

**Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)  
10th EPAS Anniversary Conference**

**Working together to build and consolidate democracy, tolerance and  
inclusion**

Organised by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport  
in co-operation with the Cyprus Sport Organisation

**11 May 2017  
Limassol, Cyprus**

Excellencies, distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Minister of Education and Culture Dr. Costas Kadis, I wish to extend a warm welcome to the participants of the 10th EPAS Anniversary Conference.

The aim of the Conference discussions today is focus on Diversity in Sport and to better understand how we can work together to build and consolidate fundamental values of sport such as democracy, tolerance and inclusion.

The fundamental role of sport can be outlined through the words of two distinguished personalities widely recognized. Pierre de Coubertin stated that *“Sport is part of every man and woman’s heritage and its absence can never be compensated for”*, while Nelson Mandela declared that *“Sport has the power to change the world...it has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. ... Sport can create hope where once there was only despair...”*

Sport is a human activity based on fundamental social, educational and cultural values. It is an element making for integration, involvement in social life, tolerance, acceptance of differences and playing by the rules.

Sporting activity should be accessible to every citizen, with due regard for individual aspirations and abilities, throughout the wide range of organized,

individual, recreational or competitive sports. It has a unique power to bring people together, to tackle social, cultural and national discriminations and differences. Sport can and should be used a powerful means for building bridges between different groups in our societies and foster social inclusion. When sport is played with passion and in respect of fundamental sport values - such as respect, mutual understanding and solidarity - it can create a sense of belonging.

The positive impact of sport in society should not be neglected. What is to be considered, is how to safeguard current sports structures and maintain the social function of sport, how to utilize sports, for whom and in what situation we are trying to make changes. By doing so, it will be possible to foster a better society through the potential of sports and expand the impact of sports on people and society.

However, sport alone will not solve the problems. Sport in conjunction with other factors, has the potential to contribute to society in general. In partnership with a range of organisations and agencies, sport can assist in the achievement of their policy objectives. All key actors, including central government, public and local authorities, parents and teachers associations, sporting organisations, athletes and many others, have a primary responsibility.

The potential of sport to facilitate social participation and to develop social capital and active citizenship requires a “bottom-up” approach to develop sport in communities, which build on and assist existing programmes, provide a greater sense of involvement and ownership by the citizens.

Educational and awareness raising initiatives and promotion of sport positive examples, especially through media, can facilitate the reduction of social and physical barriers and overcome various stereotypes.

Improving governance practices will unleash potential in the sport system and foster achieving desired results in a consistent manner with organizational values and accepted social norms. Sports leaders must operate with integrity and endeavour not only to enhance the experiences of the participants and their performance but also to the integrity and reputation of sports.

The anniversary conference today is a great opportunity to develop a platform for extensive discussion and decision-making on all aforementioned topics.

On behalf of the Minister and myself I would like to wish you a successful conference and a pleasant stay in Limassol.