



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Education and Culture
Youth, Sport and Citizenship
Sport

EU Working Group "Education and Training in Sport" 1st meeting, 1 July 2009

SUMMARY REPORT

Venue:	European Commission, Brussels
Participants:	Representatives from AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, FI, FR, HU, LT, NL, PL, SK, UK, European Commission (DG EAC); EOC EU Office (observer), EOSE (observer)
Chaired by:	Michal Krejza, Head of the Sport Unit, European Commission

1. Terms of Reference of the Working Group

Exchange of information and best practices will be the Working Group's main task. The main topics for discussion mentioned in the Working Group's mandate are the following:

- Dual careers for young sportspeople;
- Sport and physical activity in a school environment;
- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) in the sport sector.

In addition, it was agreed that the Working Group (hereinafter: WG) should discuss the section on education of the EU Physical Activity Guidelines. Moreover, the WG could help with the implementation of the three actions in the field of education and training foreseen in the White Paper on Sport.

As the mandate of the WG also mentions dialogue with sport organisations on matters of education and training in sport, a limited number of observers will be invited to attend the meetings, subject to endorsement by the participating Member States.

2. Combined education and training (dual career) of young sportspeople in Europe

The subject of dual careers for sportspeople has a high degree of priority because of the challenge to link the sport and education systems in such a way that athletes can prepare for a well-balanced career. The specific issue of the quality of education for young people involved in top-level sport has been raised by Member States (hereinafter: MS) and has led the Commission to publish an independent study on "the training of sportsmen and sportswomen in Europe" on 9 July 2008. On 12 December 2008, the European Council adopted a Declaration on Sport which calls for the strengthening of a constructive dialogue with the International Olympic Committee and representatives of the world of sport, in particular on the question of combined sports training and education for young people.

Different models for combined education and training exist already in different MS and challenges regarding the legal and financial framework, the quality of relevant programmes, the motivation of young athletes to follow general education and the role of agents and parents have been identified.

The WG should identify the legal, practical and political bottlenecks in the area of combined education and training and determine the role of local and national governments and the European Commission in terms of how they could solve or help solve some of these challenges.

Issues relating to talented young people in education and training systems are a national competence and almost all MS have set up their own tailor-made systems. A clear role for the Commission in addition to the need of exchange of information and good practices could not be formulated yet. An interesting option could be to formulate general recommendations for MS, perhaps as had been done for physical activity in the EU Physical Activity Guidelines. More discussion had to take place also in the perspective of the European Council's Declaration on Sport about dual careers. The Commission recognised the different approaches that MS have, and the aim of the WG should not be to find a single European approach.

The Commission concluded that the WG had opted for a step by step approach in which different activities could be included, such as:

- Collecting good examples, including field visits to different MS;
- Formulating criteria on quality of training and educational arrangements for different target groups in different settings. Labelling of schools and sport centres should be discussed afterwards;
- Asking attention for the different stages which the athletes go through: from the status of talent to elite sport and then after the sport career, including consideration of athletes who leave the system earlier;
- Discussing the flexibility and quality of educational systems of which athletes are part;
- Monitoring possible pilot projects to establish European networks of universities while recognising the sensitivity of national funding for national elite athletes.

The WG agreed that athletes' involvement was very important and that the EOC could invite a representative of the athletes as part of the representation from the EOC EU Office for the next meeting.

3. Input for EU actions and programmes

The Commission presented the Preparatory Action in the field of sport for 2009. The objective is to prepare future EU actions in view of the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty after ratification, on the basis of the priorities set in the White Paper on Sport. The budget for 2009 is €7.5m, of which €4m will be allocated by means of a call for proposals which was launched in May 2009. One of the four priorities of the call for proposals is promoting education and training in sport, especially dual careers, for which an indicative amount of €1m has been reserved.

4. Implementation of the European Qualification Framework and ECVET in sport

The EQF is a non-binding regional meta-framework that links national qualifications frameworks and is not related to any specific structure of the education and training systems. The EQF is based on learning outcomes on 8 levels and the validation of non-formal learning, rather than on formal systems and structures where the learning is taking place. Since 2006 there have been calls for proposals specifically for EQF projects, and two projects on the validation of learning outcomes in the area of sport have already been implemented. EQF should be fully operational by 2012.

EOSE informed that they are implementing three EQF projects and are facing challenges because of a lack of national structures and difficulties in relating to European structures. Sport often falls outside national qualification frameworks and the applicability of learning outcomes is not always accepted.

The Commission explained that there are important differences in the approach chosen under EQF on the one hand and the Directive on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (Directive 2005/36) on the other hand. EQF deals with qualifications gained through education and training systems only (learning outcomes). On the other hand, in the EU system for recognition of professional qualifications under the Directive, work experience and other factors are taken into consideration. Recognition of professional qualifications takes place on the basis of more than only academic qualifications. It should be kept in mind that sport professions will not be recognised automatically, especially in countries where sport professions are regulated (registered).

The Commission concluded that EQF could help prove that one has a certain level of qualification. The relation between EQF and the Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications, the implementation of which is overseen by DG MARKT, should be clarified. Clarification regarding the links to the Services Directive would also be needed.

Regarding the European Credit System in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), it was highlighted that vocational education is very diverse, even at national level. ECVET is open to non-formal, informal as well as formal learning, and is coherent with the EQF. The Commission intends to facilitate the testing, cooperation, mutual learning and promotion of ECVET, and to establish an ECVET users group and network, which will be an open one and in which the sport sector would hopefully be involved.

Some MS have already adopted ECVET, and there are ongoing pilot projects in the field. In the pilot projects, there is a strong sectoral approach. In the future, sport could also be one of the sectors involved, as mobility in sports makes it an especially interesting sector. It would be in the interest of the sport sector to have sport represented in these tools.

5. Education of sport volunteers

Education of volunteers was mentioned by the Sport Directors of the Member States at their meeting under the Czech Presidency, according to whom special attention should be given within EQF to the non-formal education of sport volunteers organised by sport federations. Systematic and active public support for education of sport volunteers was also mentioned in the Prague Memorandum on Volunteering in Sport (April 2009). Furthermore, COM was currently implementing a study on volunteering, in which sport was included as a sector study, and the future European Year of Volunteering 2011 would highlight the role of volunteers.

COM concluded that the study on volunteering would first be discussed in the Working Group on Non-Profit Sport Organisations, which could then forward parts of it to this WG for further discussion.

6. Conclusions and next steps

The following conclusions were agreed in the course of the meeting:

- The WG will, in addition to the subjects mentioned in the Terms of Reference, be involved in the implementation of the education section of the EU Physical Activity Guidelines. COM will present an implementation table to the WG members at the next meeting as a basis for further discussion.
- In the field of education of volunteers, the WG will wait for the outcome of an initial discussion in the WG on Non-Profit Sport Organisations.

- The WG underlined the importance of the presence of two European sport organisations as observers and the future involvement of athletes (via the EOC EU Office), especially in the discussions on dual careers.
- The WG will exchange information and good practices in the field of combined training and education for young sports people. Whether national challenges and bottlenecks in the combination of sport training and education should lead to EU-level action or recommendations will be clarified at a later stage.
- The WG was informed that financial support for dual training projects has been included as a priority for the Preparatory Action for Sport for 2009. If the Lisbon Treaty enters into force, a possible Sport Programme should take dual training into account.
- The WG was informed about EQF and ECVET. Further information about sport-related projects in this field will be distributed to MS by DG EAC. EQF could help prove that a person has a certain level of qualification in a sport profession. However, its realisation in practice should be further discussed. Especially the relation between EQF and the system for recognition of professional qualifications (supervised by DG MARKT) should be clarified. Clarification regarding links to the Services Directive is also needed. The Commission will take action.
- In mid-October, DG EAC will ask the MS and the observers to propose concrete issues for discussion at the next meeting.
- COM encouraged the WG to support the development of ECVET-related projects as well as follow-up on the matter with national ministries and national experts. It would be in the interest of the sport sector to have sport represented in the ECVET tools.
- COM would look into the possibility of organising exchange of information between national sport and education experts on EQF and ECVET together with EOSE.

The following was agreed regarding future meetings:

- The second meeting of the WG would take place in London in December 2009. The topic "sport and physical activity in a school environment" would be discussed among other topics.
- The third meeting would take place in the Netherlands in May 2010.