



## PRESS RELEASE

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### PUBLIC ENTITIES AND POLICIES

## SCHOOL AND SPORT

### Achieving an ambition

**Sport at school in France combines the compulsory teaching of physical education (PE), and optional school sport, concerning over 12.4 and 2 million pupils respectively**

**PE teaching, which mobilises €4 billion and 37,000 teachers, is the largest item of government expenditure on sport.**

**The Court has already noted in 2013 the gap between school sport and the world of professional sports, whose expectations and practices are far removed from the design and the implementation of physical education. Due to the lack of a proper strategy concerning the development of sports practice in schools, these two worlds remain compartmentalised, while the interventions of the State and local authorities are not sufficiently coordinated. Overall the fragmented sports background of students does not address the disparities that prevent all students from achieving equal success.**

**Here The Court makes 11 recommendations to strengthen PE, revitalise the organisation of sport practice in schools, ease the coordination between school and sport, and provide this policy with verifiable targets.**

### **From Physical Education (PE) to sport practice: a fragmented path**

Being the only compulsory subject at all levels of schooling, PE affects all students. The time spent on education is higher in France than the European average. However, due to the lack of an appropriate organisation, the students' careers are not continuous and do not provide sufficient incentives to sport practice. There are too many gaps between primary and secondary education on the one hand; between physical education and the sports world on the other.

Individual initiatives led by teachers, volunteers or communities can mitigate these shortcomings but do not guarantee the implementation of a uniform policy throughout the country.

PE In primary school, is differently performed according to schedules adjustments. Teaching is not carried out in accordance with the curriculum: the three hours planned per week are not provided everywhere and are not sufficiently controlled, while schoolteachers have little training in this subject.

Concerning the implemented institutional pattern, the results of school sport are disappointing: the associations created for this purpose at primary and secondary levels only welcome a small proportion of pupils.

## **Promoting the coherence of public resources**

The equipment supply of schools is a compulsory competence of local authorities, which they must provide in order to ensure equal treatment of pupils. This is however not always the case: access to swimming pools is often problematic and one third of elementary classes do not have a satisfactory pool supply.

In addition, while the staff of local administrations (professors from the City of Paris and territorial PE educators) makes a decisive contribution, its interventions are not only disparate but also confusing: the State does not take sufficient care to ensure that this staff do not replace teachers but complement their intervention.

## **Assessing a general level of physical and sporting ability**

At the secondary level, performance assessment is non-existent: no physical fitness target is defined at the national level, with the exception of "swimming skills". Similarly, no foundation of learning outcomes is defined in national examinations, making it impossible to determine the level actually achieved for a school generation.

## **The need for an overall strategy to facilitate students' sporting path**

France stands out in Europe for its lack of strategy, in the absence of clear objectives for education, and, as a result, for the absence of an evaluation of the performance of public policy on sport in schools. As an example, Swimming skills acquisition, the only quantified national target, is not achieved : according to a Ministry study on 300 secondary schools, confirmed by a recent study conducted in five academies, 48% of students entering sixth grade cannot swim, while drowning is the leading cause of accidental death among children under 15 years old.

The organization of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris and the creation of the National Sports Agency are two opportunities to build a national strategy for schools and sport. It could be based on four orientations: rebalancing this policy in favour of primary education; revitalising the organisation of school sport; establishing close links between sport professionals and schools; and adopting verifiable targets in the field of PE.

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