



Doc. 15426

06 January 2022

Sports policies in times of crisis

Report¹

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Rapporteur: Mr Carlos Alberto GONÇALVES, Portugal, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has completely disrupted the world of sport and decisive action is now needed to preserve sport and physical activity as factors for human development and personal and collective well-being, as well as for social development and economic growth.

The report invites member States to incorporate sport into recovery and resilience mechanisms and to integrate sport support measures into economic and social sustainable development strategies, to support the recovery of grassroots sport. Efforts should be made to develop funding support schemes, paying particular attention to small grassroots clubs and the most vulnerable people, not forgetting women's sport; promote the development of sports infrastructure; help low-income families to access sporting activities; adopt incentive measures to improve provision and value sport and physical education in the context of education systems.

The report also calls on public authorities and sports organisations to work together to create the conditions that facilitate and normalise access to physical activity and sport and urges the sports movement to seek out, within the framework of inclusive processes, balanced solutions, so that sports competitions can take place safely, for the athletes and the public alike, and to increase the resilience of the sport system, including through enhanced financial solidarity, operating between high-level and grassroots sport, and between different sports and across the world.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 15189](#), Reference 4552 of 25 January 2021.



Contents	Page
A. Draft resolution	3
B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Carlos Alberto Gonçalves, rapporteur	6
1. Introduction	6
2. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sport industry and the professional sport sector	6
2.1. Sports industry and sponsorship	6
2.2. Disruption to the sporting calendar and its economic and financial consequences	7
2.3. Other concerns for professional sport	8
2.4. Athletes, coaches and referees	9
3. The threats for the “sport for all” and public health concerns	10
4. Sport integrity and governance concerns	11
5. Overcoming the crisis: ways forward	12
5.1. Pointers for member States	13
5.2. Pointers for the international sports movement	14
5.3. Challenges that call for greater co-operation between public authorities and the international sports movement	15

A. Draft resolution²

1. The Covid-19 pandemic has completely disrupted the world of sport, which has been one of the sectors hardest hit by the restrictions imposed. The Parliamentary Assembly highlights the important part played by sport in the economic systems of the Council of Europe member States but above all its key role as a means of building social capital, its contribution to social inclusion and combating inequalities, its educational impact and, of course, its beneficial effects on health and quality of life.
2. The Assembly welcomes the new text of the revised European Sports Charter of the Council of Europe, which states that access to sport for all is a fundamental right and asserts that all human beings have an inalienable right of access to sport in a healthy environment.
3. The recovery and sustainable development strategies, which are designed to rebuild better what has been destroyed by the crisis, should foster an appreciation of the value of sport and physical activity as factors for human development and personal and collective well-being and for social development and economic growth, taking due account of its links with other sectors such as health, education, tourism, construction, transport, media, retail and others. There is a need to highlight the leverage effect that promoting sport can have in all these sectors and to step up co-operation between public authorities and sports organisations to create conditions which foster active lifestyles and facilitate and normalise access to physical activity and sport.
4. The flow of financial aid must not fuel corruption. The level of oversight should be raised and respect for the highest standards of integrity should be a prerequisite for the provision of financial support or support in kind for sport. Co-operation should be established between all stakeholders to ensure a consistent multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approach and to fight corruption in sports competitions effectively.
5. International sports governing bodies have a responsibility to seek out balanced, well thought-out solutions in response to public health and financial issues which cannot easily be reconciled. This must not be carried out in a way that is opaque, without listening carefully to all stakeholders. Qualification tournaments, the Olympic and Paralympic Games and other international competitions must take place safely: athletes and other people involved must not be forced to weigh their participation against their health and the health of others.
6. To back up the financial recovery of the sport sector and increase the resilience of the sport system, solidarity mechanisms will have to be established and financial solidarity will have to be enhanced, operating between high-level and grassroots sport, and between different sports and across the world.
7. The whole sports movement, from the top to the bottom, should learn lessons from the crisis, so as to evolve and modernise. Sports organisations and clubs should, in particular, gear their services even more to the needs of athletes and members. Digitisation could be a driving force in this regard. Various online tools provide ways for people to participate in sport remotely and to keep members involved. Digital transition needs to be integrated into provision strategies though this should not mean that proven models of in-person provision are abandoned.
8. Among the joint responsibilities of the public authorities and the sports-governing bodies as major sports events progressively resume, particular attention should be paid to issues relating to spectator safety, security and services, based on the integrated approach advocated by the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218, Saint Denis Convention). All member States should ratify it and all stakeholders in the sporting world should contribute to its implementation.
9. The Assembly also highlights the importance of getting fans and sportsmen and women more involved, through the intermediary of the organisations representing them, in all the stages of the decision-making process concerning sports events; their active involvement can only increase the legitimacy, understanding and observance of restrictive measures.
10. Accordingly, the Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member States to:
 - 10.1. follow the principles and approaches of the revised European Sports Charter of the Council of Europe when devising and implementing legal and policy frameworks for sport;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 28 September 2021.

10.2. incorporate sport into recovery and resilience plans and mechanisms and to integrate sport support measures into economic and social sustainable development strategies, including smart specialisation strategies and regional or local development strategies, while ensuring that a fair share of the resources allocated to the sport sector – including at regional and local level – are used to support the recovery of grassroots sport; in this context, there is a need to:

10.2.1. ensure that sport is eligible for any national funds and mechanisms that are set up to provide emergency aid and assistance;

10.2.2. develop funding support schemes for sports organisations and clubs, paying particular attention to small grassroots clubs, and establishing simple and rapid procedures for accessing funding, relaxed eligibility requirements enabling as many potential recipients as possible to benefit and an assistance and advice service for small bodies; to ensure, in this context, that a fair share of the funds available goes to women's sport;

10.2.3. provide targeted funding for the most vulnerable people (athletes in difficulty, amateur athletes, volunteers) and, in the longer term, to consider other forms of support for athletes' professional and personal development – ensuring that men and women can benefit from these on an equal footing – including mentoring, education and capacity building in key areas (for example media training, financial management, marketing, risk and career management), and to foster dual-career opportunities;

10.2.4. promote the development of sports infrastructure and an environment conducive to sporting activities and physical exercise facilitating access to sport for all;

10.2.5. help low-income families and their children to access sporting activities and to adopt measures to improve provision, aiming at the development of sports activities for health or activities geared to specific groups (such as sport prescribed by doctors or sports cheques to be distributed to people with more limited access to sport than others to be used to pay for subscriptions or one-off sporting activities); at the same time, to encourage sports-governing bodies and sport clubs to develop a range of activities geared to varying groups, while also aiming at the development of women's sport;

10.2.6. value sport and physical education in the context of education systems and to encourage sport and outdoor activities in the school curriculum during the pandemic measures and beyond;

10.3. ratify, if they have not yet done so, the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218, Saint-Denis Convention) and the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215, Macolin Convention);

10.4. adopt relevant standards and sanctions to uphold the integrity of sports competition against manipulation, to set up whistle-blowing mechanisms and to provide, in co-operation with sports organisations, awareness programmes and training in sports ethics and integrity; sponsorship of sport by the betting industry must be properly regulated and overseen, including provisions on conflicts of interest, responsible gambling, research and intelligence exchange, education and training;

10.5. encourage, in co-operation with sports organisations, the active involvement of fans and athletes in all stages of the organisation of a sports event, in particular (but not only) with regard to the restrictions put in place to safeguard health and safety.

11. The Assembly invites the European institutions to ensure that the sport sector can benefit from the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, EU4Health and other EU financial instruments and to show solidarity, considering the possibility of broadening access for non-EU member States to the European funds available and developing transfrontier partnerships in the sporting sphere.

12. The Assembly calls on the International Olympic Committee and other international sport governing bodies to:

12.1. conduct open, participatory and transparent decision-making processes on the continuation, cancellation or postponement of international sports competitions and the health rules imposed on athletes, including enhanced means for the media to follow decision-making processes closely;

12.2. improve co-ordination when deciding on the calendar for major international sports competitions, ensuring that it is not overloaded;

- 12.3. launch a real thought process on the mechanisms for financial solidarity between high-level and grassroots sport, between different sports and across the world, and to aim for a more balanced distribution of revenues from the sale of broadcasting rights;
- 12.4. review model contracts (for example those with host cities and other venues for the staging of major international competitions or broadcasting contracts) in order to better anticipate and cover the risks that further waves of pandemic (or other similar threats) may create;
- 12.5. look into building financial safeguards and compensation mechanisms into the funding system of National Olympic Committees and sports federations so as to limit the impact of the cancellation or postponement of a major event on their financial stability and, for example to:
 - 12.5.1. give thought to creating reserve funds specific to each international federation and solidarity funds at the level of the major worldwide umbrella organisations, into which a minimum percentage of the revenue from each major event they organise would have to be paid, until the funds reach a certain level;
 - 12.5.2. consider setting up reserve funds at National Olympic Committees level by engaging in dialogue with national authorities which might promote and support this process;
 - 12.5.3. contemplate setting up collective insurance mechanisms, at least provisionally;
- 12.6. draw up clear health guidelines and requirements for holding competitions in order to ensure effective protection of the health of the public, athletes and all other persons involved;
- 12.7. promote the sharing of experience and information on the effectiveness of the measures adopted with regard to, for example, health and safety requirements, training opportunities, athletes' rights and duties during lockdown and accessing Covid-19 resources (for example, personal protective equipment or testing equipment);
- 12.8. ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of nationality as regards access to training facilities, which should remain open to all competing athletes, whichever country they are from.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Carlos Alberto Gonçalves, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. The Covid-19 pandemic has turned our societies and the entire sports ecosystem upside down. Few sectors have experienced such wide and immediate negative impacts in their value chain as the sport sector has.
2. The suspension of competitions and cancellation of sporting activities along with mobility restrictions and lockdowns have caused an enormous loss of revenue, cash flow difficulties, unemployment, a decline in interest in volunteering and a lack of financial support to athletes and coaches from private sponsors, government grants, scholarships and traineeships.
3. Amongst the hardest hit is grassroots sport, which has been brought almost completely to a standstill. As has been noted,³ sports movement largely relies on a fabric of small non-profit clubs and associations which play a key role in allowing many citizens, notably from deprived and vulnerable target groups, to take part in affordable sport activities and to enjoy sport and physical activity on a daily basis.
4. These small clubs and associations, which are the backbone of the European sports movement, nurture local participation and community belonging and play an indisputable social, educational and cultural role. Because of the crisis caused by the pandemic, they are now at risk of bankruptcy and closure; if they disappear, this could have considerable negative impacts not only on the economy but also in terms of public health and social cohesion.
5. From the outbreak of the sanitary crisis in March 2020, European public authorities, sport governing bodies, supporters' organisations and other sport stakeholders have tried to control damage while complying with the stringent sanitary restrictions. However, having to cope with the multitude of pandemic-related emergencies, first in the health sector and then in the whole economic and social system, not all governments have been able to take robust measures in urgent support of sport.
6. Today, all countries are in the same state of uncertainty, which is becoming the new "norm". They are all facing the same challenges, including supporting physical activity, restarting sporting activities in schools, helping athletes maintain their performance levels, planning for the reopening of sports events while managing public (spectator) expectations so as to ensure the widest possible access to such events yet with a strong focus on safety to prevent infection and, lastly, thinking about the future.
7. In this report, I will examine the impact of the global sanitary crisis on the sport sector in Europe, taking account of the three dimensions of crisis management: response, recovery and overcoming the crisis. I will focus on the impact, the measures already taken, the future challenges for professional and grassroots sport, the sport industry and sport as physical activity and wellness, and the policy measures that need to be urgently taken.⁴

2. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sport industry and the professional sport sector

2.1. Sports industry and sponsorship

8. The world of sport constitutes a multi-billion-dollar industry, employing vast numbers across many interlinked sectors including marketing, tourism, catering, media, sponsorship, events management and clothing. In the European Union alone, the sport sector accounts for 2.12% of the GDP and 2.72% of total employment.⁵ Sport also uses more intermediate goods than an average sector, and thus generates

3. "Position paper on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the sport sector", April 2020.

4. My analysis builds on the data gathered at the committee hearing on 26 March 2021 with the presence of Mr Tomasz Frankowski, MEP, member of the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education; Mr Folker Hellmund, Director of the European Olympic Committees EU Office, Brussels, and Mr Joao Paulo Almeida, Director General of the Portuguese Olympic Committee, and on the expert analysis submitted by Mr Almeida in May 2021.

5. These figures, cited in the April 2020 "Position paper on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the sport sector", also appear in official documents published by the European Union institutions. The figures were taken from an April 2018 study on the macroeconomic importance of sport in the 28-member EU ([Study on the economic impact of sport through sport satellite accounts](#)), which is based on 2012 data. While the figures are not exact, they provide what is considered to be a reasonably sound approximation.

important revenues in other industries. It has become clear to what extent there is a special interest in protecting jobs in sport as an industry which has a strong impact in terms of employment and its share of GDP.

9. The sport industry has economic and social strengths that could help tackle the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. However, a recent EU study estimated a 15% loss (€47 million) of direct sport-related GDP and a 16% loss of sport-related jobs (845 000) in 2020.⁶ Industries that are directly and indirectly related to sport are seeing that many of the current business models are failing and feel the need to change their business strategies over both the short and long term. This affects a large number of jobs and entrepreneurs.

10. Concerning sponsorship, a recent study, which was carried out by the European Sponsorship Association (ESA) and Nielsen Sports,⁷ established that while the overall sponsorship market in Europe was down by almost a quarter (23%) in 2020 and music industry sponsorship dropped even by 60 to 70%, the European sports sponsorship sector saw a comparatively small dip, falling 9% to €18.42billion. Italy's sponsorship market was hardest hit by the pandemic, suffering a 33% year-over-year decline and France saw the second biggest drop of 32%. Other countries that have suffered significant declines were Ireland (26%), Spain (23%) and Germany (22%).

11. Football continued its dominance of Europe's sponsorship market, accounting for 49% of the total deals. The growing interest in online gaming during lockdown saw e-sports climb into second place with 12% of total sponsorships, followed by handball, basketball and rugby union. The study also highlighted that major sports rights holders were able to maintain or even slightly increase their sponsorship volume amid the pandemic, but that smaller rights holders – who have a higher reliance on fan attendance – suffered much larger declines.

12. It is thought that contract extensions will become more challenging in the future, due to economic difficulties or reduction of marketing expenses in certain industries or companies. However, despite the continued impact of Covid-19, the study also highlighted signs of recovery: the sponsorship sector is resilient and creative, and there are grounds for optimism.

2.2. Disruption to the sporting calendar and its economic and financial consequences

13. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the most significant disruption to the worldwide sporting calendar at all levels (global, continental, national and local) since World War II. The cancellation or postponement of sports competitions have surely been one of the most visible consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, sports organisations have been affected differently. For instance, whereas European professional football, notwithstanding huge financial losses, even playing matches without the public, could count on the redistribution of broadcasting revenue (with huge gaps however between top leagues and clubs and the others), other team sports such as volleyball, handball or ice hockey that depend more on the revenues from ticket sales, are struggling a lot more.⁸

14. The postponement of major sports events of summer 2020 has impacted not only the games and the athletes but the sport industry in general and also the host countries. From the economic point of view, the cost of postponing the Tokyo 2020 Olympics to 2021, for example, has been estimated at US\$5.8 billion, including the cost of maintaining the unused venues.⁹ The official cost of holding the Games in summer 2021 has now increased to a record of US\$15.4 billion, up by US\$3 billion.¹⁰

15. The issue of the redefinition of the international competitive calendar was no less important and complex, particularly in view of the unpredictable evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic, namely in the main Olympic sports (such as swimming and athletics with world championships scheduled for the summer of 2021) and in which more qualification vacancies were still open, since around only 57% of approximately 11 000 athletes had qualified for Tokyo before the postponement decision was announced.

6. Mapping Study on measuring the economic impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector in the EU, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/76b94a58-2f3c-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-175886302>, published on 27 November 2020.

7. www.sportspromedia.com/news/sports-sponsorship-market-value-europe-2020-covid-19-esa-nielsen-study.

8. Presentation by Mr Folker Hellmund at the hearing of the committee on 26 March 2021.

9. "Economic Impact of The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Delay On Japan", www.fxcm.com/markets/insights/financial-impact-of-2020-olympics-delay/.

10. Streeter, K., "It's Time to Rethink the Olympics", *The New York Times*, 12 April 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/04/12/sports/olympics/olympic-games-boycott-tokyo-beijing.html.

16. The mandates of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), many international sports organisations and – in the vast majority of European countries – national sports organisations are aligned with the dates of the Games and the Olympic cycles, which are also a reference for sports programming, accountability and support for public policies. Changes to the timetable may also have legal implications, potentially affecting sponsorship and broadcasting deals as well as player contracts and transfers.

17. All this may help to understand the position of those who advocated going ahead with the Olympics in 2020 despite the health crisis,¹¹ and why the Games have taken place after all in 2021; surveys indicate that close to 80% of Japanese thought that the 2020 Olympic Games should be postponed again or cancelled. The media spoke of the organisers' "obstinacy"¹² and criticised the fundamentally rigid and top-down nature of Olympic decision making.¹³ There may indeed be reasons to question the credibility of the risk assessment on the basis of which it was decided to proceed with the Games amid serious health concerns. National pride and political stubbornness were undoubtedly at play, but financial and legal considerations have also weighed heavily.

18. The IOC, the Organising Committee of the Tokyo Olympic Games and the governing authority of the city are parties to the host city contract; failure to perform the obligations contained therein would have exposed these parties to billions of dollars in damages, in addition to massive reputational damage to sponsors, suppliers, insurers and television rights holders, in what would almost certainly have been protracted litigation.

19. There was also the issue of reimbursing tickets to the fans, the costs related to the delays of moving into Olympic Village apartments after the Games¹⁴ and a wide array of service providing and contract supply to renegotiate. Only a few of these contracts included "business interruption", "force majeure" and "calamity" insurance clauses to cover match day and other revenue losses.

20. But there was much more at stake: \$3 billion in broadcasting rights and sponsorship. Cancelling the Games would have had a major financial impact for hundreds of NOCs and sports federations, as many of them rely most heavily on the money the Olympic Games generate, and for this reason have pledged "full support" to the IOC decisions, with few exceptions.

21. The sustainability of the vast majority of the 28 permanent international sports federations which participate in the Olympic Programme (plus the five invited to Tokyo) depends on the distribution of \$590 million in Games revenue. Many of these international federations simply cannot survive without this revenue. Winter sports federations are in a similar situation.

22. The NOCs, national federations and athletes also depend, for their preparation for the Games, on these revenues, distributed through the Olympic Solidarity programmes, aligned with the date of the Games, with a special impact on developing countries where other sources of revenue are scarce, but also on athletes who, due to the suspension of competitions, see their prizes decreasing and sponsorships in crisis.

2.3. Other concerns for professional sport

23. Besides the devastating financial impact of lost revenues from cancelled competitions, sports tournaments, events, seminars, etc, sports organisations have also lost a significant part of the regular income that comes from different types of fees, for example membership, licensing, participation or subscriptions. For instance, large German sports clubs have lost 20% of memberships. The French Wrestling Federation has lost 44,08% of its members.¹⁵

11. In April 2021, US President Joe Biden spoke out in favour of holding the Games; in early May, the World Health Organisation expressed confidence in the IOC, Japan and the host city Tokyo in managing the pandemic; and at the end of May 2021, the European Union gave its backing to the Games.

12. Philippe Pons, writing in *Le Monde* on 28 May 2021, "[Les Japonais ne veulent plus des JO de Tokyo, le gouvernement Suga sous pression](#)", suggested that the stubbornness of Yoshihide Suga's government and the IOC in allowing the Games to go ahead was set to ignite a latent political crisis.

13. M. Rich and H. Hida, "Why 'Cursed' Olympics Are Pressing Ahead Amid a Pandemic", *The New York Times*, 24 March 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/03/24/world/asia/japan-olympics.html.

14. Tokyo Olympics: Houseowners in Olympic Village apartment complex file for damages over event's postponement, www.firstpost.com/sports/tokyo-olympics-houseowners-in-olympic-village-apartment-complex-file-for-damages-over-events-postponement-9261381.html.

15. Presentation by Mr Folker Hellmund at the hearing of the committee on 26 March 2021.

24. Sports organisations have fixed costs (especially staff costs and rental costs or reimbursement of mortgage loans related to infrastructure) that they have to pay regardless of the loss of revenues; their financial stability is also affected by the costs related to tests and compliance with the sanitary measures in place. At the same time, these organisations (and their operational capacity) have been further weakened by layoffs of employees,¹⁶ athletes, coaches and other workers, especially those whose salaries depend on the above-mentioned income sources: none of the jobs in the sport sector are safe today.¹⁷

25. As in other economic activities, labour relations in the world of sport have been severely impacted. Employers in the sport sector have resorted to short-time work schemes and reduced employees' salaries by reducing working time, applying for national temporary lay-off measures and other extraordinary and immediate general measures for protection of jobs, employees and the self-employed to overcome the impact of the crisis. Players on professional teams have had to accept massive salary reduction agreements (in some cases, more than 50% wage cuts).

26. The crisis has also seen repercussions on the transfer market and athletes' value. Some fear that larger clubs may try to take advantage of the situation and strike cheap agreements with athletes from clubs unable to properly cope with the loss of revenue caused by the disruption to their businesses.

27. Available evidence¹⁸ indicates that the cost, for the top 10 European football leagues, of finishing the 2019-2020 season behind closed doors could have eroded players' value by 18%, resulting in a worsening of the clubs' overall financial situation. This has also exacerbated the risk that some will be tempted to move down the path of breakaway competitions and closed tournaments, as recently seen with the attempt to launch a European Super League.

28. Nearly all countries have general funding schemes for sport, but very often it is quite complicated for organisations to apply because of cumbersome bureaucracy; the eligibility requirements sometimes mean that certain sports organisations are excluded from such programmes.

29. Only a limited number of countries have already set up tailor-made funding schemes for professional sport, and the size of these specific funding schemes varies a lot. Even when comparing Germany and France, Germany has allocated two times €200 million for professional sport, and France – €120 million. However, a number of countries in Europe do not have any specific scheme at all, neither for the clubs nor for the athletes. Some countries have taken action with regard to tax deductions or reduced price/free membership subscriptions or supporting infrastructure investments. These kinds of incentives are very helpful and could be used by other countries as well.

2.4. Athletes, coaches and referees

30. Athletes, coaches, referees and other sports staff have been hard hit by the pandemic. Athletes have lost the opportunity to compete and in some cases, too, their coaches and the opportunity to train. The forced stoppage has deprived them of their fitness and the possibility to progress, as well as cutting them off from sources of income (for example bonuses, private sponsorship or public financial support in the form of scholarships or traineeships).

31. A recent German survey of German Olympic athletes¹⁹ showed that the latter were losing on average €1 300 per month. We can only imagine that in many other countries the situation is much worse. Many athletes are self-employed and as such have, in some countries, very limited access to financial compensation and public funds. This also applies to many freelancers operating in the gig economy: they have often fallen under the radar and cannot benefit from different types of public support for the preservation of jobs in enterprises.

32. An increasing number of athletes are known to struggle with mental health due to the difficulties related to having to cope with the cancellation of competitions and lost income, but also with the pressure to resume sport activities and competitions in unsafe and unprotected conditions, most notably in lower-level competitions, triggering mounting cases of emotional and psychological stress disorders.

16. Technical lay-off measures, where applicable, have made it possible to preserve stable jobs; but workers with precarious contracts (intermittent and freelance) to whom we can add moonlighters, have lost their jobs.

17. "Position Paper on the Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on the Sport Sector", April 2020.

18. <https://footballbenchmark.com/documents/files/public/KPMG%20FBM%20report%20-%20Covid%20impact%20on%20players%20values%20-%206%20May%202020%20final.pdf>.

19. Quoted by Mr Folker Hellmund at his presentation of 26 March 2021.

3. The threats for the “sport for all” and public health concerns

33. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a particularly devastating effect on semi-professional and grassroots sport and on the physical activity and well-being of European citizens, and, in particular, on the most disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, bringing to light and even increasing pre-existing socio-economic inequalities. The impact of the pandemic on access to community and private sports facilities is no less evident.²⁰

34. European sports movement largely relies on a microcosm of non-profit small clubs and associations that allow many citizens to access sports activities which are financially affordable and to practise a sport or to do physical activity on a daily basis. These structures, which significantly contribute to the development of young talent and are the basis of the European sport value chain, must be preserved from the risk of shutting down due to the crisis, to avoid that the future of all grassroots sport in Europe be in jeopardy.

35. Because of the closure of gyms, stadiums, fitness clubs, pools, dance studios, physiotherapy centres, spas, parks and playgrounds, most individuals have not been able, for many long months, to actively participate in their regular sporting activities outside their homes.

36. Under such conditions, many people – children and adults alike – tend to be less physically active, have longer screen time, irregular sleep patterns as well as worse diets and sedentary routines, resulting in weight gain and loss of physical fitness. Low-income families are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of stay at home rules as they tend to have sub-standard accommodations and more confined spaces, making it difficult to engage in physical exercise, which is increasingly far from meeting the World Health Organisation goals in this regard.²¹

37. The practice of sport makes people more resistant and more resilient in the face of covid pathologies, by reducing certain co-morbid factors such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancers and so-called “non-communicable” diseases, linked to the environment and to lifestyles, while the lack of access to regular sporting or exercise routines weakens the immune system and physical health by leading to, or exacerbating, diseases and multimorbidity that have their roots in a sedentary lifestyle. Lack of access to exercise and physical activity can also have mental health impacts, which can compound stress or anxiety that many will experience in the face of isolation from normal social life.²² All in all, we have reason to be seriously concerned about the effects of Covid-19 on public health.

38. The global community has adapted rapidly by creating online content tailored to different people; from free tutorials on social media, to virtual classes in which the whole family can participate. Such online offerings serve to increase access to instructors or classes that would otherwise be inaccessible, and they have shown some potential to make people who had a very sedentary lifestyle more active. On the other hand, this has further aggravated the already significant inequality and digital divide and the risks of unmonitored and technically unsupervised physical activity. It is of the utmost importance that the different online physical activity modules that are being deployed comply with gender equality, non-discrimination, safety and quality standards, and are available to the greatest number of people.

39. Technological innovation and general economic development have further entrenched the trend towards more sedentary lifestyles. It is alarming to note that children today spend less time engaging in outdoor exercise than prisoners.²³ The situation of children's physical inactivity is so serious that this could be

20. Jonathan Grix, Paul Michael Brannagan, Holy Grimes & Ross Neville (2021) “The impact of Covid-19 on sport”, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 13:1, 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2020.1851285>. This article notes that sociological studies prior to the pandemic had highlighted the downward trend in the financial accessibility of sport and leisure for lower socio-economic groups. The pandemic has not only affected these same groups more than others but has also had an impact on the public services available to them, in particular those provided at local level. Local authorities could be forced to reduce funding for facilities that help meet the needs of the most vulnerable in society and to increase the cost to users of leisure services. This can only further prevent disadvantaged socio-economic groups from accessing sport and leisure provision.

21. “Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world”, World Health Organization, 2018,

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

22. The impact of Covid-19 on sport, physical activity and well-being and its effects on social development, DISD (un.org).

23. A pre-pandemic 2018 study revealed that half of the children worldwide spend less than an hour outside: www.treehugger.com/children-spend-less-time-outside-prison-inmates-4857353 According to the data of the Association for the Prevention of Torture, all detainees have the right to a minimum of one hour outdoor exercise per day. This is crucial for their mental and physical well-being.

the first generation in the history of the human race whose life expectancy would be shorter than that of their parents. Some consider inactivity to be the second and long-term pandemic which, without considerable effort, is likely to be exacerbated by the conditions created by Covid-19²⁴ and persist long after the recovery from the current pandemic, leading to greater inequality in the health and well-being of the population.

40. The closure of schools and education institutions has severely impacted the sports education sector, sport education being a powerful means to foster physical fitness and mental well-being, as well as social attitudes and behaviour while populations are locked down. «While we may hope for policy-makers to prioritise sport and physical activity, given its undisputed positive social and physical outcomes, mounting national debt is likely to mean further cuts rather than investment in much needed sport provision, at the expense of those most reliant on community provision for their access to participation opportunities, and the significant social return on investment that often flows from it».²⁵

4. Sport integrity and governance concerns

41. The vitality of the sports movement as it is organised today, but also the “sport for all” values championed by the Council of Europe are now in jeopardy, not least because of the tensions between a vision of sport as a “public good” and the rise of a commercial model of sport as a spectator activity, where the pursuit by some of huge financial rewards may spell the economic demise of others. Recognising the importance of sport as a sector of the European and global economy, including in the context of recovery plans, should not lead us to overlook its social role and its ability to convey values, or indeed to sacrifice the protection of those values altogether for a purely market-oriented approach.

42. We are aware that the traditional sports movement has flourished as a result of the proceeds of the commercialisation of sports events. This has been a good thing, but there is a real risk of excess. The governors of the sports movement must not forget the true role of sport and turn into business entrepreneurs whose goal is to maximise the receipts of their federations or organisations. It should also be said that among the private entrepreneurs who are involved in sports events there are undoubtedly some who champion an ethical vision of sport. We are not here to defend the positions of power held by some and to deny the legitimate role and expectations of others. We must try to devise a system in which all the stakeholders can have their rightful place, pursuing the shared aim of healthy and clean sport which is accessible to all, both as a practice and as a spectacle. Between the excessive defence of monopolistic positions which can hardly be justified and the deregulation of the market, as if sport could be treated as a commodity just like anything else, I believe that it is possible to strike a fairer balance.

43. The delicate – and no doubt still imperfect – balance between safeguarding the sports “business” and protecting sporting “values”,²⁶ that the sports movement must also help ensure, has become however extremely unstable, with questions being asked about the role and competences of the major sports organisations and sports federations, and calls in some quarters for the launch of closed competitions, which would no longer be based on sporting merits and results but on the fame of the athletes or teams taking part and their ability to attract audiences, thus severing this elite entirely from existing solidarity mechanisms. Those mechanisms, incidentally, already seem ill-equipped to prevent the gap between elite and grassroots sport from widening, or to ensure adequate financial support for the (professional and personal) development of young athletes or the training of referees and officials.

44. The crisis caused by the Covid-19 epidemic has only served to exacerbate this situation. We must be careful not to jeopardise, through the decisions we make, the values of solidarity and inclusion that are enshrined in the Council of Europe's [European Sports Charter](#).

45. Article 1 of this Charter requires governments of Council of Europe member States to promote sport as an important factor in human development, by taking the steps necessary to “enable every individual to participate in sport” and to “develop the moral and ethical bases of sport and the human dignity and safety of those involved in sport, by safeguarding sport, sportsmen and women from exploitation for political, commercial and financial gain and from practices that are abusive or debasing including the abuse of drugs and the sexual harassment and abuse, particularly of children, young people and women”.

24. Hall, G., D.R. Laddu, S.A. Phillips, et al. (2020), “A tale of two pandemics: How will Covid-19 and global trends in physical inactivity and sedentary behavior affect one another?”, *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pcad.2020.04.005>.

25. “The impact of Covid-19 on sport”, op. cit.

26. I have borrowed these terms from the committee's report on “Football governance: business and values”, in which this issue is explored in greater depth from the standpoint of European football.

46. The Charter also reminds us that “[t]he role of the public authorities is primarily complementary to the action of the sports movement”, that “close co-operation with non-governmental sports organisations is essential in order to ensure the fulfilment of the aims of this Charter, including where necessary the establishment of machinery for the development and co-ordination of sport” (Article 3.1) and that “[t]he development of the voluntary ethos and movement in sport shall be encouraged, particularly through support for the work of voluntary sports organisations” (Article 3.2).

47. If the sports movement were no longer able to fulfil its mission, public authorities would come under even greater pressure to financially compensate the ongoing activities of millions of volunteers, to fund the development of grassroots sport, the role of sport for social inclusion and affordable access to sport facilities, to name but a few of the different areas, and to implement public policies there.

48. Within the context of the financial crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, separatist tensions can only reinforce the economic stress caused by the interruption of competitions to which the revenues of sports organisations are linked; this also hampers the consolidation and the continuation of governance reforms within sports organisations, which are aimed, among others, at enhancing their internal democratic systems, gender balance, inclusiveness and participation in decision making, financial transparency and accountability. This may also have the knock-on effect of reducing the capacity to combat the various forms of corruption in sport, to which the crisis itself tends to contribute.

49. In this respect, according to EUROPOL,²⁷ criminal groups have been exploiting the changing circumstances during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that organised crime will exploit financial vulnerabilities which have severely weakened European sport, raising serious threats for sports integrity, most notably, but not limited to, the manipulation of sports competitions given that the problems of infiltration of organised crime in sport and the manipulation of sport competitions linked to betting are growing.

50. Investigations, sentences and sanctions related to sports fraud rocketed in Europe in 2020 with the re-emergence of ghost competitions for the mere purpose of betting. Illegal betting remains a serious, complex and technologically sophisticated corruption enabler for law enforcement agencies worldwide, according to the Sports Corruption Barometer,²⁸ turning sport into highly vulnerable and fertile ground for criminal infiltration, prospering on high incomes and lower risks. There is also the possibility that the reopening of stadiums may be accompanied by an increase in illegal ticket sales, and there is also the fear that some may look to doping as a solution to the lack of training. Public authorities and sports organisations must remain extremely vigilant.

51. Lastly, financial difficulties also lead to increased risks of corruption and criminal infiltration of sports structures. The way to tackle these risks is first and foremost through meaningful, tangible actions fostering accountability, transparency, democracy and good governance of sports organisations, to ensure that integrity breaches are detected, prosecuted and sanctioned; there should be no space for impunity.

5. Overcoming the crisis: ways forward

52. If every crisis is an opportunity in disguise, the Covid-19 pandemic has a number of lessons for governments to learn. This crisis has been instrumental in revealing both poor governance, policy failure, and a number of pre-existing fault lines. But these unique circumstances are now an opportunity to innovate, to rethink and reassess priorities in the long run.

53. This must be the case for sports policies too. Public authorities and all the stakeholders of the sports ecosystem (including governing bodies, competition organisers, clubs, owners/investors, athletes, broadcasters, sponsors, suppliers and fans) will need to find new ways to mitigate the damaging impacts of the crisis, preserve the sustainability of the European sports movement and make sure that sport continues to deliver its benefits to individuals and to society.

54. Fresh waves of the pandemic and uncertainty about how it might develop in the future, with the emergence of new variants of the virus that could decrease the effectiveness of vaccination, are causing serious concern and serving to prolong this health, economic and social crisis that spares no one. Sport could help soften the negative effects of the crisis through mechanisms that can contribute to people's health, socialisation, education and a general sense of mental and physical well-being. It is therefore of the utmost importance that sports gets the necessary attention from governments when considering measures to respond to the crisis.

27. Beyond the pandemic: How Covid-19 will shape the serious and organised crime landscape in the EU, Europol, 2020, www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/report_beyond_the_pandemic.pdf.

28. www.interpol.int/Crimes/Corruption/Corruption-in-sport.

55. Besides the financial loss of ticket-sales, sponsoring and broadcast revenues and membership fees, the barriers preventing access to affordable physical and sport activities by the community and vulnerable groups represent a key issue to be tackled. Some measures have been put in place by European States, but quite thinly and focusing on immediate damage control and a reactive approach, mostly just to inject liquidity and provide financial support to the sports organisations. But the sport sector needs much more than this. I therefore suggest that thought be given to the following possible courses of action and concrete proposals:

5.1. Pointers for member States

5.1.1. Recognition of the social and economic value of sport

56. There is a need, firstly, for greater recognition of the social and economic value of sport, its beneficial impact on health and quality of life (and the harmful effects on physical and mental health resulting from lack of physical activity), and its education impact as well as its role as a factor for social inclusion and integration into the community. A resumption not only of top-level professional sports competitions, but also of grassroots sporting activities should be encouraged. It is important to foster an appreciation of the value of sport and physical activity as factors for human development and personal and collective well-being, as well as for social development and economic growth, and indeed of the contribution that sport can make towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

5.1.2. Inclusion of sport in recovery and sustainable development strategies

57. The sport sector does not receive the same attention as other sectors such as health, education and culture. In the current extended pandemic circumstances, governments should consider setting up specific support schemes for sport, which should appear in policy agendas as a cross-sectoral and strategic priority.

58. In addition, research should be strengthened on the health, social and economic impact of the pandemic in physical and sport activities in Europe, to deliver data-driven, evidence-based and problem-solving policies to overcome the crisis,²⁹ paving the way for a co-ordinated European approach on sports.

59. There is a need to adopt a cross-cutting approach for sport policies and to value sport's strong interconnections with other sectors such as health, education, tourism, construction, transport, research and innovation, digital transition, green transformation, media and retail. The leverage effect that promoting sport and physical activity can have in all these sectors should also be highlighted, as should the role of sport as a force for social inclusion and combating inequalities.

60. It is essential to integrate sport into European and national recovery and into resilience plans and mechanisms and to ensure that sport is eligible for any national funds and mechanisms that are set up to provide emergency aid and assistance. Funding support schemes for sports organisations and clubs should be further developed, with simple and rapid procedures for accessing funding, and eligibility requirements should be relaxed, at least temporarily, so that as many potential recipients as possible can benefit. In this context measures could be adopted to improve provision, aiming at the development of sports activities for health or activities geared to specific groups (such as sport prescribed by doctors or sports cheques to be distributed to people with more limited access to sport than others to be used to pay for subscriptions or one-off sporting activities).

61. Specific financial support measures for athletes should also be considered to help them weather the crisis. In the longer term, thought should be given to putting in place a coherent framework to support their professional and personal development, including mentoring, education and capacity building in key areas (for example media training, financial management, marketing, risk and career management), and to foster dual-career opportunities.

62. Sport support measures ought to be embedded in economic and social sustainable development strategies, including smart specialisation strategies³⁰ and relevant regional or local development strategies.³¹ Thought needs to be given to the development of sports infrastructure and an environment conducive to

29. "Including sport and physical activity attitudes and behaviors in major public health surveys as the Active Lives Adult Survey", www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives.

30. The European Union is asking all regions of Europe to develop a "smart specialisation strategy – 3S" for research and innovation. That means each region must identify the sectors of activity with the greatest growth potential and concentrate its resources on those areas of innovation where it has the greatest strengths compared to other European regions.

sporting activities and physical exercise facilitating access to sport for all. The sport sector should benefit from the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, EU4Health and other EU financial instruments.

63. In this context, I would like to point out that not all States are equally equipped to deal with the crisis; it is important therefore to show solidarity, for example by considering granting non-EU States wider access to EU funds and by developing cross-border partnerships in the field of sport.

5.1.3. Targeted support for sport for all

64. When devising financial support measures for sport, it is important to consider not only large organisations but also grassroots bodies: a fair share of the resources allocated by national budgets to the sport sector should be devoted to supporting the recovery of grassroots sport and providing targeted support to the most vulnerable (amateur athletes, volunteers, small grassroots clubs). This also applies to funds distributed by regional and local authorities, which have a key role in this domain.

65. Moreover, even where opportunities for financial help exist, smaller organisations are not always aware of these options and lack the resources or skills to apply successfully. In order to break this vicious circle, efforts should be made to provide small structures (especially those relying on volunteers) with assistance and advice, and to simplify (as far as possible) the procedures for accessing government aid or grants, the amount of which should take into account not only the loss of revenue to be compensated for, but also the increase in certain costs, including new costs related to the implementation of health measures.

66. Public authorities should promote access to sporting activities for low-income families and their children, both during the coming periods, when there might still be some pandemic-related restrictions in place, and during the gradual return to normal social activity once the pandemic is truly under control. Moreover, education systems need to value sports and physical education and find innovative ways of encouraging sport and outdoor activities in the school curriculum during the pandemic measures and beyond. At the same time sports governing bodies and sports clubs should be encouraged to develop a range of activities geared to varying groups, while also aiming at the development of women's sport.

67. Medical warnings on the mental and physical damages due to the lack of sport and physical activities, should encourage public authorities to favour the maintenance of sports activities as much as possible, in particular with regard to outdoor sports.

5.2. Pointers for the international sports movement

68. The European sports calendar is becoming increasingly overwhelmed with overlapping competitions, aggravated due to the cancellation and postponement of national and international events. International sport governing bodies, under the co-ordination of the IOC and in consultation with the competent authorities, should develop a harmonised and long-term approach. In this context, I would suggest the following improvements:

5.2.1. Ensure open, participatory and transparent decision-making processes

69. Open, participatory and transparent decision-making processes on the continuation or cancellation/postponement of international sports competitions are essential. The call for inclusive and transparent decision-making on major sporting events is not new, but in the current context these requirements have taken on new meaning and even greater importance.

70. Public health and financial issues cannot easily be reconciled and the search for balanced, well thought-out solutions, based on factual information and sound assessments, must not be carried out in a way that is opaque, without listening carefully to all stakeholders. The media can play a crucial role in this respect and their ability to closely monitor the decision-making process should be enhanced.

31. For example, sport and its different expressions (activities, services, events, competitions, etc.) can be assets for the promotion of European countries as touristic destinations.

5.2.2. Improve co-ordination when deciding the sports competition calendar

71. Greater co-ordination is required when deciding the calendar for major international sports competitions (both global and continental) and it needs to be recognised that there is a danger of overloading this calendar: planning should be done in the knowledge that we will have to live with Covid-19 for some time to come and that the risk of new pandemics in today's globalised world will always be with us.

5.2.3. Build solidarity and better anticipate and mitigate financial risks

72. To accompany the financial recovery of the sport sector, efforts should probably be made to strengthen solidarity mechanisms and ensure a more balanced distribution of revenues from the sale of broadcasting rights. This is an extremely complex issue, however, and there is no consensus on where the balance should be struck. Nevertheless, a real reflection must take place on how financial solidarity should play out from high-level sport to grassroots sport, but also between sports and across the world.

73. There is also a need for a thorough review of contracts (including but not limited to those with host cities and other venues for staging the Olympic Games and other major international competitions, or broadcasting contracts), in order to better anticipate and cover the risks that further waves of pandemic (or other similar threats) may create.

74. Lastly, I believe that consideration should be given to building financial safeguards and compensation mechanisms into the funding system of NOCs and sports federations, so that the cancellation or postponement of a major event (at world and perhaps also at continental level) does not lead to the collapse of the funding system on which the financial stability of the sport in question depends.

75. I would suggest here that some thought be given to creating reserve funds specific to each international federation and solidarity funds at the level of the major worldwide umbrella organisations, into which a minimum percentage of the revenue from each major event they organise would have to be paid, until the funds reach a certain level. Collective insurance mechanisms could be put in place, at least provisionally. The NOCs should also consider setting up reserve funds and engage in dialogue with national authorities to see how they can promote and support this process, bearing in mind the importance of sport for building social capital and its role in each country's economic ecosystem. The objective must be to ensure the resilience of the sports system and to develop mutually beneficial solidarity at all levels.

5.3. Challenges that call for greater co-operation between public authorities and the international sports movement

76. The European Sports Charter is currently being revised and the draft revised Charter³² reflects our current concerns. Among other things the draft clearly establishes that sport "is essential for (...) personal development and instrumental in the exercise of the rights to health, education, culture and participation in the life of the community" and that "access to sport for all is considered a fundamental right", adding that "all human beings have an inalienable right of access to sport in a safe environment, both inside and outside school settings" (Article 10.1). It calls on all sports movement organisations earning revenue from the sports entertainment market to "be committed to financial solidarity from high-level sport to grassroots sport, but also between sports and across the world" (Article 4.4). It asks for the organisation of top-level and professional sports competitions to "be organised in compliance with the principle of openness in sporting competitions, giving priority to sporting merit" (Article 14.3). It advocates multi-stakeholder co-operation, stating that the sports movement "is the main partner of public authorities for the implementation of sports policies" (Article 4.1) and that "the role of the public authorities is primarily complementary to the actions of the sports movement and corporate sector" (Article 3.1).

77. Indeed, it seems clear to me that, in order to respond effectively to the crisis, we need to work together. This applies to all areas, but I would particularly like to highlight this need for co-operation in four areas.

5.3.1. Promoting sporting activity and sport for all

78. Consideration should be given to the importance of sport and physical activity for health, social inclusion and as an education factor for people of all ages. Encouraging active lifestyles and promoting sporting activity at all levels, notably among the younger generation, should be something to which all stakeholders should be deeply committed.

32. <https://rm.coe.int/12rev2-draft-4-of-the-revised-esc/1680a2c399>.

79. Governments should value the capacity and willingness of sport stakeholders to play an active role in promoting a physically active and healthy lifestyle; public authorities and sports organisations must collaborate to create the conditions that facilitate and normalise access to physical activity and sport, so that people can benefit from the protective effects of regular physical activity.

80. Sports organisations and clubs also have a responsibility themselves to go with the times and modernise. In particular, they have to adapt their services even more to the needs of athletes and members. Digitalisation could be a driver in this regard. The response to the pandemic has shown to what degree digital initiatives have become important. Various online tools have already been developed, covering publicity, online training, fan engagement, sponsor activation and crowd-funding. These tools provide ways for people to participate in sport remotely, but also an opportunity to maintain member engagement at club level, and so foster resilience and swift recovery. Digital transition thus needs to be increasingly integrated into provision strategies, but at the same time proven models of in-person provision should not be abandoned.

5.3.2. Protecting athletes and participants in sports events

81. Umbrella organisations, international federations, sport event organisers and other sport governing bodies must take measures so that qualification tournaments and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as well as the international competitions organised by the various federations, can take place safely and in healthy and protected conditions. Athletes and other people involved must not be forced to weigh their participation against their health and the health of others.³³ It is also advisable that athletes participating in international competitions – not only at the Olympic Games – should be able to receive vaccinations as a priority; that requires concerted action on the part of national authorities and sports authorities.

82. First of all, clear health guidelines and requirements for holding competitions should be drawn up, in order to ensure effective protection of the health of both the athletes participating in sports events and all other persons involved (coaches, judges and referees, medical staff, security staff, greeters, etc.), and of course the public.

83. This would require, for example, access to vaccination for all athletes and all those whose work is essential to the success of events, but also the conclusion of agreements on mutual recognition of vaccinations and screening tests between the country of origin and the country of destination, and a pragmatic and harmonised (if not uniform) approach to quarantine rules (namely isolation/confinement periods to be observed as a precautionary measure after arrival in the country of destination) and other health rules.

84. It is not easy to predict how the pandemic will develop and experience has taught us that the public health situation can change very quickly. Any further stoppage or postponement of competitions that may be necessary to deal with major health risks increases the danger that jobs will be lost and athletes' performance will decline. Sport's governing bodies are under pressure, therefore, and it is expected that they will introduce mechanisms to mitigate these risks. It is no longer enough to be able to respond quickly to fluid situations: prevention and proactive action are necessary too.

85. It is thus important to promote the sharing of experience and information on the effectiveness of the measures put in place with regard to, for example, health and safety requirements, training opportunities, athletes' rights and duties during lockdown and accessing Covid-19 resources (for example, personal protection equipment or testing equipment, particularly for high-level performance athletes).³⁴

86. With different European countries imposing different sanitary measures on the practice of sport, it is more than essential to ensure a level playing field for all athletes. Some countries have reportedly been giving access to training facilities only to members of their own national teams. Some countries do not have specific sports facilities; their athletes are used to training abroad. There should be no discrimination on the grounds of nationality as regards the access to training facilities: they should remain open to all competing athletes, no matter which country's colours they represent.

87. Furthermore, in the context of the major sporting events that are gradually resuming as the crisis recedes, more attention than ever needs to be paid to security, safety and spectator services. The Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other

33. "Qualification for and Participation in the Olympic and Paralympic Games – Ensure Safety and Fulfill Duty of Care", Athleten Deutschland, <https://athleten-deutschland.org/2021/03/23/qualification-for-and-participation-in-the-olympic-and-paralympic-games-ensure-safety-and-fulfill-duty-of-care>.

34. World Athletics (2020) "Athletes now able to register for support from welfare fund", <https://worldathletics.org/news/press-releases/athlete-relief-fund-criteria>.

Sports Events (CETS No. 218, Saint-Denis Convention) is the only binding international instrument that establishes an integrated approach around these three interrelated pillars. All member States should ratify it and all stakeholders in the sporting world should contribute to its implementation.

88. I also wish to stress the importance of involving fans and athletes (and the organisations that represent them) more in all stages of the decision-making process of public health and safety authorities and sports bodies, in particular (but not only) with regard to the restrictions put in place to safeguard health and safety. The active involvement of fans and athletes at all stages of the organisation of a sporting event increases the legitimacy and understanding of restrictive measures, thereby building fan confidence and enhancing their willingness to follow the rules. In this context, special attention should be paid to the needs and expectations of families, children, women, the elderly and people with disabilities, so as to ensure a more inclusive and accessible environment in sporting events.

5.3.3. Safeguarding the integrity of sports competitions

89. The flow of financial aid must not fuel corruption. The level of oversight and demand from those who fund and invest in sport needs to rise and the highest integrity standards must be a condition to release financial or value in-kind support to sport: from governments to sponsors; from broadcasters to investors; from donors to national lotteries.

90. Sponsorship from the betting industry to sport needs to be properly regulated and overseen, incorporating provisions on conflicts of interest, responsible gambling, research and intelligence exchange, education, training, regulation and prevention of manipulation of sport competitions.

91. It is critical to develop and enhance public-private co-operation to ensure a consistent multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approach for an effective fight against corruption in sports competitions. This approach requires the necessary involvement of all relevant stakeholders including law enforcement, judicial authorities, sports bodies, regulatory authorities and other public authorities, betting operators, as well as private companies providing betting monitoring and integrity services, and the wider public. Protected reporting systems and whistle-blowing mechanisms should also be further developed. Increased co-operation and co-ordination amongst different stakeholders may also be beneficial to raise awareness and to address challenges related to the limited expertise in this area.³⁵

92. Council of Europe member States must adopt relevant laws and sanctions to uphold sports competition integrity against manipulation, and provide, in collaboration with sports organisations, awareness programmes and training in sports ethics and integrity, to make sure that every athlete, coach or competition stakeholder understands the principles of fair play, and knows how to recognise, resist and report manipulations of sports competitions, while putting the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions (CETS No. 215, Macolin Convention) higher on their political agendas and investing appropriate financial and human resources in advocacy, implementation and a proper communication policy for the Convention.

35. "The involvement of Organised Crime in Sports Corruption – situation report", Europol 2020, www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/the_involvement_of_organised_crime_groups_in_sports_corruption.pdf.