

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**

Mrs Wendela Kuper
Former Chair of the EPAS Governing Board

Dear Minister,

Dear Members of the EPAS Governing Board and the Consultative Committee,

Dear Colleagues and Guests,

Welcome to Cyprus! Welcome to the 10th EPAS anniversary conference! Yes indeed, the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. As a first step of this conference – we would like to look back today and discuss with you the achievements of EPAS during the last ten years, in particular on the promotion of diversity in and through sport. As a second step, we would like to develop with you the future strategic orientation of EPAS in this area for the next ten years.

The promotion of diversity & inclusion in and through sport was set as a key thematic pillar of EPAS . The CoE's work in the field of sport is founded on the premise that sport can play an important social and educational role, provided it is fuelled by the appropriate values. Millions of pupils and adults in Europe learn - in schools and clubs - many useful values, mindsets and practices via sports activities. The importance of trying your best, being part of a team, setting a goal and working hard to reach it, being disciplined, playing by the rules, being respectful – you can learn all this from sport.

Tolerance, friendship, solidarity and fairplay are some of the fundamental principles of the European Sports Charter and the Olympic movement. These are also important values for our societies.

At its best, sport creates a stronger sense of inclusion, prevents segregation and risk behaviour, and helps promote equality in society.

Yes, we believe sport has an incredible potential. However, this does not mean that we do not face challenges in sport which threaten its core values and integrity. Media reports show and studies prove that discrimination, racism, exclusion, fear of diversity and hate speech still exist in the sports world. I am afraid that there are still people in sport who feel that they have to pretend to be someone they are not, to lie to their own team-mates, to live in fear for their professional career... This is unacceptable and in breach of the CoE values: human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

EPAS was founded in 2007 to address these challenges with you – the representatives of the world of sport – to share ideas, exchange information,

explore solutions and discuss recommendations. Admittedly, these topics are sometimes possibly not mainstream ones and not as attractive or catchy as others. Regardless, these issues have to be addressed. And that's why we, luckily, have EPAS which brings topics such as these to the fore:

- gender equality in sport
- prisons and sport
- migrants and sport
- LGBT and sport
- Disability and sport
- Discrimination and racism in sport
- Protection of children

To this list of topics, which is non-exhaustive of course, I could add useful tools and products created by EPAS such as the handbooks and toolkits. For instance, the Pestalozzi/ EPAS module trains physical education teachers and sport coaches to promote CoE standards and values in sport. The Pro Safe Sport toolkit gives orientation and provides useful tips and practical examples on how to promote healthy and safe sport environments for children. Just to give you two examples.

More information on the achievements of EPAS, we will hear in the late morning. Matthias Guett from SPIN (Sport Innovation) was given the task of evaluating the diversity work done by EPAS. You all contributed to this evaluation by submitting your response to our survey. So thank you! I am very much looking forward to this presentation and to learning more about the recommendations on our future work in the field of diversity in and through sport.

In the afternoon, I am very much looking forward to discussions on how we can better co-operate, develop and further enhance partnerships and synergies with you – external and internal stakeholders.

The past has shown that with your involvement in and your commitment to EPAS, we are making progress in tackling these challenges, such as inequality, fear of diversity, violence and racism. You support us in promoting the positive values and functions of sport such as fairplay, team work, solidarity and tolerance.

It is clear: to be able to enhance the positive values of sport, we all have to co-operate, public authorities as well as sport organisations. We cannot do all of this by ourselves. Therefore, I am counting on your support, your ideas, your good practices, your experiences and your knowledge to create a very successful future strategic orientation for EPAS to follow in the years to come.

Among the proposals

- In the CoE secretariat, many of the topics addressed by EPAS are addressed by specialised units and committees. Fruitful cooperation has taken place with several sectors, but one could consider taking better advantage of, or combining the efforts of EPAS with other Committees which are developing a long term strategy (Disability Strategy, Strategy on Migrations).
- Many Council of Europe bodies are gathering information for their monitoring reports. One of the priorities of our Secretary General is to better connect the information stemming from monitoring with the cooperation activities. This is also valid for EPAS which could benefit from

background information coming from existing CoE monitoring mechanisms (ECRI, national minorities, ...) when designing its diversity activities.

- As part of the diversity promotion activities, EPAS has gathered impressive know-how and ideas, and has implemented awareness raising activities for public authorities and sports organisations. In some cases there is a need to draw the attention and raise awareness of the public at large - one could consider developing communication tools that are more likely to reach the public and to show the potential of sport.
- Lastly, I would like to mention the three key priorities of the SG, because I believe that there are opportunities for EPAS here, within the framework of its diversity activities, to feed into the Organisation's strategic actions on tackling populism, terrorism and the migration crisis.

So, I'd like to thank you already in advance for this productive and constructive dialogue which we are going to have today. A dialogue which will continue in the future – with you and all the members of the sports family here at this conference.

Thank you!