

Annual European Week of Sport

"...From visual sports to real sports... a step from the sofa to the playing field"

Cyprus Presidency's Background Paper for the Structured Dialogue on Sport **29 November 2012, Brussels**

I. Introduction

The Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU wishes to engage the Sports Movement as well as the EU public authorities in a debate on the future challenges relating to HEPA and in particular in establishing the annual European Week of Sport. The debate aims at providing a platform of exchanging views on the direction of the future establishment of the annual European Week of Sport, including the EU cooperation in the field. The topic will be discussed among EU Ministers responsible for Sport during the afternoon session of the EYCS Council meeting on 27 November.

II. Policies to promote Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA)

On **International level**, the World Health Organisation (WHO) adopted in May 2004 the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health aiming at the development, strengthening and implementation of sustainable, comprehensive policies and action plans on physical activity, at all levels, with the actively engagement of all sectors¹. The WHO also developed global recommendations on Physical Activity for Health addressed to three age groups. Additionally, the HEPA Europe, the WHO Regional Office for Europe, focuses on population-based approaches aiming to develop, support and disseminate effective strategies and multi-sectoral approaches in the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity².

EU Member States have shown significant and on-going actions in the HEPA field on national, regional and local level either by drafting their own strategies and policies and/or by implementing the EU Physical Activity Guidelines³.

¹ <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/goals/en/>

² <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/disease-prevention/physical-activity/activities/hepa-europe>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/20120703-eu-pag-progress_en.htm

In an effort to promote the benefits of physical activity to the citizens, **Sport Organisations** acting on an international, European and national basis, organise events and interventions in an effort to bring together and engage all the relevant stakeholders as a means to reinforce cross-sectoral cooperation on promoting physical activity and active citizenship.

The **Council** in its Conclusions of May 2007 on health promotion by means of nutrition and physical activity⁴ agreed, *inter alia*, to improve health promotion, healthy nutrition and physical activity at all levels and in all sectors of political decision-making and implementation. In the Resolution for EU Work Plan for Sport 2011 – 2014 adopted by the Council in May 2011⁵, HEPA is identified as one of its priorities; specific actions and working methods are also defined in this field. The Work Plan acknowledges that sport can contribute to the overall goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy given the sector's strong potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and new jobs and considering its positive effects on social inclusion, education and training as well as public health and active ageing.

The **Commission's** White Paper on a Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related health issues⁶ of 30 May 2007, aimed at encouraging co-operation between Member States and supporting them in their efforts to encourage, *inter alia*, health-enhancing physical activity. The White Paper on Sport⁷ of 7 July 2007 underlined the importance of physical activity and proposed the development of physical activity guidelines by the end of 2008. The EU Physical Activity Guidelines, informally endorsed by the EU Sport Ministers in 2008, recommend policy actions in supporting health-enhancing physical activity targeting to enable citizens to be physically active. In the Communication on Developing the European Dimension in Sport⁸ of 18 January 2011, which builds on the White Paper on Sport, the Commission emphasises the fundamental role of physical activity in drafting public policies. Special attention to the topic has also been given through the Preparatory Actions in the field of sport in 2009 and 2012.

The **European Parliament** dealt also with the issue in its Resolution on White Paper on Sport of 2008 and the Resolution on Communication on the Development of the European Dimension in Sport.

⁴ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09363.en07.pdf>

⁵ OJ C 162 of 1.6.2011, p. 1 & 3

⁶ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/sport/index_en.htm

⁷ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/sport/l35010_en.htm

⁸ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/sport/ef0025_en.htm

All the above has led the Cyprus Presidency to choose the HEPA topic as one of its priorities. In the relevant Council Conclusions, to be approved on 27 November 2012, a proposal is made for the establishment of an annual European Week of Sport, as a means to promote sport and physical activity and participation in sport at all levels taking into account similar national initiatives and in cooperation with relevant sport organisations. In a nutshell, a common European week, where we can all celebrate sport's ability to contribute to a better (both economically and socially) society, is proposed.

III. Establishment of the Annual European Week of Sport – Future challenges

Despite the substantial steps and actions taken by several bodies (i.e. EU, Member States, Sport Movement, etc) in promoting sport and physical activity, it appears that the diverse benefits of HEPA are facing constraints in reaching the citizens. In an attempt to raise the awareness of citizens, in cooperation with all key stakeholders and reach a common understanding and consensus on the ways how these benefits could be better obtained, the Council invites the Commission to consider the establishment of an annual European Week of Sport. The initiative could coordinate the existing trans-national events in the field of HEPA, such as ISCA's Move Week, TAFISA's Challenge Day and of those sporting and physical activity events and best practices developed on national, regional and local level. However, there are still several challenges in this regard.

One challenge could be the **mobilisation and motivation of citizens to engage in sport and physical activity**. Although it is generally accepted that regular physical activity has health, social and cost savings benefits, people do not include sport and physical activity in their daily lives. Recruitment and retention of the general population into sport and physical activity remains a key issue. The establishment of a week devoted to sport could reinforce the effort and raise awareness in engaging citizens, in particular young people, in sport and physical activity.

A second challenge that concentrates special interest is the **cooperation among relevant stakeholders** in HEPA. It is widely recognised that diverse key-actors in sport and physical activity have taken, on an individual basis, significant actions. A more concerted and cooperative effort could build consensus and commitment, avoid overlapping and join together stakeholders to foster bridged and integrated strategies and actions in HEPA.

Another aspect that deserves particular attention is the potential **social and economic added value** generated by sports. Through the establishment of such an initiative the aim is to engage more people into sport and physical activity, thus increasing the potential benefits derived from sport. The realisation of an annual European Week of Sport could showcase how **investment in low cost resources and strategies** can reveal and promote sport and physical activity and therefore contribute to economy growth.

IV. "Food for thought"

FIFA Soccer 13 video game:

- *It is the biggest sports video game ever. It sold over 4.5 million copies in the five days after launch - an astonishing sales feat that makes it 2012's biggest game so far.*
- *FIFA 13 was the number one selling game in at least 40 countries. One of these was the UK, where it went on sale on the last Friday of September and sold more than 1.23 million copies in the first 48 hours. That's 7.6 copies a second over the weekend. Electronic Arts (EA), the developer of the game, said FIFA 13 is only the second video game franchise ever to sell more than one million units in the UK within just one day, the first being Call of Duty. That means FIFA 13 sold 11.5 copies per second on the first day.*
- *Sunday, 30th September was the busiest day for online gaming for a single title in EA history. 800,000 people played FIFA 13 simultaneously, and more than 66 million online game sessions have already been played. That's 600 million minutes of online play. FIFA Soccer 13 is a critical and commercial success unprecedented in sports entertainment.*
- *Every minute of every day millions of fans around the world are experiencing what the critics have already said - FIFA Soccer 13 is the biggest and best sports game EA has ever created.⁹*

The above statement highlights that there is an immense interest in football (and sport in general). Can we build on this interest or is this where their interest stops? How can we shift people, especially children, teenagers and young adults, from these virtual sports to real sports? How can we motivate people to move from their sofas to the playing field? Is the proposal for the establishment of an "Annual European Week of Sport" a step in this direction?

⁹ Source: <http://www.eurogamer.net/>

V. Policy debate

In view of the above, the Cyprus Presidency would like to invite participants in the Structured Dialogue to reflect on how they perceive the above-mentioned challenges and identify possibly new ones and how these could be handled at all levels, i.e. EU, Member States and sport movement. Consequently, participants are invited to consider the following questions for discussion:

- 1. What are the main challenges in establishing an annual European Week of Sport and which of these challenges could be easily facilitated and integrated?**
 - 2. How can public authorities and sport movement co-operate more effectively to make the European Week of Sport a reality?**
 - 3. What would be the added value obtained by the establishment of an annual European Week of Sport?**
 - 4. How this initiative could cultivate sport culture and inspire (motivate) population, especially children and youngsters, to engage physical activity in their daily lives?**
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