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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE  
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE  
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**on the implementation of the European Union Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014**

# **REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

## **on the implementation of the European Union Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Following inclusion of sport in the Lisbon Treaty and in line with article 165 TFEU, the European Union (EU) and the Member States strengthened their cooperation in an effort to develop further the European dimension in sport.

Following the 2011 Commission Communication on sport<sup>1</sup>, the Council's Resolution on a European Union Work Plan for Sport (2011-2014)<sup>2</sup> opened a new chapter of European cooperation on sport policy. For the first time, Member States, the Presidencies of the Council and the Commission were invited to work together along agreed guiding principles, to focus on priority themes ('integrity of sport', 'social values of sport', 'economic aspects of sport') and to implement specific actions<sup>3</sup>. In an area where the EU has a supporting competence this Work Plan provided a valuable framework for all actors to cooperate in a coordinated way and in mutual respect of national and EU competences.

In order to support the implementation of the Work Plan, working methods new to the field of sport were introduced, notably Expert Groups as well as strengthened dialogue structures. The Commission was asked to produce a report on the implementation of the Work Plan as a basis for a new Work Plan from mid-2014 onwards.

This report assesses the progress towards the implementation of actions in line with the priority themes identified in the Work Plan and reviews the use of working methods introduced, inter alia drawing upon the work of the Expert Groups<sup>4</sup>, written contributions submitted by Member States<sup>5</sup> and consultations with stakeholders<sup>6</sup>. In light of this assessment, the Commission has drawn its conclusions.

### **2. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS OF THE WORK PLAN**

Overall, activities carried out under the Work Plan led to very good results in the defined priority areas. This is confirmed by the consultation: The vast majority of Member States agreed that the Work Plan had a positive impact for the sport sector in their country (24 MS) and that it was of relevance for the development (24 MS) and for the implementation (19 MS) of sport policy at national level. The Work Plan generally met the expectations of the governments (25 MS), focused on the right priorities (25 MS) and led to fruitful outcomes for policy processes (24 MS). This positive assessment was generally shared by sport stakeholders. Member States valued less positively the influence of the Work Plan on sport policy processes outside the EU (16 MS). The following sections describe the progress

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2011) 12 final, 18.1.2011

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 162, 1.6.2011, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st09/st09509-re01.en11.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Annex I of the Work Plan

<sup>4</sup> Reports from Expert Groups: [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/consultation-and-co-operation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/consultation-and-co-operation_en.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Responses from 27 Member States: <http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/documents/b22/eu-workplan-sport-results-consultation-ms.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Consultation workshops at the 2013 EU Sport Forum; written contributions from stakeholders.

achieved in implementing the priority actions, also indicating where sport aspects have been taken into account in other EU policies.

### **2.1. Action 1: Prepare draft EU comments to the revision of the WADA Code**

The EU and its Member States remain firmly committed to the fight against doping and to ensuring its proportionality and respect for EU and national values, legal traditions and applicable law. The Commission's remarks in its 2011 Communication on sport remain relevant. While the ambition of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is to ensure a harmonised approach to doping control, the individual rights of athletes may enjoy protection in the EU; thus flexibility is needed and adaptations must be made to comply with EU and national law.

Comments from the Expert Group on Anti-Doping (XG AD) to the revision of the WADC were prepared and submitted to the Council in four successive waves, following the consultation phase rhythm of WADA.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, International Standards pertaining to the Code were commented on by the EU in three waves.<sup>8</sup> In its fourth contribution, the EU has extended a comprehensive proposal to WADA to work on appropriate non-binding guidance texts to accompany the relevant Code and International Standards provisions as part of the post-2015 implementation.

### **2.2. Action 2: Present a set of recommendations on combating doping in recreational sport that can be applied at both EU and national level**

In 2012 the Council voted to extend the mandate of the XG AD "to collect, including through cooperation with relevant stakeholders, best practices in the fight against doping in recreational sport in EU Member States, and on this basis, by end-2013, to present a set of recommendations that can be applied at both EU and national level." A proposal has been prepared by a Group of Experts "Doping in Recreational Sport" and will be submitted to the Council.

### **2.3. Action 3: Develop a European dimension of the integrity of sport with the initial focus on the fight against match-fixing**

The fight against match-fixing, as one of the most serious threats to the integrity of sport, is part of the Commission priorities in the areas of sport, the fight against corruption, and online gambling as regards betting-related match-fixing.<sup>9</sup> The European Parliament also adopted a number of relevant resolutions.<sup>10</sup> The Council adopted Conclusions in this area in November 2011.<sup>11</sup> The work of the Expert Group on Good Governance (XG GG) represented an important step in the process towards improving cross-sector cooperation and coordination at EU and international level, as it gathered for the first time all relevant stakeholders at EU level. The Group's recommendations formed the basis for the Presidency Conclusions adopted in November 2012<sup>12</sup> and were also instrumental in facilitating the endorsement of the Nicosia

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<sup>7</sup> The first EU contribution to the revision, adopted by Council 14 March 2012 and submitted to WADA, covers the existing Code 2009. The second EU contribution, adopted by Council 5 October 2012 and submitted to WADA, covers Draft Code 2015, version 1.0. The third EU contribution, adopted by Council 28 February 2013 and submitted to WADA, covers Draft Code 2015, version 2.0. The fourth EU contribution, adopted by Council 22 July 2013 and submitted to WADA, covers Draft Code 2015, version 3.0.

<sup>8</sup> The second EU contribution to the revision covers existing International Standards (various years of adoption or revision). The third EU contribution covers Draft International Standards 2015, version 1.0. The fourth EU contribution covers Draft International Standards 2015, version 2.0.

<sup>9</sup> Commission Communications: COM(2011)12 final; COM(2011)308 final; COM(2012)596 final

<sup>10</sup> European Parliament resolutions of 10 March 2009 (2008/2215(INI)), of 15 November 2011 (2011/2084(INI)), of 2 February 2012 (2011/2087(INI)), of 10 September 2013 (2012/2322(INI))

<sup>11</sup> Council conclusions on combating match-fixing (2011/C 378/01)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/133873.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/133873.pdf)

Declaration on match-fixing at the 2012 EU Sport Forum<sup>13</sup>. The Group worked in close coordination with parallel initiatives undertaken by the IOC and the Council of Europe; it expressed support for having an international Convention against the manipulation of sports competitions adopted under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

The Commission represents the EU in the ongoing negotiations on that Convention on the basis of two Council decisions laying down the relevant negotiating directives.<sup>14</sup> The Convention is expected to be open to signature and ratification in the course of 2014; it may represent a useful framework for strengthening international coordination and cooperation of relevant stakeholders. As for anti-match fixing measures, the Commission plans to adopt a Recommendation on best practices in the prevention and combatting of betting-related match-fixing in 2014 which should facilitate cross-border and cross-sector cooperation between sport bodies, betting operators and regulators. In this regard the Commission has launched two studies which broadly concern 1) the sharing of information and reporting of suspicious betting activity across the relevant stakeholders and 2) risk assessment and management of conflict of interest provisions.

#### **2.4. Action 4: Develop principles of transparency concerning good governance**

The 2011 Communication on sport states that good governance is a condition for the autonomy and self-regulation of sport organisations. Against this background, the work of the XG GG focused on identifying a list of principles for the good governance of sport. Input came from Member States as well as from good practices collected amongst sport stakeholders and other organisations. The proposed principles represent minimum standards that can be met by a variety of sport bodies. A flexible approach is proposed to take into account the diverse recipients to whom the principles are addressed. Rather than proposing strict enforcement measures, such as making financial support offered by public authorities conditional on the respect of the principles, the Group suggested a gradual approach based on a first phase of education and information of relevant sport bodies. Stronger compliance tools can be envisaged at a later stage, if needed.

#### **2.5. Action 5: Address the issues identified related to access to and to supervision of the profession of sport agents and to transfers in team sports**

The 2013 results of the independent study on the economic and legal aspects of transfers of players<sup>15</sup>, the study on sports agents in the EU<sup>16</sup> and the outcome of the EU conference on sports agents<sup>17</sup> constituted the basis for the work of the XG GG relating to action 5. The recommendations adopted by the Group should be seen in the context of the ongoing work undertaken by FIFA to overhaul its system for the licensing of players' agents. Whilst football was the main focus of the Group's work, other team sports were also part of the discussions.

The Group's recommendations are addressed mostly to sport stakeholders, in recognition of the importance of the autonomy of sport in setting its regulations, whilst recalling that applicable law, notably EU law, has to be respected. The sport movement is invited to improve transparency in transactions involving players and agents and to increase protection of the youngest players. The Commission considers that the relevant EU sectoral social dialogue committees are an appropriate forum to discuss how the recommendations relate to the application of labour law.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/documents/b1/eusf2012-nicosia-declaration-fight-against-match-fixing.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Council decisions 10178/13 and 10180/13

<sup>15</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/documents/f-studies/cons-study-transfers-final-rpt.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/documents/study\\_on\\_sports\\_agents\\_in\\_the.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/documents/study_on_sports_agents_in_the.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/sport-and\\_en.htm#C10\\_Sports-Agents](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/sport-and_en.htm#C10_Sports-Agents)

## **2.6. Action 6: Prepare a proposal for European guidelines on dual careers**

A rising number of athletes, increasingly at a young age, face challenges to combine their sporting career with education or work. In response to the European Council's call in 2008 to strengthen the dialogue on "dual careers"<sup>18</sup> the Commission proposed in its 2011 Communication on sport to develop guidelines on dual careers. Following the Council's mandate, the Expert Group on Education and Training in Sport (XG ETS) prepared, with the help of specialised experts in the field, EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes. Measures identified should ultimately help European athletes to perform well, to compete at a high international level, to avoid dropping out of education and sport and to prepare for a job after their sport career. The Council, welcoming the guidelines in its 2013 conclusions on dual careers, proposed concrete actions aimed at improving the opportunities for athletes to combine study or work and sport career.<sup>19</sup> The Council recognised the European dimension of dual career arrangements, given that talented and elite athletes are often abroad. International arrangements will require more cooperation between sport organisations, educational institutes, national training centres and support services.

## **2.7. Action 7: Follow-up to the inclusion of sport-related qualifications in NQFs with reference to EQF**

In 2010, EU Sport Ministers expressed their will to continue implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in the field of sport and called upon Member States to bring qualifications in sport in line with this framework.<sup>20</sup> The Council decided to give follow-up on this in the Work Plan. The XG ETS delivered a comprehensive report in autumn 2013 on the inclusion of qualifications to be obtained through educational providers, including individual country reports. The report concludes that the process of including sport qualifications in the NQF in the field of formal education is in progress and that the inclusion of sport qualifications obtained in the education system of national sport organisations in NQFs has raised important challenges at national level. It illustrates the need for support to sport federations to develop expertise on the transformation of existing education programmes and the development of new programmes. Action at national and European level will be necessary, including the matching of national qualifications with the international qualification standards of international sport federations. In the Group's view, the Council should take action in this field and support further the inclusion of all sport qualifications in NQF's. This could be considered in the context of creating a European area for skills and qualifications.

## **2.8. Action 8: Explore ways to promote health-enhancing physical activity and participation in grassroots sport**

Under the current Work Plan for Sport, progress was sought in increasing the profile of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) in the EU's policies, in light of the high physical inactivity rates in the Union which imply significant direct and indirect economic costs. The Council in its 2012 conclusions on promoting HEPA acknowledged the need for additional action.<sup>21</sup> Building on the input from the Expert Group on Sport, Health and Participation (XG SHP), on contributions from stakeholders and on the results of a study, the Commission developed a new policy initiative on HEPA.<sup>22</sup> Based on this, the Council adopted a Recommendation on promoting HEPA across sectors in November 2013, which will support

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<sup>18</sup> <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st17/st17271-re01.en08.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:168:0010:01:EN:HTML>

<sup>20</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/documents/summary\\_be\\_presidency\\_imm\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/documents/summary_be_presidency_imm_en.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:393:0022:0025:EN:PDF>

<sup>22</sup> COM(2013) 603 final

Member States in their efforts to develop and implement effective HEPA policies taking into account the EU Physical Activity Guidelines.<sup>23</sup> The Recommendation builds on existing initiatives regarding physical activity. Its implementation as of 2014 will require policy coordination at national level and cooperation with relevant EU structures and with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Physical activity has also received increased attention in the Union's activities relating to active ageing, notably in the context of and follow-up to the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. The Council's Guiding Principles of 6 December 2012<sup>24</sup> call on actors to provide opportunities for physical and mental activity adapted to the capacities of elderly people. The XG SHP developed principles on the contribution of sport to active ageing which fed into this process and were welcomed by the Council in its 2012 conclusions on healthy ageing<sup>25</sup>. The latter calls on the Commission to support better use by the Member States of the EU Physical Activity Guidelines and calls for strategies for combating risk factors, such as the lack of physical activity.

New provisions for developing quality statistics on physical activity were included in the European statistical programme 2013-2017.<sup>26</sup> The Commission launched a Eurobarometer survey on sport and physical activity, results of which should become available in early 2014.

## **2.9. Action 9: Recommend ways to promote data collection to measure the economic benefits of the sport sector in line with the Vilnius Definition and evaluate results**

EU level work as of 2006 to develop a common European approach for measuring the economic impact of sport had led to an agreement on the Vilnius Definition of Sport, as a basis for the collection and production of data at national level and serving as a harmonised framework for creating sport satellite accounts (SSAs). SSAs provide macro-economic statistics about the sport economy. Further progress could be achieved to improve the evidence-base on the economic importance of the sector and its potential to contribute to wider policy goals, such as the Europe 2020 strategy. Encouraged by the 2011 Communication on sport, the Work Plan, the 2012 Council conclusions on strengthening the evidence-base for sport policy making<sup>27</sup> and following intense cooperation within the Expert Group on Sport Statistics (XG STAT), six Member States (AT, CY, DE, NL, PL, UK) and CH have produced national SSAs. Other Member States have also joined the process. The Group's deliverables, such as the manuals for the set up of SSAs, were instrumental in this context. A study on the contribution of sport to economic growth and employment in the EU was carried out in 2011/2012<sup>28</sup>. It shows that 1.76% of EU-wide Gross Value Added and 2.12% of employment are sport-related<sup>29</sup>. The Council in its 2013 conclusions on youth unemployment<sup>30</sup> underlined that growth in sport is employment-intensive and that sport therefore has the potential to contribute to counteracting unemployment. The XG STAT also

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<sup>23</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/documents/hepa\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/documents/hepa_en.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st17/st17468.en12.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:396:0008:0011:EN:PDF>

<sup>26</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0928:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>27</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:393:0020:0021:EN:PDF>

<sup>28</sup> Final report, November 2012: <http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/documents/f-studies/study-contribution-sports-economic-growth-final-rpt.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Figures are based on the "Broad Definition", i.e. direct effects only, no multiplier effects from suppliers of intermediate goods. Aggregate figures as well as structures differ substantially between Member States.

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/139733.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/139733.pdf)

presented proposals for future priorities, inter alia based on the 2013 study on a possible future sport monitoring function in the EU<sup>31</sup>.

## **2.10. Action 10: Recommend ways to strengthen solidarity mechanisms within sport**

Based on the EU study on the funding of grassroots sport in Europe<sup>32</sup>, the Expert Group on Sustainable Financing of Sport (XG FIN) looked into the main public and private funding streams that affect solidarity mechanisms in sport and identified the opportunities the sport movement has to raise funds and utilise public and private investment, as well as the barriers which prevent it from doing so. The Group recommended in particular a) the need for progress regarding guidance on the application of EU State Aid law to sport, b) the importance of guidance on the VAT regime applicable to the non-profit sport sector, c) the worth of using the EU structural funds to support sport, and d) considering the long-term sustainability of sport's finances, the need to implement reform measures to ensure the protection of sports' commercial property rights and to encourage a return to grassroots sports. The Commission has launched a study to analyse sports organisers' rights in the EU.<sup>33</sup> The exchange of views on the Group's recommendations was further deepened during the Irish Presidency.

Regarding State Aid, the Commission set out a comprehensive reform programme on State aid modernisation (SAM) which prompted the revision of a number of interrelated instruments. Following this, in June 2013, the Council of Ministers formally adopted two revised regulations on state aid exemptions (Enabling Regulation) and procedures (Procedural Regulation). The enabling regulation introduces new categories of aid, now also including sport, that the Commission may decide to exempt from the obligation of prior notification ("block exemptions").<sup>34</sup> The Commission will now be able to adopt regulations defining criteria under which aid in these categories can be exempted from notification.

## **3. WORKING METHODS AND STRUCTURES**

In addition to existing EU cooperation structures for sport, the Work Plan introduced working methods, in particular six Expert Groups (XGs), and called for a close and structured cooperation with the sport sector. The Commission considers that the Work Plan helped to strengthen cooperation on sport. This is further confirmed by consultation outcomes: almost all Member States expressed general support for the structures introduced by the Work Plan and agreed that it had improved political coordination on sport at EU level as well as cooperation between the EU and the sport movement. Member States also positively noted the support from the Commission, the oral and written reporting arrangements and the involvement of observers. Views expressed by sport stakeholders overall confirmed this positive assessment. However, the Commission also shares the views of Member States and stakeholders that have identified limitations to these working structures.

### **3.1. The work of the Expert Groups**

#### *3.1.1. General assessment*

Generally, the system of XGs appointed by Member States and reporting back to the Council, yet supported by the Commission, has worked well: XGs have produced results in line with their respective mandates, leading to policy outputs that informed Council documents, providing input to the policy debate on sport at EU level or influencing policy development

<sup>31</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/documents/f-studies/final-rpt-may2013-study-monitoring-function.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/top\\_layer/services/sport/study\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/top_layer/services/sport/study_en.htm)

<sup>33</sup> Contract notice in the OJ of the European Union on 06 July 2012 (2012/S 128-211223)

<sup>34</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:204:0011:0014:EN:PDF>

and implementation in the Member States. This was in particular due to a focus on a few priorities and a mandate for the XGs that defined the actions, outputs and a timeline for delivery. The Commission believes that a similar system could be used to great effect under a future Work Plan, taking into account the specific issues hereafter.

### *3.1.2. Specific issues*

Assuring a high and coherent level of participation in the work of six XGs on sport at EU level has been a challenge. Member States' sport departments could not appoint experts for all groups; not all experts could attend all of the meetings and not all experts were appointed public officials, some coming from the non-governmental sector. While these latter representatives were supposed to reflect their governments' views, it appeared that they did not always have a clear mandate to do so. The composition of groups was therefore not homogeneous, but showed variety in the level of representativeness and the level of expertise. Despite the novelty in the Groups' Work Schedules to introduce lead experts for specific deliverables, concrete work outcomes could often only be achieved by setting up additional "Groups of experts" and through input from Commission staff beyond its initial support role foreseen by the Work Plan. A new Work Plan could introduce a system that would allow Member States to devote scarce resources to the most relevant issues.

Priority actions described in the Work Plan Annex provided a political mandate for the XGs, but in some cases were not formulated in a sufficiently clear manner. Several Member States found that there should be more time in meetings for topical issues and for exchanging information and best practices. Some proposed to strengthen cooperation and exchange between the Groups and to better target outcomes at specific actors.

Deliverables of XGs, as presented to the Working Party on Sport, in many cases informed the political discussion on sport at EU level. Some of the outcomes originating from the Groups, e.g. guidelines or recommendations, would need to be implemented first, before their value for national policies can be properly assessed.

The fact that sport stakeholders could participate in the work of XGs as observers has been welcomed on all sides. However, Member States also felt that the number of observers in some of the Groups was too high leaving not enough room for debate between the Group members. While the interaction with 'other participants' should continue, a new Work Plan would benefit from clarifying the role of sport stakeholders, in the context of structures predominantly designed for Member State representatives.

## **3.2. Structured dialogue with the sport sector**

### *3.2.1. General assessment*

The structured dialogue with sport stakeholders was further strengthened in the context of the Work Plan by introducing the practice whereby sport representatives have exchanges with Member States in XGs and, albeit to a much lesser extent, through high-level dialogue meetings in the margins of the Council. The established Commission-led structured dialogue for sport has been maintained with continued success, with the annual Sport Forum as the main EU platform for exchange with sport stakeholders. In addition, an annual high-level dialogue between the Commission and the International Olympic Committee was introduced in 2013 as a means to deepen bilateral cooperation.<sup>35</sup> In the Commission's view, progress could therefore be achieved in the EU dialogue with the sport sector, but there is room for further strengthening it in the future by addressing the specific issues listed hereafter.

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<sup>35</sup> The Council's and the Commission's approaches to structured dialogue were laid down in policy documents: OJ C 322/1 of 7.11.2010; COM(2007) 391 final; COM(2011) 12 final. The Commission also has established rules regarding participation in the Sport Forum.

### 3.2.2. *Specific issues*

With the EU's emerging sport policy role, the number of sport actors wanting to have their say in EU level work has grown substantially over the past years. EU institutions are faced with the challenge of leading an inclusive structured dialogue on sport with relevant stakeholders, while ensuring continued effectiveness. Despite its great value, only a few Member States established a regular dialogue on EU sport issues with national sport stakeholders.

The Commission shares the views expressed in consultations that the structured dialogue lunch organised in the margins of the EYCS Council could be further improved, as it is considered that it has not reached the objectives.

The views of the sport sector must continue to play an important role when developing and implementing EU policies and actions with relevance for sport. A new Work Plan could establish improved dialogue structures providing for such possibilities.

## 4. SOME LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

### 4.1. Priorities for future work

Many of the competences in the area of sport lie with the Member States. It is thus important that priorities for a new EU Work Plan focus on actions delivering unambiguous value-added at EU level. The Council will assess its priorities for a new Work Plan in view of such actions. In the Commission's view, future priorities should therefore a) be in line with and contribute to the overarching priorities of the EU economic and social policy agenda, b) build on the achievements made under the current Work Plan, in particular the implementation of work outcomes, c) cover other relevant priority fields for cooperation (as listed in the 2011 Communication on sport or topical issues) and d) reflect the need for mainstreaming sport into other policies. With this in mind, a future Work Plan could cover the following themes<sup>36</sup>:

#### 1) Sport and society, including health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA):

- Social inclusion and sport: Future cooperation on sport should give attention to issues of social inclusion, in particular to the follow up on work on gender equality initiated in 2013. Expert work could deepen knowledge on the questions of participation, coaching, leadership, harassment as well as stereotypes and feed the exchange of good practices and ideas aimed at promoting gender equality in sport.
- HEPA: The implementation of the 2013 Council Recommendation in close cooperation with the Member States at EU level and the WHO, as well as coordination with ongoing processes, will be a priority. Areas that require political attention also include physical activity in the education environment and cooperation with the health care sector. Expert level work should focus on related HEPA issues, such as sedentary behavior, injury prevention as well as specific at-risk groups.
- Education and training in sport: Work should continue, e.g. in the form of peer meetings, on implementation of the Dual Career Guidelines and the inclusion of sport qualifications in NQFs. The issue of international sport federations' qualifications and the relation to NQFs and EQF should also be addressed at EU level. An increased focus should be put on the recognition of non-formal learning

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<sup>36</sup> The fact that certain topics are not elaborated upon in this Communication does not imply that they are not important for the Commission, but that existing policy documents remain a sufficient basis to address them.

provided by sport and the employability of young people through sport, including young talented athletes' educational part of their dual careers.

## 2) Economic dimension of sport:

- Evidence-base for sport: Work should continue at expert level to gather further information and data on sport and physical activity, building on existing methodologies. Attention should be given to strengthening evidence on the economic side, e.g. sport's role in increasing employability and health care savings.
- Sustainability of sport: Further action at Council level could help ensure that the sector's interests are mainstreamed into EU policies that impact on the financing of sport structures and activities. Expert work could further clarify the impact of the developing EU legal framework (e.g. in the field of state aid) on the financing of sport and may lead to specific guidance; dialogue with sport organisations should continue to strengthen further solidarity mechanisms within sport; expert work should explore the economic, social and environmental sustainability of mega sport events.

## 3) Integrity of sport:

- Anti-doping: Work should continue to focus on compliance with EU law and the protection of athletes' rights. As part of the implementation of the WADC 2015 by Member States, the EU should offer its assistance to WADA, the Council of Europe and Member States in developing appropriate non-binding guidance. Work on doping prevention should be further developed based on the 2012 Council conclusions. Issues identified in Commission documents, e.g. illegal trade and possible criminal law initiatives, use of social dialogue, may be taken up again.
- Fight against match-fixing: Work will continue, notably to ensure the implementation of the above mentioned Recommendation on best practices in the prevention and combating of betting-related match-fixing and of the future Council of Europe's Convention against the manipulation of sports competitions.
- Protection of the physical and moral integrity of young athletes: Ways should be explored to protect young athletes and to strengthen ethical behaviour in particular regarding sexual harassment.

The Sport Chapter in Erasmus+ will provide financial support for grassroots sport activities and includes a range of instruments to support cooperation and action in most of these areas.

### 4.2. Working methods and structures

To build on the positive experience of the first Work Plan and, at the same time, address the challenges identified above, the Commission sees value in an adapted form of working methods that would allow relevant actors to cooperate effectively and to cover the above priorities in the context of a new Work Plan. Based on its own observations and in response to views expressed in the consultations, the Commission concludes that the following improvements could usefully be introduced and replace the current working arrangements:

- Instead of the current six Expert Groups, three 'Sport Strategy Groups' (SSG), each composed of Member State and Commission representatives, should be established to cover the main broad priorities for EU cooperation in sport, i.e. 'Sport and society, including HEPA', 'Economic dimension of sport' and 'Integrity of sport'. SSGs would steer developments (i.e. implementation of results achieved under the current Work Plan) and exchange views on progress made in implementing the new Work

Plan. They would also be the fora to address mainstreaming of sport, to discuss topical issues and to exchange best practices, including results from the implementation of Erasmus+. SSGs would prepare submissions to the Council structures, notably on issues that require political support or follow up. The Commission would provide support to the SSGs and participate in the Groups' work to give guidance and to ensure continued involvement. SSGs should have a clearly defined mandate based on deliverables requested by the Council with specific delivery target dates.

- For special tasks of a technical nature work should be organised at expert level. “Groups of experts” (GoE), placed under the aegis of SSGs, should be established to continue work initiated under the current Work Plan and to carry out new tasks requiring special expertise.
- To associate sport stakeholders closely to the implementation of the new Work Plan, dialogue platforms, corresponding with the substance of the three SSGs, led by the Commission and the SSG chairmen, should be set up. Selected representatives from these platforms would be invited to SSGs meeting to present stakeholders’ opinion.
- The current structured dialogue lunch in the margins of the Council should be replaced by one of the following options for meetings convened by the Presidency and involving leading representatives of the EU public authorities and the sport movement<sup>37</sup>:
  - Two high-level meetings per year, at the start of each Presidency term, to address the priorities for the semester;
  - Two high-level meetings per year, one focusing on topical issues with relevance for professional sport, one on topical issues with relevance for grassroots sport;
  - An annual high-level meeting, preceding the Council or as part of an informal meeting of EU Sport Ministers.

Such a working structure would have the advantage a) to keep the number of Groups and meetings manageable, taking into account scarce resources in the Members States, while responding to policy needs, b) to follow up on results from the current Work Plan, while providing the possibility to address new priorities, c) to have a homogeneous composition of groups and to distinguish policy from expert level work and d) to strengthen the structured dialogue with sport stakeholders.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The European Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee are invited to take note of this report.

The Presidency is invited to take this report as a basis for the preparation of the next EU Work Plan for Sport during the first half of 2014.

As part of the next EU Work Plan for Sport, the Council is invited to consider the priorities for future work and the introduction of revised work arrangements identified in this report.

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<sup>37</sup> In line with the Council Resolution of 18 November 2010 on the EU structured dialogue on sport (see FN 35).