

Information Documents

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The Council of Europe and Sport Strategic Priorities for 2022-25

Sport and society

Sport plays an increasingly important role in society and in people's lives. Sport is an essential part of democracy. Its social, health and economic dimensions are gaining more and more attention, positioning sport as an important policy arena. As mentioned in the decision adopted at the [131st Session of the Committee of Ministers](#) (Hamburg, 21 May 2021), the wide mandate of the Council of Europe covers a range of important activities, including sport.

Through sport, it is possible to touch millions of people, convey values and change attitudes and behaviours. At the same time, sport also faces complex and ever-evolving threats, for example doping, violence at sports events, manipulation of competitions, corruption and human rights violations. The scale of which sport is commercialised globally may also prove to be a hurdle when it comes to promoting it as a values-based activity with a focus on human rights.

The Council of Europe's role in the field of sport

The Council of Europe will remain a driving force to ensure that human rights are embedded into sport and through it in our societies.

Two main tools are used:

The **Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport** (EPAS): this unique forum for intergovernmental sports co-operation and dialogue between public authorities, sports federations and NGOs develops policies and standards making sport more ethical, more inclusive and safer. It also benefits from a consultative body made up of representatives from the sport movement/civil society, currently 29 sport organisations. With the recent accession of Italy, Turkey and Ukraine, the EPAS is comprised of 41 member states, including three non-Council of Europe member states.

Thematic conventions

- [Against doping \(1989\)](#);
- [Against the manipulation of sport competitions – the Macolin Convention \(2014\)](#);
- [For safety, security and service at sport events – the Saint-Denis Convention \(2016\)](#) (which builds upon and is expected to replace the 1985 Convention on Spectator Violence).

With the involvement of a wide range of countries, including several from outside Europe, as well as global support for these conventions from various sports organisations, these legal frameworks make an important contribution in creating a better sporting environment and ensuring greater respect for democratic processes, human rights and the rule of law.

Co-operation with other Council of Europe sectors and institutions has also been instrumental in achieving results in areas such as gender equality, children's rights, access to justice, inclusion of migrants, economic and social rights, freedom of expression and data protection, as well as in the fight against discrimination, trafficking in human beings and corruption. The **European Court of Human Rights** delivers legally binding judgments in sports-related cases. In addition, the **Parliamentary Assembly** has traditionally played a very active role in the field of sports. This is a clear added value of the Council of Europe in the world of sports.

A number of **Joint Programmes with the European Union and assistance projects financed by voluntary contributions** also help to promote the Council of Europe standards and values in the context of sport.

Three main strategic priorities

In line with the Secretary General's Strategic Framework for the Council of Europe, and decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers at the Ministerial Session in Hamburg, the strategic priorities for the four-year period (2022-2025) to enhance sport as a values-based activity with a clear focus on human rights are:

- **Firmly place the protection of human rights and respect for the rule of law in sports, in particular in the fight against corruption**, on the agenda of both governments and sports organisations, including fostering changes in legislation, policies and practices in Europe and beyond;
- **Strive for major advances in the promotion of values-driven sport** (through the European Sports Charter), in the fight against doping, the manipulation of competitions and in ensuring safety, security and service at sports events;
- **Reaffirming the Council of Europe as a reliable and key partner** in addressing European and global challenges in sport, influencing developments – through partnership and co-operation with, among others, IOC, FIFA, UEFA, WADA (the World Anti-Doping Agency), INTERPOL, UNESCO, while establishing **a platform for effective co-operation between governments and sports organisations**, as well as serving several other important networks such as the OneVoice Platform, the Group of Copenhagen and the International Partnership against Corruption in Sport.

Work and main deliverables

EPAS

The **Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport** (EPAS) provides a pan-European platform for intergovernmental co-operation in sport on both political and technical levels. The EPAS develops policies and standards to promote sport in member states and to make it more ethical, inclusive and safe.

The partial agreement provides capacity building to public authorities and the sports movement. It supports the exchange of good practices between governments and sports organisations. The EPAS also monitors the European Sports Charter and other relevant recommendations of the Committee of Ministers.

In promoting good governance, the EPAS supports the implementation of the principles of transparency, integrity, democracy, and solidarity, and puts in place control mechanisms to ensure accountability. In order to uphold and promote the positive values of sport, the EPAS will continue to invest in the elimination of discrimination and violence associated with sport. Over the next four years there will be a particular focus on promoting the effective implementation of the European Sports Charter, using it as the backbone of the EPAS' programme and enhancing its monitoring.

The EPAS will also aim to strengthen its co-operation with the relevant intergovernmental bodies which provide expertise in areas where human rights issues have been identified.

The period 2022-2025 will be crucial for consolidating the sustainability of the EPAS.

The **European Sports Charter** (ESC) is a key Council of Europe tool. It provides guidance to member states on how to improve their existing sports related legislations and policies, and lays down basic principles for national sports policies, which enable governments to ensure that sport is practised in line with well-defined conditions.

The ESC has been, and still is, a reference point for the development of sport in Europe since the first version of the text was adopted in 1976, and countries and sports have benefited from the principles and values it enshrines. Its previous revision was carried out 20 years ago, in 2001.

The process to start revising the ESC was initiated in 2018 in Tbilisi at the 15th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for sport, which, through its adopted resolutions, invited the EPAS to consider reviewing the ESC. The 16th Ministerial Conference (online, concluded in February 2021) endorsed the progress made and gave further guidance for the completion of the revision process. On 13 October 2021, the Committee of Ministers adopted a **Recommendation on the Revised European Sports Charter**. The revised Charter will be an essential reference tool over the next few years for developing national sports policies on the European continent, as has been the case with the previous versions adopted in 1976, 1992 and 2001. Driven by the need to enable sport to deliver its benefits, such as health, inclusion and education, the revised Charter strongly emphasises the concept of sport for all. It formulates the principle of a “Right to Sport” that everyone should enjoy and also develops and clarifies the values that should underpin all sports activities and be conveyed through sport: human rights, sport integrity and sustainability.

Finally, the EPAS also works in close co-operation with sport committees on issues of common interest, in particular the promotion of an holistic sports integrity policy, as well as the fight against racism and hate speech, the right to a fair trial and the protection of whistle-blowers, as well as the fight against corruption in sport. The EPAS also regularly co-operates with international partners including the EU, UNESCO and the UNODC.

The Council of Europe work on **anti-doping** is organised around two committees – the **Monitoring Group of the Council of Europe Anti-Doping Convention** (T-DO) and the **Ad hoc European Committee for the World Anti-Doping Agency** (CAHAMA). These two committees carry out interrelated activities while having a different legal status (ad hoc intergovernmental committee set up by the Committee of Ministers and directly answerable to it on the one hand, and conventional committee on the other).

The Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping Convention (T-DO)

The T-DO, the **statutory body under the Council of Europe Anti-Doping Convention** (1989), with 52 States Parties and several observers, is primarily responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention, interpreting its provisions and providing targeted technical assistance to States Parties. It also plays an active role in the national and international harmonisation of measures to be taken against doping.

At policy and strategic planning level, the T-DO co-operates with leading organisations in the fight against doping – WADA, the IOC, UNESCO and the EU – to harmonise international standards, rules, regulations, recommendations and guidelines, to share knowledge and good practices and to ensure complementarity of actions.

Among the T-DO's priorities for action are:

- the further improvement of the evaluation process and implementation of the Anti-Doping Convention including through evaluation visits and reports¹;
- the setting-up of a platform enabling the meaningful participation of athletes and athletes' organisations in policy development and implementation;

¹ The consequences of the CAS (Court of Arbitration for Sport) decision (17 December 2020) regarding RUSADA's non-compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code is also addressed in this framework.

- the development and implementation of general principles of fair procedure applicable to anti-doping proceedings;
- the promotion of gender equality in the field of anti-doping;
- the further development of co-operation with the CAHAMA.

CAHAMA

The CAHAMA is an **ad hoc intergovernmental committee** established by a decision of the Committee of Ministers. Its primary responsibilities are to develop positions of European governments on matters **related to the functioning of WADA**, to oversee the implementation of these positions and to advise the Committee of Ministers on WADA-related matters.

The CAHAMA includes 50 members, all of which are state parties to the European Cultural Convention.

Finally, the Secretariat also co-operates closely with the **OneVoice Platform** – a co-ordination mechanism established by representatives of public authorities, from all five continents, on the WADA statutory bodies who ensure the development of informed positions. The role of this informal global co-ordination is important to sustain the efforts needed to secure the efficient involvement and strong voice of public authorities within WADA.

In the last five years, activities related to CAHAMA/WADA have seen a considerable evolution from both technical and political perspectives. The development of global anti-doping policies has been at the centre of attention of many governments around the world. These issues also enjoy considerable public and media interest. Currently, as there is no indication that this trend will change, in years to come, the Council of Europe will focus on the following issues:

- the ongoing WADA governance reform;
- the representation of athletes and national anti-doping organisations within WADA's governing bodies;
- increased co-ordination among public authorities, as well as a constructive dialogue between public authorities, WADA and sports organisations;
- the implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code and international standards, as well as the development of relevant new standards and policies.

The above-mentioned issues have considerably increased the workload of the CAHAMA and its secretariat. For example, the number of CAHAMA meeting days has more than doubled in recent years. Moreover, WADA's scope of work is now a very dynamic and complex cross-sectoral combination of technical and political issues, where developments can take place and decisions often have to be taken extremely quickly.

The political nature of anti-doping issues (direct involvement of Ministers and senior officials from different governments and sport organisations) and the role of the Deputy Secretary General, as the Council of Europe's representative on the WADA Foundation Board, also entails considerable involvement of the Private Office of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General in anti-doping issues.

The Council of Europe's core values may not necessarily be reflected in the organisational structures and regulations of sports federations based in Europe. This is certainly the case when it comes to the **human rights of athletes**² in relation to disciplinary and appeal bodies in sports. Therefore, the Organisation can play a key role in improving the system, such as to ensure the principle of separation of powers, so that disciplinary and appeal bodies are truly independent and free from conflicts of interest, while at the same time, respecting the autonomy and self-governance of sports federations. The Council of Europe has for some time worked on developing a set of **general principles of fair procedure applicable to anti-doping proceedings in sport**. This reinforces its strong commitment to the rule of law in sport and the ensuing need to guarantee effective access to justice and a fair trial in the context of the anti-doping measures required by national legislation and international law, including the UNESCO Convention against Doping in Sport and by the World Anti-Doping Code. In this process, there has been a focus on the removal of obstacles to effective access to justice, as a key element in securing equal opportunities for all athletes, regardless of gender.

The Macolin Committee

The Macolin Convention is the only legally binding international text on combating the manipulation of sports competitions. It provides a common legal framework for efficient international co-operation to respond to this global threat, requesting public authorities to co-operate with sports organisations, betting operators and competition organisers to prevent, detect and punish the manipulation of sports competitions.

The Convention currently³ has seven states parties (Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and Ukraine) and high priority should be given to increasing the number of parties enabling ratification by more member states and accession by the European Union, as well as promoting accession by non-European countries.

The Macolin Committee has already started working on a number of priority areas: the promotion of the Convention, the evaluation of its implementation, the definition of the list of sports organisations and the integration of the Network of National Platforms ("the Group of Copenhagen") as its advisory group.

The Saint-Denis Committee

The Saint-Denis Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events promotes co-operation between all public and private stakeholders involved in making sports events safe, secure and welcoming, including local communities and supporters.

The [Saint-Denis Committee](#) is the body established to monitor compliance with the Convention and to provide support and advise on its implementation, its overall aim being to protect participants at sports events in Europe and beyond.

The Saint-Denis Committee constitutes a unique international platform for exchanging knowledge and experience, sharing good practices and developing co-operation on safety, security and service at football matches and other sports events.

² See also the online course developed by the Council of Europe Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP), "Human Rights in Sport" (available at help.elearning.ext.coe.int)

³ State of ratifications on 10 January 2022.

The Committee will focus its first actions on establishing a solid and effective monitoring mechanism, providing focused policy advice, notably ensuring that the protection of human rights and the fight against hate speech, racism and discrimination are duly integrated in the various policies and actions.

UEFA, FIFA and IOC

The Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the Council of Europe and, respectively, **UEFA** and **FIFA**, provide dynamic frameworks for more structured and enhanced co-operation, in areas such as good governance, combating corruption, protection and promotion of human rights (including anti-discrimination) and the promotion of Council of Europe conventions (including both the Macolin and Saint-Denis Conventions). As regards co-operation with **FIFA**, there will also be a particular focus on safeguarding children in football and the ongoing reform of the transfer system initiated by FIFA, with the aim of introducing more transparency, accountability and a fairer distribution of financial resources within the football pyramid.

As regards **UEFA**, there is a focus on promoting good governance and key Council of Europe conventions, including a culture of clean sport and combating match fixing, as well as on fighting discrimination, developing grassroots sports and a social responsibility strategy.

The Council of Europe has also strengthened its co-operation with the **IOC**, with a focus on issues relating to athletes' rights, sports integrity (including the fight against corruption and the manipulation of sports competitions) and human rights in general.

<h3>The Council of Europe's vision</h3>
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Our starting point is a clear focus on Council of Europe values:

“Human rights, the rule of law and good governance are embedded in and advanced through sport in Europe and beyond.”

The mission should highlight the Council of Europe's added value, position it internationally and show how it can help the key stakeholders, governments and sports organisations, to realise this vision:

“To assist and advise governments and sports organisations to advance human rights, the rule of law and democracy in and through sport, while acknowledging that the Council of Europe is a platform for the development, monitoring and implementation of standards and policies for safe, ethical and inclusive sport.”