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

Report¹

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

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1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 15750](#). Reference 4738 of 26 May 2023.



A. Draft resolution²

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 \(2022\)](#) on “Football governance: business and values” and [Resolution 2465 \(2022\)](#) on “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, the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions ([CETS N°215, “the Macolin Convention”, 2014](#)), the Anti-Doping Convention (ETS No. 135, 1989) and its Additional Protocol (ETS No.188, 2002), and the Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218, “the Saint Denis Convention”, 2017).
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: promoting greater gender equality in sport”, project;
 - 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 safeguarding, 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;
 - 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 in 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 safeguarding education and prevention efforts;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 3 June 2025.

- 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 IOC Prevention of competition manipulation code;
 - 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, including anonymously and 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 actions;
 - 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 EU-Council of Europe “All In Plus” joint 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 set forth as an outcome of the completed European Union-Council of Europe “All In Plus” joint project and contribute to online repositories on inclusive sport policies with best practices;
 - 10.2. adopt and implement gender equality action plans with measurable targets, including for equal pay and for 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 signed for UEFA EURO 2024 and Women EURO 2025 and encourages its 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. develops further guidance on assessing human rights compliance in bids for sport event and provides technical assistance to bidding countries;
 - 13.2. facilitates inter-regional 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 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.

B. Draft recommendation³

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls Resolution ... (2025) on “Protecting human rights in and through sport: obligations and shared responsibilities”, which calls for binding human rights standards at all levels of sport, in particular to address abuse, discrimination and gender inequality, and to urge governments and sports bodies to strengthen safeguarding, transparency and accountability, ensure inclusive participation and embed human rights in the organisation of major sports events.
2. Considering that a co-ordinated, multistakeholder approach is essential for lasting change, the Assembly reaffirms the unique role of the Council of Europe in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in and through sport, notably through its conventions on sport and the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS).
3. While commending initiatives such as “Start to Talk” and “All In Plus”, and the work of EPAS in the area of inclusive sport more generally, the Assembly remains concerned about persistent reports of abuse, discrimination and human rights violations in sport, especially involving children, women and marginalised groups.
4. To support Council of Europe member States and sports organisations in aligning governance with human rights standards, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 4.1. reinforce EPAS’ mandate and resources to promote human rights in sport, including through the further development of guidance on good governance, safeguarding and anti-discrimination policies;
 - 4.2. task EPAS to develop model provisions for national legislation and sports regulations aimed at preventing abuse, ensuring safe sport environments and supporting victims;
 - 4.3. invite EPAS to continue to develop technical tools and indicators to monitor compliance with international human rights and gender equality standards across all levels of sport, in collaboration with national authorities and civil society;
 - 4.4. encourage EPAS to work with international partners, including the European Union and United Nations agencies, to define and promote an international code of safe sport;
 - 4.5. mandate EPAS to assist member States and sports bodies in conducting human rights risk assessments in relation to major sports events, to advise on the inclusion of human rights conditionalities in bidding and hosting processes, and to facilitate interregional dialogue, especially with emerging economies and low-income countries.
5. The Assembly considers that EPAS is well placed to co-ordinate a Council of Europe-wide approach to safe, inclusive sport based on values and rights. It calls on the Committee of Ministers to ensure that EPAS has the institutional capacity to fulfil this urgent and growing mandate.

3. Draft recommendation adopted unanimously by the committee on 3 June 2025.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Kim Valentin, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. On 25 April 2023, along with other members, I tabled a motion for a resolution, on “Protecting human rights in and through sport: obligations and shared responsibilities” ([Doc 15750](#)), which was referred to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media for report.
2. As stressed in several Parliamentary Assembly resolutions and in [the Council of Europe priorities in the field of sport for the years 2022-2025](#), the protection of human rights in values-driven sport must firmly remain on the agenda of governments and sports organisations.
3. Sports governance should aim to uphold human dignity and foster human rights, and sports events should become a powerful tool to trigger true advances in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, throughout the whole process from the selection of the host countries to the organisation and running of the competitions and even after their end in terms of legacy.
4. [Resolution 2420 \(2022\)](#) and [Recommendation 2221 \(2022\)](#) “Football governance: business and values” call for the establishment of stringent human rights conditionalities and a more severe compliance assessment in the bidding process to host major competitions. They also call for enhanced protection of children and young athletes against violence and abuse in sports, and for stronger policies to counter discrimination and achieve gender equality.
5. My report intends to follow up on those issues in particular how these calls are implemented in *all* sports, not only in football, in close co-operation with major international sports organisations and other relevant stakeholders.
6. I held two online meetings with International Olympic Committee (IOC) staff on 29 November 2023, on recent developments in safe sport, and on 29 February 2024, on human rights and gender equality, which have informed this memorandum.
7. The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media has organised four hearings over the past two years,⁴ focusing respectively on the three areas discussed in this report namely “safe sport”, fighting against violence and abuse in sport; the promotion of gender equality in sport; and human rights conditionalities and compliance assessment in the bidding process to host major competitions, with the participation of experts as well as sports federations.
8. On 4-5 November 2024, in Athens, the Assembly, in co-operation with the Hellenic Parliament, organised a [parliamentary conference](#) entitled “Promoting safety, equality, integrity and inclusion in sport”. The event brought together parliamentarians, policy makers, athletes, sport organisations, and experts from various fields to explore the multifaceted dimensions of sport.
9. As part of a fact-finding visit ahead of the Assembly’s debate on sport in June 2025, on 21 May 2025, an Assembly delegation visited FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) Headquarters, in Zurich, for in-depth discussions with FIFA leadership and experts. The exchange focused on key issues addressed in my report, particularly the need for robust human rights conditionalities in the awarding and organisation of major international sporting events, including the 2034 FIFA World Cup in Saudi Arabia. The delegation welcomed FIFA’s openness to dialogue, while underscoring the importance of stronger safeguards to ensure that sport consistently upholds human rights, dignity, inclusion and democratic values.⁵

2. Call for global unity in the battle against abuse in sport

2.1. Understanding violence and abuse in sport

10. The first hearing took place on 1 June 2023, in London, upon the invitation of the UK Parliament, and focused on ending exploitation, abuse and harassment in sport, with the participation of several sports organisations, athletes and other relevant stakeholders.⁶

4. 1 June 2023, London; 27 May 2024, Copenhagen; 4 December 2024, and 12 March 2025, in Paris.

5. [Assembly press release](#) and [FIFA press release](#).

6. A video is available [here](#) and the minutes of the hearing [here](#).

11. The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media heard powerful personal testimonies from victims of abuse in sport, as well as the steps being taken by top sports governing bodies to ensure a safe environment for players and athletes, and their pledges to do more.

12. The debates highlighted that sexual, physical and emotional abuse in sport is serious and widespread and athletes increasingly denounce emotional abuse as being part of sport culture. Two prominent athletes and victims of sexual abuse, Olivia Jasriel and Patrice Evra, speaking before our committee, work tirelessly to bring sexual perpetrators in the sporting world to justice.⁷ They called on sporting bodies to break taboos and confront child abuse,⁸ and on public authorities in general and parliamentarians in particular to take urgent and more resolute action to fight impunity, protect the victims and the witnesses of violence, prevent future abuse and find a global unified solution for all sports.

13. Alexandre Husting, Chair of the Governing Board of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) explained how EPAS supports public authorities responsible for sport and sports organisations to implement this action for the prevention of violence and the protection of victims.

14. Sadly, just like in other sectors of society, the cases reported are only the tip of the iceberg, as most victims prefer not to report because of fear, shame, ignorance, taboos, a culture of "toxic masculinity" in some sports,⁹ and lack of access to or trust in the reporting systems. Many victims denounce being exposed to threats and revictimisation due to the absence of trauma-informed professionals and support. The failure of public authorities, sport bodies, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to create a safe and empowering environment for all results in many victims and witnesses fearing to report violence.

15. The hearing highlighted the devastating and lasting consequences for the victims, including injuries, impaired physical development, loss of self-esteem, poor academic and sporting performance, distorted body image, eating disorders, self-harm, depression, anxiety and substance use disorders. In extreme cases, victims are compelled to stop practising their sport; in the very worst situations abuse has also led to death.

16. For sports organisations, violence may result in criminal and other sanctions, expose poor governance, seriously damage their reputation and lead to a loss of talent and income due to a trust deficit in the ability and willingness to create a safe environment.

2.2. Tackling violence in sport at national and international level: a human right imperative

17. Public authorities, sports organisations and other stakeholders must seek to ensure that sport becomes a safe and empowering environment for all, compliant with and a promoter of human rights, protecting the most vulnerable groups in society, including children, LGBTIQ athletes, athletes with disabilities, elite athletes, and women.

18. EPAS is actively working to combat abuse and violence in sport through its intergovernmental networks and the revised [European Sports Charter](#), and promotes dialogue between public authorities, sports federations and NGOs to make sport more ethical, inclusive, and safe. The EPAS "[Start to Talk](#)" project is supporting national authorities in developing roadmaps for the implementation of child safeguarding policies, including the setting up of Child Safeguarding Officer roles in sport.¹⁰

19. The International Olympic Committee's (IOC) strategy¹¹ to strengthen safeguarding in sport at local level and provide support for athletes, is to take a bottom-up approach that can be adapted at local level. It started with the establishment of two pilot regional safeguarding hubs in Southern Africa and the Pacific Islands. The IOC is also supporting the initial work for a European safeguarding hub. These hubs are acting as central co-ordination points, providing athletes with independent guidance, and helping them access psychosocial support, and legal aid, through existing local services, in the athletes' own language and with an understanding of their culture and local context. They will be overseen by an International Safe Sport Task Force, also on the basis of an International Safe Sport Framework, which will draw on existing international standards and set out the different roles of States and sports bodies.¹²

7. [The Jasriel Foundation](#).

8. "[Patrice Evra: As an abused child, my success is the exception not the rule](#)", *The Guardian*, 31 January 2024.

9. "[Patrice Evra criticises culture of 'toxic masculinity' in men's football](#)", *The Guardian*, 1 June 2024.

10. See also the European Union-Council of Europe joint project "[Child Safeguarding in Sport](#)" and "[Pool of international Experts in Safe Sport](#)" is also ensuring that best practice initiatives are widely shared.

11. Since 2004, the IOC has been developing [programmes and initiatives](#) to ensure a safe sporting environment. [Olympic Agenda 2020+5](#) has set the strategic roadmap including Recommendation 5, which calls for the further strengthening of safe sport and the protection of clean athlete. See also "[Safe Sport](#)", [olympics.com](#).

20. “FIFA’s Strategic Objectives 2024-27” sets out FIFA’s commitment to promote safe sport as part of broader efforts to protect human rights. The FIFA Guardians programme of the FIFA Safeguarding and Child Protection Department provides a framework to support the 211 member associations to lower the risk of harm to everyone, including children, in football and respond appropriately.¹³ FIFA has also integrated safeguarding protocols in the organisation of its world cups,¹⁴ and is working to strengthen safeguarding standards at football academies around the world, including in the FIFA Football for Schools programme, implemented in over 100 countries.

21. For the past years, FIFA has explored the establishment of an independent entity to support investigations into abuse in sport. Such an entity would support ongoing efforts to develop national solutions to ensure cases of abuse in sport are addressed across all levels and in all countries. A multistakeholder Interim Steering Group was appointed to consider the creation of such an entity together with seven international sports federations and, on 1 June 2023, it issued a [final report](#) with high-level recommendations to the founding sports federations. In London, FIFA reiterated its call on the sporting and political worlds to unite in tackling the multitude of problems currently being faced.¹⁵ In December 2024, FIFA announced the establishment of a Safe Football Support Unit to offer specialist advice and support to victims of violence in football, under the guidance of an independent panel supported by special advisors and a victim advisory group.¹⁶

22. Several international sports federations have taken action by developing a safeguarding policy. Ashley Ehlert, Deputy Secretary General of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) identified violence as “the biggest threat to sport that we will ever face” and pointed to a “toxic culture IIHF is determined to stamp out”. The integrity campaign helped the federation to uncover gaps and understand what further work is needed at local level (coach education, strengthening rules, etc.). However, she deemed that a level of international involvement will be crucial to create an effective system.¹⁷

23. Other notable examples include World Athletics (WA), which called on every member federation to have its own safeguarding policy and procedures in place by the end of 2023, offering guidance, reporting forms and training courses.¹⁸ A December 2023 [study](#) also identified and addressed abusive and threatening behaviour of a racist or sexualised nature aimed at athletes on the X and Instagram social media platforms. Ahead of the 2024 Olympic Games, WA also invested in artificial intelligence (AI) systems to further protect athletes from online abuse, educated athletes and supported further research to tackle hate speech and violence in sport. A new AI-powered cyber abuse protection service was also put in place during the 2024 Paris Games by the IOC.¹⁹

24. NGOs are active in this field and Ms Maud De Boer Buquicchio, former Chairperson of the NGO End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) presented relevant data on the prevalence and characteristics of interpersonal violence against children inside and outside sport in six European countries.²⁰ Research on the prevalence and impact of violence in sport is needed in the Global South, where prevalence of abuse might be higher, and obstacles to reporting almost unsurmountable, with potentially over 200 million child victims of sexual violence in sport.

25. Proposed changes in sports governance and regulations include measures to embed human rights and victims’ voices in the operations and governance of all sport bodies, also through the promotion of an international safe sport framework embedded in the International Olympic Code. Safeguarding must be strengthened at national level and in international competitions and athletes should access independent and safe reporting systems, with the support of the international community and all sports.

12. “Establishment of regional safeguarding hubs in Southern Africa and the Pacific Islands approved by IOC EB, groundwork laid for European safeguarding hub”, IOC, 13 October 2023.

13. “FIFA launches child safeguarding programme and toolkit – FIFA Guardians™”, FIFA, 9 July 2019.

14. “Ground-breaking safeguarding programme delivered at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup UAE 2024 Dubai™”, InsideFIFA, 28 February 2024.

15. “FIFA reiterates call for global unity in battle against abuse in sport”, FIFA, 5 June 2023.

16. “FIFA Foundation establishes Safe Football Support Unit”, InsideFIFA, 20 December 2024.

17. “IIHF stands against abuse and harassment”, IIHF, 7 June 2023.

18. “World Athletics Safeguarding Essentials training course released in seven languages”, World Athletics, 9 November 2023.

19. “World Mental Health Day: How the IOC ran the largest online abuse prevention programme ever conducted in sport at Paris 2024”, Olympics.com, 10 October 2024.

20. The Study is called “Cases” and involved research with adults (18 to 30 years old) about their childhood experiences in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

2.3. Call for action

26. The clear message emerging from the hearing was that governments and sports bodies must work together to reinforce prevention, better protect the victims, and fight impunity. This can be done through:

- embedding human rights and good governance standards in sports governance and operations, including through an international safe sport code to be signed by sports organisations, similar to the World Anti-Doping Code or the Olympic Movement Code on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions;
- implementing safeguarding policies, including prevention, protection, and safe reporting systems:
 - a. at national level, bringing together all key stakeholders, as sports do not operate in a vacuum and must respect the national legal system and connect with protection and support services at national level;
 - b. in the context of international competitions;
- creating independent safe sport entities at national and at international level, or integrate this competence in existing agencies, to provide support and protection to victims and to secure trauma-informed and human rights compliant investigations;
- establishing, under national legislation, the obligation for sports organisations providing sports and activities for children to appoint a child safeguarding officer;
- co-operating to promote vetting and safe recruitment, minimising the risk of convicted abusers getting jobs in other countries or sports;
- including children and victims of abuse in sport and their advocates in the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies, policies and measures;
- leveraging the power and potential public outreach of sport to raise awareness, empower and move to action to challenge tolerance of violence and toxic masculinity and to promote a safe, and inclusive sport, through education programmes;²¹
- organising parliamentary hearings at national level to gather data, analyse gaps in legislation and policies, and promote safeguarding and measures to increase accountability, including a global safe sport entity.

27. The IOC should be encouraged to support solutions both at national level, by strengthening safeguarding and proper case management, and at international level, through the creation of an independent, global, multisport entity to support victims and investigate cases under the jurisdiction of international sports federations.

28. All international sports federations should be encouraged to:

- strengthen safeguarding policies, use codes, regulations, accreditations, and other incentives to make sure that they are implemented and monitored;
- make training on safeguarding compulsory for coaches and referees, and for people in regular contact with children;
- review the way in which investigations and disciplinary procedures are conducted to make sure that they are trauma-informed and victim-centred;
- give victims access to trusted reporting and protection systems, accepting increased accountability through multisports solutions such as independent safe sport entities at national level and an independent global safe sport entity;
- include victims in governance and operations;
- reinforce multistakeholder co-operation.

21. Education materials for young athletes and sport educators, [Resource centre – Combating Hate Speech in Sport](#), Council of Europe.

29. Governments, sport bodies and other stakeholders should also:

- make full use of multistakeholder platforms such as EPAS to address these issues and to further invest in the development of safeguarding policies and advice on human rights-compliant vetting and safe recruitment measures. EPAS should furthermore provide guidance and tools to strengthen the protection of children in sport, including as regards the establishment of national safe sport entities;
- carry out further research and data collection and support studies on sexual violence in sport in the Global South, also including other forms of violence such as neglect, harassment, extreme forms of training, inappropriate training methods, etc.;
- empower and safely engage with victims of abuse when designing, implementing and evaluating projects, strategies and measures;
- launch a major awareness-raising campaign using in particular major sport events and involving elite athletes.

3. Countering discrimination and achieving gender equality in sport

30. The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media held a second hearing in Copenhagen on 27 May 2024, with the participation of Ms Charlotte Girard-Fabre, Secretary General of the International Federation for Sports Officials (IFSO) and Chair of the EPAS Consultative Committee at the Council of Europe, Ms Nagin Ravand, UEFA licensed football coach, GLOBAL, Denmark, and Ms Annaliza Tsakona, Senior International Relations and Public Affairs Manager, FIFA.

31. Discrimination and violence have no place in sport, which has the capacity to be an important vector of gender equality, inclusion and the fight against gender violence.

32. [Resolution 2465](#) (2022) “The fight for a level playing field – Ending discrimination against women in the world of sport”, based on the report by Ms Edite Estrela (Portugal, SOC), documented considerable progress for the participation of women and girls in sport. However, violence, sexism, gender-based discrimination and inequalities in pay and status remain and make it difficult for women to safely practice sport. The resolution not only issued a strong call to fight against violence but also urged sports federations to commit to actively promote gender equality and to invest in the development of women's sport, both at professional and non-professional levels.

33. The joint European Union – Council of Europe “[All In Plus](#)” project aims to tackle gender imbalance in sport (collecting data in 21 jurisdictions and creating an online library of best practice examples, as well as addressing the scarce and often biased media coverage of women's sports, providing media information sessions on gender equality to media professionals), in co-operation with the IOC and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).

34. The standardised indicators²² should be used globally to collect data allowing for comparability of information and the Council of Europe's Sport Division is working collaboratively with other bodies collecting data globally in the area of equality in sport. Tailor-made training is also necessary to ensure that across all levels (national, grassroots sports, etc.) there is greater awareness about unconscious bias and the need for gender parity in sport.

35. The Council of Europe has also done important work on [protecting and promoting the human rights of intersex and transgender athletes](#) in sport competitions and is preparing an educational toolkit to this end. The IOC Framework on Fairness Inclusion and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations is also an important reference in this area. Effective measures must be taken to prevent, counteract and punish the use of discriminatory insults with reference to sexual orientation or gender identity during and in connection with sports events.

36. On 29 February 2024, I had the opportunity to discuss the IOC gender equality strategy, online, with Ms Charlotte Groppo, IOC Head of Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Building on the [Olympic Agenda 2020](#), the IOC has fixed two key commitments to help create a more gender-equal world through sport in 2024: [consolidate the Olympic Games](#) as one of the most effective global platforms for promoting gender

22. Standardised indicators for data collection work (March 2023-February 2025) are: 1. Leadership; 2. Coaching and officiating; 3. Participation (from grassroots to elite sport); 4. Gender-based violence; 5. Communication/media; 6. Policies and programmes addressing gender equality.

equality, inclusion and diversity (50% participation in the Olympic Games Paris 2024); support the acceleration of [women's meaningful representation in governance](#), leadership and decision-making bodies in the Olympic Movement.

37. The IOC's ambition will continue with Olympic Games Milano Cortina 2026, the most gender equal Olympic Winter Games with 47% of female athlete participation and in Olympic Games Los Angeles 2028 where not only the number of quota allocation are gender balanced, but all the team sports will have at least the same number of men and women's teams. The IOC will pursue its ambition to promote gender equality in and through sport beyond the field of play, supporting grassroots organisations in eliminating barriers for women and girls to access to sport and the Olympic movement in having more balanced decision-making bodies.

38. In Copenhagen, Ms Girard-Fabre presented the results of the "All in Plus" project and stressed the need to promote the visibility of diversity in all sporting events, and to address intersectional discrimination. Ms Ravand, for her part, highlighted the SELF ambassador training programme, which had already trained 11 ambassadors to become role models for young girls in football.

39. FIFA regulations include mandatory rules about maternity leave, pregnancy, leave entitlements in case of adoption, breastfeeding, menstrual health, and many more.²³ For FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, the organisation invested USD 499 million, a 218% increase compared to the 2019 edition. It also aligned the conditions and services for the Women's World Cup 2023 to the same standards as those in place for the men's FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 (i.e. number of delegates per team, the level of international and domestic travel, accommodation standards, team base camps and facilities, etc.), which was a positive step in the right direction, though more can still be done. President Infantino also emphasised the goal of achieving equal pay for men's and women's World Cups by 2026 and 2027, urging broadcasters and sponsors to offer equitable support, an objective the Assembly should fully endorse.

4. Human rights conditionalities and compliance assessment in the bidding process to host major competitions

40. On 4 December 2024, in Paris, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media held a third hearing with the participation of Mr Niels Lindholm, Compliance and Risk Officer at World Athletics; Mr Stephen Cockburn, Deputy Director and Head of Economic and Social Justice at Amnesty International UK, and representative of the Sport & Rights Alliance; and Mr Alexandre Husting, Chairperson of the Governing Board of the Council of Europe's EPAS. The hearing was complemented by FIFA's input, on 12 March 2025, in Paris, with the participation of Mr Andreas Graf, social responsibility advisor and Ms Annaliza Tsakona, senior international relations and public affairs manager.

41. Paragraph 20 of [Resolution 2420 \(2022\) "Football governance: business and values"](#) called on FIFA and UEFA to review the conditions that countries bidding to host major football events must meet in terms of safeguarding human rights and to provide for, if they do not already:

- "- a thorough, contextual human rights compliance assessment as one of the key criteria for accepting any country's bid; this assessment should be based on up-to-date reports from the relevant international institutions and/or independent non-governmental organisations recognised for their competence in the field; in the case of Council of Europe member States, reports and analyses by the Organisation's monitoring bodies on compliance with key human rights standards should be taken into account;
- the requirement to comply with predetermined minimum standards on, for example, workers' (including migrants') rights, gender equality (including in sport, but also elsewhere), protecting athletes of minor age from sexual abuse and all forms of violence, combating discrimination in sport and safeguarding fundamental civil and political rights, in particular freedom of expression – including media freedom – and freedom of peaceful assembly, both as regards staging the competitions in question and otherwise;
- the identification, as part of the thorough assessment, of the measures required to meet the minimum standards set out above, with a timetable for implementation which countries should adhere to for their bids to be considered, and a human rights action plan which countries must pledge to follow if they win

23. ["Overview of FIFA's regulatory framework for the protection of female players and coaches"](#), InsideFIFA, 19 July 2024.

the bidding process; as regards workers' rights, the ILO's role should be systematically highlighted and host countries should commit to co-operating with the ILO to draw up and carry out the necessary reforms;

- the binding nature of these commitments not only by national associations but also – and especially – by host countries' governments, given their role in ensuring respect for human rights by all public bodies and by any private operator under their jurisdiction involved in organising the event in question;
- the setting up of effective mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the commitments made, including specific procedures for regular assessment by independent external stakeholders of the responses to human rights risks involved in staging the event, as well as mechanisms for direct dialogue with the public authorities of the host countries to analyse and solve any problems;
- the accessibility of effective remedies in host countries, with independent bodies empowered to investigate, punish and redress any human rights violations;
- the imposition of appropriate penalties on host countries and their national associations in the event of failure to comply with the commitments made or to implement follow-up measures required by monitoring bodies, which must include taking the decision to relocate the competition in question to a different country."

42. The present report is also a follow-up to this resolution and, building on the proposals therein, is aimed at fostering strong human rights conditionalities for all major sports events, not only in football.

43. [Resolution 2420 \(2022\)](#) sets detailed practical recommendations for FIFA and UEFA that should be extended to other major sporting bodies to ensure compliance with human rights as well as social and environmental obligations of host countries. The aim of the resolution and the present report is in line with the principles of the European Sport Charter revised in 2021, which refers to the respect of human rights when bidding to host sporting events, but also throughout the entire lifecycle of events.

44. FIFA has been requiring, publishing and implementing human rights commitments and plans for the bidding processes and delivery of its major events since 2017.²⁴ UEFA takes a leadership position in major events, with recent best in class practices in this area including the Human Rights Declaration for UEFA EURO 2024 signed in 2023 between UEFA and the German Football Association (DFB) in which UEFA and the other parties to the declaration undertook to respectively uphold and protect human rights through a comprehensive set of measures to ensure the well-being and safety of all participants.²⁵ Building on cooperation with key stakeholders, this summer's UEFA Women's EURO 2025 in Switzerland again features a formal multi-agency dedicated human rights declaration, with the Council of Europe officially participating as a member of the UEFA Women's EURO 2025 Human Rights Advisory Board alongside representatives from civil society, diversity and inclusions experts, public authorities, national associations and former players to ensure a wide range of perspectives and a comprehensive approach to human rights protection.

45. Progress has been made in integrating human rights obligations into bidding regulations and hosting agreements for events such as the FIFA World Cup, the Olympic Games, the UEFA Euro and international competitions organised by World Athletics, which was also discussed at the December 2024 hearing. However, according to human rights organisations, these measures still lack clarity, enforceability and transparency. Human rights policies are currently limited to a few major sports organisations, and many sporting events are still awarded without robust human rights criteria in the bidding process. Greater transparency in decision making and in the monitoring of compliance with human rights requirements is therefore needed, as strengthening human rights conditionalities in bidding processes is essential to ensure that major sporting events uphold the values they claim to represent.

46. Lack of enforceability remains a major issue. In most cases, individual rights holders cannot directly enforce the adopted provisions on human rights obligations, as they are not parties to the agreements resulting from the implementation of the bidding and hosting regulations. Only the international sporting bodies as the rights owners and the host organisations are entitled to challenge the implementation and fulfilment of such clauses and to take legal action in case of breach of contractual obligations. Therefore, these provisions do not effectively provide additional avenues for those affected by human rights abuses related to major sporting events to claim their rights and to obtain compensation.²⁶ FIFA requires host

24. "Sustainability report of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia", InsideFIFA, 3 October 2019.

25. "UEFA and DFB unveil human rights declaration for UEFA EURO 2024", UEFA, 14 November 2023.

26. Daniela Heerdt, "Tapping the Potential of Human Rights Provisions in Mega-Sporting Events' Bidding and Hosting Agreements", *The International Sports Law Journal* 17, no. 3 (2018): 170–85.

countries to ensure access to effective remediation within their jurisdiction in line with these countries' obligations under international law and has provided for separate grievance mechanisms informed by its responsibility under the UN Guiding Principles.²⁷

47. Recent bidding processes for some major international sports events, including the 2034 FIFA World Cup, Saudi Arabia's uncontested bid, which was officially awarded on 11 December 2024, have sparked widespread controversy.²⁸ In the case of the 2030 and 2034 FIFA World Cup bids, the independent human rights assessments carried out by Amnesty International and the Sports & Rights Alliance identified significant risks for both tournaments, including issues related to policing, discrimination, workers' rights and forced evictions.²⁹ The human rights strategies submitted by the host entities were deemed insufficient, in their views, lacking meaningful commitments or consultation with stakeholders.

48. For Saudi Arabia's 2034 bid, the risks were described as severe, including exploitation of migrant workers, discrimination against supporters, forced evictions and repression of journalists and activists. Amnesty recommended that the 2034 process be halted because Saudi Arabia's human rights strategy was inadequate and failed to address key risks. FIFA's assessment has been described as an "astonishing whitewash" and accused of ignoring well-documented issues to justify predetermined outcomes.³⁰

49. On 3 December 2024, the Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, Ms Helleland, sent a letter to President Infantino urging FIFA to set clear and enforceable rules for Saudi Arabia, as well as for any other host country, while also inviting FIFA representatives to participate in an in-person meeting.³¹

50. In its reply of 10 January 2025, FIFA's Secretary General, Mattias Grafström, reaffirmed FIFA's commitment to human rights, transparency and inclusivity in addressing those concerns. In his view, the bidding process was fair, transparent and in line with international human rights standards, focusing on progress, based on clear requirements, rather than exclusion. FIFA has integrated human rights requirements in its bidding and hosting documents since 2017, requiring bidders to provide a human rights context assessment developed by an independent and competent entity, a human rights strategy informed by the context assessment, as well as several human rights-related guarantees and commitments from host governments. This included technical guidance by the UN Human Rights office.

51. Saudi Arabia's bid included commitments on labour rights, diversity, security, and freedom of expression, as outlined in the "Human Rights Strategy in connection with the 2034 FIFA World Cup" of July 2024.³² FIFA views these commitments as a strong basis to implement programmes to address human rights risks associated with the competition. It also believes the tournament can act as a catalyst for wider reforms in the host country.

52. This was also the focus of our discussions during the meeting in Zurich on 21 May 2025, of the Assembly delegation with FIFA leadership and experts. While the adoption of human rights criteria in bidding regulations remains essential, such requirements can be rendered ineffective if sports organisations prioritise other objectives over human rights. International sports governing bodies should therefore ensure that human rights considerations are an important factor when deciding on the hosting rights of their competition and use their leverage with bidders in appropriate ways. The delegation asked FIFA to clarify its human rights risk assessments for Saudi Arabia, pressing for independent monitoring, concrete protections for vulnerable groups during the 2034 World Cup, and clear consequences for non-compliance – areas that remain uncertain at this stage.

53. The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media greatly appreciates FIFA's openness to dialogue and its regular participation in hearings and bilateral discussions. The aim of my report, and of the Assembly's dialogue with sports federations in general, is not to attack them but to help promote the robustness of these requirements and processes.

27. "FIFA Reporting Portal"

28. "Confirmation of Saudi Arabia as 2034 FIFA World Cup host puts many lives at risk", Amnesty International, 11 December 2024.

29. "High stakes bids: Dangerously flawed human rights strategies for the 2030 and 2034 FIFA world cups", Amnesty International, 11 November 2024.

30. "FIFA produces whitewash of Saudi Arabia World Cup bid and ignores own report to provide compensation for migrant workers in Qatar", Amnesty International, 30 November 2024.

31. "The World Cup and human rights: 'It is crucial that FIFA sets clear and enforceable rules for Saudi Arabia', says Assembly's Culture Committee Chair", *pace.com*, 4 December 2024.

32. FWC2034 Human Rights Strategy, July 2024.

54. World Athletics, which has also shown great commitment and openness to dialogue, has strengthened its commitment to human rights by integrating them into its governance, policies and event regulations. Its Human Rights Working Group shifted the focus to the impact of decisions on individuals, under the oversight of the Risk Committee. A human rights policy, published in 2024, ensures fairness and equity in key decisions, including sponsorship. Eligibility rules for transgender and DSD (differences of sex development) athletes in elite female competitions have been informed by stakeholder consultations, while grassroots participation remains open to all. Human rights assessments are now part of bids to host events, vetting officials and assessing labour conditions.

55. World Athletics' safeguarding measures include anti-abuse protocols and protection from online harassment. Gender equality efforts have increased female leadership in athletics federations and achieved gender parity on boards. Youth participation programmes have reached 500 000 children worldwide, including in conflict zones. Athletes can respectfully express political views. Recommendations include fostering inter-regional dialogue on sport and human rights, particularly in emerging economies, and supporting smaller federations through collaborative forums. World Athletics remains committed to making events safe and will continue its engagement with the Council of Europe.

56. Among other examples, the IOC makes available a grievance mechanism for anyone affected during the Olympic Games. The [Integrity and Compliance Hotline](#) enables participants to report cases of competition manipulation, abuse and harassment, infringements of the IOC Code of Ethics and other integrity issues, and press freedom violations. The hotline is complemented by the [IOC framework for safeguarding athletes and other participants from harassment and abuse in sport](#) during the Olympic Games. The IOC's early-stage bidding process for the 2036 Olympics, which includes high-risk bids, equally requires greater transparency and consultation.

57. At the same time, the international scrutiny associated with the organisation of mega-sporting events in high-risk areas can put pressure on governments of host countries to reform, as seen in the case of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, where labour conditions (minimum wage, improvements in health and safety legislation) improved in the run-up to the tournament, as the result of pressure from various actors, including the media, trade unions, football associations and sponsors.

58. As an example, when Qatar's bid was evaluated in 2010, neither human rights nor labour rights were considered and FIFA included detailed human rights requirements in 2017. That said, Qatar committed to the protection of human rights as part of their workers' welfare programme established after 2013,³³ as well as the joint Sustainability Strategy with FIFA. In previous reports, whilst highlighting human rights challenges in Qatar, the Assembly recognised the work conducted by FIFA and Qatar in the context of the tournament, including by stating that "FIFA's efforts but also the great work of the ILO [International Labour Organization], of the international trade union movement and of other organisations active in Qatar are to be praised".³⁴ With regard to the Saudi Arabia bid for the 2034 FIFA World Cup, past experience highlights the need for early reforms, drawing on the lessons learnt in Qatar.

59. There is an urgent need for stronger independent mechanisms to monitor and evaluate human rights compliance at major sporting events via two means: either by defining specific criteria and establishing an evaluation mechanism or by urging the organisers to formulate and adopt their own criteria. Even systems based on "name and shame", without legal consequences, to exert moral pressure by holding stakeholders accountable to agreed standards, have proved effective in past.

60. While the Council of Europe has produced guidelines and recommendations on sports governance, only three of its instruments are legally binding and include robust follow-up mechanisms, such as evaluation visits and monitoring committees: the conventions on anti-doping, safety, security and service at sport events and manipulation of sports competitions.³⁵ The lack of robust follow-up mechanisms and the clear limitations of existing ones are significant problems. To ensure an effective ongoing evaluation of compliance, available options include self-assessment by member States or more formal systems with defined rules, criteria and active monitoring.

61. In the case of the Council of Europe's EPAS platform, sports organisations participate in the drafting of EPAS recommendations, but their implementation relies mainly on moral persuasion. While stakeholders agree to principles such as non-discrimination, good governance and athlete health during the drafting process, there is usually no formal accountability, as the main addressees are member States. As discussed

33. "How have labour reforms progressed in Qatar?", International Labour Organization, 16 November 2022.

34. Assembly [Resolution 2200 \(2018\)](#), paragraph 13.

35. "Sport Conventions", Council of Europe.

at the December 2024 hearing, the “name and shame” approach could be a useful next step to remind stakeholders of their involvement in the drafting of these documents and to hold them publicly accountable. For non-binding policy, this approach represents the maximum achievable level of follow-up.

62. While our Assembly acknowledges the open and regular dialogue with FIFA, which is also very actively involved in Council of Europe conventional sectors as well as on safeguarding and gender equality, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media also believes that granting FIFA membership to EPAS, as is the case for UEFA and other sport organisations, would further benefit bilateral relations.

63. The analysis of the current situation also highlights the limits of the Council of Europe’s influence beyond Europe. While European members generally adhere to gender equality policies, non-discrimination rules and principles of transparency, there is currently little or no contact with sports organisations outside Europe, which restricts the Council of Europe’s capacity to promote similar standards globally.

64. With a view to all major sport competitions, in particular the Saudi Arabia World Cup, the goal should be to further engage with host countries to create positive change, ensure effective protection of all workers and participants involved in or affected by the tournament, and promote wider human rights reforms. I believe that the Council of Europe should play a role in this, in co-operation with the European Union and other UN agencies.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

65. The hearings organised by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media showed the need for sports governance to be based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as on the values of living together, such as safety, tolerance, dignity, respect, fair play and solidarity.

66. For sport to uphold and promote these values, leaders, managers and officials of sports organisations, but also athletes, coaches, agents, referees, sponsors and business partners among others, should work with national governments and international organisations to uphold human rights and live up to the standards of our democratic societies.

67. This report highlights some of the threats to sport and outright human rights violations, good governance and integrity: violence and racism, sexual harassment and gender discrimination, human exploitation or trafficking of young athletes, but also questionable links between sport and the highest level of politics, doping, illegal betting, manipulation of sporting competitions,³⁶ corruption, bribery, vote-buying in the awarding of major sporting events, financial malpractice, cases of tax evasion, money laundering, etc.

68. The world of sport has taken important steps to combat these scourges, to prevent human rights violations, to combat discrimination and to achieve greater equality in sport. However, much remains to be done to place human rights, safety and inclusivity at the core of sport, including in the framework of major sporting events.

69. Finally, I would also like to refer to the [conclusions](#) of the Athens [parliamentary conference](#), prepared by the conference rapporteur, Ms Elda Moreno, which make four important calls for action with practical recommendations, which are also relevant to my report and instrumental to the Assembly resolution, in four strategic areas, namely:

- embedding human rights and good governance principles in sport;
- investing in prevention and protection;
- enhancing accountability;
- achieving effective multistakeholder co-operation.

70. The Assembly should recognise the immense potential of sport to promote inclusion, equality and human dignity, and stress the urgent need to embed human rights protections across all sporting activities, particularly in the context of major international events.

71. While welcoming initiatives by organisations such as the IOC, FIFA and World Athletics to strengthen safeguarding and human rights standards, I remain deeply concerned by persistent reports of abuse, discrimination and systemic rights violations within sport. Safeguarding measures must be mandatory,

36. See the report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, Doc. 15516 and Resolution 2336 (2020).

independently monitored, and trauma informed. National frameworks should legally enshrine the protection of human rights in sport, with independent safe sport bodies supporting victims and promoting education and awareness raising activities.

72. I would also like to highlight the persistent inequalities faced by women and marginalised groups, urging the adoption of concrete, measurable strategies to promote diversity and gender equality both on and off the field. I call for robust action against discriminatory practices and for greater media engagement to challenge stereotypes.

73. A key concern remains the awarding of major sporting events to countries with poor human rights records. The Assembly should demand binding human rights conditionalities in the bidding and hosting processes, with independent oversight and access to remedies for victims of abuses. Initiatives such as the Human Rights Declaration for UEFA EURO 2024 and Women EURO 2025 are welcomed, but broader, more enforceable standards are deemed essential. The Council of Europe, in co-operation with the European Union and other UN agencies, should play an active role and further engage with host countries, including outside Council of Europe member States, to create positive change, ensure effective protection of all workers and participants involved in or affected by the tournament, and promote wider human rights reforms.

74. Finally, the Assembly should advocate for multistakeholder enhanced co-operation, in particular in the framework of the Parliamentary Alliance for Good Governance and Integrity in Sport, and urge a paradigm shift in sport governance towards transparency, accountability and respect for human dignity. The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media should maintain active oversight to ensure that sport becomes a true vehicle for the promotion of human rights for all.