plan covers a period of three and a half years. This Work Plan was adopted following negotiations that started in January 2017 within the Council. The negotiations were chaired by the Maltese EU Presidency. The EOC EU Office also contributed to the discussions by publishing an assessment of the previous Work Plan in September 2016. The position paper also contained a number of recommendations for the new Work Plan including the need for more flexibility and to cover topics in line with the real needs of sports organisations.

The new Work Plan has been drafted according to three main priorities: integrity of sport (incl. anti-doping, good governance and match-fixing), economic dimension of sport (incl. innovation in sport); and sport and society (incl. sport and health, social inclusion and education in and through sport). For each of these priorities, key topics, outputs and working structures have been specified in an Annex to the Work Plan. The following elements are worth to mention:

- Increased diversity and flexibility: in line with the position paper of the EOC EU Office, the new Work Plan contains more flexibility, in terms of the possibility to cover additional topics during the implementation, as well as more diversity in the working methods.
- Clear link with the priorities of the future EU Presidencies (e.g. listing of upcoming Council conclusions or Presidency Conferences). This policy alignment was also

one of the recommendations of the EOC EU Office.

- Less Expert Groups: only two Expert Groups have been included in the new Work Plan: one on 'Integrity' and one on 'Skills and human resources development in sport'. The need for less Expert Groups was also supported by the EOC EU Office.
- Cluster meetings: one of the new working methods are cluster meetings. Although the exact working format is not entirely clear, the objective would be to bring together successful projects of Erasmus+ Sport and other funding Programmes covering a certain topic to discuss policy-relevant outcomes. Such a cluster meeting has for instance been foreseen to promote health-enhancing physical activity.

One of the elements that had a particular influence on the discussions for the new Work Plan was the new 'Horizontal rules for on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups'. These new cross-sectoral rules were adopted in May 2016 and will apply to the newly created Expert Groups for sport within the Work Plan. This also means that, compared to the previous Work Plan, the Commission will be in charge of the Expert Groups and will, in principle, be chairing the groups. Sport organisations can still participate in the discussions, although it remains to be seen how they can apply and what their status will be (observer or full member as Type C organisation). It is clear however that Member States can only be represented by civil servants and public employees.

With the implementation of the new Work Plan starting under Estonian EU Presidency in July

## The House of European Sport

2017, a number of questions still remain. One of these questions is the extent to which the organised sport will be able to contribute to the various working structures. However, the need to closely associate with “*the sport movement and relevant competent organisations at national, European and international levels*” as mentioned in the Work Plan and the inclusion of working methods such as the cluster meetings demonstrate the willingness to build on good

practices and the existing expertise within the sport movement and its organisations.

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

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

[Commission decision establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups](#)

## Council and Parliament agree on revision EU Firearms Directive

In November 2015, the EU Commission adopted a package of measures to strengthen the provisions on the acquisition, possession and import/export of firearms in the EU. One measure was the revision of the Directive 91/477/EEC on the acquisition and possession of weapons ('Firearms Directive').

In its proposal, the Commission wanted to ban certain categories of semi-automatic firearms for civilian use (category A), including sports shooting. The particular type of semi-automatic firearms that the Commission intended to ban were those that can either be easily converted to automatic arms or that are very dangerous because of the high number of rounds. This type of weapons is not used for Olympic shooting disciplines, but still represents a high share of today's sport-shooting weapons.

After several negotiation rounds, a provisional deal was reached by the European Parliament (EP) and the Council in December 2016. This deal was approved by the EP in March 2017 and by the Council in April 2017. Following this approval, the Council and the Parliament now need to sign the adopted Directive to allow the entry into force 20 days later.

In the final text of the amending Directive, certain provisions for sports shooting have been foreseen. Article 6 allows Member States under certain conditions (including sports shooting) to authorise individuals to acquire and possess certain semi-automatic firearms of category A. These conditions for sports shooting for instance include the provision of a certificate from an officially recognised shooting sports organisation.

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

[Directive amending Directive 91/477/EEC](#)

## State Aid – EESC Hearing and latest update

On 17 May 2017, the European Commission approved the revision of the General Block Exemption Regulation on State aids. The ambition of the European Commission is to support public investment having as a result an increase of employment and growth while preserving

competition between the different actors. The text adopted contains beneficial elements for the sport sector as it includes a provision increasing the notification thresholds for state-aid supporting multi-purpose sports arenas.

## The House of European Sport

The modernisation of EU State Aid regulation started in 2012 to result to the current General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER), adopted in 2014. This GBER offers the possibility for Member States to provide public support for certain categories of state aid, which are unlikely to distort competition, without prior Commission approval.

The 2014 GBER was already very positive for sport as state aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures was included in the list. In concrete terms, public funding related to the financing for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures does not have to be notified to the Commission when the direct support is lower than 15 Mio. € and the overall investment is under 50 Mio. €.

The amended Regulation adopted today, simplifies the procedure for public investments in ports, airports, culture, multi-purpose sports arenas and the EU's outermost regions in order for the Commission to "*focus attention on state aid measures that have the biggest impact on competition in the Single Market*", Commissioner Vestager stated. With regard to sport, the Commission took the decision to double the upper-limit for multi-purpose sports meaning state aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures with direct support lower than 30 Mio. € and the overall investment remaining under 100 Mio. €. This amendment should decrease the

administrative burden legal as well as guarantee legal certainty for project developers and aid granting authorities.

The Amending Regulation will enter into force 20 days after publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The European Commission is not the only institution working on the topic of State Aid. Indeed, on 10 May, the European Economic and Social Committee organised a public hearing on the Application of State aid rules for compensating the provision of services of general economic interest. The hearing was an opportunity to present the results of the EESC commissioned study examining the main aspects of the implementation of state aid provisions of service of general economic interest in the Member States. The study revealed the vast diversity of situation between Member States, stressing the lack of common definition for public interest as well as the need for a better cooperation between local and central authorities of the Member States.

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

[2017 Amendment of the GBER](#)

[European Commission - Press release](#)

[European Commission - Fact Sheet](#)

[European Commission – Statement by Commissioner Vestager](#)

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## Education, Culture, Youth and Sports (ECYS) Council Meeting

On 22-23 May, the European Ministers responsible for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport met in Brussels for the formal ECYS Council Meeting.

The Council reached an agreement on several important issues. A general approach was agreed upon for a revised directive on audiovisual media services (AVMS). Furthermore, the Council adopted a recommendation on the European

Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. In the field of Youth policy, the Ministers discussed the development of the structured dialogue with young people, outlining the main priorities for the next cycle of dialogues. The Council also adopted conclusions on the strategic perspectives for European cooperation in the youth field post-2018, which will provide guidance to the Commission in evaluating the EU Youth Strategy.



## The House of European Sport

In the field of sport, for which the meeting took place on 23 May, the Council adopted a resolution on the **EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020**, which is analysed in-depth in a separate article in this Monthly Report.

Furthermore, the Ministers responsible for sport adopted **conclusions on 'sport as a platform for social inclusion'**. These conclusions highlight the role that volunteering in sport can play to create social cohesion and inclusive communities. The conclusions also touch upon the valuable skills and competences that can be developed through volunteering in sport. In this regard, the European Commission and Member States are for instance invited to "*Promote the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning gained through volunteering in sport*". In terms of major sport events and the important role of volunteers, Member States are invited to "*Promote volunteering through the organisation of major sport events in partnership with the sport movement. Major sport events can offer a great opportunity to create suitable conditions to train volunteers, helping them acquire necessary competences.*" Several EU funding Programmes, including Erasmus+, the Structural and Investment Funds and the European Solidarity Corps, have been mentioned as possible ways to

support the elements mentioned in the conclusions.

Besides the conclusions, a **policy debate** was organised **on the role of sports media in strengthening social inclusion**. A number of representatives of sport organisations were also invited to attend the working lunch.

Finally, in terms of any other business, the Sport Ministers discussed the outcome of recent World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) meetings as well as the situation regarding the safety of rubber granulates on artificial sport pitches following concerns from the Belgian delegation on health risks relating to artificial football pitches which use recycled and potentially hazardous rubber components. In addition, the incoming Estonian Presidency also presented its main priorities in the field of sport, which include: structured dialogue on sport, the role of coaches and the preparation of the EU position for the next WADA meeting.

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### FURTHER INFORMATION

[Main results of the ECYS Meeting](#)

[Council conclusions on sport as a platform for social inclusion](#)

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## FUNDING PROGRAMMES, STUDIES AND PROJECTS

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### EOC EU Office contributes to Erasmus+ Mid-term Evaluation

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With the first half of implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020 successfully concluded, the European Commission is currently in the process of conducting a Mid-term Evaluation. This Mid-term Evaluation included among other elements an 'Open Public consultation' which ran from 28 February until 31 May 2017.

The EOC EU Office and its partner organisations have already been very active in the various discussions leading up to the establishment of the Erasmus+ Sport funding Programme as well as in the actual implementation of the Programme. In this regard, the EOC EU Office for instance published a 'Recommendation for future calls for proposals: How to ensure the participation of grassroots sports?' in January 2015.

## *The House of European Sport*

Furthermore, the EOC EU Office conducts an annual evaluation of the selected projects with the view to assess the participation of organised and in particular grassroots sports.

Compared to the first year of implementation of Erasmus+ Sport, it is clear that considerable improvements have already been made that facilitate the participation of grassroots sports. In particular, the increase of the pre-financing rate to 70%, the introduction of simplified grants and the possibility of small collaborative partnerships (which have all been recommendations of the EOC EU Office) have been welcomed by sport stakeholders. Nevertheless, the assessment of the EOC EU Office of the last year's selection results of Erasmus+ Sport collaborative partnerships show that considerable difficulties remain for sports organisations as only 23,08% of successful project applicants are coming from organised sport.

Against this background and in view of the Mid-term Evaluation of the EU Commission, and in particular the open public consultation, the EOC EU Office decided to draft an updated position paper on the basis of a broad consultation among its partner organisations. This position paper explains what can be done for the second phase of the implementation until 2020 as well as beyond 2020.

It is based on four main recommendations:

- Safeguard the participation of grassroots sports
- Build on the results of Erasmus+ Sport projects
- Ensure the future of the Sport funding Programme
- Expand the opportunities to finance not-for-profit European sport events

For each of these four points, more specific recommendations have been listed. For instance in terms of the participation of grassroots sports organisations, it is worth to mention the positive effect of the introduction of the small collaborative partnerships as 36, 21% of successful applicants in 2016 were coming from organised sport (compared to the 23, 08% for large collaborative partnerships), with many of these being federations and sports clubs. One direct recommendation is therefore to ensure the continuation of small collaborative partnerships and to reduce the financial and administrative burden for these partnerships. Another option could be to enable small-scale cross-border projects, reducing the number of necessary Programme countries to two.

In terms of the future of the Sport funding Programme, the EOC EU Office stresses the need for supporting structures (e.g. contact points at national level) to further help grassroots sport actors to draft successful applications. Considering the proven added value of the Programme, it is also important to stress the need to ensure the future of EU sport funding in general, preferably within the EU funding Programme for education, training and youth.

## INTERNALS AND VISITS

### European Olympic Committees' 38th Seminar in Skopje

On 19 and 20 May, the National Olympic Committee of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) hosted the European Olympic Committees' (EOC) 38<sup>th</sup> Seminar in Skopje. Combined with the IOC Olympic Solidarity Regional Forum, this Seminar was a good opportunity to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NOC of FYROM. 200 delegates from the 50 European NOCs as well as representatives of the IOC and other Olympic Movement stakeholders were present to discuss the various topics on the agenda of the Seminar.

Following introductory words from Vasil Tupurkovski, President of the NOC of FYROM, Janez Kocijančič, EOC acting President, officially opened the Seminar, stressing that in these challenging times *"all National Olympic Committees and all sport federations should contribute to the implementation of the Agenda 2020"* as the future of sport will *"depend on how the public is perceiving the action and activities of the Olympic Movement"*.

After this welcome address, the day was organised according to three different workshops:

'IOC Olympic Solidarity', 'Europe and the preparation of Olympic sport events' and 'the evolution of digital communication in sport'. While the IOC Olympic Solidarity team presented its 2017-2020 plan, participants also got the opportunity to hear about the preparation of several events, including the Győr Summer EYOF 2017 as well as PyeongChang and Tokyo Olympic Games or to be informed regarding the functioning of the Olympic Channel and the possibilities for NOCs.

The progress report of the EOC Coordination Commission on the preparation of the second edition of the European Games in Minsk was the highlight of the second day meeting. In addition, representatives of the NOCS also awarded the Best Winter European Young Athlete of 2017 with the attribution of the Winter Piotr Norowski Award to the Estonian freestyle skier, Kelly Sildaru.

Finally, Janez Kocijančič announced that the next EOC Seminar will be organised in Belgrade, Serbia, in 2018.

### EOC EU Office partners discuss EU policy during the Annual Partner Meeting

On 11 May, the EOC EU Office gathered representatives of 19 different organisations for its Annual Partner Meeting in Brussels.

Folker Hellmund, Director of the EOC EU Office, used its introduction to warmly welcome all participants and to present the two new partners of the EOC EU Office: the NOC of Finland and the NOC of Portugal. Following the announcement of

the fifth edition of the European Evening of Sports, which will take place in Brussels on the 19 June, a brief overview of the office's recent activities was given. In addition, online services offered by the EOC EU Office including the Intranet or the Weekly update were presented to the participants.



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After these introductory remarks, partners of the office shared their recent activities and projects in relation to EU or international policies. Various projects within the Erasmus+ Programme as well as an overview of upcoming applications were presented while several NOCs mentioned their initiatives to develop their international strategies.

The second part of the morning session was dedicated to exchanges on the final draft of the new EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020, adopted by the Sport Ministers at the end of May (see dedicated article). Following a general assessment by the EOC EU Office, participants had the possibility to discuss the topic with Yves Le Lostecque, Head of the Sport Unit of the European Commission. The main focus of the discussion was on the way to ensure the

involvement and the role of organised sport in the new working structures and the different priorities selected by EU institutions.

The afternoon part of the meeting focused on the recent developments in specific policy fields of European sport policy. The EOC EU Office notably presented the main findings of its assessment of the 2016 Erasmus+ selection results. Updates on the EU Competition policy, the Digital Single Market and the reform of VAT policy were also discussed while new topics including eSport or Artificial Turf have also been included in the agenda of the meeting.

The EOC EU Office would like to thank all its partner organisations for their participation and valuable contributions during the meeting.

## NOC of Portugal becomes partner of the EOC EU Office

On 19 May 2017, the NOC of Portugal officially became a bilateral partner of the EOC EU Office. This partnership was formalised through the signing of the partnership agreement at the occasion of the EOC Seminar in Skopje, FYROM. The NOC of Portugal was represented by General Director Joao Almeida whereas the EOC was represented by acting President Janez Kocijančič. EOC EU Office Director Folker Hellmund also took part in the signature ceremony.

The partnership between the NOC of Portugal and the EOC EU Office is the next step in a fruitful and regular collaboration that has started during the previous Olympic cycle. One concrete example was the cooperation in the framework of the SIGGS-Project of the EOC EU Office.

President Kocijančič expressed his satisfaction with the partnership by stating that this new agreement clearly demonstrates the European-wide network of the EOC EU Office as the geographical scope is now further expanded to include the most South-Western country of the EOC.



For the EOC EU Office, the NOC of Portugal is the 11th NOC to become an official bilateral partner and the 26th partner organisation overall.

## PARTNERS' CORNER

### EOC EU Office welcomes final seminar of the CNOSF "Parcours Ambition Internationale" 2016/2017

On 3 and 4 May, the French Olympic Committee (CNOSF) organised a visit in Brussels for the participants of its program "*Parcours Ambition Internationale*". Created in 2013, this program intends to support, every year, French high-level representatives in their commitment and activities within European and international sport organisations. The "*Bernard Lapasset*" promotion 2016/2017 gathered 20 participants from 14 national federations.

The programme aims to improve participants' ability to evolve in an international environment by exchanging with actors involved in international sport organisations. In addition, experts from different fields of activities (e.g. communication, economy, lobbying) are involved in the program with the aim to share their experiences, insights and practical advices with the participants.

Following three sessions, organised in the CNOSF and INSEP and dedicated to the intercultural communication, and how to lobby/negotiate in an international environment, the final seminar aimed at getting more insights into EU sports policy as well as meeting representatives of EU institutions and sports stakeholders. The EOC EU Office provided support to facilitate the visit.

The programme started with a visit of the European Parliament and a general overview of the functioning of the EU institutions before the

group visited the EOC EU Office. The afternoon session was divided in three presentations, followed by fruitful discussions. Following a welcome by Folker Hellmund, Head of the EOC EU Office, Michele Colucci, legal assistant at the European Commission, offered a comprehensive presentation of EU Competition policy and its impacts on Sport.

The second presentation was made by Valentin Capelli, who presented the activities of the EOC EU Office, the relations of the Olympic Movement with EU institutions as well as several policy fields having an impact on sport including the Digital Single Market or Good Governance before coming back to competition issues from the sport perspective.

Then, Mathieu Fonteneau (MFO Consulting) provided the participants with a presentation of the financial possibilities existing for sport organisations at the European Level with a specific focus on Erasmus+ Sport.

The second day of the visit was dedicated to exchanges with representatives of EU institutions. Participants were welcomed to the European Commission for a presentation and a discussion with Yves Le Lostecque, Head of Sport Unit. Afterwards, the group had an interesting meeting with French MEP Virginie Rozière (S&D), Member of the Sport Intergroup of the European Parliament.

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## NEXT MONTH

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### Dates in June 2017

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<b>5 June 2017</b>	<i>Whit Monday, EOC EU Office closed, Brussels</i>
<b>9- 10 June 2017</b>	<i>ENGSO General Assembly, Paris</i>
<b>19 June 2017</b>	<i>European Evening of Sports, Brussels</i>
<b>20 June 2017</b>	<i>Board Meeting EOC EU Office, Brussels</i>
<b>26-27 June 2017</b>	<i>Estonian Presidency Seminar on Democracy, Youth and Sports</i>