

## **The Aarhus Declaration on Voluntary Work in Sport**

1. The Ministers responsible for sport in the 15 Member States of the European Union assembled on 21-22 November 2003 in Aarhus at the invitation of Mr Brian Mikkelsen, Danish Minister for Culture, and in the presence of Ms Viviane Reding, Member of the European Commission.
2. Welcoming the Community initiatives Youth for Europe and the European Year for Education through Sport in 2004.
3. Convinced that voluntary sports clubs and voluntary work play a significant role in social and cultural life in Europe, and it is therefore important to ensure that their role be maintained
4. Recalling the Presidency conclusions from the European Council in Nice in December 2000 on the specific characteristics of sport and its social function in Europe, the Ministers affirmed their strong belief in the fundamental values of voluntary sport and their intention to protect and support these values.
5. Stress the following characteristics, values and framework concerning voluntary sport:

### **The values of voluntary sport**

6. Voluntary work is considered as voluntary activities, which are not intended for material gain and are carried out for people other than family i.e. for the benefit of other citizens. Voluntary clubs have a formal character, are democratic in structure and based on ideals and values.
7. Voluntary work in sport clubs is therefore the result of citizens' own efforts and it can contribute to creating a better understanding and respect for other people through the universal language of sport. Taking part in volunteering and voluntary sport clubs may contribute to constituting an important element in forming the identity of the individual and the community to which he or she belongs.
8. Commitment, responsibility and active participation of members is the essence of voluntary sport clubs. Taking part in voluntary sport clubs is therefore an important tool in the integration and understanding of citizens with different backgrounds.

9. Voluntary sport may help develop competencies important to democratic understanding, co-operation, gender equality, leadership and organisation.
10. Therefore, it is of great importance to protect and strengthen the diversity of sport in Europe, which is based upon ethical values, cultural and social perspectives and democratic structures. Furthermore the economic value of voluntary work in sport is of great significance.

**The framework of voluntary sport**

11. The principle of autonomy of sports organisations is a fundamental condition for voluntary sport. It is the members and participants who, through the exercise of their democratic rights, make the decisions that affect the operations of their clubs and associations.
12. Thus the freedom to form associations can be regarded as one of the important prerequisites for sports organisations in Europe.
13. The right of sport organisations to set and prioritise their own missions and sporting rules within the frame of public law should therefore be respected, and the public sector should seek to facilitate voluntary work by limiting administrative procedures where appropriate.
14. As a basic principle, general public support should not challenge the principle of autonomy of voluntary sport. However, governments should be encouraged to continue supporting and implementing joint initiatives between the public sector and voluntary sports clubs and should, where appropriate, target resources to help voluntary sports clubs develop specific activities.
15. Governments should encourage different voluntary organisations to develop networks for solving common problems and strengthening their voice in society.
16. Research in, knowledge of and experience of voluntary sport and voluntary work should be generated and made available.
17. The Ministers, recalling the values of voluntary sport and reaffirming the principle of autonomy of voluntary sport organisations, encourage all parties concerned to respect these principles and to strengthen the relations between public

governments at all levels and voluntary sports organisations, in order to safeguard the specific characteristics of sport as stated in the Nice Declaration.