

Brussels, 11 03. 2014
Ares (2014) 670 459

Dear Minister,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 21 November 2013.

I fully share your views regarding the need to respect human rights and to combat discrimination and intolerance. I consider that the values mentioned in the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights should indeed be always respected in the context of all sports and sporting events. Sport has, in my view, a major role to play in educating people on the values of tolerance, fairness and the respect for all differences.

I am fully aware of Member States' concerns as expressed in the informal meeting of EU Sport Ministers of October 2013 and I have taken note of the request for an "appropriate policy approach" in the "respective areas of competence of the European Union".

In my area of responsibility, I intend to make all necessary efforts to promote the values underlined in your letter. As you may know, our new programme Erasmus+ which was adopted in December 2013 focuses on the fight against all kinds of intolerance and discrimination in the field of sport. The Commission's intention is to fully use this new tool in order to introduce more integrity and equity in sport. You may also be aware that we are presently negotiating the future EU Work Plan for Sport in the Council. Our priorities for the coming years in the field of sport will be fixed in a Council Resolution which is planned for adoption in May 2014 under the Greek Presidency. In this context, the Commission stays ready to support all suggestions which could lead to progress in the field of human rights and in the fight against discrimination and violence. Moreover, we will use all our forums for cooperation with the Council of Europe to join our efforts and make common progress on an issue which is of major interest for both organisations.

Mrs Edith SCHIPPERS
Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport
Netherlands

I should also add that according to its Article 51(1), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union applies to Member States when they are implementing European Union law. In cases which fall outside the scope of EU law, it is however for Member States, including judicial authorities, to ensure that fundamental rights are effectively respected and protected.

Respect for human rights is a key issue, of a horizontal nature and going beyond sport: rest assured that, within my field of competence, I will take active part in the discussions on this topic taking place within the European Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Androulla Vassiliou
Commissioner for Education, Culture,
Multilingualism and Youth