

The European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation's Position and Recommendations on the EU Funding for Sport 2021–2027

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Sport is the biggest civil society movement in Europe – and voluntary-based grassroots sports clubs are its backbone. According to the [Special Eurobarometer 472](#) (2018), 40% of Europeans practice sport and physical activity, making sport one of the most popular leisure time activities and a Europe-wide phenomenon. Sports clubs engage 12% of Europeans (61 million people) in physical activity. Furthermore, sport engages 6% of Europeans (30 million people) as volunteers. Grassroots sport carries with it enormous potential in terms of health and disease prevention, but also social inclusion and cohesion, civic engagement and democracy, skills and employment, regional and local development, and the economy at large.

Sport depends on its volunteers, who administer sports clubs, organise events, coach people of all ages and from all backgrounds, and consequently create value for whole communities. The voluntary nature of sport is also acknowledged in the Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU): *The Union shall contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking account of the specific nature of sport, its structures based on voluntary activity and its social and educational function.* Recognising the work that has already been done in order to reduce administrative burdens, it is vital that access to EU funds for voluntary-based organisations is further facilitated. Organised sport, especially at a grassroots level, has the potential to engage citizens and communities, and thus implement projects effectively and in a sustainable manner.

ENGSO stresses that:

- It is vital to ensure a **sufficient level of funding for the Erasmus Sport Chapter with a budget of minimum €550 million.**
- **Partner countries in Europe should have the opportunity to participate in all key actions** of the Erasmus Sport Chapter, including mobility.
- In order to make **EU funding more accessible to voluntary-based grassroots sports**, administrative burdens for applicants and beneficiaries should be reduced. Erasmus funding should be extended to **small-scale not-for-profit sports events**, which are at the core of sports clubs. Furthermore, **voluntary work should be made eligible to be used as contributions in kind**, and **co-financing requirements should be relieved for voluntary-based grassroots organisations.**
- The **participation of national and local sport organisations in EU funding programmes should be supported**, in order to facilitate the use of EU funds for the benefit of the grassroots level of sports.
- **Mainstreaming of sport to other EU funding programmes should be guaranteed**, preferably in the regulation, of e.g. education and youth chapters of Erasmus, Structural Funds, European Social Fund Plus, including its Health strand, the EU Regional and Cohesion Funds, and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as well as operating grants funded from the EU budget.

ENGSO welcomes the European Commission's proposal to double the funding of the Erasmus Sport Chapter to €550 million, as part of the Erasmus programme for 2021–2027. Extending the key action of mobility to sports would create new opportunities to develop sports – however, it is important to ensure that the increase in funding will be able to cover the introduction of a new key action, as well as the other key actions. The proposed possibility to decentralise some parts of the programme could be beneficial to support the access of grassroots sports to EU funds. Enabling the funding of small-scale not-for-profit events would be another feasible way for voluntary-based organisations to access EU funds. Due to the international nature of the sector, sports organisations also from partner countries in Europe should be able to participate in all key actions.

According to the [Study on the economic impact of sport through sport satellite accounts](#) (2018), sport accounted for 2.12% of the total GDP in the EU in 2012 – or €279.7 billion – and employed 5.67 million people. The value of the entire sports sector is estimated to be far more extensive, when taking into account e.g. the value created by sports volunteers, or the public savings created by health enhancing physical activity or social inclusion. With this in mind, it is of utmost importance that the EU funding for sport is strengthened across sectors, ensuring that support for grassroots sport is facilitated within other EU programmes as well, including the European Social Fund Plus and the EU Regional and Cohesion Funds.