Role of sport in education

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PURPOSE: to report on the measures taken during the European Year of Education through Sport 2004 (EYES 2004) under Decision 291/2003/EC establishing the Year.

CONTENT: the Communication presents the Year's main achievements together with proposals for follow-up in the field of education through sport. The Commission Staff Working Paper attached to the Communication outlines the actions and activities implemented as part of EYES 2004. The Commission's reports and proposals are based on an independent evaluation.

It is recalled that EYES 2004 was launched to increase awareness on the potential of sport as a tool for education and social inclusion. The wider aim of the Year was to promote education through sport in formal and non-formal education and as a vehicle for social inclusion in order to develop knowledge and skills by encouraging cooperation between educational institutions and sport organisations. The more specific objectives of the Year included promoting voluntary activities, pupil mobility and exchanges through sport activities, the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups and the creation of a better balance between intellectual and physical activity in school life.

The **main results are as follows**:

- involvement of the 25 Member States and the 3 EFTA/EEA countries: Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway;
- 167 projects co-financed, out of 1643 applications;
- 66 projects in the field of formal education: 22 on integration of sport in the school life, 21 promoting the educational value of mobility and exchanges, 17 using of sport to promote a healthier lifestyle and 6 on the education of young athletes taking part in competitive sports;
- in the field of non-formal learning, 60 projects using sport values in activities for young (47 projects) and adults (13 projects), 25 using sport to integrate socially disadvantaged groups, 12 on disability and 4 on non-formal learning through voluntary activities;
- 30 ceremonies (opening and closing EYES);
- representation at 12 international events such as Euro 2004 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games;
- 2 Eurobarometers.

The actions targeted political decision makers, teachers, pupils and students, managers of sports organisations, young people and deprived social groups. The active involvement of European civil society, in particular the Sport Movement, was decisive for the attainment of the objectives of the Year.

The Year provided an opportunity for cooperation and networking among the players which would not have existed without Community action. It mobilised thousands of organisations in Europe by fostering projects. It has created and developed lasting networks and often new partnerships between education and sport. EYES 2004 provided numerous examples of good practices which go beyond its networking achievements.

Its main impacts have been:

- a significant contribution to disseminating the educational values of sport;
- the fostering and increasing recognition of activities in the field of education through sport;
- a contribution to changing the attitudes of the European public in this area.

The initiative can therefore be said to have achieved its objectives.

However, its effects seem to have been more limited in other ways, for example in promoting sport as a vehicle for social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, encouraging a better balance between intellectual and physical activity in school life, and highlighting the positive contribution made by voluntary work and student mobility. Projects were indeed carried out in these fields, and some were truly innovative, but it cannot yet be said that they have had a sufficient effect.

Attitudes have changed concerning the need for better integration of sport in education, both formal and non-formal, and hence for networking and better cooperation between educational institutions and sport organisations. However, it cannot be taken for granted that these precepts will be put into practice. Further political support is required.

Follow up by the European Commission: having regard to the request for action expressed by the citizens during the Year, the Commission, within the limits of its competence and in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity and the autonomy of educational institutions and sport organisations, will ensure a follow-up to the EYES 2004 notably along the following lines:

- to carry out new studies, to organise further expert meetings and to launch new Eurobarometers in order to develop a better understanding and increased knowledge at EU level of the place of sport and physical activity in formal and non-formal education;
- to continue organising meetings with public authorities responsible for education and sport and enlarge them to stakeholders in both fields in order to raise awareness of the mutual benefits for the worlds of education and sport of closer collaboration;
- to intensify cooperation with the Sport Movement on the educational and social functions of the sport (e.g.: volunteering, participation in sport notably for women, fight against racism and xenophobia, education and protection of young athletes, etc.),
- to use the possibilities of financing projects on sporting activities in the frame of EU actions such as future European Yearsand the new EU programme “Integrated Life Long Learning” and to take advantage of the pedagogical value of sport in the exchanges of citizens through exploiting the synergies of sport, youth and citizens initiatives within the EU programme “Youth in Action” and “Citizens for Europe”;
- to improve the recognition of qualifications in sport related professions(e.g. through the inclusion of sport in the Common Quality Assurance Framework – a common reference framework designed to support the development and reform of the quality of Vocational Education and Training) and to facilitate mobility (e.g. by including sport in the field of application of the European Credit Transfer
- System for Vocational Education and Training) as this is an area with a high potential for job creation which can therefore contribute to social cohesion in Europe;
- to raise awareness of the importance of physical activity in reversing obesity trends by ensuring cooperation in the sport field at EU level and promoting involvement of the European educational and sport stakeholders in the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

The Commission invites the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to recognise the impact and the positive results achieved by EYES 2004 and to take into account in their work the expectations raised during this Year.