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# SPORT IS ESSENTIAL: A CALL TO PROTECT EU FUNDING FOR SPORT IN THE NEXT MFF

## A joint statement from European sport and physical activity stakeholders

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Brussels, Monday, 5 May 2025

### **Context and Concern:**

In view of the upcoming discussions on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period after 2027, the European sports and physical activity sector is deeply concerned about the potential reallocation of funds away from sport and health enhancing physical activity, driven by geopolitical tensions and the growing focus on defense investments. The signatories strongly believe that reducing funding for sport would harm the resilience of Europe. Sport is a foundational pillar of physical and mental health, economic growth, and the promotion of European values. Sport has proven to bring people together, foster inclusion, and advance peace.

We, the undersigned stakeholders from across the European sport and political sector, call on EU policymakers to protect and prioritise investments in sport and physical activity within the next MFF.

### **Making Europe resilient: why sport matters**

#### **1. A healthier Europe: sport is preventive healthcare**

Physical inactivity costs European healthcare systems an estimated €80 billion annually due to preventable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity[1]. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of major non-communicable diseases by up to 30% and is recognised by the WHO as a key public health measure[2]. Additionally, sport plays a crucial role in mental health, reducing depression and anxiety by 20-30%[3], which is especially important in post-pandemic recovery and for productivity. Given that the EU4Health program already acknowledges the significance of sport, cutting its funding would undermine the EU's commitment to public health.

[1] <https://inactivity-time-bomb.nowwemove.com/>

[2] [https://www.who.int/health-topics/physical-activity#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/physical-activity#tab=tab_1)

[3] <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/publications/how-look-after-your-mental-health-using-exercise>

## 2. Economic growth and jobs: the sport sector is a major economic driver

The sport industry represents 2.12% of the EU GDP and employs 5.67 million people[4], playing a crucial role in economic resilience and job creation. Every €1 invested in sport generates a return of €5 in broader economic and social benefits[5], making sport funding a highly cost-effective investment. Additionally, sport fosters innovation in areas such as digitalisation, sustainability, and new materials, enhancing Europe's global competitiveness. Cutting investment in sport and physical activity would contradict the EU's commitment to economic growth and employment, particularly for SMEs and local businesses.

## 3. Social inclusion, integration, and EU values

Sport and physical activity bridge social barriers and strengthen European identity by promoting inclusion, diversity, and integration. It plays a crucial role in youth engagement, reducing radicalisation, and fostering social cohesion. Programs like Erasmus+ and sport-based initiatives enhance skills development, employability, and mobility across Europe. Additionally, sport and physical activity empower marginalised communities, including refugees and people with disabilities, contributing to a more inclusive and united Europe.

## 4. Global influence and social stability

The European Sport model is a global force that promotes EU values such as fair play, democracy, and equality beyond its borders, reinforcing the EU's strategic influence through sport diplomacy and international cooperation. At the same time, investing in sport and physical activity contributes to enhancing security by fostering social cohesion, engaging youth, and supporting community development, which in turn helps reduce social challenges. The sport sector also plays a pivotal role in post-crisis recovery, as demonstrated by its contribution to rebuilding resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic. By improving both physical and mental well-being, sport fosters a more unified, stable, and healthier European society, making continued investment crucial for sustaining Europe's soft power and social resilience.

### **Our call to action**

As discussions on the future EU budget and MFF revisions take place, we strongly urge policymakers to:

1. **Increase funding** for sport and physical activity under the MFF, recognising its impact on health, social inclusion, economy, and security.
2. **Preserve and expand Erasmus+ Sport**, ensuring youth and grassroots projects continue to benefit from mobility and innovation funding.
3. **Strengthen sport and physical activity's role in EU4Health**, integrating sport into preventive healthcare strategies to combat chronic diseases and mental health challenges.
4. **Secure investment in sport and physical activity through EU cohesion policies**, ensuring sport infrastructure, digital innovation, and environmental sustainability remain priorities.
5. **Recognise sport as a strategic sector in EU economic policy**, ensuring that sport-related SMEs, innovation, and job creation initiatives are protected from cuts.

We, the undersigned organisations, stand united in our call for continued and strengthened support for sport and physical activity in the EU budget. Cutting sport funding would be a short-sighted decision with long-term negative consequences for European society, economy, and health.

Sport is not an expendable luxury. It is a strategic investment in Europe's future. Sport is essential!

[4] <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/865ef44c-5ca1-11e8-ab41-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

[5] <https://www.laureus.com/news/laureus-report-shows-every-1-invested-in-grassroot-sport-saves-a-further-5>

# THE SIGNATORIES 1/3

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Aalborg Boldspilklub af 1885  
European University Sports Association (EUSA)  
4iCVesport Hub Sports Valencia  
ACES Europe  
adidas  
adidas Foundation  
Andaria  
Asociación del Deporte Español (ADESP)  
Asociatia DGT  
Association Nouveaux Horizons – Nouvelles Opportunités  
Associazione Italiana Cultura e Sport (AICS)  
Assosport  
Ayuntamiento de Calanda  
Badminton Europe  
Barleti University  
Berghaus  
Budapest Association for International Sports (BAIS)  
Bulgarian Badminton Federation  
Bundesverband der Deutschen Sportartikel-Industrie e.V. (BSI)  
Canterbury  
Centro Servizi S.E.F. srl  
Centrul pentru Dezvoltarea Instrumentelor Structurale (CPDIS)  
CJT Solutions  
Clúster da Industria do Deporte e o Benestar de Galicia  
Cluster for Sport Innovations VERDE (Verde)  
Cluster Sports and Technology (S&T)  
Comisión de Cultura y Deporte (CEOE)  
Common Goal  
Competence Centre for Physical Activity (Estonia)  
Confédération sportive internationale travailliste et amateur (CSIT)  
Cycling Industries Europe  
Decathlon  
Deporte para la Educación y la Salud (DES)  
Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln  
DM&T Sport  
EAGLE Sports Integrity Services  
ebanSports  
Elan  
Elesse  
Elevate Outdoor Collective  
Eliterro  
Endura  
Estonian Sports Association Kalev  
Eurasanté  
EurEthICS ETSIA  
EuroHockey  
EuropeActive  
European Aquatics  
European Association of Sport Employers (EASE)  
European Culture and Sport Organization (ECOS)  
European Federation for Company Sport (EFCS)

# THE SIGNATORIES 2/3

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European Initiative for Exercise in Medicine (EIEM)  
European Liver Patients' Association (ELPA)  
European Network for Outdoor Sport (ENOS)  
European Network of Academic Sports Services (ENAS)  
European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE)  
European Outdoor Group (EOG)  
European Platform for Sport and Innovation (EPSI)  
European School Sport Federation (ESSF)  
European Sports and Wellbeing Alliance for Municipalities (ESWAM)  
Everythink  
fairplay – Initiative for Diversity & Antidiscrimination  
Fakultet Za Sport  
Fare network  
Federatie van Groothandelaren in Hard- en Softsportartikelen (FGHS)  
Fédération Luxembourgeoise de Badminton (FELUBA)  
Federation of European sporting goods retail associations (FEDAS)  
Federation of Irish Sports  
Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (FESI)  
Fischer  
Football Friendlies  
Friedrich Alexander Universität (FAU)  
Fundacja Institute for Sport Governance (ISG)  
Fusioni in Movimento  
Fútbol Más Foundation  
German Badminton Federation (DBV)  
Greek Carers Network EPIONI  
HAŠK Mladost  
HEAD  
Hellenic Organization for Company Sport and Health (HOCSH)  
HG80  
Higher Education Institution specialised in Health, Sports and Management (LUNEX)  
IGOID Research Group (Grupo IGOID)  
INDESCAT - Catalan Sports Cluster  
Innovationsmanufaktur (IM)  
Instituto de Biomecánica de Valencia (IBV)  
International center for promotion of education and development (CEIPES ETS)  
International Center Sports Mental Coaching  
International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE/CIEPSS)  
International Dance Organization (IDO)  
International Mountain Bicycling Association Europe (IMBA Europe)  
International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)  
ISPO  
It's Great Out There Coalition  
IZMIR Sport  
Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KAMK)  
Kinetic Analysis  
LAB University of Applied Sciences  
Laureus Sport for Good  
LEVSKI - Sport for all  
Liepaja City Council Sports Department  
Loyalty Fans

# THE SIGNATORIES 3/3

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Management Consulting & Business Building Co. Ltd (CBBS)  
Mitre  
National School, University and Leisure Sport Federation  
New Balance  
Nike  
Olympiacos SFP  
Ovidius University of Constanta  
Oxbow  
Panionios GSS  
Pentland  
Protect Our Winters Europe (POW EU)  
PUMA  
Regional Directorate of Sport, Azores Government  
Remedy  
Santcugatcreix  
Serbian Judo Federation  
Serbian Water Polo Federation  
Size Wise  
SKS Knowledge Services  
Slovenian Innovation Hub (SIH EEIG)  
Social Innovation Sports (SIS)  
SPAIN IS SPORT – Afydad  
Special Olympics Europe Eurasia  
Special Olympics Slovakia  
Speedo  
Sport and Citizenship  
Sport and Sustainability International (SandSI)  
SportCamp  
Sport Evolution Alliance (SEA)  
Sport for Development Network Germany  
Sport Inclusion Network (SPIN) Association  
Sport Ireland  
SportDrenthe  
Sports+Vitality  
Sportsko drustvo Crvena Zvezda  
Swim Ireland  
Symplexis  
Tecnica Group  
The Association for International Sport for All (TAFISA)  
ThinkSport  
Tyrolia  
Ukrainian Federation of School Sports (UFS)  
Universidad Europea de Valencia  
University of Debrecen  
University of Jyväskylä  
V4Sport Foundation  
ValorSummits Gmbh  
Varala Sports Institute  
Verband der Sportartikelindustrie und den Sportartikelhandel in Österreich (VSSÖ)  
Verband Deutscher Sportfachhandel e.V.  
Ville de Perros Guirec  
World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI)