

Headline 5.6 Human Rights

1. Definition

Sport is inherently linked to human rights, offering a powerful platform to promote equality, and inclusivity. However, it also faces significant challenges such as racism, exclusion, and discrimination, which can have serious human rights implications. Sport governing bodies have a unique role in addressing these issues by fostering inclusive environments, implementing frameworks to combat discrimination and abuse, and ensuring diverse participation in events. While these organisations are committed to respecting human rights, they may inadvertently cause or contribute to adverse impacts, underscoring the need for vigilance and proactive measures to safeguard human rights within the sporting sphere.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has articulated its commitment to human rights through its Strategic Framework on Human Rights, which provides concrete action plans across its three main spheres of activity: as an organisation, as the owner of the Olympic Games, and as the leader of the Olympic Movement. This framework identifies five key areas of engagement: equality and non-discrimination, safety and well-being, livelihood and decent work, voice, and privacy. These areas ensure that all individuals are treated fairly, protected from harm, afforded decent work conditions, given a voice in decisions that affect them, and have their privacy respected. The IOC also integrates human rights into its human resources management, enforcing a zero-tolerance policy against harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

To maintain their social license, sport organisations must align with global human rights standards, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. These frameworks set the minimum standard for respecting human rights, requiring organisations to make public commitments, conduct ongoing due diligence, and provide remedies for any harm caused. Additionally, sport-related initiatives like the Kazan Action Plan and the European Sport Charter emphasise the importance of respecting human rights in sports.

Despite not being directly subject to human rights laws, sports organisations often commit to these principles through internal regulations and codes of conduct. Recent years have seen increased pressure on these bodies to uphold human rights, especially during international competitions, which often highlight issues related to labour rights and other human rights concerns. Effective human rights advocacy in sports requires translating universal norms into contextually relevant practices, engaging meaningfully with local stakeholders, and fostering transparency and accountability in all operations. By doing so, sport organisations can ensure that they not only promote but also protect human rights in the global sporting landscape.

2. Ideal Scenario

The sport organisation integrates human rights considerations into every facet of its operations, embedding these principles into policies and decision-making processes alongside other strategic objectives. This commitment is guided by the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) and recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy, which emphasises identifying human rights risks,

integrating findings into action plans, monitoring effectiveness, and clearly communicating outcomes. The organisation prioritises the rights of athletes and stakeholders, ensuring that its responsibilities extend beyond mere legal liability, and emphasises the importance of providing access to remedies for any human rights violations.

To support this integration, robust training and education programs are in place for staff, leadership, athletes, coaches, and stakeholders, focusing on issues such as discrimination, equality, and inclusion. The organisation conducts regular human rights impact assessments and risk assessments to identify and address potential risks and vulnerabilities, with transparent processes that ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

Stakeholder engagement is central to the organisation's human rights strategy, with diverse perspectives actively sought and respected. This ongoing dialogue informs the continuous monitoring, evaluation, and refinement of human rights practices, allowing for prompt responses to feedback and the ongoing enhancement of policies and procedures.

To further uphold human rights, the organisation has established a confidential and easily accessible internal reporting mechanism for any breaches of its human rights policy and related regulations. This system is designed to be independent and impartial, ensuring that all reports are handled with the utmost fairness. Comprehensive support services and resources are available to individuals who report breaches, and strict protocols for documenting and record-keeping are maintained to ensure transparency and accountability.

3. Risks

- Legal liability: Ignoring human rights can lead to violations of local, national, and international laws, resulting in legal actions, fines, and reputational damage.
- Reputational damage: Failure to uphold human rights principles can tarnish the reputation of the sports governing body, leading to public backlash, loss of trust, and negative media coverage.
- Athlete welfare: Neglecting human rights may result in the exploitation, abuse, or discrimination of athletes, jeopardising their physical and mental well-being and potentially leading to athlete dissatisfaction, withdrawal, or legal action.
- Loss of Sponsorship and Funding: Sponsors, donors, and funding bodies increasingly prioritise ethical conduct and may sever ties with sports organisations that disregard human rights principles, leading to financial losses and decreased resources for development programs.
- Ethical concerns: failing to address human rights issues contradicts ethical values and standards, undermining the integrity and credibility of the sports governing body and its leadership.
- Ethical concerns: Hosting major international sports events may provide a veneer of respectability for states which show little regard for human rights and can contribute to worsen the situation and discredit the awarding organisation.
- International Standing: In the global arena, sports organisations that neglect human rights risk isolation, exclusion, and diminished influence in international sports governance and diplomatic circles.

4. Instruments and key elements

<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Key elements</i>
Statutes / Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including human rights principles into regulatory instruments. • Clearly communicate about the organisation's commitment. • Be specific in the scope and applicability of the policy. • Outline the fundamental human rights principles the organisation commits to uphold.
Human Rights Framework/Policy/Due Diligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering operations, activities, (institutional) events • Considering bidding and hosting of events. • Ensure that the policy aligns with applicable international human rights standards. • Clearly outline prohibited conduct. • Commit to regularly reviewing and updating the human rights policy in response to changing legal requirements, emerging issues, stakeholder feedback and best practices. • Engage stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives, insights and feedback. • Conduct a systematic assessment of human rights risks associated with the organisation's activities.
Training and awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For staff, volunteers, board members, participants. • Develop relevant and engaging content that covers the areas of your human rights policy. • Ensure the training is delivered by a knowledgeable and experienced person. • Customise contents to the target audience and provide practical guidance and tools that participants can apply within their roles and responsibilities.
Reporting and Remedy system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a confidential and easily accessible internal reporting mechanism for any breaches of the organisation's human rights policy and related regulations. • Ensure independence and impartiality of the reporting and remedy system. • Offer comprehensive support services and resources to individuals who report regulations breaches. • Establish protocols for documenting and record-keeping.

5. Good practice examples

Example “Education and Awareness Raising”

Organisation: Council of Europe

Description: HELP course Human Rights in Sports! An 8-hour online course designed to help legal professionals and sports experts to better understand and apply the internal/European law standards in the field of human rights in sport. It is spread across 8 modules covering arbitration and litigation, privacy, life and security, liberty, freedom of expression, prohibition of discrimination, anti-doping and human rights, sports manipulation and human rights and safety and security of sports events and human rights. The course has been developed by the Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme and the CoE Children’s Rights and Sport Values Department. The objectives of the course are to create awareness on key human rights issues that can arise in sport, understand the relevant provisions of the international/European legal framework and case law concerning Human Rights in Sport, apply in practice the relevant provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and CoE standards concerning Human Rights and identify the specific risks and barriers that athletes face in Europe and that impede the enjoyment of their rights.

Further information:

[Course: Human Rights in Sports | Council of Europe HELP \(coe.int\)](#)

[HR SPORTS ENG | Council of Europe HELP \(coe.int\)](#)

[FS Sport ENG.pdf \(coe.int\)](#)

Example “Handbook”

Organisation: Council of Europe

Description: The Human rights protection in Europe in the context of sports organisation’s disciplinary and arbitration procedures – Good practice handbook” is a publication of the Council of Europe. While there is no explicit mandate for sports disciplinary and arbitration bodies to directly adhere to human rights provisions, it is imperative as per European Court of Human Rights rulings, to allow appeals against their decisions in courts equipped to assess their compliance with fundamental rights. Thus, it is crucial for sports governing bodies and members of such bodies to be sensitised to the imperative of safeguarding human rights and the potential clashes with their regulations or rulings. This handbook outlines the human rights provisions that could be jeopardised by sport practices or decisions, citing references for instances where their application in sports has been legally scrutinised or subject to court rulings.

Further information: [Human rights protection in Europe in the context of sports organisations' disciplinary and arbitration procedures - Good practice handbook No. 5 \(coe.int\)](#)

Example “Human Rights Framework”

Organisation: International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Description: The IOC recognises and upholds human rights, as enshrined in both the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter and the IOC Code of Ethics. The objective is to ensure that people’s rights are put at the core of the IOC’s operations and are respected in line with international agreements and standards – within the IOC’s remit. The Strategic Framework on Human Rights explains the long-term objectives and specific actions the IOC commits to take to further respect for human rights in its remit. Approved in 2022, it is the logical consequence of the Olympic Agenda 2020+5 with recommendation 13 “Continue to lead by example in corporate citizenship”. In order to fulfil the goal of Olympism, all constituents of the Olympic Movement need to respect internationally recognised human rights within their respective remit. To meet its expectations in its spheres of responsibility, focus areas and target populations the IOC continues to carry out human rights due diligence which covers an ongoing risk management process to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for any adverse human rights impacts across its relevant activities.

The Advisory Committee on Human Rights’ mission is to provide strategic guidance to the IOC and advise on the implementation of the IOC Strategic Framework on Human Rights.

Further information:

[Respecting Human Rights \(olympics.com\)](https://olympics.com)

[IOC-Strategic-Framework-on-Human-Rights-Executive-summary.pdf \(olympics.com\)](#)

[IOC-Strategic-Framework-on-Human-Rights.pdf \(olympics.com\)](#)

Example “Human Rights Policy”

Organisation: German Sports Confederation (DOSB)

Description: The German Sports Confederation together with the German Sports Youth (dsj) published a human rights policy which was developed with the Human Rights Advisory Board. With the policy, the DOSB and dsj are putting into concrete terms the commitment to respecting all nationally and internationally recognised human rights, and in particular, children’s rights. The policy identifies key areas of action, describes the main approaches with which the DOSB and dsj fulfil their responsibility and defines internal responsibilities. These are protection from interpersonal violence, discrimination, health and safety, rights of co-determination and participation, and labour rights. DOSB carried out this process in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles in order to send impulses into the national sports landscape. The policy is intended to highlight and raise awareness of the opportunities that lie in respecting human rights for sport. The human rights policy is accompanied by an action plan with goals and measures, which will in particular establish a connection with related topics, such as the sustainability strategy, and aim to deepen a positive culture of human rights in sport.

The policy applies to all honorary functionaries, full-time and part-time employees but also teams nominated by DOSB for multi-sport events, for all events organised by DOSB or dsj throughout the entire lifecycle in accordance with any event-specific human rights policy and for all wholly owned subsidiaries of DOSB.

Further information:

[DOSB-23004 Menschenrechts Policy.indd](#)

[DOSB Human Rights Policy](#)

[FAQ Human Rights Policy](#)

Example “Human Rights Policy for an Event”

Organisation: UEFA EURO 2024

Description: UEFA and the German Football Association (DFB) jointly with the German Federal Ministry of the Interior published a Human Rights Declaration committing to the protection of human rights during the UEFA EURO 2024 and creating a framework for the implementation of related processes. The declaration is the result of cooperation between UEFA, the DFB and host nation as well as host cities. The declaration outlines objectives including the accessibility, diversity and inclusion of stadia, working environments the broader football environment, combatting all forms of discrimination and abuse, providing safety, health and well-being encompassing a safe experience but also healthy food and drink choices, and freedom of speech for everyone. The declaration is aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

After setting out the human rights commitment, the declaration outlines the human rights risk analysis. The preventative measures are listed in Annex 1. The declaration finishes with a paragraph on reporting which includes an impact study and final report of the implementation of the declaration after the tournament.

Additionally, a human rights board, which comprises representatives of NGOs and expert stakeholders is tasked with providing expert guidance on human rights issues related to the tournament, serves as a central point of information for all matters related to human rights, facilitates communication and collaboration among stakeholders to share perspectives and shape best practices and observe and make recommendations on the operational implementation of relevant policies and actions.

Further information:

[UEFA and DFB unveil human rights declaration for UEFA EURO 2024 | UEFA EURO 2024 | UEFA.com](#)

[human rights documents uefa euro 2024.pdf](#)

[EM 2024 :: Männer-Nationalmannschaft :: Männer-Nationalmannschaften :: Teams :: DFB - Deutscher Fußball-Bund e.V.](#)

[Upholding and protecting human rights at UEFA EURO 2024 | UEFA.com](#)

Example “Human Rights Policy for an Event”

Organisation: Commonwealth Games federation

Description: The Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games were the first Commonwealth Games to adopt a specific “Approach to Human Rights” which linked human rights principles to the Games’ business relationships comprising with regards sourcing and labour rights. The Commonwealth Games Federation

had approved a human rights policy statement in 2017 and updated on 2022 committing itself to respect, non-discrimination and positive impact reflected as one of the core values “Humanity, Equality and Destiny”. The Human Rights Statement builds on the commitment in the Strategic Plan to “implement decisions and activities which adhere to universal principles of good governance, underpinned by a strong commitment to, and respect for human rights, environment and sustainability, health, safety and wellbeing, as well as accessibility and inclusivity”. The Human Rights Policy Statement applies to all CGF’s officials and management team and further reflects the expectations towards partners and stakeholders in relation to the Commonwealth Sport Movement. These include the Commonwealth Games Associations, the Local Organising Committees for the Commonwealth Games and commonwealth Youth Games, the commercial partners and suppliers and other linked to the CGF through business relationships. In order to respect, protect and promote human rights of athletes, citizens and communities across the Commonwealth, the CGF pledges to embed Human Rights into their governance, athletes’ rights and advocacy, child rights, safeguarding, the media, communications and stakeholder engagement, the procurement, partnerships and ethical trading and consider conduct and whistleblowing, gender equality and non-discrimination, LGBTQ+ equality, para sport inclusion and historical injustice and racism.

Further information:

[HR-Statement-Commonwealth-Games-Federation-MR-June.pdf \(pulselive.com\)](#)

[Safeguarding \(commonwealthsport.com\)](#)

Example “Human Rights Policy in bidding for Events”

Organisation: European Athletics

Description: This commitment on human rights expands the European Athletics’ commitment to human rights beyond their organisation to the lifecycle of their events. The recommendations consider increasing the awareness and knowledge on Human Rights obligations, standards and considerations, supported by experts and through a range of training and educational measures and topics, embedding principles of respect, protection and promotion of human rights in all stages of the event bidding documents, and in the event hosting agreement, as well as in various manuals and guidelines that establish the requirements for successful delivery of each functional area of the event. Furthermore, it calls to set-up and apply a Human Rights’ risk management approach and due diligence process in the bidding process and to continuously engage all stakeholders involved in the hosting of successful events, across the public, private and third sectors of the sport ecosystem, and to encourage them to embrace the same level of human-centric commitment and dedication to responsible implementation.

Further information:

[Commitment on Human Rights Approved 18012024.pdf \(directus.app\)](#)

[European Athletics commits to respecting all internationally recognised human rights in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights | European Athletics \(european-athletics.com\)](#)

Example “Environment and Social Responsibility Guidelines”

Organisation: International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)

Description: Within these guidelines the IIHF commits to human rights, sustainability and social responsibility. The three key rights identified are protection from discrimination, civil and political rights and economic, social and labour rights. All parties concerned by the policy are asked to ensure that any violation of human rights is remedied in a manner consistent with international agreements, applicable laws and regulations and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The IIHF is committed to creating and maintaining a positive health and safety culture which secures the commitment and participation of all its employees, volunteers, contractors, partners, suppliers and licensees.

Further information: [2024_iihf_environment_social_responsibility_guidelines.pdf](#)

Example “Human Rights – a handbook for sport”

Organisation: Swedish Sports Confederation

Description: This handbook follows a joint agreement on fair play and decent conditions at sports events between the Swedish Sports Confederation, different other major sport governing bodies and labour bodies. A special focus is given to the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The purpose of the handbook is to spread knowledge on how Swedish sport can help promote human rights, both at national level and in a global perspective, while at the same time stimulating efforts to promote Good Governance in international sports. The handbook defines important principles, how sport can strengthen respect for human rights in working life and have a positive influence on human rights violations.

Further information: [Handbook Human Rights Swedish Sports Confederation.pdf \(rf.se\)](#)

Example “Human Rights Volunteers at events”

Organisation: FIFA

Description: Volunteers trained by FIFA’s human rights team to be working on the ground during event for outreach work and raise awareness among attendees about the FIFA’s grievance mechanisms. Operate alongside FIFA’s Anti-Discrimination Match Observers, the Grievance Mechanism and further HRDD initiatives in place for the event. The match day routine would include a pre-match briefing, taking position in the outer perimeter of the stadium and report, interview and observe until the start of the match. During the match, they would also screen social media, conduct interviews and observe during halftime. After the match, the volunteers take position inside the stadium and observe fans and spectators leaving the stadium which is followed by a debrief. Volunteers record and report issues through smartphones and online forms, which feed into an online database to be screened by the team lead and forwarded when necessary to the FIFA’s Human Rights Team. Action taken on a case-by-case basis.

HRV program launched in acknowledgement of a gap in the identification of human rights issues on the ground during a tournament due to a lack of information gathering. The five themes of the HRV are “be human rights aware”, “monitor”, “signpost human rights resources”, “collect data” and “share learnings and experiences”. HRVs covered live or past experiences from fans or other stakeholders that hinted at human rights abuses and, in many cases, human rights issues and abuses that were unfolding in real time.

Thus, in the observed and reported cases, the risks could not have been prevented anymore, as it usually already materialized. Acknowledge local contexts, as locals are likely to have greatest understanding of issues and certain dynamics.

Further information: [Human rights volunteer roles to return for FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™](#)

6. Steps to the next level

To level 2 ★★ “Emerging”	To level 3 ★★★ “Developing”	To level 4 ★★★★ “Established”	To level 5 ★★★★★ “Embedded”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss human rights concerns in the board when they arise. Provide awareness raising and education for staff, volunteers and participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and approve a statement at the senior level that clearly outlines the organization's commitment to respecting human rights. This statement should be informed by both internal and external expertise, set clear expectations for personnel and business partners, be made publicly available, communicated both internally and externally, and be integrated into the organization's operational policies and procedures. Identify and evaluate human rights risks through human rights impact assessment based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt a clear and coherent human rights policy, in line with international human rights standards (UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights), including a remedy strategy and sanctions system concerning the organisation's direct operations, such as the organisation of events and the impact on communities. Embed the human rights policy in Statutes/Code of Conduct/Code of Ethics and other relevant regulations and guidelines with clear procedures for implementation and enforcement. Consider maintaining robust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively foster a clear division of responsibility for addressing human rights issues across operational, management, and board levels, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are well-understood and appropriately assigned at each level. Regularly assess and confirm the understanding of these roles to ensure effective implementation Implement a comprehensive reporting system that ensures confidentiality for those that report (whistleblowers, victims, survivors), accessibility for all stakeholders, and clear procedures

	<p>on UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights within the organisation's own activities, e.g. recruitment practices, activities with and for members, procurement activities, events, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively involve stakeholders who are actually or potentially impacted in the human rights impact assessment process. Appoint a qualified person responsible for implementing the policy and as a contact point for concerns and reporting. Identify and potentially test external offers for human rights education with the appointed person. Actively foster a culture of respect for human rights within the organisation through proactive 	<p>connections with members and member organisations, board operation and composition, including recruitment, diversity, and training, ensure ethics, integrity, anti-bribery, anti-discrimination, and gender equality measures, and foster relationships with athletes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and maintain a clear division of responsibility for addressing human rights issues across operational, management, and board levels, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are well-understood and appropriately assigned at each level. Communicate internally and externally what the organisation expects regarding human rights and the conduct of its own leadership and staff, as well as that of partners it works with. 	<p>for addressing and following up on received reports in a way that allows for addressing and where relevant remedying human rights concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a comprehensive human rights training program, fully integrated into organisational practices and into the onboarding process of new personnel, conducted by experienced experts. Formulate and implement an engagement strategy aimed at fostering constructive dialogue with various stakeholders, including affected groups, regarding the organisation's approach to addressing human rights issues.
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	<p>engagement by the leadership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and manage human rights risks by adopting measures to prevent and mitigate human rights risks and leveraging influence over stakeholders involved in events, licensing, procurement, and member associations to prevent harm. • Track, report and communicate about human rights risks in which the organisation is involved and how they were addressed, keeping in mind the effectiveness of the measures, to ensure accountability and learn from mistakes. • Establish a confidential and easily accessible internal reporting mechanism for any breaches of the organisation's human rights policy and related regulations. • Enable access to remedy which is about redressing 	
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		<p>human rights harms that have occurred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a training course for staff, board members, and volunteers to raise awareness about human rights risks linked to the organisation and the measures in place to address them. 	
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