

#EYSF2017

# PINK PAPER



EUROPEAN  
YOUTH SPORT  
FORUM 2017

Malta  
10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017

## Introduction

The European Youth Sport Forum 2017 (#EYSF2017) gathered 120 young leaders in the youth and sport sector from across Europe. The Forum took place in Malta, from 10th to 13th March, during the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Participants, aged 18-35, were selected to exchange ideas and practices, and to develop a set of recommendations and actions on the topics of healthy lifestyle, social inclusion and volunteering, and sport diplomacy. These topics were formally identified as the key priorities in the frame of the Maltese presidency.

During the EYSF 2017, non-formal learning methods (workshops, discussion groups based on input from keynote speakers) were used in order to give participants the chance to actively contribute in all aspects of the Forum. It gave young leaders the opportunity to voice their opinions and exchange ideas about the current issues and challenges regarding the topics of the Forum, thereby continuing the event's legacy of almost two decades.

EYSF 2017 Pink Paper recommendations put forward by the youth delegates will be communicated to the European Commission, and the leading stakeholders in the youth and sport sector. The Pink Paper aims to further inform and prompt decision makers to change agendas on values, priorities and concerns of the European youth already having an impact at a local, national and European level. It serves as the active contribution and engagement of Europe's youth within the European Work Plan for Sport, the Europe 2020 and the Global Agenda 2030.

European stakeholders in sport have not yet developed a context in which young people are institutionally represented in the decision making, planning, shaping and execution of EU sports policies and we therefore present the following Pink Paper. The document reflects the genuine concerns of young people in Europe for consideration in developing the forthcoming sports policies.

## Healthy Lifestyle through Sport

The increasing numbers of overweight and obese people throughout Europe reflect wider physical and mental health crises across Europe. In order to address and reverse these alarming trends, we must confront today's European sedentary lifestyle by integrating physical activity and healthy nutrition into our everyday life. The public lacks knowledge, broader understanding and exposure to active lifestyles. This leads to the focus on competitive sports and structures which sets unrealistic and inaccessible expectations for wider society.

It is therefore necessary to move the focus from competitive and traditional understandings of sport towards a more realistic and pragmatic agenda of creating sustainable and active lifestyle habits. Cross-national discussions concluded that the implementation of initiatives must be tailored to meet the particularities of the local context and community which it aims to benefit, and therefore we present the following recommendations:

### Recommendation 1

Provide infrastructure that supports physical activity, which is accessible to all physically, socially, or geographically.

In order to implement the above recommendation, we propose the following actions:

- Create an accessible campaign to raise awareness and encourage people to adopt simple lifestyle changes for their physical health.
- Create a system for monitoring and evaluating the status of existing facilities in order to implement actions that will increase accessibility.
- Establish a funding programme to support local communities in developing volunteer peer-to-peer programmes for making current infrastructure more accessible.
- Promote initiatives to repurpose public spaces in urban areas at least once a week, and offer a safe environment for practicing physical activity (e.g. Sunday cycle zones).
- Identify urban-planning recommendations for member states to create safe environments for active transportation (e.g. cycling, running, walking, etc.).

### Recommendation 2

Steer people towards leading a healthier lifestyle (physical activity, nutrition, emotional, social well-being) where stakeholders from educational institutions, municipalities, health and business sectors would engage in cross-sectoral cooperation by offering local activities to various target groups.

In order to implement the above recommendation, we propose the following actions:

- Strongly recommend to the member states to ensure that the existing and new facilities are used and developed to their maximum capacity; for example, connecting sport clubs with the existing facilities.

- Establish a fund to offer holistic educational programmes that empower people to practice a healthy lifestyle through facilitating the cooperation between different stakeholders.
- Recommend to enforce regulations on healthy eating in educational institutions.
- Fund (pilot) projects within the health-care system to use physical activity as a preventative method.

## Social Inclusion and Volunteering

The increased level of intolerance and extremism within European countries during recent years raised the sentiment of exclusion towards specific groups of people. During the EYSF 2017, we identified that refugees and people with disabilities were the major target groups that needed to be supported.

We are convinced that sports bodies and non-governmental organisations who want to achieve social inclusion should use the power of volunteering as a tool to directly integrate people with disabilities and refugees: volunteers offer a platform for effectively and immediately fostering social inclusion through interpersonal interaction.

In order to ensure an effective impact of volunteering in including those target groups through sport, we need to face two major challenges. The first, is the lack of specific competences required by volunteers to work with the marginalised groups (for instance we should consider that 80% of disabilities are invisible). The second challenge is the general non-recognition of the important contribution and value that people with disabilities and refugees can offer society.

Taking the above into consideration, we present the following recommendations:

### Recommendation 1

Invest in both, appropriate and targeted volunteer training for organisations operating in the sport sector, to better engage and work with refugees and people with disabilities; and also, invest in providing the aforementioned target groups with training to be volunteers within the sports sector.

In order to implement the above recommendation, we propose the following actions:

Create specific funding opportunities for:

- Research on best practices in delivering training that educates volunteers to be socially inclusive in the sports sector.
- Research on best practices in delivering training that educates the target groups to volunteer within the sports sector; Inclusive training for volunteers with focus on skills development through volunteering, and its benefits.
- Actions that will produce guidelines on social inclusion through volunteering, for the stakeholders of grassroots sports.
- New programmes that implement the new best practice guidelines in delivering the above-mentioned training for volunteers. Specific attention should be given to the programme which empowers the target groups as volunteers.

## Recommendation 2

Communicate the value, capacity and contribution of marginalised groups as volunteers in the sports sector.

In order to implement the above recommendation, we propose the following actions:

- Introduce specific funding programmes which raise awareness and highlight the benefits of including refugees and people with disabilities as volunteers in sport.
- Create an awareness campaign on the importance of volunteering as a platform for social inclusion at the European level within the communication strategy of the European Week of Sport. Representatives of these aforementioned target groups must be involved in the European Week of Sport's Advisory Board in order to ensure an accessible message is developed that considers all barriers.

## Sport Diplomacy

Sport has been increasingly recognised as a tool for public diplomacy. It is considered a universal language which creates bridges among people of different backgrounds. Sports diplomacy is a low-cost, low-risk and highly profile diplomatic tool in the hands of policy makers that can affect the states' relations both in the short and long-term period. It is a highly effective soft power tool which can constitute a sustainable platform for nations to transfer and upgrade from low politics, to high politics cooperation.

In order to effectively tackle challenges of the 21st century, Europe also needs to utilise sport in its internal and external relations policy. With the convocation of the high-level group on sports diplomacy and the adoption of the council conclusions under the previous Slovak presidency, the European Union has taken the first step in this direction. Sport can successfully embody, communicate and promote European values across its counties. However, we must still strive towards integrating sport diplomacy as common practice in enhancing relations of the European countries and thereby present the following recommendations:

## Recommendation 1

Promote and develop relations between EU and non-EU countries through sports at the grassroots level, particularly via people-to-people exchanges by accessing existing EU funding opportunities.

In order to implement the above recommendation, we propose the following actions:

- Establish an online platform facilitating the exchange of best practices and connecting sports stakeholders within and outside of the EU;
- Reshape funding for sport-based projects that involve partner countries and develop a buddy-system in order to facilitate flow of information on knowledge and expertise in the field of sports;
- Organise hearing sessions in the European Parliament on best practices of sports diplomacy;

- Encourage and support countries organising European large scale events to invite non-participating countries to their side events to disseminate good practices.

## Recommendation 2

Encourage the organisation of side-events during large scale European sports events in order to enhance sustainable cooperation between youth and sport organisations and institutions

In order to implement the above recommendation, we propose the following actions:

- Organise training opportunities and youth exchanges for local clubs and volunteers during large scale European sports events to promote European values and ethos of sports participation as well as skills acquisition.
- Provide opportunities for high level athletes to engage with grassroots sports clubs during large scale European events and simultaneously creating opportunities for local clubs to participate and showcase at these events
- Create “learn and share” programmes within large scale European sport events, and make them accessible to both participants and local schools, using online platforms.
- Create toolkit for organisers of large scale European sports events on how to implement side events which involve grassroots sport clubs and schools.

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