

**Council conclusions on maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills,
especially among young people**

(2015/C 172/03)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES,
MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

RECALLING THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THIS ISSUE, AS SET OUT IN THE ANNEX, AND IN PARTICULAR THE
FOLLOWING:

1. The Europe 2020 Strategy and its flagship initiatives, which emphasise the need to equip young people with the necessary skills and competences and to address the high levels of youth unemployment in Europe, as well as the Synthesis report of the Europe 2020 Strategy mid-term review⁽¹⁾, which lists among its key outcomes the sport sector's valuable role as an instrument of social cohesion and inclusion.
2. The European Union Work Plan for Sport for 2014-2017⁽²⁾, which highlights the important contribution of sport to the overall goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, given the sector's strong potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. One of the three Work Plan's priorities — 'Sport and Society' — highlights the links of sport to employment, education and training.
3. The Council Resolution of 20 July 2006 on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field⁽³⁾ emphasises that non-formal and informal learning can enable young people to acquire additional knowledge, skills and competences and contribute to their personal development, social inclusion and active citizenship, thereby improving their employment prospects; and that greater recognition of these should be given due consideration by employers, formal education and civil society in general.
4. The Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁽⁴⁾, which identifies opportunities and mechanisms that enable knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning to play an important role in enhancing employability and mobility, as well as increasing motivation for lifelong learning.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

5. Participation in grassroots sport⁽⁵⁾, while first and foremost a physical leisure activity, also brings additional added-value with regard to a healthier and generally more inclusive and sustainable society in Europe. It may develop positive social attitudes and values, as well as individuals' skills and competences, including transversal skills⁽⁶⁾ such as the ability to think critically, take initiatives, problem solve and work collaboratively⁽⁷⁾.
6. There is a need to respond to the increasing requirements of an advanced knowledge-based economy, especially with regard to transversal skills development and the ability to efficiently apply such skills across various sectors; at a time of quickly changing demands in the labour market, employers highly value transversal skills, yet often indicate that new recruits are lacking such skills.

⁽¹⁾ Doc. 16559/14.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, p. 12.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 168, 20.7.2006, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ 'Grassroots sport' means organised sport practised at local level by amateur sportspeople, and sport for all. *Source*: Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50).

⁽⁶⁾ Various agencies and organisations have given different labels to these skills, ranging from 'key competencies' to 'soft skills', 'transferable skills' or 'essential skills', 'core work skills' or 'core skills for employability'. According to European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network's Glossary transversal skills are relevant to jobs and occupations other than the ones they currently have or have recently had. These skills may also have been acquired through non-work or leisure activities or through participation in education or training. More generally, these are skills, which have been learned in one context or to master a special situation/problem and can be transferred to another context.

⁽⁷⁾ COM(2012) 669 final.

7. With regard to the contribution of sport to transversal skills development, there is untapped potential, especially for young people, since skills gained via non-formal ⁽¹⁾ and informal learning ⁽²⁾ are valuable for personal and professional development, including on the labour market and in lifelong learning ⁽³⁾.
8. With regard to recognition of the value of transversal skills gained through non-formal and informal learning via grassroots sports, the first steps are awareness raising and visibility primarily among participants themselves, parents, volunteers and staff, but also society at large, including employers.

UNDERLINE THAT:

9. Sport makes a contribution to the Union's strategic objectives of growth, jobs and social cohesion, including the urgent challenges that Europe is currently facing such as the persistently high youth unemployment rates ⁽⁴⁾ in Europe. In order for sport to further develop its full potential in this regard, it is important to work towards a cross-sectoral approach involving other policy areas such as education and training, youth and employment, social affairs and public health.
10. Non-traditional sports ⁽⁵⁾ are often particularly appealing to young people, including those with fewer opportunities, and the possibilities which these offer could be further explored.
11. Competent staff, including volunteers, in grassroots sport are essential for raising awareness, unlocking the added value and benefits that it can offer with regard to the development of transversal skills.

IN THIS CONTEXT INVITE THE EU MEMBER STATES, WITH DUE REGARD FOR SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

12. Create more awareness among stakeholders in grassroots sport, in society and among employers that transversal skills gained through participation in grassroots sport have personal, social and economic added value that can be used in other sectors.
13. Cooperate and exchange good practice with other relevant sectors and among EU Member States on the positive benefits of skills gained outside formal education via non-formal and informal learning in the grassroots sport.
14. Encourage the development of knowledge, skills and competences of competent staff, including volunteers, in grassroots sport with a view to enhancing social and educational values, as well as transversal skills, through grassroots sport.
15. Encourage innovative partnerships between formal and non-formal learning providers, as well as across the youth and sports sectors, in order to develop learning approaches that could be suitable in the grassroots sport sector.
16. Promote self-assessment of skills, especially among young people, that includes transversal skills gained via grassroots sport, as well as the use of the most common skills passes and CV templates, especially Europass.
17. Make use of existing arrangements aimed at enabling validation of skills and experiences gained in non-formal and informal learning in sports.
18. Further improve the overall participation in grassroots sport of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, at national and local level, and exploit the positive potential of non-traditional sports in this regard.

⁽¹⁾ Definition: 'non-formal learning' means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives and learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. a student-teacher relationship), but which is not part of the formal education and training system. *Source:* OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50

⁽²⁾ Definition: 'informal learning' means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure which is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective. *Source:* OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50

⁽³⁾ Evidence suggests that when it comes to obtaining skills outside formal education, 52 % of Europeans assess that it is possible to learn skills that can be later used in other sectors (e.g. problem solving, working with others etc.). *Source:* Special Eurobarometer 417 (2014) 'European area of skills and qualifications', p. 12.

⁽⁴⁾ Over 5 million young people (under 25) were unemployed in the EU-28 area in the second quarter of 2014. This represents an unemployment rate of 21,7 %, while NEET (young people not in education, employment or training) rate was 13 %. *Source:* Eurostat

⁽⁵⁾ New emerging forms of sports attractive to young people, for example — street soccer, urban gymnastics and parkour, skateboarding/longboarding, stunt blading, streetball and urban street dance.

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND MEMBER STATES WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE TO:

19. Promote the value of transversal skills acquired through grassroots sports by learners so that they can be used effectively across sectors for the purposes of employment, learning mobility or lifelong learning.
20. Recognise and integrate the positive outcomes of transversal skills developed through the grassroots sports sector in national and European policies and in strategies concerning sport, youth, social affairs, health, education and employment.
21. Recognise and support contributions made by grassroots sport organisations in providing non-formal learning opportunities.
22. Explore the potential for cooperation with the youth sector, especially with regard to:
 - a. the application of non-formal learning methods and tools in the sports sector;
 - b. the use of sporting activities in non-formal learning methods in the youth sector;
 - c. encouraging more European Voluntary Service funded projects involving young volunteers from non-profit organisations in the sports sector;
 - d. using sporting activities as a social inclusion and outreach tool, including with regard to its contribution to implementing the Youth Guarantee in Europe.
23. Encourage initiatives, where appropriate, including under the European Week of Sport, on the educational value of sport, as well as that of enhancing socially inclusive communities.
24. Cooperate to raise standards in training and coaching and in the education of trainers and coaches as well as volunteers by facilitating the exchange of information and experience between policy-makers and sport stakeholders;
25. Encourage sport volunteering and raising awareness on the value of volunteering in sport, in particular in acquiring transversal skills, recognising volunteering as an important form of non-formal learning and reinforcing national and cross-border mobility of young volunteers.
26. Encourage effective use of EU funding instruments such as the Erasmus+ programme as an opportunity for developing transversal skills, especially among young people, to also enhance social inclusion, active citizenship as well as increased participation in grassroots sport.
27. Make use of the follow-up process of the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning to address the issue of transversal skills acquired through sports.

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

28. Carry out a study on the contribution of sport to the employability of young people in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including aspects of transversal skills gained through participation in grassroots sports.
29. Mainstream the sports dimension in existing skills policy discussions and events, in order to raise awareness and explore more concrete ways of acquiring transversal skills in and through sports.
30. Continue, including within the mandate of the Expert Groups established by the EU Work Plan for Sport, the collection of data, best practice and the analysis of the social and economic importance of sport and of how grassroots sport contributes to areas such as employment, education and training, including a focus on personal and transversal skills development.
31. 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.

INVITE THE SPORTS MOVEMENT TO CONSIDER:

32. Creating awareness, especially among young people and their parents, that skills gained in and through sport can have a special value that can be used in other sectors.
 33. Investing in competent staff that are using the most up-to-date methods in their work allowing them to fully benefit from the additional values that sport is able to deliver, including those of skills acquisition.
 34. Raising awareness among staff in sport of the positive benefits of transversal skills acquired in sporting activities via non-formal and informal learning and the overall social and economic added value of grassroots sport.
 35. Exploring the potential for cooperation and the exchange of good practice with youth organisations, especially as regards the application of non-formal learning methods and tools to the sports sector.
 36. Exchanging best practice on how to foster and diversify the grassroots sports movement, and exchanging good practice with regard to developing new types of grassroots sport, e.g. non-traditional sports.
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ANNEX

RECALLING THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THIS ISSUE

1. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning ⁽¹⁾ where social competence is linked to personal and social well-being which requires an understanding of how individuals can ensure optimum physical and mental health, including as a resource for oneself and one's family and one's immediate social environment, and knowledge of how a healthy lifestyle can contribute to this. For successful interpersonal and social participation it is essential to understand the codes of conduct and manners generally accepted in different societies and environments (e.g. at work). The core skills of this competence include the ability to communicate constructively in different environments, to show tolerance, express and understand different viewpoints, to negotiate with the ability to create confidence, and to feel empathy. Individuals should be capable of coping with stress and frustration and expressing them in a constructive way and should also distinguish between the personal and professional spheres.
2. The European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning ⁽²⁾ highlight that validating non-formal and informal learning is increasingly seen as a way of improving lifelong and lifewide learning. More European countries are emphasising the importance of making visible and valuing learning that takes place outside formal education and training institutions, for example at work, in leisure time activities and at home.
3. The Council Conclusions of 18 November 2010 on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion ⁽³⁾ highlight that access to and participation in diverse aspects of sport is important for personal development, an individual's sense of identity and belonging, physical and mental wellbeing, empowerment, social competences and networks, intercultural communication and employability.
4. The Council Conclusions of 29 November 2011 on the role of voluntary activities in sport in promoting active citizenship ⁽⁴⁾ emphasise the need to promote voluntary activities in sport as an important tool for raising competences and skills, also in a form of non-formal and informal learning.
5. The Council conclusions of 15 February 2013 on investing in education and training – a response to Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes and the 2013 Annual Growth Survey ⁽⁵⁾, invites Member States to introduce measures to develop transversal skills and competences as described in the 2006 Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning.
6. The Council Conclusions of 26 November 2013 on the contribution of sport to the EU economy, and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion ⁽⁶⁾, recognise that through engagement in sport, young people attain specific personal and professional skills and competences which enhance employability. These include learning to learn, social and civic competences, leadership, communication, teamwork, discipline, creativity, entrepreneurship.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

⁽²⁾ European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning. Cedefop (2009).

⁽³⁾ OJ C 326, 3.12.2010, p. 5.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 24.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 64, 5.3.2013, p. 5.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 32, 4.2.2014, p. 2.