



## EUROPEAN UNION

Funding for this project has been granted by the European Commission under the Preparatory Action in the Field of Sport 2009.

The objective of the 2009 Preparatory Action in the Field of Sport is to prepare the European Union for implementation of the priorities set out in the White Paper on Sport of 14 April, 2008.



## SPECIAL OLYMPICS EUROPE/EURASIA

Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia (SOEE) works with half a million athletes in 58 countries across Europe and Eurasia (Europe and Central Asia), providing year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of 31 Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Through sports athletes can develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Around the world Special Olympics exists in 175 countries providing life changing benefits to more than 3.1 million athletes with intellectual disabilities.

Visit [www.specialolympics-eu.org](http://www.specialolympics-eu.org)



## For information about the 2010/11 EU Youth Unified Sports Development Project

Contact: Sabine Menke  
Senior Manager, Youth Education and Unified Sports  
Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia  
Avenue Jean Burgers 4, box 35  
1180 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel (Germany): +49 221 7158179  
smenke@specialolympics.org

[www.specialolympics-eu.org](http://www.specialolympics-eu.org)

# 2010/11

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS EU YOUTH UNIFIED SPORTS® DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



*Supported by the European Union*



“SPORT ALSO HAS A VERY IMPORTANT SOCIAL ROLE. BY HELPING TO CREATE A ‘LEVEL PLAYING FIELD’ AMONG COMMUNITIES, IT SUPPORTS INTEGRATION AND DEFIES DISCRIMINATION. I KNOW THIS IS A PRIORITY FOR THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS MOVEMENT AND IT IS ONE THAT I SHARE WHOLEHEARTEDLY.”

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner responsible for sport

## SOCIAL INVESTMENT

There is growing demand in European societies for the total inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of the community.

The European Commission recognized the role Special Olympics Unified Sports plays for inclusion of young people with intellectual disability with vital funding support under the Preparatory Action in the Field of Sport 2009.

Unified Sports enables people with intellectual disabilities (“athletes”) and without intellectual disabilities (“partners”) to train and compete on integrated sports teams.

With the European Union as partner, the 2010/11 Special Olympics EU Youth Unified Sports Development Project will develop Unified Basketball and Football programmes for young people between 12-25 years in 10 EU member states: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Romania.

By training and competing together in Basketball and Football, Unified athletes and partners will improve their sports skills, social skills and self-esteem, challenge the competition and help to overcome prejudices about people with intellectual disabilities.

## UNIFIED SPORTS PROVEN MECHANISM FOR INCLUSION

Unified Sports has successfully been proven to break down the barriers that prevent young people with and without intellectual disabilities from forming friendships.

A 2006 evaluation of a Youth Unified Football pilot programme with more than 700 participants in five countries in Europe showed that 80% of the surveyed non disabled partners stated that their understanding of people with intellectual disabilities positively changed based on their experience.

Although often perceived as different from others in social, educational and other settings, athletes with and without intellectual disabilities find themselves on equal footing when competing side by side. One partner from Romania summed up his experience saying: “When we play football, we can’t see the difference”.

Unified Sports teams also provide the public direct opportunities to experience first-hand the capabilities and courage of Special Olympics athletes.

Unified Sports is the fastest growing segment of the overall Special Olympics athlete population. Today there are 30,440 in Europe/Eurasia and more than 200,000 worldwide with the four most popular sports being Football, Basketball, Athletics and Aquatics.

## EU YOUTH UNIFIED SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Special Olympics Football and Basketball have shown to be ideal team sports to bring young people together.

The project aims at creating long term sustainable structures for Youth activation and Unified Sports in local communities across the 10 focus countries. Networks will be created between various players on local and national level as well as on international level. Special, mainstream and inclusive schools, local sports clubs, sports federations, local volunteers, community groups, Universities and local sponsors, supporters and many others will work together to make Youth Unified Sports happen.

The Programme targets at recruiting at least 2,000 new Unified players across the two sports.

The participatory, grass roots and volunteer nature of the project provides a hands-on experience of positive change. The project goes far in dispelling stereotypes about people with intellectual disabilities. Young people involved in the project will learn important lessons on how they can make a contribution to their schools and communities.

