A shining month - Once again, the month of May was a busy one for the leadership of the European Olympic Committees (EOC). Acting President Janez Kocijančič, Secretary General Raffaele Pagnozzi and their team were occupied with a number of events throughout the month, including the 38th annual EOC Seminar in Skopje, FYR of Macedonia. Also on the EOC’s agenda this month were the upcoming Gyor 2017 European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF), preparations for the Minsk 2019 European Games and the plans for the next Athletes’ Forum, which will be held in Monaco in October.

Kocijančič attended the Opening Ceremony of the Baku 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games as a special guest of the organisers, bringing back memories of the highly successful inaugural Baku 2015 European Games. Together with Secretary General Raffaele Pagnozzi, he travelled to San Marino for a shining Games of the Small States of Europe Opening Ceremony.

Throughout the month, preparations for the Minsk 2019 European Games were a key focus for the EOC. There was daily contact with the Minsk European Games Organising Committee (MEGOC), a working group visit led by Spyros Capralos, and the finalisation of the sports programme, venues, Athletes’ Village, dates, and much more.

The Gyor 2017 EYOF also received special attention with the eye-catching “Shine in the Name of Sport” ceremony organised by the EOC, which was a celebration of peace and Olympic values at the Ara Pacis Museum in Rome.

2nd EOC Executive Committee Meeting of the year - On 18 May the EOC held its second Executive Committee (EC) Meeting of the year in the FYR of Macedonia. The highlight was a positive update on the progress of the 2019 Minsk European Games, which guaranteed to be Agenda 2020 compliant. The members of the EC Meeting, chaired by Acting President Janez Kocijančič, received feedback from EC member Spyros Capralos, who led a working group visit to Minsk earlier in the month. There were also updates on the 2017 Gyor Summer EYOF and other upcoming events.

During the meeting, members also voted to host the 9th European Athletes Forum and Assembly in Monte Carlo, Monaco. The event is to be held in October and will include an elective assembly that will see the baton passed to a new commission.

Commenting on the progress of Minsk 2019 after the EC Meeting, Janez Kocijančič said: “The preparations for Minsk 2019 are very much on track, but we need to continue to work hard to ensure we deliver the exceptional product we believe the European Games can be. It is very important to the EOC that the Games reflect the recommendations laid out in Agenda 2020 and we believe the 2019 Games in Minsk will provide an excellent blueprint for years to come. Today’s meeting was very productive and I have complete confidence that the preparations will continue to move in the right direction.”

The European Olympic Committees Seminar - Upon the invitation of NOC President Vasil Tupurkovski on the FYR of Macedonia’s 25th anniversary, this year’s EOC Seminar took place from 19-20 May in Skopje. The 38th Seminar was held jointly with the IOC Olympic Solidarity (OS) Regional Forum.

Chaired by EOC Secretary General Raffaele Pagnozzi, the Seminar was held in the presence of Vasil Tupurkovski, the Mayor of Skopje Roce Trajanovski and EOC Acting President Janez Kocijančič. The two-day meeting covered a number of highly topical issues for 200 delegates from all 50 European NOCs, including presidents, secretaries general and other key Olympic Movement stakeholders.
During the OS Forum, Deputy Director Pamela Vipond and her team presented the 2017-2020 objectives, budgets and programmes. Two crucial workshops were also on the programme: Preparation of the future sports events and Evolution of digital technology in sports communication.

A key focus of the Seminar was the upcoming events for NOCs, including the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games, the Tokyo 2020 Games, the Buenos Aires 2018 Youth Olympic Games and the 2017 Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE) in San Marino. Also on the agenda was the kick-off ceremony for the 2017 Györ summer European Youth Olympics Festival (EYOF), which took place immediately after the Seminar in Rome’s iconic Ara Pacis Museum.

Another major focus was the evolution of digital communication in sport and how NOCs can find new ways to increase their relevance and visibility online, particularly to the youth market. The Olympic Channel proposed new strategies in this regard, before the NOCs were presented with social media and sports data that can help tailor communications in the fast-paced social media age.

The 2019 Games also featured strongly on the final day of the Seminar with Spyros Capralos, who is Chair of the Coordination Commission, presenting NOCs with a report of his working group visit to Minsk the previous week. Director of the Minsk 2019 European Games Organising Committee (MEOC) George Katulin also presented to delegates, providing detailed information of the venues for the Games. Capralos assured delegates that the venues are existing and of the highest quality.

On Friday evening, delegates gathered for a gala dinner to celebrate the NOC of the FYR of Macedonia’s 25th anniversary and announce Kelly Sildaru as the winner of the Piotr Nurowski Winter Prize for Best European Young Athlete, which the 50 NOCs had voted on in the morning.

Warm congratulations and thanks were expressed to Sasho Popovski, the Secretary General of the hosting NOC, to his team and to the excellent volunteers.

Next year’s Seminar will be hosted in Belgrade, Serbia.

**2nd Piotr Nurowski Winter Prize** - Freestyle skier Kelly Sildaru is this year’s winner of the Piotr Nurowski Prize for Best European Young Athlete in winter sports.

The award was presented to her at the EOC Seminar gala dinner in Skopje on 19 May, following a final vote by secret ballot by the 50 European NOCs that morning. Sildaru was one of five extremely talented young finalists chosen by the NOCs of Europe for their performances over the year and their sense of Olympism.

Born in Tallinn, Estonia 15 years ago, Kelly has been a competitive athlete since 2011. Among her best results are: in 2015, 1st place at Dew Tour / slopestyle / Breckenridge (Colorado, USA); in 2016, 1st place at the European Freeski Open three times / slopestyle in Laax (SUI), then again at Dew Tour / slopestyle in Breckenridge and at the X Games / slopestyle / Aspen, Colorado USA.

She became the first athlete under the age of 15 to win the X Games gold medal twice, and the only woman to get two medals in a single X Games.

Kelly Sildaru said: “My main goal is to become an all-round skier with very technical skills combined with the touch of ease and enjoyment. Being a role-model for other kids and even grown-ups, is my fuel.”

This was the second winter edition of the Nurowski Prize created in 2010, named after the late Polish NOC President. Sildaru and the other four nominees - Alex Vinatzer (Italy), alpine skiing; Birk Ruud (Norway), freestyle slopestyle and big air; Kamila Stormowska (Poland), short track; and Nika Kriznar (Slovenia), ski jumping - were all in Skopje, where they were warmly welcomed by the participants at the Seminar.

Sildaru will now receive a scholarship to help her to reach the very top in her sport. All nominees received an EOC Piotr Nurowski Trophy.

**COMMISSIONS**

The EOC Athletes’ Commission, chaired by Belgian table tennis champion Jean Michel Saive, met in Rome on 5 May for their annual meeting.

Saive and the attending members - Mads Kruse Andersen (DEN - rowing), Marion Rodewald (GER - field hockey), Mikko Ronkainen (FIN - freestyle skiing), and Alessandra Sensini (ITA - windsurfing) - addressed various concerns of top European athletes and put together a strong agenda for the European Athletes’ Forum in October. IOC member Britta Heidemann (GER - fencing) represented the IOC Athletes Commission.

There were various candidatures offering to organise the October forum, before a final decision was taken at the Executive Committee Meeting in Skopje, where Monaco was chosen as the host city. The October forum will include an elective
assembly that will see the baton passed to a new commission that will continue to foster the role of athletes in Europe and work to influence EU policy in favour of the Olympic Movement, and athletes in particular.

**ENOCs**

**Elections**

**CROATIA** - At its meeting held on 8 May, the Council of the Croatian Olympic Committee (COC) chaired by Zlatko Matesa re-elected Josip Čop as Secretary General of the COC with a mandate of four years. Cop was the only candidate in the election and has held the position since 2005.

**DENMARK** - This month Niels Nygaard was been re-elected unopposed as President of the Danish Olympic Committee for another four-year mandate. He has been part of the NOC for 25 years and replaced President Kai Holm in 2007.

**FINLAND** - After Secretary General Teemu Japisson recently stepped down, the NOC Board of Directors this month named Mikko Salosen as the Finnish Olympic Committee’s new CEO. The new Secretary General, a graduate engineer, has worked in various management positions within sport. He was President of the Finnish Orienteering Federation from 2003-2008 and is currently the Vice-President of the International Orienteering Federation. He will begin his new role at the NOC in August 2017.

**FRANCE** - On 11 May Denis Masseglia was re-elected for a third four-year term. Masseglia was elected in the first round with 556 votes for and 385 against, beating the President of the French Fencing Federation Isabelle Lamour and Judo Olympic medallist and former Minister of Sports David Douillet. Secretary General Jean-Michel Brun was also re-elected.

**HUNGARY** - The Olympic silver medallist and former world and European champion fencer Krisztián Kulcsár was elected President of the Hungarian Olympic Committee, at the General Assembly in Budapest on Tuesday 2 May. Kulcsár, 46, won after three rounds of votes over the other two candidates: the outgoing President Zsolt Borkai, who had headed the organisation since 2010, and the former NOC Secretary General Bence Szabó. Lazlo Fabian has been appointed as interim Secretary General.

**ICELAND** - President Larus L. Blondal was re-elected unopposed. Secretary General Liney Rut Halldórsdóttir was also re-elected for another mandate.

**ITALY** - On 11 May, Giovanni Malagò was re-elected as President of the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) for a second term with a large majority, winning 67 out of 75 votes against his opponent Sergio Grifoni. The former President of the Italian Federation of Orienteering only received two votes. The assembly also elected the Executive Council, which saw windsurfing champion Alessandra Sensini, who is also a member of the EOC Athletes’ Commission, become the new Vice-President of CONI. The CONI Executive Council subsequently confirmed Roberto Fabbricini as Secretary General.

**SERBIA** - Bozidar Maljkovic has been elected as President of the NOC. He takes over from another basketball great - the former NBA champion Vlade Divac. In his coaching career, 65-year-old Maljkovic won four European club championship titles with Jugoplastika, Limoges and Panathinaikos.

After the proposal of President Maljkovic, George Višacki’s position as Secretary General was confirmed.

**SPAIN** - Alejandro Blanco, who has been president of the Spanish Olympic Committee since 2005, was re-elected for a new four-year term during an extraordinary assembly this month in Madrid. Blanco, 67, was the only candidate and received 167 votes, with only four left blank. Isabel Fernandez will continue as the first vice president; María Victoria Cabezas will replace Víctor Sánchez as Secretary General, and Sánchez will now be treasurer, a position previously held by Manuel Parga.
ALBANIA - A delegation from the Sports University of Tirana (UST), led by Rector Agron Cuka, visited CONI and its Rome School of Sport, to sign a cooperation agreement between the two organisations.

Led by Rossana Ciuffetti, Director of the Scuola dello Sport CONI, the Albanian delegation was initially welcomed by the President of CONI Giovanni Malagò and Secretary General Roberto Fabbricini.

The agreement signed by the Rector Agron Cuka and the Director General of CONI Servizi Alberto Miglietta will foster commitment and cooperation between the parties on various fields, including development and participation in conferences, seminars, technical courses and the exchange of lecturers, books, manuals and journals, etc.

The meeting was followed by a visit to the premises of the Scuola dello Sport, where the Albanian delegation was informed about the training and training programmes offered to technical specialists and managers of sports federations.

AZERBAIJAN - The 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games, the fourth of its kind, were officially opened on 8 May by the country’s President Ilham Aliyev and Vice President Mehriban Aliyeva during a ceremony in the Baku Olympic Stadium. EOC Acting President Janez Kocijančič was in attendance as a special guest, with emotional memories going back to the inaugural European Games that began in the same place in June 2015.

More than 3,000 athletes representing 54 countries competed for 269 medals. The Director of Press Operations for this year’s Islamic Solidarity Games Jayne Pearce has hailed the “fantastic human legacy” created at the inaugural European Games held in Baku 2015. The competitions lasted until 22 May.

GREAT BRITAIN - On 20 May, Sir Hugh Robertson, Chairman of the British Olympic Association (BOA), paid tribute to Dame Di Ellis who sadly passed away following a short illness.

Ellis was a pioneer in the British sporting landscape, most notably in forging a pathway for women in high performance sport and leadership. Having been an international standard rower, Ellis later became a renowned sports administrator and was appointed Chairman of British Rowing in 1989 and Executive Chairman in 1992, overseeing the rise to prominence of the sport in this country.

She was recognised as The Sunday Times Sportswoman Administrator of the Year and, in 2004, received a CBE for services to rowing, before in 2013 she was awarded a DBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honour’s list, recognising a lifetime’s commitment to sport. In addition, she became the first female steward of Henley Royal Regatta.

A Trustee of the British Olympic Foundation and the Torch Trophy Trust, Ellis was also a Life Vice President of the British Olympic Association (having first joined the BOA Board in 1997) President of British Rowing and Vice President of the Sport and Recreation Alliance.

ISRAEL - On the country’s 69th day of independence, the Israeli Olympic Committee hosted the first lady of Israeli artistic gymnastics Agnes Keleti at the annual meeting of its Board of Directors.

The award was presented to her by the State of Israel for her outstanding accomplishments as an Olympic star who won 10 Olympic medals (in Helsinki in 1952 and in Melbourne in 1956 - representing Hungary), including five gold medals. She is considered one of the best Jewish Olympic athletes of all time.

Igal Carmi, President of the Israeli Olympic Committee and Mrs Yael Arad, a member of the Board, presented Keleti with this very special prize.

On the same day, the Israeli NOC also hosted a reception in honour of Alex Shatilov, Israel’s most decorated gymnast, who won a bronze medal for floor exercises at the European Championships 2017 held in Romania - the seventh medal of his career.

LUXEMBOURG - On 4 May, Luxembourg Online and the Luxembourg Olympic and Sports Committee (COSL) signed an extension of their partnership for the next four years.

The contract was signed by Paul Retter, Managing Director of Luxembourg Online, André Hoffmann, President of COSL, and Daniel Dax, Secretary General of COSL.

As a long-standing partner of COSL, Luxembourg Online actively supports Luxembourg’s sport. This commitment is part of Luxembourg Online’s policy on sports and reflects its local roots and the importance it attaches to long-term relationships.

Luxembourg Online, founded in 1995, is one of the leading Luxembourg telecommunications
operators. It specialises in the provision of Internet access, television, fixed and mobile telephony, and has been an expert in the field of telecommunications for more than 20 years.

POLAND - On 20 May, the Polish Olympic Committee held an Olympic Museum Night, where guests painted the Olympic rings, and the Rio 2016 and PyeongChang 2018 logos.

In the mini-cinema were shown videos of the Olympic XXXI Olympiad in Rio in 2016, and "90 years on the Olympic trail". About 160 works from artists from 30 different countries and poster from the "Bienal Ecuador Poster" exhibition which took place in Warsaw were part of the educational background.

ROMANIA - Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee (COSR) President Mihai Covaliu and Secretary General George Boro have signed a protocol of bilateral cooperation with the NOC of Belarus. The agreement was signed by the NOC of Belarus Secretary General Anatol Kotau and Executive Committee member George Katulin, who is responsible for international relations.

The protocol agreement facilitates collaboration between the two national federations in various sports and permits a number of exchanges of knowledge and experience in various fields such as sport medicine, anti-doping, sport science and international relations in sport.

The signing of the agreement took place at the end of the EOC Seminar in Skopje, and is part of the new COSR vision regarding closer cooperation with National Olympic Committees of continental European countries. The bilateral agreement will be in force until 31 December 2020.

RUSSIA - On 23 May, Vitaly Smirnov, Head of the Independent Public Anti-Doping Commission (PLA), presented the National Plan to Combat Doping in Russian Sport at a meeting of the Presidential Council on Physical Fitness and Sports in Krasnodar.

The Plan, which must be implemented before the end of 2017, contains a number of innovative proposals on a global level. This document includes a whole range of measures, from the regulatory and organisational support of the fight against doping in sport, to cooperation with international organisations. There are also sections on science, education and information programmes.

It is assumed that as a result of the implementation of the Plan, Russia will significantly reduce the number of violations of anti-doping rules and an intolerant attitude to doping will finally be formed.

SLOVAKIA - Starting on 2 May, Prince Albert II of Monaco paid a two-day official visit to Slovakia. He met with President Andrej Kiska and Prime Minister Robert Fico.

Prince Albert II, a long-time IOC Member, also visited the X-bionic sphere in Šamorín. He was accompanied by IOC Member in Slovakia and Olympic medallist in shooting Danka Barteková, President of the Slovakia Olympic Committee Anton Siekel and NOC Honorary President Franz Chmelár.

TURKEY - On 30 April, the Turkish Olympic Committee (TOC) began its Olympic Day celebrations with an event in Masal Park, Gaziantep for hundreds local children and Syrian refugees. Following the successful event in Gaziantep, the TOC continued its celebrations across Turkey with further events in Muğla, Antalya and Istanbul.

The first event was coordinated by the TOC and Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality and saw hundreds of local children, including 300 Syrian refugees, take part in a variety of learning activities designed to promote healthy lifestyles, environmental awareness and the Olympic values. Children also learnt about nutrition, the environment, sport ethics and Olympic history.

At the end of the programme participating children were awarded Olympic Day t-shirts and certificates signed by IOC President Thomas Bach and TOC President Uğur Erdener, who said:
“Olympic Day is a major event on the Olympic calendar and is celebrated across the globe by more than four million people from 205 countries. Here in Turkey we have been celebrating Olympic Day since its inception as we believe it is a great way to promote sport to our countries’ youth and educate them on the Olympic values of friendship, excellence and respect.

“Last month, with the help of the IOC Emergency Fund for Refugees, the TOC and Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality launched the Support Through Sport Project which aims to provide greater accessibility to sport for Syrian children refugees. Today we were able to incorporate the same children into our Olympic Day celebrations and it was great to see them playing and learning alongside locals as they continue to integrate well into their new community.”

On 21 May, at the Free Sports Schools Project (UMS) sponsored by the Turkish Olympic Committee and Coca-Cola Icecek, the 2016-2017 season ended with a year-end event involving 500 children. The event ended with the award of a medal to all the children attending and a certificate of appreciation for the coaches in the project.

UKRAINE - On 10 May Sergey Bubka, Ukraine NOC President and Azerbaijan NOC Vice President Chingiz Huseynzada signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The two NOCs declared their intentions to cooperate in numerous spheres of sport, Olympic Movement and sport science, including ‘Sport For All’ programmes, sport for special needs, sport medical science, counselor issues, management and operation of sport venues, and training camps. The parties agreed to explore the options to expand cooperation, as well as to involve athletes, coaches and experts in joint training camps and competitions in sports in both countries.

GYOR 2017 - An official ceremony marking the final stage in the journey to the 2017 European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) took place in Rome on 22 May, as the EOC, Hungarian Olympic Committee and Gyor EYOF 2017 Organising Committee came together to celebrate the peace and unity that will be showcased throughout the event. The ceremony took place at the historic Ara Pacis Museum - home to the ninth century Ara Pacis altar which is dedicated to peace. The milestone event was attended by around 100 senior European delegates invited by EOC Acting President Janez Kocijančič and President of the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) Giovanni Malagò. EOC Secretary General Raffaele Pagnozzi, IOC Member and EOC Honorary President Mario Pescante, ASOIF President Francesco Ricci Bitti were in attendance. Representatives from Hungary included President of the Hungarian Olympic Committee Krisztian Kulcsar and Zsolt Borkai, President of the Gyor EYOF 2017 Organising Committee and Mayor of Gyor.

Acting President Kocijančič presented President Kulcsar with The Dea Pax Golden Olive Tree, to mark the peace and friendship between the two organisations. The Olive Tree was considered sacred by Dea Pax, the ancient Goddess of Peace, and the symbolic sculpture, made by the renowned sculptor and goldsmith, Nicola Amato, was designed in homage to these values.

Speaking during the ceremony, Janez Kocijančič said:
“It is a great honour to have the privilege to stage the first official ceremony for the European Youth Olympic Festival here in this amazing Roman temple dedicated to peace. Our basic idea was to bring together the ideas of peace and youth. Peace and the Olympic values should be core attributes in young people and we need to do all we can to promote that.”

The torch of the EYOF, which will burn in Gyor’s ETO FC Stadium throughout the festival, was presented during the ceremony by five distinguished Hungarian athletes to Acting President Kocijančič who in turn presented it to President Borkai, as a symbol of the sacred fire that lights the spirits of the young athletes.

The torch and the Olive Tree were taken to Gyor where they will remain until the end of the festival before returning to the EOC headquarters in Rome.
Speaking at the ceremony, President Malagò said: 
“It is a real pleasure to be here in Rome, in this unique place to host the ceremony for the European Youth Olympic Festival. The journey for the EYOF has officially begun and we look forward to taking part in it in July. I am sure Györ will host a fantastic event.”
President Kulcsar added: 
“On behalf of the Hungarian Olympic Committee it is a great privilege to be here in Rome to receive the Olive Tree and EYOF torch and to take it back with us to Hungary. For our young athletes, EYOF 2017 will be their first experience of a multi-sport event, their first experience of enjoying the atmosphere of the Athletes’ Village and their first experience of supporting and cheering on their compatriots from other sports. It is one of the most important events for young athletes and will form the basis of their future careers.”
In conclusion, Borkai Zsolt said: 
“We have been waiting six years for this moment to come. We committed ourselves to hosting the event in 2011 and since then we have been working hard to make the event as successful as possible.”
To conclude the ceremony, the Musicanova choir performed a song composed for the EOC entitled ‘Shine’. The new EOC logo and look and feel have been developed around the concept of a shining diamond made up of 50 pieces representing the 50 NOCs of the Olympic family of Europe.

EUROPEAN GAMES

A Presentation of the Minsk 2019 European Games was made by the head of the Coordination Commission (CoCom) Spyros Capralos at the EOC Seminar in Skopje. George Katulin, Director of the Minsk 2019 Organising Committee detailed the Games venues. There will be several changes introduced to the second European Games, which will be held in the capital of Belarus from 21 to 30 June 2019. Compared to the first European Games held in Baku in 2015, the programme will include 16 sports instead of 20 and there will be 4,000 athletes instead of 6,000. A notable addition to the programme of the Minsk 2019 Games will be the presentation of the new European Athletics Federation programme entitled “Athletics 2020”. The initiative is aimed at engaging a young audience and includes track events on the road.

One of the directives of the second European Games is to only use existing facilities. Whilst some facilities may be in need of refurbishment or upgrading, there will not be new construction unless the host city intends to proceed with the construction of facilities regardless of the Games. On 12 May, a small group of the CoCom, led by Capralos, visited Minsk and viewed the main Dinamo Stadium, the Minsk Sports Palace and Arena Football, and the Athletes’ Village. After the visit, Capralos said: “Now we feel more confident that the 2019 European Games will be wonderful. We saw top facilities. The Dinamo Stadium is not ready yet, but we saw a lot of people working there. It will be the leading facility of the Games.”

GSSE

The 2017 GSSE opened on 29 May in the small and ancient Republic of San Marino, in the presence of EOC Acting President Janez Kocjančič, Secretary General Raffaele Pagnozzi and a group of EC members. IOC president Thomas Bach and many sports and government authorities attended the Opening ceremony.
Just a few hours before delegates of the Olympic Committees of the Small States of Europe met at the Palazzo Graziani. They nominated the President of the National Olympic Committee of Montenegro Dusan Simonovic as President of the Assembly, thus formally accepting Montenegro’s candidacy to host the 2019 edition. The Montenegro GSSE will take place from 27 May to 1 June 2019. Bowls will be added to traditional sports. The Assembly confirmed Angelo Vicini as Secretary-General and Jean Pierre Shoebei Chairman of the Technical Commission.
Until 3 June some 890 participants from 9 countries - Andorra, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro and San Marino - competed in 12 sports, with additional archery competitions on the sports programme for the first time.
OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES 2018 - As well as revitalising winter sports in South Korea, the PyeongChang 2018 Organising Committee (POGOC) has a training programme that will reach more than one million students in South Korea. On the POCOG website there are educational videos of all 26 winter sports. You can also learn more through the interactive classroom on the web and download personalised content. POGOC President Lee hee-Beom said: “We want as many young people as possible to be part of the Olympics and Paralympics. Through our programmes, we reach over one million students and give them all a special experience around Pyeongchang in 2018. Our goal is to inspire them to feel passion for winter sports and feel like a part of this incomparable experience when the game is decided at home.” The training package also includes a competition, where entrants present a five-minute video with the chance to win language training in New York and attend the POGOC visit to the UN General Assembly later this year. Education First (EF) is assisting with the education programme.

TOKYO 2020 - The official mascot of the Tokyo 2020 Games will be chosen after a national competition in Japan. From 22 May, illustrators and professional designers, all of whom are Japanese, were called upon to present their personal creations. A dossier containing a set of standards and design criteria will be made available to all applicants. A group of experts will pre-screen entries and then the primary school students in Japan will vote for the election of the winning mascot. The national design competition will run from 1 - 14 August 2017. In 2018 the group of experts will make the pre-selection that will be submitted to students in schools. Once the mascot has been selected for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games a panel will decide on its name.

LAUSANNE 2020 YOG - On 15 May, the construction of the Olympic Village for the YOG began in Lausanne with the ground-breaking ceremony for the Vortex. From August 2020, the Vortex will host more than 1,000 students, professors and guests from the universities of Lausanne. Six months before, the building, located in the heart of the 2020 YOG, will become home to around 1,700 athletes and their support teams. Hosting the Games in 2020 has resulted in the authorities of the Canton of Vaud being able to speed up the construction of the long-planned project, meaning the Vortex will take shape more quickly than planned. The construction of the Vortex is supported and financed by the Canton of Vaud and its pension fund. Ian Logan, CEO of the Lausanne 2020 Organising Committee, said: “With the implementation of the project and the construction of the Vortex, the basic idea behind Olympic Agenda 2020 is credibility, sustainability and youth... With the Vortex, we show that the Games can leave a real legacy for the host region if these values are addressed and implemented in the right way.” The construction of the Vortex is an architectural challenge: it is a spectacular circular structure with a height of 27 metres, a circumference of 430 metres and a total area of 36,700m². The building has a courtyard of 4,000m² and has a single 2.8 kilometre-long spiral ramp, which allows access to all the apartments of the complex.

WADA

The World Anti-Doping Agency’s Foundation Board took decisive action on 18 May on a number of key issues for WADA that will shape the way forward for clean sport. Decisions were made on a number of topics that will affect the progress of WADA in and working towards sport without doping. The Board discussed a specific international system of sanctioning those who violate the provisions of the WADA Code. The proposal should be approved by November 2017.
During the meeting, the Polish city of Katowice was elected to host the 5th World Conference on Doping in Sport. It was pointed out that WADA is working closely with the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) to fulfil all the provisions of the World Anti-Doping Code as soon as possible. For this reason, the Committee approved RUSADA to carry out tests, or conduct them under the supervision of international experts. A decision was taken to support the International Olympic Committee in the appointment of an independent body for testing (ITA), whose task it will be to help the International Sports Federations who want to place their anti-doping programmes with an independent body. Two WADA working groups presented their reports. The working group on management was established to ensure the independence of the anti-doping system of the sporting public bodies. The task of the second working group is to find a possible system of accrediting anti-doping laboratories. These working groups will make their final proposals at the next meeting of the Foundation Board in November 2017.

EUROPEAN UNION

Annual Partner Meeting at the House of European Sport - In Brussels on 11 May, the EOC EU Office organised its Annual Partner Meeting, bringing together the different bilateral partner organisations of the EOC EU Office. The meeting addressed the latest developments at EU level regarding sports policy and other EU policies influencing sport. The meeting was attended by 25 participants from 20 different organisations, including 10 National Olympic Committees, three European federations (FIBA Europe, European Athletics and CEV), FIFA, the Swedish Sports Confederation, DFB, ENGSO and the IOC.

After a short introduction and update on recent developments by EOC EU Office Director Folker Hellmund, the new priorities for the upcoming years and an overview of the different services of the EOC EU Office were provided. Hellmund also presented on the upcoming European Evening of Sports of the EOC EU Office, which will take place in Brussels on 19 June. There was also a round table where the partner organisations shared their own activities and updated each other on the latest developments in their own areas. Several NOCs, including Italy, Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Germany and the Czech Republic shared information on Erasmus+ funded sports projects in which they are engaged.

Yves Le Lostecque, Head of the European Commission Sport Unit, was invited to exchange views on the future of EU sport policy. He highlighted the positive development in Erasmus+ sport, where the budget for the next year will see a further increase, up to €47 million for 2018. The new EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020 was also discussed, for the implementation of which several partners stressed the need to ensure close cooperation with the sports movement’s various working structures. The EOC EU Office also provided a detailed overview of the current policy fields at the European level that are relevant to sport. The pending antitrust case involving the International Skating Union was discussed in detail, since it could have major consequences for sports federations and the organisation of sport in Europe. Other topics that featured on the agenda were: the Erasmus+ sports programme, the digital single market and VAT policy.

MISCELLANEOUS

From 9 - 12 May, the 80th Congress of the International Sports Press Association (AIPS) welcomed more than 200 international sports journalists from over 100 countries in Korea, where, in less than a year PyeongChang will host the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

The first two days of the Congress were held in Seoul, before delegates and guests travelled to PyeongChang to visit the venues of the Games in the mountain cluster and coastal cluster.

On 12 May, Gianni Merlo (Italy) was re-elected as AIPS President for a fourth term. Esat Yilmazer (TUR) was re-elected First Vice President and Jura Ozmek (CRO), running unopposed, was chosen to take over from Michael Kuhn (AUT) as treasurer.