

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1608/08

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to the Commission

Subject: Exercise and gambling

A Commission White Paper considers sport from three different points of view: its societal role, its economic dimension and its organisation (COM(2007)0391). The declaration on sport appended to the Nice Treaty did not result in the legal certainty for the physical activity sector which organisations had sought. The definition of the particular features of sport remains unclear and ad hoc, and the Commission's White Paper does not solve the problem. In future cooperation on physical activity, Member States and the Commission should aim to work together to clarify these issues.

The Commission's views on the scope for physical activity to promote social participation in the policies, measures and programmes of the European Union and Member States are correct. It is important to ensure that equal opportunities are available to special groups and both sexes in sport. It is to be welcomed that the Commission recognises the significance of public financial support for physical activity, especially at grassroots level, and that the Commission intends to advocate the application of a reduced rate of VAT to sport. The understanding of the special characteristics of activity of general interest is likewise to be welcomed. Sports club activities should remain the province of nongovernmental voluntary organisations. This can be influenced, inter alia, by decisions on the taxation of voluntary work.

In a number of Member States, including Finland, funding of physical activity is dependent on revenue from gambling. The White Paper refers to public funding of sport, to its clarification and to how the changes which are occurring in the sector affect public and private funding of grassroots physical activity.

What legislation will the Commission propose in order to safeguard public funding of physical activity in future too in an economically sustainable and predictable manner, and how will the Commission ensure that monopoly systems for the control of gambling remain at national level, and that decision-making on the organisation of gambling does likewise?