

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

COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY (CAP) & EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EAFRD) – LEADER

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the LEADER approach, plays a central role in strengthening the social, economic and environmental resilience of rural communities. While LEADER represents a relatively small share of EAFRD expenditure, it has consistently demonstrated the added value of community-led investments, including in sport. The future CAP should therefore more explicitly recognise sport as a contributor to rural development, territorial cohesion and quality of life, especially because research [1] has shown that, among Local Action Group's (LAG) activities, improving shared community infrastructure, such as sport facilities, has one of the highest perceived environmental effects.

Recognise sport as a driver of resilient rural communities

Sport strengthens the vitality and attractiveness of rural areas and supports people's "right to stay" by promoting health, social inclusion, volunteering, youth engagement and active ageing. Investments in community sport infrastructure and local sport initiatives also contribute to stronger social capital, local partnerships and economic activity. Despite this demonstrated impact, sport organisations remain underrepresented within LAGs, limiting their contribution to local development strategies and LEADER projects.

THE EOC EU OFFICE THEREFORE CALLS FOR

- explicitly recognising local sport organisations and physical activity as contributors to rural development, territorial cohesion and community resilience within the future CAP and NRPP;
- ensuring investment in community sport infrastructure, active mobility and physical activity facilities is eligible under rural development programmes;
- strengthening the participation of sport organisations and community sport clubs in LAGs and other local partnership structures; and
- encouraging LEADER projects that use sport to contribute to social inclusion, volunteering, youth engagement, active lifestyle and ageing, social cohesion, regional sustainable development and territorial resilience.