Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2607 (2025)[1]

Protecting human rights in and through sport: obligations and shared responsibilities

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly have a long-standing commitment to the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in sport, which is a powerful tool for fostering inclusion, equality, integrity and human dignity.

2. The Assembly recalls in particular Resolution 2420 (2022) and Recommendation 2221 (2022) "Football governance: business and values", and Resolution 2465 (2022) "The fight for a level playing field – Ending discrimination against women in the world of sport".

3. It wishes to reaffirm the principles enshrined in the revised European Sports Charter (Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)5 adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 October 2021), the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215, the Macolin Convention, 2014), the Anti-Doping Convention (ETS No. 135, 1989) and its additional protocol (ETS No. 188, 2002), and the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218, the Saint-Denis Convention, 2016).

4. Human rights must be upheld and protected in all sporting contexts, from amateur to professional, including during the bidding, organisation, implementation and legacy phases of major international sports events. The Assembly:

4.1. welcomes the work of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), including in the area of child protection and of safeguarding their rights, notably through the Council of Europe Start to Talk project and in the area of gender equality in sport, whereby EPAS is continuing to develop wide-ranging alternatives, including implementing the recommendations of the joint European Union–Council of Europe All In Plus project (promoting greater gender equality in sport);

4.2. acknowledges the work of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), World Athletics and international sports federations in strengthening protection, addressing abuse and discrimination and embedding human rights and gender equality considerations in governance;

4.3. remains, however, deeply concerned by continuing reports of abuse, discrimination and human rights violations associated with sports participation and major sports events, including in contexts where sports governing bodies and host countries have failed to fulfil their responsibilities;

4.4. is deeply alarmed by the widespread and systemic abuse of children and vulnerable adults in sport, including psychological, emotional, physical and sexual abuse, often facilitated by toxic organisational cultures, impunity and a lack of trauma-informed redress systems;

4.5. is concerned that current systems for assessing human rights compliance in bidding for and hosting major sports events are often opaque, inadequately enforced and do not provide accessible remedies for victims;

1. *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2025 (23rd sitting) (see Doc. 16196, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Kim Valentin). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2025 (23rd sitting).
See also Recommendation 2297 (2025).

4.6. calls for stronger determination to reinforce accountability, transparency and the alignment of sports governance with international human rights standards, in co-operation with national and international authorities and sports governing bodies;

4.7. welcomes the work of Play the Game and the ClearingSport project, which aims to introduce new standards, collaborations and mechanisms to counter crime, corruption and other breaches of integrity in sport.

5. In light of the above, with regard to the battle against abuse in sport, the Assembly urges Council of Europe member States to:

5.1. enshrine the promotion and protection of human rights into national sport policy frameworks as a legal and ethical obligation;

5.2. require sports organisations within their jurisdiction to adopt and implement human rights policies, including zero tolerance of abuse and discrimination;

5.3. ensure the appointment of child safeguarding officers by sport federations working with minors, based on a framework agreed by the various sports stakeholders;

5.4. establish or strengthen independent national safe sport units to support victims, investigate cases of abuse and co-ordinate efforts relating to education about safeguarding and prevention;

5.5. support EPAS in improving tools for good governance and child protection, including through the adoption and monitoring of relevant standards;

5.6. actively participate in international efforts to define, promote and monitor compliance with an international code of safe sport, modelled on the World Anti-Doping Code and on the Olympic Movement Code on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions;

5.7. monitor the role of commercial advertising and influencers in sports, particularly the alcohol and gambling industries, and the effects they can have on the well-being and health of minors.

6. The Assembly also calls upon all international and national sports federations to:

6.1. integrate binding human rights and safeguarding provisions into their statutes, codes of conduct and operational rules;

6.2. establish trauma-informed, victim-centred reporting mechanisms accessible to all participants in sport, which guarantee anonymity and are offered in multiple languages;

6.3. provide mandatory safeguarding and human rights training for coaches, referees, sports officials and others in contact with children and vulnerable persons;

6.4. include victims of abuse in decision-making bodies, advisory boards and policy-making processes;

6.5. publish annual reports on safeguarding and human rights compliance, including data on complaints and disciplinary measures;

6.6. ensure full co-operation with public authorities and law-enforcement agencies in cases of suspected or reported abuse.

7. In light of the above, the Assembly also strongly supports the creation of an independent, global, multisport, safe sport entity offering support and redress to athletes across jurisdictions.

8. With regard to combating discrimination and promoting gender equality in sport, the Assembly:

8.1. reiterates that sport must be a space free from all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion and disability;

8.2. welcomes the efforts of FIFA, the IOC, UEFA, World Athletics and international sports federations in setting targets for gender equality in participation and governance, but notes that gender inequalities persist at all levels of sport.

9. The Assembly therefore calls upon Council of Europe member States to:

9.1. support research and data collection using standardised indicators on gender equality and diversity in sport, drawing on the indicators used for the joint European Union–Council of Europe All In Plus project, allowing for comparability of data;

9.2. fund national programmes and partnerships with non-governmental organisations and sports associations aimed at increasing the participation and visibility of women and girls in sport;

9.3. penalise discriminatory practices in sport and ensure access to justice for victims of gender-based violence or harassment;

9.4. promote intersectional approaches to inclusion, ensuring that the specific needs of marginalised groups are addressed;

9.5. work with media outlets to combat gender stereotypes and ensure balanced coverage of women's sport, again building on the work of the All In Plus joint project, including during its informative sessions, which set up a network of sport media professionals.

10. The Assembly also urges sports federations to:

10.1. co-operate with EPAS where possible in the implementation of recommendations marking the completion of the European Union–Council of Europe All In Plus joint project, and contribute to online repositories on inclusive sports policies with best practices;

10.2. adopt and implement gender equality action plans with measurable targets, including for equal pay and representation in governance bodies;

10.3. support mentoring and leadership development programmes for women, including coaches, referees and executives;

10.4. engage in campaigns to challenge toxic masculinity and promote positive role models for young athletes.

11. With regard to establishing human rights conditionalities for major sports events, the Assembly:

11.1. expresses concern that major international sporting events continue to be awarded to host countries with poor human rights records, without adequate monitoring mechanisms;

11.2. strongly supports the inclusion of binding human rights conditionalities in the bidding and hosting processes for all major sporting events, including monitoring mechanisms in the implementation and legacy phases;

11.3. welcomes the example of the Human Rights Declaration for UEFA EURO 2024 and the Human Rights Declaration for UEFA Women's EURO 2025, and encourages their replication and expansion across future events for all sports federations.

12. The Assembly also calls upon international sports federations and event organisers to:

12.1. require comprehensive, contextualised human rights risk assessments as a condition for accepting bids;

12.2. include compliance with international labour rights, freedom of expression, gender equality and child protection standards among minimum eligibility requirements;

12.3. develop enforceable human rights action plans with timelines and benchmarks for all accepted bids;

12.4. establish independent monitoring bodies with powers to investigate, assess compliance and impose sanctions, including the relocation of events in case of serious violations;

12.5. work actively with public authorities to facilitate effective access to remedies, including judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, for victims of abuses related to the organisation of sports events;

12.6. prioritise transparency and public engagement throughout the bidding, evaluation and hosting process, using the visibility of elite athletes to challenge harmful norms and practices, and promote inclusive values;

12.7. engage in a structured dialogue with the Council of Europe, the European Union and relevant United Nations agencies to develop human rights protocols in key areas such as freedom of expression, gender equality and child protection standards for the organisation of major sports events.

13. Furthermore, the Assembly recommends that EPAS:

13.1. develop further guidance on assessing human rights compliance in bids for sporting events and provides technical assistance to bidding countries;

13.2. facilitate interregional dialogue and co-operation on human rights risk assessments in sport, particularly with emerging economies and low-income countries.

14. The time has come for a paradigm shift in the governance of sport, one that places the dignity, human rights and well-being of all athletes and stakeholders engaged in sport at its core. Sports governance must align with democratic values, human rights, transparency and the public interest, especially when operating internationally across diverse legal and cultural contexts.

15. The Assembly underlines that only a co-ordinated, inclusive and multistakeholder approach can ensure the realisation of human rights in and through sport.

16. Finally, the Assembly resolves to continue to monitor these developments, including in the framework of the Parliamentary Alliance for Good Governance and Integrity in Sport, and to work with sports bodies, governments and civil society to ensure that the promise of human rights in sport becomes a reality for all.