



EU Work Plan  
for Sport

2014-  
2017

**Expert Group "Health-enhancing physical activity"**

**Report from the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting (13 October 2014)**

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October 2014

Report drafted by the European Commission and adopted by the XG HEPA

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## 1. PARTICIPANTS

- Experts from 23 Member States: Austria, Belgium (Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities), Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany (Federal level), Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
- European Commission: DG EAC, EACEA Executive Agency
- Other participants: -

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The Expert Group on Health-enhancing physical activity (XG HEPA) was created by the Council in adopting its European Union Work Plan for Sport for 2014-2017<sup>1</sup>. The Expert Group reports to the Council. The XG held its first meeting to elect its chairperson and adopt its Work Schedule, as foreseen in the EU Work Plan. The European Commission fulfils a secretarial function to support the work of the Expert Group.

As part of its introductory remarks, the Commission welcomed the members of the XG and briefly presented the political context. It summarized the priorities from the EU Work Plan for Sport 2014-2017 and the promotion of HEPA in particular. Recent surveys on sport and physical activity showed that there was unfortunately little or even no improvement in participation levels in sport and physical exercise. It was important to bring together all different experiences and initiatives to help reverse this trend. The Recommendation on HEPA across sectors adopted by the Council in November 2013 should be instrumental to this. It is the first Council Recommendation every in the field of sport. The Commission explained that it was looking forward to realistic and concrete recommendations from the Expert Group to promote HEPA.

Members of the XG expressed their expectations from the works for the next 2-3 years. There was consensus that sharing information, good practices and experiences between Member States was pivotal to improve the promotion of HEPA at national level. There was a strong will to cooperate on the matter. Several Members of the XG had also been appointed as national HEPA focal points.

The XG adopted the draft agenda without comments.

## 3. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON

The Commission informed that one Member State (France) had submitted its candidature to chair the XG HEPA and asked the proposed chair, Mr Jean-François Toussaint, to present himself. The XG unanimously elected Mr Toussaint as the group's chairman. The chairmanship will cover the entire lifetime of the XG, i.e. until the end of the EU Work Plan for Sport 2014-2017.

## 4. ADOPTION OF THE WORK SCHEDULE

The newly elected chair invited the Commission to present its proposal regarding the Work

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1405431776701&uri=CELEX:42014Y0614%2803%29>



Schedule for the XG HEPA. The Commission noted that the EU Work Plan for Sport 2014-2017 identified 'Sport and Society' as one of three priority themes. Within 'Sport and Society', the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) was a key topic for EU level cooperation in sport. Annex I of the EU Work Plan specified the purpose and output of the XG HEPA:

1) The XG should prepare recommendations to encourage physical education in schools, including motor skills in early childhood, and to create valuable interactions with the sport sector, local authorities and the private sector. This task (deliverable 1) is to be completed by the first half of 2015.

2) The XG should also coordinate the implementation of the Recommendation from the Council of the European Union on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors. That coordination role would entail providing political steering and sharing national best practices and lessons learned. The work of the XG would also include providing input and support to the Commission during the preparation of the progress report that shall be submitted by the Commission to the Council by the end of 2016. This task (deliverable 2) is to be completed by the second half of 2016. Coordinating the process of making data on physical activity available for the monitoring framework falls under the responsibility of the appointed national HEPA focal points and not under the responsibility of the XG HEPA.

The outcomes of the work of the XG shall be presented to the Council Working Party on Sport (WPS) by the chair and by a specific target date. All deliverables shall feed into the Commission's final report on the implementation of the EU Work Plan 2014-2017.

The XG agreed that coordination of work for each of the deliverables would be ensured by an appointed lead expert. PT volunteered to lead the work related to deliverable 1. HU and FI together volunteered to lead the work together related to deliverable 2.

It was agreed to make some adjustments to the proposed schedule so as to hold two meetings before the delivery of deliverable 1: one in February 2015 and one in June 2015.

The work of the XG will feed a policy debate on physical education with a focus on interaction with the sport sector under the LT PRES (May 2015). Therefore, first outcomes should become available in the spring 2015. Physical education (in particular motor skills in early childhood) will be a priority under LU PRES (second half of 2015), for which the final recommendations of the XG will be a valuable input.

## 5. DECISION ON OBSERVERS

The Commission presented the list of 13 organisations and 4 independent persons that had expressed their interest in participating as observers in meetings of the XG HEPA. Members of the XG thought that, in general, the meetings should not be closed for observers, while also noting that the meetings should remain efficient and that Member States should have the possibility to discuss some points of the agenda *in camera*. There was agreement that some organisations or experts, on grounds of the scope and nature of their activities, could bring some added value to the work of the XG, and that other competent organisations active in the areas of work of the XG should also be given the opportunity to attend meetings where relevant.

The XG decided to accept in principle applications from all organisations. It decided that in the first instance all observers would be invited to present their motivations and possible contributions to the work of the XG HEPA at the next meeting. On the contrary, the XG decided not to accept applications from individual persons. It decided however that independent experts might be consulted and invited to contribute on an ad-hoc basis. The



four independent experts who had applied for an observer status would be suggested to liaise with their respective national representative in the XG to identify ways to contribute to the meetings.

The list of admitted observers was then agreed as follows:

N°	Name of the organisation	Website
1	Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL)	<a href="http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com/">http://www.epfl-europeanleagues.com/</a>
2	EuropeActive / European Health & Fitness Association (EHFA - former name)	<a href="http://www.ehfa.eu.com/">http://www.ehfa.eu.com/</a>
3	European Federation for Company Sport (EFCS)	<a href="http://www.efcs.org/">http://www.efcs.org/</a>
4	European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO)	<a href="http://www.engso.com/">http://www.engso.com/</a>
5	European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE)	<a href="http://www.eose.org">www.eose.org</a>
6	European Olympic Committees (EOC) EU Office	<a href="http://www.euoffice.eurolympic.org">http://www.euoffice.eurolympic.org</a>
7	European Physical Education Association (EUPEA)	<a href="http://www.eupea.com/">http://www.eupea.com/</a>
8	Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (FESI)	<a href="http://www.fesi-sport.org/">http://www.fesi-sport.org/</a>
9	International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE / CIEPSS)	<a href="http://www.icsspe.org/">http://www.icsspe.org/</a>
10	International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)	<a href="http://www.isca-web.org/">http://www.isca-web.org/</a>
11	Sport and Citizenship think tank	<a href="http://sportetcitoyennete.com/">http://sportetcitoyennete.com/</a>
12	Union of Professional Ki Life aisbl (UPKL)	<a href="http://www.europe-upkl.eu/">http://www.europe-upkl.eu/</a>
13	WHO HEPA Europe network	<a href="http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/physical-activity/activities/hepa-europe">http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/physical-activity/activities/hepa-europe</a>

Agendas for future meetings will transparently foresee sessions open to observers and sessions hold *in camera*.

The XG asked the Commission, as the Secretariat of the XG, to inform the applicants of its decisions.



## **6. FIRST DISCUSSIONS ON THE OUTPUT OF THE EXPERT GROUP**

### **a. PREPARATION OF EXPERT GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS, INCLUDING MOTOR SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD, AND TO CREATE VALUABLE INTERACTIONS WITH THE SPORT SECTOR, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

After an introduction by the Commission and a presentation of the study on "physical education and sport at school in Europe" from the Eurydice Network<sup>2</sup>, the XG had a detailed discussion on the first topic on its agenda, for which a final deliverable should be produced by mid-2015.

Several members of the XG underlined the importance for the XG to achieve concrete, pragmatic, realistic and attractive recommendations that could be usefully taken up by policy makers at national level. The national context should be taken into account, as what would work in a Member State might not work in another.

The XG had interesting exchanges on the goal of the recommendations. It should be clarified if the objective is to improve health or to improve fitness/physical condition (health markers can be improved without improving fitness/physical condition markers). The XG noted that no data were available on physical fitness levels. Available evidence like the number of hours of physical education might not be ideal because real time spent in exercising might vary a lot and actually be much smaller.

The timeline for delivery would be very tight. It was thus important to start from what had been done already in MS or by other stakeholders and to identify where recommendations could bring added value. Existing evidence should form the basis of the work. The XG agreed to work on an inventory of all relevant available scientific evidence.

Several members suggested extending the scope of the work to physical education in non-formal settings, and to understand school in a broader context (e.g. way from home to school). Schools were the only settings where all children could be addressed but schools should not bear solely the whole responsibility. Many environmental settings (e.g. infrastructures, road safety) had an influence on the level of physical activity and cross-sector cooperation was needed. The influence of parents played an important role too.

It was decided that PT, as the lead expert, would send in the coming weeks a draft structure for the recommendations, and call on members of the XG to contribute. The agreed objective was to have a consolidated draft document by the end of 2014, to be discussed in the next meeting in February.

### **b. COORDINATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON HEPA**

The Commission recalled that on the basis of a Commission proposal, a Council Recommendation on promoting health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) across sectors was adopted in November 2013. It invited Member States to adopt national strategies, develop cross-sector HEPA policy approaches and implement corresponding action plans to promote physical activity. It also invited the Commission to promote the establishment and functioning of a monitoring framework, in close synergy and cooperation with the World

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<sup>2</sup> The Eurydice Network provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies ([http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php))



Health Organization (WHO), as the Council recognised that the availability of more information and better data on physical activity levels and HEPA promotion policies was an essential element to underpin better evidence-based policy. Member States had appointed national Physical Activity Focal Points to support that monitoring framework; they were the contacts in each Member State to provide information and data corresponding to the 23 indicators defined in the Annex of the Recommendation.

Member States were also recommended to cooperate closely among themselves and with the Commission by engaging in a process of regular exchange of information and best practices on HEPA promotion, as a basis for strengthened policy coordination. The XG HEPA should provide the European Union level structure for that.

After the introduction by the Commission, some Member States presented briefly the state of play regarding the implementation of the Council Recommendation, in particular on the definition of national cross-sector HEPA strategies and action plans. Several Member States (e.g. PT, UK, FI, HU, AT, LT) already had HEPA strategies at national level or Sport for All programmes. In some Member States, targeted action plans or measures were also defined in different areas (e.g. guidelines for sedentary behaviours, measures for physical education at schools, general Physical Activity action plans or health promotion packages). ET reported that the year 2014 had been declared the year of exercise in Estonia.

The lead experts for that work of the XG (FI and HU) suggested structuring the discussions of the future meetings along the different themes of the EU Physical Activity Guidelines. They would submit to the XG by January 2015 a draft paper or questionnaire to guide the discussions.

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the XG HEPA will take place in Budapest on 9 & 10 February 2015.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting will take place end of June 2015.