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European Union Committee

16th Report of Session 2010–11

Grassroots Sport and the European Union

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References in footnotes to the Report are as follows:

Q refers to the question in oral evidence;

GSEU refers to written evidence as listed in Appendix 2.

SUMMARY

The Lisbon Treaty granted the EU a formal competence in the field of sport, permitting it to support, coordinate and complement the actions of Member States. In January 2011 the Commission published its Communication, *Developing the European Dimension in Sport*, the first sport policy document since the Treaty entered into force on 1 December 2009. This report examines how the competence can best be used to support grassroots sport, extending the benefits participation can bring to individuals, specific groups of individuals and communities. It also responds to the Communication's suggestions in these areas. Grassroots sport is a broad term covering non-professional activity, sometimes referred to as 'sport for all'.

We conclude that the EU and its Member States can benefit most from sport by integrating it into policy making and delivery in a broad range of areas including health, education, social inclusion and equalities. Sport can act as a powerful tool in delivering objectives in each of these areas but its potential has yet to be exploited by policy makers at either EU or Member State level.

We therefore recommend that the EU should act in two main ways: by integrating sport into its policy making and funding streams; and by encouraging Member States to improve their own performances. The Commission's Sport Unit could usefully act as a focal point for activity. The EU can assist in making a more compelling case for the integration of sport through data collection and research, particularly with regard to the evidence base around the social outcomes which sport can facilitate. It should also improve mechanisms through which Member States share best practice and establish an interactive webportal where grassroots organisations can do likewise. Whilst we accept that resources for any funding stream specific to sport are likely to be small, we nevertheless see value in a Sports Programme, although lessons need to be learnt from the Preparatory Actions, most notably how to make the transnational requirement work in practice.

EU legislation in a diverse range of areas impacts upon the delivery and sustainability of grassroots sport including intellectual property and single market legislation. In these cases, we conclude that sport needs to be considered in its own right, and where appropriate its specific nature taken account of. Such legislation is significant in that the way in which it is applied to the broadcasting rights of professional sport directly impacts upon the amount of money available for redistribution at the grassroots. In order to lessen the current sense of uncertainty, sports stakeholders and the Commission should work together in light of Court of Justice judgments to produce a more widely agreed definition of the specificity of sport.

We conclude that better and more consistent measures need to be put in place to ensure that proposed legislation in areas not directly relating to sport does not adversely impact upon it or impose unnecessary regulatory burdens. We recommend that a review of existing legislation take place.

Dialogue between sports stakeholders and the Commission is currently not fully representative. We recommend the Commission put in place measures to better inform grassroots organisations about work being undertaken at EU level and the opportunities available to them.

Grassroots Sport and the European Union

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The development of an EU sports policy

1. Article 165 of the Lisbon Treaty (TFEU) for the first time accords the European Union a formal competence in the field of sport (see Box 1). The Treaty provides for the EU to support, coordinate and complement the efforts of Member States but does not allow it to adopt legislation specifically relating to sport. The EU uses the definition of sport established by the Council of Europe which encompasses “all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.”¹
2. Sport as a policy area has been developing at EU level over a number of years. Further to a number of Commission Reports, the EU’s Heads of State and Government adopted a Declaration, which was annexed to the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty. This emphasised the social significance of sport and noted that particular consideration should be given to the specific characteristics of amateur sport. Three years later, the December 2000 Nice European Council adopted Conclusions which went into much greater detail, and requested that the European institutions and Member States “continue examining their policies” in the light of the general principles laid down. On that occasion, the focus remained the societal role of sport, and the consequent importance of taking sport’s social function into account when adopting and implementing other Community policies.²
3. The Commission issued a White Paper on Sport³ in July 2007 and this, along with its accompanying action plan, subsequently formed the basis of EU action. The White Paper examined sport’s societal role, its economic dimension and its organisation. This has become the accepted structure for EU level activities and discussion among stakeholders and the EU institutions. The Commission has made clear that in many areas it considers the White Paper remains an appropriate basis for EU level activities.⁴ Preparatory actions, intended to prepare the ground for future EU actions, began in 2009.⁵

¹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/sport/sportineurope/Default_en.asp

² http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/nice1_en.htm#IV

³ COM (2007) 391

⁴ COM (2011) 12

⁵ See paragraph 60 for further detail.

BOX 1**Article 165 TFEU**

Article 165 (1) provides that “the Union shall contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking into account the specific nature of sport, its structures based on voluntary activity and its social and educational function.”

Article 165 (2) continues that “Union action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in sport, by promoting fairness and openness in sporting competitions, promoting cooperation between bodies responsible for sport, and protecting the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen, especially the youngest sportsmen and sportswomen.”

Article 165 (3) states that “The Union and Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the field of education and sport, in particular the Council of Europe.

Article 165 (4) permits the EU institutions to “adopt incentive measures and recommendations, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States.”

4. We examined the treaty base in our report *The Treaty of Lisbon: an impact assessment*⁶ prior to its entry into force. The absence of a specific treaty base for sport prior to December 2009 was regarded by some as unsatisfactory, creating legal uncertainty and leaving sports policy lacking both coherence and status. There was no strategic approach to sport, integration into wider EU policy, and no dedicated funding. There was also concern that the specific nature and characteristics of sport were neither sufficiently nor systematically taken into account by either the Commission or the Court of Justice. This was particularly the case where sport came into conflict with principles of EU law, notably those relating to the single market, such as competition and free movement. One such example was the *Bosman* ruling, in which restrictions on the number of non-nationals playing in a club team within a Member State were ruled to be in contravention of the free movement principles enshrined within the Treaty.⁷ This state of affairs was criticised for leaving sports policy to be determined by the Court of Justice.
5. In April 2010 the Commission initiated an EU-wide public consultation, which resulted in its Communication *Developing the European Dimension in Sport*. Published in January 2011, in the course of this inquiry, it proposes actions until 2015. It is due to be first discussed at the Council of Sport Ministers’ meeting in May 2011. Box 2 sets out the specific challenges which the Communication identifies and aims to address.⁸ This reflects a broad consensus on the areas where the EU should act. These have emerged through the Commission’s consultation exercise and independent expert group, Member State preferences and a study conducted for the European Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee.

⁶ European Union Committee, 10th Report (2007-08): *Treaty of Lisbon: an impact assessment* (HL Paper 62).

⁷ Case C-415 93 *Belgian Football Association v Bosman*, ECR 1995, p. I-4921

⁸ EM 5597/11

BOX 2**Challenges identified in the Commission's Communication *Developing the European Dimension in Sport***

Sport's health enhancing, social and educational functions:

- Health concerns due to a lack of physical activity
- Social exclusion of disadvantaged groups and unused potential of sport
- Inadequate systems to combine sport and education

Sustainable sport structures:

- Insufficient support for voluntary activity
- Current and future challenges to the sustainable funding of sport including regulatory changes in the gambling sector in Member States
- Inadequate protection of intellectual property rights

Doping as a threat to the physical and moral integrity of sports people

Discrimination in sport on the grounds of nationality

Unused scope for improving EU-level dialogue on sport

Perceived lack of legal clarity regarding the application of EU law to sport

Insufficient information on sport for Member States

The Committee's inquiry

6. This report does not question either the value of the competence or its scope. Sport as a policy area in itself is small in EU terms and has limited resources. The Committee launched this inquiry to consider how the new competence might best be used to maximise the potential and highlight the value of grassroots sport. In particular we consider how sport might be used to add value to wider policy priorities and agendas where the EU already acts and where it can support the actions of Member States. The inquiry was also launched with the aim of informing the Committee's response to the Commission Communication. This report puts our recommendations to the Government, but we hope that they will also be of interest to the European institutions. Although the Communication encompasses the entire spectrum of sports from professional to grassroots, the focus of this report is the grassroots dimension. We have chosen this focus in the light of the fact that Article 165 expressly recognises the social and educational significance of sport.⁹
7. This report begins by considering the evidence for the range of outcomes that grassroots sport can deliver. From this, we identify priorities for EU action. We then consider what measures are needed to support and resource these priorities and what action the EU can take, notably in the areas of volunteering and funding. Finally, we consider how various forms of dialogue should function.

⁹ The definition of grassroots activity varies from sport to sport and between Member States but is often characterised by being local or community-based and dependent on volunteers. It is not necessarily competitive.

8. The members of the Social Policies and Consumer Protection Sub-Committee who conducted the inquiry are listed in Appendix 1, showing their declared interests. We are grateful for the written and oral evidence that we received for our inquiry; the witnesses who provided it are listed in Appendix 2. In particular, we are grateful to Swiss Cottage School and the Camden Physical Activity and Disability Sports Team who allowed us to conduct a site visit and to those witnesses who gave evidence in person. A note of the visit can be found at Appendix 3. We are also grateful to Professor Richard Parrish, Professor of Sports Law at Edge Hill University, who was our specialist adviser for this inquiry. His interests are listed in Appendix 1.
9. The Call for Evidence we issued is shown in Appendix 4, and the evidence we received is available online.
10. **We make this report to the House for debate.**

CHAPTER 2: THE SOCIETAL ROLE OF SPORT

11. The Commission's Communication highlights a number of ways in which sport can contribute to the targets set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy: "sport has a strong potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and new jobs through its positive effects on social inclusion, education and training, and public health."¹⁰ This chapter first considers the evidence received about the range of outcomes sport is capable of delivering, before moving on to consider where the EU could act to provide added value to its existing actions and those of Member States in order to maximise sport's potential in these fields.
12. The Committee received a wide range of submissions which drew attention to the variety of ways in which sport can be used to deliver benefits for individuals, specific groups of individuals and communities. These could be broadly classified into benefits relating to: health; education, skills and personal development; and social inclusion. These are all areas in which the EU already acts. In the areas of combating social exclusion (Article 153(j)), public health (Article 168) and education (Articles 165–6), the EU's competence is largely restricted to a supporting one whereby it complements the actions of Member States and encourages cooperation between them. It can adopt incentive measures and recommendations to Member States, excluding any harmonisation of laws.

Health Benefits

13. There was broad agreement amongst our witnesses that the evidence base was strongest and most well-established around the positive physical and mental health outcomes that can result from regular participation in sport. These include reduced risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, strokes, certain types of cancer, osteoporosis and obesity, amongst others.¹¹ Evidence documenting sport's role in improving mental health for those who suffer from depression and anxiety was also highlighted.¹²
14. Participation in sport can therefore have particular benefit for groups at greater risk of developing these conditions. For example, the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) highlighted that the prevalence of mental illness is around three times higher amongst those with a disability than in the general population¹³ whilst Sport England noted that individuals of African Caribbean origin have a significantly higher risk of developing diabetes.¹⁴ The Royal National Institute of Blind People also drew attention to the role physical activity can play in improving balance, mobility and coordination for those with a visual impairment.¹⁵

¹⁰ COM (2011) 12

¹¹ Recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer cited in Q 41, Q 121, Department of Health *Be Active, Be Healthy*, 2009, cited in GSEU 29 and GSEU 14

¹² GSEU 20, GSEU 19, GSEU 29

¹³ GSEU 14

¹⁴ GSEU 29

¹⁵ GSEU 13

Education, Skills and Personal Development

15. A number of witnesses drew attention to sport as a tool in engaging individuals at all stages in the educational process, contributing to improved academic performance and assisting in the development of skills and attributes which can help move individuals further along the path to employment.
16. Examples of personal development included confidence building and improved self-esteem. Groups particularly identified as benefiting from this included young women,¹⁶ individuals from disadvantaged communities¹⁷ and those with a disability.¹⁸ It was also stressed that despite these benefits, these were all groups which are currently under-represented in terms of participation in sport.
17. With regard to outcomes in the education system, a number of witnesses drew attention to studies which have suggested a positive correlation between participation in sport and improved academic success in school.¹⁹ Others focused on the use of sport as a tool in increasing motivation and attendance. The Rugby Football Union (RFU) cited a project which has used sport as a means of facilitating the return of 14–16 year old young offenders to mainstream education.²⁰ The Premier League highlighted an innovative programme run in conjunction with schools which uses football as a method of engaging pupils and encouraging uptake of languages at GCSE. Football related resources are used in language teaching in the classroom, followed by football coaching in the language.²¹
18. Participation in sport can also help develop soft skills, such as communication and confidence-building, which can assist individuals back into employment or in their progress towards it. A project run by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) in association with the Prince's Trust and Gosling Tennis Academy aimed at developing skills essential for employability such as teamwork and leadership. In their pilot project 98% of participants were classified as educational under-achievers and 30% were ex-offenders. Following the programme 89% either continued in education or went into training or employment.²² The Football Foundation had similar success with a project run in conjunction with an NHS mental health partnership which combines football with educational activities. Evaluation of this project revealed that following the programme 75% of participants went into education, volunteering or training.²³
19. Participation in grassroots sport also offers opportunities for educational and personal development to volunteers. StreetGames described how for those from disadvantaged communities volunteering “can significantly improve their life chances and help achieve their full potential through teaching leadership and life management skills, as well as providing a route to

¹⁶ GSEU 15

¹⁷ GSEU 11

¹⁸ GSEU 14

¹⁹ GSEU 31, GSEU 29

²⁰ GSEU 7

²¹ GSEU 17

²² GSEU 27

²³ GSEU 20

recognised qualifications.” These included Sports Leader and Coach awards, first aid and lifeguarding qualifications. Surveys of participants revealed that these opportunities were highly valued, with individuals reporting that the experience had provided “a doorway to the future ... a practical way of learning” and had “helped me get back on my feet ... before, there were some days I couldn’t leave the house.”²⁴ The opportunities available for educational and personal development were also highlighted by Nary Wijeratne, a Volunteer Coordinator to whom we spoke in the course of our visit to Swiss Cottage School. She provided an example of a volunteer programme designed as a personal empowerment and leadership scheme for young girls.²⁵

20. We also received evidence regarding the role sport can play in awareness-raising. For example *Premier League Health* is a programme which aims to harness the popularity of sport to promote health issues. Run by clubs working with local health agencies who are able to identify the needs of a particular locality it aims to target individuals, many of whom may otherwise be hard to reach, within settings which are familiar and accessible to them. Work as part of the scheme has included bringing health professionals into stadiums on match days to talk directly to fans.²⁶ Sport Wales also emphasised the usefulness of sport, particularly in isolated rural areas, as a vehicle for bringing people together which could then be capitalised upon for other purposes, for example to broaden access to education and technology.²⁷ The European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO) and Supporters Direct considered the potential of sport as a vehicle for non-formal learning could be extended even further to promote more intangible concepts including European citizenship and democratic participation.²⁸

Societal Benefits

21. The Commission Communication draws particular attention to the potential of sport as a vehicle “to promote social inclusion of minorities and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and contribute towards better understanding among communities, including in post-conflict regions.”²⁹ The societal role of sport is one of the areas where the Government express their clearest support for the Commission’s objectives. In their Explanatory Memorandum they state that they support the Commission’s desire “to derive clear benefits for EU citizens and the continuing and effective use of sport as a positive policy instrument” and that “on that basis, the Communication should be regarded as a particularly constructive and welcome narrative of EU sports policy goals and ambitions in this area.”³⁰
22. The role sport can play in helping to integrate individuals excluded or isolated from society was highlighted by a number of our witnesses. The

²⁴ GSEU 34

²⁵ Appendix 3

²⁶ GSEU 17

²⁷ Q 212

²⁸ GSEU 30, GSEU 32

²⁹ COM (2011) 12

³⁰ EM 5597/11

Sport and Recreation Alliance³¹ and ENGSO³² drew attention to the benefits of participation for older people and the minister described increasing their levels of participation as “a huge area of possibility.”³³ The Football Foundation, which funds a project aimed at addressing physical and social inactivity of those aged over 55 and the Jubilee Hall Trust, which runs a dance class for those over 50, both highlighted feedback from participants which suggested its role in reducing feelings of social isolation in addition to increasing their sense of physical and mental wellbeing.³⁴

23. A number of our witnesses spoke of the potential role of sport in bringing together diverse or fragmented communities. Sport Northern Ireland described the “vital role” sport had played in “bringing the peoples of Northern Ireland together in an area that was safe and secure and in which there was mutual respect for their traditions and identities.” The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland acknowledged sport’s potential in this area, funding projects aimed at community cohesion and good relations.³⁵ Leon McCollin, a volunteer with StreetGames, explained how sports activities in his community had brought together individuals from a diverse range of religious and cultural backgrounds³⁶ and how this had had success in encouraging integration beyond the time of the formal sessions. The football project Kickz, funded by the Football Association and the Premier League and run in association with the police, has also had success in bringing together individuals from diverse ethnic groups in areas of deprivation where gangs often pose serious problems.³⁷
24. We also received evidence which stressed the effectiveness of sport as a method of reaching disengaged young people, particularly at “jeopardy ages.” StreetGames described the ways in which they tailored their programmes in order to address directly the protection and risk factors which affect young people falling into criminal or antisocial behaviours.³⁸ These are set out in Box 3. StreetGames also provided a number of practical examples of where their projects had contributed to measurably reduced rates of offending. For example data provided by Greater Manchester Police indicated that reported figures of antisocial behaviour in two wards where StreetGames targeted its projects were reduced by 39.7% per month in the course of a year.³⁹ Such projects can help local communities and businesses affected by offending whilst also providing opportunities for the police and other authorities to build up trust and relationships with young people and their families.⁴⁰ A report published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2009 concluded that “there is a clear association

³¹ GSEU 1

³² GSEU 30

³³ Q 231

³⁴ GSEU 20, GSEU 23

³⁵ QQ 210, 224

³⁶ Q 101

³⁷ GSEU 17

³⁸ GSEU 34, Youth Justice Board, *Risk and Protective Factors*, 2005

³⁹ GSEU 34

⁴⁰ GSEU 17, GSEU 11

between levels of trust in a community and membership of sport and cultural groups.”⁴¹

BOX 3

Using sport as a method of preventing youth offending

Risk factors are those which are known to increase the likelihood of subsequent involvement in youth crime. These can include weak communities, social alienation and attitudes which condone offending.

Grassroots sports projects can help mitigate these through creating stronger communities and helping build a sense of pride and belonging particularly through competitive events. Participation can also bring different communities together, helping to relieve tensions. Coaches and leaders can be used to transmit social understanding to participants, highlighting unacceptable behaviours and presenting the message that offending is unacceptable.

Protection Factors are those that buffer children and young people against the risks to which they are exposed.

Leaders of grassroots sports projects can provide positive role models within communities. Participation in sporting activities can also provide opportunities for individuals to develop social and intellectual skills and self-esteem. In addition it can provide a forum in which participants are able to learn to deal with setbacks.

25. **We believe that the EU could gain most from the new competence, particularly at a time of financial constraint, by regarding sport not as a peripheral policy area but as a powerful and effective tool in the delivery of objectives across the policy spectrum, notably in the health, social and educational spheres. We welcome the Commission’s focus on this in the Communication.**
26. **With particular regard to EU policy, sport can make a strong contribution to the achievement of three out of the five headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy, namely those on employment, education and poverty and social exclusion. Increasing levels of participation in grassroots sports should therefore be a priority in the field of sport for the Member States, and for the EU within the limits of its competence.**
27. Our evidence also highlighted that participation in sport can bring particular benefits to groups whose participation rates are lowest. These include women and girls, those with a disability, the unemployed, older people, migrant communities and those from disadvantaged communities. **Particular effort should be devoted to increasing participation of these groups. We welcome the Commission’s proposal to support projects promoting their inclusion.**

⁴¹ DCMS, *Lifting People, Lifting Places*, 2009

CHAPTER 3: INTEGRATING SPORT INTO POLICY MAKING AND DELIVERY

28. Given the role sport can play in delivering a number of policy objectives, this chapter first looks at how successfully it is integrated, or mainstreamed, into policy making and delivery at both EU and Member State level.⁴² We then examine the potential for enhancing the role of sport in delivering policy objectives.

Mainstreaming

29. The majority of our witnesses expressed a sense of frustration that the potential of sport was not sufficiently understood or exploited by policy makers and argued for improved and more consistent mainstreaming of sport. The Premier League felt that one of the primary obstacles to their projects addressing social issues was “the reluctance of respective spheres, particularly education and health, to accept that football and sport can have a positive impact.”⁴³ Keith Newman of the EU Sports Platform, an organisation which aims to help the sports world better understand EU policy making, agreed that sport’s potential was not “reflected in budgetary priorities or in sport’s position in the priority list, not just in the European Commission but within most governmental and European bodies.”⁴⁴ A number of witnesses felt this problem was most acute where projects were aiming at personal and social outcomes; health outcomes were better recognised.⁴⁵ As Sport Wales put it, “it is important that we seek to maximise the impact of sport by recognising the benefits beyond simply the health agenda ... the power of sport is not sufficiently recognised across public policy.”⁴⁶
30. It was felt that this was an area both where the EU needed to improve its own performance and where it could take action to promote and facilitate better policy making at Member State level. The LTA spoke for many of our witnesses when it suggested that “one way that the EU could help ... would be to promote the value of sport to the other areas of the EU.”⁴⁷
31. Mary Honeyball MEP felt that there was a genuine desire on the part of the Commission to promote the social value of sport.⁴⁸ Commissioner Vassiliou, when she met us in November 2010 to discuss the Youth on the Move initiative, was keen to stress the “social and educational benefits of sport” and its “ability to draw disadvantaged groups and people into a community.”⁴⁹ The Commission highlighted the Disability Strategy and the

⁴² ‘Mainstreaming’ is an approach to policy making and delivery. In this case it involves ensuring that sport is taken into account, and integrated into, policies and programmes in relevant areas. These might include for example health, education, social inclusion and gender equality. It both helps ensure that sport is included where it can add value and prevents the development of policies which may inadvertently adversely impact upon the successful delivery of sport

⁴³ GSEU 17

⁴⁴ Q 177

⁴⁵ Q 41

⁴⁶ GSEU 35

⁴⁷ Q 96

⁴⁸ Q 165

⁴⁹ Q 1, Social Policies and Consumer Protection Sub-Committee evidence session on *Youth on the Move*

Strategy for Equality between Men and Women as examples of where sport had been successfully integrated into policy making.⁵⁰

32. Whilst the significant progress made by the Commission in mainstreaming sport was noted by those such as the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), the majority still believed that such integration was not yet routine.⁵¹ Indeed, we have, in the course of scrutiny of EU documents, expressed our surprise at the lack of attention given to the potential of sport in, for example, the Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion and the Communication on Active Ageing.⁵²
33. We also heard that there continue to be difficulties regarding access to sporting facilities and venues for certain groups with disabilities. For example, the Centre for Access to Football and the Association of Disabled Supporters argued that access to sporting facilities and venues needed increased consideration in EU legislation and guidance for the built environment.⁵³
34. Similarly at a national level, many of our witnesses felt that a significant barrier to the potential of sport being achieved was due to the failure to mainstream. The Football Foundation viewed the Government's engagement with sport as "piecemeal rather than a coordinated cross departmental strategy, which limits its potential impact."⁵⁴ Hugh Robertson MP, Minister for Sport and the Olympics, accepted that nationally this was an area where there was "a huge amount of work to be done" and acknowledged that it was the issue in his remit which, if resolved, had the potential to bring about "the greatest long-term benefit."⁵⁵

Research and data collection

35. There was general agreement amongst our witnesses that the evidence base for outcomes in the health sphere was the most well-established and understood by policy makers. Jennie Price, Chief Executive of Sport England, explained that "it's reasonably straightforward in the health area, because there is clear medical evidence that if you do physical activity five times a week for thirty minutes you get health benefits. Health professionals understand that; it's endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer."⁵⁶ It is also an area in which work has been undertaken to quantify the benefits, providing a compelling cost-benefit argument for increasing levels of participation. For example, the Chief Medical Officer has estimated that physical inactivity costs England £8.2 billion per year and the government-funded Culture and Sport Evidence programme has estimated that if Sport England were to achieve their aspiration of one million more people across the country doing 3 x 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport a week, it would save £22.5 billion in health and associated costs.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ QQ 190–191

⁵¹ For example GSEU 22, GSEU 1, GSEU 30

⁵² <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/eu-social-policy-and-consumer-affairs-sub-committee-g/scrutiny-work1/correspondence-with-ministers/>

⁵³ GSEU 25

⁵⁴ GSEU 20

⁵⁵ Q 238

⁵⁶ Q 41

⁵⁷ CASE, *Understanding the Value of Engagement*, 2010

36. However, the evidence base for outcomes in the social sphere was felt to be less well established and many of our witnesses believed this to be to a large extent responsible for the under-use of sport by policy makers. The Football Foundation ventured that “it may be the case that a considerable barrier to grassroots sport fulfilling its potential ... is not delivering the change but being able to adequately demonstrate achievements to make the case ... It is lack of good evidence that prevents many programmes from showing the true value of their work.”⁵⁸ Sport England agreed, telling us that the social sphere lacked the “good, direct, causal evidence” which existed in the health sphere, making it harder to make a compelling case to policy makers for the use of sport as a tool in the delivery of policy. This was felt to be compounded by a lack of established quantitative data.⁵⁹
37. The difficulties in measuring, and in particular quantifying, the effectiveness of sport in personal development for individuals and for some of the societal outcomes which are more difficult to define and capture were raised by a number of our witnesses.⁶⁰ This was also evident from a number of submissions which were often forced to rely on broad statements and anecdotal evidence. However, we were provided with some examples of methodologies which seek to capture such outcomes in a more systematic way.⁶¹
38. There was agreement amongst our witnesses that data collection and research into the types of social outcomes that sport can facilitate would assist in encouraging the use of sport across the policy spectrum at all levels and would incentivise Member States to improve rates of participation. This would also strengthen the ability of sport to attract funding, including from the structural funds. As Keith Newman of the EU Sports Platform told us, “crucial to any funding, whether it’s a small amount now or a large amount in the future, is that you can measure the successful outcomes, not just in purely sporting terms, but in the other side benefits. That’s important for the political argument and for the actual benefits that it will provide at grassroots level. I hope that will be looked at a lot more carefully by the Commission.”⁶² Sport England agreed that it would be valuable if “fundamental research looking at causality, which is very difficult to fund and put in place in each country separately, could be joined up across Europe.”⁶³ Emma McClarkin and Mary Honeyball, members of the European Parliament’s Culture and Education Committee, also agreed with the suggestion that data collection and research, particularly regarding outcomes in the social sphere, would be useful priorities for the Commission to adopt.⁶⁴
39. The paucity of EU-wide data relating to sport and in particular the lack of standardised measurements, for example to measure participation, were also viewed as a limiting factor. A number of witnesses suggested that collecting comparable statistics would be a powerful incentive for Member States to improve their performance, as it had been in other areas such as promoting

⁵⁸ GSEU 20

⁵⁹ Q 41

⁶⁰ QQ 41, 92, 93

⁶¹ GSEU 20

⁶² Q 183

⁶³ Q 46

⁶⁴ QQ 141, 157, 165

recycling.⁶⁵ Sport England believed that if such data demonstrated the link between levels of participation in sport and a better overall environment for citizens it would be “very powerful.”⁶⁶

40. The Commission Communication puts forward three proposals in the field of research and evidence gathering. These are to:
- work with Member States to produce satellite accounts for sport. These measure the economic importance of a specific industry to a national economy;
 - support a network of universities to promote innovative and evidence-based sport policies;
 - study the feasibility of establishing a sports monitoring account in the EU to analyse trends, collect data, interpret statistics, facilitate research, launch surveys and studies, and promote exchange of information.
41. The Government commented that these proposals had the potential to address the evidence base relating to the social outcomes sport can deliver but acknowledged that this was an area where the Commission might need to be pressed to take specific action.⁶⁷ The Commission, whilst stressing their commitment to evidence-based policy making, also conceded that evidence around social returns was not addressed directly in the Communication, explaining that the Europe 2020 Strategy meant that “the emphasis of much of what we do is very much on the economic side of things at the moment.”⁶⁸

Sharing of best practice

42. A number of our witnesses drew attention to how the sharing of experience and best practice between Member States would add value to their work. Areas identified where this would be particularly beneficial included the societal outcomes of sport, how to increase participation, particularly among under-represented groups, and how research can best influence and be integrated into policy agendas.⁶⁹ For example, Mary Honeyball MEP suggested that the UK could learn lessons from the Scandinavian countries and Germany about increasing participation.⁷⁰ The Government agreed, particularly with respect to learning how drop-off rates in sport among older people could be reduced.⁷¹ The EU Sports Platform noted that there was particularly good practice in some Member States in anti-racism work and gender and disability equality in sport which could usefully be shared.⁷² Amongst all our witnesses, there was a sense that such exchanges represented an area of real added value on the part of the EU. For example, Emma McClarkin MEP expressed the view that “the exchange of best practice is what the EU can do when it is working at its very best.”⁷³

⁶⁵ QQ 62, 93

⁶⁶ Q 62

⁶⁷ QQ 236–237

⁶⁸ Q 188

⁶⁹ For example GSEU 5, GSEU 1

⁷⁰ Q 157

⁷¹ Q 231

⁷² Q 171

⁷³ Q 141

43. We consider the functioning of the various channels for the sharing of best practice and how these might be improved in order to exploit their potential fully in chapter 5.
44. **We consider that the potential of sport to deliver on objectives across the policy spectrum, but particularly in the social sphere, has yet to be fully exploited by policy makers at both EU and Member State level.**
45. **Whilst the Commission has had some success in integrating sport into other policies, for example including it in the Disability Strategy and the Strategy for Equality between Men and Women, further work is needed to ensure it is consistently mainstreamed across the work of all relevant Directorates General.**
46. **It is also desirable that sport should be further mainstreamed into health, social and educational policies at Member State level. We consider this to be a policy of such significance that we recommend that the Commission draw attention to it by proposing a Council Recommendation for consideration and adoption by the Member States.**
47. **While we recognise that there exist different models of sport across the EU we consider the practicalities of mainstreaming to be an area where sharing best practice among Member States would be valuable. Member States could also usefully share information on their methods of increasing participation rates in sport, particularly among under-represented groups.**
48. **The Commission acknowledges the potential of sport in delivering social objectives. However, wider scale studies could usefully be undertaken on social returns. If these were to be convincingly demonstrated they would provide a compelling argument for sport to be further integrated into wider policy making and delivery at both EU and Member State level whilst also strengthening the case for financial investment. We recommend that social returns be specifically included in the Commission's work on evidence-based policy making and work with academia, both of which are action points in the recent Communication. We recommend that the Commission work with Member States and the relevant working groups to identify appropriate data sets in relation to both economic and social aspects of sport and subsequently facilitate work to analyse these.**

CHAPTER 4: FUNDING AND SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS SPORTS

49. In order to deliver on its potential, grassroots sport needs to be adequately supported and resourced. This chapter examines how the EU can act in two fields, volunteering and financial support, which we consider to be essential for the successful delivery of grassroots sports. The EU impacts on financial support for grassroots sports in three main ways. In increasing order of financial significance these are: through a dedicated sports funding programme (yet to be agreed); through other EU funds, including the structural funds; and through regulatory impact on income derived from the sale of intellectual property rights, principally media. These are considered in turn.

Volunteering

50. Grassroots sport is heavily reliant on volunteers. Ninety percent of grassroots sport clubs use volunteers with an average of 21 per club and more people in the UK volunteer in sport than in any other sector.⁷⁴ In football alone, the FA estimate there are over 400,000 volunteers.⁷⁵ The Football Foundation stated “quite simply, volunteers are the life-blood of everything we do.”⁷⁶ In addition to ensuring that grassroots sport can be delivered, a number of witnesses highlighted how volunteers can also provide a valuable extra dimension to activities, serving as community role models⁷⁷ or by providing opportunities for inter-generational interactions.⁷⁸ As discussed in chapter 2, many of the benefits of participating in grassroots sport also extend to volunteers.
51. Some witnesses expressed the view, repeated by the Minister, that volunteering is essentially a national, indeed, local activity.⁷⁹ However, our evidence suggested a number of ways in which the EU might use its new competence in order to encourage and support volunteering.
52. Regulatory burdens were seen as one of the greatest threats to volunteering. The experience of the EFDS was that “even small increases in administrative burdens can have a devastating effect on a club’s ability to recruit and retain volunteers”⁸⁰ and this was a view shared by the majority of our witnesses.⁸¹ The Government stressed that factors associated with individuals choosing to volunteer or not were complex in nature but agreed that there was some evidence that the bureaucratic load was deterring some volunteers.⁸² The Minister, along with others such as the Sport and Recreation Alliance, believed that a review of EU legislation impacting on volunteers would be a

⁷⁴ GSEU 1

⁷⁵ GSEU 16

⁷⁶ Q 107

⁷⁷ GSEU 11

⁷⁸ GSEU 30

⁷⁹ GSEU 1, Q 230

⁸⁰ GSEU 14

⁸¹ For example GSEU 1, GSEU 27, GSEU 7

⁸² Q 234

constructive way forward.⁸³ We discuss more widely the desirability and functioning of mechanisms through which the Commission can consider the impact of general legislation on sport in chapter 5.

53. The Commission Communication addresses the issue of volunteering primarily through the proposal to “support the inclusion of sport-related qualifications when implementing the European Qualifications Framework”⁸⁴ and to “promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning gained through activities such as voluntary activity in sport.”⁸⁵ We heard evidence that these actions would be welcomed by grassroots sports organisations and were aligned with the aspirations of volunteers. The Football Foundation highlighted the findings of research they had conducted into volunteers, explaining that “what they are looking for is quite simple. They are just looking to feel valued, to move forward and be trained in the area in which they volunteer ... it is a question of providing opportunities and, perhaps, funding for people to go on courses, whether they are on book-keeping or simply sports and recreational development.”⁸⁶ The Volunteer Coordinator we spoke to in the course of our visit to Swiss Cottage School also stressed that the opportunity to up-skill and gain qualifications was one of the key factors in attracting volunteers. Other bodies stressed the importance of personal development in addition to formal training.⁸⁷ The Government expressed their support for the Communication’s proposals in this area.⁸⁸
54. In addition to the actions proposed in the Communication, the Commission highlighted work being done to promote and validate learning as part of the 2011 EU Year of Volunteering. These include a proposed Council Recommendation, the establishment of Europe-wide networks for cooperation to enable better training and accreditation of volunteers and the introduction of a European Skills Passport to enable people to record skills acquired through volunteering.⁸⁹
55. The Commission have also supported volunteering projects through the Preparatory Actions. Sport Wales described one such project they are involved in, led by the Flemish Sports Federation, which aims to consider the existing knowledge base regarding volunteering, to develop it further through exchange and to spread best practice.⁹⁰ Other witnesses similarly highlighted the potential for the EU to add value to their work by championing best practice across the EU in areas such as engaging and retaining volunteers in sport.⁹¹ In his evidence to us, the Minister focused on initiatives to increase volunteering as part of the London 2012 Olympic Games rather than on any EU dimension.⁹² However, the Minister had

⁸³ GSEU 1, QQ 10, 234

⁸⁴ The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) “acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe with the aim of promoting workers’ and learners’ mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning.” http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

⁸⁵ EM 5597/11

⁸⁶ Q 107

⁸⁷ GSEU 35

⁸⁸ EM 5597/11

⁸⁹ Q 185

⁹⁰ Q 221

⁹¹ GSEU 29

⁹² Q 229

previously noted that the EU could usefully develop “better evidence on how major international sporting events can be translated into lasting participation and further encouragement for professional sports to play their part in boosting participation.”⁹³ It may therefore be that lessons learnt regarding how to increase and retain the number of volunteers could form part of this. The functioning of various mechanisms for the sharing of best practice is discussed further in chapter 5.

56. It is clear to us that volunteering is vital to the success of grassroots sport. **The Commission should recognise the importance of recruiting and retaining volunteers, ensuring future legislation does not adversely impact on volunteers.** Our recommendations in chapter 5 are pertinent in this respect.
57. The opportunity to gain skills and qualifications through volunteering is an important factor in attracting and retaining volunteers. Volunteering also has the potential to contribute to Europe 2020 objectives, assisting individuals into education and training. **We welcome the proposals to incorporate sport-related qualifications when implementing the European Qualifications Framework and to promote and recognise formal and informal learning gained through volunteering.**
58. **Volunteering is an area which could benefit from the sharing of best practice at a European level and the Commission should facilitate this.**
59. **We consider the EU Year of Volunteering to be a valuable platform for promoting volunteering in sport and considering how to create a favourable climate for it. The integration of sport into such initiatives is important, recognising the ability of sport to contribute to a wide range of policy objectives.**

Sports Programme

60. A full Sports Programme, a dedicated funding stream for sport, has yet to be agreed. However, a Preparatory Action programme was launched in 2009 to cover the period until 2012. Preparatory Action programmes can run for a maximum of three years and are designed to pave the way, in terms of good practice and analysis, for bigger programmes. Special annual events such as the Mediterranean Games and the Special Olympics⁹⁴ were also funded from this budget. A requirement of funding was that projects have a transnational network from a minimum of five Member States. Two examples of projects funded under the Preparatory Actions are provided in Box 4. The initial intention was that this would be followed by a two year mini-programme covering the years 2012 and 2013 before a full programme in 2014. However, the mini-programme has since been cancelled. Decisions on the future, structure and priorities of the programme from 2014 have yet to be taken but there is an understanding that resources are not likely to be great.⁹⁵ Excluding money dedicated to supporting events, the Preparatory Actions had a budget of €7.5 million.

⁹³ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/eu-social-policy-and-consumer-affairs-sub-committee-g/scrutiny-work1/correspondence-with-ministers/>

⁹⁴ Olympics for those with intellectual difficulties. See www.specialolympics.org

⁹⁵ For example Q 195

61. In its Communication the Commission set out a number of areas in which it proposes to fund transnational projects. These include:
- Health enhancing physical activity
 - Participation in sport of people with disabilities
 - Women's access to leadership positions in sport and access to sport for women in a disadvantaged position
 - Social integration of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups

BOX 4

Examples of projects funded under the Preparatory Actions

Women's International Leadership Development Programme⁹⁶

UK partner, Sport and Recreation Alliance

The aim of this project is to increase women's access to decision-making positions in sport, train future women leaders, provide an information platform to help create future projects and analyse the current status of women in leadership positions in sport. It also aims to create a multi-media platform from which partner countries can continue training programmes after the project is completed.

All for Sport for All: perspectives of sport for people with a disability in Europe⁹⁷

UK partner, sportscotland

This project aims to assess the state of sport for people with disabilities, and consider issues including levels of participation, infrastructure and events.

62. Whilst the Government stressed that they had yet to take a financial decision on a Sports Programme, they expressed a certain degree of scepticism as to its potential value. They made particular reference to the transnational requirement, commenting that "although this may be effective in showing additional 'European' value, it does not add much value in terms of grassroots participation."⁹⁸
63. By contrast, many of our witnesses highlighted the benefits of transnational links and expressed enthusiasm for developing them. Some organisations had already developed, independently of the EU, their own informal links with similar groups in other Member States. For example the Dudley Community Sport and Physical Activity Network drew attention to the longstanding partnership between Sport Dudley and Bremen Sportjugend in Germany and how their exchange programme over the course of 30 years had managed to engage a number of sports clubs and highlight models of best practice.⁹⁹ The Dwarf Sports Association UK also highlighted the value of their interactions with similar organisations elsewhere including the holding of world games and the sharing of best practice. They considered that such links contributed

⁹⁶ GSEU 1

⁹⁷ GSEU 5

⁹⁸ GSEU 9

⁹⁹ GSEU 10

to broader aims promoted by the EU such as a shared sense of belonging and participation, a view shared by the Rugby League European Federation.¹⁰⁰

64. The Commission was keen to stress that it would only support projects where there was clear EU added value, and that an impact assessment for a future funding programme was currently underway. Mr Paulger also commented that the financial pressures on the budget would mean that there would be competition for resources and that projects would only be funded where there was a strong case for doing so. However, he believed that the pilot projects had demonstrated real added value.¹⁰¹
65. Many witnesses, though, found the logistics of fulfilling the transnational requirement problematic and argued that it acted as a disincentive, being both costly and administratively burdensome, particularly for smaller grassroots organisations. The LTA described it as “onerous and prohibitive given the relatively small level of funding available”¹⁰² and the Sport and Recreation Alliance felt that whilst such projects strengthened the “European framework in sport” it meant that some resources were diverted from the grassroots where they could be more beneficially spent.¹⁰³ The practical difficulties of making such links were emphasised by Sport Wales which suggested that there was a danger of partnerships being formed which were not necessarily the most productive.¹⁰⁴ How links and networks can best be formed between grassroots organisations, including in order to satisfy the transnational requirement within any Sports Programme, is discussed further in chapter 5.
66. Regarding the future structure and priorities of a Sports Programme, a number of witnesses argued that there needed to be a clearer focus on and requirement to demonstrate value to grassroots sports than had been the case with the projects under the Preparatory Actions. The Sport and Recreation Alliance suggested that “all funding through the sports programme should be required to demonstrate both pan-European value and a clear grassroots element” whilst The European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO) were keen to ensure that the funding be equally as accessible to smaller and medium sized organisations and initiatives.¹⁰⁵
67. ENGSO also highlighted that whilst they considered the Preparatory Actions had been useful for the Commission, “a thorough analysis of the projects would be needed in order to really enable contributions to the preparations of the EU Sports Programme.” They expressed concern that timings of proposals may mean that it is difficult for this to be done in time to impact upon the programme for 2014.¹⁰⁶

Mainstreaming sport into EU funding

68. There are a number of different EU funding streams to which sports projects are eligible to apply. These are set out in Box 5. Many of these funding

¹⁰⁰ GSEU 4, GSEU 26

¹⁰¹ Q 195

¹⁰² GSEU 27

¹⁰³ GSEU 1

¹⁰⁴ Q 225

¹⁰⁵ GSEU 30

¹⁰⁶ GSEU 30

streams have significantly greater resources than would be allocated to a dedicated Sports Programme and thus can be considered to offer greater potential to grassroots sports in terms of levels of funding. In addition, the majority of these funds do not require transnational networks.

BOX 5

Funding streams for which sports projects are eligible to apply¹⁰⁷

- Europe for Citizens
- European Integration Fund
- European Qualifications Framework
- European Social Fund
- European Regional Development Fund
- Life-long Learning Programme
- Youth in Action
- PROGRESS (for projects supporting EU objectives in the field of employment and social affairs including gender equality and social inclusion)
- DAPHNE III (for projects contributing to the protection of children, young people and women against violence)
- Fundamental Rights and Citizenship
- Prevention and Fight against Crime
- LIFE + (for environmental projects)

69. The availability of these funds was welcomed by our witnesses, although the Sport and Recreation Alliance felt that some of the streams highlighted in the White Paper held limited potential for sport in practice.¹⁰⁸ A number of suggestions were made by witnesses of ways in which such funding streams could be used to support the priorities identified in chapter 2. The RFU recommended that greater use should be made of the structural funds to make facilities more accessible to under-represented groups and disadvantaged communities¹⁰⁹ whilst StreetGames highlighted use of the European Social Fund in projects assisting individuals to make the transition into work.¹¹⁰ Where organisations had experience of funding through other streams they were generally positive.¹¹¹ However, there was widespread feeling that more could be done to integrate sport into these streams.¹¹² The Government commented that “so far, sport has not really been able to exploit these available funds.”¹¹³ The Sport and Recreation Alliance drew

¹⁰⁷ Funding streams explicitly mentioned in the 2007 White Paper. Cited in GSEU 1

¹⁰⁸ Q 16

¹⁰⁹ GSEU 7

¹¹⁰ Q 15

¹¹¹ Q 15, Q 126

¹¹² For example GSEU 1, GSEU 11, GSEU 27, GSEU 30, Q 162

¹¹³ GSEU 38

attention to the fact that sport is not mentioned in the Leonardo or Comenius programmes or in the 2010 and 2011 work programmes of Europe for Citizens. They also suggested that there had been retrograde steps in the last few years, with sport being removed from funding priorities within several programmes.¹¹⁴

70. The Commission dismissed fears that a dedicated funding stream for sport could lead to the marginalisation of sport in other funds. Mr Paulger believed that a Sports Programme “would be a sort of recognition that would help in the mainstreaming of sport.”¹¹⁵ He provided an example of the Commission’s active consideration of where mainstreaming could take place, saying that they intended to propose that sport be an annual priority within the Youth in Action programme in 2012 and 2013.¹¹⁶ The Government found this “encouraging,” telling us that “where there are opportunities to mainstream within funds, we will continue to press for those.”¹¹⁷
71. **Whilst we accept that the resources are likely to be small, we nevertheless believe there to be value in a Sports Programme and in the transnational links it promotes. In particular, we support the funding of projects in the areas outlined in the Commission’s Communication as in line with areas where evidence shows sport can deliver significant outcomes against wider policy objectives.**
72. Creating the right transnational networks will be crucial to the success of a Sports Programme. **We urge the Commission to learn lessons from the Preparatory Actions and in particular to explore how the transnational requirement can be made easier for grassroots organisations to fulfil.**
73. In light of the wide range of policy objectives which sport can deliver, general EU funding streams offer significant potential to grassroots sports. Many of these streams have significantly greater resources than would be available through a dedicated Sports Programme. **The existence of any specific funding stream for sport should not mean that it is marginalised in other funds. Indeed, sport should be further integrated into EU funding streams. We welcome the Commission’s commitment to the principle of mainstreaming sport in funding but found the evidence of the Sport and Recreation Alliance, that in recent years sport has been marginalised in many funds it is eligible to apply to, worrying. We hope that the EU’s new formal competence in sport will help redress this situation.**

Funding for grassroots sports from the sale of intellectual property rights

74. In its Communication, the Commission noted that revenue derived from the exploitation of intellectual property rights in sport is often partly redistributed by professional sports to grassroots sport.¹¹⁸ The primary source is the sale of broadcasting rights, as we were told by the Sport and Recreation

¹¹⁴ GSEU 21. Leonardo and Comenius are part of the Lifelong learning Programme. See Box 5.

¹¹⁵ Q 196

¹¹⁶ Q 196

¹¹⁷ Q 263

¹¹⁸ COM 5597/11

