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SHAPING EU SPORT

Elena Malíková | Kairis Ulp | Vassos Koutsioundas
Ioanna Paraskevopoulou | Veiko Ulp | Julián Vojtech



SHAPING **EU SPORT**

Capturing and highlighting 15 years
of the EU work in the field of sport
from a perspective of the Chairs
of the Council Working Party on Sport

SHAPING



EU SPORT

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preface

by **Elena Malíková**

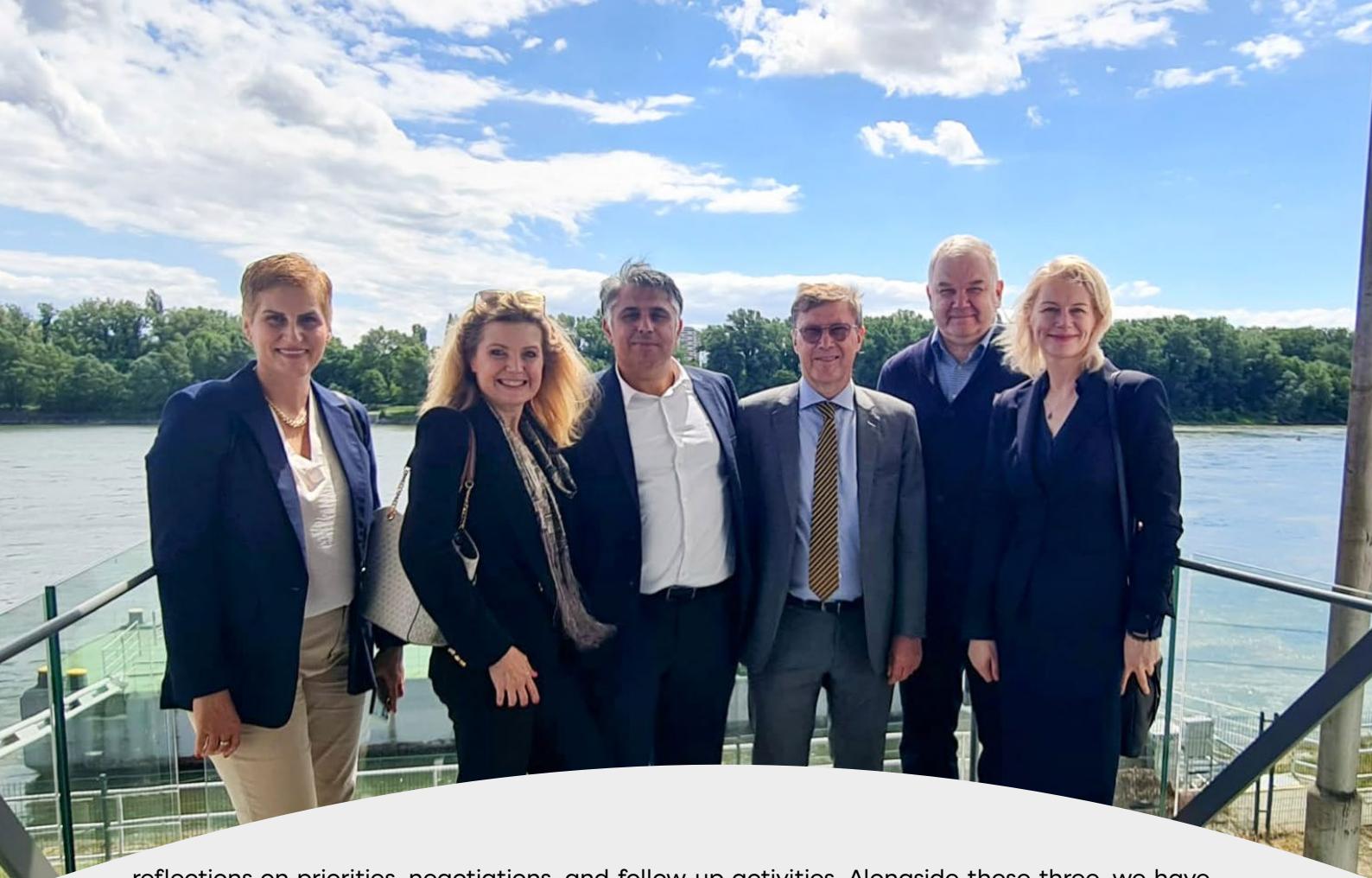
ON BEHALF OF THE PROJECT
CONSORTIUM TEAM

The SHAPING EU SPORT project was born from a shared vision – to capture, preserve, and reflect on the evolution of European Union sport policy since 2009, when sport was formally integrated into the EU agenda through Article 165 of the Lisbon Treaty. What began as a symbolic recognition has, over the years, evolved into a structured and dynamic field of cooperation, marked by policy documents, initiatives, and an ever-deepening dialogue between institutions, Member States, and the sport movement.

The consortium behind this project has pursued a common goal: to make the achievements and lessons of EU sport policy accessible to all – policymakers, researchers, sport organisations, and stakeholders at every level, including the grassroots. Our work has resulted in two main outcomes: an interactive website and this publication, SHAPING EU SPORT. Together, they document the policy framework, initiatives, and milestones of the EU from 2010 to 2025, enriched by the perspectives of those who helped shape them.

This book highlights the contributions of the EU Presidencies, particularly those of Cyprus, Slovakia, and Estonia, whose former Chairs of the Council Working Party on Sport share their





reflections on priorities, negotiations, and follow-up activities. Alongside these three, we have included insights from other stakeholders to capture the working atmosphere within the EU sport sphere. Together with summaries of all Presidencies, the book seeks to offer a comprehensive, step-by-step account of the progress achieved.

The rationale was clear: EU policy documents in the field of sport may be non-binding, yet their impact is substantial. By making them more visible, understandable, and accessible, this project strengthens awareness, fosters dialogue, and inspires future initiatives. The collaborative nature of SHAPING EU SPORT reflects the very essence of the European approach to sport – built on dialogue, diversity, and shared responsibility.

We hope this book will serve not only as a record of the past fifteen years but also as an inspiration for the future of sport in Europe.

foreword

by **Vassos Koutsioundas**

When Cyprus held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2012, sport had only recently entered the Union's formal agenda. The challenge before us was to demonstrate that the Lisbon Treaty's recognition of sport was not merely symbolic, but a genuine call to action. I vividly recall the sense of responsibility, and the excitement, as we worked to shape the first Council Conclusions in this new field and to build bridges among Member States.

The journey since then has been remarkable. Each Presidency has contributed its own piece to the European sport policy puzzle, adding not only key documents and initiatives but also a shared spirit of cooperation that is distinctly European. The greatest achievements of EU sport policy have emerged not from imposing a single vision, but from embracing diversity and forging consensus that reflects our common values.

For me, the essence of this book lies in partnership. EU sport policy has been shaped by countless individuals working together, Chairs of the Working Party on Sport, representatives of the European Commission, Member States, and stakeholders across the sport movement. It is this dialogue, at times challenging, yet always constructive, that has allowed sport to evolve into a genuine European priority.

As you read these pages, I invite you to look beyond the milestones and achievements, and to recognise the human commitment, perseverance, and vision that have driven this collective effort. These are the same qualities that will continue to guide us as we face the challenges and opportunities of the future.



foreword

by **Kairis Ulp**



The story of European Union sport policy is one of gradual and deliberate progress. From its modest beginnings, it has evolved into a structured area of cooperation – with clear priorities, regular work plans, and initiatives that touch the lives of millions of Europeans.

For me, this book reflects not only history but also continuity: the way shared experiences and collaboration nurture today's work and shape tomorrow's opportunities.

When Estonia held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2017, we placed our priorities on two themes: the role of coaches in society, and the further developing of the EU structured dialogue in sport. Today, both themes remain even more relevant, reminding us that the policy

agenda must stay responsive to changing realities. What connects all Presidencies, however, is the shared conviction that sport is more than competition – it is a tool for education, inclusion, well-being, and unity.

The value of this project lies in its ability to make the EU's work in the field of sport more visible and accessible by consolidating, on a single website, the most relevant policy documents adopted over the years. By presenting priorities, key documents, and reflections, it provides not only a record but also a compass – helping policymakers and practitioners alike to understand where we have come from, and where we might go.

This foreword is, therefore, not merely an introduction but also an invitation: to learn from the past, engage with the present, and work together for a future in which sport continues to strengthen Europe's social fabric.

About the Project

The project Shaping EU Sport began as a quiet reflection on how much had been achieved in the European Union's work in the field of sport – and how little of it was visible to the wider public. When the project commenced in January 2024, its foundation rested on an impressive legacy: between 2010 and 2023, twenty-seven EU Council Presidencies had helped shape policies addressing every aspect of sport – from health and participation to integrity, inclusion, and innovation. The European Commission had worked in close cooperation with the Council through four Commissioners and three successive Heads of the Sport Unit, producing thirty-nine Council documents – Conclusions, Resolutions, and Recommendations – along with numerous studies, communications, and initiatives. Yet the richness of these efforts remained dispersed across time, documents, and institutions.

That was precisely the seed for Shaping EU Sport – a joint initiative of partners from Slovakia, Cyprus, and Estonia, supported by

the Erasmus+ Programme under the 2023 Small Scale Partnership call. Its main ambition was simple yet essential: to bring together, in one accessible and interactive space, fifteen years of EU sport policy development.

The project built directly on the EU Work Plan for Sport 2021 – 2024, which invited Member States to consider creating a platform for sharing and storing reports, best practices, and documents that can support mutual learning. Responding to that call, Shaping EU Sport set out to create a lasting, open resource that would make European sport policy more understandable, usable, and inspiring – not only for officials and experts but also for local stakeholders, educators, and anyone interested in the role of sport in society.

Behind every policy, there are people. The core project team brought together three former Chairs and one Vice-Chair of the Council Working Party on Sport – each representing a different Presidency and perspective – united by shared experience and commitment.



Vassos Koutsioundas

Chair during the Cyprus Presidency in 2012, Head of Finance at the Cyprus Sport Organisation and national representative at the Working Party on Sport.



Ioanna Paraskevopoulou

Vice-Chair during the Cyprus Presidency in 2012, EU Affairs Officer at the Cyprus Sport Organisation, joined the core team to strengthen continuity and policy linkage.

Elena Malíková

Chair of the Working Party on Sport during the Slovak Presidency in 2016, Main State Advisor at the Government Office of the Slovak Republic and former Chair of the Slovak Olympic Academy.



Kairis Ulp

Chair during the Estonian Presidency in 2017, Head of the Estonian Sports Register and leading expert at the Estonian Foundation of Sport, Education and Information.

Together, they represented a rare blend of institutional memory and practical knowledge of EU sport governance. Their cooperation reflected what the project itself stood for – shared responsibility, respect for diversity, and an enduring belief that sport connects beyond borders.

The project's tangible outcomes were designed with both clarity and continuity in mind. The SHAPING EU SPORT website became the central tool – an interactive hub containing

adopted Council and Commission documents, complemented by insights into the work of the Presidencies and expert groups. Alongside it, a booklet under the same title captures key milestones and documents the evolution of EU sport policy across fifteen years.

In 2025, as the project period comes to an end, reflecting on two years of implementation reveals that Shaping EU Sport was never simply about documentation. It was equally about recognition – honouring the collective efforts

of successive Presidencies, hundreds of experts, and countless discussions that have helped shape sport as an essential part of European cooperation. At the same time, the initiative looks forward, aiming to create an informal network of current and former Working Party members to keep the website active and to encourage continued exchange beyond the project's duration.

In this sense, Shaping EU Sport stands as both a tribute and a tool – honouring what has been built, while ensuring it remains alive, discoverable, and relevant for the next generation of policymakers and sport professionals. What began as a small partnership among three countries has quietly evolved into an informal reference point for EU sport policy – a bridge between the institutional and the human, between the written word and the living practice of sport in Europe.

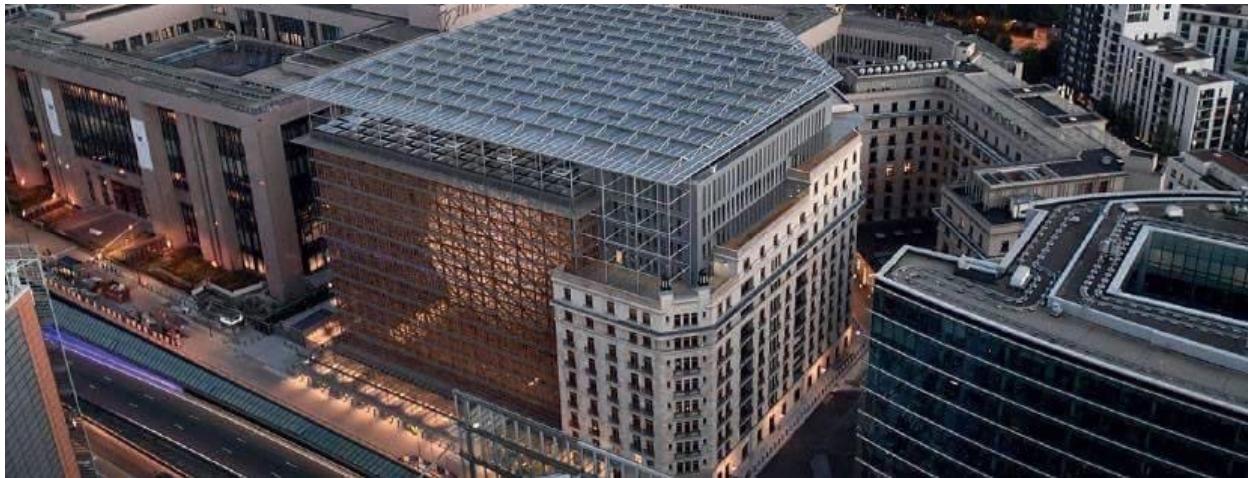


Fifteen Years of EU Action in the Field of Sport: Step by Step

The evolution of EU sport policy **is best described as a long relay race** – with each generation of policymakers, court rulings, and Council presidencies carrying the baton forward. For decades, sport was present in the European conversation, but only at the edges, but not treated as a political priority. Slowly,

through determination, legal breakthroughs, and persistent advocacy, it moved from the margins to the centre of EU action. Today, sport has its own place in the treaties, steady funding lines, and flagship campaigns that touch millions of Europeans every year.





From Early Recognition to Legal Awakening (1970s–1990s)

The story begins with the **1975 Declaration on Sport**, when EU Heads of State recognised, for the first time, sport as part of Europe's identity. At that time, it was largely symbolic – but symbols matter.

In the 1990s, recognition deepened. The **Maastricht Treaty (1992)** acknowledged sport indirectly under education and culture, and the **Amsterdam Treaty (1997)** carried a new declaration highlighting sport's social role. Yet it was the courts that shook the foundations. The **1995 Bosman ruling** abolished nationality quotas and transfer fees for out-of-contract footballers, proving that EU law could reshape sport itself. By the end of the decade, the **1999 Helsinki Report** mapped the key challenges ahead: doping, commercialisation pressures, and the need for stronger governance.

Political Momentum and the White Paper Era (2000s)

The early 2000s gave sport a more visible political voice. The **Nice Declaration (2000)** emphasised sport's educational and cultural functions. Legal clarifications followed with the **Lehtonen case (2000)** on basketball players and **Meca-Medina (2006)**, confirming that EU competition law applied to sport but allowed proportionate rules to preserve sporting integrity.

At the same time, policy experimentation flourished. The **European Year of Education through Sport (2004)** funded projects across schools and communities, while the **Matsakis Report** from the European Parliament advocated giving sport a real policy role.

The **2007 White Paper on Sport** and the **Pierre de Coubertin Action Plan** marked a breakthrough. For the first time, the EU outlined a strategy



– combining tradition and innovation – and proposed actions and dialogue mechanisms for stakeholders. In **2008, the first EU Sport Forum in Biarritz** formalised structured dialogue with the Olympic and sports movement, fostering a “European sports family” of policymakers, federations, and grassroots representatives. The **real turning point came in 2009** with the **Lisbon Treaty**, which introduced **Article 165**, giving the EU explicit competence in sport. Symbolic recognition became legal authority, marking the end of decades-long advocacy and the start of structured European sport policy.

Institutionalisation and Growth: The 2010s

If Lisbon gave sport a legal foundation, **6 April 2010** can be seen as its “birth date” within the Council. On that day, the **Working Party on Sport (WPS)** met for the very first time in the Justus Lipsius building in Brussels. The agenda reflected both practical organisation and strategic ambition:

- adopting working methods and establishing the Council’s sport structure,
- preparing the ground for the **first Council of Ministers in “Sport” formation (May 2010)**,



- identifying **priorities for EU sport policy**,
- and opening a debate on **structured dialogue with the Olympic and sports movement**.

The meeting may not have made headlines, but it symbolised a decisive step: sport had entered the daily machinery of EU decision-making. From that day forward, the WPS became the main arena where Member States exchanged views, shaped Council conclusions, and laid the foundations for long-term cooperation.

The meeting on **6 April 2010** in Brussels was more than procedural. It established the **institutional heartbeat of EU sport policy**, creating a permanent platform for Member States and stakeholders to collaborate,

debate, and implement priorities consistently. Importantly, each and every Chair of the WPS since that first meeting has played a **vital role in carrying the baton forward**, ensuring continuity, driving initiatives, and maintaining the dialogue between the EU institutions, Member States, and sport stakeholders. Their leadership, vision, and personal commitment have been central to translating high-level objectives into tangible actions on the ground – from integrity and governance to inclusion, health, and innovation. The story of EU sport policy is as much about these Chairs as it is about legal milestones and strategic plans: each contributed their unique perspective, experience, and energy to shape a coherent

European sport agenda.

The first formal Council of the European Union meeting dedicated to sport took place on 10 May 2010, under the Education, Youth, and Culture Council. This meeting was a direct consequence of the Lisbon Treaty, which, effective from December 2009, granted the EU a specific competence in the field of sport. Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) established that the Union should contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking account of the specific nature of sport, its structures based on voluntary activity, and its social and educational function.

Prior to this, EU involvement in sport was limited and informal, primarily addressing sport-related aspects of other competences, such as competition, the internal market, and employment and social affairs. The 2010 Council meeting marked a significant shift, **formalising EU cooperation in sport policy**. Ministers responsible for sport from EU Member States convened to discuss the implications of the Lisbon Treaty on EU sports policy. The central aim was to assess the principle issues and challenges that EU sports policy should address in light of the new legal framework.

The discussions of the first formal Council of the European Union meeting focused on two key questions:

1. In which specific areas of sports policy can action at European Union level be of most added value?
2. Among the areas where EU action might

be envisaged, what are the two or three most urgent priorities?

This inaugural meeting laid the groundwork for subsequent EU sports policy developments, which further clarified the Union's role and priorities in the field of sport.

In the years that followed, the EU embedded its commitments further. The **2011 Communication on Developing the European Dimension in Sport** translated Lisbon into actionable strategy, while the **first EU Work Plan for Sport (2011–2014)** outlined clear priorities: integrity, health, and governance.

Funding followed: **Preparatory Actions (2009–2013)** piloted projects on anti-doping, dual careers, and grassroots development, demonstrating the value of EU support. These successes paved the way for **Erasmus+ Sport (2014)**, the first permanent EU funding stream dedicated to sport. To help organisations navigate these opportunities, the **EU Sport Info Day** was launched in 2014, becoming an annual meeting point for exchange, learning, and networking.

At the same time, the EU brought sport closer to citizens. The **European Week of Sport (#BeActive, 2015)** engaged millions across schools, cities, and communities. The **#BeActive Awards (2015)** and **#BeInclusive Awards (2018)** celebrated excellence in promoting active lifestyles and inclusion. Health and lifestyle initiatives like the **Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle (2017)** and the **SHARE initiative (2018 – 2023)** linked sport to community development, cohesion, and economic opportunities.



Maturity and New Frontiers: 2020s

By the 2020s, EU sport policy had matured into a structured, multi-dimensional field. The **Fourth EU Work Plan for Sport (2021 – 2024)** introduced priorities such as digitalisation, sustainability, and evidence-based policymaking. The **HealthyLifestyle4All campaign (2021 – 2023)** reinforced the link between sport, health, and social inclusion.

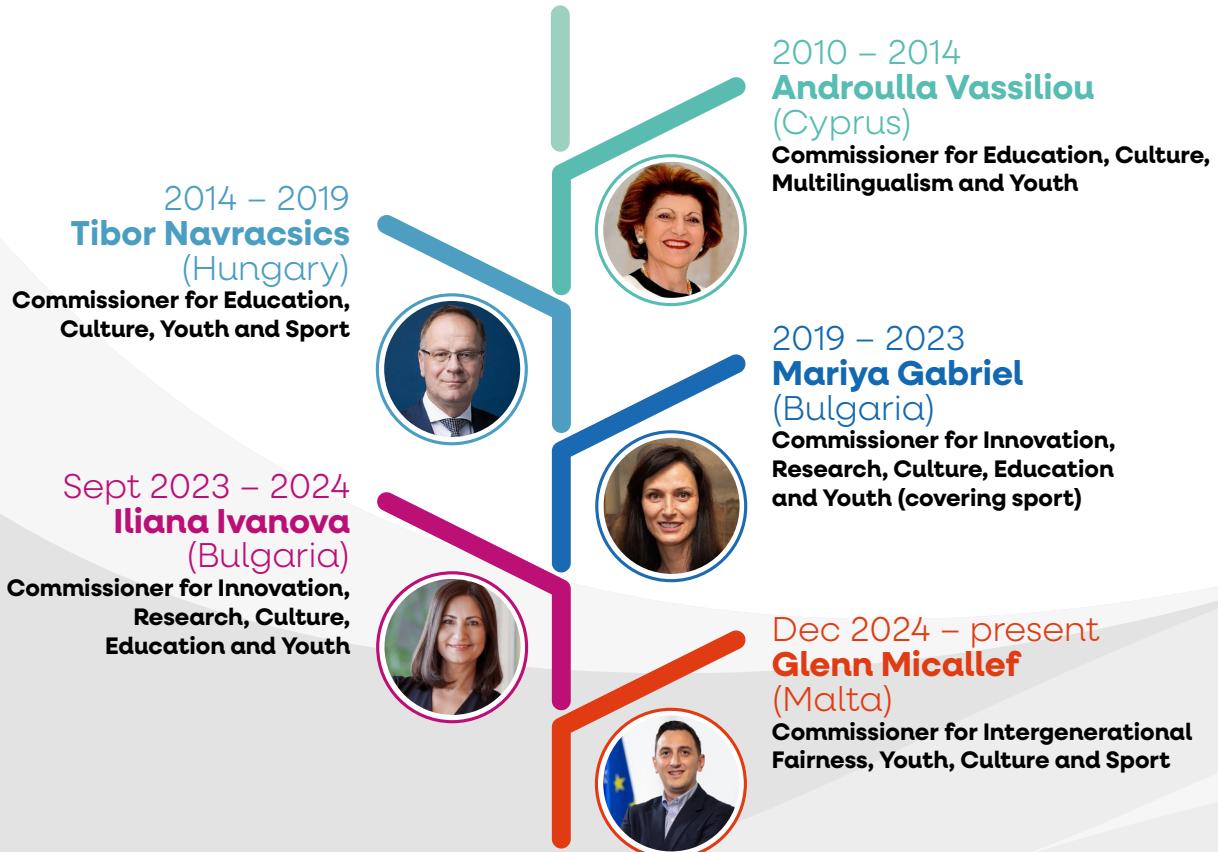
In **2022**, the Council adopted a resolution on the **European Sport Model**, affirming core values of solidarity, inclusiveness, and sustainability. The same year, the **High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport** proposed measures to

improve leadership, representation, and equal opportunities.

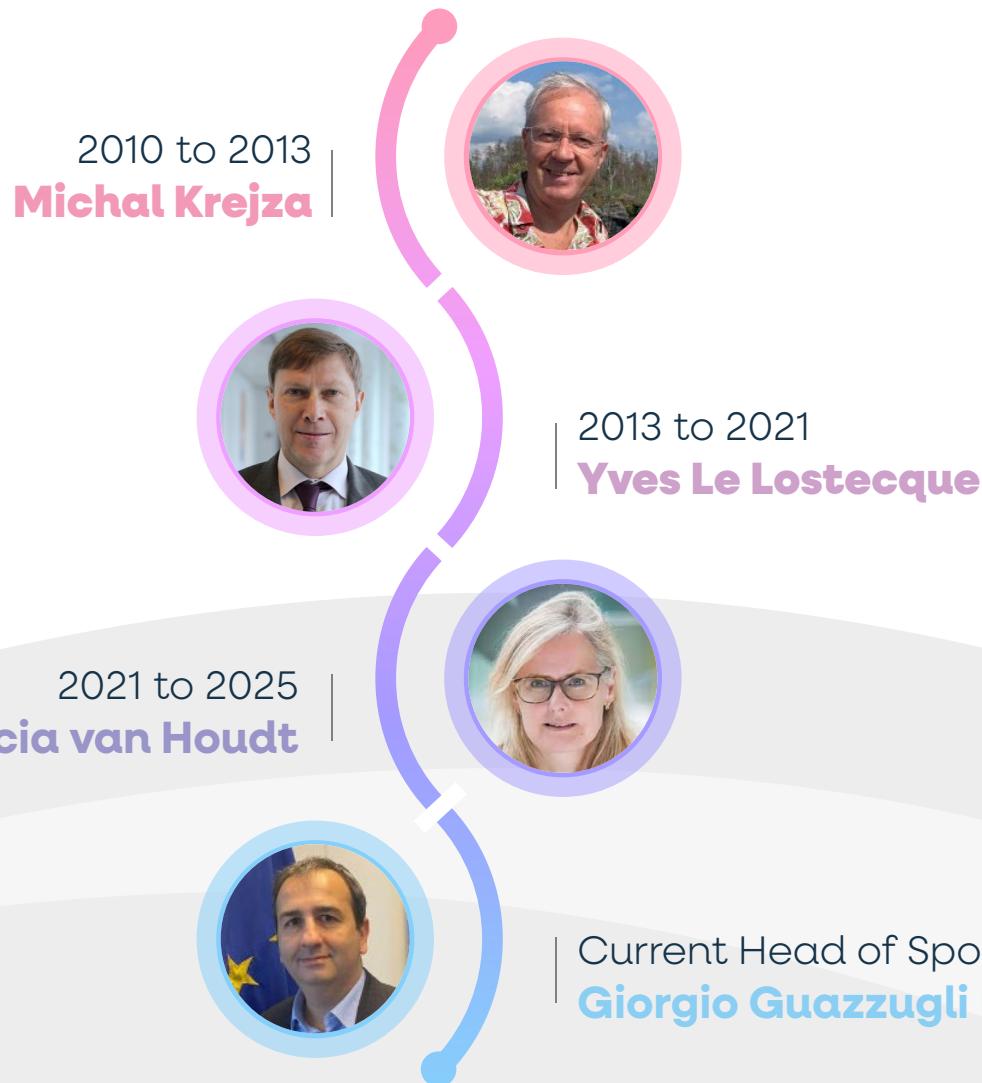
Innovation and networking grew through **SHARE 2.0 (2024)**, which established Communities of Practice around funding, health, and sustainability. The **new #BeActive EU Sport Awards (2025)** merged previous recognition schemes, highlighting inclusion, active lifestyles, and community engagement. The **EU Sport Forum 2025** in Kraków showcased debates on artificial intelligence, athlete well-being, and European enlargement, signalling that EU sport policy is now forward-looking, influential, and deeply connected to society.

European Commissioners responsible for Sport

OR THE BROADER PORTFOLIO INCLUDING SPORT



HEADS OF SPORT UNIT



Chronological Milestones of EU Action in the Field of Sport

Foundations (1970s – 1990s)

- 1975 Declaration on Sport by EU Heads of State: first recognition of sport's role in European identity.
- 1992 Treaty of Maastricht: indirect recognition of sport under education, culture, health.
- 1995 **Bosman ruling (C-415/93)**: Court of Justice removes transfer fees for out-of-contract footballers and nationality quotas, revolutionising EU sports law.
- 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, Declaration 29 on Sport: acknowledges sport's social significance.
- 1999 Helsinki Report on Sport: Commission report identifying challenges such as doping, governance, economic impact.

Political Recognition and Legal Milestones

(2000s)

2000

Nice Declaration on the Specific Characteristics of Sport: stresses social, cultural, educational functions.

2000

Lehtonen case (C-176/96): Court rules on restrictions on non-EU basketball players.

2003/2006

Meca-Medina ruling (C-519/04 P): Court confirms EU law applies to sport but allows proportionate rules for sporting integrity (e.g. anti-doping).

2004

European Year of Education through Sport (Decision No 291/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 February 2003)

2004

European Parliament Report on the Role of Sport (Matsakis Report).

2007

White Paper on Sport (COM(2007) 391) and Pierre de Coubertin Action Plan: first EU-wide sport policy framework.

2008

First **EU Sport Forum** (Biarritz): formal launch of structured stakeholder dialogue.

2009

Treaty of Lisbon (Article 165 TFEU): EU gains explicit competence in sport.

2010

Bernard case (C-325/08): Court rules that training compensation systems can be compatible with EU law if proportionate.

Institutionalisation and Funding (2010s)

- 2008
EU Physical Activity Guidelines.
- 2009 - 2013
Preparatory Actions in the Field of Sport: pilot EU projects on anti-doping, social inclusion, dual careers, grassroots development.
- 2010
Commencement of the Working Party on Sport (6 April 2010)
- 2010
First meeting of the **Council of Ministers for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS Council)** in its new “Sport” formation.
- 2011
Communication on Developing the European Dimension in Sport.
- 2011 - 2014
First EU Work Plan for Sport (integrity, good governance, health).
- 2013
Council Recommendation on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors (HEPA)
- 2014
Launch of **Erasmus+ Sport Chapter**: first permanent EU funding for sport.
- 2014
First **EU Sport Info Day** (Brussels): annual funding guidance to stakeholders.

Institutionalisation and Funding (2010s)

- 2014 - 2017
Second EU Work Plan for Sport.
- 2015
Launch of the **European Week of Sport (#BeActive)**: annual EU campaign for physical activity.
- 2015
Launch of the **#BeActive Awards**, rewarding projects promoting active lifestyles.
- 2017
Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle: joint initiative by Commissioners for Sport, Health, and Food.
- 2017 - 2020
Third EU Work Plan for Sport.
- 2018
Launch of the first **Annual EU Sport Info Day**
- 2018
Launch of **#BeInclusive EU Sport Awards**, rewarding inclusion and diversity initiatives.
- 2018
Launch of the **SHARE initiative (2018–2023)**: linking sport to regional development and EU funds.

Recent Developments (2020s)

2020

Launch of **SHARE – The New European Bauhaus**

2021 - 2024

Fourth EU Work Plan for Sport: focuses on integrity, health, digitalisation, evidence-based policymaking.

2021 - 2023

HealthyLifestyle4All: EU-wide campaign to promote sport, healthy eating, and active lifestyles.

2022

Council Resolution on the European Sport Model: affirms values of solidarity, inclusiveness, sustainability.

2022

Sport Recommendations and action plan from the High Level Group on Gender Equality in sport.

2024

Launch of **SHARE 2.0:** Communities of Practice on EU funding, health, innovation, sustainability.

2025

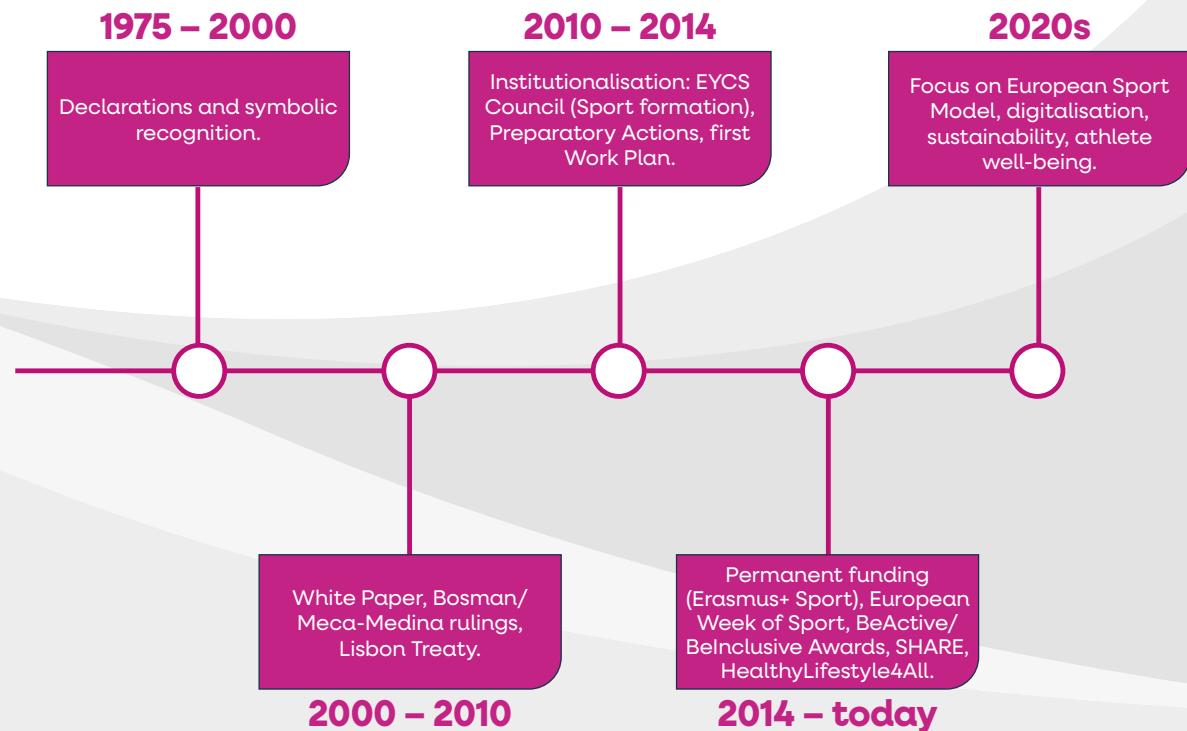
Launch of the new **#BeActive EU Sport Awards**, merging #BeActive and #BeInclusive recognitions.

2025

EU Sport Forum (Kraków): focuses on AI in sport, athlete well-being, European Sport Model, EU enlargement.



OVERALL TRAJECTORY



Shaping Sport Policy in the Council: **EU PRESIDENCIES** **2010 – 2025**

Spain

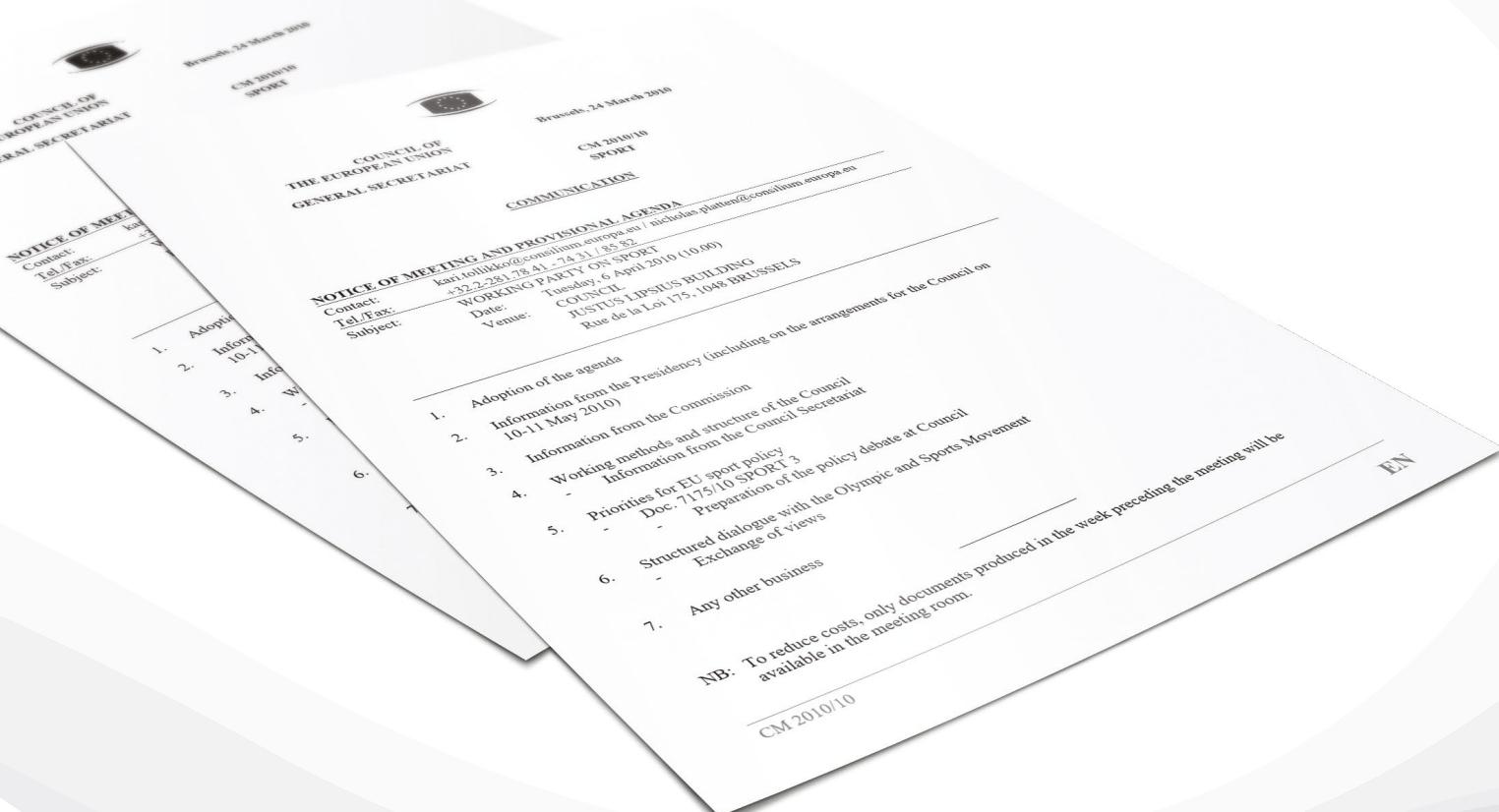


| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Period: | January–June 2010 |
| EU Council: | 11 May 2010 |
| Minister responsible: | Jaime LISSAVETZKY, State Secretary with responsibility for Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Francisco Javier ODRIOZOLA LINO |

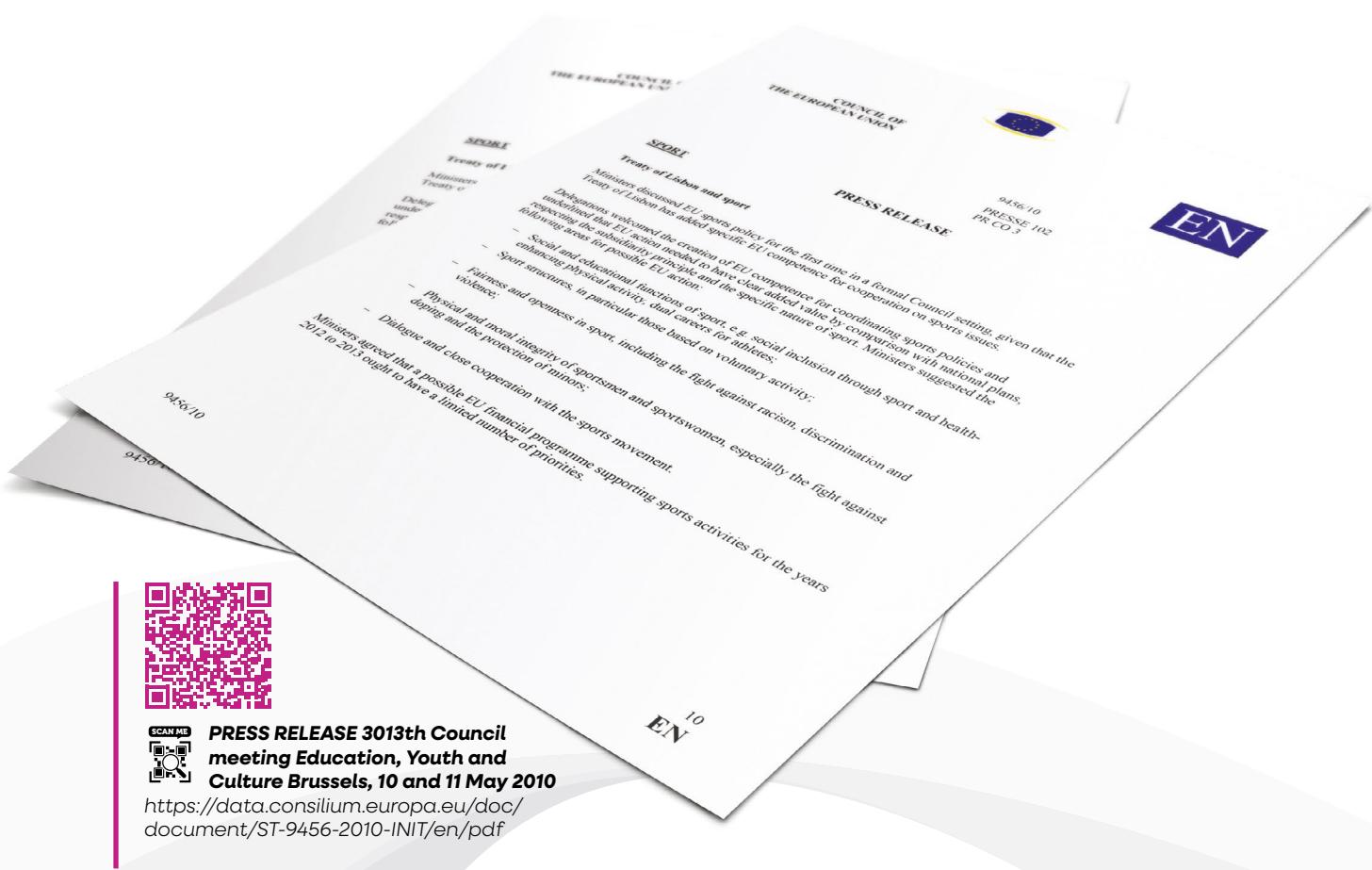
The institutional journey of sport within the European Union began to take real shape in **2010**, a year that transformed the Lisbon Treaty's legal recognition of sport into practical reality. Under the **Spanish Presidency**, and guided by **Francisco Javier Odriozola Lino**, the first Chair of the **Working Party on Sport (WPS)**, Member States met in Brussels to define how the EU would work together in this newly established policy area.

When the WPS gathered for its inaugural session on **6 April 2010** in the Justus Lipsius building, the atmosphere combined curiosity, ambition, and a sense of responsibility. The agenda was both pragmatic and forward-looking: setting out the working methods, preparing for the first Council of Ministers in its “Sport” formation, identifying priorities for EU sport policy, and initiating dialogue with the Olympic and sporting movement. That meeting quietly marked a turning point – from symbolic recognition to the first tangible steps of cooperation.

From that moment, the **WPS became the driving forum** where Member States shaped Council Conclusions and Resolutions, discussed emerging issues, and laid the foundation for long-term collaboration. It was here that sport found its place in the EU’s institutional rhythm – not through grand declarations, but through steady and coordinated effort.



The “SPORT” section from the Press Release 3013th Council Meeting 10-11 May 2010 (Doc 9456/10)



Each Presidency that followed added a new layer of depth and perspective. The succession of **WPS Chairs, each with distinct national experiences and policy interests**, contributed to building a coherent and evolving European sport agenda. Their leadership, supported by the Council Secretariat and the European Commission, ensured that discussions translated into concrete outcomes – from the first drafts of conclusions to more recent priorities such as integrity, gender equality, innovation, and sustainability.

The evolution of EU sport policy is, therefore, not only a sequence of documents and decisions, but also a collective narrative of vision and continuity.

The chapter on EU Presidencies 2010 – 2025 is dedicated to the evolution of EU Council Conclusions and Resolutions on sport and physical activity, traces this development in depth.

It revisits the documents prepared and negotiated by successive Presidencies, refined through dialogue among Member State representatives within the Working Party on Sport in Brussels, and adopted by the Council of the European Union. Together, they illustrate how the foundations laid in 2010 under Spain's leadership have evolved into a mature and forward-looking European policy area – one that continues to inspire cooperation, innovation, and shared purpose across the continent.

Belgium



| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Period: | July–December 2010 |
| EU Council: | 18 November 2010 |
| Minister responsible: | Philippe MUYTERS, Flemish Minister for Finance, the Budget, Employment, Town and Country Planning and Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | An VERMEERSCH |

Council Conclusions on the Role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion

The Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 address the role of sport as both a source of and a driver for active social inclusion. Building on the 2000 Nice Declaration and the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion, they recognise that the Lisbon Treaty grants the EU a specific competence in sport, enabling stronger coordination and action in this field.

The conclusions underline that sport is an essential part of many citizens' lives and can significantly contribute to social inclusion. Inclusion **in** sport means guaranteeing equal access and opportunities for all citizens to participate, while inclusion **through** sport refers to the wider societal benefits, such as strengthening communities, promoting solidarity, and enhancing social cohesion. Sport organisations, clubs, and volunteers are recognised as key actors in promoting



participation and inclusion at local and national levels.

Three main priority areas are identified:

1. Promoting “sport for all” based on equal opportunities.

Member States are encouraged to increase participation in sport and physical activity, with a focus on young people and those who are socially or economically disadvantaged. Accessibility to sport facilities must be ensured for everyone, including persons with disabilities, allowing full participation in recreational and competitive activities. The Council also calls for the promotion of gender equality in both participation and leadership roles in sport.

2. Using sport for community building, social cohesion, and inclusive growth.

Sport should be used as a means to integrate disadvantaged groups into society and foster community spirit. Participation in sport helps individuals acquire valuable life

skills such as teamwork, perseverance, and discipline, which can enhance employability. Volunteering in sport also contributes to personal development and civic engagement. The Council stresses that sport can contribute directly to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.

3. Promoting transnational exchange, networking, and evidence-based policy.

Member States and local authorities are invited to cooperate, share best practices, and support research to better understand and measure the social inclusion benefits of sport. Networking between institutions and stakeholders is encouraged to promote mutual learning and improve the effectiveness of sport policies.

In terms of implementation, the Council invites Member States to:

- Encourage participation in sport among inactive and disadvantaged groups.
- Promote intercultural dialogue and gender equality through sport.
- Recognise and validate informal learning and skills acquired through sport.
- Coordinate sport policies with broader inclusion, employment, and education strategies.
- Support volunteerism and grassroots initiatives.

The European Commission is invited to:

- Include social inclusion through sport as a key priority in EU programmes and policies.
- Examine how existing EU funding instruments, such as the European Social Fund and Youth in Action, can support sport-related inclusion projects.
- Evaluate and monitor progress in this field.

Overall, the Council positions sport as both a right and a tool – ensuring equal access for all while using sport strategically to promote inclusion, employability, community cohesion, and equality. The conclusions provide a foundation for aligning national sport policies with EU social objectives and for integrating sport into broader strategies for social development and inclusion.

Council Resolution on the EU Structured Dialogue on Sport

The Council Resolution adopted on 18 November 2010 sets out a formalised and strengthened framework for structured dialogue in the field of sport at the EU level. It begins by recalling that Article 165 TFEU charges the Union with contributing to the promotion of European sporting issues, taking into account sport's specific nature, structures based on voluntary activity, and its social and educational function, as well as developing the European dimension in sport. The resolution also recalls the 2008 European Council Declaration on Sport, which called for reinforced constructive dialogue with the International Olympic Committee and other stakeholders in the

world of sport.

The text acknowledges that dialogue mechanisms already exist at national, regional and local levels. It recognises that the EU Presidency and sport ministers have held informal meetings, that an EU-level dialogue has taken place via the annual EU Sport Forum, and that social dialogue in the sport sector has commenced (notably the sectoral social dialogue committee on football, established in 2008). The resolution considers that the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty ushers in a new era in EU sport priorities, and that a strengthened EU dialogue with sport stakeholders offers a valuable opportunity for continuous, well-structured exchanges on priorities, implementation and follow-up of EU cooperation in sport.

By way of implementing this strengthened dialogue, the Council agrees that the Presidency should convene, on a regular basis, informal meetings of leading public authority representatives and the sports movement, generally in the margin of Council meetings. The agenda of each meeting should focus on the issues addressed or to be addressed by the Council, ensuring relevance and timeliness. Participation should involve a limited number of invitees: representatives of the Council (the Presidency, the next Presidency, and the Council Secretariat), the European Commission, the European Parliament, and a balanced invitation to participants from the sports movement. In selecting participants from the sports movement, the Presidency should consider the agenda, topical issues (e.g., raised in the annual EU Sport Forum), continuity of representation, and representation of the diversity of the world of sport – including Olympic and non-Olympic sports, professional and amateur, competitive and recreational, grassroots, and persons with disabilities. The resolution emphasises that the international dimension of EU cooperation in sport should also be taken into account.

The overall aim is to consolidate existing structures and practices of dialogue, especially the annual EU Sport Forum, while also developing a high-level component linked to Council meetings in order to elevate the policy dialogue. By doing so, the EU seeks to ensure that sport policy remains relevant, inclusive of all sporting sectors, responsive to emerging issues, and aligned with broader European policy goals.

In effect, this resolution positions the structured dialogue as a strategic instrument for the EU and its Member States to engage sport stakeholders, align sport policy with broader European objectives, and enhance the contribution of sport to education, health, social inclusion and the European dimension of sport cooperation. The regular informal meetings, involving carefully selected participants, and a clear agenda tied to Council priorities, are intended to ensure that the sports movement and public authorities exchange views more systematically, thus improving the governance and impact of sport policy across Europe.

Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the role of the EU in the international fight against doping

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States adopted Conclusions on the role of the European Union in the international fight against doping in sport. These Conclusions reaffirm the Union's and its Member States' shared responsibility to safeguard the health of athletes, preserve the integrity of sport and tackle the societal and criminal dimensions of doping.

The document begins by recalling previous policy work, including the EU Work Plan for Sport 2011 – 2014, which had identified doping as a priority area. It emphasises that doping in sport poses multiple threats: to athletes' physical and moral integrity; to fairness and the credibility of sport; and to public health and social behaviour. The Conclusions draw attention to a key concern: while anti-doping measures in elite sport are reasonably well institutionalised, the occurrence of doping in recreational sport and fitness-centre environments remains insufficiently addressed. These environments are vulnerable to the use of prohibited substances and to trafficking networks, especially affecting young people and amateur sport participants.

Recognising the cross-border and transnational nature of doping, the Conclusions call for enhanced cooperation between national authorities, sports organisations, health, customs, police and justice bodies. They underscore the need for structured sharing of information on prevalence, prevention, testing, sanctioning and substance trafficking. The Conclusions urge Member States to develop frameworks for investigation and sanctioning of production, trafficking, distribution or possession of doping substances in recreational sport settings (such as fitness centres), and to integrate preventive, educational and recovery elements into national strategies.

One of the key actions is to extend the mandate of the EU Expert Group on Anti-Doping. The Group is tasked with collecting and pooling best practices from Member States, particularly in the area of doping in recreational sport, and to present by the end of 2013 a set of recommendations for EU and national level application. The recommendations should cover education/information-campaign initiatives, testing regimes, support for treatment and recovery of doping users, and legislative measures proven effective.

The document also invites the European Commission to undertake a study to establish an evidence base on doping in recreational sport – including prevalence data, risk-factors, effective prevention, and links to other illicit activities – and to support the dissemination of best practices, for example through EU awareness-raising campaigns or pilot projects. The Commission is further

encouraged to ensure that EU funding instruments are aligned to support anti-doping efforts in both elite and grassroots sport.

Overall, the Conclusions reflect a shift in focus: from anti-doping efforts solely in elite sport to a more inclusive, society-wide approach, recognising that doping in leisure, amateur and fitness contexts is a critical frontier. The document positions the EU not as the direct regulator of sport, but as a catalyst and facilitator for cooperation, evidence-building, capacity-development, and cross-national policy alignment. The approach emphasises the importance of preventive education, multi-sector collaboration, robust sanctioning frameworks, and mechanisms to reduce trafficking and availability of prohibited substances.

For practitioners, policymakers and national sport bodies, the Conclusions provide a clear orientation: integrate anti-doping into broader health, law-enforcement and sport infrastructure; prioritise data collection and research; extend prevention and testing beyond elite athletes; and build networks of cooperation across Member States. In doing so, the Union seeks to contribute to safe, fair and clean sporting environments at all levels.

Hungary



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| Period: | January–June 2011 |
| EU Council: | 20 May 2011 |
| Minister responsible: | Attila CZENE Minister of State for Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Krisztina GONTER |

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on a European Union Work Plan for Sport for 2011 – 2014

The Resolution by the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States sets out a coordinated European Union Work Plan for Sport for the period 2011 – 2014. It is grounded in the competence for sport under Articles 6 and 165 TFEU, which empower the EU to support, coordinate and complement national action. Furthermore, the

plan explicitly links sport to the Europe 2020 strategy's goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and recognises that sport contributes positively to social inclusion, education, training, health and active ageing.

The resolution begins by acknowledging the need for reinforced European cooperation in sport, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the Commission's Communication on Developing the European Dimension in Sport. It sets out guiding principles for the Work Plan: promoting cooperation, aligning with existing structures, addressing transnational challenges, integrating sport with other policy fields, and emphasising evidence-based policy. The Work Plan is designed as a flexible framework capable of responding to emerging developments.

Three priority themes are identified for the Work Plan:

- 1. Integrity of sport** – This includes combating doping and match-fixing, promoting good governance, addressing the supervision of sport agents and transfer systems in team sports (particularly for young players), and safeguarding the autonomy of sports organisations. Specific actions include preparation of draft EU comments on the revision of the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) Code, development of transparency principles, and studying mechanisms for agent regulation and transfer rules.
- 2. Social values of sport** – Sport is recognised as a vector for health-enhancing physical activity, social inclusion, volunteering, education and training. Actions include preparing European guidelines on "dual careers" for athletes (enabling them to combine sport with study or work), following up on inclusion of sport-related qualifications in national frameworks, and exploring ways to promote grassroots participation and health-enhancing sport.
- 3. Economic aspects of sport** – The Work Plan aims to strengthen the evidence base on the economic dimension of sport, sustainable financing mechanisms (especially for grassroots sport), and integrating sport within employment and regional development policies. Actions include promoting data collection aligned with the Vilnius definition of sport satellite accounts and recommending mechanisms to strengthen financial solidarity.

To support implementation, the resolution establishes working methods and structures. Expert groups are to be created (or reinforced) in areas such as anti-doping; good governance; education and training in sport; sport, health and participation; sport statistics; and sustainable financing. Other methods include Presidency conferences, informal ministerial meetings, structured dialogue with stakeholders, and an annual EU Sport Forum involving grassroots organisations. The Commission is invited to produce a report by early 2014 based on preparatory actions, which will serve as the basis for a new Work Plan.

The resolution invites Member States and the Commission, within their respective competences

and in line with subsidiarity and respect for the autonomy of sport, to: integrate the Work Plan's priorities into national policies; provide regular information on progress to stakeholders; promote coordination between sport and other sectors; and involve grassroots organisations. Member States are asked to ensure that sport is included in policy development in other fields such as education, employment, health and regional development. The Commission is invited to facilitate participation of Member States in expert groups; organise the annual Sport Forum; undertake an impact assessment of sport-related funding; and produce a report on the Work Plan's implementation.

Overall, the resolution positions sport not simply as a recreational activity but as a strategic contributor to broader European objectives: promoting good governance and integrity, delivering social benefits, and underpinning economic development. For stakeholders such as sports federations, national authorities and the Commission alike, the Work Plan frames sport policy within a European context, aligning sport action with major EU strategies and ensuring structured cooperation, monitoring and evidence-based practice over the 2011 – 2014 period.

Poland



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| Period: | July–December 2011 |
| EU Council: | 29 November 2011 |
| Minister responsible: | Joanna MUCHA Minister of Sport and Tourism |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Agata DZIARNOWSKA |

Council conclusions on the role of voluntary activities in sport in promoting active citizenship

The Council's conclusions address the essential role of voluntary activities in sport as an instrument for promoting active citizenship, social inclusion and the generation of wider societal benefits. It builds on earlier frameworks such as the Joint Declaration on the social value of sport for young people (2003) and the designation of 2011 as the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship. The text first recalls that voluntary activity refers to formal, non-

formal or informal acts freely undertaken without financial gain, for the benefit of society. It emphasises that while volunteering in sport is highly valuable, it must not be used as a substitute for paid employment nor reduce the responsibility of the state to ensure economic, social and cultural rights.

The conclusions recognise that sport is the largest civil society movement in the EU and that much of its functioning depends on unpaid contributions. Volunteering in sport offers pathways to active citizenship, integration of diverse social groups, greater understanding and respect across backgrounds, and strengthens personal and social capital. It highlights the capacity of sport volunteering to develop key competences such as leadership, teamwork, resilience, tolerance and respect – and thereby to enhance employability, promote mobility and develop a sense of belonging. The document situates these benefits within the wider Europe 2020 agenda, emphasising how volunteer-rich sport contributes to smart, inclusive and sustainable growth.

A key part of the conclusions is structured around invitations addressed to Member States, sport stakeholders and the European Commission. Member States and sport organisations are invited to:



create favourable conditions for sport volunteering by encouraging exchange of good practices, respecting autonomy of sport organisations, and ensuring volunteers enjoy safe participation and appropriate training; promote a positive image of sport volunteers; recognise the competences and skills acquired through volunteering and study possibilities for validation within national qualification frameworks; foster cooperation between public authorities and sport organisations, establish networks and ensure cross-sectoral cooperation; treat sport volunteering as non-formal and informal learning, part of dual career pathways for athletes and as a complement to formal education; engage volunteers beyond single events and harness their potential for long-term activity; launch campaigns to raise awareness and consider reward systems to recognise innovation in volunteer sport projects.

Further, Member States and the Commission are encouraged to address structural and systemic aspects: to eliminate unnecessary administrative burdens on sport volunteering, to study the development and economic/social impact of voluntary sport activities, to exchange knowledge, experience and best practice across Member

States, and to integrate sport volunteering into national and EU policy frameworks for sport, social inclusion, education, employment and health. Cross-sectoral cooperation among sport, health, culture, education, youth and social policy is emphasised. The Commission specifically is invited to ensure that non-profit sport organisations can access future EU programmes and funds, to identify success factors and best practices, to analyse legal/financial obstacles to volunteering in sport, and to assess impacts of future legislation on voluntary sport activities.

In summary, the document positions sport volunteering as simultaneously a right (opportunity for citizens to participate freely in sport-based volunteering) and a tool (for promoting skills, social inclusion, employability, community integration and health). The conclusions call for a coordinated approach: recognising and supporting the volunteer dimension of sport, aligning it with broader policy goals and enabling sport organisations and volunteers to contribute fully to active citizenship and the social dimension of the European sport agenda.

Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the representation of the EU Member States in the Foundation Board of WADA and the coordination of the EU and its Member States' positions prior to WADA meetings

The 2011 Resolution addresses the representation of the EU Member States in the Foundation Board of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and sets out the coordination of positions of the EU and its Member States in advance of WADA meetings. It begins by recalling the earlier Council conclusions on combating doping (2000) and on the EU's role in the international fight against doping (2010), and acknowledges that the EU and its Member States should exercise their competences and play their role in the preparation, negotiation and adoption of WADA's rules, standards and guidelines.

The Resolution recognises that there is a need for practical modalities concerning the participation of the EU and its Member States in WADA's work and the coordination of their positions prior to WADA meetings. It highlights the importance of continuity and of having representations at an appropriate ministerial level, supported by the relevant expertise. The Resolution therefore sets out key arrangements:

1. Allocation of Board Seats

- One seat on the WADA Foundation Board shall be held by one of the Member States forming the incumbent Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU.
- One seat shall be held by one of the Member States forming the future Trio Presidency.
- One seat shall be jointly allocated by the Member States meeting within the Council to

a person responsible for sport at ministerial level (the “expert at governmental level”), nominated by Member States other than those holding the Trio Presidency seats. All representatives must be at ministerial level and have appropriate experience and knowledge. The first term of the arrangements takes effect on 1 January 2013. Terms of office are three years. Transitional arrangements apply for the initial seat terms from incumbent Member States whose term starts 1 January 2013.

2. Coordination of Positions Before WADA Meetings

The Resolution includes guidelines (Annex II) for the Council, Member States and the Commission on how to coordinate positions for WADA meetings and the related Cahama (Council of Europe) processes. The coordination process begins with the analysis of the WADA meeting agenda by the Presidency (assisted by the General Secretariat of the Council) and the Commission, followed by a draft EU position prepared by the Working Party on Sport, agreement via Coreper where appropriate, and presentation in Cahama and WADA meetings. Ad hoc coordination may also take place. The representative from the EU Member States on the WADA Board is required to report the outcome of the Board meeting to the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council and the Council Working Party on Sport.

3. Review and Evaluation

By 31 December 2015, the Council and the Member States shall review the experience gained from implementing the arrangements and consider whether adjustments are needed. This review mechanism ensures adaptability and responsiveness to changed circumstances.

4. Implementation and Legal Framework

The arrangements explicitly respect the applicable EU acquis and the duty of sincere cooperation. Member States and the Commission are to act in close coordination, under the leadership of the Presidency, ensuring that EU competences are respected. The Resolution emphasises continuity and coherence in the European representation in WADA and reinforces the strategic interest of the EU to speak with a coordinated voice in the global anti-doping context.

In essence, this Resolution institutionalises a structured European approach to representation in WADA and prior coordination of anti-doping positions, thereby strengthening the EU’s collective capacity to influence global anti-doping policy. For Member States and national sport authorities, it signals a commitment to cooperate and integrate national action into a broader European system of governance, thereby contributing to the integrity of sport worldwide and ensuring that the European continent presents a unified front in the fight against doping.

Council Conclusions on Combating Match-fixing

The Council conclusions adopted in December 2011 address the issue of match-fixing as one of the most serious threats facing contemporary sport. Recognising that the integrity and unpredictability of sporting competition are fundamental to sport's appeal and values, the document highlights how manipulation of results – often linked to illegal betting cartels and money-laundering – undermines fair play, respect and solidarity. Because sport is transnational by nature and betting markets operate across borders, the problem cannot be restricted to one country or one sport. The conclusions build on earlier European policy initiatives, including the EU Work Plan for Sport 2011 – 2014 and a range of communications on gambling, corruption and the European dimension in sport.

A key message is that efforts at EU level must complement national actions by sports organisations, public authorities and betting operators. The document highlights good governance in sport as a critical prevention tool: mechanisms such as banning participants from betting on the sports in which they are involved, ensuring regular payment of salaries, financial transparency and stability are identified as reducing the risk of manipulation. Appropriate, effective and dissuasive sanctions – disciplinary, criminal or both – are deemed necessary. The Council welcomes that the Commission has launched a study on the legal framework applicable to sporting fraud in the Member States.

The conclusions set out a three-fold invitation to Member States and stakeholders (sports movement, public authorities, betting operators) to act in their respective spheres. First, the development of education and awareness-raising programmes: for example, former athletes can help convey the risks of manipulation of results to younger athletes and sports officials. Second, enhanced cooperation and information-sharing among all relevant actors: this includes international agreements to exchange data and best practice on detection, investigation and prevention of irregular betting and match-fixing. Third, commissioning or launching studies to ascertain the prevalence, underlying vulnerabilities, and remedial policy options for match-fixing.

Further, the Council calls on Member States, the Presidency and the Commission (within their competences and respecting subsidiarity and sports autonomy) to: monitor and contribute to ongoing work in international forums (for example the International Olympic Committee and Council of Europe), support the Expert Group “Good Governance in Sport” to build a European dimension of sport integrity (particularly for match-fixing), include provisions on cooperation on match-fixing in national and EU-level agreements (particularly relating to irregular gambling), and – in light of the studies' results - consider a political declaration among public authorities,

sports movement and betting operators.

The European Commission is specifically invited to take forward several actions: to map the situation of match-fixing in the EU and beyond (identifying problems, initiatives and proposed solutions); to promote the issue through its dialogue with sport stakeholders (for example via the EU Sport Forum); to pilot trans-national prevention projects with particular focus on awareness-raising among athletes and officials; to consider proposing a Council Recommendation on combating match-fixing in the light of those studies and work of the Expert Group; and to ensure that issues of match-fixing and irregular gambling are integrated in bilateral and third-country relations.

In summary, the Council positions sport integrity not as a side-issue but as central to the purpose of sport policy: protecting fairness, safeguarding public trust, and preserving sport as a driver of social values. The conclusions thus frame match-fixing as a multifaceted challenge requiring awareness, education, governance reforms, cross-sector cooperation, international exchange, and evidence-based policy. For stakeholders in sport, it provides a European-level roadmap to align regulatory, educational and strategic efforts in addressing the manipulation of sport results.

Denmark

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| Period: | January–June 2012 |
| EU Council: | 10 May 2012 |
| Minister responsible: | Uffe ELBÆK Minister of Culture |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Hans Kristian KRISTENSEN |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 10 May 2012 on combating doping in recreational sport

The Council conclusions of 10 May 2012 on combating doping in recreational sport address the increasing problem of substance use beyond elite competition. The Council acknowledges that doping in recreational environments – such as gyms and fitness clubs – poses serious risks

to public health, violates the spirit of sport, and is often associated with illegal production and trafficking of substances. It stresses that most existing anti-doping frameworks focus on professional sport, leaving a significant gap in policy coverage for recreational athletes.

The document highlights that motivations for doping in non-elite sport differ from those in professional sport. Recreational users may seek improved appearance, strength, or self-confidence rather than competitive advantage. This makes the problem deeply rooted in social and psychological factors, requiring comprehensive educational and preventive approaches rather than only testing and sanctioning.

The Council underlines that reliable data on the extent of doping in recreational sport are limited and that research is fragmented. To develop effective policies, a better evidence base is needed to understand prevalence, risk factors, and the effectiveness of prevention strategies. It therefore calls for improved monitoring, data sharing, and cross-sectoral cooperation.

Member States are invited to enhance preventive measures through awareness campaigns, education in schools and sports clubs, and information targeting the fitness sector. The conclusions also call for closer coordination between sport authorities, health and education ministries, police, customs, and judicial bodies to combat trafficking and illegal sales of doping substances. Cooperation with the pharmaceutical industry and international organisations such as Europol, Interpol, and the World Anti-Doping Agency is encouraged.

In addition, Member States are urged to create or strengthen national investigation and sanctioning frameworks for offences related to the manufacture, distribution, or use of doping substances in recreational contexts. The Council points out that such efforts are necessary to complement criminal law enforcement with preventive and educational policies.

To ensure continuity at the EU level, the Council agrees to extend the mandate of the Expert Group on Anti-Doping under the EU Work Plan for Sport 2011–2014. This group is tasked with collecting best practices in education, prevention, testing, and recovery, and with submitting recommendations by the end of 2013. The European Commission is invited to support studies that build the evidence base for future policies, facilitate exchange of information between Member States, and examine how existing EU funding instruments can support anti-doping initiatives.

Overall, these conclusions mark an evolution in the EU's anti-doping policy. They shift attention from elite athletes to the broader public and recognise doping as a public health issue rather than solely a sporting one. The Council positions education, cooperation, and research as key tools for prevention. It calls for integrating anti-doping measures into wider health promotion and sport participation strategies to safeguard both the integrity of sport and the wellbeing of all participants.

Cyprus



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| Period: | July–December 2012 |
| EU Council: | 27 November 2012 |
| Minister responsible: | George DEMOSTHENOUS Minister of Education and Culture |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Vassos KOUTSIOUNDAS |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 27 November 2012 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA)

The Council conclusions of 27 November 2012 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) address the growing concern that a large proportion of Europe's population remains insufficiently active, despite the well-documented benefits of regular physical activity for physical and mental health. The Council highlights that inactivity contributes to non-communicable diseases, rising health-care costs and declining quality of life, and that promoting physical activity is therefore an essential element of preventive health policy and sustainable health systems.

The conclusions emphasise the "HEPA" concept – health-enhancing physical activity – which goes beyond organised sport to include everyday movement such as walking, cycling, active commuting and physical education. The Council stresses that fostering active lifestyles requires a cross-sectoral approach, engaging not only sport authorities but also those responsible for health, education, transport, environment, urban planning and social inclusion. It encourages cooperation between public authorities, the sport movement, schools, workplaces, local governments and civil society.

Member States are invited to develop or strengthen long-term national strategies and action plans to promote physical activity, setting measurable objectives and indicators. These strategies should include awareness-raising campaigns, infrastructure that supports walking and cycling, active school programmes, workplace initiatives, and measures targeting vulnerable or inactive groups such as older adults, children and persons with disabilities. The Council also calls for

regular monitoring of physical activity levels, collection of comparable data and evaluation of national and regional programmes to ensure evidence-based policymaking.

In parallel, the Council urges enhanced cooperation and exchange between Member States to share knowledge and best practices. It invites the European Commission to facilitate these exchanges, support research and data collection, and promote coordination through EU-level platforms and networks. The conclusions underline the importance of partnerships with the sport sector, local authorities, and non-governmental organisations to maximise outreach and impact.

A particularly significant element of the conclusions is the invitation to the European Commission to consider establishing an annual European Week of Sport, designed to raise public awareness, celebrate the benefits of active lifestyles, and inspire citizens to participate in sport and physical activity. This initiative would serve as a unifying campaign across Member States, helping to connect existing local and national activities and showcasing good practices at European level. The Council further notes that the promotion of HEPA contributes to broader EU objectives under the Europe 2020 strategy, including improving public health, enhancing productivity, supporting social inclusion and fostering sustainable growth. It stresses that a physically active population contributes to stronger communities and lower public health expenditure.

Overall, the 2012 conclusions provide a comprehensive framework for embedding physical activity promotion in public policy. They call for long-term, evidence-based strategies, broad partnerships across sectors and levels of governance, and the use of initiatives such as the European Week of Sport to mobilise citizens and institutions towards a more active and healthier Europe.

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 27 November 2012 on strengthening the evidence base for sport policy making

The Council's Conclusions of 27 November 2012 on strengthening the evidence-base for sport policy make a clear case for the need to elevate the quantity, comparability and quality of data underpinning sport policy at national and European levels. Recognising that sport contributes to Europe's economy, employment, social inclusion and growth, the document highlights that policy-making in this field cannot be sustained merely on anecdotal evidence or isolated studies: it needs robust statistical frameworks and shared methodologies.

In the “recalling” part, the document refers to the EU’s mandate under Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to develop the European dimension in sport and to the 2011–2014 EU Work Plan for Sport which prioritised evidence-based sport policy. It recognises the work undertaken in establishing a common definition of sport (the “Vilnius Definition of Sport”), the development of sport satellite accounts in some Member States, and the EU Conference on Sport Statistics in March 2011.

The document then “considers that” the financial and economic crisis and pressure on public resources heighten the need for evidence that sport policies deliver growth, employment and societal benefits. While growing evidence points to sport accounting for around 1.7 % of EU gross value added (and closer to 3% when multipliers are included), the conclusions note the lack of harmonised data across states and the incomplete capture of sport’s indirect socio-economic impacts (such as voluntary work, health benefits, regional development).

Against this background, the Council invites Member States to:

- Continue progress in voluntarily developing sport satellite accounts (SSAs) using existing methodological instruments and cooperation structures, and involve national statistical offices;
- Encourage and support initiatives aimed at improving the collection and dissemination of information and data regarding sport, including data on participation, economic contribution, employment, and societal benefits.

The Council also invites the Presidency of the Council, the Member States and the Commission, within their respective competences, to:

- Improve the evidence base regarding social and economic aspects of sport in the EU and its Member States, for example by including sport-related data in the European Statistical Programme 2013–2017 and subsequent Annual Statistical Work Programmes;
- Seek to enhance cooperation between institutional structures for sport and for statistical systems at European and national levels;
- Promote a wider understanding of sport’s role as a driver for growth, employment, skills development and social cohesion, and ensure that this is taken into account in national and regional policy making and in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Finally, the Council invites the European Commission to:

- On the basis of previous work, consider using available and future EU funding instruments to support national efforts to develop sport satellite accounts;
- Promote the strengthening of the evidence base for sport by supporting national efforts to develop SSAs and share best practices at EU level; identify key data-needs (such as participation rates) and work towards the collection and dissemination of EU-wide sport

data; launch and disseminate EU surveys and studies (including Eurobarometer, etc.) and include sport in existing Eurostat surveys; and inform Member States and sport stakeholders about relevant funding instruments and initiatives.

In summary, the 2012 conclusions establish a strategic framework for making sport policy more evidence-informed, stressing that robust data and statistics are not optional but essential for designing, monitoring and evaluating sports policy, for demonstrating sport's value in economic and social terms, and for aligning sport with EU growth and employment agendas. For national sport agencies, federations and policy-makers, the document calls to prioritise data-infrastructure investment, methodological alignment, multi-stakeholder collaboration and embedding sport statistics into broader statistical ecosystems.

Presidency Conclusions on Establishing a Strategy to Combat the Manipulation of Sports Results

The Presidency Conclusions on establishing a strategy to combat the manipulation of sports results identify match-fixing and betting-related fraud as one of the most serious threats to modern sport. The document acknowledges that manipulation of competition outcomes violates the fundamental values of fairness, integrity, and respect that underpin sport, while also harming its economic and social dimensions. It highlights that the phenomenon is increasingly linked to organised crime networks, operating across borders and exploiting the rapid growth of online betting markets.

The Presidency underlines that, although the primary responsibility for preventing match-fixing lies with sport organisations, effective prevention requires close collaboration among all relevant actors – public authorities, law enforcement agencies, the betting sector, and international organisations. It stresses the need for a coherent and coordinated European response to complement national and international efforts.

In its analysis, the Presidency points out that the manipulation of sports results can take various forms – from individual corruption of players or officials, to systemic manipulation of competitions, often driven by illegal betting markets. It notes that inconsistent legislation, fragmented enforcement, and lack of data exchange hinder effective action. Education and awareness-raising among athletes, referees, and coaches are identified as key preventive tools, alongside ethical training and transparent governance in sport organisations.

The conclusions propose several strategic priorities for Member States and EU institutions:

1. **Strengthen prevention** – by developing codes of conduct, ethical frameworks, and education campaigns on the risks and consequences of manipulation.
2. **Improve detection and monitoring** – by creating early-warning systems in cooperation with betting operators and international bodies, and by establishing mechanisms for information sharing across jurisdictions.
3. **Enhance sanctioning and enforcement** – by ensuring that manipulation of sports results is recognised as a criminal offence where appropriate, with penalties proportionate to the severity of the violation.

The Presidency also encourages Member States to support the negotiation and eventual implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (later known as the Macolin Convention), recognising it as a key international instrument in this area.

The conclusions further invite the European Commission to facilitate cooperation between Member States, the sport movement, Europol, and the betting industry. The Commission is asked to explore the use of EU programmes and funding to support education, training, and research on match-fixing prevention. It is also encouraged to strengthen policy coordination through expert groups and exchange of best practices at EU level.

Finally, the document stresses the importance of developing a European strategy against manipulation of sports results that integrates legal, educational, and technological dimensions. Such a strategy should promote integrity across all levels of sport, protect athletes and competitions from undue influence, and preserve public confidence in sport's values.

In summary, the Presidency Conclusions establish the foundation for a coordinated European approach against match-fixing - combining education, prevention, monitoring, criminal enforcement, and international cooperation to safeguard the integrity of sport across the Union.



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| Period: | January–June 2013 |
| EU Council: | 17 May 2013 |
| Minister responsible: | Michael RING Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Annemarie SMITH |

Council Conclusions on Dual Careers for Athletes

The Council Conclusions address the necessity of supporting dual careers for talented and elite athletes, meaning the ability to combine high-level sport with education and/or employment. The document defines a “dual career” as the possibility for athletes to pursue sport and education and/or work without unreasonable personal effort, thereby preserving their moral, health, educational and professional interests. The definitions of “talented athlete” and “elite athlete” are clarified: a talented athlete is recognised as having potential for elite sport; an elite athlete is one with a professional contract or recognised status in elite sports, including disabled athletes.

Recognising that elite athletes often face unique challenges – frequent training, competition abroad, mobility, high time demands and sometimes short career spans – the conclusions state that national and European policy should respond to these realities. They note that participation of athletes in sport provides societal benefits: athletes serve as role models, convey values such as dedication and fairness, and support social objectives like youth engagement and inclusion. Dual-career support aligns with broader EU goals: preventing early school leaving, boosting higher education attainment, improving employability and contributing to the Europe 2020 objectives.

The conclusions invite Member States to take several actions: establish or reinforce national frameworks that allow dual-career pathways, ensure flexible educational provision (modular teaching, recognition of non-formal/informal learning), facilitate athlete mobility across

borders and institutions, and coordinate sport organisations, education and labour sectors. Special attention is drawn to athletes preparing and competing abroad, as their mobility complicates combining sport with study or employment. Education policies should be adapted to athletes' needs without compromising quality. The social dimension is emphasised: preventing disadvantage for athletes after retirement and enabling their integration into education or employment.

For the European dimension, Member States, the Council Presidency and the Commission are invited to foster exchange and cooperation: share best practices, develop guidelines, support research on effective dual-career systems, and facilitate networks between sport federations, educational authorities and employment sectors across the EU. The Commission is specifically asked to promote these efforts, provide guidance documents, support pilot initiatives, and raise awareness of the dual-career concept at European level. Attention is drawn to the need to involve all stakeholders: athletes, clubs, federations, universities, employers and authorities.

In conclusion, the 2013 document provides a comprehensive policy roadmap to embed dual-career support into sport and education systems across the EU. It positions athletes not only as performers but as individuals with a broader life trajectory, linking sport participation with personal development, education and employment. By doing so, the conclusions reinforce sport's societal role and align athlete policy with educational, labour and social inclusion objectives. For national sport agencies, federations and educational institutions, the text offers strategic guidance to build structured support mechanisms, flexible learning paths and multi-stakeholder cooperation to ensure that talented athletes maximise their potential both on the field and beyond.

Lithuania



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| Period: | July–December 2013 |
| EU Council: | 26 November 2013 |
| Minister responsible: | Dailis Alfonsas BARAKAUSKAS Minister of the Interior |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Agne URBONAITE |

Council Recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors

The Council Recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors provides a comprehensive framework for integrating physical activity into EU policy and practice, recognising that large parts of the population remain insufficiently active despite clear evidence of the wide-ranging health, social and economic benefits of regular movement. It begins by acknowledging that physical inactivity contributes to major non-communicable diseases (such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain cancers), mental-health problems and musculoskeletal issues, and imposes substantial direct and indirect costs on health-care systems and society as a whole. The Recommendation stresses that while some Member States have advanced policy responses, the EU as a whole still faces large disparities in activity levels and policy implementation.

At the core of the Recommendation is the concept of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) – defined broadly to include everyday movement, active transport, leisure-time sport and physical education – and the call to pursue a cross-sectoral approach. This means linking the health agenda with sport, transport, education, workplaces, urban and rural planning, and the social inclusion agenda. The Recommendation invites Member States to develop or strengthen national HEPA strategies that: set clear objectives and indicators; assign responsibilities across sectors; ensure sustainable funding; embed monitoring and evaluation; target all age groups and vulnerable populations; and promote environments that make physical activity easy, safe and attractive.

Specifically, the Recommendation urges Member States to: (a) embed HEPA in national, regional

and local policies, including health-, education-, transport- and sport-related strategies; (b) ensure leadership and governance mechanisms that span ministries and levels of administration; (c) engage stakeholders from the sport movement, civil society, employers, educational institutions and local communities; (d) focus on equity by targeting groups with low activity levels (children, older adults, persons with disabilities, migrants, disadvantaged socio-economic groups); (e) invest in capacity-building, communication, awareness-raising and behaviour change; (f) design supportive environments (active travel infrastructure, access to green spaces, active schools and workplaces); and (g) monitor progress using indicators, data collection and research. The Recommendation encourages Member States to utilise existing EU and international guidelines (including those developed by the World Health Organization) and to participate in peer-learning, exchange of good practices and networks.

On the European level, the Recommendation invites the European Commission to support Member States by facilitating benchmarking, compiling and disseminating best practices, assisting in improving data collection and comparability, and exploring how EU funding instruments can support multi-sector HEPA initiatives. The Commission is called upon to foster transnational networks and encourage Member States to consider HEPA indicators in their reporting and monitoring systems.

Importantly, the Recommendation highlights the alignment of HEPA promotion with broader EU strategic objectives (such as the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth): an active population contributes to productivity, social inclusion and reduced health-care burdens. The document emphasises that lasting progress requires sustained policy commitment, integrated governance, measurable targets and periodic evaluation.

In summary, the 2013 Recommendation offers a strong policy roadmap for Member States and EU institutions to embed physical activity systematically across society. It elevates HEPA from a sport or health initiative to a cross-sector public-policy objective, urging governance structures, stakeholder alliances, evidence-informed interventions and everyday-life environments that support movement for all. For national sport, health and education agencies, the text serves as a strategic reference to align local policy with European goals and build inclusive, long-term systems for physical activity promotion.

Greece



Hellenic Presidency of the Council
of the European Union

Period:

January–June 2014

EU Council:

21 May 2014

Minister responsible:

**Panos PANAGIOTOPoulos, Minister
for Culture and Audiovisual and Sport**

Sport Working Party Chair:

Kalliopi NEDELKOU

Council Conclusions on the Contribution of Sport to the EU Economy, and in Particular to Addressing Youth Unemployment and Social Inclusion

The Council conclusions focus on the role of sport in the European Union economy, especially with respect to youth unemployment and social inclusion. The document opens by acknowledging the severity of youth unemployment across the EU and its regions, noting that in August 2013 the youth unemployment rate stood at 23.3 % for the EU-28, with dramatically higher rates in some Member States and regions. It underscores that young people bear disproportionate burdens from the economic crisis, and that persistent unemployment risks long-term marginalisation, eroded social cohesion and weakened civic participation.

Against this backdrop, the conclusions emphasise the potential of sport to address these challenges. They assert that engagement in sport offers young people opportunities to develop key personal and professional competences – such as leadership, communication, teamwork, discipline, creativity and an entrepreneurial mind-set – which are relevant and valued in the labour market. Sport also supports the acquisition of domain-specific skills in areas like marketing, management and public safety. The value of voluntary engagement in sport is highlighted: approximately 24 % of volunteers in Europe are active in sport, underscoring its importance for social, economic and democratic participation.

The document further points out that sport transcends cultural and socio-economic boundaries, has universal appeal and therefore offers a strong vehicle for integrating marginalised or minority groups, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting community cohesion. The sport sector is shown to contribute significantly to national economies: a study indicates that sport-related value added in the EU amounts to 1.76 % of GDP, while sport-related employment corresponds to 2.12 %; when multiplier effects are accounted for the share rises to 2.98 %. This economic dimension positions sport as comparable to agriculture, forestry and fishing combined.

Recognising this dual social and economic role of sport, the conclusions recommend a range of strategic actions. Investment in sport infrastructure – especially small-scale, publicly accessible facilities in socially deprived areas – is cited as a way to create jobs, enhance social inclusion and improve health outcomes. The document encourages exploring ways in which structural funds (notably the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund) and other EU financing mechanisms (including possible European Investment Bank resources) can support sport-based interventions and infrastructure development.

Furthermore, the conclusions emphasise the importance of better stakeholder engagement and dialogue: sport organisations, the sporting goods industry, youth organisations and public authorities are called to enhance cooperation, develop initiatives to attract young people into the sport sector and reflect on how sport's contribution to youth employability and community inclusion can be most effectively integrated into future EU sport policy.

Finally, the Council invites the European Commission to respond to the key policy messages by organising a high-level cross-sectoral seminar on sport's role in job creation and youth unemployment; preparing a study on sport's contribution to the employability of young people in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy; and integrating these considerations into future EU sport cooperation frameworks.

In sum, the conclusions position sport as a strategic lever: a domain that can support both economic recovery (through growth, employment and sectoral value) and social inclusion (through skills development, community integration and opportunity for marginalised groups). By leveraging sport more deliberately in the EU policy mix, the document suggests that sport can play a meaningful role in tackling youth unemployment and fostering inclusive growth.

Council Conclusions of 21 May 2014 on Gender Equality in Sport

The Council conclusions adopted on 21 May 2014 stress that equality between women and men is a core objective of the European Union and is enshrined in the treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The document highlights that gender equality must be pursued in all spheres including sport, where the principle is still not fully realised. Although some progress has been made at national and international levels, the conclusions indicate that women's participation in sport, representation in leadership and coaching roles, and protection from gender-based violence remain far below acceptable standards.

Within the sport sector, girls and women still participate less than boys and men; women are disproportionately under-represented in decision-making bodies, coaching and refereeing; and the risk of gender-based violence – including sexual harassment and abuse of minors – remains significant and requires further research and action. Sport is recognised as having a unique role in shaping identities, fostering social inclusion, integrating diverse groups and developing skills, and

this potential can only be fully exploited if gender equality is embedded across all levels.

The conclusions outline that legislation alone is not enough to achieve gender equality in sport. A comprehensive approach is needed: mainstreaming the gender perspective, gender-sensitive planning, monitoring, tools such as gender budgeting and gender impact assessments, the elimination of stereotypes and raising awareness. Sport organisations, public authorities and stakeholders should actively engage in developing strategies, policies and practices to: promote gender balance in decision-making; remove obstacles preventing women's full participation in coaching and management; ensure inclusive governance structures; and protect persons in sport from violence and abuse, especially minors. Educational and training programmes are encouraged for coaches, managers, parents and young people, while media and advertising should contribute to dismantling harmful gender roles.

Member States are invited to develop and maintain national action plans or strategies on gender equality in sport, cooperate closely with the sports movement, integrate gender equality into sport at all levels, support the elimination of gender-based violence and ensure mechanisms for protection of victims. They should consider guidelines and tools to verify the suitability of persons working with minors, support cross-border awareness-raising campaigns, evaluate and monitor progress, and integrate gender equality conditions into sport-related funding where appropriate.

The Commission is asked to mainstream gender equality in EU sport policy, strengthen cooperation with the social partners and sport movement, support research (particularly on violence in sport, participation of women in leadership and the impact of gender stereotypes), promote transnational projects and best-practice exchange, and encourage the use of instruments such as gender budgeting in sport programmes, including Erasmus+ and other EU funding schemes.

In conclusion, the document positions gender equality as an essential component of sport policy. It recognises the multiple dimensions of sport – participation, governance, education, inclusion, protection – and stresses that only through gender-sensitive strategic measures, comprehensive monitoring, education/training, and collaboration between authorities and the sport movement can the full societal, economic and educational potential of sport be realised.

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council – European Union Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017)

The Resolution of 21 May 2014 establishing the European Union Work Plan for Sport for 2014 – 2017 builds on previous EU sport policy frameworks by reaffirming that sport is an area in which the

Union may support, coordinate and supplement Member State action under Articles 6 and 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The Plan recalls the earlier Work Plan for Sport 2011 – 2014 and the Commission's report on its implementation, and acknowledges both the achievements to date and the need to respond to new and evolving challenges in sport.

A key premise of the Work Plan is that sport contributes not only to health, education and social inclusion, but also to the economy: sport's economic dimension is highlighted via elements such as innovation, sustainable event-legacy, and the wider multiplier effect of sport on employment, research and regional development. At the same time, sport's societal role is emphasised: promoting health-enhancing physical activity, volunteering, training and lifelong learning in sport, and the development of skills and capacities connected to sport. The Plan sets out priorities for the 2014 – 2017 period along two overarching strands:

The economic dimension of sport: This includes sustainable financing of sport activities and organisations, maximising the legacy of major sporting events, leveraging innovation and research in sport-related technologies and services, and promoting entrepreneurship linked to sport. The Plan invites stakeholders to explore how sport can be a driver of growth and employment, and how sport policy can interact more effectively with other policy fields such as regional development, industry and research.

Sport and society: This dimension addresses sport's contribution to inclusive growth through health, physical activity, volunteering and education. It stresses the importance of enhancing participation in sport across all societal groups, developing volunteering (both at grassroots and organised sport levels), recognising and supporting informal and non-formal learning associated with sport, and strengthening education and training pathways for those active in sport organisations. Employment within the sport sector, skills development, and social inclusion through sport are core concerns.

The Plan emphasises that these themes are inter-linked: for example, greater sport participation can enhance societal well-being and thereby contribute to economic outcomes; innovation in sport can generate both new jobs and social benefits; volunteering can build human capital and enhance employability and social integration. The document sets forth the expectation of mutual learning, exchange of best practices, enhanced cooperation between Member States, regional and local authorities, and sport stakeholders. It further underscores the need to monitor progress, review the Work Plan in light of experience or changing environment, and adjust priorities if required.

Implementation is addressed via actions such as peer review, stakeholder conferences, advisory groups and targeted research. The Plan invites the Commission and Member States to align their policies, exploit existing funding mechanisms, support cross-border cooperation and maintain a dynamic dialogue with the sport movement. It also stresses the European dimension:

ensuring that sport policy benefits from added value at the EU level, by fostering transnational cooperation and avoiding fragmentation of efforts.

In conclusion, the Work Plan for Sport 2014 – 2017 sets out a strategic roadmap to harness both the societal and economic potential of sport across the European Union. By focusing on innovation, volunteering, education, health-enhancing physical activity, event legacy, sustainable financing and inclusive growth, and by calling for regular review and cooperation, the Resolution aims to strengthen the role of sport in support of broader European policy objectives.



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| Period: | July–December 2014 |
| EU Council: | 25 November 2014 |
| Minister responsible: | Graziano DELRIO, Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in charge of Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Giovanni PANEBIANCO |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on sport as a driver of innovation and economic growth

The Council conclusions adopted in November 2014 underline that the sport sector should be understood not only in terms of recreation, health or social inclusion but also as a significant driver of innovation, job creation and economic growth. Recognising that sport represents an economic sector accounting for approximately 1.76 % of the EU's gross value added (GVA), with indirect multiplier effects raising that share further, and that sport-related employment accounts for some 2.12 % of total employment, the document argues that sport's innovation dimension has been "exceptionally resilient" during times of economic crisis.

Innovation in the sport sector is driven by competition, media and market forces, large audiences, sponsorship and technological investment. These forces stimulate advances in



textiles, biomechanics, sensors, materials, human-machine interfaces, health-monitoring technologies and sports services, with spill-over into other industries. The conclusions note that partnerships between sport organisations, academia, industry and public authorities can leverage this innovation capacity, leading to new business opportunities, export potential, job creation and regional development. The sport industry thus serves as a micro-cosm of innovation systems: developing niche technologies, scaling them into adjacent markets (wearables, health, recreation, digital platforms) and attracting investment.

To harness this potential, the conclusions set out key priority actions for Member States and the Commission. Member States are encouraged to: adopt national strategies that recognise sport's innovation role; promote research & development in sport-related areas; support start-ups and SMEs in the sport innovation ecosystem; facilitate public-private cooperation; encourage the use of structural and regional funds to support sport-innovation clusters; and monitor the economic and employment impact of sport. Stakeholders across the sport movement, industry and academia are urged to cooperate more closely, share knowledge and best practices, and promote entrepreneurship and training in sport innovation.

The Commission is invited to facilitate the innovation agenda in sport by: supporting evidence-based research and data collection on sport innovation and its socio-economic impact; facilitating trans-national cooperation and best-practice exchange; integrating sport-innovation into EU funding instruments (research, regional, structural and investment funds); reviewing policy frameworks to remove barriers to innovation (for example intellectual property, procurement, standardisation); and organising workshops or conferences bringing together sport, industry, research and policy actors. The conclusions also stress the need to evaluate

progress, collect consistent data across Member States and sport-innovation sub-sectors, and to ensure that sport-innovation contributes to the broader Europe 2020 agenda of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In summary, the document positions sport as a strategic arena for innovation and economic growth, beyond its social, health or recreational functions. By leveraging sport's unique features – its global market, youth appeal, technological fascination, volunteer networks and habit-forming nature – Member States and EU institutions are invited to build ecosystems where sport innovation thrives, generating new knowledge, business opportunities and regional competitive advantages. For policy makers this means aligning sport policy with research & innovation policy, industry strategy, regional development programmes and employment initiatives – thus tapping the full economic and innovation potential of the sport sector.

Latvia



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| Period: | January–June 2015 |
| EU Council: | 19 May 2015 |
| Minister responsible: | Mārīte SEILE Minister for Education and Science |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Santa OZOLINA |

Council conclusions on maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills, especially among young people

The Council conclusions focus on the contribution of grassroots sport to the development of transversal skills among young people. These skills – such as teamwork, initiative, creativity, problem-solving, communication and adaptability – are increasingly valued in modern labour markets and society. The document stresses that sport provides a powerful platform for non-formal and informal learning, complementing formal education and supporting the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Grassroots sport, understood as non-elite and community-based participation, offers more than physical and health benefits: it helps individuals acquire life skills, build confidence,



and strengthen civic and social values. For many young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, grassroots sport creates accessible pathways for learning, personal development and integration into society.

The conclusions invite Member States to recognise and promote the learning potential of grassroots sport. They are encouraged to raise awareness among policy-makers, sport organisations, youth and education bodies, and employers about the value of the competences developed through sport participation. Governments should ensure that staff and volunteers in grassroots sport are trained to identify and nurture such learning outcomes and to integrate educational approaches into sport activities.

The Council also recommends the establishment or improvement of systems for validating non-formal and informal learning gained through sport. These systems could include self-assessment tools, skills portfolios, and recognition mechanisms compatible with instruments such as the Europass and national qualifications frameworks. Member States are encouraged to create partnerships between schools, universities, youth organisations and sport clubs to connect sport activities more closely with education and employment pathways.

Particular attention is given to promoting participation among disadvantaged youth, including those from vulnerable or minority groups, as well as to developing non-traditional and innovative sport formats that can appeal to a wider audience. Grassroots sport should be inclusive and accessible, helping young people build social networks and develop personal competences that

increase their employability.

The conclusions further call upon the European Commission and Member States to integrate the concept of transversal skills gained through sport into broader EU policies on education, training, employment and youth. They are invited to support studies, data collection, research and dissemination of best practices on the link between sport and skill development. The Commission is also encouraged to promote transnational projects under existing EU programmes, such as Erasmus+, that highlight the role of sport in learning and employability.

Finally, grassroots sport organisations are invited to raise awareness about the value of transversal skills, enhance the competences of their staff and volunteers, collaborate with youth organisations to apply non-formal learning methods, and share successful practices across Europe.

In conclusion, the Council positions grassroots sport as a vital tool for developing transversal skills, social inclusion and employability among young people. It emphasises cooperation between sport, education and employment sectors, validation of sport-acquired learning, and targeted action to reach all youth, thereby strengthening sport's contribution to personal and societal development in Europe.

Luxembourg



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| Period: | July–December 2015 |
| EU Council: | 24 November 2015 |
| Minister responsible: | Romain SCHNEIDER Minister for Sports |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Alexandre HUSTING |

Council conclusions on the promotion of motor skills, physical and sport activities for children

The Conclusions address the promotion of motor skills, physical activity and sport among children. They begin by recalling key EU policy references – specifically earlier conclusions on health-enhancing physical activity, the Recommendation on HEPA (Health-Enhancing Physical



Activity) across sectors, and the EU Work Plan for Sport 2014 – 2017. The document recognises that the years of early childhood and primary school are critical for acquiring motor skills (such as running, jumping, throwing) and establishing lifelong physical activity habits. It points to alarming trends of sedentary behaviour, overweight and obesity among children, and highlights the related negative impacts on health systems and social inclusion.

A central theme is that motor-skill development and physical activity do not occur automatically: they require deliberate action and proper environments. The Conclusions emphasise that schools and early-childhood education and care settings play a key role. Families, educators, sport clubs, local authorities and communities also share the responsibility. The document encourages age-appropriate physical activity programmes, structured and unstructured play in early years, and inclusive access for children with disabilities. It stresses the importance of safe, available sport infrastructures and extra-curricular opportunities and promoting active transport (walking, cycling) to and from school.

Member States are invited to implement cross-sectoral policies that integrate education,

youth, health, sport, transport and urban planning. Specific recommended actions include raising awareness among stakeholders (teachers, coaches, parents), building partnerships between schools and sport organisations, ensuring quality infrastructure and extra-curricular opportunities, providing incentives to sport clubs, schools and community organisations promoting physical activity, and focusing on children before schooling starts as well as school-aged children. Structural and investment funds are encouraged to support such initiatives.

The document further calls upon the Presidency of the Council, Member States and the Commission to take note of the Expert Group on HEPA's recommendations and intensify cooperation across sectors. It invites that during the European Week of Sport particular attention be given to school-based and extra-curricular activities. Member States are also encouraged to monitor children's physical activity levels and habits via national monitoring systems and studies. The Commission is requested to promote and support the sharing of best practices across Member States, improve the evidence base by collecting quantitative and qualitative data on children's physical activity and fitness, collaborate with the World Health Organization and other scientific experts to develop guidelines for physical activity in early childhood education and care, schools and sport clubs. Sport organisations are also invited to provide non-competitive, inclusive activities suitable for children, cooperate with municipalities, education and health sectors, and actively promote initiatives to counter sedentary lifestyles among children.

In summary, these Conclusions position the promotion of motor-skills development and physical/sport activities for children as a strategic priority for Member States and the European Union. They highlight the need for early-life interventions, multisectoral cooperation, inclusion, adequate infrastructure, evidence-based monitoring and stakeholder engagement from families through schools and sport clubs. The aim is to equip children with the physical skills and habits that underpin health, social participation and learning throughout life.

Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, reviewing the 2011 Resolution on the representation of the EU Member States in the Foundation Board of WADA and the coordination of the EU and its Member States' positions prior to WADA meetings

The conclusions adopted on 15 December 2015 focus on reviewing and reinforcing the coordination arrangements whereby EU Member States participate in the WADA Foundation Board and coordinate their positions ahead of WADA meetings. The document begins by recalling the 2011

Resolution, which originally established a system for EU representation in WADA and coordination of Member States' positions in the field of anti-doping. It acknowledges that informal exchanges at the Ministerial Meeting for Sport held in Luxembourg (6 – 7 July 2015) provided an opportunity to review how the system has performed.

Having assessed the current system, the Council affirms that the representation mechanism and coordination arrangements remain appropriate and should stay in place. Nevertheless, the conclusions recognise a number of areas where the arrangements could be enhanced to ensure stronger, more coherent action by Member States and EU institutions. Key elements for reinforcement include:

More regular involvement of the Council Presidency in WADA and related meetings, as well as in the wider policy-making chain, to ensure continuity and effectiveness of the EU position.

More systematic contributions from the European Commission in preparing the draft EU mandate in matters falling under EU competence, thereby strengthening the upstream coordination and alignment of Member States' views.

Improving the scientific expertise available to Member States and the Council Presidency, including via the informal network of experts, so that positions adopted are well-informed by latest research, data and best practice.

Enhancing ad-hoc coordination meetings and "on the spot" preparatory actions ahead of major WADA and public authority meetings, thereby strengthening consistency, timeliness and effectiveness of EU participation.

The document sets a review milestone: by 31 December 2018, the Council and the representatives of Member States will assess the experience gained from further application of the 2011 arrangements. At that time, any necessary adjustments to the established system will be considered, with a view to improving EU coordination in the area of anti-doping.

In conclusion, the 2015-dated conclusions represent a reaffirmation of the EU's structured approach to anti-doping through coordinated representation and a collective mandate in WADA-related governance. While the existing framework is retained, the document commits to enhanced involvement, stronger scientific input and better preparatory processes – all aimed at strengthening the EU's role in global anti-doping policy. This mechanism is seen as crucial for ensuring consistency among Member States, reinforcing scientific credibility, and upholding the integrity and coherence of the EU's anti-doping stance on the international stage.

Netherlands



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| Period: | January–June 2016 |
| EU Council: | 31 May 2016 |
| Minister responsible: | Edith SCHIPPERS, Minister for Health, Welfare and Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Bart OOIJEN |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on enhancing integrity, transparency and good governance in major sport events

The conclusions adopted on 31 May 2016 focus on enhancing integrity, transparency and good governance in major sport events. They begin by recognising that major sport events hold significant attraction: they celebrate athletic performance, engage large audiences, and serve as high-profile showcases of sport's social and cultural value. However, with these advantages come substantial risks – high financial stakes, complex bidding and hosting processes, wide media exposure, and potential for integrity threats such as corruption, match-fixing, doping, undue influence, lack of transparency and weak legacy outcomes. The document notes that many Member States face challenges around bidding withdrawals, event cost escalations, decreasing domestic support and events moving out of the EU zone.

The conclusions underline the inter-linked nature of integrity, governance and legacy. Integrity refers to transparent and democratic decision-making, accountability, stakeholder inclusion and prevention of corruption, doping and match-fixing. Good governance spans transparent bidding and contracting, balanced stakeholder representation, human-rights and labour-rights considerations (including children's rights and gender equality), and sustainable planning and evaluation. Legacy and sustainability emphasise long-term social, economic and environmental benefits from hosting events, meaningful community involvement, infrastructures that last, and avoiding stranded assets or unsustainable debt.

In light of these issues, the document issues several key invitations:

Member States and the European Commission should integrate integrity, transparency, good governance, sustainability and legacy of major sport events into the EU sport agenda. They should exchange information and discuss topics such as multiple-country or multiple-city hosting, host-city cost-benefit analyses, and enabling administrative/legislative frameworks. Support should be given to implementing criteria and procedures based on recognised guidelines and international standards. This includes facilitating models for public-private cooperation and best-practice transfer, especially for smaller states or regions.

The Commission is invited to launch a study on hosting events in multiple countries or regions, investigate legislative/administrative obstacles, and support transnational research and projects on integrity and legacy within EU funding programmes (e.g., sport, youth, research).

The international sport movement is encouraged to observe governance standards, adopt codes of conduct, ensure transparency in bidding and hosting, commit to human and labour rights standards (e.g., UN Global Compact, ISO standards), publish selection criteria, conduct external evaluation and engage stakeholders.

All parties should establish light monitoring mechanisms (for example a “pledge board”) to track progress on integrity and governance of major sport events, including reliable cost-benefit analyses, population-support measurement, social/economic/environmental impact assessments, and independent evaluations.

Finally, the conclusions call for a sustained high-level dialogue among Member States, the Commission and the sport movement on these themes, and for joint efforts in developing toolkits, codes of conduct, evaluation frameworks and joint multi-country hosting models. They emphasise that by reinforcing governance, transparency and legacy planning, major sport events can regain public trust, deliver real long-term value, and better align with broader societal, environmental and economic goals.

In summary, this policy document positions major sport events as not only celebration points for athletic excellence, but also arenas that demand robust governance, foresight, transparency and accountability. By focusing on integrity, legacy and good governance, the EU aims to ensure that hosting major sport events is sustainable, socially-inclusive and beneficial for all stakeholders.

Slovakia



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| Period: | July–December 2016 |
| EU Council: | 22 November 2016 |
| Minister responsible: | Peter PLAVČAN Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Elena MALIKOVA |

Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy

The 2016 conclusions on sport diplomacy set out a clear vision: to acknowledge and harness the potential of sport as a means of advancing the European Union's external relations objectives, while respecting the autonomy of sport organisations and the particular nature of sport. The Council recalls that sport diplomacy refers to the intentional use of sport-related tools – events, exchanges, programmes, partnerships – in order to influence diplomatic, intercultural, social, economic and political relations. In this way, sport becomes a component of public diplomacy,





and a platform for fostering mutual understanding, bridging cultural and religious divides, and enhancing the image and attractiveness of countries or regions.

Recognising the universality of sport and its capacity to bring people together beyond language or cultural barriers, the document emphasises that sport diplomacy can contribute to social development, peace, intercultural dialogue and the promotion of European values such as respect for diversity, integrity and fairness. The conclusions encourage Member States and the Commission to work hand in hand with the sports movement: athletes, coaches, clubs, federations and event-organisers can act as ambassadors of values and as connectors between populations. Importantly, cooperation with third countries must be mindful of the autonomy of sport organisations and should be framed within broader policy frameworks, including development, education and cultural diplomacy.

In its operational invitations, the document asks Member States and the Commission to raise awareness within their administrations (including diplomatic services, EU Delegations, sport

ministries) of the potential of sport diplomacy; to encourage meaningful cooperation between public authorities and the sport movement; and to ensure that sport-based instruments and initiatives are taken into account in EU external relations, for example when crafting association agreements, cooperation programmes, neighbourhood or enlargement frameworks. Furthermore, selecting and designing sport diplomacy programmes needs to be evidence-based: the conclusions invite collection and dissemination of empirical data and best practices on the impact of sport diplomacy in promoting values, intercultural dialogue, development and peace. The conclusion also highlights that sport diplomacy initiatives can take many shapes: international competitions and grassroots exchanges, volunteering programmes, people-to-people dialogue, training of coaches or officials in third countries, collaboration in sport infrastructure or capacity-building projects. Multi-stakeholder involvement is crucial: governments, sport federations, NGOs, local authorities and event organisers are all part of the ecosystem. Efforts should target not only elite sport but also grassroots and community levels, and should consider disadvantaged groups, small states and regions to maximise inclusiveness and sustainable impact.

In essence, the 2016 Council conclusions reposition sport as a dual-purpose domain: domestically, sport remains a vehicle for health, education and social inclusion, but internationally it becomes part of the EU's normative architecture and external action toolkit. Sport diplomacy is framed not as a stand-alone policy but as a cross-cutting instrument that intersects with foreign policy, development cooperation, youth and education, culture, and human rights. By embedding sport within external relations, the EU and Member States aim to amplify the role of sport in projecting European values globally, strengthening people-to-people ties, and supporting development objectives in third countries.

The document thus lays a foundation for future strategic developments: enhancing sport diplomacy capacity, integrating sport into diplomatic channels, and measuring its contribution. For policy-makers, it signals that sport is not just a domestic leisure or performance activity, but a tool in global engagement and value-promotion.

Malta



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| Period: | January–June 2017 |
| EU Council: | 23 May 2017 |
| Minister responsible: | Evarist BARTOLO Minister for Education and Employment |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Dermot GALEA |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on sport as a platform for social inclusion through volunteering

The Council conclusions adopted position volunteering in sport as a major contributor to social inclusion, civic engagement and community development. Beginning with the premise that sport is widely practised and volunteered in across Europe, the document underlines that the voluntary dimension of sport can help bring people from diverse backgrounds together and thus strengthen solidarity, mutual respect and inclusion in increasingly complex societies.

It recognises that many European societies face challenges of integration, social exclusion and demographic change. Volunteering in sport is presented as a route for addressing these challenges: by enabling participation, facilitating interpersonal connections and fostering a sense of belonging, sport volunteering can help integrate individuals and groups who might otherwise feel marginalised – for example migrants, refugees, seniors, persons with disabilities and socially vulnerable young people.

The conclusions lay out numerous actions and priorities for Member States, national authorities and the European Commission. On the national level, Member States are invited to:

Promote sport volunteering opportunities that are inclusive, accessible and designed to reach disadvantaged or under-represented groups;

Strengthen cooperation between sport organisations, volunteer centres, youth and social inclusion actors, educational institutions and local authorities to create structured pathways into sport volunteering;



Support the development of volunteer-management capacities within sport organisations (training, recognition, supervision), ensuring that volunteers can engage meaningfully and sustainably;

Integrate sport-volunteering initiatives into broader social inclusion, youth, education and employment policies, recognising the competences and civic capital gained through volunteering.

The Commission is asked to facilitate evidence-based policy by supporting data-collection and analysis on sport volunteering and its social-inclusion outcomes, to promote exchange of best practices across Member States, and to encourage the inclusion of volunteer-focused sport actions in EU-funded programmes and initiatives. Member States and the Commission are also encouraged to reflect on how sport volunteering can contribute to civic participation, employability, skills development and lifelong learning.

A particular focus is given to reaching the most vulnerable: the conclusions emphasise that measures should target members of under-represented groups, including persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, seniors, and socially disadvantaged young people. They call for inclusive and non-competitive sport-volunteer formats, flexible schemes, recognition of volunteering experience, and elimination of barriers to entry for volunteers from all backgrounds.

In summary, these conclusions frame sport volunteering as more than leisure or club-based activity: it is a strategic tool for social policy, capable of advancing inclusion, citizenship, skills development and community cohesion. By joining efforts among sport organisations, volunteer

networks, education/youth actors and public authorities, the aim is to maximise the potential of sport volunteering to contribute to a more inclusive and engaged society in Europe.

The Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (2017–2020)

The Resolution sets out the third multiannual framework for EU cooperation in the field of sport, following earlier work plans for 2011–2014 and 2014–2017. It builds on Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which establishes sport as an area where the EU supports, coordinates and supplements Member State action.

The Resolution recalls the achievements of previous work plans and the Commission's assessment of their relevance. It places sport within broader EU priorities, recognising its contribution to economic growth, social inclusion, public health, security, and the Europe 2020 Strategy. Member States emphasise sport's cross-cutting nature, noting its role in addressing contemporary challenges such as migration, social exclusion, radicalisation, unemployment, and unhealthy lifestyles. Cooperation with sport stakeholders, third countries, and international organisations (including the Council of Europe, WADA and the WHO) is reaffirmed as essential.

The new Work Plan for 1 July 2017 to 31 December 2020 is guided by several overarching objectives. These include strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation within the EU, reinforcing the evidence base for sport policy, promoting long-term coordinated action between Member States and the Commission, addressing transnational challenges, respecting the specific nature of sport, supporting employment and sustainable development objectives, and contributing to gender equality, education, dual careers and grassroots sport. The Plan is designed to be flexible and capable of responding to emerging priorities identified by current and future EU Presidencies. Three thematic priorities structure the Work Plan.

- 1. Integrity of sport:** This includes promoting good governance, safeguarding minors, combating corruption and match-fixing, and fighting doping. The Plan outlines a wide range of activities such as expert input on anti-doping legislation, studies on child protection in sport, seminars on preventing youth doping, and initiatives on applying international governance standards in sport.
- 2. Economic dimension of sport:** This priority focuses on innovation, economic analysis, and sport's role within the digital single market. Activities include cluster meetings on Sport

Satellite Accounts, conferences on sport's economic contribution, and a seminar on digital opportunities and challenges for sports funding and commercialisation.

3. **Sport and society:** This encompasses social inclusion, the role of coaches, education, health-enhancing physical activity, the environment, sport and media, and sport diplomacy. Outputs include conferences on grassroots sport and coaching, studies on access to sport for people with disabilities, seminars on workplace physical activity, and initiatives on environmental sustainability in sport. Sport diplomacy is supported through studies, follow-up to previous high-level work, and the development of strategic recommendations.

The Resolution describes in detail the working methods that will support implementation, including Expert Groups, cluster meetings, groups of interested Member States, Presidency events, Commission studies and peer learning activities. The Commission will coordinate expert input, support participation, organise meetings, promote exchange of good practices, follow up on anti-doping issues, and manage dissemination of results. Member States and Presidencies are invited to align national work where appropriate, inform stakeholders, and maintain active engagement.

Estonia



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| Period: | July–December 2017 |
| EU Council: | 21 November 2017 |
| Minister responsible: | Indrek SAAR Minister of Culture |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Kairis ULP |

Conclusions of the Council on the Role of Coaches in Society

Adopted on 21 November 2017, these Council conclusions emphasise that coaches are essential actors not only in achieving sporting excellence but also in fostering broader social, educational and health objectives. The document recognises that coaching goes far beyond training athletes

for performance — it encompasses mentoring, education, inclusion, personal development, and social responsibility. Coaches are described as role models who can help instil values such as respect, teamwork, perseverance, and integrity, thus contributing significantly to individual well-being and community cohesion.

The conclusions acknowledge that the social role of sport has expanded in response to changing societal challenges such as declining physical activity, youth unemployment, migration, social exclusion, and gender inequality. Against this background, the role of coaches has evolved accordingly: coaches are now seen as facilitators of physical literacy, healthy lifestyles, inclusion, and lifelong learning. Their work extends from elite sport to grassroots and recreational levels, involving diverse groups such as children, elderly citizens, persons with disabilities, and socially disadvantaged populations.

A key message of the document is that coaches have a key role in sport, as by leading and guiding participants they have an impact on participants' knowledge, skills, prospects, aspirations, health, wellbeing and values. Coaching must be recognised as both a profession and a voluntary vocation. Many coaches operate as volunteers, particularly in grassroots and community sport, and their contribution to society is invaluable. At the same time, the conclusions call for improving the professionalisation of coaching, enhancing the quality of education and training, and ensuring fair working conditions where coaches are employed. Member States are encouraged to integrate coaching into national qualification frameworks, promote the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and support continuous professional development opportunities.

The conclusions highlight the importance of gender equality and diversity in coaching. They invite Member States to increase the number of women coaches and leaders, address barriers to participation, and ensure that the coaching environment is inclusive, safe and respectful for everyone. Coaching should reflect the diversity of society and promote equal opportunities across age, gender, ethnic, and social backgrounds.

On governance and cooperation, the Council calls for stronger coordination between governments, sport organisations, educational institutions, and research bodies to enhance the training, certification, and mobility of coaches across Europe. Member States and the European Commission are invited to make use of EU programmes, such as Erasmus+, to promote education, exchanges, and mutual recognition of coaching qualifications. Research and data collection on the role of coaches in social development, health promotion, and youth empowerment are also encouraged to support evidence-based policy.

Finally, the document stresses that the ethical dimension of coaching must remain a core principle. Coaches should promote clean sport, integrity, respect for human rights, and child

protection, while contributing to the prevention of doping, discrimination, and abuse in sport. In summary, these conclusions position coaches as vital agents of social change and inclusion in Europe. They combine the pursuit of sporting success with the promotion of education, equality, and civic engagement. By professionalising coaching, supporting continuous learning, and valuing both paid and voluntary contributions, the Council aims to strengthen the impact of coaches as mentors, educators, and ambassadors of European sport values.

Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States on further developing the EU Structured Dialogue on sport

The Resolution adopted on 21 November 2017 sets out to further develop and optimise the EU-level structured dialogue in sport, acknowledging that while the original 2010 framework achieved significant progress, evolving policy needs require refinement. It recalls how sport



has been integrated into EU policy via Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 165) and how the structured dialogue emerged to provide a continuous platform for interaction between Member States, European institutions and the organised sports movement.

The document notes that recent discussions, including at the Informal meeting of EU Sport Directors in Tallinn in July 2017, highlighted both strengths and limitations of the 2010 model. It emphasises that the structured dialogue must serve as a “regular dialogue” between public authorities (national and EU), the sports movement (Olympic and non-Olympic, amateur and professional), athletes, coaches and other relevant stakeholders, with the aim of cooperation, forward-looking policy implementation and follow-up on the EU sport agenda.

Key improvements proposed include:

- Greater flexibility in selecting the format of high-level meetings, deciding whether a ministerial meeting, informal ministerial session or session linked to the EU Sport Forum is most appropriate;
- Improved preparation and coordination with the Council Presidency and Commission to ensure agendas have EU-added value, timely involvement, and proper follow-up to outcomes;
- Enhanced transparency and communication, including full reporting back to Member States on meetings where participation is restricted, and better dissemination of EU sport policy documents to sport stakeholders at national level;
- Establishment of an operational-level dialogue alongside the high-level and broad-forum components, organised in the margins of sports-directors meetings or Presidency-hosted events, to ensure more practical, executive-level engagement with sport-movement leadership;
- Longer-term planning possibility via Trio-Presidency cooperation to align dialogue topics with the Third European Union Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020 cycle, thus ensuring continuity and coherence across Presidencies.

The Resolution invites the Council Presidency to prepare the high-level component well in advance, consider innovative formats and ensure that agendas address pressing policy issues. It invites Member States to disseminate EU sport policy documents and engage the national sports movement in the structured dialogue. It also invites the European Commission to ensure sport stakeholders have access to EU policy texts, to include sport-movement representatives in relevant expert groups and work streams, and to organise an annual briefing or seminar for the sports movement on new Council conclusions and policy documents. The sports movement itself is called upon to participate actively, raise its policy proposals within the structured dialogue, and make better use of the opportunities afforded by the three-tier dialogue model.

In summary, the 2017 Resolution reinforces sport's place in the EU policy architecture and strengthens mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and policy-dialogue. By refining the structured dialogue - via increased flexibility, deeper coordination, transparency and layered participation - the document aims to ensure that EU sport policy remains responsive, inclusive and linked to strategic priorities. It emphasises that sport is not just a leisure or performance activity but a public-policy domain requiring continuous, well-organised exchange among authorities, institutions and the sports movement.

Bulgaria



Bulgarian Presidency of the Council
of the European Union

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| Period: | January–June 2018 |
| EU Council: | 23 May 2018 |
| Minister responsible: | Krasimir VALCHEV Minister of Education and Science |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Viktoria SLAVKOVA |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport

The Conclusions reaffirm the vital role of sport in promoting the common values of the European Union. Underpinned by Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, which establishes that the Values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights are shared by Member States, the document asserts that sport can serve as a powerful vehicle for embedding these values across society. The sport dimension is rooted in the Treaty Article 165, which mandates the Union to contribute to the promotion of European sport while respecting its specific nature, including voluntary structures and educational functions.

Within this context, the document highlights that sport - whether competitive or recreational – can foster mutual respect, fairness, inclusion, tolerance, solidarity and equality between women and men. It further observes that major social and economic challenges in the EU (e.g., migration, radicalisation, social exclusion, inactivity) require inclusive and value-based responses. Sport's

universal appeal and capacity to connect people beyond language or cultural barriers makes it uniquely placed to contribute. The Conclusions recognise the role of formal, non-formal and informal learning within sport to develop civic and social competences.

The document issues a series of invitations:

- **To Member States:** They are encouraged to support and explore sport-based initiatives that build civic, social and intercultural competences across all ages, genders and backgrounds; to engage local and regional authorities, sport clubs, schools, youth organisations and NGOs in value-based sport projects; to connect major sport events with value-promotion; to disseminate the EU sport policy and engage the sports movement nationally; to promote good governance and ethical standards in sport bodies (including via integrity, anti-discrimination, human-rights guidelines).
- **To the European Commission:** It is asked to further the integration of sport into external relations, capacity-building, mobility, solidarity and sport integrity initiatives; to promote existing EU funding instruments (such as Erasmus+, Structural Funds) for sport value-promotion; to disseminate evidence, good practices and project results among Member States and sport organisations; to encourage participation of third countries and candidate states in sport initiatives that promote common values.
- **To the Sports Movement:** Sport organisations are invited to utilise major event opportunities and grassroots platforms to promote common values, embed modules on values in training of coaches, volunteers and support staff, use awareness campaigns targeting participants and supporters, develop structured dialogue with public authorities, engage in non-formal learning and exchanges, and extend collaborations with third-country organisations.

In essence, the Conclusions position sport not just as a domain for physical activity or entertainment, but as a strategic lever for embedding European values, strengthening community cohesion and supporting education and inclusion. The document makes clear that value-promotion in sport requires multi-stakeholder cooperation (governments, sport movement, education/youth sectors), good governance in sport organisations, evidence-based programmes and cross-border exchange. By aligning sport policy with value-promotion, the EU and its Member States aim to reinforce a sense of belonging, mutual respect and active citizenship among Europeans and beyond.

Austria



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| Period: | July–December 2018 |
| EU Council: | 27 November 2018 |
| Minister responsible: | Heinz-Christian STRACHE Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for the Civil Service and Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Barbara SPINDLER- OSWALD |

Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the economic dimension of sport and its socioeconomic benefits

The conclusions highlight the increasingly acknowledged role of sport in the European Union economy and its broader social and regional impacts. The document starts by recalling past EU sport work-plans and Council conclusions, which pointed to the importance of sustainable financing, major event legacy, innovation and measurement of sport's contribution to employment and growth. It states that, according to recent evidence, sport accounts for 2.12 % of EU GDP and directly or indirectly employs 5.67 million people (2.72 % of EU employment). Yet these figures exclude many of sport's socioeconomic effects such as health-related cost savings, volunteer contributions, innovation spill-overs and regional development impact.

The conclusions emphasise that sport is not only an industry but also a societal phenomenon, spanning health, education, integration, tourism and regional regeneration. Several Member States maintain full sport satellite accounts (SSAs) that help to measure sport's economic contribution, while others have only partial sport-related data. The lack of comparable methods, definitions and statistics - especially on volunteering, health effects and innovation – limits full understanding and policy impact. Sport's contribution to regional development, including smart specialisation strategies and urban renewal, is noted to have considerable potential, though this remains under-documented in many cases.

In view of these realities, the document issues invitations to Member States:

- Consider developing or refining sport satellite accounts or equivalent systems to quantify sport's economic impact, ensuring gender-disaggregated data and inclusion of volunteering



and physical activity effects.

- Support and disseminate the idea of capturing sport's broader socioeconomic dimensions (volunteering, health, innovation, regional development) and enhance cross-sector cooperation (e.g., health, education, transport, tourism).
- Recognise the value of voluntary work in sport in national statistics and policy frameworks.
- Promote exchange among Member States of methods, definitions and standards concerning sport's socioeconomic dimensions.
- Explore including sport and physical activity as cross-cutting priorities in other public policy areas.

The Commission is invited to:

- Promote and support actions such as data-exchange, methodological know-how, collection of best practices and technical support for Member States in measuring sport's economic and socioeconomic impacts.
- Initiate an evaluation process on the use and applicability of calculation systems measuring sport's socioeconomic aspects, mapping existing research and promoting best practices.
- With the support of Eurostat and expert groups, develop tools to complement and update sport satellite accounts and include socioeconomic aspects.
- Raise awareness of sport's potential as a source of innovation and strengthen cooperation across Commission services and other EU institutions on sport's role in modern economies and society, especially in view of regional development.

The sports movement is invited to support the collection of data on the contribution of voluntary work and physical activity, to foster economic analyses of volunteering and physical inactivity, and to exchange best practices on measurement methods.

In summary, the 2018 conclusions position sport as a strategic economic and social asset for Europe, while recognising that its full value remains under-captured in current statistics and policy frameworks. By improving measurement, integrating sport across sectors and promoting its socioeconomic benefits, both Member States and EU institutions are encouraged to leverage sport more effectively for growth, employment, regional cohesion and social inclusion.

Romania



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| Period: | January–June 2019 |
| EU Council: | 23 May 2019 |
| Minister responsible: | Constantin-Bogdan Matei, Minister of Youth and Sport of Romania |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Lucian MIRESCU |

Conclusions of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Access to sport for persons with disabilities

The Council conclusions adopted in June 2019 focus on improving access to sport for persons with disabilities. They open by acknowledging that, within the European Union, persons with disabilities are at higher risk of social exclusion, have lower labour market participation, and face specific barriers when accessing leisure and sport activities. The document recalls that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises sport, recreation and leisure as rights, emphasising the obligation of States to enable persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis.

Key findings identify that in many Member States persons with disabilities participate less in sport due to multiple barriers: physical and sensory impairments interacting with environments not adapted, limited accessible sport infrastructure, a shortage of coaches and staff with disability-

specific competence, extra costs of adaptive sports equipment and support services, negative attitudes or low self-confidence, and the lack of inclusive sport-opportunities alongside persons without disabilities.

In view of these obstacles, the conclusions emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach:

- **Infrastructure and equipment:** Accessible, barrier-free sports venues and facilities are crucial. This includes ensuring that built sport infrastructure, transport connections, event venues and equipment are adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.
- **Coaching and staff competence:** Personnel involved in sport (coaches, PE teachers, volunteers) should have appropriate training, knowledge and awareness regarding disability and inclusive sports practice.
- **Financial and policy support:** Member States should consider the additional costs that persons with disabilities may incur (equipment, assistive devices, transportation) and adopt policies that reduce these financial burdens. They should incorporate inclusive sport in national strategies, allocate funding streams and ensure sport-policy links with health, education and social inclusion sectors.
- **Inclusive sport programming:** Sport opportunities should cover both adapted/disability-specific sports and inclusive participation alongside others. Member States should encourage the integration of persons with disabilities in mainstream sport programmes and events, and remove unnecessary segregation unless justified.
- **Data-collection and monitoring:** Better evidence is needed on participation rates of persons with disabilities, barriers faced and the impact of inclusive sport policies. Member States and the Commission are invited to share good practice, develop indicators and monitor progress.
- **Awareness and non-discrimination:** Efforts should be made to counter stereotypes, increase confidence and raise awareness among persons with disabilities about sport opportunities. Sport-organisations, public authorities and NGOs should cooperate to foster inclusive culture and ensure that disability is not an automatic exclusion.

The conclusions explicitly invite Member States to: adopt or update national action plans or policies promoting access to sport for persons with disabilities; ensure sport infrastructure and equipment is accessible; promote training for sport staff; take inclusive-design principles into account in new infrastructure; monitor and evaluate progress; and cooperate transnationally in sharing best practices. The European Commission is asked to support the exchange of knowledge, facilitate data-collection, encourage adaptation of EU funding programmes (education, youth, health, sport) to include persons with disabilities and promote cross-sector cooperation.

In summary, these conclusions position access to sport for persons with disabilities as a key objective of EU sport policy and social inclusion strategy. By laying out a coordinated framework

addressing infrastructure, competence, financing, programme design, data and awareness, they aim to ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy sport on an equal basis with others - thereby contributing to personal development, health, social participation and the reduction of exclusion.

The Resolution of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the representation of the EU Member States in the Foundation Board of WADA and the coordination of Member States' positions prior to WADA meetings

The Resolution sets out an updated and more coherent framework for how EU Member States organise their participation in the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). It also strengthens the coordination of their positions in advance of meetings of the WADA Foundation Board and the Council of Europe's Ad Hoc European Committee for WADA (CAHAMA). This Resolution replaces the previous system adopted in 2011 and reflects the experience gained in the following years.

The document begins by recalling a series of earlier Council conclusions and resolutions that established the EU's role in combating doping and its engagement in international anti-doping governance. These include the 2000 conclusions on combating doping, the 2010 conclusions on the international role of the EU, the 2011 resolution on representation in WADA, and the 2015 review of that system. Building on this background, the Member States recognise the need for the EU and its Member States to participate effectively in the global anti-doping framework, especially when WADA rules and standards with significant implications for athletes and sport organisations are negotiated and adopted.

A central element of the Resolution is the allocation of the three seats reserved for EU Member States in WADA's Foundation Board. To ensure continuity, representativeness and expertise, the Resolution establishes a structured system:

- One seat is assigned to a minister responsible for sport from a Member State of the incumbent Trio Presidency.
- A second seat is assigned to a minister responsible for sport from a Member State of the future Trio Presidency.
- The third seat is collectively designated by all Member States and is reserved for a governmental-level expert who is not from the incumbent or future Trio Presidency.

All representatives serve a three-year term, and clear procedures are established for replacements if a representative leaves office. The system aims to combine political legitimacy at ministerial level with specialised expertise, while preserving continuity from one term to the next.

The Resolution also reinforces coordination mechanisms. While CAHAMA remains the primary forum for European continental coordination, Member States can additionally coordinate within the Council's Working Party on Sport (WPS) when issues concern Member State competences and when there is clear added value in doing so. Any common position reached must be consistent with existing EU legislation and with any formally agreed EU position. These common Member State positions are approved by Coreper unless Member States decide otherwise.

Importantly, EU Member States' representatives in the WADA Foundation Board are expected to speak and vote in line with the European continental position agreed by CAHAMA, as long as it does not contradict the EU *acquis*.

Annex I details the nomination procedures, transitional rules and approval processes for representatives. Annex II outlines practical steps for preparing EU positions on matters of Union competence. The European Commission is invited to draft proposals for the EU position before each WADA or CAHAMA meeting. These are examined by the WPS and approved by Coreper, ensuring predictability and transparency.

Overall, the Resolution establishes a clear, stable and coordinated system that strengthens the EU's collective voice in WADA and enhances coherence between EU-level decision-making, CAHAMA coordination and WADA governance.

Finland



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| Period: | July–December 2019 |
| EU Council: | 21 November 2019 |
| Minister responsible: | Hanna KOSONEN Minister for Science and Culture |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Heidi SULANDER |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on safeguarding children in sport

The conclusions place the issue of safeguarding children in sport firmly on the European Union's sport policy agenda. The document begins by recognising that, for children to fully benefit

from sport – physical health, social development, learning and active citizenship – they must be protected from harm, abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. It recalls legal instruments including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and highlights that under Article 165 TFEU, protecting the physical and moral integrity of sports participants is a means to develop the European dimension in sport.

The conclusions identify multiple barriers and risks faced by children in sport environments: inadequate safeguarding policies in clubs, people working with children lacking training, limited awareness of abuse (including emotional and sexual), insufficient background checks, weak reporting and support systems, and a lack of systematic data on prevalence and monitoring. They stress the need for multi-sectoral cooperation – sport, education, health, justice and youth sectors all must play their part.

Member States are **invited** to:

- Establish and reinforce legal and policy frameworks that include both preventive measures and sanctions, tailored to sport contexts.
- Introduce awareness-raising activities and continuous education/training for children, families, sport organisations, coaches, volunteers, youth workers, teachers and instructors about physical and emotional violence and abuse in sport.
- Cooperate with sport organisations to develop codes of conduct, monitoring systems, guidelines and procedures for preventing abuse, managing allegations, conducting follow-up and giving support to children affected by harm. This includes appropriate background checks for staff and volunteers, including in cross-border contexts where applicable.
- Review how public funding is granted to sport organisations and consider linking funding eligibility to organisations' commitment to safeguarding children in sport.
- Ensure accessible, child-friendly communication channels, reporting mechanisms and support services (e.g., helplines, websites, ombudspersons) for children who experience or witness violence in sport.

The Commission and Member States are also **invited** to:

- Collect, share and analyse data on violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of children in sport, respecting data protection rules, and use monitoring instruments to assess prevalence and effectiveness of policies.
- Support and disseminate research and publications on safeguarding children in sport.
- Promote exchange of best practices among sport organisations and national authorities, especially in prevention of sexual violence, harassment, bullying, and in fostering respectful and tolerant behaviour in sport.
- Foster international cooperation (e.g., with the Council of Europe and UNICEF) and align with

international guidelines and frameworks on child protection in sport.

Sport organisations themselves are explicitly addressed: they are **invited** to ensure that children feel safe and are heard in sport settings, respect growth stages and gender differentiation in competitive frameworks, implement safeguarding procedures and background checks, appoint independent contact persons for children, and collaborate with child-protection authorities.

In conclusion, these 2019 conclusions position safeguarding children in sport as a strategic priority. They move beyond the promotion of participation, health and inclusion to emphasise the protection of children's rights, dignity and safety in sport. The document calls for systemic, cooperative, evidence-based and multi-stakeholder action, integrating sport with child protection, youth, education and justice policies – ensuring that sport remains a safe and positive environment for children across Europe.

Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on combating corruption in sport

These Council conclusions address the need to strengthen integrity and prevent corruption in sport across the European Union. They start from the principle that corruption damages not only the credibility of sport itself but also its educational, cultural and social role. Sport, which is built on fairness, respect and honesty, must be protected from practices such as bribery, match-fixing, money laundering, and abuse of influence. Corruption also has broader implications, threatening democratic institutions, distorting markets and eroding citizens' trust in public and private institutions alike.

The conclusions note that the rapid commercialisation and globalisation of sport have created new vulnerabilities. The financial flows surrounding major sport events, sponsorships, betting markets and broadcasting rights are increasingly complex and international in nature, creating opportunities for manipulation and financial crime. Furthermore, weak governance structures, lack of transparency, conflicts of interest and insufficient oversight can increase the risk of corruption at national and international levels.

To counter these risks, the document invites **Member States** to take several actions. They are encouraged to strengthen their legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms addressing corruption and financial crime in sport, including money laundering and fraud. Cooperation between sport authorities, law enforcement agencies, financial intelligence units and judicial authorities should be enhanced, both domestically and internationally. Member States are

also asked to promote integrity policies in sport that include clear ethical codes, transparent decision-making, internal audits and whistle-blower protection systems.

Governments are encouraged to link the allocation of public funding to compliance with integrity and governance criteria, ensuring that sport organisations receiving public support apply standards of accountability and transparency. Education and training are also prioritised, with Member States asked to raise awareness among athletes, coaches, officials and administrators about corruption risks, ethical behaviour and reporting obligations.

The **European Commission** is invited to complement these efforts by improving coordination, supporting data collection and sharing information about corruption cases in sport. It should promote international cooperation with organisations such as the Council of Europe, OECD, United Nations and Interpol, ensuring that EU initiatives align with global anti-corruption frameworks. The Commission is also asked to explore how existing EU programmes and funds – including those in justice, research and sport – can support integrity-related projects and capacity-building.

The **sports movement** is called upon to take responsibility for ensuring integrity in governance and competition. Sports federations, clubs and associations should adopt codes of ethics, develop monitoring systems, apply disciplinary sanctions when violations occur, and foster a culture of openness and accountability. Collaboration between public authorities and the sport sector is considered vital to detect and prevent corruption, particularly in areas such as match-fixing, betting integrity and financial transparency.

In conclusion, the document reaffirms that the fight against corruption in sport requires a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach. By improving legislation, governance, transparency, cooperation and education, Member States, the European Commission and the sport movement can collectively preserve sport's integrity and ensure that it continues to serve as a positive and credible force in European society.

Croatia



**EU
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| Period: | January–June 2020 |
| EU Council: | 02 June 2020 |
| Minister responsible: | Tomislav DRUZAK State Secretary, Central State Office for Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Martina JERICEVIC |

Council Conclusions on Empowering coaches by enhancing opportunities to acquire skills and competences.

These conclusions emphasise the strategic importance of coaches for sport and society, highlighting that their competence, lifelong learning and recognition are essential for both the quality of sport and its broader societal impact. The document begins with recognition that sport contributes significantly to health, education, values promotion and social inclusion, and that coaches are central actors in translating these contributions into real outcomes. Coaches impact both athlete learning and personal development, and with evolving social, health and technological challenges, their role is increasingly multifaceted.

The document underscores that possessing skills and competences is vital for coaches' personal fulfilment, employability and professional development. It underlines that coaches must be prepared to address challenges such as safeguarding, digitalisation, new coaching methods, and inclusive practice. It also notes the diversity of coaching roles – from grassroots volunteers to professional coaches – and the variability among Member States in education systems, recognition frameworks and data collection.

In response, the conclusions invite Member States to take key actions:

- Raise awareness of the coach's role in sport and society, promoting appreciation for the skills and competences coaches bring;
- Enhance opportunities for formal, non-formal and informal learning for coaches of all types (volunteer, employed, self-employed), while ensuring attention to gender equality, diversity, levels of engagement and qualifications;



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**Working Party on Sport
Brussels 2020**

- Encourage cooperation between sport organisations and the education sector to develop training programmes tailored to labour-market needs and modern tools including digital learning;
- Support education modules for general-applicable coaching skills (such as pedagogical planning, management, integrity, safety) across all sport types to stimulate cross-sport learning;
- Promote recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in sport;
- Facilitate integration of coaching qualifications into national qualification frameworks and reference to the European Qualification Framework to enhance mobility of coaches across Europe;
- Promote use of modern technologies (e-learning, online platforms) as complementary to traditional learning methods while considering financial implications for coaches;
- Ensure that coach education contributes to safe and inclusive sport environments adapted to participants' diverse needs, abilities and capacities;
- Encourage national/sub-national strategies to support educational opportunity for all coaches, linking sport, health-enhancing physical activity and lifelong learning.

Moreover, Member States and the Commission are invited to:

- Promote and support access to diversified learning paths and make learning accessible both offline and online;
- Map and analyse coach-education schemes including from gender perspective;
- Support peer learning, exchange of best practices and shared frameworks across Member States;
- Integrate coach-education policies with broader sport, education and health policies;
- Foster training and competence development for coaches working with specific groups or inclusive settings.

In sum, these conclusions position coach empowerment as a key component of effective sport policy and social inclusion strategy. They call for a holistic approach to coach education – encompassing formal, non-formal and informal learning, digital tools, recognition frameworks, diversity and safety – that acknowledges coaches' role beyond sport performance into education, values, inclusion and community development.

Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of the sport sector

The conclusions open by noting that the pandemic constitutes a major public-health, economic and social crisis, and that sport – while contributing to wellbeing – has also been severely affected. The sector's vulnerability is highlighted: sporting events postponed or cancelled, clubs closed, volunteers and athletes affected, fitness centres closed, and movement restrictions reducing physical-activity opportunities for citizens. The document stresses that health protection remains the priority, and that sport must adapt to continued uncertainty and constrained conditions. It emphasises that sport organisations, the sport movement, volunteers and athletes had already shown resilience and adaptability via innovative tools, flexible coaching methods, online alternatives and home-based activities. However, the pandemic's economic toll – loss of revenue, job insecurity, club insolvencies – demands recovery measures. The conclusions underline that the sport sector contributes not only to health and inclusion, but also to economies, employment, voluntary work and social capital, and must therefore be supported in its recovery.

Member States are invited to:

- Provide guidance, support and frameworks to aid the sport sector's recovery and encourage sustainable development.
- Make use of available EU programmes and funds (e.g., in youth, education, cohesion, solidarity, agriculture rural development) plus specific recovery initiatives (CRII, CRII+, SURE, State Aid Temporary Framework) to channel support to sport organisations, especially grassroots clubs.
- Ensure continuity of sport-funding programmes at national and local levels, with particular attention to grassroots sport and volunteering.
- Promote sport and physical activity as key elements of physical and mental health, especially during crises and in post-pandemic settings.
- Foster synergies among sport, economy, innovation, education, youth work and digitalisation to create opportunities for athletes, citizens and sport organisations.
- Encourage cross-sector cooperation at local, regional, national and EU levels, in consultation with the sport movement and sport-business sector, to address sector-specific challenges and strengthen the sport ecosystem.
- Promote solidarity among sport federations, clubs, athletes and organisations, recognising the European model of sport – characterised by grassroots, voluntary activity, inclusion and social function.
- Highlight sport and physical activity as instruments for economic and social development, healthier and more active communities, territorial development and resilience.
- Continue regular exchange of information and best practices on exit and post-pandemic strategies, crisis preparation, and sustainable development of the sport sector.

The Commission is also invited to:

- Maintain information sharing on flexible arrangements for EU programmes (such as Erasmus+ Sport) in the crisis context and future calls, to support sport-sector recovery.
- Consider new or strengthened flexibility mechanisms in future sport funding programmes so that the sector can respond rapidly and effectively to crisis events.
- Provide regular updates and information to Member States about recovery support, funding possibilities and horizontal measures.
- Disseminate information on health-enhancing physical activity and collaborate with health authorities worldwide to promote active lifestyles during and after crisis periods.
- Conduct research and analysis of the COVID-19 crisis's impact on sport participation, sector resilience and structural changes, to inform the next EU Work Plan for Sport.
- Support data collection and analysis on sport participation and crisis impact (e.g., via

Eurobarometer, Eurostat) and promote cross-sector cooperation and innovation to build sport's future resilience.

- Facilitate dialogue with sport movement, Member States and international federations about safe resumption of major sport events and future-proofing the sport sector.

In summary, these conclusions position the sport sector as both heavily impacted by the pandemic and crucial to social recovery. By promoting strong coordination, flexible funding, cross-sector partnerships, data-driven policy and innovation, the document lays groundwork for a resilient, inclusive and future-oriented sport ecosystem across Europe.

Germany



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| Period: | July–December 2020 |
| EU Council: | 27 November 2020 |
| Minister responsible: | Stephan MAYER, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Torsten WEIDEN |

Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting cross-sectoral cooperation for the benefit of sport and physical activity in society

The Conclusions underscore the importance of treating sport and physical activity as strategic assets for society, not merely recreational or competitive forms of exercise. They recall previous policy frameworks emphasising health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA), motor-skills development in children, coaching, and the socioeconomic dimension of sport, and now call for a systematic cross-sectoral approach. They observe that sport and physical activity contribute to physical health, mental well-being, reduced burdens on health systems, social participation, volunteering, sustainable transport (walking/cycling) and community cohesion.

Recognising that sport intersects with many policy areas – including education, youth, health, social affairs, infrastructure, transport, environment, research, innovation, digitalisation, economy and tourism – the document argues that single-sector interventions are sub-optimal. Instead, coordinated and multilayered cooperation can create the right local conditions for active lifestyles: affordable, accessible sport facilities and public space; safe transport and urban design; volunteer-friendly structures; inclusive clubs. It further notes that many Member States face stagnation or decline in sport participation and difficulties attracting long-term volunteers, underscoring the need for renewed strategies.



The Conclusions issue **invitations** to stakeholders at different levels:

- **Member States and regional/local authorities** are invited to develop and monitor joint strategies with a clear division of responsibilities to increase citizens' participation in sport and physical activity in the short, medium and long term, with particular reference to cross-sectoral cooperation. They should identify policy and administrative areas relevant to sport/physical activity, encourage decision-makers in those sectors to recognise sport's benefits, promote long- term cross-sectoral cooperation (including peer-learning and best-practice sharing), involve stakeholders from the sport movement, and inform stakeholders about EU funding programmes that support cross-sectoral sport/physical-activity projects.
- **The European Commission** is invited to promote cross-sectoral cooperation for sport, physical activity and social cohesion through appropriate initiatives; support the exchange of best practices (such as via the HEPA focal-points network); organise meetings with representatives of the sport sector and relevant stakeholders to develop and monitor shared goals/strategies; consider supporting cross-sector approaches in the implementation of relevant EU funding programmes; inform Member States, the sport movement and other stakeholders about relevant funding; identify policy and administrative areas where sport/physical activity contributes to broader EU priorities; and contribute to better knowledge of the sport/physical-activity sector by providing studies and analyses of its wider benefits.
- **The sport movement and other relevant stakeholders** are encouraged to actively engage in developing strategies to increase participation; to become part of cross-sectoral initiatives at all levels; and to promote the role of sport and physical activity in healthy lifestyles, personal/social development, social cohesion and inclusion.

In essence, the Conclusions position sport and physical activity as integral to a wide range of public policy goals, not siloed in a sports ministry alone. They advocate for embedding sport into transport, urban planning, health systems, education, volunteering, innovation and regional development. By embracing cross-sectoral cooperation – sharing data, aligning strategies, mobilising funding, engaging the sports movement and other stakeholders – Member States and the EU aim to create more coherent, sustainable and effective approaches to boosting participation in sport and enhancing its social, economic, health and regional value.

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 January 2021 – 30 June 2024)

The European Union Work Plan for Sport covering the period from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2024 sets out a comprehensive and forward-looking framework for EU sport policy. It begins by recalling the Treaty basis for EU action in sport (Article 165 TFEU) and the previous Work Plans (2011 – 14, 2014 –17, 2017 – 20). The Plan acknowledges the important role of sport in promoting European cooperation, protecting athletes' physical and moral integrity, and contributing to wider societal goals.

The Work Plan identifies **five guiding objectives**:

- 1. Strengthen an integrity- and values-based sport:** Sport must reflect key values such as fairness, transparency, inclusion, gender equality and the protection of minors.
- 2. Strengthen the recovery and crisis resilience of the sport sector:** The sector was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; building resilience, safeguarding grassroots sport, volunteers and clubs is a priority.
- 3. Support a sustainable and evidence-based sport policy:** The Plan promotes better data-collection, research, monitoring and use of evidence to guide sport policy and measure impacts.
- 4. Increase participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA):** Sport participation is encouraged across all ages and population groups, with the aim of promoting active lifestyles, green and sustainable living, social cohesion and active citizenship.
- 5. Ensure cross-sectoral cooperation and external dimension:** Sport is acknowledged as contributing to policy domains such as health, education, youth, social inclusion, innovation, digitalisation, environment, regional development and external relations. The Plan invites embedding sport across policies and strengthening cooperation with third countries and international organisations.

Implementation is framed as flexible in order to respond to emerging issues and to adapt to the priorities of upcoming Council Presidencies. The Plan uses working formats such as expert groups, peer-learning clusters, conferences, studies and Council conclusions.

Actions invited:

- Member States are invited to engage national sport movements and stakeholders, disseminate the Work Plan, coordinate implementation, and contribute expertise and experience.
- The Council Presidencies are called upon to build their programmes around the Work Plan, organise relevant working-level meetings, and facilitate exchange with the sport movement.
- The European Commission is invited to work with Member States and the sport movement to implement the Plan, provide guidance on funding opportunities, promote the mainstreaming of sport in other policy areas, support knowledge dissemination, set up exchange platforms, and report (by 2023) on implementation as a basis for the next Work Plan.

Annexes list priority areas and key topics for action and outputs. For example, in the area of “Integrity and values” the Plan includes themes such as safeguarding children, anti-doping coordination, gender equality, and sport governance. In the “Socio-economic and environmental dimension” it covers sport innovation, digitalisation, green sport, investment in sport infrastructure, regional development, and legacy of major events. For “Participation and HEPA” it focuses on sport for all, grassroots sport, inclusive formats, children’s motor skills, active transport and sustainable communities.

In sum, this Work Plan positions sport as a strategic enabler of social, economic and environmental objectives in Europe, not just as performance or recreation. It emphasises that sport’s value goes beyond competition: it is integral to health, inclusion, personal development, regional growth and global cooperation. By combining integrity, resilience, evidence, participation and cross-sectoral embedding, the Plan provides a panoramic vision of sport’s role in society and governance for the next four years.

Portugal



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| Period: | January–June 2021 |
| EU Council: | 18 May 2021 |
| Minister responsible: | Tiago Brandão Rodrigues Minister of Education of Portugal, with sport under his portfolio |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Pedro FOLGADO |

Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Sport Innovation

The conclusions position sport innovation as a key driver for the modernisation, resilience and socio-economic relevance of the European sport sector. They begin by recalling the legal basis (Article 165 TFEU) and the link between sport, sustainability, digital transformation and broader EU priorities. Innovation is framed not simply as new products or technologies but as a systemic enabler that spans grassroots sport, elite performance, governance, data, business models, infrastructure and inclusion.

Key observations include: sport innovation can increase participation – for example through gamification, digital platforms, wearables, augmented reality, AI-supported training and monitoring – thereby broadening access and promoting physical activity for more citizens. It can enhance socio-economic development: supporting start-ups, SMEs in sport-tech, regional innovation clusters, export capacity and job creation. It can help the sport sector become more sustainable, better governed, more transparent and more resilient in the face of challenges such as pandemics, climate change or demographic trends.

In light of these dynamics, the conclusions issue a number of invitations and recommendations:

For Member States:

- Recognise sport innovation as a policy priority and integrate it into national sport, research, innovation and regional development strategies.

- Foster cooperation among public authorities, sport organisations, research/academia and industry to create innovation ecosystems (clusters, networks, partnerships) around sport.
- Promote non-traditional and disruptive innovations (digitalisation, eco-innovation, new participation formats), and ensure grassroots clubs and small organisations benefit as much as elite segments.
- Encourage better data collection and statistics on sport-innovation impacts (digital tools, wearable tech, governance innovations), and support monitoring and exchange of best practices.

For the European Commission:

- Facilitate access to EU funding programmes (Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, Structural Funds, Recovery & Resilience Facility) for sport-innovation initiatives.
- Promote coordination and information sharing across policy domains (sport, research/innovation, education, health, digital, industry).
- Support the development of indicators, mapping studies and analytical frameworks to capture the sport-innovation dimension, including its socio-economic and sustainable-development impacts.

For the sport movement and other stakeholders:

- Engage actively in innovation processes: collaborate with research and industry, adopt new technologies and business models, share lessons learned.
- Promote innovations that enhance inclusion (social innovation in and through sport), sustainability (green sport, smart infrastructure), governance (transparency, data-driven decision-making) and participation (digital tools, new formats).
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing and peer-learning among clubs and organisations, notably between larger federations and grassroots level, so that innovation benefits all levels of the sport sector.

The conclusions emphasise that innovation in sport is not an isolated domain but must be embedded in a broad ecosystem: technological, social, organisational, infrastructural and financial. They stress the need for sport innovation to address future-proofing the sector – ensuring that sport remains relevant in a changing societal, economic and environmental context. Finally, by integrating innovation into sport policy, the document seeks to enhance sport's contribution to health, inclusion, digital economy, regional growth and sustainable development.

In summary, these conclusions chart a forward-looking course: empowering sport innovation as a strategic lever for growth, inclusion, modernisation and resilience – and calling on Member States, EU institutions and the sport movement to work together to realise its potential.

Slovenia



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| Period: | July–December 2021 |
| EU Council: | 30 November 2021 |
| Minister responsible: | Simona KUSTEC Minister of Education, Science and Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Luka ZIVIC |

Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on lifelong physical activity

The conclusions on lifelong physical activity frame regular movement across all stages of life as a public-health priority and a societal imperative. Starting from the acknowledged burden of physical inactivity – ranked among the top risk factors for mortality and exacerbated by recent pandemic contexts – the document emphasises that citizens should have access to opportunities to remain active from early childhood to older age, thereby maintaining fitness, preventing non-communicable diseases and supporting civic, social and employment participation.

It highlights evidence that physical activity contributes not only to health but also to well-being, mental resilience, social inclusion and reduced health-care costs. Moreover, the development of physical-fitness monitoring systems is positioned as a key instrument: such systems can help assess population-level trends, evaluate policy effectiveness and guide evidence-based interventions. The conclusions suggest that monitoring physical fitness can serve both diagnostic and motivational purposes, provided data protection and ethics standards are maintained.

In respect to implementation, Member States are invited to: identify and coordinate policies across relevant sectors (sport, health, education, urban planning, transport) that aim to stimulate lifelong physical activity; encourage decision-makers in non-sport domains to recognise the benefits of activity and to integrate them into their policies; support the development or adaptation of fitness-monitoring tools and data-systems; promote communication campaigns that highlight the societal and economic costs of inactivity; and ensure that opportunities are

inclusive, accessible and tailored to diverse population groups including youth, older adults, persons with disabilities and others at risk of inactivity.

Stakeholders such as the sport movement, local authorities, education and youth sectors are also invited to play active roles: they can adopt or collaborate on free-of-charge platforms for fitness assessment, engage in non-formal learning on physical-activity promotion, co-design programmes for lifelong movement, and liaise with allied sectors to address barriers in everyday life contexts (work, transport, leisure). Digital tools and online platforms, when used responsibly and in accordance with data-protection rules, are specifically encouraged as enablers of individual engagement and population monitoring.

The conclusions emphasise the value of cross-sectoral cooperation: aligning infrastructure, urban design, transport policies, education curricula, community sport initiatives and public-health efforts can create a “movement-friendly” environment. Examples include walkable and cycle-friendly cities, active school transport programmes, workplace physical-activity incentives, and community-based initiatives that sustain physical activity across the life span. Finally, the document underscores the need for sound evidence and data: Member States and the Commission are encouraged to support research, collect comparable data across countries, share best practices and monitor progress. By embedding lifelong physical activity into national and EU-level strategies, the conclusions seek to reduce inactivity levels, improve fitness outcomes and contribute to healthier, more active, inclusive European societies.

Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the key features of a European Sport Model

The Resolution articulates a clear vision for the European Sport Model, identifying its key characteristics, underlying values and the responsibilities of Member States, sport organisations and stakeholders in preserving this model. It begins by reaffirming the Treaty basis: under Article 165 TFEU, the EU contributes to the promotion of European sporting issues, while respecting the specific nature of sport (voluntary activity, social and educational function). The document then recalls recent policy developments (notably the EU Work Plan for Sport 2021 – 2024) and the broader context in which sport in Europe is evolving.

At its core, the Resolution recognises that organised sport in Europe is typically structured on a democratic, territorial basis – one federation per sport at national level – covering grassroots through to elite levels, combining club-based competition, leagues and national teams. It

emphasises principles such as openness (promotion and relegation), participative governance, athlete rights, gender equality, financial solidarity between professional and grassroots sport, and the social and educational dimension of sport. These features are identified as central to the European model.

The document places considerable emphasis on governance and integrity: good governance is viewed as a prerequisite for autonomy and self-regulation of sport organisations, but must rest on transparency, democracy, accountability, gender balance, ethics, the safety and rights of athletes, and the prevention of manipulation, corruption, discrimination and abuse. The Resolution identifies growing risks to the model – listed as weak governance, commercial pressures, corruption (e.g., match-fixing, money laundering), human-rights violations in major events, doping, racism, gender inequality, and excessive commercialisation. These threats require coordinated responses by public authorities and the sport movement.

Financial solidarity is described as a key pillar: supporting training of volunteers, coaches, officials, grassroots clubs, and ensuring that less commercially profitable levels of sport are sustained. The document calls for funding models that preserve the link between grassroots and professional sport, facilitate dual careers, and ensure that athletes, clubs and volunteers receive support across all levels. It further emphasises that the sport movement must reconcile the interests of athletes, clubs, leagues, fans, and commercial stakeholders in a balanced way.

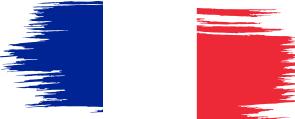
The Resolution makes a number of legislative and governance invitations:

- Sport federations should maintain central oversight and democratic governance, ensuring representation of all stakeholders and safeguarding integrity and athlete rights.
- Public authorities should monitor and support governance standards, athlete welfare, gender equality, financial transparency, and integration of sport into broader social policy (health, education, inclusion).
- The sport movement is asked to adopt codes of conduct, grievance mechanisms, athlete protection measures, transparency in bidding and hosting major events, and to uphold the values of the European sport model.

The annexes define “values-based organised sport in Europe” and provide the political background listing key documents and declarations (e.g., Council of Europe Revised European Sports Charter, Parliament and Commission sport communications). The definition describes sport built on voluntary activity, grassroots-to-elite continuity, solidarity, open competition, one federation per sport, coverage across levels, human-rights respect, gender equality and autonomy.

In conclusion, the Resolution serves as a policy milestone that defines and reaffirms the European Sport Model's core characteristics and values. It sets out a call to action – to preserve the model in the face of commercial, governance and societal pressures, to embed athlete and stakeholder rights, and to ensure that sport remains a social, cultural and educational force in Europe. The document signals a commitment among Member States, the sport movement and the EU to jointly safeguard and evolve the model.

France

The logo for the France 2022 EU Presidency. It features the word "France" in a large, bold, pink sans-serif font. To the right of the text are two abstract brushstroke shapes: a blue one on top and a red one below it, positioned side-by-side.

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| Period: | January–June 2022 |
| EU Council: | 4 April 2022 |
| Minister responsible: | Roxana MARACINEAU Minister for Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Guillaume ARDUIN |

Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States on 'Sport and physical activity, a promising lever to transform behaviour for sustainable development'

The 2022 conclusions articulate a strategic vision positioning sport and physical activity as essential levers for achieving sustainable development in Europe. Recognising the interconnectedness of physical-activity behaviour, health, social inclusion, environment and economy, the document emphasises that sport can advance multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sport and physical activity contribute not only to individual physical and mental well-being but also serve as platforms for education, gender equality, inclusion of people with disabilities or fewer opportunities, tolerance, civic engagement and sustainable communities.

At the same time, sport and its organisation face environmental and climate-related challenges: outdoor activities are affected by rising temperatures, droughts, floods and degraded natural spaces; sports events and equipment can generate significant environmental impacts – from energy and water use, plastics and micro-plastics, travel emissions, infrastructure demands and unsustainable consumption patterns. The conclusions therefore highlight a dual imperative: sport

must harness its potential to promote sustainability, while also reducing its own environmental footprint.

The document outlines strategic considerations: sport's informal and non-formal learning dimension makes it a strong vehicle for social responsibility, especially among youth; top-level athletes and major sporting events can symbolise and promote sustainable practices; sustainable event-legacy and major sport events in Europe can serve as models for ecological, social and economic responsibility.

Invitation to Member States:

- Align sport and physical-activity policies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the European Green Deal, embedding sustainability criteria in sport practice, events, infrastructure and funding.
- Ensure access to safe, inclusive and sustainable sport and physical activity opportunities for all citizens – regardless of age, ability, background or location - with accessible facilities, active mobility infrastructure, and inclusive formats.
- Monitor and anticipate climate change's effects on sport ecosystems (e.g., reduced seasons for outdoor/natural-environment sports), support adaptation and resilience strategies, and engage the sport movement in dialogue on sustainable calendars and facilities.
- Require major sports events and facility projects to include environmental and carbon-impact assessments, embed mitigation and circular-economy approaches, and promote local supply chains, resource efficiency, reuse, waste reduction and low-carbon mobility.
- Promote innovation, research and investment in green sport practices, sustainable infrastructure, and training of sport personnel in environmental literacy.

Invitation to the European Commission:

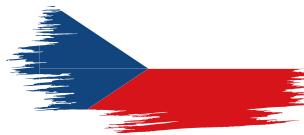
- Support the development of common standards for “green sport” via the Expert Group on Green Sport; collect evidence and best practices on sport's environmental and social impact; include sport in EU environmental, climate and innovation policies.
- Ensure that EU funding programmes (e.g., Erasmus+ Sport, ERDF, ESF+, RRF) include eligibility for projects on green sport, sustainable infrastructure and active-mobility sport practices; promote knowledge-sharing and transnational cooperation.
- Incorporate sustainable-development considerations in the next Work Plan for Sport, develop indicators and monitoring frameworks to assess the impacts of physical activity and sport on sustainability.

Invitation to the Sport Movement and Stakeholders:

- Align sport practices, events and infrastructure with the SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sport for Climate Actions Framework and the European Green Deal; adopt strategies and codes of conduct focused on reducing resource consumption, water/energy use, waste, plastics, supply-chain responsibility, biodiversity protection and carbon footprint.
- Appoint focal persons or structures within sport organisations responsible for environmental strategy; integrate environmental education and civic responsibility into training for coaches, volunteers and athletes; engage athletes and influencers to raise awareness of sustainability in sport.
- Promote sustainable procurement, local supply chains, circular economy, audio-visual media practices that reflect ethical, social and environmental responsibility, and tools to measure the social and environmental legacy of sport activities (especially major events).

In summary, these conclusions mark a strategic shift: sport and physical activity are framed as key tools for behaviour change towards sustainability. By combining inclusive access, environmental responsibility, cross-sectoral policy alignment, and innovation, the document sets out a roadmap for sport in Europe that contributes to healthy, active, equitable and low-carbon societies.

Czech Republic



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Czech Presidency of the Council
of the European Union

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| Period: | July–December 2022 |
| EU Council: | 29 November 2022 |
| Minister responsible: | Vladimír BALAŠ Minister for Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Tomas FIBEK |

Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on sustainable and accessible sports infrastructure

The Council conclusions set out a comprehensive approach to transforming sports infrastructure in Europe to meet the demands of sustainability and accessibility. The document begins by recalling key frameworks: the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (which calls on States Parties to ensure persons with disabilities participate on an equal basis in sport) and the EU's White Paper on Sport (which urged adaptation of sports infrastructure to such needs). The conclusions also build on prior policy documents emphasising sport's social inclusion role, sustainability in sport, innovation in infrastructure and integration with the Green Deal and Sustainable Development Goals.

Key context points: sports infrastructure is both a driver and a beneficiary of sustainability: it can contribute to the SDGs by providing safe, inclusive facilities that promote health, social inclusion, community resilience and regional development. Conversely, infrastructure is also subject to climate-change risks (storms, floods, drought, loss of snow, coastal erosion) and contributes to greenhouse-gas emissions through construction, energy and resource use. Thus infrastructure planning must respond to both environmental impact and future-proofing.

The document issues multiple **invitations and priority considerations**:

- Infrastructure planning and life-cycle management: Member States and stakeholders are encouraged to adopt planning processes that prioritise energy efficiency, material reuse, recycling, circular economy principles, and multi-purpose design (year-round use, community and sport combined). They should favour renovation of existing facilities, brown-field redevelopment and conversion of non-sport infrastructure rather than new build when feasible.
- Accessibility and inclusion: Infrastructure must enable participation by all citizens, including persons with disabilities, older adults, children and underserved populations. This includes barrier-free design, inclusive access from all transport modes (e.g., public transport, walking/cycling), spatial distribution (urban and rural), affordable access and synergy with community needs.
- Environmental and resource considerations: Infrastructure should incorporate sustainable procurement of materials, waste and water management, energy-efficient systems, low-carbon mobility access, and user awareness of sustainability measures. Environmental impact assessments are recommended for new or major renovations.
- Multi-stakeholder cooperation and knowledge exchange: National/regional/local authorities, sport organisations, infrastructure owners/managers, clubs, designers and researchers are invited to exchange best practices, develop data/registries on infrastructure usage, size, accessibility, environmental impact and facilitate cross-border peer learning.
- Policy coherence and funding alignment: Infrastructure policy should be aligned with sport, health, education, transport and regional-development policies. Member States are asked to mobilise EU funding instruments, structural and investment funds and recovery resources to support sustainable and accessible infrastructure. Monitoring and indicators should be built into evaluation of projects.

In the role of **sport organisations and other stakeholders**, the conclusions invite them to apply sustainability criteria (ecological, sociocultural, functional, economic, technical, process, location and sports-functional quality), to conduct environmental impact assessments, to adopt circular-economy solutions (reuse, recycling), to use infrastructure in multi-purpose community contexts, and to support sustainable mobility and short supply chains in construction/maintenance. Additionally, they should promote education of staff and users about sustainability and responsible consumption of resources.

In summary, these conclusions present sports infrastructure as a strategic asset – one that must be designed, managed and used with long-term thinking about environmental sustainability,

social inclusion and accessibility. By embedding these principles into planning, renovation, operations and governance, the infrastructure will support better access to sport, promote healthier and more inclusive societies, align with climate goals, and deliver greater value for communities across Europe.

Sweden



sweden
2023.eu

Period:

January–June 2023

EU Council:

15 May 2023

Minister responsible:

Jakob FORSSMED
Minister for Social Affairs
and Public Health

Sport Working Party Chair:

Guillaume ARDUIN

Resolution of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, reviewing the representation of the EU Member States in the Foundation Board of WADA and the coordination of Member States' positions prior to WADA meetings

The Resolution on the representation of the European Union Member States in the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Foundation Board, and on the coordination of their positions, establishes a structured framework to ensure coherent and effective participation of the EU and its Member States in global anti-doping governance.

It recognises the central role of WADA in protecting the integrity of sport by promoting fair play, transparency and the fight against doping worldwide. The Resolution highlights the importance of ensuring that the EU and its Member States speak with a unified voice within WADA, reflecting both the EU's competences and its values in areas such as data protection, health, sport, and fundamental rights. It acknowledges that the evolving structure and working methods of WADA require an updated and coordinated approach at EU level to safeguard the Union's interests and maintain influence in global anti-doping policy.

The Resolution defines that three seats in the WADA Foundation Board shall be allocated to EU Member States to balance political leadership and technical continuity:

1. One seat is assigned to the Member State holding the first Presidency of the Council's Trio Presidency.
2. The second seat goes to the Member State holding the third Presidency of the Trio, ensuring continued representation.
3. The third seat is held by a jointly designated governmental expert with specific competence and experience in anti-doping matters.

This structure provides both political legitimacy and long-term expertise, ensuring continuity in representation and allowing the EU's voice to remain consistent despite changes in national presidencies.

The Resolution also sets out clear coordination mechanisms to ensure that Member States' positions are aligned before and during WADA Foundation Board meetings. Coordination is to take place through existing Council structures on sport, with active involvement of the European Commission. Before each WADA meeting, EU representatives are to convene preparatory discussions to agree on common positions, ensure alignment with EU law, and identify shared priorities. These positions are then presented by the Member States occupying the WADA seats. After each meeting, the representatives are expected to report back on discussions and outcomes to ensure transparency and follow-up.

The document underlines that the EU's unified stance within WADA should promote the values of fairness, integrity and the protection of athletes' rights. It stresses the need to uphold fundamental principles such as proportionality of sanctions, privacy protection, and the balance between effective anti-doping measures and respect for human rights. Coordination with other international actors, including the Council of Europe, is also encouraged to ensure synergy and consistency in anti-doping governance.

The Resolution includes a commitment to regularly review the functioning of this representation framework to ensure that it remains efficient and responsive to developments within WADA and international sport governance. A review of the arrangements will determine whether any adjustments or improvements are needed to reinforce the EU's collective influence and coherence.

In essence, the Resolution establishes a practical and strategic model for EU Member States' representation in WADA. It seeks to combine political leadership with technical expertise, ensure continuity across presidencies, strengthen coordination mechanisms, and promote an EU voice that reflects shared values, legal obligations and a unified commitment to clean, fair and ethical sport.

Spain



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| Period: | July–December 2023 |
| EU Council: | 24 November 2023 |
| Minister responsible: | Victor FRANCOS DÍAZ State Secretary for Sports |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Pilar BARRERO GARCIA |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on women and equality in the field of sport

The document addresses the imperative of achieving gender equality in sport and sets out a policy framework for public authorities, sport organisations and other stakeholders to address the existing imbalances and structural barriers. It acknowledges that although women's participation and leadership in sport have improved in many areas, significant gaps persist - including lower rates of participation for women and girls, fewer women in coaching and officiating roles, limited access to leadership positions, and continued exposure to gender-based violence, harassment and sexual discrimination in sport. The document emphasises that these disparities not only undermine individual opportunities and rights, but also hamper sport's capacity to fully deliver social, educational and economic benefits.

In mapping the situation, the text identifies multiple categories of challenge:

- **Access and participation:** Women and girls may face cultural expectations, limited time, financial constraints or fewer female-friendly facilities and programmes.
- **Representation and leadership:** Women continue to be under-represented in decision-making bodies of sport organisations, coaching teams, refereeing, and other governance positions.
- **Working conditions and recognition:** Where women are active in sport roles, issues of unequal pay, undervaluation of work, limited career progression and absence of role models remain.
- **Media and visibility:** Women's sport receives less media coverage, is more likely to be

portrayed through stereotypes, and female athletes often face sexualised or reductive framing.

- **Violence, harassment and discrimination:** Women and girls in sport can experience gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, abuse, stereotyping or exclusion; sport organisations may lack robust safeguarding systems.

Given this context, the document invites a comprehensive response from three actor groups: Member States, the European Commission, and the sport movement/other stakeholders.

For Member States, the invitations include:

- Develop or update national action plans or strategies focusing on gender equality in sport – covering participation, leadership, coaching, officiating, funding, infrastructure and media.
- Set measurable targets and monitor data on gender participation, representation and working conditions in sport.
- Ensure sport infrastructures, transport, costs, and programmes are inclusive and accessible for women and girls.
- Promote education and training for sport professionals, coaches, officials and administrators to raise awareness of gender issues, safeguard rights and combat stereotypes.
- Embed gender equality criteria into public funding for sport and link eligibility to organisations' gender-equality performance.
- Enhance media coverage and visibility of women's sport, address gender biases and promote positive role models.

For the European Commission, the framework calls for:

- Catalysing data-collection and research on gender equality in sport, including participation, leadership, pay, media coverage and violence prevention.
- Facilitating exchange of best practices across Member States, sport organisations and third-countries; promoting training modules, expert groups and networks on gender equality in sport.
- Integrating gender-equality criteria into EU funding programmes relevant to sport, such as youth, education, inclusion and sport.
- Promoting media and digital-communication strategies that increase visibility of women's sport and challenge stereotypes.

For the sport movement and stakeholders, the invitation includes:

- Adopt codes of conduct, policies and procedures addressing gender equality, harassment

and discrimination; ensure safe environments for women and girls.

- Increase female representation at coaching, officiating and governance levels; establish mentoring and leadership-development programmes for women.
- Work with media, sponsors and event-organisers to improve coverage and commercial opportunities for women's sport; explore innovative formats and inclusive competition structures.
- Collaborate in research, data-sharing and awareness campaigns to enhance understanding and embed gender-equality culture across sport.

In summary, the document places gender equality in sport as a strategic priority. It links participation, representation, governance, visibility and protection into a cohesive policy agenda. It emphasises that sport organisations, public authorities and other stakeholders must work together to remove structural barriers, empower women and girls, and ensure that sport fully contributes to equality, inclusion and social development.

Belgium



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| Period: | January–June 2024 |
| EU Council: | 14 May 2024 |
| Minister responsible: | Pierre-Yves JEHOLET Minister-President of the French Community of Belgium |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Sacha VELKENEERS |

Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the contribution of self-organised sport to supporting active and healthy lifestyles in the European Union

The conclusions position self-organised sport as an important component of the broader sport and physical-activity ecosystem and as a key tool for public health, social inclusion and lifelong engagement in movement. They begin by defining self-organised sport as physical activity

typically undertaken in informal settings (parks, neighbourhoods, home, public spaces), not strictly bound by formal club membership, structured training or competitive rules. The document emphasises that, given emerging lifestyle patterns and changing citizen needs, many people now engage in sport in self-organising modes rather than traditional club frameworks – and thus policy must adapt.

It highlights data showing that a significant share of adults do not meet health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) guidelines, especially among older age-groups, women, lower socio-economic and rural populations. It notes the barrier factors: lack of time, cost, formal competition, motivation, and infrastructure mismatches. Self-organised sport is presented as a way to address these issues: it offers flexible formats, lower cost and easier access to physical activity. The conclusions underline that self-organised sport and organised sport are complementary, and both should be valued in policy frameworks.

Key invitations for **Member States** include:

- Promote and support policies and campaigns that foster self-organised sport as a means to lifelong physical activity, health and well-being, including in settings such as schools, workplaces, healthcare facilities and communities.
- Encourage participation in informal settings, including in areas with limited traditional sport infrastructure (urban neighbourhoods, rural areas).
- Explore innovative tools such as "physical-activity prescriptions" by health professionals to encourage self-organised activity in informal settings.
- Support the development of guidelines, community-based initiatives and tools for participants to safely engage in self-organised sport, including via digital applications and social media.
- Strengthen skill-development and volunteerism: provide training and recognition opportunities for trainers, coaches and volunteers who operate in informal/self-organised sport contexts, and create incentives for those transitioning from organised sport systems.
- Plan infrastructure and public-space strategy: invest in public active spaces (parks, trails, playgrounds) and ensure cross-sectoral cooperation (urban planning, transport, sport, youth) to make everyday spaces conducive to self-organised sport.
- Promote digital solutions: disseminate information about opportunities and facilities, map participation, and use data-tools to better understand and support self-organised practice.

Invitations for the **Commission** include:

- Promote awareness-raising campaigns including via the European Week of Sport, focusing

on self-organised sport participation.

- Encourage discussions among Member States, the sport movement and stakeholders on good practice and policy initiatives for self-organised sport.
- Support the use of EU funding programmes (structural, regional, recovery) for accessible and sustainable public spaces and infrastructure that enable self-organised sport.
- Foster better data-collection: include self-organised sport in future surveys and studies, monitor trends and needs, build evidence-base and encourage mapping of innovative practices outside traditional sport structures.

The **sport movement and other stakeholders** are encouraged to:

- Collaborate with public authorities to design inclusive sport-policies responsive to self-organised formats and evolving lifestyles.
- Share facilities and equipment with non-members to broaden access, especially for individuals who prefer informal and flexible participation.
- Develop community-level events and mentoring for self-organised sport participants, including volunteer coaches guiding informal practice safely and effectively.
- Diversify club offerings to allow for more flexible entry, drop-in formats and minimal scheduling constraints, thus reducing barriers for casual or self-organised sport participants.

In conclusion, the document sets a strategic policy direction: recognising self-organised sport as a vital and complementary pathway alongside organised sport to foster active, healthy and inclusive societies. By addressing infrastructure, digital support, volunteering, cross-sectoral planning, data-collection and inclusive design, the conclusions aim to enable more citizens to engage in physical activity on their own terms, contributing to health, social cohesion and lifelong movement.

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 July 2024 – 31 December 2027)

The Resolution builds a comprehensive roadmap for European sport policy over the forthcoming three-and-a-half years, grounded in the Treaty provisions on sport (Article 6 & Article 165 TFEU) and previous work plans. It acknowledges the multiple roles sport plays: not only in performance and competition, but as a social, educational and economic phenomenon linked to health, inclusion, innovation, sustainability and regional development.

This Work Plan identifies three main priority areas:

1. **Integrity and values in sport** – reinforcing safe, inclusive sport environments; preventing corruption, manipulation, harassment, violence and discrimination; promoting gender equality; safeguarding athletes' rights; and strengthening governance, transparency and the values-based dimension of sport.
2. **Socio-economic and sustainable dimensions of sport** – recognising sport's contribution to the economy, employment, innovation, regional development, and also its environmental footprint; promoting sustainable sport infrastructure, digitalisation, cross-sectoral innovation, economic resilience of the sport sector and alignment with the green transition.
3. **Participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA)** – encouraging sport and movement across the life-course, enhancing access for vulnerable groups, promoting active lifestyles, non-competitive and self-organised sport, and embedding physical activity into everyday life in schools, workplaces and communities.

Under each priority area, the Work Plan specifies key topics, themes, goals, working formats and responsible actors (Member States, Commission, sport movement) organised in annexes. For example: awareness-raising, peer-learning groups, knowledge-building, best-practice exchange, studies, monitoring systems. The document emphasises that participation is voluntary but encourages wide stakeholder engagement.

In terms of governance, the Resolution invites:

- Member States to embed the Work Plan in national sport and cross-sectoral policies; engage with the sport movement and stakeholders; coordinate monitoring and dissemination of results.
- Council Presidencies to integrate the Work Plan into their programme, organise structured dialogue sessions (high-level, operational, annual sport forum) and ensure continuity across Presidencies.
- The Commission to support implementation: providing analytical and logistical support, promoting cross-policy linkages (sport with health, education, environment, digital, economy), facilitating access to EU funding programmes (Erasmus+, structural & investment funds, research & innovation), enhancing data-collection and monitoring, and preparing a new strategic document by end-2026 on the future of EU sport policy including the European Sport Model.

The Work Plan emphasises flexibility: while the broad objectives are fixed, it allows for revision

in light of emerging challenges (e.g., crises, geopolitical shifts, health pandemics) and to adapt to future Presidencies' priorities. Implementation tools include Open Method of Coordination (OMC) groups, peer-learning communities, clusters and online platforms for knowledge sharing. The Resolution concludes by asking Member States, the Commission and stakeholders to engage actively, share expertise and incorporate Work Plan outcomes into their national or organisational frameworks, ensuring visibility and relevance. A report on the implementation will be submitted in the first half of 2027, forming the basis for the next Work Plan period.

In summary, this Work Plan positions sport and physical activity as integral to European policy objectives: from promoting ethical sport, sustainable development and innovation, to enhancing participation, health and social inclusion. It provides a structured, inclusive and forward-looking agenda for the sport sector to contribute across domains and respond to evolving societal and environmental challenges.

Hungary



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| Period: | July–December 2024 |
| EU Council: | 26 November 2024 |
| Minister responsible: | Ádám SCHMIDT Minister of State for Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Edina ELTER |

Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on fostering the lasting legacy of major sporting events

The Conclusions emphasise that hosting major sporting events presents both vast opportunities and significant challenges. While such events can boost economic, infrastructural, environmental, social and sporting development of the host city, region or country, without strategic planning a key risk is that high investments may not translate into lasting legacy for local communities. Hence the document positions lasting legacy as a prerequisite for public acceptance of major events and for their long-term success and value.

The text recalls the legal basis of EU action in sport (Articles 6 and 165 TFEU) and the role of the Work Plan for Sport 2024–2027, while referring to previous policy instruments such as the key features of the European Sport Model. It acknowledges that major events can be a catalyst for change – in sustainability, integrity, inclusion, accessibility, healthy lifestyles, tourism, innovation and regional visibility. However, it also notes that if risks are not managed – oversized unused infrastructure, environmental damage, gentrification, social exclusion, event-budget burdens – support from citizens may decline and events might shift outside the EU, reducing the continent's competitiveness.

To counter these challenges, the document offers several invitations:

For Member States

- Promote a strategic vision from the very start of bidding and preparation, ensuring legacy goals (sporting, infrastructural, environmental, economic, social) are built in.
- Consider linking public funding and state guarantees of major events to assurances on sustainability, legacy and good governance.
- Engage organising committees, public authorities, sport organisations, local communities, volunteer networks and private stakeholders early and continuously to maximise local benefit.
- Promote sustainable design and operation of event infrastructure: circular economy, climate-neutral planning, inclusive access, active mobility, integration with public transport and urban design.
- Use events to promote inclusion, gender equality, healthy lifestyles, volunteering, cultural programmes and community cohesion – especially in under-served or remote areas.
- Encourage smaller states/regions to host via multi-city or multi-country models, reducing burdens while maximising accessibility and European dimension.
- Promote use of event revenues to benefit grassroots sport, athletes, clubs and local communities.

For the European Commission

- Support exchange of knowledge and good practices on legacy planning, monitoring and sustainable practices.
- Facilitate development of harmonised sport-satellite accounts and data frameworks to measure sporting, social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts of major events.
- Encourage use of existing EU funding and initiatives to support legacy-oriented event infrastructure and community sport programmes.

- Promote recognition of volunteering associated with major events and support the mobility of skills gained through such volunteering.

For the sport movement and stakeholders

- Commit to economic, environmental and social sustainability, good governance, human-rights respect and responsible business conduct in major events.
- Adopt legacy-and-sustainability criteria in bid and selection processes; ensure transparency, democratic governance, athlete and participant rights are respected.
- Develop monitoring and reporting systems to track impacts and outcomes from events; ensure infrastructure and facilities are reused, integrated into communities, and aligned with everyday sport and active lifestyles.
- Foster multi-country bids and cooperation, and support the use of event momentum to host follow-up sport or community events that keep facilities and engagement alive.

The document's annexes provide definitions of 'major sporting event', 'lasting legacy', and a political background of previous policy documents. Overall, the Conclusions place lasting legacy at the heart of major-event policy, calling for integrated policy, continuous stakeholder involvement, robust data monitoring and genuine community benefit - positioning major events not as occasional spectacle but as long-term assets for people, place and planet.

Poland



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| Period: | January–June 2025 |
| EU Council: | 13 May 2025 |
| Minister responsible: | Piotr BORYS Deputy Minister of Sport |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Małgorzata SZUKALSKA-WRONA |

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on an integrated approach to sport and physical activity in the education context

The conclusions on an integrated approach to sport and physical activity in the education context recognise that sport and movement play a crucial role in the physical, mental and social development of children and adolescents. Schools and educational institutions are identified as prime environments for embedding regular physical activity – not only through formal physical education lessons, but by making use of infrastructure, promoting active commuting, breaks with movement, extra-curricular activities and collaboration with local sport organisations. The document emphasises that while the focus is on school-aged children and adolescents, sport and physical activity are integral elements of education across the life course, including tertiary education and lifelong learning.

It notes that many Member States are facing negative trends: reduced levels of physical activity among young people, increased sedentary behaviour, higher prevalence of overweight / obesity, and mental-health issues. Barriers include lack of time, insufficient motivation, low interest, inadequate infrastructure or support, and a lack of variety in movement opportunities. The integrated approach proposed aims to make movement more accessible, attractive, and embedded in daily school life to help reverse these trends.

Key focus areas and invitations include:

- **Flexible and inclusive physical activity provision:** Member States are urged to create conditions where children and adolescents can engage in physical activity through high-quality

physical education, extra-curricular sport programmes, movement during breaks, before and after class, active commuting to school, and outdoor/natural-environment activities. Infrastructure (indoors and outdoors) should be accessible, especially in disadvantaged or rural regions, and adapted for children with disabilities or those less active.

- **Development of transversal and motor skills, and linking sport with cognitive and educational goals:** The conclusions underline that sport and physical activity contribute not only to health but also to learning, cognitive skills, employability, social competences and personal development. Educational institutions are encouraged to regard sport as an educational tool that supports holistic development.
- **Data, monitoring and evidence-based policy:** Member States should monitor children's physical activity levels, fitness, physical literacy and sedentary behaviour, collect data with comparable methodologies and ensure evaluation of programmes and interventions. Standardised tools and indicators are proposed to enhance evidence-based decision-making.
- **Cross-sectoral cooperation and partnerships:** The document invites enhanced cooperation among sport, education, youth and health sectors, and between schools, local authorities, sport clubs and communities. This includes sharing of good practices, peer learning and partnerships to integrate sport into the education context more effectively.
- **Capacity building of teachers, coaches and volunteers:** Schools and sport organisations are asked to invest in the training and competence of personnel who deliver sport and physical activity, including in non-formal and informal settings. They are encouraged to promote sport values (inclusion, fairness, integrity), use digital tools where appropriate, and ensure safe, inclusive and ethical environments.
- **Recognition of skills and student involvement:** Children and adolescents should be encouraged to participate not only as practitioners but also in co-designing sport and physical-activity opportunities, developing organisational and leadership skills, and contributing to decision-making in school and sport contexts.
- **Infrastructure and access:** Member States are encouraged to support the availability of safe, modern, accessible sports infrastructure in and around schools, integrate active mobility infrastructure (walking, cycling), and prioritise regions, schools or groups with fewer resources.
- **Promotion and awareness-raising:** The conclusions call for campaigns and communication to raise awareness about the benefits of sport and physical activity in the educational environment, making it attractive and motivating for young people and their families.

In summary, these conclusions position sport and physical activity as embedded elements of the education system, not just optional extra-curricular components. They call for a comprehensive

and integrated approach that links sport with education, health and youth policies, supports inclusive access, promotes monitoring and evidence-based programmes, builds capacity, and encourages partnership between schools, sport organisations, local authorities and the wider community. By doing so, the document aims to foster lifelong physical activity habits, enhance learning and well-being among young people, and contribute to healthier, more active and inclusive societies.

Denmark



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| Period: | July–December 2025 |
| Minister responsible: | Jakob Engel-Schmidt Minister for Culture (Culture, Media and Sports) |
| Sport Working Party Chair: | Maria Josephine LANGE PEDERSEN |

Resolution of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, reviewing the representation of the EU Member States on the WADA Foundation Board and the coordination of Member States' positions prior to WADA meetings

The resolution reviews and updates the arrangements for the representation of EU Member States on the WADA Foundation Board and the coordination of positions before WADA meetings. It builds on previous Council resolutions (2000, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023) and reflects the need for a clearer, more transparent and coordinated process aligned with EU law and the duty of sincere cooperation.

The resolution reaffirms that the EU and its Member States must be able to exercise their competences effectively in the preparation, negotiation and adoption of decisions by WADA, given the Agency's global role in ensuring integrity and fairness in sport. It recognises CAHAMA (the Council of Europe's Ad Hoc Committee for WADA) as the forum for pan-European coordination and the Working Party on Sport (WPS) as the main EU forum for preparing and aligning positions. Representation: The EU Member States will continue to hold three seats on the WADA Foundation

Board. Representation will be at ministerial level and distributed as follows: One seat will be held by a minister or state secretary for sport from one of the Member States forming the incumbent or future Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU; Two seats will be held by ministers jointly designated by all Member States meeting within the Council. No Member State may hold more than one of these seats simultaneously. The resolution sets out transitional and procedural rules for nomination, selection, and replacement. Terms of office will last three years, in line with WADA's statutes, with automatic renewal or replacement procedures if a minister leaves office. The new system of representation takes effect on 1 July 2026, replacing the 2023 arrangements. Coordination of positions: For matters falling under EU competence, EU positions will be prepared by the Presidency in cooperation with the European Commission and the Member States, and endorsed through established Council procedures (WPS → COREPER → Council). Where timing prevents formal meetings, written procedures may be used.

Positions will be presented at CAHAMA meetings by the Commission or the Presidency, depending on competence and context. For issues under Member State competence, coordination may also occur within the WPS where added value exists, provided that such positions remain consistent with any established EU position. The Presidency's representative will present these coordinated Member State positions at CAHAMA meetings, seeking to include them in Europe's overall continental mandate. Reporting and accountability: The Trio Presidency's representative on the WADA Board will report to the WPS after each WADA meeting, summarising discussions and outcomes relevant to EU competences (e.g., compliance, data protection, governance). These findings will also be presented at the EU Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council.

By 31 December 2029, the Council will review the application of the resolution and decide whether further adjustments are necessary. The resolution and its annexes replace the 2023 framework, consolidating the EU's approach to representation and coordination within WADA. The annexes include detailed rules for selection, eligibility, and term limits of representatives, practical arrangements for preparing EU positions, a summary of the political background of EU anti-doping actions since 2000, and a schedule of Trio Presidencies up to 2036. Overall, the resolution seeks to enhance transparency, continuity, and unity in the EU's anti-doping representation and decision-making at the global level.

Insights from the Chairs of the Council Working Party on Sport

LIST OF NAMES OF CHAIRS OF WORKING PARTY ON SPORT

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| 2010 – SPAIN: FRANCISCO JAVIER ODRIozOLA LINO | 2015 – LUXEMBOURG: Alexandre HUSTING | 2021 – PORTUGAL: Pedro FOLGADO |
| 2010 – BELGIUM: An VERMEERSCH | 2016 – NETHERLANDS: Bart OOIJEN | 2021 – SLOVENIA: Luka ZIVIC |
| 2011 – HUNGARY: Krisztina GONTER | 2016 – SLOVAKIA: Elena MALIKOVA | 2022 – FRANCE: Guillaume ARDUIN |
| 2011 – POLAND: Agata DZIARNOWSKA | 2017 – MALTA: Dermot GALEA | 2022 – CZECH REPUBLIC: Tomas FIBEK |
| 2012 – DENMARK: Hans KRISTIAN KRISTENSEN | 2017 – ESTONIA: Kairis ULP | 2023 – SWEDEN: Tomas JOHANSSON |
| 2012 – CYPRUS: Vassos KOUTSIOUNDAS | 2018 – BULGARIA: Viktoria SLAVKOVA | 2023 – SPAIN: Pilar BARRERO GARCIA |
| 2013 – IRELAND: Annemarie SMITH | 2018 – AUSTRIA: Barbara SPINDLER- OSWALD | 2024 – BELGIUM: Sacha VELKENEERS |
| 2013 – LITHUANIA: Agne URBONAIte | 2019 – ROMANIA: Lucian MIRCESCU | 2024 – HUNGARY: Edina ELTER |
| 2014 – ITALY: Giovanni PANEBIANCO | 2019 – FINLAND: Heidi SULANDER | 2025 – POLAND: Małgorzata SZUKALSKA-WRONA |
| 2014 – GREECE: Kalliopi NEDELKOU | 2020 – CROATIA: Martina JERICEVIC | 2025 – DENMARK: Maria JOSEPHINE |
| 2015 – LATVIA: Santa OZOLINA | 2020 – GERMANY: Torsten WEIDEN | |

The evolution of sport policy within the European Union is a story of vision, dedication, and collaboration. Behind every EU Council Conclusion and Resolution lies the effort of individuals who have shaped its direction, nurtured dialogue among Member States, and translated strategic ambitions into concrete actions. Equally important, it is a story of people – Chairs, delegates, and stakeholders – who, while navigating formal agendas, cultivated a spirit of openness, collegiality, and mutual respect. This **warm and constructive atmosphere**, often palpable during each WPS meeting, allowed ideas to flow freely and cooperation to flourish even within the formalities of EU decision-making.

One moment from a typical WPS meeting

illustrates this vividly: delegates gathered around the table in Brussels, papers and laptops open, discussing the implementation of inclusive sport initiatives. While the agenda was formal, the room buzzed with friendly exchanges, national interventions, and spontaneous suggestions that sparked new ideas. Smiling faces punctuated serious debate, coffee breaks turned into impromptu brainstorming sessions, and every contribution, however small, was valued. It was in these moments – between formal decisions and light-hearted conversation – that relationships were strengthened and cooperation took root. Each Chair of the WPS has left a remarkable trace, bringing their own vision, experience,





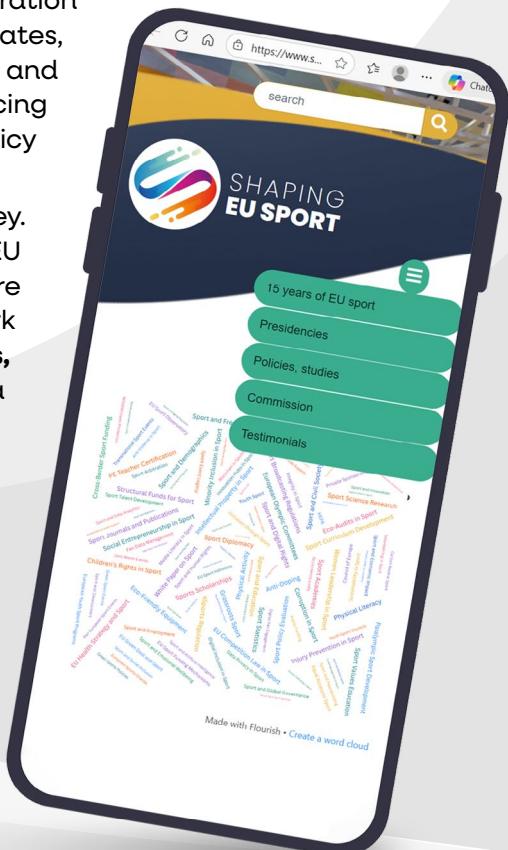
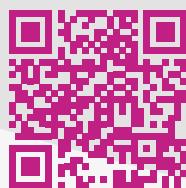


and energy to the work of building a coherent and forward-looking European sport agenda. In the pages that follow, we meet a selection of Chairs whose interviews are featured here: **An Vermeersch** from Belgium, who chaired the WPS in 2010 during the Belgian Presidency of the Council; **Vassos Koutsioundas from Cyprus** (2012); **Elena Malíková from Slovakia** (2016); **Kairis Ulp from Estonia** (2017); and **Viktoria Slavkova from Bulgaria** (2018). Through their voices, readers gain insight into the practical challenges, strategic choices, and personal commitment that have guided the WPS – from fostering cooperation among Member States, promoting inclusion and integrity, to advancing innovation and long-term policy

priorities.

These accounts represent only the beginning of a broader journey. Every Chair, past and present, has contributed to shaping the EU sport policy landscape, ensuring that dialogue and decisions are translated into meaningful actions. The hallmark of their work has always been not only professionalism but also **friendliness, mutual support, and a shared sense of purpose**, creating a collaborative environment where even complex negotiations were approached with respect and good humour.

Looking ahead, upcoming Presidencies are warmly invited to contribute to this ongoing work, sharing their experiences and reflections to enrich the archive. Many more Chairs' interviews will be made available online, and the WPS encourages future leadership to help keep the website www.shapingeusport.eu updated, preserving a living record of European sport leadership for generations to come.



AN VERMEERSCH

WPS CHAIR DURING THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2010

profile

An Vermeersch holds an MS in Law (1998), an MS in European Law (1999) and a Ph.D. in Law (2008, EU sports policy and sports law). Since 2009 she's a visiting professor of sports law in the Department of Criminology, Criminal Law and Social Law at Ghent University. She teaches sports law at Ghent University and European law at Ghent University College.

An is an arbitrator at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS, General list and Football list, since mid 2023) and a disciplinary judge at the integrity chamber of the Flemish Sports Tribunal (since 2021). An is co-founder of "Sport&EU",

the Association for the study of Sport and the European Union (2005) and member of the editorial board of 'Sports Law, Policy & Diplomacy Journal' and 'Voetbal- & Sportjuridische Zaken'.

Previous positions: arbitrator at the Belgian Court of Arbitration for Sport (2021–2023), disciplinary judge at the doping chamber of the Flemish Sports Tribunal (2023–mid 2023), arbitrator at the Centre for Sports Arbitration of CEPANI (2022–mid 2023), member of the Working Group on the Review of WADA Governance Reform (Nov 2020–May 2022), independent board member at the Flemish



Tennis Federation (2018–mid 2023), member of the Belgian national platform match-fixing (2016–2020) and member of the Flemish disciplinary body on anti-doping (2007–2009). In the past she has been advising the Flemish minister for sport on various topics, in particular in relation to governance, ethics, EU sports

policy and anti-doping (2000–2001 and 2011–2020). In that capacity she acted as Deputy member of the WADA Foundation Board (2013–2019). During the Belgian 2010 EU Presidency she worked as a project manager sport and chaired the EU Working Party on Sport.



interview

How were you selected to serve as Chair of the WPS, and in what ways did your prior experience contribute to your role during the Belgian Presidency?

In the context of the Belgian EU Presidency for Sport (with Flanders taking the lead as the responsible Community within Belgium), several additional staff members were recruited within the Flemish sports administration. Astrid Vervaet, who had already been working in

the administration for several years and also served as Sport Attaché, identified the staffing needs at the time. Together with the Secretary General and with the support of an external recruitment agency, she set up a selection procedure. I myself was recruited in 2009 as Project Manager for the EU Presidency in the field of sport. This role also included chairing the Council Working Party on Sport. The fact that I already had experience with the Belgian EU Presidency for Sport in 2001 – when I served

as an advisor to the then Flemish Minister for Sport – combined with my PhD research on EU sports law and policy, contributed significantly to my selection. Even though I chaired the Council working group, I believe most will still remember the Belgian Presidency as a strong team effort, with Astrid and myself leading it as a driving duo.

Which preparations, activities, or support systems contributed most to the success of your WPS Chairmanship during the Belgian Presidency?

A combination of many factors: the fact that a dedicated project team for sport was set up within Flanders; the various training sessions organised by the BE Presidency; the good cooperation with the French- and German-speaking Communities, the Member States, the sports sector, the Council Secretariat and the Commission. Specifically regarding the meetings of the Council Working Party, the support of the Council Secretariat, the Belgian Perm Rep and the example set by Jan Vanhee – who, drawing on his experience within the Council Working Party on Youth, shared many valuable tips – were key factors.

Looking back, what motivated you to take on the WPS Chair, and in what ways did the experience influence your professional career?

The Presidency came at the right moment in my career: I had just completed my PhD and was eager to return to practice and policymaking. Thanks to the good cooperation with Minister

Muyters during the Presidency, I subsequently joined his cabinet as an advisor.

What do you consider the most significant achievements of EU sports policy, and how successful has the EU been in advancing sport at the European level?

Over the past 15 years, key achievements in EU sports policy include the formal recognition of sport in the Lisbon Treaty, the establishment of Erasmus+ Sport funding, and strengthened cooperation on integrity and good governance in sport. Overall, the EU's work in sport has been a success in raising the profile of sport at EU level, though with limited legislative power.

What do you consider the highlight of your presidency, particularly in light of sport becoming a formal EU competence in 2009?

Given that sport only became a formal EU competence at the end of 2009, I believe the greatest achievement of the 2010 Belgian Presidency was getting the Council Working Party up and running and organising the Council meeting with the adoption of a number of Council documents.

How would you describe your cooperation with the European Commission, the Council Secretariat, and your Presidency Trio partners during your WPS Chairmanship?

My cooperation with the European Commission was very positive. We worked closely on preparing Council documents and coordinated on several joint activities, including the EU Sport

Forum, and their guidance was invaluable throughout the presidency. Equally important was the excellent support from the Council Secretariat – particularly Kari Tollikki and Nick Platten – who provided continuous guidance and efficiently coordinated meetings, making the work much smoother.

I am also pleased with the strong collaboration within the Presidency Trio. Working alongside the Czech and Spanish Presidencies, we met regularly to align priorities and share best practices, ensuring continuity and coherence across the trio.

Which key policy documents and initiatives were prepared or adopted during your presidency, and how did they contribute to EU sports policy?

During the 2010 Belgian Presidency, a number of important policy documents were prepared and adopted, highlighting the EU's priorities in sport. Among the key outcomes were the Council Conclusions on the role of the EU in the international fight against doping, the Council Resolution of 18 November 2010 on the EU

structured dialogue on sport, and the Council Conclusions on sport as a source of and driver for active social inclusion.

Beyond these formal documents, we also produced discussion papers, structured dialogue contributions, and expert group outcomes, which played an important role in guiding policy development and fostering cooperation between Member States. These documents reflected both the strategic priorities of the presidency and the collaborative spirit of the Working Party on Sport.

Looking back, what do you consider the main outcomes and lasting impact of your presidency, both at the EU and national level?

As already mentioned, the fact that we took the first steps within the Council in the field of sport is perhaps just as important as the documents that were adopted. In that context, I believe we were able to make an initial contribution to two institutionally important aspects of EU sports policy: the EU's representation within WADA and the structured dialogue with stakeholders.



VASSOS KOUTSIOUNDAS

WPS CHAIR DURING THE CYPRUS PRESIDENCY OF
THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2012

profile

Vassos Koutsioundas served as Chair of the Council Working Party on Sport during the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2012. With a strong background in sports administration and European affairs, he has been actively engaged in the development of EU sport policy and the promotion of sport as a tool for public health, social inclusion, and economic growth.

At the national level, he has held senior positions within the Cyprus Sport Organisation (CSO), contributing to the formulation of national strategies in areas such as sport governance, infrastructure development, and international cooperation. His involvement in EU sport matters dates back to the early stages of the EU's engagement in sport, allowing him to play a central role in shaping the priorities and implementation of the first EU Work Plan for Sport (2011–2014).



interview

How were you selected to serve as Chair of the WPS, and in what ways did your prior experience contribute to your role during the Cyprus Presidency?

Within the framework of the Cyprus Presidency, the Ministry of Education and Culture, through the Cyprus Sport Organisation, assumed responsibility for sport. Given my prior experience in coordinating EU affairs within the national administration and my active participation in EU sport discussions since the early 2000s, I was appointed to chair the Working Party on Sport. My earlier participation in various expert groups before the establishment of the Working Party on Sport in 2010, such as the Expert Group on Sport and Statistics, which led to the Vilnius Definition of Sport, and the Expert Group on the White Paper on Sport, provided a strong background in EU cooperation mechanisms and policy formulation. This experience proved invaluable in navigating the discussions and building consensus among Member States.

Which preparations, activities, or support systems contributed most to the success of your WPS Chairmanship during the Cyprus Presidency?

Extensive coordination and early planning were essential. The Presidency benefited from the excellent cooperation of the Council

Secretariat and the European Commission, as well as the dedication of the small but highly motivated Cypriot Presidency team. We placed particular emphasis on maintaining continuity with the Polish and Danish Presidencies, ensuring that our priorities aligned with the broader objectives of the EU Work Plan for Sport.

A key factor in the preparation phase was the participation in various training courses provided by the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, which focused on negotiation skills, EU procedures, and leadership during Council Presidencies. These courses, together with the training sessions offered by the General Secretariat of the Council, strengthened the team's capacity to manage complex discussions and formal meetings. Close collaboration with sport stakeholders, including the Commission's Sport Unit, also proved instrumental in preparing the policy documents.

Looking back, what motivated you to take on the WPS Chair, and in what ways did the experience influence your professional career?

The opportunity to contribute directly to EU policy-making at a time when sport was a newly established EU competence was both a challenge and an honour. Chairing the Working Party offered a unique perspective

on how EU institutions, Member States, and stakeholders interact in shaping common objectives. The experience significantly deepened my understanding of European governance in sport and strengthened my commitment to advancing the integration of sport within EU public policy frameworks. It also provided lasting professional connections and partnerships that continue to benefit Cyprus and the region.

What do you consider the most significant achievements of EU sports policy, and how successful has the EU been in advancing sport at the European level?

The Lisbon Treaty marked a turning point by introducing sport as an EU competence. Since then, major achievements have included the establishment of structured cooperation through the EU Work Plan for Sport, the development of evidence-based policymaking tools such as sport satellite accounts, and the creation of Erasmus+ Sport. The EU has successfully raised the political and economic profile of sport, even within the limits of its supporting competence, and promoted cooperation on integrity, governance, and public health through sport.

What do you consider the highlight of your presidency, particularly in light of the implementation of the first EU Work Plan for Sport (2011–2014)?

The Cyprus Presidency focused on three main priorities.

First, the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA), culminating in the Council Conclusions on the promotion of HEPA, which included the proposal to establish the European Week of Sport – an idea that would later materialize and become one of the EU's flagship initiatives in sport.

Second, the advancement of evidence-based sport policy, reflected in the Council Conclusions on strengthening evidence-based decision-making, with particular emphasis on the development of sport satellite accounts as a tool to measure the economic impact of sport.

Third, the effort to develop a European strategy to combat the manipulation of sport results. Although the initiative was not ultimately endorsed as Council Conclusions due to the objection of one Member State, it was adopted as Presidency Conclusions, sending a strong political message that paved the way for subsequent EU and international actions in the field of sport integrity.

How would you describe your cooperation with the European Commission, the Council Secretariat, and your Presidency Trio partners during your WPS Chairmanship?

The cooperation was excellent. The Commission, particularly the Sport Unit of DG EAC, provided continuous technical expertise and ensured policy coherence. The Council Secretariat's guidance was invaluable in managing the procedural aspects of the Working Party and drafting the final texts.

Close coordination with the Polish and Danish Presidencies within the Trio ensured policy continuity and a smooth implementation of the first EU Work Plan for Sport. The collaborative atmosphere across institutions and Member States contributed greatly to the success of the Presidency.

Which key policy documents and initiatives were prepared or adopted during your presidency, and how did they contribute to EU sports policy?

Three key documents defined the Cyprus Presidency's contribution to EU sports policy:

- Council Conclusions on the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA), which introduced the proposal for the European Week of Sport;
- Council Conclusions on strengthening evidence-based policy-making in sport, supporting the development of sport satellite accounts; and
- Presidency Conclusions on combating the manipulation of sport results, reflecting the EU's growing focus on integrity and ethics in sport.

Together, these initiatives reinforced the EU's multidimensional approach to sport policy - linking public health, economic analysis, and integrity - and laid the groundwork for several long-term EU priorities in the following Work Plans.

Looking back, what do you consider the main outcomes and lasting impact of your presidency, both at the EU and national level?

The most enduring legacy of the 2012 Cyprus Presidency is undoubtedly the establishment of the European Week of Sport, which has since evolved into one of the EU's most visible and successful sport initiatives, promoting physical activity across all Member States. At the national level, the Presidency enhanced Cyprus's administrative capacity in European affairs and positioned the Cyprus Sport Organisation as a credible and trusted partner within EU sport structures. The experience strengthened the foundation for Cyprus's continued engagement in shaping EU sport policy and promoting sport as a driver for health, inclusion, and growth.

ELENA MALÍKOVÁ

WPS CHAIR DURING THE SLOVAK PRESIDENCY OF
THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2016

profile

Elena Malíková works at the Government Office of the Slovak Republic and has extensive managerial experience in civil service. Former Director of Department of Education and International Affairs at the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (2007 – 2017), Chair of the Council Working Party on Sport under the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2016), Head of Department of Education at the National Sport Centre in Slovakia (2004 – 2007). Non-governmental work comprises both



professional and voluntary activities, notably within the International Modern Pentathlon Union – an appointed member of the Pierre de Coubertin Committee and elected member of the Business Affairs Committee (2004 – 2008), Secretary General of the Slovak Modern Pentathlon Association (1993 – 2003), Chair of the Slovak Olympic Academy (2021 – 2024).

Awarded by Trophy of the International Olympic Committee on Olympic sport and literature (2001), Editor-in-chief of the National Sport Centre Revue (2004 – 2007), Jury member of the EU #BeInclusive Award of the European



Commission (2017) and the EU #BeActive Award of the European Commission (2022), author of publications and press articles on sport, social inclusion, values and Olympic education.

Passionate for intercultural dialogue, sport diplomacy and foreign languages, fluent in English, French, Russian, with sound knowledge of Polish, German and Japanese. Interested in sport and health enhancing physical activities, notably swimming and running, inclusive marathons. Proud finisher of three marathons in New York, USA (2005), Treviso, Italy (2006) and Bratislava, Slovakia (2007) alongside with two half marathons in Cancale Saint Malo, France (2005) and Vienna, Austria (2025).

Former high-level modern pentathlete, member

of the national team of Czechoslovakia, later of Slovakia (1988 – 2000), a multiple national champion and World Cup finalist, participated in numerous foreign camps, including an educational and training camp at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas (1990).

Graduated at the University of Economics in Bratislava, educational background covers post gradual French language specialisation “Le Français du sport” at the Université Michel de Montaigne in Bordeaux and studies in sports management at the University of Poitiers, France focusing on Executive Masters in Sports Organisation Management – MEMOS programme guaranteed by the International Olympic Committee.

interview

How were you selected as Chair of the WPS? What internal procedures or criteria influenced this decision?

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic appointed the Chair based on expertise in EU sport policy, knowledge of the sports environment, communication and negotiation skills, linguistic abilities, and a diplomatic approach. At the time, I was Director of the Department of Education and International Affairs and was nominated by the Minister upon the Sports General Director's proposal. Serving as WPS Chair was an honour and allowed me to contribute to European sports policy while managing my departmental duties during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU.

What aspects of your preparation were most crucial to the success of your presidency?

A key aspect of my preparation was specialized training in EU policies, particularly the practical EU Presidency skills programme offered by the Institute of European Public Administration. This training provided essential strategies for managing the complexities of an EU Presidency, with a strong focus on leadership, negotiation, and collaborative decision-making skills that proved invaluable in achieving meaningful results during the presidency.

What training and preparatory activities did you undertake before starting the presidency?

Several key activities contributed to a well-prepared presidency. Having served as a WPS representative since 2010, I had gained insights into its working methods and built strong relationships with EU counterparts, fostering a cooperative environment. Comprehensive training by the Institute of European Public Administration, along with language, negotiation, and communication courses, strengthened my skills. Engagements with the Council Secretariat, European Commission, and informal networking events, including sports activities, further supported collaboration and the presidency's success.

Which preparatory initiatives did you find most beneficial?

It was not a single initiative but the combination of structured training, policy discussions, and relationship-building activities that proved most valuable. Together, they provided a well-rounded foundation and thoroughly prepared me for the challenges of the presidency.

What motivated you to take on the role of WPS Chair?

The opportunity to lead the WPS and shape the EU sport agenda at the governmental level

was unique and irresistible. It offered a chance to challenge myself, guide discussions among EU Member States, and build consensus on important issues. Curiosity and the desire to explore new perspectives further motivated me. Looking back, this experience remains a highlight of my professional career.

Was your presidency Brussels-based or capital-based?

The 2016 Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU in sport was capital-based, which posed its own challenges. Frequent travel between Bratislava and Brussels and managing responsibilities across multiple locations demanded flexibility and careful coordination,

making it one of the most demanding aspects of the role.

Did you introduce any new initiatives or practices during your presidency?

One initiative I remember particularly fondly was the final Working Party on Sport under my leadership in Brussels in December 2016. Held in the Europa Building as a test event just before its official opening, the meeting offered a rare opportunity to be among the first officials to explore the new venue. While our primary focus was on the agenda, we also had to assess the building's functionality – from interpreter setups and microphones to signals, lighting, and other technical aspects. Despite





several technical challenges that arose during our discussions, the meeting proved highly successful and, I believe, a deeply rewarding experience for everyone involved.

We also added a creative twist to the baton relay handover, a tradition that began during the Polish Presidency. For the first time, we introduced a brief “sports choreography” with Dermot Galea from Malta, the incoming Chair for 2017. Circling the table in the Europa Building - one of us inside, the other outside - we high-fived each delegation, infusing the transition with energy and a personal touch. The baton passed in a genuinely sporting spirit, accompanied by our brief

messages: mine expressing gratitude for the work accomplished, and Dermot’s extending goodwill for future cooperation. This unforgettable moment remains deeply impressed in my memory, and every time I see EU leaders in that same room on television, it brings it all vividly back.

The event gained an extra touch of charm as it took place on the eve of St. Nicholas Day, also known as the Feast of St. Nicholas (in Slovak Mikuláš), celebrated on 6 December. To mark the occasion, I wore a Mikulášska čiapka – a Nicholas cap – while chairing the session and handed out chocolates to each delegation. It was a small but warm gesture that, I hope,

brought smiles and made the meeting genuinely memorable.

What were the main challenges you faced during your presidency? What do you consider as your success?

The work during the Slovak Presidency was highly challenging, and I am sincerely proud of the consensus we achieved among EU Member States on the proposed Council conclusions on sport diplomacy. This document represented the first common position on sport diplomacy within the EU, marking a significant contribution to European sports policy and laying the groundwork for future initiatives. In this regard, I consider my role in the Slovak Presidency one of the highlights of my professional career. Chairing the Working Party on Sport and being at the centre of discussions on sport diplomacy was a unique and rewarding experience, and I am grateful for the opportunity as well as the dedication of all counterparts involved.

The most significant challenge, however, was managing the demanding timetable and heavy workload – a common experience, I believe, for many former WPS Chairs.

What key lessons did you learn over the six months?

The most important lesson I learned during those six months was to never give up, no matter how challenging the situation became. Those days were undoubtedly extremely demanding, yet I am grateful for the experience. I am also pleased that I remained true to my mantra –

approaching life with a smile. This mindset helped me overcome obstacles and maintain a positive outlook throughout the presidency.

How did the presidency influence your professional career?

The presidency had a profound impact on my career, broadening my perspective on the EU sport agenda and deepening my understanding of the governmental sector's connection to sport. It improved my written and verbal communication, particularly in analysing complex documents and understanding the nuances behind Member States' positions. Beyond professional skills, the experience was life-changing, strengthening me and deepening my appreciation for friendship, respect, and collaboration.

What is your view on the position of sport within the agenda of the European Union? What are the most significant achievements in EU sports policy over the past 15 years?

Having represented Slovakia in EU sport meetings since 2007, I have personally witnessed how sport evolved from an informal topic to a recognized and respected policy area. For me, the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 was a turning point, giving sport legal status and strengthening its role in EU decision-making. Seeing the establishment of the Working Party on Sport and the formal inclusion of sport in the Council's structure demonstrated how far the EU had come.

I value initiatives such as the European Week

of Sport, Erasmus+, and the EU Work Plan for Sport not just for their policy impact, but because they promote inclusion, fair play, and active participation – values I deeply care about. During the Slovak Presidency, the Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy particularly resonated with me, highlighting sport as a bridge for international cooperation and cultural exchange.

From my perspective, these milestones show that sport is not only a policy tool but also a way to connect people, strengthen communities, and build mutual understanding across Europe and beyond.

What recommendations would you offer to future WPS Chairs?

I would encourage future WPS Chairs to approach the role with confidence, as if stepping onto a stage where every decision matters. Hold firmly to your vision, but treat challenges and unexpected changes as invitations to adapt and grow. Listen actively, build genuine connections with colleagues, and remain open to new perspectives. Balancing resolve with flexibility is what transforms the demanding role of Chair into a deeply rewarding and impactful experience.

What do you consider the highlight of your presidency?

The highlight of the Slovak Presidency was undoubtedly the adoption of the Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy by the sports ministers of all EU Member States. This was a

significant milestone, as it formally recognized sport not only for its well-known benefits to physical health but also as a powerful tool for international relations and diplomacy. It laid the foundation for a more strategic use of sport to promote peace, cooperation, and mutual understanding across borders, leaving a lasting impact on the EU's global approach to sport.

I am also proud that Danka Barteková and Matej Tóth, two outstanding Slovak athletes, participated as speakers at the Council in Brussels. Their involvement was remarkable, as they were, to my knowledge, the first athletes to engage directly with ministers at such a high-level forum. Their contributions highlighted the importance of including first-hand athlete perspectives in discussions at the highest levels of sport policymaking.

How would you assess your cooperation with the European Commission?

Working with the European Commission during the Slovak Presidency was an extraordinary experience. From the very beginning, our collaboration was built on trust, openness, and a shared commitment to advancing sport in Europe. I particularly appreciated the expertise and guidance of Commissioner Tibor Navracsics and his cabinet, whose support for sport diplomacy was instrumental. The EAC Sport Unit, led by Yves Le Lostecque, became an essential partner in translating ideas into actionable initiatives, culminating in the adoption of the Council Conclusions on



Sport Diplomacy in 2016 – a milestone that still resonates with me personally.

What joint activities did you develop with the Commission?

One of the moments I cherish most was the European Week of Sport in Košice. It was not just a formal event, but a living demonstration of sport's power to connect people, inspire

communities, and encourage healthier lifestyles. Walking through the streets of Košice alongside athletes, and local stakeholders, I could see the energy and excitement that sport brings to everyday life. The event illustrated, in the most tangible way, how EU initiatives can resonate on the ground, and how collaboration between the Commission, Member States, and local partners can transform ideas into action.

For me, this was the embodiment of sport diplomacy at its best – sport as a force for inclusion, joy, and cohesion.

How would you evaluate the support from the Council Secretariat?

The Council Secretariat was my anchor throughout the presidency. From organizing meetings and managing logistics to anticipating challenges, their support was indispensable. I especially valued the guidance of Jaroslaw Pietras, Nick Platten, and their teams, whose expertise made advancing sport diplomacy smoother and more effective. Even informal moments, like morning runs before meetings, built a sense of camaraderie and trust that I believe was crucial in tackling complex topics. My primary contact, Kari Töllikkö, was a constant source of guidance and support.

Who were your presidency trio partners and how did you collaborate?

Our trio partners, the Netherlands in 2016 and



Malta in 2017, became more than colleagues – they were partners in a shared journey. Together, we aligned priorities, coordinated initiatives, and shared experiences across Brussels, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and Malta. Beyond formal meetings, our informal gatherings and exchanges created a rhythm of collaboration that strengthened understanding, trust, and ultimately the impact of our presidency. The synergy within

the trio was a reminder that sport, like diplomacy, thrives on cooperation, openness, and shared vision.

When and how did you choose your presidency topics?

Selecting our presidency topics involved careful reflection and strategic discussion. Initially, we considered focusing on education in and through sport, a political priority for Slovakia and personally meaningful to me. When we learned Latvia had already chosen a similar theme, we sought a fresh and



unexplored topic.

After consulting with the presidency trio, the European Commission, and the Council Secretariat, we chose sport diplomacy for the Council Conclusions. It was an emerging and challenging area, but achieving concrete policy outcomes made the effort immensely rewarding. Education was also addressed through a political debate during the Council of Ministers, which was successfully realized.

What side events and sports activities were organized during your presidency? Were there any emotional moments or particularly challenging situations, and how did you manage them?

One of my greatest satisfactions during the Slovak Presidency was seeing sport and health-enhancing physical activities become a living part of our events. A highlight that still makes me smile was the white-water rafting session in Čunovo. I remember feeling a mix

of excitement and nerves beforehand, unsure if participants – many high-level officials – would embrace such an informal, adventurous activity. To my delight, nearly everyone jumped in with enthusiasm. There were a few minor splashes and stumbles, of course, but the laughter, camaraderie, and teamwork that emerged made it unforgettable. It was a perfect example of how sport can break barriers and create lasting memories.

An especially moving moment came when the

Slovak minister, the European Commission DG, and the Head of the Sport Unit joined Olympic champion Michal Martíkán on the same boat. Watching them paddle together, united in purpose and spirit, I felt a profound sense of pride. That moment captured everything I hoped to achieve with the presidency – the power of sport to connect people beyond hierarchy, nationality, or protocol. The logistical challenge of coordinating such an event was significant, but careful planning and a focus



on safety ensured it was a meaningful success for everyone involved.

Another initiative that remains close to my heart was the integration of morning sports activities into the official program. On the morning of the EU Sport Directors' meeting, I joined delegates alongside Slovak marathoner Marcel Matanin for a run through Bratislava's scenic highlights – from the Danube to Bratislava Castle and Sad Janka Kráľa Park. In addition, yoga sessions at meeting venues added a calm, energizing start to the day. Seeing participants laugh, stretch, and share stories before formal discussions made me realize how much these small moments humanize diplomacy and build genuine connections.

What began as an experimental idea quickly became a defining feature of our presidency. Today, seeing these activities become a regular part of EU sport events fills me with pride. It is a reminder that thoughtful integration of sport into professional life can inspire, energize, and create lasting bonds – something I personally experienced and will never forget.

Is there a legacy of your presidency's work at the national level? What about the national perspective in terms of preparation of the Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy?

The legacy of the Slovak Presidency in sport diplomacy is something I hold close to my heart. Internally, our team at the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport worked closely together, ensuring a unified

approach and smooth coordination with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. The Department of Public Diplomacy played a pivotal role, and I am proud that a dedicated department for Sport Diplomacy was later established, carrying forward our vision.

From the very beginning, I felt the weight of responsibility, knowing that the Council Conclusions would require delicate negotiation and consensus. Support from our trio partners – the Netherlands and Malta – was invaluable, yet the process included sensitive moments, such as discussions around potential boycotts of the Rio Olympic Games. Navigating these challenges demanded patience, diplomacy, and persistence. When consensus was finally reached, the sense of relief and achievement was immense. It was not only a professional milestone but also a deeply personal one, affirming the power of careful preparation, collaboration, and the belief that sport can serve as a tool for international dialogue and cooperation.

How would you evaluate the significance of sport diplomacy during the Slovak Presidency at the EU level, and what progress has been made since then in both EU and national contexts?

From my perspective, the Slovak Presidency marked a crucial moment for the EU's approach to international relations through sport. In 2016, sport diplomacy was still emerging and not widely recognized. By pushing for its inclusion, we succeeded in adopting the



Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy – a significant step that highlighted sport's potential to strengthen international relations and enhance the EU's global standing.

Since then, sport diplomacy has become an integral part of EU policy, embedded in the EU Work Plan for Sport and actively pursued

by subsequent presidencies. What began as a challenging and little-known topic has now evolved into a recognized and strategic element of EU policymaking, with the Slovak Presidency leaving a lasting mark as a key milestone in the development of sport diplomacy.

KAIRISULP

WPS CHAIR DURING THE ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2017

profile

Kairis Ulp served as Chair of the Council Working Party on Sport during Estonia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2017. Following the Presidency, from 2018 to 2020, she contributed to EU sport-policy development as a member of the European Commission's Expert Group on Human Resources Development in Sport, and from 2020 to 2022, she worked as a Policy Officer in the European Commission's Sport Unit.

Kairis Ulp graduated in physical education and sport sciences from the University of



Tartu in 1995. She began her career as Secretary-General of the Estonian Academic Sports Federation, later serving as Head of the Cabinet to the Secretary-General of the Worldloppet Ski Federation. From 1999 to 2019, she was a member of the Executive Committee of FISU and, in 2021, was awarded the title of FISU Emeritus Honorary Member, becoming the youngest person to receive this distinction.

Kairis Ulp is the co-founder of the Estonian Sports Register and has served as its Head at the Estonian Foundation of Sport Education and Information since 2009.

interview

How were you selected to serve as Chair of the Working Party on Sport, and how did your prior experience contribute to your role during the Estonian Presidency?

I was approached by the Ministry of Culture as a potential Chair of the Council Working Party on Sport (WPS) about two years before Estonia's Presidency of the Council of the EU. I believe the nomination was based on my extensive experience in international sport

governance. For nearly 15 years, I served as a member of the Executive Committee of FISU, where I chaired the Winter Universiade Supervision Commission for eight years and led the working group that developed the bidding and election procedures for Universiade host cities—now known as the Summer and Winter World University Games.

This background in the international sport movement helped me understand both the



strategic and operational dimensions of sport governance. In 2016, I began attending WPS meetings and completed an internship at the Permanent Representation of Estonia to the EU in Brussels. This provided valuable practical insight into Council procedures and the dynamics among EU institutions and Member States.

Estonia prepared thoroughly for its first EU Council Presidency. Coordination led by the Government Office was intensive and included training sessions and simulation exercises. These preparations strengthened our understanding of EU decision-making processes and boosted our confidence that Estonia could effectively lead discussions at European level.

Which key policy documents and initiatives were adopted during your Presidency, and what do you consider its highlights?

The Council of the EU adopted two key policy documents in the field of sport:

- the Council Conclusions on the Role of Coaches in Society, and
- the Council Resolution on Further Developing the EU Structured Dialogue on Sport.

Raising the topic of **coaches** and recognising their contribution—not only within sport but to society more broadly—was an important milestone. According to the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE), there are around 9 million coaches in Europe, influencing up to 100 million Europeans. Yet

their wider societal role had never been addressed at EU level. The Conclusions recognised coaches as educators, mentors, and motivators—not merely trainers of athletes.

The Resolution on **EU Structured Dialogue** strengthened cooperation between EU institutions, Member States, and the sport movement. It expanded the dialogue beyond high-level exchanges to include operational-level discussions among sport executives, making EU sport policy more inclusive and better connected to practitioners.

A highlight of the Presidency was the first-ever participation of **IOC President Thomas Bach** in the EU Council's policy debate on sport—an important moment in the context of adopting the Structured Dialogue Resolution.

Another milestone was the **Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle** — a European Commission initiative signed by two Commissioners at the opening of the European Week of **Sport in Tartu**. It underscored the importance of healthy lifestyles and cross-sectoral cooperation across health, sport, education, and food policy. I am especially proud that such an influential initiative carries the name of my hometown.

What events were organised during your Presidency, and how did they contribute to your priorities?

We organised two international sport conferences:

- “The Role of Coaches in Society: Adding



Value to People's Lives" in Tallinn, with around 200 participants from 30 countries; • "Sport, Education, University: Joining Forces for Athletes' Dual Careers and an Active Society" in Tartu, with around 160 participants.

We also hosted the informal EU Sport Directors' Meeting, organised a dual-career workshop with TASS, and marked the International Day of University Sport (IDUS). These events brought world-class experts to Estonia and provided platforms to discuss current issues in sport policy and governance.

Together with the European Commission and Club Tartu Maraton, we organised the official opening of the European Week of Sport 2017 in Tartu, which gathered around 3,000 children and young people.

How large was the Estonian Presidency team, and how did your cooperation work in practice?

Our sport-sector team was small. The core consisted of four people - myself as Chair of the WPS, Deputy Chair Margus Klaan, our Brussels-based assistant, and a colleague responsible for organising Presidency events.

Around us, we had a support network of about ten professionals.

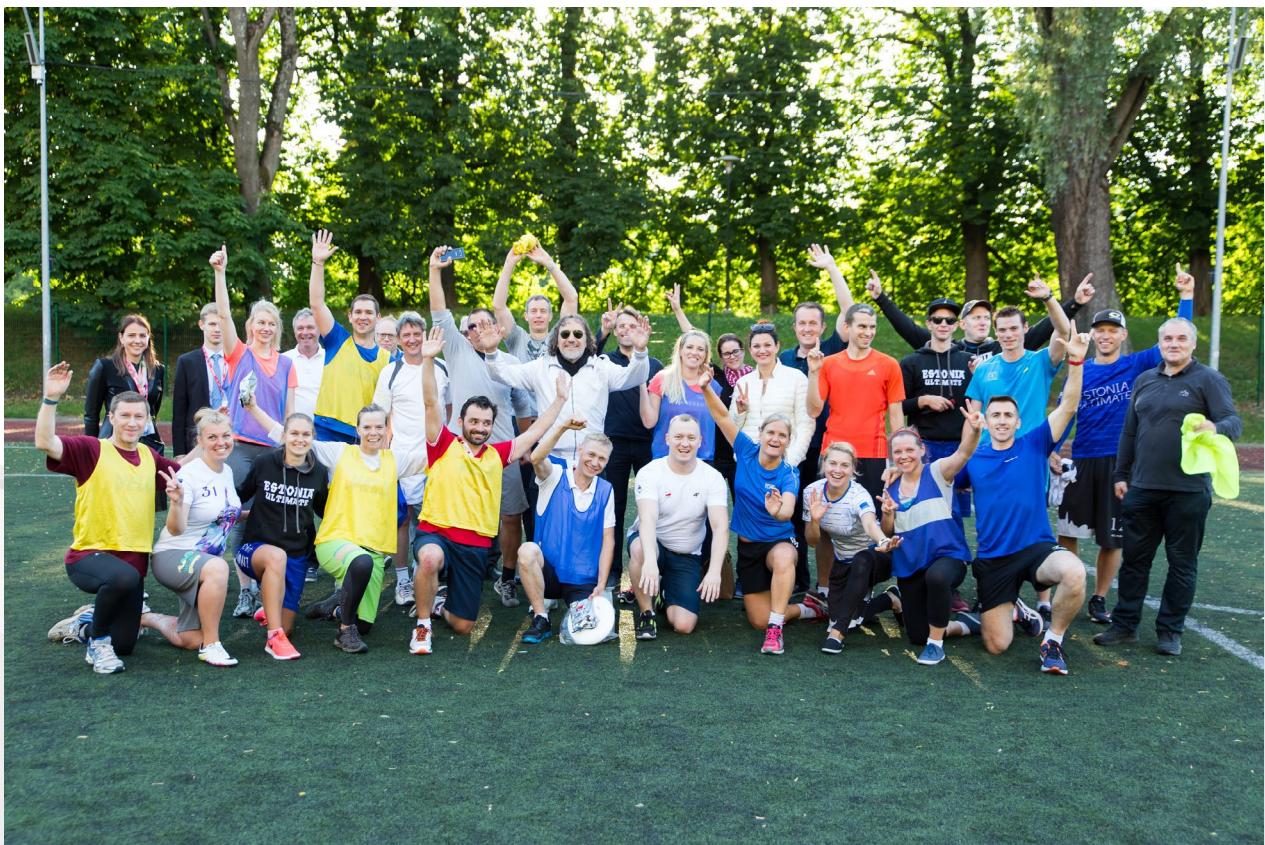
We set up a drafting team that included top experts on coaching qualifications and a representative of the Estonian Anti-Doping Agency to address WADA-related issues. Another highly capable team managed conferences and side events.

Cooperation with the minister and the ministry's communications department was excellent. Our teamwork was built on trust, short

decision-making lines, and shared motivation. I believe the success of our Presidency stemmed from this unity and from our confidence that Estonia could make a meaningful contribution to European sport.

What were the main challenges during your Presidency?

Already at the very first Working Party meeting, one Member State expressed concern that adopting the Council Conclusions on the Role



of Coaches in Society would be too ambitious. National systems differ widely - coaching is a regulated profession in some countries and largely voluntary in others. Achieving consensus among 28 Member States required intensive consultation, but ultimately all delegations recognised the value of promoting coaching excellence and social responsibility.

Another challenge involved securing the participation of IOC President Thomas Bach in the Council's policy debate. Coordinating IOC protocols and Council procedures was not easy, as the IOC President had never before taken part in such a debate at EU level. His subsequent visits to EU institutions helped strengthen dialogue further.

How do you assess the legacy of your Presidency today?

The legacy of the Estonian Presidency continues. The topic of coaches remains on the EU sport-policy agenda. In 2018, the European Commission established the Expert Group on Skills and Human Resources in Sport, which developed the EU Guidelines on Minimum Requirements in Skills and Competences for Coaches. In 2022, the Council adopted Conclusions on Empowering Coaches by Enhancing Opportunities to Acquire Skills and Competences. Since 2023, Erasmus+ has introduced mobility measures for sport-sector staff, including coaches. In 2027, Estonia will host a Peer Learning Activity on coaching.

The Structured Dialogue Resolution strengthened cooperation mechanisms, and

the Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle remains a landmark initiative-the first cross-sectoral EU initiative in sport, promoting collaboration and healthier, more active lifestyles.

How do you assess the impact of the Presidency on Estonian sport?

The Presidency was a very important milestone for Estonia. It strengthened our institutional capacity, international credibility, and professional confidence, bringing long-term benefits to sport governance.

The networks, partnerships, and trust established during the Presidency continue to support Estonia's engagement in European policymaking. The Presidency also showcased national strengths in the field of sport - the Estonian Sports Register, the coaching-qualification system, and data-driven policy approach. It helped link these strengths with EU-level policymaking and demonstrated that Estonia's digital expertise can make a meaningful contribution to sport governance.

VIKTORIA SLAVKOVA

WPS CHAIR DURING THE BULGARIAN PRESIDENCY
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2018

profile

Viktoria Slavkova is a highly accomplished professional and executive with an extensive background in various industries. Currently based in Dubai, she travels frequently to Europe and East Africa. Viktoria is the CEO of Lab Intra, a Dubai-based company that exclusively represents manufacturers of medical devices for blood transfusion services and imaging from France, Germany, Turkey, and China in the GCC region and East Africa.



Additionally, she holds the position of CEO at Best Luxury Boats, representing manufacturers of luxury boats from Italy and Greece for the UAE market.

Prior to her current roles, Viktoria served as the Director for International Cooperation at the Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sport from 2017 to 2022. In this capacity, she represented Bulgaria in various international organizations and bodies

focused on sports-related topics such as anti-doping measures, integrity, safety of sports events, and good governance in the sector's recovery post-COVID-19. Her contributions include serving in key positions like Deputy Member of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Foundation Board for 2 mandates, Elected Member of the WADA Finance and Administration Committee, Chair of advisory group for International Cooperation, Member of the Bureau of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) of the Council of Europe, Deputy Chair of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport of UNESCO (CIGEPS). She was also appointed as the National Focal Point for UNESCO's International Convention against Doping in Sport. During this period Viktoria managed an international team for the organisation of major intergovernmental events in Sofia, Varna, Brussels, Strasburg and Vienna.

Before her involvement in international sports, Viktoria held positions at the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the UN and OSCE in Vienna. She also has experience as a Director of External Operations in a group of construction companies expanding across several European countries and as a manager of NGOs focusing on regional development and sports, collaborating with notable figures in the sport field.

Viktoria is a graduate of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and Vienna University of Technology, specializing in green diplomacy. She holds a Master's degree in Finance and has received a Placement Certificate in Innovation and Business Intelligence from Cherbourg School of Engineering. Fluent in English, German, Russian, and French, Viktoria's diverse skill set and experience make her a valuable asset in any organization.

interview

What was the selection procedure for the chair of the WPS?

There was no specific internal procedure for the selection. The decision was based on background, educational qualifications, and professional experience in the field of sport and politics. These factors contributed to the selection, ensuring that the role was filled by someone with relevant expertise and a deep

understanding of the subject matter.

Were preparations for your presidency important? If so, can you explain why?

Preparations played a crucial role in the success of the presidency. Assembling a team of experts, both internally and externally, ensured a well-structured and informed approach to key topics. Engaging a diverse

network of specialists at national and international levels helped refine discussions and enhance decision-making. Additionally, securing the necessary activities and logistical support was essential for the smooth execution of the presidency's agenda.

Participating in various meetings and training sessions in advance proved highly beneficial. These included WPS meetings, discussions with Member States, and engagements with the European Commission's Sport Unit and the Council. Consultations with experts on the Presidency's thematic priorities further strengthened the preparatory process.

One of the most valuable initiatives was learning from experts involved in previous Presidencies. Their insights, shared in collaboration with the European Commission, provided practical guidance on addressing challenges and meeting expectations. Both formal and informal meetings played an important role in shaping the strategy. Additionally, training provided by the local Institute for Public Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs helped enhance the team's readiness for the responsibilities ahead.

What was your personal perspective on the presidency?

Taking on the role of WPS Chair was both a challenging and motivating experience. I felt capable and truly driven to lead and coordinate our sports team during the presidency. Although it was a new experience with many unknowns, I was prepared to

face those challenges and deliver on the responsibilities.

The presidency was capital-based, and one of the initiatives I introduced was inviting a broader range of experts to our events. This was positively received, with the European Commission recognizing it as a good practice. A significant challenge was that this was our first time leading the presidency, which meant there were many unknowns and we sometimes had to improvise. Despite that, the lessons I learned were invaluable. I realized how crucial the involvement of the Council, the European Commission, Member States, and key stakeholders such as the EOC, universities, and organizations like UNODC, Europol, and WADA was for the success of the presidency. The role also had a notable influence on my professional career. Due to my leadership during the presidency, I was invited to represent Bulgaria in various international organizations, including the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and the European Commission's working groups. Additionally, I was given opportunities to speak and participate in panel discussions at sport-related events.

What are your reflections on 15 years of EU work in sport?

Over the past 15 years, there have been several significant achievements in EU sports policy. The establishment of a legal framework for sport has been crucial, as it provides clear guidelines for collaboration across EU member states. The creation of the Working

Party on Sport has also been a landmark achievement, enabling structured discussions and coordination between EU institutions. Additionally, Erasmus+ Sport has been pivotal in fostering collaboration and supporting initiatives that promote sport and physical activity throughout Europe.

When evaluating the EU's work in sport, I consider it a great success. There has been considerable progress, with initiatives and policies that have made a tangible difference in the sporting landscape across Europe.

However, there is always room for improvement. The presidency chairing and preparation process in sport could benefit from more interactions with previous presidencies. Peer-to-peer learning and practical experience sharing would provide invaluable insights, and appointing a mentor for each new presidency could offer great value.

For future WPS Chairs, I would recommend working more closely with their peers and not being afraid to tackle controversial topics. Embracing such challenges will allow for progress and innovation within the sporting sector.

What were the highlights of your presidency?

The highlights of the Bulgarian presidency were the various events we organized, particularly the DG Meeting and the conferences. These events were central to the presidency and played a crucial role in fostering meaningful discussions and collaboration among stakeholders.

I am glad to share with you some exclusive photos that define the presidency. They bring back great memories and remind me of the wonderful time I had during this important period.

How would you assess your cooperation with the European Commission?

The cooperation with the European Commission was excellent. The Sports Unit was instrumental, providing continuous support, assistance, and collaboration at every stage of the presidency. They played a key role in ensuring that everything ran smoothly and efficiently.

We developed joint activities with the Commission, mainly centred around the events we organized. These collaborative efforts helped strengthen our initiatives and enhance their impact.

Additionally, during our presidency, we hosted Commission-led events such as the EU Sport Forum and the Sport Info Day, which were essential for engaging stakeholders and promoting sport across Europe.

How would you evaluate the support from the Council Secretariat?

The support from the Council Secretariat was excellent as well. We had strong relations with the Secretariat, who provided valuable assistance throughout the presidency. They delivered training, offered guidance and advice, and responded swiftly to any questions we had, ensuring everything ran smoothly.

Joint activities with the Secretariat were primarily communicated through emails, but we also met in person in Brussels and had a few meetings in Sofia, which helped strengthen our collaboration. My primary contact within the Council Secretariat during the presidency was Kari Töllikkö, whose support was invaluable in helping us navigate various aspects of the presidency.

How did you collaborate within the Presidency Trio?

Our presidency trio partners were Estonia and Austria, and we had an excellent collaboration

throughout the presidency. We met frequently, either in Brussels or at official presidency events held in each of the three countries. These meetings allowed us to align our efforts, ensuring a coordinated and unified approach to all activities during the presidency.

How did you approach the presidency topics and events?

The presidency topics were chosen through initial discussions with the Council and the Commission, ensuring alignment with key priorities in the sports sector. Thematic priorities for our presidency focused on several



important issues: promoting European values through sport, combating the manipulation of competitions, and fighting against doping in sport. These topics guided our approach to the presidency and shaped the events and initiatives we organized.

We organized both formal and informal events. Formal events included the DG Meeting, the conference on “Grassroots Sport as a Tool for Integration and a Bridge Between Tradition and Innovation,” and the anti-doping seminar on “Preventing Doping in Professional and Grassroots Sport through Education and Investigation.”

Additionally, we held coordination meetings with several Member States and the European Commission regarding the EU’s position on the review of the WADA Anti-Doping Code. On the informal side, we provided training for our national sports federation to introduce the presidency’s topics and encourage active involvement.

During our presidency, five WPS meetings took place, which were key in advancing discussions and decisions on the relevant topics.

What side events, sports activities, and emotional experiences marked your presidency?

During our presidency, we organized several side events to engage participants and promote the spirit of sport. These included attending the European Women’s Boxing Championships Finals, practicing various sports alongside our

main events, and visiting major sports sites. We also shared local culture with a Sofia City Tour, highlighting both the city’s heritage and Bulgaria’s sports achievements. Additionally, we organized a football match between the Council Secretariat administration staff and prominent Bulgarian female footballers and referees, which was a fun and engaging way to bring people together.

Alongside the presidency events, participants had the opportunity to practice different sports guided by young athletes, including traditional Bulgarian sports, fostering a hands-on and interactive experience.

The most emotional moment of the presidency was receiving positive feedback from the Commission, the Council, the Member States, and all other stakeholders involved. This recognition affirmed the hard work and dedication put into making the presidency a success.

One of the more challenging situations we faced was selecting and coordinating the invited experts, speakers, and panellists, particularly managing a few last-minute cancellations. Despite these challenges, we managed to adapt and ensure the events proceeded smoothly.

What EU policy papers and documentation were produced during your presidency?

During our presidency, the main document prepared and published was the Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives

of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport. This document represented a key outcome of our presidency. In addition, several supporting materials - such as structured dialogue papers and expert group reports – were produced to guide discussions and inform positions on various sport-related issues within the EU. Altogether, the documentation developed during our presidency made a substantial contribution to advancing EU sport policy.

What have been the outcomes and influence of your presidency's work?

The policies approved during our presidency served as a foundation for the subsequent presidencies, helping shape their topics and priorities. Our work laid the groundwork for the development of EU sports policies in the following years.

At the European level, our Council Conclusions on European Values played a pivotal role in launching the *Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values* programme in 2021. Additionally, the Anti-Doping Seminar we organized helped strengthen EU Member States' coordination with WADA, leading to the election of an EU country's representative as the President of WADA in 2020.

On the national level, the presidency's work had a tangible impact. It helped make Bulgaria more visible in international sports structures and contributed to the strengthening of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Notably, it

supported the full independence of Bulgaria's Anti-Doping Agency from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the establishment of a National Platform on Preventing Competition Manipulation.

The policy papers approved during our presidency led to key outcomes, including the launch of the *Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values* programme and the establishment of the *National Platform on Preventing Competition Manipulation*. These initiatives continue to have a positive influence on both EU and national levels.

Regarding the significance of our presidency topic, values and European identity became one of the most prominent topics in EU discussions in the years that followed, highlighting the lasting impact of our presidency's focus on these issues. Overall, substantial progress has been made on the presidency topics and the policies we adopted, with significant achievements at both the EU and national levels.

A View from the European Commission through the Lens of Council Working Party on Sport

YVES LE LOSTECQUE

FORMER HEAD OF THE SPORT UNIT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION; FORMER HEAD OF THE ERASMUS MUNDUS AND SPORT UNIT, EACEA

Yves Le Lostecque is an expert in EU sports policy, with a career spanning over three decades. He holds a Master's degree in European Law from the University of Rennes. His professional journey began in the French Ministry of Youth and Sport, where he focused on developing sports and physical activities in the western regions of France, including his native Brittany.

In 1993, Mr. Le Lostecque joined the European Commission, initially working in vocational

training. He soon returned to his passion, sport, and held various positions directly related to sports policy. Notably, he served as a lawyer in the Internal Market department, addressing issues such as the recognition of sports diplomas and the free movement of professionals within the EU.

From 2013 to 2021, Mr. Le Lostecque was the Head of the Sport Unit in the European Commission. During this period, he played a pivotal role in elevating the EU's engagement in sports,

leading initiatives like the European Week of Sport and the #BeActive campaign.

He was instrumental in fostering a collaborative relationship between the EU and the sports movement, transforming the Commission into a trusted partner rather than an adversary.

In 2021, he transitioned to the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) as the Head of the Erasmus Mundus and Sport Unit, overseeing the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme. In this capacity, he managed a sport budget of €70 million, supporting various projects that

promoted grassroots sports, good governance, and social inclusion.

Mr. Le Lostecque retired in February 2024 but remains actively involved in EU sports activities. He continues to contribute his expertise to various initiatives, reflecting his enduring commitment to the development of sports policy in Europe.

Beyond his professional achievements, Mr. Le Lostecque is passionate about sports. He has participated in football, tennis, diving, and running, and now enjoys walking. His dedication to sports is not just a career but a lifelong passion.



interview

Could you share some reflections on your professional career, highlighting key roles, accomplishments, and your contributions to the field of sport policy?

Even if, during my whole career, I occupied different positions in various environments, sport has been the common thread of my professional life. After having obtained my Master in European Law in 1980 at the University

of Rennes, I started working for the French Ministry of Youth and Sport. I was in charge of the development of sport and physical activity in the western regions of France, including my native Brittany.

Following these seven rewarding years spent in the French national civil service, I joined the EU in 1993. At the European Commission, after starting in vocational training, I quickly

returned to my preferred subject, sport. I therefore occupied various positions directly linked to sport. In particular, I spent four years as a lawyer in the department responsible for the Internal Market, where I was in charge of the recognition of sport diplomas. It was a challenging time, as I was involved in “battles” between some Member States concerning the free movement of ski instructors in the EU.

From 1999 to 2004, I worked as a policy officer in the Commission Sport Unit, at a time when there was no budget, no real policy, and no strong legal competence. Nevertheless, I very much enjoyed this period, when ideas were emerging to make sport an EU competence. This was finally achieved in 2007 when the Lisbon Treaty was signed on 13 December 2007 and entered into force on 1 December 2009.

It was this treaty that, for the first time, gave the European Union a specific competence in the field of sport through Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

I later returned as Head of the Sport Unit during the years 2013 – 2022. These were truly “golden years,” when sport developed significantly at EU level and many important structures were built. I finished my career in the EU institutions as Head of the Sport and Erasmus Mundus Unit at the EACEA (Education and Sport Executive Agency), where in my final year I managed a sport budget of €70 million.

On a personal basis, I am passionate about sport, even if I would have dreamed of being much better. I have practiced, or still practice,

football, tennis, diving and running. Nowadays, I am more oriented towards walking!

What are the key attributes that define your professional and personal interests, involvement in sports, leadership in initiatives, and broader engagement in the sector?

My greatest pride has been contributing significantly to the development of EU sport policy during my tenure as Head of the Commission Sport Unit. I was fortunate to be appointed to this position just after the Erasmus+ programme had been adopted and came into force. On this solid foundation, and with strong political support from the Commissioners and the Commission’s hierarchy, I was able to increase the prominence of sport within the EU.

Some of the main achievements during this period include the creation of the European Week of Sport and the launch of new initiatives such as the #BeActive and #BeInclusive awards. I also contributed to making the EU Sport Forum a “place to be” for the European sport movement. Similarly, the Sport Info Day became an important annual gathering in Brussels, where hundreds of sport organisations engage in dialogue with EU institutions at both political and technical levels.

Equally important was establishing an open, genuine, and productive dialogue with sport organisations. I remember the 1990s, especially after the Bosman case, when the European Commission was often seen as the “enemy” of sport. We have come a long way since then:



today, the sport family and the Commission collaborate in a true spirit of partnership.

From your perspective, what have been the most significant achievements in EU sports policy over the past 15 years?

From the Commission's perspective, the most significant achievement has been establishing the EU as an active and credible actor in sport policy. Years ago, due to the lack of legal competence and financial capacity, the EU was not really an interlocutor for sport organisations. The Lisbon Treaty completely changed this approach. Today, EU institutions and the sport movement know each other

much better and cooperate rather than confront. In most cases, discussions with the EU now take place before major decisions are made by the sport movement when they have a European impact.

Another major achievement has been building a balanced and solid cooperation between the EU, Member States, and sport organisations. The European Commission is fully aware of its competences, its extensions, and its limits. In respect of the Treaty, permanent cooperation between Member States and the Commission is now firmly in place.

Furthermore, the possibilities offered by the Erasmus+ budget have allowed the



Commission to provide substantial support to the sport movement through project funding. This has enabled partnerships with sport organisations and allowed the sport family to develop and implement creative ideas at the European level – a development that I consider particularly rewarding.

How would you assess the overall success of the EU's engagement in sport during this period?

My assessment is clearly positive. It is particularly significant that the European

Commission is now seen not just as an interlocutor, but also as a partner of the sport movement. Even before the Lisbon Treaty, the EU had an important impact on the organisation of sport – for example, through the Bosman ruling in 1995, and discussions on transfers or nationality rules. Internal Market principles and competition rules had to be respected in the field of sport, shaping its regulation at a European level.

With the Lisbon Treaty, however, the

Commission gained a deeper knowledge and understanding of sport's true nature. Sport has specificities and cannot be regarded merely as an economic activity. This balanced approach guided my actions during my mandate as Head of the Sport Unit.

Cooperation with Member States has also evolved positively. Formally, it takes place

in structures such as the Working Party on Sport and the meetings of sport ministers. Beyond this formal framework, the dialogue has multiplied. Today, Member States are key actors in the EU Sport Forum, which was not always the case in the past. All major initiatives are now coordinated and negotiated with Member States, reflecting a genuine spirit of



partnership and collaboration.

What tangible and intangible outcomes have emerged from the policy papers approved under your leadership as Head of the Sport Unit at the European Commission? How have these influenced EU and national-level initiatives?

I am aware that Council Conclusions and many other documents adopted within the Council framework are not legally binding instruments. This can, of course, limit their impact, and this

aspect has sometimes been criticized by the sport movement. However, these documents provide clear guidance on the priorities shaping EU action. They can also inspire further political initiatives and be supported through programmes such as Erasmus+.

All policy documents have their merits and strengths. They were adopted after long but constructive negotiations between Member States and the Commission, and all had an impact in one area or another. I would like to



highlight several that I consider particularly important.

For instance, the Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy, adopted under the Slovak Presidency in 2016, were highly valuable. They supported the Commission, which at that time was developing this dimension of sport policy under the leadership of Commissioner Navracsics. Similarly, the Council Conclusions under the Bulgarian Presidency on promoting the common values of the EU through sport had a strong impact, as they led to the integration of values promotion into the Erasmus+ programme.

I also recall the 2017 Conclusions under the Estonian Presidency on further developing structured dialogue in sport. These made our dialogue with the sport movement more fluid and more efficient. Other notable examples include the Council Conclusions on Gender Equality in Sport under the Greek Presidency in 2014, which helped the Commission strengthen its efforts on gender equality within policy and programmes.

In 2012, the Council Conclusions on Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA), adopted under the Cypriot Presidency, marked the start of a process that focused the Commission's attention on this area. Following these initial policy inputs, Council Recommendations on HEPA were adopted in 2013, and in the medium term, these efforts culminated in the adoption of the Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle in 2017. These documents – both tangible and intangible – have guided EU-level priorities,

influenced national initiatives, and helped build a more structured, cooperative, and forward-looking sport policy framework across Europe.

In what ways has EU sports policy evolved during this time, and what key challenges have shaped its development?

I would say that the role of the EU in sport policy is now widely recognized. This recognition is based on a careful approach that respects competences and engages all relevant actors in dialogue. While EU sport policy is clearly focused on grassroots sport, its scope is not limited to this area alone.

Several challenges have shaped its development. Some are institutional: it is always a sensitive exercise to act in a field where competences are diverse and sometimes overlapping. Respect for competences, ongoing dialogue, and permanent cooperation are therefore decisive principles if we want to make progress.

Another challenge is the diversity of sport policies across Member States, which are often based on very different approaches. At EU level, we have worked to promote a European model of sport by emphasizing common points and developing them further. At the same time, we remain aware of the vast diversity of approaches among Member States and sport organisations.

Finally, the sport environment itself is changing rapidly, which requires constant adaptation. EU sport policy has evolved to be more responsive, inclusive, and cooperative, balancing respect

for national differences with the promotion of shared European values in sport.

What progress has been made on presidency topics and the implementation of adopted policy documents during your tenure? What measurable impact has this had at the EU level, and how have national governments responded?

Progress has been continuous. Through discussions and negotiations, policy

documents have consistently been adopted as planned. In the beginning, the choice of priorities was primarily the responsibility of the Member State holding the Presidency. Over time, however, Presidencies have become increasingly aware that these choices must be consensual; otherwise, negotiations can become very difficult, or the text risks being rejected – which, fortunately, never happened during my tenure.



Measuring the impact of these documents is always challenging, as they are not linked to a specific budget. Nevertheless, the Commission takes them into account when implementing programmes such as Erasmus+. At the national level, implementation depends largely on the goodwill of Member States. In my experience, however, EU policy documents are generally taken seriously and respected, reflecting a spirit of good cooperation.

The impact on the sport movement is more complex. One of the challenges has been to ensure that these documents are promoted, widely known, and eventually adopted by sport organisations. Here, the nature of the documents themselves presents a limitation: they are non-binding, providing guidance, advice, and suggested orientations, but without direct financial support. Despite this, they have played an important role in shaping discussions, aligning priorities, and supporting dialogue at both EU and national levels.

What measures or processes could strengthen the role of Chairs of the Council Working Party on Sport, particularly in fostering collaboration and ensuring continuity in policy implementation?

There is no miracle recipe, and, in fact, past Chairs have generally performed very well. The key lies in solid preparation with both the Member States and the Commission, supported by the Council services, which bring extensive experience of Council work. Respecting different approaches is also essential: not all

Member States share the same philosophy or priorities, so finding a common understanding is crucial.

Good coordination with the trio of Presidencies is important, but engagement should extend beyond the trio as well. In terms of continuity, effective communication with the Commission is vital, since the Commission provides ongoing continuity. Moreover, the Commission can translate policy priorities into concrete documents and initiatives, including those with financial impact, which ensures that agreed priorities move from discussion to action.

Based on your experience as Head of the Sport Unit at the European Commission, what key lessons have you learned, and what specific recommendations would you offer to future Chairs to help them navigate the role effectively?

As I mentioned earlier, my first recommendation would be to begin preparations months, and sometimes even years, in advance. Careful planning is essential to ensure smooth coordination and productive negotiations.

Equally important is keeping in mind the scope of EU competences and the diverse approaches of Member States. Understanding these differences, respecting them, and finding common ground are key to effective leadership in this role. Balancing preparation, dialogue, and respect for diversity are lessons I have found to be fundamental for any future Chair navigating the complexities of the Council Working Party on Sport.

in conclusion

by Ioanna Paraskevopoulou

Looking back over fifteen years of EU sport policy, one theme stands out: progress has always been built through cooperation. From the early days of the Lisbon Treaty to today's ambitious agendas, the work has depended on Member States, the European Commission, and the sport movement coming together with a shared sense of purpose.

This book has brought forward the voices of those who chaired discussions, negotiated texts, and set priorities. Their reflections show that policymaking is never only about documents – it is about people, dialogue, and the willingness to seek common ground. The challenges were real, but so too were the achievements: the creation of permanent funding, the establishment of flagship initiatives, and the recognition of sport as a contributor to education, health, and social inclusion.

The lessons are clear. For EU sport policy to remain meaningful, it must continue to adapt, to respond to new realities such as digitalisation, sustainability, and athlete well-being, while never losing sight of the values at its core. The future will require creativity, courage, and collaboration at all levels – from EU institutions to local sport clubs.

In closing, I wish to underline what this project has shown: that EU sport policy is more than the sum of its documents. It is a living, evolving story, written by many hands, and driven by the belief that sport can help build a stronger, fairer, and more connected Europe.



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