(English version)

Question for written answer E-003472/25
to the Commission
Beatrice Timgren (ECR), Dick Erixon (ECR), Charlie Weimers (ECR)
(8 September 2025)

Subject: Taxpayer funded wrestling events in The Gambia

Between 2020 and 2023, nearly EUR 500 000 in EU development funds were granted to the 'Gambia Wrestling Association' to 'enhance resilience against climate change in local communities' through wrestling competitions in The Gambia ([1]).

According to multiple sources, including *The Gambia Standard*, the funds were used to support wrestling-related activities — including training workshops and the construction of three wrestling arenas in Farafenni, Boiram and Ndemban ([2]) ([3]) ([4]).

Cultural initiatives can contribute to community cohesion, however, they should be managed and funded at national, regional or local level. This is not an area where the EU adds value.

Taxpayers' money should always be spent transparently and effectively. Considering the questionable link between wrestling and climate resilience and the current strain on budgets in Member States:

1. How does the Commission justify the use of climate-related development funds to build wrestling arenas in The Gambia — and what measurable results were achieved in terms of community resilience or adaptation?

2. Did the Directorate-General for International Partnerships conduct any cost-benefit or climate impact assessment before approving this project, and has the Commission published the findings? If not, will any *ex post* analysis be carried out examining the value of this, and similar projects?

3. Will the Commission commit to stricter eligibility rules to prevent climate funds from being used for loosely justified cultural or sporting events without any clear environmental impact?

Submitted: 8.9.2025

Answer given by Mr Síkela on behalf of the European Commission
(23 December 2025)

Given that wrestling is a culturally significant and widely followed sport in Gambia, it was used as a channel for engaging local communities on climate adaptation and environmental awareness. The three wrestling arenas built in the localities of Ndemban, Farafenni and Boiram, also served as venues for training, education and community events focused on resilience to climate risks — such as flooding and deforestation — which directly affect local livelihoods. The implementation of this project was properly monitored through various mechanisms and a final report is currently under assessment.

The above-mentioned project funded cultural engagement through sporting activities that also benefitted climate adaptation and resilience, therefore climate being targeted. Overall, the Commission ensures that all projects align with EU development and climate objectives, with sustainability systematically considered and follow-up evaluations conducted where relevant.

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1 https://www.ngotransparency.eu/.
2 https://www.grts.gm/news-article-details/sports/gambia-wrestling-association-takes-major-step-in-the-decentralisation-of-wrestling.
3 https://www.grts.gm/news-article-details/sports/gambia-wrestling-association-concludes-two-day-capacity-building-for-wrestling-technicians-at-farafenni.
4 https://exxpress.at/politik/ringen-fuer-den-klimaschutz-eu-zahlt-500-000-e-an-wrestling-ngo-in-gambia/.