

ENGSO Position on the

Future EU Work Plan for Sport and Council Expert Groups

The EU Work Plan on Sport 2011-2014 adopted by the Council of the EU in May 2011, was a broad document covering many policy topics in the field of sport. It recognised three themes – societal role of sport, the economic dimension of sport and the organisation of sport – which were identified in the White Paper on Sport in 2007 and the Commission’s Communication on Developing the European Dimension in Sport in 2011. However, some of these themes especially many important topics listed by the Work Plan under the societal role of sport have been discussed very little or not at all at Council level. ENGSO is of the opinion that in the next Work Plan from 2014 onwards topics such as participation and health-enhancing physical activity, volunteering and social inclusion should be on the agenda of the Expert Groups. Furthermore, economic dimension of sport and integrity of sport should be further discussed.

Participation and Health-Enhancing Physical Activity

ENGSO is of the opinion that participation and health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) needs to be at the forefront of future EU sports policy. Physically active and healthy citizens can perform better in all areas of their lives; they could contribute better to growth and to a healthier physical and social environment. Therefore, health-enhancing physical activity and participation would contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. With these priorities all European citizens would be in the target group of the EU sports policy and the sport funding chapter of the Erasmus+. Furthermore the EU activities would reach grassroots level and have an impact on EU citizens’ lives. ENGSO believes that the current Council Expert Group on Sport, Health and Participation should continue its work in the future. However the focus of its work should be to find efficient ways to enhance participation in physical activities with following topics:

- The future EU sports policy and the sports funding chapter should focus on physical activity as a preventive measure and support activities to identify best practise in fostering participation. Increasing participation will be a key to a successful European HEPA policy.
- ENGSO believes that schools and sports clubs play a crucial role in fostering participation. Early engagement in physical activity is many times a guarantee of a lifelong physical activity. Thus, ENGSO urges this issue to be high on the EU sports political agenda.



- ENGSO wishes to highlight the importance of the cross-sectoral approach to promote physical activity and enhancing participation. This approach should be incorporated into the future HEPA agenda at EU level, as is mentioned in the Commission's proposal for Council Recommendations on health-enhancing physical activity. Co-operation between different sectors both at non-governmental, but especially at governmental side, at all levels is needed.

Volunteering

Sport is the biggest sector in volunteering in Europe, with as many as 35 million Europeans giving their time voluntarily to running sporting activities. About 60% of Europeans play sports and around 60 million are members in sports clubs. Sports clubs rely on volunteers with as much as 90% of clubs in some European countries counting on volunteers.¹ Being a crucial aspect for the existence of sport in Europe, ENGSO believes that volunteering should be higher on the EU sport political agenda, and voluntary activities needs to be supported by the Erasmus+ funding programme. Council Expert Group should discuss the following topics to promote volunteering in sport:

- Work towards decreasing administrative burdens on volunteers and voluntary sports organisations, minimising the unintended harmful consequences that European legislation can have on volunteering, and ensuring the sustainable financing of non-profit voluntary sports organisations e.g. allowing VAT exemptions for non-profit sports organisations.
- The development and recognition of the skills and competences of volunteers as well as informal and non-formal learning should be supported e.g. by promoting the European Skills Passport.
- Develop European cooperation to promote volunteering in sport through conclusions, relevant EU funding programmes and enabling visa practices. Ensure that people travelling to and within the European Union for volunteering will be able to do so, for example by establishing enabling visa practices for volunteers coming from third countries. Work towards increasing volunteering especially in the Member States which are below the EU average.

Social Inclusion

One of the topics which has not been discussed at the Expert Groups or Council level is social inclusion in and through sport. ENGSO is unequivocally in favour of taking action to promote social

¹ Special Eurobarometer 334 Sport and Physical Activity (2010); European Commission Study on volunteering (2010)



inclusion in and through sport and to include the topic in the upcoming Work Plan and on the agenda of the future Expert Groups. Besides the inclusion of persons with disabilities, immigrants, different minorities, and vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, ENGSO would like to highlight that the access to sport of people who are in risk of social exclusion or poverty or are already excluded should be supported. Inclusion in society through sport can result in better employability and better health, which again contributes to achieving the goals set in the Europe 2020 strategy. ENGSO also emphasises the need to continue actions to promote gender equality in sport. This covers not only the access of women into leadership positions in sport, but also equal opportunities to education through sport and the participation of girls and women in different sectors and roles within sport.

The future Expert Groups should:

- Explore ways to implement the Roadmap to Gender Equality in Sport. Focus should be in the topics which are identified in the Roadmap.
- Explore ways to increase the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities, immigrants, different minorities, vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and persons who are in risk of exclusion or poverty.

Economic Dimension of Sport

Regional development and employability were also listed as topics under the economic dimension of sport in the current Work Plan. Also the Commission Communication on Sport in 2011 stated that the Commission and Member States should “fully exploit the possibilities of the European Regional Development Fund to support sport infrastructure and sustainable activities in sport and outdoors as a tool for regional and rural development, and of the European Social Fund to strengthen the skills and employability of workers in the sport sector”. ENGSO fully supports these intentions, as regional development and employability have not been covered yet by the discussions of the Expert Groups. As the recent study on the “Contribution of Sport to Economic Growth and Employment in the EU” shows “sport is an important economic sector in the EU, with a share in the national economies which is comparable to agriculture, forestry and fishing combined. Moreover, its share is expected to rise in the future.” As the employment is one the goals set in EU 2020 Strategy, regional development and employability of sport should be discussed in the Expert Groups as well. This links also with the mainstreaming of sport into all EU policy areas and funding programmes. Sport should be mainstreamed so that its full potential for the smart and inclusive growth could be used.

Furthermore, the topic of sustainable financing of sport should stay on the agenda of the Expert Groups. The current Expert Group adopted a document “Strengthening financial solidarity mechanisms within sport”. The implementation of this document should be further discussed especially to safeguard the sustainable financing of grassroots sport.



- The economical value of sport and its contribution to regional development and employment should be recognized e.g. by supporting sport infrastructures and sustainable activities in sport. Expert Group should ensure the financing through European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund, but also explore ways to ensure financing from different sources at national level.
- Ensure the mainstreaming of sport into EU policies and EU funding programmes.
- Follow the implementation of the “Strengthening financial solidarity mechanisms within sport”, especially safeguarding the financing of grassroots sport.

Integrity of Sport

The current Expert Group on Good Governance in Sport was divided in to three sub-groups. Match-fixing is an imminent threat for sport and future work at EU level is needed to tackle this problem. However, ENGSO is of the opinion that all sports integrity issues such as fight against match-fixing and antidoping should be dealt in the same Expert Group. The current Expert Group adopted recommendations on Good Governance in sport which might end up as Council Conclusions. ENGSO considers that now is the moment to give some time to the sports movement for the implementation of these recommendations. Further discussion at the Expert Group level can only take place after a period of implementation.

- Continue the important work to fight against match-fixing at the Expert Group level. All sports integrity matters, such as fight against match-fixing and doping should be discussed in the same Expert Group.

General remarks

In addition to the remarks regarding the topics ENGSO would like to draw attention to the following general remarks:

- ENGSO would propose four Expert Groups for the period 2014-2017: two Expert Groups on the societal role (covering the topics HEPA and participation, volunteering and social inclusion), one on economical aspects of sport and one on integrity of sport.
- Expert Groups should facilitate the mainstreaming of sport into other EU policies and EU funding programmes. They should also cover the implementation of Erasmus+ programme.
- The broad participation of experts from member states should be promoted.
- The participation of observers should be allowed in all parts of the meetings to ensure complete exchange of ideas.