

JOINT DECLARATION BY THE TROIKA MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR EDUCATION AND SPORT AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Troika Ministers responsible for Education and Sport and the European Commission met in Dublin on 29th January to celebrate and welcome 2004 as the European Year of Education through Sport. At this important event they agreed that the present joint declaration be sent to their colleagues of the Member and Acceding States.

1. The Ministers and the Member of the European Commission celebrated this first joint meeting that enhances the close relationship between education and sport, two key sectors in the building of citizenship.
2. The participants warmly welcomed the celebration of 2004 as the European Year of Education through Sport with its major goals of improving partnership between educational institutions and sport organisations and emphasising participation by all in sport and fair play. Indeed, 2004 is the ideal moment to raise awareness of this question of partnership for with the accession of ten new Member States and two major sporting events being organised on Union soil, the Olympics and Paralympics in Athens and the EURO CUP in Portugal, 2004 will be a landmark in the history of the Union.
3. The participants referred to the conclusions of the European Council of last December in Brussels, which highlighted the Olympic Truce and its message of peace, tolerance and friendship. The participants also noted with interest the results of the Eurobarometer that was commissioned by the European Commission. They noted in particular that almost eight out of ten citizens believe sport to be instrumental in promoting cultural dialogue and understanding in the fight against discrimination. They encourage the educational and sporting worlds to explore more efficient ways of co-operating at both national and European level in order to face such important challenges as the integration of new waves of immigrant populations, youth uneasiness and school drop-out.

4. The participants share the view that school sport exchanges could accelerate full integration of the Acceding States. They, therefore, invite all grass-roots organisations to develop new initiatives in this area, trusting that some of the projects co-funded within the framework of the Year will inspire new joint projects.
5. The participants noted with interest that the question of cardiovascular health is a priority for the Irish Presidency in the field of public health. EYES 2004 being open to other community initiatives, the participants invite the Commission to examine joint actions between EYES 2004 and the public health sector.
6. The participants also invited the Commission to ensure a link between the EYES and actions undertaken during 2003's European Year of People with Disabilities. Sport is a particularly well adapted instrument to fight against any kind of discrimination and EYES 2004 can make an important contribution by identifying new lines of action that could profit from this facet of physical education.
7. Finally, the participants invited the Dutch and Irish Presidencies and all other participating Member States and Accession Countries to ensure the continuity of projects and to establish, in co-operation with the Commission, the main operational conclusions that result from the projects and actions performed along the Year, to ensure a lasting legacy for EYES 2004.