

White Paper on sport

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PURPOSE: to give strategic orientation on the role of sport in Europe, to encourage debate on specific problems, to enhance the visibility of sport in EU policy-making and to raise public awareness of the needs and specificities of the sector.

BACKGROUND: sport is a growing social and economic phenomenon which makes an important contribution to the European Union's strategic objectives of solidarity and prosperity. It promotes the active contribution of EU citizens to society and thereby helps to foster active citizenship. However, sport is also confronted with new threats and challenges which have emerged in European society, such as commercial pressure, exploitation of young players, doping, racism, violence, corruption and money laundering.

CONTENT: this White Paper focuses on the societal role of sport, its economic dimension and its organisation in Europe, and on the follow-up that will be given to this initiative.

Societal role: sport is an area of human activity that greatly interests citizens of the European Union and has enormous potential for bringing them together, reaching out to all, regardless of age or social origin. It encapsulates the following social issues:

- enhancing public health;
- fighting against doping;
- enhancing the role of sport in education and training;
- promoting volunteering and active citizenship;
- promoting social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities;
- combating racism and violence;
- sharing values with other parts of the world;
- supporting sustainable development.

The Commission supports a wide range of initiatives and proposals concerning these issues, including the development of new physical activity guidelines, anti-doping partnerships and the promotion of dialogue for combating racist and xenophobic attitudes in sport, among others.

Economic dimension: Sport is a dynamic and fast-growing sector with an underestimated macro-economic impact, and can contribute to the Lisbon objectives of growth and job creation. It can serve as a tool for local and regional development, urban regeneration or rural development. On the other hand, notwithstanding the overall economic importance of sport, the vast majority of sporting activities take place in non-profit structures, many of which depend on public support to provide access to sporting activities to all citizens.

Sport organisations have many sources of income, including ticket sales, advertising, sponsorship and media rights, for example. However, some sport organisations have considerably better access to resources from business operators than others. In grassroots sport, equal opportunities and open access to sporting activities can only be guaranteed through strong public involvement. The Commission understands the importance of public support for grassroots sport and sport for all, and is in favour of such support provided it is granted in accordance with Community law.

Organisation of sport: The political debate on sport in Europe often attributes considerable importance to the so-called "European Sport Model". The Commission considers that certain values and traditions of

European sport should be promoted. In view of the diversity and complexities of European sport structures it considers, however, that it is unrealistic to try to define a unified model of organisation of sport in Europe. Sport activity is subject to the application of EU law but also has certain specific characteristics, notably in terms of rules and structure. This specificity of sport has been recognised by European courts and the Commission.

There are many challenges to be faced in sport, including combating discrimination, promoting the free movement of EU citizens, protecting minors from exploitation and fighting corruption and money-laundering activities. The Commission is committed to achieving these objectives.

Follow-up: The Commission will follow up on the initiatives presented in this White Paper through the implementation of a structured dialogue with sport stakeholders, cooperation with the Member States, and the promotion of social dialogue in the sport sector.

The White Paper contains a number of actions to be implemented or supported by the Commission. Together, these actions form the "**Pierre de Coubertin**" **Action Plan** which will guide the Commission in its sport-related activities during the coming years.