



EU Snapshot

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Sport: When the EU is on the move!



« European sport policy is still in its infancy » recalled last year the European Commissioner Tibor Navracics, in charge of Education, Culture, Youth and Citizenship. But it is already up and running!

The first comprehensive intervention of the Commission dates back to the publication in **2007** of a [White paper](#) which called for a **structured dialogue** with **stakeholders** and identified three fields of action:

- The **societal role** of sport (public health, education, volunteering, social inclusion, prevention of violence, fight against doping, etc.)
- Its **economic dimension** and the role of **public support**
- **Governance issues** (free movement, protection of minors, corruption, etc.)

The document was completed by an [Action plan](#) named after the father of modern Olympic Games, **Pierre de Coubertin**.

In 2009, the **Treaty of Lisbon** introduced a legal basis (art [165 TFUE](#)) for an EU role in “the promotion of **European sporting issues**”, namely: **fairness** in sporting competitions, cooperation between sport responsible bodies, **physical integrity** of sport persons and cooperation with third countries and international organisations. While the creation of a proper budget was legally possible, it was necessary to wait for the next multiannual financial framework (2014-2020). Until then, funds were allocated upon the Parliament’s initiative by the European Commission, through annual **calls for proposals**, referred to as **Preparatory Actions**. Between 2009 and 2014, **88 collaborative partnerships** and **non-for-profit sport events** were selected and co-financed to up to **€37 million!**

At the same time, the Commission prepared the implementation of its new competence ([2011 Communication](#))

and the Council adopted its first three-year [Work Plan for sport](#) to specify the role of the Commission and Member States (a possible third version would be discussed at the beginning of next year).

The scene was set for the EU Sport policy to come on stage. A Sport chapter was introduced in the Programme for Education, Youth and Culture for 2014-2020 ([ERASMUS +](#)) and **€265 million** were allocated over the period to tackle cross-border threats (match-fixing, doping, intolerance and discrimination, etc.), promote **good governance**, athletes **dual careers**, **volunteering**, **social inclusion** and **physical activities**.



In spite of its relative youth and the inherent limit of the “**supporting competence**” given by the Treaty (rather than an “**exclusive**” one which allows regulatory initiatives), the EU intervention is to become **more visible**.

One of the reasons for this is its focus, beyond the community of sport persons, to promote the “**Sport For All**” and the practice at local level by amateurs of “**grassroots sports**”, therefore tackling the high levels of **inactivity** among European citizens confirmed by the publication in 2014 of a [Sport Eurobarometer](#) (which revealed that 59% of them never or rarely practiced physical activity).

In March, the annual [EU sport Forum](#) gathered stakeholders to discuss about achieved results, current issues and upcoming challenges in their field. Among the latter, the upcoming [European Week of sport \(10-19th September\)](#), a Commission-led initiative, funded under the ERASMUS + program and implemented at local level by national coordinators. The objective: to bring physical activity back into the daily life of EU citizens, regardless of their age, background or fitness level.

A DESirable Index to evaluate EU progress in getting digital

The Digital Economy and Society Index, i.e. “[DESI](#)”, is the nickname for a new tool to assess the EU’s performance in the digital area. This “**composite index**” aggregates data about Member States’ digital performance and tracks their annual progress. Calculated as a **weighted average** of five dimensions (connectivity, human capital, use of internet, integration of digital technology and public services), the DESI provides a 0 to 1 ranking.

On 25th February, the Commission published the results for 2015. They are interesting to compare with the DESI’s first edition published last year which covered data collected in 2013 and 2014.

And here we are: **all Member States have made progress**, to the notable exception of Sweden. No cause for alarm though: it remains among the digital leaders (3rd instead of 1st) and more than 80% of Swedes read news and do banking online!

The EU average has increased from 0,50 to 0,53 thanks to progress in : the **integration of digital technology and connectivity**. Despite this positive trend, twenty-four out of twenty-eight Member States experienced slower progress than last year.

As for individual performance, the results can be analysed on a standalone basis (I) and relatively to 2014 (II).

I. Once again, **the poll is led by Northern States**: Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Belgium and the UK score between 0,6 and 0,7. At the other end, Southern and Eastern countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy keep on ranking 0,4 or below.

II. In comparison with 2014, countries can be grouped in **four teams**. The winners running ahead are both above the EU average and improving faster than it: Austria, Germany, Estonia, Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal.

Some countries are in the first half but their progress is slower than average: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Sweden and the UK.

A group of States is catching up: although below the mean, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia improve quickly.

Finally, some countries “fall behind” since they have both a low index and slow progress. This group surprisingly includes France as well as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

Last but not least, the **integration of digital technology** remains by far the lowest of all dimensions, even though it experiences the fastest growth. Logically, the lower you start, the more room for improvement you have. A trend the EU may be eager to build up on with its upcoming strategy on industry digitisation which is expected on 6th April.

EU public consultations*

| Policy field | Title | Deadline |
|--------------|--|------------|
| Internal | Enforcement of intellectual property rights | 15.04.2016 |
| Market | Notifications of new regulatory requirements for services providers | 19.04.2016 |
| | Support measures for start-ups | 30.06.2016 |
| Taxation | Double taxation dispute resolution mechanisms | 10.05.2016 |
| Copyright | The role of publishers in the copyright value chain and the 'panorama exception' | 15.06.2016 |
| Transparency | Proposal for a mandatory Transparency Register | 01.06.2016 |
| Justice | An effective insolvency framework within the EU | 14.06.1988 |

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