



EU Sport Forum 2017

Final report

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Introduction

The 8th EU Sport Forum since the adoption of the White Paper on Sport took place in St Julian's, Malta and gathered approximately 300 participants, including leading representatives from international and European sport federations, representatives of the Olympic and sport movement, European and national sport umbrella organisations, representatives of Member States and other sport-related organisations. Particular attention was given to grassroots sport and Good Governance. The event has been broadcasted via Live Streaming.

The main outcomes of the EU Sport Forum 2017 can be summarised as follows:

- Grassroots sport is and should remain a priority for EU cooperation in sport;
- Transparency, accountability and stakeholder involvement are the backbone of good governance principles;
- There is a need to reform the anti-doping system in order to restore trust in it;
- Sport is an important demand driver for digital content, building on the foundations of the Digital Single Market and innovation capacity of sport industry; innovation in digital content has a potential to enhance the way sport content is consumed, facilitating and opening new possibilities to serve specific consumer demand;
- Environmental sustainability is of relevance both at major sport events and grassroots levels, it has a potential to encourage participation and commitment to wider policy objectives;
- As regards volunteering, there was a general agreement for a need for better recognition of volunteering work and further support from public authorities, at all levels;
- All sport stakeholders have a role to play in the prevention of gender-based violence.

Wednesday 8 March

Official opening of the EU Sport Forum 2017

In his welcome words, Mark Cutajar (Director General for sport and Chief Executive Officer of SportMalta, deputy President of Maltese National Olympic Committee) outlined the importance that sport plays within the European agenda and the attention that the Maltese Presidency gives to good governance in sport and social inclusion, especially through volunteering, with a special support for the European Week of Sport. A plethora of events will be organized by Malta in regard to their priorities in the following months. All the above is reflected also in the drafting of the Council conclusions and in the discussions around the next EU Work Plan, which, in Mr. Cutajar's words should be a "plan by and for all involved parties, for a true and efficient benefit of sport for everyone".

The Forum was then formally opened by Jens Nymand Christensen (Deputy Director General, Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission) who emphasized the importance of the Forum, representing a clear opportunity to openly discuss and exchange expertise on the numerous challenges sport and the EU currently face, with the aim to improve the cooperation in safeguarding and promoting sport in the European Union today. Indeed, in these challenging times, good governance in sport and volunteering itself can provide an answer by bringing people together, building communities and a sense of belonging. This is why Good governance and Integrity of Sport remain one of Commissioner Tibor Navracsics's priorities. On the occasion of the International Women Day, Mr. Christensen also underlined that equality among genders, as well as women's representation and leadership in sports are crucial.

The role of Sport in the EU policy making structure was presented by Petra Kammerevert (Chair of the CULT committee, European Parliament), and especially in the framework of the recent Resolution on an integrated approach to Sport Policy: good governance, accessibility and integrity. In this context, she called for zero tolerance towards corruption in sport and encouraged all to commit to good governance practices and to strive for social inclusion and accessibility of sport. Ms. Kammerevert stressed that investing in sports will help build united and inclusive societies, remove barriers and enable people to respect each other. Despite Sport being a new competence in EU policy, it plays an important part across public policy and the social and economic context, especially within the Erasmus + programme. The remaining challenge is therefore: how to further mainstream sport in European policy making.

That Europe is the dominating continent regarding the development of sports was voiced by Janez Kocijančič (Acting President, European Olympic Committees), as he underlined that it is indeed the united European approach to challenges in sport that contributes to this strength. The leading principles in sport, namely specificity and autonomy of sport, therefore do not mean isolation, but are a call for an open and constructive dialogue with all stakeholders to further improve these and other principles, such as social inclusion and good governance. To further promote them, numerous projects, events and collaborations are in fact being implemented, and Mr. Kocijančič expressed his high support for the Erasmus+ program, which contributes to such development and cooperation in Sport.

Update on EU Activities

This session, led by Yves Le Lostecque, Head of the Sport Unit in the European Commission (EC Sport Unit), was aimed to present an overview of EU Activities which took place since the last EU Sport Forum and which could be summarized by the words:

continuity, ambitions, support to Member States and sport organizations, and involvement of numerous stakeholders.

In this regard, Erasmus+ Sport programme was presented. The programme is an increasingly important financial tool of the EU, which budget – and therefore the success rate – has significantly grown. 140 projects were co-funded in 2016, in comparison to 53 in 2015. The key evolution of the programme is also the increased effort to support grassroots sport, especially through the simplification of the application procedure for small organizations (i.e. Small collaborative partnerships).

Further, two reports were presented: the Report from the Commission on the implementation and relevance of the EU Work Plan for sport 2014-2017, and the Report from the Commission on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on promoting HEPA across sectors, which shows positive evolution. Many political initiatives have been adopted by EU Member States and there was a clear improvement of cross-sectorial cooperation, especially pilot projects within refugee camps.

Mr. Lostecque also presented the well-known European Week of Sport, which can now be named as a true EU success story. In fact, the figures from 2016 are quite impressive, showing that more than 15.000 events were organized across Europe, with around 10 million active participants. In addition, 200 million Europeans were reached by the #BeActive message. The Opening Ceremony of the 2017 edition will take place in Tartu, Estonia, on 23 September 2017 in the spirit of continuity compared to previous editions, but now with all Member States on board.

Good governance, which was already the main theme during 2016 European Week of Sport flagship event, remains high on the agenda of Commissioner Navracsics. He in fact launched an important initiative: the Pledge to implement Good Governance in European Sport. 32 European sport organisations and federations have so far signed it.

An important point was the European Commission's contribution to knowledge in the field of sport (as a pillar of Erasmus+). In this spirit, numerous studies and mappings were published throughout the year: Study on the contribution of sport to regional development through the Structural Funds; Study on sport qualifications acquired through sport organisations and sport educational institutes; Study on gender based violence; Study on national Sport Satellite Accounts in the EU. Mapping of traditional sports and games in Europe; Mapping of good practices relating to social inclusion of migrants through sport; Mapping and analysis of the specificity of sport.

What is next? Two new Pilot projects are planned for 2017: Monitoring and coaching through sports, of youngsters at risk of radicalization, and Sport as a tool for integration and social inclusion of refugees. An awaited initiative is also the European Award of Social inclusion through sport, which is meant to be a reward for the best projects that have successfully supported social inclusion through sport, to give visibility and to support the dissemination of innovative ideas, initiatives and best practices throughout Europe.

Follow-up given to the High-Level Groups on Sport Diplomacy and Grassroots Sport

A specific discussion was devoted to the High-Level Groups on Sport Diplomacy and Grassroots Sport and their follow-up. Yves Le Losteque, who moderated this session, firstly gave an overview of the two High-Level Groups, launched in 2015 by Commissioner Navracsics. The discussion among speakers was very positive, as all welcomed the great work done by the High-Level Groups and envisioned ambitious steps to follow.

Elena Maliková, chair of the Working party on Sport during Slovakia's Presidency to the Council, explained the great emphasis put on sport diplomacy during their presidency, which identified the added value of sport for international relations. This was also reflected in the Council conclusions, which were meant as a tool to raise awareness on the topic and invited related actions and initiatives to be undertaken by the Member States and the Commission. Ms Maliková added that there is a wish for sports diplomacy to remain high on the EU agenda and develop further. To this end, Erasmus+ is a good tool to support and advance grassroots sport, as well as the policy level work, therefore the new Work plan for Sport is highly important as well. The recommendations of the high level group give inspiration to the possible topics of grassroots sport to be included also in the Work group, as for example the cross-sectorial approach to support grassroots sports. The next step for the development of grassroots sport is therefore for all other areas to support and foster it further.

The ongoing progress of Grassroots sport topic was presented by Heidi Pekkola, Policy Director at ENGSO, who elaborated on its growing visibility in the media, as well as being more and more prominent on the EU agenda. The importance of Grassroots sport should, in her view, be further promoted, also for the values it stands for. This is especially valid as Grassroots sport fits best to address the EU values and makes it easy to understand and promote the necessity and the benefits of enhanced physical activity among EU citizens.

Session 1A – Gender-based violence in Sport

The session was moderated by Paola Ottonello (EC Sport Unit), who started with a short introduction on EU policies on gender and violence, both at the general level and, more specifically, in sport. Paola mentioned in particular the recent EU study on gender-based violence in sport, the "VOICE" project funded under Erasmus+: sport and the joint projects with the Council of Europe, which would then be explained more in detail by the other panelists.

The second speaker, Tine Vertommen (Criminologist, University of Antwerp), was a key figure in the above-mentioned study and presented its main findings to the audience, stressing in particular the conclusions and the work that is still to be done in the field. Tine is also involved in the Erasmus+ project VOICE, which she introduced briefly before passing the floor to the Spanish gymnast, and violence survivor, Gloria Viseras, who shared her touching story with courage and dignity, resulting in a heart-felt standing ovation. Gloria herself stressed that the great majority of coaches are not perpetrators, but rather have a very important and positive role to play as a trusted person for the athletes, and that was the focus of Sergio Lara-Bercial's presentation (Leeds Beckett University and European Coaching Council).

Finally, with a look at the future steps, Elda Moreno (Council of Europe, COE) spoke about the joint projects between the COE and the EC on gender equality: the 2016 "Balance in Sport" and the 2017 one, which is still being finalised but will focus on gender-based violence in sport.

The discussion mostly focused on what is most needed to prevent gender-based violence in sport. The single most important thing is to raise awareness of the issue in the world of sport, in the different Member States. The study on gender-based violence in sport was a first step, but more should be done to go beyond the general mapping and to really look at the prevalence in the different Member States. The Commission and the Council of Europe have high hopes in their joint project on gender-based violence for 2017, as well as a follow-up of the work done in 2016 to collect comparable data in Member States. And of course Erasmus+: Sport can help, this session already showcased the ongoing VOICE project, and the European Commission expressed hope to see more good projects in the coming call.

Session 1B – Contribution of Sport to Jobs and Growth

The session was moderated by Agata Dziarnowska and Roland Farkas (EC Sport Unit), with the aim to look into the economic dimension of sport. In particular, focus was given to three innovative approaches, namely the economic benefits of healthy lifestyle, the development of human capital through sport and the contribution of sport to regional development. The panel consisted of Mike Coyne (Partner, Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services), Joanna Żukowska-Easton (Director of the Office of the Minister, Ministry of Sport and Tourism, Poland), Marc Theeboom (Professor of Research Group 'Sport and Society', Vrije Universiteit Brussel-VUB), Tiina Kivisaari (Director of the Division for Sport, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, former member of the High Level Group on Grassroots Sport) and Thierry Zintz (Professor, Chair of the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE)) who exchanged their views on the three topics.

On *economic benefits of healthy lifestyle* panelists agreed on the noticeable contributions that sport brings to the creation of jobs, and economy in general. However, all agreed that there is more to learn on how to make this noticeable to the broader public and usage – as through the #BeActive campaign. In this regard, they stressed that many studies have shown the costs of physical inactivity (from Poland and Austria as well as an EU-wide study). That found ground on the conclusion that an increase of physical activity levels in Europe is needed and that there should be a better cooperation with other sectors (such as education and health).

Regarding the *contribution of sport to the development of human capital* there was a need for a better recognition of sport's role in developing skills and it can be a great tool to prepare young people for the labour market. Additional evidence would be available towards mid-2016 from a study on the contribution of sport to the employability of young people in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Finally, on *sport-related investments in regional development*, the accessibility and usefulness of sport infrastructures was highlighted as well as the focus on sport and innovation at regional level (i.e. smart specialisation). On the latter it was mentioned that there were some regions that have, amongst others, put a focus on sport in their smart specialisation strategies, and that these regions have launched an initiative to put sport as a thematic area within the Smart Specialisation Platform on Industrial Modernisation. In this context, a study on the contribution of sport to regional development through the Structural Funds (published in 2016) analysed the role of sport in modern economies and society and how sport and physical activity can be a powerful means of achieving the objectives of EU Cohesion policy. Also, the study included 33 good practice examples and over 200 project fiches from all EU Member States.

Session 1C – The role of intermediaries and agents

Moderated by Professor Richard Parish (Edge Hill University), the session looked at how the role and activities of sports agents has once again become a major issue, particularly

in the field of football following changes to the FIFA players' agents system in April 2015. This was also an opportunity to follow-up on discussions organized by the European Commission a year ago.

The main objective was to look at the impact of these new regulations within the EU, and provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to exchange views and best practices, as well as to discuss the possible role of the EU in this context. The main protagonists were representatives from EPFL (European Professional Football Leagues), ECA (European Club Association), EFAA (European Football Agents Association), and FIFPro.

The session was organized as an informal roundtable event rather than a formal panel, and aimed to give participants an opportunity to inform and update attendees on recent developments in the area, rather than a formal policy discussion. This included general areas such as the role of intermediary and an agent, and why their activities had expanded considerably (in all sports) in recent times.

While not overlooking other sports, the session aimed to consider specifically the regulatory gaps created by the FIFA Regulations on Working with Intermediaries (RWI) introduced two years ago, which meant that national associations could implement the RWI with different criteria (the RWI sets minimum standards, and some national associations implement differently). This leads to some risks, and also a threat to the freedom of movement of people.

Although the session was attended by a relatively small number, the discussions were lively and informative. Key stakeholders gave their views on some of the problems which had arisen, and the legal uncertainty which they see as being created by the new provisions. A number of discussions and seminars are already taking place as regards football, and the Commission is monitoring the subject closely.

Session 2A – Towards inclusive communities – the role of volunteering in sport

Agata Dziarnowska opened the session with an overview of the current context of volunteering in sport. Building inclusive communities and integrating disadvantaged groups is indeed a growing challenge, and sport has a powerful potential to promote social inclusion in this regard: it can empower people to interact with their peers in the best possible way. Social inclusion was always in the center of interest in the EU policy. The three tools to promote international projects are Erasmus+ Sports chapter, the European Solidarity Corps and the European Award for Social Inclusion through Sport. Moreover, the European Parliament adopted a document called 'An integrated approach to sport policy, accessibility and integrity', which addresses sport's specific nature, as well as its educational and social function, and encourages EU Member states to encourage the training of volunteers in sport.

Mark Cutajar, Director General for sport and Chief Executive Officer of SportMalta, explained how this topic rose to be a priority also for the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU. Many good examples on the Maltese local level were presented, which showed the need, as well as the expertise to bring this topic to the European level. Moreover, an overview was given of the good policy development of the draft Council conclusion on sport as a platform for social inclusion through volunteering, which is being currently debated among EU Member States.

Bogdan Wenta, Member of the European Parliament, and Paul Sultana, President of the Malta Basketball Association see sport as a way to connect with people, while also connecting people together. Both identified "strengthening one's social network, creating a sense of community and trust" as major values attributed to volunteering in sport.

Michelle Muscat, president of Special Olympics Malta and David S. Evangelista, Regional President & Managing Director, Special Olympics Europe Eurasia, mentioned the major role and value of volunteers, who make up 95% of their team, and without whom they could never function. Nonetheless, events as Special Olympics and others, are striving to change the narrative about volunteering and go beyond its traditional role. Regardless to common perception, volunteering is in fact not just about being altruistic; but rather about self-investment and growth.

A lot of other exceptional practices that place volunteers in the heart of their initiatives were exchanged, such as the Ghetto games or the cooperation between fitness centers and the local sport organizations in the Netherlands. However, Raimonds Elbakjans, 2016 #BeActive Local Hero, Ghetto Games, stated that communication with authorities remains a challenge.

So, how empowering can the role of volunteering in sport be in the context of inclusive societies? The discussion concluded that the back bone of sport is indeed volunteering, as it brings its potential where everyone can feel included, valued and important.

Session 2B – Opportunities brought by innovation and digital technologies in sport

Moderated by Arne Strate (European Outdoor Group), the session looked at how sport and physical activity could be promoted via innovation and digital technologies. The session also looked at how innovation and technologies in sport can leverage the full potential of the EU's Digital Single Market, by matching innovations and ever growing consumer expectations and demands, making sport an important demand driver for digital services and content.

Innovation and digital technologies in sports were discussed from various perspectives – innovation relevant at personal level (wearable technology) to business-to-business solutions of a sophisticated data analytics that provide a competitive edge in professional sports. Innovations are already influencing at how sports content is being consumed by using technologies to deliver sport content with new experience of virtual reality. While this offers new spectator experience it also affects and may influence the existing business model between sport event organisers and broadcasters, possibly bringing more individualised offerings of sport content and serving consumer demands that are currently not possible.

The debate noted that innovation and technologies will generate substantial amount of data thus further reflections are needed on the way this data is managed as data ownership remain an open question.

Session 2C – How to restore trust in the anti-doping system?

The recent allegations of state-sponsored doping as well as the repetition of doping scandals are damaging people's trust in sport, are putting the credibility and the future of professional sport in danger and are threatening the health of sports people. The objective of the session was to explore what steps and reforms have already been undertaken and what still needs to be done to restore trust in the anti-doping system.

Honorable Chris Agius (Maltese Parliamentary Secretary in charge of sport, currently representing the EU in the World Anti-Doping Agency Foundation Board), Jens Nyman Christensen (Deputy Director General, Education Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission), Benjamin Cohen (Director, European Office and Relations with International Federations, World Anti-Doping Agency), Rožle Prezelj (former Slovenian Olympian high-jumper, Chair of the International Athletics Federations Athletes

Commission and Ombudsman for Athletes' Rights within the Slovenian Olympic Committee) and Prof Dr Mike McNamee (Swansea University, Erasmus+ Programme Director Sport Ethics and Integrity) exchanged their views in a panel debate moderated by Mr Hajo Seppelt, expert journalist at ARD German television.

The opinion was shared that there was a need for reforms of the anti-doping system, and that reforms should be based on lessons learned from the incidents that occurred over the last years. The central role of the world Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) as regulator was recognised unanimously. The possibility to give sanctioning power to WADA was discussed, as well as the WADA governance reforms, including the need for stronger independence.

The fight against doping was considered underfunded. Available budget for testing should be better spent, notably through better targeted testing (e.g. based on intelligence). But in addition, alternative ways of financing could be sought (e.g. from sponsors or contributions from sport-related commercial transactions).

The need for more focus on prevention and value-based education was emphasized, to complement deterrence measures based on sanctions. Such measures should not only target athletes but also their entourage.

Finally, the athletes themselves were considered key actor in the anti-doping system (e.g. through whistleblowing). Their voice should be heard more in general. Their fundamental rights should be respected, including their right to protection of their personal and medical data.

The panel concluded that the fight against doping would never be finished, as cheaters will always seek to be one step ahead. But reforms are necessary to reassure athletes, spectators and the world of sport in general that all efforts are being made to ensure a level playing field.

Session 3A – Greening the sport (environmental impact of sport)

The session, moderated by Ramunas Linartas (EC Sport Unit), debated sport's role in leading the sustainability debate and the need to embrace the circumstances of the 21st century and be part of the solution. A 360 degree perspective of sustainability in sport through was discussed and challenged by the panellist.

Hans Bruyninckx, Executive Director of the European Environment Agency, looked at public policy response and questioning whether there is finally an '*environment in sports*' for taking '*sports and the environment*' seriously? Andreas Klages, from German Olympic Sports Confederation, outlined national efforts and challenges to sustainability in sport, calling to integrate sustainability debate within EU Work Plan for Sport.

Mary Harvey, Green Sport Alliance US (former US football team goalkeeper and captain, Olympic champion), making an economic case and business approach to sustainability in sport. Highlighting the importance of organised structures in promoting the sustainability agenda in serving the interests of various sports, clubs and communities. Jochem Verberne, WWF International (Olympic silver medallist in rowing) outlined current challenges (legacy, pollution, sustainable management) making a call for sport to lead by example and that opportunities are greater than threats and a need to involve sport celebrities to advance the discussion.

The discussion noted that there is a need to shift sustainability in sport need debate from 'event only focus'. It was also noted that sport is slow in following policy – no mentioning, adoption or adherence by sport organisations to wider environmental goals and targets. While external drivers behind sustainability debate are well known it is essential to internalise 'the need' within sports, with internal acknowledgement (within

sport) slowly growing. Role of sport celebrities is essential in building the momentum and ensure communication opportunities and enlarging public support.

The discussion also touched upon the need for an organised structure/way in sport in leading the debate and embracing sustainable model challenge with the example of the US Green Sport Alliance and a possibility for it to be replicated in Europe. This was followed-up by a discussion of how to maximise the positive impact by seeking a balance between efforts done by major events and grassroots where environmental impact is greater.

Session 3B – e-Sports, why are we talking about it?

The session was moderated by George Paterson (EC Sport Unit), with the aim to raise awareness of the growing phenomenon of e-sports (professional competitive gaming), and to highlight the many issues relevant in 'traditional sports' which cross over to e-sports. Given the increasing numbers of mostly young people playing e-sports, it was equally important to be aware of these issues with respect to broader discussions on health and physical activity.

In order to provide an overview of the subject, and to put into perspective, James Watson (head of e-sports at SportRadar) gave a general presentation, showing how e-sports has turned into a billion dollar industry, with an increasing amount of prize money for some of the more popular games. A short video also highlighted the popularity of e-sports as a spectator sport.

The panel also included a professional e-sports player (Koen Weijland) and a leading (e)sports lawyer Kevin Carpenter. Discussion focused on a number of issues such as how e-sports had become mainstream in the past few years, and the recognition of e-sports as a sport. For the latter, this included a testimony from the Finnish National Olympic Committee, one of the first EU member States to recognise e-sports as a sport.

The discussions on integrity showed that governance, doping and match-fixing were more and more prevalent in e-sports. The patchwork nature of e-sports does not lend itself very well to such challenges, with a lack of a real governing body only serving to exacerbate some of these issues. The issue of health and physical activity was also discussed. At the very highest level, elite e-sport players would be considered much like professional athletes, but this would only be a fraction of the e-sports population.

There were plenty of questions from the floor exploring all the above issues. By way of concluding the session, the moderator repeated a survey carried out at the beginning, looking at whether the audience thought e-sports should be considered as a 'real' sport. The new results showed that a majority still against, but a much reduced number of 'don't knows' and a marked increase in the number who thought it was a real sport.

The question about whether e-sports should be a real sport is actually something of a red herring, as e-sports will only continue to grow regardless. And recognition from the 'traditional sports' is not at the forefront of the concerns of the gaming industry. Given the young age of the industry, and the age of many of the players and audience, it will be important that e-Sports develops quickly both from a regulatory and governance perspective.

Thursday 9 March

Good Governance – Evolving good governance practices in European sport and the European Commission pledge for sport organisations

The session was moderated by Michael Pederson, independent consultant helping sport develop good governance standards. The primary aim of the session was to follow-up on the pledge to implement good governance in sport in the EU, launched by Commissioner

Navracsics at the Good Governance flagship event held in Brussels in September last year. Through a variety of ways, the session explored the extent to which sport governance practices in the EU are evolving, and the willingness to change and embrace the challenges.

The discussion with Darren Bailey (former chair of the EU Expert Group on Good Governance), focused on sport governance challenges and solutions, in particular with a view to governance modernization and the need to see it as a task with no finish line but rather being more about changing culture. The mini-panel with Member of European Parliament Marlene Mizzi and acting President of the European Olympic Committees Janez Kocijančič explored the role that the EU institutions and large organizations like the EOC can play in motivating leadership in the good governance discussions. The recent report by the EP on integrity in sport was highlighted.

The session was also interactive, with the audience asked to consider various questions on good governance, including general questions regarding which issues were most important to be considered related to athletes, major sport events or in the boardroom (conflicts of interest, doping and selection of hosts respectively), followed by more specific questions on different types of conflicts of interest, and so on.

The session also gave space for some selected pledge signatories to highlight their role in implementing good governance, either by way of one-minute interventions from 9 organizations, or through a longer intervention from the EPFL.

The session offered a useful way to follow-up on the pledge (signatories also were invited to outline their good governance intentions through a poster session which was on display throughout the Forum). As organizations present at the Forum will be more aware of the pledge, it is hoped this will encourage further participation as they recognise a need (and opportunity) to be part of an initiative at EU level. It will be important to also actively seek further expansion of the number of signatories, and continue to build further momentum.

Panel Debate on Grassroots Sport

Moderated by Wolfgang Baumann, Secretary General at The Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA), the last panel debate was opened with a positive tone, highlighting the significance of the fact that Grassroots sports is debated as the concluding topic at the Forum, and with such prominent speakers. These were: Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, honorable Chris Agius, Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport, Malta, Santiago Fisas, Member of the European Parliament, co-Chair of the Sports Intergroup, and Susanne Erlandsson, vice-President of the Swedish Sports Confederation.

Mr. Baumann started by raising some thought provoking questions: How could the EU help develop Grassroots sport further, considering the challenges sport is facing? How could the EU values be transmitted in and through sport? How to raise the profile of sport in other policies?

All panelists agreed that grassroots sport is integral to the physical, mental, social and economic health of Europe's individuals, but also to Europe as a whole. Nonetheless, sometimes Grassroots sport is overlooked. To counter that, Commissioner Tibor Navracsics set up a High Level group on Grassroots sport, to investigate what can be done to strengthen the Grassroots sport movement. Moreover, Grassroots sport was put in the heart of the European Week of Sport and was supported by an enhanced financial help. The latter, i.e. increased and reoriented Erasmus+ funding opportunities for Grassroots Sport also form part of the EU's development on the Recommendations on Grassroots Sport. Some other important policy steps were made: the profile of Grassroots sports was raised in European events and was made to be the main element

of the European Week of Sport. In addition, the number of European Week of Sport participants and events more than doubled, with now all MS on board.

Still, many countries continue to face challenges related to the world of sports; integrity of sport is one of them, as the global threat of match-fixing and the fight against illegal substances are still high on the agenda. Chris Agius stressed that enhanced international cooperation is needed to efficiently counter that, as well as educational campaigns; for kids to learn about the proper use of sport. He added that values are part of the challenge on a broad scale as well; as sport is becoming an important pillar of the economy, which however might be over-abused and become a threat, especially to Grassroots sports. Volunteering is another challenge, broadly addressed on previous sessions already, which needs more recognition and struggle for more inclusiveness. He concluded saying that Member States should give major importance to these values of sport, give further support to local clubs and sport organisations, as well as support to increase health enhancing physical activity, as for example through the engagement at the European Week of Sport.

As the panelists talked the audience through some exceptional examples of Grassroots sports movements, organizations or events, they reassured their commitment for Grassroots sport to be embedded in the wholesome social context, to fully exploit and develop its value and make it more regular.

Concluding remarks

In his concluding remarks, Jens Nymand Christensen thanked everyone for their valuable participation at the Forum and encouraged everyone's feedback to further develop its topics and quality. The Forum is indeed meant to bring all European sport stakeholders together and build a healthy network of the European world of sports.

The lively discussions at 2017 EU Sport Forum reflected the quality and experience of the interlocutors and proved to spin further thoughts on the development of the discussed subjects. It is therefore important that the debate does not stop here, but goes forward.

A broad support and advocacy for sports values was highly felt and appreciated as well. In this context, Mr Nymand Christensen congratulated all who have signed the pledge for Good Governance and invited for signature all those organizations who have not yet done so, for the sports movement to move forward.

