

Sport is an investment, not a cost

EOC EU Office demands for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034

SPORT DELIVERS ON POLICY PRIORITIES

Sport is often perceived as a cost to public budgets. Yet investment in sport generates significant returns for individuals, communities and society. Across Europe, National Olympic Committees, federations, clubs and grassroots sports organisations promote healthier lifestyles, strengthen social inclusion, support education and skills development, foster volunteering and active citizenship, generate economic activity and reinforce community resilience.

The EOC EU Office's message "Sport is an investment, not a cost" reflects the need to move beyond a narrow understanding of expenditure on sport and recognise its long-term social and economic value, as a cross-sectoral enabler.



ECONOMY & RETURN ON INVESTMENT

€1 → €5

Every €1 invested in sport yields a return of €5 in eco-social benefits ([Ecorys](#)).

2.12%

of EU GDP is contributed by the sport industry ([European Commission](#)).



EMPLOYMENT, VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL COHESION

6%

of people engage in voluntary activities in sport ([European Commission](#)).

8.1%

increase of employment in sport between 2024 and 2025 ([Eurostat](#)).



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

€80bn

is the annual cost to European healthcare systems from physical inactivity - driving non communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and obesity ([European Parliamentary Research Service](#)).



SUSTAINABLE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10%

of global tourism expenditure is sports tourism ([UN Tourism](#)).

€67.6bn

spent by EU governments on recreational & sporting services, 0.4% of EU GDP ([Eurostat](#)).

Sport's contribution to EU and national policy priorities is evident, yet poorly recognised. In particular, sport supports:



PREPAREDNESS AND DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

by promoting civic engagement, democratic participation, European values.



EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

by developing transferable skills, supporting non-formal and informal learning and strengthening personal development.



YOUTH

by empowering young people through participation and youth work, developing skills for employment, active citizenship.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

by increasing physical activity, supporting mental health, preventing NCDs and helping reduce long-term healthcare costs.



EMPLOYMENT, VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL COHESION

by creating jobs, fostering volunteering and active citizenship, and strengthening local communities.



SUSTAINABLE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by supporting resilient communities and contributing to environmental, social and territorial objectives.



COMPETITIVENESS & ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

by supporting a healthier and productive population, developing skills and strengthening communities and orgs to contribute to Europe's performance.

The evidence is clear: sport is a powerful delivery mechanism for achieving the European Union's and national policy objectives. The recommendations set out in this paper are therefore based on a simple principle: **"Sport is an investment, not a cost"**, and support for sport should not be regarded merely as expenditure, but as a strategic investment in Europe's people and future.



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SPORT

About the EOC EU Office

The EOC EU Office represents the interests of the European Olympic Committees and its partner organisations towards the institutions of the European Union. It acts as the voice of the Olympic and organised sport movement in Brussels, promotes the contribution of sport to European policy objectives and supports sports organisations in accessing and implementing European Union programmes.

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

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) should therefore combine dedicated funding for sport with mainstreaming across EU policy and funding programmes. Sport should be clearly visible and eligible in key instruments, in particular Erasmus+, National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) and related sectoral regulations, AgoraEU and the Competitiveness Fund. This would enable the EU, Member States and local authorities to better harness sport's potential and allow sports organisations to translate European/national priorities in practical action.

By explicitly integrating sport across EU funding programmes and recognising sport organisations as key partners in translating European priorities into concrete action, **the next MFF can maximise social impact, strengthen regional development and deliver lasting benefits for citizens and communities across Europe.**

ERASMUS+

What we ask: Increase the Erasmus+ budget to at least €47.5 billion, allocate at least 5% to sport, preserve learning mobility, sport events, and volunteering opportunities, simplify access, and strengthen the dissemination of Erasmus+ Sport projects' results.

Why it matters: Erasmus+ is the flagship programme for sport. Greater investment will enable organised sport to contribute more effectively to health, education, inclusion, volunteering, sustainability and European cohesion.

NRPPs

What we ask: Explicitly recognise and mention sport as a cross-sectoral investment priority within National and Regional Partnership Plans.

Why it matters: Integrating sport into regional planning strengthens territorial cohesion, healthier communities, social inclusion, regional attractiveness and sustainable economic development.

ERDF

What we ask: Recognise sport infrastructure as eligible and integrate sport into regional and urban development strategies.

Why it matters: Modern, sustainable and accessible sport infrastructure supports healthier populations, stronger communities, sustainable tourism, urban regeneration, territorial attractiveness and the green transition.

ESF

What we ask: Recognise sport as a strategic partner for social inclusion, employability, lifelong learning and skills development.

Why it matters: Sport helps integrate disadvantaged groups, develops transferable skills, strengthens volunteering and workforce resilience, as well as contributing directly to the European Pillar of Social Rights.

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

CAP/LEADER

What we ask: Recognise sport as a contributor to rural development and support investment in local sport infrastructure, services, organisations and community partnerships.

Why it matters: Sport strengthens the vitality of rural communities by promoting health, volunteering, youth engagement, active ageing, social cohesion and territorial resilience.

AgoraEU

What we ask: Recognise organised sport as a civil society actor and improve access for sport organisations to funding under AgoraEU.

Why it matters: Through millions of volunteers and over 700,000 local sport clubs, organised sport strengthens democracy, active citizenship, equality, inclusion and European values.

COMPETITIVESS FUND

What we ask: Acknowledge sport and physical activity as strategic investments in prevention and recognise organised sport as a key partner in delivering health promotion and preventive actions.

Why it matters: Investing in sport and physical activity is one of the most cost-effective preventive health measures, reducing healthcare costs, preventing non-communicable diseases, improving mental health and wellbeing, and strengthening Europe's competitiveness through a healthier, more resilient and productive population.