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DRAFT REPORT

on EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward
(2021/2058(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Tomasz Frankowski

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward (2021/2058(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 6 and 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which specify the competences and actions of the Union in the area of sport, in particular 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,
- having regard to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular the role of sport as an important enabler of sustainable development and the contributions it makes to peace, to the promotion of tolerance and respect, and to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities, as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013², and in particular to the sport chapter thereof,
- having regard to the Commission white paper of 11 July 2007 on sport (COM(2007)0391),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 January 2011 entitled ‘Developing the European Dimension in Sport’ (COM(2011)0012),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 July 2020 on the implementation and relevance of the European Union Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020 (COM(2020)0293), and in particular its recommendations for the future,
- having regard to the EU guidelines of 16 November 2012 entitled ‘Dual Careers of Athletes - Recommended Policy Actions in Support of Dual Careers in High-Performance Sport’,
- having regard to its resolution of 2 February 2012 on the European dimension in sport³,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2013 on match-fixing and corruption in

¹ Resolution entitled ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1.

² OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1.

³ OJ C 239E, 20.8.2013, p. 46.

sport⁴,

- having regard to its resolution of 11 June 2015 on recent revelations on high-level corruption cases in FIFA⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 2 February 2017 on an integrated approach to Sport Policy: good governance, accessibility and integrity⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 February 2021 on the impact of COVID-19 on youth and on sport⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on challenges of sports events organisers in the digital environment⁸,
- having regard to the 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)⁹, in particular its priority areas,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on combating corruption in sport 2019/C 416/03¹⁰,
- having regard to the 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 2020/C 214 I/01¹¹,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on empowering coaches by enhancing opportunities to acquire skills and competences¹²,
- having regard to the Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on sport innovation¹³,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 16 November 1989 on anti-doping,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 18 September 2014 on the manipulation of sport competitions,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 3 July 2016 on an integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other sports events,

⁴ OJ C 36, 29.1.2016, p. 137.

⁵ OJ C 407, 4.11.2016, p. 81.

⁶ OJ C 252, 18.7.2018, p. 2.

⁷ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0045.

⁸ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0236.

⁹ OJ C 419, 4.12.2020, p. 1.

¹⁰ OJ C 416, 11.12.2019, p. 3.

¹¹ OJ C 214I, 29.6.2020, p. 1.

¹² OJ C 196, 11.6.2020, p. 1.

¹³ OJ C 212, 4.6.2021, p. 2.

- having regard to the UNESCO International Convention of 19 October 2005 against doping in sport,
 - having regard to its study of June 2021 entitled ‘EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward’¹⁴,
 - having regard to the final report of Ecorys, KEA and Sport and Citizenship to the DG Education and Culture of the European Commission of June 2016 entitled ‘Mapping and analysis of the specificity of sport’,
 - having regard to the report of Ecorys and SportsEconAustria to the European Commission of 2020 entitled ‘Mapping study on measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector in the EU’,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A9-0000/2021),
- A. whereas sport plays a key role in the social, cultural and educational life of European citizens and promotes values such as democracy, respect, solidarity, diversity and equality;
 - B. whereas sport serves as a vector for integration, especially for people with fewer opportunities;
 - C. whereas sport is a growing economic sector contributing to growth and jobs in the EU and therefore to its prosperity;
 - D. whereas COVID-19 has had an adverse impact on sport;
 - E. whereas the EU should aim to further develop the European dimension of sport while respecting its specific nature;
 - F. whereas EU sports policy must support both elite and grassroots sports;
 - G. whereas sport has a positive impact on citizens’ health and wellbeing;
 - H. whereas sport faces a range of challenges such as governance issues, corruption, match-fixing, doping, financing, digital piracy, purely profit-based models, human rights violations, discrimination and violence;

Strengthening visibility, cooperation and mainstreaming in EU policies

1. Calls on the EU to adopt a more holistic approach to sports policy and step up efforts to mainstream it into other EU policies;
2. Stresses the need to strengthen interinstitutional cooperation and collaboration with sports stakeholders;

¹⁴ Mittag, J. & Naul, R. (2021), *EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward*, European Parliament, Research for CULT Committee – Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.

3. Calls on the Commission to set up regular high-level structured cooperation with all sports stakeholders and other institutions to deliver more targeted and accountable recommendations for action on the challenges facing the sport sector;
4. Calls on the Commission to present a communication on the future of sport linked to the EU's strategic goals;
5. Insists on the increased involvement of Parliament in order to provide a framework for regular political debate and action on sport;

Enhancing the principles of a European sports model

6. Acknowledges the importance of a European sports model based on values and looks forward to further developing it in the interest of citizens and stakeholders;
7. Acknowledges the diversity of models and approaches across sports and countries while considering that the common foundation of European sport needs to be further enhanced and protected;
8. Calls for a European sports model that recognises the need for a strong commitment to integrating the principles of solidarity, sustainability, inclusiveness, open competition and sporting merit;
9. Recognises the role of federations in governing their sport and encourages closer coordination with authorities and all relevant stakeholders;
10. Highlights the need for increased solidarity and financial redistribution, especially between professional and grassroots sport;
11. Calls for Parliament to play a more active role in sports diplomacy;
12. Urges public authorities, sports federations and organisations to uphold values such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law when awarding host status for major sporting events;

Renewing good governance and integrity

13. Considers that a renewed commitment to good governance is needed in order to rebalance the social and economic elements in sport and to ensure that stakeholder representation in decision-making bodies is respected;
14. Calls on international, European and national sports organisations and stakeholder representative organisations to implement the highest governance standards;
15. Urges sports governing bodies to implement measures on diversity and inclusion, in particular to address the low numbers of women and ethnic minorities in leadership positions;
16. Calls for the EU institutions to promote the fundamental rights of athletes, including freedom of association, collective bargaining and non-discrimination;

17. Calls on Member States, sports governing bodies and clubs to acknowledge the status of fans in sport by involving them in governance and decision-making bodies;
18. Calls on the Commission to build on its existing work on social dialogue and to extend its scope to all professional sports;
19. Welcomes reforms and measures to improve transparency and accountability in the player transfer market across sports and urges further efforts;
20. Insists that fighting corruption in sport requires transnational cooperation among all stakeholders and authorities;
21. Urges the Council and the Commission to break the deadlock on the signing and ratifying of the Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions;
22. Highlights the need for information and educational campaigns on the prevention of doping, match-fixing and other integrity-related matters with a focus on amateur sport;

Ensuring safe, inclusive and equal sport

23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that sports policy and legislation support gender equality, with particular attention to media coverage, remuneration gaps, award disparities and harassment;
24. Calls on the Commission to recognise the importance and support the social inclusion of refugees, ethnic minorities and the LGBTQI+ community in sport;
25. Urges sports bodies and public authorities to effectively tackle discrimination, violence and hate speech and to guarantee safe, inclusive sport for all athletes, spectators and staff in sport venues and online;
26. Calls on the Member States to step up efforts towards the inclusion in sports activities and programmes of persons with disabilities;
27. Calls for the EU institutions, the Member States and sports organisations to prioritise policies that safeguard children from any form of abuse and provide access to remedies;

Promoting healthy and active lifestyles together with education and development opportunities

28. Calls on the Member States and public authorities to develop sports infrastructure and to increase the amount of physical education and extracurricular physical activities in schools;
29. Welcomes initiatives and campaigns to encourage physical activity such as the European Week of Sport, #BeActive and HealthyLifestyle4All;
30. Calls for the EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes to be extended to all sport staff engaged in structured sport and for specific retraining initiatives;

31. Highlights the role of coaches and sport staff in developing the skills of and in educating young people;
32. Calls on the Commission to establish a network of ambassadors for sport to leverage the influence of respected sports role models to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles;
33. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to create a system for the recognition of qualifications gained by volunteers;

Helping sport to ensure a successful recovery

34. Insists on the need for support mechanisms to get the sport sector back on track in the wake of COVID-19;
35. Stresses the need to further increase funding for sport;
36. Welcomes the higher budget for sport under the new Erasmus+ programme and supports further synergies between programmes and funds;
37. Calls on the Commission to increase the number of accepted pilot projects and preparatory actions in the field of sport;
38. Calls on national, regional and local authorities to recognise the key role of sport and physical activity in fields such as urban regeneration, tourism and territorial cohesion and to prioritise them in cohesion policy and investments under the Recovery and Resilience Facility;
39. Calls on the Commission to develop a methodology for defining the criteria for measuring and monitoring the social impact of sports-related projects;
40. Urges the Commission and the Member States to regularly update and present data on the economic impact of sport;

Supporting the transition to a sustainable and innovative future

41. Underlines the need to ensure environmental sustainability when promoting the development of sport and the organisation of sporting events;
42. Insists on the alignment of sport with the principles of the European Green Deal and its contribution to environmental education and behaviour change;
43. Calls on the Commission to establish minimum accessibility criteria, safety standards and sustainability benchmarks for sports infrastructure;
44. Highlights the importance of innovation and cross-sectoral cooperation in sport, especially of developing digital tools to increase participation in physical activity;
45. Calls on the Commission and the European Institute for Technology to create a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) in the field of sport to boost innovation and resilience;

46. Calls for the EU institutions to launch a debate on the future of e-sport and to present a study on its social and economic impact;

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47. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and European, international and national sports federations and organisations.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Sport has a unique power to promote positive change and transmit values across borders and to inspire and unite people regardless of age, sex, ethnic origin, religion, background or socio-economic status. The educational, cultural and social dimension of sport goes beyond borders and reaches out to all corners of the world.

Furthermore, sport is also an increasingly important economic phenomenon, which makes a major contribution to the strategic objectives of solidarity and prosperity in the EU. Sport generates an added value of EUR 279.7 billion or 2.12% of the Union's GDP and provides jobs for almost six million people¹. Parliament, Research for CULT Committee – Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies. Brussels.

Although the EU only has a competence to support and coordinate sporting activities, the implementation of EU sport policy has contributed to a fundamental evolution of the European dimension in sport, which has produced tangible successful outcomes.

As more than 10 years have passed since the Lisbon Treaty mandate to act in the field of sport, it is necessary to reflect on the future of EU sport policy and possible ways forward. The Rapporteur considers that the EU institutions need to take even more of a lead to support the sport sector for the next decade. This includes a new perspective on governance, strengthening the European dimension of sport, and preparing sport for long-term challenges such as post-pandemic recovery, innovation and environmental impact.

For all of the above reasons, this report seeks to put forward concrete proposals and recommendations for the European sport sector. The Rapporteur presents possible actions across seven thematic strands detailed below.

First, both increased cooperation between institutions on the one hand, and an enhanced dialogue with the sports stakeholders on the other, are crucial to guide our decision-making in the field of sport. In this regard, the Rapporteur proposes to establish a regular, structured and high-level cooperation led by the European Commission to develop more accountable recommendations in the field of EU sport policy. It should be accompanied by a new Communication on the Future of Sport for the next decade, outlining strategic objectives and orientations.

The European Parliament also has a key role to play in providing a framework for regular debate, communication and decision-making. Moreover, the EU policy on sport requires further mainstreaming and coordination. It is important that sport can benefit from actions related to EU policies on health, employment, youth, education, internal market or environment, to name just a few.

The Rapporteur believes that more visibility could be given to sport by the inclusion of a reference to sport in the title of the Commissioner, which would send a clear signal that sport

¹ Study - Mittag, J. & Naul, R. (2021), EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward, European Parliament, Research for CULT Committee – Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies. Brussels.

is high on the agenda of the EU. In addition, the nomination of an “EU Sport Coordinator” charged with the role of enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation, as well as knowledge development and exchange on sport issues within the European Commission services should be envisaged.

Second, the Rapporteur focuses on enhancing the principles and values of a sport model in Europe for the next generation. This is grounded in the specific nature of sport and based on its fundamental social, educational and cultural values. Discussions are ongoing in multiple fora, including the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Yet, despite much political will and support, substantive progress on a model of sport has been lacking in the last decade. In particular, the debate has been stymied by semantics about the name, rather than focusing on the substance of the relevant features of the model, what they mean and how best to promote them. Whilst this confusion and inaction persists, the forces that threaten the European dimension in sport and seek to undermine its features only stand to benefit. The European Super League was a prime example of this, which for now, has fortunately failed due to the strong European opposition to it.

Furthermore, there must be a willingness among all institutions and stakeholders to recognise and protect what makes European sport so entertaining, popular, and successful while maintaining its social and societal functions. These features include sporting merit, open competition, competitive balance and solidarity. The Rapporteur believes more commitment is needed to strengthen sport through an increased distribution of revenue. More equitable redistribution, in addition to public funding, supports development at the grassroots level. This should involve education and social programmes for players, coaches, and sport staff, as well as equipment and infrastructure that can serve communities and society at large. This financial solidarity also allows less profitable competitions (e.g. youth competitions) to still take place. There is also a need to improve the financial distribution and the long-term financial sustainability of professional sport with the objective of reducing the financial and competitive gap between clubs.

The Rapporteur reiterates that the EU institutions and the European Parliament in particular have a key role to play in promoting democracy, freedom, rule of law and respect for human rights through sport diplomacy and should be more active in this regard, including when it comes to EU external relations. These values should also be taken into account by public authorities, sport federations and organisations when awarding host status for major sport events.

Third, there is a need for a new appreciation of good governance combining traditional commitments to integrity with progressive actions on gender equality and inclusiveness to achieve better representation of stakeholders in decision-making bodies. In this regard, concrete measures towards organisational diversity and inclusion should be put in place. The Rapporteur acknowledges the central role of the federations in governing their sport while encouraging closer coordination with all authorities and relevant stakeholders, such as leagues, clubs, athletes, fans and volunteers. These increased efforts are needed to ensure democracy, transparency and accountability.

Athletes are at the center of sport. They deserve the same respect and protection of their rights as other European workers, including freedom of speech and association, health and safety, non-discrimination, and access to dual careers opportunities. The recent crisis has shown that

even though sport events can run without spectators, fan culture is an indispensable part of the sports experience. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge the status of fan organisations in sport by involving them in governance.

Sport faces serious ethical challenges and threats to its integrity such as match-fixing and doping which must be tackled. In this context, the Rapporteur calls for an urgent solution allowing the EU to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sport competitions. Doping is a serious threat to youth and society which is not just a problem affecting elite athletes but also amateurs. In recent years, there has been an increase in the trafficking and use of steroids and other prohibited substances that are easily available. Supporting education and prevention programmes is one way to tackle integrity-related matters, but transnational and systematic cooperation among all stakeholders, including public authorities and institutions, law enforcement agencies, private companies, athletes and supporters is also required. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have been working in this direction.

The Rapporteur also welcomes all positive evolutions in transparency and accountability in the player transfer market and new regulations on agents in football which could be further extended.

Fourth, sport at its best can bring people together and serve as a vector for integration, especially for people with fewer opportunities. Moreover, sport should be safe, equal and inclusive and accessible to all. The Rapporteur recognises the importance of the social inclusion of refugees, and all minorities and communities. Sport promotes the active contribution of European citizens to society and helps foster a sense of belonging.

Unfortunately, there is a dark side to sport, where the scourge of discrimination, harassment, violence and hate speech remain serious issues which should be actively tackled by public authorities and sport organizations not only in sport venues, but also online. Another problem impacting sport is the psychological, physical and sexual abuse of minors. Special attention should be paid to young athletes originating from developing countries who are extremely vulnerable because they have left their families and countries at a young age. They should therefore receive support services and legal help from sports organizations.

The Rapporteur calls for support for sport activities and competitions for people with mental and physical disabilities, notably by giving them equal access to sport and by ensuring funding and media coverage of sport events involving disabled athletes. The practice of sport is also crucial to encourage active ageing through physical activity. With regard to women's sport, despite significant achievements, there is still an ongoing gender 'play' gap in the practice of sports as well as persistent gender balance and equality issues in the administration of sport. All institutions, sport federations and organisations must redouble their efforts in promoting women's sport and women in sport. In this regard, the Rapporteur is looking forward to the upcoming recommendations by the EU High Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport.

Fifth, in view of increasing issues related to obesity and inactivity, particularly among young people, the Rapporteur suggests stepping up the quantity of physical activity and extracurricular physical activities in schools. Young people in Europe spend approximately 12-13 years in the school system, and it should be a major objective that they acquire healthy

lifestyle habits during this period. Further investment is also needed in school sport facilities to ensure safe use and conditions for sports practice.

Initiatives and campaigns encouraging physical activity, such as the European Week of Sport, #BeActive, HealthyLifestyle4All and LifeLong Physical Activity are welcomed and should be further promoted. With the success of such initiatives in mind, the Rapporteur proposes to establish a network of Ambassadors for Sport which would involve respected sport role models who are influential among EU citizens.

Lifelong learning in sport is important, not only for athletes who after finishing their career will follow other paths, but for sport staff as well. This is why the EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes should be extended to all sport staff along with targeted retraining initiatives.

It is also important to recall that volunteers enable the smooth running of many sporting events and in doing so they build up a great deal of skill and experience. The Rapporteur would like to underline the importance of their contribution and believes that their skills and experience should be formally recognised.

Sixth, the Rapporteur stresses that it is vital to deliver a strong and inclusive recovery for sport and society in the wake of Covid-19. Last year was extremely challenging for the sport sector as it was one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. The economic impact on professional and grassroots sport has been enormous, with revenues plummeting due to numerous events having been cancelled or held without spectators. Many sport clubs, in particular at grassroots level, have experienced an existential threat as they work mostly on a voluntary basis, and therefore operate without any financial reserves. In this regard, the Rapporteur is proposing concrete support mechanisms to get the sport sector back on track. In particular, sport should figure more prominently in cohesion policy programmes and benefit from an increased share of funding not only from cohesion policy but also from the new Recovery and Resilience Facility.

At the same time, it should be highlighted that the Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027 has received a much higher budget with 1.9 % going to sport, which will allow it to finance more projects. While this is a step forward, the Rapporteur thinks that given the social and economic importance of sport, any future review of the programme should treat sport on an equal budgetary footing with other priorities, such as youth and culture. Additional funding for sport through preparatory and pilot projects is of paramount importance. Therefore, there is a need to increase the number of preparatory actions and pilot projects in the field of sport as they can demonstrate successful results like exchanges and mobility of coaches and sport staff which is now part of the new edition of the Erasmus + Programme.

Measuring the social impact of such initiatives in a more reliable and consistent way would provide vital data for the selection of EU funded sport projects. The Rapporteur therefore proposes to establish a common methodology to better measure social impact. Additionally, there is a need to regularly update and present data on the economic impact of sport with a view to ensuring reliable data for the development of evidence-based policy in the field of sport.

Seventh, the Rapporteur believes that sport should support the transition to a sustainable and innovative future. In this regard, sport organisations have a responsibility to advance a green

agenda in sport by aligning their policies with EU climate and environmental action objectives, including the European Green Deal. Moreover, sport is not only an economic sector that has to address its own carbon footprint and impact but it is also a uniquely powerful force for contributing to environmental education and behaviour change. This is particularly true as regards the organisation of sport events and sport tourism.

Today, modern technologies play a crucial role along the entire sports life cycle, from the recruitment and training of athletes to the analysis of their performance, from audience experience to media and management, from increasing citizens' participation in sport and physical activity to protecting sport integrity, and in tackling match-fixing and doping. For the above reasons, investment in innovation and technology should be seen as a key priority for the long-term sustainability of the sport sector. The Rapporteur recommends creating a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) in the field of sport in order to boost innovation and resilience. Furthermore, in view of the growing interest, especially in younger generations, the Rapporteur believes it is necessary to conduct a study on the social and economic impact of e-sport.

To conclude, the Rapporteur believes that there has been great progress and many positive developments in the field of European sport policy. Numerous recommendations from the previous two European Parliament reports from 2012 and 2017 have been implemented and successful examples include the creation of the European Week of Sport, the mobility of coaches and sport staff and positive developments in terms of governance and the player transfer system reform.

However, it is vital to give more prominence to sport at every level and there is still room for improvement with concrete proposals and further actions as outlined in this report. The EU is not only an economic market but it represents values which also apply to sport, such as democracy, human rights, equality, diversity and solidarity. The right answers have not always been given and there is the need to stand up even more boldly and collectively for these values in the future. The proposals that have been made by the Rapporteur recognise the role of the European dimension in sport which should serve as a vehicle for these fundamental principles and to deliver added value and social, educational and economic benefits to citizens. The ball is in our court now, let us all step up to the plate.