

Pedro Velázquez Hernández¹

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address you some words to welcome your initiative of organising the first "Master in Psicologia Clinica dello Sport."

In doing so, I take this opportunity to underline how an initiative like this one contribute to the development of areas of specific relevance in the field of sport.

The European Commission has adopted the 11 of July 2007 a White Paper on Sport which is a new step in the EU increasing involvement in Sport. With this first comprehensive strategic initiative in the field of sport the European Commission acknowledges the comprehensive nature, longer-term value and political significance of this sector.

The White Paper is a broad initiative, which addresses many interests as possible. It is based on a holistic approach as it addresses all sports (taking as a reference the definition of sport of the Council of Europe) and within any sport, all levels and modalities (e.g.: amateur and professional practice).

The White Paper had six overall objectives: (1) to provide strategic orientation on the role of sport in the EU; (2) to raise awareness of the needs and specificities of the sector; (3) to improve knowledge about the application of EU law to sport; (4) to enhance the visibility of sport in EU policies, programmes and actions, (5) to encourage debate on specific problems, and (6) to identify the appropriate level of further action at EU level.

I would like to draw your attention on several areas covered by the White Paper which are of specific relevance for your activities.

To begin with there is the crucial area of sport and **public health**. The White Paper takes account of the fact that certain public health problems, in particular overweight and obesity, are not only about nutrition and consumer protection, but also about physical activity.

The White Paper complements another recent White Paper of the Commission, the "EU Strategy on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues", in order to help reverse the trend towards a decrease in physical activity. In this context, sport organisations are encouraged to take into account their potential for health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) and to undertake activities for this purpose. Too many sport organisations appear to be focussing too narrowly on the organisation of competitions.

The Commission wishes to develop new physical activity guidelines with the Member States before the end of 2008 and make HEPA a cornerstone of its sport-related activities and programmes/actions. The promotion of a pluri-annual EU HEPA network should play a key role in this respect.

With regard to **education and training**, sport, through its role in both formal and non-formal education, reinforces Europe's human capital. The Commission will focus on activities to improve qualifications in the field of sport through the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

¹ Pedro Velázquez Hernández is Deputy Head of the Sport Unit at the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission.

Finally, in light of the growing challenges to sport governance, **social dialogue** at European level could help to address common concerns. Social dialogue can be an especially well fitted self-regulatory tool to address challenges in professional sport.

The White Paper encourages and welcomes all efforts leading to the establishment of European Social Dialogue Committees in the sport sector. The Commission, to this end, will continue to give support to both employers and employees and it will pursue its open dialogue with all sport organisations on this matter.

I wish you all the best in carrying out your initiative.