



EOC to celebrate its 50th General Assembly

The European Olympic Committees (EOC) kicked off its golden jubilee with the first Executive Committee (ExCo) meeting of the Olympic year, on 11 January 2021.

The ExCo met virtually to officially open the calendar in the year of its 50th general assembly, which, pandemic permitting, will be commemorated at the 50th EOC General Assembly in Athens on 16 and 17 April.

The Birth of the Association

It is thanks to the dynamism of a small group of sports leaders that the idea of grouping the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) of Europe under a single umbrella began to take shape over five decades ago. In 1967, three enlightened leaders - **Giulio Onesti** (ITA), **Raoul Mollet** (BEL) and **Raymond Gafner** (SUI) - met in Tehran, Iran, inspired by a dream of a unified continental association bringing together all European NOCs.



A few years later, supported by a working group composed of NOC representatives from Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland and the former USSR, President of the French NOC **Count Jean de Beaumont** (FRA) convened an assembly in Versailles aimed at creating the Association of the NOCs of Europe. The invitation was accepted by 22 NOCs, which, from then on, began to meet every fourth year, on the occasion of the Olympic Games. In 1975 in Lisbon, Portugal, the Association adopted written statutes and a definitive name: "The Association of European NOCs (AENOC)".

From the very beginning, the Association's primary goal was to bring together the National Olympic Committees and make their voices heard, while increasing their collaboration with the International Federations (IFs) and the International

Olympic Committee (IOC), thereby furthering the development of the Olympic Movement. The innovative idea of staging a European Games was already on the table during these first meetings, but it was put on hold due to other commitments.

Over the years, General Assemblies and elected Presidents - **Bo Bengtson** (SWE), **Franco Carraro** (ITA), **Kurt Heller** (AUT) - saw the group of participating NOCs gradually expand to reach 33 members in 1989, when the



General Assembly in Vouliagmeni, Greece, elected **Jacques Rogge** (BEL) as President and **Mario Pescante** (ITA) as Secretary General.

A Head Office is Established Rome

1989 indeed marked a turning point for the association, then still called AENOC. Thanks also to CONI's generous offer of the use of the prestigious Villino Giulio Onesti inside Rome's Olympic Park, EOC headquarters (at the time termed the EOC Secretariat) were established in Rome under the leadership first of **Mario Pescante**, then **Patrick Hickey** when he became Secretary General, followed by **Raffaele Pagnozzi** when Hickey became President in 2006.



With the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and the resulting inclusion of 15 new member NOCs, the Association initiated the European project, an aid programme specifically designed for Europe and implemented in cooperation with the IOC's Olympic Solidarity (OS). Ten years later, in line with the progressive decentralisation of Olympic Solidarity, the management of the continental programmes was entrusted to the EOC, which effectively became the OS continental office. The family of European NOCs continued to grow and now stands at a record 50 members.

The activities of the Association also increased and benefitted the NOCs of Europe in many other ways – through both direct and indirect assistance in preparation for the Olympic Games and the reinforcement of their role at national level. Ten Commissions and Working Groups support the EOC's work and activities, including the annual seminars for Secretaries General and Chefs de Mission as well as technical workshops on marketing, sports medicine, and many others. In 2001, in collaboration with the IOC, the EOC Athletes' Commission was formed to represent the voice of the athletes from Europe.



The association also developed close collaborations with counterparts from other continents. In 1995, during its 25th General Assembly, AENOC changed its name to the European Olympic Committees (EOC). At the same time, the Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE), which had been held since 1985, came fully under the auspices of the continental organisation.

With the advent of **Hickey** as President and **Pagnozzi** as Secretary General in 2006, the work of the EOC revved up considerably. Under their leadership, the scope of the work done by the Association saw a considerable upturn, with Secretary General **Pagnozzi** overseeing a complete overhaul of the way EOC Head Offices works; key changes included the addition of more specialised staff, the careful and progressive implementation of evermore stringent good governance standards, and making communication a key activity.

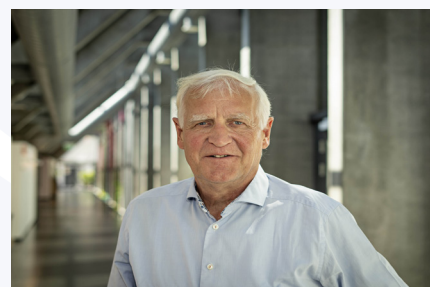
All this was in response to the ever-increasing complexity of the mission of the EOC to defend and support the interests of its members, as well as proudly pursue the path of keeping Europe at the forefront of world sport.



After **Hickey**, the leadership baton went to then Vice President **Janez Kocijančič**, who continued the policies implemented by his predecessor and focused his work on making the European Association the most meaningful and powerful of the Olympic continental associations. He is also credited with having masterminded the deal to host the 2nd European Games in Minsk, Belarus.

Following the tragic death of **Janez Kocijančič** last June, with Covid-19 wreaking havoc inside the sports movement as well, then Vice-President **Niels Nygaard** became Acting President to manage the transition period through to new elections that, always the pandemic permitting, are due to take place at the 2021 General Assembly scheduled in Athens in mid-April.

The pandemic has been and still is a very trying experience for the NOCs of Europe and their athletes and, thanks also to generosity of Olympic Solidarity and ANOC, Acting President **Nygaard** and the Executive Committee have done everything in their power to support them.



A new Constitution

Another important step that **Hickey** and **Pagnozzi** decided to take was to equip the Association with a completely new constitution. The document, called EOC Articles of Association, was drawn up by a team of experts and voted into force at the first general assembly **Hickey** presided, the 35th General Assembly in Brussels in 2006. Since then the EOC Articles of Association have been updated to accommodate the continued growth and ever greater complexity of the Association's work, most recently with measures to ensure regular 4-yearly elections of the Officers and members of the Executive Committee and, a first within the Olympic Movement, guarantee a strong measure of gender balance for the Association's executive.

The EOC and the EU

Due to the growing influence of the EU on the world of sport, and its adoption of legal oversight with the Treaty on the Function of the European Union (TFEU), better known as the Lisbon Treaty and which came into force at the end of 2009, the EOC was confronted with a new challenge to the autonomy and specificity of the sports movement within the EU, in defense of which it teamed up with the IOC.

As the need to manage its relationship with the EU progressively grew, in agreement with the IOC, the EOC established a branch in Brussels, calling it the EOC EU Office, the purpose of which was and is to help the EOC defend the interest of the Olympic Movement of Europe with the EU.

This office has also come to play another very important role in assisting NOCs in procuring EU funds.



The European Games

It was under the leadership of **Patrick Hickey** and thanks to **Zlatko Matesa's** intuition that the time was ripe to relaunch the idea of a European Games; a continental Games for Europe like those that already existed in the other continents finally came to life, also thanks to the full support of a farsighted Executive Committee.

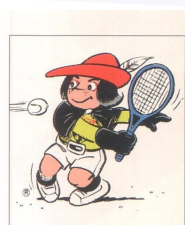
This European concept of a continental multi-sport event was based on the idea that it should become a key qualifying event for elite European athletes aspiring to compete at Olympic Games.

A long-coveted initiative, it started to regain traction at the General Assembly in Valencia in 2007, and finally became a reality at the General Assembly in Rome in 2012, which voted to accept the Azerbaijani city of Baku's bid to host the inaugural event in 2015. Baku 2015 was a huge success despite the many challenges the first edition of such a large event posed, all ably overcome thanks Coordination Commission Chair **Spyros Capralos's** great experience, drive and determination, and a great team in Azerbaijan led by Sports Minister **Azad Rahimov**. On the wave of this first success, Belarus



offered to host the second edition in 2019 in Minsk, another outstanding success, again orchestrated by **Capralos** as CoCom Chair, and again supported by a great team in the hosting country. Thanks to the commitment of Polish NOC President **Andrej Krasnicki**, the third edition will take place in Poland, in the regions of Malopolska and Silesia, with the cities of Krakow and Katowice. This time the leadership of the CoCom is in the very capable hands of ExCo member **Hasan Arat** and ExCo members **Zlatko Matesa** and **Jozef Liba** as Deputies.

The 2023 European Games in Poland promise to be the biggest and most important yet, with well over twenty sports, the majority of which will be Paris 2024 qualifying events.



Brussels
Belgium 1991

The EYOFs

As said, the first edition of the EYOF, then called the European Youth Olympic Days (EYOD), was held in Brussels in 1991, since when it has grown to be the leading major multi-sport event for young European athletes, representing a key stepping-stone on their path to the European and the Olympic Games, credit for which needs also to go to **Guido De Bondt**, for many years the mastermind behind the EYOFs.

Recent years have seen a succession of truly outstanding editions, perhaps the worthiest of note being the Sarajevo & East Sarajevo winter EYOF which brought together in peace parties that had until quite recently been at war with each other, a show of how sport can go where diplomacy fears to tread.

The GSSE

To give a unique opportunity to the smallest European countries to stage and compete at a very competitive level, 9 members of the European Olympic Family decided to come together and organise the Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE). Since 1985, the multi-sport event has been held every two years. Last year, the Games were successfully organised in Montenegro, whilst the 2021 edition Andorra was unfortunately cancelled due to the pandemic. The next GSSE will thus take place in 2023 in Malta.

The EOC Order of Merit and the EOC Laurels

In 1995, during the 24th EOC General Assembly in Athens, where the organisation also celebrated its 25th anniversary, the NOCs of Europe agreed to pay tribute to sports leaders distinguished for their valuable contributions to the Olympic Movement. They did so by establishing the first EOC Award: the Order of Merit. In 2007, the Order of Merit was joined by another recognition – the Laurels – which are awarded to people or organisations committed to promoting sport in their countries and boosting cooperation between NOCs.



The Piotr Nurowski Prize

To help and encourage the young athletes who represent the continent's future, the EOC created the "Best European Young Athlete" award, in memory of **Piotr Nurowski**, the President of the Polish Olympic Committee who tragically died in a plane accident.

The prize has been awarded to deserving summer athletes since 2010 while a winter edition has been in place since 2016.

Communications

In terms of communications, the EOC Head Office, driven by the enthusiasm from Secretary General **Raffaele Pagnozzi** and his Team in Rome, has come a long way since its first meetings, when computers were not yet on the scene and documents were written on typewriters, photocopied or mimeographed to be shared with participants. In the 1990s, upon an initiative of **Mario Pescante**, the EOC launched its own sports magazine, "SportEurope", which circulated the most important news from the European sports movement to the NOCs and Olympic family. The world eventually moved to digital communications and so did the EOC. Emails, a Newsletter, a website, social media channels and, most recently, the EOC Channel now offer European NOCs and all sports enthusiasts the opportunity to follow the activities of the EOC.

As said, this year the EOC will celebrate its 50th General Assembly, which is scheduled to take place in Athens on 16 and 17 April. We all hope to be able to celebrate this important milestone together in person, but should it not be possible due to the pandemic, we are well equipped to employ the latest technology to ensure, at the very least, a virtual celebration of our continental body.

Either way, the EOC and all its NOCs will gather to salute our shared history, dynamism and passion for further developing sport in Europe and maintaining our role as the leading continent in world sport.



EOC

ExCo approves new election procedure aimed at boosting gender representation

The election procedure for a more gender-balanced EOC ExCo has been approved by the body's current members ahead of the 50th EOC General Assembly.

Fully aligned with the IOC Olympic Agenda 2020, the EOC is at the forefront of gender parity in sport.

Also thanks to the work of the EOC Legal Affairs Commission, the Executive Committee Nominations and Election Procedure was drawn up according to the basic principles of simplicity and democracy to ensure that a minimum of 5 of the elected 16 members of the Executive Committee be of each gender.

The new election procedure was necessitated by an amendment to the EOC's Articles of Association, approved by the EOC General Assembly in November 2020, that calls for a minimum 30 percent gender representation within the Executive Committee starting from the next elective General Assembly. [Read more](#)

First ExCo meeting of Olympic year

On 11 January 2021, the EOC Executive Committee met virtually to officially open the calendar on its 50th anniversary year.

EOC Acting President **Niels Nygaard** opened the meeting with a recap of the activities undertaken since the last ExCo meeting in late November 2020. Highlights included the ongoing preparations for the European Games Krakow-Malopolska 2023, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) decision on the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA), the situation surrounding the Belarusian National Olympic Committee (NOC), and a meeting on 1 December with EU ministers regarding sport's role in Europe, at which Nygaard spoke on behalf of the Olympic Movement in Europe.

The Acting President also expressed his hope that the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 would go ahead as planned this summer, despite the worsening COVID-19 conditions. "We have seen a worsening of the situation in many European countries and elsewhere around the world, which has meant even more travel restrictions," Nygaard said. "On the positive side, now that we have vaccines, hopefully in our countries in the coming weeks and months more and more people will get vaccinated and we will have a situation later in spring and in summer where it will be much more possible to travel. I am quite confident that when we reach July we will be in a better situation and we will be able to have the Olympic Games."

Questions regarding the pandemic and how it may affect both the 50th General Assembly and the hosting of the Games this summer were raised throughout the meeting. It was agreed that the next ExCo meeting would be divided into two sections: one specifically to discuss preparations for the General Assembly and the other to address concerns about Tokyo 2020, with a view to providing the strongest possible assistance and information to European NOCs and their delegations.

EOC Secretary General **Raffaele Pagnozzi** outlined the activities of the EOC staff, beginning with the signing of agreements with beach handball, canoe, karate, modern pentathlon and taekwondo for the sports programme of the European Games 2023.

"We are delighted that we already have a strong mix of traditional Olympic sports and new sports for the third edition of the European Games," Pagnozzi said. "We are also in ongoing dialogue with 15 other European Federations and expect to be making more announcements in the coming weeks." [Read more](#)

EUROPEAN GAMES

First six sports officially confirmed for European Games 2023 sports programme



Over last December and January 2021, the EOC announced the first six sports that have been officially confirmed from the previously announced provisional list of sports, which will make up a comprehensive and varied sports programme, including a number of Olympic sports, for the European Games Kraków-Małopolska 2023.

Canoe, taekwondo, modern pentathlon, badminton, karate and beach handball have been officially included for the third edition of the Games, with the first four sports being considered a major stepping stone for Europe's best athletes en route to the following year's Olympic Games, in this case Paris 2024.

The EOC Coordination Commission for the European Games 2023, led by Chair **Hasan Arat**, has been working closely with the European Federations to finalise their participation at Kraków-Małopolska. With six sports now confirmed and more soon to follow, the EOC is quickly putting together an exciting, innovative and fan-friendly offering featuring the best athletes in Europe for the summer of 2023.

EUROPEAN YOUTH OLYMPIC FESTIVAL

Vuokatti 2021 – European Young Olympic Ambassadors to launch EYOF Virtual Week

The European Young Olympic Ambassadors (EYOA) have announced the Virtual Olympic Week Vuokatti 2021!

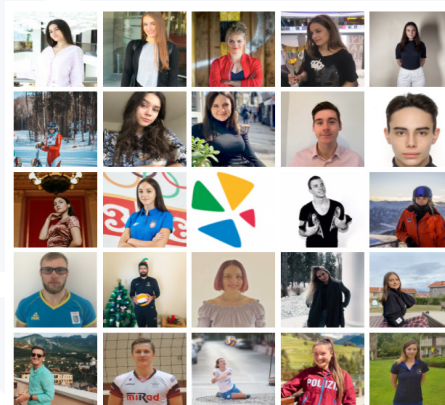
Despite the postponement of the Winter EYOF from February to December of 2021, the EYOA programme is going forward and EYOAs are regularly taking part in the virtual activities and webinars of the programme, creating a multi-national teamwork environment.

The group of 24 EYOAs, together with EOC Olympic Culture and Legacy Commission and EYOA Alumni, have been active over the past few months, brainstorming ideas for educational activities, which will be organised online not only for athletes, but also for fans, families and everyone interested, during the originally planned dates of the EYOF Vuokatti 2021 (6 to 13 February 2021).

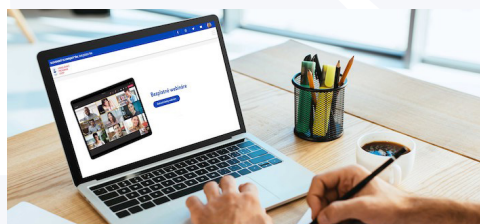
The Virtual Olympic Week will kick off on 6 February, the original date of the Vuokatti 2021 Opening Ceremony, with digital activities taking place before and after that date. Podcasts, educational quizzes, interviews with athletes, online workouts and many initiatives will allow fans to engage with the EYOA, while bringing the Olympic values closer to a young community in a digital way.

The goal of the Virtual Olympic Week is to encourage athletes and fans to go beyond competing, to discover the power of the Olympic Movement and the strength of the Olympic values and ideal in a digital way.

Follow the EYOA on [Instagram!](#)



Banská Bystrica 2022 - Slovak schools take part in Olympic Values Education Programme



The Slovak Olympic and Sports Committee (SOSC) and the Banská Bystrica 2022 Organising Committee have scheduled a wide range of activities focused on Olympic education in 2021.

As part of the Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP), all kindergartens as well as primary and secondary schools in Slovakia are being offered the opportunity to participate virtually in initiatives focused on the spreading of the Olympic values.

In one of the webinars organised in cooperation with the Anti-Doping Agency of the Slovak Republic, teachers had the opportunity to learn about the topic of anti-doping as well as to better understand the meaning and importance of developing sport without doping. Meanwhile, the SOSC Fair Play Club organised a series of workshops aimed at cultivating a positive and honest attitude, which is important not only in sport, but also for strengthening the values of harmony, tolerance and fairness throughout society. [Read more](#)

ROAD TO TOKYO

Only one goal in mind for Team GB sailor

It is said that smooth seas do not make skilful sailors, so the bumpy waters of 2020 have, at the very least, provided a good learning experience for Team GB sailor **Luke Patience**.

Among the setbacks brought about by the pandemic was the postponement of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 by a year, but rather than flounder, Patience has simply recalibrated his plans and placed his focus in other areas.

“A sailboat is much like a Formula 1 car,” the 34-year-old Scot says. “There is so much work that goes into ensuring the highest performance. We are sailors and Olympians, but also project managers, technicians, engineers and so much more. Taking away one element because of the [COVID] restrictions, just meant more time to work on the others.” [Read more](#)



Irish boxer Irvine ready to rumble in 2021



Qualifying for the Olympic Games is a very special moment for any athlete. But becoming the last athlete to do so before Tokyo 2020 was postponed earlier this year has given Irish boxer **Brendan Irvine** a unique story to tell.

“I was walking into the Copper Box [in London] for the European Qualifiers when I hear someone mentioning that it’s the last day of the tournament,” the 24-year-old flyweight said. “We knew nothing, but together with my support team we ignored the comment, I went on to fight, won, then came out of the ring and was told by the coaches that there was no more tournament – that was it.”

Having never experienced a tournament being cancelled midway through, and with a pandemic quickly sweeping across Europe, it was a surreal experience for the young boxer. The circumstances were all the more confounding for Irvine because he was on a social-media moratorium during training and therefore had no access to the news or any concept of the seriousness of the situation. [Read more](#)

ENOCs

AZERBAIJAN – NOC moves training courses online for athletes, coaches

This year, the NOC of the Republic of Azerbaijan has launched an Online High-Performance Athlete Development and Coach Education Programme.

With support from Olympic Solidarity, the NOC has been cooperating with Michael Johnson Performance (MJP) since 2015, providing special training for coaches and athletes in various sports.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has turned into a digital format and will see a total of 15 coaches and athletes from five local federations (athletics, fencing, cycling, volleyball and basketball) being trained online by MJP experts with the help of the BridgeAthletics application. Thanks to the app, the level of the training will be monitored throughout the year.

The coaches will apply assignments on both themselves and athletes and inform MJP about the positive or negative changes they have made on a quarterly basis, while determining what changes are needed in the training programme for the next quadrennium.

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA – Best 2020 sport achievements awarded at Olympic Museum

The NOC of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) held a ceremony awarding the best sport achievements of 2020 at the newly opened Olympic Museum in Sarajevo on 17 December 2020.

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and postponed international competitions, the NOC of B&H decided not to host the traditional annual Award Ceremony “Athlete of the Year”, but still wanted to pay respect to all the athletes and sports workers who have achieved significant results regardless of the difficult conditions they have been facing



The NOC of Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed its appreciation to all the athletes who have made the country proud by dedicating their efforts and time to sport under the difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

On the same day, the B&H NOC organised the Diploma Award Ceremony for the participants who successfully finished the Advanced Sport Management Courses 2020. [Watch the ceremony here.](#)

ESTONIA – Athletes of the Year unveiled



The NOC of Estonia has rewarded the nation’s best sporting talents of 2020.

WRC rally team **Ott Tänak** and **Martin Järveoja** received the Estonian Athlete of the Year 2020 “Kristjan” award, while figure skating coach **Anna Levandi** received the “Kristjan” award for Coach of the Year.

YOG gold medallist freestyle skier **Kelly Sildaru**, who was awarded the 2017 Piotr Nurowski “Best European Young Athlete” Prize, was announced as the Young Athlete of the Year, while **Merle Vantsi**, who holds six Winter Swimming World Championships gold medals, was awarded the Veteran Athlete of the Year title.

The title of Estonian Sporting Spirit 2020 was awarded to legendary equestrian athlete **Sirje Argus**. The public voting also determined the winner of the sports-friendly local municipality contest as the city of Rakvere. The facilities that received the Sports Venues of the Year title were Türi sports hall and Vastseliina hockey rink. [Read more](#)

FINLAND – New NOC President elected

Jan Vapaavuori was elected as the new President of the Finnish Olympic Committee during its General Assembly in Helsinki on 21 November 2020.

Four candidates ran for the NOC presidency, two women and two men. Mr Vapaavuori won the second round over **Susanna Rahkamo** who will continue her mandate as Vice-President.

Vapaavuori is currently Mayor of Helsinki and has a long political career within the National Coalition Party. He served as a Member of Parliament from 2003 to 2015 and was Minister of Economic Affairs from 2012 to 2015. A sportsman by heart, he believes that, through the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, sport plays a vital role in securing mental and physical well-being of people across the world. [Read more](#)



GREECE – NOC launches Olympic Education Programme in Schools



The Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC) has launched an educational programme entitled “Olympic Education – Olympic Week in schools.”

The one-week project will be conducted in Greek junior and senior schools next April and May and will involve Olympians and world champions. Students will be immersed in a set of activities that highlight the educational and training values of the Olympic Games, including the acquisition of general knowledge of sports, social skills and values.

The aim is to combine the ancient and modern history of the Games, while working on the integration of students in school and social environment through sport.

“We in the Hellenic Olympic Committee are very happy because Olympic education is returning to our schools during a very important year, a few months before the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games,” HOC President and IOC Member **Spyros Capralos** said. “Students will have the opportunity to learn about the Olympic Games and to understand the importance of applying the Olympic values in everyday life. [Read more](#)

HUNGARY – World’s oldest surviving Olympic champion Ágnes Keleti celebrates 100 years

Ágnes Keleti, the oldest surviving Olympic champion, celebrated her 100th birthday on 9 January 2021. Ms Keleti is one of Hungary’s most successful Olympians, having won 10 medals in gymnastics at the Olympic Games Helsinki 1952 and Melbourne 1956. Her haul included five golds.

She won the floor event in Finland before producing an astonishing display in Australia, winning four golds – in the uneven bars, balance beam, floor and team event. At the age of 35, she became the oldest female gymnast to win an Olympic title.

Ms Keleti, born Agnes Klein, is Hungary’s most-decorated female Olympian – and only three legendary male fencers (Aladár Gerevich, Pál Kovács and Rudolf Kárpáti) have won more Olympic gold medals for the country. [Read more](#)



KOSOVO – NOC doubled support for its elite athletes



The Executive Board of the Kosovo Olympic Committee (KOC) took an important decision in favour of the federations and elite athletes on 19 January 2021.

The board has agreed to double its support for the 20 elite athletes who are part of the Olympic scholarship programme for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. The athletes come from judo, boxing, wrestling, karate, athletics, swimming, shooting and archery.

KOC will now cover athletes’ training cost up to 80 days over the next 6 months. Team Kosovo is planning to travel to Tokyo with 12 athletes. [Read more](#)

LITHUANIA – NOC holds Olympic Values Education Programme webinar



The National Olympic Committee of Lithuania (LNOC) has held a webinar entitled “Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP): Opportunities and Tools.”

The teacher training series forms part of the Olympic Values Education Programme, taking place for the third year. Initiated by the IOC, the programme aims to provide teachers with tools for innovative work with children of all ages in the spirit of Olympic philosophy, values and symbols, while engaging with physical activity.

Participants were welcomed by the country’s First Lady, **Diana Nausėdienė**: “The pandemic has shaken the whole world and has made us understand as clearly as ever the importance of a healthy lifestyle and physical activity, how important it is to move properly and raise a physically active younger generation.

“I am extremely delighted to be a member of your community and to have this opportunity to welcome the teachers. You are developing the future of a healthy Lithuania,” continued the First Lady. “I thank [NOC President **Daina Gudžinevičiūtė**] for her sincere support, which we can feel. This year is a special one, making us rethink what we consider as important. No economy will make sense without values, health or sport.”

The LNOC was one of the first organisations in the world to translate the OVEP into the national language and, with the agreement of the IOC, to offer Lithuanian teachers the training they need. Over the last three years, over 1,000 educators have attended more than 30 training sessions for teachers in 10 Lithuanian cities. [Read more](#)

SLOVAKIA - Olympic healthy campaign ‘Zdravensko’ launched

With the motto “Let us invest in health instead of healthcare”, the Slovak Olympic and Sports Committee (SOSC) has launched a new long-term campaign focusing on healthy lifestyles.

The “Zdravensko” initiative is aimed at motivating Slovaks step-by-step to live a healthier life, with the help of the nation’s top athletes, including **Matej Beňuš**, **Zuzana Rehák-Štefečeková**, **Richard Varga**, **Barbora Mokošová** and **Danka Barteková**. The SOSC will call upon nutrition, medical and Olympic Movement experts to help in the fight against diseases and to raise awareness about the benefits of staying active and healthy.

A major part of the campaign is based on short but catchy videos featuring nutritionist and coach **Michal Páleník** creating tasty breakfast recipes with the assistance of Slovakia’s top athletes. Rio 2016 Olympic white-water slalom silver medallist Matej Beňuš was the first to prepare a recipe - a healthy beetroot spread with cottage cheese. At the end of each part, the nutrition expert explains why that particular breakfast is appropriate for the athlete’s diet.

Among the campaign’s activities is also a new podcast that has nutrition as the main topic. The presenters are Stanislav Benčat and nutritionist Associate Professor Milan Sedliak, who will invite experts from various fields of nutrition to the studio. [Watch the first episode here.](#)



TURKEY - 2021 race dates confirmed for unique Bosphorus swim from Asia to Europe



The Turkish Olympic Committee (TOC) has confirmed that the 33rd edition of the Samsung Bosphorus Cross-Continental Swimming Race will be held in Istanbul on 22 August 2021.

The world-famous swim sees swimmers from around the world compete in a gruelling race from Kanlıca on the Asian side of Istanbul to Kuruçeşme Cemil Topuzlu Park on the European side. On average, more than 2,000 amateur and elite open water swimmers take part in the annual event, which has taken place every year since 1989.

Swimmers taking part in the event will have the unique experience of competing in the only open-water swimming race between two continents. On completion of the race, participants will be awarded the exclusive title of “cross-continental swimmer”.

The Samsung Bosphorus Cross-Continental Swimming Race has been awarded the title of “World’s Best Open Water Swimming Organisation” by the World Open-Water Swimming Association (WOWSA).

The application period for the 2021 Samsung Bosphorus Cross-Continental Swimming Race will be announced at a later date. [Read more](#)

UKRAINE – NOC General Assembly approves anti-doping rules

The NOC of Ukraine’s XXXV General Assembly has approved its Anti-Doping Rules within the framework of its policy in the fight for clean sport and its strong position of zero tolerance to doping.

The decision comes after the NOC signed a Declaration on the Implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code 2021 last August.

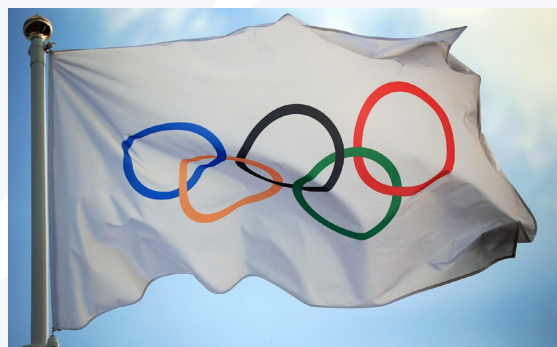
As part of its anti-doping education activities, the NOC has, in particular, organised two anti-doping webinars updating participants about major changes in the World Anti-Doping Programme. The meetings have been held jointly with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the National Anti-Doping Centre (NADC) and have been joined by over 350 athletes, 200 coaches, doctors and sports professionals.

OLYMPIC GAMES

IOC stance on COVID-19 vaccinations

The IOC continues to support the vaccination of those in need, high-risk groups, nurses, medical doctors and everyone keeping our societies alive, as a priority.

As far as the Olympic Games are concerned, the IOC and the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee have been following the principle that has driven all their decisions so far, which is to organise the Games in a safe environment for all those involved. To ensure this, the IOC will continue working together in the All-Party Task Force with the Japanese Government, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the World Health Organization (WHO) to make every effort towards staging safe and secure Games this summer.



In that respect, the IOC and Tokyo 2020, along with the Japanese authorities, have been working on a toolbox of COVID-19 countermeasures. Vaccines are obviously a very important element of this, but they are only one of many tools available in the toolbox, to be used in the appropriate way at the appropriate time.

The IOC has sent a clear message from the beginning that there will be no obligation to get vaccinated. At the same time, the IOC and the International Paralympic Committee are fully aligned in their commitment to have as many foreign participants as possible vaccinated before the Games.

The IOC will work with the National Olympic Committees to encourage and assist their athletes, officials and stakeholders to get vaccinated before they go to Japan. This is, of course, to contribute to the safe environment of the Games, but also out of respect for the Japanese people. They should be confident that everything is being done to protect not only the participants, but also the Japanese people themselves.

EUROPEAN UNION

Portugal takes over EU Council Presidency – what's new for sport?

On 1 January 2021, Portugal took over the rotating Presidency of the EU Council for six months until 30 June 2021, taking the baton from Germany, which presided the previous half-year.

The programme of the Portuguese Presidency features several paragraphs that directly relate to sport: "The Presidency will also pay attention to community policing and promoting public security, including the protection of public spaces and safety and violence in sport." As part of the new EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024, the Portuguese Presidency has committed to covering the topic of innovation and digitalisation under the socioeconomic and environmental dimensions of sport: "The Presidency will map innovation in sport and identify new trends in 'sport of the future' as part of the next EU Work Plan for Sport."

On the agenda of the Portuguese Presidency is also the organisation of the EU Sport Forum 2021 with date and format to be defined in due course. As part of the EU Work Plan, focus will be put on the topic of sport diplomacy and the plan is to organise a conference to foster best-practice exchange and knowledge-building: "Attention will be paid to sport as an instrument of the EU's external relations, with a particular focus on Africa and Latin America." [Read more](#)

MISCELLANEOUS

PEACE & SPORT – NOC of Kosovo wins April6 award



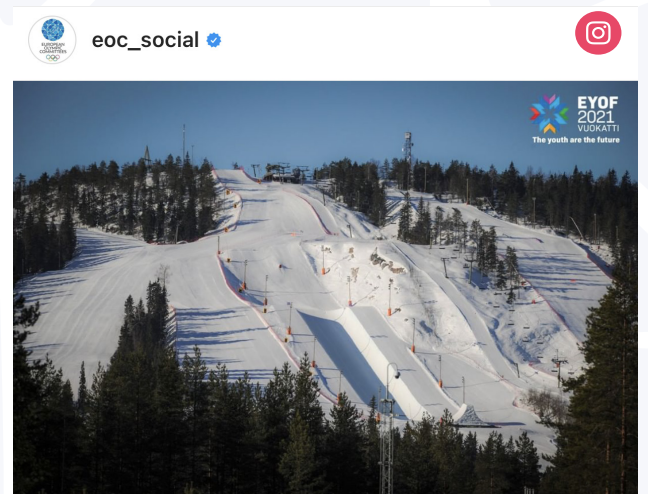
Following the success of the [EYOF Sarajevo & East Sarajevo at the Peace and Sport Awards in 2019](#), 2020 has seen the Kosovo Olympic Committee (KOK) being awarded [the April6 Initiative of the Year accolade](#) after five days of online voting for its successful #WhiteCard campaign.

The KOK has been carrying out innovative projects to celebrate the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace for a number of years and this year has been duly rewarded for its efforts. By launching a #WhiteCard competition for the 7th edition of April6 in 2020, athletes, fans and sports institutions were encouraged to take creative #WhiteCard photos and videos, while respecting COVID health restrictions.

Celebrating the success of the KOK initiative, President **Besim Hasani** was thankful to all those who took part. "Thank you very much to Peace and Sport for organising this beautiful event. I would like of course to thank all of the participants, the jury, and the public who voted for us and helped us achieve this noble prize." [Read more](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA HUB

In case you missed it...



On International Mountain Day we celebrated the beautiful mountains of Vuokatti, the next Winter EYOF host!



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We are pleased to announce that **#badminton** is the latest sport to be added to the programme of the European Games Kraków-Małopolska 2023.

EOC adds badminton to European Games Kraków-Małopolska 2023
eurolympic.org • 3 min read

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With the first ExCo meeting of the Olympic year, today we kicked off the EOC Golden Jubilee! The calendar is officially opened on our **50** anniversary year 🎉 Stay tuned! 📺 bit.ly/3bsLuNC



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