

Institution: Edge Hill University		
Unit of Assessment: C18 Law		
Title of case study: The Birth of EU Sport Diplomacy		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2003-2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Richard Parrish	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Law	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1995 –
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>In 2015, the EU ushered in an era of innovation in its foreign and security policy, adding the soft power attraction of sport to traditional statecraft and hard power. Sport, sportspeople and sporting events became vehicles for the amplification of core EU policy messages and values to non-EU countries. Some nations have ventured into sport diplomacy, notably the USA and Australia, but until Parrish's intervention, the EU had not. In 2015, he was appointed to advise the competent European Commissioner on the development of the EU's first ever sport diplomacy strategy. Through the provision of high-level expert advice, informed by his underpinning research, Parrish's role was "instrumental in the success of this initiative" (see Source 1, para.4) and resulted in verifiable policy impact including: (1) Establishing sport diplomacy as an issue of political salience at EU level (2) Establishing sport diplomacy as an official area of EU competence and (3) Guiding the EU's implementation of its sport diplomacy strategy.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Parrish's 2003 monograph (reference 3.1) is considered to be the first English language book to conceptually capture the emerging relationship between sport and the EU. A "truly groundbreaking book" (<i>Journal of European Affairs</i>, 2004 2(2), May), it employed a highly distinct actor / institutionalist hybrid framework to capture the agenda setting, policy development and implementation phases of the policy process which "... advanced the theoretical discussion of sports law considerably" (Ken Foster <i>Sports Law Bulletin</i>, 2003 6(4)) and did "a great service to scholarship" (Stephen Weatherill, <i>International Sports Law Journal</i>, 2006 3/4). His second monograph (reference 3.2) explored the application of the concept of the 'specificity of sport' in EU law and policy, arguing that whilst the EU Treaty placed constraints on some sporting practices, it also offered rich avenues for sport and the EU to work more co-operatively, a key essence of the emerging EU sport diplomacy strategy. In 2010, Parrish was lead author of a study for the European Parliament (reference 3.3) awarded following competitive tender. The study was the product of extensive research including a consultation exercise with sports organisations and stakeholders, public authorities and a network of 27 national sports experts. The study highlighted the new sports related opportunities offered by the introduction in 2007 of Articles 6 and 165 TFEU (the 'sports competence'), including the use of sport in the EU's external relations policies. Parrish was questioned on the findings of the study at a meeting of the Culture Committee at the European Parliament in Brussels (28/09/10).</p> <p>The final work cited (reference 3.4) is his co-authored <i>Report to Commissioner Tibor Navracsics: High Level Group on Sport Diplomacy</i> (2016). Due to his research expertise, Parrish was appointed by Commissioner Navracsics to this 'High-Level Group' to advise the Commissioner on the development of an EU sport diplomacy strategy (Source 1, para.1). The small group included academics, former athletes, representatives of major sport organisations and think-thanks as well as politicians having exercised high-level responsibilities in the field of sport, including the former President of Hungary, two former Sports Ministers and the President of the European Olympic Committee. Parrish was the only UK member in the group and the only member with specialist expertise in EU sports law. Over nine months, the group met on seven occasions, mostly in Brussels. The final report of June 2016 was the product of extensive research including taking evidence from ambassadors, parliamentarians, national and EU civil servants, academics and members of sports bodies. Parrish made a distinct and substantial contribution to the group and its final report is heavily influenced by his underpinning research. The European Commission</p>		

described his role in the group as “instrumental to the success of this initiative” (Source 1, para.4).

3. References to the research

Parrish’s co-productive approach to research has resulted in his outputs informing and being informed by professional practice. He has worked extensively with senior EU civil servants and politicians, with whom he has built and maintained long-standing relationships which has generated a reciprocity of benefit. This has involved working as expert advisor for two successive European Commissioners, co-authoring some of the most influential EU studies on sport and frequently acting as keynote speaker at flagship EU events. The sustainability of these relationships is further evidenced by his appointment to advise the Portuguese Presidency of the EU (Jan-June 2021) on the implementation of the EU’s sport diplomacy strategy. Through his engagement with EU officials, Parrish has co-produced knowledge with practitioners that has benefited both academia and professional practice and in doing so, Parrish has made an “extremely valuable” and “long lasting impact when promoting wider policy debate and consensus building” (see Source 1, para.1 and conclusion).

References to underpinning research:

- 3.1 Parrish, R. (2003), *Sports Law and Policy in the European Union*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.271.
- 3.2 Parrish, R. & Miettinen, S. (2008), *The Sporting Exception in European Union Law*, International Sports Law Series, Den Haag: TMC Asser Press, pp.295.
- 3.3 Parrish, R. et al (2010), *The Lisbon Treaty and European Union Sports Policy*, IP/B/CULT/IC/2010-028, report for the European Parliament pp.73 (with TMC Asser Institute and Loughborough University).
- 3.4 Parrish, R et al (2016), *Report to Commissioner Tibor Navracsics: High Level Group on Sport Diplomacy*, European Commission, Brussels, June 2016, pp.52.

4. Details of the impact

Sport diplomacy is the use of sport by the state to help achieve its foreign policy objectives. Historically, sport has been merely co-opted by the state, for example through the use of sporting events to test new diplomatic channels of communication between estranged states. US and China ‘ping-pong’ diplomacy in 1971 is a case in point. More recently, states have explored more strategic approaches, as evidenced by the establishment of the sport diplomacy programme (*SportsUnited*) in the US Department of State after 9/11 and the adoption in 2015 of the Australian Government’s Sports Diplomacy Strategy. With expert advice from Parrish, the EU has moved into this new diplomatic terrain. Parrish’s work and long standing research expertise has been instrumental in generating three impacts outlined in section 1 above. His work demonstrated an “in-depth expertise of how sport could facilitate diplomacy and political considerations” thus allowing “the EU to develop sport diplomacy in very practical terms” (Source 1, para.4). According to the European Commissioner, “[t]he work undertaken by the High Level Group of sport diplomacy has laid the foundations for the work on sport diplomacy... Building on the report of the High Level Group, the international dimension of sport has become a permanent pillar of EU sports policy.” (Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner 2014-19 (Source 2).

Impact 1: Establishing sport diplomacy as an issue of political salience at EU level: To emerge as a new policy area, sport diplomacy needed to make an appearance on the EU’s already crowded political agenda. Parrish worked in Commissioner Vassiliou’s 2010 *Group of Independent European Sports Experts* to advise the Commission on priorities in the field of sport in preparation for the development of the new EU sports competence established by Article 165 TFEU. The resulting Communication on Sport (2011) endorsed the Group’s recommendations, with the European Commission expressing the view that employing sport to advance the EU’s external relations objectives “should be a priority”. A breakthrough was achieved in 2015 when the new European Commissioner for Education and Culture, Tibor Navracsics, acted on this statement following a review of EU external relations carried out by the EU’s High Representative of the EU, Federica Mogherini. Commissioner Navracsics established a High-Level Group on Sport Diplomacy and appointed Parrish to it due to “the

quality of Professor Parrish (sic) work and the level of expertise on EU sports law and policy” (Source 1, para.1). The group reported its findings to the Commissioner by way of a report in June 2016 in which fifteen recommendations were made, many of which have since been implemented by the EU.

Throughout his research (references 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3), Parrish has argued for sport to be given enhanced status within the EU. This informed HLG recommendation 12, at which the HLG advised the Commission that DG Education and Culture incorporate the word ‘Sport’ into its title. This recommendation was accepted and the DG is now DG Education, Youth, Culture and *Sport*. This amendment has given sport, and the potential of sport diplomacy, increased status at EU political level (Commission, Council and Parliament) and has benefitted sports bodies seeking high level political access to EU policymakers. Accompanying this, the HLG recommended a strategy to ensure sport diplomacy was placed and retained on the political agenda. It requested (at recommendation 4) the staging of a high-level political conference on sport diplomacy. This was accepted by the Commission who staged two EU Sport Diplomacy conferences in Brussels (06/12/16 & 06/12/17) at which Parrish was twice keynote speaker. It was noted that Parrish “was very successful in delivering messages on complicated matters to both expert and political level audiences” (Source 1, para.1). These events highlighted to members of EU institutions, national diplomats and senior members of sports bodies the opportunities offered by sport diplomacy which hitherto had been a little known concept at EU level. To support this sensitising exercise, the HLG (at recommendation 7) requested that the Commission fund a study highlighting best practice in sport diplomacy. The recommendation was accepted by the Commission and in January 2018, it published a study on Sport Diplomacy: Identifying Good Practices. This study provided further evidence of the benefits of sport diplomacy, thus facilitating high level political decision making (see impact 2 below).

Impact 2: Establishing sport diplomacy as an official area of EU competence: Having made a fundamental contribution in establishing sport diplomacy as an area of political interest for the EU, Parrish’s work on the HLG proved “instrumental” in providing an evidence base, allowing the EU Council and Parliament to adopt evidence-based policymaking in this area, thus demonstrating the impact of Parrish’s work outside his initial work with the Commission (Source 1, para.4). The recommendations made in the HLG report drew significantly on Parrish’s research and he played a central role in drafting them. In November 2016, the Member States (Council of the EU) acknowledged the role played by the HLG and endorsed almost all of its recommendations in the Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy (14279/16) under the auspices of the Slovak Presidency (Source 3). This breakthrough contributed to the fulfilment of a number of HLG recommendations. At recommendation 12, the HLG requested that sport diplomacy should be referred to in “the EU Foreign Affairs Strategy and the EU Human Rights Action Plan”. In 2016, the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy made reference to the use of sport to counter extremism, and reference to “public diplomacy” appeared in the the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. Also at recommendation 12 the HLG requested that sport diplomacy be given “priority status in the next EU Work Plan for Sport (from 2017)”. Following the Slovak Conclusions, in 2017, for the first time in its history, sport diplomacy was recognised as a “priority” theme of EU sports policy with the adoption of the legislative initiative: *Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on the EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020* (Source 4). At para.12, sport diplomacy was established as an EU priority theme and at para.18 the Council requested that the Commission “ensure a follow-up of the work done by [the HLG]”. The Resolution endorsed the HLG report by stating “the need to cooperate with third countries, in particular candidate countries and potential candidates to the EU, to promote European values through sport diplomacy...” (para.8).

By establishing sport diplomacy as a priority theme, the Resolution added political and administrative impetus to the issue by: informing the EU institutions on initiatives in other policy areas impacting on sport (a key area of underpinning research detailed in references

3.1 & 3.2); informing the work of Commission and Council working parties and expert groups; stimulating the sharing of best-practice initiatives (references 3.2 & 3.3) and informing national sport diplomacy strategies (see impact 3); providing logistical and technical support for sport diplomacy initiatives; and facilitating dialogue on sport via the bi-lateral and multi-lateral dialogue between the EU and sport, including dialogue within the context of the European Sport Forum and the European Week of Sport (see impact 3 and a central theme developed in references 3.2 & 3.3). Equally important, priority status opened EU budgetary opportunities for sport diplomacy initiatives at both EU institutional and non-governmental levels, for example by unlocking access for sport diplomacy initiatives in the Erasmus+ Programme and other funds including European structural and investment funds (see impact 3).

Being designated a priority theme placed sport diplomacy at the heart of the EU's rolling Presidency agenda and, according to Commissioner Navracsics, established it as a "permanent pillar of EU sports policy" (Source 2). From January to June 2018, the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU established the promotion of 'European values through sport' as a priority theme. This was a recommendation made by the HLG (recommendation 11). A high-level discussion, led by Commissioner Navracsics, took place at the EU Sport Forum in Sofia in March 2018. In April 2018, the Council adopted Conclusions on Promoting the Common Values of the EU Through Sport. At paragraph 28, the Council invited the Commission to "...include sport as part of external relations" (Source 5). Between January and June 2021, the Portuguese Presidency of the EU prioritised "sport diplomacy" and appointed Parrish as expert advisor in preparation for an EU Council meeting and a sport diplomacy conference in June.

Impact 3: Guiding the EU's implementation of its sport diplomacy strategy: Having established sport diplomacy as a new competence of the EU, its institutions began to implement the strategy and Parrish's guidance "allowed the EU to develop sport diplomacy in very practical terms" (Source 1, para.4). HLG recommendation 1 encouraged sports related bilateral agreements with third countries and recommendation 14 advised the EU to "[i]nclude sport into the portfolio of Delegation officers who are responsible for cultural relations and request them to take sport into account when assessing the social, economic and political situation in the given country". The European External Action Service (EEAS), which is the EU's diplomatic service has, since the HLG report, taken numerous steps to implement these recommendations, once again highlighting not only the spread of the impact outside the initial work with the Commission, but also the reach and significance of the impact given the EEAS's global reach. Two high profile agreements are notable. First, in November 2017, for the first time, sport was integrated into the EU-China High Level People to People Dialogue (HPPD) and in July 2018, the EU and Japan launched the EU-Japan Policy Dialogue on Education, Youth and Sport which included programmes involving sport designed to foster people-to-people contacts within the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement. Other initiatives adopted by the EEAS through the EU Delegations include EU sport diplomacy initiatives in inter alia Armenia (Oct 2017), UAE (Oct 2017), Liberia (2017), Pacific Islands (Aug 2018), Philippines (Nov 2018) and Guinea-Bissau (2020). Whilst the above initiatives highlight the value of soft power in terms of EU / third country relations, the Commission's 2018 Co-operation Arrangement with UEFA (Commission Decision C(2018) 876 final) shows sport diplomacy in action in the context of public / private partnerships. Of particular relevance is the passage on the diplomatic opportunities surrounding the staging of the UEFA EURO 2020 (now 2021), an issue highlighted by the HLG (recommendation 8-11).

In encouraging the EU to implement practical sport diplomacy initiatives, the HLG identified administrative obstacles requiring correction at EU level. One such obstacle was the funding criteria for the EU's Erasmus+ Sport Programme that restricted the participation of non-EU 'Partner Countries' in the programme (totalling 21 countries from the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, South-Mediterranean and Russian Federation). The HLG identified these countries as being crucial target states for EU sport diplomacy.

Consequently, HLG recommendation 2 stated that the Erasmus+ funding criteria be amended to facilitate the participation of these non-EU states thus significantly extending the reach and benefits of the programme. This recommendation was implemented by the Commission and from 2018, Partner Countries have benefitted from EU funding. For example, in the 2020 selection process, organisations from Ukraine, Tunisia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro and Egypt joined sports related projects funded at over EUR5,000,000 (Source 6). According to a Commission Press Release, “[t]his change is one of the results of the work delivered in June 2016 by the High Level Group on Sport Diplomacy” (Source 7). The amendment “allowed sport diplomacy projects to be financed” (Source 1, para.4)

Two further funding amendments are directly attributable to Parrish’s work on the HLG. First, on the basis of the HLG recommendation 2, the Commission amended its eligibility rules for participation in the annual European Week of Sport which from 2018 was extended to include the participation of the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership states – the ‘Beyond Borders’ initiative. This was “as a direct result of the work of the High-Level Group” (Head of Sports Sector, Education, Audiovisual, Culture, Executive Agency, European Commission – speaking at 2nd EU Sport Diplomacy conference, 06/12/17). Second, implementing recommendations 5 and 11 of the HLG, on the legislative initiative of the European Parliament (2018), a new EU funding scheme with an annual budget of EUR1,400,000 was introduced to facilitate the mobility of sport coaches and staff with an emphasis on grassroots sport diplomacy. The scheme, which in its three years of operation has funded 27 projects, requires EU applicants to partner with members from non-EU countries in either the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, Asia, Latin America or Africa (Source 8).

Finally, whilst the Resolution establishing an EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-20 placed sport diplomacy on the EU’s high-level political agenda, it also encouraged Member States to “take account of this EU Work Plan when developing policy at national level” (para. 16). In this connection, Member States are beginning to formulate or amend their own national sport diplomacy strategies, and the impact of the HLG is now being felt in national capitals. For example, in 2018, Hungary launched a Department of Sports Diplomacy. In 2019, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a sport diplomacy strategy citing the influence of the work of the HLG (at page 128 and annex 1 of *La Diplomacia Deportiva Como Actor de La España Global* and in 2020, Croatia incorporated sport diplomacy into its national sports strategy (the National Sports programme) and established “a body in charge of sports diplomacy” in the Central State Office for Sport, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 1) Supporting Statement, Head of Unit (Sport), European Commission, Brussels.
- 2) Interview with EU Commissioner <https://eose.org/2018/01/exclusive-interview-with-tibor-navracsics/>
- 3) Council Conclusions on Sport Diplomacy (14279/16) - <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14279-2016-INIT/en/pdf>
- 4) *Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on the EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020* - <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9639-2017-INIT/en/pdf>
- 5) Draft Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport – <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8032-2018-INIT/en/pdf>
- 6) https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/selection-results/erasmus-sport-2020_en
- 7) European Commission Press Release: Erasmus+ sport goes international (pdf)
- 8) Call for Proposals EAC/S07/2020 Exchanges and mobility in sport - https://ec.europa.eu/sport/sites/default/files/call_for_proposals_mobility_-_eac-s07-2020.docx.pdf