

Informal videoconference of European Union Sport Ministers on addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector

2 June 2020

- Presidency background paper -

The unforeseen developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have had an impact on the Presidency programme and activities, including on the sport sector. The changes on the daily basis require adaptation and flexibility, and in this regard, the Presidency would like to express sincere gratitude to Member States for all the support.

Despite the challenging circumstances, the Presidency has been determined to continue as much as possible with the work on the initially foreseen Presidency priorities in the area of sport. In this respect, our joint work on the draft Council Conclusions on *Empowering coaches by enhancing opportunities to acquire skills and competences* was carried out successfully, and the Presidency is thankful to all delegations for their contributions, flexibility and constructive cooperation on this file.

Given that the EYCS Council meeting in the formation of the Ministers of Sport could not take place on 19 May 2020 as planned, the Presidency is proposing a second videoconference of European Union Sport Ministers on addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector.

The first videoconference, held on 21 April 2020, showed that the exchange of information and experiences, as well as ideas on the following steps to be taken, have been appreciated as a valuable contribution to the Member States' efforts to counter the effects of the pandemic on the sport sector. That was an opportunity to discuss the specific measures in Member States foreseen, or already in place, to support the sport sector in overcoming negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The horizontal and cross-sectorial measures at national and EU level which can be used to support the sport sector were brought to the attention of Ministers. The possibilities to ensure the continuity of athletes' training and preparations and enhance the physical activity of citizens, while at the same time ensuring their safety and prevention of spreading the coronavirus, were also considered. So far, we have also touched upon the main steps to be prepared and taken in order to successfully restart activity of the sport sector after the pandemic.

Considering current and potential further developments, some of these questions should be further addressed. In terms of the economic dimension of sport and its socioeconomic benefits, the COVID-19 pandemic is having devastating consequences on the sport sector. A study on the economic impact of sport through Sport Satellite Accounts (2018)¹ shows that sport accounts for 2,12% of the EU GDP and sport-related employment is accountable for 5,67 m people (2,72 % of EU employment). The disrupted activity of the sport sector will have long-term and far-reaching negative effects.

¹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/865ef44c-5ca1-11e8-ab41-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-71256399>

Since our last videoconference on 21 April, the situation has continued evolving and Member States have started with easing or gradual lifting of containment measures, depending on the epidemiological circumstances. However, the overall picture shows that major sport events, as well as the competitions in most of the sports, are still cancelled or postponed until further notice. The overall revenues for sport clubs, athletes, sport staff and sport organisations have ceased or dramatically declined, thus putting their existence at stake.

Nevertheless, recent developments in some Member States have enabled the trainings of athletes in indoor or outdoor sport facilities, as well as certain sports and recreational activities for citizens.

The decision-making on further steps towards reactivating the sport sector entails different considerations, such as the ones related to organisational and safety measures. In this regard, it is important to adjust the activities of the sport sector in order to resume in safe and secure conditions, proceeding cautiously and gradually with assessment of potential risks. This relates to all the activities on different levels, including physical activity of citizens, trainings of athletes, restoring the competitions, future organization of sport events, media coverage, public attendance, etc.

In this context, we should consider next steps in addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector in the short, mid and long-term in order to contribute to its recovery and to build resilience in view of unpredictable future developments.

In these efforts ahead of us, the broad cross-sectorial cooperation will be essential in achieving our goals, especially close cooperation with the sport movement.

We would like to invite you to reflect on the following questions in your interventions:

1. *Which measures have been taken, or planned, in your country in the short, mid and long-term order to restart the activity of the sport sector in a sustainable manner? What are the main challenges encountered in this regard?*
2. *What should be the main points of cooperation between Member States, the EU and sport movement in order to successfully restore the sport sector to its full potential and make it more resilient to crises? What kind of support at EU and national level is currently available to the sport sector in this regard?*

The ideas, suggestions and best practices emerging from this informal ministerial discussion will be taken into account as appropriate in the further work on addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of the sport sector.

Please note that the Presidency is considering the possibility of the participation of the representative of the sport movement (tbc) as an introductory speaker in the first part of our exchange of views.

At the end of the meeting, the incoming German Presidency will present its priorities and work programme in the area of sport for the coming six months.