



JOINT STATEMENT ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME FOR THE PERIOD 2028-2034

A unified message from the European sport and physical activity sector

Brussels, Monday, 8 December 2025

Introduction:

The **117 undersigned organisations** welcome the European Commission's proposal for the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034 published on 16 July 2025, and the call for feedback on EU funding for cross-border education, training and solidarity, young people, media, culture and creative sectors, values, and civil society, including Erasmus+.

Sport and physical activity have proven to be an important economic sector in the EU. The production of related goods and services in the EU contributes EUR 627.5 billion to GDP, accounting for approximately 3.4% of the total EU GDP. Moreover, sport directly accounts for 6.05 million jobs, representing 2.48% of total employment in the economy[1].

The role of sport and health-enhancing physical activity in preventive healthcare has been particularly recognised by international policymakers. Physical inactivity imposes an economic burden of EUR 80.4 billion annually on the EU, including direct healthcare costs and lost productivity. Increasing physical activity to recommend levels could save nearly EUR 8 billion in healthcare costs alone, with an average return of EUR 1.70 for every EUR 1 invested[2].

[1] hemistoklis Kokolakakis et al., *EU Sport Satellite Account: Research into Estimating the Economic Value of Sport in the EU, 2025, Eurostat (based on 2019 data)*, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3888793/22121382/KS-01-25-041-EN-N.pdf/c8266460-9f1a-affd-f288-d2669de405d2?version=1.0&t=1756987715084>

[2] World Health Organization and OECD, *Increasing Physical Activity Could Save the EU Billions Annually*, 17 February 2023, <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/17-02-2023-new-who-oecd-report--increasing-physical-activity-could-save-the-eu-billions-annually>

Sport and physical activity are proven drivers not only of health and wellbeing, but also of skills development, inclusion, as well as powerful promoters of European values, solidarity, and peace. Sport and physical activity are not a luxury: they are essential investments in Europe's people and future. They directly contribute to EU overarching policy objectives that promote preventive healthcare, education, employment, social cohesion, equality, having a crucial role in fostering a resilient and sustainable European society[3].

As representatives of the European sport and physical activity sector, we wish to fully harness the transformative potential of sport and physical activity in Europe, by highlighting our priorities and recommendations for the next MFF and the future of Erasmus+:

- **Increasing the overall Erasmus+ envelope within the MFF 2028-34**, ensuring that the programme's share of the EU budget does not decrease compared to the current period and that funding remains adaptable to inflation and other external shocks. Additionally, **guaranteeing a clear and independent identity for sport and physical activity within Erasmus+**, avoiding their dilution under broader horizontal priorities or thematic accumulations.
- **Earmarking at least 5% of the Erasmus+ budget for sport and physical activity**, a minimum and predictable share of the Erasmus+ budget, complemented by national level allocations, to ensure stable, long-term, and equitable funding for the sport and physical activity sector.
- **Ensuring balanced governance** by combining decentralised implementation and support to grassroots organisations with strong EU-level coordination, setting a mandatory minimum share for sport in each National Agency, and reinforcing transnational cooperation and supporting strong civil society through Operational Programme Grants (OPGs) and structured stakeholder consultations.
- **Reinforcing the link between sport, health, education, and inclusion**, by expanding mobility opportunities for athletes, coaches, and other grassroots participants, recognising sport as a key driver for learning, skills development, employability, and community engagement.
- **Simplifying funding procedures and enhancing transparency**, by reducing administrative burdens, clarifying eligibility rules, and guaranteeing transparent, harmonised assessment criteria to improve accessibility and fairness for all organisations and countries participating in EU funded projects, especially grassroots actors.
- **Fostering sustainability, innovation, public-private partnerships and long-term impact**, by prioritising projects that deliver measurable societal and economic values, supporting innovation and financial sustainability.
- **Extending eligibility and strengthening transnational cooperation**, expanding Erasmus+ geographical eligibility more broadly, and especially ensuring full participation of Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, and enabling multi-country HEPA (Health- Enhancing Physical Activity) and grassroots sport projects to reinforce cohesion and European values.
- **Mainstreaming sport and physical activity across all relevant EU policy areas**, by embedding them as means to achieve wider objectives of health promotion, skills development, sustainable growth, innovation, education, social cohesion and tackling climate change through EU funding programmes such as Cohesion Policy Funds, Horizon Europe, LIFE, EU4Health, Digital Europe, CERV and AMIF and their thematic successor programmes.

[3] Council of the European Union, *Conclusions on Promoting Cross-Sectoral Cooperation for the Benefit of Sport and Physical Activity in Society*, 2020/C 419/08, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020XG1204\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020XG1204(01)).

1. Increasing the overall Erasmus+ envelope within the MFF 2028-34

The European Commission's proposal to increase the Erasmus+ budget by 50%, reaching €40.8 billion, is a welcome step forward in reinforcing the Union's commitment to education, youth, and sport and physical activity. However, the undersigned organisations believe that a more ambitious overall increase of the Erasmus+ envelope within the next Multiannual Financial Framework is necessary.

Despite the nominal rise, the share of Erasmus+ within the new MFF (2028-2034) will be lower than in the current framework, meaning that, in relative terms, the programme will receive a smaller portion of the EU budget (especially when accounting for the merging of the European Solidarity Corps(ESC). Combined with rising inflation and the growing impact of external shocks, this risks eroding the real value of available EU funding for education, training, youth, and sport and physical activity. To ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness, Erasmus+ should be adaptable to inflation and changing socio-economic contexts, through periodic adjustments and adequate financial flexibility.

Additionally, it is crucial to safeguard the visibility and independence of the sport and physical activity strand. The ongoing accumulation of thematic areas under broader horizontal priorities risks diluting the visibility and policy relevance of sectoral actions, such as, precisely, sport and physical activity.

Therefore, we call for a strong political recognition of our sector, implying a dedicated, clearly identifiable budget line for sport and physical activity, preventing them from being merged with other broad thematic clusters. Only by maintaining its distinct identity and dedicated resources can the EU fully leverage sport and physical activity as drivers of education, inclusion, health, and societal resilience.

2. Earmarking at least 5% of Erasmus+ for sport and physical activity

To ensure coherence and long-term impact, at least 5% of the total Erasmus+ budget should be earmarked for sport and physical activity-related actions. This clear commitment would provide financial stability and predictability for the sector, allowing organisations to plan strategically and deliver measurable results. A dedicated budget line would also protect sport and physical activity from the risk of dilution under broader horizontal or cross-sectoral priorities, while strengthening their role as distinct policy areas within Erasmus+. Such a measure would strengthen grassroots' participation, enhance educational opportunities, and foster innovation throughout the European sport ecosystem.

3. Ensuring balanced governance and fair access

The undersigned organisations recognise that greater decentralisation of Erasmus+ funding through National Agencies can facilitate implementation and outreach at national, regional and local level, bringing decision-making closer to communities and fostering inclusion. However, this approach must be carefully balanced to avoid uneven access and fragmentation in implementation across Member States. Specifically, many National Agencies within the EU do not have dedicated sport and physical activity capacities and tend to prioritise investment in education and training, rather than in sport-related activities. A further shift towards decentralisation could therefore lead to a dilution of the resources allocated to sport and physical activity, particularly in countries where these areas are not structurally integrated into the national Erasmus+ framework.

We call for guaranteeing the Erasmus+ Committee in the upcoming Regulation and ensure that diverse civil society networks representing the beneficiaries are included in structured and regular consultations on evaluating the Erasmus+ programme, its implementation and future developments.

To ensure fairness and consistency, we advocate for a targeted and well-defined decentralisation, accompanied by a mandatory minimum share that each National Agency must dedicate exclusively to sport and physical activity projects. At the same time, strong EU-level coordination and oversight remain essential to maintain coherence, monitor implementation, and preserve equal opportunities across Europe. A centralised governance structure should continue to play a guiding and corrective role, ensuring that common objectives are met, implementation is harmonised and that no region or sector is left behind.

In this context, the introduction and strengthening of Operational Programme Grants (OPGs) across all Erasmus+ policy areas would provide a valuable mechanism to support transnational, multi-country and multi-member initiatives that cannot be efficiently managed at national level. OPGs would act as a bridge between centralised and decentralised structures, ensuring continuity, facilitating long-term partnerships, and promoting collaboration among European organisations active across several Member States.

4. Reinforcing the link between sport, health, education, and inclusion

The inclusion of athletes, coaches, and other grassroots participants in Erasmus+ mobility actions represents an important step in promoting learning, professional development, and community engagement through sport and physical activity. As a matter of fact, education in and through sport and physical activity remains a key driver for skills enhancement, training, and life long learning. These are the reasons why continued investment in these areas is vital, and why sport and physical activity should remain eligible under related EU funding strands, including adult education, health, youth, and vocational training, to promote employability, inclusion, and personal growth.

5. Simplifying funding procedures and enhancing transparency

We support the notion put forward in the Proposal for a Regulation of the Erasmus+ Programme for the period 2028-2034 that “the Programme should be simplified and made more accessible to a broader audience” - especially for newcomers. Smaller sport organisations, including local clubs, NGOs, and federations, continue to face significant administrative and procedural barriers in accessing Erasmus+ funds, thus the emphasis of ensuring proportionality between the grant level and the requirements is welcomed. Simplified application, digital systems and reporting procedures, clearer eligibility rules, and greater transparency in project evaluation are necessary to ensure fairness and consistency for all beneficiaries and especially potential first-time applicants, people with fewer opportunities and grassroots organisations.

Additionally, ensuring a harmonised and stable eligibility, assessment and reporting implementations across all Erasmus+ Programme actions and countries would enhance trust in the selection process and improve overall efficiency and accessibility of the programme.

6. Fostering sustainability, innovation, public-private partnerships and long-term impact

The assessment of sport and physical activity projects should prioritise long-term societal and economic impact in addition to short-term outputs, ensuring that EU funding delivers lasting value for citizens and communities. The European Commission should also strengthen the dissemination and storytelling of impactful project results and facilitate collaboration between similar thematic projects to maximise the pan-European impact. In this context, initiatives that foster innovation, strengthen public-private partnerships, and promote financial sustainability should be particularly encouraged, as they contribute to building a bigger and more inclusive, resilient and self-sustaining sport and physical activity ecosystem, as well as a more competitive Europe.

Moreover, the potential for commercialisation, where projects generate products, services, processes or models capable of continuing beyond EU public support, constitutes an important indicator of impact and long-term commercial success with positive outcomes on employment, economic growth and financial stability.

Finally, we regret the lack of reference to 'Not for Profit Sport Events aiming to further develop the European dimension of sport', which have been key funding lines to enable sport and physical activity stakeholders to implement campaigns that simultaneously: enable individuals to be active across the continent, directly contribute to the Commission's European Week of Sport, and that bring to life WHO's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-30 recommendations to run physical activity campaigns as key to reversing the continuous rise of sedentary lifestyles. These budget lines, formerly supporting Not-for-profit Sport and physical activity events, and pan-European campaigns, would benefit from extended project durations (i.e 24–36 months) and from greater flexibility, to enhance continuity across multiple editions, allow for more strategic planning, and significantly reduce the administrative burden on participating organisations.

7. Extending eligibility and transnational cooperation

Extending Erasmus+ geographical eligibility more broadly, and especially to the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, which already actively contribute to the European Week of Sport (EWOs), would represent a significant step towards strengthening cohesion, visibility, and the dissemination of shared European values beyond the borders of the Union. Such an expansion would not only promote closer cooperation with neighbouring regions but also reinforce Europe's role as a global leader in sport diplomacy and social engagement. This approach would encourage collaboration between diverse actors, enhance efficiency through shared structures, and ensure that the benefits of EU sport initiatives reach a broader range of communities across the continent and beyond.

8. Mainstreaming sport and physical activity across EU programmes

Sport and physical activity's proven contribution to current key Union strategies such as health promotion (via the Health-Enhancing Physical Activity – HEPA – agenda), the Mental Health Agenda, the EU Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights, or the EU Youth Strategy clearly demonstrates their cross-cutting relevance and deserve the strongest level of political endorsement. To fully harness this potential, sport and physical activity should be mainstreamed into the above-mentioned EU policy areas and their corresponding funding frameworks, including Cohesion Policy, Horizon Europe, LIFE, EU4Health, Digital Europe and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, and their thematic successors.

By strengthening the presence of sport and physical activity across these programmes as a vector to achieve their investment objectives, the EU would amplify its social, economic, and environmental impact, mitigating future health risks, fostering innovation, lowering society's carbon footprint, developing community cohesion and resilience, and active citizenship. The strategic investment in sport and physical activity aligns closely with the European Commission's 2024–2029 priorities— promoting social fairness and quality of life, strengthening democracy and values, and fostering sustainable prosperity and competitiveness—and should therefore be firmly incorporated into the upcoming MFF 2028–2034.

By prioritising sport and physical activity, the European Union can reaffirm its dedication to building a healthier, more cohesive, competitive and resilient Europe. Far from being simple leisure activities, they are proven catalysts for health, education, social inclusion, innovation and economic growth, while also embodying and promoting core European values such as solidarity and peace. Investing in sport and physical activity is not a luxury; it is an essential commitment to the well-being and future of Europe's citizens

THE SIGNATORIES 1/3

- ACES Europe
- Active Sweden
- Active-FNEAPL
- adidas
- adidas Foundation
- Afydad
- ANESTAPS
- ANIF EuroWellness (Italy)
- Asociación Para El Impulso, Investigacion, Desarrollo E Innovacion De Impacto En Deporte Y Actividad Fisica (hub 4icvesport)
- Asociatia D.G.T.
- Associació Catalana Clúster de la Indústria de l'Esport
- Asociación Tarjeta Verde
- Association Alice Milliat (AMA)
- Attic Union of Gym Owners - S.I.G.A
- Austrian Federation of Sporting Goods Retailer and Industry (VSSÖ)
- Austrian Professional Association of Sports and Leisure Enterprises
- Barleti University, Tirana, Albania
- Basic-Fit
- Bayburt University
- BSI
- Budapest Association for International Sports (BAIS)
- CBBS Management Consulting Company Ltd
- CityLegends
- Clúster da Industria do deporte e o benestar de Galicia
- Cluster Sports & technology
- CR Management SRL
- CSIT
- Cycling Industries Europe (CIE)-CONEBI
- Czech Chamber of Fitness (Česká komora fitness)
- Czech Hockey Federation
- Decathlon
- DFHO - Danish Fitness and Health Organisation
- DIFG e.V. - Deutscher Industrieverband für Fitness und Gesundheit e.V.
- DSSV e. V. - Arbeitgeberverband deutscher Fitness- und Gesundheits-Anlagen
- EAGLE Sports Integrity Services
- Econmove GmbH
- Elan
- ENERVIT SPA
- Estonian Competence Centre for Physical Activity
- Estonian Foundation of Sports Education and Information (EFSEI)
- European Sports and Wellbeing Alliance for Municipalities (ESWAM)
- Eurasante
- EurEthICS ETSIA
- EuroHockey
- EuropeActive
- European Acquatics
- European Association of Sport Employers (EASE)
- European Initiative for Exercise in Medicine (EIEIM)
- European Federation for Company Sport (EFCS)
- European Federation of Sporting Goods Retailers (FEDAS)

THE SIGNATORIES 2/3

- European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE)
- European Platform for Sport Innovation (EPSI)
- European University Sports Association (EUSA)
- Everythink, Lda
- Fare network
- Fédération Française du Sport d'Entreprise (FFSE)
- Federation of the Irish Sport (FIS)
- FELUBA
- Federation of the European Sporting Goods industry (FESI)
- FinlandActive (Liikuntayrittäjät)
- FUNDACJA INNOWACJI DLA SPORTU VERDE
- Fusioni in Movimento
- Fútbol Más Espagne
- Fútbol Más France
- HUNactive
- Hungarian School Sport Federation (HSSF)
- Ireland Active
- International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)
- ISPO
- LAB University of Applied Sciences
- LUNEX S.A.
- Matrix Fitness
- MSE Hungarian Sport- and Lifestyle Development Cluster
- National School, University and Leisure Sport Federation
- National Sports Academy "Vassil Levski" (NSA)
- Nextage
- North Macedonia Active
- NOUVEAUX HORIZONS, NOUVELLES OPPORTUNITÉS
- OLYMPIACOS SYNDESMOS FILATHLON PIREOS (OLYMPIACOS)
- PCSS - Poznan Supercomputing and Networking Center
- Play International
- Portugal Activo
- Protect Our Winters Europe (POW)
- Purpose Brands
- RSI Sports Group
- School Sport Federation Kosovo
- size Wise
- Slovenian Innovation Hub, European Economic Ineterst Grouping (SIH EEIG)
- Spain Active Foundation - Fundación España Activa
- Sport and Physical Activity Studies Centre (CEEAF), University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia (Spain)
- Sport and Sustainability
- Sports+Vitality
- SPORTCAMP Group
- Sportinnovator NL
- Sports Union of Slovenia
- Stichting Orange Sports Forum (OSF)
- Stichting SportDrenthe
- Swiss active - Fitness industry association Switzerland
- The City of Jyväskylä

THE SIGNATORIES 3/3

- ThinkSport
- Think Tank Sport and Citizenship (3S)
- Turkish Sports Industry Association (TREPS)
- UISP Aps
- Universidad Europea de Valencia
- Universidad Francisco de Vitoria – Faculty of Health Sciences (UFV)
- Università Iuav di Venezia
- University of Debrecen, Institute of Sports Sciences
- University of Jyväskylä
- University Union - Nikola Tesla, Faculty of Sport (Belgrad)
- V4SPORT Foundation
- valorSummits
- Varala Sports Institute
- VILLE DE LIMOGES
- VitalizeDx
- Wellness Foundation
- Werkgevers in de Sport (WOS)
- Youth Sport Trust International