



Health, Integrity, and Doping in Sports for Children and Young Adults

A Resolution of the European Academy of Paediatrics

Brussels, Belgium; 3 December 2016

Introduction

The European Academy of Paediatrics (EAP) is dedicated to promoting healthy lifestyles for children from birth into young adulthood. Physical exercise and leisure are essential to the development of healthy bodies, strong minds, and social skills. All children, without regard to their physical or mental capacities, should be provided with the time, the leadership, the facilities, and the equipment needed to exercise through sports while enjoying playing, even competing, in an environment appropriate to their capacities and aspirations. During exercise and sports children should be assured of a safe and an appropriate environment that protects and promotes their human rights.

Top sports that engage the best competitive athletes in an age group, in a region, in a country, or in the world should provide role models and even dreams for all children. These top sports, however, are also most usually surrounded by large political, economic, and/or business interests where only the best can compete while at times exacting a too high physical and/or psychological cost for those who have survived the cut, made the grade.

The trickledown effect of political and financial interests in sports and leisure activities for children can also often be felt in the youngest age groups and only increases as children grow older. School sports and club sports are often influenced, resulting in only 'the better children' being fully invited to participate while those with 'lesser abilities' are assigned to the side lines.

Alongside this more and more children are being raised in environments with fewer open spaces as well as inside a media and digital culture making significantly less room for the enjoyment of physical exercise and leisure. Children's diets have also been changed dramatically by a significant intake of calorie-rich foods, which often have little nutritional value and which even a child's high metabolism rate is not able to burn off efficiently.

Childhood obesity is reaching epidemic proportions in many European countries as well as in countries outside Europe. Further promoting exercise and sports across Europe at all age levels is a major public health necessity. It is further essential to our next generations of adults and even the elderly that exercise and sports were part of their lives consistently from an early age.

With this Resolution, the EAP is calling for a renewed look at the role of sports and leisure in the lives of children and, by implication, at the way we structure, finance, and promote sports in Europe. The EAP is also asking that this Resolution be adopted by all organisers of sports involving children and young adults in Europe (and beyond), be that on the playground, in schools, in clubs, or in professional sporting organizations. The EAP would like that every child, throughout his or her childhood years and into young adulthood, can fully participate in sports in a safe environment where winning is playing and playing is winning.



The Resolution

This resolution ‘Health, Integrity, and Doping in Sports for Children and Young Adults’ was prepared by the European Academy of Paediatrics Ethics Working Group on behalf of the Academy.

Considering that the aim of the EAP is to promote the physical, mental, and emotional health of all children and young adults in all aspects of their lives;

Considering that the EAP is committed to contributing to the development of children throughout their childhood and early adult years so that they may become active and productive members of society;

Considering the EAP’s strong engagement in promoting nutrition and a healthy lifestyle in children and young adults while combatting the growing epidemic of obesity;

Considering the EAP’s commitment to sustainable strategies for building multi-sectorial approaches to guaranteeing the rights of disadvantaged children, including those with handicaps, learning disabilities, and immigrants;

Having regard to the EU Physical Activities Guidelines (2008);

Having regard to the WHO Europe European Charter on Counteracting Obesity (2006);

Having regard to Article I of UNESCO’s International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (1978): ‘Every human being has a fundamental right of access to physical education and sport, which are essential for the full development of his personality. The freedom to develop physical, intellectual and moral powers through physical education and sport must be guaranteed both within the educational system and in other aspects of social life’;

Having regard to Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966): ‘1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health’;

Having regard to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989): ‘1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’;

Having regard to Article 10 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979): ‘States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women: (g) The same Opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education’; and Article 13: ‘States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular: (c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life’;

Having regard to Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008): ‘Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport 5. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures: a. To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels’;



Having regard to the Article 81 of the International Convention Against Apartheid in Sport (2001): ‘86. Calls upon States to promote measures to deter the emergence of and to counter neo-fascist, violent nationalist ideologies which promote racial hatred and racial discrimination, as well as racist and xenophobic sentiments, including measures to combat the negative influence of such ideologies especially on young people through formal and non-formal education, the media and sport’;

Having regard to the WHO Global Recommendations on Physical Activities for Health (2010): ‘Children and youth should be encouraged to participate in a variety of physical activities that support their natural development and are enjoyable and safe.’

Having regard to the UNESCO International Convention Against Doping in Sport (2005);

Having regard to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code (2015) and 2017 Prohibition List (21 September 2016); and

Having regard to European national laws, codes, and guidances for ethics, fair play, and doping in exercise, sports, and competition among children and young adults;

The EAP resolves the following:

1. All children and young adults in Europe – healthy, sick, and/or handicapped; European citizens or immigrants – have the right to leisure, exercise, and sport.
2. Exercise and sport should contribute to a child’s or young adult’s sense of belonging and wellbeing, as well as to their overall health and integrity.
3. Exercise and sports for children should be assured of a safe environment that protects and promotes the rights of children to their bodily, psychological, emotional, and spiritual integrity and wellbeing.
4. The parents and guardians of children have a responsibility to encourage each child’s participation in exercise and sport appropriate to the child’s age, ability, and interests.
5. Parents and guardians are expected to be stewards of their child’s exercise, sports, and competition engagements, monitoring their activities while promoting integrity, health, and enjoyment, and actively disallowing abusive behaviour toward others, doping, or unfair gamesmanship.
6. States, communities, and schools should work together to ensure that each child and each young adult has access to exercise and sports facilities appropriate to their age and their capacity for exercise and sport.
7. Exercise and sport should be part of a child’s and young adult’s curriculum from a young age and throughout their formative years of life.
8. Exercise and sport for children and young adults should be focused on the development of sound bodies and sound minds that contribute to a person’s current and future development of a sound personality as well as to his or her productivity as an active member of his or her community.
9. Competition in sport should be age appropriate and inclusive of all children and young adults wishing to participate.
10. Exercise and sports, and their related competitions, should emphasize participation and integrity, equality and fairness.



11. Excluding children and young adults from exercise, sports, and competition based on gender, race, origin, or handicap may not be tolerated. Exercise, sports, and competition should contribute to the basis for the building of an inclusive and tolerant society.
12. The organisers and promoters of exercise, sports, and/or competition involving European children and young adults have an obligation to ensure the integrity and fairness of the activities.
13. The organisers, coaches, trainers, promoters, and sponsors of exercise, sports, and/or competitions involving European children and young adults should ensure a safe and age appropriate environment with facilities that meet the needs of all participants.
14. Coaching and training in exercise, sport, and competition should include awareness-building for fairness, integrity, and ethics during and accompanying such activities.
15. The physical, sexual, mental, and/or bullying abuse of a child's or young adult's dignity during or related to exercise, sports, or competition should be strongly sanctioned, including criminal sanctions, where appropriate.
16. Any exercise, sport, or competition means that threatens the health or integrity of a child or young adult is not permissible and should be strongly sanctioned. The use of drugs, devices, or age inappropriate physical, training, or psychological methods should be strongly sanctioned.
17. In particular, medical doping in exercise, sports, and/or competition involving children or young adults should be strongly sanctioned, including criminal sanctions, where appropriate.
18. Organizations, coaches, trainers, medical personnel (including paediatricians and other medical doctors, physical therapists, masseurs/masseuses, nurses), supervisors, and persons in authority should be held accountable for any participation they may have in a child's or young adult's doping, health damaging or risky training methods, or unfair practices used to gain a competitive advantage.
19. Children and young adults should also be held accountable for any role they may have in the abuse of (an)other participant(s) or unfair methods of training or competition, including doping. They too should, as appropriate, be sanctioned.

The EAP invites all European paediatric professionals and their associations to adopt this resolution without prejudice. The EAP also calls on all European exercise, sport, and competition organisations to adopt and promulgate this resolution. It further calls upon all coaches, trainers, medical personnel, and sponsors of exercise, sports, and competition involving European children and young adults to explicitly adopt this resolution.

This Resolution was drafted on behalf of the European Academy of Paediatrics (EAP) in its Ethics Working Group (EWG) by the members *Francis P. Crawley*¹, *Peter Hoyer*², *Artur Mazur*³, *Liesbeth Siderius*⁴, *Stefan Grosek*⁵, *Tom Stiris*⁶, and *David Neubauer*^{7*} based on discussions within the EWG and across the EAP.

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