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« GRASSROOTS SPORT DIPLOMACY »
NEW PROJECT TO EXPLORE SPORT DIPLOMACY
AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

A cross-sector group of partners from two continents, including IRIS, is set to explore an often-overlooked aspect of sport in a brand new project called Grassroots Sport Diplomacy, led by the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA). The kick-off meeting for the EU-supported project took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 7-9 February and the project will run until the end of 2019.

During the project, the partners will map grassroots sport diplomacy actions from around the world in theory and in practice, and this will include consultations with organisations who are engaging in these actions. The mapping will lead into seven pilot actions, where selected grassroots sport organisations will have the opportunity to test different approaches to diplomacy across sectors and across borders. At the end of the project the partners will propose recommendations for future work in this field and launch an online hub of new knowledge, best practices and networking opportunities for civil society organisations.

IRIS is leading the first intellectual output and is in charge at the beginning of the project to draw a mapping of current resources, strategies and initiatives for grassroots sports in external relations, and providing definitions and delineations of the central concepts. At the end of the project, IRIS will be in charge of drafting recommendations.

The project partners, in addition to ISCA and IRIS, include

- French institutions:
 - o European Observatory of Sport and Employment (EOSE) (the President of EOSE, Prof. Thierry Zintz, is a member of the EU High Level Group on Sports Diplomacy),
 - o Think Tank Sport and Citizenship,
- Three sport oriented bodies:
 - o National Olympic Committee and Sport Confederation of Denmark,
 - o Unio Barcelonina d'Associacions Esportives (UBAE) from Spain,
 - o Unione italiana Sport per tutti (UISP) from Italy,
- Two governmental institutions:
 - o the National School, University and Leisure Sport Federation in Hungary

- the Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth, and
- And one non-European partner, Social Service of Commerce (SESC) from Brazil.

ISCA Secretary General Jacob Schouenborg says he is looking forward to seeing the concept of Grassroots Sport Diplomacy come alive as a collaborative project that will look deeper into the idea and test how it works in practice: *“Diplomacy is an opportunity for grassroots sport. It is value-based communication and exchange across borders. It has been taking place as citizen-to-citizen engagement for centuries but largely outside of the governmental and political radars. Now is a good time to highlight, enhance and exploit this potential. That will make for better diplomatic actions and benefit the grassroots sport sector itself.”*

The Grassroots Sport Diplomacy project is co-funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Collaborative Partnerships in Sport programme.

More about “GRASS ROOTS SPORT DIPLOMACY”

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The French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS) is one of the main independent European Think Tanks on geopolitical and strategic issues. IRIS addresses a broad range of geostrategic issues and works for public bodies (ministries, European institutions, Parliament, international organisations) and for private companies, for which it conducts studies and training. In addition to this it organises around fifty events a year (seminars, conferences, breakfasts, etc.).