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Report on the implementation of the European Sports Charter in North Macedonia

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A. Background: information provided by the authorities of North Macedonia

Overview of state structures and sports organisations

Agency of Youth and Sport

The Agency of Youth and Sport is the body responsible for implementing the government sport policy in North Macedonia. In particular, the scope of work of the Sport Sector within the Agency, among others, includes:

- Monitors and processes issues related to the system and organization of sports and international collaboration in the field of sports and proposes measures for its promotion and development;
- monitors the status and situation of sports associations and sport's governing bodies;
- monitors the condition of the current staff in the sports associations and proposes measures for their harmonisation;
- implements special sports programs with talented students;
- monitors the sports activities of students and citizens;
- prepares a Program for sport development in North Macedonia;
- follows the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of sports development and undertakes measures for implementation of conventions and other international documents in the field of sports accepted by North Macedonia;
- proposes and prepares criteria and criteria for acquiring the status, rank, rights and obligations of top amateur athletes;
- proposes and prepares standards for health control of the participants in the sports and recreational activities;
- proposes and prepares criteria for financing the activity, children's sport, youth and the sports-recreational activities as well as top sport and monitors their implementation;
- performs the professional and administrative-technical work of the Sports Council;
- collects reports and more.

Nevertheless, grant funding for sport is the primary means of implementing the sport policy. The Agency of Youth and Sport has the overall responsibility for ensuring that state funding is spent in accordance with the objectives of the government sport policy.

The funds for sport program implementation by the sports federations are provided from the North Macedonia budget, donations and sponsorship of legal entities, compensations for sport determined in the Law on Gaming and through the voucher system.

The Sport Council is an advisory body within the Agency of Youth and Sport, and its members are prominent athletes, coaches and sportspeople appointed directly by the director of the Agency. The mandate of the Council members is 4 years, and it can be terminated at any time by the director of the Agency of Youth and Sport. The Sport Council's scope of work is:

- participate in preparation of the Annual Sport Program
- provides opinion on the criteria for state funding towards sport federations and adoption of acts proposed by the director and more.

The Sport Council at least once a year submits a report for its work to the director of the Agency.

ORGANISATION AND COMPETENCE OF STATE ADMINISTRATION BODIES

1. Organisation of the bodies of the state administration

Article 11

(1) The following ministries are established to perform the functions of the state administration:

1. Ministry of Defence;
2. Ministry of Internal Affairs;
3. Ministry of Justice;
4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
5. Ministry of Finance;
6. Ministry of Economy;
7. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; 8. Ministry of Health;
9. Ministry of Education and Science;
10. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
11. Ministry of Local Self-Government;
12. Ministry of Culture;
13. Ministry of Information Society and Administration; 14. Ministry of Transport and Communications and
15. Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning.

Article 12

(1) The following are established as independent bodies of state administration:

- Commission for relations with religious communities and religious groups;
- Agency of Youth and Sport;
- Agency for emigration;
- Food and Veterinary Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

Article 47

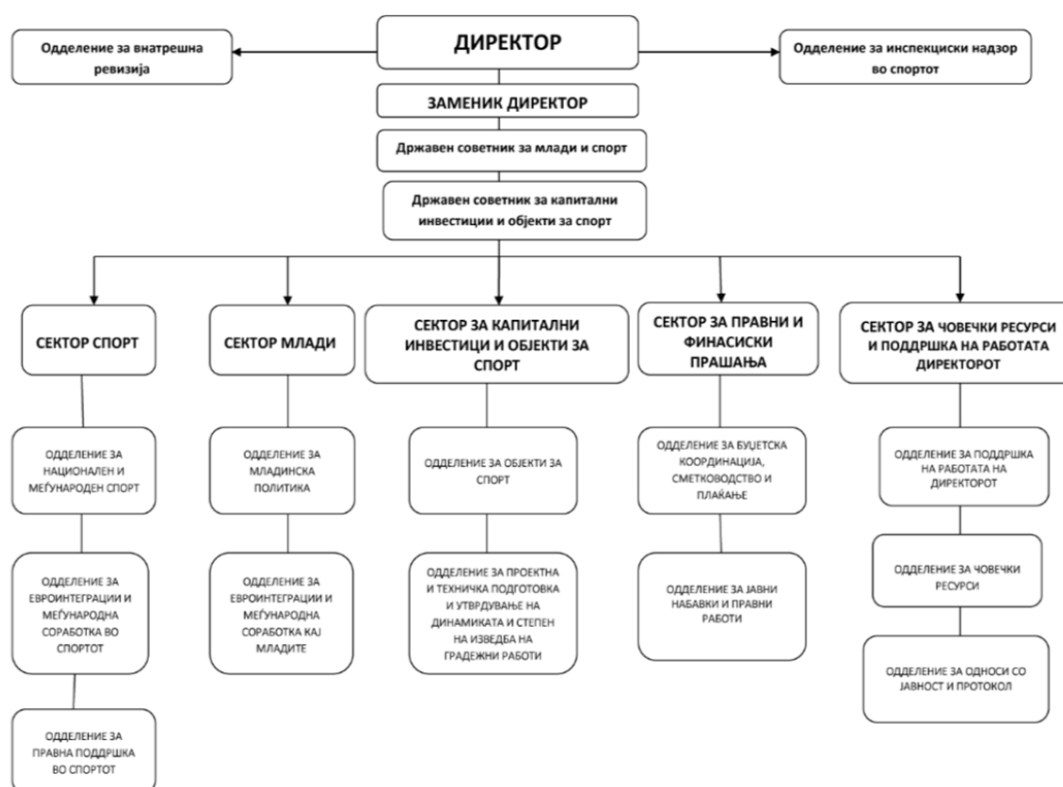
The Director of the Agency of Youth and Sport is appointed by the Government.

(1) The work of the ministry is managed by a minister.

(2) The work of the independent body of the state administration, the administrative organisation and the body in its composition, is managed by a director who is appointed and dismissed by the Government, unless otherwise determined by law.

The organisation of the Agency is as follows:

Organization and structure of the Agency for Youth and Sports



Non-governmental sports organisations

Olympic Committee of North Macedonia (OKSM)

The Olympic Committee of North Macedonia is the most prominent sports non-governmental association in which sports federations are members. The Olympic Committee

is represented by an official who is elected by the majority members of the assembly. The committee is organised in accordance with the interests of the national sport federations and in accordance with the principles of the Olympic Movement, the Olympic Charter, and the Law on Sports.

The main goals and objectives of the OKSM are:

- a) to create conditions for training and participation of top athletes and its selection for the Olympic Games, in cooperation with the National Sports Federations and to send athletes to the Olympic Games and to other types of multi-sport competitions organised by the International Olympic Committee, European Olympic Committees, International Committee of the Mediterranean Games or other multiple sports organisations;
- b) to compile, lead and organise the Olympic delegation from the Republic of North Macedonia at the multi-sport games and competitions mentioned above, in coordination with the National Sports Federations;
- c) to promote, develop and protect the Olympic movement in the Republic of North Macedonia;
- d) to ensure compliance with the Olympic Charter in the Republic of North Macedonia;
- e) to promote the basic principles of Olympism in the Republic of North Macedonia, especially in the field of sports and education, by promoting the Olympic educational programs at all educational levels, as well as to encourage institutions dedicated to Olympic education, such as the Olympic Museum and the Olympic Academy and more.

Members of the Olympic Committee of North Macedonia, under the conditions contained in this Statute, are:

National sports federations whose sports are included in the program of the Olympic Games, which are also members of international sports federations recognised by the IOC;

National sports federations for sports who are not part in the Olympic program, which are also members of an international sports federation of the respective sport, recognised by the IOC;

Elected representatives of the Athletes' Commission of the Olympic Committee of North Macedonia, elected according to the IOC rules for the Athletes' Commission, who participated in at least one Olympics, in the last three editions of the Olympic Games;

A limited number of other sports organisations or individuals who with their membership would strengthen the effectiveness of the Olympic Committee of North Macedonia or would contribute to the development of national sports, in accordance with this Statute.

The Olympic Committee counts 30 national Olympic sports federations.

National sports federations

The National sports federations are established following the principle of autonomy and self-governance. They enjoy the right to set and prioritise their own objectives and adopt their own rules and regulations.

Agency of Youth and Sport financially support the programs of the National Sports Federations for which they apply throughout the year. The rules and regulations of Macedonian sport are included in the National Sports Federation's statutes. The statutes include provision on election, voting rights, conflict of interests, financial accounting and more.

National Federations receive financial support by the Agency of Youth and Sport based on the program presented in the application form. National Federations comprise their program based on the program activities proposed by the sport club members in the respective federations.

Sport clubs

Once they are formally registered, the sport clubs and associations need to obtain the so-called license for sport to start implementing their sport activities particularly the system of competitions. This license is issued by the Agency of Youth and Sport upon receipt of relevant documentation by the sport club.

The sport clubs can only be registered as a single discipline and not multidisciplinary. Sport clubs obtain membership fees. Voluntarism in sport is under-developed and it is not often practiced.

The sport club's main income comes mostly from membership fees paid by all participants.

Main objectives and priorities of the sport sector in North Macedonia

The main objectives and priorities are set in the Annual Program of the Agency of Youth and Sport. This program is then communicated to all National Sports Federations as a base for their programs and funding application.

In the past few years, the main objectives of the Programs for sport development were focused on the participation of Macedonian teams at international competitions, support of national sports' federations, international programs for competitions, support for organising traditional international competitions and participation and preparation of Olympic candidates for the Olympic Games.

The main objectives of the Annual Program for financing of National Sports Federations and projects of the Agency of Youth and Sport to develop sport in North Macedonia are the following: support Sports Federations' operational activities, encourage participation of youth clubs at competitions, anti-doping activities, gender equality, inclusion of people with disabilities, purchase of sport equipment for the National Federations and school sport.

Physical education in schools

Physical education is a compulsory subject in the national curriculum.

The Law on Primary Education, which was passed in 2019, stipulates that from 2019 the physical education (PE) classes from first to fifth grade, will be led by a physical education teacher. Currently, the number of PE classes in elementary school is 3 per week.

Local municipalities

The role and scope of work of City of Skopje (Sport Sector)

The role of the Sector for Public Activities and the Department of Sport and Youth is to provide possibilities for the development of quality sports in the city of Skopje, to prepare and provide logistical and financial support in organising sports activities, assisting in sports events and events of importance for the city of Skopje, as well as preparing and providing condition for construction and maintenance of sports facilities in the city of Skopje.

The scope of work of the department includes the preparation of an annual programs of activities in the field of sports and youth in the city of Skopje, as well as monitoring and evaluating the implementation of activities in the past years that were part of the Program. The main objectives and priorities of the Sport Sector within the City of Skopje are to increase the participation of young citizens in sport activities through the development of school sports, gender equality in sport and in supporting the high school system of competitions. Another important objective is to develop and support recreational programs for people with disabilities and support top athletes.

To achieve these objectives, budget is allocated to local sport clubs and sport associations who implement activities such as traditional sports events and manifestations, international and city events, and activities that are of particular interest to the City of Skopje such as handball, volleyball, football, basketball, chess, athletics, cycling, archery, wrestling, swimming, badminton, bowling and other sports, as well as support recreational activities for people with disabilities.

The Covid 19 pandemic has had an impact on the municipal budget and therefore the budget for 2021 was total of 9,450,000 denars, from which 52.3% was allocated to sports clubs, while 31.5% was allocated to recreational sports activities.

Financing model of sport

State funding

The majority of the sports federations and sport clubs are financed by the government and municipal funding. Government funding for sport is regulated by law in North Macedonia. The funding of the sport sector is allocated through the budget of North Macedonia, Law on Games of Chance and the voucher system towards:

- funding for construction and renovation of sports facilities
- funding for National Sports Federations
- funding for the National Olympic Committee
- other.

In the last years, the so-called voucher system was introduced to support the sport governing bodies financially. The funds from tax exemption under the Law on Profit Tax are distributed to the users grouped in Article 2 of the Rulebook at a determined percentage of the value determined in Article 15 paragraph 12 of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Profit Tax ("Official Gazette of the Republic"). Macedonia "No. 248/2018) and Article 1 of the

Law on Amendments to the Law on Profit Tax (" Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia "No. 232/2019), as following:

- 1 group: Olympic Sports, 91%,
- 2 group: non-Olympic sports, 7%,
- 3 group: Poly-structural sports, 1%,
- 4 group: Newly formed national sports federations, 1%.

Additionally, the Agency of Youth and Sport allocates state prizes for top athletes as well as for potential young athlete aged 20 yr. old. The coaches of the top-level athletes are remunerated by 30 % of the amount paid to the athletes.

Municipal funding

Municipalities provide funding to local sport clubs and associations as well as for construction and renovation of sports facilities mostly for self-organised sport activities. Some of the municipalities allocate a great amount of their budget to professional clubs-private entity to support their programs, as they are co-founders of the same entity. The municipality at least once a year has an open call and accepts application from local sport clubs and associations.

Executive Summary

In order to optimise the governance and development of sports in North Macedonia, a set of targeted recommendations is proposed. First and foremost, the national Sports Law should undergo a revision; a comprehensive, bottom-up strategy for the next 3-10 years should be developed; and the Council of Europe Conventions related to sports manipulation, safety, and anti-doping (Additional Protocol) should be ratified.

To underscore the commitment to human rights and equality, a human rights/values-based approach should be integrated into the new sports law, linking public funding to criteria promoting equality and human rights. Emphasis should be placed on promoting ethics and child safeguarding, ensuring good governance principles are embedded in the law.

Legal frameworks for volunteering should be improved, providing incentives and protections, including criminal checks for athlete support staff. Equal access to sport, supporting youth development, and encouraging private investments for athlete development should be prioritised.

Cross-sectoral collaboration is essential, involving the establishment of working groups for public-private partnerships and a review of financing systems to enhance transparency. Sustainability initiatives, such as reducing the carbon footprint and economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable sport policies, are recommended. Effective management of sports facilities requiring coordinated planning, maintenance funding, and accessibility for all is encouraged.

Continuous monitoring of the implementation of the values of the European Sports Charter and regular updates on these recommendations will further contribute to the success of these recommendations, fostering a holistic, inclusive, and ethically sound approach to sports governance and development in North Macedonia.

B. Report of the implementation team on the European Sports Charter

Introduction

On 30 September 2022, at the request of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of North Macedonia, the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) organised a visit to Skopje to accompany the government and competent authorities in implementing the values of the European Sports Charter within their sports law, their organisation and the practice of sport in North Macedonia. This visit was a follow up to the previous virtual visit in November 2021 after which preliminary findings were shared.

The programme of the implementation exercise was arranged and coordinated with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The implementation team was provided with relevant

information and documentation. Access to both information and stakeholders was provided upon request of the implementation team.

The implementation team was able to obtain insight into most relevant aspects of North Macedonian sport and participated in direct talks with key persons involved in sport at different levels (national and local). The team had the opportunity to meet high-ranking officials from public authorities of different sectors, the sports movement, as well as other experts and stakeholders involved in sport. The discussions were conducted in the spirit of openness and transparency.

Key findings

Sport has an important standing in North Macedonian society. Sport is even referred to in the North Macedonian constitution, particularly in Article 47: *“The Republic stimulates and assists technical education and sport.”*

Legal framework

The Sports Law, which entered into force in 2005 and which has undergone 22 amendments since, provides the legal framework for public authorities to develop sport in North Macedonia.

The act is very comprehensive (consisting of 86 articles) and partially addresses some principles and values enshrined in the European Sports Charter (ESC).

Values enshrined in the ESC such as equality, access for all to sport, grassroots sports, sustainability, good governance, sport ethics, autonomy of sport organisations or volunteering are not explicitly referred to in the current law on sport.

The sports law is considered by some of the stakeholders as outdated and even dysfunctional. Due to the transversal nature of sport, horizontal co-ordination and co-operation among public authorities and other non-public sport stakeholders is crucial to develop sport further. Furthermore, public policymakers could consider delegating certain tasks to sports organisations for the provision of sport in North Macedonia.

A new sports law is being drafted, which could notably allow to further emphasise the values of the ESC, to be more actionable and provide actual solutions to the existing issues around sports legislation in North Macedonia. This new law will take inspiration from the multilateral approach of some existing sports law in other jurisdictions.

Policy framework

There is currently no national strategy for the development of sport. *Sport is covered as a thematic area within the framework of the National Youth Strategy 2016-2025.*¹

Sport is under the competency of the Ministry of Education and no dedicated Ministry exists.

The Agency for Youth and Sport (AYS) has the main role at national level for the development of sport and sport activities in North Macedonia. It promotes sport on the basis of the Sports Law and oversees the implementation of the Sports Law of North Macedonia.

The North Macedonian sport system – as in many other European countries – seems to be facing a change of paradigm – moving away from administrating sport to developing a more service-oriented approach in the provision of sport.

To ensure sustainable growth in sport, an up-to-date sports law and a national sport strategy identifying goals, vision, mission and an action plan for sport stakeholders are considered to be useful tools for the promotion of sport.²

Article 1 - Aim of the Charter

The aim of this Charter is to guide governments in the design and implementation of legal and policy frameworks for sport which highlight its multiple individual and social benefits (in particular for health, inclusion and education) and abide by and promote the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as enshrined in the Council of Europe's applicable standards. To achieve this aim, governments should take the steps necessary to:

1. *enable every individual to participate in sport and notably ensure that:*
 - a. *all young people receive physical education instruction at educational institutions and have access to opportunities to develop physical literacy, physical fitness and acquire fundamental movement skills;*
 - b. *everyone has the opportunity to take part in sport in a safe, secure and healthy environment;*
 - c. *the development of sport is inclusive, evaluated and monitored on a regular basis; and*
 - d. *everyone has the opportunity to improve their standard of performance in sport beyond its practice for recreational purpose and reach levels of personal achievement and/or levels of excellence in an ethical, fair and responsible way;*

¹ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/fr/node/2393>

² The implementation team found references to a "Sport Programme" in article 23 of the Sports Law but was not communicated any such programme.

2. *protect and develop values-based sport, which is a precondition for maximising the individual and social benefits of sport, and notably ensure that:*

a. *the human rights of those involved in or exposed to sport-related activities are protected;*

b. *sporting activities contribute to strengthening ethical conduct and behaviour among those involved in sport;*

c. *the integrity of sports organisations, sports competitions and those involved in or exposed to sport-related activities is safeguarded;*

d. *sports activities are in line with the principles of sustainable development.*

Article 23 of the Sports Law stipulates the adoption of a Programme for development of sports for a period of five years. The implementation team did not have access to this document.

An annual programme adopted by the Sports Council, an advisory body within the Agency of Youth and Sport, defines the main objectives and priorities in the field of sport. This programme is made available to the National Sports Federations on which they base their programmes and funding applications.

This yearly practice should be complemented by a more strategic (multi-annual) approach and a long-term programme drafted.

It would seem that the level of participation in sport is decreasing, which reinforces the importance of defining a clear strategy and vision based on values, supported by a functional regulatory and policy framework defining benchmarks and strategic long-term goals (together with data collection for evidence-based policy making).

Even though the sport policies seem to deliver on certain values and principles set forth in the ESC, a more holistic and strategic approach could be developed to promote a values-based sport development approach in North Macedonia, and notably commit to promoting human rights, integrity, good governance, equality and sport for all.

Recommendations:

1.1 In the process of revising the national Sports Law, keep it focused and simple for success. Develop a streamlined regulatory framework for sport by avoiding over-regulation and cutting red tape. Ensure an intergovernmental coordination to take into consideration related aspects in the areas of health/transport/mobility/IT technologies.

1.2 In the process of drafting a national sport strategy/policy (for a 3-10 years term) consider a bottom-up approach and the inclusion of a broad range of relevant stakeholders. Give a more important role to sport for all, and pay special attention to

children, young people, women, people with disabilities and senior citizens.

1.3 Take new trends such as the growing importance of self-organised sport into account when drafting/implementing the national sport strategy/ policy.

1.4 While revising the national Sports Law and drafting a national sport strategy/policy, consider a principle and values-based sport approach as recommended by the ESC. Explicit reference to the ESC in the relevant text may reinforce the impact of the provisions as clearly connecting national texts to this inspirational instrument.

1.5 Pay particular attention to the integrity of the system and the organisations and promote anti-corruptive practices in sport.

Article 2 – Definition of “sport” and scope of the Charter

1. *For the purpose of this Charter, “sport” means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, are aimed at maintaining or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.*

2. *This Charter highlights the common features of a framework for European sport and its organisation, understood by the sports movement as the European sport model, and provides general guidance to the Council of Europe’s member States to refine existing legislation or other policies and to develop a comprehensive framework for sport. It has been specified and complemented by legally binding standards addressing critical issues in the field of sport, such as:*

a. *the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches (ETS No. 120);*

b. *the Anti-Doping Convention (ETS No. 135);*

c. *the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215); and*

d. *the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218).*

3. *The implementation of some of the provisions of this Charter may be entrusted to governmental or non-governmental sports authorities or sports organisations.*

North Macedonia defines sport in a similar way to that of the ESC³ pursuing a broad approach on sport covering both top sport and sport for all, as well as organised and casual participation.

³ National Sports Law, Article 2: “A sport, with regards to this law, is the activity that includes all forms of sports activities of athletes of all ages, as well as sports and recreational activities of the citizens.”

The emerging trend of self-organised or casual sport can be assumed as being recognised and would merit greater technical/operational awareness in the years to come, not only considering it in the law strategically but also addressing it at operational level.

The national Sports Law also refers to issues tackled by the Anti-Doping convention, to which North Macedonia is a Party since 1994.

No references to other sport conventions are made in the Sports Law, however North Macedonia recently signed the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218) and the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215).

Recommendations:

- 2.1 Ensure that self-organised or casual sport are fully taken into consideration in the related sport policies and that greater awareness at operational level is gained.
- 2.2 North Macedonia is invited to ratify the Council of Europe Conventions on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions and on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events
- 2.3 North Macedonia is invited to ratify the Additional Protocol to the Anti-Doping Convention (ETS No. 188)
- 2.4 North Macedonia is invited to participate actively in the Committees established by each of the three sport related Conventions of the Council of Europe with a view to benefitting from greater international cooperation and capacity-building activities implemented by the respective instances.

Article 3 – Public authorities

1. *The role of the public authorities is primarily complementary to the action of the sports movement and corporate sector. Public authorities are responsible for setting framework conditions and, where appropriate, legal requirements which are necessary for the development of sport. In the development and administration of sports policies, public authorities should pursue the aims of this Charter and demonstrate that they place a high priority on respecting the rule of law and the principles of good governance.*

2. *Horizontal co-ordination should be ensured between the policies and actions of all the public authorities concerned with sport, for example authorities in charge of sport, education, health, social services, urban and regional planning, culture, justice, monitoring of human rights and child protection, law enforcement, betting regulation, environment and development. Vertical co-ordination should be ensured between national authorities and the regional and local authorities, which play a key role in the provision of sports activities at grassroots level.*

The central government is responsible for the youth and sport policy. The Agency of Youth and Sport (AYS) is the public body within the Ministry of Justice and currently has a staff of 50 employees. It is an independent body within the framework of the Government and is accountable to the government as an entity, not to the Prime Minister. It works independently and exercises its legal powers in accordance with the Law on Sports.

The AYS primarily interacts with national sport federations and directly with sport clubs. One important task of the AYS is to distribute public funding based on a set of specific criteria.

The public authorities of North Macedonia in general and the AYS in particular seem to work well together with the sport movement.

The system of funding of sports federations and clubs needs to be enhanced and provide greater transparency in the attribution rules. There are currently two cases before the State Commission in sport for anti-corruption (one closed and one reopened). The Commission found that the lack of accountability and transparency in the allocation and use of the funding were at the source of this corruption. It made a strong recommendation that the new sports law provides for more transparency in the funding allocation and that the legal procedures be effectively enforced. In addition, the Ministry of Finance has identified the need to simplify the application process for funding in order to make it more accessible to all.

The Ministry of Defence has emphasised the importance of sport in the military as it fosters an environment of peace and friendship within the forces. They often look to sport to foster relations between civilians and military such as the World Military Champion marathon set for 2024 in Skopje.

The Deputy Prime Minister's office has organised a series of events on corruption in sport. One was targeted specifically at children, with whom was had an open and honest debate. The children were clear in their perception that the problem in sport was the "system". Parents were also a key target group where their behaviour has not always been reputable and where they need to understand that talent cannot be bought.

Finally, in respect of local authorities, their responsibilities lie primarily in the grassroots work, namely in the development of school sport and recreational activities for citizens, organisation of sports events, management and maintenance of sport facilities and recreational zones, and importantly the provision of funding for sport at local level.

The OSCE through its offices in North Macedonia appears to work closely with the Ministry in dealing with violence of fans and spectators, including in their inter-ethnic dimension, as they are significant in North Macedonia and on the rise. This important work provides an element of accountability and continuity that is much needed.

Recommendations:

- 3.1 Set up horizontal (cross-sectoral), theme-based working groups including relevant public and non-public sport stakeholders.
- 3.2 Review the financing system in order to provide for greater transparency and

accountability. Consider creating an open monitoring system with financial audit for the organisations receiving government grants.

3.3 Pay attention to the sustainability and effectiveness of the measures as well as good governance of the organisations.

Article 4 – The sports movement

1. *The sports movement, which comprises non-governmental, non-profit sports organisations, is the main partner of public authorities for the implementation of sports policies. Its organisations are bound by the requirements and limits imposed on them by legislation in accordance with international standards.*

2. *The development of the voluntary ethos and movement in sport should be further encouraged, particularly through support for the work of voluntary sports organisations. To this end, public authorities and the sports movement should maintain framework conditions that favour the active involvement of volunteers in sport.*

3. *Sports movement organisations fully enjoy the freedom of association enshrined in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. They enjoy autonomous decision-making processes and should choose their leaders democratically in accordance with good governance principles. Both governments and sports organisations should recognise the need for mutual respect for their decisions.*

4. *Sports movement organisations earning revenue from the sports entertainment market should be committed to financial solidarity between high-level sport and grassroots sport, among different sports and across all regions of the world.*

Organised sport in North Macedonia is structured in a way similar to that of many other European countries, with single-sports federations and national sport confederations such as the National Olympic Committee (NOC).

The implementation team was informed that it is rather easy to find a sport club in North Macedonia. A step-by-step guide provides useful information. However, the licensing system entitling federations to public funding is very selective.

The Sports Law defines different types of sports organisations which have to fulfil certain criteria to be eligible for funding.

The legal framework on the categorisation of sport organisations and their entitlement to public funding could be organised in a more straight-forward, transparent way.

The AYS does not provide specific programmes promoting good governance in sport, nor does it tie the application of good governance criteria to the distribution of public funding. However, the NOC runs a sport management/good governance course which is supported by

the IOC. 12-20 students from different sports have already received a diploma from the IOC. While the NOC is satisfied with the outcome of the programme and other sport organisations recommended this course as being useful, greater benefits could be achieved by potentially opening the course to the public and the sport sector.

Officials of local sport clubs and in many federations as well as the vast majority of coaches are volunteers. Recently, some progress was made with the establishment of a volunteer certificate attracting particularly young volunteers. However, due to the lack of training or incentives offered to potential volunteers and due to the voluntary ethos not being a part of the culture, it is very difficult to hire volunteers. Typically, organisations will hire paid staff who will return year after year and have been trained for the job. It is important to note that there does not seem to be any criminal checks or regulations regarding vetting procedures around the few volunteers who do help out at clubs.

Recommendations:

- 4.1 Simplify the categorisation of sport organisations and make it more transparent and accessible.
- 4.2 Design strategies to make volunteering more attractive and to increase the number of volunteers by improving/regulating the legal framework for volunteering, creating incentives/benefits, which may include, tax reliefs, internship programmes for students in exchange for academic credits, pension top-ups, time off work etc.
- 4.3 Promote the volunteering culture by giving public recognition for voluntary work and for the skills and experiences gained through volunteering, e.g. by awarding a prize.
- 4.4 Ensure that the necessary protections are in place for all athletes, particularly children, by establishing vetting procedures and criminal checks for coach and support staff.

Article 5 – Corporate and professional sectors

1. *The corporate and professional sectors play an important role in the development of sport. Dialogue and co-operation should be undertaken with representatives of companies and occupational categories involved in sport in sectors such as the organisation of activities, events or competitions; the manufacturing of sports goods; sports nutrition; construction of facilities; service provision; and the media.*

2. *When engaging with representatives of these sectors, governments should:*

- a. *acknowledge them as drivers of innovation that can serve the development of sport;*
- b. *make sure that they abide by the relevant regulations, for example on economic and social rights, safety, qualifications, anti-discrimination, sports integrity, corporate governance and anti-corruption;*
- c. *promote endorsement of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and business;*

d. encourage them to co-operate with the sports movement and encourage their participation in solidarity schemes when they benefit from activities conducted and financed by the sports movement.

It is essential to recall the role played by the corporate and professional sector in the development of sport, and the importance for the public authorities of establishing a constructive dialogue and cooperation with them, notably to ensure that an integrated approach to safety, security and services at major sport events be implemented, including in respect of accessibility to the sport infrastructures, or that sustainability and environmental requirements are duly taken into consideration.

The corporate and professional sector are also instrumental in contributing to the promotion of a values-based sport, raising awareness through campaigns and contributing financially to solidarity schemes when they benefit from activities conducted and financed by the sports movement.

Recommendations:

5.1 Provide for consultation and exchange opportunities on a regular basis with the representatives of corporate and professional sector.

Article 6 – Human rights

1. All stakeholders shall respect and protect internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms and they should observe the general framework established for their implementation in business and other activities.

2. The human rights due diligence approach in sport requires respect for the human rights of those involved in or exposed to sport-related activities and should therefore:

a. ensure that the human rights of athletes and everyone involved in sport are respected, protected and promoted;

b. fight arbitrariness and other abuses in sport so as to ensure full respect for the rule of law in sports activities, including access to remedies, justice and a fair trial in line with the applicable human rights standards;

c. work towards gender equality in and through sport, in particular by implementing the strategy of gender mainstreaming in sport;

d. apply a policy of zero tolerance for violence and all forms of discrimination, paying particular attention to individuals and groups in a situation of vulnerability, such as children, migrants and persons with disabilities;

e. work towards the inclusion of a clear commitment to human rights in the respective policy and/or regulatory frameworks;

f. uphold human rights in the context of the organisation of sports events and introduce human rights considerations and objectives into the whole life cycle of major sporting events, starting with the bidding process and including planning for a lasting positive legacy;

g. further invest in the effective implementation of human rights standards in and through sport, in particular by developing governmental/non-governmental partnerships and using multistakeholder platforms to identify and promote measures to prevent and respond to human rights violations in sport.

The sports law of North Macedonia is not very specific in promoting a human rights approach in sport and a values-based sport model. Key aspects in promoting a values-based sport approach such as good governance, integrity of organisations and people, equality and fundamental freedoms are not referred to.

Upholding human rights is a legal obligation and is vital to maintain the attractivity and legitimacy of what remains one of the most popular activities for people, and a powerful vehicle of values.

Gender equality focus

Some progress was made in promoting gender equality in sport, in raising the awareness among stakeholders on their respective roles, with special public funding made available for certain gender equality activities/projects. For instance, workshops on this topic were organised receiving public support with the aim of putting more women in management positions.

However, gender inequality in sport still prevails – e.g., regarding the pay for athletes in football. Men earn considerably more. The media coverage of female sport, particularly on female football, is low.

There is a significantly lower participation rate of women in sport compared to men. While various attempts have been made to increase the participation of women and girls in sport, such as the Ministry of Labour and Equality writing directly to Clubs to encourage this practice, there has been little improvement according to a 2021 report. It should be noted however that there was one positive change, with an increase in girls' participation in "male sports" such as wrestling.

It would seem from the information provided that women do not benefit equally from the voucher system where male sports are given priority. Typically, female sports are reported to receive less than half of the funding provided to men's clubs. Women's football is not funded. They are further discriminated against by the allocation of time slots in gyms and sports facilities, where women tend to obtain the unpopular times, further alienating women from practicing sport.

In addition, the AYS is reported to have limited capacity for gender equality work and requires capacity development.

Recommendations:

- 6.1 Include in the new sports law a human rights/values-based sport approach inspired by the ESC.
- 6.2 Base at least some parts of public funding on the fulfilment of certain criteria promoting human rights, integrity in sport, safe sporting environment and equality of sport boards.
- 6.3 Ensure equal allocation of funding between women's and men's sports and teams.
- 6.4 Ensure that facilities and time slots are fairly distributed between female and male sports and ensure that time slots are allocated exclusively to the under-represented.
- 6.5 Monitor the development of gender equality and non-discrimination in sport regularly and consider (launching) special policy and financial measures when appropriate

Article 7 – Education in values through sports ethics

1. *“Sports ethics” is a positive concept that guides human behaviour. It is defined as a way of thinking and not just a way of acting. It underpins sports integrity, equality, honesty, excellence, commitment, courage, team spirit, respect for rules and laws, respect for the environment, respect for self and others and a spirit of community, tolerance and solidarity. It also includes respect for human rights and sustainability.*
2. *Sports ethics shall be promoted in all activities in sport, via relevant policies and programmes. Appropriate steps shall be taken to raise awareness of sports ethics and to provide continued learning opportunities in this sphere.*
3. *Being educated about how to choose the ethical course of action inside and outside sport is an integral part of the competences that should be acquired through sport. Practising values-based sport can empower people and teach fairness, teamwork, equality, discipline, inclusion, respect and integrity.*

Education in sport ethics is one important element of a values-based sport approach as recommended in the ESC. Sports coaching and physical education teaching go beyond the acquisition of motor skills and also convey values such as respect, fairness, integrity, responsibility, respect, equity and equality, inclusion, diversity, excellence, and discipline. Based on the discussion with the North Macedonian stakeholders and on the analysis of the national sports law, there seems to be a strong emphasis on excellence/delivering sports results. The pedagogical functions of sport e.g., to promote important values in sport are rather left untapped. In addition, there needs to be a focus on teaching parents and civil society in general about sports ethics. There is a worrying amount of bullying taking place at matches, mostly by parents and coaches, directed at referees. Parents need to step up and be respectful as the youngest players are witnessing this behaviour and emulating it early on.

Recommendations:

- 7.1 Raise awareness on sport ethics of persons involved in sport at an early stage.
- 7.2 Promote sport ethics in all spheres of activities in sport via relevant policies and programmes.
- 7.3 Draft and implement a code of sport ethics supporting persons involved in sport in following ethical standards.
- 7.4 Provide continued learning opportunities for athletes, parents, coaches and other persons involved in sport to develop values-based sport practices.

Article 8 – Integrity

1. *“Sport integrity” encompasses the components of personal, competitive and organisational integrity. Threats to sports integrity include criminal offences such as corruption, fraud and coercion, but also violations of statutory and disciplinary regulations and unethical behaviour. The pursuit of sport integrity should thus commit all stakeholders and:*

a. protect all people, particularly the young, from violence, harassment and abuse, ensure the safety and security of individuals and foster respect for and protection of internationally recognised human rights, including social rights;

b. support fair play, which is much more than playing within the rules. Fair play incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and a sense of fellowship. It includes issues concerned with cheating, the use of unfair strategies while respecting the rules, manipulation of sports competitions and doping;

c. inspire a governance of sport that is compliant with the principles of transparency, integrity, democracy, development and solidarity, which should be secured by checks and balances and control mechanisms.

2. *Sport integrity policies should rely on multistakeholder initiatives; encourage and cooperate with whistle-blowers and free media; pay attention to compliance with human rights; invest in education, prevention and awareness raising; be monitored, including through the use of remedies; and use gender and youth mainstreaming.*

The concept of integrity in sport is very broad. The Council of Europe’s Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport co-ordinated the development of guidelines on integrity in sport, within the framework of the Kazan Action Plan (2018) and formulated basic guidelines for public authorities:

- (1) Preserving the rights, safety and security of athletes, spectators, workers and other groups involved;
- (2) Preventing and addressing harassment and abuse in sport;
- (3) Fostering good governance of sport organisations;
- (4) Strengthening measures against the manipulation of sports competition; and
- (5) Ensuring an adequate anti-doping policy framework, implementation and effective compliance measures.

There continues to be the risk for organised sport to lose its identity as a movement/ importance for society when the integrity of sport is not respected. In this context, undesirable effects threatening the integrity of sport have been observed in general e.g., doping, corruption and match manipulation, abuse and harassment in sport etc. This can have a huge impact on low level participation for large groups of society and trigger general disinterest of the people.

Safeguarding children in sport is considered an important and topical issue for the further development of sport. Education is considered key to promoting safe and empowering sports environments. Some sports organisations provide training sessions for coaches each year to train them on preventing sexual abuse and harassment in sport. In promoting safe and healthy sport environments and preventing abuse and harassment in sport, national federations closely work together with international federations which have specific rules and guidance. The AYS does not have any official policy advising sport organisations in this regard.

In addition, reporting mechanisms are crucial for the identification, management and resolution of abuse cases in sport. Currently, sport federations do not have bodies responsible for reporting cases to the police. It is recommended to implement measures enabling the reporting of abuse cases within sport clubs and federations, such as whistleblowing system or safeguarding officer roles, and to establish co-operation with law enforcement to forward the cases of abuse to relevant authorities.

A continuous dialogue has been established by the Deputy Prime Minister's office in order for youth to be actively involved and contribute to the process of creating an efficient society. Among many initiatives, a panel discussion on the topic of "What integrity means for a young person" took place with over 240 students and 180 educational staff. In addition, 3 youth camps and 6 anti-corruption awareness raising workshops were held. Finally, the campaign *#Depends on me and you* was launched in order to strengthen integrity and anti-corruption policies aimed at young people in order to ultimately unite young people from countries of the Western Balkans on these crucial topics.

Recommendations:

- 8.1 Set up good governance principles such as transparency, integrity, democracy, development, control and solidarity, include them in the law and ensure their implementation.
- 8.2 Set up a child safeguarding policy providing guidance for sport organisations how to promote safe and healthy sport environments and preventing abuse and harassment in

sport.

8.3 Provide training sessions for staff/ volunteers on safe sport issues.

8.4 Implement the Start to Talk campaign to promote safe and empowering sport environments.

8.5 Develop reporting mechanisms within sport federations/clubs and ensure co-operation with law enforcement and other relevant authorities.

Article 9 – Sustainability

1. *The principle of sustainability in sport requires all activities to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, in particular:*

a. *when planning, implementing and evaluating their activities, organisers of sports activities and events should pay due consideration to sustainability, be it economic, social or environmental;*

b. *whereas the growing consumption of sporting goods can generate a positive impact on the global economy, the industry should take responsibility for developing and integrating practices that are satisfactory in social terms and are environmentally friendly;*

c. *indoor and outdoor activities should be carried out responsibly, in other words the precautionary principle (resource conservation and risk prevention) should be implemented. Owners of sports infrastructure have to act proactively to identify the effects and consequences of their facilities, avoid potential damage to nature and, where necessary, take counter- and protective measures against such risks;*

d. *the organisation of major sports events should ensure a sustainable legacy for the hosting communities with regard to their economic, social and environmental impact, in particular to balance the financial cost of the infrastructure with its post-event use and the effect on participation in sport.*

2. *All stakeholders should take responsibility to reduce their carbon footprint and pursue commitments and partnerships for climate action in recognition of the increasingly negative impact of climate change on society and on sport.*

Sustainability has become a central focus of action in sport. It is often addressed in the context of major sporting events and their legacy. Event organisers and facility designers need to emphasise post-event reuse of facilities and sustainable energy supply.

There is a growing movement which engages in green, resource-friendly sports. Apart from being environmentally friendly, these sports are usually easier to access for groups who are disadvantaged such as children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Governmental and

non-governmental sport movements need to analyse how these trends can be supported and promoted.

One example of an environmentally conscious initiative was the Wizzair Skopje Marathon, which attracted over 8500 participants. The marathon organisers provided a digital starter pack, collected plastic bottles for recycling and prohibited the use of paper during the event.

Recommendations:

9.1 Ensure that all sport stakeholders take responsibility to reduce their carbon footprint.

9.2 Set up policies demanding that all sport activities and events be economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable.

9.3 Set up working groups and establish partnerships to share good practices and know-how to properly address sustainability in sport.

Article 10 – The right to sport

1. *Access to sport for all is considered to be a fundamental right. All human beings have an inalienable right of access to sport in a safe environment, both inside and outside school settings, which is essential for their personal development and instrumental in the exercise of the rights to health, education, culture and participation in the life of the community.*

2. *No discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, language, religion, gender or sexual orientation, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status, shall be permitted in the access to sports facilities or to sports activities.*

3. *To safeguard and promote this right, it is necessary to:*

a. *ensure that access to the development of physical, intellectual and ethical competences through physical education and sport is guaranteed, both within the educational system and in other aspects of social life;*

b. *make sure that everyone has ample opportunities to benefit from physical education and practise sport, develop physical literacy and physical fitness, acquire fundamental movement skills and attain a level of achievement in sport which corresponds to their abilities;*

c. *make sure that specific opportunities are available for young people, including children of pre-school age, for older people and for people with disabilities to enjoy education and sports programmes suited to their requirements;*

- d. ensure that all members of a local community have opportunities to take part in sport and that, where necessary, additional measures are taken aimed at enabling disadvantaged individuals or groups and people with disabilities to make effective use of such opportunities;*
- e. guarantee that local sports clubs have a suitable legal status and framework conditions to offer affordable access to sport for all.*

In addition to the ESC, the fourth fundamental principle of Olympism states that “The practice of sport is a human right” (Olympic Charter, 2020, p.11) and that every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind, and in line with the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding, friendship, solidarity, and fair play. Although the school setting, which is specifically mentioned in article 10 (1) of the ESC is one of the main target venues for sport activities and physical activity programmes, the right to sport goes beyond the school setting and requires further sports facilities and sports activities, for example organised and delivered by local sport clubs. Public authorities have to ensure that facilities are also available for self-organised sport groups. Local sport clubs need to ensure affordability for activities for all through suitable framework conditions.

Considerable progress was made to promote the health-enhancing role of physical activity in North Macedonia, as it increased the amount of time dedicated to physical education in schools. As part of this, the country has implemented an innovative approach where physical education teachers work in tandem with the teachers of other classes to provide opportunities for physical activity throughout the school day. A few other examples include the fact that physical activity can be prescribed by a doctor, or a programme entitled “Active Cities” promoting physical activity.

To ensure the right to sport for all, the participation in sport/ sport activity of the populations needs to be monitored. In case the monitoring system identifies inequalities, they have to be addressed and measures taken to counteract these inequalities.

Although there are some funding schemes in place supporting specialised projects to promote sport among disadvantaged groups/minorities, these activities are very limited. Despite this lack of involvement of the public sector, some NGOs are active in this area promoting the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in sport.

Recommendations:

- 10.1 Develop and/or update a legal framework that guarantees local sport clubs and other relevant sport stakeholders have suitable framework conditions to offer access to sport for all.
- 10.2 Work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that all members of society have equal access to sport. Notably support clubs and federations to provide a wide range of sports activities, varying in the level of performance, pricing, physical ability, age groups, time slots etc., to support the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in sport.
- 10.3 Develop or update policies which ensure access to safe sport in any school setting as well as outside of any school setting.
- 10.4 Link funding to gender equality and sport for all.

Article 11 – Building the foundations for the practice of sport

1. *All appropriate steps should be taken to develop physical literacy and physical fitness among young people, enabling them to acquire fundamental movement skills and to encourage them to practise sport, notably by:*
 - a. *ensuring that all students have access to sports, recreation and physical education programmes and facilities and that appropriate time slots are set aside for these activities;*
 - b. *ensuring the training of qualified teachers in this area in all schools;*
 - c. *ensuring that appropriate opportunities exist for continuing the practice of sport after compulsory education;*
 - d. *encouraging the development of appropriate links between schools or other educational institutions, school sports clubs and local sports clubs;*
 - e. *facilitating and developing the use of sports facilities by schools, local sports clubs and the local community;*
 - f. *encouraging an environment in which parents, teachers, coaches and leaders motivate young people to take regular physical exercise;*
 - g. *providing education in sports ethics for pupils from primary school onwards.*

The earlier children are encouraged to be physically active; the likelier healthy and active lifestyles will be developed throughout their lifespans. The provision of sport at a very early stage – from kindergarten onwards – plays therefore a very crucial role in promoting physical literacy and active and healthy lifestyles. Physical literacy goes beyond mastering fundamental movement skills but implies knowledge and understanding for the benefits of a physically literate body and an active lifestyle. Physical literacy, built and fostered in childhood, emphasises the need to build a solid foundation of sport practice during this phase. Building the foundation also means that sport should be used to instil in children core values, such as respect, equality and inclusion etc.

A recommended daily level of physical activity across population (of circa 30 minutes) could be achieved by reforming the sport system and revising the sport law, raising awareness on the benefits of sport.

The tandem teaching programme established by the Ministry of Education in primary schools, where both a physical education and class teacher share the classroom with young children to incorporate more physical movement in their everyday school routine is once again highlighted as a best practice.

Recommendations:

- 11.1 Establish appropriate steps to develop physical literacy and fitness among young people, particularly in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools.
- 11.2 Support school sport to provide extracurricular opportunities for sport.
- 11.3 Provide guidelines for the joint use of sport facilities in communities/ municipalities.
- 11.4 Ensure that physical education lessons and sports training are based on sport ethical foundations by employing appropriately qualified teaches/ coaches.

Article 12 – Developing participation

1. *The practice of sport, whether for the purpose of leisure and recreation, health promotion or improving performance, shall be promoted across the whole population through the provision of appropriate facilities and programmes of all kinds and of access to qualified coaches, instructors and staff, whether volunteers or professionals.*

2. *Encouraging the provision of opportunities to participate in sport at workplaces shall be regarded as an integral part of a balanced sports*

Appropriate sport infrastructure goes beyond solely offering space for practicing. Sport programmes should be planned and delivered in a sustainable and inclusive manner. It seems to be commendable to integrate sport in other areas of society and policies as well such as work or spatial planning.

The implementation team noted that public authorities in North Macedonia provide physical and financial infrastructure for sport. The provision of sport is ensured by sport organisations operating on the territory of North Macedonia. Know-how on the emerging trend of self-organised sport is nascent but not yet impacting policy- and decision-making.

Recommendations:

- 12.1 Promote the practice of sport in diverse populations and communities.
- 12.2 Ensure sport facilities and programmes supply the demand for sport participation.
- 12.3 Develop strategies to promote sport (physical activity) in other areas of society and policies e.g., sport at work.

sArticle 13 – Improving performance

1. *The practice of sport at higher levels shall be supported and encouraged in appropriate and specific ways. The support shall cover such areas as talent identification and counselling, the provision of suitable facilities, developing care and support for athletes using sports medicine and sports science in line with sports ethical standards, encouraging scientific coaching and providing training for coaches and others with leadership functions and helping clubs to provide appropriate structures and competitive outlets.*

The implementation team noted that the national law on sport as well as the national public funding strategy focus on the promotion of performance sport. Schools and sport clubs are the main sources for identifying talent.

Appropriate facilities, sports medicine, scientific coaching and sport leadership development, as well as greater financial commitment, are needed to produce home-grown talents successfully and effectively.

Recommendations:

13.1 Provide appropriate support structures such as sports medicines, schools etc to promote home-grown talents.

13.2 Provide - and encourage private stakeholders to provide - greater financial investments in the programmes related to talent identification and athlete development in both Olympic and Paralympic sport.

Article 14 – Supporting top-level and professional sport

1. *Methods of providing appropriate direct or indirect support for athletes who demonstrate exceptional sporting qualities shall be devised in order to give them opportunities to fully develop their sporting and human abilities, while ensuring full respect for their individual personality and physical and moral integrity. Such support should include aspects relating to the identification of talent, to the dual careers of athletes, to balanced education while in training institutes, and to a smooth integration into society through the development of career prospects during and after involvement in high-level sport.*

2. *The organisation and management of professionally organised sport, including by the sports entertainment industry, shall be conducted through competent and well-governed bodies, supportive of appropriate social dialogue with athletes' representatives and of the*

regulatory role of the relevant international governing bodies as regards ensuring harmonised rules of the game, safeguarding the integrity of sport and co-ordinating competition calendars. People engaging professionally in sport should have appropriate social status, ethical safeguards against all forms of exploitation and the enjoyment of economic and social rights.

3. The organisation of top-level and professional sports competitions should be in compliance with the principle of openness in sporting competitions, giving priority to sporting merit. Competition organisers should work to reconcile the needs and interests of individual/local team competitions and those of national teams.

Athletes' support services in the field of health, sport, education, career is crucial to promoting the holistic development and well-being of young athletes.

There were contradictory statements on the provision of economic and social rights to athletes, with some reports indicating no guarantee of a minimum wage of 300 euros nor pension, while others suggest 2-4 years of salary depending on the level of performance (national/world-class respectively) and pension secured.

Recommendations:

- 14.1 Design and implement policies to support the holistic development of athletes such as the Dual Careers approach.
- 14.2 Ensure that athletes' economic and social rights, such as minimum salary, social security, pensions and insurance, are exercised and respected.

Article 15 – Facilities and activities

1. Since participation in sport is dependent in part on the extent, the variety and the accessibility of facilities, their overall planning should be a matter for the public authorities. The range of facilities to be provided should take account of the public and private facilities which are already available. Those responsible should take account of national, regional and local requirements, and take measures designed to ensure good management and the safe and full use of facilities.

2. Appropriate steps should be taken by the owners of sports facilities to enable persons from disadvantaged groups, including persons with physical or mental disabilities, to have access to such facilities.

3. A clear framework should be provided, and appropriate steps should be taken, to empower event organisers and owners of sporting facilities to fulfil their safety and security obligations effectively.

Sport facilities are gateways to equitable access and an opportunity when they are attractive, sustainable and accessible for all. Sport facilities are important places where not

only the provision of sport takes place but also interaction. They fulfil a vital role in the provision of sport facilities that contribute to citizens' quality of life. Flexible access to and availability of facilities can increase existing utilisation of public and private locations.

The implementation team was informed that the state of sport facilities needs to be improved. Reportedly, the vast majority of sport venues belong to schools, which commonly operate under a leasing/tender system, resulting in the lack of training facilities for clubs and federations. There is a significant call for the transfer of the management of sport facilities to the AYS and sports federations. While the local authorities are one of the largest investors in public sport infrastructure, the maintenance of the facilities is indicated to be substandard due to the lack of funds, and as a consequence some federations invest in the upkeep of sport facilities themselves.

In addition, the majority of sport facilities is reported to be inaccessible, especially for people with disabilities. This includes the lack of access of wheelchairs and prams, considerable distance from urban/populated areas, and the lack of accessible bathrooms.

Recommendations:

- 15.1 Ensure a coordinated approach in planning and managing sport facilities in the country at national and international level by developing a national strategy for sport infrastructure.
- 15.2 Encourage and empower municipalities and schools to provide more funding for the maintenance of sport facilities.
- 15.3 Ensure equitable access and opportunity to sport at public and private sport facilities by adapting sport facilities to become more accessible for all groups of population.

Article 16 – Human resources

1. *The development, by appropriate bodies, of training courses leading to diplomas and qualifications covering all aspects of sport, including its compliance with human rights, ethics, integrity and sustainability, shall be encouraged. Such courses should be appropriate to the needs of participants of all backgrounds involved in different kinds and levels of sport and designed for those working both voluntarily and professionally (instructors, coaches, managers, officials, doctors, safety officers, architects, engineers, child safeguarding officers, etc.).*

2. *Those involved in the leadership or supervision of sports activities should have appropriate qualifications, with particular emphasis on the protection of ethical values, integrity and human rights, including the protection of the human dignity, safety and health of the people in their charge.*

3. *Special attention should be paid to volunteering. Voluntary personnel, if given appropriate training and supervision, can make an invaluable contribution to the development of sport as a whole and encourage the participation of everyone in the practice and organisation of sports activities. The recruitment, training and retention of volunteers should be encouraged through the recognition of voluntary work, support for the holistic training of volunteer coaches and other measures.*

Sport is moving away from an amateur-driven, administration-based to a more business-minded, service-oriented approach to prevail in an ever more competitive environment for members. Consequently, there is a pressure and tendency to further professionalise, streamline and optimise the various managerial aspects of sport including the voluntary sector.

Curricula of sports faculties were indicated to be outdated and lacking the coverage of such topics as safeguarding and sport for all and disability sport. There is an interest in educational/professional training programmes in sport journalism, as well as professional trainings for sport officials and volunteers.

Recommendations:

- 16.1 Support initiatives/ programmes/ trainings to further professionalise staff and volunteers active in the provision of sports.
- 16.2 Improve the qualification/ education of coaches/ physical education teachers including at voluntary level by developing adequate training courses in close co-operation with relevant educational institutions (sport universities) and with the support and recognition by the central government.
- 16.3 Update the curricula of sport faculties to incorporate a values-based approach to sport and cover ethical topics such as safeguarding, sport for all, human rights, integrity etc.

Article 17 – Information and research

1. *Suitable structures and means for the collection and dissemination of pertinent information on sport at local, national and international levels should be maintained to the most up-to-date standards and developed further in line with relevant technological advances. This should notably include taking due account of digitisation and other important technological developments and of their use and application in the sporting context.*

2. *Scientific research into all aspects of sport, including its positive and negative effects on health, issues of ethics and governance, new trends and other central underlying principles, shall be further promoted and supported. Arrangements shall be made for disseminating and exchanging such information and the results of such research at the most appropriate level – locally, regionally, nationally or internationally – including as a basis for the further development of informed sports policies.*

Empirical research and sport science can drive the further development of the sport sector.

A scientific-based, coherent approach may positively impact the educational value of sport, the promotion of social inclusion through sport, the development of the voluntary ethos, the fight against corruption and performance sport.

Recommendations:

- 17.1 Set up appropriate technical structures for the collection and dissemination of relevant information related to sport on all levels.
- 17.2 Support scientific research in sport.
- 17.3 Pursue evidence-based decision-making in the field of sport.
- 17.4 Promote and support research on women and girls in sport and in women's sport in particular, including systematic gender analysis, and provide data to decision makers and other relevant authorities at national, regional and local levels.

Article 18 – Finance

1. *Appropriate support and resources from public funds at national, regional and local levels, including, where appropriate, lottery contributions, adequate public budget provisions, tax exemptions, the lending of premises, etc. shall be made available for the fulfilment of the aims of this Charter.*
2. *Mixed public and private financial support for sport should be encouraged, including the capacity of the sports sector itself to generate and allocate appropriate resources for its further development, both in terms of its social and its high-level aspects.*
3. *Public measures of support for the organisation of sporting events should be granted in the light of the relevant environmental standards and sustainable economic and social benefits that such events can achieve, in order to realise the positive potential of sporting events and increase public acceptance.*

As sport can contribute to the well-being of individuals and the society as whole, public funding shall be made available to provide financial support to fund sport structures, sport facilities as well as relevant projects.

There are various public funding schemes for sport in place:

- funding from the state budget
- funding from gambling/ betting sector
- funding via the voucher system

The AYS is responsible for distributing public funding to national sport federations, providing structural support and project support for sport organisations.

The state budget for sport amounts to 1,3 million Euros per year. Another source of sport funding provides a levy on (sports) betting which is diverted to a special account on a monthly basis (3% of revenue from the gambling industry are allocated to AYS).

National sport federations, clubs and individual athletes are tax exempt up to 10 million Euros.

North Macedonia introduced a so-called voucher system providing financial support to sport of the private sector. This voucher system allows companies to donate funds to sport. In return, the profit tax is reduced accordingly - up to a maximum of 50% of the profit tax due. Vouchers are being issued by the AYS. The concrete implementation of the voucher system is defined in a rulebook. According to the sources of the AYS, additional 10 million Euros were injected for the development of North Macedonian sports in this way.

Sport federation, clubs and athletes can benefit from the voucher system, which seems welcomed by the sports movement. However, the voucher system could tend to favour popular/ mainstream sport. An example of a basketball club was given – the male team is receiving funding via the voucher system whereas the female team does not.

The voucher system also triggered an increase in the number of clubs and athletes. In general, the voucher system was considered by many stakeholders as a success but recommended to be further improved.

The implementation team understood that the public funding policies/rules and the distribution of the public funds (“funding criteria”) are not very well known. Access to information such as qualitative and quantitative funding criteria seemed to be missing.

Recommendations:

- 18.1 Provide information for stakeholders on funding possibilities, funding rules and funding criteria based on the principle of transparency and accountability.
- 18.2 Ensure that the funding rules and criteria contribute to the aims of the ESC.
- 18.3 Assess the voucher system and enhance it accordingly. Ensure a more transparent funding system and balanced funding stream to sport organisations, sport clubs and athletes.
- 18.4 Further encourage public-private-funding as viable models for sport.
- 18.5 Ensure the appropriate use of public resources by setting up a robust controlling system (see rec. 3.2, could also be concentrated only here)

Article 19 – Domestic and international co-operation

1. *Appropriate structures for the proper co-ordination of the development and promotion of sport between the various stakeholders should be put in place where they do not already exist at national, regional and local levels in order to achieve the aims of this Charter, thus ensuring that sport is a structural element of the well-being of our society.*
2. *International co-operation at both global and continental levels is also necessary for the fulfilment of the aims of this Charter. This can be achieved through the exchange of good practice, education programmes, capacity development, advocacy, pledges, as well as indicators and other monitoring and implementation tools.*

The implementation team was informed that domestic cooperation among public and private sport stakeholders works very well. However, co-operation issues between the AYS and the NOC due to the former's lack of focus on the sport sector were reported. In addition, there was a call for greater involvement of sports federations in the work on the development on a new Sports Law.

North Macedonia cooperates very well with international organisations such as the European Union, the Council of Europe or UN programmes such as the World Health Organisation to promote sport and Health Enhancing Physical Activity.

Recommendations:

- 19.1 Enhance cooperation by setting up standing working groups/committees where an exchange of information of relevant stakeholders can take place.
- 19.2 Invite sports federations and other sport stakeholders to provide contributions to the development of the new Sports Law.

Article 20 – Support and follow-up to the implementation of the Charter

1. *The Council of Europe and other international organisations should be encouraged to use sport as a vehicle to promote values and to mainstream sport in strategies and action plans.*
2. *To facilitate the promotion and the implementation of this Charter, relevant stakeholders should be invited to pledge for the implementation of the Charter in their policies, strategies and programmes.*
3. *At European level, it is important to review progress and support the implementation of the Charter, in particular to guarantee the positive impact of sport on health, inclusion and education, to maximise its potential to promote a dynamic civil society as well as a culture of human rights, the rule of law, democratic governance and sustainability, and to fight threats to sports integrity. The Council of Europe’s Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport should be used to assess and promote progress in the implementation of the Charter, including by:*
 - a. *facilitating the exchange of information and good practices;*
 - b. *holding thematic exchanges on issues pertaining to the Charter;*
 - c. *collecting and publishing information to monitor the implementation of the Charter;*
 - d. *supporting the promotion and implementation of the Charter through regular multilateral and country-specific activities.*

The ESC identifies important values in sport such as integrity, human rights, equality, good governance, accountability which clearly have a European/ international dimension. Sport stakeholders do have obligations and responsibilities to promote and protect these values and principles. This includes coaches, managers, administrators and sports science/medicine personnel. Monitoring, assessment and implementation play an important role to enhance on the areas identified to make sport safer, more inclusive and more ethical in Europe.

Recommendations:

- 20.1 Organise training sessions on the ESC and the international sport framework and attach a North Macedonian translation of the Charter as an appendix to the sport strategy/policy to emphasise the values and benefits of sport.
- 20.2 Monitor and consistently collect data on the implementation of the ESC.
- 20.3 Provide updates on the implementation of the recommendation of this report.

Comments from the government

On behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister in Charge of Good Governance Policies, would like to emphasize the excellent job you've been doing during the process of screening the Sport area in North Macedonia. Your attention to detail and dedication has really made a difference.

The contributions of the EPAS experts' team have been invaluable. Thank you for your dedication and for consistently producing high-quality work. The result is delivered as a "Report on the implementation of the European Sports Charter in North Macedonia".

The EPAS report together with the additional received opinion will be foundation for in-depth discussion of the New Law of Sport.

I am very pleased to inform you that the formal working group that will be in charge for drafting the new Law of Sport held the first initiative meeting, that means officially we started the process.

We look forward to our continued co-operation and the EPAS commitment to supporting our country's institutions in the ongoing reform processes in the area of the sport

C. Appendices

Appendix I - Sports Law



2020-07-29_Sports
Law (No. 79 2017)_A

Appendix II - Implementation Team

The Implementation exercise on the ESC was co-organised by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) of the Council of Europe and the Office of the Prime Minister as well as the Agency of Youth and Sports of North Macedonia.

Composition of the team:

1. Mr Alexandre Husting, Luxemburg
2. Ms Satu Heikkinen, Finland
3. Mr Kolë Gjeloshaj, International School Sport Federation

For the Council of Europe/EPAS:

4. Ms Sophie Kwasny, Executive Secretary
5. Ms Cassandra Mactavish, Coordinator of the Consultative Committee

Appendix III - Programme

Friday 30 September 2022

9.00-10.00	Agency for Youth and Sport Mr. Naumce Mojsovski Mr. Ognen Stojanovski Mr. Petar Minoski Ms. Tatjana Blazevska Ms. Radmila Vasevska Ms. Dragana Bikovska
10.00-10.30	Ministry of Education Ms. Djemile Idrizi Mr. Metush Chajlani
10.30-11.30	Prime Minister's Office Mr. Georgi Tasev Ministry of Finance Ms. Irena Kostrevska State Commission for preventing corruption Mr. Darko Dachevski OSCE Mr. Afrim Bajrami Ministry of Health Mr. Nikola Grbcevski Ministry of Defence Mr. Haralampie Trajkov
11.30-12.00	Deputy Prime Minister Ms. Slavica Grkovska Ms. Dragana Bikovska Ms. Bettina Nellen
12.00-13.30	BREAK
13.30-15.00	The Municipality of Skopje

Mr. Bobi Petkovski

The National Federation for Sport for all

Mr. Elvir Kozica

The National Olympic Committee

Mr. Vladimir Bogoevski

A Sports journalist

Mr. Igor Trpeski

15.00-16.00

The Paralympic Committee

Mr. Branislav Jovanovski

Mr. Dragan Dojchiski

The National Climbing Federation

Mr. Vladimir Trpovski

The Triathlon Federation, organiser of the Wizzair Skopje marathon

Ms. Gordana Kuzmanovska

An athlete

Ms. Angela Rajchevska

16.00-17.00

Sport Social Solutions

Ms. Simona Trajkoska

The Karate Club Joshitaka

Ms. Simona Tasevska

The Handball Sports Club

Ms. Zorica Blazevska

The Handball Federation

Mr. Aleksandar Velkovski

Ms. Monika Gjorgjievska

The Basketball Federation

Mr. Vladimir Georgievski

Mr. Mirko Ivanovski