



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



## **Council conclusions on the contribution of sport to the EU economy, and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion**

*EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE and SPORT Council meeting  
Brussels, 25 - 26 November 2013*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council:

**I. AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

1. Youth unemployment continues to present a major challenge for the EU and its Member States. In August 2013, the youth unemployment rate was 23,3 % in the EU 28<sup>1</sup> with wide disparities between Member States and regions within Member States.<sup>2</sup>
2. Young people have been hit disproportionately hard by the economic crisis. Across all EU Member States youth unemployment rates are generally much higher than the unemployment rates for other age groups. At the end of 2012 the youth unemployment rate was 2.6 times higher than the total unemployment rate<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The youth unemployment rate is over 50 % in some Member states and over 70 % in some regions, while in a few regions it is even below 5 %.

<sup>2</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-30082013-AP/EN/3-30082013-AP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-30082013-AP/EN/3-30082013-AP-EN.PDF)

# **P R E S S**

3. These developments have serious consequences not only for the individuals concerned but also for society and the wider economy. Long-term unemployment may intensify marginalization, leading to poverty and greater risk of social exclusion. There are also serious risks to communities since non-involvement in the labour market may lead some young people to opt out of participation in civil society, potentially leading to further social fragmentation.
4. One of the most significant issues facing young people in Europe as a result of the crisis is the challenge posed by the lack of jobs and work experience. There is also a widening gap between skills being sought by certain employers and those held by many prospective employees.

## II. RECALLING THAT THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

5. Has recognised combatting youth unemployment as "a particular and immediate objective" and stressed the importance of paying "due attention to the labour market participation of groups of vulnerable young people facing specific challenges".<sup>3</sup>

## III. UNDERLINES THE POTENTIAL OF SPORT TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

6. Through engagement in sport, young people attain specific personal and professional skills and competences which enhance employability. These include learning to learn, social and civic competences, leadership, communication, teamwork, discipline, creativity, entrepreneurship. Sport also provides professional knowledge and skills in areas such as marketing, management, public safety and security. All these skills and competences actively support young people's participation, development and progression in education, training and employment, in ways that are relevant and applicable to the labour market and valued and sought after by employers.
7. The organisation, administration and implementation of sporting activities in Europe are traditionally based on voluntary engagement. According to a 2011 Eurobarometer survey<sup>4</sup>, almost a quarter of those engaged in volunteering (24%) are active in the field of sport. Voluntary work in sport, mainly carried out at grassroots level and through clubs, is of significant value in social, economic and democratic terms.
8. Sport has universal appeal and knows no cultural or socio-economic boundaries. It has an international character and attracts a wide and diverse range of people. Sporting activities are consequently an excellent means for integrating minority and marginalized groups. Sport is emotionally uplifting and can contribute significantly to a sense of togetherness, helping to bring stability, cohesion and peace to communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Conclusions of the European Council (27-8 June 2013) - EUCO 104/2/13 REV 2.

<sup>4</sup> Special Eurobarometer on Volunteering and Intergenerational Solidarity, October 2011.

9. The sport sector, including voluntary activities in sport, constitutes a measurable and significant economic and social value in national economies. There is growing evidence that sport makes a significant contribution to Europe's economy and is an important driver of growth and employment, while also ensuring social cohesion and well-being, thus making a distinct contribution to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy<sup>5</sup>.
10. According to a recent EU-wide study on economic growth and employment in the EU<sup>6</sup>, the share of sport-related value added in the EU amounts to 1.76%<sup>7</sup>. The share of sport-related employment in the EU is 2.12%<sup>9</sup>. When multiplier effects are taken into account, the share of sport even adds up to 2.98% of overall gross value added in the EU. According to that study the share of sport in European value added is thus comparable to the share of agriculture, forestry, and fishing sectors combined, with every sixtieth Euro generated and earned in the EU being sport-related.
11. Sport is a resilient sector of the economy. Participation levels remain quite stable throughout the different phases of the economic cycle. Sport is structured through a system of sporting events and activities, organized by sport organizations, from grassroots to top level events. These events remain popular, particularly among young people, even when economic conditions are difficult. Whilst sporting events may be affected by fluctuating economic conditions, the framework of the sporting events and sport activities remains stable.
12. Sport has the potential to create jobs and support local economic development through the construction and maintenance of sporting facilities, the organisation of sporting events, the market activities of the sporting goods and services industries and related activities in other sectors. Infrastructure related to sporting events and activities (at local level), when planned carefully with a multifunctional purpose and a clear vision of its future functional role, can help to stabilize and boost the economy.
13. Sport has "spill-over" effects on other sectors. Sporting events and championships generally have positive effects on sectors such as tourism, culture, transport, media, public infrastructure etc. They also have the ability to bring people together and create a sense of belonging and a shared feeling of success. Sport can thus make a substantive contribution to facilitate the EU's efforts to recover from the ongoing economic difficulties.

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<sup>5</sup> Commission study 'Contribution of Sport to economic growth and employment in the EU' (2012).

<sup>6</sup> Study on the contribution of sport to economic growth and employment in the EU, commissioned by the European Commission; Consortium led by SportsEconAustria; Final report, November 2012.

<sup>7</sup> According to the Vilnius Definition of Sport - broad definition: all activities which require sport as an input, plus all activities which are inputs to sport, plus the statistical definition of sport as defined in NACE 92.6 Rev.1.1.

#### IV. EMPHASISES THE FOLLOWING KEY POLICY MESSAGES

14. Because of the importance of the sport sector for the economy and of the possibilities that this sector provides for young people – including for those that are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged - to attain useful skills and knowledge, sport can play an important role in tackling the urgent problem of youth unemployment and give impetus to economic recovery. A broad range of actions involving the mobilisation of various stakeholders is required to respond to the challenges set out above.
15. Engaging in voluntary activities, whilst not a substitute for paid employment, nevertheless can provide citizens with new skills, thereby contributing positively to their employability and strengthening their sense of belonging to society. Participation, in particular in grassroots sport, by young people - whether as a participant, facilitator, or organiser - develops key personal skills and competences. Voluntary activities in sport as a form of non-formal and informal learning help young people acquire skills and competences that complement formal education.
16. Sport provides an environment within which young people can hone these skills, thus improving employability and future productivity, at a time when labour market conditions are extremely challenging, job opportunities scarce, and the opportunities for on the job skills development limited.
17. Involvement in sport, in particular grassroots sport, allows young people to channel their energies, hopes and innate enthusiasm in a manner which is constructive and contributes to the communities in which they live. It can help to counter social problems faced within Member States, such as social fragmentation and prejudice against specific groups , by providing young people, particularly those without paid jobs or opportunities for relevant education and training, with a positive, constructive and community- based focus.
18. Small scale investment of public money in local sports facilities, and support for community-based sports clubs, can generate significant benefits in terms of stronger, safer and more cohesive communities.
19. Participation in organising national and international sporting events and involvement in sporting infrastructure development and maintenance – either local or national – can be one of the key factors for creating new jobs, especially for the young people.

#### V. IN RESPONSE TO THE KEY POLICY MESSAGES INVITE THE MEMBER STATES WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY TO:

20. Exchange good experiences and practices on:
  - improving the participation in sport and society of young people at local level, especially as they leave formal education structures;
  - how voluntary involvement in sports clubs and organisations can enhance soft skills and competences;
  - how involvement in sporting activities can enhance safer and more cohesive communities;
  - organising apprenticeships and internships in sports organisations that motivate young people and facilitate national and transnational access to the labour market.

21. Promote policy actions which are aiming to develop skills for jobs through sport. In this regard, support voluntary organizations and/ or sport clubs, as well as sporting activities and/or events – at grassroots and/ or professional level.
  22. Explore ways to improve education pathways for future professionals and volunteers in sport and promote learning on the job, in order to develop skills which can be recognised within national qualification frameworks. These could be referenced to the European Qualifications Framework so as to improve the international transparency and mobility of the young people concerned. The potential for recognizing skills attained through informal and non-formal learning in sport should also be explored.
  23. Encourage strategic investment in sport using, where appropriate, the possibilities provided by EU funding instruments, including EU structural funds (notably the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund) and EU financial tools such as European Investment Bank financing.
  24. Promote effective internal cooperation within public authorities across sectors dealing with social affairs, youth, employment and economic issues in order to ensure greater awareness of the social and economic role of sport.
- VI. INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY TO
25. Promote cross-sectoral involvement with education, training, youth and employment experts with a view to exploring the development of skills and competences.
  26. Take full advantage of the Erasmus+ Programme as an opportunity for developing personal and professional skills and competences.
  27. Identify the ways in which sport can be funded to promote social inclusion and youth employment through the structural funds (notably the European Social Fund or the European Regional Development Fund) or other EU financing mechanisms, such as European Investment Bank financing, especially the development and, where appropriate, the maintenance of small scale sporting infrastructure in towns and cities for use by the public, paying special attention to socially deprived areas. Such small scale infrastructure can help to achieve numerous social goals, such as job creation, social inclusion, and health improvement.
  28. Enhance dialogue and common initiatives with key stakeholders, in particular sporting organizations, sporting goods industries and youth organisations to further develop a favorable environment for attracting young people into the sport sector.
  29. Reflect on how the contribution of sport to the skills development of young people and the maintaining of socially-inclusive communities in times of high youth unemployment can most effectively be addressed in the context of future work on sport at EU level.

VI. IN RESPONSE TO THE KEY POLICY MESSAGES INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

30. Organise a high-level cross-sectoral seminar on the contribution of sport to the creation of jobs and to tackling unemployment in the EU, in particular youth unemployment.
  31. Based on on-going EU cooperation at the expert level, prepare a study on the contribution of sport to the employability of young people in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy."
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