

**Presidency Summary of the discussion from the
Informal Videoconference of the EU Ministers of Sport “Addressing the impact of the
COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector”**

The second videoconference of the EU Ministers of Sport was organised by Croatian Presidency on 2 June 2020. with the focus on next steps in addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector in the short, mid and long-term in order to contribute to its recovery and to build resilience in view of unpredictable future developments.

Ministers had the opportunity to exchange views on measures which have been taken or planned in their countries in order to restart the activity of the sport sector in a safe and sustainable manner, as well as on the main challenges encountered in this regard.

The cooperation between Member States, the EU and sport movement aiming to successfully restore the sport sector to its full potential and make it more resilient to crises has been also brought to attention.

In this regard the representatives of the International Olympic Committee were invited to share knowledge and experience from the perspective of the sport movement.; where the need for recognition of the socioeconomic role of sport and its inclusion in national programmes of economic recovery was emphasised. Furthermore, it is important to promote solidarity funding model within the sport movement and equally provide appropriate support to athletes as regards training opportunities, motivation and mental health.

The ministerial discussion showed that, depending on epidemiological circumstances, Member States have begun to relax or phase out restrictive measures, while at the same time making various recommendations – to ensure the protection of all participants in training and sport activities. Those recommendations among other refer to safety distance, specific hygiene requirements and rules for the use of sport infrastructure and equipment. It was therefore emphasized that in addition to providing appropriate information to sport organizations and clubs, athletes, coaches, sport staff and other stakeholders, it is also important to ensure necessary protective and safety equipment.

Furthermore, the general picture shows that major sport events as well as competitions in most sports are still cancelled or postponed until further notice. In some Member States where the epidemiological situation is more favourable, some competitions will continue, but still mostly without the presence of spectators.

When making further decisions for the reactivation of the sport sector, it is important to carefully adjust sport activities, so they could be continued in safe conditions. The assessment of potential risks is important, and the key is cooperation and joint work with the competent authorities in the field of health, scientific community as well as sport organizations.

Due to the crisis, the total income for sport organizations and clubs, athletes and sport staff has been interrupted or dramatically reduced, thus jeopardizing their existence. Member States have continued with sport-related support measures,, as well as horizontal ones, such as budgetary adjustments, aid to preserve jobs or special types of loans.

Along with the flexibility of Erasmus + Sport programme, Commission’s ambitious financial package "Next Generation EU" was acknowledged by the Ministers. However, a number of

Member States expressed their expectations that the role of sport should be recognized through the European Recovery Instrument and that the appropriate access to funding for the sport sector should be ensured. Future measures and instruments in the 2021-2027 programming period should recognize the importance of sport for social development, as well as its' economic effects.

Furthermore, it is important to explore possibilities for the use of EU structural funds in the context of "Corona Response Investment Initiative", and "Corona Response Investment Initiative PLUS", Temporary Support To Mitigate Unemployment Risks In An Emergency (SURE)", in accordance with national priorities and in cooperation with the competent authorities. The guidelines at the EU level on already existing sources of financing available to the sport sector would be appreciated.

Member States also agreed that lessons from the crisis should be used in future cooperation activities at EU level, including the preparation of a new EU work plan for sport, beyond 2020.

In order to be able to further develop effective measures after the epidemic period, Member States agreed that it would be important to conduct research and analysis of the effects of the crisis, and in particular the financial aspects. In this regard, the European Commission announced that the study will be launched in order to quantify the short-term economic impact of the crisis on the sport industry.

At EU level, there is a need to focus on the exchange of information and scientific data on the safe return of athletes and citizens to sporting activities and the launch of sport events without compromising public health. Various tools can be used for such an exchange, including a platform provided by the European Commission.

The exchange with European sport organizations, in order to coordinate action and provide the necessary support to continue the activities of the sport sector as soon as possible, is also needed. It is necessary to further strengthen the dialogue with the sport movement at all levels - from local to international - in order to jointly approach the long-term adjustments to the changes brought about by this crisis.

Special attention should be paid to athletes and their rights. As the current crisis has significantly affected the schedules of national, European and international sport competitions, it is important to work in cooperation with all stakeholders in order to find solutions for new schedules. In these exceptional circumstances it is important to take care of the protection of the clean sport and make adjustments necessary to conduct antidoping activities.

With the awareness that the health and safety of citizens remain the most important priority, it is necessary to implement activities that will motivate citizens to remain physically active and provide them with access to sport and physical activity, in accordance with the epidemiological situation. In cooperation with sport organizations, it is necessary to assess the effect of the crisis on the physical activity of citizens and possible changes in attitudes towards sport. The Commission announced that the European Week of Sport, taking place in September, will be adapted according to the post-COVID-19 situation.

Different opportunities to make sport sector more resilient should be explored through cross-sectorial cooperation, especially with the innovation sector. Member States and the Commission are committed to continue joint work in order to enable the restart of the activities in the sports sector and to support its recovery.