



Resolution 2200 (2018)¹

Good football governance

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Too little money harms football, too much is killing it. Football must be prevented from self-destructing. There is far more to football than scoring goals and winning matches and titles. The Parliamentary Assembly believes that sports governance, and especially the governance of football, must be based on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as the values of living together, such as tolerance, respect, fair play and solidarity. In order for football – and sport in general – to be a vehicle for the transmission of these values and contribute to their protection and dissemination, everyone involved, namely senior officials, players, agents, sponsors and business partners, among others, as well as the representatives of public authorities, must be above suspicion and their conduct must be beyond reproach.

2. The reality, however, is completely different. Doping, illegal betting and the manipulation of sports results, violence and racist speech, sexual harassment and gender discrimination, questionable connections between sport and the top levels of politics, corruption, financial malpractice, cases of tax evasion and other scandals continue to make front-page headlines. Often considerations of a geopolitical order influence decision making. Football cannot be a lawless zone; action must be taken to deal with and eradicate these scourges. This requires greater effort and determination by all partners. It is necessary to ensure genuine independence of the bodies responsible for detecting and punishing breaches of sports ethics, because this independence is indispensable to the good governance of sport.

3. Football does not belong to one person; it belongs to everybody. The public authorities have to face up to their responsibilities to put an end to the financial excess to which football strays. It is necessary to end the tendency to conceal, ignore, play down and trivialise overindulgences. The excesses we are witnessing are not only socially unacceptable, but they are also creating imbalances so pronounced that they are undermining the very foundations of football. All the parties concerned must co-operate in order to achieve a change of culture. The Assembly is determined to work with all stakeholders in order to advocate this change and to prevent football from self-destructing.

4. Confronted with the power of sports organisations and the colossal economic issues at stake, the public authorities waver. On one hand, they are reluctant to take action on the pretext of the autonomy of sport, although this principle cannot justify sport being a lawless zone; on the other hand, they overlook this principle when their representatives sit on sports governing bodies. Moreover, they are prepared to make exceptions to the law and agree to conditions imposed by organisers in order to be able to host major sports events. It is therefore crucial to examine the interactions and connections between politics, business and sport.

5. The Assembly notes that progress has been made with regard, among others things, to the systems of governance of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), their commitment to combating discrimination and to promoting mutual tolerance and respect, their gender-equality policies and their social responsibility programmes. It also notes, however, that a number of problems remain. It is necessary to ensure that the reforms are properly implemented and supplemented, including by seeking to bring about a radical change in the culture of governance at all levels so that it is firmly based on respect for human rights and the rule of law, internal democracy and participation, transparency and responsibility, the unreserved upholding of the highest ethical values, solidarity and concern for the common good.

1. *Assembly debate* on 24 January 2018 (5th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14452](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Anne Brasseur). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 24 January 2018 (5th Sitting).



6. The Assembly welcomes the progress made by FIFA and UEFA in incorporating human rights into their system of governance, including criteria concerning the protection of human rights in the processes of choosing host countries for major sports events and in the tendering procedures for the selection of commercial partners. The Assembly is satisfied with the action taken in response to its [Resolution 2053 \(2015\)](#) on the reform of football governance.

7. Responsibility for the effective protection of human rights lies primarily with the public authorities; however, all sports organisations have a role to play in this regard and must exert a positive influence on the attitude of countries that host sports events. The Assembly welcomes the concrete initiatives taken by FIFA to monitor and improve the working conditions at the construction sites of the World Cup in Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022. However, the situation of immigrant workers in Qatar remains a concern, even though some progress has been noted at the 2022 World Cup construction sites. Problems concerning the rights of workers also exist in Russia. The Assembly is confident that FIFA will continue its endeavours to consolidate these improvements in these two countries and ensure that they benefit all workers and not only those employed at the football sites.

8. The Assembly believes that all partners should work together to promote human rights in and through sport and accordingly advocates closer co-operation between sports organisations and international organisations operating in the field of human rights, at both global and regional level. It welcomes the creation of a Human Rights Advisory Board within FIFA and hopes that co-operation can take place with the Council of Europe and the Assembly itself on the protection of minors, combating racism and discrimination and the promotion of gender equality. The Assembly also welcomes the negotiations under way on the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between UEFA and the Council of Europe and is prepared to work together on the measures to be implemented to strengthen the protection of human rights and promote good governance and sports ethics in Europe.

9. In order to make progress in these areas, the Assembly counts on the co-operation not only of FIFA and UEFA, but also of other key partners, such as the Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL), the European Club Association (ECA) and the International Federation of Professional Football Players (FIFPro). The Assembly thanks these five organisations for their contributions to its work.

10. With regard to the requirement to ensure that the decision-making bodies within sports organisations are independent of the political authorities, and also that the internal supervisory bodies are genuinely independent of the decision-making bodies, the Assembly recommends that FIFA, UEFA, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the international sports organisations:

10.1. include in their statutes a rule prohibiting any individual who is a member of a government or holds a government office from sitting on their decision-making bodies;

10.2. review their regulations on the supervisory bodies which ensure compliance with standards of ethics and good governance, in order to safeguard the independence in practice – in both procedural and substantive terms – of the members of these bodies, especially their chairpersons. In this connection, there should be open, transparent and objective procedures for selecting candidates for these offices, and the role of management boards in appointment and removal procedures should be limited; in addition to providing for a limitation on terms of office, the principle of partial renewal should apply so as to have at least one third of members in office at each renewal, to ensure the continuity of the work of these bodies;

10.3. make reasonable efforts to punish those responsible for malpractice or exerting undue influence, and ensure that effective mechanisms are introduced to combat corruption.

11. With regard to the protection of human rights, and in particular the protection of minors, and the promotion of gender equality and the human development of all football players, the Assembly recommends:

11.1. that FIFA:

11.1.1. encourage the Qatari authorities to ensure that the worker welfare standards applicable to workers employed at the 2022 World Cup construction sites apply to all workers;

11.1.2. design support programmes – particularly the Forward Programme – in such a way as to promote the human development of players, by linking the allocation of funds distributed under these programmes to the obligation to give young footballers an education and vocational training;

11.2. that FIFA and UEFA, each within its sphere of responsibility:

11.2.1. introduce effective checks on compliance with the obligations entered into by countries that apply to host major football competitions and by their national associations;

11.2.2. insist with the governments of host countries on the necessity to protect fundamental civil and political rights, and in particular freedom of expression – including the freedom of the media – and freedom of peaceful assembly, and this not only in connection with their competitions, but beyond;

11.2.3. ensure that all cases of serious breaches of human rights, including the rights of workers, by private companies involved in the organisation of their competitions, beginning with those who build stadiums and infrastructure, are made public and that effective penalties are applied when the follow-up measures recommended by supervisory bodies are not implemented; the governments of host countries must accept this responsibility;

11.2.4. ensure compliance with the transfer rules in order to prevent “trading in children” and consider, in collaboration with the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), the mechanisms and measures required to put a stop to the chain of “forced transfers” of underage players, which falls within the definition of human trafficking;

11.2.5. initiate a reflection on the protection of underage players and the promotion of their education, as well as the promotion of gender equality in and through football, by taking account of the specific proposals in the report entitled “Good football governance” ([Doc. 14452](#)) and of Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of child and young athletes from dangers associated with migration;

11.2.6. promote the adoption by their member associations of rules enshrined in their statutes in order to ensure that the composition of their executive boards and standing committees includes a number of women at least proportional to the number of female members registered, with a minimum number of places reserved for women in all cases;

11.2.7. increase the funds allocated to education programmes and the financial support for educational projects launched by national associations;

11.2.8. strengthen their financial support for training programmes to promote leadership for women at national level and to increase the number of female coaches and referees;

11.2.9. use a higher percentage of their resources to promote women’s football, particularly in countries where associations are less wealthy, by studying forms of co-operation with national associations;

11.2.10. launch an information campaign to combat sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

12. The Assembly asks FIFA to take reasonable measures and shed full light on the latest procedures for the award of the World Cup, and in particular the procedure concerning the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, which appears to be seriously flawed.

13. The Assembly calls on FIFA and UEFA not to lose sight of its previous recommendations to which there has not yet been a satisfactory response. In particular, FIFA and, more generally, all major sports organisations should consider separating their regulatory powers and commercial operations, with the establishment of a subsidiary that would be responsible for the management of commercial operations.

14. With regard to the promotion of good governance and sporting values, the protection of professional players’ rights and a reflection on financial excesses in the world of football, the Assembly considers it essential for all partners to work together on these matters. It calls on FIFA and UEFA to set up a joint working group to discuss financial fair play, caps on player transfer fees and player wages, player ownership, the status of agents or intermediaries and other issues, by involving other stakeholders.

15. The Assembly calls on the European Commission and on the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) to participate in this working group once it has been set up and confirms its willingness to contribute to a joint reflection.

16. The Assembly asks FIFA, UEFA and the bodies representing leagues, clubs and players at national and international levels to take the expertise of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) into consideration with a view to improving, where applicable, their internal control procedures and also stepping up supervision in relation to dubious transfer transactions.

17. The Assembly calls on the authorities of the European Union, in concertation with the IOC, FIFA, UEFA and the Council of Europe, to examine the feasibility and promote the establishment of an independent observatory entrusted with assessing the governance of football by placing the emphasis on, among other things, ethics and the integrity of elections. This would not confer on this observatory the power to govern the sport but to ensure that the principles of good governance are being effectively implemented and shared.

18. The Assembly asks the public authorities to work with international sports bodies, especially FIFA and UEFA, to ensure that ordinary law is applied with regard to financial and taxation matters.