

Joint declaration on the need to consolidate investment in sport in Europe's regions post-2020

1. Sports produces a multitude of benefits, including better physical and mental health for the individuals practising it, the regeneration of urban areas, the social integration of disadvantaged groups, the development of tourism and the creation of job opportunities. It makes an important contribution to the achievement of the strategic objectives of the EU's cohesion policy and the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Sport is widely recognised as being crucial for growth and economic development across Europe (article 165 of TFEU), existing EU programmes and financial instruments struggle to provide member states, regions, cities and villages with the financial resources they need to invest in it, especially in disadvantaged areas. Sport is sometimes seen as a marginal activity, despite the fact that its impact and potential is underestimated when it comes to identifying investment priorities under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).
3. UEFA and the European Committee of the Regions welcome the European Commission's proposal to double Erasmus funding in the next long-term EU budget (which will cover the period 2021–27) and the attention paid to grassroots sport, good-governance and integrity in sport.
4. At present, a lack of sport-based policies and a lack of infrastructure for grassroots sport are two of the main obstacles standing in the way of free and equal access to sports activities for all citizens, including people with disabilities. Ensuring universal access to sports activities is key to enable economic and social development and increase the overall number of people involved in sporting activities, thereby facilitating the promotion of European common values as well as education, training and skills through sport.
5. In recent years, the UEFA HatTrick programme has made a significant contribution to the development of football, sports facilities and grassroots across Europe. At the same time, ESIF has sometimes been directed towards the construction of small-scale sports infrastructures providing recreational services and implementing sport-based policies and initiatives.
6. However, this does not go far enough. Most EU countries still do not have adequate facilities or policies promoting sport within local communities, especially in disadvantaged areas.
7. Against this background, and in order to fully exploit its potential, the contribution of sport to strengthening economic development and fostering social inclusion should be better recognised. Hence, the regulations governing the ESIF and other appropriate European policies should support sport-based policies including investment in physical sports infrastructures in order to enhance solidarity and prosperity through sport.
8. On that basis, UEFA and the European Committee of the Regions have agreed to join forces to promote better accessibility to and synergies with EU funding for investments in sport, and work together within the **#CohesionAlliance** for a strong cohesion policy that promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion across the EU post-2020.