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Association Européenne de Jeux et Sports Traditionnels
Asociación Europea de Juegos y Deportes Tradicionales
Association Européenne de Jeux et Sports Traditionnels
European Traditional Sports & Games Association

**MOTION to the EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
for a RESOLUTION in FAVOUR of SPORTS and GAMES
of CULTURAL TRADITION in EUROPE**

The European network of Traditional Sports and Games represented by ETSGA, an international NGO whose work is recognised by UNESCO, solicits its representatives elected at the European Parliament for official recognition of sports and games of cultural tradition in the European Union. ETSGA, created in 2001, and its fifty eight member organisations representing several hundreds of thousands of players considers that it is already the orientation taken by history.

Indeed, UNESCO, in its universal Declaration on cultural diversity adopted in 2001, affirms:

In its article 1 – (common heritage of humanity)

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognised and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.

In its article 2 – (cultural pluralism)

In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life.

In its article 3 – (as a factor in development)

Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.

Moreover, UNESCO, in its international Charter for traditional sports and games elaborated in 2004, reminds us:

- that the principles expressed in the international Charter for physical education and sport, adopted by the UNESCO general Conference in November 1978, underlines the importance of national, regional and local sporting traditions in particular.
- that in the Punta del Este Declaration, adopted by the third international Conference of ministers and high commissioners responsible for physical education and sport

(MINEPS III) held in December 1999, ministers advanced the preservation and enhancement of traditional and autochthonous sports connected with the cultural heritage of regions and nations.

- that it has in mind the important values that traditional sports and games transport and their contribution, at the level of education, culture and communication, to global human being development and the community to which he belongs. For example that traditional sports and games, because they are less exposed to excessive merchandising, manipulation and doping, can reinforce the values of conviviality and the spirit of fair play.

It is in this spirit that the UNESCO commission for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) has constructed since the year 2008 a world representative list. Several sports and games of cultural tradition were admitted in 2010, as the Mongolian wrestling, Turkish oil wrestling and Catalan human towers.

Europe Union is also active, at least through the deep motivation of its citizens, and it clearly appears in the speeches of its representatives that there is a will to construct an European Union conscious of its diversity, and accepting it like a wealth, in other words tolerant and showing the way to the whole world in this experimentation.

Traditional sports and games, as well as sport and culture, are part of this rich diversity. They are often associated with local tradition festivities, inseparable from the other facets of the culture of European regions: handicrafts, dances, music, songs and gastronomy. Everything that aids the socialisation of villages and districts, creating a "better live" for our fellow citizens.

However, the European Commission doesn't recognise the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' aspect of sports and games of cultural tradition and its functioning system blocks implicitly all participation to programs under this title. Thus, whereas these practices constitute a treasure of human and social values, a laboratory for the development of the future, many are today threatened with disappearance.

This situation requires a political initiative in order that institutional recognition can be given to them. It is why the following resolution is presented.

ANALYSIS of the SITUATION of SPORT and GAMES of CULTURAL TRADITION in EUROPE

Circumstances

- The 1980's have seen a growing appreciation of Europe's cultural diversity, including her traditional games and pastimes. This was also with traditional sports and games matter, often bound to popular festivals.

This awareness of the importance of local and regional activities is greatly encouraged as towns and regions twin across national boundaries.

- Migration into and between the countries of Europe can result in conflicts when new-comers seek to preserve their cultural identity in their new homes in the face of attempts to persuade them to conform and integrate within their adopted society. A unidimensional politics of their "integration" in the immigration country domain of sport can provoke some conflicts between alienation and cultural identity.

- At international level, some forms of sport spectacles, standardised and media-promoted, has created major problems which are being discussed at international level; drugs, hooliganism and excessive nationalism.

- It is worth asking whether traditional sports and games could hold the answer, not just by reducing the problem but by introducing a new concept of social relations, founded on their local roots?

- The *European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages*, founded in 1984, could be seen as an example that could be transposed to the *games, sports and recreational activities of the cultural traditions of Europe* in general. But more specifically European programs (non sporting) could be developed so that this sector becomes the vector of sustainable development:

- . in order to make more dynamic scientific research (sociological, anthropological, technique) with the aim to use applications in the education area of school and extracurricular.

- . in order to make more dynamic research for development (festivals, tourism, sociocultural development, logistics, formation) with the aim to create permanent economic and sociological structures.

Effects and causes : the nature of the problem

1) Why are these traditional popular games, despite their social and cultural importance, nowadays under threat ?

- Many have disappeared as the result of direct repression. They were condemned, especially in Eastern Europe before the “fall of the Berlin wall”, as old fashioned, obsolete, reactionary, separatist and incompatible with the state’s representation of modernity.

- Indirect repression was not less efficient:

- . Economic and social marginalisation

- . Suppression in schools and in the media

- . Expropriation from their special playing places for other purposes such as roads, building land and so on.

- . Giving them a deliberately low priority, politically and financially.

- Others have been forced to accept the limited role of helping to promote some other objective, such as physical education in schools or to serve as training and preparatory exercises to Olympic sports. The demotion of these games to such a subservient role reduces the cultural diversity of the world of sport.

- A too-strictly conservationist approach is equally damaging. It can lead to their being ' folklorised ' or ' mummified ' as a museum taking them out of their everyday social context and reducing them to mere tourist attractions. This ' fossilisation ' prevents the natural interplay of tradition and evolution that characterises a living sport.

2) In the face of such hostility and disparagement the future of traditional sports and games is located in an explicitly cultural and social setting

Let us explain :

- This games heritage lies at the very foundation of our respective cultural traditions. They come from the roots of our cultures.

- These indigenous pastimes reflect the many-sidedness of Human and European culture. Expressions of cultural diversity, they are what we call now “Ludodiversity”.

- The popularity of some games crosses state frontiers, demonstrating an international side to life; they are a reality bearer of a universalist human dimension.

- This exciting diversity raises interesting possibilities for cultural tourism. It offers the challenge of 'cultourism'.

- The equipment necessary for these games is usually cheap, so that anyone can afford to play them, which increases the human potential of the games.
- Games provide a very varied training for social and community skills. They make opportunities for social contact and for the exchange of experiences across the generations. They enrich the life of the individual and the community alike and have to do with family as well as community and territorial identity, an organiser of non-working time.
- Games thus actively participate to the physical and mental health of men and women, and contribute to a social well being. One can see in them a counter power and a medicine to “social pathologies” and therefore an element encouraging “global health” as defined by the W.H.O.
- Through their diversity games create good opportunities for learning. As a 'school of life' they can provide a model for schools of the future, and for revising our educational practices.
- Traditional games are equally important in economic terms. They not only contribute directly to the economy of their region but also, by harnessing a sense of regional identity and social solidarity, become a source of productive and intellectual energy
- Through their diversity, their non-conformism, these ' people's games ' serve as a laboratory for 'post-modernism; ' a testing ground of social ideas for the future.
- One must not forget that play, itself is fundamental to human culture. Play culture is, therefore, a human condition that we must preserve and develop carefully for one's own sake and that of future generations.
- These popular traditional games illustrate vividly that :
 - . a 'local' attachment is in fact from universal feeling.
 - . the 'global' only exists in terms of a popular and regional social reality.

3) The support and development of these games calls for new experimental research into the philosophy of games and body culture, cultural sociology and social history, in a combination of the practical and theoretical approach.