

Resolution on Education Through Sport

Europe is often seen as the ageing continent, but we as Youth of the European People's Party are convinced that the political challenges on our continent do not limit themselves to the elder. The European Commission has also seen this and acted by calling out the year 2004 "the Year of Education through Sport". Already in 1979, the UEFA has held a conference on Youth Football. This year, with the World Cup in Germany, the interpersonal aspects of sport also catch attention. The slogan of the World Cup is "A Time To Make Friends".

We as Youth of the European People's Party believe that the European centre-right should stand for the integration of different classes and thus support sports. Sports unite the economically and intellectually rich and poor. We also believe that there are positive effects for the democratic experience and attitude by being active in (team)sport. We acknowledge as well as the positive effects of sports heroes by giving an example to youngsters all over the world. An excellent example is the intervention from Zinedine Zidane during the riots in the suburbs of Paris.

Nowadays, we have seen the limits of governments to organise and to alter societies by laws and laws alone. Forces in society itself should be appreciated and valued more when it comes to strengthening the citizens. Successful examples are the Premier League clubs in the United Kingdom who oblige their players to be engaged in community projects where less fortunate children are being coached by a mere three hours of compulsory community work. One cannot deny either the benefits on the physical level by engaging in sports (as opposed to the disease of the 21st century: depression (through endorfines) and as well against the next pandemic of obesitas.

We as the Youth of European People's Party would like to see more attention for societal challenges as the ones mentioned above. In general, one could say that the predominant issue for (young) people nowadays is the crumbling down of the social capital. Social cohesion encourages children to take up responsibility in their community in later adult and professional life and should therefore be supported. Depressions and youth suicide are the greatest killers among young people in Europe. Isolation is a key source of depression. Involvement in sports and active live assists in the development of self- confidence, team work and community involvement. Sport is therefore vital for positive mental health.

One of the catalysts of improvement of social cohesion is sports. Sports can be seen as the ultimate meritocracy. Although everybody is born with a different amount of talent, the efforts of training are predominant in the achievement of (relative) personal success. We therefore believe that the initiative of “Education Through Sport” needs further continuation and implementation.

Since both sport and education are national or regional competencies and there can only be support from the European Commission (as seen in the Bologna-process), YEPP urges both the Commission as the national and regional governments to join forces and show “team spirit” on this policy issue. We recall the declaration with the Treaty of Nice where support for sport was shown. It is stated that “sport leans on fundamental social, educative and cultural values. Sport enhances integration, social coherence and tolerance’. We also remember clearly the European consensus concerning the policy field of “Sport” as agreed upon by the Convention and the Council on the Project of a Constitutional Treaty.

YEPP asks for:

- A political signal that social cohesion is one of the keys to regrow social capital in our societies.
- A Europe-wide recognition of the value and possibilities of sport.
- An appreciation of “Education through Sport”.
- more cooperation on exchange of experience in best practices in sport and youth training
- A stronger support and recognition on a national level of youth trainers and coaches who – very often voluntary – try to guide youngsters all over Europe to perform better.
- The development of an ERASMUS-programme especially for gifted and skilled youngsters, similar to the “centres of excellence” like the European Commission already proposed.

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