

CONF/AG(2025)REC6

Recommendation on "Access to sport for all as a recognised fundamental right"

Adopted by the Conference of INGOs
at its General Assembly session of 15 October 2025

Introduction

Sport is much more than a playground: it is a social glue. It unites all generations and all strata of society around universal values: respect, tolerance and fraternity. A real lever for health, it contributes to the physical, psychological and social balance of each individual. However, access to sport remains unequal. Age, gender, origin, ability or economic means should never be barriers. Guaranteeing access to sport for all is a matter of social justice. Sport liberates, emancipates and includes. It supports people with disabilities, those from immigrant backgrounds and, more broadly, all those who are too often left behind by society. It creates encounters, builds bridges and shapes a more just and united society.

Promoting sport for all is a collective challenge involving institutions, associations, businesses and citizens to make it a driver of progress and well-being for all. The Conference of INGOs is aware of the leading role played by the Council of Europe. Promoting access to sport for all young people, including those who may feel excluded because of their identity or expression, contributes to well-being, social cohesion and the values of respect and tolerance that are at the heart of the Council of Europe. Its work is essential in promoting sport that respects the dignity and integrity of all.

Having regard to the following:

- the Council of Europe (through its conventions) and INGOs recognise sport as a major asset for public health and integration, particularly for young women, girls, migrants or refugees, people living in poverty and social exclusion, and people with disabilities;
- the aim of this Recommendation, which is to ensure equitable access to physical activity and sport for all, as sport currently remains difficult to access for these vulnerable groups outside of educational institutions; and that INGOs reaffirm the essential role of sport as a vehicle for social cohesion, integration, inclusion and empowerment;

- NGOs are warning about the deterioration in young people's physical condition, inadequate sports facilities, the lack of recognition of sport in the workplace and its commodification, which runs counter to its ethics. They also denounce gender discrimination, the obstacles faced by people living in poverty or with disabilities, and the rise of abuses such as violence (particularly gender-based violence), racism, human rights violations and unequal access, which primarily affect the most vulnerable;
- the revised European Sports Charter and the Recommendation adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 October 2021, which are essential reference tools in the development of national sports policies on the European continent;
- the Reykjavik Declaration 'United around our values' adopted at the 4th Summit of the Council of Europe (16-17 May 2023);
- the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)
- the Conference organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 'Promoting safety, integrity, equality and inclusion in sport' (Athens, 4-5 November 2024)
- the opportunity to participate in sport is a fundamental aspect of the rights set out in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- recent Resolutions of the Parliamentary Assembly, including:
 - Resolution 2131 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) of 2016 "*Sport for all: a bridge to equality, integration and social inclusion*";
 - PACE Resolution 2199 of 2018 "*Towards a framework for modern sports governance*";
 - PACE Resolution 2276 of 2019 "*Stop hate speech and hate acts in sport*";
 - PACE Resolution 2420 of 2022 "*Football governance: business and values*";
 - PACE Resolution 2421 of 2022 "*Sport policies in times of crisis*";
 - Resolution 2465 of 2022 "*For fair play – Ending discrimination against women in sport*";
 - Resolution 2503 (2023) "*Social inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons through sport*".
 - Résolution 2607 (2025) Protecting human rights in and through sport: obligations and shared responsibilities
 - Resolution 2608 (2025) « The Olympic Movement and peacekeeping: is sport neutrality serving sport values ? »
- Recommendation CONF-AG(2023)REC2 "*Towards a comprehensive approach to the rights of refugees and migrants and the role of civil society*"
- the importance of themes proposed by INGOs,
 - access to sport for people living in poverty and social exclusion;

- access to sport for all minorities, vulnerable people, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees;
- gender equality in access to sports activities
- the fight against hate speech and discrimination.

The Conference of INGOs

1. calls on Council of Europe member states to implement effective policies to ensure universal, equitable and dignified access to sport for all;

2. recommends that national sports policies and the work and actions of the Council of Europe in support of these policies be guided by the following principles:

Sport for all

- **Make** physical activity and sport a national priority for all ages, in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO), and encourage the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe to support the achievement of this objective, and to this end
- **Emphasise** the importance of high-quality physical education in schools, with a minimum of three hours per week and enhanced training for teachers;
- **Encourage** the introduction of appropriate physical activities in care homes for the elderly and facilities supporting vulnerable groups, with qualified staff, as well as the widespread use of "**prescription sport**";
- **Integrate** sport into reception and inclusion programmes for refugees and migrants and promote participation in sport among women and girls from immigrant backgrounds;
- **Recall** that sport for all includes persons with disabilities and the need to support and promote initiatives taken by the sports movement for this group;
- Actively **support** the practice of sport among people with disabilities, while ensuring that educators receive specific, appropriate training.

Local and corporate policies :

- **Support** the development of local multi-sport facilities, particularly in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods and rural areas;
- **Encourage** local authorities to improve access to sports facilities, in particular by extending opening hours and opening facilities during school holidays, and to provide financial and logistical support to people who are isolated from sport, through schemes such as the PassSport.

- **Promote** sport in the workplace by launching national awareness campaigns on its benefits;

Gender equality

- **Ensure** equal representation of women and men in sports' governing bodies;
- **Emphasise** the need for all sports organisations to adopt clear policies against gender-based violence, in particular through recognised training courses for coaches, managers and participants;
- Where possible, **promote** women's sports and ensure much wider media coverage of women's sports.
- **Work** with educational institutions to implement specific local initiatives to enable young women and girls from immigrant backgrounds to continue participating in physical and sporting activities, which are essential to their empowerment.

Children's rights

- **Recommend** that sports policies pay particular attention to the mental health and psychological well-being of children and adolescents, ensuring that participation in sport is a factor for growth rather than a source of distress.

Integrity, safety and ethics

- **Reiterate** the importance of taking firm action against violence, hate speech and discrimination in sports venues, allowing for sanctions ranging from the interruption of matches to the permanent exclusion of individuals involved in such acts;
- **Emphasise** the need to strictly regulate access to sports coaching positions through systematic checks on skills and any history of violence;
- **Ensure** increased vigilance with regard to sports betting, particularly illegal betting, and specific preventive measures to be taken with young people;
- **Promote** ethical and controlled media coverage of top athletes, who have a significant impact on young audiences in particular. Promoting the virtues of sport is an educational act;
- **Support** the European Young Sportsperson's Charter as a common ethical framework and ensure the dissemination of a set of best practices to all sports associations, promoting the fundamental values of sport, namely respect, inclusion, solidarity and ethics;
- **Apply** the sanctions imposed by the competent authorities in cases of discrimination, violence and racism against clubs, supporters and federations in a broad, rigorous and systematic manner;

- **Promote and support** the voluntary sector and existing prevention and reporting mechanisms;
- **Ensure** increased awareness and vigilance with regards to human trafficking and exploitation in sport and in the supply chain of sport equipment
- **Give particular attention** to preventing and addressing all forms of hate and exclusion in sport, on any ground, including but not limited to sex, gender, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics (SOGIESC), age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status.

The Conference of INGOs requests its President to ensure dissemination of the present Recommendation to the other instances of the Council.