On 6 December 2017, the European Commission organised the second Seminar on Sport Diplomacy in Brussels. The goal of this event was to take stock of the current state of play of the role of sport in international relations and to present what has happened in this field since the first Sport Diplomacy Seminar which took place in December 2016.

The Seminar was opened by the European Commission (Head of the Sport Unit, Yves Le Lostecque); the Estonian Presidency (Undersecretary of Sport, Tarvi Pünn); Member of the European Parliament, Bogdan Wenta; and the Vice-President of the European Olympic Committees, Niels Nygaard. Subsequently, four projects from the field were presented as good practices in the area of sport diplomacy and a panel discussion was held on the question: *To what extent can sport be used as a tool for diplomacy?* Four panellists gave their views on the topic and the main conclusions were: public interventions should focus on civil society empowerment; the legacy of international sport events is gaining on importance as well as that at the national level sport is having more prominent role in the context of public diplomacy. In addition, the role that NGOs can play by using sport projects to achieve social inclusion was strongly underlined as well.

During the afternoon session, a Commission update on the policy actions in the area of sport and external relations was given. After this, participants had the opportunity to take part in one of three interactive workshops on the following topics: *European Week of Sport - Beyond the EU’s borders, Mobility of athletes and coaches, and How to use sport to increase the international position of a country.* At the end of the day, conclusions on the seminar were provided by Gabriela Kozareva, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports of Bulgaria, and Antoaneta Angelova-Krasteva, Director of Innovation, International Cooperation, and Sport, DG EAC, European Commission.

The seminar was attended by more than 100 participants, coming from countries within and outside the EU, representing national Sports Ministries, Universities, the European institutions, the national, European, and International sports organisations, the Olympic Movement, and other sports stakeholders.
Workshop conclusions

European Week of Sport - Beyond the EU’s borders

1. The European Week of Sport is the EU’s flagship event in the area of sport and for 2018 it will be open for the first time to 11 new countries: the 6 countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and 5 countries from the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo).

2. Several presentations were delivered during this Workshop including information on a successful project (the European School Sport Day, ESSD) as well as good practice from the national coordinator of the European Week of Sport in the Czech Republic.

3. The European Week of Sport can be a concrete example of how the European Union can reach countries outside the EU.

4. The new initiative to open the Week for the countries from Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership was welcomed by the participants.

Mobility of athletes and coaches

Interview with Shelley Rudman, skeleton athlete (Olympic Medallist), and Jacques Borlée, athletics coach.

1. The role of the coach is crucial in an athlete’s career since a coach does not only guide the athlete to develop his/her full sportive potential, but also mentors the athlete by giving advise outside the playing field.

2. Mobility of athletes and coaches should be encouraged and supported both in the context of access to sport infrastructure as well as education (dual careers, lifelong learning coach education).

3. EU could better support and facilitate people-to-people actions and initiatives (like exchanges of coaches, volunteers and athletes).

4. An athlete can be an excellent tool for sport diplomacy. People look at athletes as role models and therefore the direct and indirect messages that they pass via traditional media and via social media can have an important effect on the society at large.

How to use sport to increase the international position of a country?

1. Sport is an appropriate tool for enhancing the international position of a country. This nation-branding through sport is a part of the public sport diplomacy exercised by almost all countries.

2. The contribution of sports events and athletes to nation-branding is certainly due to the intense media and social media coverage of sports events these days.

3. The size of the event and the type of sport are less important than the fact that the sport diplomacy must be consistent with the traditional diplomacy of the host country.
Nevertheless, the higher the costs of the event are, the higher the risk is for the image of the country.

4. Sports events can also be a tool for promoting common, European values as already demonstrated by some organised at the same time in several countries.

5. In the future Erasmus+ Sport programme could better support projects with international components.