

SPEECH DELIVERED BY ISCA PRESIDENT MOGENS KIRKEBY AT THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE DECLARATION ON INCREASED EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORT FOR GRASSROOTS SPORTS AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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The Written Declaration on increased financial support to grassroots sport is a milestone in the political engagement in sport at European level.

Sport has always been a popular topic among politicians. However, most of the attention to sport – be it political attention, financial attention or media attention - has been attention the elite sport sector.

The last couple years - knowledge from strategic researches and statistics, such as the Eurobarometer, has been accepted and made it possible to move from a “feeling based” to a more “evidence based” approach.

The data, the knowledge, the evidence gives clear indications of the impact of the grassroots sport sector and its operational stakeholders. It gives clear indications of the impact the grassroots sport organizations and its millions of volunteers, provide to society. And yes, we speak about millions of volunteers.

It verifies the impact on areas such as health promotion, education, social integration – or described in a more general term – it is creating Human Capital in Europe.

Direct support for the grassroots sport sector is important and necessary!

It is important because the current financial challenges, which most countries are facing, put the of the grassroots sport sector under economic pressure. We can see direct reduction of financial support and income from between 5 /10 % up to 45 % in the most dramatic cases.

Direct support for the grassroots sport sector is also necessary!

It is necessary because in the distribution “within” the sport sector in general, the grassroots sport sector cannot beat the glamour of the shining medals – which almost all countries want more of.

Direct support to the Grassroots sport sector is the only efficient way to support grassroots sport efficiently. Sometimes – quite often - we see financial support put on the tip of an “out dated” pyramid structure, with the expectations that the money will trickle down to the grassroots! Such direction is not the way money flows very easily in the sport sector. It does not happen in a scale of significant importance.

The grassroots sport sector – through its widespread and local based structure – is about people. It is about the European citizens. It is something, which in more ways has a significant impact on the quality of life. However, there is unfortunately a big gap between the accessibility and the involvement on recreational sport and physical activity.

As a great part of the idea behind European Union, is to assist areas and countries with a development potential – to develop to a higher level. By sharing and supporting!

This is why ISCA - a few months ago - suggested a common EU vision: Namely the VISION: 100 MILLION MORE EU CITIZENS ACTIVE IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BY 2020

Grass-root sport, is engaging 40 % of all Europeans in physical activity on a regular basis. However, there is a considerable gap between European countries in regard of the degree of involvement of the citizen in public life in general, and in sport in particular. The top five countries can register a more than 20% higher activity level. Therefore, we suggest closing this physical activity gap by giving all Europeans the opportunity to practice sport

The European Union clearly has the potential to increase the number of citizens being regularly active in sport and physical activity with another 100 million individuals – and we believe that should be our common goal.

The Written Declaration increased financial support for Grassroots sport is a very important political manifestation and tool to reach this and other goals where the impact of the grassroots sport sector can be significant.

I thank you very much for this encouraging and visionary political initiative!