



January 2010

ENGSO response to the Consultation on the Future "EU 2020" Strategy

Introduction

ENGSO (European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation) is the umbrella body for the national sport confederations in Europe. ENGSO presently has 40 national umbrella sports organisations as members, representing sport in its broadest sense - from children and youth sport, to sport-for-all activities up to elite sports. ENGSO is the only European sports organisation having been granted consultative status by the Council of Europe.

Sport is the largest social activity in Europe. More people participate in sport – about 60% on a regular basis¹ – than in any other activity; meaning decisions in sport affect more people across the continent than in any other movement.

Sport is attractive to people and sport is not always just sport. As a tool for health-enhancing physical activity, the sport movement has a greater influence than any other social movement. Sport has specific added value to society and so is well positioned to supplement a host of policy streams and hopes the Commission can help sport integrate into its current policy streams, given the competence afforded to it in the Lisbon Treaty. For example sport could have a positive effect in the field of gender equality through the European Roadmap for equality between Men and Women. Sport can be a powerful social tool in many areas and, for example, can help facing the new challenges outlined in the EU 2020 consultation such as the “integration of an increasing immigrant population, social exclusion... and solidarity between generations²”. The societal role of sport also has the potential to strengthen the Union’s external relations.

Integration of immigrant populations

Sport is unique in bringing people together. There are many national and local projects focused on the integration of immigrants (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, etc.). Sport has the potential through such projects to show good practice. A fine example of integrating immigrant populations comes from cricket, often due to its huge popularity in Asia. For example the Israeli Cricket Association prides itself in helping to bridge the gaps in Israeli society and its policy of offering cricket free of charge. Children of many different backgrounds have been attracted to cricket, matching the diversity of Israeli society³.

Social exclusion

Social exclusion is where areas of the community lack access to power, knowledge, services, facilities, choice and opportunity due to problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime levels, bad health and family breakdown⁴. Breaking out of the social exclusion cycle is difficult and it is Government’s responsibility to provide every opportunity to break free from this spiral. Sport is not necessarily the cure, but it should become an integral part of creating social cohesion. Sport can engage people at a community level, improve health and provide a focus in lives that have previously lacked

¹ European Commission (DG MARKT) (2007) European White Paper on Sport

² European Commission (2009) Consultation on the Future “EU 2020” Strategy (p3)

³ ICA: http://static.cricinfo.com/db/NATIONAL/ICC_MEMBERS/ISR/YOUTH/YOUTH.html

⁴ Bailey, R, (2005) Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion, *Educational Review*, 57(1):71-87



structure and role models. Preventing behavioural problems can also have a positive financial effect, the average cost to society of a juvenile delinquent from the age of 10 to the age of 28 is in excess of €77,000, (cost of crime, extra educational provision, care, benefits and health costs) compared to a cost of under €8,500 for the average child⁵.

Where opportunities and support are offered to young people, both children and communities can benefit greatly. For example, research in the US has shown that boys already identified as at risk (low social economic status, disruptive, aggressive, slow learners) are 2.5 times less likely to drop out of school or be in trouble with police if they take part in after school activities, while girls are four times less likely⁶.

Solidarity between generations

Sports clubs also offer a variety of opportunities for integration between young and old. In the UK for example the average sport club has 117 adults alongside 109 junior members⁷. Depending on the sport, the age range of participants vary but sports such as golf, yachting, rowing, cross-country skiing, bowls, or shooting will support active members for the entire age range, while team sports such as football and rugby have long traditions of attracting social members and utilising older players as coaches and volunteers.

The importance of sport policy in Europe

More than a social tool, sport also has a huge economic effect on the EU. The sport sector contributes 3.7% of EU GDP, and employment for 15 million people or 5.4% of the labour force⁸. It should also be noted that the sport sector is unlike any other in Europe, with the grassroots sport sector relying on volunteers (over 90% of sports clubs in some European countries use volunteers⁹). It is these volunteers and their non-profit voluntary sports organisations which may need particular help from the European institutions as the citizens of Europe come under increasing pressure for their time and resources given the current economic climate.

In particular European institutions tend to look on sport as a purely economic activity, and applying standard European competition policy threatens the existence of the sport movement in Europe. National sports structures can only exist due the specific status of sports organisations with respect to taxes and also often from revenues guaranteed by state owned or licensed lotteries. Such funding structures, and therefore the whole of sport in Europe, is under threat through infringement proceedings on national tax systems and proposed deregulation of gambling markets.

Since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the European institutions have, for the very first time, a competence in sport. This is a valuable opportunity for the European Union to help the European people participate in open opportunities for inclusion through sport activities, while also helping to address some of the key social issues of our time.

⁵ Scott, S., Knapp, M., Henderson, J. & Maughan, B. (2007) Financial cost of social exclusion: follow up study of antisocial children into adulthood, *British Medical Journal*, 323:1-5 (Figures converted to Euros)

⁶ Mahoney, J.L. (2000) School Extracurricular Activity Participation as a Moderator in the Development of Antisocial Patterns, *Child Development*, 71(2):502-516

⁷ CCPR (2009) CCPR sports club survey

⁸ Dimitrov, D., Helmenstein, C., Kleissner, A., Moser, B. and Schindler, J. (2006) *Die makroökonomischen Effektedes Sports in Europa*, Studie im Auftrag des Bundeskanzleramts, Sektion Sport, Wien. (As in EC White Paper on Sport)

⁹ CCPR Sports Club Survey (2009) www.cpr.org.uk



The Treaty says “the Union shall contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking account of the specific nature of sport”¹⁰, providing the European institutions a unique opportunity to help sport. ENGSO urges the European institutions to respect the specific nature of sport, but understands that sport must act within the legal confines of the Treaty. It is also important to note that the specific nature of sport does not apply just to professional and elite sport and is much more than allowing national teams to field only national players.

In creating its policy for 2020 the Commission should look to sport to help meet its key policy goals, but in order for this to be successful future policy should be made with sport in mind across policy streams. The Commission should:

- Allow and defend sports organisation autonomy to develop their sports through legal and other available means
- Engage sports associations in dialogue
- Use the supporting competence in the Lisbon Treaty to mainstream sport
- Allow and create possibilities for public financing of grassroots sport through contributions from state-run lotteries
- Prevent the EU interfering with national funding schemes
- Protect the specific nature of sport in EU law and help to clarify the sport’s legal position
- Recognise the role sport and physical activity plays in European public health, education, lifelong learning, social integration and social cohesion
- Defend the integrity of sport and promote equal opportunities
- Develop opportunities and conditions for volunteering in sport and reduce bureaucratic burdens

ENGSO welcomes the Commission’s initiative and the opportunity to participate in the EU 2020 consultation and hopes sport will play a positive role in future EU policy. The creation of formal sport minister meetings following the inception of the Treaty and the continuation of the positive work of the Commission’s sport unit since the 2007 White Paper on Sport highlights the importance and potential of sport in EU policy streams.

ENGSO would be delighted to help the Commission further both in its capacity and its experience of national and international level sport policy, particularly offering its knowledge and pan-European networks in the field of the benefits to the civil society through sport and physical activity.

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¹⁰ Lisbon Treaty (2009). Art. 165