

Strasbourg, 20 March 2025

EPAS(2025)8

ENLARGED PARTIAL AGREEMENT ON SPORT (EPAS)

Report on the implementation of the European Sports Charter in Finland

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A. Information provided by national authorities

1. Overview of state structures and sports organisations

The section 1 of the Finnish **Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity (390/2015)**, **appended in appendix 1**, which was amended in 2022, *“sets out provisions on the promotion of physical activity and top-level sports; the responsibilities of and co-operation between central and local government; the government administrative bodies; and the funding to be provided by the state in the field of sports and physical activity.”*¹

The section 2 of the same act sets the objectives of the Act:

“1. The objective of this Act is to promote:

- (1) the opportunities of various demographic groups to engage in physical activity;*
- (2) the wellbeing and health of the population;*
- (3) the maintenance and improvement of the capacity for physical activity;*
- (4) the growth and development of children and young people;*
- (5) civic action in the field of physical activity including club activities;*
- (6) top-level sports;*
- (7) integrity and ethical principles in the context of physical activity and top-level sports; and*
- (8) greater equality in sports and physical activity.*

2. The efforts to achieve these objectives are based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion, multiculturalism, healthy lifestyles, respect for the environment and sustainable development.”

The subsequent sections of Chapter 1 outline the responsibilities of the state and local governments. Chapter 2 of the Act establishes the basic rules for state financial support. This financial support includes government transfers to municipalities and regional administrations to promote sport and physical activity, state aid to organisations that encourage sport and physical activity, funding for facilities, and other purposes that foster sport and physical activity.

1.1. Section 4 of the Act sets out the state responsibility:

“1. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the overall management, co-ordination and development of the national sports policy, and for the creation of favourable conditions for engaging in physical activity.

2. Responsibility for local administrative duties rests with the Regional State Administrative Agencies. More detailed provisions on these duties shall be issued by government decree.

3. When performing the duties defined herein, the State shall, as appropriate, engage in co-operation with municipalities, non-governmental organisations and other actors in the field of physical activity and sports.”

¹ Chapter 1, section 1 Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity (390/2015)

find solutions for reducing sedentary behaviour. The new government has decided to continue the work of LIPOKO, with the new term of office running from 1 October 2023 to 30 April 2027. LIPOKO is composed of high-level civil servants from the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's Office, and the "School on the Move" programme.

2. *Non-governmental sports organisations*

The Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity does not specifically categorise non-governmental sports organisations. All non-governmental sports organisations are established according to the Finnish Associations Act, which states that an association "may be founded for the common realization of a non-profit purpose. The purpose may not be contrary to law or proper behaviour." The Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity stipulates that, to qualify for state aid, a sports organisation must first be approved by the ministry. Approval may be granted to a registered association whose purpose is to promote sport and physical activity and whose activities align with the objectives of the Act. Additionally, when assessing eligibility, the ministry considers the type, extent, and social impact of the association's activities, as well as how the association promotes equality and non-discrimination. More specific criteria for state aid are outlined in the Government Decree on the Promotion of Physical Activity. However, the Act specifies that only one national federation per sport may be approved as eligible for state aid.

In general, non-governmental sports associations can be divided into four categories. The Finnish Olympic Committee, which also serves as the Finnish Sports Confederation, leads and coordinates the high-performance sports network, inter-sport co-operation, and efficiency support systems, including assistance for sports and systems, training, and facilitating teams for multi-sport competitions. The NOC has 89 regular members and 30 partnership members, including 79 national sports federations. National Sports Federations are responsible for developing their own activities, including high-performance sports, training and coaching systems, expertise, support for local sports clubs, events, and competitions.

Sports associations and federations consist of sports clubs. Additionally, Sports Academies and High-Performance Training Centres serve as operational environments for the development of athletes and sports, forming a common network led by the High-Performance Unit (HPU), each with its own roles and responsibilities.

3. Main objectives and priorities of the sport sector in Finland

The main objectives and priorities of the sport sector can be identified in the table below.

Sports practice target/audience		High priority	Somewhat a priority	Low priority
High-performance sport	x	x		
Professional sport				
Overall population	x	x		
Sport for all (including all member of society)	x	x		
Physical education and school sport	x		x	
Physical activity and health	x	x		
Paralympic sports	x	x		
Sport career				
Conciliation of academic and sporting success (dual careers)	x	x		
Support mechanisms after the end of sporting career				
Ethics				
Combat all forms of violent behaviours including, racism, xenophobia and intolerance in sporting contexts	x	x		
Sports integrity	x	x		
Ethics	x	x		
Inclusion				
Inclusion of people with a disability	x	x		
Social inclusion	x		x	
Equality, diversity, inclusion, accessibility	x	x		
Universally inclusive design of sport competition (eligibility regulations, competition formats & sport presentation)	x		x	
Non-discrimination				

Grassroots sports	x		x	
Non-discrimination and social justice	x	x		
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults (impacted by Mega Sport Events)	x		x	
Harnessing opportunities in high-risk hosting environments				
Gender				
Gender equality in sports	x	x		
Gender mainstreaming	X	x		
Sustainability				
Sustainability at sport events	x	x		
Sustainable development, urbanisation, and human rights/child rights friendly cities	x		x	
Sustainability in the sport industry				
Sports facilities:				
Sustainability	x	x		
Environment	x	x		
Inclusive	x	x		
Access	x	x		
Events				
Responsible event hosting	x	x		
Broadcasting and event coverage				
Protecting people and communities (at all phases of the mega sporting events lifecycle)				
Athlete well-being				
Athlete advocacy and activism	x			x
Athlete health, safety, and wellbeing	x	x		
Adult athlete rights	x		x	
Child athlete rights	x		x	
Organisation				

Professional services and standards	x		x	
Public sector regulations and investment	x	x		
Engagement and support	x		x	
Social justice, reconciliation and decolonisation	x		x	
Sponsorship and commercial investment				
Grievances and remedy mechanisms and standards	x		x	
Others				
Sport body leadership, culture and governance	x			x
News access and journalism				
Pandemic recovery	x	x		
E-sports	x			x

4. Financing model of sport

State funding

The sports budget in 2024 was 165 466 000 euros, which came directly from the Government budget, while previously most of the sports budget depended on lottery funding.

The budget is divided into 4 main blocks, which has its own division:

1 Ensuring equal access to physical activity

1.1 Financial aid for the construction of sports facilities 27 million euros

2 Participation in sports and physical activity

2.1 Civic engagement in sports 43 million euros

2.2 Elite sports 16 million euros

2.3 Major sports and exercise events 2 million euros

2.4 Ethical activities in sports and physical activity 5 million euros

2.5 Sports museum 0,4 million euros

3 Promoting physical activity in the whole population

3.1 Central government transfers to local government for local government sport and physical activity programmes 20 million euros

3.2 Promoting active lifestyles 6,4 million euros

3.3 Get Finland Moving programme 20 million euros

4 Competence and knowledge base in sports

4.1 Central government transfers for sports training centres 17 million euros

4.2 Strategy for knowledge-based management of physical activity	8,5 million euros
4.3 Activities of the National Sports Council	0,25 million euros

However, at the time of the visit, the budget was projected to be reduced by approximately 30%.

Government grants for sports associations are awarded to those who help achieve the objectives outlined in the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity (390/2015) and aim to promote, among other things, integrity and ethical principles in physical activity and top-level sport. When assessing state aid for organisations promoting physical activity, due consideration is given to:

- The type, extent, and social impact of the activities the organisation is engaged in;
- How the organisation promotes the objectives of the Act and the ethical principles of sport and physical activity;
- The extent to which it complies with binding international regulations;
- How it promotes equality and non-discrimination.

Sports associations must also meet sustainability criteria, which account for 15% of the grant. The sustainability criteria, corresponding to the sustainability programme developed by the Finnish Olympic Committee, include good governance, gender equality and diversity/non-discrimination, a safe and healthy environment for sport, ecological sustainability, and anti-doping and anti-match-fixing measures. The first four points are assessed by the Ministry and experts, while the fifth point is assessed by the Finnish Center for Integrity in Sports (FINCIS).

In total, sports associations receive around 40 million euros. Besides municipalities, local sports clubs also receive financial support from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Discretionary government aid has been granted to sports clubs since 2013, aimed at developing low-threshold activities for children and young people. The annual amount is approximately 4 million euros, with sums granted to clubs ranging from 1,500 to 25,000 euros.

The state also supports two types of educational institutions related to sport: educational sports institutes and sports academies.

There are 12 educational sports institutes (9 national, 3 regional), which serve as training centers for elite athletes and leisure centers for the general public. Funding is allocated in the form of central government transfers and can be divided into:

- Vocational education ~ 18 million euros (not in the sports budget)
- Liberal education ~ 18 million euros (in the sports budget)

Some of the institutes are included in the sports academy network.

Sports academies provide talented athletes the opportunity to combine ambitious sports training with studies, forming the first step in the Finnish dual career system, which starts in lower secondary school and continues through athletes' career transitions after elite sports. There are 19 National Sports Academies. According to the Ministry, these academies are national and regional co-operative bodies that build networks and provide sports-related activities in collaboration with municipalities, lower secondary schools, upper secondary sports institutions, higher educational institutions, sports federations, and sports clubs.

In total, the Finnish dual career network includes over 100 lower secondary sports schools (~10,000 athletes), 31 upper secondary sports institutions (~6,000 athletes), and about 1,500 athletes in higher education. Additionally, over 1,000 coaches and 300 coaching experts are involved. Funding for this system has increased from 800,000 euros in 2013 to 4 million euros in 2021.

The Ministry of Education and Culture also has a separate mechanism to support sports events. A clear criterion with pre-conditions was created to support events before they are hosted. The criteria include:

- Public support and national interest in the particular championship event (Ice Hockey, Athletics, Nordic skiing, etc.);
- Co-operation;
- Gender equality;
- Participation and civic activity, voluntarism;
- Sustainable economic development and ecological impacts.

The last part of state funding is related to sports facilities. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional State Administrative Agencies allocate grants for projects to build sport and recreational facilities. Most financial aid is granted to projects that serve large groups of users, such as swimming pools, gyms, outdoor sport facilities and ice rinks, as well as for the construction, renovation, or repair of local sports and physical activity facilities.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is the government aid authority for projects where the cost estimate exceeds 1 200 000 euros. For projects with a cost estimate under 1 200 000 euros, the relevant Regional State Administrative Agency is the aid authority. Projects eligible for financial aid are first listed in a four-year financial plan for sports and physical activity facilities. These plans are drawn up only for projects within the remit of the Ministry of Education and Culture and are indicative, being reviewed each year.

Aid applications are submitted to the relevant Regional State Administrative Agency, which arranges the projects in order of priority. The Ministry of Education and Culture then drafts a national proposal for all projects within its remit and requests a statement on the proposals from the National Sports Council.

B. Report on the implementation of the European Sports Charter (ESC)

5. Introduction

A support and follow up visit was held in Helsinki on 18-19 April 2024 which provided an excellent opportunity for the EPAS team to exchange with all interested counterparts and further its understanding of the implementation of the ESC in Finland. The programme and list of participants are appended in Appendices II and III.

Finland was the first country to be visited with the newly improved questionnaire on the implementation of the ESC. This follow-up visit not only provided an opportunity to assess the state of play regarding the ESC implementation in Finland but also to pilot the questionnaire during the visit.

With regard to the implementation of the ESC, the current situation led to the **following findings**, structured by Article of the ESC.

6. 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.*
- 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.*

In Finland, the legal sport framework is based on the Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity (390/2015). The objectives of the Act seem to be in full compliance with the Article 1 of European Sports Charter:

“Section 2. Objective of the Act

1. The objective of this Act is to promote:

- (1) the opportunities of various demographic groups to engage in physical activity;*
- (2) the wellbeing and health of the population;*
- (3) the maintenance and improvement of the capacity for physical activity;*
- (4) the growth and development of children and young people;*
- (5) civic action in the field of physical activity including club activities;*
- (6) top-level sports;*
- (7) integrity and ethical principles in the context of physical activity and top-level sports; and*
- (8) greater equality in sports and physical activity.*

2. The efforts to achieve these objectives are based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion, multiculturalism, healthy lifestyles, respect for the environment and sustainable development.”

In 2018, the government of Finland adopted the Government Report on Sports Policy², which analysed the current situation and trends in the field of sport and physical activity, drawing comparisons with other Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway). It also covered a wide range of topics within sport, including the promotion of physical activity as part of social policy, independent and guided exercise, the construction of sports facilities, civic activity in sports, elite sport, state sports policy, and state funding for sport. The report provided background information on each topic and suggested possible measures to improve the situation, including the cost of these measures.

The report envisioned that the most important sports policy goal in Finland in the 2020s is to significantly increase physical activity among citizens of all ages and population groups, ensuring that the population engages in physical activity as broadly as possible for health and well-being. Other sports policy priorities for the decade include supporting the construction of sports facilities, fostering vibrant civic activities that promote equality, increasing support for elite sport, particularly at the early stages of an athlete's career, and developing internationally competitive environments (e.g., sports academies and training centers) and training processes.

² Only available in Finnish

(<https://okm.fi/documents/1410845/4449678/Valtioneuvoston+selonteko+liikuntapolitiikasta.pdf/16b4a853-180b-ad4f-0127-e3065b616912/Valtioneuvoston+selonteko+liikuntapolitiikasta.pdf?t=1540454134000>)

It is important to note that while drafting this report, a comprehensive engagement programme was launched.

Each government has its own priorities. The Finnish government, which took office in 2023, has made the “Get Finland Moving” programme one of its priorities. The objective of this programme is “to increase physical activity in every age group. To achieve this, a cross-administrative action plan will be drawn up to promote physically active lifestyles and functional capacity.”

The field of sport in Finland is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Ministry is responsible for “the overall management, co-ordination, and development of the national sports policy, and for creating favourable conditions for engaging in physical activity.” This is achieved by:

- Leading, developing, and coordinating sports policy through financing and legislation.
- Setting financing criteria for approximately 130 national and regional sports organisations receiving state aid; financing depends on the quality, extent, and social impact of their operations and the results of their ethical work (responsibility, sustainable development, anti-doping measures, etc.).
- Developing strategies, policy programmes, decisions on grants for major sports facilities, and research projects.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 Leverage the cross-administrative action plan to ensure co-ordination among sectors such as health, education, urban planning, and social services to create a culture of physical activity.
- 1.2. Establish clear indicators and benchmarks for the effectiveness of Finland's sports policies, particularly for increasing physical activity in diverse demographic groups.
- 1.3. Prioritise state funding for accessible, multi-purpose sports facilities that cater to all age groups, including adaptive facilities for persons with disabilities and age-friendly designs for seniors.
- 1.4 Support grassroots civic activities and local clubs by providing training and resources to promote ethical practices, sustainability, and anti-doping measures.

7. 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:*
 - b. *the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches (ETS No. 120);*
 - c. *the Anti-Doping Convention (ETS No. 135);*
 - d. *the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215); and*
 - e. *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.*

As part of the implementation of the European Sports Charter, member States are encouraged to adhere to international legally binding standards, including the Council of Europe Conventions in the field of sport. Finland has ratified the *Anti-Doping Convention* (ETS No. 135) and the *Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events* (CETS No. 218). Finland has signed but not ratified the *Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions* (CETS No. 215) and *Additional protocol to the Anti-Doping Convention* (ETS No. 188).

Recommendations:

- 2.1 Finland is invited to ratify the *Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions* (Macolin Convention).
- 2.2 Finland is invited to ratify the *Additional protocol to the Anti-Doping Convention* (ETS No. 188).

8. 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.*

Chapters I and II of the Finnish Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity provide a detailed description of the interrelation of state structures and support with/for organised sport. According to these Chapters there is a clear division between the role of the public actors, including the local municipalities, and sports organisations. There is also a concise description of vertical co-ordination between national authorities and the regional and local authorities.

On the horizontal level, in 2020 the Finnish authorities established a Sports policy co-ordination body (LIPOKO) with the aim of increasing the physical activity of the entire population as a cross-administrative co-operation and it was set to operate until the end on April 2023. In 2023, the government decided to continue LIPOKO's operations. LIPOKO's main task is to co-ordinate, promote, monitor and evaluate the mobility promotion work carried out by various ministries and their administrative branches.

Recommendations:

3.1. Strengthen Horizontal and Vertical Co-ordination Structures

- Expand and formalise the role of LIPOKO as a permanent structure, aligning its objectives with the European Sports Charter's principles of governance and inclusion.
- Emphasise accountability mechanisms for cross-administrative actions, ensuring effective collaboration among national, regional, and local actors.
- Leverage vertical co-ordination between national, regional, and local authorities to streamline resource allocation for sports programmes.

3.2. Enhance Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

- Foster partnerships between public authorities, municipalities, and sports organisations by introducing incentives for collaborative projects that promote physical activity across all demographic groups.

- Draw from Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6, focusing on co-developing policies with youth and grassroots organisations to ensure diverse representation in decision-making processes.

3.3. Prioritise Accessibility and Inclusion in Sports Infrastructure and Programmes

- Strengthen efforts to make sports facilities and programmes accessible, particularly for underrepresented groups such as seniors, rural populations, and persons with disabilities.
- Promote local municipal initiatives that align with the Council of Europe’s focus on inclusion and equality, ensuring that regional disparities in infrastructure and participation are addressed.

9. 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.*

In Finland, all sport organisations are formed under the Finnish Associations Act³. When an association is created, the founders of the association can choose the purpose of the association. According to the section 10 of the Finnish Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity “1. *To qualify for state aid, an organisation promoting sports and physical activity shall first be approved as eligible for such aid by the Ministry of Education and Culture. 2. Approval for eligibility may be granted to a registered association whose purpose is to promote sports and physical activity and whose activities comply with the objective specified in section 2. When assessing eligibility for state aid, due consideration shall be given to the*

³ <https://www.prh.fi/en/yhdistysrekisteri/act.html>

type, extent and social impact of the activities that the association is engaged in, and the ways in which the association promotes equality and non- discrimination.

3. Of the individual sports federations, only one national federation may be approved as eligible for state aid for each given sport. Only federations that operate under the auspices of an international organisation or competition system and sport that is of national importance can qualify for state aid. When assessing a federation's eligibility for state aid, due consideration shall be given to the type, extent and social impact of the activities that the federation is engaged in; the ways in which the federation promotes equality and non-discrimination; and the extent to which it complies with the ethical principles of sports and physical activity and the international regulations binding on Finland."

According to point 3 of the same section, only one sport federation for each given sport is eligible for state aid. Statistics show that the grant to a sports federation can represent between 10-70% of the federation's total budget.

During a meeting with representatives from the sports movement, some indicated a potential issue with the independence of sports organisations. However, to the visiting Council of Europe team, the Finnish government's approach appeared to fully respect the independence and autonomy of the sports organisations. The government distributes state aid according to specific criteria, which cannot be seen as interfering with the independence of sports organisations, as the aid is intended to fulfil specific objectives.

According to information provided by representatives from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, sports organisations and other stakeholders in the sports movement are consulted on various aspects of sports policies in both formal and informal meetings. Topics discussed range from high-performance sport to physical activity and health, including sports careers, ethics, inclusion, non-discrimination, gender, sustainability, athlete well-being, and organisation.

Voluntarism within sport is supported and encouraged by specific legislation, monetary prizes, training courses, and a general sense of community. During meetings with governmental, local municipality, and representatives from the sports movement, it was made clear that the use of volunteers is widespread, especially at the grassroots level, including for coaching roles. Additionally, at sports events, the use of volunteers is common and is supported by specific legislation, compensation, insurance, training courses, recognition of experience, and a general sense of community.

Recommendations:

4.1. Promote financial transparency and grassroots solidarity

- Encourage sports organisations earning revenue from high-performance or commercial activities to dedicate a proportion of their resources to grassroots development, in line with Article 4.4 of the European Sports Charter.
- Introduce incentives for federations that demonstrate financial solidarity by supporting small-scale clubs and local associations, fostering inclusivity and regional equity in sports development.

4.2. Strengthen volunteerism in sports organisations

- Expand current support for volunteerism through targeted policies that enhance training opportunities, insurance coverage, and recognition programmes, emphasising long-term career pathways for volunteers.
- Collaborate with the EPAS to adopt best practices for sustaining the volunteer ethos, particularly at the grassroots level, while ensuring alignment with the principles of inclusion and equality.

4.3. Reinforce autonomy and ethical governance

- Maintain and monitor the balance between state support and the autonomy of sports organisations, ensuring compliance with Article 4.3 of the European Sports Charter, which calls for independent and democratically governed sports organisations.
- Develop additional training programmes on ethical governance for sports leaders, emphasising non-discrimination, gender equality, and compliance with international standards, such as anti-doping measures and athlete well-being frameworks.

10. 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.*

According to information provided by government representatives, Finland has a specific platform to engage with the corporate and professional sectors, which is also used to promote responsible business conduct.

According to the report on Finnish Elite Sports, 162 million euros of private sponsorship was distributed in Finland in 2019, slightly more than the financial support provided by state funds in the same year. Compared to other Nordic countries, private investments in Finland have grown faster, but still remain smaller.

Finland ranks 5th in the World Press Freedom Index. During discussions with media representatives, it was evident that the media has not encountered significant obstacles in covering sports or related issues and has acted as a watchdog. However, there have been instances where sports organisations have shown some reluctance in addressing certain negative aspects and cases within the sports field. From the government's perspective, public authorities responsible for sport should maintain a dialogue and co-operate with the media, particularly regarding major sports event bidding processes and broadcasting rights.

Nevertheless, the government does not provide specific grants to acquire broadcasting rights for major sports events to ensure their public availability; this responsibility falls to various companies, including the Finnish public broadcasting company.

Recommendations:

5.1 Foster responsible business conduct in sports development

- Strengthen the role of Finland's platform for engaging the corporate and professional sectors to encourage the adoption of responsible business practices aligned with Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3 and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- Introduce measures that incentivise businesses involved in sport to commit to safety, anti-discrimination, integrity, and anti-corruption standards, ensuring compliance with both national and international regulations.

5.2 Encourage corporate contribution to sports solidarity schemes

- Promote closer collaboration between businesses and the sports movement by encouraging private sponsors and service providers to contribute to grassroots and solidarity schemes. This could involve direct sponsorship, infrastructure development, or supporting underfunded sports, aligning with the European Sports Charter's call for financial solidarity.
- Recognise companies actively engaged in such initiatives to foster broader private sector involvement in promoting inclusivity and diversity in sport.

5.3. Strengthen media co-operation for transparency and accessibility

- Maintain an active dialogue between government, sports organisations, and media outlets to enhance transparency in processes such as major event bidding and broadcasting rights.
- Encourage sports organisations to work more openly with the media to address negative incidents, improving public trust and safeguarding sports integrity. While public funding for broadcasting rights is not feasible, collaboration could promote media accessibility to major events, especially through public broadcasters, to ensure broad coverage and public engagement.

11. 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.*

Section 2, point 1 of the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity outlines the Act's objectives, while point 2 emphasizes that achieving these objectives is guided by principles such as equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion, multiculturalism, healthy lifestyles, environmental respect, and sustainable development. One criterion for government funding is how effectively an association promotes equality and non-discrimination. During the meeting, the minister affirmed that safeguarding ethical and moral issues, including gender equality, remains a priority, even though the government announced budget cuts due to the challenging state of public finances.

In 2018, a joint project “You are not alone” (Et ole yksin) of the Family Federation of Finland and Finnish sports started with the aim to prevent and reduce bullying and experiences of

sexual harassment and all kinds of violence in sport. “You are not alone” is Finland’s first targeted support service to which an athlete who has been subjected to sexual abuse and harassment, inappropriate behaviour or bullying can receive help. In addition to the nationwide support service, the project strengthens the self-determination of children and young people and increases the knowledge of parents and coaches about the prevention of violence and harassment experienced by young people. The project also provides training for sports federations on the prevention of inappropriate behaviour as well as online courses and easy-to-use materials for clubs.

The Finnish Center for Integrity in Sports (FINCIS) plays a key role in the fight against inappropriate treatment, sexual and gender-based harassment and other ethical questions. In the centralised disciplinary system for sport adopted at the beginning of 2022, FINCIS is tasked with investigating serious ethical violations in sport and submitting recommendations to the disciplinary committee. This centralised system is administered by the Olympic Committee and applies exclusively to sports federations committed to its oversight. For serious ethical violations that occurred before 2022, FINCIS handles separate investigations upon request from a sports federation, for instance.

FINCIS has the authority to initiate investigations independently or upon request. The confidential investigation materials produced by FINCIS are also provided to the requesting party for potential further action. Decisions regarding serious ethical violations are not published by FINCIS; instead, publication decisions are made by the Olympic Committee, which administers the centralised disciplinary system.

Each sports federation is responsible for its coaching and education system, which varies from sport to sport. At the lower levels, coaches usually do not have formal qualifications, and the system heavily relies on volunteers, who are often parents. Usually, they have not followed any training, including on sport ethics. Clubs are not required to check the backgrounds of volunteer coaches, but they generally do so.

The League for Human Rights and their Don’t Break the Game project is noteworthy as it has raised awareness of human rights in sport and educated the sport sector for several years in large part as a result of Ministry support and grants.

Recommendations:

6.1 Strengthen safeguarding frameworks for vulnerable groups

- Expand and reinforce the initiatives of projects such as “You Are Not Alone” by ensuring sustainable funding and wider implementation across all levels of sport.
- Mandate comprehensive safeguarding training for volunteers, parents, and coaches, with specific focus on the protection of children, persons with disabilities, and migrants. These efforts should align with Article 6.2(d), which calls for zero tolerance of violence and discrimination.

6.2 Ensure integration of human rights in sports governance

- Build on the centralised disciplinary system to incorporate a human rights lens, ensuring accountability and transparency in addressing ethical violations.
- Introduce mandatory human rights assessments for sports federations receiving public funds, including adherence to gender equality and anti-discrimination objectives, as outlined in Article 6.2(a, e).

6.3 Invest in capacity building for ethical sport practices

- Establish partnerships with non-governmental organisations and international bodies to enhance human rights due diligence in Finnish sport. This can include adapting best practices to prevent rights violations in high-profile sporting events.
- Provide targeted support to smaller clubs and volunteer-based organisations to implement ethics and integrity training for coaches and volunteers. The training should emphasise the principles of non-discrimination, equality, and athlete well-being, consistent with Article 6.2(f, g).

12. 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.*

Section 2 of the Finnish Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity declares that one of the objectives of the Act is to promote “integrity and ethical principles in the context of physical activity and top-level sports.”

The FINCIS actively collaborates with various sports stakeholders to enhance expertise in sports ethics. Key partners in this co-operation include sports federations, sports institutes, other institutions, and the Olympic and Paralympic Committees. Additionally, FINCIS engages with other societal entities, such as the Family Federation of Finland (Väestöliitto), to jointly work on preventing harassment and inappropriate behaviour. The National Olympic Committee’s [sustainability programme](#) for the sport community is also worth mention for its ethical perspective. Another best practice in sport ethics would be the noteworthy [You are not alone](#) service established by sport federations and the Olympic Committee.

The FINCIS has also conducted several research studies, including a research review titled “Vaikeneminen ei ole vaihtoehto” (‘Silence is not an option’; available only in Finnish), which summarises the latest international research on harassment and bullying in sport and exercise.

Published in 2022, a study on athletes’ experiences of positive and negative treatment in Finnish competitive sports surveyed over 2,000 athletes regarding inappropriate treatment. Another study from the same year examined the experiences and observations of sports

community employees regarding inappropriate treatment in their work environment. Both reports are available in Finnish, with English summaries.

In 2020, a study on harassment in Finnish competitive sports investigated the prevalence of sexual and gender-based harassment.

Recommendations:

7.1 Expand ethics education in grassroots and competitive sports

- Develop and integrate sports ethics curricula at all levels of sports participation, emphasising values such as respect, integrity, inclusion, and teamwork. This aligns with Article 7.2, which stresses awareness and learning opportunities.
- Leverage findings from FINCIS research to create targeted programmes for athletes, coaches, and administrators, addressing harassment and inappropriate behaviour while promoting ethical principles.

7.2 Promote evidence-based programmes and best practices

- Broaden the dissemination of studies like *"Silence is not an Option"* and surveys on harassment, ensuring their findings guide national and local sports policy.
- Establish partnerships with educational institutions and international organisations to adopt evidence-based approaches to teaching ethics through sport, enhancing FINCIS's collaborative efforts with societal entities.

7.3 Strengthen ethical oversight and reporting mechanisms

- Ensure all sports organisations implement mandatory ethics training for stakeholders, using tools such as workshops and e-learning modules developed in co-operation with FINCIS and other entities.
- Create a national reporting system for ethical violations in sport, linked to awareness campaigns that encourage athletes and personnel to speak up against unethical practices, building on the success of Finland's studies on harassment and workplace experiences.

13. 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 co-operate 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.*

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for implementing the European Anti-Doping Convention, as well as the Manipulation of Sport Competitions Convention (Macolin Convention) signed in 2014 (though not ratified). The Ministry of the Interior, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Culture, is responsible for implementing the Saint-Denis Convention (Safety, Security, and Service).

At the operational level, sport integrity issues in Finland are managed by the Finnish Center for Integrity in Sports (FINCIS), in collaboration with other sports organisations. FINCIS is responsible for implementing international treaties on anti-doping activities, the manipulation of sports competitions, and spectator security and safety in Finland. Additionally, FINCIS supports ethics in sport in co-operation with other parties and actively initiates and participates in related discussions. Established in 2016 from the Finnish Anti-Doping Agency following a feasibility study on restructuring sports ethical administration in Finland, FINCIS operates alongside the Ministry's Advisory Board on Ethics in Sport. This Board comprises representatives from public authorities (Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Ministry of the Interior) and NGOs (Save the Children Finland, The Finnish League for Human Rights, LGBTI Rights in Finland – SETA, National Olympic Committee, Finnish Paralympic Committee, Athlete's representative, Finnish Athletics Federation, Finnish Basketball Association, Finnish Floorball Federation, Finnish Wrestling Association, Finnish Coaches Association, and FINCIS). NGO representatives serve four-year terms, currently mandated until 2027. FINCIS also closely co-operates with the police, customs, and other law enforcement agencies.

The Board meets regularly and has an annual plan for its activities, allowing flexibility for urgent matters. It monitors and develops joint activities with sports and public authorities, oversees international co-operation, and issues recommendations and initiatives. The Board also makes statements, including on international topics, such as the football team's training in Qatar.

Its sub-committee, the National Platform referred to in the Convention on Manipulation of Sport Competitions (Article 13), includes representatives from FINCIS (Chair and Secretary), the Office of the Prosecutor General, the National Police Board, the National Bureau of Investigation, the National Lottery, the National Olympic Committee, the Finnish Professional Footballers Association, the Finnish Football Association, the Finnish Ice-Hockey Federation, the Finnish Basketball Association, and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The National Platform's responsibilities include developing a monitoring system and risk analysis for sports rules, co-ordinating the exchange of relevant information and activities, preparing national development initiatives for the Finnish Advisory Board on Sport Ethics, and collaborating with

national and international stakeholders. The fight against match-fixing is also one of the measures in the national anti-corruption strategies.

Recommendations:

8.1 Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (Macolin Convention).

8.2 Strengthen multistakeholder co-operation on sport integrity

- Enhance the operational collaboration between FINCIS, law enforcement, and sports organisations to ensure robust prevention and response mechanisms against threats like doping, match-fixing, and harassment. This aligns with Article 8.2, emphasising multistakeholder initiatives and transparency.
- Promote the ratification of the Macolin Convention on Manipulation of Sports Competitions to bolster international co-operation and alignment with European standards.

8.3 Expand awareness and education initiatives on sports integrity

- Develop targeted educational programmes, including workshops and e-learning tools, for athletes, coaches, and sports administrators. These should focus on ethical behaviour, whistleblowing, and recognising manipulation in sport.
- Integrate gender and youth mainstreaming into all awareness campaigns to address issues such as gender inequality and youth-specific vulnerabilities in sports ethics.

8.4 Implement advanced monitoring and reporting systems

- Leverage technology to establish a real-time risk assessment and monitoring system for match-fixing and manipulation, co-ordinated by the National Platform under FINCIS.
- Introduce an anonymous, accessible reporting platform for ethical violations in sport, ensuring confidentiality and protection for whistle-blowers, thereby supporting Article 8.2's call for proactive integrity measures.

14. 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.*
- e. 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.*

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established in 2015, set a core framework for public and private actions. Since the adoption of the SDGs, sustainability has increasingly become a fundamental component of responsible governance and business conduct. Achieving these internationally established goals requires both state-led public engagement and private efforts.

In recent years, the international world of sport has embraced this task. Initially, the focus was on the economic and ecological aspects of sustainability. More recently, there has been growing attention to the social dimension, particularly the protection and respect for human rights. This has created a strong impetus to advance related developments at the national level.

During their 17th Council of Europe Conference on 26 October 2022 in Antalya, Türkiye, the Ministers responsible for Sport reaffirmed their commitment in Resolution 2, "Rethinking Sport: Leading the Way for a Healthy and Sustainable Future," to support the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within the sports sector. They recognised the close interrelationship between healthy environmental conditions, sporting activities, and the need to integrate sustainable development principles into sport.

The Ministers resolved to facilitate access to sport and physical activity for all members of society. This includes investing in sustainable infrastructures that are accessible to everyone, encompassing public facilities and services for sport and physical activity.

The Finnish government has focused on achieving sustainability through legislation and has produced guidelines to reduce the ecological footprint of school sport activities and events, incorporating these into funding criteria. For instance, one of the criteria for distributing government grants to sports organisations is ecological sustainability. The Ministry of Education and Culture also considers sustainable economic development and ecological impact when distributing grants for organising sports events in Finland.

Additionally, the Ministry provides financial assistance for research and development projects aimed at improving expertise in the construction and quality of sports facilities. These projects promote safety, accessibility, and environmental friendliness. Research is conducted by research institutes and higher education institutions, with findings influencing urban planning and the development, planning, construction, and use of sports facilities.

The Ministry of Education and Culture funds research and development projects aimed at enhancing expertise in the construction and quality of sports facilities, while also promoting their safety, accessibility, and environmental sustainability. Research is carried out by research institutes, higher education institutions, and third-sector organisations within the field. The findings are considered in urban planning and in the development, design, construction, and use of sports facilities. Various organisations publish guidelines on sports facility construction, with the Building Information Foundation RTS sr regularly issuing design standards for such facilities.

Recommendations:

9.1 Ecological Sustainability:

- Enhance the integration of circular economy principles in the design, construction, and maintenance of sports facilities. This includes using renewable materials, implementing energy-efficient systems, and developing a standardised framework for recycling and waste management in sports events and facilities. Expanding partnerships with private-sector stakeholders can accelerate the adoption of innovative green technologies within the sports industry.
- Strengthen multistakeholder co-operation on sport integrity
- Enhance the operational collaboration between FINCIS, law enforcement, and sports organisations to ensure robust prevention and response mechanisms against threats like doping, match-fixing, and harassment. This aligns with Article 8.2, emphasising multistakeholder initiatives and transparency.
- Promote the ratification of the Macolin Convention on Manipulation of Sports Competitions to bolster international co-operation and alignment with European standards.

9.2 Social Sustainability:

- Promote inclusivity by increasing investments in accessible sports infrastructure, ensuring that facilities cater to individuals with disabilities and marginalised communities. Public awareness campaigns and targeted programmes can further encourage participation in sports across all demographics, fostering social cohesion and well-being while aligning with the United Nations SDG principles of reducing inequality.

9.3 Economic Sustainability:

- Develop financial incentives for sports organisations and private companies to adopt sustainable practices, such as tax breaks for adhering to green standards or prioritising sustainable urban development in sports-related projects. Additionally, encourage research and partnerships between academia, businesses, and government entities to create economically viable solutions for sustainable sports infrastructure and operations.

15. 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.*

The Finnish Sports Act clearly states several objectives, including providing opportunities for various demographic groups to engage in physical activity, supporting the growth and development of children and young people, and promoting greater equality in sport and physical activity. These efforts are based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion, multiculturalism, healthy lifestyles, respect for the environment, and sustainable development.

The right to sport is also guaranteed through school education, and the government provides financial support to sports clubs to develop low-threshold activities for children and young people.

Recommendations:

- 10.1 Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to eliminate barriers to sports participation based on economic, social, or cultural factors. This could include increasing subsidies for underprivileged families to access sports programmes and enhancing anti-discrimination policies within sports clubs and organisations. A national campaign promoting diversity and inclusion in sport could further raise awareness and encourage participation.
- 10.2 Continue to develop tailored sports programmes for specific demographic groups, such as pre-school children, older adults, and people with disabilities, ensuring their unique needs are met. Collaborate with local municipalities and community organisations to make sports facilities more accessible and inclusive, including adaptations for individuals with physical or cognitive impairments.
- 10.3 Increase funding and legal support for local sports clubs to maintain affordable and sustainable access for all participants. Expand school-based physical education initiatives, emphasising physical literacy, fitness, and fundamental movement skills. Establish partnerships with sports clubs to create pathways for young people to transition from school sports to community-based activities, fostering lifelong engagement in physical activity

16. 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.*

In Finland, physical education classes are mandatory. The aim of physical education is to enhance pupils' well-being by supporting their physical, social, and psychological functional capacity, as well as fostering a positive body image. Positive experiences in physical education lessons and promoting a physically active lifestyle are key components of the curriculum. Lessons emphasise physical elements, physical activity, and exercising together.

Physical education promotes equity, equality, togetherness, and supports cultural diversity. It is conducted safely and leverages the opportunities provided by different seasons and local conditions. School premises, local sports facilities, and nature are utilised diversely in teaching and learning. Pupils are guided to commit to a safe and ethically sustainable activity and learning environment.

Physical education has two main goals: guiding pupils in adopting a physically active lifestyle and educating them through physical activities. Factors contributing to a physically active lifestyle include age-appropriate physical activity, learning fundamental movement skills, and improving physical functional capacity through exercise. Pupils gain the knowledge and skills needed for various physical activities.

Learning through physical activities involves respectful interaction, responsibility, long-term self-development, emotional recognition and regulation, and developing a positive self-image. Physical education provides opportunities for joy, physical expression, participation, sociability, relaxation, playful competition, effort, and helping others. Through physical education, pupils learn ways to promote their health.

Teacher education system provide education for physical education teachers, as well as, on the job training.

In Finland, 72% of sports facilities are built and maintained by municipalities. Facilities connected to schools are available for use by sports clubs and the wider public after school hours. According to the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity, municipalities are responsible for building and maintaining sports facilities, providing a general basis for physical activities at the local level, and promoting physical activity among their residents. This includes organising physical activity services for different target groups (children, adults, older people, and people in need of special support) and supporting civil society activities, such as sport clubs.

There are about 9,000 sport clubs in Finland. The primary task of municipalities is to provide financial support for local sport clubs through general transfers. Additionally, these clubs can receive special governmental aid aimed at developing low-threshold activities for children and young people. However, during the meetings with different stakeholders, it seemed that this support is not enough to guarantee an affordable access to sport for everyone.

Recommendations:

- 11.1 Increase municipal and governmental funding for local sports clubs to ensure affordable access to sports facilities and programmes for all residents, especially children and young people. Consider implementing sliding-scale fees or free access initiatives for economically disadvantaged families. Enhance the shared use of school-based sports facilities by local clubs and the wider community during non-school hours.
- 11.2 Develop structured partnerships between schools and local sports clubs to create seamless pathways for continued sports participation beyond compulsory education. This could involve co-hosted events, joint coaching programmes, and integrated extracurricular sports activities. A mentorship programme connecting students with experienced athletes or coaches could also foster long-term engagement in sport.
- 11.3 Expand and incentivise training opportunities for physical education teachers and volunteer coaches (who are often parents) to adopt innovative and inclusive teaching methods. Encourage parents, teachers, and coaches to act as motivators for young people by providing workshops on fostering enthusiasm for physical activity. Additionally, introduce mandatory education on sports ethics and values from an early age to instil principles of fairness, respect, and responsibility in physical activities.
- 11.4 By addressing affordability, accessibility, and education, Finland can further strengthen the foundations for sports practice, ensuring that physical literacy, fitness, and lifelong participation in sports are attainable for everyone

17. 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 policy.*

The government that took office in 2023 launched the "Get Finland Moving" programme to encourage physical activity across the population, using a phenomenon-oriented approach with initiatives implemented through various government ministries and administrative sectors. The measures relate to the development of physical activity culture, physical activity counselling, conditions of physical activity, expertise related to physical activity, and taxation that encourages people to exercise. Eighty million euros have been set aside for funding the programme during the term of office, which is approximately 20 million euros per year. The programme can be divided into two areas: the first focuses on creating better conditions for exercising, and the second addresses the mindsets of people and communities. Additionally, there are 16 measures in the "Get Finland Moving" programme.

Moreover, the “Get Finland Moving” programme is related to other previously created programmes aimed at increasing physical activity and access to sport for all. These initiatives, known as the “On the Move” programmes, are cross-administrative, multiprofessional, network-based, and research-assisted, making them a successful approach to promoting physical activity.

In addition to physical activity, the programmes aim to promote learning, growth, and development of children and young people, physical fitness and work ability of working-age individuals, participation and community spirit, comprehensive health and well-being, and sustainable development. The foundation for these programmes lies in the former Government Programme (2019) and the preceding Report on Sport Policy (2018), which proposed expanding the "Schools on the Move" initiative to other age groups. The objective is to increase physical activity throughout life.

These programmes are complemented by the Finnish model for leisure activities, which aims to improve the well-being of children and youth. The goal is to provide every child and youth access to an enjoyable and free leisure activity at their school or nearby during the school day. The target group includes grades 1 through 9. Leisure activities are not limited to sport but also include cultural, scientific, artistic, and other activities based on the wishes of the children and youth.

The model combines consultation with children and youth on leisure activities, co-ordination of existing best practices and operating models, and collaboration between schools and leisure activity organisers. This programme was created after a successful piloting period in 2021, when 1,106 schools in 123 municipalities participated, offering leisure activities to 213,035 children and youths. The programme had a budget of 6,409,100 euros, with municipalities required to self-finance 20%.

The Finnish model for leisure activities has been and continues to be developed with the aim of establishing it as a permanent operating model in municipalities. The estimated budget for permanent funding is 14.5 million euros per year. The latest grant application period was in spring 2024.

Recommendations:

- 12.1 Encourage more workplaces to adopt physical activity initiatives as part of their wellness programmes by offering tax incentives or subsidies for employer-sponsored sports and fitness activities. Provide guidelines and support for companies to design inclusive programmes that cater to employees of all fitness levels, promoting long-term physical and mental health benefits.
- 12.2 Leverage the success of the "Get Finland Moving" and "On the Move" initiatives by increasing their budgets and enhancing collaboration between administrative sectors. Expand these programmes to target underrepresented groups, such as older adults and people with disabilities, ensuring that appropriate facilities, instructors, and tailored programmes are widely available.
- 12.3 Develop a national campaign to raise awareness of the importance of staying active at all stages of life, focusing on both the physical and mental health benefits of sport and recreation. Integrate this messaging with the Finnish model for leisure activities, creating a seamless transition from school-based programmes to lifelong participation in physical activity. Encourage municipalities to adopt this model permanently, ensuring every individual has access to enjoyable and inclusive leisure opportunities.

18. Article 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.*

In Finland, the national sports federations are responsible for developing their own top-level sports activities, including training and coaching systems. However, their activities are led and coordinated by the National Olympic Committee and its High-Performance Unit, which also oversees Paralympic sport. The main activities of the High-Performance Unit include managing the high-performance sports network, fostering inter-sport co-operation, providing efficiency support systems, and preparing teams for multi-sport competitions.

The Finnish Institute of High-Performance Sport (KIHU) and five Sports Medicine Centers provide expert services in top-level sport. KIHU plays a nationally leading role, offering specialised expertise, research and development services, and maintaining networks of experts.

Recommendations:

- 13.1 Expand national talent identification programmes to ensure broader outreach and inclusivity across various sports disciplines. Enhance collaboration between the Finnish Institute of High-Performance Sport (KIHU), sports federations, and local clubs to provide specialised support for emerging athletes, including tailored training programmes, psychological counselling, and mentorship initiatives led by experienced athletes.
- 13.2 Invest in upgrading and maintaining state-of-the-art training facilities that cater to the specific needs of high-performance athletes, including Paralympic participants. Support the integration of cutting-edge sports science and medicine into training regimens through the Sports Medicine Centers, ensuring athletes receive world-class care and injury prevention services.
- 13.3 Expand opportunities for advanced training and certification programmes for coaches and sports leaders, emphasising evidence-based and ethical coaching methods. Foster inter-sport collaboration to share best practices and innovative coaching techniques. Introduce incentive programmes to attract and retain top coaching talent while supporting ongoing professional development.

19. 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.*

The Ministry of Education and Culture supports top-level sports in Finland through various scholarships and by establishing educational institutions and specialised training programmes for coaches aimed at top-level performance. The Ministry's direct support primarily targets

elite sport under the Finnish Olympic Committee and its elite sports unit. The Ministry awards athlete grants to approximately 260 elite athletes, ensuring they can pursue comprehensive training programmes. However, the central government does not provide financial support to promote for-profit professional sports.

The Ministry also awards discretionary government grants to sports institute training centers and sports academies. These academies and high-performance training centers serve as development environments for athletes and sports. This common network is led by the High-Performance Unit, with each entity having its own roles and responsibilities. The sports academies allow students to focus on sport while studying. Together with the sports institutes, they form a comprehensive network supporting Finland's dual career system, starting in lower secondary school and continuing through athletes' career transitions once their elite sports careers have ended. In total, the Finnish dual career network includes over 100 lower secondary sports schools (~10,000 athletes), 31 upper secondary sports institutions (~6,000 athletes), and about 1,500 athletes in higher education. Additionally, over 1,000 coaches and 300 coaching experts are involved. Funding for this system has increased from 800,000 euros in 2013 to 4 million euros in 2021.

There are 12 educational sports institutes (9 national, 3 regional), which serve as training centers for elite athletes and leisure centers for the general public throughout Finland. They offer sports-related upper secondary and vocational further education and training, as well as non-formal education for youth and adults. The national institutes have dormitories, while the regional ones offer only day training. Funding is allocated in the form of central government transfers and can be divided into:

- Vocational education ~ 18 million euros (not in the sports budget)
- Liberal education ~ 18 million euros (in the sports budget)

Some of the institutes are included in the sports academy network.

Sports academies provide talented athletes the opportunity to combine ambitious sports training with studies, forming the first step in the Finnish dual career system. There are 19 National Sports Academies. According to the Ministry, these academies are national and regional co-operative bodies that build networks and provide sports-related activities in collaboration with municipalities, lower secondary schools, upper secondary sports institutions, higher educational institutions, sports federations, and sports clubs.

Recommendations:

- 14.1 Enhance the dual career system by expanding partnerships between sports academies, educational institutions, and private sector employers. Develop mentorship and career counselling programmes for athletes to ensure seamless integration into society post-retirement, focusing on transferable skills and career development opportunities. Increase funding to support athletes pursuing higher education while training at elite levels.
- 14.2 Establish an independent oversight body to ensure that professional athletes' rights are upheld, including protections against exploitation, fair compensation, and equitable representation in decision-making processes. Advocate for stronger social dialogue between professional sports bodies, athletes' unions, and international governing organisations to standardise ethical practices and improve working conditions in professional sports.
- 14.3 Ensure that competition structures prioritise sporting merit by creating transparent selection processes for athletes and teams. Invest in the development of regional and national-level competitions to serve as steppingstones to professional leagues and international events, especially for underrepresented sports. Promote collaboration between local and national sports organisations to balance the interests of individual athletes, local teams, and national representation.

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.*

There are around 46,000 registered sports facilities in Finland, approximately 72% of which are built and maintained by municipalities. Privately-run sports facilities, mainly located in cities and towns, complement the supply of municipal sports facilities.

The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional State Administrative Agencies allocate grants for projects to build sport and recreational facilities. Most financial aid is granted to projects that serve large groups of users, such as swimming pools, gyms, outdoor sports facilities and ice rinks, as well as for the construction, renovation, or repair of local sport and physical activity facilities.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is the government aid authority for projects where the cost estimate exceeds EUR 1200 000. For projects with a cost estimate under EUR 1 200 000, the relevant Regional State Administrative Agency is the aid authority. Projects eligible for financial aid are first listed in a four-year financial plan for sport and physical activity facilities. These plans are drawn up only for projects within the remit of the Ministry of Education and Culture and are indicative, being reviewed each year.

Aid applications are submitted to the relevant Regional State Administrative Agency, which arranges the projects in order of priority. The Ministry of Education and Culture then drafts a national proposal for all projects within its remit and requests a statement on the proposals from the National Sports Council. The Ministry of Education and Culture also provides grants for research and development projects aimed at improving expertise in the construction of sports facilities and enhancing the quality, safety, accessibility, and environmental friendliness of these facilities.

During the meeting with the local municipality, it was acknowledged that the accessibility of sports infrastructure might be an issue. In discussions with sports organisations, it was noted that at lower levels, the requirement for qualified security personnel at sports competitions was deemed unnecessary.

Recommendations:

- 15.1 Develop a national accessibility strategy for sports facilities to ensure equitable access for individuals with disabilities and disadvantaged groups. Provide targeted funding and guidance for municipalities and private facility owners to retrofit existing facilities and incorporate accessibility standards in new projects. Additionally, encourage community feedback mechanisms to identify and address specific accessibility challenges.
- 15.2. Introduce a centralised digital platform to co-ordinate the use of sports facilities, enabling better planning and full utilisation across municipalities and private providers. Include safety and security training modules for facility managers and event organisers to ensure compliance with safety protocols without imposing excessive requirements, such as unnecessary use of qualified security personnel at lower-level competitions.
- 15.3. Incorporate sustainability as a core criterion for grants allocated to the construction and renovation of sports facilities. Encourage the creation of multi-use facilities that cater to diverse groups and activities, ensuring cost-effective and inclusive solutions that serve broad demographic and geographic needs. Promote research into eco-friendly construction practices and incentivise projects that minimise environmental impact while meeting local and regional requirements.

20. 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.*

In universities and sports institutes in Finland, it is possible to study coaching and sports instruction. For physical education teachers, there is a mandatory curriculum, but in the sports sector, there is no unified qualification requirement.

Each sports federation is responsible for its coaching and education system, which vary from sport to sport. At lower levels, coaches usually do not have formal qualifications, and the system heavily relies on volunteers, who are often parents. Clubs are not required to check the backgrounds of volunteer coaches, but this practice is generally followed.

In addition to the federations, there is a Coaches Association whose mission is to promote coaches' competencies, appreciation, and community. The Finnish Coaches Association helps its members develop their skills, succeed, and gain recognition, though it is not a trade union. They run various projects such as "Coach Like a Woman" and the "Young Coaches Project."

In elite sport, coaches receive formal education. However, as the training programmes are developed by each federation, the emphasis on human rights, integrity, and sustainability in coach training depends on the federation. Many federations met by the evaluation team are already incorporating these elements.

The National Olympic Committee (NOC) estimates that there are 6,000 people employed in the field of sport in Finland, while around 500,000 people volunteer. The biggest area where volunteers are utilised is in sports events. The education of volunteers is carried out by the sports federation, the respective competition organisers, or the clubs where the volunteers are active.

Recommendations:

- 16.1 Introduce a national framework for coaching and sports leadership qualifications to standardise training across all sports federations. This framework should emphasise ethics, human rights, integrity, sustainability, and child safeguarding, ensuring consistency in education for both professionals and volunteers.
- 16.2 Mandate background checks for all coaches and volunteers working with minors or vulnerable groups and require minimum certification for coaches at all levels. Incorporate training on ethical practices, safeguarding, and inclusivity as prerequisites for coaching and leadership roles.
- 16.3 Create a national initiative to recruit, train, and retain volunteers by offering structured education in areas like sports ethics, safety, and event management. Recognise volunteers' contributions through certifications, awards, or incentives to encourage continued participation and engagement.

21. 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.*

The Finnish government promotes, supports, and disseminates scientific research in the field of sports through public funding and partnerships with academia, sports organisations, and other relevant public authorities. They also collect and disseminate relevant sports data through sports organisation reports, national monitoring systems, and partnerships with universities.

Recommendations:**17.1 Enhance technological integration in sports data management**

- Establish a centralised digital platform that integrates sports data collection, analysis, and dissemination, leveraging advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence to support research, policy development, and public access to information.

17.2 Promote multidisciplinary research in sport

- Increase funding through sponsorship for collaborative research initiatives between academia, sports organisations, and public authorities, focusing on emerging trends, health impacts, ethical governance, and innovations in sports technology to ensure evidence-based policy-making.

17.3 Foster international research and knowledge exchange

- Strengthen international partnerships and participation in global research networks to share best practices, disseminate research findings, and address cross-border challenges in sport, such as inclusivity, sustainability, and technological advancements.

22. 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.*

In Finland, the annual state budget devoted to sport and physical activity is 165 million euros and it is divided as it is seen in this table below:

Entities funded	Percentage of funding of each source
Sports federations	24%
Sports clubs	2%
National Olympic Committee	4%
National Paralympic Committee	1%
Other entities, e.g. facilities, other organisations, FINCIS, municipalities, sport institutes, research etc	70%

The government has encouraged private sponsorships in Finland. According to the report on Finnish Elite Sports, 162 million euros of private sponsorship was distributed in Finland in 2019, slightly more than the financial support provided by state funds in the same year. Compared to other Nordic countries, private investment in Finland has grown faster, but they remain smaller overall.

Special provisions are established in legislation for sports lotteries and operators, while additional secondary legislation offers financial incentives to contributors, encouraging support for grassroots sports.

Recommendations:

- 18.1 Encourage stronger collaboration between public bodies and private sponsors to support both grassroots and high-level sports. Develop mechanisms to ensure a more balanced distribution of resources, focusing on both social inclusivity and elite sports development.
- 18.2 Strengthen public measures to ensure that financial support for sporting events aligns with environmental sustainability and promotes social benefits. Establish criteria for evaluating the long-term impact of events on community well-being and sustainability.
- 18.3 Ensure a clear and transparent system for allocating funding across various sporting entities, such as sports federations, clubs, and facilities, with a focus on equitable distribution that supports all levels of sport, including grassroots and disability sports.

23. 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.*

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture has effective horizontal and vertical co-operation structures in place. The Ministry closely interacts with other ministries and state institutions to promote sport and physical activity, primarily through various established structures, such as the National Sports Council, LIPOKO, and the Advisory Board for Ethics in Sport. These structures also include vertical co-operation, involving many sports organisations and other relevant entities depending on the topic. The main partner among sports organisations is the National Olympic Committee (NOC), but regular consultations are also held with other organisations. Several policies also require close co-operation with regional state administrative agencies and local municipalities.

Internationally, Finland is actively represented in all different organisations – Council of Europe, European Union, different United Nations forums, UNESCO, Nordic Co-operation and Arctic/Barents Co-operation.

Recommendations:

- 19.1 Enhance the existing co-ordination structures at national, regional, and local levels to ensure effective collaboration among all stakeholders in the development and promotion of sport. This includes increasing the involvement of municipalities and local sports organisations in decision-making processes.
- 19.2 Promote deeper collaboration with international sports organisations, focusing on sharing best practices and implementing education programmes that align with global and continental objectives. Strengthen partnerships with global entities such as the Council of Europe, EU, and United Nations bodies to enhance Finland's influence and contribution to international sports development.
- 19.3 Ensure stronger vertical integration between various levels of government (national, regional, local) and sports organisations, fostering more comprehensive and inclusive approaches to sports development and policy-making.

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

1. *The Council of Europe as a whole 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.*

In Finland, the principles of the ESC are included in their sport policy. The ESC has been introduced to sport organisations.

Recommendations:**20.1 Strengthen engagement with international frameworks**

- Finland should enhance its active participation in the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) to exchange best practices, monitor progress, and support the promotion of the European Sports Charter principles through dedicated multilateral and country-specific activities.

20.2 Develop a comprehensive monitoring system

- Establish a robust national monitoring and reporting mechanism to assess the implementation of the European Sports Charter in Finland, ensuring alignment with its principles on health, inclusion, education, human rights, and governance, while addressing threats to sports integrity.

20.3 Promote awareness and integration

- Increase awareness and understanding of the European Sports Charter among all stakeholders in Finnish sport, including grassroots organisations and policymakers, by integrating its principles more explicitly into strategies, programmes, and training initiatives across sectors.

25. Summary of the findings and recommendations

Based on the questionnaire, documents and other information provided by the hosts and gathered during the visit, the evaluation team is in opinion that the Finnish government has quite successfully implemented the values of the European Sports Charter within their policies and practices. Finland ensures that every individual can participate in sport by meeting several important criteria. Firstly, all young people receive physical education instruction at educational institutions, with access to opportunities to develop physical literacy, physical fitness, and fundamental movement skills. The Finnish model, which engages nearly all sectors in promoting physical activity, is truly remarkable. Additionally, everyone has the chance to take part in sport within a safe, secure, and healthy environment.

The development of sport in Finland is inclusive and regularly evaluated and monitored to ensure continuous improvement. Moreover, individuals have the opportunity to enhance their performance in sport beyond recreational purposes, achieving personal excellence in an ethical, fair, and responsible manner. The Finnish governments and sport movement's efforts to guarantee sports integrity are noteworthy.

Finland is also committed to protecting and developing values-based sport, which is essential for maximising the individual and social benefits of sport. This commitment includes protecting the human rights of those involved in or exposed to sport-related activities and promoting ethical conduct and behaviour among all participants. The integrity of sports organisations, competitions, and participants is safeguarded, and all sports activities are aligned with the principles of sustainable development.

While Finland demonstrates strong policies and practices in sports governance, the review identified several areas for improvement. The team offers the following recommendations:

1. International commitments: Finland is encouraged to ratify key international conventions, including the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (Macolin Convention) and the Additional Protocol to the Anti-Doping Convention. These steps will strengthen the country's commitment to integrity in sports.
2. Sports organisation autonomy: It is suggested that Finland reviews whether the independence and autonomy of sports organisations can be further enhanced, particularly in policy areas that may influence them. The visiting team noted that sports organisations' autonomy is well-respected, but continual evaluation is advisable.
3. Private sponsorship: Finland is encouraged to conduct an analysis on how private sponsorships in sport can be improved, promoting more robust financial support for sports organisations.
4. Coaching standards and volunteer involvement: The team recommends making background checks mandatory for coaches. Additionally, while volunteer involvement is highly valued, a centralised system should ensure that volunteers, particularly coaches, possess the necessary skills and competencies, with a focus on Education, Sustainability, and Citizenship components like human rights, ethics, and integrity.
5. Participation in the Saint-Denis Convention: Consider increasing the Ministry of Education and Culture's participation in the work of the Saint-Denis Convention, enhancing Finland's role in promoting safety and security in sport.
6. Accessibility and affordability of sport: It is recommended to implement measures to reduce the cost of sports clubs, making them more accessible to children, young people, and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Supporting municipalities and sports facility owners in improving the accessibility of sports infrastructure is also advised.
7. Data transparency: To promote transparency and innovation in sports, Finland is encouraged to make sports data more accessible to the public.
8. Security requirements at lower-level competitions: Finland could reconsider the necessity for qualified security personnel at lower-level competitions, which may be deemed excessive in certain cases.

To further increase visibility and awareness of the ESC, the Finnish version of the Charter could be distributed more widely among sports organisations and other relevant institutions and incorporated into the broader national sports framework, including established training and education formats. Supporting the Council of Europe's efforts to continuously review the uptake and implementation of the ESC based on national learnings is recommended. Additionally, updates on the implementation of the recommendations of this report should be provided to EPAS.

Acknowledgments

The preparations for the visit were first-rate. The team was made to feel extremely welcome and would like to thank all those who contributed to the preparation of the visit and to the visit itself. In particular, it would like to thank the Minister, as well as Tiina Kivisaari, Satu Heikkinen, and the whole team for their co-ordination of the visit, the hospitality received, their valuable support, and their readiness to provide the team with all the necessary information.

Appendices

Appendix I - Sports Law

Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity (390/2015)



Act on the promotion
of sports and physical

26. Appendix II – Programme of the 18-19 April 2024 visit

Draft Programme

Implementation of the revised European Sports Charter Support and Follow up in Finland - evaluation visit

18 - 19 April 2024

Thursday 18 April 2024 – Ministry of Education and Culture Meritullinkatu 10, Helsinki

9.00 – 12.50 Meeting with Minister and Sports Division, room Labor (ESC, all articles)

- Sandra Bergqvist, Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Activity (10:00 – 11:15)
- Tiina Kivisaari, Director, Sports Division
- Experts from the Sports Division
 - o Satu Heikkinen, Senior Ministerial Adviser
 - o Mikko Helasvuo, Senior Ministerial Adviser
 - o Kari Niemi-Nikkola, Senior Specialist
 - o Samuli Rasila, Senior Specialist
 - o Hannu Tolonen, Senior Specialist
- Get Finland Moving programme / Minttu Korsberg, Secretary General
- National Sports Council /Toni Piispanen, Secretary General
- Jamk University of Applied Sciences/Kati Lehtonen, Principal Researcher (art. 16-17)

13.00 - 14.15 Lunch with Petteri Huurre / City of Helsinki, Sport department (ESC art. 3, 10-12, 15)

14.30 - 16.30 Meeting with coordinating bodies and representatives of other public authorities, room Potentia (ESC, art. 3, 6-9,19)

- Board of Sport Ethics
 - o Chair Antti Aine, Professor, University of Turku
 - o Secretary Teemu Japisson, Secretary General/FINCIS
 - o Member representative Kerttu Tarjamo, Secretary General/Seta- LGBTI Rights in Finland (by Teams)
- Co-ordination body for sport policy (LIPOKO)
 - o Ministry of Health and Social Affairs / Sirpa Sarlio, Ministerial Adviser
 - o Ministry of Finance / Jussi Lammasaari, Ministerial Adviser (by Teams)
- Ministry of Justice / Venla Mäntysalo, Senior Specialist

17.00 – 17.45 Visit the Helsinki Olympic Stadium and the sport museum Tahto/Kalle Rantala, Head of Exhibitions

18.00 – 19.00 Visit Liikuntamyylly sports centre (sport for all activities) (address: Myllypurontie 1, <https://liikunta.hel.fi/en>, <https://www.myhelsinki.fi/see-and-do/activities/liikuntamyylly>) (ESC art.10)

19.30 - Dinner hosted by Esko Ranto, Director General/Ministry of Education and Culture

Friday 19 April 2024 – Metropolitan Sports Academy Urhea / National Olympic Training Centre, Address: Mäkeläkatu 47, Helsinki

09.00 – 11.30 Site visit and discussions with representatives of

- Sports Academy Urhea / Juha Dahlström, Vice CEO
 - Finnish Coaches Association /Toni Kallio, President
 - Foundation 'Ura' (promotes athletes' careers)/Tuuli Merikoski
 - National Olympic Committee /Taina Susiluoto, CEO
 - National Paralympic Committee /Riikka Juntunen; Secretary General
 - Sport federations
 - o Finnish Basketball Association /Kati Packalén, CEO
 - o Finnish Gymnastics Federation / Maria Laakso, Secretary General
 - o Finnish Football Federation/Marco Casagrande, Secretary General (by Teams)
 - Athletes/Henri Kantonen (basket, professional) and Kira Kaipainen (athlete, high-school student)
 - YLE (media company) / Joose Palonen, Head of Sport (after 11)
- (ESC art. 4-5, (6-9), 10-14, 16)

11.30 – 12.30 Lunch at Urhea/Swimming centre

- o Vili Nurmi, Sales Manager / SM-liiga (ice-hockey league)
- o Matti Pietilä, Counsellor/Finnish National Agency for Education

13.00 – 14.00 School visit (incl. PE and School on the Move –activities, Laura Pirhonen, Finnish National Agency for Education) (ESC art. 10-11)

14:30 – 16.30 Visit to some grassroots activities organised by clubs and the city of Espoo (Leppävaara, Espoo)

16.30 – 17.00 Final questions (Ministry of Education and Culture reps) and debrief

27. Appendix III - Council of Europe Team

The ESC implementation exercise on the European Sports Charter was co-organised by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) of the Council of Europe and the Sports Division in the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

Composition of the team:

1. Kaarel Nestor (Estonia) – Governing Board member and Rapporteur for the visit
2. Diana Santos (Portugal) – Chair of the visit
3. Hugh Torrance – Consultative Committee member– European Gay and Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF)

For the Council of Europe/EPAS:

1. Irena Guidikova (Head of Department – Democratic Institutions and Freedoms)
2. Cassandra Mactavish (Senior Project Officer)