



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

***Promoting a Strategic Approach to EU Sports Diplomacy***

***Background Paper***

***March 2019***

***Authors***

*Professor Thierry Zintz (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium)*  
*Professor Richard Parrish (Edge Hill University, UK)*

***Research Team***

*Dr Antoine Duval (TMC Asser Institute, Netherlands)*  
*Silvija Mitevska (TAKT, Republic of North Macedonia)*  
*Professor Carmen Perez-Gonzalez (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain)*  
*Professor Vanja Smokvina (University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law, Croatia)*  
*Professor Albrecht Sonntag (ESSCA School of Management, France)*  
*Dr Andrea Cattaneo (Edge Hill University, UK)*

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

# Contents

1. <i>Background</i>	3
2. <i>Historical Perspectives</i>	3
3. <i>Conceptualising Sports Diplomacy</i>	5
4. <i>EU Sports Diplomacy: A Chronology</i>	7
5. <i>The Next Steps</i>	12

## 1. Background

This project received financial support under the EU's Erasmus+ Programme (Collaborative Partnerships). The project commenced in January 2019 and will conclude in December 2020. The project is led by Edge Hill University and the project partners are the Universidad Carlos III Madrid, The University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law, the TMC Asser Institute, ESSCA, Université Catholique de Louvain and the North Macedonian NGO TAKT (Together Advancing Common Trust). We are co-operating with our associate partner, the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) from the Council of Europe.

The aim of our project is to undertake primary research and stage a series of Multiplier Sport Events (MSE) to support EU priorities in the area of sports diplomacy. Our project will help the EU adopt a strategic approach to sport diplomacy and provide evidence of instances where sport can help amplify key EU diplomatic messages and help forge better diplomatic relations with third countries.

## 2. Historical Perspectives

Power lies at the heart of international relations, but power can present itself in many forms. Whereas realist scholars look to force and military strength, others consider the softer face of power such as influence and attraction.<sup>1</sup> The tools of soft power are also varied and often “unconventional” and can include the subject of this investigation: sports diplomacy.<sup>2</sup> The agents of this diplomacy are also varied and can include not only traditional governmental actors, but also private bodies, non-governmental organisations and individuals, including sportsmen and women.<sup>3</sup>

This relationship between diplomacy and sport might appear obvious and even familiar, but it is in fact an under-studied field of enquiry.<sup>4</sup> Several reasons could explain this. First the separation of fields of research left these two themes in their respective categories, without seeking or combining them. Second, sport has struggled, within many disciplines, to establish itself as serious area of research, notwithstanding the growing interest in high profile areas, such as state boycotts of several Olympic Games.<sup>5</sup> Third, sport was regarded by diplomats as occupying the terrain of low politics, far from the weighty matters of state.<sup>6</sup> Fourth, the difficult and evolving definition of the relationship between diplomacy and sport remains an obstacle to its proper comprehension. Finally, there has been a reluctance in some quarters to acknowledge that sport and politics should mix at all.

However, since the late 1960s and especially since the early 2000s, several researchers have kindled an interest in the subject and have contributed to making sports diplomacy a discrete

---

<sup>1</sup> Esherrick, C et al (eds) (2017), *Case Studies in Sport Diplomacy*, Morgantown: FiT Publishing, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, S. (2018), *Sports Diplomacy. Origins, Theory and Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge, p.61.

<sup>3</sup> See example Rofe, S. (2016), Sport and Diplomacy: A Global Diplomacy Framework, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol.27, No.2, 212-230.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, S. & Pigman, G. A., (2014), Mapping the Relationship Between International Sport and Diplomacy, *Sport in Society*, Vol 17, Issue 9, 1098-1118.

<sup>5</sup> See Gomez, C. (2018), *Boycotts and Diplomacy: When the Talking Stops* in Rofe (ed) Sport and Diplomacy: Games within Games, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.169-184. See also Cha, V. (2009), *Beyond the Final Score: The Politics of Sport in Asia*, New York: Columbia University Press.

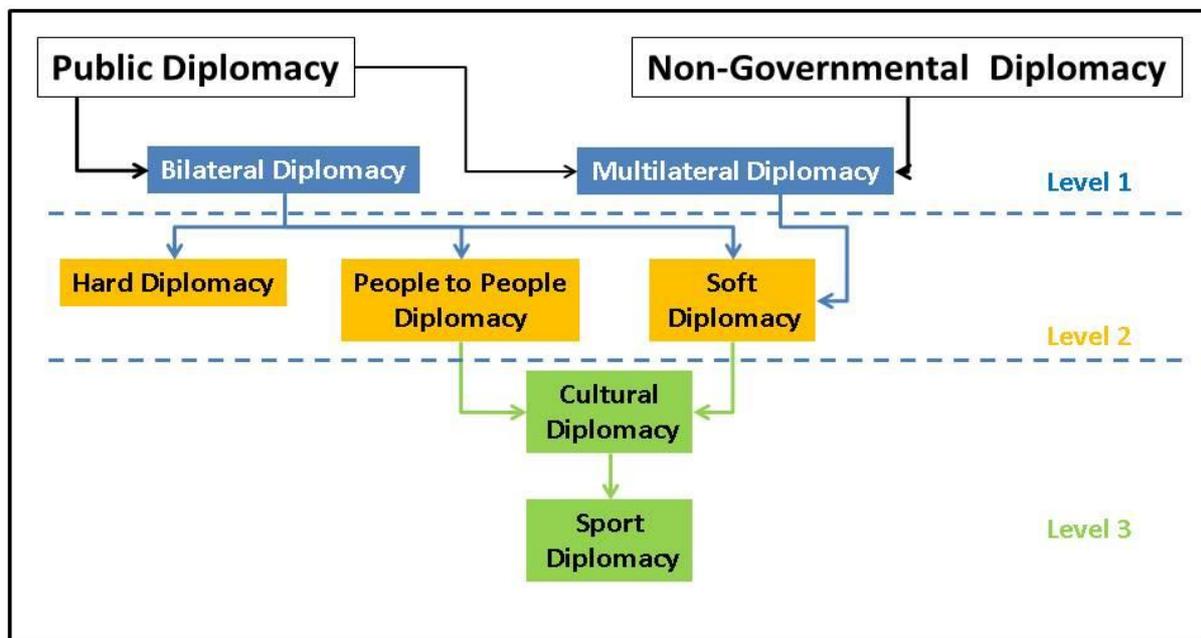
<sup>6</sup> Murray, S. (2018), *Sports Diplomacy. Origins, Theory and Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge, p.59.

field of enquiry.<sup>7</sup> It is still interesting to note that reactions to this development remain somewhat schizophrenic and oscillate between being considered both important and trivial.<sup>8</sup>

The objective of this brief overview is to contribute to our growing understanding of sports diplomacy, particularly the emerging EU sports diplomacy, in light of the EU’s publication of two reports by two High Level Groups, the first on sports diplomacy and the second covering grassroots sports.<sup>9</sup> This overview is not comprehensive – it merely sketches out some issues that will be further explored by the participants at our MSE’s. The findings will then be integrated into our final report.

Before turning to the emerging EU sports diplomacy, it is worth reflecting on some related concepts. Figure 1 is an attempt to present these concepts before providing and section 3 below elaborates.

**Figure 1. Positioning sport diplomacy in the context of diplomacy**



An attempt to position sport diplomacy in the general context of diplomacy

<sup>7</sup> This is charted in Murray, S. (2018), *Sports Diplomacy. Origins, Theory and Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge, p.59.

<sup>8</sup> Jackson, S. (2013), The Contested Terrain of Sport Diplomacy in a Globalizing World, *International Area Studies Review*, 16(3). See also Keys, B. (2013), *International Relations* in Pope & Nauright, Routledge Companion to Sports History, 248-267, Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>9</sup> These reports can be accessed here: [https://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/cooperation/high-level-groups\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/cooperation/high-level-groups_en)

### 3. Conceptualising Sports Diplomacy

#### *Public Diplomacy*

There is no single agreed definition of public diplomacy. This lack of consensus may prove propitious as it gives room for many initiatives. The common traits that can be highlighted are:

- A key mechanism through which nations foster mutual trust and productive relationships;
- Even if its roots are very much state centric, it has evolved to the stage where a multitude of actors and networks are involved;
- Aiming at promoting the national interest and advancing the nations foreign policy goals;
- Shifting towards the leverage of soft power resources, as defined by Joseph Nye as the ability to obtain desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payments.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Cultural Diplomacy*

Public diplomacy mainly refers to Government sponsored programmes intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries. Its chief instruments are publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio and TV (one-way communication). Embassies and diplomats play a major role in this context. Cultural diplomacy establishes a two-way communication with other countries. The primary focus is not merely political but also cultural (athletic, education, art). The agent of diplomacy can take on his/her own agenda independently of the government. It is generally more high culture and education focused (less popular culture, publications, radio or TV). Cultural diplomacy can be sponsored by the government but also by private institutions or NGOs. Embassies play a major role but not the only role.

#### *Sports Diplomacy*

Despite protestations from many involved in the sports movement, sport has, and continues to be, inextricably linked to politics.<sup>11</sup> This link is evidenced historically, as illustrated by the Olympic truce in Ancient Greece, and also in more recent times as witnessed by the practice of boycotts against various countries whose policies are denounced, or by the instrumentalization of sports competitions by governments. In the latter regard, we can list ‘ping-pong diplomacy’ between China and the United States, ‘cricket diplomacy’ between India and Pakistan, ‘hockey diplomacy’ between Canada and the USSR and ‘baseball diplomacy’ between Cuba and the United States. However, even if the relationship between sport and politics has been discussed, theories and practices of sport and diplomacy are largely unexplored.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Nye, J. (1990), *Soft Power*, Foreign Policy no.80, Autumn, 153-171.

<sup>11</sup> Allison, L. (1993), *The Changing Politics of Sport*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>12</sup> For discussion see Murray, S. (2018), *Sports Diplomacy. Origins, Theory and Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge, Rofe, J. S., (2018), *Sport and Diplomacy: Games within Games*, Manchester: Manchester University Press & Murray, S. (2012), The Two Halves of Sports Diplomacy, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol 23(3), 576-592.

This is surprising because the mixing of sport, diplomacy and politics is part of the middle of international relations. Sports diplomacy - a theoretical and practical hybrid of two significant institutions - is the specialization, exploitation, and reification of a familiar aspect of state-quasi-state interaction.<sup>13</sup>

As explained in the report of the High-Level group on sports diplomacy, this concept could be understood through two other concepts: soft power and public diplomacy. Soft power was defined by Nye, just before the end of the collapse of the USSR, as “the nation’s ability to obtain its desired outcome not through coercion or payment, but through attraction, particularly through the attraction of its culture, its political values and its domestic and foreign policies”.<sup>14</sup>

The second concept, public diplomacy, could be defined as “the mechanisms short of war used by an international actor (state, international organization, non-governmental organization, multi-national cooperation or other player on the world stage) to manage the international environment”.<sup>15</sup> For Murray, public diplomacy is related to its adaptability. The scope of public diplomacy is limitless and the cast of players diverse. This diplomacy is significant: it has created fertile conditions for hybrid forms of diplomacy to emerge.<sup>16</sup>

Between these two concepts, sport diplomacy is as intuitive as it is difficult to define. In order to solve this problem, many researchers have tried to define it, but in doing so have contributed to the “over-simplification” of the term.<sup>17</sup>

Murray distinguishes *traditional* from *new* sports diplomacy.<sup>18</sup> For Murray, traditional sports diplomacy is “the opportunistic use, strategic exploitation and, in some cases, abuse of elite sport, sportspeople and sporting events in order to advance a state’s foreign policy objectives”.<sup>19</sup> For Murray and Pigman, this type of sport diplomacy is the familiar form where international sport is consciously employed by governments as an *instrument* of diplomacy.<sup>20</sup>

Murray defines new sports diplomacy (or just sports diplomacy for short) as “the conscious, strategic and regular use of sport, sportspeople, sporting events and non-state sporting actors by MFAs [Ministries of Foreign Affairs] and their diplomatic staffs in order to create collaborative, long term and mutually beneficial partnerships which, ideally, maximize people-to-people links, development, cultural, trade, investment, education and tourism opportunities for governments”.<sup>21</sup> This type of sports diplomacy is more inclusive and involves a wider range of actors including those not formally connected to the state. It is a recognition that diplomacy

---

<sup>13</sup> Murray, S. & Pigman, G. A., (2014), Mapping the Relationship Between International Sport and Diplomacy, *Sport in Society*, Vol 17, Issue 9, 1098-118.

<sup>14</sup> Nye, J. (1990), *Soft Power*, Foreign Policy no.80, Autumn, 153-17 and Nye, J. (2004), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs.

<sup>15</sup> Cull, N. J. (2009). *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*, Los Angeles: Figueroa Press.

<sup>16</sup> Murray, S. (2012), The Two Halves of Sports Diplomacy, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol 23(3), 576-592.

<sup>17</sup> Stuart Murray quoted in Rofe, S. (2016), Sport and Diplomacy: A Global Diplomacy Framework, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol.27, No.2, p.214.

<sup>18</sup> Murray, S. (2018), *Sports Diplomacy. Origins, Theory and Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> Murray, S. & Pigman, G. A., (2014), Mapping the Relationship Between International Sport and Diplomacy, *Sport in Society*, Vol 17, Issue 9, p.1099.

<sup>21</sup> Murray, S. (2018), *Sports Diplomacy. Origins, Theory and Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge, p.94.

is no longer the sole preserve of the traditional diplomat. It is the “democratization” of diplomacy.<sup>22</sup>

For Esherick et al, what this means in practice amounts to seven strategic objectives of sports diplomacy: (1) providing an unofficial reason and location for international leaders to meet and begin a dialogue (2) providing insights into the host country and educating others about it (3) bridging cultural and linguistic differences among nations and seeking common ground through sports (4) creating a platform for new trade agreements or legislation (5) creating an awareness for the international relationship through sport ambassadors (6) creating a legacy for the host country, improving its image in the world and (7) using sport to provide legitimacy for a new nation.<sup>23</sup> Although often referred to as the ‘strategic’ use of sport for diplomatic ends, it is, in reality, often clumsily employed by states, particularly around the time of the hosting of major sports events and as a consequence, sports diplomacy generates as much criticism as it does praise.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4. EU Sports Diplomacy: A Chronology

The EU is often considered an economic power. It leverages influence with third countries through the wielding of this so called ‘market power’.<sup>25</sup> The Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties endowed the EU with a greater traditional diplomatic persona yet soft power, the “power to persuade and attract” is still an underused tool of the EU’s external relations policies.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, sport is one of Europe’s most appealing attractions to third-country nationals and Europe is the home of some of the world’s most recognisable sporting leagues, competitions, clubs and athletes. The problem for the EU is that third country nationals tend to regard the *EU* in economic and political terms whereas *Europe* is thought of with reference to geography, history, society, culture and sport.<sup>27</sup> By adopting a strategic approach to EU sports diplomacy, the EU can realign these perceptions amongst external audiences, thereby harnessing the power of sport to make the EU ‘brand’ more attractive. Equally, by developing a sports diplomatic persona, the EU can employ sport to leveraging power and share its values with third states and the sports movement, for example by promoting the rule of law and human rights within the context of the staging of major sporting events. In this connection, one might observe the potential of adding ‘normative power’ to the EU’s ‘market power’.<sup>28</sup>

By developing a sports diplomatic persona, the EU will join a number of states across the globe who routinely employ sport to amplify diplomatic messages. The USA and Australia are, perhaps, the best examples of strategic state approaches.<sup>29</sup> The question for the EU, and one to

---

<sup>22</sup> Murray, S. (2018), *Sports Diplomacy. Origins, Theory and Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge, p.91.

<sup>23</sup> Esherick, C et al (eds) (2017), *Case Studies in Sport Diplomacy*, Morgantown: FiT Publishing, p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Murray, S. (2018), *Sports Diplomacy. Origins, Theory and Practice*, Abingdon: Routledge, p.61 & p.75.

<sup>25</sup> See Damro, C (2012), Market Power Europe, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol.19, No.5, pp.682-99.

<sup>26</sup> Pigman, G.A. & Rofe, J.S., (2014), Sport and Diplomacy: an Introduction, *Sport in Society*, Vol.17(9), 1096.

<sup>27</sup> For example, see: PPMI, NCRE & NFG (2015), *Analysis of the Perception of the EU and EU’s Policies Abroad*.

<sup>28</sup> Manners, I. (2002), Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.40, issue 2, pp.235-258. For a discussion see Geeraert, A. & Drieskins, E. (2016), Normative Market Power: the EU as a Force for Good in International Sports Governance, *Journal of European Integration*, Vol.39, No.1, pp.79-94.

<sup>29</sup> For the USA see: <https://eca.state.gov/programs-initiatives/initiatives/sports-diplomacy> For Australia see: <https://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/sport/Pages/sports-diplomacy-2030.aspx>

be addressed in our study, is how should the EU proceed? As a sui generis form of political association, the EU is not simply the reconstruction of the state on a larger level. Will sports diplomacy work as well in a supranational context as it does in a national setting? Can the EU develop a diplomatic persona distinct from its constituent Member States?<sup>30</sup> Will these strategies be complimentary or conflicting? Can the EU institutions act collectively in this area or will institutional silo mentalities infect the approaches? Will EU citizens accept as legitimate a growing EU role in sports diplomacy?

Crucially, our study will examine what brand of sport diplomacy the EU favours, or should favour. Is it the traditional state-centric approach whereby sport is co-opted by states to advance traditional foreign policy ends or the more nuanced and inclusive ‘new sports diplomacy’ characterised by the multi-level involvement of state and non-state actors? Developments in the EU’s post-Lisbon diplomatic personality and construction of competences suggest the EU can look beyond the traditional state-centric approach. Will EU sports diplomacy become the preserve of the diplomat, civil servant, European Commissioner, minister and MEP – a reconstruction of traditional sports diplomacy at an EU level - or will this traditional sports diplomacy become imbued with a distinct non-state and grassroots character? What follows is a chronology of attempts made by the institutions of the EU to plot a path to the development of EU sports diplomacy and an indication of which path the EU is choosing.

### *The Chronology*

- In 2006, FIFA and the European Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding to make football a force for development in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries.<sup>31</sup> The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso said, “*Football has a great potential of building bridges between people. This is particularly important when we look forward to the first FIFA World Cup ever to take place in South Africa in 2010. Through this initiative football will contribute to enhancing global capabilities for development.*”
- The 2007 White Paper on Sport included a section on ‘Sharing our values with other parts of the world’ (s.2.7) in which the Commission stated it would “*promote the use of sport as a tool in its development policy*” and would “*include, wherever appropriate, sport-related issues such as international players' transfers, exploitation of underage players, doping, money-laundering through sport, and security during major international sport events in its policy dialogue and cooperation with partner countries*”.<sup>32</sup>
- A legal breakthrough for EU sports diplomacy came with the adoption of Article 165 TFEU in 2009 which, amongst other things stated, ‘*The Union shall foster co-operation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the field of sport*’. Article 165 also expounded normative values that could underpin its diplomatic

---

<sup>30</sup> Kooops, J & Macaj, G. (eds) (2015), *The European Union as a Diplomatic Actor*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> European Commission (2006), *European Commission and FIFA sign a memorandum of understanding for football in Africa, in the Caribbean and Pacific Countries*, IP/06/968, Brussels, 9 July 2006. Accessed at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-06-968\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-06-968_en.htm?locale=en)

<sup>32</sup> European Commission (2007), *White Paper on Sport*, COM(2007) 391 final, Brussels, 11/7/2007. Accessed at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0391&from=EN>

conversations with third states and international sports bodies, such as *'fairness and openness in sporting competitions'* and *'the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen'*. As the EU operates on the principle of conferral, it can only act within the powers conferred upon it by the Member States. Article 165 settled any legal doubts regarding the EU's ability to use sport as part of its external relations policies. Lisbon also introduced the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU's diplomatic service, headed by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

- In 2010, a Group of Independent European Sports Experts, appointed by Commissioner Vassiliou, advised the Commission on priorities in the field of sport and recommended the use of sport in the context of the EU's external relations policies. One member of the current research team (Professor Parrish) was a member of the group.
- In the 2011 Communication on Sport, the Commission committed itself to *"identify the scope for international cooperation in the field of sport with a focus on European third countries, in particular candidate countries and potential candidates, and the Council of Europe"*.<sup>33</sup>
- In 2011, sport was, for the first time, incorporated into the EU's Erasmus+ programme.
- In 2015, in a move signaling a personal commitment to advance EU sports diplomacy, European Commissioner Navracsics established two High Level Groups, one on Sport Diplomacy and the second on Grassroots Sport. Both groups reported their findings in 2016.<sup>34</sup> The Sport Diplomacy group advanced recommendations in the context of (1) EU external relations (2) promotion of EU values in the context of major sporting events and advocacy and (3) the development of an organizational culture of sport diplomacy. Four members of the current research team were members of the High-Level Group (Professors Parrish, Perez-Gonzalez, Sonntag and Zintz).
- In May 2016, the Council of the European Union adopted Council Conclusions on *'Enhancing Integrity, Transparency and Good Governance in Major Sport Events'*.<sup>35</sup> Within the conclusions, the Ministers recognised the value of hosting major sporting events for transmitting a positive image and that the potential for joint hosting of events within the EU exists.
- In November 2016, the Council of the European Union adopted Council Conclusions on *Sport Diplomacy* under the Slovak Presidency.<sup>36</sup> The conclusions made a series of recommendations to take forward the EU sport diplomacy agenda including, *inter alia*,

---

<sup>33</sup> European Commission (2011), *Developing the European Dimension in Sport*, COM(2011) 12 final, Brussels, 18/1/2011. Accessed at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0012:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>34</sup> European Commission (2016), High Level Group on Sport Diplomacy, June, accessed at: [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/policy/cooperation/documents/290616-hlg-sd-final-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/policy/cooperation/documents/290616-hlg-sd-final-report_en.pdf) & European Commission (2016), High Level Group on Grassroots Sport, June, accessed at: [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/policy/cooperation/documents/290616-hlg-gs-final-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/policy/cooperation/documents/290616-hlg-gs-final-report_en.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Council of the European Union (2016), *Council Conclusions on enhancing integrity, transparency and good governance in major sport events*, 9644/16, Brussels, 1/6/2016. Accessed at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9644-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Council of the European Union (2016), *Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy*, 14279/16, Brussels, 23/11/16. Accessed at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14279-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

raising awareness of sport diplomacy in the EU; encouraging cooperation between the EU, public authorities and the sports movement; using sport to promote positive sporting and European values; using sport diplomacy to advance economic objectives; maintaining sport diplomacy on the EU's political agenda; exploring the possibility of using Sport Ambassadors; promoting evidence base research and activities; using sport within the framework of Accession, Association, Cooperation and European Neighbourhood agreements; and funding sport diplomacy projects, including engaging third countries in the European Week of Sport.

- The 1<sup>st</sup> EU Sport Diplomacy seminar was held in Brussels in December 2016. Organised and hosted by the European Commission, the seminar brought together diplomats, politicians, civil servants and members of the sports community to discuss the recommendations of the High-Level Group.<sup>37</sup>
- Following adoption of Article 165 TFEU, the EU embarked on a series of multi-annual work plans for sport. In the 2017-2020 EU Work Plan for Sport, sport diplomacy was identified as a priority theme.<sup>38</sup> Paragraph 8 acknowledged, “the need to cooperate with third countries, in particular candidate countries and potential candidates to the EU, to promote European values through sport diplomacy, and with the competent international organisations in the field of sport, including the Council of Europe, WADA and the World Health Organization”.
- In November 2017, EU sports diplomacy took one of its first practical steps with the integration of sport into EU-China High Level People to People Dialogue (HPPD) which has been taking place since 2012.<sup>39</sup> Commissioner Navracsics and Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Yandong met in Shanghai.
- In December 2017, the European Commission organised the 2<sup>nd</sup> EU Sport Diplomacy Seminar in Brussels.<sup>40</sup> The seminar adopted a series of conclusions on: opening the European Week of Sport to Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans states; encouraging the mobility of athletes and coaches; and how to use sport to increase the international position of a country.
- In 2018, the Commission published a study on *Sport Diplomacy, Identifying Good Practices*.<sup>41</sup> The study was carried out in the framework of the 2017-2020 EU Work Plan for Sport and highlighted examples of best practice. The study made four recommendations: (1) that capacity building workshops be held (2) sport for development should be identified as an explicit priority in relevant EU funding instruments (3) larger scale research should be undertaken on the current state of play

---

<sup>37</sup> European Commission (2016), Seminar on Sport Diplomacy. Outcomes, 6/12/16. Accessed here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/sport/sites/sport/files/seminar-sport-diplomacy.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Council of the European Union (2017), *Work Plan for Sport (1 July 2017 – 31 December 2020)*, 9639/17,

Brussels, 24 May 2017. Accessed at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9639-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>39</sup> See European Commission (2017), *EU and China strength cooperation on education, culture, youth, gender equality and sport*, IP/17/4548, Brussels, 15/11/2017. Accessed at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-4548\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-4548_en.htm)

<sup>40</sup> European Commission (2017), *Seminar on Sport Diplomacy*, 6/12/2017. Accessed at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/sport/sites/sport/files/report-sport-diplomacy-seminar-2017.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> ECORYS (2017), *Sport Diplomacy. Identifying Good Practices*, a final report to the European Commission.

Accessed at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0efc09a6-025e-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-65111809>

and (4) actions are developed to support dissemination of and knowledge sharing on good practices.

- A further step at operationalising EU sports diplomacy was taken with the amendments made to the 2018 Erasmus+ funding criteria which facilitated participation from third countries. Until that change, projects whose proposal did not demonstrate that the Partner-Country participant brought specific added value to the partnership would be rejected on eligibility grounds. However, this is no longer the case as now, if the Partner Country's participation meets the criteria, they are treated in the same way as the other partners.<sup>42</sup> This change was recommended by the High-Level Group on Sport Diplomacy.
- The internationalisation of Erasmus+ and growing significance of EU sports diplomacy was further evidenced by changes made to the European Week of Sport programme. From 2018, this was extended to permit participation from Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership states.<sup>43</sup>
- EU sport diplomacy took another concrete step in February 2018 with the agreement between the European Commission and UEFA adopting the *Arrangement for Cooperation between the European Commission and the Union of the European Football Associations (UEFA)*.<sup>44</sup> This Arrangement for Cooperation added to that agreed between the parties in 2014.<sup>45</sup> The objectives of the 2019 agreement are: (1) to promote values and principles common in Europe (2) to strengthen cooperation in matters of long-term interest to football and sport and (3) to improve the overall financial health of European football. The staging of EURO 2020 was highlighted as key vehicle for achieving the first objective. In 2018, UEFA also agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council of Europe.<sup>46</sup>
- In June 2018, the Council of the European Union adopted Council Conclusions on '*Promoting the Common Values of the EU Through Sport*'.<sup>47</sup> In a wide-ranging set of conclusions, the Council highlighted the role of sport in promoting common values among Member States and also with third countries. At paragraph 28, the Council invited the Commission to "include sport as part of external relations, where appropriate to promote the common values of the EU, for example through including mobility and capacity building or supporting sport integrity, as well as integrating it in the discussions and High Level Dialogues with third countries". At paragraph 38, the

---

<sup>42</sup> See: Erasmus+ sport goes international. Accessed at: [https://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/20170724-erasmus-plus-sport-goes-international\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/20170724-erasmus-plus-sport-goes-international_en)

<sup>43</sup> European Commission (2018), Press Release: *European week of Sport, 23-30 September*. Accessed at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_AGENDA-18-5910\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_AGENDA-18-5910_en.htm)

<sup>44</sup> European Commission (2018), Annex to the Commission Decision adopting the Arrangement for Cooperation between the European Commission and the Union of the European Football Associations (UEFA), C(2018) 876 final, Brussels, 19/2/2018. Accessed at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/EuroExperience/uefaorg/EuropeanUnion/02/53/98/34/2539834\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/EuroExperience/uefaorg/EuropeanUnion/02/53/98/34/2539834_DOWNLOAD.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> C(2014), 7378 final.

<sup>46</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). Accessed at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/General/02/56/17/27/2561727\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/General/02/56/17/27/2561727_DOWNLOAD.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Council of the European Union (2018), Promoting the Common Values of the EU Through Sport, 2018/C196/06. Accessed at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2018:196:FULL&from=FR>

Council invited the sports movement to “continue developing mutually enriching relations and exchanges between grassroots sport organisations from EU countries and third countries, sharing values and principles, and illustrating the diplomatic value of such people-to-people relations”.

- During the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU (Jan-June 2018), sport diplomacy was the focus of a high-level discussion at EU Sport Forum, Sofia (March 2018).
- In 2019, the Erasmus+ programme funded this EU Sports Diplomacy project, adding to the Grassroots Sports Diplomacy project funded in 2017.<sup>48</sup>

## 5. The Next Steps

Our project is 24 months in duration, commencing January 2019. In phase 1 (Jan-June 2019) we will prepare background information, publish an interim report and plan for the staging of our key themed events which are to be staged in Phase 2 (June 2019-April 2020). In Phase 2 of the project, the project partners will each host an MSE – a workshop addressing a key theme in sports diplomacy:

*MSE 1 (June 2019): Best Practice in Sport Diplomacy: National Examples (Zagreb, Croatia)*

MSE 1 will examine how, in both historical and contemporary contexts, nation states have employed sport to amplify diplomatic messages. Examples of strategic state sport diplomacy initiatives will be examined, including those from the USA, Australia and Croatia. The event will examine the merits of both ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ sports diplomacy as a means of informing the EU’s approach to the issue.

Co-ordinator: Prof. Vanja Smokvina

*MSE 2 (September 2019): Towards a Strategic EU Sports Diplomacy (Madrid, Spain)*

MSE 2 will establish how the EU can act more strategically in the field of sports diplomacy. It will explore how to develop an organisational culture of sport diplomacy within the EU and how the EU can facilitate the funding of sport diplomacy initiatives. The MSE then examines how the EU can operationalise sport diplomacy initiatives within the context of its external relations policy. In particular, the MSE will examine how sport can be taken into account in the agreements with third countries, including within the framework of Accession, Association, Co-operation and European Neighbourhood agreements.

Co-ordinator: Prof. Carmen Perez Gonzalez

*MSE 3 (November 2019): Co-operation with International Organisations (Strasbourg, France)*

---

<sup>48</sup> For EU Promoting a Strategic Approach to EU Sports Diplomacy see: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/603168-EPP-1-2018-1-UK-SPO-SCP> For Grassroots Sports Diplomacy see: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/590880-EPP-1-2017-1-DK-SPO-SCP>

MSE 3 will explore how the EU can, in the field of sport and sports diplomacy, develop meaningful relations with international organisations, specifically the Council of Europe. The seminar will be held in Strasbourg, at the site of the Council of Europe, in order to maximise the participation of its members and members of the EU.

Co-ordinators: EPAS (Council of Europe) & Prof. Albrecht Sonntag

*MSE 4 (February 2020): Sport Diplomacy and Major Sport Events (The Hague, The Netherlands)*

MSE 4 will gather evidence on the types of sports diplomacy initiatives the EU and its Member States should seek to explore in relation to the staging of major sport events in, and outside, the EU. Specifically, the seminar will examine the types of projects and research the EU should support and it will discuss taking forward the recommendations of the various expert groups established under the 2nd EU Work Plan for Sport as well as Conclusions adopted by the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council related to major sport events. The seminar will investigate the contribution the staging of major sport events can make to the EU's economic objectives of growth, employment and competitiveness and it will examine how the EU can leverage major sporting events to advance key EU goals including human rights, labour rights and environmental protection, and how the EU can advance a sustainable legacy, particularly in time when many EU citizens are growing apathetic or even hostile to the staging of major events. The MSE will also tackle the issue of sporting boycotts, which is very relevant in the current international climate and whether the creation of a network of sport ambassadors including current as well as former athletes and coaches can add value to EU action in this area.

Co-ordinator: Dr Antoine Duval

*MSE 5 (April 2020): Sport Diplomacy in Practice (Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia)*

MSE 5 discusses sport diplomacy initiatives in the Republic of North Macedonia. A partner to this application is TAKT, an NGO active in the North Macedonia that uses sport to bridge cultures, enhance dialogue among communities, fight gender and social discrimination and empower vulnerable groups such as refugees. The MSE will bring together national ministries from the Republic of North Macedonia and neighbouring states, national sport bodies, and NGOs. Working with TAKT and other NGO's, the workshop will seek to raise awareness of the opportunities that sport offers and evaluate best practice in relation to, amongst other issues, fighting gender inequality, empowering girls and young women and promoting social inclusion through, and participation in, sport. The MSE will also explore how sport can be employed more systematically within the framework of EU / Republic of North Macedonia relations and, by extension, through wider EU / third state relations.

Co-ordinator: Silvija Mitevska (TAKT)

*MSE 6 (September 2020): Flagship Event and Final Report (Brussels, Belgium):*

A final MSE (6) will be held in Brussels in September 2020 in order to coincide with the European Week of Sport. This Flagship Event will bring together key stakeholders (EU institutions, sports bodies, national ministries, embassy staff, diplomats, NGOs, members of civil society etc). The partners will deliver the key findings of the Final Report and presentations on good practice will be made and awareness raised amongst the stakeholders

regarding the potential of sport diplomacy so that the issue remains on the political agenda. A key objective of the event and the report is to inform a strategic approach to sport diplomacy in the framework of the EU and to offer guidance and support to public authorities and relevant stakeholders involved in sport diplomacy issues.

Co-ordinator: Prof. Thierry Zintz.