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Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on sport tourism as a contributor to sustainable development

(C/2026/3012)

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

RECALLING:

1. Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which confers on the European Union the competence to carry out actions in the area of sport to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States, Article 165 TFEU, according to which the Union is to contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking account of the specific nature of sport, its structures based on voluntary activity and its social and educational function, as well as Article 195 TFEU, which provides that the Union shall complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector, in particular by promoting the competitiveness of Union undertakings in that sector and encouraging the creation of a favourable environment for their development.
2. The European Union Work Plan for Sport 2024–2027 ⁽¹⁾, which sets out the strategic framework for cooperation at Union level in the field of sport in its guiding objectives, to ‘promote, through cross-sectoral cooperation, awareness of sports tourism which can play a key role in the sustainable development of the sector and in building its resilience’.
3. The political context as set out in the Annex to these conclusions.

UNDERLINING THAT:

4. For the purpose of these conclusions, sport tourism refers to tourism activities in which travel is motivated by participation in sport or physical activity, or by attendance at or observation of sporting events, competitions or sport-related attractions.
5. Sport tourism combines the economic vitality of tourism with the social, cultural and health-enhancing value of sport and can serve as a strategic instrument for sustainable and long-term local and regional development. When planned responsibly and proportionately, it can foster territorial cohesion, quality employment, the protection of cultural heritage and resilient destinations, while delivering lasting economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities, including through sporting events that can increase participation in sport, strengthen community identity and enhance the visibility of host regions.
6. In this context, sustainability is understood as a guiding principle which ensures that environmental, social and economic aspects are taken into consideration in the design of public policies and practices and in economic activities over the long term.
7. Sustainable sport tourism requires sport tourism activities to be compatible with environmental protection and climate objectives, while delivering long-term value for visitors and local communities. Sport tourism activities should be developed in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring a balance between social and environmental responsibilities, as well as economic viability.
8. By providing opportunities for participation and exchange, sport tourism can promote the Union’s fundamental values, strengthen social cohesion and foster non-discrimination.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C, C/2024/3527, 3.6.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/3527/oj>.

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT:

9. At local and regional level, sport tourism can strengthen economic ecosystems by supporting employment, stimulating entrepreneurship and investment, generating economic value through visitor spending and contributing to the extension of the tourism season through sport-related activities, while taking into account environmental protection, climate objectives, and the varying nature of sport tourism in different Member States.
10. In the longer term, it can contribute to a more robust destination branding and international visibility, positioning regions and communities through sport-related activities and values, provided that tourist flows are managed sustainably, while reinforcing Europe's attractiveness as a sport tourism destination.
11. The active involvement of local communities and relevant stakeholders, including grassroots sport organisations and local sport clubs, in the planning and delivery of sport tourism initiatives, including through sustainably designed infrastructure, can help maximise positive impacts, preserve local culture and heritage, and strengthen local ownership, identity and community resilience.

EMPHASISING THAT:

12. When strategically planned and proportionate to local capacities, sport tourism may provide an alternative to certain mass tourism models, associated with unbalanced tourism and related environmental and social pressures. It can help address territorial disparities by diversifying tourism products, promoting less well-known destinations and encouraging more responsible and balanced forms of tourism, including those linked to small- and medium-scale sport events, which may support the attractiveness of destinations over time.
13. Where not appropriately managed, unsustainable sport tourism practices may generate environmental pressures, thereby contributing to and being affected by climate change. At the same time, even sustainable sport tourism practices may be impacted by the effects of climate change. The development of sport tourism should therefore continue to adapt to environmental risks and be fully consistent with the Union's climate neutrality objectives. It should further be supported by integrated, proportionate and future-oriented planning, including, where feasible, systematic impact assessment and monitoring based on comparable and harmonised indicators, to enhance the resilience of sport tourism destinations.
14. Transport-related emissions represent a significant share of tourism's environmental footprint. Sustainable sport tourism development requires climate-conscious mobility planning, including the promotion of low-carbon and active modes, and adequate infrastructure and incentives to encourage the use of public transport.
15. The development of sport tourism should take due account of the sustainable use of natural resources and the preservation of terrestrial, coastal and marine environments, particularly in sensitive ecosystems. Where appropriate, and in accordance with national, regional and local arrangements, income generated through sport tourism can also contribute to environmental conservation, sustainable infrastructure and the long-term management of destinations.
16. Raising awareness, through environmental education and capacity-building initiatives, among sport tourists, and residents, as well as among organisers and service providers, can contribute to more sustainable sport tourism practices.
17. Cooperation among public authorities, local businesses, sport organisations, environmental organisations and other relevant stakeholders, at local, regional, national and international level, can play an important role in the development of sustainable sport tourism, including through improved coordination, knowledge exchange and the sharing of good practices.

18. By encouraging social interaction and inclusion, trust, networking and dialogue among participants from different backgrounds sport tourism can enhance the promotion of mutual understanding, gender equality, participation of persons with disabilities, intercultural dialogue and people-to-people contacts, including as a tool of sport diplomacy.
19. Sport tourism can contribute to the achievement of several United Nations SDGs, in particular SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17, when developed and implemented in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES, AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL, TO:

20. Consider taking a strategic and integrated approach to sport tourism development, by aligning sport, tourism and sustainability policies, taking into account the relevant objectives of the 2030 United Nations SDGs.
21. Encourage European, international and cross-border cooperation among national, regional and local authorities through existing Union programmes, regional partnerships, networks and joint initiatives, ensuring a coordinated and cross-sectoral approach that also involves public-private and voluntary sector partnerships to promote innovation and long-term sustainability in sport tourism development.
22. Explore, where appropriate, within their respective competences and available financial frameworks, the possibility of allocating appropriate financial resources to support sustainable sport tourism initiatives, including capacity-building, mobility solutions and infrastructure development, digital innovation, research, and cross-border cooperation projects, while ensuring coherence with Union priorities and existing funding instruments.
23. Consider promoting sport-related tourism activities, including active mobility, to encourage participation in physical activity among visitors and local communities, including underrepresented or vulnerable groups and persons, where possible through synergies with relevant Union initiatives, noting that the greatest health benefits are achieved by engaging those who are the least physically active.
24. Encourage diversified sport tourism as a tool for sustainable destination development and branding, including in less-visited and peripheral regions, while promoting sustainable transport solutions, connectivity and accessibility, and fostering synergies with other alternative and special forms of tourism, in order to reduce seasonality, ease territorial pressures and help prevent environmental degradation and social challenges.
25. Promote environmentally responsible practices in the organisation and delivery of sport tourism activities prioritising the engagement of local communities, and taking into account climate resilience and long-term environmental impacts, and encourage the development and maintenance of sustainable infrastructure and services, while respecting environmental carrying capacity and managing visitor flows, particularly over long distances, to avoid overcrowding.
26. Foster awareness-raising initiatives for visitors and organisers, as well as training on environmental protection issues for sport tourism professionals.
27. Consider encouraging research and knowledge development through the collection and exchange of data on environmental, social and economic sustainability indicators for sport tourism, including market trends, as part of broader tourism sustainability monitoring frameworks, where possible using existing comparable and harmonised indicators; this should feed into evidence-based decision-making and support the monitoring of public policies over time.
28. Where relevant and in line with applicable data protection rules and ethical standards, explore the use of digital tools, including applications, platforms, virtual or augmented reality and AI, to support the data-driven and sustainable management of sport tourism activities and destinations, including for visitor flow monitoring and impact assessment, while taking into account the environmental costs associated with such solutions, in particular in terms of energy and water consumption.

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, WITHIN ITS SPHERE OF COMPETENCES, TO:

29. Support the exchange of information, good practices and knowledge among Member States and relevant stakeholders on sustainable sport tourism development, including through structured platforms and existing initiatives, and promote understanding of the application of state aid rules.
30. Provide guidance on relevant Union funding programmes, such as but not limited to Erasmus+, to support sustainable, socially inclusive and innovative sport tourism initiatives, including those promoting cross-border cooperation.
31. Encourage, where relevant, research and data collection related to sport tourism, including the development and use of harmonised methodologies and statistics, such as Tourism Satellite Accounts, Sport Satellite Accounts, the European Tourism Data Space (ETDS) and the EU Tourism Dashboard, without creating parallel or fragmented statistical systems.
32. Explore the role of sport tourism in the context of the EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

INVITE THE SPORTS MOVEMENT AND SPORT TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE AUTONOMY OF SPORT, to:

33. Consider engaging in long-term and structured partnerships and cooperation, including cross-border and public-private partnerships, to develop sustainable sport tourism services and projects, and to contribute to relevant Union initiatives promoting participation, sustainability and innovation in sport.
34. Promote volunteering, community engagement and social inclusion in and through sport tourism activities and events.
35. Foster environmentally responsible and socially inclusive practices in the planning and organisation of sport tourism activities and events, including the development and implementation of a sustainable mobility plan covering transport arrangements.
36. Integrate sustainability, including sustainable transport options, accessibility and social responsibility into the marketing of sport tourism, including through digital tools and the promotion of off-season and regional events, in order to support balanced territorial development, quality employment, the protection of cultural heritage and long-term destination resilience.
37. Contribute, where appropriate, to data collection, research and knowledge-sharing, in order to support evidence-based policymaking and the continuous improvement of sustainable sport tourism practices.
38. Encourage sport organisations to join the Green Sport Manifesto under the SHARE 2.0 initiative and to work together towards more environmentally responsible and sustainable sport tourism, including through the wider dissemination of good practices.

ANNEX

EU legislative and policy framework

- Council conclusions of 9 December 2024 on fostering the lasting legacy of major sporting events (OJ C, C/2024/7401, 9.12.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/7401/oj>)
- Council conclusions of 27 November 2023 on developing the 2030 Agenda to reach the goals: Accelerating the localization of the SDGs (15939/23)
- Council conclusions of 21 November 2023 on a social, green and digital transition (15732/23)
- Council conclusions of 1 December 2022 on the European Agenda for Tourism 2030 (15441/22)
- Council conclusions of 29 November 2022 on sustainable and accessible sports infrastructure (OJ C 494, 28.12.2022, p. 1).
- Council conclusions of 4 April 2022 on sport and physical activity, a promising lever to transform behaviour for sustainable development (OJ C 170, 25.4.2022, p. 1).
- Council conclusions of 3 March 2022 on Special Report No 27/2021 by the European Court of Auditors: EU support to tourism: need for a fresh strategic orientation and a better funding approach (6829/22)
- Council resolution of 30 November 2021 on the key features of a European Sport Model (OJ C 501, 13.12.2021, p. 1).
- Council conclusions of 30 November 2021 on lifelong physical activity (OJ C 501 I, 13.12.2021, p. 1)
- Council conclusions of 18 May 2021 on sport innovation (OJ C 212, 4.6.2021, p. 2).
- Council conclusions of 27 May 2021 on tourism in Europe for the next decade: sustainable, resilient, digital, global and social (8881/21)
- European Parliament resolution of 25 March 2021 on establishing an EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 106).
- European Parliament resolution of 19 June 2020 on transport and tourism in 2020 and beyond (OJ C 362, 8.9.2021, p. 55).
- Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 22 November 2019 on the Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development (OJ C 410, 6.12.2019, p. 1).
- Council conclusions of 27 May 2019 on the competitiveness of the tourism sector as a driver for sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion in the EU for the next decade (9707/19)
- Council conclusions of 9 April 2019 'Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030' (8286/19)
- Council conclusions of 20 June 2017 on a sustainable European future: the EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (10370/17)
- Council conclusions of 1 June 2016 on enhancing integrity, transparency and good governance in major sport events (9644/16)

- European Parliament resolution of 29 October 2015 on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe (OJ C 355, 20.10.2017, p. 71).
 - Council conclusions of 4 December 2014 on strengthening tourism by leveraging Europe's cultural, natural and maritime heritage (16535/14)
 - Council conclusions of 13 October 2010 on Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe (14944/10)
 - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe (COM(2010) 352 final (30 June 2010))
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