European dimension in sport

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PURPOSE: to develop the European dimension in sport.

BACKGROUND: following the publication of the White Paper on Sport (2007), EU-level cooperation and dialogue on sport have been greatly enhanced. The White Paper includes a description of the specificity of sport and the application of EU law in areas such as the Internal Market and competition to the sport sector. Through the implementation of the White Paper on Sport, the Commission has gathered useful evidence regarding themes to be addressed in the future.

In a number of areas, the White Paper remains an appropriate basis for EU-level activities in the field of sport. These areas include, for example, the promotion of voluntary activity in sport, the protection of minors, and environmental protection. The White Paper has also created a structured dialogue with sport stakeholders.

However, following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, a new and specific competence gives the EU a supporting, coordinating and supplementing competence for sport which calls for action to develop the European dimension in sport.

This is the reason why the Commission is presenting this communication which retains the same presentation as that of the White Paper: i) the societal role of sport, ii) the economic dimension of sport and iii) the organisation of sport)

CONTENT: while preparing this Communication, the Commission consulted with a wide range of stakeholders. Consultations with the Member States revealed a high level of consensus that the following topics should be priorities in the EU agenda for sport: health-enhancing physical activity; the fight against doping; education and training; voluntary activity and non-profit sport organisations; social inclusion in and through sport, including sport for people with disabilities and gender equality in sport; sustainable financing of grassroots sport; and good governance.

As regards the area of sport, the communication indicates that EU action aims at supporting Member States' actions and complementing them where appropriate in those sectors where the EU can bring added value. This is particularly the case in regard to combating racism and dealing with the challenges of doping, fraud and match-fixing. EU action also contributes to the overall goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy by improving employability and mobility, notably through actions promoting social inclusion in and through sport, education and training.

In all of the areas elaborated in this Communication, EU action can serve to provide a platform for exchange and dialogue among sport stakeholders, spreading good practice and promoting the development of European networks in the field of sport. In parallel, EU action contributes to the dissemination of knowledge about EU law in the sport sector, but also support for projects and networks to encourage sport (notably in the context of the preparatory actions).

As regards the main themes covered by the communication and in response to the contributions received from the stakeholders, EU action will take place at three levels:

1) The societal role of sport: several actions will be supported:

with regard to the **fight against doping,** the Commission intends to:

- propose a draft mandate for negotiations on EU accession to the Anti- Doping Convention of the Council of Europe;
- examine the most appropriate way to reinforce measures against trade in doping substances by organised networks, including if possible through **criminal law**;
- support transnational anti-doping networks, including networks focusing on preventive measures targeting amateur sport, sport for all and fitness;

with regard to **education, training and qualifications in sport**:

- support innovative initiatives under the Lifelong Learning Programme relating to physical activity at school;
- develop with the Member States European guidelines on combined sports training and general education ("dual careers") and support the inclusion of sport-related qualifications when implementing the European Qualifications Framework;

with regard to the **prevention of and fight against violence and intolerance**:

- develop and implement with the Member States security arrangements and safety requirements for international sport events, including pan-European training and peer review projects for police officers regarding **spectator violence**;
- support activities aimed at fighting against racism, xenophobia, homophobia and related intolerance in sport;

with regard to **enhancing health through sport**:

- with the Member States, continue progress toward the establishment of national guidelines, including a review and coordination process, and consider proposing a **Council Recommendation** in this field;
- support transnational projects and networks in the area of health-enhancing physical activity;

with regard to **social inclusion in and through sport**:

- develop and disseminate standards for accessibility of sport, leisure and recreation organisations, activities, events and venues;
- promote the participation of people with disabilities in European sporting events;
- support transnational projects promoting women's access to leadership positions in sport and access to sport for women in a disadvantaged position
- support transnational projects promoting social integration of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups through sport and related exchange of good practice.

2) The economic dimension of sport: recalling how much the sports sector contributes to growth and employment (it generates 2% of global GDP), the Commission envisages the following actions:

Evidence-based policy-making in the field of sport:

- support a network of universities to promote innovative and evidence-based sport policies;
- study the feasibility of establishing a sport monitoring function in the EU (analyse main trends);

Sustainable financing of sport:

- ensure that intellectual property rights that might arise in the coverage of sport events are taken into account in the implementation of the Digital Agenda initiative;

- launch a study to analyse sport organisers' rights and image rights in sport from the perspective of the EU legal framework;
- in cooperation with the sport movement, explore ways to strengthen financial solidarity mechanisms within sports while fully respecting EU competition rules;
- consider best practice among existing funding mechanisms f**or transparent and sustainable financing of sport**;

Application of EU State aid rules to sport:

- monitor the application of State aid law in the field of sport and consider guidance if the number of sport-related State aid cases increases;

Regional development and employability:

- fully exploit the possibilities of the European Regional Development Fund to **support sport infrastructure and sustainable activities in sport and outdoors** as a tool for regional and rural development, and of the European Social Fund to strengthen the skills and employability of workers in the sport sector.

3) The organisation of sport: recalling that good governance in sport is a condition for the autonomy and self-regulation of sport organisations, the Commission envisages the following actions:

- with the Member States, promote standards of sport governance through exchange of good practice and targeted support to specific initiatives;
- provide assistance and guidance, on a theme-per-theme basis, relating to the application of the concept of the specific nature of sport;
- issue **guidance on how to reconcile the Treaty provisions on nationality with the organisation of competitions in individual sports on a national basis**;
- assess the consequences of rules on home-grown players in team sports in 2012;

in the area of **transfer rules and the activities of sports agents**:

- launch a study on the economic and legal aspects of transfers of players and their impact on sport competitions. In this context, provide **guidance on transfers of players in team sports**;
- organise a conference to further explore possible ways for EU institutions and representatives of the sport movement (federations, leagues, clubs, players and agents) to improve the situation with regard to the activities of sports agents;

in the area of **European social dialogue in the sport sector**:

- support social partners and sport organisations to create an EU-level social dialogue for the whole sport and leisure sector.

Follow-up: the Commission will continue to provide support for informal working groups in the field of sport which the Member States wish to continue or establish. The European Parliament and the Council are invited to support the proposals made in this Communication and to indicate their priorities for future activities.