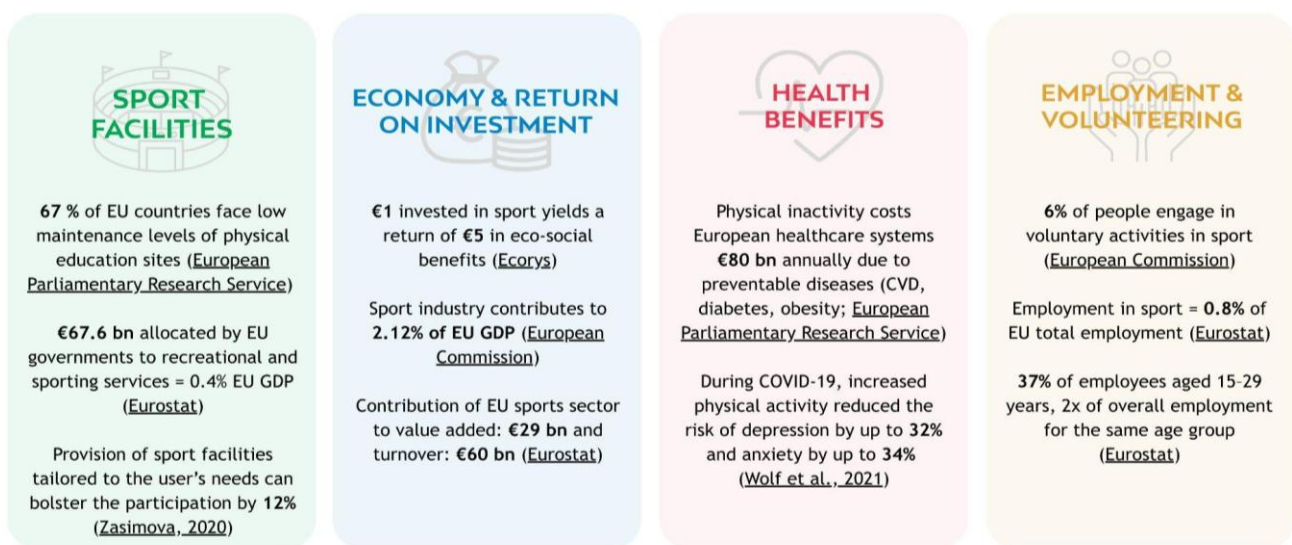


OLYMPIC MOVEMENT AND MAJOR SPORT FEDERATIONS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK 2028-2034

In light of the ongoing discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2028 - 2034 (MFF), the European Olympic Committees, the International Olympic Committee, 48 National Olympic Committees, and major International, European and National Federations are concerned to ensure that the needs and priorities of organised sport are appropriately represented in the next MFF.



Sport has demonstrated its capacity to enhance Europe's preparedness and resilience, as a driver of sport diplomacy, economic growth, the improvement of societal well-being and people's physical and mental health. More importantly, sport is an incomparable platform for the promotion of European values among citizens, and fosters social cohesion by uniting communities, promoting inclusion, which is key considering the ongoing geopolitical tensions.

EU funding is a key source of opportunities for sport organisations in Europe to finance impactful societal projects and contribute to Europe's preparedness and resilience. Yet, current trends suggest a potential diversion of funds away from sport into other areas, despite the value of sport to the EU's core priorities.

This document provides a series of recommendations from the European Olympic movement to better embed sport into the different programmes of the next MFF, as the signatories firmly believe that adequate funding must be allocated to the sport sector.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN MESSAGES

Mainstreaming sport across these programmes is essential to reflect its growing societal role and ensure its contribution to the EU's strategic objectives.

As an enabler for health, inclusion, youth engagement, regional development, sustainability and European values, sport must be systematically mainstreamed into EU policies and funding programmes to unlock its full potential for European society. Sport should be explicitly included in key EU funding mechanisms such as EU4Health, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Sport should also be explicitly prioritised in Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPAs).

PPPAs also require reform to better support grassroots and smaller sport organisations. Adopting a Lump Sum funding model would simplify administrative procedures and make funding more accessible. PPPAs, particularly in areas such as infrastructure development and crisis response.

In the area of regional and rural development, sport must be recognised as a legitimate catalyst for social and economic progress.

EU Regional Development and Cohesion Funds should provide clear guidance to managing authorities on how to support sport initiatives, while programmes like LEADER should be strengthened to fund sport infrastructure and promote its role in rural development, cohesion, and sustainability.

Enhanced opportunities via Erasmus+

The Erasmus+ Programme must also reflect the increasing demand and potential of sport. A minimum of 5% of the Erasmus+ 2028-2034 budget should be allocated to sport in order to enhance its contribution to EU priorities. Furthermore, building upon the Youth and Education strands of the programme will encourage deeper engagement of sport organisations in implementing EU policy at all levels.

To ensure fairer access to EU sport funding, a cap on the number of applications per organisation should be introduced, alongside mechanisms that guarantee sport-specific representation within consortia. The introduction of suspension mechanisms for recurrent offenders would enhance transparency and accountability in the use of EU funds. Simplifying access by consolidating EU funding portals into a single platform would ease the administrative burden, especially for smaller and less experienced organisations.

Additionally, the evaluation process for EU sport funding must shift focus from narrative strength to the quality and feasibility of implementation. It is also critical to ensure that assessors understand the unique needs of the sport sector. Regular training sessions and harmonised guidelines for National Agencies will be essential in providing consistent and knowledgeable support to sport stakeholders across all Member States.

Finally, regular and dedicated EU funding for Large-Scale Sport Events (LSSEs) is crucial to fully leverage their social, economic, and diplomatic benefits. These events provide a powerful platform to promote EU values, foster unity, and showcase sustainability.

In conclusion, the next MFF presents a critical opportunity to recognise sport as a cross-sectoral contributor to the European Union's priorities. Through targeted investment, policy mainstreaming, and streamlined administrative processes, the EU can empower the sport sector to deliver tangible, inclusive, and lasting benefits for citizens and communities across Europe.

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

Mainstreaming of Sport

Ensure sport is explicitly recognised within EU social, health, education, migration and digital policies. A more coherent and inclusive approach to the mainstreaming of sport within all Erasmus+ Programme strands appears essential. Additionally, securing the integration of sport into a broader range of EU relevant funding programmes such as the current EU4Health, the Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values Programme (CERV), European Solidarity Corps (ESC), Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds (AMIF), and Cohesion Funds (European Regional Development Funds - ERDF; European Social Fund Plus - ESF+, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development - EAFRD).

Strengthening the sport dimension in EU development policies. Financing sport is essential to achieving the EU's development policy goals, as it fosters social inclusion, economic growth, and health improvement. Sport serves as a powerful tool for promoting peace, gender equality, and human rights, aligning with the EU's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By investing in sport infrastructure and programmes, the EU can drive sustainable development, reduce poverty, and create inclusive societies, thus enhancing its global impact as the world's largest donor of development assistance.

Erasmus+ Programme

Increase the share for sport in the Erasmus+ Programme. The Erasmus+ Programme 2025 allocated €81 million to sport, an encouraging 28.5% increase from 2024. However, this funding boost is overshadowed by an even greater surge in demand. A record-breaking 2,390 applications were submitted for the 2025 calls, reflecting a 34% increase compared to the previous year. Despite this overwhelming interest, only around 330 projects are expected to receive funding, resulting in a success rate of just 14%. Moreover, as societal challenges evolve, the EU's objectives and priorities to which sport can contribute are expanding. At the same time, sport organisations are increasingly expected to play a broader role in addressing key societal, economic, and health-related issues. Therefore, allocating at least 5% of the Erasmus+ 2028-2034 budget to sports is essential to meet growing demand and maximise sport's contribution to Europe.

Building on existing actions from the Youth and Education strands of the Erasmus+ Programme

- **Introduce "Partnership Agreement".** This initiative should support European membership-based sport organisations in raising awareness of EU sport policies, fostering dialogue between sport organisations and policymakers, and promoting knowledge-sharing and cooperation among member organisations. Its implementation in sport is expected to contribute to the sustainability, and effectiveness of sport policies across Europe while also enhancing stakeholder engagement and strengthening capacity building for less experienced organisations.
- **Introduce the "Sport Participation Activity".** This action contributes to implementing small-scale projects at the local, regional and national levels. This is expected to facilitate the participation of regional and local sports clubs, as well as groups of individuals (e.g. athletes, coaches, and entourage). This action is already present under the youth strand of the Erasmus+ Programme (i.e. [Youth Participation Activity](#)).

Strengthen financing for large-scale sporting events (LSSE). LSSE offer wide-ranging benefits to hosting communities, participants and organisers while being a platform for promoting EU values, thereby strengthening diplomatic ties and unity. These events enhance the reputation of both the host country and the EU as global leaders in sport, aligning with EU priorities. Accordingly, LSSE can serve as powerful catalysts for community engagement, and connections between grassroots and elite sport. Moreover, LSSEs can contribute to social cohesion and stimulate broader economic and social

benefits. Economically, they stimulate local growth by boosting tourism, hospitality, and job creation, while attracting local investment and international visitors. Moreover, increased financial support could facilitate the integration of sustainable practices and improve security and accessibility measures. Therefore, strengthening the financing of LSSE by regularly opening a dedicated call should be understood as a comprehensive strategy that reinforces economic growth, upholds EU values, boosts international reputation, and enhances sustainability and safety.

Ensure more diverse representation and better access to sport organisations. Aligned with other strands of the Erasmus+ Programme, to ensure fair access and a balanced distribution of funding for a diverse range of sport stakeholders, including smaller and less experienced organisations, a limit on the number of applications submittable under each action of the Programme should also be introduced for sport. Specifically, a maximum number of applications should be set for each action within the Programme, with an overall cap of 10 applications per organisation per deadline, whether as applicants or partners. Moreover, the applicant should be required to be a sport organisation, and a quota of sport organisations within the consortium should be mandatory to enhance sectoral representation and ensure that funding reaches those with the greatest expertise and impact.

Review scoring system. Overall, the minimum scoring threshold for successful projects has risen significantly in recent years, raising concerns about what is expected. Besides, ensuring that the evaluators are sufficiently qualified to understand the specificities of the sport sector and its beneficiaries is crucial. This issue is exacerbated by the lack of clear instructions within the grey box, particularly regarding indicators, and is further compounded by the misalignment between awarding criteria and the Technical Form. In this regard, placing greater emphasis on project implementation rather than the narrative aspect would be highly beneficial.

Simplification of application, submission and reporting. The lengthy reporting requirements for KA1 impose significant administrative burdens, while the grant agreement preparation for KA2 could be streamlined by enabling automatic data transfer from the Technical Form. Similarly, the use of complex jargon leads to confusion and misunderstandings. A more user-friendly approach would not only reduce administrative strain but also allow the participation of less experienced and/or smaller organisations.

Suspension mechanism. A "yellow card" suspension mechanism should be introduced for organisations submitting identical applications within the same call and/or year. Besides, to further strengthen accountability, contracts and timesheets should be required, while the credibility and professionalism of organisations in previously funded projects should also be assessed.

Online Platforms. The coexistence of the [EU Funding and Tender Portal](#) and the [Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Portal](#) creates confusion and inconsistencies in the funding process. Establishing a single platform tailored to the specific nuances of the Erasmus+ Programme would improve accessibility, clarity, consistency, and efficiency.

National Agency: levelling the playing field. Currently, National Agencies (NAs) demonstrate varying levels of expertise in the field of sport, as well as differing capacities to guide sport stakeholders effectively. To address this imbalance, it is essential to establish bi-annual capacity-building activities aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of NAs. Additionally, the creation of stringent and harmonised guidelines for NAs is critical to standardise administrative requests and clarify the interpretation of sport-related actions. This will help ensure a more consistent and informed approach across Europe; therefore, fostering a shared understanding of sport as a transversal tool and ensuring minimum standards across NAs to enable the decentralisation of additional actions in the future.

Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPAs)

Introduction of a Lump Sum model. The complexity of the application, implementation, and financial mechanisms within PPAs presents a significant barrier to participation, particularly for smaller and less experienced sport organisations, such as grassroots clubs. To address this challenge, it would be highly advisable to introduce a Lump Sum model within PPA projects to streamline the process, making it easier for organisations with limited administrative capacity to participate effectively. By integrating a Lump Sum model, the PPAs could become more inclusive and effective, allowing a broader range of sport organisations to contribute to and benefit from EU funding.

Recognising Sport as a priority within PPAs. It is crucial to guarantee that sport is explicitly recognised as a priority sector within the PPAs and that support is given to the European Parliament's proposals for sport-related PPAs, leveraging the role of sport as a tool for addressing priorities and objectives not covered by other EU funding programmes. While existing EU funding programmes offer opportunities for sport, gaps persist in areas such as sports infrastructure and response to crises, among others. This would further enhance development of sport organisations at all levels and their contribution to the EU's strategic objectives.

EU Regional Development and Cohesion Funds

Recognising Sport in the regulations. Sport should be explicitly included in the scope of the future EU Regional Development and Cohesion Funds, with clear guidance for managing authorities at both the national and regional levels on the relevance of sport-related projects to achieving the programme goals. In this regard, [the Study on the Contribution of Sport to Regional Development through the Structural Funds \(2016\)](#) encourages *"Member State authorities and sport organisations to promote a greater awareness of the strengths of sport and physical activity as an instrument in economic and social development"* as it showcased that *"sport has a critical role in making Europe and its regions more attractive places in which to invest and work"*.

Strengthen the social inclusion dimension. The [2010 Council conclusions on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion](#) ask to focus *"on the use of sport to promote inclusion into society of disadvantaged groups so as to develop more cohesive communities"*. During the past decade, a lot of progress has been made concerning the promotion of sport for all, where sport-related projects can be key drivers to address socioeconomic disparities, promote gender equality, make sport governance more diverse and sport facilities more accessible for everyone and combat discrimination. From a cohesion perspective, sport can therefore have a meaningful impact concerning the objectives of social inclusion as well as the integration of vulnerable groups, while actively contributing to further reinforce the implementation of the [EU Action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027](#).

Reinforce the financing of sport infrastructure. While the expectations on sport clubs to expand their activities and welcome an increasing number of registrations in sport clubs are growing, sport clubs are often facing a lack of adequate infrastructure, adapted to today's practices and accessible for all. As showcased in the [study on the Contribution of Sport to Regional Development through the Structural Funds](#), ensuring adequate sport infrastructure across EU regions is crucial, as access to facilities can boost participation, promote social cohesion, support the inclusion of minorities and refugees, while also helping to combat crime and youth unemployment. Investments in sport infrastructure also have a powerful multiplier effect on the economy. The development and modernisation of sports facilities stimulate demand across sectors such as construction, tourism, and retail, significantly enhancing return on investment and creating employment opportunities, and in turn, strengthening local economies and enhancing their attractiveness. Energy-efficient sports infrastructure can play a key role in sustainable urban development strategies, reducing the energy bill for sport clubs, but also influencing responsible behaviour by clubs and their members. Therefore, strengthening funding for sport infrastructure in the new regulation is essential to guarantee

affordable access, particularly in deprived areas, enhancing participation, active lifestyles, and regional and urban attractiveness.

Reinforcing the sport dimension of the LEADER. Although LEADER accounts for only a small percentage of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), it has proven highly effective in promoting sustainable rural development across the EU, including for sport-related projects. The [evaluation support study on the impact of LEADER on balanced territorial development](#) highlighted that investments in “*shared community infrastructure*,” including sports facilities, were particularly beneficial for both communities and the environment (54.6%). However, sport clubs make up less than 20% of Local Action Groups, limiting their role in local development initiatives. Therefore, strengthening the sport dimension of the LEADER Programme would enhance its capacity to foster social inclusion, improve public health, and create economic opportunities in rural areas, ensuring that sport plays a more integral role in sustainable territorial development.

Recognising the value of sport for tourism. Sport plays a vital role in driving tourism, boosting local economies, and enhancing regional attractiveness through major events and active travel opportunities. Yet, while sport tourism generates significant economic benefits, it is essential to recognise sport's intrinsic value beyond tourism; therefore, adequate funding for sport itself is crucial to ensure access to quality infrastructure, grassroots participation, and the long-term development of athletes and communities. Without direct investment in sport, its potential to drive social inclusion, public health, and economic growth cannot be fully realised.

SIGNATORIES



Detailed list of signatories

- EOC - European Olympic Committees (48 National Olympic Committees of Europe)
- EOC EU Office - European Olympic Committees EU Office
- IOC - International Olympic Committee
- European Paralympic Committee
- ASOIF - Association of Summer Olympic Sports Federation
- CEV - Confédération Européenne de Volleyball
- European Aquatics
- European Athletics
- EEF - European Equestrian Federation
- EHF - European Handball Federation
- FIBA - Fédération Internationale de Basket-Ball
- IBU - International Biathlon Union
- IIHF - International Ice-Hockey Federation
- ISSF - International Shooting Sport Federation
- Rugby Europe
- ENGSO - The European Sports NGO
- DFB - German Football Federation
- Swedish Sports Confederation

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