

ENGSO Youth response to the sports provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the future EU Sport Programme

Background

ENGSO Youth is the youth organisation of ENGSO (European Non-Governmental Sport Organisation). It is the youth sport-for-all organisation at European level, and has 41 member organisations, which are national umbrella organisations for sport from across Europe.

ENGSO Youth is a non profit organisation and has the aim to represent the interests of people under the age of 35 dealing with sport in Europe. Youth sport for all is our main focus. We promote sport and health, participation and volunteering of children and young people in sports and international cooperation.

The main activities of ENGSO Youth are

- networking;
- offering a discussion platform for current sport political issues in the field of youth;
- exchange of ideas on national sports developments in the field of youth;
- seeking common positions on sport issues in the field of youth and publicising these positions;
- strengthening the cooperation with other bodies dealing with children and youth matters.

Introduction

ENGSO Youth welcomes the sports provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the supporting, coordinating and supplementing measures that are now enabled. When implementing these provisions, ENGSO Youth encourages the decision-makers to assume a broad understanding of sport. Sport should not only be seen as elite sport, and youth sport should not only be understood as aiming to the top. In our view, the Treaty gives good support to this broad definition of sport with its reference to the social and educational function of sport.

Young people are an important group taking part in sporting activities as athletes, volunteers, officials, and many other roles. In Europe, 61% of 15-24 year-olds practice sports at least once a week (Eurobarometer 334 "Sport and Physical Activity" 2010), while the number of active people decreases with age. As for the younger population, the numbers seem to be even higher: for example, in Finland 92% of all children aged 3–18 years practice sports, and 43% are members of a sport club.

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The Olympic movement has recently started adding emphasis on young people. They took a while to understand that youth is important – it's about time the EU understands that, also!

ENGSO Youth's comments on the implementation of Article 165 of the Lisbon Treaty and the priorities of the EU Sport Programme

ENGSO Youth would like to highlight the importance of some of the policy areas that were already identified in the 2007 White Paper on Sport:

Volunteering

Volunteering is an important aspect of active citizenship and building a stronger Europe. Sport depends on volunteering, and many of the volunteers are young people; volunteering is an important means of engaging young people, of offering a possibility to be involved and of learning to take responsibility. Young people also take part in the administration of sports organisations; for example, many sports organisations have established youth committees that are run on a voluntary basis.

To support volunteering in sports, ENGSO Youth suggests that

- structural support should be allocated to European, voluntary-based sporting organisations in the form of annual or multi-annual operating grants. According to the EU study on volunteering (2009), professional management can support voluntary activity, and it should therefore be supported. As the Treaty specifically mentions the development of the European dimension in sport as well as sports structures based on voluntary activity, these grants should be strictly allocated only to European sports organisations and to sport organisations whose activities promote volunteering. Furthermore, the grants should be allocated to a wide number of organisations to ensure the plurality of European sports organisations; any preferential treatment of predetermined organisations should be avoided.
- actions that promote dialogue and exchange of best practice in volunteering should also be supported. In order to encourage a culture of volunteering in regions and countries where it is not yet fully developed, specific regional actions could also be implemented.
- mobility of young volunteers should be encouraged; international exchange of young people active in sports, not only athletes, is important as it promotes the cohesion of Europe and multilingualism.

Education and learning through sport

Schools are excellent places for reaching young people and for supporting them in adopting a physically active way of life. School environments should therefore encourage children and young people to be physically active. As education is the competence of Member States, ENGSO Youth would welcome the introduction of an open method of coordination in this field in order to encourage sport, physical activity and physical education in schools.

While it is important to promote physical activity in formal school settings the educational function of sport should not only be seen as formal education. Non-formal education, including peer education, is also an important aspect of learning through sport: it can be used to empower young people and to educate people about a variety of issues such as the societal values of sport. Non-formal education is a way of learning in a way which motivates young people and reaches young people, even those in risk of social exclusion.

Education and non-formal learning are also means of promoting the integrity of sportspeople: Education of coaches and other educators helps them tackle the issue, and methods of non-formal education empower young people to face problems and to be strong, or to “do it for themselves”.

To support education and learning through sports, ENGSO Youth suggests that:

- in the future Sport Programme, non-formal educational activities in sport need to be supported, for example, in the form of projects using the methods of non-formal learning.
- actions promoting the capacity development of teachers, coaches and other educators working with children and young people should also be supported.

Health and sport

The role of sport and physical activity to health is obvious from a plethora of studies. Prevention of chronic diseases and obesity are key issues from the youth perspective, as they pose a threat to the future of the whole of Europe. ENGSO Youth would also welcome an open method of coordination in the field of health and sport in order to follow the developments in physical activity in Member States based on the EU Physical Activity Guidelines. Doping can also be considered to be a health risk, therefore it is important to start preventive measures early and to include parents in these actions.

To support health and sports, ENGSO Youth suggests that:

- promoting physical activity and preventive measures to combat health risks through multi-

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actor networks should be a key priority in the Sport Programme; however, it is important that the Sport Programme should concentrate on actions implemented in the framework of sport and by sport organisations as opposed to medical actions, which should be supported through the Health Programme.

- in the field of anti-doping, actions that include preventive educational programmes are key elements and should be supported; however, a youth-friendly way should be encouraged in these actions.

Social inclusion in and through sport

Young people are an especially vulnerable group whether it be ethnic minorities, gender equality, disability or simply being young. Many of the social gaps emerge early in childhood, therefore it is crucial to tackle emerging fractures of society as early as possible. Through sport it is easier to reach certain groups at risk of exclusion; sport is a transversal movement and sports organisations involve young people from all social backgrounds. However, large gaps exist in accessing certain sports and in being able to reach a higher level of performance between certain groups of young people.

To support social inclusion in and through sports, ENGSO Youth suggests that:

- promoting social inclusion in its various fields, be it gender equality, inclusion of migrants and people with a foreign origin, inclusion of the disabled or other, should be a priority in the Sport Programme.

Implementation of the EU Sport Programme

ENGSO Youth underlines that the priorities of the future EU Sport Programme should include the above areas. Youth-specific sports projects should also be considered a priority. This applies as well to the mini programme of 2012-2013 as to the full Programme anticipated in 2014. Some further remarks are considered to be worthwhile:

- ENGSO Youth does not encourage supporting individual sporting events directly. We believe that better sustainability can be reached when supporting long-term initiatives or projects. Support for sporting competitions exists already; therefore, the added value of these subsidies would be questionable. Any support to sporting events should be strictly based on the European value of the event, its contribution to social inclusion, promotion of volunteering and other central aspects of sport described above, and allocated only if the event could otherwise not be organised. Furthermore, ENGSO Youth would like to point out

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that European sporting events do not only include sporting competitions; major sport-for-all events take place regularly too and reach an even bigger number of participants than certain European competitions.

- It should be ensured that allocated support reaches the grassroots level in order to ensure true added value of the Programme. Support should not only be given to large-scale projects, but smaller and medium initiatives should be eligible for support too.
- The programme should be partly decentralised. A partly decentralised Programme can better consider the fact that sport structures vary a great deal in different Member States, and would ensure that the Programme reaches the grassroots level better. Furthermore, structures to implement a decentralised Programme are in place already thanks to the National Agencies that run the Youth in Action Programme, among others.
- The management of the Programme should be based on co-management, where the target organisations are consulted and take part in decision making.
- ENGSO Youth encourages the inclusion of non-EU countries in the Programme and hopes that the Commission will be swift in concluding agreements with the countries in question to enable this.

Conclusions

ENGSO Youth welcomes the new sport competence and supporting measures of the European Union to sport, and would be willing to actively support the implementation of it and of the suggestions included within this paper. ENGSO Youth hopes that you take into consideration the above comments and include youth sport permanently in the structured dialogue as a serious counterpart to build together a Europe where the participation of young people in sport and their well-being and inclusion are ensured.

ENGSO Youth Committee
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