

## EU WORK PLAN FOR SPORT

### Recommendations for the future EU Work Plan for Sport beyond 2020

EOC EU Office – 12 June 2020

*General recommendations for the future Work Plan:*

1. Tackle the real challenges of sport
2. Involve and engage the Olympic sport movement
3. Mainstream sport in other policy areas

## INTRODUCTION

The EOC EU Office has been actively involved in the discussions and implementation of all EU Work Plans for Sport since the creation of this instrument in 2011. It has participated in all Expert Groups that have been established under the respective Work Plans and contributed, on behalf of the Olympic sport movement, to the structured dialogue. Based on this experience, the EOC EU Office and its partners consider that the new EU Work Plan for Sport needs to integrate better than its predecessors the following guiding objectives outlined in the Work Plan 2017-2020:

*“to ensure, through cross-sectoral cooperation, the awareness of other EU policy domains of the contribution that sport can make in meeting the policy challenges facing the EU; to promote a cooperative and concerted approach among Member States and the Commission, and where appropriate with the sport movement and other relevant stakeholders, to deliver added value in the field of sport at EU level over the longer term; to address transnational challenges using a coordinated EU approach; and to take into account the specific nature of sport.”*

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Tackle the real challenges of sport

The **European Institutions and relevant sport stakeholders should together identify and focus on policy fields in which the EU can bring a real added value.** This assessment should take into account both the EU competencies in the field of sport and in other policies, and the autonomy of sport. Furthermore, since sport in Europe is organised on a pan-European level, EU sport policy should integrate the challenges and

opportunities of the sport sector from a continental perspective and should better involve, the EU's Eastern and South-Eastern partners. With this common approach, the EU Work Plan **would better address the real needs** and challenges of the sport movement, its deliverables would better contribute to the development of sport in Europe, and the involved sport organisations would be more eager to implement the outcomes.

## 2. Involve and engage the Olympic sport movement<sup>1</sup>

As described above, for the successful implementation of the future Work Plan, a strong cooperation between the EU Institutions and the Olympic sport movement is needed. The Olympic sport movement should be involved in all phases of the various processes – from identifying topics to producing and disseminating outputs. In addition, the existing documents and activities of the Olympic sport movement (for each topic in question) should be fully taken into account, not only to avoid duplication, but to discuss in detail how the EU could support and complement these existing activities.

The Olympic sport movement should be also fully involved in discussions at national level, where it is the task of each Member State to engage sport organisations in all relevant EU sport policy and funding-related matters. This could be done by further involving representatives of the Olympic sport movement in Expert Group meetings, as some Member States already do, or by establishing structures such as the EU structured dialogue at national level (see the chapter below).

## 3. Mainstream sport in other policy areas

The importance of mainstreaming has been reiterated in the guiding objectives of the Work Plan 2017-2020: *“Ensure, through cross-sectoral cooperation, the awareness of other EU policy domains of the contribution that sport can make in meeting the policy challenges facing the EU.”* However, even after 13 years since the publication of the White Paper on Sport, mainstreaming remains one of the biggest challenges.

The new working structures should facilitate and monitor the implementation of mainstreaming of sport in relevant EU policy areas and funding programmes (e.g. EU competition policy or cohesion policy). This would imply a full involvement in EU sport policy, of Member States and Commission representatives who are in charge of other policy fields relevant for sport, e.g. cohesion, health and competition policy or social inclusion. Otherwise, a truly comprehensive and holistic approach to sport policy will remain out of reach. Furthermore, the new structure should allow the involvement of a higher number of external experts.

A positive example of the mainstreaming of sport is the Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle. Such cross-sectorial initiatives would be very much needed in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to all actors of the organised sport movement including organisations, which endorse this position paper. See the complete list of logos on page 12.

## WORKING METHODS

### 1. Coherence between different working methods

The EOC EU Office and its partners would like to underline that a better coherence between different working methods is crucial for the quality, usefulness and successful implementation of the various deliverables. By this, we mean that topics should be developed in a coordinated way by using different working methods, e.g. studies, deliverables of the Expert Groups and Presidency priorities. This coordination between the Work Plan, Presidency priorities and other activities and methods, e.g. initiatives by the Commission, is key. The EOC EU Office was pleased that this coordination improved during the implementation of the Work Plan 2017-2020, and wishes to see it being fully embedded in the working methods in the near future. In addition to coherence, it is also important that the Work Plan is flexible, so that new priorities and arising topics can make it on the agenda.

### 2. Stronger link between the Work Plan and the Erasmus+ Programme – common projects

As a new working method, the EOC EU Office and its partners propose a new instrument called **“common projects”**, which would be financed by an **earmarked budget of the Erasmus+ Sport programme**, and which would contribute to the implementation of certain policy conclusions or recommendations. This would mean that for a certain topic, relevant stakeholders (e.g. interested Member States, Commission, Olympic sport movement, other experts on the given topic), would get together to **build an action plan to implement the conclusions or recommendations**. The topics of the common projects could be also linked to Presidency priorities or to other important topics outside the “normal” Erasmus+ Sport priorities. This new approach would require the creation of networks of credible and representative partners, who are best placed to successfully implement the topic in question (i.e. the Olympic sport movement working together with public authorities). It would guarantee that the recommendations and conclusions are really implemented, and it would also strengthen the link between the Erasmus+ Sport programme and the Work Plan of Sport Ministers.

### 3. Expert Groups

During the implementation of the Work Plan 2017-2020, only two Expert Groups (XG) have been created. Even though the Expert Group on Integrity covered important topics, its tasks and deliverables were not clearly defined. Some of the XG meetings have also been organised in not easily reachable destinations and their agenda was rather limited.

Based on this and previous experience, we would like to stress that Expert Groups should only be established when there is a clear task for them to be delivered, else there is a risk that they become “travelling clubs” without any mission. Otherwise, other methods, like peer learning activities or cluster

meetings, would be more suitable. It is important to find a good balance for the tasks and goals of the XGs. During the implementation of the Work Plan 2014-2017, some XGs had clearly too many tasks to be delivered, which led to the situation that the quality of the deliverables was sometimes very low. As stated above the objectives for each task or deliverable of an Expert Group should be clearly defined together with the Olympic sport movement.

The composition of the Expert Groups is also still problematic. The number of observers is too high to make the XG work efficient and effective. **Only those organisations whose representativeness, remit and expertise are relevant for the topic in question should be accepted as observers.** We would recommend to conduct a thorough analysis of the activities, role, knowledge and possible contribution of the potential observers to guarantee that only organisations with a real stake and those who can bring a clear added value to the given topic are invited.

Another challenge is related to the lack of real expertise. The topics that are discussed in the Expert Groups are sometimes very technical and it does not make sense that people who do not understand the given topic take part in the technical discussion. To overcome this challenge, the EOC EU Office and its partners would **strongly recommend that Member States include experts from the national Olympic sport movement or other relevant institutions in their delegations**, as some MS already do. It is also important to understand that the nature of the topics vary, as some are more political than others. For this, we would recommend to form **smaller groups with technical expertise, e.g. “working groups”**, which would deal with the drafting of the documents. The drafts could be then discussed in, and validated by the Expert Group, before being presented to the Council Working Party. This division should improve both the quality of the initiatives and the political link between the XG outcomes and the work of the Council Working Party on Sport.

#### 4. Group of Interested Member States and peer learning activities

The Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020 proposed two new working methods: “Group of interested Member States” and “Peer learning activities”. **The EOC EU Office and its partners see a clear potential in these working methods and would like to see them further developed during the implementation of the new Work Plan.** To tap fully into the potential of these activities, it is important that the **Olympic sport movement be involved**. This would guarantee that the outcomes of these methods have the best possible impact.

#### 5. Structured dialogue

Since the early beginning of the existence of the Work Plans, structured dialogue has been challenging, especially regarding Council structures, such as the “Structured dialogue lunch”, which has usually been organised back-to-back with the Sport Ministers’ Council. Even though the rationale behind the structured dialogue is very good, the added value of its current form remains low. To improve this situation, the EOC EU Office and its partners would propose the following:

- Prior to its Presidency **each MS should organise a consultation event with the main organised sport stakeholders to discuss** its main priorities and activities.
- **Relevant Olympic sport movement stakeholders should be regularly invited to the Council Working Party on Sport meetings to contribute to the development of the conclusions or recommendations.** This would improve the implementation of these documents.
- Structured dialogue lunch itself should be made more interactive to enable a proper dialogue between the MS and the Olympic sport movement.

In addition, the EOC EU Office and its partners would propose as a new method – **EU Sport Summit** - to be established. This **high-level** EU Sport Summit would bring together Sport Ministers of the Trio Presidency, Commissioners for Sport and other relevant policy fields, and a selected group of top-level leaders of the Olympic sport movement. The EU Sport Summit should take place at least once during each Trio Presidency and should deal with all strategic questions related to EU sport policy and beyond.

Furthermore, it is important that **Member States also establish a structured dialogue at national level**, if they have not done so yet. This could mean that the Ministries would organise a consultation with the Olympic sport movement prior to or at the beginning of each Presidency. In addition, as mentioned above, the ministries should include representatives and experts from the organised sport to the Expert Group meetings.

## 6. Other working methods

The EOC EU Office and its partners consider **cluster meetings**, which bring together all Erasmus+ projects on a certain topic, **as a very good tool to exchange best practices and to contribute to the policy developments of the given topic**. Cluster meetings also ensure that project outcomes do not have to be discussed in Expert Group meetings, and that the Expert Groups can focus more on policy discussions.

In addition, the EOC EU Office and its partners acknowledge that during the implementation of the Work Plan 2017-2020, Olympic sport movement representatives have been systematically involved in the **Sport Directors meetings**. We consider this development very positive and we would like to see it also in the activities under the new Work Plan.

## TOPICS

The list of topics, which are to be addressed in the new Work Plan, should be created with the following questions in mind:

- What are the concrete challenges that the sport actors are facing? What role can the EU play to contribute to solving these challenges?
- Which other policy fields, having an impact on sport, are relevant to be covered by the Work Plan?

Taking into account the above-mentioned questions and the current challenges, the EOC EU Office and its partners propose the following list of key topics to be included in the new Work Plan. New topics, which have not been priorities in the previous Work Plans, are described in a comprehensive manner. Other topics, which have been already discussed at the EU level and where follow-up is needed, are listed with concrete follow-up proposals.

## New topics

### 1. European Sport Model

- **Challenge:** Although the main EU Institutions have recognised the importance and the added value of the European Sport Model (ESM) on different occasions, the ESM is currently challenged by the appearance of an increasing number of private competitors that regard sport only as a business model. They question the key elements of the model by: (1) organising closed competitions, which are not based on sporting merits/results but on financial power of the participants; (2) not participating to the solidarity mechanism (e.g. financial support to the development of young athletes, training of referees, officials); (3) questioning the role and competences of sport federations to regulate their respective sport. This situation endangers the whole European Sport Model. If the sporting movement is no longer able to fulfil its mission, public authorities would be even more asked to financially compensate the ongoing activities of millions of volunteers, the development of grassroots sport, the role of sport for social inclusion, the affordable access to sport facilities, just to name a few, and to carry out public policies in those different areas.
- **Aim:** Recognition of the European Sport model as values-based system (defined by a pyramidal structure and solidarity mechanism) by finding an agreement between the Olympic sport movement and the EU institutions on the definition of the specificity of sport.
- **Method:**
  - Discussion at the EU Sport Summit between the Olympic sport movement, EU institutions, and Member States.
  - Follow-up of the 2019 specificity seminar to define the key characteristics of the European Sport Model by a new working group, which would include representatives of the European Commission, Member States and Olympic sport movement.

### 2. Overcoming the crisis caused by Covid-19

- **Challenge:** Sport in Europe is heavily affected by the Covid-19 crisis. It is the entire world of sport that is facing major challenges: from small grassroots clubs to professional teams, from athletes and coaches to competition officials, fans and sponsors. Cancellation of events, competitions, and trainings, loss of membership fees and sponsors have caused significant financial problems for the sport sector. Amongst those hardest hit are sport clubs and federations, which, due to their status of non-for-profit organisation, are not allowed to keep substantial reserves. Those clubs and

federations face liquidity shortages or even bankruptcy due to the lack of revenue, and have been forced to lay off their employees. This crisis will have a long-lasting impact on the sport movement and is seriously threatening even its existence. However, at the same time the crisis has shown the importance of physical activity for people's physical and mental health in a crisis situation. Many Europeans, who do not exercise regularly, have started to be physically active during this period. This momentum should be used to ensure that the physical activity in sport clubs continues in sport clubs also after the crisis.

- **Aim:** In these exceptional circumstances a **clear action plan with quick and adequate support mechanisms** is urgently needed and should be set up to mitigate the adverse impact of the current Covid-19 crisis on the sport sector. **Member States and the European Commission should ensure that the sport sector is eligible in all EU funds targeting the *protection of jobs, employees and self-employed*** to overcome the impact of the crisis. In this regard, it is crucial that sport has access to the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII and REACT- EU), future Structural Funds 2021-2027, as well as to the future measures to be set up, such as the Next Generation EU, and other initiatives at national and European level.
- **Method:**
  - Establish an ad-hoc working group with, as members, representatives of the Member States, European Commission and Olympic sport movement to coordinate, exchange information and knowledge to overcome the crisis, as well as to ensure that financial support is available for the sport sector to mitigate the impact of the crisis.
  - Study on the (short- and long- term) impact of the crisis on sport taking into account the many various aspects.
  - Follow-up and assessment of the efficiency of the Tartu Call for a Healthy lifestyle to acknowledge and promote the role of sport and physical activity in building people's and societies' resilience and immunity. This should be followed-up by coordinated activities at MS level and in consistency with the WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity adopted in 2018. Furthermore, together with the Olympic sport movement and sport clubs, seek ways of keeping physically active those Europeans who started to exercise during the crisis.

### 3. Environmental sustainability

- **Challenge:** Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the whole world. The EU has adopted the European Green Deal as a growth strategy and a roadmap to overcome these challenges. Sport is not immune to climate change, and itself can have an important impact on the environment. Therefore, the sport movement should be recognised as an actor in EU's (environmental) sustainability policies, and this not only as subject of EU environmental legislation and policies - which, true, are expected to have an increasing impact on sport - but as an important stakeholder.
- **Aim:** EU should give concrete support (exchange of best practices, funding etc.) to the Olympic sport movement at all levels to improve sustainability, reduce emissions, decrease the impact



of climate change etc. and thus help building a sustainable future for sport. Synergies between the existing activities of the sport movement, and the initiatives of the EU institutions should be found, and cooperation established. Cross-sectoral cooperation and mainstreaming will be crucial in this regard.

- **Method:**

- Exchanges between the Olympic sport movement and EU institutions through an Erasmus+ funded “common project” on the practical implementation of the Green Deal related to sport (defining the role of sport in sustainability policies of the EU etc.).
- Capacity building exercises, such are those organised by [SHARE initiative](#), or peer learning activities including both the Member States and the Olympic sport movement.
- Conferences/seminars on the particular issues related to the Green Deal and their impact on sport.
- Study on the impact of climate change on sport and the organisation of major sport events in the EU, including mapping and assessment of measures already implemented by MS and sport organisations.
- Ensure that activities of the sport movement are eligible for funding at national level under the future Structural Funds 2021-2027 (e.g. small infrastructures or sustainable, “green” activities).
- Review the production-side of the activities of the Commission, Presidencies and Member States to make sure that they are organised in a more sustainable way, e.g. by reducing unnecessary travelling.

#### 4. Sport infrastructure

- **Challenge:** Sport facilities and infrastructure are crucial for the practice of sport and physical activity at all levels. There is evidence that the better and more available the facilities are, the more people exercise. However, in many EU countries there are areas where there is either not enough facilities or they are in bad shape. Furthermore, there is no EU-wide information on the exact situation regarding sport facilities.
- **Aim:** To map the situation of sport infrastructure in the EU as well as to draft recommendations for minimum requirements regarding sport facilities in the EU. The focus should be on the financing of small infrastructure at local and regional level in order to increase their accessibility as well as environmental sustainability and energy efficiency.
- **Methods:**
  - A mapping study on the situation regarding sport infrastructure in Europe.
  - Establish an Expert Group to define recommendations on the minimum requirements as well as to exchange best practices.
  - Ensure that at least small-scale sport infrastructure is eligible for funding at national level in the implementation of the future Structural Funds 2021-2027 and produce guidelines on the possibilities to use the Regional Development Funds for sport infrastructure.



## 5. Olympic values and ideals as part of the European Way of life

- **Challenge:** As illustrated during the Covid-19 crisis, sport has the potential to soften the negative effects of the crisis on societies and lives of individuals through mechanisms that can contribute to people's health, socialisation, education and wellbeing. This situation gives even more prominent role to the values of solidarity, inclusion, openness, peace or human dignity shared by the EU and the Olympic sport movement. Values-based sport organisations are an integral part of the European Way of Life promoted by the von der Leyen Commission and their full potential of bringing European communities together should be harnessed.
- **Aim:** To have Olympic values fully recognised as part of European cultural heritage, and to encourage their dissemination through cross-sectoral initiatives and projects promoting their educational and inclusive aspects.
- **Methods:**
  - Potential priority topic for one of the upcoming Presidencies with Council conclusion to be adopted.
  - Recognition of the Olympic values as part of the cultural heritage of Europe.
  - Support to education exchanges and projects working with, and promoting, Olympic and European values.

### Topics that have been already discussed but need a follow-up

We believe that the traditional division of topics into three pillars (Integrity, Economic dimension of sport and Sport and society) is still relevant. While current activities on topics such as good governance, manipulation of sport competitions, HEPA, volunteering in sport and social inclusion in and through sport should be pursued, the following topics would require more specific follow-up activities:

#### 1. Integrity

- **Safe sport and the fight against harassment, abuse and gender-based violence**
  - Study on the prevalence of harassment, abuse and gender-based violence in sport and on the situations in different countries with a consistent methodology. Mapping as well as best practises of sport organisations and MS to fight against this threat.
  - "Common projects" with the Olympic sport movement, experts and public authorities financed by Erasmus+ sport, as well as capacity building or peer learning activities at national level to support the sport movement and authorities to set up structures, educate contact points and raise awareness on the topic.
  - Cooperation with DG JUST to identify how sport can contribute to EU LGBTI+ Equality Strategy and list of actions, which will be adopted at the end of 2020.

- Cluster meeting for Erasmus+ and the DG JUST financed projects on the topic.
- **Gender equality**
  - Review the progress and update the EU [“Gender Equality in Sport – Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014-2020”](#).
  - “Common projects” with organised sport movement, experts and public authorities financed by Erasmus+ sport, capacity building or peer learning activities at national level to develop and implement concrete action plans for the implementation of gender equality.
  - Groups of interested MS – exchange of best practices on the implementation.
  - Ensure the expansion and continuity of the data collection on equality in sport together with relevant stakeholders.

## 2. Economic dimension of sport

- **Improving information and evidence base**
  - Update of the [study on the funding of grassroots sports in the EU](#) (2011)
    - Aim should be to strengthen the funding base of sport clubs and grassroots sport in the long term, e.g. in the post Covid-19 era and mapping the good practises on the topic.
  - Update of the [Study on the contribution of sport to regional development through the structural funds](#) (2016) - Adding examples from the funding period 2014-2020
  - Satellite accounts
    - Implementation and systematic use of satellite accounts in all EU Member States.
  - Study on the economic and social impact of voluntary-based sport, describing e.g. the value of voluntary work and savings for public health budgets in Europe, and outlining a return of investment model

## 3. Sport and society

- **Grassroots sport and its societal role**
  - Study on the societal role of voluntary-based grassroots sport, including social inclusion, the civil society, democracy, fostering peace, fighting prejudice and preventing radicalisation.
  - **Cooperation with DG EMPL to acknowledge and promote the role sport can play in supporting skills development and employability including in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.**
  - **Peer learning or group of interested MS to discuss impacts of the discontinuing seasonal time changes directive on grassroots sport organisations and their activities.**

## Signatories of the EOC EU Office Position Paper on the EU Work Plan for Sport beyond 2020

