

Factual summary report

Public consultation on the future Commission's Communication "A Strategic Vision for Sport in Europe: Reinforcing the European Sport Model"

Disclaimer: *This document should be regarded solely as a summary of the contributions made by stakeholders to the public consultation on "A Strategic Vision for Sport in Europe: Reinforcing the European Sport Model". It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its services. Responses to the consultation activities cannot be considered as a representative sample of the views of the EU population.*

Introduction

As part of the initiative to define the priorities for outlining a strategic vision for sport in Europe, the European Commission carried out a public consultation. This public consultation was open from the 15 September to the 8 December 2025. Its objective was to gather views from a wide range of citizens and stakeholders to inform the preparation of the future Commission's Communication "A Strategic Vision for Sport in Europe: Reinforcing the European Sport Model".

This report presents the outcomes of the public consultation exercise. The document is structured the same way as the questionnaire and is divided into five sections. First, a short introduction and an overview of respondents. Four thematic sections follow:

1. Significance of sport in Europe
2. The European Sport Model
3. Challenges to sport in Europe
4. Actions and priorities to reinforce the European Sport Model

Overview of respondents

The public consultation received 211 contributions from a diverse range of stakeholders from across the continent and a few from abroad. Most replies were received from respondents based in Belgium (16%), Germany (16%), and France (15%), while 11% came from non-EU member states.

Of the predefined segments, EU citizens accounted for the most responses with 36%. Most organisational responses came from NGO, who accounted for 32%. After them are academics/research institutions (12%) and public authorities (10%). The remaining responses came from non-EU citizens (3%), company/business (3%), trade unions (1%), business associations (1%), and others (1%).

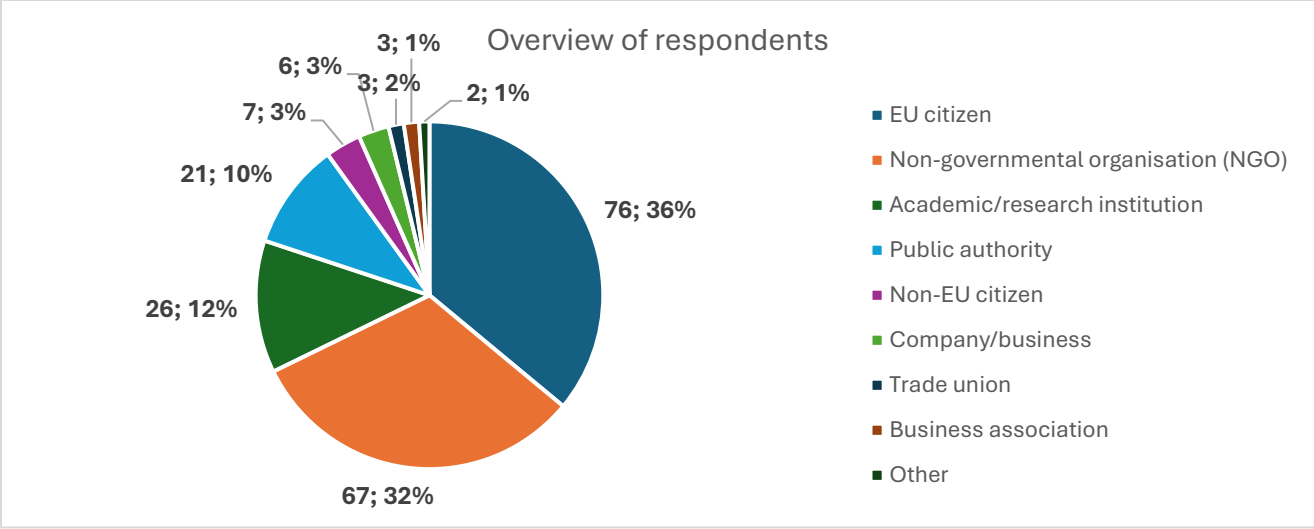
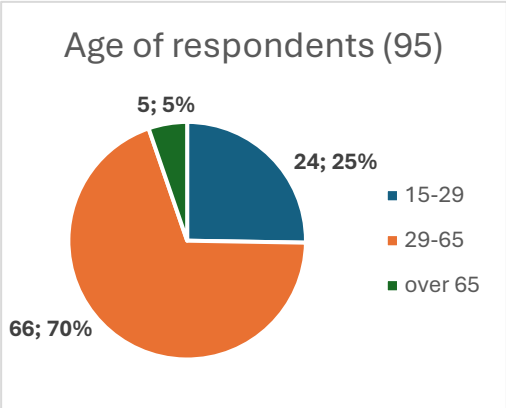


Figure 1: Question. I am giving my contribution as:

Participants mentioned 35 different sports when asked if they were considering any sport in particular when providing their opinion. Among the sports most frequently mentioned were football (9%), athletics (7%), cycling (6%), swimming (5%), volleyball (4%), and handball (4%). A majority of respondents, 65%, said that they were not considering any sport in particular.

The remaining sports were basketball, martial arts, badminton, tennis, skiing, climbing, rugby, field hockey / floorball, table tennis, horse riding, archery, weightlifting, ice skating, ice hockey, shooting sports, motor sports, gymnastics, rowing, golf, canoeing / kayaking, triathlon, cricket, padel, wrestling, fencing, curling, skateboarding, waterpolo, sailing, american football, ultimate frisbee, paragliding. No specific campaigns were identified.

27% of respondents indicated their involvement in sport as a sport club/federation, grassroots sport organisation or organisation operating in the sport sector. 20% identified as amateur athlete, sport volunteer or coach. The remaining respondents are researchers, civil society organisations, education professionals, youth- or media organisations. Respondents could select the category 'other', which was the case mainly for consultants and experts.



Out of the 211 total respondents, 95 indicated their age. The option to enter age was available only to those who completed the survey as individuals (citizen, athlete, researcher etc.). Of these respondents, about 25% (24) were between 16-29 years old. Their perspectives are subsequently referred to in this document as those of young people.

Figure 2: Question. What is your age? (amended, only respondents that registered their age)

Findings

The public consultation included four sections, starting with one on the significance of sport in Europe (4 questions), followed by one on the European Sport Model (6 questions), one on the challenges to sport in Europe (2 questions) and a section on the actions and priorities to consider to reinforce the European Sport Model (4 questions). These sections also serve as structure for this report.

All results are expressed as percentages based on the 211 responses received, unless otherwise indicated.

1. Significance of sport in Europe

When asked about the **core values** of sport that should be better promoted or safeguarded at EU level, the survey results indicate that **health-enhancing (51%) and inclusion (49%)** are the highest priority. Equity and anti-discrimination are valued by 33% of participants, while integrity by 32%, and sustainability by 28%. Fair play, respect, and solidarity each received attention from approximately 20% of respondents.

The following question examined perception of the **significance of sport in Europe**, structured into four categories covering its contributions to public health, social cohesion and values, education and economic growth. The results presented in the below table highlight the three statements within each category that received the highest proportion of ‘strongly agree’ responses.

Public health	Encouraging active lifestyles across all age groups	82%
	Promoting physical health, particularly by addressing inactivity and obesity	81%
	Having positive impact on mental health, including reducing stress, depression, and anxiety	76%
Social cohesion, equity and values	Strengthening social interactions in local communities	70%
	Fostering a sense of belonging and common identity	68%
	Helping unite individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including those with fewer opportunities	57%
Education	Fostering skills development, including social and emotional competences and transversal skills such as leadership, teamwork, and resilience	64%
	Enhancing learning and academic performance, including concentration, memory, and cognitive functions	58%
	Recognising that schools are key environments for promoting physical literacy	55%
Economic growth and competitiveness	Contributing to a healthier population, reducing healthcare pressure and supporting a healthy workforce	72%
	Supporting tourism (active holidays and event travel, generating benefits to local businesses)	43%
	Driving investment in infrastructure such as facilities, transport, and urban or rural renewal	41%

- Comparatively, respondents clearly recognised **sport's role in public health** as the most significant area, particularly in encouraging healthy lifestyles, combating inactivity and obesity, and improving mental health. **Social cohesion** followed closely, with sport seen as vital for strengthening community interactions, fostering belongings and bridging socio-economic divides. In **education**, its value in developing life skills, enhancing learning, and promoting physical literacy was emphasised. **Economically**, sport was acknowledged for reducing healthcare burdens, boosting tourism, and driving infrastructure investment.

In evaluating the extent to which **sport can contribute to the 2024-2029 priorities of the European Commission** (see figure 2), **Democracy and Values**, along with **Strengthening the European Social Model**, emerged as the most prominent areas, with over 60% of respondents believing that sport can significantly contribute to these priorities. **Sustainable Prosperity and Competitiveness** and **Global Partnerships** are also acknowledged as impactful areas.

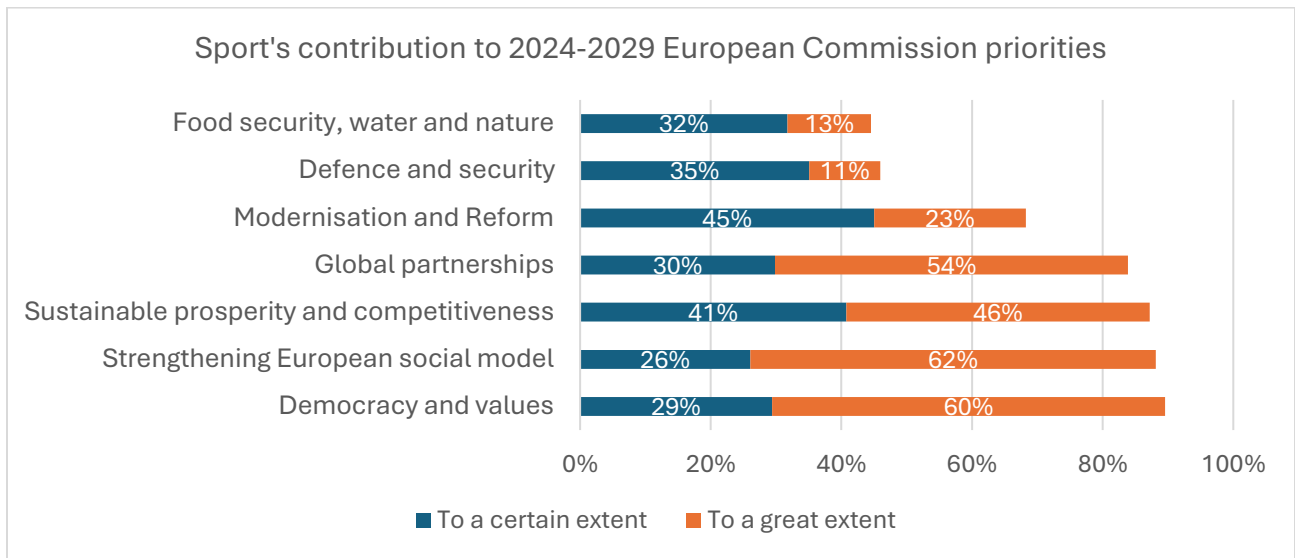


Figure 3: Question 3. In your view, to which extent can sport contribute to the 2024-2029 priorities of the European Commission?

Regarding **key policy areas where sport should be mainstreamed**, two emerge clearly as priorities (see figure 3). **Health promotion and disease prevention** scoring the highest, with 70%, and **Education and youth policies** coming second with 69%. Additionally, 35% of respondents recognise the importance of synergies with Employment, social affairs and inclusion, as well as Regional development and urban policy. Furthermore, respondents show some support to five other areas for cross-sector work namely: Justice, consumer rights, equality and non-discrimination; EU international partnership and development policy; Climate action and environmental policy; Research and innovation; Single market, competition and industrial policies, including tourism.

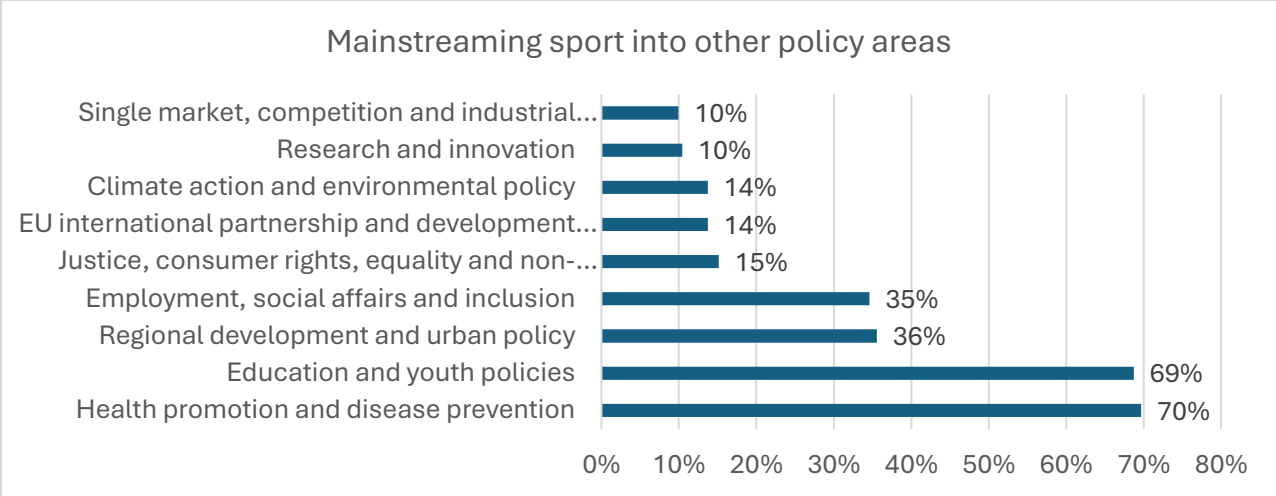


Figure 4: Question 4. Can you identify three key policy areas where you believe sport policies should be mainstreamed to enhance cross-sectoral impact?

2. The European Sport Model (ESM)

Respondents indicate a **generally high level of familiarity with the ESM**, with over two-thirds claiming to have either a moderate or significant understanding of the concept (see figure 4). When segmenting the data, a few tendencies emerge, such as 49% of the **EU-citizens** replied that they have limited or no knowledge of what the ESM is. On the other hand, the **NGOs** and **academics** reported the highest familiarity with the ESM, with respectively 79% and 85% being familiar to a certain extent or better. Half of the young people identified were familiar (to a great or certain extent) with the ESM.

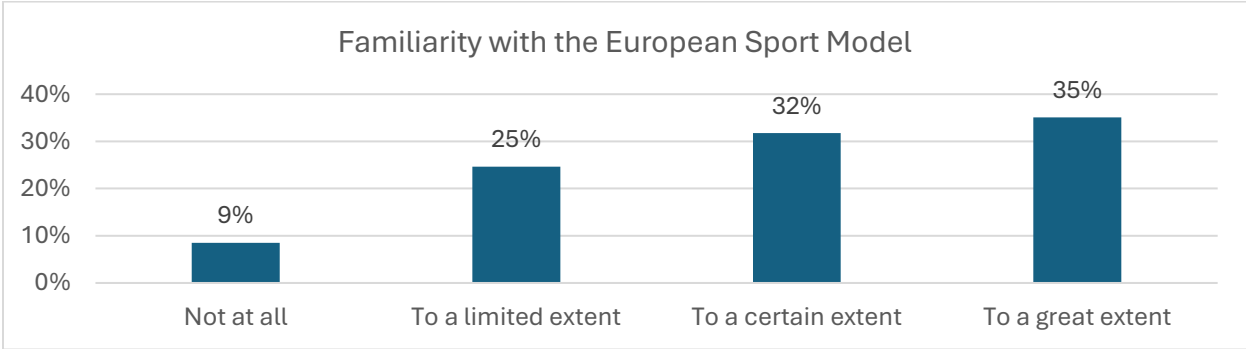


Figure 5: Question 5. To what extent are you familiar with the concept of the European Sport Model?

The assessment of respondents' perception regarding the **alignment between the organisation of sport in Europe and the European Sport Model** revealed that only a small proportion, 14%, feels that the ESM strongly reflects the reality (see figure 5). However, a larger segment, 59%, considers it representative at least to a certain extent. This indicates that there is room for improvement, yet a degree of alignment between the model and actual practices is evident. Importantly, only 5% of respondents felt that there is no alignment at all between the organisation of sport in Europe and the European Sport Model. Academics perceive the strongest alignment, with 77% answering that it at least aligns to a certain extent. Conversely, 46% of NGOs believe that the model is not, or only to a

limited extent, representative. Young people reflected a similar opinion to the wider population, though slightly more critical, with 8% agreeing to a great extent about the complete implementation of the ESM, and 58% agreeing “to a certain extent”; while 33% consider it realised to a limited extent.

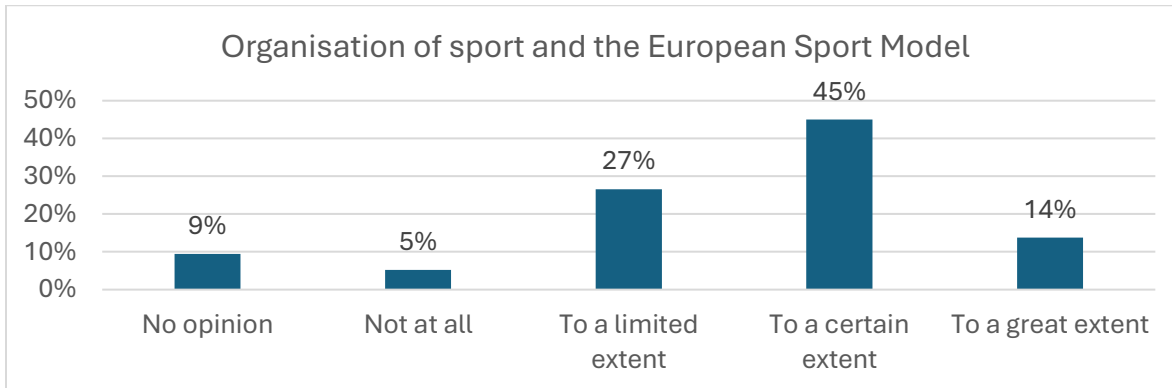


Figure 6: Question 7. Do you consider that the way sport is organised in Europe is in line with the European Sport Model, as described above?

Furthermore, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of eight **key characteristics of the ESM** to sport practices. The features identified as the most important ones were good governance and integrity (81%), followed by support for grassroots sport (79%) and social inclusion and accessibility (75%).

Respondents were subsequently asked to assess **how well each feature is reflected in the current organisation of sport in Europe**. Few features were widely seen as fully realised. The highest-rated was sporting merit, with 37% agreeing it exists to a great extent. When including those who agreed to a great or certain extent, sporting merit still led (82%), followed by openness of competition (76%). The role of volunteers was also of importance (69%). In contrast, financial solidarity stood out as the least realised feature (12%).

With respect to the **autonomy of sport governing bodies**, responses reflect a varied opinion, with a slight tilt towards maintaining (31%) or reducing (31%) the current level of autonomy in sport governance, while 23% of respondents would like to see it strengthened and 15% deferred from answering (see figure 6).

- Among NGOs, 45% believe that the current level of autonomy is sufficient, with 25% indicating a preference for strengthening it. Academics, on the other hand, leaned towards reducing autonomy, with 50% favouring reduction and 23% supporting the status quo. Public authorities are also divided, with 38% in favour of keeping the current level of autonomy and 33% suggesting a reduction. The perspectives of the citizens vary widely, with no clear consensus in the responses. While 36% of citizens call for reduced autonomy, 21% are satisfied with current levels, and 28% wish to strengthen it. Similarly regarding young people, roughly 25% (5 out of 24) indicated that autonomy should be reduced, almost 30% (7) willing to see it maintained at the current level, while about 33% (8) called for strengthening autonomy, for sport organisations to have more independence from public authorities. This diversity of opinions shows the complexity in the question of autonomy in sport governance.

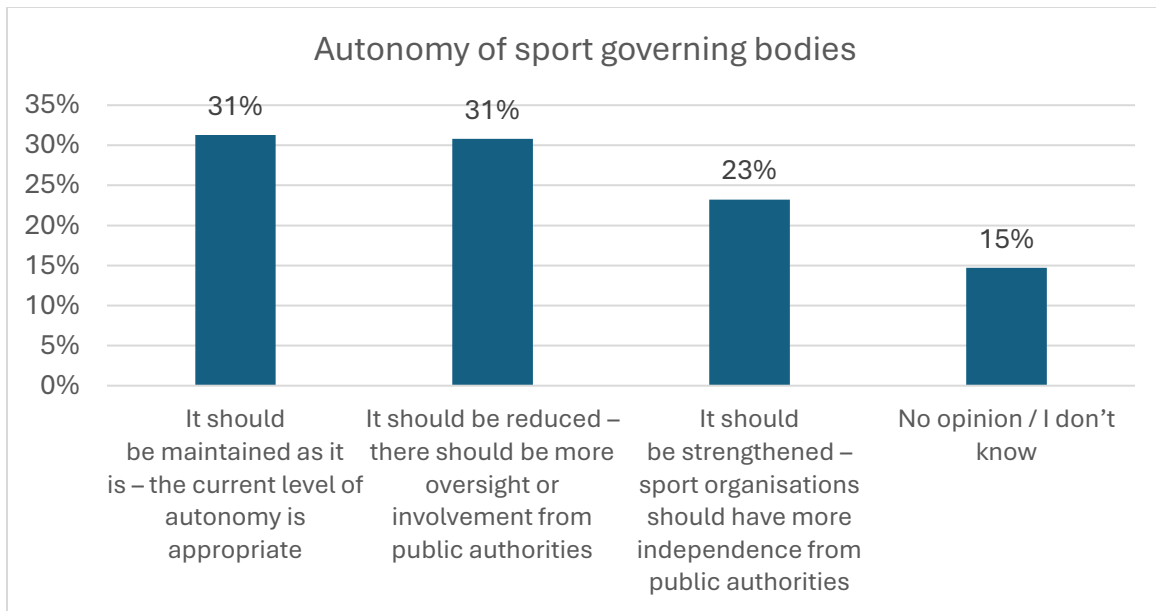


Figure 7: Question 9. To what extent do you believe the autonomy of sport governing bodies should be maintained?

Among those willing to see a need for increased autonomy, the most important to reinforce were internal governance and leadership decisions (23%), as well as talent development and training programmes (22%). Among those calling for reduced autonomy, the most popular areas were financial transparency and accountability (27%), governance and leadership (24%), and athlete rights and welfare (22%).

Furthermore, respondents were invited to suggest elements that could **enhance the definition of the European Sport Model** through an open-ended question. A thematic analysis revealed that **Governance and rights** are identified as crucial by an important share of respondents (47%, 51 out of 107 respondents), mainly calling for sporting autonomy contingent on good governance standards (eg transparency, democratic processes). Stronger protection of athletes' rights and representation within governance structures is also highlighted. The analysis also shows that about 45% (47 out of 107 responses) advocate for the European Sport Model to be grounded in the everyday realities of sport across Europe, emphasising **grassroots participation** as instrumental to foster social cohesion and health benefits. Persistent barriers are also stressed notably affordability, administrative burden, unequal access to facilities, and declining volunteering with several respondents calling for **better recognition and support for volunteers**. Some respondents also challenge the current pyramid structure, pointing out that many Europeans engage in sport outside formal competitions. In addition, respondents strongly advocate to **strengthen financial solidarity between elite and grassroots levels**. Furthermore, **Health and education** are also highlighted as key aspects to be included in the European Sport Model, mentioned in close to 33% of replies (35 out of 107 respondents). Although less frequently, responses stressed the need to foster environmental sustainability eg for the long-term viability of sport infrastructures, while also pointing to digitalisation regarding governance and efficiency.

3. Challenges to sport in Europe

Respondents were asked to identify the biggest challenges to sport in Europe (with responses grouped in six pre-identified categories, each including multiple response options). The table below presents the statements most frequently rated as “very important”.

Governance & Integrity	Unethical behaviours, corruption, and conflicts of interest in sport governance	84%
	Lack of transparency and accountability in sport governance	74%
	Lack of gender balance and diversity in sport governance	62%
	Commercially driven decisions undermining core values and disconnecting from traditional fan bases	58%
Competition & Broadcasting	Biased representation and limited visibility of women and minorities	63%
	Financial disparities and unbalanced competition formats	57%
	Limited access to sports events of societal interest for large segments of the population	55%
Grassroot sport	Lack of investment in grassroots sport	78%
	Prioritisation of profit over grassroots development	71%
	Lack of solidarity mechanisms from elite sport to lower levels	64%
	Inequal access to sport, including for persons with disabilities	61%
Athletes & Volunteers	Discrimination affecting athletes (e.g. gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion)	64%
	Declining involvement of volunteers in sport	61%
	Gender- and identity-based harassment and abuse (online and offline)	60%
	Insufficient investment in training and professional development for staff and volunteers	60%
Investment for Societal Benefits	Insufficient investment in education linked to sport and active lifestyles (including physical literacy)	73%
	Sedentary lifestyles and limited opportunities for active mobility	69%
	Insufficient investment in youth empowerment and development through sport	69%
	Lack of and access to sport infrastructure	67%
	Lack of accessibility of sport for persons with disabilities	66%
Sport Diplomacy	Geopolitical tensions in sport	48%
	Non-EU investment in European sport	39%

- Comparatively, **governance and integrity** clearly received the highest level of concern overall (particularly unethical behaviour, corruption, conflict of interests; and transparency and accountability). Closely following this, **grassroots sport** was highlighted as highly important (lack of investment; and profit-driven priorities). Additionally, respondents noted the importance to emphasise **education to sport and active lifestyles (physical literacy)**.

When asked to consider how **digitalisation** should be approached related to sport in Europe there was an optimistic consensus among the respondents (see figure 7). 57% of respondents believe it should be seen as a balanced challenge, and this suggests that implementation should be organic and safeguarded by regulation and standards. 29% see digitalisation as a primary opportunity to be implemented in sport for creating better access and innovation for sport actors. Only 9% view it as a direct threat to competitive balance and privacy in sport. Additional comments informed that digitalisation could be used for enhancing accessibility, supporting athletes' development, and for promoting active lifestyles through games and digital platforms, however with remarks to the risk and downsides posed by digitalisation i.e. data security. The opinion of young people was well reflected in the answers of the wider population, viewing it first as a balanced challenge (54%) and second as an opportunity for accessibility, diversity and innovation (38%). However, none of the young people identified it as a significant threat to privacy and competitive balance in sport.

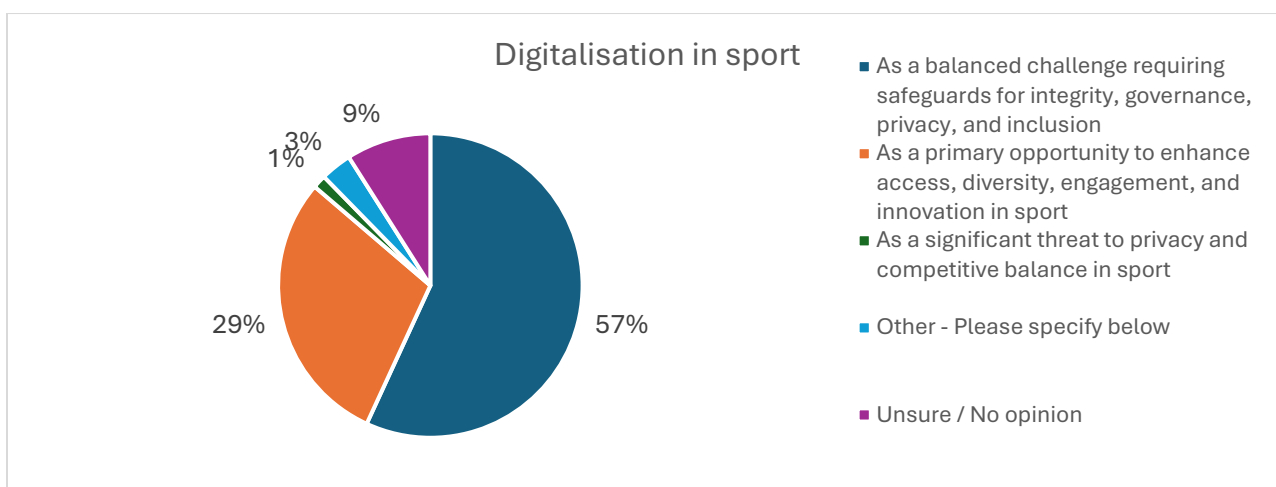


Figure 8: Question 12. In your view, how should digitalisation be approached in sport in Europe?

4. Actions and priorities to reinforce the European Sport Model

When evaluating the importance of the European Union to strengthen the way sport is organised in Europe, the results showed **strong support for EU level action** with 79% indicating that it is very important and 16% expressing moderate importance (see figure 9). Among the different stakeholder segments there was little variance between answers, however with NGO's (82%) and academics (81%) being slightly more for EU level action, and public authorities (76%) and citizens (72%) slightly less.

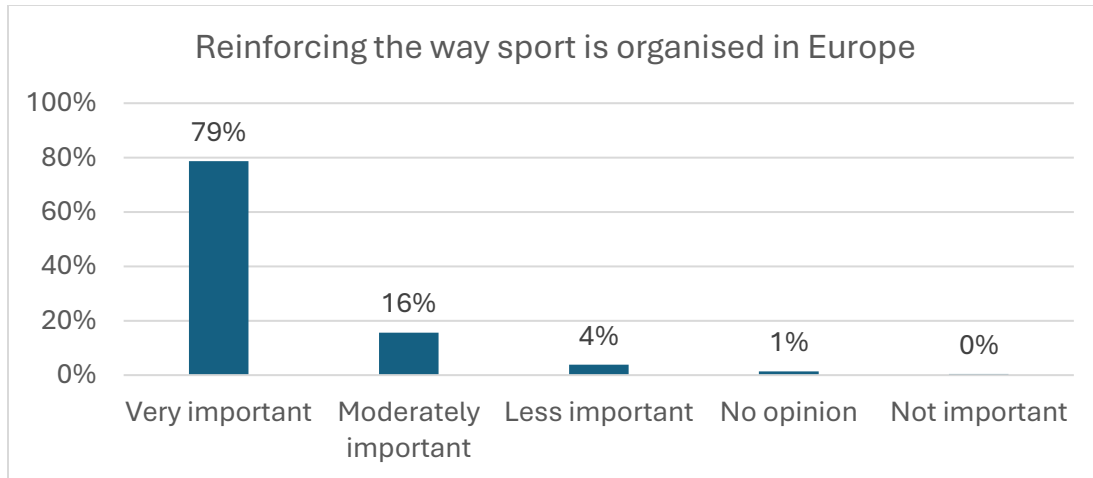


Figure 8: Question 13. To what extent do you consider it important for the European Union to take action to reinforce the way sport is organised in Europe?

Respondents were asked to identify **where the EU should consider taking action to address the challenges identified above.**

- **Governance and integrity:** nearly half of respondents (48%) highlighted unethical behaviours, corruption, and conflicts of interest in sport governance, while around one-third noted a lack of transparency and accountability (33%) and a lack of gender balance and diversity in governance (28%).
- **Competition formats and broadcasting:** nearly half of respondents (49%) highlighted the lack of access by a large part of the population to sports events of social interest. Additionally, financial disparities and unbalanced formats of competitions was also considered important by 43% respondents.
- **Grassroots sport:** lack of investments in grassroots sport was the most frequently reported challenge (61%), followed by prioritisation of profit over grassroots development (51%) and insufficient investments in professional development of those working or volunteering in sport clubs and associations (49%). Inequality in access to sport, including for persons with diverse disabilities (38%) was also of importance.
- **Athletes and volunteers:** nearly half of respondents (49%) referred to the insufficient investments in professional development of those working or volunteering in sport clubs and associations, while 45% also noted the decline volunteering participation in sport.
- **Investment in sport for societal benefits:** Insufficient investments were noted regarding physical literacy and education related to sport and active lifestyles (48%), regarding sport as a vector for inclusion (38%) and youth empowerment and development (31%).
- **Sport diplomacy:** Geopolitical tensions in sport (64%) and non-EU investment in European sport (53%) were also frequently reported, reflecting that these items were presented among a smaller set of options.

Finally, respondents were asked to what extent **EU-level actions** could enhance the organisation of sport in Europe. Respondents selected from a list of fifteen proposed actions. Six of these emerged as priorities, stated as highly significant by more than 60% of respondents. First, the Integration of health-enhancing physical activity and physical literacy as part of the European Sport Model (72%),

and prioritising funding for grassroots sport (71%). Followed closely by the mainstreaming of sport across public policies and priorities (68%) and the promotion of equality, inclusion and accessibility (65%). Increase integrity, transparency, and good governance of sport governing bodies (62%) and in this regard setting benchmarks for good governance in sport in Europe (60%) were also deemed important, as well as exchanging best practices amongst national and local governments, and stakeholders (62%).

To conclude, respondents could share **further comments and suggestions for the upcoming Communication** through an open-ended question. A significant part of respondents – about 45% (40 out of 89 respondents) stressed participation at local level and grassroots sport development. Emphasis is often given to the importance of accessible facilities and affordable physical activities, while pointing to the need to reduce administrative requirements for sport clubs. Some contributions highlighted that volunteers are essential to grassroots sport and call for clearer measures to strengthen their engagement, including basic training, and better recognition, support and skills development to sustain local sport structures. Additionally, Governance and rights were raised in over 42% of replies (38 out of 89 respondents). Respondents largely support sport's autonomy, while calling for greater guidance on upholding good governance principles. Furthermore, Health and education are mentioned in roughly 24% of cases (21 out of 89 respondents), as important contexts in which the ESM should be promoted. Respondents frequently pointed schools as key spaces to develop physical literacy, seen as a foundation for lifelong physical active and healthy lifestyles. References to inclusion and equal opportunities appear often, with several contributions mentioning discrimination, abuse and violence, and asking for stronger protection of children and other vulnerable groups in sport. In this context, some respondents also underlined the importance of rights and athlete representation, including calls for stronger dialogue structures and clearer protections for athletes within sport organisations. Respondents also point to funding needs including solidarity mechanisms to reach grassroots level and support health and education goals. Lastly, sustainability and digitalisation were also mentioned, with respondents referring to environmental responsibility in infrastructure and events, and to digital tools that can help improve transparency, coordination and reduce administrative burdens.