

To the Ministry of Education and Science  
in Portugal  
Minister Nuno Crato  
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(Gent), 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012

Subject: Protect Physical Education in Elementary and Secondary Schools

Minister Nuno Crato

I write you this letter on behalf of the (Flemish) Physical Education Teachers Organization (BVLO), which is a professional body representing the Physical Education teachers in (Flanders/Belgium).

We are informed that soon in Portugal you may cut down the amount of hours for Physical Education in elementary and secondary schools. This is unique in Europe and our Portuguese colleagues are extremely concerned about this proposal because they fear a reduction of hours. All professional Physical Education organisations in Europe share that concern.

Physical education plays a unique role in the educational process since it offers a set of learning opportunities for young people which cannot be provided elsewhere. It provides a foundation for many opportunities in future life. The PISA survey also shows some correlation between well being, the amount of Physical Education/physical activity and school results.

Most of Europe is strenuously attempting to encourage young people to adopt healthy lifestyles and to acquire the basic skills and knowledge to engage in lifelong physical activity and to adopt a positive attitude towards being active. Thereby it is critical that we protect the place of the subject in school. Just as important, there are few other subjects which offer the children the opportunity to use their own bodies as learning medium. The only way to reach all the children with a professional approach is in the schools.

So it would be highly inappropriate to let boards and principals decide on the amount of time for Physical Education in schools, especially at this moment.

We cannot understand how the Portuguese government can make such a decision when the whole world is concerned about young people's inactive lifestyle and how that affects their health. This very moment many countries are expanding the time for physical education/physical activity so pupils/students have at least 30-60 minutes every day at all age levels.

We would like you to give serious consideration to the likely detrimental effects of the implementation of such political decisions. If we neglect to provide the opportunities for children and young people in schools with a reasonable amount of time, many of them will miss out on critical learning opportunities. It will have a negative effect on healthy lifestyles and lifelong physical activity.

We thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely

(Eric De Boever  
President BVLO – Flemish Physical Education Teachers Association  
Secretary General EUPEA – European Physical Education Association)