



# Report to Commissioner Tibor Navracsics

*'Grassroots Sport - Shaping Europe'*

*High Level Group on  
Grassroots Sport*

*June 2016*

*Sport*

*Under the chairmanship of Sir Graham Watson and Niels Nygaard this report was prepared by the co-rapporteurs, Wolfgang Baumann and Carlos Cardoso, and submitted to the European Commission in June 2016.*

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## EXECUTIVE REPORT

The European Commission (DG EAC) set up a High Level Group (HLG) on Grassroots Sport, under the political leadership of Commissioner Tibor Navracsics. The HLG met five times during 2015 and 2016.

The HLG noted that all respectable academic studies point to significant economic benefits from grassroots sport: not only in terms of the direct economic benefit of spending in the sector but also deriving from the benefits to employers of fewer days lost to sickness absence and the benefit to society of a reduction in healthcare costs. Grassroots sport policy could therefore make an important contribution to achieving the goals of the EU's Juncker Plan.

The HLG considered furthermore that several issues which are fundamental to the beneficial social contribution of grassroots sport and are often linked should be investigated and recommendations elaborated. These are:

- Health
- Social inclusion
- Informal learning and skills development
- Volunteering
- Economic dimension
- Sustainable financing
- Urban planning and infrastructure

In pursuit of this objective, the HLG decided to define Grassroots Sport thus:

***Grassroots sport is physical leisure activity, organised and non-organised, practised regularly at non-professional level for health, educational or social purposes.***

This builds on the more limited legal definition of grassroots sport in the Erasmus + Regulation, which defines grassroots sport as: "organised sport practised at local level by amateur sportspeople, and sport for all".

**The HLG proposes to European Commissioner Tibor Navracsics the following 10 key recommendations as their agenda for the promotion of grassroots sport in Europe:**

1. to introduce and promote grassroots sport as a subject in its own right manifested by an “EU Vision for grassroots sport” to be presented at EU policy level in 2017
2. to prioritise promotion of grassroots sport in the next EU Work Plan for Sport (2017+), focussing on four key issues:
  - a. Promotion of health enhancing physical activity;
  - b. Employment and skills benefits of grassroots sport;
  - c. Accessibility of EU funding, including Erasmus+, for grassroots sport;
  - d. Securing stable/strong financing support
3. to work actively on good governance in sport, in particular to promote social inclusion
4. to gain and maintain awareness of best practice in Member States and to highlight and share best practice, in the spirit of subsidiarity
5. to develop a cross-sectoral approach to grassroots sport across all relevant policy fields and related funding instruments
6. to recognise and support sport clubs at grassroots level as a leading sports delivery system for the provision of nationwide accessible, affordable and qualified grassroots sport programs and events in the Member States
7. to encourage new initiatives and new actors, both public and private in the provision of sport activities/services as a way of driving innovation and new partnerships
8. to recognise the important contribution of volunteering to grassroots sport and to promote volunteering through EU funding programs, particularly those related to sport (mapping best practices)
9. to encourage early positive experiences in sport and physical activity in Member States through education in schools and physical active learning
10. to encourage Member States’ commitment to grassroots sport via re-search highlighting the social and economic benefits of participation in grassroots sport.

Finally, the HLG recommends the formation of a group to monitor and evaluate progress in the promotion of grassroots sport in Europe and report to the Commissioner. This committee might usefully draw on the expertise of the HLG.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The European Commission (through its Directorate-General for Education and Culture) set up a High Level Group (HLG) on Grassroots Sport, under the political leadership of Commissioner Tibor Navracsics for whom the promotion of grassroots sport is a declared priority.

The HLG was mandated to evaluate the place and role of grassroots sport in European society and provide ideas on how the EU could better support and develop grassroots sport in order to strengthen the network of sports clubs. This included an analysis of the role of grassroots sport in the promotion of tolerance and social inclusion. In line with the Group's mandate, the present report, including the Group's recommendations, will be submitted to Commissioner Navracsics on 29th June 2016.

## II. MEMBERS OF THE HLG ON GRASSROOTS SPORT

Members of the HLG were chosen in an open and transparent selection process. The Group was composed of high-level members from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, including current and former athletes, former ministers and politicians, academics, representatives of sport organisations and other high-profile personalities in the field of sport:

No.	Surname	First name	Country
1	ANDREEVA	Mila	Bulgaria
2	BALOGH	Gábor	Hungary
3	BAUMANN	Wolfgang	Germany
4	BRASSEUR	Anne	Luxembourg
5	CARDOSO PAULA	Carlos	Portugal
6	CHAPPELET	Jean-Loup	Switzerland
7	INFANTINO	Gianni	Italy
8	KIVISAARI	Tiina Annikki	Finland
9	MACHU	Philippe	France
10	MESTRE	Alexandre Miguel	Portugal
11	MILANOVA	Vanina Vaneva	Bulgaria
12	NYGAARD	Niels	Denmark
13	SEMAN	Frantisek	Slovakia
14	STICKLER	Friedrich	Austria
15	WATSON	Graham	United Kingdom

### III. WORKING METHODS

At its kick-off meeting, the HLG elected two Co-chairs, Sir Graham Watson (President of EuropeActive) and Mr Niels Nygaard (Executive Committee Member of EOC, President of the Danish NOC), supported in their work by two co-rapporteurs, Mr Wolfgang Baumann (Secretary General of TAFISA) and Mr Carlos Cardoso (President of ENGSO).

The HLG met five times with the aim to investigate each of the identified themes and formulate recommendations to the European Commission. These meetings were held on:

- 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015 (Introductory meeting)
- 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2016 (Focus themes: health and social inclusion)
- 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016 (Focus themes: informal learning, skills development and volunteering)
- 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016 (Focus themes: economic impact, sustainable financing, urban planning / infrastructure)
- 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016 (to discuss the draft final report)

At each meeting, the European Commission gave an overview of the state of play at EU level on the main themes as an introduction to the Group's work, followed by presentations from external experts as an introduction to the discussion.

The following experts gave valuable presentations:

- Mr Koen Breedveld, Director of Mulier Instituut, about grassroots sport in Europe, the structures, benefits and current challenges;
- Mr Mathieu Moreuil, representative of the Premier League, about the role of professional sport in supporting grassroots sport through the funding of a range of successful social inclusion projects;
- Ms Heike Kübler, Deputy Head of Unit "Equal opportunities and diversity, sport and integration", German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), on the inclusion of migrants through sport;
- Mr Peter Krustrup, Professor of Team Sport and Health, University of Copenhagen, on team sports as prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of non-communicable diseases for individuals across the life span;
- Mr Marc Theeboom, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), about the developmental potential of grassroots sport (myth or reality?);
- Mr Themis Kokolakis, Sheffield Hallam University, "The economic impact of sport and sport volunteering- the UK experience";

- Mr Poul Broberg, NOC and Sports Confederation of Denmark, on how activating architecture and urban planning can strengthen grassroots sport and make people more physical active<sup>1</sup>;
- Mr Greg Whyte, Professor at Liverpool John Moores University, "Active Urban Planning: Liverpool & Beyond".

In addition to the discussions held during the meetings, members of the Group provided written input to the rapporteurs who regularly presented progress reports to the Group.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Broberg had to cancel his participation at short notice due to flight connection problems; his presentation was shared with the Group.

## IV. SCOPE OF WORK

As a preliminary but fundamental act, the Group discussed a workable definition of grassroots sport that would reflect a focus on organised sport at local level in the traditional sense (i.e. sport club setting) and the new developments in grassroots beyond organised sport (i.e. “non-organised” grassroots sport). On the basis of the different contributions the chairman presented a proposal that, in the end, was accepted by the Group: *“Grassroots sport is physical leisure activity, organised and non-organised, practised regularly at non-professional level for health, educational or social purposes”*.

The members of the Group then set the scope of their future investigations related to grassroots sport, including the following themes, and without losing sight of the fact that *“sport”* is the central theme and that increasing participation remains an underlying objective:

- **Health benefits**
- **Social inclusion**
- **Informal learning and skills development**
- **Volunteering**
- **Economic dimension (including impact and sustainable funding), urban planning, infrastructure**

The HLG noted the challenge of not reinventing the wheel considering existing work undertaken in many of those fields, including at EU level.

The HLG on Grassroots Sport agreed to present the report, including the recommendations hereafter, to the European Commission.

The final report was officially presented to Commissioner Navracsics on 29 June 2016 in Brussels.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HLG ON GRASSROOTS SPORT

The recommendations are structured as follows: General recommendations covering the broader policy dimension regarding grassroots sport in Europe and specific recommendations to the EU, but also other relevant actors, relating to the main themes identified by the Group. For each of the themes an introduction summarises the main points of the Group's discussion.

### 5.1. General Recommendations

The HLG Grassroots Sport S calls on the EU and its governing institutions, especially the European Commission and Member States in the Council:

- a. to introduce and promote grassroots sport as a subject on its own right based on the definition by the HLG and manifested by an “EU Vision for grassroots sport” to be developed with relevant experts and presented to the European Commission in 2017;
- b. to gain and maintain awareness of, support, coordinate and supplement the good actions of Member States, in the spirit of subsidiarity;
- c. to give priority to the implementation and implications of existing recommendations and outputs prepared in the context of the EU Work Plans for Sport, in particular the following:
  - volunteering
  - sustainable financing of grassroots sport
  - protection and safeguarding children's rights in sport
  - gender equality in sport
  - legacy of major sports events, with a focus on social, economic and environmental sustainability
  - transparent and long-term investment in sport – potentially through non-traditional channels, such as investment in general infrastructure, promotion of active commuting, use of traditional sports and games
  - physical education in schools, including providing early positive experiences with physical activity to encourage the development of lifelong, positive habits
  - the contribution of sport to the employability of young people, and the creation of jobs in the sport and sport-related labour market;
- d. to give particular priority, in the next EU Work Plan for Sport (2017+) on promoting grassroots sport, to the following:
  - identifying and encouraging innovative ways for sport clubs to encourage participation, physical activity and accessibility.

- recognising and promoting volunteering and informal skills development, and therefore employability
  - encouraging early positive experiences in sport and physical activity, including active learning, to encourage lifelong habits
  - providing opportunities for, and encouraging minority and female involvement in grassroots sports, as participants from a young age, volunteers and professionals;
  - sustainable financing of grassroots sport, and how to improve the access of grassroots sport to EU funding opportunities.
- e. to actively work on mainstreaming sport and physical activity as priorities in EU Funding Programmes, including health and social funds;
- f. to develop a cross-sectoral approach on grassroots sport across all relevant policy fields and respective funding instruments, including, in particular, the following:
- education, youth, culture
  - health
  - competition
  - employment
  - regional policy
  - transport
  - internal market
  - social affairs
  - urban planning and infrastructure
- g. to invest further work in order to identify new models of cooperation/alliance between traditional delivery system and new players;
- h. to increase physical activity by encouraging active commuting, incentive programs and use of existing open space and infrastructure;
- i. to closely work with the sport movement so as to ensure the implementation on Good Governance principles in grassroots sport

## 5.2. Specific Recommendations

### **THEME: Health benefits**

#### **Introduction**

The undeniable and important health benefits of sport and physical activity and their crucial role in tackling obesity and other non-communicable diseases have been underlined in many ways (research, policy action, targeted funding). In the EU context, the issue has been tackled more intensely over the past years and the HLG noted, in particular, the progress made in implementing the 2013 Council Recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) across sectors, the work in the context of the 2014-2017 EU Work Plan for Sport, notably the Expert Group recommendations on physical education at school, and other related action to promote the health-enhancing effects of sport and physical activity (Erasmus+ projects, European Week of Sport). The Group therefore focused its discussion on areas not yet sufficiently addressed in EU policies. In this respect, the expert presentation on the important role of team sports in generating health-benefits gave inspiration. And the Group also identified other areas that would deserve an increased focus in the EU's and national sport policies, including specific offers for people with a disability and for the elderly. Moreover, the Group noted the need for sport clubs to adapt towards more health-enhancing offers, and that the situation in some Member States is quite different from that in others in terms of the level of understanding of what grassroots sport is, and the wider benefits of grassroots sports participation.

### ***Recommendations to the EU***

- To continue implementing the Council Recommendation on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors, including its monitoring provisions;
- To actively work on mainstreaming sport and physical activity as priorities in the EU Health Funding Programme;
- To support sport clubs in finding innovative ways to organise HEPA activities.
- To coordinate and help to develop targeted and integrated campaigns to promote HEPA, such as through the European Week of Sport;
- To invest in finding alternative means to access for currently inactive and sedentary people, through the sport clubs, the use of traditional sports and games, social and community based programmes and other existing municipal delivery systems;
- To collect, promote and disseminate good practice that encourages initiatives by the Member States.

### ***Recommendations to public authorities in the Member States***

- To cooperate actively with the Ministries responsible for health to better include sport and physical activity as tools into health policies;
- To encourage the prescription of physical activity by medical professionals, in place of, or in addition to, prescription medication when appropriate;
- To integrate physical education and activity, as well as active learning, into school curricula in all Member States to increase awareness of the importance of HEPA and a healthy and active lifestyle;
- To motivate and assist sport federations to develop and offer grassroots programmes within their given sport;
- To take into account the good practices identified at EU level to develop national policies in the field of HEPA;
- To develop targeted and integrated campaigns, policies and networks;
- To ensure cooperation among relevant local authorities, e.g. regarding use of facilities, in order to find solutions for a better environment to attract the population in general to physical activities and sport;
- To develop the skills of sport and fitness coaches and trainers so that they are better equipped to provide motivation and support to encourage inactive people to start exercising to a level that is beneficial to their health.

*Recommendations to the sport movement / sport stakeholders*

- To motivate and assist sport federations to develop and offer grassroots programmes within their given sport;
- To generate synergies between organised and non-organised grassroots sport to promote health-enhancing sport and physical activity;

*Recommendations to other sectors and parts of society*

- To cooperate with health organisations in each Member State to develop programmes to promote the wellbeing of the population through grassroots sport activities;
- For the health sector: to actively promote participation in physical activity and grassroots sports as health enhancing.

**THEME: Social inclusion**

**Introduction**

In light of the important challenges that the EU and its Member States are currently facing in terms of more inclusive societies, the HLG underlined the importance for the EU (the Commission and the Member States within their respective spheres of competence) to increase efforts to support sport as a tool for social inclusion of groups and individuals at risk of exclusion. The focus should be put on the migrants and refugees, while not forgetting other socially-excluded groups (the elderly, people with a disability, etc.). The Group also discussed the need, when searching for solutions within or through sport, to bear in mind that the situation and organisation of sport vary widely between EU countries. In its considerations, the Group underlined the need for new networks (and partners outside sport) to address on-going societal challenges.

The importance of an evaluation of programmes, not only quantitative data regarding sport's role in the field of social inclusion (and migrants' integration in particular), but especially also qualitative data on effective interventions was highlighted.

With respect to the integration of minorities of all kinds, awareness of what the minorities can bring to the majority, and not just the what the majority can do for the minority, should be actively promoted, and involvement of minorities in grassroots sports at all levels should be encouraged – not just as participants but as volunteers, coaches, board members, trainers, managers and other professionals.

### ***Recommendations to the EU***

- To allocate special funding to initiatives supporting the inclusion of refugees in and through sport in the EU, e.g. through the European Social Fund or other relevant funding sources;
- To coordinate with the agencies and authorities who are specialised in dealing with migrant communities, including ensuring that any documentation required for individual immigrants to participate in grassroots sports is made available to them in a timely and efficient manner (e.g. national IDs);
- To identify and provide appropriate tools (financial, policy action) to reach selected target groups, including, for instance, a handbook/toolkit for sport clubs on integration;
- To support and encourage sport clubs and organisations to develop innovative ways of social inclusion in and through sport;
- To add a focus on refugees/migrants in the European Week of Sport;
- To ensure – within the EU's sports policy and programme – equality with regard to ethnicity, physical and mental disabilities, gender, age, socioeconomic background and location;
- To encourage the inclusion of minorities in all roles within grassroots sports – as participants, volunteers, board members and professionals.
- To build awareness of the positive contribution of minorities of all kinds to the majority within grassroots sports – knowledge, culture and traditions, capabilities, etc.

### ***Recommendations to public authorities in the Member States***

- To use sport and physical activity actively as a tool for social inclusion and co-operate actively with the sports movement on this issue;
- To encourage stakeholders to organise special opportunities for migrant people, and other minorities, to encourage participation and foster integration namely through special rates/openings, qualified instructors, etc.;
- To identify, collect and share good examples that can be easily replicated;
- To design and support multi-cultural grassroots sport events.

*Recommendations to the sport movement / sport stakeholders*

- To encourage the inclusion of minorities in all roles within grassroots sport – as participants, volunteers, board members and professionals;
- To build awareness of, and capitalise on, the positive contributions minorities can bring to grassroots sport to increase participation and enjoyment levels of the local majority – knowledge, culture and traditions, capabilities, etc.;
- To approach community associations with opportunities for minorities to participate, and for co-operation on joint initiatives.

*Recommendations to other sectors and parts of society*

- To utilise participation in grassroots sport as an educational tool to promote, in particular, language and cultural integration and exchange, as well as to build contacts with people in new hosting communities;
- To provide grassroots sports opportunities and programs to encourage safer communities, for example during peak crime times or 'safe/supervised' opportunities in traditionally 'dangerous' locations.
- To actively recommend and encourage participation in grassroots sport and physical activity to minorities of all kinds.

**THEME: Informal learning/skills development**

**Introduction**

The HLG underlined that sport clubs, associations and fitness facilities used as educational settings, as well as participation in grassroots sports themselves, can make a strong contribution to informal learning and development of transversal skills, such as discipline, teamwork, leadership, problem solving, etc. Additionally, voluntary and professional roles in grassroots sport are increasingly providing opportunities to develop IT, marketing, management and communications skills. Thus, grassroots sport can have a positive impact on decreasing the high numbers of (youth) unemployed by offering opportunities to develop skills and overcome skills gaps.

This is in line with the Council conclusions of May 2015 on maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills, especially among young people, that outline the educational potential of grassroots sport. The Council emphasised the work with local structures and the support of amateur sport infrastructures to help disadvantaged youth to find their place in society. Grassroots sport could contribute by using its social and educational potential to promote tolerance, mutual understanding and European values.

### ***Recommendations to the EU***

- To follow up on the above Council conclusions, according to which the Commission should "*Facilitate the exchange of information and good practice, effective peer learning and networking among Member States especially with regard to developing more accessible, attractive and diversified grassroots sport, in particular for young people.*";
- To ensure sport has its place in upcoming initiatives, such as the new EU skills agenda, and to work actively for the recognition of informal learning and skills gained through sport in different European settings, such as the European Skills Passport and European Qualification Framework;
- To identify good practice regarding the potential of grassroots sport for skills development and create awareness for its educational role in other relevant settings;
- To follow up on ongoing related work in the 2014-17 EU Work Plan for Sport, notably in the Expert Group on Human Resources Development, and specifically to liaise with DG EMPL and other relevant DGs with responsibilities for skills, employability and jobs. The sport and active leisure sector cannot find solutions alone – it needs to be coordinated with other actions – such as “new skills for new jobs”;
- To develop a scientific evidence base to highlight the role of grassroots sport in informal learning and skills development at European and MS level (based on the on-going EU Study on employability of youth through sport, due to report in 2017)
- To support and encourage sports movements to take initiatives in the field of employability, skills development and informal learning.

### ***Recommendations to public authorities in the Member States***

- To promote among relevant stakeholders the values of transversal skills acquired through grassroots sport in order to create awareness for grassroots sport and skills development;
- To recognise that informal learning has an appropriate and essential place within formal education systems, and that physical education is critical, and to promote them.

*Recommendations to the sport movement / sport stakeholders*

- To foster the development of transversal skills such as *Attitudes and values at work, Application of knowledge, Social skills and competences, Language and communication, and Thinking skills and competences*, there is a need to assure social environments in sport that promote the development of these skills;
- To work with the education sector to encourage informal learning and skills development through grassroots sports within the formal education system;
- To promote informal learning and skills development via participation in grassroots sport to attract newcomers.

*Recommendations to other sectors and parts of society*

- To encourage informal learning and physical education within formal or academic institutions and systems;
- To recognise 'soft' skills learnt through participation and volunteering in grassroots sports when it comes to employment opportunities;
- To encourage internships and work placements of students of all ages in grassroots sports organisations to build awareness of, and participation in, the grassroots sport movement.

## **THEME: Volunteering**

### **Introduction**

Volunteering makes a positive contribution on many levels, from individual wellbeing and development to community solidarity and organisational and national economic health. The HLG stresses that the role of volunteering in grassroots sport is a fundamental condition for the provision of nationwide accessible, affordable and qualified grassroots sport activities and events in the majority of Member States. In that majority of states, sport clubs are the traditional sports delivery system, and sport clubs rely heavily on the involvement of volunteers, as do many major sporting events, both in grassroots and elite sport. However, the difficulty of recruiting and retaining volunteers, particularly for ongoing positions rather than single-event based positions, is increasing. In many member states, there is no clear legal framework or strategy for the provision of voluntary activity in sport, particularly grassroots sport. The tradition of volunteering varies greatly across member states, Even in States with high levels of volunteering, the prestige that was once associated with volunteering is being overshadowed by increasing demands on individuals' time and an undervaluing of the contribution of volunteers across the spectrum, from a policy and funding perspective through to a community perspective. The HLG noted the EU is in a unique position to influence volunteerism from both a policy and funding position, as well as an awareness position.

### ***Recommendations to the EU***

- To recognise voluntary work as eligible contribution in kind in the activities financed by the Erasmus+ Sport Programme;
- To defend the VAT exemptions and other tax incentives for not-for-profit sport organisations in order to support sport structures based on voluntary activity;
- To evaluate actively the impact of EU legislation on grassroots sport with a view to reducing the bureaucratic burden on grassroots sport which can arise from EU legislation or policy decisions;
- To develop guidelines for recruiting, training and retaining volunteers for Member States, including a volunteering qualification system and (non-monetary) rewarding of volunteers;
- To gather and disseminate information regarding opportunities to volunteer within Europe in a central location, e.g. webpage;
- To support research into the economic benefits of grassroots sport volunteering;
- To offer Member States support in developing legal and strategic frameworks for volunteering.

*Recommendations to public authorities in the Member States*

- To recognise the work of sports volunteers and help to develop recruiting, training, retaining, qualification and awarding systems for volunteers, including in schools;
- To develop clear a legal and strategic framework for volunteering;
- To consider additional incentives for individual volunteers, for example financial/tax incentives or training programs.

*Recommendations to the sport movement / sport stakeholders*

- To develop tools and programmes for identifying, qualifying and awarding volunteers, and encourage and support adequate management of volunteers;
- To develop innovative models for part-time volunteering, and ‘introductions’ to volunteering with low commitment to attract new volunteers and youth;
- To recognise that volunteers do not always hold formal positions, but that many contribute voluntarily to the grassroots sports movement without a ‘title’, for example parents driving children to sports activities;
- To target the currently inactive population to volunteer within grassroots sport as a ‘soft’ introduction to sports and physical activity;
- To recognise the positive elements volunteers bring to their work, including passion, vision and commitment which go beyond the call of duty, and the positive role model this creates for others.

*Recommendations to other sectors and parts of society*

- To recognise the skills developed in volunteering within the grassroots sector as valuable and transferable.
- To encourage volunteering in grassroots sport by supporting time away from other duties.

**THEME: Economic impact of grassroots sport**

**Introduction**

Following a presentation from the Commission which outlined the state of play at EU level, i.e. Council conclusions, the work of the Expert Groups, the 2012 study on the contribution of sport to the EU economy and the work done in cooperation with Eurostat in relation to Sport Satellite Accounts statistics, the external speaker, Themis Kokolakis of Sheffield Hallam University, presented recent findings on the economic impact of grassroots sport in the UK. Mr Kokolakis showed that most of sport's economic benefits came from participation at club level and underlined that while voluntary activity in the sport sector was not reflected in national accounts, it had an important economic impact, especially at local levels. He also showed that major events such as the London Olympics can have an important impact on the participation of citizens in sport, provided that long term planning and public investment is ensured. Mr Kokolakis also highlighted the labour intensity of the sports sector and therefore its potential to generate employment, especially relevant in times of economic crisis. He finally referred to the regular English national "active people survey" in which some 160,000 people took part. The survey illustrated that sports participation was positively correlated with education and income, although the underlying relationship was still to be better investigated. The interesting presentation generated a lively discussion within the Group, which focused *inter alia* on employment figures relating to the sports sector. Some members thought that there was a need for more detailed statistics and suggested a stronger involvement by Eurostat in sports-related statistics.

When addressing the economic impact of grassroots sport, it is important to bear in mind that 60% of Europeans are, with more or less frequency, engaged in sporting activities and that it is estimated that around 60 million people are sports club members in Europe. Thus, sports clubs are in close interaction with citizens at grassroots level. These figures need to be given due weight when dealing with the "Sport Satellite Accounts". Furthermore this should be recognized in the new EU Work Plan for Sport from 2017 onwards.

### ***Recommendations to the EU***

- To devote more attention to sport at the grassroots level, especially to sports clubs, by developing indicators and measuring its impact on the economy.
- To conduct further research into, and widely promote, the positive economic impact of participation in grassroots sport, at an individual and societal or state level;
- To consider the positive economic impact and multiplier effects of grassroots sport when devising budgets and allocating funds, within and beyond the sports sector, for example on employment, transport and construction;
- To investigate further the correlation between participation in grassroots sports, further education and income, and use this data to promote provision of grassroots sport opportunities in Member States.

### ***Recommendations to public authorities in the Member States***

- To consider the positive economic impact and multiplier effects of grassroots sport when devising budgets and allocating funds, within and outside the sports sector, for example on employment, transport and construction;
- To consider incentivising participation in grassroots sports for individuals, for example through tax reductions or other subsidies;
- To coordinate between the various sectors to share information and provide a detailed and accurate picture of the true impact of grassroots sport and physical activity, for example involving the health, education, transport and urban planning sectors;
- To encourage participation of health insurance providers in funding grassroots sports programs and events.

### ***Recommendations to the sport movement / sport stakeholders***

- To promote positive individual economic impacts, for example via the reduction of health spending, to encourage participation in grassroots sport;
- To capitalise on research proving the positive economic impact of grassroots sports actively to seek cooperation with other sectors;
- To ensure that major sporting events include provision for grassroots sport.

*Recommendations to other sectors and parts of society*

- To recognise the positive economic impact grassroots sport has, and in turn encourage participation in grassroots sport and cooperate with the sport sector to provide grassroots sport opportunities.

**THEME: Sustainable financing of grassroots sport**

**Introduction**

Ensuring mechanisms for sustainable funding is critical to the grassroots sport movement, including through public support; however in several Member States this is declining. There is a strong need to find innovative ways of sustainably financing grassroots sport, including cooperation with public and private sectors, at a local, Member State and EU level.

The Commission presented the state of play regarding recent and ongoing works in the EU, i.e. Council conclusions, deliverables of the former Expert Group on Sustainable Financing of Sport, related activities under the current EU Work Plan for Sport. It then focused on the application of EU state aid rules to sport, which is mostly related to professional sport. The Commission indicated that aid in the field of grassroots sport, relating to local infrastructure in particular, was in principle not subject to investigations under EU state aid law. Thanks also to the General Block Exemption Regulation no more ex-officio investigations for public (infrastructure) support at grassroots level could be expected. The information given by the Commission stimulated a lively discussion: the members of the Group in particular agreed that the findings of the 2012 report of the Expert Group on Sustainable Financing of Sport on "Strengthening financial solidarity mechanisms within sport" should be taken into account in its recommendations. The Group also discussed the important role, in many European countries, of lotteries in providing financial support for grassroots sport.

### ***Recommendations to the EU***

- To work actively on mainstreaming sport and physical activity as priorities in EU Funding Programmes, including health and social funds;
- To improve the accessibility for real grassroots actors such as sports clubs to the Erasmus+ Sport Programme
- To provide more oversight and coordination of the many Erasmus+ actions to ensure effective and efficient actions with measurable, ongoing impact are prioritised, with minimal overlap between actions;
- To defend the VAT exemptions and other financial incentives for clubs and other sport providers in the framework of grassroots sport projects
- To encourage all bidders for support for major events bids to have some element of grassroots sports funding, with a focus on sustainable action and funding beyond the lifecycle of the event itself;
- To encourage cooperation across sectors to find innovative ways to finance grassroots sports sustainably, for example through the inclusion of health insurers, tax incentives, and use of other public funds.
- To further investigate and promote public-private partnerships, where appropriate;
- To recognise the role of lotteries in sustainable grassroots sports funding.

### ***Recommendations to public authorities in the Member States***

- To consider including tax incentives or subsidies for participation in grassroots sport;
- To consider VAT exemptions for clubs that enjoy the status of not-for-profit organisations fulfilling a community need;
- To look for innovative solutions for funding grassroots sports, for example through public-private partnerships;
- To encourage the private sector to increase contributions to grassroots sport funding and sponsorship, ahead of elite sports;
- To coordinate between multiple sectors to use existing funds more efficiently and avoid overlap or wasted use of funds;
- To encourage company-based sports;
- To investigate and stimulate crowd funding opportunities;
- To promote and safeguard the role of national lotteries in financing grassroots sports and take measures to prevent illegal betting.

*Recommendations to the sport movement / sport stakeholders*

- To increase efforts to attract and retain volunteers within grassroots sports;
- To support and encourage good governance practices within sports organisations;
- To include grassroots sports within elite or competitive sports events and programmes e.g. during opening, as side events, etc.;
- To approach the private sector to broaden their sponsorship portfolios to include grassroots sport;
- To redirect funds from elite sports to grassroots sports;
- To approach and communicate with other sectors in finding collaborative projects and ensure efficient use of existing funding.

*Recommendations to other sectors and parts of society*

- To consider funding or sponsoring grassroots sports as an alternative to elite sports;
- To encourage company sports and provide opportunities for grassroots sports within and funded by the workplace;
- To look for collaborative project opportunities and efficient use of joint funding.

**THEME: Urban planning / infrastructure**

**Introduction**

The invited expert, Professor Gregory Whyte of the Liverpool John Moores University, presented the active urban planning concept for Liverpool. He mentioned that together with building useful sport infrastructures, local authorities should also devise policies that are able to motivate people to regularly use the available infrastructure, so that it actually becomes part of the local community and promotes generally active lifestyles. He also noted the need for more research in urban planning related to grassroots sport and for more exchange of best practices. The presentation triggered a stimulating discussion and the High Level Group seemed to agree that sport considerations should, as a principle, be included by local authorities in the design or modification of urban areas. Several members of the Group also mentioned the need to accompany investments in urban infrastructure with socio-cultural and people-centred investments aimed at changing people's attitudes and motivating them to participate in sport in their local communities. It was also stressed that international sports federations' technical requirements for sport facilities were not appropriate for grassroots sport because they often implied expensive infrastructure not adapted to the needs of grassroots sport, and that grassroots sports should be considered when building any new infrastructure.

***Recommendations to the EU***

- To include urban planning for grassroots sport considerations in EU policy, including EU HEPA policy;
- To promote and build awareness of the positive impacts of appropriate urban planning to Member States;
- To explore the role of European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Investment Fund (EIF) in financing sporting facilities and infrastructure;
- To gather and disseminate best practice examples of urban planning for grassroots sport participation.

*Recommendations to public authorities in the Member States*

- To consider including mandatory open spaces and opportunities for physical activity, accessible to all, in urban planning policy and regulations;
- Actively to build awareness of the positive impact of utilising available infrastructure for physical activity and play, particularly within non-traditional target groups, for example the elderly;
- To coordinate between different sectors, specifically including sports, urban planning, transport and parks and recreation, when devising new policy or implementing new projects.

*Recommendations to the sport movement / sport stakeholders*

- To cooperate actively with, and offer expertise to, other sectors, including urban planning, transport and parks and recreation, to encourage use of existing, and development of new, infrastructure for grassroots sports;
- To promote use of non-traditional sports infrastructure for grassroots sports, for example open spaces, roads closed to traffic, etc.
- To look for innovative programs and events to make use of existing infrastructure;
- To ensure grassroots sports are considered when implementing any new elite sports facilities.
- To make the after use of facilities built or used for mega sport events element of legacy policy.

*Recommendations to other sectors and parts of society*

- To consider grassroots sport and coordinate with the sport sector when developing infrastructure projects to ensure appropriate inclusion of grassroots sports opportunities;
- To open existing facilities for alternative use whenever possible, for example school playgrounds for public use outside school hours.