



## Resolution 1602 (2008)<sup>1</sup>

# The need to preserve the European Sport Model

### Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has been instrumental in upholding the values of the Council of Europe: democracy, human rights, the rule of law and respect for cultural diversity. Such values are also present in the ways in which sport is organised in Europe: what is commonly known as the European sports model.
2. The European sports model is neither homogeneous nor perfect. It is, however, deeply rooted in European civil society and is an important expression of European culture and the European attitude towards sporting values. It is a democratic model that serves to ensure sport remains open to everyone.
3. It includes all levels of professional and amateur, team and individual, high-level and grass-roots sport, and it is underpinned by the twin principles of financial solidarity and openness of competition (promotion and relegation, opportunity for all).
4. Sport undoubtedly has a specific nature that sets it apart from any other field of economic activity. It has important social, educational and cultural functions. Solidarity between different levels in sport (in particular, between professional and amateur) is a fundamental aspect of the European sports model.
5. The independent nature of sport and sports bodies must be supported and protected, and their autonomy to organise the sport for which they are responsible should be recognised. The federation must continue to be the key form of sporting organisation, providing a guarantee of cohesion and participatory democracy.
6. The preservation of the European sports model is the best means of safeguarding the interests of sport and the benefits that sport delivers to society.
7. The European sports model should enable dialogue and exchange between the professional and the grass-roots levels of sport. This feature of the European sports model is an important means to ensure the healthy development of sport.
8. There is no doubt that the professional level of sport has become more and more of a business and this negative trend has become particularly marked in the last two decades. We have witnessed the internationalisation of sport and, above all, the unprecedented development of the economic dimension of sport, driven in particular by the value of television rights.
9. Recent scandals in several European countries, involving illegal betting and manipulation of results, have seriously damaged the image of sport in Europe. A number of mutually-reinforcing mechanisms are needed to reduce the risk of match fixing, illegal betting or other forms of corruption. These problems will require the more active involvement of state authorities.
10. The problem of “trafficking” young athletes has become apparent in many European countries. It seems that international networks, co-ordinated by agents based in Europe, have started to manage this “business”, especially in relation to young athletes coming from Africa and Latin America.
11. The current European sports framework is not sufficiently adapted to deal with this matter and closer collaboration between the European sports authorities and public authorities is necessary.

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1. Assembly debate on 24 January 2008 (7th Sitting) (see [Doc.11467](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Arnaut). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 January 2008 (7th Sitting).



12. Part of the social function of sport is to foster integration and bring people together from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that sports events have often witnessed outbreaks of racism and xenophobia. This is part of a more general problem in society, also sometimes related to the problem of hooliganism.

13. Doping has been a recurrent problem in many sports. The Council of Europe has been addressing this problem for many years, particularly through its Anti-Doping Convention of 1989 (ETS No. 135). Europe has the highest standards in fighting against doping in sport and these are an integral part of the European sports model. Co-operation within the World Anti-Doping Agency is essential not only to preserve, but also to try to extend, such standards to other regions.

14. The Assembly welcomes the setting up in 2007 of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), which now has the following members: Andorra, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, San Marino, Slovenia, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", and the United Kingdom. Serbia will join in 2008.

15. The Assembly welcomes the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community (EC), particularly the amendments to Article 149 EC, including sport in the primary law of the European Union and the insertion of Article 188 P stressing the need for appropriate forms of co-operation between the European Union and the Council of Europe. Sport must be one of the main fields of that co-operation.

16. The Parliamentary Assembly therefore urges the governments of member states to:

16.1. uphold the European sports model based on the twin principles of financial solidarity and openness of competition (promotion and relegation, opportunity for all);

16.2. acknowledge and give practical effect to the specificity of sport and protect the autonomy of sports federations (governing bodies);

16.3. recognise the priceless contribution of hundreds of thousands of volunteers in the field of sport and support them whenever necessary by fiscal or other means;

16.4. accede to the EPAS if they have not yet done so.

17. Finally, the Assembly addresses the European sport bodies and urges them to:

17.1. ensure internal democracy, transparency and good governance along the Council of Europe guidelines;

17.2. work together with all interested stakeholders in their respective sports in order to preserve and strengthen the European sports model while recognising the diversity that exists between and within different sports in Europe.