

**Council conclusions on sport diplomacy**

(2016/C 467/04)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. RECALLING the political background to this issue as set out in the Annex;
2. ACKNOWLEDGING that sport is a possible tool in supporting intercultural, economic and political cooperation and understanding between nations and cultures, and that its potential can be part of extending and strengthening contacts between the EU and third countries;
3. RECOGNISING THAT:
  - sport diplomacy can be understood as the use of sport as a means to influence diplomatic, intercultural, social, economic and political relations. It is an inseparable part of public diplomacy, which is a long-term process of communication with the public and organisations with aims such as heightening the attractiveness and image of a country, region or city and influence decision-making on policy areas. It helps to achieve foreign policy goals in a way that is visible and comprehensible for the general public;
  - sport diplomacy at EU level encompasses all relevant tools from the area of sport which are used by the EU and its Member States in order to cooperate with non-EU countries and international governmental organisations. These should focus on policy cooperation and support to policies, projects and programmes. Emphasis should be made on the role of sport in the Union's external relations, including the promotion of European values;
4. ACKNOWLEDGING that sport diplomacy can be realised in close cooperation with the sports movement whilst respecting its autonomy. It includes areas such as promotion of positive sporting values and it contributes to the development of political, social and economic cooperation and relations;
5. ACKNOWLEDGING the values that sport can promote such as fair play, equality, respect for diversity, integrity, discipline, excellence, friendship, tolerance and mutual understanding which can bring different people and countries together. Sport diplomacy uses the universality of sport as a way to transcend linguistic, sociocultural and religious differences and thereby has strong potential to promote multi-cultural dialogue and contribute to development and peace;
6. EMPHASISING that sports people and sporting events can contribute significantly to the development of sport diplomacy. They can bestow a positive image among foreign publics and organisations and shape perception in order to support reaching broader foreign policy goals. In this context sport can contribute to strengthening and complementing national and EU diplomacy;
7. CONSIDERING that sport can be a platform for building people-to-people relations, for example by supporting exchange programmes for athletes, young people, coaches and experts, or by organising international sport competitions both at elite and grassroots level;

WITH DUE REGARD TO THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCES AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

8. raise awareness within Member States and in the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) (including EU Delegations) on the potential of sport to contribute to public diplomacy;
9. encourage cooperation between public authorities and the sports movement in order to use the potential of sport in foreign policy;
10. enhance relations with relevant sport organisations and international governmental organisations as well as other stakeholders through the EU structured dialogue on sport in the framework of the Council meetings and the EU Sport Forum and other structures;
11. better use the potential of sport, including through education and the involvement of well-known athletes as messengers, to promote positive sporting and European values;
12. promote major sport events as an important aspect of EU intercultural, social and economic diplomacy in cases where they can contribute to the EU's economic objectives of growth, employment and competitiveness;
13. ensure that sport diplomacy remains on the EU political agenda;

14. examine the possibility of using the network of European Week of Sport Ambassadors to promote positive sporting values and European values with the aim of increasing the attractiveness, recognition and visibility of the EU in third countries;
15. support and participate in activities, such as conferences, seminars, peer-learning activities or informal ad hoc groups, which could contribute to the preparation of the strategic approach to sport diplomacy in the framework of the EU;

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

16. ensure that sport, and the contribution it can make to achieving the EU's external relations ambitions, is taken into account in agreements with third countries, including within the framework of Accession, Association, Cooperation and European Neighbourhood agreements;
17. collect and disseminate empirical evidence of the effectiveness of sport as a means of promoting values, intercultural dialogue, development and peace;
18. organise a high-level conference to discuss the possibilities of cooperation in the field of sport diplomacy, including on a possible platform or network for enhancing knowledge in the field of sport diplomacy, in particular through collecting and exchanging best practices on the role of sport diplomacy in society; and examine the possibility of preparing educational guidance or modules for public authorities and relevant stakeholders involved in sport diplomacy issues;
19. examine the possibility of funding sport-related activities from EU external relations funding programmes and consider supporting projects related to sports diplomacy with the participation of third countries through EU funding programmes in the area of EU external relations as well as through the Erasmus+ programme;
20. consider engaging third countries in the European Week of Sport.

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## ANNEX

In adopting these conclusions, the Council recalls in particular the following:

- Article 165(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) the Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the field of education and sport, in particular the Council of Europe,
- the Commission White Paper on Sport (2007) which underlines that the societal role of sport also has the potential to strengthen the Union's external relations <sup>(1)</sup>,
- the Commission Communication 'Developing the European Dimension of Sport', which stressed that the cooperation with European third countries, in particular candidate countries and potential candidates, and the Council of Europe should be priorities <sup>(2)</sup>,
- the report of the High Level Group on Sport Diplomacy established by the European Commission (2016).

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<sup>(1)</sup> Doc. 11811/07 + ADD 1-4.

<sup>(2)</sup> Doc. 5597/11 + ADD 1-3.