



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Education and Culture

Youth and Sport
Sport

EU Working Group
"Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities in Sport"
1st meeting, Brussels, 8 July 2010

SUMMARY REPORT

Venue:	DG EAC, Place Madou 1, Brussels
Participants:	Representatives from BE, CY, DE, GR, ES, FR, HU, LU, NL, PL, UK DG EAC: M. Krejza, B. Ooijen, A. Greis DG Employment: S. Grieco, S. Finné External expert: Prof. M. Theeboom
Observers:	EOC EU Office, ENGSO, EPC, Special Olympics Eurasia, EWS
Chaired by:	Michal Krejza, Head of the Sport Unit, European Commission

1. Introduction

Upon the initiative of the Spanish Presidency, Member States (MS) and the Commission concluded that it would be beneficial to create an informal Working Group where issues of social inclusion and equal opportunities, including discrimination, could be elaborated and analysed in more detail. As a result, EU Sport Directors decided at their meeting on 25-26 February 2010 in Barcelona to set up an informal EU Working Group (WG) in the field of Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities. The informal ministerial meeting on 21 April 2010 in Madrid confirmed this decision.

So far, 13 Member States have shown interest in joining the new WG.

At the first formal Council meeting of EU Sport Ministers on 10 May 2010 in Brussels, social inclusion in and through sport came up as one of the four main priorities for the future EU sport agenda.

2. Social inclusion in and through sport

The social effects of sport have become an increasingly important factor in the sport policies of various European countries. This reflects a belief in the contribution of sport to the challenges of MS and Europe regarding disadvantaged groups and fragmented areas. The Working Group expressed the view that MS could learn from each others' good practices and how (and under which conditions) sport could contribute to social inclusion.

The following challenges should be addressed in the discussion about social inclusion and sport:

- Social inclusion, unlike equal opportunities, has no generally accepted definition at EU level because of different historical, social and political developments and the different positions of MS in that process.
- The concepts of social integration, social inclusion, social capital and social cohesion are often used interchangeably in both policy documents and academic texts. They are also translated in different languages in different ways.
- The subject is politically sensitive but interesting regarding immigration or inclusion of minority groups in MS and the position of transnational groups such as Roma communities.
- Sport itself is characterised by different structures, traditions and positions in the different cultural and political contexts of the MS.

In his contribution to the WG, Prof. Dr. Marc Theeboom (Free University Brussels) explored the role of sport in the field of social inclusion and the relation between social inclusion and sport. Social inclusion 'in' sport referred to participation in sport and mainly to the "sport inactives" or "sport underprivileged", while social inclusion 'through' sport referred to participation in society, to skills needed outside sport and to the added value of sport. For a long time policies on social inclusion and sport had been based on a target group approach. Today more and more (local) governments had chosen for a territorial approach (disadvantaged areas) to improve the quality of living and the social relations between citizens with a different background in such areas instead of paying attention to one specific group. There was a great need for a clear and coherent framework for the analysis of good practices and a shift in the approach to relevant policies: from an on assumptions and theory-based policy towards a more inductive approach based on proved working practices. In an evidence-based policy the critical factors of successful interventions should be described. Monitoring and evaluation of participation, implementation and impacts of the activities would be essential. Scientists were still looking for common critical factors such as context, leadership, characteristics of participants, type of suitable sports.

3. Sport for people with a disability

It was likely that the subject would get a high priority in the future EU sport agenda. Developments in a wider EU perspective were presented. It was noted that in the past decade a paradigm shift had taken place from disabled people as 'objects' of charity to persons with their own rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was an example of this new paradigm, asked attention for sport in Article 30 on integrated activities in mainstream sport, special sport activities for disabled people, and access to sport facilities. The EU would launch a new Disability Strategy with an Action Plan including sport in October/November 2010.

Sport for people with a disability was also included in the 2009 Preparatory Action in the field of sport. Two projects (EPC/EOSE and Special Olympics) had been awarded. In 2010 the European Special Olympics Games in Warsaw (2010) and the preparations for the Special Olympics World Games in Athens had been supported.

The envisaged output of the WG and possible EU future actions would be discussed in the framework of the new EU Disability Strategy, the Communication on sport and the results of the two presented 2009 projects. Both projects focussed on strategic issues such as a future sport for all strategy and the social inclusion of youth with a disability through mixed sport activities. The results of these projects should therefore be part of the discussions in the WG.

5. Gender equality in and through sport

Gender equality was a high EU priority. In the world of sport it was neglected for a long time. It had slightly changed but in leadership positions in sports governing bodies the situation could still be described as alarming. The discussion on gender equality in sport could benefit more from developments taking place in the field of gender in other sectors and EU gender policy. In March 2010 the EU Women's Charter was launched, a declaration by the European Commission. The Charter would be followed by a new strategy for gender equality, to be adopted by the Commission in September 2010. The strategy would provide a coordinated framework for action across all EU policies including, albeit in a limited way, sport. The importance of the appearance of sport on the gender agenda and, vice versa, of gender on the sport agenda, was pointed out.

In the framework of the Preparatory Action 2009, three gender equality projects had been awarded. The European Women and Sport Network indicated that it was ready to support the dissemination of information on international and national projects, special initiatives and good practices. The next EWS conference had been scheduled for September 2011 in London.

In May 2010 the 5th World Conference on Women and Sport took place in Sydney, Australia. 30 participants from 8 European countries attended the conference. The Sydney Score Board had been launched which would monitor women in leadership positions in sport and their roles. Raija Mattila, the former Sport Director from Finland, had been elected as new Chair and would be responsible for the next international World Conference on Women and Sport in Finland in 2014.

Various MS were active in the field of gender equality. Several issues such as effectiveness of the tools (quotas, funding criteria) to increase the number of women in leadership positions had been touched upon in the meeting but would require further discussion and analysis. Exchange of best practices could be useful at national and international level. Women in leadership positions had a high priority in the WG but the other aspects of gender equality, such as sexual harassment in sport and the contribution of sport against gender stereotyping should get attention as well.

6. Conclusions and next steps

Informative presentations and interesting discussions took place at this first meeting. The message to develop a framework to analyse good practices and an evidence-based policy in the field of sport and social inclusion got support. The 2nd WG meeting would follow the same format as the 1st meeting and take place on Wednesday, 12 January 2011 in Brussels. It would focus on migrants and discrimination.

The subjects of social inclusion for people with a disability and gender equality in sport would be discussed again at the 3rd meeting of the WG, when the final results of the projects awarded by the EU in these areas would be available.