Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2667 (2026)[1]

Media freedom in sport

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Sports journalism performs an essential democratic function by informing the public, ensuring transparency and contributing to accountability in sports governance. Freedom of expression and freedom of information, as guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), therefore apply fully to sport and to sports journalism.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to the relevant Council of Europe framework in this area, in particular:

2.1. the Revised European Sports Charter (Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)5), which recognises the importance of co-operation among the various stakeholders in sport and affirms that the integrity of sport rests, in particular, on the principles of transparency, accountability and good governance. These principles create an environment conducive to the work of the media and independent journalism, which play an essential role in promoting transparency and accountability in sport;

2.2. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the promotion of good governance in sport, which sets out key principles relating to transparency, accountability, conflicts of interest, whistle-blower protection and public funding conditionality in sport;

2.3. the Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on sport integrity (2023), calling for strengthened governance frameworks, enhanced transparency and effective mechanisms to combat corruption and manipulation in sport;

2.4. Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors, complemented by the more recent Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), addressing legal harassment against public interest reporting, as well as the work of the Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists, which continues to document threats, intimidation and restrictions affecting journalists across Europe, including in sports reporting;

2.5. the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, which confirms the strong public interest in investigative sports journalism and the risks to freedom of expression when journalists face disproportionate sanctions or pressure.

3. The Assembly also points to Resolution 2200 (2018) "Good football governance", Resolution 2199 (2018) and Recommendation 2120 (2018) "Towards a framework for modern sports governance", Resolution 2465 (2022) "The fight for a level playing field – Ending discrimination against women in the world of sport", Resolution 2532 (2024) and Recommendation 2268 (2024) "Guaranteeing media freedom and the safety of journalists: an obligation of member States", and Resolution 2607 (2025) and Recommendation 2297 (2025) "Protecting human rights in and through sport: obligations and shared responsibilities".

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1. *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2026 (25th sitting) (see Doc. 16415, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Tone Wilhelmsen Trøen). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2026 (25th sitting).
See also Recommendation 2308 (2026).

4. Sport has become a global and highly commercialised sector with significant economic, social and political influence, which increases the importance of independent media scrutiny while also intensifying structural pressures linked to the concentration of media rights, commercial interests and control over access to information.

5. The profound transformation of the media environment, driven by digitalisation, the increasing role of digital platforms and economic change, has weakened traditional journalism models and reduced the resources available for investigative reporting, including in sport, while sports journalism remains highly dependent on access to events, athletes and institutions.

6. In the context of upcoming major sporting events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup, media and policy discussions have already highlighted potential challenges related to increasingly restrictive accreditation systems, the growing control of content by rights holders and the complexity of ensuring consistent media access across multiple host countries. These developments illustrate broader structural trends which may further affect the ability of journalists to report freely and independently across a range of major competitions and high-profile international events.

7. The Assembly is deeply concerned about restrictions on journalistic access, contractual limitations, intimidation, harassment, legal pressure and structural inequalities within sports media, including the particular challenges faced by women in sports journalism. Sexual harassment, threats and intimidation create a chilling effect that undermines participation in the profession and reinforces persistent gender inequalities in sports media, including the under-representation of women in investigative sports reporting and the unequal visibility of women's sport. Public investment in sport creates a legitimate expectation of transparency, accountability and openness to independent media scrutiny.

8. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to ensure that freedom of expression and freedom of information are effectively guaranteed in sport, including by:

8.1. guaranteeing practical, fair and non-discriminatory access for journalists to sporting events, athletes and relevant institutions;

8.2. reviewing legal and regulatory frameworks on broadcasting rights, accreditation systems and contractual arrangements so that they do not disproportionately restrict journalistic activity or the public's right to information;

8.3. strengthening whistle-blower protection mechanisms in sport, including secure reporting channels and effective protection against retaliation;

8.4. supporting investigative journalism in sport through appropriate public interest funding mechanisms and safeguards against undue commercial or political interference;

8.5. ensuring that sports organisations benefiting from public funding comply with minimum standards of transparency, accountability and media access, including fair accreditation procedures;

8.6. taking effective measures to prevent and address intimidation, harassment and violence against sports journalists, both online and offline;

8.7. promoting gender equality in sports media, including by addressing structural barriers, ensuring equal opportunities and combating discrimination and harassment;

8.8. improving the collection of data on gender representation and diversity in sports journalism to support evidence-based policy making.

9. Furthermore, the Assembly urges sports organisations, federations and event organisers to recognise media freedom as a core element of good governance in sport and to ensure that journalists can operate independently and without undue interference, including by:

9.1. ensuring that host countries of major sporting events fully respect media freedom and facilitate the work of journalists, including by avoiding unnecessarily restrictive, burdensome or disproportionately costly visa and accreditation procedures that may impede access for independent journalists and hinder investigative reporting during international sporting events;

9.2. guaranteeing access to sporting events, venues, athletes and information on a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory basis;

9.3. ensuring that accreditation systems are not used to control editorial content or restrict legitimate reporting;

9.4. avoiding contractual arrangements that undermine editorial independence or impose disproportionate restrictions on the use of information gathered in the public interest;

9.5. facilitating access for investigative journalists, including on issues of governance, integrity and accountability;

9.6. refraining from practices that limit critical reporting or treat journalistic work as a form of controlled communication output.

10. The Assembly also calls on media organisations and journalism stakeholders to safeguard editorial independence in sports reporting and to contribute actively to a pluralistic media environment, including by:

10.1. resisting commercial or institutional pressures that may affect journalistic integrity;

10.2. investing in investigative sports journalism as a key contribution to transparency and accountability in sport;

10.3. promoting diversity and inclusion within newsrooms, including balanced representation in editorial and leadership positions;

10.4. developing ethical standards for the use of artificial intelligence in sports journalism, ensuring transparency, accountability and human oversight.

11. Furthermore, the Assembly recalls the principle of the specificity of sport, as recognised in European Union law, which reflects the unique social, cultural and democratic role of sport in European society. While acknowledging the autonomy and special status granted to sports organisations, the Assembly stresses that these principles must not be used to shield such organisations from public scrutiny and accountability. As European governments continue to promote media freedom and protect investigative journalism as fundamental democratic values, there is a legitimate expectation that these standards should also be respected and upheld internationally within global sports governance.

12. Finally, the Assembly supports continued reflection on initiatives by non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders, which may contribute to improving transparency and access to reliable governance information in sport, in complementarity with Council of Europe standards.

13. Safeguarding media freedom in sport requires sustained co-operation between public authorities, sports organisations, media actors and civil society to ensure both the autonomy of sport and its democratic accountability.