



Youth Forum Position Paper on
'The European Year of Education through
Sports, 2004'

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2004 has been declared by the European Union as the 'European Year of Education Through Sport'. It will be marked by numerous European and national initiatives aimed at making the European public more aware of the importance of sport in an educational context as well as to increase the significance of physical activities in school curricula. The EU, under the Declaration on the "European Year of Education Through Sport 2004", seeks to encourage national and cross-border partnerships between non-traditional partners such as NGOs involved in education, youth or sport, voluntary organisations and public authorities. European Commissioner Viviane Reding has stated that the EU "is sending a clear signal that it wants to play an active role in promoting and restoring sporting values and the educational and social potential of sport"¹. The Youth Forum welcomes this Declaration.

The proposed article on education, vocational training, youth and sport² in the Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe prepared by the European Convention in 2003 further states the importance of the Union action in developing a European dimension in sport.

Young people benefit in many ways from taking part in sports activities. They improve their physical well-being and thus, the quality of their lives. They learn to respect others since sports activities provide a healthy outlet for any frustrations that they might have and frequently involves them in a team activity. Participating in the organisation of sports events helps young people to take responsibility and learn important skills such as leadership. Sporting events including young people from different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds also promote better understanding, solidarity and mutual respect.

The European Youth Forum supports the aims of the European Year of Education through sport. It agrees that there is a need to raise awareness among education and sports organisations of the need to co-operate to develop education through sport (and its European dimension) in order to enable young people to develop their 'social capabilities such as teamwork, solidarity, tolerance and fair play'.³ The Youth Forum especially supports the aim of raising 'awareness of the positive contribution made by voluntary work to informal education, particularly for young people'⁴ and the aim to 'promote the educational value of mobility and pupil exchanges,

¹ <http://www.ibeurope.com/Records/7100/7163.htm>

² http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/constitution/index_en.htm (Section IV, Art. III-182, point G)

³ <http://www.eyes-2004.info/221.0.html>

⁴ <http://www.eyes-2004.info/221.0.html>

particularly in a multicultural environment, through the organisation of sports and cultural meetings as part of school activities'.⁵

Particularly welcomed by the Youth Forum are those actions which support informal education. Moreover, sport can play an important role in youth activities and may serve as a tool for non-formal education. Therefore, any sports activities which complement the work and actions of youth organisations in contributing to the personal, social and physical development of young people are also to be welcomed.

Furthermore, sport can be used as an important tool to promote the social integration of young people, especially those groups with special needs. The European Year of Education through Sport can serve to raise awareness of the challenges faced by young people with disabilities. Every effort should be made to include these groups in the activities that take place during the year.

In conclusion, the Youth Forum welcomes this EU initiative since sport is a useful tool for transmitting very important skills and values that the Youth Forum promotes in its policies on non-formal education for young people. The Youth Forum stresses the importance of the inclusion aspects of such activities. The Youth Forum supports any events and initiatives that are undertaken by young people during the year.

⁵ <http://www.eyes-2004.info/221.0.html>