Tuesday 23 November 2021

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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P9_TA(2021)0463

EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward

European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2021 on EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward (2021/2058(INI))

(2022/C 224/01)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Articles 6 and 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which specify the competences and actions of the Union in the area of sport, in particular 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,

— having regard to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular the role of sport as an important enabler of sustainable development and the contributions it makes to peace, to the promotion of tolerance and respect, and to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities, as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives ([1]),

— having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 ([2]), and in particular to the sport chapter thereof,

— having regard to the Commission white paper of 11 July 2007 on sport (COM(2007)0391),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 18 January 2011 entitled 'Developing the European Dimension in Sport' (COM(2011)0012),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 7 July 2020 on the implementation and relevance of the European Union Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020 (COM(2020)0293), and in particular its recommendations for the future,

— having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2021 entitled 'Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030' (COM(2021)0101),

— having regard to the EU guidelines of 16 November 2012 entitled 'Dual Careers of Athletes — Recommended Policy Actions in Support of Dual Careers in High-Performance Sport',

([1]) Resolution entitled 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1.
([2]) OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1.

— having regard to its resolution of 2 February 2012 on the European dimension in sport ([3]),

— having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2013 on match-fixing and corruption in sport ([4]),

— having regard to its resolution of 11 June 2015 on recent revelations on high-level corruption cases in FIFA ([5]),

— having regard to its resolution of 2 February 2017 on an integrated approach to Sport Policy: good governance, accessibility and integrity ([6]),

— having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2020 on effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps ([7]),

— having regard to its resolution of 10 February 2021 on the impact of COVID-19 on youth and on sport ([8]),

— having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on challenges of sports events organisers in the digital environment ([9]),

— having regard to 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 (1 January 2021-30 June 2024) ([10]), in particular its priority areas,

— having regard to the conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on combating corruption in sport ([11]),

— having regard to the conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on access to sport for persons with disabilities ([12]),

— having regard to the conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of the sport sector ([13]),

— having regard to the 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 ([14]),

— having regard to the conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on sport innovation ([15]),

— having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 16 November 1989 on anti-doping,

— having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 18 September 2014 on the manipulation of sports competitions,

— having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 3 July 2016 on an integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other sports events,

— having regard to the Code of Sports Ethics, as revised on 16 May 2001, and to the European Sports Charter of the Council of Europe, as revised on 13 October 2021,

— having regard to the UNESCO International Convention of 19 October 2005 against doping in sport,

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([3]) OJ C 239 E, 20.8.2013, p. 46.
([4]) OJ C 36, 29.1.2016, p. 137.
([5]) OJ C 407, 4.11.2016, p. 81.
([6]) OJ C 252, 18.7.2018, p. 2.
([7]) OJ C 385, 22.9.2021, p. 2.
([8]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0045.
([9]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0236.
([10]) OJ C 419, 4.12.2020, p. 1.
([11]) OJ C 416, 11.12.2019, p. 3.
([12]) OJ C 192, 7.6.2019, p. 18.
([13]) OJ C 214 I, 29.6.2020, p. 1.
([14]) OJ C 196, 11.6.2020, p. 1.
([15]) OJ C 212, 4.6.2021, p. 2.

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— having regard to its study of June 2021 entitled 'EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward' ([16]),

— having regard to the final report of Ecorys, KEA and Sport and Citizenship to the DG Education and Culture of the European Commission of June 2016 entitled 'Mapping and analysis of the specificity of sport',

— having regard to the report of Ecorys and SportsEconAustria to the European Commission of 2020 entitled 'Mapping study on measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector in the EU',

— having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A9-0318/2021),

A. whereas sport plays a key role in the social, cultural and educational life of European citizens and promotes values such as democracy, respect, solidarity, diversity and equality;

B. whereas sport serves as a vector for integration, especially for people with fewer opportunities;

C. whereas sport must be inclusive and open to all regardless of age, gender, disability or cultural and socioeconomic background;

D. whereas sport is a growing economic sector contributing to growth and jobs in the EU and therefore to its prosperity;

E. whereas sport contributes to strengthening European integration and to the EU's position in international cooperation;

F. whereas COVID-19 has had an adverse economic and social impact on the sport sector;

G. whereas the EU should aim to further develop the European dimension of sport while respecting its specific nature and autonomy;

H. whereas EU sports policy must support both elite and grassroots sports, including forms of active leisure;

I. whereas grassroots sport contributes to the development of skills among young people and promotes civic participation through volunteering;

J. whereas young athletes face the challenge of reconciling their sports careers, their training and professional activities;

K. whereas sport has a positive impact on citizens' health and wellbeing;

L. whereas the development of sports infrastructure is an important element in improving quality of life and economic opportunities in remote and disadvantaged areas;

M. whereas sport faces a range of challenges such as governance issues, corruption, match-fixing, doping, financing, digital piracy, purely profit-based models, human rights violations, discrimination and violence, and environmental impacts and sustainability concerns;

N. whereas women still are underrepresented in sport, both in governing bodies and in the media sphere;

O. whereas illegal streaming of live sports events threatens the financial stability of both professional and grassroots sports, which depend on the revenues from sport broadcasting rights;

Strengthening visibility, cooperation and the mainstreaming of sport in EU policies

1. Calls on the EU to adopt a more holistic approach to sports policy and step up efforts to mainstream it into other EU policies;

2. Stresses the need to strengthen interinstitutional cooperation and collaboration with sports stakeholders;

([16]) Mittag, J. & Naul, R. (2021), *EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward*, European Parliament, Research for CULT Committee — Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.

3. Calls on the Commission to set up regular high-level structured cooperation with all sports stakeholders and other institutions to deliver more targeted and accountable recommendations for action on the current challenges facing the sport sector;

4. Calls on the Commission to present a communication on the future of sport linked to the EU's strategic goals;

5. Calls on the Commission to strengthen the visibility of sport and its perspective on sport across policy areas at EU level by adding sport to the title of the portfolio of the Commissioner in charge;

6. Calls also in this regard for the establishment of an EU sport coordinator who would be the Commission's contact on the issue and a visible reference point;

7. Insists on the increased involvement of Parliament in order to provide a framework for regular political debate and action on sport, and on parliamentary scrutiny and monitoring with regard to the implementation of the strategic goals;

8. Underlines the role of the Conference on the Future of Europe in discussions on the way forward on EU sports policy and sport related issues, and encourages the active participation of all sports stakeholders;

9. Acknowledges the recent adoption of the revised European Sports Charter within the Council of Europe which highlights the common features of a framework for European sport and its organisation and invites EU institutions to strive for consistency, cooperation and solidarity at continental level, while taking initiative in the field of sports policy;

10. Calls for Parliament to play a more active role in sports diplomacy;

Enhancing the principles of a European sports model

11. Acknowledges the importance of a European sports model based on values, voluntary activities and solidarity and looks forward to further developing it in the interests of citizens and stakeholders;

12. Acknowledges the diversity of approaches across sports and countries while considering that the common foundation of European sport needs to be further enhanced and protected, in particular the links between grassroots and elite sport;

13. Calls for a European sports model that recognises the need for a strong commitment to integrating the principles of solidarity, sustainability, inclusiveness for all, open competition, sporting merit and fairness, and accordingly strongly opposes breakaway competitions that undermine such principles and endanger the stability of the overall sports ecosystem; stresses that these principles should be encouraged by all sports stakeholders and national authorities;

14. Recognises the role of federations in governing their sport and encourages closer coordination and cooperation with authorities and all relevant stakeholders;

15. Acknowledges sports clubs as the foundation of a European sports model offering everyone the opportunity to engage in sport locally, especially young people, regardless of their cultural or socioeconomic background;

16. Highlights the need for more targeted and increased solidarity and more financial redistribution, as well as exchanges in skills and know-how, especially between professional and grassroots sport; calls on sports federations to implement a solidarity mechanism based on a fair and binding distribution method that ensures the adequate funding of amateur and grassroots sport;

17. Emphasises the need to ensure the sustainable financial stability and sound management of sports clubs and calls on sporting bodies to introduce mechanisms to this end, where they do not already exist, alongside a proper enforcement system;

18. Believes that the German club ownership model based on the 50+1 rule has served German football well and should be considered as a possible example of best practice as other countries seek to enhance their own models;

19. Urges public authorities, sports federations and organisations to uphold human rights and democratic principles in all of their actions, especially when awarding host status for major sporting events, as well as in the choice of sponsors; insists that major sporting events should no longer be awarded to countries where these fundamental rights and values are repeatedly violated;

20. Calls on sports organisations to respect the established frequency of international sports tournaments, especially European and world championships, while taking into account domestic competitions and the health of athletes and players;

Renewing good governance and integrity

21. Considers that a renewed commitment to good governance is needed in order to rebalance the social and economic elements in sport and to ensure that stakeholder representation in decision-making bodies is respected;

22. Notes that a focus on commercial interests by professional sport should be balanced with much-needed social functions; encourages the relevant organisations to address this issue as a means of maintaining their position as role models in defending the ideals on which European sport was built;

23. Calls on international, European and national sports organisations and stakeholder representative organisations to implement the highest governance standards;

24. Acknowledges the efforts made by sports organisations and federations to ensure the implementation of good governance principles in sport and stresses the need for the Commission to develop recommendations for guidelines for the organisation of sport and its governing bodies in the EU;

25. Urges the international, European and national sports governing bodies and stakeholders to implement measures on diversity and inclusion, in particular to address the low numbers of women and ethnic minorities in leadership positions and on boards;

26. Calls on all sports stakeholder organisations to attain the appropriate levels of representativeness and professionalisation as a prerequisite for involvement in collective decision-making processes;

27. Calls for the EU institutions to promote and protect the fundamental rights of athletes, including athlete representation in decision-making, freedom of association, collective bargaining and non-discrimination;

28. Stresses the need for sports authorities to take into account the protection of athletes' mental health in the same way as their physical health;

29. Calls on the Member States to take measures to ensure that all professional athletes have equal access to social and labour protection mechanisms;

30. Calls on the Member States, sports governing bodies and clubs to acknowledge the status of fans in sport by involving them in governance and decision-making bodies;

31. Calls on the Commission to build on its existing work on social dialogue and to extend its scope to all professional sports;

32. Welcomes reforms and measures to improve transparency and accountability in the player transfer market across sports and urges further efforts; notes that European frameworks are needed to improve player transfer systems to meet European standards and objectives, in particular with regard to labour market and financial regulations;

33. Recalls the need to regulate the activities of agents and acknowledges that the recent reforms in the football transfer market, including the establishment of a clearing house, licencing requirements for agents and caps on agents' commission go in the right direction; urges the relevant sports authorities to ensure the prompt implementation of these reforms and calls on the Commission to monitor progress;

34. Insists that fighting corruption in sport, which is often linked to money laundering and crime, requires transnational cooperation among all stakeholders and authorities;

35. Calls on Member States and the relevant authorities to firmly fight against abuses in the gambling sector, including the proliferation of fraudulent sites and predatory practices, in order to protect minors and vulnerable people from any risk;

36. Urges the Council and the Commission to break the deadlock on the signing and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions;

37. Highlights the need for capacity building to strengthen prevention and anti-doping measures in sport through a common European strategy that includes close collaboration and information sharing between law enforcement agencies in all EU countries;

38. Highlights the need for information and educational campaigns on the prevention of doping, match-fixing, corruption, violence, physical and psychological abuse and other integrity-related matters with a focus on amateur sport;

Ensuring safe, inclusive and equal sport

39. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to involve all relevant stakeholders in ensuring that sports policy and legislation support gender equality, with particular attention to tackling all forms of violence and harassment, gender stereotypes, low visibility and media coverage, and disparities in wages, premium pay and awards;

40. Calls on national sports federations to move towards equalising premium payments for female and male athletes, following the example of the Football Association of Ireland (FAI);

41. Calls on the Commission to recognise the importance and support the social inclusion of persons with fewer opportunities, refugees, ethnic minorities and the LGBTQI+ community in sport, leaving no one behind;

42. Underlines the need to leverage the significant social weight of elite sport to raise awareness related to issues faced by LGBTQI+ people in sport;

43. Urges sports bodies and public authorities to effectively tackle discrimination, violence and hate speech and to guarantee safe, inclusive sport for all athletes, spectators and staff in sports venues and online;

44. Insists on a zero-tolerance approach in terms of racism and violence in sport and urges the Commission, the Member States and sports federations to develop measures to prevent such incidents and to adopt effective penalties and measures to support victims;

45. Calls on the Member States to step up efforts towards the inclusion in sports activities and programmes of persons with mental and physical disabilities, and to increase visibility in the media of competitions involving athletes with disabilities;

46. Stresses the need to increase funding and remove all barriers for people with disabilities through educational and awareness campaigns, specialised training for relevant actors and accessible sports infrastructure that allows attendance at sports events and participation in sports;

47. Calls on the Member States to offer equal financial rewards to their Olympic and Paralympic champions and to support Olympians and Paralympians with low incomes;

48. Recalls that the EU faces demographic challenges such as an ageing population, and that specific attention should be paid to encouraging active ageing through physical activity;

49. Urges the media in the Member States to give more coverage to a wider range of sports and in particular women's and youth sports;

50. Calls on the Member States to introduce special measures to enable children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds to access sports that involve high equipment costs and fees, including winter sports;

51. Calls for the EU institutions, the Member States and sports organisations to prioritise policies that safeguard children from discrimination, harassment and any form of abuse, raise awareness and provide access to remedies, including legal advice and timely protection;

52. Welcomes the 2019 Commission study entitled 'Safeguarding children in sport' and calls on the Commission to continue working in this area, including by regularly collecting and updating data;

53. Insists that young athletes from developing countries must be protected from fraud and trafficking, and should benefit from a legal status in Europe and receive support with the assessment and monitoring of their contracts;

54. Calls on the Member States and sports federations to provide first aid training for young people and athletes;

Promoting healthy and active lifestyles together with education and development opportunities

55. Urges the Member States and public authorities to develop sports infrastructure, especially in remote regions and disadvantaged areas, and to increase the amount of physical education, including daily physical activities, active breaks and extracurricular physical activities in schools, while instigating a change of mentality in the recognition of the importance of sport as a school discipline;

56. Stresses the need for an integrated approach to active cities which promotes physical activity in the everyday life of European citizens, including at the workplace, and which increases and develops active and sustainable mobility and means of transportation;

57. Welcomes initiatives and campaigns to encourage physical activity such as the European Week of Sport, #BeActive and HealthyLifestyle4All and encourages the Commission to intensify communication about these events in the Member States, particularly targeted towards schools; underlines the importance of regular assessments of their outreach and impact;

58. Calls for the EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes to be implemented and promoted in each Member State, and extended to all sport staff engaged in structured sport and for specific retraining initiatives;

59. Reiterates its call on the Commission, the Member States, sports federations and clubs to promote dual-career opportunities for athletes and calls on the Commission to consider including cross-border mobility of athletes in the next Erasmus+ programme;

60. Reiterates the need to develop a strategy for supporting former athletes to ensure they have adequate access to jobs, skilling or reskilling;

61. Highlights the role of coaches, sport staff, teachers and youth workers in developing the skills of and in educating children and young people and stresses that adequate training plays a key role in encouraging participation in sport and in ensuring a safe environment for all;

62. Welcomes the inclusion of sport staff mobility in the Erasmus + 2021-2027 programme, and calls on the Commission, national agencies and sports federations to raise awareness about this new opportunity;

63. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop common standards at EU level to ensure that all coaches have the appropriate skills and training to coach children and young people;

64. Calls on the Commission to establish a network of ambassadors for sport to leverage the influence of respected sports role models to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles;

65. Recognises the valuable contributions that sports volunteers bring to a society and calls on the Commission and the Member States to create a system in line with the EU skills agenda, and building on the European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET), for the recognition of qualifications gained by volunteers, including coaches working as volunteers;

Helping sport to ensure a successful recovery

66. Insists on the need for support and dedicated funding mechanisms to get the sport sector and all sports back on track in the wake of COVID-19, including through national support funds, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and EU structural funds;

67. Welcomes the fact that some Member States have included sports in their national recovery and resilience plans;

68. Calls on the Commission to provide data on sports-related investments and reforms in its review report on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which is to be presented to Parliament and the Council in 2022;

69. Welcomes the higher budget for sport under the current Erasmus+ programme and supports further synergies between funds and programmes such as EU4Health and LIFE; underlines that the removal of all obstacles in the application process at national level is key in order to make better use of these tools to support the recovery in sport;

70. Regrets the absence of an explicit reference to sport in the EU4Health programme regulation;

71. Urges the EU institutions to considerably increase the budget dedicated to grassroots sport under the Erasmus+ programme in the next financial programming period;

72. Stresses the need to further increase funding for sport, also beyond the Erasmus+ programme, in a targeted manner with a focus on the social dimension of sport, particularly in grassroots sports;

73. Highlights the importance of preparatory actions and pilot projects in the field of sport which provide additional funding for grassroots sport and give promising results;

74. Calls on the Commission to increase the number of accepted pilot projects and preparatory actions in the field of sport;

75. Highlights the need to support sports tourism as one of the means to boost the recovery and resilience of the sport sector after COVID-19;

76. Recalls the importance of protecting traditional sports and promoting them with adequate funding as part of European cultural heritage and regional identity;

77. Calls on national, regional and local authorities to recognise the key role of sport and physical activity in fields such as urban regeneration, tourism and territorial cohesion and to encourage relevant investments under EU cohesion policy, specifically with regard to the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional and Development Fund and the Recovery and Resilience Facility;

78. Calls on the Commission to encourage the use of REACT-EU funding for projects related to sports infrastructure, provided that it is sustainable, contributes to long-term economic recovery and supports tourism;

79. Draws the attention of the Commission and the managing authorities to the important role of small sports clubs and associations and highlights the lack of human and material resources available to them for accessing European funding and targeted support;

80. Calls on the Member States to consider applying the lowest possible rate of VAT to the sports sector as one of the tools to facilitate access to its services in the wake of COVID-19;

81. Calls on the Commission to develop a methodology for defining the criteria for measuring and monitoring the social impact of sports-related projects together with all relevant stakeholders including civil society, social partners and public authorities, and to regularly update and present data on the social impact of sport;

82. Urges the Commission and the Member States to regularly update and present data on the economic impact of sport;

Supporting the transition to a sustainable and innovative future

83. Notes the efforts undertaken by clubs and federations to ensure environmental sustainability; calls on the EU institutions, Member States and sports federations, however, to further support and promote the development of sport and the organisation of environmentally ambitious sporting events;

84. Insists on the alignment of sport with the principles of the European Green Deal and its contribution to environmental education and behaviour change;

85. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support the green transition of the sport sector, especially with regards to constructing, extending and renovating sports infrastructure, including winter sports facilities;

86. Highlights the importance of sport and physical activity within the New European Bauhaus and acknowledges the potential for the development of active spaces and the promotion of sustainable sports infrastructure; calls on the Commission to ensure that sports-related projects, especially those within public spaces, are prioritised within this initiative;

87. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish harmonised minimum accessibility criteria, sustainability benchmarks and safety standards for sports infrastructure, including measures to prevent any form of harassment, and to support inclusion as well as mobility of athletes and sports-related workers;

88. Calls for particular attention to be paid to the working conditions of construction workers involved in building sports infrastructure;

89. Highlights the importance of innovation and cross-sectoral cooperation in sport, especially of developing digital tools to increase participation in physical activity, with a particular focus on young people;

90. Underlines that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, new ways of organising sporting events should be envisaged using the digital technologies available;

91. Calls on the Commission and the European Institute for Technology to create a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) in the field of sport to boost innovation, resilience and transnational collaboration;

92. Calls for the EU institutions to launch a debate on the future and on the opportunities of e-sports and to collect data in order to assess this sector and present a study on its social and economic impact;

93. Calls on the Commission to effectively tackle the growing problem of illegal streaming of live sport events without delay;

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94. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and European, international and national sports federations and organisations.