Well done Erzurum Winter EYOF! - February’s standout event was the 13th Winter European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF), hosted in Erzurum, Turkey. A total of 700 athletes aged between 14 and 18 from 34 countries competed in nine sports at one of Europe’s major winter sports resorts.

The Opening Ceremony took place on 12 February at the Athletes’ Village at Atatürk University. Youth and Sports Minister Akif Çağatay Kılıç, Minister of Health Recep Akdağ, EOC acting President Janez Kocijančič and EOC Secretary General Raffaele Pagnozzi were in attendance at the ceremony. A number of Executive Committee members were also present, including the Turkish National Olympic Committee (TOC) Vice President Hasan Arat, as well as other key representatives from the Turkish and wider sports world.

“The Winter EYOF is a tremendous life experience and I am sure that every athlete, no matter what result they achieve, will leave with a thousand positive memories of participating in this Winter EYOF in Turkey,” commented Janez Kocijančič.

TOC President Uğur Erdener attended the EYOF Closing Ceremony on Sunday 17 February, where athletes and officials celebrated an overwhelming success for Turkey and young European athletes. Governor of Erzurum Seyfettin Azizoğlu handed over the flag for the 14th Winter EYOF to the mayors of Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo, Abdulah Skaka and Nenad Samardžija.

On behalf of the EOC, Secretary General Raffaele Pagnozzi said: “Thank you to the government of Turkey who accepted this huge challenge and delivered a great sporting success. I would also like to offer a special thank you to the volunteers who have contributed to this superb edition of the EYOF.”

Russia comfortably topped the medal table at the festival, winning 19 gold medals and 39 medals in total. Turkey finished in 11th place with two silver medals and one bronze. It was Turkey’s best ever finish at a Winter EYOF with Hazar Karagüll (short track speed skating) and the girls’ curling team both securing silver medals on the final day of competition.

ENOCs

BULGARIA - Over 400 young people participated at the fifth edition of the Bulgarian Olympic Winter Festival. The event was held in Ossogovo, a fast-growing ski resort located between south-western Bulgaria and north-eastern Macedonia.

The event was organised under the slogan “Discovering the Olympic hopes of Bulgaria” by the Bulgarian Olympic Committee and the Association for Development of Sport and Leisure.

The festival aims to promote the fundamental ideals, principles and values of Olympism amongst the next generation and to give young athletes the platform to showcase their sporting talent.

Since the first edition, the festivals have offered young Bulgarian athletes their first taste of serious competitive action. Many of the competitors have gone on to represent Bulgaria in international competitions, with some former participants now preparing for the Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang next year.
CROATIA - The National Olympic Committee’s commission “Gender Equality in Sport” celebrated its 20th anniversary. NOC Vice-President Morana Paliković Gruden will chair the commission from 2016-2020. Other members on the commission are Ratko Cvetnić, Danira Bilić, Branka Matković, Jasna Višnjević, Mirna Rajle Brodanac, Gea Barbic, Sanda Čorak and Linda Antić Borak. The Secretary of the Commission is Gordana Borko, who is also head of the development programmes at the Croatian Olympic Committee.

In line with the IOC’s call to action, the commission will look to provide better opportunities for women in sport and on sports bodies. Through a variety of educational measures, including seminars, conferences and training programmes, the commission will look to promote equal gender representation in management positions in sport, and encourage greater education and an increased public awareness on the topic.

GERMANY - “German athletes set an exemplary standard in achieving high performance” stated the result of a study published by Deutsche Sporthilfe and the Deutsche Sporthochschule in Cologne. The study of top level sport in Germany showed that 85.6% of the population in Germany agree with the statement.

The survey’s participation has risen over the past five years, from 57.1% to 60.1% of the German population now contributing. This shows that a majority of the population are interested in elite sport. The moral standing of German athletes is also very high, with the study stating that “81.3% of Germans have confidence in the fact that German athletes act morally, respect the rules, fair play and incorruptibility.” For international athletes this figure is only 39.3%.

However, negative themes surround elite sport such as doping, corruption and match fixing and have a negative impact on the social acceptance and relevance of elite sport.

It was reported that German athletes still play an exemplary role in communicating positive social norms and skills such as efficiency and fairness. However, compared to a study conducted in 2011, the responsibility of athletes as role models has declined slightly - it is now 85.6%, down from 90.9%. The perception of an athlete’s fairness is now 79.1%, down from 87.2%.

According to the study, only 60.9% of Germans associate elite sport with individual or national benefits for Germany, while in 2011 this was 78.2%.

The German population’s low confidence in the integrity of international athletes, international sports associations and international sports officials is particularly apparent.

Professor Christoph Breuer, Head of the Institute for Sports Economics and Sports Management at the German Sporthochschule, said: “We were able to prove for the first time a causal chain that the acceptance of top sport in the German population depended on trust in the integrity of the athletes, the associations and in particular the officials.”

Deutsche Sporthilfe currently supports some 3,800 up-and-coming, elite athletes from over 50 different disciplines; the Deutsche Sporthochschule is the largest sports university in Europe.

GREECE - Elections took place this month at the Hellenic Olympic Committee. Spyros Capralos has been re-elected as President of the NOC for a third consecutive four-year mandate.

The General Assembly, held in Athens on 6 February also confirmed the positions of the first Vice-President Pavlos Kanellakis and Treasurer Antonios Nikolopoulos, whilst Vasilieios Katsoros was elected as the new second Vice-President.

Emmanuel Kolymphadis was elected as the new Secretary General, whilst Michael Fysentzides was elected as President of the International Olympic Academy, replacing Isidoros Kouvelos.

“It is not a personal victory,” commented President Capralos, “it is the victory of Greek sport, the victory of our athletes, who in difficult times made our country proud at the Rio summer Olympics.”

IRELAND - Elections also took place at the NOC of Ireland this month. Sarah Keane was elected the new President of the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI), succeeding Pat Hickey who had held the position since 1989.

Sailing’s Colm Barrington was elected 1st Vice-President and Snowsports Ireland’s Robert Norwood was chosen as 2nd Vice-President. Sarah O’Shea was elected as the new Secretary General.

The election, which took place on 9 February at the OCI’s Extraordinary General Assembly in Dublin, means the OCI joins the exclusive club of European NOCs headed by a woman, accompanying Bulgaria, Liechtenstein and Lithuania.

Ms Keane won her position by a large majority over acting OCI President Willie O’Brien and Basketball Ireland Chief Executive Bernard O’Byrne, winning 29 out of 43 votes available.
42-year-old Sarah Keane has been a member of the OCI for the last two years and is currently Chief Executive of Swim Ireland. She will lead the new Executive Committee up to and including the Tokyo 2020 Games.

Sarah Keane commented: “I am committed to working with the new Executive Committee and staff of the OCI to put in place administration and governance structures that are fit for purpose and best in class, to ensure an athlete-centred approach in respect of all that we do and ultimately, that the OCI plays its part in enhancing the future development of sport in Ireland and represents the country well on the world stage.”
She added: “Some of the required changes will take some time as there are steps that have to be taken in order to facilitate the governance changes.”

Patrick Hickey, who had long ago announced he would not be a candidate, wrote a farewell statement on the Olympic Council of Ireland website.

LIECHTENSTEIN - Whilst travelling to the Alpine Ski World Championship in St. Moritz, IOC President Thomas Bach stopped in Vaduz to meet with Prime Minister Adrian Hasler, Sports Minister Marlies Amann-Marxer, IOC Member Princess Nora of Liechtenstein, LOC President Isabel Fehr and the board of the Liechtenstein Olympic Committee. During the course of his stay, President Bach visited the Liechtenstein National Museum and attended the presentation of the Pierre de Coubertin medal to Baron Eduard Alexandrowitsch von Falz-Fein.

At Thomas Bach’s meeting with representatives of Liechtenstein sport, Sports Minister Amann-Marxer emphasised that Liechtenstein is able to produce athletes who are capable of great success, which is why it is important that smaller countries are valued within the large IOC family. Former President of the NOK Liechtenstein, Dr Peter Ritter, and Olympic medallists Hanni Wenzel-Weirather and Paul Frommelt were also in attendance at the meeting.

POLAND - The Polish Fair Play Awards ceremony took place on 8 February at the headquarters of the NOC of Poland.

This year’s annual contest, organised by the POC Fair Play Club, celebrated its 50th jubilee.

The President of the POC Fair Play Club Halina Zdebska-Biziewska welcomed the guests and spoke about the history of the contest.

POC Secretary General Adam Krzesiński pointed out the importance of fair play in modern day sport and in day-to-day life, noting that without clean competition and appropriate behaviour, the true value of sport is lost.

Daria Leba was honoured with the Fair Play Diploma in the category of “Act of Fair Play 2016” for her behaviour during the regional Pit Bike competition.

Despite being just 15 years old, she showed incredible sportsmanship and gave away second place in the overall classification to her rival, who could not finish the last race due to a technical problem with her motorbike. Daria believed her rival deserved the second-place finish more than she did. The organisers of the competition allowed her decision to stand.

Tadeusz Olszański, founder of the POC Gentleman of Sport Fair Play Club in 1963, was awarded the “Willi Daume Honorary Diploma” by Halina Zdebska-Biziewska, Adam Krzesiński and Kajetan Hądzelek, who has been actively involved with the International Fair Play Committee (CIFP) for many years.

**EYOF**

Winter European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) 2017 Coordination Commission members have commended the event held in Erzurum, Turkey.

On the last day of the Winter EYOF, Liney Halldordsdottir (ISL), Leo Kranz (LIE), and Florin Misca (ROU) gave their views on the event in Erzurum. They all agreed on the perfect conditions, top-class venues, wonderful hospitality, and friendliness of the organisers.

Everyone was full of praise for the Turkish Olympic Committee and the Organising Committee, who organised such a high-class event in such a short time-period.

There was also a general appreciation for the Games’ compact nature and the excellent Athletes’ Village.

Away from the competitions, the Coordination Commission visited a school in Erzurum and were delighted at seeing how the EYOF had inspired the young children to participate in sport and be active.
The atmosphere throughout Erzurum 2017 was excellent, with young volunteers showing their commitment - most of whom were from the English Faculty of the local university. Modern technology, such as the new online Registration and Accreditation System provided by the EOC, enabled much faster internal communications at Erzurum 2017 than had been seen at previous editions of the EYOF. Holding the Victory Ceremonies at the Athletes’ Village was also a great success and helped maintain a fantastic atmosphere throughout the event. Lastly, the Turkish authorities delivered a comprehensive security service, making competitors, spectators and organisers all feel safe.

Congratulations Erzurum!

GSSE

In the presence of IOC President Thomas Bach, San Marino’s National Olympic Committee celebrated 100 days to go until the Games of the Small States of Europe begin on 19 May. Special ceremonies were organised on 18 February on Mount Titan, to mark preparations for welcoming the Games back to San Marino. NOC President Gian Primo Giardi and Secretary General Eros Bologna attended the celebrations. The standout event of the day was the unveiling of the medals, which are in the shape of the country and show the flags of the other eight participating countries (Andorra, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco and Montenegro). It will be the third time that the Games are being hosted in San Marino. The country hosted the first ever edition of the GSSE in 1985.

OLYMPIC GAMES

TOKYO 2020 - This month, organisers focused on the production of the 5,000 Olympic and Paralympic medals needed for the Games. An ad hoc committee held various meetings to discuss details of the process for the design of the medals, which will be made out of recycled metal from mobile phones. The project aims to promote sustainability and reduce costs. The Japanese public will be asked to donate their old phones and small appliances in order to gather the eight tonnes of metal necessary to create the two tonnes of gold, silver and bronze required for the manufacturing of the 5,000 medals. Collection boxes will be placed in local offices and telecom stores from April and will remain there until the required metal has been collected. “A project that involves the people of Japan in the creation of the medals is really positive,” said Tokyo 2020 Sports Director Koji Murofushi. “There is a limit on the earth’s resources and using recycled metals shows our concern for the environment.”

PYEONGCHANG 2018 - February was a special month for the host city of the next Olympic Winter Games. Organisers celebrated the One-Year-to-Go milestone, as well as the Chefs de Mission seminar and the occasion of first tickets going on sale in South Korea. However, the standout event was the unveiling of the Olympic torch and the torchbearers’ uniform. South Korean Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn and an IOC delegation led by Gunilla Lindberg, who heads the IOC’s Coordination Commission for the Games, attended the ceremony. The 700mm torch, designed by Korean designer Young Se Kim, is a representation of the altitude of PyeongChang, which is 700 metres above sea level, whilst the white and gold tones, which are the main colours of the Torch Relay, represent the Olympic Winter Games. The Olympic flame will be transported by 7,500 different torchbearers wearing uniforms combining the colours of the Olympic torch with the colours of the Olympic rings.
2024 OLYMPIC CANDIDATES - Only two candidates, Los Angeles and Paris, remain in the race to host the 2024 Olympic Games after Budapest withdrew its bid. A decision will be made this September at the IOC Session in Lima. Hungary’s government withdrew Budapest’s bid, citing a lack of political and national unity. A petition demanding a local referendum on the issue received 250,000 signatures from Hungarians. According to a national survey, half of the voters wanted Budapest to withdraw its bid, with only a third supporting it nationally. In Budapest, 56% of voters were against the bid.

MISCELLANEOUS

Second International Forum for Sports Integrity - The second edition of the International Forum for Sports Integrity (IFSI) took place on 15 February at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland. The IFSI is the main platform for all stakeholders to exchange ideas and coordinate actions on issues relevant to the integrity of sport. Discussions focused on ways to prevent the manipulation of competitions and how to support ethical conduct and anti-corruption.

Top delegates from five European NOCs (Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Portugal) participated in the forum. The EOC was represented by the head of the Brussels office Folker Hellmund, whilst ANOC Secretary General and IOC Executive Board Member Gunilla Lindberg, Turkish Olympic Committee President and IOC Vice-President Uğur Erdener, and National Olympic Committee of Ukraine President and IOC Executive Board Member Sergey Bubka represented ANOC.

The event, chaired by IOC President Thomas Bach, gathered together 180 participants from governments, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Council of Europe, the European Union, INTERPOL, Europol, sports betting operators, national regulating authorities and other Olympic Movement stakeholders.

The outcome of the forum was the establishment of two bodies: the Olympic Movement Unit on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions, which will aim to streamline related IOC initiatives and engage Olympic Movement stakeholders, including International Federations (IFs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and athletes, and the International Sports Integrity Partnership, which will aim to help prevent the risk of corruption in sport, enable better cooperation between key stakeholders and ensure a coordinated approach to the implementation of dedicated measures.