



European Union and Sport

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European Union and Sport

Commission reviewed the First EU Work Plan for Sport

The European Commission has adopted its report on the first EU Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014. The report provides an overview and assessment of the implementation of the Work Plan. Furthermore, it also proposes ideas on priorities and working structures for the future Work Plan, which is foreseen to be adopted by the Council in its meeting in May. Thus, the Commission's report is intended to serve as a basis for the discussions in the Council taking place during the first half of 2014.

The report assesses the work and deliverables done by the six Expert Groups (anti-doping, good governance, education and training, sport, health and participation, sustainable financing and statistics) which were established in the first Work Plan. In general the assessment is very positive and the Commission considers the first Work Plan and its implementation successful. However, regarding the working methods and structures, some challenges e.g. with regard to the organisation of high-level structured dialogue and Member States' resources to appoint experts to all Expert Groups, were identified.

As priorities for the future Work Plan, the Commission proposes three main topics:

- **Sport and Society**
 - social inclusion and sport
 - gender equality
 - health-enhancing physical activity
 - education and training in sport
- **Economic Dimension of Sport**
 - evidence-base for sport
 - sustainability of sport
 - mainstreaming sport

- state aid
- sustainability of mega sport events
- **Integrity of Sport**
 - anti-doping
 - fight against-match-fixing
 - protection of the physical and moral integrity of young athletes

Regarding the future structure and working methods, the report proposes to have three "Sport Strategy Groups" (SSG), composed of Member State and Commission representatives, one on each main priority topic (e.g. Sport and Society). Under these SSGs, the more technical work should be organised at expert level with "Groups of Experts" e.g. according to the sub-topics.

For the involvement of the sport movement, the Commission suggests to have dialogue platforms corresponding to the substance of the three SSGs. With regard to the high-level structured dialogue, the report proposes three alternative options to improve its organisation.

The EOC EU Office welcomes the main priority topics of the Commission's report as the proposed topics are in line with the ones that the EOC EU Office raised in the EU Sport Forum. However, the proposed structure of the future work Plan seems too complex with several different groups and platforms. Furthermore, it is important that the expertise of the organised sport will also be included in the possible "Sport Strategy Groups" to improve not only the quality of the Work Plan but also the better implementation of the outcomes. The EOC EU Office will closely follow the discussions



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on the future Work Plan at the Council during the Greek Presidency.

Further information:
[Report COM\(2014\)](#)

State Aid and sport: Block exemption for sport, revised de minimis aid and state aid cases

On 18 December 2013, the European Commission announced two further steps in the framework of the State Aid Modernisation: the launch of a final consultation on conditions for block exemptions and the adoption of the revised "de minimis aid". The revision of these regulations can have a positive influence on sport infrastructure projects.

Furthermore, the Commission took a decision in the case of public support for the construction and renovation of stadiums in the framework of the EURO 2016 Championship and announced the launch of three distinct investigations of public funding for Spanish professional football clubs. These decisions on specific cases as well as ongoing investigations are taking place under current rules.

Conditions for block exemptions

Following two rounds of consultations, the European Commission published a revised draft version of the General Block Exemptions Regulation (GBER). This regulation sets out the conditions under which certain categories of aid (including "sports" as a result of the revised Enabling Regulation of 22 July 2013) can be exempted from prior notification. The following criteria for "sports and multifunctional infrastructure" were included in the latest draft:

- The infrastructure shall not be used exclusively by a single professional sport user and the use by other

professional or non-professional sport users shall annually account for at least 20% of time capacity.

- The maximum aid shall not exceed 75% of the total eligible costs.
- Notification threshold will be the following: aid amount of 15 Mio EUR or total project costs of 50 Mio EUR.

On the basis of this latest draft, the Commission has launched a third and final public consultation. This consultation will run until 12 February 2014. The aim is to adopt the final regulation in the second quarter of 2014.

The importance of this block exemption is considerable. According to the European Commission, 3/4 of today's state aid measures and some 2/3 of aid amounts could be exempted as a result of the revision. On top of that, the block exemption would not only exempt aid for sports infrastructure that meet the criteria set out in the Regulation from the requirement of prior notification to the European Commission. The public aid would also be automatically considered compatible with the EU State Aid rules as long as the project remains within the criteria of the Regulation. This exemption would therefore facilitate the planning and implementation of sports infrastructure projects, for instance by providing more reassurance and by saving time.

Revision of the "de minimis aid"



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On 18 December, the Commission adopted the revised version of the “de minimis” Regulation. This Regulation excludes aid measures below a certain ceiling from the application of state aid rules. After an extensive period of consultation, the Commission decided not to increase the ceiling of 200.000 EUR over a period of three years. Compared to the previous period, the ceiling therefore remains unchanged. The new de minimis Regulation entered into force on 1 January 2014.

Recent State Aid cases

On 18 December, the Commission took the decision to approve the French public support for the construction and renovation of nine stadiums in the framework of the UEFA EURO Championship 2016. It was argued that the project would not have been viable without public support and that this support was limited to the minimum necessary. On top of that, the stadiums will continue to be available for the respective professional football clubs and serve as multifunctional arenas for the public for sport, cultural and social events.

However, the Commission decided to make the differentiation between the renovation and construction of the stadiums and the further commercial exploitation of the stadiums. The conditions for further commercial use will therefore be assessed in a second distinct decision. This decision shows that sport organisations need to consider both the conditions regarding

renovation/construction and the further use of the facilities for instance when hosting major sports events.

On top of that, the Commission decided to initiate three distinct investigations into public funding for Spanish professional football clubs:

- Investigations of possible tax privileges for Real Madrid CF, Barcelona CF, Athletic Club Bilbao and Club Atlético Osasuna.
- Assessment of a land transfer between the city of Madrid and Real Madrid CF.
- Examination of guarantees given by the state-owned Valencia Institute of Finance for loans to three clubs in Valencia: Valencia CF, Hercules CF and Elche CF.

In March 2013, the Commission had already initiated investigations of public funding for five professional football clubs in the Netherlands.

Further information:

Press release: [Commission consults on draft Regulation exempting more aid measures from prior notification](#)

Press release: [Commission adopts revised exemption for small aid amounts \(de minimis Regulation\)](#)

Press release: [Commission approves French aid for construction and renovation of stadiums for UEFA EURO 2016 Championship](#)

Press release: [Commission opens in-depth investigation into public funding of certain Spanish professional football clubs](#)

EU conference on “Gender Equality in Sport”

More than 120 representatives of sport, universities, ministries and the European institutions met on the 3rd and 4th December 2013 in Vilnius upon the invitation of Sports Commissioner Vassiliou to discuss equality in sports.

Nearly 20 years after the “Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport” it can be stated that although this declaration was signed by more than 380 sports organizations, progress is only now becoming slowly visible. Against this



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background, the Helsinki World Conference on "Women and Sport" planned for 12-15 June 2014, will gain particular importance.

The expert group set up by the European Commission on "Gender Equality in Sports", drew a roadmap that focused on the following topics and is intended to form the basis for the national strategies to be created:

- Women in sports governing bodies
- Women in the coaching profession
- Sexualized violence in sport
- Women-specific stereotypes in the media

The participants of the conference agreed that the objectives set out in the Roadmap should have been both realistic and ambitious. The announced quotas for 2020 on the management level of sports governing bodies and in the public administration of sport foresee 40 % of women in national and 30 % in the international arenas. Moreover, all sports federations should operate according to an equal opportunities policy that includes a targeted action plan.

Proposed were also strategic initiatives that international sports federations such as the EOC/ EPC could implement in cooperation with the EU. Since the financing of specific projects was also considered relevant, the sports chapter in the framework of the EU programme Erasmus+ should facilitate network building in the future. The first call to the Erasmus+ programme took place on 12 December 2013 and was published by the EU Commission on the website of the Sports Unit.

The majority of conference participants stated that concrete and transparent goals are indispensable as well as implementation measures that can be verified in their effectiveness. In recent years, the issues and challenges have been described many times, but with the exception of the Scandinavian countries, a comprehensive policy changeover in sport has not sufficiently taken place. In this sense, there have been calls to make the promotion of public funds match the fulfilment of certain gender criteria.

Further information:

[European Commission's website on Sport](#)

Consultation on "Review of existing VAT legislation on public bodies and tax exemptions in the public interest"

Since 2010 the European Commission is working on a new frame for a simpler and more efficient VAT system in the European Union. One of the priority areas in this regard is the review and possible revision of the VAT rules in the public sector including special rules for "public bodies and tax exemptions in the public interest".

Before preparing the ground for a possible future legislative initiative in this area, the European Commission will launch an internal

impact assessment. The public consultation provides the opportunity for stakeholders such as sport federations or sports clubs to give input to this assessment. The **deadline** for contributions has been postponed to **25.4.2014**.

The consultation refers to two public sector activities that deviate from the general tax regime and have the potential to create distortion of competition as similar services



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from different actors underlie different tax rates:

1. Public bodies acting as public authorities are eligible for special taxation rules laid down in Art. 13 of the VAT-Directive

Only in exceptional cases sport stakeholders are acting as public authorities.

2. Tax exemptions in the public interest laid down in Art. 132-134 in the VAT-Directive

This article asks the Member States to exempt "the supply of certain services closely linked to sport or physical education by non profit-making organisations to persons taking part in sport or physical education".

For non-profit making stakeholders in sport this article is of utmost interest. These sport actors could be affected if

they are providing services in concurrence with private entities. Climbing halls or fitness centres are typical areas where private and non-profit stakeholders compete with each other.

In the consultation paper the Commission put forward five different reform options. Only option 3 would safeguard the continuation of current exemptions in the public interest. In this regard it is highly recommended that non-profit making stakeholders in sport take part in the consultation by expressing their concerns on the potential negative consequences of grassroots sport activities in Europe.

Further information:

[VAT legislation on public bodies and tax exemptions in the public interest - European commission](#)

Media rights: European Commission launches public consultation on the review of the EU copyright rules

On 5 December 2013, the European Commission launched a public consultation as part of its on-going efforts to review and modernise EU copyright rules.

The participants of the consultation were asked to comment on the following questions: territorial restrictions to copyright and license rights in the internal market, harmonisation of copyright limitations and exceptions to copyright in the digital age, fragmentation of the EU's copyright market, and how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of enforcement while underpinning its legitimacy in the broader context of copyright reform.

In its strategy on "A Single Market for Intellectual Property Rights" and its initiative

on "Licences for Europe", the European Commission initiated a stakeholder dialogue, while facilitating practical solutions to controversial issues in the field of copyrights. The discussions and results of the stakeholder dialogue "Licences for Europe" will be taken into account in the context of the revision of the legislative framework in the field of copyright.

The European Commission intends to create a "European digital single market". In doing so, the previous territorial restrictions of copyrights could be reversed and the "country of origin principle" for cross-border transfers could be introduced. This would imply that broadcasting rights of sports organizers would have to be tendered on a pan-European basis and it would no longer



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be possible to protect the domestic market against cross-border live broadcasts of the same sporting events from other EU Member States. This would have an effect on the exclusivity of the content and thus the value of the broadcasting rights.

Until 5 February 2014, the stakeholders have the opportunity to submit a contribution to the list of questions included in the survey. Providing the circumstances, this deadline

can be extended. Based on the submitted contributions, the European Commission has announced to publish a "White paper on the European framework for copyright" by the end of May.

Further information:

[Public Consultation on the review of the EU copyright rules](#)

Agreement to postpone Data Protection reform until after EP elections

The deadline for the adoption of the new Data Protection package has officially been postponed following an agreement between the EU institutions. The European Commission, the Rapporteurs of the European Parliament and the Greek and Italian Presidency of the EU agreed on an informal roadmap that would set the deadline for adoption at the end of 2014.

The responsible Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (LIBE) had already adopted the package in October 2013 with the hope to finalise the process before the European elections, but following the meeting of the European Summit of late October 2013 this deadline did not seem likely. The Heads of State and Government proposed to postpone the adoption and agreed to have the new Regulations in place by 2015 at the latest.

On 28 January 2014, the European Data Protection Day, Commissioner of Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Mrs Viviane Reding, again stated the need to adopt the new package in timely fashion. She proposed a "Data Protection Compact for Europe" based on eight principles that should govern the way data is processed by the public and private sector in Europe. The principles include the following:

- The reform should not distinguish between the private and the public sector.
- Data collection should be targeted and limited to what is proportionate to the objectives that have been set.
- Data Protection rules should be kept up to date, taking into account technological progress.
- Data Protection rules should apply irrespective of the nationality of the person concerned.

Link with sport

The adoption of the new Data Protection package can have a profound impact on sport. The Regulation on the one hand might affect the fight against doping. It is for instance not sure if the newly adopted WADA Code, which is foreseen to enter into force on 1 January 2015, will be completely in line with the new Data Protection rules. The Directive on the other hand might have an impact on the fight against match-fixing. Sport organisations for instance seek to ensure that they can receive information on suspicious betting activities on sport events.

Further information:

Press release: [Vice-President Reding calls for a new data protection compact for Europe](#)



Commission publishes a proposal for a "Quality Framework for Traineeships"

On 4 December 2013, the European Commission released a proposal for a Council recommendation for a "Quality Framework for Traineeships". This framework would apply primarily to open market traineeships and intends to facilitate transition to the labour market and boost the employability of young adults. As traineeships are fairly widespread in the sports sector, this Quality Framework could improve the conditions of these traineeships and might also incite more mobility in the sports sector throughout the EU.

After previous studies and consultations wherein reoccurring concerns were noted in traineeships such as lack of compensation, learning content, protection, terms and conditions, the Commission decided to proceed with an EU initiative on establishing a Quality Framework for Traineeships. The proposed recommendation of the

Commission sets out guidelines to enable trainees to acquire quality work experience under safe conditions through the conclusion of a written placement agreement. The Commission backs the idea that a written agreement between trainee and traineeship could moreover foster mobility within the EU in that it would lay down the working conditions of the traineeship and therefore encourage trainees to transition between Member States.

The Commission's proposal also outlines how it will support Member States' action through this EU Framework, the exchange of good practice cases and monitoring.

Further information:

Press release: [Commission proposes standards to improve quality of traineeships](#)
[Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships](#)

Funding programmes, studies and projects

Commission launches first call for proposals in Erasmus+

On 12 December 2013, the European Commission launched the first call for proposals of the new Erasmus+ programme. For sport, the call offers funding for the following actions: collaborative partnerships in the sport field and not-for-profit European sport events.

Collaborative partnerships

For collaborative partnerships, the first call covers the following topics:

- Combat doping at grassroots level, notably in recreational environments such as amateur sport and fitness;
- Support prevention and raise awareness among stakeholders involved in the fight against match-fixing;
- Support prevention, educational and innovative approaches to tackle violence, racism and intolerance in sport;



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- Support the implementation of EU policy documents in the field of sport and other relevant policy areas such as recommendations, guidelines, policy strategies, etc. (e.g. EU Physical Activity Guidelines, EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes, Principles on good governance in sport, etc.).

The partnerships should contain at least five organisations from five different programme countries due to the transnational character of the programme. The length of the project can vary between 12 and 36 months and the deadline for the submission of proposals is foreseen for **15 May 2014**. Selected project will start by 1 January 2015.

Not-for-profit sport events

The Erasmus+ programme will provide financial support for the organisation of European-wide sport events. In addition, the programme might also finance national events organised simultaneously in several European countries in the context of European events in the field of sport. The activities should contribute to:

- Increased visibility and awareness of events aimed at promoting social inclusion, equal opportunities and health-enhancing physical activity
- Increased participation in sport, physical activity and volunteering activity

A sports event requires participants from at least twelve different programme countries to be eligible for funding. The deadlines for applications are: **14 March 2014** (for events taking place in 2014) and **15 May 2014** (for events organised in 2015).

Budget and further information

The total budget for the collaborative partnerships and not-for-profit sport events will be 16.6 million EUR during this first year. This budget will be gradually increased every year.

- For the collaborative partnerships the budget will be around **14.6 million EUR** out of which approximately 42 projects will be selected. Fifty percent of the budget will be foreseen for the support of the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes and the EU Physical Activity Guidelines.
- For the sport events, the budget for the sport events will be around **2 million EUR** for 4 events.

The responsible Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) has also published the Erasmus+ **Programme Guide**. This guide contains detailed information on award and eligibility criteria. You can find a link to this Programme Guide as well as to the new website on Erasmus+ below.

On top of that, the Agency will organise a **Sports Info day** on 4 February 2014. Registrations for this information day have been closed, but a live-stream will be available. The EOC EU Office makes use of this opportunity to organise a partner meeting on funding applications on 5 February 2014.

Further information:

[Erasmus+ Call for proposals](#)
[Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#)
[New Erasmus+ website](#)



Internal and visits

Board meeting of the EOC EU Office-Farewell of Mathieu Fonteneau

On 16 December 2013, the second annual Board meeting of the EOC EU Office took place in Brussels. Representatives of the EOC (Patrick Hickey, President and Kikis Lazarides, Treasurer) and CNOSF (Michael Aloisio, Director International Affairs) discussed the implementation of the activities of 2013 and the forthcoming tasks for 2014. The main topics for the upcoming year correspond with the start of the new funding chapter for sport and the negotiations for a new EU Work Plan for sport.

During the meeting, it was officially announced that Mathieu Fonteneau (second right on the photo) will leave the EOC EU Office as of 1 January 2014. The EOC EU Office would like to take the occasion to thank Mathieu for his dedication and excellent work throughout the many years that he worked for the EOC EU Office

(2009-2013) and the EU Office of German sports (2006-2009). We wish Mathieu all the best for the future. The decision on his replacement will be taken in the upcoming weeks.



The next Board meeting will take place in the first half of 2014.

ENGSO and EOC EU Office organised a seminar on good governance in Tirana together with the NOC Albania

ENGSO and the EOC EU Office organised together with the NOC of Albania, the seminar "Strengthening Sport through Good Governance" in Tirana on January 27, 2014. The event was successful due to the presence of the Albanian Minister for Education and Sport Mrs Lindita Nikolla and the Albanian federations, sport clubs and universities who showed a big interest in this event. Many media representatives attended the seminar and it was also reported on the TV News. The seminar was furthermore supported by the European Olympic Committees.



NOC President Viron Bezhani, Minister Nikolla and ENGSO President Birgitta Kervinen opened the seminar. It was followed by a presentation of President Kervinen on the importance of

good governance in sport and a panel discussion on good governance involving a



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representative from the government. As a major part of the seminar the toolkit "**Your key to good governance**", which is an outcome of the Sport 4 Good Governance project by the EOC EU Office, was presented to the public. The session focused primarily on introducing the self-evaluation tool, which is a good instrument to evaluate the current situation of good governance within a given organisation.

Participants were very satisfied with the seminar and found the self-evaluation tool very useful for assessing their current governance and for identifying steps for development.

Further information:
[Website of the S4GG Project](#)

Dates in February 2014

4	Erasmus+ Sport Info Day, Brussels
5	EOC EU Office Partner Meeting on Erasmus+ projects, Brussels
7-23	Sochi Winter Olympic Games
12	Deadline: Consultation on "State Aid Block exemption"
25-26	Informal Meeting on HEPA, Greek Presidency, Athens

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