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Sport as a growth engine for EU economy

Sport is an important economic sector in the EU in its own right, with a share in the national economies which is comparable to agriculture, forestry and fisheries combined. Moreover, its share is expected to rise in the future. Overall the sports sector accounts for 2% of the EU global GDP, while the total employment generated by sports activities is 7.3 million equivalent to 3.5% of the total EU employment. Despite these impressive figures, the economic impact of the sport-related industries is often underestimated.

To underpin the role of sport-related industry as an economic driver, a High Level Meeting of stakeholders on the impact of sport and sport-related industries took place in Brussels. The meeting was aimed at taking stock of the progress made since the first meeting of the European Sport Industries on 21 January 2014. Furthermore, the meeting offered the opportunity to present an industry-led Action Plan on the economic impact of sport and sport-related industries. The meeting highlighted the role of sport as a powerful lever for innovation, industrial competitiveness and employment.

Concrete actions to foster sport and sport-related industries in Europe

Following the first meeting of the European Sport Industries on 21 January, the economic importance of sport has been elaborated with three main objectives:

1. Maximising efficiency of investment in sports infrastructure:

With limited public funding, improving efficiency of investment in sport infrastructure has become crucial.

To this end, a number of actions are envisaged in this industry-led Action Plan, including: taking stock of existent infrastructures in all Member states, creating a forum bringing together policy makers and industry executives in order to share best practices, supporting sports clusters, facilitating the creation of public-private partnerships and raising awareness to sport community that sports projects can be included in "innovative public procurement" under Horizon 2010.

2. Fostering the competitiveness of sports-related industries:

The sport industry is characterised by constant and rapid waves of innovation, often in close collaboration with other industries (textiles, electronics, aerospace, etc.). However, investment in innovative goods for sport can be done to the extent that Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are sufficiently protected. Finally, Free Trade and Investment Agreements (FTAs) between the EU and third countries are critical to improve the market access conditions of EU sport-related industries.

Against this background, a set of actions are proposed, including: developing studies on the effectiveness and sustainability of sporting events in Europe, promoting synergies at EU level, encouraging Member states to take full benefit of the funding possibilities from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Moreover, Member states should exchange best practices so as to have an effective and unified enforcement of IPR. The EU should also reinforce cluster collaboration across Member States, develop case studies about new trends and opportunities and consider sport-related industries' needs when negotiating bilateral FTAs. Finally, an EU "Mission for Growth" focused on sports industries should be organised after every major sports event in third countries.

3. Enabling demand for sports and recreational activities and related goods and maximizing the spill-over effects of sports on growth and employment:

Every new job in the sport supply chain generates 0.65 new jobs in related industries outside the supply chain. Sectors with the highest multipliers are found in the construction branch and in tourism-related sectors.

Against this background, a set of actions are envisaged including: exploiting COSME funding possibilities, supporting enterprises operating in the "app economy", creating specific agencies at regional level to facilitate the organization of sporting events and adopt measures to facilitate sport-related tourism activities. The EU together with Member states and other stakeholders shall also encourage tourism from third countries to Europe at the occasion of major sport events and, finally, consider whether to follow up the recommendations of the Expert Group on the sustainable financing on sports on reviews of the VAT system to take account the specific nature of sport.

Background

Due to the importance of sport as a driver of growth for the wider EU economy, an informal high-level stakeholder meeting was held on 21 January 2014 ([MEMO/14/35](#)), as a platform bringing together representatives of all sport-related economic sectors, clusters, academia and sport associations.

The meeting, which was a joint initiative by Vice-President Tajani with Commissioner Vassiliou, allowed stakeholders to share their views on which measures and/or initiatives the Commission should take into consideration at EU level in order to further promote the positive effects sport has on EU manufacturing and on the economy as a whole.

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