



SPORT

Sport is a field in which the EU's responsibilities are relatively new, having only been acquired with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in December 2009. The EU is responsible for the development of evidence-based policy and for fostering cooperation and managing initiatives in support of physical activity and sport across Europe. A specific budget line was established for the first time under the first Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) to support projects and networks relating to sport.

LEGAL BASIS

Although the Treaties did not mention a specific EU legal competence for sport before 2009, the Commission laid the foundations of an EU policy for sport with the 2007 White Paper on Sport and the Pierre de Coubertin action plan.

With the Lisbon Treaty, the EU acquired a specific competence in the field of sport. Article 6(e) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) confers on the EU the competence to support or supplement the actions of the Member States in the field of sport, while Article 165(1) sets out the details of a sports policy, stating that the Union 'shall 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'. Article 165(2) refers to 'developing the European dimension in sport, by promoting fairness and openness in sporting competitions and cooperation between bodies responsible for sports, and by protecting the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen, especially the youngest'. The EU thus has a legal basis to support the sports sector structurally with the Erasmus + programme, and to speak with one voice in international forums and non-EU countries. EU ministers for sport also meet in the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council meetings. In addition, EU competences in the single market have also had a considerable impact on sport. For example, the Court of Justice of the European Union has developed important case law with major implications for the world of sport (such as the [Bosman case](#)). At the same time, the EU exercises its soft law powers in closely related areas such as education, health and social inclusion through funding programmes.

OBJECTIVES

The creation of a new specific competence in the Treaties opened up new possibilities for EU action on sport. The EU works to promote greater fairness and openness



in sporting competitions and to better protect the moral and physical integrity of sportspeople while taking account of the specific nature of sport. Furthermore, the EU supports the idea that sport can improve general well-being, help overcome wider societal issues such as racism, social exclusion and gender inequality, provide significant economic benefits across the Union and that it is an important tool in the EU's external relations. In particular, the EU is concerned with three aspects: (1) the societal role of sport; (2) its economic dimension; and (3) the political and legal framework of the sports sector.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Policy developments

1. The [White Paper on Sport](#) and the Pierre de Coubertin action plan

The Commission's 2007 White Paper on Sport was the first 'comprehensive initiative' on sport by the EU. Through the implementation of the proposed actions, the Commission gathered useful evidence on issues to be addressed in the future. The White Paper envisioned a number of objectives, including, among others:

- Enhancing the societal role of sport;
- Promoting public health through physical activity;
- Boosting volunteer activities;
- Enhancing the economic dimension of sport and the free movement of players;
- Fighting doping, corruption and money laundering;
- Controlling media rights.

2. Developing the European dimension in sport

The Commission's White Paper on Sport and the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 paved the way for the Commission communication of January 2011, '[Developing the European Dimension in Sport](#)'. This communication was the first policy document on sport adopted by the Commission after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force. The communication emphasised the potential of sport to make significant contributions to the overall goals of the 'Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs' (2010-2020), improving employability and social inclusion. It also suggested that the EU should sign the Anti-Doping Convention of the Council of Europe, develop and implement security arrangements and safety requirements for international sports events, progress towards introducing national targets based on the EU's physical activity guidelines, and develop standards for disabled access to sports events and venues.

On economic matters, the Commission called on sports associations to establish mechanisms for the collective selling of media rights in order to ensure adequate redistribution of revenue. Other issues addressed in the Communication dealt with sport-related intellectual property rights, exchanges of best practice on transparent and sustainable sports financing, and monitoring the application of state aid law in the field of sport.



3. The EU Work Plan for Sport

The EU Work Plan for Sport is one of the most important EU documents on sports policy. It focuses on the Union's key activities in the field and acts as a guidance instrument for the promotion of cooperation between EU institutions, Member States and sports stakeholders.

The first [Work Plan for Sport \(2011-2014\)](#) was adopted by the Council in 2011. On 1 December 2020 the Council of European Ministers of Sport adopted the fourth [EU Work Plan for Sport \(2021-2024\)](#). Physical activity has a prominent place in the plan, which includes the creation of sport opportunities for all generations, listed as a key priority. The plan also aims to strengthen 'the recovery and the crisis resilience of the sport sector during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic'. Other key action areas include the prioritisation of skills and qualifications in sport through best practice exchanges and knowledge building, the protection of integrity and values, as well as the socioeconomic and environmental dimensions of sport and the promotion of gender equality. The EU also aims to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions and coaching, to promote equal conditions for all athletes, and to enhance media coverage on women in sport.

In line with the EU's green transition, 'green sport' also figures as a priority, as the plan proposes the development of a common framework with shared commitments taking into account the [European Climate Pact](#). Further emphasis is put on innovation and digitisation in all areas of the sports sector.

4. COVID-19 post-pandemic actions

On 22 June 2020, the Council adopted its [conclusions on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sports sector](#), proposing different measures for its recovery. The document highlighted how the entire sector was severely hit, including in economic terms, as the pandemic had devastating consequences on sport activities at all levels. The Council stressed how pandemic and post-pandemic resumption strategies at local, national, regional and EU levels are needed in order to support the sports sector and maintain its important contribution to the well-being of EU citizens. The Council thus encouraged EU institutions to supplement national efforts by channelling financial support to the sector through available EU programmes and funds, such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, the Cohesion Policy funds and the Corona Response Investment Initiatives (CRII, CRII+). Furthermore, the Council emphasised the need to promote a dialogue between Member States and relevant stakeholders to discuss strategies to allow sports activities to start again in a safe and – where possible – coordinated manner, and to prevent future crises, enhancing the resilience of the EU sports sector.

On 10 February 2021, Parliament [adopted a resolution](#) reaffirming the Council conclusion but stressed that financial aid should not be limited to major spectator sports events and that recovery measures are of utmost importance for grassroots sport. Furthermore, the Commission was asked to develop a European approach to tackling the negative effects of the pandemic on the sports sector.



B. Actions and programmes

1. [Erasmus+](#)

Sport is an integral part of Erasmus+, the programme for EU action in the field of education, training, youth and sport. The current programme for 2021-2027 allocates 1.9% of its overall budget to sport.

Promoting 'learning mobility of sport staff, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of sport organisations and sport policies' was emphasised as one of three key objectives of the current Erasmus+ programme. Actions to attain this objective include, inter alia, fostering mobility, especially for staff in grassroots sports, and increasing virtual learning possibilities, creating partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of best practices, including small-scale partnerships, fostering wider and more inclusive access to the programme, and supporting non-profit sporting events that promote issues of relevance to grassroots sports.

2. [European Week of Sport](#)

An EU-wide 'European Sport Day' was first proposed by Parliament in its February 2012 resolution on the [European dimension in sport](#). In September 2015, the European Week of Sport (EWOS) was launched, with the aim of promoting sport and physical activity across Europe at national, regional and local levels and encouraging European citizens to lead a better, healthier lifestyle. As a 2018 [Eurobarometer survey](#) showed, 59% of Europeans never or seldom exercise or play sport. As a result, people's health and well-being suffer, as does the economy, and this leads to increased spending on healthcare, loss of productivity in the workplace and reduced employability.

Since 2017, the EWOS has been held between 23 and 30 September all across Europe, with Member States and partner countries organising a wide range of activities and events. In 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 42 countries participated and 32 617 events took place.

3. Projects for social inclusion

Social inclusion is among the EU's priorities for the role of sport in society. By bringing people together, building communities and fighting xenophobia and racism, sport can make an important contribution to the integration of migrants in the EU. In September 2016, the Commission published a [study](#) examining how sport supports the integration of migrants around Europe, mapping good practices around the EU. The Commission also supports projects and networks promoting the social inclusion of migrants through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Erasmus+ programme. Projects such as the European Sport Inclusion Network (ESPIN), the Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe partnership (SIVSCE), and [Fairplay](#) are funded by the EU.

4. Awards

In 2021, the Commission created two award programmes, #BeActive and #BeInclusive, which reward innovative ideas and initiatives developed in Europe by individuals or organisations to promote sport and physical activities. They also promote 'breaking



down social barriers' through sport in order to bring people together and help create a sense of European identity.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In Parliament, the development of a European sports policy falls under the competence of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). Parliament recognises the growing need for the EU to deal with sports matters while fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity, as sport itself is an important social phenomenon and a public good. In 2012, Parliament adopted a resolution on the [European dimension in sport](#), which paved the way for the European Week of Sport. Parliament also promotes the social importance of sport. In addition, in its various resolutions, Parliament has addressed the issues of [gender equality in sport](#), as well as [active ageing and solidarity between generations](#). The key role of sport is also mentioned in the 2016 resolution on the [integration into the labour market and social inclusion of refugees](#), underlining the important role of sport as an instrument for fostering social and intercultural dialogue by establishing positive links between the local population and refugees and asylum seekers.

Besides, Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) has regularly discussed human rights in the context of large sporting events hosted in countries such as Russia (Winter Olympics 2014), Brazil (FIFA Men's World Cup 2014, Summer Olympics 2016), and Qatar (FIFA Men's World Cup 2022). Following a first hearing on sports and human rights focusing on the situation of migrant workers in Qatar in February 2014, a joint hearing on human rights violations in connection with large sporting events was held in 2015 together with the CULT Committee.

Parliament has also been very active in the fight against match-fixing and corruption in sport, adopting a [resolution on the subject](#) in March 2013. This was followed by a resolution in June 2015 on [revelations on high-level corruption cases in FIFA](#) and a resolution in February 2017 entitled '[An integrated approach to Sport Policy: good governance, accessibility and integrity](#)'.

In July 2016, the CULT Committee tabled an oral question to the Commission on match-fixing, asking for a full commitment to ratification of the [Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions](#). The Commissioner's answer underlined the Commission's support for the Convention as a valuable tool in the fight against match-fixing, as it is a solid basis for ensuring pan-European coordination and cooperation in that fight. However, cooperation between Member States and institutions is needed in order to ensure that the Convention enters into force in the EU.

Parliament also acknowledges the [importance of sport for tourism](#), recalling the important role of sporting activities in making Europe's regions attractive to tourists, and highlighting the opportunities arising from travel by athletes and spectators to sports events, which attract tourists to even the most remote areas.

In its amendments to the Commission proposal on the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme, Parliament proposed reallocating parts of the Erasmus+ budget in order to ensure that more young athletes and sports coaches have the opportunity to participate in mobility schemes.



On 23 November 2021, Parliament adopted a [resolution entitled 'EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward'](#). In it, MEPs recommended different actions such as more funding for grassroots sports, better regulation of player transfers, equal pay and greater visibility for women in sports, better protection of children in sport and an increase of the number of hours allotted to physical activities in schools.

Lastly, on 10 November 2022 a [resolution on e-sports and videogames](#) was adopted, in which Parliament concludes that e-sports and sport are different sectors. It therefore called on the Commission to draw up a charter to promote European values in e-sports competitions and to consider the creation of a visa for e-sports personnel. Parliament recognises the potential of sports video games and virtual sports for exploring new forms of fan engagement and increasing youth participation in physical activities, but acknowledges the need to safeguard e-sports from match-fixing and illegal gambling. It believes that the EU should adopt a responsible approach to video games and e-sports by promoting them as part of a healthy lifestyle which includes physical activity, in-person social interaction and involvement in cultural activities.

[Katarzyna Anna Iskra](#)
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