

IV

(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES

COUNCIL

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on empowering coaches by enhancing opportunities to acquire skills and competences

(2020/C 196/01)

THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

1. Sport is recognised through its social and societal dimension as an important tool for health, education, skills development, promotion of values and social inclusion and it has significant social and economic value, through both employment and voluntary activities.
2. Coaching, whether it is undertaken by volunteers or by employed or self-employed coaches, has a considerable impact on athletes and sport participants in terms both of their direct training and learning process and their personal development.
3. Coaches can contribute to address societal challenges regarding physical activity and wellbeing, facilitate the acquisition of social and other essential skills, promote fair play and advocate ethical values among all members of society. This becomes especially prominent in times of health crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. In the field of sport, possessing skills and competences is essential for the personal fulfilment, employability and professional development of all coaches, so that they are ready to respond successfully to the various challenges they encounter in their everyday work, as well as to the rising expectations of society. This is equally important to ensure the safety of athletes and sport participants, maintain participants' motivation for healthy and active lifestyles, develop their skills and competences and promote the values of sport. Coaches with relevant skills and competences can contribute to the development of a more structured framework of the physical activity and the sport sector.
5. The European Union Work Plan for Sport (2017–2020) ⁽¹⁾ recognises sport and society, and in particular the role of coaches and the importance of their qualifications and competences, as one of the priority themes for EU cooperation in the field of sport.
6. The Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning ⁽²⁾ emphasises that supporting people across Europe in gaining the skills and competences needed for personal fulfilment, health, employability and social inclusion helps to strengthen Europe's resilience in a time of rapid and profound change.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 189, 15.6.2017, p. 5.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 189, 4.6.2018, p. 1.

7. The International Charter on Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (⁵) emphasises that all personnel who assume professional responsibility for physical education, physical activity and sport must have appropriate qualifications, training and access to continuous professional development. Volunteer coaches, officials and support personnel should be offered suitable training and supervision. Opportunities specific to inclusive and adaptive training across all levels of participation should be widely available.
8. According to a 2016 study on sport qualifications acquired through sport organisations and educational institutes (⁶), the European Union, the Member States and sport organisations recognise the need to enhance the quality and quantity of better-qualified people in the sport sector. This need is linked to the recent increased awareness of the role played by sport in society.
9. The Council conclusions on the role of coaches in society (⁷) point out that the work of coaches is associated with responsibility, skills and competences, and one of the issues mentioned refers to expanding coaches' opportunities for lifelong learning and education. In this regard, Member States were invited to support the development of prior learning and a lifelong-learning system, and to promote, within the sports education system, a learning outcomes' approach based on both national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and the European Qualification Framework (EQF) goals and the inclusion, where appropriate, of coaching qualifications in NQFs with reference to the EQF (⁸).
10. The Council conclusions on access to sport for persons with disabilities (⁹) invite Member States to support the further education and training of physical education teachers, coaches, other sports staff and volunteers in general to enable them to include persons with disabilities in different physical education or sports settings.
11. The Council conclusions on safeguarding children in sport (⁹) invite Member States, *inter alia*, to consider introducing and reinforcing initial and continuous education and training measures targeted towards coaches, in order to prevent physical as well as emotional violence and abuse.
12. The Guidelines regarding the minimum requirements in skills and competences for coaches (⁹), as prepared by the Commission's Expert Group on Skills and Human Resources Development in Sport, outline the core competences a coach should possess.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT:

13. In Member States, education and training systems for coaches are the responsibility of different institutions or organisations and therefore these systems differ. In this context, the role of social partners in each Member State must be respected, in accordance with national practices.
14. There is a variety of types and levels of coaches' engagement existing in Member States – from volunteers to employed and self-employed coaches, from those engaged in the grassroots sport to those working in professional sport.

(⁵) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235409>

(⁶) <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/28026772-9ad0-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1>

(⁷) OJ C 423, 9.12.2017, p. 6.

(⁸) Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

(⁹) OJ C 192, 7.6.2019, p. 18.

(⁹) OJ C 419, 12.12.2019, p. 1.

(⁹) In the Council conclusions on the role of coaches in society (2017), the European Commission was invited to consider including in the work of the Commission's Expert Group on Skills and Human Resources Development drafting guidelines regarding the basic requirements in skills and competences for coaches.

15. Despite the issue of uneven methodology and the absence of systematic data collection on the number and types of coaches on the EU level, there are certain figures and estimations that reflect the context. According to the available data, employment in sport in the EU has risen between 2011 and 2018 (⁽¹⁰⁾). Figures, however, do not reflect the coaches engaged as volunteers. At the same time, work on voluntary basis becomes more and more important and the number of volunteering coaches across the EU is extensive and far-reaching. It is estimated that there could be as many as 5 to 9 million coaches operating across Europe, with a likely reach of somewhere between 50 and 100 million sport participants (⁽¹¹⁾).
16. Changes and challenges in society and in sport, such as demographic issues, pandemics and other health crisis, sedentary lifestyles, new coaching methods (including innovation and technological changes), developments related to safeguarding the integrity of sport and the role coaches play in education and social inclusion, highlight the need to provide appropriate education and training to enable coaches to successfully deal with these new challenges.
17. Encouraging specific groups of people (⁽¹²⁾) to participate in sport requires certain specific skills and competences, especially with regard to safe environment, physical and mental health and well-being of athletes and sport participants.
18. The levels of participation in sport and physical activity are declining (⁽¹³⁾). This can be also linked to different challenges related to urbanisation and lack of green urban areas, demography and lifestyle. The aim of increasing levels of physical activity in European society can put pressure and demands on the sport sector, including coaches. Therefore, the capacities of coaches to motivate citizens to practise sports and physical activities and to support citizens' health and wellbeing should be strengthened, and the need to develop new programmes for physical activity and training practices adapted to the needs of changing society and health crisis periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, should be borne in mind.

RECOGNISING THAT:

19. There are differences in the requirements for training and coaching qualifications both between Member States and between different sport organisations, and educational providers offer varying educational programmes for coaches. Coaches can acquire skills and competences through formal education and non-formal and informal learning. The situation in Member States regarding systems of recognition and the validation of non-formal and informal learning also varies.
20. At EU level, the educational dimension in sport is supported through the Erasmus+ programme, pilot projects and preparatory actions, as well as other financial instruments. Projects provide learning opportunities, exchanges and mobility, as well as the enhancement of coaches' skills and competences, especially through the exchange and development of good practices.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES, WHILST TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SUBSIDIARITY PRINCIPLE, AND AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVELS, TO:

21. Raise awareness, in cooperation with the sport movement, about the role of coaches in sport and society and about the importance of the skills and competences that are essential for coaching and which can foster appreciation and recognition of coaches' valuable work.
22. In cooperation with the sport movement, enhance opportunities for education and the acquisition of skills and competences for volunteering, as well as employed and self-employed coaches, while taking into account gender equality and diversity in coaching, type and level of engagement, responsibilities and acquired qualifications, skills and competences, and motivate coaches to benefit from offered opportunities.

⁽¹⁰⁾ According to Eurostat data (Employment in sport – Statistics Explained, Eurostat, 2019) employment in sport rose by 3,2 % between 2013 and 2018 in terms of annual average growth rate. ESSA – SPORT Project, 2019, has shown that the accumulated growth rate between 2011 and 2018 was 19,2 %; with the growth rate for sports coaches, instructors and officials being 85,2 %.

⁽¹¹⁾ CoachLearn project, 2015.

⁽¹²⁾ See definition in the Annex.

⁽¹³⁾ Special Eurobarometer 472 Report: Sport and physical activity, March 2018.

23. Encourage cooperation between the sport and educational sectors in developing educational and training programmes for coaches, taking into account, among others, the needs of the labour market and possibilities offered by technology, digital tools and innovation. Implementation of the programmes in health crisis periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, should be taken into account.
24. Encourage, where appropriate, the sport sector to develop educational and training courses or modules that are focused on general applicable coaching skills, such as management, pedagogy, integrity and safety, and deliver these courses to coaches in all sport types and branches, in order to stimulate cross-sport cooperation and learning.
25. In cooperation with the sport movement, promote the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in sport.
26. Exchange experiences and support as appropriate the inclusion of coaching qualifications in NQFs within the framework of the implementation of the EQF, which can contribute to official recognition of the coaching profession and the mobility of learners and workers within the EU.
27. Promote the possibilities of modern technologies in education and training systems, such as online learning, as complementary with traditional methods, in order to provide the necessary skills and competences to more coaches, while bearing in mind the financial impact that the use of modern technologies may have on coaches.
28. Promote coaches' skills and competences as integral to providing all athletes and sport participants, including specific groups of people, with safe training conditions, which are adapted to their diverse needs, abilities and capacities.
29. Encourage the sport movement to enable that coaches have requisite skills and competences for their work with specific groups of people, especially with regard to safe environment, contribution to physical and mental health and well-being of athletes and sport participants.
30. Encourage educational opportunities for all coaches, where appropriate as part of national and/or sub-national strategies and actions in the field of sport and health-enhancing physical activities, taking into account coaches' educational needs, the requirements of professional and grassroots sport, the needs and the abilities of athletes and sport participants, and the gender perspective.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE AND WHILST TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

31. Continue to support the educational dimension of sport through the enhancement of education, training programmes and learning opportunities for coaches, including work with specific groups of people and work in times of health crisis such as the COVID-19. In this regard, possibilities offered by technology, digital tools and innovation should also be taken into account.
32. Promote and support, at national and European level, the accessibility to diversified learning and educational paths within the whole sport sector and promote the non-formal learning both offline and online, as an opportunity for coaches to gain required training.
33. Support coaches' training, learning mobility and employability through relevant EU programmes, funds and instruments, and encourage cooperation with all stakeholders on the effective use of these instruments, as an opportunity to enhance education and training for coaches, facilitate the exchange of best practices and share information on existing projects.
34. Promote, in cooperation with the sport movement, the implementation of the Guidelines regarding the minimum requirements in skills and competences for coaches among all relevant stakeholders in the sport sector.

35. Consider, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, to support the development of comparable data collection systems in order to have insight into the overall number of people involved in coaching and the type and level of their engagement, as well as qualitative studies on their level of qualification, educational needs and other relevant issues. In this regard, all existing instruments, including Europass, could be used where relevant.
36. Support, promote and disseminate studies and publications on educational opportunities for coaches and systems of education of coaches.
37. Support relevant activities, including exchange of information and experiences between policy-makers and sport stakeholders in order to promote minimum requirements in skills and competences, recognition of prior learning based on learning outcomes and development of a lifelong-learning system for coaches, including volunteers.

INVITE THE SPORT MOVEMENT TO:

38. Take into account the Guidelines regarding the minimum requirements in skills and competences for coaches when creating strategic documents, developing new and updating existing educational and training programmes for coaches, including volunteers as well as employed and self-employed coaches.
39. Develop programmes for acquiring the requisite skills and competences to work with specific groups, and ensure that coaches have the right qualifications with regards to contribution to safe environment, physical and mental health and well-being of athletes and sport participants, including in times of health crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
40. In collaboration with relevant institutions at the EU, national, regional or local level, enhance cross-sectoral cooperation in order to apply new insights and methods in everyday work, and involve the research and innovation sector in developing education and training programmes for coaches. In this regard, encourage the collaboration between coaches and the scientific community in order to promote the tailor-made transfer of scientific research for coaches in their daily work.
41. Promote the education and training of coaches as well as their acquisition of the necessary skills and competences as an asset for sport organisations. In this regard, encourage coaches to participate in lifelong-learning activities, including on-site trainings in coaching and the possibilities of modern technologies as added value in education, as well as in the sport training process.
42. Use relevant EU funds and programmes to enhance opportunities and quality of education and training for coaches, including volunteers as well as employed and self-employed coaches.

ANNEX

Definitions

For the purpose of these conclusions the following definitions apply:

‘Coaches’ are the persons who plan and deliver sports training, by applying demonstrable skills and knowledge for performance, recreation or health goals in a safe manner ⁽¹⁾

‘Specific groups of people’ may include, among others, children, youth, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, people from disadvantaged backgrounds and persons with health issues, regardless of gender and ethnic origin.

References

In adopting these conclusions, the Council recalls, in particular, the following:

- Special Eurobarometer on Volunteering and Intergenerational Solidarity, October 2011
- Special Eurobarometer 472 Report: Sport and physical activity, March 2018
- CoachLearn project,
http://www.coachlearn.eu/_assets/files/project_documents/coachlearn-project-summary-website-june-2015.pdf
- Council conclusions on the role of coaches in society (OJ C 423, 9.12.2017, p. 6)
- Council conclusions on maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills, especially among young people (OJ C 172, 27.5.2015, p. 8)
- Council conclusions on safeguarding children in sport (OJ C 419, 12.12.2019, p. 1)
- Mapping and analysis of education schemes for coaches from a gender perspective: a report to the European Commission, ECORYS, 2017
- Mapping on access to sport for people with disabilities: a report to the European Commission, ECORYS, 2018
- ESSA-Sport project, 2019 <https://www.essa-sport.eu/essa-sport-outcomes-are-now-available>
- European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1062>
- International Charter on Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, Unesco, SHS/2015/PI/H/14 REV
- Council Resolution on A New Skills Agenda for an Inclusive and Competitive Europe (OJ C 467, 15.12.2016, p. 1)
- Study on sport qualifications acquired through sport organisations and (sport) educational institutes, European Commission, 2016 ⁽²⁾
- Council Resolution on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 July 2017–31 December 2020) (OJ C 189, 15.6.2017, p. 5)
- Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications (OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 22)
- Directive 2013/55/EU amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 132)
- Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (OJ C 189, 15.6.2017, p. 15)

⁽¹⁾ Definition of coaches as agreed upon in the Council conclusions on the role of coaches in society.

⁽²⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/28026772-9ad0-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1>

- Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (OJ C 189, 4.6.2018 , p. 1)
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on sport as a platform for social inclusion through volunteering (OJ C 189, 15.6.2017, p. 40)
- Council Conclusions on access to sport for persons with disabilities (OJ C 192, 7.6.2019, p. 18).
