



EVALUATION REPORT

GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS OF ATHLETES IN OLYMPIC SPORTS IN EUROPE

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I. Executive Summary

In view of current changes in Olympic sport, the field of **employment relations of athletes** is experiencing **fundamental changes** as well. While sport was traditionally shaped by notions of amateurism, voluntary engagement and prestige – professionalisation and commercialisation changed both the structures and perception of Olympic sport. Against this backdrop, the **demands for improvements** of the conditions of the social and professional setting of athletes have been voiced more and more loudly by an increasing number of actors in the past years. This can be explained above all by an ambiguous picture: on the one hand, Olympic athletes are acclaimed stars and public heroes; on the other hand, there are reports on difficult financial situations of athletes and precarious employment conditions.

In view of the lack of comprehensive data, the first phase (1/2021-12/2021) of the “EMPLOYS” project offered an **empirical driven inventory** of the social and work-related conditions of Olympic athletes in **29 European states** (EU member states, plus United Kingdom and Norway). The results documented in the first interim report of the project ([EMPLOYS Fact Report](#)) reveal that the working conditions of athletes are subject to various influencing factors. These include above all:

- the framework of the national legal, social and welfare systems
- the structures of the national sport systems
- the specificities of sport-related regulations in the interplay between general labour law regulations and individual arrangements

In the second project phase (1/2022-6/2022), the project has turned its attention to evaluate and assess current practices across the continent and pursued above all the objective of **developing dimensions and principles** for appropriate employment and social relations in sport. One of the demands that has been increasingly raised recently by the general public is the expectation that organised sport should **meet good governance criteria**. This is associated with the demand that stakeholders in sport orient their statutes and programmes, but also their activities and procedures, to certain, not least ethical, standards. At the same time, it is expected that specific norms will form the basis of member states’ and associations’ decision-making and management processes. These good governance criteria mark the focus of this second interim report of the project.

Based on intense communication with national, European and international stakeholders in sport and considering the results of **several Multiplier Sport Events** at Ormskirk (Edge Hill University), Rijeka (University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law), Lausanne (University of Lausanne) and Warsaw (Institute for Sport Governance), the project team has developed **27 principles of Good Governance across six core dimensions** of the employment relations of athletes in Olympic sports in Europe. This framework is introduced and explained in this report in detail.

Conceptual definition:

Good Governance in the Employment Relations of Athletes in Olympic Sports:

*“Systemic, political and organisational measures
to ensure the fulfilment of athlete employment relations rights.”*

- 1) **Athlete Employment Relations Rights** = citizenship rights in core dimensions of the employment relations of athletes in Olympic sports (contract, income, commercial opportunities, occupational safety and health, social protection, participation and bargaining). These rights are derived from athletes’ status as members of four communities: the nation state, the European Union, the global community, and the Olympic elite sport system.
- 2) **Good Governance** = systemic, political and organisational (cf. Henry & Lee 2004) measures to ensure the fulfilment of athlete employment relations rights.

This concept serves as the normative basis and justification for the formulation of **27 principles of Good Governance** across six core dimensions of the employment relations of athletes in Olympic sports in Europe. The proposed framework furthermore permits to include additional and well-established sources of moral rights to justify the formulated principles and set the framework apart from descriptive-legal approaches to athletes’ rights. Sources include legal and political frameworks (e.g. from the UN, the EU, the ILO or national governments), policy papers and academic studies. The 27 principles are formulated as “athlete rights”. Some principles consist of sub-principles which further specify and operationalise the main principle.

Derived from the Good Governance Concept, each principle can be classified as either a civil, political or social right – combinations exist. In addition, derived from the utilised framework of good governance, the contribution of each principle to the general aims and dimensions of good governance is indicated. Lastly, the level of (sport) governance on which the athletes’ right is best fulfilled is proposed.

II. A Rights-Based Approach to Good Governance in Athletes' Employment Relations

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1. Rationale and Approach of the Concept

a) Empirical reality of athletes in Olympic sports in Europe

As the results of the [EMPLOYS Fact Report](#) (Mittag et al. 2022) indicate, athletes in Olympic sports in Europe find themselves in a diverse setting with regards to their contractual and legal status (cf. O'Leary 2017). While some elite Olympic athletes are employees (e.g. of the army), many have other contractual relationships that are not employment. The results furthermore show that the legal and contractual status have significant effects on the six dimensions of the employment and social relations of athletes (e.g. contract, income, commercial opportunities, occupational safety and health, social protection, and participation and bargaining, cf. Figure 1). Principles of good governance must be able to reflect the diverse nature of athlete relations across the European continent and account for the different characteristics of national settings.

b) Approach to Good Governance

Established concepts and frameworks of good governance in sport usually have as their **empirical-analytical focus** the structures, practices and policies of organisations, mostly sport governing bodies (SGBs) on the national or international level (Parent & Hoye 2018; Thompson et al. 2022).

As the results of the Fact Report (Mittag et al. 2022) show, athlete employment relations are characterised by a multitude of relationships between athletes and different actors involved in the governance of Olympic elite sport. Therefore, good governance in the employment relations of athletes in Olympic sports does not only refer to the practices of private SGBs but must reflect the **systemic character of governing athlete relations** (cf. Henry and Lee 2004).

Actors at multiple levels of governance from both the state and sport sector shape the lives of elite athletes. Different from most of the previous work on good governance in sport, the conceptual and empirical focus of good governance, here, is not on individual organisations but on a **network of actors** as well as on national, EU and international **legal and socio-political frameworks** at the centre of which the athletes are located. In light of this holistic consideration, the concept seeks to establish a framework for **good governance for athletes**.



Figure 1: Employment Relations of Athletes in Olympic Sport in Europe.

Concepts of good governance usually rely on a rather **complex methodology** underpinned by a challenging process of operationalisation that commonly ranges from broad dimensions (e.g. transparency, democracy, accountability, etc.) to practical principles and (dichotomous) indicators (cf. Chappelet & Mrkonjic 2019; Geeraert 2018). While no clear methodology and terminology exists in current literature, a similar practice of conceptualising and operationalising good governance is being followed throughout most studies (Thompson et al. 2022).

An evaluation against principles of good governance is per se **normative**. Yet, normative claims and underlying conceptual reasoning often remain vague, ambiguous, or even neglected. Recent reviews of good governance in sport point out that many studies lack a sufficient explanation of the normative justification and premises for the formulation of good governance principles (Geeraert 2022; Chappelet and Mrkonjic 2019). Rationales for implementing good governance principles can be established on two distinct grounds: Most commonly, principles of good governance qualify as “good” because they may contribute to broader conceptual notions and outcomes valued in corporate governance, like effectiveness, efficiency, or output legitimacy. In this sense, good governance is conceived as “a means to an end” (Girginov 2022, p. 90), implying an **instrumental** justification of the recommended principles. In contrast to this, justifications can also be derived from **moral** or **values-based reasoning**. Here, good governance constitutes an “end in itself” (Geeraert 2022, p.4), as it establishes practices of moral values. Such moral/value-based reasoning to justify and explain principles of good governance can take place along the lines of the “classic juxtaposition” (Geeraert 2022, p. 5) of ethics: Cosmopolitan or universal norms, in principle, apply to all people and entities irrespective of the social and cultural setting. Communitarianist or contextualist values and norms may vary according to the particular setting in which they apply and account for long-established relationships and commonly agreed practices.

As stated, most studies on good governance in sport adopt an instrumental approach to establish a normative justification of rules and practices that deserve the label “good”. This, together with the empirical focus on SGBs, strongly ties good governance in sport to the broader concept of corporate governance. From the perspective of a values-based approach, the primary objective of good governance, however, is not to ensure organisational effectiveness, but to be moral and to live up to the desired values. Adopting this notion of good governance, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2022), for example, states that: “The true test of 'good' governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights [...]”.

c) Athletes’ Rights

In recent years, the discussion about **athletes’ rights** has gained significant traction. The World Players Association’s *Universal Declaration of Player Rights* adopted in 2017 may be seen as the point of departure for much of the activities and debates. On the European political level, the Council of Europe’s European Sport Charter (2021, p. 5) states that “the human rights of athletes and everyone involved in sport are respected, protected and promoted”. In addition, the current EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-2024 (Council Resolution 2020/C 419/06) for the first time includes “athletes’ rights” as one key topic. Actions shall be implemented that raise awareness, build knowledge and analyse the factual and legal situation. In the world of Olympic sport, several recently published documents illustrate these developments: In 2018, the IOC Session adopted the *Athletes’ Rights and*

Responsibilities Declaration which was developed “through a worldwide consultation process, reflecting the views of athletes.” (IOC 2018, p. 1). More broadly, the IOC-commissioned Independent Export Report *Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy* (Al Hussein & Davis 2020) strongly refers to the rights of athletes. As a direct result of the report, the IOC’s (2022) *Introduction to the IOC Human Rights Strategic Framework*, published in May 2022, identifies athletes as one of the four “target populations” (p. 5) addressed by the framework.

Seeing these recent developments, this study adopts a **rights-based approach to good governance** in Olympic sport that applies to the specific area of athlete employment relations in Olympic sports in Europe.

3. Conceptualizing Athlete Employment Relations Rights

The current data (cf. Mittag et al. 2022) point to a **large variety** of employment, work and social relations of athletes in Olympic sports in Europe. However, with regards to the formulation of athlete employment relations rights, it must be considered that athletes from all countries and sports included in the study perform the same or similar tasks. Since 2012, the International Labour Organization lists **athletes and sport players** in its *Standard Classification of Occupations* (ILO 2012, p. 210). Among other things, the tasks of this occupational group include the participation in sport events, the regular training practice and the adherence to rules and regulations of a specific sport (cf. *ibid.*). While the empirical reality of athletes’ employment relations is characterised by a large degree of variety across all six dimensions depending on the national context, the reality is that athletes are performing the same tasks (depending on their sports, of course).

Based on the principle of equality in their employment relation rights, the relevant rights of athletes **shall apply to all elite athletes in Olympic sports in Europe** under the following premise:

Irrespective of their legal status, contractual relationships and nationality, all athletes in Olympic sports have equal employment relations rights.

Within the framework of this study, principles of good governance are explained and justified on moral grounds to ensure a holistic consideration of rules and practices that place athletes at the centre of sport governance (cf. Figure 1). Seeing the complex empirical reality of athlete employment relations in sport, universalist (e.g. human rights, etc.) and contextualist (e.g. the national settings or the specific structures of the Olympic elite sport system) notions of morality are combined to establish a solid normative foundation for the formulation of good governance principles.

This proposed conceptualisation of athlete employment relations rights builds on the fundamentals of Marshall’s (2009 [1950]) concept of citizenship and the rights associated to it.

Traditional concepts of athletes’ rights are rooted in human rights and labour rights which derive a universal entitlement from the status of personhood or assign rights based on contracts and the necessity to overcome power imbalances (cf. Mundlak 2007). However, the research data and literature review have shown that athletes also have rights by virtue of their membership in the

Olympic system. The concept does not supplant human rights or labour rights of athletes. Rather, it identifies a third layer of rights for Olympic athletes and seeks to establish a framework that combines all applicable sources of rights.

Citizenship theory states that “[c]itizenship is a status bestowed on those **who are full members of a community**. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.” (Marshall 2009 [1950], p. 149f., emphasis added)

Marshall then distinguishes three different types of rights arising from the status of citizenship:

- Civil rights: “rights necessary for individual freedom” (p. 148)
- Political rights: “right to participation in the exercise of political power” (p. 149) (active right)
- Social rights: “whole range from right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage.” (p. 149) (passive right)

As to the source of rights and the relevant polity towards which rights can be claimed, firstly, athletes are members of the community of **citizens of a nation state**. As the data of the EMPLOYS Fact Report indicate, the national legal and socio-political framework has significant effects on the employment relations of athletes in Olympic sports. In addition to membership in the community of a nation state, athletes are members in the **community of the European Union and global citizens** (cf. Ong 1999). This entitles them to the fulfilment of rights on a transnational and international level.

Building on Mundlak (2007, p. 739), in conceptual terms, “a theory of citizenship requires an account of **who** the **constituent-citizen** and **what** the relevant **community** are”. This is important to the conceptualisation of athlete employment relations rights and shows that the concept of citizenship can also be transferred to contexts of the **private sphere**, leaving behind narrow conceptions of citizenship as membership community with rights towards public/state actors. Exemplarily, this extension has inspired concepts like workplace democracy, where the relevant polity is the private setting of a firm. Such a conceptual extension of citizenship becomes all the more important with a view to Crane and Matten (2005) who argue that actors of the private sphere increasingly assume the roles and responsibilities of welfare states due to processes of privatisation, for example in the provision of social protection services. This reflects the current data which indicate that private actors of the elite sport system assume an important role in the employment and social relations of athletes (cf. Mittag et al. 2022).

The conception of private sport governing bodies forming a regulative regime that can be considered a **uniquely characterized polity** has been developed in literature on sport governance from a political science (cf. Rittberger & Boekle 1996), a sociological (cf. Henne 2015) and a socio-legal perspective (cf. Freeburn 2018, Duval 2018, Cattaneo & Parrish 2020). Analysing the far-reaching effects of the specificities of the elite sport system, Henne (2015) proposes a conceptualisation of “**athlete citizenship**”. She argues that the transnational anti-doping regime makes international elite athletes a “unique caste of citizen subjects” (p. 3) and illustrates the effects of the regime on athletes’ rights.

Applying the citizenship framework to the governance of the employment and social relations in Olympic elite sport requires that athletes must be considered the “constituent-citizen” (Mundlak 2007, p. 739) of the **specific network of relationships they operate in as elite athletes**. Therefore, athlete

employment relations rights shall also be understood as **rights derived from athletes' specific membership status in the elite sport system**. This entitles athletes to **additional rights** vis-à-vis the different actors governing Olympic elite sports. Yet, the rights of athletes derived from their *general* membership in the global community, the community of EU citizens and of the nation state remain unaffected and apply to all athletes.

Therefore, athletes in Olympic sports in Europe are in a unique position strongly defined by:

1. Their status as citizens of a **nation state**
2. Their status as citizens of the **European Union**
3. Their membership in the **global community**
4. Their specific (contractual) relationships with private actors of the **system of Olympic elite sports** (private and public)

On the international level, the fourth aspect includes the relationships of athletes to bodies like the International Olympic Committee, International Federations and further transnational actors and event organizers. On the national level, it refers to relationships to the National Olympic Committee, National Federations, local clubs and any other organisation that strongly affect the lives of athletes.

4. Governing Athlete Employment Relations Rights

As Henry and Lee (2004) point out, the governance of sport can be understood as having **systemic, political** and **organisational** components to it. These distinct yet interconnected types of governance serve as an ordering principle for the fulfilment of athlete employment relations rights. The *systemic dimension* of governance relates to the interaction and “mutual adjustments between organisations” (ibid., p. 27.). *Political governance* refers to processes of steering the sport system “by moral pressure, use of financial or other incentives, or by licensing, regulation and control” (ibid.) of the government and public authorities. Lastly, and most commonly referred to in conceptualisations of good governance, the *organisational dimension* encompasses “accepted norms or values for the just means of allocation of resources, and profits or losses (financial or other) and of the conduct of processes involved in the management and direction of organisations in the sports business.” (ibid.)

Following this systematisation, **good governance in the employment relations of athletes in Olympic sports in Europe** is conceptualised as:

***“Systemic, political and organisational measures
to ensure the fulfilment of athlete employment relations rights.”***

III. Principles of Good Governance in the Employment Relations of Athletes in Olympic Sports in Europe

The present chapter outlines the **context-specific principles of good governance in the employment relations of athletes in Olympic Sports in Europe**. In view of persisting conceptual challenges related to the **complex methodology** as well as **practical relevance and impact** of any good governance codes (cf. Geeraert 2022; Thompson et al. 2022), the core question in the process of formulating sound principles is:

“How can the “rights-based approach” to good governance be (best) translated into applicable, valid and universal principles that are widely accepted by the involved stakeholders?”

Overall, the **operationalisation** of athletes’ employment relations rights through the lens of good governance takes place along the lines of the **six problem-centered and topic-specific dimensions** of the Fact Report, including contract, income, commercial opportunities, occupational safety and health, social protection and participation and bargaining (see Chapter 2, Figure 1).

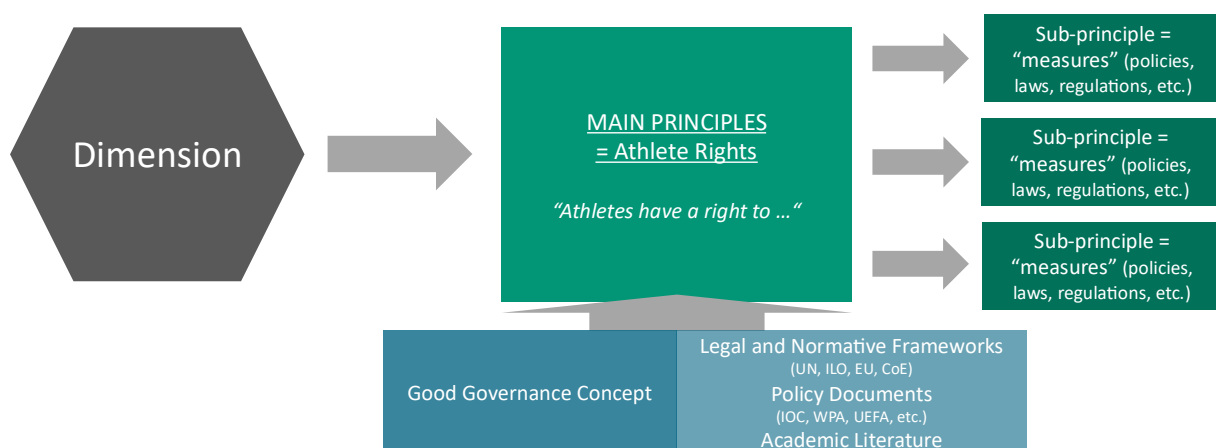


Figure 2: Operationalisation of Good Governance Principles.

Each **dimension** consists of specific “**main principles**”. **27 main principles** have been formulated in a deliberative process among the project partners which is based on current literature and on the exchange and discussion with stakeholders (e.g. within the framework of Multiplier Sport Events – MSEs). These main principles are phrased as **athletes’ rights**, beginning with the formulation of “**Athletes have a right to**” as commonly found in declarations and fundamental rights charters. The principles do not reflect an empirical reality in the current Olympic elite sport system, nor are they legally enforceable rights that can be claimed against any actor or party. Rather, each principle has a declaration-like character and constitutes a **moral right** which shall be fulfilled to ensure good governance in the employment relations of athletes in Olympic sports. So understood, the **principles state a normative end or goal** which shall be achieved **through different means and measures**. This way, the concept allows to **account for national peculiarities** in terms of distinct legal, socio-political, and economic frameworks as well as cultural characteristics across EU member states.

As part of the **good governance catalogue**, it is clearly stated how each main principle is integrated into the conceptual approach and where its normative justification lies. In sum, for each of the formulated main principles, **relevance and justification** (normative basis), **rights category**, **good governance dimension**, **level of (sport) governance** and underlying **sources** are clearly specified:

- Based on the Athlete Employment Relations Rights Concept, each main principle is for example **categorised as either a “civil”, “political” or “social right” of athletes** (see p. 6: “rights category”) – combinations of two or three rights categories may, however, occur.
- The main principles are furthermore linked with more **commonly used good governance dimensions** in sport-specific literature and policy papers. In this respect, any of the formulated principles shall contribute to fostering broader and widely disseminated dimensions in sports governance research such as **transparency, democracy, accountability, independence, and social responsibility**, among others.
- In accordance with Henry and Lee (2004), specific **governance level(s)** (“systemic”, “political”, “organisational”) at which adequate means and measures by the involved stakeholders are required to fulfil a given main principle (athlete right) are proposed.
- Ultimately, the **sources** of each main principle are specified, comprising **legal and political frameworks** (e.g. from the UN, the EU, the ILO or national governments), **policy papers** and **academic studies**, inter alia.

To ensure additional analytical profoundness, some main principles are further specified through “**sub-principles**” (53 in total). In practice, these sub-principles refer to the **presence / absence of specific measures such as policies, laws, and regulations at national level**. Contrary to many previous sport-specific codes of good governance, the **aim is not to introduce binary indicators** to measure and compare the fulfil-/non-fulfilment of the main and/or sub-principles.

Dimension 1: Contract

Principle 1: Written contract

Athletes have a right to a written contract.

Relevance and justification:

Irrespective of the contract's categorisation under national law, written contracts ensure the fulfilment of athletes' civil rights as members of the elite sport system. They increase transparency, ensure accountability and prevent the exploitation of athletes.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil, (political), (social)	transparency, accountability, (social responsibility)	organisational, (systemic)

Sources:

- World Players Association 2018: The Economic Rights of Players

Principle 2: Minimum contractual requirements

Athletes have a right to a written contract which includes clearly defined provisions of national and international minimum requirements.

Relevance and justification:

Minimum contractual requirements ensure the fulfilment of athletes' civil, political and social rights. They have been collectively negotiated in many professional (team) sports and shall also be applied to elite Olympic sports. They increase transparency, ensure accountability, foster equal treatment and prevent the exploitation of athletes.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil, (political), (social)	transparency, accountability, (social responsibility)	organisational, (systemic)

Sub-principles:

- 2.1** *All parties involved are clearly identified and applicable laws, rules, and codes of conduct are integrated.*
- 2.2** *Obligations and rights of the parties and access to remedy are specified.*
- 2.3** *Type of contract, start date, end date (duration, extension) and equal rights for the termination of the contract are defined.*
- 2.4** *Athletes' salary / income, image rights, and commercial opportunities are defined.*
- 2.5** *Athletes' social protection coverage is defined.*

Sources:

- EASE & EURO-MEI 2008: Joint Recommendation on minimum requirements of employment contracts in the sport sector
- UEFA 2012: Agreement regarding the minimum requirements for standard player contracts in the professional football sector
- Geeraert 2015; 2018; 2021: Sport Governance Observer; National Sport Governance Observer; National Anti-Doping Governance Observer

Principle 3: Evaluation of contract status

Athletes have a right to seek an evaluation of their contractual status in accordance with national law.

Relevance and justification:

It is the civil right of athletes to address national labour courts and/or independent entities regarding the legal status they obtain under their respective contract(s). This evaluation increases transparency, enhances accountability and prevents the exploitation of athletes.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil	transparency, accountability, (social responsibility)	systemic, (political)

Sub-principles:

- 3.1** *Sport specific laws and regulations that exempt an athlete from being recognised as a worker do not exist.*
- 3.2** *Mechanisms initiating an independent legal evaluation of an athlete's contract(s) are available.*
- 3.3** *Policies preventing retaliations against athletes who are requesting an evaluation of their contract are implemented.*

Sources:

- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- World Players Association 2018: The Economic Rights of Players

Principle 4: Eligibility criteria of contracts

Athletes have a right to the publication of eligibility criteria for any contract and/or membership in national teams or cadre systems.

Relevance and justification:

A career in elite sports exposes athletes to high opportunity costs. It is a civil right of athletes to know about the applicable eligibility criteria for membership in national teams and talent development programmes (cadres) which may impact their future career prospects in elite sport. The publication of clearly formulated criteria increases transparency, enhances accountability, and foster fair and open competition, including equal treatment of athletes. Ultimately, a greater predictability of an athlete's future (sporting) career path is provided.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil	transparency, accountability, (social responsibility)	organisational, (systemic)

Sources:

- Capranica & Guidotti 2016: Research for Cult Committee - qualifications/dual careers in sports (2016)
- EU Expert Group "Education & Training in Sport" 2012: EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes
- Geeraert 2015; 2018; 2021: Sport Governance Observer; National Sport Governance Observer; National Anti-Doping Governance Observer

Principle 5: Collective and independent negotiation of standard contracts

Where standard contracts apply (e.g. athlete / support agreements or participation agreements), athletes have a right to independently negotiate the terms of these through an organisation representing athletes.

Relevance and justification:

It is a political right of athletes to negotiate standard contracts that apply to them. Collective negotiations ensure democratic principles by countering imbalances in decision-making power aimed at fostering stakeholder inclusion and participation. It is a key role for organisations representing athletes and increases accountability, transparency and athletes' independence (see further: Dimension 6 "Participation and Bargaining").

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
political	democracy, accountability, transparency, (independence), (social responsibility)	systemic

Sources:

- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Preamble, Article 08
- ILO 1998: Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- Al Hussein & Davis 2020: Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy

Principle 6: Implementation of CBA provisions

Where collective agreements or social dialogue outcomes apply, athletes have a right to the full implementation of these into the provisions of individual contracts.

Relevance and justification:

It is a civil right of athletes that the provisions of applicable collective agreements are fully implemented and respected in individual contracts. The implementation of collective agreement provisions enhances accountability, increases transparency and prevents the exploitation of athletes' rights (see further: Dimension 6 "Participation and Bargaining").

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil	accountability, transparency, (independence), (social responsibility)	organisational, (systemic)

Sources:

- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Preamble, Article 08
- ILO 1998: Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus

Dimension 2: Income

Principle 7: Non-discrimination

Athletes have a right to equality of income with regards to financial support and income schemes, and to equal treatment and employment opportunities.

Relevance and justification:

Acknowledging the varying economic and commercial potential of different sports, many athletes receive funding through overarching national career support schemes. Athletes of all genders and types of sport have a social right to be treated equally with respect to their income and employment opportunities as elite athletes. This equality meets the social responsibility of the involved actors and fosters key democratic values such as inclusion and diversity.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social	social responsibility, (democracy)	systemic

Sources:

- ILO 1998: Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- ILO 1951: Equal Remuneration Convention
- IOC Charter, Fundamental Principles of Olympism
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- World Players Association 2017: Universal Declaration of Player Rights
- World Players Association 2018: The Economic Rights of Players
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture 2022: Towards more gender equality in sport: recommendations and action plan from the High Level Group on Gender Equality in sport

Principle 8: Adequate minimum income

Athletes have a right to adequate income that ensures a life of dignity.

Relevance and justification:

Irrespective of their contractual relationships, an adequate minimum income is a social right of athletes whose occupation is elite sport. It shall be ensured in a way that provides for the satisfaction of athletes' basic needs in the light of national economic and social conditions, whilst safeguarding access to employment and incentives to seek work. In-work poverty shall be prevented. Minimum income prevents the exploitation of the athletes' workforce, fosters social responsibility in the elite sport sector and potentially reduces susceptibility to competition manipulation.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social	social responsibility	systemic, political, organisational

Sub-principles:

- 8.1** *When signing an employment contract, applicable national minimum wage levels must be respected.*
- 8.2** *Athlete stipends and scholarships shall ensure a level of income that provides a life of dignity.*
- 8.3** *When representing their country in international sporting events, athletes shall receive an adequate (daily) income / financial compensation.*

Sources:

- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Article 2 and 3
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- ILO 2012: Standard Classification of Occupations

Principle 9: Eligibility criteria of income schemes

Athletes have a right to the publication of eligibility criteria for any income and financial support schemes.

Relevance and justification:

A career in elite sport exposes athletes to high opportunity costs. It is a civil right of athletes to know about the eligibility criteria of applicable financial support schemes which may impact their future career prospects in elite sport. Clearly formulated criteria increase transparency, enhance accountability, and foster fair and open competition including equal treatment of athletes. Ultimately, it may allow athletes to better plan their future (sporting) career.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil	transparency, accountability, social responsibility	organisational

Sources:

- Capranica & Guidotti 2016: Research for Cult Committee - qualifications/dual careers in sports (2016)
- EU Expert Group "Education & Training in Sport" 2012: EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes
- Geeraert 2015; 2018; 2021: Sport Governance Observer; National Sport Governance Observer; National Anti-Doping Governance Observer

Principle 10: Predictable and transparent income

Athletes have a right to an income that is determined through a predictable and transparent structure and procedure.

Relevance and justification:

A career in elite sports exposes athletes to high opportunity costs. It is a civil right of athletes that a transparent structure and procedure for determining their income is established. This increases transparency, enhances accountability and prevents the exploitation and unfair treatment of athletes.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil	transparency, accountability, social responsibility	systemic

Source:

- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Article 06
- Geeraert 2021: National Anti-Doping Governance Observer

Principle 11: Regularity and periodicity of payments

Athletes have a right to receive their attributed payments regularly and on time.

Relevance and justification:

A career in elite sports exposes athletes to high opportunity costs. It is a civil right of athletes that payments are made regularly and in due time. This becomes even more important since athletes may be required to make sport-specific advance payments prior to (possible) reimbursements (e.g. travelling, equipment, health checks, etc.). Regularity and periodicity ensure mutual accountability, athletes' independence, and prevents the exploitation and unfair treatment of athletes whilst reducing their susceptibility to engage in corruptive practices (e.g. match-fixing).

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil	accountability, (independence), (social responsibility)	systemic, (organisational)

Sources:

- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Article 06
- UEFA 2012: Agreement regarding the minimum requirements for standard player contracts in the professional football sector

Principle 12: Collective and independent negotiation of income schemes

Where collective income or financial support schemes apply (e.g. stipends, scholarships), athletes have a right to independently negotiate the terms of these through an organisation that represents athletes.

Relevance and justification:

It is a political right of athletes to negotiate collective income or financial support schemes that apply to them. Collective negotiations ensure democratic principles by countering imbalances in decision-making power aimed at fostering stakeholder inclusion and participation. It is a key role for organisations representing athletes and independent negotiations increase accountability, transparency and athletes' independence (see further: Dimension 6 "Participation and Bargaining").

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
political	democracy, accountability, social responsibility	systemic

Sources:

- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Article 08
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus

Dimension 3: Commercial Opportunities

Principle 13: Commercial freedom and freedom of occupation

Athletes have a right to their general commercial freedom and freedom of occupation, subject only to reasonable restrictions that are independently negotiated.

Relevance and justification:

Commercial opportunities and work outside of sports constitute important sources of income for elite athletes. Athletes' general commercial freedom and their freedom to pursue an occupation of their individual choice as EU citizens increase athletes' independence. Commercial freedoms of athletes are restricted to varying degrees and under different circumstances. These restrictions must be proportionate, justified and balance the interests of sport stakeholders. The grounding of restrictions in general principles of national and EU law increases transparency and ensures accountability. Furthermore, it is a political and civil right of athletes to negotiate any restrictions to these rights and freedoms freely and collectively. This fosters democracy, increases transparency, enhances accountability and prevents athletes' exploitation.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil, political	accountability, democracy, transparency, independence	systemic

- 13.1** *Athletes' name, image and likeness rights shall be ensured in line with national and EU law.*
- 13.2** *Athletes' freedom to engage in private sponsorship activities shall be ensured in line with national and EU law.*
- 13.3** *Athletes' freedom to pursue additional work shall be ensured in line with national and EU law.*
- 13.4** *Any restriction of these rights and freedoms shall be grounded in national and EU law.*
- 13.5** *Any restriction of these rights and freedoms shall be independently negotiated to balance the interests of sport stakeholders.*

Sources:

- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union 2012: Article 15
- ILO 1998: Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- IOC 2018: Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities Declaration
- World Players Association 2017: Universal Declaration of Player Rights
- World Players Association 2018: The Economic Rights of Players

Principle 14: Name, image and likeness rights usage and profits

Athletes have a right to influence and to benefit from the distribution of profits generated by the collective sales of their image, name and likeness rights.

Relevance and justification:

It is a civil right of athletes to profit from the sales of their name, image and likeness rights. The collective sales of their rights and the related profits shall be negotiated with athletes. This enhances accountability and fosters democracy.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil, political	accountability, democracy	organisational

Sub-principles:

- 14.1** *Athletes are involved in the sales process of their name, image and likeness rights.*
- 14.2** *Athletes receive a collectively and independently negotiated share of the profit generated by the collective sales of their image, name and likeness rights.*

Sources:

- ILO 1998: Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- IOC 2018: Athletes’ Rights and Responsibilities Declaration
- German Federal Cartel Office 2017; 2019: Press Release 21 December 2017; Press Release 27 February 2019
- World Players Association 2017: Universal Declaration of Player Rights
- World Players Association 2018: The Economic Rights of Players

Principle 15: Support structures and policies

Athletes have a right to support structures and policies enhancing their commercial opportunities.

Relevance and justification:

A career in elite sports exposes athletes to high opportunity costs, especially with regards to the restrictions on commercial opportunities. Support structures and policies on self-marketing, sponsorship and additional work increase athletes’ commercial opportunities and fulfil athletes’ social rights.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social	social responsibility	organisational, systemic

Sub-principles:

- 15.1** *Support structures and policies that assist athletes to sell their name, image and likeness rights (self-marketing) exist.*
- 15.2** *Support structures and policies that assist athletes to obtain sponsorships exist.*
- 15.3** *Support structures and policies that assist athletes to pursue additional work opportunities exist.*

Sources:

- IOC 2018: Athletes’ Rights and Responsibilities Declaration
- IOC Athletes’ Commission: Athlete 365
- EU Expert Group "Education & Training in Sport" 2012: EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes.

Dimension 4: Occupational Safety and Health

Principle 16: Healthy and safe work environment

Athletes have a right to a healthy and safe work environment when training and competing.

Relevance and justification:

Elite sport exposes athletes to numerous risks. Irrespective of their contractual relationships and legal status, it is a social right of athletes to practice their sports in a healthy and safe environment. This prevents the exploitation of athletes and strengthens social responsibility in sport.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social	social responsibility	systemic

Sources:

- 1989 European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus

Principle 17: Statutory minimum coverage

Athletes have a right to a minimum of national and EU-level statutory occupational safety and health provisions.

Relevance and justification:

Elite sport exposes athletes to numerous risks. Irrespective of their contractual relationships and legal status, it is a social right of athletes to benefit from the minimum provisions under national and EU law and policy on occupational safety and health. This prevents the exploitation of athletes and strengthens social responsibility in sport.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social	social responsibility	systemic

Sub-principles:

- 17.1** *In line with national and EU law, working time regulations are respected.*
- 17.2** *In line with national and EU law, annual leave day regulations are respected.*

Sources:

- 1989 European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work
- European Commission 2004: Communication on the practical implementation of the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Directives
- European Commission 2021: EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus

Principle 18: Exemption from financial costs

Athletes have a right to be exempted from financial costs that relate to occupational safety and health in training and competitions.

Relevance and justification:

Acknowledging their own obligations, athletes are exposed to several risks when practicing and competing in elite sports. Elite athletes operate in a complex network of relationships with different actors and principals. The costs related to fulfilling health and safety obligations should not be covered by athletes but must be the responsibility of the employer and/or principal. This prevents the exploitation of athletes, strengthens social responsibility in sport and enhances accountability.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social	social responsibility, accountability	systemic, (organisational)

Sources:

- 1989 European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work

Principle 19: Specific private measures

Athletes have a right to specific private measures that provide a safe and healthy training and competition environment, and cover the risks associated with their elite sport.

Relevance and justification:

Athletes are exposed to several risks when practicing and competing in elite sports. Elite athletes operate in a complex network of relationships with different actors and principals. Occupational safety and health measures of private Sport Governing Bodies specifically address these risks, thereby fulfilling the social rights of athletes. Athletes and their representatives are included in the formulation, decision-making and implementation of these policies and measures. This prevents the exploitation of athletes, fosters social responsibility and enhances democracy in sport.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social, (political)	social responsibility, democracy	organisational, (systemic)

Sub-principles:

- 19.1** *The employer and/or principal of the sporting activity take responsibility to ensure a safe and healthy training and competition environment for athletes.*
- 19.2** *SGB's competition rules are evaluated against applicable standards of occupational safety and health.*
- 19.3** *Athletes have access to preventive and protective equipment, regular physical and psychological check-ups and specified medical assistance.*
- 19.4** *Specific policies and regulations are established to protect and prevent athletes from being exposed to any hazardous conditions, including violence, abuse, discrimination, data protection infringements and coercion.*
- 19.5** *Athletes are provided with information and education schemes on:*
 - *sport-specific risk assessments (associated with the practice of a sport)*
 - *all relevant safety and health measures in place*
 - *possible health-damaging consequences of doping practices and dietary supplements*
- 19.6** *Effective and transparent policies and procedures are established to ensure the participation of athletes in the development of relevant safety and health measures and their instruction / training.*
- 19.7** *A representative who defends athletes' safety and health interests at competitions is appointed.*

19.8 *Effective and transparent policies and procedures are established to report, remedy, and record inadequate shortcomings and/or infringements of relevant safety and health measures.*

Sources:

- 1989 European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work
- European Commission 2004: Communication on the practical implementation of the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Directives
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- European Commission 2013: EU Guidelines on Dual Career of Athletes

Dimension 5: Social Protection

Principle 20: Cover and payment of statutory social protection contributions

Athletes have a right to be covered for, and paid, statutory national social protection contributions.

Relevance and justification:

A career in elite sport exposes athletes to high opportunity costs, especially with regards to social protection, as well as to high physical and psychological risks. Irrespective of their contractual relationships, it is a social right of athletes to be covered by statutory social protection measures while pursuing their occupation. This prevents the exploitation of athletes and fosters social responsibility in sport.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social	social responsibility	systemic, (political)

Sub-principles:

- 20.1** *Statutory health care contributions are paid for elite athletes.*
- 20.2** *Statutory sickness benefit contributions are paid for athletes.*
- 20.3** *Statutory old-age and pension contributions are paid for athletes.*
- 20.4** *Statutory invalidity / occupational disability contributions are paid for athletes.*
- 20.5** *Statutory unemployment contributions are paid for athletes.*
- 20.6** *Athletes are covered by statutory measures of maternity, paternity and adoption protections.*
- 20.7** *Athletes are covered by statutory measures of parental (and/or maternity/paternity) leave.*

Sources:

- Council of Europe 1964: European Code of Social Security
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture 2022: Towards more gender equality in sport: recommendations and action plan from the High Level Group on Gender Equality in sport

Principle 21: Specific private social protection measures

Athletes have a right to specific private measures of social protection that cover the specific risks associated with the practice of elite sport.

Relevance and justification:

A career in elite sport exposes athletes to high opportunity costs, especially with regards to social protection. The specific social risks of elite sport require additional private measures to complement statutory social protection coverage. These private measures shall be collectively negotiated with athletes. This prevents the exploitation of athletes, fosters social responsibility and enhances democracy in sport.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
social, (political)	social responsibility, (political)	organisational, (systemic)

Sub-principles:

- 21.1** *Complementary private accident insurance schemes exist for athletes.*
- 21.2** *Complementary private injury insurance and health care schemes exist for athletes.*
- 21.3** *Specific pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption protection policies securing athletes' social status exist.*
- 21.4** *Specific parental leave policies securing athletes' social status exist.*
- 21.5** *Private social protection measures are collectively negotiated with athletes.*

Sources:

- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture 2022: Towards more gender equality in sport: recommendations and action plan from the High Level Group on Gender Equality in sport

Dimension 6: Participation and Bargaining

Principle 22: Participation in governance

Athletes have a right to participate in the governance of their sport.

Relevance and justification:

As members of the elite sport system, it is a political right of athletes to participate in the governance of their sport. This fosters democratic governance and accountability in sport.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
political	democracy, accountability	organisational

Source:

- IOC Charter (Rules 2, 21)
- IOC 2018: Athletes' Rights and Responsibilities Declaration
- IOC Athletes' Commission 2017: Guide to developing an effective Athletes' Commission
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- Al Hussein & Davis 2020: Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy
- Geeraert 2015; 2018; 2021: Sport Governance Observer; National Sport Governance Observer; National Anti-Doping Governance Observer

Principle 23: Representativeness

Athletes have a right to be represented by the people of their own choosing.

Relevance and justification:

Following the democratic principle, athletes have a political right to independently choose the people that represent them and their interests in the governance of elite sport. This fosters democratic governance in sport.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
political	democracy	systemic

Sources:

- IOC Charter (Rules 2, 21)
- IOC Athletes' Commission 2017: Guide to developing an effective Athletes' Commission
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- Al Hussein & Davis 2020: Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy
- Geeraert 2015; 2018; 2021: Sport Governance Observer; National Sport Governance Observer; National Anti-Doping Governance Observer

Principle 24: Recognition and effective involvement

Athletes have a right to be formally recognised as a key stakeholder and to have decision-making power.

Relevance and justification:

The formal recognition of athletes and their decision-making power (whether exercised individually or collectively) as citizens, members and key stakeholders of the elite sport system must be codified in SGB statutes and in national sport-specific legislation. It is a civil right of athletes to exercise their political freedoms with reference to clearly stated codifications of their rights and obligations. This fosters democracy, increases transparency and enhances accountability in the governance of sport.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
political, (civil)	democracy, (transparency), (accountability)	systemic

Sub-principles:

- 24.1** SGB statutes include a paragraph that acknowledges athlete representatives.
- 24.2** National sport-specific legislation acknowledges athlete representatives.
- 24.3** Athlete representatives are formally involved in decision-making processes on issues that directly affect them.
- 24.4** Athlete representatives have effective and proportionate decision-making power in their respective governing bodies.
- 24.5** There are measures in place to prevent and remedy discrimination or retaliation against athlete representatives.

Sources:

- IOC Athletes' Commission 2017: Guide to developing an effective Athletes' Commission
- Al Hussein & Davis 2020: Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy
- Geeraert 2015; 2018; 2021: Sport Governance Observer; National Sport Governance Observer; National Anti-Doping Governance Observer
- McNamee 2021: Strengthening Athlete Power in Sport – A multidisciplinary review and framework

Principle 25: Independent union / association representation

Athletes have a right to be represented by their union / association.

Relevance and justification:

Independent organisations, such as unions or associations, strengthen the decision-making power of athletes and complement the role of athletes' commissions. It is a civil and political right of athletes to form or join unions / associations that represent their interests towards other stakeholders, even if an athletes' commission already exists. This fosters democracy and ensures independence of athletes as a key stakeholder in Olympic sports.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil, political	democracy, independence, (accountability)	systemic

Sources:

- ILO 1998: Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Preamble, Article 08
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union 2012: Article 28
- Al Hussein & Davis 2020: Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy
- World Players Association 2017: Universal Declaration of Player Rights

Principle 26: Recognition of athlete organisations, social dialogue and collective bargaining

Athletes have a right to form independent athlete organisations and to social dialogue and collective bargaining.

Relevance and justification:

Independent organisations, such as unions or associations, strengthen the decision-making power of athletes. Social dialogue and collective bargaining are well-established tools in most economic sectors. Irrespective of their contractual relationship and legal status, it is a civil and political right of athletes as members of the elite sport system to form associations and to engage in independent and collective negotiations. The recognition of independent athlete organisations and implementation of social dialogue and collective bargaining fosters democracy, ensures independence, enhances accountability and increases transparency.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil, political	democracy, independence, (accountability), (transparency)	systemic, (organisational)

Sub-principles:

- 26.1** *Independent athlete unions or associations are recognised as the representative body and/or a social partner in accordance with national labour law.*
- 26.2** *Social dialogue and collective bargaining are recognised and promoted in the sport sector.*
- 26.3** *There are no attempts to interfere into the establishment, functioning and administration of independent athlete organisations.*

Sources:

- ILO 1998: Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union 2012: Article 28
- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Preamble, Article 08
- Al Hussein & Davis 2020: Recommendations for an IOC Human Rights Strategy
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
- World Players Association 2018: The Economic Rights of Players

Principle 27: Independent negotiations and collective agreements

Athletes have a right to negotiate conditions upon which they are involved in sport and, where independent athlete organisations exist, to negotiate collective agreements with the relevant stakeholder(s).

Relevance and justification:

It is a civil and political right of athletes to negotiate the conditions and relationships with actors of the elite sport system. The relationship between independent athlete organisations and actors of the elite sport system are codified and agreements are negotiated collective to foster democracy, increase transparency and enhance accountability.

Rights Category	Good Governance Dimensions	Level of (sport) governance
civil, political	democracy, transparency, (accountability)	systemic, (organisational)

Sub-principles:

- 27.1** *Where athlete unions or associations exist, there is a formal collective agreement (MoU or other) between the actors and the athlete union / association in line with national law.*
- 27.2** *Collective agreements are recognised and implemented in the elite sport system.*

Sources:

- European Pillar of Social Rights 2021: Preamble, Article 08
- ILO 1998: Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- ILO 2020: Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport – Points of Consensus
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