



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union for Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein

**Welcome message
on behalf of**

**Androulla Vassiliou,
European Commissioner for Education,
Culture, Multilingualism and Youth**

**UEFA Course for Chinese
Elite Youth Coaches 2011**

**Thomas Näcke
Councillor**

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

[UEFA House of European Football, Nyon, 06. October 2011]

Monsieur le Président Michel Platini,

Madame la Présidente Li Xue,

distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the opening of this encounter and I would like to congratulate UEFA for this important initiative of organising such a Course in the context of the **EU-China Year of Youth 2011**.

This Year of Youth is a great opportunity to widen and strengthen the 35-year old relations between the EU and China.

We have already come a long way in this relationship: our economic and trade relations in particular have grown to one of the most important in the world. I myself was privileged to contribute to the development of these relations, when I was working for the EU on Beijing, in the mid-90ies. But our cooperation has also expanded to other areas, including transport, science, education and culture.

Indeed, political and economic cooperation are essential but without a dialogue on other fundamental human values, our mutual understanding cannot be considered complete.

And we need to involve our young citizens and future leaders in this dialogue, if we want it to prosper. By focusing this Year on

youth, the EU and China are giving a clear message of partnership for the future.

The main aim of the EU-China Year of Youth is to create concrete opportunities to open up new horizons for our young generations to share their ideals, experiences, values, and to learn from each other.

Various flagship events, including conferences, round tables and study visits, have been organised all over the year, either in Europe or in China, in cooperation between the European Commission and the All China Youth Federation.

Furthermore 23 projects have been granted by the EU to support partnerships between youth organisations from the Europe and from China; these projects have just been launched and involve many partners in various Chinese provinces and European countries.

But the Year of Youth has also triggered many other events from civil society.

This **UEFA Course for Chinese Elite Youth** coaches is one remarkable example of such initiatives. It allows sport to be part of the Year of Youth, which is entirely appropriate if one considers the importance of sport for young people as well as its importance in the peaceful relations between peoples.

Coaches play a central role in the training of young athletes. They assume responsibility for young athletes in many fields. Their responsibility is wider than only for sports training. Coaches are the people who motivate, encourage and inspire, be it at school, in the local club or in a major international team.

Sport demands highly qualified coaches who can perform in different international settings and who can protect the physical and moral integrity of the athletes.

Football and other sports in Europe recognise the importance of the coach more and more, and excellent coaching education programmes have been set up. The European Commission supports innovative developments in this field which have an EU added value. Such support may be increased from 2014 onwards, when a funding stream for sport should become available. The Commission is planning to adopt the proposal for such a programme in November this year.

I hope that this encounter will provide inspiration to develop future cooperation and maybe establish long-lasting partnerships between sport organisations from both sides.

This would be an important legacy of the Year of Youth: the focus on youth promoted by this Year is intended to be the start of deeper cooperation. It will stimulate other actors and partners

at all levels to develop initiatives aimed at encouraging dialogue and cooperation with China in different sectors.

最后，我想跟各位分享一个15年前在北京的个人经验。

1996年，我在北京的欧盟代表处工作。有一天，在工人体育馆，有一个中国英国友好足球赛。我跟我的欧盟同事高兴的，便喝啤酒便看比赛。

当天，工人体育馆爆满。我记得，在上面的与座位，有很多军人。大家都很大声的为中国队加油。那时候,我被这个强烈的爱国主义下到了。

可是，没想到。因为英国对的表现比中国队好，所以大家都为英国对开始加油。最后，英国因了，3比0。这个经验让我认识到中国人的运动家精神。那就是，公平和公正。

最后，我希望中国队越来越强，有一天你们可以打败英国，或者意大利，法国，西班牙，。。。 Good luck!

谢谢。