Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Resolution 2421 (2022)**[1]

# Sports policies in times of crisis

Parliamentary Assembly

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 even 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 has to 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 must be established between all stakeholders to ensure a consistent multistakeholder and multidisciplinary 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 up 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, safeguard mechanisms have to be established and financial solidarity needs to be enhanced, operating between high-level and grass-roots sport, and between different sports and across the world.

7. The whole sports movement, from top to 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 allow for sports activities to be set up remotely, thus keeping members involved. The digital transition needs to be integrated into provision strategies, though this should not mean that proven models of in-person provision are abandoned.

---

1. *Assembly debate* on 26 January 2022 (5th sitting) (see Doc. 15426, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Carlos Alberto Gonçalves). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 26 January 2022 (5th sitting).

8. Among the joint responsibilities of public authorities and sports governing bodies as major sporting events gradually 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 stages of the decision-making process concerning sporting 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;

10.2. incorporate sport into recovery and resilience plans and mechanisms and to integrate support measures for sport 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 levels – are used to support the recovery of grass-roots 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 grass-roots 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 and volunteers) and, in the longer term, 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 promoting dual-career opportunities;

10.2.4. promote the development of sporting infrastructures and an environment conducive to sporting activities and physical exercise that facilitates access to sport for all;

10.2.5. help low-income families and their children to access sporting activities and 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 distributing sports vouchers 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, encourage sports governing bodies and sports clubs to develop a range of activities geared to various groups, while also aiming to develop women's sport;

10.2.6. value sport and physical education in the context of education systems and 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 protect the integrity of sports competitions from 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 exchange of information, 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 sporting event, in particular (but not only) with regard to the measures 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 sports 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 enhancing the 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 thorough review of the mechanisms for financial solidarity between high-level and grass-roots sport, between different sports and across the world, and 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 systems 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 sufficiently high level;

12.5.2. consider setting up reserve funds at National Olympic Committee 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. seek to ensure that athletes who have been vaccinated during pandemics, with vaccines available and recognised in their countries, can participate fully in international tournaments and competitions;

12.8. 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 (personal protective equipment or testing equipment, for example);

12.9. 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.