

North-South Dialogues 2025

From competition to cooperation:

The power of sport as a tool for development and inclusion

Strasbourg, France, 21 May

Concept note

In 2024, in response to today's tense and rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, the North-South Centre (NSC) launched the "[North-South Dialogues](#)", an initiative that emphasises the need for deeper dialogue to address critical issues in North-South relations.

The North-South Dialogues bring together stakeholders from Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and beyond, to explore opportunities for cooperation and address shared challenges. By identifying key areas of contention and fostering collaborative solutions, these discussions aim to build trust and strengthen partnerships, in line with values and standards of the Council of Europe that are shared in other regions.

In 2025, inspired by the exemplary work of the 2024 North-South Prize laureates— Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, United Nations Under-Secretary-General holding the post of High Representative for the [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations \(UNAOC\)](#), and the initiative enabling refugees to compete in the Olympic and Paralympic Games (led by the [International Olympic Committee](#), the [Olympic Refugee Foundation](#), and the [International Paralympic Committee](#))—the Dialogues will focus on values-based sport and its power as a tool for development and inclusion.

As Nelson Mandela once said, "sport has the power to change the world". Sport has become a powerful force in people's personal, social, and professional lives. As its influence grows, so do legal and human rights issues in sport. Globally, the sport community faces significant challenges, including discrimination, exploitation, health and safety risks, and corruption. But first and foremost, sport also serves as a social, educational, cultural, and economic asset, promoting universal values such as fairness, respect, and equality. Events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games exemplify sport's unifying power, bringing millions together across borders and cultures.

The Council of Europe significantly contributes to promoting values-based sport and integrity through international standards, including the [European Sports Charter](#), the [Anti-Doping Convention](#), the [Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions \(Macolin\)](#), and the [Convention on Safety, Security, and Service at Sports Events \(St. Denis\)](#). These open conventions integrate human rights, anti-corruption measures, and athlete safeguarding policies into sports practices. By emphasising education, collaboration with international organisations, and innovative approaches to emerging issues like match-fixing and athletes' mental health, the Council of Europe stands as one of the global actors in fostering ethical sports practices.

Other regional and international organisations contribute to this field promoting inclusive and values-driven sports development. The [Olympic Charter](#) is key among these standards which sets forth and recalls the fundamental principles and essential values of Olympism. [UNESCO's International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport](#) and the [Kazan Action Plan](#) align global sports policies

with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on inclusion and integrity, with landmark initiatives such as its “fit for life” project. Similarly, the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) advances these values through the [“Sport for One Humanity”](#) initiative. The African Union, through the [African Union Sports Council \(AUSC\)](#), highlights sport as a tool for social cohesion, peace, and integration. The League of Arab States promotes sport and cultural activities to strengthen regional ties. [Commonwealth Sport](#) harnesses sport’s power to unite communities and promote values of equality and inclusion, with the Commonwealth Games and other initiatives driving social change. Similarly, the [Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie \(OIF\)](#) promotes the use of sport as a means of fostering development, cultural exchange, and youth engagement among French-speaking nations, with initiatives focused on inclusion and ethical governance in sport.

Organised by the North-South Centre, in collaboration with the [Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport \(EPAS\)](#), the North-South Dialogues 2025 will bring together high-profile figures, athletes, and the expertise of leading organisations in the field of sport. The discussions will highlight the transformative power of sport in promoting education, inclusion, and integrity, while also addressing urgent human rights challenges in sport and examining the legal frameworks designed to overcome them.