EU Sport Forum - Second session: The Sport Chapter of Erasmus+ and its implementing modalities - Consultation with sport stakeholders
30 September 2013, Vilnius

Speech

(+/- words)
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Dear colleagues,

- Our new Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport named Erasmus+ is about to be formally adopted. This adoption will clearly open a new chapter in the cooperation between the Commission and "the sport family". We are going to enter an exciting period with new challenges and new ambitions.
- This is why I am very happy to update you today on the details of this new programme.
- Last year already, in Cyprus, I had the opportunity to give you an overview of the

Commission's proposal. We have behind us a year of intensive negotiations. Needless to say that such negotiations have not always been easy especially in a context of deep economic and financial crisis.

- However, despite all these challenges and difficulties, we can now be proud of the results.

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- With Erasmus+, sport will have for the first time ever a dedicated EU funding stream. A specific Chapter of Erasmus+ will focus on sport.
- The Erasmus+ Programme is expected to come into force in early 2014, following its formal adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. It will cover the next seven years, up to 2020 and will secure long-term financial support to the sport sector.
- In the Commission's view, **policy and programmes** must be closely linked.

Therefore, the Sport Chapter of Erasmus+ has to be seen not as a funding stream in itself, but as a funding instrument at the service of the policy objectives of the EU.

- This new sport chapter hence reflects **clear policy priorities**. It will naturally be connected to the main EU Policy initiatives or documents, such as recommendations, communications, guidelines, etc. Consequently through the building of solid partnerships we will be in a position to facilitate the exchange of the best existing practices amongst organisations from different Member states.
- This will allow us, in the spirit of the new Treaty, to develop the **European Dimension in Sport**.
- I would like to underline than the main focus of the sport chapter will be **grassroots sport**. This was clear in the Commission's proposal and it has been reinforced in the

interinstitutional process. This does not mean that the programme is only going to finance small projects at local level. It rather means that we will concentrate our efforts where there is a real need and that we want to be as close as possible to the activities on the "ground". Grassroots organisations are invited to participate by creating partnerships with similar organisations from other Member states. The logic of the Sport Chapter is to create the conditions for inducing structural long term effects for the benefit of sport and of European citizens.

- Before entering in the content, let me remind you that we do not start from zero in establishing this Sport chapter:
- You are familiar with the Preparatory Actions we have been financing since 2009. They have helped us a great deal to prepare this new

programme, building upon their excellent results.

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I described last year the **objectives** of the Sport Chapter. One year later, following the discussions held in the European Parliament and in the Council, the objectives remain broadly speaking the same:

1. To tackle cross-border threats to the integrity of sport, such as doping, match fixing and violence, as well as all kinds of intolerance and discrimination.
2. To promote and to support good governance in sport and dual careers of athletes – another vital field. You will all remember that projects in this area were supported as of 2011 with impressive results. I invite you to (re) discover them at the exhibition;

3. To promote voluntary activities in sport, together with social inclusion, equal opportunities and awareness of the importance of health-enhancing physical activity through increased participation in, and equal access to sport for all.

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- Four main types of **instruments** will be used to achieve these aims:
- First, I will start with the Support for transnational collaborative partnerships. This will be the backbone of the Sport Chapter. We expect proposals for European partnerships from sport stakeholders, from grassroots organisations as I just mentioned. The objective will be to develop, transfer and implement innovative practices in different areas relating to sport and physical activity

between various organisations. These partnerships will involve organisations and actors in and outside sport from different Member states, including public authorities at European, national, regional and local levels, sport organisations, sport-related organisations and educational bodies. These partnerships will also take the form of European networks in the field of sport.

- The main idea is to provide opportunities for cooperation among stakeholders from different Member states, which would not have existed without EU action. Looking at the results of the projects carried out so far we are confident this is an effective way of adding value to the work done by all our partners in European cooperation. We hope to be able to fund some 500 partnerships over these 7 years.
- The second type of support will go to <u>not-for-profit European sport events.</u> These events

should include several countries, and seek to promote volunteering, social inclusion, equal opportunities and awareness of the importance of health-enhancing physical activity.

- Support for strengthening the evidence base for policy making will be the third important tool for our future work. Through studies and surveys, we want to gather more reliable and recent data about sport in the EU. We need to better understand the place of sport in Europe, we also need to improve our knowledge of the stakeholders' needs. Furthermore in my view this is a key instrument to show the contribution of sport in our societies. I do not speak only about economic impact but also about social integration and personal well-being.
- The dialogue with the relevant European stakeholders which of course is of major importance, will be the fourth type of activity to

be supported. In coherence with what has been done in the past, the sport chapter will help us continue our cooperation with you. The EU Sport Forum is a key example of such a dialogue.

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- I started my presentation with the word "ambition". With its proposal the Commission has been ambitious, and with the Erasmus+ we will clearly be in a position to meet this ambition.
- First of all the **budget** will be of a different magnitude than in the past. Unfortunately I cannot be more specific today on figures, simply because we will have no certainty of what they will actually be until the Council and the Parliament decide. I can tell you, however, that, in terms of budget, we are expecting a

considerable increase comparing to what had been allocated to sport in the past.

- I would like also to remind you an important element. When we will see final figures about the Sport Chapter we will have to bear in mind that the amount of EU programme is set for the seven year period of implementation and is not flat year after year. The annual amount will grow gradually. Therefore the budget of the first year should be much lower than the amount of the 7th year of implementation. This will give the comfort of steadily increasing resources.
- The programme is intended to be open. The participation of non-EU countries, the so-called Programme Countries, will be possible. This means that also organisations from non-EU countries, based in these "programme countries" may apply.

- Concerning the modalities for applying for a grant, there will be no surprise. A **general annual call for proposals** for Erasmus+ will among many actions cover transnational collaborative partnerships and not-for-profit sport events. This call will be very succinct and will take into account priorities decided annually. These annual priorities will allow some flexibility in order for the new programme to take into account on board new needs, hence catering for policy developments.
- Since the call will be succinct, details will be mentioned in the **Erasmus+ Programme Guide** which will be published in anticipation of the entry into force of the programme.. It will contain all the necessary information that any applicant needs to know in order to participate in the programme. It will cover all the sectors of Erasmus+ in the field of Education, Training, Youth and Sport. I can ensure you that in

preparing this document we are doing our best to be as user friendly and clear as possible. You will, of course, be informed of its publication.

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- The DG EAC will not be alone in implementing Erasmus+. Two important actors will assist us in the process:
  - First, the **Committee of the Erasmus+ programme.** This Committee will be composed by the representatives of the Member states and will be chaired by the Commission. It will assist the Commission in the implementation of the programme. It will in particular have to agree upon the annual work programme, which will define

notably the annual priorities, amounts and their distribution per activity.

- The **EACEA (Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture)** will be your entry point to the programme, as it will be in charge of the management of the collaborative partnerships and not-for-profit European Sport events. It is a new key actor in our sport environment, but it has been in charge of the implementation of part of the current programmes. This forum is an excellent opportunity to get to know this new partner. In a few minutes, its director, Brian Holmes will present you the Agency and its work. Let me just already assure you, you can trust the professionalism and expertise of the Agency.

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- As mentioned at the beginning of my intervention, the negotiations on the programme were tough and lengthy, as it is the case for all such important policy initiatives. We would not have reached such a good result without the support of the European Parliament and the Council. I am taking advantage of the presence of their representatives to express my gratitude for such a good and fruitful cooperation.

  Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you, the sport stakeholders, who closely monitored the process and encouraged us during the negotiations. The Erasmus+ is also your success. I am convinced that Erasmus+ will open new opportunities for European sport organisations to build new ways of improving grassroots sport for the benefit of European citizens.