

The role of sport in education

European Parliament resolution of 13 November 2007 on the role of sport in education (2007/2086(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 149, 150 and 152 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to Declaration no. 29 on sport, annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Commission's Report on sport, presented at the Helsinki European Council on 10 and 11 December 1999 (COM(1999)0644) and to the Nice Declaration on the specific characteristics of sport and its social function in Europe in Annex IV to the Presidency conclusions of the Nice European Council meeting (7 to 9 December 2000),
- having regard to the Commission's White Paper on Sport (COM(2007)0391),
- having regard to the Commission's White Paper entitled 'A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues' (COM(2007)0279),
- having regard to the Commission's evaluation of the European Year of Education through Sport (EYES 2004) programme (COM(2005)0680),
- having regard to the Council of Europe's Recommendation on improving physical education and sport for children and young people in all European countries, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 April 2003 (Rec(2003)6),
- having regard to the Commission's Green Paper entitled 'Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases'(COM(2005)0637),
- having regard to the study published by the European Parliament entitled 'Current situation and prospects for physical education in the European Union',
- having regard to its resolutions of 13 June 1997 on the role of the European Union in the field of sport¹ and of 5 June 2003 on women and sport²,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 March 2007 on the future of professional football in Europe³,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 April 2005 on doping in sport⁴,
- having regard to Articles 6 and 149 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as set out in the draft Treaty of Lisbon

¹ OJ C 200, 30.6.1997, p. 252.

² OJ C 68 E, 18.3.2004, p. 605.

³ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2007)0100.

⁴ OJ C 33 E, 9.2.2006, p.590.

- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinions of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A6-0415/2007),
- A. whereas physical education is the only school subject which seeks to prepare children for a healthy lifestyle and focuses on their overall physical and mental development, as well as imparting important social values such as fairness, self-discipline, solidarity, team spirit, tolerance and fair play,
 - B. whereas overweight caused by a sedentary lifestyle and incorrect diet, giving rise in some cases to poor health and psycho-social problems and illnesses which are associated with expensive complications, such as high blood-pressure, diabetes, and cardiac and vascular diseases, is affecting an ever greater proportion of the EU's population, including around a quarter of the child population,
 - C. whereas school physical education and sport are among the most important tools of social integration, but whereas for some minority and religious communities, and for children with disabilities, full participation in physical education is in many cases not guaranteed and raises numerous problems that are difficult to solve,
 - D. whereas the number of physical education lessons has fallen in the past decade not only in primary but also in secondary schools, and whereas there are extremely wide divergences between the Member States as regards the provision of establishments and equipment,
 - E. whereas physical education teacher training programmes differ widely among the Member States and there is an increasingly widespread practice whereby physical education is taught in school by teachers with inadequate specialist training,
 - F. whereas there is no appropriate coordination aimed at reconciling school and out-of-school sporting activities, and at making better use of existing establishments, and whereas the link between them varies from one Member State to another,
 - G. whereas parents have a crucial role to play within the network of partnerships in this area, and whereas parental support for children's sporting activities is of vital importance, since parents set an example for their children and it is they who enable children to have access to establishments and programmes,
 - H. whereas the legal frameworks governing physical education and sport, and those governing EU funding for those activities, are both equally uncertain,
 - I. bearing in mind the fact that public health and the protection of young people are priorities of the EU and for this reason special emphasis should be placed on combating doping in sport,
 - J. bearing in mind that sport is one of the most effective measures for combating smoking, especially among young people,
1. Reaffirms the EU's legitimate interest in sport, in particular its social and cultural

aspects, as well as the educational and social values that sport transmits such as self-discipline, challenging personal limitations, solidarity, healthy competition, respect for opponents, social inclusion, opposition to any form of discrimination, team spirit, tolerance, and fair play;

2. Stresses the significance of implementing the abovementioned Amsterdam and Nice declarations, especially the specific characteristics of sport in Europe and its social function account of which should be taken when implementing common policies;
3. Stresses that, in our multicultural society, sport can and should be an integral part of formal and informal education and that studies have shown that regular physical activity improves mental and physical wellbeing, while having beneficial effects on learning abilities;
4. Calls on the Member States and the competent authorities to ensure that greater stress is placed on health development in school and preschool teaching programmes by encouraging specific forms of physical activity suitable for the preschool age group and raising awareness within clubs and associations in order to ensure, for example, that children can start physical activity at the earliest possible age, for the benefit of their development and health, and hence to guarantee physical education status in accordance with the profile of the institution and the corresponding level of study;
5. Points out that sport and physical activity can make an important contribution to combating negative health trends such as a sedentary life-style and obesity; refers to Eurobarometer 246 on Health, Food and Nutrition published in November 2006 which addresses the health and physical characteristics of Europeans, their diets and problems relating to obesity and lack of exercise;
6. Urges the Member States to carry out information campaigns, aimed at children from a very early age and their parents, on the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle, to engage in regular physical activity and on the health risks linked to an unhealthy diet ;
7. Welcomes the informal working parties set up by the Commission and the Council in the area of sport, and proposes that these working parties pay more attention to reinforcing the link between health and physical education at school;
8. Proposes that the work of the group of experts involved in the 'EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health' set up by the Commission in March 2005 be reinforced through the participation of physical education teachers and experts in the field of sport ;
9. Calls on the Member States to consider, and where necessary implement, changes in the orientation of physical education as a subject, taking into account children's health and social needs and expectations;
10. Calls on the Member States to make physical education compulsory in primary and secondary schools, and to accept the principle that the timetable should guarantee at least three physical education lessons per week, while schools should be encouraged to exceed this prescribed minimum as far as possible;
11. Calls on the Member States and the responsible authorities to promote body awareness and health through a higher degree of integration between sport and academic subjects;

12. Awaits the conclusions of the Commission Working Party on Sport and Health on what the minimum level of recommended daily bodily exercise should be and as regards the promotion of physical activity at school;
13. Welcomes the Commission White Paper on sport, which represents an important step towards the future development of Community action in the field of sport, and hopes that the issue of school physical education will form part of the 'Pierre de Coubertin' Action Plan (SEC(2007)0934);
14. Welcomes the abovementioned Commission's White Paper on health issues, which identifies prevention, primarily by means of the promotion of exercise and an increase in the number of participants in sport, as a priority;
15. Welcomes the achievements of the abovementioned EYES 2004 programme, which stressed the role of sport in education and drew attention to the wide-ranging social role of sport;
16. Stresses that the results of the EYES 2004 programme must be used to the full, capitalising on and further developing good practices through new initiatives that are in receipt of public and private funding or that are being promoted in the spirit of corporate social responsibility;
17. Welcomes the decision of the International Olympic Committee to hold the Youth Olympic Games as of 2010, an event which will contribute to young people's awareness of the Olympic spirit and the value of sport;
18. Considers that sports education and training, with a particular emphasis being placed on Olympic ideals, is an effective instrument for the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups and multicultural dialogue, and for the promotion of voluntary work; further considers that it plays an active part in counteracting discrimination, intolerance, racism, xenophobia and violence;
19. Encourages Member States to modernise and improve their physical education policies, principally to ensure that a balance is struck between physical and intellectual activities in schools, to invest in quality sports facilities and take appropriate measures to make sports premises and sports curricula at schools accessible to all students, with proper regard being paid to the needs of disabled students; suggests that support be given for a wide range of sporting activities so that every student has a real opportunity to participate in different sports; calls on the Member States to support the requirement to increase the time spent on physical education in schools and to promote the legal recognition of institutions and organisations which contribute to better integration of sports activities in schools and preschools; favours granting incentives to sports clubs having partnership agreements with schools, educational establishments, youth centres, and other community or voluntary organisations involved in lifelong learning projects;
20. Calls on the Member States to guarantee the right conditions for ensuring compliance with the prescribed minimum number of physical education lessons, bearing in mind that regular exercise contributes significantly to reducing health care expenditure;
21. Invites all Member States to ensure the teaching of physical education at all levels, including primary school, by specialised physical education instructors;

22. Urges the Member States, in the spirit of the Bologna process, to ensure a greater level of convergence between training programmes for physical education teachers at each school level and ensure the continuous professional training of physical education teachers integrating gender specific aspects, and to devise an independent supervision system in the interest of guaranteeing quality;
23. Urges the Member States, in cooperation with physical education colleges, to provide high-quality, all-round education, equipping athletes with all the necessary skills to enter the employment market or pursue their studies in higher education institutions and beyond;
24. Calls on the Member States and competent authorities to provide physical education teachers with training on gender issues by including this aspect in their respective curricula; calls for an end to the downgrading of the status of physical education as a subject and of the status of physical education teachers; stresses the importance of the possibility of sports coeducation for children at nursery and primary schools as well as the option of having either sports coeducation or single sex classes from secondary level onwards in order to encourage girls to try out sports traditionally practised by men; stresses the need to explore alternative forms of physical activity, which could be practised on an optional basis, preferably outside compulsory state education;
25. Considers that the qualifications acquired through sports activity should be recognised under the common reference system embodied in the future European Qualifications Framework; welcomes the Commission proposal to include sport within the field of application of the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training; considers that increased transparency and mutual recognition of licences and diplomas for the provision of services in the sports sector in the EU would contribute to the free movement of persons (students, sportsmen and women, workers and employers) as well as to the long-term assimilation of athletes on the employment market, and that it would also contribute to social cohesion in Europe and to achieving the Lisbon Strategy targets, as this is an area with a high potential for job creation;
26. Calls on the Commission to initiate and support multi-disciplinary research in the field of sport and physical education, and to disseminate best practices; recommends that it devise basic principles for the pan-European survey on physical education policies and practices which the Council of Europe has defined as a priority;
27. Stresses that the use of performance-enhancing chemical substances is contrary to the values of sport as a social, cultural and educational activity; also calls on the Member States to ensure that physical education teachers, both in schools and outside, inform pupils about the physical and psychological dangers inherent to the use of doping substances;
28. Calls on the Member States to carry out a study of the quantitative and qualitative participation of girls and boys in sport within and outside schools and to provide the necessary resources to further expand the range of sports on offer and thereby increase the participation of girls in sports; reiterates the need to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of such public spending by means of gender budgeting and gender impact assessment;
29. Urges the Member States, when developing policies in the field of sport and physical

education, to mainstream gender by taking systematic account of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men in these policies; calls on Eurostat to further develop indicators and obtain improved quality statistics on male and female participation in sport at all levels;

30. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States, while taking full account of the subsidiarity principle, to draw up appropriate instruments which may promote further investment and equipment in sporting activities performed by young people;
31. Welcomes the inclusion of a direct and unambiguous reference to the social, cultural and economic value of sport, which forms the basis of the legal framework for future Community action, in the text of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as set out in the draft Treaty of Lisbon;
32. Proposes that the EU Public Health Programme pay more attention to raising awareness of the prominent role played by education, physical education and sport in the area of public health;
33. Recognises that health reasons are not sufficient to encourage regular sporting activities; urges the Member States, therefore, to redouble their efforts to promote sports linked to leisure and social activities;
34. Calls on the Commission to devise clear guidelines on rules for state support, setting out what type of state support is regarded as acceptable and necessary in the interest of successfully fulfilling the social, cultural, health protection and educational functions of sport, including financial or other support awarded by the state authorities for the creation or modernisation of school sports facilities, and for improving and diversifying existing equipment and facilities, because sports equipment in many schools is inadequate or worn out in all respects;
35. Calls on the Commission to identify areas in which EU action can provide added value with regard to action already taken by sports organisations and Member State authorities; considers that the open method of coordination is an appropriate way to achieve better cooperation at European level in the specific area of physical education policy and sport for all;
36. Calls on the Commission to take into account and formulate a policy towards stakeholders, decision makers and citizens, in order to facilitate consultation with regard to European action on the role of sport in education;
37. Recommends that EU structural funds be used for the creation and development of school and other sports facilities in disadvantaged areas;
38. Calls on the Commission to ensure that legislation applies to the provision of services in the sports sector in the same way as to other activities in the framework of all Community policies;
39. Calls on the Member States to ensure equality of opportunity by taking steps to put an end to any discrimination which might arise on the grounds of gender, religion or ethnic origin, to promote a more cooperative approach based on information, greater understanding, and wider public exposure, encompassing diversity and intermixing

methods, and also to guarantee access for children with disabilities, at least to a basic level of physical education and, where possible to wider opportunities;

40. Since sport represents a means of socialization, communication, social integration and, at the same time, teaches team spirit, fairness and respect for rules, invites all Member States to intensify sports programmes and physical education for young people from rehabilitation centres for minors ;
41. Urges the Member States to promote cooperation, and improve the exchange of information and examples of best practice , between schools and out-of-school sports associations, local authorities and voluntary and civil society organisations which run sporting activities;
42. Urges the Member States to actively support forms of physical activity which can be performed by families, and to improve the dialogue between parents, physical education teachers and out-of-school sports associations;
43. Emphasises the need to make European society more aware of the modern role and educational importance of sport, by encouraging educational and sports organisations to establish and develop close partnerships and joint objectives and by promoting solidarity between the professional and amateur sectors, and to sensitise the educational community to the need to address the problems of a sedentary lifestyle by promoting sports at school;
44. Stresses the importance of the educational role and social responsibility of sports associations and clubs, as is acknowledged in the Nice Declaration;
45. Recognises the vital social and cultural role that sport clubs and associations are able to play in their local and national communities; considers that schools, training centres, sport clubs and associations should be more involved in various forms of engagement and participation of the local population through a better social dialogue, preferably initiated by local authorities (health, social affairs and education departments); calls for attention to be focused in order to ensure that sports clubs function without fanaticisms, thus upholding sporting and social ideals;
46. Emphasises the role of sports organisations and initiatives, such as the Special Olympics, that contribute to the integration of people with disabilities in sport as well as in society; strongly encourages Member State and EU support in order to continue and expand the work of those organisations and initiatives;
47. Applauds the work of volunteers in all sporting organisations and recognises that most of these organisations could not exist without volunteers; therefore recommends that 'credits' or some form of reward for voluntary service be put in place at European level in order to promote and give greater recognition to this work;
48. Calls on the Commission to draw on the experiences of the “sports-minded schools” programme initiated by the Luxembourg Presidency and to devise, in cooperation with the Member States, a uniform set of criteria for the award of this label, as well as the conditions for a European sports prize to be awarded in acknowledgment of new initiatives;
49. Calls on the Commission, building on the experiences gained from the EYES 2004

programme, and within the framework of the Lifelong Learning, Youth and Europe for Citizens programmes, to devise new initiatives aimed at heightening the profile, and increasing awareness in society, of the role played by sport and physical education not only in education and culture but also in terms of social integration and health protection, in particular through the prevention of obesity and stress at school; calls in particular for sports initiatives to be developed as part of the Lifelong Learning Programme;

50. Calls on the Commission to promote the European mobility of physical education teachers and trainers, as part of the Lifelong Learning Programme, thereby enabling them to learn about best practices and gain experience from exchanges;
51. Calls on the Member States to ensure that sports facilities are designed in such a way that access to them is facilitated for disabled spectators and/or participants;
52. Calls on the Member States to ensure that the diversity of sports offered encourages children to adopt an open-minded attitude to the world and develop values such as self-respect, respect for others, solidarity, self-awareness and tolerance;
53. Recognises that sport plays an important role in lifelong learning, and that students of all ages should be enabled to participate;
54. Calls on the Member States to pay particular attention to situations in which children's talent is exploited with a view to success in sports competitions and stresses that professional sports activities involving children must respect their fundamental rights and best interests;
55. Recognises the importance of the full participation of girls and women in sporting activities at all levels; considers gender equality and non-discrimination to be objectives that form an integral part of sport's educational and social functions; stresses the need to ensure equal access and participation for women and men as well as boys and girls at all levels and in all functions and areas of sport, irrespective of their social background, particularly for people with disabilities given that disabled women can face multiple discrimination; furthermore stresses the important role of sport for public health, especially in the fight against obesity that currently affects 21 million children in the EU;
56. Urges the Commission and the Member States to pay particular attention to the physical and mental health of adolescent girls participating in top-level competitions, and to assess with the utmost care the effects certain demands may have on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls and on their physical and mental development, with the aim of preventing any effects that run counter to the important educational role of sport;
57. Urges the Commission to identify best practices in the fight against sexual harassment and abuse in sport; urges the Member States to adopt prevention and elimination measures and develop awareness-raising campaigns on the available legal redress, taking into account the innumerable resolutions on this subject, particularly the Council of Europe resolution of March 2000 on the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of women, young people and children in sport (Bratislava resolution) and its abovementioned resolution of 5 June 2003;
58. Calls on the Member States to guarantee equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women as regards access to training and the pursuit of a career in sport;

59. Calls on the Member States and competent authorities to take steps to raise awareness among everyone working in the sports sector (clubs, federations, etc.) of the importance of gender mainstreaming in all their decisions and in all actions launched by them, and of the need to include equality between men and women among their objectives when planning activities;
60. Stresses the importance of physical exercise in curbing obesity and overcoming unhealthy life-style habits, thereby greatly benefiting the health of each individual; expresses concern, however, that longer working hours and present-day conditions of employment in general are preventing workers from taking regular physical exercise and becoming more involved in sport;
61. Recognises that sport is an employment-creating sector and that other areas, such as education, medicine, the media and the manufacture and marketing of specialised equipment and products, are directly linked to this sector;
62. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the governments and the parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe and the International Olympic Committee.