

International Symposium on *Sport for all!*



THE EUROPEAN UNION AND SPORT

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Contacts and dialogue between the European institutions and the sports world are growing every day. Cooperation is a very welcome trend which started some years ago, but is more intense now than ever. In our opinion it is of crucial importance both to sport organizations and to us that we inform and consult each other, that we cooperate and that we continuously discuss important matters of common interest.

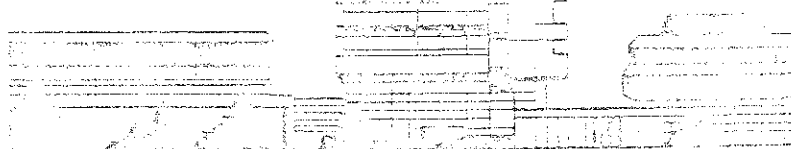
The key element in the European Commission's sport policy is an active and permanent dialogue with the sport world on subjects of common interest. Why is active dialogue so crucial for both parties? Essentially there are two main reasons: Firstly, it is very important for the sport world and its leaders to be well-informed and up-to-date on sports related activities and developments within EU. And secondly, it is just as important that EU is aware of the problems and opinions of the sports world when preparing new EU rules. Without this knowledge, our work cannot take all aspects into account, and it will not represent the best solutions for sports.

THE EUROPEAN SPORT FORUM, THE STEERING COMMITTEE

We have therefore, a clear, common interest in maintaining and strengthening this active dialogue. We are already doing so in various ways. **The European Sport Forum**, organized annually by the European Commission, meets every December. It is of crucial importance to the future of the EU's sports policy. The participants are national sport organisations, Olympic Committees, governmental representatives from the Member States and various sport federations together with representatives of the Commission and the European Parliament. The Commission appreciates very much the contacts, ideas and proposals coming from the Forum. The European Sports Forum offers an important active platform for dialogue, and it is also sport's gateway to the European Union.

The last meeting took place in November 1995 in Brussels and the result of the discussions of this fifth Sports Forum is reported in a newspaper. A number of issues were discussed, among others, sport in the Maastricht Treaty, sport sector as a job creator, educational and youth programmes, sports and health. The Forum will meet next time in December this year, and the objective will still be to have a concrete and operational meeting, which will enrich all participants with useful and progressive information. The European Sport Forum is becoming even more important, when the number of legal and political questions at the level of the European Union and even globally are increasing rapidly - from intellectual property to broadcasting contracts and from taxation to sports equipment.

The dialogue is also nourished in other ways. Initiatives and decisions taken at the Sports forum are followed up by the **Steering Group**. The members of the working group are government representatives from three Member States (Troika), representatives from European Olympic Committees (EOC) and European Non-Governmental Sport Organisations



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(ENGSO), the European Parliament and the European Commission. At the same time, bilateral meetings with European, national and international sports organisations are often on our agenda.

HOW CAN THE COMMISSION HELP THE SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN OF EUROPE?

SPORT INFO EUROPE

But one thing is an active and hopefully productive dialogue. Another is how the sports world can access information, get contacts and have its voice heard in the European Commission on an every-day basis. That is equally important for all parties.

Many already have good contacts within the European Commission. But the majority are still a little uneasy when it comes to contacting "this thing in Brussels". The fact that sport issues are handled by many different directorates in the Commission does not make contact easier. That is the reason why we, General Directorate X, decided to set up a special help desk for sport, called Sport Info Europe managed by the sport sector. The main task of the Sport Info Europe is to act as a coordinating unit. This fact will facilitate the dialogue between the sports world and the EU, and everybody with a need for information. But it should be a two-way information flow, and the Commission therefore warmly welcomes suggestions or information from the sports world or other interested parties.

The European Commission has a clear wish to support **Sport for all**. The reasons for this should be seen in a wider context where economic, social, cultural, educational, and health related issues play an important role. Good contacts with all Sport for All organisations is crucial.

An example is our support to **European Programmes**, for example exchange of especially young people within amateur sport. Such initiatives are of great importance in promoting mutual understanding, fighting prejudice and encouraging inspiration. But clubs operating on sport for all level are often prevented from participating in such initiatives due to lack of funds.

In order to make this EU support to sport for all simple and transparent for everybody, we have created a programme called **EURATHLON**, launched in 1994 by the European Commission to support sports activities with a European dimension. The fundamental objectives of Eurathlon, which is hugely popular, include promoting sport for everyone, sport as an important part of health education and as a factor of social integration.

For the pilot Eurathlon programme together 796 completed applications for Commission assistance were received and approximately 10 per cent of the submitted proposals were selected for funding. For 1996, a total of 742 applications were received for Commission assistance under this programme; 175 projects have been selected.

The Commission also helps **sport for the disabled**. The Commission's European programme on sport for the disabled exists since 1988. Financial support is available for the projects which promote the integration of disabled people in sport in the EU.

Within all these fields of activity, the following two objectives are crucial for us:

1. We wish to work on close collaboration with the European sports organisations and their members. We do not attempt to duplicate any activity or initiative. We plan activities together with the organisations. And we implement them together.