



Brussels, 3 November 2016
(OR. en)

13647/16

**SPORT 73
EDUC 344
EMPL 436
JEUN 88
SOC 640**

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
No. prev. doc.: 13287/16 SPORT 62 EDUC 324 EMPL 418 JEUN 75 SOC 631
Subject: The impact of sport on personal development
- *Policy debate*
(Public debate in accordance with Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedures [proposed by the Presidency])

Following consultation of the Working Party on Sport, the Presidency has prepared the attached discussion paper, which is submitted as the basis for the policy debate to the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 21-22 November 2016.

The Impact of Sport on Personal Development

Presidency Discussion Paper

Winning is not the only metric available to judge success in sports, however, using other metrics is still not so obvious in today's society. In this regard, the Slovak Presidency would like to discuss the impact of sport on personal development and focus on the range of benefits and outcomes from participation in sport.

The Member States dealt with similar topics during the Latvian, Lithuanian and Irish Presidencies when approving the *Council conclusions on maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills, especially among young people*, *Council conclusions on dual careers for athletes* and *Council conclusions on the contribution of sport to the EU economy, and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion*. Development of Human Resources is highly placed in the EU political agenda in the field of sport since its first Work Plans for Sport during which the Expert group on Sport and Education and Training dealt with expertise in this area. The second Work Plan for Sport for 2014 – 2017 covers this issue as well and the Expert group on Human Resources Development is in the process of finalising its report. This discussion paper is a summary of the research and discussions held during the Slovak Presidency on this issue, as well as a follow up to previous discussions on better use of the potential of sport in modern society.

The Presidency has already developed discussions on this issue during the Bratislava conference on *Education in and through Sport* and the Informal meeting of Directors of Sport. The invited guests¹ of the conference panel discussion in Bratislava tackled the topic of the impact of sport on personal development from five different perspectives (academic, athletic, employment, health and political) while answering questions about values, skills, employability, health benefits, education and dual careers of athletes. They agreed that there is a complex mixture of physical, health, social and psychological benefits which sport can have on personal development.

Literature recognises that the following five “C”s are important for personal development – competence, confidence, connections, character and caring (Mulholland, 2008) - whereas longitudinal studies suggest that sport participants have greater and/or more academic success, personal confidence, connections, peer relations, academically-orientated friends, family attachments, avoidance of risky social behaviours, involvement in voluntary work, initiative, social integration, self-control, persistence and responsibility, resilience, self-perception and acceptance of one’s body, competence and self-worth.

Alongside values important for personal development, such as, fair play, respect for diversity, friendship, tolerance and mutual understanding, sports involvement is also linked to important benefits, such as enhanced self-confidence, academic involvement and success, teamwork, and social skills.

Sports people are, in general, adaptable, sociable and communicative. This applies to athletes as well as coaches, officials, managers, physiotherapists, etc. They are often mentally strong, constructive, pragmatic, and used to overcoming barriers and facing problems. Those traits together with the fact that sports people are often hardworkers might be significant elements for the labour market as well.

¹ Ian Culpan, Director of Olympic Studies Centre in New Zealand, Martina Moravcová, Slovak Olympic medalist in swimming, Giovanni Di Cola, ILO specialist, Richard Raši, former Slovak health minister, Ivar Sisniega, former sports minister of Mexico

Winning is important for sports but in addition it is also a means to surpass an individual standard of excellence and provide self-satisfaction by breaking out of one's comfort zone. Taking this into account, participation in sport often goes hand-in-hand with benefits to health.

Sport is not only for the most highly gifted. It can bring to anyone involved in it such benefits as self-esteem, discipline, patience, the joy found in effort and social interactions. Those benefits are often very valued for business and politics. EU Member States, as well as third countries, often engage sports people not only in enhancing the image of their countries, but also in politics itself².

The Presidency believes that we need to be cautious about over stating the educative and social values of sport, as sport does not automatically build character. Coaches, teachers and parents play a critical role in this field. Positive outcomes must be taught and therefore specialised educational programmes focused both on personal and professional development are needed for better developing transversal skills, especially among young athletes. They might comprise, for instance, management/leadership/communication trainings, protocol aspects, presentation skills, as well as a various range of specialised trainings, such as focusing on how to contact and address the media, sponsors, business partners, etc³.

In order to discuss the issue of the impact of sport on personal development, the Presidency would like to focus a policy debate during the Council on psychological and social outcomes, including emotional benefits of sports participation.

² A good example of such engagement and how sport can be used to help youth around the world to develop important off-the-court skills including leadership, mutual understanding and academic achievement, is SportUnited, where the U.S. Department of State's sports diplomacy works in cooperation with the U.S. Olympic Committee, U.S. sports federations, and professional leagues.

³ As examples might be given IOC sports management programme (MEMOS) or UEFA-backed Executive Master in European Sport Governance (MESGO).

The Presidency kindly asks delegations to share their experience on the impact of sport on personal development and answer the following questions:

- 1. Could you share best practices on educational programmes regarding personal and professional development of sports people (such as athletes, coaches and leaders) in your country?**

- 2. How can sport be used to better develop social skills relevant to participation in democratic society?**

ANNEX TO THE ANNEX

References

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