



Background Paper – Session 1
Informal Meeting of EU Directors-General for Sport
Lisbon, 2 June 2021

Structured Dialogue with the sport movement and other sport stakeholders

I - Structured Dialogue

The Council Resolution of 12 December 2017¹ on further developing the EU Structured Dialogue on sport, recognizes that EU Sports Directors or other informal Presidency events as an opportunity for EU Sports Directors to meet senior and high-level representatives of the international sport movement and other relevant sport stakeholders.

In the framework of the EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024², presidencies of the Council are invited to inform, and where appropriate consult, the national sport movement, and other relevant stakeholders on the implementation of this EU Work Plan and disseminate the knowledge and outcomes, to facilitate the practical relevance and visibility of the activities.

Within the scope of structured dialogue with the sport movement and other sport stakeholders, this session is expected to foster a more practical discussion on some relevant topics on the EU's sport agenda, promoting the dialogue and sharing of experiences of those who, on the ground, oversee the application of sport policies in each Member State.

In this regard it will address the most pertinent issues at the moment in the field of sport, such as the implementation of the EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024, or the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of the sports sector.

The Portuguese Presidency has invited the following stakeholders from the sport movement, both from European and national levels, to participate and contribute with their expertise in two round table discussions on the above-mentioned topics:

- Niels Nygaard – President of the European Olympic Committees
- Fernando Gomes – President, Portuguese Football Federation and UEFA Vice-President
- José Manuel Araújo –General Secretary, NOC of Portugal
- Leila Marques, Vice President, NPC of Portugal
- Mogens Kirkeby – President, International Sport and Culture Association

¹ OJ C 425, 12.12.2017, p. 1–2

² OJ C 419, 4.12.2020, p. 1–11



II - Implementation of the EU Work Plan 2021-2024

The Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the European Union Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024 is in force from 1 January 2021 to 31 June 2024³.

This document establishes the guiding objectives and priority areas such as the protection of integrity and values in sport, the socio-economic and environmental dimensions of sport, and the promotion of participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activity. It works as a guiding instrument for development and promotion of co-operation between EU institutions, Member States, and sport stakeholders.

The EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024 also encloses specific key topics, themes, goals, working formats and possible outcomes.

Pursuant to Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union⁴, sport is an area where action at EU level should support, coordinate, and supplement the actions of Member States.

Notwithstanding the respect of the principle of subsidiarity and the autonomy of States, the implementation of the EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024, may constitute an opportunity to engage EU bodies, Member States, local entities, the civil sports society, coaches, athletes *inter alia* in its evaluation and implementation, while carrying out the exercise of the structured dialogue in the field of sport.

In addition to the development of physical and sports skills, participation in local sports organizations can reinforce the integration of young people in their local communities, by learning in a non-formal or informal way to manage an organization in democracy and to understand the relevance of their contributions to the institutions and their community.

Member States are in different stages of implementation and development of the previous Council Conclusions, recommendations, and common policies/strategies; in addition, each Member State needs to conciliate their national policies agenda with the work that is previewed in the Work Plan. In this sense, flexibility should be considered to better adjust common priorities and new activities with national agenda.

The current level of sharing and exchanging information and experiences contributes to the empowerment of stakeholders, who are increasingly informed and knowledgeable, which is expected to create a positive trend in sport organizations to innovate and prepare for future challenges.

There is an urgent need to level the playing field, thus contributing to the correction of the huge asymmetries that exist between sports organizations within and between Member States. This can be done *inter alia* by promoting human and organizational capacity building, the necessary knowledge and resources to these organizations and stakeholders so they can respond to current and future challenges.

In this perspective, it is crucial to discuss on possible solutions and share best practices, using the EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024 as driver for a better alignment between the European, national, and local levels, and recognizing the key role of visibility and monitoring in this context.

III - Impact of the COVID19 pandemic and the recovery of the sport sector: state of play and way forward

The pandemic crisis is having very strong consequences in the sport sector, and disruptions in the activity of the sector will have negative effects in the long term, in particular on the economic dimension of sport,

³ OJ C 419, 4.12.2020, p. 1–11

⁴ OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 47–390

its socio-economic benefits and the access to fundamental right, especially among the most vulnerable sectors and citizens.

There is still a great expectation on the side of the sports movement and other stakeholders, about what the EU is planning to do in concrete terms to recover the sports sector in the face of the strong impact of the pandemic.

It should be noted that in the current context, the gradual reactivation of the sports sector should address several issues at the appropriate levels, such as those related to organisational and security measures, the practice of physical activities by citizens, the training of athletes, the resumption of competitions, the future organisation of sporting events, the public participation in them and the media coverage.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a serious impact on the entire sport sector⁵. While affecting countries differently, the consequences stretch across all levels of governance and dimensions of sport. Additionally, it has both exposed and aggravated existing weaknesses and inequalities, and accelerated the adoption of innovative practices, highlighting the need to develop holistic approaches to address structural challenges⁶

The European Commission mapping study on measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector in the EU, acknowledges that this pandemic situation has brought immediate and continuing negative impacts on the sport sector, such as broad economic changes, reduced income, events cancellation, and those resulting from the limitations to mobility, travel, and social distancing.⁷

The European Commission has recommended to provide immediate support, while promoting measures for long-term sustainability.

Other recommendations were made, such as:

- Continue to disseminate and make available financing sources.
- Examine the development of a coordinated EU plan, including for the recovery phase.
- Promote micro and macroeconomic data on the importance of the sports sector.
- Incorporate sport into economic and social development strategies and leverage broader cross-sectoral links, especially with public health, the green agenda, and other relevant areas.
- Ensure that funding opportunities for the Sports Chapter of the Erasmus + Program are sufficiently flexible.
- Support the coordination of sports events in the Member States.

Several European sport stakeholders⁸, have also highlight some issues related to the impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector, including loss of revenue for sports organisations, loss of revenue and opportunities for athletes and freelancers, cash flow difficulties, unemployment, loss of volunteers, impact on sports-related industries, abandonment of sport activities, and disruption in the process of sports development.

The United Nations and the Council of Europe, also appealed for the adoption of measures, encouraging Member States to ensure adequate solutions and initiatives, including financial support, to respond to the crisis sport sector is facing.

In this context, it is important to envisage the work to be carried out in order to address the impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector in the short, medium and long term, with a view to contributing to its recovery and creating resilience for unexpected future situations, while bearing in mind that cross-sectoral cooperation and close cooperation with the sport movement are crucial in this regard.

⁵ Council Conclusions of 29 June 2020 on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of the sport sector

⁶ Council Conclusions of 18 June 2021 on sport innovation

⁷ European Commission Mapping study on measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector in the EU (2020)

⁸ 2021 European Parliament briefing on “how coronavirus infected sport”



Cooperation, complementarity and solidarity between Member States, through the definition of common approaches and the exchange of positive experiences in addressing the impact of COVID-19 in the sports sector, and by making all relevant information available, are important elements in this common endeavour.

The convergence of the adoption of national measures, together with the collection, analysis and sharing of data and information on sport participation and the impact of COVID-19 on regular practice and sedentary behaviour at EU level, should continue to be encouraged.

Member States and sport stakeholders must also work together to develop security conditions that reinforce confidence in the future organisation of international sports competitions in European territory.

Within the scope of the current MFF, the NextGenerationEU recovery instrument aims to help repair the immediate economic and social damage brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. Member States have already started to submit their Recovery and Resilience Plans.

This is an opportunity to stimulate a sustainable recovery of society in the post-pandemic period, but also for the sport sector to come out of the crisis stronger, more sustainable, more competitive, more cohesive, thus ensuring a resilient future for sport in the EU and for the well-being of the population.

IV - Questions for the debate

Delegations are kindly invited to give their reactions to the Round Table's discussions. The Presidency has prepared the following guiding questions to foster the debate:

Round Table 1: Implementation of the EU Work Plan 2021-2024

Providing a better alignment between the European, national, and local sport dimensions

Can the EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024 be a driver for a better alignment between the European, national, and local sport dimensions? How can further visibility and dissemination of the EU Work Plan at different levels contribute for this propose?

Round Table 2: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of the sport sector:

Overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening the sport sector's resilience

How should the EU, the Member States and the sport stakeholders use the available funds under the Structural Funds of the Multi Financial Framework 2021-2027 in order to strengthen the sport sector's resilience in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic?