

HOW THE MFF 2028-2034 CAN SUPPORT SPORT ORGANISATIONS' ESSENTIAL ROLE

COMPETITIVENESS FUND

The proposed Competitiveness Fund, which will integrate the current EU4Health Programme, provides an important opportunity to place greater emphasis on preventive health and to further value the role of sport and physical activity in supporting the European Union's health, resilience and competitiveness. Currently, only 5.5% [3] of health expenditure in the EU is dedicated to preventive health, highlighting the potential to strengthen investment in prevention. EU countries spent €62.8 billion on preventive health care in 2023 [4], whereas the economic burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) amounts to €530 billion [5] and the economic burden of cardiovascular diseases to €282 billion[6].

The future Fund should therefore place greater emphasis on preventive health and explicitly recognise the key role of sport and sport organisations in supporting population health, reducing healthcare expenditure and strengthening Europe's human capital, while acknowledging their central role in delivering health promotion and preventive actions.

Recognise sport as a strategic investment in prevention and competitiveness

Physical inactivity is estimated to cost European healthcare systems around €80 billion annually [7], while increased physical activity significantly reduces the risk of depression, anxiety and other chronic conditions [8]. In this regard, regular physical activity is one of the most effective tools for preventing NCDs, improving mental health and promoting healthy ageing. Therefore, by supporting healthier and more active populations, sport contributes directly to a more productive workforce, greater social resilience and enhanced European competitiveness. Explicit recognition of sport would also reinforce key EU health priorities, including the prevention of NCDs, mental health and the objectives of the European Commission's SAFE Hearts Plan.

THE EOC EU OFFICE THEREFORE CALLS FOR

- explicitly recognising sport and physical activity as strategic investment in preventive health measures within the Competitiveness Fund; accordingly, recognising organised sport as a key partner in delivering health promotion and preventive actions thereby ensuring that sport organisations can fully contribute to health-related funding calls;
- supporting sport organisations that promote sport, physical activity and active lifestyle across civil societies, including underrepresented and vulnerable groups; and
- encouraging cross-sectoral initiatives linking sport, health, education and social inclusion to maximise prevention outcomes.