



**European Committee
of the Regions**

SEDEC-VI/037

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OPINION

Mainstreaming sport into the EU agenda post-2020

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- highlights the fact that sport is not a marginal sector, but rather a priority area for EU investment, as alongside competitive activities, the definition of sport nowadays also fully encompasses the areas of motor activity and physical activity, which are useful not only in terms of increasing sporting activity itself, but also in promoting health and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle;
- points out that the role played by sport in the economy and in contemporary society – including following the economic crisis experienced by EU – entails significant benefits for local and regional authorities;
- points out the opportunity to propose measures and to adopt practical tools with a view to "Mainstreaming sport into the EU agenda post-2020", through:
 - considering it essential to introduce more explicit guidelines also under "Erasmus+", on the need to boost sport beginning with compulsory education;
 - calling for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) to support employment, particularly youth employment, through start-ups or technological innovation platforms in the sector and to boost basic grassroots sport with the help of a new generation of small-scale sports infrastructures and facilities;
 - promoting gender equality through sport for more effective sport policies to increase the percentage of participation;
 - calling that the above-mentioned initiatives be considered in the negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework with sport being effectively mainstreamed into the EU agenda post-2020;
 - further calling for a discussion on the appropriateness of eventually establishing a Sports Programme.

Rapporteur

Roberto Pella (IT/EPP), Mayor of Valdengo, BI

Reference document

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Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Mainstreaming sport into the EU agenda post-2020

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General comments

1. aims to look at the economic and human dimension and the social-inclusion role of sport for the European Union and local and regional authorities, as these aspects are inseparable. Sport, defined as a continuum of motor activity and physical activity, relates to a wide range of policies, products and services that intersect and interact with different value chains;
2. points out that according to the most recent estimates, sport is an essential economic sector for the EU, with "a share in the national economies which is comparable to agriculture, forestry and fisheries combined"¹, a share which is expected to rise in the future. Moreover, the sports sector represents 2% of the EU's overall GDP, accounting for 7.3 million jobs across the continent and 3.5% of total employment in the EU. With regard to the tourism sector, between 12 and 15 million international journeys are planned every year for the purpose of taking part in sporting events or practising an activity. One of the particular features of the sports sector is thus its strong links with other areas of production (e.g. accessible or sports tourism, technology, health, environment, transport, integration, buildings and infrastructure), where it helps both directly and indirectly to create added value²;
3. notes, however that a study carried out by SportsEconAustria (SpEA)³ for the European Parliament has shown how the scope and impact of sport in terms of influencing and shaping public policies has been underestimated, particularly when considering occurrences such as volunteering (the majority of sporting activities are carried out by not-for-profit bodies) and the spillover effects of integration and social inclusion processes are factored in, along with the cost of physical inactivity, which amounts to EUR 80 billion per year in the 28 EU countries⁴, and the medium-term impact on regional health budgets of illnesses caused by a lack of or insufficient exercise;
4. stresses that, despite the growing recognition of physical activity as a major policy concern, a strong gap in knowledge still exists at local level when it comes to the wider benefits of physical

¹ European Commission (2014), *Sport as a growth engine for EU economy*, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-432_en.htm.

² European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/sport-growth-engine-eu-economy-0_en.

³ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/563392/IPOL_STU\(2015\)563392_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/563392/IPOL_STU(2015)563392_EN.pdf).

⁴ Studio ISCA/CEBR 2015 in *Narrative review: the state of physical activity in Europe*, p. 37, and the PASS Project <http://fr.calameo.com/read/000761585fb41d432c387>.

activity, as research shows that 66% of local policy-makers are unaware of obesity levels in their communities, and 84% of overweight levels⁵;

5. highlights the fact that sport is not a marginal sector, but rather a priority area for EU investment, as alongside competitive activities, the definition of sport nowadays also fully encompasses the areas of motor activity and physical activity, which are useful not only in terms of increasing sporting activity itself, but also in promoting health and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. An approach to the issue should be taken which aims to provide more equal – in other words balanced, fair and equivalent – access to the various disciplines, as well as to prevent the onset of chronic diseases (in particular non-communicable diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular risk and mental illness, etc.);
6. underlines the key role of sport as a health enhancing and well-being factor, as acknowledged, in particular in the Third EU Health Programme and HEPA (Health-Enhancing Physical Activity) monitoring, the WHO 2014-2019 Agenda and the WHO European Database on Nutrition, Obesity and Physical Activity (NOPA);
7. further reminds that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development considers sport an important enabler of sustainable development and recognises its role in better health and education, as well as its contribution to peace, the promotion of tolerance, respect and social inclusion, and the empowerment of women and young people⁶;
8. notes some of the results from the EuroBarometer on sport⁷:
 - almost half (46%) of European citizens never exercise or play sport and this proportion has gradually increased in recent years (42% in 2013), continuing a gradual trend since 2009;
 - the rate of participation in sport or exercise decreases among individuals with lower education levels and/or greater economic difficulties;
 - "informal settings" for sport, such as parks or outdoor areas (40%), the home (32%) or the journey between home and work or school (23%) are more widespread than locations formally designated to serve this purpose;
 - the main motivation for participation in sport or physical activity is improved health and fitness. Lack of time is the principal barrier;
 - the majority of Europeans think that there are opportunities to be physically active at local level, but, at the same time many of them feel that their local authorities do not do enough in this regard;
9. points out that the role played by sport in the economy and in contemporary society – including following the economic crisis experienced by EU – entails significant benefits for local and regional authorities in terms of: the permeability of the sectors that it impacts, producing a

⁵ PASS Project <http://fr.calameo.com/read/000761585fb41d432c387>

⁶ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

⁷ Eurobarometer (release date 22/03/2018), https://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/2018/new-eurobarometer-sport-and-physical-activity_en

significant leverage effect; competitiveness, attractiveness and quality of life where sporting events activities are of a significant size and held regularly; employability, considering that European local authorities are very often owners of the facilities; and integration, as a powerful tool for communicating shared EU values which are often expressed more clearly at local level⁸. Given that sport is increasingly used as a means of achieving social and economic objectives, the demand for effectiveness and efficiency in the sports sector is gradually growing, not only as a means of achieving objectives set, but also as a strategic objective in itself;

Background: existing European initiatives

10. notes that the first policy document on sport, the White Paper on sport, was published by the European Commission in 2007;
11. would like to draw the attention to the fact that sporting, cultural and educational events can provide a framework for breaking down barriers to integration, as stated in the CoR opinion on Combatting radicalisation and violent extremism⁹;
12. underlines that the Treaty of Lisbon, which has been in force since December 2009, introduced a specific article – Article 165 TFEU – giving the EU new competences to support sport, by providing provisions on the promotion of sport and calling for EU action to develop the European dimension in sport. Article 6(e) TFEU established that the EU has the competence to carry out actions to support or supplement the actions of the Member States in the area of sport;
13. notes that in 2011, the Commission adopted a communication entitled "Developing the European Dimension in Sport"¹⁰, on the basis of which, the Council adopted a resolution on an EU Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014, which further aimed to strengthen European cooperation on sport, by setting priorities for activities at EU level that involve Member States and the Commission. In 2012, the Council adopted conclusions on promoting health-enhancing physical activity and on improving the database for developing sports policies, calling on the Commission to publish regular surveys on sport and physical activity;
14. further notes that, to implement the Work Plan, experts have focused on devising the questionnaire for the current Special EuroBarometer survey;
15. points out that, more recently (2017), an inter-regional initiative on economic development and value creation in the sector was launched in collaboration with the European Platform for Sports Innovation (EPSI). The initiative, named ClusSport, includes 10 countries to date; during the last 18 years ACES Europe promoted the European values through the awards European Capital, City, Community and Town of Sport, under the flag of Europe;

⁸ Study on the contribution of sport to regional development through the structural funds, https://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/20161018_regional-development-structural-funds_en

⁹ CdR 6329/2015

¹⁰ CdR 66/2011 fin

16. notes that a new EU Work Plan on Sport entered into force in July 2017 and outlines the key areas that the Member States and the Commission should prioritise in the run-up to 2020, including: integrity in sport, focusing on good governance, safeguarding minors, combating match fixing and corruption and preventing doping; the economic dimension of sport, focusing on innovation and links between sport and the digital single market; sport and society, focusing on social inclusion, coaching, the media, the environment, health, education and sport diplomacy;
17. reminds, finally, the Commission's most recent initiative, the "Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle"¹¹, a roadmap which has prompted a positive dynamic of cross-sectoral collaboration;

Objectives

18. given the potential and the shortcomings identified so far, proposes addressing the following challenges:
 - a. improving dialogue between existing projects and the most recent measures put in place in the regions, by encouraging high levels of participation and the sharing of good practices and partnerships (extended to the countries of the enlargement programme);
 - b. being more closely in touch with people and the social dimension of sports projects, by making proximity and the "local" approach their main feature, also reflecting the responsibility that local and regional authorities have with regard to facilities and events;
 - c. maximising overall awareness of the benefits of exercise, physical activity and sport;
 - d. broadly communicating the positive impact of sport on the EU economy, and therefore ensuring greater integration of sports policy in sectors that it intersects and influences;
 - e. driving greater technological innovation and more companies on the basis of tools for local and regional authorities, by encouraging stakeholders in research, technology and education, together with managing authorities, to make a joint effort to develop and implement a common strategy, acting on links with all value chains, both upstream and downstream of the production process, with the utmost attention given to the job opportunities offered by the sector;
 - f. considering sport as a genuine right of citizenship, as a tool for socialisation and inclusion, particularly with regard to people with disabilities, and for opening up opportunities for improving quality of life and physical and mental well-being, and as an educational opportunity;
 - g. providing support aimed at making sports facilities fully accessible to all, regardless of age, gender, nationality and status, allowing them to be freely used and extending the hours during which they are available to the public;
 - h. increasing support for and raising the profile of women's sports competitions;
 - i. considering sport as an instrument to facilitate social integration and equality;
 - j. providing budgetary support for the mobility of amateur sportsmen and -women participating in competitions, especially those from remote, island or outermost regions.

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/sport/sites/sport/files/ewos-tartu-call_en.pdf

Policy recommendations and proposals

19. points out the opportunity to propose measures and to adopt practical tools with a view to "Mainstreaming sport into the EU agenda post-2020", through:

Political level

20. making a significant commitment to sport diplomacy, which will promote European values through sport and multi-level, constructive dialogue, involving all levels of government and European institutions such as the European Parliament, through the Intergroup on Sport; the relevant Commission directorates-general; the national and European Olympic committees; and all other stakeholders, including civil society, involved in this process, e.g. through pilot-projects;
21. developing external relations and international cooperation projects outside of Europe, in order to add a further dimension to exchange efforts, through mobility projects and sharing knowledge, experience and good practice (communities of practice);
22. developing at European level tools to promote sport as a growth factor for the EU, through: mentoring programmes and soft policy measures (in conjunction with the annual Forum on Sport and the Info Days, for example) and through support for the exchange of best practices; amongst local and regional sporting associations and organisations involved at national and European level, using a bottom-up and participatory approach that takes account of their requests and needs;
23. enhancing the role of European local and regional authorities, by ensuring that the regions are involved actively and in a more coordinated fashion in the annual European Week of Sport – which, since its launch, has been a major source of motivation for undertaking medium and long term policies that have a demonstrable impact on healthy lifestyles and behaviours and on encouraging increased participation by people in the workforce, thereby ensuring greater professionalism and employability for the sports sector;
24. practical support from the European Union towards full implementation in the Member States of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with regard to its sport dimension;

Programme level

25. welcoming the European Commission's proposal to double the Erasmus funding for the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, as well as its focus on grassroots sports.¹² Calls the Commission to focus in this regard on exchanges of experience between coaches, sports officials and professionals related to the sector in a broad sense – particularly young people –

¹² COM(2018) 367 final, Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing Erasmus: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013.

via, for example, peer-learning activities and study visits, mutualising expertise and experience and building capacity within cities, municipalities and regions at local level to develop innovative approaches to integrating physical activity as a key component of cities' or regions' strategies;

26. calling for the allocation of funding specifically and explicitly to sport in the next European Structural and Investments Funds, given also the underinvestment in local grassroots sports infrastructures, focusing on the promotion of physical activity particularly in disadvantaged areas, ensuring access to sports activities for everyone and strengthening human skills and capabilities as key enablers of economic and social development;
27. considering it essential to introduce more explicit guidelines also under "Erasmus+", on the need to boost sport beginning with compulsory education;
28. calling for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) to support employment, particularly youth employment, through start-ups or technological innovation platforms in the sector and to boost basic grassroots sport with the help of a new generation of small-scale sports infrastructures and facilities; promoting gender equality through sport for more effective sport policies to increase the percentage of participation. Moreover, the ESIF could support new solutions to specific challenges facing regions across the EU, such as support for popular and traditional sports and encouraging their mainstreaming into curricula in the public education system, which can be used to enhance and promote Europe while keeping alive the specific characteristics and identity of communities;
29. promoting health through exercise and physical activity, as already outlined in the Tartu Charter, including at the workplace, by considering incentives for employers, including European SMEs, for doing so, with a view to improving employees' overall performance and productivity, while at the same time limiting absenteeism and preventing illness;
30. underlining the importance of planning community activities – where possible in cooperation with civil society stakeholders – in accessible areas, that can be easily reached by the most vulnerable groups, particularly those with reduced mobility¹³, mothers and children, the elderly, groups at risk of social exclusion such as migrants and those living in precarious socio-economic conditions, in order to promote greater interaction between generations and integration of European citizens; planning community activities for people in prison. To this effect, calls for the consideration of a Sport4EU scheme, similar to the existing WIFI4EU one, for the promotion of health through exercise and physical activity. It would operate at the level of local and regional authorities on the basis of vouchers, disbursed in a geographically balanced manner;
31. emphasising the link between physical activity and a healthy diet, especially at school, through education but also under the thematic objectives of the agriculture programmes. This could be done, for example, by setting up real test-beds, known as "health gardens", which would provide

¹³ [CdR 3952/2013 fin.](#)

children, adolescents and families with practical information on healthy eating, the seasonality of fruit and vegetables, the risks associated with unhealthy lifestyles and the importance of sport and physical activity;

32. given the tremendous amount of attention that the European institutions have given to the future Urban Agenda, providing resources needed for testing and developing "active cities", which are very attractive in terms of tourism and innovation and are smarter with regard to addressing the needs of urban populations;
33. calling for the inclusion of emblematic sporting events and sites in the Interrail project, starting with the younger generations so that they can discover and spread sporting values promoted by the EU, thereby empowering them and strengthening their sense of identity;
34. using the structural funds available for making public buildings and other public infrastructures more energy efficient in order to contribute to the environmental sustainability of existing sports facilities, including through preventing the growing use of microplastics, while exploring the possibility of converting such facilities into multidisciplinary facilities with EU funds;
35. including the opportunity to improve data collection and modelling tools in the next "Horizon Europe" programme, with a view to finding innovative solutions and new technologies to facilitate the continuous exchange of knowledge, something which also addresses the objectives set by the future Romanian presidency in relation to the smart specialisation strategy and the Digital Single Market;
36. calling that the above-mentioned initiatives be considered in the negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework with sport being effectively mainstreamed into the EU agenda post-2020; further calling for a discussion on the appropriateness of eventually establishing a Sports Programme;

Subsidiarity and proportionality

37. expects, during discussions on and the subsequent approval of the next MFF, to have the opportunity to invoke the principle of subsidiarity in relation to this issue, as well as to draw the Commission's attention to the aim of emphasising, under the appropriate circumstances, the key role played by the local and regional authorities with regard to the economic and human dimension of sport;
38. reiterates its commitment to considering regional operational plans – which define the investment strategies underpinning the Structural Funds – as another useful, effective instrument to be targeted by these efforts, positioning local and regional authorities as the guarantors of collaborative multi-level governance, which allows institutions, businesses, civil society organisations and citizens to contribute to the planning and development of the sector;
39. intends to take part, along with the European institutions, in a reflection process that translates debate and policy narratives into tangible proposals, in accordance with the SEDEC commission

work programme SEDEC (21/11/2017, p.1.2) and the Committee of the Regions' political priorities;

40. hopes that the Commission is committed to the EU's ratification of the Council of Europe's Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.

Brussels, 10 October 2018

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Karl-Heinz Lambertz

The Secretary-General
of the European Committee of the Regions

Jiří Buriánek

II. PROCEDURE

Title	Mainstreaming sport into the EU agenda post-2020
Reference(s)	N/A
Legal basis	Article 307 TFEU
Procedural basis	Rules 41(b)(ii), 15(4) and 23(3) of the Rules of Procedure
Date of Council/EP referral	N/A
Date of Commission letter	
Date of Bureau/President's decision	21 March 2018
Commission responsible	Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture
Rapporteur	Roberto Pella (IT/EPP)
Analysis	4 April 2018
Discussed in commission	25 June 2018
Date adopted by commission	25 June 2018
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	Majority
Date adopted in plenary	10 October 2018
Previous Committee opinions	Modernising school and higher education ¹⁴ Health in cities: the common good ¹⁵ Disability, Sport and Leisure ¹⁶ Developing the European dimension of sport ¹⁷
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	N/A

¹⁴ <https://webapi.cor.europa.eu/documentsanonymous/COR-2017-03139-00-00-AC-TRA-EN.docx/content>COR 3139/2017

¹⁵ <https://webapi.cor.europa.eu/documentsanonymous/COR-2016-06620-00-00-AC-TRA-EN.docx/content>COR 6620/2016

¹⁶ https://webapi.cor.europa.eu/documentsanonymous/CDR3952-2013_00_00_TRA_AC-EN.doc/contentCOR 3952/2013

¹⁷ https://webapi.cor.europa.eu/documentsanonymous/CDR66-2011_FIN_AC-EN.doc/contentCOR 66/2011