



SPORT IS ESSENTIAL: A CALL TO PROTECT EU FUNDING FOR SPORT IN THE NEXT MFF

A joint statement from European sport and physical activity stakeholders

Brussels, Monday, 5 May 2025

Context and Concern:

In view of the upcoming discussions on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period after 2027, the European sports and physical activity sector is deeply concerned about the potential reallocation of funds away from sport and health enhancing physical activity, driven by geopolitical tensions and the growing focus on defense investments. The signatories strongly believe that reducing funding for sport would harm the resilience of Europe. Sport is a foundational pillar of physical and mental health, economic growth, and the promotion of European values. Sport has proven to bring people together, foster inclusion, and advance peace.

We, the undersigned stakeholders from across the European sport and political sector, call on EU policymakers to protect and prioritise investments in sport and physical activity within the next MFF.

Making Europe resilient: why sport matters

1. A healthier Europe: sport is preventive healthcare

Physical inactivity costs European healthcare systems an estimated €80 billion annually due to preventable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity[1]. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of major non-communicable diseases by up to 30% and is recognised by the WHO as a key public health measure[2]. Additionally, sport plays a crucial role in mental health, reducing depression and anxiety by 20-30%[3], which is especially important in post-pandemic recovery and for productivity. Given that the EU4Health program already acknowledges the significance of sport, cutting its funding would undermine the EU's commitment to public health.

[1] <https://inactivity-time-bomb.nowwemove.com/>

[2] https://www.who.int/health-topics/physical-activity#tab=tab_1

[3] <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/publications/how-look-after-your-mental-health-using-exercise>

2. Economic growth and jobs: the sport sector is a major economic driver

The sport industry represents 2.12% of the EU GDP and employs 5.67 million people[4], playing a crucial role in economic resilience and job creation. Every €1 invested in sport generates a return of €5 in broader economic and social benefits[5], making sport funding a highly cost-effective investment. Additionally, sport fosters innovation in areas such as digitalisation, sustainability, and new materials, enhancing Europe's global competitiveness. Cutting investment in sport and physical activity would contradict the EU's commitment to economic growth and employment, particularly for SMEs and local businesses.

3. Social inclusion, integration, and EU values

Sport and physical activity bridge social barriers and strengthen European identity by promoting inclusion, diversity, and integration. It plays a crucial role in youth engagement, reducing radicalisation, and fostering social cohesion. Programs like Erasmus+ and sport-based initiatives enhance skills development, employability, and mobility across Europe. Additionally, sport and physical activity empower marginalised communities, including refugees and people with disabilities, contributing to a more inclusive and united Europe.

4. Global influence and social stability

The European Sport model is a global force that promotes EU values such as fair play, democracy, and equality beyond its borders, reinforcing the EU's strategic influence through sport diplomacy and international cooperation. At the same time, investing in sport and physical activity contributes to enhancing security by fostering social cohesion, engaging youth, and supporting community development, which in turn helps reduce social challenges. The sport sector also plays a pivotal role in post-crisis recovery, as demonstrated by its contribution to rebuilding resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic. By improving both physical and mental well-being, sport fosters a more unified, stable, and healthier European society, making continued investment crucial for sustaining Europe's soft power and social resilience.

Our call to action

As discussions on the future EU budget and MFF revisions take place, we strongly urge policymakers to:

1. **Increase funding** for sport and physical activity under the MFF, recognising its impact on health, social inclusion, economy, and security.
2. **Preserve and expand Erasmus+ Sport**, ensuring youth and grassroots projects continue to benefit from mobility and innovation funding.
3. **Strengthen sport and physical activity's role in EU4Health**, integrating sport into preventive healthcare strategies to combat chronic diseases and mental health challenges.
4. **Secure investment in sport and physical activity through EU cohesion policies**, ensuring sport infrastructure, digital innovation, and environmental sustainability remain priorities.
5. **Recognise sport as a strategic sector in EU economic policy**, ensuring that sport-related SMEs, innovation, and job creation initiatives are protected from cuts.

We, the undersigned organisations, stand united in our call for continued and strengthened support for sport and physical activity in the EU budget. Cutting sport funding would be a short-sighted decision with long-term negative consequences for European society, economy, and health.

Sport is not an expendable luxury. It is a strategic investment in Europe's future. Sport is essential!

[4] <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/865ef44c-5ca1-11e8-ab41-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

[5] <https://www.laureus.com/news/laureus-report-shows-every-1-invested-in-grassroot-sport-saves-a-further-5>

THE SIGNATORIES 1/3

- Aalborg Boldspilklub af 1885
- European University Sports Association (EUSA)
- 4iCVESport Hub Sports Valencia
- ACES Europe
- adidas
- adidas Foundation
- Andaria
- Asociación del Deporte Español (ADESP)
- Asociatia DGT
- Association Nouveaux Horizons – Nouvelles Opportunités
- Associazione Italiana Cultura e Sport (AICS)
- Assosport
- Ayuntamiento de Calanda
- Badminton Europe
- Barleti University
- Berghaus
- Budapest Association for International Sports (BAIS)
- Bulgarian Badminton Federation
- Bundesverband der Deutschen Sportartikel-Industrie e.V. (BSI)
- Canterbury
- Centro Servizi S.E.F. srl
- Centrul pentru Dezvoltarea Instrumentelor Structurale (CPDIS)
- CJT Solutions
- Clúster da Industria do Deporte e o Benestar de Galicia
- Cluster for Sport Innovations VERDE (Verde)
- Cluster Sports and Technology (S&T)
- Comisión de Cultura y Deporte (CEOE)
- Common Goal
- Competence Centre for Physical Activity (Estonia)
- Confédération sportive internationale travailliste et amateur (CSIT)
- Cycling Industries Europe
- Decathlon
- Deporte para la Educación y la Salud (DES)
- Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln
- DM&T Sport
- EAGLE Sports Integrity Services
- ebanSports
- ELAN
- Ellesse
- Elevate Outdoor Collective
- Eliterro
- Endura
- Estonian Sports Association Kalev
- Eurasanté
- EurEthICS ETSIA
- EuroHockey
- EuropeActive
- European Aquatics
- European Association of Sport Employers (EASE)
- European Federation for Company Sport (EFCS)
- European Initiative for Exercise in Medicine (EIEM)

THE SIGNATORIES 2/3

- European Liver Patients' Association (ELPA)
- European Network for Outdoor Sport (ENOS)
- European Network of Academic Sports Services (ENAS)
- European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE)
- European Outdoor Group (EOG)
- European Platform for Sport and Innovation (EPSI)
- European School Sport Federation (ESSF)
- European Sports and Wellbeing Alliance for Municipalities (ESWAM)
- Everythink
- fairplay – Initiative for Diversity & Antidiscrimination
- Fakultet Za Sport
- Fare network
- Federatie van Groothandelaren in Hard- en Softsportartikelen (FGHS)
- Fédération Luxembourgeoise de Badminton (FELUBA)
- Federation of European sporting goods retail associations (FEDAS)
- Federation of Irish Sports
- Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (FESI)
- Fischer
- Football Friendlies
- Friedrich Alexander Universität
- Fundacja Institute for Sport Governance (ISG)
- Fusioni in Movimento
- Fútbol Más Foundation
- German Badminton Federation (DBV)
- Greek Carers Network EPIONI
- HAŠK Mladost
- HEAD
- HG80
- Higher Education Institution specialised in Health, Sports and Management (LUNEX)
- Hungarian Badminton Association
- IGOID Research Group (Grupo IGOID)
- INDESCAT - Catalan Sports Cluster
- Innovationsmanufaktur (IM)
- Instituto de Biomecánica de Valencia (IBV)
- International center for promotion of education and development (CEIPES ETS)
- International Center Sports Mental Coaching
- International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE/CIEPSS)
- International Dance Organization (IDO)
- International Mountain Bicycling Association Europe (IMBA Europe)
- International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)
- ISPO
- It's Great Out There Coalition
- IZMIR Sport
- Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KAMK)
- Kinetic Analysis
- LAB University of Applied Sciences
- Laureus Sport for Good
- LEVSKI - Sport for all
- Liepaja City Council Sports Department
- Loyalty Fans
- Management Consulting & Business Building Co. Ltd (CBBS)

THE SIGNATORIES 3/3

- Mitre
- National School, University and Leisure Sport Federation
- New Balance
- Nike
- Olympiacos SFP
- Ovidius University of Constanta
- Oxbow
- Panionios GSS
- Pentland
- PUMA
- Regional Directorate of Sport, Azores Government
- Remedy
- Santcugatcreix
- Serbian Judo Federation
- Serbian Water Polo Federation
- Size Wise
- SKS Knowledge Services
- Slovenian Innovation Hub (SIH EEIG)
- Social Innovation Sports (SIS)
- SPAIN IS SPORT – Afydad
- Special Olympics Europe Eurasia
- Special Olympics Slovakia
- Speedo
- Sport and Citizenship
- Sport and Sustainability International (SandSI)
- SportCamp
- Sport Evolution Alliance (SEA)
- Sport for Development Network Germany
- Sport Inclusion Network (SPIN) Association
- Sport Ireland
- SportDrenthe
- Sports+Vitality
- Sportsko drustvo Crvena Zvezda
- Swim Ireland
- Symplexis
- Tecnica Group
- The Association for International Sport for All (TAFISA)
- ThinkSport
- Tyrolia
- Ukrainian Federation of School Sports (UFS)
- Universidad Europea de Valencia
- Universitatea "Ovidius" din Constanța
- University of Debrecen
- University of Jyväskylä
- V4Sport Foundation
- ValorSummits GmbH
- Varala Sports Institute
- Verband der Sportartikelindustrie und den Sportartikelhandel in Österreich (VSSÖ)
- Verband Deutscher Sportfachhandel e.V.
- Ville de Perros Guirec
- World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI)