

Recommendations for policy makers and sport organisations

my sporting heritage

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The experience of My Sporting Heritage suggests that the future of sporting heritage lies at the intersection of preservation, participation and innovation. Sporting heritage should not be treated simply as something that belongs in museums or archives. It can become a resource for education, physical activity, community engagement, intercultural dialogue and European citizenship.

Europe's sporting heritage largely extends beyond national borders. It includes emblematic venues, competitions that create shared emotions and narratives (such as the European football championship, EuroBasket and the Champions League), athletes who act as ambassadors of European sporting history, and a common sporting culture made of shared values (fair play, self-improvement) and rituals (anthems, flags). However, this heritage is little valued in its transnational and cultural dimension, and research, education and dissemination on European identity through sport remain fragmented.

Digital technologies can make heritage more accessible, but access alone is not enough. The next step is to create opportunities for people to explore, question, play, move, share memories and establish their own connections with the past.

Similarly, gamification should not be understood simply as adding points, prizes or competition. Its value lies in creating experiences that encourage curiosity, discovery, collaboration and active interpretation.
The central recommendation of My Sporting Heritage can therefore be summarised as:

Preserve sporting heritage, digitise it, connect it, and - above all - give people opportunities to experience it.

In this way, Europe's sporting heritage can become not only a record of the past, but a resource for learning, participation, inclusion and connection between generations and communities across Europe.



Recommendations for policy makers

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1 Recognise sporting heritage as part of cultural heritage policy

Sporting heritage should be explicitly recognised within cultural heritage strategies at European, national and regional levels. Public policy should adopt a broad definition of sporting heritage that includes:

- sporting objects and equipment;
- historic venues and landscapes;
- archives, photographs and audiovisual material;
- traditional sports and games;
- everyday physical practices;
- sporting organisations and communities;
- oral histories and personal memories;
- the social, technological and cultural contexts surrounding sport.

Sporting heritage should not be understood only as the history of elite competition. The everyday experience of sport is equally important for understanding European societies.

As a first step, the proposed Council conclusions on Traditional Sports and Games, put forward by the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU, should be welcomed. Traditional sports and games are indeed a key topic under the EU Work Plan for Sport 2024-2027. The Presidency and Member States are encouraged to include elements of this advocacy paper in the conclusions, due for adoption at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting of 20 November 2026.

Sporting heritage should also find its place in the Work Plan for Culture 2027-2030, currently under preparation in the Council. The Irish Presidency programme already refers explicitly to “sporting heritage” and its contribution to European society.

2 Support the systematic identification and documentation of sporting heritage

Many sporting heritage resources remain dispersed among museums, sports organisations, local authorities, clubs, archives, families and private collections.

Policymakers should support programmes that:

- map existing sporting heritage resources;
- document vulnerable or poorly documented collections;
- encourage the collection of oral histories and community memories;
- identify traditional and local sporting practices;
- facilitate cooperation between sport organisations and cultural heritage institutions.

Particular attention should be given to forms of heritage that risk disappearing because they are poorly documented or held outside formal heritage institutions.

3 Establish stronger cooperation between the sport and cultural heritage sectors

Sport organisations and cultural heritage institutions often possess complementary knowledge and resources but operate separately. Public programmes should encourage partnerships between:

- museums and sports federations;
- archives and sports clubs;
- universities and sport organisations;
- local authorities and community organisations;
- cultural heritage professionals and coaches/educators;
- digital heritage specialists and sport practitioners.

Such cooperation can transform sporting collections and memories into resources for education, research and public engagement.

4 Make sporting heritage a resource for education

Sporting heritage should be used more systematically in formal and non-formal education. Policymakers should encourage schools, museums, youth organisations and sport organisations to use sporting heritage to teach:

- history and geography;
- social and cultural change;
- citizenship and European identity;
- inclusion and diversity;
- technological development;
- critical thinking;
- local and community history.

The My Sporting Heritage project demonstrates the potential of educational games, storytelling and discovery-based activities, particularly for young people aged 11-14.

Such education tools can take the following form:

- teaching kits (digital and physical) on major European sporting sites, on the careers and legacy of European athletes, and on the values of sport (fair play, inclusion, self-improvement);
- cross-curricular modules combining history and physical education on the evolution of sport in Europe;
- meetings between young people and athletes, so that athletes can share their view of Europe;
- an interactive online platform offering virtual visits of sporting sites, quizzes and challenges (for example, exploring the sporting heritage of one's own country and of two other European countries);
- podcasts or videos with experts and athletes.

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5 Invest in digital access to sporting heritage

Digitisation should be considered an essential component of contemporary sporting heritage policy. Funding programmes should support:

- digitisation of collections and archives;
- online exhibitions;
- multilingual digital resources;
- high-quality metadata and documentation;
- interoperable digital collections;
- digital storytelling;
- open educational resources;
- sustainable hosting and long-term preservation.

Digital access should not simply reproduce collections online. It should help people discover relationships between objects, people, places, events and stories. The My Sporting Heritage virtual exhibition was conceived precisely to make common European heritage visible while retaining space for local traditions and practices.

Policymakers should also encourage the creation of a common European digital archive, centralising the archives of sports federations and clubs (photographs, videos, objects).

6 Support innovative forms of heritage interpretation

Public funding should encourage experimentation with:

- gamification;
- serious games;
- geocaching;
- digital escape games;
- interactive exhibitions;
- location-based storytelling;
- participatory digital experiences;
- mixed physical-digital activities.

Digital and game-based approaches should be used when they help audiences explore, question, interpret and remember heritage. The project's geocaching model, for example, combines physical exploration, digital storytelling, problem-solving, teamwork and physical activity.

Put young people at the centre of sporting heritage strategies 7

Young people should not be treated only as audiences for sporting heritage. They should also be involved in interpreting and creating it. Policies should support:

- youth co-creation of exhibitions and games;
- intergenerational storytelling;
- school-museum-sport partnerships;
- youth-led documentation of local sporting history;
- participatory collection of memories and stories;
- creative digital production.

This can help transform sporting heritage from something that is simply “shown” to young people into something they actively investigate and reinterpret.

8 Ensure inclusion and accessibility from the beginning

Sporting heritage initiatives should reflect the diversity of European society. Policies should encourage attention to:

- women's sporting histories;
- disability sport;
- minority and migrant communities;
- grassroots and community sport;
- traditional and lesser-known sports;
- different generations;
- people with fewer opportunities.

Digital and physical activities should also be designed with accessibility in mind. The project's educational tools, for example, explicitly recommend alternative tasks for participants with mobility or access needs.

Preserve sporting heritage as collective memory 9

Sport can provide an important entry point into broader European social history. Policies should encourage projects that document how sport relates to:

Preserving sporting heritage therefore means preserving not only sporting achievements, but also the memories and experiences of the people and communities connected to them.

- migration and mobility;
- gender relations;
- political and social change;
- industrial and technological development;
- local identities;
- community life;
- international relations;
- moments of crisis and transformation.

10 Create sustainable European cooperation

European cooperation is particularly valuable because many sporting traditions, athletes, technologies, competitions and organisations have crossed national borders. Future programmes should support transnational networks and projects that enable organisations to:

- share collections and expertise;
- develop common methodologies;
- exchange educational resources;
- connect sporting heritage sites;
- develop joint exhibitions;
- promote cross-border sporting stories;
- maintain communities of practice after individual projects end.

The next EU Work Plan for Sport, to be negotiated in 2027 to follow the current one, which ends on the 31 December 2027, offers a framework to give this cooperation continuity at EU level, building on the work on traditional sports carried out under the current plan.

11 Structure European research on sporting heritage

Research, teaching and dissemination on the European dimension of sport remain fragmented. Policymakers should support the creation of a European research network on the history and sociology of sport, bringing together:

- **sport museums (for example the Musée National du Sport in France and the Olympic Museum in Lausanne);**
- **universities, through chairs in sport history and partnerships with research laboratories;**
- **sports federations (for example UEFA, EHF and FIBA Europe), to provide access to their archives.**

Calls for projects could fund work on:

- **differences and convergences in sporting practices across Europe (for example football compared with rugby, or the role of clubs in social integration);**
- **the impact of major sporting events on European construction (for example Euro 2016 and the Paris 2024 Olympic Games);**
- **sports figures as symbols of European identity (for example Nadia Comăneci and Marco van Basten).**

An annual European conference on this theme could bring together researchers and practitioners, building on the interest shown by the public in narratives combining sport, history and culture.

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12 Integrate sporting heritage into European funding programmes and consider a European label

While sporting heritage is already eligible under several European programmes, it is rarely targeted as such. It should become an explicit priority under:

- **Horizon Europe: research projects on the history of European sport, for example through the cultural heritage calls of Cluster 2 and the new European research and innovation partnership on cultural heritage announced in the Culture Compass for Europe;**
- **Erasmus+: exchanges between young people around sport (for example a project "Discovering the sport of my European partner"), building on Erasmus+ Sport projects that already address sporting heritage, such as My Sporting Heritage;**
- **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): renovation of historic sporting sites, which can already be supported under its culture and sustainable tourism objective;**
- **The proposed AgoraEU, currently under negotiation.**

In addition, we welcome the fact that sporting sites are already eligible for the European Heritage Label awarded by the European Commission: Ancient Nemea, site of the Nemean Games, received it in the 2021 selection. The revision of the label announced in the Culture Compass for Europe is an opportunity to encourage more sporting sites to apply. Any new label should also be coordinated with the European Cultural Route of Sport, which has applied for certification as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

13 Support public events and media production

Public events can make European sporting heritage visible beyond specialist audiences. Local authorities, museums, clubs and media should be encouraged to organise:

- travelling exhibitions on themes such as “The places that made European sport”, “The heroes of European sport” and “Sport and the construction of Europe”, in an interactive format (stations with video archives, historical objects, testimonies), developed with national museums, federations and media;
- study days and conferences, for example on “Sport and European identity” and “Sporting heritage as a lever for cultural tourism”, open to researchers, decision-makers and the general public, in a hybrid format (on site and streamed);
- annual sporting heritage festivals in symbolic cities, with guided visits, workshops, documentary screenings and meetings with champions;
- during the European Week of Sport (23–30 September), a dedicated exhibition, guided tour or event on European sporting heritage at the House of European History in Brussels.

Public support could also be given to documentaries or series on European sport, and sports media could be encouraged to include sections on the history and culture of sport.



Recommendations for sport organisations

14 Treat your organisation's heritage as an asset

Sports federations, clubs, associations and other sport organisations should identify and preserve their own heritage. They should consider establishing basic heritage policies covering:

- photographs and audiovisual material;
- trophies and equipment;
- uniforms and memorabilia;
- historical documents;
- publications;
- venues;
- club traditions;
- oral histories;
- memories of athletes, coaches, volunteers and supporters.

Even relatively small collections can have significant historical and community value.

Start collecting stories, not only objects 15

An object becomes much more meaningful when its history is documented. Sport organisations should collect the stories associated with their heritage:

This approach can transform an inventory into a living cultural resource.

- Who used the object?
- Where and when was it used?
- What did it mean to the community?
- What memories does it evoke?
- How did the sport or practice change?
- What social context surrounded it?

16 Work with museums and heritage professionals

Sport organisations do not need to become museums themselves. They should establish partnerships with museums, archives, universities and cultural heritage organisations that can provide expertise in:

- documentation;
- conservation;
- digitisation;
- interpretation;
- copyright and rights management;
- archival preservation;
- exhibition design.

At the same time, sport organisations contribute something equally important: knowledge of their communities, practices and traditions.

Federations can also open their archives to researchers, in particular within European research networks.

17 Make heritage part of everyday sport activity

Sporting heritage should become part of everyday sporting life, not just a topic for special occasions.

Sport organisations can integrate historical stories, objects, photographs and traditions into:

- training sessions;
- tournaments;
- school programmes;
- fan activities;
- sporting events;
- club websites;
- social media;
- community celebrations;
- volunteer programmes.

A historic club story, photograph or object can become a starting point for conversations between generations.

18 Use anniversaries and public events as opportunities

Heritage should not depend only on anniversaries, but anniversaries and public events can be useful occasions to present it. Sport organisations can:

- mark the anniversaries of clubs or competitions with exhibitions or conferences;
- take part in travelling exhibitions, conferences and sporting heritage festivals organised with museums, local authorities and media.

19 Use digital storytelling to reach new audiences

Sport organisations should make greater use of digital formats to communicate their heritage. Short stories, photographs, videos, interactive timelines, digital exhibitions and location-based experiences can reach audiences who might never visit a traditional museum.

The key is to move from an archive-centred approach to an audience-centred approach: ask not only what the organisation wants to preserve, but what stories audiences might want to discover.

20 Use games to turn audiences into participants

Game-based approaches can encourage curiosity, collaboration and active learning. Sport organisations can experiment with:

- treasure hunts;
- quizzes and challenges;
- escape games;
- geocaching;
- historical trails;
- interactive exhibitions;
- digital badges and collections.

The experience should encourage participants to discover and interpret heritage rather than simply consume information. The My Sporting Heritage educational games combine storytelling, problem-solving, discovery and teamwork for precisely this purpose.

Connect heritage with physical activity 21

One of the distinctive opportunities of sporting heritage is that it can connect learning about sport with doing sport. Sport organisations should explore activities where participants:

- walk historical sporting routes;
- visit former sporting venues;
- recreate traditional games;
- explore sporting landmarks;
- combine physical challenges with historical clues;
- discover heritage through movement.

This approach can simultaneously support heritage awareness, physical activity, social interaction and learning.

22 Give visibility to overlooked sporting histories

Sport organisations should actively seek stories that are absent from conventional sporting narratives. This includes:

- women's sport;
- grassroots sport;
- amateur sport;
- disability sport;
- traditional games;
- local clubs;
- volunteers;
- coaches and technical staff;
- sporting communities;
- minority and migrant experiences.

A richer sporting heritage narrative is also a more representative narrative of European society.

Involve athletes as ambassadors of sporting heritage 23

Athletes can act as ambassadors of the history of European sport. Sport organisations should consider:

- training players in this role, for example through modules on ethics and heritage in training centres;
- encouraging athletes to give testimonies about their relationship to Europe, for example through interviews for documentaries.

24 Make resources reusable

Where possible, sport organisations should make digitised heritage resources available for educational and cultural reuse, while respecting copyright, privacy and other applicable rights. Reusable resources can support:

- teachers;
- museums;
- researchers;
- journalists;
- community organisations;
- game designers;
- cultural creators;
- other sport organisations.

This increases the value and reach of heritage investment beyond the organisation that originally collected it.

Sport organisations can also contribute their archives (photographs, videos, objects) to common European digital archives, where these exist.

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Build heritage into long-term organisational strategy

Heritage should not depend exclusively on temporary projects or anniversaries. Sport organisations should identify:

- who is responsible for heritage;
- what should be preserved;
- where it should be stored;
- how it will be digitised;
- how stories will be communicated;
- how young people and communities will participate;
- how partnerships with cultural institutions will be maintained.

A small, sustainable heritage strategy can be more valuable in the long term than a one-off exhibition.

Concluding remarks

To summarise these recommendations and make them more actionable, we offer the following concluding remarks. They are intended to guide organisations and policymakers in putting these recommendations into practice.

Within the My Sporting Heritage project, we have identified a set of good practices, compiled in the brochure Good Practices: Defending Sports Heritage. These examples show that safeguarding sports heritage is achievable, and they can serve as a source of inspiration and a practical starting point for organisations and policymakers wishing to apply the recommendations in their own context.

Turn recommendations into practical action

Policymakers should accompany sporting heritage strategies with clear implementation measures. These should identify responsible organisations, provide access to appropriate funding and expertise, establish realistic timelines, and define indicators to assess progress. Particular attention should be paid to the long-term sustainability of initiatives beyond the duration of individual projects.

Start with a realistic and sustainable heritage plan

Sport organisations should adopt heritage plans that reflect their size, resources and needs. Even small organisations can begin by identifying their most valuable records and objects, assigning responsibility for their care, and ensuring safe storage and basic documentation. Regional networks, museums and heritage professionals should be encouraged to provide shared expertise, training and practical support.

Make digital heritage accessible and responsibly reusable

Digital heritage initiatives should provide clear information about provenance, ownership, copyright, privacy and permitted uses. Wherever possible, resources should be accompanied by standardised metadata and explicit reuse conditions. Sport organisations should seek appropriate permissions before publishing photographs, recordings or personal testimonies, while making material available for education, research and cultural activities whenever rights allow.

Develop sporting heritage narratives with communities

Sport organisations and cultural institutions should involve the communities concerned in identifying, documenting and interpreting their sporting heritage. Particular attention should be paid to underrepresented groups and to experiences that may be absent from official archives. Participatory approaches can help ensure that sporting heritage reflects diverse perspectives and remains relevant to the people whose lives it documents.

Invest in skills and capacity-building

Policymakers, sport federations and cultural heritage institutions should promote accessible training on the identification, documentation, preservation and interpretation of sporting heritage. Training should also address digitisation, copyright, data protection and inclusive communication. Shared training opportunities and practical guidance can help smaller organisations and volunteer-led clubs safeguard their heritage effectively.

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