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Child protection in competitive sports

Motion for a resolution
tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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Sport and physical exercise are highly beneficial for children. Striving for excellency in sports can be an enriching and rewarding experience. At the same time, intensive sports activities often involve substantial risks for children's physical, mental, and psychological well-being. The competitive and financial pressures on elite athletes can make them especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This includes pressure to take drugs to cope with tough competition schedules, doping, bullying, invasive media coverage, potential for physical, psychological, and sexual violence, and simply not having enough time left to learn or to play. The 2021 CARE Report found that 51% of athletes under age 18 reported having experienced economic exploitation and 69% of athletes said they were not aware they had rights when they were a child in sport.

In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, the right to rest and leisure, the right to the protection from arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, and the right to protection from violence.

Taking into account the White Paper on "Child labour in sport: Protecting the Rights of Child Athletes" launched in May 2022 by the Centre for Sport and Human Rights, the provisional outcomes of the joint EU and Council of Europe project "Child Safeguarding in Sport" (which is concluding in 2022), and the forthcoming 17th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport, to be held on 26 October 2022 in Türkiye, it is time to take stock of the latest developments, and to propose recommendations on how to ensure effective child safeguarding in sport policies, with a focus on the best interests of the child, and with due consideration for children's views and concerns.