



High Level Group on Grassroots Sport

*First meeting (9 November 2015)
Report by the European Commission*

1. INTRODUCTION

The first meeting of the High Level Group on Grassroots Sports took place on 9 November in Brussels. The Group is composed of high level members having a great diversity of backgrounds and experiences. It includes current and former athletes, former ministers and politicians, academics, representatives of sport organisations and other high-profile personalities in the field of sport.

In the first meeting 13 Members were present; two were excused.

Commissioner Tibor Navracsics opened the meeting, underlining the high expectations that the Commission has concerning the outcome of this Group. He outlined the importance of grassroots sport for the EU's sport agenda and for European sport in general. The Commissioner stressed that grassroots sport has a unique capacity to unite people, irrespective of national, cultural and social differences and can contribute to enhance European values such as tolerance, integration and intercultural dialogue.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND RAPPORTEUR

Sir Graham Watson and Mr Niels Nygaard were elected as co-chairs. Their work will be supported by two co-rapporteurs: Mr Wolfgang Baumann and Mr Carlos Cardoso.

3. SETTING THE SCENE

After information given by the Commission about the working methods of the Group, the following issues were discussed:

Definition of grassroots sport: The Group discussed quite intensely on a workable definition that would reflect a focus on organised sport at local level in the traditional sense (i.e. sport club setting) and the new developments in grassroots sport outside organised sport (i.e. "non-organised" grassroots sport). On the basis of the different contributions, the chairman presented a proposal that, in the end, seemed acceptable to the Group.

The scope of the Group's work: The experts agreed that the scope of their work should focus first and foremost on five broad themes:

1. health;
2. social inclusion;
3. informal learning/skills development/volunteering;
4. economic dimension;
5. sustainable funding.

Two external experts then gave two valuable presentations:

Mr Koen Breedveld, Director of Mulier Instituut based in the Netherlands, made a presentation on grassroots sport in Europe, describing the structures, benefits and current challenges;

Mr Mathieu Moreuil, representing the Premier League, gave practical examples on the role of professional sport in supporting grassroots sport through the funding of a range of successful social inclusion projects.

4. THE WORKING METHOD

After this meeting, the group will meet at least 3 additional times in Brussels. However a possible 5th meeting could be useful. Each meeting should focus on 1 or 2 of the broad themes included in the scope of the group's work.

The group invited the Commission to give at each meeting an overview on the state of play at EU level on each of the themes as an introduction to the Group's work.

External experts should be invited in order to provide knowledge and different perspectives on these themes as well as to present examples of good practices.

Each member of the Group would provide, following each meeting, written input to the rapporteurs who would present their progress report to the Group.

5. CONCLUSION

The chairmen summarised the discussions and the main decisions taken in terms of procedure. The provisional date for the next meeting is 22 January 2016. At that meeting the High Level Group on Grassroots Sport would focus on two themes: social inclusion and health.