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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**The EU action in the field of Education through Sport: building on EYES 2004
achievements**

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“Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano¹”
(Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis, 1st century AD)

“Move your body, stretch your mind”
(EYES 2004 motto)

1. Introduction

This Communication is the response to the request from the European Parliament and the Council on the Commission to report on the measures taken during the European Year of Education through Sport 2004 (EYES 2004) under Article 12 of the Decision² establishing the Year.

The Communication presents the Year’s main achievements together with proposals for follow-up in the field of education through sport. The Commission Staff Working Paper attached to the Communication outlines the actions and activities implemented as part of EYES 2004. The Commission’s reports and proposals are based on an independent evaluation³.

EYES 2004 was launched to increase awareness on the potential of sport as a tool for education and social inclusion. It has spread a message: in our multicultural societies sport can and must become a tool to be used in formal and non-formal learning.

Educational institutions, sporting organisations and public bodies worked together during the Year so that values like fair play, tolerance, teamwork, and respect for the rules and for one’s opponent are transmitted via sporting activities to our citizens, in particular the young.

The expectations raised by the initiative among European civil society, the tangible results recorded during the Year and its positive impact (part 2) deserve proper political follow-up (part 3).

2. Implementation and main results of EYES 2004

2.1. Objectives and outputs

The wider aim of the Year was to promote education through sport in formal and non-formal education and as a vehicle for social inclusion in order to develop knowledge

¹ "You should pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body"

² Decision No 291/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 43, 18.2.2003, p. 1)

³ Evaluation report by Eureval-C3E:
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/sport/action_sports/aees/aees_en.html#Evaluation

and skills by encouraging cooperation between educational institutions and sport organisations.

The more specific objectives of the Year included promoting voluntary activities, pupil mobility and exchanges through sport activities, the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups and the creation of a better balance between intellectual and physical activity in school life.

To this end, information and communication activities, numerous projects and initiatives were carried out. The main results are:

- Involvement of the 25 Member States and the 3 EFTA/EEA countries: Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway;
- 167 projects co-financed, out of 1643 applications;
- 66 projects in the field of formal education: 22 on integration of sport in the school life, 21 promoting the educational value of mobility and exchanges, 17 using of sport to promote a healthier lifestyle and 6 on the education of young athletes taking part in competitive sports;
- In the field of non-formal learning, 60 projects using sport values in activities for young (47 projects) and adults (13 projects), 25 using sport to integrate socially disadvantaged groups, 12 on disability and 4 on non-formal learning through voluntary activities;
- 30 ceremonies (opening and closing EYES);
- representation at 12 international events such as Euro 2004 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games;
- 2 Eurobarometers.

The actions targeted political decision makers, teachers, pupils and students, managers of sports organisations, young people and deprived social groups.

2.2. Implementation

2.2.1. Cooperation with stakeholders

The success of the initiative was dependent on smooth and continuous cooperation with the Member States and European civil society. The broad consensus reached on adopting the decision establishing the Year was borne out by the active participation and involvement of all stakeholders in its implementation.

Cooperation with the participating countries was channelled through the Advisory Committee in which most of them were represented by delegates from Education and Sport departments. This has become the first stable European network of public authorities responsible for education and sport, allowing rich interaction not only at European but also at national level. This cooperation was complemented by the network of National Coordinating Bodies designated by the Member States with

responsibility for the technical coordination and implementation of the initiative nationally.

The active involvement of European civil society, in particular the Sport Movement, was decisive for the attainment of the objectives of the Year.

The EU institutions were actively involved in the Year. The European Parliament participated in a series of events and activities during EYES 2004 such as the special EYES day at the Paralympic Games in Athens. The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions placed the issue of sport high on their agendas during 2004 and organised various events which contributed to the visibility of the initiative.

During the Year, the Commission cooperated with the Council of Europe, notably by co-financing a project in the field of education on democratic citizenship in Europe. As part of the preparations for the International Year for Sport and Physical Education in 2005, a fruitful dialogue was established with UNESCO with a view to continuing activities in 2005.

2.2.2. *Coherence and complementarity*

The synergy between the EYES 2004 and the national and local policies for education through sport has been unanimously recognised by the actors involved. The Year provided an opportunity for cooperation and networking among the players which would not have existed without Community action. It also allowed the exchange of good practice and had a useful leverage effect in different ways:

- Participating countries matched the amount of the EU budget available for EYES 2004 projects in order to finance projects which had not been selected because of budgetary constraints.
- Pilot actions intended to promote a better balance between intellectual and physical activity in school life were launched by participating countries (e.g. a competition to reward the “most sport minded schools” in 8 Member States).
- Different levels of government (national, regional and local) were strongly mobilised to set up actions and programmes to promote education through sport. Even in non-participating countries, like Romania, a national programme of initiatives was set up to meet the objectives of EYES 2004.
- A vast number of initiatives undertaken by public or private organisations received the EU moral support, including authorisation to use the EYES logo.
- The EYES achieved synergies with the SOCRATES and YOUTH programmes and with anti-tobacco and anti-discrimination campaigns (e.g. 603 projects using sport were co-financed through the YOUTH programme during 2004).
- Four studies were commissioned to increase knowledge on different aspects of education through sport⁴.

⁴ http://europa.eu.int/comm/sport/whatsup/index_en.html

Thus the Year can be considered a coherent initiative both internally (between the various measures and actions taken under EYES 2004) and externally (synergy with other national or European policies). This was particularly noteworthy as regards coherence with national and local policies for education through sport.

2.3. Impact assessment

The high number of applications received in the framework of the call for proposals confirmed the huge expectations and demand in European society for concrete initiatives in the field of education through sport.

The Year mobilised thousands of organisations in Europe by fostering projects. It has created and developed lasting networks and often new partnerships between education and sport. EYES 2004 provided numerous examples of good practices which go beyond its networking achievements.

Its main impacts have been:

- a significant contribution to disseminating the educational values of sport,
- the fostering and increasing recognition of activities in the field of education through sport,
- a contribution to changing the attitudes of the European public in this area.

The Commission's message has spread among expert circles in the field of education through sport and the ideas promoted by EYES 2004 have visibly been adopted by politicians, sports and educational managers, and academics. The details of the projects carried out were widely disseminated in Europe on CD-ROM. Nevertheless, several innovative actions deserve to be taken up more widely, not only among stakeholders (via the Internet, meetings, etc.) but also via additional political action.

The educational institutions and sport organisations that participated in the Year say it met their expectations. The initiative can therefore be said to have achieved its objectives.

However, its effects seem to have been more limited in other ways, for example in promoting sport as a vehicle for social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, encouraging a better balance between intellectual and physical activity in school life, and highlighting the positive contribution made by voluntary work and student mobility. Projects were indeed carried out in these fields, and some were truly innovative, but it cannot yet be said that they have had a sufficient effect.

Attitudes have changed concerning the need for better integration of sport in education, both formal and non-formal, and hence for networking and better cooperation between educational institutions and sport organisations. However, it cannot be taken for granted that these precepts will be put into practice. Further political support is required.

3. A need to pursue the action in the field of education through sport

The educational values of sport were acknowledged by the Nice European Council⁵, which asked the Community institutions to take due account of the educational values of sport in their actions under various provisions of the Treaty, since, as acknowledged in Declaration 29 attached to the Amsterdam Treaty, sport forges people's identity. In the Nice declaration the European Council underlined that "even though not having any direct powers in this area, the Community must, in its action under the various Treaty provisions, take account of the social, educational and cultural functions inherent in sport."

The Council, in its Resolution of 17 December 1999⁶ on the non-formal education dimension of sporting activities in the European Community YOUTH programme, called upon the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to devise a coherent approach in order to exploit the educational potential of sport, considering that sporting activities can have a pedagogical value which contributes to strengthening civil society. This non-formal education dimension has been backed by the European Parliament, which underlined the educational and social value of sport as well as its role in combating racism and xenophobia⁷.

EYES 2004 provided a response to both the Declaration and the Resolution. The positive reaction of European citizens and institutions to EYES 2004 has highlighted the need to reinforce the links and the cooperation between the world of sport and the world of formal and non-formal education as a means to better equip EU citizens for the new challenges faced by our increasingly mobile and diverse societies (in 2004 82% of the citizens were in favour of accentuating the role of sport in education and 63 % supported the idea of strengthening cooperation between the EU, sport organisations and national governments⁸).

3.1. Expectations in formal education

Research has shown that regular exercise improves mental and physical health and its positive contribution to the learning process is nowadays accepted. Formal education could take better advantage of the values conveyed through sport to develop knowledge, motivation, skills, readiness for personal effort and also social abilities such as teamwork, solidarity, tolerance, fair play and learning to lose, in a multicultural framework. Therefore sport is essential in formal education for the acquirement and development of key competences⁹ that everyone needs for personal fulfilment, social inclusion and employability.

On the other hand, formal education has a crucial role to play in encouraging habits leading to regular physical activity and in countering unhealthy lifestyle habits, which is essential as the health of our citizens appears to be declining because of a lack of physical exercise. Furthermore, formal education contributes to improving the

⁵ Declaration IV annexed to the Presidency conclusions. European Council of 7-9.12.2000

⁶ OJ C 8, 12.1.2000, p. 5

⁷ OJ C 135, 7.5.2001, p.274

⁸ Answers to the Special EUROBAROMETRE 213 "Citizens of the European Union and sport". December 2004

⁹ Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning (doc COM/2005/0548 final)

qualifications of those who work in sport-related professions and to a better and safer sport environment. This is closely related to the ongoing development of qualifications and competences by the sport sector at the European level (much of it through non-formal learning) which will be supported by the common reference levels provided by the future European Qualifications Framework¹⁰.

Education and sport therefore face common challenges and both worlds can provide appropriate responses for European citizens if a proper cross-fertilisation process is initiated.

EYES 2004 has contributed to raising the expectations of European citizens on actions aimed at better using the educational and social values of sport in formal education. The expectation on the Year has led to the following main requests and ideas:

- to use national expertise for developing a better understanding and increased knowledge at EU level of the place of sport and physical activity in school life and to promote recognition of institutions and organisations which contribute to better integration of sports activities in school (e.g. by promoting recognition by Member States of sport-minded schools based on criteria defined at EU level),
- to raise awareness of the mutual benefits for educational institutions and sport organisations of closer collaboration in order to better use the potential of sport for the acquisition and development of key competences that equip young people and adults for adult life such as interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competences,
- to improve recognition of qualifications of those involved in the teaching of sport-related professions (e.g. trainers and sports managers) in order to fully exploit the high potential for job creation which can contribute to social cohesion in Europe,
- to take advantage of the potential of sport and physical activity in formal education as a way to reverse current trends towards sedentariness and a passive lifestyle,
- to make full use of the result of EYES 2004 by capitalising on the good practices developed during the Year and to better exploit the possibilities for financing projects and initiatives based on sporting activities.

3.2. Expectations in non-formal learning

Sport reaches all citizens regardless of gender, race, age and social or economic background and EYES 2004 confirmed the increasing interest in using sport as a means of non-formal learning. The Year has proved the demand in European civil society to use sport in non-formal learning and as a tool for promoting social integration, developing intercultural dialogue and combating discrimination, in particular racism and xenophobia.

Both sport and youth organisations have become increasingly aware of the synergies

¹⁰ Commission staff working document: Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (doc SEC(2005)957)

between their two fields and of the possibilities offered by the YOUTH programme. EYES 2004 has also contributed to creating synergies in the area of active citizenship. Taking part in sport is educational not only in its own right but also by virtue of active participation in sport clubs and organisations, which helps to reinforce civil society through teaching practical democratic values.

EYES 2004 has also proved that cooperation with organisations that are active in social integration, youth and active citizenship can be highly beneficial for sport organisations in terms of recognition and reinforcement of their social function.

As a result of the expectations raised by the Year on European citizens, the following ideas and demands have emerged:

- to use national expertise for better understanding and exploiting the potential of sport as a means of non-formal learning,
- to raise awareness of the potential of sport as a means of non-formal learning among people working in sports (clubs, federations, etc.) and non-sport organisations in the fields of youth, active citizenship, anti-discrimination, social integration, anti-racism, etc.,
- to promote recognition at EU level of volunteer work in sport as a means of non-formal learning and informal learning and to encourage young people to participate actively in sport organisations in order to exploit the potential of sport for the acquisition of new skills and civic values,
- to take better advantage of the pedagogical value of sport by using it to promote exchanges and by exploiting the synergies of sport initiatives within the EU programmes relating to non-formal learning and active citizenship.

3.3. Follow up by the European Commission

EYES 2004 highlighted the need for better integration of sport in formal and non-formal education and learning and hence for networking and better cooperation between educational institutions and sport organisations. However, while the EYES has contributed to change attitudes, further action is still required at EU level.

Having regard to the request for action expressed by the citizens during the Year, the Commission, within the limits of its competence and in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity and the autonomy of educational institutions and sport organisations, will ensure a follow-up to the EYES 2004 notably along the following lines:

- to carry out new studies, to organise further expert meetings and to launch new Eurobarometers in order to develop a better understanding and increased knowledge at EU level of the place of sport and physical activity in formal and non-formal education,
- to continue organising meetings with public authorities responsible for education and sport and enlarge them to stakeholders in both fields in order to raise awareness of the mutual benefits for the worlds of education and sport of closer collaboration,

- to intensify the dialogue and cooperation with the Sport Movement on the educational and social functions of the sport (e.g.: volunteering, participation in sport notably for women, fight against racism and xenophobia, education and protection of young athletes, etc.),
- to use the possibilities of financing projects and initiatives on sporting activities in the frame of EU actions such as future European Years¹¹ and the new EU programme “Integrated Life Long Learning” and to take advantage of the pedagogical value of sport in the exchanges of citizens through exploiting the synergies of sport, youth and citizens initiatives within the EU programme “Youth in Action” and “Citizens for Europe”,
- to improve the recognition of qualifications in sport related professions¹² (e.g. through the inclusion of sport in the Common Quality Assurance Framework – a common reference framework designed to support the development and reform of the quality of Vocational Education and Training) and to facilitate mobility (e.g. by including sport in the field of application of the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training) as this is an area with a high potential for job creation which can therefore contribute to social cohesion in Europe,
- to raise awareness of the importance of physical activity in reversing obesity trends by ensuring cooperation in the sport field at EU level and promoting involvement of the European educational and sport stakeholders in the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

4. Conclusion

The main objectives of the Decision establishing the European Year have been fulfilled. With contributions from the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, awareness of the potential of sport as an educational tool has been raised. A consistent cooperation framework has been created at European level but also national cooperation has been reinforced. Widespread mobilisation of educational institutions and sports organisations, public authorities and governments has been achieved.

High demand from civil society for EU intervention in the field of education through sport has been verified, in particular as regards a European Union action to strengthen cooperation between the worlds of education and sport as well as with national governments.

The Commission therefore:

- (1) acknowledges the results of EYES 2004 as well as the need to capitalise on the initiative and to valorise and disseminate good practices,
- (2) will develop its action along the lines proposed in the current Communication so as to

¹¹ E.g. Proposal a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) (doc COM(2005)467, 5.10.2005)

¹² The EU legally binding instrument on recognition of professional qualifications in the field of regulated professions is the Directive on professional qualifications (OJ L 255, 30.9.2005)

improve knowledge in the field of education through sport, to promote cooperation between Member States and between the worlds of education and sport, to intensify the use of sport under the aegis of EU instruments, to increase recognition of qualifications and skills in sport and to promote physical activities,

- (3) invites the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to recognise the impact and the positive results achieved by EYES 2004 and to take into account in their work the expectations raised during this Year.