EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward

2021/2058(INI) - 23/11/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 597 votes to 36, with 55 abstentions, a resolution on EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward.

Sport contributes to strengthening European integration and to the EU's position in international cooperation. COVID-19 has had an adverse economic and social impact on the sport sector. The EU should seek to further develop the European dimension of sport by supporting both elite and grassroots sport, which play a key role in the social, cultural and educational life of European citizens and promote the values of democracy, respect, solidarity, diversity and equality.

Strengthening visibility, cooperation and the mainstreaming of sport in EU policies

Parliament called on the EU to adopt a more holistic approach to sports policy and step-up efforts to **mainstream it into other EU policies**. With this in mind, it called on the Commission to present a communication on the future of sport and to establish regular structured high-level cooperation with all sport stakeholders and other institutions in order to make more targeted and accountable recommendations for action on current challenges in the sport sector.

Members suggested adding sport to the title of the portfolio of the Commissioner in charge. They called for the creation of an **EU sport coordinator** who would be the visible reference point for the Commission on this issue. Parliament should play a more active role in sports diplomacy and be more involved in establishing a framework for regular political debate and action on sport.

Enhancing the principles of a European sports model

Members called for a European sports model based on **values, voluntary activities and solidarity** that recognises the need for a strong commitment to integrating the principles of solidarity, sustainability, inclusiveness for all, open competition, sporting merit and fairness. They accordingly strongly opposed breakaway competitions that undermine these standards and endanger the stability of the overall sports ecosystem.

Recognising the role of federations in governing their sport and sports clubs as the foundation of a European sports model offering everyone the opportunity to engage in sport locally, the resolution highlighted the need for more targeted and increased solidarity and more financial redistribution, as well as exchanges in skills and know-how, especially between professional and grassroots sport. Sports federations to implement a **solidarity mechanism based on a fair and binding distribution method** that ensures the adequate funding of amateur and grassroots sport.

Parliament also insisted that major sporting events should no longer be awarded to countries where these **fundamental rights and values** are repeatedly violated.

Ensuring safe, inclusive and equal sport

The Commission and the Member States are called on to involve all relevant stakeholders in ensuring that sports policy and legislation support gender equality, with particular attention to **tackling all forms of violence and harassment**, gender stereotypes, low visibility and media coverage, and disparities in

wages, premium pay and awards. Members expressed support for the social inclusion of persons with fewer opportunities, refugees, ethnic minorities and the LGBTQI+ community in sport. Funding should be increased for people with **disabilities** and **children** should be safeguarded from abuse.

The fundamental rights of athletes should be protected, including their representation in decision-making, freedom of association, collective bargaining and non-discrimination.

The resolution stressed a zero-tolerance approach to **racism and violence in sport**. The Commission, Member States and federations should develop measures to prevent such incidents and to adopt effective penalties and measures to support victims.

Public authorities are called upon to **develop sports facilities**, and to increase the number of hours devoted to physical education, active breaks and extracurricular physical activities in schools, while instigating a change in mentality in the recognition of the importance of sport as a school discipline.

Helping sport to ensure a successful recovery

Members insisted on the need for support and dedicated funding mechanisms to get the sport sector and all sports back on track in the wake of COVID-19, including through national support funds, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and EU structural funds. The EU institutions are urged to considerably increase the budget dedicated to grassroots sport under the Erasmus+ programme in the next financial programming period.

Supporting the transition to a sustainable and innovative future

The resolution underlined that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, new ways of organising sporting events should be envisaged using the digital technologies available. Members called on the Commission to effectively tackle the growing problem of illegal streaming of live sport events without delay.