

**Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion**

(2010/C 326/04)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. RECALLING:

The political background to this issue as set out in the Annex, in particular:

- the declaration attached to conclusions of the European Council of 7-9 December 2000, which states that sport is a human activity resting on fundamental social, educational and cultural values, and a factor making for integration, involvement in social life, tolerance, acceptance of differences and playing by the rules <sup>(1)</sup>,
- Decision No 291/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 February 2003 establishing the European Year of Education through Sport 2004 <sup>(2)</sup>,
- Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 concerning the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) <sup>(3)</sup>.

2. WELCOMING:

- that, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty <sup>(4)</sup> on 1 December 2009, sport has become a competence of the European Union and that, consequently, the European dimension in sport is to be further developed, taking particular account of the social and educational function of sport,
- the intention of the Commission to adopt the Communication on the Lisbon Treaty and sport by the end of 2010.

3. RECOGNISES THAT:

1. Common priorities, such as increased employment, social inclusion, gender equality, equal access to facilities and services, intergenerational solidarity and intercultural dialogue, need stronger support across the European Union, including in the area of sport.

2. Sport holds an important place in the lives of many EU citizens and plays a strong societal role with a powerful potential for social inclusion in and through sport, meaning that participation in sport or in physical activity in many different ways contributes to inclusion into society; whereby inclusion in sport involves a combination of 'sport for all', equal access to sport, equal opportunities in sport, and varied demand-oriented sporting opportunities and sport facilities, and whereby social inclusion through sport involves inclusive participation in society, community development and strengthened social cohesion.

3. The sports movement can make an important contribution to issues of public interest such as social inclusion. In this context, professional athletes and amateur sport persons, as well as sport clubs, are role models for society, especially for young people, and other sport organisations and civil society organisations dealing with sport also contribute to social inclusion in and through sport.

4. Access to and participation in diverse aspects of sport is important for personal development, an individual's sense of identity and belonging, physical and mental wellbeing, empowerment, social competences and networks, intercultural communication and employability.

5. The 'European Conference on Local Sports Participation: social inclusion and combating poverty', 13-14 October in Leuven, Belgium, which demonstrated that sport plays an important role in social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, especially on the local level.

4. IDENTIFIES, WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, THE FOLLOWING COMMON PRIORITIES WITH A VIEW TO PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN AND THROUGH SPORT:

- 4.1. Support the 'sport for all' principle based on equal opportunities by:

1. increasing the overall participation in sport and providing encouragement for physical activities to as many citizens as possible, including young people;

2. paying special attention to social inclusion in sport of people who are currently not physically active, mainly among socially disadvantaged groups;

<sup>(1)</sup> SN 400/00

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 43, 18.2.2003, p. 1.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 298, 7.11.2008, p. 20.

<sup>(4)</sup> Articles 6 and 165 of the TFEU.

3. bearing in mind that access to 'sport for all' is important, including the accessibility and availability of sport facilities, infrastructures and venues to as many people as possible, in particular to persons with disabilities, as well as the importance of enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities;
  4. encouraging gender equality in sport, especially concerning access to sport and representation in decision-making bodies, and including active measures against gender stereotyping.
- 4.2. Make better use of the potential of sport as a contribution to community building, social cohesion and inclusive growth by:
1. focusing on the use of sport to promote inclusion into society of disadvantaged groups so as to develop more cohesive communities;
  2. recognising and increasing the acquisition of skills and competences such as discipline, team-work and perseverance through informal learning activities in sport, including voluntary activities, as a way of enhancing employability;
  3. acknowledging the economic, employment and learning potential of sport for contributing to the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth necessary for achieving a sustainable future.
- 4.3. Support the transnational exchange of strategies and methodologies to make better use of the potential of sport for social inclusion on a national and European level by:
1. stimulating networking between the Member States, and local and regional authorities, and ensuring their involvement, in particular concerning mutual exchange of knowledge and best practices;
  2. supporting research and analysis of the relation between sport and social inclusion in creating an analytical framework founded on practice-based evidence, with special attention to social inclusion of disadvantaged groups through sport;
  3. monitoring and evaluating existing policies in order to support decision-making and improve future actions, taking into account the views of relevant stakeholders.
5. THEREFORE, IN CONNECTION WITH THE ISSUES OUTLINED ABOVE, INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF SPORT, TO:
1. promote sport cooperation on the principle of 'sport for all' based on equal access and equal opportunities, in particular for physically inactive people, following the priority of social inclusion in and through sport;
  2. encourage actions involving a strong link between sport and sectors engaged with the issue of social inclusion, and increase interest in sport among physically inactive people;
  3. encourage and promote participation in sport of people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, at the same time as ensuring their inclusion into society through sport by introducing them to new social networks and equipping them with new skills;
  4. promote intercultural dialogue by including persons from different cultural backgrounds in society through sport;
  5. promote actions related to social inclusion in and through sport of persons with disabilities, including improved infrastructure and better accessibility of sport facilities and venues, as well as research related to specialised sport devices, and give priority to sport;
  6. promote actions related to the mainstreaming of gender equality issues into sports-related activities, especially equal gender access to decision-making positions, and address sport in connection to gender roles as set out in the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 <sup>(1)</sup>,
  7. design channels of communication and cooperation with other relevant policy fields and departments both within and between the various EU institutions and within the Member States, paying special attention to the positive contribution of sport to social inclusion and include sport in relevant action plans such as action plans for social inclusion and action plans against poverty;
  8. encourage the recognition of informal learning through sport, as a complement to formal education through the acquisition of constructive skills and competences necessary for employability, in connection with sustainable and inclusive growth;

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(2010) 491 final.

9. raise awareness and highlight the importance of voluntary activities in sport both as a tool for social inclusion and as a means of acquiring skills so as to contribute to employability and cohesion, particularly in the context of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011);
  10. promote and support mutual learning instruments, cross-disciplinary research aiming at an analytical evidence-based framework, and the exchange of knowledge and best practices, for instance through high-level seminars or meetings of expert groups on issues relating to sport and social inclusion, and ensure that the results of such activities are effectively disseminated and connected to practice;
  11. maximise the contribution of sport to achieve goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, particularly through its flagship initiatives including the European Platform against Poverty;
  12. encourage, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, to set an example for social inclusion by linking sport to social inclusion projects, with special focus on local organisations which are in close contact with citizens;
  13. encourage, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, to make efficient use of the funds available in the EU, including in connection to the possible future sport programmes, to support the process of social inclusion in and through sport;
6. INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:
1. incorporate the issue of social inclusion in and through sport as a priority for sport cooperation, above all in the upcoming Communication of the European Commission on the Lisbon Treaty and sport;
  2. ensure that social inclusion in and through sport is considered in possible future proposals for EU sport programmes, as one of the priorities, and examine the possibilities of using the existing funds such as the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, and programmes such as the Youth in Action and Lifelong Learning programmes to support activities in the area of sport;
  3. evaluate the effectiveness of EU level activities supported by preparatory actions in the field of social inclusion.
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## ANNEX

**Political background**

1. Conclusions of the Nice European Council of 7 to 9 December 2000, Annex IV, Declaration on the specific characteristics of sport and its social function in Europe <sup>(1)</sup>.
  2. Conclusions of the Spring 2008 European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008 <sup>(2)</sup>.
  3. Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 concerning the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) <sup>(3)</sup>.
  4. European Council Declaration on sport of 11 and 12 December 2008, part of the European Council conclusions — Annex 5 <sup>(4)</sup>.
  5. Decision 2010/37/EC of the Council of 27 November 2009 concerning the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011) <sup>(5)</sup>.
  6. Conclusions of the European Council of 17 June 2010 <sup>(6)</sup>.
  7. Commission White Paper on Sport of 11 July 2007 <sup>(7)</sup>.
  8. Communication of the European Commission on the Lisbon Treaty and sport (to be published in November 2010).
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<sup>(1)</sup> SN 400/00 ADD1 REV1 + ADD1 REV2 (de, el, en, it, pt).

<sup>(2)</sup> Doc 7652/08, p. 9 (Presidency conclusions).

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 298, 7.11.2008, p. 20.

<sup>(4)</sup> 17271/08 Annex 5, p. 21.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ L 17, 22.1.2010, p. 43.

<sup>(6)</sup> EUCO 13/10.

<sup>(7)</sup> COM(2007) 391 final, p. 4.