Recommendation Rec(2003)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the contribution of sport to alleviating the consequences of humanitarian disasters: “Ballons rouges”

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 April 2003)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members, notably by means of common action in social and cultural matters;

Conscious that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, within the member states of the Council of Europe there are more than 7 million refugees and displaced persons, including children and young people, many of whom have been living in camps or collective accommodation for long periods of time;

Realising the positive contribution that physical activities can make to the physical and psychological health and to the lifestyles of those living in difficult circumstances, for example refugees and/or displaced persons, whether inside camps, collective accommodation or in the community;

Mindful of Article 39 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which obliges States Parties to “take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of (...) armed conflicts”;

Aware that an increasing number of humanitarian organisations working in crisis situations are now convinced that once the preliminary emergency situation has stabilised and basic necessities are assured, sporting activities and games play an important role, especially in helping children and young people cope with the trauma they have experienced and in rebuilding confidence between different groups;

Taking note of the mandated role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in providing protection and durable solutions to refugees, and in co-ordinating, together with the host governments, humanitarian responses to refugees' situations;

Noting that many humanitarian organisations and sports organisations, as well as Unesco and the European Union, have shown interest in co-operating with the Council of Europe in setting up a project to assess needs, decide on the correct help and to provide sports equipment and organise activities in situations where people, and in particular children, are suffering in the aftermath of conflicts or crises,

Recommend that the governments of member states co-operate in the setting up and functioning of this network, which has a unique role and can add positive value to relief work throughout Europe by providing recreational sport and physical activity, through the suggestions for action set out in the Appendix to this recommendation.

Instruct the Secretary General:
a. to bring this recommendation to the attention of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and to ask them to inform him of any follow-up;

b. to transmit this recommendation to humanitarian organisations, inviting them to co-operate with the Council of Europe in the “Ballons rouges” project for post-emergency situations in Europe, where the provision of sports activities, equipment and trainers can help refugees and/or displaced persons;

c. to ask the sports organisations already working in this area to work in partnership with the Council of Europe in setting up this project to implement the “Ballons rouges” network;

d. to invite the leading international sports associations and federations to co-operate with this network and project by offering help, be it with equipment, trainers or important related services, such as transport and distribution;

e. to request the hosting governments and their national sports associations to co-operate with the “Ballons rouges” project and network and be actively involved in the elaboration and implementation of this programme.

Appendix to Recommendation Rec (2003) 7

Target Group

The target group of the project is children and young people, living in a crisis or post-emergency situation, who would benefit from games and sporting activities to help them in coming to terms with the consequent disruption and trauma.

Aim of the Project

The aim of the project is to provide physical activities, such as sport and games, which can:
- help to recreate a structured lifestyle;
- act as a psychological aid in coping with trauma;
- rebuild confidence between different groups;
- be used as a vehicle for important education in such areas as safety (for example, avoiding land mines) and hygiene (for example, avoiding disease).

Implementation of the Project

The implementation of the project is through the creation of a network of organisations called “Ballons rouges”. This network will be composed of intergovernmental and humanitarian organisations and international sports organisations and federations, and will work with the Council of Europe.

Procedure

The following procedure is foreseen either:
- at times of crisis where there are movements of refugees and displaced persons within a member state or states of the Committee for the Development of Sport;
- or when, in a post-emergency situation, there are a large number of refugees or displaced persons continuing to live in camps or collective accommodation.

At such times the humanitarian organisations that are caring for displaced persons and refugees, having assessed the situation and needs and prepared a programme which includes a target group, a blueprint for implementation and criteria for evaluation:
- shall consult with the appropriate national authorities and discuss the desirability of seeking help from the network;
- inform the Council of Europe of the resulting decision, and, if appropriate,
- ask the Council of Europe to handle the request.

The Council of Europe shall subsequently inform the “Ballons rouges” network of the need for sports equipment, trainers and transport. It will invite the national authorities of the country or countries concerned to co-operate with all parties – the intergovernmental and humanitarian organisations, the Council of Europe and the sports associations and federations by:

a. facilitating customs controls for importing sports equipment;
b. facilitating visa controls for those visiting to organise and help with sports and games programmes;
c. contacting and seeking involvement, co-operation or help in the programmes, from their own national, regional and local sports federations and associations.

The implementation of the programme will be decided and carried out under the authority of the “Ballons rouges” network.

On such an occasion other member states of the Committee for the Development of Sport are also invited to co-operate with the intergovernmental and humanitarian organisations, the Council of Europe and the sports associations and federations in offering help, whether through the offer of sports equipment, personnel such as sports trainers or financial resources.

**Setting up of an emergency fund**

Member states of the Committee for the Development of Sport are invited to make voluntary contributions to a special account that, under the authority of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe or his representative, can be used to:

a. provide general sports equipment;
b. arrange and pay for the transport, if necessary, of the aforesaid equipment;
c. contribute to the expenses of personnel, such as sports trainers working with refugees and/or displaced persons.

**General measures**

The governments of member states are invited:

a. to assist the Secretary General with information on national organisations and bodies, together with the names of individual people capable of helping this project, to be included on a contact list for the network;
b. to set aside resources in the national budget for action to be taken in such situations.

**Other points**

Organisations offering help may decide that their contributions and help should be made either to crisis situations or to long-term post-emergency situations.