

Joint Panel with Sport Ministers: "Developing the European dimension in sport"

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Speech

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Almost one year ago we met in Madrid to discuss the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty in the field of sport. At that meeting I committed myself to take into account your views when drafting the Commission's first proposals in this field.

Today I am delighted that we meet to discuss the Commission's newly adopted Communication. It is the result of a wide consultation with sport stakeholders and Member States and also reflects the active contribution of the European Parliament to the debate.

At last year's Forum, I greatly benefited from hearing your many views. You also sent 1326 replies to our online consultation, including an important number of very substantial written positions.

Your valuable input on how you see the EU's contribution to the sport sector helped us prepare the proposals we adopted last month. I thank you for your efforts.

The Communication I present to you today is the first on sport in the framework of the Lisbon Treaty. It builds on the 2007 White Paper on Sport and presents the Commission's ideas on EU-level cooperation in sport for the coming years. We propose measures to enhance the societal, economic and organisational dimension of sport.

I would like to stress that the document confirms our respect for the autonomy of sport governing structures and the competences of the Member States, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. Indeed, I have strived to present an EU agenda for sport with actions that have clear EU added value and complement Member State actions. Also I have indicated how the actions I propose can help achieve our Europe 2020 Strategy, with more employability and mobility.

I will not go through all the actions in the Communication as we will discuss them more in detail during the panel debate. However, allow me to share with you some ideas on the three main sections: the societal role of sport; the economic dimension of sport; and the organisation of sport.

The first section of the Communication, on the societal role of sport, underlines sport's potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and new jobs. The actions I propose aim to do this by promoting social inclusion, education and training and improving public health. More specifically, I want to develop European guidelines on combining sports training and general education. And I want to ensure the development of national guidelines on physical activity.

In this section I have also identified actions to help tackle doping, violence and intolerance. These all pose threats to athletes, particularly young athletes, but also to citizens. In the international fight against doping, I want the EU to help improve the coordination of EU Member State positions. With a more coordinated effort, I am convinced that together we can make progress.

In the second section, devoted to the economic dimension of sport, the communication highlights the sport sector's importance for the economy. It generates around 2% of global GDP. However, there has to be more acknowledgment of this at political level. We need more and better comparable data for evidence-based policy-making.

We also need to make sure that sport structures are financially sustainable. The whole fabric of sport is at stake. We need to protect and improve the sources of financing for grassroots sport, including the financial solidarity from professional sport. This is why I propose to use the full potential of the European Regional Development Fund to promote sport. And I am also supporting actions to increase our knowledge about sport-related intellectual property rights. I believe that the collective selling of media rights is a good example of financial solidarity and redistribution mechanisms within sports.

In the third section of the Communication dealing with the organisation of sport, I describe the principles which define good sport governance at European level: autonomy within the limits of the law; democracy, transparency and accountability in decision-making; and inclusiveness in the representation of interested stakeholders.

I am fully aware of the Sport movement's call for additional legal certainty. In this section I propose concrete actions to help sport organisations adopt rules to comply with EU legal requirements (such as fundamental rights, free movement, prohibition of discrimination, competition rules, etc.).

We will provide assistance and guidance, on a theme-per-theme basis, to apply the concept of the specific nature of sport. In this regard, I am convinced that social dialogue can play a fundamental role in improving self-regulation in the sport sector and in defining the concept of specificity. The Commission encourages this development and invites social partners to further consolidate this process.

In this section on the organisation of sport, I have also tried to address issues related to the integrity of competitions, such as match-fixing. This is a growing concern for all of us. I intend to closely cooperate with my colleagues, Commissioners Malmström and Barnier, to address this problem. We will be tackling it from the perspective of criminal law and as regards the provision of online gambling services in the EU.

I strongly believe that our sport Communication, together with input from Member States and the sport movement, will enable us to develop, in a meaningful way, the European dimension in sport.

For all the areas covered in this Communication we need your active cooperation. Without you, we will not succeed in implementing the actions. We must work together as a team. For this, I want to engage in permanent and constructive dialogue with the sport world, Member States and the European Parliament. United, we can address the challenges facing sport and help the sector develop.

I thank you very much for your attention. I am looking forward to our Joint panel debate on the proposals put forward in our sport Communication.