OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN SPORTS CHARTER (ESC) IN

BELGIUM

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport
epas
Accord partiel élargi sur le sport

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



TOTAL POPULATION: **approx. 11.867.600**

PER CAPITA GDP (€): **44.800**

MAIN SPORT PRIORITIES

TARGET/ AUDIENCE | CAREER | ETHICS | INCLUSION | NON-DISCRIMINATION | GENDER EQUALITY | SUSTAINABILITY | FACILITIES | EVENTS | WELL-BEING | ORGANISATION | OTHER

FUNDING

SOURCES OF FUNDING

- ✓ State/public authorities
- ✗ Local authorities
- ✗ Taxes/tax exemptions
- ✗ Betting
- ✓ Lotteries (public/national)
- ✗ International funding
- ✓ Other: public revenues, mostly from operating the administrations' own sports centres

ENTITIES FUNDED

- Sports federations
- Sports clubs
- National Olympic Committee (NOC)
- Local authorities
- Schools/educational bodies
- Top-level athletes
- Citizens (families, youth, elderly)
- NGOs

- ✓ Public/private financial partnerships
- ✓ Solidarity mechanisms

STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE AND CO-ORDINATION OF SPORT POLICIES

✓ National plan for sport – community plans and strategies: Flemish Community policy note on sport 2024–2029; French Community priorities for 2026–2030 in preparation (previous administration contract 2020–2025); German-speaking Community sport strategy within "Ostbelgien 2030". The joint BeGold programme supports young athletes with potential.

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

- No single national **platform** for overall sport policy: national platforms on specific topics – the National Platform against the manipulation of sport competitions, the Anti-Doping Coordination Council, and an Olympic and elite sport platform (joint meetings of the ministers responsible for sport and the Belgian Olympic Committee). At community level, the three sport administrations (Sport Vlaanderen, ADEPS, Ostbelgien Sport) co-ordinate sport policy through structural dialogue with the sports movement and an advisory committee consulted in policymaking.
- **Participants:** the director-general in charge of sport, the anti-doping agency, the sports movement and municipalities.
- **Primary objectives:** define policies and priorities, and co-ordinate policies.

THE SPORTS MOVEMENT

- **Co-ordination** through the formal public platform and other formal and informal meetings, involving the ministers responsible for sport and education, the director-general in charge of sport, the anti-doping agency, the sport integrity agency, sport event organisers, the sports movement, municipalities and NGOs.
- **Prioritised topics:** high-performance and Paralympic sport, overall population, sport for all, and physical education and school sport; dual careers and support after the sporting career; combating violence, racism, xenophobia and intolerance; sports integrity and ethics; disability and social inclusion; gender equality in sport; sustainable, environmentally friendly, inclusive and accessible sports facilities; athlete health, safety and wellbeing, and child athlete rights; public sector regulations and investment.
- **Volunteering support** under the Volunteering Law of 2005 (amended in 2019): for sports organisations, specific legislation, insurance and legal advice; for regular volunteers, specific legislation, insurance, training, safeguarding and flat-rate financial compensation; for event volunteers, specific legislation, compensation and insurance.

CORPORATE AND PROFESSIONAL SECTOR

- A specific **engagement platform** with the corporate and professional sector, not used to promote responsible business conduct.
- **Media dialogue** through a press award, media ambassadors, regular meetings, legislation on transmission rights and agreements.
- **Media freedom** and investigative journalism lie outside the remit of the sport administrations; initiatives on this topic exist elsewhere in Belgium.

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A NOTABLE PRACTICE

#TraitRouge campaign – French Community (ADEPS): a weekend of collective action to say stop to all forms of violence on and around sports grounds, with three editions held so far and a photo contest whose cash prize is donated to the participating sports club.

Gamechanger campaign – German-speaking Community: a campaign of LOS Ostbelgien on interpersonal violence in sport, raising awareness, offering advice and training to clubs and developing a prevention and intervention concept.

Integrity contact point (API) – Flanders: to be recognised, every sport federation must appoint an integrity contact point; the administration funds Sportieq to support federations in designing integrity policies.

ESC Articles 6, 7, 8 – Human rights, education in values and integrity

VALUES-BASED SPORT ESC ARTICLES 6, 7, 8, 9

Human Rights

- Measures to protect human rights in sport: a **mechanism to report human rights violations**, **sport-specific legislation**, national campaigns, specific funding criteria, the right to appeal to court, co-operation between public bodies responsible for sport and for human rights, and sport-specific actions in national strategies on human rights and on children's rights, in collaboration with civil society.
- Implementation of the Council of Europe **Child Safeguarding in Sport**.
- The sport movement and the professional and corporate sport sectors are **required to commit** to international human rights and **human rights due diligence**.
- Participation in **multi-stakeholder platforms** to prevent and respond to human rights violations in sport.
- Measures to protect human rights at **sports events**: regular dialogue with sports organisations and with civil society.
- Promotion of **gender equality** through a broad range of measures, including the **"All In Plus"** EU–Council of Europe project, a specific plan, mandatory gender quotas for governing bodies, legislation and funding criteria, as well as the French Community's strategic plan for gender and women's rights, the 2025–2029 strategy to protect LGBTQIA+ persons (French Community and Wallonia), the Intra-Francophone Plan to Combat Violence Against Women, and project funding for "More women in sport" in Flanders.
- **Zero-tolerance policy against violence and discrimination** through a broad range of sport-specific and general measures, including implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach (CETS No. 218, signed and ratified), legislation, campaigns, reporting mechanisms and funding criteria, as well as the German-speaking Community's Gamechanger campaign.

Education

- Sport is used for education through the **physical education curriculum**, **campaigns promoting values**, ambassadors such as former athletes, involvement with federations and the sports movement, and schools.

Integrity

- **Competitive integrity** through fair-play awareness campaigns, dissemination of best practices, educational programmes and inclusion of fair play in the school curriculum.
- **Manipulation of competitions:** a comprehensive set of measures, including a legal framework, regulation of the sports betting market, information-sharing platforms, criminal, administrative and disciplinary sanctions, and national and international co-operation. CETS No. 215 signed and ratified.
- **Doping:** a comprehensive set of measures, including a WADA-accredited national anti-doping organisation, information sharing on convicted athletes, and national and international co-operation. Anti-Doping Convention (ETS No. 135) signed and ratified; Additional Protocol (ETS No. 188) not signed.
- **Organisational integrity** through specific legislation defining the rights and duties of sports organisations receiving public funding, supervision mechanisms, and guidelines and codes of conduct.
- **Whistle-blower protection** through guaranteed anonymity and forwarding of complaints to the appropriate organisation.

Sustainability

- Legislation and policies on sustainability when organising **sport activities and events:** sport-specific and general legislation, campaigns, educational programmes (sports clubs, sport managers and leaders, other practitioners), guidelines to reduce the ecological footprint of school sport activities and events, publications and research, and dissemination of best practices.
- **Sporting goods industry:** publications and research, and dissemination of best practices.
- Mechanisms for **owners of sports infrastructure** to avoid potential damage: general legislation, campaigns, educational programmes in sports clubs and for sport managers and leaders, and publications and research.

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SPORT FOR ALL ESC ARTICLES 10, 11, 12

LEGAL BASIS ENSURING THE RIGHT TO SPORT FOR ALL
➜ Article 23 of the Belgian Constitution (right to cultural and social development); Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the decrees governing the organised sport sector

PROVISIONS TO ENSURE ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS CAN TAKE PART IN SPORT
➜ Disability sport federations in each community; health-insurance reimbursement of part of sport costs; fiscal incentives for employers' «sport cheques»; the Masterplan for inclusive sport in Flanders (BIIND); BSC Ostbelgien for athletes with disabilities; a vision document for sport promotion in Flanders; the UiTPAS benefit card for people in poverty; a platform for social-sportive practices; low-priced ADEPS training courses, free weekly «Adeps Walks» and free online courses

APPROPRIATE TIME SLOTS FOR STUDENTS TO ACCESS SPORT
➜ Mandatory PE, optional PE, school sport clubs; the «Sport after School» pass, a subscription for secondary-school pupils to practise sport after school at a fair price

MECHANISMS TO ENSURE PE TEACHERS HAVE APPROPRIATE QUALIFICATIONS
➜ Mandatory certified education to access sport careers; mandatory certified continuous training; optional continuous training

MECHANISMS TO ENSURE CO-OPERATION IN USE OF FACILITIES BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND SPORTS CLUBS
➜ Informal and formal agreements on facilities use and on provision of club staff; the FOLLO programme in Flanders, supporting PE teachers in developing after-school sport with local administrations and clubs





SPORT FOR ALL ESC ARTICLES 13, 14

SUPPORT FOR TOP-LEVEL ATHLETES
➜ Legislation, insurance, free healthcare (specifically mental health), scholarships, awards, special school and work regimes, end-of-career support, talent identification and follow-up programmes, coach training specific to top-level performance, and elite athlete contracts under which top athletes receive a salary from the government; for student athletes: all listed mechanisms; for transition to a post-sport career: legislation, reintegration grant, special access to recruitment procedures, access to higher education (also during the career), training courses, a system for combining studies and sport, career counselling and individual guidance

MECHANISMS TO ENSURE SPORT IS MANAGED BY COMPETENT, WELL-GOVERNED BODIES
➜ Specific legislation defining the rights and duties of sports organisations receiving public funding, supervision mechanisms, guidelines and codes of conduct

MECHANISMS TO GUARANTEE RIGHTS AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF SPORTS PROFESSIONALS
➜ Education, campaigns, dissemination of best practices, collective agreements



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MEANS ESC ARTICLES 15, 16, 17, 18

- **MECHANISMS TO ENSURE THAT FACILITIES AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES ARE ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL**
  ➜ Legislation on public infrastructure, recommendations and guidelines, and a Flemish quality label rating the accessibility of sports infrastructure
- **MECHANISMS TO EMPOWER EVENT ORGANISERS AND SPORTS FACILITIES OWNERS TO FULFIL THEIR SAFETY AND SECURITY OBLIGATIONS**
  ➜ Dialogue with sports organisations, dissemination of best practices
- **ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATE TRAINING COURSES LEADING TO QUALIFICATIONS IN SPORT**
  ➜ Legislation, legal framework on mandatory course subjects, accreditation of courses, pedagogical materials
- **ENSURING SPORTS LEADERS ARE QUALIFIED IN VALUES, INTEGRITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**
  ➜ Training and education, support, access to management tools and guidance, recognition and dissemination of good practices in club management, certification of club management systems and services, and a French Community label on good management of organisations

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

- MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING
- EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES
- PLEDGES
- ERASMUS+ PROGRAMMES
- EU WORK PLAN FOR SPORT (2024–2027)
- PARTICIPATION IN HEPA FOCAL-POINT MEETINGS, EU PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES, THE EU SPORT FORUM AND MEETINGS OF EU DIRECTORS-GENERAL FOR SPORT, COUNCIL OF EUROPE EVENTS AND PROJECTS, ERASMUS+ SPORT PROJECTS, THE WORKING GROUP ON SPORT IN THE GREATER REGION, AND FRANCOPHONIE SPORTIVE

RESEARCH AND CO-OPERATION

- **SUPPORT FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN SPORT**
  ➜ Public funding, awards, partnerships with academia, sports organisations and public authorities
- **PUBLIC AUTHORITIES COLLECT AND DISSEMINATE RELEVANT SPORTS DATA**
  ➜ Sport organisations' reports, national monitoring systems, partnerships with universities; a Flemish online knowledge platform (publications, webinars, studies, podcasts, open data) and an ADEPS research page
- **PUBLIC/PRIVATE FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIPS**
  ➜ Public recognition and dissemination of best practices; the ADEPS Pro Platform connecting athletes with companies; encouragement of public–private partnerships in applications for sports infrastructure funding in Flanders

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
European Union
UNESCO
UN FORUMS
OECD
World Health Organization



Ministry responsible for Sport: no national ministry – the ministers responsible for sport of the Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities (Sport Vlaanderen, ADEPS, Ostbelgien Sport)