

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Closing Session of the 16th Council of Europe Conference of
Ministers Responsible for Sport**

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Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

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Ministers, distinguished partners and colleagues,

The decision to hold this Conference online and in five sessions reflects our times.

COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on the way that we all live and work.

But while it has presented us with new challenges, it has not erased the others.

So, I am grateful to the Greek authorities and to Minister Avgenakis for their flexibility in adapting the format of this Conference.

And to all the EPAS members and bodies and all parts of the Council of Europe that have contributed to its work.

Back in 2018, at our Conference in Tbilisi, I was struck by the clarity of thought about the challenges facing sports today - and by the determination to make progress.

Globalisation, commercialisation, and the increased visibility of sport have both changed the nature of human rights and rule of law violations and drawn them further out, into the open.

The sexual abuse of children, the exploitation of players and employees, and the lack of access to justice.

These were among the key challenges identified at Tbilisi as requiring action.

And thanks to the hard work of governments and non-governmental specialists, the two resolutions of this Conference will make a substantial difference.

The first sets out the principles for the further revision of the European Sports Charter.

Stakeholders have worked together on this in a spirit of co-operation, mutual respect and trust.

And, as a result, we now have a pathway to updating the guidelines that inspire sports policies across member states.

This will be the third revision of the Charter, ensuring its long-term effectiveness in today's fast-changing world, and I hope that it will be concluded soon.

The second resolution is a statement about the role and application of human rights in sports.

When it comes to the credibility and effectiveness of anti-doping proceedings, fair procedures are necessary.

And this text lays out the principles that are required to achieve this.

It also elaborates on the principles of the European Social Charter and on the social rights of athletes;

It builds on Council of Europe guidance for fighting discrimination and hate speech;

And it is clear about the importance of combatting racism, ensuring media freedom, addressing the rights of intersex people in sports competitions.

To ensure that a human rights culture permeates the sports world, we need governments, sports organisations, and business alike to buy into it.

And this resolution is a bold and necessary step in that direction.

As important as these resolutions clearly are, it is important to see them in the context of a bigger picture.

In recent years, the Council of Europe has taken a more prominent and proactive role in fostering intergovernmental co-operation on sports.

Two new conventions have been adopted and entered into force:

One on the manipulation of sports competitions and the other on safety, security, and services at sports events.

And Europe, thanks to our anti-doping convention, is playing a proactive role in the work of WADA.

Together, we are helping to shape a better environment for the entire sports world.

So, as we enter 2021, with EPAS welcoming its 40th member state, we should be proud of the progress we are making today, and of the direction in which we continue to travel.