



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 28 April 2023
(OR. en)

8676/23

SPORT 14
DOPAGE 9

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Ensuring respect for human rights in the organisation of major international sporting events
- *Policy debate*

Following consultation of the members of the Sport Working Party, the Presidency has prepared the attached background document, which is submitted as the basis for the policy debate at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting of 15-16 May 2023.

Ensuring respect for human rights in the organisation of major international sporting events
Presidency discussion paper

International human rights law, as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities among others, and as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is fully applicable in the European and international sports domain. Furthermore, the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union refer to the most important personal freedoms and rights enjoyed by the citizens of the EU.

The Universal Declaration provides a common standard of rights that apply to all people. It stipulates that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone, without distinction of any kind, has the right to live their life free from discrimination. Ultimately, all individuals must have the same opportunities to participate meaningfully in society and for their human rights to be fully respected and fulfilled.

In May 2016, the EU ministers responsible for sport discussed how governments could improve governance in sport against the backdrop of recurrent corruption, money-laundering and doping scandals. The ministers also discussed the consequent negative impact on credibility and public trust in the positive values of sport. They emphasised that the autonomy long enjoyed by the sports sector can only be maintained if high standards of good governance are applied.

In November 2019, the Council also adopted conclusions on combating corruption in sport. Such corruption takes many forms, including bribery, influence-trading, the abuse of office, the manipulation of sporting competitions and money laundering.

Sports organisations are therefore clearly ill-equipped to combat the different threats to their integrity on their own. These threats to the international sports movement pose a number of challenges. With effort, sports organisations can contribute to respect for human rights by ensuring that such rights are valued throughout the process of organising international sporting events. It is also important to monitor how sports facilities and infrastructure are built, as well as the social and political environment in which events take place.

Another central issue is the working conditions of those employed in the provision of services for sporting events. It may also be necessary to impose social obligations on the sponsors of such events, who need to take their social responsibilities seriously.

In most cases, it is possible to influence the planning and organisation of international sporting events far in advance. This applies, among other things, to the conditions under which facilities are built and the events are arranged, as well as working-condition requirements. This work starts at an early stage, in the internal policy work of international sports federations.

Human rights have a fundamental role to play in the organisation of international sporting events, in ensuring that trade union rights are respected, and that occupational accidents are avoided.

Human rights must also be taken into account by ensuring that child labour, forced and slave labour are not used in connection with international sporting events, either in the construction of sports arenas or in the running of such events.

Corruption on the part of international sports federations and stakeholders clearly takes place in the bidding process to stage international championships when these championships are awarded without openness and transparency, with bribes coming before quality in the award process. Bidding procedures must be improved and made more open and transparent.

Furthermore, beyond observing high standards of good governance aimed at ensuring the autonomy of the sports movement, it is essential that sports organisations are not used as a weapon by governments conducting unprovoked military warfare on foreign territory or to “sports wash” any kind of human rights violations. International sports organisations therefore need to shoulder their responsibilities and make sure they are not being used for illegitimate purposes by their governments. Sports organisations are at risk of being abused by aggressor countries when awarding international sporting events to or organising them in such countries or by allowing sportspeople representing such countries to participate in international events.

Member States are consequently invited to reflect on the following questions:

1. How can Member States strengthen international sports organisations to reinforce respect for human rights and openness and transparency in the awarding and running of international sporting events?
2. How can Member States and the EU work together to strengthen respect for human rights and openness and transparency in the activities of national, European and other international sports organisations?